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The Northwest Journal of Communication is a scholarly, peer reviewed publication dedicated to understanding human and mass communication in all forms. The journal is indexed by Ebscohost. We encourage contributions related to any area of communication from all theoretical and methodological perspectives. Articles relating to any aspect of communication are welcome, as are all theoretical and methodological approaches. Manuscripts will be considered as they are received, and all submissions undergo rigorous peer review. Acceptance rates range, depending on the issue, from 15–25 percent.

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Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis, and may be submitted electronically at any time. Manuscripts should conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA). Most manuscripts should not exceed 8,000 words including references (although exceptions may be made at the editor's discretion) and should not have been published in any prior form. The journal follows a policy of blind review; authors should avoid any identification in the body of the manuscript or abstract.

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Table of Contents

Introduction to the Special Issue

STEPHANIE HOUSTON GREY
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Farrell (1998) explains that we live in a culture that is filtered through the lens of the post-traumatic. This is to say that identity, history and memory are invested by violence, intense loss, isolation, deprivation and other events and conditions that produce psychological rupture. Stemming from the Greek term used to describe a severe wound, "trauma" was originally used in Hippocratic texts. Treatments required physicians to open these wounds, including those that led to the brain, the seat of consciousness. The study of trauma expanded during the nineteenth century when doctors realized that head wounds often manifested symptoms throughout the entire body via the central nervous system. Thus the term trauma underwent a shift from its more visceral meaning and began to signify those injuries that tended to originate in the brain, setting the stage for the study of trauma as an exploration of the indirect manifestations of neural damage. The exhibition of post-traumatic wounds meant looking in other places since the secondary signs were refracted expressions stemming from a primary source. By the latter part of the twentieth century it became widely accepted that trauma could

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debilitate individuals to the extent that they were rendered virtually helpless, despite the absence of any apparent wound.

In recent decades, trauma has been increasingly detached from biology and relocated to the symbolic realm. Drawing heavily from the work of Freud, Laplanche (1973) codified the modern definition of trauma through a theory accounting for its unique, oblique expression. Laplanche acknowledged that trauma had a spatial dimension, a material ontology that could be mapped at a particular historical moment, but was particularly interested in the echoes of trauma across time. This theme was expanded by Caruth, who viewed trauma as a question of history. Much as individual psyches could be subject to the reverberations of traumatic memory, so too could entire cultures. Trauma thus became a unique historical problem because it circulates through a community's unconscious symbolic subfields, creating rips and ruptures in this complex array of representations that must be addressed or, at the very least, sutured so that the cycles of repetition that they evoke can be managed. Trauma suggests that these ruptures emerge and are managed in ways that are surprising but significant. Scholars interested in the ways that trauma shapes this symbolic field must mine a wide range of representations for the indirect expressions of these explosive experiences which, in turn, have a profound impact upon culture, memory, and even ideology.

Because trauma is unconscious, one of its primary locales for expression is art and entertainment. The capacity to constitute past experiences through discursive practice—to project one's identity through language—is driven by aesthetics. The effect that past events have upon behavior, identity, and policy can be traced through the scars they leave upon the symbolic universe that forms the basis for our cultural consciousness. When individuals or societies undergo stressful events, whether generated by internal violence or driven by external catastrophe, these occurrences become integral to the collective histories of those who shared them. While Burke (1993)

does not overtly use the nomenclature of trauma to describe these dynamics, he notes that art is the practice through which massive ruptures in symbolic fields are managed. As the social fabric is abruptly torn by external conditions or events, the subsequent symbolic activity must address the impact that these openings have upon individuals and societies. Because cultural aesthetics are restless and multi-vocal, they serve as vehicles through which trauma erupts from the unconscious into the conscious. They thus become windows into the stresses and fissures that mark a culture. Most importantly, aesthetics remain the topography upon which trauma is negotiated by individuals and cultures. As Farrell (1998) notes, we live in the post-traumatic age and these aesthetic phenomena increasingly inform how we see ourselves.

The essays in this special issue each provide unique insight into the dynamics of culture and trauma. Each examines how trauma is managed through aesthetic forms. In the first contribution, Claire Sisco King provides a rich analysis of the film *Seven Pounds* that explores this text as an indirect expression or symptom of a much larger anxiety regarding humans' relationship with technology. This essay vividly demonstrates how the cinematic commonplace of the car accident is often used to launch a post-traumatic narrative—complete with debilitating flashbacks. King finds that the vocabularies of trauma are highly codified and used for regulating modern crises, such as those in masculinity and uncertainty.

The next group of essays informs how traumatic expressions emerge in political contexts. Brent Saindon examines the Jewish Museum in Berlin as an artifact of post-Cold War culture. This complex analysis locates Daniel Libeskind's design within the fields of repression and confession, particularly how this space impacts international perceptions of the reunification of Germany after the horrors of the Holocaust. In this essay, the Jewish Museum becomes a reference point through which a host of traumatic events linking World War II to the Cold War are managed and contested.

Similarly, Stephanie Grey examines expressions of trauma against the backdrop of the War on Terror and the management of East/West relationships through the lens of gender. This essay looks at the controversy surrounding Norma Khouri's 2003 *Honor Lost: Love and Death in Modern Day Jordan,* which recounts her systematic repression within Muslim society, culminating in the murder of her best friend, Dalia. After this narrative had an international impact, compelling evidence emerged suggesting that it was a fraud. Grey goes on to explore how conventions of post-traumatic narrative have now been linked to larger and deeper questions about authenticity.

Sarah Gendron focuses on the genocidal hatred and violence in Rwanda and analyzes the film and play by Marie France Collard and Phillipe Taszman, *Rwanda 94: Through Us, Humanity,* which locates the roots of genocide in a dynamic that runs through both tribal culture and Western society: the compulsion to identify and divide. Gendron notes that this artistic work served the political function of laying bare this systemic form of symbolic violence that in Rwanda erupted to mass killing. Rachelle Sussman then recalls representations, artistic expressions and popular culture events regarding the 1980s in Africa, when images of the Sahel famine circulated around the world, inspiring a massive concert event known as Band Aid. Sussman demonstrates that it was designed to transform the famine into a commodity to be consumed by Western consumers as a stand-in for structural changes needed to change the African food system.

The next two essays combine the political dimension of trauma with deeply personal reflections, articulated through the alternative discourse of performative writing. First, Kurt Lindemann's auto-ethnographic account of his father's motorcycle accident that left him paralyzed provides a haunting portrait of how trauma can itself be negotiated through aesthetic performance. As a participant as much as a critic, Lindemann attempts to express the inexpressible pain and discontinuity that surrounded a traumatic event and its

consequences; he focuses upon his relationship with his father and how it addresses universal themes of masculinity. Next, Jade Huell explores the historical and personal resonance of an object of pilgrimage now heavily inscribed into the culture of tourism, the Elmina slave castle in Ghana. Huell traces the narratives of trauma and nostalgia at the site and considers her body as a place where their dissonance is felt as well as recognized.

In the last essay, Peggy Bowers examines the way pedophilia acts as a prime example of community trauma serving as a powerful news story. The newsgathering conventions and protocols appear to distance the reporter from the painful emotions of this issue, creating an aesthetic of transparency and objectivity, but masking journalism's depth of participation in the culture's response to this tragedy. She argues that the nature of news itself precludes healing from this increasingly prominent trauma.

Each of these essays enlightens our understanding of trauma, one of the most elusive symbolic dynamics that defines the modern age. Working with an era identified with the multi-faceted study of trauma and its lasting effects, scholars of communication and rhetoric remain uniquely positioned to explore the cultural and political impacts of the complex aesthetic dynamics of these times.

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Car Crashes and Crosses to Bear: Trauma and Masculinity in *Seven Pounds*

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In *Seven Pounds* (Gabriele Muccino, 2008) Will Smith joins a long line of Hollywood heroes who find their lives wrecked by a tragic car accident. In such films, a crashed car acts as a cinematic signifier for traumatized masculinity but also serves, paradoxically, as the tool with which a stronger, nobler version of the masculine can be rebuilt. *Seven Pounds* not only deploys the cinematic iconography of trauma but also uses the visceral onscreen destruction of a car to enact performatively the traumatic rebuilding of masculine subjectivity. Like most melodramatic films about car crashes, *Seven Pounds* reinforces hegemonic male privilege by metonymically linking technology with masculinity, suffering with atonement, and injury with redemption.

KEYWORDS: Film, masculinity, trauma, sacrifice, car crash

The 2008 Will-Smith-helmed melodrama *Seven Pounds* (Gabriele Muccino) might take the prize for Hollywood's most bizarre and unexpected use of a jellyfish as a plot device. The film's protagonist Ben/Tim Thomas (Smith) uses the poisonous sea creature to commit suicide so that he can become an organ donor and save the lives of others in need.[1] In response to both Ben's messianic mission of corporeal generosity and his peculiar method of self-extermination, many critics have called the film implausible, if

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not preposterous.[2] Yet, while musings on the film's oddities have become a constant refrain throughout most reviews, most critics *also* censure *Seven Pounds* for replicating one recurrent and predictable Hollywood trope: the redemptive self-sacrifice of the leading male protagonist—a narrative structure that has become quite familiar to Smith himself as an actor.[3] As A. O. Scott (2008) argued, Smith "has taken so eagerly to roles predicated on heroism and world-saving self-sacrifice—see *I Am Legend* and *Hancock*—that you may wonder if he has a messiah clause in his contract" (p. C6).[4] Although his particular method for ending his life in *Seven Pounds*—submerging himself in a bathtub full of ice alongside a cardiotoxic box jellyfish—may be unusual, Thomas' decision to end his life so that others might live reenacts the same choice made by dozens of Hollywood heroes before him.[5] So, too, does his motivation for ending his life: a life-shattering car accident.

Heavily reliant on flashback editing and non-linear narrative, *Seven Pounds* centers on Thomas's efforts to rebuild his life after causing a traffic accident that killed his fianceé, Sarah, and six other people. The trauma of the accident leads Thomas, first, to despair and depression, and then to an unrelenting impulse to find redemption and restore purpose to his life. In an attempt to atone for the suffering his accident caused, Thomas begins making piecemeal blood and organ donations to recipients in need. He then makes the radical decision to give up his own life so that he may make a total organ donation—but only after carefully investigating his would-be recipients to assess whether they deserve the second chance the donation would afford them. *Seven Pounds* links Thomas to many other beleaguered Hollywood men not only because of its generic structure (trauma, followed by suffering and a longing for redemption) but also because of the significant and particular role played by the *car crash* in the male hero's undoing. If the jellyfish is an unconventional way for Thomas to end his life, the car crash represents an all-too-common device for beginning his redemptive journey.

Despite the prevalence of the trope of the life-altering car accident in popular American films, the relationship between the car crash, trauma, and masculinity remains largely unexplored in critical literature. In this essay, I examine the car crash as a performative trope within Hollywood cinema that reenacts conventional assumptions about trauma along gendered lines. In particular, the cinematic destruction of the car—a technology that has been historically imagined as "masculine"—and the consequent rebuilding of its traumatized male driver serve to reinscribe normative expectations about gendered subjectivity. The cinematic car crash paradoxically naturalizes hegemonic constructs of masculinity by performing its traumatic undoing and restoration, figuring the male body as humanity's most potent and valuable technology. I begin by considering the relationship between the car crash as a cinematic device and canonical understandings of trauma. Then, I consider the gendered implications of the car as a trope for breaking and then repairing the traumatized male subject. I focus on S*even Pounds* not as a peculiar treatment of car crashes, trauma, and masculinity but as a representative text whose attitudes and strategies recur in multiple Hollywood films. In particular, this film reveals Hollywood's investment in the imagined associations of technology with masculinity, suffering with redemption, and trauma with masculine rebirth.

CRASH COURSE

In such sites as the action-adventure film or the heist film, car crashes might seem to occur as often and as quickly as cuts; and in these adrenaline-based films, spectacular car crashes sometimes seem to go almost as unnoticed as the straight cut—just another explosion in the midst of many. Within dramatic (or, even melodramatic) films, however, car crashes often take on a more prominent place in the narrative, operating as the tragedy around which the story

and its (most often) male protagonist develop. Such stories follow a fairly predictable route. A fatal car accident upends the life of a man—sometimes by his own fault and always affecting the life of a person for whom he cares deeply (typically a woman but also frequently a child). Although the crash often occurs at an early point in (or even before the start of) the film's plot, its presence is felt throughout the film, often reappearing in the form of flashbacks that haunt the surviving male protagonist and abruptly fragment the diegesis. Following the accident, melodramatic car crash narratives focus on the leading male's attempts to put his life back together and, in some cases, to make amends for the loss; and in every case, car crash melodramas use the accident as a catalyst for the protagonist's confrontation with his identity as a man.

Consider the following examples, which should be regarded as a representative but not exhaustive selection of films.[6] The fantasy-oriented melodrama *What Dreams May Come* (Vincent Ward, 1998) tells the story of a man devastated by two car accidents—one that kills both of his children and a later one that takes his life.[7] Following his wife's consequent suicide, his spirit follows her to the depths of hell to save her soul and his own. In *Return to Me* (Bonnie Hunt, 2000), a loving husband loses his wife in a car accident as they return home from an event in his honor, leaving him devastated by loss and guilt. The choice to donate his wife's organs eventually leads him to find himself and rediscover love with the woman who was saved by his late wife's heart.[8] In *Reservation Road* (Terry George, 2007) a hit-and-run accident kills a young boy and destroys the lives of two men. The father of the victim battles with his desire for revenge, while the driver—a father himself—must reconcile his fear of punishment with his desire to make up for the loss he caused. *Of Boys and Men* (Carl Seaton, 2008) tells the story of a once-distant father who must learn to be a full-time parent after his wife dies in a car accident.[9] Narrated by the youngest son of the family, the film also depicts this boy's journey to find himself or, as the DVD box

explains, to learn "through the loss of his mother what it means to be a man." In *Snow Cake* (Marc Evans 2006), a lonely ex-convict, mourning the loss of his child, befriends and cares for the autistic mother of a young woman he accidentally killed in a car wreck.[10] As he learns to care for another, he also learns how to repair his own life. *A Single Man* (Tom Ford, 2009) centers on the last day of a man's life as he prepares to commit suicide following the death of his partner in a car accident. As he remembers his past and says goodbye to his present, he finds new reasons to go on living.[11]

Certainly, these films warrant further discussion and critique for their tendency to traffic in the deaths of others (especially women) as a means of granting men new leases on life. This list of films also begs questions about why the *car accident* features so prominently in Hollywood film as an exemplar of tragic experience. What does this recurrent narrative device accomplish? What makes the car accident—as opposed to innumerable other forms of human suffering—useful and potent as a cinematic trope? An easy answer to these questions might suggest that car accidents achieve the levels of shock and surprise needed to sustain Hollywood dramas, while also supplying the kind of loud, garish, and spectacular special effects displays that have become commonplace in commercial American films. After all, most audiences likely consider the instant carnage of a car wreck a more thrilling way to destroy a protagonist's life than the slow demise of old age or terminal illness; but the recurrence of the car crash in Hollywood melodramas owes to more than just its thrill factor. The cinematic "appeal" of the car crash has ideological motivations and implications that help shape cultural discourse about life, death, gender, and subjectivity.

As Kirby Farrell (1998) argues, the prominent presence of car crashes (and other technological disasters) in American popular culture evinces a prevailing trauma culture. When trains wreck, planes crash, or cars collide, Farrell (1998) posits, these accidents produce cultural trauma by "exposing the constructed and

interdependent nature of our existence" and by revealing "how radically vulnerable and ephemeral we are" (p. 176). For Farrell, if such disasters can produce trauma (in individuals and in cultures) it follows that mediated representations of accidents involving our prosthetic extensions reflect a cultural interest in trauma, or a traumatized culture. In such contexts, "post-traumatic themes" abound in public discourse, proliferating images and metaphors of injury, woundedness, and crisis (Farrell, 1998, p. 153), and the preponderance of tragic car crash films in the late 1990s and early 2000s represents the flourishing of such trauma culture.

Understanding the significance of the car crash within trauma culture requires consideration of the concept of "trauma" as it is most often defined. Both clinicians and humanists typically describe trauma as an experience so shocking, sudden, and overwhelming that it overrides the survivor's mental ability to process what has happened. As a result, the traumatized subject may find his/her cognitive faculties impaired and may experience such uncontrollable reexperiences as hallucinations, nightmares, and flashbacks.[12] When such impairment persists to a pathological degree, subjects often receive the diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—published by the American Psychiatric Association and used by most clinicians as a primary diagnostic guide—the causes of PTSD "include, but are not limited to, military combat, violent personal assault (sexual assault, physical attack, robbery, mugging), being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, natural or manmade disasters, severe automobile accidents, or being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness." With "severe automobile accidents" factoring among the potential causes of PTSD, it is little wonder that car crashes recur as the causative origin of trauma within Hollywood films; but beyond registering anxieties about the frailty and contingency of the human condition,

cinematic car crashes also become a useful trope for *performing* the sensibilities of trauma.

There is an aesthetic to the Hollywood car crash. Filmic crashes typically occur suddenly, without much warning. They not only disrupt the onscreen lives of the characters involved but they also rupture the filmic narrative, bringing forward-moving progress to a grinding halt. Car crashes, thus, do to the diegesis what trauma is said to do to the subject—create an interruption, or laceration, in what is imagined to be an otherwise coherent whole. Representations of car crashes also typically involve a variety of visual distortions including canted frames, jarring angles, changes in focus, and manipulations to speed of motion. Significantly, many of the cinematographic devices used to represent the physical assault and chaos of a car accident are also used to represent the psychological states associated with PTSD. As E. Ann Kaplan (2005) contends, such "cinematic techniques attempt to render how trauma symptoms feel to the victim, subjectively" (p. 77) and to put the spectator "'inside' the traumatic experience" (p. 125), so that—in the case of the car crash melodrama—the witness may not only imagine that he/she is in the wrecking car but also that he/she is in the mind of the crash victim. Car crashes also typically warrant loud, discordant manipulations of film sound. The sounds of breaking glass and grinding metal often overtake the soundtrack, in the way that trauma is said to overwhelm (or, hijack) the psyche of the trauma survivor.

The depictions of the car crash in *Seven Pounds,* for instance, help to illustrate these points. The first images of the crash come with little contextualization. At this point in the narrative, the audience does not yet know that Thomas caused the accident that killed his fiancée and six strangers; hitherto, the only reference to the crash occurred in a shot of Thomas reading a newspaper with the headline, "Fatal Crash Kills Seven." The refusal to offer narrative contextualization or exposition mirrors the sudden onslaught

of the accident and trauma itself; the images of the crash appear without warning, disorient the viewer, and hijack the narrative. Brief, fragmented, and out-of-focus images of the crash emerge as Thomas's memories. Following a slow zoom on Thomas's distraught face, the audience sees out-of-focus extreme close-ups of Thomas's and his fiancée's entangled hands. It appears as if they are sharing a tender and amorous moment. Suddenly, these intimate sights give way to slow motion and out of focus shots of bodies, shattered glass, and other forms of debris tumbling through space. Then, a slow-motion shot depicts a van rolling again and again amid a fiery cloud of smoke. These images end abruptly with a close-up on Thomas's face; he is in bed and appears to have awakened with a start, as if from a bad dream.

The next images of the crash, which occur near the end of the film, depict the accident more fully. These images also return as flashbacks connected to Thomas's memories, revealing that he was the driver that caused the crash that killed Sarah. This sequence alternates quickly edited, fast-paced shots with slow-motion shots; cars are shown to collide, spin out of control, and repeatedly flip from a variety of angles and distances. Long shots, which visualize the entirety of the crash scene, collide with interior close-ups of the passengers that are so tight and near to the subjects that the images become almost indecipherable. In some cases, the camera is turned completely upside down, so that viewers feel as if they are standing on their heads; and overlapping edits repeat images of the crash, as if to anticipate the way that trauma is said to return to or revisit its survivors. The sounds of human screams, screeching tires, shattering glass, and nondiegetic music intermingle to the point that each becomes almost indistinguishable from the next.

Seven Pounds intercuts this flashback to the accident with the scene of Thomas's suicide. Following the revelation of the accident, the film shows Thomas as he submerges himself in a bathtub with the toxic jellyfish. As the poisonous invertebrate makes contact with

Thomas's skin and he begins to writhe in pain, the film alternates between shots of his agonizing death and the moments immediately following the crash. In these flashbacks, dark, shaky, hand-held shots depict Thomas running along the roadside; the images are fleeting and fragmented. The final flashback shows Thomas as he lays his body next to the bloody corpse of his fiancée; as he laces his fingers with hers, this close-up recalls his earlier and happier memory of their private embrace.

In car crash melodramas, the use of flashbacks—a term that names both a form of film editing and a particular symptom of PTSD—that depict the accident in the form of the protagonist's memories creates a subjective link among the crashed car, the traumatized protagonist, and the film's imagined audience. The use of flashback editing has become one of the most resilient strategies with which Hollywood films represent trauma (Turim, 1989, p. 207). As Maureen Turim (2001) posits, flashbacks suggest a "poesis of trauma," visually representing trauma as an experience that "invades, troubles and even forecloses by asserting the unresolved pain of events that cumulatively have overwhelmed a subject's ability to cope" (p. 209). This device mirrors clinical descriptions of the nature of traumatic memory as a "*literal* registration of the traumatic event" that revisits the survivor "belatedly," viscerally, and invasively (Leys, 2000, p. 266). The flashbacks to car wrecks assault and unhinge the traumatized protagonist in the same way that the collision disrupted his life.

Such flashbacks that depict car crashes again (and again) also invite spectators to re-experience the trauma that disrupted the life of the filmic protagonist and to identify with the shattered male hero. Just as flashbacks are said to return to trauma survivors suddenly and without his/her volition, cinematic flashbacks disrupt and disarticulate the cinematic text. The sudden intrusion of the flashback enables the film to position spectators to be as shocked, helpless, and distressed as the trauma survivor within the narrative.

Car crashes in these films do not operate solely at representational or indexical registers but also on a *performative* one; these cinematic scenes do not merely show the effects of an accident but attempt to reproduce the sensations of trauma in its imagined witnesses. That is, cinematic car crashes reenact how trauma is said to feel *and* what trauma is said to do to human—especially male—subjectivity.

In addition to using visual and audio techniques that link the physical experience of the crash with the psychic experiences of trauma, car crash melodramas use the material destruction of the car as a metonymic stand-in for the devastation of the traumatized psyche. The splintering of the automotive framework acts as a literal representation of psychological trauma, which is often described as breaching (Caruth, 1996, p. 4), puncturing, disarticulating (LaCapra, 2001, p. 41), and shattering (Herman, 1992, p. 51) the mind of the survivor. Both the car and the trauma survivor might be said to fall apart, while the shattered car becomes a metonym for the shattered subject and, in particular, the shattered male subject.

MUSCLED CARS

A cigar may sometimes be just a cigar, but a car is never just a car. As John Sloop (2005) contends, the automobile operates as both a "medium or prosthetic for the body"—a means of getting around—*and* as a "discursive object that enters a culture with preexisting gender/sexual meanings" (p. 193)—a means of constituting and articulating gendered identity. A car may help humans negotiate their physical presence in the world around them, but it also functions as a tool for managing gendered norms and assumptions. As Sloop (2005) explains, for instance, "most of us have some vague idea of what colloquially constitutes a 'male' and a 'female car'"; a sports car or pick-up truck might qualify as the former, while a mini-van or station wagon might be associated with the latter. Such associations derive from and contribute to hegemonic assumptions

not only about what men and women like but also about what men and women "are like," thus inscribing "gender onto the meaning of the prosthetics functions" (p. 195). Even if gendered differences exist within the world of automobiles, however, the car itself—like almost all of what gets called "technology" in Western culture—has been historically linked with the masculine.[13]

Identifying cars as a prominent "site of gender production," Sidonie Smith (2001) proffers, "Far more than any other form of transportation, the automobile has been associated with male sexual prowess," with cars imagined as "prosthetic extensions of the [male] sexual organ" imbued with "phallic power" (p. 183). Virginia Scharff (1991) likewise argued that, since the inception of the automobile, rhetoric about cars has framed the technology in terms of a "rough-hewn, muscle-bound masculinity" (p. 10). As a product of an industry led almost exclusively by men and catered toward male consumers, the American car was "born in a masculine manger" (Scharff, 1991, p. 13).[14] In fact, Scharff's (1991) cultural history of the automobile revealed that technological developments and innovations in the production of cars have often been driven by gendered ideology. She contends that the "critical cultural categories of masculinity and femininity penetrated, applied to, and organized the dawning of car culture" (p. 165). Referencing, for instance, the assumption that men would prefer gasoline-based cars to the electric ones that were the presumed preference of women, Scharff argues that "car culture absorbed and adapted to popular notions of what masculinity and femininity decreed" (p. 173).

Although cars are themselves sometimes referred to in feminine terms, the production and control of cars has been gendered as masculine. Even the act of driving itself has been gendered, according to Scharff. While men get constructed most frequently as drivers or "motorists," women are typically positioned as "passengers" (Scharff, 1991, p. 68), perpetuating equations of masculinity with agency and femininity with passivity.[15] As a concrete example of such gendered

binaries, Scharff (1991) cites the decision by the Automobile Club of America (ACA) to bar women from membership—a choice that "institutionalized the common identification of masculinity with motoring" (p. 68). Operating a motor vehicle has, thus, become a key ritual with which individual men may perform their masculinity. As Smith (2001) posits, "Driving a car as a 'boy' signifies empowered masculinity, whether it's the elegant masculinity of the corporate subject in his Mercedes or BMW, or the ethically marked masculinity of the low rider, or the working class masculinity of the muscle car" (p. 183).[16] Driving represents a "performative act through which men stake their claims to defining masculinity" (Smith, 2001, p.184); furthermore, as I argue below, *crashing* a car also becomes a performative act through which American film culture manages and redefines masculine subjectivity.

As a gendered signifier, the car perpetuates and naturalizes associations between masculinity and such qualities as aggression, power, speed, and force. Just as the bodies of cars are geared to be hard, resilient, and impregnable, hegemonic discourse often figures "manly" men as strong, stoic, and invulnerable. Such metonymic logic gets condensed in the figure of the "muscle car," high-performance automobiles that are typically linked to young, male drivers and that might be considered to be gendered "male" themselves. Cars also help forge associations between masculinity and individualist discourses of mastery. As Mikita Brottman (2001) notes, "In the West, the car has become a symbol of democracy, of individual freedom, and of the increasing independence enjoyed by the mass of the population of the industrialized world. In the United States in particular—historically a restless, mobile society—the automobile has always been the most obvious index of individual prosperity and personal control" (p. xxxvi). The car, read in this way, becomes part of a metonymic chain linking men with the mythos of the American nation itself.

Seven Pounds preserves such imagined connections. Flashbacks

to the time prior to the car accident depict Thomas as fulfilling the mythos of the "American Dream." In such scenes, he enjoyed a prosperous life as a successful and well liked professional with a beautiful fiancée and an enviable beach home; but Thomas was not just *any* kind of professional. An MIT graduate, he was an engineer and team leader at Apogee Aeronautics, designing state-of-the-art technologies for space exploration. Like the rugged heroes of the Hollywood Western, Thomas was a pioneer—of the final frontier. He also drove a 1960s model Chevrolet Corvette, a quintessential muscle car; and, like his car, he appeared (in multiple shirtless beach scenes) to be strong, fit, and resilient. Thomas it would seem was also "born in a masculine manger": technologically adroit, independent, agentive, and muscle bound.

Even after the accident, Thomas continues to demonstrate his strength and technological prowess, as he repeatedly rescues an ailing woman named Emily Posa. From manual labor in Posa's neglected backyard to restoring her 1956 Heidelberg Windmill printing press, which Posa could find no one else to repair, Thomas affirms linkages among masculinity, strength, and technology. After the accident, Thomas also uses his body as a technology, literally offering up his organs as life-saving devices for others in need.[17] First, he donates a lung to his brother to save him from cancer; then part of his liver saves a female social worker. In contrast to his healthy, youthful, and seamless body prior to the accident, shots of Thomas's body after the accident reveal deep scars from his transplant operations. These scars mark his body as wounded but strong, wrecked but "rough-hewn" and durable. Driven by his desire to continue his salvific donations, Thomas ultimately uses suicide as a means for transforming his body entirely into medical machinery so that every part of him can be put to good use.

The second car crash flashback in *Seven Pounds* underscores the importance of Thomas's masculinity to the narrative. Maintaining the traditional binary of male driver-female passenger,

Thomas drives Sarah home in his Corvette, having just proposed marriage. Although we do not see the proposal, the scene in the car alludes to the recent engagement through shots of and dialogue about her impressive and sizeable diamond engagement ring. As he notes to Sarah, he made sure to "pay extra" for the kind of ring that does not "crack." Offering evidence of his heterosexuality and his financial success—both key signifiers of hegemonic masculinity in America—this scene marks Thomas as performing an idealized version of male identity.[18]

And yet, it is also a signifier of Thomas's traditional masculinity that triggers the tragic accident that will destroy his life and the lives of so many others, pitting hegemonic masculine norms against one another. Instead of attending to his responsibilities as a driver, and, thereby, fulfilling the hegemonic expectation that he uphold and protect "familial patriarchy" (Trujillo, 1991, p. 291), Thomas insistently checks his smart phone—another masculine technology—for messages from work. In an instant, Thomas finds his car careening toward oncoming traffic; he violently swerves the wheel, sending his Corvette into a collision with a van filled with people. This moment of distraction puts Thomas's patriarchal obligations of professional responsibility into literal and violent conflict with the patriarchal obligations of his personal life; his compulsion to perform as a workingman forecloses the possibility of his becoming a family man. As Thomas's muscle car is subsequently destroyed, so too is his sense of self.

A TOTAL WRECK

If driving a car becomes a strategy for performing various versions of masculinity, what, then, is the performative effect of crashing a car? If Thomas's masculinity remains tethered to technologies, including his car, what happens when these technologies fail him (or he fails the technologies)? The melodramatic car crash violently

engenders and performs the dissolution of male subjectivity as the paradoxical grounds for reasserting masculine strength and authority. As the prosthetic extensions of Thomas disappoint (or, even betray) him, he turns to his body as his most resilient and powerful resource; in the end, it would seem, Thomas needs no extensions at all. In fact, through his organ donations, Thomas transforms himself into a prosthesis for other subjects that lack his apparent strength and buoyancy; and significantly, most of the strangers that Thomas saves are either embodied as female or characterized as feminine, perpetuating associations between femininity and passivity, weakness, and vulnerability. For instance, Thomas's heart goes to Posa, a frail and tender-hearted woman whose life has been derailed by cardiac disease; and his eyes go to Ezra, a blind, male musician whom the film casts as meek, sensitive, fragile, and uncomfortable around women.

Ultimately, Thomas's accident demonstrates that he did not actually need the technologies, or prostheses, that had once buttressed his life. In fact, after the accident, Thomas gives up most of his worldly possessions and gets by with next to nothing, save one dark suit (and the giant tank for his jellyfish). He trades his smart phone for low-tech landlines and his beach home for a squalid motel room. Within the logic of *Seven Pounds,* Thomas's personal and radical experience with suffering and vulnerability reveals the strength he has possessed within himself *all along.* Such a figuration of Thomas's life following the car accident recalls and reenacts a tension central to most popular trauma discourse. On the one hand, trauma gets marked as a profoundly transformative (and, in some cases, didactic) experience that radically alters the subject. On the other hand, the discourse of trauma also gets used to bolster fantasies about the nature of human subjectivity, using the wounds of trauma as "evidence" of the subject's wholeness and perfection prior to his/her encounter with radical personal loss or terror.

First, *Seven Pounds* depicts Thomas's accident as changing and,

paradoxically, strengthening him. Thomas may be "wrecked" by his accident, and his destroyed car may metonymically signify his (and masculinity's) vulnerability; but Thomas's car crash also functions as a significant tool for the rebuilding of hegemonic masculine norms and for buttressing fantasies about the resiliency of masculinity. To wit, after the accident, Thomas becomes more of a man than he was before. Prior to the crash, Thomas struggled to order his priorities and balance his patriarchal obligations to be a workingman and a family man; the film depicts Thomas as disappointing Sarah on multiple occasions because of his habit of working late, and it is his compulsion to check in with work that causes Sarah's death. After the accident, however, Thomas understands what "really matters."

Such an emphasis in *Seven Pounds* on the power of trauma to convert and alter the subject resonates throughout multiple accounts of post-traumatic subjectivity. For example, Jay Robert Lifton—one of the most prolific writers on the subjects of trauma and PTSD since the Vietnam War—describes encounters with death as "transformative," contending that the individual who has been able to "take in death" will find him/herself constantly "reassessing what is ultimate, significant, or . . . 'what counts'" (Caruth, 1995, p. 131). This reassessment, Lifton argues, leads the trauma survivor to discover a "profound new knowledge" (Caruth, 1995, p. 135) or what he calls also a "special" kind of "wisdom"—a "something more" than what most are capable of knowing (Lifton, 1973, p. 35).

Seven Pounds certainly grants Thomas such vision and wisdom. After intense research into the lives of the candidates Thomas has chosen to receive his organs—studying their behaviors, surveilling their choices, and even subjecting them to interviews—Thomas decides who should and should not receive his organs. Rather godlike, he makes judgments about which subjects are "worthy" of rescue, determining, in effect, who should live and who should die. For instance, Thomas provokes his blind beneficiary with humiliating insults to gauge how he will react; when Ezra chooses not

to lash out in anger, Thomas declares him to be a subject worthy of salvation. In contrast, Thomas visits another potential organ recipient at his workplace but deems him unfit for rescue because of the practices of the nursing home he runs. When Thomas does grant others the possibility of new life, he does so with a particular directive: his beneficiaries must "honor" his wishes and "live life abundantly." In other words, his figurative heirs must honor his legacy and live up to his worth.

