Reading Contemporary Memoirs of Sexual Assault in the Wake of #MeToo

by

Amanda Spallacci

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

English

Department of English and Film Studies

University of Alberta

Abstract

Supervisor: Dr. Julie Rak

This thesis examines the cultural memory of sexual assault in the United States. It examines the relationship between selected published texts about sexual assault and the cultural memory of anti-rape activism, focusing on the ways in which the books about rape that were published during the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement leave material traces of activism that memorialize the white, middle-class feminists who wrote them. Despite women's greater access to the opportunity to publish memoirs, today, this project considers the ways in which that 1970s discourse continues to determine how publishers present such texts. I study promotional materials used to market five memoirs of sexual assault, published between 2014-2017 that, I argue ensure that white authors who advance relatively liberal politics become part of the cultural memory of mainstream feminist activism. Conversely, Black authors who posit intersectional and radical politics are excluded from it. While the mechanisms and politics of publishing sexual assault memoirs are significant, the sexual assault narratives that appear within these memoirs present nuanced representations of sexual assault. The form of memoir lets survivors weave their narrative of sexual assault through their life memories; this form allows survivors to reveal their relationship to sexual assault, personal identity, and the broader cultural memory of sexual assault in the United States.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by expressing my sincerest gratitude to my wonderful supervisor, Dr. Julie Rak, for her support, guidance and enthusiastic dedication to this doctoral project. Because of her belief in my work, I made my way to the University of Alberta, where we worked together to advocate for sexual assault survivors in both our academic scholarship and activism. I am incredibly grateful for Julie's mentorship, wisdom, and careful criticisms of my writing. Thank you for your terrific supervision.

I have also been so fortunate to have had Dr. Cecily Devereux and Dr. Teresa Zackodnik as my first and second readers. To Dr. Devereux, thank you for your guidance over the past four years; you not only helped me to define my doctoral project, but your words of advice and encouragement were also critical in helping me to navigate the academy as a woman. Dr. Zackodnik, thank you for always encouraging me to interrogate the methods and application of theory in my doctoral project and for modelling how to translate and apply theoretical knowledge into pedagogical projects and advocacy work. I also want to express my gratitude for your tireless efforts to make the University more livable for all students. To my entire committee, my sincerest thank you for your enthusiastic support of my dissertation from its initial stages to its completion and your belief in me as a scholar.

At this time, I would also like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which funded this project by means of a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, as well as the Killam Trust at the University of Alberta, which assisted my research with an Honorary Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship. The financial assistance of these organizations has greatly aided in the completion of this thesis.

I would also like to state my appreciation to Dr. Corrinne Harrol and all of the Wellness Centre volunteers—Braidon, Miriam, Keighlagh, Emily, and Rachel—for taking on a significant amount of extra-academic labour to establish and run the Wellness Centre in our Department. I would also like to thank my colleague and friend, Matt, for his confidence in my work, gracious editing, and willingness to collaborate on our various academic publications.

I want to acknowledge the tremendous support my family has shown me throughout my education journey. Simply know that you have made this dissertation possible. In particular, I must recognize a debt of gratitude to my first teacher, my mother. She introduced me to books and reading at the earliest stages in my life and pushed me to follow my curiosity and think critically about everything.

Finally, thank you to my two gorgeous boys/dogs, Artie and Otto. You both got me out to the River Valley every day, including during some of the most stressful moments, and helped me feel grounded. You've both helped me to develop patience, gratitude, and appreciation for life. Thank you for being my best friends.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

Anti-rape Activism and Sexual Assault Memoirs

I still remain conflicted about what happened to me. Not because I don't understand that I was a victim of sexual assault. It's more because I know I will never receive justice, and my anger at the knowledge that if I were to come forward today, I would have to come armed with over fifty other women sharing a similar story—and would most likely still be branded a liar by society.
-Sil Lai Abrams, *Black Lotus* (240)

I believe in the importance of sharing histories of violence. I am reticent to share my own history of violence, but that history informs so much of who I am, what I write, and how I write. It informs how I love and allow myself to be loved. It informs everything
-Roxane Gay, *Hunger* (40)

Sil Lai Abrams explains in her memoir *Black Lotus* that her trauma is not only rooted in a prior sexual assault, but also and more urgently in the knowledge that in the United States there exists a collective silencing, dismissal, and disregard for sexual assault survivors. This collective denial is established and reproduced by publicly circulating misconceptions and misinformation about sexual assault that tend to displace the blame for the assault away from the perpetrator and onto the survivor, using blaming tactics focused on inappropriate dress, substance use, and the survivor's relationship to the perpetrator. Even though sexual assault is a criminal offense in the United States, Melissa S. Morabito et al. state that most reports filed with the police do not result in an arrest, a trial, or a conviction (2).[1] This is because, in order for a sexual assault case to go to trial, the prosecutor must feel confident that the case meets the standard of proof beyond a

[1] Before proceeding, it is important to define a few terms. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), sexual assault refers to "any sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent." The term rape refers to a form of sexual assault that "is often used as a legal definition to specifically include sexual penetration [of any kind] without consent" (n.p.) The legal definitions of sexual assault and rape vary from state to state. According to RAINN, sexual violence is "an all-encompassing, non-legal term that refers to crimes like sexual assault, rape, and sexual abuse" (n.p.). Throughout this dissertation, I will use the term sexual assault to refer to sexually related assaults more broadly; however, if a survivor uses an alternative term, such as rape, I will adopt their terminology.

reasonable doubt; this standard of proof means that the prosecution leaves the court convinced of the defendant's guilt, as close as possible, to absolute certainty. It is often impossible to meet this criterion because most sexual assaults happen in private spaces without a witness, and any physical evidence of the assault can be explained away as consensual sex by defense attorneys. Consequently, many survivors do not file complaints with the criminal justice system because, as Abrams points out, they know they will likely not be believed, nor will they receive justice.[2] If most sexual assaults are not reported to police—leaving no official record of the event—where do scholars look for these unreported cases; in particular, where do survivors disclose that they were sexually assaulted and alert the public of the various ways in which the criminal justice system fails to address sexual assault complaints adequately?

Survivors of any form of sexual violence do not necessarily have to file a police report to make a public statement about the assault. In fact, even though the criminal justice system is a public institution in the United States, sexual assault police reports, trial transcripts, and court rulings are not part of the public record. Some survivors, therefore, do not make a formal report with the police; instead, survivors have other options. They can, for example, publish a blog entry or an open letter, post on social media, share an article in a popular news media outlet, write music, poetry, fiction, or construct various forms of visual art to document and circulate their assault in the public sphere. These personal narratives of sexual assault grant survivors a sense of freedom to describe the event on their *own* terms—free from the overwhelming pressure in the criminal justice system to bear witness to their assault, by presenting a linear, coherent,

[2] Sexual assault is the most-underreported crime in the United States; well over 80% of sexual assaults are not reported to law enforcement (David Lisak and Paul Miller 82; Cassia Spohn and Katherine Tellis 3).

and comprehensive account of the assault—and to circulate their narratives more broadly, than for example, a police report or a legal testimony.[3] Of course, not every story is well received.

Due to the criminal justice system's response to sexual assault cases—specifically, their emphasis on the burden of proof—issues of belief and credibility are more pronounced in sexual assault cases than in any other crime (Jordan 2). Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale state that survivor stories can disrupt the dominant beliefs and discourses of sexual assault because they allow survivors to "name and validate their experience," bring trauma, like sexual assault, out of the private sphere and into the public (278) and "point to the possibility of a different set of formation or rules" that pertain to sexual assault (266). To ensure that these stories are no longer disruptive, some people try to evoke dominant discourses about sexual assault, like popular misconceptions about rape, to silence these stories, "channel [them] into nonthreatening outlets" (268), or "inscribe them into hegemonic structures" (260). While this pushback has devastating effects on survivors, Rachel Loney-Howes proposes that internet trolling online, for example, demonstrates the "disruptive capacity" of survivor testimonies and their ability to generate conversation and debate (47). Moreover, by writing and publishing a sexual assault testimony in a public forum and having someone else like, share, or comment on it, survivors receive a sense of comfort, support, and solidarity, which are sentiments that Loney-Howes argues, survivors often struggle to obtain in the criminal justice system (44). For many survivors, who share their story in a nonfiction genre, these sentiments give them a sense of validation that people believe their story.

[3] Testimonies presented within the juridical system must adhere to imperatives: for example, coherence, linear narrative structure, comprehensive language, and consistency of the argument. Moreover, lawyers ask survivors questions that frame and control their testimonies.

These survivor narratives that report on sexual assault draw their authority and believability from an important salient characteristic of nonfiction—the reader expects that the author is making truthful claims and statements. According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, readers engage with nonfiction differently than fictional texts because they assume that the narrative is making truth claims that they do not necessarily expect when they read fiction (10). Even though these survivors never prosecuted their cases in court, Wendy Hesford (2011) argues that, often, readers believe these stories because of the "value attributed to truth-telling discourses" (99). For this reason, Marlene Kadar states that life writing is a critical practice and that "[a]t its most radical…it enhances reading as a means of emancipating an overdetermined 'subject'" (12). While the survivor is undoubtedly not emancipated from the cultural discourses about sexual assault that inform the public response to their stories—a reason for which they continue to receive backlash—a first-person narrative, according to Leigh Gilmore, "draws its social authority from its relation to culturally dominant discourses of truth-telling, and not, as has previously been asserted, from its privileged relation to 'real life"'(14). As a result, nonfiction discourses, like sexual assault narratives, are not stories to be "proved or falsified" (Smith and Watson 17); unlike in the criminal justice system where professionals listen to testimonies to determine an objective version of the truth, readers of nonfiction discourses in the public sphere should believe survivor stories.[4] By drawing their power from "a discursive formation of truth telling (3), sexual assault narratives that circulate in the public sphere can create an informal archive that documents the prevalence of sexual assault in the United States as well as the

[4] Smith and Watson note that many postmodern and postcolonial theorists suggest that autobiography, as a genre, does not adequately describe or include the "historical range and the diverse genres and practices of life writing not only in the West but around the globe" (3). Scholars such as Julie Rak and Leigh Gilmore "address this troubling, exclusionary aspect of autobiography shifting the term of reference to autobiographical discourse, that is, to a discursive formation of truth-telling" (Smith and Watson 3).

criminal justice system's failure to obtain justice for survivors. While these narratives are undoubtedly powerful, productive, and believable, they do present some limitations.

A critique of personal narratives that focus predominantly on the sexual assault—or a retelling of the event—is that, often, they are unable to present the broader political, cultural, and social implications that inform the assault. For instance, Selma Leydesdorff and Nanci Adler argue that "courts seek testimony, but they do not want life stories," and, as a result, "judges do not bear witness to the whole trauma" (10).[5] Similarly, sexual assault narratives that circulate in the public sphere, such as some of the social media posts that are accompanied by #MeToo and the archive in the *Washington Post* titled*,* "Sexual Assault Survivors Tell Their Stories," focus predominantly on the assault itself and not on the impact of the assault on survivors. Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale state if sexual assault is presented as a "simple report" instead of a narrative about a life, a potential to "essentialize experience and often identity…by obscuring the way in which experience itself is discursively mediated" manifests itself (283).[6] I certainly do not consider survivor narratives, even those exclusively about the sexual assault, to be simple reports; as I previously stated, these narratives are powerful and can generate an archive of cases that were not reported to the police. I do argue, however, that by solely retelling the event, survivors are unable to document the complicated histories that are related to systemic discrimination, popular discourses about sexual assault, and the criminal justice system's

[5] Life writing scholarship about testimony and human rights uses the legal rhetoric of forming what Meg Jensen (2014) calls an "appeal" (152); similarly, Leigh Gilmore (2001) classifies testimony as an "alternative jurisdiction" (143).

[6] Jolly also notes that "[l]ife stories as rights stories, then, are no simple and singular thing. They are complex constructions even when they appear to be simple cries of pain" (9).

response to sexual assault, nor do they depict how these issues both inform their assault and how they negotiate their memories of the assault.

Unlike sexual assault testimonies delivered in the criminal justice system or those circulating in public forums—testimonies that tend to focus predominantly on the sexual assault—a writer like Abrams positions her sexual assault within a larger narrative of her life, in a memoir.[7] In doing so, she can explain why the particulars of her assault, as well as her position of power in society, might inform the public response to her assault. For instance, Abrams states that if she were to report her sexual assault to law enforcement, she "will never receive justice"; yet, she also anticipates a similar response from the public sphere (240). She states that even if she "were to come forward with over fifty other women sharing a similar story"—saying that the same perpetrator sexually assaulted them—she "would most likely still be branded a liar by *society*" (my emphasis 240). Because Abrams had a sexual history with the perpetrator and was under the influence of drugs and alcohol at the time of the assault, she knew that her description of the assault would not adhere to society's narrative of what constitutes sexual assault (240). According to Cassia Spohn and Katherine Tellis, mainstream American culture believes that a "real" sexual assault involves a woman sexually assaulted by a stranger when that stranger wields a weapon. These cases do happen, yet, most often the perpetrator does not threaten the survivor with a weapon, the survivor knows the perpetrator, and there are no witnesses present who can corroborate the report (2). These misconceptions about sexual assault, Leigh Gilmore argues, "enter the law and permeate everyday life" and generate doubt about allegations that survivors bring forward in legal contexts, the mainstream media, and society, more generally

[7] Abrams uses both the terms sexual assault and rape; throughout this dissertation, I will use both of these terms interchangeably to refer to Abrams' narrative.

(2016 n.p.). Abrams shows that the particulars of her sexual assault differ from the social understanding of what constitutes sexual assault in the United States, and how her knowledge of this discrepancy became a source of anguish for her. She knew that society would not believe her story and likely brand her a liar.

Following the assault, Abrams knew that society would not consider her a "perfect victim." She rationalized that society would label her as a "drunken twenty-four-year-old model," with a history of "emotional instability," and who was socio-economically precarious relative to the perpetrator (240).[8] Thinking about her experience retrospectively, she explains that while misconceptions about sexual assault cause most women to blame themselves for the assault, they disproportionately condition Black women to do so. Abrams states that the cultural messages that "Black is dirty, coarse, violent, hypersexual, irresponsible, and ugly" (xii) not only normalize violent acts such as sexual assault against Black women, they also cultivate an "acceptance on a social level of the idea that a [Black] woman's body can be violated in the most intimate way, and that it is usually 'her fault'" (xii). Abrams' thinking is accurate. Spohn and Tellis establish that a survivor's position of power in society—connected in inequitable ways to their sexuality, gender, class, race, and disability—can inform whether a law enforcement official perceives the survivor as a "genuine victim" and has a real and tangible effect on the outcome of the case (3). This legal response also informs the social responses to sexual assault. Karyn Boyle explains that survivors are more likely to be believed and to receive sympathetic media attention if they are, for example, "either very young or very old…if they are white and the perpetrator is not [and] if they are deemed sexually respectable which is a deeply classed and racialized notion"

[8] Abrams publicly named Russell Simmons as the perpetrator in 2018, two years after publishing her memoir and twenty-four years after the assault.

(125).[9] Valerie Smith explains the relationship between sexual respectability and class and race, arguing that "a variety of cultural narratives that historically have linked sexual violence with racial oppression continue to determine the nature of public response" towards Black women who disclose that they were sexually assaulted (274).[10] Abrams can depict this complicated relationship between racial oppression, sexual assault, and the public response to these cases because her narrative extends beyond a retelling of the event; instead, Abrams publishes a memoir in which she writes about the sexual assault in relation to her experiences, her identity, and her larger life narrative. As a result, Abrams can demonstrate that sexual assault is never exclusively personal. It exists within complicated histories. These histories are foundational in establishing what constitutes sexual assault in the United States and why a survivor's credibility is intrinsically connected to their position of power in society.

Relatedly, in her memoir, Roxane Gay discusses her rape and advocates for the "importance of sharing histories of violence" (40).[11] At first glance, a history of violence might not seem different from a personal narrative of the violent act; however, history is rarely defined by a single event but by a series of past events woven into a narrative.[12] Gay's evocation of history, then, makes sense as a method to present violence and histories of trauma. As Ann Kaplan and Ban Wong argue, we should try to understand a traumatic event that produces trauma as "one episode in a longer chain of structural mutations in modern systems that have accumulated a record of violence, suffering, and misery" (12). To document her history of

---

[9] Similarly, Susan D. Rose argues that a survivor's position of power in the United States, marked by race, class, gender, age, sexuality, and ability, "influence[s] whether one is seen as credible or authoritative" (172).

[10] Moreover, Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale state that Black women are much less likely to be believed if they allege that they were sexually assaulted than white women who report that they were assaulted by men of oppressed races (267).

[11] Gay solely uses the term rape throughout her memoir.

[12] For instance, *miriam-webster.com* defines "history" as a "chronological record of significant events" (n.p.). Similarly, *dictionary.com* states that the term refers to a "continuous, systematic narrative of past events" (n.p.).

violence, Gay, like Abrams, places the episode of violence within the larger chain or context of her life story in a memoir. Julie Rak states that historically, the term memoir referred to texts written by nonprofessional writers, and "it has been described as writing of one's own life in relation to others, to events, or to the construction of some kind of public identity related to a popular issue of the day" (12). Nearly following this formulation precisely, Gay explains that she writes about her rape in relation to her life because it "informs so much of who I am, what I write, and how I write […] It informs how I love and allow myself to be loved […] It informs everything" (40). Memoir allows survivors like Gay to become both witnesses to their lives, including their most painful memories, and theorists, who can conceptualize their histories of violence in the context of dominant legal notions of objective truth, popular discourses of sexual assault, and systemic forms of discrimination in the United States.

While the term history is undoubtedly appropriate, it does present some restrictions; the term implies a delineation of the past that is official, factual, and objective, not unlike the expectations of a testimony delivered in a legal trial. If history, and the implicit notions of truths and objectivity that the term evokes, are used as a framework to think about memoirs, it can be just as restrictive and limiting as the legal response because, as Smith and Watson state, "life narrators […] are making history in a sense," but they are also doing much more; they perform rhetorical acts such as "justifying their own perceptions, upholding reputations, disputing the accounts of others, and conveying cultural information" (13). To reduce a personal narrative to facts, then, "is to strip it of the densities of rhetorical, literary, ethical, political, and cultural dimensions" (13).

With this in mind, perhaps memory is a more productive term to use to talk about memoirs that are about sexual assault because it can account for subjective perceptions of one's

lived experiences without evoking notions or standards of objective truth that are implicit in mainstream understandings of history.[13] Karyn Ball suggests that perhaps recounting memory is one way to talk about the "affective aftermath of oppression without recourse to idealist notions of coherent identity and 'authentic' experience" because memories can "*stand in* for experiences" (7). As survivors weave their memories together to narrativize their experiences, Leydesdorff and Adler state that their "accounts are not necessarily what happened, but rather, perceptions of what happened" (7). Narratives of memory, thus, have different aims than history concerning truth; rather than read personal experiences to find objective truths or "access to unmediated memory," Max Saunders argues that what autobiographical texts such as memoir reveal, instead, is cultural memory (322). Memory and, in particular, cultural memory studies, provides a framework for thinking through the ways in which personal forms of remembering in the public sphere—such as publishing a memoir about sexual assault—interact, shape, and challenge collective attitudes about sexual assault in the United States.

Astrid Erll defines cultural memory as "the interplay of the present and the past in sociocultural contexts" (2). In other words, memory implies a relationship to an event that took place in the past; in contrast, cultural memory studies are concerned with how a memory of the past is negotiated and remembered in the present, given specific sociocultural contexts. For Erll culture can be defined through a three-dimensional framework comprising "the social (people, social relations, institutions), material (artifacts and media), and mental aspects (culturally defined ways of thinking, mentalities)" (4). Likewise, Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering argue that memory, expressed through personal experience, "shares a concern with the use of the past as a resource in making experience and social life meaningful, in producing, or challenging

[13] Fittingly, the etymology of the word memoir comes from the French mémoire, which translates in English as memory.

cultural norms and conventions, and in reproducing or subverting established orders of power" (151). Although memory is influenced and produced through and by culture, José van Dijck states that we should avoid thinking of "memory products as conformist" (265). Instead, because personal memory is inextricably linked to the socio-historical contexts in which individuals negotiate their past experiences, it offers survivors the agency to challenge official histories and popular misconceptions about sexual assault. Accordingly, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith argue that "the individual story also serves as a challenge and a counter-memory to official hegemonic history" (7) because it redresses "the official forgetting of women's histories" (4). Saunders similarly argues that autobiographical texts "record counter-cultural memories that official cultures tend to repress or try to forget" (327). Gay's assertion regarding the "importance of sharing histories of violence" is, therefore, less about history—in the mainstream sense of the term—and more about ways in which survivors can document or record counter-memories of violence that cultural histories would rather forget.

Moreover, Gay recognizes a connection between this history of violence and her identity, stating that it informs her writing, how she loves and allows herself to be loved; in other words, "[i]t informs everything" (40). Here, Gay acknowledges that remembering and writing about violence are both inextricably tied to identity, informing and shaping it. They are informed by her identity and they shape her identity. Researchers increasingly contemplate identity due to this innate complexity—mainly how it is constructed and represented in memoir—through memory studies' nuanced framework. As van Dijck argues, "[t]he construction of individuality takes place through autobiographical story forms" (262). "Identity, whether individual or cultural," is always connected to cultural memory, because, as Hirsch and Smith explain, identity "becomes a story that stretches from the past to the present and the future, that connects the individual to the

group, and that is structured by gender and related identity markers" (8). Despite culture's seemingly inescapable influence, the construction of identity also requires personal agency; Erll points out that "identities have to be constructed and reconstructed by acts of memory, by remembering who one was and by setting this past self in relation to the present self" because "ways of making sense of the past which are intentional and performed through narrative, go hand in hand with the construction of identities" (2).

Most memoirs about sexual assault are published years after the sexual assault occurred, giving survivors time to negotiate the event and retrospectively think about who they were at the time of the assault—their past self—in relation to their present self. Abrams recalls who she was at the time of her assault, identifying her race, low socio-economic status, mental health and substance use, and her career as a model, and puts this past identity in conversations with popular misconceptions about sexual assault that render her, based on her position of power in society as well as the particulars of the assault, as less than a "perfect victim" (240). Consequently, she believed that she did not have a right to report or even to admit that someone had sexually assaulted her. Abrams attempted suicide on the morning following the assault, becoming overwhelmed by feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness (240). Once Abrams reflects on these experiences retrospectively, she then unpacks the mechanisms that not only informed how she thought about the sexual assault but also how she learned to see herself; she can reformulate her experience and definitively state, "the a music mogul raped [her]" (239). Personal narratives of sexual assault are particularly potent for scholarship on memory because they are entangled within gendered, classed, racial, and sexual political stakes. Survivors are often trying to understand their assaults as they write about them but are caught between the influences of the

cultural, legal, and social surrounding them that inform their perception of the assault and how it is related to their identities.

The Memoirs in Context

As Erll argues, cultural memory is reflected by "the interplay of the present and the past in sociocultural contexts" (2). In that case, memoirs, which are composed of documented personal memories, should also reflect the cultural memory dominant when they were written and published. With this in mind, memoirs that include sexual assault as a topic can tell us about the cultural memory of sexual assault in the United States; in particular, cultural memory informs how survivors remember, write, and feel about the sexual assault, as well as, how they think about and portray themselves as survivors. The memoirs that are the focus of this dissertation were published between 2014-2017, and it is imperative to understand them in the context of the shifting conversations about sexual assault during these three critical years when sexual assault was established as a serious concern in various political, institutional, and cultural spheres. They are arguably part of a movement to address sexual assault as a national problem, which was largely informed by the federal government's official response to this crime.

Leading this critical conversation, President Barack Obama and then-Vice President Joe Biden instituted the "White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault" on 22 January 2014.[14] This task force consisted of senior administration officials committed to coordinating federal enforcement efforts against sexual assault. Their mandate was to raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault—stating that one in five women are sexually

[14] In 2011, President Obama's administration required that all universities reduce the standard of proof in campus sexual assault hearings to a "preponderance of evidence," which means that the party with the burden (the complainant) convinces the hearing committee that there is greater than 50% chance that their claims are true. According to Sarah Schaaf et al., this 2011 initiative was a strategy to increase reporting, unlike the 2014 initiative, which was a national public awareness campaign (698).

assaulted on college campuses and how misinformation about sexual assault has negative effects on survivors. They say that perpetrators of sexual violence are usually someone survivors know, and survivors do not report the crime for various reasons, leaving them feeling "isolated, ashamed, and to blame" for the assault (The White House 2). This task force sought to ensure that colleges adequately respond to reports of sexual assault; if colleges violate Title IX—which prohibits gender discrimination by any school that receives federal funding—they risk losing their federal funding. This high-profile, political initiative generated interest in and various discussions about sexual assault in the public sphere.

In their investigation of newspaper and magazine articles that feature college sexual assault as a topic, for instance, Charlene L Muehlenhard et al. found 3,630 of these articles were published between 2014-2015, compared to 638 in 2012-2013 (549), indicating that this newfound media interest in sexual assault was “likely in part because of the heightened political attention” (549). Many of these media articles featured women’s testimonies about sexual assault on college campuses; often, these stories reported that colleges tend to dismiss complaints to preserve the institution’s reputation. “A Rape on Campus," published in *Rolling Stone* on 19 November 2014, for example, is an exposé of an undergraduate student from the University of Virginia named Jackie, who alleged that fraternity members at the university gang-raped her. Later, Jackie reported the sexual assault to the Dean of Students; according to Jackie, the Dean silenced and dismissed her story to preserve the university's reputation.[15] Presumably, due to the topic’s timeliness, this article was the most read non-celebrity story in the forty-nine-year history of *Rolling Stone* (McNiff, Effron, Schnider np). Perhaps just as well-known were the numerous

[15] The article was retracted on 5 December 2014, with an official statement claiming that new information reveals discrepancies in Jackie’s account and that the magazine’s “trust in [Jackie] was misplaced” (n.p.). The Dean of Students and three men from the fraternity filed separate lawsuits against *Rolling Stone.*

news media articles published by the *New York Times, Washington Post, and National Review,* to name a few*,* devoted to an undergraduate student at Columbia University, Emma Sulkowicz, who reported her sexual assault to the university in 2012. After Columbia refused to expel the alleged perpetrator, Sulkowicz carried her mattress with her to all of her classes in the act of protest against the college.[16] This national conversation about sexual assault on college campuses demonstrated the prevalence of the issue and revealed the barriers survivors encounter if they try to obtain justice. As these narratives about survivors who had been assaulted on college campuses circulated in popular news media, they also began to appear in other literary forms, such as memoirs.

On 30 September 2014, creator, director, writer, and actress of the popular HBO television show, *Girls*, and self-proclaimed feminist, Lena Dunham, published her memoir, *Not That Kind of Girl,* with the publisher Penguin Random House. In her memoir, Dunham presents a unique perspective on mental health, rape, dating, her body, and subsequent struggles with creativity and artistic production. In her essay titled "Barry" that appears in Dunham's memoir, she discloses that a man named Barry raped her while she was a student at Oberlin College, and refutes popular myths involving consent as well as alcohol and drug consumption and how they are used to discredit claims of sexual assault.[17] She describes consenting to sex with Barry and repeatedly asking him to wear a condom; then, while she was slipping in and out of consciousness, Barry continued to remove the condom (59). His refusal to wear the condom negates Dunham's consent and undermines her agency, especially considering that her intoxication level itself reduced her capacity to actively consent to any sexual act with him. Dunham's memoir, therefore, seemingly enters this national conversation about sexual assault on

[16] In the Fall of 2017, Columbia released a statement effectively reaffirming Paul Nungesser's case was dismissed. [17] Dunham solely uses the term rape throughout her memoir.

college campus; shortly after, this important conversation began to expand outwards to include discussions about the pervasiveness of sexual assault in other industries, such as Hollywood.

For instance, on 16 October 2014, comedian Hannibal Buress referred to stand-up comedian and sitcom actor Bill Cosby as a "rapist" in his comedy routine. One month later, Barbara Bowman penned an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* titled, "Bill Cosby Raped Me, Why Did It Take 30 Years for People To Believe my Story?" Once this discourse about Cosby entered the public, over sixty women made allegations against him. This case was significant in challenging misconceptions about sexual assault because it demonstrated that perpetrators are not exclusively strangers who wear masks and assault women with a weapon; instead, they can be famous, charismatic, wealthy, and beloved actors. Moreover, because the majority of women brought forward these allegations years after the assault occurred, these cases established that survivors do not immediately report the assault for various reasons, like the social status of the perpetrator, their relationship to him, the nature of the assault, and so on. While these cases certainly helped to challenge misconceptions about sexual assault, it is important to acknowledge that there is a history of publicly accusing and reprimanding alleged Black perpetrators in the United States. Angela Davis argues that post-emancipation, "ex-slaves would not willingly discard their dreams of progress," so the role of the "fictional Black rapist" was created in order to justify the more than ten thousand lynchings of Black men that occurred in the three decades following the Civil War (43). The goal of this racialized violence was to ensure that after slavery was abolished, Black people would remain at the bottom of the economic hierarchy so that white men could maintain their place at the top. This history is significant in Cosby's case because it provides one of the many reasons why the media was so keen to circulate these allegations made

against him in public. As claims and reports about sexual assault circulated in the mainstream media, the film industry also began to address sexual assault as a film topic.

In 2015, for example, Kirby Dick released *The Hunting Ground*, a documentary film outlining the widespread crisis of sexual assault on college campuses. Popular American singer, Lady Gaga, co-wrote and performed the song "Til it Happens to You" for the film. The following year, on 28 February 2016, Gaga performed the song at the Academy Awards and was accompanied by over fifty sexual assault survivors on the stage. Vice President Joe Biden introduced Lady Gaga at the Oscars. In his opening remarks, he stated that "despite significant progress over the last few years, too many women and men on and off-campus are still victims of sexual assault" (n.p.) Biden urged the public to join him, President Obama, and thousands of students in a pledge to intervene in situations when "consent has not and cannot be given."[17] Biden acknowledged that in order to address the current state of sexual assault in the United States, Americans need to change the culture surrounding sexual assault, which includes creating a bystander culture and challenging misconceptions and misinformation about sexual assault.

That same year, Jessica Valenti and Sil Lai Abrams published memoirs that addressed sexual assault as a topic. On 1 June 2016, illustrious feminist author of numerous books, news articles, and co-founder of the popular feminist blog, *Feministing.com,* Jessica Valenti, published *Sex Object* with Harper Collins. In her memoir, Valenti states that while she was unconscious at a party, she was raped by an acquaintance named Carl who, at Valenti's request the following morning, ordered her a grilled cheese and paid for her taxi home (109).[19] Valenti challenges the misconception that if someone were "truly" raped—even a self-proclaimed feminist author, such as Valenti—they would immediately identify and respond to the event as such. Then, on 2

[17] Viewers were encouraged to take the pledge at *itsonus.org* [19]
Valenti solely uses the term rape throughout her memoir.

August 2016, domestic violence expert and social activist Sil Lai Abrams published her memoir *Black Lotus* with Simon and Schuster. In her memoir, Abrams addresses multiple subjects, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation and harassment, drug and alcohol addiction, loss, healing, motherhood, and career aspirations and struggles, all through the lens of her biracial, Black and Chinese identity. While these memoirs, as well as the critical political, cultural, and institutional work on sexual assault across the United States, were forcing citizens to have necessary conversations about this topic, the end of 2016 marked a devastating shift in American politics.

Days before the 2016 Presidential Debate, a series of reports about the Republican Presidential candidate, Donald Trump, including a video in which he makes derogatory and violent remarks about women, and a lawsuit filed by a woman stating that Trump sexually assaulted her at a party when she was thirteen-years-old, began to circulate throughout the mainstream news media.[18] According to William Benoit, Americans on any side of the political spectrum perceived these comments about women as extremely offensive (244). These derogatory stories were partly responsible for Trump losing the popular vote by 2.9 million votes despite winning the Electoral College (255). Trump simultaneously apologized for the remarks and defended his position by claiming that he made these comments many years ago, during a private conversation, and by circulating these comments, the media disregarded his right to his privacy (249). Just as Obama's public stance against sexual assault led to an increased awareness of the pervasiveness of the issue and challenged misinformation about sexual assault, Trump, as

[18] According to Alan Yuhas, Trump's lawyer Alan Garten called the claims that Trump raped a thirteen-year-old woman a "complete fabrication" and "a sham lawsuit brought by someone who desires to impact the presidential election" (n.p.). The lawsuit was dropped.

Megan K. Maas et al. argue, was an example of the ways which “powerful political leaders can [also] be salient symbols of rape culture” (1739), perpetuating and condoning sexual assault. Trump took his place in the oval office in January 2017. It was immediately apparent that, more than ever, Americans must continue to have these critical conversations about sexual assault.

Although the political configuration shifted, women continued to publish memoirs about sexual assault. For instance, *New York Times* best-selling feminist author Roxane Gay published her memoir, *Hunger*, on 13 June 2017 with Harper Collins. In her memoir, Gay presents a nuanced and complex narrative that addresses various topics, including the effects of trauma—manifesting physically and mentally—that she experienced after she was gang-raped by a group of her peers when she was twelve years old. In *Hunger*, Gay states that she was “raped by Christopher and several of his friends in an abandoned hunting cabin in the woods where no one but those boys could hear [her] scream” (48). Even though she suffered such a horrible crime, Gay never spoke about nor reported the violence because she knew that the court evaluates rape cases based on "he said/she said"—the perpetrator's testimony set up against the survivor's testimony—and that "all too often, what 'he said' matters more" than what she says (52). So, women who have been sexually assaulted, like Gay, "just swallow the truth" (52). Based on the outpouring of survivor narratives in the public sphere, it became increasingly clear that so many women had been sexually assaulted in their lifetimes, but they did not file an official report with the police. As a result, the statistics compiled to illustrate the prevalence of sexual assault in the United States did not represent the issue in its entirety; however, by the end of 2017, one of the most extensive anti-rape activism campaigns—the #MeToo Movement—went viral, and would create an informal database of survivor testimonies online.

The #MeToo movement went viral shortly after Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey published their investigation into the sexual harassment and assault allegations against Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein, entitled "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accuser for Decades," in the *New York Time*s on 5 October 2017. In response to the article, Hollywood actress Alyssa Milano, @Alyssa_Milano, tweeted on 15 October 2017, "if you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write '#MeToo' as a reply to this tweet." While Milano's tweet caused the hashtag to go viral, the phrase "me too" was created by Tarana Burke, senior director of an international organization committed to supporting young women of colour called "Girls for Gender Equity," to support survivors through community-building, research collection, and sharing resources.[19] Following Milano's public call on Twitter, over twelve million sexual assault survivors used #MeToo on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Elisa Giaccardi and Liedeke Plate state that by sharing personal testimonies of sexual assault online, survivors participate in acts of "collection, preservation and interpretation" of personal memories (65). The #MeToo movement created an archive through the hashtag that documented and communicated the prevalence of sexual assault on a global scale.

Two days after the #MeToo Movement went viral, on 17 October 2017, Gabrielle Union published *We're Going to Need More Wine* with Harper Collins. In her memoir, Union speaks about her marriage to NBA player Dwayne Wade, growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood in California, her struggle with IVF, and being raped when she was 19.[20] Union demonstrates how the circumstances of her rape were and continue to be informed by the intersections of gender and race; specifically, Union explains how notions like gender propriety

[19] To read more about Burke's role in the MeToo Movement, see Chapter One. Throughout this dissertation, I use the phrase "MeToo Movement" to refer to Burke's movement and "#MeToo Movement" to refer to the social media archive and user actions that Milano instigated.
[20] Union solely uses the term rape throughout her memoir.

and racial solidarity forced her to be polite and remain in the retail store where she was working after the perpetrator forced his way into the space as Union and her coworker were closing the store (91). These notions of gender propriety and racial solidary were just as powerful to Union as the gun that the perpetrator used to force her to the backroom of the store because they kept her in the store despite her instincts that were telling her to run (92). Significantly, Union's rape is the only one out of the five memoirs I study in which the perpetrator is a stranger with a weapon and the only one that results in a criminal conviction.

This brief overview presents a mere glimpse of the cultural conversation about sexual assault in the United States between 2014-2017. The purpose of presenting this contextual information is to demonstrate that these three years represent a movement to make visible the prevalence of sexual assault and to challenge and debunk popular misconceptions and misinformation about sexual assault. I position the five selected memoirs that are the focus of this dissertation within this contextual overview to highlight their relation to these shifting national, political, and cultural efforts. I do so to take seriously that the process of writing a memoir—weaving personal memories into a narrative—is influenced by cultural memory. As Maurice Halbwachs argues, "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories," and "[i]t is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (38). I would also add that this changing cultural memory informs the various publishers' decisions to publish these memoirs. However, memoirs that include sexual assault as a topic are not necessarily new. For instance, one of the first books of this kind was written by Harriet Jacobs, whose *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* was published by Thayer & Eldridge in 1861. Since 2014, there has been a steady increase in published memoirs about sexual assault, with no sign of the publication rate

slowing down.[21] Halbwachs provides a possible explanation for this. He argues that for a personal memory to be accepted or recognized as collective memory, that memory must "be functionally related to the achievement of the group goals of a community, and the content and structure of the memory have to exhibit meaningful relationships to these goals" (Halbwachs qtd in Wang 306). Without such actualizations, according to Erll, "monuments, rituals, and books are nothing but dead material, failing to have any impact in societies" (5). Following this logic, then, perhaps we see an increase in published memoirs about sexual assault beginning in 2014 because they are "related to the achievement" of Obama's task force to address the prevalence of sexual assault and the significant media attention it received in the public. They also "exhibit meaningful relationships to these goals" because they not only debunk and challenge misconceptions about sexual assault but also demonstrate how assault and personal identity are connected. In addition to holding cultural significance then, these memoirs, in the context of shifting cultural conversations about sexual assault in the United States, can have a real and tangible "impact in societies" (Erll 5).

The Project

Sexual assault stories written by women who felt unable to report to law enforcement are circulating in the public sphere in various forms, but most prominently in digital news media and

[21] While this is certainly not a comprehensive or exhausted list of memoirs published since 2014, these memoirs received significant attention in the mainstream media and on social media: *Not That Kind of Girl* by Lena Dunham (2014), *My Body is a Book of Rules* by Elissa Washuta (2014), *Sex Object* by Jessica Valenti (2016), *Black Lotus* by Sil Lai Abrams (2016), *Hunger* by Roxane Gay (2017), *We're Going to Need More Wine* by Gabrielle Union (2017), *What a Body Remembers* by Karen Stefano (2019), *Era of Ignition* by Amber Tamblyn (2019), *Know My Name* by Chanel Miller (2019), *Inside Out: A Memoir* by Demi Moore (2019), *Things We Didn't Talk About When I was a Girl* by Jeannie Vanasco (2020).

social media. These stories, according to Mendes et al., create "new forms of dialogue, connectivity, and awareness, which although [they] may be temporary and ephemeral are nonetheless real and powerful" (1302). Unlike stories published on digital media platforms, contemporary memoirs written by women that address sexual assault as a central topic leave a material trace of activism that addresses sexual assault in the public sphere. According to Joanna Maciulewicz, “it is the materiality of books that has the power of immortalization of the immaterial aspects of human life: thoughts, ideas, and spirit” (56). For this reason, published memoirs about sexual assault preserve both the narratives and the authors who write them. This preservation is tied to memory, specifically, the cultural memory of sexual assault.

“Reading Contemporary Memoirs of Sexual Assault in the Wake of #MeToo” is a project about the cultural memory of sexual assault in the United States; its main objective will be to show that the cultural memory of feminist activism, the strategies used to market contemporary memoirs, and the presentation of sexual assault in memoirs are all deeply informed by the activist, author, and survivor's subject position or identity. These memoirs demonstrate how the cultural memory of activism addressing sexual assault is constructed and sustained in and by popular culture, reveal the politics involved in publishing, marketing, and promoting a memoir about sexual assault, and establish how the memoir’s form allows survivors to present their sexual assault within their life story in ways that foreground relationships between a survivor’s sexual assault, their identity, and the broader cultural memory of sexual assault.

Chapter One considers the cultural memory of what has come to be known as the 1970s Anti-Rape Movement in the United States. Like contemporary activism targeting sexual assault, the Anti-Rape Movement consisted of ephemeral and published texts. With the gift of retrospection, it seems that the cultural memory of the Anti-Rape Movement is mostly informed

by the published texts and the (white) authors who wrote them, preserving both over the decades as made apparent by repeated references in contemporary mainstream news articles about the #MeToo Movement. Yet, the anti-rape activists who were not white or socio-economically privileged did not have access to publishing, so they produced ephemeral documents that were not always preserved, nor were their names, their identities, and stories.

Black women have arguably gained slightly more access to the publishing industry in the 21st century, which is why Abrams, Gay, and Union are able to publish their memoirs with reputable, mainstream publishers that have the financial capital to promote the memoirs. Chapter Two seeks to uncover whether access to publishing translates to representation in the cultural memory of sexual assault activism, as it did for the white, middle-class liberal feminists from the 1970s, or if access today means that Black authors and their texts continue to be excluded from this cultural memory.

Then, shifting the focus to the content of the memoirs, Chapter Three considers how narratives of sexual assault, placed within the context of one's life story, are deeply melancholic and the degree to which textual melancholia might index a politics. Following Freud's early definition of mourning and melancholia as responses to loss, an acceptable survivor mourns, overcomes, and heals from their tragic loss. Conversely, a survivor who is melancholic remains "psychically stuck" (243). By thinking of identity politics, sexual assault laws, and misconceptions about sexual assault as mechanisms that cause a survivor to enter a state of melancholia, I consider that a survivor's persistent desire and need to retrospectively reflect on the assault and write about it in a memoir years after the assault occurred demonstrates a refusal to heal that is not pathological; instead, it is a powerful and productive state of resistance.

Chapter 1:

Publishing the Specter of White Feminism: Women's Liberation, Anti-Rape and #MeToo

On 6 December 2017, *Time* magazine released their "Person of the Year" issue featuring a group of women prominently displayed across the cover. Ashley Judd, Taylor Swift, Adama Iwu, Isabel Pascual, and Susan Fowler appear on the magazine's front cover, along with the title "The Silence Breakers: The Voices that Launched a Movement." Conspicuously, the founder of the MeToo Movement, Tarana Burke, and the actress who helped #MeToo go girl, Alyssa Milano, appear in a photograph buried well into the issue. Activists took to social media to draw attention to this exclusion of the MeToo Movement's founder. Commenting on this odd sequence, the online publication *AfroPunk* stated that "Tarana Burke was the original creator of the #MeToo awareness movement, but you would never know that from whom *Time* chose to put on its cover instead" (Ziyad 2017, n.p.). *Time* not only chose to omit Burke, a Black activist, from the cover of the issue, but the "Silence Breakers" article failed to acknowledge or reference any of the sexual assault activism initiated and led by Black activists over the past century. Moreover, it did not acknowledge how online activism such as #MeToo builds on historical Black activist practices of collective enfranchisement and consciousness-raising. Instead, the authors of the *Time* article linked #MeToo to the work of second-wave feminist Betty Friedan and the text, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

The authors of the article, Stephanie Zacharek, Eliana Dockterman, and Haley Sweetland Edwards, reference Friedan in a fairly innocuous way: they state that just as the "postwar wives and homemakers" experienced "the disquieting malaise of frustration and repression" that Betty Friedan famously identified as "the problem that has no name" over fifty years ago, similarly, the

#MeToo movement is "born of a very real and potent sense of unrest" (n.p.). For some, it might seem strange that the authors chose to associate a book from fifty years ago with a contemporary online activist movement. In particular, the content of Friedan's book does not align with the #MeToo movement, which is about creating a community built on solidary among survivors and representing the prevalence of sexual assault. However, I am struck by the fact that the authors chose to reference Friedan in an article about #MeToo at all. A search for mainstream news articles about the #MeToo movement reveals that most referenced the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement, the official narrative of the Anti-Rape Movement, as well as feminist authors such as Susan Brownmiller, Gloria Steinem, and Friedan.[22] This presents a rather curious conundrum: why did *Time* decide to exclude Burke—the founder of the MeToo movement—from the cover of the "Silence Breakers" issue, and instead, along with numerous other publications on #MeToo, reference feminist icons from the 1970s in their articles, ultimately keeping the memory of their activism alive?

Even though *Time* put Burke on the cover the following year, their choice in 2017 demonstrates the power that publishers and popular news media have in constructing who the public remembers to be feminist activists. While most people consider memory to be an individual act of remembering, Maurice Halbwachs argues that individuals "recall, recognize, and localize their memories" in society (38). For Qi Wang, this social process of remembering, known as cultural memory, consists of "both a system (values, schemata, scripts, models, metaphors, and artifacts) and a process (rituals, daily routines, and practices) of symbolic

[22] A few examples include: "#MeToo's Roots in the Feminist Awakening of the 1960s" by Nicole Hemmer (*Vox*)*;* "Aziz, We Tried to Warn You" by Lindy West (*New York Time*)*)*; "The MeToo Movement's Roots in Women Workers' Rights" by Peter Dreir (*Yes!*); "International Women's Day: Gloria Steinem on #MeToo, Trump and Making Change Happen" by Abigail Jones (*Newsweek*); "The First Crop of #MeToo Books Reflect the Movements Complexity" by Anne Kingston (*MacLean's*)*;* "How to Make MeToo Stick This Time" by Helen Benedict (*CNN*).

mediations" (306).[23] Cultural memory consists of those memories that survive through the decades following the Women's Liberation Movement in public storytelling and discourse, particularly in popular news media that form the cultural narrative about the history of anti-rape activism. During #MeToo, the media's consistent and plural references to the 1970s Anti-Rape Movement, especially its mainstream white feminist icons and their books, demonstrate a critical association between the construction of the cultural memory of anti-rape activism in the United States and print material. Print materials have always played a role in shaping accepted historical narratives of feminism; often constituted as pieces of evidence of women's activism, print materials comprise a "critical body of work documenting" the history of the women's movement (McCammon et al. 4). Published texts, written by both feminists and news media from the 1960s and 70s, therefore, participate in constructing popular cultural memories of anti-rape activism.

