POPULAR MEMOIRS OF WOMEN HELD CAPTIVE

Robin Hershkowitz

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2018

Committee:

Montana Miller, Advisor

Esther Clinton

Kristen Rudisill

ABSTRACT

Montana Miller, Advisor

In this thesis, I apply an interdisciplinary approach to the study of four popular captivity memoirs. Popular captivity memoirs are recent memoirs published by women who have been held captive whose stories were previously well known in the media. The four texts I work with are A Stolen Life: A Memoir by Jaycee Dugard, who was taken at age eleven and held captive for seventeen years at a home in Antioch, CA; *My Story* by Elizabeth Smart, who was taken from her bedroom at age fourteen by Brian David Mitchell and held at a camp for nine months in the Utah hills; *Finding Me, A Decade of Darkness A Life Reclaimed* by Michelle Knight, who was kidnapped at age twenty-one by Ariel Castro and held captive in his home in Cleveland for ten years with two other women; and *Hope: A Memoir of Survival in Cleveland* by Amanda Berry and Gina DeJesus, who were held captive by Ariel Castro along with Knight. These texts are significant because they provide insight into how these women choose to frame their trauma in the written form intended for mass consumption. My analysis seeks to answer the questions: What are the significant themes, ideology, and messages that are contained within these narratives? How does the medium of a popular memoir deliver the narrative of trauma to fit the ideals and expectations of readers? How do the structures and framework resemble past structural narratives, and what do these similarities say about popular narratives? To address such questions, I (1) use genre theory to identify the components of the popular captivity memoir genre, (2) apply a structural analysis adapted from folklorist Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* to identify common functions of narrative, (3) identify and analyze common themes and narrative structures within the texts, and (4) explore recent texts in film and television that appear

to be influenced by themes from popular captivity memoirs. By closely examining formulas, themes, and structures of the popular captivity memoirs, this thesis provides insight on how these memoirs both reflect and influence familiar narratives about reckoning with trauma.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the guidance of my thesis committee: Dr. Montana Miller, Dr. Esther Clinton, and Dr. Kristen Rudisill for the encouragement and support of the topic. Your time and guidance has been invaluable and will help me succeed as I move on in my academic career.

Thank to family and friends who supported my decision to return to graduate school.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION……..... 1

Defining the popular captivity memoir……..... 2

Thesis overview……. 5

Brief summaries of the captivity narrative texts…….... 7

CHAPTER I. EMERGING GENRE…….……..... 10

Genre formulas and conventions……. 10

The limits of truth……. 15

Representing trauma……. 18

Lowbrow and middlebrow……..... 23

Commodifying trauma as “mis lit”..... 28

CHAPTER II. ADAPTING PROPP’S METHOD…….……. . 36

Propp’s methodology……..... 39

Applying Propp’s method……..... 44

Summary……..... 57

CHAPTER III. THEMES……. 59

Stockholm syndrome…….. 59

Missing White Women…….. 65

Captive motherhood……... 69

Pain as inspiration....…….. 73

Surviving sexual assault…… 79

Summary……..... 86

CHAPTER IV. FICTIONAL NARRATIVES OF CAPTIVIY……. 88

Room: I'm supposed to be happy……88

Martyrs: Revenge as Horror…… 94

The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Females are strong as hell …….. 99

Summary…….. 109

CONCLUSION……..... 111

Further research……. 114

WORKS CITED……118

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Summary of Gilet's functions found within four captivity narratives	43
2	Summary of Gilet's functions found within four captivity narratives	57

INTRODUCTION

For this thesis project, I will examine recent popular memoirs of women who have been held captive by another individual or individuals. Specifically, I will examine four texts: *A Stolen Life: A Memoir* by Jaycee Dugard, who was taken at age eleven and held captive by Phillip Garrido for seventeen years at his home in Antioch, CA; *My Story* by Elizabeth Smart, who was taken from her bedroom at age fourteen by Brian David Mitchell and held at a camp in the Utah hills and later in San Diego for nine months; *Finding Me, A Decade of Darkness A Life Reclaimed* by Michelle Knight, who was kidnapped at age twenty-one by Ariel Castro and held captive in his home in Cleveland for ten years with two other women; and *Hope: A Memoir of Survival in Cleveland* by Amanda Berry and Gina DeJesus, who were held captive by Ariel Castro along with Knight.

These texts are significant because they provide insight into how these women choose to frame their trauma in the written form intended for mass consumption. As is common with popular texts, they contain ideas that both influence and are connected to current cultural beliefs and embody ways in which trauma is represented within popular culture. In this thesis, I aim to inspire further curiosity about these texts as significant cultural artifacts that bring up important questions, such as: What are the significant themes, ideology, and messages that are contained within these narratives? How do these memoirs fit the conventions and create inventions within genres? How does the medium of a popular memoir deliver the narrative of trauma to fit the ideals and expectations of readers? How do the structures and framework resemble past structural narratives, and what do these similarities say about popular narratives?

To address such questions in this thesis, I will (1) apply genre theory that the chosen texts, which I will refer to as popular captivity memoirs, to identify the characteristics of an emerging genre, (2) explore the themes and narrative events using various concepts adapted from Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Russian Folktale,* (3) identify and analyze common themes and narrative structures within the texts, and (4) explore recent texts in film and television that appear to derive their themes and structures from popular captivity memoirs.

I chose these texts for several reasons. One is that they are based on cases that took place in the last fifteen years and received considerable media attention. All the books appeared on the *New York Times* bestsellers list, even if just for a short time. Additionally, they are all written from the first-person perspective (although in conjunction with other authors, and, presumably, some help from a ghost writer), and finally, all focus on telling the accounts of the traumatic details of the women's ordeals, rather than an overview of their entire lives. It is also significant that these memoirs were published a short time after their escape and rescue, except for Elizabeth Smart, who published hers ten years after her rescue.

Defining the popular captivity memoir

I refer to this emerging genre as "popular captivity memoirs" for several reasons. First, this is to distinguish it from the Indian captivity memoirs from the late 1800s. Indian captivity narratives are first person narratives purportedly based on true stories of white women captured by American Indians. These stories represented white men's fear of the Native Americans violating white women. In their extensive study, *The Indian Captivity Narrative 1500-1900,* Derounian-Stodola and Levernier explain, "As long as Indians remained a viable threat to frontier settlement, white readers wondered what fearful things happened to unfortunates" (15).

Along with true accounts, there were also many fictional accounts written that exploited the appeal of a first-person account. This phenomenon was a precursor to the commercial success of memoirs of trauma. Like the popular captivity memoir, early Indian captivity narratives share a common three part architecture: (1) separation of the woman from society, (2) initiation of the woman into her captor's society, and (3) return to her original life (Derounian-Stodola & Lavernier 39). Although these texts are not fully examined in my research, their appeal is very likely similar to the appeal of the popular captivity memoirs.

Secondly, I specifically use the term "popular" to refer to cultural artifacts that are not simply commercially popular but take on the cultural meanings of the audience's relation to them. There are many definitions of popular within cultural studies scholarship. Ray Browne applies the term popular to the concept of popular culture, which he describes as "all those elements of life which are not narrowly intellectual or creatively elitist and which are generally though not necessarily disseminated through the mass media" (21). In other words, they are available to the largest number of people and contain no barriers based on institutional knowledge or financial means. Popular captivity memoirs are easily found in a bookstore or online for about fifteen dollars. The ability to consume the content is also free of a requirement of special knowledge or cultural capital. These books are not sought out because of the proficiency in language or the type of writing found in the type of books considered literary achievements. The language is suited for a range of reading levels and is not particularly complicated, nor are the books long. Thus, I use the term popular to indicate that it is part of a culture of the masses as well as commercially successful.

The term "memoir" is appropriate because of its designation as non-fiction and the depiction of real-life events in the first person. Along with general curiosity about the lives of

others, memoirs have risen in popularity because of the rise of cultural narcissism, especially since the 1970s. Mitchell and Trouth explain the rise of memoirs to cult status because "curiosity, coupled with the American free market, equates to a thriving memoir cult in which readers want writers, whether they are somebodies or nobodies, to simply tell them everything" (22). According to Mendelson, the dramatic confessions of daytime talk shows led to a fascination with experiencing "authenticity" in our entertainment:

> This awkward blurring of the real and the artificial both parallels and feeds off another dramatic confusion: that between private and public life. The advent of cell phones has forced millions of people sitting in restaurants, reading on commuter trains, idling in waiting rooms, and attending the theatre to become party to the most intimate details of other people's lives—their breakups, the health of their portfolios, their psychotherapeutic progress, their arguments with their bosses or boyfriends or parents. This experience of being constantly exposed to other people's life stories is matched only by the inexhaustible eagerness of people to tell their life stories—and not just on the phone.

The development of the modern publishing industry and the rise of digital communication have fueled the curiosity and knowledge of other people's lives through the availability of published works, such as blogging and social media. In fact, sharing more of our own lives has become almost compulsory. If someone has had an interesting experience or experienced trauma, others expect and even yearn to hear the details. The narcissism of sharing our own lives is imposed upon us by the expectation of others to share.

Early memoirs used to be about an individual's relationship to larger, more abstract concepts, such as God, nature, and politics. However, more recent memoirs reflected an inward look at an individual's own experiences. "Once the memoir stopped being about God and started being about Man, once 'confession' came to mean nothing more than getting a shameful secret off your chest—and, maybe worse, once 'redemption' came to mean nothing more than the cozy acceptance offered by other people, many of whom might well share the same secret— it was but

a short step to….the belief that confession is therapeutic and therapy is redemptive and redemption somehow equals art" (Mendelsohn). With many of the memoirs, the excitement is in the details. These details create a vicarious experience and sense of danger for the reader. The reader can experience the lows of addiction to drugs, the taboo nature of crimes committed, and marvel at the depths of degradation of being abused.

Within the larger category of popular trauma memoirs, popular captivity memoirs create a special interest and fascination. Several fragments of the narratives are similar to other cultural fascinations: a woman in peril, the fear of domestic violence and sexual assault, the meaning of childhood innocence, adaptive survival behaviors, and, as mentioned, the inspiration of surviving a trauma. My goal is to not determine an absolute reason for the cultural significance of popular captivity memoirs. Rather, I intend to analyze popular captivity memoirs using current cultural studies methods to better understand their context within popular culture.

Thesis overview

The research and theoretical bases for this project originate across several disciplines, including genre theory, literary criticism, trauma studies, and folklore. The interdisciplinary nature of the subject provides the opportunity for multiple perspectives on a popular culture text. Chapter one will explore the context of these texts and their significance in popular culture, emphasizing the "popular." Although these memoirs draw from true events, I will consider them self-contained texts. This allows me to analyze the memoirs as independent texts, separate from news and media reports of the traumatic incidents. Therefore, genre is an important place to begin. John Cawelti's *Adventure, Mystery, Romance (1977)* provides the foundation for understanding genre. Cawelti states that genre is built from on the use of common formulas,

which are "a combination or synthesis of a number of specific cultural conventions to form a more universal story form or archetype" (6). My chosen texts contain unique conventions and themes that fit Cawelti's definition of formula. Additionally, I will further explore the notion of "popular" as it is related to mass culture, relating it to Lawrence Levine's concept of highbrow and lowbrow culture, as well as Beth Driscoll's concept of middlebrow culture. Relying heavily on Anne Rothe's *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media* (2015), I will explore how popular captivity memoirs face the possibility of becoming "trauma kitsch," in which the victims of tragedies are commercially exploited for the demand of the excruciating details of their suffering. Finally, I will address the nature of trauma and the concept of witnessing, based on the work of Gary Weissman and psychologists Cathy Caruth and Dori Laub.

In chapter two, I identify a common formula from these memoirs, creating a structural analysis of this emerging subgenre. For this, I found inspiration in an established study of narratives, Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Russian Folktale* (1958). Propp identified thirty-one functions of hundreds of Russian folktales. He defines a function as "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (21). I will identify the presence of these functions within the four popular captivity narratives. My intention in comparing the captivity memoirs to Russian folktales is not one of inclusion; in other words, I do not make the claim that the captivity narratives serve as modern folktales. Rather, I intend to illuminate the similarities to show that captivity narratives carry some of the same themes and structure of narratives that have long existed. There are common narrative forms and actions that happen across texts as disparate as Russian fairytales and popular captivity memoirs. Even

though memoirs are based on true events, how they are told through the medium of a popular memoir follows a common, familiar narrative.

In chapter three, I will conduct a close reading of the four texts to identify common themes. These themes include (1) adapting survival methods (2) the social identities of the women and their captors, (3) sexual assault and its implications, (4) the experience of motherhood while in captivity, and (5) the use of these narratives as inspiration and their relationship to self-help.

In chapter four, I discuss fictional texts that explore themes of captivity through visual mediums. This will build on the other chapters and show how the genre conventions, themes, and structures of popular captivity narratives have influenced the creation of fictional narratives. The drama film *Room* (2015), the horror film *Martyrs* (2008), and the situation comedy *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015) use their own genre conventions and character representations to explore women in captivity. Analyzing these texts will illustrate how women in captivity can be represented within fictional narratives, and how fictional characters take on themes from the popular captivity memoirs.

Brief summaries of the captivity narrative texts

To best understand my analysis, the reader needs some knowledge of the books and the cases they chronicle. The following are the important dates, events, and people involved in each of the cases that are described in this thesis. This information will provide the context needed for when I reference them throughout the thesis.

A Stolen Life was published in 2011 by Jaycee Dugard when she was thirty-one years old. Jaycee was kidnapped in 1991, at age eleven, by Phillip and Nancy Garrido. They approached

her on a suburban street a few blocks from her home and forced her into their van. Jaycee was held at the Garridos' home in Antioch, California for the next seventeen years. After several years, she was not physically contained, but still stayed with Garrido and his wife. She had two daughters as a result of rape by Garrido, one when she was fourteen and one when she was sixteen. Garrido was a convicted sex offender but officials who checked on him did not report the young women and children who were seen at his house. Jaycee's identity was discovered in 2009 when she was twenty-nine, by two UC Berkeley Police Officers when Garrido brought his family to the campus to ask for permits for an event. After conviction, Phillip Garrido was sentenced to life in prison. Nancy was given a shorter sentence due to her cooperation with law enforcement.

In 2013, at age twenty-four, Elizabeth Smart published *My Story*, ten years after her rescue from captivity at age fourteen. Elizabeth Smart lived with her devout Mormon family in Salt Lake City Utah. In 2002, she was kidnapped at knifepoint from her bedroom by Brian David Mitchell, a vagrant and street preacher who thought God had instructed him to take Elizabeth as a new wife. Elizabeth's father hired Mitchell to do housework several months earlier, which was how he orchestrated the break-in and kidnapping. Elizabeth was held by Mitchell and his devoted follower and legal wife, Wanda Barzee, first at a remote campsite in the Utah mountains, and then in a remote location outside San Diego. Elizabeth was sighted by a passerby nine months into her captivity when she and her captors returned to Salt Lake City. Elizabeth admitted her identity when the police officers separated her from Mitchell and Barzee. Mitchell did not stand trial until 2010. Elizabeth, at age twenty-two, provided extensive testimony at the trial. Mitchell was sentenced to life in prison. Barzee was given a lesser sentence.

Two of the texts, *Hope* and *Finding Me*, were written by the three women held captive by Ariel Castro in his Cleveland Home. In 2013, Amanda Berry, twenty-seven, caught the attention of a neighbor, who helped her break out of Castro's home. The police were called and discovered the two other women also held in the house, chained to the walls. Michelle Knight, age twenty-two, was tricked into entering Castro's home. She had a four-year-old son in foster care at the time of her disappearance. Amanda Berry was seventeen when she was taken in the same manner in 2003. In 2006 she gave birth to a daughter, Jocelyn, who was six when the women were rescued. Gina DeJesus was taken at age fourteen. The women were chained to mattresses in separate rooms most of the time. In 2014, one year after their rescue, Michelle published *My Story*, followed in 2015 by *Hope* (co-written by Gina and Amanda). Because Castro manipulated the women and played them against each other, Michelle did not wish to continue a relationship with Amanda and Gina. Castro was sentenced to life in prison. Six weeks into his prison sentence, he took his own life in his jail cell.

In real life, these women are still trying to make sense of their trauma and struggling with recovery. This thesis focuses only on the text they produced. In the books, the women refer to each other and to themselves by their first names. Because of this and the personal nature of their memoirs, I will refer to these women by their first names throughout this thesis. My intention in interpreting their texts is not to doubt their renderings of their stories nor to imply that they are not being truthful. However, as I will discuss, the medium of the popular captivity narrative has a strong influence on how their story is filtered and how readers receive it.

CHAPTER I. EMERGING GENRE

In this chapter, I will focus on popular captivity memoirs in their context in popular culture. Placing them in context provides information that is important to understand before conducting a close reading. I propose that the phenomenon of the popular captivity memoir contains the elements of an emerging genre. Why is it necessary to identify a specific genre for these texts? Creating the parameters and patterns of the texts allows for further discussion on commonalities and meanings.

Genre formulas and conventions

Genre is commonly used as a taxonomy to define a group of cultural texts based on similarities in form and content. In mass culture, genre is used in marketing and the publishing business. However, when I use genre here, the commonalities signify more than just surface-level identifiers. I wish to define these texts as an emerging genre to consider the common themes, styles, messages, and narrative choices. Identifying these commonalities and genre conventions is important in understanding how readers connect with these books and how the narratives reflect and influence cultural myths.

I turn to John Cawelti's work on popular genre and formulas, *Adventure, Mystery, Romance,* as the basis for this analysis. Cawelti, however, is not consistent in the way he uses genre and formula. For the purposes of this study and for clarity of my argument, I define formula as a component of genre. Cawelti defines formula as "…specific cultural themes and stereotypes [that] become embodied in more universal story archetypes" (6). This includes repeated character behaviors, situations, styles, story arcs, settings, and conflicts. I am using formula to include items that are formulas in relation to themselves and appear across genres

(i.e., the hot-headed detective, the flirtatious blond, the quirky detective), as well as actions and narrative components that are specific to a genre. For example, a popular captivity narrative is largely identified by the narrative of someone being abducted, held captive, and rescued, which is specific to this particular genre. The common formulas, however, must not only be present but also, as Cawelti notes, "for these patterns to work, they must be embodied in figures, settings, and situations that have appropriate meanings for the culture that produces them" (6). In other words, these aspects must be recognizable by and hold meaning for the readers so that they create expected outcomes and qualities. To maintain readers' interest, the text can vary or add slight variations to these conventions, but it still must be rooted in the familiar. Cawelti states that these meanings change over time and are affected by sociocultural factors.

I seek to establish this emerging genre not strictly for identification, but because of the significance of its contents. Cawelti proposes four hypotheses that support why the study of genre is important. Three of these are most relevant to the study of popular captivity memoirs. The first hypothesis is that "genre affirms existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with these interests and attitudes and helps maintain consensus about the nature of reality" (35). This can be found in the narrative formula as a binary of good v. evil. In these memoirs, the captive women are the good that is in direct opposition to their captor, who is the evil. Narrator and captor represent two ends of the binary, in which the good will triumph. There is no sympathy for the captor or attempt to explain his actions; he remains the consistent evil figure throughout. These memoirs reinforce the belief that good will triumph over evil, there are deterministic, causal relationships in the world, and that criminals will eventually be punished.

In another hypothesis, Cawelti states that genre is significant because it "enable[s] the audience to explore in fantasy the boundary between the permitted and the forbidden and to experience in a carefully controlled way the possibility of stepping into this boundary" (35). Popular captivity memoirs deal with an individual's trauma and suffering. This allows for readers to experience the trauma through a narrative and not in their real lives. This is related to the concept of witnessing, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Cawelti's third relevant hypothesis is that genre "assist[s] in the process of assimilating changes in values" (36) to traditional constructs of culture. Cawelti uses the example of the Western genre. Since it has become a recognizable genre, specific attention has been paid to representation of Native Americans and people of color. Changes can and have been made in the area of identity representation, while much of the Western formulas stay the same. Thus, the Western genre can retain its consumers by maintaining familiar formulas while exposing the audience to new social ideas and perhaps gaining new audiences.

The popular captivity narratives can, for example, help inform readers of the rising threat of gendered violence and provide emotional understanding to lend better support to prevention. Recent feminist scholarship, such as the work of feminist psychoanalyst Linda Brown, has addressed the importance of studying women's lived experiences and how women are socialized to constantly fear the threat of violence. Individually, these memoirs tell of violence against one woman, but collectively, they inform us about women's experiences. Brown, referring to current sexual assault treatment, states that trauma that pertains to males is typically public, e.g., war, and that women experience trauma more in private, such as domestic and interpersonal relationship abuse. To fully understand the trauma of all people, she urges scholars and caregivers to look beyond the public into the private, to "examine our definitions of human" and

challenging how a majority of the research on trauma is associated with dominant identity groups.

With this understanding of genre, what, if any, formulas are present in popular captivity memoirs? I propose the following as the formulas that define the popular captivity memoir genre:

(1) *First-person, confessional accounts based on true cases of captivity that were highly visible in the mass media*. In the chosen memoirs, both these women's abductions and rescues were covered widely across many media venues. The reader is often aware of the author's ordeal from prior media coverage.

(2) *Written by women*. Although there can be exceptions, women primarily write popular captivity memoirs. This is because women are more likely to be victims of abduction and captivity by men, more likely to write about it, or both.

(3) *Written in easily accessible narratives*. These memoirs are not considered for their literary merit. They are written in a way that is accessible and straightforward for describing their captivity. This does not mean that the writing is rendered less intelligent. Rather, they are written in chronological order without literary devices that need interpretation or use sophisticated phrasing. Accessibility to the greatest number of people also implies that there is an expectation of these achieving commercial success.

(4) *Contain three primary narrative phases*: The books cover three major parts, told in linear time: life before capture, the time in captivity, and life after rescue. These memoirs differ from autobiography in that they are not intended to cover the whole of these women's lives, but to focus on the events directly surrounding their captivity.

(5) *Embodies a simple binary of good v. evil*. The narrator, the captive woman, is the "good" force who must triumph over the "evil" force: the captor.

(6) *Transformation and inspiration resulting from their experience*. After their captivity, the women reflect on their experience and attribute to either a higher power or their sense of resilience and mental survival. This provides inspiration for readers to overcome their own hardships.

Identifying the genre formulas of the popular captivity memoir creates opportunity to discuss their commonalities and why they are significant. Cawelti explains that "when a group's attitude undergoes some change, new formulas arise, and existing formulas develop new themes and symbols, because formula stories are created and distributed almost entirely in terms of commercial exploitation. Therefore, allowing for a certain degree of inertia in the process, the production of formulas is largely dependent on audience response" (34). Many cultural phenomena can create this inertia, including the fear of the "other" often seen in modern horror movies (Wood), the rise of mass media, anxiety over surveillance, reliance on technology and the growing isolation of people in cities.

Social issues and political causes also affect cultural norms, such as marriage equality and reproductive rights. Some cultural inertia is constructed through hegemonic beliefs rather than specific political events, such as the rise of violence against women, feelings of personal safety, the criminal justice system, and the commercialization of entertainment and leisure. In the remainder of this chapter, I will use these genre formulas to expand on the context and impact of popular memoirs by women held captive.