As much as *Seven Pounds* indicates that Thomas's accident changed him, the film also suggests that there was something special about Thomas all along. The fortitude and presence of mind that Thomas is imagined to discover *after* his accident also evince what Thomas had been like *prior to* his experience with loss. To demonstrate, much of what gets registered in the car crash scenes in *Seven Pounds,* like most car crash melodramas, is shock and disbelief that the car—a technology once so sturdy and solid—could be destroyed so quickly. The fetishistic and repetitive shots of the automobile's structural implosion serve not only to register the degree of devastation wrought by the accident but also to assert the grandeur of what *once had been.* Similarly, depictions of Thomas's suffering and sorrow in the wake of the accident *contrast and reaffirm* the extraordinary nature of his once perfect life, as glimpsed in his flashbacks—just as the shots of his scarred body, following his choice to become a habitual organ donor, reinforce the perfection of his body before the accident. The fact that Thomas could be so thoroughly shattered by the accident serves as proof that he had once been a sturdy and solid subject.

To assume that trauma shatters, disarticulates, or disables its survivors is to assume that subject was whole, unified, and masterful prior to traumatic experience. Put crudely, for a subject to be broken by trauma, this subject must have been complete and intact in the first place. Such a construction of the unbroken and seamless subject is itself a fiction that paradoxically finds reinforcement

in assertions of its own injuries. At stake in understandings of trauma as a "self-shattering" experience are hegemonic fictions about the nature of the self; and cinematic depictions of trauma, as in melodramatic car crashes, contribute to prevailing figurations of human subjectivity in Western culture. That is, these cinematic accidents help to reproduce "the subject" that is imagined as being undone by trauma. As Maurice Stevens (2005) argues, canonical representations of trauma performatively constitute the subjects who are understood to bear its traces.

> [Trauma discourse] says, "You see, there once was a whole, seamless and modern subject. Our effort to repair it, by making legible its injury, is proof enough of its having been there at one time, whole (read: vulnerable), pure (read: violable) and mature. Trauma has rendered this particular example of proper subjectivity damaged, where once, in a moment of innocent possibility, it was not. (Stevens, 2005, p. 281)

The discourse of trauma implies a "before" and an "after" to trauma, which is invested in and lends support to fictions "about the coherent subject of history" (Stevens, 2005, p. 281); and within this traumatologic timeline, the "after" of trauma gets used to shore up fantasies about subjectivity "before" it was damaged.

Hal Foster (1999) echoes this claim, and argues, "in popular culture, trauma is treated as an event that guarantees the subject, and in this psychological register the subject, however disturbed, rushes back as witness, testifier, survivor" (p. 168). The version of the subject that is "guaranteed"—or "*evacuated and elevated all at once*" (Foster, 1999, p. 168, emphasis in original)—is not just *any* subject; this "proper" subject does not reflect a neutral or nonideological category. Rather, the "wholeness, purity and propriety of this subject have been built on the very particular ways it has always already been gendered, sexed, and, of course, raced"

(Stevens, 2005, p. 281). Specifically, as Stevens (2005) suggests, the proper subject imagined by trauma discourse is both white and male. In the instance of cinematic car crashes, I argue that these representations of trauma specifically reproduce gendered and sexual assumptions about the nature of subjectivity, aligning "proper subjectivity" with heteronormative masculinity.[19] Arguing that crashed cars themselves stand in as figurative replicas of human subjects, I contend that cinematic car crashes not only reinforce masculinist constructions of the subject but also elevate and set apart male subjects as worthy of reverence. *Seven Pounds* reinforces this reverence through Thomas's reproduction of the trope of self-sacrifice, creating a paradox wherein Thomas signifies both human subjectivity and divine authority.

In *Seven Pounds,* Thomas does more than "rush back" to testify; he returns from trauma in order to pronounce the worth of other subjects and to give new life to others, using his own body as the source of their salvation. Embodying what Farrell (1998) calls "traumatic heroism" (p. 37), Thomas's woundedness and suffering—or, victimization—become prerequisites for his power to heal. It is not just the recipients of Thomas's organs who benefit from his sacrificial death, however. To "sacrifice," from the Latin "*sacri-ficium,*" according to religious understandings of the term, is to "make holy" (Strenski 2003, p. 52). The object that is offered up in the sacrificial ritual must be of value to the community at the time of its offering—if the object is less than cherished, the community has not made much of a "sacrifice"—and then it becomes consecrated through its destruction. Sacrificial death, therefore, marks its object as both warranting reverence *before* its annihilation and as gaining further value *after* it is offered up. As the sacrificial object is extinguished, it also is touched by godly authority. Thus, as Thomas submerges himself in his bathtub—itself an object that recalls a baptismal font—he is reborn as "something more" than just any man. He is set apart as someone special.

Thomas also grants himself life after death; his body may be destroyed (or, in automobile jargon, "totaled"), but his organ donations allow him to live on through others. In Christologic fashion, his body and blood are ritually broken, shared, and made transcendent—although, unlike the Christ story, Thomas picks and chooses whom he will save. His selective donations counteract the ephemerality that Farrell describes as a traumatic mark of the human condition and endow him with the authority he has lost as a patriarch. By living on through others, Thomas also renders his beneficiaries his dependents. He may be "wrecked," but he rebuilds others; and just as the crash led to Thomas's redemptive restoration, his donations will redeem others. Determining who deserves and will (or will not) receive his organs, Thomas maintains his agentive position as driver, relegating his inheritors to the feminine position of passenger.

CONCLUSIONS

I conclude by arguing that the collision of the tropes of self-sacrifice and the car crash in *Seven Pounds* is no accident. Hollywood's treatments of self-sacrifice and car crashes share similar logics and make corresponding contributions to hegemonic discourse about trauma and masculinity. At stake in these analogous logics is the naturalization of masculine privilege. Although Thomas does not literally get "on a cross," his self-sacrifice does figuratively reenact the Christologic myth of self-sacrifice that has become concretized in the icon of the crucifix; as such, Thomas's choice to become a martyr as a result of his accident illustrates what Julian Darius (2001) describes as an affinity between the car crash and crucifixion. Calling the car crash the "(post)industrial equivalent of the crucifixion," Darius (2001) posits that the "cross and the car . . . have analogous mythological significance" (p. 305). Darius (2001) contends, "As the cross provided a central symbol of the Middle

Ages, so the car acts as a totem for twentieth-century Western civilization" (p. 306). In addition to their symbolic or totemic status, both the cross and the car might be read, as well, as prosthetic technologies—the former, perhaps, more literally an articulated extension of the human body than the latter.

The cross and the car also share an interstitial position between the realms of the monumental and the mundane. Both the crucifixion and the car crash suggest a departure from the norm, a shocking anomaly that demands attention, notifying subjects to look upon its horrors and wonders. Both become a cultural performance around which on-lookers, or audiences, might gaze. Both testify to the ephemeral and fragile nature of life, at the same time that the cross and the car are themselves forged as sturdy and formidable technologies. As Darius (2001) explains, "As crucifixion was a public display of might used for its dramatic potential, so the car crash is a fiery wreck, always remarkable and always 'striking'" (p. 308). And yet, Darius (2001) counters, "As crucifixion was a common execution method, so the car crash is a simple automotive accident" (p. 308).

The coterminous monumentality and mundaneness of the crucifixion and car crash also link these cultural events to the logics of trauma discourse. On the one hand, such discourse constructs trauma as unspeakable, un-representable, framing it as a shock so anomalous and singular that it annihilates consciousness. On the other hand, at certain moments, trauma discourse pervades public culture, with such topics as recovered memories and PTSD becoming commonplace in mass-mediated discourse—particularly in moments of "trauma culture" in the late 1990s. For example, a *New York Times* article from 1999 described trauma as an almost ubiquitous, if not inevitable, human experience.

> From the cycle of violence in the Balkans to the string of teenage killing sprees at high schools, trauma has become nearly

> as commonplace as the weather on the evening news. It has rippled through boardrooms and bedrooms, emergency rooms and courtrooms across the United States. (Cohen, 1999, p. B9)

Jane Brody (1999), a frequent contributor on the subject of trauma in *The New York Times,* offers a similar assessment of trauma's omnipresence. Describing trauma as "widespread," Brody (1999) reports that PTSD "is more common than even most experts believe" (p. C9). Mark Seltzer (1998) dubs such a paradox the "abnormal normality of trauma" (p. 254), in which American culture appears both to be shocked by traumatic events and to be constantly expecting their occurrence. As if anticipating Darius's (2001) asserted link between the crucifixion and the car crash, Seltzer (1998) visualizes the American public sphere as a "crowd gathered around the fallen body, the wrecked machine, and the wound" (p. 22), equally fascinated by and familiar with trauma.

This paradox remains central to the effectiveness of trauma discourse. Constructions of trauma as an abnormality insist that traumatic events demand attention and response. At the same time, understanding trauma as recurrent, ubiquitous, and inevitable also ensures the reproduction of the "proper subjectivity," of which trauma is said to offer proof. The fiction of coherent, masterful subjectivity requires repeated evidence of its injury in order to guarantee its restoration; and given that this version of the subject historically aligns with notions of masculine identity, it should come as little surprise that similar tensions between the extraordinary and the routine—the astonishing and the quotidian—also characterize the treatment of masculinity in car crash melodramas such as *Seven Pounds.* While such films cast their protagonists as special and remarkable, they also mark these men as relatable and representative—as "everymen." These men may be exceptional, but they are not exceptions.

Rather, the male protagonists of these films operate as synecdotal

stand-ins for male subjectivity writ large. Their extraordinary experiences—of terror, loss, sacrifice, and redemption—suggest that all men—at least those who share the same markers of idealized masculinity—may be capable of such feats, as demonstrated by the recurrent presence of such characters within American film culture. The consistent return of the car crash narrative, along with its repeated tropes and character types, insists on the naturalness of such experiences, reinforcing fantasies about subjectivity and masculinity. While car crash melodramas seem to dispose of women (and children) easily, they emphasize (and sometimes belabor) the emotional journeys of men from suffering to redemption and, as such, cast their protagonists (and the masculine subject position for which they stand) as our culture's most valuable victims *and* heroes. And to the extent that traumas and prosthetic disasters have been constructed as something of cultural bromides in America, such cinematic victim-heroes (and Will Smith) will likely enjoy unrivaled job security.

NOTES

1 For most of the film, viewers and diegetic characters know Thomas as "Ben." At the end of the film, we learn his given name is "Tim" and that "Ben" is a pseudonym. He has assumed his brother Ben's identity, and his IRS credentials, in order to enable his investigations of the potential candidates for his organ donations.

2 Jan Stuart's review in the *Los Angeles Times* describes the film as feeling "like a half-hour 'Twilight Zone' script that has been pressed onto a gob of Silly Putty and stretched to the sinking point" (E1). Referencing the film's cryptic and nonlinear structure, Mick LaSalle's review asserts, "If the movie were to announce its subject and story in the usual straightforward way, it would seem so ridiculous, far-fetched and borderline distasteful that no one would want to watch it. It might even seem funny" (E1). A.O. Scott's review in *The New York Times* calls *Seven Pounds* the kind of "transcendentally awful, eye-poppingly, call-your-friend-ranting-in-the-middle-of-the-night-just-to-go-over-it-one-more-time crazily awful motion pictures" that leads spectators to ask, "Did I really just see what I thought I saw?" (C6).

3 For further discussion of the importance of male sacrifice to Hollywood cinema see, C. King, *Washed in Blood: Male Sacrifice, Trauma, and the Cinema (*New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

4 Wesley Morris's review also critiques the film's and Smith's reliance on self-sacrifice as a narrative structure. He writes, "I'd like to make a 911 call myself: Lord, please stop this increasingly fine actor from climbing onto another cross. Smith is a movie star, not a martyr" (G7). Stuart similarly faults Smith for what she describes as a "temptation to play God," citing *Seven Pounds* as following *Hancock* and *The Pursuit of Happyness* in a "kind of trilogy of self-deification" that hinges on the hero's "grotesque mission of redemption" (E1).

5 Other examples of sacrificial films, in which the leading male character dies and by so doing affords salvation for others, include *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, 1971), *The Poseidon Adventure* (Ronald Neame, 1972), *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995), *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998), *Ladder 49* (Jay Russell, 2004), *The Guardian* (Andrew Davis, 2006), and *Poseidon* (Wolfgang Petersen, 2006).

6 A corollary to these car crash movies is the plane crash film, in which a male protagonist loses loved ones suddenly and finds himself reeling in the wake of tragedy. Examples include *Reign Over Me* (Mike Binder, 2007), in which a man is traumatized when his wife and daughters are killed in one of the hijacked planes on 9/11, and *I Am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007), in which Will Smith's character must contend not only with a global epidemic but also the loss of his wife and daughter in a helicopter crash.

7 Most of the films discussed here involve a man who loses someone else in a car accident but himself survives. Occasionally, though, as in the case of *What Dreams May Come,* the car accident affects the male protagonist more directly. In *Intersection,* for instance, (Mark Rydell, 1994)—a remake of the

French film *Les Choses de la Vie* (Claude Solet, 1970)—a car accident propels a man to think back on the choices of his life. Told primarily in flashbacks, the story centers on his troubled marriage and his infidelity and how the crash offers him an opportunity to reevaluate and change his life's course.

8 Although stylistically, structurally, and tonally dissimilar, *Return to Me* and another car-crash movie, *21 Grams* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2003), share some narrative similarities. A reformed criminal and recovering alcoholic causes a car accident that kills a man and his children. The wife of the deceased man donates his organs, and his heart goes to a terminally ill mathematician. Struggling with his own troubled marriage and guilt over having been saved by someone else's loss, the mathematician seeks out the widow of his heart donor, who suffers greatly from the loss of her family and has resumed her own drug habit. The widow and the mathematician become lovers and then conspire to kill the driver, who has also become unhinged by guilt over the accident and left his family. In the end, the widow shoots the driver but does not kill him, and the mathematician dies of heart complications in the process. Shortly after, the widow begins her life again after discovering that she is pregnant, and the driver returns to his family. The car accident is something of a leitmotif in Iñárritu's work, also structuring his film *Amores Perros* (2000). In this film, as in *21 Grams,* a car accident unites otherwise disconnected lives.

9 A similar narrative structures *Signs* (M. Night Shyamalan, 2002), in which a father must learn how to be a single parent following the death of his wife—and an alien invasion. Likewise, in *Not Easily Broken* (T. D. Jakes, 2009) a car accident repairs a broken family. After his wife is injured—but not killed, unlike most car crash melodramas—the male protagonist of this film learns through aiding his wife's recovery how to be a better husband and decides that their troubled marriage is worth saving.

10 Like the films of Iñárritu, the work of Evans seems particularly drawn to the trope of the car crash. Evans also directed *Trauma* (Marc Evans, 2004), in which a man falsely believes he has killed his wife in a car accident and, in the throes of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) becomes obsessed with and murders another woman. Later, Evans directed the BBC television series *Collision* (2009), about a group of strangers brought together by a large-scale traffic accident. Evans is currently finishing *Patagonia,* a road movie that intercuts the stories of two road trips across Argentina. No news yet as to whether the intersecting car trips will produce any actual collisions.

11 Although *A Single Man* follows the narrative pattern of the Hollywood car crash closely, it should be noted that this film offers one significant departure from most films in this selection. The protagonist is a gay man who mourns the loss of his same-sex partner in the crash. Nonetheless, its treatment of masculine subjectivity and the search for redemption through trauma remains largely consonant with the other films considered here.

12 Other characteristic markers of trauma include "emotional numbing, depression, guilt, autonomic arousal, explosive violence or tendency to hypervigilance"—all of which are thought to occur as a result of the mind's defensive dissociation from the traumatogenic experience (Leys, 2000, p. 2).

13 For more on the ways in which Western culture genders technology as masculinity, please see Mellström, U. (2003). "Technology and Masculinity: Men and their Machines." In Søren Ervø and Thomas Johansson (Eds.), *Moulding Masculinities: Among Men.* Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

14 The masculinized origins of the automobile are not unique to the American context. For instance, offering a cultural history of the car in Great Britain, Sean O'Connell (1998) argued, "Traditional notions of separate spheres and the control of technology ensured that the car came to be identified with masculinity" (p. 44).

15 Smith echoed this claim, noting, "Driving a car also helps to maintain heteronormative relations between the genders, 'keeping women in their place through the conventional gender arrangement of (male) driver and (female) passenger'" (Smith, 2001, p. 183).

16 Amy Best (2005) similarly asserted, "Cars have long served as objects for men to position themselves in terms of masculinity, enabling an elaborated performance of the masculine" (p. 89).

17 Thomas also asserts his magnanimous patriarchal authority by gifting his beach home to a woman and her children to rescue them from an abusive living situation. In this case, Thomas's generosity not only atones for his mistake but also for the mistake of another man. If his chance at a family has been destroyed, he can at least enable the restoration of another broken family.

18 For more on centrality of heterosexuality and financial success as distinguishing characteristics of hegemonic masculine norms, see N. Trujillo, 1991.

19 It should also be added that class factors largely in this construction of the subject. As Smith argued, it matters whether a man drives a Mercedes, which typically signifies "elegant" upper-class identity, or a muscle car, which might be read as a signifier of working-class identity. In the case of Thomas in *Seven Pounds,* the vintage 1960s Corvette negotiates fantasies about both elite and working-class masculinity. Thomas's ability to purchase a classic car certainly illustrates his financial wealth, and Thomas's success as a professional and a provider are key to his pursuit of hegemonic masculine ideals. The choice of the muscle car also balances what Smith might call Thomas's "elegance" with ruggedness and his intellectualism (he is, after all a rocket scientist) with strength and bravado.

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Traumatic Repression and Aesthetic Confession: The Call for German Remembrance in International Discourse about the Jewish Museum Berlin

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This essay argues that the international coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin's development framed a reunified German national identity as driven by the desire to repress the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. The coverage also suggested that Germany's embrace of Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum design would function as a form of confessional "aesthetic therapy" for its memory pathology. In this case, the rhetoric of repression and confession was more demonstrative of other Western societies' fear toward Germany than an accurate account of German memory politics.

KEYWORDS: Aesthetic therapy, confession, Jewish Museum Berlin, repression, uncanny

On the fifth of August, 1991, Nina Libeskind faxed a message thanking Zvi Hecker, an Israeli architect, for protesting the attempted cancellation of the Jewish Department extension to the Berlin Museum. Nina's husband, Daniel, won the 1989 design competition with a structure that "embodied in matter fragmentary thoughts, inscriptions, and cryptograms, and in doing so it entwined Jewish and Berlin history" (Jaeger, 1989, 6; author's translation). When the Berlin government considered scrapping the project, Nina organized

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an international letter writing campaign to, as she relayed to Zvi, shift focus from practical monetary and city planning concerns toward the Holocaust and German collective memory (Libeskind, 1991). For the German public, the issue was not whether the city would display Jewish history, but whether the city would build an expensive new museum when other gallery spaces existed and other city needs seemed more pressing (Cramer, 1991; "Jüdisches Museum," 1991). Little international interest previously existed in the Berlin Museum extension, but Nina's letter writing campaign gained the attention of the English-speaking press (Glancey, 1991; Morris, 1991; Tagliabue, 1991; Wise, 1991) and placed intense public pressure on the city government, resulting in the continuation of her husband's building project ("Briefaktion," 1991).

Today Libeskind's building is a national museum, the Jewish Museum Berlin, documenting two thousand years of Jewish-German history, with the other structure, Philip Gerlach's "Collegienhaus" (formerly housing the Berlin Museum's main collection), functioning as a gift shop, restaurant, office space, and security center. (Photographs of the Jewish Museum Berlin are available on its website: http://www.jmberlin.de/.) Encased in zinc with erratic window slits carved into its façade, the luminous exterior looks like a modern industrial sheet-metal structure twisted and punctured by the experience of human tragedy. The above-ground portion of the design is composed of two lines: a jagged line containing the museum's office and exhibition space, and a straight line of empty space slicing through the center of the museum. As visitors traverse the two millennia of Jewish-German history, they periodically encounter the absence of the straight "void line," a symbolic reminder of cultural destruction that forms both the backbone of the building and the ever-present tragic background of the Jewish-German cultural narrative. The below-ground portion has an entirely different floor plan with three intersecting lines, one leading up a staircase to the main building and two leading to architectural installations, the "Garden of Exile" and the

"Holocaust Tower," designed to allow visitors to feel the fates of Jewish citizens of Berlin under the Third Reich. Originally proposed as an appendage of the Berlin Museum, visitors can enter only via an underground passage from the Collegienhaus next door, suggesting that the visitor's own action of walking reconnects German and Jewish history. One of Berlin's most popular attractions, the Jewish Museum Berlin has been an integral part of Berlin's new image as a cosmopolitan tourist destination (Kruse, 2002).

Nina Libeskind's rhetorical gesture to change the terms of the conversation from one concerned with public administration of the city's precious resources to one concerned with Germany's proper confrontation with the traumatic memory of the Holocaust was emblematic of a larger international discourse about the reunited German nation—one that had a lasting impact on the project's development into the Jewish Museum Berlin. The Holocaust and the events of World War II have been an active and explicit part of German public conversation since at least the late 1960s (Burns & van der Will, 1995). However, international voices believed that the German public had repressed memories of the Holocaust, particularly the attempted extermination of the Jewish population, in order to justify Daniel Libeskind's design as a necessary confrontation with the traumatic past. This framing was consistent with other analyses of Holocaust repression that were growing "ever more ubiquitous" in the treatment of memory studies (Huyssen, 2003, p. 8), one prominent example being the *Historikerstreit* (historian's debate) of the 1980s (Brunner, 1997).

Surveying international coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin's development, this essay argues that traumatic repression, similar to Freud's (1919/1925) description of the "uncanny," functioned as a significant rhetorical theme in international discourse that constituted (Charland, 1987) the German national citizen subject as in need of an "aesthetic therapy," provided by Daniel Libeskind's provocative design. Similar to Michel Foucault's (1976/1990) discussion of the structure of confession, the German public was

called upon to confess its past transgressions—in the form of a visible public cultural project—as a condition of reintegrating into the post-Cold War international moral community. Rather than an accurate description of German repression of traumatic memory, this "realm of memory" (Nora, 1989) was more indicative of a pervasive cultural fear in other Western nations of a reunited Germany. Alternating between conceptual expositions and their popular culture instantiations, the essay outlines the elements of repression and the call for confession in the English-speaking international coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin's development.

IDENTIFYING REPRESSED TRAUMA AND PRESCRIBING AESTHETIC THERAPY

Both the strength of, and difficulty with, trauma discourse stems from its ability to traverse the boundaries of disciplines as diverse as communication, history, medicine, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. As Grey (2007) notes, the word "trauma" itself has a certain historical instability, moving from a medical term for physical wounds to a broader physio-psychological concept linking both visible and invisible damage that impairs an individual's ability to function in society. Moreover, similar to memory studies' migration from the individual to the aggregate psyche of a society (Halbwachs, 1952/1992), one can now speak of cultural trauma, "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness" that have profound implications on collective identity (Alexander, 2004, p. 1). In the shifts of trauma studies from the medical to the psychological and from the individual to the collective, the conceptual terrain has expanded such that the discourse surrounding trauma—perhaps even the ability to describe an experience *as* trauma—defies categorization as either theoretical exposition or historical experience (LaCapra, 1994).

Scholarly descriptions of trauma have their own historical life and sometimes find themselves used as "cognitive anchors" for understanding public problems, perhaps in ways that their theoretical progenitors would not have imagined.

Two theoretical concepts related to trauma, as they have been deployed by international discourses about the Jewish Museum Berlin, are of particular importance to this essay: the "uncanny" effect of repressed trauma, and its treatment through cultural "confession." Using Foucault's (1969/1972) notion of "discursive formation," this section outlines the emergence of a certain rhetorical form prevalent in these international discussions. Discursive formations work like composite imagery; one identifies similarities in several discursive events in order to glimpse regularity in the form of arguments being advanced. Inspired by Zboray and Zboray's (2006) approach to outlining particular themes in everyday historical discourse, only the most striking examples of an element in the pattern are selected, while respecting their specificity and heterogeneity via quotation.

What does it mean to speak of a "social unconscious" containing repressed traumatic memories? Sigmund Freud, while not the first to speak of repression, brought the analytic study of it to full fruition in the early twentieth century. Freud (1922/1963) treats repression as a psychological response triggered when a person's actions do not match his or her professed values. Shifting from individuals to society, the strongest companion concept is Freud's (1919/1925) discussion of the *unheimlich* (uncanny). Freud concluded that "the 'uncanny' is a class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (pp. 369–70). In other words, something known, but repressed, emerges again to consciousness in a mutated form, which is often dismissed as unimportant or mere coincidence. But the unconscious continues to project repressed memories, causing a periodic repetition of uncanny effects. Because the *unheimlich* depends on a set of visual traces that can be apprehended by anyone, even if their significance is often denied

by their target subjects, it has become a powerful tool for various scholarly critics to comment upon a culture (Creed, 2005; Giblett, 2006; Sorfa, 2006; Vidler, 1992). In essence, aesthetic expression is an opportunity for the "uncanny" return of repressed traumatic cultural memory that the critic decodes through analysis, often concluding that a culture or society must learn to confront directly the critic's "discovered" neurosis.

Freud's "uncanny" provides an important cognitive map of the relationship between trauma and aesthetics while also outlining the position of the critic as authoritative speaker about a particular culture. The aesthetic object is read or interpreted as the visible symptom of a repressed trauma, something a society does not wish to openly admit. The critic speaks from the privileged position of learned outsider analyst of a culture, highlighting a supposed *lacuna* (missing part) within a collectively shared "memory framework" (Halbwachs, 1952/1992, p. 40). The concept combines the power of the psychologist as interpreter with the knowledge of cultural signification embedded in sociology and ethnography, imposing an authoritative interpretation of the de-formed collective identity.

In order for international commentators to see Daniel Libeskind's architectural project as an "uncanny" symbol of repressed traumatic memory, three interpretive steps worked together to build the argument. It first needed to have great symbolic value to its cultural context. Because of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of the nation, and the relocation of the national capital from Bonn to Berlin, "it's a unique moment for Berlin to redefine itself and confront its ravaged history" (McGuigan, 1999, p. 60). During Berlin's division, the museum was considered only a minor project, but after reunification, Daniel Libeskind's design was not just "one of the most fascinating buildings ever proposed in Europe," but also "a symbol of a revived and reunited capital" (Glancey, 1991, p. 25). Every change to the urban landscape dripped with meaning. "Architecture has become a subject that often serves

as a touchstone for the larger question of what Berlin should be," particularly important because after the Cold War "Berlin is a profoundly wounded city, and its wounds still show" (Goldberger, 1995, p. 45). "The die has been cast. The centre of Berlin will become a showpiece, a meisterwerk of capitalist and governmental ascent," and "Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum, a three-dimensional bolt of angular lightning, promises to be one of the most challenging and moving new buildings in Europe" (Glancey, 1993, p. 22). More than just a building, the Jewish Museum "is rich in many-layered allusion" and "heavy with meaning" (Apthorp, 2000, p. R2).

Next, the Jewish Museum Berlin's design must be interpreted as a concrete instantiation of the traumatic past, a "disturbing historical dagger through the heart of the united city" that "seeks to embody the void created by the Holocaust" (Wise, 1991, p. 40). Its presence is "a testament to a vibrant community of 185,000 that perished in the Nazi concentration camps" (Morris, 1991, p. 4D). The jagged design and visible absences symbolized "what's missing in Berlin—the 'deported' population, the writers" (Thorson, 1992, para. 27). "Libeskind insists we go beyond the feelings of sadness and sorrow and try to understand why an event as horrific as the Holocaust can happen" (Hume, 1995, p. H11). Although intended as a history museum, Holocaust memory came to define the entire project in international commentary.

Finally, once established that Libeskind's architecture "speaks" a traumatic past into existence, any opposition to the project on the part of the German government would inevitably be interpreted as symptomatic of the desire to repress traumatic memory. "The pressure to forget is enormous, of course. The subject is too painful, too awful to deal with, especially in Germany" (Hume, 1995, p. H11). In August 1991, a threat to delay the museum from the ruling CDU (*Christlich Demokratische Union*) party was a reflection of "the city's attitude towards thousands of Jewish Berliners who perished in the Holocaust" (Tagliabue, 1991, p. C13). As "the

first such memorial to the Jewish community to be sponsored by the German government rather than by Jewish groups" (Landsberg, 1991, p. F1), funding the project becomes the litmus test for an overarching question: "can it [Berlin] plunge confidently into its future without solidly confronting its past?" (Morris, 1991, p. 4D). According to Amnon Barzel, director of the Jewish Museum from 1993 to 1997, "our responsibility is enormous" because "the museum will be built practically in what was the nest of Satan . . . where the decision was made on the Final Solution" (quoted in Atkinson, 1994, p. B1). If the museum failed to come to fruition, "it means the sickness [presumably pervasive anti-Semitism] didn't pass" (Barzel, quoted in Staunton, 1995, p. 17).

These three interpretive gestures also bespeak the privileged position of the outside observer to know the problems of another culture. What seems like healthy public deliberation inside a society regarding the proper use of a building, distribution of government funds, or affirmation of cultural values becomes instead a visible reminder of the collective desire to forget. The 1991 five-year delay proposed to the Berlin Senate to deal with a three billion dollar budget deficit was reinterpreted as "a polite way of cancelling the new Jewish Museum" (Morris, 1991, p. 4D). While verifying the motives of public officials would be impossible, it should be noted that the cancellation was never publically discussed and much deliberation occurred about an appropriate temporary location for a Jewish Department for the Berlin Museum (for example, Cramer, 1991; "Jüdisches Museum," 1991). Other public projects were also subject to an outside reading of social motives. For example, to celebrate reunification, the city of Berlin also wanted to host the 2000 Olympic Games, a clearly insensitive move because "the last Berlin Olympics was a showcase for the Nazi 'Kraft durch Freude' (strength though joy) philosophy" (Glancey, 1991, p. 25), a way "to glorify Hitler's Nazi regime" (Tagliabue, 1991, p. C13). To recapitulate the composite form of this international commentary, the "uncanny"

effect of Libeskind's design triggered a response by the local government to repress the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. While Germans may have been in denial, international observers were well positioned to decode the cultural "will to forget" in the controversy over the continuation of the Jewish Museum Berlin project.

Once an authoritative reading of a social unconscious was rendered, observers were also placed in a position to prescribe therapeutic response. To overcome repressed trauma, a society must directly confront the source of the contradiction between collective self-image and past actions. The idea of therapy is intimately connected with the treatment of trauma (Grey, 2007); trauma often does damage to one's ability to communicate emotions, and as such, forms of personal or public discourse often are important steps in confronting it. For cultural trauma, public hearings, monuments, and artistic expression often provide therapeutic benefits to a society (Ehrenhaus, 1988; Marxen, 2009; Silverman, 2002). Contrary to the belief that the rhetoric of therapy is politically debilitating (Cloud, 1998), often these forms of ritual therapeutic performance offer the opportunity for political reconciliation (Doxtader, 2003).

Michel Foucault's (1976/1990) discussion of Christian confession for sexual transgressions outlines a possible therapeutic prescription. Though often associated with religious practice, what Foucault describes in the tradition of confessing sexual transgressions can be analogized to other situations, for it is "a way of giving shape to the requirement to speak about the matter" (p. 35). Confession's general structure is widely used when confrontation with past traumas (especially as perpetrator) is necessary for social healing, including the "talking cure" associated with psychoanalytic therapy (Foucault, 1965/1998). Confession codifies a particular performance of *parrhesia* (frank speech) about one's past and present, offering a new foundation for sound cultural cultivation (Foucault, 2001). Memory provides grounding for identity, and shared memories are critical elements in the formation of a culture (Assmann, 1995).

Consequently, a culture's confession of guilt with regard to the traumatic, formerly repressed, memory provides a vehicle for beginning to re-form the culture in an ethical manner (Olick & Levy, 1997).

The international coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin project contained a unique twist: an acknowledgement and embracement of Daniel Libeskind's design, rather than opposition to it, became a sort of confessional "aesthetic therapy" for the country's presumed desire to forget the Holocaust. "As time passes and the living memory of the Holocaust disappears, the need to keep the memory alive becomes more urgent" (Hume, 1995, p. H11). "The city would rather forget the pain of its history with its Jews," but Libeskind's "architecture prods Germans to recall the anguish they would prefer to deny" (Goldberger, 1995, p. 45). In contrast to the historical erasure of the Nazi past in many other parts of the city (partly due to the extent of Allied bombing during the final days of World War II), "Libeskind has inserted a memorial destined to keep the wounds fresh" (Patterson, 2000, p. 70), an "architectural dagger plunged into the heart of complacency" (Russell, 1999, p. 76). Instead of being simply another building, Libeskind's design is something more: "sculpture . . . theater . . . a memorial . . . [and] a wildly disconcerting journey into disturbed inner worlds" (Apthorp, 2000, p. R2). To keep the wounds of the Holocaust metaphorically open in the cityscape would be "a milestone in Germany's quest to become . . . a normal nation" through the completion of its "Vergangenheits-bewaltung—or process of coming to terms with the past" (Klein, 2001, p. B15).

Why was Libeskind's design so important as a form of therapy? According to Paul Goldberger of the *New York Times*:

> Berlin must get on with its life, but it cannot pretend the wall was never there, any more than it can pretend that the Nazi years did not happen. As the city struggles to define itself as a cultural and political capital for the reunited Germany, it faces

> a troubling paradox: the more successful it becomes at creating an ordinary, satisfying good life for its citizens, the less it will show its wounds. If Berlin dwells too much in the past, if it allows its history to be too visible, it cannot become the new city it yearns to become. (1995, p. 45)

The design of the Jewish Museum helped to confront precisely this paradox. In its physical form, it was a memorial trace of Germany's past, while still an avant-garde architectural achievement that placed the city on the cutting edge of cultural development; "it stands out as a true original, yet it also subtly honors history" (McGuigan, 1999, p. 60). In addition, the institution's commitment to displaying Jewish life and culture in the city, both historical and contemporary, meant it would "play 'a critical role in the reshaping of German-Jewish relations'" (Ellis, 1999, p. 27). "The Jewish Museum ends the century on a note of truth and reconciliation . . . It does not cower in denial of history. It is the one real cultural truth of our time by the only modernist to deal with the Holocaust" (Niesewand, 1999, p. 11).

Given the contours of this rhetorical form in the context of the Jewish Museum Berlin project, one might be tempted to ask: why is so much of the international coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin formulated in this fashion? The question is particularly interesting given the evidence that German culture has not, at least for the last thirty years, had much trouble talking about and memorializing its past in a variety of ways (Young, 1994). This essay asks the reader to entertain a controversial proposition: international opinions of German public memory say more about the beliefs and fears of the international speaker than they do about German culture itself. As unusual as this proposition might seem and as difficult as it might be to speculate about motives, both public and scholarly discourse about the fear of German reunification prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall provide strong confirmation of this possibility.

