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Dr. Ryan

Critical Methodology

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Embodying Trauma: The Body as Archive in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* and Edwidge
Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*

“The body is not simply a sign to be read, a symptom to be deciphered, but also a force to be reckoned with.” — Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 120

In the past twenty-five years, critical race and gender scholars have written on how trauma is encoded within the body. A variety of disciplines including, but not limited to, psychology, epigenetics, sociology, and literature have created a field of Trauma Studies: A canon of literature that is interested in unveiling how trauma is archived psychologically and physically. Scholars such as Elizabeth Grosz and Gail Weiss have written on the corporal absorption of psychological and physical trauma in female bodies. Similarly, Resmaa Menakem has written on trauma through a lens of embodiment, detailing how recent science and sociology discoveries show that the body carries traces of emotional and physical trauma from one generation to the next. Others, such as renowned trauma scholar Cathy Caruth and sociologist Ilja Srubar, have contributed extensively to work on the deep connections between trauma, memory, and narrative. However, few scholars have explored how trauma is embodied through memory and narrative in the specific context of diaspora novels, and further, ones that highlight the female experience. One scholar who does conduct this research extensively is diaspora and gender studies scholar Marianne Hirsch, who has written on postmemory: A new type of memory that is built on inherited trauma, experienced by the descendents of the first-generation that experienced the trauma first-hand. This essay seeks to build on Hirsch's work, and to unveil

this narrative of embodied trauma, and in particular, how this narrative plays out in two novels about Afro-Caribbean female experiences: *Annie John* by Jamaica Kincaid and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* by Edwidge Danticat.

Menakem writes in *My Grandmother's Hands*, “after months or years, unhealed trauma can appear to become part of someone’s personality. Over even longer periods of time, as it is passed on and gets compounded through other bodies in a household, it can become a family norm” (39). *Annie John* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* both showcase tumultuous mother/daughter relationships; in both cases, the daughters experience trauma (either physically or psychologically) through somatic experiences. These experiences are not all alike: In some cases this embodied trauma experienced by daughters mimics the trauma of their mothers, but in other cases, the embodied trauma is a way for the daughters to reclaim their own trauma; also, while there is an element of this trauma that is sometimes inherited — “passed on and...compounded” in the bodies of mothers and their daughters, as Menakem suggests — this essay claims that trauma is often *intentionally self-inscribed* by the daughters on their bodies. It has already been established that the mothers in these novels mimic the role of the colonizer, while the daughters represent the colonized, perpetuating a cycle of trauma (Alexander, Brancato). However, this essay is not interested in employing postcolonial criticism, and instead considers inherited trauma in these novels through the scholarship of embodiment scholars.

This essay provides an in-depth textual analysis of how the trauma represented in these novels is embodied in the mothers and daughters. In addition to this, I engage with recent scholarship on the profound gaps in archives. For non-dominant groups (i.e., oppressed peoples, once-colonized subjects, etc.), the archive does not exist as a space of truth. Rather, the archive, as Mike Featherstone writes, is “part of the social apparatus of rule and regulation” (Featherstone

591). The traditional dominant archive reflects the history as seen through the eyes of the oppressor, the colonizer. When considering novels about the experiences of Afro-Caribbean women — once-colonized diasporic subjects — it is worth considering how embodied trauma becomes a way for the characters in these novels to reclaim the archive within themselves. To what extent do the female characters in the aforementioned novels encode their bodies with trauma to transform the existing archival information available?

This essay answers this question, and contends that the daughters in *Annie John* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Annie and Sophie, act transgressively in preserving the female experience within their own bodies. While their mothers sacrifice the role of their bodies as agents, submitting to their trauma experienced throughout their lives, the daughters use their bodies as vehicles to revolt against the trauma that comes with being a colonized female subject, to encode this trauma as a truth they hold within themselves. In the words of Hirsch, this desire to encode trauma on one's body — particularly the gendered daughter's body — is a desire “to identify so strongly as to receive from the parent the wound on the skin” (82). This desire to identify with a parent so deeply that one would mark themselves physically is seen through Annie and Sophie, as they create an archive of their personal and ancestral female experience. Further, this becomes a way for Annie and Sophie to rewrite dominant narratives that the archives of the oppressors have upheld. Returning to Hirsch, we can think of these “daughters as agents of transmission”; it is through them “their practice of postmemory, particularly, can become a reparative ethical and political act of solidarity and, perhaps, agency on behalf of the trauma of the other” (99). In the first section of this paper, I will analyze how Annie's psychological trauma becomes part of her physical body's experience. As she matures through puberty, a rift grows between her and her mother; in the second section, I will delve into how

Sophie reclaims physical and psychological abuse through self-mutilation, and further, how this recreates the trauma her mother endured as a mode of recovery. In the third and final section, I conclude by discussing how the daughters' embodiment of trauma mirrors the physical preservation of an archive.

