Entangled Stories: Reimagining Dementia, History, and Narrative in Contemporary Literature and Life Writing

by

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DEDICATION

For my *ahpo* and *akoeng*,

Sjoe Lien Jong and Mooi Tsien Lie

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PREFACE

Over the course of my doctoral studies, my late grandfather forgot me. In February 2015 he began losing interest in reading the *Sing Tao Daily*—my father, who cared for him, would find them untouched on his desk more often than not, which was unusual given his love for the newspaper. He was diagnosed with senile dementia in June of that year. It did not occur to me that by the end of the next year I would never hear him call me by name again. By the time I began working on this dissertation in 2017, he ceased to recognize me, something I often blamed on my absence from home. It felt ironic that my grandfather was most proud of me for pursing higher education, but that was also what perhaps led him to so readily forget me.

Like the several narrators I encountered while researching for this project, I struggled with a sense of inadequacy in knowing how best to remain connected to him and to our family history, though our communication had always been strained due to language differences and his becoming deaf in 2012. As in many of the texts this dissertation explores, my grandfather's dementia occluded my family's routine access to stories: stories he once told of living through the Second Sino-Japanese War, of travails he faced living in Suriname before its independence, and of immigrating to the U.S. Unlike some of the figures with dementia in this study, my grandfather did not return to these memories of his past and was often quiet. Yet what did emerge, and what I observed dramatized in many texts, were enriching ways of being social differently; connections that I relished when they did occur, such as the joyous moments that arose whenever he mistook the plastic cockatiel figurine as a real incarnation of my deceased pet bird, and the contentment with which we'd sit during our silent, unhurried meals at the dinner table together. Thus, as I was composing this project, I felt pressed to explore how literature helps imagine what new meanings and possibilities for connection and communication can surface from the changing and aging body's forgetting.

At the same time, my personal experiences as an occasional caregiver and witness to the processes of dementia in my grandfather (and less severely in my late grandmother) coupled with the sensibility I've cultivated through disability studies, have made me cognizant of the dangers of romanticization, appropriation, and essentialism. *Entangled Stories* explores how writers (many with loved ones with dementia) deploy dementia as a narrative, ethical, and aesthetic resource, as well as a vantage point through which to explore personal and collective histories of traumatic events. I approach this corpus of literature cautiously, with the caveat that the voices and viewpoints of real people are not necessarily being reflected in it. As integral as dementia is in these narratives, one cannot take them as definitively representative of the complex lived experience of dementia and the equally complex, often difficult, intimate work of caregiving. As impossible as it is to do justice to all individual experiences, I nevertheless hope that *Entangled Stories* has highlighted some of their richness.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines cultural and literary responses to dementia in narratives dealing with the personal and historical memory of trauma and violence. Rather than use dementia to signify a crisis of forgetting or the erasure of history, the texts in this dissertation deploy dementia as a formal and ethical resource; they offer *revisionary narratives* that recuperate negative discourses surrounding aging and cognitive impairment, as well as enable readers' reflections on issues across geopolitical borders, historical contexts, and different marginalized life experiences. Bringing a disability studies analytic to the examination of the politics and narrative aesthetics of dementia, *Entangled Stories* argues for a nuanced understanding of how dementia operates formally and thematically in contemporary writing as a site in which the intimate and global collide.

Each chapter centers on authors' concomitant personal encounters with dementia and their explorations of the historical memory of major 20th- and 21st-century catastrophes. As such, I probe into the corresponding tropes and metaphors of dementia appearing strategically alongside the representation of those events. Chapter 1 interrogates the discourse of environmental disaster and memory loss in Ruth Ozeki's narration of the aftermath of Fukushima. Chapter 2 examines the contemporaneous rhetorics of the "War on Alzheimer's" and the War on Terror in Susan M. Schultz's experimental writing. Chapter 3 focuses on two authors' graphic renditions of dementia and traumatic history: Dana Walrath challenges dementia as a popular metaphor for political amnesia and denial in the context of the Armenian Genocide, while Stuart Campbell visualizes the interrelations of dementia and the social traumas of World War II. Chapter 4 turns to the popular

fictions of Emma Healey and Jo Walton, which take up the trope of dementia's "alternative realities" to narrate histories of gendered postwar violence and aging differently. Together, these chapters reveal how dementia operates as a heuristic for understanding the past and connecting to others differently, thus reimagining life with dementia as one of agency and social value. For readers of these texts, the subject of dementia becomes an opportunity for thinking about transformative approaches to care, community, and conceptions of what it means to be human in time and history.