Specifically, a relationship exists between personal narratives of sexual assault and antirape activism: life writing and print culture play complex roles in both developing and publicizing feminist activisms pertaining to sexual violence because the histories of gender, sexual, racial, and class identities have all been enriched by personal narrative. Consciousness raising, for example, is a political technique used by activist groups, cultural producers, and writers to raise awareness for personal, social, or political issues. While consciousness-raising documents can take the form of letters, flyers, pamphlets, manifestos, news articles, and books, historically, consciousness-raising about rape took the form of autobiography (Dowd Hall 341). Scholars who work in both gender studies and life writing argue that autobiography aligns itself with feminist critical theory because both insist that "accounts of other lives influence how we

[23] Similarly, Marianna Hirsch and Valeri Smith argue that cultural memory, "can best be understood at the juncture where the individual and the social come together" (7), and this understanding of memory provides a framework to analyze individual stories that can "serve as a challenge and a counter-memory to official hegemonic history" (7).

see and understand our own" (Polkey xiii). Personal stories appearing in autobiographical forms create a dialogue between the author and the reader. Studies in feminist print culture suggest that sharing a personal story, especially one in which sexual assault is the subject, can be a political act.

Both contemporary memoirs of sexual assault and books about rape published by mainstream feminist icons from the past include personal reflections about rape to demonstrate a political stance against it. This combination of a personal account with a political stance, according to Jamie Harker and Cecilia Konchar Farr, form consciousness-raising texts; these texts are often first-hand accounts of "individual transformation and once-taboo subjects," and provide millions of women with a "vicarious 'aha' moment" that may begin to alter the reader's consciousness (4). In a similar formulation, Julie Rak explains that memoir "provides the story of others in a way that creates the private self alongside the self of another" (33). For Rak, "this means of mobility from the private to the public, in memoir, [means that] lives go public as they become public. It becomes a way for readers to think publicly, but from the private sphere. It creates the possibility of social movement through personal movement. In this sense, memoir as a genre has the potential to create social action" (33). Evidently, a relationship exists between consciousness-raising literature and autobiography because both kinds of texts comprise first person narratives and include a direct address to the reader. This conversational mode can spark self-reflection and personal transformation that may translate into political mobilization. Suppose the testimonial quality of the direct address to the reader can produce social change similar to feminist consciousness-raising efforts. In that case, it stands to reason that authors interested in social change would want to use an established publishing house to publish their memoirs or books about rape. Yet, Simone Murray suggests that using a mainstream publisher has serious

implications for how the public interprets and perceives feminism because "the tendency within the industry is for feminism to be defined not by peer review, but by publisher press release" (209). Publishers allocate capital to advertise these anti-rape books written by feminists and publicize the author as much as the book. In other words, they exert significant influence over what a public can know and, in turn, the extent to which memoir can play a part in effecting social change.

Even in the case of memoir, in which the narrative is a life story, it is important to remember that "[t]he author's voice is not a sole, independent voice in the woods, but is entirely dependent on the third party of the publishing industry" (Gilley 2012, 8). By promoting the feminist author—just as much, or sometimes even more than the text itself—mainstream publishers "mediate public perceptions regarding the nature of feminism and its relevance to contemporary society" (Murray 208). As authors decide to publish their book with mainstream publishers instead of feminist presses, the publishers come to control how feminism is defined, interpreted, and made visible in the public sphere by choosing whose books as well as which types of narratives they want to publish. Through the proliferation of mass media marketing and advertising made possible by the financial capital of these publishers, the authors themselves become feminist commodities who usually perpetuate a white, middle-upper class version of feminism. In other words, mainstream publishers sell a particular brand of feminism. By looking at the publication history of anti-rape books, including media coverage of the authors and their texts, this project demonstrates a relationship between published texts, news media, and the cultural memory of the Anti-Rape Movement. Specifically, it considers how a well-paid, multipronged publisher promotion plan can mean that a single text and author come to stand in

for a range of feminist work and can ensure the longevity of certain feminist icons within cultural memory.

The official Anti-Rape Movement—often categorized as a sub-movement (Bevacqua; Ryan) or as a movement established by radical feminists within the Women's Liberation Movement (Freeman 1994)—refers to political activism against sexual violence beginning near the middle of the 1960s and continuing throughout the 1970s in the United States. While radical feminists were part of the larger context of the second-wave feminist movement, their activist practices, specifically consciousness-raising—a practice in which women shared personal experiences and theorized their political implications—created favourable conditions for these radical activists to frame rape as a weapon that works to subordinate women (Griffin 30). While the official Anti-Rape Movement was established by radical feminists, print media from the 1960s and 1970s promoted white feminist authors, who were not necessarily radical, conflating official anti-rape activism with white feminism.

By examining the intersections of mass media and the second-wave feminist movement, for instance, Patricia Bradley explores the construction of feminism by mainstream media. Bradley centres Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* as her object of study and demonstrates how Friedan's book became mainstream because her commercial appeal allowed her to write a book about feminism in ways that were "acceptable to the mass media" (5). Less well-known, Gloria Steinem's first published book called *The Beach Book* (1962), "typified this trend" because it "simply strung together illustrations of beaches to amuse," and was one of the first coffee-table books (5). While the content of Friedan's and Steinem's books demonstrates a response by publishers to appeal to new niche markets, Bradley argues that second-wave feminist politics, as it appeared in published texts and the mass media, would "often find itself absorbed into a

broader media culture but only in ways that served other aspects of mass media" (5). Bradley argues that the *Feminine Mystique* played an important role "in influencing media's packaging of feminism as a whole": book content changed to meet niche markets, so publishers began to take an interest in untapped markets such as women who had settled in the suburbs, and the publishing industry began to utilize "more aggressive" marketing techniques (5), creating a paradoxical relationship between feminism and popular print media. On the one hand, feminists utilized the media—magazines, newspapers, and television—to spread their messages because news media had the resources to transport feminism to "millions of women who otherwise might never have connected" to the movement (4); on the other hand, feminists were unable to control the content of the media coverage (27), which often promoted ideas that "diametrically opposed feminist ideas" (4). Bradley's study outlines the symbiotic and simultaneously fraught relationship between news media, book publishing, and the second-wave feminist movement. While Bradley proposes that second-wave feminism had a "short shelf life" (5), I argue that news media from the #MeToo movement, particularly in 2017, demonstrates its longevity.

While popular print media throughout the 1960s and 70s typically focused on feminist authors like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, radical, anti-rape activist authors like Susan Brownmiller also appeared in news media coverage. Simon and Schuster published Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* in 1975, and Brownmiller quickly appeared in various mainstream news media publications, most notably the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker.* Almost immediately, Brownmiller was constructed and represented as a celebrity by these publications. Notably, in "Greeting the New Year—Some with a Bang, Some with a Whimper," an article published by the *New York Times* on 31 December 1975, Judy

Klemesrud reports on the plans that celebrities such as artist Andy Warhol, Hollywood director Woody Allen, and fashion designer Diane Von Furstenberg, to name a few, had for New Year's Eve. Feminist icon, Betty Friedan, is featured in the article expressing that she plans on attending three parties given by "fellow writers" or else "fleeing to the country" (n.p.). While the article represents Friedan as "a leading proponent of the Equal Rights Amendment," it presents Brownmiller, who appears alongside these celebrities and feminist icons in the article, as the "author of the successful book about rape, *Against our Will*, and one of *Time* magazine's twelve Women of the Year" (26). Klemesrud also reports that Brownmiller plans to spend her New Year's Eve having dinner and talking with "a few very old friends" (26). In this *New York Times* article, placing Friedan and Brownmiller alongside these celebrities and cultural figures, who are predominantly visibly white and economically prosperous, constructs feminism as mainstream and elite.

Similarly, in an article titled, "Swirl of Parties Tries to Breathe Life in the Equal Rights Cause," Klemesrud (1978) reports on a "2 day New York celebration—6 parties in all—on behalf of the stalled equal rights amendment" (34). This celebration involved "3 days of eating, drinking, celebrity watching, and check writing to the tune of $50,000" (34). This reference to lavish parties at which checks were written for exorbitant amounts of money for a feminist cause ultimately begins to align feminism and capitalism and present it as a celebrity cause; Klemesrud concludes the article reporting that "the list of celebrity hosts included […] recent Oscar-winner Richard Dreyfuss, Lillian Hellman, Martha Graham, Marlo Thomas, Gilda Radner, Lauren Bacall, Paul Simon, Lois Gould, Diane Von Furstenberg, Joel Grey, and Susan Brownmiller" (n.p.). Brownmiller, an anti-rape activist, becomes a celebrity figure because she is represented in the media alongside famous New Yorkers. Over time, her feminist activism becomes

associated with or, more accurately, absorbed by a media-constructed second-wave feminism and figures like Friedan and Steinem. I argue that this is why Friedan, who was neither a radical feminist nor an anti-rape activist, is referenced in *Time's* 2017 article about contemporary antirape activism. Since popular white feminist figures became symbolic of the movement in the media and eclipsed the work of radical feminists who, unlike early liberal feminists, were willing to raise controversial topics like rape in the public sphere and established the official Anti-Rape Movement, the cultural memory of anti-rape activism was constructed and dominated by mainstream feminist icons who may not have engaged in rape protest work.

While radical feminists' work was overshadowed by popular white feminist figures in news media, the history of Black women's efforts is even further removed from the cultural memory of anti-rape activism. Black women were crucial to not only founding the official Anti-Rape Movement but also to teaching radical feminists the Black activist practices like consciousness-raising that they had developed in their fight against rape since emancipation, but they rarely, if ever, appear in mainstream media during the Anti-Rape Movement. Instead, news media covering the #MeToo movement credit Black women's contemporary anti-rape activist practices to popular, mainstream feminists from the 1970s through repeated and plural references to its mainstream feminist icons. I am interested in anti-rape activism and the relationships between activism, identity, memory, and history. Most notably, the cultural memory of the 1970s official Anti-Rape Movement and the 2017 #MeToo movement in America have been selected and shaped by news media in relationship to white feminism. Documenting Black women's antirape activism against the broader cultural memory of anti-rape activism shows that mainstream news media tends to disregard Black women's experiences of sexual violence, their political activism, and suppresses their voices. This chapter thus concerns itself with various sets

of memories of anti-rape activism as well as the relationship between print culture, popular news media, and the cultural memory of anti-rape activism that together suggests a collective "amnesia" of Black activist practices, revealing a legacy of racialized remembering and forgetting.

I document the history of the official Anti-Rape Movement before reporting on the antirape activism of Black women leading up to the official Anti-Rape Movement to demonstrate that, contrary to the narrative that white feminist authors were central to this movement, Black women were at the forefront of anti-rape activism since post-emancipation. Then, I discuss the #MeToo movement and argue that, by evoking white feminists who were particularly active during the second-wave rather than focusing on Burke, news media guarantees the continuation of the established order of white, heterosexual, capitalist culture in which the cultural memory of American feminism is complicit.

Black Anti-Rape Activist Tools: From Post-Emancipation to #MeToo

Recent scholarship has attempted to address Black activists' exclusion from what Becky Thompson refers to as the "normative version" of women's political activism (40) by revisiting the historical record to include Black women. For Valethia Watkins, the feminist revisionist project is a "subjective practice […] of indiscriminately and randomly naming and labeling historically significant Black Women as 'feminist' often posthumously in historical narratives" (272). Labeling Black women who participated in activism as feminists is an arbitrary allocation based on gender; the practice "deliberately marginalizes and/or erases the underlying ideological perspectives that informed Black activism" (274). These ideological perspectives are informed by multiple intersecting forms of oppression beyond the narrow scope of gender in which

mainstream second-wave feminists operated. Scholars often make futile gestures, such as stating that historians excluded Black women's involvement in the Anti-Rape Movement even though they participated in it (Bevacqua 40; Thompson 40). Alternatively, they claim that feminism emerged from the civil rights movement and perhaps do so to passively give credit to some of the practices pioneered by Black activists and later adopted by (white) feminists (Arnold 282). Watkins, who builds on Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984), claims that these gestures systemically re-inscribe Black women's relationship to feminism without an intersectional lens (273). Rather than describing Black anti-rape activism as feminist, I briefly identify three Black activist practices—enfranchising every member of their communities, activists speaking as a unified collective of "we," and consciousness-raising—to demonstrate that these practices have been credited to white feminists, especially radical feminists during the second-wave feminist movement—an exercise that fails to recognize that Black women developed these practices. This section demonstrates that Black women not only participated in anti-rape activism decades *before* the Anti-Rape Movement, by examining documents from the post-emancipation era, but they were also active members of radical feminist groups *throughout* it (Arnold 278; Bevacqua 40; Thompson 44).

Enfranchising the entire community by ensuring children and migrants' full rights in activist meetings has been documented in the Black community dating back at least to the post-emancipation era. Elsa Barkly Brown argues that much of the scholarship about the nineteenth-century public sphere "constructs a masculine liberal bourgeois public with a female counter-public" (29). Yet, applying these generalizations to Black communities during this era is problematic because, as a study of Black political life in Richmond, Virginia shows, immediately following emancipation, Black men, women, and children "attended and participated in

(including voting)…mass meetings in church buildings" and Republican Party conventions (29). Not only were Black women and children welcome in politically charged spaces in their communities, their delegates also wanted to enfranchise them to vote. Barkley Brown notes that the Black community of Richmond allowed men and women of any age, as well as any rural migrants who came to Richmond, full rights without any waiting period (75). By enfranchising their entire community, they allowed all community members to participate freely in political activism, ultimately creating a process of political inheritance.

The longevity of collective enfranchisement as an activist practice became an integral tradition within Black activism and is demonstrated by the Combahee River Collective, a group founded in 1974 by Black women and lesbians in Boston, Massachusetts that exposed and opposed the fundamentally homophobic and racist ideologies of the Women's Liberation Movement. While some militant, Black and even white women, who were active in the movement, rejected the term feminism because they rejected the group's narrow focus on gender and its homophobic and racist exclusionary practices, Barbara Smith from the Combahee River Collective explained that feminism is a "political theory and practice to free all women—women of colour, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women" (qtd in Thompson 42). For Smith, anything less than this definition "is not feminism, but merely female aggrandizement" (qtd in Thompson 42). The collective not only wanted to enfranchise all women but their Collective Statement, released in 1977, also uses the pronoun "we" throughout in order to encompass women from future generations, almost like an "umbrella that offered political cover to future Black feminists and Lesbians" (Norman 107). This investment in political protection for future generations is a testament to enfranchising the entire community and the

inheritance of political advocacy within Black communities in America, investments that are foundational to contemporary Black online activism, like #MeToo.

According to McKee Hurwitz, Black feminists use new social media to reach a vast number of activists across "diverse participants" in order to "practice anti-racism" (474), and instead of relying on "traditional leaders to call for strategies and protests," these activists coordinate action on social media (475) and form extensive networks of activists (473). Karen Boyle claims that there are a "lack of gatekeepers on platforms like Twitter," which gives the impression that social media is a non-hierarchical space for activism and produces a sense of "democratic potential" because anyone with a social media account can be enfranchised into the activist community (95). While social media allows activists to expand the reach of their activism to encompass diverse groups of people, the content on Twitter and of hashtag activism, for Sherri Williams (2015), demonstrates "a unique fusion of social justice, technology and citizen journalism" (343). Twitter, Williams claims, is a "site of resistance where Black feminists challenge violence committed against women of colour as they leverage the power of Black Twitter to bring attention and justice to women who rarely receive either" (343). Hashtag activism, like the #MeToo Movement, diminishes hierarchies, enfranchises all community members, and creates activist networks.

Statistics tracking the prevalence of the #MeToo hashtag across multiple social media platforms and various countries demonstrate the reach of online activism. Hollywood actress Alyssa Milano, @Alyssa_Milano, tweeted a post from an anonymous friend on 15 October 2017 that stated: "if you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write '#MeToo' as a reply to this tweet." Within twenty-four hours, #MeToo appeared 609,000 times across a variety of social

media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Within a year, the hashtag "appeared in almost fourteen million public tweets" (Griffin, Recht, and Green 2018; n.p.). The #MeToo Movement has appeared across eighty-five nations. In their article "#MeToo's Global Impact," Meighan Stone and Rachel Vogelstein from the Council on Foreign Relations claim that women around the globe, "who previously endured abuse, harassment, and discrimination in silence have raised their voices en masse, collaborating across borders to demand reform" (n.p.). Like enfranchising entire communities and creating networks, consciousness-raising is a political tool used by Black activists since post-emancipation that reappears in anti-rape activism throughout the decades and is a foundational premise of #MeToo.

Black activists used consciousness-raising documents to protest the lynching of Black men and some women and the rape of Black women, and it was a common and effective practice adopted during the second-wave feminist Anti-Rape Movement. Often taking the form of letters, flyers, pamphlets, manifestos, and news articles, consciousness-raising documents were printed, distributed, and circulated—either by informal or formal means—for causes such as Black suffrage, anti-lynching, and justice for the rape of Black women. Ida B. Wells, a Black activist frequently referred to as the "guardian of justice, calling attention to issues of inequality" (DuRocher 2017, 64), is known as the first person, "Black or white, to distribute a systemically researched explanation for lynching" (70). Despite threats to destroy her printing press and even of death, Wells wrote, printed, and distributed four pamphlets—*Southern Horrors* (1892), *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics of Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States* (1895), *Lynch Law in Georgia* (1899), and *The Arkansas Race Riot* (1920)—of well-researched statistics to demonstrate that lynching and rape were both used as violent tools by white people to keep Blacks subordinate in America (Smith 2018, n.p.). Years later, scholars would make these same

observations and claim that the rape, lynching, and murder of Blacks "served as a tool of psychological and physical intimidation that expressed white male domination and buttressed white supremacy" (McGuire 2004, 907). Wells' pamphlets outlined that prosecuting Black men with the rape of white women relied on the myth of the Black violent rapist (D'Emilio and Freedman 22) and revealed that rape had not been alleged in two-thirds of lynching cases, as it was often alleged once a covert consensual relationship between a Black man and white woman had been exposed (21; Smith n.p.). She also revealed that Black men were lynched to threaten Black individuals and communities to "keep their place" and were often white violent responses to their economic success and political gains. These statistics were inconsistent with the narrative that white men needed to protect white women from the "violent Black rapist," ultimately debunking the myth of the dangerous Black man and making space for Wells to acknowledge that Black women "endured rape by white men far more often than white women had ever been raped by Black men" (D'Emilio and Freedman 21). These pamphlets exposed that at the end of the nineteenth-century rape allegations made by Black women against white men were often "minimized, denied or ignored" in the South, and cited specific cases that affirmed the difficulty Black women faced in accusing white men of rape, as well as the lenient treatment of white men who were convicted (21).

Similar to Wells' pamphlets—that produce the same social awareness as consciousness raising documents—contemporary Black activists use new social media to "publicize and educate" people about racism and sexism and to "express outrage about rape, gather support for survivors, and expose sexual assault ignored by male-dominated social movement organizations" (McKee Hurwitz 474). Not only has #MeToo had a significant impact globally, it has also generated positive outcomes through social media: for instance, in the United States, women are

breaking their silence by reporting workplace harassment. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission saw a twelve percent increase in workplace sexual harassment complaints and discrimination from October 2017 to September 2018 (Chiwaya n.p.). Initially, this statistic appeared to suggest that sexual misconduct and harassment had increased since #MeToo. Victoria Lipnic, acting chair of the EEOC, however, states that although harassment complaints increased, overall complaints dropped (Chiwaya n.p.), indicating that #MeToo encouraged women to break the silence around workplace harassment. Online activism achieves a global reach, ensuring that anyone with a social media account has the opportunity to participate in this activism, and the content debunks problematic myths and exposes essential issues that are often overlooked in popular discourses in mainstream media. Black women, like Wells, established these activist techniques in their anti-rape activism from post-emancipation to #MeToo; however, the news media makes repeated references to mainstream feminist icons in their reports of anti-rape activism, and Black women are often relegated outside of this cultural representation of anti-rape work. Following Kimberlé Crenshaw's claim that "[r]ighting the history [of sexual violence against Black women] would also mean resurrecting the feminist legacies of the iconic figures of the civil rights movement" (n.p.), the following section briefly documents the anti-rape work of some Black activists since the post-emancipation era.

Black Women and the History of Anti-Rape Activism

Feminist scholarship often maintains that the “widespread, action-oriented feminist opposition to rape did not appear until the second-wave” (Bevacqua 18). Still, research from the post emancipation era demonstrates that “the first outcry against sexual assault as the systemic abuse of women” was in response to “lynch law in America in the years following the emancipation of

slaves" (D'Emilio and Freedman 21). Wells and Black activists like Anna Julia Cooper, who was born into slavery in 1858 and later received her doctorate from the University of Paris, Sorbonne in 1925, and Fannie Barrier Williams, who was one of the only Black members of the Chicago Women's Club, asserted that white men felt entitled to Black women's bodies and that the rape of Black women went unquestioned by the dominant culture (23). Similar to the myth of the violent and dangerous Black rapist used to justify lynching, Black women were mythologized as "lustful lewd, Jezebels" to rationalize raping them (23). Scholars hypothesize that the construction of Black women as promiscuous originated after European men first traveled to Africa and observed that African women wore little to no clothing because of the tropical climate (White 29). Later, in America, due to slavery, Black women usually wore torn rags for clothing (31-3). By forming a connection between the outward appearance of Black women, specifically their clothing, and claims about women's chastity, the myth of Black women's promiscuity became "firmly established in popular media and scholarship" by the end of the nineteenth century (Morton 28-9). Wells' aforementioned four pamphlets, Cooper's article, "The Intellectual Progress of Colored Women in the United States Since Emancipation Proclamation: A Response to Fannie Barrier Williams" (1893), as well as her feminist manifesto *A Voice from the South* (1892), her autobiographical booklet, *The Third Step* (1945), and memoir, *The Early Years in Washington: Reminiscences of Life with the Grimkés* (1951), along with Fannie Barrier Williams' speech at the World's Columbia Exposition in 1893 are proof that consciousness-raising can take a variety of forms. All of these forms speak to an urgent concern among Black women—the myth of the promiscuous Black woman, the high incidence of rape by white men, and the constant threat of rape. Wells, Cooper, and Barrier Williams reveal that Black women's

voices exposed this harsh reality in the public sphere in the late nineteenth century, though we also know that Black women's slave narratives exposed it decades earlier.

Their work continued into the mid-twentieth century when we see the response of Black activists to Recy Taylor's rape in 1944 and Rosa Parks' anti-rape activism further demonstrating that Black activists used consciousness-raising practices to resist the injustice that Black women were confronted with if they decided to report their rape to the police. In 1944, Recy Taylor was walking home from church in Alabama when a car, carrying six white men, stopped beside her, and the men forced her into the car at gun and knifepoint before raping her. Taylor immediately reported the incident to the sheriff, who refused to pursue any legal action against the white rapists, which created widespread unrest among Black people not only in Taylor's community in Alabama but also across America, reaching activists like Rosa Parks and writers such as W.E.B. DuBois and Langston Hughes. In an interview with Taylor's older brother, R.J., and sister, Mary Murry, Danielle McGuire (2010) documents that both siblings remember that their father would often walk to the police station to ask Deputy Lewey if the police had made any progress on the case, and he would be continuously turned away because he had "no money, no transportation, nor did he have an education" (503). These factors, as well as the threat of lynching, "handicapped him" (504). This left Taylor and her family without any recourse or possibility of justice.

Through word of mouth and Black newspapers, the news of Taylor's case made its way across the country to Harlem, New York, reaching the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, who upon hearing about Taylor's case decided to send Rosa Parks to investigate the matter in Alabama. While gathering evidence for the case, Parks organized the Committee for Equal Justice for Recy Taylor, a campaign that urged Chauncey Sparks, the

Governor of Alabama, to investigate the rape. Taylor was aware that Black women were denied the most basic human rights, especially the right to ownership of their bodies; her willingness to identify those who attacked her as well as testifying in front of two grand juries once the case was finally given a trial "broke the institutional silence around the long history of white men's violation of Black women, countered efforts to shame or stereotype her as unchaste, and made southern leaders…recognize her personhood" (McGuire 508). Through Parks' grassroots consciousness-raising practices, as well as Taylor's testimony, this case launched a "national and international campaign" (McGuire 2004, 911) and helped "to inspire the modern civil rights movement" (McGuire 2010, 500). Taylor's case is compelling for a variety of reasons: it establishes a linkage between the power of consciousness-raising efforts to mobilize Black activists in the past and current consciousness-raising activism to mobilize groups on social media, and it reveals a dichotomy between the popular narratives of Rosa Parks and the reality of her activism.

Rosa Parks is well-known in American popular culture for starting the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. According to the historical narrative, Parks sat in the first row of the section designated for Blacks on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Once the bus was full of passengers, the bus driver, James Blake, ordered Parks to move to the back of the bus, which Parks refused to obey. The official historical record describes Parks as a woman who "quietly incited a revolution—just by sitting down" because a year later, the Supreme Court declared a ban on the segregation of city buses ("54b. Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott"). While Parks' resistance on the bus may have informed this Supreme Court ruling, it is curious that this narrative, in particular, circulates in popular culture. In contrast, narratives of Parks' anti-rape activism are far less prevalent. Popular culture scholars Susie O'Brien and Imre

Szeman claim that studying narratives that circulate in popular culture "unmasks and to a certain extent disables the power of commercial culture" because it helps people to recognize "the narratives, genres, myths, and discourses that convey its values—values that tap into fundamental beliefs about ourselves, our relationships with others, and society at large" (21). Kimberlé Crenshaw explains that writing Parks as an anti-rape activist into the official historical record would mean "freeing [her] from that lonely seat on a Montgomery bus and placing her on the damp soil of rural Alabama where she undertook the dangerous job of defending Recy Taylor" (n.p.). The act of keeping empowering historical narratives of Black women's activism from cultural memory is a tool that continues the subjugation of Black women in America. Christina Sharpe argues that since emancipation, the "means and modes of Black subjection may have changed, but the fact and structure of subjection remain" (12). Often this subjection takes the form of "silences and ruptures in time, space, history, ethics, research and method," or the "accumulated erasures, projects, fabulations and misnamings" usually read in historical narratives written about Black people (12). Writing and circulating Parks' history with the narrow focus of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, rather than positioning Parks as a militant antirape activist, transfers the physical forms of violence used to subjugate Black women into narrative forms of violence that silence Parks' activism.

Sharpe extends her examination of Black subjection to "narratives of violence and forced submission that are read or reinscribed as consent and affection: intimacies that involve shame and trauma and their transgenerational transmissions" (4). While we can and should read Taylor's story as empowering, especially the moments in which she delivered her testimony in court despite her status as a Black woman, it is also important to acknowledge that Taylor never received justice after she was raped at gun and knifepoint by six men, even after the case went to

trial. Recognizing that Taylor and her family never received "resolution, reconciliation or justice" and that white people in the community deny that the rape ever happened while Black members "remember the events very well" (McGuire 502), allows scholars to acknowledge the "transgenerational transmissions" (Sharpe 4) in the form of violence that continues to "resonate through generations" of Taylor's community (McGuire 502).

Another rape case that requires restating is that of Betty Jean Owens; this case documents the power of Black women's testimonies about rape, and Black women's anti-rape activism, both of which are conspicuously absent from the cultural memory of anti-rape work in America. By 2 May 1959—on the evening that Betty Jean Owens, a Florida A & M student, was raped at gun and knife point by four white men—Black anti-rape activist practices were so ingrained in the foundation of Black activist communities that within twelve hours of Owens being admitted to the hospital, her friends organized a demonstration that resulted in the arrest of Owens' four rapists (McGuire 2004, 916). Owens was returning home from a Green and Orange Ball with three friends in an automobile when they were forced off the road by four white men carrying knives and guns. Owens' three friends could escape, but Owens was captured and raped by the four men at knife and gun point. Even though Owens' case had insurmountable evidence, the police were reluctant to prosecute the rapists until over one thousand Florida A & M students formed a demonstration to apply pressure onto them to arrest the rapists. As Owens' case went through the trial, she was confronted by specific tactics that are employed by defense attorneys to undermine women's testimonies: the defense lawyer questioned Owens' chastity; asked her why she did not fight off her rapists; and held up the dress that she wore the night that the rape took place. Owens refused to respond to any questions that she believed were insignificant to the case, such as those pertaining to her chastity. She also resisted the "lawyer's efforts to shame her"

(McGuire 924). By identifying her rapists and testifying about being raped, while at the same time choosing not to respond to the defense lawyer's offensive questions and what they implied about her chastity, Owens oscillates between speech and silence—both as forms of resistance—and, according to McGuire (2004), "follows […] her reconstruction era counterparts" by refusing to "shield [her] pain in secrecy, thereby challenging the pervasiveness of the politics of respectability" (914). Like Taylor before her, Owens testified about her rape, "leaving behind critical evidence that historians must find the courage to analyze" (914). Despite Black women's powerful testimonies that historically disrupted and resisted the silence surrounding rape, as well as their political activism in the form of consciousness-raising, "white women have often played the protagonists in the history of sexual violence, and Black women have been relegated to the supporting cast" (Hobbs n.p.). These women were integral to anti-rape organizing and protests, but they are often excluded from the official history of the Anti-Rape Movement. The following section outlines the history of the Anti-Rape Movement while demonstrating that many anti-rape activist practices were adopted by white feminists from Black women.

Anti-Rape Activism in the United States

The 1960s in the United States mark a period when, in increasing numbers, activists organized around political concerns. John F. Kennedy was elected president in 1961, and as part of his domestic policy reform, he instituted the President's Commission on the Status of Women. This commission presented a report emphasizing the need for equal rights for women under amendments five and fourteen of the United States Constitution, advocated for accessibility and affordability of childcare services for women, and improved access to education for women.

Eventually, each state developed a variation of this commission to ensure that the government would uphold the recommendations of the President's Commission (Riley 2007, 444).

The advocacy for women's rights also coincided with the growing labour force, which prompted widespread advocacy for American workers' rights. The American labour force evolved into a service industry, creating more jobs for white women and Latino, African, and Asian Americans who required fair and equal compensation (Riley 2001, 493). Through labour advocacy, the Equal Pay Act was instituted in 1963, followed by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which prohibited discrimination by employers, employment agencies, and labour unions based on race and gender; moreover, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was established to enforce these provisions (500). As a result, more women had greater access to education. They took jobs outside of the home—during the 1950s, women's employment rate grew "four times that of men," and the number of "working mothers rose by 400 percent" (432)—and, simultaneously, women advocated for their reproductive rights and their children's rights.

The landmark *Griswold vs. Connecticut* Supreme Court case, for example, occurred in 1965, ensuring that states could no longer ban birth control: Estelle Griswold, the Executive Director of the Planned Parenthood League of Connecticut, opened a birth control clinic to fight birth control restrictions and was arrested for doing so along with medical volunteer, Dr. Buxton. Griswold appealed her conviction, arguing that banning birth control was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment—one of the Amendments that Roe would use to construct the famous *Roe vs. Wade*[24] (1973) court case. Thus, the Supreme Court no longer permitted states to ban

[24] United States Supreme Court ruled that restrictive state regulation to abortion is unconstitutional. According to the organization Planned Parenthood (2020), Roe vs. Wade's outcome dictates that access to safe and legal abortion is a constitutional right (n.p.).

birth control following Griswold vs. Connecticut, hopefully improving access to birth control for women and giving them more agency over their reproductive health. Later that same year, women fought for children's rights, especially in cases of child abuse, and Lyndon B. Johnson, established Project Head Start, an organization that acknowledged children who belonged to families with a low socio-economic status had more difficulties accessing services and education (Riley 507). The evolving labour force and family structure created a climate of participatory democracy in which civil rights organizing could enter the mainstream. White men and women began participating in civil rights groups, learning Black activist practices that would eventually become foundational to the Women's Liberation Movement.

Women who volunteered and participated in civil rights organizations like SNCC learned the value of participatory democracy, a process that Terrence Cook explains appeared across several political and social movements, making participants feel like they possessed the political skills to make them indispensable to the movement as well as believe that they were capable of making real social change (7). Julie A. Clements claims that throughout the early 1960s "large numbers of white male and female college students spent their summer advocating for civil rights" (11), and women adopted some of these activist "tactics such as sit-ins, marches, grassroots campaigns, and consciousness-raising" (11), fueling their involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement (11).[25] Specifically, the civil rights movement taught white women how to develop "trust and intimacy amongst other activists" and to use consciousness raising to "[elicit] personal experiences" that can be used to create "an action plan" (13). Soon, "differences in ideology among the myriad of diverse groups of women…triggered the formation

[25] Similarly, Susan M. Hartmann (1996) and Judith Hole and Levine Ellen (1971) argue that white men and women who participated in the civil rights movement in the early 1960s went on to develop the Women's Liberation Movement.

of varying organization structures among those groups" (21), and women began their organizations that were separate from civil rights organizations.

Despite Black women's anti-rape activism dating back to post-emancipation as well as white women's involvement in civil rights activism, the historicization of the Women's Liberation Movement situates its beginning with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 (Rademacher and Fallon 178; Riley 419). Three years after the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, at the third National Conference of State Commissions in 1966, Friedan invited twenty-eight women to her hotel room. Each woman contributed five dollars to found the National Organization of Women (NOW). By the first meeting, over 300 men and women joined NOW and elected Friedan as the President (Riley 518). This choice reflected a fundamentally different structure from that of civil rights organizations, like SNCC, whose members believed that establishing a leader for their organization would compromise their commitment to participatory democracy (Echols 464). NOW's Statement of Purpose (1966) declares that "there is no civil rights movement for women" as there has been for "other victims of discrimination," so "NOW must begin to speak." NOW was established "to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all of the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men." Ignoring the activism by lesbians and women of colour since the first wave feminist movement, NOW founded itself as the first women's liberation organization.

The feminist movement waves concept is a well-known issue in the historical record of women's organizing because it overlooks women's activism in the years between the official waves. Scholars such as Kristin Goss problematize official narratives of women's organizing and activism, advocating a reading that examines the "swells" between the historicized formal waves

of feminist activism to account for the activism by women of colour and working-class women who are often excluded from historiographies of American feminism (31-2). While narratives about the activism accomplished by white, upper- and middle-class women throughout the "swell" between first- and second-wave feminism have recently entered the mainstream, the activism by women of colour is far less prevalent in historical feminist accounts. For instance, Hispanic-American women were active members of the agricultural and harvesting industries and experienced unsafe working conditions and low wages for seasonal work. By forming networks in the workplace, which employers feared was a form of "labor militancy" (Riley 2007, 435), Hispanic women protested their working conditions, unfair pay, and the mistreatment of migrant workers (Pardo 651). Similarly, Asian-American women advocated for fair wages and affirmative action across various industries, demanded equal access to education (Riley 483), and were active members in the civil rights movement, protesting the injustices done to Japanese Americans by the war program (400). Activist efforts by Black women also resulted in significant Supreme Court decisions: in 1948, the California Supreme Court ruled that a Black man could wed a white woman, and in the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, the United States Supreme Court declared that "racial discrimination in public education" was unconstitutional (438). Black women also advocated for labour rights and protested the segregation of neighbourhoods: for example, the exclusion of Black, middle- and upper-class families from the suburbs (Riley 437). Black advocated for abortion, childcare, equal pay, access to education and employment, and framed the subordination that causes these issues through racism rather than sexism. While all women campaigned for these rights, Indigenous women were protesting forced sterilization of Indigenous peoples in addition to the removal of their children, the imprisonment of Indigenous activists, the degrading stereotypes of Indigenous

people in the media, and their stolen land (479). Furthermore, Indigenous women were confronted with federal Indigenous policies, developed by white legislators, that ignored the extended kinship systems of Indigenous peoples, and those that pressured Indigenous peoples to embrace Christianity and renounce all Indigenous languages in favor of English (478). While racialized women's political activism is often omitted—from both the cultural memory and official historical narratives of American activism—their work, in many ways, enabled white women's activism during the second-wave, especially the Anti-Rape Movement.

White feminist authors, like Susan Brownmiller (1975), Jean MacKellar (1975), Kate Millet (1970), Diana Russell (1975), and Susan Griffin (1986), claim that, because women had been defined by patriarchy, rape was not a separate issue from the liberation of women. Yet, radical feminist activists established the Anti-Rape Movement at this time using communication networks, written documents, and print media to support rape survivors on an individual level by creating rape crisis centres, and on a political level by reforming rape laws and attempting to alter social attitudes about rape (Arnold 282; Bevacqua 12). The women who established the New York Radical Feminists (NYRF) in 1969 published a newsletter in 1975 indicating that their organization hosted "the first feminist exploration of rape" in January 1971 and held a "rape conference" in March that same year ("New York Radical Feminists' Activities"). The organization defined their ideologies in political rather than personal terms. According to their "Philosophy of Radical Feminism," they understood that men "have organized together for power over women, and they have set up institutions in society to maintain this power" (n.p.). However, they used their shared personal experiences—that were revealed during consciousness raising sessions—as the basis for their politics. The goals of consciousness-raising for radical feminists were to raise awareness that patriarchy is responsible for assembling the institutions

that oppress women, and to dismantle the internalization of oppressive ideologies that cause competition between women by encouraging open communication for women to take pride in their gender by identifying with other women. Radical women were less concerned about raising contentious issues in public than the Women's Liberation Movement was, as NYRF explained that they understood that the "liberation of women will ultimately mean the liberation of men from their destructive role as oppressor" (n.p.). Rather than advocating for equality in the current system, these feminists expressed in "New York Radical Feminist Activities" that they organized politically to "change the system of sexist oppression" (n.p.). Consciousness-raising and the fact that radical feminists were unencumbered in their speech allowed them to confront rape as a serious social problem.

Radical feminists founded the Anti-Rape Movement based on two premises: that rape was a patriarchal tool used to oppress women and that the movement itself should help women transition from being victims to survivors. Discussions developing in consciousness-raising groups allowed radical feminists to recognize that rape is a violent and political instrument used by men to subordinate women rather than a personal problem for which women should feel guilt and shame (Bevacqua 30-1). In "Suggested Topics for Consciousness Raising," the *NYRF* offered suggestions for talking about rape during consciousness-raising sessions: the newsletter encouraged feminists to ask if anyone had ever been raped, and, if so, whether the perpetrator was a stranger or someone the women knew; it also prompted feminists to ask if anyone ever felt coerced or pressured into having sex with someone when they did not want to do so, as well as encouraged women to ask if survivors ever called the police, and, if so, what was the police response to the rape disclosure. Furthermore, women were advised by the *NYRF* not to offer advice or challenge any women's experience during consciousness-raising sessions because,

while these sessions could feel therapeutic, feminists wanted to move away from therapeutic models that sought to "get at the truth," which were historically used to oppress women; instead, consciousness-raising was supposed to serve as a means to "speak freely about yourself as a woman" (n.p.). As women assembled in consciousness-raising groups and spoke freely with each other about rape, they agreed that rape was a political issue—not a personal problem—and embarked on creating strategies to support women who had been raped.

Radical feminists believed that a critical aspect of confronting rape trauma was to change how women who had been raped were labelled. They wanted the terminology changed from "victims" to "survivors" (Matthews xix); however, they were wary of traditional social services and educational models that responded to rape because they felt that these current responses to rape "undermined radical feminist ideologies and goals" (Arnold 282). While being critical of these traditional systems at the time, the *NYRF* continued to argue that the group "does not believe that capitalism, or any other economic system, is the cause of female oppression" because the "political oppression of women has its own class dynamic" ("Philosophy of Radical Feminism n.p.). This discourse that patriarchy is fundamentally separate from capitalism would allow radical feminists to seek funding for their projects in addressing the rape issue. As a new response to rape, and in an effort to support rape survivors, radical feminists in Washington D.C. opened the first rape crisis centre in 1972, and in the same year wrote and circulated a pamphlet, *How To Start A Rape Crisis Centre* (*HTSARCC*), that instructed radical feminists about everything from training staff to location-building. The pamphlet addressed a similar discomfort towards traditional social service models and advises women to keep expenditures small to avoid state and external funding. Later that same year, the group confessed that "while survival is important, growth is equally important," and their new projects require additional expenditures.

As a result, they "are now actively seeking funding" (2).

The position of radical feminists within anti-rape activism pertaining to capitalism is conflicted and made all the more difficult by their initial denial that capitalism was a system that oppressed women: mainly, the narrow conceptualizing of rape as a product of patriarchy ignores how intersecting forms of oppression like gender, sexuality, class, race, whether someone is able-bodied, caused certain women to be more vulnerable to rape than white, upper- and middleclass women. This sentiment appears in *HTSARCC* as the Washington Radical Feminists state that "rape affects the lives of all women—regardless of race, class or age," acknowledging that the rape crisis centre requires an intersectional staff, but that women who occupy a low socioeconomic status can only "make a serious commitment [to the centre] if they can meet at least some of their financial needs through the centre" (2). These radical women were learning the difficulty of fighting a system like capitalism without participating in that same system to support rape survivors through rape crisis centres and pay for women's crucial labour within these centres.

Other early forms of radical feminist, anti-rape activism involved speak-outs and conferences to raise awareness and debunk myths about rape that circulate in the public sphere. The first documented speak-out about rape reports that New York Radical Feminists organized this event at St. Clements Episcopal Church on 24 January 1971. Even though NOW was established five years earlier, and speak-outs about women's liberation were common in the early 1970s, this speak-out was one of the first to address rape in a public setting. Nearly three months later, radical feminists held the New York Radical Feminist Conference on Rape in March. The most significant consensus reached at the conference was that rape is not just an event perpetrated by a stranger, but also commonly committed by men with whom women had

relationships. *The New York Radical Feminist Manifesto of Shared Rape*, written by Mary Ann Manhart and Florence Rush and printed in July 1971, reported on the conference, especially the conference's "central revelation" that "the violent rapist and the boyfriend/ husband are one" because "the friend and lover commits rape every bit as much as the 'fiend' prowling the street" (n.p.). These "revelations," according to NYRF, would help women "learn to overcome the damage done [to them] by internalization" ("Philosophy of Radical Feminism" n.p.). These radical feminist events and documents are the first official, historicized moments in which women began to call all men to account for sexual violence publicly.

Most well-known as a tradition on college campuses in the United States to protest sexual violence against women, Take Back the Night was a movement that also protested violence against women. The earliest instance of the event dates back to 1972, when women from the University of Southern Florida marched throughout the campus and demanded resources that could ensure women's safety on campus, and in 1973 women in San Francisco protested pornography due to the relationship between violent images in pornography and violence inflicted on women by men who watch it. In one of the earliest iterations of Take Back the Night, the ideologies of this protest would later become known as the Women Against Pornography (WAP) movement, founded by Andrea Dworkin, Susan Brownmiller, and Robin Morgan in New York City in 1979.[26] In October 1975, men and women in Philadelphia gathered to protest unsafe

[26] Following Kate Millet's feminist literary criticism in *Sexual Politics* (1970), WAP argued that representation (in pornography) imitates reality and vice versa (Allen 51). In an effort to protest pornography through Civil Rights, Dworkin partnered with lawyer Catharine Mackinnon and tried to establish the Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance. The rationale behind this ordinance was that pornography violates women's civil rights because it leads to violence against women inflicted on them by men who watch pornography. Feminists considered Dworkin to be a "conservative voice" because of her pro-censorship attitude. Opponents of WAP, such as feminists like Gayle Rubin, Nancy K Miller, and Dorothy Allison, claimed that WAP situates women as passive victims who lack agency in sexual relations (Allen 65). This conflict marked the beginning of the sex wars, which, due to the purview of this dissertation, I will not review.

conditions for women in the public sphere after Susan Alexander Speeth, a microbiologist, was murdered on the sidewalk while she was walking home from work. The first official Take Back the Night anti-violence rally took place in Pittsburgh in 1977. The purpose of these marches, rallies, and protests was to raise awareness with respect to the prevalence of violence against women and to demand resources that might begin to improve safety conditions for women in the public sphere. Only once radical feminists started speaking publicly about rape did the Women's Liberation Movement begin to address rape as a serious concern. Two factions emerged from the larger Women's Liberation Movement: the first was NOW, which consisted of women who were already involved in mainstream feminist politics; the second comprised younger activists who were part of the Civil Rights and New Left Movements and who joined women's liberation and later, created smaller feminist group collectives (Matthews 1). In other words, according to the official historical feminist narrative, the first anti-rape activists were already involved "in varying degrees in feminist politics" (Bevacqua 28).

Following the first anti-rape conference hosted by New York Radical Feminists, NOW "*quietly* passed Resolution 115," which favored more severe treatment of rape by law enforcement (my emphasis, Bevacqua 35). Even though radical feminists were beginning to address rape in the public sphere, NOW remained apprehensive about addressing issues that they considered taboo so as not to alienate potential allies who may have wanted to join their movement. Six months after the New York Radical Feminists hosted the first anti-rape conference in America, the New York Women's Liberation Centre held a rape organization meeting in October 1971, which consisted mostly of radical feminists. The Women's Legal Defense Fund, composed of feminist lawyers, issued a press release calling for a revision of rape laws and harsher rulings for perpetrators of rape in December 1972. Abortion, like rape, was a

topic that NOW avoided in the public sphere because of its controversial nature and the division it created among groups of individuals, and only after the Supreme Court case ruling of *Roe vs. Wade,* on 22 January 1973, did NOW publicly address rape in the public sphere and begin to allocate resources to rape activism. On 19 February 1973, NOW held their national conference, and created the NOW Rape Task Force, and elected Mary Ann Largen as the Task Force coordinator. The task force drew on existing NOW resources and communication networks while creating new connections with both established and emerging anti-rape groups to examine the current status of rape, propose a model for a new rape law to present to state legislators, research how rape victims are treated as they navigate public support services, and investigate self-defense tactics (36). The task force tried to accomplish some of these tasks and gauge the city's needs by drawing on popular and existing feminist methods such as creating and distributing surveys and questionnaires to hospital personnel, police, and prosecutors—practically all sectors who interact with rape survivors. While this brief historical overview tells of the official antirape narrative, it white-washes Black women's foundational anti-rape efforts since emancipation in the United States. This tendency is made evident by reading the #MeToo movement, and while it is critical to consider what #MeToo produced—a climate that refused to remain silent about sexual violence against women—it is just as important to analyze the socio-cultural mediascape that shaped the national memory of the #MeToo movement.

