

Silenced No More: Transformation of Female Sexual Violation into Sacred Stories and Sacred Silence

Chaya M. Abrams¹, Ph.D., LPC LAC

Abstract

Holocaust literature has historically focused on generalized genocide of Jews throughout several decades, with scarce mention of Jewish sexuality, reproductive functioning, or sexual trauma (Chalmers, 2015). This paper addresses silenced female sexual violations that occurred within ghettos and concentration camps during the Holocaust. A background of Jewish sexuality in Germany prior to World War II is examined, as well as the impact of the *Rassenschande* Laws on violations of the female body and intelligence. The terms *traumatic silence* and *sacred silence* are presented and defined by the author and discussed in context of current scholarly ways of understanding silence in posttraumatic response. Observations of silenced sexual violations are discussed through examples from the author's visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and conceptualized as sacred stories of Holocaust women. To support this stance, sacred stories of several minority female writers are portrayed in this paper as examples of strength during times of oppression. Through externalization of silenced sacred stories, transformation of female sexual violations from traumatic silence to whole-hearted sacred silence is possible. Implications for re-authorship of traumatic stories into sacred stories are introduced through contemporary western attitudes toward the sexuality and reproductive rights of women.

Keywords: female sexual violation, sacred stories, traumatic silence, sacred silence

1. Introduction

The majority of Holocaust literature over several decades has focused on generalized genocide of Jews through venues of torture, starvation, gassing, diseases contracted in ghettos, and death at the hands of Nazi killing units, or *Einsatzgruppen*. An act of Nazi brutality that has been historically silenced, however, is manipulation of Jewish sexuality and reproductive functioning in an attempt to eradicate Jewish existence deemed unfit by Aryan standards of purity (Chalmers, 2015). Specific to this paper, I discuss silenced female sexual trauma that occurred within the ghettos and concentration camps in Eastern Europe.

I was drawn to this topic after conducting a recent study that examined how persons having experienced Historical Trauma Response (HTR) connect to sacred stories in psychotherapy (Abrams, 2019). Although the study did not intentionally target an exclusive sample of female trauma survivors, all participants were female and several hailed from marginalized populations. The participants' experiences of Historical Trauma and Historical Trauma Response (HTR) opened my eyes further to the complexity of silenced female trauma. Compelled by a quest for more information, I toured Auschwitz-Birkenau and was engulfed by trauma associations so strong, I felt my body contract and hold the echoes of the violations suffered by women of the camp. Following that visit and through subsequent writings, I wish to break the tortured silence of women whose cries permeate my entire being. I lend a gentle hand to the reader in exploration of female testimonies of sexual violations over several decades.

¹ Faculty Member, University of Colorado Denver, School of Education and Human Development, Counseling Program
Correspondence: chaya.abrams@ucdenver.edu Phone: +1 303-947-3356

1.1 Female testimonies

After World War II, detailed testimonies of sexual violence against women emerged in print and featured graphic accounts of survivors. With the approach of the 1940s and 1950s, however, discussion of such suffering became undesirable and publication of Holocaust memoirs decreased. Historians of the time favored objective cases of survival over personal narratives, and though this phenomenon shifted somewhat after the Eichmann trial in 1961, female testimonies of sexual trauma were largely concealed. When research of human sexuality gained popularity toward the end of the 1990s, new and improved methodological strategies for addressing sexual violence emerged. The combination of more efficient methodology and renewed respect for voiced testimonies of survivors prompted an influx of publications on sexuality during the Holocaust within recent years (Timm, 2017).

The aforementioned increase of literature on Jewish sexuality during the Holocaust has made it impossible for current scholars, historians, and trauma professionals to ignore testimonies of sexual violence during World War II, a practice once coined “a weapon of war” (Mühlhuser, 1941–1945, as cited in Timm, 2017, p. 353). Acknowledgment of personal narratives over objective ones marked a significant shift toward the externalization of silenced survivors' stories (Timm, 2017). Though shocking, the silencing of female sexual violation is hardly surprising, as stories that transcend the common discourse often remain untold and thus, undocumented (Simons, 2014). Psychotherapists and researchers similarly struggle with immersion into the raw depths of survivors' trauma narratives (Altmaier, 2013), a phenomenon that has further contributed to historical silencing (Abrams, 2019).