Traversing the intergenerational memory of injustices surrounding environmental degradation, war, occupation, and genocide, the works featured in *Entangled Stories* generate discussions relevant to fields of literary studies bordering trauma theory, memory studies, and postcolonialism. This dissertation's focus on Alzheimer's and senile dementia also emphasizes age is an important intersectional identity category, bringing disability studies into conversation with work in feminist aging studies, dementia studies, and the medical humanities. The interdisciplinary nature of this project attests to how contemporary re-imaginings of dementia go beyond personal stories of loss and the pathological discourse of plaques and tangles—they are imbricated in broader representational concerns over how to remember and respond to extreme events and political conflict. Through writing about intimate encounters with dementia, these authors grapple with the increasing fear of Alzheimer's and dementia in the 21st century—a fear bolstered by the post-9/11 injunction to "never forget." Indeed, one of the tensions authors negotiate is the need to protect historical memory—as a form of enlightenment and intervention to preclude future tragedies—and the necessity of holding space for personal forgetting and caring for/about the experiences of aging, dementia, and embodied difference more broadly.

INTRODUCTION

Dementia and the Historical Memory of Trauma

In May 2017, Salena Zito's interview with U.S. President Donald Trump generated a number of headlines due to a question asked by President Trump: "Why was there the Civil War?" Media outlets were quick to criticize Trump's chronologically inaccurate reference to Andrew Jackson and his overall "deeply confusing" response as a lack of historical understanding, temporal grounding, and outright manifestation of mental illness (Graham). In a segment of MSNBC's *Morning Joe* that aired the next day, former GOP congressman and host Joe Scarborough told audiences, "my mother had dementia for ten years," likening Trump's question to "the sort of thing my mother would say." Continuing the cascade of conjectures six months later, *Late Show* host Stephen Colbert asked his audiences if it was "okay to use the 'D' word" to describe Trump yet. Colbert wielded the euphemistic "d-word" as a censored slur in service of comedic effect. But in using it to delineate just how "crazy" Trump is, Colbert also spoke to the way dementia currently exists in the public imagination as a humiliating, malignant mental condition to be feared.[1] The recurring debates around Trump's dementia as a campaign issue are also profoundly illustrative of the way in which the metaphors accruing around dementia take on political urgency, as the malignancy here signals a particular ideological orientation or political act. For instance, Historian David Andress' critique of right and far-right political actors' "abandonment of political attention to history" (1) are drawn

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[1] On Trump and the rhetoric of ableism and neurological difference see Byrd McDaniel and Paul M Renfro who elaborate on how "ableist claims of Trump's exceptional depravity have often leveraged language used to stigmatize the very groups Trump's presidency stands to harm the most." See "This is Not Normal: Ability, Gender, and Age in the Resistance to Trumpism," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 39.2 (2019).

from his own disparaging perceptions of his father's Alzheimer's: "They make no more sense than a dementia sufferer demanding that his carers let him get the train to work in his pajamas. Just as a confused eighty-year-old cannot bend the world to his perception, so a Brexiting Britain or 'Great Again' America cannot return old prosperity to their rustbelts by willing it to happen" (3).