The Socio-Cultural Production of #MeToo

Online activism such as #MeToo enacts the Black activist practices of enfranchising every member of the community, speaking as a unified collective of "we," and consciousness-raising, and even exceeds these practices given the reach of digital platforms. Participants of online

activism can coordinate actions faster, and with more people, diminishing hierarchies by eliminating the need to rely on leadership positions (McKee Hurwitz 473). Furthermore, discussion forums, listservs, and different forms of social media have become contemporary consciousness-raising groups representing a twenty-first-century evolution from the original structure of small groups who met face to face (Garrison 2010, 388). The internet allows consciousness-raising groups to reach wider audiences and participants, share greater quantities of information, and coordinate action. The hashtag #MeToo continues to generate millions of posts featuring the same hashtag across Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. This social media movement began a conversation about the prevalence of rape in the United States and on an international scale. It was founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke, senior director of an international organization committed to supporting young women of colour called *Just Be Inc*. to support survivors through community-building, collecting research, and sharing resources.

Almost a decade after the inception of Burke's Me Too Movement, Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey published the article "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accuser for Decades," in the *New York Times* on 5 October 2017. As mentioned above, in response to the article, Hollywood actress Alyssa Milano, @Alyssa_Milano, tweeted on 15 October 2017, "if you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write '#MeToo' as a reply to this tweet." Following Milano's public call on Twitter, over 600,000 survivors of sexual violence used #MeToo on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram over the next twenty-four hours. The mainstream news media credited Milano with beginning #MeToo, which sparked extreme despair for the 2006 MeToo Movement founder, Tarana Burke. In an exclusive interview with Paulina Cachero, Burke discusses the moment when she learned that Milano's infamous #MeToo tweet went viral, and

recalls that she immediately began to worry about the real possibility that her work would be lost in this Hollywood narrative. Then, Burke confessed that she asked herself whether she was "going to be in conflict in this moment" before resolving "to be who [she] said [she]was, which is somebody who was in service of survivors" (n.p.). Despite Burke's stoic resolution, that very same day, Black activists took to social media to ensure that neither Burke's name nor her work would be erased from the #MeToo Movement.

Sherri Williams (2015) asserts that a fundamental component of Black online activism is that "it enables anti-violence advocates to connect with the public and one another in real time without relying on the traditional news cycle or mainstream media's problematic framing of sexual violence and Black women" (342). Accordingly, in an effort to credit Burke with #MeToo, Black activists, including *New York Times* best-selling author Luvvie Ajayo and television personality Bevy Smith, circulated a video of one of Burke's speeches from 2014, in which she discusses "me too" (Cachero n.p.). Burke then retweeted the footage of her speech at the 2014 March Against Rape Culture in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 15 October 2017. In the forty-five-second video, Burke stands in front of a group of rape protestors and states: Me Too is a movement among other things, radicalizing the notion of mass healing. As a community, we create a lot of space for fighting and pushing back, but not enough for connecting and healing. It's a long and varied process for everyone, and each and every one of us has a different entry point onto the journey to heal from our experiences. But the one thing we have in common is the ability at some point in our journey to create an entry point for another woman. Some of us start by telling our story. For those who are ready and able, standing up and saying "me too" can be a deeply cathartic experience. And if you're able to go beyond me too it's even better. (n.p.). This video demonstrates that, while Burke may not have founded the contemporary hashtag

#MeToo, she established the MeToo Movement to support Black women and women of colour who have survived sexual violence as well as the phrase “me too” as a means of validating their experiences and encouraging all women to stand in solidarity with survivors of sexual violence. Furthermore, even though Burke did not initially spread the #MeToo over Twitter, she did turn to social media; in an interview with Abby Ohlheiser, Burke states that she began a MySpace page for the MeToo Movement in 2006, that this page generated a lot of attention, and that “one woman, a designer, donated 1,000 ‘Me Too’ T-shirts” (n.p.). With all of this new information, Alyssa Milano went back on Twitter to reach out to Burke.

In response to the video that shows Burke speaking at the March Against Rape Culture from 2014, Alyssa Milano, @Alyssa_Milano, tweeted on 16 October 2017, “I was just made aware of an earlier #MeToo movement and the origin story is equal parts heartbreaking and inspiring.” Milano linked the page "The Inception" from Burke's organization *Just Be Inc*. to this tweet. Burke did not respond to Milano’s tweet; instead, she thanked each Black activist who tweeted that Burke started the MeToo Movement and those who shared her 2014 video. On 16 October 2017, Aura Bogado, @aurabogado tweeted, “#MeToo was started by Tarana Burke. Stop erasing Black women,” and Nyasha Adler @nyasha_adler criticized Bogado’s tweet saying “It would have been nice to tag her handle.” Bogado explains that Twitter had malfunctioned, preventing her from looking up and tagging users, but acknowledges that “I could have looked it up in a different browser and included it. I messed up by moving too quickly.” Adler responds, “I searched for her. @TaranaBurke great stuff you’ve been doing and are doing.” Burke @TaranaBurke responded to Bogado and Adler tweeting, “I love sisters-we stay looking out! <3”. Here, Burke is thanking these women for crediting her with the MeToo Movement and demonstrating that holding women accountable for their activist practices and accepting criticism

is part of feminist accountability and anti-racist activism. For Kristin Hogan, feminist remembering is a practice of accountability that acknowledges “how both difficult and vital it is to work simultaneously toward racial, gender, LGBTQ, socio-economic class, and dis/ability justice”; moreover, feminist remembering does not serve to “punish or reify but to teach in dialogue, recognizing that social justice work means always (sometimes painfully) learning on our own from each other” (188). With the help of Black activists across all social media platforms, Burke was credited with beginning the movement not only by Milano but by most popular news media outlets, which would also credit Burke with beginning the movement in 2006 and Milano with helping the movement go viral with her tweet in 2017.

Most news media reports on the #MeToo movement credit both Burke and Milano for the movement and are cautious not to take a critical stance on the politics around the historical and continued erasure of Black women’s work. Instead, these articles state that on 15 October 2017, while thousands of women were tweeting #MeToo in solidarity with each other, Burke was overcome with fear and dread that she would lose her life’s work in the narrative of the movement, and rather than explain the historical legacy of erasing Black women’s activism, the articles include a series of Burke’s tweets to explain this racist tradition. With the exception of opinion pieces, the public entrusts news media to report the truth rather than provide a subjective stance on events, explaining why the journalists let Burke's tweets explain Black activists' response to Milano's #MeToo tweet. Despite the discrepancy surrounding who established the #MeToo movement, the hashtag went viral throughout the year.

To commemorate the #MeToo movement's first anniversary, Milano and Burke published separate tweets about their experience with the movement over the past year. Alyssa Milano, @Alyssa_Milano, tweeted on 15 October 2018:

> One year ago today, you shared with me your #MeToo stories.
>
> Our collective pain became our collective power.
>
> #MeTooOneYearLater
>
> Thank you @TaranaBurke for being a force for good.

Milano linked her tweet from the previous year that encouraged Twitter users to respond with the hashtag #MeToo. Two hours later, Burke released a series of tweets commemorating the one year since #MeToo went viral as a hashtag. @TaranaBurke tweets:

> A year ago today I thought my world was falling apart. I woke up to find out that the hashtag #metoo had gone viral and I didn't see any of the work I laid out over the previous decade attached to it. I thought for sure I would be erased from a thing I worked so hard to build.

Kimberlé Crenshaw explains that, "throughout history, Black feminist frameworks have been doing the hard work of building social justice movements that race-only or gender-only frames cannot" (n.p.), which gives credence to Burke's fear. Rightfully, Burke worried that "[she] would be erased" from the movement's narrative. However, even more significantly, Burke was concerned that the work she had done during the previous decade would be absorbed and then lost in the movement. The MeToo Movement—as described on the Just Be inc. website—is "focused on young women who have endured sexual abuse, assault or exploitation," and was established to "fill what we see as a void" (n.p). This "void" refers to a lack of agencies and programs across the United States that are "equipped to deal with young women of a variety of ages and races, who were victims of molestation incest, or exploitation" (n.p.). The website explains that the work of the MeToo Movement "addresses the nuances of being… a survivor." Alternatively, the #MeToo movement that Milano tweeted in 2017 breaks the silence around

sexual violence testimonies and unites survivors through the shared hashtag. Burke's MeToo Movement is also about solidarity but involves an intersectional approach to sexual violence that foregrounds survivors of colour. Burke worried that because both movements have the same name, Milano's hashtag would absorb her work. Burke's concerns can be explained by Crenshaw, who argues that race politics were left out of historical narratives about significant moments of collective resistance of sexual violence that were established by Black anti-rape activists like Recy Taylor and Rosa Parks. Referencing the 1983 Anita Hill vs. Clarence Thomas trial, Crenshaw claims that white feminists "cast [Hill] as an accomplished lawyer and legal scholar whose race was immaterial" and, therefore, "in the great awakening around sexual harassment, race was politely ushered offstage" (n.p.). Unsurprisingly, in a more contemporary "great awakening around sexual violence," Burke worried that with Milano's #MeToo tweet about solidarity, "race [would be] politely ushered offstage" once again.

Popular digital news media and print magazines also participated in the historical practice of erasing Black women from the historical anti-rape narrative. While *Time Magazine* Silence Breaker's issue referenced Friedan in the accompanying article, drawing a comparison between "the problem that has no name" and the #MeToo movement credits white feminism, specifically Friedan's version of second-wave feminism, with Burke's online rape awareness movement, thereby centering a feminist who has refused to acknowledge race and class in their politics and pursued a "gender-only" political framework in their activism. The reference to Friedan in *Time's* December 2017 "Silence Breakers" is not unique to the publication; it had referenced her along with Susan Brownmiller, author of *Against Our Will: Men Women and Rape* (1975), when Brownmiller was named one of *Time's* twelve women of the year in 1976.

Time's 1976 "Women of the Year" piece features interviews and research conducted by fourteen women, while Lance Morrow wrote the full-length article. The article begins by comparing women who enter male-dominated professions with colonialism and American expansionism, claiming that "[women] have arrived like a new immigrant wave in male America" (6), and "U.S. women have so deliberately taken possession of their lives that the event is spiritually equivalent to the discovery of a new continent" (6). While Morrow insists that we should commemorate 1975 for women's collaborative efforts, "those whom *TIME* has selected as Women of the Year accomplished much in their own right in 1975, and they also symbolized the new consciousness of women generally" (6). This collective sentiment ascribes "new consciousness" to all women, completely bypassing any regard for the intersectionality of women's experiences and consciousness. Despite this collective sentiment, Morrow insists that this "cumulative process owes much to the formal feminist movement—the Friedans, Steinems and Abzugs" (6). As the article records women's strides during 1975, especially in the fields of politics, literature, religion, business, family, and abroad, Morrow refers to Friedan as the "godmother of feminism," explaining that Friedan joined twelve members of NOW to form a new group called Womensurge because NOW was growing "too radical" and consequently began "alienating the masses of American women"; in particular, Friedan and her twelve followers "were especially disturbed that last October NOW pledged to make lesbian rights a priority issue" (8). While the article has very little if anything to do with Friedan—she was not featured in the article as one of the twelve women of the year—Morrow references Friedan at the beginning of the piece as a figure to whom feminism is indebted. Given this inflection, Friedan was heralded as the leader of feminism, despite her lack of intersectionality, her homophobia, and her lesser-known, problematic comments about sexual violence.

Friedan's not well-circulated comments about the Anti-Rape Movement claimed that anti-rape activists had an "obsession with rape" and that the desire to establish support services for rape survivors produced "a kind of wallowing in a state of victimhood" (257). Friedan's feminism not only fails to account for sexuality, race, and class, but she also reduces rape victims' trauma to "wallowing." While Friedan made these comments in 1981, over thirty-six years before #MeToo, and the remarks seem fairly innocuous in the context of the #MeToo movement, these statements are problematic considering that like Morrow, the authors of "The Silence Breakers," Zacherak, Dockterman, and Sweetland Edwards seemingly herald Friedan in 2017 as a specter who inspired and made the #MeToo movement possible. Bearing Friedan's statements about rape in mind, in a letter appearing on the *me too.* website (2018), Burke states that she founded the MeToo Movement while she was employed as a youth worker, counselling Black women and young women of colour. On one particular evening, a young girl disclosed to her that her stepfather raped her. Lost for words, Burke directed her to another counsellor who was more qualified to support this specific case. Burke admits that she is still haunted by the look of rejection and disappointment on the young woman's face and that she developed the MeToo Movement so that women could feel solidarity and validation within a community of survivors of sexual violence. Burke's narrative of the inception of the MeToo Movement almost completely contradicts Friedan's comments about rape; yet, *Time* conspicuously referenced Friedan in this important article about breaking the silence around sexual assault and the #MeToo movement, and absented Burke, from the cover.

Time attempted to rectify their error by putting Burke on the cover of "The Person of the Year" issue on 19 April 2018, accompanied by a piece written by Hollywood actress Gabrielle Union, who instead of referencing white feminists from the second-wave, claims that "you want

a leader who truly believes in inclusivity. For Tarana, it's not about personal gain or attention, but doing the work in a way that makes people feel like they can join in." In other words, Union speaks to the Black activist practices of inclusivity and collaboration that Burke inherited and uses. Although *Time* put Burke on the front cover one year after excluding her, news media following #MeToo continues to evoke the specter of white feminism by including references not only to Friedan and Steinem but also to the history of the second-wave feminist Anti-Rape Movement, specifically through published books about rape written by white feminists.

Multiple online news publications reporting on #MeToo have likewise continuously referenced the Anti-Rape Movement as well as popular second-wave feminist authors such as Susan Brownmiller, Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millet. In an article appearing on the popular online news publication, *Vox*, Nicole Hemmer asserts that consciousness- raising groups during the 1960s and 1970s, and publications such as *Ms.* Magazine—co-founded in 1971 by Gloria Steinem—as well as Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,* constitute the "roots" of the #MeToo movement (n.p.). Victoria Hesford explains that Steinem and Friedan are "stereotypical caricatures;" specifically, Steinem is the "brassy babe," and Friedan embodies the "stately matriarch." Neither of these women, according to Hesford, "threaten or disturb the hegemony of sex and gender norms in American society" (237). While both women are Jewish, the repeated references to them across popular news media demonstrate that neither threaten white supremacy in America as much as past and present Black anti-rape activists do.

Online news media, for instance, reported on the #MeToo movement by conjuring white second-wave feminist icons and especially the memory of Susan Brownmiller, author of *Against Our Will* (1975), which is arguably the most influential text in English about rape and has never

been out of print. Moreover, the *New York Times* featured an article about Hollywood men who were accused of sexual assault since the #MeToo movement, in which Lindy West credits Susan Brownmiller with beginning the conversation about "enthusiastic consent," a practice adopted by contemporary feminists like Jessica Valenti and Jaclyn Friedman, authors of *Yes Means Yes! Visions of Sexual Power and a World Without Rape* (2008). By evoking second-wave feminism and its iconic white feminist figures in articles about the #MeToo movement—an Anti-Rape Movement that was founded by a Black woman—these news articles perpetuate a white, "hegemonic" feminist history that has the effect of suppressing the anti-rape activism piloted by Black activists.

Meanwhile, *The New Yorker* released an article by David Remnick who makes a passing reference to the "strong resistance" that critics like Angela Davis have directed towards Brownmiller's treatment of rape in *Against Our Will*. Despite this criticism, Remnick nonetheless also asserts in the same sentence that Brownmiller's book "remains an important part of our understanding of the social order" (n.p.). While it is one of the few articles to even reference critics of Brownmiller, Remnick's piece swiftly sets aside the criticism, firmly preserving the importance of her text as foundational to the #MeToo movement. Similarly, Nona Willis Aronowitz credits radical feminist texts such as Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970) for "laying the groundwork for the #MeToo movement decades later" in an article appearing in *Medium*. These references to Brownmiller and radical feminists as trailblazers for the future of anti-rape activism are supplemented by Brownmiller herself, in an interview with Rachel Cooke that appeared in the *Guardian*. In this article, Brownmiller begrudgingly states that the #MeToo movement is "promising," but laments the fact that a lot of what she and other radical feminists "accomplished seems somehow just to have been erased"—

such a comment is ironic in light of the overwhelming number of references to Brownmiller and radical feminists in news media since #MeToo went viral.

Brownmiller's claim to Cooke that her "accomplishments" have been erased may point to the fact that Brownmiller considers herself a radical feminist and part of the "sisterhood" who, as she was writing her book, opened "rape crisis centres" and inspired legislatures to "look at the law around a woman's past" (n.p.). Yet, Brownmiller's understanding of sisterhood and anti-rape activism is controversial: after she announced to her "sisters" that she was publishing *Against Our Will*, Brownmiller remembers one of her sisters telling her that the movement does not "need stars"; another asked, "[w]hy don't you be the first feminist without an ego who doesn't put your name on the book?"; while another sister pushed even further, asking Brownmiller, "why did you put your name on *Against Our Will*? All of your ideas came from our movement, after all" (n.p.). Brownmiller confesses to Cooke that she responded to these activists by asking, "what page did *you* write, sister?" (n.p.). Brownmiller's decision not to credit her consciousness raising group in her book is dichotomous with Black anti-rape activism that works to enfranchise future women and their activism by using "we" instead of crediting one activist and circumvents leadership positions to promote solidarity among activists. Furthermore, Brownmiller admits to Cooke that following the references to her status as a feminist icon and to her book in recent articles about the #MeToo movement, she expected an "upswing in her emails, perhaps the odd visit from a journalist. But no" (n.p.). Perhaps journalists do not want to talk to Brownmiller about her book's content; instead, they want to continue to make these thoughtless references to her text.

Criticism of Brownmiller's book, specifically that by Black activist and scholar Angela Davis, might explain why *Against Our Will* and Brownmiller's name are referenced in news media reports about #MeToo, but rarely is the content of her work mentioned in these articles. Davis critiques Brownmiller and other white feminists who wrote books about rape during the 1970s Anti-Rape Movement for maintaining that "rape is a natural product of male anatomy and psychology" (39) and ignoring the link between the "institution of lynching" Black men and women (42), and the "systematic rape of Black women," both of which are tools used by the oppressor to ensure the "exploitation of Black labour and political domination of Black people" and to guarantee "prosperity of whites" within the capitalistic system (40). If scholars understand rape as a natural impulse of men rather than a socially condoned form of violence against women, Davis argues, "women will always be forced to regard police and prisons as their only glimmer of hope" (39). Alternatively, feminist scholars and activists should acknowledge that Black women do not receive any "sympathy from these men in uniforms and robes"; in fact, there are numerous "stories about police assaults on Black rape victims" (40).

For Davis, this new framework should account for the intrinsic link between capitalism and rape. After slavery was abolished in the United States, Davis asserts that white men who occupied secure economic status had to develop new methods to ensure the continued labour of Black people in order to conserve the capitalist economy. Rape, like lynching, was used as a tool to inflict fear and violence on Black communities; yet, narratives to justify this racism would also need to be constructed. Society used the myths of the dangerous Black rapist and the promiscuous Black woman to rationalize the lynching of Black men and the rape of Black women, and these acts of violence would become the "essential ingredient[s] of the strategy of

terror which guaranteed the over-exploitation of Black labour" and the "political domination of Black people" (42).

Furthermore, Davis argues that accounting for rape without acknowledging lynching is irresponsible because if economic power sits within the class structure of a capitalist society that "harbour[s] the incentive to rape Black women," then this system is also responsible for lynching the ten thousand Black men in the three decades following the American Civil War (43). In *Against Our Will,* Brownmiller writes that Black men have far fewer economic opportunities than white men, providing them with fewer public spaces to express their male dominance; subsequently, she warns white women that Black men resort to rape in order to garner a sense of agency and power (195). Unlike Davis, who deconstructs the specter of the dangerous Black rapist and the violence that this "valuable" image justified white violence against Black men, Brownmiller "succumbs to the racist sophistry of blaming the victim" (Davis 42) and demonstrates the Anti-Rape Movement's "posture of indifference towards the frame-up rape charge as an incitement to racist aggression" (40). Unsurprisingly, in a 2015 interview Gloria Steinem told *Guardian* reporter Emma Brockes that while Brownmiller worked for *Ms*. Magazine, Steinem sent her to cover a domestic violence case in which a man beat his wife and killed their baby. Brownmiller wrote a piece "that blamed the mother" (n.p.). Steinem remembers that "not even the legal system came to this conclusion." Despite these critiques of Brownmiller, news media began to cite her and the title of her book consistently, often crediting her with laying an important foundation that made the #MeToo movement possible, without saying anything about her work.

Print Culture and Memory

These consistent and plural references to popular feminist authors, their books, second-wave white feminism and its sub-movements following the #MeToo movement demonstrate a critical

association between print material and the construction of feminism in American cultural memory. Feminism has always had a paradoxical relationship with mainstream publishers. Big name publishers have the capital to distribute and circulate these feminist texts widely: Jennifer Gilley (2017) claims that "a fundamental tenet of feminist print culture studies is that the product of feminist knowledge creation (in this case, writing) must be distributed in some way if it is to be influential to the overall feminist political movement" (19). Gilley's assertion, however, outlines a paradoxical relationship between mainstream publishers and feminism: on the one hand, big-name publishers have the capital to advertise, distribute, and circulate feminist texts, but on the other hand, as Simone Murray argues, "the tendency within the industry is for feminism to be defined not by peer review, but by publisher press release" (209). The relationship between publishing, authorship, and advertising forms the cultural memory of American anti-rape activism.

Despite three texts about rape being published in 1975—*Against Our Will* by Susan Brownmiller, published by Simon and Schuster; *The Politics of Rape* by Diana Russell, published by Stein and Day; and *Rape: The Bait and the Trap* by Jean MacKellar, published by Crown—the news media has only referenced Brownmiller's book in its coverage immediately following the #MeToo Movement. The publication history of Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* indicates a strong correlation between using a mainstream publisher and media exposure, which both help to construct Brownmiller as a feminist icon, or more accurately, a celebrity, ensuring that she became an integral figure within the fabric of the cultural memory of the second-wave feminist movement. Yet I note these three feminist texts published in 1975 because they exemplify the choices white feminists made when it came to book publication.

The 1970s Women in Print Movement is referred to by scholars like Agatha Beins, Bonnie Dow, and Trysh Travis as the movement in which women learned how to independently print and publish their writing, opened independent publishing agencies and feminist bookstores, and ultimately created a "circuit of readers, writers, editors, printers, publishers, distributors, retailers, all attempting to be free from capitalist control" (Harker and Konchar Farr 5). At times during the 1970s, however, mainstream publishers took an interest in timely political issues such as the Women's Liberation Movement, which resulted in some feminists engaging in a "symbiotic--sometimes co-dependent relationship with the mainstream literary establishment," while other feminists remained "suspicious of the motives of these mainstream players" (6-7). While some feminists chose to support feminist presses and publishers, others pursued mainstream publishers who had the means to distribute their texts and consequentially, ensured that their activism reached large audiences. Diana Russell, for example, published *The Politics of Rape* with Stein and Day, an independent book publisher active from 1962 to1989 that published popular and literary fiction as well as biographies and social history. MacKellar's *Rape: The Bait and the Trap* was published by Crown Publishers, who published fiction and nonfiction titles before being purchased by Random House—thirteen years after Crown published MacKellar's book—in 1988. While Russell's and MacKellar's publishers had the capital to ensure that they could market their books sustainably to reach large audiences, Brownmiller published her text with Simon and Schuster. Founded in 1924 by Richard L. Simon and M. Lincoln Schuster, Simon and Schuster prides itself as being the first agency to apply mass-market production and distribution techniques distinguished by aggressive marketing. According to Simon and Schuster's "corporate history" page on their website, the company was known to spend five to ten times more money on advertising and promotions than their competitors. Unlike Stein and

Day or Crown, Simon and Schuster allocated large amounts of money to ensure that Brownmiller's text appeared across various news media publications and that she could tour across America to promote her book.

The pamphlet entitled "Rape Racism and the White Women's Movement: An Answer to Susan Brownmiller," written by Alison Edwards in 1976, indicates that Simon and Schuster ensured Brownmiller's book would be released in time for Christmas and that the text was "almost universally acclaimed in the press" (1). Edwards recalls that Brownmiller's book appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*' book review section, was "selected by most major book clubs, serialized in four major periodicals, and [was] the subject of countless promotional forums for the author" (1). Even though critics like Angela Davis and Alison Edwards critiqued *Against Our Will,* most news articles put Brownmiller's text on "bestsellers lists" and gave general, sweeping overviews of the content. Specifically, within the same month that Brownmiller published *Against Our Will,* it appeared in an article titled "20 Books Nominated for Critics' Awards," indicating that Brownmiller's text, among nineteen other books, was "nominated by authors and the advisory board of the National Book Club Circle" for the "group's first annual awards for works by American authors" that were published in 1975 (36). Furthermore, on 7 December 1975, it was ninth on the "General Category" of the *New York Times* "Best Seller List" (361). In the same issue, Brownmiller's text was featured in the article "1975: A Selection of Noteworthy Titles" in "Current Affairs" of the *New York Times*, and was described as "far more than a feminist polemic," even though Brownmiller writes with "power and passion," blending investigative research "broad enough to encompass psychoanalysis, sociology, criminology, law, and historical fact" with "personal journalism into a demand for justice" (349). Jennifer Gilley (2017) emphasizes the draw of controversial texts for publishers;

they can incite massive amounts of media coverage and "journalists can create news stories surrounding the publication of a book fairly easily because they can quote from the book without having to fact check, since the publisher is presumed to have verified all of the facts" (7). Brownmiller's publishers paid for media endorsements to ensure that her text would appear throughout *The New York Times,* one of the most influential papers in America, thereby elevating

Brownmiller to celebrity status, giving her validity and credibility as a feminist author.

Simon and Schuster paid Brownmiller to tour twenty-seven American cities over six weeks to increase her visibility across the nation and publicize her book. Using a big publisher has implications for how the public interprets and perceives feminism because the publishing industry's "interest" in feminist texts is entirely different than "feminism's own best interests" (Murray 172). According to an interview in the "Book Ends" section of the *New York Times,* Brownmiller states that, while she was promoting her book, she had to learn how to apply makeup from a CBS make-up person "in order to look better on television" (n.p.). Brownmiller humorously says that she "had to become a radical feminist to learn to put on makeup" to ensure that she completed "what her publishers wanted her to do: come back [from the book tour] with a best seller" (n.p.). Brownmiller realized that she had to look "better" on television, which meant that she had to adhere to feminine standards of beauty that were contradictory to her values as she indicates that she "never wears [makeup] ordinarily" (n.p.). Edwards claims that "never before has the media been so friendly to radical feminism," (1) suggesting that Brownmiller was willing to compromise her values as a radical feminist to ensure the success of her text. While the media was never kind to radical feminists, Edwards—alluding to radical feminist values that denote a desire for lack of official leadership structures in favor of group collaboration—points

out that “never before has radical feminism been so eager to place itself at the forefront.” Brownmiller realized that self-promotion was just as critical to the promotion of her book, and throughout her tour, Simon and Schuster ensured that she became as famous as her work.

Making the author of a text with feminist themes a representation of feminism itself was at the centre of the promotion of *Against Our Will* because the publisher made sure that Brownmiller was publicized just as much, if not more, than her book. After publishing her text in November 1975, Brownmiller appeared on the cover of the “Women of the Year” *Time* Magazine 1976 issue. In the issue, she appears alongside famous women like Betty Ford and Billie Jean King, is acknowledged as “one of feminisms most articulate and visible activists,” and her book is hailed as “the most rigorous and provocative piece of scholarship that has yet emerged from the feminist movement” (20). This coverage joined those numerous *New York Times* articles in which she appeared alongside celebrity figures and was referred to as a celebrity herself. According to Andrea McDonnell, “social media and celebrity journalism encourage us to follow the lives of the stars as though they were our close friends,” such that celebrity narratives become “a form of social learning” (197). Celebrities are recognizable figures “whose experiences allow audiences to initiate safe, sociable conversation about serious issues, including domestic violence and sexual assault, which are not typically discussed in mainstream media” (199). As authors like Brownmiller decide to publish their texts with mainstream publishers instead of feminist presses, these mainstream publishers gain some control over how feminism is defined, interpreted, and made visible in the public sphere. Through the proliferation of mass media marketing and advertising made possible by the financial capital of these publishers, the authors themselves become feminist commodities who usually perpetuate a white, middle-upper

class version of feminism. In other words, mainstream publishers choose to sell a particular brand of feminism.

The relationship between feminism and capital is contentious: Black scholar and activist Angela Davis argues that capitalism is responsible for men's incentive to rape, especially to rape Black women; meanwhile, the Women in Print Movement fears that mainstream publishers only publish feminist texts because they are timely and that their financial greed suggests that they are out to "finish off our movement" (Arnold qtd. in Gilley 2004, 3). Despite these tensions, Brownmiller published her book with Simon and Schuster, and this strategic decision ensured that *Against Our Will* would remain integral within the cultural memory of feminism as a "classic," just as the author "modestly described" it herself (Edwards n.p.). Furthermore, publishing with Simon and Schuster, and all of the promotional advertising that the agency was able to afford for Brownmiller to promote her text, ensured that her book would never be out of print and that she would remain a prominent feminist figure during the #MeToo movement some forty years after the publication of *Against Our Will*. The trend of publishing with big-name publishers and promoting white, middle-class feminist iconography is an important dynamic in the publication of the memoirs that are the subject of this dissertation. The following chapter examines the publication and promotion of those selected memoirs and their relationship to what circulates within a popular imaginary as feminism, alongside more ephemeral activism like the authors' Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Chapter 2: Publishing Memoirs and Marketing Feminism

Throughout the Women's Liberation Movement, feminists wrote books that addressed and responded to serious concerns, such as sexual assault. As mentioned in the previous chapter, feminists often referred to these texts as consciousness-raising books. While consciousness-raising took many forms—ranging from speaking at protests, participating in women's groups, or texts such as pamphlets, newsletters, manifestos, and magazines—Jaime Harker and Cecilia Konchar Farr assert that this activist technique also took the form of books. These consciousness-raising books were "first-hand accounts of individual transformation that discuss once-taboo subjects" and have the power to invite "millions of women" to experience a "vicarious 'aha' moment" (4). Due to the political potential of these books, it stands to reason that feminists would want them to circulate widely; some feminists, therefore, chose to publish their books with mainstream publishers, who had the financial capital to not only keep up with production and distribution but also promote and market the book to cultivate an extensive readership.

Feminists today continue to write consciousness-raising books about sexual assault; in particular, a number of contemporary memoirs—published between 2014 and 2017—respond to cultural conversations about sexual assault in the United States. In 2014, for instance, institutions and mainstream media started a conversation about sexual assault on college campuses, and in 2017, the #MeToo movement went viral across various forms of social media.[27] Abrams', Dunham's, Gay's, Union's, and Valenti's memoirs respond to these anti-rape movements by demonstrating the prevalence of sexual assault in the United States and by challenging popular

[27] See the Introduction for a detailed description of each of these movements.

misconceptions and misinformation about rape that circulate in society and that tend to displace the blame away from the perpetrator and onto the survivor.[28]

However clearly their contents identify these memoirs as pieces of anti-rape consciousness-raising, the books' promotion and marketing often tell a different story that powerfully influences the public discourses around the memoirs and authors.[29] The marketing and promotion of a book, including the description on the publisher's website, interviews, book reviews, and social media promotion, are important to understanding the manners in which feminist texts get published and circulate in the public sphere. However, Jennifer Gilley argues, these elements have not received critical attention because such a project is yet "in its infancy" (5). Similarly, Murray states that "[f]eminist theorists themselves have to date largely failed to factor feminist publishing into their analysis as an active agent in determining feminism's public profile" (214). Feminist print culture studies thus urge scholars to account for the role of publishers and their marketing strategies. Scholars can ascertain how specific stories about rape have circulated in the United States and why middle-class white women's contributions have dominated the cultural understanding of mainstream feminism and anti-rape activism. In other words, how the news media and publishers talk about the memoirs and the authors control not only whether or not people will read these texts but also how the public—including those who will never even read the memoir—perceive the author and the memoir as part of a single image.

---

[28] For more on rape culture, see the Introduction.

[29] Before proceeding, it is important to note that both the marketing and promotion teams housed at each publishing agency manage and produce each memoir's content and descriptions. Valerie Peterson, a book publishing consultant, states that "before the book is published, the book marketing department works with the promotion department to develop the standard sales tools for each book, such as their description" (n.p.); additionally, social media campaigns are often "developed in-house (for big-budget books)" (n.p.). For the sake of simplicity, the term "publisher," used throughout this chapter, refers not only to the publishing company but also to the marketing and promotion divisions of the company. This chapter considers promotional materials from publishers' websites and social media accounts.

Consequently, it is necessary to look at print culture and ephemera as important parts of understanding how some stories have become part of contemporary sexual assault activism's cultural memory while others are less well-known. Part of this work involves tracing the circulation and subsequent placement, or lack thereof, in the cultural memory of sexual assault activism. Feminist print culture scholar Kristen Hogan classifies the work that seeks to look closely at the women who come to signify the feminist movement and those excluded from these popular representations, the work of feminist accountability. This framework urges feminist researchers to consider how mainstream representations of feminism may be tied to white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. For instance, a relationship appears to exist between women who had access to the publishing industry in the 1960s-1970s and their prominence in the mainstream news media reporting on feminism. Yet, focusing simply on this mainstream or popular narrator of feminism ignores the histories of women who did not have access to the publishing industry. For Hogan, in order to participate in feminist accountability, scholars must practice queer, antiracist, feminist remembering--a practice of "listening to the speech and silences" that "holds us accountable to those histories of our allies across difference" (188) and can help us to fill in the "missing pieces of feminist histories" (183).

In a similar vein, memory studies scholars Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin remind scholars that "what is understood as history and as memory is produced by historically specific contestable systems of knowledge and power that produce them" (11). Since mainstream publishers and news media helped to construct feminist history around mostly white, middle-class, liberal feminist icons, feminist accountability is a method that can end the invisibility of Black women in feminism. The memoirs that I discuss here have a vital role to play in understanding the ongoing impact of sexual violence in the United States, historically and at

present, but we must work to also turn to accountability. According to Gilley, scholars must analyze the "mechanisms by which feminist ideas get printed and distributed" (3); therefore, I account for the publication history of selected memoirs about rape with a focus on how publishers, news media, and the authors promote the memoirs. Additionally, because popular representations of feminism constitute the cultural memory of feminism, feminist work on nostalgia works to resist mainstream accounts of feminism. Nostalgia as a critique of feminist history prevents its hegemonic recounting as the history of white, middle-class women and the centering of their experiences. Moreover, employing a framework of feminist accountability and nostalgia to the print culture of contemporary memoirs about rape can explain how contemporary discussions of feminism and anti-rape activism continue to marginalize Black feminists, and why this marginalization is important for American feminism to maintain.

Feminist Remembering

The references to the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement in contemporary discussions of #MeToo and the promotion of anti-rape memoirs evoke a sense of nostalgia for the era that, according to Michelle Meagher and Roxane Loree Runyon, has come to be conceptualized as "the golden era of feminism" (352).[30] Reading these nostalgic references, Heather Hillsburg claims, might be "a central component of feminist acts of remembering" (205), while Kate Eichhorn states that analyzing "nostalgia's status in contemporary feminist thought and cultural production…is a radical politic" (253). Meagher and Runyon argue that this productive reading of nostalgia "helps us to push against the impulse to either disavow or idealise the stories

[30] In order to refer to this "golden era of feminism" that I thoroughly examined in Chapter One, this chapter uses the following terms throughout the chapter: 1970s women's movement, 1970s mainstream feminism, and the Women's Liberation Movement.

told…about the feminist past" (352). This framework is also important for reading some of the extra-textual materials related to the publication of contemporary anti-rape memoirs—including the publishers', news media's, and authors' promotion of the memoirs—because these elements sometimes represent an ambivalent relationship to the 1970s women's movement.

Correspondingly, Meagher and Runyon argue that scholars can find nostalgia for 1970s feminism in ambivalent references to this era (352).[31] These references tend to be ambivalent rather than explicit because a direct expression of longing for a past era of feminism would be problematic due to the belief that contemporary feminists have learned from the "knowledge of the failures of the 1970s feminism" and "progressed from a naïve and essentialist past" and, therefore, are much more "attuned to questions of difference" (349). Unsurprisingly, promotional materials containing ambivalent references to the 1970s Women's Movement have been largely overlooked by scholars because the material is ephemeral, ambivalence is sometimes difficult to ascertain, and, at first glance, it seems unimportant. Yet looking closely at the ambivalent references to 1970s feminism in the marketing and promotion of contemporary memoirs about sexual assault can reveal oppressive ideologies. Initially, it might appear that mainstream publishers have progressed from their previously exclusionary and discriminatory publishing practices examined in the previous chapter. However, this chapter considers ambivalence in the promotional and marketing of contemporary memoir about sexual assault to document the longevity of these oppressive patterns.

Ambivalence appears within many of the memoirs' promotional materials and is inscribed with different meanings: ambivalence can be racist; it can depoliticize the author's radical

[31] Moreover, Hillsburg claims that nostalgia is represented in "ambivalences of human longing" (203). At the same time, Meagher and Runyon conceptualize nostalgia as a reflective mode that allows scholars to analyze the "ambivalent relationship" that feminists have with 1970s feminism (352).

politics; and it can represent a nostalgia for 1970s mainstream feminism. In all versions ambivalence maintains the cultural memory of white, middle-class, liberal feminism. Systemic racism, for instance, is rarely an attitude that institutions such as publishing openly project while promoting feminist books; yet, traces of racism can be found in the ambivalence present in the promotional materials of the memoirs written by Black authors. For example, Simon & Schuster publishes Abrams' memoir, and Harper Collins publishes Gay's and Unions' memoirs. On the surface, it may seem that these publishers are no longer exclusionary and discriminatory against Black authors; however, Anne Anlin Cheng argues that "while racism is mostly thought of as a kind of violent rejection, racist institutions in fact often do not want to fully expel the racial other; instead, they wish to maintain that other within existing structures" (34). Accordingly, institutions, such as mainstream publishing, offer Abrams, Gay, and Union publishing contrasts; yet, despite the fact that their memoirs engage sexual assault activism, the publishers do not promote these authors as feminists or activists in the explicit ways they do with their white authors like Dunham and Valenti. Initially, this seems unusual, but as Cheng points out, "[r]acialization in America may be said to operate through the institutional process of producing a dominant, standard, white national ideal, which is sustained by the exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others" (30-1). This "national topography of centrality and marginality" manifests as a "profound ambivalence" around the racialized other that allows the nation to maintain "a dominant, standard, white national ideal" (30). Systemic racism inherent in public discourses of feminism, therefore, is sustained by mainstream publishers who promote white women like Dunham and Valenti as feminist authors, but are ambivalent about the status of Black authors like Abrams, Gay, and Union as feminists; this ambivalence excludes Abrams, Gay, and Union from public discourses or cultural memory of feminism (Spallacci 2021, 66). Ambivalence takes

various forms and appears throughout the promotional material that corresponds with each memoir. Feminists also often confront an ambivalent double bind as they look to use memoir to do political work and decide to publish with a mainstream publisher, but then often wind up caught in a bind: these publishers have the financial means to circulate the memoirs widely, but they control and mediate the discourse surrounding the memoir and the authors.

Memoirs: Mainstream Publishers and News Media

A primary concern of publishing a feminist text with a mainstream publisher was and continues to be the narrative that the publisher creates about the book. Fictional texts written by women, according to Murray, risked "containment and political distortion" throughout the publication process with a mainstream publisher, and these risks have been greater for nonfiction texts. The nonfiction genre, Cameron states, "is of most use to feminists" because it is "informative, decently researched, thought provoking and readable" (4). Therefore, the generic qualities of these nonfiction texts lend themselves to a wide readership, which could be why some feminists choose to publish with mainstream publishers that have the promotional budget to afford to circulate the book to a broad readership. While this large audience is alluring for some feminist writers, Cameron asks, "how much is really gained…by feminists adopting the trappings, not of 'accessibility' (which I would define simply as writing in a way readers can understand) but of *popularity*, which is defined by the standards of the mass media?" (4). Evidence of the publishers' "containment and political distortion" appears in the marketing materials—the publishers' websites, book reviews, and interviews with the authors—corresponding with Gay's, Dunham's, Valenti's, Abrams', and Union's memoirs to which I now turn.

Hunger

Roxane Gay's *Hunger* presents a nuanced and complex narrative that addresses a variety of topics, including the effects of trauma—that can manifest physically and mentally—following Gay's rape at the hands of her peers at twelve years old. For Gay, her trauma produced an urgent need to consume considerable amounts of food in order to accumulate body mass so that her body might serve as a "fortress [that is] impermeable" (25); paradoxically, her body became an entity that simultaneously "shamed [her] but one that made [her] feel safe, and more than anything, [she] desperately needed to feel safe" (25). Though Gay's trauma is central to her memoir, in an interview with Terry Gross from *NPR*, Gay re-establishes that her memoir is also about "living with contradictions" (n.p.). For instance, Gay reminds readers that her memoir "describes growing up a daughter of middle-class Haitian immigrants, and not fitting into the narrative of American Blackness" (n.p.). She talks about being a feminist. And she explains why she identified as a lesbian, even though she still finds men attractive (n.p.). Despite the multiplicity of subjects prevalent throughout her memoir, Gay tells Gross that in a section of her memoir, she divulged her "highest weight," and that she has been surprised to observe that "every single review and article about [her] book thus far has mentioned it" (n.p.). The unfortunate amount of attention that reviewers pay to Gay's weight circulates online. It creates the perception that her memoir is about her relationship to her body-weight, which, according to Gay, is only partially what her memoir is about. In response, Gay turns to Twitter to promote her memoir, on her own terms.

While she was writing her memoir, @rgay optimistically proclaimed: "I am increasingly realizing that Hunger is going to maybe do some good in the world."[32] Here, Gay sees her

[32] See Appendix C: Tweets, for a list of all of the tweets that appear in this chapter, in their entirety.

memoir as a vehicle for social change, which is quite different from the reviews that focus on her highest body weight. Four months after Gay's memoir was released, in a thread of tweets, @rgay explains that so "often" women "get worn down by persistence and guilting and bullshit" and eventually they believe that "it will be easier to just have sex with this guy to make him go away." The phrase "just have sex" may sound cavalier, but in this scenario, the word "just" ironically means that having sex against one's affirmative desire is the safer alternative to being brutally raped or killed. The thread proceeds as @rgay states that "fatness also complicates this"; she confesses that up until "four years ago," men exploited her weight to make her believe that she ought to be "grateful for shitty treatment from fuckboys." Then, offering some hope, @rgay admits that once she "stopped dealing with men… it's been fine since hahahahaha." This complicated relationship between sexual assault, pressure and coercion, body and weight, and queer identity is addressed in Gay's memoir, and @rgay concludes this thread by stating: "I wrote a book about this now that I think about it. It's called Hunger. Buy it." Despite Gay's attempts to establish that *Hunger* is about a multitude of topics beyond her weight, in interviews and on her social media, almost two years after she published *Hunger*, @rgay continues to air her frustration with book reviewers by tweeting that she is "[j]ust going to make a book out of all the random diet advice people sell me after reading Hunger and clearly missing the point." Gay's memoir circulates as a testimony about her weight, which, according to Gay, is "missing the point," and the description of her book, which appears on the Harper Collins website, also contributes to this false narrative about the memoir.

The publisher begins by establishing Gay as a "*New York Times* bestselling author," who "has written with intimacy and sensitivity about food and bodies" (n.p.). Even though the title of Gay's memoir features the subheading "A Memoir of (My) Body," Gay's aforementioned

remarks about her memoir during interviews and on her Twitter page, as well as the content of her memoir itself, demonstrate that the publisher's claim that Gay's book is "*about* food and bodies" is quite reductive (my emphasis n.p.). Near the end of the description, the publisher states that "[i]n *Hunger*, [Gay] casts an insightful and critical eye on her childhood, teens, and twenties—including the devasting act of violence that acted as a turning point in her young life" (n.p.). Gay simultaneously implies the rape and refuses to name the "act" as rape, demonstrating a relationship of consumption and denial, which Cheng argues constitutes ambivalence. However, this ambivalence appears to be strategic; it represents the publisher's desire to appeal to both the readers who will understand the vague reference and be interested in the book's political content and those who might be deterred by both rape content and anti-rape activism. Despite Gay's attempts to market her memoir on Twitter and in interviews with mainstream news reporters, book critics and Harper Collins choose to promote her memoir as a narrative about her "overweight" body; this is most likely because while Gay's narrative of her body is political, this subject is less polarizing than rape. Similarly, Lena Dunham's memoir also contains an essay about rape, but neither the reviewers nor the publisher reduces her narrative to a single topic.

Not That Kind of Girl: A Young Woman Tells You What She's Learned

In her memoir, *Not That Kind of Girl*, Lena Dunham presents a unique perspective on mental health, sexual assault, dating men, her body, and subsequent struggles with creativity and work. She separates her memoir into five sections, and each section features multiple pieces of writing. In particular, Dunham devotes an entire section—"Section II: "Body"—to her relationship with

her body; yet, despite this attention to the subject, book reviews do not centre this particular subject as they do in the case of Gay's memoir.