Due to the ambivalence of clinicians and researchers to walk alongside survivors of trauma, I conceptualize sexual violence and shame experienced by Holocaust women in this paper as sacred stories, and later elaborate upon integration of sacred stories as a means of transforming *traumatic silence* into *sacred silence* (Abrams, 2019). Before addressing integration of sacred stories and testimony, I provide a historical backdrop of attitudes toward female sexuality in Germany prior to World War II. I present for the reader the inconceivable impacts of Nazi brainwashing, fear of sexual progressiveness and, above all-shaming of female intelligence and sexuality.

1.2. History of sexuality in Germany prior to World War II

The Weimer Republic of Germany (founded in 1933) placed a high emphasis on sexual liberation of all people. Based on a model of open sexuality, the Institute for Sexual Science and Physical Education was founded by Jewish activist Magnus Hirschfeld (Chalmers, 2015; Evans, 2005). The Institute advocated for contraception, promoted sex education clinics, featured literature on topics of sexuality, and legalized abortions and homosexuality. Traditional Germans, however, viewed the Institute as an intentional threat to the worldview and purity of German family life (Evans, 2005), and Hirschfeld's works and Institute became targets of violence and desecration. Above all, the Jewish ‘intelligentsia,’ (Chalmers, 2015, p. 185), or progressive intelligence of German Jews was loathed and feared (Chalmers, 2015). After Hitler rose to power, the Institute was looted by a variety of students from German schools and organizations. The students confiscated books and manuscripts on gender and sexuality and later burned them in the mass *Bücherverbrennung* (book burning) of 1933. A staggering 10,000–12,000 of Hirschfeld's prolific works went up in flames at that time (Burleigh & Wipperman, 1991; Chalmers, 2015; Evans, 2005).

Bücherverbrennung was among a series of events that demonstrated a powerful brainwashing aspect of Nazi Germany. During the same month, women's rights established during the Weimer era disappeared, and female groups were reorganized into a single Nazi Women's Front (Chalmers, 2015; Koonz, 1987). As a result of this reorganization, all sex education literature, birth control, and counseling on matters of sexuality were prohibited. The term *healthy sexuality* promoted by the Nazis referred to the open expression of sexuality among “desirable” Aryans. Consideration of sexuality as it related to Jews and other undesirable populations was seen as degenerate, as depicted in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1939), and in various popular German publications of the time. Hitler regarded sexual intimacy between Aryans and Jews as bestiality and in light of this, created the *Rassenschande*, or Racial Shame, Laws (including the Law for Protection of German Blood and Honor) to prohibit sexual contact between the two populations (Chalmers, 2015).

1.3 *Rassensch and e*Laws

The *Rassenschande* Laws greatly impacted sexuality of Jewish women in Nazi Germany. Female sexual violence at the hands of SS men was silenced for decades until the study of rape gained new focus in academia (Banwell, 2016). Although scholars such as Ringelheim (1993) and Hedgepeth and Saidel (2010) questioned whether gender mattered during the Holocaust, prolonged silence surrounding female sexual violence may have been the result of fear and disgust projected onto Jewish intimacy by way of the *Rassenschande* Laws.

Sexual abuse of Jewish women in concentration camps and ghettos is a complex discussion topic for several reasons. First, despite detailed female testimonies of sexual violence, there is no official Nazi documentation of Jewish rapes (Hedgepeth & Saidel, 2010). Second, there are obvious limitations associated with use of oral histories and testimonies as the primary source of evidence in research of sexual violence (Banwell, 2016; Greenspan, 2010). Finally, most women violated at the hands of Nazis vanished or were killed immediately after being raped (Sinnreich, 2010). Perceived Jewish contamination of Aryans contributed to the great fear of Nazi intimacy with Jews, resulting in the frequent murder of Jewish female victims following their sexual violation (Banwell, 2016).

