

Women Who Remember Rape: Representing
Trauma and the Self

by

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Introduction

A woman's rape narrative is laid out for her from childhood, from cautionary tales to horror stories. Without realizing it, we prepare ourselves for our own victimization. But we are taught a particular rape story: stranger snatches young girl walking at night. My mother certainly warned me against talking to strangers and walking around late at night, but she never prepared me for how small I would feel when I walked past men catcalling me. She never told me that sex should always be pleasurable, that women are sexual, too. Adults warned us against drinking too much and wearing revealing clothing, but they failed to mention that it was okay to say "no" to sex, even if we had said "yes" previously:

Strange to think I have been raped
Only once;
It felt so familiar,
So similar to things I had hoped were unimportant,
Things we do not call rape
(qtd. in Harris 69)

I have not discussed my thesis topic without first assuring whomever I am speaking with that “no, I have not been raped.” Sometimes the person will ask me directly -- “Are you writing this from personal experience?” Other times the tension builds so exponentially that I cannot help but detach myself from my subject. And it works. We both relax and usually enter a decent, though short, conversation about rape. But that rape, the idea of rape, is not what I want to talk about, it is not what my project focuses on. Rape as an idea, a myth, a statistic, a threat is completely divorced from rape as a reality – as an experience lived through. Once attached to a body, an individual, rape becomes unthinkable, and therefore unspeakable.

How can the indescribable be made comprehensible? Before an experience is located within a narrative, it is diffuse, and threatens to both fracture and saturate the self. To speak of a traumatic experience is to change the meaning of the experience itself. Placing the experience within a person’s life narrative is a way of integrating it within the self, while also attempting to give it a size: a large size, perhaps, but a bounded size nonetheless, recognizing that there is room for other experiences in this self as well. We validate our experience by structuring memories in time. Narrative falls short, then, in its inability to express the memory of trauma, which lies outside of time, coming and going in pockets of images and sensations. To narrate trauma is to normalize the memory, to fit the event into a prescribed structure, which is undoubtedly problematic but is also the framework that Western culture has provided for us. A woman who has been raped turns her trauma into narrative memory – into an experience, inevitably loaded with cultural and personal meanings, but nonetheless one that she must

somehow fit into her life narrative.

In this study, I discuss the effectiveness of first-person narration for self-transformation and social change by exploring connections between three emergent discourses: memoirs by rape survivors in which the subject speaks from a privileged yet socially marginalized position about life-altering experiences; clinical discourse that elaborates treatment methods for empowering trauma survivors and helping them reconnect with the social world; and scholarly discourse that reflects on the relationship between trauma, self-representation, witnessing, and recovery. Post-Foucauldian theories of life-writing illuminate how the author-subjects of survivor narratives discursively reconstruct their shattered subjectivity in a therapeutic relationship with themselves and their readers. Since the 1980s, an abundance of memoirs have been written by rape survivors; these texts reconstruct subjectivity, often with the result of empowering, validating, and reconnecting the writing subject to the social world from which she has become disenfranchised.

I focus on two well-known rape survival memoirs written by white women to explore the value of this genre to the writer, as subject, to her readers, and to the societal structures through which she is writing. The idea that being raped takes away women's agency, fragments their sense of self, implies that they have never experienced a similar loss of agency or fragmentation of their selves, when that is in fact what all forms of oppression do. That black women are considered "unrapeable," for example, makes all considerations of their agency null and their selves instantly fragmented upon their birth, and makes that traumatic upon their understanding of their

social position as black women in a racist and sexist society. I do not mean to compare acts of racism to rape, but to acknowledge that the authors' whiteness makes it possible for them to consider their rapes in a way that is isolated from other aspects of their social contexts.

My project centers on two women's experiences as both victims and survivors of rape. Women are certainly not the only victims of sexual violence, but 9 out of 10 rapes are committed against women (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network). For this reason, I use female pronouns and refer only to female victims throughout my thesis. In doing so, I do not wish to gloss over those victims who do not identify as female, nor do I deny that women can also be perpetrators. I simply choose speak as a woman, to women, and with women.

Patricia Weaver Francisco's memoir, *Telling: A Memoir of Rape and Recovery*, is deliberately self-conscious in its revelations of what happened, in its exploration of emotion and in its construction of meaning. Francisco's style mirrors the larger argument that animates the memoir: that, while telling is nearly impossible, silence is poison. In this sense, *Telling* is not only about a single rape placed in the context of the ongoing epidemic of sexual violence in the U.S., it is also about the power dynamics of language: who can speak, what can be spoken. Nancy Raine's memoir, *After Silence: Rape and My Journey Back*, resembles *Telling* in thesis but not in structure. She too struggles with the tenacity of language and entrenched ways of seeing or not seeing. Raine, however, creates a more linear narrative, one that reads as a well-edited journal. She writes a more structurally coherent narrative than Francisco and is generally more matter-of-fact with the reader. But it is clear

that she has switched the order of events to create such a cohesive text. Raine explores new ways of telling through her consistent use of metaphor. The poetry of her words weaves itself seamlessly into her solid framework.

In the first chapter, I consider the implications of a memoirist's use of agency within social and linguistic structures to expand the parameters of those structures. An overemphasis on the social structures controlling rape discourse risks undermining the ways that women, as part of feminist organizations or working alone as writers of memoirs, have intervened in those structures; at the same time, an overemphasis on individual agency risks underestimating the force of social institutions. An examination of both explains how the rape survival genre is politically ambivalent. I assess the intellectual and social contexts in which both memoirists are writing and the pre-existing narratives they are responding to. I begin the chapter with a consideration of the language of rape that also explains my choice of words throughout this piece. Then I introduce theories of trauma recovery, namely those of Judith Herman, focusing on the importance of telling in both verbal and written form. Introducing the concept of life-writing, I explore the dynamics between language and identity construction. Autobiography complicates the relationship between a writer and her words. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a consideration of the subversive potential of rape survival memoirs. I look at the history of anti-rape activism since the 1970s, offering a framework for this emerging literary genre.

In my second chapter, I provide a close reading of both memoirs, looking at the different ways of telling that each woman explores. I take a less structured approach in this chapter, letting the women's words guide my

analysis. After a formal introduction to both memoirs, I dedicate two sections to the difficulty of representing something as elusive as trauma. By definition, trauma is unknowable. I focus on the loss of time and on the mind-body disconnect that plagues both women, demonstrating how skillfully both Raine and Francisco describe that which defies description. Both women have an intimate connection to words that was temporarily destroyed by their attacks. Much of their writing portrays the struggle to regain control over language, and subsequently, to reconnect with their selves. The chapter's final sections focus on the encouraged silence that rape victims encounter from all sides. Both writers address the problems within the rhetoric of rape, calling attention to the shame entrenched within this language.

Finally, I will consider how these memoirs both transform and perpetuate certain dominant notions of rape, particularly the conception of rape as a mysterious occurrence and a necessary evil. Both narratives certainly transgress a historical imperative of silence, assigning new meanings to the experience of being raped and providing frameworks for survivors and their supporters to understand rape. At the same time, they also reinforce certain stereotypes and become co-opted by existing institutions. Given the lack of sufficiently acceptable ways of understanding their rapes, both women turn to unconventional paradigms. Neither finds the language of psychology adequate, although it does validate their responses to trauma, but the language of mythology and fairy tales proves helpful. While I applaud Raine and Francisco for finding alternative ways to understand their traumas, they ultimately support rape culture by inscribing

their stories into other Western, and therefore patriarchal, traditions. Neither writer sets out to construct a political narrative of rape survival, and I do not criticize either woman for looking at rape through a strictly personal lens. It is clear that both Raine and Francisco wrote these memoirs to catalyze their healing processes, and to offer guidance and solace to other women who have lived through similar traumas. It is not these writers' job to or duty (as rape survivors or as women) to use their memoirs to combat United States' rape culture. That is not what they have chosen to do here. It is, however, our job, as readers, to understand the ways in which both women provide potentially liberating insights into understanding rape while simultaneously reaffirming the structures – linguistic, cultural, and political – that ensure the permissibility of rape within our society.

Rape will not stop until our culture knows the stories of rape survivors, until we can grasp the horrendous costs women pay year after year because of sexual violence. If we, as women, are to create a culture where women are safe, we need to heed Adrienne Rich's advice when she urges us to talk to each other, to tell our life stories, to read aloud to one another the books that move and heal us, to read our own words to each other, to remember what has in the past been forbidden to mention. Both Francisco and Raine drive home the harm rape does to women in the United States, uncovering what a rape culture demands they conceal.

Rape is a word with no rape in it. The only way to say anything hearable or worth hearing about rape is to dwell in the particular, to push the grand narratives of science, religion, even feminism away in favor of the layered moment -- how it is possible to lay face down on a bed, blindfolded,

and still think clearly enough to plan on jerking your shoulder blade upward if the rapist knifes you from behind, to save your heart from being hit, or how the smell of gladiolas makes you edgy because for months after the attack these cut flowers, with their strong fragrance and associations with childhood and maternal protection brought solace into the injured spaces of body and home. These are only some of the "telling" details I found myself recalling at odd moments, weeks after reading them. In these particulars lingers the limited and limitless possibility of making contact, of moving a person to perceive differently, in this small window of time where I recognize her body in my body, her story in my story. And in the instant a woman sees that the earth does not swallow her whole for telling, rape descends from the arc of myth and whisper, becomes mortal, a decision we do or do not make.

Chapter One: Trauma and Women's Life-Writing

The trauma said, "Don't write these poems.
Nobody wants to hear you cry
about the grief inside your bones."

-- Andrea Gibson, "The Madness Vase"

The works that I use do not represent the voices of all women in the United States who have suffered sexual trauma. They do not even represent the experiences of women within a certain demographic. All the American book-length rape survival narratives that I found tell the story of rape by a stranger, and a disproportionate number tell of the rape of a white woman by an unknown African American man. Statistics have shown that approximately 85% of rapists were known to the survivor, and around 90% of rapes are committed by an attacker who is the same race as the victim (INCASA).ⁱ My purpose here is not to fault a literary genre for failing to represent life realistically, but to raise the question of the investment of readers, publishing houses, and writers in a particular kind of narrative. In order to enter into circulation, life stories must conform to the expectations of those calling for the narration: "Only certain kinds of stories become intelligible as they fit the managed framework, the imposed system" (Smith and Watson 11). Clearly, the myth of the black rapist is still very much a part of the American conception of rape. But it is just that – a myth, a lie that the publication of these memoirs in the 1990s and 2000s perpetuates. This does not mean we should not value the real accounts that have been offered to us, as readers, but it does call attention to that which is not available – the myriad of stories that continue to go untold. The two memoirists I study are educated, middle class, heterosexual, white women. The landscape of the

literary market as such does not appear to allow other kinds of narrators to claim the same credibility. These narratives are inevitably inscribed within particular cultural institutions -- as are all stories.

The Language of Rape

Language is the mode through which we make sense of reality. Yet the language available is always already saturated with meaning, bearing the weight of past convention. Language, and the reality that is mediated through it, cannot escape this value system. The rhetoric of rape supports both the silencing and the blaming of victims. Traditional narratives are simply not adequate to the task of voicing the kind of trauma that has been inflicted upon women who have been raped. Yet such a space where women can overcome imposed silence by constructing a different kind of language becomes crucial to their survival.

