

TRAUMA AND LITERATURE

As a concept, “Trauma” has attracted a great deal of interest in literary studies. A key term in psychoanalytic approaches to literary study, trauma theory represents a critical approach that enables new modes of reading and of listening. It is a leading concept of our time, applicable to individuals, cultures, and nations. This book traces how trauma theory has come to constitute a discrete but influential approach within literary criticism in recent decades. It offers an overview of the genesis and growth of literary trauma theory, recording the evolution of the concept of trauma in relation to literary studies. In twenty-one essays, covering the origins, development, and applications of trauma in literary studies, *Trauma and Literature* addresses the relevance and impact this concept has in the field.

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CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107176645

DOI: 10.1017/9781316817155

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First published 2018

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Kurtz, John Roger, editor.

TITLE: Trauma and literature / edited by J. Roger Kurtz.

OTHER TITLES: Cambridge critical concepts.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2017. |

Series: Cambridge critical concepts | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017042293 | ISBN 9781107176645 (Hardback : alk. paper)

SUBJECTS: | MESH: Psychological Trauma | Psychiatry in Literature

CLASSIFICATION: LCC RC552.W74 | NLM WM 172.5 | DDC 616.85/21-dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017042293>

ISBN 978-1-107-17664-5 Hardback

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Preface

The things that go on between Tancred and Clorinda – they meet on a battlefield, they fall in love, they suffer tragically – are part of a larger story invented over 400 years ago by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso in his ambitious romantic epic, *La Gerusalemme Liberata*. Today's readers of this lively tale likely come away feeling a mixture of fondness and embarrassment. The story is compelling and fast-paced, and it is hard not to enjoy. Yet it is also melodramatic and at odds with present-day sensibilities, particularly in its assumptions about the interplay of love, honor, and martial glory. Tasso's thriller about the efforts of Christians to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim control during the First Crusade feels uncomfortable, given the fact that current geopolitical conflicts also pit the Abrahamic faiths against each other. Furthermore, some of it seems hackneyed: The moment when Clorinda pulls off her battle helmet to reveal long blonde tresses that tumble down her back has a certain B-movie flavor. Reading Tasso can be like listening to a dinner-table story recounted by a lovable but long-winded elderly uncle. We are fond of the teller, and we admire his ability to spin a compelling yarn, but we inwardly roll our eyes, privately glad that the worldview he expresses is now out of date.

Sigmund Freud saw something else in the story of Tancred and Clorinda. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he suggests that it offers a cautionary illustration of how people unwittingly repeat actions that hurt themselves or others. Tasso's tale contains what Freud calls, in Strachey's translation, "the most moving poetic picture of a fate such as this." This fate is what Freud came to label repetition compulsion, and it figures largely in our current understanding of trauma, in a manner reminiscent of how Freud plumbed the literary tradition for the example of Oedipus to illuminate what he considered another aspect of the human condition. As a result, the story of Tancred and Clorinda is now an entrenched part of our conceptual framework as we study and theorize trauma and its meaning. It also serves to remind us that literary language has a role to

play in our engagement with trauma, which is precisely the notion that this volume of essays explores.

Tancred and Clorinda, as recognized literary emblems of trauma, adorn the cover of this book in the photograph of a terra-cotta sculpture created by an anonymous Neapolitan artist in the mid-eighteenth century. The sculpture presents both characters, as well as the remains of the tree that also figures into their story. I am grateful to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for permission to use their image of this work, which is housed in their collection.

In completing this book, I am also grateful for the support and inspiration that I found in a number of settings. The groundbreaking work of the trauma awareness training program (“STAR”) at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Virginia, helped open my eyes to the complexities of trauma healing. The University of Iowa supported my work as a scholar in residence during a sabbatical leave, and my colleagues at The College at Brockport (State University of New York) both supported that leave and offered opportunities to discuss and deepen my understandings. I also appreciate the further encouragement I have received from my new colleagues at Drexel University. Ray Ryan, editor at Cambridge University Press, first proposed this volume to me; his vision for a Cambridge Critical Concepts series was timely and in tune with current developments in literary studies. The professional work of all the staff at Cambridge University Press was of top quality.

Finally, I want to thank all the contributors to this volume not only for their work on this project but also for their larger engagement with the important topics of trauma and trauma healing. This book is dedicated to all those who wish for the literary and other arts to play a role in creating more just and peaceful conditions in our world.

Introduction

J. Roger Kurtz

We live in an age of trauma. Writing in the *London Review of Books*, Thomas Laqueur reports a verifiable increase in the use of this term: “Having once been relatively obscure, it is now found everywhere: used in the *New York Times* fewer than 300 times between 1851 and 1960, it has appeared 11,000 times since” (2010: 19). Indeed, the vocabulary of trauma seems ubiquitous. In everyday language we label as traumatic events ranging from the casual to the catastrophic. Popular awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is widespread, trauma is increasingly viewed as a public health issue, and there is the sense that any understanding of contemporary social problems is only complete to the extent that it is informed by an awareness of the role of trauma in shaping those problems. If trauma has become a conceptual touchstone in the culture at large, this is also true in literary studies, where trauma theory has come to represent a discrete and significant critical approach, one that according to Cathy Caruth “demands a new mode of reading and of listening” (1996: 9).

Why this growth in attention to trauma? Why has the relationship between trauma and literature assumed such importance? What does it mean for literary studies? The ways in which the concept of trauma has asserted its relevance in literary settings, the evolution of its application in those settings, and how it has come to animate literary studies constitute the principal concerns and focus of this book.

Fundamentally, trauma is a wound. This, at least, is its Greek origin, where it denotes a physical injury from an external cause. In Luke’s Gospel we read of a traveler (the “Good Samaritan”) who, encountering the body of a man lying beside the road, took pity on him, went to him, and bandaged his *traumata* [τραύματα] – his wounds. Today, however, we more frequently use the term *trauma* to describe emotional or psychological injury, as opposed to bodily harm. If someone claims to have been traumatized, we assume they have suffered a frightening or shocking

experience, but that they wish to emphasize its emotional impact rather than any physical injury. We think of trauma as a pathological mental and emotional condition, an injury to the psyche caused by catastrophic events, or by the threat of such events, which overwhelm an individual's normal response mechanisms.

These wounds, like words, require interpretation. What trauma means in the lives of individuals and communities, and how to promote the healing of this type of wound, are the principal concerns of the capacious field of trauma studies. This field has been building for over a century, and the lexicon of trauma – the language and concepts that we use to discuss it – has entrenched itself in psychology, medicine, law, theology, the fine arts, film, and other disciplines. “Trauma-informed approaches” are promoted in all manner of professional settings. Trauma, says Ruth Leys, is “one of the signal concepts of our time” (2000: 10). It is, by many accounts, symbolic of our cultural condition, and it is in this sense that the concept is of particular interest to the field of literary studies, which initiated a profound and prolonged focus on trauma beginning in the mid-1990s.

The chapters in this volume treat the rich topic of trauma studies in relation to literary studies, standing as part of a larger series from Cambridge University Press that explores key critical concepts driving literary studies in the twenty-first century. The chapters in Part I (“Origins”) outline the etiology or genesis of the concept of trauma in literary studies, noting the main branches of its lineage or ancestry. Part II (“Development”) records the growth and evolution of the concept of trauma in relation to literature, along with some conceptual and practical problems that arise. Part III (“Applications”) addresses the relevance of literary understandings of trauma – the ways it is enacted or put into practice, with various examples of how the concept has impacted the study of literature.

Origins

While literary scholars began to engage the language and concepts of trauma in an intensive way beginning in the mid-1990s, it is clear that the roots of this engagement date from a much earlier period. There are a number of salient intellectual precursors to literary trauma, all of which played influential roles in shaping the vocabulary, approaches, and methods of trauma theory. Part I examines five such precursive components – psychoanalysis, modernism, deconstruction, the Holocaust, and the acceptance of PTSD as a medical category – and outlines how the genesis of the concept of trauma in literary studies must be understood in light of

these influences. These intellectual antecedents have shaped and framed the discursive genealogy of trauma within literary studies.

The core concepts in our present model of trauma were laid out over a century ago in the therapeutic practices of late nineteenth-century European neurologists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Josef Breuer, and Sigmund Freud, and these concepts continue to determine how we speak about trauma today. These men developed a range of theories to account for abnormal behaviors by their patients, none of which showed any obvious connection to immediate physical or organic causes.

Writing in 1892 about Charcot's work, Freud defined trauma as "an accretion of excitation in the nervous system, which the latter has been unable to dispose of adequately by motor reaction" (I: 137). The psychoanalytic understanding of trauma defines it as an event so overwhelming that it cannot be processed normally at the time of its occurrence, so that its memory is effectively blocked but returns to haunt the victim until it is appropriately confronted and dealt with. In 1894, reviewing the work of Breuer, Janet, and Freud in the inaugural issue of *Psychological Review*, William James compared what they called trauma to a "thorn in the spirit" – an evocative image that equates trauma to a foreign object that becomes lodged in the psyche, like a wound that is covered over and rendered invisible but that continues to fester and cause problems and that can only be truly treated by being uncovered and extracted (199).

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud emphasized the overwhelming nature of trauma, the fact that it acts like a breach in the psyche's defensive wall, so that trauma represents "excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield" (XVIII, 29). In this essay, Freud turns to the story of Tancred and Clorinda, from Torquato Tasso's epic poem *La Gerusalemme liberata*, in order to illustrate his point. This tale has turned into something of an iconic example not only for the psychological functioning of trauma but also for the connection between literature and trauma theory, prompting lively debate around Freud's deployment of this story to describe the effects of trauma and around our interpretation of that deployment. Later, in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud applied some of his ideas about trauma on a cultural level. These concepts and others form the foundation of the psychological definition of trauma.

In Chapter 1, "The Psychoanalytic Origins of Literary Trauma Studies," Andrew Barnaby highlights these psychoanalytic origins of our ideas about trauma, with particular attention to their application to literature. He describes the way that Freud's thinking about trauma evolved over four

decades, and how the concepts and metaphors that Freud elucidated at various stages of his thinking continue to shape the way we talk about trauma over a century later. Barnaby describes how, for trauma theory, narrative is much more than a recounting of case studies or experiences of loss and harm. Rather, narrative itself embodies the traumatic problem, in that it represents through its narration of past events a ceaseless and obsessive return to the site of trauma at the same time that it offers an expressive mechanism that might potentially offer a solution to the problem. Neither of these dynamics is straightforward or simple.

In describing the development of the concept of trauma in his book *The Trauma Question*, Roger Luckhurst starts with the argument that there is a tight bond, an isomorphic link of sorts, between trauma and modernity. He quotes Micale and Lerner in noting how trauma is “responsive to and constitutive of modernity” (Luckhurst 2008: 20). This claim suggests that although psychological wounds are not new to human experience, there is something unprecedented about the social changes that originated in the European Enlightenment and that reached their greatest intensity in the Industrial Revolution, which carry a particular relevance for trauma and which have shaped the vocabulary and the concepts within which it is currently conceived.

These changes included new political alignments, the rise of the nation-state, the supplanting of the relations and traditions of village life by urbanization, and the rise of increasingly capitalistic economic relations. Technological innovations and new machines altered landscapes along with our sense of time and place and social relations. The advent of film, cinematography, and the telegraph changed standards and patterns of communication. These markers of modernity represent a series of shocks or even violent assaults on human sensibilities and on individuals’ notions of personal or corporate identity, all of which evoke a traumatic vocabulary.

In particular, Luckhurst notes, “the general scholarly consensus is that the origin of the idea of trauma was inextricably linked to the expansion of the railways in the 1860s” (21). As the rails spread across the landscape, linking disparate places and standardizing previously uncoordinated clocks, railway crashes exposed ordinary people to powerful accidents involving previously unimaginable levels of energy. The train as an icon of modernity also became an icon of trauma, as doctors began to diagnose what they called “railway shock” or “railroad spine,” something experienced by someone who walks out of a train crash seemingly unscathed, only to report nervous symptoms that recur months and even years later.

As victims sought financial compensation for their suffering, the language of trauma became an interlinked discourse – something Luckhurst calls “an exemplary conceptual knot” (14) – involving psychology, medicine, law, and other disciplines.

In Chapter 2, “Modernity as the Cultural Crucible of Trauma,” Karolyn Steffens outlines the connections between our current understandings of trauma and these dramatic social changes that typified late-Victorian modernity. She highlights how the shocks of those dramatic transformations laid the foundation for modernist style, but also how medical discourse attempted to understand trauma as an organic and functional disorder, around the same time as and even somewhat before its rise to prominence in psychoanalysis. Steffens proposes naturalism as a fitting aesthetic category within which to explore the rise of traumatic concepts in this period, highlighting two French texts in this regard: Émile Zola’s novel, *La Bête humaine*, which features the image of the rushing train as a metaphor for modern Europe’s mad rush to devastating war, and a lengthy work by the modernist poet Blaise Cendrars that also equates the railway, modernity, and war.

In what has become a canonical text for trauma theory, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra makes the case that “trauma is a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence,” one that unsettles our assumptions about knowledge and truth with the result that “the study of traumatic events poses especially difficult problems in representation and writing” (2001: 41). This way of characterizing trauma and its effects, with its emphasis on instability and on the thorny contradictions of representation that mirror the workings of language itself, meshes particularly well with the core claims of the literary theory known as deconstruction. Because deconstruction offers an approach that accounts for and even emphasizes these representational gaps and disarticulations, it is perhaps not surprising that we find this close link between trauma theory and the literary discourse of deconstruction. The key insight is that traumatic symptoms appear not only in our bodies and minds; they are also evident in language itself, and as a result, deconstruction as a literary approach has had a profound influence on trauma theory.

Tom Toremans documents and discusses that influence in Chapter 3, “Deconstruction: Trauma Inscribed in Language,” noting in particular the impact of a group of scholars based at Yale University. For those who criticize deconstruction for its ahistorical tendencies and for an approach to reading that emphasizes textuality at the expense of material reality and therefore at the expense of ethics, trauma studies is sometimes described as

a way to reconcile deconstructive insights about texts and their functioning with ethical concerns. As Susannah Radstone suggests, “trauma theory appears to help the Humanities move beyond the impasses and rises in knowledge posed by these theories, without abandoning their insights” (2007: 11). In his chapter, Toremans notes that Geoffrey Hartman’s influential essays on literary trauma theory promote that strong ethical grounding, and while a number of more recent scholars have suggested that such a rapprochement is ultimately unsustainable, the role of deconstruction in shaping the discussion of trauma remains strong.

In Chapter 4, “The Holocaust as the Ultimate Trauma Narrative,” Anna Hunter highlights and explores how and why theorists find the concept of trauma useful for analyzing the Holocaust, and in turn how the experience of the Holocaust has shaped many of our understandings of both personal and collective trauma. The experience of the Nazi Holocaust has also been foundational for trauma studies, featuring prominently in the work of pioneering trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dominick LaCapra, and concentration camp survivor Dori Laub. For many, the Holocaust is the quintessential trauma of recent human history, something of a traumatic “watershed of our times” (Felman and Laub 1992: xiv). It is “the paradigmatic event of unspeakable human suffering” (Miller and Tougaw 2002: 3). The way that we have come to view the Holocaust and the language that we use to engage it, says Wulf Kansteiner, are “inextricably linked to the rise of trauma as one of the key interpretive categories of contemporary politics and culture” (2004: 193). The Holocaust offers a paradigmatic instance of the key issues relating to literary and other artistic representations of massively horrific events, including the ethical implications and limitations of portraying an event like the Holocaust, particularly on the part of those who did not experience it. We remain uncertain of how to deal with Theodor Adorno’s claim that postwar Western civilization finds itself in an ethical cul-de-sac of cultural criticism, such that to “write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (1967: 34).

In a general or popular sense, perhaps the single most important event for the concept of trauma occurred in 1980, when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) included a description of what it termed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the third edition of its influential *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)*. This recognition “helped consolidate a trauma paradigm” in Western medical care (Luckhurst 2008: 1), with the result that by the turn of the century, as trauma concepts gained traction in literary studies, many of our

assumptions about the nature of trauma were undergirded by popular understandings of PTSD.

For trauma studies, the effect of defining and naming PTSD was both to legitimate and to complicate many of our ideas around trauma. The inclusion of PTSD in the *DSM-III* was the culmination of advocacy work by a number of groups, especially veterans, who welcomed its appearance as a long-overdue recognition of the psychological costs of war. It has also helped to destigmatize psychological malfunction in general. At the same time, the rather broad set of symptoms embraced by the definition of PTSD, the appreciation that it may be caused by a whole spectrum of events (not just warfare), and the fact that different individuals respond differently to the same events, mean that PTSD is a rather loose and baggy category. It names “a wide spectrum of responses to psychic and physical events often with little in common beyond the label” (Miller and Tougaw 2002: 2). Nevertheless, its cultural impact has been enormous; as Caruth notes, the APA’s definition of PTSD “provided a category of diagnosis so powerful that it has seemed to engulf everything around it” (1995: 3).

In Chapter 5, “PTSD: A New Trauma Paradigm,” Lisa Diedrich discusses the influence of PTSD on our vocabulary and understandings of trauma. She uses the image of the precipitation of a substance, a concept from chemistry, to describe how an idea like PTSD comes into existence in the social imagination. If we read PTSD as an illness narrative, Diedrich suggests, it serves not only as a literal description of physical symptoms but also as an event that transcends individual experience to reflect wider cultural categories. Furthermore, seeing PTSD as a performative act, in the terms of speech act theory, allows us to ponder how that category has created a unique kind of traumatized subjectivity that is intertwined with other subjectivities, including gender, in fascinating ways.

Development

The lively entwining of trauma and literature that found a coherent expression in the mid-1990s has since that time led to a number of new and sometimes surprising developments. What is not surprising is that as these ideas have evolved, we have seen the emergence of a number of important conceptual problems that were not obvious in the early years of trauma theory. Part II of this volume explores these developments and challenges, examining how the initial models and concepts of early trauma theory have grown and evolved, sometimes taking new directions or forms.

The analogous characteristics of trauma and narration represent one key area in this development. One of the fundamental claims of trauma theory is that literary language, in its very nature, offers a uniquely effective vehicle for representing the experience of trauma in ways that ordinary language cannot. The converse claim is also made – that there is something inherent to the nature of trauma that offers insights for exploring questions of signification and representation that have long dogged literary studies. There are obvious links between the language of literature and the language of trauma. Psychic woundedness has always been a feature of human stories, and literature is nothing if not a relating of humanity's responses to life's calamities. Many of the memorable characters from world literature are traumatized individuals whose personal pain may also be taken to represent the broader wounds of history. The literary tradition serves up figures like the gaze of Medusa, an evocative example of the speechless fright and paralysis that can accompany a traumatic experience – what Levine calls the “Medusa Complex” (1997: 19). Literary trauma theory also claims that narrative processes share important features with traumatic processes, that there is a special connection between words and wounds, and that literature offers unparalleled insight into “the relation between psychic wounds and signification” (Hartman 2003: 257).

In Chapter 6, “Trauma and Narrative,” Joshua Pederson explores this relationship between trauma and narrative, pointing out how what he terms a first wave of literary trauma theory emphasized the three tropes of absence, indirection, and repetition. More recent work in the field focuses on issues like transgenerational trauma and on how a broader set of narrative models invites new perspectives on the relation between word and wound.

In Chapter 7, “Problems in Representing Trauma,” Marinella Rodi-Risberg takes up some additional issues that have been raised in response to the original formulations of literary trauma theory. For instance, one of the inherent tensions in trauma theory arises in the distinction between historical trauma and structural trauma. The former involves particular events, while the latter refers to a more general situation – “an anxiety-producing condition of possibility” (LaCapra 2001: 82). Is it possible that too much emphasis on structural trauma has the effect of watering down the significance of specific historical trauma? As Rodi-Risberg points out, the ethics of representing the traumatic experience of others raises yet another critical problem for literary trauma theory. Bearing witness to the trauma of others seems obligatory from a moral point of view, but the danger is always that speaking of the traumatized can turn into speaking

for the traumatized in a disempowering way. An additional tension arises from the way we tend to conflate models of individual trauma with models of collective trauma, using similar approaches to describe these inherently differing experiences.

In Chapter 8, “Trauma in Non-Western Contexts,” Irene Visser discusses the extent to which trauma theory is appropriate for non-Western settings and the ways that insights from those settings might modify and even enrich trauma theory. Although trauma is a universal phenomenon, the concepts and vocabulary of trauma studies as a discipline grow out of a Western, Euroamerican perspective. Either by ignoring non-Western experiences or by taking Western modernity as a universal norm, these built-in limitations and biases limit the ability of trauma theory to offer an effective cross-cultural ethical engagement that has global relevance. The problem, as Michael Rothberg notes, is that “as long as trauma studies foregoes comparative study and remains tied to a narrow Eurocentric framework, it distorts the histories it addresses (such as the Holocaust) and threatens to reproduce the very Eurocentrism that lies behind those histories” (2008, 227). Visser notes how culturally dependent responses to trauma are particularly evident in literary texts, and she also highlights the theoretical contributions of thinkers like Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Achille Mbembe.

In recent decades, a deepened interest in memory within the field of literary studies has accompanied growth in literary forms such as memoirs, testimonials, confessionals, and historical explorations. In Chapter 9, “Trauma and Memory,” Silke Arnold-de Simine explores how understanding trauma requires a particularly close engagement with issues related to memory and how, as a result, many of the questions raised by trauma studies overlap with those in the field that is sometimes called memory studies. Like trauma, memory involves past events – more correctly, interpretations and representations of those events – that profoundly impact how we live in the present. Like trauma, memory is inveterately connected with identity. As with trauma, the realms of personal and collective memories intersect in complex ways, and in both trauma and memory studies, there are complicated interactions between the biological, the psychological, the political, and the cultural. In her chapter, Arnold-de Simine offers the works of W. G. Sebald as particularly useful texts in examining the sometimes contradictory relations of trauma and memory.

Another recent trend in trauma studies is the development that “biological paradigms are in the ascendant” (Leys 2000: 16), meaning that

more attention is being paid to trauma's measurable physiological effects, particularly within the brain. This focus on neurobiological factors shifts the center of trauma research away from the mind as a general construct and toward the more specific study of the parts and functions of the brain as they respond to traumatic experiences. Under such a view, trauma "can be viewed as a technical matter in which the focus becomes what region and processes of the brain are involved" (Hartman 2003: 257). Looking either at hormonal involvement in reacting to shocking events and in memory formation, or by imaging the physical connections between parts of the traumatized brain, this biological orientation rests on the idea that trauma results in discrete and measurable physical changes.

While this might suggest a departure from the humanistic understandings of trauma, there are in fact commonalities between these approaches. Clinicians interested in the biology of trauma suggest that "traumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experience, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995: 176). Indeed, it might be argued that the enthusiasm for trauma studies is precisely because it is an area that shows great promise for making sense of the interconnectedness of emotional, cognitive, social, and biological aspects of human experience in ways that we rarely see elsewhere. In Chapter 10, "Neuroscience, Narrative, and Emotion Regulation," William P. Seeley discusses the implications of recent discoveries in affective and cognitive neuroscience for trauma studies as manifested in literature and the humanities.

Our understandings of trauma have always been profoundly shaped by technology, and in the twenty-first century, the ways that we represent or memorialize trauma are being transformed through digital technology. To the extent that our experience of trauma is culturally mediated, the shift from linear analog to interactive digital media is bound to modify that experience. Museums, for example, are experimenting with the resources of digital technology in their exhibits (e.g., a Los Angeles museum plans to create holographic images of Holocaust survivors who can be engaged "interactively" by visitors – see Kansteiner 2014). Our immersion in digitally mediated violence (through video games, Internet communication, social media), the immediacy and speed of communication, and the ease of manipulation of images change many of our assumptions about the representation of trauma. They affect our ideas about authenticity, about our ability to access the experience of others' trauma, and about LaCapra's model of "empathic unsettlement." Luckhurst has argued that new

technologies associated with modernity contain both liberating and self-destructive potential, a contradictory situation that “invokes the traumatic” (2008: 20). In Chapter 11, “Trauma in the Digital Age,” Allen Meek discusses how digital technology creates new cultural codes and how digital aesthetics mediate our memory of violence, its effects, and our responses. Digital media, he points out, has both changed and extended the way traumatic experience is transmitted, and the current popularity of the trauma concept may be attributed in part to these new technological capacities for recording, storing, and replaying traumatic images.

Feminist thought has also influenced the recent direction of trauma studies. From the start, our notions of trauma have been entwined with questions about gender. Freud and his contemporaries grounded many of their clinical observations in patriarchal assumptions about what they termed “hysteria,” and many of the psychopathologies with which they were concerned originated in sexual abuse. Despite what we now consider the limitations of their work, Judith Herman suggests that it represents a “heroic age of hysteria” because “for a brief decade men of science listened to women with a devotion and a respect unparalleled before or since” (1992: 10, 12). In the twentieth century, war-related trauma and PTSD grew out of a model that assumed a male experience. It is fascinating to note, therefore, the profound impact of feminist scholars in raising awareness of and focusing attention on problems of trauma. In literary studies, feminist approaches emphasize how agency, voice, narrative, and literary form interact with gender in assigning meaning to trauma. Feminist approaches to trauma treat it as a complex, layered phenomenon whose cognitive, emotional, and spiritual components cannot be understood in isolation. They emphasize that traumatic symptoms should be seen not as pathological but rather as adaptive responses, and that in a patriarchal context one of the key strategies for female trauma survivors is collective self-care. The tale of Tancred and Clorinda, for instance, which Freud posited as emblematic of the traumatic condition, appears in a different light when viewed through a feminist lens. In Chapter 12, “Feminist Interventions in Trauma Studies,” Jennifer Griffiths highlights how feminist scholars have effectively moved trauma studies beyond its focus on an isolated, individual experience to emphasize how female trauma should be understood as immersed in larger structural systems.

With the caveat that “resolution of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete” (Herman 1992, 211), one of the remarkable features of trauma studies is its abundant optimism about the potential for healing. Brains can be retrained; wounds can heal. Some practitioners go so far as to

argue that working through an experience of trauma can actually leave a person healthier than before. "Trauma, *resolved*, is a blessing from a higher power," says Levine (1997: 196). The term *post-traumatic growth* (PTG) was coined in the mid-1990s to reflect the empirical evidence for the paradoxical notion that successfully navigating traumatic harm can prompt growth, especially in psychological or spiritual terms. In terms of its evolution, it is perhaps inevitable that trauma studies deepen its focus on the possibilities of healing from trauma.

In Chapter 13, "Healing and Post-Traumatic Growth," Suzanne LaLonde offers an overview of approaches to trauma healing and models for recovery, with particular attention to the role of the literary arts and the literary imagination within those approaches. While there is no consensus on the best treatment for trauma, and while the range of therapies and interventions for trauma is as wide as its symptoms and causes, there is nevertheless the sense that trauma healing is a process that follows a predictable pattern or pathway. Most practitioners concur that the first step in trauma healing is creating a sense of safety (or at least relative safety, according to LaCapra), to allow the "working through" (as opposed to the "acting out") of trauma. Acknowledgment and remembrance are subsequent steps, and these are facilitated by the literary resources of testimony and by literary criticism's capacity to "read the wound" (Hartman 1995: 549), even for its unspoken elements. The work of grieving is also credited as an important stage of healing, and the elegiac capacity of literature suggests ways of dealing with loss and injury that promote what Freud would call a healthy "mourning" as opposed to a pathological "melancholy."

Applications

Following its emergence in the mid-1990s, and given the evolution of those original ideas in subsequent years, the actual implementation of trauma theory in literary studies has taken a wide range of directions. Part III illustrates that range by sampling a number of the ways that trauma theory has been enacted or put into practice in the study of literature.

War is one of the principal and most obvious sources of trauma. The concepts of shell shock in World War I, of "combat fatigue" and "soldier's heart" from World War II, of survivor's syndrome in the Holocaust, and of PTSD following the Vietnam War, are representative examples of our attempts to come to terms with war-related trauma in the twentieth century. After every major conflict we are reminded that battle wounds

are not only physical, and that we must acknowledge “psychological trauma as a lasting and inevitable legacy of war” (Herman 1992: 27). As Christof Decker notes, “trauma narratives, at least from the Civil War onwards, have played a special role in the cultural history of the United States to ‘work through’ the experience of war and death” (2012: 94). “Trauma and the Literature of War” is the topic of Chapter 14, in which Gerd Bayer discusses the connection between war-related trauma and literature, how trauma theory has been impacted by the evolving nature of war and the changing types of wars, and how this connection has led to remarkably diverse literary responses.

Along with war, sexual abuse is the other principal source of trauma, and in Chapter 15, “Trauma and Sexual Violence,” Emma V. Miller tackles the difficulties involved in textualizing sexual violence. Sexual trauma differs from war-induced trauma in several key respects: it is more widespread, it affects individuals from all income levels and backgrounds, women and girls are its more common victims, and men are more likely to be perpetrators. Abuse can happen over longer periods of time, and the perpetrators are usually known or trusted and are frequently immediate family members. Feelings of shame play a greater role in the trauma of abuse, and it is never socially sanctioned in the way that involvement in war can be. Nonetheless, the traumatic symptoms of sexual violence are familiar, and in the 1980s the impact of sexual abuse began to be described within the framework of PTSD.

Indeed, sexual abuse was linked to trauma from the start. Freud and his contemporaries originally identified sexual exploitation as the key to understanding traumatic symptoms in their patients (with Freud controversially changing his view to hypothesize their origins in a universal infantile sexuality that informs everyone’s psyche). Thanks to the advocacy work of feminist critics and practitioners, the 1970s and 1980s saw a renewed focus on sexual abuse as a real (and disturbingly ubiquitous) traumatogenic experience, and a broadening of these concerns to include sexual violence more generally along with a critique of the patriarchal social structures that support it.

As Jennifer Yusin points out in Chapter 16, “Postcolonial Trauma,” whether or not the kinds of wounds inflicted by colonialism can be accounted for by the concepts within trauma studies constitutes an important question for the field. Colonialism is an inveterately traumatizing phenomenon, and the title of an essay collection from the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o – *Something Torn and New* (2009) – evokes the very essence of trauma and trauma healing in such a context. In this

work, Ngugi argues that colonialism in Africa may be best characterized by the trope of dismemberment. He offers the nineteenth-century examples of the Xhosa leader Hintsa wa Khawuta and of the Gikuyu chief Waiyaki wa Hinga, whose bodies were literally disfigured by colonial troops, as symbols of colonialism's "even farther-reaching dismemberment: that of the colonial subject's memory from his individual and collective body" (2009, 6). Ngugi is certainly not the first to point out the traumatic impact of colonial rule. Writers, scholars, politicians, journalists, and other intellectuals in postcolonial contexts have testified abundantly to the harms of colonialism. In doing so, the words and concepts they have deployed have frequently anticipated or complemented the vocabulary of trauma theory. Achebe's famous novel about the effects of the colonial encounter offers the image of a traumatic wound in its very title – *Things Fall Apart*. The task of postcolonial healing, it is clear, involves re-membering that which has been dismembered and re-integrating that which has disintegrated. The dilemma is that postcolonial studies always involve a "suspicion of the universal," as Yusin points out, but the way that postcolonial trauma is typically discussed may in fact affirm the Western philosophical tradition, rather than offering an alternative to it.

While classical trauma theory has tended to focus on literature and literary forms, the influence of memory studies has shifted that focus to image-based genres such as photography, cinema, and experiential museums. Rather than being represented through language, perhaps it is the case that trauma is most effectively represented through images. After all, it is through intrusive and anachronistic images such as flashbacks that traumatic memories frequently manifest themselves. Perhaps the true nature of trauma is "the state of being haunted by images that can neither be enacted nor cast aside" (Lifton 1979, 172). If this is the case, then photography, film, and other visual arts should be considered our most important cultural forms in engaging trauma, a topic that Marie Kruger addresses in Chapter 17, "Trauma and the Visual Arts." Especially in an era when traumatic images can be reproduced and circulated instantaneously and globally, it may be that visual images play a unique role in bearing witness to historical and personal trauma. Kruger offers the example of a recent South African film, *Zulu Love Letter*, as an instance of an aesthetic attempt to "visually translate trauma into a culturally useful discourse."

In Chapter 18, "The Middle Passage and Race-Based Trauma," Luminita M. Dragulescu discusses the role of literature and art in both shaping and responding to race-based trauma. For Americans of African descent,

modern history is marked by a series of traumatogenic events, for which the experience of the Middle Passage stands as an iconic representation. The legacy of the Middle Passage is emblematic of the experience of trauma, encompassing dysfunction, disintegration, heroic resistance, amazing resilience, and various approaches to healing. As W. E. B. Du Bois noted in *The Souls of Black Folks*, that legacy involves an inherently split personality that he described as a “double consciousness,” in which “One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (1903: 3). This is an evocative picture of psychological trauma that is formative to African American identity as processed through experiences of slavery, the Jim Crow era, civil rights struggles and the present-day mass incarceration of people of color. As Dragulescu notes, literary engagement with the trauma of the Middle Passage is rich and revealing. Toni Morrison, whose works are particularly engaged with the traumatic history of race in America, has noted that “Certain kinds of trauma visited on peoples are so deep, so stupefyingly cruel, that . . . art alone can translate such trauma and turn sorrow into meaning” (2005: 717).

Whereas genocide, especially the Holocaust, has until recently served as the overriding instance of collective trauma, in more recent years experiences of displacement and migration have become more prominent examples of this phenomenon, a shift that may represent an important evolution in the field of trauma studies. Buelens, Durrant, and Eaglestone evocatively suggest that “the future of trauma theory must be tied up with the fate of today’s refugees” (2013, 6).

In Chapter 19, “The Trauma of Displacement,” Madelaine Hron discusses the extent to which concepts from trauma studies have relevance for the experience of refugees and other displaced people. Literature of exile and of displacement has a long history, with all manner of variations and subthemes. Refugees may experience imprisonment, torture, loss of property, malnutrition, physical assault, and separation from family. Flight may last days or years. The cause of flight may be war, religious persecution, or political or economic triggers. It may involve the experience of exile, chosen or forced, by an individual writer or intellectual, or it may result in the displacement of an entire community for which migration eventually becomes part of its collective narrative. The common characteristic in all of this is one of displacement, suggesting that trauma studies may need to spend more attention on issues of place, which has been undertheorized or at least less developed as a concept within trauma

studies. Michelle Balaev, for instance, argues that studying trauma novels reveals how “the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character’s identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience” (2008: 149).

Recent history has seen numerous attempts to bring social and political healing in postconflict settings through the use of truth (or truth and reconciliation) commissions. The most prominent of these have been in postapartheid South Africa, in post-Pinochet Chile, and in Argentina following the so-called Dirty War, but similar projects have been attempted in many other settings as well. The function of such commissions contrasts with the work of international criminal tribunals in the same way that the practice of restorative justice more generally (with its emphasis on truth-telling, reconciliation, and the needs of the community) may be contrasted with the methods of retributive justice (which emphasizes the establishment of guilt, enforcement of laws, and punishment).

The vocabulary of trauma recovery has been influential in the work of such truth commissions, both in the ways that they have been set up and in the ways that their activities have been represented. In a place like postapartheid South Africa, “the language of trauma proves to be an invaluable tool [because] it also addresses the crucial question of how change and transformation might become possible” (Mengel and Borzaga 2012, x). In Chapter 20, “Trauma, Truth, and Reconciliation,” Erica Still explores how the concept of trauma – more specifically, the language of trauma healing – has impacted recent political experiments with truth and reconciliation commissions, and the engagement of literature with those experiments.

Finally, in Chapter 21, “Terrorism: Trauma in the Excess of Affect,” Michael Richardson considers terror as a cause of trauma, along with literary responses to the unique nature of this type of trauma. In the developed world, twentieth-century fears of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War have been replaced by twenty-first-century fears of terrorism. In 2001, the events we now call 9/11 precipitated a fundamental shift in popular awareness and understanding of terrorism. The sense that the world had experienced a basic cultural shift received confirmation by other terror attacks in major urban centers such as the Madrid metro in 2004, the London Underground in 2005, and Nairobi’s Westgate Mall in 2013. On a general cultural level, a sense of vulnerability to terror has left traumatic markers on individuals’ experience of urban space and of travel and on the sense of who constitutes an enemy. The narrative of terror has

resulted in an abdication of many previously held rights (particularly the right to privacy), something that is frequently seen as a danger in itself but also a necessary defense against terror. As Richardson points out, the transformations in what terrorism represents culturally may be traced through the evolving literary representations of terror even prior to the twenty-first century. He traces that evolution from Conrad and Dostoevsky through literary depictions of the 9/11 terror attacks and poetry by detainees at the U.S. military detention camp in Guantanamo Bay.

As the essays in this volume illustrate, there is ample evidence to show that the perspective of trauma theory, the lens and the language that it offers, provides unique tools for the analysis of literary texts and their contexts, and conversely that the insights of literary studies might be useful for understanding the dynamics of trauma. Trauma is an inevitable part of human experience, and literature has value for trauma because it offers “exegesis in the service of insights about human functioning” (Hartman 1995: 544). As a subfield, literary trauma theory rests on the basic claim that trauma “is inherently linked to the literary in ways that it has not always recognized” (Whitehead 2004: 4). Whether for reasons external or internal to the discipline, literature appears to have found in trauma studies a set of concepts that allows it to revisit its own assumptions about and approaches to literary texts at the same time that it allows it to extend beyond itself to connect with some of the most pressing social issues of the day.

The Psychoanalytic Origins of Literary Trauma Studies

Andrew Barnaby

Summarizing a metapsychological position first staked out in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud writes in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* that “in the experiences which lead to a traumatic neurosis the protective shield against stimuli is broken through and excessive amounts of excitation impinge on the mental apparatus” (1926: XX, 130). As befits a medical–scientific statement about trauma – or, more precisely, a neurosis brought on by trauma – there is, as we would expect, something decidedly technical about Freud’s description here: “protective shield against stimuli,” “excessive amounts of excitation.” The latter phrase particularly underscores Freud’s broadly economic approach to the workings of the mind, the notion that psychical processes determine even as they are constituted by the production, maintenance, and distribution of instinctual energy. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis observe, for example, that the “economic point of view consists in taking into consideration the cathexes – their movement, the variations of their intensity, [and] the antagonisms that arise between them” (1974: 127). Ten years before the publication of *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud had explicitly positioned trauma within this diagnostic framework: “the term ‘traumatic’ has no other sense than an economic one” (1916–17: XVI, 275).

In attempting to understand how trauma so conceived might, to borrow a phrase from Shoshana Felman, “generate implications between literature and psychoanalysis” (1982: 9), we might do well to locate their meeting point in a third discursive order, philosophy, and especially that special terrain of philosophical speculation once identified by Stanley Cavell: “Philosophy begins in loss, in finding yourself at a loss” (1989: 114). In his explicitly philosophical meditation on Freudian thought, Paul Ricoeur effectively clarifies what Cavell’s aphorism might mean as it is read through psychoanalysis:

The reading of Freud is also the crisis of the philosophy of the subject. It imposes the dispossession of the subject such as it appears primarily to itself in the form of consciousness . . . What emerges from this reflection is a wounded *cogito*, which posits but does not possess itself, which understands its originary truth only in and by the confession of the inadequation, the illusion, and the lie of existing consciousness. (1974: 161, 173)

Ricoeur here connects Cavell's origin of philosophy – the disorienting experience of finding oneself at a loss – to Freud not just by reference to the way consciousness needs to be distinguished from other modes or sites of mental activity but more specifically by the suggestion that, precisely in its encounter with what is not itself, consciousness (the *cogito*) may be *wounded*, in other words traumatized.¹ If Ricoeur might be disposed to make the narrower claim that all *Freudian* philosophical activity begins in finding oneself at a loss, we might take this idea to mean that the loss we call trauma is marked by the wounding of the *cogito* in the experience of what Ricoeur here calls “the dispossession of the subject” and particularly that dispossession of the *cogito*'s narcissistic, or perhaps just self-blinded, belief that it is self-possessed and self-possessing.

To the extent that this Freudian-inflected philosophical perspective might seep into the production, interpretation, or theorization of literature, *literary* trauma might be understood as just one way (or maybe a series of related ways) of grappling with the crisis of subjectivity in which the experience of finding oneself at a loss points to a consciousness breached – as Freud puts it, “the protective shield against stimuli is broken through” – and thus exposed as inadequate to the demands of reality. In his *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan suggests that the recognition of such inadequacy is at the heart of the entire psychoanalytic project: “For what we have in the discovery of psycho-analysis is an encounter – an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us” (1973: 53). From the more limited perspective of trauma-theory, finding oneself at a loss might be taken, in Ricoeur's terms, as the sudden, shocking discovery that the consciousness by which we think, engage the world, and even know ourselves is an illusion or, worse, a lie. Threatening what Laplanche calls the near-total “disqualification of normal defenses and a triggering of a virtually atypical kind of reaction on the part of the ego” (1976: 130), this discovery of what we might prefer would stay hidden is a wounding in the sense that the psychical grasp of selfhood is injured to the point where that identity emerging through and dependent upon the complex inter-workings of the various psychical processes and states is put at risk.

In “Mourning and Melancholia” Freud would refer to such a scenario as “the impoverishment of the ego on a grand scale” (1917: XIV, 253).

Realigning this philosophical perspective with Freud’s own original formulations on trauma requires special attention to documenting what in the course of his long career represents divergent, if not precisely contradictory, views on the matter. It is then possible to consider some of the ways that such a realignment might be understood as relevant to the production and study of literature.

Freud often used the word *trauma* and its variants in an almost generic sense. At one point in his prepsychoanalytic treatise *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), for example, he refers to trauma simply as an “experience of pain” or, in somewhat more Freudian terms, “a release of unpleasure” (1954: 416). In other words, trauma can simply mean for Freud any psychically undesirable experience. Thus, three decades later in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* he will conceptually locate trauma in relation to a vaguely defined “situation of danger,” which “consists in the subject’s estimation of his own strength compared to the magnitude of the danger and in his admission of helplessness in the face of it . . . Let us call a situation of helplessness of this kind that has been actually experienced a *traumatic situation*” (1926: XX, 166).

Even in the early *Project*, though, Freud aimed at describing the “release of unpleasure” in the context of mental processes – particularly the complex relationship between troubling memories (often just psychical impressions) and various kinds of defense mechanisms organized against these – and, more broadly, the status of the ego relative to other competing components of the psyche as these were meshed into the processes of identity formation. At the point in *Project* previously alluded to, Freud distinguishes normal traumas that are effectively reined in by the ego through the creation of “lateral cathexes” that, over time, dissipate the force of the trauma from other sorts of trauma (e.g., ones producing a hysterical reaction) that are not “on the occasion of the *first* release of unpleasure” accompanied by “an inhibition by the ego” (1954: 416). Particularly virulent or pathological traumas “escape the ego” and so create (and then are experienced as) what Freud refers to as a “‘posthumous’ primary affective experience” (1954: 416). The word *posthumous* here points to a situation in which, though psychically retained, the impression of the original experience, not at first excessively troubling, “only become[s] a trauma *after the event*” (1954: 413).

The *Standard Edition*’s rendering of that final italicized phrase – “by *deferred action*” (Freud, 1895: I, 356) – is undoubtedly the more widely

recognized translation of Freud's own *nachträglich* (Freud, 1950: 435). In their encyclopedia of psychoanalytic terms, Laplanche and Pontalis remark that "although he never offered a definition, much less a general theory, of the notion of deferred action, it was indisputably looked on by Freud as part of his conceptual equipment" (1974: 111). At a very early stage in his thinking on the subject (specifically in the context of the etiology of hysteria), Freud offers this description of the psychical processes at work in such deferral, that temporal delay effectively constituting trauma as always and necessarily "after the event":

If a cathexis which releases unpleasure were able to escape attention, the *ego's intervention would come too late*. And this is precisely what happens in the case of hysterical *proton pseudos* [first lie or distortion]. Attention is focused on perceptions, which are the normal occasions for the release of unpleasure. But here it is not a perception but a memory-trace which unexpectedly releases unpleasure, and *the ego discovers this too late*. It has permitted a primary process [e.g., displacement of the original experience] because it did not expect one. (1954: 415–16; emphases added)

To align the ego's disorienting belatedness (the "too late") with the previously mentioned notion of impoverishment, we might tentatively infer that a key element in trauma's capacity to render the ego, and perhaps also consciousness, problematic to itself is that there is something missing or misplaced in an experience that, while not necessarily traumatic in itself, will only later, by some activity of retrospection, become the focal point of mental disruption. Laplanche and Pontalis observe in this context that a deferred response to a past experience acts on "whatever has been impossible in the first instance to incorporate fully into a meaningful context. The traumatic event is the epitome of such unassimilated experience" (1974: 112).²

What it means to say that an experience is unassimilated is one of the central questions of trauma theory. Freud himself offered two models, and although over the full arc of his career he clearly privileged the first, it is the second that has had a more lasting impact on the understanding of trauma as a psychical process from both the medical and the literary standpoint. Freud's analysis of his patient, Emma, in his *Project* carries the seeds of both possibilities. Here is part of his 1895 description of Emma's original experience:

On two occasions, when she was a child of eight, she had gone into a shop to buy some sweets and the shopkeeper had grabbed at her genitals through her clothes. In spite of this first experience she had gone to the shop a second time, after which she stopped away. Afterwards she reproached

herself for having gone a second time . . . And in fact a “bad conscience” by which she was oppressed could be traced back to this experience. (1954: 411)

The experience with the shopkeeper had effectively been psychically displaced (unassimilated) and, in deferred form, had come to be symbolized in relation to a second encounter four years later, an encounter with which her conscious memory then associated a hysterical response:

Emma is at the present time under a compulsion not to go into shops *alone*. She explained this by a memory dating from the age of twelve (shortly before her puberty). She went into a shop to buy something, saw the two shop-assistants . . . laughing together, and rushed out in some kind of *fright*. In this connection it was possible to elicit the idea that the two men had been laughing at her clothes and that one of them had attracted her sexually. (1954: 410)

Freud literally sketches out the process by which the original experience, which didn't even properly exist in Emma's memory (at most a “memory-trace”), is mnemonically (re)triggered by the second event. The second event then becomes the psychological expression of what in the first event was never consciously registered because it came before any conscious awareness of sexuality. In the context of an experience we might call traumatic there is an initial situation from which some element appears to be missing or unassimilated and that then can only be (re)experienced in such a vexed way that the ego must erect defenses against it. Freud thus writes that, for Emma, “the recollection aroused . . . anxiety[:] . . . she was afraid the shop-assistants might repeat the assault, and ran away” (1954: 411).

Although these will be subject to subsequent modification, two elements of Freud's account deserve special emphasis. First, despite the oft-rendered critique of psychoanalysis for its deterministic understanding of the past (in the economic model, for example, the storing up of psychological energy that is only discharged at a later date), Freud is clear from the *Project* onward that trauma does not reside in the original event; rather, trauma is constituted as a relationship between two events, neither of which is traumatic in itself. Meaning is deferred during the original event (something is unassimilated at that moment), but that event's properly recognized meaning is not simply recovered at the time of the second event even if that event might be said to trigger a retrospective understanding of the original.³ In an 1896 letter to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud will generalize this relationship of past and present: “I am working on the assumption that our psychological mechanism has come about by a process of stratification: the

material present in the shape of memory-traces is from time to time subjected to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances – is, as it were, transcribed” (1954: 173). In the more particular context of the etiology of neurosis, Laplanche and Pontalis add that in situations where “the subject revises past events at a later date . . . it is this revision which invests them with significance and *even with efficacy or pathogenic force*” (1974: 112; emphasis added). What Freud posits as the temporal structure of trauma must therefore be analyzed in terms of how the present works over the past, a reconfiguration operating especially at the unconscious level and through various mechanisms of defense (e.g., repression).

Second, extrapolating from the details of Emma’s case, Freud is drawn to the notion that the sexual experiences of childhood are particularly susceptible to initial nonassimilation. This is so because of the peculiarly human delay in full sexual maturation. Freud thus moves from the specifics of Emma’s situation – “Here we have an instance of a memory exciting an affect which it had not excited as an experience, because in the meantime *the changes produced by puberty* had made possible a new understanding of what was remembered” – to the formulation of a general principle: “Although it is unusual for a memory to arouse an affect which the actual experience has not produced, this is nevertheless what quite ordinarily happens in the case of sexual ideas, precisely *because the retardation of puberty is a general characteristic of the organization*” (1954: 413; emphases added). There is an element of blaming-the-victim in Freud’s conceptualization here. For, having noted that, while, in theory, “every adolescent, accordingly, must carry within him the germ of hysteria,” its manifestation is “restricted to the small number of people who actually become hysterics,” he adds that “experience teaches us that hysterics,” typically, “have become precociously excitable sexually through mechanical and emotional stimulation (by masturbation) and . . . have a predisposition to precocious sexual release” (1954: 413–14). In the context of delayed sexual maturation, “precocity of sexual release” (1954: 414), Freud concludes, sets the stage for subsequent repression precisely because, as he will later note, repression emerges as that form of “pathological defense . . . directed only against memory traces from an earlier phase which have not yet been translated” (1954: 175–6).⁴

In theorizing the various psychical processes at work in the etiology of trauma, at this early point in his researches Freud is still focused on a real event as and at the point of origin: Emma really had been sexually assaulted by an adult even if, because of her prepubescent lack of sexual

awareness, that real event was not experienced as a trauma while it was happening. The evolution of psychoanalysis from 1897 onward, however, leads to a series of major transformations in Freud's thinking. Two key developments appear in 1897, both first presented in letters to Fliess. In the first, Freud comes to reject as implausible the likelihood that so many of his hysterical (female) patients had actually been sexually assaulted by male acquaintances and in particular by close relatives and more particularly by their fathers. Thus, to the extent hysteria still involves a sexual component, Freud hypothesizes that what had been recounted as episodes of abuse are in reality sexual fantasies. Indeed, as Freud observes in regard to the revelations of his patients, because "there is 'no indication of reality' in the unconscious," it is effectively impossible "to distinguish between truth and emotionally-charged fiction" (1954: 216). This distinction leads Freud to give increasing attention to the role of fantasy or "psychical reality" in the formation of neurotic conditions. The shift here from the notion of actual sexual assault, especially as it is tied to his increasing interest in the possibility of infantile sexuality and more specifically in the persistence of unconscious instinctual impulses grounded in desire, takes root in Freud's second major transformation in his working theory:

Only one idea of general value occurred to me. I have found love of the mother and jealousy of the father in my own case too, and now believe it to be a general phenomenon of early childhood . . . If that is the case, the gripping power of *Oedipus Rex* . . . becomes intelligible . . . Every member of the audience was once a budding Oedipus in phantasy, and this dream-fulfillment played out in reality causes everyone to recoil in horror, with the full measure of repression which separates his infantile from his present state. (1954: 223–4)

Even beyond its particular link to hysteria and traumatic neurosis more broadly, the theory of the Oedipus complex will, of course, become one of the central Freudian doctrines and undoubtedly the one with which psychoanalysis is still most immediately identified.

The introduction of the psychical reality of the Oedipus complex produced a series of secondary conceptual shifts in Freud's thought, some explicit, some less so. First, to the extent that a traumatic neurosis could emerge from a fantasy and a widely shared one at that (particularly emerging in relation to one's parents), the conditions that might produce a trauma are necessarily latent in everyone. Of course, the "everyone" is itself newly conceptualized: if it is universal in some sense ("*every member of the audience* was once a budding Oedipus in phantasy"), the universal subject is now explicitly gendered as male: as Freud will add, "everyone

recognizes because *he* has felt” (the “he” itself modeled on the experience of one particular man, Sigmund Freud, an experience itself aligned with a particular male literary figure, Oedipus). Moreover, as the male (boy/infant) who sexually fantasizes replaces the female (preadolescent or at least nonadult girl) who had actually been sexually assaulted, the adult agent of the sexual advance or seduction shifts from the father to the mother even if what she does (her seduction of the male child leading to his “love of the mother and jealousy of the father”) happens both unconsciously and with deep tenderness rather than with aggression (cf. Freud, 1905: VII, 223).⁵ At the same time, within the full Oedipal economy the focal point of the trauma-inducing situation is still the violent male figure; only now this figure is not a real sexual predator but the figure of the Father in the abstract, the primal father whose violence resides in the threat of castration (what helps establish the superego as a new psychical agency in tense relation with the ego and the id). In the *Ego and the Id*, for example, Freud will assert that the “dread of castration” is “the nucleus round which” the ego’s fear of the super-ego (“of conscience”) “has gathered” (1923: XIX, 57). *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* will pick up this thread by making several references to a condition of “psychical helplessness,” a condition Freud sees as typically enacted through the ego’s struggle with a “situation of danger” itself associated with the threat of castration (1926: XX, 137–8).⁶ To the extent this traumatic scenario effectively resides in “everyone’s” past, trauma is reconceptualized as constitutive of all (male) psychical development, even development Freud would have considered normal.

In sum, one trajectory from his prepsychoanalytic theorizing on the etiology of trauma leads Freud, after his abandonment of the seduction theory, to understand the temporal structure of trauma (a relation between an earlier and a later event rather than an experience residing in a particular event) as governed by fantasy. Whatever real incidents might stand at the origin of the trauma, the focus of the trauma, still driven by libidinal forces, is primarily focused not in something that really happened but in something that is feared (if unconsciously): the son’s castration at the hands of his sexual rival. As the sexualized scenario thus also shifts from hysterical girls and young women to young boys (from late infancy to about the age of five by which time the full Oedipal economy has developed⁷), Freud also becomes more convinced that the process governing traumatic neurosis is repression, but a process now moved earlier in psychical development so that its fully compulsory force can be understood as effected by the *return* of the repressed. More precisely, the

trauma resides in the compulsive force of the repressed fantasy as it returns under the influence of new emotional-biological conditions in the now adolescent boy (though in the highly displaced and disguised form of neurotic symptoms). This understanding of the origins of traumatic neurosis first fully emerges in Freud's account of the Wolf Man ("From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" [1918]), is developed in some detail in his final metapsychological work (*Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* [1926]), and is still central to his thinking in his last major work (*Moses and Monotheism* [1939]).

At the same time, Freud's analysis of Emma opens up – or actually continues from his own earlier research, especially with Josef Breuer – a second conceptual path regarding the etiology of trauma. This path will have important affinities with his original understanding of Emma's experience: that it started with an actual assault. Even if, at the time it happened, she could not understand the experience in those terms and if only as prompted by a second and otherwise unrelated event, Freud understands the unassimilated residue of the original event – the shopkeeper's groping – as the foundation if not precisely the origin of the trauma (manifested later through anxiety). Moreover, because Emma was eight when the assault occurred, the sexual element could not immediately be described in the terms Freud would later employ: as a manifestation of *infantile* sexual desire developed within the family romance that had emerged at least by age five. Even more important, Freud recognizes in the temporal structure of Emma's trauma – the retrospective conferral of meaning upon an earlier event through which, at the time, the meaning could not be expressed – that something in the original event, something that had truly happened, could not be integrated into Emma's conscious thought and memory. Laplanche is no doubt correct in his observation that the "psychical status of the memory of the first scene" (the assault) is not really a memory at all and therefore not originally in a state that could be repressed: "it would seem that for Freud [the recollection of the assault] persists neither in a conscious state nor, properly speaking, in a repressed state; it remains there, waiting in a kind of limbo, . . . not linked to the rest of psychical life" (1976: 41).

Thus, on the one hand, we have a real event as opposed to an event with only psychical reality; on the other hand, that real event, even as it is psychically retained, is not assimilated into conscious memory (nor does it reside in the Unconscious due to repression). Those two elements of Emma's case would return to challenge Freud's situating of traumatic neurosis within the Oedipal economy. When, in the aftermath of World

War I, he faced the reality of an increasing number of male patients who had all the symptoms of hysteria, Freud returned to the prepsychoanalytic model in the sense that he accepted the notion that a real event could trigger a traumatic response. For these male hysterics, moreover, the real event and the psychical context in which that event had meaning were no longer assumed to have a sexual component – the horrors of war undoubtedly seemed both more likely and more suitably masculine as the source of the hysterical symptoms (hence the diagnosis of “war neurosis”).⁸ This situation, which appeared to point to the mental residue of actual lived experience, would later be extended as a way of describing, diagnosing, and finally treating psychical disturbances emerging as responses to a variety of other events and situations: scenarios of cultural violence of many kinds – torture, genocide, and colonization – though, eventually, it would also be extended to instances of actual sexual abuse, precisely the situation of female hysterics as Freud had understood it before his abandonment of the seduction theory.

Just as important, some psychical process other than repression seemed to govern the creation and manifestation of the war neurosis. We might note here that in the 1895 *Project*, Freud had at least hinted that, even in those cases where sexual conflict of some kind was central to the trauma, repression might not be the best way of understanding the governing psychical process. One senses Freud’s struggle to find the right term. At one point, as though he did not know how to describe the matter, he simply observes that an unpleasurable experience retained as a mental impression may not “become *conscious*” where there is “a resistance . . . directed against any occupation of one’s thoughts” toward the experience. “So that instead of ‘excluded from consciousness,’ we can say ‘excluded from thought-processes’” (1954: 408–9).

What precisely is the nature of a resistance that can exclude in this way? Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart write that, with regard to trauma, Freud’s

use of the term “repression” evokes the image of a subject actively pushing the unwanted traumatic memory away . . . [But] contemporary research has shown that . . . [t]here is little evidence for an active process of pushing away of the overwhelming experience; *the uncoupling seems to have other mechanisms*. Many trauma survivors report that they are automatically removed from the scene; they look at it from a distance or disappear altogether, *leaving other parts of the personality to suffer and store the overwhelming experience* . . . [W]hen a subject does not remember a trauma, *its “memory” is contained in an alternate stream of consciousness*. (1995: 168; emphases added)

This alternate stream, van der Kolk and van der Hart claim, is governed by dissociation, a process whereby the mind, faced with an incomprehensible experience, fails to organize that experience within an unfolding temporal order.⁹ In this model, trauma renders experience inaccessible to conscious thought not through repression but through the failed psychic integration of that experience: the experience cannot be assimilated into the broader cognitive patterns that are central to memory and, through memory, to the possibility of continuous or narrative selfhood.¹⁰

This conceptualization of the etiology of trauma is, as noted, especially associated with Freud's grappling with the new reality of shell-shocked veterans (male hysterics) trying, often unsuccessfully, to return to the lives they knew before World War I. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud would reimpose much of the Oedipal model on the experiences of these traumatized soldiers. In this reworking, the soldiers' encounter with imminent death, which many had seen as the common point of traumatic origin, becomes just another expression of the "fear of castration" (1926: XX, 129–30). Against this foundational idea, however, Freud began to develop a new line of investigation. Building on ideas preliminarily considered in "On Narcissism" (1914), "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1914), and "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) offered the almost grudging recognition of a very different conceptualization of trauma and its attendant symptoms.

Among its many novelties, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is particularly marked by the critical elaboration of a concept that had been percolating in Freud's work, "repetition compulsion." Despite their obvious affinities, repetition compulsion could not simply be equated with the concept of the "return of the repressed" that Freud had previously viewed as the chief mechanism of traumatic neurosis formed within the Oedipal economy. We might go so far as to say that trauma so (re)conceived gives special privilege to repetition such that this one neurotic symptom becomes peculiarly expressive of a constitutive feature of trauma: the mind's obsessive need not just to return to but also to reenact an origin it can neither leave behind nor ever truly claim as its own. Freud grasps the change in his own thinking in his comment that the compulsion to repeat does not just override the pleasure principle but is more primitive in the sense of being more foundational to the workings of the psyche (1920: XVIII, 22, 32–3, 35).

If trauma itself might have different points of origin (real event or fantasy) and be governed by different psychological processes (repression or dissociation), repetition compulsion itself pointed to two different possible

resolutions of the trauma. On the one hand, repetition was the expression of a ceaseless and obsessive return to the site of the trauma that forever eluded the mind's grasp. On the other hand, repetition functioned as the primary mechanism by which the mind attempted to move beyond the trauma by mastering it via the production of what we might call salutary anxiety: returning to the site of the trauma but in a "prepared" state for the shock that was to come with the result that, from the vantage of readiness, the mind would now be capable of integrating what had previously been unassimilated into an unfolding and coherent temporal structure. Repetition could thus be understood either as part of a cure (the process by which the traumatized subject could "work through") or as inescapable reenactment, the ceaseless ungrounding of consciousness (Ricoeur's "wounded *cogito*") and its attendant self-volitional autonomy in the subject's sense of being fatefully bound to what Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* refers to as the "perpetual recurrence of the same thing" (1920: XVIII, 22).

Some theorists have taken the latter view of repetition, as the particular expression of trauma, much further, even to the point of restoring the notion that trauma primarily crosses the terrain of psychological reality (of fantasy) and thus does not require a specific, actually experienced event – sexual abuse, torture, war, genocide, colonization – as its point of origin. For example, attempting to link the new idea of trauma articulated there to the concept of the death drive, Cathy Caruth observes that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* "traces a significant itinerary in Freud's thought from trauma as an exception, an accident that takes consciousness by surprise and thus disrupts it, to trauma as the very origin of consciousness and all of life itself" (1996: 104). More recently, Todd McGowan has argued that "traumatic rupture," which "constitutes every subject as a subject," cannot finally be overcome because "foundational loss . . . defines us as subjects." As McGowan concludes, "we approach authenticity not through accessing our original temporality" – a life-narrative that could, as Aristotle might have said, come to grasp meaningfully continuous selfhood as a unified action – "but through distinguishing ourselves from the movement of time as beings of repetition" (2011: 235, 237).

If "philosophy begins in loss," as Cavell suggests, then the loss that is trauma – the psychically debilitating experience of a present lost in relation to a past that has mysteriously gone missing – finds its chief literary counterpart and mode of expression in narrative. Individual narrative works across the spectrum of literary modes have, of course, offered direct representations of medically realistic (if often extreme) instances of trauma. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that, while a case-history has

some foundational, if implicit, story-element, storytellers, no matter their commitment to accurate representation, do not create their characters and plots merely to document medical conditions.

In this context and with an eye toward exploring Felman's aim to "generate implications between literature and psychoanalysis" (1982: 9; original italics deleted), we might consider storyteller Katherine Anne Porter's response to an interviewer's question about her idea that "every story begins with an ending . . . [and] that until the end is known there is no story." Porter's response is instructive: "That is where the artist begins to work: With the consequences of acts, not the acts themselves . . . The reverberations, you might say, the overtones" (Plimpton, 1963: 151). The artistic treatment of "consequences," "reverberations," and "overtones" has some affinity with how trauma itself is constituted as a temporal process in which the present struggles to come to terms with a past that is not at first fully assimilated into conscious recall or understanding. Porter immediately adds that "it has sometimes taken me ten years to understand even a little of some important event that had happened to me. Oh, I could have given a perfectly factual account of what had happened, but I didn't know what it meant until I knew the consequences . . . If I didn't know the ending of a story, I wouldn't begin." On the one hand, before writing she *thinks* about the past as a patient or even a psychoanalyst might begin therapy: not yet understanding "even a little of some important event that had happened." But as *a writer*, she is more like the patient or analyst at the end of therapy: knowing "what it meant," knowing "the consequences," knowing "the ending." Observing that she "always write[s] her] last lines, [her] last paragraph, [her] last page first," and that she "then . . . go[es] back and work[s] towards [her] . . . goal" (not just the ending she began with but a true understanding of the ending as the consequence of something that came before), she concludes by saying that the "goal is the clearing up of disorder and confusion and wrong, to a logical and human end" (Plimpton 1963: 151–2).

While what constitutes a "logical and human end" for a storyteller might not be the same as it would be for the patient or analyst, the sense of "clearing up of disorder and confusion and wrong" as a present moment grapples with a past that is not yet assimilated into an unfolding life-narrative does very much sound like the goal of psychoanalytic-based therapy. In the previously mentioned 1896 letter, Freud had written to Fliess that, because "relics of the past still survive" in the mind, the mind creates "successive transcripts" of those relics, each "represent[ing] the psychical achievement of successive epochs of life." He adds that "at the

frontier between any two such epochs a translation of the psychical material must take place” and if it does not – that is, if “the translation of some of the material has not occurred” – the development of a psychoneurosis may be the consequence (1954: 175). Over many years Freud would then develop the therapeutic concept of “working through” as the process by which a patient could move past neurotic repetition by means of the restoration of memory, a proper mental ordering of the past in temporal relation to the present.¹¹ The wounded *cogito* Ricoeur points to as the true subject of philosophy conceived in Freudian terms might then materialize in narrative not only in the psychically vexed motivations of a character represented as traumatized subject. It might also manifest in the function of narrative itself as a relation of past and present structured by the labor of retrospective understanding or in the experience of reading, an act that begins in a loss that is akin to trauma.

Freud’s opposing conceptualizations of traumatic repetition, however, point to opposing notions of narrative, both its structure and its purpose. On the one hand, in a way that replicates his sense that memory (and thus conscious control) must win out over repetition if the patient is to be cured through analysis, reading narrative might confirm through a final ordering of the plot that life itself is a creative process aiming at meaningful narratability. So Peter Brooks writes in returning to Freud’s economic approach to psychical processes: “As a dynamic-energetic model of narrative plot, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* gives an image of how the non-narratable existence is stimulated into a condition of narratability . . . The energy generated by [a plot’s] deviance, extravagance, excess . . . maintains the plot in its movement through the vacillating play of the middle, where repetition as binding works toward the generation of significance, toward recognition and retrospective illumination” (1984: 108–9). The philosopher Richard Kearney argues that narrative so understood might become the vehicle for the construction of moral identity. Reflecting on keywords in Aristotle’s *Poetics* (*mythos*, *mimesis*, *catharsis*, *phronesis*, *ethos*), Kearney defines “narrativity” as “what marks, organizes and clarifies temporal experience” (2002: 130). Emanating from a sense of continuous selfhood that in turn gives rise to an ever-unfolding sense of narrativ(iz)e(d) identity, the work of story is at once central to the realization of a constitutive *mythos* or life-story at the heart of all human experience and foundational in the emergence and development of the ethical–political subject. Even in the face of painful truths, Kearney concludes, “narrative selves” are those that are especially “capable of ethically responsible action” because a narrative understanding of self, other, and world awakens us to the

possibility of seeing life itself as a continuous and, ideally, unified moral act (2002: 151–2).

On the other hand, reading might also sustain the trauma – Cavell’s “finding oneself at a loss” – by exposing how the very idea of a unified action in a well-made plot is but a pretense of coherence claiming falsely to overcome ceaseless repetition. Brooks even feels compelled to check his own initial optimism: “It may finally be in the logic of our argument that repetition speaks in the text of a return which ultimately subverts the very notion of beginning and end, suggesting that . . . the interminable never can be finally bound in a plot” (1984: 108–9). McGowan takes this idea even further in his claim that what “reveals the inescapable . . . nature of trauma” is that loss is “constitutive of our thought because our subjectivity emerges with it and depends on it” (2011: 232). From this vantage, Kearney’s narrative selfhood as founded on the lived reality of Aristotelian *mimesis*, which itself might be understood as a kind of Freudian working-through, may simply cover over Ricoeur’s “dispossession of the subject” that must finally confront itself in “the inadequation, the illusion, and the lie of existing consciousness.”

As Freud himself might have put it, the tension between these two models of narrative points to the gap in literature between the terminable and the interminable, a gap that expresses what is most unnerving about traumatic experience: the recognition that our lives are our own and not our own simultaneously.

Modernity as the Cultural Crucible of Trauma

Karolyn Steffens

In 1952, British psychologist Millais Culpin published “Some Forgotten Episodes” in the history of psychology in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*. After describing treating shell-shocked soldiers during World War I, he recounts how, upon publishing his MD thesis on war neuroses, he received a letter from Herbert Page, who informed him, “all the symptoms of shell-shock would be found in his book, *Railway Injuries* (1892), but the lesson he had tried to teach had been forgotten” (956). Culpin recalls studying John Eric Erichsen’s “railway spine” in his “student days” and the “years of controversy [it took] to destroy this fancied pathology,” now “buried so obscurely that but for Herbert Page I should never have known about it” (956). He met with Page, and during “our talk about railway spine I mentioned psychology. He shook his head. ‘I don’t know anything about psychology,’ said he; ‘I only knew it was something the matter with the man himself’” (956). Indeed, Page, Erichsen, and the nineteenth-century controversy over railway spine predate the explosion of psychological writing on shell shock. Yet, for scholars not subscribing to the *BMJ*, the intersection between railway accidents, modernity, and traumatic neuroses would remain a “forgotten episode” until it was unearthed in the 1990s, alongside the birth of trauma studies.

In part, Page says he doesn’t “know anything about psychology” because nineteenth-century medical discourse understood trauma as an organic, functional disorder, not the psychological disorder it would become after the war with the aid of psychoanalysis. Modernity in nineteenth-century medicine meant breakthroughs in physiology, a revolution in pathology with germ theory, and Darwinian evolution. At the end of the century, psychology was only emerging as a distinct discipline out of the interdisciplinary tangle of philosophy, neurology, and physiology.¹ Although the relationship between mind and body had been debated for centuries, railway accidents forced consideration of new questions about trauma and modernity in the context of “the nineteenth-century obsession with

nerves and nervousness [meeting] the languages of degeneration” (Marcus 2014: 41). According to Erichsen, the malady popularly dubbed “railway spine” resulted from a spinal cord concussion or lesions developed due to the physical shock of a railway collision. As Eric Caplan recounts: “Born in 1866 as an exclusively somatic disease, railway spine entered its adolescence in the 1880s as a confusing psychological ailment, began its adulthood in the 1890s in a state of somatic-psychic flux, and suffered an early death in the first decade of the twentieth century” (1995: 388). Although this narrative is persuasive and popular in the now well-documented history of railway trauma, drawing such a neat lineage from somatic to psychic disorder privileges contemporary trauma theory’s emphasis on psychoanalysis, to echo Ralph Harrington’s reservations (2003). Although Page is frequently credited with introducing psychic explanations for railway neuroses, he asserts there “was something the matter with the man himself” – the entire man, not just his mind. Rather than explore the depths of the unconscious, the majority of nineteenth-century medical discourse sought an etiology for the trauma of modernity in disease, heredity, and the physiology of the nervous system and brain.

While railway spine is a product of the nineteenth century, the impacts of violence, war, death, accidents, and their traumatic aftereffects are not modern phenomena. What is uniquely modern about trauma is the shift from corporeal to psychic wound, a transition coinciding with the forces of sociocultural, technological, political, and economic modernity in the nineteenth century through the First World War. Trauma studies often traces its origins to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and, less often, the theorization of external traumatic events in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), but Sigmund Freud was not writing in a historical or cultural vacuum. Indeed, as Mark Micale notes “the Euro-American medical world had witnessed a full generation of debate about the origins and nature of psychological trauma” by the time Pierre Janet and Freud and Josef Breuer published their work on hysteria in the 1890s (2001: 134), a debate incited by gruesome railway accidents and subsequent legal cases. Although literary critics often turn to the First World War, shell shock marks a culmination, not the origin, of the forces of modernity that had been contributing to a marked rise in traumatic neuroses throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth-century modernity is characterized by the shock of unprecedented social change, including widespread industrialization and urbanization, new political alignments, the rise of nation-states, increasingly capitalistic and imperial relations, the establishment of legal precedence for

accident insurance, and technological innovations like the telegraph, electricity, steam engines, and photography. Although these changes all play a vital role in emerging trauma discourse, prepsychoanalytic medical and literary discourse about trauma unfolds against the embodiment of these forces of modernity: the railway. As Roger Luckhurst observes in his comprehensive genealogy of trauma, “the general scholarly consensus is that the origin of the idea of trauma was inextricably linked to the expansion of the railways in the 1860s” (2008: 21). The railway exemplifies almost all of industrial modernity’s traits by the mid-nineteenth century: technological progress in the steam engine and telegraph; coal, iron, and steel as the raw materials of industrialization; a remapping of space as tracks rapidly crisscrossed the globe; the widespread adoption of standard time due to railway timetables; the growing mechanization of everyday life; and the increased speed of international social, political, and economic exchange. As historian Eric Hobsbawm argues, the railway quickly surpassed the cotton mill as the symbol of “revolutionary transformation” (1968: 88) because it “represented a far more advanced phase of industrialization and one bearing on the life of the ordinary citizen outside the rather small areas of actual industry” (88), becoming “a sort of synonym for ultra-modernity in the 1840s, as ‘atomic’ was to be after the Second World War” (89). Similarly, in his authoritative history of the railway, Wolfgang Schivelbusch declares, “Nothing else in the nineteenth century seemed as vivid and dramatic a sign of modernity as the railroad” (1977: xiii). It was a vivid, rapid, sleek, evocative, even intoxicating symbol of progress and cutting-edge technology. Yet the dramatic crashes that captured the public imagination and dominated courtrooms in the second half of the century were visible reminders of modernity’s grave effects on the comparatively fragile human body and mind.

If, as Micale and Paul Lerner argue, “trauma is responsive to and constitutive of ‘modernity’” (2001: 10), how do literature and medicine simultaneously imagine such modern trauma? Literalizing the link between trauma and modernity, critics frequently turn to modernist aesthetics for an appropriate representational mode for traumatic events. For example, when asking what type of literature can be used to ethically and responsibly represent the Holocaust, Hayden White draws a parallel between modernist style and the conditions of historical modernity that created the possibility of the Holocaust. White argues that the Holocaust is not unrepresentable but rather “requires the kind of style, the modernist style, that was developed in order to represent the kind of experiences which social modernism made possible” (1992: 52). In contemporary

trauma theory, the formal features of such modernist style are commonly equated with the symptomatology of Freud's repetition compulsion and put in service of a melancholic aesthetic that refuses catharsis and narrative closure. Yet modernism, as the aesthetic response to modernity's sociocultural conditions, is often employed as a catchall for any literature, regardless of period, that displays an aesthetic that "is uncompromisingly avant-garde: experimental, fragmented, refusing the consolations of beautiful form, and suspicious of familiar representational and narrative conventions" (Luckhurst 2008: 81). Thus, Luckhurst's examples are all post-1950s works from Toni Morrison, W. G. Sebald, filmmaker Claude Lanzmann, architect Daniel Libeskind, and Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo.²

This chapter reconsiders the aesthetic modes used to interpret traumatic events in terms of the historical conditions of modernity from which contemporaneous medico-psychological and literary works emerge. Although the modernist aesthetic remains exemplary, naturalism in fact offers a better fit for mid-nineteenth-century trauma discourse. Furthermore, analyzing the transition from naturalism to the modernist avant-garde reveals both a literary and medico-psychological genealogy that better contextualizes the aesthetic used to successfully interpret post-1950s literature.³ For example, naturalistic fin de siècle literature such as Émile Zola's 1890 novel, *La Bête humaine*, which dramatizes violent instinctual drives against the backdrop of the railway and the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War through an experimental application of scientific observation to modern life, mirrors nineteenth-century medicine's effort to establish an observable, organic etiology for railway-induced neuroses. Whereas the majority of medical discourse flirts with the unconscious but remains fixed in a physiological view of neuroses, Zola anticipates full-fledged psychological theories of the unconscious by wedding observable phenomena with instinctual drives. Similar dynamics are evident in Blaise Cendrars's *La prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France*, published in 1913 on the eve of the First World War and depicting the mobilization of troops in the first Russian Revolution. Cendrars, a pivotal member of the modernist avant-garde, exemplifies the "Futurist Moment," to borrow Marjorie Perloff's term, and its aesthetics of fragmentation, collage, and subjective impressions. These developments in avant-garde literature – a shift from the naturalist emphasis on dispassionate scientific observation to subjective abstraction – anticipate the imminent rise of psychoanalysis and its exclusively psychic explanations for traumatic neuroses.⁴ Reading these works reveals a rich and significant

interrelationship between the authors, the railway, and emergent trauma discourse.⁵ Just as we must return to pre-Freudian medical discourse to fully theorize the link between trauma and modernity, we must also return to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature to fully establish the origins of the aesthetic routinely applied to contemporary literature.⁶

The nineteenth century witnessed a widespread debate over the health effects of modernity. American physician George Beard and German social critic Max Nordau prominently and explicitly link modernity with neurosis. In 1881, Beard attributes the “chief and primary cause” of the rise in neuroses to “modern civilization, which is distinguished from the ancient by these five characteristics: steam-power, the periodical press, the telegraph, the sciences, and the mental activity of women” (vi). For Beard, the nervous system is “Like the steam engine, its force is limited, although it cannot be mathematically measured” (99). He elaborates:

when new functions are interposed in the circuit, as modern civilization is constantly requiring us to do, there comes a period, sooner or later . . . when the amount of force is insufficient to keep all the lamps actively burning; those that are weakest go out entirely, or, as more frequently happens, burn faint and feebly – they do not expire, but give an insufficient and unstable light – this is the philosophy of modern nervousness. (99)

The steam engine and electricity are perfect metaphors for Beard’s contention that neurasthenia, or nervous exhaustion from daily overstimulation, is unique to modernity. Nordau expands Beard’s medical thesis to the language of degeneracy. In dismay over *fin de siècle* culture, Nordau polemically diagnoses the era as one of degeneracy and hysteria, “of which the minor stages are designated as neurasthenia” (1895: 15). He observes how “steam and electricity have turned the customs of life of every member of the civilized nations upside down” (37) and attributes the increase in nervous diagnoses as “exclusively a consequence of the present conditions of civilized life” (41). Like Beard, Nordau blames everyday activities – from the “little shocks” of railway travel to the bustle of cities to the suspense of the newspaper and postman – as requiring “an effort of the nervous system” which “cost[s] our brains wear and tear” (39). Accordingly, “the vertigo and whirl of our frenzied life, the vastly increased number of sense impressions and organic reactions” (42) leads to “all sorts of odd aesthetic fashions” including Zola’s “realism and naturalism,” which “are manifestations of degeneration and hysteria” (43). Although not exclusively applied to traumatic events, the popular diagnosis of neurasthenia correlates the nervous system with rapidly changing cultural norms and the often violent effects of modernity.

Twenty years earlier, fears over modernity's ill effects crystallized around the railway when *The Lancet* commissioned a special report in 1862 on "The Influence of Railway Travelling on Public Health." The most influential early theory of railway trauma was Erichsen's *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System* (1867), which quickly "became a guide book" throughout Europe and the United States, frequently cited in legal proceedings against railway companies (Trimble 1981: 18). As a respected British surgeon, Erichsen gave a series of lectures on the increasingly common "peculiar affection of the spine" that surgeons had dubbed "*railway spine*" (1867: 22). He insisted on a biological cause for symptoms (today classified as post-traumatic stress disorder) in which the victim was "not the man he was" (75), suffering from fatigue, memory lapses, irritability, depression, nightmares, stammering, and even paralysis (76–8). For Erichsen, the cause of these symptoms was a spinal concussion, not a psychic response to overwhelming fright. Melancholy was attributable to the radical change in life circumstance of a man "active in mind, accustomed to self-control, addicted to business, and healthy in body, suddenly, and for the first time in his life, after the infliction of a severe shock to the system, find[ing] himself affected by a train of symptoms indicative of serious and deep-seated injury to the nervous system" (93). Erichsen denied the possibility of male hysteria, refusing to believe that his patients would "suddenly become 'hysterical,' like a love-sick girl" (93). Rather than provoke psychic explanations, such phenomena would "certainly be to my mind an evidence of the most serious and disorganizing disease of the nervous system" (93), or a functional disorder.

Erichsen's theory quickly sparked rebuttals: Page in Britain rejected the notion of spinal concussion and instead argued for "nervous shock"; Jean-Martin Charcot adopted Page's thesis in France and linked railway accidents to male hysteria; and Hermann Oppenheim in Germany argued for traumatic neuroses. In both his works on railway trauma, Page "inverted Erichsen's model" (Harrington 2001: 51); instead of a physical lesion causing belated subjective symptoms, the shock occurred first and subsequently produced the physical symptoms. For Page, railway neuroses were "not due to physical injury sustained by the spinal cord" but "were the more or less immediate concomitants of the profound mental emotion" (1892: 6). Instead of railway spine, he proposed "nervous shock" to express the "element of fear, this great mental shock which in railway collisions has so large a share – in many cases the only share – in inducing immediate collapse, and in giving rise to those after-symptoms which may be almost as serious as, and are certainly far more troublesome than, those

which we meet with shortly after the accident has occurred" (36). For physicians like Page, "nervous shock" indicated "some functional or dynamic disturbance of the nervous equilibrium or tone, rather than structural damage to any organ of the body" (33). Trapped between theorizing nervous shock as a functional, physiological disorder and the reality of "profound mental emotion," Page settled on this generalized biological "equilibrium or tone." Refusing an exclusively psychological explanation, he declared, "General nervous shock is not hysteria," explaining how "the function of every organ and structure in the body is affected" to the point that "the wide-spread weakness which results from nervous shock . . . is expressed in the convenient word 'neurasthenia'" (57). In very rare cases, Page admitted the possibility of "traumatic hysteria," but he preferred "fright neuroses" (70) and "neurasthenia" (107) with their etymological emphases on the nervous system. For Page, "most of the results of railway injuries are essentially psychical in origin" (108) in that shock and profound mental emotion played a significant role in upsetting the balance of the nervous system. As Caplan observes, "conscious forces, not unconscious ones, were the dynamic variable" since as "a surgeon, Page could not fathom the possibility of unconscious, involuntary submission to psychic forces" (1995: 396). For the majority of accident victims, nervous shock affected the entire nervous system (not the mind) leading to a "wide-spread weakness" of the body akin to the "insufficient and unstable light" in Beard's steam engine metaphor.