Despite unanswered questions regarding female testimonies and the general focus of Nazi genocide on “Jews as Jews” (Banwell, 2016, p. 209), it is clear to scholars of sexuality that female lived experiences of sexual violence differed greatly from those of men (Banwell, 2016; Goldenberg, 1998; Horowitz, 1998; Ofer & Weitzman, 1998). I include Halbmyer’s (2010) definition of *sexualized violence* below to describe the power differential of female abuse at the hands of men.

The term sexualized violence makes it clear that male violence against females is not about sexuality, but is a show of power on the part of the perpetrator and includes many forms of violence with sexual connotations, including humiliation, intimidation, and destruction. From this we derive that violent acts can be understood as sexualized if they are directed at the most intimate part of a person and, as such, against that person’s physical, emotional, and spiritual integrity (p.30).

Women in concentration camps and ghettos were subjected to violations of the most sacred aspects of femininity. Although rapes occurred by fellow Jewish prisoners, intimate partners, and community leaders of ghettos, Holocaust women encountered horrors of forced sterilization, killing of their infants, coerced nakedness, sexual sadism, involuntary reproductive experimentation, and violent rapes at the hands of male SS officers (Banwell, 2016). Perhaps most dehumanizing, however, were the acts of sexual humiliation and mutilation of reproductive organs in concentration camps and ghettos. Menstruating women, for example, tore segments off of their uniforms in attempt to staunch menstrual flow and were then beaten by the SS for doing so (Chalmers, 2015). Similarly, several survivors described the guards’ violent twisting and maiming of their breasts and nipples when breastfeeding as punishment for sustaining Jewish children (Banwell, 2016). In cases of sexual sadism, Banwell (2016) suggested that violence is sexualized when directed toward the most intimate of body parts, as in the two cases noted above.

During my visit to Poland, I discovered yet another shocking invasion of female intimacy and spiritual disgrace. Upon witnessing the confiscated *tallitot*, or prayer shawls of Jewish men at Auschwitz (see Figure 1), I experienced a choking sensation and could not hold back my tears. I could not make sense of this visceral feeling at the time, but attributed it to violation of spiritual Jewish life. After my return home, I learned that *tallitot* were, on occasion, sewn into undergarments for women (Banwell, 2016), forcing an agonizing moral dilemma for female prisoners: choosing between survival against the bitter elements of the camps or desecration of spiritual artifacts. Only after reading this shocking information did I comprehend the trauma that “reverberated” (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, as cited in Harrison, 2019, p. 9) in my body when I spotted the yellowing *tallitot* in the glass showcase at Auschwitz. The reverberation escalated, as did my conviction to hold silenced cries of Holocaust women dear. My visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau shook the core of my very existence. I realized that I would not—could not—tuck the remnants of female intimate violations witnessed in the camp into the margins of my existence. Instead, I resolved to cry out loudly on behalf of Holocaust women beaten into silence, and to counteract deeply internalized shame. I seek to transform traumatic silence into sacred silence (Abrams, 2019) through the silenced sacred stories of female sexual violence. In the progression of this paper, I define traumatic silence and sacred silence for the reader in context of traumatic experiences.



Figure 1. Prayer shawls or *tallitot* at Auschwitz. Os'wiecim, Poland.

2. Sacred stories

Stories hold capacity to transform the lives of those impacted by traumatic experiences (Altmaier, 2013). In fact, verbalization of sacred stories is known to be the most effective vessel through which the sacred enters everyday existence. Sacred story or text is defined as a compilation of cultural and personal stories that shed light upon the Self and an individual's connection to the world. Most relevant to this paper, sacred stories are seen as a threshold for weaving past stories into the present and future (Sexson, 1992).

Eliade (1957, 1987) defined the sacred component in stories as “the opposite of the profane” (p. 10), or separate from ordinary living. Possessions, art, music, cultural artifacts, and stories, therefore, are considered sacred stories for the individual or group if their existence prompts insight or connectivity to Self or others. Results of the study I conducted on Historical Trauma Response (HTR) and connection to sacred stories within psychotherapy indicated that a sacred component is bound to stories based on individual or communal attachment to the story. Findings of the study also suggested that individual or communal connections to sacred stories are amplified when explored with a trusted person, such as a psychotherapist. Finally, I learned that therapeutic witnessing through immersion into sacred stories of traumatized individuals or groups encourages the survivor(s) to regain authorship of their sacred stories in a redemptive manner (Abrams, 2019).

