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DECOLONIZED FEMININITY AND POST-COLONIAL TRAUMA AUTOBIOGRAPHIES:
READING ADRIANA PÁRAMO, JULIA ALVAREZ, AND AZAR NAFISI THROUGH
'SCRIPTOTHERAPY'

by

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B.A. Nova Southeastern University, 2019

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of English
in the College of Arts and Humanities
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates testimonies of three female authors from Latin America and the Middle East through scriptotherapy narratives which “give voice to previously repressed memories,” defined by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. Through the genre of autobiography, women have an opportunity to showcase acts of resistance towards the inner turmoil of colonial trauma that has been brought upon their existence. Decoloniality re-integrates the roots of colonial power into re-invigorated narratives that will become lineage. The only way that they can create their own identity is through “legending,” Gilles Deleuze’s conceptualized theoretical framework, which does not offer an escape from colonialism but utilizes its power to offer narratives of healing. As “scriptotherapy” narratives, these female authors are displaying resistance by circulating their stories to the global public and bringing communities together to understand that it is possible to stop the cycle of trauma and abuse that exists to keep the women of their culture repressed.

I argue that Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi’s scriptotherapy narratives encode trauma as acts of resistance in relation to turbulent political situations in their home countries. Julia Alvarez’s *Something to Declare: Essays* (1998) details her experiences as a Latin American woman who has been displaced, bodily, from the Dominican Republic during its revolutionary period from April to September of 1965. Azar Nafisi’s *Things I’ve Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter* (2008) paints a historical portrait of her Iranian family life during the Islamic Revolution of 1978–1979 and the toll the colonial powers had on cultivating her journey into womanhood. Adriana Páramo’s *My Mother’s Funeral* (2013) showcases writing as trauma reintegrated into a narrative in which personal ideologies and native Spanish language construct

an intersectional space. Through storytelling, women are advocated for globally and consciously brought into the major Western culture to instigate change.

To my wonderful family who have continuously supported every dream and adventure I have pursued. I am honored to be the first woman in my family who has completed her Master's and moving to New York for her PhD in Comparative Literature at Cornell University. It is an incredible moment that I am in awe to have accomplished and continued further. I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Cecilia Ruiz, who passed away before I began my program. I feel very blessed to have had the memories with her and I know she is so proud, always a part of my life, and looking after me. Her tenacity and resilience as well as my mother's, Clara Mansilla, have moved me forward to this moment and beyond. My mother's love and belief in my research and my capabilities as a woman and scholar have been that push I have needed to reach the heights I have. I am overjoyed and thankful for the community I have who sees my potential for great achievements.

My lovely sister, Stephanie Suárez is the most important to me through her belief in my writing from the very beginning of my career at Nova Southeastern University and years before to this degree filled with so many challenges. Her love, support, dedication, and laughs have made this academic journey absolutely worth it. My father, Herbert Suárez, taught me what it means to take a risk for your career and how life will unfold as it should. His job led my family to the Middle East, where this all started, and it has evolved into a beautiful life surrounded by cultures, languages, and music to which my creativity is presented through writing. From my upbringing in Saudi Arabia, identifying with the Arab culture to now understanding that there is more than one identity with my Latin American and scholarly work, I am very fortunate to have had the experiences and opportunities granted to me. My incredible grandparents, Adolfo Mansilla y Clara Inés Mansilla have followed me through each step of my adventures, and I would not be the

person I am today without them, I am so thankful and grateful to have the time to spend each day with them and see the pride and love on their faces.

My final dedication is to Dr. Louise Kane, who has been such an amazing thesis chair throughout the entire process, and I do not believe that I will ever have the words to thank her for everything that she has done to help advance my educational career. From the very first meeting with her, she ignited passion and excitement in the research I have conducted and the opportunities I have applied for and pursued. My first international conference experience, with her recommendation, at the University of Greenwich began my professional career trajectory into presenting my research to diverse audiences. In my personal life, Dr. Kane has helped me believe in myself and present my work with confidence and grace to the point of applying to top-tier PhD programs. I had to trust that the best program for me would align in the way it had to. Her drive, determination, and passion to advocate for me in this thesis has been remarkable, and I am incredibly thankful and in awe of her faith and confidence in me.

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¹Mauer, B. and Venecek, J with Heredia, Erika, Smeltz, Emily and Suárez, Nicole; Pressbooks. July 20, 2022.

I could improve the presentation of my argument and evidence became key components to discovering the beginnings of my authorial voice.

Wendy Cartier, editor of the *Thesis and Dissertation Office*, has been my supervisor for the past year, of whom I have learned so much regarding formatting and the best approaches in coaching students who come into the office for assistance. Through my time with her, I have found mentorship and friendship through building connections in the office and developing diverse writing skills in communicating my needs effectively and professionally. She has also been kind and welcoming in training and recognizing the work I have done. I have grown as a writer, woman, and researcher through her guidance, and taken upon more tasks to assist her with student concerns. Tyler Campbell, the director of the *Graduate Student Center* has provided opportunities to work one-on-one in professional development activities alongside events that have fostered communication, diverse perspectives, and perseverance in the daily work. This community space has respected my identities and is where I can bring my own opinions and experiences to improve the work-life balance.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the *Writing Center* and its consultants for all their dedication and assistance with different pieces of my thesis. Particularly, Emily Goiricelaya and Tatiana Rivera have been wonderful consultants who have encouraged and supported my thesis progress from its inception. Through brainstorming the introduction and main arguments to fine-tuning my defense presentation, I am very grateful in their guidance, discussion, and interest in the development of this project to this completed piece. Their passion and curiosity in the work I was investigating kept my goal in sight to continue advocating for underrepresented voices and cultures at Cornell University for my PhD in Comparative Literature.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis conducts a cross-cultural critical comparative analysis of autobiographical texts written by post-colonial 20th century women in Latin America and the Middle East. The primary texts that I plan to focus my research on are the following: Adriana Páramo's (2013) *My Mother's Funeral*, Julia Alvarez's (1998) *Something to Declare: Essays*, and Azar Nafisi's (2008) *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter*. These texts have powerful voices attached to them and I have selected these because they are a calling to home. In being raised in the Arab World with a Colombian heritage, it was not always easy to understand who I was as an individual while also remaining true to my roots and language. I spoke in a mixed tongue with languages that were not my own but became mine through my connection with the people I surrounded myself with and in learning their culture. In these pages, women have written not only about what it means to be a woman, but also about what they witnessed as young girls in a political world that did not recognize them as individuals with power in their voices.

For this Master's thesis, my endeavor was to select autobiographies that are unheard of in this part of the world, with languages and cultures vastly different from what anyone had ever encountered. At the same time, it would connect my "homes" together and showcase how culture and language do not define our differences, but instead enrich our knowledge of who we are on the human level for social change and unity. The main research questions the thesis explores are:

1) How does the genre of female authored autobiography enable writers to deconstruct colonial identities and express post-colonial reinventions and reservations? 2) How do female writers use trauma, both physical and mental, to construct new identities? And 3)

How can “scriptotherapy” and post-colonial theory enlighten our readings of

autobiographies as texts of trauma? The core of this research lies in deconstructions of colonialism, integrating how the postcolonial theory makes its claim on the national origins of these selected colonized countries of Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Iran.

In this way, I am engaging in feminist transformative research² by centering on the conditions in which women are at a crucial time to elevate their voices through writing, a huge revolutionary act that seeks to advance social justice.³ In these autobiographical narratives, women are taking a risk in laying out the full depth of their experiences for a different audience to be seen: young girls, adult women, and silenced minorities to feel represented for the first time. The thesis utilizes several theoretical lenses and concepts as avenues through which to approach and understand female autobiographical texts; these include: Deleuzian and Guattarian philosophies, feminist and gender studies frameworks, genre theory (what does the autobiography tell us that other genres cannot?), area studies and global studies (why women in Latin America and the Middle East?), postcolonialism, and trauma theory.

Suzette Henke⁴, provides a conception or mechanism of writing as healing, “‘scriptotherapy’ [...] the process of speaking or writing about trauma [...] give voice to previously repressed memories.”⁵ Her focus on scriptotherapy stems from the desire to heal wounds of psychological trauma in autobiographical testimony and the power that female voices bring. Historically unrepresented and silenced, female writers in Latin America did not have the

² “Using critical theory as a framework [...] aims to enable difference, examine power relations with axes of difference, and explore the ways that they intersect to shape behavior and identity.” Donna M. Mertens qtd. in Sharlene N. Hesse-Biber, *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*, 2014; 65.

³ Nollaig Frost and Frauke Elichaooff in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 65.

⁴ Professor of Literary Studies at the University of Louisville and Women’s Studies author.

⁵ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2010; 29.

space and platform to speak out about their struggles and hardships growing up in a home that forced these writers to betray their identity as a woman. Women felt less than a person, they simply existed but they were not truly living as individuals with the ability to make decisions and move forward in their lives. Everything about their childhood and further into their adulthood was stripped away from them in their lack of choice to nurture their identities as young girls.

Historian Deniz Kandiyoti speaks to the “tendency of researchers to ‘universalize’ disciplinary concepts, ignoring the ethnocentrism that lies within constructs such as patriarchy.”⁶ I will explore questions such as: **1) How it came to be so easy to colonize and take over land that was already owned? and 2) How white supremacy and colonialism contributed to the mindsets of institutional frameworks that facilitated or enforced limitations and wars upon women and people of color?** Connecting this, one of the key frameworks in my research builds on the multiple ways that women have been silenced and ignored not only on the basis of their gender, but on how their culture plays a role and how that is not always seen in these Western narratives. Many of the authors that I have analyzed and focused my research around had to take the English language as their “weapon” in order to tell their story and have a platform that the Western world would care about enough to bridge the cultural gap. In this context I bring in the concept of the minor literature from French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: a necessity of the “minority construct[ing] within a major language.”⁷ It is the storytelling that is vital to be advocated for and brought into the consciousness of the majority culture to instigate a change for the minor people.

⁶ Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 8.

⁷ “What is a Minor Literature?” *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 1986; 16.

Female Authored Autobiographies

In Smith and Watson's text, *Women, Autobiography, Theory: a Reader* they situate what subjectivity entails within the genre of autobiography, especially in the feminist perspective and include a collection of essays from various female scholars in the field. This encapsulates the understanding of what feminism is in the genre of autobiography and invites diverse perspectives to share their knowledge in the expanding theoretical framework of where the "I" lays in self-writing. Through investigations of female autobiographies, I argue that scriptotherapy can be an act of resistance towards patriarchal forces that restrict fluid conceptualizations of "woman," which can guide women writers toward claiming ownership of their own narratives. Latin American writers usually do not have the autobiographical space to publish their stories about the struggles with identity and recognition for who they are as cultural women and individuals. In this way, these kinds of writers from these countries are relegated to the status of "minor," reflective of their marginalized status in their countries.