The limits of truth

True events inspire popular captivity memoirs that are written by the primary survivors of violence and trauma. The words memoir and autobiography, although contain slightly different meanings, are used interchangeably. According to Leigh Gilmore, in *The Limits of Autobiography: Truth and Testimony*, an autobiography "is characterized less by a set of formal elements than by a rhetorical setting in which a person places herself or himself within testimonial contexts…to achieve as proximate a relation as what approximates truth in that discourse" (3). The authors of narrative trauma have made their best efforts to tell the truth as they experienced it. Captivity narratives focus on the specific period of a traumatic incident and provide minimal preceding and anteceding information as secondary content. When analyzing an autobiography, one must accept that an ultimate truth cannot be reached, nor should that be the purpose. Gilmore identifies this as a "limit" of the autobiographical form. However, her definition of limit defines it as a benefit rather than a hindrance:

> A different question would focus on the way testimony tests a crucial limit in autobiography, and not just the one understood as the boundary between truth and lies, but rather, the limit of representativeness, with its compulsory inflation of the self to stand for others, the peculiar way it operates both to expand and constrict testimonial speech, and the way it makes it hard to clarify without falsifying what is strictly and unambiguously "my" experience when "our" experience is also at stake. (Gilmore 5)

The lens by which these women narrate their trauma is beneficial to the reader experience. The four main captivity memoirs of this study were released not long after the tragedies happened. The endless news cycle and access to a constant flow of information allows us to know the facts and the frameworks of the trauma. However, the memoirs fill in the gaps that only the person experiencing it can share. Furthermore, these women are interpreting their trauma into a narrative, written form. The experience of trauma is often not experienced in a linear fashion.

Trauma also affects an individual's memory of events. However, the form of the memoir requires that the women put their experience in narrative form because of the requirement of the medium and the expectations of a reader of a memoir. There is an unavoidable transformation that occurs from memory to page. In a written memoir, there is no absolute truth about what transpired. This limit, according to Gilmore, is unavoidable yet still is not a detriment. The framing of the trauma narrative may have the effect of making sense of events for both the author and reader. Trauma will be discussed further in this chapter.

Amanda, Gina, and Michelle's rescue played out publicly in the news. The news reported the rescue immediately after Amanda emerged from Castro's house in Cleveland with a six-year-old daughter. Readers already knew about her daughter, but readers were seeking Amanda's narrative of becoming a mother while being held captive as the "truth" of what happened. Amanda's "limit," then, is her experience raising Jocelyn (a child she gives birth to) which gives her a unique perspective. Although Jocelyn played a large role in Michelle's and Gina's experiences, neither was her biological mother. It makes for an interesting study that the Cleveland kidnapping was written about from three different perspectives: by comparing these we can see the "limits" that Gilmore describes. These limits are not a hindrance to a semblance of truth. Rather, is the limits are a lens that shapes the experiences that most align with the writer's experience.

The limit, as Gilmore describes, in Elizabeth Smart's memoir is that she wrote it ten years after she experienced the nine-month captivity. Her narrative is based on recalling what it was like as her fourteen-year-old self, armed with the adult perspective of a twenty-four-year-old woman. This is similar to Jaycee Dugard, who, recalling her capture and rape at eleven years old, was able to convey the feelings of being young and not understanding her predicament from her

current adult perspective. The reflection of this innocence and the commentary on it is a limit. This limit is advantageous in that it creates context, a specific point of view, and stronger identification with Elizabeth at the time of the incident.

Narratives of trauma are especially important to women as well as other vulnerable populations that, until recently, were not given legitimacy. This is especially true in cases of sexual assault and abuse of women and girls. When the experiences of men have been privileged in scientific and legal institutions, personal narratives of women's trauma bring issues to the public's attention. Louise Armstrong's 1978 book, *Kiss Daddy Goodnight,* is considered one of the first popular trauma memoirs. It details her experiences with parental abuse and incest. These topics were considered taboo for popular culture at the time. The book's popularity coincided with the second wave of the women's movement, which fought to publish scholarly work on rape and assault. Previously considered to be a matter of the private, domestic spaces, these were now brought to public awareness. Gilmore continues:

> Autobiography exposes a limit between the private and the public: it is a representation of personal experience meant to make a claim on public attention. It cannily introjects private into the public and ensures that what is published cannot be considered exclusively private. While autobiography holds out the possibility that one might speak credibly to others about a life that challenges the assumption, for example, that law equals justice and justice prevails, autobiography is Janus-faced. It can incite voyeurism and censure as readily as sanctification and respectability. Auto-biography's negative capability is important here because it reveals that a self-representational text about incest and illegitimacy would lay the autobiographer bare to judgements about veracity and human value. Autobiography is a genre whose name makes it possible to make a declaration of illegitimacy. (49)

In other words, though it is impossible to determine if autobiographical writing is truthful, narrators can never be questioned because they are the only holders of that truth. Therefore, searching for an absolute truth in a memoir is a pointless goal. Although women's stories of abuse and trauma are becoming more visible, they open the possibility of exploitation for

commercial reasons, leading to a culture of distrust from readers. These captivity memoirs will always be open to skepticism about their truthfulness, yet absolute, objective truth cannot exist in memoirs, because they will always be from the perspective of the writer's unique experience.

Representing trauma

The texts in this study name co-authors or credits other authors with assistance in writing it. This is not surprising, considering the swift release of these books after the incident, nor is it uncommon with first-time memoirists. For the purposes of my study, I will still consider the woman held captive to be the main narrator of the books and I accept the blanket assumption that the memoirs represent an honest intention by the authors to describe the experience as best as the women recalled them. I also want to acknowledge that there is vast psychological work about the nature and impact of trauma. For the limits and scope of my study, I will not attempt to provide psychological diagnoses of the women.

First, it is important to define trauma. Unfortunately, this is not a simple task, as there are numerous attempts to define it from varying disciplines. For this study, I will use psychologist Cathy Caruth's definition, as her work focuses on narratives and witnessing trauma. She defines trauma as "a wound not inflicted on the body but a wound of the mind" (3). Whereas a wound of the body will heal within a finite time, she writes, a wound of the mind never fully heals. Trauma also includes remembering the difficult event and this memory affects life after the traumatic experience ends. In relating trauma to narrative, Caruth asks the questions "Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it? Is [trauma] a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of the event and the story of the unbearable nature of its

survival?" (7). In other words, the pain and suffering from trauma is not just in the event, but the difficulties of continuing life with the memories and changes inflicted on a person's mental state, relationships with loved ones, and even the ability to complete everyday tasks. The pain of dealing with pain expounds on itself. Surviving the trauma is the challenge.[1]

The women held captive obviously experienced severe trauma, and not just as a one-time event: For months and years, their every moment was traumatic, even if the coping methods they employed gave momentary points of relief. As they express in the books, their lives did not suddenly reverse course after they were rescued. Their trauma continued as they coped, and writing these memoirs was a key part of that post-rescue experience. There is a popular belief that to achieve mental healing, one must "share their story" as way of releasing pain and "giving back." In different ways, the women in the captivity narratives explain that they wrote their books to help others. Jaycee and Elizabeth have also started foundations to continue to help victims of violence and abuse, an extension of "sharing their stories."

> I want to turn my experience into something that gives hope to other people who are going through traumatic events in their lives. I would say that my biggest goal is to help other survivors get past their fears and to turn them into strengths…nothing makes me happier than hearing from someone who's read my book or heard me speak, telling me that I've helped them get through whatever difficult things they're dealing with (Knight 251).
>
> I don't know if I would have found myself in this role, trying to make a difference in sexual abuse prevention, education, and child crimes, had I not been forced to go through the things that I have gone through…I can honestly say that I'm not sorry that it happened to me because of where I am now, and the difference I am trying to make. I am grateful for the voice it has given me and for the strength I can share (Smart 316).

[1] Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is important to mention here because it often comes up when discussing trauma. PTSD is a psychological and medical diagnosis. The women do not mention this in their memoirs, although it is likely that someone who suffered captivity would deal with it. For my study, it is inappropriate to assign a medical diagnosis.

These passages indicate that Elizabeth and Michelle are coping with the trauma and the "unbearable nature of survival" by sharing their stories. Therefore, writing these memoirs has a therapeutic effect for them. Although I cannot claim to seek the true intentions of these words, the texts inspire several questions. For one, do the memoirs serve to assure readers that the women held captive are, indeed, grateful for what happened to them? Is this belief written because of the expectations of readers, following the formula of a redemption and inspiration? Would the memoir be published if these women still expressed anger and hopelessness? Except for Elizabeth's, these memoirs were all written within three years of their release from captivity. Would it be shameful to struggle with emotional recovery in such a short time after the traumatic event? A book that does not result in the road to recovery may not appeal to the reader. The captive women are not consciously trying to write to cater to audiences, but the result is that their recovery narratives fit readers' expectations of their own interactions with the books. The concept of witnessing can explain the reason that readers are drawn to these books and survivors may be drawn to write them.

Witnessing is a concept developed by Gary Weissman in his work *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*. Weissman explores the desire of non-witnesses, i.e., those that did not themselves directly experience the atrocities, to feel a connection to the trauma, an "unspoken desire of many people who are deeply interested in studying, remembering, and memorializing [the traumatic event]" (4). This work is important because, as Weissman and other scholars note, personal narratives in the media were instrumental in understanding the experience of living through the Holocaust. The Holocaust is a benchmark for the study of trauma in popular culture due to the postwar presence of mass media

and visual images that were unavailable at prior major historical events. Holocaust memoirs have been numerous since the 1950s.

According to Weissman, the desire to witness "can only be satisfied only in fantasy of witnessing [the Holocaust] for themselves. [Non-witnesses] attempt to actualize these fantasies through exposure to sites and texts where the Holocaust can be vicariously experienced and thereby made 'real' for visitors" (4). Attempts to have these vicarious experiences can be disappointing because non-witnesses do not feel what it was like to be there as much as they wish, but at the same time are aware they never really can. Weissman stresses non-witnesses' good intentions. However, the desire to witness can also lead to exploitation and a superficial appropriation of trauma for entertainment purposes. The daytime talk show culture of the 1980s and 1990s is often presented as an example of witnessing by exploitation in which people's trauma was paraded in front of viewers for shock value. According to Weissman, how witnessing happens is dependent on media culture and the cultural anxieties of the despite that witnessing originates out of a desire for empathy.

The desire to witness has, for example, created the modern concept of dark tourism, a type of tourism destination associated with death, disaster, and suffering (Lennon and Foley 3). Dark tourism includes kitschy crime scene bus tours and plantation tours but is most associated with tours of concentration camps, such as Auschwitz. Even within dark tourism studies, research has found that participants don't have one definitive motivation for participating. Some tourists participate to confront their fear of death, others want to feel more connected to trauma, and others do it for reasons similar to why people watch horror films: for vicarious emotional feelings. These reasons can all be applied to why people seek out memoirs about trauma. In fact, written memoirs are the most convenient ways to witness. They are easy to obtain, can be mass

produced, don't require travel, and can be consumed individually. These memoirs are literary dark tourism. The concept of witnessing provides a strong justification of why readers might engage with trauma memoirs. However, there are also ways in which witnessing affects the actual survivors of the trauma as well.

Psychoanalyst Dori Laub builds on Weissman's concept of witnessesing. He identifies three different levels of witnessing: (1) the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience (the witness), (2) the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others (non-witness), and (3) the process of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself (non-witness). The first level, being a witness oneself, represents the immutable, individual experiences of the women in captivity. Laub calls this a "trauma with no witness," in that nothing will replicate actual time spent in the traumatic situation. Just as trauma is a mental malady, one's own memory and aftermath is a witness, but one can never truly remember the incident as it really was. Laub explains how victims are not reliable narrators of their trauma: "No observer could remain untainted, that is, maintain an integrity: a wholeness and a separateness- that could keep itself uncompromised, unharmed by his or her witnessing" (66). Here, unreliability is not intentional. The women are not purposefully deceiving readers or have malignant motivations. This relates back to Gilmore's work on autobiography, in that one's own memory and lens of experience will always be limited. Therefore, the popular captivity memoir will never hold the truth of what happened, and the writer can never include everything and every feeling in a way that will make people feel like they have reached the truth. Still, there is merit in attempting to do so, because the attraction of being a non-witness, Laub's second level of witnessing, is what readers desire.

However conscious readers are of the limitations of non-witnessing, they still read trauma memoirs to place themselves in the trauma. Readers wish narrators to tell things in linear, descriptive order. Therefore, these memoirs often take on the same tone and form. They don't use abstract or aesthetic literary conventions because they may obscure the reader's desire to witness. Anne Rothe, in *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media,* states that the boundaries of witnessing are hard to determine:

> Non-witnesses essentially enact the reception equivalent of … "writing trauma" and juxtaposed to "writing about trauma." While the latter mode of representation is dominated by the interpretative powers of consciousness, the former supposedly allows the trauma to be externalized from the victim's mind into a narrative, without the interference of consciousness (Rothe 162).

What Rothe means here is that readers of trauma narratives don't acknowledge the mediated way that the trauma is delivered to them and that they fantasize about feeling the same things as the victim. These levels of witnessing highlight an important conflict between the reader (non-witness) and the writer (witness). This conflict promotes and helps explain the appeal of trauma memoirs. Ultimately, narrators are doing their best to approach the truth while readers are trying their best to experience that truth, but the two desires can never intersect. However, readers still believe they can seek the truth, which compels them to read on in the memoir or consume multiple memoirs. Since memoirs infinitely approach truth, readers believe they can close the gap between witnessing and non-witnessing. So, they continue to seek out these memoirs, making them popular.

Lowbrow and middlebrow

Captivity memoirs are considered popular because they are intended for consumption by the masses and are neither expensive nor hard to obtain. Popular culture scholars emphasize that it is important to study culture that is not considered elite, nor considered of the highest (and

therefore most specialized) aesthetic value, because it is the culture of the masses. In popular culture studies, it is common to categorize texts into categories including highbrow, lowbrow, middlebrow, and even no-brow. Much like genre, this categorization is useful in analyzing and comparing cultural texts.

Lawrence Levine's 1988 study, *Highbrow/Lowbrow, the Emergence of Cultural Study in America*, stresses that placing texts in categories is less important than examining the nature of hierarchies and why they exist. He argues that "because the primary categories of culture have been the products of ideologies which were always subject to modifications and transformations, the perimeters of our cultural divisions have been permeable and shifting rather than fixed and immutable" (8). In other words, the categories in which we place these texts change depending on cultural climate and cultural shifts. Levine's work examines the nature of opera, which was entertainment for the masses (lowbrow) until the upper class appropriated it. Currently, opera is considered highbrow. Lowbrow becomes associated with commercially successful texts, because the lowbrow is made for the lowest common denominator, prioritizing appeal over quality. For example, Broadway musicals have gone through several cycles of being considered highbrow and lowbrow since their inception. In the early 20th century, Broadway provided mass entertainment; towards the end of the century it became elite and restricted in its audience. Now, with the mass popularity and accessibility of cast soundtracks, it can be re-classified as culture for the masses. However, exorbitant ticket prices create a boundary between lowbrow and highbrow. This example shows that the classification of culture is never stagnant.

Beth Driscoll, building on Levine's work, proposes the existence of a new category called the middlebrow. The middlebrow, as perceived by elite culture, "consist[s] of people who are hoping someday they will get used to stuff they ought to like...cut off from the highbrows,

desperately trying to emulate their cultural mastery" (7). To consume middlebrow culture is aspirational in that it is a substitute for more elite culture. However, Driscoll states that these middlebrow texts should be valued on their own merits and not solely as lesser substitutes. Driscoll's work focuses on popular fiction, and I argue that her ideas are also applicable to popular captivity memoirs. Like fiction, they have an "elite" equivalent: the literary memoir. Thus, the popular captivity memoir is to literary memoirs as elite literary fiction is to middlebrow fiction.

Driscoll identifies eight key features of the middlebrow: The middlebrow is (1) middle-class, (2) reverential, (3) commercial, (4) mediated, (5) feminized, (6) emotional, (7) recreational, and (8) earnest. Of these eight features, commercial, mediated, feminized, and emotional are the most relevant to popular captivity memoirs. Commercial appeal is a key facet of the middlebrow. The short time between the experience and the release of the book, deliberate coordination with media appearances, and common formulas indicate that popular captivity memoirs are meant to be sold to the masses. Commercial appeal also indicates that sales are meant to be optimized within a short time frame. It is very rare for these books to re-enter best-selling lists after their initial release. Driscoll points to a "constant tension between art and commerce [that] animates literary middlebrow culture" (23). The tension is found both in producers and audiences. A literary scholar or elite publisher may describe such memoirs as exploitative. However, this tension is crucial to the very existence and impact of these memoirs. If, as many of these authors say, the goal is to help others by sharing their stories, commercial appeal is the most effective way this can happen. Sales reports are more accurate measure of success than a positive review in a prestigious literary periodical.

The feminization of the middlebrow is a key factor when examining popular captivity memoirs. The readers of middlebrow texts are overwhelmingly female. Feminization makes the term "middlebrow" a derogatory term. A cursory glance at the literary field quickly reveals that prestigious literary accomplishments are associated with men, and women's works (including popular captivity memoirs) are merely seen as "guilty pleasures" or "chick lit." The same could be said about memoirs; Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* and Elie Wiesel's *Night*, both memoirs dealing with trauma, are esteemed in the literary genre. Often, men's memoirs receive more coverage in established circles of literature.

With very few exceptions, authors of popular captivity memoirs are women. Men who have been held captive are more likely to write memoirs if the captivity occurred in, for example, military service, because of its masculine setting (Caruth). Readers who are women are more likely to identify with the women held captive and men are more interested in reading about the details of the case, identifying with the investigator or law enforcement.[2] In a memoir, the woman held captive is the protagonist and hero; in a true crime account, the one who solves the case is the protagonist. It is possible that women are more likely to seek out the emotional experiences of the narrator rather than the logistics of the case as a crime.

Book covers are an important feature of the middlebrow and its feminized appeal. In the four works I am examining, two types of covers emerge. Elizabeth Smart's *My Story* and Michelle Knight's *Finding Me* both use first-person titles. This corresponds to their covers in that a picture of each woman takes up the entire space of the cover. Both women are styled conservatively but femininely, both wearing sweaters. Elizabeth, standing, looks directly into the

[2] For each of the cases covered here, several other books have been published by family members, law enforcement, and journalists about the cases.

camera with her hands clasped at her waist. Michelle is leaning against a wall with her head turned to face the camera. Both are smiling, but in a formal, performative way. Their expressions are socially coded as smiles for when one's picture is being taken rather than smiles that exhibit happiness. They are smiling to ensure us that they are safe and happy now. They cannot look very happy because the book details their traumatic experiences. Conversely, they cannot look too unhappy because they need to convey the fact that they have overcome their ordeals. This also speaks to how women are socialized to appear pleasant and non-confrontational. This instinct, as readers will learn, was also exploited by their captors.

The covers of Jaycee's *A Stolen Life* and Amanda and Gina's *Hope* are similar. Both feature a small picture centered on a cover of beige background, with the title above it and their names below. These pictures are nonprofessional photos or are purposefully made to look so. Jaycee's picture is one taken when she was a child, not long before she was kidnapped. She wears a sweater with kittens on it and is playfully sticking her tongue out of her mouth. This fits well with her title, *A Stolen Life*, because it represents the innocence that was stolen from her. In the picture on the cover of *Hope*, Amanda and Gina pose for the camera cheek to cheek, as if it originated from a candid shot; their dress and makeup do not look professionally done. The image resembles the pictures young women might take of each other to post on social media. Their physical closeness in the picture signifies an intimate friendship.

The covers suggest ways in which these books have been feminized. Female subjects are the covers' focus, and they are presented to show emotion. The smiles, regardless of their sincerity, provide the assurance that these women's stories have successful conclusions. The women are the sole focus of the covers, and the women look directly into the camera. The

woman is the clear subject of the picture, challenging the often-seen male gaze, in which women are the object and men identify with the subject (Mulvey).

Middlebrow works describe struggles which incite an emotional response from the reader. Because these works rely heavily on the response, this can lead to works being minimized as sentimental or melodramatic, descriptors that carry negative connotations. Perhaps consumers of the memoirs are explicitly seeking emotional reading experiences. Emotional content is a defining feature of the middlebrow and possible part of the appeal.

Levine's analysis of highbrow and lowbrow and Driscoll's analysis of the middlebrow are important to further identifying the genre of popular captivity memoirs. Placing these texts in the context of popular culture is important before we turn to a close reading of the texts.

Commodifying trauma as "mis lit"

Anne Rothe, in *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media*, combines the analysis of trauma memoirs and the effects of mass culture, thus establishing theories about the modern phenomenon of trauma and witnessing as popular entertainment. Building on Weissman, Laub, and Caruth's work on witnessing, Rothe points to a specific event of the Holocaust as the origin of popular trauma culture. In 1961, the Eichmann trials were broadcast widely on television. Adolf Eichmann oversaw the transport of millions of European Jews to death camps. The broadcast of surviving witnesses' detailed testimony was especially captivating. Prior to this, news of the death camps was mediated through mainstream news channels, and even the Nuremburg trials that occurred a decade earlier did not convey victims' individual suffering. The witnesses at the Eichmann trials shared personal testimony, revealing the horrific details of their suffering that no one had heard before. These testimonies formed a

theme in which "the main character eventually overcomes victimization and undergoes a metamorphosis from the pariah of weak and helpless victim into a heroic survivor" (2). Enduring trauma is equated with heroism. Gaps in the historical record were filled through these individual accounts. Even though knowledge of the concentration camps was widespread, the horrors these witnesses had endured still surprised many viewers. Individual testimonies and stories became crucial to filling in gaps that the official, regulated information did not include.

Rothe also points to a more recent example. In 2006, Oprah Winfrey broadcasted a special episode of her popular talk show in which she tours Auschwitz concentration camp with noted Holocaust survivor and memoirist Elie Wiesel. Rothe criticizes Winfrey for engaging in what she terms as "Holocaust kitsch," in which Winfrey transforms an important historical event into a narrative that fits the themes of her show. "Reflecting and reinforcing dominant American Holocaust discourse, their televised sentimental journey through Auschwitz does not inform viewers about the complex socio-political history of the 'Final Solution,' but rather constitutes a search for a mystical revelations and uplifting self-help messages" (3). Here, Rothe is concerned that viewers will ignore the historical importance in favor of how the incident relates to their own lives. The episode further illustrates popular trauma culture because this special also tied into the presentation of Wiesel's memoir, *Night,* as the next selection in Winfrey's widely influential book club. By bringing a work that was previously considered elite literary memoir into popular discourse, Oprah brought the tragedy memoir into the narrative peddled by many daytime talk shows: inspirational transformation of the downtrodden. The very existence of a memoir reassures its consumers that things will end well, because the person needed to survive to write the book. One must have been transformed to write the memoir. The formula, then, is almost always guaranteed.