I chose to include these relevant findings of my previous study in this paper due to their consistency with my hypothesis that publication of silenced encounters of sexual violation will allow survivors of trauma and future descendants the capacity to regain authorship of their sacred stories. Although I acknowledge that deceased women cannot experience this triumph, I honor the unheard traumatic silence of Jewish female victims through depiction of the horror endured in ghettos and camps, and through recognition of the oppression associated with prolonged historical silencing.

3. Traumatic silence

The definition of silence is the absence of speech (Kidron, 2009). The inability of trauma survivors to relay harrowing encounters in words is described by Felman and Laub (1992) as a truth that escapes the speaker and is verbally inaccessible. The mental health profession has imposed negative connotations on silence in posttraumatic response, interpreting lack of verbal capacity as avoidant or resistant (Kidron, 2009). In fact, Freud's (1953) term *nachtraglich*—or terrifying silence associated with trauma—is still reflected within societal and professional attitudes today. From his experiences of treating World War I veterans, Freud noted patients' inability to integrate traumatic experiences into consciousness, other than through flashbacks and night terrors. Freud named this agonizing phenomenon “trauma neurosis” (Freud, 1953, p. 9), and concluded that silence in posttraumatic response could only be conceptualized in a repetitive or belated manner (Freud, 1953; Khader, 2012).

Correlated with Freud's terminology, I define traumatic silence as silence that is symbolic of deep oppression the trauma survivor has endured (Abrams, 2019). In the following paragraph I provide examples of traumatic silence encounters in several settings, and most poignantly, during my visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The first example I present is Morris's (2018) novel, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, based on the true story of Lale Sokolov, a Slovakian Jew chosen to work as a *Ta"towierer*, or tattooist of Auschwitz-Birkenau. In this stunning account, the author described Lale's deep recognition of the traumatic silencing of Auschwitz women from early arrival. The following excerpt from the novel depicts the delicate impressions of a young Lale, forced to tattoo numbers onto the arms of women.

Lale starts the "job." He tries not to look up. He reaches out to take the piece of paper being handed to him. He must transfer the five digits onto the girl who held it. There is already a number there, but it has faded. He pushes the needle into her left arm, making a three, trying to be gentle. Blood oozes. But the needle hasn't gone deep enough, and he has to trace the number again. She doesn't flinch at the pain Lale knows he's inflicting. *They've been warned-say nothing, do nothing.* (p. 40).

Lale's compassion and fear of inflicting pain onto the women of Auschwitz in his role of *Ta"towierer* touches me in a profound way. His desire to reduce the anguish of female prisoners amongst brutality reminds me of my own need to hear the unheard voices of trauma survivors. As a clinician and counselor educator, I have borne witness to traumatic silence within the practice of psychotherapy, academic discussions, and clinical supervision. I acknowledge the silencing of Historical Trauma within my family of origin as the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. The traumatic silence I experienced in my body (in the form of keeling over) at Auschwitz-Birkenau, however, was indescribable and unlike any other I had ever encountered. I discovered that this level of trauma is stored within recesses of the human body and its DNA (Harrison, 2019). In essence, human bodies become "sounding chambers" (Harrison, 2019, p. 9) for individual and collective traumatic experiences. It became clear to me that I was reliving the traumatic silence of tortured Jewish women at Auschwitz, and therefore could not escape the associated "reverberations" (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, as cited in Harrison, 2019, p. 9) in my body.