The very meaning of the word "rape" is constantly scrutinized, from issues of consent to questions of the level of violence. The U.S. Justice Department's recently revised definition of rape reads, "the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim." Until now, the Justice Department defined rape as strictly the forcible male penile penetration of a vagina. The new, broader, definition will hopefully lead to more accurate statistics regarding rape, and consequently to a better understanding of the impact that rape has on this country. To be clear, this change is only one of definition, not of federal or state law. Most states prefer the term "sexual assault" to "rape," because

there is less of a stigma attached to the former phrase. "Sexual assault" reflects a historically recent clinical, political, and social analysis of the phenomenon of rape that attempts to drain off the toxins of blame-the-victim, and to shift the criterion of rape from the behavior of the victim to that of the criminal. The term "sexual assault" is in common usage, sometimes considered a synonym for "rape," although it is a more encompassing term. I concede that, used generally, "sexual assault" is the more appropriate term. At the same time, "sexual assault" forces violence into the word "rape." For most people, "rape" is a visceral, violent, horrifying word, and it is because of this that I use it throughout my project. When I refer to the attacks of Patricia Francisco and Nancy Raine, I do not mean that two men sexually assaulted them, but that two men raped them. In both cases, the word "rape," often conceptualized as stranger rape, refers exactly to what both women endured. While "sexual assault" may be the more diplomatic term, I find nothing diplomatic about sexual violence. Furthermore, the words "sexual" or "sex" have become universal modifiers for violent acts or persons. We call rapists "sexual predators," speak of a "sex crime," and a registry for "sex offenders." But rape is not sex, and linking the two can have devastating consequences. Ultimately, all of these words – rape, date rape, sexual assault, and sexual violence – are couched in rhetoric that supports the rape culture, and they all mean virtually the same thing to the public. These words are less stigmatized versions of "rape," used to make it easier to talk about. But I am not interested in making rape an easier or more comfortable topic of conversation. The very fact of our discomfort demands that we, as a society, face it head on. "Sexual assault" is a more palatable phrase, but why make

rape palatable?

In discussions of rape, women are referred to as either victims or survivors, most of the time without their consent. The dominant victim-survivor narrative insists that the subject speaking place herself as subject or object in relation to the event. But this task requires a certain amount of distancing from the action that is not possible in incidents of sexual violence. The word “victim” connotes powerlessness and a lack of agency. It is shameful to describe a person’s life in terms of what is outside her control. And while “survivor” does more to empower a woman, it can also turn her into a spectacle, even a paradigm of strength and recovery. Furthermore, the insistence on commonality and identity among women given their experiences of sexual violence ignores the differences that women can tell us about the terms on which sexual violence is made possible. These words, however, are not inherently oversimplifying. Rather than categorize a group of women, I refer to these labels to depict the experience of individuals. In this project, I use the word “victim” as often as “survivor,” not with the intention of emphasizing women’s victimization, but with the understanding that these women may not be survivors. They may not have survived yet.

Discourses of Trauma and Recovery

Narratives of trauma...emerge from the wound, from a time between injury and healing, a time when the effects of trauma remain as powerful and as insistent as ever.

-- Kathryn Robson, *Writing Wounds*

Theories of trauma legitimized women’s reactions to rape, as well as the idea that testifying to trauma could be valuable for survivors. Partly in response to feminist attention to rape as a societal concern, medical and

psychological establishments began to examine and acknowledge the effects of violence against women. Judith Herman's groundbreaking *Trauma and Recovery*, published in 1992, asserts that women who have survived rape often experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in a way similar to men and women who have survived combat. Herman applies the concept of PTSD to the experience of rape and describes how reactions such as flashbacks, hypervigilance, and sleep disruption are normal reactions to having been terrorized by rape. She discusses the almost universal effects of trauma, regardless of the actual experience or events surrounding it. She introduces a dialectic dealing with the aftermath of rape that provides understanding of a trauma that until recently was not considered a collective experience; however, rape threatens all women at all times. Herman provides a language for discussing the trauma of rape. Her work has helped to bring the issue of rape, which had for so long been considered taboo, into the public sphere.

Herman defines trauma as an event that "overwhelm[s] the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning" (33). The understanding of trauma that I use moves beyond the actual event, addressing the lasting effects of trauma and highlighting the loss of control and meaning that Herman describes. Trauma is "a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered" (LaCapra 41). Traumatic experience is too overwhelming to be registered fully in consciousness as it occurs and is thus unavailable to conscious recall. Yet trauma cannot simply be consigned to the past: it is relived endlessly in

the present through repeated painful reenactments, nightmares, hallucinations, and flashbacks. The past intrudes insistently on the present, demanding, yet resisting, articulation, wreaking devastating effects on the survivor's memory and identity. Rather than a unified self, trauma supports the conception of the self as fundamentally relational, an identity that is vulnerable enough to be undone by violence and yet resilient enough to be reconstructed with the help of others. As Herman observes, "The traumatic event thus destroys the belief that one *can be oneself* in relation to others" (53). Without this belief one can no longer "be oneself" even to oneself, since the self exists fundamentally in relation to others (Brison "Trauma" 41).

Traditional philosophical accounts of the self, from Descartes' to contemporary theorists', are based on the assumption that one can individualize selves and determine what sustains a continuous identity without considering the social context in which they are situated. In contrast, recent concepts of the self, inspired by Marx, Freud, and feminist theories, focus on the ways in which the self is formed in relation to others and is sustained in a social context. This account views the self as related to and constructed by others on an ongoing basis, both because others continue to shape us throughout our lifetimes and because "our own sense of self is couched in descriptions whose meanings are social phenomena" (Brison *Aftermath* 41). Thus, the stories we tell about ourselves, the composite of which makes up our selfhood, are always informed by the cultural context in which we live, between the language made available and the structuring of experience we have adopted. Trauma fractures selfhood by breaking this continuous narrative, severing the connections among remembered past,

lived present, and projected future.

Trauma victims – having undergone the violent rupture of self brought about by an assault – need to recover by narrating their trauma, thereby integrating the experience into their understanding of their selves (Herman). What LaCapra's definition lacks, then, is the figuring of trauma as a discursive construction. It is a phenomenon that both demands and resists discursive intervention. Cathy Caruth recognizes the gap between the event itself and the experience of the event by observing that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature – the way it was previously *not* known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). In her model, the psychological wound of trauma is not locatable and curable like a bodily wound, but a breach in the mind's temporal framework. In other words, trauma can only be grappled with discursively; it is not until it is written or spoken about that trauma is made present. To attempt to narrate an experience of trauma is, then, to try to speak, or write, through rupture, through a break in space and in time. Judith Herman describes this state of recovery as one in which the survivor takes the "wordless and static" (175) traumatic memory and transforms it into a narrative. The survivor of trauma no longer knows who she is, what she feels, or what aspects of her former self she can continue to identify with – which is why she is unable to integrate these changed aspects of her identity. By working through the trauma in carefully delineated steps that include naming the problem, stabilizing the trauma symptoms, reconstructing the trauma narrative, and transforming the traumatic memory into a narrative that ceases to recreate trauma as it is being

told, the therapist helps the trauma survivor reconnect to society. Herman, like other theorists, promotes Freud's model of treatment that emphasizes the importance of integrating the experience into one's conception of oneself. Freud distinguishes between repeating and recollecting the event. The repetition or reliving of the event is symptomatic behavior, uncontrollable and incomprehensible, whereas the act of recollection brings the symptoms to consciousness and structures them in a narrative. His "talking cure" puts his theory into practice. In this treatment, the therapist helps the patient construct a story out of fragments and distorted puzzle pieces of memory (Steele). Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub describe the importance of such a method: "To undo this entrapment in a fate that cannot be known, cannot be told, but can only be repeated, a therapeutic process – a process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially of re-externalizing the event – has to be set in motion" (69). The articulation of a traumatic event is important not just in the formulation of a narrative, but also in the reception of that narrative by a caring listener. Although these theories describe an oral process, the recuperative effects of written trauma narratives have also been theorized, and the understanding of the reading public as such a listener has been introduced as well.

Narrating Identity, Narrating Experience

Fiction, not truth, is what we humankind live in, and truth arises from fiction, not the other way around.

-- Lydia Fakundiny and Joyce Elbrecht, *Scenes from a Collaboration*

Suzette Henke has explored the idea that writing may also serve as a space in which the articulation of the traumatic narrative can occur. She

introduces the term “scriptotherapy” to describe “the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment” (xii). While the dynamics of presenting a written text to be read by readers differs greatly from the therapist-client relationship, there are important similarities. The memoirist writes with an intended audience or receiver in mind: “Testimonial life-writing allows the author to share an unutterable tale of pain and suffering, of transgression or victimization, in a discursive medium that can be addressed to everyone or no one” (Henke xix). She argues that the reading audience, or the imagined one, provides witnessing and validation similar to that exhibited by a therapist or other receiver of testimony. Henke asserts that

The story of survival in the face of racial, cultural, and psychosexual adversity reconstructs a fragmented ego forced to the margins of hegemonic power structures. The act of life-writing serves as its own testimony and, in doing so, carries through the work of reinventing the shattered self as a coherent subject capable of meaningful resistance to received ideologies and of effective agency in the world. (qtd. in Burke 20)

This reinvention of the postmodern shattered self carries a liberating potential. In *Shattered Subjects* (1998) Henke studies how post-traumatic stress disorder figures into a significant number of contemporary feminist autobiographies, and how the autobiographical female subject works through traumatic experience. Covering a wide spectrum of texts in her study, she defines life-writing broadly to include confessional forms, autofictions, diaries, and other forms of first-person narrative. Henke acknowledges that

when she first introduced her approach, some considered it more psychoanalytic, even marginal to the field of literature. However, since the early 1990s and the publication of Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* and Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, a widespread interest in scriptotherapy has developed, one that ranges from mental health practitioners to literary critics.

Women's life-writing that does not support patriarchal conceptions of gender begins the creation of a new tradition that empowers those who have previously been excluded. Writers of rape survival memoirs intervene in the long history of silencing survivors by manipulating the discourses available to them and asking their audiences to rethink the ideologies that inform their daily lives. First-person narratives can expose the gender, and other, biases inherent in the traditional impersonal and acontextual philosophy "that has purported to present the view of the essentially and universally human has, masked by this claim, presented instead a view that is masculine, white, and Western" (qtd. in Brison *Aftermath* 24). The feminist imperative that the personal is political (and philosophical) critiques this traditional split between personal and academic writing. Personal experience provides the basis for empathy with those who are different from ourselves. Feminist ethics, in particular, relies on the actual experiences of concrete individuals to give voice to marginalized groups. This employment of the personal voice recognizes a fundamental characteristic of many feminist theories, which is that it takes women's experiences seriously, just as trauma theory takes survivors' experiences seriously.

However, writers theorizing from personal experience must

acknowledge their own biases in order to avoid overgeneralization. Susan Brison criticizes white, middle-class academic feminist philosophers for letting their experiences speak for all women's experiences. She writes, "we need not speak *for* other survivors of trauma in order to speak *with* them" (Brison *Aftermath* 30). In order to theorize from personal experience, writers must challenge the temptation to take experience at face value, as fact. Experience cannot be self-evident because if it were, our understanding of it would not change over time. Our memories would be static. Joan Scott's article "The Evidence of Experience" (1993) problematizes the conception of experience as self-evident, as uncontested, and as an originary point of explanation. Such self-evidency implies that the vision of the individual subject who had the experience becomes the foundation of evidence, leaving the constructed nature of experience unquestioned. To consider experience as fact is to strip away its discursive underpinnings. Furthermore, this assumption renders invisible the way in which experience constitutes subjectivity. The linguistic event of reconstructing the autobiographical subject's "experience" produces that subject's identity without depriving her of agency (66). Narratives of trauma highlight the problem of the relation between lived experience and text, between life and meaning. Where standard first-person narratives imply a knowing subject who can claim and narrate her own experience, trauma renders such self-knowledge impossible; and questions how we can be sure of the "truth" and of the reality of experience and memory. Narratives of trauma call their own knowledge and stories into question, explicitly challenging their attempts to explain and contain traumatic experience.

There are several prominent theories on the construction of self in autobiography, including Judith Butler's "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" (1989), which problematizes the cultural construct of gender and a sexed body to show that the body itself is a construct, a multiplicity. Butler claims that identities are effects of discursive practices which are historically contingent. Similarly, Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993) investigates the performativity of gender and the paradox of subjectification; Butler, a post-Foucauldian, posits that the subject that resists societal norms is produced by those same norms. Performativity articulates and situates personal narrative within the forces of discourse, the institutionalized networks of power relations, such as medicine, the law, the media, and the family, which constitute subject positions and order context; and *performance* implies the transgressive desire of agency and action. Like Butler and Scott, Sidonie Smith argues that the autobiographical speaker is a performative subject; in effect, the self of autobiography does not exist before the moment of self-narrating.