Rothe is particularly critical of Oprah Winfrey for what she sees as exploitation of victimhood and trauma to create trauma kitsch. Kitsch, as a general concept, is associated with sentimentality and often signifies the distasteful or disrespectful. Rothe uses kitsch in this way and sees it as an issue because it creates an apolitical representation of trauma. She explains trauma kitsch:

> By omitting the socio-economic contexts of oppression, victimization, and violence by representing these quintessentially political subjects as individual tragedies, trauma kitsch covertly reinforces the power structures that have created the represented injustices. In conveying the message that teary-eyed sentimentality constitutes an adequate and sufficient reaction, they suppress the critical reception from which political action can arise (45).

In applying trauma kitsch to the captivity memoirs, the "political subjects" would be the subordination, abuse, and victimization of women and people of color. Because each of these memoirs tell an individual story, her argument contends, these memoirs will not inform audiences about the larger issues associated with the trauma nor change their perceptions of it. Thus, trauma kitsch takes on the appearance of a melodrama. As mentioned earlier, in Cawelti's exploration of genre, melodrama involves a simplified dichotomy between good and evil, the innocent and the omnipotent evil, the hypermasculine villain and the feminized victim. Rothe contends that this simplified narrative of trauma is a way of appeasing the masses through a commercialized product. "The overt optimism expressed in the redemptive happy endings is undermined by the fact that the vast majority of the plot casts innocence as constantly threatened by seemingly omnipotent evil, which lurks everywhere under the surface of mundane life. The simultaneous overt optimism and covert angst may explain the addictive capacity that made [trauma kitsch] such hot commodities" (49). Reading these memoirs is a way to confront this omnipotent evil, yet it also perpetuates it, eradicating neither from the reader's life. This will

cause the reader to seek more of these memoirs as they seek to eliminate the horrors from their lives.

Rothe is also cynical about the way audiences interact with texts. “As audiences seek more and more reassurance that, despite appearances to the contrary, all will be well in this late-modern world, they look, ironically, in all the wrong places. Despite its optimistic endings, the kitsch-sentimental melodramatic emplotments of the pain of others actually reinforce the consumer’s sense of omnipresent but intangible danger that is paradigmatic of trauma culture” (47). In other words, the more readers seek trauma as assurance of transformation and inspiration, the more reading trauma creates unconscious fear of the dangers of the modern-day world. In popular captivity memoirs, women may want to read about other women who overcome the evil domination of men to feel inspired and empowered. However, according to Rothe, the consumption of these texts reinforces the idea that men are always a source of danger to women despite women’s efforts to free themselves from the fear.

Rothe explains that the demand for trauma memoirs led to the creation of a modern subgenre, dubbed by the publishing industry as misery literature, or “mis lit.” Mis lit refers to memoirs that “represent real-life experiences, particularly child abuse, illness and addiction, according to the plot paradigm dominant in popular culture: they construct a melodrama of suffering and redemption around ethically simplified conflicts of good and evil embodied in the characters of villain and victim, and they rely on kitsch’s clichés and tropes to arouse teary-eyed sentiment in readers” (88). Mis lit is based on a very clear binary of good and evil. Readers of captivity memoirs are in no way supposed to identify with or humanize the captors. The captor and victim serve as “characters” in the memoirs’ melodramas. I am not advocating sympathy for captors but pointing out that a simple binary conflict of good/evil is comforting and easy for the

reader to comprehend. Rothe's obvious critical view on mis lit reveals that she feels the way the events are presented is too simplified, which, to her, reflects audience' misguided willingness to accept simplicity. This also implies a mistrust of audience response.

Furthermore, mis lit promotes the idea that enduring great suffering is the highest accomplishment someone can achieve. This is unlike other types of memoirs, which base a person's meaning on remarkable accomplishments. Previously, stories were based on heroes actively taking on challenges. Mis lit celebrates bad things happening *to* someone. Great suffering gives life meaning. Readers are hungry for the specific details of the suffering. This requires the author to be willing to disclose these details. The worse the experience gets for the victim, the more significant, and satisfying to the reader, the redemption will be.[3]

Rothe calls the abundance of self-disclosure the "pornographic details" of mis lit. Here, pornographic does not refer to sexual content, but to the way that details of suffering are graphically described to arouse visceral emotional responses. The publishing industry has driven this to be a one-upmanship culture: whosever memoir is the most horrifying will sell the best. Readers have a "voyeuristic fascination with bodies that are both naked and in pain coupled with the exculpatory belief that extremity reveals some absolute and profound truths" (95). The more specific and graphic the details, the more it must be true. This includes notable memoirs *A Child Called It*, about child abuse, the aforementioned *Kiss Daddy Goodnight,* and Augusten Burrough's *Running with Scissors*, about an abusive and neglectful family.

Rothe holds the opinion that the mis lit industry is unethical because publishers exploit authors' traumas for commercial gain. In fact, the demand for the genre has created an

[3] This is very similar to Cawelti's analysis of the melodrama genre.

environment where fabricated memoirs have been published.[4] The most recent notable fabricated memoir is 2006's *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey. Oprah chose this memoir for her book club immediately after Elie Wiesel's *Night*. Frey's memoir was about, among other things, his time in a strict in-patient alcohol addiction facility and the suicide of his girlfriend. It was later revealed that the publisher encouraged packaging the book as a true story, although it was only loosely inspired by events in Frey's life. The heaps of praise quickly turned to a public shaming of Frey, particularly by Winfrey. Ironically, readers were upset that Frey had not suffered all the "pornographic details" in his book. Even though the content of the book did not change, its re-classification from memoir to fiction tarnished the book. Reading about the trauma in his book may not be as satisfying to some knowing that he didn't actually experience it.

As with middlebrow and mis lit, popular captivity memoirs are written for the masses. Regardless of the writer's intent, the four memoirs I have chosen are published by mainstream publishing companies and my focus is on the information contained within, not the aesthetic value of the writing. In fact, several of the books issue an apology for the lack of literary cohesion. Jaycee includes an author's note of apology:

> This book may be confusing to some. But keep in mind throughout my book that this was a very confusing world I lived in. I think to truly begin to understand what it was like, you would have to be there, and since I wish that on no one, this book is my attempt to convey the overwhelming confusion I felt during those years…If you want a less confusing story, come back to me in ten years when I sort it all out! (Dugard, Author's Note)

There is a hint of defensiveness in this note. Why, then, not wait ten years to write this when she has thought it all out? It is likely because the publisher means to capitalize on her recent news-worthy rescue. Book releases are planned in conjunction with television interviews, television

[4] Holocaust memoirs are of particular interest to fabricators, as there is a cultural worship as Holocaust survivors. A well-known case is Binjimim Wolanski, which is detailed in Rothe's *Popular Trauma Culture*.

specials, and photo shoots in *People* Magazine. How much of this is instigated by a publisher looking to exploit a tragedy for book sales? How much of this is the survivor controlling her own narrative to receive payment that will help her adjust back to everyday life? How much of it is a psychological need to share a story as part of a healing process? It is possible for all of these scenarios to be true.

Popular captivity memoirs could be considered "trauma kitsch." They contain the same formulas and themes (to be discussed in more depth in the next chapter) that resemble melodrama. Amanda and Gina introduce the book *Hope* with:

> We have written here about terrible things that we never wanted to think about again. But our story is not just about rape and chains, lies and misery. That was Ariel Castro's world. Our story is about overcoming all that. We want people to know the truth, the real story of our decade as Castro's prisoners inside 2207 Seymour Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio. (Author's Note)

This introduction is a blueprint for the mis lit genre. It assures readers that the book will fulfill their needs: both the pornographic details (rape, chains, misery), and the uplifting message (overcoming).

This also fulfills the final facet of mis lit: the simplified conflict. The enemy is easy to identify: it is the captor. There is no grey area, no sympathy, and no attempt to understand motives. I do not propose that the captors deserve empathy, but in melodramatic formulas, readers are assured that embodiments of evil will receive punishment when the captives receive redemption, restoring the balance of justice. I argue that popular captivity memoirs should be included in the category of mis lit. However, Rothe's definition contains cynicism and focuses on the readers' use of these as kitsch, implying that the trauma is exploited for its disturbing content and that writers may be intentionally exploiting their own traumas for commercial gain. The popular captivity novels I am including in this study cannot be reduced to a single purpose

or intention. Writers may have multiple, and possibly conflicting, reasons for writing their memoirs. The texts contain many ways of making meaning, all which can exist within the same text.

In this chapter, I used the frameworks of genre, formula, the middlebrow, and the concept of "mis lit" to identify and contextualize the significance of popular memoirs of women held captive. Applying genre theory to the texts, I identified six formulas found in the popular captivity memoir. I used these formulas to further explore the impacts of autobiographical narratives, how trauma is represented through narratives, and the significance of these memoirs as 'middlebrow' popular culture. Then, I explored how these memoirs have the potential to become trauma kitsch, depending on the audience reception and the way the publishers market them. It is important to frame captivity memoirs and their place within popular culture before closely reading their content. In the chapter three, I will focus on the texts' common themes.

CHAPTER II. ADAPTING PROPP'S METHOD

In the previous chapter, I explored genre. In this chapter, I will turn from themes to the texts' narrative structure. I will use the folklorist Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* because of the structure and systems he created to study Russian folktales, not because he used Russian folktales as his target of study. I contend that his structural analysis of narratives can be adapted and applied to narrative structures in other genres and contexts. It is tempting to claim that Propp's structural analysis is universal to linear narratives, but that is not the claim I am making. I argue that popular captivity memoirs share many structural similarities and Propp's method is useful in making these similarities visible. .

In the previous chapter, I explored genre. In this chapter, I will turn from themes to the texts' narrative structure. I will use the folklorist Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* because of the structure and systems he created to study Russian folktales, not because he used Russian folktales as his target of study. I contend that his structural analysis of narratives can be adapted and applied to narrative structures in other genres and contexts. It is tempting to claim that Propp's structural analysis is universal to linear narratives, but that is not the claim I am making. I argue that popular captivity memoirs share many structural similarities and Propp's methods is useful in making these similarities visible.

Before Propp's actual structure and functions are discussed, terms must be defined. First, of the folktales he collected and studies, Propp identified different types of Russian folktales: wonder tales, narrative tales, comprehensive tales, and animal tales (*The Russian Folktale*). The narrative structure he devised, and the one I am employing in this study, applies to wonder tales. The simplest definition of the wonder tale is a tale that deals with magical and fantastical

elements, but most importantly, it is a narrative that must be defined "by its plots and motifs…. It is not just the magical enchantments and fantasy worlds that populate the wonder tale, but 'rather by the regularities that typify it'" (*Wonder Tales* 148). Of the folktales Propp studied, wonder tales have the most common, recognizeable plots. There exists "a uniformity, so that by the middle of the tale an attentive or experienced listener or reader can already predict what will happen next." (*Wonder Tales* 148). This predictability and repetition have made the wonder tale the opposite of tedious; it is this very nature that has made wonder tales influential.[5]

The structure of the wonder tale brings us to why the captivity memoirs also fit this repetitious, familiar form. The structure may explain why we find comfort in these tales. Folktales have also influenced other commonly shared stories and character types, which have been popular from the origins as oral narratives to current blockbuster animated movies. Literary scholar Jessica Tiffin, in her studies on fairy tales and their origins, explains this long-lived popularity of tales as they "signal their particular nature and function through highly encoded structures, a complex interaction of characteristics and content which nonetheless operates with a simple and holistic effect to create a sense of nostalgic familiarity "(1-2). We know the women in the popular captivity memoirs will cease to be held captive, hence they lived to write these books. We collectively expect stories of redemption after tragedy, or, more simply, happy endings, which is part of the nostalgia for repeated story patterns.

The women's captivity takes place in real settings without magic or fantasy. How can the wonder tale structure be relevant to a modern-day memoir? I argue that the wonder tale structure

[5] There is an abundance of scholarship on origins of fairy tales that due to scope, I will not examine in this study. Many fairy tales originate from folktales. For these purposes, my claim that folktales and fairytales are connected is a simplification.

applies if the magical elements in Propp's structure are taken metaphorically. The women were being held captive in the realm of our reality, but their experiences (and the narratives they tell about these experiences) take on an "other worldly" feel. Captivity ordeal memoirs are anything but ordinary. These events the memoirs describe are so horrific and surprising that readers likely perceive them as unreal. This is what part of what makes them analogous to wonder tales.

A similar comparison was conducted communication scholar Chandler Harriss' application of Propp's functions to the television crime procedurals *Law and Order* and *The X-Files*. Harriss applies the structure of a system like the one Propp used to describe Russian wonder tales to modern-day genre television. The textual experiment does not perfectly fit Propp's structure, but rather adapts a Propp-like structure. When applied to modern texts, Propp's functions allow for a level of flexibility in how they are applied. The inability to map all Propp's original functions seamlessly onto the modern text should not be interpreted as failure to choose an applicable method. Rather, using Propp's functions is helpful in illustrating how the order of functions within a narrative are important. Harriss saw emerging similarities among the procedural shows he analyzed. From his analysis, Harriss concludes, "Proppian analyses provide critics with foundations for future work, regardless of whether that work is stylistic analysis or examinations of viewers' interpretations of narrative functions" (58). Here, he views critics, rather than audiences, as deciphering the structure. With Propp, critics can "see both the simplicity and the complexity of the objects of their analyses…and see how a single genre has evolved and is evolving" (58). I argue that this analysis is useful for critics and audiences, both of whom may seek out patterns and common structures.

Propp's analysis and methods, predictably, has its critics. The existence of a single formal structure implies the structure's universality. Even with the folktales in his study, exceptions to

his model were made. Thus, applying Propp's structure to other texts will inevitably require a flexible adaptation. Another criticism is that Propp does not connect his structure to the tales' meaning or exceptions and interpretations significance. Likely, this was not Propp's aim, and showing an emerging structure, according to Propp, provides a baseline to later examine the content and meanings of the tales.

Propp's methodology

For this analysis, I have looked to other theorists who have studied and synthesized Propp's numbered functions, specifically Peter Gilet's 1998 work *Vladimir Propp and the Universal Folktale: Recommissioning an Old Paradigm--Story as Initiation*. Gilet combined several of the thirty-one functions originally identified by Propp into five major categories, listed below. In this study, I refer to Gilet's five groups as Functions 1-5, and the original Proppian functions will be identified as P1-P3. This is slightly different than the numbers used by Propp, but it makes sense for the purposes of the study. The functions I am using, as adapted by Gilet, are:

1. The Initial Situation is the "initial impetus to the story" (Gilet 55). This action focuses on the main character, the Hero, the arbiter of the action; the individual who propels the story and whose experiences propel the story. This person is what Propp called the "dramatis personae" and what Gilet refers to as the Hero. The dramatis personae are the subject of the "initial situation," the out of the ordinary course of events that sets the narrative in action. This includes the first eleven of Propp's functions:

P1. Abstention: one of the family members is taken away (death, desertion).
P2. Interdiction: something is denied or delayed to the dramatis personae.
P3. Violation: a violation of the main character's physical self or of his world.

P4. Reconnaissance: some important information is attempted to be taken from dramatis personae.

P5. Delivery: Villain obtains information.

P6. Trickery: Villain enacts deceit.

P7. Complicity: Villain is deceived.

P8. Villainy: general harm is caused to someone.

P9. Mediation: a misfortune is known, a Villain is dispatched.

P10. Counteraction.

P11. Departure: character leaves home (usually of their own will).

2. The Helper interacts with the Hero. Gilet's analysis combines Propp's two secondary character types, Helper and Donor figures into the Helper. This Helper is defined as "a person who meets the Hero early in the story and aids them in their adventures, either by providing them help or providing them with an object that will aid them. Typically, this Helper appears early in the story" (Gilet 55). The Helper is someone, who, in the narrative, exists merely to continue the narrative. The tale does not focus on the Helper's journey or larger goals. The Helper may provide an object, which may prove magical or utilitarian for later events. A simpler, better-known example is the fairy godmother from *Cinderella* or the dwarfs in *Snow White*. Additionally, the sidekick often acts as the Helper.

In captivity memoirs, the Helper may be aligned with the Villain, but provides the possibility of relief and comfort and even escape. The Helper is someone whose approval and relationship are needed not only for escape, but for surviving the captivity. They provide emotional comfort and possibly even physical protection from the Villain. However, these Helpers have limits. Ultimately, they are also under the influence of the Villain, and their loyalties can be ambiguous.

In other instances, the Helpers are animals. In wonder tales, these animals may talk and possess magic, but in captivity memoirs, the animals act as pets that possess innocence, comfort and affection, something that the Hero strongly needs. Propp describes animals as Donors:

> But there are also Donors of a completely different type. We can count grateful animals among them. The hero is hungry; he is already taking aim at a bird, but she begs him to spare her: "Don't eat me! Someday I'll come in handy." Sometimes the Hero does a favor on his own initiative for an animal who is in trouble. He covers fledglings who are getting wet in the rain, pushes a beached whale back into the water, and so on. In all cases there is no direct testing, but nonetheless the Hero displays responsiveness, benevolence, which is rewarded. [*Wonder Tales*, 199]

This category includes Propp's functions 12-15:

P12. First Donor function. The Hero is tested by the Helper and receives the first aid.

P13. Reaction: the Hero reacts to the Helper.

P14. Receipt: Hero receives magical agent. In this study "magical" will refer not to something in the fantasy world, but magical in that it provides a power that the Hero does not herself possess.

P15. Spatial Change: the Hero is led to the object of search.

3. *Interaction with the Prince/ss*. This is a function developed by Gilet not present in Propp's original function. Gilet defines this as:

> This person may be defined as the (often unavowed) object of the hero's quest and his/her future spouse, as someone associated with the Adversary, and as someone secretly committed to helping the Hero, having formed an attachment to him/her. That is, the Prince/ss is a Helper, but one who lives with the Adversary and who therefore appears after the Hero has penetrated the Adversary's realm, the Other World. The Prince/ss is, ultimately, destined to return with the Hero from the 0therWorld to the normal world and usually stays there with the Hero as his or her spouse. (Gilet 54)

I will further develop this function for the purposes of the study by eliminating the romantic/spousal relationship of the Prince/ss, yet assume there is someone the Hero becomes attached to who will return with them from the "other world." This will be non-romantic love, such as a close family member.

I will further develop this function for the purposes of the study by eliminating the romantic/spousal relationship of the Prince/ss, yet assume there is someone the Hero becomes attached to who will return with them from the "other world." This will be non-romantic love, such as a close family member. Villain, experiencing repeated mental and physical violence at the hands of the Villain. There is a cycle of gains and defeat that appears almost melodramatic. Included in this function is Propp's "Difficult Task," which is "an action proposed by the [Villain] which is normal in appearance, but which requires some kind of supernatural power or assistance to complete" (Gilet 56). Again, for the purposes of this study, "supernatural" stands in for an act completely out of the ordinary, a "miracle" or circumstance of time and place that will seem near impossible in the world that the adversary has created.

P16. Struggle: direct combat between Hero and Villain.

P17. Branding: Hero is branded.

P18. Victory: Villain is defeated.

P19. Liquidation: initial misfortune or lack is liquidated.

P20. Return: Hero returns to the original setting.

P21. Pursuit, chase: Hero is chased.

5. *Return of the Hero*: This return does not signal the end of the Hero's adventures, the supposed "happy ending" still has some functions that preclude the ending of the narrative. Even though the Hero has returned from the "other world," she has been changed from the adventures and needs to reincorporate the changed self into the former world.

P22. Hero is rescued from pursuit.

P23. Unrecognized arrival.

P24. Unfounded claims made by the Hero.

P25. Difficult task is proposed to Hero.

P26. Solution: difficult task is resolved.

P27. Recognition of Hero.

P28. Exposure: false Hero is exposed.

P29. Transfiguration: Hero is given a new appearance.

P30. Villain is punished.

P31. Wedding: Hero is married and ascends to the throne.

Gilet's consolidation of functions provides a model of how to use this structure that is still in the spirit of Propp but without interpreting it literally. Therefore, based on this work, I propose my own narrative equivalents when applying this to popular captivity memoirs, as seem in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of Gilet's Categories and captivity memoir function

Gilet's category of Propp's functions	**Captivity Memoir Function**
1. Initial Situation	Capture/Kidnapping of Woman
2. Helper Interacts with the Hero	Captive Woman forms alliance with other captive women or member of household;
3. Interaction with Prince/ss (not present in Propp's functions)	Relationship to a family member
4. Interaction with the Adversary	Captive Woman Endures her time in captivity. Receives abuse and manipulation from captor. May have many near-miss escapes.
5. Return of the Hero	Woman is saved from captive situation; receives help and reflects on experience.

Despite some functions being redefined, several of Propp's thirty-one functions do appear within the narratives of the popular captivity memoirs, some in surprising ways. Next, I will conduct a close reading of the four memoirs to place themes, actions, and scenes within these functions.

Applying Propp's methods

1. Initial Situation/Capture and Kidnapping

Amanda, Gina, Jaycee, and Elizabeth were all young adults/teenagers when they were captured, with Jaycee the youngest, at eleven. Michelle Knight was twenty-one, which provides an interesting exception to the narrative, to be discussed later.

The opening chapters of the memoirs provide a slice of life for these children, displaying their innocence in the world. Amanda and Gina came from families with divorced parents and low socioeconomic status. Jaycee and Elizabeth were from privileged families. However, all of them stressed how they led a typical teenage life. Amanda worked at the local Burger King because "I need money because one day I'm going to go to college. I'm going to study—maybe clothing design. I love clothes and obsess over every detail, right down to the shoelaces, which I make sure always matches my shirt." (4) Gina describes a day at school: "school today is the same old stuff: science, reading, math, social studies. Nothing special at lunch, just pizza and chocolate milk. I'm extra hungry, so I buy my potato chips with some of the $1.50 in bus money my mom gave me." (64). This establishes them as the dramatis personae: they were leading ordinary lives before the significant event.

The girls' capture takes place as a matter of circumstance by way of an unusual occurrence, or a seemingly normal opportunity that comes upon them. It is a normal day until this happens—this is the initial action. One small decision, one coincidence, a lot of "what if's" put them in their situations. This is a theme that later comes up—during their capture, the women often think about what would have happened if they hadn't acted in that way that one day. Gina, having spent her bus money, had to walk home: an interdiction (P2). Amanda's boyfriend was late to pick her up from work. Jaycee stopped to talk to the van that pulled up beside her. It is

presented that, because of one seemingly harmless choice, the women's actions made their captivity possible. A virtue that is usually seen as good led to their capture.

Elizabeth's innocence is expressed through her devotion to God, as the Smart family was prominent in the Mormon community. She described herself at age fourteen: "My favorite things were talking to my mom and jumping on the trampoline…but [my] idea of fun wasn't chasing boys, or prank calling other kids in our class. In almost every way, I was still a little girl" (8). She also inserted memories of her childhood throughout her memoir, such as bobbing for apples at her grandfather's farm. Elizabeth's relationship with God is a strong theme in her story (see chapter three for further discussion about religious themes).

The Villains, their captors, prey on this innocence and deceived the girls into getting into their cars (P6). Ariel Castro, the captor of the women in Cleveland, was known to the three women as the father of a school friend. He used this as assurance that he was a friend to them, eliminating the "stranger danger" threat taught to most children. Amanda thought, "This is a little weird, but I tell myself to chill. My parents know him. It's [her friend] Arlene's dad." (66). Castro's trickery is not only by his coaxing her to get in the car, but his outward appearance of being a "normal" guy. Amanda observed, "He's maybe in his forties, older than my mom. He has curly brown hair, dark eyes, a receding hairline, and a goatee. He's about five-foot seven and stocky, with a bit of a beer belly. If I passed him in the mall, I'd never notice him." (9).