As my tour group strolled across the grounds of Auschwitz with our guide, we stopped near Block Ten (see Figure 2), a building similar in structure to others in the camp. The doors of Block Ten, however, were barred and entrance to visitors was forbidden. Our tour guide explained in a hushed tone that within that building, women were subjected to sexual torture and forced experimentation for which there was no escape. My body shook upon hearing this historical truth, and I found it impossible to speak. For what seemed like eternity, I remained rooted to the spot, my gaze fixed on the sealed windows of the wretched Block Ten. Long after the tour group moved on, I stood in the same place with my eyes closed. During those moments, I heard the strangled cries of women tormented by the invasion of their femininity, the last strands of dignity taken from them in the form of brutality and humiliation. Dozens of agonized female eyes stared at me and through me, and I bowed my head and stumbled, the haunting gazes and voices knocking me to the ground. It was there, on the grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau, fertile from Jewish blood, that I began to understand the impact of traumatic silence on collective Historical Trauma experiences and Historical Trauma Response (HTR). I suggest the term *communal silence*, or the inability of an entire community to speak out due to oppression in cases of collective trauma (Abrams, 2019).

I offer an example of communal silence below from *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* that describes Lale's horror upon discovery of the sexual violations of women trapped in Block Ten of Auschwitz. Most poignant, however, was his reaction to the communal silence of the captured women, and complete disassociation witnessed as result of prolonged sexual and psychological torture:

Slowly, he registers small movements in the enclosed area. He stumbles, transfixed at what lies beyond the fence: girls, dozens of them, naked—many lying down, some sitting, and some standing, hardly any of them moving. Paralyzed, Lale watches as a guard comes into the enclosure and walks through the girls, picking up their left arms, looking for a number, possibly one made by Lale. Finding the girl he wants, the guard drags her through the bodies. Lale looks at the girls' faces. Vacant. Silent. He notices several leaning against the wire fence. Unlike the other fences at Auschwitz and Birkenau, this one is not electrified. The option of self-destruction has been taken from them. (Morris, 2018, p. 124).



Figure 2. Block Ten of Auschwitz. Os'wiecim, Poland.

It is with great difficulty that I dare document extreme acts of Nazi cruelty, such as the ones discussed in this section. As a woman who holds deep regard for the feminine, my senses are flooded when imagining the magnitude of intentional assault to the female body, psyche, and spirit. This flooding brings me back to the realizations I came to during prolonged moments near Block Ten, and the resolve to create sacred stories from the horror.

4. Sacred silence and unspeakability

From my place on the manicured lawn of Auschwitz, I acknowledged that acts of witnessing and telling unheard stories of female survivors hold possibility for transformation of traumatic silence into sacred silence. Sacred silence is whole-hearted silence, a silence that is revered. Sacred silence occurs when the traumatized individual or group develops a whole-hearted relationship with silence (Abrams, 2019), or “the presence of absence” (Kidron, 2009, p. 6). Through conceptualization of silenced testimonies of female victims as sacred stories, I strive to alter oppressive components of traumatic silence through compassion, warmth, and deep admiration of feminine strength.

Honoring loss through silence differs from the Freudian concept of *nachtraglicht* (Freud, 1953) and current therapeutic treatment of posttraumatic response. Social scientists and revisionist historians have recently begun to encourage recognition of silence as a non-pathological expression of traumatic experiences. Children of Holocaust survivors, for example, foster emotional connection with parents alweeping and the tattooed numbers on their arms, rather than the unspoken words or testimonies of Holocaust horror. Khader (2012) noted the term *unspeakability* as a phenomenon wherein all elements of language fail to convey the enormity of the trauma encountered. Similarly, Kidron's (2009) teachings suggested that varying components of silence in post trauma are considered powerful testimonies of suffering, and Caruth (1995) highlighted the vast complexity of posttraumatic response. I was engulfed by the weight of unspeakability (Khader, 2012) in front of Block Ten, but also by the presence of sacred silence.

