

Antony Rowland and Jane Kilby (eds.). *The Future of Testimony: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Witnessing*. Routledge 2014. 244 pp. \$145.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780415854450).

Elie Wiesel famously remarked a few decades back that we were in the age of testimony. In the proliferation of memoirs and oral and written testimonies from the Shoah, and other mass atrocities, it is difficult to disagree. Yet, the widespread acclaim for the genre is fairly recent. Recall David Hume cavalierly dismissing witnesses (in the context of miracle claims) and how most historians and lawyers discounted testimony's reliability as objective truth and fact. One key historian who helped reverse the trend was Christopher Browning, especially in works like *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and The Final Solution in Poland*, and the more recent *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*. As an interdisciplinary academic field, testimony studies owes near-universal credit to Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's 1992 work, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*.

Yet even with such academic recognition, we cannot ignore the reality that most of us do not want to hear and see what is being claimed and witnessed by survivors of mass atrocities and other horrors, from the distant and recent past until our present day. Recall, for example, Las Casas' witnessing of the slaughtering of Native Peoples in the so-called New World; the testimony of escaped African slaves in the context of the Americas; Armenian groups sent on death marches through the Syrian deserts; Jewish children burned alive in Auschwitz; to survivors of the Cambodian killing fields, Russian gulags, Chinese Laogai, and North Korean camps. Even more recently, Mohamedou Ould Slahi's prison memoir, composed in Guantánamo Bay in 2004 but published only a decade later after US military censors redacted the text, has rightfully garnered critical praise and attention. As the refugee crisis continues to unfold in Europe, stories of witnesses to crimes in Syria, among other places of war and attrition, vie for the world's attention. Testimony is everywhere—if we want to hear and see. But in its inundation is also the call for analysis and careful reading. ISIS, too, have their testimonies.

The Future of Testimony: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Witnessing, edited by Antony Rowland and Jane Kilby, seeks to link and build upon Felman and Laub's seminal text, and Felman even contributes a chapter, along with other foundational voices like Cathy Caruth, Dan Stone, and Robert Eaglestone. Paired with a 2010 edited collection, *The Future of Memory*, also co-edited by Kilby and Rowland, along with Richard Crownshaw, *The Future of Testimony* succeeds in maintaining the ethical urgency, textual close-reading, and interdisciplinary breadth and depth demanded by the material and contexts covered. The collection contains an introduction and thirteen chapters, divided by three parts, namely: 'Witnessing in Psychoanalysis and History', 'Beyond Western Testimony', and 'The Enduring Aesthetic: Literature and Testimony'.

History, memory, and testimony are often in tension and Dan Stone clearly teases out their links, 'interconnectedness' (20), conflicts, and the 'blurring' of history and memory in recent years (18). He also shows the differing and overlapping ways in which memory and history interpret and are interpreted by testimony, though he ultimately wants to maintain memory and history as 'separate spheres of human affairs' (26). While acknowledging the 'poetic' in history, Stone is still partial to the idea of history as a science which can avoid the uncritical reading of some memoirs and testimonies that were later proven to be frauds. The separation makes sense—even as each needs the other for balance and critical engagement.

While Cathy Caruth is a recognized pioneer in the field of trauma studies through literary and psychoanalytic engagement, her dense if not jargon-replete chapter is thankfully both lucidly and generously interpreted by Shoshana Felman. Caruth focuses on Derrida's interpretation of the archive in his *Archive Fever* through his own reflection on the writings of Freud and Freud's further reading of another thinker, German writer Wilhelm Jensen: layers within layers. Caruth uses these thinkers to reflect on what she calls the 'language of ashes', the trace left behind from the traumatized memories and language left-over to interpret such impenetrable events (42). Such reflection on ashes is to reveal the impossibility of witness amidst a history that devours its own possibility of memory. When Felman writes that 'she wants to make the concept of ashes a little more concrete', readers can pause and be grateful (49). Building on Caruth's aims, Felman movingly articulates the hope and future of testimony, taking from the ashes left behind, a glimpse and glimmer of a spark that can 'illuminate' our hope to write, and to live, our future (66).