Patricia Francisco and Nancy Raine understand the very act of writing as identity forming, and they both explore multiple ways of working through their traumas. Although neither woman uses the term, their engagement with scriptotherapy undertakes a process similar to narrative recovery: first, in and through writing the subject reconstructs her rape trauma and rebuilds her shattered self; second, she creates a text in which she and her reader can follow the subject's trajectory from trauma victim to recovered survivor. From these actions a textual self emerges that reflects and reinforces the new identity of its subject.

Although neither writer engages in an explicitly political or philosophical pursuit, their memoirs open up an important space for individuals to theorize about their own experiences. In doing so, they disrupt patriarchal social structures and break through the technologies of power that, as Foucault claims in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, impose secrecy on those victimized by sexual violence. Throughout postmodern autobiography studies the theories of Foucault figure prominently. Particularly relevant is his claim that one does not engage in confession without the presence or virtual presence of an authority that requires, prescribes, and appreciates that confession. The testimony of the speaker is a byproduct of technologies of power requiring confession to produce a truth-statement, but it is this very truth-telling technology that validates and can empower both speaker and statement. While the subject speaking in autobiography is subject to technologies of power that control and produce her speech-act, her identity is unmistakably linked to the self-knowledge produced by articulating her story, and circulated through the channels of communication that both oversee and allow for individual truths to be voiced in the public forum. In the case of rape survival narratives, the question is raised as to whether confessional speech that initially resists the silencing of survivors of rape might eventually become commonplace and lose its subversive effect. Although the proliferation of survivors' speech in public discourse to some extent signals a positive "breaking of the silence," it runs the risk of the institutionalization and cooptation of survivor discourse (Smith and Watson). In the case of both rape memoirs I look at, the "community's normative patterns of speakability" come to include a very particular rape narrative

(Smith and Watson 16).

Feminism and Rape Narratives

It requires something more than personal experience to gain a philosophy or point of view from any specific event. It is the quality of our response to the event and the capacity to enter into the lives of others that help us to make their lives and experiences our own.

-- Cherríe Moraga, "La Guera"

Women's representations of rape and domestic violence can exert a forcible social critique of female victimization by the patriarchal social structures that confine and silence them. Although the public has become increasingly aware of the frequency and complexity of sexual violence, many women find it difficult to define a coercive sexual experience as rape. A woman who recognizes herself as raped risks conceiving of herself as a victim in ways that may frustrate attempts at recovery.

Most second-wave feminist anti-rape literature posits women as already raped and rapeable, essentializing their victimization. Sharon Marcus argues that this "apocalyptic tone" reinforces the "rape script" that presupposes masculine power and feminine powerlessness and that society inscribes on men's and women's psyches (168-9). This understanding of rape leaves no room for resistance or prevention. Accepting as self-explanatory men's capacity to rape encourages activism "after the fact," but does not challenge the victim role prescribed by the rape script. Rape victims are thus women whose minds are occupied by a sexual scenario they could instead learn to recognize and use to prevent the scripted experience. This narrative of rape, comprised of a series of steps and signals that we can learn to recognize and avoid, works to make rape permissible, even expected. Marcus

claims that this script pre-exists the act of violence and only momentarily creates the identities of rapist and victim when enacted.

Rape is “a scripted interaction in which one person auditions for the role of rapist and strives to maneuver another person into the role of victim...a process of gendering which we can attempt to disrupt” (Marcus 172). Therefore, it is up to the woman to recognize that her assailant does not simply have the power to rape but that his power is created by the extent to which she succumbs to the social script’s efforts to secure her participation. Women need to stand up for themselves rather than conform to the “self-defeating rules which govern polite, empathetic feminine conversation” and that generate their “non-combative responses to rapists” (170). While I appreciate that she challenges the presupposition of masculine power, I find the rest of Marcus’ argument highly troublesome. The assumption that rape is successful because of women’s passive compliance with a sexual and linguistic script implies that women who get raped do not in fact strategize prior to the rape and therefore that their rape necessarily signifies their submission to the role of victim. The focus on women’s reactions (or lack thereof) during an attack takes the focus off the rapist and places it, along with the responsibility for the outcome, on women and women alone. Making women’s behavior and identity the site of rape prevention only mirrors the dominant culture’s proclivity to see rape as women’s problem – a problem women should solve and one that they caused. Of course, my study also focuses on the rape victim, not the rapist or the society that produces him. I am interested in the specifics of rape, in the stories that continue to go untold. I look at rape as a reality, as an experience lived through.

It is important to consider rape in its cultural context, as an act of gender-based sexual violence, rather than view it as simply an act of physical violence. Within the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, discussions of rape gave voice to an experience that many women had never spoken about. With the publication of *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* in 1975, Susan Brownmiller brought attention to the issue and argued that rape is “nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men keep all women* in a state of fear” (15). She maintained that rape is not inspired by sexual stimuli but is a primarily violent act, and that reducing it to sexual impulse -- and thinking of it in solely an individualist manner -- strips the issue of its political and cultural context, namely the patriarchal structure that makes rape permissible.ⁱⁱ

Rape then became one of the primary causes of the feminist movement. In 1971, the New York Radical Feminists provided the first feminist guide to surviving rape and to challenging the patriarchal norms that engender sexual violence in *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*. Editors Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilson viewed the speech act as an essential feminist response to rape. They claim that “the act of speaking-out is an open act of rebellion,” and they assert, “self-definition is a crucial step, because as women we live in a world where we are defined by others” (qtd. in Burke 27). Survivors were encouraged to resist the definitions of their experience by men and to put women’s voices at the center of the discussion of rape. Gradually, more publications using first-person narratives, privileging the autobiographical “I,” emerged, paving the way for a proliferation of representations of rape in popular media, including the genre of memoir.

Intersections

The rape survivor memoir cuts across professional specialties: literary criticism; literary and cultural theory; psychology and psychoanalysis; and feminist theories. Both Nancy Raine and Patricia Francisco use concepts from these disciplines to refigure their narratives of recovery. This follows the inherently hybrid methodologies of intersectionality, of examining the reciprocal relationships of race and gender. A personal take on the trauma of rape allows both memoirists to interrogate concepts of mind and body, narrative and experience, and self and other in ways that contribute to a general theoretical understanding of those broad philosophical and social issues. Ultimately, the question of representing rape comes down to the intersection and interweaving of body/mind and culture.

The following chapter delves further into the writing of Nancy Raine and Patricia Francisco. Their memoirs reflect the effects of trauma that Judith Herman describes in her work, particularly the importance of structuring the traumatic memories into a comprehensible narrative. Both women consider their writing processes as both the reconstruction of their stories and the reconstruction of their identities.

Chapter Two: Narrating Trauma

I came to explore the wreck.
 The words are purposes.
 The words are maps.
 I came to see the damage that was done
 And the treasures that prevail.

-- Adrienne Rich, "Diving into the Wreck"

A rape survival memoir involves the survivor not simply voicing her experience, but also assigning meaning to the experience, and asking others to bear witness to that meaning. As writers, both Francisco and Raine had always relied on language to assign meaning to their experiences; to give solace through the wholeness that writing creates. Theirs is a heightened relationship to words. Writing had fostered self-expression and understanding – an easy and essential process of working through. Rape destroyed that partnership. Made them fearful of words, alien to their loved ones. The loss of control that both women experienced, as well as the gruesome invasion of their bodies and homes, stripped both Francisco and Raine of their subjectivity. The rapists reduced them to mere objects – their subjectivity was rendered useless and viewed as worthless. Their rapes robbed them of the power of words by taking away the subject that wields them. Without language, the vital link between an experience and its meaning was severed. Their memoirs reflect this break and the subsequent struggle to mend it.

Patricia Francisco's Telling: A Memoir of Trauma and Recovery

On August 14, 1981, a man broke into Patricia Francisco's Minneapolis apartment, where she slept alone. She awoke to find a dark figure standing in the doorway of her bedroom. He threatened her with a knife, blindfolded

her, looted her house, and eventually raped her. Besides the attacker's first lunge out of the darkness, she saw nothing until he left her, bleeding, faced down on the bed, with threats to cut her nose off if she called the police. Her memoir comes after a fifteen-year struggle to understand what she lost that night.

Francisco constructs a readable rape; that is, she uses literary techniques to compose a beautiful piece of literature – making it less traumatic for the reader. She makes it easier for us and for herself to bear witness. She writes knowing that no one will want to read this, but also knowing that for her it is important that anonymous others read her story. Her writing is self-conscious – she works to make us read. She takes the pieces that the rapist tore apart and creates a narrative written on her own terms, not his. She does not spare us the gruesome and devastating details, but she does help us through them.

Her writing is episodic, playing with time, the chronology of events and verb tenses. She first addresses the reader in the present tense, then moves to the present in the past, to the rape itself, and then shifts again into a different present, where she reads her son a bedtime story. The memoir continues like this, never letting the reader get too comfortable in one place and time. Francisco plays with our understanding of what a narrative ought to look like. From the subtitle, *A Memoir of Rape and Recovery*, we expect a standard progression from trauma to recovery, from a shattered self to a whole one, from darkness to light. While the overarching trajectory fits this mold, Francisco plays with the particulars so that her narrative is anything but chronological. She interrupts the novel's forward motion with frozen

moments in which she reads to her son, remembers her life before the attack, and mourns her losses. In the long run, her constant shifts protect the reader from what could easily become a phantom reliving of her trauma. She limits our capacity for empathy. The empathic unsettlement of a secondary witness is an important aspect of the complex process of working-through that Francisco has undertaken. However, Dominick LaCapra explains the dangers of empathizing too much with the victim of trauma. The role of empathy should involve an experience through which “one person puts oneself in the other’s position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place” (“Trauma” 722). Rather than a straight line, the narrative takes the shape of interwoven circles, reminding the reader that this is a piece of literature as much as it is her life. Francisco waits to describe the actual assault, and eases into it. She relates a few details, interspersing them with her memories from before and after the rape. Thus, the very structure of the book depicts the fracturing of and from the self that Francisco experiences.

Nancy Raine’s After Silence: Rape & My Journey Back

On October 11, 1985, Nancy Venable Raine was 39, divorced and living alone in a working-class area of Boston. A man broke into her apartment, tied her up, and raped her for several hours. She never saw his face. Raine, a poet and essayist, tries to come to terms with unbidden feelings of shame, with the desecration of her self, and with the unwelcome yet insistent belief that she was responsible for the attack. Raine writes herself back to wholeness and out of Hell by constructing a modern narrative about the

meaning of rape.

Raine figures the completion of the book as the joining of her two selves, the one that carries out everyday life and the one that has registered the trauma of her rape. She describes her writing process as one in which she would get out of bed before dawn “to find a woman waiting at the desk where [she] wrote” (275), write for a few hours and then return to her husband in bed. On the day she finishes the narrative, Raine experiences a unifying of her selves: “I saw that the woman at the desk and the woman in his arms were the same woman again” (275). Through the completion of her narrative, Raine claims to have reconciled the fragmented parts of her identity. However, this is a convenient ending on wholeness that is not achieved. During the course of the novel she describes four different selves that manifest and ultimately comes to understand that she can never have her first self back, the one unfamiliar with rape. This realization implies that she cannot, in fact, unite all of her selves. At best, she can hope to connect the remaining fragments.

Clearly, both narratives follow the expected plot, what Susan Brison calls a “reverse conversion narrative: ‘I once was found, but now am lost’” (*Aftermath* 110); thus maintaining the notion that there is a set pattern, a linear trajectory of recovery. However, it is unclear whether Francisco and Raine construct the narratives so typically for themselves, for the publishing houses, or simply because that is the trajectory they experienced. If this plot is expected, it makes sense that both memoirists would take comfort in fitting their stories to mimic it. This is how the story has to end, because they need to believe in a process of recovery that brings closure. In reality, however,

neither woman's story has ended by the conclusion of her novel.