Across the English Channel at the Salpêtrière, Charcot was delivering his famous lectures on male hysteria in which he mentions railway neuroses. Charcot adapted Page's theory of railway injuries and translated it into the dominant and expanding discourse of hysteria in French medicine. Citing the "special interest" male hysteria held in the late nineteenth century (1888: 98), Charcot contended that "neuropathic states, so grave and so tenacious, which present themselves as a sequel of 'collisions' of that kind, and which render their victims unable to work or pursue any regular occupation for months and for even years, are often only hysteria, nothing but hysteria" (99). He argued against the prejudice attached to hysteria because male hysteria is common and "a consequence of the psychical nervous shock resulting from the accident" (100). Charcot favorably acknowledged Page and insisted on fright's role, proposing "the terror experienced by the patient at the moment of the accident" plays "a more important part in the genesis of these accidents than the wound itself" (115). Whereas Freud would famously argue that hysterics suffer from reminiscences, Charcot insisted on a hereditary predisposition for

hysteria, albeit with more acknowledgment of the role of emotion than his contemporaries. According to a Salpêtrière intern, by 1889, “everyone understood ‘railway brain’ as a functional disorder that affected not just the spine and brain but the whole nervous system” (Ashley 2003: 182). As Harrington concludes, Page and “his hero, the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, [were] entirely . . . organicist[s], who sought the causes of mental and nervous disorder in physical injury and disease” (2003: 221). Although clearly laying the foundation for psychoanalytic explanations of trauma, Page and Charcot ultimately insisted on biological, functional etiologies.

The history of the medico-legal consequences of the “railway spine” debate and its relationship to railway brain, neurasthenia, traumatic neuroses, and psychoanalysis are now well documented.⁷ What is most useful for contemporaneous literary developments is the tension between observable, biological causes and the subjective symptomatology of a psychic disorder. As John Hall⁸ states in the *BMJ* in 1868, the contention over railway injuries boils down to objective versus subjective interpretations: “By objective, I mean whatever is exterior to the mind – outward, external; something that we can see. To this, the term subjective is altogether opposed. In the former case, I depend on the evidence cognisable to my senses; in the latter, there is nothing to depend upon, save the statement of the patient” (217). This diagnostic predicament established the precedent for accusations of malingering when railway accident victims sought compensation, accusations that were later repeated against shell-shocked soldiers. The nineteenth-century medical profession, with its commitment to physiology, sought an objective, biological diagnosis for the seemingly inexplicable appearance of neuroses in patients without visible injuries. Page and Charcot critique Erichsen’s exclusively objective diagnosis, ending up on indeterminate middle ground. Charcot’s theory of heredity as the root cause of hysteria straddles the divide because it is attributable to physiological bloodlines, even if medical technology could not observe the genetic level. Similarly, Page’s emphasis on the nervous system’s equilibrium insists on organic function but resorts to metaphor to describe such tonal imbalances. Although the distinction between subjective and objective did not greatly affect treatment (because most patients were prescribed a combination of rest cure, isolation, and suggestive therapeutics), it was pivotal in legal battles over compensation for accident victims (with Erichsen enlisted by plaintiffs and Page by the railways). Page’s critics argue that his employment by the North Western Railway Company incentivized him to find a psychological origin for railway trauma that would

dismiss claims by linking shock with hysteria, and all of its gendered connotations, whereas Erichsen's exclusively organic disease "nearly always resulted in huge payments for damages" (Luckhurst 2008: 23). Although such socio-legal ramifications should not be discounted, they should not overshadow nineteenth-century medicine's commitment to functional diagnoses. Psychology was only just emerging as a distinct discipline, and patients would have to wait until after the First World War for an entirely psychical explanation for trauma. Erichsen, Page, Charcot, and their contemporaries all ultimately sought an organic cause for neuroses, be it a physical concussion (Erichsen) or a neurological imbalance caused by shock or hereditary predisposition (Page and Charcot).

Crucially, the squabble over objective and subjective diagnoses provides a link between the medical discourse and Émile Zola's contemporaneous naturalism. Zola was influenced by the groundbreaking work of Claude Bernard, another pioneering figure in nineteenth-century medicine for his application of the scientific method to physiology and advocacy of the blind experiment and vivisection. Zola cites entire paragraphs from Bernard's *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale* (1865) in his essay on naturalism, "Le Roman expérimental" (1880), frequently substituting "scientist" for "novelist." Zola finds Bernard so revolutionary because he believes the experimental, naturalist novel should use the same principles of objective observation to diagnose "the reciprocal influence of society on the individual and of the individual on society" (174) [*le travail réciproque de la société sur l'individu et de l'individu sur la société*] (1184). Methodologically, the experimental novelist "leans heavily on physiology" [*nous nous appuyons sur la physiologie*] but takes "man in isolation from the hands of the physiologist in order to carry forward the solution of the problem and resolve scientifically the question of knowing how men behave themselves once they are in society" (174) [*nous prenons l'homme isolé des mains du physiologiste, pour continuer la solution du problème et résoudre scientifiquement la question de savoir comment se comportent les hommes, dès qu'ils sont en société*] (1185). Zola seeks an objective diagnosis for the individual in modern society but theorizes literature's contribution as akin to psychology. The domain of the novelist "is the same as that of the physiologists, except that it is more vast. Like them we operate on man, for everything leads us to believe . . . that cerebral phenomena may be determined like other phenomena" (193) [*Notre domaine est le même que celui du physiologiste, si ce n'est qu'il est plus vaste. Nous opérons comme lui sur l'homme, car tout fait croire . . . que les phénomènes cérébraux peuvent être déterminés comme les autres phénomènes*] (1201). Like Page and Charcot,

who remain trapped between objective and subjective diagnoses for railway trauma, Zola remains committed to physiologically informed observation but with a psychologist's interest in the unconscious. Anticipating psychology's disciplinary independence, Zola predicts, "since scientists like Claude Bernard now show that fixed laws govern the human body we can assert without fear of mistake that the day will come when the laws of thought and the passions will be formulated in their turn" (171) [*puisque des savants, comme Claude Bernard, démontrent maintenant que des lois fixes régissent le corps humain, on peut annoncer, sans crainte de se tromper, l'heure où les lois de la pensée et des passions seront formulées à leur tour*] (1182). Although nineteenth-century physiologists and neurologists cannot objectively observe emotion, passion, and the intricate workings of the brain, the novelist can imagine them. For Zola, the naturalist novel imaginatively bridges the divide between objective and subjective, "doing scientific psychology, as a complement to scientific physiology" (172) [*Nous faisons en quelque sorte de la psychologie scientifique, pour compléter la physiologie scientifique*] (1183).

This experiment in "scientific psychology" is borne out in Zola's twenty-volume Rougon–Macquart cycle, with its panoramic vision of modern life. Throughout, Zola illustrates heredity's effect on a family, representative of the class divisions in France's Second Empire. The seventeenth installment, *La Bête humaine*, dramatically captures the intersection between the railway, modernity, trauma, and scientific physiology and psychology. The novel depicts the struggles of Jacques Lantier, a locomotive driver, to conquer his instinctual urge toward violence against women, particularly his mistress Séverine. Zola spent months meticulously researching and observing the railway system, and his descriptions of La Lison, Lantier's engine, are frequently cited in histories of railway spine for their accuracy.⁹ Zola repeatedly equates the railway with modernity and the future as it hurtles through the French countryside:

So many people! Still that crowd, that limitless crowd, amidst all the rolling of the carriages, the whistling of the engines, the tinkling of the telegraph, the ringing of the bells! It was like some huge body, a giant creature laid out on the ground with its head in Paris, its vertebrae the length of the track, its limbs stretching out with every branch-line, and its hands and feet in Le Havre and other destinations. And past it went, past it went, mechanical, triumphant, hurtling towards the future with mathematical rigour, determinedly oblivious to the rest of human life on either side, life unseen and yet perennial, with its eternal passions and its eternal crimes. (44)

Que de monde! encore la foule, la foule sans fin, au milieu du roulement des wagons, du sifflement des machines, du tintement du télégraphe, de la sonnerie des cloches! C'était comme un grand corps, un être géant couché en travers de la terre, la tête à Paris, les vertèbres tout le long de la ligne, les membres s'élargissant avec les embranchements, les pieds et les mains au Havre et dans les autres villes d'arrivée. Et ça passait, ça passait, mécanique, triomphal, allant à l'avenir avec une rectitude mathématique, dans l'ignorance volontaire de ce qu'il restait de l'homme, aux deux bords, caché et toujours vivace, l'éternelle passion et l'éternel crime. (1035)

Here, Zola combines the two iconic symbols of modernity, the crowd and the railway, into a force that acts in willful ignorance of individual lives and obliterates traditional time and space. Eventually, this mechanical beast collides with these individual lives in the form of a dray blocking the tracks. Witnesses see “the train rearing up into the air, seven carriages climbing one on top of the other, and then everything falling back down with the most dreadful splintering sound into a jumbled mass of wreckage” (289) [*le train se dresser debout, sept wagons monter les uns sur les autres, puis retomber avec un abominable craquement, en une débâcle informe de débris*] (1260), accompanied by cries of the victims that were “dissolving into the inarticulate howling of beasts” (290) [*se perdaient en hurlements inarticulés de bête*] (1260). Despite the horrific accident, by the end of the chapter, the “few, faceless members of the crowd” [*les inconnus de la foule*] (1274) who died had been removed and “the blood wiped away; and people were on the move once more, bound towards the future” (305) [*On avait [...] lavé le sang, et l'on repartait pour là-bas, à l'avenir*] (1275).

Zola extends his objective observation of modernity embodied by the railway to psychological drives at both the individual and societal levels. Thus, La Lison's destructive potential becomes a symbol of Lantier's murderous instincts, his climactic stabbing of Séverine occurring at the very second “the Paris express was passing, so violently and so rapidly that the floor shook; and she had died as though struck by lightning during the storm” (330) [*A cette seconde, passait l'express de Paris, si violent, si rapide, que le plancher en trembla; et elle était morte, comme foudroyée dans cette tempête*] (1297). Just as nineteenth-century medicine attributes traumatic neuroses to hereditary predispositions, Lantier believes he is “paying for the others, for the fathers and the grandfathers who had drunk, for the generations of drunkards of whose blood he was the corrupt issue, that he was paying the price of a gradual poisoning, of a relapse into primitive savagery that was dragging him back into the forest, among the wolves, among the wolves that ate women” (53) [*qu'il payait pour les autres, les*

pères, les grands-pères, qui avaient bu, les générations d'ivrognes dont il était le sang gâté, un lent empoisonnement, une sauvagerie qui le ramenait avec les loups mangeurs de femmes, au fond des bois] (1043). He struggles throughout the novel with these “savage” instinctual urges, against which “*l'homme civilisé*” (1236) fought back. It is no surprise that Zola was one of Freud's favorites: his depiction of Lantier reads like a psychoanalytic case study describing fugue states, hallucinations, and sexual neuroses.

This battle between primitive and civilized drives also ends tragically for society. The novel concludes with the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, again linking modernity, violence, and the railway. In the final chapter, Lantier and his fireman engage in a death duel, and the now driverless train rushes on with eighteen wagons loaded with soldiers headed to the front. The soldier-boys drunkenly sing as the train “race[s], onward and onward into the dark night, bound they [know] not where, simply onward” (367) [*il roulait, il roulait, dans la nuit noire, on ne savait où, là-bas*] (1331). Zola ends with the following:

What did it matter what victims it crushed in its path! Was it not, after all, heading into the future, heedless of the blood that was spilled? And on it sped through the darkness, driverless, like some blind, deaf beast turned loose upon the field of death, onward and onward, laden with its freight of cannon-fodder, with these soldiers, already senseless with exhaustion and drink, still singing away. (367–8)

Qu'importaient les victimes que la machine écrasait en chemin! N'allait-elle pas quand même à l'avenir, insoucieuse du sang répandu? Sans conducteur, au milieu des ténèbres, en bête aveugle et sourde qu'on aurait lâchée parmi la mort, elle roulait, elle roulait, chargée de cette chair à canon, de ces soldats, déjà hébétés de fatigue, et ivres, qui chantaient. (1331)

From the vantage of 1890, Zola retroactively diagnoses the mad rush to war as a symptom of a modern society hurtling toward the future as an immense crowd. Just as Lantier suffers from a hereditary flaw, society collectively returns to its primitive past in the senseless violence of war. As Rae Beth Gordon observes, in “the wake of the Franco-Prussian war, fears of degeneration and the startling rise of cases of hysteria would have been enough to justify the symbolism of disintegration” since, not just the French, but “all of humanity . . . is in danger of derailment” like the driverless locomotive, a “clear evocation of the Unconscious” (2007: 165–6). Ultimately, *La Bête humaine* dramatizes the nineteenth-century medical emphasis on heredity and prefigures the rise of the unconscious. The final image of the train running madly across a field of death, carrying senseless boy-soldiers fated to be cannon-fodder, foreshadows both the

carnage of the First World War and Freud's interpretation of the collective id in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).

Twenty-three years later, on the eve of World War I, Francophone avant-garde poet Blaise Cendrars would also equate the railway, modernity, and war in *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jeanne de France*. The long poem was published in a pamphlet measuring two meters that juxtaposed the text with Sonia Delaunay's vibrant cubist painting and a map of the rail line. Cendrars's intention was that the full print run, when lined up, would equal the height of another icon of modernity: the Eiffel Tower. *La Prose* is a simultaneous text; the reader experiences the visual and linguistic at the same time, mimicking the speed of modern transportation and technology that seemingly allowed one to be in multiple places at once. As Marjorie Perloff argues, it is "a poem of threshold, of passage from one world to another – from adolescence, if we will, to maturity, or from the promise of 1913 to the future of 1914" (1986: 29). In the text of the poem, the speaker recalls his past in France while the train races across Russia. As they progress east, he witnesses soldiers returning from the Russo–Japanese War and mobilizing for the First Russian Revolution: "If I were a painter I would splash lots of red and yellow over the end of this trip / Because I think we were all slightly crazy" (26) [*Si j'étais peintre je déverserais beaucoup de rouge, beaucoup de jaune sur la fin de ce voyage / Car je crois bien que nous étions tous un peu fous*]. He describes how "in the perpetual screeching of wheels I heard / The insane sobbing and screaming / Of an eternal liturgy" (26) [*Et je percevais dans le grincement perpétuel des roues / Les accents fous et les sanglots / D'une éternelle liturgie*] and "saw the silent trains the black trains returning from the Far East and going by like phantoms / And my eyes, like tail lights, are still trailing along behind those trains" (27) [*J'ai vu les trains silencieux les trains noirs qui revenaient de l'Extrême-Orient et qui passaient en fantômes / Et mon œil, comme le fanal d'arrière, court encore derrière ces trains*]. After witnessing "soldiers gone insane" [*de soldats fous*] and lying in quarantine with "gaping sores and wounds with blood gushing out" [*des plaies béantes des blessures qui saignaient à pleines orgues*], he sees "trains with 60 locomotives streaking away chased by hot horizons and desperate crows / Disappearing / In the direction of Port Arthur" (27) [*des trains de 60 locomotives qui s'enfuyaient à toute vapeur pourchassées par les horizons en rut et des bandes de corbeaux qui s'envolaient désespérément après / Disparaître / Dans la direction de Port-Arthur*]. Whereas Zola concludes with soldiers fatefully headed to the front, Cendrars vividly illustrates the horrific consequences of war. While *La Bête humaine* ends with a comet of flame streaking through the

darkness from the runaway engine, in *La Prose* the phantom-like trains are pursued by the taillight eyes of the poet-witness as they flee flames and hungry crows. The belated haunting by the silent, black trains; glimpses of soldiers and witnesses driven insane; and the fragmentary, nightmarish recollection of screeching wheels, sobbing, and screaming all anticipate psychoanalytic conceptions of trauma and the modernist aesthetic so frequently equated with melancholia in contemporary trauma theory.

Unlike the omniscient narrator in *La Bête humaine* who dispassionately and carefully observes events from various points of view, *La Prose* immerses the reader in the poet's perspective, creating a collage of sense perceptions, memories, and eyewitness impressions. Despite their aesthetic differences, both Zola and Cendrars vividly represent the fragmented modern psyche torn between past and present. Zola, like nineteenth-century medical writers, seeks an objective, hereditary diagnosis for the psychological neuroses caused by modernity. For Cendrars, modernity is simultaneously violent and exhilarating, crashing into tradition and remaking the world from the wreckage. As Perloff reminds us, *La Prose* is aligned with Futurism and is "by no means a pacifist poem" because "[v]iolence, energy, the thrust into the future – these are essential to living" (22). Whereas Zola's locomotive symbolizes the social ills attendant on modernity, Cendrars's railway spurs creativity. The poet realizes his potential in the "Rhythms of the train / What American psychiatrists call 'railroad nerves' / The noise of doors voices axles screeching along frozen rails / The golden thread of my future" (18) [*Les rythmes du train / La 'moëlle chemin-de-fer' des psychiatres américains / Le bruit des portes des voix des essieux grinçant sur les rails congelés / Le ferlin d'or de mon avenir*]. In the futurist moment on the brink of world war, railroad nerves become poetic inspiration written to the rhythm of the incomparably modern experience of speeding along frozen rails. While *La Lison*, a beast destructively and powerfully mirroring the faceless crowd, dashes through the French countryside toward an inevitable fate, for Cendrars, the train drives the poet toward the promise of his future, despite the war flashing by the windows. He declares, "I deciphered all the garbled texts of the wheels and united the scattered elements of a violent beauty / Which I possess / And which drives me" (28) [*J'ai déchiffré tous les textes confus des roues et j'ai rassemblé les éléments épars d'une violente beauté / Que je possède / Et qui me force*]. Scattered memories and sensations of the train journey are reassembled into this image of modernity's violent beauty. The railway is a wellspring of creativity, a vortex of sensations, not a debilitating case of "railroad nerves." Of course, the avant-garde, particularly the Futurists, would be

harshly deflated by the horror of the First World War, a “violent beauty” difficult to justify when faced with the mechanization of modern warfare. Yet the transition from a naturalist observation of psychological phenomena to an entirely subjective and fragmented modernist aesthetic parallels the rise of psychoanalysis in the wake of the war.

The perpetual rhythm of the train, collapsing individual and collective futures, hurtling toward war, captures trauma theory in transition, being forged in the crucible of modernity. As Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane observe, modernism is “the art that responds to the scenario of our chaos. It is the art consequent on Heisenberg’s ‘Uncertainty principle,’ of the destruction of civilization and reason in the First World War, of the world changed and reinterpreted my Marx, Freud and Darwin, of capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, of existential exposure to meaningless or absurdity” (1976: 27). For the modernists, “the shock, the violation of expected continuities, the element of de-creation and crisis, is a crucial element *of the style*” (24). Fin de siècle culture, with its shocks of unprecedented change, became fertile ground for both modernist style and psychoanalytic conceptions of trauma, which today yield such successful interpretations of post-1950s literature. Analyzing naturalist and avant-garde literature alongside concurrent medico-psychological discourse reveals a crucial precursor to the popular narrative of trauma theory beginning with Freud. The trajectory from naturalism to modernism is ripe for continued research by trauma scholars to further contextualize and theorize contemporary representations of violence, modernity, shock, and war. A trauma theory emerging from and shaped by the forces of sociocultural modernity, medico-psychological discourse, and aesthetic innovation belatedly and compulsively repeats, reverberating in the aftermath of the First World War, the Holocaust, and the Vietnam War, and echoing in the present day.

CHAPTER 3

Deconstruction *Trauma Inscribed in Language*

Tom Toremans

The emergence of trauma theory in the 1990s as an ethical resuscitation of the allegedly textualist, ahistorical, and apolitical theoretical discourse of deconstruction has been recounted at several instances.¹ As Susannah Radstone argues,

Within the Humanities ... deconstruction was one of the theories which ... most shaped the emergence of trauma theory ... To put things at their simplest, trauma theory appears to help the Humanities move beyond the impasses and crises in knowledge posed by these theories, without abandoning their insights. (Radstone 2007: 11)

This deconstructionist theorization of trauma was firmly embedded at Yale University, where a number of the key foundational figures of trauma theory were based. Shoshana Felman was Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Yale until 2004, when she moved to Emory University. Dori Laub today still is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine and was one of the cofounders of the Holocaust Survivors' Film Project, which subsequently became the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale.² Another founding member was Geoffrey Hartman, whose involvement with the archive paralleled a "pivotal presence in the domain of trauma studies, Jewish studies, and the memory of the Holocaust" (Vermeulen 2010: 2). Hartman, who in the 1970s had already become a key figure – though as "a reluctant fellow traveler" (Vermeulen 2010: 2) – of the so-called Yale School of deconstruction,³ supervised Cathy Caruth's doctoral dissertation at Yale, which she completed in 1988 and published three years later as *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud*. In the preface, Caruth not only acknowledges Hartman's "critical attention and comments on the entire manuscript," but also indicates her indebtedness to "the teachings of the late Paul de Man" (Caruth 1991: ix), Sterling Professor of Humanities at Yale at the time of his death in 1983.⁴

The reference to Paul de Man in Caruth's early work is not insignificant: both de Man's work on (post-)Romantic aesthetic ideology and his incisive critique of traditional literary theory profoundly influenced the early articulation of trauma theory. To an important degree, trauma theory can be considered a response to the challenge of reading "after" de Man – both chronologically and following his example. This challenge was formulated by de Man himself at the moment when his critique of linguistic referentiality had reached a point that appeared to signal the end of literary theory. It is the critical return to and the theoretical recovery from this radically negative moment in de Man that allowed for an inscription of trauma into "a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (Caruth 1996: 5). In the deconstructionist strand of trauma theory, it is thus de Man, rather than Derrida, who takes center stage.⁵ Two crucial effects of this de Manian influence are the marked presence of Romantic literature in this early theorization of trauma and its complication of literature and theory in a crisis of reference.

Before turning to Cathy Caruth's highly influential articulation of trauma theory, it is worthwhile to first zoom in on Geoffrey Hartman's seminal 1995 essay, "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies." This essay not only signaled one of the most overtly programmatic moments in the emergence of trauma theory in the 1990s, but also foregrounded the strong ethical drive of this new paradigm and its firm link with the literature of Romanticism. In a second section, we will pursue a close reading of Caruth's rearticulation of de Man's critique of reference into the theoretical basis for the ethical restoration of reading pursued by trauma theory. A third and final section discusses the critical legacy of this deconstructionist theorization of trauma and the criticism that has been leveled against it from various perspectives and disciplines.

Situating itself at "a beginning" and amidst "a virtual community of explorers," Hartman's essay, "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," introduces trauma theory as a field "focusing on the relationship of words and trauma, and helping us to 'read the wound' with the aid of literature" (1995: 537). In an emphatically ethical register, Hartman repeatedly foregrounds the ways in which trauma studies brings about "a new awareness . . . which is ethical as well as clinical." Facilitating a study of literature driven by "more *listening*, more *hearing* of words within words, and a greater openness to *testimony*" (541), trauma theory makes "the literary object . . . more connected with what goes on in a blatantly political world" (543) and creates "an opening . . . to public . . . issues . . . with ethical, cultural, and religious implications" (544). Careful to

distinguish this new approach from “moral criticism” (544), Hartman further specifies this ethical mode of reading:

The reader . . . is not simply a subject who reads, but a teacher or a student; something of both, perhaps. If we superimpose the interactive relation of teacher and student on that of reader and text, literary studies loses some of the chill which cognitive or constative theories have cast on it, and reading is restored as ethical . . . because the readings are *addressed* . . . to the other as a responsive, vulnerable, even unpredictable being. (549)

Underlying this ethical restoration of reading is “an unsentimental acknowledgement of the human condition, and a view of art as at once testimony and representation” (545). The term *acknowledgement* is crucial here: trauma theory does not seek to *explain*, but instead “stays longer in the negative and allows disturbances of language and mind the quality of time we give to literature” (547). The negativity in question unites literature, theory, and criticism in a pursuit of a “traumatic knowledge,” a knowledge “that cannot be made entirely conscious, in the sense of being fully retrieved or communicated without distortion” (537). On a theoretical level, the phrase “traumatic knowledge” is an oxymoron, precisely because it is a knowledge based in the acknowledgment of the impossibility of cognition in the face of the traumatic event, to the extent that the latter bypasses perception and consciousness and “falls directly into the psyche” (537). The very use of the figure of falling signals the rhetorical consequence of this oxymoronic kind of knowledge for trauma theory: it always “risks being figurative itself” (537) and cannot rely on a literal or non-figurative language in which to turn trauma into an object of cognition. If figurative language addresses “the negative moment of experience,” then trauma theory explores this poetic language “as something other than an enhanced imaging or vicarious repetition of a prior (non)experience” (540). This coimplication of literature and theory will form an essential part of the deconstructionist strand of trauma theory and its persistent questioning of “reference, subjectivity, and narration” (547).

Ultimately, however, Hartman’s focus is on literature, rather than on theory. This should not come as a surprise, given that Hartman’s scholarly work had persistently addressed the complications of Romantic literature since the 1950s. As he emphasizes elsewhere, the notion of trauma refers back to “a more mystical notion” he already mentioned in his first book, *The Unmediated Vision* (1954), i.e. “that of Meister Eckhart’s *Unerkennendes Erkennen*, an unknowing knowing” (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 631–32). Hartman stresses that “certainly from the beginning I’ve been interested in how to define a specifically literary knowledge, which can

reveal without full consciousness, or systematic analysis" (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 632). In the 1995 essay, Hartman similarly indicates that his "own interest in the relevance of psychoanalysis to literary studies has not centered on trauma" and that "[t]he poets were there before" (1995: 551), stipulating that he mainly shares with the emerging field of trauma studies a concern "for the absences or intermittences in speech . . ."

for the obliquity or residual muteness of "flowers of speech" and other euphemic modes; for the uncanny role of accidents; for the "ghosting" of the subject; for the connection of voice with identity . . .; for interpretation as a feast not a fast; and for literature as a testimonial act that transmits knowledge in a form that is not scientific and does not coincide with either a totally realistic (as if that were possible) or analytic form of representation. (552)

Indicative of the close proximity between Hartman's notion of traumatic knowledge and his engagement with Romantic literature in terms of testimony and transmission are the references in the essay to Blake, Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Blake's creation myth and the evocation of the fall of Albion present us with a "hyperbolic picture of trauma" (538): the division of Albion is a traumatic event, and the latter's attempt at recovering unity and reintegration ends up in "a repetitious nightmare" (538). Reading Blake's creation myth in Lacanian terms, Hartman suggests a parallel between Albion's desire for a prelapsarian state of integrity and the infant's fall into the symbolical order and the subsequent desire for the real. Hartman finds a similar breach at work in Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," a poem in which trauma is legible as "the ominous repetition of images of arrest and *isolation*" (543). In the case of Coleridge, however, the rupture affects not the symbolic as such (as in Blake), but occurs "*between* the symbolic and the individual" (543): the Mariner's unmotivated killing of the albatross leads to the disappearance of speech, and this latter only returns in the form of the Mariner's compulsive and repetitive narration of his story before the infinite (re)figuring of his trauma in "a rhythmic or temporal stutter" (543). In Keats's pursuit of a postpastoral poetry, Hartman locates "an act of imaginative regeneration" aimed at the creation of a new, nontraumatic psyche. Ultimately, however, this pursuit ends in *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats's unfinished epic poem that "remains entangled in all the rhetorical symptoms of trauma" (554).

While the poetry of Blake, Coleridge, and Keats each present us with singular figurations of trauma, it is Wordsworth's poetic diction that occupies a unique position as promising a successful transmission of trauma and its extension "into personal and cultural memory" (Hartman 1995: 552). As Pieter Vermeulen has extensively demonstrated, "from the very

beginning until his most recent cultural criticism and his work on Holocaust memory,” Hartman’s work has been driven by the affirmation of “the viability of a Wordsworthian mode of aesthetic mediation in the face of cultural forces that seem to deny its potency” (Vermeulen 2010: 3). In Hartman’s discussion of traumatic knowledge, Wordsworth enters the scene as the poet whose work, like that of the other Romantics, is punctured by moments of negativity and rupture (for example, the “mute, insensate things” in the Lucy poems), yet that at the same time contains a promise of recovery, which, though never fully redeemable, safeguards the possibility of testimony and memory despite this negativity. Hartman’s reference to his 1964 study on *Wordsworth’s Poetry* and its location in Wordsworth of “quasi-sacred sites of ‘first encounter,’ binding contacts between his imagination and earth” (1995: 552) reinscribes Wordsworth’s poetry into a trauma-theoretical framework by reaffirming its restoration of “the resilience of the imagination and the reality of the phenomenal world” (Vermeulen 2010: 4). As Hartman puts it in a less theoretical tone in his interview with Caruth: “everything works against trauma in Wordsworth, yet the basis of trauma is there” (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 638).

In sum, Hartman’s intervention in the emerging field of trauma studies pursues an ethical restoration of reading and a nonsystematic, figurative, particularly “literary” kind of knowledge that acknowledges the limits of cognition and representation in the face of trauma. The traumatic event can only be addressed or acknowledged by a figurative language, and both literature and theory participate in this “perpetual troping” (Hartman 1995: 537). This theorization of trauma is informed by Hartman’s earlier work on Romanticism and repositions Wordsworth’s poetry as exemplifying the continued possibility of (limited) recovery and transmission despite the radically negative work of trauma. As Vermeulen has convincingly argued, however, Hartman’s intervention in trauma theory is substantially conditioned by a certain degree of “avoidance . . . of the utter negativity of trauma” (Vermeulen 2007: 6), already legible in *Wordsworth’s Poetry*. Instead of providing “a strategy to cope with the aftermath of trauma,” Vermeulen argues, the trauma-theoretical turn in Hartman’s lifelong engagement with Wordsworth’s poetry delivers

an ethic and aesthetic that intervenes in a culture that is manifestly saturated by the images, memories, and aftershocks of trauma, but whose members are not for all that exposed to radical trauma themselves. It does not aim to offer an antidote to suffering, but wants to function as a paradoxically potent force in a media-saturated culture in which traces of suffering circulate promiscuously. (Vermeulen 2010: 7)

Both Hartman's avoidance of this radical negativity and his insistence on the essentially figurative mode of theory in fact refer his work on trauma to the work of that other Yale deconstructionist, Paul de Man, who is markedly absent in Hartman's essay but who will come to occupy a central position in the theorization of trauma by Hartman's student, Cathy Caruth.

In the final years before his death in 1983, de Man's work took an "overt turn to history, ideology and politics, though a concern for all three is there all along in [his] post-1953 work" (Miller 2005: 314). During this period, de Man's writing turned increasingly autocritical and self-reflexive and persistently foregrounded the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of continuing beyond a radically negative point that appeared to make a systematic theory of literature impossible. In the preface to the posthumously published volume on *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1984), for example, de Man singled out "Shelley Disfigured" as "the only place where I come close to facing some of these problems about history and fragmentation," leaving a challenge for future critics: "[h]ow and where one goes on from there is far from clear, but certainly no longer simply a matter of syntax and diction" (de Man 1984: ix). Significantly, Geoffrey Hartman identified the same essay as the one in which de Man's position had become "too absolute" (Hartman 1980: 108).

An alternative version of this challenge occurs in de Man's "The Resistance to Theory" (1982), the essay originally intended as a chapter on the discipline of literary theory for an *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures* published by the Modern Language Association, but ending up explaining "why the main theoretical interest of literary theory consists in the impossibility of its definition" (de Man 1986: 3) and provocatively claiming that "[t]he loftier the aims and the better the methods of literary theory, the less possible it becomes" (de Man 1986: 19). At the same time, however, de Man also indicates the necessity and inevitability of the continuation of theory:

Yet literary theory is not in danger of going under; it cannot help but flourish, and the more it is resisted, the more it flourishes, since the language it speaks is the language of self-resistance. What remains impossible to decide is whether this flourishing is a triumph or a fall. (de Man 1986: 19–20)

It is this paradoxical invitation to continue literary theory despite the radically negative knowledge it simultaneously reveals and resists that is the point of departure of Caruth's articulation of trauma theory in

Unclaimed Experience, in which both de Man's essay on "The Resistance to Theory" and its concluding figure of the fall occupy central positions.

Prior to the publication of her seminal book, Caruth had already edited two special issues of *American Imago* on "Psychoanalysis, Culture and Trauma" in 1991, republished four years later in the volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Addressing "the challenges that trauma poses to psychoanalytic theory, as well as the possibilities it opens within psychoanalysis and more generally within contemporary thought" (Caruth 1995: 4), the special issues pursued an emphatically interdisciplinary scope, including literature as one of the specifically relevant discourses for this reconceptualization of trauma:

The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience. (Caruth 1995: 4)

Also in 1991, Caruth published her first book *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud*, based on the doctoral dissertation she submitted at Yale in 1988. As de Graef et al. have argued, it is in Caruth's location of "a sort of linguistic trauma of self-absence" in Locke ("a determined de Manian performance") that "trauma theory may be observed to invent itself as an articulate project" (2003: 250).

In fact, at the time Caruth was already deeply invested in an analysis of de Man's critique of theory. One year earlier, Caruth had published an essay on de Man's reading of Kant and Kleist in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* ("The Claims of Reference"), focusing on de Man's critique of linguistic referentiality and the recurring figures of falling and the human body as indicative of the "necessity, and failure, of theory" (Caruth 1990: 204). It is this essay that, in a slightly revised version, will occupy a central position in *Unclaimed Experience* as the chapter that theorizes trauma in terms of de Manian deconstruction. It is interesting to note that the essay was also republished in another context: in the volume *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*, edited by Caruth and Deborah Esch, it was prefaced by an introduction in which Caruth indicated that "[i]n increasing numbers of books and articles, deconstruction has been wrongly . . . dismissed as denying memory, history, and all notions of truth," while it in fact "does not deny reference, but denies that reference can be modeled on the laws of perception or of understanding."⁶ Deconstruction's "surprising realignment of reference with what is *not fully*

masterable by cognition” (Caruth and Esch 1995: 2) in fact already anticipates its close proximity to trauma. Although the term *trauma* does not appear in the introduction, it is strongly implied by what Caruth posits as the central question addresses by the volume:

What would it mean . . . to conceive of an experience that is constituted by the way it escapes or resists comprehension? How might one have access to a history that is constituted by its continually delayed entrance into experience? (Caruth and Esch 1995: 1)

In *Unclaimed Experience* this deconstructionist disjunction between reference and perception and the persistence of the former in a noncognitive mode is rephrased in terms of trauma. Although the term is completely absent in the chapter on de Man (now entitled “The Falling of the Body and the Impact of Reference”), Caruth suggests in her introduction that the figure of falling is “perhaps . . . de Man’s own translation of the concept . . . of trauma” (Caruth 1996: 7). Together with Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Lacan’s reinterpretation of Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams*, and Duras and Resnais’s *Hiroshima mon amour*, de Man’s critique of reference becomes part of a body of “texts of psychoanalysis, of literature, and of literary theory” that “both speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience”:

If traumatic experience, as Freud indicates suggestively, is an experience that is not fully assimilated as it occurs, then these texts . . . ask what it means to transmit and to theorize around a crisis that is marked, not by a simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness. (Caruth 1996: 5)

Reading beyond “each author’s argument in its explicit reference to traumatic experience,” Caruth traces “in each of these texts a different story, the story or the textual itinerary of insistently recurring words or figures.” In doing so, even theoretical texts have an irreducibly “literary dimension that cannot be reduced to the thematic content of the text . . . and that, beyond what we can know or theorize about it, stubbornly persists in bearing witness to some forgotten wound” (1996: 5). In de Man’s text, trauma becomes legible in the ways in which it “both conceptualizes and enacts a mode of referential resistance” (77). De Man’s “critical theory of reference,” Caruth argues,

ultimately becomes a narrative, and a narrative inextricably bound up with the problem of what it means to fall . . . The story of the falling body – which I read through de Man’s text as the story of the impact of reference – thus encounters, unexpectedly, the story of a trauma, and the story of trauma is inescapably bound to a referential return. (7)

Caruth's analysis of de Man's critique of reference is structured around a series of paradoxes complicating the relation between texts, reality, language, and knowledge. The master paradox driving de Man's critique of theory, Caruth argues, concerns "the recognition that direct or phenomenal reference to the world means, paradoxically, the production of a fiction" (76). Ever since Newton's discovery of gravitation and the corresponding reconceptualization of the world as one determined by falling rather than motion, a disjunction appeared between mathematics and language; that is, gravitation could be applied to the world "as a mathematical formula," while as a concept "it remained philosophically incomprehensible." The paradox that emerged with Newton was thus that "the only thing that was adequate to the world was . . . that which didn't refer (mathematics); and what did refer, language, could no longer describe the world" (76). A disjunction thus occurs between language and physical law, the former no longer referring to or representing empirical reality.

The further theoretical exploration of this paradoxical relocation of reference vis-à-vis reality occurs in de Man's "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," one of the six Messenger Lectures that de Man delivered months before his death in 1983 and later published in the volume *Aesthetic Ideology* (1996: 70–90). The essay provides a close reading of Kant's establishment of theory as a "self-knowing, self-referential system of discourse" (Caruth 1996: 79) that is not bound to empirical reality and enjoys a certain conceptual and linguistic freedom. In Kant, critical (or transcendental or pure) philosophy distinguishes itself from metaphysics in that the latter concerns empirical or phenomenal reality, while the former is about the conditions of possibility of experience and knowledge. Whereas metaphysics pursues the articulation of "an empirically determined set of laws," transcendental philosophy is purely conceptual and does not depend on the empirical world or on a referential relation to this world. This clear-cut demarcation between a purely conceptual language and empirical reality, however, is substantially complicated by the emergence in Kant of the figure of the human body. This "recurring metaphor of the body, as a totality of various limbs and parts" (quoted by Caruth 1996: 79) allows Kant to recuperate the loss of reference to empirical reality in the integration of transcendental philosophy and metaphysics in a unified organic system, thus containing the possibility of theory and its "independence of empirical referents" in its "self-representation as a human body" (Caruth 1996: 79). At the same time, however, the figure of the human body signals a persistent problem of reference:

Behind philosophy's own figure of its conceptual project [i.e. that of the human body], which would incorporate force, as an unknowable event, into the articulated body of philosophy, lies the ideal of a mechanism that lifelessly transforms the laws of force and motion into superhuman grace. (Caruth 1996: 80)

When de Man traces Kant's reference to *Glieder* [limbs] to Kleist's *Gliedermann* (the puppet in the story *On the Marionette Theater*), this paradoxical figure of the puppet substantially disrupts the figuration of philosophy as organic body. The paradox of the puppet resides in the observation that its dance emulates and surpasses human grace while it is actually composed of dead and mechanical limbs. If we conceive of the relation between the puppeteer and the puppet as one between the author and his writing, this juxtaposition between the organic and the mechanical translates into a problem of reference. On the one hand, the graceful dance of the puppet incorporates the human puppeteer into its purely mechanical movements. As such, it eliminates reference and incorporates the latter into "a formal, quantified system that is as predictable . . . and . . . nonreferential . . . as a mathematics" (Caruth 1996: 81). On the other hand, however, the puppet's dance, in its elimination of reference, also evokes the image of the human body. Translated in linguistic terms: although a purely formal, nonreferential grammar might allow reference to be eliminated and inscribed into a system of intralinguistic differences, it nevertheless ends up figuring an organic, phenomenal link to empirical reality.

This oscillation between reference and its elimination, figuration and grammar, ultimately presents a juxtaposition of mutually incompatible linguistic models – one organic and representational, the other mechanical and purely formal. The desire to integrate both models produces "a deep, perhaps fatal, break" (quoted by Caruth 1996: 87) at the center of Kant's critical philosophy. At the moment when philosophy wants to integrate force into its formal motions and integrate language with phenomenal reality, the figure of the human body reappears, this time, however, not "as a unified whole" but as a disarticulated set of "limbs, hands, toes, breasts . . . in themselves, severed from the organic unity of the body" (quoted by Caruth 1996: 88). For Caruth, this mutilated, disarticulated body is "the paradoxical evocation of a referential reality neither fictionalized by direct reference nor formalized into a theoretical abstraction" (89). Reference is thus radically repositioned toward language: instead of establishing a direct relation between language and reality, reference comes to bear on the perpetual shift between two incompatible linguistic models: when language aspires to be purely formal, it is haunted by reference to reality, when it

aspires to a referential link to reality, it betrays an incompatible desire for pure form.⁷ As it perpetually oscillates between both models, language thus never reaches empirical reality, instead continually referring to its other. In this sense, the mutilation of the body in Kant “designates the reassertion of a referential moment . . . that is not, however, to be understood within the . . . formalizable opposition of empirical and conceptual knowledge” (88). This return of reference, in other words, is not accessible to Kant’s text as (self-) knowledge: it is “not something known or stated by philosophy, but something that occurs in its attempt to free itself from reference” (88).

In a concluding gesture, Caruth posits as “the crucial task de Man’s theoretical work is engaged in” and “the task that falls upon us” (Caruth 1996: 90) to capture the repeated narration in de Man’s text of this radical impact of reference and the ways in which it persistently resists understanding. Deriving from this irreversible disjunction between reference and extralinguistic reality, the fundamental paradox in de Man’s later writing is the simultaneous inevitability and impossibility of theory:

reference emerges not in its accessibility to perception, but in the resistance of language to perceptual analogies; . . . the impact of reference is felt, not in the search for an external referent, but in the necessity, and failure, of theory. (90)

Like Kant’s text, the de Manian text cannot *know* but only *figure* this paradox: it “no longer simply knows what it says, but indeed does more than it knows.” The “unique referential resonance of de Man’s writing” is that it tells the paradoxical impossibility of theory as “the story . . . of its own falling” (90). This crisis of theory is a crisis of knowledge and a crisis of reference, and as such it is very intimately connected to the epistemological crisis effected by trauma. If the figure of falling is de Man’s translation of the concept of trauma, this reciprocity between reference and trauma “does not deny or eliminate the possibility of reference but insists, precisely, on the inescapability of its belated impact” (7). As such, de Man’s critique of reference not only actively confirms the traumatic narratives of Freud, Lacan, Duras, and Resnais, but also provides a theoretical basis for the inscription of trauma in language, the basic material available to these narratives for the perpetual troping of trauma.

As Roger Luckhurst indicates in the introduction to *The Trauma Question*, Caruth’s “small body of work has been extremely influential” (2008: 5). It is thus no coincidence that the introduction to the recent volume on *The Future of Trauma Theory* points out that although her work “has been explored and problematized . . . many of the chapters in

this volume cite it and use it as the basis of their critique” (Buelens et al. 2014: 3). At the same time, Ruth Leys, one of Caruth’s most ardent critics, claims that “while Caruth’s approach continues to appeal to a range of scholars in various fields, in the course of the past several years the deconstructive theory informing Caruth’s approach has lost much of its appeal, with the result that trauma theory has been modified” (2012: 5). If one of Caruth’s early articulations of trauma theory emphasized the need for an interdisciplinary dialogue, her deconstructionist approach has indeed been criticized from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. As Thomas Elsaesser has argued,

The critiques ranged from demanding more precise definitions, suggesting modification through wider and more diverse examples, basic methodological challenges, warnings about too monolithic an application, all the way to polemical engagements and outright rejection, on the grounds of tautology and circular reasoning. The disciplinary spectrum of these voices also ranged widely from Freudian psychoanalysis to clinical psychologists, from anthropologists to neuroscientists, from literary scholars to film scholars, from feminist philosophers to law professors, from historians to sociologists. (2014: 308)

From a clinical perspective, various critics have targeted Caruth’s Lacanian take on the amnesiac, unknowable, and unspeakable traumatic event and its partial recuperation in/through literary language. As Joshua Pederson suggests,

Caruth builds [her] theory on the work of prominent contemporary psychologists and psychiatrists, most prominently Judith Herman and Bessel van der Kolk . . . Because she constructed her critical edifice on a scientific foundation, her theory has long been resistant to critique, and this resistance contributes to her system’s enduring use value. (2014: 334)

Accordingly, one strand of criticism of Caruth’s work has focused on the clinical foundation of her theory. Pederson, for example, highlights how Richard McNally’s take on trauma “undermines the two most crucial tenets of Caruth’s literary theory of trauma: the notion that traumatic memories are ‘unregistered’ or ‘unclaimed,’ and the idea that traumatic memories elude straightforward verbal representation” (Pederson 2014: 336), concluding that “we must be willing to give up the claim that *only* literature can help us read the wound of trauma” (349).

Without doubt the most polemical and influential criticism of the scientific foundations of Caruth’s trauma theory was voiced by Ruth Leys in her seminal book *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Leys mainly takes issue with

Caruth's notion of the "literality" of trauma (and its basis in the work of Bessel van der Kolk) and its close proximity to the de Manian notion of materiality. This "pathos of the literal," according to Leys, not only allows Caruth's theory "to preserve the truth of the trauma as the failure of representation," but also permits this trauma "to be passed on to others who can not only imaginatively identify with it but literally share in the communion of suffering" (2000: 253). In an overtly polemical tone, Leys concludes that Caruth assimilates "trauma theory to a version of the 'deconstructive' views on language and meaning of the literary critic and theorist Paul de Man" and that her work betrays "a fascination with, almost a relishing of, the currently modish idea that the domain of trauma is the unspeakable and unrepresentable" (304).

Leys's book remains a standard reference for critical interventions in the field of trauma studies seeking to wrestle its theoretical foundations from Caruth's deconstructionist account. Susannah Radstone, for example, takes Leys's argument as the starting point for her suggestion of an alternative clinical framework. Criticizing Caruth's "topography of the inner world" as one that "dispenses with the layering of conscious/subconscious and unconscious" and "entails the abandonment of Freud's emphasis on the mediating role of unconscious processes in the production of the mind's scenes and meanings, including those of memory" (Radstone 2007: 16), Radstone appeals to the work of "Object-Relations theorists and . . . Laplanche and Pontalis." The latter "substitute for trauma theory's emphasis on the dissociation of unassimilated memories, a focus on the traumatic nature of unconscious associations" (16). Likewise, Amy Hungerford has indicated that her criticism of Caruth is "in some ways parallel – and certainly indebted – to Leys's work" (2001: 84). Like Leys, Hungerford argues that "Caruth's work, and trauma theory more generally, produces not so much a certain understanding of trauma, as a certain understanding of language . . . indebted to de Manian deconstruction but also departing from it at the very point where the autonomous literary language that de Man imagined is taken . . . to actually be the experience of persons." Hungerford, in other words, sees Caruth's translation of de Manian deconstruction as advancing an "understanding of trauma and language [that] is neither new nor particular to the practices of deconstruction and psychoanalysis she explicitly engages" (84). In her more elaborate critical response to Caruth in *The Holocaust of Texts*, Hungerford repeats Leys's insistence on the presence of a certain pathos in Caruth's argument that prohibits an engagement with "more concrete notions of trauma." If, Hungerford argues, there is a certain "unacknowledged

pathos” in de Man that is indicative of a sense of “regret or loss” accompanying his theoretical critique of reference, then “Caruth simply replicates and amplifies the pathos without making its object – the failure of reference – any more plausible as an instance of trauma” (113).

Caruth’s foundational work has also been criticized and redirected from other angles. A first resistance to her work has, not surprisingly, been voiced by deconstructionist theorists who are skeptical of the ethical resuscitation of deconstruction in trauma theory. As discussed earlier, Geoffrey Hartman himself has warned against the luring danger of a new evangelism. This warning, as de Graef et al. have argued, is indicative of

a weakness in the formalisation of this ethical charge across the disciplines it haunts. The measure of that weakness is the uneasy mixture of hesitation and emphasis characteristic of trauma studies in the field of literature. The emphasis bespeaks a commitment to the reading of literature as an inventive practice intent on alterity; the hesitation bespeaks a salutary reservation against the potentially abusive self-aggrandisement attendant on the appropriation of trauma.⁸ (2003: 254)

Stef Craps’s response to Caruth in his recent book on *Postcolonial Witnessing* might be taken as paradigmatic of the postcolonial critique of her work. Craps highlights the remarkable failure in “the founding texts of the field (including Caruth’s own work) . . . to live up to [the] promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement” (2013: 2) that concludes Caruth’s reading of Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* in *Unclaimed Experience*.⁹ In a similar vein, Kalí Tal has claimed that “Caruth’s claim that trauma can link different cultures is not borne out in her own work, in which she makes reference only to Euro-American thinkers and scholars, and reinscribes Western colonialism upon the body of the alien Other” (1996b: n. pag.). Indicative of the pertinence of this postcolonial critique is the observation that Caruth herself has extensively responded to it in her afterword to the 2016 “20th Anniversary Edition” of *Unclaimed Experience*, in which she returns to her reading of (Freud’s interpretation of) the story of Tancred and Clorinda in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*.

Another key response to Caruth’s work within the field of trauma studies has been articulated by historian Dominick LaCapra, whose work has been equally foundational and influential. While in LaCapra’s two main works on trauma published in the 1990s, his commentary on Caruth’s work is hidden in footnotes,¹⁰ he engages more directly with her approach in *History in Transit* (2004). According to LaCapra, Caruth “comes dangerously close to conflating absence (of absolute foundations and total meaning or knowledge) with loss and even sacralizing, or making

sublime, the compulsive repetition or acting-out of a traumatic past” (2004: 121). By sacralizing the acting-out of trauma, Caruth (not unlike Adorno) forecloses any possibility of working through trauma and ends up representing “some long-standing religious views relating to a radically transcendent, inscrutable divinity and his mysterious, nonsymbolizable, unreadable, or unrepresentable ways.” “In secular terms,” LaCapra adds, “one is in the vicinity of an aesthetic of the sublime” (122).¹¹ Against such sacralizing and reductive tendencies, LaCapra argues, “one may nonetheless maintain that a noncaricatural, nontotalizing form of working-through is desirable, especially in social and political life” (123).

With LaCapra’s emphasis on the social and political importance of trauma studies, we seem to have come full circle. If Caruth’s deconstructionist theorization of trauma was driven by an ethical restoration of de Manian deconstruction, its critical reception turns precisely on its premature foreclosure or limitation of the ethical purport of trauma studies. Rather than making Caruth’s work obsolete or out of fashion, however, the very fact that trauma studies is time and again forced to return to its theoretical foundations in Caruth’s articulation of Freudian psychoanalysis with de Manian deconstruction is testimony to its relevance for the further development of the field. One way in which Caruth’s work endures derives from its “grappling with intractable problems in ways that may have valuable or instructive dimensions” (LaCapra 2004: 87). Another, no less important, way it does so is by inscribing trauma in language, thus firmly positing a linguistic condition, which it has become all too easy to criticize as reductive, and which will still demand to be addressed and imagined by trauma studies to come.¹²

The Holocaust as the Ultimate Trauma Narrative

Anna Hunter

In *Auschwitz and After*, her testimonial account of surviving the concentration camp in Birkenau, Charlotte Delbo writes, “Today I am not sure that what I wrote is true. I am certain that it is truthful” (1995: 1). This meditation on what we might term the veracity or accuracy of her writing reveals one of the core identifiers of traumatic narrative – what Cathy Caruth, borrowing from Shoshana Felman, describes as a “crisis of truth” (1995: 6). In exploring the relationship between trauma theory and the Holocaust, we come repeatedly to the notion of crisis, and in addition to the crisis of truth that characterizes the traumatic narratives of Holocaust survivors, we may also, following Dori Laub, identify a crisis of witnessing in both individual and cultural responses to those narratives that underlies attempts within cultural memory to integrate the Holocaust into the narrative of the twentieth century. This chapter is centered on the notion of crisis, and specifically of the Holocaust as a central point of crisis within twentieth-century history and culture, that replicates the individual trauma of survivors on a macrocosmic scale evidenced within a crisis of narrative. It explores the positioning of the Holocaust as the ultimate trauma narrative by first of all examining the application of trauma theory to Holocaust survivor testimonies. Expanding from the private, individual trauma of survivor accounts to the broader question of how (and if) the Holocaust can be narrated within cultural memory, Anne Whitehead notes that “crisis extends beyond the individual to affect the ways in which historical experience can be accessed at a wider cultural level” (2004: 7). The Holocaust constitutes a traumatic narrative not only as a historical trauma in narrative form but also as a trauma *to* narrative itself enacted as a crisis of both signification and representation.

In her seminal text *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Cathy Caruth offers the following definition that describes the pathology of psychic trauma for the individual:

There is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (4)

Paradoxically, in addition to this advanced awareness surrounding stimuli that call to mind the traumatizing event and the intrusive repetition of the event via dreams and hallucinations, Caruth also reveals a key identifying feature of this pathology as being a lack of direct access to the event within the conscious memory of the sufferer: "The event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (4–5). A person who suffers from traumatic memories may have no conscious recall of the event itself and experiences it only through the traumatic repetitions described earlier. When this occurs it is a failure of conscious memory to fully account for and narrate the horror of the event at hand, thus the traumatic event remains "unassimilable to associative chains of meaning" (5). Drawing on the work of Janet (1928) and using psychoanalysis as a framework to explore this failure of conscious memory further, van der Kolk and van der Hart explain that "Narrative memory consists of mental constructs, which people use to make sense out of experience . . . under extreme conditions existing meaning schemes may be entirely unable to accommodate frightening experience" (1995: 160). In such instances, the traumatic event is stored only in the subconscious memory of the sufferer and surfaces into the conscious mind in the form of unwelcome and uninvited intrusions such as flashbacks and vivid dreams. Having no recognizable conscious memory of the traumatic event leaves the survivor of that event in a position where, like Delbo, they are forced to question the reliability of their own memory, placing the truthfulness of their memories under scrutiny even as they must question their ability to tell their own stories to themselves. It is here that we may begin to conceptualize the crisis of truth cited earlier, in the inability to locate and narrate one's own history. Indeed, Caruth further clarifies her definition of trauma as a pathological symptom as being "not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history. The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot fully possess" (1995: 5). The crisis of truth to which Caruth refers, however, speaks not only to an individual's problematized relationship to his or her own history, but also to a wider crisis of truth that

“extends beyond the question of individual cure and asks how we in this era can have access to our own historical experience” (6). Nowhere is the question of how we access our own historical experience more pertinent than in relation to the Holocaust, identified by many as the paradigmatic trauma of the modern age.

It is widely accepted, particularly within psychoanalytic approaches to trauma, that the most effective way of reducing the pathological symptoms of trauma in the survivor is to facilitate the conscious narration of the traumatic event, so that it may become lifted from the subconscious and integrated into conscious memory. Van der Kolk and van der Hart argue that “traumatic memories . . . need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language” (1995: 176). Once this initial act of narration has taken place “the story can be told, the person can look back at what happened; he has given it a place in his life history” (176). In the case of a traumatic historical event such as the Holocaust, the individual act of self-narrative also carries the potential to become a public act, speaking to a collective memory that also struggles to situate its response to the event. Indeed, as Dori Laub identifies, for the process of narration to have its desired effect for the survivor, there needs to be “an address to hearing” (Felman and Laub 1992: 71), which renders the act of narration necessarily public. Laub’s discussion of trauma and survivor testimony in reference to the Holocaust develops some of the key issues identified so far in relation to traumatic memory, and in doing so invites us to explore the earliest relationship between trauma and narrative in reference to the Holocaust. This demonstrates how trauma complicates the act of narration and destabilizes the roles of narrator, receiver, and witness.

Laub echoes Caruth in stating,

Massive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction. The victim’s narrative – the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma – does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence. (Felman and Laub 1992: 57)

Narrating one’s own memories to oneself is a key element of identity formation. Susan J. Brison uses this formulation as the basis for her essay, “Trauma Narratives: Remaking the Self,” citing Locke’s identification of “the self with a set of continuous memories, a kind of ongoing narrative of one’s past that is extended with each new experience” (1999: 41).

According to Brison, the self is constructed out of narrative memory: the subject is no more than the story told to oneself, a story composed out of a sequence of narrative memories. Ernst van Alphen echoes this theory, albeit in slightly different terms: “subjects are the effect of the discursive processing of their experience” (1999: 25).

The symptoms and effects of trauma can be understood in its relation to narrative memory: “traumatic memories remain present for the subject and/or totally resist integration . . . they cannot become narratives” (Bal et al. 1999: viii). Brison echoes this statement: “Trauma undoes the self by breaking the ongoing narrative” (41). In other words, it is in the un-narratability of trauma that its impact on the subject lies. An event that cannot be known by the subject cannot therefore be narrated. This is why trauma remains permanently present in the mind of the survivor: as it cannot be incorporated into narrative memory, so it cannot be satisfactorily labelled as “past.” As van Alphen comments, “We experience events from the perspective of narrative frameworks in terms of which these events can be viewed as meaningful” (33). The traumatic interruptions that follow the experience of a traumatic event are symptomatic of the breakdown of the most fundamental of these narrative frameworks: “the camp experience continues . . . the most elementary narrative framework, which consists of the continuum of past, present and future, had disintegrated” (35).

Laub’s analysis of the oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors demonstrates the disruptive impact of trauma on narrative memory processes. In exploring this epic destabilization, Laub offers examples of survivor testimony that aptly illustrate the specific crisis of truth presented by survivors of the Holocaust. Specifically, he describes the case of “a woman in her late sixties” who within her testimony revisits the Auschwitz uprising of October 1944. Laub uses the word *revisit* rather than *recount* or *describe* because her testimony was not a conscious retelling of an event from the past but rather a reexperiencing of a trauma that had been held only in the subconscious: “She was relating her memories as an eyewitness of the Auschwitz uprising; a sudden intensity, passion and colour were infused into the narrative. She was fully there” (59). What is particularly significant about this woman’s testimony in relation to the question of truth and truthfulness is her insistence within her narrative that she “saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding” (59). This, as Laub demonstrates within his analysis, generates a crisis of truth and calls into question our very understanding of the notions of truth and truthfulness, for historical record tells us that only one chimney was blown up during the uprising.

For the historians among Laub's colleagues who observe this factual inaccuracy, "since the memory . . . turned out to be, in this way, fallible, one could not accept – nor give credence to – her whole account of the events. It was utterly important to remain accurate, lest the revisionists in history discredit everything" (59–60). Conversely, Laub argues that the woman's testimony reveals the truth of the event *as it happened for her*: "One chimney blown up in Auschwitz was as incredible as four. The number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence. The event itself was almost inconceivable . . . She testified to the breakage of a framework. That was historical truth" (60). In many ways this aporia between different "truths" encapsulates the "impossible history" within which Caruth locates the survivor experience. Charlotte Delbo in her last book, *Days and Memory*, reveals the rift between personal truth and historical truth as being governed and negotiated by the inconsistency of traumatic memory:

the skin enfolding the memory of Auschwitz is tough. Even so it gives way at times, revealing all it contains. Over dreams the conscious will has no power. And in those dreams I see myself, yes, my own self as I know I was: hardly able to stand on my feet, my throat tight, my heart beating wildly, frozen to the marrow, filthy, skin and bones; the suffering I feel is so unbearable, so identical to the pain endured there, that I feel it physically . . . It takes days for everything to get back to normal, for everything to get shoved back inside memory, and for the skin of memory to mend again. I become myself again, the person you know, who can talk to you about Auschwitz without exhibiting or registering any anxiety or emotion. (1990: 3)

The effects of dissociation described here by Delbo can also be understood in terms of "knowing" and "not-knowing." In her conscious mind, Delbo knows that she suffered terribly in Auschwitz ("my own self, as I know I was"), and yet she has no emotional reaction to this knowledge, indeed, she is almost proud of this, presenting it as some sort of achievement ("without exhibiting or registering any anxiety or emotion"). It is only in her dreams, during the traumatic reenactment of her experience in the camp that she is fully able to access that trauma and truly "know" her experience. Delbo herself appears to be aware of this dichotomy between "knowing" and "not-knowing" her experience, presenting it to the reader in terms of "deep" and "common" memory:

memory and the skin of memory. It clings to me yet. Memory's skin has hardened, it allows nothing to filter out of what it retains, and I have no control over it . . . Because when I talk to you about Auschwitz, it is not from deep memory my words issue. They come from external memory, if

I may put it that way, from intellectual memory, the memory connected with thinking processes. Deep memory preserves sensations, physical imprints. It is the memory of the senses. For it isn't words that are swollen with emotional charge. (1–3)

For Laub, the key to unlocking the unknown and unnarratable personal “truth” of traumatic experience is the presence of a witness to the testimony. The very nature of the Holocaust as traumatic experience also mitigates against this facilitation, conjuring a crisis not only of truth but also of witnessing.

Within his analysis, Laub repeatedly emphasizes the view of traumatic testimony as a dialogic process. He identifies the listener or hearer of the testimony as “the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time” (57). Through this process the listener becomes “the enabler of the testimony – the one who triggers its initiation, as well as the guardian of its process and of its momentum” (58). Without someone external to the narrative to bear witness to the telling of the story, the testimony cannot take place because “Bearing witness to a trauma is, in fact, a process that includes the listener. For the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an *other*” (70, emphasis in the original). Through the testimonial process, therefore, the listener becomes as much a witness to the traumatic event as the speaker and even takes on some ownership of the trauma: “The listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself” (57). The role of the witness is given such significance within Laub’s understanding of traumatic testimony that a failure of witnessing may constitute “a return of the trauma – a *reexperiencing of the event itself*” (67). And yet the circumstances and characteristics of the Holocaust as an event work against successful witnessing, leading to a continued perpetuation of trauma for both the individual survivor and for wider collective memory because “the inherently incomprehensible *and* deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims” (80). Laub describes the Holocaust as “an event without a witness,” in doing so identifying a process of totalized fear, dehumanization, and dissociation through which the Nazi project precluded the possibility of witnesses to the genocide that was unfolding:

As the event of the Jewish genocide unfolded, however, most actual or potential witnesses failed one-by-one to occupy their position as a witness, and at a certain point it seemed as if there was no one left to witness what was taking place . . . it was not only the reality of the situation and the lack

of responsiveness of bystanders or the world that accounts for the fact that history was taking place with no witness: it was also the very circumstance of *being inside the event* that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist. (80)

The isolation of the concentration camp prisoners and the process of dehumanization enforced on them within the concentrationary universe thus created a world in which there was no possibility of an “other” to address and no means of identifying oneself as a subject in opposition to that “other,” given the reality that “The Holocaust created in this way a world in which one *could not bear witness to oneself*” (81). Describing the testimony of another survivor, whose inability to narrate her traumatic memories of the Holocaust has led her to a place where she is unable to identify or acknowledge her own capacity for love or empathy, Laub claims that “in her memory of her Holocaust experience, as well as the distorted way in which her present life proceeded from this memory, she failed to be an authentic witness to herself. *This collapse of witnessing is precisely, in my view, what is central to the Holocaust experience*” (80).

Given the propensity for the listener to traumatic testimony to in some measure experience that trauma and the extent to which the process of witnessing is itself disrupted by the traumatic impact of the Holocaust, it is possible to identify the roots of a crisis in witnessing that precludes the survivor from achieving satisfaction or healing from the act of narration. Proceeding from this, Robert Eaglestone has argued that trauma theory may not be the most appropriate frame through which to view the experience and subsequent narrative of Holocaust survivors, arguing against the implicit notion that the trauma of Holocaust survivors can be cured through a simple act of narration: “their memories are not ‘symptoms,’” he argues, and “forgetting would be the ultimate desecration, a ‘cure’ the ultimate illusion” (2004: 31).¹ Furthermore,

The risk seems to be that the term trauma (already twice metaphorical), if it is invoked with all the rest of the analytic and therapeutic tools, will overcode accounts of the Holocaust with a discourse of healing analysis or therapy, and so pass over both the epistemological and ethical impossibility of comprehending the survivors’ testimony by seeming to grasp and resolve it, and “work through” or finish with this ethical obligation to recall the events. (33)

The experience and memories of Holocaust survivors appear to resist the possibility of “working through” and “healing” trauma on both an ethical basis, given the moral imperative not to forget, and on a psychoanalytical

basis, given the unavailability of a witness. Taking this into account it becomes feasible to appreciate the extent to which the “impossible history” that Caruth ascribes to the survivor of a trauma becomes, in the case of the Holocaust, not only impossible in terms of the survivor’s inability to consciously narrate his or her experience of the event but also impossible as a narrative of cultural memory. As Felman and Laub observe, “Our cultural frames of reference and our pre-existing categories which delimit and determine our perception of reality have failed, essentially, both to contain, and to account for, the scale of what has happened in contemporary history” (1992: xv). In breaching the boundaries of existing cultural frames of reference and in resisting the conventional methodology of working through, the Holocaust also presents a traumatic crisis of narrative.

The next step in this exploration of the Holocaust as the ultimate trauma narrative requires a return for a moment to van der Kolk and van der Hart’s observation about trauma that “under extreme conditions, existing meaning schemes may be entirely unable to accommodate frightening experiences” (1995: 160). Although this definition demonstrates the impact of a traumatic event on the memory of an individual, on a macrocosmic scale it represents the effects of the Holocaust on narrative cultural memory within the Western cultural imagination. Insofar as the clinical definition of trauma is as “a wound,” the Holocaust is a wound within history. Indeed, Caruth adopts the metaphor of the wound in her introduction to *Unclaimed Experience*, borrowing from Freud’s own use of the parable of the wound and the voice to claim that “trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (1996: 4). The traumatic event or the wound (read: the Holocaust) thus presents “a crisis that is marked, not by simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness” (5). An event within history that “simultaneously defies and demands our witness” cannot easily be situated within the collective narrative of cultural memory, so that the Holocaust not only takes the form of a crisis of narrative but also presents as a crisis within language itself.

One of the most commonly cited (and misquoted) philosophical statements on the possibility of post-Holocaust culture is Adorno’s statement that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (1967: 34). Adorno’s statement, insofar as it is repeated without accuracy and without

context seemingly *ad infinitum*, has become in many ways a cliché; however, it is also a useful signpost for considering the traumatic impact of the Holocaust on Western culture as a whole and on cultural memory as the narrative representation of its history. Michael Rothberg's revisitation and analysis of Adorno's post-Holocaust philosophy notes that Adorno's writing in *Negative Dialectics* positions "modern history as a traumatic shock, a shock that leads to a critical reformulation of enlightenment" (2000: 29). The alliterative collocation of "after Auschwitz" that has become so iconic in discussions around the cultural impact of the Holocaust belies, for Rothberg, an atemporality within Adorno's work that returns (or more accurately, never leaves) the site of the initial "traumatic shock":

Adorno's focus on Auschwitz is not just turned towards the past. Rather, it creates a constellation between the past and a series of postwar developments in Germany and to a lesser extent in the United States and the Soviet Union. These developments include the persistence of the very modes of thinking and social organisation that made the Holocaust possible. Through constant reference to the site of murder, Adorno forces a reevaluation of the time of the modern world – now no longer conceived as a progressive passage from before to after but as threatened from within by potentially deadly repetition. (29)

Although "after Auschwitz" suggests the possibility of a time in which Auschwitz belongs to history, Rothberg's interpretation identifies a temporal crisis at the heart of Adorno's writing; time itself is destabilized by the existence of Auschwitz, and the progressive march of narrative time is halted in favor of "potentially deadly repetition," which clearly echoes the traumatic repetition experienced by the individual survivor of trauma. Indeed, one of the key identifiers of trauma within the narrative accounts of survivors is a lack of temporality within the experience that inhibits the ability to accurately narrate it. As Ernst van Alphen has noted, "The Holocaust is ineffable, specifically unnarratable because of the monotony of the days. There were barely any specific events" (1999: 26). The insistence on the repetition of Holocaust narratives, testimonial and fictional, written and filmed, within Western culture signals a form of traumatic repetition that is again indicative of a crisis of narrative.

In claiming that the Holocaust demands a "critical reformulation of enlightenment," Rothberg arrives at one of the key factors that makes the traumatic impact of the Holocaust unique in modern history and also reveals the extent of the trauma enacted on narrative. For Rothberg, Adorno's work

assigns Auschwitz a particular position as the apotheosis of barbarism, but the significance of barbarism emerges from its place in what he sees as its Enlightenment dialectic with culture. The specificity of Nazi barbarism does not rupture, but continues, the dangerous blend of instrumentally rational means and irrational ends that the Frankfurt School understands as the primary legacy of modernity. (2000: 35–36)

The Holocaust traumatizes on a cultural scale because it is precisely a product of rational thought within Western European culture; it is in part this confrontation with its own culpability that renders Western cultural memory voiceless in the search for narrative integration. The possibility of the Holocaust remains so long as culture prizes modernity, and this makes for the traumatic repetition of Holocaust narrative in an effort to uphold Adorno's categorical imperative: never again.

Adorno's injunction that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" references not only the barbarism of the concentration camp and by extension the potential for future barbarism within the culture that produced it; this (by now familiar) exhortation also carries the implication that poetry itself, under normal circumstances aligned with high culture and civility, is rendered barbaric in the aftermath of the Holocaust. In doing so Adorno reveals a crisis within language itself that further serves to inhibit the narration of the Holocaust into cultural memory. Normal systems of meaning and signification are turned on their heads by the traumatic impact of the event and the familiar cultural frames of reference are rendered uncanny and inappropriate.

Like the Western culture predicated on Enlightenment notions of modernity and rational thought that is revealed in its horrific capacity for brutal savagery by the mirror that is held up by the Holocaust, so the German language within which Adorno finds its voice must also examine its own complicity in the production and maintenance of the horror. George Steiner's interpretation of Adorno's thought condemns the German language as "not innocent of the horrors of Nazism . . . Nazism found in the language precisely what it needed to give voice to its savagery" (Rothberg 2000: 30).² The language of Germany is, Steiner claims "no longer lived" but is instead characterized by "a profound deadness of spirit" (1967: 96).

The problematic presented by the idea of expressing or representing the Holocaust using the language of its administration is echoed by Shoshana Felman in her discussion of the poetry of Paul C elan. Felman writes of C elan that his native German language provided "an indissoluble connection to the language of the murderers of his parents, a subjugation to the

very language from which death, humiliation, torture and destruction issued, in a verdict of his own annihilation” (1992: 27). Despite this, C elan continued to write in German, signalling a fatalistic attachment to the language that shaped his identity, even as he manipulated and subverted the language to shape a new post-Holocaust identity. Born Paul Ancel, C elan follows a tradition of Holocaust survivors such as Hans Meyer/Jean Am ery in creating an anagrammatic pseudonym that manipulates sound to arrive at a less “Germanic” sounding name while maintaining a link to the past by keeping the constituent letters of the name. Through this act of linguistic trickery, we once again encounter language that has become detached from its original signification; the letters are the same but the meanings encoded within them are different. Felman writes of C elan’s fragmented, fractious poetry that “the breakage of the verse enacts the breakage of the world” (25). The “breakage of the world” identified by Felman within C elan’s poetry is thus encoded within the destabilized anagrammatic name as a breakage of the *word*. Viewing this breakage in terms of mourning, Derrida identifies post-Auschwitz as

something worse than death, or at least an experience that, in going further than death and doing more harm than it, would be disproportionate to what is too easily granted just after death, namely, mourning . . . What is lacking in this dispersion of phrases, in this evil worse than evil, is the horizon, or even the hope, of their very dispersion ever receiving a common meaning. (2001: 222–223)

We can read into this “dispersion of phrases” the dislocation of language itself resulting from the Holocaust: this is the thing that for Derrida is worse than death. Mourning (and, by extension, healing) is impossible in the face of this dislocation, for the word itself has become a diaspora, as we see in the fragmentation of the anagrammatic name. As Josh Cohen notes, “It is just this inner tendency towards self-division that constitutes the truth of the lyric after Auschwitz” (2005: 21). This is the traumatic impact that the Holocaust enacts on language itself. It can be little wonder, therefore, that in searching for engagement with the “truth” of the Holocaust through narrative that we encounter an impossibility of representation.

For Barbara Foley, this impossibility extends outward from the language of a narrative to the structure and genre: “the greater appropriateness of . . . non-totalising narrative forms indicates not that the Holocaust is unknowable but that its full dimensions are inaccessible to the ideological frameworks that we have inherited from the liberal era” (1982: 333).

Foley echoes the notion that existing frames of reference cannot contain or adequately represent the Holocaust, claiming that the experience of the Holocaust has altered not only the nature of historical reality but also the possibility of embodying that reality in artistic representation. Identifying survivor testimony as “a discourse that poses challenges and difficulties for writers and readers alike” (334), Foley observes that the majority of Holocaust memoirs act as a subversion, even a parody of familiar narrative forms such as autobiography. A conventional autobiography tells the story of a life, of the ontological development of the protagonist: “We ordinarily approach the narration of a past phase in a person’s life with the expectation that the writer will explore the specificity of his/her fate, discover in it a pattern of growth that will be significant for the reader, and achieve some sort of felt resolution” (337). However, a Holocaust memoir presents “the reversal of the traditional pattern of growth, and the absence of a felt resolution that can align the particulars of the narrative under a cohering explanatory scheme ... the characteristic movement is from life to death” (338).

Insofar as existing and familiar narrative structures fail to provide an adequate framework for the representation of the Holocaust experience, the reader of a Holocaust memoir is confronted with a narrative that does not and cannot meet with his or her expectations born out of generic tradition. The impact of this is unsettling and challenging, more so because within Holocaust narrative there is no further comfort for the reader in the form of a readily identifiable landscape: “Holocaust writers can assume no analogous relationship between the world described in the text and the world inhabited by the reader” (332). Here we encounter another strand in the crisis of representation enacted by the Holocaust: narrative memory, and by extension history itself, are almost exclusively referential in character. Although memory has, of course, the ability to distort history, narrative cultural memory is informed by mimetic recall of events as they occurred. Human beings process events and experiences into narrative memory first of all by seeking to identify similarities with existing points of reference within established mental schema. However, as Foley observes there is no reference point – either cultural or personal – for an event such as the Holocaust. This creates a situation whereby narratives of the Holocaust cannot be easily integrated into cultural memory, as we have already discussed. It also challenges and disrupts the reader’s ability to identify with the text and thus to bear witness to it.

Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi discusses the impossibility of metaphor within the concentrationary universe, citing Tadeusz Borowski’s self-referential

technique of drawing “images of comparison” from within that universe only: “like a blade of ice . . . like a wet leather strap . . . not a single prisoner, not one solitary louse” (1980: 55). For Ezrahi, “the persistence in this literature of a factuality which does not allow for transcendence through metaphor is a reinforcement on the literary level of the brutal inexorability of concentrationary reality” (55). The Holocaust narrative thus presents a universe that is hermetically sealed within its own “brutal inexorability.” With no external point of reference the impossibility of witnessing cited by Dori Laub again rears its head. The narration of the experience may take place; however, the reader is excluded from the possibility of witnessing it fully as the narrative strategies usually employed to foster identification with the text in these circumstances preclude it.

Whereas Ezrahi identifies the narrative technique of writers such as Borowski as “Concentrationary Realism,” Michael Rothberg suggests another approach to mimetic representation within Holocaust narratives that he terms “Traumatic Realism.” Rothberg echoes both Foley and Ezrahi when he claims that “it is precisely the confrontation with the lack of shared meaning that characterises both the genre of Holocaust testimony and works of historiography that do not seek simply to reinsert the Holocaust in the continuous flow of German, European or world history” (2000: 114). The characterizing feature of Traumatic Realism is the conflation of the extreme and the everyday, which simultaneously invites identification from the reader while resisting and undermining such attempts: “By representing a site of extreme violence as a borderland of extremity and everydayness, traumatic realism attempts to produce the traumatic event as an object of knowledge and to programme and transform its readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to posttraumatic culture” (109). Rothberg cites the example of Ruth Klüger’s *weiter leben: Einer Jugend* [living on: A Youth] as “a concrete instance of the articulation of the extreme and the everyday” (109). One passage in particular stands out as denoting “a step beyond modern realism” (135), the instance in Klüger’s memoir of an encounter with a pair of Hungarian women on the other side of a barbed wire fence:

My mother remembered that we had another pair of wool socks, went to fetch them, and set about throwing them over the wire. I interfered, I could throw better, give them to me. My mother refused, threw, threw badly, and the socks remained hanging overhead in the barbed wire. Words of regret on both sides. Futile gestures. The next day the Hungarian women were gone, the camp stood ghostly empty, in the barbed wire our socks still hung. (1994: 123; cited in Rothberg 2000: 134)

What marks this passage in particular as entering into the realm of traumatic realism is the way in which “Klüger mixes identification and dis-identification, familiarity and estrangement” (Rothberg 2000, 134). In doing so she conflates an everyday act of kindness (the gifting of the socks), represented by a commonplace and easily identifiable object (socks) with the extremity of the barbed wire and, more troubling, the disappearance of the Hungarian women from the “ghostly empty” camp. This passage seems to tell the story of a good deed gone wrong (a “futile gesture”); however, between the lines of this account lies the horror:

When the Hungarian women disappear, their end can be conceived, but not represented, through a mimetic gesture. Nevertheless, their absence is marked by the socks that hang in the barbed wire. Not quite across the line into ghostly emptiness, but no longer in the possession of the living on the near side, the socks mediate between the everyday and the extreme. The dead possess the living insofar as they dispossess them – of words, gestures, and other everyday objects. (Rothberg 2000: 134)

This pair of socks (hung on barbed wire – another example of the insular referentiality identified by Ezrahi) symbolically brings together the everyday and the extreme, all the while inhabiting a border space that will give precedence to neither. There are examples of this within the writing of other survivor-authors such as Charlotte Delbo and Tadeusz Borowski. In the vignette “The Stream,” in *Auschwitz and After*, Delbo takes the everyday act of washing oneself and renders it uncannily by filtering it through the lens of the concentrationary universe:

Let’s see, face, feet, legs. I should also wash my behind. I took off my panties and placed them onto the pile formed by my jacket, scarf and shoes. My panties must have stunk. It was also the first time in sixty-seven days I had peeled them off. But no, actually, I couldn’t smell anything. There is something mysterious about the sense of smell. For example, I’d been back for a long time, and I bathed at that time twice a day – a real mania – scrubbing my body with a fine soap. I’d been back weeks but I could still smell on me the odour of the camp, an odour of raw sewage and carrion. Yet, on that day, I removed my panties, stiff with dry diarrhoea – if you think there was toilet paper, or anything like that, before the appearance of new-grown grass – yet the smell didn’t nauseate me. (1995: 151)

In this example, the act of washing belongs to both the concentrationary universe and the post-Holocaust world (and later on in the passage, as Delbo references her mother’s insistence on washing behind her ears, the prewar world as well) and as such has a liminal quality that transcends these borders (like Klüger’s socks) and thus resists identification. Modes of

representation and identification are further disrupted as it is in the postimprisonment realm that Delbo is tormented by the stench of the camp, whereas in the camp itself she smells nothing. Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* also employs this device whereby the horror of the camp experience is hidden in the gaps between the everyday and the extreme. Describing a soccer game, the narrator casually observes that "between two throw-ins in a soccer game, right behind my back, three thousand people had been put to death" (1976: 64). As Ezrahi observes, "This laconic commensuration of the tally of goals scored and of people gassed indicates the degree of this prisoner's adjustment to the operation of the system; the grim irony is only latent in the text and must be catalysed by the outrage that the reader, secure in a world of restored symmetries, brings to it" (1980: 58). Ezrahi's analysis brings us once again to Laub's crisis of witnessing: Borowski's text, like other testimonial narratives of the Holocaust needs an external witness (the reader) to apply "normal" feelings (or "restored symmetries") to the narrative for the horror of the trauma to be conveyed. However immediately the reader attempts to do so, the full inadequacy of our reference systems is revealed and thus the attempt and identification and integration is doomed to futility. The uncanny duality of these narratives is also echoed by Felman and Laub's claim regarding the way in which trauma underlies the individual life narratives of survivors: "It is as though two simultaneous dialogues proceed and the ordinary one, the one that is common-place, prevails" (1992: 63). The white noise hidden in the spaces between the everyday and the extreme within Holocaust narratives can be identified as the site of a trauma by which language itself is again corrupted because it no longer means the same thing that it used to. A bath is not a bath, and a soccer game is not a soccer game. Normal systems of reference and signification are disrupted, and the trauma remains unspeakable: "The Holocaust only 'exceeds' speech because its effects are *internal* to speech itself" (Tresize 2001: 40).

In 1999, historian Tim Cole wrote that "at the end of the twentieth century, the 'Holocaust' is central to modern consciousness" (1999: 12), adding that "the Holocaust has emerged as nothing less than a ruling symbol in our culture . . . a dominant icon" (18). But can the Holocaust really be considered to be the ultimate trauma narrative, as the title of this chapter suggests? The impact of the Holocaust, not only for individuals but also for existing frameworks of representation and signification, would certainly suggest that in enacting trauma on narrative itself, the Holocaust may indeed have a case to lay claim to that title. The Holocaust is "the apotheosis of barbarism" within Rothberg's analysis of Adorno's

post-Holocaust thought; elsewhere, the Holocaust has variably been identified as “paradigmatic” among genocides, even identified by the United Nations as “the paradigmatic genocide” (Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education 2010: 1), and as “historically and phenomenologically unique” (Katz 2001: 49).

Yet to assume that the enormity of the Holocaust within contemporary consciousness somehow privileges it above and beyond other collective or cultural traumas is a dangerous move, opening the way toward what Rothberg elsewhere identifies as “competitive memory”: “Because many . . . commentators also believe that a direct line runs between remembrance of the past and the formation of identity in the present, they understand the articulation of the past in collective memory as a struggle for recognition in which there can only be winners and losers, a struggle that is thus closely allied with the potential for deadly violence” (2009: 3). Rothberg warns of the potential contained within competitive memory to repeat and reenact past traumas in an effort to assert the “value” of one traumatic narrative over another: “there can be no doubt that many manifestations of contemporary violence, including war and genocide, are in part the product of resentful memories and conflicting views of the past” (3). Here we see further potential for the possibly infinite traumatic repetition of the past, born out of a failure of integration or working through by cultural memory in the present. Within the framework of competitive memory the traumatic event becomes, not an icon as Cole suggests, but rather a cultural idol that obscures remembrance, as opposed to facilitating engagement with the past. That such a failure of integration has occurred seems clear in the continued traumatic repetition of Holocaust narrative in all its different forms which signals a collective cultural testimony that has yet to be heard and cannot be heard. There are no available witnesses because we are all tainted by the complicity of language and culture.

There is a danger inherent in setting the Holocaust up as the ultimate trauma narrative if that means excluding other narratives of trauma from making claims on our collective consciousness. There is a case to be made, however, that the massive cultural impact and extent of responses to the Holocaust installs it as a sort of meta-trauma, not against which other traumas must be measured, but through which we may find a discursive framework for approaching those other collective traumas. For Rothberg, “the account of history and representation that Adorno develops in his writings on Auschwitz has indeed defined the horizon of many more contemporary considerations of genocide” (2000: 27). Furthermore,

writing on the clash of memorial ideologies between the Holocaust and slavery in the United States, as identified by Walter Benn Michaels, Rothberg asserts,

I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not so privative. This shift in perspective allows us to see that while [Khalid] Muhammad and Michaels both speak of Holocaust memory as if it blocks memory of slavery and colonialism from view (the model of competitive memory), they actually use the presence of widespread Holocaust consciousness as a platform to articulate a vision of American racism past and present. (2009: 3)

Thus while the traumatic narrative of the Holocaust may yet struggle to find its voice in a manner that addresses the hearing of contemporary cultural memory, this struggle in itself may provide a means by which other narratives of trauma can begin to be heard.