Jaycee also wrote that Phillip Garrido, her captor, was "a very tall man. He has light blue eyes and brown hair that is thinning on top a bit. His nose is kinda long and his skin is a bronze color. It looks like he spent too much time in the sun. He does not look like a bad guy. He looks like a normal guy. Like an ordinary guy you would see in everyday life" (Dugard 14). This was

the ultimate deceit; these men looked ordinary, like people that walk among us every day. Monsters should show themselves as they are, not mimic innocence.

Elizabeth Smart met her future captor in downtown Salt Lake a few days before he broke into her house to take her: “I don’t remember a lot about him, but I do recall that he was clean cut and well-groomed. No beard. No robes…for now, he appeared to be a normal guy who had hit a rough patch in his life. He certainly didn’t mean to be dangerous or threatening” (Smart 2). It is interesting that Elizabeth, even knowing later that upon meeting her in town he had chosen her to kidnap, still described his intentions (“didn’t mean to be”) based on his initial appearance.

Elizabeth Smart experienced a violation different from mere trickery: Brian David Mitchell had been planning to kidnap her after seeing her in town (Reconnaissance, P4) and broke into her house at night to take her (P3). The trickery was in Mitchell’s threat to kill her parents. This is what he used to get her to comply and to come with him.

Ariel Castro further deceived the three women after they got into his car by convincing them he needed to stop at his house before delivering them to their destination. After arriving, he also convinced them to come into the house under the guise of visiting his daughter or seeing new puppies he found. When he had them physically trapped, he showed his true intentions right away. Thus, the trickery and deceit quickly thrust the women into the next part of their narrative: captivity and survival.

2. Interaction with the Helper/Donor.

Despite being held captive, the women encountered other beings that influenced their narrative. In Propp’s functions, the Helper is positively disposed or inclined to the Hero. In these

memoirs, some of these Helpers were people who had the potential to help, which makes them significant, even if they ended up harming. For the possibility of any potential affection from another person, escape and freedom was significant to the everyday survival to the women who were held in isolation. (P12-P13)

Mitchell forced Elizabeth to become his symbolic wife, but he was aided by Wanda Barzee, his "first wife." There is no doubt that Barzee is equally responsible for capture and rape of Elizabeth and had the physical freedom to leave Mitchell at any time, but Elizabeth quickly observed that Barzee was also under the influence of Mitchell's emotional manipulation. Not to mention that Elizabeth, as a child, yearned for maternal comfort. She was scared of Barzee, but also wished to align with her. Barzee was a reprieve from Mitchell's incessant talking, and to Elizabeth, the lesser of the evils, especially when Mitchell left her and Barzee alone at camp for several days to "plunder" (acquire booze, drugs, sex, and food in downtown). Barzee was the only adult Elizabeth could rely on.

Elizabeth, in public, was distressed at how invisible she felt. She reveled in the kindness of a stranger, who gifted her a Walkman radio at Christmas time. This was a short reprieve into normalcy that gave her a shred of hope. (P14—a "magical" item). Jaycee's captor, Phillip Garrido, also had a wife, Nancy, who aided in her kidnapping and enabled her rape. Garrido had also convinced Nancy that he needed a child to abuse to control his "problem." Like Elizabeth, Jaycee yearned for a motherly figure as well as a reprieve from being assaulted, and Nancy's coolness to her only made her yearn for her approval. "I wonder if I will get to meet his wife, Nancy. I hope so. I would really love to meet her. I am so lonely. Maybe one day she will come in and talk to me" (39). Nancy also gifted her a parakeet and allowed Jaycee to keep stray kittens from their yard, which served both as objects and Helpers (P14).

The three women held captive by Castro had complicated relationships with each other. Although they were in same situation and in close quarters, Castro deliberately kept them separate and planted false information about things they revealed about each other to him. The companionship that could have been a comfort was also, at times, a source of strife. After a few years, Castro kept Gina and Michelle in one room while isolating Amanda. Amanda observed, "Those two girls in the next room make it even harder to be here. They bug me, laughing and talking all the time. I can hear them through the door, and they actually joke with him, like everything's okay" (105). Castro also treated them differently, creating resentment and paranoia. Michelle writes:

> As much as I hated it when he came to my room, I was happy to hear that Amanda was fending him off [from sexual assault]. "I don't want to force her to do things and make her cry," he added. I thought, but you're okay with making me cry? I wondered why he seemed to treat her different than me. Why she got the better tv. Why he made me do the most sick sexual acts with him and tell me it was because she didn't feel like it. I figured it was because he had an obsession with blondes (Knight 134).

For Jaycee and the Cleveland women, journaling was a form of resistance, a way to process that what was happening was indeed real. Often, they would address the journal entries to their pets or their families. This was a coping method, and ultimately, aided them in being able to process their story and write their book. Later, their journals also served as evidence in the criminal investigation of their captors.

Because he was such a strong presence in Elizabeth's narrative, God plays the role of Helper. In her memoirs, she spoke directly to him, both in her thoughts and through direct prayer. She claimed that God provided her with a magical object. When Mitchell left her and Barzee in the camp in the mountains without food or water, after the seventh night, nearly dead

of starvation and dehydration, she woke up to find a full cup of water next to her, something Elizabeth maintains is a miracle. (P14)

3. Interaction with the Prince/ss/ Birth of Children

Jaycee's two daughters and Amanda's daughter come into existence directly because of their captivity. Despite their biological father, these children were, to Amanda and Jaycee, a blessing as well as a reason to endure. (See chapter three for themes of motherhood.) To adapt Gilet's notion, these are the princesses that need to be saved from the Villain and taken from the evil world into the good world. Gina and Michelle became surrogate aunts to Jocelyn, their interactions with her replacing the temperate ones they had with Amanda. The sacrificial nature of motherhood gave them more hope and motivation to change their situation, if not for themselves, then for their daughters.

Having children is analogous to Propp's marriage function. Amanda experienced some remorse about separating Jocelyn from Castro after he was apprehended, wondering if she would let her daughter continue the relationship. Jaycee's mother, as the grandmother, replaced Phillip Garrido as the other parental figure in Jaycee and her daughters' lives. Jaycee's first words to her mother after being rescued were "I have babies," as a way of letting her mother know she was coming back with them, perhaps seeking forgiveness for it. Jaycee expressed her fear that her mother would reject her children because Garrido was the biological father.

4. Interaction with the Adversary/ Endurance of Captivity

For these women, to be held captive was to endure two forces: that of enduring confinement and lack of freedom, and battling directly with their captor, whose actions and attacks caused trauma. From the outset, we know that the woman will survive, but the methods used to survive

provide the salacious details. Here, Propp's functions need some transformation, and I will use several of them metaphorically.

Branding by the Villain (P17) is represented by sexual assault. Assault was something that was forcefully not only branded literally on their bodies, but on their sense of self, innocence, and purity. The effects of sexual assault cannot be understated, and the trauma of being assaulted, multiple times a day for years, is horrific beyond the common imagination. Yet this is what was endured, and the women often did what they could to enact resistance in their own ways, both mentally and physically. Amanda would record the number of times she was assaulted in a diary to hold him responsible: "I want him someday, somehow, to be held responsible for every single time he steals a piece of me. I can't let him get away with this. It was three times today— morning, lunchtime, and when he came home from work— so in the corner of my diary page, I mark 3x. He'll never know what it means. I'll never forget" (23).

Resistance also consisted of what the women would consider not participating: letting the assault occur but being passive, as a way to make it less satisfying for the captor and, as mentioned earlier, as a survival strategy. Amanda writes, "My strategy has become: Don't fight. Don't make him mad. Do whatever I have to do to stay alive and get home. But now he is making me lie on my stomach again while he does that nasty thing again. It hurts so bad. How would he like it if somebody stuck something in him that way?" (41) As the women explained it, this also challenged Castro's delusions that these women were his "girlfriends," as he sometimes referred to them.

Elizabeth equated the branding with being forever cast off from her religious beliefs about purity. *Who would want me now*? She asked after she was sexually assaulted. Her Mormon

upbringing instilled in her the importance of not having sexual relations outside of marriage, and now this violation had been done and couldn't be undone. Mitchell branded her with shame and the idea that she will be cast out.[9]

All of the captors created narratives that their sexual proclivities were caused by a larger problem, thus reducing their personal responsibility. Ariel Castro claimed a sex addiction he could not control. Garrido, who was convicted of sexual assault of a child and served time prior to Jaycee's abduction, told Jaycee that he had taken her to help keep his problem under control; if he could be physical with her, it would stop him from assaulting other girls. Mitchell believed he had been instructed by God to take on seven new wives, all of whom must be young Mormon girls, and that Elizabeth had no choice but to take up "wifely duties." The Villain's self-aggrandizement makes the combat against the Villain (P16) more meaningful, as the Hero represents purity and innocence.

The memoirs describe the combat with the Hero's conflict with the Villain in detail. This makes up the "pornographic details" of mis lit mentioned in chapter one: beatings, rape, fear, and trickery. The fear allowed captors to take away some of the physical barriers, as their captors were now imprisoning them psychologically. "I stand and stare at the door that once was my prison. I am in another kind of prison now. Free to roam the backyard but still prisoner nonetheless. I feel I am bound to these people —my captors—by invisible bonds instead of constant handcuffs. No one seems to care that I am there" (Dugard 47). Basic needs, like food, showers, and working toilets were denied. Michelle Knight received some of the most horrific physical abuse. She became pregnant over five times. Castro hit her in the stomach with a

[9] Smart was vocal in the media about the shame she felt about being a sexual assault survivor and how her religion had made her feel shame for being a survivor as a way to show her support.

barbell, punched her, and threw her down the stairs to cause her to miscarry. He did not allow her to wear clothes for months at a time and forced her to eat mustard knowing she would have a deadly allergic reaction. In one incident recalled both in Michelle and Gina's accounts, he held a revolver with one bullet in the chamber and pulled the trigger on Michelle, then made Gina pull the trigger on him to see if she would do it. Gina pulled the trigger, not aware that the gun was not loaded. Castro punished her for her actions.

Throughout their captivity, the women experienced long bouts of boredom. After initial fears of captivity, the "new normal" was cemented, especially since many of these women were children when they were first captured. The women spoke about survival tactics of living through each day, in which fear still filled them, but the long hours were also a struggle. Sleeping and daydreaming was a common survival technique, but the relief of television, radio, and paper to draw and write became a luxury and a way for the captor to elicit dependence. Still, the days were monotonous. Jaycee wrote in her journal, "My plans for the day are: 1. I watch the Today show. 2. Play a couple hours of Super Mario bros. 3. Take a nap and 4. Hopefully by then it will be dinnertime. My day. Very exciting. I am so lonely. I wish I had someone to talk to. Tomorrow will probably be the same" (Dugard 3).

For punishment, their captors sometimes took away luxuries, such as television and radio. (P19) For Jaycee, Michelle, Amanda, and Gina television kept them connected to the outside world, as well as allowing them to see reports of their own missing status. Ironically, the women in Cleveland saw news reports of both Jaycee and Elizabeth's abductions, and Jaycee watched the return of Elizabeth to her parents. These other stories gave them both hope and despair. If these women could be found, why hadn't they?

The despair of captivity caused a lot of hopelessness and questioning of fate, but it also made the women question their own self-worth. Castro repeatedly told Michelle that neither the police nor her family were looking for her; because she was twenty-one when she disappeared, she was not treated like an abducted child. Gina chronicled her years-long bout of depression that left her unable to talk or leave her bed. Jaycee doubted her self-identity and her ability to be her own person, which continued even after she was able to leave Castro's home.

There were several near-escapes or glimpses of hope during each woman's captivity. Castro's children and friends visited his house several times, yet none of them suspected anything was amiss, already knowing Castro to be secretive. In the days immediately following her abduction, Elizabeth witnessed search helicopters flying over their camp and heard her uncle calling her name on a search of the hills behind her neighborhood. Later, a police officer approached her with her captors while at a public library, but Mitchell convinced the officer that she was not the missing girl. This cemented the idea that no authority figure was going to come to her rescue. She writes:

> Up till that point, I'd had this fantasy that someone was going to see me and immediately scream out my name. Someone was going to rescue me. A cop was going to rescue me and come over and arrest Mitchell without me even saying anything. But no one was going to recognize me. I might as well have been chained up back at camp walking around, hidden underneath the veil. (Smart 167)

Jaycee began leaving the house with her captors, yet no one recognized her. This failure to be noticed, especially by law officers, gave way to an immense feeling of defeat for these women.

The escape, or pursuit from the Villain, all happened upon seemingly instances of chance by meeting the right person who had foresight or kindness, or a slight mistake of their captors, who had been skilled and vigilant in their plans. This eventual fallibility came to the women's

rescue. It wasn't for lack of trying, but just as their captures were extraordinarily rare events, their escapes were also due to rare moments of opportunity. Ariel Castro, after holding the women for ten years of captivity, neglected to close and lock the front door when leaving for the day, although he often did this to test the women to see if they would try to escape, hiding outside the door terrorizing them if they did. On this particular day, Amanda yelled for help from the outer door, and a neighbor helped her out, calling the police. The police retrieved Gina, Michelle, and her daughter Jocelyn. "I don't know what possessed me to go and try to escape that moment," she confesses.

Elizabeth and Jaycee's escapes (P18) were because law enforcement took the extra effort to discover them, showing special forethought and compassion. Upon being seen walking out of a Walmart with her captors, Elizabeth was approached by a police officer who asked her to identify herself. Stunned with fear, she did not answer, and the police officer could have let them go. However, based on a gut feeling, he was determined to separate her from Barzee and Mitchell to ask her who and how she was. Jaycee and her daughters accompanied Garrido to a university to ask about event spaces, and two female officers, based on intuition that something did not seem right, asked the family to come back the next day, separating Jaycee from Garrido, so she was finally able to give her true identity.

The women's initial release was, of course, a source of happiness and celebration, and the return to normalcy was a significant, although brief part of their memoirs. In all the memoirs, only one or two chapters was devoted to life after escape. Return to normalcy, although not as horrific as their captivity, still proved difficult. One cause was the media attention they received. This could be considered the pursuit (P21) by the Villain, because if he does still not have them physically captive, the psychological damage he inflicted remained with them long after.

5. Return of the Hero

The women, emerging from captivity back into the world represents the unrecognized arrival (P23). When Elizabeth's father went to retrieve her from the police station, he asked her "Elizabeth, is that really you?" because she looked like a "homeless girl." Furthermore, her younger brother, who was four at the time, didn't recognize her after her nine-month absence. Within a couple of days, he regained his memory of her and Elizabeth was able to return home with her family. Jaycee was especially unrecognizable to anyone but her mother, having endured seventeen years of isolation. Michelle Knight's longtime physical abuse permanently affected her physical appearance and led to surgery to correct her severely damaged jaw. For Jaycee and the women in Cleveland, the public had never seen them as their adult selves.

Upon return, many of the women struggled to find places to live, and Jaycee and Amanda struggled with bringing their children into their families and the real world. Both Jaycee and Elizabeth participated in equine therapy. They learned to do things for themselves and be self-sufficient; since the women were taken as children, they had never learned life skills for themselves or how to make decisions on a day to day basis. "The smallest things make me happy in [my new] apartment. For one thing, I can get up and make my own coffee every morning. After that I can either read a book or do some paintings— it's my choice of what I want to do" (Knight 243).

Despite the graphic descriptions of assault and abuse in these captivity narratives, the descriptions of recovery are vague and talked about in sweeping terms. The women speak of the support of the community and their families, but the details of recovery seem more guarded than the actual ordeal. One must suppose that the healing, while important, is not as central to the

story as are day by day events that take place, just as Propp's purpose was to show that different functions propel a story forward. The healing process, because it occurs for a long period after the last narrative function, is more nebulous and non-linear. The ending of their memoirs does not represent the end of recovery for these women.

Much of the media coverage seen after the rescue is covered in the memoirs. The women are reluctant or wary but claim to be glad to have participated. Appearing on television or in print requires them to take pride in how they look, and were given the opportunity for personal grooming and style (P29: Hero is given a new appearance). For Elizabeth, since Mitchell's trial did not occur until eight years after she was freed from captivity, her transfiguration was that from emerging to the public as a child and then becoming a grown woman. The women are carefully styled and posed for their media appearance and are seen on the covers of their books.

Many of the women made official appearances as advocates for other survivors (P27: Recognition of Hero), with Amanda and Michelle detailing their visit to President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden. Elizabeth Smart started the Elizabeth Smart Foundation for survivors.

The other difficult task (P25), besides learning to reclaim their lives, was facing their captors in court. Jaycee, Elizabeth, and Michelle all chose to give statements and testimony in court. This testimony became a crucial turning point, the idea that facing up was letting go and reclaiming power. The relief and sense of justice for being heard addresses the difficult task (P26).

In all the captivity cases, the Villain was punished with a life sentence in prison (P30: the Villain is punished), which the women said was a suitable punishment, accepting that a life of isolation of prison was comparable to their being held captive. There was no doubt of guilt for

their captors; the trials were merely procedural. The decision was significant for sentencing, not guilt. Ariel Castro, a month after his term started, died from hanging himself in his prison cell. Some media speculated that it was a result of auto-erotic asphyxiation because of his alleged sex addiction. At first, the women felt it was unfair for him not to endure punishment for his actions. However, they found that forgiveness and letting go was more beneficial to their healing process.

Here, I replace a wedding and marriage (P31) with establishing the women and their children as a family outside of captivity. Amanda and Jaycee's children would not exist without their experiences in captivity, but they remained firm in their stance of the children being a blessing. Seeing these children in the outside world was their reward; eventually these children enrolled in school and began what their mothers considered a normal childhood. Michelle was not able to unite with her son Joey but was able to converse with his new adoptive parents to learn about his life since she last saw him.

Summary

Based on the interpretations of Paul Gilet, Propp's morphology of folktales can be used to analyze the popular memoirs of women held captive. To review, the general grouping of functions can be summarized in table 2:

Table 2

Summary of Gilet's functions found within four captivity narratives

Propp/Gilet Function	**Elizabeth Smart**	**Jaycee Duggard**	**Michelle Knight**	**Amanda Berry**	**Gina DeJesus**
Initial Situation	Kidnapped in her home	Taken from the street	Tricked into getting a ride	Tricked into getting a ride	Tricked into getting a ride
Villain	Brian David Mitchell	Phillip Garrido	Ariel Castro	Ariel Castro	Ariel Castro

Helper/Donor	Wanda Barzee	Good: various pets Bad: Nancy Garrido	Good: Gina Bad: Amanda	Good: Gina Bad: Michelle	Good: Michelle, Amanda
Interaction with Prince/ss	God	2 children, one at 14 and one at 16	Joey (biological son); Jocelyn (Amanda's daughter)	Jocelyn (daughter)	Jocelyn (Amanda's daughter)
Donor Object	Radio/headphones	journal	journal	journal	journal
Interaction with Adversary	Years of abuse/captivity	Years of abuse/captivity	Years of abuse/captivity	Years of abuse/captivity	Years of abuse/captivity
Return of the Hero	Resumes life, attends college, goes on mission	Returns to raise 2 daughters, reunited with mother	Contacts Joey's adoptive parents	Integrates daughter with family	Gets job at restaurant

This analysis illuminates how the functions of a memoir are similar to how folktales are presented in narrative form. Despite being based on the women's real experiences, the transformation to a narrative takes on a familiar form. This supports the idea that tales exist in culture for reasons beyond entertainment: the readers anticipate for the sequence of events that takes us through the trials and tribulations of a Hero; we are able to endure the worst of times because the functions and formulas are familiar to us.

CHAPTER III. THEMES

In chapter one, I examined captivity memoirs as an emerging genre based on shared formulas and conventions. In chapter two, I used Vladimir Propp's functions of folktales to analyze the narrative structure of the memoirs. In this chapter, I will compare and contrast the captivity memoirs' themes. These themes include (1) the concept of Stockholm syndrome and adaptive survival, (2) the impact social identities of the women and their captors, (3) sexual assault and its implications, (4) the experience of motherhood while in captivity, and (5) the use of the memoirs by readers as inspiration and self-help.

Stockholm Syndrome

The term Stockholm syndrome is very likely to appear in media coverage of victims of captivity. The four texts studied here are no exception. The term, derived from a 1973 robbery at a Stockholm bank in which bank employees were held hostage for several days, was first defined as "a disorder whereby abductees bond with or express loyalty toward their captors in an effort to save their lives or make their ordeal more tolerable" (Adorjan et.al 454). Although rooted vaguely in psychology, Stockholm syndrome is not an official medical diagnosis, but a term created in media coverage of kidnappings, hostages, and those held captive.[11] The term has been expanded to apply to longer-term situations, such as abusive interpersonal relationships and parent-child relationships. Stockholm syndrome remains a relevant concept, especially in cases of women held in captivity.

[11] After the original incident, the term Stockholm syndrome was commonly associated with the of the kidnapping of Patty Hearst, particularly after she robbed a bank with her captors, members of the Symbiamese Liberation Army. Prisoners of War are also often said to suffer from Stockholm Syndrome.

Cases of alleged Stockholm syndrome are captivating because the captive individuals act in a way that is so counterintuitive to initial expectations of captor-captive personal relations. As Adorjan et. al explain, “the formula story for abductions and hostage-takings typically casts captives as innocent victims and their captors as villains, and offers a plot that has victims, once they are released, exhibiting relief, gratitude toward their rescuers and pity, if not outrage, toward their captors” (465). Victims and villain formulas are common in real and fictional narratives. However, when “captives refuse to see themselves as captives; when they reject the demonization of the villain, the formula story is disrupted” (Adorjn et. al 465). This disruption makes the situation intriguing and baffling: “the disruption challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about how individuals should feel and behave… or how events should unfold” (465). Observers wonder how someone could possibly act this way, and observers may, we think: *is this how I would act in this situation? I would know better than that.*

The challenge with assigning Stockholm syndrome as an explanation for someone’s behavior, besides it not being a medical diagnosis, is that it includes assumptions about the captive person’s character and morality. It also assumes that there is a single correct way to respond in all these situations. Actions of someone assumed to have Stockholm syndrome can be unintentional yet still be an adaptive strategy for survival. However, “the development of a psychological alliance with the captor is at the same time aligned with less stable, less mature individuals” (Jameson 350). When captives admit that they were aware of their counter-formulaic actions, they are seen as using valid strategy. When it is not conscious, they are seen as weak. However, both conscious and unconscious strategies can be biologically and psychologically adaptive, as these coping mechanisms can aid in ultimate survival and reduce

biological fear responses in order to remain rational and in control (Jameson). Any action that results in the captive person's survival should be considered successful.

Judgements associated with how and to what extent a victim relates to her captor can cause the victim to feel that she must defend her actions to law enforcement and to the public. Therefore, I propose that a defense of the women in captivity's actions is a possible motive for why the women chose to release the memoirs about their captivity. Their memoirs may serve as a pre-emptive statement of actions because the women know that the details of their stories will likely be very public and filtered through mass media channels. In public relations speak, it would be like getting "in front of the story." This is one of many possible motivations of these women, but I do not claim it is the sole reason they write their memoirs. Nor do I claim that they need to defend themselves or that they owe anyone an explanation. I do suggest that this need to explain is a result of the inherent paradoxical nature of the concept of Stockholm syndrome. The women knew they would be talked about in the media, and one can understand why they would want some control over their own narratives.