In sum, examination of how persons having experienced Historical Trauma Response (HTR) connect to sacred stories within psychotherapy (Abrams, 2019), and my recent visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau prompted deeper understanding of silenced traumatic experiences of female Jewish survivors. Through experiencing my own “reverberations” (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, as cited in Harrison, 2019, p. 9) of body-based trauma at Auschwitz, I connected to the voices and spirits of once-tortured and now-deceased Jewish prisoners. Both experiences led me to write about transformation of the traumatic silence into sacred silence through conceptualization of silenced voices as sacred stories. I refer back to findings of the aforementioned study of HTR and sacred stories and address the aspect of regaining authorship (Abrams, 2019) through contemporary and future use of sacred stories. I then integrate historical examples of sacred stories that addressed oppressed and link the authors’ messages to current threats to female reproductive and sexual rights in U.S. society in the final section of this paper.

5. Integration of sacred stories and silence into contemporary society

I was also compelled to write about female sexual violation due to my growing dismay regarding current attitudes toward reproductive and sexual rights of women in the U.S. as of 2016. Along with an entire nation, I witnessed the public humiliation and traumatic silencing of Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford’s testimony of sexual assault by a desensitized and seemingly possessed society and presidency. I was privy, along with other media watchers, to shameless male taunting of Blasey-Ford for her courageous initiative, and found the blatant degradation of such trauma incomprehensible. I continue to struggle with the depth of oppression this act symbolized, and compare intentional shaming of women by men in positions of power to the SS men’s targeting of Jewish *intelligentsia* (Chalmers, 2015, p. 185) and the female psyche. Similar to fear and disgust of liberal sexuality that prompted the *Rassenschande* Laws and subsequent violations of women (Chalmers, 2015), the brazen actions taken to restrict and eliminate reproductive and sexual rights of U.S. women reflect fear of female self-agency in sexual decision making.

I find it imperative to integrate sacred stories into research of female sexuality and wellness due to growing despair among contemporary women regarding rights to their bodies and minds. I would like to offer hope to women within the current political climate of oppression, and therefore select several historical writings of female authors that foster empowerment in times of silencing.

6.1 Writings of women throughout history

Many courageous female writers have spoken out against colonialism, sexism, and female violence throughout history. Among these writers are women of color and indigenous groups who advocated for human rights, but more specifically for the empowerment of minority women. Dove’s (1997) poem *Parsley*, for example, told of Haitian persecution during the 1937 Haitian massacre that involved brutal killings of farm workers and their families. The massacre was initiated due to Haitian workers’ inability to pronounce the consonant “r” in the Spanish word *perejil*, or parsley. Until Dove’s (1997) poem was published, atrocities of the Haitian massacre remained unclear and hidden from the public (Suarez, 2006), but the author’s courage in writing about the oppression of her people was seen as externalization of “an overlooked aspect of Haitian history” (Barsamian, 2004, p. 3) in western literature.

Dove was invited to present *Parsley* live to the Clinton administration at the White House, and due to her willingness to address oppression of the Haitian community, three subsequent novels on Historical Trauma were published by women of Hispaniola. These writings not only began a process of “re-telling” (Ayuso, 2011, p. 49) of traumatic experiences, but also transformed these women’s traumatic silence into sacred silence through use of sacred stories (Abrams, 2019).

Henery (2017) wrote about diaspora experiences of black women in western culture and explored how the formation of a collective voice prompted connection and shattered the silence of black interiority (Henery, 2017; Quashie, 2012). Ultimately, Henery (2017) conceptualized the collection of writings as a love story that brought the longing of black women in diaspora to light and put words to Historical Trauma experiences of women of color at last (Abrams, 2019; Henery, 2017).

As a final example, I have been drawn to Chickasaw writer Hogan’s (1998–2016) writings on intergenerational wounding and the long-term results of Historical Trauma. Hogan’s novels are unique in propelling the reader toward recognition that history lives inside the human body as body-based trauma (Hogan, 2001), and she encourages each reader to experience her novels from inside the body (Hogan, 1998). The author’s 2016 article displayed conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in the recent debate over the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) as an extension of historical, land-based, and body-based trauma (Harrison, 2019; Hogan, 2016).

Hogan (1998) also underscored the power of songs (a form of story) and narratives to alter weather or even environmental elements. In her novel *Power*, for example, Hogan (1998) stated that songs “make the earth change without so much as a hammer, backhoe, or dredge” (p. 85). Her capacity to speak out against violence aimed at bodies, land, and indigenous people through use of sacred stories accentuates the strength and healing of song in cases of silenced trauma.