Margaret Thatcher, in a 1989 meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, revealed that the Western European powers wanted the Soviet Union to actively thwart impending German reunification. "We do not want a united Germany . . . This would lead to a change in postwar borders, and we cannot allow that because such a development would undermine the stability of the whole international situation and could endanger our security" (Thatcher, quoted in Binyon, 2009, para. 4). Thatcher's position, while not publicly acceptable to express, was certainly not an isolated sentiment. François Mauriac, a French writer, often is given credit for providing the paradigmatic statement of the Western world's fear of reunification: "I love Germany so much that I am glad there are two of them" (quoted in Hitchens, 2009, para. 10). During the late 1980s, German ambivalence toward supporting nuclear deterrence was often perceived by the United States to be motivated by a deep-seated desire for reunification (Schmemann, 1989). Scholars also linked concerns about Holocaust remembrance with a presumed desire for a unified German national identity, such as the negative reaction of Germans to the miniseries "Holocaust" (Postone, 1980) or the perceived attempt to finally unburden Germany's national identity in the historian's debate (*Historikerstreit*) of the 1980s (Bartov, 1992; Maier, 1988). These examples were not indicative of the ongoing public conversation in Germany about National Socialism, and in some cases, provided a venue for Germans to publicly work out their obligation to remember the Holocaust (Burns & van der Will, 1995). Nevertheless, political, popular, and scholarly discourses from international sources expressed fears about the impact of a unified national identity on global behavioral norms and the memory of Germany's past transgressions.

What became of this fear after the fall of the Berlin Wall? Political unification was a *fait accompli,* so focus shifted to the need for visible German remembrance of the Holocaust. To allay international fears on the day of reunification, a German diplomat laid a

wreath at the Yad Vashem in Israel, though the gesture fell short of the international desire for Germany to explicitly acknowledge responsibility for the Holocaust in reunification documents (Meyer, 1990). Framing of seemingly "objective" news coverage about reunification events often selected quotes from international actors pressuring for German speech about the Holocaust (e.g., Schmemann, 1990) or from German officials responding to such pressure (e.g., "Kohl," 1990). Some go so far as to claim that the divided Germanys had never taken responsibility for the Holocaust (even though official speeches expressing responsibility and German reparations to Israel date back to the 1950s), making it imperative they do so as part of reunification (McGrory, 1990). Given the prevalence of this theme, regardless of its factual accuracy, the international coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin project can be read as another episode in the same line of thinking. Fearing that German forgetting, especially post-reunification, will fuel a new wave of intolerance, outside agents continually call for visible signs of German contrition for the Holocaust.

CONCLUSION

This essay argues that a significant discourse about repressed trauma and the need for confession existed in the international news coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin project. The Jewish Museum project was treated as a symbolic symptom of Germany's traumatic relationship with its Jewish diaspora, made more significant by the process of political and cultural reunification. Controversy over the museum's development was interpreted as a sign of the desire to repress the memory of the Holocaust, which international voices were conferred the privilege to interpret. Daniel Libeskind's design for what would become the Jewish Museum Berlin was both an "uncanny" object symptomatic of repression and a potential source of confessional "aesthetic therapy" that confronted the past and

provided a way to begin cultural reconciliation with the Jewish community. The rhetoric of repression, rather than being simply descriptive of German memory politics, constituted a presumed cultural problem that demanded the therapeutic release embodied in Daniel Libeskind's design.

As rhetorical form, international coverage of the Jewish Museum Berlin's development was consistent with a persistent fear of German reunification expressed by scholars, politicians, and news columnists. The discourse of repression allowed comments to maintain a certain analytic distance and presumption of objectivity, while displacing the element of fear from the observer to the memory "sickness" of the observed. In so doing, international coverage argued for a privileged position to speak of German collective memory politics while simultaneously containing little more than surface-level information about *actual* conversations happening in the German public sphere. Complex negotiations over the redundancy of collection space between East and West Berlin after reunification ("Keine," 1991), important projects to improve the life of a struggling group of citizens (many of whom were out of work) ("Mehr," 1991; Müller, 1991), or the ability to house the Jewish collections of the city museum in another building, were elided in these international treatments of the Jewish Museum Berlin controversy. The rhetoric of repression provided a powerful shortcut around a complex cultural history and political debate by way of a readily available psychological vocabulary, while "aesthetic therapy" fit the pattern of confessional self-talk that had some historical traction in Western societies.

A few statements of clarification about this argument are necessary. First, that international sources often deployed the tropes of repression and confession at the expense of a more robust discussion of values and interest circulating within Berlin and Germany should not be taken to mean that concerns about German forgetting or resurfacing anti-Semitism are entirely unfounded. Clearly

anti-Semitic violence does exist in Germany, and certain political groups such as *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* have association with neo-Nazi politics. There are also segments of German society who would happily forget their past. However, researchers and critics need to be very sensitive to cultural controversies as indicative not only of a desire to forget, but also a desire for remembrance from some groups. Otherwise, one gives license to a compositional fallacy: what is true of the part must be true of the whole. Second, this essay merely tries to establish the discourse of repression as one significant discursive formation in the conversation. The number and diversity of quotations ought to be sufficient to make that claim probable for the reader, though it was not the only style of framing used in international discussions of the project. Finally, it would be a mistake to assume that this media framing was entirely successful in driving German public policy. Anecdotal evidence exists of its effectiveness in persuading the Berlin government to move forward with the project ("Briefaktion," 1991), but when the museum finally opened in 2001, it was configured as a museum of tolerance rather than contrition for the Holocaust (Gorbey, 2002). Perhaps because the mere existence of Libeskind's building was sufficient from the perspective of international discourses to overcome repression, debates in Berlin over the internal configuration and purpose of the museum were able to effectively satisfy outsider concerns while eschewing framing the museum's purpose in terms of confession and repression.

This essay's goal has been to outline a rhetorical form of certain arguments about the Jewish Museum Berlin project. In doing so, no claim is made for universal applicability for the trope as a way of dealing with the relationship between trauma and aesthetics. However, I have provided a cognitive map that can have utility in other studies, particularly if, as Huyssen (2003) suggests, the discourse of repression was a strong feature of memory study during the 1990s. While Sigmund Freud's insights into the psyche

are quite innovative, when applied to a society-wide phenomenon by distant observers, the resulting discourse can generate a disingenuous misunderstanding of localized responses to traumatic collective memories. In this case, international discourses about repressed cultural trauma surrounding the Jewish Museum Berlin project more likely indicated observer fears displaced onto German society (the observed) and generally ignored the internal concerns and interests expressed in local and national public deliberations.

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Contested Honor: Marketing the Traumatized Persona in Historical Memoir

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This essay analyzes the complicated relationship between narratives of trauma and claims to truth by focusing on the case of a memoir concerning honor killing in Islamic culture that was commercially successful and critically acclaimed, but upon examination found to be, depending on one's perspective, either a fiction or a fraud. Specifically, the essay shows how Norma Khouri's text *Honor Lost: Love and Death in Modern Day Jordan* used the emerging conventions of the trauma memoir to gain credibility while calling the reader to identify with the narrator, the lone witness to the apparent murder by family members of a woman wrongly suspected of having a sexual liaison with a non-Muslim. The feigned narrative further deepened the outrage in Western culture over the excesses of Islamic extremism while portraying outwardly respectable Jordanians as willing to commit savage acts in the name of supposed "honor." This case shows how commonplaces of ideology and rhetorical conventions function together to support claims that may pass as true without the critical scrutiny Khouri's text eventually received.

KEYWORDS: Honor, identification, Islam, Jordan, Khouri, memoir, trauma, truth

> "A timeless tragedy of Shakespeare's star-cross'd lovers is reflected in . . . this deeply affecting story."—*Publishers Weekly*

> "[A] deeply moving work. . . . [T]he dark horror of honor killing is brought to life for Western readers."—*Library Journal*

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> "Terrifying and inspiring."—*The Washington Times*
>
> (From reviews of Khouri's *Honor Lost: Love and Death in Modern Day Jordan*)

The relationship among trauma, transmission and truth has considerable implications for politics, particularly in those instances when history has evolved into a site for cultural contest. Events that disrupt or shatter the experiences of individuals, sub-groups, and entire societies enter into the historical field in ways that complicate orthodox approaches to the past. In the most systematic investigation of this process to date, Caruth (1996) suggests that traumatic events function to effectively short-circuit both individual and collective psyches and in so doing render literal or referential speech difficult if not impossible. Given that the experience of trauma is so disorienting (and is sometimes referred to as the inexpressible), these cultural subjects articulate themselves through recursive attempts to *know* this experience through word and voice, believing that by recording the event they can manage the psychic fragmentation to which they have been subject. Through these accounts, victims can momentarily fix their identities and allow for speech as they enter into dialogue with a real or imagined third party, the vicarious witness. This process of transmission often takes place through the survivor narrative. These narratives render events meaningful, if not "known" literally, and seed the ground for legibility and cultural authority, albeit through an unstable voice. Because literal witnesses are so close to the event, these voices can gain prominence in the public sphere. As they struggle to make sense of their experiences, so too does the broader culture through these acts of transmission.

In 2003 Norma Khouri published a memoir entitled *Honor Lost: Love and Death in Modern Day Jordan,* which recounted her systematic repression within Muslim society, culminating in the murder of her coworker and best friend, Dalia. The two women

became close while sharing a hairstyling business. Together they engaged in small, secret resistances to the crushing reality of gender inequity in traditional Islamic culture. This portrait of political repression is vivid. Although these women ran their own business, a chauffeur had to accompany them in public and family members carefully monitored their interactions with strangers. The narrative turned tragic when Dalia fell in love with an unsanctioned suitor, a *dhimmi* or religious minority—in Khouri's recounting, a Catholic with the anglicized name of Michael. When Dalia's father learned of the affair her family butchered her in the now well documented custom of honor killing. Honor killing is a holdover from tribal culture that has interpenetrated some conservative Islamic societies in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. It requires male family members to murder female relatives who have strayed outside of their socially sanctioned roles, particularly in the case of sexual misconduct. In these cases local authorities will sometimes defer to the family's judgment. After Dalia, the family turned its unrepentant gaze upon Khouri, marking her as the next victim because she had assisted her friend in hiding the affair. As Dalia's body was cast unceremoniously into an unmarked grave, the suitor, Michael, approached Khouri to offer her a means of escaping her fate by fleeing the country, which she immediately accepted. According to the account, these events took place in the early 1990s.

After the publication of *Honor Lost,* Khouri embarked on an international book tour where she became a focal point for raising awareness of the practice of honor killing, particularly with respect to its prevalence and acceptability throughout the Middle East. At times of political tension between East and West, these narratives of gender repression within the Muslim world take on a special prominence in literary memoir. In the wake of U.S./Iranian tensions, Betty Mahmoody's account of her custody battle with her Iranian husband, later turned into a movie (*Not Without My Daughter,* 1991), filtered a domestic dispute through the lens of

gender politics. One of the most commercially successful works, Azar Nafisi's (2003) *Reading Lolita in Tehran,* recounted the heroic resistance of Muslim women to these repressive regimes. These works are significant in current political debates because they stand at the juncture of religious, economic and ideological conflicts. As these accounts came into wider demand, Khouri and her story of tragedy and heroism fit perfectly into this dramatic mold.

The story became more complicated in July 2004 when Malcolm Knox of the Sydney *Morning Herald,* doing a basic background check on Khouri, discovered that she was nowhere near Jordan during the timeframe of the book's events. This stalemate inspired the HBO documentary *Forbidden Lie$,* a 2007 film directed by Anna Broinowski that attempted to document Khouri's story. An interesting dynamic in this film is the relationship between the filmmaker and her subject. Broinowski was clearly moved by Khouri's vivid account, beginning the film with a lengthy exhibition of Khouri's version of events including the brutal tradition of honor killings directed against women whose families perceive some disgrace in their behaviors. The filmmaker and Khouri then traveled to Jordan where they found women walking unattended in public, were unable to find any of the sites mentioned in the book, or any documentation whatsoever that Dalia had ever existed. The third part of the film moves into a fascinating character study of Khouri who, by this time, was suspected of fraud. Many Islamic political action groups have pointed to Khouri's work as an example of Western propaganda designed to unfairly denigrate Muslim culture. Toward the end of the film Khouri makes a new set of claims that attempt to explain her faulty memory, including her recollection of being raped by her father, leaving the auditor with a distinct distrust for her voice as a witness.

While Fisher's (1985) reflection on the narrative paradigm is often cited, the primary goal behind the work is sometimes overlooked. Fisher's key observation is not merely that people tell stories to

make sense of the world, but that narratives create the underlying coherence to disciplinary knowledge systems that constitute the frameworks through which we come to *know.* Examining some of the conventions emerging from the terrain of East/West identity studies suggests that certain narrative principles have become so ingrained that they can pass unchallenged and, in the case of Khouri, circumvent basic fact-checking on the part of publishers. Some scholars have recently begun to challenge these conventions of (in)visibility as they pass by book racks in stores crowded by Islamic autobiographies with pictures of veiled faces on the covers and containing harrowing accounts of political oppression (Whitlock, 2005). While gender oppression justified by religious practices in many parts of the world remains an unfortunate reality, a lingering question is the extent to which these images, and the associated narratives that they provoke, have come to stand for the experience of all Muslim women within the Western visual economy. MacDonald (2006) writes, "the Muslim veil's potency as a magnet for discussions about Islam and women's position arises from its capacity to evoke mixed emotions of fear, hostility, derision, curiosity, and fascination: a capacity already in evidence in colonial discourses" (p. 8). These images are particularly provocative when accompanied by the discourses of trauma which, due to their jarring effects, create powerful identification between the storyteller and the auditor. When an emotionally jarring story is bound to the material by the assertion that it is real, a bond of trust is established with the audience that transcends the fictional. It is precisely because narratives of traumatic events have the ability to challenge conventional meanings in such powerful ways that their authenticity is vital.

Lacapra (2001) suggests that traumatic experience defies the traditional correlates of knowledge systems to external reality, as they grapple with questions of such brutality that the teller's experience is dislocated and can be transmitted only in fragmented

speech. Some historians have further argued that even histories themselves can be read as traumatic accounts (Pillemer, 2004). From this standpoint, recording traumatic experience becomes an act of resistance to the linguistic conventions by which events are habitually captured and fixed in the cultural imagination. Yet the challenge confronting many authors of legitimate trauma narratives is to work within the conventions that make their accounts believable in the first place. The initial success of Khouri's alleged deception indicates the degree to which it conformed to the standards of what Western consumers consider to be believable. While Khouri's narrative contained certain cues that should have generated skepticism—particularly the studied manner in which she positions herself as a romantic heroine—the text fulfilled many of the dominant dramatic dynamics that Western consumers associate with traumatic memoir. These conventions do not bear any direct connection to reality; they are modes for making the event legible and believable for the consuming public. These shared tropes and standards provide the grounds for identification with the author in an attempt to know a traumatic event, while also providing a resonant linguistic structure for historically contextualizing the event.

As trauma has become a commodity, its capacity to generate critical shifts in meaning also has been challenged. The case of Khouri and the controversy surrounding her work raises the possibility that, with the discourse of the traumatized witness heavily inscribed within the memoir tradition, recognized marketability has supplanted reliability as a guiding ethos in the selection of manuscripts for publication as well as their initial reception. Make no mistake, the repression of women through religious and tribal customs still exists in its most brutal forms throughout the world; however, perhaps the time has come to examine the rhetorical conventions that have begun to obscure and, to some extent, delegitimize factual violence in order to provide a more marketable story.

EVENT

The boundary between truth and fiction in the creation of traumatic memoir is complicated, particularly when considering an event that depicts vivid violence. While the psychic fragmentation of the event renders it unknowable, some scholars argue that the role it plays in the formation of historical consciousness is more complex than it might seem on the surface. Given that the event is unknowable, does it become a piece of fiction and thus denigrate its cultural authority? Suleiman (2000) echoes this question: "Does that mean that there are no significant differences between memoir and novel, between recollection and invention? While significant differences exist, they are not textual so much as conventional or institutional. Textually, a fiction can imitate any kind of speech act, including the act of imperfectly recollecting a personal past" (p. 544). Thus fiction can mimic memoir as it deploys literary conventions using the eyewitness framework to drive the text's internal dynamics. She notes, "Memoirs resemble historical narratives as they make truth claims—more exactly, claims to referentiality and verifiability—that put them on the other side of a boundary from novels. Interestingly, this conventional boundary becomes most apparent when it is violated, in the cases of fraud or hoax" (p. 546). Thus the difference between these two forms is not in their stylistic elements, but in their cultural authority. Yet traumatic narratives also gain authenticity through the literary tropes that they deploy (Grey, 2002). Often the narrator speaks through a particular literary frame, such as Romanticism, and the events take on their cultural significance through the mode of their performance rather than their accuracy. This raises the question of whether the authority of the witness is constituted through connection to the traumatic event, or through the capacity to perform the role of traumatized subject.

During their time in the salon, the characters of Khouri and Dalia

formed a resistant society of two. In this secret world they passed their time documenting the parameters of their oppression. For example, Khouri reported that to help the time to pass they began keeping notes on how many women who frequented the shop wanted to give birth to girls and how many wanted boys (p. 24). Through their informal polling they determined that the vast majority of women wanted boys. It is important to note that by bearing witness to a traumatic experience, survivors essentially bring themselves into being by telling or writing about these events (Hungerford, 2001). More importantly and sometimes overlooked, the act of testimony can produce a unification between people—particularly the subject and the audience (Graham, 2003). As Khouri and Dalia formed their secret alliance against the repressive regime that systematically denied their rights and delegitimized their gender, the audience was drawn underground with them. The reader knows Dalia as a courageous, although sometimes foolhardy, heroine who seeks to undermine the established traditions of conservative Islam. Khouri writes, "To Middle Eastern men, Dalia's beliefs made her an enemy, a *Sharmuta,* and they would have only one way to deal with her. They would silence her before she had the chance to influence others with her scandalous views" (p. 26). The internal drama of the narrative was carefully crafted around this device of tragic foreshadowing as Khouri guided the audience through the unfolding events that led to Dalia's murder. As does any good storyteller, she creates a sense of identification then allows us to journey with her into the future toward the narrative's inevitable, crushing collision.

As foreshadowed, Dalia told Khouri that she had met a young soldier named Michael and confessed that she was in love with him. Khouri's first response was to attempt to dissuade her friend from doing anything that would bring her to the attention of her father, brothers, and cousins:

> You have to be a Jordanian woman to grasp what a shock, a frightening explosive shock, those words were. My response just rushed out. "*Bism ill ah* [Oh my God, in the name of God], Dalia! You have to forget about him now! Nothing but trouble can come of this." Both Jordanian society and law strictly forbade relationships between people of different religions. But what chilled me as I heard this were all the stories I'd heard about the tragic endings of these relationships. (16)

As a potential witness to the tragic fate that awaited Dalia, Khouri carefully traced the forces arrayed against them. These forces were so vast that the women's repression was inevitable. From this standpoint, the trauma generated within the narrative came from Jordanian society itself and only by escaping this culture could the dramatic conflict be positively resolved. Despite her misgivings, Khouri kept Dalia's secret and, putting her own life at risk, created opportunities for the lovers to meet. Her primary loyalty was to her friend, not to her family or culture.

In an analysis of the false testimony that history professor Joseph Ellis provided about his involvement in the Vietnam War, Maslin (2006) suggests that certain false testimonies, rather than driven by greed or a desire for self-adulation, represent an attempt to draw an audience into an emotional connection with the event. He writes, "Ellis wanted to not just teach his students what happened in Vietnam, but to make them feel as if they were there by proclaiming that he had been. And this is indeed what seems to have occurred when Ellis lectured to a hushed auditorium about being in the vicinity of My Lai shortly before the massacre" (p. 606). The witness becomes the connection between audience and event, evoking an emotive response and psychic intimacy. The author's struggle with the unknowable makes the event irresistible. Khouri's narrative similarly serves as a bridge for the audience into

a foreign world and thus builds the author's credibility. Perhaps the most striking component of the account of Dalia's murder is how Khouri thrusts herself into the unfolding events. While she was not physically present as Dalia's male relatives stabbed her to death, Khouri became a constant companion to her friend throughout the ordeal leading to her demise. She places herself at key junctures that establish her as a reliable witness. The day before her murder Dalia called Khouri to tell her that the family was acting strangely and that she was worried that somehow they knew about Michael. Later Khouri was the only person to attend to Dalia's body in the morgue and was one of only two people present at her funeral. The family had refused to provide even a coffin. This spatial primacy, that Khouri is not "a" but "*the*" primary witness to the events, not only heightens her proximate authority but intensifies the intimacy that characterizes the genre of memoir.

Nowhere is Khouri's central role in the narrative more evident than with her immediate confrontation of Dalia's family when it became clear that she was missing. Most of these exchanges proceeded with Khouri exhibiting stunned disbelief and the family speaking in oblique threats:

> "What happened? Where is she?" I asked.
>
> The only person who responded was her father. "Where is she? Where she belongs, that's where she is!" he said angrily.
>
> "What do you mean? What happened?" I asked.
>
> I waited a moment and when he didn't reply, I asked again, "Where is she?"
>
> "Don't worry, if I find out you knew, or helped her in any way, you'll be following her shortly," he snapped. The dehumanized way he looked at me and spoke his icy words told me exactly what he meant, but I had to press on. Had to know.
>
> "Following her? Please tell me what happened! Tell me where they took her!" I pleaded.

> "God's will is what happened! What did she think? That my home is a house of whoredom!" he yelled. (p. 139)

Because she was not present to see Dalia's murder, Khouri supplanted the event with a vivid description of the unrepentant family. Her anger is even more justified as the coroner concluded that Dalia remained a virgin and was thus pure. As Khouri cursed the family, it became clear that she too signed her own death warrant. Here the key word in the memoir's title, "honor," becomes increasingly evident. In Muslim culture honor is often a question of control. Khouri's honor is at risk in the memory of her friend's death and she can uphold it only by accurately conveying the event. Here, too, we witness the power traumatic narrative has in generating key shifts in meaning.

However, the characters in trauma narratives that follow Romantic conventions are often relatively predictable. The men are uniformly inhumane and violent while the women are tearfully dignified and passive. After her outburst Khouri was forced to apologize to Dalia's father for having questioned his honor, while providing instead a dual testimony to her friend and the damage that her death brought to Khouri's life. She told him, "the truth is that my world was shattered the moment you took her life, but I know that it is my problem . . . Dalia's mother was the only one who shared in the tears that I couldn't keep erupting when I'd finished" (p. 179). Whitehead (2004) suggests that traumatic testimonies bring about a new way of looking at the world—that they "strive toward a new form of representation" that allows survivors to deal with their own ruptures and closures (p. 123). For Khouri this meant understanding that in this world there are only two kinds of women, those who quietly and unhappily bear the burdens of their sex and those who are killed. The complexities of social exchange are reduced to their simplest common denominators. After Dalia was killed, Khouri saw it as her duty to replace her in the role of

Sharmuta. As soon as she fixed herself upon the pathway to political resistance, the narrative conflict makes a subtle shift to focus on Khouri's struggles. In this world the *Sharmuta* becomes "hero."

RESISTANCE

One of the most common literary devices used to explore both traditional Islamic societies and other tribal cultures in the developing world has been the subjugation and resistance of women to these norms (Freedman, 2006). Replacing Khouri at the center of this literary movement, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and her 2007 memoir entitled *Infidel* described her systematic abuse, genital mutilation, and eventual flight to the progressive West as a political refugee. Like Khouri, Ali is highly intelligent, articulate, and telegenic. Also like Khouri, her account has been subject to historical revision and she has been accused of being adept at reinventing herself and at mimicking what Western audiences want to hear about the Muslim world. Ali contextualized her trauma in terms of religious extremism, writing that "each abuse is justified by the perpetrators in the name of God, citing Quran verses now written on the body of the women. These women stand for the thousands of women around the world" (p. xxi). Thus these narratives are more than individuals' attempts to grapple with psychic fragmentation: they have deep cultural and political ramifications, particularly in an era when the United States and its allies are attempting to remake these cultures in the image of the West and "Facebook activists" have taken to the streets in astounding numbers to force reform or regime change. With growing worldwide support for protean feminist movements within these countries, Khouri enacted a political resistance that not only resonated in the West, but could be seen as another justification, or provocation, for policy decisions.

As noted, after Dalia's death, Khouri's narrative voice shifted. While she had warned her friend to exercise caution, the knowledge that Dalia's family had stabbed her to death produced such

acute psychic rupture that the two main characters switched places. Khouri became the outspoken critic of traditional, tribal Muslim culture as well as the object of concern for Dalia's former lover, who would eventually help her to flee the country. In *The Limits of Autobiography,* Gilmore (2001) argues that traumatic events are difficult to articulate within traditional biography because they generate ruptures in language that thwart the historical process. A main reason is that the psychic wounds are still open and thus these individuals' identities constantly shift. Scott (2006) suggests that this instability is because the subject uses the recursive process of telling the story to further the goals of self-healing. Thus the act of narration creates a psychic unification that fixes both subject and event within some knowable framework. This serves as one formal explanation for the transformation in Khouri's voice from dutiful daughter to outspoken avenger of Dalia's murder. Through a series of confrontations with various family members, Khouri established her voice as a challenge to their authority to define Dalia as a "whore," and an affront to the entire system that trapped and victimized both women. Her self-healing came in the form of redemptive memory. While she was unable to save her friend, she was able to preserve and recount her story.

When Khouri confronted Dalia's father her recalcitrance further established the persona whom the public would meet in 2004. This persona is itself a product of the psychic reunification that took place in the wake of the trauma. Despite her evident danger, Khouri was so disturbed by her friend's death, she told her murderers, "I will not be silent—I will not allow my silence to condemn her. Dalia did nothing wrong! I will defend her actions to my dying day" (p. 148). Their violence against Dalia opened a wound in Khouri's personality that mandated speech and her contest with those who had perpetrated this violence. She told the unrepentant family, "Dalia never shamed you, you shamed yourself. You've turned your home into a house of murder. The spilling of her innocent blood has stained your name, and your soul forever" (p. 141). As

she began to explore the contours of her own resistance, she became aware that she herself was undergoing a subjective shift: "I fully understand now the gravity of my words, and I meant every word I said. I knew that hundreds of women had been killed for lesser offenses. Honor killing has always been part of the Middle East, even more deeply rooted than the religions that seemed to rule us" (p. 141). By becoming Dalia's witness, Khouri emerged as an embodied, fully voiced subject as well as a literary persona for members of her audience. As she redeemed herself through her testimony and rejection of this vision of Jordanian culture, she was constituted as authentic through the text itself—creating a vivid, inspiring authorial presence that would become a primary component of the marketing campaign that surrounded her work.

Dalia's murder is rendered legible through Khouri's perceptions of her lifeworld. As a witness to violence, the roots of the tragedy are articulated in the preceding chapters where Khouri links these actions to the interpersonal and cultural context from which both she and Dalia have emerged. During the course of their development, both women have experienced, and been forced to consume, systematic gender oppression based upon consistent and permeating messages:

> Our parents wove into everyday life the idea that all men are superior to women. We were not beaten into a state of slavery with whips and chains, but rather persuaded into it by words and teachings of centuries old traditions. It was not our faith in those words that continued to bind us but our fear of the consequences if we ever went against them. This was the first time that either of us had ever thought of challenging these conventions. (20)

Dalia's crime was to challenge the existing cultural conventions regarding the role of women in Jordanian society to determine their own destiny. Her break with this authority followed by its

violent reprisal formed the basis for the voices that render these accounts meaningful for the consuming public. As Khouri occupied Dalia's resistant space, the work she did earlier in the book to map the parameters of their shared oppression became the focus of her persona. Through the trauma of Dalia's murder, her subjective shift is explained and her shattered personality reassembles into one that exists in order to contest the machinery that had generated it.

The formation of Khouri's persona through the process of contesting the meaning of Dalia's death has obvious implications for the biographical process and the rhetorical tropes that drive it. While these literary devices, such as the redemption of self through the act of resistance, function within the dynamics of the text such that they may run counter to traditional history, these tropes are not essential to the material context that produced the narrative. Rather they create new meanings that render the text more consumable and perhaps even more meaningful and, most importantly, recognizable to its audience. Gilmore (2001) writes, "Telling the story of one's life suggests a conversion of trauma's morbid contents into speech, and thereby, the prospect of working through trauma's hold on the subject. Yet, autobiography's impediments to such working through consist of its almost verifiable [nature], even in the presence of some ambivalence about those criteria. Conventions about truth-telling, salutary as they are, can be inimical to the ways that some writers bring trauma stories into language" (p. 129). As Khouri admitted in 2004, she clearly takes a certain "literary license" with facts in order to convey deeper, more important revelations about her experience and the role of Muslim women in Jordanian culture. However, given that this text was destined to enter the political field at a historically sensitive moment in Western/Islamic relations, the constructed "authenticity" of Khouri's voice cannot be easily dismissed. While Khouri provided a persuasive account of a traumatic event by giving eyewitness account of her friend's presence in the morgue and eventual transit to her burial site, this spatial intimacy has broader cultural implications. By

crafting Dalia as a real person, then hinging her own authorial persona on contesting how her friend's death would be consumed, Khouri's witness required a basis in material reality, particularly as it potentially held political and even policy implications. Certainly memory is faulty, but can truth be circumvented by the generic constraints and opportunities of a particular narrative? And, again, does trauma free the narrator from the responsibility to provide a reliable account?

LEGACY

One of the most interesting aspects of Khouri's work is its persuasiveness—as evidenced by how she was able to publish her book, tour with it as a piece of nonfiction, and exploit the political context from which her persona emerged. Given that United States policy goals shifted from preventing terror attacks to attempting to create capitalism-friendly and democratic cultures in the Middle East, works focused like Khouri's join a growing tradition within trauma narratives, marked by the unique lexicon of human rights. Schaeffer and Smith (2004) suggest that within narratives such as Khouri's the "modernist language of rights had become a *lingua franca* for extending—sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly—the reach of human rights norms, not everywhere, but across an increasingly broad swath of the globe" (p. 3). It is not unusual that journeys of self-discovery, such as Khouri's apparent account, have deep implications for a political culture. As Larson (2007) notes, the memoir often has as much to do with the individual as the society that is depicted within it. If the author is indeed a reliable witness, pain radiates outward from the self's own psychic experience into a larger field of historical consciousness. In short, a belief in the narrator's reliability is essential in creating and maintaining claims for universal authenticity.

The fact that Khouri's memoir involves the political status of

Jordanian women further complicates her status as witness. With its presumption to blend the personal and the political, women's literature has become a site for challenging many of the social norms that isolate and silence these voices (Buss, 2002). Given the powerful combination of human rights lexicon and women's experience narrative, Khouri provides a highly resonant critique of Jordanian society by linking her account to this political context. One of Khouri's most resonant tactics is to construct her text as a legacy to Dalia and by extension as a legacy to all of those women who suffer under the yoke of Islam. Dalia functions as a symbol with both personal and political import. The rhetorical impact is heightened by the audience's tendency to identify closely with Khouri and then, by extension, to keenly feel the loss of her closest friend. The dedication to the text reads as follows:

> My dear Dalia, in your life you made me laugh and made me cry. You managed to touch my soul and become part of me forever, and in your death you've become my purpose for living. I write this book in loving memory of you, and pray that God keeps you safe and happy until we meet again. Till then, *ya gazelle,* I know your spirit strengthens me, and your memory comforts me, and you will always remain a special part of my life.

As one comes to know Khouri, one comes to connect with Dalia. This raises the question of whether the emotional power of the text is heightened or reduced by the fact that Dalia is likely a complete work of fiction. We can return to the deep disappointment and exasperation one hears in Broinowski's voice as she moves through the streets of Jordan trying to pin down the evasive Khouri. Certainly it is not unusual for authors of women's literature to use fictional characters to express and explore real experiences that cannot be articulated in any other way (Henke, 1999). Yet, for Broinowski, it appears that Khouri has breached a boundary through which some

ethical violation or betrayal has occurred. The auditor reads the traumatic eyewitness testimony with the understanding that the author, at some basic level, dependably conveys a real experience. With this emotional investment comes a level of trust, and breaking this barrier constitutes a transgression. The ethical breach may be even more profound given the significance of the legacy left by Khouri's story. For example, this work helped to foster a further lexical shift in the meanings of the word "honor," from a term indicating fidelity to one's culture to a term of shame used to brand Jordanian men as inhumane monsters who victimize their family members in a rage masked by religion.

After Khouri came to terms with the loss of Dalia, her mother sought to convince her to apologize for her own actions in order to protect her. Khouri then considered her mother in a new way, with the trauma now revealing aspects of her mother that she had not realized before. She writes, "I wondered if she'd suffered a loss like mine. Surely she'd had a life before becoming a wife and a mother though she never shared many details of it. It was as if parts of her existence had vanished, and others were filed away in secret compartments of memory" (p. 173). Clearly the other women in *Honor Lost* are either silent or have been silenced. By speaking for Dalia, who becomes a symbolic representative for all Jordanian women, Khouri creates a text through which the everyday trauma that Jordanian women suffer at the hands of their families, husbands, and religious leaders is unveiled and so that their muted voices may be heard. By preserving Dalia's legacy, Khouri's status as witness positions her as such an intermediary.