When it comes to autobiographies, there is a concept called the "Ideological 'I'"⁸ in which the narrator struggles with multiple identities that can lead the reader to question the truth of their narrative due to the contradictions of what is presented. Here there is an "ideological shift in identity"⁹ through the movement of different spaces whether they be physical or metaphorical. In establishing the understanding of how ideologies play a crucial role in narration as well as rhetorical dimensions, the experience is highlighted from the individual perspective in relation to the collective experience. Reflexivity is a feminist principle where one becomes the object of study and takes into account surrounding perspectives, biases, and external experiences

⁸ Louis Althusser cited in Smith and Watson 77.

⁹ Smith and Watson 80.

that play a role in depicting the full event as it really was, especially when we come across a topic or conversation that may challenge that, and to keep an open mind to how we respond.

The greatest takeaway from the feminist theoretical framework that stresses the need to unpack epistemological assumptions and reconsider ethical research practices, serves to remind us of the fact that truth is subjective. As Nancy Naples and Barbara Gurr argue in Sharlene N. Hesse-Biber's text, *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*, "'truth' can be multiply defined or understood and that knowledge is political (as opposed to existing in a pure state outside of social contexts)." ¹⁰ Truthfully, I had not thought about this concept as one that was political but was already looking at 'truth' in its multiplicity of definitions and understandings, especially in the context of autobiographical truth. It is an interpretation that one must be consciously careful about in defining with terms like "autofiction" or labeling a text as "historical fiction" when the content is about a lived experience. An author has the authority to play around with some of the events to create a narrative that may not be completely truthful, with the understanding of the way that memories play a role in how one remembers an event differently from another person.

In this way, knowledge comes in a privileged authority with its role in politics: "knowledge production becomes an act of silencing as much as an act of discovery and the politics of knowledge production serve the politics of imperialism." ¹¹ The construct of empire with colonialism and the postcolonial theory is one that I am centering my research on. It is a field that is ever evolving and branching out in various ways with decolonialization and anti-colonial dialogues. The influence of politics in culture is active in our society today, with the

¹⁰ 15.

¹¹ Nancy A. Naples and Barbara Gurr in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 22.

production of knowledge being restricted as the government decides what will be distributed to its students and what will not. This provides an extra layer of why certain texts are not included in the educational curriculum, and how excluding denies the voices of history from being a part of the larger conversation.

Trauma Theory

Another lens this thesis adopts is that of trauma theory, and the linked concept of scriptotherapy. Trauma represents terrors and challenges within the mind, it is also played out and presented in other parts of the body and the identity of the human experience. Nicole Schnackenberg is a psychotherapist who presents in her text, *False Bodies, True Selves: Moving Beyond Appearance-Focused Identity Struggles and Returning to the True-Self* the disastrous effects that trauma has on the body and one's identity. Through sensory spaces and the subjective frame of one's existence as an object, the concept of the "false self" is presented as the displacement process of one's connection to the body that no longer exists in this experience.¹² In this sense, the importance of the body is what defines the identity concept and how to heal our history and trauma to fill those gaps and express ourselves authentically. Within this context, they are "voiceless" because there have not been spaces or platforms constructed for where their opinion or spoken language plays a role or has value for the conversations taking place.

In Latin America and the Middle East, a woman's voice, let alone her presence, is not considered as human but something that can easily be cast aside. In this case, a space needs to be created in order for a connection with others to be respected and seen in the same light as those who have never had to fight for it before. The "voiceless" find their voice in the heart and beauty

¹² Nicole Schnackenberg, 2016; xviii.

of a deeper care and understanding in another's eyes and ears. In representing terrors and challenges within the mind, it is played out and presented as well in the other parts of the body and the identity of the human experience. Nicole Schnackenberg's experiences provide a sense of welcome in the rhetorical dimensions of pathos that she incorporates within her text to bring awareness to the challenges many women face when it comes to the trauma of the body and its effect on identity. In multiple circumstances, immigrant and marginalized women have had to put on a mask or create a persona based on the restrictions and boundaries placed within who they are as women and how they must act in accordance with this suppression of their gender. This integrates Donna Haraway's conceptualization of "feminist objectivity" in regard to "situated knowledges," in which concepts such as knowledge and truth are always partial and inseparable from the lived experience of the researched" presents an understanding of how women's voices are categorized¹³. The ways in which knowledge of women is imbued in the cultural narrative is crucial in understanding how to break away from the truth of a women's lived experience, and how that can be placed in a new light from what has already been described.

Postcolonial Theory

Additionally, as well as reading these texts through trauma theory lens, this thesis also explores some of the more immanent attempts to read Latin American and Middle Eastern female writers' autobiographies through post-colonial theory. There is of course a considerable body of scholarly studies examining Latin American, the Middle East, and other global women writers' autobiographies through post-colonial and de-colonial approaches. The theory of

¹³ Sharlene N. Hesse-Biber, 2014; 5.

postcolonialism comes from the consequences that colonialism left in its wake to these marginalized countries and their people. Several texts have spoken about this field and gone further to branch out how it relates to the realities being faced today in our world.

Edward Said is considered the father of postcolonial theory with his text, *Orientalism*, is the first one that began the conversation regarding the “Other” and how that plays a part in colonization. His main argument is on the differentiation between “Other” and the “Oriental” definitions in regard to Middle Eastern cultures. His focus is on how the “Orient” was defined to be those countries in the East and is framed as the alien “Other” to the Occident “West.” Particularly, what is it that makes these countries inferior to the Western power and how was that decided? His sub-claim includes psychology approaches that look at the “Orient” as being the mirror reflection of Europe in trying to create its “self-image” through the Middle East. This implies that they are one and the same through the constructions of each other in relation to the world. With this being the case, it does not connect in how one is viewed as the “lesser kind” of the “ideal image” since both are representations of each other. From here, there are many theorists that branch out to create sub-fields such as Frantz Fanon with decoloniality and how that has taken the center stage in today’s discussions.

From this origin of postcolonialism comes the critical text of Robert J.C. Young’s *Empire, Colony, Postcolony*. In the first few chapters, the text eloquently describes the differences in colony and empire: “As any empire expanded, so did the extent of its boundaries: on the one hand this only prompted the desire for further conquest [...] more open to attack [...]and] produces more borders to secure.”¹⁴ In this context, it is crucial to understand how the

¹⁴ Young, 2015; 8.

idea of empire and conquering borders played a role in the selection of countries chosen to expand. The dominant culture overtakes the minor culture and its resources for their own benefit without any concern as to what this would do to the people of the country. Academic texts like John Beverley's *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory*, Abraham Acosta's *Thresholds of Illiteracy: Theory, Latin America, and the Crisis of Resistance*, and Miriam Cooke's *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature* have shifted the focus from what the traditional role of women or the subaltern should be and encompassed a new perspective that takes the postcolonial understanding of how things have changed and how society is transforming within.

In this postcolonial world that we are living in, it is absolutely crucial to change that narrative especially for the feminist woman despite the political wars on them. It has become a revolutionary act to be “resistant” and take a stand against the limitations placed in diminishing women to a box, a category, or a stereotype. With autobiography as the genre of this research and “scriptotherapy” the medicinal art form to express the life story, the comparison of the cultures is not separate. In both the Latin American and Middle Eastern cultures, as an example myself of what results in existing within those worlds, there is a human story that unfolds in the language that we speak and the political histories that chain our hands. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh in their introduction of the field of decoloniality have co-written a theoretical and praxis text that merges the application of decoloniality as a branch from the colonization of power: “Decoloniality emerges out of the need to delink from the narratives [...]—not to resist, but to re-exist [...] a set of creative processes leading to [...] decolonial ways of doing and

living.”¹⁵ The ideology of the West in being the global power and de-centering this colonization will provide a way for the colonized people to find a way to redefine their identities and re-establish their existence as not only an act of resistance, but of stability within the country.

The concept of decoloniality strives on the connection of how the colonization has focused on the European centered ideals and not on what works for those whose lands they’ve settled on. . In the decoloniality of a culture, one is striving to retrieve the roots and, as Deleuze points out, one cannot escape colonialism instead one would “be [...] caught in the act of legending. It's how any people is constituted. So, to the established fictions that are always rooted in a colonist's discourse, we oppose a minority discourse.”¹⁶ This is the main premise of what my thesis will constitute—the current-day premise of where the field has led. This text provides not only the main authors’ ideas and opinions, but it is evident that they have done their research by including other critical thinkers and case work that has been completed in Latin American countries such as Ecuador, Boliva, Colombia, and Mexico, among others. This text falls under the field of postcolonialism with focus on decoloniality and how it affects those who have been colonized.

A New Interdisciplinary Approach

In Gilles Deleuze’s “What is the Creative Act”, he focuses on this act of writing as both creativity and resistance to the forces that surround the individual: “Every act of resistance is not a work of art, even though, in a certain way, it is. Every work of art is not an act of resistance, and yet, in a certain way, it is.”¹⁷ The act of expression is one that is so crucial in our literary

¹⁵ *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, 2018; 145–146.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990*, 1995; 126.

¹⁷ *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, 2006; 317.

culture, whether we are looking at the arts or the writing process, and how that develops from an idea to a product of one's desire. This Master's thesis strives to collect pieces of literary art that paint the story of the inner wounds within the body and expose the emotions of the woman who is now liberated. In receiving her voice and a platform to be a part of the social change for humanity, she is now seen and strengthened to be that a catalyst for the next generation.

My Master's thesis study of autobiographical texts, focusing on two vastly diverse cultures as Latin America and the Middle East are, lies in their comparison of the written literary discourses by women through synthesis and analysis. This includes understanding the traditions and landscape of the countries as well as the political powers that lie in place. With women's voices being historically marginalized and silenced, this investigation has revealed how the postcolonial times of the 20th century allows more female voices to be expressed. Writing is a healing process and in its own right, an art form to take the page and create a story of the human experience. The feminist methodology of literary analysis, content analysis, and data analysis are the best approaches for this comparison in its ability to trace the line of where these women have represented their unique experiences, cultures, and languages within the pages of their autobiographies.