In the introductions to these memoir, the women provide reasons for writing the book. Usually a memoir's purpose is implied: the simple reason of sharing a story. A reader who chooses the book expects a reflection of true events. However, in these popular captivity memoirs, there seems a need to provide explicit reasons:

> I decided to write this book [because] Phillip Garrido believes no one should find out what he did to an eleven-year-old girl….me. He believes he is not responsible for his actions…. I believe I shouldn't be ashamed for what happened to me…. (Dugard ix)
>
> Although it may be hard to understand, a few of [my feelings] were good, for they show the things you cling to when everything is gone. (Smart 4)
>
> Yes, I made it through one of the most terrible experiences that can happen to a human being, but most of all, my story is about hope. I might have been chained, starved, and

> beaten, yet that monster couldn't totally crush my spirit. Over and over I chose to get back up and keep going. Now I'm going to tell you how I did it. (Knight xi)
>
> We have written here about terrible things that we never wanted to think about again. But our story is not just about rape and chains, lies and misery. That was Ariel Castro's world. Our story is about overcoming all that (Berry and DeJesus, "A Note to Readers").

There are many possible reasons for the need to express reasons for writing the book. One could be that it counteracts a perceived commercial gain from the book. This explanation assumes that writing for commercial gain is selfish and would contribute to trauma kitsch, in which the victims of tragedies are commercially exploited for the demand of the excruciating details of their suffering (see chapter one for further discussion on trauma kitsch). Another possible reason for explaining motives is to proactively counteract the idea of Stockholm syndrome. The authors may assume their actions would be misunderstood and thus need to prove themselves and justify their decisions for "disrupting the narrative." This tells us something larger about how a victim is supposed to act and how it affects people experiencing such trauma.

Elizabeth, after enduring the first two days of being held by Mitchell at a remote campsite, wrote:

> My mind started turning. Okay, I thought to myself, I can't fight them all the time. If I do, they'll keep me cabled [tied up]. I'll never have a chance to escape…. I continued thinking. If I did as they told me, if I didn't fight them, then maybe it would be harder for him to hurt me. If I could get them to trust me just a little, maybe they would let me off the cable. Maybe they'd realize how much they were hurting me. Maybe they would come to like me, maybe even care about me. Then maybe they would let me go. (73)

As mentioned, these memoirs are written based upon reflection and memory, thus creating the opportunity for the woman to shape, or reshape, her narrative. In the above example, regardless of whether Elizabeth used cooperation as a conscious strategy, framing it as getting her captors to care about her for the sake of survival gives her personal agency. Hypothetically, if she felt the urge to be cared for initially without thinking of it as a proactive strategy, it would still be a

successful survival strategy. If the goal of survival is the same, would these both be labeled Stockholm syndrome? Did Elizabeth feel like she had to explain that it was a conscious decision, almost trickery, to comply with their rules? As a fourteen-year-old girl, was she able to discern these feelings? Perhaps, upon reflection, she retroactively assigned feelings to it. She possibly had a need to prove that her thoughts met the expected narrative, even if her actions did not.

Michelle displayed her detachment from her captor, Ariel Castro, by not using his real name throughout her memoir, calling him "the dude" instead. She reflected on her awareness of the conditioning of being held captive:

> After years of being in a prison a crazy thing starts to happen: the locks move from off of your wrists and your ankles and up to your brain… but after you've been raped, humiliated, beaten, and chained for so long, you get into the habit of doing what you are told. Your spirit starts crumbling. You start not to be able to imagine anything different. And it feels like your captor is all-seeing and all-knowing. (Knight 192)

In this passage, the Michelle turned from documenting the actual narrative events to reflect on these events. This helps the readers understand why Michelle did the things she did, perhaps even why she did not try to escape for ten years. The reflection adds depth and layers to her story; a straight play-by-play would not be as interesting. Without this, she would be open to scrutiny and misunderstanding about her perceived lack of trying to escape. Her actions required explanation.

Of the women held captive, Stockholm syndrome was most frequently mentioned in the media conversations about Jaycee's case. Perhaps this is because she was held captive the longest, she was not physically restrained or locked up, or that Garrido was an active participant in raising their two children. According to Jaycee's memoir, Garrido did not physically harm their children; in fact, Jaycee describes him and his wife Nancy as having helped raise them, caring a great deal for them, and creating a family unit. Jaycee openly spoke about Garrido at

times with affection, but certainly documents the abuse she endured. She offered no active defense of this; she did, in reflection, understand her relationship with him: "I can't believe how much I came to rely on him for everything…it seemed he had an answer for everything. Phillip seemed like a nice guy when he wasn't using me for sex. I even started enjoying his company. I was naïve and desperately lonely" (33-34). She shared how he would affectionately call her Snoopy, how she enjoyed when Garrido and his wife Nancy would come to her trailer in the back yard to watch movies and eat dinner with her. A constant theme throughout the book was how she sought affection and approval from Nancy, who oten seemed to withhold any affection from her out of jealousy.

Jaycee's two daughters, to whom she gave birth when she was fourteen and sixteen, tied her to her captors, and when they were out in public, Jaycee chose not to escape. Her perceived lack of trying could be a surprise to readers and cause them to wonder why she did not try.

> I guess I have turned a switch off inside of me. In the beginning I did it to survive. Now it's just a habit, I suppose, but nonetheless it is now a part of who I am. I feel it switch when I watch TV or I'm out somewhere. When I'm out in public I want nothing more than to be invisible. To blend in and not get noticed. That's when I feel the switch turn on and me sink into the background. I don't look at people or really see them either. I feel like if I notice them, they will notice me. (Dugard 179)

Jaycee's narrative differs from the others in that she discussed her attachment to her captors throughout the book, offering no apologies or shame. Her narrative leaves room for her to weave in and out of feelings of sympathy, attachment, and at times, affection for her captors. When she was questioned at the parole office about her identity, she turned to Garrido for direction. She also distinguishes between what she remembers feeling at the time and her current reflections on the situation, looking back at her experience as an adult with more knowledge and insight. Jaycee did not specifically use the term Stockholm syndrome when describing herself, but

among the other three memoirs, she is the narrator who most clearly admits voluntary feelings of attachment to her captors. The way in which these women explained their actions is not compared to determine who is more truthful or which acted more acceptably. Rather, my intention is to look at how these narratives were told; what information was included, how the narrative was framed, and how the author(s) presented themselves to readers.

Missing white women

The identity of the captives as women is certainly significant and relevant throughout all the captive women's experiences. The captors took these women to be held as object to serve their own needs of power and control. Castro and Garrido claimed it was to help with their sexual maladies. For Mitchell, it was to fulfill his megalomaniacal delusions. The women in Cleveland, when driven to Castro's house, agreed to go inside because they had been socialized to be nice and non-aggressive. They felt that they owed Castro some politeness because of the favor he was doing them.

The ethnicity of crime victims, and the bias and empathy associated with them, has been the subject of much media analysis. The "Missing White Woman" phenomenon has come to be known as a phenomenon when "news outlets report more extensively on missing person's cases that involve young, conventionally attractive, middle- to upper-class white women" (Conlin and Davie 37). According to the theory, the public will feel immense sympathy towards white women, seeing their cases as more tragic and their lives as worth more. The Missing White Woman phenomenon is applicable to Elizabeth Smart and Jaycee Dugard, whose pictures were kept prominently in the public's eye. The appearance of their grieving parents, who appeared white and upper or middle class, also kept the cases visible. This is not to deny the importance of

the media's reception to the women missing in Cleveland; the parents of Gina and Amanda were strong in keeping their community informed about her. However, their disappearances did not receive the national media attention that Elizabeth and Jaycee's did. In fact, the cultural implications of the three women held captive by Castro provide an interesting inquiry into how identity of both captor and captive women played a part in the captivity experience.

Based on the memoirs of these women, a pattern of differential treatment by their captors mirrors patterns about perceptions of privilege and oppression. Of the women held by Castro, Amanda, with her blonde hair and blue eyes, had physical features most identified with youth and whiteness. Gina identified her ethnicity as Puerto-Rican and stated that many people mistook her for older than fourteen, and Michelle Knight appeared as "other," due to mixed heritage. Michelle was kidnapped first of the three women. Castro believed her to be younger than she was due to her short height. Castro expressed disappointment when he learned of her age. Michelle did not identify strongly with a racial identity, although she recognized her own "othered" appearance: "One time Ma told me she was mixed with Irish, black, Hispanic, Indian, Arabaic, and Italian. 'We're mutts,' she said. That must be where my big lips came from, especially because she had them too" (6). In the socially constructed categorizations of race, anything that deviates from whiteness is considered a marked category, different from the default whiteness.

There is no confusion about whether Amanda was abused; she most certainly was. However, in the small world of their capture, Amanda received what the other women considered privileges from Castro. For a majority of their capture, Amanda was kept in a larger room than the one that Gina and Michelle shared; she also was given a better television. In the horrors that they suffered, these advantages seemed vast, and, unfortunately, created tensions and

resentment between the women. Both Gina and Michelle were repeatedly demeaned and told that they were mere objects to be held for the reason of Castro's "problems": his lack of self-control, his self-diagnosed sex addiction. Amanda, on the other hand, was included in Castro's delusion as his romantic partner. Amanda was permitted to more showers and time outside her bedroom to spend in the rest of the house. Even though she was still captive in the house, these small opportunities felt like luxuries.

The most significant example of preference was that Castro allowed Amanda to remain pregnant. One notable and gruesome detail of Michelle's capture was that she became pregnant on five different occasions, and each time Castro physically harmed her, causing her to miscarry. He starved her, fed her rotten food, and hit and kicked her in the abdomen. Amanda's pregnancy, he decided, was a gift. Although the reason is not given, it is interesting to surmise that Amanda's favoritism in the house was due to her perceived whiteness. One possibility is that Castro, as a Hispanic man, valued Amanda as a potentially superior, more desired relationship. Even with his own non-privileged identity, he may have reinforced a pattern of valuing whiteness, even among the reprehensible abuse he was causing. As documented in *Hope*, Castro called Amanda's parents not long after she was taken to say, "I have Mandy…. she wants to be here because we're married" (33). The delusion of returned affections was not put-upon Gina or Michelle; in fact, he often referred to them as objects while Amanda was more humanized. Amanda described the delusions that she was forced to endure:

> "You're so pretty," he says as he starts pawing me again. "Stand this way, stand that way, put your arms around me, you're so beautiful." Blah, blah blah. He was a whole little routine he makes me recite, about how much I love it, how much I want him. If I don't say it, he's rougher…he's always touching me like he owns me. He talks about the different parts of my body and says that they belong to him. He says we are "together." How can he think that if he has to lock me up to keep me here?" (Berry and DeJesus 43-44)

Similarly, Mitchell viewed his "marriage" to Elizabeth Smart as an accomplishment because of her features associated with whiteness. To Mitchell, her youth and blond hair signified innocence. After Mitchell left Elizabeth chained to a tree at the camp to obtain food and supplies from downtown Salt Lake City, he arrived back at the camp gleeful that the city was plastered with Elizabeth's picture, her "sweet face looking down on me…I thought to myself, I got the real McCoy. I got the most beautiful girl in the city. And that makes me proud" (113).[12] For him and Castro, taking these girls was like a trophy, a reward for what they though was owed to them. This very image of whiteness fuels media fascination and the tarnishing of their innocence makes these stories horrifyingly compelling.

It is worth noting that Michelle Knight, unlike the other four women in this study, did not fit the young and innocent ideal that the other women represented for their captors. In her memoir, she recalled how Castro was frustrated when he learned that she was twenty-two years old, because he assumed she was a teenager. Knight was not "sexually innocent" in her captor's eyes. She had already given birth to a son, and she had already endured years of sexual abuse at the hands of an older relative throughout her childhood. Therefore, she was not innocent, and was seen as a tarnished body with no value to her captor. Because of this, she was punished even more in captivity, as Castro took sinister delight in telling her that no one was looking for her.

Michelle's disappearance was not reported to the police right away, and when it was, was not considered a priority because she was twenty-two, had already run away several times, and was estranged from her parents. She did not fit the media's conception of "Missing White

[12] Keeping Elizabeth's picture visible was a strategy enforced by Elizabeth's parents, who wanted to be sure that everyone knew what she looked like and to keep her case relevant in the news. Although they did not consciously use the Missing White Woman as strategy, it served to help them. Ultimately, it was a passerby that called the police because of a possible sighting nine months later, leading to her rescue. The passerby noted that he only recognized her because of all the coverage.

Woman," Her story, then, is unlike the others. Her tales of abuse and mistreatment began long before she got into Ariel Castro's car. Her memoir reads almost as a succession of tragedies that don't stop until her release. Her memoir feels unlike the others, and the reader is left with a sense of too much tragedy. The expected narrative of such a story is that the protagonist starts out innocent and happy, so we can follow her downfall and know it is resolved. Michelle's story doesn't fit that structure, so reading it feels, for lack of a better word, inappropriate. The abuse she endured prior to captivity is told more hurriedly, as if she knows it is not what her readers care about most. She, and the other writers, are subject to the ways in which we, the readers, want to witness tragedy.

Captive motherhood

Jaycee, Amanda, and Michelle biologically gave birth before or during their captivity; Amanda and Jaycee became pregnant as a result of rape by their captors. However, Gina and Elizabeth's narratives still involved themes of motherhood. According to their memoirs, for the former three, pregnancy was not chosen, but the concept of motherhood was accepted almost immediately, Michelle became pregnant at eighteen by a high school boyfriend, but her son, Joey, was taken from her home after he was injured by a relative who also lived there. The biological father of Michelle's child was not involved in her life in any way both before and after her captivity.

Giving birth and raising children in captivity are some of the most salacious details of captivity narratives. When we hear these children exist on the news, the questions from the media and public are relentless. How did they give birth at home? What was life like for the children? Did they know their mother was a victim and held captive? There also comes the hard

question that seems to not be spoken of: did they even want to have a child? Did they ever wish the pregnancy would terminate? Did they resent the child? Did the children resemble their fathers in some way? In all the narratives, the women immediately accepted and embraced the role of motherhood without doubt. This aligns with the ideals of motherhood, in that it is always beneficial to the mother. I do not deny that the women didn't love their children, but their narratives, as a way of explaining themselves to the public, erase any doubt they had about being mothers. Would the public likely be forgiving if they claimed to be less than enthusiastic given the circumstances?

For Jaycee, having her first child at age fourteen provided her with companionship. Her loneliness made her long for time with Garrido and to connect with Nancy. With a child, she had someone to be with. There were also other benefits:

> Life is nicer than it used to be since the baby came. Phillip hasn't made me have sex with him since the baby came…when I was pregnant he didn't make me have sex, but one time I had to take off my shirt and masturbate him. Phillip and Nancy visit a lot more. (Dugard 112)

Having a child or children not only set the woman into domesticated roles of caregiver, but also somehow domesticated their captors. It helped Jaycee avoid potential instances of rape; in their captive state, any lessening of this seemed something to be grateful for. Having a child created the illusion of a normal family—something the girls craved, having been only children themselves when they were taken from their own families. Amanda wrote:

> The baby started kicking like crazy. I reached for his hand and laced it on my stomach, wanting [Castro] to feel connected to the baby. I knew my baby would be safer, and would have a better chance of staying with me, if he was excited about being a new father (Berry and DeJesus 152).

A new child gave Amanda, as well as Michelle and Gina, hope. However, the reader may wonder if there was doubt about being a mother. Did they express any resentment that their child

was fathered by their captor? Did they ever think that the child should never have been born in their situation? One can surmise that there is a need to explain—and convince—readers that their child was always welcome, and their joy of motherhood did not waver. It would make sense to do this, especially making this public information that their children might one day read. Amanda provided some vulnerability in her feelings towards Castro:

> I know it's wrong, but I feel closer to him. I appreciate that he treats Jocelyn well and buys her clothes and toys- she loves Daisy, the big doll he just brought her. He's even giving us better food and put a microwave on my dresser so I can warm up her mashed potatoes, beans and rice. We all sit and watch kid movies together, and it almost feels normal, or at least a lot better than it used to. I desperately want Jocelyn to have a normal life. And on the days he helps me do that, I actually feel some affection for him (Berry and DeJesus 168).

Amanda and Jaycee were not given the choice of being mothers, but they chose to embrace it, a decision that made their captivity even more binding. Attempting to leave or disrupt the norm would put their child in danger. Even if this wasn't explicitly planned, forcing pregnancy onto their captives was the cruelest manipulation. To admit this, of course, may admit the regret of motherhood. There was an implicit need to prove their skills as mothers, in spite of the conditions. Both Jaycee and Amanda created school environments modeled after their own limited school experience in an attempt to normalize their children. Jaycee wrote of being overwhelmed by being stuck indoors with her first child as a baby (also being only fourteen when she had her); she felt relief when Garrido provided help and company. She saw this as him being a good father, another way in which he maintained power over her.

The irony for Michelle is that she was already a mother and separated from her child prior to being taken,[14] a situation that became even worse while she was in captivity. Castro

[14] Michelle's son was removed from her care after incident of abuse by another family member in the house. He was in foster care and Michelle was allowed supervised visits. She was on her way to a visit when Castro offered her a ride.

abused her horrifically, caused her to miscarry five times, and forced her, under the threat of death, to successfully deliver Amanda's baby. One can surmise that Castro knew that this would be especially damaging to Michelle given her estranged son and her multiple miscarriages. Michelle provided the details of her miscarriage, caused by Castro hitting her in the stomach.

> Just as the sun was coming up I started having horrible cramps. Minutes later I felt something slide out of me. It was the most god-awful thing I ever lived through. The dude came upstairs before work and saw the big mess on my mattress. "You aborted my child!" he yelled. He slapped me so hard in the face that I saw stars. "That'll teach you not to kill my baby, you slut!" All I could do was lay there and stare into space." (Knight 136)

Michelle described the circumstances of other miscarriages, each one a traumatic reminder that she had already lost a son prior to being in captivity. Despite the tensions between her and Amanda, Michelle expressed joy over having Amanda's daughter in the house, though her feelings about Amanda being permitted to keep her child were not explicitly stated. Michelle's narrative focused more on the physical details of miscarrying and did not mention her feelings about the possibility of having a child in captivity.

Elizabeth's association with motherhood involved her craving for motherly behavior from Barzee. While she was scared of Mitchell, she still hoped that she could find an ally in Barzee. The lack of acting motherly, in Elizabeth's eyes, made her especially evil:

> But I want to be clear. I never developed any kind of affection for Barzee. She was a monster and I knew that. She never showed me a single moment of kindness. She never demonstrated a single act of compassion or understanding towards me. If Mitchell was the devil, then she was his sneering sidekick. In some ways, I think she was even worse. She was a woman. She was a mother. She knew what I was going through. (Smart 190)

Elizabeth's own closeness with her mother provided the contrast to her relationship with Barzee. In fact, Elizabeth's ordeal was a series of almost opposite binaries to her life prior in every way.

Coming from a large Mormon family with five siblings, she now lived just with two adults she feared. She was subjected to things that her religion had shielded her from, such as alcohol, drugs, foul language, stealing, and sexual activities. Mitchell and Barzee embraced the values that Elizabeth's upbringing warned her of.

Pain as inspiration

A major formula found in the captivity narratives is an uplifting, inspiring ending: not only celebrating freedom from their captors but freedom from mental suffering. The memoirs' happy ending is guaranteed because the women have survived to write and publish the book. As discussed by Cawelti and genre in chapter one and in the discussion of Stockholm syndrome, a narrative comes with expectations. Things must resolve, make meaning and provide inspiration. Anything besides resolution would not be worth the suffering of both the actual victim and the reader, who has placed themselves in the role of a witness to trauma.

The cultural messages derived from the captivity memoirs have much in common with the study of the self-help genre, which rose in popularity in the second half of the twentieth century. Self-help is a billion-dollar industry, especially in the sales of books and the daytime talk shows such as *Donahue, Geraldo, Sally Jesse Raphael*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show.*[15] The active intentions of the popular memoirs to share their stories as a way of helping others align with the messages of self-help. Elizabeth wrote:

> When we are faced with a challenge, it is very easy to be mad or upset. But when we have passed our great test, we are then given opportunities to reach out to other people.

[15] Even with the introduction of new media, the self-help industry is still popular. Even though daytime talk shows do not exist as they were, the process becomes more democratized, where self-published books, self-help blogs and youtube channels are in abundance.

> We are able to effect change in a way that otherwise we wouldn't have been able to. Because of the things I have lived through, I can help other people now. (303)

Thus, it is worth exploring some of the relevant research of self-help. In her comprehensive study of the self-help book industry, Sandra K. Dolby points to the shift from reliance on so-called experts to personal narratives to provide inspiration as a turning point in the self-help industry. She writes,

> The ideational content of self-help books nearly always emerges as a kind of 'creative cultural plagiarism.' The originality comes in how the content is presented, for the content itself—the traditional American values—comes from the authors' surrounding culture. In contemporary America, self-help authors are instrumental in transmitting to a new generation the values that are central to what we think of as 'American character' (150-151).

Connecting this to Cawelti's ideas of genre and formula, the "traditional American values" Dolby speaks of are also found in popular genres. Romance, melodrama, and other genres have an unspoken rule that even though horrible things can happen to good people, they will always triumph in the end. This is also true for the popular captivity memoirs. Dolby contends that self-help is an individualistic pursuit. The assumption is that no one can help one better than oneself. Therefore, the inverse is likely to be true: *if I can't get better, I'm not trying hard enough*. Here, the captive women endured the most horrific acts, yet still recovered. Following their stories can serve as inspiration for personal recovery.

Self-help also derives from psychotherapy moving from a medical/privatized area to a public one, in the idea of "talk therapy." Janice M. Shattuc explores this in *The Talking Cure*, attributing self-help and inspirational messages from the testimonial format. Sharing a story is helpful both for the person sharing and the person listening. This sort of democratized therapy is ripe for use in mass production. Shattuc's observations on TV talk shows that feature guests who have been through trauma is that "TV therapy is closer to testimonials of faith than to guilt-

ridden whispers of the confessional" (113). Furthermore, "the talk show undercuts the rigors of therapeutic practices and reduces the power of the therapist or expert…talk shows are predicated on a belief in the individual's active cognition of his or her problems" (115). Since talk shows have studio audiences, there must be an affirmation from audience members about what is healthy and unhealthy, what is right and what is wrong, what is normal and abnormal, etc. This helps shape the "creative cultural plagiarism" mentioned by Dolby. The norms are established by the public audience, thus insuring they fit the social norms of its time.

Captivity memoirs are different from talk shows and self-help books in many obvious ways, but their similarities make the comparison legitimate: both rely on a self-determination model that is pervasive in most western narratives of individualism. Dolby postulates that the underlying message of inspirational texts holds

> the idea of the soul, the idea that what is of ultimate concern is not the fate of the body but rather the fate of what we identify as a "self." Some writers do not identify this "self" as an eternal soul but rather as a kind of psychological self-referential entity; however, a large number of [self-help] writers do in fact write of the soul as a preexisting, death-surviving reality. Interestingly, in either case, the assertion is made that one must learn to trust that the "self" is safe, that the self cannot be harmed by life (103).