The Trauma of Womanhood: An Embodiment in *Annie John*

In *Annie John*, the relationship between Annie and her mother shifts from warm to frigid as Annie hits puberty, and this is when Annie begins embodying her psychological trauma. Before Annie reaches puberty, she and her mother are very close. Annie's mother informs her that she is "on the verge of becoming a young lady, so there [are] quite a few things [she] would have to do differently" (Kincaid 26). However, despite this blunt prescription of a behavior change, Annie is still left in the dark as to what will change in her life. What will she have to do differently? And how can she reconcile feeling, psychologically, like a child while she is beginning to look more like a woman? As Annie's body image "changes orientation or inflection as [she] develops into adolescence and adulthood," she is no longer able to find refuge in being part of her mother's body, and she must find a home in her own skin (Grosz 75). While she was once a literal extension of her mother, she finds the cord between her and her mother is officially cut; she is left alone to experience these bodily changes independently. According to Grosz, this "period in which the biological body undergoes major upheavals and changes as an effect of puberty" is the time when "the subject feels the greatest discord between the body image and the lived body, between its physical idealized self-image and its bodily changes" (75).

Annie's changing body and the disconnect she experiences between her internal and external self is manifested through an unidentifiable sickness that causes her to reside in her bed

for months. In the chapter “The Long Rain,” she becomes very ill during the first rain of the season in Antigua:

I looked inside my head. A black thing was lying down there, and it shut out all my memory of the things that had happened to me. I knew that in my fifteen years a lot of things had happened, but now I couldn't put my finger on a single thing. As I fell asleep, I had no feeling in any part of my body except the back of my skull, which felt as if it would split open and spew out huge red flames. (Kincaid 111-2)

Every doctor Annie's parents take her to cannot identify what is causing this malady, which suggests her illness is psychosomatic, caused by psychological turmoil as her body adapts to womanhood. This dream-like representation of illness inside Annie's head is paired with physical manifestations of this; the “black thing...lying down there” in her mind represents the psychological trauma caused by the rupture between her child-self and her adult-self, in addition to separation from her mother.

As Annie's adolescence continues to mark itself in the form of bodily changes, her relationship with her mother becomes more volatile. We might assume that puberty would create more opportunity for mutual identification (Hirsch), yet the opposite reaction is what occurs. Simone A. James Alexander contends that there is a complex mimetic relationship between mother/daughter, and colonizer/colonized in Afro-Caribbean female literature: “Perversely, it is this mutual fear, the fear of identifying and of becoming, that binds mothers and daughters. They are both colonized subjects” (Alexander 48). However, I have to push back against Alexander slightly. I do not see Annie's fear as being emblematic to the larger relationship between the colonizer and the colonized; as Annie gets older, it is not this fear of becoming a colonized subject that creates a schism between her and her mother. Rather, it is a dual psychological-corporal upset — a deep mind-body connection — that contributes to this divide. More than anything, Annie experiences “the fear of identifying and of becoming” a

woman in her bodily shape and in her psyche, which her mother represents. The older Annie becomes, and the more her body begins to resemble her mother's, the tangible this fear becomes.

When Annie begins to menstruate, this fear of becoming more like her mother is exacerbated, and Annie draws further mental distinctions between her and her mother's experiences. The physical representation of Annie's changing body, the menstrual blood itself, becomes a tangible marker of this distinction. Annie's body becomes a space of contention:

On the morning of the first day I started to menstruate, I felt strange in a new way — hot and cold at the same time, with horrible pains running up and down my legs. My mother, knowing what was the matter, brushed aside my complaints and said that it was all to be expected and I would soon get used to everything. Seeing my gloomy face, she told me in a half-joking way all about her own experience with the first step in coming of age, as she called it, which had happened when she was as old as I was. I pretended that this information made us close — as close as in the old days — but to myself I said, 'What a serpent!' (51-2)