Narrating the Unknowable: Loss of Time

The undoing of the self in trauma involves a radical disruption of memory, a severing of past from present, and, typically, an inability to envision the future. In order to integrate the traumatic memory into a survivor's life story, and subsequently remake her self, she must reconstruct the memory as a narrative that ascribes meaning to it. Memories of traumatic events, experienced as flashbacks, are often themselves traumatic: "uncontrollable, intrusive, and frequently somatic" (Brison "Trauma" 40). In contrast, the act of testimony, narrating memories to empathic listeners, empowers survivors to gain more control over the traces left by trauma. According to Judith Herman, the second stage of trauma recovery consists of the survivor telling the story of the trauma in depth and in detail. Both Francisco and Raine depict the various forms that their stories of trauma took, from the "repetitious, stereotyped, and emotionless" initial tellings to testimonies that detail their emotional states as painstakingly as the facts (Herman 175-7). They also display the pitfalls of such a process, which demands the reliving of the event. Both women suffer the loss of chronology that resulted from their rapes. Herman explains the importance of a therapist at this stage, so the survivor "can simultaneously re-experience the feelings in all their intensity while holding on to the sense of safe connection that was destroyed in the traumatic moment" (178). The therapist anchors the patient to the present, helping her move back and forth in time. Without this anchor, survivors of trauma often lose sense of time, living in a continuous present

that is the past. Raine and Francisco bring to the fore the utter disruption of time and space that a traumatic event inflicts on the self and the disruption of the unity of the self. At some points merely coping, at others recovering, they live lost in time: afraid to imagine the future, trying to avoid the present, and wanting to forget the past.

Trauma explodes the chronology of time. For both women, the rapes obliterated any conception of past or future. The attacks forced them into a continuous present. Francisco writes, "time was altered, becoming deep and broad, my consciousness radically inflated like a parachute, slowing down time by expanding my use of it" (17). Both women struggle with the loss of time that their experiences produced, and they both show this disconnect in the techniques they use to write about their rapes. Patricia Francisco shifts between verb tenses constantly throughout her telling of the rape. She begins in the past tense, acknowledging the distinction between then and now. However, as she delves further into the memory, she shifts to the present: "We walked to the back room, where he emptied my purse, took the money and my driver's license. I *see* this. He holds the card up...*what does the M stand for?* he asks" (21). She calls attention to her present self, reminding both the reader and herself that this is, in fact, a memory, not a present moment: "I remember thinking, *He's making conversation.*" She italicizes both internal and external dialogue to further distinguish between her memories. She presents the italicized sentences as primary sources, words she explicitly remembers, whereas she has tweaked the memories that she relates in straight text.

Nancy Raine also writes against the inability of language to be useful in the face of a violent, traumatic experience. She describes the initial moments

of the attack in metaphorical language, as if unable to commit to the reality of the scene: *“A storm from behind, and impact. It sucks away the air around me in a great rush...something is coiling around my neck, something alive...My body is on fire from inside”* (9). Raine likens the rape to commonly understood phenomena -- a storm, a snake, and fire. She connects her experience to the anonymous reader’s by referencing acceptable, logical experiences. She relies on metaphor because she cannot depict her experience during the attack with literal, everyday language.

Rather than weave the description of her rape into her narrative, Raine first writes about the rape by shifting voice entirely. She makes a break in the page, italicizes her words, and writes in the present tense:

Who is screaming? I do not know who is screaming.

I cannot breathe.

Now I hear the words. These are the words I hear: Shut up shut the fuck up you bitch you dirty bitch you fucking cunt shut up do you hear me you fucking dirty bitch I’m going to kill you if you don’t shut up you bitch I’m going to kill you.

Now I am sucking air into my lungs. I am prey, grasping for air.

Now I have a thought: So this is Death.

Now I have a feeling: Anything to live.

Now I feel something hard pressing against my back. I know what it is. It is a penis.” (9)

Her use of the present tense emphasizes the conflation of past and present that trauma often induces: *“At that moment, time disappeared into a*

continuous present" (10). She cannot remember in the past because "the memory of what happened did not feel like a memory. It felt here and now, in the present" (31). At this point in her writing process (and potentially concurrent recovery process), Raine cannot think about the past and remain in the present. Her speech is haunted by the past, acting as a reenactment. Part way through this remembrance, she jumps out of the experience, as if to take a break. She continues the telling in her authorial voice, using the past tense and straight text. She reacquaints herself with the present, and depicts her thoughts with an understanding and knowledge that she could not have been aware of during the rape. Her shift in writing marks a clear moment of working over and through the trauma. As Dominick LaCapra explains, in this working through "the past becomes accessible to recall in memory...language functions to provide some measure of conscious control, critical distance, and perspective" (90). Raine has reconstructed this part of her story and is writing for us, her audience, but she will not sugar coat it. She describes the actual rape scene early on in her telling, as if to get it over with. She continues writing in the past tense and using detached language. Yet she ends the first chapter with another slip into her rape's present:

Open your legs. Go on, you dirty bitch. Groan. That's not good enough. I'll cut you. Groan good. Now suck it. You bite me and you die, you fucking bitch. You gag and I'll kill you. Tell me how good it was. Now you die. (22)

Narrating the Unknowable: Forgetting the Body

Raine and Francisco use the language of detachment and separation, the

chasm between their bodies and minds now so vast. Patricia Francisco describes the survival instinct to dislocate her consciousness from bodily experience. She leaves, because it is the easiest thing to do. She “remember[s] [the rape] from a spot up near the ceiling,” (28) and as she describes this separation, I find myself joining her up there, also leaving her body behind, and the memories it holds. I also join Nancy Raine’s shadow self, the part that split off during the attack. I become the observer she describes, the part that stayed behind, both loss and absence. The anonymous witness whom they reach toward in their writing. Both women hold onto their minds and leave their bodies behind. We both, their split selves and I, observe the rapes rather than experience them.

Francisco does not remember the experience of being raped. As is described above, she remembers the actual rape as a witness of it, not as the victim lying beneath her rapist. It is not the penile penetration, but the objectification and victimization – the fear – that she remembers. Francisco describes that which she does consciously recall, sounds and thoughts:

Here is what I do remember: I remember the sound of his belt buckle, unmistakable and final. I remember knowing from that sound that he is standing at the end of the bed. I remember waiting for him to be human with me and knowing by the silence that he will not be. I remember a sense that this is ritualized behavior, prescribed, a matter of necessity, of course, of pride. (Francisco 28)

Francisco explains that it is not until she learns how to retrieve her bodily memories that she experiences some of the details of her rape. She had shut

out her body not by choice but out of instinct. Her memories are therefore disjointed, incomplete. She remembers the moment the rapist put a pillow over her face, the threat of death bringing her back to her body. She thinks, "He does not want to see me. He wants a body without a head attached, leaving me a head without its body" (29). He turns the mind-body disconnect she feels into a physical reality. Similarly, as Raine explains, the physical act of the rape did less damage than the psychological implications of losing subjectivity and agency: "In the scheme of things, his penis, although employed as a bludgeon, did not make much of an impression" (11). This capacity to disconnect mind from body was once viewed as "a merciful protection...a creative and adaptive psychological defense against overwhelming terror" (Herman 239). But the extent to which trauma is rooted in corporeity implies the lasting consequences of such a separation.

Francisco and Raine rely on the modernist discourse that has validated Cartesian (mind-body) dualism to understand their shattered selves. Trauma blurs the mind-body distinction that continues to inform our cultural narrative about the nature of the self. Francisco speaks of not being able to remember the physical experience of the rape and of the necessity to retrieve that bodily memory in order to move on. The conscious retrieval of those memories would help her gain control over them. Although Francisco's mind left her body during the assault, her corporeal memories still unconsciously infiltrate her psyche. The mind-body distinction is therefore not so absolute: "the intermingling of mind and body is apparent in traumatic memories that remain in the body, in each of the senses, in the heart that races and skin that crawls whenever something resurrects the only slightly buried terror" (Brisson

42). The body remembers. Trauma to the body is locked within it, making itself known in actions other than words.

Words of Hurt and Healing

Trauma destroys language by destroying the subject who uses it. Both women try to use words to reason with their attackers. At first, Nancy Raine believed that she might be able to speak words that would change the mind of the rapist. She explains, "It came to me then that my mouth was still free. Words. I still had words. I spoke words as he began to push me toward the bedroom. Words that tried to reason where there was no reason" (10). At this point, she still functioned as her old self, as the self who believes wholeheartedly in the power of language. The rapist, however, shut down her speech early on: "*Shut up, you shut up, you bitch, or I'll kill you...shut up, you fucking bitch. Shut up. I'm going to kill you. I'm going to break your fucking arms and then I'm going to cut you up, you fucking cunt*" (20-1). So much for words. Threats of torture and death are very effective censors.

Elaine Scarry argues for the total unrepresentability of trauma to the body. Scarry's book, *The Body in Pain*, is a philosophical meditation on what pain does to knowledge, to truth and to one's sense of oneself as human. Scarry contends that language is destroyed by pain: the experience is so intense that words fail in the face of it. She writes, "physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language" (Scarry 4). Both memoirs reflect Scarry's assertion. As the attack progressed, terror overwhelmed Raine, and she detached from physical reality. The encounter with such intimate

violence and the threat of death brought about an emptying of all prior systems of understanding, including language:

Words had no referents and no beauty of their own. Memories were drained of meaning, because the person who had them no longer existed...concepts, emotions, prayers, faith, love, words. All illusions. There was, in the end, only a focus on living one more second within the logic of each moment that was all moments (14).

This loss of meaning is akin to, and a result of, the consequent loss of agency during rape. The body that remembers the pain inflicted has been turned into an object to be abused, to be regarded as something to be injured; hence the survivor's loss of agency and subjectivity. Furthermore, with her available methods of understanding and acting in the world nullified, she can no longer see herself as an active agent, a subject. After pain has destroyed one's ability to speak, the victim must then find an alternative form of expression. Elaine Scarry claims that when one person or a group has been silenced by pain, a language of agency is developed in order to speak for those who are without a voice. She writes that "agency...permits one person's body to be translated into another person's voice" (18). Much of Raine's focus throughout the narrative, and in the existence of the narrative itself, is then to recuperate some of the power that words had held before her rape. This loss of agency worsened the fracturing of the self that both women experienced – the split between the woman who had been and the woman who had not been raped.

However, Raine's goal is not to return to her previous state of total faith

in language but to reclaim language and reconstitute herself as a subject. In this way, she continues a long history of reclaiming words and power by oppressed, violated people. In the opening pages of her memoir, she announces, "I have written this book to renew my faith in the alchemy of language to transmute a patch of darkness into a memory that I may claim as my own...seeing the world through the eyes of a woman who remembers rape" (6). Raine self-consciously asserts the role of writer as one through which she constructs her narrative and reaches an expanded understanding of herself. Answering her own question about whether or not she is trying to construct an identity by writing the book, she names the problem of not being able to know herself after the rape: "But the self that is engaging in this construction, the sum of all I remember, is a self in which repression has been a factor in survival and, dare I say, sanity" (112-3). The self that narrates the story is only one part of herself. The part that registered and holds the memory of the attack and its aftermath is another. In therapy, and through the text, she works to connect these two selves. As the narrative progresses, we see her come to know the self that registered the attack. By integrating the memory of the attack into her understanding of her self, Raine finds a way to connect the two selves that subsequently restores her status as an agent and a subject.

Of course, the speaker in the narrative has the benefit of hindsight. This is part of the difficulty she has before she gains this understanding: seemingly random feelings of rage that emerge years after her rape perplex her, and she does not initially connect them to her experience of rape because "they did not 'come with a story,' a linear narrative, the way non-traumatic memories

do" (185). Part of her task as a writer is to establish this narrative. Raine portrays therapy as a decidedly chaotic and random process of assigning meaning and order to the emotional experiences after rape, so she uses this narrative to make clear to her readers and to herself how interconnected her emotions and experiences were.