In feminist research, it is vital to make "decisions about what is important to *measure* (what questions will be asked)" and "*how* the questions will be asked."¹⁸ This information is crucial in considering that main theme of research when starting any kind of project, and it has opened my mind to the endless possibilities that one may find during this research process. The literary expressions of these narratives are hidden for the Western world because not many

¹⁸ Kathi Miner and Jayaratne cited in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 312.

people read texts that they do not understand—it is a different lifestyle, and it is not always easy to put the Western privilege and upbringing aside to open these reader’s minds to something that would challenge them. For this thesis, I selected autobiographies understudied and not as widely acknowledged in this part of the world with languages and cultures quite diverse to conceptualize the American ideology and its principles. While, at the same time, I aimed to connect my “homes” together through scholarly discourse and showcase how culture and language do not define our differences. Our knowledge of who we are, on the human level for social change and unity is enriched inside a dominant community to trace the heart of what the post-colonial world uncovers in authoring our ingenuity and creative practices.

Conclusion: Methodology of Textual Research

My study of autobiographical texts focusing on two vastly diverse cultures as Latin America and the Middle East are lies in their comparison of the written literary discourses by women through synthesis and analysis. I have looked at a variety of theoretical texts that center on how women in these two cultures (Latin America and Middle East) are situated: the ways in which I can highlight a different perspective and create new platforms for these women. It is true that even as diverse as many cultures and people can be, there is an element or interest that ties them together in their ways of thinking or perspectives.¹⁹ This is not to say that by categorizing them into similarities we are steering away from what makes them different, but it is what can unite people that may appear so different. This frame of thinking draws in a feminist evaluation methodology, “Cultural competence is a stance taken toward culture [...] A culturally competent evaluator is prepared to engage fully with communities to capture important cultural and

¹⁹ Elana D. Buch and Karen M. Staller, in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 112.

contextual dimensions.”²⁰ As a researcher, one must be open to the cultural varieties that exist within our world and be prepared to engage in them. This entails conducting investigations surrounding the origins of their language, traditions, histories, and what motivated these specific people to write and share their stories.

²⁰ Donna M. Mertens and Nichole Stewart in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 336.

CHAPTER 1. ADRIANA PÁRAMO'S *MY MOTHER'S FUNERAL*: THE RHETORICAL DIMENSIONS OF EMOTIONAL TRAUMA

Introduction: Autobiography As Genre

The literary genre of autobiography is the personal, self-referential account of a writer's life. It can appear simple to believe and understand how the author's story resonates with the readers, and so it is the truth of the experience. In this chapter, I argue that Adriana Páramo's *My Mother's Funeral* (2009) presents rhetorical dimensions of emotional trauma with emphasis on Enargeia, ethos, and common places to give voice through a lens of scriptotherapy. To frame through genre, I argue that the genre of autobiography offers unique space for scriptotherapy to take place. I also contend that what I am terming the ideological "I" exemplifies this voicing of multigenerational trauma and repression of identity. The "Ideological 'I'"²¹ is defined as an experience in which the narrator identifies and embodies multiple cultures and understandings of their self and what that means in the context of their storyline. This then leads to an "ideological shift in identity"²² through the movement of different spaces in time and establishing the understanding of how ideologies play a crucial role in narration. Specifically, with rhetorical dimensions, the experience is highlighted from the individual perspective in relation to the collective experience.

This chapter draws on Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's reading of "autobiography."²³ Their reading presents a new perspective in which this genre is not viewed as merely about life writing detailing the events that transform the author, since components of politics, history, and culture are also involved. With their text on "autobiographical theory," the concepts of agency,

²¹ Louis Althusser cited in Smith and Watson 77.

²² Smith and Watson 80.

²³ *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2010.

embodiment, and identity are applied to the subject's storytelling along with the surrounding perspectives of embedded characters, political environments, and family culture. I argue that the purpose of narratives like Páramo's is to give voice to their mothers and to future generations of women and girls. This leads to what Smith and Watson describe as "Intergenerational life writing [...] traumas that are embodied [...] as collective and systemic."²⁴ Through their "scriptotherapy" narratives, these autobiographical women writers are taking charge to stop the cycle of trauma and abuse that exists to keep women of their culture repressed and without a voice to be their true selves.

Historical Background of Colombia: Racialization Through "Mestizos" and Blackness

Peter Wade's examination of racial order in Colombia depicts the historical and cultural elements of the how Blacks and Indians have been cast aside and mis-identified into "mestizos." This is the identification of a race mixture between Spanish and Indigenous populations, but these categorizations cause erasure of what it means to be indigenous, or black when we consider "mulatto" which is that mixture. Specifically, he incorporates logos within his description of how slavery came to be within Roman and canon law as a way to categorize the "barbarians" and "natural slaves" from the superiority of Christianity in these times. This appears to be a natural order of things in the hierarchy of the blacks versus the Indians, and this is not a concept that is widely spoken about in other literature. Wade emphasizes how Colombia needs to be aware of their black roots and not have the shame that comes with that because of skin color. He goes through the historical development of the *limpieza de sangre*, the cleansing of blood, when it came to how there were mixed race and culture. The whiteness was usually desired over the

²⁴ 30.

darker skin tones that came from the black and indigenous populations. Therefore, the *mestizaje*²⁵ faced discriminatory reactions with the goal being to erase the dark color from the community to keep it “clean.” This ideology framed the lighter skin color from the race mixture to be the one that was desirable. It was the white preference and excluded those that were black from benefiting in their rights within the society.

Wade’s chapter provides a deeper perspective on the rhetorical dimensions of how slavery and discrimination against a darker skin tone came about, specifically with the black population more than the indigenous. This presents a compelling understanding of the cultural history and its place in Colombian hierarchy as a way to bring awareness to the blackness that should not be erased or forgotten. The style of writing in Wade’s chapter is not opinion but factual about what occurred for the classification of the “mestizos” to be more focused on the whiteness instead of who they are as a whole. In this way, he is also taking a more empathetic and nurturing teacher role as he goes through the history and understands that his audience does not know the extent of difficulties and politics that have separated the Colombian citizens into these categories. To grab the audience into the narrative that Wade is presenting, he employs pathos to appeal to the emotions of his readers regarding the injustices that have historically been misrepresented with the marginalized community in Colombia. His readership is included in the description of the situation occurring in Colombia, he keeps them in mind as he goes through defining the skin politics and the Latin American ideologies with the Spanish words.

In current rhetoric there is limited awareness on the background of the black population and how that portrays the conceptualization of identity in the later generations. The background

²⁵ Wade 11.

information regarding the development of racism and how the categorization of skin color in Colombia provides specific context to the challenges during La Violencia. It is time to change that narrative with scriptotherapy and autobiographical text that will produce the philosophy of creating and writing in a framework of progress towards mobilizing stories of oppression to the forefront. In this context, the true wisdom of what the autobiography presents is in the truth of identity and authorship to the life story, along with the legacy for what the future generations will acquire and possess. The autobiographical genre has proposed a new wave and legacy for the importance of writing one's stories. This is especially true when analyzing the texts in terms of the intergenerational trauma and how that prompted Adriana Páramo to then create her own platform and use her voice for a larger cause.

The life story cannot be predicted but can construct one's identity according to the belief of the future potential and a path that will change. This is constructed from other cultural elements that generated the original trauma and will now be the journey to healing. In the Latin American context, there is a human story that unfolds in the language that we speak and the political histories that chain our hands. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* paints the challenges and horrible violence occurring in Algeria for its plight into independence. As a psychotherapist, he explores the situation through the lens of decolonization and how there was no other way to prosper without violence. The colonized were never going to be seen as equals to those who were colonizing, and they had to stand their ground through "revolutionary violence" that would lead into their independence. Fanon's main argument is that the colonizers came into Algeria and took whatever they pleased without thinking about the "natives" of the country. It is

important to see how the inclusion of race is decolonizing and deconstructing the white narrative that has always existed since the colonization of all these nations all around the world.

Post-colonial theory blends with the race studies as Frantz Fanon looks into the anti-colonialism to bring forth the native culture and see just how much the colonization has affected the nation in terms of their identity and agency as human beings. Fanon's take on decoloniality exposes the idea that postcolonialism does not have to exist in a limited view of only coloniality but how it can be changed. The connection with Páramo's text is not only on the traumatic relationship that her parents had with each other but how her own identity as a woman and mixed-race individual played in the development of how she viewed blackness. "La Violencia" was all about the disconnection of the people whether they were conservative or liberal, it was the play to separate the citizens of Colombia to be on the run and seen as fugitives to the white perspectives of the cultural politics playing out. The only way that freedom could take place was through the "natives" becoming like these "settlers" and taking back what was theirs. A sub-claim that Fanon makes throughout the text is the emphasis on "national culture," it cannot be either Arab or black, but it must be unified in order for all people to feel that sense of identity.

There is no way to peacefully have the colonized take back what is theirs from the colonizers because the latter simply will not give this up. The colonizers win and take the colonized to the side while displacing them in order to make way for their plans of settlement. Colonialism can be changed and brought into the national consciousness of the people into direct action of how they have passively allowed an outside force take control of their country while the natives have continuously suffered for centuries. This toll on the resiliency and strength of the "minor" culture keeps them barely satisfied with their realities and conditions while making

sure that they do not voice or revolt against the government. With Fanon introducing specific cases in which the “natives” take the role of the “settlers,” brings into focus that anti-colonialism can have its way in reversing history. There is a necessity to change the narrative and give back to the traditions, cultures, voices, and identities of its original people. The natives cannot be cast aside and seen as “less”, and this also includes the black cultures because both are prominent in Latin America with specific focus in Colombia. These discourses must have the space and acknowledgement of its history and culture that created the richness of resources and prosperity. It is disheartening to know about countries in which its citizens must flee but we must also realize that the displacement occurs in one’s country within the borders that abandon their rights and freedoms as individuals.

Common Sense Ideological Principles: Influence Versus Fact

In this chapter, Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee present the concept of common sense in conjunction with its ideology: “bodies of beliefs, doctrines, familiar ways of thinking that are characteristic of a group or a culture [...] the power of an ideology is measured by the degree to which it influences the beliefs and actions of relatively large groups.”²⁶ In this way, it is a waste of time and energy to determine which of the conjectures about political correctness is “correct” because as stated in the text, they are "educated guesses about something that probably took place in the past or present or about something that will take place in the future.”²⁷ In other words, it is not feasible to reach a valid determination about who or what fact is “correct” because there are too many factors at play. This is also why common sense is not something universally established as each individual has his or her own way of looking at particular

²⁶ *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, 2012; 96–97.