In an analysis of the political role that cemeteries play in Palestinian culture, Khalili (2005) argues that these seemingly peaceful sites become resonant landscapes where dramatic heroism is underscored. Given the strong connection between author and audience within the traumatic narrative, the political implications of even personal accounts are also compelling. Khouri's case uses

mimesis to fabricate the literary tropes associated with trauma and apply them to the cultural backdrop of Islam. Toward the end of Khouri's account she describes Dalia's burial:

> She would have no coffin—part of the harsh end for honor crime victims. Her body was placed into a freshly dug hole. Workmen shoveled the brownish red dirt over her, then placed a crude cement slab on top, covering the dirt. These grunting men were the only witnesses at her graveside. No flowers or tears were left on this unmarked grave, only the aura of shame. (p. 183)

Because Dalia has been established as a universal symbol for those women who have the misfortune to challenge the Islamic system, Khouri's response to this aura of shame is, in effect, to set the record straight. By doing so she created a powerful legacy in the minds of Western audiences. This account was not initially interpreted as fiction; instead these literary devices were coded within the field of historical documentation. When her status as witness turned out to be false, this betrayal generated backlash against Khouri and provided critics with vivid evidence that Western claims of gender oppression in the Islamic world are largely the product of propaganda and hysteria. By coding this heroic narrative into the referential field of history, the traumatic events that Khouri appears to have falsely narrated challenge the fidelity of entire fields of thought involving East/West identity studies. Thus those groups who have legitimate concerns about human rights and women's status in countries such as Jordan received a severe blow when Khouri proved unable to document her account. While scholars of trauma literature often argue that literal truth is transcended within these accounts, they may not foresee the extent to which the market economy appropriates narrative as literal truth. If it is able to follow certain conventional patterns that conform to existing political narratives, this mimetic trauma sells.

CONCLUSION

When Ayann Hirsi Ali immigrated to the United States she raised more than a few eyebrows when she joined the American Enterprise Institute for Foreign Policy Research, a conservative think tank with a mission statement dedicated to advancing conservative principles in world politics. Given that Ali remains an outspoken advocate for women's rights and is also now a proponent for atheists, this might seem an uneasy alliance. Ali has used her position as a witness to the excesses of Islamic culture, which she argues is essential to the faith itself, to warn Americans that they still do not fully comprehend the scope of the tribal forces arrayed against them, even in Jordan, which has worked to promote a more progressive image in order to facilitate strong relations and financial investments with the West. The political significance of traumatic narratives is their power to produce further symbolic shocks throughout the social system (Schwab, 2006). While some trauma scholars make compelling arguments that truth is secondary to perceived experience, the stakes may be somewhat higher in cases where these narratives may have urgent political implications. Khouri seemed to fulfill the role of eyewitness to atrocity in a highly persuasive fashion. The resonance of such accounts should not, however, lead one to abdicate a duty to reliability.

In a history of the post-colonial relationship between Islam and the West, Erickson (1998) suggests that many indigenous scholars and artists attempted to look for a voice that moves between the two spheres, creating a type of hybrid. In this way they are able to challenge both political systems—those of colonial control and exploitation as well as those of local, tribal provincialism. These types of narratives have the problem of not conforming to the growing trend in trauma literature to create dramatic, conflict-driven narratives that will appeal to a large audience. Some Muslim scholars now recognize that since the war on terror, the question of radical,

repressive Islam has taken on added salience in the West (Amin-Khan, 2009). For those cultures who are more cooperative with the West, discussions of political radicalism are downplayed for paradigms of cultural relativism. Certainly these narratives play a key role in the current political climate as the critical response that Khouri generated demonstrates. The world that she created is stark and simple, with conflicts that may be a bit too black and white. While perhaps this should have been immediately concerning to publishers, Khouri's ability to appropriate existing conventions within trauma literature made her an extremely marketable literary persona. The question of authenticity needs to play a more central role in the analysis of the traumatic memoir because "real" voices will soon be excluded or reprocessed and regurgitated by the publishing industry. The dislocation and resistance Lacapra (2001) described is consumed and tamed by market forces. Rather than Caruth's (1996) psychic ruptures in meaning, these texts become markedly predictable in their management of conflict, character development, and outcome. Thus the commercially successful memoir genre has itself become subject to certain literary principles to make it appealing to publishers and readers—principles that are in many ways antithetical to the explosive expressions of traumatized subjects.

There is at least one other question that might bear mentioning. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of Khouri's narrative is the ease with which she fabricated a traumatic persona. She presents herself as an eminently believable narrator. Sulieman (2000) has argued that in certain cases traumatic memoirs may not be about fraud as much as self-delusion. Given how Khouri's self-explanations for her memory lapses became increasingly fantastic, she may fall into this category. It is certainly possible that the alleged sexual abuse that she later claimed to suffer at the hands of her father may have been transferred onto her experience as a Jordanian woman. Perhaps Dalia can be read as a psychological response to her family dynamics or as an extension of Khouri's own personality. Yet this

type of rudimentary psychoanalysis is, in the end, speculation. If the story is indeed a complete fabrication, then the question of motive remains uncertain. She appears, in some ways, to be shifting from one traumatized persona to another—from a political refugee to a sexual abuse victim. It also may be maintained that she is simply a liar. A revision in the ways that traumatic testimony is read along political lines may be necessary (Wallach, 2008). Perhaps treating these types of memoir as literal history is part of the problem. The memoir craze has provided a host of outlets for these voices to speak, but this proliferation may in fact come at the price of authenticity. When the performance of literary tropes is elevated above connective experience, trauma moves from being an act of expression to a political and commercial tool.

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Beyond Borders: Formalizing Trauma in Marie-France Collard and Phillippe Taszman's *Rwanda 94: Through Us, Humanity . . .*

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Responses to genocide are typically motivated by a three-part objective: to commemorate the victims, bring peace to the survivors, and prevent future like-occurrences. However, prevention rarely comes without understanding. An investigation into genocidal hatred, as the definition of genocide suggests, invariably leads to an exploration of the compulsion to identify and divide. "Beyond Borders: Formalizing Trauma in Marie-France Collard and Phillippe Taszman's *Rwanda 94: Through Us, Humanity . . .*" examines how identification and division could have led to the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and how this film and play of the same name attempt to reconcile the rift by putting identification and division themselves on trial.

KEYWORDS: Genocide, Rwanda, trauma, identification, naming, division, transcendence, unity, Marie-France Collard, Phillippe Taszman

INTRODUCTION: REPRESENTING TRAUMA

Whether related to the promotion of political stability, truth and reconciliation, or the establishment of NGO operations, responses to genocide typically share a three-part objective. From the Holocaust, to Pol Pot's Cambodia, to the events currently taking place in Darfur, organized political and social reactions to mass murders

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commonly have sought to be both prescriptive, in that they attempt to benefit the survivors, and archival, so as to state what took place and to memorialize the victims. Although not always expressed overtly, a preventative component to these responses also exists. One seeks to understand how genocidal atrocities came to be in order to recognize the signs of possible future reprisals. Inevitably this leads to an exploration of identity and difference: in particular, why we seek to establish such potentially dangerous norms within our own communities and to imbue them with so much power. At the core of this investigation lies the meaning of being human. Are we the product of our own free will and thus the master of our impulses? Or are we, as the saying goes, natural born killers?

Historical writing, journalism, and biography—in other words, styles associated with neutrality—have long been considered the privileged forms of representation regarding the articulation of real traumatic incidents. Ostensibly, the reason is their ability to accurately testify to lived experience and to investigate human impulses in a pseudo-scientific, objective fashion. In contrast, more patently creative responses to horror often seem excessively subjective, and thus less able to bear witness to the "truth" of such events or to the inclinations that produced them. Historically, artistic representations of traumatic moments have received additional considerations related to aesthetic responsibility, raising questions as to the appropriateness of *creatively* evoking real-life horrors. Adorno may be the most well known to petition against the supposed "barbarism" of such works, but he is not alone. Elie Wiesel's appeals to realism, Hana Wirth-Nesher's plea for strict adherence to "facts," the Wittgensteinian demand for silence when faced with the ineffable, and the equally justifiable concerns about voyeurism and thanatourism all come to mind.[1]

In addition to ethical considerations, aestheticizing trauma produces pragmatic concerns regarding imaginative representations' effectiveness for presenting and processing trauma, and producing change. Of course, factual accounts of genocide speak

to the "traumatic" nature of the events by detailing the brutality that victims endure. However, as Cathy Caruth has contended, such descriptions tell only part of the story (not that of the victim's), for "trauma" describes not the diverse aspects of events per se—their "brutal facts"—but rather, how "their occurrence defies simple comprehension" (Caruth, 1995, p. 153).[2] In contrast to the more "objective" representational forms, artistic responses to genocide are less concerned with detailing what took place than they are with stylistically evoking the psychic damage inflicted upon the involved population. Or, to paraphrase Shoshana Felman describing the Holocaust poetry of Paul Celan, they seek to enact a "breakage of [. . .] verse" in order to more faithfully conjure up "the breakage of the world" (Felman, 1992, p. 25). Still, we must ask ourselves if this form of representation has the capacity to transcend the realm of the symbolic so as to effect real societal change. Once again, this raises the question of what it means to be human, and specifically, the roles of nature and culture in human development. If we are, as suggested above, hard-wired to hate, can art enable us to overcome this primal compulsion?

Since the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Rwandans and non-Rwandans alike have creatively attempted to address this question by focusing on trauma as a formal element. In literature, the multiple narrators and temporal mixing in Véronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* and Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi: The Book of Bones* stylistically suggest the ensuing chaos of that fateful 100-day period. J. P. Stassen's graphic novel *Déogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* and Alfredo Jaar's installation pieces from the series *Rwanda Project: 1994–1998* visually call to mind the incomprehensibility of what took place. Arguably, one of the most creative formal responses to the Rwandan genocide is Marie-France Collard and Phillippe Taszman's exquisite documentary film *Rwanda 94: Through Us, Humanity . . .* [3] which details the efforts of the Belgian theatrical troupe *Groupov* to stage their play *Rwanda 94* in Rwanda on the tenth anniversary of the genocide.[4]

A primary theme of this film, where scenes from the theatrical production of *Rwanda 94* are juxtaposed against interviews with actual survivors, is the transcendence of boundaries: those thought to separate various groups of people from one another, the natural from the supernatural world, and fiction from truth. In so doing, *Rwanda 94* manages to speak to the principal aims of testimonial representation. It recounts the "story" of what took place, in a manner that expresses the nature of psychic trauma—the explosion of conceptual parameters that the victim experiences—and challenges the gestures that were ultimately responsible for genocidal hatred: the related acts of identifying and dividing.

IDENTIFICATION AND DIVISION IN THE OPENING OF *RWANDA 94*

The Survivor

Rwanda 94 opens with images of present-day Rwandans disinterring bodies that had been entombed in communal graves for more than ten years, juxtaposing this with the opening of the play *Rwanda 94,* in which the actors unearth memories. In this lengthy introductory monologue, Yolande Mukagasana, an actual survivor of the genocide, underscores one of the most significant concerns of the play, the film, and genocide in general: the role of identity.

> I am a human being of the planet Earth. I am a woman. I am an African from Rwanda. I am Rwandan. I am not an actress. I am a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda. Alas, that is my new identity.

Yolande designates the categories in which she participates—human, woman, African, Rwandan, survivor—and one group to which she does not belong: actress. In so doing, she symbolically transcends the stage's limits that artificially separate her from her audience. Interestingly, the identity markers that we would expect to hear in a play with this title—Tutsi or Hutu—she does not

specify with respect to her own identity. As her story unfolds we come to understand that she was considered to be either a Tutsi or a moderate Hutu, because her name appeared at the top of the lists of individuals to be assassinated. But the fact that she does not state this in her introduction is significant. In her refusal not only to name herself as either Hutu or Tutsi but even to express the words at all, she effectively rejects the imposition of identity by the Other, in this case, the Belgian colonial regime.

The Historian

As a means of exploring the historical importance of identity in Rwanda, *Rwanda 94* provides a general introduction in a scene with a "Historian." In many ways, this Historian typifies "*the* colonizer." He is white, European, and has no name to distinguish him from any other individual. In comparison to Yolande, who presents her personal story, he comes equipped with the "Master Narrative." Indeed, his role initially seems to be to transmit "objective" facts about Rwanda to the audience, even if the audience is composed of Rwandans themselves. Yet, his message and tone indicate that he is the antithesis of what he originally appears to represent. In other words, he does not perform the colonizing gesture of informing the audience about *their* history or of imposing one upon them, as much as he speaks of his own country's history and its influence on Rwandan identity. He relates the extent to which the white, European "intellectuals" (scientists, ethnologists, historians, missionaries) were responsible for racializing a division in Rwandan society.

IDENTIFICATION AND DIVISION IN HISTORY AND THEORY

The Ethnologists and Missionaries

The history of Western Civilization is replete with examples of the use of both "hard" and "soft" sciences as well as religion in the service of justifying domination of one group over another. The best known example is no doubt that of Nazi Germany, but this was also

often the case for regimes who sought to rationalize colonization. The so-called "racial science" of the Hamitic hypothesis in vogue amongst Western European colonizers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries posited that lighter-skinned beings from the North (North Africa for example, and by geographic proximity, Europe), because of their biologically superior strength and intelligence (somehow linked to their "Northern" appearance), should be responsible for ruling over their darker-skinned counterparts. In the case of Rwanda, missionaries such as Father Léon Classe (who would become the first Bishop of Rwanda), convinced of such seemingly scientifically based proofs, combined forces with ethnologists in campaigning for the privileging of the comparatively paler Tutsis over the Hutus and Twas. The subsequent hatred that eventually resulted in massacres of both groups from 1959 until 1994 illustrates Kenneth Burke's (1969) contention of just how perverse the "austere scientific ideal"—and, arguably, religious fervor—can become if "released into a social texture unprepared for it."[5]

Admittedly, the terms Tutsi and Hutu were, in fact, in usage long before Europeans attempted to colonize Rwanda. However, the way the Belgians conceptualized and employed the names was markedly different from how they had been understood and used for centuries. Once indicative of function (pastoralists versus agriculturalists), thus allowing for mobility between the identities, under Belgian colonial rule they became linked to ethnicity, and so forfeited any possibility of change.[6] At one point terms under which a multitude of different governing bodies reigned with relative equality (as is evidenced by the fact that there were diverse chiefs of the various pastures and hills), they became isolated and hierarchized under the colonial administration, giving one group ultimate privilege over the other with disastrous consequences. The result is two competing ways of conceiving of divisions: those without explicit hierarchies and those with them, divisions understood as artificial—albeit useful—constructs, and supposedly genetically determined. Finally,

some distinctions allowed for fluidity from one group to the next, while others later rigorously traced and retraced boundaries so as to prevent contamination from without.

The Theorists

Clearly, the act of identifying and categorizing is not simply an Occidental gesture, nor is it inherently threatening. All humans rely on labeling and differentiating in order to understand the world and each other. The production of language itself—whether pictorial, textual, or verbal—is little more than the creation of labels meant to represent some thing. As the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure has argued, the effectiveness of the label to accurately represent its object is entirely dependent upon the extent to which the definition of the term asserts its difference from the definitions of other objects. In order for clear communication to take place, one must therefore be able to see how one term, object, or idea is distinct from another. The acts of naming and separating in order to come to and to convey knowledge are gestures that are common to all beings capable of linguistic production and communication. However, as Jacques Derrida suggests in his "Law of Genre," the "readability" afforded by identification and division comes at a cost.[7] While we have a need for naming in order to understand each other and our world, it can come only by way of a loss of freedom.

Kenneth Burke famously notes as particularly human the use of the concepts of division and identification—the domain of rhetoric—for the purposes of inducing strife. In contrast to the symbolic, in which objects are "considered in their uniqueness," rhetoric describes the relationship between objects. In its capacity as a classificatory realm, rhetoric's primary concern is with the seemingly benign gesture of identification. Yet, since identification entails division—its "ironic counterpart"—rhetoric must be recognized as a sphere of dissonance as well (Burke, 1969, p.23). In other words, where the symbolic permits objects to exist "outside

the realm of conflict," rhetoric exploits the "partisan" possibilities of classification by focusing on "the way in which individual [entities or groups] are at odds with one another" (Burke, 1969, p. 22). For Burke, these definitions determine the linguistic functions of each sphere. Where the symbolic represents the realm of poetic language, employed "for itself and in itself," rhetoric is the domain of manipulation. Its aim is not to unearth facts, for here, "truth is at best a secondary device" (Burke, 1969, pp.43, 54). In the words of Cicero, rhetorical language is instead "speech designed to persuade" (*dicere ad persuadendum accommodate*). Naturally, the inducement to action on the part of the speaker demands a submissive response on the part of the receiver. Burke notes that this relationship is implied in the etymology of the word *peitho,* for while its "active form" means "to persuade," its "middle and passive forms" suggest its opposite: "to obey" (Burke, 1969, p.52).

IDENTIFICATION AND DIVISION IN THE FILM *RWANDA 94*

The Absurdity of Identification

Practical reasons existed for intentionally cleaving Rwandan society into three discordant groups. By considering them as entities in conflict with one another, such as what one might find in the domain of rhetoric, the colonizers were better able to control the Rwandan people. In order to justify these distinctions, ethnologists associated certain physical and moral characteristics with each group "as if determined by nature." In an attempt to underscore the absurdity of these supposed genetic determinations, the Historian of the play *Rwanda 94* reads several Belgian-authored descriptions to the Rwandan audience:

> The Tutsi is tall, a kind of giant, thin, high forehead, thin nose [. . .], intelligent, but also cunning, hypocritical, lying, cruel and lazy [. . .]. The Hutu is the "common negro," [. . .] flat

> nose, enormous lips, childish in nature [. . .]. The Twa is a monkey-like creature, ugly, dirty, brutal, ferocious, born for base activities (my translation).

In the film, his descriptions are met, appropriately, with bursts of laughter from the audience members. He further undercuts the methods of the ethnologists by reflecting on their ultimate lack of ability to control the categories of Tutsi and Hutu. If physical attributes clearly distinguished one group from the next, why was there a need for identification cards stating ethnic membership? If the distinction was biologically determined, why were there cases in which two brothers of the same parents were classified as belonging to different ethnic groups?

This segment of the Historian's monologue conveys a sense of levity that was surely absent in the experiences leading up to and culminating in the actual events of April, 1994. He does not explicitly address the extent to which faulty reasoning can lead to atrocity, particularly when accompanied by a dogmatic need to isolate one part of a population from another. Of course, given his audience, that fact goes without saying. But it bears articulating to those of us who have never experienced such horror. By definition, "genocide" entails the formal distinguishing of (at least) one group from another. This is what differentiates it from a "simple" hate crime. To be sure, definitional variations of the term genocide exist over time, but the basic elements formulated in the 1948 legal definition of the *UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* remain consistent from one definition to the next.[8] Genocide requires systematic and violent aggression against some group or members of that group precisely because they are thought to *belong* to that group.

The Benefits of Naming

Undoubtedly, Collard and Taszman's film holds this fervent desire to divide a population responsible for producing genocide in Rwanda. The strength of both the play and the film is the marked absence of "partisan" or totalizing views of any kind, or even a lack of labeling the acts of identifying and dividing as fundamentally damaging. In the play, the dual nature of such notions is a principal theme. When Yolande chooses to name (or leave unnamed) the various aspects of her identity, defining is a liberating gesture. She is what she chooses to be. Elsewhere, naming becomes the equivalent of bearing witness. Like Yolande before them, the characters who make up the Choir of the Dead—some named (Cyrdy Cyrin Cyezamitima Rugamba, Joseph and Josiane), others unnamed (dead person number two, number three, and number five)—all give voice to their experiences of the genocide. In some scenes, identification takes the form of accusation. Yolande identifies neighbors who betrayed her and her family. The Historian names the colonial administration as responsible for the massacres. The Choir of the Dead focuses on the involvement of the Church and pronounces the actual names of known perpetrators of rapes and mass killings, such as Father Alvoet and Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka.

Outside of the confines of the theatrical space, when the filmmaker interviews survivors she affords them the opportunity to testify to their own experiences as well. One anonymous young woman tells of her narrow escape from death when she was thrown into a pit of dead bodies and buried alive. Likewise, Dusabe Marine of the Ntawiyangira, the sole woman whom we see working alongside men to exhume bodies from mass graves, relates her story of multiple sexual violations. Later, the resistors of Bisesero not only have the opportunity to bear witness to their heroic battles against the Hutu extremists, they also hear these stories echoed back to them—and hear their own names enunciated in relation to them—while watching a presentation of the play in which their stories are featured.

The Dangers of Naming

But if the play and the film demonstrate a preoccupation with the notion of identification, there is an equally strong emphasis on refusing to identify. As already indicated, although some characters in the play have names, others are left nameless, perhaps as a means of invoking the universality of the victims. Of course, outside of the theatrical space the reasons for anonymity are often related to survival. The majority of the survivors interviewed in the film are unnamed. In the case of one group of women, they are even visually unidentifiable, as they are covered from head to toe in fabric and are filmed only from behind. They explain that they must conceal themselves in order to remain alive, even ten years after the genocide. They speak of those who were assassinated for having supported the victims, like a certain "Karasira" who was killed for simply accompanying a female victim to the courts. Even keeping one's experience to oneself is not enough to guarantee safety, for those who know them now know that they were Tutsi, and thus "not considered human." Living in constant fear, they view themselves as "the living dead."

Similarly, while the actors of the play do not hesitate to name the perpetrators, the real survivors interviewed in the film do not dare pronounce the names of their victimizers. At one point, the anonymous young woman who recounted her own live burial asks the interviewer why he does not wish to know the names of the men who tried to kill her. When he finally asks her after much prodding, she refuses to divulge them, explaining that naming would be akin to suicide. The only *génocidaire* to be identified in the film is a man in a yellow sweater who works alongside Dusabe Marine. When he states that he wants only his voice recorded and not his face, the cameraman manages to "name" him by never turning the camera off, even after agreeing that he would. In contrast to the characters on stage, for the actual survivors naming is not always possible. Accusation rarely leads to incarceration, and even when it does,

it does not last long. Eventually, the accusers must return to their homes and then the consequences are very real, and often deadly.[9]

The Benefits of Not Naming

The dangers involved in naming notwithstanding, symbolic benefits of breaking down the boundaries associated with categorizing include honoring the victim's experience by evoking the psychic trauma with which she or he must live post-genocide. As Caruth and others have suggested, "trauma" describes the shattering of former ways of knowing and understanding that occurs when someone lives through something as unimaginable as genocide. Dori Laub argues that this damage often renders the trauma victim unable to distinguish between "fact" and "fiction." At one point in the film, survivor Dusabe Marine appears to reflect this mindset. After attending a performance of the play, she speaks to the filmmaker about the importance of the Historian. Given the lack of action on the part of the U.N. and the United States, and the excessive actions that benefited the Hutu extremists (the initial French evacuations, Operation Turquoise, etc.), the victims assumed that all white people were on the side of the *génocidaires.* Since the Historian seemed to be an exception to this rule, and because she assumed that his extensive knowledge of the history of her country came from his having Rwandan ancestry, Dusabe Marine suggests that it would be useful for the survivors if the Historian—in other words, the white, Belgian actor—would remain in Rwanda in order to testify in the hearings.

The blending of representation and reality also can be seen in a more positive, or restorative light, representing the possibility of transcendence. In the play itself, we first witness blurring of art and artifice in the person of Yolande, an actual survivor who recounts her own unscripted story.[10] The actors also frequently cross this divide by walking off the stage and milling among the audience members.

Perhaps the film's greatest contribution to the play is the amplification of this gesture of transcendence. From the beginning of the film, we see a juxtaposition of film footage from 2004—the exhumation of bodies in the opening scene, the interviews with survivors, and footage from various memorial sites—with staged scenes from the play. The images and voices of the actors often overlap the film footage, leaving the spectator with the impression of witnessing ghostly beings cross over the Rwandan countryside. At some moments the play and the film are so tightly choreographed that the actors' voices seem to narrate the images of life outside of the confines of the theatre. As the camera lingers over images of Murambi, the memorial to the slain Belgian paratroopers, a voice from the play laments the fact that no one did anything to stop the violence. Just as the voice says "[. . .] they did nothing," the camera closes in on a pile of neatly stacked skulls at the actual site. In another scene, the film audience sees footage of the Nyamata memorial: a church into which hundreds were lured and slaughtered. As the camera sweeps across the coffins inside the church, the blood-stained altar sheet, and the tourists who silently pay homage to the dead, we hear a voice-over from one of the actors who recounts the violence that took place at the hands of church representatives: "Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka, who in 94 was a priest. [. . .] He handed over his parishioners and those who sought refuge in his church to the Interahamwe [militia]. He raped women and young girls. Wenceslas lives in France. He is a priest in a parish, where he says mass every Sunday." As he implores those who witnessed these atrocities to remember their origins, saying, "Let them not forget to say: Here's the fruit of Rwanda's Christianization. Here are the teachings of the theocratic church," the camera focuses on tourists gazing at a pile of skulls, many of which are split in half. Later, when the Choir of the Dead grieves for victims' premature and violent end, chanting, "we are not at peace," its voices and images ghost the film footage of the disinterment of actual victims

during the inauguration of the Gisozi Memorial Center in Kigali.

As the notion of transcendence suggests, the blurring of boundaries—perhaps particularly when speaking of genocide—may also have cathartic potential. In general terms, a traumatic experience is defined as something that precludes immediate comprehension. As a result, the victim of such an event finds himself in almost complete isolation. Unable to grasp the horror of what he experienced, he is doubly isolated insofar as he is severed from the "original moment" of the trauma and from all of those who did not also experience it.[11] Given this state, and given that rigid categorization was responsible for the racial bifurcation of Rwandan society, then refusing to accept artificial boundaries as "natural" might be considered a step toward reparation of this original rift. Indeed, as Yolande Mukagasana's example demonstrates, the refusal to refer to herself as either Tutsi or Hutu or to mention this distinction at all in her initial introduction, symbolizes a move toward emancipation both for herself and for her people. In denying these words the power to fully signify as they once had—as binary opposites—she effectively expresses her refusal to accept the artificial division of Rwanda.[12]

This restorative act of dissolving boundaries emerges verbally and visually in both the play and the film. Both representations feature an explicit confounding of sexual and racial boundaries, as women's and men's voices overlay one another and white and black actors play the roles of Rwandans. The Choir of the Dead—modeled on the chorus in classical Greek drama—is perhaps the manifestation *par excellence* of transcendence of this type. Historically, the Greek chorus performed a variety of functions, among them providing the audience with background information and interpretive tools, and allowing time for scene changes. However, in *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche argues that the principal function of the tragic chorus was to establish a sense of "primal unity" between the spectators and the characters of the play, highlighted by the fact that the chorus participants, like Yolande Mukagasana,

were initially not actors but rather Greek citizens (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 36). *Rwanda 94*'s Choir of the Dead seems to perform this same function in the sense that it is responsible for the majority of the voice-overs narrating cinematic images of the actual memorial sites. Unification also takes place between the world of the living and that of the dead. For example, when Dusabe Marine watches the performance, the camera captures her nodding in agreement as the Dead speak of their continued suffering. As a woman who commits her time to exhuming bodies in order to give them a proper burial, this is something that, her gestures indicate, she knows all too well.

Insofar as it cultivated "a forgetting of the self," the classical Greek chorus also encouraged a sense of community among the spectators themselves (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 36). Nietzsche elaborates:

> The Greek man of culture felt himself nullified in the presence of the satiric chorus; and this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature. (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 7)

Likewise, *Rwanda 94* appears to create a similar sense of community among the audience members, particularly when individuals leave their seats in order to comfort each other during the performance. While not one of the Choir of the Dead, Yolande Mukagasana's chorus-like status as a mediator between the fictional space of the stage and the real space of the audience puts her in a position to have this cathartic effect on the spectators. Indeed, during her opening monologue, a woman in the audience begins wailing so loudly that Yolande stops speaking for several minutes, presumably out of respect. When this happens, a man from across the aisle rises to console the woman. At another point during the performance

when the actual Choir of the Dead is speaking, a different audience member leaves his chair and passes a note to one of the actors on stage. The actor puts the note in his pocket to read after the play has concluded.

CONCLUSION: CONSIDERING IDENTIFICATION, DIVISION, AND UNITY

Despite these hopeful signs of unification, *Rwanda 94*'s long-term impact on its viewing population is difficult to project. Clearly, it holds an immediate, symbolic value for viewers. In the film, we witness the cathartic effect for the survivors when others acknowledge the specificity of this trauma. The post-performance interviews also suggest that for some the play manages to prompt a rather radical shift in perspective. For Dusabe Marine and the men known as the Resistors of Bisesero, the play challenged how they viewed the Western World. For them, the presence of white Europeans in both the performance of the play and the making of the film signaled that, contrary to what they had believed, not all Westerners collaborated with the extremists. In other words, they learned that the genocide victims were not as alone as they had assumed.

Beyond this, it is unclear whether the message of *Rwanda 94* (the representation), like Rwanda 94 (the reality), will have any real bearing on the attitudes that led, and might one day lead again, to genocide. By taking the point of view of the victims, the film's ability to attract viewers who perpetrated the killings is minimal. Dusabe Marine alludes to this unfortunate situation in her interview when she bemoans the fact that the audience was comprised exclusively of victims: "The play pleased me but it also saddened me because the assassins weren't there to see it. They might think 'I remember what I've done,'" and thereby, presumably, repent.

Admittedly, events taking place on a judicial level in Rwanda

suggest that the presence of the *génocidaires* may itself not be enough to effect this type of change. In an effort to supplement the trials of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which have proven to be incapable of both trying and incarcerating the overwhelmingly large number of citizens accused of genocidal acts, the Rwandan government has reinstituted the traditional form of justice known as the Gacaca courts. In contrast to the ICTR, where decisions are made by an international body with no relation to either the victims or the accused and where justice is punitive, the Gacaca courts are community-based forums for dispute resolution, whose justice is meant to be restorative. Victim accusations, voluntary persecutor confessions, and subsequent reparations (often in the form of payment) are intended ultimately to lead to a renewed sense of unity by reintegrating both parties into the community. The goal of creating a unified body is further reinforced by the Chorus-like structure of the trials, where not one person represents the prosecutor or the judge but rather a group, and where the aim is to bring all parties together into one harmonious unit. However, although such procedures are ideally intended to produce a feeling of unity—or, in Nietzsche's description of the Chorus, "the metaphysical comfort that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances"—the reality can be quite different (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 7). First, the motivation to confess does not always come from a desire to atone for past sins, but from a hope of avoiding incarceration. Unification is also compromised in part by the composition of the Gacaca population, since the majority of the victims are Tutsi and the greater part of the accused are Hutu. In this sense, the Gacaca trials cannot help but reinforce an image of Rwanda as a society that was once and may still be irrevocably divided.

It would be naïve to think that any one thing could repair the damage or prevent such destruction from recurring. Equally naïve is the belief that pure unity could exist outside of the symbolic,

and if it could, that its demand for sameness would be any more beneficial than a demand for pure division. Although perhaps ultimately unable to fully achieve the implicit aims of healing, exacting justice, and restoring a general sense of community amongst *all* parties, *Rwanda 94* and its real-life counterpart, the Gacaca courts, move in the right direction. In their integration of both division and unity—in their refusal to choose one gesture over the other—both strive toward a realistic, and thus imperfect, vision of unity that does not negate difference. Yolande Mukagasana's staged, but *real,* monologue reinforces this. Yolande describes the beginning of what would end up being the last night she would ever see her husband or children alive. She explains that the *Interahamwe* militia ordered everyone in her neighborhood out into the streets. The English subtitles of the film read that she was ushered out "with all the neighbors: Hutus and Tutsi." In French she says that in the streets she saw "tous les voisons, Hutu et Tutsi confondus" ("all of the neighbors, Hutu and Tutsi mixed/confused together"). This slight difference between speech and English translation is more important than it may initially appear. After that statement she relates how the militia—realizing that the crowd was all "mixed together"—ordered the separation of Hutus and Tutsis. Once they severed the crowd into two groups, the *Interahamwe* killed all Tutsis unable to react in time. What Yolande stresses bears repeating, especially given that genocide continues to be part of the fabric of our time. Prior to colonization, Rwanda was a country comprised of several groups who made up one people. This does not imply that Rwandan society was entirely harmonious or devoid of aggression among its citizens before the Belgian-instituted ethnic divisions, but previous hostility was not based on such difference. While financial and social distinctions differentiated one group from the next, for centuries Rwandans shared much of what divided others around the world: geographical borders, god (Imana), and language (kinyarwanda). If anything could be said to be "natural," it would be

this state in which the Rwandan people were different and yet "all mixed together." The rigidification and subsequent naturalization of difference were unnatural. As Yolande suggests, safety comes in some form of unity: in strict identification or division, only death.[13]

NOTES

1 Adorno's proclamation regarding the barbarism of writing poetry after Auschwitz has several potential readings. He could have been arguing against the use of the Holocaust as content material for poetry, or writing poetically (i.e., employing poetic style) about the Holocaust, or writing creatively at all after the Holocaust, etc. For Wiesel's admonition concerning the combination of fiction and the subject of the Holocaust, see "The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration." Wirth-Nesher, following Wiesel, states, "While all narratives are imaginative reconstructions, when it comes to those of mass suffering, we should be particularly vigilant about honoring the line between fact and fiction" (Wirth-Nesher, 1985, p. 17). The demand for silence when faced with that which seems to escape articulation is often justified by Ludwig Wittgenstein's seventh proposition of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* which states "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (Wittgenstein, 27 + 108, Ogden, Trans., 1981). For a reference to voyeurism and atrocity tourism, see Debjani Ganguly's "100 Days in Rwanda: Trauma Aesthetics and Humanist Ethics in an Age of Terror."

2 In the often brilliant *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* (1995), Kalí Tal counters Caruth's conceptualization of trauma by employing Lawrence Langer and Laura Brown's contention that because traumatic moments have become so frequent (and because the official definition of trauma has been revised over time) they are no longer thought to designate "extra-ordinary" experiences. While it may indeed be the case that we all experience some form of devastation during our lifetimes that greatly challenges our ways of knowing and expressing—the death of loved ones, illness, and perhaps serious victimization of one kind or another—we do not expect to be subjected to something such as genocide. Although it is justifiable to state that "trauma" has undergone a widening of its definition to include events that are common to many of us, it is equally valid to assume that those events that are most outside of the realm of normal experience produce the most extreme forms of trauma.

3 I am grateful to my friend and colleague Sarah Davies Cordova for bringing this play to my attention.

4 In 2002, after five years of research, the theatre troupe *Groupov,* comprised of both Belgians and Rwandans, began staging the play *Rwanda 94* in Europe and in North America.