Instead, Dunham's memoir's positive reviews praise the author for the breadth of topics that she addresses in her book. Michiko Kakutani from the *New York Times,* for instance, lists all of the topics that Dunham covers in her memoir, spanning "terrible dates and cringe-making email exchanges…her doubts and fears and neuroses, her dependence on a therapist, and her icky sexual encounters with an assortment of jerks…bouts of obsessive-compulsive disorder, [including] a compulsion to translate her experiences into words" (n.p.). While Kakutani's list risks trivializing some of the subject matter—like referring to Dunham's rape as an "icky sexual encounter"—Gay, in her review of Dunham's memoir for *Time*, demonstrates the breadth of the memoir by listing the sections outlined in the table of contents, and applauds Dunham for crafting "warm intelligent writing that is both deeply personal and engaging." Not only is Dunham commended for covering a variety of important topics in her memoir, but some critics also liken her writing to consciousness-raising.

In an interview with Dunham, Laura Brown from *Harper's Bazaar* tells Dunham that women who read her memoir tend to feel like "that's me. That happened to me" (n.p.). This sensation to which Brown refers resembles the "vicarious 'aha' moment" that Harker and Konchar Farr classify as a defining feature of a consciousness-raising novel. Furthermore, Harker and Konchar Farr claim that consciousness-raising books provide women with a space where they can produce their "self-expression and [cultivate] community" (3). Dunham responds to Brown's feedback stating that her book has "created a kind of community [that she] didn't have as a young person" (n.p.). Here, both Brown and Dunham acknowledge that her memoir's content is not only relatable but also that it can bring together a community of like-minded

readers. Similarly, Gay concludes her review of Dunham's memoir by expressing that "Dunham is not only a voice who deserves to be heard" but also one that will "inspire other important voices to tell their stories too" (n.p.).

While these reviews of Dunham's memoir inadvertently link it to a consciousness-raising text, others praise her essay, "Barry," in which Dunham speaks about being raped on her college campus. Eliana Dockterman from *Time*, for instance, published an article about Dunham's essay the very same month that the memoir was released, and praised Dunham for publicly sharing her rape testimony given the cultural moment when colleges are under scrutiny for mishandling rape complaints made by survivors. For Dockterman, Dunham's essay is her "bravest work of activism yet" because she contests the myths that are produced by rape culture that tend to displace the blame away from the rapist and onto the survivor, and Dockterman believes that Dunham's essay "may become a lifeline for women who've been through something similar and are feeling confused and alone" (n.p.). While both Gay's and Dunham's memoirs represent much more than a rape testimony, they are nonetheless published during cultural movements of antirape activism. Yet the mainstream media seemingly invite Dunham into the 2014 sexual assault on campus conversation by praising her essay on rape, but attempt to exclude Gay from the 2017 #MeToo conversation by focusing on her weight instead of her rape testimony. Despite some of these popular news reports that designate Dunham's memoir as activism, Penguin Random House does not promote the memoir with this same political inflection.

Instead, Penguin Random House merely alludes to Dunham's chapter on sexual assault by including types of a coming of age narrative (Spallacci 2021, 63). For instance, the publisher calls the memoir, "[e]xuberant, moving, and keenly observed" and states that "*Not That Kind of Girl* is a series of dispatches from the frontlines of the struggle that is growing up" (n.p.) By evoking the

challenges of "growing up" the publishers also seemingly mirror the marketing of Dunham's popular television show *Girls,* which Maša Grdešić claims presents a "dichotomy between girls and women" through taglines, including "[o]ne mistake at a time" and "[m]istakes that girls make" (356). These taglines, according to Grdešić, generate the meaning that "girls are not yet women, they are younger, less mature, less experienced, and more prone to experimentation" (356). This association "transforms the trauma of rape into the comedy and light-heartedness of a popular coming-of-age story" (Spallacci 2021, 63).

The most direct reference to Dunham's sexual assault appears at the end of the description, where the publisher borrows a quotation from Dunham's introductory chapter: "[b]ut if I can take what I've learned and make one menial job easier for you, or prevent you from having the kind of sex where you feel you must keep your sneakers on in case you want to run away during the act, then every misstep of mine will have been worthwhile" (n.p.).
The original quotation appears in Dunam's introduction to her memoir, and the context in which it appears is quite different from its placement in the description. In her introduction, the quote appears in a passage in which Dunham divulges that some of the content of her memoir includes "waking up to [her] adult female body and being disgusted and terrified," "getting [her] butt touched at an internship," and "allowing [herself] to be treated by men in ways [she] knew were wrong," among others (22). Following this series of critical experiences, Dunham proceeds with the aforementioned quotation, which breaks the tension in the paragraph by juxtaposing the gravity of the list of serious topics that proceed it with humour. Because Dunham's original quotation is taken out of context and included in the book description, the statement "reads like a casual, humorous statement in which Dunham informs consumers that by reading her memoir, they might be able to learn from her mistakes and avoid the same 'misstep'" (Spallacci 2021,

64). In other words, "the coming-of-age conceit and trivializing language misrepresent the book as one about silly mistakes and progress or triumph rather than about the life-long effects of rape, which is palatable rather than overtly political" (64). This simultaneous inclusion of the allusion to the rape and rejection of the rape as a serious issue demonstrates the publisher's ambivalence regarding Dunham's rape testimony as part of its promotion of the book. Although Penguin Random House's ambivalence about the rape testimony, like Harper Collins' ambivalence regarding the representation of Gay's rape, allows the publisher to achieve a balance between presenting a timely memoir with a palatable rather than overtly political subject matter.

The publisher, however, eventually had to confront critics who were determined to investigate and scrutinize the "Barry" essay. John Nolte, for instance, searched through Oberlin College's student roster and identified a man named Barry, who claimed he had never met Dunham. Nolte published his investigation on *Breitbart* and attempted to discredit Dunham's representation of sexual assault, characterizing her essay as a questionable and dishonest testimony of a woman who "cries rape" (n.p.). According to Sean Fitz-Gerald at *Vulture,* once Nolte published his investigation on the "conservative blog," Penguin Random House released a statement clarifying that the copyright page indicates that "some of the names and identifying details in the book have been changed" (n.p.) and apologizing on their "own behalf and on behalf of [their] author" for any confusion (Maglio n.p.). Furthermore, Random House offered to "pay the fees" that the lawyer "has billed to his client" and hope that the client and lawyer will donate the proceeds from the GoFundMe to "organizations assisting survivors of rape and sexual assault" (n.p.).[33] Even though Penguin Random House gave Dunham a $3.7 million advance to write her memoir (Freeman 2014 n.p.), which is a sign of their investment in her work, following

[33] To view the full statement, see Figure 5 in Appendix A: Additional Figures.

these harsh allegations, the publisher immediately released a statement apologizing for the confusion. Their statement on these allegations is dramatically different from Dunham's comments about the media backlash.

In her essay "Why I Chose to Speak Out," Dunham claims: "my work has been torn apart in an attempt to prove I am a liar, or worse, a deviant myself. I have been made to feel, on multiple occasions, as though I am to blame for what happened" (n.p.). Dunham's statement demonstrates that rape testimonies are met with skepticism and aggression—efforts that attempt to suppress the power of women's stories—and that these efforts cause additional pain for the survivor. These two official statements, by Dunham and the publisher, expose a disparity between Dunham's decision to publish and circulate her rape testimony for a variety of reasons, including political activism, and the publisher's ambivalence towards the subject matter. While Dunham hoped that her story would encourage women to come forward with their sexual assault narratives, the denunciations of Dunham's memoir in news media and Penguin Random House's public apology for her book's controversy reinforce the imperative that women should remain silent about sexual assault.

Although Dunham continues to work with Penguin Random House—the publisher gave her a publishing imprint—this case demonstrates the risk of publishing a consciousness-raising text with a mainstream publisher because, as Murray claims, the publishing industry's "interest" in feminist texts is entirely different from "feminism's own best interests" (172). This cautionary tale might explain why Jessica Valenti, who published multiple books with Seal Press, a feminist publisher, before publishing *Sex Object* with Harper Collins, ended up returning to Seal Press to publish her most recent book in 2020.

Sex Object

Before publishing *Sex Object,* Valenti established an illustrious writing career by publishing various feminist books, writing articles for the *Guardian*, and co-founding the popular feminist blog, *Feministing.com.* Valenti published the majority of her books with Seal Press, a well-known feminist publishing agency that, according to their website, was "founded in 1976…during the women's press movement of the 1970s" (n.p.). Seal Press aims to publish books that are "radical and ground breaking," that "inspire and challenge readers," and that "humanize urgent issues" (n.p.). This statement from Seal Press aligns with Valenti's memoir; in an academic book review, Kimberly Fairchild states that the purpose of *Sex Object* is to "remind those who study sexism and objectification of the real-life events behind our scales and measures" (289). Valenti uses her life to illustrate sexism and objectification (289), and despite the resonances between the purpose of Valenti's memoir and Seal Press' mission statement, Valenti published *Sex Object* with Harper Collins.

Similar in tone to the reviews of Dunham's book, reviewers praise Valenti for the various subjects that she addresses in her memoir. Fairchild, for example, states that Valenti's writing style is "engaging, smart, and often funny, despite the gravity of her topics—sexism, objectification, abortion, drug abuse" (289). Likewise, Julia Felsenthal from *Vogue* describes the memoir as a series of essays that "take their author from puberty to the present" with subjects spanning "confronting a naked penis on the subway... male teachers [who] hit on high school students with alarming abandon," followed by "a series of toxic relationships and a couple decent ones, a period of cocaine abuse, and two abortions" as well as "a window into her marriage, her turbulent pregnancy…and struggles with postpartum depression" (n.p.). Even though the title, *Sex Object*, like Gay's *Hunger*, lends itself to a narrow interpretation of the

memoir, the reviewers do not cling to a single topic as they do with Gay's book. Moreover, while reviewers label Dunham's essay about sexual assault as a piece of feminist activism, they are quick to label Valenti's entire memoir as feminist.

In an interview with Valenti, Katie O'Reily from *Michigan Quarterly* asks Valenti how she feels about her "memoir as a vehicle for social change" (n.p.). Valenti responds that while she usually writes "feminist theory," she believes that "we're in a moment where women are telling their stories, where first-person narrative is big, where people are really using their experiences to contextualize political issues" not only in books and articles but also on social media (n.p.). Relatedly, Felsenthal asks Valenti if she believes that feminists are still able to push any boundaries. Valenti replies that she would "like to think [that she is] still pushing boundaries," mainly because women are telling their stories "a lot more" than they were "10 years ago," and this "act of storytelling …is a feminist act" (n.p.). Julie Rak classifies the "memoir boom" as "a period roughly spanning the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the production and public visibility of American and British memoirs by celebrities and by relatively unknown people sharply increased" (3). While the rise in published memoirs is somewhat new, women sharing their personal stories in other forms is not. By stating that women are telling their stories "a lot more" than they did "10 years ago," Valenti erases the history of first-person consciousness-raising documents, newsletters, pamphlets, manifestos, and novels over the decades that were vital to spreading anti-rape activism. Despite this statement, Valenti's memoir, specifically her essay about sexual violence, is hailed by reviewers as an important piece of feminist literature.

Fairchild, for example, asserts that *Sex Object* "will appeal to academic feminists" and might be "particularly useful for fueling discussion in women's studies classes" (289), ensuring

that Valenti's memoir not only circulates as a piece of feminist literature in popular culture but in academic circles as well. Furthermore, Fairchild states that in her memoir, Valenti admits that, even though she knows that raping a woman while she is unconscious is sexual assault, she does not want to call this event rape (289). Accordingly, in her interview with Felsenthal, Valenti states that "people have this image of public feminists as always having the correct answer or ideology. And that is just not what the messy truth of people's lives look like" (n.p.). For Valenti, suggesting that feminists like herself need not always have the correct response to every situation is a political choice. As a practiced feminist writer, these interviews demonstrate Valenti aimed to write personal essays that reveal how misogyny and the objectification of women determine how women see themselves and perceive the horrific events that happen to them. Despite Valenti's political intention to represent her rape in her memoir, Harper Collins is ambivalent to her sexual assault testimony.

Like Random House's description of Dunham's memoir, Harper Collins presents Valenti's memoirs as a coming-of-age story. The publisher classifies her memoir a "darkly funny" exploration of the "painful, funny, embarrassing, and sometimes illegal moments that shaped Valenti's adolescence and young adulthood in New York City" (n.p.). The repetition of the word "funny" alongside words with more sombre connotations such as "darky" and "painful," informs readers that they will find even the serious stories amusing. Interestingly, readers may not be aware that the "sometimes illegal moments" could in fact refer to Valenti's chapter about how a man named Carl sexually assaulted her while she was unconscious at a party (109). Moreover, the publishers seemingly dilute the severity of some of Valenti's stories, such as her sexual assault, into a coming of age narrative by stating that these experiences "shaped Valenti's adolescence and young adulthood." The evocation of the coming of age narrative, alongside

repetition of words signifying humour, depoliticizes Valenti's work in her memoir, which seeks to unpack her sexual assault. The publisher's decision to allude to the sexual assault but avoid any direct statement about it subverts the political activism Valenti's memoir engages, and like the description of Dunham's memoir, ensures that potential readers do not interpret the work as political.

It is unclear whether Valenti chose to publish *Sex Object* with Harper Collins because she hoped a mainstream publisher could circulate her memoir to a broader audience instead of a smaller publisher like Seal Press. Despite these speculations, this disparity between Valenti's serious political motivation to publish her memoir and the publisher's desire to sell copies by promoting a light, palatable coming-of-age story might explain why, four years after publishing *Sex Object* with Harper Collins, Valenti published her book most recent book, *Believe Me: How Trusting Women Can Change the World* (2020), with Seal Press. Despite the large sum of money that a mainstream publisher can allocate to marketing the book, Valenti's case demonstrates that publishing with a mainstream publisher might compromise how the memoir circulates in the public sphere, which may, in turn, contradict the author's intended message. In contrast, Sil Lai Abrams published her memoir with Simon & Schuster, and her memoir receives the least media attention. The next section explains why this might have happened.

Black Lotus: A Woman's Search for Racial Identity

In her memoir, *Black Lotus,* Abrams addresses multiple subjects, including rape, sexual exploitation and harassment, drug and alcohol addiction, loss, healing, motherhood, and career aspirations and struggles, all through the lens of her biracial, Black and Chinese identity. *Black Lotus* received little attention in the press, unlike the other memoirs on which I focus. In some

cases, Abrams did not see any reviews for months because her publisher minimally promoted her memoir. For example, @ Sil_Lai states that her memoir was reviewed by *NPR Books* almost five months after it was published, and comments that it is "better late than never." In a way, Abrams' memoir's limited exposure grants her more control over the discourses that circulate about her memoir.

While reviewers liken Dunham's and Valenti's memoirs to social activism and consciousness-raising, Gay's memoir does not receive this type of designation; however, the lack of media coverage of Abrams' memoir gives her the autonomy to frame the public discourse around it. During one of Abrams' only interviews, Brooke Obie from *NBC News* remarks that Abrams' memoir is about deciding "who you are for yourself" before asking her who she would say she is today (n.p.). Abrams responds that she considers herself "a truth-teller, as an advocate and as a woman who is passionately committed to inspiring other women to share their stories unapologetically so that [Black women] can help transform this larger narrative of what it means to be a Black woman and that all of our stories are valid" (n.p.). Here, Abrams aligns her writing with consciousness-raising because she believes that telling her truth can inspire other women to tell their stories in hopes that they will generate social change.

Proceeding onto the topic of Abrams' anti-rape activism, Obie addresses one of Abrams' rape narratives, specifically the one in which Abrams accuses a famous music producer—not by name—of raping her and asks Abrams whether she has healed from the anger that comes from the knowledge that she will never receive justice. Abrams responds that she conceptualizes healing as a "continuum" because one day a person may feel like, "[o]h, that situation's behind me," and the next, something can "trigger you and you are in pain again" (n.p.). Instead of healing and its implication of moving on, Abrams has resolved to resist the social silence

surrounding sexual assault by “speak[ing] out against it,” even though she knows that she cannot publicly call out her rapist because of the “disparity in [their] income and social standing”; she channels this “frustration and anger…into [her] advocacy work” (n.p.). Abrams recalls that a friend, who works as a psychologist, identified that this activist work comes with the risk of “retraumatizing” her; yet, Abrams confesses to Obie that while “her heart is broken still” from her trauma, she did not feel triggered by writing her memoir because she “knew there was a purpose” in her activism (n.p.). While this interview allows Abrams to frame her memoir as a piece of anti-rape activism, the description of Abrams’ memoir on the Simon & Schuster website does not address this activism.

Although Abrams writes about being raped on two separate occasions, Simon & Schuster never directly refers to the rape in its description of the book. Instead, like the description of Gay’s memoir in which the publisher emphasizes her struggles with weight, this description focuses on Abrams’ race, claiming that the memoir “will undoubtedly ignite conversations on race, racial identity, and the human experience” (n.p.). The publisher then repeats this pivot from specific race issues to the universal "human experience," ending in a general classification that may appeal to a wider demographic of consumers instead of only those interested in race issues. Finally, the publisher vaguely alludes to Abrams’ rape by claiming that her memoir is about “a quest for healing” (n.p.). But while the description notes that Abrams must heal from “overt racism” and “her own internalized racism,” it adds that her healing also involves “depression, abuse, and an addiction,” never naming rape per se (n.p.). The publisher concludes this section by stating that the memoir demonstrates the “ability of the human spirit to triumph over tragedy” (n.p.). Rather than reference how Abrams' writing incorporates an intersectional analysis of various subjects, like sexual assault, her publisher markets the book as one about the shared

human condition of healing. Again, similar to the description of Gay's memoir, this description is ambivalent because it balances references to timely topics such as sexual assault but not explicitly in fear of presenting the memoir as one that engages political work.

At this point, the publishers have used two main techniques to depoliticize the sexual assault narratives in the memoirs; these techniques involve evasive language and evoking the coming of age narrative. It's important to note that these techniques correspond with the author's race; the evasive language depoliticizes the descriptions of Gay and Abrams' memoirs while the coming of age narrative depoliticizes the descriptions of Dunham and Valenti's memoirs. This work also represents a contemporary legacy of slavery in the United States. In her work on the criminal justice response to sexual assault in the United States, Saidiya Hartman argues that the legal system's denial and silencing of Black women reports and testimonies of sexual assault "was essential to the displacement of white culpability that characterized both the recognition of Black humanity in slave law and the designation of the Black subject as the originary locus of transgression" (79-80). By not referencing Abram and Gay's sexual assault testimonies directly, the publishers participate in "a history of silencing Black women's rape testimonies as part of a larger culture of white supremacy" (Spallacci 2021, 64). Troubling this statement, however, Gabrielle Union's memoir receives a significant amount of media attention and is hailed as a piece of anti-rape activism.

We're Going to Need More Wine: Stories that are Funny, Complicated, and True Union's *We're Going to Need More Wine* delves into a variety of subjects, including her marriage to NBA player Dwayne Wade, growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood in California,

her struggle with IVF, and being raped at 19. Like Abrams, Union frames these subjects within a critical conversation about race. She begins her memoir with a famous quote by W.E.B. Du Bois from *The Souls of Black Folk* (10) because for Union, being Black in the United States is inextricably linked to all of her experiences. Interviewers and reviewers respond to Union's book by highlighting the breadth of its subject matter, similar to the reviews of Dunham's and Valenti's text.

Haley Krischer from *The New York Times*, for example, acknowledges that Union's memoir "coincided" with #MeToo going viral; Union published her memoir two days later. Yet, rather than focus the review on Union's rape testimony, Krischer states that her memoir is about her "infertility struggles," growing up in an "all-white" neighbourhood in California while spending her summers "in a predominantly Black neighbourhood in North Omaha," as well as her "first marriage to the N.F.L. player Chris Howard, and subsequent divorce," her "relationship with her father," and "about the time she was raped at gunpoint when she was 19" (n.p.). Similarly, Mandalit Del Barco from *NPR* declares that Union's memoir is "about many things," such as "losing her virginity, sexual encounters, cheating, infertility, miscarriages, [and] [i]n one essay, she describes being raped at gunpoint by a stranger in the back room of a shoe store where she worked" (n.p.). Rather than defining Union's memoir by one topic, as is the tendency for some reviews of Gay's memoir, reviewers and interviewers represent Union, a Black author, with far more depth. Similarly, in their description of Union's memoir, her publisher likens her memoir to others written by white authors.

On the Harper Collins website, the publisher categorizes Union's memoir as "in the spirit of Amy Poehler's *Yes Please,* Lena Dunham's *Not That Kind of Girl*, and Roxane Gay's *Bad Feminist*" (n.p.). Here, the publisher associates Union's memoir with two memoirs written by

white women. At the end of the list, they mention Gay's book on feminism rather than her memoir. Perhaps Harper Collins decided not to reference Gay's *Hunger* because they published her memoir in June of the same year. To avoid competition between the two memoirs, they instead chose to include Gay's book published three years earlier. At the same time, this explanation does not address the sequence in which the authors appear, which implies that Union's celebrity status, corresponding with actresses Amy Poehler and Lena Dunham, is more pertinent to the publisher than her racial identity. Unlike Gay's memoir, the publisher also presents the subject-matter of Union's memoir with more attention.

The publisher outlines the vast topics that Union addresses in her memoir, stating that "Union tackles a range of experiences, including bullying, beauty standards, and competition between women in Hollywood, growing up in a white California suburbia and then spending summers with her Black relatives in Nebraska, coping with crushes, puberty, and the divorce of her parents" (n.p.). While Harper Collins presents a holistic description of Union's memoir, as they do with Valenti, and similar to how Penguin Random House presents Dunham's book, Harper Collins does not use language that evokes a coming-of-age story. Initially, this choice seems odd, considering that Union starred in many coming-of-age films as a young actress. In an interview with Alison P. Davis from *The Cut,* Davis reminds Union that her films from the early 2000s evoke a sense of nostalgia for "the best era of teen movies" (n.p.). Even though these films are arguably coming-of-age narratives, Union never plays the protagonist; rather, the role is reserved for white women, like Kirsten Dunst, who stars as the lead in *Bring it On* (2000), and Julia Styles, who is the protagonist of *Ten Things I Hate About* (1999). Therefore, instead of arousing this type of narrative sentiment in the description of her memoir, Harper Collins states that Union writes with "unique wisdom" and "fearlessness," classifying her entire essay

collection as “powerful” and “thought-provoking” (n.p.). It seems as though the publishers choose not to represent Union’s memoir as a coming-of-age story because that genre of storytelling is reserved for white authors like Dunham and Valenti; instead, the publisher presents Union’s memoir and her writing with a greater sense of maturity and seriousness. For instance, the publisher states that Union’s memoir is humorous, and rather than use adjectives like “hilarious” or “darkly funny” to describe the content, as Random House and Harper Collins do for Dunham’s and Valenti’s books, the publisher writes that Union’s essays are “infused” with “deep humour,” implying a more intellectual and complex humour than the other books (n.p.). This serious tone throughout their description of Union's memoir trickles into how the publisher presents the rape narrative.

The publisher begins by identifying a “vulnerable and impassioned” editorial that Union wrote after a rape trial from 1999, in which the director and actor Nate Parker, of Union’s upcoming film *Birth of a Nation*, was on trial for sexual assault, resurfaced in the mainstream media (n.p.). According to Harper Collins, Union’s editorial urged “our society to have compassion for victims of sexual violence,” ensuring that Union “instantly became the insightful, outspoken actress that Hollywood has been desperately awaiting” (n.p.). It is important to note that this tagline is not original; instead, it is a headline taken from an interview between Union and Rebecca Carroll from *Harper’s Bazaar* one year earlier. Then, the publisher proceeds to state that in her memoir, Union writes with “honesty and heartbreaking wisdom” about her “own trauma as a victim of sexual assault” (n.p.). Harper Collins published Union’s memoir as #MeToo went viral; thus, referencing Union’s editorial and presenting her as the “outspoken actress” ensures that the memoir is associated with the timely #MeToo social movement.

While the publisher recognizes Union's writing talent and her anti-rape activism, other sectors ensure that readers cannot access her memoir. In her interview with Krischer, Union shares that "only certain airports displayed [her] book, and that she had heard from readers that they had asked for [her memoir] in certain cities, only to find [that her book] was still in stacks on the floor or in carts in the back" (n.p.). Wanting to find out more information on this subject, Krischer consults Kima Jones, founder of Jack Jones Literary Arts—"a publicity company [that]…mostly represents black authors" (n.p.)—about certain retailers who refused to display Union's book. Jones responds that she "was not surprised" that Union's memoir had "received inadequate support" (Krischer n.p.). According to Jones, Union's experience does not "make sense in a way…but it *does* make sense to Jones because that's the way a lot of books by Black people, celebrity or not, are treated" (Krischer n.p.). By choosing not to display Union's memoir, these retailers participate in the historical practice of silencing Black women's testimonies and stories, a practice that Union believes persists throughout the #MeToo movement.

In her interview with Krischer, Union states that despite the #MeToo movement's popularity, "women of colour haven't been heard as enthusiastically" as white women who disclose their sexual assault (n.p.). She continues, stating that she is reluctant to believe that "it's a coincidence whose pain has been taken seriously. Whose pain we have showed historically and continued to show […] whose pain is tolerable and whose pain is intolerable. And whose pain needs to be addressed *now*" (n.p.). For Union, this history of dismissing rape allegations brought forth by Black women is why she wanted to use "her own platform" to write about her rape both in the editorial and in her memoir. At the same time, Union acknowledges that her rape story presents her as the "perfect victim" because "she was raped at work" by a stranger and "it was caught on surveillance" (Krischer n.p.). @itsgabrielleu states: "I was raped at 19. He rapes

another woman B4 he turns himself in. He took a plea deal & got 33 yrs. I sued Payless Shoe Source 4 $$$ as they knew the rapist was a former employee & didn't warn any1. I received a settlement. NO ONE has EVER accused me of using my rape as a cash grab." In most cases of rape, the only form of evidence is the survivor's testimony. Often, due to the lack of evidence and racism, Black women who have been raped by white men are much less likely to be believed than white women reporting rapes by men of oppressed races (Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale 267). Yet, Union calls herself the perfect victim because her narrative presents a Black stranger who enters Payless Shoe Source with a gun and forces Union to the back of the store where he rapes her at gunpoint (Union 84-92). This account differs from the rape stories in the other four memoirs in which the rapist tends to be an acquaintance of the author, who does not yield a weapon. Moreover, unlike Abrams, Dunham, Gay, and Valenti, who never reported their rape to the police, Union's rapist turned himself in and pleaded guilty, so the rapist was prosecuted in a court of law.

The publisher is not ambivalent about Union's rape, perhaps because the court convicted her rapist, and therefore her story was validated as truthful by this court of law. Often the circumstances of rape testimonies—such as the survivor's relationship to the perpetrator, drug and alcohol use, and the fact that they did not immediately report the assault to the police—are used against the survivor in order to discredit their testimonies, while the conditions of Union's rape ensure that her narrative is more likely to be believed. By acknowledging and problematizing these misconceptions about sexual assault, Abrams', Dunham's, Gay's, and Valenti's rape stories are arguably more radical than Union's representation of rape that adheres to the popular conventions that constitute rape. The publishers' ambivalence about their rape, inherent in their descriptions of the memoirs, re-enforces the precedent in the public sphere that

testimonies that adhere to conventions of rape culture should be believed, and testimonies that challenge these conventions should not. The descriptions on the publishers' websites and book reviews and interviews with the authors demonstrate ambivalence patterns linked to both the author's race and the content of their rape testimony. While this section focused predominantly on the memoirs, the following section considers how the publishers promote both the memoirs and the authors on their Twitter pages.

Promoting the Memoirs on Twitter

By conceptualizing the publisher as an encompassing corporation that includes marketing and promotional teams, Simone Murray states that in the emerging social and digital media environment, "[t]he most profitable application of book property may not necessarily be in book form, but that interest in content generated by a screen medium may be captured and redirected by publishers" (218). This statement alerts scholars to the need to analyze the publisher's social media promotion of the texts to uncover critical patterns related to public discourse, the books, and their authors. The prevalence of tweets in which the publishers promote the memoirs, for instance, demonstrates a relationship between tweet frequency and the author's racial identity. More specifically, the publishers promote Dunham and Valenti as feminists but are ambivalent about Abrams', Gay's, and Union's feminist status, signifying a relationship between dominant perceptions of feminism and race.

I generated the following data by using the "Advanced Search" function on Twitter: by entering the publisher's Twitter handle, along with keywords such as the title of the memoir and the author's name, the program generated a list of the publishers' tweets that contain these

keywords from 1 January 2006 to 2 July 2019.[34] The number of tweets is represented in a table in the following data visualization. Figure 1 depicts the total number of tweets in which the publisher references the corresponding memoir. [35]

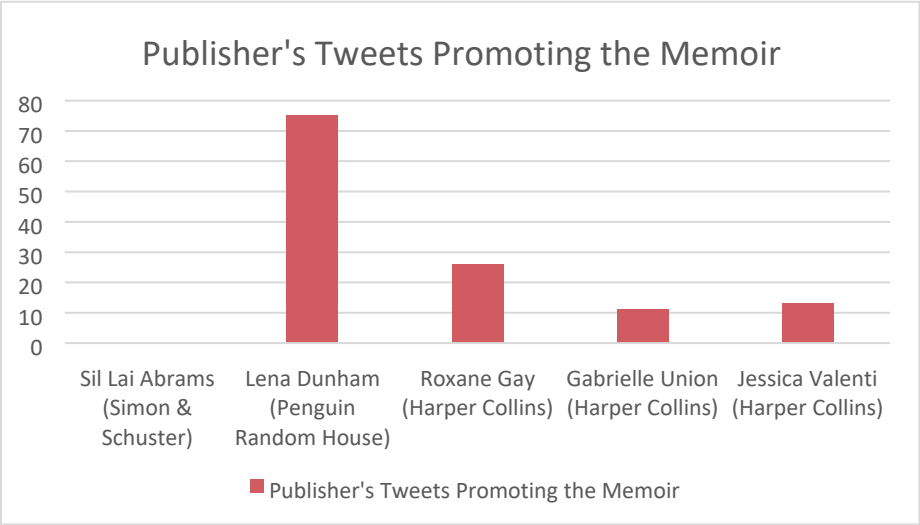


Figure 1- Publisher's Tweets Promoting the Memoir

As Figure 1 shows, Penguin Random House tweeted significantly more about Dunham's memoir than the other publishers. In part, the promotion of Dunham's book involves the publishing company's size: as Alex Shephard argues, Penguin Random House is "larger than its four biggest rivals combined, and its sheer size gives it leverage to promote and sell books" (n.p.). Penguin Random House, therefore, has the resources to ensure that Dunham's memoir is promoted sufficiently on their Twitter page. The high number of tweets related to Dunham's memoir is also associated with her celebrity status as a Hollywood actress and as a sort of celebrity feminist, and reflects the social context in which she published her memoir.

[34] To ensure that the keywords did not appear in a different context—for example, Gay published three books with Harper Collins, but this data sample pertains to tweets about Hunger—I manually reviewed the results to confirm that all of the tweets included the author's name in relation to the relevant book.
[35] For a detailed breakdown of each table related to a memoir, see Appendix B: Advanced Search Twitter.

Dunham cultivated name recognition as a Hollywood celebrity and a feminist in large part due to her popular HBO television show *Girls*; this series presents feminist issues, and because Dunham created, directed, produced, wrote, and starred in the show in addition to publicly stating that she is a feminist, she enters public discourse not only as a Hollywood celebrity but also a feminist. According to Meredith Nash and Imelda Whelehan, Dunham's "self-declared feminism" becomes a kind of "mission statement in popular cultural terms," and precisely because of the association between Dunham, *Girls*, and feminism, critics can raise "legitimate questions" about the content of her television show, particularly the "focus on white middle-class young women" (2). Most criticism addresses the lack of intersectionality in *Girls* as well as the "hipster racism" that Elwood Watson classifies as scenes in which the characters make "blatantly racist comments under the assumption that they are outdated, thus inoffensive, or comments made simply by the controversial and edgy" (153). While these concerns are undoubtedly legitimate, the purpose of stating these critiques here is to emphasize Nash and Wheleman's point that it is precisely because Dunham is recognized in popular culture as a feminist—because of her proclamation—that critics engage with her feminism, even to negatively critique her feminist politics, and that her politics are seemingly connected to a white, liberal version of feminism. Dunham's feminist status, therefore, was already established by the time she published her memoir.

Dunham also published her memoir when various North American institutions and the mainstream news media took an interest in sexual violence on college campuses in 2014. As discourses about Dunham's memoir circulate in the public sphere, including reviews of the memoir and interviews with her, potential consumers learn that Dunham's memoir features a rape testimony. Like Dunham's name, potential consumers may recognize her memoir's title in the

publisher's promotional tweets and purchase the memoir because they recall that the book is about a timely topic. Dunham's Hollywood and feminist celebrity status along with the social context, which designates the memoir as timely, might account for the publisher's overwhelming promotion of the memoir; however, Union published her memoir during the #MeToo movement as well, yet it did not receive the same level of promotion.

Like Dunham, Union is a popular Hollywood celebrity and has publicly written about feminist issues such as sexual assault. Specifically, Union published an opinion piece in the Los Angeles Times titled '"Birth of a Nation' actress Gabrielle Union: I cannot take Nate Parker rape allegations lightly" (n.p.). In this article, Union not only condemns Parker's behaviour but also confesses that she was raped by a stranger at gun-point twenty-four years earlier while she was an employee at Payless Shoe Source (n.p.). One year after Union wrote this opinion piece, she published her memoir with Harper Collins—a publishing firm that *Book Business* classifies as the "second largest consumer book publisher in the world (after Penguin Random House)"—two days after #MeToo went viral. Like Dunham's memoir, then, Union's book is undoubtedly timely. One would expect Harper Collins to promote her book as Penguin Random House did with Dunham; instead, Harper Collins tweets about Union's memoir 11 times, while Dunham's memoir appears in 75 of Penguin Random House's tweets. A possible explanation of this disparity in promotion of Twitter comes from an interview between Rebecca Carroll of *Harper's Bazaar* and Union, in which Union explains that before the release of *Birth of a Nation*, Nate Parker's 1999 rape case resurfaced, leading to low attendance and box office numbers, as potential viewers chose to boycott the film. Union believes that all of the Black women who starred in the film and who have important things to say "got thrown out" along with Parker, "like the baby and the bathwater all went down the drain" (n.p.).

As the Black actresses were dismissed, along with Parker and his film, Union airs her frustration with white celebrities like Dunham, Amy Schumer, and Kate Upton, who have "white girl privilege"—a privilege based on "oppressive systems [that] have benefited and allowed [these actresses] to say careless, insensitive and offensive things" (Carroll n.p.). Union's statement identifies that race undoubtedly contributes to how feminist icons and their political opinions circulate in the mainstream media: white, heteronormative, feminist celebrities can preserve their platforms, and the media will always circulate their stories—with a positive or negative spin—which ensures their longevity in popular culture, but Black women are often relegated to the margins. Figure 1 depicts this pattern as both Dunham and Union are Hollywood celebrities who published a memoir that features a rape testimony during a social movement against sexual violence; yet, Dunham's memoir was promoted exponentially more than Union's memoir. This mirrors how Dunham's version of feminism circulates predominantly in mainstream media while, as Union explains, Black women have been historically silenced. Not only is Dunham's memoir promoted almost seven times more frequently than Union's, but Harper Collins also published Roxane Gay's and Jessica Valenti's memoirs. These memoirs appear in more promotional tweets—26 and 13 consecutively—than Union and her memoir.

Even though Gay and Valenti are not Hollywood celebrities, Harper Collins promotes their memoirs more often than Union's memoir, perhaps because the public considers Gay and Valenti as established authors. Roxane Gay published her *New York Times* "Bestseller" and *NPR*'s "Best Book of the Year," *Bad Feminist*, with Harper Collins in 2014, and since Gay's first book was successful among critics and readers, Harper Collins may have been more inclined to promote *Hunger*. The success of Gay's first book in mainstream media likely provided Gay with greater name recognition, and the publisher tweeted about *Hunger* 26 times, which the Advanced

Search function on Twitter revealed is the same amount of tweets they devoted to Gay's *Bad Feminist*. Like Gay, Valenti is also an established author, but *Sex Object* is the first book she published with Harper Collins. Oddly, despite Union's celebrity status, Harper Collins devoted a few more tweets to Valenti's memoir. While this difference in tweets is not significant, it is curious that Harper Collins promoted Valenti's memoir more than Union's.

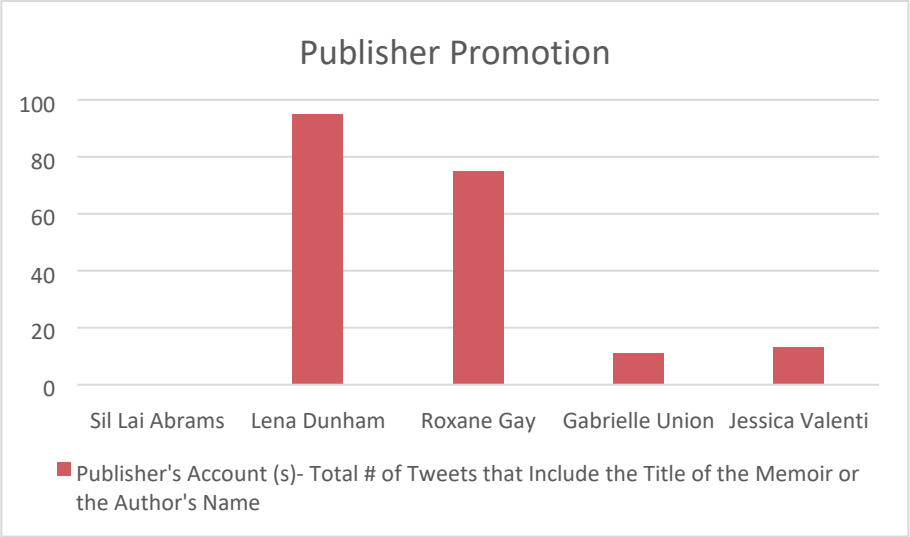


Figure 2: Publisher Promotion

One explanation may involve the fact that Valenti is a feminist icon, given the prevalence of some of her writing in popular culture. Yet Gay, who is also a feminist author, published three books with Harper Collins at the time of this analysis. As Figure 2 reveals, the number of times Harper Collins tweets about Gay does not surpass Penguin Random House's tweets about Dunham's book. Unlike Figure 1, which eliminated tweets that do not pertain to the memoirs, Figure 2 represents the number of tweets that contain the title of the memoir and the author's name, regardless of whether the name is in reference to the specific memoir. [36] Penguin Random House tweets about Dunham's one memoir 95 times. This is significantly more than Harper

[36] To see an in-depth breakdown of this data visualization, see "Table 5: Publisher Promotion vs. Author Self Promotion (Twitter)" in Appendix B: Advanced Search Twitter.

Collins tweeting about Gay and her three books a total of 75 times. In other words, Hollywood celebrity status or being an established feminist author does not appear to factor into promoting the memoirs written by Black authors in quite the same way it does for Dunham and Valenti. Conversely, Simon & Schuster do not promote Sil Lai Abrams' memoir at all.

Simon & Schuster tweets about many of their books but did not promote Sil Lai Abrams' memoir on their Twitter page, possibly because, despite her leadership and involvement in antirape and domestic violence activism, she is neither a feminist icon nor a Hollywood celebrity. The mainstream culture of celebrity feminism, according to Debbie Cameron, ensures that specific texts receive substantial support and attention, while other "interesting books…never get reviewed at all" (4). If the publisher, in this case, Simon & Schuster, is not invested in marketing and promoting Abrams' memoir, mainstream news media will not take an interest, and neither the author nor the memoir will circulate in the public sphere. Murray urges scholars to "interrogate the media construction of supposed feminist success stories" (210) and, relatedly, Cameron argues that mainstream publishers are the "villains in this story" along with "other media" who act as "accomplices" of constructing feminist celebrities (4). These corporations, publishers and media, determine which authors circulate as feminist icons in popular culture, even if, as Union noted, these feminists say "careless, insensitive, and offensive things"; through this practice, feminists like Abrams are left out of this cultural memory of feminism entirely.

Using a mainstream publisher seemingly informs the cultural memory or public perception of feminism; for instance, Simone Murray states, that mainstream representations and understandings of feminism may be informed "by publisher press release" (209). Often, this press release can take the form of a post on social media and involves promoting the feminist author just as much or sometimes even more than the text itself (208). Julie Rak argues that the

rise of individualism led to the invention of the copyright for authors' words, and this "author celebrity becomes the most important way to read and understand literary writing" (44). Authors enter the national consciousness and become feminist commodities, sometimes contingent on publishing a book. Gilley (2012) demonstrates the importance of the publisher's financial resources and network connections to publish a book through an analysis of Jessica Valenti: according to Gilley, Valenti did not "truly enter the national consciousness via the media machine until she published her [blog] writings in a book: *Full Frontal Feminism*, despite publishing on her online blog, '*Feministing.com*,'" for years (6). Once Valenti published her text, she was invited to appear on talk shows and "therefore broaden her audience and the reach of her message" (6). Valenti's decision to publish her memoir with a mainstream publisher demonstrates how the publisher's marketing of the author is just as important as the promotion of their memoir—both work to construct popular and mainstream representations of feminism.

Commodifying and Promoting Feminist Authors

When publishers promote authors, they feature a biography on their websites, and while these biographies vary significantly, the content is primarily based on the author's professional occupation. Research into whether these publishers ask authors to write their biographical statements, as is the case in academic publishing, or whether the promotion and marketing teams at the publishing agencies create these statements, was inconclusive. It is more productive, then, to focus on which of the five authors, the publishers choose to support and promote as feminists on Twitter.

Penguin Random House not only market's Dunham's memoir as a feminist discourse by featuring the book on its "Feminist Reading List" (2014) on its Tumblr page, they also give

Dunham and her friend, Jenni Konner, their own publishing imprint, named after their digital feminist newsletter, also called *Lenny*. To commemorate Jenny Zhang's *Sour Heart*—the first book that Dunham and Konner publish through their imprint—@randomhouse tweeted a photo of Dunham and Konner at the launch with the caption, "we're at @HousingWorksBks tonight for the launch of @lenadunham's Lenny imprint and @Jennybagels debut novel, Sour Heart!" Even though Konner is part of the imprint, her name is conspicuously absent from the tweet, focusing on Dunham. Furthermore, by granting Dunham and Konner their publishing imprint, and the power to decide which feminist texts will be published, the publisher is ultimately supporting their feminist values. Similarly, in their tweets promoting Valenti's memoir, Harper Collins uses the #feminism (see Figure 8 in Appendix A). Hashtags, according to Sherri Williams (2015), are an "effective way to share information" (342), and in this case, Harper Collins can reinforce the relationship between Valenti, her memoir, and feminism. While Dunham and Valenti are both self-proclaimed feminists, it stands to reason that the publishers would represent them as such; yet, it is odd that the publisher does not give an established writer like Gay her imprint or that the publishers do not use #feminism to promote Abrams', Gay's, or Union's books, which are also pieces of anti-rape activism.

As the previous chapter showed, the cultural memory of the Anti-Rape Movement centres on white feminist icons; it excludes women of colour, lesbians, and radical feminists, whose vital work furthered the movement and is defined by its lack of intersectionality. The significant difference between the memoirs is that the Black authors address feminist themes through an intersectional lens to address sexual assault, while the white authors focus solely on gender. Therefore, systemic racism inherent in public discourses of feminism is sustained by the ambivalent promotion of Black authors, which excludes these women from public discourses or

cultural memory of feminism and maintains the cultural memory of white, middle-class, liberal feminism.

It is important to note that with the popularity of social media, the publishing industry may not have *as much* power as it once did in constructing feminism. For instance, Abrams, Gay, and Union resist mainstream publishers' racist promotional strategies by circulating their memoirs on their terms. Figure 4 depicts the number of tweets each author devotes to promoting their book compared to the number of tweets each publisher allocates to promoting the author's memoir.

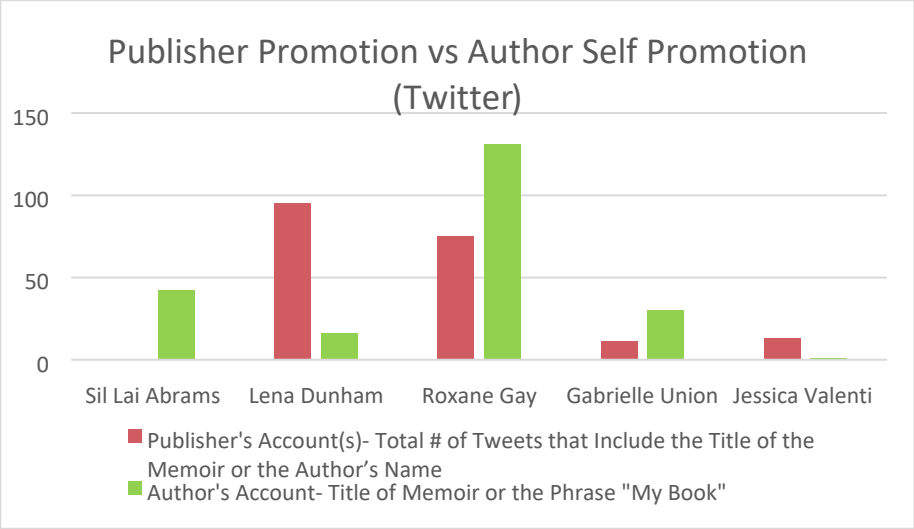


Figure 3: Publisher Promotion vs. Author Self Promotion (Twitter) The data reveals that Abrams, Gay, and Union promote their memoirs on their own Twitter pages significantly more than the publishers promoted their memoirs; whereas Dunham and Valenti tweet about their memoirs less than their publishers' tweet about them. Put differently, the Black women tweet about their memoirs more often than the white authors and the publishers. By promoting their memoirs considerably more than their publishers, Abrams, Gay, and Union take control over the marketing of their memoirs on social media (Spallacci 2021, 66). Black women, Aisha Durham argues, "have pushed feminism forward by theorizing power as it pertains racialized gender and class, Black women have also demonstrated how mass communication …

could be used as a form of media activism" (208). If these memoirs are pieces of anti-rape activism, then promoting their work on Twitter, in turn, circulates these Black activist discourses.