I mention the above publications authored by women of color or minority groups to demonstrate efficacy of integrating sacred stories into situations of adversity as means of empowerment. I note the writers' capacity for modeling determination, stamina, and courage in cases of Historical Trauma and physical or sexual violation. The phenomenon of feminine strength modeled through publication is consistent with the findings of my original study, wherein survivors of Historical Trauma hold capacity to regain authorship of their own stories through witnessing the sacred stories of others (Abrams, 2019).

6. Discussion and conclusion

Female testimonies of sexual violations during the Holocaust were published in abundance after World War II, but rapidly decreased in number due to a growing preference for objectivity over personal narratives. Though new interest and regard for the study of sexual violations has increased over the past decade, Jewish women's experiences of sexual violence were, and still are silenced (Timm, 2017). In an attempt to uncover explanations of such silencing, a historical backdrop of German attitudes toward Jewish sexuality prior to World War II was presented, and discussion undertaken of how the *Rassenschande* Laws impacted sexual violation of Jewish women at the hands of SS men. Fear and disgust associated with female progressive intelligence (Chalmers, 2015) were noted as an underlying fear that prompted subsequent acts of sexualized violence (Halbmyer, 2010) toward Jewish women performed by Nazis. Relevant to violations of female intelligence and sexuality, I shared a cultural artifact (see Figure 1) and a designated block for sexual torture (see Figure 2) witnessed during my visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I was compelled to cry out loud to counteract the silenced cries of Auschwitz women, and consider both written and unspoken female testimonies sacred stories and a vessel through which present and future sacred stories will be integrated (Sexson, 1992).

As a *wounded researcher* (Romanyshyn, 2010) of trauma, I am “chased” (Craig, 2008, as cited in Romanyshyn, 2010, p. 278) by my own unconscious desire to address (Romanyshyn, 2010) the silencing of Historical Trauma and violations of the female mind, body, and spirit. Through portrayal of unheard violations of women as sacred stories, I can only hope to transform the traumatic silence associated with these experiences to the sacred silence of redemption and whole-hearted honor of female lives. I cling tightly to the belief that sacred stories bring about great comfort and guidance to present and future readers and survivors of traumatic experiences. I aspire to attain a state of “epistemological humility” (Romanyshyn, 2010, p. 278), or sense of integrity in a sea of research findings through externalization of my deepest beliefs and recognitions.