5 See Burke, 1969, 34.
6 A Hutu could *Kwihutura* (lose "hutuness") with wealth accumulation, often in the form of acquiring cattle. Likewise, a Tutsi could *Gucupira* (lose "tutsiness") with the loss of wealth, again often with the loss of cattle.
7 A response to Jürgen Habermas's "Excursus on Leveling the Genre-distinction Between Philosophy and Literature."
8 Article 2 describes genocide as all "[. . .] acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious *group* as such: killing members of the *group*; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the *group*; deliberately inflicting on the *group* conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the *group*; [and] forcibly transferring children of the *group* to another *group*" (my emphasis).
9 Of course, this is the opposite of the effect that naming would have had if countries such as the United States had named what was taking place in Rwanda as "genocide" and not simply, as Madeleine Albright did, as a series of "genocidal acts."
10 An examination of both the play script and the film shows the extent to which her monologue changes with each representation.
11 For more on the inaccessibility of the original moment in cases of trauma, see Caruth (1996).
12 Her use of both the past and present tenses to describe the events of 1994 is itself indicative of temporal crossing.The first part of her monologue, although recounting the events of 1994, is spoken entirely in the present tense: "En avril 1994, je suis mariée. Joseph, mon mari, et moi avons trois enfants [. . .]. Nous sommes heureux" ("In April of 1994, I am married. Joseph, my husband, and I have three children [. . .]. We are happy" [My translation]).
13 Following the genocide, the government imposed a provisional moratorium on teaching the history of the genocide in the public schools. Not long thereafter, the terms "Hutu" and "Tutsi" were officially banned by the government.

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Consuming Trauma: The African Famines and the Gaze of Philanthropy

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This essay critically analyzes images and discourses of Africa produced within the realm of humanitarian culture throughout the 1980s time period. During this time, devastating images of the Sahel famine circulated within a variety of media formats, at the same time that the hip philanthropic endeavor known as Band Aid generated its own set of consumer-oriented imagery in order to raise awareness about the famine. I demonstrate how Band Aid was created as a transformative space that turned the tragedy of the famine into a desirable cause commodity for Western consumers. In this way, Band Aid became a cultural vehicle through which the West could negotiate the spectacle of trauma unfolding through the famine's mediation.

KEYWORDS: Africa, Famine, Band Aid, Live Aid, philanthropy, commodification, spectacle

In 1984 BBC correspondent Michael Buerk reported from Korem, Ethiopia, about the devastating famine gripping the country and in particular the northern regions of Eritrea and Tigray. As BBC cameras panned the suffering crowd and initiated close-up shots of mostly women and children in various states of distress, Buerk described an apocalyptic scenario unfolding before him:

> Dawn, and as the sun breaks through the piercing chill of night on the plain outside Korem it lights up a biblical famine now,

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> in the 20th century. This place, say workers here, is the closest thing to hell on Earth . . . Death is all around.[1]

The famine in Ethiopia and other parts of the Sahel region of Africa became one of the biggest media stories of the 1980s in no small part because of the accompanying devastating imagery that circulated within a variety of Western print and broadcast media formats. The famine imagery, projected primarily through the bodies of women and children, worked to produce iconic scenes of African suffering and trauma signified through moaning voices and starved and mangled bodies. Much of the media coverage portrayed the famine primarily as a result of drought conditions plaguing the region, so that the trauma came across as both the result of a random disaster and indicative of Africans' inability to feed their own.

Images of the Sahel famine also inspired people to act on behalf of the sufferers in unique ways. The Band Aid Foundation, for example, forged a new model of philanthropy or "pop philanthropy" that centered squarely on practices of consumption and the marketing of suffering to the MTV (18 to 34 year old) demographic. Instead of focusing on images of suffering, Band Aid drew upon the terrains of popular culture and consumerism to construct a different kind of visual humanitarian narrative about Africa for the Western public. In this way the sign of Africa was transformed not only by narratives of suffering and pity but also by hip celebrities and the "culture of cool." Band Aid founder Bob Geldof's initiative was unique in that he sought to make an undesirable and neglected story within American and British mediated culture—the starvation and suffering of African citizens—relevant within the realm of popular culture. Through an unprecedented level of participation from a number of "A-list" celebrities and collaboration with the budding hip cable channel MTV, Band Aid generated millions of dollars in revenue to aid the famine relief effort, while its

corresponding charity concert, Live Aid, was watched around the world by an estimated more than one billion people.

This essay focuses on the images produced within these two key moments of Africa's discursive invention in the West, arguing that during the 1980s Africa became signaled in the West through what I term a "philanthropic gaze" largely shaped by the media coverage of the Sahel famine. I demonstrate how the pop philanthropy model of Band Aid functioned as a *transformative space* through which Western spectators could negotiate the spectacle of African trauma being witnessed in living rooms around the world. Band Aid transformed the mediation of the famine into a desirable cause commodity and situated humanitarian intervention toward the African continent within the terrain of consumerism and celebrity culture. In this way Band Aid participated in what Mike Featherstone (1991) refers to as the "promotion of an aestheticizing distancing" (p. 86). The mediated imagery surrounding the famine offered a searing glimpse of the stark realities of the global economic divide between "North" and "South" during the height of the Cold War period, a time normally associated with the ideological divide between East and West. Pop philanthropy was (and is) thus valued for its ability to offer spectators a kind of virtual, *consumer-oriented* response to the suffering, a response largely shaped by the famine's representation within the media. Indeed, Band Aid signaled only the beginning of a new kind of pop philanthropy toward Africa that, today, has been taken to deeper levels of consumer and celebrity engagement.

This essay builds upon Cathy Caruth's (1996) notion that we are all implicated in each other's traumas, not necessarily in the literal sense of contributing to another's trauma (although the West's role in the cycles of African famine begs for more public discussion) but through our role as witnesses and interpreters of traumatic experiences. This is an especially intriguing point when considering that many of us today experience others' trauma through screens and, therefore, layered interpretations. In defining trauma, Caruth (1995)

refers to societal notions of post-traumatic stress disorder when she states, "To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" that refers back to the original traumatic experience (p. 4–5). Caruth (1991) takes this understanding of trauma one step further to understand history itself as a kind of post-traumatic *reference* of events that replaces "immediate understanding," which is always unattainable (p. 182). What happens to our understanding of traumatic events "over there" when they are primarily relayed to us *as* images is particularly considered in relation to the cultural role that Africa plays within the Western imaginary, a role that James Ferguson (2006) refers to as "a metaphor of absence" whose meanings are often conferred through the "Dark Continent" motifs of the past and contemporary humanitarian discourse (p.4). Africa's meaning in the West is further complicated by how we are living in an era of the "refusal of the referent" and a corresponding "unstable field of floating signifiers" (Featherstone 1991, p. 85). Pop philanthropy became the vehicle to create new cultural and *visual* references for the African famines that were racialized, depoliticized, and oriented toward the gaze of the donor-consumer.

THE PHILANTHROPIC GAZE IN THE AGE OF THE MEDIAPOLIS

As the famine imagery suggests, philanthropic discourse in the contemporary era operates to a great extent through the visual. The visual culture landscape is marked by the omnipresence of the mass media and the "electronic age," what Roger Silverstone (2007) terms the "mediapolis." This term indicates that media have come to play a determining role in constituting our world and defining our place within the global order. A strong corollary exists between the media and our sense of the global, as according to Silverstone global media enables "a technical and cultural framework for the connectivity, positive or negative, without which the globe would be merely a shadow" (p. 10). However, while the development

of satellite technologies has broadened opportunities to access information around the world these developments also reflect transnational relationships of power and have contributed to the solidification of the global divide (Chouliaraki, 2006; Morley, 2000).

Through the onset of satellite technologies and deregulatory media policies the 1980s marks an important precursor to the mediapolis of today. As cable television took flight within the United States and other parts of the world it drastically expanded the mediated landscape for consumers, fostering an appetite for the increased media-tization of culture. Within this framework of the nascent "mediapolis" of the 1980s, a complex relationship among broadcasters, news editors, and the humanitarian sector structured the philanthropic gaze upon Africa *as a site of trauma and suffering.* Richard Dowden (2009), a well known journalist on African issues, has written about this relationship and how each entity plays its part in creating a particular, chaotic idea about Africa for a variety of reasons. In his book *Altered States* Dowden explains:

> the media's defense [of the negative imagery around Africa] is that it feeds on news of wars and disasters . . . Editors want breaking news but have little interest in explanations, let alone explanations from an African perspective. . . . 'Keep it simple' is the message. All the rich history, culture and complexity of Africa is missed . . . It is easier to describe it as chaos. (p. 5)

The aid industry is also implicated within Dowden's assessment of Africa's misguided representation because it has a financial and political interest in maintaining a certain image of Africans as victims, and as a result, has helped create the overdetermined notion of Africa as a giant site of distress. According to Dowden the aid industry and journalists "feed off each other . . . The deal, mostly unspoken but well understood, is that aid workers tell journalists where disaster is breaking" (p. 7). This mutually

beneficial relationship of promotion and profit means journalists get a compelling story to bring to their editors and audiences, and the humanitarian organizations receive positive news coverage and an opportunity to create a viable fundraising campaign around the "breaking news" agenda.

Among a variety of journalists and editors is the persistent belief that audiences are ultimately more interested in devastating images of starvation, simplistic narratives of tragedy, and the heroic rescue effort of the aid agencies than they are in contextualized and nuanced accounts of how famines and civil wars actually begin and unfold over time. From this perspective the victim/hero dynamic works as a narrative for the Western mind that hearkens back to the savior motif of the European colonial era, in which colonialism was justified as a "civilizing mission" to "save" the "heathen" and "barbaric" Africans from themselves (Mudimbe, 1988; Mbembe, 2001, McClintock, 1995). Rather than being solely the result of a tragic drought, however, the Sahel famine was fueled by Cold War politics, neoliberal economic and political foreign policies of the Western world, and ethnic tensions that trace back to the arbitrary carving up of Africa during the colonial period (Walker and Maxwell, 2009; De Waal, 1997).

The formulaic nature of disaster reporting, including the eye-popping imagery normally associated with it, precluded the possibility for a deeper engagement with these kinds of stories as they related to the production of the famine. Keith Tester (2001) in his book *Compassion, Morality, and the Media* includes comments from BBC journalist George Alagiah, who describes, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, the phenomenon of "template reporting" in relation to Africa and in particular famine coverage:

> You've got to have the emaciated child, preferably crying; you've got to have a feeding centre where mothers with sunken breasts are trying to calm their children; you've got to have an aid

FIGURE 1. Image of mother and child from Buerk's 1984 BBC broadcast of the famine in Ethiopia.

> worker, usually white, usually a woman who is working against the odds and yet has time to come and tell us, the reporter and the audience, how difficult it all is. (p. 39)

This conventional hero/victim media narrative is often accompanied by exoticized imagery that incorporates close-ups of famine victims' bodies and bones, drawing attention to their physical attributes in a morally questionable way (Tester, 2001).

MOTHER AND CHILD: IMAGES OF THE SAHEL FAMINE

The portrayal of the Sahel famine in many ways reflects Alagiah's template, including the emphasis among journalists on the state of the crisis and the heroic efforts of aid agencies. The media coded the famine primarily as a natural disaster rather than as a complex political problem doomed to be repeated without a clearer understanding within the international community of the various factors propelling the famine. This template guided many of the

media images and eventually Band Aid's use of them. Buerk's BBC broadcast opens with a particularly wrenching scene (Fig. 1) of a mother offering her "emaciated breast" to her hungry, crying child. The mother has no direct eye contact with the camera, signaling her lack of agency within this mediated exchange; instead she focuses on soothing her distressed baby. The camera zooms in on the baby's frail body and wails of suffering. Another scene features a close-up shot of a young boy's face clearly gripped by trauma, as he looks dazedly around the crowd of suffering people. The camera pans from his tear-stained face to his thin frame, focusing in particular on his bony knees and legs. These scenes, set amid the smoky, darkened arena of dawn, are accompanied by continuous moans of grief from the gathered crowd. Following these images is a shot of aid workers weighing skeletal-looking babies, one after the other in quick succession, in order to decide which ones most qualify for the short supply of food aid. A number of scenes also depict the now well worn imagery of flies buzzing around people's faces, or what is colloquially referred to within the aid community as "flies in the eyes" "disaster porn."[2]

The image of the emaciated woman offering a sunken breast to her hungry, crying child appears repeatedly during the famine crisis. A 1987 *Time* magazine cover, for example, featured (Fig. 2) an Ethiopian woman looking down at her malnourished baby strewn across her lap. One of the woman's breasts is exposed to signal the futility of breast feeding. She wears a look of great sadness and concern, as does her child, which is particularly wrenching to witness on someone so young. As in Fig. 1, these photographic subjects have no direct eye contact with the camera. The caption next to the image reads, "Why are Ethiopians starving again?" and "What should the world do—and not do?" The "again" refers to the fact that although the 1984/85 famine received a great deal of attention and galvanized widespread relief efforts, Ethiopians were once again on the brink of another famine. The "again" also

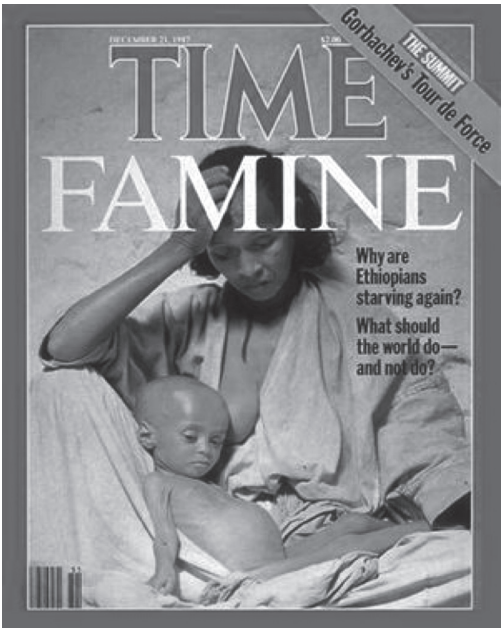

FIGURE 2. *Time* Magazine's 1987 cover issue on the Ethiopian famine.

reads as a kind of Western exasperation toward Africans' continued dysfunction and the implication that the West would possibly need to intervene a second time. The question, "what should the world do?" establishes an insider-outsider global border that situates the Western spectator as of the "world" and Africans outside of it.

Time magazine's framing of the famine and its positioning of the question, "what should the world do?" is indicative of the more racially sublime, modernized Western paternalism enabled through the philanthropic gaze. Africa is signaled here (and repeatedly elsewhere) through the deformed bodies of a woman and child as well as the moral voice of humanitarian discourse that ponders actions to finally "solve" this problem. The breastfeeding woman symbolizes in this instance the *inability* of Africans to feed their own and the urgent need for Western intervention. As the act of

breast feeding normally is associated with nourishment and abundance, in these instances its signification is twisted so as to connote vulnerability, helplessness, and lack. These African women and children represent the dark, dysfunctional other to the classical, bucolic iconography of Madonna and child that has circulated so prominently within the West for centuries. The *Time* picture and caption thus work together to create an already filtered lens through which one can interpret Africa's vulnerability, inferiority, backwardness, and position on the outskirts of global civil society, as well as the West's position of world strength. The global order is preserved through the implication that predictably—"again"—the West will save and Africa will *be* saved.

TRANSFORMING AFRICAN TRAUMA: THE BIRTH OF BAND AID

Taken together the visual portrayals of the famine emanating from BBC and *Time* demonstrated a need to both empathize with the sufferers and blame them for their desperate state, indicating how the Western viewpoint indeed became "implicated" in both the telling and the unfolding of this traumatic and historical event. Despite *Time's* somewhat exasperated tone, the famine imagery elicited strong emotional responses that, in some instances, inspired people to act on behalf of the sufferers. As scholar Lilie Chouliaraki (2006) explains, we must understand "spectators of suffering" as *part* of the news narrative and keep in mind that news coverage offers a range of ideological positions for the viewer, from "voyeuristic" observer of others' pain to ethical philanthropist or activist who tries to stem the tide of suffering in her own way. How people are inspired to act depends to a significant degree upon how the philanthropic gaze operates within a particular disaster scenario. Chouliaraki identifies a number of "regimes of pity" embedded within television broadcasts that foster a variety of ethical positions for the spectator, depending on how the suffering others

are rendered and judged by the news narratives. The notion of regimes of pity implies that rather than being pure or outside of ideology, spectators' emotions are shaped by the values embedded within the philanthropic gaze rendered through media broadcasts, aid agencies, and humanitarian discourse more generally.

In his autobiography entitled *Is That It?* Bob Geldof (1986) explains that the inspiration for doing a charity record stemmed from Buerk's 1984 broadcast and the sense of pity, anger and cosmopolitan citizenship it engendered within him. Geldof describes feeling a sense of shock from the devastating images of starvation being broadcast "prime time" into living rooms across Great Britain. He writes, "A horror like this could not occur today without our consent. We had allowed this to happen and now that we knew it was happening, to allow it to continue would be tantamount to murder" (p. 217). Band Aid would not have come into being without the BBC broadcast and its ability to portray the Sahel region as a traumatic "zone of suffering" in urgent need of global intervention from those who inhabit the "transnational zone of safety" (Chouliaraki, 2006). In many ways, Geldof's reactions reflect Caruth's (1996) notion that interpretations of trauma unfold within a paradoxical framework of "destructiveness and survival" (p. 58). While the horror of the BBC imagery lay in its emotional and dramatic documentation of bodily death and decay, the witnessing of that trauma compelled Geldof to try to save as many African lives as possible.

The influence of Buerk's broadcast, as well as the savior motif, are evident within Geldof's choice of lyrics for his charity record entitled, "Do They Know It's Christmas?" In writing the song he explains, "I wanted to evoke pity and concern and I wanted to make people think" (p. 219). The song reveals a somewhat ethnocentric perspective that lumps together the diverse peoples of the Sahel region into a homogenizing "they" and assumes the cultural and religious primacy of Western Christianity despite a large Muslim presence within the Sahel region. By invoking the culture of Christmas

as well as the harsh drought conditions, Band Aid sought to elicit emotions of pity and compassion from the mass consumer market in order to generate record sales for its cause. In addition, the song drew upon the rituals of Christmas as a way to signal Western abundance, the triumph of capitalism, and its role in saving an amorphous, absent "they" somewhere in darkest Africa:

> And there won't be snow in Africa this Christmas time. The greatest gift they'll get this year is life. Where nothing ever grows, no rain or rivers flow. Do they know it's Christmas time at all?

Building upon the motifs of darkness and suffering that circulated around the mediation of the Sahel region, Geldof's lyrics construct an arid, dark and homogenous notion of "Africa" waiting for the gift of life—and religion—from the Western world.

Many of the structural decisions around Band Aid stemmed from an emphasis on promotion or what Geldof termed "raising awareness," all of which drove the organization to drum up emotion, avoid political rhetoric, and emphasize the practice of *consumption* as a viable solution. Band Aid spoke to its audiences through a discourse of consumer citizenship that encouraged people to engage with consumerism (purchasing records) as a form of global civic engagement ("giving back" to those in Africa). Geldof explained to the public, "It's pathetic, but the price of a life this year is a piece of plastic with a hole in the middle" (p. 232). His rhetoric thus equated record sales with the opportunity to save African lives as mutual forms of exchange within the marketplace, and created the notion that eradicating the famine was but one consumption choice away from becoming a reality.

Band Aid enlisted many well known, mostly white musicians of the MTV generation to record the Band Aid song and music video in just enough time for the approaching coveted Christmas shopping season. MTV, whose slogans such as "I Want My MTV!"

encouraged young people to view themselves as a viable consumer demographic, proved a potent vehicle for not only capturing the spotlight but securing tremendous record sales. Together the charity record and music video signified a more edgy and sexy form of philanthropy befitting the pop cultural realm, particularly through the celebrity personas involved with the project such as Bono, Sting, and Boy George—each of whom represented alternative musical, political, and aesthetic styles. While this assemblage of chart-topping musicians translated into a potent symbol of cultural capital for Band Aid it also drew criticism for the ironic lack of artists of African descent invited to participate in a charity event for Africa. As edgy as Band Aid may have seemed, the lack of diversity within the organization signaled the very kind of Western paternalism, regressive politics, and disregard for issues of *representation* that contributed to the legacy of unsustainable and inchoate attempts at humanitarian intervention within the African continent.

The song's recording session supplied the primary text for the music video, which functioned as a major marketing tool for the record and for the Band Aid brand. Characterizing the mood of the recording session, Geldof (1986) states, "For all the exhilaration of the day, always in the background were the cadaverous specters whose faces we had seen from Ethiopia" (p. 229). This is a somewhat ironic statement given the lack of images related either to Africa in general or the crisis in particular within the music video. Instead, as Fig. 3 demonstrates, the video focuses on the musicians engaged in different stages of the recording process and is more about celebrating *them* and their participation in the song as a way of promoting Band Aid's "culture of coolness" for youth audiences. As "Do They Know It's Christmas?" was sung in a collaborative manner the video highlights the clustered images of superstars collaborating together—Duran Duran and Bono over here, Boy George and Sting over there—sharing sheet music or cueing each other into their lines. These images are edited and

FIGURE 3. Band Aid stars record "Do They Know It's Christmas?"

juxtaposed in particular ways to connote both a feeling of community and camaraderie among the musicians, interspersed with an occasional sense of emotional seriousness. While some scenes illustrate Band Aid musicians hamming it up for the camera, signing autographs and kissing babies, they mostly depict the musicians donning headsets and singing their lines into studio microphones.

Although the video intends to evoke a sense of togetherness, the headsets and insulated studio environment also emphasize individualism over and above the power of the collective to bring about "change" in Africa. While, as Fig. 3 demonstrates, we witness musicians standing next to one another within a shared space, they do not sing as one, but rather as individuals listening for their cues. Furthermore, as the video lacked any direct visual reference to the continent of Africa or its inhabitants, the musicians, primarily white musicians, themselves stood in for Africa, or *as* Africa, while Africa itself disappeared within its own chain of signification. Thus the video transformed African suffering into a pleasurable media text

FIGURE 4. Geldof with Prince Charles and Princess Diana.

that privileged the gaze of the donor-consumer and referenced Africa through the floating signifiers of pop culture. Spectators were thus invited to negotiate the traumatic images of the Sahel through a symbolic refusal of the referent Africa in exchange for symbols of consumerism tailored to the new "MTV generation." Through the prolific use of celebrities and the culture of MTV, Band Aid attempted to turn "morality into a leisure time entertainment" (Moore, 2008) and erode the boundaries between suffering and leisure by dramatizing the famine within an entertaining format (p. 39).

LIVE AID

Perhaps no other event encapsulated the visual juxtapositions of African trauma, celebrity, and consumerism more than the 1985 Live Aid concerts. Live Aid became a huge pop cultural phenomenon that attempted for the first time simultaneous, live broadcasts of two major concerts in London and Philadelphia containing many of the artists from Band Aid and U.S.A for Africa, the American musical collaboration for the Sahel inspired by Band Aid. At the beginning of the London concert (Fig. 4) Geldof entered Wembley Stadium

FIGURE 5. Dire Straits and Sting as featured during MTV's broadcast of Live Aid.

to raucous applause, accompanied by Prince Charles and Princess Diana, two public figures who functioned as powerful symbols of world power. This image demonstrates the extent to which Geldof himself, through the international success and popularity of Band Aid, had become a significant figure not only within the realm of popular culture but among political elites. His public persona dramatically shifted from a nominally successful member of an Irish pop band to the founder of Band Aid and ultimate symbol of Western philanthropy toward Africa. In many ways he became Africa to the Western world, or at least, the Voice of Africa. The images of Prince Charles and Princess Diana point to how Band Aid brought the colonial notion of Empire as a humanitarian civilizing mission into the contemporary era.

The concerts lasted for hours and were broadcast around the world. MTV played a crucial role in Live Aid's success: it was one of the only channels to broadcast the concerts in the U.S. and

FIGURE 6. Image of the Live Aid logo.

provided behind-the-scenes footage and a host of interviews with musicians in between sets. This image (Fig. 5) of MTV's broadcast of the concert demonstrates how Live Aid was not simply a philanthropic phenomenon but, similar to the Band Aid video, functioned as an enormously popular entertainment vehicle in its own right. Live Aid musicians such as Dire Straits and Sting were celebrated and promoted as both caring philanthropists and talented and popular artists whose affiliation with MTV extended well beyond the Band Aid phenomenon. The positioning of the MTV logo next to the words "Live Aid" signals the extent to which the Band Aid/Live Aid platform intertwined the spaces of promotional culture, popular culture, consumerism, and philanthropy toward Africa. The concerts were broadcast within the arena of commercialized television, with its continual display of sponsors and, as T.V. Reed (2005) notes, a "perpetual orgy of consumption portrayed and appealed to in commercials" (p. 162). The high

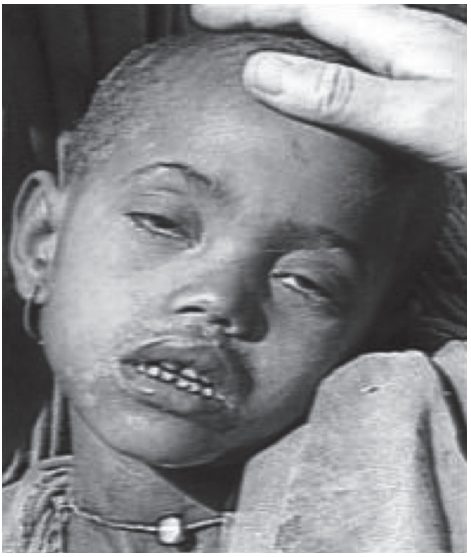

FIGURE 7. Birhan Woldu.

level of sponsorship made it difficult to draw distinctions between humanitarianism and entertainment, suffering and leisure. Geldof admitted that at points throughout the concert he became paranoid that its overall message was getting lost in the fray of music, partying, and high level of sponsorship. Indeed the concerts represent a blurring of the line between "leisure time entertainment" and humanitarian action.

Both concert stages in the U.S. and the U.K. were flanked by immense images of the Live Aid logo, which consisted of a vertically displayed guitar with the body shaped as the African continent (Fig. 6). While the logo functioned as a gesture of solidarity with the African continent, the guitar, as a symbol of Western culture, also appears to penetrate Africa in order to "save" it. Indeed, the savior motif reoccurs in various ways throughout the concert, such as, for example when the image (Fig. 7) of Ethiopian child Birhan Woldu flashed onto the big screens in the arena. Audiences heard that her famished body had been "minutes away from death" before aid workers brought her back to life. A severely weakened

Woldu appears with her eyes barely able to open as the white hand of an aid worker touches her forehead, almost as a priest would do when offering the Holy Spirit to parishioners. Similar to the mainstream media, images of the famine displayed throughout the concert were represented primarily through the traumatized bodies of women and children. Woldu's image within the context of Live Aid encapsulates Caruth's explanation of trauma as a paradoxical notion of destructiveness and survival. Although Woldu was dying, she was also in the process of being saved by the aid worker, but more significantly by the entire Live Aid phenomenon as well. Thus, her trauma is reinterpreted for Live Aid audiences within the context of the philanthropic gaze and, more specifically, pop philanthropy.

CONCLUSION: BETWEEN SUFFERING AND LEISURE

While Band Aid became an emotional salve for Western consumers in the face of the traumatic images from the Sahel, its impact upon the famine itself is less clear. Geldof understood the limits of his organization, and even claims that the name "Band Aid" was devised partly as a way to remind people of the limits of aid within the context of the larger, endemic problem of global poverty. The organization contributed millions of dollars and food aid to the region, and undoubtedly saved many lives. However, the actual effectiveness and impact of that aid has been questioned by the aid community, aid recipients, and scholars. Humanitarian scholars Peter Walker and Daniel Maxwell (2009) state:

> The story of the Ethiopian famine was about . . . the politics, the excuses and finger-pointing, the late response, the politicians and rebel movements, the journalists, aid workers, and celebrities who all weighed in. Perhaps the only missing "voice" on the famine—its causes and what the appropriate response should have been—was that of the people who suffered its effects. (p. 46)

Although Band Aid was born out of a response to the visualization of the Sahel trauma, it reproduced the trauma of privileging the donor-consumer gaze and contributed to the treatment of Africa as a metaphor of absence. As African activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai (2009) argues, the continued suppression of African voices in comparison to those of the Global North within the humanitarian sector perpetuates the idea that African solutions for African problems are not possible, and Africans are not equally equipped to solve them. As a result, "too often Africa is still presented as a helpless victim of her own making" (p. 78). Western audiences are still encouraged to view Africans in problematic ways and according to Maathai, Africans themselves come to believe in the victim/savior, Africa/West binaries embedded within mediated narratives of the continent.

As this essay demonstrates, *how* others' trauma is presented matters. Although both the BBC and Band Aid wanted to end the tide of suffering in the Sahel, their mediation of the trauma as an emergency to be solved through Western aid obscured the need for more effective responses that focused, for example, on political questions around Africa's economic, political and social marginalization within the global community. Craig Calhoun (2008) notes that humanitarian emergency "implies sudden, unpredictable events which require immediate action," when in reality many "emergencies" develop over long periods of time, and are the result of geopolitics as much or more so than any seemingly "out of control" factors (p. 8). Today, in fact, the Sahel region continues to struggle with famine and drought, as well as endemic poverty, despite pop philanthropy's efforts to "feed the world." Clearly, however, the Sahel famines of the 1980s marked an important cultural moment when consumerism became more centrally positioned as an appropriate response to the spectacle of trauma.

NOTES

1 The full broadcast is included in the *Live Aid* (4 Disc) DVD Box Set from 2004.

2 I first heard these terms during a series of interviews I conducted with humanitarian personnel in summer and fall 2009. The purpose of these interviews was to inquire among communications officers within humanitarian organizations about representations of Africa within their promotional materials. Several of my interview subjects used these terms in a pejorative sense as a way to demonstrate how the humanitarian sector had moved beyond these problematic representational archetypes of Africans.

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Access-Ability and Disability: Performing Stigma, Writing Trauma

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Scholars have long called for understandings of disability to move beyond the notion of disability as traumatic and stigmatizing. Nonetheless, the introduction of disability into a family can be particularly traumatic. Including able-bodied family members in the study of disabled persons offers additional insight into the ways the ableist gaze constructs disability as well as into resulting traumatic ruptures in communication. Writing disability, like writing trauma, poses a dilemma for the autoethnographer. Performative writing offers a way to interrogate the fragmented locations of identity in this unique familial relationship, as well as to embody the difficulties in narrating trauma. Ultimately, this piece illustrates not only the difficulty of acknowledging and writing a private, physical realm of traumatic experience, but also how trauma can be shared and creates shared aspects of identity among family members.

KEYWORDS: Performative writing, trauma, disability, family communication, masculinity

> An autoethnographic voice can interrogate the politics that structure the personal, yet it still must struggle within the language that represents dominant politics.—Spry, 2001, p. 722

> What we would wish to remember and what we might wish to forget are so intricately woven.—Griffin, 1995, p. 171

I look at the two pictures I have in my office of my father: racing his wheelchair across the cobblestone streets of Flint, Michigan,

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and sitting with me, age three, on his lap, his large hand under my elbow, teaching me how to throw a punch. His head is down slightly, his thinning hair still dark and combed straight back. He is looking at my loose fist of fat fingers, and I'm staring off, large eyes transfixed on the space in front of me. He's trying to teach me to be manly—a black, white, and gray portrait. This is four years before the motorcycle accident that will render him paraplegic. Four years before I will hesitantly poke my head into the hospital room and see him lying there, smiling to reassure me, his still body covered up to his chest in a stark white sheet. Four years before that thing he's trying to teach me in the picture, elusive yet ever-present, will make itself felt in the space between us. He was hurt when I was seven years old, and I don't really remember anything about him before then.

So, I have constructed memories of our time together that are no doubt different from the actual events. In the essay "Red Shoes," Griffin (1995) notes two forms of experience into which we shape memories, the acknowledged, socially instantiated experience, and the experience that resides in "an exiled region of consciousness" (p. 171). Describing trauma, Grey (2008) similarly explains that gaps in our "symbolic terrain" extend beyond the person and the "wound" (p. 203). After this picture was taken, I began to sense his "wound," his injury cleaving us, driving us apart and then re-joining us like the scar that ran down his back. My writing about our life after his injury is also cleaved; I present a linear, more scholarly narrative that acknowledges my experience by framing it with theory, and writing that includes theatrical monologue and poetry to attempt to access what Griffin (1995) calls another kind of knowledge, a realm of experience that is complex, hidden, and difficult to express.

My father's disability was traumatic. His body suffered trauma when his motorcycle flipped over a tree stump in a grassy North Michigan wood and landed on his back. Trauma can be conceptualized

as a rupture in an individual's ability to think of him or herself as a unified, holistic self (McAlister, 2006). He talked about himself in before and after terms, as is common with male spinal cord injury survivors (Sparkes & Smith, 2002). He tried to go back, to do what he used to do. I was called upon to help him in this journey. From an early age I was his legs, hands, and arms when he couldn't reach an engine part, a nail in a loose board, or a shingle on a bare roof. And when I did well, I was a good son. And when I failed at a task, I wasn't. Our relationship was an exaggerated version of what Kimmel (1994) explains is the foundation of male-male relationships: activity. Our father-son relationship was mediated by his disability, and so I learned to "be a man" from someone many might think was "less than a man," a male who couldn't walk. A male whose genitals and sex organs no longer functioned as they should, whose sexuality and masculinity were called into question under the gaze of able-bodied persons to whom disability was a static marker of a "spoiled" identity, a stigma (Goffman, 1963), and not as a fluid and nuanced performance (Asch & Fine, 1988; Davis, 1997; Kuppers, 2003; Lindemann, 2008). Gingrich-Philbrook (1998) states that masculinity presents itself where we think it absent. In the picture of us, I now see that its absence will soon become debilitating, the duality of wellness and illness of which Do and Geist (2000) write, collapsed into an embodiment of absence.

My realization of this absence, like the sudden glint of a penny in a sidewalk crack, has itself been traumatic. I have spent my life trying to dig that penny out. At times, I pretend it doesn't frustrate me. Like Tamas (2008), I've tried to maintain an even, distanced, scholarly tone in narrating my trauma, my imagining of my father's trauma, and descriptions of how we dealt with those sharp, copper wedges in our communication. I read Grey's (2008) argument, that such wounds can be articulated by rethinking aesthetic dynamics, with interest and trepidation; I have begun to explore the ways I might embody these ruptures in writing, but I am also aware of

the contestations of authenticity and authority in narrating trauma, especially when an able-bodied person attempts to (re)present disability. So, I follow Caruth's (1996) suggestion to listen to my experiences, and my father's, to bear witness. While the impulse to bear witness through narrating trauma is certainly not new (Grey, 2008; Hesford, 1999; McAlister, 2006), these rhizomes of (dis) ability and masculinity are difficult to trace. I realize now that we shared his trauma. Yet, in many ways he remains a mystery to me, as does our life together.