PTSD
A New Trauma Paradigm

Lisa Diedrich

Post-traumatic stress disorder, immediately punctuated into the pithy acronym PTSD, emerged in 1980 with its inclusion as a new diagnostic category in the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III)*. Rarely has a disorder felt so definitively coined in a particular place and time, although this apparent definitiveness covers over a much more complicated history and present of trauma and its vicissitudes. The new diagnostic category has had a profound impact not just in psychiatry but also in culture at large, with the result that PTSD is a multiple and complex object that is enacted in a variety of discourses, practices, and institutional spaces. Although PTSD first emerged as a diagnostic category and as part of a classification system within the clinical context of the institution and discourses of American psychiatry, historicizing the category reveals continuities and discontinuities between PTSD and other historical trauma paradigms. The prehistory of PTSD provides a genealogical framework for analyzing the contemporary deployment of the term in clinical, critical, political, and cultural domains.

As well as being a historically defined category, however, PTSD is also an illness performative¹ that brings into being new subjectivities and sites of diagnosis and treatment, clinical and otherwise. Illness narratives can be read as symptomatic texts of our time in at least two respects: as texts that literally describe symptoms (and struggle with finding a form to describe the affective and physical experience of symptoms), and as texts that describe illness as an event that goes beyond any particular individual's experience and account of it, reflecting wider cultural categories, including race, gender, class, and sexuality. Any *treatments* of PTSD, therefore, will extend transversally to include not only clinical methods for healing the devastating biopsychosocial effects of trauma but also critical methods for analyzing PTSD as symptom and sign of a changing politics of trauma in the present. It is also necessary to consider PTSD's representability, not to

give the question of representation the last word, but rather as a gesture meant to keep open the question of how we treat trauma.

The third edition of the *DSM* was published in 1980 to much fanfare and some controversy. The revision promised to radically change psychiatry by reorganizing and scientizing psychiatric classification and diagnostic criteria. The explicit goal was to move away from the psychoanalytically oriented concepts and classifications of the earlier *DSMs*.² As Bradley Lewis explains, “*DSM-III* sparked this massive reorganization through one major classificatory innovation. It shifted psychiatric diagnosis from vaguely defined and loosely based psychoanalytic descriptions to detailed symptom checklists – each with precise inclusion and exclusion criteria all meant to be ‘theory neutral’” (2006: 97). Lewis shows that the push for new diagnostic criteria emerged from a concern that psychiatry had a “reliability problem,” a problem that implicated the field as more art than science at a time when an emphasis on science and scientization was on the ascendance in medicine in general and psychiatry in particular (2006: 100; see also Kirk and Kutchins 1992). Lewis argues the *DSM-III* attempted to create a rhetorical framework based on a disease model of madness that understood the cause of mental illness as physiological (107). The disease model approaches mental illness as a biological condition of the brain and not a matter of mind or soul. Proponents of the disease model argued that biologizing mental conditions would reduce the stigma and shame associated with mental illness by locating the cause of illness in brain malfunction rather than perceived weakness of will or moral failing.

Some of the controversy that the revision generated swirled around the new classificatory category of post-traumatic stress disorder, whose “essential feature” was described as “the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event that is generally outside the range of usual human experience” (American Psychiatric Association, 1980: 236). The characteristic symptoms of the new diagnostic category were “re-experiencing the traumatic event; numbing of responsiveness to, or reduced involvement with, the external world; and a variety of autonomic, dysphoric, or cognitive symptoms,” including hyperalertness, difficulty sleeping and recurrent nightmares, survivor’s guilt, memory impairment and difficulty concentrating, avoidance of activities that might arouse the memory of the event, and an “intensification of symptoms by exposure to events that symbolize or resemble the traumatic event” (236–237). The discussion of PTSD in the *DSM-III* also provides details on possible stressors, mentioning both traumas experienced alone, like rape

or assault, and those experienced in the company of others, like military combat or natural disasters. It then provides a picture of the variety of ways that the traumatic event might be reexperienced. In particular, the discussion foregrounds the intrusiveness of the past event into the present moment, sometimes to the point that the person dissociates from the present reality and “components of the event are relived and the individual behaves as though experiencing the event at that moment” (236). This stress on intrusiveness and dissociation has led some critical theorists, including Ian Hacking (1995) and Ruth Leys (2000), to argue that PTSD is “fundamentally a disorder of memory” (Leys 2000: 2). In addition, and perhaps even more so than a disorder of memory, PTSD in its original clinical instantiation might be considered a disorder of time, or put differently: PTSD disorders a person’s experience of temporality. In PTSD, the past is not past, and thus the present and future are precarious temporalities – the past threatens to crowd out the present and swallow up the future.

Although the stated goal of the *DSM-III* revision was to create a more recognizably scientific nosology as demonstrated through the process of diagnostic repeatability and validity enacted in and by the checklist of symptoms as a tool of scientific diagnosis, politics nonetheless intruded on the process to delineate the category and render it verifiable in checklist form. One of the main reasons for the controversy surrounding the new PTSD diagnostic category was that, despite the attempt by psychiatrists to create a nonsubjective, purely descriptive classificatory system of diagnosis in the *DSM-III*, the category PTSD emerged as a result of politics as much as if not more than science. Despite its capacity to clarify and regularize the practice of diagnosis, a checklist cannot be said to be a reflection of illness in some pure state devoid of culture and politics. This is particularly clear in the case of PTSD.

Most origin stories of the category PTSD cite the political advocacy of Vietnam War veterans in the United States as leading directly to the inclusion of PTSD in the *DSM-III*. For example, in the chapter “Learning from Vietnam Veterans” that opens his comprehensive and influential analysis of trauma as embodied experience and event in *The Body Keeps the Score*, psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk notes that “a group of Vietnam veterans, aided by the New York psychoanalysts Chaim Shatan and Robert J. Lifton, successfully lobbied the American Psychiatric Association to create a new diagnosis: posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which described a cluster of symptoms that was common, to a greater or lesser extent, to all of our veterans” (2014: 19). Van der Kolk

shows how the American soldier's experience in Vietnam and after was used to create the checklist of symptoms, and then this checklist of symptoms became a "conceptual framework" for a "radical change in our understanding of our patients" that led to new research on the condition and the development of a variety of new treatments, many of which moved away from the talk therapies that dominated psychoanalytic approaches to trauma toward brain- and body-oriented therapies, including those van der Kolk discusses in his book – Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), yoga, biofeedback, and even theater (2014: 19). If that sounds circular, it's because it is: the checklist of symptoms brings into being a new traumatic event and clinical experience, which then becomes the basis for new research agendas and treatment modalities on the diagnostic category that the checklist helped bring into being. This is not to say that a checklist cannot be a useful diagnostic tool; it is rather to note the obvious point that a checklist is a mode of ordering that creates the conditions of possibility for a diagnosis and its treatments.

In her important work *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman, professor of clinical psychiatry and training director at the Victims of Violence Program at Harvard, also discusses the importance of politics in helping to explain the emergence of the category PTSD, as well as the renewed interest in trauma at various periods over the past 100 years more generally. Using intrusion as a kind of metaphor for historical emergence, Herman describes how different forms of psychological trauma have "surfaced into public consciousness." She discusses hysteria, shell shock or combat neurosis and later PTSD, and domestic violence and sexual abuse as psychosocial problems that emerged as a result of political shifts from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries, including increasing secularization, antiwar politics, and women's and sexual liberation movements (1992/2015: 9). The intermingling of politics and science, then, has been a key aspect of the emergence and enactment of trauma in its many forms, as well as a factor in the curious phenomenon that histories of trauma are frequently presented as acting like trauma itself. Like Herman, Ruth Leys in *Trauma: A Genealogy* refers to numerous "episodes" of trauma, and argues that they are not "part of a continuously unfolding historical trauma." Instead, she notes, "what is striking about them is their irruptive character," which means they are experienced "as if for the first time and almost with the same quality of shock or disruption that has been attributed to trauma itself" (2000: 10). In both Herman's and Leys's accounts, the history of trauma is described as traumatic in character. This insight motivates Leys to turn to genealogy as a kind of traumatic method

of history writing that allows her to capture the irruptive character of trauma as both individual experience and episodic historical event.

A brief exploration of PTSD's prehistory can be instructive in thinking about the interrelationship between trauma, history, and methodology.³ "Prehistory" does not suggest a fixed period of time or place, nor does it suggest a time outside history, but rather a methodological incentive to look in advance of the precipitation of a particular substance in history. What is significant is how an illness – like AIDS or PTSD – becomes a substance in history. The precipitation of PTSD as a substance in history is an echo of Denise Riley's earlier use of the idea of precipitation in relation to the category "woman" in history. In *Am I That Name?* Riley writes that "even the apparently simplest, most innocent ways in which one becomes temporarily a woman *are not* darting returns to a category in a natural and harmless state, but are something else: adoptions of, or precipitations into, a designation there in advance, a characterisation of 'woman'" (1988: 97). Why might it be helpful to think "PTSD" in particular and "illness" more generally as Riley thinks "woman"? The concept and practice of prehistory undermines a binary structure in which the natural becomes historical and political, at a specific point in time and once and for all. The process of chemical precipitation is then a method-image, a term for the verbal and visual statements that help articulate, through condensation, the complexity of an object like illness as phenomenological experience and socio-political event, as localized contagion and global crisis, and as much more in between. Chemical precipitation as method-image allows us to consider how a category – in this case, the mental illness category PTSD – is formed in solution through practices of science, medicine, politics, and aesthetics, and also to open up the possibility that the illness category as substance in history might become, indeed is always already becoming, unformed or transformed into something else.

The precipitation of PTSD as a substance in history around 1980 was the result of the immediate clinico-political milieu that brought together a scientizing psychiatry with antiwar and feminist activism. To call attention to this clinico-political phenomenon in history is not, however, to suggest that PTSD came out of nowhere and was discontinuous with past illness experiences and events. Moreover, thinking about the many factors that form and unform illness categories does not mean that illness is only discursive and not experienced as real, as a grievous misreading of social constructionism would have us believe. Put another way, exploring the constructed character of diagnostic categories is not to suggest that the materiality of illness does not matter. Quite the contrary: The many

diverse discourses of illness contribute to the materialization of our felt experience of illness, and the discourses surrounding PTSD are a good example of this phenomenon.

Approaching PTSD as a new trauma paradigm requires that we consider some older paradigms to trace both continuities and discontinuities in the multiple genealogies of trauma. A schematic sketch of the shifting trauma terrain reveals a kind of gendered transition that moves from hysteria and sexual trauma (women) to shell shock and war neurosis (men) to PTSD (both men/war trauma and women/sexual trauma). Treating gender and illness together helps us to understand how PTSD combines in a single diagnostic category a range of symptoms arising from the experiences and events of both sexual trauma and war neurosis, creating a transgendered and transgenerational trauma diagnostic category – both/and: both male and female, both war and sexual trauma.

Hysteria, of course, has a long association with the female body and women. At least as far back as Plato and Aristotle in the Western tradition, the female body in relation to the normative male body has been perceived to be and naturalized as pathological and symptomatic.⁴ The symptoms and significations that concatenate around the sign of hysteria are multiple and mobile. Hysteria's habit of mimicking other diseases makes hysteria not one disease but many, if not all diseases, at least potentially. Despite the capaciousness of the category of hysteria and the multiplicity of its symptoms, and despite the fact that both Charcot and Freud insisted that hysteria was found in men as well as women (Micale 1995: 2), nonetheless, the gendered aspects of the diagnosis meant that men were rarely perceived to be hysterical or diagnosed as suffering from hysteria.⁵ Yet during World War I hysterical symptoms were frequently identified in soldiers who experienced trench warfare. Although many psychiatrists at the time acknowledged that war neurosis was in fact a kind of "male hysteria," the term that was most commonly used was *shell shock*, a term that was intended to dissociate the symptoms from feminine associations, at the same time as it suggested the physical and psychological aspects of the condition in relation to the specificity of the experience of war on the bodies of men. In these ways, PTSD became a late-twentieth-century solution to the problem of sexual difference in earlier trauma genealogies.

Treating gender and trauma together, Judith Herman cites Virginia Woolf's antiwar essay, *Three Guineas*, to show how we might understand trauma as providing a kind of vestibule between the gendered spaces of public and private. Herman quotes Woolf, who argued that "the

public and private worlds are inseparably connected . . . the tyrannies and servilities of one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other” (Woolf 1966 [1938]: 147; quoted in Herman 1992/2015: 32). This feminist insight linking public and private traumas would result in a challenge to one of the key features of the original diagnostic criteria for PTSD – as noted earlier, that PTSD results from a traumatic event “outside the range of usual human experience.” Based on her clinical work with survivors of sexual abuse, Herman has worked to help clarify what she takes to be extraordinary about trauma: “Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life” (33; see also Brown 1995). In the interest of challenging misunderstandings arising from the original definition, Herman has gone so far as to propose a new diagnostic category called “complex post-traumatic stress disorder” (C-PTSD), which supplements the current PTSD diagnosis by demonstrating how “responses to trauma are best understood as a spectrum of conditions rather than as a single disorder” (119). Relatedly, Bessel van der Kolk has proposed the diagnosis “developmental trauma disorder” to point to the effects of chronic interpersonal trauma on children and adolescents who experience or witness “multiple or prolonged adverse events over a period of at least a year” (2014: 361–364).

These recommendations to expand trauma categories and criteria represent an attempt to better describe both the multiplicity and the everydayness of trauma. Despite advocacy to include these new diagnoses, neither has yet to be incorporated into the *DSM* as either a new category or subcategory of PTSD. However, it appears likely that the World Health Organization’s eleventh edition of the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)* to be published in 2017 will include complex PTSD as a separate diagnosis (Friedman 2014: 1). That the American Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organization would disagree over classification even within the now well-established diagnostic category PTSD suggests how an illness like PTSD is multiple and remains open to contestation. We discover this not only through a diachronic analysis of the category in history, but also by looking at the instantiation of the category across different sites in the present, including the current nosographies of the American Psychiatric Association and the World Health Association.

There is a sense in which illness is performative, “performative” understood here through the lens of both social interactionist theories, which explore the constitution of the self in the practices of everyday life,⁶ and

speech act theories of performative utterances, which explore how saying can be doing.⁷ These theories have been utilized to discern, importantly, the how, not the what, of gender, and it therefore becomes of interest to analyze the how, not the what, of gender (along with race, class, and sexuality) and illness together. Where illness is concerned, the utterance “you have – [choose any disease here]” doesn’t simply name an existing biological condition; it brings that condition into being. In the case of PTSD, it brings it into being within the space of the psychiatric clinic and through the procedures established in the *DSM*. The performative force of the utterance “you have PTSD” rests on the checklist of symptoms as an “accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect,” as Austin puts it in his description of how performatives work in his distillation of speech act theory in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962: 14). Being diagnosed leads to becoming something new or someone else; it is an estranging experience that can be both painful and productive. Diagnoses reveal not so much the, or even a, truth of the self, but the self as truth effect of various practices of illness. In considering PTSD as performative, we can begin to think of PTSD as operating like gender, meaning that it operates biologically, psychologically, and socially – or biopsychosocially⁸ – in particular times and spaces.

PTSD as illness performative has contributed to the emergence of a particular kind of traumatized subjectivity in late modernity. According to Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, “Trauma has become a major signifier of our age,” and they discuss how trauma, clinically and metaphorically, is “one signifier for a plurality of ills signified” (2009: xi). For Fassin and Rechtman, trauma has other genealogies beyond the clinical and scientific ones; indeed, they contend that the idea of trauma has become a “shared truth” in the contemporary world (2). In their delineation of what they see as a universalizing psychologizing trend, they claim that, “Contemporary society now accepts without question the notion that psychologists and psychiatrists intervene in situations of war and disaster, in cases of exceptional or even everyday violence” (4). Along with new clinical sites for approaching trauma as an individual problem, then, we are also seeing the emergence of new sites for the treatment of and research on trauma as social suffering.⁹ The concept and practice of social suffering understands trauma not, or not only, as an experience that moves from the inside out (from an individual’s interior psychic experience to external world) but as one that moves from the outside in (world to individual). The experience of suffering is not, then, wholly a personal experience; it is a relational and interactive experience. As anthropologists Arthur and Joan Kleinman

explain in their introduction to an edited volume on the concept, suffering is first and foremost a social phenomenon (1997: 2).

Fassin and Rechtman's work on trauma owes a theoretical and methodological debt to the anthropology of social suffering as articulated by the Kleinmans and others (see, for example, Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997; Das, et al. 2001; and Das 2015). They pay close attention in their analysis to the growth of humanitarianism and crisis management as new rhetorics and practices promoting a politics of trauma based on what they see as the key figure of trauma in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: the victim. They argue that the emergence of the victim as a universal and universalizing figure has meant that the person claiming to be traumatized is no longer treated with doubt and suspicion, as was often the case in the past where concern was frequently expressed about the possibility that symptoms of hysteria and war neurosis were not real but examples of simulation and malingering. In this new scenario, according to Fassin and Rechtman, the possibility that the symptoms of trauma might be simulated for personal or economic benefit is no longer considered an issue. Indeed, the rhetoric and practices of crisis management might be said to seek out and encourage individuals to willingly take on the identity of victim to avail themselves of humanitarian services. In Fassin and Rechtman's critique, the victim becomes a social figure who lacks agency and thus can be acted on in a politics of trauma in the contemporary moment that is, paradoxically, depoliticizing. Although they offer a valuable critique of the depoliticized figure, Fassin and Rechtman overstate their point that the predominance of the victim indicates that there is no longer concern about the reliability of victims of trauma. In the case of PTSD, despite or perhaps because of the widespread deployment of the category to describe the experience of a wide variety of events, the counter-deployment of suspicion remains salient. This part of their argument aside, Fassin and Rechtman's analysis of what they call a "dual social innovation" (10) that invents new knowledge and practices that then are utilized to discover new patients and subjects is a compelling one.

In conclusion, it is worth considering briefly two other contemporary sites of trauma – those literary and cultural productions where the experience and event of PTSD is enacted through representation, as well as the field of trauma studies in the academy, which has produced a meta-discourse about trauma's representability and unrepresentability. Around the same time that biopsychiatry displaces psychoanalysis in the discourses, practices, and institutions of psychiatry, and PTSD emerges as diagnostic category, we see the emergence of trauma studies in literary

studies in the academy influenced by both psychoanalytic theory and deconstructive practice, which leads to an often densely theoretical grappling with the difficulties of delimiting what trauma is and does (see, for example, Felman and Laub 1992, and Caruth 1995 and 1996). One prominent example is Cathy Caruth's edited volume, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). Her introduction begins with the emergence of the diagnostic category PTSD not as clarifying once and for all our understanding of trauma, but as bringing us "to the limits of our understanding." Caruth goes on to explain the promise of an interdisciplinary approach to trauma studies: "If psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience" (1995: 4).

In much of this work, PTSD becomes a lens through which humanities scholars are able to view trauma anew, and Ruth Leys argues that through the lens of PTSD, "the Holocaust now appears, retroactively so to speak, not only to have been *the* crucial trauma of the century, but also one that can be fully understood only in light of our knowledge of PTSD" (2000: 15–16). Leys also notes that research by psychiatrists like Bessel van der Kolk into the embodied neurophysiological experience of PTSD would help "solidify a powerful trend in the humanities to recognize in the experience of trauma, especially the trauma of the Holocaust, a fundamental crisis of historical representation (and at the limit, for representation as such)" (16). Although this is often the reductive reading by humanities scholars of what trauma is and does in language and history, Leys overstates for the sake of a polemical argument the emphasis on the limits of representation and communication about trauma. It seems that while many literary and cultural treatments of trauma do point to the difficulty in communicating to others the experience of trauma, this is not the end of the story of trauma, but its beginning. If the experience of trauma is difficult, even impossible, to represent, this difficulty becomes a challenge for treating an experience and event like PTSD, bringing us back to thinking creatively about our treatments, in the general denotative sense of techniques or actions customarily applied in a specified situation.

One recent example of a treatment of PTSD, by the daughter of a Vietnam veteran, can be found in Kara Frame's short film *I Will Go Back Tonight* (2016). This work presents what we might call a classic case of PTSD among a group of Vietnam veterans who were the only survivors of an ambush of their 90-person unit by over a thousand North Vietnamese at the Ben Cui rubber plantation on August 21, 1968. The film was made

some 48 years after the incident and featured on the “Parallels” section of National Public Radio’s webpage¹⁰ on Veteran’s Day 2016. It provides an account of PTSD not only from the perspective of the persons who experienced the event, but also from those living with those persons after the event.

The 18-minute film opens with an image of the moon coming into the film’s frame and the viewer’s field of vision from the left. A voiceover begins, “I read something once that the first set of astronauts that walked on the moon, when they came home, they had psychological problems. And one of them became religious, one had alcoholism, one had depression. You’ve been on a damn moon and you’re looking down at the earth and that changes your perspective.” The film cuts from a shot of the moon to a blurry view of the earth from the moon, before cutting to the face of the man speaking: “And the world wasn’t the same for those people anymore after that.”¹¹ Another shot of the moon appears, as the man’s voice says, “I think sometimes the same thing is true of armed combat.” The film then cuts to shots from a plane flying over a battlefield, as the voiceover states, “This experience is so extreme you don’t look at the world the same way after that.” The final image of this scene shifts perspective again, to the ground where a young soldier sits in a field in quiet contemplation. We realize that this young man is the same man who has been speaking, as the sequence cuts to the man, now older, as he introduces himself, “My name is Donald Ray Elverd and I achieved the rank of Sergeant E-5 during the Vietnam War.”

Four men – Elverd, Thomas Frame (the filmmaker’s father), Abe Cardenas, and Gary Young – speak on camera about what happened on that day in August 1968. Frame also interviews the wives of three of the men – Chris Frame, Betty Young, and Chacha Cardenas, who describe the impact of the traumatic event, and the experience of having survived it, on the men and their families. One man, Artie Torgeson, is interviewed by phone; subtitles explain that he is in prison for killing his wife during a flashback in 2008. PTSD is first introduced by the filmmaker’s mother, Chris Frame, in the context of her explaining how she came to have insight into her husband’s suffering. “My husband suffers with PTSD,” she tells her daughter, the filmmaker, and us viewers. “I knew that he was in a very bad battle on August 21 and that’s about the only thing I knew. It wasn’t discussed. He probably suffered longer before I realized. Along the way, I had to learn things and sometimes I don’t have my facts right, but this is the [searches for the word] . . . event . . . that [starts crying] . . . this is the event that my husband lives with every day.”

In another sequence, Abe and Chacha Cardenas discuss how alcoholism and violence almost ended their marriage before he finally gave up drinking. Together they provide an image of Abe's PTSD that fits the *DSM's* diagnostic criteria. Chacha explains that their life changed after Abe gave up drinking; she no longer fears him hurting her, but as she repeats several times, nonetheless, still he lives in Vietnam. The film ends with Abe and Tom Frame at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. These are scenes most viewers will have seen before, of veterans emotionally reacting to seeing and touching the names of men they knew that are carved into the black wall, as some civilians look on respectfully while others photograph the scene of sorrow and remembering. The final words in the film are from Abe, in a response to onlookers who ask, "When were you in Vietnam?": "It was last night. It was this morning. Five minutes ago, before you asked me, and I will probably go back tonight." These words and images from this short film are not so much a representation of the unrepresentability of PTSD as they are one woman's filmic treatment of PTSD that is both a statement about the persistence of the traumatic event in the present and an enduring call to witness.

*Trauma and Narrative**Joshua Pederson*

The history of the relationship between trauma and narrative is almost as long as the history of trauma itself.¹ Indeed, it is a widely accepted therapeutic truth that the stories we tell about the catastrophes that beset us – both individual and collective – can be crucial tools for recovery. This, of course, was the goal of Freud and Breuer’s “talking cure,” in which patient narratives help victims heal; as Ganteau and Onega point out, the talking cure helps the patient “give adequate expression to the shocking event, either in deeds or words, since, as they argued: ‘language serves as a substitute for action; by its help, an affect can be “abreacted” almost as effectively” (2014: 2). The close relationship between narrative and trauma was reconfirmed as Holocaust survivors like Elie Wiesel began speaking of survivors’ somber responsibility to tell both their own stories and those of the slaughtered.² And the 1970s saw the rise of both the “rap groups” that allowed Vietnam veterans to tell stories of the horrors of war and domestic abuse support groups in which women shared narratives of the cruelty inflicted on themselves and their children. In all of these settings and others, trauma and narrative are tightly bound. Thus, it is no surprise that when trauma theory burst onto the stage in the middle of the 1990s, some of its biggest proponents begin arguing that literature – and literary narrative in particular – might possess a privileged (if not unique) value for communicating our deepest psychic pains. Geoffrey Hartman writes most succinctly on this theme, arguing that literature can help us “read the wound” of trauma (1995: 537) and asking whether perhaps trauma “can only be reclaimed by literary knowledge” (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 641).

Plumbing the depths of the relationship between trauma and literary narrative – wound and word – in the works of prominent theorists active in the past two decades or so brings up two primary questions. First, what is it about literary narrative that makes it so appropriate for communicating trauma? And second, how exactly does trauma shape the narratives in which it appears?

Those who attest to literary language's special ability to communicate – or “claim” – trauma also frequently contend that nonliterary language cannot do so. And trauma theorists often argue that historical, objective, or archival language fails to capture traumatic experience. For Caruth, direct, “archival” accounts of trauma fail because they seem to put us to sleep, deadening us to the most piercing horrors. Says Caruth, such “direct” representations fall short because of their “hypnotic or numbing quality” (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 647). As an example, she cites director Alain Resnais's decision not to make a documentary about the bombing at Hiroshima: “In his refusal to make a documentary on Hiroshima, Resnais paradoxically implies that it is direct archival footage that cannot maintain the very specificity of the event” (1996: 27). Working in a similar vein, Dominick LaCapra cites the historian Raul Hilberg's feeling of apprehension on being lauded as a “successful” Holocaust historian:

Now I have been told that I have indeed succeeded. And that is a cause of some worry, for we historians usurp history precisely when we are successful in our work, and that is to say that nowadays some people might read what I have written in the mistaken belief that here, on my printed pages, they will find the true ultimate Holocaust as it really happened. (LaCapra 2001: 7)

For Hilberg – and also for LaCapra – a too “documentary” history risks giving readers the sense that they have mastered the great traumas of the age. Hilberg fears that even excellent historical narratives of trauma may give the false sense that true knowledge has been achieved. In another context, Hartman sees all putatively objective language as falling into a similar trap; it deludes us in pretending to communicate truth and comprehension. Hartman writes, “the ‘pointing’ or ‘bullseye’ pretension of language – our wish to achieve a perfect marker by way of language, a successful verbal fixative of the real, even a magical and animating evocative – this orphic quest or communication-compulsion (which raises voice to the luminosity and immediacy of sight) is always disappointed, always revived” (1995: 541). We hope that nonliterary language – historical, archival, and otherwise – can pinpoint traumatic experience with great accuracy, but our hope is always frustrated, and thus our efforts to directly communicate trauma are always already doomed to failure.

So what, then, can literature bring to the table? Why is literary language better suited to capturing or claiming trauma? For Hartman, again, if nonliterary language tries to pinpoint trauma and fails, literature gestures toward or evokes trauma and sometimes succeeds. Hartman uses the story

of Philomela to explain his point. If the mute – and muted – Philomela cannot speak her pain, she may however use her art to point toward it; her weaving restores her voice if not her tongue (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 641–642). Poetry is similar, he argues. It evokes loss even if that loss is somehow tongueless or inarticulate. Asked directly about the relationship between trauma and figurative language, he replies,

I've always been intrigued by certain basic literary forms, and the riddle is one of them. I suggest that all poetic language partakes of the riddle form, with its surplus of signifiers. An answer is *evoked*, but can you get to the answer? If you could get there, the signifiers would become redundant and fall away. But in poetry you can't get to the answer. So the signifiers *keep pointing to* what is missing. Or mute. (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 641–642, emphasis added)

Shoshana Felman takes a different tack in her analysis of Camus's *The Plague*. In *Testimony*, she argues that it is the imaginative quality of literary narrative that allows it to access traumatic experience. Indeed, both personal and collective traumas are somehow unimaginable in the normal course of events. She cites as one of the reasons for the Nazis' success the fact that few could actually conceive of the horrors they plotted. She writes, "the victims of the Holocaust in turn did not believe in the information that was forthcoming about the Nazis' final aims" (Felman and Laub 1992: 103). In *The Plague*, Felman argues, the eponymous pandemic is impossible; the strain is thought to have disappeared from the earth. The historical record proves that the plague cannot kill even as it mows down hundreds and thousands. Literature, however, can imagine – and can thus anticipate or envision traumas history cannot. Felman continues, "It is precisely because history as holocaust proceeds from a *failure to imagine*, that it takes an *imaginative* medium like the Plague to gain an insight into its historical *reality* as well as into the attested historicity of its unimaginability" (1992: 105). LaCapra takes yet another approach to explaining the benefits of using literature to claim trauma. Drawing on the language of affect, he notes that narrative fiction might capture the "feel" of traumatic experience even if it does not aim to reproduce facts: "One might argue that narratives in fiction may [. . . provide] insight into phenomena such as slavery or the Holocaust, by offering a reading of a process or period, or by giving at least a plausible 'feel' for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods" (2001: 13–14). He cites Camus's *The Fall* and Morrison's *Beloved* as examples of fictions that effectively communicate the experience of mass trauma.

There is another significant reason why some trauma theorists see literature as opening up new insights onto traumatic experience: they contend that trauma and language are formally similar. The argument grows out of poststructuralist literary theories flourishing in the 80s and 90s, and it goes something like this: trauma, as understood by psychologists like Judith Herman, Bessel van der Kolk, and even Freud, hits the human psyche with such force that it delays (or even disables) the mind's ability to access memories of the event. Caruth cites Michael Herr's *Dispatches* to drive home the point: "The problem was that you didn't always know what you were seeing until later, maybe years later, that a lot of it never made it in at all, it just stayed stored there in your eyes" (Caruth 1996: 10). In other words, traumatic experience is either inaccessible or only indirectly accessible to the individual. For Caruth and others coming out of the poststructuralist tradition, language has a similar structure. From Saussure to more radical deconstructionists working later in the twentieth century, poststructuralists question (or even deny) the link between signifier and referent. Says Caruth, there is the possibility that "reference is indirect, and that consequently we may not have access to others' or even our own, histories" (Caruth 1996: 10). Put simply, for poststructuralists, there is a break between word and world; for trauma theorists, there is a break between word and wound. Leys sums up, suggesting that for Caruth, the nonreferential quality of words and wounds renders the former appropriate for communicating the latter: "On this view, language succeeds in testifying to the traumatic horror only when the referential function of words begins to break down" (2000: 268). Hartman takes this thinking to its logical conclusion, arguing that the nonreferential quality of language might itself wound: "hurt, striking deeper than we realize, also comes through the radical inadequacy of what is heard or read, when the words searched for cannot address or redress other shocks, including visual images with a violent content" (Hartman, 2003: 259). When language lacks the referential power to describe both the world and our deepest hurts, those hurts are compounded. In sum, for some literary critics, language is both trauma-like and potentially traumatizing.

Having established the claims that, (a) language resembles trauma and (b) literary language is well suited for communicating it, we turn our attention to a more practical question: How exactly does literature speak trauma? Or, when authors represent trauma in the stories they tell, how does trauma shape those narratives? For the most significant trauma theorists of the 90s – Hartman, Felman, Caruth, and LaCapra – the

answer to this question often returns to three tropes: absence, indirection, and repetition.

Especially for Caruth and the many who follow in her footsteps, trauma is “an event whose force is marked by its lack of registration” (Caruth 1995: 6). To reiterate, the traumatic event strikes with such force that it jars the brain and disallows the normal “recording” of memory. Accordingly, both traumatic experience and our memory of such experiences are characterized by “radical disruption and gaps” (4). Thus, in both memory and narrative, lacunae serve as markers of traumatic experience. Or, as Leys puts it, trauma manifests itself as a “gap or aporia” both in “consciousness and representation” (2000: 266, emphasis added). Insofar as trauma is at least initially unavailable to the consciousness, efforts to articulate it often result in silence and textual space. Here, again, is Caruth: in traumatic experience, “a gap . . . carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory” (1995: 7). This notion shapes Caruth’s own textual criticism, especially in her masterwork, *Unclaimed Experience*. In an early chapter, she turns her attention to Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*, which the author composed in parts separated by his departure from Vienna (under duress) as the Nazi armies approach. In the explanatory material that precedes a later edition of that text, Freud narrates his experience of its publication. However, when he reaches the point where he must tell the story of his leaving, the text – Caruth argues – ruptures and breaks. There is silence where story should be. For Caruth, this silence indicates the traumatic nature of Freud’s departure: “Freud’s writing preserves history precisely within the gap in his text; and within the words of his leaving, words that do not simply refer, but, through their repetition in the later ‘Summary and Recapitulation,’ convey the impact of a history precisely as what *cannot be grasped about leaving*” (Caruth 1996: 21).

Caruth’s interpretation of *Hiroshima mon amour* runs along similar lines. In the film, a French actress working in Japan tries to recall the events surrounding her German lover’s death during World War II, but her memory of his passing is interrupted by her inability to access the death itself; writes Caruth, “Between the ‘when’ of seeing his dying and the ‘when’ of his actual death there is an unbridgeable abyss, *an inherent gap of knowing*, within the very immediacy of sight, the moment of the other’s death” (1996: emphasis added). Her inability to process that tragedy brings her together with a new lover, a Japanese man who is similarly unable to claim his own disrupted traumatic history. For Caruth, the fact that the narrative disruptions in their life stories match up allows them to connect:

It is indeed the enigmatic language of untold stories – of experiences not yet completely grasped – that resonates, throughout the film, within the dialogue between the French woman and the Japanese man, and allows them to communicate, across the gap between their cultures and their experiences, precisely through what they do not directly comprehend. Their ability to speak and to listen in their passionate encounter does not rely, that is, on what they simply know of one another, but on what they do not fully know in their own traumatic pasts. (1996: 56)

Resnais's film is structured around the spaces that open up around the histories they "do not fully know."

An even more explicit example of a trauma theoretical mode that attends primarily to narrative gaps and silences appears in Caruth's extended interview with Hartman. Their conversation takes as its starting point the section of Wordsworth's *Prelude* addressing the death of the boy from Winander. In that poem, the boy's passing comes abruptly, as a shock whose impact seems to break the poem. Indeed, the moment of the boy's death falls between two stanzas – into a literal gap in the text. And Caruth and Hartman's reading of the poem returns again and again to tropes of silence and speechlessness. Caruth suggests that the "poetic knowing" of the child's death is also a "muteness" – a gap in both narrative and experience (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 635).³ This muteness drives what she names a "pausal style" that shapes an "interruptive" form of poetry (639). And yet for some, such mutenesses and interruptions originate not in the internal structure of trauma but instead from a crisis in witnessing effected by massive catastrophes that play out on collective or even global scales. Thus does Dori Laub speak of the Holocaust paradoxically as an event without a witness; the *shoah*, he writes, "produced no witnesses. Not only, in effect, did the Nazis try to exterminate the physical witnesses of their crime; but the inherently incomprehensible *and* deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims" (Felman and Laub 1992: 80). In other words, the silence that greets trauma in text may be not only psycho- or neurological – as it often is for Caruth – but political.⁴

Sometimes, trauma marks narrative with gaps and silence. At other times, narrative flows around trauma like a river past a hillock. In other words, a trauma narrative might be only indirectly related to the event itself. *The Plague* stands as a perfect example of such narrative indirection. As Shoshana Felman and many others note, Camus's novel is a book about the Holocaust that never mentions the Holocaust. Instead, it reads pandemic as a metaphor for the Nazi genocide (Felman and Laub 1992: 93–119).

Caruth provides a similar example of traumatic indirection in her reading of *Moses and Monotheism*. For Freud, the reality of Jewish history is that the Israelites murder their redeemer Moses. The Biblical narrative, however, cannot integrate that trauma; thus, it tells a parallel narrative that both hides and gestures toward the grisly truth; Caruth argues that for Freud, “historical memory, or Jewish historical memory at least, is always a matter of distortion, a filtering of the original event through the fictions of traumatic repression, which makes the event available at best indirectly” (1996: 16–17). Trauma theorists offer us a number of productive ways to think about the indirect relationship between some texts and the traumas they “filter.” For Hartman, they are indicative of a sort of authorial “coldness” that must be assumed if one is to approach psychic anguish on the personal or collective level. Hartman resorts to Greek myth in explaining the utility of such an interpretive attitude: “I associated this coldness, leaning on the Greek myth, with Perseus’ shield, which guarded him from the petrifying glance of the Medusa, and speculated that tradition functioned as this shield”; absent this protection, “the poet had to go against the real with the unshielded eye or the unshielded senses. This seemed to increase the risk and potential of trauma” (Caruth and Hartman 1996: 632).⁵ LaCapra discusses the relationship between text and trauma – or shield and Medusa, in Hartman’s metaphor – by deploying a term of his own making: “aboutness” (2001: 188). For instance, it’s hard to say that *The Plague* is “about” the Holocaust; the book is about a disease outbreak. Yet there is a clear link to the Holocaust nonetheless. LaCapra argues that texts featuring such an indirect link to trauma might be thought of as partaking in a unique genre – one that he refers to (following others) as “traumatic realism.”⁶ In texts participating in this genre, metaphor mediates the relationship between reality and catastrophe:

At the very least, the complex relation of narrative structures to truth claims might provide a different understanding of modern and postmodern realism (including what has been termed *traumatic realism*) wherein correspondence itself is not to be understood in terms of positivism or essentialism but as a metaphor that signifies a referential relation (or truth claim) that is more or less direct or indirect. (LaCapra 2001: 14)

Explained as such, traumatic realism might be thought of as a sort of mirror image of medieval allegory. Christian writers like Spenser and Bunyan use symbolic structures to talk about God and his heavens even when dogma suggests that such themes are ultimately ineffable. For some psychologists and neuroscientists, traumatic experience is similarly

inaccessible, and traumatic realism allows authors to discuss such experience through the filter (and with the protection) of metaphor.

A third trope one sees frequently in the work of early literary trauma theorists is repetition and return. The importance of repetition to our understanding of trauma goes back at least to Freud – who observes victims reexperiencing trauma in dreams and flashbacks and reliving it through the repetition compulsion. As Caruth writes in her most recent sustained work on trauma theory, *Literature in the Ashes of History*, “It is, interestingly, the story of a disappearance and return that lies at the heart of the twentieth century’s most profound thinking about trauma, Sigmund Freud’s notion of ‘repetition compulsion’ published in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* after World War I” (2013: 57). And yet for Hartman and others, traumatic repetition has narrative ramifications. Victims do not merely relive or reexperience their traumas; they retell them, too. Writes Hartman, “Flashbacks compel the sufferer to involuntarily tell his story again and again” (2003: 268). The critic finds a key example of such repetition in Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” As the coda of that work makes clear, the mariner feels compelled to tell the story of his hellish time at sea over and over again – to whomever will listen. These tellings soothe, but only momentarily: “The repetitions, too, though cathartic, suggest an unresolved shock: a rhythmic or temporal stutter, they leave the storyteller in purgatory, awaiting the next assault, the next instance of hyperarousal” (Hartman 1995: 543).⁷ Repetition and return are also crucial components of Caruth’s readings of trauma literature, both in *Unclaimed* and in *Ashes*. In the former, Caruth lays heavy weight on the fact that the trauma text *Moses and Monotheism* features not one but two Moseses: the first who is killed by the Israelites and the second whose return recalls the first and confirms the establishment of Jewish monotheism. Indeed, Caruth argues that Paul’s writing about Jesus in the Christian New Testament constitutes a third incarnation of the Moses figure (Caruth 1996: 18). That the figure returns again and again recalls the structure of traumatic memory. The memory of the murder of Moses is not integrated in the Israelites’ collective mind, so it appears and reappears as a haunting presence that marks Jewish (and Christian) religious texts by way of repetition. Writes Caruth, “It is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of the Jews’ historical experience: since the murder is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time” – and with another “Moses,” we might add (1996: 17).

Another series of repetitions and returns appears in the central chapter of *Ashes*, which features a long interpretation of Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden*. The play, which takes place in an unnamed Latin American country after the collapse of a repressive government, seems to feature the unexpected reunion of a (former) regime doctor and a young woman whom he tortured before the government's fall. For Caruth, the torture is an unintegrated trauma that mysteriously returns when the doctor coincidentally comes to the young woman's home after liberation. This return results in a number of narrative repetitions: of scenes of torture, of hostage-taking, and even of the Schubert string quartet after which the play is named. Writes Caruth, "The play can be said to reenact the traumatic nature of the *return of disappearance* as it threatens to undo the possibility of truth, and the achievement of justice, at the heart of the returning democracy" (2013: 58).

The narrative devices described earlier and put forth by a group of critics we might refer to as the first wave of trauma theorists are part of a critical juggernaut that may represent the most important innovation in literary theory of the past two decades. Yet all this attention has brought no small amount of scrutiny for their dominant model, and in the years following this first "wave," a second group of theorists has probed the edifice's surface for cracks. These authors have produced a variety of new insights that both alter and expand our understanding of the ways in which trauma and narrative interact.

Some of these authors develop arguments that try to incorporate innovations in our understanding of psychology into our theories of narrative trauma. For instance, in *Haunting Legacies*, Gabriele Schwab constructs a model that addresses transgenerational trauma in literature. For Schwab, literary narrative might not only communicate trauma; it might also pass traumatic memory from generation to generation. Schwab uses the "topology of haunting" – as developed by Abraham and Torok in *The Shell and the Kernel* – to examine the ways narrative might encode transgenerational trauma. In this "topology," previous generations transmit "unresolved conflicts" on to descendants; Schwab continues, "This foreign presence finds its way into speech and writing, a process Abraham and Torok liken to ventriloquism. An individual or a generation can unwittingly speak the unconscious of a previous individual or generation in a cryptic speech marked by an unspeakable secret" (Schwab 2010: 52). These unintegrated traumas manifest themselves in text like ghosts in the machine, unseen but not unnoticed; in the texts of transgenerational trauma, "Language itself becomes haunted, and haunted language uses a gap inside speech to point

to silenced history. Haunted language refers to what is unspeakable through ellipsis, indirection and detour, or fragmentation and deformation” (54). For Schwab, the pains that pass from one generation to the next inflect narrative much as individual trauma does for the theorists of the first wave – in terms of silence, disruption, and indirection.

Writing in a similar vein, the critic Ilka Saal looks at the ways different traumas tend to link to (or recall) one another in narrative. She identifies a prime example of this trend – which she calls “trauma transfer” – in the Jonathan Safran Foer novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. In that book, meditation on 9/11 gives way to reflection on previous historical traumas, notably the bombing of Dresden and the Holocaust. For Saal, this trend is indicative of our tendency to read “the current trauma through the lens of a previous one” (Saal 2011: 454). Yet trauma transfer is not about some sort of fight for prominence between catastrophes that must jostle to the foreground or risk being blotted out.⁸ Rather, such cognitive and narrative linking might prove either illuminating or therapeutic; thinking or writing about one trauma might allow – indeed, might welcome – victims of other calamities to speak out about their own experiences; Saal writes, “bringing the trauma of 9/11 into conversation with other, older collective traumata suggests an attempt to engage the pain of others and to consider the myriad ways in which global power structures implicate one’s own vulnerability in that of others” (2011: 455).

Other recent work in the field builds on critiques of the model popularized by Hartman, Caruth, and the rest. In an invaluable essay outlining the most prominent assaults, Stef Craps explains what he sees as a narratological (or perhaps generic) bias in that model. For Craps, first-wave trauma theory often focuses too narrowly on modernist and postmodern texts that are aporetic, silence-ridden, or deeply fragmented. Think here of Caruth’s writing on Resnais and Dorfman, Felman on Camus and Celan, or LaCapra on Borowski and Morrison. He writes:

Trauma theorists often justify their focus on anti-narrative, fragmented, modernist forms by pointing to similarities with the psychic experience of trauma. An experience that exceeds the possibility of narrative knowledge, so the logic goes, will best be represented by a failure of narrative. Hence, what is called for is the disruption of conventional modes of representation, such as can be found in modernist art. (Craps 2014: 50)

Craps notes (following others) that this preference for modernist and postmodern narrative techniques is Eurocentric and privileges a psychological understanding of trauma that is decidedly Western.⁹ Thus, he offers a reading of Aminatta Forna’s *Memory of Love* intended to show what a

more global approach to trauma narrative might look like. Two points in his analysis stand out – and help draw our attention to distinct differences between his model and the “Eurocentric” ones that precede it. First, for Craps, in previous trauma theoretical readings, silence is a “symptom” of trauma. (Recall Hartman’s reading of silence in the *Prelude*.) In *Memory*, silence takes on a very different meaning; He argues that in Forná’s novel, silence is rather a “coping mechanism, a conscious choice deserving of respect” (Craps 2014: 55). In the face of catastrophe, silence might indicate not an inability to describe, remember, or integrate but rather an intentional decision to gather one’s strength and memorialize loss. Second, pushing back against the notion that the fragmented narratives of modernism are best suited for communicating trauma, Craps argues that *Memory* is a prime example of a relatively straightforward realist text that nonetheless testifies effectively to individual and collective loss; Forná’s novel, he writes,

is a fine example of literary realism, which does not derive its haunting power from the conversion of unspeakable suffering into a broken, traumatized speech, but rather from its acknowledgement of the existence of vast silence spaces of unknown, ongoing suffering in the face of which narrative therapy – to the extent that it is on offer – is an inadequate response. (Craps 2014: 57).

In such texts, narrative is neither disrupted by trauma nor forced to circumnavigate it. Rather, in such realistic texts, the trauma narrative passes straight through the landscape of pain, describing the difficult sights along the way. In sum, Craps challenges readers to question some of the assumptions of first-wave trauma theorists in exploring which generic decisions and narrative techniques are best suited for communicating trauma.

Another critic of early trauma theory is Greg Forter, who takes issue with some of that model’s punctualist assumptions. For Forter, too many literary critics adopt an understanding of trauma psychology that addresses only the catastrophes that strike in a single moment – or at least that are temporally confined: a bomb blast, a sexual assault, a genocide. Forter argues that such models ignore what theorists call “structural” or “insidious” trauma: persistent, aching pain often related to enduring societal pressures – like racism or patriarchal oppression. Thus, he offers a supplement to literary trauma theory designed to address these less spectacular – but no less damaging – forms of psychic anguish. His model for thinking about structural trauma suggests that such pain manifests itself in narrative in unique ways. He develops this model in an extended reading of

Faulkner's *Light in August*. First, the sources of structural trauma are both multiple and buried much deeper in the social fabric. Hence, Forter argues that if an author is to engage structural trauma in text, he or she must provide deeper, more complex back stories for his characters that give insight into the ways these individuals are imbricated in a social network colored by insidious trauma. To do so in *Light in August*, Faulkner

elaborates an ever more complex and deeper personal past for each of his main characters, as if to suggest that an event of this kind can be understood only by tracing its root in the histories of all those involved in it. This excavation reveals, in turn, how the characters' apparently "personal" stories cannot be told independently – are, indeed, inextricably intertwined, *regardless of whether the characters know each other* – precisely because all are implicated in the social history and legacy of slavery, the bloodshed of the Civil War, and the violent suppression of Reconstruction. (Forter 2007: 270)

In other words, for Forter, understanding structural trauma demands a deep dive into social history. Forter calls a second narrative effect of structural trauma "retrodetermination." Because the causes of such trauma often lie deep beneath the visible surface, individuals might be harmed by them without knowing the source of that harm. For instance, a young girl forced by a sexist father to give up an interest in the sciences might be hurt by that decision without understanding the misogyny that underpins it. Forter sees a prime example of such ignorant suffering in the figure of the young Joe Christmas, who is called a "little nigger bastard" by a white woman long before he has the information he would need to understand the harm she tries to inflict with those words. Only later in the novel do the character and the reader have knowledge sufficient to retrodetermine this moment as a manifestation of the structural trauma of racism. (Indeed, for much of the book it is unclear whether Joe is indeed black.) Forter notes that Faulkner uses this narrative device frequently throughout both *Light* and the rest of his oeuvre; the author persistently plants

details whose most basic significance Faulkner withholds, compelling thereby a cognitive paralysis relieved only by the retrodetermined revelation of a given scene's meaning. Readers are thus made to encounter the effects of slavery and patriarchy "too soon," before they're able to grasp or make sense of the traumatogenic significances that Faulkner foists upon them. (2007: 278–279).

By giving readers the tools to access and analyze nonpunctual forms of traumatic experience, Forter does a great service to the field.

Schwab, Saal, Craps, and Forter are just a few of the authors currently working to supplement and improve the ways we think about the interaction between trauma and narrative, wound and word. Yet their efforts to tweak the dominant model should serve as a reminder to others working in the field that as our understanding of psychological trauma changes and expands, our literary theories of trauma must evolve too.

*Problems in Representing Trauma**Marinella Rodi-Risberg*

Research on traumatic experience addresses the limits and possibilities of testimony in an age of violence, abuse, genocide, torture, war, and terror and raises issues of how trauma can or cannot be represented. The way trauma is conceptualized and understood, and the meaning attributed to it, poses difficult problems to its representation. This chapter highlights some of the inherent tensions or unresolved issues within trauma studies, particularly as they relate to literature and literary representation. Questions such as how, what kind of, and whose trauma is depicted by whom and for whom problematize representation in terms of which texts are identified as trauma texts and which are not, which experiences or events are identified as traumatic and which are not, who is identified as victim, who as perpetrator, and by whom, and who benefits and who do not from these understandings. Ultimately, as this chapter will show, these issues have ethical as well as political implications.

In Cathy Caruth's famous definition, trauma causes an epistemological crisis and bypasses linguistic reference and is thus paradoxically only experienced belatedly through representation in the form of traumatic effects, which are seen to literally represent the traumatic event. Therefore, literature becomes a privileged site for bearing witness to trauma through innovative literary forms that mimic and transmit rather than represent the phenomenon to readers in its literality. Thus, history is accessible only as trauma: "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (1996: 18). This belated reaction gives rise to the construction of history so that "history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (24).

In the twenty-first century, this Caruthian understanding has been questioned on account of the way it depoliticizes and universalizes traumatic experience. For instance, Dominick LaCapra has issued a word

of caution in relation to claims made by Caruth concerning the tension between what he calls historical and structural trauma (notions connected to Caruth's event-based model), the former being specific events (such as the Nazi Holocaust) with particular victims, whereas the latter is "an anxiety-producing condition of possibility" (2001: 82) to which all can fall victim. Conflating absence and loss or conflating transhistorical and historical trauma not only risks universalizing psychic pain but also downplaying the importance of specific historical problems: it may mean that "the significance or force of particular historical losses (for example, those of apartheid or the Shoah) may be obfuscated or rashly generalized. As a consequence one encounters the dubious ideas that everyone (including perpetrators or collaborators) is a victim, that all history is trauma, or that we all share a pathological public sphere or a 'wound culture'" (64).

James Berger traces the notion of structural trauma to Freud's work in *Moses and Monotheism*, which he says allows us to see any historical trauma as the recapitulation of a phylogenetic Ur-trauma that can have the effect of undermining the meaning and importance of the actual experienced trauma (1997: 570). In other words, if every historical trauma is seen through the prism of structural trauma, misrepresented as it were, (mis)-understood in relation to repressed memories of an earlier catastrophe, then each traumatic event may lose its specificity.

Furthermore, the border between structural and historical or event-based traumas has recently been challenged for its Western bias, especially by postcolonial critics, as (post)colonial experiences include daily and routine exposure to oppression and racism (see, e.g., Craps 2014). Alan Gibbs wonders if LaCapra's concept of absence is ideological and may possibly conceal causes of trauma, including "political and economic structures of oppression": If so, there is the danger of "anaesthetising concrete historical loss by transforming it into something entirely illusory, that may be concealed underneath the ideological construction of an allegedly universal human experience labelled 'absence'" (2014: 205).

While LaCapra emphasizes the dangers of transforming absence into loss, the idea of absence as originating in a historical hiatus stems from a claim that trauma exists in an ahistorical and apolitical realm. Consequently, as Gibbs notes, LaCapra's caution may involve the conversion of an actual historical trauma or loss into a structural one rather than the conflation of loss and absence: "the conflation of absence and loss . . . may be comprehended as one method through which victims begin to process their trauma, by de-actualising, universalising, and thus humanising and diminishing their condition's exceptional and overwhelming status" (2014: 206). Also,

the reverse, or what LaCapra refers to as converting absence into loss can instead be the reconstruction of “more recondite and elusive (and maybe even illusory) loss into one which becomes recuperable through the addition of identifiable causes” (206). This suggests, for instance, that a specific group may be blamed for losses that did not take place in actuality.

In the 1990s, Caruth’s model offered an interdisciplinary approach to the trauma concept, incorporating psychoanalysis, literature, and philosophy, at a time when the fields of the humanities and psychiatry came together in investigations into trauma and the Holocaust, thus providing a possibility for integrating poststructuralist theory and real traumatic events and their political, cultural, sociohistorical, and ethical meanings. Yet, as Wulf Kansteiner points out, “once that important task had been accomplished the continued claims about the ubiquity of cultural trauma have quickly turned into unintended gestures of disrespect towards today’s victims of extreme violence” (2004: 213). This is because what Kansteiner calls “the cultural trauma metaphor” (2004) unsuccessfully unites two different research traditions on trauma – philosophical texts on the Holocaust and the limits of representation, and psychological research on real trauma victims. This, he claims, has led to an elimination of the historical precision and social pertinence that the concept of trauma initially helped to create, thus resulting in an aestheticization of violence that elides the difference between actual trauma and its representation and between victims, perpetrators, and spectators, rather than offer insight into the sociocultural consequences of historical trauma.

If all are traumatized – victims, perpetrators, and spectators alike – trauma no longer constitutes a ground for differentiation, and so how is it possible to discuss other people’s trauma? The ethics of representing the traumatic experience of others is another related critical problem for literary trauma theory. Who speaks for the traumatized? Or, in Colin Davis’s words, “Who should speak for those who do not speak for themselves, the dead, the mute, the traumatized, those who cannot or will not tell their own stories, or those who have no story to tell?” (2011: 19). What is an ethical way to depict that trauma? While discussing the trauma of others is what Davis calls an “ethical minefield,” the opposite, or “not to speak for those who have been silenced, not to recall or to study what happened to them in the hope of learning something from their stories,” would in and of itself “be an act of barbarity . . . , hideously complicit with the forces which sought to eliminate them” (19).

According to the basic tenets of trauma studies, testimony to trauma is impossible without a situation of witnessing. In Shoshana Felman and

Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), Laub insists that "the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event" (1992, 57), and Felman relates how her famous graduate seminar class, involving reading literary texts and the watching of videotaped testimonial interviews from the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony at Yale collection, "broke out into a crisis" (47). After conferring with Laub she decided she needed to bring them "back into significance" (50), and worked through the crisis by interpreting the students' reactions.

For LaCapra, affective engagement when reading/watching testimonies requires careful maneuvering between sympathy and distance to avoid overidentification, and he rightly voices concerns about Felman's approach: "One may question whether taking up an authoritative role that brings students 'back into significance' is tantamount to working through problems," and "one may also raise doubts about an academic's tendency to identify with a therapist in intimate contact with traumatized people as well as about the identification of a class with trauma victims and survivors – tendencies that may induce the reader's identification with one or the other subject position" (2001: 101–102). For Davis, "witnessing the other's trauma is precisely *not* to share it," but "to regard the other's pain as something alien, unfathomable, and as an outrage which should be stopped" (2011: 30): in a literary context, what readers can do is "to try to attend as honourably as possible to the traces of that which remains foreign to us" (40). The challenge, therefore, is to navigate between distance and sensitivity to avoid the appropriation of the trauma of others.

To address this problem, LaCapra distinguishes between two forms of historiography, which he labels "positivism" and "radical constructivism" and which he finds equally insufficient for the job of representing trauma (2001: 1). Instead, he argues for finding a narrative "middle voice" for the historian, who he sees as a "secondary witness," to bridge gaps they leave and (equally important) an attitude of "empathic unsettlement" in shaping that narrative. "Empathic unsettlement" describes the process of texts facilitating a feel for traumatic experiences by working through, putting readers/viewers in an empathic mode that entails critical distance (78). Even empathic unsettlement may sometimes lead to "secondary trauma" for interviewers and commentators who work with survivors, but for LaCapra it would be an exaggeration to say that all who find themselves at least one remove from an encounter with trauma experience it (102).

Yet, empathic unsettlement presupposes the transmissibility of trauma in its literality, and the notion of its transmissibility is also disputed.

Kansteiner, who rejects secondary trauma, indicates that there is an unexplored area between the experience of trauma and its representation, or “between trauma and entertainment” (2004: 195). Thus, the notion of transmissibility, or saying that trauma texts simulate the traumatic experience is, as Gibbs notes, “deeply problematic” because the affect performed by such texts transmitted to readers is contingent on context and the readers’ disposition (2014: 28), which means that sensitive readers are not a given.

“No ‘we’ should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people’s pain,” Susan Sontag establishes (2003: 7). Although Laub’s claim about the listener becoming a participant and co-owner of the trauma may be psychologically valid in a clinical situation where psychiatrists listen to their patients’ traumas, Martin Modlinger and Philipp Sonntag, in referring to Sontag’s conclusion, draw attention to the way that it is ethically problematic if indiscriminately transposed to a context of literary and cultural criticism because “the narratives of trauma that ‘we’ are being offered about other people’s pain in literature, film, photography and art are, in the overwhelming number of cases, not the same ones that psychologists and psychotherapists are dealing with in their treatment of real victims and witnesses” (2011: 8). Although art “can navigate brilliantly the territories of trauma,” “it should be careful not to succumb to voyeuristic and arrogant spectatorship”: Instead of offering understanding, they suggest, literature may provide “a perspective on that which ‘we’ have not experienced” (9). This means that while ‘we’ cannot understand that which ‘we’ have not experienced, art can offer sensitive readers a unique view of other people’s suffering.

To avoid the risk of trauma studies turning readers and viewers into voyeurs and arrogant or commiserate spectators and appropriators of other people’s traumas, it is important to recognize the need to critically analyze the ethical and political implications of the position of trauma studies within the humanities. Susannah Radstone emphasizes trauma studies as a form of “tertiary witnessing” – through arts, literature, film, and historiography – and of examining the perils of inferiorizing primary trauma victims by constructing them as “helpless” from the perspective of LaCapra’s secondary witness (2011: 64, 63). Radstone stresses that “a focus on texts of catastrophe and suffering is bound to be inflected, also, by less easily acknowledgeable fascinations and fantasies concerning victimhood grounded in aggressivity, or a drive to voyeurism and control” as well as “masochistic identification with victimhood” (84, 85). Here trauma studies’ reading of Freud in the versions offered by Caruth, Felman, and

Laub differ from contemporary psychoanalytic theories in solely focusing on the conscious mind and eschewing unconscious conflicts and identification with the perpetrator, or in replacing intrapsychical “unconscious processes of repression” with dissociation and “the inter-subjective” through witnessing (80). The implication is that such intrapsychic and unconscious meaning-shaping processes, highlighted in alternate psychoanalytic understandings of trauma and memory, are replaced in Caruthian, Felmanian, and Laubian trauma studies with the witness/listener–testifier relationship that also defines the meaning of trauma.

Not all trauma victims are constructed equally, and if trauma studies will continuously deploy the concept of witnessing to account for its practices then it might ask itself whose stories are not being empathized with and witnessed. Trauma critics act as gatekeepers at the border of what is acknowledged as trauma and thus determine “for whom, when, where and in what circumstances are particular texts read or experienced as trauma texts” and “which events, experiences and texts are to be classed as traumatic and which are to be excluded from this category” (Radstone 2011: 85). The pain of those that are classified in the West as “other” are often ignored by trauma theory, which consequently makes it, as Radstone claims, “a theory that supports politicized constructions of those with whom identifications via traumatic sufferings can be forged and those from whom such identifications are withheld” (86). As trauma scholars we are *not* “helpless spectators/witnesses” because “the theories and approaches that we mobilize are implicated *in* politics and the mobilization of power”; therefore, “the concept of witnessing to describe [trauma studies] *own* practices . . . might best be deployed in the interests of developing a critical trauma studies sustained by an awareness of both ambiguity and the inevitability of ethical impurity” (88). Radstone’s critique emphasizes that trauma theory cannot claim ethical purity because it is necessarily inflected by politics as well as by psychical processes.

Feminist and postcolonial critics sometimes refuse the concept of empathy altogether because of “its assumed basis in ‘universal human emotions,’” which may represent yet another instance of inflicting Western values on other cultures (Vickroy 2015: 17). Laurie Vickroy emphasizes the importance of readers recognizing the parts they play in systems of power and their internalization of these systems’ ideologies, and strives “to create public awareness in the hope that it might reduce people’s complicity in these ideologies” (xii).

Another thorny question is the extent to which an individual model of trauma can or cannot be translated into a social or collective model.

Collective memory is more complex than simply an extension of individual memory and collective trauma is more about politics than about psychology. A primary purpose of recalling the past through a model of collective memory is the self-image of a specific group in the present. What is termed collective memory is not so much about memory as about a story of shared social suffering agreed on by a specific social group and accepted by an audience: collective memory is, as Sontag indicates, “a stipulating; that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened” (2003: 86).

What does it mean to talk about group trauma, and how does this differ from individual trauma? Although it is possible to discern on a societal level certain processes that may equal those on an individual level, including repression, denial, and screen memories, the effects of such processes are different. Whereas the emotional experience of individual suffering drives the actual cultural construction of collective trauma, it is not fundamental, nor is repression, denial, and working through as in individual psychology (Alexander 2012: 3). It is, Jeffrey Alexander notes, “the threat to collective rather than individual identity that defines the suffering at stake” (2). According to his social theory of trauma, “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (6). Thus, in contrast to theories of individual trauma, events acquire traumatic status “because these phenomena are believed to have abruptly, and harmfully, affected collective identity,” and “not because of their actual harmfulness or their objective abruptness” (14).

Collective traumas are socially and culturally constructed in the sense that events are not intrinsically traumatic. A dreadful event may have taken place, but its representation is a matter of construction, or what Alexander calls a “trauma process,” “subject to whirling spirals of signification, fierce power contests, simplifying binaries, subtle stories, fickle audiences, and counter-narrations” (2012: 1, 98). Social suffering may be caused by war, genocide, violence, racial, ethnic, religious, and economic conflicts; the trauma process answers the questions regarding who caused the pain to whom, and responds to issues of moral responsibility, punishment, compensation, repair, and measures taken to prevent it from reoccurring. As a collective process devoted to collective memory and meaning-making, the trauma process fills the gap between what has occurred and its representation. At issue is the stability of the collectivity’s identity “in terms of

meaning”: “It is the challenge to meaning that provides the sense of shock and fear, not the events themselves” (15). Collective trauma narratives are created by authors and other artists, intellectuals, politicians, and leaders for social movements, and they rely on the development of powerful symbols as well as demographics and material resources, “which affect, even if they do not determine, what can be heard and who might listen” (3). Thus, the trauma process is similar to “performative speech acts” (16), and the collective trauma narrative that wins out in the struggle for symbolic control simply exhibits more performative power. The result is that the members of the group are convinced that they have been traumatized by a specific event and how it happened.

How does a collective model of trauma impact questions of memory, representation, and healing? One answer is that the transformation of individual suffering into collective trauma relies on ritual, political action, and different forms of storytelling (Alexander 2012: 3–4). If received by readers as media of cultural memory and if widely read, literary works can have transformational power: “Representations of historical events . . . and characters . . ., of myths and imagined memories *can* have an impact on readers and *can* re-enter, via mimesis, the world of action, shaping, for example, perception, knowledge and everyday communication, leading to political action – or prefiguring further representation” (Erl 2011: 155). Consequently, literature may not only transform readers’ perception of reality but also reality itself through readers’ actions.

As an effective metaphor, cultural trauma may call attention to hitherto unrecognized suffering of a specific social or cultural group. Although social suffering cannot be avoided, shedding light on the sociocultural structures and processes through a social theory of trauma may allow for a space where victims, spectators, and perpetrators can achieve the necessary critical distance to avert the most atrocious consequences (Alexander 2012: 5). Collective memory also involves what is chosen to be forgotten by social groups. Some social suffering may not achieve the status of collective trauma and so will have no audience outside the group, no redress, repair, or healing. Again, one cannot take a “we” for granted. Sometimes social groups extend the idea of a “we,” but in a similar way they can also deny other groups’ trauma or deny responsibility and project it elsewhere (6). Thus, trauma narratives, “[p]rojected as ideologies that create new ideal interests,” are two edged: they have the potential to “trigger significant repairs in the civil fabric” or “instigate new rounds of social suffering” (2).

Scholars have increasingly emphasized how the political integration of the Holocaust in the United States downplays America’s own violent

history. The Holocaust Memorial Museum in the United States not only exemplifies an instance of memorialization of atrocity but also indirectly calls attention to a refusal to recognize trauma that may be felt to be too close to home. As Sontag notes, it is “about what didn’t happen in America, so the memory-work doesn’t risk arousing an embittered domestic population against authority. To have a museum chronicling the great crime that was African slavery in the United States of America would be to acknowledge that the evil was *here*” (2003: 88). Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler suggest that the assimilation of the Jewish Holocaust into American culture may function as a “screen memory” for the killing of Native Americans “through which the nation is struggling to find a proper mode of memorializing traumata closer to home” (2003: 53). Anne Rothe, for her part, explains that “to minimize America’s own past and present crimes” the United States is cast “as Nazi evil’s innocent Other” (2011: 11), yet “establishing the Holocaust as the ultimate embodiment of evil is unethical in itself because it minimizes all other instances and forms of oppression, victimization, and atrocity” (14).

This raises issues of perpetrator trauma, a neglected area of literary trauma studies. Literary trauma criticism has so far mostly paid attention to identification with victims and focused much less on perpetrator trauma. For Gibbs, this has to do with the amalgamation of PTSD and Caruthian trauma theory, which creates problems as regards the ethical aspects of trauma: The former originates in activists’ struggles on behalf of Vietnam War veterans and therefore to a great extent attends to perpetrator trauma, while the latter is partly rooted in Holocaust studies, where a disinclination to support or tolerate perpetrator trauma is expected (2014: 19). Historians, however, must consider transference, or the implication of themselves in relation to their object of study, to avoid reproducing the conditions they investigate. For LaCapra, absolute objectification or placing oneself wholly on the outside of a specific event means denying transference: as Stef Craps notes, this “repeats the kind of thinking that allowed the Nazis to dehumanize the Jews and do what they did in the first place” (Craps et al. 2015: 916).

Michael Rothberg aptly criticizes the elision of “the category of ‘victim’ with that of the traumatized subject” in trauma studies, which has resulted in the marginalized position of perpetrator trauma texts (2009: 90). Being traumatized does not automatically imply being a victim as is the case with combat soldiers. In addition, there are also nontraumatized victims, “either because the victimization did not produce the kind of disruption that trauma ought to signify in order to have conceptual purchase, or because

the victim has been murdered” (90). Scholars have also recently suggested that the categories of victim and perpetrator are not easily distinguishable in trauma narratives (Gibbs 2014: 167; Vickroy 2015: 30). Rothe has also found that victimhood has been equated with suffering in the trauma paradigm, but indicates that “[w]hile all victims suffer, not everyone who suffers is a victim, because some forms of suffering are not the result of victimization,” and that “the concept of victimhood requires that there be a perpetrator” (2011: 25). Thus, one may be traumatized and suffer without being a victim, i.e., without there being a human agency directly responsible for the victimization, such as in cases of illness or natural disasters.

Examining the ethical and political implications of trauma studies’ position and practices also includes addressing issues of complicity in the construction of victims. Focusing on perpetrators does not downplay the importance of engaging with victims. Craps emphasizes that calling attention to representations of perpetrators does not mean exculpation, but usefully points out that “we effectively deny our own complicity in violent histories and our own capacity for evil” when “we only ever identify with victims” (Craps et al. 2015: 916). Complicity is also taken up by Gibbs, who suggests that perpetrator trauma is connected with the idea of agency, or specifically “the denial of agency” to avoid responsibility, and that trauma studies “needs to address its potential complicity in the manufacturing of a sense of victimhood” in its depoliticizing tendencies in the sense of diverting attention from the oppressive contexts that cause trauma and downplaying the trauma sufferer’s agency and responsibility (2014: 247). Because perpetrators, according to trauma theory, do not suffer from trauma, trauma theory itself, as Gibbs indicates, is “implicated in post-9/11 events,” allowing “the reconfiguration of the traumatised US body politic as absolute victim” (2014: 243). The U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate that the transformation of “vicarious suffering” or “a sense of collective victimhood” may also be mobilized to offer “spurious justification for undesirable political action” (21).

Collective trauma and individual trauma are not wholly contradictory but unite in the notion of intergenerational trauma, trauma as communicable from one generation to another. The intergenerational transmission of trauma is, according to Yael Danieli, intrinsic to human history and “has been thought of, alluded to, written about, and examined in both oral and written histories in all societies, cultures, and religions” (1998, 2). Yet, although the psychological profession was slow to recognize the phenomenon (3), it currently constitutes a multidisciplinary field. Although it has been studied most thoroughly with Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and

indigenous peoples in North America, it has been observed in different populations, contexts, and legacies, including the Vietnam War and repressive regimes in Russia and Chile. The modes of transmission range from the molecular to the psychological, the intrafamilial, and beyond to the socioethnocultural and the political, as Danieli's volume demonstrates.

Sometimes distinguishing between event-based or punctual trauma and intergenerational or more insidious forms of trauma can be difficult, for instance, in the case of American slavery that lasted almost four hundred years. As William E. Cross, Jr., perceptively indicates, "how does one draw a straight line between slavery and, say, contemporary expressions of black 'racial' anxiety, without necessarily trivializing the instances of oppression faced by blacks since slavery?" (1998: 387). The ensuing and ongoing periods of oppression after American slavery "have trauma potential in their own right," which "makes it a scientific nightmare to design a strategy capable of disentangling transcendental racial anxiety from racial anxiety grounded in postslavery or contemporary encounters with discrimination and injustice" (388). Even the Holocaust, which is often referred to as a punctual trauma, cannot, Craps indicates, be considered "a textbook example" of the event-based model because it continued for five years and involved many different events (Craps et al. 2015: 911).

Eduardo Duran's articulation of the intergenerational or historical trauma of the colonization of Native Americans as a "soul wound" addresses past and contemporary indigenous experience of trauma alike: "Historical trauma is trauma that is multigenerational and cumulative over time; it extends beyond the life span" (Duran et al. 1998: 342). In this way, intergenerational trauma is an ongoing and cumulative process "via pressures brought on by acculturative stress" and the consequences of genocide, oppression, and racism (342). The soul wound can be seen as a form of insidious trauma, Laura Brown's (2008) term (borrowed from Maria Root) for covert forms of violence that includes both racism and intergenerational trauma: Brown has criticized the definition of trauma as resulting from a single or isolated event for being indicative of a narrow (e.g., white middle-class heterosexual male) criterion that downplays or excludes traumas resulting from prolonged, quotidian, or routine exposure to racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty, colonialism, and ableism.

Caruth's conception of trauma as an experience that can be transhistorically passed on across generations has become crucial as a source for theorizing intergenerational trauma in literary studies. Michelle Balaev believes that the concept of trauma in Caruth's assertion that "we are implicated in each other's traumas" makes "collective the specific

experience of a group or individual in the past” thus producing “an unspecified action and effect as well as an indeterminate meaning of experience” (2014: 7). The problem with this is not only that it erodes the borders between group and individual, “thereby suggesting that a person’s identity can be vicariously traumatized . . . due to a shared genealogy that affords the label of victim as part of personal or public identity,” but also that the false connection between individual and collective experience “obscures the different forms of violence, torture, and abuse that can produce different responses in different individuals” (Balaev 2012: 13, 16). Instead, Balaev’s notion that the protagonist’s role in trauma fiction is that of a cultural figure to reference historical periods in which collective traumas were experienced by a group of people of a specific race, gender, or culture in order to increase the knowledge of particular historical events is useful.

Concepts such as “secondary trauma,” “intergenerational trauma,” “insidious trauma,” and “cumulative trauma” enrich our understandings of trauma but may also simultaneously undermine the meaningfulness of trauma as a concept. Their usefulness lies in their capacity to sharpen the distinctions between the past and the present as well as between victims and survivors, and between spectators and readers. Although it is crucial to differentiate between, for instance, the primary trauma of victims and survivors, and the secondary trauma that an audience or a reader may experience, as well as between punctual and more insidious forms, in the words of LaCapra, “any idea of strictly mastering its use and defining its range may be self-defeating” (2001: 102).

But does some other disciplinary approach – e.g., communication theory, in which the trauma process might be likened to a performative speech act – offer a more effective model for understanding collective trauma than does trauma theory per se, as has been suggested by critics like Alexander or Kansteiner? Cultural trauma analysts stress the media’s part in creating cultural trauma, but have so far largely refrained from collaborating with scholars in communication departments where research on the psychological effects of media on its viewers have been conducted for decades (Kansteiner 2004: 209). The concept of cultural trauma is helpful, Kansteiner argues, only as far as “we can show theoretically and/or empirically how the interplay between everyday life and electronic media produces something akin to trauma on a collective scale” (208). This can be accomplished, he proposes, through “experiments in self-guided immersion in digital violent worlds . . . accompanied by extensive reception studies” (2014: 406).

Cooperation between trauma studies and communication theory may also advance knowledge as to our fascination with trauma, to what extent our obsession with it is simply a coping mechanism – an attempt to tame, manage, or control our fundamental anxieties and fears (an effort to attach meaning to a world that feels out of control, or to claim heroic significance in the face of terror and death). For instance, media studies scholar Dolf Zillmann has found that media, including film and popular literature, can be used by audiences to regulate and manage their mood states (Rothe 2011: 96).

In addition to looking to other disciplinary approaches including media studies for an understanding of collective trauma, cultural trauma studies would perhaps benefit from reconsidering its interdisciplinary connections with psychology and history to attempt to unite conceptions of trauma among the fields. When trauma studies appeared in the 1990s, it was hoped that it would bring together conceptions of trauma and memory from different disciplines, especially literature, psychology, and history; yet, as Gibbs points out, this has not been “anywhere near achieved” (Craps et al. 2015: 914).

The growing awareness among psychologists of the necessity to move beyond discussions of a chance traumatic encounter in the past has so far not had a significant effect on cultural trauma studies. Nor, says Craps, is “[t]he impact of different cultural traditions on the way trauma is experienced and on the process of healing” generally recognized (Craps et al. 2015: 907). Much of trauma studies still relies on seminal works that focused on the Nazi Holocaust, modernism, and postmodern texts of the twentieth century by European and Euro American authors with mainly (post)deconstructive and psychoanalytic literary methods that were geared toward horrific events in the Western world. Yet, an increasing number of scholars emphasize a pluralistic trauma scholarship (see Balaev 2012; Craps et al. 2015; Gibbs 2014; Luckhurst 2008). Such a scholarship means developing a culturally knowledgeable trauma theory that considers cultural differences in terms of various forms of representations of experiences in extremis, refusing an ethnocentric and depoliticized discourse of dominance. Even Caruth responds to the criticism of trauma theory as apolitical by showing its political potentiality in her latest book, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (2013).

Explicit in the title of this chapter is the notion that there are problems in representing trauma; implied, however, is that despite these problems, representing trauma is also possible. Although the concept of trauma has been the object of considerable debate, the representation of trauma is not

necessarily intrinsically problematic or limited, but the controversy is reflective of the multifarious means through which it has been conceptualized. As this chapter has shown, this conceptual heterogeneity has not so far dissuaded literary trauma scholars from developing new and creative approaches to the representation of trauma. New issues to consider emerge as understandings of the phenomenon are (de)constructed, and trauma studies must continue to address and theorize problems and limits of representing trauma, and a fortiori explore who sets these limits and for whose benefit, to keep the discipline ethically urgent.

Although a continued focus on the challenges of representing trauma is necessary, we should not forget to focus on possibilities and on the fact that atrocities and suffering have, after all, always been represented and will probably continue to be. A deluge of responses in different cultural and literary forms contests the predominant critical conception of trauma in terms of an aesthetic of unrepresentability. Says Roger Luckhurst, “Rather than privileging narrative rupture as the only proper mark of a trauma aesthetic, if the focus is moved to consider narrative *possibility*, the potential for the configuration and refiguration of trauma in narrative, this opens up the different kinds of cultural work that trauma narratives undertake” (2008: 89). While literature is not the only site for exploring the representation of the wound that trauma is, it remains one place where trauma can productively be represented and examined, despite the problems that arise in the course of that representation.

Trauma in Non-Western Contexts

Irene Visser

In the development of trauma theory the history of contributions from scholarship on non-Western literature and theory has been relatively short but eventful. From its inception in the 1990s, the theorization of trauma in literary studies has aroused not only widespread scholarly approbation and enthusiasm but also resistance and opposition, and much of the latter has come from the side of postcolonial and non-Western literary criticism. Although this response was slow to develop and only became a strong factor in the debates on literary trauma theory in the past decade, its impact on the development of trauma theory has been significant. It is no exaggeration to state that the reformulation of trauma in literary studies in the last decade and the present theorization of trauma in literary studies owes much to the findings from postcolonial and non-Western scholarship, perhaps due to what Bill Ashcroft considers its characteristic and remarkable “facility to use the modes of the dominant discourse against itself and transform it in ways that have been profound and lasting” (2001: 13).

The reformulation and transformation of trauma theory, necessitated by the response from non-Western literary studies, has involved a movement away from Freudian psychoanalysis and deconstruction, which were the foundational elements in the theory formulated by Cathy Caruth and her colleagues in the 1990s, now often referred to as classical trauma theory. In Caruth’s two influential publications, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), cultural trauma is theorized from the dominant, Western diagnostic model, which defines trauma as individual and event based. Due to the influence of critics and trauma therapists reporting on non-Western perspectives of trauma, this orientation has been redirected and transformed to include a much broader spectrum of agents in trauma with a much clearer emphasis on political, historical, and socioeconomic factors. This opening up of trauma theory as a result of non-Western scholarship is noted, for instance, in Michelle Balaev’s edited collection *Contemporary*

Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory (2014). Balaev states that in the development of early trauma theory, which viewed literature as “a closed psychoanalytic system” and which was filled with “contradictory theories and contentious debates,” scholarship on non-Western literatures has been a major influence, particularly in enabling “a view of trauma as multiply figured with diverse representations in literature and far reaching effects in culture” (2, 10). Now incorporating the long-term and systemic violence of colonization, racism, exploitation, and oppression, early trauma theory’s too narrow Eurocentric model has been expanded due to non-Western perspectives to include a broader understanding of trauma.

In its continuing expansion, literary trauma theory presents a complicated entanglement of concepts and approaches. Offering a strong potential for fruitful connections among and within disciplines, it comprises research into many modes of cultural expression, such as written, visual and oral storytelling, drama, and song as well as written literary forms, as cultural modes of coming to terms with victimization and the many effects of traumatization. “As a research paradigm, trauma cannot be stabilized according to a predetermined field of theory,” as Norman Saadi Nikro remarks, “but is both embedded in and traverses relational accommodations between disciplines, geographies, histories, implicating flows of material and imaginary resources and the institutions directing their distribution and access” (2014: 1). The metaphor of a knot is particularly apt in capturing this complex relationality. As a metaphor for trauma theory, it was first proposed by Roger Luckhurst in *The Trauma Question* (2008), following Latour’s concept of knowledge as “hybrid assemblages” or “tangled objects” (14). In *The Future of Trauma Theory* (2014), editors Buelens, Durrant, and Eaglestone describe contemporary trauma theory as indeed such a tangled assemblage, as “perhaps less a field or a methodology than a coming together of concerns and disciplines . . . drawing on literary and cultural studies, history, politics, sociology, psychology and philosophy” (2014: 3). The metaphor of the knot is not only felicitous in expressing this interdisciplinarity, but also in evoking the productive potential of heterogeneity. Following Bruno Latour’s theory of knowledge, Luckhurst explains this potential as follows: “a successful statement can be measured by how many links or associations it makes, not only within the rigours of its own discipline but far beyond it, too, as it loops through different knowledges, institutions, practices, social, political and cultural forums” (2008: 14). The most felicitous aspect of the notion of trauma theory as a knotted assemblage, I would suggest, is that it evokes the image of a nonoppositional, noncompetitive, and nonhierarchical structure, to

which may be added many knowledges and cultural practices without any elitist prioritizing or ranking according to a Eurocentric systematicity.

This chapter discusses the knotted complexity of trauma theory from the perspective of non-Western literary studies. Before addressing the various and specific contributions of trauma researches in non-Western context to the development of trauma theory, it is useful to first consider the common core of the trauma knot, the major cross-cultural features at the center of the intricate entanglement of contemporary trauma theory.

As critics and theorists working in non-Western studies have emphasized, trauma is not only to be understood as an individual, psychological, and/or physical response, but also as a collective, political, and cultural condition with far-reaching material and immaterial dimensions. This leaves undisputed trauma's basic definition as the response to an overwhelming and unassimilable life-threatening event or wounding. This response, as a condition in which the precise experience of the stressor event is inaccessible to conscious cognition, may take a variety of forms, all characterized by an altered experience of time. The traumatizing event is not experienced as past but as continuing in the present; these experiences may take the form of intrusive memories, repetition compulsion, and a broad spectrum of other symptoms that indicate a disruption of cognitive closure. Intergenerational trauma, as memories and experiences incurred by later generations, further testifies to trauma's "belatedness" and nonclosure. The basic and uncontested notion of trauma, then, is that it is a period of aftermath rather than a traumatic event or experience; it is a process following an experience that defies integration.