This idea fits the captivity memoirs and other types of mis lit (see chapter one) because they detail abuse from an external villain. Despite the physical bodies that suffer abuse, a consistent sense of oneself pervades the experience, and this self is attributed to successful recovery. The self, Dolby explains, is synonymous with a soul. The idea of a soul is common among several religions. It is no coincidence that the women partake in a spiritual relationship with God during and after their captivities.

Religion plays a large part in the self-help genre and is also common in the popular captivity memoirs. "Aspects of psychology and religion had merged into a hybrid concept of

spirituality in self-help, increasingly positing transformative power and transcendental wisdom within the inner self…[spirituality] offered a deeply mystical aspect of the self to which life's most meaningful questions could be posed, and in response, clear directives were said to be returned" (Woodstock 173). The mention and use of God in the memoirs as less of a figure of specific scripture, but more as a general higher serving as a mirror in which the "desires of individuals were reflected back upon them" (Woodstock 165). It is self-assuring and an attempt to make meaning of life. This is not to say that I am questioning the extent of the women's belief in a higher being. What is important in the discussion of the role of God in their memoirs is to observe how it fits the narrative and formula where the wrongs are eventually righted. The religious aspects contain the message that there's a purpose for everything, and although God plays a role, it is not God that helped the women. The women helped themselves, albeit with the help of God. It is common after a tragedy for people to surmise "everything happens for a reason." The reason could possibly be God, or at least a higher power that controls reason. Jaycee wrote:

> I want things to be different, but I would never change a thing about my life. I would never turn back the clock and changed the way things turned out. I love my kids. I wouldn't say I have scars from it, but I do have a few scratches! (Dugard 169)

This short excerpt contains not only contradictory messages, but contradictory emotions. The "everything happens for a reason" concept is present, especially since her children were a product of her captivity. To say she regretted it would be to regret her children. She also tried to assure the reader that she "has no scars, just scratches," using a metaphor that refers to bodily harm. The use of the exclamation point implies that she is trying to use humor or emphasis. Thus, her sense of self is still consistent, and to say she doubted her sense of self may be too painful for her to recognize or for the audience to recognize. Interestingly, Jaycee's memoir is

the only one of the four that devoted a significant part of her book to discussion of formal therapy and treatment after her rescue.

Gina, Michelle, and Amanda all spoke about losing hope and faith in God during their time in captivity leading to suicidal feelings. However, in the narrative of their memoir, it was their rescue that brought them back to a belief in God, rather than their belief in God causing them to be rescued. Michelle explicitly stated: "Dear God, I will not let this tragedy bring me to my knees or define me my whole life. I've got the right path in my sight. I don't want to live forever feeling this pain all over again" (187). She does not ask God to explicitly help her; she asks God to support her in helping herself. This is in alignment with the pervasive sense of self contained within these memoirs and often in self-help rhetoric. Gina spoke more directly to her audience and instructed them to believe: "Always believe in hope, even though sometimes it is hard to believe in hope. Just pray to God, and God will give you that hope." (309). Again, she did not expect God directly to save her, but to give her the ability to save herself.

Of these four memoirs, Elizabeth is the only one who expressed a belief in an established religious sect: she and her family were devout Mormons. She also attributed more of the events of her captivity directly to God's work:

> I believe in a God who loves me. I'd never pictured Him as mean or vindictive or anything like that. I'd always pictured Him as a beautiful person, glowing with love and kindness, someone what understood exactly how I felt all the time, someone who loved me as one of his children…even after I had been raped, I still thought of Him that way, He loves us all. Even me. Even still (Smart 49).

Elizabeth spoke of several miracles that occurred during her nine months of captivity. One was that she felt her deceased grandfather's spirit with her. Another was that it started to rain right as she may have perished from thirst in their makeshift camp in the mountains. The one that may be

the hardest to take at face value is that during one night, when she and her captors were without food and water for seven days and on the edge of death, she awoke to a cup of water beside her which she drank from, but was missing in the morning. She wrote, "Why did God send me the water? Because he loved me. And he wanted me to know…the experience reminded me once again that God had not deserted me, that He was aware of my suffering and loneliness. And that gave me hope" (132).

Elizabeth acknowledged that readers may not believe that it happened. Elizabeth did not present it as a metaphor. She credited God as her main source of recovery:

> I think a few people might look at me and almost not believe what I say. Some of them might think, given the fact that I haven't received any professional counseling, that something must still be wrong with me, that I am hiding or putting on a happy face. Some might think that I'm carrying a bit of baggage, or that there are certain things that I'm not ready to face. But it's very important to stress that every survivor must create their own pathway to recovery. What works for one might not work for another (Smart 297).

Where I would not call this judgmental of therapy, it does strengthen her case for God as healer and inspiration. She also anticipated criticism of God from the readers. Her memoir doesn't feel like religious indoctrination, but she often mentioned God in the context of assuming disbelief from her readers. It seems that she was aware of tragedy memoirs' inherent formulas and had to mention that her book doesn't fit recovery narratives' traditional formulas. Still, after explaining her life ten year after her rescue, she reflected that "the truth is, history is replete with stories of human suffering…there are examples of those who suffered abuse as I did… so what I did may not be so exceptional when you consider the entire scope of human experience" (299). In other words, she placed herself as an example of recovery, not an exceptional case. This fits the "if I can get better you can, too" model of self-help. It is also worth considering that Elizabeth's book

was written a decade after recovery and her captivity was significantly shorter than the other women's ordeals.[17]

Surviving sexual assault

The trauma of captivity involves sexual assault, which serves as a great horror yet of great interest for the reader. As discussed in the earlier chapter on witnessing, this trauma creates great fear for readers, yet also a need to witness. This is something the women suffered as a trauma that was done to their bodies, along with the psychological trauma of the constant fear of being assaulted. The way these women wrote about their experiences with sexual assault in captivity varied in style, detail, and context. One can assume this relates back to the way in which they were comfortable having readers witness their trauma. However, it also may be because of the assumption that readers will want to know details of the abuse.

The concept of sexual assault is complex and multi-disciplinary. Not until the latter half of the twentieth century did it gain prominence in both sociological terms and in support of treatment and understanding of survivors. There are also great legal implications and various definitions. For this project, the most salient points relate to how the authors present their own experiences and how their stories might contribute to a social understanding of assault. The publication of Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* in 1975 marked a significant development in the study of sexual assault as a social phenomenon. Despite its flaws, Brownmiller's work is significant in the notion that rape is not just an act of sexual aggression,

[17] Of course, this does not mean her suffering was less than the other women. There is no intention to compare. Her circumstances and distance from her experience is the outlier of the four memoirs I am studying.

but also a result of patriarchal power.[18] Rape, according to Brownmiller, is not a result of sexual desire, but a desire to assert dominance, aggression, and subjugation. This is certainly exemplified in the popular captivity memoirs. The men that held the women captive raped them regularly, often several times a day, leaving the women in a constant state of fear. The ways in which the women dealt with their situation included fighting back, begging for reprieve, appearing to be compliant to make it less painful, and the strategy of appearing to enjoy it. As most of them were taken and assaulted as children, they lacked understanding of the men's action, and in some cases, the assaults became normalized within their context.

The women not only relayed the horrors of the actual acts, but how they lived it. Garrido would consume large amounts of drugs while he raped Jaycee. Jaycee reflected, "I hate drugs, I wish [Garrido] wouldn't take them. I think it turns him into another person. He seems nice the rest of the time. That's how I get through sex, I just tell myself it will be over and he will become the 'nice' person that I think he can be. I just need to get past the pain" (74). Michelle documents how Castro fed her only after she had intercourse with him. It is clear how these men used rape to gain power and make their captives more compliant: to deny or afford basic needs, to be their only source of human contact, or provide emotional comfort, however short-lived. However, the examples also show how Brownmiller's division between the sexual act and power can be limiting, as they cannot always be mutually exclusive. The women had no choice but to associate sexual acts with their survival.

[18] Rape occurs among all gender identities and gender expression. However, much of the research, especially feminist scholarship, focuses on rape as inflicted on women by men. Based on the nature of the memoirs, I will focus on this research, although I acknowledge it is not the only assault that occurs.

In *Rethinking Rape*, Ann J. Cahill challenges Brownmiller's concept of a sex/power dichotomy. Cahill argues that thinking of rape as a political act separate from a sexual act cannot fully embody the concept of rape because assault of the mind, assault on the body, and assault on a political concept of sexuality cannot be separated. Whereas Brownmiller argued that rape is a strategy used by men to keep all women in a state of fear, Cahill argues this is too simplistic. "To assume that the realms of sexuality and politics are easily demarcated, and separable is to ignore that the violence of rape is peculiarly sexual, that the sexuality on which the phenomenon of rape feels is peculiarly violent, and that the complex relationship between the two cannot be reduced to one factor" (27). In other words, rape is something that is violent specifically because it is associated with the victims' sexuality, both physically and mentally. This is also similar to the definition of trauma introduced in chapter one, that trauma is an assault on the body, an assault on the mind, and a constant struggle of the mind after the actual trauma ends. Rape causes mental trauma long after the physical trauma ends.

Cahill continues to explain that rape is an embodied trauma. Rape is a specific violent act that is dependent on the physical makeup of the body. Because of the way culture shapes sexuality, rape is a violation of the sense of the sexual self of the victim. She explains:

> The exhortation to "buck up," to pack the experience away neatly and forever, fails so spectacularly because it assumes that there is a self that exists independently of the traumatic experience, a self that can voluntarily choose to interpret and take up the experience in a variety of ways, the best of which is simply to ignore it. It also assumes that this true self is significantly separate from the self's body, so separate as to be reactively untouched by the physical experience of the assault. The recognition of the bodily self disallows the notion of such an abstract or intellectual self buried beneath the layers of skin and bone (130).

In other words, a trauma that violates sexuality is specifically different from other traumas. It is not that it is worse or less traumatic, but that sexuality includes social and mental components

that are not separate from the body. Rape is an attack on a woman's sense of her own sexuality and impacts all later sexual identity. Considering that the rape of these women began when they were children, one can assume it will, unfortunately, affect them as they pursue adult sexual relationships.

Despite the desire to witness the trauma, readers of these memoirs will never be able to fully comprehend the extent of the trauma, nor its effect on the narrator. We can only interpret what they provide in writing, thus fulfilling the role of non-witness (see chapter one). However, the choices that the authors made in written form give us information about how they conceptualize their own sexual assaults. How much they share and the words they use to do it are important. Some of the women use the word rape while others call it sex. Often neither word is used in favor of description of the incident in the moment.

The memoirs cover a lot of time, ranging from nine months to over ten years. Therefore, some parts of the memoirs go into specific detail of events and other parts provide a summary of an event. All of the authors detailed the first time their captors assaulted them. This may be because the initial trauma was most memorable. For some, it created the boundary between an innocent body and a traumatized one. Cahill expresses the significance of embodiments of trauma in rape: "Because all victims of rape are embodied, rape always had bodied experience; because embodiment is always marked by difference that significance varies widely among victims" (115). This is to say that although rape is political, as one would expect, all survivors experience it differently depending on their individual relationship with their bodies.

The first morning after she was taken from her home, Elizabeth found herself in a secluded camp with Mitchell and Barzee, where Mitchell "married" her and Barzee prepared her

for Mitchell by washing her and making her change into the symbolic garments that he and Barzee wore. In her recall of the moment, Elizabeth knew what was about to happen, but as a child didn't fully comprehend, so her terror is documented as she feels it through the event:

> I sat on the bucket, sick with dread, huge tears rolling down my cheeks. My body was so tight I felt I couldn't breathe. I shivered, my feet still wet. I waited, crying softly as he came into the tent…I fought and kicked and struggled. I did everything I could. But he was a powerful and driven man. There was nothing I could do. When it was over, he got up and crawled out of the tent, leaving me crying on the floor (Smart 45-46).

Elizabeth chose to narrate her inner thoughts as it was happening, instead of detailing the actions that were done to her. She referred to the rape as "it," knowing that her readers knew what she was referring to. At end of her description, she explained her actions, perhaps defending why she did not fight back successfully. This alludes to the idea that the "correct" response is to fight back. After the initial details of the first instance of rape, she wrote: "Over the next nine months, Brian David Mitchell would rape me every day, sometimes multiple times a day. He would torture me and brutalize me in ways that are impossible to describe, would starve and manipulate me like I was an animal" (46). She particularly used the word rape, as opposed to assault, had sex, attacked, etc. to encompass both the physical act and the trauma associated with the word. In the remainder of the book, she did not detail any other instances of rape, after establishing in this early chapter that it was a regular occurrence during her entire time in captivity. This may be a way for her not to relive the experience over and over, and protect the reader from having to witness it several times.

Why does it matter how she describes her rape in her memoir? First, it may reflect her comfort level with sharing the details to the public. Perhaps establishing it in the beginning and sharing the details absolves her of having to write about it often yet provides the readers with the details that they desire. This is her way of controlling her narrative, while not allowing the book

to become a detailed chronicle of abuse that would make it ”mis lit.” Jaycee Dugard also writes about her first experience with rape from the point of view of herself as a child:

> He takes off his clothes and I try not to look. He asks if I have seen a naked man before and I answer no. He says that's hard to believe at my age. I have never seen a naked man before and I know that I'm not supposed to look. The strange man tells me to look at him. I glance real quickly and want to start laughing in spite of my fearfulness. His private parts look so funny. In spite of myself, I smile. I sometimes laugh when I'm nervous. I don't mean it, it just comes out. The man says to touch it. It is small and squishy. The man says to make it grow. In my mind, I think this man is crazy. This is the strangest and weirdest man on the planet! (Dugard 18)

In the concept of witnessing, Jaycee's account provides more opportunity for the reader to take the perspective of experiencing the assault as Jaycee did. Whereas there is discomfort in all these descriptions, there is something impactful about reading her mix of fear, horror, confusion, and even how she found humor in the situation that makes it seem more real. But at what cost? Jaycee's decision to put this in her book allowed her to control her narrative, but it confronts the reader more directly, mostly because instead of reading something that was simply done to her, we are put in her place as she experienced it.

Of the four captivity memoirs, Michelle's *Finding Me* is the most explicit in its description of physical embodiment of rape and abuse. As expected, there can be no definitive answer as to her reasons for representing her rape in her memoir. It may be because she was an adult at the time of her capture and could process what was happening from an adult perspective. Cahill, in her work on contextualizing rape, stresses that women's bodies are biologically othered, as well as "significantly affected by such factors as historical location, cultural environment, economic status, gender, race, sex, sexual orientation, physical limitations, emotional experiences, and others" (Cahill 113). Women's bodies are also the site of cultural influence from the experiences that happen prior to the assault. In the simplest terms, because

women's bodies hold different meanings, women experience sexual assault differently. The women held captive expressed themselves differently in their narratives. Despite this thesis' goal of showing similar themes among these memoirs, it is important to acknowledge that the women experienced their traumas differently. What they do have in common is that their experiences are filtered through the medium of popular memoir. This is another variable added to the factors that make up embodiment. "A subject's conceptualization and experience of his or her body, takes place in a particular, situated context and thus is linked in important ways to the various specific discourses that constitute the context. It is also to claim that bodily development is central, not peripheral, to the subject's subjectivity or being" (Cahill 113). In Michelle's case, she had had previous consensual sexual experience. In the book, she detailed longtime sexual abuse by an adult male relative. These experiences also affect the way she processed her abuse during captivity.

When Castro convinced Michelle to enter his home after she agreed to get in his car, he tied her up and hung her by her wrists for several hours. When she was tied up, Castro masturbated in front of her. Michelle described his actions, his anatomy, and how "a big glob of semen sprayed all over my shorts" (81). Michelle was also explicit about both her and Castro's bodily functions. She mentioned how she bled when raped and how she noticed the smell of his sweat. As mentioned earlier, she also detailed how she miscarried her multiple pregnancies. Unlike the other women, she discussed the details of daily bodily functions, how Castro provided her with a bucket as a toilet, and how it was rarely cleaned. She also was the only obe of the four to talk about her experiences with menstruation during captivity:

> The entire time I was in the basement [three months] I never got to wash up or take a shower. When my period came, he'd throw a few paper napkins down in front of me. "Use these," he said. I tried to roll them up and turn them into something like a tampon,

> but he never gave me enough, so I had brown blotches of dried blood all over my body. I also had so much of his dried semen in my hair that when I touched it, it was hard as a rock. (Knight 98)

Michelle contextualized the ongoing trauma of being assaulted in a way that continually affects her body in a way that the other women do not. She described her humiliation of being covered in both her bodily fluids and his. This does not imply that she was more accurate, more truthful, or more traumatized that the others, but through the lens of her experiences, this is how she chose to share it. Because of the taboo nature of bodily functions, it also may be the most graphic and disturbing to readers.[19] In sharing her story, Michelle may have thought it was important to share this to provide a more vivid way for readers to witness. Describing the physical state of her soiled body served as a strategy to relay how degraded and traumatized she felt. It is unlikely that she relayed this information just for the sake of shock. Regardless, it did provide the uncomfortable details that are common among memoirs of this type.

As the exploration of sexual assault will continue in the academic, legal, and social spheres, the lived experiences of survivors help others to understand it in context. Written memoirs are testimony of this. Therefore, trauma memoirs are an important addition to the field. The four women describe their sexual assaults differently, which indicates that each one embodies and processes it differently. Thus, readers will witness it differently.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored some common themes found in these memoirs. Identifying common themes is an important next step after interpreting the memoirs through genre and formula. Themes and commonalities give insight into the cultural messages and expectations of

[19] Michelle ordered by Castro to help Amanda give birth while they were both held in Castro's house. Michelle describes the physical details of the birth in her memoir more than Amanda does.

popular captivity memoirs. The four texts do indeed contain common elements, but a closer reading shows that there is variation among how these themes are handled by each of the women. These aspects contribute to the experience of witnessing, and illuminate the reader about what the women thought were the most important aspects to share in their stories.

CHAPTER IV. FICTIONAL NARRATIVES OF CAPTIVITY

In this chapter, I will turn to popular scripted, fictionalized texts which contain a major character who is a woman who has been held captive. In turning from memoirs to fictional texts, I argue that the themes and formulas of the popular memoirs have directly influenced and inspired fictional works. The three texts I will examine are the films *Room* (2015), *Martyrs* (2008), and the television show *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015). One reason I chose these texts is that they are all presented through a visual medium, which allows for easier comparison to each other and a contrast to the audience experience from reading about trauma.[20] Secondly, these texts focus heavily on how a character deals with her post-captivity recovery rather than the actual time in captivity. *Room* is a film drama that most closely follows a realistic setting. *Martyrs* is a horror film and contains stylized and supernatural elements. Finally, *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* is a situation comedy.

Room: "I'm supposed to be happy"

The film *Room* is based on Irish author Emma Donaghue's 2010 novel of the same name. She conceived the idea for her novel after reading about Elizabeth Fritzl, an Austrian young woman who mothered four children in captivity with her captor and biological father, Josef Fritzl. The story, however, bears a strong resemblance to the captivity of Jaycee Dugard.[21] The assumption that the book is based on Jaycee Dugard is because *Room* contains plot and story elements that are prevalent in captivity narratives, especially the ones I have examined thus far.

---

[20] Young adult fiction is an area that includes numerous texts about young women who are held captive. As mentioned, I chose to use fictional works from films and television instead. See Heather Hillsburg's work for further analysis of young adult fiction.

[21] Rumor surrounding the book and film had often wrongly attributed Donaghue's inspiration to Dugard. However, in an interview, Donaghue revealed that she was almost done writing the novel when Dugard was rescued. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/aug/13/emma-donoghue-room-josef-fritzl

Room is the story of Jack, a five-year-old boy who has lived his whole life in one room, with his mother, known as "Ma." When she was seventeen, Ma was taken by an older man and kept in a shed in the captor's backyard, known to Jack simply as "Room.". Ma hides Jack from her captor, Jack's biological father, when her captor regularly visits Room to sexually assault Ma. After five years in captivity, Jack starts questioning their reality. Sensing that Jack is old enough to understand their captivity, Ma devises a plan in which Jack will pretend to be dead, she will wrap him up in a rug, and convince her captor to take the body elsewhere to be buried. Jack jumps out of the truck at a stop light and is eventually able to lead the police back to where Ma is being held. The second half of the film depicts Jack adjusting to life outside Room, as Ma and Jack referred to the shed in which they were held, and how Ma progresses through her difficult recovery. The ending is ambiguous, with Ma and Jack both still recovering but also still struggling.

Although Jack is the protagonist and sole narrator of the novel, the film version puts the character of Ma at the center of the story. Characters experiencing and recovering from trauma are coveted roles for actors. This was no exception: Brie Larson won the Academy Award for best actress in the role. The film received near universal accolades. I contend that this is in part due to the captivity narrative. It is a compelling story that provides much potential for emotional performances and complicated character interactions. The aftermath of Ma's captivity is troubling and difficult. This is counter to the narrative of captivity memoirs, which, although they mention that recovery is challenging, paint it with a veil of vague inspirational recovery narratives, discussed in chapter two. *Room* confronts this vague narrative by providing a story that is difficult to bear: being saved from Room is not the end of suffering. In a way, it is merely an intermission, an introduction to the lifelong suffering of living with the trauma.

Ma struggles with the time lost in her life. In the seven years she has been gone, her peers have attended college, gotten married, started professional jobs, etc. The time she spent in captivity was not only traumatic just because of what she experienced in Room, but it also took from the life she would have had outside captivity. Even though she is free, those experiences cannot be replaced. “Every second passed [in Room] was a moment more away from her previous life and one more trapped inside Room; it is as if duration created a bifurcation of time, resulting in one time inside and another outside Room” (Davis 144). After a few days at home, Ma has an upsetting outburst with her mother. “I don’t understand, I’m supposed to be happy,” she says. She thinks her lack of happiness is an anomaly, because the popular narrative about trauma is usually that, when the physical trauma itself ends, so does the suffering. However, as discussed in chapter one, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as “a wound not inflicted on the body but a wound of the mind” (3). Trauma is not just about the pain experienced at the time but having to live with the memory of the experience. Ma’s body’s captivity ended, but the wound of the mind is not as quick to recover. Ma is not a heroine nor does she feel like her trauma was a blessing or that she can help others. Her healing doesn’t automatically begin after her rescue as she expected. From what the research on trauma informs us, Ma’s trauma will continue long past absence of physical abuse. Even though healing is possible, her life will forever be altered.

Ma also struggles with her role as a mother. She is concerned about Jack’s slow adaptation to the outside world. She expects him to play with all the toys he has been gifted from her family, but he acts uninterested in them. Ma expresses frustration with Jack, often being short with him, and she is unable to explain the world to him like she could in Room. This is significant to the theme of motherhood, in which the woman in captivity is expected to live up to

ideals of motherhood even in a situation of captivity. Ma's annoyance and sometimes indifference to Jack uncomfortably challenges this narrative.