Unlike Nancy Raine, who became frighteningly aware of the complete powerlessness and meaninglessness of words during her rape, Patricia Francisco believes that this was the only way she could have defended herself. By talking about herself and making conversation, she did not avoid the rape, but she did avoid murder by her rapist. She tells the rapist details about herself, reminding him that she is a person. Francisco narrates her life to her rapist; he is her first audience. The idea of talking comes to her when she first conceptualizes the horror of her possible murder: "Because I would be dead, I would not be able to tell what had happened to me" (17). In her situation, the fear of the inability to speak is the fear of becoming a victim who does not live to tell the tale. Thus her narrative emphasizes the gradual and active nature of this act of resistance. She compares herself to Scheherazade, who, as the story goes, saved her life each night by telling her husband a story so intriguing that he spared her to hear the rest (Dawood). Francisco expresses uncertainty as to whether this storytelling impulse was a learned or an innate behavior: "Was knowledge of that old story the source of my impulse, or do we instinctively tell stories to save our lives?" she asks (Francisco 18). Her storytelling might thus be linked to a mythologized history of female resistance through telling stories. She writes against Western academic discourses that do not value personal experience, or

creative portrayal, of social issues, such as violence. Like Raine's project, part of Francisco's endeavor is to reconstruct herself as a subject by engaging with multiple discourses to portray her rape. She frames her narrative with rhetoric from psychology, second-wave feminist theory, and Western conceptions of good and evil.

Paradoxically, the measures Francisco takes to ensure her physical survival preclude her ability to later tell of the event. As he is pillaging her room, she tells her attacker that she studied journalism and is writing a novel, that her middle name is Scottish – McKee. She tells him things that even her loved ones do not know, answers questions that no one else has thought to ask, "angling for his heart of gold," a heart she hopes for simply because he is still listening to her (22). Nothing in her nightmarish imaginings of rape ever prepared her for this level of intimacy. She writes that her most intimate relationships are based on conversation -- it is what she understands about safety and trust. And now she has entered into a relationship with someone who wants to hurt her. With the enemy. While this conversation most likely did deter her assailant, Francisco also realizes that "there is a price for bargaining with your humanity" (26). She tells him she is a writer and he sneers, "*Now you'll have something to write about,*" and she resolves, "Never...not one word" (25). She describes this moment as that which, more than all other silencing, bound her for so long. Francisco concludes the section by admitting, "I hate what he knows about me" (26). She asserts her power by speaking to her rapist, but she also relinquishes power by the knowledge that she gives him.

The conversation between Francisco and the rapist comes to an end, and

“he is silent for so long that [she] become[s] terrified” (26). And suddenly she realizes, for the first time, that he will rape her before killing her. There is no more talk, no more questions. She can feel him looming somewhere behind her, letting the realization sink in: “this is the hour of my acquiescence, this silence and all that it contains” (26). Rather than words, which serve to silence Raine, the rapist’s silence is what looms over and ultimately overpowers her. Francisco writes,

I remember that everything happens in agonized silence. It seems we are both in pain...he enters my body with his body in a sad and quiet way. He is unable to maintain an erection...there is emotion in the room at this point. Sobriety, sadness, perhaps belonging to both of us, a brief connection I never want to acknowledge... I was not afraid in this moment. I remember thinking that he was. (28-30)

“Our Rite Was Silence”

“Silence,” says Adrienne Rich, “makes us all, to some degree, into liars” (190). Raine and Francisco demonstrate how intimately dangerous the lie of silence can be, for they have lived through its perilous consequences. By ending their silence, their memoirs extend the possibilities for living a more informed and effectual moral existence. Both writers stage the problematic of speech and silence: by featuring silence in the narrative, the authors also engage with the question of the availability of discourse and of opportunities for speech. Both memoirs use the personal journey to put a face on the fact of rape, wielding poetry to combat the call to silence so familiar to women

writers.

The decision to speak out violates basic norms of society, norms of denial. “The silence of survivors is, I believe, supported by a profound collective anxiety about rape that borders on cultural psychosis. We—all of us—deny,” writes Raine (5). By drawing the reader’s attention to the ways that rape has been unspeakable, Raine calls attention to her project of intervening in that silence. She posits the silence imposed on survivors of rape as a problem of both the availability of language and the lack of appropriate social contexts to discuss rape. In the preface, she marks the passing of the seventh anniversary of her survival of rape, but notes that there is no community recognition for hers and other survivors’ triumphs: “There were no appropriate rites, no public ceremony...our rite was, therefore, silence” (3). Rape survivors do not have access to the kind of rituals and freedom to tell their stories that they need in order to reconnect with their communities. She reports a great many facts and statistics about rape to show the widespread nature of the problem, situating her individual experience of silence in the larger cultural context. Yet it is difficult to recognize that rape is such a widespread problem in our society when so many survivors are kept, and may choose to remain, silent. The lack of appropriate rites and paradigms of understanding rape is all the more astounding, then, when we consider the number of people affected by rape. According to the Rape Abuse Incest National Network, every 2 minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted, and there are about 213,000 victims of sexual assault each year.ⁱⁱⁱ As Raine says, “numbers this big carry little emotional punch” (68). We cannot see the image of a single human face from

a number, a face that has “a name, a family, a favorite book, a certain way of smiling.” Yet this country continues to encourage rape victims to hide their stories, to forget about it. They cannot forget, and we should not either.

Therefore, along with the lack of appropriate rites, the stigma attached to rape victims serves to shut down opportunities for survivors to speak even in everyday interactions. Because the topic of rape is often excluded from common conversation, women who have suffered rape do not have the same opportunity as survivors of other traumatic events to share their experiences. Raine describes the bonding and healing of sharing stories with regard to an earthquake in California in 1989 to highlight the lack of this experience for rape survivors:

Telling my story, and hearing my friends tell their stories, was soothing...even years later, pieces of our stories, now a part of our collective folklore, work their way into conversations. We don't talk about the earthquake much anymore, but we haven't forgotten. But no one wanted to know about the rape. (43)

The integration of the memory of the earthquake into everyday conversation allows those who experienced it to integrate the experience into their identities. The bonding of a shared experience also afforded healing. Raine's experience of rape, however, could not be shared in this way, not just because in this case it was an “individual” experience, but also because people were simply unable or unwilling to discuss it. Raine gives several troubling accounts of people who expressed a desire to avoid the topic of rape, either by failing to ask her about it or by explicitly expressing their disinterest. For a time she was silenced by the words of a woman who denigrated her first

effort to speak out—a magazine article that Raine had written about her rape. The woman told her, “Let’s face it, people don’t want to read about such terrible things” (5). Rather than dismissing or being completely derailed by this comment, Raine uses it as a way of understanding the refusal of most people to be willing listeners to the story of rape. She learns that it is taxing not just for her but also for those with whom she tried to talk about her ordeal. She says, “It pained my family and friends to remember. To acknowledge my experience might bring up what they hoped I had forgotten – that terrible day, those hours of horror. They hoped to spare me that” (3). Raine is too forgiving – they helped to spare themselves, because confronting another’s vulnerability means confronting their own.

Although Raine attributes some of the social anxiety about rape to people’s association of rape with sex, she believes that most of this anxiety is simply the reluctance of many people to think about everyday atrocities and, ultimately, the possibility of their own victimization. Survivors of rape remind others of their own vulnerability. Particularly in a society in which each individual is thought to be responsible for her own destiny, a story of random victimization is difficult to accept. As a culture, we strongly believe that we can control what happens to us. While this thinking assures us agency in all respects, it also makes “being a victim feel like some kind of personal failure” (Raine 160). It leaves no room for bad luck. The problem that Raine identifies here is one of narrative patterns of discourse – the logic of most dominant American narrative paradigms does not easily admit the random victimization of a woman. There must be a reason that she was raped. Part of Raine’s project, then, is to shift this paradigm and propose

alternative models for understanding rape. "Where are the words?" Raine asks, "I need to find them so I don't have to feel that I am talking about something 'embarrassing' when I talk about rape" (207).

Telling Details

Nancy Raine and Patricia Francisco write against the depersonalization of rape, providing an almost excruciating amount of detail in their "telling." They are not and will no longer let us hide. These are details they cannot get over, and so we must not either, because as Francisco says, "we need more people to carry this load; we cannot bear it alone" (190).

The completion of their memoirs marked the return of their love for and reliance on language. Raine writes, "I had come to realize that if remembering is to re-create, then the understanding of the past itself can be transformed by the present" (269).

Chapter Three: Testimony and Discourse

It strikes me now that one of the untold burdens of the survivor of rape is what she has come to know. She has been left holding the truth. It is not only a threat of death she has encountered. That threat has carried with it a malevolence and an insanity with a long history...For her the world has changed. And in this understanding she is isolated, because for us who have not been raped the world remains the same. We keep the fact of rape at the periphery of consciousness and do not let it bear on our vision.

-- Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness*

To what extent has the proliferation of rape discourse been co-opted, taken up in a manner that diminishes its subversive impact? Rape narratives do expose oppressive material conditions, violence, and trauma and help shape public consciousness about violence against women. However, the rhetoric is also constantly re-scripted by the dominance of the masculinist state. Wendy Brown's article "Finding the Man in the State" makes visible the numerous forms of masculinist power, asserting, "not merely the structure and discourse but the ethos of the liberal state appears to be socially masculine" (Brown 191). And the prerogative powers of the nation-state are masculine prerogatives, the powers to protect but also the institutionalized powers of violence. Thus, sexual violence is the reality of masculinist state and social power. The patriarchal state must also constantly reassert its power. Elaine Scarry's immediate moral and political concern is how pain is ritually used to reinforce the reality of the otherwise illusive power of (il)legitimate political regimes. She argues that they use ritualized practices of torture, which in destroying the world of the prisoner create the world of the state: "the conversion of absolute pain into the fiction of absolute power" (Scarry 27). The struggle Scarry describes to represent the truth of pain resonates deeply with women's efforts to describe their experiences of sexual violence. Considering Scarry's analysis of pain and power, sexual violence

represents the limits of masculinist hegemony. Society, saturated with multiple forms of masculinist power, already understands the logic of sexual violence, even if it cannot know the individual narrative of trauma.

Elaine Scarry suggests that different social spheres, like the medical and legal communities, for example, have developed a vocabulary for their patients or clients (sufferers of pain) in order to facilitate and clarify expression. Both Raine and Francisco borrow from these discourses, traditional and untraditional, in order to develop their own language to understand their suffering. Raine uses mythology, conventional Western notions of good and evil, feminism, and psychology to narrate her experience of rape. Francisco also looks to psychology, the concept of evil, fairy tales, and feminist theories in her narration. The appropriation of these discourses to impart meaning to their experiences of rape is in itself a feminist project, but neither author explicitly engages in a politicized critique of rape.

The Medical-Psychological Establishment

Raine's psychological paradigm consists of an attempt to understand trauma, particularly as Judith Herman articulates this issue. Herman's conceptions of dissociation, repression, and the need to articulate trauma figure heavily in Raine's memoir. Raine explains psychological theories and uses them to demonstrate to her readers the ways in which her trauma manifested itself. She also invokes a technical, physiological language to discuss a person's experience of traumatic events: she cites research that has shown that "in states of high sympathetic nervous system arousal, such as those produced by trauma, the linguistic encoding of memory is actually

deactivated, causing the central nervous system to revert to sensory forms of memory” (185-6). She employs this neuropsychological explanation of human behavior to explain the way in which her injury from the rape manifested itself – in recurring sensations of fear, helplessness, and grief that did not necessarily seem related to the rape. This scientific language gives a logical explanation for why she continued to experience and act out those emotions many years after the rape. That these behaviors are manifestations of a biological process in the brain reinforces the idea that the experiences are not the result of weak character or personal failures.

Raine herself problematizes the use of this language because of the gap between such clinical terminology and her experience. In one section of the memoir, she uses the concept of dissociation to understand her behavior. Though she suffered some feelings of panic and detachment immediately following her rape, she tells us that she enjoyed a sort of grace period of five calm years before the effects of her rape really took hold. When the feelings triggered by the rape resurfaced, they did so in a much different form; i.e., they did not appear directly related to her memory of the rape. She explains that in dissociation, memories and feelings connected to the traumatic event return in forms different from their origins. Raine questions the efficacy of this language in describing her experiences, asking, “why do I still feel that calling this experience ‘dissociation’ is an easy way out of my own incapacity to describe it? Yet what other words do I have if I abandon the language of psychology?” (173). This dilemma is part of the contradictory imperatives of trauma: feeling compelled to talk about something and yet being unable to articulate it exactly. The emergence of a psychological discourse regarding

trauma helped to fill that vacuum but still left Raine with a sense that this language was not really her own.