Trauma as aftermath finds expression in a variety of long-lasting effects or symptoms well known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. PTSD is perhaps a somewhat misleading term because trauma is by definition not "post" but persistent, resisting closure in much the same sense in which the term *postcolonial* is often seen as inadequate in view of the ongoing legacy of colonization. This perception is aptly captured in Achille Mbembe's well-known term 'the postcolony.' It is Mbembe's central argument in *On the Postcolony* (2001) that the postcolonial condition is one of aftermath: It is an inherently unstable condition comprising "decomposition and violence" as the trauma of colonialism, and signifies the continuation or nonclosure of the violence of colonization (2001: 103). The postcolony as the condition of displacement and dissociation following colonization is thus defined by the temporal disjunction inherent also in the trauma concept. Mbembe delineates this as the "non-linearity

of time, the discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another . . . [as] an *entanglement*" (14), in words that further underscore the aptness of the metaphor of a knot, signifying not only the diversity of trauma studies but also postcolonial trauma's tangled complexity.

Among the major cross-cultural features of the complex entanglement of trauma, then, are that it is a process of aftermath, encompassing a variety of disorders and phenomena, and that it affects not only individuals, but also communities and nations. As psychologists working in non-Western parts of the world have found, many of trauma's symptoms are universal, occurring throughout time and in many cultures. Intense grief, numbness, affect dysregulation, dissociation, and survivor's guilt are "seen among trauma survivors around the world," as psychological research since the nineteenth century has confirmed (Rhoades and Sar 2005: 4).

The cross-cultural human responses to trauma, however, find specific expression in diverse cultures. Psychological research on trauma, particularly in recent years, confirms that many trauma-related syndromes are culture-bound. The American Psychiatric Association has officially recognized several of those disorders, in a revision to *DSM-IV* released in 2000. For example, anger as a universal trauma symptom takes a culture-bound form in Malaysia, which is known by the specific term "amok," which translates roughly as visibly uncontrollable rage, a phrase that, however, fails to capture its specific cultural connotations. Similarly, the common human reactions of guilt and shame in trauma victims translate in specific forms of altered self-perception or even depersonalization that are often given local names, and whose precise meanings cannot be captured in translation, such as Latin-American "susto." Fear and anxiety attacks have been given culturally specific terms such as Indonesian "latah" (hypersensitivity to fright) and Caribbean "ataque," which, as Rhoades observes, is difficult to define but "seems to be related to symptoms of panic" (2005: 23).

It is due to the response to trauma theory from the area of non-Western studies that not only the comprehensiveness of trauma but also this cultural specificity and diversity have come in for closer scrutiny. In the course of this development, serious objections have been raised against concepts that were foundational in classical trauma theory, but that were incompatible with concepts and findings from non-Western studies. As a result of these objections, trauma theory has become less narrow and less defined by features deriving from deconstruction and Freudian psychoanalytic theory. However, contemporary perspectives on trauma often still display Eurocentric and limiting tendencies, as is demonstrated by the fact that objections continue to be raised by scholars in non-Western areas.

In his introduction to a special issue of *Postcolonial Text* devoted to postcolonial trauma studies, Nikro warns against a “compulsive, though incapacitating binary opposition between the West and the Rest,” which reproduces an Orientalist paradigm in which “trauma in the non-West is always collective, identified through the category of the *what*, the designation of a community, while in the West trauma is identified by the *who*, affording a personal sense of self-representation” (2014: 13). Nikro questions those categories, arguing instead for a consideration of “how works of literature *con/texturalize* various affiliations in which individual and collective are plotted and designed in specific geographies” (13). Nikro’s view that trauma theory today still tends toward Eurocentrism and thus necessitates continuing critical questioning and reformulations resonates with earlier critiques by scholars in non-Western literatures. A prominent critique has been that classical trauma theory’s tenet of the “unsayable” nature of trauma diminishes the literary potential of trauma narratives. The resistance against this tenet has been substantial, particularly in non-Western scholarship, in which trauma has been reformulated to allow for a multiplicity of “saying” trauma, including nonnarrative forms such as dance, song, and sculpture, all expressive of traumatic wounding, and refuting the classic claim of trauma’s inaccessibility. Deriving from the deconstructionist emphasis on aporia, the insistence on the inexpressible nature of traumatic experiences logically entails the denial of any therapeutic or healing potential of trauma narratives.

Non-Western literatures, in fact, often express indigenous ways of healing trauma, as critics have pointed out. Scholars working with Maori literature, for instance, have emphasized that it is characterized by themes of integration and connectivity after trauma, precisely through storytelling as a major cultural tradition (Keown 2007, Knudsen 2004, Visser 2012). Storytelling reduces fragmentation, dissociation, and other trauma symptoms, harnessing the spiritual resources of the ancestors to come to terms with the long-term trauma of racist oppression and land loss. The Waitangi Tribunal in New Zealand Aotearoa has recognized the importance of indigenous language use in trauma recovery, stating in its official documents that “the language is the embodiment of the particular spiritual and mental concepts of the Maori” and that “holistic thinking, group development, family relationships and the spiritual dimensions of life” are specific to Maori culture (1986: 25). This illustrates the importance of language as storytelling, and similar literary modes of expression, as vital instruments in trauma recovery.

The scholarship engaging with political and national trauma institutions such as the Waitangi Tribunal has been a major factor in the development of trauma theory away from its early aporetic dictum. Real-life examples of the expressive power of trauma narratives are provided by the trauma testimonies of public hearings meant precisely to promote large-scale healing and restoration, such as Rwanda's *gacaca* Courts and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in South Africa. Of particular influence in this development has been the work by Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga on trauma, memory, and narrative in South African literature. Together with other researchers of the TRC hearings in the 1990s, Mengel and Borzaga have found trauma theory in Caruth's dehistoricist model inadequate to the analysis of trauma in South Africa, arguing that the importance of the TRC hearings for trauma theory resides in the recognition that wounding incurred by systemic, political, and long-term traumatization can and should be brought to light by allowing victims to express themselves in oral and written narratives. It is now widely recognized that the trauma of the legacy of apartheid, which is the collective traumatization of several generations, is neither an unclaimed nor "unsayable" experience, and that it is the ethical responsibility of governments to enable and facilitate such public expressions of trauma.

Critics and theorists working in the area of non-Western literatures today concur that many of the claims of early trauma theory are today untenable. Buelens, Durrant, and Eaglestone state in the introduction to their book *The Future of Trauma Theory* that even Caruth's well-known statement that her trauma concept was to provide a link between cultures has failed, citing trauma critic Stef Craps's repeated critique that a broader and more egalitarian cultural engagement precisely through trauma has not been realized. They endorse Craps's standpoint that publications on trauma theory often "marginalize the traumatic experience of non-Western cultures, assume [that] the definitions of trauma and recovery that the West has developed are universal and often favour a distinctly modernist form in order to 'bear witness' to trauma" (Buelens et al. 2014: 5).

While Eurocentrism in trauma criticism indeed still often persists, Craps's critique of trauma theory's exclusive focus on modernist narrative techniques is less pertinent today. Craps's assertion that it is almost "axiomatic within trauma theory" that "traumatic experiences can only be adequately represented through the use of experimental, modernist textual strategies" (2013: 50) suggests a too restrictive and reductive view of modernist narrative techniques in contemporary trauma criticism. A more nuanced perspective on the stance on modernism in trauma

criticism is provided by J. Roger Kurtz in his article, "Literature, Trauma and the African Moral Imagination" (2014). Kurtz states that modernist features of African trauma literature must be understood from this literature's grounding in Western theoretical models that were used in major publishing houses and in universities like Ibadan and Makerere, as "the most influential institutions in shaping the ongoing identity of African writing" (2014: 427). Modernist elements were appropriated by African writers, combined with traditional cultural expressions, and set within the traumatogenic context of African history; as such, they were part of the cultural exchanges within Africa and with the West (424). Kurtz uses the history of the railroad to demonstrate the role of modernism in Africa, demonstrating how, unlike in Western texts, in African literature the railroad as a symbol of modernity did not signify public service and transport, but was an instrument of "colonial extraction and domination" and, hence, "enmeshed with trauma" (428).

What is evident is that trauma critics working with non-Western literatures are well placed to critique, nuance, and modify dominant notions in trauma theory, through relating the systemic effects of trauma to the sociocultural histories and political structures in non-Western texts. Studies of trauma in non-Western texts illuminate underlying, implicit, often figuratively expressed representations of familial and collective modes of dealing with traumatization. In the past decade, connections have been made between literary and cultural theory and sociology and anthropology to delineate new models to aid the exploration of non-Eurocentric, collective, and systemic trauma, resulting in a number of publications that broaden the original trauma paradigm. As Balaev points out, the political and social implications of trauma have recently been addressed "within a variety of frameworks" by critics such as Luckhurst, Mandel, Yaeger and Visser" (2014: 3), whose work uses theories and concepts from anthropology and sociology that aid the expansion of literary trauma theory.

Literary trauma studies may be further enriched by studies that respect the uniqueness of trauma processes in cross-cultural contexts without conforming to models from Western trauma theory. Rhoades's publication of psychological studies on "international trauma around the world" is one such potential fruitful source, comprising trauma research in seventeen nations, as diverse as Iran, China, Hawai'i, and Argentina, from all continents except North America. What becomes clear from this research is that while people respond to traumatization in ways that are found throughout the world, the spiritual and ritual responses to trauma are often culturally determined. An example provided by Rhoades is the trauma of

the tsunami in Sri Lanka in December 2004. Over 38,000 people lost their lives, and 800,000 people became homeless. The people in Sri Lanka responded to this event in ways that are universal, such as intense grief, mourning, and survivor's guilt, as Rhoades reports, but they have also "sought understanding of trauma according to their religious beliefs (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian) and have used cultural practices that aided recovery" (2005: 4).

Similar to this research, literary studies of trauma texts in non-Western contexts may contribute much that is illuminating to the understanding of culturally specific trauma responses. Through the thoughtful reading of reflections, meditations, and the full ambiguity and ambivalence of human responses to trauma, which literary expressions by definition provide, literary criticism can contribute to a greater viability and validity of trauma theory and may lay to rest the consistent critiques that have weakened the theory from the start. The changes in trauma theory to date are evidence of this potential. An illuminating illustration of this is provided by the debate on melancholy as the outcome of trauma, an outcome insisted on by the adherents of classical trauma theory. Let us briefly consider that debate as a case study of major changes brought about in the development of trauma theory due to the influence of scholarship in non-Western literatures.

In the first decade after the influential publications by Cathy Caruth and her associates, most literary work engaging with trauma, including research in postcolonial literatures, remained closely aligned with Caruth's theory. For example, Samuel Durrant, in his book *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*, argues for the recognition that mourning is the core quality of postcolonial narration and repudiates scholarship that pays too close attention to closure or healing, stating that his purpose is "to contest the mainstream understanding of postcolonialism as a recuperative, historicizing project and argue for the centrality of a deconstructive, anti-historicist ethics of remembrance" (2004: 7). Durrant thus accentuates the aporetic tenet of Caruth's trauma theory according to which trauma is a weakening disorder, as well as the dehistoricist, Freudian foundation of early trauma theory.

Durrant's views, while being propagated by other scholars following in Caruth's footsteps, also aroused strong resistance at this time, particularly among critics working in non-Western literary studies. Published in the same year as Durrant's book, Eva Rask Knudsen's important study of Australian Aboriginal and New Zealand Maori literature titled *The Circle and the Spiral* speaks out strongly against any theoretical readings that

reduce the “vigour and imaginative impact” of literature from the non-West by making the postcolonial condition “sound like a serious ailment when it fact it has given birth to strong-lived visions of cultural recuperations” (2004: 11). Later publications in trauma criticism support Knudsen’s view in providing literary analyses whose findings refute the dictum that melancholy is the inevitable and universal outcome of traumatization. If melancholy and resilience are incompatible, we must conclude that melancholy cannot be the defining condition of trauma, as non-Western literatures offer a far broader array of responses, often including resilience and healing instead of apathy and enduring stasis.

During the first decade of the new millennium the prescriptiveness of early trauma theory was increasingly interrogated by scholars from non-Western literatures, and as a result its emphasis on melancholy as the inevitable final stage of trauma process was one of the first injunctions to be rejected. Susan Najita’s book *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific* (2006) presents an interesting example of this. Najita engages with the Pacific region’s traumatic histories of empire and (post) colonialism. While initially situating her project in this book firmly within classical trauma theory, Najita gradually finds that her close readings of Pacific literature necessitate a rejection of her initial understanding that trauma means a weakening or crippling of a community or of a nation. She eventually makes a strong case for a theory of trauma that moves through and beyond the classic Western model and emphasizes the importance of indigenous cultural forms in the processes of coming to terms with traumatization. Najita points out that Maori authors such as Keri Hulme, Patricia Grace, and Witi Ihimaera reinvoke indigenous cultural forms as the basis for imagining new futures, interweaving “historical documents, genealogy, oral tradition, and testimony in to their fictional representations of actual historical moments of resistance” as ongoing engagement with the traumatic past, “whether it be nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands or the legacy of settlement of Aotearoa” (2006: 13). The result of colonial trauma, as reflected in Oceania’s literature, is therefore not to be defined as melancholia or mourning, Najita concludes, but of ongoing political work, as a way of “imagining the future by exorcizing the past” (27). This emphasis on redress and resilience contradicts the approach exemplified by Durrant’s book, which still saw postcolonial trauma narratives as “engaged in a work of disruption rather than recovery” (Durrant 2004: 117).

The importance of non-Western contexts for a profounder understanding of trauma in decolonization processes is not to be underestimated. Najita’s view that through literature a new future can be imagined, and the

past negotiated and reclaimed in such a way that healing can proceed, has since been more widely expressed in non-Western criticism, perhaps most insistently by Mengel and Borzaga in 2012, who dismiss Caruth's Freudian framework outright, due to its "melancholic vocabulary" marked by "notions of absence, holes, deferral, crises of meaning, unknowing and dissociation," which precludes "any possibility for healing for individuals or entire nations" (2012: xiii). In the development of trauma theory this rejection of melancholy as trauma's inevitable outcome has been a transformational factor. Perhaps influenced by these responses from non-Western studies, even Caruth's theorization is today no longer defined by its earlier "melancholic vocabulary," but allows for avenues of recovery and healing. In her *Literature in the Ashes of History* (2013), Caruth departs from her earlier emphasis on melancholia and stasis as inherent in trauma and instead turns to Freud's concept of the life drive "by which Freud signals a mode of speaking and of writing that bear [*sic*] witness to the past by turning toward the future" (2013: xi) to postulate that trauma may also constitute an "imperative to live" (xi). Caruth's recent views, then, are aligned with the views expressed in non-Western trauma studies that literature is of considerable importance in laying bare the workings of processes of recovery and resilience as part of trauma theory.

While, as we have seen, the development of trauma theory has been directly influenced by critical scholarship in non-Western literatures and cultures, trauma theory has also been informed by the theoretical work of non-Western thinkers such as Franz Fanon, Alfred Memmi, and Achille Mbembe. Their influence (past, present, and future) cannot be neglected in an overview of the development of trauma theory in its non-Western context.

Franz Fanon (1925–1961) is undoubtedly the most influential voice among theorists from a non-Western background, as well as the most prominent precursor of trauma theory in postcolonial studies, even though his last major work, *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in 1961, many years before the start of literary trauma theory. Fanon's first major publication, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), was based on his professional experiences as a Western-educated psychiatrist working in the Blida-Joinville psychiatric hospital in Algeria. He resigned his position when he found that the treatments that he had learned during his studies in France were utterly inadequate in the treatment of the sociopsychological effects of the trauma of colonialism in Algeria. Fanon's letter of resignation states his motivation:

If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization. (1970: 53)

Fanon's insistence that Eurocentric trauma therapy was very much inadequate in non-Western context because it ignores relevant political and social circumstances has since found resonance in many reports from international trauma workers today. As a pioneer of trauma theory, then, Fanon was the first to posit what is now received knowledge in trauma theory: that to be truly effective and productive, trauma theory must take into account material and ideological circumstances and incorporate a cluster of influences (political, social, economic, ideological, historical).

Although Fanon's importance is uncontested in this respect, it must be noted that his thinking has also come in for much criticism in later years, and that his work has been charged with sexism, racism, bigotry, and homophobia. Most controversial in the context of trauma theory is undoubtedly his emphasis on the emancipatory effect of violence. In his theory of resistance, violence is no longer a criminal act but becomes an instrument of liberation. This radical political stance must be understood from Fanon's personal history of active involvement in armed combat. Fanon fought with the Allied Forces in World War II and later joined the liberation struggle in Algeria, where he had a major role in its underground organization. As Renate Zahar writes, Fanon had "a leading part in the setting up and training of commando units . . . [Fanon] taught the *moujahedin* how to lay booby-traps, how to control their reflexes when making bomb attempts, and which mental or physical attitude to adopt in order to endure tortures" (1974: xi).

Although we understand the circumstances that led to Fanon's emphasis on violence as a justified and indeed necessary method of resistance, this emphasis is ethically unacceptable in trauma theory in which there is no place for an ideology of violence in whatever form. This consideration arguably limits Fanon's contribution to theories of trauma, and perhaps to cultural theory in general. Zahar, writing in the late 1960s, already questions whether Fanon's theory is of general applicability, emphasizing that its focus is only French colonialism: "His theories are limited in scope by the fact of their being based on the historico-economic and political conditions he encountered in his own revolutionary activity" (1974: xxi). Nikro notes this, too, stating that Fanon's work often "has come to be positioned as providing an apparent non-Western approach by wresting trauma studies from its debilitating subject-centred episteme" and has

often been “pitted against the depoliticized tenor of Caruth’s work”; however, to this view Nikro wants to interpolate that Fanon’s work must be refocused on the circumstances of Fanon’s writings, “the jagged terrain of their real time and place of enunciation in Algeria, France, Martinique” (2014: 14). Zahar’s and Nikro’s point that Fanon’s theories cannot be extended to include all forms of colonialism is pertinent also to the discussion of processes of trauma in decolonization today because Fanon died before he could witness the effects of decolonization in Africa.

The problematic stance on violence in Fanon’s theorization has also been addressed by Edward Said in his important book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Re-evaluating the emphasis on justified violence in Fanon’s work, Said points out that this is literature of resistance written “in the thick of battle,” where there is an “understandable tendency” to concentrate on “combative, strident assertiveness” (1994: 274). Concluding his detailed analysis of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Said observes that Fanon asserted the need for violence to combat both imperialism and nationalism, but “could not make the complexity and anti-identitarian force of that counter-narrative explicit”; to elucidate this complexity, Said proposes a connective motivation that is not immediately apparent in Fanon’s formulations but which Said poses as evidence of Fanon’s desire “somehow to bind the European as well as the native together in a new non-adversarial community of awareness and anti-imperialism” (274). This reevaluation of Fanon’s polemicism is important in bringing Fanon’s theorization in closer alignment with the present mode of thinking about trauma, in which relationality and multidirectionality are central notions.

The mutuality of relationships that Said poses in his reading of Fanon is perhaps more immediately evident in the work of Fanon’s contemporary Albert Memmi (1920–), a Tunisian-born theorist and novelist educated in France. Like Fanon, Memmi contributed to the early formulations of postcolonial theory through his anticolonialist writings, most importantly in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), whose main thesis was the paradoxical mutuality of colonial power structures in which the primariness of the colonizer is dependent on the secondariness of the colonized. This was significant pioneering work for postcolonial theory. Memmi argued that the oppression and exploitation inherent in the colonialist system affects both colonizer and colonized; both experience alienation, and the colonizer who regards the colonized as an object or as an animal will himself assume dehumanized features and be himself degraded. These thoughts resonate with present conceptualizations of trauma as affecting

both perpetrators and victims. However, although Memmi's explorations of colonial relations were important contributions to the understanding of trauma as the systemic violence of colonialism, his theories have not been influential in trauma theory and its development since the 1990s. More is perhaps to be expected from his later publication, *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (2006), which engages with what Memmi sees as the disillusion of decolonization: today's situation of ongoing poverty, the problematics of integration, the lack of responsible government, and the failure of, in particular, Arab intellectuals to address the problems adequately; instead, they often "justify the unjustifiable" (2006: 33). Although this book, and in particular Memmi's concept of neocolonialism, was not favorably received by academic reviewers, its theories on transmigration, diaspora, and exile are an area of potential interest for the development of trauma theory in light of the more recent refugee problematics.

More influential today, though certainly not uncontested, are the publications of Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian theorist, who became a forceful presence in postcolonial theory after his collection of essays titled *On the Postcolony* (2001). In these essays Mbembe combines a poststructuralist stance with notions from existential phenomenology to analyze decolonization in Africa as the continuing influence of colonialism. Questioning entrenched views of colonialism, such as the binary oppression-resistance, Mbembe replaces the victim paradigm with a less simplified account of complicity and (unconscious) guilt as responses to power in postcolonial or decolonized African nations. While thus offering productive areas for further exploration, it cannot be said that Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* has become a central text in postcolonial trauma theory today. This may be attributable to negative critiques by, for instance, Jeremy Weate, who pronounced it as "theoretically confused and devoid of productive substantial argument" (2003: 27), and partly perhaps to Mbembe's critical tone in challenging the discourse of writing about Africa, for instance, in speaking of "the extraordinary poverty of the political science and economics literature on Africa" (Mbembe 2001: 5). However, while Weate deems that Mbembe's claim to instigate a new form of writing about Africa fails to provide "any substantive ground for further development," he also feels compelled to conclude that *On the Postcolony* suggests the way forward "for postcolonial thought as a whole" (Weate 2003: 39). Weate thus recognizes what is indeed the strong potential of Mbembe's work: the thinking through of the need and potential of accounts of trauma at the level of ordinary, everyday life. This way of reading trauma accords with the call for a more specific, yet also

more comprehensive, account of trauma that was often expressed in the early years of the twenty-first century in literary trauma studies.

In a manner similar to Fanon's contributions to postcolonial psychoanalytical theory and Memmi's contributions to ethical debates in postcolonial studies, Mbembe's detailed poststructuralist analyses provide useful contextualization for literary and cultural criticism that seeks to understand the development of trauma from non-Western perspectives. It must, however, be noted that the perspectives of Fanon's and Memmi's twentieth-century analyses are time-bound and hence inevitably limited, and that the polemical, strident tone that characterizes Fanon's and Mbembe's work is out of accord with the ethical, other-directed orientation of early trauma theory and the insistent call in present trauma theory for noncompetitive and nonoppositional modes of thinking. A further consideration relevant in the discussion of these theorists is that while their background is non-Western, their theoretical apparatus is fully Western and, by its nature and origin, incontestably Eurocentric. It cannot be denied that the thrust of their polemical and anti-Eurocentric arguments depends to an important degree on Western-based knowledge and understanding, rather than on non-Western knowledge and learning. Today's trauma critics often express their sensitivity to this issue. Ananya Kabir, for instance, acknowledges a duality in her own thinking about trauma, caused by the fact that trauma theory is Euro-American; it is "an existing, sophisticated set of theoretical approaches," which for her own thinking as a critic from a non-Western background results in an uneasy combination of Western and non-Western positions that she continues to grapple with in her intellectual work (2014: 64). Critics and theorists who, like Kabir, are keenly aware of their dual positions herald a new development in trauma criticism, one that promises a strong engagement with trauma narratives from a non-Western theoretical perspective.

The duality between Euro-American theories and indigenous perceptions of trauma has already come to the fore in today's trauma criticism. Native American scholarship, for instance, is a site of resistance against the dominance of Western traditional theorization in literary studies, a resistance that is based on the dual knowledge of indigenous thinking and Western cultural theory. Contemporary Native American theorists are mapping out their relationship with mainstream methodologies, some faulting the uncritical and unreflective use of Western theories, and some focusing on developing new models and methodologies based on indigenous thinking. Their contributions to postcolonial theory are substantial, and their focus on Native American concerns in the discussion of land,

identity, and the discourse of discovery offer a significant potential for elaboration in trauma theory, as does their work on the long-term effects of the discourse of discovery, of Manifest Destiny and the myth of the West. Prominent Native American writers such as Paula Gunn Allen and Gerald Vizenor deliberate the relationship between Native American experiences and postcolonial theory, and they question the usefulness of such theoretical approaches as poststructuralism and Freudian psychoanalysis for the exploration of Native American histories and literature. Vizenor in particular has consistently expressed his concern that the specific nature and history of Native American trauma may be elided in trauma studies that appropriate it and reconfigure it by presenting it in the dominant, conventional trauma discourse. Stating that it is important to bring to light the precise ways in which Native communities were subjected to exploitation and oppression, Vizenor also emphasizes the need to acknowledge the ways in which they have survived, with language and storytelling as their tools of resilience and resistance. Seeing language not only as an instrument of colonization, but also as the way of resistance and liberation, Vizenor has created new words, such as *survivance*, *post-indian*, and *storying*, to emphasize the specific contribution of Native American literature to postcolonial theory. The term *survivance*, central in Vizenor's work, illustrates Vizenor's rejection of victimhood and melancholia as defining characteristics of trauma: "Survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories . . . Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy; and the legacy of victimry" (2008: 1). For the development of trauma theory as the aftermath of historical, political, and ecological oppression the introduction of Native American approaches will be a vital enrichment and rejuvenation, as will the contributions by other indigenous modes of thinking in non-Western studies.

For the development of a non-Eurocentric trauma theory, the literatures of Africa may well prove of major importance. Increasingly, the African moral imagination reflected in contemporary writing offers an "intrinsically transformational impulse," as Kurtz states (2014: 421). It is evident that trauma theory stands to gain substantially from a broader and deeper engagement with non-Western literary studies. Culturally specific approaches to trauma from other non-Western theorists such as Chicano/a, Australian Aboriginal, and the literatures Oceania, the West Indies, and many more are potentially fruitful directions for the future of trauma studies.

Critics working with non-Western literature are currently offering ways for further development of trauma theory through a focus on indigenous concepts of language. A recent article by Xavier Garnier presents a strong case for potential renewal of trauma criticism through attention to untranslated African-language or Indian-language texts. Garnier asserts that these texts, which despite their long histories have remained unexplored to date, can teach us much about trauma in non-Western contexts: “These texts exist now, and no one knows what their fate will be. By their very existence, they are a potential renewal of theoretical approaches sometimes a little too sure of themselves” (2012: 510). A further underresearched area is the role and function of rituals and ceremonies in the engagement with trauma victims. As Kabir writes, the challenge to scholars interested in the “future of trauma theory” is to find ways of analyzing the traumas of the non-Western world that “acknowledge the myriad modes of consolation, memorializing and reconciliation which are deployed by traumatized subjects who may never have heard of Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis and, indeed, ‘trauma theory’” (2014: 64).

It is not surprising, perhaps, that non-Western criticism has provided a strong and valuable rejuvenation of trauma theory. It is well placed to explore literary trauma fiction and analyze its cultural metaphors, area-specific use of language, and indigenous rituals, symbols, and archetypes, throwing fresh light on the literary representation of human experiences of trauma. Research on culture-specific indigenous traditions constitutes a rich potential for the further development of trauma theory. In addition to the inclusion of more culturally and historically specific narratives, what is needed in literary trauma studies is an ongoing, careful delineation of the parameters and categories that guide theorization, while developing a multidirectional and relational approach in which the entrenched binary oppositions between the West and the non-West may be collapsed and cultural differences may be celebrated as enriching and illuminating the expanding field of literary trauma theory.

*Trauma and Memory**Silke Arnold-de Simone*

In recent decades, the rise in forms such as memoirs, testimonials, and confessionals has paralleled the growing interest in the intersection of memory, place, trauma, and literature. This intersection can be traced back to the legend of the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (c. 556–468 BC), who is credited with the invention of a system of memorization (*ars memoria*): Simonides was attending a banquet to celebrate Scopas of Thessaly's victory with a commissioned ode. The building collapsed during an earthquake, crushing everybody in it, and as the sole survivor, Simonides was asked by the mourning relatives to identify the mutilated and unrecognizable bodies which he managed by recalling where they had been seated around the table. While this story is usually read as the foundation of mnemotechnics as a technique based on precise recall, it can also be described as the mythical origin of testimony in the face of trauma. Although it says little about the effects this experience had on the poet, it privileges the eyewitness perspective in the process of mourning in which *place* rather than *time* becomes the marker of memory and trauma.

Memory studies have moved on from the idea of remembering as retrieval and recollection of faithfully stored stable information, picturing memory not so much as a fixed product but as a fluid and imaginative process in which the memory is remade every time remembering happens. Operating in a perpetual present, it reveals a past reworked in relation to current needs, fears, desires, and wishes. Memory indicates a relationship to past events that is shaped by, and in turn profoundly impacts, how we think, feel, and live in the present.

The classic model of trauma, on the other hand, has been conceptualized as an actual trace of the past, characterized by involuntary flashbacks, by a “literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits” (Caruth 1995: 5). While memory is potentially granted an identity building redemptive and therapeutic power, this is denied in trauma whose impact is seen to shatter all representational capacities, leaving only a flood

of terrifying affect and disrupting an individual's coherent sense of self. Trauma, defined as the psychological effects of suffering on an individual or a collective, has been conceptualized in memory studies as a temporary or permanent interruption of the ability to represent the traumatic event and to make meaning of it. In contrast to the approach of psychoanalytic therapy, which aims to turn traumatic memory into narrative memory and integrate it into a life story, Caruth claims that sufferers are unable to narrativize their response to the traumatic experience. "Trauma . . . issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge. In its shock impact trauma is anti-narrative" (Luckhurst 2008: 79). Critics such as Kansteiner (2004: 203) or Ruth Leys have pointed out that Caruth's approach to trauma can be traced back to deconstructivist literary theories (especially to Paul de Man) in which all traces of the past are treated as language that has lost its referent. According to classic trauma theory, trauma exists outside conventional forms of perception, representation, and transmission, and only experimental aesthetics can mimic the effect of trauma in which "temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection" (Whitehead 2004: 3). Elliptical omissions, gaps, and distortions testify to unspeakable trauma and to the response of pathological dissociation. Trauma cannot be contained by verbal exegesis but spills out in uncontrollable images and is part of a fragmented and cyclical temporality. Trauma texts are therefore characterized by gaps, silences, and fragmentations, symptoms of "disremembering," which testify to the trauma: "No narrative of trauma can be told in a linear way: it has a time signature that must fracture conventional causality" (Luckhurst 2008: 9). This suggests that trauma cannot be grasped through conventional realistic forms of narration and that we have to resort to modernist strategies of representation in the attempt to imaginatively work through and transform psychic trauma (Roth 2012: 94), and even more important, to facilitate emotional and cognitive strategies of resilience, which allow the traumatized subject to survive.

For better or worse, trauma has become a – if not *the* – central paradigm in memory studies. According to Antze and Lambek the implicit understanding is that the only "memory worth talking about – worth remembering – is memory of trauma" (1996: xii). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel (*The Metropolis and Mental Life*, 1903) had described the shocking, traumatizing nature of modern urban life in crowded downtown Berlin, while Walter Benjamin was drawing on Charles Baudelaire's depiction of nineteenth-century Parisian life,¹ but for both trauma was becoming the hallmark of modern industrial and

urban life. At the end of the twentieth century, confirmed by the century's most deadly and disturbing manifestations in industrialized warfare and genocide, Mark Seltzer could declare that "[m]odernity has come to be seen under the sign of the wound . . . the modern subject has become inseparable from the categories of shock and trauma" (1997: 18).

It is the expressed hope of trauma studies that a focus on trauma will allow us to address the modern condition *and* the subject's relation to difficult or marginalized pasts, which we are condemned to act out in one way or another if we do not face up to our position in history after trauma. This "ethical turn" in the humanities implies a social responsibility to avoid the involuntary repetition that is often associated with trauma by working through (the interface of) personal and collective violence and suffering with the help of self-reflexive and antiredemptive art forms that thematize their own limitations.

The lens of "trauma" situates the subject in a specific temporality, illuminating the hold the past has on us and yet at the same time casting a shadow that threatens to obscure our agency as (political) subjects. The debilitating characteristics of trauma highlight the unconscious transmission and passive reproduction of the past while the ethical refusal of facile redemption casts doubt on our ability to imaginatively explore and actively transform our relationship with the past to enable a different future.

Just because a focus on trauma has the potential to remind us of our ethical responsibilities does not mean that it escapes commodification or ideological instrumentalization. Trauma and the consequential victim status have acquired symbolic capital and present the opportunity to gain a voice and visibility in public forums. Despite best efforts in the scholarly community to argue against this competitive form of remembrance, it has triggered a contest of comparative victimization. Rothberg argues that "far from blocking other historical memories from view in a competitive struggle for recognition, the emergence of Holocaust memory on a global scale has contributed to the articulation of other histories – some of them predating the Nazi genocide, such as slavery, and others taking place later" (2009: 6). And yet "once victimhood is understood to endow one with special claims and rights, the scramble to attain that designation for one's own interest group is as heated as any other race for legitimacy and power" (Bernstein 1994: 85). But it would be wrong to assume that gaining a public voice is the same as making yourself heard or, indeed, that all suffering has the same potential to become visible and attract empathic investment (Butler 2004). While the problems of narrativizing trauma and its proclaimed "unreadability" have been extensively theorized and

criticized (Toremans 2003: 337), other reasons that contribute to the silencing of trauma – such as the unwillingness or incapacity of the potential audience to listen and to acknowledge the larger social, political, and economic practices including the various ways in which we are implicated in other people’s trauma – are thoroughly underresearched. Discourses of trauma can be ideologically instrumentalized and exploited to ignore the complexities of a historical event; they can be dehistoricized and mythologized to view the world in simple terms of good and evil, victims and perpetrators,² or indeed culturally simplified into a facile juxtaposition of nostalgia and trauma. Scholars such as Kaplan and Wang have warned against pushing “trauma into the mystified circle of the occult, something untouchable and unreachable” (2004: 8).

Both memory and trauma studies have originated in the 1980s and are closely connected with the crisis or proclaimed “end of history” (Francis Fukuyama), a new era labeled by Jean Baudrillard as “*posthistoire*” and either bemoaned as “loss of historical consciousness” (Frederic Jameson) or celebrated as the abandonment of “grand narratives” (Jean-François Lyotard). In this situation “memory” gained importance both as a cultural paradigm and, in consequence, as a theoretical concept in the humanities. The idea was that this new perspective would allow for a democratization of remembrance culture, encouraging and facilitating the growth of alternative, marginalized, multivocal narratives from diverse sources, providing public forums for counterhegemonic memories and competing *emplacements* (White 1975: 7–10).

But in recent years, the promise of classic trauma theory that “listening to the trauma of another can contribute to cross-cultural solidarity and to the creation of new forms of community” (Craps 2013: 46) has been drawn into question by scholars such as Stef Craps, who points out the hidden imperialism in understanding trauma as a monolithic response. Such a Eurocentric approach fails to acknowledge that people respond to suffering in the context of a specific place and time and according to cultural assumptions, values, and beliefs: The range of contextual factors that specify the experience are often ignored. Trauma’s universal pathologizing effects have also come under severe criticism for disempowering those who suffered from the experience of violence, denying them agency and control over their own responses and the transformative journey offered by their own narratives and potential reevaluation of former “truths” (Balaev 2014: 6; Pederson 2014: 338). They have gone so far as to argue that trauma theory obscures the reality of Holocaust survivors and the multiplicity of their particular, actual experiences, by comparing them

to a limited number of classic formulations of how trauma is meant to affect the individual who is framed as bearing the evidence of a “reality imprint” (Van Der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth 1996: 52), becoming “themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot fully possess” (Caruth 1991: 4).

In the context of trauma theory traumatic experiences have become associated with very specific memory dynamics. The concept of trauma as a temporal disruption, destroying or fracturing the narratives of our lives, is first formulated in Sigmund Freud’s 1896 essay *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, where he claims that an event is not understood as traumatic until its return. According to Freud, trauma is experienced on a spectrum from amnesia through to intense, affective memories (with no conscious understanding), to misremembered, mistaken, repressed, displaced, or disguised registration (as, for example, in the case of “screen memories”³). Trauma is generating painful, involuntary “flashbacks,” it is deferred and strikes “afterwards”⁴ but is emptied of any content, which accounts for seemingly paradoxical symptoms, such as rage and numbness or feeling both possessed and empty.

Trauma theory, as it was developed by a group of Yale University literary scholars including Shoshana Felman (Felman and Laub 1992) and Cathy Caruth (1991a, 1991b, 1995), constitutes the paradoxical relationship between the elision of memory and the precision of recall. Caruth argues that the overwhelming event was never consciously processed, which means that it remains an unnarrativized fragment, inaccessible to controlled recall. Her influential if controversial theory states that trauma as an excess of reality cannot be assimilated and defies comprehension (Caruth 1995: 4). The overwhelming experience could not be mentally processed and thus event and affect became dissociated. The sufferer becomes haunted by an event because she cannot develop a memory, and yet the traumatic event is “engraved” on her mind. This approach to trauma theory situates the trauma not so much in what Caruth describes as an “unclaimed experience” (Caruth 1991b, 181), but in the event itself. Caruth speculates “that perhaps it is not possible for the witnessing of trauma to occur within the individual at all, that it may only be in future generations that ‘cure’ or at least witnessing can take place” (1996: 136). The obligation to witness the traumatic event, to form an experience and a memory that was denied to the survivors, is passed on to secondary witnesses (Felman and Laub 1992: 76). However, secondary witnessing does not necessarily imply “vicarious traumatization” (Kaplan 2005: 39), that is the recurring of some of the symptoms of post-traumatic

stress – this might even be counterproductive as it would prevent secondary witnesses from working through the trauma.

Like so many concepts in memory studies, the idea that people can be haunted by events they have not lived through emerged in the context of Holocaust studies and at the critical historical juncture when the threat of the generation of survivors passing became immanent. It has soon gained a wider application, meeting with psychoanalytic theories such as Nicolas Abraham's and Maria Torok's notion of transgenerational haunting in which an individual's psychic development is shaped by an unspeakable drama in the family's history, a secret that must be kept hidden, guarded by phantoms. In this case trauma is silent not because it cannot be articulated but because it is caught up in a complex mixture of violence, guilt, and shame. But most important it bears trauma's hallmark of "belatedness."

Marianne Hirsch had originally introduced the term *postmemory* for the haunted second and third generations of Holocaust survivors who grew up with the symptoms, stories, and unspoken affects to which they were exposed in the family dynamic, tied to the experience of their parents and grandparents and yet separated from them by an unbridgeable distance. As a child of Holocaust survivors herself, she was interested in "the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated" (Hirsch 1997: 22). In response to criticism she extended the concept to encompass "witnessing by adoption" which is nevertheless facilitated by familial tropes such as family photographs: "It is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences – and thus also the memories – of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story" (Hirsch 2001: 10). Both Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" and Landsberg's term "prosthetic memory" are indebted to Caruth's transhistorical model of trauma and both see memory not only as being inherited along "blood lines" but transcending notions of genealogical, "racial," or ethnic lineage.

However, this cannot simply be conceptualized as an extension because there is a categorical difference between the psychic effects that result from growing up with traumatized caregivers on the one end the spectrum and a conscious emotional engagement with and investment in a mediated representation of traumatic experience on the other. Alison Landsberg argues that cinema and experiential museums in particular can transmit "memories of events through which [one] did not live," derived "from a

mass-mediated experience of a traumatic event of the past” (2004: 19). She politicizes practices of witnessing and adoption by insisting that they allow an audience of popular mass culture to forge empathic communities beyond the traditional boundaries of national, ethnic, religious, or generational belonging.

However, the well-meaning attempt to establish transcultural, transnational and transgenerational trauma communities can potentially mystify the process of traumatization. If trauma is indeed not just confined to the individual but spills into social interactions, then we need to make a distinction between different interactions and engagements, between being exposed to embodied affect in a family dynamic, listening to testimonials, engaging in reenactments, or consuming media representations. These different forms of mediation and immersion will necessarily be experienced differently and have different effects. Ann Kaplan, for example, has developed the concept of “mediatized trauma” (2005: 2) to analyze how a catastrophe can have an effect on persons removed not only in time but in space. The 9/11 attacks have been experienced by an audience of several millions live on TV across the world, but does this turn them into witnesses or even secondary witnesses? At the same time the whole American society has been declared as traumatized by the 9/11 attacks, but can whole societies be traumatized?

In both memory and trauma, the realms of personal and collective intersect in the complicated interactions between the biological, the psychological, the political, and the cultural.⁵ In *Notes on Trauma and Community*, Erikson defines collective trauma as the result of damaged attachment patterns that sustained a community, the

gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared . . . “I” continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. “You” continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But “we” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body. (1995: 187)

Similarly to Halbwachs’s understanding of memory as a social activity, Erikson argues that not only is there a social dimension to trauma, but that trauma can in fact be and often also is the foundation of a community (185).⁶ Erikson notes that “trauma has both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. It draws one away from the center of group space while at the same time drawing one back” (186). While Erikson understands trauma to be a transitional reexperiencing that is driven toward an obtainable goal of narrativization through collective dialogue, others such as Hayden White

have called for “anti-narrative non-stories” (White 1996: 32), historical metafiction and trauma images/texts that resist conventional modes of narrativization.

Trauma narratives can be communicated in different modes (e.g., oral or written) and different media (e.g., book, cinema), and while classic trauma theory privileges literature and its specific aesthetic forms, memory studies places a strong focus on image-based media forms such as photography (Marianne Hirsch), cinema (Janet Walker, E. Ann Kaplan, Anton Kaes), and experiential museums (Alison Landsberg), not just as carriers of trauma narratives but also as implicated agents in the way trauma is conceptualized and vicariously (re-)lived. If “traumatic memories lack verbal narrative and context; [. . . and] are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images” (Herman 1992: 38), it is by no means surprising that visual media have also become central to the idea of secondary witnessing. Photography could not only provide indexical recordings of traumatic events: in much the same way as reality left a physical trace on the photography negative, the traumatic event was seen to imprint itself directly into the psyche, supposedly bypassing perception and consciousness. Film and photography are also able to produce imagery, which conjures up the mental and emotional responses we imagine are triggered by traumatic events (cf. Hirsch 2004: 6–7). Walker defines trauma films and videos as “those that deal with traumatic events in a nonrealist mode characterized by disturbance and fragmentation of the films’ narrative and stylistic regimes . . . trauma films . . . ‘disremember’ by drawing on innovative strategies of representing reality obliquely, by looking to mental processes for inspiration, and by incorporating self-reflexive devices to call attention to the friability of the scaffolding for audiovisual historiography” (Walker 2005: 19).

It was Freud who in *Constructions in Analysis* (1937) had first suggested that a narrative that has no historical basis – a fictive narrative – can nevertheless produce a transformational therapeutic result if the meaning produced by this narrative goes to the heart of the trauma. This is why the process of remembering challenges the binaries of fact and fiction, truth and imagination. There are, of course, ethical issues in the “deliberate confusion of factual and fictional modes in some memoirists” (Luckhurst 2008: 137). One high-profile case in which this became painfully obvious is the by now infamous case of Binjamin Wilkomirski (real name Bruno Doessekker, born Grosjean) who in 1995 published his memoir *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* in which he described from a child’s perspective his experiences as a Holocaust survivor. When the Swiss

journalist and writer Daniel Ganzfried (himself a second-generation Holocaust survivor) started to question Wilkomirski's identity in 1998, the publishers asked Swiss historian and anti-Semitism expert Stefan Maechler to look into the case. He not only confirmed the doubts but posed the still controversially discussed questions if Wilkomirski/Grosjean was simply a fraud or if he himself believed in his claims, if his claims were based on "unconscious fantasy"⁷ or a displacement of other forms of trauma and abuse. What is the troubling, unsettling place of unconscious fantasy in the construction of memory and trauma, and what does this mean for the book that had received critical acclaim and a range of literary prizes? It had lost its status as a memoir but did that also change the literary qualities for which it was lauded?

Criticism of misappropriation and overidentification was also raised against W. G. Sebald's *The Emigrants* (1992; English translation 1996) and *Austerlitz* (2001), although both texts clearly reveal their first-person narrator as a non-Jewish German. Sebald's texts are from the outset suspended between documental and fictional narratives that introduce an interpretative uncertainty. Sebald "writes across the traditional generic conventions of 'history' and 'literature' to produce a hybrid" that Kochhar-Lindgren calls a "novel-memoir" (2002: 369). Not only does he blur the line between history and fiction, but he also transgresses the medial boundaries of traditional fiction toward a hypertextual network, a nonsequential bricolage that denies the linear and clear-cut progression from the event and its remembering to the mediation of memory. *Austerlitz* traces and reveals what cannot be remembered in a straightforward manner – either because of a traumatic experience, denial or because it was not personally experienced. But it clearly distinguishes between the belated and the secondary witnessing of traumatic memory: Austerlitz himself is traumatized by the separation from his parents, which saved him from experiencing the ghetto and concentration camp at first hand but deprived him of a loving upbringing and a family history. He is dispossessed of an event that nevertheless dominates and defines his life, resulting in radical self-estrangement. The text describes how Austerlitz regains knowledge of this event, its place in history and effect on himself, through a range of mediated encounters with a stranger and a childhood friend, with architecture, radio programs, photographs, archives, and museums. They form the basis of the protagonist's continuously thwarted efforts to discover his past by traveling not so much into the depths of his own personal memories, but by negotiating the realms of "social," "political," and "cultural memory" (Assmann 2004: 22).

The partly conscious, partly dreamlike reconstruction of traumatic memories that the text documents, rests on an interplay of different media. As Kouvaros has pointed out, Sebald's writing "borrows from and is shaped by an explicit relation to other media" (Kouvaros 2005: 181). Texts, photographs, audiovisual media, and objects are not simply combined to enhance our insight into the past. Instead of converging media representations, the aesthetic and perceptual tensions, gaps, and interferences between those medial performances draw attention to the generation of meaning that they facilitate (or hinder). The enigmatic objects of a collection of curiosities are contrasted with the structured approach of a modern history museum, visual media such as film and photography compete in Austerlitz's quest for an image of his mother, archival memory is contrasted with the testimony of eyewitnesses such as Austerlitz's former nanny Vera, and voluntary memory is set off against involuntary memory, triggered, for example, by smells when Austerlitz enters his childhood home in Prague.

In *Austerlitz* the sensual evidence of objects, the immediacy of voices, the tangible trace of photographs as emanations of the subject and the lifelike presentation of film that are on different levels revealed to be manipulations based on willful staging and theatricality, all refuse to provide the protagonist with a consistent account of what happened to his parents. Not only do these media refuse to coalesce into a coherent narrative that would enable him to link with a family history and a cultural tradition that has been violently broken off, but their representations also remain elusive, fragmentary, and decontextualized. The media representations with which we prolong, expand, or substitute our memory are not simply metaphors for the way we perceive the workings of our memory; at times they supersede latent, repressed memories, at other times they assist in the process of forgetting or act as cover-memories to shield an amnesia that has not only befallen Austerlitz. They indicate memorial voids, events that are "unremembered yet cannot be forgotten" (Baer 2002: 7). Austerlitz's search for his lost father and mother will go on forever, as the desire to undo the traumatic separation and to be reunited with them can never be fulfilled.

Our belief in the ability of media to enhance our memory or provide access to the past fluctuates. External memory devices can be seen as an enhancement as well as a debasement of memories. Austerlitz himself deplores the "dissolution, in line with the inexorable spread of processed data, of our capacity to remember" (Sebald 2001: 398), thereby voicing a skepticism that reaches back to Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, in which he describes the invention of scripture not as an advance of the natural human

capacity to remember but as an artificial and dead form of storage leading to misunderstanding and forgetfulness. Augustine valued writing as it persists and can transmit an extensive range of information in a more complex, differentiated, and concentrated form than images or objects.⁸ But at the same time writing relies on a symbolic code rendering it more opaque and arbitrary than material traces of the past. Austerlitz's embodied, somatic, and involuntary memory of smells and tactile experiences is immediately transferred into the symbolic code of the Gutenberg-Age ("type-case"; Sebald 2001: 213) and this symbolic code is reinvested with a direct bodily impact as when Austerlitz convalesces and is able to recollect his memory simply on the basis of his reading of an antiquarian pharmacopoeia (378). The text shows that there is no greater truth in Austerlitz's embodied memory. His recollections are always already mediated through an imaginative investment and creation.

Sebald's texts have mostly been read as "photo texts," in which photographic reproductions or representations are interspersed in the text. In *Austerlitz*, text and images are carefully placed just as in an exhibition in which the narrative is determined by the spatial composition of the material. The images form an integral part of the text, introducing a spatial dimension into what is usually a sequential narrative. The photographs hold up the successive and linear movement of reading by detaining the reader's gaze, translating the temporal activity of reading into a spatialized experience.

For Hirsch, trauma is "less a particular experiential content than a form of experience" (2004: 19) that is closely associated with the medium of photography. Austerlitz compares his attempt to remember the farewell from his mother through the metaphor of taking a photograph: "but as soon as I tried to hold one of these fragments fast, or get it into better focus, as it were, it disappeared into the emptiness revolving over my head" (Sebald 2001: 312). Proust, Freud, and Walter Benjamin likened the unconscious to the operations of a camera whose negative might never be developed, pointing out that somatic, embodied memories cannot easily be brought to consciousness or be translated into semantic memory. The fact that photographs have to be processed indicates a belatedness that is seen to characterize traumatic memory (Pane 2005: 39). Just like trauma, which constantly repeats itself, photographs are based on the principle of reproduction. Seen in the light of photography, the latency and the temporal discrepancy between the event and its representations seem no longer signs of uncertainty, but guarantors of truth (Baer 2002: 124–125). However, it is the truth of a frozen moment that cannot be contextualized

or rendered with meaning. As the photograph provides no relation to a before or after, so trauma results from the mind's inability to place an event within the meaningful and coherent narrative and temporality of a remembered experience.

The text introduces the narrator as a secondary witness who is asked to testify not to the event itself or to a mediated reconstruction of trauma memories but to the ethical dilemma of bearing witness to an unrecovered trauma. His visit to the historic fortress of Breendonk in Belgium, which was used as an internment camp by the German occupying forces during World War II, shows that the narrator is not so much appropriating the victim status but exploring the tension between his implication in and his simultaneous exclusion from the events:

I could not imagine how the prisoners . . . could have pushed these barrows full of heavy detritus over the sun-baked clay of the ground . . . *it was impossible to picture* them bracing themselves against the weight . . . However, *if I could not envisage* the drudgery performed day after day . . . *I could well imagine* the sight of the good fathers and dutiful sons from Vilsbiburg and Fuhlsbüttel . . . sitting here when they came off duty to play cards or write letters home to their loved ones at home. After all, I had lived among them until my twentieth year. (Sebald 2001: 28–29, emphasis added)

This position reflects LaCapra's notion of "empathic unsettlement" (2001: 78), a position that faces up to personal connection and emotional involvement while imposing a self-reflexive distance when faced with the unrepresented or unrepresentable trauma of others. *Austerlitz* is an imaginative engagement with an intractable "other" that cannot be brought to a closure. But while it insists on the painful distance between past and present, experience and memory, seeing and knowing, self and other, it still outlines a social and dialogic process culminating in a relational and countertransference encounter that has the potential to generate a "discursive analogue of mourning as a mode of working through a relation to historical losses" (LaCapra 2001: 218).

Moving forward, we have to ask what the relationship between trauma and memory studies will look like. The concept of trauma has gained so much significance in public discourse that it has usurped all other ways of reacting to and dealing with violence or suffering, to such an extent that other reactions such as shock, numbness, grief, or mourning might of course be felt on an individual level but do not really feature in public discourse. There are attempts in memory studies to replace trauma as the central disciplinary category: Caruth's deconstructive trauma theory has been criticized for seeing trauma everywhere, spilling over the borders of

traumatic history to define reality itself.⁹ Trauma is universalized as “inherent in history, language, or even experience itself” (Hirsch 2004: 9). In that way trauma theory *conflates* the traumatic with the nontraumatic and so obliterates “historical precision and moral specificity” (Kansteiner 2004: 194). If trauma becomes synonymous with any kind of oppression and injustice, it loses its effectiveness: Does a focus on wounds take our sights off the necessary transformations of the social dynamics that created them in the first place? What does the focus on trauma enable us to do, and what are its limits? If the temporality of belatedness and endless repetition that is associated with trauma becomes universalized as the structure of reality itself, it is increasingly difficult to envisage other temporalities, such as time as change and the reparative possibilities that might bring with it. If we can only gain access to the past through the memories of the traumatized, we are confined to the present performance of a violent past that is acting out through us, in which we have no agency. In this traumatized world, it is indeed place that becomes the marker of trauma, not time. Trauma promises us “the real” but only by paying the price of being trapped in a repetitive present of melancholic mourning.

*Neuroscience, Narrative, and Emotion Regulation**William P. Seeley*

Recent findings in affective and cognitive neuroscience underscore the fact that traumatic memories are embodied and inextricably integrated with the affective dimensions of associated emotional responses. These findings can be used to clarify, and in some cases challenge, traditional claims about the unrepresentability of traumatic experience that have been central to trauma literary studies. The cognitive and affective dimensions of experience and memory are closely integrated. Recollection is always an attenuated form of embodied reenactment. Further, situation models for narrative comprehension show us that these same neurobiological processes underwrite narrative understanding. This in turn suggests that literary texts can be used as a resource for representing, reenacting, and understanding traumatic experience and might serve as external regulatory resources for reenacting, shaping, and thereby coping with traumatic memory.

The human ability to respond emotionally to the environment is a critical adaptive function. Affective responses to objects, events, and actions signal their utilitarian, social, and biological value, or their value to the goals and interests that define our sense of self as human beings and members of broader communities. The psychological processes that underwrite these affective responses are integrated into neurophysiological networks that guide attention and shape the way we perceive objects, events, and actions. Reciprocal connectivity between sensory cortices and prefrontal areas associated with affective responses, e.g., ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) and orbitofrontal cortex (OFC), both enhance the firing rates of populations of neurons responsible for initially encoding expected features of objects, events, and actions and inhibit the encoding of features unrelated to current goals and actions (Barrett and Bar 2009; Pessoa 2015). These processes implement a spotlight of attention. They focus perception on aspects of a current situation that we interpret as relevant to our current goals or long-term interests, causing those elements of the environment we interpret as salient to our well-being to be perceived

more vividly, while at the same time inhibiting elements that we interpret to be irrelevant to our current behavioral goals. Reciprocal connectivity between affective perceptual networks and the visceromotor network responsible for our autonomic responses to environmental stimuli integrate our emotional appraisals of objects, events, and actions with our bodily responses to them. Connectivity between vmPFC and the visceromotor network integrates our interpretations of incoming sensory signals with our bodily responses to the environment. Connectivity between vmPFC and OFC subsequently integrates this affective information into a broad sensorimotor integration network responsible for our explicit conscious perception of the environment and our current bodily states (Barrett and Bar 2009). The sensorimotor integration network deploys the same resources used to encode and process new incoming sensory information. We can thereby think of subjective emotional responses as recursive embodied appraisals of objects, actions, events, and scenarios.

There is some disagreement about the details of these psychological events. Cognitivist theorists argue that the feelings we associate with emotions are the effects of prior cognitive appraisals of what we antecedently perceive (Lazarus 1991). Embodied appraisal theorists argue instead that we are directly aware of our embodied, autonomic responses as emotions, e.g., fear, surprise, joy, happiness, as appraisals of the value of some perceptual object to our goals, interests, and well-being (Prinz 2005). The feeling and the emotional appraisal are integrated in experience. Emotional experiences are adaptively important. They shape our online responsiveness to objects and events in the immediate environment. Cognition is notoriously slow in this regard. Offloading our recognition of the affective value of elements of the local environment to embodied appraisals could serve as a critical cognitive shortcut to facilitate flexible responsiveness in a dynamic environment.

Embodied appraisals facilitate immediate behavioral responses, shape longer-term decision making, and guide the development of social connections (negatively or positively). For instance, we might perceive a roughly bear-sized stump in among tall grass rustling in the wind while out on a hike. A fast sweep of perceptual processing in the time range of 180 milliseconds (see Green and Oliva 2009; Pessoa and Adolphs 2010) might identify the stump as a bear ambling along toward us. This, in turn, results in an immediate autonomic affective response that appraises the stump as dangerous to us and focuses attention on features of the environment necessary to respond to it. Further attention to the stump might

reveal a static demeanor in stark contrast to the dynamics of animate creatures. The perception of these features of the stump would quickly override our initial embodied appraisal. Critically, this view entails that affect and emotion are inescapably integrated into perception. They are part of perceptual experience and so are inescapable parts of both our perceptual memories and the broader cognitive categories we derive from these memories and experiences (Barrett and Bar 2009). On reflection this makes sense. Perceptual learning involves recognizing systematic patterns in experience. Experience is always embodied and is, as a result, always affectively inflected. Our episodic memories and knowledge of general facts about the world thereby naturally carry information about our running embodied appraisals of their affective value.

Classical conditioning is a common means to study emotional associative learning and emotion regulation (for a review, see Hartley and Phelps 2009). In these familiar studies an affectively neutral stimulus called a conditioned stimulus gains emotional significance through repeated pairing with a naturally aversive unconditioned stimulus, e.g., in rodent studies, a tone might be paired with a footshock. Over time the perception of the conditioned stimulus alone comes to elicit the same automatic fear response as the unconditioned stimulus. This kind of emotional associative learning is adaptive. It influences the development of behavioral routines that are sensitive to threats and opportunities in familiar environments. Extinction, in contrast, refers to the gradual attenuation of a conditioned response over time because the conditioned stimulus is not continuously reinforced by the unconditioned stimulus. Extinction learning does not overwrite or erase the initial association between the conditioned and unconditioned stimulus. Rather, it involves the encoding of a new memory, a new set of stimulus–response associations in a new context. The conditioned stimulus predicts safety in this new context, not danger. Again, this setup has adaptive significance. Contextual information is the critical determinant of whether the fear memory or the extinction memory will control emotional expression in the future. Because the initial conditioned response is never unlearned it can still be called on to shape behavior in salient circumstances. Our emotional responses are therefore not only embodied, but they are also situated, or constrained, shaped, and called forth by the context of our behaviors.

Fear learning is an essential tool for survival. It helps us avoid noxious and otherwise dangerous stimuli and situations in everyday contexts. However, classical conditioning studies demonstrate the importance of emotion regulation for our psychological well-being and everyday

behavior. Emotion regulation, e.g., extinction learning, refers to a range of processes by which we can control the physiological, behavioral, and explicit experiential components of our affective responses to everyday objects, events, actions, and scenarios. Emotion regulation is a natural part of our emotional life, a counterpart that balances emotional learning over time and allows us to develop flexible coping strategies that fine-tune our behaviors to a dynamic environment. Failure of emotion regulation is known to produce disruptive memories that interfere with smooth coping in everyday behaviors. In the extreme, these disruptive memories are associated with familiar forms of psychopathology, e.g., anxiety or the kinds of traumatic memories that are the topic of exploration in trauma literature.

Extinction learning provides a clue to understanding emotion regulation. In ordinary contexts we deploy emotion regulation strategies that are designed to recontextualize current behaviors and our memories of them. Active coping strategies are behavioral strategies explicitly designed to recontextualize an aversive conditioned stimulus by pairing it with behaviors associated with positive outcomes. Cognitive regulation strategies are similarly deployed to reflectively recontextualize events to reappraise their affective and emotional significance (Ochsner and Gross 2008). Actively engaging in these kinds of behavioral and cognitive strategies fosters novel semantic and emotional associations that reshape our embodied appraisal of the aversive stimulus, experience, or memory.

Current evidence suggests that memories are stored in integrated networks that are inherently plastic (Hartley and Phelps 2009, Kandel 2006). Consolidation is the process of transferring a memory from a short-term store to a long-term store and thereby encoding it in a more stable format. Memory consolidation involves the strengthening of networks of synaptic connections within brain regions associated with the long-term storage and manipulation of memories, e.g., connections among and within the amygdala (which is responsible for the encoding and expression of fear memories), areas of the vmPFC associated with the cognitive regulation of fear memory, and areas of the hippocampus associated with the consolidation of long-term memories. Critically, memory recall is an embodied event that involves the reinstatement of an initial memory trace in the broad network of brain regions responsible for its initial encoding and expression, including perceptual and sensorimotor areas and areas of the vmPFC and amygdala responsible for initiating autonomic responses to affective perceptual stimuli. Emotional memories are themselves, therefore, attenuated embodied appraisals. Note, however, that the context of recall

is nearly always dramatically different from the context in which the memory was initially encoded. This entails that the reconsolidation of a recalled memory has the potential to recontextualize it. This is important because memories are neither stored nor parceled out in discrete packages. Memory is, rather, an intricate, contextually modulated web of recorded events and associations. The recall and reconsolidation of memory can itself, therefore, serve as a powerful form of emotion regulation in ordinary contexts.

Literary trauma theory is a field that is, perhaps intentionally, hard to pin down. This is not an unusual quality for a category of art. Genre categories are ontologically peculiar. They are not natural kinds. Rather, they define flexible art critical strategies, post hoc recipes for understanding, interpreting, and engaging with artworks. Invention is the one constant in artistic production. Morris Weitz (1956) referred to this quality as revolutionary creativity. Arthur Danto (1964), similarly, noted that once a strategy for artistic production is codified, it immediately sanctions its own refusal as a viable means of making art. Philosophers of art in the analytic tradition have long since given up the Sisyphean task of defining categories of art. In their place we find instead closed sets of normative conventions for critically evaluating a work relative to a community of consumers. The task of the philosopher of art, then, is to reflect on the structure of these critical categories as we find them in practice to reveal the normative conventions governing our understanding of art in a time at a place, to reveal family resemblances among artworks that govern the development of artistic categories over time, and to uncover the tacit procedures embedded in the practices of a community for accepting and evaluating artifacts as artworks.

Literary trauma theory is grounded in psychoanalytic theories of pathological memories (Balaev 2008, 2014; Caruth 1995, 1996.). Van der Kolk and van Der Hart (1995) trace this origin story to Pierre Janet, who distinguished between two kinds of memory: automatic memory and narrative memory. He argued, foreshadowing contemporary neurophysiological theories, that memory was a unified web of associations that integrated sensations, emotions, thoughts, actions, in short all of the psychological aspects of experience over time. In ordinary contexts, he argued, new information is automatically integrated into memory without much conscious attention. It would be, as a result, extremely difficult, if not impossible, to retrospectively cull a single, particular memory and understand its discrete role in behavior independent of the range of integrated schema and procedures within which it was encoded. Narrative

memory is defined in contrast to automatic memory. Narrative memory consists of the explicit schema and mental constructs that people deploy to sort, organize, and make conscious sense of their experiences.

Janet argued that experiences are easily and automatically assimilated into memory in ordinary contexts. But, in more difficult or complicated contexts, e.g., frightening or uniquely novel experiences, our subjective assessment of what is happening may make it difficult to easily assimilate a memory into existing schema. In these contexts the details of an experience may be remembered vividly, its particularity may resist assimilation into the unified narrative web of memory and remain available to consciousness in memory recall. In extreme cases a memory trace may resist accommodation altogether – it can't be shaped to fit narrative memory and so retains its uniqueness. The result is twofold. On the one hand it retains its unique particularity, remains dissociated from narrative memory, and as result is unavailable for explicit, conscious retrieval. On the other hand, fragments of the memory may, when triggered by environmental conditions, recur. The vivid particularity of these dissociated memories, in turn, may capture conscious awareness and overtake the current experience of the individual. The individual is thereby destined to reexperience the particularity of a dissociative emotional memory that he or she is unable to recall, recontextualize, or regulate in ordinary contexts.

A traumatic memory is defined as an individual or social memory that cannot be fit to narrative memory and so leads to dissociative behaviors. Adopting more contemporary language, a traumatic memory is an emotional associative memory that is triggered by environmental contingencies, but cannot be successfully recontextualized, and so comes to be expressed as a set of undesirable, maladaptive conditioned responses. For instance, Van der Kolk and van der Hart describe a patient of Janet's who could not remember the events surrounding the death of her mother (in fact, could not remember that her mother was dead) but nonetheless would slip into a pathological state whenever she saw an empty bed and reenact her inaccessible memory of those events. A more pedestrian everyday example might be the kind of intrusive fear response triggered in New York City residents by the sound of a downshifting truck, or the sight of a commercial aircraft overhead, in the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001.

A recurrent theme in the trauma literature is the idea that traumatic memories resist integration into narrative memory because they are in some critical way unrepresentable. Of course, this cannot be meant quite literally. The trace of memory that recurs as a dissociative, pathological

memory is already represented. It is carried on as a memory trace that is reinstated and relived time and again over time as an unreconcilable embodied memory. What is meant here is rather something quite specific. The recalled experience is cognitively unrepresentable, or opaque to linguistic interpretation. It cannot be fit to the abstract semantic categories we use to sort, organize, and manipulate memory. It cannot be generalized. It can only be relived. Traumatic memories retain the particularity of an original experience. The neurobiological model for memory introduced earlier suggests that recall is always an act of reenactment. What is unique about pathological memories, then, is that they cannot be recontextualized, their affective emotional profile cannot be overridden. They become disruptive, capturing attention, precluding both integration in reconsolidation and the flexible adaptation of behavior to novel contexts. It is not, therefore, that traumatic memories cannot be represented. Rather, traumatic memories are memory traces that defy redescription as propositional memories. The vivid way they are represented resists integration in a broader web of episodic and semantic memory, memory for events and general facts about the world respectively. Trauma literature offers an opportunity to reenact and recontextualize the context and experience of these kinds of traumatic memories to learn from them.

The social dimension of trauma is critical to trauma literature. It is often used to narrate the personal and social circumstances surrounding the expression of individual trauma as a means to reenact, or reinstantiate social trauma, or events and recurring social behaviors that we find difficult to integrate into the broader narrative of our social existence (Forster 2014). These are not in fact unrepresentable events. They are represented events that either defy categorization as discussed earlier, or have been misassimilated into existing schemas that gloss their poor fit to narrative memory. To borrow a Piagetian framework, in accommodating these novel memories to existing schema, or cognitive frameworks for interpreting and categorizing events, we have modulated our memory of the experience to mask its uncomfortable elements and consequences. Trauma literature provides a recontextualized opportunity to reenact these social memories and accommodate our existing schema to more faithfully integrate them into our social zeitgeist.

It is important to recall that reciprocal, cross-modally integrated, cortico-fugal attentional networks mediate the influence of episodic memory and semantic knowledge in perception. Furthermore, the cognitive and affective dimensions of perception are inescapably integrated in experience and memory. This entails that memory and attention are strong

constraints on the construction of the context of experience. Basic object categorization processes drive the way we attend to the environment in ordinary circumstances. The neurophysiological processes that underwrite selective attention in ordinary contexts enhance the perception of expected features of the environment and inhibit the encoding of features that are irrelevant to this interpretation. The context of experience is thereby shaped by the cognitive expectations and embodied appraisals carried in the memory schema we use to recognize and evaluate what we perceive. This in turn entails that the distinction between organism and environment is not as stark and clearly drawn as it seems in ordinary experience. Memory and attention are constitutive elements that define how we are situated in our environment and how the environment shapes our current experience. Perhaps more accurately, an environment is a relation between an organism and a world defined by both the local availability of information and embodied psychological state of the organism.

Laurie Vickroy (2014) argues that fiction can provide readers with a thick description of the conditions and characters associated with traumatic experience. Thick descriptions present objects, events, and actions with sufficient context that an outside reader can make sense of the meaning and value of some behavior for the actors involved (Geertz 1973; Ryle 1968). They are defined in contrast to thin or purely descriptive factual descriptions. Critically, the addition of context enables a reader to interpret, or empathetically understand, the mental states and actions of others as both socially and psychologically meaningful from an authentic perspective.

In the context of literature, thick descriptions serve as tools, narrative strategies that can be deployed by authors to imaginatively place readers in difficult and alien situations. Readers are thereby engaged in a critical process that immerses them in the thinking, feeling, and behavior of traumatized individuals while, at the same time, providing them with a novel interpretive context within which to assimilate and accommodate their understanding of a broader, and perhaps opaquely familiar, social trauma within which that individual trauma is presented. We might interpret the point here to be that trauma nearly always occurs within, as a result of, and is reinforced by the norms and behaviors that define a social setting. By playing out the trauma of fictional characters in our imagination we are forced to confront the cultural constraints that define the social nature of trauma. By recontextualizing our experience of these broad social themes in the context of the novel we can gain a grip on them and assimilate them into narrative memory. Trauma literary texts thereby

tacitly (or explicitly) serve as cognitive regulation strategies that facilitate the reconsolidation of social memory to accommodate socially traumatic memories.

One example that springs to mind is Adrian Piper's performance art piece *Catalysis IV*. Piper rode the city bus in New York with a sock in her mouth. This conceptual artwork directly confronted mass transit riders with the traumatic experience of her alienation and invisibility as an African American woman, instantiating her traumatic experience as a traumatic social experience of their own. At the same time it enabled them to reframe and recontextualize this experience as critical commentary, providing an opportunity to recontextualize the vivid, raw nature of the expressive act as a work of art that was designed to draw attention to itself so that it could be understood and assimilated. Vickroy draws similar lessons in her critical analysis of Margaret Atwood's *A Handmaid's Tale* and Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*.

Vickroy's suggestions about the functional mechanics of trauma literary texts are suggestive of simulation theories of interpretation, character identification, and narrative understanding (see Carroll 1997; Currie and Ravenscroft 2002; Goldman 2006; Seeley 2009). Simulation theory offers an alternative to what are called theory–theory, or theory-of-mind approaches to our understanding of other minds. We attribute beliefs and desires to others as an essential part of our everyday life as social animals, in order to understand and explain the actions of others, predict their future actions, and thereby coordinate our social behaviors. We do so with friends, acquaintances, strangers, folks that are nearby, folks that are not present, and even to understand the expected actions of others at a distance in the future. Theory-of-mind approaches to interpretation argue that our attributions of beliefs and desires to others are governed by tacit theories of mind, cognitive structures that facilitate the construction of hypotheses and inferences to interpret the mental states of others and predict their actions. Simulation theorists argue, to the contrary, that we do not need theories of mind in most cases. Rather we can use ourselves to simulate the mental states of others. We can adopt the perspectives of others, put ourselves in their shoes, and use our own psychological apparatus to model what they are perceiving, thinking, feeling, or planning.

Simulation theory provides a straightforward account of character identification and narrative understanding. We adopt the perspectives provided by thick descriptions of characters in narrative events to interpret narratively salient aspects of their fictional beliefs, to understand and explain their motives and actions, and to generate narrative expectations that can

be realized, unfulfilled, or thwarted by the unfolding events in the story. Of course, simulation doesn't happen in a cognitive vacuum. A great deal of tacit theory about actions and events is needed to seed this form of mental modeling. We might thereby think of theory of mind and simulation theory as two aspects of a broader, embodied cognitive capacity for interpretation, action planning, and narrative understanding. Just as we might use visual imagery to model the particular dimensions of some spatial transformation, e.g., how to orient a set of suitcases to fit them in the trunk of the car, we can deploy our own affective-sensorimotor capacities to model and understand particular aspects of the current beliefs, desires, and emotions of others, including characters, that are outside the domain, and so beyond the reach, of our general theory of mind.

Simulation theory suggests an embodied theory of perception, cognition, and interpretation. Support for this embodied theory of mind can be drawn from the general theory of selective attention and object recognition articulated earlier and a discussion of situation models for narrative understanding. We are bombarded by a dense flux of sensory information every waking moment of every day. Only a small fraction of this information is salient to our current cognitive and behavioral goals. Add to this the fact that perception and cognition are limited capacity psychological processes, and it becomes clear that selectivity is a critical feature of cognitive systems. Phillippe Schyns (1998; Schyns, Gosselin, and Smith 2008) has suggested that we resolve the problem of selectivity by focusing attention in everyday perception on small sets of diagnostic features that are sufficient to categorize, and thereby recognize, what we perceive. Biased competition theories of selective attention provide support for this theory. These theories demonstrate that selective attention and object recognition are supported by broad, cross-modally integrated, reciprocal corticofugal networks. Sensory information is collected, processed, and used to make quick and dirty categorization judgments about the identity and affective value of what we perceive in fast-forward sweeps of these networks (on a time scale of approximately 100–180 milliseconds as mentioned earlier). Top-down feedback is then used to modulate the firing rates of populations of neurons at the earliest stages of sensory processing, enhancing the encoding of expected features of objects, events, and actions and inhibiting the perception of other nearby features (Kastner 2004). Critically, these networks integrate the outputs of sensorimotor processing, affective processing, and cognitive judgments about the identity and emotional value of what is perceived. Our perception and understanding of the world is constructed from iterations of these recurrent neurophysiological processes.

A situation model is a mental elaboration of the actions and events described in a sentence or block of literary text. Situation models integrate information explicit in the surface structure of a text with a reader's episodic and semantic memory (Zwaan 2004). We can use a general theory of sentence comprehension to articulate this theory of narrative understanding (Seeley 2016; Zwaan 2004). Consider the following two sentences:

The ranger saw an eagle in the sky.
The ranger saw an eagle in its nest.

These sentences carry a great deal more spatiotemporal information than is explicit in their surface structure. A soaring eagle has outstretched wings and is moving through space. A nesting eagle pulls its wings in close and lies still to accommodate the cramped quarters of its nest. These examples demonstrate that what is articulated in a situation model is vastly richer than what is explicitly represented in the surface structure of a text. Of course, these sentences are also ambiguous about a broad range of information. Is the eagle soaring, wings outstretched, laboring against the wind with its wings flapping, or diving toward prey? We don't know. A text is an invitation for a conversation between an author and a reader. Authors provide diagnostic cues that generate the thick fictional world of a narrative in the communicative exchange between texts and readers.

The ambiguities articulated for the sentences in the previous paragraph illustrate a key aspect of situation models. Narrative comprehension is not rigidly determined in a bottom-up fashion by the order of presentation of information in the text. Just as in sentence comprehension, readers continuously collect novel information that they use to retroactively structure and articulate the content of a narrative. Consider this second set of sentences also borrowed from Zwaan (2004):

The red squirrel jumped from the oak to the pine tree.
The red fire truck we had heard in the distance suddenly appeared, swerving around the corner.

The meaning of the word *red* is semantically underdetermined at the outset of the sentences. Its full content is retroactively articulated by the noun that it modifies in each case, e.g., the brownish red of a European squirrel versus the cadmium red of a fire truck. Likewise, the sound and movement of the fire truck is underdetermined in its initial mention as heard in the distance. It is only concretely articulated when we learn later that it swerved around the corner, indicating high speeds, a loud engine, and most likely a blaring siren.

Situation models for narrative understanding are likewise constructed, updated, revisited, and revised as the range of possible narrative trajectories is pruned by unfolding events within the story. The forward and backward articulation of situation models within a text reflects the structure of erotetic narration (Carroll and Seeley 2013). Erotetic narrative theory is derived from erotetic logic, or the logic of questions (Carroll, 2009). Erotetic narratives are constructed by generating and answering hierarchically organized sets of questions. These questions are employed to generate narrative expectations and related moral expectations about the outcomes of the described events and their impacts on characters.

The thick description of events provided by an author at any given stage of a story foregrounds contextually salient information (filmmakers analogously employ shifts in focus and editing techniques like variable framing to visually point toward contextually salient information in a shot or scene). The focus of attention on these bits and pieces of the text generates questions about the outcomes of future events. These questions generate narrative expectations about the fates of characters. Readers are prompted to interpret these expectations as just or unjust. In turn, they develop hopes and fears about future narrative outcomes. Just as situation models are retroactively articulated in sentence comprehension, the unfolding of narrative events can reveal contextual information that retrospectively modulates our understanding of prior erotetic narrative devices and our concomitant understanding of the mental states and actions of characters – a pedestrian example is that “aha moment” when a viewer is prompted to solve the mystery in a crime procedural just prior to the explicit reveal within the narrative. Erotetic narratives are built up in this way, prospectively and retrospectively, piece by piece, from evolving situation models that shape readers’ expectations about the moral outcomes of potential narrative events relative to their general world knowledge and their understanding of the appropriate genre categories. Literary texts can therefore be conceptualized as sparse scripts assembled from diagnostic cues that scaffold the construction of a story, or for directing the construction of nested sets of situation models that define their subject matter and thematic content.

Situation models are embodied, multimodal representations that are underwritten by the same range of neurophysiological processes that support perception and action in ordinary contexts (Seeley 2016). Premotor areas involved in motor planning, motor preparation, and the execution of actions are involved in kinesthetic imagery and in the comprehension of action words and sentences (Fischer and Zwaan 2008). These areas are somatotopically organized and are part of a corticospinal circuit that

connects premotor and motor areas to muscle groups responsible for the execution of actions as well as the somatosensory and proprioceptive areas that are responsible for our sense of touch and bodily awareness (Kandel et al. 1999). The activation of this circuit in sentence comprehension entails that electromyographic signals associated with muscle activation are also involved in kinesthetic imagery and the comprehension of action words and sentences (Candidi et al. 2010). Similarly, the same regions of the visual system that are used to perceptually recognize objects are involved in the semantic comprehension of object names (Martin 2007), and the same brain regions that underwrite our emotion responses to actions and events are involved in our capacity to recognize and comprehend emotions depicted in affective pictures and text (Foroni and Semin 2009; Havas Glenberg, and Rink 2007). Imagination and the semantic comprehension of texts are therefore both embodied psychological processes. We use our bodies to articulate and understand their content.

Nicole Speer, Jeffery M. Zacks, and their colleagues have demonstrated that these results generalize to the narrative comprehension of text and film (Speer et al. 2009; Zacks et al. 2009; see also Glenberg and Kaschak 2002). Speer and Zacks used functional magnetic imagery (fMRI) to measure brain activation associated with changes in narrative descriptions in literary text. They measured described spatial change, object change, character change, causal change, and goal change. Perceived changes in the goals and actions of characters in literary texts were associated with activations of areas of the posterior superior temporal cortex associated with the perception of goal-directed biological motion and areas of prefrontal cortex associated with the recognition of and interpretation of the structure of goal directed actions (Broadman Areas 9, 44, and 46). Character-object interactions were associated with activation in the premotor and somatosensory hand areas. Further, changes in the spatial locations of objects and characters were associated with activation in the frontal eye fields (associated with eye movements and internally cued shifts of attention) and parahippocampal place area. These results replicate similar findings for the visual perception of Hollywood movies (Zacks et al. 2009) and everyday perception (Kurby and Zacks 2008). Together these results demonstrate that readers employ the full range of sensorimotor and affective processes involved in ordinary behaviors to construct embodied representations of depicted actions of characters in narrative comprehension (Seeley 2016).

Returning to Vickroy's discussion of trauma literature, we can see how the construction of memory is analogous to building a story. It a process by

which current experiences are integrated into narrative memory. The encoding of current experience is constrained by the availability and structure of concepts, categories, and schema in memory. Memory is an integrated network. The structure of memory is flexible, designed to accommodate learning through reconsolidation and the assimilation of novel experiences.

Trauma theory is predicated on the assumption that in some contexts this process is thwarted, producing pathological, disruptive memories that cannot be integrated into the broader structure of memory. Contemporary research suggests that, in these cases, the original context in which the memory was encoded is too strong to be displaced by extinction learning or other strategies for recontextualizing memories. The ordinary avenues of emotion regulation fail. Trauma literature seeks to replicate the context of traumatic memories as a literary device, and Vickroy suggests that this device can be used to explore the interplay of individual and social variables in the expression of traumatic memories, to cause us to confront both the experience, and our role in the production, of recurrent social trauma. The discussion of situation models in narrative understanding lends credence to this suggestion. It is an open empirical question whether this research truly generalizes to emotion regulation in the kinds of social contexts suggested by trauma literary theory, and whether trauma literature can serve as a clinical cognitive regulation strategy to recontextualize and reconsolidate traumatic individual and social memories that have emerged from the alienation and oppression of disenfranchised demographic groups. Nonetheless, the metaphor is an apt tool for criticism. It provides a lens through which to understand authorial intentions and how to engage with a new, dynamic field of literature.

*Trauma in the Digital Age**Allen Meek*

The idea that collective memory and experience can be traumatic is embedded in the historical transformations of modern technological media, which today include a change from a mediascape dominated by broadcasting to one shaped by digital information networks. Broadcast media transmit “traumatic” images and cultural trauma narratives in which entire nations or ethnic groups are understood to share feelings of distress and grief and to engage in acts of commemoration and mourning. Digital media allow a further proliferation of such images and narratives, permitting a greater multiplicity of competing interpretations and identifications to be recorded and disseminated. This less centrally controlled transmission of trauma has led to a shift in public and critical discourses from an emphasis on unified response and empathetic identification to anxiety about highly mobile and unpredictable threats to collective security and immunity.

Photography, film, and television have produced iconic images of violence, suffering, and catastrophe that have defined collective memory over the past 150 years. Taboos and prohibitions surrounding the visibility of human injury, dismemberment, and death have been dismantled, allowing such images to cause shock and to become primary ways that mass media shape recollections of the past. Famous examples of such images include the liberation of the Nazi death camps, children burned by napalm in the Vietnam War, and bodies falling from the Twin Towers after the 9/11 attacks. Conceptions of psychological trauma also have an early link to modern visual media through Jean-Martin Charcot’s use of photography to document the symptoms of female hysterics. Sigmund Freud rejected this public visibility of the patient, but in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) he proposed a theory of the protective shield against shock that was later adapted by Walter Benjamin to explain how media insulate the human sensorium from intrusive stimuli. Two different aspects of the traumatic image, showing psychological distress and causing

psychological distress, were thereby linked through media recording and transmission. In Benjamin's account of modernity, shock becomes the "norm" (Benjamin 2003: 318) when the industrial mass production of images destroys the unique aura of an object or place and thereby the long-term memories belonging to specific communities. In place of these lost traditions media images carried the traces of physical reality, breaking down the taboos surrounding private life and sacred values. Benjamin did not see these changes in an entirely negative light, as they also made possible new forms of political engagement and mobilization. For example, he writes: "The social significance of film, even – and especially – in its more positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive cathartic side: the liquidation of the value of tradition in the cultural heritage" (2002: 104). Since Benjamin made these comments in the 1930s, mediated narratives of traumatic loss, such as the Holocaust, have assumed the value of new cultural traditions for nations and ethnic groups, but also for everyday consumers of entertainment and information. Today this destruction of physical and cultural uniqueness is associated with digital media and globalization but, as in Benjamin's time, these changes also engage new forms of collective identification and political action.