The first time Jaycee Dugard talked to her mother in seventeen years, she found it imperative to immediately inform her mother that she had children with Phillip Garrido. She explains her fear of her mother not accepting them because they were fathered by Garrido. In *Room*, this fear is fully realized. Ma's father cannot accept Jack as her child and his grandson, creating more emotional challenges for her in her recovery. The viewer further sees Ma's struggles against a happy recovery narrative when she looks at pictures of herself and her friends in high school, right before she was abducted, telling Jack "my friends have all moved on." Ma believes she is supposed to be happy because she is physically free from Room; she is frustrated with herself in not living up to the recovery narrative that is so prevalent.

The film acknowledges the social impact of the abduction of a young girl. Ma is white and upper class; thus, the media is heavily involved in her rescue. Cars and reporters pack the driveway as she returns home. After a tense conversation with her mother, her mother tells her "you're not being very nice right now." Ma responds angrily, "I'm sorry I'm not nice anymore. Maybe if your voice saying 'Be nice' hadn't been in my head, then maybe I wouldn't have helped the guy with the fucking sick dog." This informs us that Ma's abductor tricked her by claiming he needed help with a sick dog, possibly luring her into his car. Here, Ma realizes that her own socialization as a girl, the expectation that she should be trusting and polite, led to her captivity. Perhaps she realizes that her captor exploited this innocence, just as Castro had done with the three women in Cleveland. Although Jaycee Dugard and Elizabeth Smart were taken forcefully, they still had an antipathy to making scenes of themselves in public, a concern that their captors exploited. In *Room*, Ma confronts the unbearable notion that there were direct

causes of her abduction that, had situations been different, could have been avoided. In chapter two, I explored how the idea that "everything happens for a reason" is prominent in self-help literature as well in the narratives of the popular captivity memoirs. Ma's reaction is counter to this reasoning.

Later, Ma is asked to be interviewed for a prime-time news program. The women who wrote the memoirs discussed in this thesis all made such media appearances to tell their stories. *Room* gives us a glimpse into their possible motivations: putting on a performance of recovery and healing in exchange for pay. Ma's mother expresses a concern that it is too soon, but their lawyer reminds them that there will be fees that need to be paid for the upcoming trial. Ma reluctantly agrees. The film shows Ma's visible discomfort during the interview when the cameras are not rolling. Her makeup artists surround her, ensuring she looks acceptable for filming. She feels the pressure to maintain a performative persona of strength and gratitude for the camera.

During the interview, the news anchor asks Ma, "Did it ever occur to you to ask your captor to take Jack away...so Jack could be free?" Ma, visibly agitated, says, "But he had me." The interviewer responds, "But was that the best thing for him?" The viewer is left with no answer, as the film cuts to a later time, when Ma is contemplating her role as Jack's mother. Later that evening, Jack discovers her in the bathroom after she has overdosed on pills. Ma trying to take her own life is a particularly upsetting notion because, after living through seven traumatic years of captivity, she does not want to live even after being freed. Ma, along with the viewer, is confronted with the contradictory narrative. It is heavily implied that her suicide attempt was encouraged by the interviewer's suggestion that she did not do the best for Jack while in captivity. Davis calls her suicide attempt biopolitical, in that taking her own life Ma

finally had control over her own bodily existence, something she did not have in captivity. However, doctors have a responsibility keep their patients alive, even if the patient attempts suicide. "In a somewhat disturbing parallel, then, both [her captor] and the [hospital] make decisions over Ma's life, albeit through different means and for different ends" (Davis 155). Ma is still reckoning with the control over her own body, even when the physical restraints of place and captor are not present.

Room ends with some resolution but not with Ma's complete recovery. Ma and Jack revisit the shed where they were held before it is torn down so Jack can say a proper goodbye to his former home. Seeing it again provides some closure for Ma, and it represents her moving forward in her recovery, as she plans to never see it again. What her recovery looks like is not known, as the movie ends after this scene. Will she move out of her mother's house? Will Jack go to school? Will she be able to form stable relationships? Questions remain unanswered and her future is not known. Unlike the memoir, we cannot hear her inner thoughts about how she feels she can move on, if she felt everything happened for a reason, or any of the other myths contained within the memoirs. We are left wondering if her journey to recovery will have setbacks, or, for that matter, what Jack's life will look like when he grows up. Ending the book/film where it does is a conscious choice. Recovery is not timed, nor is it easy or ever really achieved. The film *Room* allows for the discomfort of not knowing that everything will turn out well for Joy and Jack.

Room is a film that contains familiar elements from modern day cases of women held captive and the media fascination with such cases. The presentation of Ma and Jack's post-rescue lives directly challenges the themes contained in the trauma memoirs. The film provides a more nuanced, more troubling path to recovery than the inspirational recovery messages. Perhaps Ma's

story is close to how previously captive women recover and the challenges they face when not filtered through a lens of a memoir meant for mass consumption.

Martyrs: Revenge as horror

Generally unknown in the U.S. upon its release in France in 2008, *Martyrs* has gained visibility and a cult following in the years since.[22] The film has appeared on many popular blogs and film interest sites described as one of the most disturbing horror films of all time (Barone and Serafino). This film is often dismissed by popular media as torture porn, a term coined by *New York Magazine* film critic David Edelman to dismiss the films as merely vehicles to showcase graphic violence (Edelstein, http://nymag.com/movies/features/15622). Sandra West includes *Martyrs* in the subgenre the New French Extremity, which is a group of French films released in the last twenty years, defined partly for their graphic depictions of violence and suffering as well as themes of "pliability of the self, how characters can be overtaken [by situations] beyond their control or … which irrevocably damages the world around them" (8). The graphic, disturbing elements of these films service to heighten meaning and emotion. Captivity is certainly a situation that is beyond the character's control and creates damage to their perception of the world. Thus, this genre is a fitting setting for a captivity narrative.

Although it is not my intention to focus on the film's graphic violence, its presence is significant because it makes sense for a film about women being held captive to be viscerally terrifying. Being held captive and abused while being deprived of any freedom is one of the worst horrors an individual can face. As the popular captivity memoirs have shown, horribly frightening and graphic things were done to them multiple times a day. The New French

[22] The film was released in the U.S. in 2010. An American remake was released in 2016, which was both critically and commercially unsuccessful.

Extremity was originally defined by film scholar Jean Quant as “cinema suddenly determined to break every taboo, to wade in viscera and spumes of sperm, to fill each frame with flesh, nubile or gnarled, and subject it to all manner of penetration, mutilation and defilement” (West 5). Referring to chapter one, in which Rothe defined misery memoirs as providing the reader “pornographic details” of suffering, this seems even more fitting for the subject of captivity. Michelle Knight’s memoir included many details of her beating, rape, miscarriages and bodily functions that fit Quant’s description.

Martyrs is a film distinctly divided into three acts. It tells the captivity narrative in reverse, first depicting a captivity aftermath, then a rescue, then a captivity. For the purposes in this study, I will focus on the captivity and its aftermath. In act one, Lucie, a young woman who escaped captivity from a mysterious captor as a child, arrives at a wealthy family’s home with her lifelong friend Anna. Lucie, believing this family is responsible for her captivity, brutally murders them with a shotgun. Anna helps Lucie bury the bodies in the back yard. Expecting to get closure from her revenge, Lucie still has visions of a monster that takes the form of a naked, feral, screaming child covered in deep scars. This monster represents the other child held captive with Lucie that she could not save and the trauma that has stayed with her. The monster cuts Lucie with a knife, which, through Anna’s point of view, is really Lucie cutting herself. Unable to feel satisfaction from the revenge and unable to destroy the monster, Lucie takes her life in the rain outside in front of Anna.

There are numerous interpretations of this part of the film, including biblical allegories, the sanctity of the family unit, and body horror (Harrington; West; Green). However, for this study, it is most relevant to understand Lucie as a victim who struggles with extreme distress and the burden of living with the memory of her trauma. The grotesque monster figure is a

representation of both her extreme guilt for failing to rescue the other girl in captivity as well as her continued trauma and assumed post-traumatic stress disorder. Her only drive has been the search for her captors to enact a violent revenge. When that does not end her suffering, she realizes that nothing will.

Desire to enact revenge is the opposite of the themes in the popular captivity memoirs, in which there is a desire to forgive, move forward, and to find reason and meaning in their experience. In *Martyrs*, Lucie is driven by her most primal, obsessive need to seek revenge on her captors. Even in the first few minutes Lucie is onscreen, it is obvious that Lucie cannot function within larger society, with Anna as her only friend. She appears to be almost feral, driven solely by fear and anger. Lucie is a representation of someone letting trauma take over, letting her captors "win" in the end, because although she is physically free, her ability to heal and live her own life is not. She does not find solace in any larger meaning to her captivity, other than a violent revenge and taking her own life. The guilt is now shifted to Anna, who, in act two of the film, becomes the main character of the story.

After trying to clean up the crime scene, Anna finds a massive underground facility hidden under the house. The audience and Anna learn that the captors are part of a cult run by an older woman known as Mademoiselle, who captures, isolates, and tortures women to make them martyrs. Martyrs, according to Mademoiselle, can see past the corporeal life and have the secrets of the afterlife. "It's so easy to create a victim," Mademoiselle explains to Anna. "Martyrs are rare. A martyr is something else. Martyrs are extraordinary beings. They survive pain, they survive depravation. They bear all the sins of the earth. They give themselves up. They transcend themselves. They are transfigured." Mademoiselle says that only young women can reach this state: "Women are more responsive to transfiguration." There is a strong implication that the

women should also be virgins (Green 26). Women almost exclusively write captivity memoirs. The captivity narrative, as told in the popular memoir, is a woman's story, aligning with cultural norms of women being terrorized by men using their power to abuse them. Most of the women, as they were abducted as children, were sexually pure, which, according to the ideas put forth by the cult in the film, would make them more likely to transcend their trauma. They are what Mademoiselle would consider perfect candidates for martyrdom.

Lucie, according to Mademoiselle, is a victim who never transfigured beyond her current existence. She was a failure as a martyr. In act three, Anna, taken as the cult's next captive, is isolated, chained at her wrists and ankles, and intermittently force fed and beaten for several weeks. This torture is depicted for twenty dialogue-less minutes of the film. The film forces the audience to witness the details of her trauma "in a filmic innovation that takes our identification with Anna and uses it against us, asking us to bear the burden of her trauma" (Harrington 14). In other words, it places the audience in the role of witness. The brutal details in the film are akin to the explicit details of abuse in mis lit. Of course, reading a memoir is different from watching a horror film, and it is likely that many more people are willing to endure written details than to see the visual depiction.

By positioning captivity and abuse as part of the narrative of a horror film, *Martyrs* places the audience in the act of witnessing the horrors of abuse. The last shot of the film is a close-up of Anna's face in complete rapture, having "transfigured," before the film cuts to a black screen with the definition of martyr, which the film defines simply as "witness." "It is the audience who must process the unspeakable torment inflicted on all of the cult group's victims and who must watch the utter destruction and progressive neutering of the female form" (Green 24). After being isolated and severely beaten for some time, Anna imagines a conversation in

which Lucie tells her that she needs to "just let go." Anna becomes numb to her torture and almost catatonic. Her captors recognize the change in Anna and declare that she has reached martyrdom. Anna can finally see the "world beyond death." This is how the cult justifies the torture of women; it provides them answers about what lays beyond death. This is comparable to the women in the captivity memoirs, in that they contend that they have moved past their tragedies, or are well on the way, and will not let them define them. To still be suffering would be to simply be a victim. They have transfigured.

The film has an ambiguous ending and leaves the audience questioning whether Anna truly achieved martyrdom. Anna only came out of her altered state briefly to speak to Mademoiselle and will not share her testimony with others. Mademoiselle takes her own life after hearing Anna's testimony, before she is scheduled to share the insight with the cult members, and right after she tells a senior member of the cult to "keep doubting" about what comes after death. One interpretation is that Anna's suffering was all for nothing because she suffered extreme trauma at the hands of the cult without results. However, West proposes that the film:

> ultimately rewards its audience with a nihilistic yet strangely uplifting ending. Anna has transcended something no other character in the film has been able to achieve because she loves unconditionally. By doing so, Anna destroys her captors. Even the film gives her the power of knowledge by allowing her to keep the secret of what she sees on the other side. Many articles and blogs have theorized about what Anna said[24] that could make the Mademoiselle kill herself, but as [the director] insinuates, that's for Anna to know and everyone else to find out on their own. (153)

By writing a memoir and exposing the acts of their captors, the women in captivity memoirs also symbolically destroyed their captors. The women get to live on, and their captors lose their lives

[24] My interpretation is that Anna's description of life after death was so enticing to Mademoiselle that she was anxious to experience it, but in a selfish act, wanted to be the only one of the cult to know the truth about it.

taken away by being sent to prison. Their ability to forgive, to create lives of their own, as depicted in the memoirs, gives them power. Just as the audience theorized about what Anna said to Mademoiselle, readers of the memoirs can only theorize about what happened in those places of captivity. The women writers experienced the truth and have control over what they choose to share.

The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Females *are strong as hell*

The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt was already a source of great discussion as soon as its production was announced. Co-creator Tina Fey had found success as both a writer on *Saturday Night Live* and as co-creator and star of *30 Rock*. Fey is a divisive figure, praised for her role as one of few women acting and producing her own comedies, but also as being less than progressive in her representations of race (Hill), and her refusal to address these critiques publicly (Rosenberg)[25]. The show's premise is unique for a sitcom on a mainstream television network: the adventures of a girl who had survived a doomsday cult. Originally announced as part of NBC's lineup, the show later moved to the streaming service Netflix. Publicly, Fey explained that Netflix provided a better home, as Netflix tend to make and air a whole season at once. Television critics wondered if it may be the subject matter. Netflix is less strict on creative control and able to push more social boundaries than major networks, and broadcast TV viewers are believed to "lack the sophistication to appreciate its cheerful absurdity" (Stuever). The premise of a woman being held captive in a cult was, indeed, a unique subject for a half-hour situation comedy. Mining comedy from such tragedy and abuse may at first seem like a difficult

[25] Tina Fey does not have a social media presence, part of which she explained as not being interested in online discussions. "I feel like we put so much effort into writing and crafting everything, they need to speak for themselves. There's a real culture of demanding apologies, and I'm opting out of that," she stated in an interview, which sparked more criticism of her as an artist and of her work.

task and could potentially be at the expense of the victims. However, the show creators use the common assumptions and media coverage of cases of captivity, as well as the common features of the cases for comedic value, rather than the victim's pain as the focus. The series debuted in 2015, the same year the Cleveland women's memoirs were released, and only two years after Jaycee's rescue and Elizabeth Smart's book release. The show borrows specific elements of these women's stories and the treatment they received in the media. The *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* creates comedic situations from the main character's experiences in captivity, but also provides commentary on how the audiences engage with trauma through media and popular culture.

The genre of situation comedy is an appropriate vehicle to provide commentary about such traumatic events because the genre allows for more absurdity and encourages the suspension of reality. The history of television sitcoms reveals that sitcoms have played a larger role than just superficial entertainment. In the 1970s, Norman Lear created shows that introduced progressive social issues and representation of underprivileged groups and class struggles, such as *All in the Family* and *The Jeffersons*. Sitcoms began to represent social issues like the meaning of family and provided a layer of satire not always accepted by all viewers of mainstream television. Tueth explores how sitcoms have been transgressive in reflecting and challenging social norms in a way that no other medium has:

> In another overlap with satire, transgressive humor, purposely or not can sometimes serve general satirical purposes by its faux-innocent or playful criticism of ignorance, prejudice, or stereotypes. For example, in a transgressive context, the articulation of an offensive world or the performance of an offensive action operates to transform stigmatization into empowerment. The appropriation of the insult by the intended target disempowers the insult (29).

The “intended target” is typically a person of color, from a lower socioeconomic class, and/or female. *Kimmy Schmidt* includes comedy that satirically criticizes stereotypes, as most of the cast are from gender, racial, and/or sexual minority groups. White men only appear as plot devices that point out their ignorance. Here, the targeted identity is shifted to Kimmy’s identity as a woman who has been held captive, a woman who has had scarce agency or power in her whole life. Therefore, the transgressive nature of comedy allows Kimmy’s traumatic past to be used as comedy. The application of humor to her terrible experience makes it possible for her to character to process and learn from the trauma she experienced.

As many television series do, the first few episodes rely heavily on the main character’s point of view. *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, as of this writing, is currently in its fourth season. The later seasons have moved away from the show’s original premise and transitioned to an ensemble comedy. In fact, a recent episode of the fourth season contains a scene in which a book publisher urges Kimmy to write a memoir, thus following the common trajectory of women held captive that is the basis of this thesis. However,, for the purposes of this study, I will do a close reading of the first two episodes of the first season. The pilot episode begins with the discovery and rescue of Kimmy and three other captives from an underground bunker. The first few minutes of the episode contain a pastiche of cultural references to recent events involving captivity, specifically of young women. Their captor, Reverend Richard Wayne Gary Wayne, had told the women that an apocalyptic event had destroyed earth and they were the only survivors. The women wear dresses and hairstyles identical to women from the Fundamental Church of Latter Day Saints (FDLS), the best-known sect of which is the Warren Jeffs’s polygamous Mormon group. Although Jeffs’ many wives were not technically held in a specific

room, he did abuse them and confined them to their small isolated community.[26] The unseen Reverend lectures them about his religious beliefs, recalling Brian David Mitchell's street preaching and his prophecy that he was to take Elizabeth Smart as a wife.

The women conclude the Reverend's speech by singing in unison "Apocalypse, apocalypse, we caused it with our dumbness." The women's response informs the audience of how the Reverend manipulated the women into believing in their powerlessness and relying on him. The Reverend's manipulation of the women recalls Ariel Castro's mental abuse of the three women he held captive, especially Michelle Knight, whom he constantly told was useless, and no one wanted to find her. The recognition of a common feature of a real life case by the audience illustrates how the conventions of a sitcom can encapsulate an idea quickly. Recognition also allows humor to show congruencies and incongruences between the general captivity narrative formula and the fictional narrative of Kimmy's captivity and life immediately following release.

After the women are led out of the bunker, the show cuts to a news clip of an older African-American man who lived near the bunker for years without knowing of its existence. Suddenly, his interview transitions to an auto-tuned clip and viral YouTube video. This directly references recent popular news interview clips that both celebrate and mock poor African-American people. In 2010, a local Alabama news station interviewed Antoine Dodson, an African-American man whose sister was attacked in their home. Dodson's appearance

[26] Several of the women who escaped these lives have written memoirs, which are similar to the memoirs analyzed in this thesis. I strongly considered including the 2009 memoir *Stolen Innocence: My Story of Growing Up in a Polygamous Sect, Becoming a Teenage Bride, and Breaking Free of Warren Jeffs* by Elissa Wall in my textual analysis. Wall was forced by Jeffs, at fourteen, to marry her nineteen-year-old-cousin. This case ultimately led to the arrest and prosecution of Warren Jeffs. In 2017, Jeff's biological daughter Rachel Jeffs also left the sect and published a memoir.

conformed to stereotypes of lower socioeconomic class: he was wearing a wrinkled tank top and a red bandana over his natural hair. He said emphatically to the camera, "He's climbing in your windows, he's snatching your people up, trying to rape them, so y'all need to hide your kids, hide your wife, and hide your husband, because they're raping everybody." He says this with dramatic emphasis and with an effeminate inflection (Kennicott). In this interview, Dodson represented several othered identities, as well as providing a surprising answer to an interview question.

Musical producers happened upon this clip and created an electronic song out of it, using auto-tune and editing a video to accompany it. The popular clip became known as “Bed Intruder” and Dodson himself became a celebrity, appearing on reality shows and even releasing a single. However, this video and its celebration mocks Dodson’s perceived “ghetto” linguistic style and apparent lower socioeconomic class. In the video, Dodson performs a perceived otherness that can be celebrated and exploited simultaneously. Furthermore, the song’s popularity seemingly dilutes the fact that it originated from a crime of attempted sexual assault.

Charles Ramsey, the man who responded to Amanda Berry’s cries for help from Ariel Castro’s home in Cleveland, is another example of a representation that is both celebratory and mocking. After several people ignored her calls for help, Ramsey, who lived across the street, realized the issue was that the outer screen door was still locked and advised her to kick in the screen to escape. The viral clip shows Ramsey surrounded by neighborhood onlookers. Ramsey says to the news reporter, “[Ariel] Castro got some big testicles to pull this off, bro. Because we see this dude every day. I mean *every day*. I knew something was wrong when a little, pretty white girl ran into a black man's arms. Something is wrong here. Dead giveaway” (Levs et al.). Furthermore, during the interview, a police siren cuts in and Ramsey recoils at the sound. Although many may have found this interview to be humorous, there is truth in his statement

about a white woman asking help from a black man, truth cloaked in comic delivery. Ramsey was viewed as a hero, but the celebration of him, like Dodson, was also because of his performance of his blackness as comedy.[27]

These two instances of African-American men's news interviews are important because they directly inform the opening credits of *Kimmy Schmidt*. Opening credits are important to a show. They set the tone and subject matter, traditionally telling the viewer what the show is about. They also play before every episode, a repetition that makes them one of the most memorable parts of the show. In *Kimmy Schmidt*'s opening credits, a black man is interviewed who lived on the property of the hatch. As was done with Dobson and Ramsey, his interview is auto-tuned into a song. This use of race as a performance informs a lot of Fey's humor, which can be read as satire. There is always a danger that audiences won't recognize satire and will respond as if the text is straight forward. The actor sings lines including: "White dudes hold the record for creepy crimes," "They alive, dammit," and "Females are strong as hell." This featured line sets the show as being about female strength, suggesting that somehow Kimmy's journey to recovery is aided by her female identity.

Immediately after rescue, the four women held captive on the sitcom appear on the *Today* show, in a scene mocking the media blitz survivors face. They are given the name "Indiana Mole Women" by the popular media. We learn that one of the Mole Women, Cyndee, was tricked into the cult by her obligation to be nice to her captor. Matt Lauer, host of the Today Show playing a version of himself, ponders, "it never ceases to amaze me what women will do not to appear

[27] In 2014, Ramsey released a memoir of his own, titled *Dead Giveaway: The Rescue, Hamburgers, White Folks, and Instant Celebrity . . . What You Saw on TV Doesn't Begin to Tell the Story.*

rude."[28] Castro lured the women from Cleveland into his van by asking them to come in and see his daughter or new puppies. They all sensed something was wrong but did not want to defy an adult that appeared to be nice to them.

Kimmy served as the emotional caretaker of the other three women in the bunker for the fifteen years, acting as sister, mother, and protector. She realizes that she does not want to go back to Indiana because she does not want to be known as one of the "Indiana Mole Women." As Michelle Knight writes in her book, she does not want her tragedy to define her for the rest of her life (Knight 187). Kimmy decides to stay in New York to redefine herself. Kimmy, kidnapped at age fifteen, retains her childlike innocence and sense of wonder against the backdrop of a world that has embraced technology, social media, and new cultural hallmarks. Placing her in New York City presents her as outside the society and unaware of current social expectations, setting up many "fish out of water" situations. To be socially accepted, thereby shedding her identity as a Mole Woman, she must catch up to her physical age of thirty. Opportunities for Kimmy to misunderstand cultural references provide many opportunities for comedy. Her character is defined by her earnest positivity and childlike wonder, which is due both to her personality and to the arrested development because of her captivity.