In the following section, I juxtapose the publishers' promotion of the authors and their memoirs with each author's own representation of their feminist politics. According to Nancy Thumin, self-representation is a "bounded text, however fleeting and ephemeral that text might be…and has the potential for subsequent engagements" from others on social media (6). Furthermore, self-representation on social media is different from representation because of the understanding that the author represents themselves—through a conscious mediated representation—rather than being represented by another, more powerful group (6). Reading each of the author's self-representation of feminism on their social media can provide a glimpse of each of their feminist politics.

Author's Self-Representation: Feminism

Each of the authors represent their relationship to feminism and their feminist values during interviews with mainstream news media and their social media platforms. These representations reveal that Abrams, Gay, and Union resist the cultural memory of feminism because they espouse radical feminist values and critique mainstream feminism. Alternatively, Dunham and Valenti seem to be committed to preserving this cultural memory.

To begin, Abrams, Gay, and Union are committed to challenging white, middle-class, liberal feminism either by promoting radical feminism or publicly critiquing the feminist movement. For instance, @Sil_Lai asserts: "[m]e when people tweet at me about radical feminism like it's a bad thing," accompanied by a GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) or looping video of famous singer Beyoncé Knowles, laughing. Here, Abrams emphasizes that the

suggestion that radical feminism is problematic is laughable or humorous because she identifies as a radical feminist. While Abrams promotes radical feminism, Gay publishes a collection of essays called *Bad Feminist*, in which she criticizes mainstream feminism because it is "too often … associated only with the most visible figures, the people with the loudest, most provocative voices" (x). Like the tendency to centre a few feminist icons and their texts in the cultural memory of the 1970s women's movement, Gay claims that contemporary feminism also suffers because it is conflated "with women who advocate feminism as part of their personal brand" (x). Similarly, Union reviews Mikki Kendall's book *Hood Feminism: Notes From the Women That The Movement Forgot*, which, according to the description on the Penguin Random House website, "takes aim at the legitimacy of the modern feminist movement" because the movement "failed to address the needs of all but a few women" (n.p.). In her review, Union states that Kendall's book is "a rousing call to action for today's feminists" and that "it should be required reading for everyone" (n.p.). While one might presume that feminism has become more intersectional and inclusive since the 1970s, both Gay's and Union's writing demonstrates that contemporary feminism persists in promoting a few feminist icons to represent the entire movement. In other words, including all feminists in the women's movement but excluding most feminists from the cultural memory of feminism ensures the continuation of white, middle-class, liberal feminism, which is a pattern that Gay and Union seek to expose and that Abrams publicly rejects. Alternatively, Dunham's and Valenti's self-representation on social media appears to preserve the cultural memory of mainstream feminism by evoking objects that Barbara Green calls "feminist things" (77) from previous feminist movements.

Both Dunham's and Valenti's relationships to feminist things symbolize their attachments to the specific politics tethered to them. "Feminist things," according to Green, have their roots in

the suffrage shop which sold objects—pins, neckties, signs, necklaces, periodicals, newsletters, and so on—that symbolized the suffrage movement. While some of these feminist things originated during the suffrage era, images of women with these feminist things circulated with greater frequency during the 1970s due to significant advancements in mainstream news media. Therefore, in cultural memory, these feminist things often symbolize both the suffrage movement and, more prominently, the Women's Liberation Movement. A feminist thing, Green argues, can make a "feminine practice of everyday life visible" (77) because things have the power to evoke "affect, sentiment, and desires that bond subjects to objects." Based on this logic, feminist icons from the past, like Gloria Steinem, can also be feminist things today because mainstream publishers and news media have commodified them to symbolize an entire movement. Acts of consumption, explicitly consuming feminist things, according to Green, is tied to subject-formation because "affect, sentiment, and desires […] bond subjects to objects and allow for the production of new subjectivities through innovative acts of consumption" (77). By this logic, analyzing the authors' self-representations in which they engage with feminist things can reveal their feminist values.

Relatedly, Cheng states that ambivalent relationships arise from intricate systems of "consumption and denial" of the other (37). In denying the other, Judith Butler suggests that the subject "refuse[s] to speak of the other"; however, in consuming the other, the other is subsequently drawn into the subject's psyche (183). By looking at self-representation, Butler claims that scholars can find "a refracted trail of what [the subject] did not say about the other" (183). Both Dunham's and Valenti's personal Instagram and Twitter pages—platforms of self representation—feature posts in which the authors align themselves with feminist things like newsletters, pins and feminist icons like Gloria Steinem, things that symbolize feminist values of

white, middle-class liberal feminism. Put another way, these representations are ambivalent about feminists who were excluded from the cultural memory of the movement and their feminist values.

For instance, Dunham promotes her feminist newsletter, *Lenny*, and multiple photographs in which Gloria Steinem is the subject on her Instagram page. A year after publishing her memoir, Dunham and her friend Jenner Konner created *Lenny*, which, according to *lennyletter.com*, takes the form of a bi-weekly email that delivers news about "*feminism*, style, health, politics, and unique voices" to subscribers (my emphasis n.p.). Newsletters, according to Agatha Beins, are ephemeral traces of political activism from feminist movements (46), so by calling their email—that reports on feminism—a newsletter, Dunham and Konner evoke a sense of nostalgia for these past eras of feminism, in which feminists used newsletters to spread feminist information. Additionally, Dunham's Instagram features numerous posts featuring Gloria Steinem. @lenadunham posts a selfie with Gloria Steinem with the caption, "Gloria Steinem is the recipient of the first Lenny Questionnaire. That is not her greatest achievement though…" Dunham also posts a Black-and-white photograph of Gloria Steinem wearing a shirt that says "F Word" along with a lengthy caption wishing the 84-year-old Steinem, who Dunham calls a "national treasure," a happy birthday. Unlike Abrams, Gay, and Union, who critique contemporary feminism, Dunham does not cast a critical eye on mainstream feminism; instead, @lenadunham admits that "the debate about good and bad feminism makes [her] want to take a nap for a year." Not only does Dunham refuse to engage with debates about mainstream feminism, her posts that feature her newsletter or Gloria Steinem demonstrate an ambivalent relationship to forms of activism that counter mainstream feminism. In other words, Dunham's nostalgia for a past era of feminism symbolizes that her relationship to feminism is not future

oriented but is one that continues to place her politics in the past. In an interview with Megan O'Grady from *Vogue*, Dunham states that for her next project, she "really want[s]…to turn backward and think about where we're coming from, and examine what feminism was for my mother, for my grandmother, you know, for the women who have made all of this possible" (n.p.). While Abrams', Gay's, and Union's feminism demonstrate their commitment to "bringing about a future that is decidedly different from the past" (Meagher and Runyon 344), Dunham's self-representation, signifies her complicity with mainstream feminism and its nostalgia.

Like Dunham, Valenti also represents herself using feminist things like buttons and photographs that feature Gloria Steinem. In an Instagram post from 9 April 2016, almost two months before she published *Sex Object*, Valenti posts a photograph of the front cover of *Sex Object* with the #SexObject on a button, with the caption, "[b]uttons came in!!!" [37] Photographs from the 1970s depict feminist icons like Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem wearing feminist buttons.[38] Using buttons to promote her memoir demonstrates that Valenti's feminism is rooted in this past era of feminism and ambivalent to radical feminist politics' exclusion from the movement. She also posts a selfie with Gloria Steinem, which looks almost identical to the photograph that Dunham posts with Steinem (see Figure 9 in Appendix A), as well as a photograph of a framed picture of Valenti's sister with Steinem and a signed copy of Steinem's book—two gifts that Valenti and her sister gifted to their mother for Christmas. Feminist things, like buttons and Steinem, represent Valenti's nostalgia for a movement in which she did not participate. Meagher and Runyon claim that this "golden era of feminism…is a time animated by the promise of feminist revolution" and is thus "all the more captivating" for contemporary feminists "given that they were not there to experience it" (348).

[37] See Figure 6 in Appendix A
[38] See Figure 7 in Appendix A

If Dunham and Valenti feel nostalgic about the Women's Liberation Movement that they did not attend, their nostalgia must originate from this movement's cultural memory, which, as Chapter One demonstrated, is signified by white, middle-class, liberal feminism. Perhaps Dunham's and Valenti's complicity with the movement involves knowing that the revolution was for white women like them, and they are interested in preserving mainstream feminism because the movement has always benefited them. Conversely, Abrams, Gay, and Union critique mainstream feminism and demonstrate radical feminist politics. The following section collects data from the authors' Twitter pages, specifically tweets about anti-rape activism. It shows that Abrams, Gay, and Union tweet significantly more about anti-rape activism than Dunham and Valenti, and their activism is intersectional. At the same time, Dunham and Valenti approach sexual violence with a gender-based perspective.

Authors' Anti-Rape Activism on Twitter

While mainstream publishers and news media promote Valenti and Dunham as feminists, which is most likely because their feminism is aligned with white, middle-class, liberal feminism, Abrams, Union, and Gay are excluded from the feminist conversation, which, as this section demonstrates, is because their anti-rape activism is intersectional. By compiling tweets by each author that features a word or phrase connected to anti-rape activism, this section exhibits the extent to which each author is engaged in anti-rape activism, revealing that Abrams, Gay, and Union participate in anti-rape activism on Twitter more than Dunham and Valenti. Moreover, a close reading of some of these tweets shows that Abrams, Gay, and Union use an intersectional framework to discuss rape. In contrast, Dunham and Valenti use a gender-based perspective, closely aligned with the mainstream cultural memory of the official Anti-Rape Movement.

A large portion of Valenti's tweets, for instance, respond to mainstream news media reports of Donald Trump's remarks about rape allegations made against him by women. Asserting that Trump condones sexual violence against women, for example, @JessicaValenti states: "Trump being credibly accused of rape—again—is not news-of-the-day or just another wrong in a long line of misdeeds. It's a message to all American women that our bodies can be hurt, grabbed, assaulted, and mistreated without recourse." While a president who condones sexual violence can undoubtedly contribute to the number of incidents of sexual assault against all women, Valenti's tweet ignores the history of women of colour who experienced disproportionately higher rates of sexual assault long before Trump was elected President.

Similarly, Valenti responds to reports that E. Jean. Carroll accused Trump of assaulting her in a Bergdorf Goodman's dressing room (Jones n.p.). Trump responds to the allegation by noting that Caroll has a pattern of accusing men of sexual assault, that she is not his type, and that she certainly would not be his first choice of a woman to assault (Jones n.p.). In response to these news reports, @JessicaValenti asserts that "Trump tries to cast doubt on Carroll's rape accusation by saying she's accused other men of abuse. This happens to women all the time! Lots over the course of a lifetime! I WROTE A WHOLE BOOK ABOUT IT". Furthermore, @Jessica Valenti explains that she is "[s]till sort of reeling over the fact that we have a president who calls women too ugly to rape." While the President's comments are undoubtedly disturbing, in particular, because he is a public figure with enormous power, Valenti's tweets reflect her rage at the knowledge that the President and society employ various techniques to discredit surivivors' rape testimonies. Yet, she also pounces on the opportunity to promote her book—in all capital letters, no less. She makes no mention that, historically, society has always attempted to discredit Black women who report that they were raped. bell hooks argues that “19th-century

representations of Black female bodies were constructed to emphasize that these bodies were expendable," and contemporary representations "give a similar message" (64). Valenti's ambivalence, therefore, ignores "a variety of cultural narratives that historically have linked sexual violence with racial oppression," which, as Valerie Smith argues, "continue to determine the nature of public response" towards Black women who disclose that they were raped (274). Intersectionality is crucial to anti-rape activism because certain groups of women experience disproportionately high rates of sexual violence due to their positionality and are more likely to be silenced and disbelieved when they attempt to bring a perpetrator to justice. Still, Valenti's tweets do not account for survivors' positionality in society beyond their gender. Similarly, Dunham's anti-rape activism also purports a gender-based perspective.

Three years after the publication of Dunham's memoir, the #MeToo went viral, and in twenty-four hours, the hashtag appeared in over 12 million Facebook posts, comments, and reactions, challenging the view that women should stay silent about rape allegations. The following week, Dunham shared a post of a screen capture of a man replying to one of her tweets about #MeToo that states, "You made up a rape story." Accompanying this photograph, @lenadunham writes a lengthy post about #MeToo, and shares with her followers that, when she disclosed her rape in her memoir three years earlier, "[she] was ignorant—[she] assumed (despite being in the eye of the storm before) that you share a painful story and people say 'hey, we may not agree on everything but fuck I hate that this happened to you.' That isn't often the experience of coming forward with assault." Like Valenti, Dunham recognizes that women who come forward with rape allegations are met with skepticism. Still, this tweet universalizes all experiences of women who report that they were assaulted and is ambivalent about the fact that Black women are significantly less likely than white women to be believed if they choose to

report that they were raped. Although Dunham attempts to raise awareness about the fact that survivors are often not believed if they choose to speak publicly about their rape, and despite Dunham and Konner's feminist newsletter, imprint, and Dunham's public status as a feminist, once Aurora Perrineau accused Murray Miller, a writer for Dunham's television series, *Girls*, of raping her when she was seventeen years old, the two women sent a statement to *The Hollywood Reporter* in an attempt to publicly silence Perrineau.

Not only did Dunham and Konner release a public statement to *The Hollywood Reporter* defending Murray, but @lenadunham also tweeted to @THR on behalf of Konner and herself declaring that their "insider knowledge of Murray's situation" made the women "confident that the accusation is one of the 3 percent of assault cases that are misreported every year." Chastising Perrineau, Dunham and Konner state that “it is a true shame” to add to the number of false reports, as Perrineau had allegedly done, because “outside of Hollywood women still struggle to be believed.” Dunham and Konner did not face any significant repercussions for their statement; they retain their newsletter and publishing imprint. [39] A year later, Dunham wrote an opinion piece in *The Hollywood Reporter* publicly apologizing to Perrineau called “My Apology to Aurora,” claiming that her attempts to silence Perrineau to protect her friend, Murray, were “inexcusable” (n.p.). Despite the public apology, the fact remains that Dunham used her status as a celebrity and feminist to cast serious doubt and suspicion on Perrineau's testimony.

Even though mainstream publishers and news media present Valenti and Dunham as feminists, both of their public statements about rape on Twitter simultaneously publicly condemn the rape of white, cis, heterosexual, able-bodied women and are ambivalent to various degrees about the historical legacy of condoning the rape of women of colour. Conversely, Abrams,

[39] Dunham and Konner stopped their newsletter a year later in October 2018.

Union, and Gay, who do not circulate in the public sphere as feminists, not only tweet about antirape activism more frequently than Dunham and Valenti, but their tweets are also intersectional, and, therefore, their activism does not conform to mainstream feminism.

I generated the following data using the "Advanced Search" function on Twitter; I inputted the author's Twitter account, along with keywords pertaining to anti-rape activism such as: rape/d, rapist, sexual abuse/d, sexual assault, sexually assaulted, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexually harassed, sexual predator, violence, assault, abuse, harassment, harass, and harassed, from 1 January 2006 until 2 July 2019. Then, to ensure that the key words did not appear in a different context, I manually reviewed the results to confirm that the keywords corresponded to a tweet about anti-rape activism. Sil Lai Abrams and Roxane Gay have published anti-rape activist tweets more frequently than the other authors: 461 and 343, respectively. Additionally, as the data visualization shows, most of the anti-rape activism tweets were published by Abrams, Gay, and Union, the three authors whom the publishers did not promote as feminists on their social media.

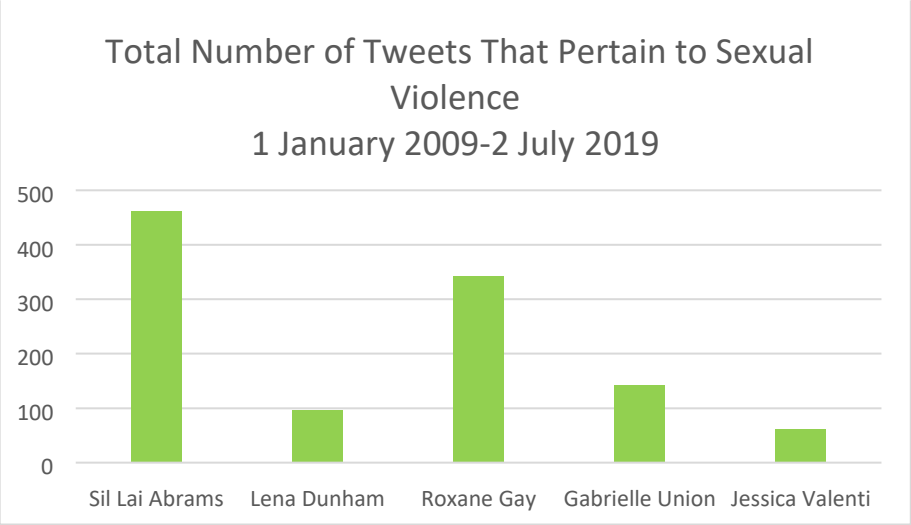


Figure 4: Total Number of Tweets That Pertain to Sexual Violence

(1 January 2009 – 2 July 2019)

Scholarship on Black digital activism demonstrates that Black women, who are also activists, use social media to create networks and raise awareness about rape since mainstream media avoids reporting on serious issues that affect Black women. Accordingly, Charlton McIlwain states that Black activists use Twitter as "a radical new way of making news" and "giving unfiltered voice to those whose voices are traditionally unheard, ignored or silenced" (5). Twitter provides activists a space to build "dense and diverse networks between affiliated activists, journalists, public officials, and mass groups of anonymous strangers to both hijack and resist media influence and power" (5). Rosemary Clark explains that social media activism has its "grassroots origins and intersectional values…[in] analog Black feminist strategies that circumvented white and male political leadership to connect the specific concerns of local communities and national movements, and prioritize the situated knowledge of women of colour" (185). Likewise, Aisha Durham states that "[c]ontemporary forms of cyberfeminism… are steeped in a rich tradition of Black women's activism" (212). Anti-rape activism on social media demonstrates a need to raise awareness about sexual violence inflicted on Black women, especially outside of mainstream media.

In the context of sexual violence activism, Sherri Williams (2015) states that Black women use Twitter to "combat the sexual brutalization that Black women and girls have experienced throughout history" (342). Since the mainstream media does not take an interest in these issues, Twitter, according to Williams, becomes "an important tool to inform the public of violence against Black women…without relying on the traditional news cycle or the mainstream media's problematic framing of sexual violence and Black women" (342). Furthermore, Williams (2016) asserts that Twitter allows Black activists to not only circumvent "traditional media barriers" but also allows content about sexual violence against Black women to "be

communicated to a wide audience" (925). While mainstream media coverage eventually reports on Black activism, like reports about Black Lives Matter—an organization that raises awareness about "state-sanctioned anti-Black violence"—the news coverage tends to omit representations of Black women and focuses "almost exclusively…on cisgender Black men" (925). Mainstream media refuses to represent the victimization of Black women because they "are not perceived as legitimate victims" (923). To expose the prevalence of sexual violence against Black women and to challenge stereotypes of Black women as rape victims, Abrams, Union, and Gay use Twitter as a medium for their intersectional, anti-rape activism.

First, Abrams' tweets are intersectional because they show that race determines how various institutions treat rape survivors if they publicly speak about their rape. Specifically, as the #MeToo movement went viral, some actresses came forward with allegations of sexual assault against Harvey Weinstein. While Weinstein remained quiet about most of the allegations, Abrams notes that he immediately refuted Lupita Nyong'o's allegation against him. @Sil_Lai states, "[o]f course Weinstein chose to refute Lupita Nyong'o. He figures because she's Black, people will not believe her. He's wrong. #IBelieveLupita." Unlike Valenti's anti-rape activism tweets, Abrams raises awareness that women who come forward with rape allegations are not treated equally; Black women have historically been silenced or dismissed if they spoke publicly about being raped, and Weinstein participates in this legacy by immediately denying Nyong'o's allegation. Abrams also addresses that as #MeToo went viral, the movement's Black feminist founder, Tarana Burke, was excluded from discourses about the movement. Responding to a tweet stating that Alyssa Milano and UNICEF plan to launch the #HerToo campaign, @Sil_Lai asks, "[i]s #HerToo a way to push the creator of #MeToo @TaranaBurke, a Black woman, out of

the way & rebrand the movement with a white female celeb?" Here, Abrams points to the tradition that although Black women's activism was foundational to the 1970s Anti-Rape Movement, their work was excluded from the cultural memory of anti-rape activism while white feminist icons were credited with the movement. Like Abrams, Union also addresses sexual violence through an intersectional lens, demonstrating that race contributes to the prevalence of sexual assault cases and whether Black women are believed about rape.

Referring to a statistic regarding the prevalence of women who are raped before the age of eighteen, @itsgabrielleu states that "60% of Black girls in the US are victims of sexual assault by 18 yrs." Union uses Twitter to address how pervasive sexual violence is among communities of young girls and address the inequality inherent in the public's response to the #MeToo movement. @itsgabrielleu critiques the #MeToo movement, asserting: "[l]ook around, u can EASILY see whose pain is 'real/valid' & must be addressed and whose pain is tolerable, unimportant and systemically ignored." Here, Union challenges the public discourse or belief that the #MeToo movement changed the collective silencing of rape testimonies—by inviting all women to speak about sexual violence in the public sphere—by announcing on a public platform, like Twitter, that Black women were not validated during #MeToo. Similarly, Gay's anti-rape activist tweets call for nuance in conversations of sexual violence and confront white feminists who refuse to think of sexual violence with an intersectional perspective.

In a thread that addresses Union and her film *Birth of a Nation*, @rgay states, "[i]t's weird that people are saying 'But Gabrielle Union is still asking people to see Birth of a Nation,''Well, yes. She stars in the movie." Gay defends Union's stance on the film and continues her thread, replying, "it's called nuance. She is a rape survivor and a movie star and a Black woman. She can't separate these things." Gay emphasizes the need for an intersectional perspective to discuss

Black women's relationship to sexual violence, by explicitly stating that Union's positionality as an actress in the film, as a Hollywood celebrity, as a rape survivor, and Black women inform her decision to ask people to see the film, despite Parker's past rape trial.

In a similar vein, during an interview with @feministabulous, Roxane Gay states that "[i]f R. Kelly was preying upon young white girls they would have built a prison on top of him." Joyce M. Short, @jm_short, a white feminist who writes about consent and serves on the New York State Assembly, opposed Gay's statement immediately. @jm_short argues that @rgay's statement is insensitive to the white girls who are "treated horribly by authorities and society!" and that "[w]e should be fighting for all victims, not segregating victims by race." Short seems to think that intersectional approaches to sexual violence are a form of segregation, which is why Gay responds to Short telling her to look up intersectionality. This particular interaction shows how Black women continuously take on the labour of educating society about intersectionality. Adopting an intersectional framework to read texts, histories, and testimonies of sexual assault allow for a more nuanced critical understanding of rape, which, as their tweets demonstrate, can build strong forms of anti-rape activism.

A comparison of these five memoirs' publication histories exposes intersecting relationships between mainstream publishers, news media, and political activism, and the construction of the cultural memory of feminism. In the descriptions of the memoirs, the publishers exhibited an ambivalent relationship towards the memoirs in which the authors challenge rape myths but directly referenced the rape in the memoirs that adhere to these myths. This ambivalence demonstrates both a desire to publish the memoirs because of the timely subject matter along with a resistance to make a political stance against rape. Furthermore, the publishers promote Dunham and Valenti precisely because their feminist politics reflect the

cultural memory of mainstream feminism, which is evident through the authors' self-representations on social media.

Dunham and Valenti demonstrate a simultaneous nostalgia for the 1970s women's movement and ambivalence for intersectional activism, which is why their anti-rape activism reflects a gender only perspective of sexual assault. Conversely, Abrams, Gay, and Union are not promoted as feminist even though their activism on social media determines that these authors are avid anti-rape activists who challenge mainstream feminism and adopt an intersectional approach to sexual violence. Publishers promote Abrams, Gay, and Union and their memoirs on their websites and Twitter pages, and journalists interview these authors and review their books. Despite this version of retention, the nostalgia for the Women's Liberation Movement, present in these pretextual objects—excludes these authors and their memoirs—maintaining the cultural memory of white liberal feminism. This chapter focused on the epitextual elements involved in the publication history of the memoirs, and the next chapter will look at the memoirs; specifically, how the narratives expose the limits of legal testimony in situations of rape as well as debunk and refute rape myths that undermine women's testimonies. As they do so, these memoirs seem to demonstrate that melancholia, particularly for Black authors, is not a pathological form of mourning, but rather a state of resistance and grievance.

Chapter 3 -Melancholia as Resistance: Reading Sexual Assault Memoirs

> We still don't have a name for what happens to women living in a culture that hates them […] what about those of us who walk through all of this without feeling any of it— what does it say about the hoops our brain had to jump through to get to ambivalence?
> -Jessica Valenti, *Sex Object* (13-4)

Jessica Valenti begins her memoir, *Sex Object*, by establishing that women in the United States face a serious predicament; the public invites them to participate—in professional, familial, and ultimately, capitalist capacities—but various institutions and people continuously attempt to suppress their participation because the culture hates women (13). These circumstances echo the politics of publishing a memoir of sexual assault, which I outlined in the previous chapter, in which mainstream publishers invite all five authors to publish their memoirs but ensure that only Dunham and Valenti—the white authors who advance relatively liberal politics—become a part of mainstream feminist activism's cultural memory. Conversely, Black authors, who posit intersectional and radical politics, like Abrams, Gay, and Union, are excluded. These patterns maintain a structure of "centrality and marginality"—to borrow from Anne Anlin Cheng—that resembles Valenti's statement that the culture in the United States teaches women to believe they have a sense of liberty in the public sphere, yet consistently subjects them to sexual harassment and assault (30).

To cope with this perceived and often real threat of sexual assault, Valenti posits that women's brains have to jump through a series of hoops to achieve a state of ambivalence (13-4). I would argue that Sigmund Freud's theory of loss, in *Mourning and Melancholia*, can explain these "hoops" to which Valenti refers. To begin, Freud classifies loss as either the death of a loved person or the "loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of [a loved one], such as one's liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). As Valenti directs readers to the many incidences of sexual assault and harassment—that she is confronted by daily—she explains how these constant

threats to her safety caused her significant "hurt" and "damage"; her loss, then, seems to be her liberty because she learned that she genuinely does not have the agency to control what happens to her body in the public sphere (14). Growing up in New York City, Valenti identifies the subway system as a public space where she learned this harsh reality. In her chapter titled "Subway," Valenti explains that as a teenager, she realized that if she remained in an empty subway car, she "just knew the guy sitting across from [her] would inevitably lift his newspaper to reveal a semi-hard cock" (57). A crowded subway car, according to Valenti, was no better; instead of seeing men exposing their "semi-hard" penises, "[she] felt them"; either they were "pressing into [her] hip," or men pretended "that the rocking up against [her] was just because of the jostling of the train" (57). This informal education causes Valenti to ask: if liberty in the United States means that citizens ought to be able to live their lives free of oppressive control, then why are "public spaces not really public for [women], but a series of surprise private moments that [they] can't prevent or erase [?]" (65).

The answer might lie in the fact that for most people in the United States—except for privileged, white men—liberty is merely an ideal, not an attainable state of being. To illustrate this point, Cheng explains that the "economic, material, and philosophical advances" of the nation were "built on a series of legalized exclusions…and the labor provided by those excluded" (31). These series of exclusions, Cheng argues, creates a "national topography of centrality and marginality" that maintains a "dominant, standard, white national ideal" (30). This topography, according to Cheryl Harris, meant that "whites could not be enslaved or held as slaves," that "white identity and whiteness were sources of privilege and protection [and] their absence meant being an object of property" (1720-1). In other words, Harris claims that, "owning white identity as property affirmed the self-identity and liberty of whites and, conversely denied the self-

identity and liberty of Blacks" (1743). Following emancipation, to preserve white men's liberty, the nation had to disavow its "topography of centrality and marginality" publicly and somehow, simultaneously maintain it. As a result, the United States has historically promoted ideals such as freedom and liberty for all of its citizens, providing them with a false sense of safety and security, but according to Cheng, citizens such as "African Americans, Jewish Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans" (31)—and, I would argue, women, people who identify as queer, those who are not able-bodied, and so on— participate in an oppressive and discriminatory democracy.[40]

Ideally, promoting values such as liberty ensures that marginalized people feel safe enough to participate in the public sphere and provide a mechanism that can exclude experiences of discrimination. Relatedly, Valenti claims that the culture teaches women to accept repeated assaults against them and not to report these daily forms of harassment or speak of them in the public sphere because "no one wants to hear a woman talking or writing about pain in a way that suggests that it doesn't end" (15). Valenti resists this imperative in her memoir by conceptualizing this pain as an illness with no cure. By demonstrating how both the threat of and acts of sexual assault infringe on her safety, she explains that "[women] are sick people with no disease, given no explanation for [their] supposedly disconnected symptoms" (14). Unlike physical illnesses that tend to present a specific set of symptoms physicians can more easily

[40] Here, the emphasis on white men is that, in post-antebellum America, white women were sometimes thought of as property to preserve white men's liberty. As I reference later in this chapter, Valerie Smith, in a historical overview of rape laws in the United States, argues that "rape is constructed as a crime against the property of privileged white men"(9). Similarly, Jacqueline Dowd Hall states that "[w]hite women were the forbidden fruit, the untouchable property, the ultimate symbol of white male power" (334). In other words, any form of sexual violence against a white man's daughter or wife was recognized in the law as an assault on white men's property; so, while white women were not subject to being enslaved, the law recognized them as white men's property.

diagnose, “what diagnosis do you give to the shaking hands you get after a stranger whispers ‘pussy’ in your ear on your way to work? What medicine can you take […]?” (14).

Here, I return to Freud's framework of mourning and melancholia to think of Valenti's symptoms as side effects of losing her liberty. For Valenti, her lost object is her liberty because, she does not reside in a society where she is free from oppression; instead, as she demonstrates throughout her memoir, she lives in a society that promises a false sense of liberty while men constantly harass and threaten women. According to Freud, once a person realizes that the lost object, in this case, liberty, is gone or “no longer exists” –and I would add, perhaps, never did exist—we expect to see the libido “withdrawn from attachments to that object” (244). Yet, this demand to relinquish attachments to the lost object “arouses understandable opposition” and, sometimes, this “opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place” and the person clings to the lost object (244). During mourning, “respect for reality gains the day,” and, after the libidinal attachment to the lost object is severed, the “free libido” redirects towards a new object. Similarly, melancholia begins with an original “attachment of the libido” to a particular object but, “then, owing to a real slight or disappointment coming from this loved person, the object-relationship [is] shattered,” creating a state of ambivalence (249). [41] Freud's conceptions of mourning and melancholia help me to understand how the repeated assaults against Valenti cause her to enter a state of melancholic ambivalence about inhabiting “a culture that hates [women]” (14).

After Valenti is raped by a man named Carl, for instance, she confesses that the rape did not “destroy” her as she “thought something like this is supposed to” (112); instead, she does not

[41] According to Pamela Thurschwell, Freud found that melancholics, who experienced the loss of a simultaneously loved and hated object, “harboured unconscious ambivalent feelings towards the lost object” (90).

“think about Carl or that night,” nor does she “carry scars from [the rape],” and for these reasons she feels “strange"”(112), a strangeness that seems to arise from her feelings of melancholic ambivalence following her rape. Cheng explains this ambivalence by outlining the three stages of melancholia, designated by “a chain of loss, denial, and incorporation” (28). The final step—incorporation—is the internalization of the lost object, and Cheng argues that as a result, “the melancholic does not feel melancholic because he or she has lost something but because he or she has introjected that which he or she now reviles” (28). This process of incorporation may explain why, even though Valenti admits that she does not “carry scars from [the rape],” she did begin to have “trouble sleeping” and “felt sick all of the time” (9). Valenti admits that, for years after, she resisted classifying Carl's actions as rape: she “did not feel like a person who was capable of being violated because at the time [she] barely considered [herself] a person” (112). Moreover, Valenti recognizes that following a rape, women struggle to acknowledge that they were sexually assaulted because they live “in a world that regularly tells women they're asking for it” (12). Her feelings of illness, then, are perhaps symptoms of internalizing the rape along with problematic misconceptions about sexual assault survivors.

Valenti outlines strategies that some women employ to try to live with this illness: women use humour in an attempt to laugh through the pain, for example, or they pretend that the “offenses roll off their back” (14). Arguably, these strategies are performances of mourning because they demonstrate a sense of letting go of the constant injustice; women employ strategies like humour and denial to present to others as though these daily abuses do not affect them. We may also read these performances as embodied techniques of self-preservation because if women were to acknowledge the consistent threats and physical abuse directed towards them, they would likely experience depression, anxiety, and a variety of unsettling or uncomfortable

effects. Instead, women adopt these techniques of mourning, which, according to Valenti, are "sharper versions of the expectation that women be forever pleasant, even as [they are] eating shit" (14).

This consumption—eating shit—is aligned with Cheng's claim that melancholia is a consumption of self-impoverishment that "is also nurturing" (8). According to Freud, the ambivalence felt for the lost object, thereby establishing an "identification of the ego with the abandoned object" (249). Freud classifies this identification with the lost object as "narcissistic identification": throughout this process, the "ego wants to incorporate this object into itself" (249), and it does so "by devouring it" (250). During mourning, Freud famously argues, "it is the world which has become poor and empty," while in melancholia, it is "the ego itself" that becomes "poor and empty" (254) because the melancholic subject demonstrates "self-reproaches and self-revilings" that "culminate in a delusional expectation of punishment" (244). These "self reproaches of melancholics are really disguised reproaches directed towards the loved person or object" (Thurschwell 90) and serve as "a way for melancholics to unconsciously protect themselves from the feelings of guilt that would surely follow if they were to admit their ambivalence towards the lost object" (90). Valenti is part of a society that promises women success, love, freedom, and happiness, but instead, it allows men to get away with directing multiple forms of violence against women regularly. Liberty, for Valenti, becomes a simultaneously loved and hated object, and that conflict produces ambivalent feelings towards the object as well as self-reproaches and reviling towards herself.

Valenti recalls that once her body began to show signs of puberty, and in particular when she "grew breasts," men started harassing her on the subway, and this objectification of her body was reinforced by both the men who abused her during sex and by popular films that adopt

cinematic and narratives techniques to objectify women's bodies (13). Due to the threatening nature of these messages and their potential to translate into violence, Valenti confesses that her "survival instincts took over," and she "became the loudest girl, the quickest with a sex joke, the one who laughed at old men coming on to her" (13). Here, it is particularly salient that we recall the "self-reproaches" exhibited by "melancholics are really disguised reproaches directed towards the loved person or object," and serve as "a way for melancholics to unconsciously protect themselves" (Thurschwell 90). In an attempt to survive the constant threats to her liberty, Valenti vowed that if men were going to treat her like a "sex object, [she] was going to be the best sex object [that she] could be" (13); yet, she claims that "this sort of posturing is a performance that requires strength" that she does not have anymore (14). Absorbing the cultural messages that repeatedly taught her that she was a sex object, Valenti became one and used humour to cope with this melancholic identity while secretly hoping that "someone [would] finally notice that this is not very funny" (14). Arguably Valenti's memoir begins with a melancholic disposition, but, at times, she deconstructs her ambivalence and reveals the roots of her pain. However, this melancholic disposition is not pathological; even though Valenti sometimes uses the term "sick" to describe women's melancholia, and even though Freud initially classified melancholia as pathological, Valenti also demonstrates how melancholia may not be an illness but rather a form of resistance.

Patricia Rae explains that, in Freud's later publications, "The Ego and the Id" (1923) and "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" (1926), he acknowledged that "melancholia is an inevitable part of ego formation" (16). Scholars such as Madelon Sprengnether, and Kathleen Woodward, along with Patricia Rae, have argued that perhaps Freud's later writings were inspired by his personal experiences of loss. As a result, Freud "retreats from the position that the

mental health of the mourner depends on severing all ties with the lost beloved" and instead, "recuperates melancholia as a normal process" (Rae 16). Accordingly, as melancholia became a normal response to grief rather than a pathological state of mourning, Rae claims that theorists and political activists began to think of melancholia as an ethical response to the histories of loss for marginalized people (16). Since mourning and melancholia are responses to loss, both concepts are linked to memories of remembrance and memorialization that carry ethical imperatives concerning grief representations. Yet, Freud's initial theorization of mourning as overcoming loss "amounts to a forgetting of, or an abdication of responsibility for, what has been lost, and […] this amnesia has been too often demanded and paid in the interest of preserving the status quo" (18). Scholars began to theorize melancholia's state of being "stuck" as a state in which subjects are forced to acknowledge and remember, and melancholia became aligned with an ethics of remembrance.

By conceptualizing melancholia and remembrance as an ethical response to loss, Lucy Brisley reiterates that, through the "assimilation" that occurs during mourning, the subject forgets the lost object, or the "Other," while "melancholia seems to be ethical because it preserves the other at all costs" (99). According to Brisley, a melancholic relationship with the lost object—in this case, the dead "Other"—"is conceived as an ethical response to death, as it both precludes the forgetting of loss and respects the singularity of each (lost) individual" (99). This form of memorialization, Jacques Derrida argues, is accomplished by a process called aborted interiorization, which essentially translates into following the traces of loss. According to Gabrielle Schwab, we can find these traces in Derrida's cryptic enclaves (4). This crypt is "a place comprehended within another but rigorously separate from it," where "the free circulation and exchange of objects and speeches can occur" (Derrida and Johnson 67-8). While "traumatic

de-signification of language" is often a technique adopted to "ward off intolerable pain…[t]he creation of critical enclaves in language marks the traces of refused mourning" (Schwab 4). Thus, as Brisley argues, melancholia provides a "memorial model that safeguards the memory of the lost other" (97), and people express their memories in cultural artifacts like literature. The narratives of vulnerable subjects not only "humanize the lives that were lost," but they also "provide the narrative means by which the human in its grievability is established" (38).

Similarly, in a study that analyzes AIDS testimonies in memoirs, Sarah Brophy argues that the "AIDS epidemic is fundamentally cultural" because "its meanings" are "created through language and visual representation" (3); therefore, testimonial narratives constructed by people living with AIDS can give "way to a resistance that does not cast itself within the imaginary of future, optimism, and hope" (7) through visibility that "fractures the complacency about the epidemic" (8). Here, Brophy argues that testimonial accounts can illuminate the "boundaries of theoretical discussion" and "allow us to locate the discussion of melancholia in lived responses to loss" (22): as a result, Brophy deploys melancholia as a political mechanism to read AIDS memoirs as narratives of resistance and remembrance. Notions of the cryptic enclave, literature by minoritized subjects, and AIDS memoirs, therefore, reveal a critical relationship between memory and personal forms of narrative.

As authors mediate their memories into personal forms of narrative, scholars can trace the social, political, and cultural contexts in which they form their memories and their identities. Paulina Grzęda, for instance, argues that autobiographical accounts can reveal the intersection where memory meets the "temporal, historical and political" as well as the "individual […] and the global and local" (74). However, Grzęda argues that by reading personal narratives through a framework, like trauma studies, readers may ignore these social and cultural landscapes and risk

homogenizing and universalizing personal accounts of trauma (74). Similarly, some skeptics of psychoanalysis have contended that the psychoanalytic framework universalizes trauma, but Cheng addresses these critics, arguing that a psychoanalytic framework of melancholia alerts scholars to the "social relations [that] live at the heart of psychical dynamics […]the complexity of these dynamics bespeaks a wide range of complicated, conflictual, interlocking emotions: desire and doubt, affirmation and rejection projection and identification, management and dysfunction" (39). These complex processes and "signs come into play" and "get theorized in literature" (39). Since social relations "live at the heart" of the "psychical," Cheng's adaptation of psychoanalysis challenges critics who argue that the theory tends to universalize personal stories. Cheng claims that "the psychoanalytic subject is universal only insofar as it posits every subjective being as historical beings, embedded in time, family, and sociality"; thus, rather than inscribing essentialism, psychoanalysis "alerts us to context" (28)—an attention to context that is missing from trauma studies.

This distinction between trauma analysis, which can be universalizing and prescriptive, and psychoanalysis, which "alerts us to context," is necessary to understand testimonies of sexual violence as they appear in memoir. Not only is context pertinent to understanding traumatic events, but it is crucial to studying memoir because authors present the traumatic event within a narrative in which the author testifies about their entire life. The mediation between the life story and the traumatic event—created by the author—requires a framework for understanding trauma through the context of a life story. A reading practice that incorporates memory studies to account for the contextual practices of remembering, affect theory to account for embodied subjectivity, and psychoanalysis to account for melancholia as an affect that can enact political work combine to become powerful ways to read memoir. With this reading practice in mind, in

the following section, I apply Cheng's theory of melancholia to read the historical context of rape in the United States and demonstrate how the threat of rape coupled with the false promise of justice that the criminal-juridical system offers women create a lost sense of liberty and justice. These losses produce a state of melancholia for rape survivors. Liberty and justice, therefore, can be the lost objects or ideals that seemingly produce melancholia for rape survivors.

Rape Laws and Melancholia

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Saidiya Hartman, and Valerie Smith contextualize contemporary discourses about rape through a historical investigation of rape laws in the United States and an analysis of cultural discourses that link racial and gender oppression; in other words, the liberty and justice that survivors have lost. Hall argues that, as women can earn financial capital, they also begin to postpone marriage, live alone or as single heads of households, and, as a result, become “easier targets for sexual assault” (342). This capitalistic endeavor, in particular, as Hall suggests, generates a sense of liberation contingent on a false promise of equal opportunity for women, and rape is used as a weapon to marginalize women to re-establish white men's dominant position in the centre. Rape laws, in particular, provide women with a false sense of justice- they convey to women that the criminal justice system will prosecute perpetrators for rape; yet, the inception of rape laws in the United States presents a different story.

According to Hall, rape laws were constructed and established in the United States to protect white men's property: since women were seen as property, any assault against a white man's daughter or wife was an assault against his property (334). The rape of an enslaved Black woman, Angela Davis and Valerie Smith argue, could only enter the law if the slave owner claimed damage of property; or, if the enslaved woman fought back against the rapist, who was

usually the slave owner, then he could request that the system bring criminal charges against the enslaved woman (Davis 170; Smith 9). Suppressing the legal recognition of the rape of Black women "was essential to the displacement of white culpability that characterized both the recognition of Black humanity in slave law and the designation of the Black subject as the originary locus of transgression" (Hartman 79). This historical context helps to explain Black women's intersectional embodied experiences and the material practices that give credence to Hall's claim that "rape is an overwhelmingly intraracial crime, and the victims are more often Black than white" (334). Rape laws in the United States actually conserve and protect patriarchal power, and the constitutive suppression of their historical conception denies this historical account, consequently discouraging women from bringing forward sexual violence allegations against men.

Referencing both her frustration with the criminal justice system's inability — which often seems like a refusal — to prosecute rapists as well as society's acceptance that "some men do horrible things" (12), Valenti claims that women in the United States live "in a place that has given up on the expectation of [their] safety" (12). In the context of rape, Valenti says that women are taught not to question discourses like "some men just do bad things," and these types of discourses deny that violence against women is a severe problem (13). From a melancholic standpoint, Valenti suggests that rape laws give women a false sense of safety and security; they invite women into the public sphere where they are assaulted by men, creating a relationship of "exclusion-but-retention" that reaffirms white men's dominant position in the centre and women's place in the margins (Cheng 30). Valenti's memoir demonstrates a melancholic bind in which women are stuck: if women believe that sexual assault laws will protect them, they may choose to report their rape to the criminal justice system, and if the case is deemed serious enough, the

survivor may have to testify about the rape in a courtroom—in front of a judge, jury, defense lawyers, and the rapist—and this experience can re-traumatize the survivor. Yet the alternative, which is to remain silent, can be just as painful for survivors. For Valenti, to navigate this society that does not ensure women's liberty means that women may confront violence at any given moment, and to survive this reality, women walk through life "in a permanently dissociative state" (12). Susan D. Rose defines dissociation as a process adopted by some survivors when they feel "so assaulted, so bombarded, that the mind escapes to avoid destruction" (167). Unsurprisingly, survivors of various traumas adopt the term dissociation to explain how they survived the traumatic event: for example, Gabrielle Union described dissociating from her body and watching the rape occur from outside of herself.

When Union writes in her memoir, *We're going to Need More Wine*, about her rape she confesses that during it she did not "watch her life flash before her eyes"; instead, she "began to hover over [herself]" and was "present at the scene, watching this man rape [her] with a gun to [her] head" (94). Union dissociated because of the urgent and direct threat to her life, while Valenti adopts the term "dissociative" to explain how women cope with the trauma of living in a world where the threat of violence is imminent. While scholars can read both of these memoirs with an eye to identifying specific conditions of trauma, like dissociation, literally, the argument stops at the claim that rape memoirs tend to express forms of dissociation in their survivor testimonies—a claim that can inadvertently become a prescriptive condition that universalizes all rape testimonies. Not only is this reading practice dangerously close to the conditions that defense lawyers place on the survivor's legal testimony, but this reading also ignores the rich context such memoirs offer. Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray-Rosendale argue that if rape is presented as a "simple report" instead of a narrative about a life, a potential to "essentialize

experience and often identity…by obscuring how experience itself is discursively mediated" manifests (283). By looking for trauma's prescriptive conditions in rape testimonies in memoir instead of analyzing the symptoms alongside the rich context that memoir provides, scholars ignore how positionality factors into rape trauma.