²⁷ 90.

circumstances and can decide that something is going against their ideological beliefs which will betray their sense of reality. Specifically, a person's perspective about a topic will be too difficult to change or “correct,” and most discussions regarding political correctness are based on speculation.

It is not based on concrete facts, but on the understanding and perspective of certain beliefs and ideologies. This can get tricky when it comes to autobiographies: there is a concept called the “Ideological ‘I’”²⁸ in which the narrator struggles with multiple identities that can lead the reader to question the truth of their narrative due to the contradictions of what is presented. I analyze Adriana Páramo’s personal ideologies of the relationship with her parents along with the way she portrays Colombia. She has a very different understanding based on the experiences of feeling like she was the unwanted child and how that affected her own sense of self and identity as a woman. Here there is an “ideological shift in identity”²⁹ through the movement of different spaces whether they be physical or metaphorical. In establishing the understanding of how ideologies play a crucial role in narration as well as rhetorical dimensions, the experience is highlighted from the individual perspective in relation to the collective experience. This comes to show that it is not simply about who is “correct” and who is not, as previous bias and misunderstanding come into play on a person's opinion in a situation.

Rhetorical Emotional Appeals: Political and Bodily Reactions

The chapter also draws on the concept of rhetoric. A knowledge of rhetoric allows us to be aware of the rhetoric employed by others who might use it to control us. It is the power of the

²⁸ Louis Althusser cited in Smith and Watson 77.

²⁹ “every autobiographical narrator is historically and culturally situated, each is a product of his or her particular time and place [...] situated in the historical notion of personhood and the meaning of lives at the time of writing” Smith and Watson 77–78.

message being presented non-verbally, it is in the depth of emotional connection and the feeling that one is receiving during the interaction that provides the interpretation and its meaning. It is not presented as tied to evidence in order to prove something, but as a way to engage and connect with its audience. Specifically, in terms of the constructions of opinions, Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee state the following: “The point of rhetoric, after all, is to change opinions [...] politics, morality, and sociality depend on our relations with beings that think and feel.”³⁰ It can be easy to just cast aside a certain idea that does not align with our own upbringing or personal views. However, the point of rhetoric in conversation is not to prove someone right and wrong, but to expand our understanding of the world that we live in; and the only way to do this is through the sharing of ideas, opinions, and perspectives. It is here that we can see the rhetoric play a role in the factors and pieces put in to relay the full power behind a message and how that impact brings a deeper understanding to what is being conveyed.

Further in this section, the authors present evidence that one's opinion does not solely belong to the person speaking, but that others have contributed to the scholarship, and it has gone further to distinct individuals. This is not to say that an opinion only matters or has value if it is published or spoken about by a top scholar or politician, but that the sharing of an idea or perspective is what creates this political culture of a democracy. For if we all kept our thoughts and knowledge to ourselves, then the world would not be as advanced in technology, scholarship, and community as it is today. Presenting our work to conferences, symposiums, or within institutions is a key factor to advancing the understanding of a particular topic and how it can be challenged or viewed differently to bring all those pieces together in an innovative

³⁰ 15.

manner. According to Damasio's research in neuroscience, Crowley and Hawhee cite that “we can't think without emotions, and that our emotional responses are intricately tied up with our beliefs.”³¹ It is unfair to stick to the belief that emotions because they reside in the body and are reactionary, that they cannot contribute to the intrinsic proof of logos. As Crowley and Hawhee elaborate on this notion of emotion, they present examples of how shared joy, excitement and grief relates to reason in the sense that it is not a hysterical or irrational emotion when in community with others.

Emotional appeals are not as widely accepted because reason has a stronger distinction in relation to rhetorical discourse. Emotions, as stated previously, relate to the body and are seen as these irrational senses of who we are. The emotional disposition is a crucial component to how a particular discourse is received. The emotional appeal resides in not only one's character, but in the way that we feel being in the presence of another person and that shared environment. In analyzing this, it is evident that emotions are seen as these unnecessarily intense and chaotic feelings that alter someone's attitude, behavior, and even character towards a particular event or person. This leads to emotions not being accepted in the rhetorical situation because of the way that emotions have affected individuals negatively, and not seen in the positive ways that they can lead to reason once they are necessarily processed after the initial reaction.

Analyzing Trauma in the Female Autobiography

As a “scriptotherapy” narrative, Páramo is taking charge by representing their stories to the global public and bringing communities together to understand that it is possible to stop the cycle of trauma and abuse that exists to keep the women of their culture repressed and without a

³¹ 171.

voice to be their true selves. By examining Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's definition of a concept, these narratives provide a deeper understanding of the necessity of an event and the experience that is felt in accordance, "The task of philosophy when it creates concepts, entities, is always to extract an event from things and beings, to set up the new event from things and beings, always to give them a new event: space, time, matter, thought, the possible as events."³² In the creation of a concept, the main component is that of necessity, of a space or time that needs to be showcased or determined. With Adriana Páramo, her narrative is not completely distinct or separate from others who have written about their own lives, but it has a need to be told in the sense that she is representing her parents' lives and what that meant for her as the observer. Her need is one of reflection and coming home to herself finally. It is her journey into painful memories and experiences that she had not dealt through until she put the pen to the paper and let the words flow. These emotional stories have a larger purpose to the logos of social change and its revelation of underlying stasis.

In this manner, the emotional disposition is a crucial component to how a particular discourse is received. To be in dialogue with someone who is angry or hurt versus another who is overjoyed, and kind brings in a completely different feeling of what the situation entails. The positive feelings of love and compassion along with those of despair and sadness can translate to our connections with other individuals and the place that we feel them. It does not only relate to bodily experiences to conclude that they affect our minds in a negative way, but the implications of when and how we feel them that lead us to understand more of what the role of the emotion was. In this chapter, Gorgias applies *kairos* to *pathos* in "alter[ing] an audience's emotional state

³² "What is a Concept?" *What is Philosophy?*, 1994; 33.

of mind and thus change their assessment of reality, in essence helping them to see the world in new ways.”³³ It is curious to see how the role of altering the emotional state or appeal in the “right circumstances” as is the case in *kairos*, presents a differing result according to the feeling that is produced leading to a rational action. Kairos is defined as “the right rhetorical moment [...] a multidimensional and flexible term [...] a period during which opportunities appear to those who are prepared to take advantage of them.”³⁴ To delve deeper into this term, it is also referred in the text as “situational,” “temporal dimension,” and “opportunity” or a “window” of time. It is a chance and a particular moment in a rhetorical situation that must be taken, and the rhetor must be aware of it in order to take advantage of such a situation. This captivates an understanding leading to ethos of a shared experience with the reader and the community that is created of how our emotions and connection to its context is processed.

Nicole Schnackenberg is a psychotherapist who presents the disastrous effects that trauma has on the body and one’s identity through sensory spaces and the subjective frame of one’s existence as an object. Specifically, the concept of the “false self” is presented as the displacement process of one’s connection to the body that no longer exists in this experience.³⁵ In this sense, the importance of the body is what defines the identity concept and how to heal our history and trauma to fill those gaps and express ourselves authentically. Within this context, they are “voiceless” because there have not been spaces or platforms constructed for where their opinion or spoken language plays a role or has value for the conversations taking place. With the rhetorical dimensions, the “voiceless” is in the ethos, the emotional response to feeling that her

³³ Greek philosophy Gorgias, 483–375 BC cited in Crowley and Hawhee 175.

³⁴ Crowley and Hawhee 38.

³⁵ *False Bodies, True Selves: Moving Beyond Appearance-Focused Identity Struggles and Returning to the True-Self*, 2016; xviii.

voice does not matter or exist in the grander scheme of things. In Colombia, a woman's voice, let alone her presence is not considered as human but something that can easily be cast aside. In this case, a space needs to be created in order for a connection with others to be respected and seen in the same light of those who have never had to fight for it before.

The "voiceless" find their voice in the heart and beauty of a deeper care and understanding in another's eyes and ears. In representing terrors and challenges within the mind, it is played out and presented as well in the other parts of the body and the identity of the human experience. There is this immense disconnection between what it means to be a woman in their culture and how they can interact with their own selves moving through the phases of their lives. The context of this text plays directly on the pathos of the reader to engage within the emotions and feelings that women have had to endure as "voiceless." In particular, this source connects with my work in the genre of autobiography with the Colombian author I have chosen who presents the tumultuous relationship with her mother and how that is playing out in the context of her funeral. Her mother did not always accept Páramo's choices, and she felt that she was stuck in the middle choosing sides with her parents and taking the next step for a better life for herself. Her mother blamed the men in her family for the dissatisfaction she had in her life and for why she had to struggle as much as she did in raising five daughters on her own.

In retrospect, this kind of relationship affected Adriana Páramo in her development as an adult in her own relationships. She believed that at times she was heading towards the same type of future, but the necessity of creating her own path and being in control of her story, the author halted this cycle from repetition. Páramo left Colombia for a better life in the US and Middle East which caused her mother to resent her. This caused challenges to ensue as the author felt

this sense of “voiceless” and a “false self” as she tried to appease to her mother’s wishes, but this was making her betray her own dreams and aspirations. Schnackenberg’s experiences provide a sense of welcome in the rhetorical dimensions of pathos that she incorporates within her text to bring awareness to the challenges many women face when it comes to the trauma of the body and its effect on identity. In multiple circumstances, immigrant and marginalized women have had to put on a mask or create a persona based on the restrictions and boundaries placed within who they are as women and how they must act in accordance with this suppression of their gender.

Conclusion: Enargeia Through Father’s Disappearance

In analyzing Adriana Páramo’s *My Mother’s Funeral*, the greatest pain that she experienced was when her father left and utterly destroyed her mother. She had to be the rock for the emotions that her mother was feeling and through her observations, as readers, we can sense the emotional appeal felt in the body:

But Dad isn’t listening. He is peeling himself away from our lives; he has shut his heart to us like an unpaid utility. Panic settles on Mom’s face; and just when I’m sure she is about to scream or collapse, she grabs me by the hand and draws me close to her as we stand by the door.³⁶

Even though Páramo is the one who is hurting as well to see her father leave, the lens of this excerpt of the text focuses solely on her mother and how she has to give up her own feelings. By abandoning how she feels, she grows up to hate her father and never truly understood the depth of what his abandonment did to her as a child. In the rhetorical dimensions of emotions in the

³⁶ 2013; 82.

body and how they have historically been perceived as unnecessary, the text above proves how we can feel these intense emotions as if they were our own based on the depth of the shared experience.