And yet she attests to the fact that she does have another language, the religious language of redemption and grace. When it comes to this temporary reprieve from the emotional aftermath of the rape, she can conceive of it as an imparting of grace:

I am left with the words *pardon* or *mercy*, the archaic meaning of the word *grace* according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which in scriptural and theological language is God's temporary exemption – 'the divine influence which operates in men to regenerate and sanctify, to inspire various impulses, and to impart strength to endure trial and resist temptation.' I believe I was granted (and by whom or what I cannot say) a full but temporary pardon that permitted me to construct the hull of the vessel that would carry me here, to words themselves, the witnessing of my own survival. (173-4)

This theological and poetic language carries a very different tone from the scientific language of psychology. Here there is a sense of mystery, of the unknown, and though she specifies that she does not believe that it was a deity who granted this to her, she suggests that the feeling was bestowed upon her by some benevolent force. In her psychological description of this reprieve, she does not say that this respite gave her a chance to prepare for the impending confrontation with her emotions, whereas here she uses this time to "construct the hull of the vessel" that would carry her forward in this difficult process. Thus the religious discourse allows her a more useful view

of what she went through.

The use of the psychological framework tends to divorce the experience of the individual survivor of rape from the larger social context in which it occurs. Of all of these discourses, the scientific one might be seen in dominant American culture as the most legitimate, and yet this is the one that Raine finds most alienating. Nevertheless, the attention of psychology to the violence experienced by women is what may have opened the space, more than any of these others, for the rape survival genre to emerge.

Francisco also turns to the psychology of trauma not only to further her understanding of trauma itself but also to validate her reactions to her rape. Reading Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* is an "immediate relief, a perspective on symptoms whose persistence had seemed a personal failure" (78). Just as Nancy Raine describes the victim-blaming and the tendency of some people to hold survivors accountable for the wrongs done unto them, Francisco suggests that there was a certain pressure for her to simply get over it. Herman's theories about trauma legitimize her reactions. Describing her own frustration with being unable to put the rape behind her, Francisco regrets her lack of knowledge about psychological understandings of trauma: "But I don't have that language yet. I don't realize that my symptoms describe a condition about which there is knowledge..." (77). Her clinical language of "symptoms" and a "condition" legitimizes her reactions in a way that her own personal descriptions of these phenomena could not. The supposed value of this clinical language is a testament to this culture's reliance upon "knowledge" produced by medicine and psychology.

Following the rape, Francisco experiences paralyzing fear in situations

that do not appear dangerous to others. Nightmares plague her as she sleeps -- she often experiences terror to the point of panic at night. Like anyone socialized into a modern rationalist mindset, these irrational experiences lead her to think there must be something wrong with her. Only through the discovery of the psychological classification of these reactions to trauma as “normal” can she be convinced of the legitimacy of them. As she says explicitly, this understanding, for which she is grateful, comes as a huge relief.

Yet it is the very medical-psychological establishment that would have categorized her as a crazy, hysterical woman in the not-so-distant past. Smith and Watson’s concept of the “managed framework” is helpful here: they suggest that the various discourses available are what make certain kinds of theories intelligible at given times, and here, the acknowledgement on the part of the psychological establishment of women’s experiences of rape is what opens up the framework for this kind of story to be told. While this opportunity for speech gives survivors a voice where they were once silenced, it also serves to reinforce the mastery of these managed systems of knowledge over subjects within them.

Furthermore, it is not conventional talk therapy but alternative therapies – massage therapy, bodywork, and energy work – that ultimately bring about Francisco’s deep healing from the rape. The physical release in these practices helps “the body’s stored memories to be released and the accompanying feelings to be consciously re-experienced” (145). At first skeptical of these treatments, Francisco comes to believe that they are responsible for her ability to begin feeling and fully engaging in life again:

“I’ve come to believe that the body’s memory is as deep and unacknowledged as our dreams. Both fall outside language, their messages carried in image and sensation” (151). So although she affirms the expertise of psychological discourse, she also emphasizes the need for complementary therapies that involve a more hands-on healing process that may ultimately afford her greater mastery over her own subjectivity.

Through her healing process, Francisco becomes more aware of the myriad physical and sensual sensations available to her in the world. Following the rape, she had completely detached from her body. She describes fighting to maintain awareness of her bodily sensations as much as of her thoughts, otherwise she would go without drinking or eating, sleeping or stretching for long periods of time. The pivotal moment of the birth of her son actually condensed this problem, making it worse so that she finally sought treatment. During labor, she experienced flashbacks of the rape due to the lack of control and fear that her difficult labor produced. She came to believe that the reason her cervix seemed to refuse to dilate past five centimeters was that her body was reacting to the trauma of rape, desperately closing in on itself. A psychologist later explains to her that many survivors of rape or incest experience traumatic labors. This ordeal revealed to Francisco just how deeply the rape had embedded itself in her body. Thus, it took a process of recovery that attended to her physical body and her sense of herself within that body to make her feel whole again.

The bodywork forces Francisco to connect with her corporeal self, identify sensations, articulate her physical feelings as accurately as her emotions. Scattered throughout the chapters that describe her bodywork are

small sections, italicized, describing a variety of sensations. She describes

feet arched over sand; knees on moss; thighs a springboard for tumbling; hipbones when I'm thin; river scar, portal of emergence, emergency; hillocks of stomach; breasts when nursing; lungs when I remember them; my shoulders bared, my neck arched for stars; mouth in repose; tongue on sugar and lime; the smell of hot meat and fruit; wind in my hair, a watery fur. (146)

Francisco writes short prose poems to highlight the ambiguity and elasticity of language. These passages remind the reader of that which transcends definition. Literality has no place when speaking of trauma to the body or to the self; both fall outside language, their messages carried in image and sensation.

Good and Evil

There is a tension between Raine's portrayal of the rapist as an actual man perpetrating a rape and her portrayal of the rapist as a manifestation of abstract evil. Thus we see him as both a real person perpetrating acts of violence against a woman in a specific cultural context and as an abstract manifestation of evil in the world. The use of this language locates her narrative in a specific Christian history. Looking to the origins of the word "nightmare," she explores Western conceptions of demons and evil spirits. She imagines that an incubus, the male version of the medieval female nightmare spirit that attacked men in their sleep, might have attacked her. Although she remained calm and detached during the rape itself, when the rapist leaves, she finally feels her fear and conceives of it in terms of the

unleashing of pure evil into her world. Because she never sees her rapist, she has difficulty conceiving of him as a human being, blurring the difference between reality and fantasy: "My mind was no longer modern, but medieval. No longer adult, but childish" (18). She had learned as a child to dispel her fears of bad dreams and monsters because they were not real, but monstrosity was her only way to conceive of the rapist. However, her inability to understand her rapist as an actual human being has grave consequences. She loses the ability to distinguish what has actually happened from the infinite imaginings of her deepest fears, which were awakened by an attack that so closely resembled them. Being a woman, the fear of rape was instilled in her early on, so it makes perfect sense that she would connect the rape to her nightmares. Her childhood nightmares did not come from nowhere. She has been taught to fear rape as a child fears nightmares, which are uncontrollable and inevitable.

Western myths of good and evil forces provide an initial way for understanding the rape, but this understanding is highly troublesome because it places blame on the unconscious of the victim. Rather than using self-blame to regain a sense of agency, Raine employs it as a further debilitating force. Far from depicting rape as an experience in which all of the negative and damaging forces come from the rapist, Raine suggests that rape brings out and intensifies emotions that survivors already possess: "It seems to me now that my rape acted like a chemical injected into my psyche that intensified whatever unconscious defenses, conflicts, self-concepts, and beliefs were already within. It was a psychic steroid..." (264). Like the nightmares, these were also social implants. While this understanding allows

her to establish a sense of continuity between her former self and her post-rape self, it also blurs the line between perpetrator and victim to a problematic degree.

Francisco's conception of her rapist as a representative of the inherently evil forces of the world also depoliticizes her understanding of rape, and yet works alongside other politicized understandings in her narrative. The framework of good and evil positions the rapist simply as an evil aberration, a pathological exception to an imagined rule of gender equity, while a feminist perspective sees him as a man who is carrying out the misogynistic sentiments of a particular culture. A sexist society creates rape and perpetuates it by silencing those who experience it. And this is part of the same discourse that allows these memoirs to become popular – white women being raped by unknown black men retell a long-standing American myth.

Francisco posits rape as contact with the presence of evil, infusing the narratives of their transformations with an archetypal power. Francisco compares her experience of violence during her rape to a wildfire, and:

as in all stories relished by the teller, in the heat there was also the alchemy we are promised in fairy tales. As unprepared as I was for despair, it is the dialectic of transformation that remains the deepest mystery. Jack pine seeds, I've been told, only open in a fire. (Francisco 3)

The natural imagery, the mystery, and the alchemy of transformation reduce her struggle with rape to an essential level. For her, there is something simple and elemental about the contact with evil that she had during her

rape. She has been privy to a truth, albeit a disturbing one, about life.

This conceptualization of rape in terms of “evil” is representative of the Western/Christian paradigm for understanding events in the world. Like the use of fairy tales, this framework suggests that rape fits under the umbrella of the many other horrible things that occur in life. If a survivor can draw some wisdom from the aftermath of rape, then she can claim that experience. This salvaging of rape as an experience onto which one can impart meaning contradicts conventional understandings of rape as a “fate worse than death.”^{iv} The rhetoric comparing death to rape contributes to a cultural norm built upon Victorian ideology that elevates women’s chastity to the very essence of their identity. When death becomes a lesser fate than being raped, patriarchal norms of women’s innocence and virginity become the crucial elements of personhood. Attempts to recover from rape are already fruitless before they start, because those who have been raped are already the “living dead.” Furthermore, this view gives the penis the ability to permanently destroy any person it touches. That is to say “all that [women] can stand in the face of pain and hardship [is] reduced to naught because we will fall to pieces should an unwelcome lump of male flesh be forced upon us” (qtd. in Rayburn 1155).

Mythology and Fairy Tales

Raine also finds comfort in Greek mythology, rather than in the alienating language of psychology. She reads the story of Persephone and Demeter,^v and finds that it provides a better understanding of the trauma of rape than any other she had previously encountered. Interestingly, Francisco

also invokes the myth by using the image of Bernini's "Rape of Proserpine" on the cover of her book. Whether or not this was her decision, I find it worth considering the use of this artwork, which depicts rape with grace and beauty, similar to the ways that both Francisco and Raine create beautiful, cohesive narratives out of the wreckage of rape.

Raine posits the myth of Persephone as a narrative paradigm for the rape of a woman and the ensuing separation from her community: "It was the separation from the world of light—from meaning, memory, nature, mother, from earth and fecundity itself—that constituted the violation" (239). Raine feels that Persephone's experience, often viewed as a metaphor for female development or as an explanation of the seasons, provides insight into her own experience of rape. She finds solace and comfort in what she views as an apt discussion of rape in *The Hymn to Demeter*, written by an unknown Greek poet between 650-550 B.C.^{vi} I would add that the hymn also implies the extent to which rape affects not only the victim but also the victim's community. The poem describes Demeter's anger and grief over losing her daughter: "She produced a most grim year upon the fruitful earth...and she would have destroyed the race of men completely / with painful hunger" (qtd. in Lincoln 232). Thus, the rape of Persephone becomes a truly "cosmic event," the world plunging into a state of chaos that threatens "the existence of men and gods alike" (Lincoln 232). The world almost ends because of one woman's rape, which is how American society should respond to such violence.

Raine turns to Greek mythology in part because of Western academia's validation of Ancient Greece. She depends on a Greek myth because of her own social context in a society of white Western academics that think the

Greeks were the pinnacle of civilization. Furthermore, American culture is so bereft of ways to talk about rape that Raine uses a story *about* rape to heal *from* rape. She turns to a culture that demonstrated deep hatred toward women and to a myth that justifies the trauma she endured because her own society proves so insufficient.