Susan Sontag's oeuvre on the damaging cultural fantasies concocted around cancer, tuberculosis, and AIDS continues to be relevant today when considering the plethora of myths and metaphors that have accrued around Alzheimer's and the general diagnostic category of dementia.[2] "A death sentence without a timeline," "the silver tsunami of the 21st century," "an apocalypse on the horizon," and "an unrecognized killer"—such are the metaphors of Alzheimer's readily found across news media and health communication headlines, as well as filmic and literary productions. In "Dementia as a Cultural Metaphor," Hannah Zeilig puts it formulaically:

> dementia, which is so persistently associated with crisis, war, uncontrollable natural disaster, and death, has become synonymous with a general sense of calamity. In linguistic terms, dementia can almost be considered a metonym…A rather simplistic equation has developed: Dementia = a complex, unknowable world of doom, aging, and a fate worse than death. (261-62)

The imaginary of calamity surrounding dementia in the 21st century is deeply imbricated in the fact that genocides, wars, and collective catastrophes have multiplied from the end of the 20th century and into the present day (Hirsch 2). The crisis over aging populations is thus entangled in a representational crisis over how to remember and respond to extreme events and geopolitical conflict. As renown American gerontologist and theater artist Anne Davis Basting points out, "the trope of memory loss imagery in US culture began with WWII in which films especially were concerned with how we would forget brutal memories of war and move on individually and nationally" (*Forget Memory* 51).

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[2] See Susan Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor* and *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York: Picador, 1990); on the emergence of Alzheimer's meanings in the 70s and 80s see Jesse F. Ballenger, *Self, Senility, and Alzheimer's Disease in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006).

If, as Sontag has argued, metaphor shapes the ways we think about, experience, and respond to illness, then these popular metaphors undoubtedly continue to sensationalize and stigmatize not just the experiences of Alzheimer's, but those of aging, cognitive change and difference, and memory loss intrinsic to the diversity and complexity of human experience. In the spirit of Sontag, *Entangled Stories: Reimagining Dementia, History, and Narrative in Contemporary Literature and Life Writing* pursues three goals: to "reveal the metaphorical trappings" (Sontag 102) of the conditions of dementia; to highlight works that interrogate established metaphors, especially those pertaining to the traumas of war/militarization, environmental disaster, and foreign threat; and to de-mythologize dementia, centering new tropes and iconographies that are productive and just. I do not aim to offer a comprehensive catalogue of all the problematic metaphors circulating around Alzheimer's and dementia in the 21st century; many cultural critics and historians and have already done so. Instead, I focus on excavating complex narratives, often with experimental features, that interrogate these metaphors and deploy them differently.

Entangled Stories offers a more nuanced reading of Alzheimer's and dementia in narratives dealing with the personal and historical memory of trauma and violence. Each chapter explores how dementia operates as a site in which the "entangled stories" of the intimate and global collide. Rather than use dementia to signify forgetting or an absence of history, authors deploy dementia to orchestrate the "multidirectional" meeting of different traumatic memories.[3] Doing so, these authors offer *revisionary narratives* that recuperate negative cultural discourses surrounding dementia. Using dementia as a source of formal innovation, these narratives also cross genre and subject matter,

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[3] My use of the term "multidirectional" draws from Michael Rothberg's term "multidirectional memory," which defines how traumatic and global histories of issues such as racism, slavery, and colonialism can be articulated and compared together without equating them. Rothberg writes, "memory's anachronistic quality—its bringing together of now and then, here and there—is actually the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones" (7). I argue in these works it is the impaired memory of dementia that functions to bring together "now and then." See *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009).

offering fluid spaces for readers' potential empathic connection with issues across geopolitical borders, historical contexts, and other marginalized life experiences.

Representational Ethics and Stories of Dementia

"It can hardly be coincidental," Lisa Appignanesi writes in the introduction to *Losing the Dead: A Family Memoir* (1999), "that I want to remember, to uncover, to know, at the moment when my last gateway to family memory—my mother—is losing hers" (7). Grappling with the progression of her mother Hena's Alzheimer's, Appignanesi undertakes a project to excavate the past of her parents, Polish Jews who survived the Nazi occupation and resettled in Canada in the 1950s. While Hena's Alzheimer's-related dementia is not the focal point of *Losing the Dead*, it is the text's key motive. As the narrator of *Losing the Dead* explains, Hena's increasingly fragmented and repetitive articulation of memories ("She can only return and return again to what she has already told me, scraps of unruly experience which refuse the consecutive shape of story" [7]) impel her to "put these fragments into some kind of sequence…to set her memories now side by side with the fuller versions I remember from childhood and my own youth" (91). Piecing together Hena's "scraps of unruly experience," Appignanesi creates a correspondingly formal patchwork of auto/biography, traumatic *bildungsroman*, travelogue, fiction, and collective history of wartime Poland (Pellicer-Ortín). Over the course of writing the book, she importantly points out that talking about the war "cease[d] to be one of [Hena's] preoccupations"; the narrator reflects, "I don't know whether this is because she feels I have stolen it from her or that she has given it to me. In any case, the onus has been transferred" (247). In the process of intimately witnessing the progression of Alzheimer's, Appignanesi acquires not only an interest in her mother's wartime memories but also exhibits a fraught sense of power and responsibility over their representation.