Broadcast media, particularly television, has transmitted the shock of violence and catastrophe and reconstituted imagined communities through cultural trauma narratives. The 1961 Eichmann trial, broadcast "live" on radio in Israel and television in America, is now seen as the founding event constituting Holocaust memory through survivor testimony. The trial also aimed to strengthen Jewish identity and the state of Israel and to invoke the specter of the Arab intent on completing the Nazi genocide. Fifty years later the September 11 attacks were also broadcast "live" to the world. The recording of the events on digital cameras by thousands of witnesses and re-presented on television overtook the delayed memory that had characterized Holocaust commemoration. But like the Eichmann trial, it also formed the basis of a cultural trauma narrative in which the nation was cast as an innocent victim of an Arab enemy. Both of these trauma narratives were engendered in significant ways by media transmission: The destruction of specific, localized communities thereby became the basis for new mediated communities.

Digital media has both extended and transformed the experience and conceptualization of traumatic transmission. Television allows the centrally controlled transmission of an event designed to prompt collective identification: Everyone sees the same images and hears the same stories and is therefore assumed to have similar emotional responses. The fact that

this was never entirely the case is now plain to see. A quick scan of YouTube reveals a wide range of responses to, and interpretations of, events such as the Holocaust and 9/11, challenging the tendency toward a single dominant narrative characteristic of mass media. Digital media also allow new events to be instantaneously transmitted through networks that can more easily bypass corporate control. Revelations of illegitimate uses of violence, such as the use of torture by American military in Abu Ghraib or the killing of African Americans by police in the United States, are unpredictable and potentially disruptive from the point of view of the state. Today images and messages produced by groups as different as ISIS or Black Lives Matter can quickly reach large populations in ways that elude the forms of censorship and re-presentation employed by television. Although new media in liberal democracies are not required to reproduce the official narratives of the state, in the context of national “traumas” they can find themselves under greater pressure to conform to the “official” version of events. Digital media can facilitate marginal, repressed or “enemy” groups’ attempts to transmit alternative traumatic images and narratives that recruit new members and call for political action.

Traumatic images and narratives also foster a sense of vulnerability that can be mobilized as part of a larger system maintaining immunity from destruction. Catastrophes are mourned, but the nation or ethnic group comes together and is stronger, vowing never again to be a victim. Digital information networks make traumatic images and narratives available in a new multiplicity of locations, thereby making it more difficult to monitor their political impact. For this reason traumatic transmission tends to be understood as something like what Jacques Derrida called the *pharmakon*: It is both poison and remedy, needing to be administered in controlled dosages to produce desired effects, otherwise it becomes dangerous like an illicit drug. The *pharmakon* is the “dangerous supplement” (Derrida 1981: 110) that threatens “internal purity and security” (128). Television uses traumatic images to capture viewer attention and to anaesthetize and inoculate the body politic against their apparent threat. The decentralization of transmission by digital information networks has led traumatic transmission to be seen as a “weapon” available to the enemy, or as an infection potentially overcoming the immune system of the body politic. On the Internet and social media, videos “go viral” – sometimes in highly unpredictable ways that defy the more orchestrated approach of mass media. The collective immunity of the nation (or of larger imagined communities such as the West) must contend with virulent, traumatic images that contaminate and potentially destabilize the host body. If

cultural trauma narratives define which lives matter and which do not, then digital media has seen a new extension of vitalist conceptions of the image: Images travel and circulate like living organisms. Images, like living organisms, can be the bearers and transmitters of harmful infection.

Research on media has long included a concern with the psychological effects of witnessing violence. The constant availability of images of human suffering has led cultural critics to either foster empathy for others or to lament the collective “numbing” of the media viewer. Discussing the television coverage in the United States of the Vietnam War, psychologist Robert Lifton refers to the “massive” numbing in response to “a vast spectacle, removed from appropriate emotional impact” (1973: 157). “Images anesthetize” writes Susan Sontag (1977: 20), comparing repeated viewings of photographs of war to the effects of pornography. Challenging this collective numbing – and thereby the forgetting of historical catastrophe – trauma theory and trauma studies in the humanities and social sciences have placed a particular stress on the witnessing of recorded testimony. This research has often promoted the idea of transmission from survivor to witness, across generations and cultures. Psychological trauma, manifest in symptomatic disturbances, conditions, and behaviors, is transmitted from the body of the survivor to the larger community. When this conception of transmission is aligned with technological media, trauma becomes a means of (re) producing a body politic. This transmission of trauma to a community of witnesses assumes a one source-to-many receivers model of communication.

In Shoshana Felman’s and Cathy Caruth’s work, the traces of traumatic memory become signifiers of an authentic relation to history that can be contrasted with the exploitation of trauma by mass media. Further complicating this distinction, however, film scholar Thomas Elsaesser suggests that the preoccupation with trauma can itself be seen as a symptom of technologically mediated experience. Trauma is understood by Felman and Caruth as a form of “deep memory” to be contrasted with the immediacy of television news or the manufactured history of Hollywood (Meek 2010: 9). But in other respects their understanding of trauma as a literal trace of past events aligns it with photography and audiovisual recording. Elsaesser proposes that the media image, like a traumatic memory, is also understood as the literal trace of an event: always dislocated in time and space yet experienced with a powerful sense of immediacy and involvement. “To the degree that culture is generating new forms of media memory,” writes Elsaesser, “the subject . . . fantasizes history in the form of trauma” (Elsaesser 2001: 198). The diverse range of

images and narratives made available by news media and the entertainment industries invites identifications with the position of victim that can be described as “fantasies,” insofar as they may or may not be grounded in the actual historical experiences of violence and catastrophe. The image brings the event to viewers who may have no direct relationship to it, but experience it with a vividness resembling a traumatic memory.

This logic appears to operate in the gradual emergence of the Holocaust from general “forgetting,” in the decades immediately following World War II, to a widely dramatized and memorialized event today. In his account of the Eichmann trial, prosecuting lawyer Gideon Hausner comments that Israel “literally lived the trial,” “public interest remained unabated,” and with the help of “live” radio broadcast the trial was “an event that overshadowed everything else” (Hausner 1966: 307–8). The trial was a clear example of what Jeffrey Alexander calls a “trauma drama” (Alexander 2009: 34): It presented innocent victims, dramatized their suffering through testimony, and identified the perpetrators embodied in the person of Eichmann. But since the 1960s this trauma has come to be more widely consumed. Anne Rothe’s more critical account of the Eichmann trial sees it as the forerunner of popular trauma culture in the TV talk show in which the witness is transformed from a helpless victim into a heroic survivor. This narrative “recycles the Christian suffering-and-redemption trope of spiritual purification through physical mortification in trauma-and-recovery narratives and encodes a latently voyeuristic kitsch sentiment as the dominant mode of reception” (Rothe 2011: 2). The redemptive national narrative transforms into something else when the Holocaust becomes an object of transnational consumption: Without any specific national or historical context, traumatic narratives become free-floating signifiers allowing identification with the victim.

Is the “traumatic” status of the media image, then, to be understood as a symptom of “deep” experience and memory, or as a cultural-discursive framing of the recording and replaying of events? That is, does media transmit actual traumatic memories to the audience or is the identification with trauma by the audience a cultural effect of media technologies? Amit Pinchevski has addressed this problem specifically in relation to the testimonies of Holocaust survivors collected in the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale, which forms the basis of later research by Felman and Caruth. Pinchevski argues that it was the ability to rewind, replay and pause videotape that allowed the gestures, expressions, gaps, and silences in recorded testimony to be interpreted as symptomatic of unspeakable trauma. He comments that the camera “served as a technological surrogate

for an audience *in potential* – the audience for which many survivors had been waiting for a lifetime” (Pinchevski, 2011: 257). This potential is also inherently political. Trauma theory has promoted testimony – or, more specifically, video testimony – as the model for mediated trauma because it directly addresses the viewer as witness and in doing so potentially constitutes a political community (as was explicitly the case in the Eichmann trial).

Rejecting the psychoanalytic account of unconscious memory and symptomatic behavior and stressing instead this political function, Alexander argues that trauma narratives are constructed by public figures, media professionals, and artists to provide sites for identification. Alexander explains the role of “carrier groups” (a term he borrows from Max Weber’s sociology of religion), who facilitate the articulation of collective trauma. As he explains, “The carrier group makes use of the particularities of the historical situation, the symbolic resources at hand, and the opportunities provided by institutional structures” (Alexander 2012: 16). For example, the emergence of the survivor–witness into the public realm during the Eichmann trial could be seen as an example of a carrier group allowing identification with the Holocaust for those Jews born after World War II in Israel and elsewhere. Alexander’s account of cultural trauma, read alongside Elsaesser’s and Pinchevski’s insights into the role of media technologies in purveying the “traumatic” conception of identity, suggests a compelling alternative to the psychoanalytic account of collective trauma, replacing it with a model of public discourse combined with mediated experience. The ability to replay recorded events and testimony and to add audio commentary, however, is no longer limited to television or documentary film and thereby to established media industries and institutions. Digital media allow nonprofessionals and ordinary citizens to post such video texts on the Internet or social media.

Earlier cultural traumas, such as the Holocaust, the Kennedy Assassination, or the Vietnam War were embedded in broadcast media, which controlled its distribution. For many years Abraham Zapruder’s footage of John F. Kennedy’s 1963 assassination, taken with his home movie camera, was unavailable to the public until it was finally screened on Geraldo Rivera’s television show *Good Night America* in 1975. Today there are multiple versions of the tape available to be seen on the Internet, including fully restored and digitally enhanced footage and numerous conspiracy documentaries that obsessively pause and replay the tape. The aftermath of the Vietnam War paved the way for the emergence of cultural trauma narratives in popular culture, such as the television miniseries *Roots*

(ABC 1977) and *Holocaust* (NBC 1978). This popular trauma culture was later challenged by academic theorists. Describing a class she taught at Yale in 1984, Felman claims that the directness of video testimony provoked a crisis: Something real had been transmitted to the students that could not be contained by the usual forms of pedagogical discourse. The introduction of Holocaust testimony into the classroom provoked the formation of a new kind of community: “The tapes were screened in the informal privacy of an apartment, with the students sitting on the carpet, all over the floor” (Felman and Laub 1992: 47). These video screenings took the classroom out of the university into a situation that resembled watching television in a domestic environment, with academic intellectuals subsuming the role of media professionals in directing the transmission process.

Although it may have intended to further enshrine the unique aura of the Holocaust, trauma theory’s alternative to mass media also anticipated the proliferation of traumatic identifications made possible by digital culture. For example, Felman celebrates Claude Lanzmann’s long documentary *Shoah* as the masterwork of trauma transmission. One of the most discussed sequences in the film includes the testimony of Abraham Bomba, who worked as a barber in the gas chamber at Treblinka (Felman and Laub 1992: 219–20; LaCapra 1998: 123–4). Now it is possible to view this sequence on YouTube, posted by one Adolf Wolf, with an added voice-over commentary questioning the validity of the testimony, pausing the tape and replaying certain statements.¹ Wolf also posts videos on YouTube in series with titles such as “International Jewry Related,” “Stop White Genocide,” and “HelpSaveWhiteRace.” Numerous videos and documentaries propagating Holocaust denial are now available on the Internet, along with others that portray the German people as the true victims of World War II.

9/11 was a transitional event in this broader shift in who can control traumatic transmission because for the first time the corporate news organizations were overtaken by the sheer number of video recordings produced by ordinary citizens. The official narrative, propagated by politicians and media professionals, that 9/11 is a national trauma for Americans, is challenged by the variety of real-time responses documented on video and available to be viewed on YouTube. These responses include amusement, fascination, and conspiracy theorizing, all unfolding along with the event itself. Television, so central to the articulation and maintenance of the imagined community of the nation, appears to have lost ground to digital networks where various communities can articulate alternative narratives about collective identity.

Contemporary transformations of the centralized model of imagined community based in broadcast media are further clarified by Roberto Esposito's account of immunity. In biology, immunity means the ability of an organism to protect itself from contamination; in law, immunity means to be exempt from obligations and responsibilities. In discourses about digital media these different definitions, biological and legal, converge. Immunity describes the ways that particular individuals and groups are protected from threats and demands from other individuals and groups. To suffer trauma is to have one's physical or psychological defence system broken or damaged, and to restore immunity, the alien threat must be expelled or eliminated. Yet as Esposito puts it, immunization is also an "internal mechanism" that "separates community from itself" (Esposito 2011: 52). Immunity is defined not only by external borders around a specific society but also by limits, thresholds, and hierarchies that define different relationships between different groups within society.

Societies protect individuals and communities at the cost of imposing obligations and responsibilities, and as a consequence in modern secular societies individuals are released from traditional obligations to others but become increasingly dependent on the state for insurance and security. In the 1990s computer viruses came to be seen as threats to security, as networks gradually assumed a central role in national infrastructures and international commerce. Jussi Parikka notes that computer viruses became widely discussed at the same time as public knowledge of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) first emerged. Just as the AIDS virus is seen as a threat to the body's entire immune system, so the computer virus is seen as a threat to the security of the body politic with society and the state imagined as a body that is therefore a unified entity. But digital networks and global flows of information make this model of one unified body difficult to sustain. The political equivalent of the computer virus is the terrorist, who also produces and circulates "traumatic" images as a symbolic attack on Western global hegemony (Parikka 2007: 119–23). As Parikka explains, immunity is a naturalizing discourse that attempts to impose a clear self–nonself distinction on an inherently open system that makes possible new forms of connectivity. The body politic must remain immune from the threat of alien life forms. Today this conception of external and internal threats is often understood according to "the media technological logic of network digitality based on the ease of copying and transmitting information" (130).

Insofar as the mediated transmission of trauma is understood in terms of individual or collective psychology, it cannot account for the discursive

and systemic shifts that define individual entities and external threats to self-identity. Mediated trauma is biopolitical (Meek 2016; Vermeulen 2014): It defines social membership and exclusion in terms of biological hierarchies. For example, Caruth closes her edited collection *Trauma* with a panel discussion on AIDS, in which Douglas Crimp calls the illness “a socially produced trauma” (Caruth and Keenan 1995: 257). The social stigma surrounding those with AIDS is an expression of a desire to remain immune from the threat of “deviant” outsiders. The association of AIDS with Africa – both in its origins and its catastrophic impact – recalls the Eurocentric trauma of first encountering the African “savage.” Africa threatens the self-identity of “civilized” Europe. Today these colonialist perceptions of Africa can still be seen in responses to AIDS, now driven by anxieties about globalization (Hardt and Negri 2000: 136). Increased connectedness and proximity have driven the promotion of hygiene and protected sex as ways of protecting immunity.

Pieter Vermeulen discusses the notion of collective trauma specifically in terms of Esposito’s immunity paradigm. He compares the “internal mechanism” (Esposito 2011: 52) of immunity that monitors and regulates social inclusion and exclusion to Freud’s “protective shield” that mediates external stimuli, anticipating and registering the shocks of everyday experience (Vermeulen 2014: 149). Previously Benjamin argued that photography and film take on this mediating role in modern metropolitan culture. For example, photojournalism and television confront viewers with surprising and disturbing images, allowing mass media to regulate and manipulate collective responses to stimuli. The greater viewing freedoms and ever proliferating quantities of images made available by digital media demand that the individual learn to regulate his/her own sense of vulnerability and anxiety – similar to the ways individuals must regulate sexual contact with others.

Another aspect of this consumer sovereignty is the increased proximity of others through globalization, prompting the state to intensify security and policing of borders with regard to specific ethnic and religious groups. The collective trauma of 9/11 transmitted by mass media sounded this alarm and has subsequently been used to justify the destruction and incarceration of enemy populations. Responses to the 9/11 attacks by the American government and corporate media show how the military–security–media apparatus fits Esposito’s immunity paradigm. These responses included solicitation and analysis of data about the levels of traumatization in the general population (Marshall et al. 2007; Neria, DiGrande, and Adams 2011). Recorded images of the attacks were

replayed to induce a sense of alarm but also to decontextualize the events from their complex historical and political causes and implications. News and entertainment media disseminated images and narratives about threatening groups and enemies of society. Biometric data about those entering national territory was collected and those deemed a threat to security detained, sometimes indefinitely and without trial. The trauma of 9/11 served as a justification for intensified surveillance, policing, incarceration, and military aggression.

Digital media and information networks have created a new historical situation in which images are more rapidly mobile and can appear in unpredictable contexts and situations. Connectivity and the apparently unlimited proliferation of images has aligned with other anxieties about globalization and the mobility of populations, requiring new explanatory paradigms. W. J. T. Mitchell proposes that the terminology of viral infection registers a shift from what Benjamin called “the age of mechanical reproduction” to what he calls “the age of biocybernetic reproduction” (Mitchell 2011: 20) – that is, a shift from an economy based on industrial mass production to one based on genetic and digital information. The language of viral contamination suggests new forms of immunization from the less-predictable effects of digital media.

This relation between trauma, immunity, and media was already visible in the late nineteenth century. Foucault argues that modern medical science and the state were aligned through the struggle against infectious disease, requiring the physical isolation of specific individuals and groups. The establishment of places of confinement – hospitals, asylums, and prisons – also made possible Charcot’s conception of psychological trauma based on his observation of female hysterics in the Salpêtrière. Trauma is identified with the threat to social order, but there is also in Charcot a visual fascination with the trauma victim. The image of the trauma victim forms part of the media apparatus that both induces shock and immunizes against the threat of traumatization. Thus Vermeulen proposes that trauma discourses (and images) “mobilize the negativity of trauma in a mitigated form for the sustainment of life” (Vermeulen 2014: 150). Broadcast media transmitted trauma to the imagined community of the nation either in a positive sense (as in the Eichmann trial, which mobilized national resolve) or a negative one (as in the Vietnam War, which eventually numbed moral outrage). After 9/11, as television replayed images of the collapsing towers and political leaders reaffirmed American power and resolve, conceptions of media transmission shifted. Rather than positively

identifying with or being desensitized to images of suffering, the viewer was now understood as more directly threatened by the image.

Mitchell has proposed that vitalist conceptions of the image, grounded in implicit comparison to living organisms, continue to be a feature of technologically advanced societies, even if this is not consciously acknowledged (Mitchell 2005: 11). Digital information networks allow media transmission to be reconceived in terms of the immune system of the body politic. Images freely circulate or are arrested, depending on their perceived threat to collective security. As a result, the life of the image poses a more direct threat than the violence or death it shows. Just as the anonymous masses of modern cities prompted new forms of police surveillance so does the multiplication and mobility of digital images prompt new anxieties about apparently random acts of violence and terror. To maintain collective security and immunity for “lives that matter,” threatening images must be neutralized, disposed of, or redirected.

Cultural trauma narratives assign roles of victim and perpetrator, but they also define whose lives are worth living and which lives do not count and therefore can be disposed of. In the 2011 speech he gave announcing the assassination of Osama bin Laden, Barack Obama began by invoking the cultural trauma of 9/11, images of which “were seared into our national memory.” Remembering the “nearly 3000 citizens taken from us,” Obama went on to claim that after the attacks “we were united as one American family.”² Three years later, in his dedication speech at the opening of the 9/11 Memorial Museum, Obama narrated a story about “the man in the red bandana”: a young American who tended the wounded and led others to safety until he himself was killed when the South Tower collapsed. Wells Crowther, a twenty-four-year-old white male who worked in finance, embodied for Obama “the true spirit of 9/11: love, compassion, sacrifice.”³ These two speeches demonstrate how cultural trauma narratives define which lives count and which do not, in any kind of widespread social conflict. By this account, the lives of American citizens were sacrificed so that the larger American community could survive. The life of Osama bin Laden, along with countless others who were killed in the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, do not count and are not counted. Bin Laden’s death was publicly celebrated in America but there was a brief controversy about the failure to make public any images of the dead body because the killing of the terrorist enemy must not be allowed to be seen as a sacrifice or martyrdom. Some deaths contribute to cultural trauma narratives through which the life of

the community is extended, while other deaths are seen as posing a threat to lives that matter. Obama also refused to release certain images of torture and abuse in Abu Ghraib prison, claiming they might exacerbate anti-American sentiment.

Mitchell appears to share Obama's anxieties when he describes images produced by terrorist groups since the 9/11 attacks as intended to traumatize the viewing public and "designed to overwhelm the viewer's defences" (Mitchell 2011: 97). This claim is problematic, however, as these psychological defences are themselves embedded in the technological media apparatus. Images of violence and catastrophe are consumed, self-censored, and negotiated as a regular occurrence for the contemporary media user. For most, these defences are relatively secure unless the violence or catastrophe poses some immediate threat to their lives or loved ones. Discourses about the psychological vulnerability of large populations can be seen as part of the apparatus of surveillance, but they also invite viewers to self-examine and regulate their consumption of stress-inducing images. In a neoliberal society where individuals are required to manage higher levels of risk and therefore also levels of fear and anxiety, media users monitor their own resilience, coping mechanisms, and levels of distress.

Decapitation videos provide a clear example of this logic: They appear to assert the traditional sovereignty of religion and state, but they are available to be consumed like any other "shocking" image. The images from videos produced by Islamic State have become familiar to many: the victim kneeling in a desert landscape or on a beach, dressed in an orange jumpsuit. Early decapitation videos were often graphic and raw, but subsequent videos produced by ISIS were slick, high definition, carefully edited, jumping to show the severed head resting on an inert body rather than showing the act of decapitation. Some of the videos included a statement linking the execution to specific military interventions by Western leaders such as Barack Obama or David Cameron. The state and corporate media disseminate images of alien threats intended to invoke feelings of horror, but the ISIS videos are a deliberate intervention in this system of media representation and security: They explicitly attack Western societies but also participate in its networks of information and power; they are both "other" to Western media and also a functioning component of it.

The stereotype of the terrorist has one of its origins in fear of the "savage" violence of colonized peoples that continues to inform the violent response of police to African Americans in the United States. In 1991 Rodney King was videotaped being beaten by Los Angeles Police

Department officers after a high-speed car chase. The footage was widely shown and discussed on television. The subsequent acquittal of the officers involved triggered the Los Angeles riots in which over 50 people were killed and more than 2000 injured. The Rodney King footage now stands as an early instance of “traumatic” videos made by private citizens, which can reach large populations through media networks. In June 2009 Nedā Āghā Soltān was shot during election protests in Iran and died in less than two minutes. Her final moments were recorded on three different videos later posted on the Internet, after which she became an icon for the struggle against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Her commemoration became the cause for subsequent protests and the object of further government repression.

On July 3, 2016 Alton Sterling, a thirty-seven-year-old African American male who was selling CDs outside a convenience store in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was reported to be threatening someone with a gun. Two white policemen arriving at the scene held Sterling on the ground and shot him several times at close range. The shooting was recorded on phones by several bystanders, including members of a group called Stop the Killing, which films crimes in process and monitors police activities. On the night of July 5 protests against the killing began in Baton Rouge, continuing the following day with a candlelight vigil. On that day another African American male, Philando Castile, age thirty-two, was fatally shot in Minnesota after being pulled over in his car by a police officer. Castile’s girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, recorded the immediate aftermath of the shooting and live streamed it on Facebook. The next day a protest responding to both the Sterling and Castile killings was held in Dallas, Texas, at which Micah Xavier Johnson shot and killed five police officers, wounded nine other officers and two civilians. He was subsequently killed by a robot-delivered bomb.

The use of communication technologies in all of these dramatic instances made visible to a potentially unlimited viewing public what many had known about for decades. The killing of African Americans by police, whether judged lawful or not, is an acting out of the state’s power over life and death, and the videos that show this exercise of state power provoke others to challenge the legitimacy of this violence. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement began on Facebook in 2013 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the shooting of Trayvon Martin, and further deaths of young African American males, particularly those held in police custody or shot by police, led to calls for action resulting in street demonstrations. As a contemporary civil rights movement BLM is

distinguished from its forerunners by its dissociation from the church and Democratic Party and lack of reliance on charismatic leaders. The emergence of BLM on social media reinforces the strong link between earlier civil rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King or Jesse Jackson, and broadcast media. BLM is a decentralized movement that emphasizes localized action, supported by celebrities such as Beyoncé and political leaders such as Bernie Sanders. Beyoncé posted messages about the shootings of Sterling and Castile on her website, and “Black Lives Matter” appears as graffiti in her “Formation” music video. The movement has spread to other countries, for example Australia, where it addresses similar issues for Aborigines.

The contemporary preoccupation with trauma may be understood as a cultural effect of the technological recording, archiving, and replaying of images and narratives. These technological recordings function as a form of artificial memory that can induce shock through their repetition in times and places removed from their original production. The Internet allows nonprofessionals to record, exhibit, and manipulate images in ways that potentially create such traumatic effects. The cultural transition from broadcast media to digital information networks means that cultural trauma narratives are no longer limited by identification with the nation or state and can be widely disseminated by groups with alternative political agendas. Modern technological media have helped to create a historical situation in which the violation of visual taboos and the open display of death and suffering can be an everyday occurrence for media users. Because shock is the “norm” in consumer capitalist societies, most violent images can be viewed in a situation of immunity from the threat of actual destruction and from the point-of-view of a numbed emotional response. But such images are never entirely under the control of existing media industries and institutions. Traumatic images will continue to circulate like a *pharmakon* that is difficult to regulate and to fully control.

*Feminist Interventions in Trauma Studies**Jennifer Griffiths*

In one of the most important contributions to feminist trauma studies, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Violence to Political Terror* (1992), Judith Herman traces the history of modern trauma research and its relationship to social justice movements, particularly feminism. The second wave of the 1960s and 1970s brought women's private experience into public space through consciousness-raising groups and organizing. The personal became political, and close analysis revealed the relationship between individual acts and interpellation within dominant ideology. Herman's trauma analysis reflects a generation's worth of struggle within feminist politics to incorporate the many aspects of identity, including gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability. Feminism has required a shift away from isolated, private, domestic experience, sharing many individual narratives to identify the patterns indicating systemic abuses, which would then support a call for collective action in relation to political struggle for agency and full citizenship and to see offenses or trauma as a symptom and tool of patriarchy. Feminist interventions politicize the study of trauma by emphasizing the relationship to the dominant culture and sources of power prior to a traumatic event and to how this position within the society impacts the exposure, experience, and reception of the trauma. Once the perspective shifts to viewing trauma as a tool of dominance, the process of recovering from trauma also provides a political opportunity in refusing to remain silent, in placing individual crisis within the larger framework of political oppression, and in resisting the cultural forms that perpetuate second-class citizenship.

The emergence of the modern feminist movement included a re-examination of previous thought about women's experience. Herman reviews the history of psychoanalysis through a feminist lens and places the research on hysteria as the beginnings of modern trauma studies, followed by war neuroses and sexual/domestic violence (1992: 9). The distinction between these stages and their relationship to gender is that

women's trauma is linked to intimate life and is interpersonal in nature. In early work on trauma, the focus was on railway accidents (ungendered) and on a soldier's heart or shell shock. Symptoms of shock, disconnection of experience/re-experiencing, were associated with the horrors encountered in war, public events detached from personal relationship with the perpetrator, and not connected to masculinity itself. As is often noted in feminist scholarship, the label *hysteria* itself connects pathology to the uterus, and this early work demonstrates the ways the female body is read to conform to a patriarchal narrative that relies on its diminished value. The pathology is not attributed to a catastrophic event, such as a railway accident, but to excesses in the female body's already inherent instability or corruption.

Scholars of this early period in modern psychoanalysis have noted that Freud, Breuer, and Janet connect hysteria with psychological trauma (Herman 1992: 12), but that their positions alter and diverge from one another. Janet never abandoned themes that connect hysteria with sexual trauma, but was then dismissed or neglected in the history. Perhaps the most controversial chapter in this history involves Freud's proposal and later retraction of sexual abuse's relationship to the trauma symptoms he witnessed in his female patients. His "Aetiology of Hysteria" presents the theory that his patients shared histories of premature, involuntary sexual encounters and later manifested similar symptoms of distress that did not connect immediately to their current lives; rather, they included "disguised representations of intensely distressing events which had been banished from memory" (Herman 1992: 12). Freud's subsequent move away from his earlier claims related to seduction theory would be seen later by critics such as Jeffrey Masson and Florence Rush as an abandonment of his patients' controversial truth: that childhood sexual abuse occurred much more often than previously recognized, and in middle-class homes.

This controversial reversal demonstrates the way in which women's bodies serve as the site of political struggle. Indeed as women gained a political voice in the fight for suffrage, the theories around their experience contained their actual voices less and less. The study of hysteria developed as women's political rights also gained international focus, with the First International Congress for the Rights of Women 1878 and one of Freud's most notable patients, Anna O (Bertha Pappenheim), transitioning from analysand to activist in the fight for women's equality. During this period, mainstream newspapers relied on the burgeoning field to connect women's activism with pathological states, such as in the *New York Times*, which

“advised physicians to: ‘carefully investigate the curious nervous disorder peculiar to women, which is vulgarly called dress reform’ and which is characterized by an abnormal and unconquerable thirst for trousers . . . Investigation will probably show that the disease is simple hysteria, attended by prolonged and, in most cases, permanent mental hallucination” (Moore 1997: 8). This advice reflects the connection between public sentiment, political movements, and psychiatric treatment that feminist scholarship has uncovered and criticized.

As Cathy Caruth notes, literary texts provide insights for developments in psychoanalysis: “If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (Caruth 1996: 3). Feminist literary criticism shares this enterprise to uncover the previously silenced or marginalized aspects of women’s creative experience. Within feminist literary criticism, representations of hysteria and “madness” provide an opportunity to examine possible sites of resistance against oppressive gender norms and practices that regulated female behavior. Canonical texts in feminist literary criticism such as *The Madwoman in the Attic* suggest that female madness should be read as transgressive, undermining the law of the father/patriarchy. As Elaine Showalter explains, “Mental pathology was suppressed rebellion” (Showalter and Showalter 1987: 147). In *The Female Malady* (1987), Showalter establishes a clear link between feminist literary and trauma studies by considering the way femininity has been constructed in patriarchy, specifically within the field of psychiatry.

In her discussion of the “The Rise of the Victorian Madwoman,” Showalter connects representations of female madness that she finds in nineteenth-century women’s writing, including Bertha Mason in Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, with responses to social and political restrictions. These representations respond to Victorian psychiatry’s attempt to “manage” women, and they demonstrate literature as potentially threatening to the status quo (Showalter and Showalter 1987: 75). For trauma theory, it is important to consider how this “madness” might be distinct from post-traumatic responses and whether it is possible to identify those distinctions when the underlying causes, because they are linked to sexual exploitation and interpersonal violence, remain taboo and largely silenced. In feminist literary criticism’s efforts to disentangle femininity from mystique and inscrutability, the analysis moves from male-authored representation to finding the unpublished, out-of-print, or underanalyzed work by women writers and in many cases “decoding”

these texts in relation to the political contexts in which they originated. Such discovered or rediscovered writing represented women's experience, but often in the coded terms allowed during the period in which the work was produced, which adds a layer of complexity when one considers the already complicated representation of trauma. This focus on personal writing forms allowed voices and experiences into the public space that had previously remained private and marginalized and includes the expansion of literary criticism into letters, diaries, and other forms available to women for telling their stories.

In *Écriture féminine*, Hélène Cixous revisits Dora as a feminist literary icon. In "Laugh of the Medusa," she claims, "You, Dora, you the indomitable, the poetic body, you are the true 'mistress' of the Signifier. Before long your efficacy will be seen at work when your speech is no longer suppressed, its point turned in against your breast, but written out over against the other" (Cixous, Cohen, and Cohen 1976). For Cixous and other feminist theorists and critics, the return to Dora and the "mad-woman" involved a shifting away from pathological to more radical or subversive interpretations of hysteria and its key figures. Within literary analysis, Dora's experience with thwarted testimony offers a way to interpret female characters who find their experiences misread and their narratives shaped by male authority. When considering the constraints of femininity for plots and characters, a feminist lens would view hysterical symptoms as gestures of rebellion to disrupt – through their excess and instability – the seamless imposition of patriarchal signification.

In examining trauma theory's development since the late nineteenth century, feminist scholars have primarily considered the ways in which women's experience has been read and misread within the context of patriarchy. In clinical studies, women's voices remained largely silenced, even as their bodies were inscribed with meaning to support their status as the second sex. The early foundational research involving traumatic experience and response focuses on white, predominantly middle-class women, and within this context women of color have been marginalized or ignored. Although their stories have been employed politically at key historical moments, such as within the Abolitionist movement, these testimonies often occurred in relation to white advocacy. Although early hysteria research focused mainly on middle-class white women, the stories of women of color or working-class women became a critically important part of social justice movements, and the feminist rediscovery of propaganda literature highlights the plight of women under patriarchy. For example, *Bridget's Sisters, or the Legal Status of Women in Illinois Since 1868* by

Catharine McCulloch, centers around the plight of a woman who experienced domestic violence at the hand of her alcoholic husband without recourse within the law, emphasizing the terrible conditions of working-class women. Women's trauma testimony also entered the public sphere through slave narratives presented to support the Abolitionist movement. Slave narratives such as *Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* document the terror of sexual exploitation under which Black women lived during slavery.

The second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s returned attention to the political efficacy of women's testimony about gender-based violence. In her introduction, Herman highlights second-wave feminism's consciousness-raising efforts, speak-outs on rape in 1970s, research, policy initiatives, activism on incest/sexual abuse and domestic violence (Herman 1992: 2), along with the combination of political climate and research that allowed this connection to emerge. The response to soldiers' experience after the Vietnam War and the coalescing of the Women's Liberation Movement both included "informal rap groups" or consciousness raising sessions. The issue has always involved both recognizing experience and acknowledging its impact: "When the victim is already devalued (a woman, a child), she may find that the most traumatic events of her life take place outside the realm of socially validated reality" (Herman 1992: 8).

In the case of rape, antiracist women activists such as Ida B. Wells and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching focused on the ways in which sexual violence against women receives value only in service of white supremacist legal and extrajudicial proceedings. In her 1972 "A Letter to White Southern Women," Anne Braden describes the legitimacy offered to white women once they consent to participating in this system:

For the fact is that rape traditionally has been considered a crime in the South – if the woman was white and the accused black. But it has not been seen as a crime – and is not now – if the woman is black, or if both parties are white. Nor is it considered a crime if the victim appears to be an independent woman – not visibly someone's wife, someone's sister, or someone's daughter. Most real rapes go unpunished – and often unreported – because of the contempt with which police treat the complaining woman. Police and the society generally extend "protection" only to women who are willing to be pawns in their game. (Braden 1972)

Literary efforts to express the way this history related to rape complicates feminist solidarity across racial lines include Alice Walker's short story

“Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells” and Marilyn French’s *The Woman’s Room*. Susan Brownmiller’s (1975) *Against Our Will* contributed significantly to discussion around the rape as political and military strategy, linking it to implicitly state-sanctioned violence and not only a rare and personal event.

In addition to Herman’s work, *Father–Daughter Incest* and *Trauma and Recovery*, some of the most notable contributions to feminist trauma theory are attributable to Laura Brown, Maria Root, and Jennifer Freyd. Their interventions led to new understandings within the psychiatric field, including Herman’s notion of Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which addresses prolonged exposure to trauma such as with domestic violence and child abuse, rather than single incidents. Laura Brown focuses on traumatic events as “not outside the range” of everyday, common events occurring to women living under patriarchy. In “Feminist Paradigms of Trauma Treatment,” Laura Brown reinforces how the feminist value that the “personal is the political” plays out in the way “certain forms of trauma are viewed by feminist theory as representing, at the individual or interpersonal level, the intended consequences of institutionalized forms of discrimination” (Brown 2004: 96). In her discussion of the relationship with feminism and trauma theory, Brown identifies two “major developments”: Maria Root’s notion of insidious trauma and Jennifer Freyd’s model of betrayal trauma. Root’s work on insidious trauma identifies the cumulative impact of racial bias in addition to sexism, and Freyd explores the complex response in memory systems to trauma committed by caregivers or others on which victims depend.

Harkening back to earlier differences between the foundational studies related to shell shock and female hysteria, Laura Brown asserts, “Public events, visible to all, rarely themselves harbingers of stigma for the victims, things that can and do happen to men – all of these constitute trauma in the official lexicon” (1995: 102). In the late twentieth century, feminist interventions to consider the ubiquitous, chronic aspects of violence against women connect with the activist efforts such as Take Back the Night rallies, that sought to bring private stories into public spaces for political efficacy. With the phrases “stopping the silence, stopping the violence” and “a woman was raped here,” in chalk-markings on public sidewalks, these rallies addressed rape trauma and existing under its persistent threat as part of keeping women outside of public spaces and engaged in full participation as citizens.

During and following the period of feminism’s second wave, women of color organized in solidarity with institutional efforts that would inform

intersectional feminism, such as The Kitchen Table Press, whose Combahee River Collective statement addresses explicitly the relationship between racism, sexism, and violence as a tool of domination and foretells more recent statements of intersectionality:

We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression. (Collective and Smith 1986)

Addressing what was seen as a largely white middle-class movement, women of color formed collectives engaged in resistance and education about their specific experience. Key texts from this period include *This Bridge Called My Back* (Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Bambara 1981) and *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Hull, Scott, and Smith 1986), multigenre and interdisciplinary in their presentation of the history, experience, and perspectives of women of color. This period also saw the production of neoslave narratives, including Gail Jones's *Corregidora*, which highlights the traumatic legacy of slavery and the ways in which female bodies of color are misread for hypersexuality and hyperreproduction, even when they are victims of horrendous violence. Abbey Lincoln describes this crisis in testimony: "Raped and denied the right to cry out in her pain, she has been named the culprit and called 'loose,' 'hot-blooded,' 'wanton,' 'sultry,' and 'amoral'" (Lincoln 1970: 98).

According to critical race feminist Kimberle Crenshaw, feminism must always prioritize intersectionality, particularly at moments of cultural crisis, violence, and traumatic experience:

As feminists, we recognize how racism has been – and is still – gendered. Patriarchy continues to be foundational to racial terrorism in the US, both in specious claims that justify the torture of Black men in defense of white womanhood, and in its brutal treatment of Black women and girls. We also recognize that while patriarchy and racism are clearly intertwined, all too often, our struggles against them are not. This call for sustained focus on issues of race when considering gender equality echoes a long history. Women of color have intervened in white feminism and called out for more careful consideration and inclusion of issues impacting women outside of a white, middle class framework. ("The Charleston Imperative: Why Feminism & Antiracism Must Be Linked" 2014)

Intersectional feminism, as represented in texts such as *The Charleston Imperative*,¹ disrupts the formation of a public narrative that would erase the relationship between identity, “daily violence,” and “extreme acts” within a system using trauma to oppress, a sentiment echoed throughout feminist interventions in the research on traumatic experience. In this way, it builds on the important work from late-twentieth-century activist-writers such as Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, and Gloria Anzaldúa, who seek to define the relationship between violence and subjugation in history and the daily lives of women of color in their own words. This emphasis on changing public spaces and the dynamics of listening means not exploiting the stories, not only recovering and discovering, but also ensuring that they enter the realm of meaning within an intersectional framework that acknowledges the way power works, shaping the narrative as it enters into public discourse, and making sure that the entrenched patterns, denials, and elisions are recognized.

In addition, feminist literary criticism finds representations of rape and its aftermath coded in earlier texts, a phenomenon represented by Lynne Higgins’s edited volume *Rape and Representation* (1993). This analysis often includes rape representations and the way they may promote or complicate societal norms, aligning with Brown’s assertion that “the private, secret, insidious traumas to which a feminist analysis draws attention are more often than not those events in which the dominant culture and its forms and institutions are expressed and perpetrated” (1995: 102). Within theory, criticism, and activism, old and news texts representing women’s experience with violence or abuse and its aftermath provide opportunities to see trauma as ideologically imbued. According to Brown, “A feminist perspective on trauma requires us to move out of our comfortable positions – as those who study trauma, or treat its effects, or categorize its type – to a position of identification and action” (1995: 105). This position of “identification and action” connects to feminist literary criticism and its efforts to enact a kind of witnessing encounter between reader and text, in the act of reading itself and receiving previously unspoken and private truths. In the area of testimony, it is always central to consider the role of voice and how the victim’s identity and subject position factor into the availability of a receptive audience and the language with which to frame the totality of the trauma.

The literary process is also the process of remembering against these survival mechanisms of forgetting and cultural forces that do not validate the experiences. When Root describes insidious trauma, she is addressing the interaction between the cumulative, chronic impact of racism and the

acute events most often associated trauma, and a significant aspect of the feminist literary project has involved focusing on texts that express these otherwise marginalized experiences. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1999), for instance, illustrates the links between insidious trauma, internalized racism, and misogyny (what Moya Bailey terms "misogynoir"). For lesbian and other queer women, this understanding of insidious trauma reflects the fear of possible violence or violation within hostile families and communities, as reflected in literary presentations such as Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1953). In such texts, experiences considered both extreme but also "not outside the range" of normal are presented through personal narrative in fiction, memoir, and hybrid genres.

Freyd's *Betrayal Trauma* revisits the kind of trauma from which Freud distanced himself, namely relational and intrafamilial abuse, particularly sexual abuse, which remain among the most contested and controversial narratives for their role within feminist inquiry and action. Janice Haaken's *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back* (1998) focuses on Freyd's role as a key figure in the recovered memory controversy: Starting with her academic credentials and a lucid summary of her betrayal-trauma theory, Freyd's narrative took on a potent significance because her later description of personal anguish as a self-proclaimed incest survivor stood on the stronger shoulders of science. Her narrative is a modern chapter in the history of women and madness, one where women in the role of experts, with the authority of "science knowledge," acquire legitimacy to speak generally, even universally, about emotional suffering. As novelists, poets, and diarists, female authors remain on the margins of public authority, chronicling the particularities of feminine outrage and discontent. But science aims to generalize beyond the particular. Science, traditionally, has been more intimately tied to a masculine world of lawful effects and technocratic power than have those literary portraits of the human condition mapped out in the humanities" (Haaken 1998: 24). Haaken here articulates the limits against which literary forms pushed when feminists relied on their insights to address previously neglected aspects women's experience. Within trauma studies, the tension has existed between factual, empirical, scientific documentation and the complexities of survivors' ability to recall and depict trauma to which literary forms respond more aptly.

Feminist literary critics incorporate the various field-shaping trauma studies into their analytical framework. Autobiography scholar Leigh Gilmore reminds her readers in "Looking Back/Looking Forward," for example, that "the rape of a woman by her spouse was not a crime until the

state considered it as such. Status, rather than injury, defined a legitimate victim” (Gilmore 2008: 266). Laura Vickroy’s *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, one of the primary efforts in contemporary feminist literary trauma studies, begins with a gesture toward Herman’s work: “These works attest to the frequency of trauma and its importance in a multicontextual social issue, as it is a consequence of political ideologies, colonization, war, domestic violence, poverty, and so forth” (Vickroy, 2002: 2).

The explosion of attention to female sexual trauma had its critics, and the criticism revealed the tensions between need to acknowledge and understand previously marginalized experience and the drive to advance political agency within a broader equality movement. The conflict surfaced as a contrast between victim/agency and in many ways reflected a deeply entrenched stigma against trauma survivors and the complex relationship to direct power for feminists challenging patriarchal hegemony. Many critics focused on the way women were seen as helpless, or permanently damaged, and that the abuse was exaggerated and left survivors feeling permanently marked. They were concerned that women would lose political agency and that the survivor movement valued compulsive confession over reasoned, nuanced critique.

Elaine Showalter again contributes to the discussion with *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media*, when she criticizes the “Feminists have an ethical as well as an intellectual responsibility to ask tough questions about the current narratives of illness, trauma, accusations, and conspiracy” (Showalter 1998: 13). For Showalter, dangers exist in remaining focused on previous periods of historical oppression in which women’s experience and voices remained silenced. Feminism, Showalter asserts, requires new focus to evolve politically: “Claiming hysteria and admiring the victims may have had inspirational functions in the 1970s: feminism, like other insurgent movements, needed martyrs. But Saint Dora’s days are over. Today’s feminists need models rather than martyrs; we need the courage to think as well as the courage to heal” (Showalter 1998: 61). Some critics see stalled efforts to move beyond identifying difference and vulnerability: “Feminist embracing of the trauma model is symptomatic as well of a much broader crisis within feminism regarding the sustained effects of victimization and our current difficulties in mobilizing meaningful resistances” (Haaken 1996:1088). Narratives that were once deployed to focus on previously ignored or marginalized experiences in the hopes of political gain are now questioned as undermining agency and authority.

Within the feminism of the 1980s and 1990s, attention moved to a conflict between what many referred to as “victim feminism” versus ‘power feminism,’” with writers, such as Naomi Wolf and her *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How to Use It*, prioritizing strategies to harness power and emphasizing “breaking glass ceilings” to correct institutionalized sexism. Other texts by younger feminists, including Rene Denefield’s *The New Victorians: A Young Woman’s Challenge to the Old Feminist Order* and Katie Roiphe’s *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism* challenged what they saw as a shift away from women’s agency and a focus on women’s vulnerability. Subgroups of feminism that negotiated with these tensions included antipornography activists like Andrea Dworkin and pro-sex/sex-positive artists and writers, such as Annie Sprinkle and Ellen Willis.

What we see within the literary and dramatic work produced in that period of questioning proves once again that feminism is never monolithic. Demonstrating this questioning particularly is Paula Vogel’s *How I Learned to Drive* and her critical framing of its treatment of sexual abuse, its impact, and the relationship between perpetrator and survivor. Notably, Vogel issues a warning and a challenge: “I would say that we can receive great love from people who harm us . . . We are living in a culture of victimization, and great harm can be inflicted by well-intentioned therapists, social workers, and talk show hosts who encourage people to dwell in their identity as victim. Without denying or forgetting the original pain, I wanted to write about the great gifts that can also be inside that box of abuse. My play dramatizes the gifts we receive from the people who hurt us” (Holmberg 2006: 436). In “The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire: Feminist Approaches to Sexual Abuse and Psychic Trauma,” Janice Haaken analyzes the “memory wars” occurring in response to new understanding about dissociation and recovered memory. When challenging the possibility that survivors could gain access to memories, the therapeutic relationship undergoes intense scrutiny: “Beyond these challenges to the memories of women – as patients – is the closely allied problem of professional authority in interpreting those memories” (Haaken 1996). Like Elaine Showalter, who claims that “Recovered memory is primarily a white woman’s phenomenon” (Showalter 1998: 151), Haaken also identifies a difference she sees in the way Black women respond to the testimonial encounter: “While black women writers have woven accounts of sexual violence into a larger fabric of cultural critique, the trend within the incest recovery movement has been toward a more narrow psychologizing of sexual abuse”

(Haaken 1996). If we return to that earlier moment when the testimony of women of color and working-class women was used for political purposes but left out of the formal psychoanalytic research on trauma, this seems to repeat that pattern with a clear indication that it does not serve the movement for gender equality. White women depoliticized at a time when their proximity to power structures/access to economic power is most threatening to patriarchy.

More recent critiques focus on the way trauma lexicon has entered into political social discourse through debates about hate speech, which invokes Maria Root's insidious trauma and developments in the field of Critical Race Theory. Recent re-engagement with issues represented in texts such as *Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment* address the psychic injury resulting from racist messages within a restricted community, such as a place of employment or campus. For Jack Halberstam, terms like "Trigger" and "safe space," which exemplify "the re-emergence of a rhetoric of harm and trauma that casts all social difference in terms of hurt feelings and that divides up politically allied subjects into hierarchies of woundedness," often belie any real understanding of the advances in understanding traumatic stress. Halberstam continues:

As reductive as such responses to aesthetic and academic material have become, so have definitions of trauma been over-simplified within these contexts. There are complex discourses on trauma readily available as a consequence of decades of work on memory, political violence and abuse. This work has offered us multiple theories of the ways in which a charged memory of pain, abuse, torture or imprisonment can be reignited by situations or associations that cause long buried memories to flood back into the body with unpredictable results. But all of this work, by Shoshana Felman Macarena Gomez-Barris, Saidiya Hartman, Cathy Caruth, Ann Cvetkovich, Marianne Hirsch and others, has been pushed aside in the recent wave of the politics of the aggrieved. (Halberstam 2016)

This debate continues to remain relevant within public culture with many parties concerned about the potentially divisive political rhetoric in traditional and social media outlets and campaigns leading to an increase in violence. Halberstam's critique, one counter-argument suggests, may represent the kind of failure of witness that feminist interventions in trauma studies attempt to correct. It raises the issue about the limits of opening up trauma studies to include daily experience, what is within "the range of normal" and chronic, rather than acute, such as Root's insidious trauma.

Although some criticism seems to ask for fewer stories in the public space about women's trauma, other trauma scholars want instead to change the role of the listener/receiver of testimony and the public space in which the testimony emerges. Critiques of trauma studies' earlier formations, including feminist interventions, emphasize a focus on the receiver of testimony and the public space in which the testimony occurs, in an effort to avoid universal theorizations about post-traumatic experience. Cathy Caruth's call to recognize "deeply ethical dilemma: the unremitting problem of *how not to betray the past*" (Caruth, 1996: 27) remains central in current feminist interventions in trauma studies. In the "Unbearable Witness: Toward a Politics of Listening," Wendy Hui Kyong Chun centers in the murders of 14 women at the Ecole Polytechnique to turn the attention toward the development of an ethical witness:

I will argue that we need a politics of listening as a necessary complement to a politics of speaking. Feminism has often concentrated on consciousness-raising, on producing speech that breaks one's silence and inaugurates one as a feminist. The question of how to listen and respond to these testimonials have largely been unaddressed, since the question of listening in general tends to be under-theorized and under-valued. More often than not, we assume we know how to listen. (Chun 1999: 144)

This imperative aligns with work on canonical work on witnessing and testimony, including most notably *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*; not only is it critical for women to find modes of expression to speak their previously silenced truth, but also there always exists a primary need to a public space and audience to receive this testimony.

By emphasizing the relational, transactional aspects of testimony, feminist scholars continue to connect the personal and the political and resist efforts to remove women's experience from public discourse. These questions about the possibilities and limitations regarding representation of traumatic experience echo and reinforce some earlier claims about feminist reading practices, including Judith Fetterly's *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* and reading across racial difference in *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Does one have to cultivate a "resisting reader" strategy to bear witness to female traumatic experience, especially when promoting an intersectional lens that must recognize the traces of patriarchal and white supremacist influence in this reading?

Ann Cvetkovich questions any universal trauma paradigm and influential figures in the resurgence of trauma analysis, including Cathy

Caruth: “By consistently stressing questions of epistemology and trauma as structurally unknowable, she flattens out the specificities of trauma in a given historical and political context” (Cvetkovich, 2003: 19). Cvetkovich continues the call to intervene in any attempts to remove trauma studies from political spheres of influence: “I reject the search for a universal model of trauma because it runs the risk of erasing essential differences between traumatic experiences, differences of historical context and geopolitical location, as well the specificities of individual experiences that can be lost in a diagnosis that finds the same symptoms everywhere” (Cvetkovich, 2003: 32). To ground trauma studies in material reality and the bodies bearing the traumatic legacies, Cvetkovich represents queer and feminist scholars who prioritize lived experience and encounters between subjects, examining the way “touch” functions as the boundaries between the physical, emotional or psychological, and political.

The navigation of boundaries – between bodies, groups, in testimony, and across disciplines – central to feminist trauma studies includes the generational and collective memory. Referring to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* as “a theoretical text for the contradictions that define the intergenerational transmission of trauma,” Marianne Hirsch affirms the close relationship between women’s cultural work and trauma studies (Hirsch 2002: 73). Her influential discussion of postmemory entails looking at intergenerational trauma legacies and transmission of memory and working against forces of co-option: “This is the story of how the mark of memory gets erased to make space so that – generations later – it may again be found and re-adopted across lines of difference. It is a story of a bold and risky and deeply feminist act of making connections across the differences of gender, race, and generation” (Hirsch 2002: 89). Inherently, trauma inhabits a space between past and present, which make a return to the archive to find meaning its return. When engaging with the archive of women’s experience, particularly its missing or misread parts, feminist strategies of interpreting testimony and creating meaning entails a consciousness of the way a witness can impose identities and agendas onto survivor testimony. Kali Tal recognizes this risk when she writes, “The critic of trauma literature must determine: the composition of the community of trauma survivors; the nature of trauma survivors; the nature of the trauma inflicted upon members of the community; the composition of the community of perpetrators; the relationship between the communities of victims and perpetrators; and the contemporary social, political, and cultural location of the community of survivors” (Tal 1996: 17). This awareness of traumatic experience

as immersed in cultural and political systems connects essentially to the drive toward functioning within an intersectional framework. Perhaps the most prominent feminist intervention in trauma studies involves the way in which this intersectional consciousness intervenes whenever universalizing or marginalizing moves threaten to reproduce the oppression feminist exists to counter.

Healing and Post-Traumatic Growth

Suzanne LaLonde

Before Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, and Pierre Janet engaged in their early research and treatment for psychic trauma, the French poet Charles Baudelaire wrote for an unfinished epilogue of his *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), “Tu m’as donné ta boue et j’en ai fait de l’or” [“You gave me your mud, and I’ve turned it into gold”] (quoted in Cyrulnik 2002: 20). Baudelaire’s alchemical exercise stimulates a series of questions about terms and therapies for post-traumatic experiences. For example, does it make sense to talk about resolution and recovery, if it is often said that the “resolution of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete” (Herman 1992: 211)? The terms *healing* and *recovery* post-trauma also establish a “pathologization and depoliticization of victims of violence” (Craps and Buelens 2008: 5), whereas the experience may be fundamentally political (an attack by a powerful entity on a more vulnerable one) provoking resistance, resilience, and eventual growth. Further, the issue of “recovery” post-trauma appears murky, as it often consists of defensive survival mechanisms such as dissociation, in which the original event and ensuing traumatic experience of the mind is “split off and fragmented, so that the emotions, sounds, images, thoughts and physical sensations related to the trauma take on a life of their own” (van der Kolk 2014: 66). This does not necessarily constitute a transformation of mud into gold, but it does seem to constitute survival, if not a form of resilience. Baudelaire’s imagery also spurs an examination of how language can undermine one’s sense of integrity, as one is challenged to acknowledge a traumatic past while moving beyond its legacy. In light of the complexity of these terms, this chapter employs “post-traumatic growth” (PTG) to accommodate the possibility that the experience can entail both nuanced unhealthy and healthy psychological growth.

Does it make sense to argue that the literary arts and imagination can promote healthy post-traumatic growth? After all, the “story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative, but as a symptom” (Herman

1992: 1). How can literary imagination stimulate healthy growth in survivors if “trauma has shut down their inner compass and robbed them of the imagination they need to create something better” (van der Kolk 2014: 98)? Moreover, just because the field of Western cultural studies endorses the idea that the transmission of a traumatic experience must “be spoken in a language that is always somehow literary: a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding” (Caruth 1996: 5), does this mean that literary language is always key? Can a survivor of trauma really experience growth by engaging in a language-centered therapy while her body’s physiological reactions are the only form of communication she knows? Can she experience growth by participating in a form of trauma therapy that is culturally alien to her? These questions lead to an exploration of the possibilities and limitations of the literary arts and imagination to promote healthy post-traumatic growth. This chapter provides not only a synthesis of PTG therapies in relation to the literary arts and imagination, therefore, but also an analysis of the growth of the field and suggestions about ways for the field itself to grow.

Since the 1990s, there has been a spate of research by neuroscientists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and cultural theorists, among other health-care professionals and artists, on PTG. Following the example of Janet, psychiatrist Judith Herman outlines a three-step recovery process in her *Trauma and Recovery*, which has served as a contemporary model of best practices and hence deserves special attention. She first describes how imperative it is to establish a sense of safety for the survivor of trauma. By building “healing relationships, the survivor re-establishes psychological faculties that were compromised by the traumatic experience, such as trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity and intimacy” (1992: 133). A sense of safety is established primarily by forging a professional psychotherapeutic alliance, “a relationship of existential engagement, in which both partners commit themselves to the task of recovery” (147). The importance of such an alliance cannot be overstated, for “if the professional who seeks to cure the patient is confident that she will remain untouched by the patient’s suffering, then no one is listening to the patient’s story, the suffering remains without meaning, and healing has been rendered impossible” (Brody qtd. in Lindemann Nelson 1997: 28).

Safety also entails attention to and control of the body, seeing that “survivors feel unsafe in their bodies” (Herman 1992: 160). In the case of a single traumatic event, the therapist coaches the survivor by focusing on the “restoration of the biological rhythms of eating and sleep and reduction of hyperarousal and intrusive symptoms” (Herman 1992: 161). In

prolonged cases of trauma, the therapist addresses issues of bodily integrity: “attention to basic health needs, regulation of bodily functions such as sleep, eating, and exercise, management of post-traumatic symptoms, and control of self-destructive behaviors” (160). In both cases, the survivor gains a sense of empowerment by caring for herself and by remedying one of the most persistent symptoms of trauma, dissociation, “the essence of trauma” (van der Kolk 2015: 66). When Herman speaks about survivors creating new connections, she is referring not only to therapeutic alliances, but also to a new relationship with the dissociated self.

How does this first step of safety relate to the literary arts? In both trauma recovery and the literary arts, the body must be acknowledged, for “the body is not a thing, it is a situation, it is the instrument of our grasp upon the world, a limiting factor for our projects” (Beauvoir 2009: 46). In other words, to understand the world, in real and imaginative form, one must acknowledge the body and the signals it sends about the world. If the body and mind are disconnected, if the body has been made strange, how can the world be interpreted? Sociologist Arthur Frank has written, “Both observation and witness begin with a body, and both commit that body” (2013: 19). The suffering body is ethically responsible also to witness the suffering that takes place within a greater social context. Second, by creating a sense of safety through a well-cared-for body and a therapeutic alliance, the survivor creates a distance between herself as survivor and herself as victim. This step helps to resolve the problem of objectivity that arises when the survivor attempts to analyze herself in psychoanalysis and storytelling. Through practicing an ethos of self-care and by establishing a therapeutic alliance, the survivor defines herself as an empowered survivor and no longer as a victim. In metaphorical terms, she no longer is in the center of the landscape she is trying to paint. Third, the therapeutic step of establishing safety is tied to the literary arts, considering that the very essence of a traumatic event is “walled off” from conscious awareness and defies therefore an easy reading. By establishing a safe environment, the survivor creates a holding ground of investigation. The body does not beckon her attention away from the object of investigation and the therapeutic alliance encourages focused attention on the subject. Within this state of safety, words, images, and emotional reactions are analyzed methodically, as if analyzing a piece of literature.

In the process of creating a sense of safety, the survivor is encouraged, according to Herman, to use her own intellectual and emotional resources to comprehend the events of the traumatic event. During this stage of remembrance and mourning, the survivor tells her story. “This work of

reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story," although first attempts to tell the trauma story might remain "wordless and static" (Herman 1992: 175). Through repeated attempts, the survivor begins to articulate her emotions, sensations, images, and bodily experiences, as "the therapist plays the role of the witness and ally in whose presence the survivor can speak of the unspeakable" (175). Herman supports a three-step narrative reconstruction of the traumatic event. The survivor is invited first to describe her "important relationships, her ideals, and dreams and her struggles and conflicts prior to the traumatic event" (176). The second step is to reconstruct the traumatic event in a factual way. "As the narrative closes on the most unbearable moments, the patient finds it more and more difficult to use words. At times the patient may spontaneously switch to nonverbal methods of communication, such as drawing or painting" (177). In fact, because traumatic memories can be visual in nature, "creating pictures may represent the most effective initial approach to these indelible images" (177). To drive home the message of the importance of including images that involve the senses in the trauma story, Jessica Wolfe, who has worked with combat veterans reports: "We have them reel it off in great detail, as though they were watching a movie and with all the senses included. We ask them what they are seeing, what they are hearing, what they are smelling, what they are feeling, and what they are thinking" (qtd. in Herman 1992: 177). The ultimate goal is to put the event along with its imagery and bodily sensations into words and for the survivor's story to be spoken, felt, sensed, heard, and understood.

The survivor is also invited to analyze and interpret the original traumatic event and ensuing emotional experience, as "the traumatic event challenges an ordinary person to become a theologian, a philosopher, and a jurist" (Herman 1992: 178). To foster a deeper understanding of the trauma story, the survivor explores "the moral questions of responsibility and guilt and reestablishes a belief system that seems to make sense of her undeserved suffering" (178). And yet, the story is not complete unless it is coupled with action. By (a) confronting the horrors of the past, which includes mourning the old self that has been destroyed by the traumatic event; (b) embracing the horrors of the past, as a way to restore and embellish her life; and (c) and reconstructing a creative story of physical imagery and meaning about her trauma, the survivor's story becomes a testimony, which "has both a private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect which is political and judicial" (181). However, it takes time and mourning – for what was and will never be again.

“After many repetitions, the moment comes when the telling of the trauma story no longer arouses quite such intense feeling . . . The story is a memory like other memories, and it begins to fade as other memories do” (195). Even though the reconstruction of the traumatic experience is never complete, the trauma might not be seen as the most important part of the survivor’s story. When the action of telling the story of trauma ceases, the original traumatic event and ensuing emotional experience belong to the past, and the survivor can embrace the task of reimagining her present life and building her future.

Herman’s use of these terms – story, narrative, memory, image building, and testimony – creates an obvious connection between post-traumatic growth and the literary arts and imagination. Not only is the survivor coached to read and analyze her mind (and the physical transmission of emotions), as if it were a piece of literature, but she also becomes the writer of her own story. Shall we assume that growth occurs because the survivor becomes “the author and arbiter of her own recovery” (1992: 133)? If Herman argues that recovery “is based upon the empowerment of the survivor,” can one conclude that this is just a case of empowering the disempowered (133)? It is conceivable that assuming the position of author and arbiter of one’s recovery could be in itself therapeutic for a survivor whose personal jurisdiction has been violated. After all, “telling our story does not merely document who we are; it helps to make us who we are” (Charon 2006: 69). Still, telling our story of trauma is not simply a case of making ourselves anew. Hilde Lindemann Nelson describes in more detail how it is possible to remake a mind through storytelling: “By pulling apart the master narratives that construct a damaged identity and replacing them with a more credible, less morally degrading narrative, counterstories serve as a practical tool for reidentifying persons. They serve to repair the damaged identity” (2001: 186). This intimates that the survivor of trauma must edit out “the master narratives,” those stories that do not belong to the storyteller. It is the standard story of trauma that belongs to the community and thus lacks a personal and creative and even perhaps a hopeful take. Frank describes how it might be possible to go beyond the morally degrading story:

First they resist the call: the disease, or trauma, or chronic pain that is being forced upon their bodies. As their stories develop and as they develop in their stories, they resist the silence that suffering forces upon their bodies. Finally their resistance finds a voice; they make suffering useful. In the wounds of their resistances, they gain a power: to tell, and even to heal. (2013: 182)

The fact that Frank employs vocabulary like “resist” and “resistance” suggests that he interprets storytelling as a type of immunotherapy. By telling the trauma story, the survivor reexperiences the traumatic experience, but on her own terms. She uses her own creative powers to react differently to the traumatic event and subsequent experience. This imaginative process involves creating new openings, new ways of understanding the past, present, and future. Roland Barthes describes this process as he writes about his mother’s death: “Not to suppress mourning (suffering) (the stupid notion that time will do away with such a thing) but to change it, transform it, to shift it from a static stage (stasis, obstruction, recurrence of the same thing) to a fluid state” (2010: 142). Barthes’s reference to shifting away from stasis and obstruction also brings to mind psychoanalysis, thus reiterating the connection between Herman’s therapies and the literary arts. After all, the talking cure, is a “neuro-plastic therapy” (Doidge 2007: 217.) It takes place not only in the therapist’s office, but also in the survivor’s mind, thus “making alterations in neuronal networks” (Vaughan qtd. in Doidge 2007: 221). From a physiological perspective, telling creative stories restores the brain because neurons fire in novel ways, which triggers the brain to secrete dopamine, the pleasure hormone. In psychological terms, with a shift away from the static stage of the traumatized self, it appears that “we have lived another life – that we have had a miraculous enlargement of experience” (Armstrong 2013: 135). Telling stories, thus, is not just a therapeutic act of empowerment, but also a phenomenological and cognitive act that helps survivors define and redefine themselves in creative ways.

This leads to Herman’s third stage of recovery, which is that of restoring connection. Now that the trauma begins to recede into the past, intimacy with others can be fostered because the survivor has “regained some capacity for appropriate trust” (1992: 295). She may venture into a wider circle and share her story in an attempt to connect with other victims and survivors, while raising public awareness and preventing future traumatic events. A multidimensional identity now consists of the victim, the survivor, and the narrator, who represents an “ideal self” and “involves the active exercise of imagination and fantasy, capacities that have now been liberated” (202). The creative undertakings of the narrator determine the success of the recovery post-traumatic experience because the narrator replaces the therapist or close friend or family member, allowing the survivor the imaginative space and emotional freedom to become her own therapist, philosopher, writer, or even experimental actor. A line from a guidebook for formerly battered women describes the essence of this next

stage: “Now is the time to rise above the sameness of your days and explore the risk of testing your abilities, the expansive feeling that comes from . . . growth” (NiCarthy qtd. in Herman 1992: 202). The manual includes this suggestion: “If you really wanted to act, don’t go to your grave saying that regretfully. Get out and join a little theater group” (NiCarthy qtd. in Herman 1992: 202). It is noteworthy that the theatrical arts are recommended as a way to develop the “ideal self.” Although this statement advises survivors to engage in new undertakings in general, therapeutic environments are defined by a protected space where “fantasy can be given free rein,” while serving as “a testing ground for the translation of fantasy into concrete action” (203). The ultimate goal of Herman’s post-traumatic growth is summed up in this way: “The self-discipline learned in the early stages of recovery can now be joined to the survivor’s capacities for imagination and play” (203). Obviously, notions like “fantasy can be given free rein,” “translation of fantasy into concrete action,” and “capacities for imagination and play” translate into an endorsement of creative exercises, such as the dramatic arts.

This synthesis is not meant to oversimplify Herman’s recovery steps or trauma survivors’ experiences of growth; after all, any recovery process is dialectical in nature, involving both healthy and unhealthy forms of growth. Herman is quick to point out, nonetheless, that “in the course of a successful recovery, it should be possible to recognize a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory, and from stigmatized isolation to restored social connection” (1992: 155). Again, for Herman the act of telling one’s story and creative engagement are pivotal factors in healthy post-traumatic growth.

The research of cultural theorist Cathy Caruth and sociologist Jeffrey Alexander also stands as a pillar in the construction of theories and treatments for survivors of trauma. Caruth’s argument that “literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (1996: 3) has dominated much of cultural trauma studies during the last twenty years. More recently and perhaps less obscurely, Caruth has written: “Traumatic memory thus totters between remembrance and erasure, producing a history that is, in its very events, a kind of inscription of the past; but also a history constituted by the erasure of its traces” (2013: 51). Although it might seem as if Caruth emphasizes the “inaccessibility” of the traumatic event, and hence the impossibility for healthy growth, her reading is designed first of all to challenge the therapeutic listener (and survivor) to locate a “departure” from the original

traumatic event and the ensuing traumatic experience (1995: 10). That “departure” includes a departure away from a “meaningful” or “logical” story line and brings to mind what Bruno Bettelheim wrote in reference to the therapeutic effects of reading fairy tales: “Contrary to the ancient myth, wisdom does not burst forth fully developed like Athena out of Zeus’s head; it is built up, small step by small step, from most irrational beginnings” (1975: 3).

The concept of knowing and not knowing, remembering and erasing, relates to healthy and unhealthy PTG. First, a memory of a traumatic event might be allowed to fester in an unknown state, lest it be reduced to clichés or turned into versions of the same story (Caruth 1995: vii). This unknown state might be the survivor’s attempt to maintain a sense of integrity of her understanding (or lack of understanding) of the original event, whose gravity might defy verbal description. Moreover, the event(s) might be so encumbered with evil and debasement that to engage in therapy that portends to lead to recovery somehow betrays that evil. This decision to “erase” the past, at least from one’s conscious awareness, might give a sense of empowerment. By allowing her story to be “erased,” the survivor is calling the shots on her recovery, which is a necessary step in recovery.

Despite the ethical and therapeutic benefits of “erasing” the event, one must ponder how a survivor moves beyond the stage of the unknown. Alexander argues that, “there was no ‘getting beyond’ the story of the Holocaust. There was only the possibility of returning to it: not transcendence but catharsis” (2012: 60). To his mind, “catharsis clarifies feeling and emotion by forcing the audience to identify with the story’s characters, compelling them to experience their suffering with them and to learn, as often they did not, the true causes of their death” (61). The fact that observers can leave the theater while a character remains locked in her traumatic experience encourages a cathartic experience for the audience, which is that “strange combination of cleansing and relief, that humbling feeling of having been exposed to the dark and sinister forces that lie just beneath the surface of human life and of having survived” (61). We accompany fictitious personages on sinister journeys to confront kindred sinister moments in our own journeys. But what exactly is going on as we accompany characters through their dark passages? Are these moments cathartic, precisely because we are exposed to a traumatic moment that can be controlled through an interpretation of the fictitious event? Caruth’s analysis of *Hiroshima mon amour* suggests that it is by listening to another’s story of trauma that one knows without knowing about one’s own trauma

(1996: 8). Indeed, the story of trauma becomes a testimony of another's trauma, for "one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another" (8). By witnessing another's traumatic experience, the survivor-witness becomes a co-creator of meaning because "works of art have a kind of 'unconscious,' which is not under the control of their producers" (Eagleton 2003, 96). The interpretation of another's traumatic experience is in essence the survivor's unconscious being made known, but in a new situation. This idea finds resonance in Freud's notion that "it takes two to witness the unconscious" (qtd. in Felman and Laub 1992: 15). The survivor's unconscious is practicing for a narrative interpretation of her own traumatic experience. This is vital for recovery and growth, as the underlying challenge for a survivor is to tell her story from a point of view that appears so alien to the pretraumatic self.

The process of clarifying feelings and emotions through stories is especially therapeutic for survivors; after all, they often engage in psychic numbing, as manifested in dissociation. Second, if a trauma survivor begins to feel for and empathize with another in a dramatized tragedy, she may begin to feel for and empathize with her own traumatized self. During a fictitious journey, she begins to read herself in the traumatized character, and consequently, a process of empathetic connection between her traumatized self and the traumatized character is created. The survivor is both inside and outside the traumatic event, and "to occupy a territory while loitering skeptically on the boundary is often where the most intensely creative ideas stem from" (Eagleton 2003: 40). It is this connection and this creative act that leads Françoise Davoine to conclude, "Understanding one's own story through a relation to, or in an interference from another's story, is healing" (qtd. in Caruth 2014: 102).

Be that as it may, healing is tied up and dependent on repetition, suggesting that the process is never complete. Alexander contends, "We 'redeem' tragedy by experiencing it, but, despite this redemption, we do not get over it. Rather, to achieve redemption we are compelled to dramatize and re-dramatize, experience and re-experience the archetypal trauma" (2012: 61). His choice of the words *re-dramatize* and *re-experience* to describe redemption emphasizes how healing methods must be repetitive. Echoing Freud, Caruth elaborates on the theory of "repetition compulsion" and contends that trauma returns in unrecognizable forms, as repeated nightmares, dreams, and games. "The repetition of trauma, therefore, is not only an attempt or an imperative to know what cannot be grasped that is repeated unconsciously in the survivor's life; it is also an imperative to live that still remains not fully understood" (2013: 6). Even

though it might seem counterintuitive to imagine that the repetition of trauma in the form of nightmares constitutes “an imperative to live,” Caruth likens these repetitions to children’s repetitive playing: “What is most surprising in the child’s game, however, is that this reenactment of reality in the game places repetition at the very heart of childhood, and links the repetition to a creative act of invention” (4). The survivor of trauma might find the nightmare a “safer” place to work out her traumatic experience, given that it is an imaginative and masked form of communication. By experimenting with images and emotions in dreams that involve a physical response, the survivor chips away at the encrusted image of the traumatic experience, as if it were a story carved in the marble of literature.

Psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk diverts from Herman, Caruth, and Alexander by confessing: “I discovered that my professional training with its focus on understanding and insight had largely ignored the relevance of the living, breathing body, the foundation of ourselves” (2014: 91). This statement serves as a reminder to affirm the role of the body in healthy PTG and perhaps more important, that storytelling and other forms of talk therapy merit a nuanced explanation. van der Kolk insists that, “the act of telling the story doesn’t necessarily alter the automatic physical and hormonal responses of bodies that remain hypervigilant” (21). The body is central in telling one’s story because describing a traumatic experience provokes memories that are accompanied with physiological and physical responses. These post-traumatic responses, characterized as a hypoarousal or hyperarousal state, can lead to feelings of helplessness and fear and create a resistance to confront the traumatic event explicitly. “For real change to take place, the body needs to learn that the danger has passed and to live in the reality of the present” (21). The survivor is challenged to work through not only the original traumatic event(s), but also the ensuing traumatic experience that takes place in the body and brain. van der Kolk advocates, therefore, a therapy focused on the body and namely, the viscera (the internal organs, such as the bladder and the intestine). This “bottom-up” approach seeks “actually to change the patient’s physiology, his or her relationship to bodily sensation” (72) through rhythmic exercises like drumming and dancing.

van der Kolk’s research on the traumatized body and his insistence on a “bottom-up” treatment for recovery puts pressure on the focus on narrativity discussed earlier. Even if Herman’s clinical experience and Caruth’s and Alexander’s theoretical notions do refer to the body, their research privileges telling one’s story. Obviously, a “bottom-up” therapy does not dismiss storytelling altogether. Yet van der Kolk’s insistence on

the body is supported by research on how language and storytelling are impaired by traumatic experiences. Scans show, for instance, that the Broca region – the part of the brain responsible for processing and producing language – goes “offline” whenever a flashback of a traumatic event is triggered (2014: 43). Tangentially, emotional arousal provoked by trauma can compromise the hippocampus, such that memories become “emotional sensory states with little verbal representation” (van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth 1996: 296). Scans also indicate that trauma activates the right hemisphere of the brain and deactivates the left (van der Kolk 2014: 45). “Deactivation of the left hemisphere has a direct impact on the capacity to organize experiences into logical sequences and to translate our shifting feelings and perceptions into words” (45). This is why “it is enormously difficult to organize one’s traumatic experiences into a coherent account – a narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end” (70). In addition, in the trauma induced state of dissociation, the thalamus shuts down, which helps to explain “why trauma is primarily remembered not as a story, a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end, but as isolated sensory imprints: images, sounds, and physical sensations that are accompanied by intense emotions” (70). Even though this summary of the effects of trauma on the brain may seem to divert from the question of how the literary arts and imagination can play a role in healthy PTG, knowledge of these physical changes can point to therapies from the humanities that can be effective. If trauma compromises language output – our capacity to think in logical terms and to translate emotions, and our ability to string a story together with a beginning, middle, and end – then PTG methods from the humanities that take those limitations into account should be employed. For instance, patients who suffer from strokes on the left side of the brain and who suffer from “severe nonfluent aphasia are better at singing lyrics than they are at speaking the same words” (Schlaug et al. 2010: 1). Because singing involves the right side of the brain more than the left, it could serve as a therapy for survivors. Van der Kolk elaborates further:

We were more open to the value of other age-old, nonpharmacological approaches to health that have long been practiced outside Western medicine, ranging from breath exercises (pranayama) and chanting to martial arts like qigong to drumming and group singing and dancing. All rely on interpersonal rhythms, visceral awareness, and vocal and facial communication, which help shift people out of fight/ flight states, reorganize their perception of danger, and increase their capacity to manage relationships. (2014: 88)

Related to this range of rhythmic therapies, survivors can participate in theater programs. What is the connection between the traumatized and the therapeutic potential of drama? Van der Kolk points out first of all that survivors of trauma are often afraid of feeling deeply, for emotions compromise their sense of control. “In contrast, theater is about embodying emotions, giving voice to them, becoming rhythmically engaged, taking on and embodying different roles” (2014: 337). Second, the traumatized avoid conflict because they fear losing again, whereas conflict is central to theater. Theater is about discovering ways to convey truths to the audience: “This requires pushing through blockages to discover your own truth, exploring and examining your own internal experience so that it can emerge in your own voice and body on stage” (337). Finally, theater gives actors an opportunity to experience a new identity, which could be a first step toward breaking away from the constricting identity of “the survivor” of trauma.

Van der Kolk’s attempt to build bridges between “bottom-up” theory and the literary arts and imagination is based on clinical observation and practice. Further, it is not as if survivors of trauma cannot tell stories; the challenge is to guide them to tell a new story of recovery and hope. “It is so much easier for them to talk about what has been done to them – to tell a story of victimization and revenge – than to notice, feel, and put into words the reality of their internal experience” (2014: 47). In light of this observation, it may be therapeutic for people who have experienced the unspeakable and have reverted to a narrative of victimization and revenge to hear, read, and witness the same type of stories of other survivors. Performing or watching *Hamlet* or reading and discussing *The Scarlet Letter* or *Moby Dick*, among other pieces of literature that wrestle with the theme of revenge, could prove therapeutic. An exposure to these pieces of literature is not designed to create a one-size-fits-all narrative of trauma; it may be a first step instead toward recovery because listening to another’s traumatic story, as pointed out earlier, has the power to create a therapeutic alliance. The act of reading stories and constructing related images in the mind has the power to be therapeutic because survivors of trauma do not display “the mental flexibility that is the hallmark of imagination” (2014: 17). And yet, “Without imagination there is no hope, no chance to envision a better future, no place to go, no goal to reach” (2014: 17). This leads us to conclude that stimulating the body and the imagination through stories and assuming a character role either in the mind or on stage are essential therapies for post-traumatic growth.

That Western clinicians and cultural theorists have only begun at the turn of the millennium to integrate the body in post-traumatic growth methods indicates that the field has suffered from a form of myopia and cultural bias. Frantz Fanon, the Martiniquais psychiatrist and philosopher, describes how the body keeps the score of racism, colonization, and oppression. “In the colonial world,” he writes, “the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of the skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent” (1963: 19). Fanon’s comment along with trauma studies’ tendency to privilege an abstract, individual, and unknowable source of trauma (rather than a concrete, cultural, and knowable one) propel us to look to other cultures for enlightenment about trauma theories and treatments.

In postcolonial contexts, where the burgeoning genre of “*testimonio*” is an especially welcomed addition to the field, it is important to consider one of the most provoking criticisms leveled against the field. (For a thoughtful analysis of the new genre of *testimonio*, see John Beverly’s and Kimberly Nance’s work.) Critics complain that the field of trauma studies focuses too much on trauma, as opposed to modes of growth. “By putting trauma at the center of a theory of representation,” write Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga, “their melancholic vocabulary is one marked by notions of absence, holes, deferral, crises of meaning and dissociation” (2012: xiii). They conclude that the field has a tendency to “neglect the agency, resistance, resilience and creativity of people in times of trauma” (xiv). This brings to mind what psychiatrist Arthur Kleinman wrote in reference to medical care: “Cultural issues are allowed to slip by, one after another in a way that would be regarded as sheer clinical incompetence if the issues were biological” (1988: 135).

This blatant neglect of postcolonial considerations in trauma studies should pique curiosity about other modes of recovery, cases of agency, resistance, and creativity witnessed in non-Western cultures that could embellish the current field. There has been in fact a “decolonization” of the novel, such that postcolonial trauma novels are beginning to enrich our understanding of trauma, growth, and even literature itself, and these have been explored in the work of critics like Steph Craps, Ewald Mengel and Michela Borzaga, Michael Rothberg, and Mthobi Mutlootse. The French-Mauritian writer J. M. G. Le Clézio describes a unique form of trauma recovery in his novel *Desert*. The Berber character Lalla finds relief from the traumatic cultural event of colonization through “benevolent retaliation.” “Instead of promoting forms of violent retaliation against a culture that had traumatized her and her people, she revolts against the

West with beauty. It is benevolent, since she is endorsing and exposing beauty to others, harming no one” (LaLonde 2013: 211). The Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami employs magical realism as a way for his characters to escape trauma. In his short story “A Shinagawa Monkey,” the character Mizuki suffers from pseudodementia caused by an early traumatic childhood and is able to recover by speaking to a talking monkey who reveals the truth to her (LaLonde 2014: 104). Even if clinicians might be reluctant to advise survivors to undertake such a creative exercise, lest it lead them away from the “truth,” it might provide a more playful, imaginative, and safer environment than a standard psychoanalytic encounter. Moreover, if Murakami’s fictional mode of recovery from trauma appears objectionable – on account of it defying the cognitive-centered therapies of the West – his literature and other non-Euro-American literature do provide precisely examples of “the agency, resistance, resilience and creativity” that could embellish the field.

Finally, anthropologist Alex Argenti-Pillen’s research in Sri Lanka on post-trauma recovery serves as a springboard to consider the future of post-traumatic treatments. She explains how women who suffer from “terrified hearts” and “the gaze of the wild,” by which she means post-traumatic symptoms can “organize domestic cleansing rituals and engage in cautious discourse about violence” (2003: 205). “Cautious discourse” includes euphemisms, indirect speech, and linguistic ambiguity, fostering “post-war social reorganization” (197). She goes on to warn: “the elites who organize trauma-counseling services in rural war-affected areas thus do so, at the risk of eroding a fragile local cycle of containment of violence” (206). In short, she cautions the West against exporting trauma theories and treatments to non-Western nations.

Establishing a sense of safety through therapeutic alliances and a nurtured self, mourning and remembering the traumatic event, and becoming the author of one’s own story may be therapeutic to some. Remaining true to one’s “unknown” story, honoring stories that defy logic and meaning, and engaging in a cathartic journey with another character may lead to recovery. Priming the body by engaging in singing and theatrical exercises before telling one’s story is essential for restoring the body. Practicing “benevolent retaliation” and exploring the unconscious through imagined characters (like talking monkeys) also offer creative opportunities for growth. These experiences indicate that a wide range of therapies from the literary arts and imagination is quintessential for PTG. Still, what other forms of treatments, especially from non-Western communities, can inspire our therapies? It may well be that to develop new therapies, it is

necessary to observe carefully and locate new forms of trauma, such as those associated with aging and neurological diseases, as explored in Catherine Malabou's work, or with environmental degradation, as exposed in Vandana Shiva's research. The notion that there are still forms of trauma to discover and therapies to develop actually confirm what Olivier Sacks wrote: "The exploration of deeply altered selves and worlds is not one that can be fully made in a consulting room or office" (1995: xix). For survivors of trauma, the consulting room or office must extend into the pages of literature, onto the stage, and among a community – preferably a multicultural one. As witnesses to their suffering, it is an ethical imperative to guide them to these havens of creativity and growth.