While all women are vulnerable to rape, Black women are more vulnerable to rape and are less likely to be believed if they decide to report their rape. In other words, even though women may consider sexual assault as a collective trauma that affects all of them—especially if they look at the prevalence of sexual violence as represented by solidarity movements such as #MeToo—a sexual assault narrative should be analyzed as narrating an individual trauma.[42] This way, scholars can distinguish between the social, cultural, and systemic factors that influence how survivors experience and perceive their trauma or determine the different degrees to which women are exposed to sexual violence. Of course, acknowledging that Valenti and Union both experience dissociating symptoms in response to their rape trauma is essential, but the context of their trauma is equally significant.

Valenti claims that women are confronted by sexual harassment in the context of the public sphere in particular, like "on the subway and on the street" and in presentations of violence against women in the media, like "on television" and "in music" (12). Valenti claims that, as women continue to endure these repeated assaults on their autonomy without any recourse, they just "watch these things happen to [them]" (12). These "things" to which Valenti refers are the oppressive messages that saturate contemporary popular culture and society, teaching women that they do not deserve their liberty. According to Valenti, these plural

[42] In Chapter One, I noted that within twenty-four hours, #MeToo appeared 609,000 times across a variety of social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Within a year, the hashtag "appeared in almost fourteen million public tweets" (Griffin, Recht, and Green 2018; n.p.).

references to violence against women become the “air [we] breathe” (12). Psychoanalysis, specifically melancholia, directs scholars to think about this metaphor of consuming air, encouraging a deconstruction that reveals the important contextual influences producing Valenti's trauma. While Valenti, as a white woman, stresses that patriarchal culture and the cultural acceptance of violent messages and behaviours directed towards women are responsible for her trauma, Union's rape testimony demonstrates how intersecting forms of oppression like race and gender contribute to her trauma.

Union confesses that conventions of solidarity and politeness, which she links to race and gender politics, conditioned her response to the rapist entering the shoe store; her “fight or flight” instincts activated, and she recalls that even though her “instincts said, ‘Run. Run’” (92), she “ignored [her] instincts” (92). Expanding on the fight or flight responses to trauma to include the phenomenon in which a survivor completely freezes, Rose claims that “[i]n the case of inescapable trauma, the psychobiological response is more likely to numb than to mobilize one for fight or flight” (166). Initially, this “numbing” seems to align with Union's response; however, her testimony reveals that this explanation is too simple. Union explains that she did not run away from the rapist because “[her] racial solidarity and [her] 'good home training' as a ‘polite’ woman said, ‘Stay put. Don't feed the stereotype. Don't be rude’” (92). Since Union is a Black woman, her references to “racial solidarity” implies that the rapist is also Black and that she is aware of the history of Black men who were lynched for rapes that they did not commit (Davis 1981; 42). Furthermore, Union claims that she remained in the store instead of running because of her gendered social “training” that taught her to be “a polite woman” (92). Gender and linguistic scholar Sara Mills claims that “politeness” is often associated with femininity because it is a “civilizing force which mitigates the aggression of strangers and familiars towards

one another" (204). Unsurprisingly, even if a woman senses danger, their social training is so powerful that they would appear to be polite rather than risk offending the stranger. These social and cultural factors—gender expectations and racial solidarity—inform Union's decision to stay in the store instead of running away. In this reading, Union is much more autonomous than a trauma framework would allow that relegates her as a victim who succumbs to the fight, flight, or numbing response to fearful stimuli. To further account for the socio-political context that includes rape culture and the misconceptions about sexual assault that survivors must navigate as they mediate their rape, I use memory studies as a backdrop for readings of rape testimonies through melancholia. This framework demonstrates that survivors simultaneously incorporate misconceptions about rape into their memoir and then reject them to argue that they are in a constant battle with rape culture as they try to work through the effects of being raped.

Melancholia and Rape Culture

By building on Rosanne Kennedy and Tikka Jan Wilson's work on trauma studies frameworks as a methodology for reading testimonies of trauma, Stef Craps argues that, by analyzing how the effects of the survivor's trauma might interrupt the chronology and coherence of the testimony, scholars relegate the survivor as a "passive, inarticulate victim," while the reader is the "knowledgeable expert" (42). The problem with this positionality, according to Craps, is that the survivor must "bear witness to a truth of which he or she is not fully conscious, and can do so only indirectly, making it impossible for his or her testimony to act as a political intervention" (42). Consequently, reading through a trauma studies framework tends to neutralize the power of rape testimonies in memoirs; instead, a memory studies framework allows me to position the

survivor as an active writer who pulls from their memories and the sociocultural context to write their memoir.

In a study of memory and autobiography, Max Saunders argues that life writing seeks to "record counter-cultural memories that official cultures tend to repress or try to forget" (327), and that memory studies provides the framework to read personal narratives that write against the "cultural grain" (323). By situating memoirs about rape within a cultural context in which rape myths frequently discredit survivors and various social and cultural institutions question the veracity of their testimonies, one can read survivor narratives using memory studies to account for this tumultuous cultural context in which survivors navigate their trauma. Melancholia can also demonstrate how survivors appropriate and refute rape myths in their narratives to challenge conceptions of rape in this cultural context. By borrowing from Wendy Hesford (1999), who argues that "strategies of appropriation can subvert dominant rape scripts[43] even if they establish complicity with them" (197), how survivors appropriate rape myths in their memoirs become clear: the rhetorical act of appropriation is also a form of melancholic consumption that can illuminate the contexts of inequality that perpetuate abuse and silence survivors.[46]

A common misconception about rape is that if a woman were truly raped, she would undoubtedly identify the traumatic event as rape. Valenti challenges this misconception in her memoir, disclosing that while she was unconscious at a party, an acquaintance named Carl raped her. She thus draws on her position of power as a white, middle-class woman in society to

[43] According to Hesford, "culturally dominant rape scripts" include narratives that "presume women's passivity and helplessness and that women want to be raped" (194). The term "draw[s] attention to how historical, geopolitical, and cultural struggles, narratives, and fantasies shape the materiality of rape and its representation" (194). [46] Hesford states that rape is "both a material and discursive site of struggle for cultural power" (197), and that scholars can turn to material rhetoric as a means to understand how survivors' stories "involve of process of negotiation with prevailing cultural rape scripts and practices" (197).

maintain that women—even those who are well-informed about rape—can struggle to say that they were raped. Valenti confesses,

> I have never called this assault. I'm not really sure why. As a feminist writer I've encouraged others to name the thing that happened to them so our stories can be laid bare in a way that is inescapable and impossible to argue with. And I realize, and I realized then, that by definition penetrating someone while they are unconscious—even if you've had sex before with this person—is rape. I just have never wanted to call it that. (112)

Here, Valenti forms a dichotomy between the myth—that women who are raped would immediately identify their trauma—and the reality that survivors struggle to label their trauma. In her testimony, Valenti recognizes that she was reluctant to classify her trauma as rape but is "not really sure why." Testimony scholar Molly Andrews identifies a relationship between trauma and language, arguing that "[l]anguage is part of our social order and when trauma happens language falls apart" (37). In other words, trauma is a violation that disrupts "our social order," and because language is part of this social order—which has been disrupted—survivors might struggle to articulate their trauma. Yet, this explanation might go further. As previously stated, because Valenti was raped by an acquaintance, which deviates from popular misconceptions of what constitutes rape, she may not have initially believed that rape was the appropriate term to classify her trauma.

Similarly, Lena Dunham, in her memoir, presents a series of flashbacks to her childhood throughout her rape testimony, demonstrating that these past moments in which she "learned" about rape throughout her life return to haunt her after the rape and become a part of her trauma. At age seven, Dunham learns the word "rape" and recalls that she pronounced it "rabe" like the playwright, using it with "reckless abandon" (55). Ironically, the word "learned" displays a

complete misunderstanding of the language and definition of rape. Years later, Dunham consents to sex with a man named Barry, and as she slips in and out of consciousness, she notices that even after numerous requests that Barry wear a condom, he continues to remove it. Dunham consents to sex with a condom. Barry's refusal to wear one undermines Dunham's agency, particularly when her level of intoxication harms her autonomy and her capacity to actively consent to any sexual act with him (Spallacci 2016 n.p.).

Even though Dunham is in excruciating physical and emotional pain the following day because the sex with Barry was "terribly aggressive," she "bursts out laughing" (61) at her friend Audrey who, startled by Dunham's recollection of the previous night, grasps Dunham's hand and sympathetically classifies the event as rape (61). While we can read Dunham's reaction as a form of denial for psychological protection, it also indicates her inability to comprehend this encounter as rape because it deviates from dominant narratives of rape that imagine violent strangers in dark alleys. According to Susan Elrich, such "rape myths" are culturally pervasive, and they regulate social, as well as legal, discourses of what "counts" as sexual violence (29). As a result, Dunham finds the comparison between the two extremely contrasting experiences and ideas laughable (Spallacci 2016 np).

Misconceptions of rape have shaped both Valenti's and Dunham's understandings of it. After both women are raped, they struggle to find the language and ability to define the event as rape, much as Dunham's seven-year-old self misunderstood the word itself. Brisley argues that similar to understanding that unassimilated traumatic event returns to haunt the survivor, "the melancholic individual" also "remains ensnared in a looping, repetitive, and ultimately unconscious relationship with the lost object" (98). Valenti and Dunham demonstrate that they have consumed misconceptions about rape that proliferate across media in society; through this

acknowledgment, they destabilize the myth that a rape survivor would readily state that they were raped.

Another misconception about rape that Valenti and Roxane Gay address in their memoirs is that survivors would try to fight off the rapist. Valenti titles her chapter that focuses on sexual assault "Grilled Cheese," and begins with the following sentence: "THE DAY AFTER HE FUCKED ME WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS, I HAD Carl buy me a grilled cheese sandwich and French fries" (109). An unmissable signpost to readers, the beginning of this chapter's opening sentence appears in bold letters. It foregrounds the assault, while the second half of the sentence is not bolded and describes how Valenti responded to the rape. Valenti draws attention to discourses of disbelief and suspicion surrounding rape testimony, especially when rape survivors display behaviours that defy the cultural expectations of how a rape victim should and would act following an assault (Spallacci 2019 n.p.). As Rennison notes, rape is the only "crime in which victims have to explain that they didn't want to be victimized" because of the belief that the number of false allegations of rape is high, when in reality the occurrence of false allegations is low, between 2-4 percent (Rennison, qtd. in Brody n.p.). The second half of the sentence appears to be much less significant than the first half, implying that, for Valenti, the fact that she was raped is much more important than how she responded to the event. This formal inversion demonstrates her struggle to understand her rape because she has consumed the cultural rape myths that prevent her from understanding her assault while simultaneously knowing that she was victimized (Spallacci 2019 n.p.). Formally, Valenti presents a paradoxical combination of the bold and regular font to depict how she both knows that Carl raped her and that society taught her to believe that this was not rape. Yet, this statement still relies on the implication of the rape myth, rather than direct identification, which demonstrates unconscious melancholia.

Similarly, in a less humorous tone, Gay's memoir, *Hunger*, repeats the phrase “something terrible happened” and the word “consume” in her testimony:

> Something terrible happened. That something terrible broke me. I wish I could leave it at that, but this is a memoir of my body so I need to tell you what happened to my body. I was young and I took my body for granted and then I learned about the terrible things that could happen to a girl body and everything changed.
>
> Something terrible happened, and I wish I could leave it at that because as a writer who is also a woman, I don't want to be defined by the worst thing that has happened to me. I don't want my personality to be consumed in that way. I don't want my work to be consumed or defined by this terrible something. (38)

The repetition of “something terrible” and its inversion “terrible something,” conveys Gay's rape as a profoundly traumatic experience — one that continues to affect her life. Gay’s repetition of “consumed” refers to the rape’s continued infiltration of her life, her “personality” and “work,” despite her desire and attempts to stop it. Not only is the word “consumption” inherently melancholic, but also this phrasing allows Gay to report that the lost object, in this case, her sense of liberty lost when she was raped, is a loss from which she cannot recover.

Even though Gay admits that the thought of her rapist “nauseates her” because she “can [still] smell him,” she confesses that she continues to Google him:

> I Googled him when I wrote this book. I don't know why. Or I do. I sat for hours, staring at his picture on his webpage on his company's website. It nauseates me. I can smell him. This is what the future brings. I think about tracking him down the next time I'm in his city. (66)

While the thought of her rapist leads Gay to feel adverse physical effects like nausea, she continues to consume images and information about him, challenging the misconception that a woman who is raped will never think about, contact, or speak with her rapist again because the thought of him makes her sick. The fact that Gay does feel sick at the thought of the rapist but continues to Google him can be explained by Cheng's conception of melancholia as a process that is self-impoverishing and "also nurturing" (7). By Googling her rapist, Gay identifies a continuous relationship with the lost object, her liberty. By keeping track of the rapist from a safe distance that Google seems to offer, Gay can continue to assure herself that he resides in the city, away from her. Furthermore, Gay admits that she sometimes thinks of "tracking him down the next time [she's] in the city" (66), which implies a potential confrontation that could give Gay the justice she never received in a legal context.

Gay acknowledges that rape survivors often avoid speaking publicly about their rape because discourses like "he said/she said is why so many victims (or survivors, if you prefer that terminology) don't come forward" (45). According to Gay, "all too often, what 'he said' matters more" than what she says, and so as women, "we just swallow the truth" (45). Here, Gay is all too aware that in contemporary court cases in which white men are on trial for rape, the court seems to value the man's welfare, his patriarchal whiteness as property, above that of the rape survivor, thereby signaling that his property rights trump her liberty rights. For example, during the 2016 highly publicized Stanford Sexual Assault case, Judge Aaron Persky used rhetoric such as, "I take [Brock Turner] at his word," and overturned the jury's conviction because a longer prison sentence would negatively impact Turner's life (Donaghue n.p). [44] Judge Persky

[44] A witness caught Brock Turner sexually assaulting an unconscious woman, Chanel Miller, behind a dumpster. Turner's defense team claimed that Turner was inexperienced with alcohol, and after a night out with his teammates, he engaged in consensual sex with Doe.

acknowledged the sexual assault poisoned Chanel Miller's life; yet, he asserts that sentencing Turner to prison is not "an antidote for that poison" (Donaghue n.p.). According to Persky, "a prison sentence would have a 'severe impact' on Turner," who would undoubtedly "suffer severe 'collateral consequences' resulting from the felony" (Donaghue n.p). These statements seemingly set a dichotomy of value between Miller's and Turner's liberty. The judge acknowledges that Miller's life was "poisoned" by being sexually assaulted by Turner, and yet he immediately moves past this fact, claiming that he does not want to seize Turner's liberty by sentencing him to seven years in prison. Miller refused to let the legal system suppress her testimony, however. After the trial, in a profoundly political act, she released a personal testimony that was critical of the value assigned to Turner's life, calling for the public to recognize and acknowledge how her liberty was not only violated by the sexual assault but also unaccounted for throughout the trial. Gay is both aware and critical of this typical response to sexual assault allegations and claims that instead of reporting their truth, women swallow it "and more often than not, that truth turns rancid" (45). Gay consumes the lost object, in this case, justice, and it "spreads through the body," becoming "physical manifestations," like "depression or addiction or obsession" (45). These "physical manifestations" according to Gay, are really "manifestations of silence," more specifically, of what the survivor "would have said, needed to say, couldn't say" (45). In dispelling misconceptions of survivor's responses to rape, Gay demonstrates that since justice is not available to them, survivors are forced to consume this lost object that then infiltrates them like poison.

Again, we see that this melancholia for the lost object—both liberty and justice—turns onto the subject, who begins to display "self-reproaches and self-revilings" (Freud 244). Gay confesses that throughout this process, "with every day that went by," she was "disgusted" with

and “hated” herself more (45). These self-reproaches “became as natural as breathing” for Gay, and because she had been treated like nothing, “[she] became nothing” (45). Gay's testimony demonstrates how the lack of liberty and justice in society caused her melancholic state that eventually displaced hatred away from the rapist, society, rape culture, and institutions onto herself.

Rape culture disenfranchises all women, not only those who are raped but also those made to understand they are seen as rapeable. Yet, because rape myths and rape culture affect all women, a framework of melancholia produced by rape myths risks homogenizing all experiences of sexual violence. A survivor's position of power within this rape culture is important to consider while reading rape testimonies because positionality can affect both a woman's vulnerability to acts of violence and whether or not her testimony is believed in the public sphere. The following section argues we must include affect theory in our frameworks to account for the survivor’s position of power and their negotiation of it in relation to their memories of rape. That negotiation appears to be registered in descriptions of their body, leading me to term this a melancholia of the body.

Melancholia of the Body

Testimony, within the field of trauma studies and seen mainly in the work of Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Cathy Caruth, carries an ethical dimension: as Caruth (1996) argues, “the history of trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another” (11). In other words, the survivor cannot bear witness to the event without the “cost of witnessing oneself” (Caruth 1995, 7), and so they require another person to bear witness to their testimony of trauma. Yet, Amber Dean notes “how overdetermined the language of bearing witness has

become," primarily as scholars use this language to "describe an empathetic or compassionate response to violence, suffering or loss" (23). Similarly, Ruth Leys criticizes Caruth's notion of bearing witness because she assigns victimhood not only to the survivor but also to those who bear witness, and these witnesses are "always marked by the difference and division that characterizes the traumatized subject" (297). Like Leys, Dean argues that the notion of bearing witness "stops short of a reconsideration of how we are ourselves implicated in the violence or suffering experienced by others" (23). Rather than accounting for embodied and cultural differences that make some subjects more vulnerable or believable than others, trauma theory instead homogenizes critical differences of positionality by positing the witness as so empathetic that they can know the victim's experience, which has serious implications for rape testimonies (Spallacci 2019 n.p.).

Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith argue that witnessing violence in any form requires "empathy as well as distance — being able to say 'it could have been me' but at the same time asserting that 'it was not me'" (10). Memoirs about rape encourage a reading of positionality because they foreground the life story. With respect to rape, Selma Leydesdorff and Nanci Adler argue that "courts seek testimony, but they do not want life stories," and, as a result, "judges do not bear witness to the whole trauma" (10). By ignoring the survivor's positionality, the criminal justice system and culture universalize violence against women. Yet affect theory, through the frame of the body, refuses essentialism by accounting for survivors' embodied subject positions.

Like Dean, Leys, and Hirsch and Smith, Jill Bennett cautions readers against using empathy as a discursive framework because it can fail to account for differences based on survivors of various forms of violence and their position of power in society (31). In other words, empathy may not help us understand why Black women are disproportionately subjected to

sexual violence. Instead of a framework of empathy, Bennett proposes that we analyze representations of trauma with a framework that incorporates memory and affect, arguing that, "in poetics and art, the memory [of trauma] operates through the body of the survivor to produce 'a seeing truth' rather than 'a thinking truth' communicated at the level of bodily affect" (29). Bennett suggests that one should "read fragments of memories written on the body" using a "dialectic relationship" between common memory, which consists of experiences that can be transcribed into narrative frameworks, and sense memory, which is the physical imprint or bodily affects of the experience of trauma felt in the present (31). Similarly, Sianne Ngai suggests that affect can point to a "specific history of systemic political and economic disenfranchisement, [and] racialized animatedness" (12). If, as Hirsch and Smith state, "cultural memory is most forcefully transmitted through the individual voice and body-through the testimony of a witness" (7), then memories and affects related to histories of violence are felt through the body, and are communicated through stories of violence. Therefore, we should read how survivors mediate their trauma into the narrative through the frame of the survivor's body.

Gay, for instance, clearly signals with her memoir's title, *Hunger: a Memoir of (My) Body,* that the narrative is about coping with the effects of trauma that manifest on her body. The title appears to substitute the word trauma for the word body because, for Gay and many survivors of sexual violence, trauma and the body are inextricably linked. Additionally, the first chapter of Gay's memoir appears as follows:

1

Every body has a story and a history. Here I offer mine with

a memoir of my body and my hunger. (3)

The form of this passage, represented in a small fragment, provides the reader with instructions on how to read and interpret her memoir. Rather than use the common phrase, "everybody has a story and a history," Gay separates "everybody" into "every body," suggesting to the reader that if they want to know her story and history, they have to read them through her body.

Gay, for instance, adopts the metaphor of skin in her memoir to describe the sensation of the aftermath of living with the effects of the rape: "I could wake up thin tomorrow and I would still carry the same baggage I have been hauling around for almost thirty years [...] I would still bear the scar tissue of many of those years [....] One of my biggest fears is that I will never cut away all of that scar tissue" (301). Bennett states that the image of ruptured skin continuously appears in artistic depictions of trauma because the skin is permeable. It is "precisely through the breached boundaries of memory that skin continues to be felt as a wound…it is here in sense memory that the past seeps back into the present, becoming sensation rather than representation" (36). Gay uses the metaphor of scar tissue and, more specifically, of "cutting away" the scar tissue, to describe the sensation and process of living with and trying to cope with the effects of trauma; moreover, she explains that, following the traumatic event, she felt compelled to eat and build up her body as a mechanism of protection against future sexual violence. Gay confesses that she ate to accumulate mass and muscle so that her body would serve as a "fortress [that is] impermeable" (16). While her "father believes that hunger is in the mind," Gay says that she knows "differently" because for her, "hunger is in the mind and the body and the heart and the soul" (193). These statements demonstrate that for Gay, her rape trauma manifests on her body and in her mind, emphasizing the need for a framework to read rape trauma, as it appears in memoir, through the body and the psyche, which affect theory and melancholia provide.

An analysis of the body through affect theory will also address the recent criticism that life writing scholars tend to ignore: how the body factors into life writing (Smith &Watson 51). The relationship between the body, the subject, and the written text is taken up by life writing and affect studies. Leigh Gilmore (2001) argues that autobiography interrogates the relation between body and text and is "concerned with interpenetration of the private and the public, and how its impact is registered in personal, aesthetic and legal terms" (3). As such, "the responsive, adaptive, social and interpretive body is a key frame through which all forms of trauma testimony must be understood" (Jensen 147). Ruth Leys brings together the fields of embodied politics and affect to argue that "affect cannot be fully realized in language," because the "body has a grammar of its own that cannot be fully captured in language" (442).

By theorizing trauma through affect, Meera Atkinson and Michael Richardson acknowledge that feminist and critical race theorists have always focused on the body, and "specifically those bodies most ignored, maligned, and exploited, whether in social, political or theoretical realms" (7). Narratives about trauma may sensationalize trauma—a process that creates distance by placing the reader in a voyeuristic role—or incite an empathetic reading, which can depoliticize and universalize violence against women (Spallacci 2019 n.p.). Affect theory, however, intersects with feminist and critical race theory to account for the different ways in which women from different subject positions choose to represent their testimonies in their memoirs.

While affect undoubtedly accounts for a trauma survivor's positionality, Nathan M. To and Elena Trivelli argue that the complexity of psychoanalysis and the unconscious is absent from affect studies, even though, "in the transmission of trauma, bodies and psyches intertwine, sharing and enacting many stories of history" (13). Similarly, Teresa Brennan asserts that trauma

is directly linked to the transmission of affect because “some of its victims testify with extraordinary activity concerning the experience of something infiltrating their psyches as well as their bodies” (121). In this sense, trauma theory both within and beyond the humanities should account for how the “inter-intra-subjective processes through which meanings are conferred, negotiated and mediated” (Radstone 18). This inter-intra-subejctive process would account for how the personal, cultural, and traumatic are factors that determine how survivors choose to narrativize the sexual assault. Analyzing the survivor's positionality in relation to their trauma demonstrates how the survivor's position of power can participate in the extent to which the subject mourns the lost objects of liberty and justice.

In her memoir, Abrams describes how she had to construct a counter-narrative to the “repetitive messages that Black is dirty, coarse, violent, hypersexual, irresponsible, and ugly” that she consumed from the media (xii). Responding to the negative images and discourses about Black women in mainstream contemporary culture, bell hooks argues that these representations of Black womanhood originate from slavery and tend to objectify and over sexualize Black women (49). These cultural narratives and representations speak to the continued oppression, specifically sexual violence, that Black women like Abrams experience in contemporary American society. One way that Abrams tried to navigate these cultural narratives was by having sex with white men to garner “the white man's stamp of approval” (192). Looking back, Abrams realizes that as she was trying to elevate her self-esteem, these white boys were “satisfying an urge” for a “taste of the ‘exotic’” (192). Abrams finds herself in a melancholic bind: on the one hand, she hates the messages about her Black identity circulating in the media; on the other, Abrams consumes these problematic messages, feeding her insecurity, which she tries to reverse by having sex with white men. One particular night, Abrams wakes up and a white man is raping

her. She is eventually able to fight him off and runs into the kitchen for a knife. The friends in the surrounding rooms ask Abrams to leave the house rather than the rapist. She confesses that no one in the room believed her when she said the man raped her because he "was too good looking and popular" (193). Patricia Hill Collins helps us understand both why Abrams approaches her insecurity ambivalently and why she does not make a believable victim that night. Analyzing representations African American women in pornography, Hill Collins concludes that they represent "the continuation of the historical treatment of actual bodies" in their violence and submissive posture in a violent position of slavery (99). Her analysis explains why, "despite the fact that [Abrams] would freely give [her] body away," a white man still decided to force "himself on [her] while [she] was passed out drunk" (193). This analysis of racialized pornographic representation also explains both why Abrams' disclosure of being raped registers as unbelievable and is perceived to be, itself, a problem.

Years later, as Abrams writes her memoir, she remembers that she blamed herself for being raped, but now she knows "what this phenomenon is called: rape culture" (193). Not only is Abrams raped by a white man who feels entitled to her body, but that violence is rendered unbelievable by a history of Black women's perceived sexual availability to all white men and, without any recourse, Abrams begins to blame herself. Abrams' liberty is lost because she endures a serious violation, and her justice is lost because no one will believe her. Her personal experiences are enveloped by the cultural stereotypes of Black women and representations of violence against them in the media, that further intensify the "acceptance on a social level of the idea that a woman's body can be violated in the most intimate way, and that it is usually 'her fault'" (193). All of these messages intersect and convey to Abrams that she is not entitled to liberty or justice. Abrams' self-blame can be explained by these lost objects—liberty and

justice—that she turns inwards, resulting in self-reproaches in the form of self-blame. By unpacking this self-blame years after the rape, Abrams gains the critical distance to acknowledge that her self-blame is the result of the complex layers of racialization and misogyny that she internalized and their relationship to her rape.

Union also demonstrates the relationship between racialization and rape that fuels the melancholic disposition of her personal story about rape. In her memoir, she discloses that one of the most harrowing parts of the rape was witnessing her parents' reaction to the news. In particular, she states that her mother was “shocked” because Union had never demonstrated “fear” in her life, indicating that she was “the strongest one” who knew how to care of herself, and thus, her mother never “had to worry about [her]” (116). The notion that Union's mother believed that Union could preserve her liberty is interesting, especially given her position of power as a Black woman in America; yet, Union's statement immediately following this claim reveals where her mother's false sense of her children's security originated. Union states: “you move your kids to this all-white community and force them to go to these all-white schools. You think you've priced yourself out of this shit. You've done all these things and then this happens” (116). Here, melancholia is active across generations: Union's family literally bought into the promise that with capital success, Black Americans can “price” themselves out of the vulnerability and precarity that are synonymous with their racialization in the United States. In reality, Black folks are invited into the public only so they can be relegated to the margins. As Angela Davis argues, one of the tools that oppressors use to maintain this dynamic of “centrality and marginality” (Cheng 30) is the rape of Black women (Davis 40). Despite her parents' effort to ensure that their children belong to “all-white” communities, with the assumption that they will be safe and have greater opportunity, Union is raped, reinforcing her family's place in the

margins. Union's testimony demonstrates that trauma is not necessarily an individual event, but one that radiates not only through her family but also through Black communities as a cautionary tale, re-inscribing their role in the margins.

Valenti's memoir also addresses how her family members share the trauma of sexual violence: specifically, Valenti believes that sexual violence in her family "is passed down like the world's worst birthright, largely skipping the men and marking the women with scars, night terrors and fantastic senses of humor" (10). Valenti hopes to disavow the affects of shame and disgust that this "matrilineal curse" produces in her family and transfer them onto the "perpetrators"; however, this process is complicated for her because the "frequency with which women in [her] family have been hurt or sexually assaulted starts to feel like a flashing message encoded in [their] DNA" that reads, "Hurt. Me." (11). Brennan argues that the affects of trauma enter individuals, meaning "[p]hysically and biologically something is present that was not there before" (1). For Brennan, "it is not genes that determine social life"; instead, it is the "socially induced affect that changes our biology" (2). For Valenti, the violence enacted against the women in her family taught her that "what it means to be female" is that "it's not a matter of if something bad happens, but when and how bad" (11). Even though Brennan claims that genes do not determine social conditions, Valenti argues that her family's DNA absorbed the problematic discourses that condone violence against women; now, the women appear to reflect the same messages that cause their trauma. Here, liberty is the lost object, and Valenti's response to liberty is ambivalent: Valenti certainly wants to preserve her safety and hopes that her daughter inherits "genes that feel safe," but at the same time, the "frequency" with which the women in her family have been assaulted leads her to believe that liberty is a fallacy (11).

Theories of trauma and melancholia seem to follow a circular structure: in a trauma framework, the survivor is repeatedly confronted with belated intrusions of trauma, and in a framework of melancholia, the survivor is caught in a never-ending relationship with the lost object. While Valenti acknowledges that family violence, such as the violence she outlines in her memoir, is often referred to as a "cycle of violence," she calls her first chapter "Line Violence" and explains that in her "family, female suffering is linear" (10). For Valenti, women in her family pass down their testimonies of rape and sexual violence through generations, and the violence loses "steam with each generation" (10). By remembering, acknowledging, and narrativizing the violence in their family, the women transform the melancholic "cycle of violence" into a line that tracks the violence. Unlike the cycle of violence that continues in a loop formation that is difficult to break, Valenti's version of line violence conceptualizes stories as memorialized traces of violence that diffuse some of the power that the patriarchy has over women with each generation.

Affect for Valenti and Teresa Brennan is thus not about what happens in the body, but about exchanges between bodies. In the context of rape, Jane Caputi adopts Brennan's framework and the transmission of affect that she renames as "dumping" to explain that, through rape, negative and toxic affects are transmitted to the "Other." Rape and the subsequent affectual dumping is a process marked by power, and negative affects are more likely to be directed towards "women, the poor, those stigmatized by racism, sexuality, age, and so on" (2). As a result, women who are raped carry these negative affects, and these affects can produce feelings of shame and guilt (Spallacci 2019 n.p.). The following section outlines the theoretical relationships between guilt, shame, and remembering, particularly in the context of sexual violence.

Guilt and Shame

Affect scholars are interested in shame because, as they argue, it serves as a site of resistance to cultural norms associated with identity. Elspeth Probyn claims that shame is part of identity since it goes to the "heart of who we think we are" and coincides with embodied politics because it signals "considerations of why one feels ashamed" (xiii). Shame is a crucial affect: as survivors share their life stories of trauma and their experiences of shame in the public sphere, they perform acts of remembrance. Through these testimonies, we begin to "question value systems" that produce shame (x). In particular, sexuality is, for Probyn, an "area ripe for shame" (x). Narrowing in on the relationship between shame and identity to focus on the relationship between shame and the body, Sara Ahmed (2004) argues that "the way in which the pain of shame is felt upon the skin surface, at the same time as it overwhelms and consumes the subject, is crucial" (104). Shame, for Ahmed, becomes a part of identity and stems from the relationship between trauma and the body; yet, the relationship between shame and the body should not lead to the conclusion that shame is a biological affect (Spallacci 2019 np). Instead, shame is a social affect, meaning that feelings of shame are born out of socio-cultural contexts, and, as a result, can change: shame depends on a spectator and is performative, making it a productive site of resistance against cultural norms and possible healing from these oppressive norms. Analysis of how survivors incorporate shame in their memoirs can account for why women feel ashamed after a traumatic experience such as rape and how their position of power in society is part of this shame.

After Dunham is raped by a man named Barry, she struggles to come to terms with the violence. After meeting her friend Audrey, who turns to her and whispers, "you were raped,"

Dunham decides to contact her friend Mike, who is also Barry's friend. Mike tells her that "Barry called today, said he woke up in the hallway of his dorm. Said he deep-dicked some girl, but he has no idea who" (62). Dunham claims that this term, "deep-dick" will "never leave [her]" (62). Long after her physical pain from the rape, and once she forgets the "taste of Barry's bitter spit or the sound of him cursing through the thick glass of [her] sliding door" (62), she will always remember this turn-of-phrase. For Dunham, this "set of sounds" will always "mean shame," and part of her shame comes from being dehumanized by Barry both during the rape and in his verbal rendition of the events (62). Dunham also makes clear that Barry's actions completely strip her of agency, which she is shamed by and attempts to manage. While Dunham assumes responsibility for the assault—blaming herself for consuming too much drugs and alcohol and initiating sexual contact—the words Barry adopts to explain the event to Mike reflects his indifference to Dunham's autonomy the previous evening. This language forces Dunham to confront the severity of the event, and she vows "not to have sex again until it's with someone [she] love[s]" (63).

Dunham's decision to abstain from having casual sex is a temporary solution that allows her to refrain from interrogating why she feels ashamed. She remembers pitching "a version of the Barry story" to a group of writers. She admits that this narrative, in fact, happened to her but classifies the event as a "sexual encounter that no one can classify properly" (64). The writers immediately label this "sexual encounter" as rape and claim that they "don't see rape as being funny in any situation" (64). Dunham does not speak about the rape again, until years later, when she confides in her partner, Jack, over the telephone. He tells her that the rape was not her fault; yet, Dunham admits that she feels "like there are fifty ways it's [her fault]" (65). She believes she created favorable conditions for Barry to rape her. Evidently, Dunham internalized the rape myths circulating in the public sphere that displace the blame away from the rapist and onto the

survivor. This blame, coupled with the dehumanizing manner in which Barry describes Dunham and the rape, contributes to her shame.

Only once Dunham writes her memoir does she acknowledge these rape myths and how they produce her feelings of shame; then, she rejects them and acknowledges that “at no moment did [she] consent to being handled that way. [She] never gave him permission to be rough, to stick himself inside of [her] without a barrier between [them]. [She] never gave him permission” (65). Dunham confesses that her resolve in knowing—"in [her] deepest self”—that she never permitted Barry to take away her agency “has kept [her] from sinking” (65). By writing a memoir, Dunham creates a narrative that addresses how misconceptions of sexual assault create her feelings of shame. Her shame comes from the pervasiveness of rape culture and the misconceptions it fosters about rape. The act of recording how these powerful myths produced her shame destabilizes them, forcing them to lose some of their power, not only so that Dunham can renounce her shame, but so future survivors might relinquish their shame by recognizing its origins.

Like Dunham, Abrams presents a testimony of a “sexual encounter that no one can classify properly” because it deviates from widespread misconceptions about sexual assault and harassment (Dunham 64). She, too, initially assigns blame to herself instead of the perpetrator. She remembers a time in her life when she felt increasingly vulnerable: she was recently sober and desperate to book a modeling job to pay her rent. Abrams remembers arriving at IMG modeling agency, one of the “top agencies in the world,” handing the receptionist her modeling portfolio, and expecting the receptionist to return and respond “with the usual, ‘Thanks, but no thanks’” (224). Instead, the receptionist approached Abrams with a man who introduced himself as the “head of the women's division” (224). He brought Abrams into a boardroom, where she

remembers standing in front of him as he looked through her portfolio. Then, he looked up at her and said, “You have some nice pictures. But in order to make a decision, I need to see your breasts” (225). Abrams remembers feeling “shocked by his request” and, sensing her hesitation, the agent interjected the following statement: “Models shoot naked all of the time…You've seen the pictures in *Elle* and *Harper's Bazaar* right?” (225). Not wanting to waste an opportunity to become a high fashion model, like those whom the agent evokes in his condescending statement and follow-up question, Abrams recalls nodding her head before she “obediently unhooked [her] bra and lifted [her] shirt” (225). The agent immediately thanked Abrams, stated that she did not have the “right look” for the agency, and ushered her out the door.

Abrams identifies the “shame and embarrassment” that she felt as a result of this sexual exploitation, and how this affect “prevented [her] from telling anyone for years” (226). Like Dunham, only once Abrams writes her memoir, reporting that the modeling agent sexually exploited her, is she able to engage in the productive work of thinking through why she felt so ashamed by this experience. A popular misconception about rape is that the perpetrator exercises physical force; yet, in Abrams' case, the modeling agent exploited his power over her. Abrams' testimony of sexual violence diverges from the cultural belief that sexual violence requires a physical component, and, as a result, she struggles to identify why, immediately following the event, she knew in her “gut” that she “had just been had” (226).

For Abrams, her shame manifested from a combination of “feeling raw. Exposed. Stupid. Dirty” because in only a matter of minutes, “she had been sexually coerced by a sleazy booker at one of the top agencies in the world” (225). Abrams claims that, while the agent was right that some models are photographed nude, she was “stupid” to believe that showing her breasts would help her to book a job and “dirty” for quickly agreeing to the agent's inappropriate request—a

request that “none of the agents” she had seen before had ever made (225). Abrams is convinced that the event was her fault; however, she frames the beginning of this narrative with the information that her recent sobriety, coupled with her need to pay rent, produced conditions in which she found herself vulnerable and desperate for a job, which the agent exploited. The shame of being an alcoholic and destitute contributes to Abrams' vulnerability, but the construction of Black women's identity in the media, which Abrams deconstructs throughout her memoir, is also a source of her shame.

The media that Americans consume, according to Abrams, serves to “reinforce the racist culture that teaches Black women” to believe that they are “inferior, violent, ugly, and subhuman” (430). During an interview with Eva Wiseman and Jess Cartner-Morley from *The Guardian*, Black supermodel Jourdan Dunn states that “[t]he people who control the [modeling] industry. They say if you have a Black face on a magazine cover it won't sell” (n.p.). Consequently, the racism within the modeling industry, Abrams' racialization, coupled with her recent sobriety and need to pay rent, all place her in a precarious position relative to the modeling agent who controls her fate. Abrams' shame transforms into vindication once she learns that, years later, the agent was “booted out of IMG after multiple allegations of his predatory behavior became public” and his “wife divorced him” (225). This statement demonstrates that the agent repeatedly used his power at the modeling agency to sexually exploit models who entered the agency, and, in conjunction with Abrams' narrative, transforms her shame into vindication. Both Dunham and Abrams are able to transform their shame into another affect: Dunham's shame transforms into her resolve, and Abrams' shame transforms into vindication.

Conversely, like Cheng's conception of racial melancholia, Leys (2007) claims that under extreme instances of trauma, the survivor experiences hostile impulses out of fear that are

repressed and turned against the ego and experienced in the form of guilt (41). Unlike shame, which Dunham and Abrams demonstrate can be transformative, Union and Gay show that guilt is less malleable than shame. Union's rape testimony appears in a chapter titled “Code 261,” in which Union recalls that, on the night of her rape, her parents and sister Kelly came to the scene. Kelly, according to Union, was majoring in criminal justice, and she “recognized the police code for rape: 261” (115). The police called Union's parents to the scene, and they did not offer them an explanation or any details; confused, they stood there until Kelly whispered the code and what it represented to their father. The look on her father's face, once he learned that his daughter had been raped, “is still a nightmare” for Union (115). Explaining that her father's reaction represents how Union's identity immediately transformed once she was raped, she conveys that “the look was: Damaged. Victim. Guilt. Fear” (115). She does not identify a time when her father conveyed these affects or labels to her; instead, this is Union's reading of the look on her father's face, and while her father may have felt this way about Union after the rape, Union's reading might also represent a projection of the ways that she felt about herself. In response to this reading of her father's face, Union declares: “I HATED THAT. To this day, I HATE IT” (115). The capitalization of "hated" and "hate" that enclose the phrase "to this day" demonstrates that Union has not overcome nor abandoned the feelings that she felt upon looking at her father's face. While she sued Payless for negligence, Union confesses that she wishes that she could “sue them for [her] dad looking at [her] like that” (115). In other words, even though Union received a form of legal justice for the rape—an unlikely outcome for the majority of rape survivors—we understand that the rape had lasting effects for Union and her family.

Similar to Union, Gay represents guilt as an affect that sustains her state of melancholia rather than a transformative affect like shame, which turns into another feeling. Gay confesses

that after her rape, “guilt consumed [her]” (48) and that she copes with this guilt by consuming food. For Gay, food is an ambivalent mechanism that produces feelings of comfort through a sense of self-preservation and guilt through a sense of self-punishment. Gay writes,

> I start to feel full but I ignore that fullness and then that sense of fullness goes away and all I feel is sick, but still, I eat. When there is nothing left, I no longer feel comfort. What I feel is guilt and uncontrollable self-loathing, and oftentimes, I find something else to eat, to soothe those feelings, and strangely, to punish myself, to make myself feel sicker so that next time, I might remember how low I feel when I overindulge. I never remember. (192-3)

On the surface, Gay's book reads like a narrative about her fraught relationship with food and her body, but the prevalence of the rape narrative, woven throughout her memoir, demonstrates that this tumultuous relationship results from the rape. Rather than say that her relationship to food is an effect of trauma, which would position Gay as a passive victim with little to no agency over her relationship with food, she says that she consumes food deliberately to add to her body mass as a defense mechanism. Gay explains that food brings her comfort because “when there is nothing left, [she] no longer feel[s] comfort”; yet, food is also the source of her feelings of “guilt and uncontrollable self-loathing” (203). Once Gay begins to feel this guilt and self-loathing, she must “find something else to eat,” not only to “soothe those feelings,” but also to “punish [herself]” (203). By analyzing these passages through the framework of melancholia, we can see that food is cast as the lost object that Gay both loves and hates, producing an ambivalence that Gay turns inwards to create self-hatred and the expectation of punishment. If food represents Gay's literal and metaphorical response to her rape, then the melancholic reading of food reveals how feelings of guilt sustain Gay's melancholia for her lost liberty.

Gay cannot transform this guilt into another emotion because, according to her, she is as "healed as [she] is ever going to be" and she has "accepted that [she] will never be the girl [she] couldn't have been if, if if" (318). Furthermore, she admits that she is still "haunted" and that she does not plan to "forgive the boys who raped [her]" because this act "will not free [her] from anything" (318). Immediately after refusing to forgive the boys who raped her, she acknowledges that she does not "know if [she] is happy, but [she] can see and feel that happiness is well within [her] reach"(319). Even though she cannot assuage her guilt or transform it into another emotion, guilt does not define her; instead, she can feel hopeful.

In a history of the theorizations of guilt and shame, Ruth Leys (2007) establishes rigid definitions of these feelings: Leys aligns shame to mourning and guilt to melancholia. Taking up Silvan Tomkins' work on shame, Leys demonstrates how scholars of shame, such as Eve Sedgwick, argue that the feeling requires a real or imagined subject who witnesses the act. The premise that a person can only feel shame in front of a real or perceived spectator means that shame is not a constant or irreversible affect. Instead, shame can change, making it a productive affect because scholars can identify the socio-cultural values that the real or perceived spectator holds, which prompts the subject to feel ashamed. Since shame can change, Leys aligns the feeling with mourning because both states can transform into healing (131). Conversely, guilt is a personal affect that does not rely on a real or perceived spectator, and because of guilt's indifference to another person, the feeling can stay with a person for the duration of their life (133). As a result, Leys aligns guilt with failed mourning, or melancholia, because both are considered irreversible states that a survivor cannot overcome (41). In other words, melancholia and its related guilt are theorized as a failed sense of mourning, in which the survivor can never overcome their grief. In contrast, shame is aligned with mourning, in which a subject can

overcome the loss. The melancholic subject is stuck, in other words, while the mourning subject is about to triumph over the trauma. While Leys' associations of shame with mourning and guilt with melancholia make sense, they are based on Freud's work in *Mourning and Melancholia*, and appear to ignore his later reconceptualization of melancholia as a response to grief rather than a pathological state of mourning. Contemporary scholars have adapted Freud's theory of melancholia, reconfiguring it as an ethics of remembrance that reports and subsequently resists narratives that perpetuate the status quo. I wish to turn now to what such a reconceptualizing of melancholia can produce when we read memoirs that offer testimonies of rape and survival.

Melancholia as Resistance

Narrative closure, or lack thereof, is conceived as a modern aesthetic of personal narratives of trauma: critics of trauma studies like Bennett and Kennedy, Craps, and Andreas Huyssen argue that these narrative aesthetics thought to represent or mirror the effects of trauma on memory can be prescriptive and universalize testimonies about trauma. Each memoir I focus on undoubtedly demonstrates conditions of trauma and melancholia in both the aesthetics and the narrative, but they vary in their narrative closure. While some authors end their testimony with a narrative of healing and resolution, others refuse this narrative closure. Rather than labeling the lack of narrative closure as a form of resistance, this chapter concludes by demonstrating that, regardless of whether the narratives end with representations of mourning or melancholia, each is an individual act of resistance.

Dunham and Valenti, perhaps unconsciously, present a sense of healing from their rape in their testimony. At the end of her chapter about her rape, Dunham accepts that she has been sexually assaulted. After an emotional conversation with her partner, she looks in the mirror,

"prepared to see eyeliner dripping down [her] face, tracks through [her] blush and foundation" (66); instead, her "makeup is all where it ought to be" (66). Dunham concludes the chapter with this act in which she looks in the mirror, and she says, "I look alright. I look like myself" (66). Dunham's expectation of ruined makeup might be a metaphor for the assumption that the trauma of being raped could shatter a survivor. Instead, Dunham, who constantly circumvented any conversation about the rape by either misnaming the event, laughing, or telling jokes, finally testifies about the rape to her partner, only to realize that she "looks alright" and still looks like herself (66). While Dunham undoubtedly experienced negative effects from the rape, she chooses to end her testimony by ensuring that readers know that the rape did not ruin her life nor take away her identity; instead, she is alright and still herself.