The equivocality Appignanesi feels as to whether or not she has appropriated her mother's war memories raises some of *Entangled Stories*' guiding questions. How do authors leverage the representation and lived experience of people with dementia—as characters, tropes, metaphors, narrative resources—in writing about the memory of historical trauma? How do texts reinforce or challenge the stigmas associated with age- and dementia-related forgetting and to what ends? Broadly, how does dementia, formally and thematically, enable authors to explore questions of identity, relationality, history, and narrative itself from new vantage points? What ethics of representation and care emerge?

In what is now popularly known as the "Age of Alzheimer's," it is not coincidental that contemporary writers like Appignanesi invoke an aging parent's dementia in their works as a starting point to explore the anxieties surrounding the impending loss of a generation of eyewitnesses to major traumatic events such as the Holocaust, a loss marking the end of what Eva Hoffman calls "the era of memory" (203). Indeed, *Losing the Dead* exemplifies the preoccupations of the "post" generation ("the generation that comes immediately after the event" [Hoffman 4]) and their relationship to the past. Marianne Hirsch, building on Hoffman, terms this particular intergenerational structure "postmemory," or "the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (5). Hirsch argues that what is at stake in expressions of postmemory like *Losing the Dead* is "the 'guardianship' of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a 'living connection' and that past's passing into history or myth" (1). However, *Losing the Dead* is not just motivated by stories and experiences Appignanesi "grew up" with—it is about the longing arising from her adult experience of stories that emerge distorted, fragmented, and anew in light of Hena's dementia. As Katarzyna Kawapisz Williams has similarly observed of the war documentary film *Once*

My Mother (2013), dementia functions as a “catalyst for restoration of generational memory, connection to people and places” (131).

There is something else besides postmemory characterizing texts like *Losing the Dead* that this project aims to explore as a critical site of inquiry: that is, the specific mode and formation of *relational memory and knowing* that emerges through relationships with a parent (or grandparent) with dementia and that drives the desire to recover that family member’s past. The concept of postmemory has been influential in literary criticism bordering memory studies and trauma theory (particularly in relation to post-Holocaust literature), but these critical conversations almost always unproblematically equate dementia with trauma or leave such analogies unquestioned. This failure leads to an oversight that leaves subjects with dementia underexamined, despite being “significant others, those whose stories are deeply implicated in the narrator’s and through whom the narrator understands her or his own self-formation” (Smith and Watson 86).

Indeed, little critical attention is directed to figures with dementia in works of life writing like *Losing the Dead*; their loss of self and forgetting is taken as a convenient metaphor for cultural amnesia (another cognitive disability metaphor). As another example consider the conversation around Caterina Edwards’ creative nonfiction memoir, *Finding Rosa: A Mother with Alzheimer’s, a Daughter in Search of the Past* (2008), which bears similarities to *Losing the Dead* in that Edward’s mother’s Alzheimer’s serves as motive for her excavation of traumatic histories. In *Finding Rosa*, Edwards’ uncovering of her mother’s past from World War I onward to her immigration to Canada leads the author to reconstruct a broader history of ethnic Italian refugees exiled from Istria during World War II. In the text, the *foiba*—sinkholes in which ethnic Italians living in Yugoslavia-occupied territories during World War II were killed *en masse*—becomes a symbol for the violence in Istria during the 1950s but also for Rosa’s Alzheimer’s (the “foiba of forgetfulness” [Edwards 76]). Here the meaning of dementia as a lived experience is depersonalized—it is the *foiba*, a place of trauma and killing—an ontology defined in terms of suffering, violence, and horror. Thus, the force of the narrative's conveyance of historical trauma is inextricable from its reproduction of dominant cultural perceptions of dementia as a form of trauma itself or "biosocial death" (Leibing 248). Critic Jennifer Bowering Delisle's reading of *Finding Rosa* goes along with this analogy; writing that the loss of Rosa's memory to "the *foiba* of Alzheimer's" "would be to perpetuate traumatic repression, and to become complicit with the willful erasure of ethnic Italian people from the Istrian landscape" (135). Delisle's reading places stigmatizing onus on Rosa, in that her personal forgetting comes to symbolize the perpetration of collective violence.[4]