While she is somatically becoming more similar to her mother (as a woman), she feels further away from her mother emotionally as hatred creeps in. She returns home after feeling ill and fainting at school (a result of her first menstrual period), and her mother greets her with concern and love. Annie resents this, commenting, "my whole mouth filled up with a bitter taste, for I could not understand how she could be so beautiful even though I no longer loved her" (53). Annie's choice to push her mother's love away becomes a mode of reclaiming her autonomy over her female experience. We can return to Elizabeth Grosz to better understand Annie's resistance toward becoming more like her mother:

The child's body, particularly as an already sexually designated body onto which a culture's fantasies of sexual difference are etched, is like a screen onto which the mother's — and culture's — desires, wishes, fears, and hopes are projected and internalized. Its orifices are well suited for sexualization not only because they are conduits between the inside and outside of the body (i.e., not simply in terms of their 'natural' or adaptive functions) but because they are the sites from which the mother's or nurturer's successes and failures, ambitions and disappointments, are most readily projected and played out; they are the sources for criteria of her self-worth and sexual

value in the sense that the mother's own unconscious desires must play a significant role for each successive generation. (Grosz 75)

Annie's effort to remove herself from her mother is actually an effort to separate herself from her mother's "desires, wishes, fears, and hopes" that are projected onto Annie. Annie's first menstruation is symbolic of her "orifices" being "well suited for sexualization not only because they are conduits between the inside and outside of [her] body," and therefore, is a moment in which she feels her "self-worth and sexual value" purveyed by her mother.

Another moment in which Annie's "self-worth and sexual value" are judged is when she is slut-shamed by her mother. After Annie talks with a group of boys on her way home from school, one of whom she used to play with as a child, her mother confronts her, telling Annie she saw her "making a spectacle of [herself] in front of four boys. She went on to say that, after all the years she had spent drumming into [Annie] the proper way to conduct [herself] when speaking to young men, it had pained her to see [Annie] behave in a manner of a slut" (Kincaid 102). Annie narrates that her mother continued to use "the word 'slut' (in patois)... until [she] felt as if [she] were drowning in a well but instead of the well being filled with water it was filled with the word 'slut,' and it was pouring in through" her eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth (102). Annie's mother tells her that in the instance of seeing her daughter behave like a 'slut' with young men she feels shame. This shame is imparted onto Annie as though water is flowing into her pores, and it causes a reaction in her mind and body. Annie internalizes the divide between her and her mother as her budding hatred toward her mother, herself, and the position they both take as women in the colonized Antigua becomes realized in her somatic experience. Annie's purposefully built psychological wall crumbles during the 'slut' conversation, ultimately leading to the long term psychological illness realized through her embodied experience.

In the case of the mothers in *Annie John* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the domestic sphere is theirs, leaving the daughters to feel isolated, as though they have no home entirely their own. bell hooks writes about “the subversive value of homeplace, of having access to private space where” African Americans are free of “white racist aggression” (hooks 47). This is certainly true for the mothers in these novels, whereas the daughters see their mothers’ homes as spaces of control: Their mothers’ policing. Resultedly, the only “homeplace” Annie maintains is her own body, which we can think of as her body-home. This becomes a mobile space where she is able to keep her mother’s “successes and failures, ambitions and disappointments” out of her embodied experience, until she chooses to let them in (Grosz 75).

Annie finds resistance in her body-home through the new sexualization of her womanly parts during puberty, particularly through her relationships with other young women. Feeling as though she “had been kept prisoner under the watchful gaze of her mother,” Annie begins deceiving her mother about her whereabouts, meeting with the “Red Girl” at a lighthouse (Kincaid 62). The Red Girl pinches Annie’s “almost nonexistent flesh and twist[s] it around,” and then she begins kissing “her on the same spots where shortly before [she] had felt the pain of her pinch. Oh, the sensation was delicious — the combination of pinches and kisses” (63). Annie’s body-home becomes a vehicle by which she can escape her mother’s “watchful gaze” and feel the “delicious” sensation of another female’s touch. The combination of pain and pleasure Annie experiences with the Red Girl mirrors the intense dichotomies Annie feels toward her mother. Annie’s enjoyment of pain demonstrates her interest in confronting pain and trauma kept in her body — an escape from the dependence of living under her mother’s roof.