* * *

I remember you coming into the study as I was home from college writing a paper. The ting of your wedding ring on the aluminum hand rim was always a reminder of your otherwise usually silent presence in the house. You wondered why I had to write about *it* so much: the accident, your injury, your anger and rage. Forgive me for talking more about it, though I didn't ask your forgiveness that day in the lonely study, dust filling the columns of light from the two windows and invisibly landing on the polished wood floors. Grove and Werkman (1991) caution that uncertainty and discomfort in interactions with disabled people will cause reduced levels of awareness. I don't know what that means for us. You were a stranger to me in many ways after your accident. Even so, I can remember small things about that day, like how I kept pointing to the old computer console screen, its orange cursor blinking slowly, in the hopes of covering what I'd written about you. But you valued education, and this was for a college writing class, so you didn't say anything else.

* * *

(UN)COVERING STIGMATIZED MASCULINITY: PERFORMATIVE WRITING AND NARRATING TRAUMA

I enact the tracing of these rhizomes through performative writing. Performative writing is a genre of scholarly writing that attempts to embody theory and research as well as to embody the inability of writing to fully capture the lived experience (Pollock, 1998). According to Pollock (1998), performative writing is nervous, unable to settle into a genre or voice, and functions on enthymeme, resisting closure as a way to interrogate the gap between theory and lived experience. An approach that incorporates, as this paper does, creative nonfiction, poetry, and scholarly writing, is necessary to resist the tendency highlighted by Tamas (2008) to tell trauma stories in a linear, logical, and controlled manner: one that masks the messiness of trauma and positions the reader as voyeur rather than active participant. As Grey (2008) explains, traditional literary modes often fail to capture the disjunctures that occur from and within traumatic experiences. I employ several genres, separated by asterisks (***) to resist closure and draw attention to the (in) ability of writing to fully (re)present trauma and disability.

* * *

I shouldn't have been in there. Nosing around, as many kids do, looking through their parents' drawers. The shades were pulled down across the windows and across the glass door that led onto the deck. In my mom's sock drawer, I found them: pictures of my father sitting naked in his wheelchair. They didn't look like the pictures of the men in my mom's *Playgirl* magazines—he was just sitting there, his hands, calloused and tough from years of working in machine shops, placed loosely in his lap. I failed to see how this was exciting. I wondered if my mom obligingly took them after he photographed her. I didn't want to go looking for *those* pictures.

* * *

In attempting to write about him, I am writing about me. In writing about the trauma, I am writing about us. Perhaps this is why Grey (2008) calls identifying trauma a Gordian knot. Performative writing allows me to better trace the threads of the knot that entangled us after his accident. Certainly, this piece interrogates the ruptures in my father's and my communication that his injury and subsequent disability caused. But these ruptures, compounded by the ubiquitous specter of masculinity that hovered above our interactions, permeated the way I processed his disability. Mumby (1998) laments that masculinity is everywhere, firmly embedded and shaping discourse, yet its knotty entanglements make it difficult to trace, tease out, and effectively critique. I argue that performative writing is well suited to undertake this critique precisely because its nervous "irrationality" works against the tendency of scholarly research to move toward "rational" closure. In doing so, I hope to break "linguistic codes" (Grey, 2008) surrounding trauma and disability and to provide new understanding of how disability informs family communication systems, especially those that enactments of traditional masculinity undergird. I also illustrate how trauma can be shared, uniting family members in certain aspects of a shared identity while, at the same time, entrenching them in a realm of experience rooted in the visceral and, in many ways, the unsayable.

* * *

ECHOES AND HAUNTINGS: TRAUMA, DISABILITY, AND SEXUALITY

I knew about his injury and the pain it caused him. I asked questions, and my parents were honest and forthcoming: he was a T4, which meant that when the motorcycle flipped and landed on his back, it

paralyzed him from about the middle of his chest down, which also meant that he lost sensation and function of his body below that point. Goffman (1963) states that conformance to identity norms can situate themselves in the most private of places, and that while their violations may be directly perceived by others in face-to-face encounters, the person may act in ways that signify the inability to live up to the ideals presented by society. I always knew the anger my father unleashed on my brother and me was connected to the fact that we could walk and he couldn't:

> He was angry at most things, including me,
> as if he sensed the incompetence in things and people—
> misplaced items on a workbench, a saw blade breaking—
> he was like a sculptor seeing shape in a block of marble,
> carving rage out of only the most malleable.

I had, on several occasions, flipped through the pornographic magazines he kept in his bathroom. My brother and I had to ask to use his handicapped-accessible bathroom, its jungle-themed wallpaper providing imaginary cover for our covert activity, which was easy to pull off when someone was in the main, inaccessible bathroom. But when we started asking regularly, for no particular reason, a slight look of realization came across my mom's face. Then, just as slowly and subtly as it came, it went. I wonder what she thought. Maybe she thought we needed to know about "those things": not only that magazines like that existed but that it was okay to take joy in the sexual pleasure of one's body. Perhaps she thought, "Boys will be boys." Or maybe she thought, "Boys *should* be boys."

As for myself, I flipped through the pages and wondered what they did for my father, who I assumed had lost the function of his sexual organs. Were they "deflected reverberations" (Grey, 2008, p. 210) of his life before his injury, ghosts of sexuality past

that haunted him? For me, they were ghosts of sexuality future, the way things might—or should—be for me. But part of me viewed them the way I imagined he did, which is why I assume he was haunted. I thought about my own body, my own sexuality.

I never got a "birds and bees" talk from my father, at least not one I would consider informative or heartfelt. He decided to give it as we were driving to the store together. I remember shifting in our van's passenger seat, knowing even then my father's reasons for avoiding the topic: not just a lack of communication skills, but some kind of absence. We could feel the "other" him, the virile, able-bodied him, sitting in the empty wheelchair wedged between the two seats, where he usually secured it when driving. Although he couldn't walk anymore, I didn't doubt he could take the "other" him in a fight had they met. My father's thick, sinewy arms and solid shoulders formed themselves from years of pushing himself around, from the weight of the "other" him he carried. His pale, lined face showed a different kind of strength, one forged from the patient assembly of machines, imagined and real, to transport him somewhere else, like the wheelchair between our seats. Sometimes, the faraway look in his sharp blue eyes told me where he wanted to go. Other times, I couldn't tell.

Had he wanted to, I think he could have survived in the world without me, my brother or my mom. But my duties on these errands—carrying packages that might otherwise prove too cumbersome as he pushed his chair, pulling his wheelchair up and down steps if there was no ramp, making initial contact with the person behind the counter if it was high enough that my father couldn't see over it—seemed to me to be absolute necessities of getting around in the world. Sex and sexuality seemed less important to him and, as a result, more important to me.

* * *

While disability and trauma are not equivalent, the ways we communicate about disability resulting from an injury can, in fact, be traumatic. Certainly, persons who do not learn to retell a narrative that integrates a pre- and post-injury self can experience disability as traumatic (Do & Geist, 2000; Sparkers & Smith, 2002). The fragmentation in my own sense of self, feeling "normal" and—out of allegiance and the desire to empathize with my father—not "normal," is consistent with scholarly definitions of trauma (Hesford, 1999; McAlister, 2006). My father's injury—the interruption and, eventually, complete break in his perception of a holistic and unified sense of self—rippled out into my relationship with him. The social fabric of our family, the narrative we collectively wrote about who we were in relation to each other, tore open. Our efforts to address this opening are also characteristic of trauma (Grey, 2008). The social model positions disability as the product of social relations, of communication about and within traditional notions of ability, rather than as a static marker of "stigma" (Brittain, 2004; Thomas, 2001). Trauma is similarly understood as communicatively negotiated (Grey, 2008). Both encompass a tension between the materiality of the body and its symbolic construction. The performative aspects of disability and trauma allow an ongoing mediation of both through writing that maintains an aesthetic of ambiguity (Grey, 2008), of multiplicity.

* * *

I am seven and walking into the hospital room. The lime green hallways stretch out in front of me, disrupted by the square of dull fluorescence from his doorway. He is asleep. I uncover his body and look for a long time. The formless blue gown covers most of his body, but his arms lay at his sides, patches of orange smears where the IVs and needles made their marks. I'm sorry, Father. You didn't deserve this. You don't deserve what I imagine you will face

in the coming years. I'll think about it often, it will seep into my thoughts like oil into water, separating in a definite, recognizable, irrevocable way. I'm tugging at the sheet, mourning what I know is there, and what I know is not. I'm performing grief, even now (Phelan, 1997). I'm uncovering my stigma, and I am covering for my father: It wasn't his fault, the way he treated us.

* * *

PATHETIC HEROES, FOR THE LACK OF BETTER WORDS

My brother and I felt helpless, but we didn't act like it. My dad was a real do-it-yourselfer as long as my brother and I could do what he couldn't. We didn't think our father was "pathetic," and we had often heard others refer to him as "heroic." According to Seiter, Larsen and Skinner (1998), referring to people with disabilities as normal doesn't demonstrate as urgent a need to help people with disabilities as does a speaker who calls attention to those disabilities. Credibility is contextual, though. Yeah, right. Try disabling.

Try talking about it to your mother, asking her how intimate they were after the accident. Try talking to others, relating your position in the space of Goffman's "courtesy stigma," neither "in" nor "out" of disability but somewhere in between. Try thinking of other words that better express your position. Try reading Denzin (1997). He says, "[There] is no simple retelling of lived experience" (Denzin, 1997, p. 209). "Thanks," you say. Try again. He says, "[T]he experimental text privileges emotion and emotionality . . . [A] main goal is to evoke emotional responses for the reader, thereby producing verisimilitude and a shared experience" (Denzin, 1997, p. 209). Try coming to grips with your lack of vocabulary to express this. Try other words to express the feeling of walking on eggshells around him because you know he's got something on you: he can't walk, and you can, and you are therefore obliged to help. It doesn't

matter what term you use. Try writing a poem about it. Try re-reading an excerpt:

> I helped my father work on his van many nights,
> changing the oil or taking out an old starter:
> he shouted directions from his wheelchair
> to me underneath, squawk grunts and
> short bursts of silence between long bouts of helplessness.
> The gears and parts connected to the engine,
> continuing up into the dark hull of the body,
> I had no idea what I was looking at.
> "I don't want to be here all night," he finally muttered.
> Neither did I.

Try thinking about what Seiter, Larsen, and Skinner (1998) say: that the derogatory communicator was less persuasive than were the speakers depicting people with disabilities as heroic and disabled, but not less persuasive than the speaker depicting people as normal. Remember Goffman (1963) stating that normals may perceive defensive responses in stigmatized people as direct expressions of their defect. Remember reading that normals sometimes impute stigmatized people with other desirable attributes, often of a supernatural cast, like "sixth sense" (Goffman, 1963, p. 5). See your father as heroic. Or normal, which may be the most difficult to imagine: your suburban house, your tree-lined street, your two-car garage converted into the workplace for your family business, your workaholic father, the school nights you stayed up working with him:

> One night I forgot to close the garage door and
> left the dim light on over the workbench,
> sallow metal parts cold to the touch and
> tools laid hopefully arranged. Things worked as best they could,

suspended reconstructions of machinery,
a tool for each of his hands and the promise of his legs
connected to the gears in his eyes, his screw-like focus.
To either side of the open door was
the darkness of well cut lawns, and the possum scurried
quietly inside and hid in the tin green shelves,
a dumb suburban animal as common as bicycles
urgently abandoned to fathers' voices
shouting through picture window curtains.
It realized it was trapped. It locked itself in to feel safe.
I called my father out and we watched
its yellow eyes pace back and forth along
the car parts, paint cans and obsolete mechanics of
repairs long forgotten. It settled for a while, hidden.
And my father's face gaunt in garage light,
the cancer already beginning to nest in his stomach,
menacing swallows in a thicket on a sill, or a possum
bringing chaos to a surface of order slowly gathering dust.

Try remembering how much you and your brother liked it when he left for the weekend for a wheelchair road race. Go back to the poem about the possum loose in the garage:

We tried to sweep this new disturbance into the light and
it fell into a lump, feigning death.
He tapped its back with the broom and
it seemed willing to take a beating.
I knew the feeling, the surrender, the lost orientation,
looking for an exit through half open eyes.
And then we turned out the lights,
leaving it to suffocate or snag itself before
more drastic measures were taken.
But I still left the door open and sat outside,

waiting for it to leave, wondering if it sensed this
second chance for escape from this museum of broken and
remembering how my little brother imagined our father's death:
a fiery traffic accident, no witnesses,
and how I sometimes hoped
one morning he'd be gone,
having left all the lights in the house on.

Trapped. Once I started seeing things as he did, I couldn't stop. As we went through hallways, past buildings on sidewalks or through parking lots, he would point out the lack of handicapped-accessible facilities, or the shortcomings of what was already in place. He got angry with me when my first college apartment was on the second floor, no ramp. I figured he wouldn't want to come see me anyway, but he expected a concern with the facilities to be top priority for me—after all, what had he taught me if not that the world was accessible to some and not to others? Indeed, I was more comfortable as an able-bodied person in a disabled world. In school I was picked on, beat up, had food poured on my head in the middle of the cafeteria. With my father and his friends, the different-ness about me was minimized, until we came into contact with the other normals.

We're riding around the ACE Hardware store parking lot, looking for a space. All the handicapped ones are taken, so we have to park at the far end. As we approach the door, a man, a woman, and their three kids walk to their pickup truck parked in a handicapped space. My father silently wheels over to the truck, pulls out his keys and runs them up, down, and across the truck as the man, his wife and their kids look on. My father finishes, and we continue on into the store. The man says nothing. What could he say? Perhaps he thought that the rage was a direct result of my father's disability. Had he said this, I would've agreed. But I didn't say anything. What could I have said? I might have told the man he deserved it, I might

have apologized for my father, though this would have angered him even more than if I had slowly edged away from the scene, straddling the in and out, the here and there; as Goffman (1963) notes: "The stigma and the effort to conceal it or remedy it become 'fixed' as part of personal identity" (p. 65). So, I apologized in my mind to the man, but no matter how hard I tried not to, I felt as if I, too, had keyed that truck. And no matter how I tried not to, I saw my father's actions as heroic, for lack of a better word.

* * *

How does one recover from a traumatic injury? Disabled persons are expected to tell a particular narrative when they have "recovered" (Do & Geist, 2000). For disabled men, this is usually a script of "heroic masculinity" (Hutchinson & Kleiber, 2000), in which the disabled person accomplishes a feat many able-bodied men could not or would not, like sky diving, mountain climbing, or marathons. My father wheeled in marathons, and started and ran a successful business. He was liked and respected among his peers. And despite this success, or perhaps because of it, he refused to see a therapist. Whenever my mother suggested it, he told her she was the one with the problem with his disability, she should go. I can't follow "the traumatized subject through its linguistic pathways" (Grey, 2008); his pathways seem to stop short. Beyond the end of the road, I'm on my own.

* * *

THE SPACE BETWEEN ASKING AND TELLING: LIMINALITY AND LIMIT

While other kids spent weekend nights with the family around the television, I was at wheelchair basketball games, helping my father

take pictures. While other kids watched Saturday morning cartoons, I was standing in the chilly Detroit air, cheering on my father and the rest of the wheelchair road racers at the Detroit-Windsor International Marathon. The runners were televised on local stations and the wheelers weren't. We would curse the papers the next day when the news gave us scant coverage. "We." "Us." My father dead eighteen years, my mom remarried to an able-bodied—how would anyone know my membership status? My stigma is underneath the surface, marked *in* rather than *on* my body. It shaped how I learned about sex and masculinity, how I thought about my relationship with my father and mother. If I look hard enough, I can still sense what isn't accessible to normals.

So many times, I wanted to ask him how he managed the relationship with my mother. Thompson (1981) tells me that marriages in which one person becomes disabled are more likely to end in divorce than when one person is already disabled. But some marriages exist in the space between happy and sad. I was in this space, between my mother and father in bed with them after a nightmare, or sitting in the living room after they fought, or with my brother in the garage after my father threw tools against the wall out of frustration. Langellier (1999) calls the liminal "a threshold, a border, a margin, a transitional space, a site of negotiation and struggle" (p. 138). Personal narrative, as Langellier (1999) concludes, is one of the few ways available to communication scholars to express that liminality. And so I ask, and so I tell.

Both my parents slept in the nude. My child's body in his pajamas occupies the space between my mom's sexuality, laying unmoving at the edge of the bed, and my father's strong arms and scruffy face growth. He was the one who woke up when I walked into their bedroom. He was the one whose body was present to comfort me, whose body was present in mine as I peeked at his magazines. I berated myself even as I took pleasure in the act of looking at those magazines, wondering what it would be like *not* to be able to get an erection.

My friend Jerry's father had drawers and drawers of magazines to raid. And we did, partly out of curiosity, partly for fear of being labeled a "faggot," what Gingrich-Philbrook (1998) might call the masculine enforced in the pre-emptive disciplinary action of voyeuristic participation:

> in the bedroom he and I used to creak into, and into
> his father's dresser drawer collection of laminated sex,
> the stacks of glossy bodies twisted
> into some kind of beanstalk. We climbed
> to what we thought was manhood sky.
> Later, I collected those magazines, hid them
> in a dirt hole under the wooden fence in my backyard,
> got them digging in the dumpsters behind graffiti-bricked stores,
> coffee-stained faces smeared beyond recognition,
> picked them up and laid them in the hole,
> a mound of bodies, each folded inside the other.

I tell myself that my adolescent obsession with pornography was normal. But I ask myself whether it had anything to do with my father's disability. Was I writing a collective narrative of (our) trauma, all by myself? Was this a pornography of grief, displaying bodies violently as a way to maintain the presence of my father's sexuality? Or perhaps it's my writing about these events over and over, displaying the family's "dirty laundry," that's pornographic. But through these "relivings" (Caruth, 1996, p. 59) I'm attempting to gain knowledge over what is unknowable.

WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS WRITE ABOUT THIS?

My father asked this question in the study one day. I remember how embarrassed I was to have him even quickly glance at the screen. I remember feeling bad for bringing it up, for not asking

his permission. I never interviewed him, never talked openly about any of this. And so I must (re)construct. I must occupy this space between those parentheses. Him, me, the asking and telling. And I'm digging the hole and the dirt keeps falling back into the hole. And I ask myself, is it time to bury all this?

When my father died from colon cancer, the director of the funeral home had to open the connected room for the viewing, the most people he'd ever seen for one. The 12-year-old girl my father met at a marathon, the one for whom we made a racing wheelchair for free "until she grew out of it," (my father's words), couldn't finish what she'd written. She started crying halfway through and rolled back to her mom's side in the aisle crowded with other wheelchairs, her small frame quivering. There were more like her, people who had trouble telling everyone else what he meant to them. I couldn't even stand up to speak. I wasn't sure what to say. I suppose I'm still not sure what to say. Like his accident, our relationship was something I spoke about only indirectly. He told me how proud he was of me on several occasions, though sometimes with prodding from my mom. I never returned the compliment, though. Maybe I thought such things sounded condescending. Maybe I was afraid that I'd have to contextualize it: ". . . for someone in a wheelchair."

I remember playing catch in the backyard sometime after he was hurt, smells of fresh cut summer grass and the shade of our aluminum-sided garage cool on my right arm. Tossing the ball, my mom watching from the large wood deck, standing on the ramp he used to get in and out of the back door. I throw the ball and it sails over his head. My mom, joking, yells, "Jump!" He smiles. The next time it happens, I yell, "Jump!" He doesn't smile. It's a private joke, I realized. A conversation I wasn't meant to be a part of. I learned quickly that I was supposed to accept him as he was, and not remember our life before his accident, not reference it, ask him about it, or wish things were different. I felt I couldn't say anything to him about any of this, which left me fragmented,

fumbling for pieces of our relationship constructed in snippets of conversations and hazy memories. The fabric of our family was more patchwork than quilt, haphazardly sewn to cover what no one wanted seen. That's why I must write about this, to publicly acknowledge the private, "a liberation from the imprisonment of an enforced privacy" (Griffin, 1995, p. 175). This privacy was, to a certain degree, self-imposed. I was seven years old when he was hurt, and back then I didn't think much about what I could and couldn't—or shouldn't—say. But I learned quickly to be mindful of my words. I feared another joke falling flat, raising dust with a thud and exposing what we had all, in one way or another, tried to bury.

I remember standing over his grave on a colorless February Michigan day. A bulging mound of soil, a freshly hewn headstone, and the newness of his death jutted forth like the stark black branches cracking the sky above me. I wondered why the dirt had to be piled so high and was told the mound would settle over time, gathering grass and blending into the surrounding landscape. Then it would be like we were never there, like we never stood around this grotesque hill whose purpose—to cover the dead, to hide the buried—had yet to be realized.

In this piece, I've attempted to give voice to that realization, to unearth the roots that have twisted their way around the memories of my father and our family life. In doing so, I trace the ways traumatic injury and disability disrupts family communication and informs the communication of masculinity. Locating these disruptions, as Tamas (2008) argues, requires representation choices that position the reader as an active participant. The blending of genres in this piece resists an artificial closure, maintaining the fragmentation of identity that Grey (2008) claims is part and parcel of trauma. The tension between closure and ambiguity, linearity and fragmentation, is embodied in a performative writing style meant to communicate the experience of trauma, its myriad understandings, and the possibilities of trying to write

trauma into scholarship, and to write scholarship about trauma.

I look up from my desk, searching the two photographs of my father for an ending to this piece, some detail that might adequately encapsulate my journey. I smile slightly, recognizing that my first instinct as an academic is to provide closure, even as I intentionally write against this instinct. And I finally understand that this is the irony of writing trauma; to understand trauma by voicing it, I must also understand that I can never fully voice it. Our relationship, and my father himself, remain a mystery to me, but it is a mystery that becomes less traumatic with each telling.

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My Nervous Body: Affect, Aesthetics, and Performing Transatlantic Nostalgia in the Slave Castles of Ghana

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Expanding on Bruner's (1996) and Richards' (2005) analyses of Ghanaian slave castle tourism, this essay explores the affective and corporeal dimensions of slave castle visitation through performative and autoethnographic methods. It examines the site of Elmina Castle and its spatiotemporal implications for African American tourist-pilgrims. The essay concludes that narratives of trauma and nostalgia are operating simultaneously at the site, creating a productive dissonance, which encourages a critical and bodily engagement of a past home.

KEYWORDS: Ghana, slave castles, nostalgia, trauma, affect

One of the most popular Asante symbols in and around the former European Gold Coast, the now independent nation of Ghana, takes the image of a long-necked bird reaching over to remove an egg from its back. Sankofa represents the mythic bird of Akan, and signifies the effort to reach back into the past to reclaim knowledge. The symbol can be interpreted as "return and take it," a meaning simultaneously instructional and value laden. In essence, the proverb insists two things: that one should not fear return and that return is necessary. Sankofa has embedded within it an essential struggle, a tension centered on the interrelations of past, present, and future.

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While visiting a market in Ghana, I once had a vendor attempt to sell me a pair of Sankofa earrings by telling me the symbol meant "go back to your roots," a modification of the traditional proverb presumably designed to appeal to my nostalgic sensibilities as an African American tourist-pilgrim to my "homeland" of Africa.[1] I did buy the earrings. But after considering the implications of this pleasurable souvenir-driven purchase juxtaposed to the sobering and eye-opening experiences I had over the course of my journey "back to Africa," specifically my experiences in the slave castle at Elmina, I began to consider the notion that this was no normal nostalgia. This nostalgia was not solely driven by a yearning to escape the present and revel in a glorious idealistic version of the past. It was instead a realization of the Asante proverb represented in the Sankofa bird, a nostalgia born out of a desire to reclaim knowledge of the past in order to better understand the present and the future.

In Richards' (2005) "What is to Be Remembered?: Tourism to Ghana's Slave Castle-Dungeons," she relates the symbolism of Sankofa to the precarious positionality of visitors to Ghana's most (in)famous attraction. She writes, "Presumably, the bird looks at any number of resources available to him and chooses the one best suited for his trip. In journeying to these slave sites, travelers need ask: Who are we? How are 'we' constituted such that we share an identity with 'them,' or conversely, have adversarial interests? What morsel(s) of wisdom from the past are we to collect from these sites of memory? Toward what future(s) are we—and they—poised for flight?" (Richards, 2005, p. 637). This essay takes an autoethnographic approach to exploring Richards' questions concerning the constitution of identity and the spatiotemporal dynamics of memory and history as they relate to bodily experience. The essay pushes Richards' bodily metaphor of the bird "poised" (Richards, 2005, p. 637) for flight by placing the tensions of Sankofa and the tourist-pilgrim squarely within the/my fully sensate, nervous body.[2] My body is nervous. It is nervous in that it finds difficulty

as it "looks at any number of resources available" (Richards, 2005, p. 637), resources, and discourses, framing my experiences before they are had. It shakes as it "chooses the one best suited for [t]his trip" (Richards, 2005, p. 637). Mine, the body of an anticipating tourist-pilgrim, apprehensively navigates a variety of resources and discourses while inhabiting the ironies and contradictions of the slave castle.

A CASTLE ON A COAST

In the summer of 2007, I participated in a study abroad with the NYU performance program. The program centered on West African dramatic traditions and culture. I was one of about nine or ten performance students primarily interested in playwriting and acting. As a part of the curriculum, we traveled to Elmina and Cape Coast to visit the castles there. In this essay, I recollect my memories of this place as a historical site of trauma, and as a pilgrimage destination for many African Americans and other members of the Black Diaspora and place them in conversation with the acts of memory promoted in this place as a tourist attraction. The overarching questions to consider are the extent to which nostalgia is operating as a type of performance, how this performance interacts with trauma, and what are the affective and aesthetic implications of this performance. I apply the lens of nostalgia to the events and performances surrounding the site of the slave castle.

The castle sits unapologetically on the coast. It seems unaware of the time and space it occupies, sharing the shoreline with possible descendants of the very dark inhabitants it used to hold inside its thick, impenetrable walls. But at the same time, it shares itself with the floods of pilgrims and tourists who flow in and out on a daily basis. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Monument, the castle is marketed on the web distinctly in terms of its historical significance,[3] stressing most noticeably the shifts in ownership of

the castle and its relation to the slave trade in general. Reasons for visiting the castle abound. History. Tourism. Pilgrimage. Though most of the visitors to the castle are Ghanaians and Europeans, according to anthropologist Edward Bruner (1996), a considerable portion of visitors to the castle are African Americans. He writes, "Some are upscale tourists in organized tour groups, others are independent travelers. Some make the journey on a budget, and still others prefer to stay in African homes and to eat local food, for a more intimate African experience" (p. 290). And, like me, some visitors gather there in the reluctant anticipation of identifying a key part of their history and in doing so are exposed to a darker side of humanity.

Elmina Castle is the oldest of its kind. In 1482, after having negotiated with the natives of the former Gold Coast, the Portuguese were allowed to build a castle as a permanent structure meant for trade in gold, ivory, and spices. Later, with the discovery of the New World and the development of the transatlantic slave trade, it was used for a much darker enterprise. The castle became a holding place for captured Africans from nearby areas as they awaited shipment across the Atlantic. As many as 600 captives were held at Elmina at any one time. The Africans were held under deplorable conditions. Many of them died before the ships even arrived. The castle includes male and female dungeons where the slaves were kept, living quarters for the European governor and his soldiers, a mess hall, a church, a magazine where weapons and artillery were held, and a courtyard. After several attacks, in 1637 the Dutch were successful in seizing control of Elmina Castle where they continued trading in flesh and expanding the castle's physical structure for over 230 years. The British then gained control of the castle in 1871 and began using it as an officer training facility until 1957 when the Gold Coast was finally given its independence and the current nation of Ghana was officially formed. The Ghanaian government is now the owner of the castle. It has been restored,

renovated, and is marketed as a tourist site primarily in terms of its historical role in the slave trade. Often the castle is mentioned as a tourist attraction among many others as a part of PANAFEST, a cultural festival held in Ghana every two years. An advertisement found on a website called "Black Africa," for example, reads, "PANAFEST activities include performances and workshops in theatre, drama, music, cinema, poetry, colloquia and lectures. Attendees can also witness the colorful traditional durbar of chiefs and experience the popular excursions for any Ghana Tour—the slave castles of Elmina." This description of what Ghana and the festival have to offer a tourist points to the ways in which tourism in Ghana, like many African Americans, manage what Bruner describes as sadness and ancestral pride. That is, the return of the Black Diaspora to the castle requires the management of conflicting emotions. On the one hand they may feel "at home" in Ghana, a place of perceived origin, and on the other hand they are confronted with the sobering weight of the atrocities their ancestors faced. In "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," Bruner (1996) isolates these and other contrasting sentiments. He writes, simply and correctly, "the situation is full of ironies" (p. 295).

Like Bruner, I recognize the tensions that live within this monument to a traumatic memory, this simultaneous symbol of transatlantic slave trade and perceived ethnic home. Within this tension lie two theoretical concepts in need of exploration: trauma, or what Grey (2007) describes as "the impact of events that produce severe ruptures in social cohesion and threaten the stability of these cultural narratives" (p. 175) and nostalgia, coined in 1688 by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, who combined the Greek *nostos,* meaning to return home, and *algos,* for pain or longing to refer to a familiar pathology we might now call homesickness. Nostalgia, often thought of as a general longing for a lost past, and trauma, often conceived as a violent wounding, have a more intimate

relationship than one might first assume. Both are theorized in metaphysical and material ways. Both resonate deeply within mind and body. Felt at the confluence of mind and body, the slave castle reveals and inspires a curious combination of wounding and longing. A seemingly timeless space, it is endowed with meaning and emotional resonance to those who share in it. Further, the minds and bodies of the traumatized subject and the nostalgic subject interpret, change, shape, mediate and reflect intersections of space and place, simultaneously engaging and illustrating a peculiar set of affective and performative aesthetics. Put another way, this essay analyzes the space of the slave castle in light of the aforementioned theoretical tensions while observing the practical concerns that relate to the space as it transforms into a significant and affective place through the bodily aesthetics of nostalgic and traumatic performance.

In an effort to interpret space in bodily terms, Hamera (2007) invokes de Certeau's articulation of the difference between space and place. She explains, "Space is multivocal, characterized by perpetual possibilities for transformation. Place is univocal, stable, proper" (p. 65). She goes on to argue, "the construction and reproduction of place from space can be explored in performative terms" (p. 65). By this, she means that individuals consciously and subconsciously utilize actions or performances that turn space into place through bodily activities. African Americans in particular, and the Black Diaspora generally, turn the space of the slave castle into specific places of memory that house affective relations evoked through performing the aesthetics of trauma and nostalgia. Here, trauma functions as a disrupting or destabilizing force, the *space* of the slave castle its physical symbol. At the same time, nostalgia is an organizing energy that seeks to make sense of, or *place,* the actions and emotions of the past in dialogue with bodily experiences in the present. The visitation to Elmina Castle along the Ghanaian coast is a site at which to observe and enact nostalgic performance mediated through various discourses of trauma.

A strange relationship between trauma and nostalgia is advanced through the experience of and the discourses surrounding Elmina. The castle simultaneously sells nostalgia while providing physical and narrative evidence of distanced and often abstracted trauma. The relation between trauma and nostalgia is thus a conflict of emotional appeal. Its promise of nostalgia, of welcome, homecoming, and return, is juxtaposed to an experience of uninhabitable pain represented through historically framed narratives of trauma. A further implication of the tensions of Elmina arises when we move from an analysis of the appeals of nostalgia to the experience of it in the context of the castle tour. Here, nostalgia might be thought of as a way to work through the traumas of the past. Such an endeavor results in a nervousness that evinces the incompatibility and interconnectedness of trauma and nostalgia at this site.

I refer to my body as nervous as a result of the strange transatlantic nostalgic condition I describe. This nervousness represents many things but primarily it asks questions about how the concepts of trauma and nostalgia are related. I am nervous because the site uses nostalgia, a concept often reserved for pleasant encounters, to frame a traumatic site. I am nervous because I do not know what to do with my body and the stories in this place. I am nervous because Elmina is simultaneously remote and immediate, nostalgia providing a relatively safe and distanced method to experience the unspeakable pain of the past. Elmina, at once a dungeon and a home, should make anyone nervous. But I implicate my own diasporic bodily experience as I navigate the tensions between trauma and nostalgia, space and place. In my experience in Elmina and my examination into the intersections of nostalgia and trauma, I also propose and advocate for a productive and critical way to view and encounter events associated with a (traumatic) past. Applying the lens of nostalgia to a space of trauma promotes fuller explication of its physical and metaphysical qualities while illustrating the interrelating emotional models of nostalgia and trauma by refusing to fully assign either to pure history or pure emotion. As a distiller

of the central questions surrounding performed, affective, and aesthetic features in corporeal form, I am primarily interested in the role of bodily experience in the intersection between trauma and nostalgia as it moves through Elmina.

To discuss nostalgia in this context is to navigate the relations among cultural memory, official history, and imaginative enterprise. To what extent is active and bodily creativity a part of the history and memory of the Black Diaspora? Nostalgia is, after all, about how we imaginatively remember and enact the past. Through the course of this essay, I present a framework for understanding how some home(lands) are tied to the (sometimes unpleasant, or traumatic) past. Through this exploration, I offer an expanded model of nostalgia as a critical tool, a method of analysis, and as a performative experience that has corporeal and theoretical properties and potentialities. I do so in order to emphasize the role of affect and aesthetics in representations or narratives of memory and history. I hope to illustrate that to perform transatlantic nostalgia means to enter nostalgia and trauma into conversation, to navigate the difficult contradictions this engenders, and to return to a more bodily understanding of nostalgia. In the end, I conclude that visiting the slave castle and in turn revisiting our affective memories of past trauma are productive acts. They are productive in the sense that the bodily experience of entering, navigating, and returning creates, through the aesthetics of repetition and return, an oscillating field of space and place. That is, in the slave castle, space becomes the arena for an array of specific bodily experiences that simultaneously localize, by bringing focus to one's own feeling body, and expand, by juxtaposing that body to nonspecific traumatic narratives. I rest on the contention that the effort to connect to these stories, specifically to historical narratives (of varying conceptions of) home is best described as performing transatlantic nostalgia. And further, that performing transatlantic nostalgia forces a critical, spatiotemporal negotiation that embodies historical affective relations.