We can understand how the shared experience plays a role in how we relate to another person whether that be through love and compassion or anger and disappointment. Specificity is key to how we show our emotions and can connect in that way to the people that we are close to. It is not a clear cut black and white understanding of how emotions are displayed but has overlapped in our understanding to the differing layers that play a role in its reception. This causes understanding of Enargeia within a situation or event that can “come alive for audiences and makes them see vividly what is at stake in the issue.”³⁷ Ethos is defined as the “ability to persuade [...] to his or her moral habits.”³⁸ This captivates an understanding leading to ethos of a shared experience with the reader and the community that is created of how our emotions and connection to its context is processed.

These emotional stories have a larger purpose to the logos of social change and its revelation of underlying stasis. It is not because of who we are that we can feel and understand the depths of an event, but through the style and techniques utilized with a specific audience in mind to get to the ethos. In this way, Adriana Páramo is bringing the concept of humanity through connecting with her audience and presenting her truth of the matter through diverse ideals that have impacted her as she grows:

³⁷ Crowley and Hawhee 184.

³⁸ Crowley and Hawhee 148.

My mother's house. This is where I grew up. I know the worn magic of every sound from every room in every season. This is the house I never expected would change. This is the house where [...] everything remains transfixed, [...] everything is exactly as it was when I left it.³⁹

In these lines, you can feel “what is at stake” and what has “come alive for audiences”⁴⁰ as energiea has described. In Páramo returning home, it is not just the tumultuous relationship she had with her mother that is coming through but also the loss of everything that she represented which is showcased in the home that is left behind. The funeral is not the last goodbye: the home still stands, the memories eat away at the magic that once existed when she was alive, the daily activities are much more pronounced, and this transition comes at a cost. Even though everything, physically, remains the same, it is not because energetically and emotionally so much has changed from the last time Páramo was there and this is the power that words, and objects have on humans in how they shift through the events that life throws at them.

³⁹ 215.

⁴⁰ Crowley and Hawhee 184.

CHAPTER 2. THE GLOBAL WOMAN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BECOMING—JULIA ALVAREZ'S AND AZAR NAFISI'S DETERRITORIALIZED "SCRIPTOTHERAPY"

Introduction: Deleuzian and Guattarian Creative Expressions

This thesis chapter applies Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's theoretical frameworks⁴¹ through a comparative analysis of women's minor autobiographies. Specifically, I focus on the developments through which both women undertake a process of "Becoming" in terms of their emotional transcendence and fluid identities as they negotiate various forms of trauma. To define this concept clearly, it is the transformation into something more than one initially thought was possible. Deleuze and Guattari also present the concept of *necessity* in terms of its representation in colonialization where the production of an idea must stem from one's own desire.

Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi are two global women writers. The first, Alvarez, was born in 1950 in New York City and after an early career as a poet began writing novels in the late 1980s. Her best known novel *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* was published in 1991, followed by several other critically acclaimed fictional works. Alvarez is also well-known for her autobiographical work with her first essay collection, *Something to Declare*, published in 1998. Just two years before Alvarez was born in 1948, on the other side of the world, Azar Nafisi was born in Tehran, Iran's capital city. Perhaps one of the best known female writers in the Middle East, Nafisi has had an extensive career as a novelist, journalist, and children's book writer. In 2008, Nafisi published the memoir *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter*. By this point, Nafisi had been living in the United States for ten years having moved there in 1997, following periods living abroad in other countries such as England and

⁴¹ *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*; 1987.

Switzerland. Julia Álvarez has a similar multicultural background: after spending the first ten years of her life there, in 1960 Alvarez was forced to leave the Dominican Republic, because of her father's involvement in the failed plot to oust the territories military ruler, Rafael Trujillo.

This chapter reads the autobiographical writings of Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi in conjunction with one another. As René Wellek argued in his now seminal essay, *The Crisis of Comparative Literature* which was published in 1959 when Alvarez and Nafisi were still young girls: "Comparative literature has the immense merit of combating the false isolation of national literary histories." Whilst scholars have no doubt heeded this warning, surprisingly few studies have directly compared women's writing in Latin America and the Middle East. Recent publications, such as *The Cambridge History of Latin American Women's Literature* or Farzaneh Milani's *Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement*, highlight the ways in which Latin American and Middle Eastern women have written about their backgrounds. Their focus on women from single continents, namely Latin America and Asia, tend to reinforce the idea that women's writing in Latin America and women's writing in the Middle East are somehow completely different from each other, the full installation of national literary histories that Wellek described some sixty years ago.

I argue that, by directly comparing the autobiographical writings of Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi, we can see how women writers from countries whose politics and socioeconomic conditions are defined by instability and gender inequality often write about their experiences of living in or migrating from these countries in strikingly similar ways. Specifically, I argue that in Alvarez's autobiography, *Something to Declare: Essays*, and Nafisi's memoir, *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter*, both write about their experiences of migrating

to America by using similar descriptions of exile and the complex feelings that go along with it. I argue that both women exist in a complicated middle ground which sees them engaged with the familiar structures of North America—capitalism, its Western education system, relative democracy, social freedoms, and unfortunately, racism —whilst simultaneously missing aspects of their home countries.

Julia Alvarez's *Something to Declare: Essays* details her journey as a Latin-American woman presenting the storytelling of fleeing a war-torn country, the Dominican Republic. Azar Nafisi's *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter* depicts a historical portrait of family life in Iran during the Islamic Revolution of 1978–1979, and how the country's colonial dictatorship placed a great toll in Nafisi's forsaken journey into womanhood. Through each of these two autobiographical texts, both women utilized scriptotherapy as a concept of storytelling to regain ownership over their lives and restore cultural identity as a voice to the repressed. Through investigation on female autobiographies, I argue that scriptotherapy can be an act of resistance against patriarchal forces that restrict fluid conceptualizations of "woman," which can guide women writers toward claiming ownership of their own narratives. Latin American and Middle Eastern female writers do not usually have the autobiographical space to publish their stories about the struggles with identity and recognition for who they are as cultural women and individuals. In this way, these kinds of writers from these countries are relegated to the status of "minor," reflective of their marginalized status in their countries.

The act of expression is crucial in our literary culture, whether we are looking at the arts or the writing process. From this perspective, Suzette Henke⁴² provides a conception or

⁴² Professor of Literary Studies at the University of Louisville and Women's Studies author.

mechanism of writing as healing, “‘scriptotherapy’ [...] the process of speaking or writing about trauma [...] give[s] voice to previously repressed memories.”⁴³ Her focus on scriptotherapy stems from the desire to heal wounds of psychological trauma in autobiographical testimony and the power that female voices bring. Through the “scriptotherapy” narratives, Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi are taking charge by representing their stories to the global public and bringing communities together to understand that it is possible to stop the cycle of trauma and abuse that exists to keep the women of their culture repressed and without a voice to be their true selves. In these scriptotherapy narratives, Alvarez and Nafisi reveal the necessity of creating and writing within a progressive framework for mobilizing stories which represent silenced voices. Through writing in the major language of English, women are able to discover a platform that will disseminate their story and advocate for those who do not have the same opportunity.

In Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s analysis of Frantz Kafka in “What is the Creative Act?”, the oppressed minority is deterritorialized in geopolitical spaces disconnected from identity and home. Kafka’s ideology of writing as an act of resistance presents necessity as crucial in the context of what minor literature is composed of. In other words, this type of literature is conceived by the minority population who write in the major language, as is the case with the Western English. When it comes to autobiographical texts, the importance stems from promoting a deconstruction of coloniality in the physical spaces of writing that will unite the minor within the major audience. The conceptualization of minor literature sets the stage for this necessity of the “minority construct[ing] within a major language”⁴⁴ in which the minor literature

⁴³ Smith and Watson 29.

⁴⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 1986 16.

becomes a storytelling format that is vital to be advocated for and brought into the consciousness of the majority culture to instigate a change for the those categorized as minor, the marginalized. This concept of minor literature advocates for women's voices, which have historically been silenced and unpublished in the Western world.

In this way, these autobiographical texts by Alvarez and Nafisi present decolonized perspectives towards historical contexts of bodily displacement within struggles of their fragmented identity at home, and within American culture. By examining Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's definition of a concept, these narratives provide a deeper understanding of the necessity of an event and the experience that is felt in accordance, "The task of philosophy when it creates concepts, entities, is always to extract an event from things and beings, to set up the new event from things and beings, always to give them a new event: space, time, matter, thought, the possible as events."⁴⁵ The scriptotherapy component adds the level of healing and that is where the purpose and need to produce an idea comes into play. In "extract[ing] an event [...] to set up the new event"⁴⁶ provides the embodiment of the more, which is the expansion and development of what the event entails and how one can move into a more predominant role to what is new. These narratives speak to the experience of each author but there is the deconstruction of their identity and culture in the collective sense. This concept of deconstruction is not connected to Jacques Derrida's conceptualization of antistructuralist theory within the analysis of texts in regards to their meanings. Instead, the deconstruction here is of the self, who one is and how as individuals we are constructing our own identities based on our experiences,

⁴⁵ "What is a Concept?" *What is Philosophy?*, 1994; 33.

⁴⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1994; 33.

feelings, thoughts, and the lives that we have led and will continue to follow. In this context, the autobiographical texts take on identity in the sense that both of these women are coming into their own essence and understanding of who they are as women before they lose their sense of worth. Their voices are important in advocating for other women and girls in their situation and a call to hope and strength, of resilience to who they are as whole human beings and not these fragments that the patriarchal society has tried to diminish them to.

Historically unrepresented and silenced within their respective cultures of Latin America and the Middle East, Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi did not have the space and platform to speak out about their struggles and hardships as they were growing up in an “imprisoned” home where the man of the house had the last say and made all the decisions. In this context, both women felt less than a person; they simply existed but they were not truly living as individuals with the ability to make decisions and move forward in their lives. Everything about their childhood and further into their adulthood was stripped away from them in their lack of choice to nurture their identities as young girls invisible to the patriarchal world. Julia Alvarez’s *Something to Declare: Essays* and Azar Nafisi’s *Things I’ve Been Silent About: Memories* present gendered bodies as sites of resistance in their escape from political dictatorships, Rafael Trujillo’s presidency in the Dominican Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, showcasing the truth of their experiences in “becoming feminized writers.” This conception of “feminized” is not centered on the basis of the female and the feminist movement, but on encompassing the concept of bodies from the gendered perspective of women and the fluid understanding of what a woman is in its inclusive form. In this autobiographical analysis, gender is understood in the “traditional sense” of the

biological definition, and the “feminized” is tapping into their power and perspective of a woman in the minoritized and marginalized framework.