Trauma and the Literature of War

Gerd Bayer

Susan Sontag's brilliant description in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) of the complex ethical relationship between the arts, traumatic material, and the readerly moment of reception addresses the main challenge that any literature dealing with topics like war must face. In discussing the painfully explicit etchings that Francisco Goya collected in *Los Desastros de la Guerra* (1863), Sontag takes specific note of the tension that arises between the works' visual portrayal of atrocities and their calmly didactic captions: "While the image, like every image, is an invitation to look, the caption, more often than not, insists on the difficulty of doing just that" (2003: 45). It is this antagonism that critics and readers of war literature need to dissolve to deal productively with the traumatic content of these texts. The twofold gesture that Sontag addresses, and whose attachment to the contrastive emotional fields of revulsion and curiosity also calls for rather distinct ethical responses, already identifies what is at stake when art approaches the actual traumata of real people, albeit usually through the filter of invention and representation. All literature that deals with war exists in this gray zone between the didacticism of educating readers about the horrors of the battlefields and the enticement that stems from drawing on extreme emotions. Across various centuries, writers have risen to this challenge, and readers interested in how literature deals with trauma and contributes to a cultural working-through of the past will have much to learn from the various aesthetic and ethical pathways chosen by what is now a very diverse literary field, surveyed here in roughly chronological order.

Although trauma theories allow for productive and insightful readings of classical and early modern literature of war, the overall attitude to combat, masculinity, violence, and victory sets these works apart on a number of counts: The ethos of chivalry and its concomitant trust in the self-righteousness of fighting for the good cause, frequently ordained by divine order, prevents authors from presenting the consequences of the battles as

they play out in their texts in ways that suggest a modern trauma reading. The kind of military conflict showcased in texts like Homer's *Iliad* or Caesar's reminiscences on the war in Gaul emphasizes the personal heroics of main protagonists like the mighty Achilles or lingers on the tactical side of warfare. The focus on individual man-on-man skirmishes survives throughout the medieval period: The knights in shining armor that readers encounter in works like *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, or *The Song of the Nibelungs* do not so much face traumatic consequences as tremble before a loss of honor and social status. This attitude extends into the Renaissance, with the general valorization of warlike behavior a noticeable feature in Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532) as well as in many of William Shakespeare's plays. In late sixteenth-century chivalric works like Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) or Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (c. 1580), personal heroics still demand a prominent place. It takes a combination of extended military conflicts and the invention of newspapers in the early seventeenth century for literary texts to present the horrors of the battlefields in a more realistic and traumatological manner.¹ Although Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) had already shifted the attention from the great warlords to simple soldiers and from heroic endurance to corporeal pain and suffering, it was after the Thirty Years' War on the continent that Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen combined elements of the travelog and the picaresque tale into his *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1668), which not only stands as one of the earliest German novels but also shifts the focus on the suffering endured by the civilian population. The criticism implied in this move also features powerfully in John Milton's epos *Paradise Lost* (1667), published after England had suffered through its own Civil War. Famously accused of turning Satan's rebellion against God into an allegorical accusation of absolutist aspirations within the Stuart monarchy, Milton's divine conflict invests battles large and small with the kind of moralist note that also features in such didactic publications as John Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1682). Both works demonstrate that, for devout early modern readers, the loss of life on the battlefield mattered less than placing one's soul at risk. In such a framework of eternal bliss and hellish damnation, the psychological suffering endured as a consequence of traumatic events and experienced as the kind of psychological wound theorized by trauma theories does not take pride of place. Characters in these texts do not so much suffer belatedly as a consequence of traumatic experiences: They fear and tremble in anticipation of eternal damnation.

The contrastive temporalities of these two approaches, already tested in works like Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, would soon shift in favor of trauma's orientation toward past wounds. Writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, Laurence Sterne introduced a different sort of engagement with the memories of war through the character Uncle Toby in his *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67). Toby's elaborate forms of restaging of his own war experience are ostensibly shaped by a desire to work through his traumatic mutilation. Sterne cleverly employs the physicality of how his text's characters relate to individual experiences of trauma for an allegorical engagement with how his experimental novel relates to its generic precursors. By putting *Tristram Shandy's* precise line of ancestry into play and by emphasizing various levels of potency and impotency through incidents like the protagonist's accidental circumcision, the interruption at the original moment of conception, the omnipresent uncle's groin injury, and even the manor's very virility challenged by the inefficiency of the Parish bull, the novel evokes the very belatedness and recurrence of the traumatic moment. It furthermore relates this crisis implicitly to the authorial moment of creation in that it alerts readers to the fact that what they are reading may not yet be the offspring of a particular generic tradition, the newly formed novel. The consequences of war wounds, in this novel, play with the fact that the early modern form of narrative prose fiction is itself the result of a belated return of earlier traditions.

Whereas Sterne employs traumatic figurations to complement his aesthetic project, other writers have turned directly to the political as a source of inspiration for addressing how literature can relate to the experience of war and conflict. Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "Ode to the West Wind" (1820) openly celebrates physical conflicts as potential moments of revolutions. Shaped by Romanticist notions of a sublime nature, Shelley's celebration of the superhuman force of nature, in the shape of the mighty west wind, admits to a fascination with the pain that humans frequently suffer in the service of a better and brighter future. When the text proclaims in rather overwrought tones "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"² Shelley's wilful acceptance of pain places the promises of a glorious future – famously evoked in the closing verse "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" – above and beyond the mere physical exposure to injury. The poem implicitly denies the long-lasting consequences of war wounds and thereby offers a clear example of a text that reveals how traumatic wounds are frequently repressed as a consequence of larger, sociopolitical narratives. The individual and his or her suffering are

relegated to a minor inconvenience, thereby exposing the traumatized person to a second form of victimization.

The manner in which individuals experience their historical presence often varies substantially. Yet at any historical moment, the way literature deals with war mirrors the unique political landscape and cultural climate in which particular nations exist. As various European players extended their military presence across vast colonial territories during the nineteenth century, they also found themselves involved in larger and smaller skirmishes. Although some works resorted to the jingoist logic of empire in their description of Western superiority, there was also a growing awareness that the vast discrepancies in weaponry led to unwarranted violence and bloodshed that could no longer be brought into agreement with the supposed heroism and chivalric quality of earlier centuries. In fact, as criticism of colonialism grew, the consequences brought about by actual warfare were addressed more directly. In E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) and in George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934), protagonists struggle with their responsibility toward their English mission and with the growing realization of the injustice that results from the warlike and violent occupation of the colonies. The sense of disgrace that haunts these characters continues to mark works by twenty-first-century artists like the South-African writers J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, who have taken a more or less allegorical approach, respectively, to addressing the ills caused by the military enforcement of their home country's apartheid politics.³

Although colonial conflicts clearly emerge as a major literary topos throughout the modernist moment, it was only as a result of World War I that a broad readership across European borders began to reflect on the inhumanity of technologized killing, poison gas, and shell shock. How corrosive this critical understanding of the underbelly of the war machine can be to a nation's ability and willingness to support a war is demonstrated by the fact that Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) became one of the first books that Nazi Germany had banned and publicly burned. Remarque's blunt portrayal of the meaningless dying, as experienced by soldiers in trenches on both sides of the rarely changing frontlines, revealed how it became next to impossible for veterans to return to normal postwar civilian lives. When Alfred, Lord Tennyson in 1854 felt called on to celebrate "The Charge of the Light Brigade," he still sounded convinced that what the six hundred who were riding between "Cannon to right of them, / Cannon to left of them" expected was not only certain death but beyond that undoubting admiration: "When can their glory fade?"⁴ The sheer scale of World War I swiftly came to tip the scales, and it

is no surprise that Virginia Woolf singles out Tennyson's poem, in her novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927), to reflect on how literature has shamefully served the rhetorical logic of a militaristic culture.

That literature on war always walks a close line between giving voice to the traumatic suffering of those affected by it and celebrating its energy and momentum is demonstrated most forcibly and controversially in Ernst Jünger's writing about life on the front line. Turning his personal experience and diary notes into the frequently reworked and republished *Storm of Steel* (1920), Jünger met with substantial criticism for glorifying the brutality and violence of war, but he can also be praised for his unmediated portrayal of how war affects the soldiers who fight, and how such a commitment to realism evokes the horrors of the military battlegrounds, albeit through recourse to the very principles of aesthetics that should be put to ethically more motivated and explicit use.⁵ Jünger's work nevertheless continues to claim a prominent role in the canon of the literature on war, and this is precisely for the fact that it does not give in to the urge to offer an ameliorated narrative of redemption but instead confronts its readers with the full force of war's traumatic reality. As such, the novel's aesthetic strategy stands in clear antithesis to the subversively humorous tone applied in Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* (1921), whose protagonist undermines the supposed logic of discipline and servitude through excessive enthusiasm and various acts of insubordination that see him repeatedly imprisoned. Hašek's subterfuge can be read as an act of resistance aimed at the very heart of warfare, which rests on the subaltern's obedience to orders, even when told to commit inhuman or traumatizing acts. Taking the humorous attitude from Hašek's novel to a more allegorical extreme, Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959), while dealing with World War II, condenses the postwar situation in Germany into the figure of the novel's dwarfish protagonist Oscar, whose refusal to grow and whose piercing shriek both embody the physicality with which the war generation experienced the violence of war. Unlike Jünger's book, Grass's novel focuses on the legacy of the war and on how the various war wounds, physical and psychological, continue to impact the survivors, most obviously in the manner in which Grass's Oscar visibly embodies the corporeal effects of war traumata.

Hans Hellmut Kirst, himself a war veteran, also avoided realism and turned to satire as a means of responding to the absurdity of war. His series of books under the joined main title *o8/15* (1954–) follow the exploits of a World War II soldier called Asch, whose name evokes "ashes" in the original German but also puns on the soldier being the eternal "butt"

("Arsch") of jokes, thus addressing his systemic victimization. The book's title echoes the type designation of a particular German machine gun but turns into a metaphor for the pointless routine exercises of cleaning and reassembling this gun that metonymically represent the senseless obedience that enables the subaltern discipline on which military conflicts rely. The novels' antimilitaristic attitude initially drew criticism from postwar military circles, at a time when German public discussion aimed to exonerate the German Wehrmacht from the crimes committed by the Nazis.⁶ In working against the supposed heroism and respectability of the military profession, Kirst's texts lent themselves to a critical reading of all forms of military engagement. At the least, Kirst suggested, soldiers were badly scarred by the very inhumanity of military routines, which form the basis for all forms of battlefield atrocities. In stressing the principle of automatized drills, the novel also evokes trauma's reliance on belatedness and compulsory repetition.

In the English context, World War I brought forth a group of writers known as the War Poets, including Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Their lyrical work is marked by personal front experiences, most famously in Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est," published in 1920, two years after the author's death in Northern France. The poem evokes war traumata in two different ways. The first stanza offers a description of how soldiers walk away from the trenches, clearly marked by the exhausting physical and psychological demands put to them. Owen presents the soldiers as "old beggars under sacks" and shows them in an almost catatonic state: "All went lame; all blind; / Drunk with fatigue; . . ." The poem employs a first-person speaker, and this lyrical I, at some points of the text cast in the plural, strikes the reader as utterly exhausted, entirely deprived of normal emotional responses. Although readers face these traumatized soldiers from the distance, as if on a tableau, the remainder of the poem forces a more direct confrontation. The second stanza begins with an urgent warning of an impending gas attack and sees the platoon struggle with their gas masks, with one soldier failing to put on the protective device. The third stanza runs only to two lines: "In all my dreams before my helpless sight, / He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning." The painful death that the lyrical I witnesses clearly haunts him, with the poem resorting to nightmares as a classical topos of the unconsciousness working through the repressed memory of the traumatic event. Yet the poem does not stop there and instead turns directly on the reader. By imagining how "you too could pace / Behind the wagon that we flung him in," Owen's poem exposes its readers to a second and much more explicit image of the human

body in its most fragile and morbid state: the description of the corpse's "blood / Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs," a synesthetic rendering of a poison-gas casualty, clearly aims at the readers' affective response. Although the poem's closing lines fault those who speak about war as a glorious event, finishing with the Latin proverb "*Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori*," the text's most striking effect is not one of rhetorical debunking of the deception at the heart of militaristic rhetoric (also a key theme in Sassoon's poem "They"); it is instead the corporeality of the soldier's frivolously destroyed lungs and body that linger with the reader.⁸ Like Jünger, Owen clearly does not want to spare his readers, and in passing on his own traumatic experiences, he gives strong indications of how the type of impersonal killing on a massive scale as it terrorized soldiers in trenches on both sides of the frontline affected both body and mind of those who managed to survive.

It is precisely the issue of survival that also surfaces in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), most specifically in the person of war-veteran and shell-shock-victim Septimus Warren Smith. Although the novel ostensibly deals with a party given by its eponymous protagonist, herself a woman who suffers painfully from the memories of biographical paths not taken, Smith's side plot introduces not just the inability of contemporary medical experts to deal efficiently with the psychological needs of traumatized soldiers, but it also presents in stark detail how a dissociated psyche frequently finds it impossible to readjust to the banal demands of a fairly normal day. Woolf's text exploits the potential of juxtaposing the tormented war veteran with the privileged wife of a senior politician, implying that regrets and pain are shared by people from all walks of life. Woolf, who would commit suicide at the beginning of World War II, portrays Mrs Dalloway as barely scraping by, while Smith succumbs to his terror and throws himself out of a window. At various stages in the novel, his mental state is revealed through a typically modernist turn toward the interiority that can be shown through focalized consciousness, as when he sits in the park and blends the environment around him with his memories from the war: "A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond the river where the dead walk, how there is no death" (2016: 24). The manner in which Smith hears voices and combines suppressed memories with objects physically present provides a stark portrayal of a mind suffering from traumatic

exposure. The passage goes on, with a paragraph break, only to underline how, for Smith, absent and present objects exist simultaneously and in one place: “There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings!” The spectral appearance of his fallen fellow soldier increases Smith’s suffering, and his untreated illness not only estranges him from his wife but furthermore causes confrontations with members of the medical profession who refuse to admit to the seriousness of his aggrievement. It is at this point that Smith’s plot touches on Mrs Dalloway’s biography. She, too, is filled with regret, and for her as well this development is occasioned by the (in her case real) reappearance of a long-lost person, her former suitor Peter. These memories of repressed events place her refusal to admit to her homosexual desires alongside Smith’s post-traumatic suffering. By implication, Woolf’s novel draws parallels between the traumatic effects of frontline warfare and the suffering caused by heteronormative social conventions.

Some of the best American writing on the traumatic effect of war was occasioned by military conflicts as they played out on the European continent. Ernest Hemingway not only served in World War I, but also his *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) takes an antimilitaristic approach to the horrors of warfare. In particular its ending, with the romance plot’s fatal conclusion as the protagonist’s love interest and child both die, implies that the long-term effect of direct involvement in fighting and killing will catch up with its agents.⁹ Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969), whose protagonist, Billy, lives to tell of the World War II firebombing of Dresden, draws on the experience of a prisoner of war. His postwar attempts at verbalizing the horrors of war – emblematically evoked by the novel’s title and its association with senseless slaughter – also touch on questions of religiosity, thus tying in with other texts that allude to the theodicy debate to reflect on the ethics of warfare and genocidal violence.¹⁰

The role played by war for the formation of cultural traumata also has found its way into literary works that address the legacy of the age of empire. While postcolonial literature invariably deals with the trauma of imperialist and racist violence perpetrated on the minds and bodies of non-European peoples from around the world, some postcolonial novels draw explicitly on the experience of war as a means to draw parallels between colonialism and militarism, suggesting that the former is a mere continuation of the kind of warfare historically associated with the latter. Belonging to a corpus of texts that are now discussed as examples of “multidirectional memory” (Rothberg 2009), Ken Saro-Wiwa’s *Sozaboy*

(1985) uses the figure of the conscripted child soldier as a way of addressing the inhumanity and violence of the colonialist principle of *divide et impera*, which pits one indigenous group against another, assigning the very work of domination and exploitation to those who, in the larger picture, are equally on the receiving end of a highly exploitative political structure. Subtitled “A Novel in Rotten English,” Saro-Wiwa’s text also performs the linguistic effects of cultural and physical traumata in that it presents a speaker who is largely incapacitated as far as his communicative skills are concerned. A similar notion of almost full paralysis of all mental and cultural abilities as a result of warfare also structures Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* (1977), which features a Native American World War II veteran who is twice traumatized: first, by his experiences in the war and, second, by the realization that, despite his contribution to the American war effort, he is treated as, at best, a second-class citizen, whose difference from dominant culture makes him highly suspect. Silko’s text turns to indigenous forms of healing, the ceremony of the book’s title, as a way of transgressing both the personal and the cultural trauma as experienced by Tayo.

Individual moral consequences are also the main concern of Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* (2001), a highly metafictional novel that combines a complex love plot with detailed descriptions of World War II front and home front experiences. McEwan effectively frames his readers: Not only are they invited to become emotionally invested in the work’s love plot, following Robbie and Cecilia across various war scenarios in their pursuit of love and companionship, but readers are also eventually confronted with the dying words of narrator Briony, who admits that, after her childhood betrayal of the couple, they not only lost all social status but, during the war, also their lives. The novel’s powerful closing scene changes the work’s tone from one of redemption and romance – two forces that help victims overcome suffering and pain – into one of ironic atonement. McEwan smartly employs the very structures of trauma literature to turn them upside down, creating a novel that addresses the futility of narrativization vis-à-vis the corporeal consequences of actual injury, wounds, and dying. At the end of the novel, as Briony reflects on how she has treated her sister and her lover, she admits to the insurmountable tensions between being truthful to the horrific truth and her desire to invent something more positive that will exonerate her. She appears to be almost content with how her reinvention of history corrects reality’s flaws: “When I am dead . . . , and the novel is finally published, we will only exist as my inventions” (2002: 371). McEwan employs Briony’s control over her narrative as a

means to invite his readers to reflect about whether any story about traumatic events that lingers on a positive outcome is not an act of betrayal committed on the victim at the hands of the somewhat voyeuristic onlooker, deriving an unhealthy mix of pain and pleasure from the external and belated position of the distant reader. Briony in fact embodies this very reader when she gives in to her need for atonement by rewriting the lives of her own victims. Yet she is simultaneously and painfully aware of the fact that she is also engaging in an act of hubristic betrayal: “How can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God?” (371). As a narrator and a long-surviving perpetrator, Briony is visibly exhausted, both in terms of creative impulse and her ethical sense of responsibility. Yet, as *lector in fabula*, Briony stands in for the writerly reader of a trauma novel who acts on the very impulse of redemption and atonement that accompanies so much of trauma literature and that McEwan employs as the poetological principle of his postmodern experiment in the form of the novel.

Although McEwan’s approach to literature, war, and trauma may strike readers as uniquely postmodern and metafictional, one only needs to turn to *The 120 Days of Sodom* by Marquis de Sade, first written in 1785 but not published until 1904 (when it began a long history of censorship and outright indexing), to find that this type of “dialogism of the art of trauma” clearly predates contemporary literary forms (Ganteau and Onega 2014: 3). Sade wrote his tale of sexual exploitation, brutality, and voyeuristic pleasures while imprisoned in pre-Revolutionary France, and his text cleverly addresses how narratives may occasion violence. Indeed, the abusive exploits in the novel are mostly inspired by tales told by some of the perpetrators and their guests. Sade thus offers an implicit warning about the potentially detrimental and exploitative effect of trauma narratives because they may not only cause secondary traumas by identification with the victims but may also move the reader, albeit frequently only on an imaginary level, into the role of the perpetrator, thereby repeating the suffering of the original victims. It is this painful dilemma – famously addressed by Adorno’s comments on poetry after Auschwitz and echoed in Susan Sontag’s post 9/11 reflections – that both Sade and McEwan evoke in their novels, and it is this conflict also that places all art dealing with the pain of others under such close scrutiny.

When trauma theory emphasizes the role played by memory, both in shielding victims and in aiding healing, it shows how literary works can reflect on the relationship between the memorialization of past events and the formation of current national identities. In addition to addressing

issues of personal trauma, novels accordingly also bring up cultural traumas. Kazuo Ishiguro's work frequently draws on traumatic incidents. For instance, in *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), the artist Masuji Ozu personifies how Japan deals with the legacy of its involvement in World War II and the manner in which the imperialist ethos of its military class contributed to the country's suffering. Ishiguro smartly portrays the close bonds between the art world and its underlying ideology and the political sphere, ultimately demonstrating how institutions, buildings, even aesthetic schools and cultural traditions can be implied in a traumatic past that subsequently requires a disengagement. Ishiguro goes even further in *The Buried Giant* (2015), a novel set in the middle ages. The main protagonists live in a world of forgetfulness, regretting this situation and seeking to reconnect to their own memories, only to learn that ignorance of the past can be a blessing and the only likely path toward forgiveness and healing.¹¹ The novel's eponymous giant turns out to be an embodiment of the very memories of past crimes, hurts, and violence, and it is the very legacy of war and conflict that, as it becomes resurrected, threatens to disrupt what little peace and comfort the novel's characters encounter. Ostensibly built around an elderly couple seeking to reunite with their long-lost son, the narrative effectively brings together a number of smaller plots that all strive to connect the past with the present. It is this very nexus the people seem to have lost, as readers are told early in the text: "For in this community the past was rarely discussed. I do not mean that it was taboo. I mean that it has somehow faded into a mist as dense as that which hung over the marshes. It simply did not occur to these villagers to think about the past – even the recent one" (2016: 7–8). What initially appears to be a casual act of forgetting, increasingly is revealed to have been a more active form of repression, as if a whole community had somehow agreed that, to find any form of peace, they need to sever all ties with past deeds. Ishiguro's novel cleverly uses its medieval setting to comment on larger cultural patterns as practiced in the contemporary age, in particular how cultural memory frequently resorts to more or less active acts of amnesia.

One of the central topics of twentieth-century war traumas is the Holocaust, and its legacy reverberates across world literature. The final part in Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (2004) offers a number of brilliant insights into how the traumas of war can translate into literary production. In relating the youth of one of the novel's major figures, the (fictional) German writer Benno von Archimboldi, Bolaño reveals that writing about painful memories, as, for instance, caused by the traumatic

experiences in a war, is always a form of rewriting, of secondary voicing that avoids and denies direct forms of representation.¹² The text stages variations of a single memory, that of excessive pain and murder, only to demonstrate to its readers that regardless of how often and in how many different versions such a memory is told and retold, it is neither capable of undoing the past nor able to represent the experience of this event as it affected the traumatized victim. Bolaño describes in highly realistic detail the atrocities committed by the Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* as they shoot and bury large numbers of Jewish victims in individual acts of murder. His portrayal of the perpetrators raises a topic, also addressed in works like Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* (2006),¹³ to which much recent trauma studies has turned, arguing that the full ethical impact of postwar critical studies can only stem from a detailed engagement also with the mind and motivation of the perpetrators, themselves frequently severely traumatized.

In these texts, readers encounter the full depth of the philosophical thinking by writers like Giorgio Agamben on "bare life" (1998) or Alain Badiou on evil (2013). The precariousness of the individual victim, faced on the literary page in a Levinasian moment of approachment, throws into focus the anonymity of mass genocides.¹⁴ Although much late-twentieth-century literature takes the Holocaust as its prime focus for this type of post-traumatic discussion, recent novels have also turned to more abstract threats posed by artificial intelligence or other forms of technology. The warfare in David Mitchell's *The Bone Clocks* (2014) pits the forces of evil, in the shape of un-dead soul-suckers, against the benign powers of the horologists, a group of undying and metempsychotic quasi-angelic figures determined to save mankind from eternal doom. Drawing heavily on conventions from fantasy and other genre fictions, Mitchell's novel traces the scarring caused by encounters with absolute evil as it affects witnesses of brutality. Mitchell makes palpable the threat of a worldwide enslavement of humanity at the hands of unscrupulous forces through the appearance of superhuman strength and the ability to transcend both time and place. The resulting terror in those affected by these events resonates with his novel's readers and their own encounters with an anonymous and increasingly nonethical political class. By raising the domestic and local to a global conflict, Mitchell presents the contemporary age as always-already postapocalyptic and, thus, as also existing in a post-traumatic state of anxiety.¹⁵ Although his novel's conclusion gives in to a desire for optimism (or, one could say, sentimentality), his work nevertheless forces readers to confront a variety of suppressed fears about the state of what appears to be (or will soon be) a traumatized civilization. The atavism that emerges as

technology and narcissism replace community and ethics raises concerns about what is at stake when political entities negotiate the core of their social reality. In this move, Mitchell echoes works like Haruki Murakami's *1Q84* (2009–10), which also relies on an elegiac note of family and romance to counter the inhumanity and amorality of a technologized coup d'état that acts as a reminder of the moral epigonality as it plays out in contemporary politics.

Mitchell and Murakami, and one could add works like Salman Rushdie's *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015) alongside the alternative history in Philip Roth's *The Plot against America* (2004), appear to tell readers that if they do not already feel traumatized by the kind of antisocial onslaught of political, social, and ethical developments of the early twenty-first century, then they might well find cause to reconsider before too long. Many in the Western world are getting used to witnessing traumatic wars as a media spectacle that plays out elsewhere and at best affects them through the traumatized survivors who manage to attain refugee status outside their original home countries. Although some literary texts appear to take a self-congratulatory and even redemptive attitude toward the West's involvement in these conflicts, for instance Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2007), cosmopolitan novels like those by Mitchell and Murakami act as a reminder that the types of wars as they are acted out in the new millennium, as well as the traumatizing effects they wreak, transcend conventional forms of military conflict.

*Trauma and Sexual Violence**Emma V. Miller*

Writing about the trauma of sexual violence is particularly challenging because it remains a topic that seems to elude the easy grasp of language.¹ Even in the twenty-first century, the narrative forms at our disposal strain to entirely capture the experience of sexual trauma, particularly if the speaker means to be heard and believed. It is not only victim or survivor (and even here, at the point of terming the person most affected, the lexical choice is also much debated²) who struggles as Shelley's Beatrice does in "The Cenci" to "find a word that might make known/The crime" (2003: 348), but also the writer. To textualize sexual violence is problematic, in life as well as in art.

In February 2016, London's Police Commissioner for the Metropolis, Bernard Hogan-Howe, reignited the debate surrounding the voicing of sexual violence, saying in regard to those considering making an accusation of rape or sexual assault that "[t]he public should be clear that officers do not believe unconditionally what anyone tells them" (Hogan-Howe 2016). Yet a report by the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and the Office for National Statistics (2013) estimated that in England and Wales there were, "around 85,000" female "victims on average per year" "of the most serious offences of rape or sexual assault" and "around 12,000" males (6).³ In the United States in 2010, the FBI totaled the number of rape victims at 85,593, but the findings of a 2010 survey on National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offered a figure of approximately 1.3 million female rape victims (Black et al. 2011; FBI 2010).⁴ In addition to this as Shana L. Maier states,

false allegations of rape are still rare (Archambault, 2005; Belknap, 2010; Lonsway, 2010; Ward, 1995). A commonly cited statistic is that 8 percent of rape reports are deemed by the FBI to be 'unfounded' (both false and baseless cases) (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1997). Since baseless claims are included, it is possible that some of these rapes actually occurred but evidence was not found, or the incident did not meet the legal definition of rape according to the police. (2014: 90)

Evidence has indicated that sexual assault is a particularly challenging crime to report and see through the legal process, with Miranda Horvath and Jessica Woodhams stating that “the prosecution of rape is fraught with difficulties for victims, practitioners and those who want to see justice for rape victims” (2013: 218). Yet, sexual violence is one of the most likely causes of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Tolin and Foa 2006: 959), and rape victims could comprise the greatest percentage of PTSD diagnoses (Foa, Rothbaum, and Sketete 1993).

The narration of sexual violence continues to be discussed regularly on an international basis. In the United Kingdom and across the Atlantic, allegations of large-scale institutional failings within the church, hospitals, and in social care have led to intense recent news coverage on historical allegations of sexual abuse.⁵ The ways and means of talking about sexual violence and textualizing sexual violence (including all mediums of expressing testimony, not just the written text) has become an issue in and of itself and an area of fraught social discussion, academic research, and artistic exploration.

Literature and the real-life incidence of sexual violence have always had a fractious relationship, but the two have continued nevertheless to coexist, often in the same textual space. Historically, fiction has both helped *and* hindered medical, criminal, political, and popular discourses surrounding the topic of sexual violence, challenged what it is, and helped to define it, confronted who is to blame, and aided our appreciation of how language can both be a part of the healing process and part of the problem. These concerns in relation to the narrating of sexual trauma are not the preserve of the contemporary age. Indeed, tales of sexual violence have been narrated throughout history, but the acknowledgment of the act itself has always, even in the textual geography, been fraught with difficulties. Authors have long been aware of the unique problems of the narratology of sexual trauma. Ovid’s *Philomela* (AD 8) has her tongue cut out by her rapist, King Tereus, but manages to bear witness through a depiction of her ordeal in tapestry form. Shakespeare’s *Lavinia* is mutilated so that she loses both tongue and hands during her attack, but uses the tale of *Philomela* to alert her father to her situation, before forming the names of her rapists in the sand with a stick held between her severed wrists. Shelley’s dramatic representation of the historical *Beatrice Cenci* shows a young woman whose desperate and eloquent pleas for a release from her father’s violence are ignored, yet the note that condemns her for his murder is viewed with the utmost gravity. There are a huge number of other literary examples of women, men, and children being subjected to

sexual assaults and struggling to give their trauma a voice and a narrative form that will elicit a fair response. From fairy tales of abusive fathers such as “Donkey-Skin” and “The Bear” to depictions of teen rape in crime writing like Louise O’Neill’s award winning *Asking For It* (2015) and Young Adult fictions such as Laure Halse Anderson’s *Speak* (1999), both the importance of relating the incidence of trauma, as well as the challenges of doing so, have been a foundational and integral part of the literary landscape across cultures and continents alike. Transgressing the challenges of translation and the intricacies of criminality, the shame and the guilt, the fear and the repression, these tales continue somehow against all of the odds to be told.

Fiction is a problematic term to use in relation to testimony on sexual violence, as is creativity, when discussing crimes that so often occur without witnesses (Loveless 2014: 552). Victims have been accused of being “fantasist[s]” and “liar[s]” (BBC February 2013; Salter 2013: 1; Tickle 2013); and as Susan Caringella asserts, it has been the case that in terms “of sexual assault . . . ulterior motives like malice, resentment (‘a woman scorned’), or regret are attributed” (2009: 115). The way a victim dresses or how much they drink can also be used to undermine their allegations (Maier 2014: 28–45; Norris 2015). Yet literary fictional accounts of sexual violence have served a crucial role in bringing the suffering of victims to public attention, and not just in terms of the bare reportage of the event – which is, after all, the province of journalism – but by attempting to recreate the emotional intensity of the experience itself: the terror, the pain, the shock, the paralysis, the effects on relationships, and the victims’ subsequent everyday life. Literary authors have thus attempted to convey the particularity of the event, to engage the reader with the characters so that they feel something personal for them, that this is no longer something that happens to other people, in some other place but something happening widely, repeatedly, to your neighbor, your colleague, your friend, your sister, your brother – to you – now. Indeed, Shoshana Felman and Dominick LaCapra have argued that hearing, seeing, or reading actual or recreated testimony can lead to an experience of a reaction that appears similar to trauma. Dominick LaCapra has reasonably argued that although the experiences of watching “testimony videos” and the reality of trauma are clearly distinct, “the possibility of secondary trauma cannot be discounted” (2004: 103). In *History in Transit*, he writes that “fiction may well explore the traumatic . . . and may raise the question of other possible forms of experience. It may also explore in a particularly telling or

unsettling way the affective or emotional dimensions of experience and understanding” (2004: 132).⁶

Literary scholars and avid readers alike have long recognized that in a social environment so often averse to hearing about the realities of sexual violence, fiction has provided a unique testimonial opportunity without the personally directed censure connected to the narrating of firsthand experiences. However, the effectiveness of literature in this respect has raised its own problems, and even in the domain of the arts there are limits to what people have been willing to accept on their bookshelves or to bear in performance. Censorship and criticism has dogged many works of literature that have sought to directly address sexual violence and corruption, with Hubert Selby Jr.’s *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1964/2011) “banned in Italy, and the subject of an obscenity trial in the UK” (Welsh in Selby 2011: vii), and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955) banned in France, the United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand, and Argentina (Sova 2006:146–148). Neither is the distaste for engaging with literature about sexual crime a phenomenon committed to history. Indeed, “more than 100 people fainted or left the theatre” during a 2014 production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Globe Theatre (Clark 2014), and similar responses were witnessed at a 2016 production of Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed* at the National Theatre (Furness 2016).

The debate continues, not just over whether literature should depict sexual trauma, but also, if it is permissible, how to do so. This is further complicated by conflicting expectations regarding the role of literature: Is literature art or entertainment? If it has a political or social function as art, then how do we determine if aspects of these works are gratuitous, or if they are a means to challenge us with a representation of the violence that many people do experience? Indeed, crime writer Ann Cleeves has recently spoken out about this issue, saying Stieg Larsson’s popular *Millennium* trilogy “was quite gratuitous at times” (Gallagher 2013). Yet many identify a feminist impetus in Larsson’s novels, including Kristine De Welde who, writing in Donna Lee King and Carrie Lee Smith’s edited collection dedicated to the tension inherent in Larsson’s treatment of his female protagonists, argues that “Larsson’s feminist avengers implicitly challenge the assumption that strength, power, and violence fall outside of women’s capacities” (24).

Although sexual violence and literature have had a complex relationship for thousands of years, it was not until the 1890s that child abuse was linked to latent suffering in adults, a development that would fundamentally change the way that the narration of sexual trauma was received.

Sigmund Freud presented his theory that there was a link between hysteria and unwanted sexual interference in 1896, and then he infamously abandoned this argument in 1897 (Masson 1984). Freud's conclusions were developed in relation to his work with primarily female patients; he cites twelve women and six men as his sample used for his theory of hysteria (1896: III, 207–208). Yet although hysteria is often viewed as a historically female problem, by the end of the nineteenth century there were those who understood that it could affect both genders, although the causes were, until Freud, viewed as distinct (Showalter 1993). Freud suggests that hysteria as a consequence of premature sexual experience is more likely among female patients than males, who instead exhibit obsessional behavior as “disguised and transformed *self-reproaches about sexual aggression in childhood*” (Freud 1896: III, 220), thereby implying that his female patients are the probable and primary victims.

Indeed, the potential for victimization as a result of unwanted sexual attention was more commonly a concern at the time for women than men. Although as Louise A. Jackson argues, male rape was understood to occur, and the justice system reflected this, a culture of “silences” surrounded it. Heterosexuality was viewed “as the ‘norm’” and “other propensities” were considered “characteristics of a deviant subculture” (2000: 100–101). Although rape within heterosexual marriage in the United Kingdom was legal during this time period (Shanley 1989: 42), and as Jackson states “[g]irls of the poorer classes, even when they were clearly under the age of consent . . . were depicted as corrupted, depraved and delinquent” (2000: 98), unmarried white girls, of middle-class status were viewed as vulnerable, requiring protection and guidance both mentally and physically (Smith-Rosenberg 2011: 133). A problematic equation that meant that while society viewed them as living with a heightened risk of assault, they did not credit them with knowing their own minds on the subject (Bronfen 1998: 115). This is evident in Freud's treatment of Dora, who described how she felt “handed over” at age fourteen to her father's friend, Herr K, so that he could continue his affair with Herr K's wife without interference (1905: VII, 34). Freud dismisses Dora's own interpretation of events and instead focuses on his own reading of her situation, seeing Dora as someone who is in love with her father and Herr K (36, 56).

Freud's response to Dora is indicative of his dramatic change in position from the seduction theory to the Oedipus Complex. His reassessment has had a long-lasting impact on the treatment of survivors of sexual violence, informing the debate surrounding fact and fiction in relation to allegations of abuse. If we consider the language of Freud's writings, it is clear that there is evidence of literary influence, something that in itself affects the

way readers respond to Freud's views. Freud bookends his argument with literature. The Oedipus Complex takes the place of a theory that Freud, reflecting uncomfortably in a letter to Wilhelm Fleiss, described thus: "[My] surprise [was] at the fact that in every case the father, not excluding my own, had to be blamed as a pervert" (qtd in Meisel 2007: 7). Rather than accept what he himself here calls "fact," he turned instead to fiction, and not even to a recent text where connections could more easily be drawn between his contemporaries and the characters, but to the tale of a mythic king reimagined by Sophocles in the fifth century BC. Freud also referred to literature in his other writings, referencing *Lady Macbeth* in "Obsessions and Phobias" (1895: III, 79), and *The Merchant of Venice* in "The Theme of The Three Caskets" (1913: XII). Literary form and technique is also evident in his use of language, with Perry Meisel claiming that "Freud's texts are literary . . . [his] writing doubles the psychological mechanisms it describes" (2007 xi).⁷ Freud's use of literary language can be seen as elucidating aspects of his ideas, yet creating such an intrinsic bond between his work and fiction has certainly been problematic.

The speculation surrounding Freud's rejection of the seduction theory in favor of the Oedipus Complex has been particularly intense in recent decades, with Jeffrey Masson's now well-known and widely discussed critique, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (1984), serving as perhaps the best-known example. Wherever one stands on Freud's reasons for his change in direction, what is certain is that not only were Freud's early writings on the topic of child sexual abuse interwoven with the language of literature and creativity more generally, but also his change of direction added further fuel to the already volatile backlash against recovered memories.

Professional interest in sexual trauma ebbed and flowed after Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory, with notable efforts to raise awareness made by the psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi – whose Confusion of Tongues theory (presented initially at the International Psychoanalytic Association, Wiesbaden, 1932), argues that abusive parents misread infantile requests for innocent affection. Once again there is an emphasis on the narrative of abuse and who controls it, and attempts were made to prevent Ferenczi from making his theory public, not least by Freud. Indeed, it was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that child abuse began to receive significant attention, as Nancy Whittier states:

Until the early 1970s, the prevailing view was that child sexual abuse was extremely rare and mostly confined to the economically disadvantaged or to particular ethnic or racial groups. Seductive children were thought to provoke sexual contact with adults, and incest was often believed to be

the result of controlling mothers who drove their husbands into their daughters' arms (Brownmiller 1975; Butler 1985; Rush 1980). The issue was rarely discussed, and those who had been sexually abused often disclosed their experiences to no one. (2011: 5)

The Vietnam War increased public interest in the effects of trauma on veterans, and this, in the wake of the Second Wave of Feminism (Leys 2000: 5) and the outpouring texts by scholars such as Judith Herman, Susan Brownmiller, and Germaine Greer, memoirists like Maya Angelou, and fiction writers such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, tipped the scales of both public and medical interest.

Initially the descriptors used for intimate trauma were "rape trauma syndrome" and "battered wives syndrome," but when the similarity of symptoms from these and other conditions such as those associated with armed combat were recognized, they came to be understood collectively under the banner of trauma (Keane and Miller 2012: 56; van der Kolk 2004: 225).⁸ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, the medical term for sufferers, was first officially recognized in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, III (DSM-III)* in 1980, and Carol Harrington argues,

Feminists and anti-war activists in the 1970s and 1980s developed a theory that linked rape with torture and combat as traumatic events which break down and disorganize the self. The psychosocial model of trauma purported to scientifically establish that rape, torture, combat and other conditions that render the individual helpless caused profound psychological damage, in the form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). (2010: 97)

At around the same time there was a resurgence of interest in a concept discussed by Freud, the recovered memories of childhood sexual trauma. A change in culture anticipated by feminist campaigners meant that there was greater awareness of and interest in the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse, and as Richard J. McNally explains, by the 1980s,

Following [Alice] Miller's lead, many therapists now believed that many women were wholly unaware of having been sexually abused as children, because of what Judith Herman and Emily Schatzow called "massive repression" (1987: 12) . . . These therapists believed that memories of abuse, blocked from awareness by defensive mechanisms of the mind, silently poisoned the mental health of survivors. Repressed memories, which lay at the root of diverse psychological problems, needed to be remembered, emotionally processed, and cast into narrative form. (McNally 2003: 5–6)

Respected therapists and researchers believed that it was necessary to use a variety of methods to "trigger" repressed memories, including hypnosis

(McNally 2003: 6).⁹ This shift in attitudes toward potential victims unsurprisingly led to an increase in allegations, and in response to this the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF) was formed, claiming that therapists were implanting false memories in their patients' minds or coercing them to amend or imaginatively alter the memories they had (McNally 2003: 14–21).

This dispute between the two factions became known as the “memory wars.”¹⁰ Authors and publishers responded to the memory wars with a proliferation of publications of so-called misery memoirs¹¹ (autobiographical writings on experiences of individual hardship), such as novelist Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss* (1997), which details her incestuous relationship with her father: “From a mother who won't see me to a father who tells me I am there only when he does see me,” she writes, “perhaps unconsciously, I consider this an existential promotion. I must, for already I feel that my life depends on my father's seeing me” (89). There were also fictional explorations of the import of repressed memories, such as Jane Smiley's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of 1992, *A Thousand Acres*, a contemporary rewrite of the story of King Lear, where the elder daughter's difficult relationship with their father, here a farmer named Larry, is explained by sexual abuse. A *New York Times* piece by Susan Chira from 1993 illustrates the cultural aptness of Smiley's tale of recovered memory, at a time when “repressed memory is reverberating through the culture, not only in fiction but also in pop-psychology best-sellers, incest recovery groups, celebrity confessions, made-for-television movies, therapists' offices, living rooms and courtrooms” with what Chira describes as “numbing frequency” (1993).

These developments impacted literary criticism as well, with Roger Luckhurst providing a significant example in his essay on the impact of the memory wars in contemporary fiction, “Memory Recovered/Recovered Memory” (1999). Evidence of these still much-debated theories can be seen much earlier than the 1990s, however, for example in D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1981), Iris Murdoch's *The Unicorn* (1963), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* (1934). More recent critical attention has looked back toward the fiction of the Romantic and Victorian Gothic, from Daniel Lapin's *The Vampire, Dracula and Incest* (1995) to a consideration of how the repercussions of a vampire attack – such as those depicted in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* – may be evidence of the victim's repressed sexual trauma (Miller 2012).

Trauma theory in the humanities as we now understand it was conceived amid the fertile and vitriolic debate regarding memory,

growing to prominence in the 1990s with a flurry of research into the nature of traumatic memory, considering survivors' ability to reclaim memories of their experience and whether they are able to assimilate their trauma into a recognizable narrative form (Leys 2000: 266ff.; McNally 2003: 135ff.). Early researchers such as Judith Herman, Bessel van der Kolk, and Cathy Caruth, among others, have undeniably forged an important space for debate, yet there are still no definitive conclusions on how sexual trauma affects individuals or on how it impacts their ability to remember and narrate. Michelle Balaev has consequently urged a reconsideration of the "classic model" of trauma theory, which depicted the traumatic experience as "an unspeakable void," toward instead envisioning "a different psychological starting point for defining trauma" that "allows critics a renewed focus on trauma's specificity and the process of remembering" (2014: 1). Balaev discusses a variety of scholarly methods – calling this embracing of multiplicity "the pluralistic trauma model" – challenging Caruth's claim that trauma is "*not known* in the first instance" (Balaev 2014: 2; Caruth 1996: 4) and asking the reader to consider alternative responses to trauma as a result of varying contexts and the particularity of individual circumstances. This "revisionist" mode suggests that trauma can be told, acknowledging "the possibilities that language can convey the variable meanings of trauma" (Balaev 2014: 2–4).

Trauma theory has necessarily been interdisciplinary from its inception, with collaborative approaches across the social sciences and the humanities. Given that African American writers such as Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker played a pivotal role in the latter half of the twentieth century in forging a narrative space for telling about sexual trauma, postcolonial literary critics have developed a dynamic relationship with trauma research, and so have scholars of Queer theory, who have examined the particular societal and political pressures on sexuality and gender and the responses they engender. Notable examples include Ann Cvetkovich's seminal work, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003) and Jack Halberstam's much-discussed blog post, "You Are Triggering Me! The Neo-Liberal Rhetoric of Harm, Danger and Trauma" (2016). The pluralistic model that Balaev describes, which aims to open the field for interdisciplinary researchers working on the narratology of sexual trauma, particularly in the arts, is helpful and constructive, given that sexual trauma may affect anybody and that the debates over traumatic memory and the ways and means of narrating sexual trauma continue.

A consensus that could narrow the scope for interpretation of trauma may arguably be undesirable, given that while the professional recognition of PTSD in the 1980s by the medical community helpfully legitimated the symptoms of traumatic experience, many have since queried whether it is wise to use one term to describe individuals who have had such disparate traumatic experiences that may lead to such distinct outcomes. PTSD triggered by sexual violence can lead to a plethora of circumstances unique to this group of survivors. These may include being exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, and a fear of intimacy (particularly sexual intimacy). Indeed, “Burgess and Holmstrom (1979) found that of 63 rape survivors in their sample who were sexually active before the rape, 30% (or 19 women) reported that sexual functioning had not returned to normal 4 to 6 years after the rape” (Basile 2005: 109). Judith Herman has also argued that PTSD is more suited to describing the resulting trauma from a singular event, rather than the exposure to prolonged and repeated abuse, such as that of a child abused in their home, and Herman consequently suggests the term “complex-PTSD” to address this unique experience of trauma (Herman 1992: 115–130).

Literary writing has certainly responded to the news coverage of the debates surrounding sexual trauma, although authors tend to focus on the human experience rather than the terminology of trauma, with notable works including John Boyne’s novel of child abuse in the Catholic church, *A History of Loneliness* (2014); Emma Donaghue’s *Room*, which was “triggered” by the widely reported case of Josef Fritzl’s twenty-four year imprisonment and repeated abuse of his daughter, Elisabeth (Crown 2010); and Alice Sebold’s *The Lovely Bones* (2002), which was drawn from her own experience as a rape survivor, recounted in her memoir, *Lucky* (1999) (McCrum 2007). Mainstream adult literature still maintains a focus on the female victim, with Hanya Yanagihara’s *A Little Life* (2015) providing one of the few examples of male rape in literary fiction. A. S. Byatt’s *The Children’s Book* (2009), which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, does include an incident at an all-boys’ school that, although the violence is not directly addressed, is highly suggestive of a sexual trauma. Young adult fiction has, however, candidly addressed a wide range of challenging experiences, from Margo Lanagan’s unflinching portrayals of intrafamilial abuse in *Touching Earth Lightly* (1996) and *Tender Morsels* (2008), to novels that consider transgender teens such as Rachel Gold’s *Being Emily* (2012) and Elliott Deline’s *I Know Very Well How I Got My Name* (2013).

Current statistics seem to indicate that females remain more at risk of sexual violence than men, as Shields and Feder (2016) state here:

[T]he National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) – shows that 18% of women and 1% of men have been raped at some point in their lives (Black et al. 2011) . . . Forty-five percent of women and 22% of men have experienced sexual violence other than rape, including sexual coercion (e.g. sex obtained through threat of humiliation), unwanted sexual contact (e.g., groping), noncontact unwanted sexual experiences (e.g., “flashing”), and being made to penetrate someone else . . .

For both female and male victims, the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are male (Greenfield 1997). (132)

It is important to note that statistics are often based on narrated incidents, whether this be in a therapeutic environment, for a research exercise such as a questionnaire, or from official crime figures. If males are not reporting sexual crimes or if crimes against them are not for some reason being recorded, then the prevalence of incidents will not be reflected in the results. The 2015 Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct also reports, “Rates of sexual assault and misconduct are highest among undergraduate females and those identifying as transgender, genderqueer, non-conforming, questioning, and as something not listed on the survey” (Cantor et al. 2015: 4).

Just as creative practitioners have responded to the developments in the scientific community, so have therapeutic practices recognized the benefits of creativity. Scriptotherapy and bibliotherapy have both been used therapeutically with victims of sexual violence. In the introduction to her 2000 collection of autobiographical writings about trauma by authors from HD to Anaïs Nin, Suzette Henke writes, “autobiography is, or at least has the potential to be, a powerful form of scriptotherapy” (2000: xv). This can be seen as a development of Freud’s theories on narrative and an attempt to reshape the traumatic memory into a narrative that the self and/or others can better understand and potentially accept. The reading of already published texts for therapeutic purposes (bibliotherapy) has also been found to be beneficial. As Samuel Gladding states in *The Creative Arts in Counselling*,

Another premise behind the inclusion of literature in counseling is that “true self-knowledge and a greater understanding of the world emerge” (Hynes & Hynes-Berry, 1986, p. 1). Clients realize that their problems are universal as well as unique. They learn that they share a connectedness with many other people across time, gender, culture, and circumstance (Duffey, 2015; Lerner, 1994). (2016: 126)

For child victims, the use of metaphor can provide “a shield,” as Deanne Ginns-Gruenberg and Arye Zacks explain:

Fictional characters give victims the emotional distance to allow them to discuss the character’s problems without feeling threatened. Animal characters are engaging, provide an additional layer of separation and safety, and have the added benefit of frequently being gender and race neutral. Children learn resiliency from the characters in the story, and find a way to understand their own complex emotions through the eyes of the story’s characters. (2012: 380–381)

This process can “contribute to restoring their sense of safety and power, so that they will be able to move from victimhood to survivorship” (Ginns-Gruenberg and Zacks 2012: 381). Calla E. Y. Glavin and Paul Montgomery (Oxford University) recently published a literature review in *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, demonstrating that interest in this area shows no signs of abating.

Recent scholarship by academics such as Raymond A. Mar and Keith Oatley (2008), D. C. Kidd and E. Castano (2013), and Maria Chiara Pino and Monica Mazza (2016) among others, points to the possibility that reading creative literature may increase our ability to mentalize, that is imagine, the mental processes and internal behavioral motivations of others, thus increasing our ability to empathize. Mar and Oatley argue that literary fiction (rather than genre fiction) has the capacity to

offer models or simulations of the social world via abstraction, simplification, and compression. Narrative fiction also creates a deep and immersive simulative experience of social interactions for readers. This simulation facilitates the communication and understanding of social information and makes it more compelling, achieving a form of learning through experience. Engaging in the simulative experiences of fiction literature can facilitate the understanding of others who are different from ourselves and can augment our capacity for empathy and social inference. (173)

Although this field of research is still in its infancy, in that there are numerous other avenues where it could be developed and its possibilities tested, it has, as Mar and Oatley admit, occasioned academics from the social sciences to reconsider creative writing as more than “entertainment” (2008: 173), and it is easy to see how it could potentially lead to new directions for bibliotherapy and scriptotherapy in the treatment of both offenders and victims.

As scientific work continues to evolve, and cultural and legal understandings of the scope and nature of sexual violence also change, so must

the literary creative output and the critical response. The importance of true interdisciplinarity, transparency, and dynamic interaction between the sciences and the arts has never been so evident. Literary critics must stay abreast of advancement in the fields of medicine, criminology, and sociology if they are to impact on real-life situations in a positive way, but strong and sustainable relationships must be made and maintained between the disciplines if the most socially advantageous work is to be achieved. Indeed, debates over the truth of memories and the ability to voice trauma may affect the reportage and criminalization of sexual crimes. The emphasis is on finding a narrative form that will reflect and illuminate the true experience but that will be understood and respected by external authorities. Mar and Oatley's comment that the social sciences have viewed literature as "entertainment" (2008: 173) and have thus dismissed fiction and poetry from their focus is a pertinent warning for future scholarship in this field. The skills of the literary critic are valuable and pertinent to examining any narrative, whether it be factual, creative, or both. Even if literature were relegated to the category of entertainment, it would not make it any less relevant to the study of the social sciences. To understand people, their motivations, their pain, and their violence, we must pay attention to the world in which they exist, a world that literature both reflects and affects.

*Postcolonial Trauma**Jennifer Yusin*

Postcolonial criticism has tended to critique, analyze, or describe the nature of the relation between the “postcolonial” and trauma by focusing on the manners in which the wounds from which peoples of non-Western cultures or minority groups suffer cannot be accounted for by traditional psychoanalysis. It has also tended to focus on the failures of psychiatric approaches to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and of modernist approaches to the question of text and the understanding of history to address the cultural specificities of lived experience. In specifically calling upon the poststructuralist maneuvers of what has been designated as “trauma theory” in the field of trauma studies, the critical conjunction between the postcolonial and trauma consistently emerges according to the character of the value of the postcolonial suspicion of the universal in which the “universal” is thought of in a materialist sense – that is, universals can only apply if they are made to apply.¹ Postcolonial criticism, as Benita Parry once concluded, is constituted by the “constant slippage between significations of an historical transition, a cultural location, a discursive stance, and an epochal condition” (Parry 1997: 3). By whatever method or means the term postcolonial challenges the particularly Western character of regimes of knowledge (as distinct from truths) about the results of its circularity, the value of postcolonial studies inevitably pertains to its subjective applications, for which it is necessarily reserved.

The analytic strategies of the postcolonial critique of the poststructuralist methods employed by trauma theory concentrate on subjective experiences of pain and suffering in the effort to disclose the ways in which the very concept of trauma is a Western artifact. Such strategies aim to show how the theoretical thinking of trauma assumes the immediate applicability and adaptability of the event-based model to any and all forms of violent effractions, including forms of structural oppression such as apartheid and colonialism in which trauma is not a momentary intrusion on everyday life, but rather *a way of life*, a permanent state of things.

Generative in the strong sense – as a movement to produce something ungraspable by sovereign power – the application of the postcolonial in this context aims to apply itself in a manner that reveals the way in which what we finally call traumatic experience (understood not merely as a descriptive term but as a category or principle) circulates according to the strong assumption that such an experience is a uniform, universal phenomena of the encounter with death (or an essential threat to life) that cannot be experienced as such at the instance of its occurrence. In its turn, this assumption re-instantiates the very oppressive and violent, injurious schematics that cause pain and loss in the first place by designating in advance not only that which can or cannot return in experience, but also the one to whom something returns, the addressee of that which returns to demand response. Literally and figuratively evoked by the linguistic order of “postcolonial trauma,” postcolonial thinking arrives at the question of trauma by aiming to make the postcolonial come before the terms of trauma in order to disclose what/which subjects and objects the concept erases, by its own repetitions and methods, in affirming what/who is or is not, properly speaking, the site of authentic experience. In opposing the primacy of the law and order of Western knowledge and thinking about the subject, the postcolonial intends to produce new relationships to the other and to their pains and suffering.

Before choosing sides in disputes about method (poststructuralist or textualist versus materialist), it is necessary to elaborate the problem that lies at the core of the point of suture between the two understandings of the relation between experience and wound that are employed by trauma theory and postcolonial studies. Such an elaboration requires an exploration of the underlying problems that give space to the intimate intricacy between the matter and meaning of the couple here called “postcolonial trauma.”

The word problem, from the Greek *problēma*, signifies what is thrown forward, what is projected, and in a contradictory sense, as a form of protection (like a shield) and an impediment, a difficulty that interrupts a continuous and ordered trajectory. A problem is not simply a question but the elaboration – that is, the process of developing, engendering, and inventing a question. Also from the Greek, trauma means “wound” and derives from the verb “titrosko,” which means “to wound” or “to pierce.” Critically, the Greek definition upholds the ambiguity between a physical or psychical injury, making no clear distinction between the two: that which *has been* wounded and that which *causes* the wound. In Greek, then, trauma designates an injury, a rupture that breaks opens a protective

barrier that is the result of an effraction. It can be either psychic or organic. In German and English, however, the word trauma also includes *traumatism*, which means a particular state or condition of mental shock.

The properly psychoanalytic concept of trauma as it was developed by Freud and Lacan and then later taken up by trauma theory is, for them, inseparable from their thinking of the psychic event and psychic causality. This means that one of the fundamental postulates of trauma in psychoanalysis is that there is a distinction between a determining cause and an efficient cause of psychic disturbance. Either way, however, trauma plays a causal role. In order for trauma to become properly traumatic, it must trigger the subject's psychic determinism and history of psychic disturbance. More precisely, it must trigger the necessity of the repetition mechanism (the compulsion to repeat as such) of the originary trauma or else the primal scene. In other words, it activates the endogenous causes of a given psychic disturbance. Any empirical shock injures an already wounded subject.

Thus trauma, as Lacan elaborates in his essay "Tuché and Automaton," is an *appointment* between two meanings of the event – the event as that which occurs from the outside, external realm (*tuché*, which means contingency, or good or bad fortune), and the event as an immanent, internal determinism (*automaton*, which is the compulsion to repeat as such) – and by accord, between two types of causality.² In this essay, Lacan turns to the example of the "Dream of the Burning Child." In this dream, a father, who has recently fallen asleep after his ill child has died, is suddenly awakened when the apparition of his son grabs him by the arm and exclaims, "Father, can't you see that I'm burning." The father awakens to discover that the candle next to the body of his son has fallen over, setting alight the cloth covering the dead child's arm. Lacan returns to Freud's question by asking, "Where is the reality in this accident?" (Lacan 1992: 58). If the dream stages, by means of repetition, the encounter with trauma, then how can we explain the dream as wish-fulfillment?

According to Lacan, what is authentically burning in the dream are the words of the child's address to the father, "Father can't you see I'm burning," and not the actual arm of the child. The contingent encounter of reality – the candle falls onto the cloth covering the dead child and sets it alight – triggers the true Real, which is the unbearable apparition of the child reproaching his father. Thus the reality of the automaton, the reality of something more fatal, is more real than the *tuché*. The *tuché* is only a means by which the automaton or the Real happens because, as Lacan says,

“What is repeated, in fact, is always . . . something that occurs *as if by chance*” (Lacan 1992: 54).

In Lacan, then, the arrangement between the endogenous and exogenous aspects of an event is the dual structure and character of the traumatic event. The point is that the psychical event, understood here as the traumatic event, is at once a structural and mutable assembly of the reciprocal action between exteriority (or that which is outside in the empirical or transcendental senses) and the interior realm of the psyche, which further assembles the ways the psyche elaborates exteriority in the effort to absorb it into the subject’s history. For both Freud and Lacan, it designates the mode and regime of a certain kind of occurrence in the interior realm of the psyche.

This touches upon two important, interconnected elements in the psychoanalytic concept of trauma. First, every event involves the factor of surprise, an unexpected occurrence. Second, any type of external shock or surprise constitutes a secondary factor. In an often cited passage about traumatic neuroses in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud writes, “In the case of the ordinary traumatic neuroses two characteristics emerge prominently: first, that the chief weight in their causation seems to rest upon the factor of surprise, of fright; and secondly, that a wound or injury inflicted simultaneously works as a rule *against* the development of a neurosis” (1920: XVIII, 12). Here Freud makes clear the incompatibility between a physical injury and a psychical injury. Trauma is what results from the unexpected confrontation between the absolute surprise of the blow and a preexisting psychic conflict, namely a conflict between the ego and the sexual (not to be confused with sexuality in the everyday sense), which catches the psyche completely unaware.³ No matter how violent or what type of external effraction befalls the subject, its causal regime is limited to being a triggering power insofar as it awakens a more primary conflict in the ego. This does not deny the power of chance events and the lack of preparedness, but instead firmly installs traumatism under the jurisdiction of psychic causality. It means that the external wound is sublated or translated into the language of the internal psychic wound and accounted for as a symptom, such as the interminable compulsion to return to the effective accident or event in traumatic nightmares and flashbacks. Thus traumatism owes itself to the resonances exteriority finds in the determining power of the reactivation and retroaction of older psychical conflicts.

By necessity, then, in the (post)traumatized subject, the dual structure and character of the traumatic event appears and is expressed as the problem of the compulsion to repeat the traumatic scene, which is an

effort aimed at incorporating radical exteriority into the subject's subjective structure. As Freud more precisely elaborates it in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the repetition compulsion in traumatic neurosis presents us with the problem of the governing authority of the pleasure principle in the "mental reaction to external danger" (1920: XVIII, 11). Inasmuch as the inflicted wound is also paradoxically incompatible with the development of a neurosis, traumatism is neither a purely mechanical model nor simply the effects of the lived experience of an external event; rather, it is an unconscious construction generating particular types of subjective constructions. In traumatism, then, we see that retroaction is a causality that designates the conservation of effects that are themselves generated by processes generating another succession of effects. That is, the after-event carries a partial knowledge and becomes a traumatic signifier in the daily, lived life of the subject. For example, in the often cited case of the soldier returning from the war front, the trauma is caused not by the shock, per se, but more precisely by an older ego conflict it triggers. In whatever sense the event is real (psychically, materially, physically) and even if, in the beginning, trauma was simply undergone (for example, as the permanent way of life), the psyche always bears the trace of the experience of the initial experience, and this trace is always, in its turn, liable to be reactivated when faced with the return of another fright, another threat that reminds us once more that we are always at once under the threat of and the effect of severance. This is what Freud calls *nachträglichkeit*, deferred action, which works to dissolve the clear distinction between the first instance and repetition. The source of the other "threat" is the unconscious.⁴

At bottom, trauma presents the elaboration of the problem of the incapacity of the unconscious to conceptualize its own death. The destruction of the unconscious is an event that, properly speaking, cannot happen. Thus trauma necessarily comes to affect the structure of the effacement of the subject, which is the character of the structure of the anticipation of separation (of the ego's relation to its own erasure). This is what Lacan calls the horizon of the encounter, which opens towards every event and which is the very structural form of anticipating death and mark of temporality.⁵ Again referring to his analysis of the "Dream of the Burning Child," Lacan writes, "It is not that, in the dream, the father persuades himself that the son is still alive. But the terrible version of the dead son taking the father by the arm designates a beyond that makes itself heard in the dream. [. . .] It is only in the dream that this truly unique encounter can occur. Only a rite, an endlessly repeated act, can commemorate this not very memorable encounter" (1992: 59). In other words, the dream is a scenic revival of the

essential(ly) missed encounter with the impossible Real. The encounter with the trauma is a misencounter that escapes the possibility of a real grasp while nonetheless taking hold; it is an experience that cannot be experienced as such at the moment of its instantiation. Such is the very assembly of trauma as a death without death.

All of this points to the fundamental principle that grounds trauma theory – namely, that the concept of trauma upholds it as a specific mode of causality that organizes the phenomenal circulation and distributions implied in daily, lived experience. As such, trauma is conceptually and practically invested with the authority of law and causal character; it constitutes both the regime and the case of its law, and it inheres in a paradoxical centering and delocalization of the demand for response. The inability to apprehend the experience of trauma is also trauma's claim as that which can be made to apply to the very possibility of history and our ethical and political relation to it, and by accord to the demand of our responsibility to bear witness and to respond to the other's suffering, in and as the taking leave of oneself.

This is especially true in the work of Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartmann, Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub, where trauma emerges by means of the motif of the indestructibility of the horizon of the encounter. In privileging and emphasizing gaps, ruptures, difference, and endless deferrals, these poststructuralist, psychoanalytic inspired readings stake out, in a text, the place of trauma's eccentric center(s), which is something like a series of trauma's most hidden and manifest articulation points that suture a text even as it undoes its fabric according to its own potential to annul and destroy precisely that which it figures by its excess (death, separation). Like the son, the mute cry of the adventure of separated words – the figural improvisations of the “deathlike break” in life (to borrow Caruth's phrase) – repeats itself from its own erasures. In so doing, it delays its own death as the way to come back to the father in order to ensure the very transmission of the necessity of the urgency of response (Caruth 1996: 91). In this sense, trauma is productive in the strong sense, as a movement to produce history.

As much as the rupture of experience may provide the soil for the fertile, practical growth and development of new families between cultures, histories, and peoples, trauma nevertheless remains for these theoreticians a structure of destruction, which is in itself ineffaceable. Thus trauma remains a kind of transcendental erasure, a condition of possibility for history and the ethics and politics of memory in general. The question of trauma, as it is developed by trauma theory on the basis of the structure of

experience and the status of afterwardness, is always first of all the question that the strange pair of death and anticipation addresses to us, which, going by the name of the reversibility of difference, turns on itself to reproduce the very form of the question(ing) of the historicity of being.⁶

What does this mean for trauma as a conceptual category? It means that the ineffaceable character of trauma nominates itself as singularly inhering in the power of becoming an incisive point of conjunction – that is, as finally happening and inscribing itself at the same time, comprising what we call historicity and shaping aspects of the consciousness of laws. It is always already the appropriating event that causes the structural estrangement of the subject by its means of its own ends. In a sense, the post-traumatic subject accomplishes itself according to its own concept, that is, by repeating itself out of its own destruction of experience, its own tendency towards destruction. There is, by accord, nothing but the ways we relate to the question of the exposure to one's own of death and to the abyssal play of life and death. In this regard, trauma, understood here as the advent of exteriority within the appropriating event (*Ereignis*), is the very structure and signature of finitude, which designates at once the slit of the other in time and the other in being. Thus in the same instance, trauma is the immutable hermeneutic horizon of meaning that reveals, via metamorphic points, the effects of the truth of an essential relation with an inherited past that is already there before me, before the I has the chance to establish its own past. This is also true for the whole of the tradition of metaphysics.⁷

Against the poststructuralist or textualist approach to trauma, Dominick LaCapra develops the distinction between historical trauma and structural trauma through a sustained focus on the historiography of the Holocaust. For LaCapra, the place of these two types of traumas clarifies and brings to light the distinction between loss and absence, which is where the ethical and political question is to be sought, since the former is that which bears the potential to be worked through in different regards. According to him, loss is situated “on a historical level and is the consequence of particular events” whereas absence is placed on the level of the “transhistorical,” which “is not an event” in the proper sense insofar as it does not “imply tenses (past, present, future)” and belongs instead to the exigencies of existence (LaCapra 2001: 48–49). For her part, Ruth Leys opposes Caruth's development of trauma in particular through a genealogical account of trauma in psychoanalysis by attempting to show the dangers of conversion and extrapolation from the specific to the universal that present themselves when the subject counts for nothing in the thematization of trauma.

For all that LaCapra and Leys offer by way of a historical or genealogical critique of trauma, they never once envisage the possibility that trauma has transformative implications for how we conceptualize human history, the human, and processes of growth and development. Neither do they consider what, in their own structures of critique, the very concepts of history and genealogy owe to the classical concept of life that takes the movement of life and subjective modes of the living being to be the result of the rigidity of the difference between the material and the nonmaterial.

A large part of the critique of trauma theory coming from scholars of postcolonial studies stems from a general dissatisfaction with these post-structuralist theoretical tools for describing and attending to specific (non-Eurocentric) local contexts and situations. The initial ethical and epistemological promise of trauma theory, which is linked to that of post-modern theory in general, resulted in disembodied abstractions that recuperated prevailing Western modes of production rather than in the accomplishment of the subversion of supposed universals and the claimed contingencies of identities and difference. In this vein, and thus against the privilege of aporia and fragmentation as the condition for new sensitivities and relations to specific cultural contexts and the plurality of subjectivities, postcolonial scholars have decidedly favored the specificity of lived experience. We see this, for example, in the work of Michael Rothberg, Sam Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone. In different ways, they demonstrate how culturally specific experiences of and representations of time, such as those that we observe in memory and mourning, effect an epistemological break with the theories of pluralization, difference, and identity that preoccupy poststructuralist and postmodern thought to the extent that it signals the emergence of new conceptual categories of knowledge about the subject and of thinking the structure of subjective and collective experience.⁸ For his part, Stef Craps has worked to disclose trauma theory's tendency towards the assumption of the Holocaust as the paradigm that describes the link between individual and collective experience, which also serves as the source from which it draws its idea of traumatic suffering: "The traumatic impact of racism and other forms of ongoing oppression cannot be adequately understood" in terms of the basic concepts and definition introduced under the category of "structural trauma" because they are "historically specific," or that of "historical trauma" because such forms are not easily "with a before and an after" (Craps 2013: 31–32).

The intellectual landscape that these postcolonial approaches to trauma as a conceptual category sketch out is one that identifies the inadequacy and inaccuracy of classic psychoanalytic conceptions of trauma and of

poststructuralism to characterize today's ever-changing forms of violence and responses to the experiences of cruelty and suffering. It is no longer sufficient to deal with trauma only in terms of momentary, violent interruptions to everyday life and modes of living that destroy but also weave the symbolic texture of a subject's identity. Non-Western networks of power, history, knowledge, culture, and society supply us with an abundance of specificities – of local culture(s), the political, the empirical, the national, the conceptual, the lived, and so forth – that show how trauma does not necessarily have a spectre (a source of fright that is imagined as an apparition) and does not become traumatic by means of deferred action. There is no pure trauma; there is only a mixture between exteriority and interiority, between the organic and the psychic, between the natural and the political that breaks the structure of transference as singularly constituting the urgency of response. The rallying cry of these critiques is that it is time to restore back to the other their loss, their pain, and their suffering, without taking their place.

Although it is a crucial move to recover the non-Western structural nucleus of the question of community, which is also a political and ethical question, what is finally called “postcolonial witnessing,” to borrow Craps's titular term, consists in drawing the connections between the internal elements of subjective knowledge or the specificity of lived experiences and words in language. Though it focuses on non-Western texts, postcolonial witnessing, conceived as both a knowing suffering and a form of knowledge, accomplishes its cultural inclusiveness and sensitivity, and its “attunement to previously unheard suffering” by reading the problem of the position of “the enjoyment of the reader” in the narrative (im)possibility of textual inscription of aporia (Craps 2013: 4, 40). To interpret still means to say, in bearing witness to the political claims effected by a narrator's expert testimony about their own experience, how a text is made and its texture is elaborated according to the necessity of the introduction of the aporetic gap between things that articulates, in its irreducibility, the composition of how specific histories of experiences come to be specified. In the end, postcolonial witnessing's deconstruction of trauma theory is not originary. It is structured exactly as that which it critiques.⁹ In this sense, no new subject is actually produced and no new knowing body of knowledge is invented, for we once more ring the bell toll of old hermeneutics.

Whatever their project, aim, or guiding principle, all the readings and hermeneutics of wounds deployed by both postcolonial studies and trauma theory lead to the minimal requirement that there remains deep within the

concept of (human) life the absolute necessity of the idea of something irreducible – the *irreducible* residue. Both discourses assume that there is a composition of structures of both theoretical and practical experience, which remain irreducible to either empirical, material (or also natural) data on the one side, or purely formal, logical procedures on the other. They effectively maintain, more precisely, the indestructibility of the separation, which is in effect the irreducible excess, between the material and the symbolic (or nonmaterial) by reintroducing an incommensurable gap between the two dimensions of life.

Generally speaking, and in the case of current assessments of postcolonial trauma, this occurs in one of two ways. In one case, either a dialectical or nondialectical breach between the material and the symbolic is that which gives rise to the necessity of materialism and therefore confers meaning upon the material. In the other case, one must first go outside of any material or empirical structure of the real, one must take leave of experience in order to constitute an anticipatory view on the real, the horizon within which all experience becomes possible. Either case leads to a rethinking of the role of the afterwards, that is, of afterwardness and the nature of its relation to the structure of experience and time, and by accord, the nature of the links to the question of being a being with language. Whatever trauma theory and postcolonial studies take to be their object of analysis, the subject is always at once under the threat of splitting and the effect of separation from substance; for the subject is governed by separation as a specific causality and is thus taken to be of a specific causal value with a tendency towards destruction. Separation, in any of its forms (whether the death of a principle or one's own death), gives death its conceptual and figurative content. Finitude, by means of the same gesture, remains the proper name for the finitude of existence. To be finite is necessary for existence, for being a living being who suffers and endures. Finitude singularly means the end; it names only the truth and senses of the limit.

It is in this way that current formulations of postcolonial trauma circumscribe what, since Kant, has been a leading problem in continental philosophy: the nature of the correlation, or the necessity of the agreement between categories and objects of experience. Is the agreement *a priori* or does it derive from an empirical source; is the originary relation between subject and object an *a priori* synthesis or is it acquired? In short, we impact here upon the immense question of the transcendental, which is the very question of the condition of possibility in general, and thus the foundation of all experience and its circularity. At bottom, both

postcolonial studies and trauma theory ask after the extent to which trauma becomes a new kind of transcendental.

Any serious consideration of postcolonial trauma inevitably finds itself in an intersection with the western philosophical tradition. The question is whether postcolonial trauma, as a form of posteriority, serves to confirm the tradition or whether it arrives to interrupt the order of succession and alter the character of the relation between the before and the after. As of now, we can say that the answer is the former: the tradition is preserved and maintained by the affirmation of the rigidity of separation as an *a priori* structure of destruction. This is true in two ways.

First, no matter how radical the critique of Western ideological tendencies, postcolonial thought manages to preserve or maintain the finitude of the subject as the indestructible structure of knowledge about the subject as the very force of its subjectivity. Consider for example, Spivak's salutary exercise in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in which through her deconstructionist inspired Marxist and feminist approach to the critique of the subject, she forced a confrontation between the subject of Subaltern Studies and the classical figure of sovereignty. Woman, as Spivak's own analyses of representations preserve and maintain, who is both the subject and will not have been the subject, is ever more an instance capable of effacing all substantial content, while tracking her effacements in order to be new to herself and to be presented to the world. For while it is an indispensable move to recover and rehabilitate the subject of history, the subject who finally arrives to interrupt the text is structured as none other than a disguised form of the classical Cartesian form of subjectivity. In the passage from mute to uttered, the mute body who/that cannot speak – the mute experience still yet to speak – is inscribed in what already appears as a tradition.

Second, trauma theory, at least the vein which derives from psychoanalysis and poststructuralism, finds itself on the *always already*, which is to say that trauma always already happens. It is a repetition of a prior scene, of a more ancient wound. As a result, trauma theory depends on the figure of trauma as that which conceptually and empirically imprints itself as the *figure of the law* at the heart of life and the living being in order to be effectively real knowledge about the subject. However, this figure, which is but the sculptural rectitude of meaning, affirms the sense of death as the economy of life once the rupture has taken place. Life, in other words, is always already *after* the rupture, which is always a temporalized rupture. Here too, the primacy of the indestructibility of the separation between the material and the nonmaterial, and more precisely, the *a priori* causal

necessity of separation is sustained in the very idea of a traumatized or post-traumatic subjectivity that confirms the essential structure of the subject as that which must constantly erase the traces of the past already passed away and which is not mine in order to be a subject.

As they currently stand, whether together with or together against, conceptions of the postcolonial and trauma ultimately serve to confirm the classical concept of life as that which is originally time driven and thereby must split, fragment, and transgress itself in order to be sovereign. The irremediable divide between what, since Heidegger, is called primordial temporality (the temporalization of time) and vulgar, everyday lived time is the cardinal remain that appears as the originary resource or potentiality for any autonomous formative process. What emerges here is the inheritance of an old conflict, given by and which serves to confirm the philosophical tradition from Plato onward: the opposition between the body and the soul, and then, later, the opposition between nature and culture. Whatever terms one places on either side of the opposition – the body and the soul, the mind and the psyche, the intelligible and the sensible, nature and culture – the absolute necessity of the irreducibility of the opposition is the law of philosophical discourse. In both Plato and Aristotle, for example, we see this law figure the “good life” as a life free from its enslavement to natural necessity and the purely mechanistic time of nature – as a life that transgressed the shackles of the innate forces of the biological necessity of life processes and the instincts of sheer survival in its capacity to turn upon itself as the making a world of the earth and sculpting of one’s being into a model of life that endures beyond death.

In the circularity of its exchanges between what comes before and what arrives after, current formulations of postcolonial trauma maintain the determining causal value of *a priori* irreducibility and necessity in the conversion of a philosophy of life into a hermeneutics of the subject. Thus what appears in/as the afterwards does not actually invent or produce new logical structures and relations to *a priori* schemas; the character of the relation between anteriority and posteriority is preserved. Any otherness of the other opened within the concept of life by means of the postcolonial or traumatic experience is delegated to the poetic or literary expressions of a new messianic temporality. We see this for example in Sam Durrant’s development of the work of postcolonial mourning as involving “insoluble ethicopolitical practices” in the expression of anticipatory mourning for a “just future” (2004: 26–30). This is also true for philosophy.

All of this arrives once more at the problem of origin, to which, since Kant, temporality comes to the rescue. In other words, we arrive, once

more, at the status of the question of time – or, to put it in late Heideggerian terms: the character of the disappearance of time itself as a question.¹⁰ The difference between primordial temporality and lived time is originary. This helps clarify the assembly and display of the appointment between two meanings of the event, which can be called *Ereignis*, or the event that happens from the outside, and *Erlebnis*, or the idea of internal, lived experience. To base our conceptual and empirical understanding solely on the work of Freud and Lacan, or the idea of the event and the structure of experience on what the western philosophical tradition conveys by means of its structure of transmission and inheritance, is to turn their texts into a type of religion, and so turn to marble the figure of the master. However, the answer to the address of, which is also an address to post-colonial trauma is not solely sought in the territory of what is called non-Western since this remains trapped between the two notional polarities of West/non-West that it is attempting to overcome. This denies neither the theoretical and practical needs nor the importance of the theoretical and practical inclusiveness of non-Western and minority cultures, traumas, groups, and so forth. In any case, it is not so much a question of what postcolonial trauma transmits but rather of its teaching – and this teaching, itself an event or phenomenon, is provoking a profound shift in the order of things.

Is postcolonial trauma thereby accurate to characterize current forms of global psychic violence or the nature of the diversity of forms of psychic violence? Is it valid for approaching the question of the emergence of a global consistency of responses to trauma in which we may perhaps isolate the emergence of a new concept of the event that does not solely pertain to the specular rehabilitation of the subject, that is, the structure of reflexivity, even if that subject arrives in the form of a deconstructed or criticized subject? Insofar as what is at stake in postcolonial trauma is the apprehension of a novel subject, which involves structure as subject and subjective structure, the answer to these questions minimally engages the question of how such a revolution in things is to be recognized. This not only takes up epistemological scrutiny and the gaze, but also in this taking up, constitutes a locus and its heterogeneity, and so generates a putting into place of a structure. In short, postcolonial trauma borrows from the experience of the adventure of separation.

The 1947 Partition of British India, which simultaneously generated the end of British colonial rule and the establishment of Pakistan and India as independent nations, helps bring this to light. Generally speaking, discussions about the trauma of the Partition emphasize the experiential

dimensions of the eruption of an unprecedented level of communal violence, mass migration, forms of gendered violence, intensities of conflations between religious identities and their politicizations, the loss of home and family, scissions to communities of neighbors, and crises of belonging. However, to ask after to what extent the Partition is opening something like a new conceptual and empirical era in postcolonial trauma is not the same as asking how the Partition is determined as a postcolonial trauma on the basis of a particular set of structures. Whereas the latter assumes the character of the relation between what comes before and what comes after to be settled in advance, the former examines how the very nature of that link is in itself at once mutable and structural to the extent that it can force a transformation in the very causal character of anteriority and posteriority. The immense opening that the Partition accomplished is indicated in the generation of the word and name “Pakistan” where different occurrences of the motif of partition appear in a process of increasing complexity.

There are several accounts of who first conceptualized the word *Pakistan*. However, its spoken and written pronouncements are generally attributed to Sir Muhammad Iqbal, a Muslim poet, philosopher, and politician, and Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge University student at the time. In his presidential address to the twenty-fifth session of the All-India Muslim League on December 29, 1930, Iqbal outlined a territorial vision for an independent Muslim nation by identifying the Muslim-majority provinces in the northwestern region of the subcontinent.¹¹ In response, Ali self-published a pamphlet titled “Now or Never: Are We to Live or Perish Forever” three years later. In it, he presented “PAKSTAN” as an acronym, arranged from and with the first letter of the names of the different Muslim-majority provinces, that called for and represented the body of the sovereign nation: “P” for Punjab, “A” for Afghania (the Northwest frontier province), “K” for Kashmir, “S” for Sindh, and “stan” for Baluchistan.¹² Ali also incorporated the Urdu and Persian translations of the prefix *pak-* and the suffix *-stan*. The Persian word *pak* translates as “pure” and “clean.” In both Urdu and Persian, the suffix *-stan* translates as “land of,” “place of,” or “country.” *Stan* is also a cognate of the Sanskrit word *-sthāna*, which refers to place.¹³

Seventeen years later in 1947, the declaration of independence at midnight between August 14th and 15th and the announcement of the Radcliffe Award on August 17th, which settled the dispute concerning the precise location of the actual geographical borders, signaled the accomplishment of a new constitution of the subject. Pakistan’s process of

making for itself a name and body in constituting the localization of a place, which included and involved a diversity of other processes, such as the drawing of new geographical borders where they had not actually before been, braided together the material and the symbolic dimensions to the extent that it dissolves the question of origin as that which means it is from there something starts as new. “Pak(i)stan”, in other words, is the articulation point between different regimes of partition, exchange, and transformation that shows the consistency of the interplay among the geographic, the political, the linguistic, the psychic, the cultural, the social, the symbolic, and so forth to be assembled and manifested in different ways at each of its historical occurrences.

The sociopolitical reality of today imposes different structures of the experience of finitude and of the relation to death. From cruel incursions of terror attacks like 9/11, to different types of suffering engendered by forms of imperial, colonial, political, or racial suffering, to natural catastrophes and the anthropogenic, planetary crisis, to the 2008 collapse of the banking system, to the destruction of subjectivity effected by neurological diseases like Parkinson's, to genocides and war-torn countries, to refugee crises, postcolonial trauma discovers itself in and as the interactions between nature and history, between nature and culture, that is, between different systems of production, generation, and exchange. The way in which postcolonial trauma gathers, arranges, and manifests structural difference between the psychic, the linguistic, the natural, the social, the cultural, and so forth is diverse in each instance of its historical occurrences. Postcolonial trauma does not so much name this or that thing, this or that type of suffering, but instead engenders the character of the relation between what/who comes before and what/who comes after as structural, mutable, and transformable. It is a coincidence that asserts different processes of inventing for itself a body that includes experience in its own self-differentiating movements. In its own increasingly complex formative processes, postcolonial trauma dissolves the clear-cut distinction between natural history and human history to the extent that it erases the limits between the two, rendering any certitude of the authenticity or irreducibility of their difference and thus the direction of difference incalculable. This, in turn, makes it impossible to pin down the time of generations, dismissing, in the process, the question of origin.