Similarly, Valenti ends her chapter by declaring, "I never saw Carl again. We never spoke after I left his apartment after eating my grilled cheese and french fries. He did give me cab money, though. And I know that I took it" (114). Valenti ends her testimony on a similar note to Dunham because neither of their endings anticipate continued, life-altering effects of the rape. This claim does not suggest that Dunham and Valenti will not or do not continue to endure serious consequences from being raped; instead, their conclusions at the end of the rape testimonies are neutral in their tone. Valenti shares a series of facts about her life immediately following the rape—she did not make any future contact with the rapist and she accepted his money for a taxi so that she could safely make it home—rather than an emotionally charged narrative about her psyche after the rape. Neither Dunham nor Valenti concludes their testimonies with extreme dread associated with the impossibility of moving forward or with the prospect of healing and moving on from the rape. Refusing narrative closure in the form of healing, or resistance in the form of pessimism, Dunham and Valenti arguably end their

testimonies in an ambivalent state. Readers can interpret this ambivalence by continuing to think through the systems that produce a climate in which rape is acceptable and permissible.

By contrast, Abrams concludes her rape testimony by confessing that her life took a negative turn after the rape. At the time of Abrams' rape, she was dating a man named Ismaele, and once she was released from the hospital into Ismaele's care, he brought Abrams to Italy. With her son still in New York, Abrams found that Ismaele confiscated her passport, and she was being held hostage in Italy. After six weeks, she escaped and made it back to New York, where she broke things off with Ismaele and "immediately [became] pregnant" (313). Abrams and her son moved to the Bronx and slept on a mattress on her sister's floor. Abrams concludes her rape testimony declaring,

> My reversal of fortune was total and complete. Two months earlier I was sunning myself on the deck of King Hussein of Jordan's mega yacht. Now I was sleeping on the floor of a tenement building with peeling paint on the walls and a urine-stained elevator. Oh, how the briefly mighty had fallen. (313-4)

Abrams' pessimistic ending demonstrates how the effects of being raped and her financial precarity negatively impact her life. Furthermore, she recognizes that the false sense of security and liberty that came with her success is temporary and fleeting.

Union, like Abrams, does not offer the reader a happy ending; instead, she ends her testimony by admitting that the negative effects of trauma, such as increased feelings of fear, have not diminished since the rape. Union concludes her rape testimony by stating, "I often get asked if my fears have decreased as I move further from the rape. No. It's more about me moving from becoming a rape victim to a rape survivor" (133). Rather than offer her readers a conclusion of recovery, Union admits that her fear has not decreased. Furthermore, Union states that she

cannot separate the rape from her identity; instead, she will move from a rape victim to a rape survivor, but the rape will stay with her throughout her life.

Finally, Gay, who is perhaps even more despondent than Abrams and Union, concludes her rape testimony by professing that “those boys treated me like nothing so I became nothing” (45). Gay admits that the rape and, the boys dehumanization of her during it, negatively shaped her identity so that she felt like “nothing” (45). Rather than offer the reader an opportunity to swiftly move past the uncomfortable rape testimony, by offering them a sense of hope that she might heal from the rape, Gay forces the reader to stay in the present and focus on the impact the trauma of the rape has had on her life. While the lack of closure to Abrams’, Gay’s, and Union's testimonies might demonstrate a sense of pathological mourning, the decision not to provide a happy ending for the reader is a state of resistance registered in and through melancholia. In her analysis of Paul Gilroy's and Saidiya Hartman's work, Cheng reminds readers that, even during slavery, outsiders might view suicide as a sign of defeat; however, in a system in which survivors are devoid of will, suicide is a chance for them to reclaim a sense of agency in a capitalist system that is contingent on slave labour (21). In other words, “under extreme conditions,” the management of grief “exceeds our vernacular understanding of agency” (21). Furthermore, according to Denise Ferreira DaSilva, a Black feminist poetics requires a suspension of modern categories of knowing to reach an understanding beyond them because “Blackness knowing and studying announces the End of the World as we know it” (83). This argument does not suggest that Black women cannot or do not move on from rape trauma; instead, it refuses a reading of melancholia as a pathological form of mourning and argues for it as a knowing beyond or as a form of resistance that demonstrates Abrams, Union’s, and Gay's resilience.

In order to understand the complexity of rape trauma and trauma more generally, scholars must expand their frameworks beyond dichotomies between shame and guilt, the body and psyche, and between affect and psychoanalysis to account for aspects of trauma that may not have been previously considered (To and Trivelli 306). Reading practices in the humanities are essential because they can foreground and make a community; as Maurice Halbwachs argues, for a testimony to be accepted or recognized as collective memory, memory must "be functionally related to the achievement of the group goals of a community, and the content and structure of the memory have to exhibit meaningful relationships to these goals" (89). Personal testimony and political activism about rape have begun to saturate popular culture across various media, and these discourses expose issues such as the suspicion and disbelief with which rape testimony is often met in both juridical settings and the public sphere.

Accordingly, some rape survivors refrain from testifying their trauma in legal contexts; instead, they write a memoir to circulate their rape testimonies in the public sphere. The memoirs studied in this dissertation are published years after the rapes they testify to occurred. Unlike a court of law, the memoirs give survivors time to negotiate their experiences; moreover, the narrative structure of memoir, unlike the legal context, allows survivors to contextualize the rape within a life story. These rape narratives extend beyond a simple retelling of the event, alerting readers to the social, cultural, and institutional conditions that cause their authors' trauma, and explain why—in most cases—these women refuse to report their rape to police.

Conclusion:

Sexual Assault and Believability

I had a more expansive vocabulary, now, for what happened in the woods. At twelve years old, I had no such words. I just knew that these boys had forced me to have sex with them, had used my body in ways I did not know a girl body could be used. Thanks to books and therapy and my new friends online, I knew ever more clearly that there was a thing called rape. I knew that when a woman said no, men were supposed to listen and stop what they were doing. I knew that it wasn't my fault that I had been raped. There was a quiet thrill to having this new vocabulary, but in many ways, I did not feel like that vocabulary could apply to me. I was too damaged, too weak to deserve absolution. It was not easy to believe these truths as it was to know them

- Roxane Gay, *Hunger,* 92

Roxane Gay remembers that she did not have the vocabulary to classify what happened to her in the woods; she knew that she was hurt, but she did not have the words to call it rape. Gay credits books, therapy, and online support groups for providing her with the language to talk about the rape and teaching her about consent, both of which helped her abdicate some of her overwhelming feelings of guilt and shame. Despite the "quiet thrill" of learning "this new vocabulary," Gay confesses that she continued to blame herself for the rape; she asserts that, "[i]t was not easy to believe these truths as it was to know them" (92).

Gay identifies a tension between learning "these truths" that challenge popular misconceptions about sexual assault and "feel[ing] like" they "could apply to [her]" (92). By identifying this tension, Gay demonstrates a resulting conflict that explains her struggle to believe that she was a survivor of sexual assault. In one of Gay's earliest examples of growing up "in a culture that is generally toxic to women" (27), she describes flipping through *Playboy* and *Hustler* magazines with one of her classmates named Christopher (50). Gay remembers that Christopher found these women sexually attractive, and because she did not resemble these women, he began to "punish [her] for what [she] wasn't and couldn't be" (51). With each of

Christopher's "transgressions"—which Gay confesses are "too humiliating" for her to "bring [herself] to detail"—she "lost more of [her] body" (51). Interestingly, Gay does not try to establish that these hyper-sexualized and derogatory images informed Christopher's decision to assault her sexually; instead, she believes that Christopher assaulted her because she did not look like the mostly "young white blond thin" women who populate the magazines.[45] In other words, because her identity as a young Black girl did not adhere to popular representations of femininity, Gay believes that Christopher never saw her; instead, she was a "thing" that he could sexually assault (51).

Gay also began to accept this dehumanization; she saw the images of the women in the magazines and recognized that she was "nothing like them" (51), and over time—with Christopher's prolonged abuse—Gay remembers that she began to lose parts of herself, as well as "the possibility of the word 'no'" (51). By addressing the link between personal identity and culture, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith argue that identity "becomes a story that stretches from the past to the present and the future[…]and is structured by gender and related identity markers" (8). Gay also addresses the connection between identity and culture, a connection that in a white supremacist rape culture is also one that negates her ability to consent: because the magazines overwhelmingly represented white women, Gay did not see herself as sexually desirable nor as someone who could claim any type of agency over her body. By believing that she was not a person who could give or refuse consent, she learned that other people would believe this about her, too. This explains why, after Christopher and his friends rape Gay in the woods, she does not immediately blame the rapists; instead, she is "disgusted with [herself]," and

[45] This point is interesting because, as I stated in Chapter One, the rationale behind Andrea Dworkin and Catharine Mackinnon's Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance was that pornography violates women's civil rights because it leads to violence against women inflicted on them by men who watch pornography.

"convinced that having been raped was [her] fault" because "[she] deserved it" (81).

Gay explains that her response to being raped was mainly a result of the messages she received about her identity—both before and after the rape—that communicated to her that she did not have the right to exercise any sort of agency over her body. Many years after the rape, for instance, Gay attends graduate school in Michigan; while she walks on campus, she notices that pro-life students write messages on the sidewalk that read: "Planned Parenthood #1 Killer of Black Lives" and "Hands up, don't abort" (295). For Gay, these messages mean that "[her] Blackness is, again, a threat [and she doesn't] feel safe" (295). While these messages, written in chalk, do not necessarily pertain to sexual assault, for Gay, they remind her of the magazines, Christopher sexually assaulting her, and the rape in the woods; all of these memories inform her identity, teaching her that while she should not claim any agency over her body, others will always try to control it. It stands to reason, then, that once Gay began to learn about sexual assault—from books, therapy, and online communities—she knew that what happened to her in the woods was rape; yet, she felt that she did not "deserve absolution" that came with the label of rape because she still believed she was to blame (92). By writing her memoir, Gay has the space to explain why so many survivors feel a tension between knowing that they were sexually assaulted and believing that they are not to blame for the assault. Often, as I have argued, this explanation involves a close analysis of the cultural messages that inform survivors' memories and identities; these memories and identities shape survivors' personal beliefs and affect how they feel about their sexual assault.

These personal beliefs, as Gay, demonstrates, cause her to feel an overwhelming sense of blame for the assault; consequently, after she is raped, Gay "buried the girl [she] had been" and "tried to erase every memory of her, but she is still there, somewhere" (21). While she cannot

remove this part of herself—that believed that she did not have a right to give or refuse consent over her body—she knows that she does not have to be defined by these previous beliefs because memories and identities are malleable and subject to change. For instance, Michael Rothberg argues that conceptualizing memory as multidirectional "encourages us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but come into being through their dialogical interactions with others" (5). Gay explains that by writing a memoir, she can put her present self—with all of the new truths that she learned about her identity and sexual assault—in dialogue with the "small and scared and ashamed girl" who she used to be; she can write her way back to her past self and "tell her everything she needs to hear" (21). Here, Gay addresses a relationship between writing a memoir and healing; yet, her version of healing does not necessarily require that she move on from the rape. For Gay, like many survivors of sexual assault, healing is an ongoing process: survivors put the horrible messages and memories that informed their identity in the past and made them believe the rape was their fault in conversations with the new truths they have learned about sexual assault and themselves. Writing a memoir can heal survivors because it allows them to move from knowing these new truths to believing them.

Knowing and Believing: Sexual Assault Memoirs Beyond 2017

In 2016, when Gay was writing her memoir and identifying this tension between learning new facts about sexual assault and believing them to be true, *Oxford Dictionaries* named "post-truth" as the word of the year. The editors state that they selected "post-truth" because they observed a "spike in frequency" within which people used the term throughout the year; they attribute this spike to "the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and the presidential election in the United

States" (n.p.). *Oxford Dictionaries* defines post-truth as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (n.p.).[46] This definition is nearly identical to the tension that Gay presents in her memoir and can be used to understand why misconceptions about sexual assault remain pervasive, despite anti-rape activists' efforts over the decades to debunk and eradicate them.

Despite the various and continuous efforts to combat misinformation about sexual assault in the public sphere, the criminal justice system continues to document high rates of case attrition and low conviction rates of sexual assault, and the public continues to respond to survivor narratives "with silence, disbelief, skepticism and critique" (Henry et al. 15). This is likely because misconceptions and misinformation about sexual assault are not static; instead, they are consistently re-inscribed and reinforced by various spheres and institutions in contemporary culture, which gives them momentum and power. [47] To illustrate this point, take former-President Obama's "Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault"; this high-profile, political initiative—that consisted of public awareness campaigns and guidelines for colleges—as the name clearly states, sought to protect students from sexual assault.[48] Once Donald Trump was inaugurated as President of the United States in January 2017, he appointed a new Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, who immediately began to reverse this work. On numerous occasions, DeVos publicly stated that the former-Task Force worked to ensure that "accused students were not getting a fair hearing"; to address this supposed injustice, DeVos implemented a rule that colleges change the standard of proof from a preponderance of evidence to clear and convincing

[46] To define post-truth, Oxford evokes Stephen Colbert's term "truthiness," which he coined in 2005 and describes as "the belief in what you feel to be true rather than what the facts will support" (n.p.).
[47] As stated throughout this dissertation, misinformation about sexual assault, according to Spohn and Tellis, is informed by sexist, racist, homophobic, ableist, and classist beliefs which inform the public's perception of who is seen as a "genuine victim" of sexual assault and defines what constitutes "real rape" (3).
[48] See Introduction for more information about "The Task Force To Protect Students From Sexual Assault."

evidence in cases of sexual assault and sexual misconduct (Schaaf et al. 699). [49] DeVos' public statements set a precedent that informs the public that, unlike the Obama administration, the Trump administration did not plan to take a public stance to protect survivors of sexual assault, and their new rules actually may have discouraged survivors from reporting.[53] This comparison demonstrates a clear shift in political responses to address sexual assault and documents how misconceptions continue to cultivate and sustain their power.

This troubling shift in politics largely informs how the American public thinks about sexual assault and what the public understands as history and as memory because, according to Radstone and Hodgkin, memory "is produced by historically specific contestable systems of knowledge and power that produce them" (11). In other words, even if the public is subject to alternative histories and memories that contest "systems of knowledge and power," they find it difficult to believe these truths because they are in tension with the narratives that are produced and circulated by these powerful systems. Concerning sexual assault, then, and as the previous example demonstrated, if the current political government preserves and fuels the misinformation that circulates about sexual assault, and activists continue to challenge and contest this misinformation, we can expect to see polarizing views on sexual assault circulating in the public sphere. These opposing narratives make the tension that Gay discussed in her memoir in 2017—knowing truths about sexual assault and believing them to be true—far more pronounced. We can expect to see this cultural predicament reflected in the memoirs published since then. This is because, as Jan Assman argues, "cultural objectivations"—in this case,

[49] According to Cornell Law School, a standard of clear and convincing evidence means that "evidence is highly substantially more likely to be true"; the committee must be convinced that the allegation is highly probable (n.p.). [53] According to Leah Butler et al., DeVos' rule shifts the focus from protecting survivors to "expanding the protections to the due process rights" of the students accused of committing these acts, which might discourage survivors from reporting sexual assault or misconduct to their colleges (980).

memoirs—are "carriers of memory" that convey shared memories to the collective. Following Assmann, then, survivors who published memoirs after 2017—a period which is beyond the scope of this dissertation—might not only document what they know and believe about their sexual assault but also reflect shared or collective memories of sexual assault in light of current conflicting political discourses about sexual assault in the United States.

I want to end this dissertation by discussing a memoir titled *Era of Ignition*, written by Amber Tamblyn and published in 2019, to demonstrate how memoirs published during the 20172020 Trump administration reflect the rising tension between conflicting discourses about sexual assault in the United States. In her memoir, Tamblyn explains how the troubling messages she hears from the Trump administration trigger her memories of sexual assault. Tamblyn recalls the first time she listened to the infamous audio clip of then-Presidential candidate Trump bragging to television host Billy Bush: "when you're a star, you can do it […] you can do anything—grab them by the pussy, do anything" (Trump qt in Tamblyn 114). This clip triggered Tamblyn, and she began to think about a sexual assault from the past. One evening her ex-boyfriend found her out at a nightclub with friends and immediately rushed towards her, picked her up by the neck with one hand, and used his other hand "to grab [her] by the vagina and drag [her] towards the exit" (115). Tamblyn remembers that, following this sexual assault, she not only felt "completely numb [and] in shock," but also suffered excruciating physical pain and had to lay in a "sitz bath, something traditionally used by women after giving vaginal birth" (116). The statements in the audio clip and the circumstances of Tamblyn's assault are remarkably similar, which may explain why, upon hearing the then-Presidential Candidate make these statements, Tamblyn confesses that "a sickening feeling came over [her]" (114). Hearing a political figure make seemingly cavalier statements about sexually assaulting women can be a

traumatic experience for survivors. It instructs survivors that they have to remain hyper-vigilant because they live in a culture where “entitled frat boys of the world” are taught that “sexually terrorizing women in their youth comes with little to no consequences” (189).

Tamblyn provides greater support for this statement by referencing Justice Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court. Like Trump—who showed the American people that a privileged white man could make statements about sexually assaulting women and become President of the United States—Kavanaugh demonstrated that privileged white men, whom women claim assaulted them in their youth, can become Supreme Court Justices.[50] Once Dr. Christine Blasey Ford alleged that Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her, both Ford and Kavanaugh were asked to testify in front of the Senate judiciary committee. During this highly publicized hearing, Ford provided her testimony with “extremely reserved emotion” while “her hands shook, and she fought back tears” (Tamblyn 189). Conversely, Kavanaugh was “so upset that he was practically spitting into the microphone” about how “his name has been tarnished” (189). Tamblyn remembers thinking that if a woman displayed a similar disposition to Kavanaugh, “she would have been immediately deemed erratic, unstable, and unfit for office” (189). However, Kavanaugh's emotional display “rendered him human in the eyes of the committee” (189). At the same time, the Republican panel responded to Ford's testimony by rolling their eyes or with “complete silent disinterest” (189). Kavanagh was eventually voted onto the Supreme Court, which, according to Tamblyn, sent the message that "[m]en get away

[50] On 9 July 2018, President Trump nominated Brett Kavanaugh as Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. On 16 September 2018, following Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing, an article appears in the Washington Post. Dr. Christine Blasey Ford alleges that Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her at a party while they were in high school. Following Ford's article, two more women, Deborah Ramirez and Julie Swetnick bring sexual assault allegations against Kavanaugh to the judiciary committee. Ford's lawyers then requested that the Senate Judiciary Committee calls on the FBI to investigate Kavanaugh before he is confirmed into the Supreme Court.

with these types of egregious behaviors […] allowing them to grow up into powerful men" (190).[51]

Tamblyn reflects on how these public messages create a tension between what she knows to be true about her sexual assault and the extent to which the current culture of sexual assault in the United States affects whether she believes these truths. She remembers writing a brief account of her sexual assault and posting it on Instagram; later, her ex-boyfriend sent her a message apologizing for sexually assaulting her. He concluded his apology claiming that perhaps Tamblyn had "exaggerated the experiences of violence in [their] relationship" (188). Tamblyn knew that her story was accurate and that the series of events she presented on Instagram was factual. Still, after she had this conversation with her ex-boyfriend, she remembers feeling as though she had done something wrong, regardless. Despite going to "great lengths to protect his identity," Tamblyn could not help feeling "guilty for dredging up his horrible behavior from the past" (118). She began to question whether "the incident really did happen the way [she] had framed it, all the while knowing full well it undeniably did" (119). By experiencing this incredible frustration, Tamblyn began asking herself, "what is it about our culture that perpetuates this blame and sends the message that it is okay to shame survivors into *believing* they are somehow responsible for what's been done to them?" (my emphasis 119). For Tamblyn, the answers to this question "lie in the foundational belief that the autonomy of our bodies is not ours to govern in the first place" (119). Similar to Gay's memoir, in which she demonstrates how public messages about Black female identity caused her to believe that she was to blame for her rape, Tamblyn shows how messages—like Donald Trump's statements about sexual assault and the Senate Judiciary sexual assault hearing—teach women that they do not have control over

[51] On 5 October 2018, the U.S. Senate votes 51-49 to advance Kavanagh's nomination, and the next day Kavanaugh is confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court by 50-58 votes.

their bodies, leaving survivors "feeling like they somehow deserved their abuse" (119). Unlike Instagram, which offered Tamblyn a limited number of characters to briefly present her narrative about sexual assault, the memoir provides her with the space to reflect on these cultural messages that inform her memories and identity, which and, in turn, affect how she feels and what she believes regarding her sexual assault. I would expect, then, that similar to Tamblyn's narrative, authors who publish memoirs after 2017 will also document how public messages regarding women, people of colour, queer-identifying folks, those who are disabled, and the working class inform how survivors think and feel about their sexual assault. Of course, these memoirs are outside of the parameters set for this dissertation; this means that there is a robust collection of memoirs about sexual assault waiting to be read critically by scholars.

Before I conclude this dissertation, I will address some of these potential lines of inquiry. To begin, I must restate that survivors write memoirs to contextualize their sexual assault within their life story, which, as this dissertation argues, allows them to document the complicated relationships that connect individual acts of violence to rape culture, white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, and sexism. While memoir is undoubtedly a productive way for survivors to present their sexual assault, testifying about sexual assault in the public sphere—regardless of the form or medium—is part of a tradition in which survivors have been tasked with the overwhelming burden of testifying and attempting to prove that they were sexually assaulted. For this reason, Gay reminds readers that "so much testimony is demanded of women, and still, there are those who doubt our stories" (257). Here, Gay points to a dilemma that survivors encounter if they choose to share a rape narrative in the public sphere. Not only are survivors participating in a problematic tradition in which the public demands that they give testimony to their assault, but also once these memoirs circulate in the

public sphere, people can scrutinize, question, and generate doubt about the validity of these stories, which can be retraumatizing for survivors. Perhaps, these glaring issues are partly responsible for the success of virtual activism, like the #MeToo Movement. My supervisor, Julie Rak (2020), for instance, states that the #MeToo movement is quite radical because survivors can join this international movement by merely posting the hashtag #MeToo, without having to provide testimony about their assault (n.p.).[52] This begs the following question: if memoirs reinforce the imperative that women publicly testify about their assault, and if sharing a rape story in the public sphere means that people can contest and discredit the narrative—causing it to lose its power—is publishing a memoir a political act? More work needs to be conducted on memoirs about sexual assault to find nuanced answers to this question.

Future work, for example, should also consider that if we argue writing and publishing a memoir about sexual assault is, in fact, a political act, we must also consider who can participate in this form of activism, and who is excluded from it? It is important to note that with the exception of Sil Lai Abrams, the authors whose memoirs I focus on are either celebrities or writers with prolific publishing records. If, as this dissertation proposed, memoirs document and present how survivors conceptualize their sexual assault within particular cultural movements and in response to pervasive discourses about history, identity, and sexual assault, then scholarship should consider which survivors are not only able to write a memoir, but also who can secure a publisher to distribute and circulate it. As this dissertation demonstrated, a relationship exists between mainstream publishers' practices and the author's identity; thus, writing a memoir might be a political act, but the mechanisms by which it is published, may reproduce and reinforce the systems of oppression that the memoirs attempt to address and

[52] Julie Rak made this statement on 10 September 2020, in her English 465 class, which is titled "#MeToo and Canadian Literature."

critique. Therefore, more work needs to be done on the politics of publishing a memoir about sexual assault with a mainstream publisher.

While these questions raise serious concerns about these memoirs, they also recognize the significant potential for scholarly work that these memoirs incite. This is because personal stories, as Schafer and Smith argue, serve as "meta-sites for social critique…[that] unsettle received conceptions of personal and national identity…dismantle foundational fictions…and reconstruct histories" (19). As memoirs unsettle and dismantle hegemonic narratives about what sexual assault is and it is usually assumed to be like, they create alternative ways of talking about and understanding sexual assault. As a result, this transmission of knowledge becomes a political act. Creating and sharing this knowledge and alternative discourses about rape are essential for survivors and their communities because personal stories can contribute to structural or societal change (Franklin and Lyons ix).

On the topic of social change, as I conclude this dissertation, volunteers across the United States are sorting and counting ballots to determine the results of the 2020 Presidential Election; currently, former-Vice President Joe Biden has won the electoral college vote and is on track to become the next President of the United States in January 2021. Citizens across the nation are celebrating already because Biden won the election and because President Trump is leaving the White House.[53] Upon learning of these election results, one might expect to see the gap between misinformation about sexual assault and survivors' truths become less wide, due to Joe Biden's record of establishing various efforts to remedy the culture of sexual assault in the United

[53] It is also important to note that during the 2020 election campaign, Tara Reade accused Joe Biden of sexually assaulting her in a Capitol Hill basement in 1993, and several women have accused Biden of "unwanted touching," which means that Biden touched them without their consent (Suk Gersen n.p.).

States.[54] Others, however, may not be as optimistic. Sara Ahmed's (2016) work regarding sexual assault on university campuses, for instance, conceptualizes assault as a result of systemic problems; because systems of power, like white supremacy, inequality, exclusivity, and heteronormativity ensure that sexual assault remains pervasive and goes unchecked; Ahmed argues that "you can change policies without changing anything" (n.p.). In other words, the nation can elect a new President—one who may continue to institute legislative reform and policies about sexual assault—without changing the culture of sexual assault in the United States. Rather than adopt either of these polarizing views, I will borrow from the authors of the memoirs and end on an ambivalent note. It is currently too early to project what these election results will mean for the culture of sexual assault in the United States and sexual assault survivors, but what I can say for certain is that survivors will continue to publish memoirs that will relay this information to us.

[54] Joe Biden was instrumental in establishing and working with "The Task Force To Protect Students From Sexual Assault." Moreover, Biden states that his "proudest legislative accomplishment" dates back to 1990 when he proposed the Violence Against Women Act, which became federal law in 1994. According to Tara Law, this legislation created "a profound cultural change, and has encouraged Americans to take gender-based violence seriously" (n.p.).

Works Cited

"20 Books Nominated for Critics' Awards." *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times,* 5 December 1975, pp. 36.

"54b. Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott." *U.S. History: Pre Columbian to the New Millennium.* http://www.ushistory.org/us/54b.asp. Accessed 15 August, 2019.

"1975: A Selection of Noteworthy Titles." *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times,* 7 December 1975, pp. 349.

Abrams, Sil Lai. *Black Lotus: A Woman's Search for Racial Identity.* Apple Books ed., Gallery Books/ Karen Hunter Publishing, 2016.

"About Us." *Seal Press.* https://www.sealpress.com/landing-page/about-seal-press/. Accessed 2 June 2020.

Ahmed, Sara. "Resignation is a Feminist Issue." *Feministkilljoys,* 27 August 2016, http://feministkilljoys.com/2016/08/27/resignation-is-a-feminist-issue/. Accessed 20 September 2020.

---.*The Cultural Politics of Emotion.* Routledge, 2004.

Alcoff, Linda., and Laura Gray-Rosendale. "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" *Signs,* vol. 18, no. 2, 1993, pp. 260-290. *University of Chicago Press,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174976.

Allen, Leah Claire. "The Pleasures of Dangerous Criticism: Interpreting Andrea Dworkin as a Literary Critic." *Signs,* vol. 42, no. 1, 2016, pp. 49-70.

Anderson, Nick., and Emma Brown, Steve Hendrix, Susan Svrluga. "Sexual assault survivors tell their stories." *Washington Post.* 5 June 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/local/sexual-assault/

Andrews, Molly. "Beyond Narrative: The Shape of Traumatic Testimony." *We Shall Bear Witness,* edited by Meg Jensen and Margaretta Jolly, University of Wisconsin Press, 2014, pp. 32-47.

Arnold, Gretchen. "U.S. Women's Movements to End Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Rape." *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 271-285.

Assmann, Jan. "Communicative and Cultural Memory." *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, in collaboration with Sara B. Young, De Gruyter, 2008, pp. 109-18.

Atkinson, Meera, and Michael Richardson, editors. *Traumatic Affect.* Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

"Bad Feminist." *Harper Collins.* https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062282712/bad-feminist/. Accessed 2 June 2020.

Ball, Karyn. "Introduction: Trauma and Its Institutional Destinies." *Cultural Critique,* no. 46, 2000, pp. 1-44. *JStor,* DOI: 10.2307/1354407.

Barkley Brown, Elsa. "To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women's Political History, 1865-1880." African American Women and the Vote, 18371960 , edited by Ann Gordon, Bettye Collier-Thomas, John H. Bracey, Arlene Avakian, Joyce Berkman, University of Massachusetts Press, 1997, pp. 66-99.

Beins, Agatha. "A Revolution in Ephemera: Feminist Newsletters and Newspapers of the 1970s." *This Book is an Action: Feminist Print Culture and Activist Aesthetics,* edited by Jaime Harker and Cecilia Konchar Farr, University of Illinois Press, 2016, pp. 46-65.

Bennett, Jill. "The Aesthetics of Sense Memory." *Memory Cultures: Memory, Subjectivity, and Recognition*, edited by Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin, Routledge, 2005, pp. 27-39.

Bennett, Jill, and Rosanne Kennedy. "Introduction." *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, edited by Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 1–15.

Benoit, William. "Image Repair on the Donald Trump 'Access Hollywood' Video: 'Grab Them by the P*ssy." *Communication Studies,* vol. 63, no. 3, 2017, pp. 245-259.

"Best Seller List." *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times,* 7 December 1975, pp. 361.

"Betty Friedan on 'The Problem That Has No Name,' 1963." *D.C. Health & Company*, edited by Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander,1996, pp. 439.

Bevacqua, Maria. *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*. Northeastern University Press, 2000.

"Black Lotus: A Woman's Search for Racial Identity." *Simon & Schuster*. https://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/Black-Lotus/Sil-Lai-Abrams/9781451688481 Accessed 30 July 2018.

"Book Ends." *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times,* 21 December 1975, pp. 228.

Bowman, Barbara. "Bill Cosby Raped Me, Why Did It Take 30 Years for People To Believe my Story?" *Washington Post.* 13 November 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/11/13/bill-cosby-raped-mewhy-did-it-take-30-years-for-people-to-believe-my-story/. Accessed 2 May 2017.

Boyle, Karen. *#MeToo, Weinstein and Feminism.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Bradley, Patricia. *Mass Media and the Shaping of American Feminism 1963-1975.* University Press of Mississippi, 2003.

Brisley, Lucy. "Trauma Theory, Melancholia and the Postcolonial Novel: Assia Djebar's *Algerian White/ Le Blanc de l'Algérie." Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative, Resistance,* edited by Abigail Ward. Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. pp. 97-11.

Brockes, Emma. "If Men Could Get Pregnant, Abortion Would Be A Sacrament." *The Guardian,* 17 October 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/17/gloria-steinemactivist-interview-memoir-my-life-on-the-road. Accessed 20 July 2018.

Brody, Jane E. "The Twice-Victimized of Sexual Assault." *New York Times,* 12 December 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/13/health/the-twice-victimized-of-sexual-assault.html. Accessed 3 July 2017.

Brophy, Sarah. *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony, and the Work of Mourning.* University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Brown, Laura. "The Life: Girl on Girl, Lena Dunham talks to Laura Brown. *Harper's Bazaar.* 30 September 2014. https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a3772/lena-dunhamnot-that-kind-of-girl-interview-1114/. Accessed 22 March 2017.

Burkett, Elinor. "Women's rights movement." *Encyclopedia Britannica.* https://www.britannica.com/event/womens-movement. Accessed 20 March 2020.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories In Subjection.* Stanford University Press, 1997.

Butler, Leah., and Heejin Lee, Bonnie S. Fisher. "Less Safe in the Ivory Tower: Campus Sexual Assault Policy in the Trump Administration." *Victims & Offenders,* vol. 14, no. 8, 2019, pp. 979-996.

Cachero, Paulina. "19 million #MeToo tweets later: Alyssa Milano and Tarana Burke reflect on the year after #MeToo." *MAKERS-yahoo!news.* 15 October 2018, https://ca.news.yahoo.com/19-million-metoo-tweets-later-195400791.html. Accessed 27 April 2019.

Cameron, Debbie. "The Price of Fame—I." *Trouble & Strife*, vol. 39, 1999, pp. 4-8. http://www.troubleandstrife.org/articles/issue-39/the-price-of-fame/

Caputi, Jane. "Take Back What Doesn't Belong To Me:' Sexual Violence, Resistance and the 'Transmission of Affect.'' *Women's Studies International Forum* , vol. 26, no. 1, 2003, pp. 1-14.

Carroll, Rebecca. "Gabrielle Union: The Outspoken Actress Hollywood Has Been Waiting For." *Harper's Bazaar.* 21 November 2016, https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a18822/gabrielle-union-interview/. Accessed 16 September 2018.

Caruth, Cathy. "Introduction: Trauma and Experience." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* edited by Cathy Caruth, John Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 3-12. ---.*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.* John Hopkins University Press, 1996.

"Chapter 15.5 Student Safety [67380-67386]". *California Legislative Information.* January 2020, http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&sectionNum=67386. Accessed 10 January 2019.

Cheng, Anne Anlin. *The Melancholy of Race.* Oxford University Press, 2001.

Chiwaya, Nigel. "New data on #MeToo's first year shows undeniable impact." NBC News. 11 October 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/new-data-metoo-s-first-yearshows-undeniable-impact-n918821. Accessed 4 January 2018.

"Clear and Convincing Evidence." *Legal Information Institute.* https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/clear_and_convincing_evidence. Accessed 20 September 2020.

Clements, Julie A. "Participatory Democracy: The Bridge from Civil Rights to Women's Liberation." *The Interdisciplinary Journal of American University's School of Public Affairs,* vol. 1, 2003, pp. 5-24. *The Public Purpose,* https://www.american.edu/spa/publicpurpose/upload/partcipatory-democracy-the-bridgefrom-civil-rights-to-women-s-liberation.pdf

Cook, Terrence E. *Participatory Democracy.* Canfield Press, 1971.

Cooke, Rachel. "Interview: U.S. feminist Susan Brownmiller on why her groundbreaking book on rape is still relevant." *The Guardian,* 18 February 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/18/susan-brownmiller-against-our-willinterview-metoo. Accessed 4 June 2019.

"Corporate History." *Simone and Schuster.* https://about.simonandschuster.biz/corporate-history/ Accessed 15 August 2019.

Craps, Stef. "Beyond Trauma Aesthetics." *Postcolonial Witnessing.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 38-43.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "We Still Haven't Learned From Anita Hill's Testimony: In the Great Awakening Around Sexual Harassment, Race was Politically Ushered Offstage. That Problem Persists." *The New Yorker*. September 27, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/27/opinion/anita-hill-clarence-thomasbrettkavanaugh-christine-ford.html Accessed 2 June 2019.

Dana, Will. "A Note to Our Readers." *Rolling Stone*. 5 December 2014, https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/a-note-to-our-readers-72612/. Accessed 20 February 2020.

Davidson, Caroline. "Rape in Context: Lessons for the United States from the International Criminal Court." *Cardozo Law Review,* vol. 39, no. 1191, 2018, pp. 1119-1237, *SSRN*, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3261566.

Davis, Angela Y. "Rape, Racism and the Capitalist Settling." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 12, no. 6, 1981, pp. 39-45.

Davis, Alison P. "Gabrielle Union Can't Believe She Just Said That: The candid actress gets even more candid in a new book of essays." *The Cut*. https://www.thecut.com/2017/10/profile-gabrielle-union-on-her-new-book.html. Accessed 15 October 2020.

D'Emilio, John, and Estelle B. Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America,* 3rd ed., Kindle ed., University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Dean, Amber. *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women: Settler Colonialism and the Difficulty of Inheritance*. University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Del Barco, Mandalit. "Gabrielle Union Gets Real in 'We're Going To Need More Wine'". *NPR.* 20 October 2017, https://www.npr.org/2017/10/20/558838759/gabrielle-union-gets-realin-were-going-to-need-more-wine. Accessed 2 June 2020.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Proust and Signs.* University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Dockterman, Eliana. "Lena Dunham's Story of Rape is a Must-Read." *Time*. 30 September 2014. https://time.com/3445018/lena-dunham-not-that-kind-of-girl-rape-essay/. Accessed 6 June 2020.

Donaghue, Erin. "Judge on Stanford attacker's consent claims: 'I take him at his word.'" *CBC.* 15 June 2016. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/brock-turner-ex-swimmer-judge-instanford-sex-assault-case-i-take-him-at-his-word/. Accessed 20 September 2020.

Dow, Bonnie. "Introduction: 1970." *Watching Women's Liberation, 1970: Feminism's Pivotal Year on the Network News.* University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Dowd Hall, Jacquelyn. "The Mind That Burns in Each Body." *Powers of Desire*, edited by Christine Stansell, Ann Barr Snitow, and Sharon Thompson, Monthly Review Press, 1983, pp. 328-349.

Dunham, Lena. "My Apology to Aurora." *The Hollywood Reporter.* 5 December 2018, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/lena-dunham-my-apology-aurora-perrineau1165614. Accessed 20 January 2019.

---. *Not That Kind of Girl: A Young Woman Tells You What She's 'Learned.'* Penguin Random House, 2014.

---.Why I Chose to Speak Out". *Buzzfeed News,* 9 December 2014, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lenadunham/lena-dunham-why-i-chose-to-speakout. Accessed 2 July 2019.

Durham, Aisha. "Analog girl in a digital world: Hip hop feminism and media activism." *Media Activism in the Digital Age,* edited by Victor Pickard and Guobin Yang, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017, pp. 205-15.

Echols, Alice. "White Women and the Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement." *Major Problems in American Women's History,* 2nd ed., edited by Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander, D.C. Health & Company, 1996, pp. 464-471.

Edwards, Alison. "Rape, Racism, and the White Women's Movement: An Answer to Susan Brownmiller," 1976, http://www.sojournertruth.net/rrwwm.html. Accessed 2 July 2020.

Eichhorn, Kate. "Feminism's *there:* On post-ness and nostalgia." *Feminist Theory,* vol. 16, no. 3, 2015, pp. 251-264. *SAGE,* DOI: 10.1177/1464700115604127.

Erll, Astrid. "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction." *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Sara B. Young, Ansgar Nunning, and Erll Astrid, De Gruyter, 2009, pp. 1-15.

Fairchild, Kimberly. "Book Review: Sex Object: A Memoir." *Psychology of Women Quarterly,* vol. 41, no. 2, February 2017, pp. 289-9. *ResearchGate,* DOI: 10.1177/0361684316667605

Felsenthal, Julia. "Jessica Valenti on Writing Sex Object and Holding Nothing Back." *Vogue.* 3 June 2016, https://www.vogue.com/article/jessica-valenti-sex-object-interview. Accessed 10 May 2020.

Ferreira da Silva, Denise. "Towards a Black Feminist Poetics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World." *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2015, pp. 81-97.

Fitz-Gerald, Sean. "Lena Dunham's Publisher Will Tweak Her Book Over Rape Story." *Vulture.* 9 December 2014, https://www.vulture.com/2014/12/lena-dunham-publisher-changebarry.html?wpsrc=nymag. Accessed 1 June 2019.

Franklin, Cynthia, and Laura E. Lyons. "Bodies of Evidence and The Intricate Machines of Untruth." *Biography*, vol. 27, no.1, 2004, pp. v-xxii. *ResearchGate,* DOI: 10.1353/bio.2004.0031

Freeman, Hadley. "Not That Kind of Girl review- Lena Dunham, exposes all, again." *The Guardian.* 30 September 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/sep/30/notthat-kind-of-girl-lena-dunham-review-memoir. Accessed 20 September 2019.

Freeman, Jo. "From Suffrage to Women's Liberation: Feminism in Twentieth Century America." *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, 5th ed., edited by Jo Freeman, McGraw Hill, 1994, pp. 509-28.

Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey, eds. Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, Vintage, 2001. pp. 237-258.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. W.W. Norton, 1963.

---. *The Second Stage.* Harvard University Press, 1981.

Garcia, Sandra E. "The Woman Who Created #MeToo Long Before Hashtags." *The New York Times.* 20 October 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/20/us/me-too-movementtarana-burke.html. Accessed 15 November 2019.

Gay, Roxane. *Bad Feminist.* Harper Collins, 2014.

---.*Hunger: A Memoir of my Body*. HarperCollins, 2017.

---."Lena Dunham: A Generation's Gutsy, Ambitious Voice." *Time*. 24 September 2014, https://time.com/3425759/lena-dunham-a-generations-gutsy-ambitious-voice/. Accessed 9 June 2018.

Giaccardi, Elisa., and Liedeke Plate. "How Memory Comes to Matter: From Social Media to the Internet of Things." *Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture,* edited by Laszio Muntean, Liedeke Plate, and Anneke Smelik, Routledge, 2016, pp. 65-88.

Gilley, Jennifer. "Ghost in the Machine: Kitchen Table Press and the Third Wave Anthology that Vanished." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2017, pp. 141-163. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/678868.

---."This book is an action: A case for the study of feminist publishing." *The International Journal of the Book*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-9.

Gilmore, Leigh. "Stanford Sexual Assault: What Changed With the Survivor's Testimony." *The Conversation, PBS,* 16 June 2016. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pointtaken/blog/conversation-stanford-sexual-assault-what-changed-survivors-testimony/ Accessed 17 October 2016.

---. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony.* Cornell University Press, 2001.

Goss, Kristin A. "The Swells Between the "Waves": American Women's Activism, 1920-1965." *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 52-68.

Graham, Meikle. *The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism.* Routledge, 2018.

Grdešić, Maša. '"I'm Not The Ladies!'": Metatextual Commentary in *Girls*." *Feminist Media Studies,* vol. 13, no. 2, 2013, pp. 355-358. *Routledge,* https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2013.771878

Green, Barbara. "Feminist Things". *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1800-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*, edited by Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier, Palgrave, 2008, pp. 66-79.

Griffin, Riley, Hannah Recht and Jeff Green. "#MeToo: One Year Later."*Bloomberg.* 5 October 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2018-me-too-anniversary/. Accessed 20 November 2019.

Griffin, Susan. *Rape: the Politics of Consciousness.* Harper and Row, 1986.

Gross, Terry. "Be Bigger, Fight Harder: Roxane Gay on a Lifetime of 'Hunger.'" *NPR.* 19 June 2017, https://www.npr.org/2017/06/19/533515895/be-bigger-fight-harder-roxane-gay-ona-lifetime-of-hunger. Accessed 2 July 2020.

---. "Lena Dunham on Sex, Oversharing and Writing About Lost 'Girls.'" *NPR*. 29 September 2019, https://www.npr.org/transcripts/352276798. Accessed 2 June 2019.

Grzęda, Paulina. "Trauma and Testimony: Autobiographical Writing in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative, Resistance,* edited by Abigail Ward. Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. pp. 65-83.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory,* translated by Lewis A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Harker, Jaime. & Cecilia Konchar Farr. "Introduction: Outrageous, Dangerous, and Unassimilable: Writing the Women's Movement." *This Book is an Action: Feminist Print Culture and Activist Aesthetics.* University of Illinois Press, 2016, pp. 1-19.

Harris, Cheryl I. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review,* vol. 106, no. 8, 1993, pp. 1707. *JSTOR,* https://www.jstore.org/stable/1341787.

Hartmann, Susan. *From Margin to Mainstream: American Women and Politics since 1960.* Temple University Press, 1989.

Hemmer, Nicole. "#MeToo's Roots in the Feminist Awakening of the 1960s." *Vox,* 29 November 2017, https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/11/29/16712454/me-toofeminism-sexual-harassment-twitter. Accessed 20 December 2019.

Henry, Nicola., and Asher Flynn, Anastasia Powell. "The Promise and Paradox of Justice: Rape Justice Beyond the Criminal Law." *Rape Justice: Beyond the Criminal Law,* edited by Anastasia Powell, Nicola Henry, and Asher Flynn, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 1-17.

Hesford, Victoria. "Feminism and its ghosts: the specter of the feminist-as-lesbian." *Feminist Theory*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2005, pp. 227-250. DOI: 10.1177/1464700105057361.

Hesford, Wendy. "Reading Rape Stories: Material Rhetoric and the Trauma of Representation. *College English*, vol. 62, no. 2, 1999, pp. 192-221.*JStor,* DOI: 10.2307/379018. ---.

"Witnessing Rape Warfare: Suspending the Spectacle*." Spectacular Rhetoric: Huan Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms*. Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 93-124.

Hill Collins, Patricia. "Pornography and Black Women's Bodies." *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography,* edited by Diana E.H. Russell, Teachers College Press, 1993, pp. .

Hillsburg, Heather. "Furious Females: Women's Writing as an Archive of Anger". Unpublished dissertation, University of Ottawa, Canada. https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/24371/1/Hillsburg_Heather_2013_thesis.pdf

Hirsch, Marianne, and Valerie Smith. "Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction." *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2002, pp. 1-19. *University of Chicago Press Journals,* https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/citedby/10.1086/340890

"History & Vision." *me too.* 2018, https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history. Accessed 13 January 2020.

Hobbs, Allyson. "One Year of #MeToo: The Legacy of Black Women's Testimonies." *The New Yorker,* October 10, 2018, http://www.newyorker.com/culture/personalhistory/oneyear-of-metoo-the-legacy-of-Black-womens-testimonies. Accessed 20 January 2020.

Hogan, Kristen. *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability.* Duke University Press, 2016.

Hole, Judith and Ellen Levine. *Rebirth of Feminism.* Quadrangle Books, 1975.

"Hood Feminism: Notes From The Women That A Movement Forgot." *Penguin RandomHouse. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/586743/hood-feminism-by-mikkikendall/9780525560548.* Accessed 20 May 2020.