The main context of autobiographical narratives that I will focus on is in what Nicole Schnackenberg states of “voiceless” women who were “living life as a false self.”⁴⁷ Women especially feel this more powerfully when they navigate new waters and worlds on their own while trying to cultivate their own identities and how they fit into a more culturally diverse environment. In multiple circumstances, immigrant and marginalized women⁴⁸ have had to put on a mask or create a persona based on the restrictions and boundaries placed by the new society on who they are as women, and how they must act in accordance with this suppression of their gender. Within this context, they are “voiceless” because there have not been spaces or platforms constructed for where their opinion or spoken language plays a role or has value for the conversations taking place. Specifically in the Latin American and Middle Eastern cultures, women must hold their tongue and play out realities in their minds of what they wish and hope for, while having to be submissive and follow along the conversations that are occurring with the men being the intellectuals and the ones whose opinions matter and have weight to decisions being made. There is this immense disconnection between what it means to be a woman in their culture and how they can interact with their own selves moving through the phases of their lives.

⁴⁷ *False Bodies, True Selves: Moving Beyond Appearance-Focused Identity Struggles and Returning to the True-Self*, 2016 xviii.

⁴⁸ Those who are considered minor in their voices from the Western major languages and self-conceptualizations within the literatures.

Becoming: “Becoming Woman”

The conceptualization of “becoming-woman”⁴⁹ from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari is presented in conjunction with the healing mechanism of “scriptotherapy” from the ideation of gender expectations, where women must only write about themselves as men should do the same. In this understanding, it is trying to restrict how far an author can really go in the depths of their own emotions and understanding of the human experience. The clinical sense of a scriptotherapy narrative is through the autobiographical: through the eyes of the author setting the scene to tell the story of her “becoming-woman” experience and what that then can mean for the lineage of women who can learn to express themselves as women in their culture and lifestyle. These female authors are in the process of becoming the next version, the better version of who they are as women and what that means in telling their narratives and creating these spaces for other women to be able to situate themselves in the process. Through their own “becoming,” they are finally seeing themselves through different lenses and perspectives as a whole human being; their bodies, minds, and voices were not taken into consideration as a woman and that caused multiple obstacles in defining their identities and who they believed they were destined to be in a world that viewed them as unimportant.

Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi do not only write about their own experiences and the trajectories of their lives, but that of their parents and the effect that this had on them as they grew. An autobiographical author has the space to interpret the impact of the events to present how memories play a role in how one remembers an event differently from another person. “Truth can be multiply defined or understood and that knowledge is political (as opposed to

⁴⁹ *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1987.

existing in a pure state outside of social contexts).”⁵⁰ The ‘truth’ is in its multiplicity of definitions and understandings, especially in the context of autobiographical truth with terms like ‘autofiction’ or labeling a text as ‘historical fiction’ when the content is about a lived experience. “Scriptotherapy” becomes more than a healing mechanism, one that includes vulnerability and truth to embody the feminine conceptualization of the woman as a full lived form with all the potential that exists for her. However, the concept of knowledge is political especially with the limits placed on representing the truth in countries of dictatorships.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have complicated the difference between the imitation of what a woman should be and in fact moving into the role as a woman. This does not mean in the physical sense of embodying the woman, but in the autobiographical depiction of what a woman has been defined as in a restricted world, such as the countries of the Middle East and Latin America.

We are not, however, overlooking the importance of imitation, or moments of imitation, [...] the prodigious attempt at a real transformation on the part of certain transvestites. All we are saying is that these indissociable aspects of becoming-woman must first be understood as a function of something else: not imitating or assuming the female form, but emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest.⁵¹

In the context of Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi, they are creating the concept and space to present their own experiences as female writers and struggling young girls in a society that did

⁵⁰ Nancy A. Naples and Barbara Gurr cited in Sharlene N Hesse-Biber, *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*, 2014 15.

⁵¹ *A Thousand Plateaus* 275.

not accept them as they were. Their inner challenges of being the women they so desire to be, these authors are not only presenting the space in where it could be seen as just a fictional reality, but that there is so much more truth to what a woman faces in such a world. Through their own “becomings,” both women are finally seeing themselves through different lenses and perspectives as whole human beings, when in the past they were perceived as less than a man due to the cultural restrictions. Their bodies, minds, and voices were not taken into consideration due to their gender, and that caused multiple obstacles in defining their identity and who they believed they were destined to be in a world that viewed them as unimportant. One does not need to be the gender, male or female, in order to write about the experience if one has been able to truly move into the experience and depict it in the way that it is not seen as a male-centered or female-centered response.

Now, in building their legacies and taking the healing mechanism of “scriptotherapy” to promote and encourage others with their stories, their profile as women and individuals has increased exponentially as they fall into their new lives with voices that can reach global audiences. As adults and mature women, Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi finally prevailed with the opportunity to become more: expanded in their element of womanhood and femininity through the act of writing. More specifically, in analyzing these autobiographies within the “scriptotherapy” healing mechanism that allows for reflection and control of the story, both women present their tribulations as representations of their cultural experiences and how they were able to grow and reflect on these hardships as a way to become the women that they are today. In a way, necessity is presented here in terms of the concept to produce their desires in wanting to have and be more than their current situations. Alvarez and Nafisi struggled in

defining and understanding what their identity encompassed and how they could represent or voice their adversities for publication in order to reach the younger generation of women. In the end, they were able to traverse these adversities and become advocates for their communities. This kind of minor literature can also be seen as clinical in the sense of a scriptotherapy narrative that is also autobiographical through the eyes of the author setting the scene to tell the story of their becoming-woman experience, and what that then can mean for the lineage of women who can learn to express themselves as women in their culture and lifestyle.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari present the following dilemma: “the feeling of an irreducible distance from their [...] territoriality [...] is the deterritorialization of the [...] population itself.”⁵² It is the displacement of identity and space within a country that has been colonized and dictated in the benefits of the majority. The immigrant feminized becoming through autobiography presents the traumas defined by Cathy Caruth as “a ‘wound of the mind’ [...] time, self, and the world,” and also of the body (Torrell 91). The main context of these narratives is in what Nicole Schnackenberg provides in the definitions of trauma. In connecting the terrors and challenges within the mind, the body is involved in the trauma and memory conceptualizations that are played out and presented through identity of the human experience. There were multiple events that transpired in the early years of Alvarez’s livelihood that caused her mother to believe that she had to take the future of her lineage into her own hands. The family was very fortunate to have survived the diseases and dictatorship along with weak genetics that were not on their side.

⁵² Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 1986 16.

Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi's texts present empowered women through emphasis on what it means to be a woman and their witnessing as young girls in a political world that did not recognize them as individuals with power in their voices. The cultural wars that plagued each woman selected for this study have an overarching theme in their stories which is the overpowering desire to be men and act like them in order to be noticed and cared for. To have a seat at the political table and be included in terms of their thoughts and feelings about certain topics revolved around personality shifts that created an individual worthy to be heard. For this chapter, my endeavor was to select autobiographies unheard of in this part of the world with languages and cultures vastly different from what anyone had ever encountered. While, at the same time, it would connect my "homes" together and showcase how culture and language do not define our differences; instead, it enriches our knowledge of who we are, on the human level, for social change and unity.

Postcolonial– Decoloniality Historical Background: Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi

The theory of postcolonialism comes from the consequences that colonialism left in its wake for marginalized countries and their people. Edward W. Said's main argument reflects on the relationship between the "Other" and the "Oriental." He makes a key point about how the West and the East were distinguished and how they were represented as being the mirror reflection of Europe's "self-image." Specifically, he explains: "the Orient must be made to perform, its power must be enlisted on the side of 'our' values, civilization, interests, goals [...] give rise to new currents of thought and action in the Orient."⁵³ There is a crucial point to include and clarify how it came about and the arguments that Said presents in his text of what the

⁵³ *Orientalism*, 1978; 238.

“lesser kind” of the “ideal image” is since they are both representations of each other. My own representation of postcolonial theory lies more in the decoloniality or anti-colonialism, in separating between the colonized and the colonizer to then bridge deeper into how the economic and political structures were formed. Said’s Palestinian background brings attention to literature and theory regarding the politics that created the “Other” and the “Orient.”

The consequences of this demoralized construction of the “Other” caused the natives of the countries that were being colonized to be cast to the side and not acknowledged for who they were. Robert J.C. Young’s *Empire, Colony, Postcolony* (2015) describes the differences between colony and empire:

As any empire expanded, so did the extent of its boundaries: on the one hand this only prompted the desire for further conquest, while on the other hand it made those peripheries harder and harder to defend, more open to attack. Every new conquest or annexation produces more borders to secure, and further limits against which to push and which territory to conquer.⁵⁴

Postcolonialism allows us to understand how the idea of empire and conquering borders played a role in the selection of countries chosen to expand. Young’s analysis presents a model in which the dominant, colonizing culture overtakes the minor culture and its resources for its own benefit. In this context, I find the theory of postcolonialism to be an important piece by first understanding how the idea of empire and conquering borders played a role in the selection of countries chosen to expand. From there, the concept of borders can be informed through the act

⁵⁴ 8.

of desire in becoming that dominant power, where the focus was on the process of defeating the “lesser” natives so that their influence would extend to further areas. Through there, the dominant culture overtakes the minor culture and its resources for their own benefit without one ounce of thought to what this would do to the people of the country.

Walter D. Mignolo introduces decoloniality as follows, “Decoloniality emerges out of the need to delink from the narratives [...]—not to resist, but to re-exist [...] a set of creative processes leading to [...] decolonial ways of doing and living.”⁵⁵ The ideology of the West in being the global power and de-centering this colonization provides a way for colonized people to redefine their identities and re-establish their existence as an act of resistance and stability within the country. It has become a revolutionary act to be “resistant” and take a stand against the limitations placed in diminishing women to a box, a category, or a stereotype. With autobiography as the genre of this research and “scriptotherapy” the medicinal art form to express the life story, the comparison of the cultures is not separate. This co-written text with Catherine E. Walsh is a theoretical and praxis text that merges the application of decoloniality as a branch from the colonization of power. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* constructs a detailed explanation on where the origins of decolonialization as a theoretical and applicable framework first stemmed from. The ideology of the West is not only in being a political and economic system, but also in the global context of culture and intellect. Their main argument focuses on how Europeans have the right to conquer and colonize those who are not, which is the basis for the need of decolonialization or anti-colonialism.