The mother/daughter transference of psychological trauma to embodied trauma in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*

While Annie endures trauma internally — exclusively on the island of Antigua and within her own mind and body — Sophie’s bodily trauma occurs on a much wider, transnational scale. Her body becomes a site of struggle as she is forcefully uprooted multiple times by matriarchal figures in her family, putting her at odds with her mother, aunt, and grandmother. As a girl, Sophie grows up with her Tante Atie — her mother’s sister — in Haiti while her mother lives and makes money in New York City. One day, she is sent to live in New York with her mother — the first instance in which she loses her bodily autonomy at the hands of the women in her family. Sophie’s notion of home is disrupted by her forced transience, and it is further disrupted when she is a teenager. Sophie’s bodily autonomy is not only disturbed, but her control is fully sacrificed when her mother makes her lie on her bed and “tests” her by putting a pinkie finger in Sophie’s vagina, to ensure she is still a virgin (Danticat 84). Her body truly becomes a fought-over space between her own wish for embodied freedom and her mother’s reign over the most intimate part of Sophie’s body.

Sophie’s inability to dictate where she is placed and what is done with her body causes her to look for ways in which she can reassert dominance over her own body-home — including self-inflicted genital mutilation and bulimia. In an effort to end the “testing,” Sophie takes a pestle and breaks her hymen: “My flesh ripped apart as I pressed the pestle into it. I could see the blood slowly dripping onto the bed sheet... It was gone, the veil that always held my mother’s finger back every time she tested me” (88). Sophie endeavors to regain control over her body, but she is unable to do this without inscribing her body with violence. Donette Francis builds on this concept of trauma encoded in the body and further, as the body becomes a place of contested control. She writes, “at multiple levels — state, community, and family — violence is subtly

inscribed on women's bodies and made invisible" in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (Francis 93). Sophie reclaims this inscription of violence when she commits acts of self-mutilation; she makes this violence visible by taking the acts into her own hands. Not only this, but Sophie uses her body as a "vehicle to rewrite dominant narratives" that the "state, community, and [her] family" had written for her (93).

In trying to escape her mother's abusive "testing," Sophie ironically ends up self-inflicting a trauma that mimics her mother's. Martine, Sophie's mother, endures trauma as a result of having been tested by her own mother, and being raped when she is a young teenager. She tells Sophie, "My mother stopped testing me early... A man grabbed me from the side of the road, pulled me into a cane field, and put you in my body" (Danticat 61). This rape and subsequent pregnancy (with Sophie) haunts Martine, in the form of horrific nightmares. Sophie ultimately self-imbues her with trauma that mimics the pain Martine carries throughout her life, in waking and sleeping hours.

Sophie becomes torn (literally and figuratively) between her past (Haiti, her mother, the testing, etc.) and her present (her life with her husband, Joseph, and her infant daughter). She begins seeing a therapist to work through her issues with her mother, and through the sexual challenges she experiences due to the vaginal trauma she has suffered. Joseph reflects on Sophie's dysphoria for a homeplace close to the end of the novel. Talking about her choice to refer to Haiti as "home," he comments, "'You have never called it that since we've been together. Home has always been your mother's house, that you could never go back to'" (Danticat 195). This dysfunctional relationship Sophie has with "home" is what ultimately lets her claim her *body* a home: a site in which she can resist her mother's dominion and reclaim her sexual autonomy. Despite the fact that she unwillingly and unknowingly becomes an "agent of

transmission” of her mother’s trauma, after returning to Haiti, Sophie begins to see her and her mother’s pain as pain of “solidarity” and identification with one another (Hirsch 99).

Sophie visits Haiti with her baby without Joseph and without telling her mother she is going. She sees her grandmother and her Aunt Tatie for the first time in many years. Her mother, eventually, discovers where Sophie is and returns to Haiti, too. While they are both there, Sophie asks her mother if she is still having the nightmares she used to have throughout Sophie’s childhood, and Martine responds, “More than ever” (169). She mentions that it’s worse when she is visiting Haiti, and Sophie comments in her narration that her “old sympathy [for her mother] was coming back. [She] remembered the nightmares. Sometimes, [Sophie] even had some [her]self” (169). This sympathy is a symptom of Sophie’s softening, of her ability to identify with her mother and see their unique traumas as one.