* * *

To Enter

I have a nervous body. My heart beats too fast. My stomach is clenched in the center. The clenching keeps my core intact so that I do not burst into many directions at once. I enter the castle at a tour guide's request. I am a part of a group but I feel alone, isolated, and pulled at from the center. I enter the castle grounds, I enter the space marked as the entrance of the castle, I enter the female dungeon, the male dungeon, I enter a church, and a museum of sorts. There are several entrances in this castle, and exits. And there are parts I simply do not remember.

I do not remember the shape of the person's face who worked at the gift shop on the castle grounds. I imagine him as a he and that he has a warm smile and a careful glance. I do not meet him until after I tour the castle. He sold me a DVD. It is entitled, "The Elmina Castle & The Slave Trade." The video opens with festive music; an upbeat tempo with horns, clapping, and drums as the opening credits roll. A male narrator/tour guide appears. I assume he is native Ghanaian because of his accent and comportment. He has a round and pleasant face with a distinctly neutral facial expression and a clear and direct tone of voice. He is clothed in a black-collared button-up shirt with gold markings on it. He begins in a sober tenor:

"Thank you my dear viewers for taking the time out to watch this. I know some of you have seen this building before, been through it before. So now it's time to sit back and reflect on the tour you had. For others also this will be the first time of having a look at this. If that is the case, you need to understand that this story is so painful; it's so sad and depressing. However the motivation for doing this is not to make you sad, bitter, or angry but to help each and every one of us learn from these horrible

mistakes of the past. [Unclear, possibly "Try out"] more ways to correct these mistakes by way of taking informed and humane decisions so collectively we can stop this from re-happening in any form in the future. And that's all this is about."

The narrator/tour guide invites the viewer to witness the town of Elmina before entering the castle. As the music begins to play, I begin to suspect learning about the past in order to secure the future is perhaps not "all this is about."

The song is robust and harrowing. The voices of the singers are disembodied, never shown. The ballad features moaning yet melodious male voices seemingly echoing from above the scenes privileged by the camera's eye. The rounded sounds of the song, accented by one lengthy section of instrumentals, continue through the length of an extended pictorial tour of the city of Elmina. The lyrics of the song illustrate the aesthetics that will hover over the remainder of the video, the tour itself, and indeed, my bodily interpretation of this space.

You've been gone, it's an empty home
Come on back where you really belong,
You are always welcome home,
Welcome home.
You've been kept down for much too long
Stand up please and say I am free.
Don't forget you are welcome home,
Welcome home.
Come with me on this happy trip back to the Promised Land.
All will be happy and gay

The camera offers an assortment of pictures from Elmina, moving from the town's inhabitants to extensive focus on historic sites and buildings.

You've been gone, it's an empty home

A crowded dock with murky water. Townsmen busily working.

Come on back where you really belong,

Close up on one unsuspecting man preparing his fishing net while perched securely in his boat. He looks over his shoulder as though he feels someone's eyes upon his back.

You are always welcome home,

Three men sail under a low-hanging bridge in a small angular boat without sails

Welcome home.

I cannot isolate any women in the scene

You've been kept down for much too long

Wide shot of boats on the move in the water

Stand up please and say I am free.

A series of landmarks captioned in difficult-to-read white-colored lettering.

Don't forget you are welcome home,

LOCAL MILITARY SHRINES (prolonged views of symbols and life-size figurines atop buildings)

Welcome home.

Come with me on this happy trip back to the Promised Land.

OLDEST CATHOLIC CHURCH (shot from several angles)

All will be happy and gay

OLDEST CATHOLIC PARISH HALL (view from the street)

ELIMINA NEW TOWN (birds eye view, from a white, arched stone structure)

DUTCH CEMETERY (juxtaposed to the words of the song repeating: *welcome home*)

Come with me on this happy trip back to the Promised Land.

All will be happy and gay

You've been gone; it's an empty home
Come on back where you really belong,
You are always welcome home,
Welcome home.

Our narrator/tour guide appears at the entrance of the castle. "You are welcome back. Now we move on inside the castle to see what the castle really has to offer." The narrator/tour guide turns his back to the camera. It follows him over a suspended bridge. He enters.

As do I.

I have a nervous body. My heart beats too fast. My stomach is clenched in the center. The clenching keeps my core intact so that I do not burst into many directions at once. I enter the castle at a tour guide's request. I am a part of a group but I feel alone, isolated, and pulled at from the center. I enter the castle grounds, I enter the space marked as the entrance of the castle, I enter the female dungeon, the male dungeon, I enter a church, and a museum of sorts. There are several entrances in this castle, and exits. And there are parts I simply do not remember.

* * *

Reflecting on the video purchased at Elmina Castle places me in another unstable position, another point of hesitant entry forcing me to manage accurately representing experiences of/in such a contentious site. Of course, the film performs its own set of tensions related to ways in which the castle is represented outside of the immediate experience of touring the physical site. In just the first ten minutes, Bruner's ironies are beginning to unfold. The first—the pains and pleasures of return. Like the proverb of Sankofa, the viewer is encouraged, indeed instructed, to return home and to reclaim the knowledge of the past, to cast oneself simultaneously as prodigal

child and historian. At the same time the narrator/tour guide frames the understanding of the pain associated with the castle, and the atrocities perpetrated there, as necessary to guide present and future moral action. The narrative he constructs is clearly one of trauma. My experience is interpreted through, changed, shaped, and mediated by this narrative of historical trauma. But to further complicate matters, my positionality as an African American tourist-pilgrim to a perceived home(land) renders the traumatic narrative incomplete in its efforts to capture my experience. The same sentiment haunts the video. It invites, "*Come with me on this happy trip back to the Promised Land.*" It promises, *"All will be happy and gay.*" Here, there is a distinct appeal to sentimental notions of Elmina/Ghana/Africa as a home. And further, a home constructed as spatially removed and temporally distanced, a past home. A good home. A simple home. A home worthy of revisiting. A careful examination reveals simultaneous narratives of nostalgia and trauma in operation, a seeming paradox. The narrator seems unaware of the contradiction. As the tour guide he is devoted to the materiality of the castle and careful stewardship of the stories he tells. But I feel the incongruities of this space deeply and acutely. This video makes me nervous.

ON TRAUMA AND NOSTALGIA

Nostalgia, of Greek origin, has become associated with a pain or loss of something in the past. Though the term is used loosely in this way, its etymology implies also the loss of something connected to a real or perceived home. Nostalgia was once used in the medical community as a synonym for homesickness in diagnoses of soldiers at war. Nowadays, nostalgia is often used in the colloquial as a style of dealing with or writing about the past, at best one of romanticism or escapism and at its worst one of purposeful historical revisionism. On the other hand, the term trauma, also

of Greek origin, means, "wound." According to Caruth (1996) in *Unclaimed Experience,* trauma originally referred to a physical wounding of the body but later became (most notably by Sigmund Freud) a way to describe, "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (p. 3). Taken together, the terms have moved out of the realm of bodily experience and medical diagnosis and into the arena of the metaphysical, the experience of trauma or nostalgia as a state of mind that can be more or less accurate when compared to 'actual,' physical experience.

Noting that the concept of nostalgia has become linked with inauthenticity of experience, Lippard (2000) seeks to reclaim nostalgia as a "seamless and positive part of life" (p. 164) rather than a "social disease" (Stewart, 1993, p. ix). The question of authenticity emerges with respect to trauma as well. Grey (2007) explains, "Traumatized subjects can sometimes achieve an elevated status in our culture," their authentic distressing experience being a source of "legitimacy and institutional authority" (p. 186). At the center of the discussion on nostalgia is the question of whether the concept serves a positive or negative function. At the center of the trauma discussion is whether one can question or challenge traumatic experience. In the present case questions of authenticity translate as: are the feelings of ancestral connection that African Americans experience in the slave castle "authentic" or "real"? What are the politics of denying ownership or identification with the traumatic events of the castle, and in what ways does this ownership and identification function as a political tool? Bruner points to these questions in his analysis of the differing representations of Ghanaians and African Americans with respect to the slave castles of Ghana. He finds, "from a Ghanaian perspective, they [African Americans] become 'too emotional,' which suggests the Ghanaians do not understand the feelings of Diaspora blacks" (Bruner, 1996, p. 293). Where Bruner captures the authenticity question in the disparate life experiences of Ghanaians and the Diaspora, the video demonstrates a complex, albeit eerie, understanding of questions of authenticity, stating the

traumatic facts of the castle, all the while whispering in alluring nostalgic undertones, *welcome home*.

The relationship between trauma and nostalgia raises several questions with respect to notions of authenticity, which are no doubt heightened by the ways in which the physical site itself is represented to a tourist public. What happens when the past that we long for is necessarily inauthentic, when it lingers in our memory as a mythical narrative of a place in time never personally or physically experienced? And what if this place in time is marked in the collective memory not as "seamless and positive" (Lippard, 2000, p. 164) but ruptured and violent, haunted by slavery and the continuing legacy of racism? Such is certainly the case with the African Diaspora. Though many in the Diaspora may look upon Africa as an idealized place of origin, it must also be contemporaneously connected with the abuses of the past. The slave castle attracts me and repels me at once. It reminds me of the common struggle of people of African descent around the globe and of the pain of separation caused by the transatlantic slave trade and symbolized by the castle, "dominating the countryside" as a "bastion of power, a site to be struggled over" (Bruner, 1996, p. 302), and, I add, struggled in.

The relationship between Africa and her Diaspora is likewise akin to nostalgia, bittersweet. It is one that can be characterized as a trauma and as an identity-building phenomenon. It is through my body that I, both in the video and in my immediate experiences at Elmina, explore the nostalgic relationship between Africa and her Diaspora as one of necessary inauthenticity and one that takes place within specific social contexts like slave castle visitations. Its inauthenticity does not render it a bad thing nor does it eliminate its identity-forming abilities. In fact, as Battaglia (1995) demonstrates in her work on the urban Trobrianders, it is through the very agent-oriented imaginative enterprise of nostalgia, that a spatiotemporally negotiated notion of self and/in home is constructed.[4] Nostalgia describes a particular subset of memory, and

memory is work.[5] Understanding nostalgia through bodily experience expands conventional conceptions of nostalgia, calling attention to the practicality of nostalgia, a strategy for confronting the traumatic ghosts (and narratives) of the past rather than a diseased obsession with them. Bodies mobilize the idea of nostalgia without dismissing a sometimes disturbing past and without recasting the nostalgic narrative as inherently positive, holding the concept in nervous tension.

Nostalgia has a contentious history. It is a feeling, an experience, a moment that at first thought can be said to lack both materiality and concrete characteristics. It is a narrative of remembrance and forgetting. As Jackson (1998) suggests in "Performance at Hull House," "the efficacy of nostalgia's narrative lies in what it erases from memory as much as in what it retains"; it exists as an "idealized and selective vision" (p. 280). It is no wonder, then, that scholars of communication have wrestled with nostalgia. They have theorized, rhetoricized, and historicized it so as to make sense of this mysterious phenomenon of human communication. Researching the varying notions and origins of nostalgia as a concept quickly becomes a profusion of ideals, intents, definitions, and typologies. The ways in which black identity is socially constructed through nostalgia at Elmina are an added complexity, calling for the consideration of nostalgia with respect to the subjectivity of historically objectified bodies. As trauma and memory scholar Maurice E. Stevens (2003) points out, "black subjectivity ought to be understood as complex and uniquely located, as an effect of powerful radicalizing forces, somewhere between intrapsychic experience and the external world of social structures" (p. 13). Nostalgia in the/my body highlights the/my subjective navigation of the internal and external processes that constitute a/my (unstable) racial identity.

Having entered Elmina, and therefore a discussion of the convergence of trauma and nostalgia, we must now navigate this discussion, notwithstanding the multitude of implications within this context.

Thus, for the purposes of the present study, I have isolated pertinent conceptions of nostalgia using distinct but overlapping classifications, which I draw on as I move through the castle: nostalgia as disease, embedded nostalgia, nostalgia as escape or as a ritualistic mourning practice, and nostalgia as a narrative of belonging and home. In the context of slave castle tours, each category has implications that unfold through a narrative of trauma, producing affective, corporeal and theoretical consequences.

* * *

To Navigate

Our narrator/tour guide appears. This time he is inside the castle walls, his body framed by the archway of the, as of yet unmentioned, entrance to another part of the castle. After a lengthy description about the changes in ownership and usage of Elmina Castle, ultimately ending in the holding of African slaves awaiting shipment to areas across the Atlantic, he takes a caveat, feeling it important to discuss the dynamic intertribal relations that resulted in the practice of some Africans selling other Africans into slavery.

"I have been here for some time and I do hear people talking about Africans giving out brothers and sisters. In fact if they see it from the angle that all Africans are one people and therefore giving out brothers and sisters, that's correct. But then, if we come to think of it that they mean the literal sense of brothers and sisters they are wrong. In those days, people were limited to their tribes and kingdoms and one tribe never saw the next tribe to be same, let alone brothers and sisters. So that in case of wars and kidnappings, they were giving out enemies, nowhere near brothers and sisters. In other words, those of the same tribe never gave themselves up but, rather, those of other

tribes and they never saw themselves to be brothers and sisters."

The narrator switches back to a more neutrally delivered historical account about the war in which the Dutch, with the help of local Africans, overthrew the Portuguese who then took control of the castle but continued in the trading of slaves. He moves through the remainder of the castle's history relatively quickly, ending with the independence of Ghana that led finally to the ownership of Elmina by the Ghanaian government. He gestures at the entrance that has been lurking behind him.

"Now we can move on to see the various places."

The first space is the female dungeon. He begins with an accounting of the horrendous health conditions of the castle and juxtaposes this to a gendered narrative of desire, remarking that the white men never brought their wives with them. And further, that the Gold Coast became known as "the white man's grave" because of the prevalence of malaria and yellow fever and the resulting accumulating death toll of Western administrators of the castle. Immediately he turns to relations between the female captives and the white male authorities, "they kept on raping the women in the dungeons."

"Whatever the governor wanted, because of his position, the story says, up on the balcony he stood . . . women were then brought out from the dungeons all around to the courtyard so then he just looked through and then made his choice. The woman chosen could have been in the dungeon for a whole month, all the time in there she never cleaned her [unclear], she never took a bath or bathed, gone through the menstrual sometimes and still the governor was interested."

He goes on to describe the process by which the selected woman was cleaned. Then, as he moves, the camera focuses on a staircase leading up to the governor's quarters. The narrator's voice relays the sexual abuse of the woman and the various consequences of the rape (including possible freedom if found

> pregnant), the camera's eye moves up the stairs and into the governor's bedroom, forcing the viewer into the positionality of the raped captive woman. As the ascent happens, the narrator/tour guide speaks of an almost "insignificant" number of women who became mistresses of the white castle authorities. Houses were built for them and their children in town, as they could not return home to their villages because the Europeans wanted them close and their communities may not have been within reach.

* * *

The tour guides are careful to describe in as much detail as possible the pain and suffering that took place in the castles. The trauma that is remembered is engendered through the strategic offering of explicit and implicit contradictions presented in binary form: governor/captive, black/white, holy/evil, dirty/clean, men/women. The guides are careful to balance talk of the slave traders with talk of the enslaved Africans within the framework of the tour. Of course the conditions the slaves were held in was highlighted while touring the female and male dungeons. The perspective of the slaveholders at the castle was generally talked about with disdain and in contrast with that of slaves. The contradictions are privileged. For example during the tour of the governor's sleeping quarters, it was mentioned that the slaves were housed just below the floorboards. During the tour of the church space, the beauty of the construction was contrasted to the crudeness of the dungeons. Such binary oppositions do not provide any answers. But, as Richards (2005) notes, "I must acknowledge that even if the guides were to supply additional data, that would not fully assuage a sense of loss; whether I knew then that representation is bound to fail before the enormity of historical violence, I do not remember" (p. 91). One leaves the space with one primary question: "how could

something like this happen?" Transforming space into place allows enough specificity to ask questions about the effect on individuals with regard to events that transpired in the past but provides little guidance about what to do with these questions.

People here are both curious and anxious. They listen intently, hanging on every word the tour guide utters. People are extremely quiet as if silence might ward off the ghosts of injustice housed in the place. People are hyper-aware, looking about at others' faces as if for a clue as to how to comport themselves. I tried to cry. I watched others manage the act. People notice their differences. At one point, I remember my white colleagues being unable to look at me and the other African Americans on the tour. Questions are rarely asked. People gasp at almost every description of events. I closed my eyes at many points, having tired from seeing too much of nothing. Empty rooms, empty walls, echoing footsteps. The truth is that there isn't much to do here but try to listen for your place. But if I think hard, I remember walking more softly than I normally would. I remember my jaw getting tight from grinding my teeth and being silent for so long.

Space and place are negotiated here. Memories are both vivid and vague. Vivid because the guide entices the mind with descriptions of masses of people suffering in a sea of filth. Visitors are encouraged to notice the fingernail markings on the wall left there from those trying desperately to escape. However, on the other hand these images are vague because they are impersonal. The images/memories that are constructed are projected upon faceless masses screaming in the dark. All in all, I do not feel that these memories are there to serve as any type of closure for visitors of the African Diaspora. The space operates as a place for opening up yet more questions about the future of humanity. The slave castle marks itself as a rupture point in history, not as a healing space for the present. The castle simultaneously promises a return home and denies it.

Slave castles differ from memorials constructed to remember

victims or heroes of war. In this space there is not a tightly constructed sense of duty or justice, but rather memories of past traumas roaming free. While the video and the physical tour attempt to tame these roaming memories through the language of historical fact, tourist-pilgrims inhabit these memories through bodily experience. Richards (2005) describes the process of recollecting memories in this very place. "Part of the pain of walking through the lower levels of this castle-dungeon, of imagining the life that transpired here, relates to absence. I can smell what I imagine is the stench of suffering, but no material scrap remains inside the dungeons" (p. 92). To ask what is remembered in this place is to inquire what we must do in order to make sense of a fractured and disturbing history. One cannot escape how the size and shape of the rooms in the castle envelop the body, catching and trapping you in a history that is evident by its material remains but unbelievable in the scope and scale of the cruelty attached to it. Like Richards, I looked, felt, and grasped for meaning. I tried to justify why I wanted to know about this history. Why was it so very important for me to take in this information? Why do I, to this very day, feel attached to, almost in love with this memory of cruelty and injustice that I never experienced and would never want to? This is no normal nostalgia. But if I must answer Richards' question, I'd have to say that I remembered, and only because I forced myself, my connection to the events that transpired in this castle. And I long for this time and place not because it was good but because it was mine. By walking through the castle and engaging the stories that were told, my remembered space of Africa turned into a more specific and localized place centered on the tension of home and past. But conversely and simultaneously, this very tension highlighted also the ways that Africa simply exceeded my experience and understanding.

While it is easy to get swept up in the allure of the slave castles as self-articulating monuments of injustice, these spaces do not speak for themselves entirely. Operating under the explicit theme

"never again," Elmina Castle declares its mission as one of education predicated on learning from the mistakes of the past. In the 1990s when Ghana embarked on the restoration of Elmina Castle, a plaque was placed beside the door to the dungeon where those who were condemned to death for rebelling were held. The inscription reads: "In everlasting memory of the anguish of our ancestors. May those who died rest in peace. May those who return find their roots. May humanity never again perpetrate such injustice against humanity. We, the living, vow to uphold this."

My body feels the tensions of trauma and nostalgia, of wounding and longing. The affective bodily manifestations of nostalgia, its mental factors and processes, and its function as ritualistic return are not limited to the experiences of the Black Diaspora. These notions of nostalgia, as I have articulated them, reflect a highly self-centered and even Americentric flow of memories. They point to the agency and politics involved in choosing which nostalgias to experience and implicate African Americans in our selective memories. Bruner (1996) reminds us, "African American interest in slavery and the dungeons focuses on one event and one time range in the past, as opposed to a return to all the expressive cultural aspects of contemporary African culture" (p. 296). Festivals like PANAFEST stress a more complex spatiotemporal activation of memories. It is perhaps for this reason that I abstained from visiting the second castle on the same day I visited Elmina, opting instead to reflect on Elmina and to roam the beach area next to the Cape Coast Castle, while my colleagues entered another stage of trauma.

* * *

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I should have cried. All that I took in at the moment, all that I heard and all that I saw . . . I should have cried. At one point I remember consciously making an effort to cry. I thought that if I could just

crank out some tears then I wouldn't feel such a loss. But oddly enough I didn't sense the feeling was a loss for my lost people but a loss for emotion. I wanted to be angry but I had no one to be angry at. History is designed so that we remember but we forget at the same time. We remember the dates and times and numbers and even the images but we forget the cries and the screams and the prayers. Who could possibly be angry at History?

I wanted to feel sad for my ancestors and for humanity but I wasn't exactly sure how to channel the sadness. I even appreciated the irony of the beautiful white castle sharing the shoreline with the dark natives of the town while the whispering of history revealed the brutal truth about this monumental symbol of oppression. The feeling was similar to watching some devastating coverage on CNN like Katrina or Darfur. Damn that's sad, but not quite personal enough for my tear ducts to fill, not home-hitting enough for one saline drop to fall.

After we left the castle and had time on our own, I went to sit alone by the beach. I remember thinking how calming it was. A young man came and sat beside me and I was thinking, "If he tries to sell me something, I am going to scream" but he didn't want anything from me but a conversation. He is 18 years old and he has a name. He has one sister, who is not yet married, and he goes to a local school where he is trying to be a better student. We talked about these trivial things until he told me that every day he thinks of being in America. This got my attention so I asked him why. He replied, "There is real happiness in America; we never have money here so there is not much happiness." I recall some bullshit cliché response of mine; I was blabbing about how real happiness is being with the people you love. He was not moved. Looking over at the beach, I asked him if he liked to swim. He then told me of how two weeks earlier he and his friends went swimming at night and his classmate was sucked into the ocean and drowned. His classmate's name was TooSweet. The boy's sister was married the same day. When the body was found, it had no eyes. I shook my head and

said, "Wow, that is so sad." What am I? What is wrong with me? I should have cried.

* * *

I am nervous about telling this story in such a public way. But I do so because I think it is important for people to know that wounding and longing flows many directions across the Atlantic. The crowds of tourist-pilgrims who come to Ghana and visit Elmina and Cape Coast often spatially and temporally isolate their narrative of return in such a way that renders the sensibilities of the native Ghanaians irrelevant. I can't help but view TooSweet's dead body, absent of those highly subjective symbols we call eyes, as a metaphor of diasporic return. We sometimes wash back onto the African shore, blind to what we find in the present, or casting it solely as a part of an idealized past. We are tourists in the streets, but returning pilgrims within the (now safe) haven of the castle, free from the eyes of the inhabitants of Elmina, Ghana, Africa.[6] In addition to the other ironies Bruner highlights and the video frames, such as ancestral sadness and pride, feelings of foreignness and familiarity, differing senses of family and home, and the ambiguity of return, this tension especially makes me nervous.

* * *

To Return

Our narrator/tour guide appears again. He explains first the horrors of the Middle Passage, stating that the lives of the captives of the castles from Elmina to slavery "only got worse."

The narrator is pictured in the shadows of a sea-level stone passageway. A dispersion of light through a small opening brightens only the side of his face and body. As he gestures toward the opening, he continues to tell the viewer that this is

the door that led to the ships that dispersed Africans to places far and away, the door of no return. He turns the narrative to a welcoming ceremony held during PANAFEST in which everyone who has traveled to the festival is welcomed. During this celebration, homage is given to those who died in the slave castle. Gifts in the form of wreaths are presented. "One from the chiefs, one from the government, and one from all Africans in the Diaspora."

"We need to understand, and I believe that everyone who has been to the castle and would come to the castle, will bear in mind that those who died in the process never died in vain and will believe that as we go through the dungeons leaving us at the point of no return where we're marching the Africans in chains going out of the castle. It should reflect on us that we have a responsibility. And how to get yourself acquainted with that responsibility, over here we keep a minute of silence in memory of all those who died. And we vow in us to do whatever it takes to make sure that when we say never again, means never again."

* * *

My Return

I approach the door of no return. I am amazed by how small the door actually is. The tour guide explains that people were smaller back then and my mind wanders back to when I visited a silver mine in the Czech Republic. The tour guide in the Czech Republic said the same thing. In the present case, he adds also that the poor nutrition, brutality, and terrible living conditions often contributed to the diminished size of the captives by the time they reached and were ushered through the door of no return. I cringe at this. My stomach is tethered to itself from all of the clenching. You see, I tend to compress when I am nervous. The walls of my belly become sensitive. All feelings seem to originate in my throat and then dive down through my heart only to be caught by the intersecting

tightropes that are my tightened core. This triggers backache. I imagine bodies bending, tied to one another. I think of the people moved in and out of this room on a daily basis. In. Out. In. Out. They must duck down, bend over, and orient their differently sized bodies to this uncomfortable space. I think about the countless returns of the tour guides and castle workers, returning over and over again to tell the tale. I suppose tourism is all about return. Perhaps someone should rename this room, this door. I have returned. Many have not. Many bodies sprinkled the Atlantic never to return. Or if so, on some indiscriminate wave, loose and steady. The doorway is barred. The light pieces through, illuminating the dark room and forcing eyes to adjust and bodies to react to the adjusting. As I squint, I negotiate the tension between the double tightness of my face and my core. My back hurts. I attempt to feel some emotional pain congruent with my nervous body. I imagine a scenario I can't now recall. The only way I could feel something was to feel with someone who may have suffered in this place, in this room. Time passes. I grow tired of trying to feel things. I grow tired of forcing connections through the pit of my gut. I want to go home.

* * *

I think visiting the slave castles is an act of homing, reconstruction and longing.[7] The slave castles provide a physical place for a trauma known only to the Diaspora through narrative. It makes spatial memories of the past more vivid, and more real, locating it in a particular place. But it also presents a crisis of memory, an interrogation of the past on the one hand and an interrogation of the self in relation to the world and to home on the other.

To enter and to navigate the complex intersections of nostalgia and trauma embedded in Elmina ultimately signifies an aesthetic of return. The affect and aesthetics as regards trauma and nostalgia

are all worked out through return, repetition, recapitulation, and reconciliation. Nostalgia is returning to a past home while trauma is returning to a wounding event. Through this exploration I have also attempted to return nostalgia home as well to the body. We might also think of returning to the narratives of those missing in the context of this essay, for instance the tour guides who return each day to the same narratives of trauma and the toll this must take on their bodily orientation to the present and the past.

Performing Trauma and Nostalgia

Performances that take place in the slave castles of Ghana can be analyzed through the lens of nostalgia. Acts of nostalgia present in the slave castles complicate the notion of nostalgia as a "fond remembering" by making it clear that the past home is not necessarily a past of simpler, better times. In this case, a critical nostalgia of regret and mourning is enacted in tandem with a set of nostalgic acts that embody imaginative, mythical or idealistic narratives of Africa as motherland.

The relations between trauma and nostalgia are largely those that can be discussed in aesthetic terms, those that can be viewed as distinct characteristics of imaginative or emotive experience. Here, we might name the primary aesthetic guiding the nexus of trauma and nostalgia as repetition, or an inclination toward return. The return to the past and to [perceived] home evokes a simultaneous wounding and longing that is psychosocial in nature and manifests in both physical and metaphysical ways. Return and repetition also point to the ways in which nostalgia and trauma are characterized in art and life with respect to issues of time. The former is conceived as a future-to-past orientation toward time, stressing the return to the past as that which brings pleasure and hope. Whereas the latter is commonly held as having a past-to-future orientation to time, emphasizing the role of learning from the mistakes of the past in order to construct a better present and

future. The aesthetic of return makes possible an oscillating field of affect unstably caught between seemingly contradictory associations. That is—dream, memory, and fascination on the one hand and violence, death, and wounding on the other. My nervous body straddles and navigates this line.

To recall in this space is less about excavating the crevices of my mind for changing and uncertain memories and more about mining my own bodily histories for the inarticulate and illegible sentiments embedded deep into my bones. I seek not only history, but I also seek the layers of affect inextricably linked to the histories and herstories rooted simultaneously in contradictory senses of home, past, and trauma. Though visiting these feelings may be perceived as a threat to healing or to progress, I view this activity as productive. Aesthetics of trauma and nostalgia change the space/place dynamic through an oscillation between real and imagined specificity. They are entrenched in the body and bring the body into the conversation around personal and cultural memory. We are bound to our bodies in different ways than we are bound to narrative text. Aesthetics of trauma and nostalgia put us in touch with our ancestors not through conventional knowledge but through an active and bodily engagement with the traumas of the past. History patterns, memory recalls, and affect affects.

In *The Atlantic Sound,* Phillips (2000) enters, navigates, and returns to issues of transatlantic identity. Ultimately, he concludes, "it is futile to walk into the face of history," describing remnants of the past as "shards of memory," warning that they may "draw blood" (p. 275). He is right. They may. And he is right to be nervous about nostalgia for a traumatic past. But it is my contention that this nervousness is no reason to discount or avoid our feeling in and about the past. This case of nerves is symptomatic of nostalgia moving us through memories in a way that encourages affective relations to historical moments. We should feel our way through history. Nostalgia helps us to contextualize trauma in a way that

centers on emotional, bodily experience and encourages us to engage both the problems and the potential of the past. While we can never truly go home, nostalgia offers a way to return, a way to connect, and a way to practice the pleasures and pains of memory.

Perhaps what happens in the castles and in my body are best called performances of transatlantic nostalgia. Transatlantic nostalgia leaves open the possibility for longings to flow in the others' directions as well, taking into account the miscellaneous effects of African colonialization worldwide. Performing transatlantic nostalgia forces a negotiation of time and space in one's sensate body and does not let us escape the tensions of history, privileging the expressive body as the conduit of history, memory, and feeling. This is no normal nostalgia; instead it is a nostalgia that encourages a critical "eye/I" toward the past without denying our affective relations toward it.[8] Indeed, it is one that asks us to return (n)ever again.

NOTES

1 I use the term "tourist-pilgrim" to sit on the line between representing myself, and by extension, other African Americans as essentially tourists to Ghana or as pilgrims to Ghana. In her study of the castle at Elmina, Richards (2005) ultimately chooses the term "tourist," denoting, "our collective inability to escape a mediatized cultural economy" that is a key part of the discourse of traveling (p. 619). Tourist-pilgrim stresses my acceptance of the tensions in the positionality that lies between tourism and spiritual sojourner.

2 I use nervous not unthinkingly. Jackson (1998) describes a "nervous gap between historical signifiers and their signified" (p. 266). According to Pollock (1998), performative writing also is nervous; it fluctuates within the convergences of text and context. Also germane to this essay, Pollock (1998) notes that performative writing is citational and consequential, that is, caught up in repetition and with the ability to bring about change. Nervous connotes the body's nervous system and the tendency for nostalgia to reflect nervousness about the present. For more on nostalgia in relation to the present, see Tannock (1995), Smith (2000), and Cashman (2006). The word nervous comes from the Latin "sinew," which in its first definition denotes a thing that holds muscle to bone, and in the second, a thing that gives strength or binds together. I mean to compare the way my nervous body, in the present context, binds together the physical and metaphysical components of trauma and nostalgia.

3 For in-depth analyses of the history, ownership, and touristic politics of Elmina Castle see Richards (2005) and Bruner (1996). This essay focuses on the affect/effect of the castles on the body of tourists, reflecting on cultural and theoretical implications.

4 Battaglia's (1995) study of yam growing amongst urban Trobrianders sets out specifically to theorize nostalgia as an act realized in performance. In this book chapter, she describes nostalgia as a bittersweet phenomenon, representing both a longing and a sense of gratification, both pleasure and pain. Battaglia (1995) very carefully endows nostalgia with the potential to create concrete practical manifestations, to be evident in performance, in practice, in action. She finds that the Trobrianders perform nostalgia by performing the actions and sensibilities of home. Following Battaglia, I examine the relations between performance and nostalgia focusing on how African Americans perform home in the slave castles of Ghana.

5 Here, I draw specifically on Kuhn's (1995) idea of "memory work" from her study constructing memories through family photographs. Here she lays out a framework for conceiving of memory as often difficult but indeed productive.

6 Bruner (1996) provides an elaboration of the ways in which the citizens of Elmina are kept away from the castle site though signs and ordinances. He also notes resistance strategies to these methods, namely refusing to pay to enter the castle on the grounds that, as citizens of Elmina, the castle belongs to them.

7 Terry (2008) uses the term "homing" to describe the performative process by which one makes or constructs a (sense of) home.

8 Richards (2005) reflects on the ability of the "memory's eye/I" to place herself in the context of the castle tour in relation to what she imagines were the traumatic experiences as captive there (p. 623).

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Newsroom SVU: Pedophilia, the Press, and the Objective Aesthetic

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Pedophilia represents an intractable ethical problem for journalism. While news values mandate coverage of this community trauma, newsgathering and reporting conventions inadvertently precipitate or exacerbate a culture of suspicion and manipulate emotion. The objective aesthetic, a stylized means of presenting events as transparent facts, presents unforeseen consequences to victims, accused perpetrators and the community. Using interviews with journalists, the article explores professional practices in covering pedophilia and argues that the nature of news precludes healing from this increasingly prominent cultural trauma.

KEYWORDS: Pedophilia, objectivity, trauma, news reporting, qualitative research, grief

> If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?—Alexsandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*

When the news values of prominence, conflict and deviance (Campbell, Martin and Fabos 2011) converge in a powerful journalistic trifecta, the result is a Perfect Storm of a news story whose scale and emotional frenzy rivet national attention on its subject. In November 2011, Jerry Sandusky, then a long-time assistant football coach at Pennsylvania State University, was charged with 40 counts

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of sexually abusing eight boys, some of the encounters taking place in university locker rooms and showers. The 67-year-old coach, from one of the most storied football programs in the country, eventually faced more than 50 counts of child sexual abuse with 10 boys (Viera 2011). His youth charity for at-risk children, Second Mile, closed its doors after financial support from donors collapsed (Viera 2011). Sandusky faced enough prison time, if convicted, to incarcerate him for the rest of his life. Four prominent Penn State employees, including the beloved and legendary Head Coach Joe Paterno, who had coached there with Sandusky for 46 years, and University President Graham B. Spanier, lost their jobs. The coverage in the mainstream press and sports media was constant and rife with fairly explicit detail about the kind of sexual activities Sandusky was accused of engaging in with the boys during a period of 15 years. The stigma was enormous, instantaneous and widespread. Media even speculated that Penn State graduates' degrees would lose their value on the job market (Marklein and Snyder 2011).