References

- Abrams, C.M. (2019). *Partners in story: Connecting to sacred stories in historical trauma response within psychotherapy*. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.
- Altaier, E.M. (2013). Through a glass darkly: Personal reflections on the role of meaning in response to trauma. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 26(1)106-113. doi: 10.1080/09515070.2012.728760
- Ayuso, M. G. (2011). How lucky for you that your tongue can taste the ‘r’ in “Parsley”: Trauma theory and the literature of Hispaniola. *Afro-Hispanic Review*, 30(1), 47–62. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41350920>
- Banwell, S. (2016). *Rassenschande, genocide, and the reproductive Jewish body: Examining the use of rape and sexualized violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust*. *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 208-227. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2015.1049853>.
- Barsamian, D. (2004). *Louder than bombs: Interviews from The Progressive Magazine*. Cambridge, UK: South End.
- Brave Heart, M.Y.H., & DeBruyn, L.M. (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 8(2), 56. doi: 10.5820/aian.0802.1998.60
- Burleigh, M., & Wipperman, W. (1991). *The racial state: Germany 1933–1945*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Chalmers, B. (2015). Jewish womens' sexual behavior and sexualized abuse during Nazi era. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 24(2), pp. 184-196. doi:10.3138/cjhs.242-A10
- Craig, E. (2008). The human and the hidden: Existential wonderings about depth, soul, and the unconscious. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 36, 227-282. doi:10.1080/08873260802391588
- Dove, R. (1997). "Parsley". In *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (2585–2587). New York: Norton & Co.
- Evans, R.J. (2005). *The Coming of the Third Reich*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Freud, S. (1953). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Vol. 18 of *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. translated and edited by James Strachey. London, UK: Hogarth.
- Greenspan, H. (2010). *On Listening to Holocaust survivors: Beyond testimony* (2nd ed.). St Paul, MN: Paragon House.
- Goldenberg, M. (1998). *Memoirs of Auschwitz survivors: The burden of gender*. In D. Ofer & L. Weitzman (Eds.), *Women in the Holocaust* (327–339). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Halbmayr, B. (2010). Sexualized violence against women during Nazi 'racial' persecution. In S. Hedgepeth & R. Saidel (Eds.), *Sexual Violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust* (29–44). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- Harrison, S. (2019). "We need new stories": Trauma, storytelling, and the mapping of Environmental justice. In L. Hogan's *Solar Storms and Standing Rock*. *American Indian Quarterly*, 43(1), 1-35. doi: 10.5250/amerindiquar.43.1.0001
- Hedgepeth, S.M., & Saidel, R.G. (2010). *Sexual violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- Henery, C. (2017). And so I write you: Practices in black women's diaspora. *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 15(2), 435-463. doi:10.2979/meridians.15.2.08
- Hitler, A. (1939). *Mein Kampf*. London: Hurst and Blackett.
- Hogan, L. (1998). *Power*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Hogan, L. (2016). Why we are singing for water: In front of men with guns and surveillance helicopters. *Yes Magazine*. Retrieved from: www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/to-the-standing-rock-sioux-who-are-singing-for-water. 20161004
- Horowitz, S. (1998). Women in the Holocaust literature: Engendering traumamemory. In D. Ofer & L. Weitzman (Eds.), *Women in the Holocaust* (364–377). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Khader, J. (2012). Un/Speakability and radical otherness: The ethics of trauma in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. *College Literature*, 39(2), 75–97. doi: 10.1353/lit.2012.0021
- Kidron, C.A. (2009). Toward an ethnography of silence. *Current Anthropology*, 50(1), 5–27. doi: 10.1086/595623
- Koonz, C. (1987). *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the family and Nazi Politics*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Morris, H. (2018). *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*. (Kindle iPad version). Retrieved from Amazon.com.
- Mühlhuser, R. (1941–1945) *Eroberungen: Sexuelle Gewalttaten und Intime Beziehungen deutscher Soldaten in der Sowjetunion 1941–1945* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2010).
- Mühlhuser, R. (2011). Between 'racial awareness' and fantasies of potency: Nazosexual politics in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, 1942–1945. In D. Herzog (Ed.), *Brutality and desire: War and sexuality in Europe's twentieth century* (187–220). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ofer, D., & Weitzman L. (1998). Introduction. In D. Ofer & L. Weitzman (Eds.), *Women in the Holocaust* (1–18). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Quashie, K. (2012). *The sovereignty of quiet: Beyond resistance in Black culture*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Ringelheim, J. (1993). Women and the Holocaust: A reconsideration of research. In C. Rittner & J. Roth (Eds.), *Different voices: Women and the Holocaust* (374–418). New York: Paragon House.
- Romanyshyn, R.D. (2010). The wounded researcher: Making a place for unconscious dynamics in the research process. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 38: 275-304. doi: 10.1080/08873267.2010.523282
- Sexson, L. (1992). *Ordinarily sacred*. Charlottesville, VA: Virginia University Press.
- Simons, I. (2014). Sacred stories and silent voices: What the big bad wolf can teach us. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 54, 11-22. <https://doi.org/10.9774/GLEAF.4700.2014.ju.00004>
- Sinnreich, H. (2010). The rape of Jewish women during the Holocaust. In S. Hedgepeth & R. Saidel (Eds.), *Sexual violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust* (108–123). Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- Suárez, L. (2006). *The tears of Hispaniola. Haitian and Dominican diaspora memory*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Timm, A.F. (2017). The challenges of including sexual violence and transgressive love in historical writing on World War II and the Holocaust. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 26, No. 3, doi: 10.7560/JHS26301