⁵⁵ *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, 2018; 145–146.

In this context, their main aim is to de-center the European ideology and provide a way back for those colonized to come back into existence in the country where they have been displaced and lost their identity. Instead of focusing on the resistance of their reality, these colonized people should strive to redefine who they are in terms of their current conditions. This will provide a way for the colonized people, especially the indigenous communities, to find a way to redefine their identities and re-establish their existence as not only a form of resistance but of stability within the country. This exposes a new frame of thought in the postcolonial theoretical model as it branches off into decoloniality and how the current system of colonialism is affecting the colonized. For the first time, these critics are focusing on the marginalized communities and the best way to provide a better reality for them to take back who they are. The concept of decoloniality strives on the connection of how the colonization has focused on the European centered ideals and not on what works for those whose lands they've settled on.

Minor Literature's Line of Flight and Writing as an Act of Resistance Through Decoloniality

The next concept that branches from this is the deconstruction of minor literature's role in the act of writing. In Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of Kafka, there is an understanding that it lies within the oppressed minority. Here is where deterritorialization is defined in these geopolitical spaces as the disconnect from identity and home. In having to write in the major language, it is necessary to understand that it is the sacrifice that the autobiographer must make in order to mobilize and bring awareness to their stories to the major audience. In learning this colonized language, they have fully embodied their becoming to present their stories and have them be read with a global audience in mind. It is a strategy of owning this new language as their own to serve their own purposes. In this way, they are partially taking hold of the colonized

dialect to appease the audience member that will be able to voice and share their platform in a text that would otherwise fall into obscurity. Alvarez and Nafisi are even further distanced to place their voices on a page in hopes of being heard. In both cultures, Latin and Arab, there is no acknowledgement of their voices in the political powers at play. In their femininity, both women are pursuing a therapeutic regaining of power to act on their desires and needs—to be selfish for the first time. However, this does not mean that they do not care about the people they have interacted with as they have their purpose and trajectory to advocate for the next generation of women while halting the continuous cycle they have been dealt and their ancestors have suffered through.

As Deleuze says, “Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience.”⁵⁶ In this way, it becomes a collaborative effort to feel and present all faculties of emotions to those who are also lost in finding their way back home to their bodies and humanity. Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi are in the process of becoming the next version, the better version of who they are as women and what that means to them in telling their stories and creating these spaces for other women to be able to situate themselves in the process. In Gilles Deleuze’s “What is the Creative Act,” he focuses on this act of writing as both creativity and resistance to the forces that surround the individual: “Every act of resistance is not a work of art, even though, in a certain way, it is. Every work of art is not an act of resistance, and yet, in a certain way, it is.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Critical and Clinical*, 1998, 1.

⁵⁷ 317.

Scriptotherapy emerges here in the healing component and within literature as health in the becoming of a self that is no longer fragmented or deterritorialized within a colonial framework. In these narratives, the pharmakon (cure & remedy) conception of literature is realized as a function of necessity. It is a structure of a healing process that expands in the roots of space and seals the line of flight, to “flee is to trace a line. [...] The great mistake and only error lies in thinking that a line of flight consists in fleeing from life, fleeing into the imaginary [...]. On the contrary, to flee is to produce the real, to create life, to find a weapon.”⁵⁸ It is the concept of becoming more than one is and applying the philosophy of creation in one’s life to be better, and constitute what it means to be an individual and part of the collective culture that needs to be reinvented.

In the decoloniality of a culture, one is striving to retrieve the roots of colonialism’s impact, and as Deleuze points out, one cannot escape colonialism; instead one would “be [...] caught in the act of legending. It’s how any people are constituted. So, to the established fictions that are always rooted in a colonist’s discourse, we oppose a minority discourse.”⁵⁹ The colonized in many aspects do not have the ability to speak on what their identity is as it becomes labeled for them. The only way that they can in a sense create their own is through “legending;” it is not an escape from colonialism, but through utilizing what colonialism has provided in terms of another part of who they are, they come to understand the major culture and how they fit in. What decoloniality strives to do is re-integrate their roots of power from the colonist to enter into a new role that was their origins now into a lineage.

⁵⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, 1977 60.

⁵⁹ Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990*, 1995 126.

Connecting this with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's framework of order denotes how there must be rules created for the chaos in our minds of which "prevent[s] our 'fantasy' (delirium, madness) from crossing the universe in an instant."⁶⁰ However, this is more of a fear to what our minds can create, and the rules applied to them is the control to make sure that the "delirium, madness" does not come into play in the real world. There can be a wildness to our mind that connects us back to the world without it being such a dangerous entity and here is where the line of flight back into decolonized (deterritorialized) culture can take fruit. From their conceptualizations of deterritorialization, which can be seen as a chaos within the severing of territorial ties, to creating a new one in the reterritorialization process. Through labeling chaos as "chaosmos, a composed chaos,"⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize deterritorialization as a chaos within the severing of territorial ties to create a new one in the reterritorialization process.

To resist this in a way of ordering the chaos to suit Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical framework takes its departure in a new construction focused on structural becoming instead of the natural, organic course. Furthermore, the conception of the chaos takes its form through art in which it "borrow[s] weapons from it that it turns against opinion, the better to defeat it with tried and tested arms [...] must confront the chaos and hasten the destructions so as to produce a sensation that defies every opinion [...] Art is not chaos but a composition of chaos."⁶² This creation aligns with Gilles Deleuze's minor literature framework in where the "destructions [...] produce a sensation" which integrates a means for a reinvention or a new vision of the current reality. The chaos is necessary to open one's eyes to the possibility of what could exist, and in

⁶⁰ *What is Philosophy? 1994; 201.*

⁶¹ *What is Philosophy? 1994; 204.*

⁶² Deleuze and Guattari. *What is Philosophy? 1994; 204.*

the realm there is unity to the reterritoriality that deterritorialization left in its wake. The purpose is to leave a situation or environment that was not beneficial to the person's passions or life path as another was in the process of being built to create that future. In the end, chaos brings our awareness and conscientiousness to the forefront of what we need to do to thrive as creatives in spaces that we forge out of our merits within this dominant world that is calling for it.

The Act of Legending, Deterritorialization, and the Missing People

As the act of legending is all about creating a new understanding of colonization to the point that one can go back to the original roots of the culture and country's traditions, one can also make a connection with both the original and the colonial issue. Not only that, but the concept of becoming in terms of the collective culture to what they are as individuals, is taken away as the government takes the lead on these decisions. In this understanding, the writer has found a way to traverse through the politics and loss of identity that once encompassed the isolation, to one of empowerment and enlightenment of who this writer is now. The act of resistance and taking their power back focuses on the minor literature that is not published or spoken about regarding women, or those of the Orient. In these times, there are more opportunities to have discussions about the war-torn countries, and how these can affect citizens of that country as they create their identity and agency around these events. One can sympathize but never truly understand the hardships of fleeing one's home because it is at war; many will never return in their lifetimes, and that is the most heartbreaking. Resistance of oppression will never stop, but when does the world start to acknowledge that these Middle Eastern and Latin American countries also have a place in society?

Azar's Nafisi's narrative in the context of the Islamic Revolution in Iran presents her childhood during Iran's dictatorship and turmoil. This text is not only about her experiences but what she saw through her mother and father's actions. The construction of her narrative is divided into separate sections with images that depict the state of the country and the tribulations of her family. In Nafisi's text, she elaborates on the governmental systems and how they repressed the youth from their true purpose: "we had to thank the system for the disillusionment of the country's youth and former revolutionaries with the system itself. The ideological barriers that divided people into East and West, outsiders and insiders, were falling."⁶³ In this conception of the downfall of the Iranian dictatorship, the "people [...] missing" derives from the youth losing their voices and rights as individuals to express their opinions in informing decisions that will affect them. Nafisi's conceptualization with the "people [...] missing" comes to bear the understanding of how it does not always constitute a political discrepancy but one of moral philosophy: "Most serious confrontations in life are not political, they are existential. One can agree with someone's political stance but disagree in a fundamental way with how they came to that position [...] For that, there was no reconciliation or resolution, there was only separation or surrender."⁶⁴ In the decolonization premise of this existential crisis, there is the root of the cause in how a writer, especially a feminine writer, becomes her true self in the context of a political uproar in her native country.

In this context for Azar Nafisi's work, the work of art is not in a physical object produced but in the way that she comes to advocate and provide a voice for the youth who do not have that

⁶³ 270.

⁶⁴ 190.

platform. She also has the upper hand in her father's assistance to take her along with him to change the outcomes of the government and not be silenced or sidelined: "The people are missing and at the same time, they are not missing. The people are missing means that the fundamental affinity between a work of art and a people that does not yet exist is not, will never be clear."⁶⁵ For Azar Nafisi, this is the displacement and loss of identity that surrounds their existence in this middle ground of "How do I exist and have the ability to write my story, yet others were not so lucky?" She is struggling to find her grounding as a woman who has a special place due to her father's role but at the same time is not fully realized in her description of the events that surrounded her life. She understood many things that developed as a result of the actions taken by the government but that did not mean that she was able to change the course of those decisions to something that mattered.

In turn, the repression that existed for Azar Nafisi is understood in comparison with Julia Alvarez as authorities from different entities repressing both women: from trauma through governmental dictatorship to one where the mother is restricting American "street food." In Alvarez's escape from dictatorship, the concept of "people [...] missing" relates to her weak genetics and how her family could have faced the same reality. At such an early age, Alvarez lost her connection and safety in her body, home, or cultural self because of the extreme circumstances her nutritional health was placed in. In her college years, when she was living on her own, Alvarez was very thin, and this was not due to body image issues but as a result of the toxic relationship she had with food and its association with cooking. In turn, Julia Alvarez's mother had created a fragmented identity for her daughters in defining who they were, and thus

⁶⁵ 318.

the significance of their bodies as women is distorted. To place this into context, our mind produces the fantasy of what we want to see, and that results in pieced together identities taken from the multiple elements of who we are and who we believe we should be. In a way, the immigrant experience creates this challenge of trying to categorize our identity as single individuals when we are constantly pulled in every direction by our culture and the society.