Sandusky himself fueled the coverage by granting two interviews, one on camera with a *New York Times* reporter and the other a telephone interview with NBC sportscaster Bob Costas. His denial of wrongdoing even as he admitted to activities such as showering with the boys or giving them gifts, prompted outrage among victims and the public at large. One victim called it, "a punch in the stomach" (Tanglao and Katrandjian 2011). Costas and other media commentators were surprised that Sandusky hesitated when he asked him if he was attracted to young boys, and Sandusky's explanation further muddled the situation when he told the *Times* reporter, "if I say, 'no, I'm not attracted to boys' that's not the truth . . ." which his lawyer then clarified as "you like spending time with them." Andrew Shubin, a lawyer for one of the alleged victims, called on Sandusky to "accept responsibility for his behavior, express remorse for the pain he has caused, and spare the victims, their families and our community *further trauma* (emphasis mine)" (Tanglao and Katrandjian 2011).

Unquestionably pedophilia poses emotional and psychological trauma to its victims; the consequences often last a lifetime. This case and other high-profile pedophilia cases highlight the cultural experience of trauma and demonstrate the crucial role media play in how the community deals with important ethical issues, particularly when they involve an extreme degree of stigmatization. Shubin used the media to call for the perpetrator to confess and repent publicly in order to stanch the community's trauma. If Sandusky were to acknowledge guilt and try to atone, the media would be the vehicle for him to do so. As the public emotionally processes its shock and outrage, the discussions take place in large part through the media. The Sandusky case has provided a "teachable moment" when psychiatric professionals educate the public about the patterns of sexual abusers and their effects on victims, again, largely through the media. More importantly, the media function as moral narrators, constructing stories that affirm societal mores, remind the public of culturally constructed moral values, and stigmatize or even scapegoat the deviant. Pedophilia is so far outside the borders of acceptable behavior in contemporary society, that those on whom this stigma is laid are seen as virtually incapable of rehabilitation. Pedophiles are demonized in society, and the heinous nature of their crime on a vulnerable population subsumes all other aspects of their identities. Even the accusation or innuendo of such activities can ruin a man's life. If how others see us indelibly marks us, or shapes us irreversibly, then the media role in exposing, discussing and judging pedophilia becomes that much more important.

Arguably the most far reaching, serious and complex cases of chronic pedophilia occurred as a pervasive pattern of pedophilia in the Catholic Church came to light in 2002. John Patrick Shanley's 2008 film *Doubt* strongly mirrors the perplexing ethical controversies posed in the award-winning press coverage of the pedophilia scandal in the Boston Catholic Diocese, which has

exponentially expanded in the ensuing decade. Based on the Pulitzer Prize winning play, this film provides an unsettling account of a scandal involving a parish priest accused, without proof, of sexual misconduct with a 12-year-old African American boy in the early days of Civil Rights and Vatican II. As the unfolding drama problematizes innocence and guilt, it simultaneously offers moral lessons on the destructive nature of gossip and suspicion as well as the arrogance of moral certitude, knowledge which should not be lost on media practitioners.

In 2002 the *Boston Globe* rocked the world with a series of articles (more than 300 in the first four months alone) detailing Catholic priests' chronic sexual abuse of children in the most heavily Catholic diocese in the country and the Church's systematic and deliberate efforts to hide it (Boston Globe 2002). More shocking, this was not news to reporters across the country, who had known about cleric sexual abuse and misconduct for decades (Cannon 2002; Larson 2003). In the daily business of keeping and revealing secrets juxtaposed with the delicate balance of privacy and public interest, journalists long have struggled with when and how to report on sexual offenders. Because of the stigmatization of registering as a sexual offender, reporters face moral controversy in publicizing offenders' presence in the community. Also, the potential to ruin someone's life over the mere accusation of sexual abuse places a special burden on the press in covering this delicate issue.

One overlooked area of investigation is the role that the media play in managing and representing the intense trauma of those who have experienced sexual abuse at the hands of a spiritual leader. When people undergo a personal trauma of this intensity, the narratives that they tell about their experiences reflect an intense fragmentation of the psyche as they repress these events from public view, both from themselves and those around them (Mitchell 1998). During the past decade, this unique form of traumatic experience has emerged for public scrutiny in a context of doubt or refusal

to believe these claims because of the repercussions for perceptions of the Church (Duncan 2004). Also worth acknowledging is Moeller's (1999) contention that we live in an era when cynicism and emotional fatigue make it increasingly difficult for communities to respond to these narratives with empathy and/or outrage. When journalists confront these stories, their narratives often have profound ramifications for those who experienced them.

The sexual abuse practiced by members of the clergy represents an especially problematic form of trauma because of the emotional investment members of society make in their spiritual leaders. These events are unique for those who live through them because faith, traditionally a source of comfort, can become a source of pain (McMackin, Keane and Kline 2009). When the Church began gradually silencing these individuals or strategically failing to address their spiritual crises due to legal considerations, these people were more or less dismissed as lost sheep. Rehabilitating their faith means addressing the trauma they experienced which, in turn, means addressing the veracity of their claims, something that many parishes did not feel able to do. Given this wall of silence, the journalist becomes the primary means for providing the tools with which individuals can reconstruct their fragmented psyches. These types of trauma, which emanate beyond the private psychological sphere and into the public arena where many members of a society are strongly invested, requires a more systematic ethical code for dealing with clergy sexual abuse (Ross 2003). At present, these codes remain murky at best as it seems to be those in the priesthood who are often our moral arbiters.

What to do with sexual offenders, particularly pedophiles, is a growing national issue as well. Some states are taking extreme measures. Louisiana, Florida, Montana, South Carolina and Oklahoma now allow the death penalty for repeat sex crimes against children (Associated Press 2006). Nebraska and Iowa have placed tight restrictions on where offenders can live (Reed 2006). The

legal and cultural consequences raise the moral stakes in reporting this issue. How journalists evaluate and subsequently act on these ethical predicaments merit investigation and ultimately reveal the ethical shortcomings of current professional practice. In fact, many accepted styles of journalistic investigation and reporting practices make it difficult for these media professionals to tell these stories. This relationship between style and ethics must be addressed before these types of stories can be told without further damaging those who lived them and those who will read them.

In proportion to its importance, little scholarly work has been done on journalistic reporting of pedophilia (Breen 1997; Critcher 2002; Ingbretsen 2004). Scholars have focused attention on the sociology and ethics of sex scandals generally, but these other types involve political figures or celebrities and sex between adults, much of it consensual (Erni, 1998; Gamson 2001a, 2001b; Siegenthaler 2000; Thompson 2000; Varon 2004; Moncrieff 2006; Desjardins 2001). Even the ethical problems raised in the past regarding rape did not involve children. Hence, the special vulnerability of the victims means pedophilia poses journalistic and ethical problems that other sex scandals do not.

For years journalists have seen pedophilia as an intractable, persistent problem in journalism, growing in significance and prominence. During the course of a conversation with a prominent journalist then at the *Washington Post,* she revealed that one of the most important and perplexing ethical issues then rising to the surface for journalists was how to report stories on pedophilia. With that as a cue, I arranged a series of in-depth group interviews (Fontana & Frey 2000; Silverman 2000) with mid-career professional journalists from all over the United States at publications of varying circulation during a one-year period in the late 1990s, before the *Boston Globe* coverage began.[1] Learning what considerations journalists weigh most in making moral decisions regarding pedophilia is an important first step in finding a morally satisfactory

way of dealing with this type of story. In order to do so, during the course of the interviews a series of three escalating scenarios[2] with journalistic verisimilitude increased the threat or level of suspicion that a sexual predator would chronically conduct his activities without notice. Qualitative textual analysis of the transcripts revealed a detailed, contextual account of journalists' moral reasoning process as they attempted to construct these narratives.

This study will examine the latent and overt processes of moral decision making that journalists use to determine ethical conduct in cases of pedophilia in order to understand what journalistic or other values are salient, then use those findings to draw conclusions about how to generate more morally satisfactory reporting of child molestation that addresses the intense trauma that these stories represent and subsequently produce. Interestingly, although some popular conceptions of journalists assume they are slaves to economic pressures or directives from supervisors or publishers, the journalists themselves spoke very little about what stories sell newspapers or what their editors or publishers would think. Rather, analysis shows the predominant themes from the journalists' discussions among themselves: a pervasive concern for the legal issues at stake, a responsibility to report whatever the profession deems newsworthy, a conscientious obedience to an objective aesthetic and the invisible role of insider knowledge and discernment. Such approaches to this sensitive topic are destructive, and thus merit changes in resource management and writing technique in order to permit journalists' humanity to inform these sensitive and socially profound stories. Journalists and critics have so far addressed neither the intense trauma survivors of clergy sexual abuse have experienced, nor the profound emotional trauma of those who stand accused of such stigmatizing crimes. Both are often reviled and deprived of what may have been at one time a clear source of personal comfort or satisfaction for them. These considerations mean reconceiving the objective aesthetic and in turn addressing

the ethical quandaries that individual reporters often confront during their investigations. More profoundly, journalists bear a greater moral weight for the social implications of their work in covering this type of trauma: namely, in contributing to a culture of suspicion, participating in a mythology about the nature of trauma, and consequently in stunting the social grieving process.

TELLING TRAUMA, EVOKING EMOTION

Journalists have a love/hate relationship with emotion. It is their classic professional paradox: emotion is the core of the narratives that appeal to the news consumer, but their own professional ethos, established firmly and permanently in their professional and even moral consciousness at the end of the 19th century, demands utter separation from emotion. While journalists do well to manipulate emotion, to use the emotional component of the human interest stories to their own ends of telling a good tale, journalists' own engagement with emotion is almost always perceived as ill-advised, entered into with no small amount of trepidation and apology. Journalists go to great lengths to maintain the perception at least, if not the pure belief, that what they write is purely factual, as dispassionate and impartial as (in)humanly possible, what Thomas Nagel (1989) coined as the "view from nowhere." For example, many journalists contend that the identity of the reporter makes no difference to the content of the story; some won't vote or participate in civic affairs; all reporters know the procedures to establish objectivity in one's reportage, such as using third person, using a minimum of adjectives, finding a source to quote for everything. These professional conventions and more set in place a style of writing with its own voice and the perception of no perspective that I will call "the objective aesthetic." This is appropriate rather than simply labeling it "objectivity" because it *is* a style, a way of seeing that purports to be no way of seeing. Its highly imitable form is

an aesthetic. Its chief benefit is largely the contention that keeping emotion at a distance is more ethical, less corruptible, much less susceptible to the distractions and moral perils the average human must face. Journalists, of course, realize that they can often appear heartless, as trauma photographers such as Kevin Carter (who committed suicide) and James Nachtwey can attest. They produce images of trauma; they do not and cannot ameliorate it. This view of emotion not only shortchanges its utility for journalism but also runs counter to the important role emotion plays in ethics. Margolis (1998) describes the erstwhile contrast between the rational and cognitive versus the irrational and emotional as ill-considered. Emotions have their own rationality and intelligence, and are integral to human morality (Nussbaum 2001). In her explication of Aquinas and Aristotle, Cates writes, "a failure to become emotionally engaged in a situation can amount to a moral failure" and praises the ethical ability of the moral person to "respond to situations with appropriate emotion" (p. 238). For journalists covering the pedophilia story, the ability to engage with appropriate emotion may actually enable greater understanding and more moral sensitivity to the fragile and raw emotions such a story entails. The objective aesthetic has important consequences for the humanity of journalists, but equally noteworthy, emotional engagement has important dividends for the journalism profession, the quality of the social narrative it produces, and the empowerment and enrichment of the people who consume it. As Margolis (1998) writes, language and feelings, "give us flexibility, but they give us solidity too. Languages change, but they change slowly, and so too do moral systems change, and with them emotions. We invent them all, but we do not invent them in a day" (p. 152).

Under these professional circumstances, coverage of any trauma, but especially pedophilia, becomes precarious at best. Trauma is a mainstay of journalism, and trauma is a story about and imbued with emotion. As Caruth (1991) notes, "trauma describes an

overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events" (181) and response is often uncontrollable. But journalism's most perplexing element is the struggle to describe the emotions of others and to evoke a sufficient amount of emotion in the telling of them to satisfy the mandates of narrative itself while maintaining the objective aesthetic that demands journalists to eschew emotion. The vicious circle is unbroken: journalists wield emotion (as a tool or a weapon) because they need it to be relevant to their constituents, but with little time to consider its deeper implications. Such professional practice often alienates those to whom they wish to appeal and damages those about whom they write. The moral emotions (Nussbaum 2001) involved in the story of pedophilia, especially, amplify the indelible consequences of trauma reporting. Most obviously, pedophilia entails a great deal of shame, both on the part of the victim (wrongly) and the perpetrator. If the perpetrator feels no shame, that is itself a moral indictment, and often the community foists such a sense of shame on the perpetrator in the absence of his own remorse. The journalistic narrative can serve such a function as well, with potentially positive consequences: "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" (Herman 1997, p. 1). Such narratives also bring us face to face with "the capacity for evil in human nature" (Herman 1997, p. 7). While Nussbaum argues (2004) that shame is under certain circumstances a socially useful tool, used improperly, she writes, it can be debilitating, stigmatizing and an impediment to a liberal, egalitarian society in which we face our humanity rather than hiding it. Shame is also by nature "degrading" and "revealing one's lack of worth" stemming from the inability to carry out moral and social commitments (Deonna and Teroni 2009, p. 33). Those who consume the stories of pedophilia often display another moral emotion, that of disgust. Here Nussbaum (2004) makes a converse argument: that while disgust very likely

may have played a positive role in our evolution, it is quite often misused, and usually embodies unreasonable, even "magical ideas of contamination, and impossible aspirations to purity, immortality and nonanimality" (p. 14) that are potentially destructive. It is well to remember that our traumas can be socially constructed through our discourse as both private and public events (Grey 2008). Bearing in mind the nature of trauma, the especially profound moral emotions and consequences involved in the pedophilia story, and the difficulties most people have in negotiating the cultural contours of the moral order and in responding with appropriate emotion to a particularly painful tragedy, journalists have a delicate task. The professional conventions of traditional reporting threaten to hinder journalism from attaining the emotional sophistication requisite to provide a complex understanding of a serious social problem. Journalism can be the narrative voice of hope and healing; the social fragmentation and unresolved pain of pedophilia on multiple levels should be motive enough for journalists to closely reexamine their treatment of this tragedy.

A JOURNALISTIC APPROACH TO PEDOPHILIA

The Law Sets Moral Boundaries

With cases as sensitive as pedophilia, it is no wonder that journalists would seek somewhere else to lay the moral responsibility, and the legal system provides just such a comfort zone. When the law has preceded journalists in judgment, it offers some modicum of protection from ethical blame. Moreover, it sets the boundaries for behavior and automatically justifies them. Pedophilia becomes public record when it enters the justice system, so journalists feel compelled to report with impunity under those circumstances, regardless of the social consequences for the accused. One journalist termed such a decision a "no brainer," while another said it was a "simple call" to print the story. With every scenario, the journalists'

first concern was the case's legal standing. If the justice system has acted, the journalists are free to act in turn. According to one journalist, a conviction means, "you're not printing innuendos, you're printing the facts." The journalists thus expressed reservation only when the legal system has failed to act or is indecisive, so they were instinctively sure the pedophile priest was a story, but there were no charges, and no formal action from the diocese so they could not print it.[3] This perhaps serves as a clue as to why the scandal in the Catholic Church took so long to surface.

Because reporting on pedophilia can hold such profound consequences for the accused, though, it prompts some prick of conscience, as one journalist expressed: "The court news is probably the most read . . . And these are allegations . . . what their charge was in a little 'graph. No response. No defense. Period. And I often have a problem with this." Journalists are distinctly unwilling to challenge the authority of the law on their own; indeed it is their cloak. Pedophilia draws notice from the press when the justice system deems it worthy, and under that authority, journalists have no obligation to act outside of it.[4] The journalistic watchdog behaves as his literal counterpart. Without movement to attract his attention, he can let even the most obvious intruder be. The watchdog couldn't sound a sustained alarm as long as the Catholic Church hid its movement so well. With the survivors of sexual abuse marginalized, the abuse persisted.

Newsworthiness Undermines Moral Autonomy

An important part of the character of pedophilia coverage stems from the role of the journalist. Journalists are clearly the creators of newsworthiness, but they are in turn compelled by the standards of newsworthiness they have created. Moreover, newsworthiness becomes the "first principle" for any journalist. Once the story has been identified as important, journalists indicated they have no choice but to write it; in fact, it is their moral duty.[5] Pedophilia in that sense is driven by news values common to all stories such as

novelty (unusually brutal or first known occurrence) or prominence (i.e., to what extent the priest, cardinal or other religious figure is already in the public eye). These journalists saw themselves as protectors of privacy, but this is by no means a simple task given their professional demands. One journalist summarized her mental process as a balance between a person's civil rights and the duty to be an informant, even though she admitted the line was far from clear. Another journalist recalled stories that were suppressed or altered to allow people to retain their privacy: "It was somebody did something wrong but it wasn't that big a deal. And they were doing OK with their lives. And I just said, 'sheesh,' you know, 'let it be.'" Separating details so the reader cannot construct certain private facts is one way journalists indicated balancing the compulsion to report with the responsibility to protect the privacy rights of those involved in the story.

Along with that important responsibility, they are the arbiters of stigma, a role with which they seemed less comfortable. If accusations against a priest turn out to be wrong, said one journalist justifying holding the story, "it's all over for the guy, right?" One solution they suggested was to do extensive interviews to contextualize the pedophilia. Another was to protect those who answer to private groups such as churches and charities more so than those who are public servants. In several instances, journalists cited forces beyond their control (the law, the public, even other news organizations) to have already made the determination for them, thus precluding them from deciding who would ultimately receive the stigma of pedophilia. Who journalists think they are determines in large part how they treat pedophilia stories.

Newsgathering Conventions Become Moral Obligations

While the public is traditionally thought of as journalism's master (Carey 1987, 1991; Auletta 2005; Lehrer 2002), newsgathering conventions primarily dictate the ethical behaviors of journalists. One that figured prominently in the journalists' discussions included

skepticism, particularly a lack of confidence in law enforcement and government's judgment. As one person put it, "There doesn't have to be any trust. They're just doing something and we report it." Police claims did not mean journalists' belief. Although their own judgments were more trustworthy, journalists often thought of them as something to overcome in the name of objectivity, another important convention[6]. Even if a reporter thinks someone is a "heinous criminal" and suspects or knows he is lying, that person must receive equal weight in the story. Journalists are often propelled by precedent, the notion that if something has appeared before in the press, through one's own story or another news agency, those details or that story must be published. If the public is already talking, or if other organizations ran the story, "then you have to . . . whether or not you want to run it."

Particularly in the case of the accused priest, journalists were willing to write stories in the absence of legal action if some events surrounding the issue took place, such as parishioners calling for his resignation, others defending him, or some other staged activity. This is especially true if the events are conflict ridden, one of the most fundamental news values and a universal trigger for coverage protocols. Most striking about this line of discussion is journalists' apparent loss of autonomy to the dictates of journalistic convention. Though they claim to serve the public interest, this may be true only where that interest coincides with newsgathering protocols and values. More seriously, conventions militate toward the homogenization of news types when not all stories may be alike. Pedophilia's vulnerable victims, profound harms and recidivist perpetrators suggest that this type of story is unlike others.

Credible Sources Create Moral Privilege

A more subtle determinant of pedophilia coverage is the existence of legitimate and insider knowledge. The ethos of journalism is an egalitarian one (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001). Journalists mostly

do not discuss their work overtly in terms of what they consider legitimate sources of authoritative opinions and accounts (Fishman 1980, 1982). Neither do they speak in terms of the privilege of those inside the power structure to set what constitutes genuine knowledge. Yet these become crucial assumptions both to how and whether pedophilia is portrayed. What journalists *believe* determines what becomes a story, and that is partly determined by whom they think they *can* believe.[7] Pedophilia cannot emerge as a consistent pattern or a chronic social problem if journalists cannot find such a pattern credible, which is part of what kept the Catholic Church scandal out of the press for so many years.[8] Deference to (or fear of) the Church, its perceived legitimate authority, and the marginal credibility of its victims made such a story too formidable for news. No one was there to legitimate it. As the journalists spoke of the scenarios, they subtly questioned the absolute authority of the victims to lay blame. As one journalist said, "If these four people are wrong . . ." Even among the scandal-ridden media some topics are taboo. Journalists allow cultural presuppositions about credibility and plausibility to shape their work. In the case of pedophilia this has hampered a silent, destructive social problem from seeing the light.

Discernment Admits Moral Complexity

Ultimately, sensitive stories such as pedophilia require judgment, and this is something that is both more nebulous and difficult to universalize. Thus, journalists are perhaps least comfortable of all with this notion, but do acknowledge that it exists. This is most often described with terms such as gut feeling where one senses that there is "something more suspicious about the guy," or simply doing what any "good, decent" human being would do. Pedophilia stories involve a great deal of pain, as does silence about them, and thus it is incumbent on the journalist to make some determination of where the pain lies, and who is more deserving of having the press attend to their pain. The journalists indicated that they

would run the story if for example the families were suffering by keeping quiet. Interestingly, the journalists made numerous comments regarding the necessity of reading people to determine where this delicate balance would fall. One said that a convicted sexual predator who denies his own guilt "kind of loses my sympathy." Another said that if a story must be reported, the reporter must use discretion to disclose information while being sensitive to the person's feelings. The discernment requisite of pedophilia stories is at best in fragile tension with common journalistic practice and values, and as such journalists enjoy limited freedom to employ it.

If the news as narrative literature tells us anything, it is that stories matter, and that the stories journalism tells provide a powerful mythos about who we are, who others are, and how the world is structured (Bird and Dardenne 1988). Its constructed realities help people make sense of the world around them, and simplify the often complex process of human interaction. It follows, then, that media stories about grief, trauma and tragedy possess the power to interpret and even to guide in the intricate and delicate ways that communities and cultures deal with misfortune, distress and loss. In that sense, perhaps these stories matter most of all.

NEWS AND THE MYTHOLOGY OF GRIEF AND REGRET

Writer Antoine Saint-Exupéry (1944) once penned, "It is so mysterious, the Land of Tears." Despite television psychologists, grief websites and innumerable self-help books, Western societies, and in particular the United States, are notoriously poor at the process of grief. The skeptical and tenuous relationship most westerners maintain between a particular Enlightenment view of Reason and Emotion hinders complex, nuanced understanding of grief and precludes the ability to cope with sorrow, loss and other trauma in sophisticated, palliative ways or to complete the cycle of grief in healing, restorative fashion. Journalism participates in

a mythology that stems from this evasion of difficult emotions.

The most fundamental impulse in facing traumatic events and circumstances or their concomitant painful feelings and aftermath is to believe that there is some perfect path of escape or avoidance. People want to believe there is a way out of their painful journeys, a quick fix. In other words, traumatic events and circumstances may be inevitable, but their consequences are not. The attorney for one of Sandusky's victims illustrates this assumption by stating, as noted above, that if only Sandusky would confess and apologize, the community could be healed. While confession and apology are certainly appropriate once someone is actually found to be guilty, these acts are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the long, slow and painful process of genuine healing. The allure of thwarting, circumventing or escaping pain, of shortcutting its arduous process, is powerful. Journalism, a participant in and product of its culture, is no less susceptible to this proclivity. If journalism has been criticized for its inability to deal with historical context (Schudson, 1986), with the probing and complex question of why (Carey, 1986), or to wield emotion with sophistication and sensitivity (Bowers 2008), its fecklessness in the face of grief would seem to emulate that of the larger culture. The news cycle may exploit the "pornography of grief" (White, 2009) but it also lives in the perpetual vortex of escape in three ways. First, and no less true of pedophilia than other stories involving tragedy, the raison d'etre and foremost aim of news is to provide objective information that will prohibit future incidents (Chernak 1995; Wykes 2001; Sacco 1995; Vincent, Crow and Davis 1989). Journalism's contribution to the overall myth of escape is to preclude tragedy. Pedophilia's cruel twist to the journalistic myth is to suggest that information can somehow precipitate prevention. Second, news privileges the novel. Helen MacGill Hughes (1940), among others, has argued that only a handful of narratives exist in journalism. These master narratives tap into deeply held value structures and moral

perceptions of which we never tire. This is the essence of great stories and hence great journalism. Yet, the journalist's task is to somehow provide a fresh retelling of the old story, as though we are seeing it for the first time, surprised or shocked anew. Such a mission has the unfortunate consequence of making each story its own entity, stripped of context and relation to the larger social problem of which it is a part. Pedophilia hence becomes a series of deviant events, without increasing understanding of its larger social context. The impulse to make the familiar also novel means that the news cycle perpetuates one dramatic, traumatic moment in the process of grief, with its own set of sad consequences, as discussed below. Finally, journalism's often scientistic epistemology lends itself to the myth that stories about pedophiles and pedophilia will allow us to control them and even to escape them, to put them away from decent society. The kind of surveillance function that news purports to provide, including publishing lists of sex offenders, news stories triggered by every step in the machinations of the justice system, and most problematic, publicizing claims of alleged victims before the justice system has acted or found legal action warranted, potentially provides the false assurance that pedophilia is an isolated problem well in hand. Indeed, the narratives of deviance and the moral order that undergird crime news generally, are designed to reflect the often contradictory messages both that criminal behavior is a marginalized and segregated minority and that the community's moral order is still intact and protected.

The Enlightenment proceduralism that lends itself well to journalism informs the psychological professions as they grapple with assisting those in grief to deal with their losses. Perhaps the most famous approach conceptualizes grief in a series of stages (e.g., Kubler-Ross 1969), varying in number (usually five to seven), in fluidity (distinct definitionally or with respect to one another) and in flexibility (moving freely back and forth rather than occurring chronologically). Although this model recently has been

questioned (Bonanno 2009), the challenge is evidentiary rather than questioning the epistemology of a "science of bereavement." The perfect scientific model of grief has yet to be constructed. Assuming some veracity to the current model's descriptions of the grieving process, however, grief proceeds from initial shock to eventual acceptance, healing and moving forward. In between, the grief-stricken person moves through such emotions as guilt, anger and what psychologists label as "bargaining" though for purposes of this argument, it may just as well be thought of in terms of regret. That is, the person so fervently wishes to turn back time, to return to the place where the event had not occurred so as to act in some way differently and perhaps prevent the grievous event from occurring, that he or she would promise anything to make it so. This stage of profound regret, trying to change what is immutable, is grief's darkest hour. News exists here.

The news cycle moves through perpetual conflict. It is the mother's milk of journalism. Conflict generates stories, defines the news narrative, determines reporting assignments, and, perhaps cynically, earns Pulitzers. When the conflict subsides, the journalist moves on—to more conflict. In that sense news replicates itself, perennially the same. Journalism is caught in the alluring web of drama, unable to illuminate more than one turbulent moment at a time, poorly connecting the dots, if at all, dwelling on one chapter in a greater saga. Reminiscent of Lippmann's (1922) criticism of news as a single restless beam of light, leaving much in the dark as it passes, the journalistic story of trauma repeatedly dwells on the part of the grief process most laden with conflict, that torturous moment of regret. News hones in on the details of its characters' painful encounters, and once the acute trauma, past or present, is recited, leaves its subjects to complete, if possible, the long process of grief in private. In the case of pedophilia, journalism participates in aborting the social grief process. Its preoccupation with one stage of grief to the exclusion of the others, its abandonment of the

communitas as it struggles to heal and move forward, could be seen as a failure of the social responsibility that some critics argue journalism bears (Christians et al., 1993; Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947). If journalism is increasingly the mechanism by which large-scale communities socially sustain themselves, the consequences of stymied social grieving bear great weight. As arguably even one component of a larger mechanism of social sustenance, journalists should tread more carefully over the wounds of pedophilia their reportage at least in part opens. More importantly, if journalism stunts the social grief process, then journalists bear some blame for the emotional turmoil surrounding pedophilia, rather than simply objectively and therefore presumably innocently recounting the pain of others.

PEDOPHILIA AS THE PRESS' ETHICAL CHALLENGE

The much lauded *Boston Globe*'s sustained attention to chronic pedophilia in the Catholic Church was unprecedented and effectual (Madore 2003; Mehren 2003). The self-congratulatory journalistic rhetoric, though, lends the impression that pedophilia coverage has had a watershed moment (Robinson 2003). Yet its problems are far too delicate, complex and peculiar to fit the standard newsgathering conventions, which are precisely what set the ethical tone for these stories. News conventions are unreflective. Journalists merely do what the dictates of their profession demand. Values are involved, but they have been chosen in advance, not weighed against a fluid set of social goods. Conventions can be harmful. Consider that in medicine, the basic tenet is to "do no harm." Journalists are compelled to "minimize harm," to tacitly accept the inevitability of choosing between individual and social harms or perhaps even harming both to some degree (Society of Professional Journalists 1996). In the case of pedophilia, even minimal harm coupled with the harms already wrought by the act itself can be excessive.

Conventions can be exploitative as well. Part of the difficulty of these stories is the nearly inescapable exploitation of those involved, regardless of proof. Pedophilia seems to be one place where the legal system and news conventions not only hold most sway but perhaps where that sway is most inappropriate. Pedophilia stories are deserving of their own staff and protocols, mindful of the rights and integrity of both the victims and the accused. To do so will require constructing new values and procedures, not merely choosing from among the traditional ones. The rules of engagement must change.

Moreover, journalists must be free to use their own judgment rather than the uniform dictates of the news profession. As one journalist aptly put it, "Sometimes facts don't tell the truth." While this may seem impractical, chaotic or frightening, not to do so is unnecessarily limiting for journalists and can actually result in more harm from the story. In difficult cases, journalists already use their judgment, just not comfortably or freely. Although one journalist said, "hypocrisy is always a story" a premise that requires judgment for fulfillment, the journalists did note that on occasion they have withheld those stories, also based on their moral (not news) judgment. Most poignantly, these interviews indicate journalists are not sure where to draw the line between humanness and the professional. That distinction drew the longest pause among journalists. One journalist said that she wanted to think being human and being a journalist were the same, to which her colleague replied, "But you know they're not." One journalist said that being a father did not affect his reporting of pedophilia at all. In the interviews, several journalists described a dichotomy between what they thought "personally" and what journalistic procedure called them to do. Pedophilia stories seem to be the last place to force journalists to make that choice.

Intimate journalism offers a possible alternative to inform this writing (Harrington 1997). Its descriptive realism provides in-depth

narratives that "invoke the felt life" (Denzin 2000, p. 900) and establish a relationship among the writer, reader and the person whose life is told. The voyeuristic nature of the present coverage breeds complacency and passivity. Narrativity can be a valuable mechanism for understanding this social problem as happening not in the abstract but among us. Such a realization can move the public to meaningful judgment and action (Charity 1995). More research is needed in this area. What prompted the judge to release sealed court documents on the Catholic Church in the first place was her realization that acts of pedophilia follow children the rest of their lives (Boston Globe 2002; McLaughlin 2003). They sell their bodies, hurt themselves, and even commit suicide as a result. With the stakes so high, it is a disservice to journalists and to the people they purport to serve not to allow journalists to exert their human powers of judgment and to treat this story like the moral entity that it is. Without that, journalists can never fully acknowledge the responsibility they bear toward these special victims.

NOTES

1 Eleven volunteer respondents were divided into two discussion groups of three and one group of two. The interviews lasted approximately one hour each. The journalists were told to converse among themselves regarding a brief scenario and a discussion question. When the conversation lagged, a second scenario was introduced, and then a third after approximately 45 minutes. At the end, journalists were given an opportunity to summarize, then the session concluded. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

2 The first involved public notification of the presence of a pedophile in the community. At the highest level of risk, the sheriff's department issues a warning that a sexual predator has been released in the county. A man is challenging the law charging that it violates his privacy and constitutes ex post facto punishment. The second scenario asks about revealing that a high school coach had formerly served time in prison for child molestation, although he claims his innocence. The third depicted accusations from four families against a priest who has worked with youth for 20 years and leads a parish of several hundred families. The district attorney is conducting a preliminary investigation.

3 For example, one journalist commented that he would be free to write a story

"if they've been removed from their duties so therefore the diocese has taken some action or there was a formal allegation in court." Another said, "But if he's just sitting there, he's been accused of a crime but nothing else has happened except there's an investigation going on, he's in a church; he's not in a government agency or some kind of overall public responsibility even though he's a public figure, I don't know. Well, I do know. I mean, I'd just wait it out."

4 One journalist said, "I didn't want to do the story at all before the charges were filed." Yet another said, "There's no charges, no formal charges. The judicial system has not moved against him in any way. The legal system hasn't moved against him. So our instinct is immediately we've got a story here, but . . ."

5 Journalists routinely made comments such as the following: "You gotta do that story. You gotta try to do that story," or, "So there are moments when it, when you can't avoid it, you can't avoid it." One journalist said, "morally and ethically [the issue] boils down to 'do we have a story here?'" Another journalist flatly said, "if you're going to get convicted of child molestation, you know, at some point in your life then there may be consequences . . . that aren't necessarily our responsibility. Our responsibility starts in a different place. What's the news story here?"

6 Journalists were less comfortable using the much maligned term "objectivity" and often substituted fairness, but when pressed to elaborate, described objectivity nonetheless.

7 One journalist said that if the district attorney "flubs up" and "there's cause for this thing" then the journalists could pursue it themselves. Another said that stories about the Church or other nongovernment agencies have "got to reach a higher level" than stories about public agencies. "You know, this is a priest, Catholic Church," she said.

8 In a similar vein, according to victim accounts, the priests would often tell the children whom they molested that even if they told, nobody would believe them—their parents loved the Church too much (Boston Globe 2002).

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