Many scholars, including Bruce Lincoln, writing in the *Harvard Theological Review*, support the interpretation of the Greek myth as one of rape, describing it as a woman's initiation. Lincoln holds that the initiation by rape is a pattern found in many "male-centered, misogynistically inclined cultures" (Lincoln 229). If placed within its cultural context, Hades' abduction and rape of Persephone fits within the acceptable patriarchal norms of his society. However, Raine's appropriation of the myth, situating it in a contemporary context, proposes a return to the forcible subjugation of women to male control.

Raine identifies with the victims of this myth. She finds that the story provides a framework for understanding the victim of rape and/or the experience of separation from the world of light and of the living as being potentially valuable in its negotiation of the many aspects of life. Raine wonders how she can "transform the 'victim' into someone who can bridge the darkness and the light, as Persephone does at the end of the tale" (243-44). She finds this potential bridging of the gap between darkness and light redemptive. This model, however, is at odds with the narrative of the total triumph over evil that prevails today. In the myth "the way back from victimization is not triumph over adversity. It is transformation through grief, rage, and loss" (244). A reconciliation with darkness. Most American

models, or “heroic myths,” as Raine describes them, perpetuate the notion of total mastery over the self and the so-called evil forces in the world. Rather than force her experience into a paradigm that has not made room for it, Raine creates her own meanings.

While Raine finds liberatory potential in the myth, this framework does not allow her to engage in social and political analyses of rape. Of course, her project is not to provide some alternative, imaginary framework, and in the act of appropriating the mythology for her own purposes, Raine does intervene in this discourse. However, she does not contest this discourse. In fact, she actually advocates a return to a reading that adheres more closely to the myth’s original framework. The kind of acceptance of darkness portrayed in this story is necessarily one that accepts male violence and the achievement of male desires as a fact of life. It also condemns women (Persephone and Demeter) to suffering because of a man’s crime. Hades, after all, goes unpunished.

As I have suggested with regards to Raine’s use of Greek mythology, Francisco’s use of fairy tales allows her to find a discourse helpful in explaining her story, but in doing so, she avoids a critical social analysis and ambivalently inscribes her story into the Western tradition. Her use of Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Snow Queen* as a subtext suggests that she finds the stories and knowledge found in Western culture to be adequate to deal with the crime of rape. She takes the focus away from the particularities of rape and moves the conversation into the realm of the nature of human existence itself. The story contains a metaphor that Francisco easily appropriates for her narrative of recovery, a metaphor for the power of love overcoming evil

in the world. The young Gerda must go on an extended journey to find her lost friend Kay, whose vision of the world becomes full of despair after a shard of an evil-inducing mirror pierces his eye and his heart. Gerda's love for Kay eventually leads her to him and melts his frozen heart, returning him to the land of the living and the loved. Francisco struggled for years not to be consumed by despair and overwhelmed by her newfound knowledge of evil. By framing her narrative with a story about the healing power of love, she implies that the love of others rescued her from the poison of negativity that her rapist imparted to her.

This is one of a very few fairy tales in which the one who does not give up, who sets out on a quest, taking roads that go nowhere, is female. It is a model of a journey that does not happen easily, and yet, if you keep after it and keep getting help and taking advice, you might get there. In the story, the boy is carried off. He does not know that he is lost. He cannot see his way out, but it is not about pointing the finger at him. The question is, can we get back to where we want to be? The tale represents the collaboration necessary to recover from trauma. Francisco uses ways of meaning already embedded in Western culture to assign meaning to her experience of rape.

At the same time, her employment also inscribes the fairy tale tradition with new meaning. At one point, she says, "But this is my life, weaving itself into a story I have a hard time believing" (24). She likens her trauma to a fairy tale that can be very real and yet so surreal that it is unimaginable. Part of this fairy tale, metaphorically, is told through the relating of Andersen's story. Thus, Francisco frames her own story of rape as one among many that she will tell in her lifetime. By making rape part of a story that can be told,

she brings it into the realm of regular human conversation and experience. The scenes of her reading *The Snow Queen* to her young son in sections entitled "Bedtime Stories" actually stage the transmission of knowledge that occurs in storytelling. And indeed, she concludes the text with the scene of her telling her son that she had survived rape before he was born.

The fact that Francisco reads her son this story at bedtime also suggests the importance of assuring a safe nighttime environment for both herself and her son. "Bedtime Story / 2" precedes a chapter called "Fear," in which she discusses her night terrors resulting from the attack. She writes, "Here's what the nights were like: *Felt the fear last night. Heard a floor creak and lost control. Like dominoes falling, the fear escalated*" (73). The juxtaposition of the bedtime story with her night terrors implies that Francisco ultimately overcame her nightmares, finding coping strategies that she can pass on to her son. Her clear reliance on stories, on "Once upon a time," proves that she has not lost her total faith in words.

Nature

Both memoirists appeal to nature to depict the extent of their suffering. Nancy Raine calls on nature to understand her fractured self, but she does so without universalizing her experience. Moments before the rapist attacked her, Raine remembers the soothing sounds of a bird singing outside. Later, she wonders if the bird "was a warning that [she] should have heeded?" (9). She explains, "The feelings of wholeness evoked by my connection with nature, feelings that had been a glimpse of heaven since my childhood, were transformed in an instant into feelings of foreboding." Raine feels that her

rapist stripped her of the comfort she took from nature: "Listening to the song was a prayer...in those last minutes before my terror began, I felt blessed" (8). Her heavy reliance on metaphor throughout the memoir implies the difficulty of structuring trauma with words. She describes the terror she felt after her initial, numb, response to the attack as literally splitting open inside her, "splitting out an uncharted island where [she] was now stranded. Its peaks and valleys, its shores and streams would take a lifetime to explore, but [she] didn't know that. [She] stood on its shore bewildered" (15). Her analogy of the aftermath of rape with being stranded on an island portrays, on a more relatable level, the feeling of isolation and "otherness" that followed the attack. She provides a vivid image for her readers, inviting them to join her. Raine also calls on an island to represent her new self. She writes, "I was like a coastal island submerged by a storm surge. I had no shore, no definition, no borders" (33). The submerged island illustrates the sense of simply existing, not living – of being swallowed whole.

Francisco's discussion of the way that rape interferes with women's ability to enjoy nature locates her critique of rape in a very specific historical and cultural moment. She universalizes the appreciation of nature, assuming that all women wish to encounter nature in the way that she does. Because she has taken great solace in the outdoors (she often mentions the beauty of the landscape in Minnesota, where she is writing), and she no longer feels safe in wild spaces after her rape, she laments the loss of her ability to enjoy nature freely. She mourns the consequent loss of "a windy open quality in [her] spirit" and names this loss as "a female grief" (217). Francisco promotes the misogynist opinion that links women to the earth, to nature. She

fantasizes about building a walled garden, “a place where women collared by fear can walk and let beauty hold them up” (218). Rather than fight against the social structures that permit rape, Francisco would rather lock all women up in a “protected and wild” (barricaded) garden. This does not offer women freedom of movement, which is something that the threat of rape takes away from them. Furthermore, it assumes that a woman cannot rape another woman.

Francisco grieves for herself as well as for other women, and cites the example of the Central Park jogger. That Francisco uses the case of the Central Park jogger as a reference point here is telling. The Central Park jogger story embodies cultural beliefs about rape and sets up the paradigm for white women’s stories of rape. Although she was raped in her home, the threat of stranger rape is inherent in Francisco’s fear of the woods. Francisco’s emphasis on the loss of natural spaces, as opposed to the loss of safety in one’s own home or in the presence of one’s loved ones, participates in a specific dominant rape discourse that locates it outside of the home, taking place between strangers, rather than in private spaces among intimates.

Justice?

Ultimately, Francisco portrays our current institutions, such as the psychological establishment and the law, as being capable, with some moderation, of bringing about a fairer world for women. She imparts a sense of optimism to the text by describing the trial of a man, who, as the police assumed of her own rapist, had raped several women unknown to him.

Although there was not enough evidence to even look for her rapist, Francisco seems to find peace by attending this court case thirteen years after her rape. In the chapter of her memoir entitled "Justice," she explains that this case gave her reason to hope for a better judicial system, although the court system most often disappoints rape survivors. The defendant, Timothy Baugh, was convicted of all 83 counts of a combination of sexual assault and burglary charges and sentenced to a 139-year sentence. Her vision of justice, then, includes the long-term imprisonment of those who have perpetrated rapes. She describes the trial as a ritualized space of storytelling: "The structured telling of these stories enables an imaginative transaction that is deeply emotional and personal" (173). An integral part of attaining justice is the public acknowledgement of the stories of rape survivors. Here, the state acts as an official verifier of stories. Given the incredibly low attrition rate, which refers to the number of secured convictions compared with the number of reported crimes, for rape,^{vii} this is fantasy solace.

Raine demonstrates less good will toward the justice system. She is outraged to learn that only 2% of rapists are caught and that their average prison sentence stood at a year or less. She writes, "it would be I, not the rapist, who would be given the life sentence" because "rape was bad, but not that bad – it was only a-year-in-the-slammer bad. Right up there with dastardly deeds like passing bad checks" (51). Raine expresses more displeasure with the treatment of rape victim's by the legal and medical systems. In the hospital after her assault, a nurse leaves her alone in an examination room, making her wait to undergo a three-hour rape exam. Raine feels trapped by "the logic of the hospital that was trying to treat [her]

like an injured human being while re-injuring [her]" (25). For legal purposes, the nurse photographs all of her physical injuries and performs a pelvic exam to extract the "evidence inside [her]" (28). Legally, these steps are important and necessarily technical, but for Raine, as well as other victims, the process only heightened her sense of alienation and devastation. Furthermore, she finds the ritualized storytelling required to file a police report to be re-traumatizing, rather than healing. She had to "sever the pain of facts from the facts themselves," and explains that this "heightened [her] sense of fragmentation" of self (31).

Francisco notes that in the trial she sat through, there is an obvious disparity between the race of the defendant and his supporters (black) and every one else in the courtroom (white), including the judge and most of the jury, and merely hints at the possibility that there is also a certain disparity of power that goes along with that divide. For her, these factors do not undermine the justness of the trial. She believes in a criminal justice system that is inherently racist and perpetuates racism by not acknowledging it. Francisco at least mentions that "same-race rape is the norm, and white men make up the majority of men arrested for rape" (175). Thus, there is some attempt to avoid perpetuating the stereotype that black men commit most rapes, but it is definitely significant that this chapter, which serves as a climax or a catharsis in the text, invokes the black on white rape narrative.

Francisco's intention here is to experience the satisfaction of revenge on this "surrogate" (169) for her rapist. She does not intend to explore the politics of race as it relates to rape, and thus makes no attempt to dismantle stereotypes or allow more space in her narrative for other kinds of rapes. While this trial

clearly helped her heal, her engagement with it exacerbates open wounds of racism for others.

Francisco openly admits to a generalized sense of racism instilled in her during her childhood in 1960s Detroit. She claims that the race of her rapist did not matter to her, which she clearly proves to be false in her discussion of the “surrogate” trial. She writes,

The race of the man who raped me rarely enters into my thinking. Although I never got a clear look at him, I surmised from his voice and a flash of vision before I was blindfolded that he was black...For a while I was more wary than usual around black males I did not know, but I have always carried that wariness, relatively unexamined from childhood, like a bad habit. (175)

Racism is not *like* a bad habit; it *is* a bad habit. Other than this brief mention of her rapist’s race, there is little discussion of race anywhere else in the text.

In this final chapter, Francisco implies that a more proactive and accurate criminal justice system and the incarceration of rapists is the best path to protecting women from rape. Though she hints earlier in her narrative at the need for societal attitudes towards women to change (and become less misogynistic), she ultimately reaffirms the role of the conventional justice system. She writes, “Fifteen years ago when I was raped, the law giving victims the right to speak in court did not exist in Minnesota...Certainly the justice system continues to disappoint rape survivors. But all over my town, this trial and this verdict were seen as signs

of change" (195). This conclusion is a token that has been aggrandized to have social significance. The true implication is that rapists are rarely ever charged, much less tried, and only seldom convicted.