Conclusion: Scriptotherapy Heals Decolonization By Feminist Frameworks

To conclude this chapter, the scriptotherapy narrative of healing as literature and health articulates how the power is held within the individual. The minor literature plays a role in the departure or line of flight to branch into decoloniality (deterritorialization) of becoming feminized writers. There has not been much understanding or conceptualization of what it means to exist in a society that does not listen to the voice of the minority, and that includes one's gender. It is time to change the narrative with scriptotherapy and autobiographical text that will produce the philosophy of creating and writing in a framework of progress towards mobilizing stories of oppression to the forefront. This is especially true when analyzing the texts in terms of the political dictatorship and how that prompted these women to then create their platforms and use their voices for a larger cause. In this context, Julia Alvarez and Azar Nafisi are providing their writings to the global world, mobilizing and advocating their stories beyond the Middle East and Latin America. These experiences are healing their inner wounds and the relationships with their mothers from their perspectives, as well as presenting an opportunity for others in similar situations.

Daniel Smith,⁶⁶ provides this in connection, “every literary work implies a manner of living, a mode of life, and must be evaluated [...] suffer from frail health, a weak constitution, a fragile personal life.”⁶⁷ Continuing with this conceptualization of the literary work from the realities of life, authors utilize their art as a way of expelling the hurt and pain felt in a way that is productive and healing. It is therapeutic and a necessity in the creative act to produce such work for any woman. Of course, men may use this technique, but more often it is gendered towards women writing out their stories. As Smith states above, the literary work cannot be taken at face value as there is always more to the story when looking at the experiences of each author’s understanding of what happened. Overall, the connections with the clinical-health in literature is seen through the femininity in pursuing a therapeutic regaining of Julia Alvarez’s and Azar Nafisi’s power to act on their desires and needs—to be selfish for the first time and endeavor to connect with their mothers on the traumatic experiences of their upbringing and childhood. However, this does not mean that both women do not care about the perspectives of their mothers in the decisions each made to provide the best life that they thought would bring their daughters. In this way, it becomes a collaborative effort to feel and present those emotions to those who are also lost in finding their way back home to their bodies and humanity.

To tie this all together, Lauren Fournier’s *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* takes that final piece of the puzzle of “scriptotherapy” narratives and the genre of autobiography to launch a whole new conceptualization. This text is not just about the literary arts but an integration of feminism, its history, and how the postcolonial world can all

⁶⁶ Philosophy professor at Purdue University, focusing on 19th and 20th century continental philosophy. His most prominent work is on Gilles Deleuze and the translation of his work.

⁶⁷ “Critical, clinical.” *Essays on Deleuze*, 2012; 213.

collaborate in this revolution of the autobiographical genre. It has become more than pure life-writing but a true experience with art forms such as music, painting, dance—a true immersion into the female body and its politics that enhances the performative space from self-representation to the collective of “woman.” This article strives to collect pieces of literary art that paint the story of the inner wounds within the body and expose the emotions of the woman who is now liberated. It is crucial to see how the autobiographical genre plays a key role in understanding the truth of the experience within scriptotherapy narratives, and how that cycle is vicious unless a descendant takes a stand to clear a new path.⁶⁸

This is constructed from other cultural elements that generated the original trauma and will now be the journey to healing. The life story cannot be predicted but can construct one’s identity according to the belief of the future potential and a path that will change. I utilize the concepts here to tie in other autobiographical authors and why this act of resistance in writing is so crucial for the representation of silenced voices. I plan to go further in a possible dissertation or research project that delves into uncovering archival diaries or journals. The purpose is in understanding how women’s writing in the earlier times of the publishing world contributed to women today having the platform that they do.

⁶⁸ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2010; 30.

CONCLUSION

Despite multiple Arab countries' longstanding alliance with the United States, in my personal experience the literature, history, and culture of the Middle East still feels inaccessible to many scholars and students. The cultural and literary history is currently still overlooked with gaps in the scholarship discourse pertaining to female authors and their societal influences and contributions. Having grown up in the birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia, I understand how significant and enriching it is to be in its sands while being enveloped by the incredible structures that tell its story. This Master's thesis work investigates the conception of "scriptotherapy" as a healing mechanism and approach to understanding the identity of women reclaiming ownership of their own narratives in the Middle East and Latin America, where their rights may be threatened or denied. The autobiographies selected focused on the work of women writers through a cross-cultural post-colonial critical comparative analysis of 20th-century autobiographies from Colombia, *My Mother's Funeral* by Adriana Páramo (2013), Dominican Republic, *Something to Declare: Essays* by Julia Alvarez (1998), and Iran, *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter* by Azar Nafisi (2008).

The core of this research investigated deconstructions of colonialism: through the engagement of feminist transformative research,⁶⁹ integrating how postcolonial theory staked its claim on the national origins of these countries. This centered on the conditions in which women are at a crucial time to elevate their voices through writing, a huge revolutionary act that seeks to advance social justice.⁷⁰ My main thesis argument focused on the physical embodiment of

⁶⁹ "Using critical theory as a framework [...] aims to enable difference, examine power relations with axes of difference, and explore the ways that they intersect to shape behavior and identity." Donna M. Mertens qtd. in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 65.

⁷⁰ Nollaig Frost and Frauke Elichaooff in Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. 65.

women in a restricted world and their reflection of what it means to be a woman, having witnessed a political world that did not recognize them as individuals with powerful voices. My analysis delved into Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theoretical frameworks of deterritorialization, the act of legending, and the role that the creative act plays in the necessity and desire for these women to write and express themselves through their narratives. My own experience comes from being a Latin-American scholar who has traveled across the globe with my educational journey nurtured through the exposure of language, comprehension, and literary analysis. I have seen a new way to voice the integration of culture and history in the unique approaches I take with classic literary texts. The literature that I can connect with my own story builds on my sense of individuality and has contributed to the types of research and areas of study that I have pursued.

The research questions I explored were: **1) How does the genre of female authored autobiography enable writers to deconstruct colonial identities and express post-colonial reinventions and reservations? 2) How do female writers use trauma, both physical and mental, to construct new identities? and 3) How can "scriptotherapy" and post-colonial theory enlighten our readings of autobiographies as texts of trauma?** My findings created spaces and platforms for marginalized ("minor") scholars to be acknowledged and considered. The literary emphasis on border migrations along with cultural understandings of skin color, body politics, and globalization narratives is crucial in bringing these concepts to light. As an academic researcher, I was not surprised to find similarities between all three authors as my global experiences in the Middle East and my Latin American heritage provided me with background understanding of how colonialism played its role and how the cultures had its

similarities in the ways women were expected to behave and present in societies. However, I was surprised to find that there is little, if barely any, scholarly investigation currently being conducted on the integration of these two cultures and how these three texts are not predominately taught in higher or lower-level educational institutions. It was not until my first course, *Autobiography/Life Writing*, for my Master's degree that I was exposed to Julia Alvarez's work and then found Azar Nafisi. In this respect, my work has only begun in mobilizing and advocating for underrepresented cultures and authors.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I integrated emotional trauma with memory studies to generate an understanding of what the cultural representation entailed in being a woman. The authorial voice that was produced by each woman in their healing throughout their relationship with their mothers. This then cultivated a sense of connection and recognition with the mother's perspective in determining what she believed was best for her family, especially the female legacy she hoped to nurture. The selected female writers, Adriana Páramo, Julia Alvarez, and Azar Nafisi is taking back the power into her own hands as a woman and not succumbing to the tradition and culture of her family expecting her to be a married woman. In this way, she is not only "becoming-woman," but re-emerging as a self-identified human being who can be more than what others deem her fit to be. In this transformation, she is merging both her cultural identities and growth from her internal and environmental repression factors that will lead her to the thriving woman she has the potential to be. Through the use of the English language, Páramo and Alvarez have presented globalized stories of trauma by incorporating native Spanish dialect. In turn, all three writers have appeased the Western audience with power to mobilize and advocate for such stories which require a platform, space, and worldly expression to change the

narrative and perspective into one that is unified and understanding of difference. In terms of the components regarding the colonization of our world within these chapters, the focus centers on the order and in repressing the minority to an impossible standard of who they must identify in this regard. The inner chaos never leaves, and the rhetorical power of the emotional trauma pervaded in identity and distancing of the mother to prove strength and resilience in a world that causes destruction to femininity. However, multiplicity can exist, especially when it comes to the body and the experiences that cannot be stated but felt through that of cultural representations, and how the female gender can be unlocked in diverse routes.

I plan to continue this research into my doctoral studies at Cornell University, focusing on Arabic cultural history and its diverse expressions in comparison with Latin American literary histories. In focusing on women's narratives and presenting their impact in current societies, I believe that they deserve to have their voices heard and their stories to become part of the historical records. The goal for a potential dissertation or research project is in bringing awareness of the literary, oral, and cultural history of the Arab and Latin American world to the current scholarship and discourse in the United States, which is historically underrepresented and considered. Through uncovering Islamic narratives, these discoveries will be a means of understanding more about post-colonial Muslim women's lives and providing them vocal agency in the American culture as well as the Arab and Latin American. The healing mechanism of "scriptotherapy" in my current research will be enriched by the incredible opportunity of access to unpublished letters from women's Arabic cultural heritage. This research comprises of analyzing both, ancient texts translated into English and modern texts, which brings the history of the Middle East regarding women's roles in developing its cultural heritage.

A few of the texts I plan to analyze for this research are: *Our Moslem sisters; a cry of need from lands of darkness interpreted by those who heard it*, 1907; *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 1843–1926; *Syria and Egypt; from the Tell el Amarna letters*, 1898. These texts in English with analysis of the time and cultural heritage within the Middle East provide unique perspectives of women's roles through letters, observations, and diary entries. Through textual analysis and research of female texts that were written or orally produced, I will retrace the power of female voices and the reasoning behind why they were silenced and not accessible in public spaces. Narrowing my scope to centering on the various genres of written texts and audio provides focus on the scarce written and oral literature that is not taught or easily accessible to the global public. The texts that I have in mind to include in this future project are Shamma Al Bastaki's *House to House*, Salha Obied's *It Might Be a Joke*, and Maha Gargash's *That Other Me* along with Iranian writers providing stronger comparative frameworks, Firoozeh Dumas, Nazila Fathi, and Roya Hakakian. Through investigating the cultural traditions, I aim to incorporate findings on the knowledge transfer of the art of their henna traditions or the migratory customs in Bedouin tribes through oral stories. My project design emphasizes written and oral voices of women and their historical manuscripts that have not been published, while aspiring to bridge the understanding of their Arab culture and its indigenous and African origins with how they identify as women.

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