Memoirs such as those of Edwards and Appignanesi signal a trending use of dementia in contemporary life writing, as well as literary fiction, to narrate history and trauma on personal and collective levels. Furthermore, they register how critical conversations around this trending corpus reveal a common analogical move that obfuscates the relationship between dementia and histories of trauma rather than illuminating them. These critical interpretations take the presentation of dementia as an ultimate negative signifier for the evacuation of personhood. Further, they equate trauma and dementia, an abstraction that flattens the contours of actual history and the complex processes and sources of violence. These abstractions thus damagingly dislocate the person with dementia from the concrete particularities of their history and lived experience, as well as the value of their social and emotional bonds with others that can still persist.

Scholar Lucy Burke's recent article makes a similar observation of Annie Ernaux's memoir *I Remain in the Darkness* (1999) in its critique of Ernaux's reliance on analogies between Holocaust death camps and her mother's experience in a long-term care home.[5] Burke observes a tendency in

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[4] Similarly, another critic writes, "Rosa Pagan's Alzheimer's disease becomes a metaphor for the amnesia of national leaders of our own day who seem to have forgotten the evils of war" (Pivato 62).

[5] As Burke elaborates, "Since the Holocaust has been repeatedly configured as the most unspeakable form of suffering… then something more significant is arguably taking place when it is evoked in narrative accounts of living with dementia. Indeed, the symbolic power of this analogy resides in its extreme encapsulation of the perceived impact

auto/biographical works like Ernaux's, in which the analogy "used by the writer/observer symbolically reinscribes the very impersonal and debased effects that the self-same writer or observer laments as attributes of the neurological impairments associated with dementia" (198). For Burke, this symbolic displacement of the subject of dementia from the performative center of the work of life writing is ethically problematic; what emerges is

> a representational modality that effaces the contours of the person in order to communicate something about the emotional impact of dementia on the writer/observer…these descriptions construe the lived experience of dementia as opaque and unrepresentable, characterized by a fundamental rupture of intersubjectivity in that the gaze of the observer is never returned or acknowledged. This paradigm precludes recognition of the diverse ways in which individuals might live with particular impairments as well as any notion of the person with dementia as someone capable of meaningful interaction, of expressing a preference or exercising choice or agency. (199)

The erasure Burke observes occurs through "analogical mediation" (198) but also at the level of narrative structure. Arguably, Appignanesi and Edwards reify the opacity and unrepresentability of dementia by approaching the narration of their mothers' unruly memories as needing order and policing. Thus, we might ask if Appignanesi's "systematic" (90) approach to eliciting and writing her mother's stories comes at the expense of allowing Hena's "montage of disparate fragments" (91) and memories that "elude the system" (90) to speak for themselves. Indeed, we get very little of Hena's own words in the narrative. Might Appignanesi's ordering and need to "fix" the "scraps" (7) of her mother's memories be a violence to Hena's own subjectivity? The same question of self-interest arises in *Finding Rosa*, as the narrative Edwards creates "attempts to repair, *if only for [the author] herself*, the fragmentation and disorientation that Rosa's trauma and dementia have both caused" (Delisle 135; emphasis mine). In both these narratives, dementia operates as "narrative prosthesis,"