Traumatic experience and suffering does not always and necessarily constitute a certain truth with regard to a more ancient past, but rather involves diverse autonomous, increasingly complex developments of a

specific epistemology of experience that implies a theoretical elaboration of the production of partial truth. What is at stake in postcolonial trauma is not just the inventing of the inside and of the outside, of exteriority and of interiority, but also of the engendering of the nature of their interaction. The question of how to apprehend whatever finally arrives to interrupt postcolonial trauma – such is the critical task which we now face.

*Trauma and the Visual Arts**Marie Kruger*

It took only hours for the photograph of Omran Daqneesh to go viral on August 17, 2016. With his blood-stained face and his body covered in the dust of the collapsed building from which he had just been rescued, Omran's image refocused international attention on the five-year long Syrian civil war, as old as the small boy now sitting dazed and quiet in the ambulance, a victim, together with his entire family, of the daily airstrikes visited upon the citizens of Aleppo. It is a troubling photograph, an image that testifies to the inhumanity of a protracted war, conveniently ignored or simply forgotten by a global audience who, when inundated with a seemingly endless flood of images about the war and the large-scale movement of refugees into neighboring Middle Eastern and Europe countries, are likely to turn away from the needs of other human beings. So why did this image of a traumatized child resonate with spectators around the world while countless other photographs go unnoticed?

In the past decades, several images of brutalized children have acquired a dubious iconic status in the global visual archive that exhibits bodies in pain: Kim Phuc, the Napalm-burnt young girl running away from the aerial bombardment of the United States military during the Vietnam War; the nameless Sudanese girl, crawling toward a feeding center, a vulture perched behind her, in the infamous Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph; Alan Kurdi's body washed up on a Turkish beach as his family struggled to reach a safe haven from the Syrian war; and, more recently, Omran's solitary presence in an ambulance.¹ Well-known and widely circulated, these images serve as expedient references to the inhumanity of war and famine, to the physical and emotional trauma suffered by children. They work differently from other media as they appeal, and sometimes manipulate, the emotions and ethical responsibilities of the adult viewer. Susan Sontag's reminder in *Regarding the Pain of Others* is still relevant that "[n]arratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us" (2003: 89). Difficult if not unbearable to

watch, these images speak of an experience far removed from the everyday realities of most viewers, illustrating the “vast imaginative space” that separates those who have witnessed atrocities from the viewer’s capacity to absorb their testimony (Langer 1991: 19). In the case of the emaciated Sudanese girl or the crying Kim Phuc, the distance between (Western) viewer and photographic subject is further aggravated by prejudices that relegate extreme suffering to those “other” places – poor, backward, post-colonial – where tragedy seems inevitable (Sontag 2003: 71). The photographs of Alan Kurdi and Omran Daqneesh, however, operate differently; the white skin and familiar clothing of the two boys render their images more accessible to Western audiences and the extent of the child’s trauma is apparent without being fully visible: Alan’s prostrate body appears to imitate the posture of a sleeping child; and Omran’s face reflects the atrocities of the war while eliding its graphic violence. As Craig Allen notes in *The New York Times*: “The Omran picture delivers a shock to the conscience but also strikes a balance between delivering a sharp message and being too difficult to view. It is compelling but not grisly; it can enter an Instagram feed or a Facebook wall, arouse sympathy, be shared and allow the viewer to move on without seeing the absolute worst of what war has to offer.”²

Travelling across the globe, the photograph of Omran begged the question whether the image would result in more than fleeting attention to the political and humanitarian crisis in Syria; whether it would allow for a “protest [against] suffering, as distinct from acknowledging it” (Sontag 2003: 40). Many Syrians, including Mahmoud Raslan, the photojournalist responsible for the image, expressed disbelief (if not anger) at the selective and unpredictable attention of the West, while some advocacy groups seized the opportunity to lobby for the pressing needs of civilians and raise funds for Syrian and international humanitarian organizations. Photographs are often more effective than other media in mobilizing the viewer’s sentiments, but efforts to capitalize on the didactic functions of the medium – to shock and to accuse so as to invite a change in conduct in the viewer – can have the adverse effect of exploiting the dignity of the photographic subject or of perpetuating prejudices and misinformation. Indeed, “[p]hotographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed” (Sontag 2003: 81). In the days following the release of Omran’s photograph, his body transformed into a convenient symbolic shorthand not only for the atrocities of the Syrian civil war but also for larger political debates that deny the humanity of refugees. Thus, when Donald Trump Jr. tweeted an image of the popular skittles

candy to lobby against the admission of refugees into the United States, some responded with the by then famous photograph of Omran to visualize the bloody consequences of civil war and foreground the xenophobic rhetoric that enables a comparison between rainbow-colored candy and the human bodies of refugees (Diaz 2016).

In their global circulation and accessibility, photographs appear to offer a universal mode of communication, “destined potentially for all” (Sontag 2003, 20). But the viewer’s geographical location and ideological baggage, their relative proximity or distance to the photographic subject, their culturally conditioned ways of seeing and their personal preferences, render impossible any collective response to even the most harrowing images of atrocity. Not surprisingly, questions about the author of Omran’s photograph and his potential bias were raised in the immediate aftermath of the photograph’s publication. Mahmoud Raslan’s work for the Aleppo Media Center, a group of antigovernment activists who document the conflict, as well as his controversial association with the Zenki-militia, rendered the photograph suspect especially for those who disagreed with its perceived criticism of the Assad regime and its allies (Baumstieger 2016). Government-controlled media in Russia presumed that the photograph was staged, that it served as a convenient propaganda tool for the rebels and their allegations of Russian responsibility for the aerial bombardment of Aleppo. Consequently, Omran’s photograph was largely excluded from Russian media coverage, replaced by images and stories that safeguarded the interests of the government and its military mission. Though Mr. Raslan’s credentials, at least initially, had a significant impact on the authority (or lack thereof) accorded to the photograph, his intentions ultimately proved secondary to the meaning attributed to the image: for some, Omran’s face shows the inhumanity of a civil war and his far-reaching repercussions for an entire region; for others, it is a carefully orchestrated tool to mobilize support for the rebels.³

Especially in the age of digital photography, when the notion of the photographic index has been undermined by “[the shift] from the chemical trace to the infinitely manipulable electronic bit” (Luckhurst 2008, 150), the photograph of Omran Daqneesh raises fundamental questions about the authority accorded to visual images as a “witness to the real” (Sontag 2003: 26), about the general ability of photographs to provide “a quick way of apprehending something and a compact form for memorizing it” (22), while many viewers remain critical of the medium’s potential to distort and manipulate. How can the viewer reconcile the hegemony of the visual in our contemporary world with the lingering skepticism about

the indexical quality of the image?⁴ This question also informs the complex relationship of trauma studies and visual arts, and it is especially important for the significance attributed to images as literal imprints of traumatic experiences. An understanding of traumatic memory as iconic memory, as standing outside normal processes of cognition and representation and only allowing for a literal and imagistic registration of the traumatic event, appears to support the meaning assigned to images and the visual in trauma studies.

From flashback to screen memory, visual arts have provided the diagnostic terms that shape medical understandings of post-traumatic stress disorder, and also offered specific visual genres in which traumatic experiences can be rendered accessible to larger audiences. But even as cultural forms such as photography and film deliver the diagnostic and visual vocabulary with which to apprehend traumatized subjectivities, they find themselves implicated in general debates about the limits of a literal reading of the image. This critique of literalism applies to the visual arts in general, with scholars of photography such as Robert Hariman and John L. Lucaites (2016) criticizing what they consider a reductive “photographic matrix” that privileges the referential value of photographs over their aesthetic quality.⁵ The same critique also resurfaces in trauma studies when Ruth Leys and Susannah Radstone, among others, question the understanding of traumatic memories as literal icons and sensations, impervious to unconscious or conscious reorganization. As mimetic and anti-mimetic models of trauma continue to dominate the field, cultural genres such as film inevitably engage with and attempt to offer alternatives to these established theoretical paradigms.

Undoubtedly, photographs like the one of Kim Phuc and Omram Daqneesh determine which catastrophes attract public attention and thus help shape discussions about political and personal responsibilities. In a world over-saturated with images of atrocity the viewer risks becoming habituated to such visual archives, which define “the normality of a culture in which shock has become a leading stimulus of consumption and source of value” (Sontag 2003, 23). While Susan Sontag wonders whether the moral authority of photographs is neutralized in a culture of constant visual stimulation (105), Roger Luckhurst insists that the photographic image remains one of the privileged cultural forms of trauma precisely because it continues to have the ability to shock. The infamous Abu Ghraib photographs, he argues, once removed from their circulation among American soldiers, expose the rhetoric of liberation that camouflaged the brutality of the Iraqi war and return representation to the

tortured body (2008: 175–76). But the abilities afforded to specific visual media in representing traumatic experiences have to contend with the larger question troubling trauma studies: Can trauma be represented at all? The most widely circulating definitions of trauma claim such painful experiences as originating in an overwhelming event, shattering the psyche and defying normal processes of memory and cognition. Trauma signifies the unrepresentable, a crisis of representation and knowledge closely associated with the psychological, social and economic conditions of modernity. It is the aporetic quality of trauma that explains the somewhat paradoxical situation of trauma studies, its concern with an event that “demands urgent representation but shatters all potential frames of comprehension and reference” (Guerin and Hallas 2007: 3). For Cathy Caruth, the traumatic event is separated from normal processes of cognition and only returns belatedly in the form of flashbacks, traumatic nightmares, and other recurrent phenomena. This literal and imagistic registration of the traumatic event explains why visual media are often privileged in rendering trauma explicit, even as they – like all cultural genres – struggle to find appropriate aesthetic strategies for that which in its “proper visual form . . . might very well be invisible” (Saltzman and Rosenberg 2006: xiii).

In a world where trauma has become ubiquitous, the exceptional nature of traumatic experiences is somewhat contradicted by the understanding of trauma as constitutive of modernity, as intrinsic to history, experience, and language, so that “the modern subject has become inseparable from the categories of shock and trauma” (Seltzer 1997: 18). Modernity is here associated with the rise of the nation-state and the attendant shifts in socio-political relations and economic production, with standardized time and disembedded social relations that remove individuals from the familiar dynamics of place and community, and with the industrial city and its artificial and overstimulating environment. Technology plays a particular role in this ambiguous landscape that, as Luckhurst explains, promises both progress and ruin. It might be considered an essential tool in the liberation from the constraints of space and time, “[a] prosthetic extension of the [human] will to mastery, yet nearly every technology hailed in this way also attracts a commentary that regards it as a violent assault on agency and self-determination” (2008: 20). The longstanding debate about the origin of “railway spine,” the physical and psychological injuries stemming from railway accidents, shaped the legal and medical understanding of trauma in the twentieth century and testifies to the painful encounter between technological modernity and human agency (24). Modern

technologies such as the camera, taking and translating images into print and digital media or projecting them onto the screen, operate within this paradigm when they are perceived to generate shock and trauma in the viewer. In the work of Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, and Robert Jay Lifton, moving and still images often have been associated with the violent freezing of that which they capture and with the precarious psychological states they elicit in the viewer.

What is often missing from this discussion of the violent impact of modernity and the technologies of the image that both reveal and cause trauma is a consideration of the violence embedded in specific acts of looking. Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Achille Mbembe are among the many postcolonial scholars who have drawn attention to the colony as a site of trauma and modernity. In particular, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* offers a poignant examination of the psychic and physical injury inflicted upon the colonized, an injury that originates not in an exceptional event situated in the past but in the continued daily violence of the colonial gaze. This gaze, which denies the humanity of the black man, locates him in a "zone of nonbeing" (1967: 8) and "[seals him] into that crushing objecthood" (109). The constant and conscious wound that resides in "the fact of blackness" leads to the interpellation of the subject, a body overwritten by a racial epidermal schema, oscillating between acquiescence and aggression, "torn between the desire to disappear and the narcissist impulse to dominate the other" (84). The surgical metaphors in Fanon's text – amputation, excision, hemorrhage – speak effectively to trauma "as a living bodily wound that is re-opened each time the black man is confronted with the white racist gaze" (Borzaga 2012: 81). Western models of trauma, predicated on individualistic conceptualization of self and society, on models of liberal statehood that grant rights to citizen, and on trauma as originating in an extraordinary event, fall short when attempting to address the lived experience of trauma in other historical and cultural contexts.

Postcolonial studies has provided new directions for the study of trauma as exemplified in the work of Stef Craps, Michela Borzaga, Roger Kurtz, and Ogaga Ifowodo. Their concerns with the everyday experiences of trauma in culturally diverse locations, with alternative sources for healing and recovery, and with the general possibilities of a trauma aesthetic demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Indeed, "no genre or discipline owns trauma as a problem or can provide definitive boundaries for it" (LaCapra 2001: 96), and Luckhurst, in his influential study of *The Trauma Question*, prefers to think about trauma as a knot in which are

entangled various disciplinary knowledges and institutions as well as cultural and political practices. Visual studies is of particular importance in this entangled web since, similar to trauma studies, the field offered a response to the poststructuralist critique of the construction of “reality” and “truth” (Guerin and Hallas 2007: 3). Just as trauma studies returns attention to historical events and their impact on individual and collective trauma, and thus raises the political and ethical stakes involved in the representation of the real, visual studies insists on the historicizing of images and asks pivotal questions about culturally conditioned modes of seeing; about the process by which sight becomes vision; about vision as an act “in which fragmentary sensory data are combined to make a ‘view’ by which we literally and metaphorically see the world” (Mirzoeff 2009: 4). Certainly, such a consideration of how vision is socially organized and controlled also needs to account for the violence of the colonial gaze.

Even as postcolonial studies provides new impulses for the exploration of the vexed relationship between visibility, trauma and modernity, these new avenues still have to contend with prevailing models of trauma, which are themselves often the product of interdisciplinary collaborations. Caruth’s poststructuralist reading of trauma, for example, is informed by the work of neurobiologist Bessel van der Kolk and his collaborators, who track the hormonal changes in the brain in extreme situations, and examine the extent to which such hormonal discharges intensify emotional states while blocking the cognitive processing that would make them available for narrative memory. Traumatic memory is thus lost to conscious recall, “[it] cannot be organized on a linguistic level and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level: as somatic sensations, behavioural reenactments, nightmares and flashbacks” (qtd in Luckhurst 2008: 148). The claim that traumatic symptoms (such as dreams and flashbacks) are veridical memories of the traumatic event and as such stand outside representation, constitutes one of the paradigms that Leys identifies as dominating the field of trauma studies (2000: 229). While the so-called mimetic model insists that the victim cannot recall the original traumatic event and, therefore, is “fated to act it out or in other ways imitate it” (298), the anti-mimetic paradigm positions the victim as a spectator to the traumatic experience, which is “a purely external event that befalls a fully constituted subject” (299), and hence allows for the possibility of remembering the circumstances of the traumatic event.

Though the work of Caruth and van der Kolk demonstrates that mimetic and anti-mimetic interpretations of trauma cannot be strictly

separated from each other,⁶ these models remain, in Leys' genealogical reading of trauma studies, the two paradigms that have shaped the field since the late nineteenth century in often contradictory and unproductive ways. Theorists like Susannah Radstone, Ann Kaplan or Laurence Langer have attempted to work beyond this theoretical impasse, as have cultural forms which contribute toward the consolidation of traumatic subjectivities in genres as diverse as memoir, photography and cinema. Susannah Radstone, for example, relies on recent Freudian scholarship when advocating for an approach to trauma that considers the role of the unconsciousness in mediating and processing memories. She critiques Caruth for replacing the multifaceted layering of conscious/subconscious and unconscious with "a conscious mind in which past experiences are accessible and a disassociated area of the mind from which traumatic memories cannot be accessed" (2007: 16). Her analysis of trauma shifts attention from the belated memory of the event to the belated meanings attributed to the event, and the extent to which "memory becomes traumatic when it becomes associated, later, with inadmissible meanings, wishes, fantasies, which might include an identification with the aggressor" (17).

Ann Kaplan tries to reconcile several theoretical positions when discussing how the dissociative function that renders trauma inaccessible to memory co-exists with the possibility of conscious recall, and when considering the complex relationship between victim and perpetrator (2005: 38). Her and Radstone's interests relate to Lawrence Langer's work with Holocaust survivors whose trauma is complicated by conflicting understandings of their moral agency, by a self divided between "the knowledge that during their ordeal they were deprived of human agency by their circumstances and their present need to see themselves then and now as responsible agents of their own destiny and of those around them" (1991: 185). As we shall see, these discussions are especially relevant to films like *Zulu Love Letter*, a South African narrative film that features the experiences of Thandeka Khumalo, a political activist who, in spite of being victimized by the apartheid state, finds her moral authority compromised by what she believes to be her failure to protect other apartheid dissidents, and whose traumatic memories of the past shift in relation to her needs and experiences in the present. The film offers just one example of how visual art engages with and attempts to work beyond theoretical debates, ideally contributing toward "a language with which to begin to represent the failure of representation that [a witness] has experienced" (J. Hirsch 2004: 18).

In their volume on *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity*, Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg also insists on the significance of art in negotiating the opaque quality of trauma. Metaphors of visuality and image – from primal scene and flashback to screen memory and dream – dominate attempts to develop a discourse about trauma; these metaphors, they argue, are “unavoidable [carriers] of the unrepresentable” (2006: xii) and thus allow trauma to take on a particular visual form and frame. Luckhurst follows a similar trajectory in *The Trauma Question* when discussing the “[cultural] genres and narrative forms in which traumatic disruption is temporalized and rendered transmissible” (2008: 80). Cinema acquires a particular significance for the clinical understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder and the importance of flashbacks as a recurrent symptom of traumatic experiences. “Flashback,” a term borrowed from film and media studies, was included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980 to describe how trauma returns in the form of sudden and repeated intrusions, stark visual reminders of past events that signify on the emotional states and disruptive temporal experience of the traumatized subject. In the 1960s and 1970s, “flashback” still referred to experiences resulting from drug-induced hallucinations, and researchers acknowledged the extent to which flashbacks were shaped by fantasy and role-playing, by the imaginative reworking of past and present experiences. Only in the 1980s, as the concept gained increasing importance in trauma studies, did its meaning shift toward a literal memory of past events.⁷ Prominent definitions of traumatic memory as “unclaimed experience” (Caruth 1996) also encouraged an understanding of flashbacks “as a literal, non-symbolic, and nonrepresentational *memory* of the traumatic event” (Leys 2000: 272; emphasis in original). Not surprisingly, critics such as Fred Frankel or Ruth Leys have questioned the underlying premise that visual images are non-symbolic, permanently imprinted onto the mind, so that traumatic memory returns in the form of literal icons and sensations.⁸

The tendency to read the flashback as a literal record of the event warrants a return to the previous discussion about the indexical quality of the image, the assumption that “[the visual image] is somehow closer to the event, less mediated, than the verbal record” (Luckhurst 2008: 149). This tendency toward literalism is complicated by film scholars who, even if departing from established models of trauma, shift the debate from the traumatic image to the cinematic afterimage, from a general consideration of the possibility of representing trauma to a more specific concern with the representational languages best suited for mediating traumatic experiences. Joshua Hirsch’s work on post-traumatic cinema emphasizes the

dissociative and pathological quality of traumatic memories and thus is clearly indebted to the theories of Cathy Caruth and Bessel van der Kolk. Hirsch's concerns, however, extend beyond the original witnessing of trauma to "the subsequent cinematic encounter with the images of atrocity" (2004: 19). Interested in cinema as a transmitter of historical trauma and a form of post-traumatic historical memory, he highlights the possibilities afforded to a medium that "constitutes a kind of witnessing to both the outer, physical reality of historical events and the inner, psychological reality of the effects of those events on people" (7). The indexical recording of images and sounds thus has to contend with the work of the imagination, with cinematic efforts to capture the often unpredictable dynamic of the unconsciousness.⁹

More specifically, post-traumatic cinema attempts to reflect some aspects of post-traumatic consciousness and thus "formally reproduce for the spectator an experience of suddenly seizing the unthinkable" (J. Hirsch 2004: 19). It offers an image-based form of witnessing, carefully designed to upset the viewer's expectations of historical film and history in general. However, the play with – and potential disruption of – established modes of seeing also requires a close consideration of available representational strategies. For Hirsch, such considerations are framed not only by the film's response to the past but also by the cultural and political context of the present, by "the ideological conditions through which the trauma is reinterpreted" (11). While Hirsch here is primarily concerned with the larger social dynamics that have an effect on cinematic representations, it is just as important to recognize the influence of popular definitions of trauma. His understanding of the aporetic and dissociative nature of post-traumatic memory, shaped by symptoms such as temporal collapse and fragmentation, inaccessible or uninvited intrusions, leads him toward a trauma aesthetic that explicitly reflects on its own limitations. He privileges a modernist aesthetic vocabulary that, defined by "the ethics of failure" (Bényei and Stara 2013: 6), expresses the ruptures of modernity through frequent time shifts, hypersubjective points of view, and a self-conscious narration that foregrounds the mediated construction of reality. It is a form of narration that intends to repeat the structure of witnessing traumatic events and hence works toward "a discourse of trauma [which] transforms the inherent limit of the witness's private memory into a moral limit of public memory" (20).

The question of whether trauma can be represented is thus reframed to consider which aesthetic choices are able to represent its aporetic quality, and the concern with the literal and imagistic quality of trauma shifts

toward a deliberately distorted and elusive image that, through its very opaqueness, renders explicit what cannot be expressed otherwise. The elusiveness of the “afterimage” avoids positioning the spectator as a “false witness,” which, as Hirsch argues, is the case in realist narration when a transparent and accessible representation of traumatic experiences offers the spectator the illusion of having mastered profoundly disturbing events without having to engage with the existential crisis of individual or collective trauma (2004: 21). Hirsch’s preference for a modernist trauma aesthetic is shared by scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds, including the historian Lawrence Langer, though it has also encountered sustained criticism from those who caution against the import of “Western modernism” to other cultural locations, while Michael Rothberg offers traumatic realism, “a form of documentation and historical cognition attuned to the demands of extremity” (2000: 14), in an attempt to work beyond the binary configuration of modernist and realist aesthetics.¹⁰

Cognizant of these debates, the South African filmmakers Bhekizizwe Peterson and Ramadan Suleman advocate for a visual aesthetic that juxtaposes realist and modernist repertoires, that “allows for a plurality of temporalities, presences and generic styles (from realism to fantasy) to co-exist within the same frame or sequence” (2009: 228). Their film *Zulu Love Letter* takes place in the mid-1990s and offers a bleak assessment of a country struggling to heal “the deep psychological and economic scars that are the result of a society structured on racial domination and exploitation” (Peterson 2012: 20). The central protagonist, Thandeka Khumalo, wonders how she can embrace the official institutions of nation-building and forgiveness when “all around [her] the misery continues” (Peterson and Suleman 2009: 116). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission appears unable to respond to her complex needs as a political activist, journalist, and mother, or to provide relevant resources to those hoping for answers about the fate of the disappeared. The absent bodies of political dissidents, like those of Dineo, the young girl whose murder Thandeka witnessed, demonstrate the lack of accountability among the perpetrators while also denying the possibility for meaningful mourning to the victims’ families. Though Thandeka remains troubled by specific traumatic events – the murder of Dineo; the death in detention of her colleague Mike Peters; her own imprisonment and torture – the film carefully establishes the general context of suffering and exploitation that, for people of color, extends into present-day South Africa. As the lingering effects of colonial modernity seep into the routines of quotidian life, they reveal the inadequacy of any event-based model of trauma.

Thandeka appears to exist in a state of “speechless terror” (J. Hirsch 2004: 23), often unable or unwilling to recall the events leading to Dineo’s murder. Her personal and professional relationships are troubled by a profound sense of betrayal, which extends to her perception of herself as a mother and an activist who failed to protect others. But her avoidance of the past is undermined by the hypermnesic intrusions of her memory of Dineo’s murder into her present life. The film returns to Thandeka’s perception of this traumatic event in three elaborate scenes, and though the core event remains the same – the young girl is killed by the security forces – the circumstances of the execution, and especially Thandeka’s emotional and spatial relationship to the victim change significantly in direct response to her experiences in the present. In its portrayal of Thandeka’s traumatic memory, *Zulu Love Letter* employs a modernist vocabulary that features frequent and sudden shifts in time, unsteady camera work that mimics the frantic movements of political dissidents fleeing the apartheid police, and a visual language reliant upon unfocused, partial and disjointed images. Video and audio tracks often collide in these scenes, with single sounds amplified and delayed, or audio cues from the past extended into the present.

The rich sensory texture and hyper kinesthetic register of these “flash-backs” attempt to reproduce the structure of witnessing disturbing events and illustrate for the audience the experience of suddenly coming upon “the unthinkable.” These representational strategies also signify on the extent to which visual media enter shifting alliances with sound and text, movement and touch, so that visuality is absorbed into the mixed media landscape that blurs the tenuous boundaries of cultural genres. The film’s initial scenes even foreground how technologies such as the camera simultaneously cause and reveal trauma. Here the visual and audio quality of the film not only re-enacts Thandeka’s memory but also references the physical conditions under which the competing visual archives of apartheid are established, the archive of the security forces, whose cameras “shoot” photographs of activists out of moving cars, and the archive of political dissidents who secretly document Dineo’s murder. The images produced by these clandestine activities reveal the abuses of the apartheid state even as they expose those who document such violence. The isolated sounds of a camera shutter, occurring in rapid succession, communicate the force with which the photographic image traps an event while inhibiting its transformation into memory.¹¹ The violence of the image resonates through Thandeka’s life as each encounter with the photograph of a perpetrator or a victim triggers a new confrontation with her traumatic memory.

Though the audience will be aware of the significant changes in Thandeka's traumatic memory throughout the film, they might still register them as "flashbacks." The filmmakers, however, prefer to recognize the return to Dineo's murder and the attendant temporal and tonal shifts as "interludes." This terminological choice signifies on the extent to which Thandeka lives "beside apartheid," re-experiencing Dineo's murder in durational time as an always-present past.¹² The notion of "interlude" also reflects the filmmakers' understanding of the unreliability of traumatic memory, an unreliability that, as Peterson explains in the screenplay to the film, relates just as much to the general inability to fully know or articulate experiences of extreme violence as it results from the openness of traumatic memory to belated insights and recognition (Peterson and Suleman 2009: 22). The film thus shifts attention from the belated memory of the event to the belated meanings attributed to the event, but while Radstone emphasizes that such inadmissible meanings and fantasies might also include an identification with the aggressor, the film offers a more complicated moral landscape. For Thandeka, the trauma of the past is amplified by the unbearable contradiction of pain and guilt, of mourning the loss of her friends and the loss of her moral integrity. Her traumatized self is divided between the knowledge of her behavior in the past – passive and paralyzed – and her present need to understand herself as a responsible moral agent. Her need to save Dineo, her judgment of her past behavior as morally compromised, is thus articulated by a person "who was never in control of [the circumstances]," and whose traumatic memory "resists all efforts of interpretation using traditional moral expectations" (Langer 1991: 183).¹³

The third interlude, however, represents a substantial change in Thandeka's perception of the murder since it includes an intimate visual exchange between Thandeka and Dineo who, as she falls to the ground, looks back at Thandeka. Previous interludes had positioned the two women in separate physical spaces, with Thandeka witnessing the execution from the confinement of a nearby building. Now they inhabit the same space, enabling a visual encounter that suggests multiple registers of trauma: from the shared experience of racially based violence to the fundamental difference between the finality of death and the continued burden of bearing witness. For Thandeka, this is a moment of profound recognition, of realizing that she can simultaneously occupy more than one moral space, that her past behavior cannot be judged from the perspective of the moral agent she desires to be in the present. Reconciling with the unheroic memory of the past allows her to reclaim her body as a site of

torture and as a source of sight.¹⁴ Shortly after this last interlude, she reveals the circumstances of her imprisonment for the first time and decides to testify before the TRC. Thandeka's gradual willingness to claim her experiences in the public context of the TRC and in intimate conversations with her daughter conveys the film's vision for post-traumatic recovery. The premium on communication extends beyond the spoken and written word to the visual art created by Thandeka's daughter. Her elaborate collage of beads, photographs, paper and fabric departs from traditional Zulu beadwork – the Zulu Love Letter of the film's title – to express her affection for an often withdrawn mother, and thus signifies on the film's general attempt to visually translate trauma into a culturally useful discourse.

In its portrayal of traumatic memory, often outside normal cognitive and linguistic processes and yet open to belated meanings and transformations, the film enters a dialogue with established models of trauma that aims to expand visual registers, especially when asking the viewer to reconsider the temporal and psychological dimension of the cinematic flashback. Even when *Zulu Love Letter* expresses the harrowing quality of traumatic experiences in opaque and fragmented images, it pairs such modernist vocabularies with the realist portrayals of a mother's frantic search for her daughter or of a witness observing in terror the presence of a perpetrator in her neighborhood. In any of these scenes, the pain of the witness is palpable and profoundly disquieting to watch, though it remains difficult to predict how different viewers respond to *Zulu Love Letter* or any work of visual art that offers an image-based form of witnessing traumatic experiences. More productive than debating the indexical quality of the image, its significance as "a witness to the real," is a renewed consideration of its unique capacity to engage the imagination – its ability to mobilize the viewer's imagination so as to complete the scenes of violence excluded from the visual narrative, to recognize "the vast imaginative space" that separates them from the victim, and to allow for a sense of empathic unsettlement that remains acutely aware of the difference between the primary witness and the viewer and, in recognizing that difference, feels called upon to act.¹⁵

The search for representing that which "might very well be invisible" remains implicated in larger theoretical debates about the physical and psychological imprints generated by traumatic experiences, and the extent to which such efforts are inevitably compromised or even commodified in a global media culture that simultaneously celebrates Kevin Carter's photograph of the starving Sudanese girl while condemning him for his

decision to take the picture.¹⁶ Spectatorship is never far removed from voyeurism, and yet the need to document and remember, to acknowledge and respond to the pain of other human beings, contributes toward “[the] modest, if still elusive goal of working through – instead of repetitively acting out – the traumas of the past” (Rothberg 2000: 11).

*The Middle Passage and Race-Based Trauma**Luminita M. Dragulescu*

In the relatively new field of trauma studies, catastrophic events that afflicted entire populations and cultures – wars, ethnic genocides, the Jewish Holocaust, slavery – have been vivisectioned, scrutinized, and assessed in relation to the dire implications on those communities. While for many of these events, historians and analysts have sufficient data to reconstruct, evaluate, and recreate the palimpsest of human suffering, the transatlantic slave trade is still constructed mostly out of imagination rather than from the surviving sparse, censored and unilateral accounts. By and large, the Middle Passage stands as both a prelude to and also a metonym for slavery.

The metonym for the Middle Passage itself, the slave ship, that “ghost ship sailing on the edges of modern consciousness,” as Markus Rediker labels it, as well as its microcosm and history, is still insufficiently known (2012, 13). Rediker decries the imbalance between the mercantile accounting and the narrative accounting of the slave trade, observing that even if “excellent research” has been done on the “origins, timing, scale, flow, and profits of the slave trade,” there was, at the time of his study, “no broad study of the vessel that made the world-transforming commerce possible” (2012, 10). The slaver’s heterotopia holds the key to understanding the Middle Passage and its unique dynamics. The slave ship constituted a place of exception from civilization, where social norms and moral or religious rules were suspended, where the crew could project desires and behaviors otherwise impermissible in their homeland, beyond sanction, and rarely chronicled. Of those who perished during the voyage, there is barely any chronicle beyond numbers and statistics. Sowande Mustakeem notes that, “[a]ll too often, the physical and psychological traumas [that] captives underwent during their final moments of life remain unrecorded” (2008: 475). Even after the abolition of the slave trade by Great Britain in 1807, the United States in 1808, and the subsequent treaties signed by Spain and Portugal in 1818, slave trafficking continued to flourish, becoming even more violent and, evidently, even less documented than before. But by

focusing on the psychological, clinical, and social impacts of the slave trade we can begin to comprehend the vast influence it has had on American culture. The slaver's stories – mostly untold, many imagined – reveal the traumatic scene that gave birth to (African) American identity. One may equate the fractured and sporadic first-person narratives of the Middle Passage with trauma itself: accounts in bits and pieces, to put together *le corps morcelé* of one historical period that impacted and has continued to shape the present. For this reason, literary imagination proves especially useful and relevant in representing the race trauma of the Middle Passage and its aftershocks in contemporary American culture.

As a consequence of a violent racial history, there is a predetermination of trauma within race, so that mere racial identification is fraught with a history of racial violence that manifests itself in the trauma of race. Race trauma includes “the psychological, somatic, and cultural effects that individuals and groups suffer as a consequence of being racialized,” growing out of the reality that “[e]ither as a result of an official racially oppressive system or as an outcome of residual racist discourses and practices, certain categories of people are still victimized solely on the basis of their association with a certain race” (Dragulescu 2011: 4–5). Assessing race trauma requires a nuanced approach that would go “beyond the superseded belief in a native born, African-descended, and monolithic black community” (7).¹ The traumatic memories sedimented in the American national body, from the transformative events of the Middle Passage, shaped American identity, with significant ramifications in the present. The historical legacy of people of African descent that infused the American continents contributed to a mutable and ever more influential culture in which the fixity of race trauma persisted. Enshrined in bodily practices, traditions, customs, and beliefs, the African heritage has shaped and continues to impact American culture. African American communities are depositories of this traumatic heritage, historical avatars of the enslavement and transplantation inflicted on their African ancestors.

The American race trauma was engendered by several major traumatic events (conquest and colonization, Middle Passage, slavery, and the rampant lynching during the Jim Crow era, to name the most important), and sustained by recurring, omnipresent acts of racism that span the entire history of the United States. The massive enslavement and trafficking of Africans over the Atlantic was made possible by the white colonist's projecting onto the black body the worst characteristics of humanity, à la Comte de Gobineau. White supremacist, and later, white privilege ideologies sustained race trauma. But it is not only the perpetuation of racist

discourses and the outbursts of racial violence that are traumatic. The failure to recognize the survivors' experience – be it at an individual or collective level – reproduces, and often augments, trauma. Cathy Caruth and Thomas Keenan note a double trauma at work: “there’s a cataclysmic event, which produces symptoms and calls for testimony. And then it happens again, when the value of the witness in the testimony is denied, and there’s no one to hear the account, no one to attend or respond – not simply to the event, but to its witness as well” (1995: 258). The failure to validate the witness has contributed historically to a socially produced trauma.

This stifling of the trauma narratives and the recognition of the symptoms that afflict African Americans has lasted for centuries where the Middle Passage is concerned. Carl Pedersen decries the lack of interest in the transatlantic slave trade that historians purposefully ignored. He notes that “as late as 1981, a historian [James A. Rawley in *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*] could write: ‘Mythical conceptions of the trade exist because historians, until recent years, have slighted the trade’” (1993: 228). Yet, like traumatic memory itself, trauma stories irrupt against even the most drastic censorship. Cultural trauma surfaces through artistic engagement, fictional narratives, or through bodily practices. Joseph Roach’s assessment of the circum-Atlantic memory comes to mind: “the unspeakable [violence] cannot be rendered forever inexpressible: the most persistent mode of forgetting is memory imperfectly deferred” (1996: 4).

In *On Collective Memory* (1925), Maurice Halbwachs theorized memory as a collective social phenomenon as much as an individual faculty, indicating the possibility that memory is socially constructed, beyond the neuro-psychological capacity. Ever since Halbwachs, individual memory has been understood as a function of collective memory, subject to active and continuous social amendment and manipulation. There has been a growing interest in understanding the ways in which collective and individual memory are connected, and the extent to which there is a continuous transfer between the two. Following Halbwachs, scholars such as Pierre Nora, Geoffrey H. Hartman, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Cathy Caruth increasingly moved the focus of their inquiry from society to culture in conceptualizing collective memory. Jan Assman, for instance, sums up cultural memory as “a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practices and initiation” (1995: 126). Where cultural memory is acquired through social exchange, so is cultural trauma.

Compulsive memory, manifested through both psychological and also somatic symptoms, is trauma's primary form of manifestation. Perhaps the most difficult hurdle in diagnosing and assessing the severity of trauma is restoring the traumatic memory in order to effect psychological recovery. But "working through" one's traumatic memory is challenging, if hazardous. Caruth argues that trauma precludes representation since the victim's consciousness is (temporarily) gravely affected by the traumatism. The perception of the event, unmediated by mechanisms of conscious abstractization, returns belatedly, yet unremittingly, through manifestations of the unconscious, such as nightmares, flashbacks, and anxiety (1995: 152–153). There is an agreement that trauma is performative, compulsively reenacted through obsessive bodily and psychic manifestations. Caruth observes that trauma, "its uncanny repetition," comes as a voice that "cannot fully know but . . . which . . . nonetheless bears witness" (1996: 9). Similarly, Paul Connerton, notes that by "acting out or remembering," through compulsive repetition, or by "forming meaningful narrative sequences," the past can and must be brought into the present (1989: 25–26). Extrapolating the interchange between the individual and collective memory to the individual and collective race trauma establishes the framework for exploring historical trauma. But given the scarcity of individual accounts, we have a better perspective on the collective, cultural trauma of the Middle Passage that continues to ripple in the present.

In a manner similar to the way in which memory was conceived prior to Halbwachs, early conceptions of trauma were intrinsically linked to theories of subjectivity and identity formation. Psychoanalytical investigation of trauma focused on the individual and only later broadened its inquiry to entire groups, communities, or/and cultures. There is scholarly consensus that there are important similarities and connections in the ways individuals and communities are afflicted by and respond to trauma. Kai Erikson notes that, "sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissue of mind and body" (1994: 228). For that reason, trauma can "serve as a broad social concept as well as a more clinical one" (230). In the introduction to their study, *Trauma and Memory*, Austin Sarat, Nadav Davidovitch, and Michal Alberstein characterize trauma as "socially constructed through a constant interplay on the individual and the communal levels" (2007: 3). They explain the shift from the individual to the social understanding of trauma in this way:

Emphasis on social construction and the use of cultural narratives as a means to explain the self produced a shift in trauma analysis by tying it to broad social structures (including structural violence) and moving it away

from the individual as a primary unit of inquiry. Instead, collective identity becomes the unit of analysis and a group that shares an identity such as ethnicity, gender, or religion is considered as the primary unit that experiences trauma. (7)

Consequently, assessing collective trauma requires approaching it both synchronically – the ways in which trauma manifests and disseminates among the members of the same group, at a certain time and place – and also diachronically – the mechanisms through which collective trauma transmits inter-generationally.

Almost a century after Halbwachs, we understand individual traumatic memory as a mark of cultural memory. To Susan Brison “all memory of (human inflicted) trauma – whether traumatic memory or narrative memory – is cultural memory in at least two respects” (1999: 41). First, she notes that “traumatic events are initially experienced in cultural context (even when endured alone) and are taken in under certain descriptions or other (for example sensory) representations and not others” (41). Second, the way traumatic events are remembered “depends on how they are perceived by others, directly or indirectly, and the extent to which others are able to listen emphatically to the survivor’s testimony” (42). Therefore, both experiencing and witnessing trauma are acts of cultural memory, shaped by cultural contexts. Similarly, Neil Smelser defines cultural trauma as “a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (a) laden with negative affect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more fundamental cultural presuppositions” (2001: 44). Ron Eyerman sees it as “a dramatic loss of identity and meaning,” and “a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion” (2001: 2).

Cultural trauma transcends individual experience, and it inherently controls it. Wulf Kansteiner assesses cultural trauma as “always socially mediated” (2004: 211). Kansteiner’s estimation exposes the effects of the unfavorable, if not hostile, socio-political environment that deepens race trauma. Stef Craps observes that the “far-reaching implications of the fact that trauma is rooted in a particular historical and geographical context have long been ignored by academic researchers, including activist scholars fighting for public recognition of the psychic suffering inflicted on socially disadvantaged” (2012: 21). Historical race trauma is sustained by the delayed recognition of black history and the systemic indifference to the consequences of a history of racial violence. In acknowledging race trauma, it is imperative to establish the causal links among racist discourses,

cultural contexts, and the socio-political framework that generate and propagate trauma. Narratives of trauma are located somewhere between the compulsion to tell and the suppression of what must be told. When this suppression is more an outside demand rather than an intimate censorship, the narrative representation of trauma becomes even more complicated. Race trauma invites rethinking the ability of a universalized Eurocentric model to account for the American experience, to acknowledge the heterogeneity of experiences and responses to trauma. Only when recognized outside the communities whose individuals were traumatized is there hope for recovery; in other words, race trauma needs to be accepted as a historical reality, as part of the respective cultural fabric that requires collaborative effort to overcome.

Western culture is a site of racial trauma, as Frantz Fanon conceptualizes it, thereby initiating a much-needed inquiry on the psychopathology of colonialism and racism. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon explores culture, especially in its racial prescription, as breeding and perpetuating race trauma. He investigates the genealogy of racial discourse formation, of racial typology, and the trauma they effect. Fanon exposes a pattern of a white European civilization and culture that “have forced an existential deviation on the Negro” (1952: 14). Racial reconciliation rests on the possibility of the “disalienation of the black man,” by the “immediate recognition of social and economic realities,” whose alterations in favor of the blacks would subsequently recalibrate “the internalization – or better, the epidermalization – of inferiority” (11). Fanon envisioned that therapy for the neurosis of race may only be achievable through political and economical change.

Although we talk about cultural trauma, we cannot envision entire groups as pathologically affected; that would be an unsupported generalization. But through the literary imagination – at times self-representational – certain social, political, and economic positions that come with racial ascription could be traumatic and that these traumatisms could leave individuals scarred and maladjusted. Moreover, the inertia of such conditions, or at best their slow-paced change, contributes to sustaining cultural as well as individual trauma. As long as racist discourses still define a society, they act as a catalyst of trauma both through the reenactment of the traumatic past and through the present experience of failed inter-racial rapports. What David Theo Goldberg labeled “the racist culture” of the Western World made possible the perpetuation of the Middle Passage trauma. Goldberg points to the inherent racialized nature of Western ideology:

Race brings together in self-conception individuals who otherwise have literally nothing to do with each other. In this, race pushes to its extreme the logic of national identification; hence the gratuitous ease with which racism and patriotism seem to intersect. This anonymity also facilitates, through the modes of distantiation inherent in it, the faceless forms of exclusion, exploitation, oppression, and annihilation that have so much accompanied the history of racial creation. (1993: 81)

The racial divide is mirrored in the memory of diverse racial groups and is appropriated differently at an individual level. Communities, cultures, even individuals, construct their memory as much from experience as from imagination and desire. There is not a unitary American cultural memory that brings together the imaginary community in Benedict Anderson's sense. Eyerman notes that since they lacked the means to influence public memory, "blacks were left to form and maintain their own collective memory, with slavery as an ever-shifting reconstructed reference point" (2001: 18). Slavery, along with the Middle Passage, has been the referent for black communities' ordeal even if psychoanalytical studies have taken belated interest in examining the traumatic effects of colonialism, transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and racism. Gilda Graff, for instance, notes that "[o]nly recently has psychoanalysis turned any attention to slavery and racism," and she decries "psychoanalysis' refusal to remember" (2014: 183). Not unlike individual trauma, collective race trauma manifests in the "[r]efusal to remember, denial, dissociation, and disavowal [that] are all echoed in the absence of slavery from the trauma literature, and until recently, from psychoanalytic literature" (183). It is from psychoanalysis that we learn that trauma manifests itself in symbolic, encrypted ways. Decoding verbal and non-verbal representations of trauma makes literary hermeneutics indispensable. On an individual level, as a defense mechanism, the trauma survivor can experience "detached states of consciousness . . . similar to hypnotic trance states," explains Judith Herman (1992: 43). As a clinician, she notes that, "although people vary in their ability to enter hypnotic states, trance is a normal property of human consciousness. Traumatic events serve as powerful activators of the capacity for trance" (43). Moreover, apart from dissociation and trance, trauma is subject to the idiosyncrasies of the psyche, particularly the unconscious, and thus requires specific semantic codes.

Pointing to the tragic sublime of the transatlantic slave trade in a way that calls to mind Friedrich Nietzsche and Edmund Burke, W. E. B. DuBois notes that "the most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history is transportation of ten million human beings out

of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new found Eldorado of the West. They descended into Hell” (1935: 649).² While slavery was tantamount to hell, the capture and sale of Africans and the seven- or eight-month trans-Atlantic journey was just as horrific a transition, ridden with disease and death.³ Added to the physical agony was the emotional and cognitive turmoil that traumatized the enslaved. Uprooted and crammed in the abject space of the slave ship, Africans of distinct cultures faced every kind of physical and emotional deprivation imaginable, disorientation, language barriers, and subjection to horrific abuse. During the almost four hundred years of slave trade, 12.4 million were loaded for the journey across the Atlantic and, according to Rediker, “almost 1.8 million died, their bodies cast to the sharks that followed the ships” (2007: 5).⁴ Ira Berlin paints the horrific picture of slave ships bound for the New World’s plantations: “Slaves were forced to wallow in their own excrement and were placed at the pleasure of the crew [. . .] death stalked these vessels, and more than one in ten Africans who boarded them did not reach the Americas” (1998: 104). Rediker notes the dire consequences of the slavers’ crammed spaces where “bodies forced into small spaces were often left contorted and disfigured” (2012: 56). In May 1848, explorer George Thompson, going aboard a slave ship in Frenchtown, Sierra Leone, attempts to relay the horror, describing “a *dense mass* of human beings” as “a soul-sickening sight.” Thompson admits the limitations of his narrative: “[n]o one can get a realizing sense of the horrors of a slave ship from any oral or written description – it must be *seen* or *felt*” (1852: 18–19).

As Du Bois notes, for those who survived the journey the hell merely began, but while it isolated them from their African roots it also brought them together in the imaginary community of African America, a community that would shape its own identity. Ron Eyerman deems slavery the “‘primal scene’ which potentially unite all ‘African Americans’ in the United States, whether or not they had themselves been slaves or had any knowledge of or feeling for Africa” (2001: 1). African Americans’ collective identity is not rooted in the trauma of slavery alone, as it did not begin, but continued, on the American continent. The Middle Passage, understood as the journey from capture to setting foot on the American continent, was the first site of African Americans’ historical trauma, both chronologically and psychoanalytically. The transatlantic slave trade constituted the first encounter with the racial other as the oppressor and the master, even before the slave ship reached the American shores. In an interview with Mark Roth, Marcus Rediker defines the slave ship as “a kind of factory . . . [that] produced two things. It produced labor

power that was crucial to the growth of the modern world economy. And it produced the beginnings of the African-American identity” (2007).

Expanding the understanding of cultural trauma, Stef Craps argues the necessity that “traumatic histories of subordinate groups have to be acknowledged on their own terms and considered in relation to traumatic histories of people in socially dominant positions for trauma studies to have any hope of redeeming its promise of ethical effectiveness” (2010: 53). As such, any analysis of the race trauma associated with Middle Passage is bound to account for the specific experiences racial groups have had in their common history. Rediker defines “four distinct but related human dramas” that took place on the slave ship during the Middle Passage voyage, “each . . . meaningful in its own day and again in ours” (2007: 6). The actors in these dramas were “the captain, the motley crew, the multiethnic enslaved, and toward the end of the period, middle-class abolitionists and the metropolitan reading public to whom they appealed in both Britain and America” (6). The impact, therefore, went far beyond the slaves themselves and their descendants to encompass the very cultures that fostered slavery. At its core, slave trading translated in the pervasive chaos of terrorized communities, separated spouses, broken families, relocating in foreign, hostile realms, and isolated by language, cultural, and religious barriers⁵. The dislocation, compounded with the tragic loss of freedom, marked the beginning of the traumatic history that reverberates to this day.

Historical trauma ripples and impacts all aspects of life – public or private – but perhaps nowhere else is race trauma more poignantly visible than culturally. Certain segments of culture fulfill the role of representation, and also act as of spearheads of reform against traumatic triggers; they resist and disavow a racist status quo. Resistance to racism is “often, if not predominantly, cultural,” Goldberg explains:

First, the production, expression, and appeal of culture cannot be controlled as easily as material resources. Second, to wrest control over one’s culture is to pry loose the hold over naming and (self-) representation. This is a first step to self-determination, for it enables one to assert power over self-definition. And it is a necessary condition for taking command of the power to rationalize actions, conditions, and relations, for representations is always mediated by the prevailing discursive culture. (1997: 21–23)

Arguing for literature as a “monument to witnessing,” Shoshana Felman explains that the role of literary testimony is “to open up in that belated witness, which the reader now historically becomes, the imaginative capability of perceiving history – what is happening to others – *in one’s own*

body, with the power of sight (of insight) usually afforded only by one's own immediate physical involvement" (1992: 108). Indeed, literary endeavors that undertake representations of trauma implicate the reader as witness, and pass onto him/her the responsibility of a conscious and involved participant in a traumatic history. Such undertaking is particularly important in the case of race trauma, whose only possible healing must engage active individual, social, and political involvement in disputing the racist culture's status quo and gradually changing the habits of white privilege.

Representing trauma has been the Gordian knot of psychoanalysis, while its narrativization has provided a constant challenge for literature. Representing the primal scenes of the American identity formation – the Middle Passage and slavery – has proven challenging for both historiographic and fictional endeavors. Bringing Middle Passage onto the literary and historical scene faces several difficulties. First, there is the idiosyncratic interpretation of trauma in general, which complicates indefinitely any claim to “knowing” trauma. Second, there is the problem of witnessing, since there are few testimonies of those who survived the Middle Passage and escaped slavery that have not been tainted by white censorship. Third, in creating the palimpsest of these infamous events, one must consider the absence, the silence of those who never had a voice to tell their stories. These are the enslaved who never survived and whose accounts were lost need now be re-imagined; as Toni Morrison once stated, “[w]e have to re-inhabit those people” (qtd in Gilroy 1993: 179). Or, as Janie tells Pheoby in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, “you got tuh *go* there tuh *know* there” (1978: 285). Fourth, in representing the race trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery, writers and historians have to confront *their* present and how the stories they imagine about the past inform about the present status quo. bell hooks advocates that giving voice to the past and to the present alike is crucial in confronting racism. She writes, “The time to remember is now. The time to speak a counter hegemonic race talk that is filled with the passion of remembrance and resistance is now . . . To move past the pain, to feel the power of change, transformation, revolution, we have to speak now – acknowledge our pain now, claim each other and our voices now” (1995: 6). The “now,” to which bell hooks refers, is of a present that happened yesterday and has a perpetual urgency. Fifth (and the count can go on), the complexity of the Middle Passage, and then the slavery as an institution, an ideology, a condition, a spatiotemporal locus, a historical event, and a heterogenic host of traumatic occurrences, reveals the exponential difficulty of representing it aptly and justly.

Reflective of its culture and society, literature suggests specific contexts in which individual and collective traumas unfold. Literature of trauma negotiates between lived and theorized accounts and disputes assumptions of wide-ranging trauma diagnoses that fit all. Kalí Tal notes that it is the identity of the author that defines literature of trauma, which “holds at its center the reconstruction and recuperation of the traumatic experience, but it is also actively engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the writing and representations of nontraumatized authors” (1996: 17). When the author her/himself is traumatized, then the narrative “is written from the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it ‘real’ both to the victim and to the community” (25). The importance and the impact of the literature of trauma calls for a responsible politics of representation and transmission. Writers who convey trauma in imagined or lived narratives raise deep issues of ethical responsibility. The literature of trauma creates an empathetic imagined community that helps survivors identify with and possibly find solace from trauma. It is the author’s mission to lead the audience into an active engagement with history while considering the impact of that history on the lives of *all* individuals bearing that legacy.

Literature has the potential to expose the continuous presence of a racially oppressive past, that is reactivated by the present racial tensions. But while literature dispatches the yet unspoken histories of hurt, it does not necessarily deliver a respite from trauma, but it indicates trauma’s transformative work, an identity-shaping process. A range of literary traditions reflect on the impact of the journey from Africa to the Americas: Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), Barry Unsworth’s *Sacred Hunger* (1992), and Caryl Phillips’ *Crossing the River* (1993), in England; George Lamming’s *Natives of My Person* (1971) and Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s *The Arrivants* (1973), in Barbados; Manu Herbstein’s *Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (2001), in South Africa; Robert Hayden’s “Middle Passage” (1941–66), Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), and Charles Johnson’s *Middle Passage* (1990), in the United States. Literary, as much as historical, imagination, reconstructs the Middle Passage focusing on the three fractured segments of the journey: before, during, and after the slave trade. Carl Pederson elaborates on these phases: “the period before the slave trade and evidence of African encounters with Europeans and Amerindians; the historical moment of the slave trade and the middle passage experience; and the significance of this experience for African-Americans seen in contemporary cultural practices, archaeological findings, imaginative

reworkings, and historical reconstructions” (1993: 227–228). Pedersen notes the creation of a slave system on Portuguese-colonized islands off the West coast of Africa that became spring boards for the slave trade in the Americas; the second voyage of Columbus, “by transporting five hundred Amerindians from the Caribbean to Spain, launched the slave trade from West to East” (228). The second phase, early sixteenth century to the latter half of the nineteenth century, is the most problematic in both “cultural survivals and historiographical interpretation” (228). While the commercial aspect of the Middle Passage has been thoroughly researched, the narratives of the survivors are preciously rare. Sporadic early slave narratives, like Equiano’s, give grim evidence of the traumatic effects the Middle Passage had on the Africans who endured it.⁶

Shunning literary realism, African American novelists Charles Johnson, Octavia Butler, John Edgar Wideman, Toni Morrison, and Ishmael Reed address the Middle Passage and slavery, by distancing their narratives from the historical reality and, in turn, reimagining it in ways that makes liberation, revenge, and healing virtually possible. These texts do not, however, expunge the racial conflict and the political and moral injustices of the events on which they focus. They engage these issues in a fantasist manner, but deeply rooted in black history and identity. The gist of the traditional slave narrative is preserved; they relay the journey, from bondage to freedom, that effected the African American identity. As Pedersen notes, “The task [. . .] is to lay bare the historic irony that the inhumanity of the physical and psychological displacement of the African becomes [. . .] a voyage of death that signals the birth of the African American” (1993: 238).

For the most part, literary imagination aims to reflect on rather than restore historical “truth” of the Middle Passage. Advocating the importance of resistant historiography, Walter Benjamin emphasizes that articulating the past does not mean recognizing it “the way it was.” Instead, such verbalization means “to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (1973: 255). African American writers seize hold of history and revive it in all its traumatic inconsistency and symbolism. Postmodern historians aim to look at the past as a movement of return, which haunts the present in all but “real” shape. The effect of this perspective on history is what Linda Hutcheon defines as “historiographic metafiction.” Such narrative bypasses the question of whether the events of the past actually took place and is “self-conscious about the paradox of the totalizing yet inevitably partial act of narrative representation. It overtly ‘de-doxifies’ received notions about the process of representing the actual

in narrative – be it fictional or historical” (1989: 75). Hutcheon explains that through historiographic metafiction “[p]ast events are given *meaning*, not *existence*, by their interpretation in history” (78).

Representing the Middle Passage and slavery inevitably calls attention to the issue of audience. Nineteenth-century slave narratives were addressed to the white abolitionist audience, as a political means for change, but the targeted audience for the neo-slave narratives displays a different dynamic between the African American writer and a white audience. This dynamic is predicated on the socio-political context and, most importantly, on the state of the racialized discourses of the time these writers produced their work. Writers like Reed, Wideman, Johnson, and Morrison commit themselves to a subtle criticism of the 1970s and 1980s racist cultures respectively. They addressed a national audience not yet prepared to acknowledge the devastating effects of the slave trade and slavery throughout American history. This not-so-new wave of African American writers were uncomfortable with some of the precepts mandated by the Black Arts Movement and found alternate expressions for the racial unrest and the African American culture’s need to contest the white national narrative. Under the surveillance of the white audience and the demands of a cautious and conservative publishing industry, the task of representing race trauma, of exposing the catalyst powers of the present status quo in sustaining this injury, and of uncovering the pervasiveness of racism in the American society is taxing, if not traumatic in itself. Anticipating the scrutiny of a potentially unsympathetic audience, the accuracy of the slave’s story likely changed to accommodate the expectations of white abolitionists. Considering the discontent that neo-slave narratives display in relation to the present, African American writers continually negotiate between ethics of representation and the racialized discourses of their times. The enterprise of representing the Middle Passage and the plantation system that these authors undertake not only emancipates the historiographic novel, and the slave narrative in particular, from the bondage of the nineteenth-century form, but also liberates the audience from its expectations of what African American literature should be and how it should address both its own identity and the national history.

In the context of the U.S. racial regimes, being black often means being exposed to a range of traumatic experiences, ranging from daily racial microaggressions to episodes of blatant racial violence that occur with the background of haunting specters of the slave trade and the plantation system. Understanding the connection between individual and communal race trauma, and the link between past and present in perpetuating the

traumatizing elements of the American racist culture, launches more in-depth inquiries into the how these transfers operate intra- and inter-culturally. This is one of the aspects of the trauma of race that call for an expanded investigation and further research. Since the structure of racism and the process of racialization inherently conflate individual and group identities, individual trauma operates in relation to the (non-homogenous) community. In the ever-changing political and social environment regarding racial definitions, race relations, and racialized discourses, reexamining the Middle Passage and slavery through the lens of race trauma provokes fresh examinations of its cultural and literary representations.

The Trauma of Displacement

Madelaine Hron

Sorte nec ulla mea tristior esse potest. “There can be no fate sadder than my own” (Ovid 5.12: 6). Thus wrote the poet Ovid two millennia ago, when contemplating his exile from Rome, a fate he described as “worse than death” (3.1: 53). In *Tristia*, generally translated as “Sorrows” or “Lamentations,” Ovid bewails that words fail him, that he’s forgetting Latin and that words cannot contain all his suffering. Nonetheless, he manages to describe the hostility and alienation he experiences, the bodily afflictions that mirror his mental anguish, and the immediacy and continuity of his torment, as “teardrops overflow to wet the page” and “cold sorrow drips in his heart like rain” because “his old wounds feel fresh again” (4.3: 96–98).

Today, more than two thousand years after they were penned, Ovid’s words may sound effusively maudlin. Certainly, exile is no longer as singular a phenomenon as it once was. Rather, at the start of the twenty-first century, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that levels of displacement were higher than at any time since World War II, with approximately one in every 120 persons uprooted from their home. Problematically, increasing numbers of people – some 10 million – were also stateless, meaning that they had been denied a nationality and are thus deprived of basic rights and protections. News headlines and public policy continue to revolve around “refugee crises” or “immigration reforms,” so that the hostility and alienation that Ovid alludes to remain uncomfortably current. However, two thousand years later, the trauma of exile – or in contemporary terms, the various traumas associated with displacement, migration, and refugeedom – continue to be murkily understood and are all too easily dismissed. Moreover, much like in Ovid’s time, these sufferings remain painfully difficult to communicate in words or images.

As intimated by Ovid’s *Tristia*, displacement has been part of the human condition for millennia; some scholars even go as far as to claim that “[t]he human story is a migration story. We all are, or have been

migrants, immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers” (Maruskin 2005: 77). In the Judeo-Christian-Quranic traditions, the mythic etiology of migrancy is inextricably linked with the origins of the human race: Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden may be considered as the first exile, with Adam and Eve as the first refugees roaming the earth. Likewise, the founding myth of the Jewish people, the Exodus, dramatizes the Jews’ exile in Egypt and subsequent forty-year wandering in the desert. Similarly, spiritual leaders such as Jesus Christ, Mohammed, and Buddha were all exiled at some point in their lives, as were great epic heroes such as Gilgamesh, Odysseus, or Sundiata. The categories of exiles and refugees have thus shaped the imaginative landscape of Western traditions, often without people’s conscious awareness.

Mythic dimensions notwithstanding, neither exiles nor refugees were commonplace in preindustrialized societies. Exile, or banishment, was generally reserved for select individuals who had somehow transgressed social norms and who were too wealthy or notable to readily imprison, such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Bahá’u’lláh, the founder of the Baha’i faith, or writers such as Ovid, Dante, or Victor Hugo. Throughout the Middle Ages, popes also resorted to excommunicating monarchs when they threatened papal authority. To this day, because of its associations with punishment, the notion of exile continues to summon up connotations of guilt and innocence, as well as just and unjust suffering.

Refugees were also not as common in preindustrialized Europe as they are today. For instance, until the seventeenth century, because travel was slow, expensive, and dangerous, people rarely traveled 25 miles beyond their birthplace (McKay et al. 1983: 323). Therefore, refugees were more the exception than the rule. Though the term *refugee* was first applied to French Huguenots, after the Edict of Fontainebleau (1540), some scholars point to refugees in the Middle Ages, such as those of the Albigensian Crusade (Cassidy-Welch 2012). Escalating wars between nation-states in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries increasingly forced many minority populations to flee their homes – from the émigrés of the French Revolution to those of the 1917 Russian Revolution. With World War II, the refugee situation became a crisis of massive proportions; during the Third Reich, hundreds of thousands of Jews desperately sought asylum around the world and in Palestine, and after the war an estimated seven million refugees were roaming in Europe.

Appalled by the horrors of the Holocaust and in dire need to deal with millions of displaced people, the world community created the UNHCR, as well as the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which

granted refugees special rights and protection. Crucially, it defined refugees as people who, “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted, are unable or . . . unwilling to return [to the country of their nationality].” Thus in order to gain asylum in another country, Convention refugees must demonstrate a “well-founded fear of persecution,” thus an imminent threat to their lives; former torture for instance, does not qualify one for refugee status. Likewise, when applying for asylum, claimants must provide ample documentation of one’s identity – a paradoxical feat when one is fleeing for one’s life. Last, because of the traumas they may have experienced, refugees often require specialized medical care to deal with the sequelae of torture, war, and, increasingly, life in limbo.

In contrast to exiles and refugees, immigrants are closely associated with the progress of modernity and the social changes ushered in by nineteenth-century Europe, namely the impact of the Industrial Revolution, technological advances, the supplanting of traditional village life by urbanization, the rise of the nation–state, and the rise of increasingly capitalistic economic relations. Though there was colonization in North America from 1492 to 1820s – for instance, the Spanish settled the Southwestern United States; the Dutch the Northeast United States and the French in much of Canada – the largest waves of immigrants migrated to North America from the 1820s to the 1930s. It is estimated that 25 million Europeans traveled to the continent after 1880 when massive steam-powered ships replaced sailing vessels, which resulted in cheaper fares and greater immigrant mobility. Immigrants crossed the Atlantic for manifold reasons: some, like the Irish, were driven out by the 1845 Great Famine; others, such as Ukrainian farmers, sought farmland in Western North America.

Current sociological literature often distinguishes refugees from immigrants by differentiating between the “push” and “pull” factor (Ben-Sira 1997). “Refugees” are commonly defined as involuntary migrants “pushed” by life-threatening and coercive political conditions, while “immigrants” are known as voluntary resettlers “pulled” by expectations of better futures and attractive economic opportunities. Of course, in real life such distinctions are very difficult to parse. For instance, in the 1930s Ukrainian immigrants were seeking better opportunities, yet most of them were also fleeing the genocidal famine known as Holodomor. Similarly, Syrian refugees fleeing the Assad regime faced the destruction of their homes and livelihoods and feared for their lives, yet many detractors accused them of simply seeking an “easier life” in Europe, of burdening social services or health care systems, and of “stealing” economic opportunities from EU citizens. Moreover, underlying these facile categories are

fallacious assumptions – such as that refugees suffer persecution to be granted asylum, or that all of their traumas will be erased once they acculturate into their new society.

As outlined earlier, the terms *exile*, *immigrant*, and *refugee* are often confused and easily conflated. Though each of these categories encompasses concepts related to foreignness, displacement, and alienation, each also reflects a disparate trajectory and, importantly, conjures up different associations as far as understandings of suffering are concerned. The term *exile*, for instance, evokes notions of “guilt” and “innocence” or “just” and “unjust” suffering. Intriguingly, such distinctions are nicely represented in the history of art, where guilty parties are viewed as suffering in exile, whereas innocent parties are not. For instance, from Masaccio’s and Michelangelo’s Renaissance depiction of *the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* to Chagall’s expressionist *Adam and Eve Expelled from Paradise*, an avenging angel with a sword looms over the downcast figures of Adam and Eve – they are clearly guilty, and their exile is just punishment for their disobedience. By contrast, Jesus’s exile to Egypt was clearly undeserved, and indeed most renditions of Flight to Egypt depict Jesus’s exile as a leisurely journey. A few even depict exile as a sacred educational opportunity – for instance, Caravaggio’s (1595) and Francois Boucher’s (1737) paintings depict Joseph and Mary reading fat library tomes under palm trees, while being ministered by attentive angels.

In the twenty-first century, the concept of “exile” is somewhat antiquated, when contrasted with the existing legal categories of “refugee” and “immigrant.” Nonetheless, the term *exile* continues to be applied to intellectuals or the elite – such as in Edward Said’s *Reflections on Exile* (1990) or Chinua Achebe’s *Home and Exile* (2000) – though legally, Said was an American by birth and Achebe, a foreign national teaching at elite American universities. Most academics who claim the status of “exile” are in fact citizens of Western countries (often a necessity to acquire important scholarly funding) and had to apply for citizenship like other first-generation immigrants. Interestingly however, few such “exiles” would claim the condition of being an immigrant or refugee because of its devalued status. As Belinda Edmondson explains, “in contrast to the glamorous image of the educated – if tortured – exile, thinking and writing in a ‘cultured’ cosmopolitan center where he can finally be understood, the image of the immigrant calls to mind very different scenarios: depressing urban sweatshops and low-status jobs; physical, not intellectual, labor” (1999: 141). In like manner, audiences much more readily acknowledge the “trauma of exile” of public intellectuals, than the manifold mundane

sufferings endured by immigrants and refugees. Whereas exiles are often characterized by their alienated condition, immigrants are defined by their “success” at “making it” in their new homeland.

In 1678, a young Swiss doctor named Johannes Hofer first documented a new “disease”— a serious, life-threatening form of homesickness – which he termed “nostalgia.” Hofer’s findings were later corroborated by doctors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who elaborated on nostalgia’s symptoms, causes, and treatments and further classed “nostalgia” as a mental condition or nervous disorder (Ritvovi 2002; Rosen 1975). In the late twentieth century, doctors recognized that many immigrants and refugees suffer a wide variety of psychological and physical disorders resulting from the migration process. Although nostalgia is no longer considered a mental disorder, various migrant groups have been linked to higher incidences of diseases such as schizophrenia and depression. Today, immigrant psychology, and in particular ethnopsychology and ethnopsychiatry, are growing fields of inquiry.

Migrant suffering lies at the interstices of both trauma theory and pain studies. Immigrants and refugees experience a variety of hardships, from mental disorders to somatic pain, and from social alienation to economic discrimination. In many ways, the immigrant/refugee experience does not neatly fit with classic definitions of trauma. The traumatic events experienced by immigrants or refugees are rarely as unspeakably harrowing as the Holocaust, or as acutely mortifying as torture, although some refugees from repressive regimes are subjected to gruesome tortures, while others are survivors of horrific genocides, such as those from Cambodia or Rwanda. More commonly, the sufferings that immigrants and refugees experience are more quotidian and chronic in nature and may include such experiences as isolation, alienation, discrimination, poverty, or violence. Similarly, while the manifestations of migrants’ distress sometimes neatly fit into the classic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) categorizations – with intrusive memories, nightmares or flashbacks, hypervigilance, dissociative states – in many instances they do not. Often, their symptomology exhibited reflects more mundane conditions such as grief, fear, or anxiety, while in other cases, they point to other mental disorders such as depression, eating disorders, or prolonged duress stress disorder (PDSO), a more chronic form of PTSD. Finally it is crucial to recognize that not all immigrants or refugees experience suffering or traumatic sequelae as a result of the process of migration or displacement: there are just as many happy, well-adjusted migrants as there are ones who suffer deeply.

As research shows, the trauma that migrants experience manifests itself in multifaceted symptoms and may be influenced by a constellation of factors (see Foster 2001; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989; Schouler-Ocak 2015). Immigrants and refugees face numerous stressors when they leave their homelands and acculturate into a new host environment, such as the loss of familiar social networks (Kirmayer et al. 2011), lowered socio-economic status across the socioeducational spectrum (Tinghög 2007), lack of fluency in the host language (Watkins et al. 2012), or values and behaviors that clash with ethnic traditions (Camino and Krulfeld 2005; Dinnerstein et al. 2015; Ingelby 2005). The loss of one's homeland, familial and social networks, language, and culture are themes that reappear throughout both medical and creative literatures about migration. However, some individuals are much better able to cope with these possible stressors than are others, and therefore some migrants develop traumatic symptoms, or psychological conditions as a result of migration, while others do not.

Importantly, psychologists have also come to realize that it is not the migration process itself but, rather, harrowing events before, during, or after dislocation that can lead to suffering of clinical proportions. Even before emigrating, many people displaced from war-torn, violence-ridden, or repressive societies, may have experienced traumas related to war, famine, or torture (Ingelby 2005; Veer 1998; Wilson 2004). Trauma may also occur in transit to safety, or in supposedly safe places such as refugee camps or detention centers. Immigrants also face various hardships when in the host society – such as exploitative work conditions, inadequate living conditions, hostility, and discrimination – which may lead to traumatic sequelae or psychological conditions for some individuals. Finally, although the trauma model is largely modeled on the experience of Holocaust refugees, refugees from other cultures, such as Vietnam, Rwanda, or Syria, may experience and express their trauma differently.

Generally, most psychologists and sociologists view the difficulties of immigration in terms of development toward “healthy” integration – be it in terms of adjustment steps, stages of individuation, or phases of cultural transformation (Knafo and Yaari 1997). Such linear development presumes progress and ultimate resolution and reflects the national narrative of assimilation. More convincing is Abdelmalek Sayad's formulation of the immigrant condition as a “double absence.” In *La Double Absence* (1999), Sayad characterizes the immigrant subject as both an immigrant and an emigrant, who remains psychically both in the former home and the new host country, as well as in the past and in the present. This ambiguous

state of twin identities and binary thinking is the greatest challenge facing immigrants. At the heart of this “double absence” is the anguish that many immigrants feel at being suspended “in-between,” in a virtual existence between two worlds. This “in-between” threshold, where time and space become chaotic, often becomes a locus of impotence for immigrant subjects, where little agency, voice, or movement is possible. Contemporary migrants, many of whom can return to their homes for visits, often find themselves trapped in this liminal locus of inertia. Sayad’s paradigm is especially pertinent for immigrant writers, who often recreate their home worlds and childhoods in their fiction, paralleling the present with the past, and inhabiting both of these worlds virtually.

Sayad’s conceptual notion of “double absence” nicely echoes Ezat Mossallanejed’s more tangible reality of “immigration limbo” (2005), or the protracted bureaucratic waiting that many refugee claimants endure, often for years on end, before their immigration claim is processed. As he explains, “the limbo of backlog” (now further lengthened due to a number of new antiterrorism provisions) “causes tremendous psychological tension, depression and re-traumatization for thousands of refugees especially those who were survivors of war and torture” (2005: 231). As Mossallanejed elucidates, limbo is one of the most powerful techniques of torture: under torture, limbo can include such strategies as being forgotten, being given false news, waiting for sentencing, waiting to be tortured again, being part of mock executions, or placed on death row. Mossallanejed expatiates how immigration bureaucracy and the indeterminacy of waiting years for one’s official status in many ways parallels these forms of torture. Such “immigration limbo” also highlights that increasingly in our “Age of Terror” migrants do not only suffer traumatic dislocation because of the physical experience of flight or the difficulties of resettlement, but rather because of legal categories based on national and international criteria that bear little relation to community relations or these migrants’ personal experience.

As outlined earlier, immigration is a complex psychosocial process with multifaceted manifestations. For this reason, the various sufferings immigrants and refugees experience do not always neatly fit into the categorizations or assumptions associated with trauma or PTSD. In addition to trauma, another relevant model to consider when conceiving of immigrant/refugee suffering is that of “pain.” Pain is defined by the medical community as “an unpleasant sensory or emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage or described in terms of such damage” (IASP 1996: 216). When applied to immigrant suffering, this

definition invites readers to examine individuals' "experiences" of immigrants and refugees, as well as the "damage" associated with the process of migration, both on a personal and social level. In so doing, it also becomes invested in "social suffering" (Kleinman 1997) – or the human consequences and responses to social problems related to migration, be it structural violence, economic disenfranchisement, or systemic racism.

Complementing trauma theory, translation theory offers a particularly useful framework to consider how this pain of immigration may be communicated, or "translated" into words and meaning. Translation studies – which emphasize communicability, interpretation, and transformation – offer a counterpoint to trauma studies, which, undergirded by deconstructionist tendencies, tend to underscore the "unrepresentability," "ineffability," and "incommunicability" of painful experiences. As Cathy Caruth summarizes, "traumatic experience suggests a certain paradox: that most of the direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it" (1996: 91–2). Similarly, Elaine Scarry argues that the event of pain inevitably destroys language itself: "[Pain's] resistance to language is not simply one of those incidental or accidental attributes, but it is essential to what it is" (1985: 5). While Scarry is here referring to the agony of torture instead of the hardships of migration, in trauma studies there is a recurring theoretical turn to "incommunicability," which at a certain point, to cite Primo Levi, becomes somewhat "frivolous and irritating" (1989: 68). Manifestly, immigrants and refugees do indeed communicate their suffering, but all too often, audiences in the host nation fail to recognize their expressions of pain.

Translation studies readily acknowledge that finding equivalency, fidelity, or transparency are unattainable aspirations; rather translation celebrates notions of difference, interpretation, and mediation. As Benjamin argues in "The Task of the Translator," translation passes through continua of transformation – to translate is to transform (1973). Translation, or "equivalence in difference," as Jakobson defined it (1959: 233), begets interpretation and critique. Moreover, translation is always shadowed by loss – that of an "other" text, an "other" voice, an "other" world – in much the same way that migrants are haunted by "otherness" in displacement.

In many ways, then, translation nicely reflects the migrant experience. Just as the language of the host society may not be transparent for immigrants or refugees, neither is the time, place, or culture they inhabit; these individuals survive in the ghostly shadow of their former selves. As they acculturate to their host country, immigrants and refugees must also translate themselves, changing, adapting, and recreating themselves in

continua of transformation. The sufferings that they experience in migration also demand translation, as they originate from deep within the body or the mind. Although this pain is not transparent, immigrants and refugees seek to identify it, describe it, understand it, but also to transform it, or even treat and heal it.

In translation studies, translation is usually defined as the conversion of a sign into some further alternative sign (Jakobson 1959), from a source language to a target one. Standard translation focuses primarily on the rendition of verbal signs. Manifestly, pain does not originate with verbal signs, but can nonetheless be conceived of as a system of signs: bodily signs or nonverbal neurological, physical, or psychological symptoms. Furthermore, social suffering, such as sexism, racism, or socioeconomic hardship, may also be decoded by decipherable signs. In so doing, the translation of pain may be deemed a form of “inter-semiotic translation” (or “transmutation”), defined by Jakobson as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (1959: 233). Here, Jakobson refers to the translation of language into music, art, dance, or other forms of expression. Taking up Jakobson’s notion of intersemiotic translation in reverse, “the translation of pain” examines how the source language of pain may be interpreted into a verbal sign system of the target host country – in all, how immigrant writers might translate their pain into the written word.

Like translators, then, immigrant and refugee writers are faced with the difficulties of finding linguistic equivalencies for their pain – be it to describe their pain, convey its intensity, explain its cause, or specify its location. The scarcity of a direct language of pain does not mean that there is no viable mode of expression for their pain; rather, like translators, writers must engage in a variety of representational tactics to render their suffering understandable to readers. For instance, like Ovid in the introductory passage, some writers might choose to relate their pain in lyrical laments, while others might insinuate it with sarcastic asides. However, these choices are not merely linguistic; they are largely dictated by the cultural codes, literary conventions, and social expectations of their home and host countries. Therefore, translation does not merely consist of finding linguistic equivalencies; rather, it is also governed by genre, culture, and the target audience.

Though often overlooked, genre plays a crucial role in the translation of pain of immigrants and refugees. As Derrida states, “[e]very text participates in one or several genres: there is no genreless text . . . yet such participation never amounts to belonging” (1980: 212). Publishers and

readers usually consider fiction written by immigrants and refugees as “belonging” to the genre of the immigrant novel. The immigrant novel usually follows predictable generic patterns, such as that of the “American Dream” of open opportunity and easy social mobility. In his structuralist analysis, William Boelhower (1981) details various elements of the immigrant novel, such as the characterization of the hero as “hopeful initiate” or the “pluricultural” reality that signals the novel’s end. Most important as far as suffering is concerned, Boelhower notes that “a series of trials” drives the plot, as the hero comes into contact with the host country and learns to navigate this new culture. The trauma that migrants experience may thus easily be dismissed as a necessary part of the immigrant narrative – a “series of trials” to endure until a happy ending appears.

Most prevalent in this genre, however, is the “myth of success” (Weiss 1969), which refers to a complex set of values that leads people to believe that “everyone can succeed, if only they try hard enough.” Although there clearly are successful immigrants, all too often, the immigrant story is condensed to a triumphant struggle over all obstacles, be they language barriers, ethnic discrimination, or past trauma. The hardships or violence that migrants may endure are glossed over or promptly resolved as a necessary “series of trials.” As such, the immigrant success story ultimately reflects the narrative of the successful host nation – as economically thriving, socially classless, and pluralistically hospitable, proudly embracing racial, ethnic, and gender differences.

The generic trends associated with the immigrant narrative permeate popular culture and are especially evident in mainstream films. In box-office hits such as *Brooklyn* (Crowley 2015), *The Immigrant* (Gray 2013), and *The Hundred-Foot Journey* (Hallström 2014), immigrants all easily resolve a “series of trials” to succeed in their new homelands. In *Brooklyn*, Eilis’s homesickness, depicted as a mournful “double absence,” becomes a “double presence” when a healed Eilis can marry either her American or Irish sweetheart. In *The Immigrant*, Ewa is forced into prostitution because her sister is stuck in “immigration limbo,” but Ewa manages to change her pimp into an honest man, free her sister, and start a new life. In *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, Hassan, a promising Indian cook, becomes a three-star Michelin chef, although he does not speak a word of French and is a visible minority in a small rural French hamlet. In this film, Hassan’s sufferings of migration are wholly supplanted by the hardships of success, that of becoming a celebrity chef. Hassan eventually gives up his stardom to be reunited with his family. In all of these films, family reunification, often as interethnic marriage, signals the resolution of the immigrant narrative.

In contrast to the immigrants, representations of refugees are curtailed in popular culture. Although there are copious memoirs by immigrants, there are comparatively few first-person accounts by actual refugees. Most refugees in camps or those seeking asylum do not have the time or energy to compile their experiences, the desire to relive their traumatic pasts, or the skills to pen their experiences engagingly enough to capture a publisher's attention. Similarly, when the refugee experience is represented by writers and filmmakers, all too often these representations are conflated with those of immigrants, as in the case of the "Lost Boys of Sudan." "The Lost Boys" refer to 20,000 Sudanese children who fled to Kenyan refugee camps during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2003); in the early 2000s, 3800 of them were granted asylum in the United States. In docudramas such as the *Lost Boys of Sudan* (Mylan and Shenk 2003) or *God Grew Tired of Us* (Quinn 2007), much of these children's refugee experience is condensed to a few sequences; what is underscored is their immigration experience and their acculturation in the welcoming United States. Instances of "culture shock" are emphasized – such as these boys' first time eating at McDonald's, encountering snow, or using a toothbrush – and the traumatic sequelae they may still be suffering from their refugee experiences are wholly erased.

Stylistically and linguistically, there are many ways to translate the pain of migration. In popular films, such suffering is often described with the use of atmospheric sound and lighting, in a form of pathetic fallacy. For instance, in *Brooklyn*, when Eilis is homesick, the colors are gray, dull, and monochromatic, and the soundtrack plays plaintive violin music, as Eilis sobbingly reads letters from home. As she acculturates, the colors brighten up, until finally, the letters disappear completely, and in supersaturated colors, Eilis animatedly narrates her adventures in a laugh-filled voice-over. In like manner, setting and atmosphere plays an important role in literary texts, such as in texts by North African immigrants born in France, also known as Maghrebis or Beurs. Many Beur novels are set in the *cités* or *banlieues*, suburbs of low-cost housing on the periphery of major French cities, which are often described as poor, dirty, gloomy, or violent. As Michel Laronde has pointed out (1993), descriptions of the *banlieues* alternate between mud (*boue*) and cement (*béton*). When correlated to the sufferings of immigration, the sinking mud may connote immigrants' depression and despondency, while the cement may refer their confinement on the margins of society.

Maghrebi texts are also marked by signs of ambiguity, aporia, and dysphoria. For instance, in her novel, Sakinna Boukhadenna's *Nationalité*:

Immigré(e) [Nationality: Immigrant] (1987) deploys the construction “*je ne sais pas*” [“I don’t know”] close to a hundred times, thus denoting her ambivalence and sense of “malaise,” or dis-ease. Much like Boukhadenna’s text, the titles of many Maghrebi novels draw attention to immigrants’ feelings of spatiotemporal dislocation, cultural loss, and identity confusion: *Une fille sans histoire* [Girl Without History], *Zeida de nulle part* [Zeida From Nowhere], or *L’entre-deux vies* [The Between Lives]. All of these titles denote feelings of loss – be it a missing past, missing spatiotemporal markers, or missing national affiliation – as well as connoting an alienated sense of identity.

Julia Kristeva’s treatise on depression, *Black Sun* (1982), is particularly useful when considering the dysphoria in these texts. In her analysis, Kristeva describes the linguistic symptoms of depression as “arbitrary or empty” language or as “meaning without signification” (1982: 51, 49). As she sums up, “the speech of the depressed is to them like an alien skin” (1982: 53), a particularly apt analogy in the case of immigrants who often write in a foreign tongue. Notably, Kristeva posits that the only means to understand the indistinct language of the depressed is through the semiotic signs of the body, or “the continuum of the body” (62). She suggests that this “body continuum” reveals itself verbally in the tone of voice, gestures, breathing, and written language, through grammatical syntax, the logic of argument, rhetorical devices, phrasing, and rhythm. As Kristeva explains, “one must learn to understand [this body language] in order to decipher the meaning of affect” (1982: 55).