Cathy Caruth writes about dreams, and nightmares in particular, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Caruth looks at dreams through a Freudian lens, and considers how trauma and PTSD are realized in dreams:

The return of the traumatic experience in the dream is not the signal of the direct experience but, rather, of the attempt to overcome the fact that it was *not* direct, to attempt to master what was never fully grasped. Not having truly known the threat of death in the past, the survivor is forced, continually, to confront it over and over again. For consciousness then, the act of survival, as the experience of trauma, is the repeated confrontation with the necessity and impossibility of grasping the threat to one’s own life. It is because the mind cannot confront the possibility of its death directly that survival becomes for the human being, paradoxically, an endless testimony to the impossibility of living. (Caruth 64)

Because Martine does not reclaim her sexual trauma as an embodied part of her narrative and memory, she continually is confronted by her trauma psychologically in her dreams. This PTSD follows her, causing her to waste away in her waking hours, in which we see remnants of her terrifying and sleepless nights. When Sophie mentions that she has the same nightmares that

afflict her mother, this articulates the intergenerational transmission of memory; Sophie, who was not raped, possesses these memories inside her, and they appear in her subconscious.

Although Sophie has embodied the abuse of her mother “testing” her, she has not been able to fully reclaim her mother’s rape, because it still torments her mother. But when Sophie identifies with her mother, and recognizes that their traumas are more similar than they are different, she is ultimately free from the psychological blocks (PTSD, anger, dysphoria) causing her so much internal turmoil. Her body can truly become a home when she does this.

Angeletta KM Gourdine writes in her essay “Palè Andaki” that “The Martine/Sophie binary suggests the mother-daughter relationship is damaging, as it enables the translation/transference of patriarchal violence into a shame and trauma that haunts across generations” (Gourdine 146). Gourdine’s claim, that Martine’s choice to “test” Sophie transfers her own traumatic memories into her daughter, perpetuating a cycle of patriarchal violence, shame, and trauma, does not give enough credit to survivors of trauma. Although Martine and Sophie are haunted by the violence of a man raping Martine, and it is ironically Martine and Sophie who continue to perpetuate this trauma, Sophie are able to find power in her own choice to self-mark her body with trauma. As Menakem writes, trauma is passed through family abusing one another, through unsafe systems upheld culturally, and “through our genes. Recent work in human genetics suggests that trauma is passed on in our DNA expression, through the biochemistry of the human egg, sperm, and womb” (Menakem 10). This is clearly true in the case of Sophie and Martine: the combination of the abuse Sophie endures through her mother “testing” her, her own choice to self-mutilate and purge, and the epigenetic research suggesting trauma is “passed on in our DNA expression” saturates Sophie’s bodily experience. However, Sophie frees herself of the negative associations with this physical mark on one of her most

intimate body parts. She re-claims this trauma and finds intergenerational female connection in it.

After returning home from their visit to Haiti, Martine becomes pregnant a second time. Despite the becoming pregnant with a man she is in a loving relationship with, Martine is unable to bear the traumatic memories of her rape that come with the experience of pregnancy and commits suicide: “She stabbed her stomach with an old rusty knife... seventeen times” (Danticat 224). This tragic scene might be better understood through a reading of Caruth:

The shape of individual lives, the history of the traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction... If not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration. And this would also seek to explain the high suicide rate of survivors... who commit suicide only *after* they have found themselves completely in safety. (Caruth 65)

Martine’s suicide is not a product of feeling unsafe, unloved, or even unhappy in the moment she kills herself. Rather, it is a result of her brain’s deterioration over years of experiencing PTSD from an extreme bodily trauma — Martine’s own mother testing her, and a violent rape as a young teenager. Although Martine’s suicide comes at a seemingly inappropriate time in which she seems outwardly healed, the trauma she has carried in her body is reflected in the child growing inside her. Sophie reflects: “I come from a place where breath, eyes, and memory are one, a place from which you carry your past like the hair on your head” (Danticat 234). Whereas Martine could not escape the trauma that had embedded itself in her body, compounded over years of trying to forget and being unable to do so, Sophie takes ownership over this bodily trauma; she makes use of her body as an archive of her and her mother’s experience, but it is not an archive compiled of exclusively painful and traumatic memories. The pain Sophie’s mother experienced will always be inside her, even after her Mother’s suicide, through Sophie’s epigenetic makeup, the abuse she endured from her mother, and her own self-inflicted vaginal

abuse. However, this pain can allow for a changed narrative. Sophie's relationship with her daughter can break this cycle of trauma.