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Open Hand Publishing, 1987.

"How To Start a Rape Crisis Centre." *ERIC,* 1972, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED108060. Accessed 2 Mary 2020.

"Hunger." *HarperCollinsPublishers.* https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062362599/hunger/ Accessed 24 May 2020.

Huyssen, Andreas. "Resistance to Memory: The Uses and Abuses of Public Forgetting." *Globalizing Critical Theory,* edited by Max Pensky, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005, pp. 161-184.

"Introduction to Consciousness Raising." *New York Radical Feminist Newsletter,* 1975. https://cache.kzoo.edu/bitstream/handle/10920/28141/NYRFNewsletter1975-03.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 10 June 2019.

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Thayer & Eldridge, 1861.

Jackson, Stevi. "Looking Back at the Women's Liberation Movement." *Discovery Society,* no. 42, 2017,https://discoversociety.org/2017/03/01/looking-back-at-the-womens-liberationmovement/ Accessed 2 May 2020.

James, Meg. "Iconic book publisher Simon & Schuster is on the auction block." *Los Angeles Times.* 4 March 2020. https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/202003-04/simon-schuster-book-publisher-for-sale. Accessed 20 April 2020.

Jensen, Meg. "The Fictional is Political: Forms of Appeal in Autobiographical Fiction and Poetry." *We Shall Bear Witness,* edited by Meg Jensen and Margaretta Jolly, University of Wisconsin Press, 2014. pp. 141-157.

Jolly, Margaretta. "Introduction: Life/Rights Narrative in Action." *We Shall Bear Witness,* edited by Meg Jensen and Margaretta Jolly, University of Wisconsin Press, 2014, pp. 3-31.

Jones, Abigail. "International Women's Day: Gloria Steinem on #MeToo, Trump and Making Change Happen." *Newsweek.* 28 February 2018, https://www.newsweek.com/2018/03/09/international-womens-day-gloria-steinem-822707.html. Accessed 3 June 2019.

Jones, Sarah. "Trump Doesn't Have a 'Type.'" *The Cut.* 25 June 2019, https://www.thecut.com/2019/06/trump-says-e-jean-carroll-is-not-my-type-sexualassault.html. Accessed 2 June 2020.

Jordan, Jan. “Introduction: The Credibility Conundrum.” *The Word of a Woman?* London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, pp. 1-13.

Kadar, Marlene. “Coming to Terms: Life Writing- from Genre to Critical Practice.” *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice.* University of Toronto Press, 1992, pp. 3-16.

Kakutani, Michiko. “Hannah’s Self-Aware Alter Ego.” *The New York Times*. 23 September 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/24/books/lena-dunhams-memoir-ish-not-thatkind-of-girl.html. Accessed 2 June 2020.

Kantor, Jodi., Megan Twohey. “Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accuser for Decades.” *New York Times,* 5 October 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/us/harvey-weinstein-harassment-allegations.html. Accessed 22 March 2019.

Kaplan, E. Ann., and Ban Wang. “Introduction: From Traumatic Paralysis to the Force Field of Modernity.” *Trauma and Cinema: Cross Cultural Explorations,* edited by E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang, Hong Kong University Press, 2004, pp. 1-23.

Keightley, Emily. And Michael Pickering. “Painful Pasts.” *Research Methods in Memory Studies,* edited by Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, pp. 151-166.

Klemesrud, Judy. “Greeting the New Year—Some with a Bang, Some with a Whimper.” *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times,* 31 December 1975, pp. 26.

---.“Swirl of Parties Tries to Breathe Life in the Equal Rights Cause.” *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times,* 18 April 1978, pp. 34.

Krischer, Hayley. "We're Going to Need More Gabrielle Union." *The New York Times.* 5 December 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/05/style/gabrielle-unionmemoir.html. Accessed 30 May 2019.

Law, Tara. "The Violence Against Women Act Was Signed 25 Years Ago. Here's How the Law Changed American Culture." *Time.* 12 September 2018, https://time.com/5675029/violence-against-women-act-history-biden/. Accessed 20 September 2020.

Lee, Jarry. "Lena Dunham Launches Her Own Imprint at Random House." *BuzzFeed Books.* 6 April 2016, https://www.buzzfeed.com/jarrylee/lena-dunham-will-have-her-own-bookpublishing-imprint. Accessed 18 March 2019.

Leydesdorff, Selma. and Nanci Adler. "Introduction: On Evidence and the Value of Personal Testimony." *Tapestry of Memory: Evidence and Testimony in Life- Story Narratives, edited by Nanci Adler and Selma Leydesdorff,* Routledge, 2013. pp. ix-xxix.

Leys, Ruth. *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After.* University of Princeton Press, 2007.

---.*Trauma: A Genealogy.* University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Lisak, David. *Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence*. University of Massachusetts at Boston, 2008. pp.1-12.

---. and Paul Miller. "Repeat Rape and Multiple Offending Among Undetected Rapists." *Violence and Victims,* vol. 17, no. 2, 2002, pp. 73-84. *Springer. https://time.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/09/repeat_rape.pdf*

Loney-Howes, Rachel. "Shifting the Rape Script: 'Coming Out' Online as a Rape Victim." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies,* vol. 39, no. 2, 2018, pp. 26-57. *ResearchNet,* DOI 10.5250/fronjwomestud.39.2.0026.

Lonsway, Kimberly A., et al. "False Reports: Moving Beyond the Issue to Successfully Prosecute Non-Stranger Sexual Assault." *The Voice*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1-11.

Maas, Megan K., and Heather L. McCauley, Amy E. Bonomi, S. Gisela Leija. "'I Was Grabbed by My Pussy and Its #NotOkay': A Twitter Backlash Against Donald Trump's Degrading Commentary." *Violence Against Women,* vol. 24, no. 14, 2018, pp. 1739-1750. *Sage,* https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801217743340

Maglio, Tony. "Lena Dunham's Publisher Altering Book to Clarify That 'Barry' is a Pseudonym" *TheWrap.* 8 December 2014, https://www.thewrap.com/lena-dunhamrandom-house-not-that-kind-of-girl-barry-one/. Accessed 2 August 2019.

Matthews, Nancy A. *Confronting Rape: The Feminist Anti-Rae Movement and the State.* Routledge, 1994.

Maciulewicz, Joanna. "The Representation of Book Culture in *It-Narratives." Materiality and Popular Culture: The Popular Life of Things,* edited by Anna Malinowska and Karolina Lebek, Routledge, 2017, pp. 55-64.

Mackellar, Jean. *Rape: The Bait and the Trap.* Crown, 1975.

Manhart, Mary Ann. And Florence Rush. "New York Radical Feminists Manifesto of Shared Rape. July 1971" *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women,* edited by Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilson, New American Library, 1974. https://web.viu.ca/davies/H323Vietnam/Manifesto.SharedRape.1971.htm

McCammon, Holly J., and Karen E. Campbell, Ellen Granberg, Christine Mowery. "How Movements Win: Gendered Opportunity Structures and U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866 to 1919." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2017, pp. 49-70. *JStor*, DOI: 10.2307/2657393.

McDonnell, Andrea. "Gender, Violence, and Popular Culture." *The Handbook on Gender and Violence*, edited by Laura J. Shepherd. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019, pp. 189-202.

McGuire, Danielle. *At The Dark End of the Street.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

---. "It was like All of Us Had Been Raped": Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization and the African American Freedom Struggle." The Journal of American History, vol. 91 no. 3, 2004, pp. 906-931. DOI: 10.2307/3662860

Mcilwain, Charlton D. *Black Software: The Internet & Racial Justice, From the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

McKee Hurwitz, Heather. "From Ink to Web and Beyond: U.S. Women's Activism Using Traditional and New Social Media." *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 462-484.

McNiff, Eamon, and Lauren Effron and Jeff Schneider. "How the Retracted Rolling Stone Article 'A Rape on Campus' Came to Print." *ABC News,* https://abcnews.go.com/2020/deepdive/how-retracted-rolling-stone-article-rape-oncampus-came-print-42701166. Accessed 20 May 2020.

Meagher, Michelle and Roxanne Loree Runyon. "Backward Glances: Feminism, nostalgia and Joan Braderman's The Heretics (2009)." *Feminist Theory,* vol, 18, no. 3, 2017, pp. 343356. *Sage,* DOI: 10.1177/1464700117721883.

Mendes, Kaitlynn., and Jessalynn Keller, and Jessica Ringrose. "Digitized Narratives of Sexual Violence: Making Sexual Violence Felt and Known Through Digital Discourses." *New Media and Society,* vol. 21, no. 6, 2019, pp. 1290-1310. *Sage,* DOI: 10.1177/1461444818820069.

Mills, Sara. *Gender and Politeness.* Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Miller, Shae. "Sexuality, gender Identity, Fluidity, and Embodiment." *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 441-456.

Morabito, Melissa S., and Linda M. Williams, April Pattavina. "Decision Making in Sexual Assault Cases: Replication Research on Sexual Violence Case Attrition in the U.S." Lowell Massachusetts: *National Institute of Justice,* 2019. *Print.* ICPSR 37181.

Morrow, Lance."Women of the Year." *Time*, vol. 107 no. 1. 5 January 1976. *The Vault* https://time.com/vault/issue/1976-01-05/. Accessed 2 November 2019.

Morton, Patricia. *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women*. Praeger, 1991.

Muehlenhard, Charlene L., and Zoë D. Peterson, Terry P. Humphreys, Kristen N. Jozkowski. "Evaluating the One-in-Five Statistic: Women's Risk of Sexual Assault While in College." The Journal of Sex Research, vol. 54, no. 4-5, 2017, pp. 549-576. *Taylor & Francis Online,* https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1295014

Murray, Simone. *Mixed Media: Feminist Presses and Publishing Politic.* Pluto Press, 2004.

Nash, Meredith, and Imelda Whelehan. "Why *Girls?* Why Now?" *Reading Lena Dunham's Girls: Feminism, Postfeminism, Authenticity and Gendered Performance in Contemporary Television.* Palgrave, 2017, pp. 1-13.

"New York Radical Feminists' Activities." *New York Radical Feminist Newsletter,* 1975. https://cache.kzoo.edu/bitstream/handle/10920/28141/NYRFNewsletter1975-03.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 10 June 2019.

"New York Radical Feminists Manifesto of Shared Rape, 1971." *New American Library, 1974,* https://web.viu.ca/davies/H323Vietnam/Manifesto.SharedRape.1971.htm. Accessed 2 June 2020.

Ngai, Sianne. "Introduction." *Ugly Feelings.* Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 1-37.

Nolte, John. "Investigation: Lena Dunham 'Raped By A Republican' Story in Bestseller Collapses Under Scruitiny." *Breitbart.* 3 December 2014. https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2014/12/03/investigation-lena-dunhamsrepublican-rapist-story-falls-apart-under-scrutiny/. Accessed 2 June 2020.

"Not That Kind of Girl." *Penguin Random House.* https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/227740/not-that-kind-of-girl-by-lenadunham/. Accessed 25 July 2018.

"NOW's Statement of Purpose, 1966." *Major Problems in American Women's History,* 2nd ed., edited by Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander, D.C. Health & Company, 1996, pp. 445.

Norman, Brian. "We" in Redux: The Combahee River Collective's Black Feminist Statement." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2007, pp. 103-132. DOI:10.1215/10407591-2007-004.

O'Brien, Susie., and Imre Szeman. *Popular Culture: A User's Guide.* John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2017.

O'Grady, Megan. "Lena Dunham Talks to Vogue's Book Critic About Her New Collection of Essays, Not That Kind of Girl, and Why Now Is Such a Pivotal Time for Women. *Vogue.* 30 September 2014, https://www.vogue.com/article/lena-dunham-not-that-kind-of-girl. Accessed 18 October 2019.

O'Reily, Katie. "On 'Sex Object: A Memoir": An Interview with Jessica Valenti." *Michigan Quarterly Review*. 3 June 2016, https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mqr/2016/06/on-sex-object-amemoir-an-interview-with-jessica-valenti/. Accessed 17 November 2019.

Obie, Brooke. "Memoir Uncovers One Woman's Painful Search for Racial Identity." *NBC News*. 8 September 2016, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/new-memoir-uncovers-onewoman-s-search-racial-identity-n632741. Accessed 13 October 2018.

Ohlheiser, Abby. "The woman behind 'Me Too' knew the power of the phrase when she created it-10 years ago." *The Washington Post.* 19 October 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2017/10/19/the-woman-behindme-too-knew-the-power-of-the-phrase-when-she-created-it-10-years-ago/. Accessed 2 November 2019.

Pardo, Mary. "Latinas in U.S. Social Movements." Feminist Identities." *U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 644-660.

Parks, Rosa with Gregory J. Reed. "Reflections by Rosa Parks." *Keeper of the Word Foundation*, 1994.

Peck, Emily. "Gloria Steinem: For The First Time Ever, 'Women Are Being Believed.'" *HuffPost*. 2 July 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/gloria-steinem-makersconference_n_5a7b62d4e4b0c6726e0ec9b5. Accessed 2 November 2019.

Peterson, Valerie. "Publishing and Book Marketing." *The Balance Careers.* 25 June 2019, https://www.thebalancecareers.com/about-book-marketing-2799981. Accessed 2 July 2019.

---."The Big 5 Trade Book Publishers." *The Balance Careers.* 30 May 2019, https://www.thebalancecareers.com/the-big-five-trade-book-publishers-2800047 Accessed 16 August 2018.

"Philosophy of Radical Feminism." *New York Radical Feminist Newsletter,* 1975. https://cache.kzoo.edu/bitstream/handle/10920/28141/NYRFNewsletter1975-03.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 10 June 2019.

"Preponderance of Evidence." *Legal Information Institute.* https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/preponderance_of_the_evidence. Accessed 20 September 2020.

Press, Joy. "Lena Dunham speaks uncomfortable truths about 'Girls'". *Los Angeles Times.* 8 April 2012, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-xpm-2012-apr-08-la-ca-lenadunham-20120408-story.html. Accessed 2 February 2019.

Probyn, Elspeth. *Blush.* University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Rademacher, Heidi E. and Kathleen M. Fallon. "The Historical Roots of a Global Feminist Perspective and the Growing Focus Among U.S. Feminists." *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 173-183.

Radstone, Susannah. "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics." *Paragraph,* vol. 30, no.1, 2007, pp. 9-29. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/214014.

Radstone, Susannah, and Katharine Hodgkin. "Regimes of Memory: An Introduction." *Memory Cultures: Memory, Subjectivity, and Recognition.* Transaction Publishers, 2009, pp. 1-22.

Rae, Patricia. "Introduction: Modernist Mourning." *Modernist Mourning,* edited by Patricia Rae, Bucknell University Press, 2007, pp. 13-28.

Rak, Julie. *Boom!:Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market.* Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013.

Reger. Jo. "Contemporary Feminism and Beyond." *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 109-123.

Remnick, David. "The Weinstein Moment and the Trump Presidency." *The New Yorker,* 12 November 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/11/20/the-weinsteinmoment-and-the-trump-presidency. Accessed 20 December 2019.

Riley, Glenda. *Inventing the American Woman: An Inclusive History Since 1877,* 3rd ed., vol. 2. Harlan, Davidson, 2001.

---.*Inventing the American Woman: An Inclusive History Since 1877,* 4th ed., vol. 2. Wiley-Blackwell, 2007.

Rose, Susan D. "Naming and Claiming: The Integration of Traumatic Experience and the Reconstruction of Self in Survivors' Stories if Sexual Abuse." *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives* edited by Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff, and Graham Dawson, Routledge, 1999, pp. 160-179.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory.* Stanford University Press, 2009.

Russell, Diana. *The Politics of Rape: The Victim's Perspective.* Stein and Day, 1975.

Ryan, Barbara. *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism.* Routledge, 1992.

Saunders, Max. "Life-Writing, Cultural Memory, and Literary Studies." *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook,* edited by Sara B. Young, Ansgar Nunning, and Erll Astrid, De Gruyter, 2009, pp. 321-331.

Schaaf, Sarah. And Raina V. Lamade, Ann W. Burgess, Mary Koss, Elise Lopez, and Robert Prentky. "Student Views on Campus Sexual Assault." *Journal of American College Health*. Vol. 67, no. 7, 2019, pp. 698-705.

Schaffer, Kay, and Sidonie Smith. "Conjunctions: Life Narratives in the Field of Human Rights." *Biography*, vol.27, no.1, 2004, 1- 24. *Project Muse,* doi:10.1353/bio.2004.0039

Schwab, Gabriele. *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma.* Columbia University Press, 2010.

"Second-wave feminism." *Khan Academy.* https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/postwarera/1960samerica/a/second-wave-feminism. Accessed 2 May 2020.

"Sex Object." *Harper Collins.* https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062435088/sex-object/ Accessed 2 May 2020.

"Sexual Assault." *RAINN.* 20 September 2020, https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-assault. Accessed 5 October 2020.

"Sexual Assault in the United States." *Stop Violence Against Women: A Project of The Advocates for Human Rights.* 17 October 2018, http://www.stopvaw.org/national_sexual_assault_laws_united_states Accessed 2 October 2020.

Sharpe, Christina. "The Wake." *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being.* Duke University Press, 2016, pp. 1-24.

Shephard, Alex. "Penguin Random House Is Building the Perfect Publishing House: But does it matter in the age of Amazon?" *The New Republic.* 12 September 2018, https://newrepublic.com/article/151177/penguin-random-house-building-perfectpublishing-house. Accessed 3 June 2019.

Smith, David. "Ida B. Wells: The Unsung Heroine of the Civil Rights Movement." *The Guardian.* April 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/27/ida-b-wellscivil-rightsmovement-reporter. Accessed 4 July 2019.

Smith, Roberta. "In a Mattress, a Lever for Art and Political Protest." *The New York Times.* 21 Sept 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/arts/design/in-a-mattress-a-fulcrum-ofart-and-political-protest.html. Accessed 6 July 2019.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julie Watson. *Reading Autobiography.* 2nd ed., University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Smith, Valerie. "Split Affinities: The Case of Interracial Rape." *not just race, not just gender: Black Feminist Readings,* edited by Valerie Smith, Routledge, 1998. pp. 1-35.

Solis, Marie. "Tarana Burke Remembers One Year Since #MeToo Went Viral." *Vice.* 15 October 2018, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xw9p8w/tarana-burke-me-tooanniversary-alyssa-milano. Accessed 26 February 2019.

Sowards, Stacey K., and Valerie R. Renegar. "The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism." *Communication Studies,* vol. 55, no. 4, 2004, pp. 535553. *Routledge,* https://doi.org/10.1080/10510970409388637

Spallacci, Amanda. “Lena Dunham and Sexual Violence: A Young Woman Tells You What She’s ‘Learned’ About Rape.” *International Autobiography Association Life Writing Graduate Student and New Scholar Network*, November 2015, http://iabasns.dudaone.com/newpage1.

---. Rape Testimony in Contemporary Memoir.” *Studies in Testimony*, vol. 2, September 2019. https://studiesintestimony.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Amanda-Spallacci-Complete.pdf

---“Evoking the Specter of White Feminism in the #MEeToo Movement: Publishing Memoirs and the Cultural Memory of American Feminism.” *#MeToo and Literary Studies: Reading Writing and Teaching about Sexual Violence and Rape Culture,* edited by Mary K. Holand and Heather Hewett, Bloomsbury Press, 2021, pp. 57-71.

Spohn, Cassia., and Katherine Tellis. *Policing and Prosecuting Sexual Assault: Inside the Criminal Justice System.* Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014.

Sprengnether, Madelon. “Reflections on Melancholia and Mourning.” *Mourning Freud*. Bloomsbury, 2018, pp. 189-240.

St. Félix, Doreen. “Roxane Gay’s Complicated “Hunger”. *The New Yorker.* 26 June 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/roxane-gays-complicated-hunger Accessed 20 February 2018.

Stone, Meighan and Rachel Vogelstein. “Celebrating #MeToo’s Global Impact. Foreign Policy.” 7 March 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/07/metooglobalimpactinternationalwomens-day/ Accessed 30 March 2020.

"Suggested Topics for Consciousness Raising." *New York Radical Feminist Newsletter,* 1975. https://cache.kzoo.edu/bitstream/handle/10920/28141/NYRFNewsletter1975-03.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 10 June 2019.

Suk Gersen, Jeannie. "A Fair Examination of Tara Reades Allegation Can Strengthen the #MeToo Movement." *The NewYorker,* 6 May 2020. https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/a-fair-examination-of-tara-readesallegation-can-strengthen-the-metoo-movement. Accessed 3 June 2020.

Tamblyn, Amber. *Era of Ignition: Coming of Age in a Time of Rage and Revolution.* Apple Books ed., Penguin Random House, 2019.

The Hunting Ground. Directed by Kirby Dick, Lantern Entertainment, 2015.

Thompson, Becky. "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism." *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, edited by Hewitt, A, and Nancy Hewitt, Rutgers University Press, 2010, pp. 39-60.

Thumin, Nancy. *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Thurschwell, Pamela. *Routledge Critical Thinkers Essential Guides for Literary Studies: Sigmund Freud.* Routledge, 2000.

To, Nathan M., and Elena Trivelli. "Affect, memory and the transmission of trauma." *Subjectivity*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2015, pp. 305-315.

Travis, Trysh. "Women in Print Movement: History and Implications." *Book History,* vol. 11, 2008, pp. 275-300. *ProQuest,* DOI: 10.1353/bh.0.0001. "Truthiness.

Oxford Word of the Year." *Oxford Languages,* 2016. https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/. 2 September 2020.

Union, Gabrielle. "'Birth of a Nation' actress Gabrielle Union: I cannot take Nate Parker rape allegations lightly". Los Angeles Times. 2 September 2016, https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-union-nate-parker-birth-nation-rapeallegation-20160902-snap-story.html. Accessed 30 October 2018.

---. "Tarana Burke." *Time.* 19 April 2018, https://time.com/collection/most-influential-people-2018/5217577/tarana-burke/. Accessed 2 June 2020.

---. *We're Going To Need More Wine.* Harper Collins, 2017.

Valenti, Jessica. *Sex Object.* Harper Collins, 2016.

van Dijck, José. "Mediated Memories: Personal Cultural Memory as Object of Cultural Analysis." *Continuum: Jounral of Media and Cultural Studies,* vol. 8, no. 2, 2004, pp. 261-277. *Communication and Mass Media Complete*, Accession Number: 13396614.

Vincent, Alice. "Recy Taylor: the woman whose rape inspired Rosa Parks in 1944, and is inspiring Oprah Winfrey today." *Telegraph*, 8 January 2018,

Wang, Qi. "On the Cultural Constitution of Collective Memory." *Memory,* vol. 1, no. 3, 2008, pp. 305-317. *Taylor Francis Online,* DOI 10.1080/09658210701801467.

Ward, Abigail. "Introduction." *Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative, Resistance,* edited by Abigail Ward. Palgrave MacMillan, 2015, pp. 1-14.

Watkins, Valethia. "Contested Memories: A Critical Analysis of the Black Feminist Revisionist History Project." *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies,* vol. 9, no. 4, July 2016, pp. 271-288.

Watson, Elwood. "Lena Dunham: The Awkward/Ambitious Politics of White Millennial Feminism". *HBO Girls and the Awkward Politics of Gender, Race, and Privilege*. Lexington Books, 2015, pp. 145-166.

"We're Going to Need More Wine: Stories that Are Fun, Complicated, and True." *Harper Collins.* https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062693983/were-going-to-need-more-wine/. Accessed 25 August 2019.

West, Lindy. "Aziz, We Tried to Warn You." *The New York Times,* 17 January 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/opinion/aziz-ansari-metoo-sex.html. Accessed 3 April 2019.

White, Barbara. *Ain't I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South.* W.W. Norton and Company, 1985.

"White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault." January 2017. https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/images/Documents/1.4.17.VAW%20Event.Guide%20for%20College%20Presidents.PDF

Whitlock, Gillian. *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit.* University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Whittier, Nancy. "Identity Politics, Consciousness-Raising, and Visibility Politics." *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism,* edited by Holly J. McCammon, Verta Taylor, Jo Reger, and Rachel L. Einwohener, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 377-391.

Williams, Sherri. "Digital Defense: Black Feminists Resist Violence with Hashtag Activism. *Feminist Media Studies,* vol 15, no. 2 ,2015, pp. 341-344. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1008744

---. "#SayHerName: using digital activism to document violence against Black women." *Feminist Media Studies,* vol. 16, no. 5, 2016, pp. 922-5. *Routledge*, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1213574.

Willis Aronowitz, Nona. "Will #MeToo Change Our Sex Lives?" *Medium*, 7 March 2019, https://medium.com/s/story/will-metoo-change-our-sex-lives-1511a0b27101 . Accessed 6 November 2019.

Willis, Ellen. "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism." Social Text, no. 9, 1984, pp. 91-118, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/466537.

Wiseman, Eva. And Jess Cartner-Morley. "From Twiggy to Cara Delevingne: 25 years of supermodels." *The Guardian,* 20 September 2013. https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/interactive/2013/sep/20/twiggy-cara-delevingne25-years-supermodels. Accessed 20 October 2019.

Woodward, Kathleen. *Aging and its Discontents: Freud and Other Fictions.* Indiana University Press, 1991.

"Word of the Year: 2016: Post-truth." *Oxford Dictionaries.* https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/. Accessed 20 September 2020.

Yuhas, Alan. "Woman Who Accused Donal Trump of Raping her at 13 Drops Lawsuit." *The Guardian,* 5 November 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/usnews/2016/nov/04/donald-trump-teenage-rape-accusations-lawsuit-dropped. Accessed 2 October 2018.

Zacharek, Stephanie, and Eliana Dockterman, Haley Sweetland Edwards. “The Silence Breakers.” *Time.* 6 December 2017, https://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017silence-breakers/. Accessed 20 December 2019.

Ziyad, Hari. “Tarana Burke was Omitted From the Time Magazine Cover, SO Let’s Celebrate The Shit Out of Her Today!” *AfroPunk,* 7 December 2017, https://afropunk.com/2017/12/tarana-burke-omitted-time-magazine-cover-lets-celebratesht-today/. Accessed 2 December

Appendix A:

Additional Figures

Figure 5: Random House Statement on *Not That Kind of Girl*

This image was taken from an article titled "Lena Dunham's Publisher Altering Book to Clarify That "Barry" is a Pseudonym" by Tony Maglio on *The Wrap*, published on 8 December 2014.

Earlier, Random House cleared Minc's client's name via TheWrap.

"As indicated on the copyright page of 'Not That Kind of Girl' by Lena Dunham, some names and identifying details in the book have been changed. The name 'Barry' referenced in the book is a pseudonym," the publisher told TheWrap exclusively. "Random House, on our own behalf and on behalf of our author, regrets the confusion that has led attorney Aaron Minc to post on GoFundMe on behalf of his client, whose first name is Barry."

"We are offering to pay the fees Mr. Minc has billed his client to date," Random House continued. "Our offer will allow Mr. Minc and his client to donate all of the crowd-funding raised to not-for-profit organizations assisting survivors of rape and sexual assault."

Figure 6: Valenti's Feminist Buttons

Figure 7: Feminist Buttons from 1970s Women's Liberation Movement

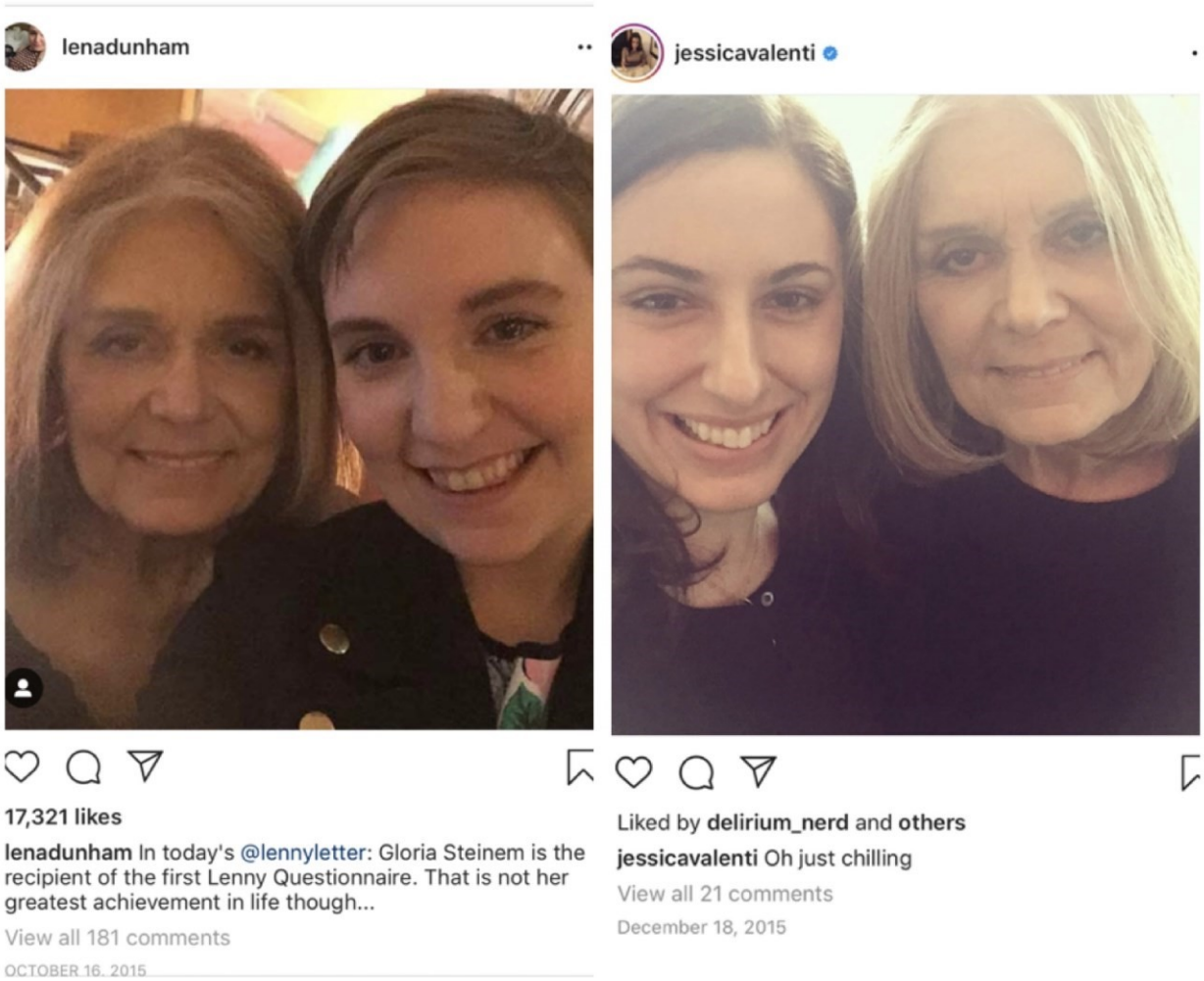
Image credit: Stevi Jackson, *Discover Society*

"Second-wave feminism" from *Khan Academy* Image Credit: Smithsonian Institution Archives

Elinor Burkett Encyclopedia Britannica Image Credit: Britannica

Figure 8: #Feminism to Promote *Sex Object*

Figure 9: Gloria Steinem with Dunham and Valenti



@lenadunham: In today's @lennyletter: Gloria Steinem is the recipient of the first Lenny Questionnaire. This is not her greatest achievement in life though….
16 October 2015. Instagram.

=

@jessicavalenti: Oh just chilling
18 December 2015. Instagram

Appendix B :
Advanced Search Twitter Results

Table 1 Promoting *Hunger*

Promoting ***Hunger***	References
Twitter Account: @HarperCollins Tweets containing the following elements or words	
Total Posts	**75**
• @rgay	72
• Hunger	24
• Roxane Gay	5
Instagram Account: harpercollins **Total Posts**	**4**
• Posts about *Hunger*- as sole book	1
• Posts about *Hunger*- accompanied by other books	3
• Posts about the author, Roxane Gay	0
Instagram Account for the Imprint: N/A	

Table 2 Promoting *We're Going to Need More Wine*

Promoting ***We're Going to Need More Wine***	References
Twitter Account: @HarperCollins Tweets containing the following elements or words	
Total Posts	**11**
• @itsgabrielleu	11
• We're Going to Need More Wine	7
• Gabrielle Union	1
Instagram Account: harpercollins	
Total Posts	**2**
• Posts about *We're Going to Need More Wine*- as sole book	1
• Posts about *We're Going to Need More Wine*- accompanied by other books	0
• Posts about the author, Gabrielle Union	1
Instagram Account for the Imprint: deystreet	
Total Posts	**8**
• Posts about *We're Going to Need More Wine*- as sole book	6
• Posts about *We're Going to Need More Wine*- accompanied by other books	1

Table 3 Promoting *Not That Kind of Girl*

Promoting ***Not That Kind of Girl***	References
Twitter Account: @penguinrandom Tweets containing the following elements or words	
Total Posts	**25**
• @lenadunham	25
• Not That Kind of Girl	5
• Lena Dunham	8
Twitter Account: @randomhouse Tweets containing the following elements or words	
Total Posts	**70**
• @lenadunham	70
• Not That Kind of Girl	9
• Lena Dunham	0
Instagram Account: penguinrandomhouse	
Total Posts	**1**
• Posts about *Not That Kind of Girl* - as sole book	
• Posts about *Not That Kind of Girl*- accompanied by other books	1
• Posts about the author, Lena Dunham	
Instagram Account: randomhouse	
Total Posts	**20**
• Posts about *Not That Kind of Girl* - as sole book	12
• Posts about *Not That Kind of Girl*- accompanied by other books	3
• Posts about the author, Lena Dunham	5
Instagram Account for the Imprint: N/A	

Table 4 Promoting *Sex Object*

Promoting ***Sex Object***	References
Twitter Account: @HarperCollins Tweets containing the following elements or words	
Total Posts	**13**
• @jessicavalenti	13
• Sex Object	4
• Jessica Valenti	0
Instagram Account: harpercollins	
Total Posts	**1**
• Posts about *Sex Object*- as sole book	1
• Posts about *Sex Object*- accompanied by other books	0
• Posts about the author, Jessica Valenti	0
Instagram Account for the Imprint: deystreet	
Total Posts	**8**
• Posts about *Sex Object*- as sole book	8
• Posts about *Sex Object*- accompanied by other books	0
• Posts about the author, Jessica Valenti	0

Table 5 :Publisher Promotion vs Author Self Promotion (Twitter)

Memoir	**Publisher's Account (s)- Total # of Tweets that include the title of the memoir or the author's name**	**Author's Account -Title of Memoir**	**Author's Account -"my book"**
Black Lotus- Sil Lai Abrams	0	42	--
Not That Kind of Girl- Lena Dunham	95	0	16
Hunger- Roxane Gay	75	131	--
We're Going to Need More Wine- Gabrielle Union	11	4	26
Sex Object- Jessica Valenti	13	1	--

Table 6 @rgay- Tweets Pertaining to Sexual Violence

Words that Appear in Tweets	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	**Total**
Rape/d						35	19	8	7	7	7	**83**
Rapist												**0**
Sexual Abuse/d			3	2			1		1			**7**
Sexual Assault/ed				1	2	4	3	1			1	**12**
Sexual violence			2	3	3	13	6	6	4	1	2	**40**
Sexual harassment		2	1	1						2		**6**
Sexually Harassed												**0**
Sexual predator									1	1		**2**
Violence		2	3	8	1	15	12	7	9	5	2	**64**
Assault			1	2	2		2	2	6			**15**
Abuse		2	6	6	3	12	5	1	4	1	1	**41**
Harassment				1	1	12	5	9	12	4	1	**45**
Harass				1	1	2	2		2	2	2	**12**
Harassed				1	1	2	2	3	5	1	1	**16**
Total									51		17	**343**

Table 7: @lenadunham Tweets Pertaining to Sexual Violence

Words that Appear in Tweets	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	**Total**
Rape/d		2	6	2	4	4	4	1	5	0	0	**28**
Rapist	1		4			1			2			**8**
Sexual Abuse												**0**
Sexual Assault						5	1	1	1			**8**
Sexual violence								1				**1**
Sexual Harassment			1		1							**2**
Sexually Harass/ed										1		**1**
Sexual predator												**0**
Violence				1	1	2	3	1	5			**13**
Assault						1	1		4			**6**
Abuse		1	2		1	2	3		10	2		**21**
Harassment					1	1		1	2			**5**
Harass									1			**1**
Harassed				1		1						**2**
Total												**96**

Table 8 @jessicavalenti tweets pertaining to sexual violence

Words that Appear in Tweets	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	**Total**
Rape/d											31	**31**
Rapist											2	**2**
Sexual Abuse												**0**
Sexual Assault											9	**9**
Sexual violence											1	**1**
Sexual harassment											3	**3**
Sexually Harassed												**0**
Sexual predator												**0**
Violence											4	**4**
Assault											1	**1**
Abuse											3	**3**
Harassment											6	**6**
Harass											1	**1**
Harassed												**0**
Total												**61**

Table 9 @itsgabrielleu tweets pertaining to sexual violence

Words that Appear in Tweets	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	**Total**
Rape/d			15	14	3	2	3		5	5		**47**
Rapist			4	2						3		**9**
Sexual Abuse/d				2					2			**4**
Sexual Assault			1	4					2			**7**
Sexual violence			7	1					3	1		**12**
Sexual harassment									2	1		**3**
Sexually Harassed												**0**
Sexual predator												**0**
Violence			17	12	5	1	2	1	2	4		**44**
Assault			1									**1**
Abuse			10	1	1							**12**
Harassment				1								**1**
Harass			2									**2**
Harassed				1								**1**
Total												**143**

Table 10 @Sil_Lai- Tweets Pertaining to Sexual Violence

Words that Appear in Tweets	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	**Total**
Rape/d									10	34	19	**63**
Rapist												
Sexual Abuse/d									5	11	4	**20**
Sexual Assault									6	32	36	**74**
Sexual violence									4	39	20	**63**
Sexual harassment									7	10	3	**20**
Sexually Harassed												
Sexual predator									5	4	1	**10**
Violence									19	44	36	**99**
Assault										20	16	**36**
Abuse									15	33	15	**63**
Harassment									4	4	2	**10**
Harass											1	**1**
Harassed									1		1	**2**
Total												**461**

Appendix C:
Tweets

Single Tweet:
@rgay. “I am increasingly realizing that Hunger is going to maybe do some good in the world.” *Twitter,* 5 April 2016.

Thread:
@rgay.“It’s weird that people are saying ‘But Gabrielle Union is still asking people to see Birth of a Nation.’ Well, yes. She stars in the movie.” *Twitter,* 2 September 2016, 10:04 AM.

@rgay. “It’s called nuance. She is a rape survivor and a movie star and a Black woman. She can’t separate these things.” Twitter, 2 September 2016, 10:04 AM.

Thread:
@rgay. “The Harvey audio reminds me of how often as women we get worn down by persistence and guilting and bullshit.” *Twitter,* 10 October 2017.

@rgay. “So many times I used to think ‘it will be easier to just have sex with this guy to make him go away so I can get on with my day.’” *Twitter*, 10 October 2017.

@rgay. “Even as recently as four years ago. But then I stopped dealing with men and it’s been fine since hahahahaha.” *Twitter,* 10 October 2017.

@rgay. “Ugh. Fatness also complicates this because guys love to make you think they are your last hope.” *Twitter*, 10 October 2017.

@rgay. “And this culture makes you think you have to be grateful for shitty treatment from fuckboys because that’s all you deserve.” *Twitter,* 10 October 2017.

@rgay. “I wrote a book about this now that I think about it. It’s called Hunger. Buy it.” *Twitter*, 10 October 2017.

Single Tweet:
@rgay. “Just going to make a book out of all the random diet advice people sell me after reading Hunger and clearly missing the point.” *Twitter,* 22 January 2018.

Thread:
@feministfabulous. ‘“If R. Kelly was preying upon young white girls they would have built a prison on top of him.’ @rgay.” *Twitter,* 22 February 2019.

@jm_short. “I wholeheartedly agree that R. Kelly’s behavior was atrocious. But to say that if he preyed on white girls, they’d have built a prison on top of him is over reaching and insensitive. Assaulted white girls are also treated horribly by the authorities and society!” *Twitter,* 22 February 2019.

@rgay. “Give me a break. You’re missing the point and it’s gross.” *Twitter, 22 February 2019.*

@jm_short. “Actually- it’s gross to assume that cases of sexual assault toward white girls get properly addressed. They don’t. That assumption lacks humanity. We should be fighting for all victims, not segregating victims by race.” *Twitter,* 22 February 2019.

@rgay. “I didn’t say they were properly addressed. I have a whole body of work about the inadequacies of the justice system and sexual violence. But if R. Kelly’s victims were white something would have been done already. That is a fact. Intersectionality. Look it up.” *Twitter.* 22 February 2019.

Single Tweet:
@Sil_Lai. “Better late than never- my book was on @NPRBooks’ #bookconcierge: Black Lotus: A Woman’s Search For Racial Identity.” *Twitter,* 21 January 2017.

Single Tweet:
@Sil_Lai. “Of course Weinstein chose to refute Lupita Nyong’o. He figures because she’s Black, people will not believe her. He’s wrong. #IBelieveLupita.”*Twitter,* 21 October 2017.

Single Tweet:
@Sil_Lai. “Is #HerToo a way to push the creator of #MeToo @TaranaBurke, a Black woman, out of the way & rebrand the movement with a white female celeb?” *Twitter,* 1 November 2017.

Single Tweet:
@Sil_Lai. “Me when people tweet at me about radical feminism like it’s a bad thing.” *Twitter,* 23 February 2018.

Single Tweet:
@itsgabrielleu. “60% of Black girls in the US are victims of sexual assault by 18 yrs.” *Twitter,* 12 July 2012.

Single Tweet:
@itsgabrielleu. “Look around, u can EASILY see whose pain is ‘real/valid’ & must be addressed & whose pain is tolerable, unimportant &systemically ignored.” *Twitter,* 15 October 2017.

Single Tweet:
@itsgabrielleu. “I was raped at 19. He rapes another woman B4 he turns himself in. He took a plea deal & got 33 yrs. I sued Payless Shoe Source 4 $$$ as they knew the rapist was a former employee & didn’t warn any1. I received a settlement. NO ONE has EVER accused me of using my rape as a cash grab.” *Twitter,* 27 April 2018.

Single Tweet:
@randomhouse “We’re at @HousingWorksBks tonight for the launch of @lenadunham’s Lenny imprint and @Jennybagels debut novel, Sour Heart!” *Twitter,* 1 August 2017.

Single Tweet:
@lenadunham. “The debate about good and bad feminism makes me want to take a nap for a year.” *Twitter,* 18 December 2013.

Instagram Post:
@lenadunham. “Gloria Steinem is the recipient of the first Lenny Questionnaire. That is not her greatest achievement though…” *Instagram*, 16 October 2016.

Instagram Post:
@lenadunham. “when I shared my story three years earlier, I was ignorant- I assumed (despite being in the eye of the storm before} that you share a painful story and people say ‘hey, we may not agree on everything but fuck I hate that this happened to you.’ This isn’t often the experience of coming forward with assault.” *Instagram,* 23 October 2017.

Single Tweet:
@lenadunham. “While our first instinct is to listen to every woman’s story, our insider knowledge of Murray’s situation makes us confident that sadly this accusation is one of the 3 percent of assault cases that are misreported every year.” *Twitter,* 17 Nov 2017, 7:44PM.

Instagram Post:
@lenadunham. “Birthday Post for Gloria Steinem the National Treasure.”*Instagram*, 25 March 2018.

Instagram Post:
@JessicaValenti. “Buttons came in!!!” *Instagram,* 9 April 2016.

Single Tweet:
@JessicaValenti. “Trump tries to cast doubt on Carroll’s rape accusation by saying she’s accused other men of abuse. This happens to women all the time! Lots over the course of a lifetime! I WROTE A WHOLE BOOK ABOUT IT.” *Twitter,* 22 June 2019.

Single Tweet:
@JessicaValenti. “Still sort of reeling over the fact that we have a president who calls women too ugly to rape.” *Twitter,* 25 June 2019.

Single Tweet:
@JessicaValenti. “Trump being credibly accused of rape—again—is not news-of-the-day or just another wrong in a long line of misdeeds. It’s a message to all American women that our bodies can be hurt, grabbed, assaulted, and mistreated without recourse.” *Twitter,* 25 June 2019.

Single Tweet:
@Alyssa_Milano. “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘#MeToo’ as a reply to this tweet.”*Twitter,* 15 October 2017.

Single Tweet:
@Alyssa_Milano."I was just made aware of an earlier #MeToo movement and the origin story is equal parts heartbreaking and inspiring."*Twitter,* 16 October 2017.

Single Tweet:
@Alyssa_Milano. "One year ago today, you shared with me your #MeToo stories. Our collective pain become our collective power. #MeTooOneYearLater. Thank you @TaranaBurke for being a force for good. *Twitter,* 15 October 2018.

Single Tweet:
@TaranaBurke. "A year ago today I thought my world was falling apart. I woke up to find out that the hashtag #metoo had gone viral and I didn't see any of the work I laid out over the previous decade attached to it. I thought for sure I would be erased from a thing I worked so hard to build." *Twitter,* 15 October 2018.

Thread:
@aurabogado."#MeToo was started by Tarana Burke. Stop erasing Black women." *Twitter,* 16 October 2017.

@nyasha_adler. "It would have been nice to tag her handle." *Twitter,* 16 October 2017.

@aurabogado."I could have looked it up in a different browser and included it. I messed up by moving too quickly." Twitter, 16 October 2017.

@nyasha_adler."I searched for her. @TaranaBurke great stuff you've been doing and are doing." *Twitter,* 16 October 2017.

@TaranaBurke responds to Bogado and Adler tweeting, "I love sisters-we stay looking out! <3". *Twitter,* 16 October 2017.