Feminist Critiques

Both Raine's and Francisco's memoirs gesture towards the rape script, particularly the stigma surrounding rape victims, without calling explicit attention to it. A vital component of their recovery involves coming to terms with the language that is available to talk about rape. They discuss the difficulty of telling others (and themselves) that they had been raped. Francisco explains the difference between the statements "I was raped" and "a man raped me." In both structures she is the object acted upon, but the former phrase hides responsibility, while the latter directly indicates the perpetrator, the subject. Similarly, both Francisco and Raine reference "the rape" instead of "my rape" throughout their memoirs. This intentional detachment helps Francisco reference the event without attaching herself to it. She describes the guilt she feels whenever rape comes up: "I feel responsible for introducing pain into the conversation. More than that, I feel responsible for the existence of the word itself" (10). Both women also recognize the difficulties inherent in the word "rape." One of the most effective tools used to silence the reality of rape has been the proliferation of other, watered down, words to describe such an event: "We call it *assault*, *sexual violence*, but rarely say *rape*, the harshness of the word itself an offense" (Francisco, 10). Nancy Raine also speaks of her reluctance to use the word: "To say that I had been raped, to use the word, required that I sort out the incubi from the saber

tooths from whatever it was that had just destroyed my apartment" (20). Saying "rape" would push her out of her living nightmare, which she endured alone and could deny, into the reality and viewpoints of others.

Both women also grapple with the terms "survivor" and "victim." As she acknowledges, the modifier missing in our use of the word "survivor" is "physical." She writes, "Indeed, my physical body survived, but for a very long time I felt like a woman in mourning" (15). She mourned the spiritual, sexual, and affectional death of her self – "*I died a different kind of death.*" The labels victim and survivor condense a woman's entire life story, entire identity, down to one (or more) moment(s) in time. She gets lost in these words. Nancy Raine explains, "Whenever I see the words *the victim*, I want to fill in the blank" (90). While this shroud of secrecy works to protect a woman's privacy, it simultaneously makes her and her experience invisible. She joins the rhetoric of abstractions and statistics. "Anonymous, unless murdered," writes Francisco (13). Death can be announced, but rape goes unspoken. These words are inherently subjective, but are frequently used in an objective manner, without qualification, thus desensitizing and depersonalizing the traumatic event.

Neither woman's memoir explicitly calls on feminist analyses of the gender politics that influence sexual violence in American culture. However, they gesture towards feminist concerns regarding rape when charting their recoveries. Francisco expects that making rape audible would incite action, and her own knowledge of rape prompts her involvement in the Silent Witness Project described in the chapter entitled "Visibility." The project consisted of the construction of 26 life-size wooden silhouettes to represent

each of the women killed by domestic violence in Minnesota in 1990. The group organizers took the silhouettes around the state to promote awareness of domestic violence, and brought them to a lobbying event called “Women Come to the Capitol” in Minnesota and eventually to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the 1995 crime bill. Francisco explains that making the deaths of these women visible was an important part of honoring their memory and of seizing the attention of the world. This attention to intimate-partner violence shed light on the fact that violence against women is most commonly perpetrated by someone known, indeed, dear to the victim. Francisco goes no further in her critique of rape culture, but she does continually emphasize the importance of bringing awareness to the reality of

Although Raine does not partake in any anti-rape activism, she does devote a significant section of her writing to the rape culture within the United States. She approaches the subject after summarizing her research on PTSD and explaining how it helped her understand her self after trauma. She also says that the research she did on the 1970s women’s movement and subsequent rape prevention programs served as a path towards healing. Both she and Francisco share their research on rape, including statistics, feminist arguments, and case studies.

Raine explains that if we take the most conservative figure for the number of rapes committed in 1991 in our country – 106,593 – and compare it to the number of Americans killed in Vietnam, we will find that in 1991 alone, 48,458 more women were raped than military personnel died in the entire Vietnam War. This statistic means that if we were to list the name of each reported rape victim for that year alone, the wall would have be to twice as

long as the Vietnam War Memorial. However, Raine goes further by noting that according to a 1992 study by the National Victim Center and Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, only one out of six rapes is reported to the police. Thus, if we were to combine the number of reported rapes and the probable number of unreported rapes, “the wall would need to be eleven times longer just to accommodate the names of women raped in 1991” (69). This image has me reeling; I had never fully comprehended the appalling magnitude of rape in this country. Like the Silent Witness Project that Francisco took part in, Raine’s metaphor takes up space, demanding the witnesses’ attention.

Francisco also explores the use of metaphor to emphasize the extent to which rape infects our society, but she chooses an aural metaphor rather than a visual one:

If the occurrence of rape were audible, its decibel level equal to its frequency, it would overpower our days and nights, interrupt our meals, our bedtime stories, howl behind our lovemaking, an insistent jackhammer of distress. We would demand an end to it. And if we failed to locate its source, we would condemn the whole structure. We would refuse to live under such conditions. (2)

Here, the metaphor of the decibel level and the frequency suggest that rape has a concrete and measurable impact on our society. Were the true impact or the true sound of rape to be heard, people would be compelled to act to end it.

Since Francisco notes that images of women as objects and images of

violence against women abound in popular media, she does espouse the feminist tenet that rape is a mechanism of patriarchy, a means for men to exert control over women. She attempts to learn about the causes of rape from a psychological perspective and finds the biological arguments unconvincing, such as the idea that from an evolutionary perspective, men had to be aggressive in their mating techniques and thus there has been natural selection towards sexual violence. She then gestures toward the American cultural context and suggests that the American “sexual culture” is to blame (193). She concludes, however, “rape remains one of the most intractable mysteries of human behavior, so complex it has thus far defied explanation and treatment.” According to this view, rape is an expression of an unstoppable, natural force in the universe, thus making any attempts at its prevention futile: *“I’m going to kill you. I’m going to break your fucking arms and then I’m going to cut you up, you fucking cunt”* (Raine 20-1). What is complex or mysterious about those words? Rapists tell their victims why they rape, what they want, in their threats, degradations, and actions. Rape is not a necessary evil. Why does Francisco want to make rape so mysterious? In order to understand rape, she would have to recognize the inequality and oppression that infects American society – a difficult understanding to come to terms with, particularly for an upper-middle class white woman.

Conclusion

It is not so much women's lack of language as their failure to speak profoundly to one another.

-- Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life*

Nancy Raine and Patricia Francisco force their readers to see rape, to give identities to rape victims that are hidden in the vague statistics published every year, and to realize that sexual violence is a problem in our society. Both writers reconstruct their identities through life-writing. They reclaim their relationships to language and, in doing so reaffirm their agency as subjects. While they may not completely unite their shattered selves, both women learn to accept the fragmentation and embrace the destabilization of their identities. The violence – physical, emotional, and verbal – that they depict is essential to their testimonies; rape cannot be softened. The penetrative effects of rape must be known and the public must not be sheltered from its reality. The memoirs' structures demonstrate the writers' understanding of this necessity. Both women reflect the shattering of their selves in the fragmented, non-linear structures of their memoirs. Francisco and Raine adopt multiple voices, graphic personal imagery, and thick metaphoric patterns to convey their pain. Raine writes of being stuck in cement, slowly chipping herself out, and Francisco describes herself as a rock, neutral and dosed on morphine, “absorbed by tendril and petal” (57). These images leave readers unable to deny the effects of rape on survivors and victims alike.

These works also prove the importance of literature, and of art, to enact social change. Art makes the invisible visible. It “keep[s] everyone in

the circle” (Francisco 206). If you are isolated by something, an experience or a fact of your life that causes you to feel alone, and inarticulate in that aloneness, art can make a connection: “the story and the image can carry us until we find our footing” (207). What sustains pain is when the source remains unidentified. Unarticulated. When it has not been given expression or shape. The process of shaping transforms an experience from something that is disturbing and isolating into something that you can stand – that stands outside of you. You can claim it, or you can put it away. Not everyone has the ability to articulate and give shape to feelings or experiences, and that is why we need art. It is a service, like any other service, that we are grateful for.

I believe in the transformative power of testimony. However, as a society, we must be careful not to over-emphasize women’s experiences of sexual violence. In emphasizing the strategy of piecing together our reality as a rape culture through personal narratives and speakouts, we also participate in placing the event of sexual violence as a defining moment of women’s possibilities for being in the world. I do not question the usefulness of rape narratives for personal recovery, but I do wonder to what extent these stories simply re-establish gendered power relations in the push to make rape culture visible. It is much easier to view ourselves as the oppressed than as the oppressors, but in acknowledging the oppression that we impose on others, we can take responsibility for our actions, and consequently regain some of the power we lost as victims.

An optimistic vision of personal narrative emphasizes the speaker’s agency through self-transformative storytelling. The intimacy of the structure

invites empathy through its immediacy and emotionality. Personal narrative can educate, empower, and emancipate. On the other hand, a reliance on personal narrative raises concerns over its potential for misleading consolations and diversions from material conditions, as well as its inscription of experience within existing structures of domination. Personal narrative can individualize and over-personalize; it can normalize, naturalize, and moralize. Telling one's story always carries risk, both existential and political. It hovers on the fine line between hegemony and resistance, between recuperation and transgression – disclosure may increase as well as diminish domination (Alcoff and Gray). Personal narrative situates us not only among marginalized and muted experience but also among the mundane communication practices of ordinary people. Placed against the backdrop of disintegrating master narratives, first-person accounts respond to the wreckage, the reclaiming, and the reflexivity of postmodernity.

The impersonal and reductive language that traditional academia so values is not adequate to the task of unveiling this country's rape culture. Such institutions legitimize cultural meanings, and it is within them that society's conceptions of rape must change. To do so requires the proliferation of personal testimonies from those affected by sexual violence. In order to broaden the category of what we call "the academic," books such as *Telling* and *After Silence*, that foreground intersectionality, need to be read, critiqued, and used in pedagogy.

I wish that all it would take for a woman to protect herself against rape would be for her to dress more conservatively, or to avoid dark alleys, or to monitor her drinking. At least then we, as women, would still be able to

control what happens to our bodies and our selves. At least then we could obliterate the permissibility of rape. But neither women nor men are the problem, although we feed it. The problem is so deeply ingrained in our standards of conduct, in our sense of morality that most of the time we do not even see it. Rape is invisible.

ⁱ When examining statistics on sexual violence, it is important to keep in mind that rape and sexual assault are largely underreported. The 2006 National Violence Against Women Survey revealed that only 1 in 5 women (19.1%) who were raped as adults reported their rape to the police.

ⁱⁱ This relates to a larger problem of the individualist liberal subject that became an intellectually dominant conception at the turn of the century, around the same time as industrialization.

ⁱⁱⁱ More statistics: 1 out of every 6 American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. 17.7 million American women have been victims of attempted or completed rape.

^{iv} Francisco notes that the phrase "a fate worse than death" is listed as a synonym for rape in *Roget's Thesaurus* (172).

^v In the myth, Hades, the god of the underworld, desired the beautiful young Persephone and stole her from her mother, the goddess of the Harvest, Demeter. Although Persephone was eventually freed from Hades and the underworld, she had eaten a pomegranate and thus had to return for a portion of every year. When her daughter was in the underworld, Demeter refused to let anything grow. Thus, Persephone's return became associated with the harvest and the fertility of land. This myth was celebrated in Ancient Greece by the cult of Eleusis in a series of rituals, known as the Eleusinian mysteries, whose details the participants were forbidden to disclose. Another silencing of rape.

^{vi} She notes that, according to the translator's notes in her version of the poem, the hymn's language strongly suggests rape, particularly in the use of the Greek word "biazomenes," which has connotations of overpowering force, as in "suffering violence."

^{vii} While the 6% conviction rate for rape cases has been reneged and updated to a much more reasonable 58% (considering the average conviction rate for all cases is 57%), the real problem is the attrition rate, which is 12% for rape cases. The problem is the number of cases that never get to trial (Bancroft).

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