The daughters' embodiment of trauma: A reflection of the physical archive

Records continuum researcher Belinda Battley explores how shared/collective memories are connected to physical places/spaces. Places themselves, Battley argues, create "layers of shared meaning and understanding," and also shared identity (Battley 15). If the bodies of Annie and Sophie serve them as "homeplaces," or rather as body-homes, we can further understand their bodies as places in which "meaning and understanding" are constructed — in which a collective identity / memory develops. When Sophie returns to Haiti with her daughter Brigitte, her taxi driver commends her on her flawless Creole, and they have a discussion about this:

'People who have been away from Haiti fewer years than you, they return and pretend they speak no creole.'
 'Perhaps they cant.'
 'Is it so easy to forget?'
 'Some people need to forget.'
 'Obviously, you do not need to forget,' he said.
 'I need to remember.' (Danticat 95)

Sophie's emphasis on her "need to remember" can be applied to much more than just her Creole. Sophie's identity is based on her "need to remember" Haiti, her mother's rape, and the sexual abuse Martine endured through her own mother's testing. Featherstone writes that "for formerly subjected peoples, the post-colonial nation-states, constructing the national memory from the archive was often problematic as the archives had generally been shipped to the European imperial centres" (Featherstone 592). For Annie, Sophie, and their mothers, their construction of a national memory, or even a more personal familial memory, has been disrupted by "European

imperial centres.” Their way of reframing this European narrative is through the archive of their bodies.

The body offers a space in which Annie and Sophie can record this memory that has been denied from them and their mothers. Particularly in the case of Sophie, who literally inscribes her body with a record of her and her mother’s sexual abuse, her body becomes the vehicle through which she can archive memories, and in particular, traumatic ones. Although Annie’s embodiment of trauma subsists on a more subconscious plane, through the form of bodily ailments — the “black thing” inside her head — Annie’s body expresses a “need to remember,” too. According to Grosz, “inscriptions on the subject’s body coagulate corporeal signifiers into signs, producing all the effects of meaning, representation, depth, within or subtending our social order” (Grosz 141). While for Sophie these “inscriptions on [her] body” are more material than they are for Annie, both young women inscribe meaning on their bodies. Battley’s archive, a space of “shared meaning and understanding” becomes inscribed on Annie and Sophie through a process of adapting “corporeal signifiers into signs, producing all the effects of meaning” within their bodies. It is precisely *because* Annie and Sophie inscribe meaning (i.e., memories, trauma) on their bodies that their bodies also become archival sites — “layers of shared understanding” — of the female experience, and trauma that is encoded within that experience.

These “layers of understanding” are critical to the development and evolution of the human race. The findings of this essay elicit action: We must turn to the measures that Annie and Sophie take through the embodiment of trauma and learn from these efforts. In a moment in which the Truth is put on trial on national television — a moment in which women are not

believed and male abusers are¹ — how can we prove our Truths? In the cases of Annie and Sophie, a way to escape these cycles of abuse is through reclaiming this trauma via embodiment. I am not suggesting we all physically imbue our bodies with trauma to escape the cyclical processes intergenerational and institutionalized abuse. Rather, I suggest we learn from these somewhat tragic tales of female trauma, and begin to view certain acts of “self-inflicted abuse” as powerful for oppressed groups.

If we are to understand one another, we must remain curious about the truth, and we must not accept archives, museums, and other institutionalized banks of knowledge as the purveyors of ultimate validity. It is our obligation to ask questions of stories widely considered to be historical facts, and to seek out historically less-heard voices in which more genuine tales are told. Science has now proven that the *body* is one space in which we can find a wealth of knowledge: Our DNA carries the stories of our ancestors within it. And literature is a discipline that allows these stories to pour from our DNA onto the page. If we want to diversify the discipline of literature, scholars must continue researching embodiment narratives and acknowledge the intersection of the sciences and the humanities as a node to illuminate untold stories, and ultimately more fully-formed, diverse archives.

¹ Dr. Christine Blasey Ford’s testimony at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing alleging that U.S. Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her exemplifies this. Kavanaugh denied all allegations, and ultimately was confirmed by the Senate by a vote of 50-48.

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