Following this challenging but illuminating exchange, Robert Eaglestone, whose work aligns testimony with much postmodern thought and analysis, examines what he calls the 'public secret'—how much and to what extent the German people, for example, knew about the events leading up to and after The Final Solution. Eaglestone's contention, also echoed in the important 2006 work, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany*, is how such secrets can be widely known and denied at the same time. Interestingly, Eaglestone turns to Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go* to present his ideas, a good testament of this interdisciplinary collection. Closing out the first part, Kirsten Campbell presents the role of testimony in the context of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and in international criminal courts, more broadly. Here, testimony as a field of studies and as witnessing to the truth, can often collide with truth as determined in a courtroom, which is not to say testimony is fictitious, but that its concerns and aims may parallel those deciphered and circumscribed in the courtroom. Kirsten's case studies and close readings of how testimony is used by the witnesses, the prosecutors, the defense, and the trial chambers make for depressing but seminal reading. In this regard, the work of Eric Stover is also particularly recommended.

While testimony has often been linked with the Shoah, it resides within and beyond that historical rupture, especially as examined in the field of genocide studies. Part Two opens up with Lyndsey Stonebridge's examination of the writings of Hannah Arendt and how her imprisonment in Gurs detention camp influenced her view of statelessness, not only as a concept dependent upon political power, but in that politics is dependent on the condition for speech and the right to spread and provide testimony. Thus, Stonebridge contends: 'The right to have rights, for Arendt, begins not with a memory of horror, but with the memory about speech, specifically about poetry, and its power to create persons out of rightlessness' (125). Zoe Norridge then provides a fascinating and jarring account of how journalist and filmmaker Nick Hughes and forensic anthropologist Clea Koff used their advanced training and professional skills to serve as witnesses to the genocide in Rwanda. Matthew Boswell examines what he calls hybrid testimony, texts that straddle and incorporate fact and fiction, most notably in Dave Eggers' *What is the What*, but touching upon issues prevalent to any nonfiction memoir or testimony dealing with horrific and traumatic events, from Wiesel's *Night*, to Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone*. Relevant here, for example, are the recurring questions regarding the accuracy of specific dialogues in such works and the role of memory and imagination in their retrieval. Part Two closes with Crownshaw's presentation of a post-Hurricane Katrina novel which aims to witness beyond the human person, seeking to challenge human superiority and establish the need

for witnessing to non-human suffering as well. While some unnecessary jargon slips in to the end of the essay, the context and subject matter, especially in light of greater ecological awareness from the papal encyclical *Laudato si'* to the contemporary classic, Carl Safina's *Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel*, are prescient and notable.

Part Three of the collection highlights the sometimes fraught relationship of testimony with literature and aesthetics. When so much is at stake, aesthetic questions can seem insignificant, but as James Young and others argue, such appreciation can not only help us to better understand the texts themselves (think of Dante's writings interpreted by Primo Levi) but help us to avoid sanctification of these texts, almost as pernicious as their once common, blanket dismissal. Again the material is engaging and diverse from Stef Craps' analysis of *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza in the Context of Holocaust Memory*; Ursula Tidd's focus on Buchenwald survivor Jorge Semprún's reflections on testimony; David Miller's dense reading of the equally dense writings of Theodor Adorno on testimony and lyric poetry after Auschwitz; and finally, Paula Martín Salván's turning to the post 9/11 fiction of Don DeLillo and the ethics of testimony.

As this brief survey hopes to show, the future of testimony, both sadly and promisingly, is richly rewarding, challenging, and all too relevant. If only our world had truly taken to heart the call 'never again'—but despite our ongoing failures to do so, these works are reminders of the cries not heeded, of the witnesses ignored and silenced, the truths they carry, and the anticipated hope of our response.

Peter Admirand, Dublin City University