Indeed, corporeal markers of suffering abound in Maghrebi immigrant literature. Authors such as Charef, Mokeddem, Sebbar, Kacem, Zouari, or Zeituni regularly exhibit their cultural and social dis-ease by explicitly inscribing bodily disease thematically and stylistically into the corpus of the text, with numerous allusions to injuries, sexual mutilation, self-inflicted pathologies, and etiologies of disease. This embodied discourse then serves to criticize the labor oppression, gender inequity, and racial and ethnic marginalization of Maghrebi immigrants. Interestingly, French psychologists, including Franz Fanon (1952), have observed that North African patients often somatize their psychological suffering, in what some doctors have come to refer to as “mal partout” or “pain everywhere” (Jarret 1981: 1721). As psychiatrist Hossain Bendahman elaborates, this somatization connotes immigrants’ inability to identify linguistically or culturally with the host country: “When the mother tongue is lacking, and no longer allows for cultural or social inscription . . . somatization is deployed so as to better convey suffering” (2000: 218). Furthermore, medical researchers

have shown that the memory of trauma and violence often resides in the body. As Elaine Scarry explains, “what is ‘remembered’ in the body is well remembered” (1985: 109). As far as translation is concerned, the body is a universal signifier, shared and recognized by all human beings, and bodily signs – scars, injuries, or physical ailments – prove universally intelligible markers of suffering. Moreover, for visible minorities, the body becomes both the sight and the site of racial and ethnic stereotypes and is often the only stable referent some displaced people have.

In contrast to the universal signifier of the body, cultural connotations of suffering are much more difficult to convey. However, the role of culture should not be underestimated in the translation of pain. Just as language is a social construct, so too is pain; it is shaped by a specific culture, time, and place, and its interpretation is determined by sociocultural and political contexts (Morris 1991). Moreover, displaced writers themselves are embroiled in a process of acculturation or cultural translation. In some host countries, immigrants and refugees face wholesale assimilation – the erasure of their cultural identity and of their social and historical roots, their “source” cultural language. In other countries, writers must learn to “translate themselves,” or to successfully integrate their culture within the scope of the narrative of the nation. Although cultural allusions often permeate immigrant texts, interpreting cultural referents related to suffering is not always transparent.

Some of the difficulties of conveying suffering through cultural signifiers are exemplified in the work of Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat. Danticat often deploys subtle allusions to Haitian *vodou* in her work; however, often these allusions can only be deciphered by readers familiar with Haitian culture. Danticat describes her work as that of “survival soup” or of “braiding” experiences (1996: 220) in a form of cultural *métissage* that intertwines suffering with hope and reworks painful experiences with cultural healing. For instance, her collection *Krik Krak* (1996) consists of nine stories and, as such, structurally resembles a Haitian wake, which is nine days long. In Haiti, a wake is not merely an occasion for mourning, but also one of celebration, just as in Danticat’s collection, the tragedy in the first story, “Children of the Sea” is remembered and reclaimed in the last story, “Caroline’s Wedding,” which features an interracial wedding.

Closer inspection of “Children of the Sea” reveals some of the many nuances of Danticat’s cultural translation. This story details the brutal lives of a group of Haitian boat-people who drown on their voyage to freedom; however, the harshness of their fate is mitigated by the use of various elements from Haitian *vodou*. The story’s protagonists, two star-crossed

lovers, evoke the figures of Ezuli-La Sirene and Agwe, *lwa* (gods) of the seas. Notably, the young woman sits writing her letters under a banyan tree, the resting place of the *vodou* family spirits, while the young man, Kompé, voyages to the bottom of the sea, the final resting-place of humans in *vodou* tradition. Just before dying, Kompé dreams of this underwater heaven, envisioning Agwe, starfishes, and mermaids dancing and singing in Latin, like *ougan* priests at a *vodou* ritual. As Marie-José N’Zengou-Tayo has shown, Haitian texts on boat-people often refer to *lwa* Agwe (1988). Moreover, Agwe is usually celebrated with a raft laden with sacrifices of rich food, called the *barque d’Agwé* (Desmangles 1992: 184). In this case, the rickety raft does not carry food sacrifices but human ones. In *vodou* legends, glimpsing Agwe’s “beasts of the sea,” as Kompé does in his last hours, usually foreshadows death (Courlander 1960: 27); however here, it is depicted as a delightful death, of dancing and rejoicing with mermaids.

Even more implicitly, Danticat references one of the major *vodou* ceremonies in this story – *wete mò na ba dlo* – or the reclamation of the souls of deceased ancestors, as described by numerous ethnographers. Haitians believe that the *lwa* and the spirits of the dead reside in a sacred dwelling place *en ba dlò* “in the watery deep” (Deren 1970: 36), or on *zilet en ba dlò*, the “island beneath the sea” (Courlander 1960: 19). *Wete mò nan ba dlo* (“extracting the dead from the waters of the abyss”) is a death ritual in which the godlike life-force (*gwo-bon-anj*) of the deceased is separated from the community of the dead *en ba dlò*, and is reincorporated into the community of the living. In like manner, Danticat’s collection *Krik Krak* also performs such ceremonial reclamation; this work reclaims the souls of these boat-people, as well as the spirits of many forgotten Haitians, including prostitutes, witches, widows, repudiated women, and destitute laborers. However, to fully understand this cultural reclamation, or the depth of these refugees’ suffering and their healing, readers must be familiar with Haitian *vodou*.

Sketching out the trauma of displaced peoples involves demystifying some of the differences between the exile, refugee, and immigrant experience, pointing to various forms of migrant suffering such as nostalgia, “double absence,” or the “limbo of immigration” and identifying key components in the translation of pain, namely language, genre, and culture. Ultimately however, the most important factor in the translation of pain, and the one that most strongly shapes the experience of immigrants and refugees, is the constitution of “target language,” or the attitude of the receiving host country. It is the receiving country that largely determines the nature and extent of sufferings that migrants may

experience after their arrival – be they forms of discrimination, difficulties finding employment, or therapy for their traumatic sequelae. The host environment, especially its legal, medical, and social institutions, is responsible for doubting or recognizing migrant suffering and effectively treating it.

Interestingly, already 2000 years ago, Ovid concluded his *Tristia* with an apology to his readers for all of his effusively sad verses, while admitting that, until his exile is annulled, his heart would remain tossed at sea, unable to find a safe harbor. Unfortunately, in this day and age, there are more than 65 million people in the world unable to find a permanent home. Their stories are much sadder than those of the patrician Ovid, and problematically, they cannot all simply continue to apologize for their unrelenting misery. The suffering of displacement may be both expressed and dismissed through the generic myth of success, universal corporeal referents, or more opaque cultural signifiers such as Haitian *vodou*. However, just as migrant writers must work to transcend generic conventions and offer fresh approaches to describing migrant suffering, receiving audiences must work to learn to hear and heed these different forms of trauma of displacement, so as to ultimately effectively address them.

*Trauma, Truth, and Reconciliation**Erica Still*

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), perhaps the most well known of its kind, resulted from negotiations between the failing National Party and the rising African National Congress (ANC) during the transition period from apartheid rule to an inclusive democratic government. Authorized by the National Reconciliation Act, the TRC sought to establish an official record of apartheid-era abuses. Three separate committees – focusing on human rights violations, amnesty, and reparations – composed the TRC, which was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Over the course of two years (1996–1998), the first two of these committees held public hearings for victims and perpetrators to come forward in pursuit of either information or amnesty. These hearings were widely publicized – daily reports were included in the major news outlets, and the hearings themselves were televised. As the culmination of its work, the TRC produced a Final Report that outlined a record of abuses, injustices, and human rights violations committed under the auspices of the apartheid government and resistance movements such as the ANC (and eventually recommended a plan for reparations). The TRC was marked by its transparency and focus on national reconciliation, rather than secrecy and retributive justice. Although it was neither a judicial nor a religious body, the TRC occupied a tenuous position between the two possibilities, state-mandated and led by Archbishop Tutu. Its stated purpose was to obtain the truth of apartheid's oppressive force and to enable the healing necessary for a renewed national identity. Through the accumulation of as much truth as possible, the TRC indicated, national (and personal) forgiveness and reconciliation could be achieved.

The TRC operated under a particular definition of “trauma.” Its mandate covered “gross human rights violations” committed in the specific context of political activity related to apartheid (whether in support or defiance of it). Furthermore, the TRC followed the predominant thinking regarding the need to reclaim one's story as a part of recovery from

traumatic events, evidenced by its assumption and assertion that speaking of their personal traumatic experiences (along with gaining information about those abuses, such as the burial locations of their murdered relatives) would help victims gain closure and healing. These definitions of trauma and recovery also helped determine the framing of the Final Report, which was offered as a kind of national “story” of trauma on which the foundations of a newly united national community could be laid. In that sense, the TRC had a dual, perhaps contradictory, task: to record the traumatic experience of one party at the hands of another, and to promote a shared narrative of triumph over that oppressive system.

The TRC was not the only source of narratives about the past being produced in and about postapartheid South Africa. Like other creative forms of cultural expression, literary endeavors often address the problem of representing a traumatic history in a country whose present rests on a precarious balance of frustration and hope. Unlike the TRC, however, many of these literary trauma narratives resist the possibility of reconciliation and linear narratives. In the logic of the TRC, trauma was presumed to be nameable and in that articulation lead to reconciliation between victim and perpetrator; the truth of trauma could be established and used to further national (and personal) recovery and unity. However, in the logic of much of the literary response, trauma remains beyond the realm of the speakable, and in most cases it does not – perhaps cannot – lead to any kind of renewed or redeemed relationship. Literary texts forefront the disruption inherent in traumatic events, even as they work to provide narrative shape to the disruption. South African postapartheid literature provides alternative narratives that resist closure, such that the story of the traumatic encounter is always available for retelling and revising. Closure is necessary for material, pragmatic, and political purposes, and the TRC sought to respond to these needs. Literary engagements with trauma, however, reveal that trauma also creates psychological, relational, and ethical needs that cannot be adequately accounted for in linear or judicial models. Literature’s propensity for and capacity to create a narrative arc without requiring a definitive ending allow for those additional needs to be met.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the TRC and South African postapartheid literature are often read as competing efforts to name and frame South Africa’s history. The TRC is sometimes presented as a nation-building body that most likely rushed to create a closed, fixed narrative of struggle, triumph, and reconciliation, and therefore it tends to lose the moral high ground (among literary scholars, at least) to literature’s open, multiple

accounts of the traumatic experiences of apartheid and its aftermath. The different approaches to narrating trauma employed by the TRC and literary texts have often been posited as antithetical, such that appreciation for one method seems to preclude the same for the other. The limits of this either/or perspective result in unproductive valorization and demonization that occludes insight into the nuanced processes of cultural trauma more broadly. Instead of looking at the TRC and literature as competing narratives, we can usefully recognize them as complementing one another in the larger work of maintaining a collective identity. Such complementarity points to more nuanced strategies employed within the (ongoing) production of South Africa's cultural trauma.

Some critiques of the TRC focus on its use of Western conceptions of trauma, noting its reliance on the event-based definition, the concept of unspeakability, and the therapeutic power of storytelling central to work done by Western intellectuals such as Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartmann, and Dominic LaCapra. Perhaps even more important for the Commission's purpose was Judith Herman's work on the necessity of storytelling for recovery from trauma. Herman writes, "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (1992: 1). Like several other truth commissions, as Martha Minow explains, the TRC operated on the premise that "the restorative powers of truth-telling, of being heard by sympathetic listeners and forging a relationship with them, and of establishing potentially affirmative roles for bystanders and perpetrators are key elements of the recovery for trauma survivors" (2000: 243). In her narrative analysis of the TRC, Claire Moon also reminds us that "the TRC explicitly undertook the task of telling a story about South Africa's transition from past violence to future reconciliation, and argued that storytelling was fundamental to catharsis, healing, and reconciliation on an individual and a national level" (2006: 258). Especially in the aim of the hearings regarding human rights violations to restore the victims' dignity, but also in the work of addressing amnesty, the crucial component was the space provided for individuals to articulate their suffering in a public, ostensibly receptive, setting.

Likewise, in its emphasis on reconciliation, the TRC accepted the proposed therapeutic benefits of telling one's story, suggesting that doing so would allow for victim and perpetrator to move beyond their history of division, sharing instead in the life of a "new South Africa." Remarking on the connection between Herman's model of recovery and the TRC's work, Russell Daye notes, "no, the TRC was not therapy, in full form, for the

many South Africans traumatized by political violence. But it did perform some therapeutic tasks: It provided a forum for truth-telling, remembrance, and mourning; it offered this forum to the nation to aid trauma survivors in their quest for self-understanding; and it may have helped some of these survivors in their search for healing models and healing relationships” (2004: 139). And as Jane Poyner explains, “The much maligned TRC, with its objective of bringing gross acts of human rights abuse into the public domain, has, if nothing else, shown that bearing witness to the past plays a constitutive part in healing the trauma inflicted by apartheid, allowing victims of the regime and the nation as a whole to move towards the concept of the ‘new South Africa’” (2008: 106). This new nation, John de Gruchy argues, has the potential (and responsibility) for a new “moral culture,” and that potential is due to the fact that “the TRC . . . has set in motion a debate about moral values and the building of a moral culture which needs to be kept alive and taken forward . . . What the TRC has done is to open up the debate and provide raw material for the task” (2001: 171). As such observations affirm, the TRC employed the language of trauma, recuperation, and storytelling to promote a national reconciliation.

As Poyner indicates, however, not all of the responses to the TRC were entirely positive, as some observers believed it served political purposes rather than seeking justice. An outgrowth of this critique was the charge that the TRC produced a narrow, flat version of the apartheid past. Both in its adoption of Western trauma models and in its nation-building mission, the TRC seemed to privilege certain experiences, definitions, and narratives, namely, those that reinforced the desired outcome of a reconciled “Rainbow Nation.” Claire Moon argues that “reconciliation as the prefigured closure of transition thus shapes the new official history *from its very beginning* in both symbolic and material ways, both as an imaginary condition of co-existence, and as a disciplinary discursive construction” (2006: 271, original emphasis). And Erik Doxtader concludes that pre-transition conversations about reconciliation’s meaning and methods “demonstrate the way in which reconciliation preceded, conditioned, and followed the transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy” (2009: 4). Certainly the state-sanctioned TRC was charged with a monumental task, as it ultimately was enlisted (indeed, designed) to participate in the work of nation-building; reconciliation became the term of entry into the rainbow nation. For some, with its commitment to ushering in a new dispensation, the TRC compromised its ethical imperative. “In its eagerness to reinforce the new order,” Mahmood Mamdani writes,

“the TRC created a diminished truth that wrote the vast majority of apartheid’s victims out of its version of history” (2001: 61). Contrary to de Guchy’s celebration of the debate enabled by the TRC, Mamdani insists that “the unintended outcome [of the TRC] has been to drive a wedge between the beneficiaries and victims of apartheid. In doing so, the TRC has failed to open a social debate on possible futures for a post-apartheid South Africa” (61).

Similar critiques were raised about the TRC’s definition of trauma, with its focus on “gross violations of human rights,” which consisted primarily of assaults against physical bodies, and its limited historical purview (1960–1994). These limitations led to an individualizing of political and societal traumas and an emphasis on spectacular rather than quotidian violence; the TRC “has been accused of downplaying, individualizing, pathologizing, and depoliticizing the lived experience of subjection,” as Stef Craps notes (2013: 45). Furthermore, “Its deployment of therapeutic and theological ideas of healing and redemption in the service of an explicit nation-building agenda led to accusations that the TRC attempted to impose premature closure on the past” (45). As Moon argues, “The TRC negotiated the relationship between the real – violent conflict – and the imaginary – future reconciliation – by narrating a causal and linear relationship between them,” producing a “narrative [that] was roughly organized around the following stages in its story: a past conditioned by violent conflict, a present marked by the confessional, and testimonial, and a future reconciliation” (2006: 269). Shane Graham also speaks to this concern:

In appropriating the stories of trauma and loss in the service of a nation-building agenda aimed at assuring international investors, the TRC threatens to consign those memories to the ‘archive’ of a safely contained history. This, even more than the false expectations created by a conception of truth-telling as simple excavation, is the greatest danger in the TRC as it was conceived in South Africa: ostensibly a mechanism for registering and preserving a record of the past, the Commission might instead serve as a mechanism for obscuring and forgetting it. (2009: 30–31)

So while for some the language of trauma, storytelling, healing, and reconciliation offered the hope of a bright future, others found in that language the grounds for erasure, displacement, and a closing off of the past. Appearing to sacrifice nuance and “messy” realities for the utility of a simplistic and cohesive story of reconciliation, the TRC was seen as a further institutional displacing and disadvantaging of those who had already suffered so severely under apartheid.

Critics of this aspect of the TRC often point to literature as a superior means of representing and reckoning with South Africa's traumatic past. They point to the multiplicity inherent in literary representations of apartheid's abuses and consequences, attributing much of that quality to the generic possibilities of this aesthetic medium (especially, though not exclusively, the novel). In light of this uneasiness about the TRC's attempt at a linear history of cause and effect, some have turned to the promise of the literary narrative to disrupt the state's version of history. Francesca Mussi, for example, in her discussion of two theatre pieces, Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1998) and John Kani's *Nothing but the Truth* (2002), argues that "these plays use dramatic performance to challenge and expose some weaknesses of the TRC – regarding, in particular, the concepts of truth, amnesty, and reconciliation – suggesting the necessity to keep the dialogue about the past open" (2015: 91). She reads a scene from *Nothing but the Truth* as calling "into question one main assumption in the TRC's operations – the notion that revealing and documenting the truth about gross human rights violations committed under apartheid was itself a sufficient basis to heal and reconcile the whole country" (99). Not only do these plays make visible some of the limits of the TRC, Mussi concludes, but their generic identity helps them to circumvent such pitfalls: "Both plays thereby show how literature makes it possible to deal with contradictory questions, and to engage critically with the past, and with the way the past has been addressed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (100). In another account of a literary critique of the TRC, Anne Whitehead reads Sindiwe Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* (1998) by "drawing on feminist theorists [to position] Magona's rejection of empathetic cross-racial connection as a critique of the South African [TRC]," (2012: 181), noting especially that "Magona's insistence on the ongoing social effects of the forced removals constitutes a pointed critique of the TRC's narrowness of scope" (187) and arguing that "the force of Magona's novel lies in its exposure of the violence inflicted by apartheid legislation on black domestic and family life; even as the TRC acts to 'cover over' such wounds, [the protagonist's] present shame reveals that the past is not so easily or straightforwardly reconciled" (193). The TRC, it seems, must be "corrected" by a literature that is more capacious and capable of managing multiplicity.

Such texts are likely what Ana Miller intends when she concludes that "literature can individualize and differentiate generalized experiences to foreground heterogeneity, complexity, and ambiguity" (2008: 159). In her reading of Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001), she praises the novel as it

“raises questions about the TRC’s ability to recover and recuperate the massive personal and collective traumas of South Africa’s past [and] suggests that the heterogeneous traumas of apartheid exceed and cannot be ‘contained’ by the TRC’s national narrative of healing without being submerged and distorted beneath its particular ‘framing’ of the ‘truth’” (159). In a similar vein, speaking of the same novel, Shane Graham contends that it “constitutes an extended critical evaluation of the TRC process through its microscopic dramatization of the conflicts and confrontations that drove the TRC’s work” (2009: 94). Given its attention to the dangers of too-flat a history of apartheid’s abuses, “the challenge that the novel poses is how to preserve and give voice to the past without being trapped in it or possessed by it” (94). The TRC’s failure to keep alive various stories could be remedied by literature’s resistance to easy answers.

The issue of genre becomes critical here, as the possibilities for properly acknowledging the past without flattening it into an official history wielded by the state for its own purposes reside in the creative realm, and within the novel form especially. Paul Gready makes this case explicitly when he writes of “novel truths,” by which he means “the unique truth practices and repertoire available to the novel as a genre, as distinct from other genres such as the human rights report” (2009: 156). Speaking of “culture” broadly, he notes that “in taking up and taking on the TRC as its subject, culture has meditated upon the meanings of its keywords (truth, justice, reconciliation), retold its stories and reinvented its meta-narratives and metaphors” (164). The novel form, however, remains exemplary in its ability to keep alive the multiple versions of and debates about the past: “Perhaps [recent novels’] major contribution is in providing alternative grammars of transition, picking away at ‘uncomfortable truths’ and ‘unfinished business’ . . . The novels’ truths also escape the rigid certainties, stereotypes, and characterizations of the struggle and struggle novels, and the easy identity oppositions and homogenizations of the TRC” (174). Poyner too highlights the corrective work of the novel when she asserts that “in the tradition of engaged writing, contemporary South African novelists have pointed up the need both to bear witness to the past in order to build a better future and also to regard the promises of truth and reconciliation in the ‘Rainbow Nation’ with a politically urgent and measured skepticism” (2008: 112). And Mengel and Borzaga find that “in opposition to historical writing, in fact, literature can personalize traumatic national histories and engage on a metaphorical and stylistic level with what in history would otherwise remain unrecorded and unrepresented” (2012: xxviii). What becomes evident, then, is the frequent

celebration of the novel form (and literature more broadly) as able to exceed the TRC's narrowly constructed apartheid history.

Admiration for the novel and other creative expression appeared in some of the literature produced during this time as well. Though not explicitly about the TRC, Mda's novel *The Madonna of Excelsior* (1998) does address the question of history, or of how to reimagine the relationship between past and present. Centered around the community at the heart of the 1971 Immorality Act trials in the Free State town of Excelsior, *The Madonna of Excelsior* explores the impact of unacknowledged trauma and unreconciled anger. Niki, an African woman, enters into a sexual relationship with a prominent local Afrikaner in retaliation for his wife's humiliation of her. She becomes pregnant and is later arrested (along with fourteen other African women and five Afrikaner men) for violating the Immorality Act. Released after the charges are withdrawn, Niki recedes further and further from the community. Meanwhile, her daughter, Popi, suffers shame and humiliation as a Coloured girl. Against Niki's warning that "anger eats the owner," Popi harbors a deep resentment, especially against the Afrikaner half-brother whom she will not acknowledge as such and with whom she remains in constant political battle (222). Eventually, however, she lets go of her anger, even reconciling with her longtime adversary. What allows for this transformation is her encounter with paintings by the local priest, who was "nourished by the Flemish expressionists" (7). Standing before them, she found "The works exuded an energy that enveloped her, draining her of all negative feelings. She felt weak at the knees. Tears ran down her cheeks. She did not know why she was crying . . . Yet she felt she had been healed of a deadly ailment she could not really describe . . . There was no room for anger and bitterness in her any more" (229).

Mda's agenda becomes clear here, as he attributes healing powers to artistic expressions. Throughout the novel he addresses the various responses to the abuses and injustices of apartheid, to the fight against the oppressive system, and to the complexities of the political shifts and maneuvering accompanying the new government. For every point, however, he offers a counterpoint, such that no one perspective wins the day when it comes to moral authority or even political efficacy. As one chapter title declares, "Everybody is a hero at one time and a villain at another time" (168). In the midst of all this ambiguity, however, stands one sure antidote to the anger, nostalgia, and cynicism flourishing within the community: creative expression. Whether it is the Seller of Songs, whose "songs have made [her] such a beautiful soul" (197), or the priest, whose

paintings “tamed the open skies, the vastness and the loneliness of the Free State” (4), those who give themselves to the creation of beautiful things emerge as the true heroes of the novel. We might say, then, that Mda’s answer to the social and personal dis-ease of South Africa is to turn to the aesthetic, rather than to the fact-finding model of the TRC. Furthermore, Mda advocates for the indecipherability of the artistic vision. When Popi encounters the paintings, she wonders, “*What did it all mean? Did it matter that she did not understand what it all meant? Was it not enough just to enjoy the haunting quality of the work and to rejoice in the emotions that it awakened without quibbling about what it meant? Why should it mean anything at all? Is it not enough that it evokes? Should it now also mean?*” (227, original emphasis). Here we see Mda’s refusal of interpretive finality. Such openness counters the TRC’s efforts to provide a closed narrative. If we extend Mda’s artistic vision to the possibilities of the literary, his novel calls for acceptance of the kind of ambiguity that the TRC cannot offer or tolerate.

Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull* (1999) provides another example of the rich possibilities encoded in literature. As a memoir, Krog’s account of the TRC promises to be an accurate representation of its work and effect, at least from one person’s experience. However, the realization that Krog included certain details that are untrue – such as her adulterous affair – disrupts readers’ expectations of the genre and reasonably raises questions about the author’s credibility. That fictitious addition, however, reveals an important aspect of the challenge facing the TRC and those who would represent the trauma it sought to address. Namely, how does one convey the truth of a reality so horrifying as to become almost absurd? Can unadorned language, what we might call objective and accurate, bear up under the weight of reality (that is, of lived experience)? Krog’s narrative suggests that it cannot. Her creation of an alternative relationship, one marked by its infidelity, its betrayal of a commitment to faithfulness, can be read as an attempt to “adorn” the language of the TRC’s fact-finding mission. The affair, read as an expression of intimacy facilitated by the presence of sorrow, becomes an image of trauma’s fundamental rearrangement of one’s relationships (to language and therefore to people). In other words, just as adultery unsettles one set of affections to create a new, alternative intimacy, so too does trauma disrupt one’s dependence on language as a means of social connection, replacing that dependence and connection with distrust and isolation. In an effort to make visible the ways in which trauma (and attempts to name it) breaks up relationships, Krog introduces the affair. In that sense, the affair marks the pain of a

traumatic experience. Language links human beings to one another, making it possible to explain one's experience to another and thereby reducing isolation. Trauma devastates that link. That Krog depends on a fictional element to address this experience indicates the inadequacy of a judicial, theological, or perhaps even psychological discourse to capture the nature of trauma. Only the language of metaphor – of literature – can do such work.

As we can see, then, careful readings of postapartheid texts often conclude by celebrating literature's ability to complicate the simplicity of the TRC's project. Interestingly, many of these readings emerge from or contribute to postcolonial revisions of Western trauma studies. While the TRC drew on the language familiar to Western observers regarding trauma, much of the literature frequently posited as richer accounts of South Africa's trauma appears to become so through engagements with and enactments of postcolonial thinking about the role of trauma theory in non-Western contexts. Such theories respond to the dominance of Western articulations and experiences of trauma, asking if such a culturally influenced theory can usefully and appropriately be imposed on (or, less cynically perhaps, invited into) the postcolonial context. For Mengel and Borzaga, the answer is a provisional "yes." They contend that "the language of trauma, then, proves to be an invaluable tool to investigate and understand these phenomena, because through explaining the mechanisms by which the past is repeated and negatively continued, it also addresses the crucial question of how change and transformation might become possible" (2012: x). At the same time, however, they clearly call for a revision of some key ideas, given the limits of Western conceptions of trauma in a South African context: "What we need, then, is an understanding of trauma that sees it not only as a result of an identifiable event but as the consequence of a condition that came about historically" (xi). In considering the differences between Western and postcolonial theories of trauma, Mengel and Borzaga conclude that "by putting trauma at the centre of a theory of representation, [Western scholars'] *melancholic* vocabulary is one marked by notions of absence, holes, deferral, crises of meanings, unknowing, and dissociation, in this way precluding any possibility of healing for individuals or entire nations. However, postcolonial thinkers [such as Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe] believe, by contrast, in the importance of reclaiming the past and of transcending mechanisms of victimization and resentment, so typical of traumatized consciousness" (xiii, original emphasis). In such a formulation, then, trauma theory becomes useful when it takes into account the full range of potential

cultural responses and is consequently expanded in its conceptual framework.

Irene Visser takes up this issue directly as well, noting that “increasingly the consensus in postcolonial literary studies has been that trauma theory has not entirely fulfilled its initial promise of offering insightful exegetical tools for the literary analysis of human functioning” (2014: 107). In light of this failure, she continues, “the constraints of trauma theory necessitate expansion and redirection to the theory in order to adequately understand the problems of trauma during and after colonization and to situate these traumatic experiences in specific societal and historical perspectives” (107). Culturally specific modes of addressing overwhelming experiences must be taken into account when thinking about the nature of trauma in a post-colonial context. Such considerations reveal that “trauma, then, is a very complex phenomenon. It is not only to be understood as acute and event-based, but can also be chronic and non-event based; it can be debilitating and disruptive to individuals and communities, but it can also create a stronger social cohesion and a renewed sense of identity” (109–110). She extends this claim in a later piece, in which she posits that “the postcolonial interrogation of the legacy of Western colonialism cannot maintain the ‘injunction’ to regard malaise and melancholia, with their connotations of submissiveness and inaction, as the inevitable outcome of traumatization” (Visser 2015: 254). Instead, “without negating the lasting, profound impact of trauma, postcolonial trauma narratives often also demonstrate that resilience and growth are possible in the aftermath of traumatic wounding” (255). Further, “Postcolonial fiction by these authors [Toni Morrison and Patricia Grace] demonstrates that trauma can be narrated with integrity, and that oral storytelling enables a healing process, which allows insight, acceptance, and access to various modes of redress . . . A decolonized reading of trauma . . . calls for a recognition of the centrality of oral modes of narrative and their ritual function in indigenous communities” (259). For Visser the narrativization of traumatic events, while recognized within Western trauma theory, has a greater significance and efficacy in many postcolonial settings, where culturally familiar methods of managing distressing events often provide ways and opportunities for turning such trauma into meaningful life and/or social stories. Ana Miller addresses similar questions. In her reading of *Bitter Fruit*, she argues that it “casts doubt on the ability of universalized Eurocentric models of trauma . . . to account for South African trauma without suppressing the heterogeneity of experiences and responses to trauma in that locale” (2008: 146). For Miller, as for Visser, the specificity of South African trauma

requires a theoretical framework that accounts for the culture's embedded methods of negotiating devastating events.

This is not to say that novelistic accounts always and inevitably "remember rightly" (to use de Gruchy's phrase). Rather, given the need for multiple and simultaneous versions of South Africa's traumatic past, literary narratives have great *potential*. Graham registers this idea in his discussion of Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*, leaving open the degree of success she achieves while saluting her efforts "to create a form in which victims can be allowed not only to 'speak for themselves' . . . but to do so in a way that recreates or dramatizes the disjunctures and displacements of trauma" (2003: 27). In such a context, "the production of a chronologically and empirically accurate accounting of external events is less important than registering the very impossibility of creating such narratives" (27). Literature offers space in which to negotiate the demands and impossibilities of narrating trauma, but that space must always be reclaimed. Graham again states:

The restoration of the victim's subjectivity is and can only ever be partial and temporary. The story of trauma must be continually told and re-told [and therefore] the challenge for writers and artists is to tell the story in such a way that it reenacts its own paradoxes and displacements, but without a fixed narrative formula . . . For South African literature after the Truth Commission, the challenge is to make it possible for every version of the Truth to be aired without erasing or excluding the victims of apartheid's ravages. (28)

With such qualifiers in mind, many scholars contend that literature serves to expand, or better understand the already expansive nature of, our search for and grasp of truth; acknowledging language's inevitable limits and multiplicitous possibilities, literature provides an avenue toward mutual understanding and ethical reckoning with the past and its aftermaths that traverses ground untouched (or, at least, underdeveloped) by the TRC.

Undoubtedly, critics of the TRC and advocates for literature raise important, convincing arguments that speak to important ethical and material concerns. In this light, it is easy to see how the TRC and literature would appear as antithetical and in competition. But such a conclusion comes too quickly and precludes recognition of a more complex relationship. What, we might ask ourselves, if we reframed the relationship between the TRC and postapartheid South African literature? Greedy does already propose such a position, noting that "the insights and approaches of novels and reporting are complementary and should remain so; their

generic differences should be defended as a source of strength rather than weakness” (2009: 174). While at first glance the contrast between the Western-influenced TRC and the postcolonial perspectives of South African postapartheid literature seems straightforward, further consideration reveals somewhat surprising complications to that apparently obvious juxtaposition. Specifically, the opposite formulation is equally true: The Western-identified TRC embodied a postcolonial sensibility regarding trauma, while the body of literature frequently associated with postcolonial multiplicity inscribed Western assertions of traumatic dissociation onto a South African set of experiences. The TRC, it turns out, was as invested in the culturally recognizable strategies that postcolonial trauma theorists call for, even as it also drew on Western concepts. Likewise, South African postapartheid literature reproduced Western images of unspeakability and consequent isolation as being inherent to traumatic experiences at the same time that it resisted homogenizing narratives associated with dominant discourses. Like postcolonial trauma literature, then, the TRC expanded the framework for understanding trauma. These projects, with their different aims and methods, share a commitment to articulating traumatic experiences in ways that promote restored dignity and agency (personal and communal), even while recognizing the limits of language’s ability to complete such a restoration.

Trauma can be understood as the abrupt encounter with the failure of language to account for experience. That is to say, in the moment when we have no conceptual ways through which to express ourselves, particularly in times of distress and disruption (whether that results from a physical or a psychological wounding), when we have no way to *think* about what is happening, the potential for trauma arises. Obviously, being at a loss for words is not always a sign of a traumatic encounter. When that loss is accompanied by a deep despair at the realization of language’s failure to create meaning and connection, however, it becomes traumatic. The inability to name our experience so that both we and others may fully comprehend it reveals a fundamental isolation inherent to the human condition. Trauma occurs in the experience of facing that void, the abyss in which meaning disappears and our extraordinary aloneness overwhelms us. The TRC’s approach to its task emerges from South African conceptions of dealing with such a void.

Despite charges of overreliance on Western means of dealing with trauma and the work of nation-building, the TRC did in fact draw on a postcolonial ethos, one that expresses great faith in the power of language to hold a dehumanizing isolation at bay. Its limitations notwithstanding,

the TRC reflects a deep commitment to the restorative and performative possibilities of language and demonstrates a culturally derived method, even as it integrated some of the founding ideas of Western trauma theory. Tanya Goodman makes the point clearly:

Although the notion of talk therapy and its catharses have a long Western legacy in the work of Freud . . . , the legitimacy of a forum such as the TRC that privileges the power of public testimony and the promise of healing through talk can also be traced to indigenous cultural forms [and because it succeeded] in combining indigenous and modern forms of theatrical expression with performative models of communal problem solving and social reparation as well as with an underlying acceptance of talk as therapy, the structure of the TRC was thus infused with a degree of cultural legitimacy and communicative power. (2009: 50–51)

The concept of *ubuntu* stands as a clear example of a culturally relevant ideology that played a critical role in certain justifications for the Commission's emphasis on reconciliation. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu,

ultimately this third way of amnesty was consistent with a central feature of the African *Weltsanschauung* – what we know in our language as *ubuntu*, in the Nguni group of languages, or *botho*, in the Sotho languages . . . Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human . . . It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “A person is a person through other persons.” It is not, “I think therefore I am.” It says rather: “I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.” (1999: 31)

By depending so heavily on the concept of human connectedness, the TRC demonstrated its own cultural means of restoring the humanity of those so utterly dehumanized by apartheid.

The concept of *ubuntu* offers an important insight regarding the South African understanding of trauma. In its insistence on the interdependence of human being, *ubuntu* recognizes the isolation that leads to dehumanization. In other words, if humanity is achieved through community, to be separated from that community is to experience the loss of one's own sense of selfhood. That loss is the fundamental trauma – it is the wound to one's meaning-making capacity such that one can no longer know herself. The fracture from humanity (understood as community) points to the isolation that threatens but also attends the very possibility of *human* being because it is the nature of being human to experience both the separation from and the inclusion in a communal existence. If one can only know one's

subjectivity through recognition by others, the possibility of failed or denied recognition suggests that humanity emerges from a constitutive aloneness within the world. Connection is needed to realize one's subjectivity fully, and that need reveals a lack inherent in the condition of being alive. Language is the means through which the necessary recognition is achieved. As a shared conceptual framework, language allows for mutually sustaining meaning-making; the ability to share one's experience allows for entrance into the community that constitutes humanity itself.

South Africa's postcolonial understanding of trauma resonates with Western ideas because both attend to the loss of meaning at the heart of the traumatic experience. Both recognize the need for reentrance into the community for healing from such trauma, and both emphasize the role of storytelling in achieving such a reconnection. However, whereas Western theorists generally perceive the trauma to result from an *event* that *creates* the isolation experienced by victims, a South African postcolonial perspective assumes the isolation as inherent in the condition of being. The trauma, in that framework, therefore is neither the event itself (*per se*) nor the realization that such isolation exists; instead, the *reemergence* – due to language's failure – of the always already existing isolation creates the trauma. "Humanity" (as concept and as experience) is the meaning (constituted in and through language) created around the core lack (or isolation) within the experience of simply being alive, and when that meaning fails to maintain the borders keeping such absence at bay (or, perhaps, the failure to keep the hole contained), trauma arises and is experienced as dehumanization – the separation from the community. In other words, in Western conceptions, a traumatic event *creates* isolation, whereas in postcolonial South African models, an experience becomes traumatic because it *exposes* the isolation innate to being human.

This difference matters. Understanding isolation as *resulting from* a traumatic event suggests that a naturally occurring communal bond has been irreparably rent, leaving the subject forever stranded within an experience that cannot be articulated or bridged. Understanding isolation as *interrupting* the communal bond suggests that the isolation has already been bridged at some point, such that the subject can reasonably hope for reentry into the community through a repair of the bridge. That repair can be accomplished by language, which has already proven itself capable – although and even when only temporarily – of creating communal bonds. We might say, then, that the traumatic experience is, at heart, a matter of language; the event itself is not the trauma, but instead, the disruption of our relationship to language in the face of the event incites the trauma.

Recovery from trauma requires the belief that meaning and connection are, in fact, made possible through a shared conceptual or cognitive framework. Traumatic events are such precisely because they force the recognition of a fundamental aloneness within the human experience. This isolation is overcome by language, until and unless language itself is overwhelmed by experience. Recovery from trauma involves, indeed necessitates, a return to language – more precisely, a return to *faith* in language as a means of creating communion. Efforts to recover that communion enact a commitment to the possibility of relationship even in the face of unavoidable disruption and incompleteness. That is to say, though it can severely distort it, trauma cannot annihilate the *potential* for human connection, and every effort to name one's trauma resists the threat of overwhelming isolation. To recover from trauma is to believe that words can bind us – as wounded individuals and as fractured communities – together. *Ubuntu* reflects such a faith, and in adopting it as a core tenet, the TRC embodied a South African postcolonial sensibility.

In an unexpected contrast, much of the South African postapartheid literature celebrated for its complication of the TRC's approach actually reinforces Western assumptions (shaped by postmodernist, deconstructionist lines of thought) about language's inability to deal with a dehumanizing isolation. In other words, much of this literature reflects a pessimism about the possibility of human connection in the face of traumatic disruptions to the meaning-making capacity found in language. Even an abbreviated reading of such texts helps make the point. J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001) are two of the most widely known and well-received novels addressing the TRC and postapartheid South Africa. Both are praised for their depictions of the multiple narratives left out of the TRC's nation-building, reconciliatory approach, but an alternative reading demonstrates how these two novels are embedded in a framework built on the perceived unspeakability of trauma and the inevitable debilitating isolation caused by language's failure to convey traumatic experience.

Language is at the heart of *Disgrace*. A white, middle-aged scholar of modern languages and English Romantic poets, David Lourie is now listlessly teaching communication classes at a university in Cape Town. The fact of David's profession is significant, as is his loss of that profession. He is steadily moving away from language and all the power he once perceived it to hold. The move from the study of language as revelatory (evidenced by his intellectual commitment to the poetic aesthetic projects of the Romantics) to the study of language as functional (suggested by his

displacement into the communications department) marks his increasing distance from language's inherent connective potential. In other words, as he mourns the shift from celebrating language as a thing of beauty to wielding it as a thing of utility, he also removes himself from the interweaving of relationships, messy as that may be. Increasingly, David finds himself without words for the reality of his life. In a conversation with a neighbor after his daughter Lucy is raped, "He does not bother to reply. The day is not dead yet but living. *War, atrocity*: every word with which one tries to wrap up this day, the day swallows down its black throat" (102, original emphasis). No word can encompass, fully name and contain, the horror of the day's events. In the face of physical destruction, language fails to repair any of the breaches David experiences, whether of his body (he is physically attached as well), his parental instinct (he is further forced to listen to the attack on Lucy), or his interpretative grasp of the world (he cannot find the words to make sense of what has happened). Later, when regarding Lucy's black neighbor, David thinks, "Doubtless Petrus has been through a lot, doubtless he has a story to tell. He would not mind hearing Petrus's story one day. But preferably not reduced to English. More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa . . . Pressed into the mould of English, Petrus's story would come out arthritic, bygone" (117). Liking English to a prehistoric dinosaur, David suggests that it cannot bear the weight of Petrus's (presumed) tragedy – and therefore of the country's as well. David's rejection of English, the only language he and Petrus share, effectively renders fulfilling his desire to hear the other man's story impossible.

At the novel's end, David decides to "give up" the dog by whom he has been chosen. "He is sensible of a generous affection streaming out toward him from the dog. Arbitrarily, unconditionally, he has been adopted; the dog would die for him, he knows," and his choice reveals his melancholic acceptance of a new worldview (215). In response to the dog's clear affection and curiosity, David declares, "Yes, I am giving him up" (220) as he ushers it in to be euthanized. For David, it is a gift: "He has learned by now . . . to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love" (219). His offering – a letting go of the one being who has accepted him without reservation – is one of love. It also represents a coming to terms with all that he has lost, an acceptance of his displacement in the new social order. Coetzee's novel serves as a eulogy of sorts, marking the death of any (white, liberal) distancing from the enactments and consequences of a racialized world. David's self-absorbed detachment is no

longer tenable, Coetzee's novel admits, but its demise is nonetheless grieved. And that final vision, of stories that can only be told in an as-yet unknown language and of a love that can only be expressed through sacrifice, makes *Disgrace* a counter to the cultural work of the TRC.

Bitter Fruit offers a similar example. Set in 1998, as the country prepares for Nelson Mandela's retirement and the election of a new president, the novel chronicles the lives of the Ali family. Silas, the father, was a member of the underground resistance movement during the apartheid years and is now working as a high-level government official in connection with the TRC as it writes its final report. Lydia, his wife, who suffered for Silas's antiapartheid activities when an Afrikaner police officer (Francois Du Boise) raped her (within Silas's hearing) as a warning for him to get out of the movement, has since refused to speak of the incident. Mikey, their eighteen-year-old son, discovers he is actually the child of a rapist when he reads Lydia's diary and eventually kills Du Boise.

Given his work, Silas serves as the presumed representative of the TRC in the novel. Through him, Dangor challenges that body's logic, suggesting that the process entails "managing" rather than revealing the truth. Silas thinks, "Hell, he had an important job, liaising between the Ministry of Justice and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was his task to ensure that everyone concerned remained objective . . . that they considered the law above all, and did not allow their emotions to sway them. What would happen if he broke his own golden rule and delved into the turmoil of memories that the events of those days would undoubtedly unleash?" (63). He admits to himself that examining the traumatic past "would require an immersion in words he was not familiar with, words that did not seek to blur memory, to lessen the pain, but to sharpen all of these things. He was trained to find consensus, even if it meant not acknowledging the 'truth' in all its unflattering nakedness" (63). Though Silas encourages Lydia to appear before the TRC, his own role within it undermines any claims to its restorative power. Furthermore, he himself resists engaging in any attempts to come to terms with his own trauma, thereby remaining isolated from Lydia, from his son, and from his past.

For her part, Lydia refuses the invitation to speak with the Commission, insisting that "It would not have helped her to appear before the Commission, even at a closed hearing" (156). She rejects the very premise of the TRC, believing that "nothing in her life would have changed, nothing in any of their lives would change because of a public confession of pain suffered. Because nothing could be undone, you could not withdraw a rape, it was an irrevocable act, like murder. Once that violating penis, that

vile *cock* had been inside you, it could not be withdrawn, not by an act of remorse or vengeance, not even by justice” (156, original emphasis). Whereas Silas believes in the “rule of law,” Lydia notes that “it was good to have a rule to live by, but how little his rule – if you make a law, then apply it, to the letter, there is no other way – had helped all those ‘victims’ who had told their stories before the Commission” (155–156). Just as he uses Silas to highlight the pragmatism at work behind the scenes of the TRC, Dangor uses Lydia to question the public promise of healing and reconciliation offered through its process.

At the same time, however, Dangor also interrogates Lydia’s chosen alternative of silence. Having “crossed over into a zone of silence” after the rape (and fueled by her anger and contempt for Silas’s inadequate response to the traumatic event), she finds herself increasingly estranged from her husband and son. Alone on the road to Cape Town at the end, Lydia represents perhaps the novel’s best answer to the problem of a traumatic past, for she is convinced that “Time and distance, even this paltry distance, will help to free her” (281). It is not the communal, or at the very least public, rite of confession that will rescue her, she concludes. Listening to Leonard Cohen’s “Last Year’s Man,” she paraphrases the lyrics simply: “Carry your own burdens, / Mister my friends” (281). It is a bittersweet ending, for while she is rescuing herself, she is left to do so on her own. Dangor undermines the promise of the TRC to make reconciliation possible; if anything, relationships within the Ali family disintegrate even further and faster as the truth emerges. But he does not offer an easy alternative, as the final image insists on a solitary carrying of one’s own burden. Bitter fruit, indeed.

Such readings suggest that whereas the TRC ultimately remained grounded in a faith in language, South African postapartheid literature (at least as represented by these two novels) manifests a deep sense of disillusionment and despair. Presenting it in such a way, however, is not meant to reproduce the either/or binary demanded by the competitive model of assessing the TRC and literature. It is not sufficient simply to reverse the outcome, as if suggesting that the TRC is somehow more authentic, or morally superior, or any other similar kind of conclusions. Instead, it is a both/and situation, in which *both* the TRC *and* literature are embedded in, indebted to, and expansions of *both* Western *and* postcolonial theories of trauma. Both the TRC and the literary narratives are necessary and efficacious as independently yet mutually constituting the means of personal, social, and political restoration and reinvention. As complements, both methods of narrating a traumatic history (or, more

accurately, South Africa's traumatic *histories*) participate in and reveal something about the work of producing a cultural trauma.

Considering the ways in which the TRC and the literature of postapartheid engaged with the language of trauma leads to another key point: namely, both actively participate in the production of a *cultural trauma narrative*. Separate from accounts of individual traumatic experiences, "cultural trauma" speaks to the nature of the story a collective tells about itself. As Jeffrey Alexander explains, "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental ways" (2012: 6). Whereas much of trauma theory draws on the model of an individual's experience of and recovery from traumatic events, "for *collectivities*, it is different. Rather than denial, repression, and 'working through,' it is a matter of symbolic construction and framing, of creating stories and characters, and moving along from there . . . The lives lost and pains experienced are individual facts; shared trauma depends upon the collective processes of cultural interpretation" (3, original emphasis). Those collective processes – embodied in efforts such as the TRC and literary production, for example – perform significant cultural work, "for trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society" (7). As "reflections of neither individual suffering nor actual events, but symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine them," cultural traumas are the stories groups tell themselves about their experiences of profound change (4). Institutional bodies like the TRC and cultural expressions such as the various arts are critical in the production of such narratives. Interestingly, Alexander contends that "the truth of a cultural script depends not on its empirical accuracy, but on its symbolic power and enactment" (4). If that is true, it might help to explain why critiques of the TRC Final Report tend not to be about its empirical findings but about its representative scope and authority. In other words, skepticism about the TRC's final version – indeed, of any final version – of apartheid's traumatizing power emerges not from the question of whether or not apartheid *happened*, but from the challenge of naming what its happening *meant* (and means). Both the TRC and much of postapartheid literature attempt to answer that challenge, thereby participating in the production of South Africa's cultural trauma.

Understanding how the TRC and literature produce narratives of trauma helps to reveal that the terms of that cultural trauma are continually being contested and reworked. These debates respond to the

psychological and material needs of postapartheid South Africa, needs that literature and the TRC together can help (and have helped) to address. Of course, much work remains to be done. The TRC by no means fully accomplished its goal of reconciliation, and literature remains within the purview of a relatively small percentage of the country's population. And yet, taken together these narratives keep alive the possibility of reconciliation and the responsibility for pursuing it ethically. Returning briefly to *Country of My Skull* uncovers what is possible when both the TRC and literature are taken seriously. Speaking of the victims' testimonies, Krog insists "no poetry should come forth from this. May my hand fall off if I write this" (66). The tension arises from recognition of pain's fundamental unspeakability and the simultaneous impulse – compulsion, even – to find language capable of conveying both the pain and its refusal of representation. She cannot reduce others' lives to ordinary words: "So I sit around. Naturally and unnaturally without words. Stunned by the knowledge of the price people have paid for their words. If I write this, I exploit and betray" (66). Even so, she cannot *not* write: "If I don't, I die" (66). If we imagine death as the ultimate experience of isolation, Krog's assertion that not writing will kill her reminds us of the human instinct toward connection enabled by language. Even when doing so is incomplete and insufficient, as it necessarily always is, reaching out through language remains our best hope for escaping the isolation, the unbearable loneliness, that trauma reveals and reproduces.

Finally, however, the fragility of relationships reconstituted through language cannot be overlooked. Like any act of faith, our relationship to language is always fraught by doubt and must, therefore, continually be reinforced, revisited, and reinvented. As Krog notes when discussing the days of negotiations and strategizing by various parties just before the release of the Commission's Final Report, "For me, the Truth Commission microphone with its little red light was the ultimate symbol of the whole process: here the marginalized voice speaks to the public ear; the unspeakable is spoken – and translated; the personal story brought from the innermost depths of the individual binds us anew to the collective. What has happened to that? Has it all become politics?" (311). Humans are as inclined to rejection as we are to connection, and in the face of that tension we must protect and perpetually recreate whatever bonds we can weave. Complementing, contradicting, and complicating each other, the TRC and literary narratives together represent some of our best efforts to do just that.

Terrorism
Trauma in the Excess of Affect

Michael Richardson

Terrorism necessarily involves spectacle. This is what grants it the power to terrorize, to assault relations between someone and the world. Terror's damage is contagious: it is not simply the victims of a bomb blast who suffer, but those touched by its rippling consequences and mediatized representations. Although terrorism's traumas can be local and specific to the event, its distinctiveness as terror is contained in the excess of affect its violence produces. Terror terrorizes when it overwhelms, when it becomes the dominant mode of relations to the wider world, the prism through which everything else refracts. This is what happened after September 11, 2001 – not to everyone the event touched, but to some. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were not the first spectacles of terror – far from it – but they sparked violent repercussions in contemporary politics, life, culture, and literature (see Greenberg 2003; Kaplan 2005; Keniston and Quinn 2008). How 9/11 was experienced, along with the actions taken by the United States and its allies in response, shaped the meaning of later attacks in Madrid, London, Nairobi, Lahore, Paris, San Bernardino, and other sites of terror, as well as the violence and chaos afflicting the Middle East, parts of Africa and South East Asia, and elsewhere.

Terrorism's particular force, its seeming suitability to this increasingly globalized and mediatized point in history, is bound up with its trauma and the capacity for that trauma to touch countless bodies far beyond the reach of any singular terrorist act. Yet to account for such trauma can be difficult. Terror's traumas do not necessarily manifest in forms readily recognized by clinical models. They can be as fleeting as they are enduring, as subtly transformative as they are violently rupturing. This is what literature captures so well. Unsurprisingly, the spate of American fiction published in the years since 9/11 is particularly revealing of terrorism's trauma. Yet authors from around the world, writing both before and after September 2001, have also worked with narrative

structure, aesthetic style, plot, and theme to evoke the forceful resistance to representation of such trauma.

In its traditional theorizing within the humanities, trauma is defined by the repeated return of latent experiences – events rendered out of time by the violence of their occurrence. In the work of Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Judith Herman, and others, this latency makes the traumatic event precisely that which resists representation: Its very status as trauma is defined by its refusal to be known. Powerful as they are, these accounts tend to reduce trauma's impact on the body and its relations to the world to sequelae, rather than recognizing that they are constitutive of trauma itself. Trauma is as much about rupturing or damaging how a body experiences the world at a relational level as it is a function of individual psychology. Trauma, in short, needs to be recognized as affective and not simply psychological. This recognition is particularly important in the context of terrorism, which even while killing or injuring individuals is much more concerned with wounding the cultural, social, and political fabric of communities.

Reading for the trauma of terrorism thus means reading affectively, attuned to the forces of encounter, rupture, and change within the text, and to the ways in which the text impinges on the human sensorium in the act of reading itself. It means reading trauma in relation to the excessive affective force of terrorism itself. Yet the foundational underpinnings of trauma theory in techniques of deconstruction and psychoanalytic subjectivity make it resistant to recognizing affect, which means that trauma theory itself requires some broadening to better address the complex ways in which terrorism traumatizes bodies, societies, and their relations to one another and the world. Reading these forces in literary works that seek to account for terrorism and its traumas also calls for practices of reading that attend less to symbolism and more to the specific forms that affect takes within the text.

This chapter thus considers the trauma of terrorism in literature in three parts. First, it outlines a brief history of terror in literature, tracing the shift in emphasis from the figure of the terrorist to the workings of trauma after 9/11. Then, building on that history, the chapter reconsiders trauma through affect to more fully account for the complex and contagious representations of terrorism's traumas. This theory is taken up and read against literary texts in the third and final section.

Before World War I and its catastrophic impact on psyches, bodies, and societies, terrorism was synonymous with anarchism and revolution. Novels by Joseph Conrad, G. K. Chesterton, and Fyodor Dostoevsky

explore this anarchic deployment of terror, but are more concerned with its political and moral dimensions than personal or cultural trauma. Indeed, insofar as trauma appears at all in Conrad and Chesterton, it does so more within the milieu of the terrorist than his victims. In Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), the political purpose of terror and its strategic form is of more concern than the damage done to any victims. When the attack itself occurs, the sole victim is the disabled brother-in-law of the agent, and its repercussions are traced not in the social sphere but the familial: In a state of shock, the agent's wife kills both him and herself. If there is trauma in the text, it is in the shattering return of events to the agent's friend Comrade Ossipon, haunted by unbidden memories of his role in cheating and abandoning the agent's wife. In Chesterton's metaphysical adventure *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), a council of anarchist terrorists are progressively revealed to be police detectives, each secretly tasked with breaking up the council. The real plot of anarchy serves an inverted purpose: to call attention to the sacred order in everyday life. While the protagonist Gabriel Syme and the other detectives are frequently shocked, horrified, and thrown off kilter, their story returns again and again to the transcendental good rather than the broken or traumatized. With its greater scale and scope, Dostoevsky's *Demons* (*The Possessed*) (1871) does more to examine the motives, psychology, and consequences of the demons of nihilist anarchism that throw a provincial Russian town into chaos. Although characters are recognizably traumatized, what concerns Dostoevsky is moral crisis, the social and personal corruption that attend a revolution conducted without integrity or compassion. That trauma does not figure in these texts is perhaps no surprise: The very concept had not yet truly arrived.

When it did, it was part and parcel with the mechanized violence of World War I. Understanding the social and psychological impacts of war – along with the injury done in railway crashes, that other violence of the mechanical age – required a new clinical vocabulary. What figured as shock or moral crisis became more psychological and intimate in the language of Freud: trauma. At the same time, war overtook terrorism in literary imaginations: writers of trauma were chroniclers of war, not of subversive political violence. The catastrophe of the Holocaust, the brutal violence of World War II, and the impossible scale of the atomic weapon, rendered the notion of bomb-throwing anarchists almost quaint.

Yet terror, if not terrorism, emerged as a prevailing atmosphere of Cold War culture. If the terrorist had a regular role in literature, it was in the espionage thrillers that rose to popularity – not as source or subject of

trauma, but as anticapitalist antagonist. There were exceptions, of course. Chief among these, Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* (1997) chronicles the rippling consequences of an act of domestic terror: the 1968 bombing of a post office by the wayward daughter of an all-American family. For Seymour "the Swede" Levov, those aftershocks slowly reveal the chaos simmering below veneers of respectability and social change alike. His daughter's traumatic transformation from terrorist violence to Jainist pacifism toward all creatures marks a kind of working through of wider social trauma in the life of the individual. Beyond Anglo-American literature, transnational authors often saw the terrorist as a complex figure – neither antihero nor freedom fighter, but caught up in the impossible currents of history. In Naguib Mahfouz's *The Day the Leader Was Killed* (2000), for example, the title haunts the novel's account of a young couple struggling to stay afloat in the economic upheavals of Sadat's Egypt. The president's death comes at the end of the book, the title serving as a kind of traumatic portent, and the sudden violence of its arrival is mirrored in the lowly lives of the characters. Terror in the form of assassination is not so much the novel's preoccupation as its culmination: Trauma is already present, a condition of the flux and uncertainty of postcolonial existence, not incubated in the aftermath of political violence.

By the last decades of the twentieth century, the emergence of globalized televisual media had given terrorism a new stage and reinscribed its literary prominence. Writing just before the attacks of 2001, Margaret Scanlan argues that "the contemporary terrorist novel conceives terrorism as a constructed phenomenon and measures terrorism's impact against its own possibilities for changing political and social reality" (2001: 13). The exemplar of this is Don DeLillo's masterful *Mao II* (1991), an interrogation of the blurred boundary between writer and terrorist. DeLillo's novel frequently attends to images, to televised moments and mediated emotions – the technological potential for the transmission of terror, its amplifier as a political force. How, in the face of the spectacle, can the writer possess a similar potency? As DeLillo's character, the reclusive novelist Bill Gray says, "There's a curious knot that binds novelists and terrorist . . . Years ago I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of the culture. Now bomb-makers and gunmen have taken that territory" (41). When Bill is asked to assist in a project launched by a group of publishers to free a poet captured by terrorists in Beirut, he becomes caught in a dramatization of this battle over significance between writing and terror. As Scanlan writes, "in Bill's view, the old affinity between terrorists and novelists, as solitary rebels and plotters, has turned

into a corporate takeover of art by violent people who manipulate the media” (30). It is, of course, one he cannot win: His futile efforts to intercede lead to a lonely, trivial death. Trauma can be found in *Mao II*, but not as a consequence of terror – it is, rather, the background condition of contemporary culture, a condition which the contemporary novel, DeLillo seems to be suggesting, can no longer disrupt or repair. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that DeLillo was among the authors most prepared to write about the terror of 9/11, an event that reshaped the significance of the terrorist as literary figure, transformed the form and force of terror within literature, and challenges the theories of literary trauma that emerged in the wake of the Holocaust.

The experience of 9/11 reoriented the relationship between literature and terror. It exceeded all terrorism before and after in part because it constituted a spectacle without equal. While it killed thousands and shattered the lives of many more, far more were affected by its imagistic intensity, its mediatised force in a world only just coming to terms with the interconnectedness of globalization. This mediatisation meant despite the sheer realness of the event, “its traumatic force seems nonetheless inseparable from a certain ghostliness, not just because the attacks did more than merely literal damage (that would be true of any event causing cultural trauma) but because the symbolic damage done seems spectral – not unreal by any means, but not simply ‘real’ either” (Redfield 2007: 56). Watching in real time and then having the footage under “obsessive, compulsive scrutiny” meant that, for writers, “the traumatic moment was an iconic one” (Gray 2011: 7). This shift from abstraction to intimacy carried with it a far deeper preoccupation with the trauma it engendered and the paradox of speaking the unspeakable. For American writers in particular, the failure of words “became a refrain, a recurrent theme with writers as they struggled to cope with something that seemed to be, quite literally, beyond words” (15). Few novels capture the challenge of that transition in emphasis more completely than Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* (2007). Rather than attempting to make sense of 9/11 writ large, DeLillo focuses on Keith Neudecker, a lawyer injured in the collapse of the World Trade Center, who makes his way through “a time and space of falling ash and near night” (3) to the apartment he used to share with his now-estranged wife. Unable to reconnect with his past in a way that makes sense for his present, Keith instead engages in a relationship with another survivor. At the same time, his wife Lianne becomes increasingly preoccupied with the performance artist she sees throughout the city: a man who suspends himself by a rope around his leg, mimicking the pose of the

“falling man” from the famous Richard Drew photograph. This suspended body, caught between the event’s arrival and its terrible finality, recurs as a performative reminder of the inability of Keith – and the city – to make sense of what happened. This failure to make sense is repeated structurally in the sharp division halfway through book, after which Keith tours the world playing poker. This inability of the text to approach the event itself reveals the problem 9/11 presents for literature: its traumas are at once individual and societal, immediate and mediatized, visible and impossible.

Terrorism is not simply a particular form of political violence, but also a marshaling of affect. That is, terrorism targets relations between bodies and the world: the very capacity to affect and be affected. If terror’s purpose is to disrupt the patterns and forms of everyday life, then its means is indirect – its force is both symbolic and affective. Both are part and parcel of the act itself and the context for its emergence. What makes terror powerful is its deep rooting within specific social, political, and economic histories. Whatever might be said of the inhumanity of flying passenger planes into office tower, setting off bombs on buses, or firing machine guns into crowds, terrorists do not act without political purpose. The Lockerbie bombing served a political function for Qaddafi, but it also changed the relation many air travelers had with airplanes. Similarly, 9/11 dramatically altered various security procedures and national security priorities, but it also shifted the affective atmosphere of Western nations: It reoriented relations to the state and to the future. As Brian Massumi argues, it brought an emergent form of power from the periphery to the core of the state – a power not just to act but to bring into being. This “ontopower is a power of emergence: a power for the serial production of variations belonging to the same power curve, or tendency” (Massumi 2015: 221). It is the power to form reality into that which it needed to have been to legitimate state action.

Such power is bound up with terror because it is a power that seeks to control the future, which is precisely the *when* from which threat arrives: “Its eventual location and ultimate extent are undefined. Its nature is open-ended. It is not that it is not: it is not in a way that is never over” (Massumi 2010: 53). Yet the failure of the threat to arrive is no obstacle to its force: Its lack of arrival justifies new forms of state power and the very failure to detect the terrorist testifies only to the necessity of looking harder. Terrorism’s trauma, then, is not merely absent in the nonoccurrence of terror – rather, it is always just around the corner. Trauma haunts the now, even as it fails to arrive: terror’s trauma concerns the future as well as the past. This is what makes terrorism powerful and also what renders it traumatically

affecting in a double sense: not only in the past, but in its potential to return as trauma and as another terrorist act. Encountered in literature, this futurity takes the form of a pervasive uncertainty, a sense that experience is increasingly and irretrievably slipping out of control.

Like terror, trauma is far more affective than much of traditional theorizing in the humanities allows. Melding psychoanalysis and post-structuralist techniques of literary deconstruction enabled trauma theory to analyze its symbolic qualities, but eliding both the relational and corporeal limits its capacity to offer insight into the complex, shifting fullness of trauma. Thinking of trauma in terms of affect – the bodily capacity to both affect and be affected by the world, by other bodies, by language and image – opens up ways of understanding its emergence, transformation, transmission, and representation that make clear its complexity and changeability. As Meera Atkinson and I have written elsewhere:

Traumatic affect crosses boundaries, between personal and political, text and body, screen and audience, philosophy and culture. It is not a prescriptive and contained concept, but an open one. Rather than narrowing the meaning of its constitutive terms, traumatic affect brings them into relation in dynamic and surprising ways, sometimes discovering spaces in between that refuse to conform to either. (Richardson and Atkinson 2013: 12)

Terrorism is affective in just this way: Constitutive of the terror it engenders is a raw intensity, an affectivity that exceed the bounds of reason and its naming as an emotion, the “sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal” (Massumi 2002: 28). It is this contagiousness that allows terror to infect the body politic and the body personal. Terrorism’s trauma, then, is inseparable from this intensity of encounter. Because the terror of terrorism is as cultural as it is personal, as collective as it is individual, to think of its traumas only in terms of the psychoanalytic and the poststructural, narrows understanding too much. Ann Kaplan has argued that “most of us generally encounter trauma vicariously through the media rather than directly” (2005: 87), which is not the same as experiencing trauma directly. Yet such encounters can be intensely affecting: “the media act as vectors in affective epidemics in which something else is also smuggled along: the attitudes and even the specific ideas which tend to accompany affect in any given situation” (Gibbs 2001: 1). If the trauma of 9/11 – or any other terroristic spectacle – is bound up with media and mediation, then to understand how its trauma functions in representation, as well as direct experience, then that trauma must be understood affectively. Trauma’s affectivity thus

makes it inseparable not simply from the violence of the terrorist act, but also the terror that event instills. Terror's trauma is thus at once individual and collective, about an event that occurred and has yet to arrive, impossible to narrate and yet everywhere present as spectacle – at least for a time. To write the trauma of terrorism is always to engage this complexity.

Literary representations of the trauma and traumatic affects of terrorism can be found working at the level of narrative, theme, and style. A selection of recent novels, along with poems by Guantanamo detainees, makes clear how literary writing attempts to represent and make sense of terrorism's trauma. Rather than delve deeply into a single text, the remainder of this chapter shows how the intensity of such trauma manifests in different ways and uses those manifestations to construct a theoretical conception of terrorism's trauma in contemporary literature.

The transmissions and mutations of trauma after 9/11, the rippling contagion of its traumatic affects, and the consequences of their impingement on lives and communities, are elegantly traced in Amy Waldman's novel *The Submission* (2011). In a blind competition, a jury selects a Muslim architect's design for a memorial on the site of the World Trade Center. That choice stirs up an emotive storm that swiftly wreaks havoc on all concerned and foments discord in the wider community. Waldman portrays the complex ways in which trauma surfaces and resurfaces, changes form and intensity, and refuses to be the same thing for those it touches. Each of the characters who has lost a family member in the attacks – Claire, poised and wealthy; Sean, full of barely contained rage; Asma, at sea in a foreign city – bears that loss differently, their trauma manifesting in confusion, violence, or outrage. As Arin Keeble points out, “the novel itself is invested in the questions of how to remember and represent 9/11” (2014: 168). Trauma becomes a political tool for opportunistic politicians, as well as a means of selling tabloid newspapers. Traumatic affects, the novel suggests, are not without their uses.

Memorializing is a political act, as well as an aesthetic one: it speaks not only to individual traumas, but also to their affective inseparability from collective ones. Who, exactly, is allowed to speak for the families of victims, for the city or for the nation? Such questions become impossible to answer when the event itself remains traumatic and thus in a certain sense outside knowing. And yet in its emphasis on what happens after, rather than 9/11 itself, the novel shows how traumatic resistance to sense-making does not prevent the event from being overloaded with meaning. In one sense, *The Submission* is a novel about the slow, messy, and often fraught process of coping with terror's trauma, and the ways in which

trauma's affectivity, its emergent yet unformed potential sociality, only amplifies those difficulties when it becomes intensely public. Like many contemporary novels about terror's traumas, the entire plot of *The Submission* takes place after 9/11, and the text only returns to the time before or of the attacks in the recollections of characters. Its plot takes place in careful chronological order, the narrative intact rather than fractured or fragmented. Works such as *Falling Man* or Yasmina Khadra's *The Attack* (2006) are similarly ordered: The terror that produces the trauma that circulates in the text takes place on or just before its first pages. Events occur in response to the trauma and attempt to make sense of what has happened or overcome its impact, but there is no shock or rupture to the narrative itself, no embodiment of traumatic violence at the level of the narrative.

Such narrative disruption is more evident when terrorism arrives mid-text, such as in Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), a novel in which 9/11 fractures the narrative, occurring in the unnarrated space between one chapter and the next. Corrine Calloway, married to a literary editor and mother to young twins, and Luke McGavock, wealthy ex-banker and cuckolded husband of a New York socialite, are thrown together as the narrative breaks late on September 10 and restarts on September 12, as if the day itself were un-narratable. Covered in dust from digging at the site, she appears to him like an apparition as an apparition from the smoke. Luke has only narrowly missed being in the tower, while Corrine's husband's best friend died there. Volunteering together at a makeshift soup kitchen, the two fall in hopeful, fraught love. As a response to the trauma, both the soup kitchen and their romance are urgent, uncertain, and caught in a dilated temporality, a space of unreality produced by the attacks but magnetic to figures already fraying at the seams. Rather than pulling their marriages back from the brink, the two restlessly search for meaning elsewhere – Ground Zero becomes, as Corrine says, “the biggest thing I have ever seen” (135). This immense scale does not so much threaten to consume them as to shift the ground beneath their feet and reshape the stuff of their lives. Luke describes finding “voids, holes under the debris” (253) of the towers, pockets of air that might contain survivors, yet being unable to reach inside. What meaning the soup kitchen offers Corrine, Luke, and the other volunteers is necessarily temporary: a space to breathe within the traumatic intensity that follows the attacks.

Unlike Waldman, who is more interested in how trauma ripples outward from an event and disrupts the very capacity to memorialize, McInerney focuses on its smaller, more intimate workings as an affective force

on individual lives. Like most novels discussed in this chapter, *The Good Life* is written in free indirect style, and the traumatic intensity of the terrorist event produces a sharp tension between the narrative impulse and affective drive, which, as Fredric Jameson argues, bring realism into being “in the symbiosis of [a] pure form of storytelling with impulses of scenic elaboration, description and above all affective investment” (Jameson 2013: 11). Terrorism, the novel shows, does not simply damage the most immediate of survivors, or the families of its victims; it can slip like a splinter into those proximate to the violence, traumatically affecting them in strange, intimate, and mutable ways. With the soup kitchen closed and Christmas arriving, the novel closes on their chances of a life together seeming tenuous. Yet it also ends with an uncertainty turned toward the future, with Luke imagining what might be rather than desperately seeking to make sense of what was. Terror’s traumas, its circulating and mutable affects, can at least be shaken free, if only for a moment, so that a more hopeful future might be imagined.

Literature can attempt to account for trauma in more formalistic and meta-textual ways too. One text that does this in a particular interesting way is French novelist Frédéric Beigbeder’s *Windows on the World* (2004). Taking as its subject the event of 9/11, the novel counts down the two hours during which the planes hit the towers and the towers fall. The novel is structured like the towers themselves, with chapters alternating between twinned narratives. Through the eyes of a Texan realtor who has taken his two sons to the titular restaurant on the 107th floor of the North Tower, the author imagines his way into the catastrophe. In short chapters named for each passing minute, Carthew Yorston does his best to shield his sons and to evaluate his own life in what he soon knows will be its last hours. Rather than allow this story to settle into the moment of the event, to vacate it of its aftermath, every second “minute” tells the author’s own wrestling with what 9/11 means, how its traumas are playing out in major and minor ways in his own life. He knows he cannot know the event as such – “a plane would have to crash into the black tower beneath my feet” (8). Nor does he hold out hope for his own writing: “it is simply an attempt – doomed, perhaps – to describe the indescribable” (57).

In this deliberate insertion of an authorial figure within the text, Beigbeder follows not only in DeLillo’s *Mao II* footsteps, but also Philip Roth’s in *American Pastoral*, where Roth’s layers of authorial uncertainty – the novel is the retelling of his fictional alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman – give the positioning of the act within the narrative, and the articulation of its traumas, a self-conscious fictionality. For Beigbeder, there is no narrative

space outside the violence. Even the author's future narrative and the rendering into text of Carthew's imagined story are inseparable from the event. Whether chronologically or affectively, they are subsumed within it. As smoke and heat surround Carthew and his boys, as the tower begins to give way, the authorial narrative becomes increasingly fraught, as if the act of writing the final collapse were itself something only possible in a frenzy of existential doubt. The attack has a gravity that nothing in the text can escape: despite the author's distance from the event itself, its affective and symbolic force captures him, its traumatic affects entangle his every word. Terrorism's trauma thus animates both form and style and restructures the very relationship of author to text.

Form and style are both pushed even further in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005), the story of nine-year-old Oskar's search across New York for a lock that will fit the key he has found two years after his father's death in the attacks. Narrated by Oskar, the novel leaps and jumps, diverted and deepened by the particular instincts and insights of the boy. Pages accumulate large blocks of text, sometimes with the words layered on top of each other to become impenetrable, or contain just a short phrase or two. A red pen circles certain lines, or suddenly words disappear altogether to be replaced by image after image. Yet this very proliferation of attempts to make meaning or decode it from the world shows the double force of trauma: It produces a desire to know and renders that knowing impossible. The text has a restless energy. Oskar's precociousness, his sense of purpose, couples with the play of form and style. Slowed at times by the "heavy boots" that are Oskar's own metaphoric distillation of trauma's affects, his journey through the city and encounters with its inhabitants are a means of arriving at a different relation to his own memories, to his own knowing of what happened, of comprehending something of the scale of 9/11. At the end of the book, Oskar pastes the photos he has collected of the falling man in reverse order in his book. Flipping the pages, he sees the man fly up, but does not have enough images to see him returned safely to the tower. Oskar cannot make sense of the attacks or his loss, but rather arrives at an acceptance of incomplete knowledge – just as the literary representation of terror's trauma, no matter how far it pushes form and style, must also fall short. Yet in falling short, the novel gives an intensity of presence to the unrepresentable. Arriving at this traumatic affectivity "in the act of reading is to encounter the gestural capacity of literature, an intensity that escapes the page to change the state of the reading body" (Richardson 2016: 138).

This problem of delving into the unrepresentable, of making sense of the senseless, is dealt with rather differently in Yasmina Khadra's *The Attack*. Early in the novel, Amin Jaafari, a wealthy and feted Arab–Israeli surgeon, learns that his wife carried out a suicide bombing in a crowded Tel Aviv McDonald's, yet it makes no sense to him – why would she do such a thing, and how could he not have known? Amin's narration reveals his shock and denial, and how those feelings give way to traumatic anger and an increasingly frustrated desire to know and understand. Khadra uses present-tense, first-person narration to make Amin's shock, disorientation, and eventual trauma intimate and immediate. After finding a confessional letter from his wife, Amin slips from first to second person – “You think you know . . . and then, without warning, the sky falls on your head” (70–1) – textually performing his necessary distancing from an experience that refuses to make sense. His erratic behavior and increasing obsession over whether his wife was unfaithful are a kind of personal and literary flailing, a displacement of fury and hurt onto what can be more readily grasped and answered. Learning that she cheated might be possible, understanding why she blew up herself and others might remain forever elusive. Accepting that she has not slept with someone else but rather given her life to radicalism finally fractures Amin. His narration breaks down as he blacks out, waking to find himself physically drained in a strange hotel room.

By approaching the trauma of terrorism from the other side, as it were, Khadra complicates the position of the victim, and, by placing the narrative within the context of Israel and Palestine, shows how forceful political milieus can be. While the narrative arc of the novel investigates the suicide bombing, its narration is framed by a different kind of terror: a missile attack by the Israeli state. The brutality of the opening scene, narrated by a torn and broken body, only coheres at the novel's close, when it becomes clear that it is Amin narrating his own death at the beginning and end of the book. Terror renders all bodies ultimately little more than flesh: It is indiscriminate in its trauma and the way its affects circulate and destroy in the aftermath of the act.

Part of that destruction is what the response to terrorism does to bodies that threaten to be terrorist. Among the traumatic affects of the aftermath of terror, the felt presence of a threat that fails to arrive amplifies and accumulates intensity. Certain bodies must necessarily be controlled and contained, subjected to the very power that finds itself under threat of terrorism. As Abu Ghraib revealed, that subjection all too often takes the form of torture. Novels such as Janette Turner Hospital's *Orpheus Lost*

(2007) and John Le Carré's *A Most Wanted Man* (2008) examine this dynamic, but perhaps the most powerful articulation of the intimacy of torture and terror is found in the collection *Poems from Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak*, edited by attorney Marc Falkoff (2007). Although few of the twenty-two poems by seventeen different writers show an aesthetic artistry, each of them is deeply marked by the trauma of their context. They are marks of a refusal by the writers to subjugate their humanity in full: testimony to trauma and literary generators of traumatic affect. As Jumah al-Dossari writes in his "Death Poem":

Take my blood.
Take my death shroud and
The remnants of my body.
Take photographs of my corpse at the grave, lonely.

(32)

These remnants, he goes on to say, are to be sent to the "judges" and the "people of conscience" so that what happened can be understood. In his poem, much like the rest, terrorism does not figure. This is poetic testimony to the transform of bodies into threat, of terror into torture. It is not testimony to the trauma of terror, but to the spread of trauma's affects and the damage wrought by their infection of the American body politic. Reading that trauma in literature, whether in these poems or the various novels addressed here, makes clear how powerful, enduring, and contagious terrorism's traumatic affects can be, and how crucial it is that trauma itself be understood as affective, visceral, and relational.

This chapter has argued that literary representations of the trauma of terrorism need to be understood as affectively transmitted and culturally circulated. Although literary writing about terrorism extends back to the late nineteenth century, an emphasis on its trauma only emerges alongside terrorism's own return to cultural prominence in the age of visual media. Writing in the 1980s, DeLillo was able to ask whether the terrorist had replaced the novelist as the revolutionary figure of the contemporary age. Yet by the time he wrote *Falling Man* in the wake of 9/11, the trauma of the event itself had consumed any revolutionary or romantic meaning the terrorist figure might possess. What came to be known as the 9/11 novel is inescapably – even if at times peripherally – one defined by the traumatic affects that reshaped lives, social relations, and political power after the attacks. In different ways, literary works have sought to trace and make sense of such affective trauma and of the war and torture that took place in Afghanistan, Iraq, Guantanamo, and elsewhere in response to the attacks. In the readings performed here, traumatic affect proves variously

changeable, elusive, fleeting, enduring, intense, and uncertain. Literature struggles to pin it down and force it to take specific form, but finds an intensity in its evocation as mutable and affecting. Understanding trauma through psychological, psychoanalytic, or linguistic models, as so much of trauma studies does, proves too limiting for conceptualizing all the complex ways in which terrorism and its traumas take up moments, lives, cities, and cultures and leave them irrevocably marked. Conceiving of trauma as affective, as constituted by the rupturing of relations between body and world, shows how literature attends with care, insight, and subtlety to terrorism's traumas. And it makes clear the necessity of conceptualizing trauma as cultural and relational if its impacts on our contemporary world are to be more fully understood.

Conclusion: After Trauma Studies?

J. Roger Kurtz

“There is something in trauma that intrinsically invokes a beyond,” says Roger Luckhurst (2010: 11). This “beyond” invokes several layers of meaning. On the one hand, Luckhurst is alluding to the time lag between a traumatic event and the onset of trauma symptoms. This is the belatedness that is captured in the “post-” of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and in the inherent deferral or “afterwardsness” of trauma encapsulated in Freud’s evocative term *Nachträglichkeit*, translated by Strachey as “deferred action” (see Freud 1895: I, 356 and 1896: III, 167n). Additionally, the prospect of moving beyond trauma speaks to the hope of working through wounds and arriving at a place of healing. On the other hand, Luckhurst is also referring here to the question of whether trauma theory as a phenomenon has run its course, whether its ideas will continue to have relevance in coming years, and if so under what conditions.

Trauma will, of course, always be with us, in the sense that it is a universal experience. The insights of trauma theory, as this volume demonstrates, have profoundly impacted our study of the humanities in general and of literature in particular. The achievement of trauma studies lies in the way that it offers “a critical-theoretical way of attending to and addressing the representation of human suffering and ‘wounding,’ both literal and metaphorical, both personal and communal,” notes Eaglestone (2013: 12). In this regard, the future of literary studies is inevitably “post-traumatic,” given that trauma studies have enriched and irrevocably impacted our critical vocabulary and our conceptual framework.

Nevertheless, as time passes and ideas consolidate, there is a sense that perhaps we have bumped up against some of the limits of trauma, or that at times too much has been claimed for it. Will these ideas continue to be relevant in the coming generations? Will trauma theory follow the trajectory of other literary-critical approaches, flourishing for a period until the insufficiencies of its most optimistic claims are revealed, then declining in popularity but leaving behind, like a receding tide, choice ideas and

concepts that will always remain part of the field? Some signs of this decline are already evident, for example, in the way that memory studies is in some places replacing trauma as a central disciplinary category.

One criticism of trauma studies concerns its all-embracing nature, the fact that it is a large and baggy concept that soaks up other approaches (in the manner of a category like cultural studies) and that as a result it loses its analytic purchase. If trauma becomes synonymous with any kind of oppression or injustice, it loses effectiveness as a discrete category. In discussing poverty, for instance, does an emphasis on trauma divert us from an economic or class analysis? Does attention to gender-based trauma evacuate our analysis of the functioning of patriarchy? Does a focus on wounds take our sights off the necessary social transformations that create them? If so, this would be an ironic turn of events, given that the initial enthusiasm for trauma studies rested on its promise of enabling an ethical perspective within text-based approaches to reading.

As the chapters in this book show, the impact of trauma studies on literature is wide and deep. That impact is likely to endure, but for it to do so may require us to moderate two of its grandest claims.

The first of these is the claim that trauma explains everything, the notion that it represents an all-encompassing category that embraces all aspects of our cultural condition. What if we were to temper this claim? What if we were to consider trauma not as *the* cultural condition but simply *a* cultural condition of our time? What if, along with Rothberg, we were to “think of the trauma category as a necessary but not sufficient category for diagnosing the problems that concern us as scholars and human beings” (2013: xiii)? This more modest approach might allow us to see trauma in its proper relation to other categories of social problems. It may allow us to think of trauma theory in the plural – as a variety or network of theories growing out of multiple disciplines. In this sense, trauma within literature and other fields would be not the single paradigm through which all human experience is viewed, but rather an important category or component of a larger project. Trauma studies could then reclaim its specificity and its significance within the larger field of peacebuilding.

A second modification would be to see literature not as the privileged site for exploring trauma, but rather as one among many such sites. The resources of literary language offer one set of hermeneutic tools that, like any tools, are good for some tasks but less good for others. This would allow us to approach trauma from the perspective advocated by Luckhurst, which is to “regard trauma as a complex knot that binds together multiple

strands of knowledge and which can be best understood through plural, multi-disciplinary perspectives” (2008: 214). Rather than seeing trauma as the ultimate example of the failure of representation that bedevils language, maybe it is better to follow Kansteiner’s approach, which is to say that “Just because trauma is inevitably a problem of representation in memory and communication does not imply the reverse, i.e., that problems of representation are always partaking in the traumatic” (2004: 205).

In literary studies, the beyond that is invoked by trauma may simply require right-sizing the concept. Insights from trauma have profoundly enriched our understandings of what it means to be human and of our instinct for expressing the complexities of that humanity in language. Moving beyond trauma means that we consider it not as the overarching problem of human existence, but rather as one among a number of important problems. Trauma reverts to being a wound, albeit one with powerful metaphorical resonances. Bringing together trauma and literature, the wound and the word, illuminates both of these categories in remarkable ways, without requiring or allowing either one to have the final say.

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