Kimmy determines that finding a job and a place to live is the first step in shedding her former identity. Ironically, in both these situations, she finds herself in the caretaker role she played in the bunker. Many of her choices also replicate the bunker. She moves to a basement apartment (underground like the bunker) with Titus, an egocentric struggling actor. Lillian, an eccentric and scheming landlord, is also a regular visitor. Titus and Lillian are social misfits to

[28] This takes on an ominous meaning now, after Matt Lauer was fired in 2017 for sexual harassment of numerous female employees of *The Today Show*.

whom Kimmy seeks to nurture. In return, they teach her how to adjust to current times and help shed her identity as a Mole Woman.

The biggest parallel to her captivity is when Kimmy accepts the position of nanny to socialite Jacqueline Voorhees' nine-year-old son, Buckley. Jacqueline is a rich, materialistic, and narcissistic woman who is a captive of her own marriage and expectations of a trophy wife. Stephanie Patrick describes how Kimmy's first meeting with Jacqueline uses a misunderstanding to parallel the two women. Kimmy encounters Jacqueline's son, Buckley, shoplifting from a candy store, and takes him home to his wealthy townhouse. There is a locked gate at the entrance to the steps to the house. Jacqueline opens the door and calls down to her son, "Buckley, please get in here, you know I'm not allowed outside." Kimmy spots the portrait of her husband, Julian Voorhees, behind Jacqueline and mistakes her for a captive.

> Kimmy: Ma'am, what do you mean you're not allowed outside?
> Jacqueline: I had a face peel.
> Kimmy: referring to the portrait: Is that your Reverend? Did he peel your face?... Do you need help?
> Jacqueline: (starts crying) Yes, I need help.

The parallel here is that Jacqueline is trapped in a loveless marriage and is raising a son she doesn't appear to care about. The misunderstanding described here is appropriate to a comedy and directly compares marriage and captivity. Jacqueline hires Kimmy as a nanny for Buckley, but this episode quickly shows that she will become the functional caretaker of Jaqueline.

In return for her service, Jacqueline takes on the role of teaching Kimmy the current values of being a woman in modern times, instructing her to pursue the affections of a rich man. Kimmy's propensity for optimism usually makes her doubt Jacqueline's advice, yet this is her only source of information about the world. Patrick explains:

> Kimmy's unwillingness to think of herself as victim brings her problematically back into alliance with postfeminist, neoliberal values of individualism. Even in light of the show's many allusions to structural violence, Kimmy and her cohorts are "unbreakable," able to individually overcome and move past structural inequality, building new lives for themselves—lives that in many ways echo or extend their lives in the bunker, but are somehow better because they have now been freely chosen by these women, rather than enforced. and efforts in a domestic setting…Women, in the world of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, are trapped and contained by the expectations placed upon them by authoritative male figures both within and beyond the bunker. (246)

This is related to captivity because, after they are rescued, the women find themselves in their own (non-comedic) comedies of manners, trying to adjust to society around them, to gain agency over their own lives, and incorporate themselves into society as adults. Kimmy's bright neon clothes and endless enthusiasm is child-like; the real-life women are child-like in that they have had important life benchmarks taken from them. Kimmy did not have a daughter in captivity, but she was the caretaker inside the bunker, and the skills she used there (shown in flashbacks) prove successful when she cares for Jacqueline, Titus, and Lillian. Does this mean the women in the memoirs are doomed to follow the behaviors they developed in the bunker? Will they be able to unlearn the adaptive behaviors now that they are out of captivity? The memoirs, as discussed in earlier chapters, express hope for change. Part of this change will be accomplished by sharing their stories with others. After all, if they can help someone with their story, then it was not all for naught. Kimmy, as a character in a sitcom, obtains personal victories when she successfully navigates new experiences in life. However, her instinct is and always will be to cater to the needs of others before herself.

It is clear that the creators of the show are aware of the conditions surrounding women held captive in real life. We can also assume that the creators are aware that these women have been repeatedly sexually assaulted and physically abused. To leave it out would not embrace the experience of captive women, rendering Kimmy Schmidt as less of a representation of the

trauma. To include it would result in a comedic representation about sexual assault, which could done successfully. However, audience reception theory has informed us that there is no guarantee of how audiences will respond to controversial subjects. *Kimmy Schmidt* does address sexual assault, albeit briefly. Upon learning that Kimmy is a Mole Woman, Titus says, "Can I ask you a question?" Kimmy immediately answers, "Yes, there was weird sex stuff in the bunker." The quickness of her reply implies that this is a question everyone asks her immediately. It indicates that people are mostly interested in the most explicit details of her experience. Her quick, emotion-less answer reveals that she is tired of answering questions about sexual assault. The choice of saying "weird sex stuff" is also an interesting character choice in how to refer to her sexual assault. It is unclear if Kimmy considers the sexual assault as "weird sex stuff" or she is used to others referring to the assault as such.

Other instances of sexual assault are brushed off quickly. Kimmy, not accustomed to appropriate social boundaries, tells Titus after her first day exploring the city: "everyone here is so nice! Like the man in the grocery store who kept asking me to take things out of his pockets." Assailants in the current, real world prey on Kimmy's ignorance, although the issue is dropped quickly and is not brought up again in the episode. Furthermore, the comedy is made at Kimmy's expense, implying that her ignorance means that she still needs to learn what is appropriate behavior from others is and is not. Another significant choice made in the show is that John Hamm, a television and movie star known for his charisma, masculinity, and conventional attractiveness, plays her captor, Reverend Richard Wayne Gary Wayne. Hamm's most notable prior role is Don Draper, the protagonist of the television drama *Mad Men*. Don Draper is often looked up to by viewers as an ideal representation of masculinity (Falcolf). This is not to imply that because Hamm is appealing, it lessens the impact of an assault, but his persona has the

potential to support current ideas about hegemonic masculinity. For instance, for some it may mean that all men are potential dangers, because even the ones that appear appealing are not safe.[29] Beyond the first two episodes, sexual assault is barely touched upon on the show; in later episodes, Kimmy worries about dating and sex, but it is mostly due to her supposed inexperience with proper social behavior around heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships.

The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt is based on real-life women who have been held captive. Many parts of the show directly reference actual events from the memoirs included in this study. Comedy's transgressive nature allows for blunt commentary about real-life events and provides insight into how these events are received by media and consumers. The freedom from realistic portrayals like ones found in drama allows many opportunities to represent social issues such as motherhood, domesticity, class, and marriage as extensions of the captivity metaphor. Comedy, and especially the sitcom format, has been and will continue to be a genre in which ideas are challenged and power dynamics explored. *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* highlights the often-surprising ways in which trauma is treated in popular culture.

Summary

In this chapter, I analyzed fictionalized texts that contain a major character who is a woman who has been held captive. I argue that the themes and formulas of these popular memoirs have directly influenced and inspired fictional works. Further, I also argue that the creators of these texts expect the audience to recognize the aspects of the fictional narratives that have occurred in

[29] John Hamm's conventional attractiveness is also actively part of the Reverend character. The reverend uses his charm and looks to manipulate the media and his lawyers during his trial, which provides commentary on the way criminals are treated. He also charms and dates several women while serving his prison sentence. Then again, John Hamm is a strong comedic actor and frequent collaborator with Tina Fey, so there are probably multiple reasons why he was cast.

the real-life cases. This recognition of common formulas, themes, and narrative structures supports the notion that the stories of women held captive constitute an emerging genre. Placing these recognizable features of the genre in fictional texts allows for critical exploration about the experience of women within a subversive, creative space.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I examined recent popular memoirs of women who have been held captive by another individual or individuals. The interdisciplinary analysis of these texts provides insight into their significance within popular culture in several ways. First, the texts encourage an examination of popular trauma memoirs and explore the important cultural messages they contain. Second, the texts provide insight into how the women who have been held captive frame their trauma in the written form. The women also write these narratives with an awareness that they will be widely read by the public. Third, the memoirs may contain ideas that influence and are a result of how trauma is represented within popular culture. As stated in the introduction, the work in this thesis aimed to answer the following questions: What are the significant themes, ideology, and messages that are contained within these narratives? How do these memoirs fit the conventions and create inventions within genres? How does the medium of a popular memoir deliver the narrative of trauma to fit the ideals and expectations of readers? How do the structures and framework resemble past structural narratives, and what do these similarities say about popular narratives?

The methods and theory used in this analysis drew from several disciplines including, but not limited to, genre theory, folklore, trauma theory, and feminist theory. To identify the genre of the popular captivity memoirs, I turned to John Cawelti's study of genre to create a list of formulas that define the emerging genre of popular memoirs of women held captive. In chapter one, I defined the genre as: first-person, confessional accounts based on true cases of captivity that were highly visible in the mass media; written by women; written in easily accessible narratives; containing three primary narrative phases: life before capture, the time in captivity, and life after rescue; focus on the captive women's post-captivity transformation of the narrator

that is intended to inspire the reader; and finally, contain a simple binary of good v. evil. Additionally, I discussed the memoirs' relationship to readers through idea of autobiography and middlebrow literature.

Next, in chapter two, I used a structural analysis of the narrative derived from folklorist Vladimir Propp. Using a simplified version of Propp's thirty-one formulas found in Russian folktales, I identified common narrative patterns among the four popular captivity memoirs. Identifying these proved useful in comparing and contrasting the four texts. The exercise also generated discussion on the repeated use of familiar functions in popular narratives.

Genre and structure are important in analyzing the genre, yet a close reading of the memoirs is a necessary part of an analysis. In chapter three, I explored common themes that emerged in the memoirs, bringing to light expectations of the readers when engaging with the texts. Stockholm syndrome is very closely associated with experiences of captivity. Although not a medical diagnosis, the idea of forming a relationship with a captor often occurs and is an especially prominent feature of how the media covers these stories. This may have affected how the women conveyed their experience. The women included possible justifications for their behavior, since forming a relationship with the captor is incongruent with expected narratives about captivity. Two of the women bore children from rape by their captor. The children and the role of motherhood had a large impact on their experiences in captivity and their own sense of selves. It simultaneously provided both a comfort in the experience and a fear for the children's safety. Another theme I explored was how the women translated their experiences of sexual assault to the written word and how these assaults are connected to larger hegemonic views of gender and power.

The formulas, themes, and narrative elements that are found in the popular captivity memoirs can also be found several fictional works. In chapter four, I explored three recent fictional visual narratives. *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, a situation comedy, uses the transformative nature of satire to call attention to the way women in captivity are treated in the media. The characters also draw parallels between captivity and women's present social roles in the home and family. The drama *Room* provides an alternative and uncomfortable view of recovery by challenging the healing narratives found in the memoirs. Finally, the horror film Martyrs portrays living with the memory of the trauma as a literal inescapable monster. Fictional narratives that adapt the familiar narratives of real-life incidents show that there is a heightened cultural awareness of how trauma is represented in our lives.

In addition to answering the previously mentioned research questions, two other conclusions emerged from my analysis. One is that these memoirs provide the opportunity to connect the personal narratives of women who have experienced sexual assault and traumatic abuse to larger issues of gender violence. Making these stories public is an important predecessor to actively addressing patriarchal oppression. Furthermore, reading stories of trauma is a part of understanding the needs of victims. Although reading these memoirs is certainly not equal to receiving medical or psychological treatment, the act of reading the narratives keeps the issues associated with them culturally relevant. There is, of course, the possibility of trauma stories being exploited by publishers for financial gain.

The second major conclusion is that although these memoirs are based on real events, the texts and how they are transformed into a written narrative exhibit structures and formulas that are repeated across time, genre, and media. The often present formulas such as good v. evil,

endurance of suffering creates strength, and the Proppian structural narrative model show that there is something inherent in how the stories are framed that is appealing for consumers.

Further research

Although I approached these texts with varying approaches and disciplines, there remain many other ways to analyze these texts. My thesis is a textual analysis, which, although insightful, has its limits. As mentioned, the accessible nature of the memoirs is likely due to publishers' hopes that they will be commercially successful. How can audience reception theory explain the appeal of these texts? In this study I explored some possible impact reading the popular captivity memoirs may have on readers and what the readers expect from the memoirs. This could be strengthened by actual ethnographic studies. Specifically, a method similar to the way that Janice Radway studied romance readers in her work *Reading the Romance* would provide some insight into the readers of the genre. An ethnographic study would contribute to understanding why people read these memoirs, what appeals to the readers, and what their experience of reading can inform us. Although this thesis intentionally only covers memoirs, women in captivity are the subject of many fictional texts in other mediums. According to Heather Hillsburg, urban captivity books, as she calls them, are a growing subgenre of young adult novels. Additionally, within the last two years, two television shows about women being held captive (besides *Kimmy Schmidt*) have emerged: *The OA* and *Thirteen*. All three of these shows were either created or distributed by the streaming television service Netflix. I believe a streaming service is more likely to produce more subversive or disturbing television than mainstream network television, allowing for the difficult themes of captivity to be depicted. Horrors that would be considered too risky for mainstream culture have now become more visible.

A media analysis would be a beneficial and data-rich method to study not just the popular culture texts, but the actual real-life cases on which they are based. As mentioned, these women's memoirs were published amidst a publicity and marketing plan and released in conjunction with print campaigns and nationally broadcast interviews. Although this thesis exclusively studies the memoirs as texts, the clear connection to recent events cannot be discounted. All of the women in these memoirs took part in televised interviews, magazine spreads, and morning talk shows; some even participated in documentary specials about their cases. In 2017, the film *I Am Elizabeth Smar*t aired on Lifetime television. This film included dramatized depictions of the events of her 2003 capture intercut with Elizabeth explaining to the audience her thoughts during the ordeal. A media analysis would include an assessment of media coverage on these women, their media appearances, questions they are asked, and the language used in the reporting. It would be interesting to analyze what part of their ordeal was discussed most: their inspirational stories or the details of their rape and abuse?

Ultimately, popular captivity memoirs represent a trauma experienced by women that will live with them for the rest of their lives and is exacerbated by the presence of media attention. Some of the women, like Elizabeth Smart, have chosen to become public figures, while others retreated from the public eye after the release of their memoir. Popular trauma memoirs are not a substitute for clinical treatment of trauma. Readers that have suffered trauma likely seek out the memoirs to relate and identify. Further research into trauma study could address how framing trauma in a narrative form helps to make meaning for both the author and reader. Creating more narrative experiences reframes and reifies many hallmarks of trauma. This could help in the support of trauma survivors.

Anne Rothe, in *Popular Trauma Culture*, suggests that popular captivity memoirs, and trauma memoirs in general, have created what she calls trauma kitsch. She is very cynical about this emerging genre, arguing that selling trauma through commercial channels dilutes the seriousness of the issues and is unethical, because "its consumers seek only to revel in their own sentimental arousal, rather than to eliminate the depicted suffering" (165). Rothe's view brings up philosophical questions about the production of these texts. Is it a responsibility of the readers and/or producers of the texts to avoid exploitation? Is it an issue of ethics or an unavoidable consequence of trauma writing? How this would even be enforced in mass culture where financial gain is involved? Furthermore, does the author own her own narrative, or does the publisher control how it is used?

The popular captivity memoirs raise many significant cultural questions whose answers will continue to develop and change because, unfortunately, gendered violence and crimes of abuse will continue, and the media will continue to meet the demands of interest about them. However, the positive aspect of this increase in both cases and coverage is that the cultural conversation emerges. Because of a larger commercial availability of the memoirs, more readers are exposed to the realities of the horrors that are possible in our world. Noted literary scholar Nancy K. Miller observes, "Memoir paradoxically is the most generous of modern genres. Indeed, the point of memoir—when it succeeds—is to keep alive the notion that experience can take the form of art and that remembering is a guide to living" (432). My argument is that regardless of audience impact, the stories of the women held captive are increasingly present and there are various ways in which the memoirs and their narrative impact readers and authors. Eradicating their presence because of ethical concerns is neither beneficial nor feasible. Instead, we should turn first to the affected woman's voice, regardless of the medium. As Michelle

Knight wrote, “Every day in the house the man did the most horrible things to me. In the end I was still here. Still standing strong” (Knight 232). This reminds us that one of the most important parts of experiencing trauma is surviving to share one’s story.

WORKS CITED

Adorjan, Michael, et al. "Stockholm Syndrome as Vernacular Resource." *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2012, pp. 454-474.

Barone, Matt and Serafino, Jason. "50 of the most disturbing movies of all time." *Complex*, August 17, 2012. http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2012/08/the-50-most-disturbing-movies/martyrs.

Berry, Amanda, and Gina DeJesus. *Hope: A Memoir of Survival in Cleveland*. Transworld Digital, 2015.

Brown, Laura S., Mary Ballou, and Lenore E.A. Walker. *Personality and psychopathology: feminist reappraisals.* New York: Guilford Press, 1994.

Brown, Laura S. "Not outside the range: one feminist perspective on psychic trauma." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press. I995.

Carroll, Noël. "Two Comic Plot Structures." *The Monist*, vol. 88, no. 1, 2005, pp. 154-183.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2010;1996;.

Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977.

Conlin, Lindsey, and William R. Davie. "Missing White Woman Syndrome: How Media Framing Affects Viewers' Emotions." *Electronic News*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2015, pp. 36-50.

Crown, Sarah. "Emma Donoghue: 'To say *Room* is based on the Josef Fritzl case is too strong'," *The Guardian*, August 13, 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/aug/13/emma-donoghue-room-josef-fritzl

Davies, Ben. *Sex, Time, and Space in Contemporary Fiction: Exceptional Intercourse*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016

Derounian-Stodola, Kathryn Z, and James Levernier. *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, *1550-1900*. New York: Twayne, 1993.

Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.

Dolby, Sandra K. *Self-Help Books: Why Americans Keep Reading them*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 2005

Driscoll, Beth. *The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century.* New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Edelstein, David. “Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn: Why has America Gone Nuts for Blood, Guts, and Sadism?” *New York Magazine* 28 Jan. 2006. http://nymag.com/movies/features/15622.

Falcof, Nicky. "The Father, the Failure and the self-made Man: Masculinity in Mad Men." *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2012, pp. 31-45

Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Fey, Tina and Robert Carlock, creators. *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. 3 Arts Entertainment and Netflix Studios, 2015.

Gilet, Peter. *Vladimir Propp and the Universal Folktale: Recommissioning an Old Paradigm--Story as Initiation*. vol. 17., P. Lang, New York, 1998.

Gilmore, Leigh. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Gray, Jonathan, et al. *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*. New York University Press, New York, 2009.

Green, Amy M. "The French Horror Film *Martyrs* and the Destruction, Defilement, and Neutering of the Female Form." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. XXXIX, no. 1, 2011, pp. 20-28.

Harrington, Erin. “A Means to an End: Challenging the Notion of 'Torture Porn' in the French Film 'Martyrs'”. *Oculus: Postgraduate Journal for Visual Arts Research*, issue 3, 2011, pp. 9-15.

Harriss, Chandler. “Policing Propp: Toward a Textualist Definition of the Procedural Drama.” *Journal of Film and Video*, Volume 60, Number 1, Spring 2008, pp. 43-59

Hill, Libby. “What’s Up With the Native American Subplot on Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt?” March 10, 2015, *Vulture*. http://www.vulture.com/2015/03/unbreakable-kimmy-schmidt-native-american.html

Hillsburg, Heather. "Urban Captivity Narratives: Captivity and Confession in Women's Writing." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 2017, pp. 1-24.

Hollis, Susan T, Linda Pershing, and M J. Young. *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Kennicott, Phillip. “Auto-Tune turns the operatic ideal into a shoddy joke,” August 9, 2010. *The Washington Post*. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/27/AR2010082702197.html

Knight, Michelle. *Finding Me*. Weinstein Publishing, 2014.

Laub, Dori. “Truth and testimony: the process and the struggle.” *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press. I995.

Lennon, J. John., and Malcolm Foley. *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of death and disaster*. London: Continuum, 2000.

Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Levs, Josh, Phil Gast and Steve Almasy, “Charles Ramsey: I'm no hero in freeing of captive women,” May 9, 2013, *CNN.com*. https://www.cnn.com/2013/05/07/us/ohio-cleveland-ramsey/index.html

Martyrs. Directed by Pascale Laugier, performances by Morjana Alaoui, Mylène Jampanoï, The Weinstein Company, 2008.

McKeon, M. *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Mendelsohn, Daniel. “But Enough About Me.” *The New Yorker*, January 25, 2010.

Miller, Nancy K. "But enough about Me, what do You Think of My Memoir?" *Yale Journal of Criticism: Interpretation in the Humanities*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2000, pp. 421.

Mitchell, Joy and Trauth, Erin. “Tell Me Everything: The Cult of the Memoir.” *Cult Pop Culture: How the Fringe Became Mainstream*. Ed. Bob Batchelor. Praeger, Santa Barbara, Calif, 2012.

Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen*, v. 16/3 (1975).

Patrick, Stephanie. "Breaking Free? Domesticity, Entrapment, and Postfeminism in Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt." *Journal of American Culture*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2017, pp. 235.

Pierson, David. “American situation comedies and the modern comedy of matters.” In Ed. Mary M. Dalton and Laura R. Linder. *The Sitcom Reader: America Re-Viewed, Still Skewed*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2016.

Propp, V. I. 1. *Morphology of the Folktale*. vol. 10.;9.;, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1968.

Propp, V. I. 1., et al. *The Russian Folktale by Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp*. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2012

Rodríguez, Ileana. *Gender Violence in Failed and Democratic States: Besieging Perverse Masculinities*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, 2016

Rosenberg, Alyssa. “Tina Fey is right: Artists should apologize less in 2016,” January 5, 2016. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2016/01/05/tina-fey-is-right-artists-should-apologize-less-in-2016

Room. Directed by Lenny Abramson, performances by Brie Larsen, Jacob Tremblay, A24, 2015.

Rothe, Anne. *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J, 2011

Shattuc, Jane. *The Talking Cure: TV Talk shows and Women*. Routledge, New York, 1997.

Smart, Elizabeth, and Chris Stewart. *My Story*. St. Martin's Press, 2013.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2003.

Stuever, Hank. "'Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt': Too good for NBC, but still not that great." *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/tv/unbreakable-kimmy-schmidt-too-good-for-nbc-but-still-not-that-great/2015/03/05/6a38f632-c12d-11e4-9ec2-b418f57a4a99_story.html.

Tal, Kalí. *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*. vol. 95., Cambridge University Press, New York; Cambridge [England]; 1996.

Tiffin, J. *Marvelous Geometry: Narrative and Metafiction in Modern Fairy Tale*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009.

Tueth, Michael V. "Breaking and entering: Transgressive comedy on television." In Ed. Mary M. Dalton and Laura R. Linder. *The Sitcom Reader: America Re-Viewed, Still Skewed*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2016.

Weissman, Gary. *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*. Cornell University Press, 2004.

West, Alexandra. *Films of the New French Extremity*. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2016.

Woodstock, Louise. "Vying Constructions of Reality: Religion, Science, and "Positive Thinking" in Self-Help Literature." *Journal of Media and Religion*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2005, pp. 155-178.

Zipes, Jack. *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2002;1979.

Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale.* University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1994.