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of dementia upon personhood. Its enunciation enacts the near absolute dissolution of the unique, concrete, and particular features of the individual into a generic category of suffering marked by a type of death in life, thus reducing dementia to an expression of the abyssal point of humanity and the terminus of hope" (197). Burke also extends this critique to Catherine Malabou's theorization of psychic trauma which relies on autobiographical accounts of her mother's Alzheimer's and similar analogies to war trauma. See "Dementia and the Paradigm of the Camp: Thinking Beyond Giorgio Agamben's Concept of 'Bare Life'," *Bioethical Inquiry* 16.2 (2019): 195-205.

something in the story to be fixed or rehabilitated (Mitchell and Snyder).[6] Furthermore, Appignanesi's drive to undo Hena's "diminishment" (90) also reinforces the notion that people with dementia are lost to themselves: "Now that she had all the necessary identity papers that had so preoccupied her during the war years, it seemed she didn't really have herself" (256). Indeed, this view of dementia as loss, a kind of perpetrator of personal and communal atrocity, is reinforced by Appignanesi's description of the Nazis as a "demented racist regime" (242). Part of what is at stake here, then, is how narrative "does a disservice to actual people with disabilities, insofar as 'while stories rely upon the potency of disability as a symbolic figure, they rarely take up disability as an experience of social or political dimensions'" (Mitchell and Snyder qtd. in Bérubé 44). In order to offer insight into the social and political dimensions of dementia more fully in literature, *Entangled Stories* offers a sustained engagement between disability theory and dementia studies.

The Conjunction of Disability and Dementia Studies

I join a chorus of scholars in disability studies and dementia studies whose work aims to open up a space to "defamiliarize and trouble dominant representational modalities of dementia and assumptions about the challenges with which it presents us" (Burke, "Dementia," 195). My analysis brings a dedicatedly disability studies analytic to the examination of the politics and narrative aesthetics of dementia in contemporary narratives written by "post" generation authors, predominately women writing about their mothers and addressing the memory of events such as the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the Iraq War, World War II, and the Armenian Genocide. Through

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[6] "Mitchell and Snyder's theory of "narrative prosthesis" refers to the dependency literary narratives have upon disability as a stock feature of characterization or an "opportunistic metaphorical device" (2). Narrative prosthesis assumes that narratives "operate out of desire to compensate for a limitation or to reign in excess," so for example, a narrative may work toward doing away with a deviant character by seeking to resolve or repair a character's impairment, or push the focus of that impairment into the margins of the text (53). In short, the "narration of the disabled body enables the textual body to have meaning through its "long-standing historical representation as an overdetermined symbolic surface" (64) See *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

writing about intimate encounters with dementia, these writers grapple with the increasing fear of Alzheimer's and dementia in the 21st century—a fear bolstered by the post-9/11 injunction to "never forget." Indeed, one of the representational quandaries authors address is the need to protect historical memory—as a form of enlightenment and intervention to preclude future tragedies—while holding space for personal forgetting and different embodied experiences. This need to disentangle the myths and metaphors of memory loss from the crosshairs of reality and performative public language is ever pressing amid the regressive political agendas and policies of the Trump Era, where explanations of dementia (and cognitive impairment more broadly) frequently assume liability for actual political manipulation and the tactical distortion of history. A disability studies analytic lays bare and is accountable to the material realities and current political and historical conditions responsible for the oppressive representation and exclusion of actual lives.[7]

Disability studies encompasses "theory, research and practice that are antagonistic to the popular view that disability equates with personal tragedy" (Goodley xii); and it holds that "there is no neutral or objective position from which to regard the human body and its differences" (Adams et al. 4). As disability scholars have shown, shifting away from medical and toward social, political, and relational models of disability reveals how bodies are intimately tied to political ideologies, economic systems, and other material, cultural, and environmental formations.[8] Feminist disability studies scholar and bioethicist Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues that integrating disability into

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[7] My use of "accountable" borrows from Nirmala Erevelles on doing disability justice: "Why be accountable? Because a transnational materialist critical disability studies is not only about 'theorizing life' but also about 'living theory.'…To think with disability studies and hold it accountable to the lives it purports to represent." See "Thinking with Disability Studies" *Disability Studies Quarterly 32.4* (2014).

[8] For example, Burke has shown how "contemporary debates about ageing and dementia are increasingly bound up with the promissory discourses of bio-gerontology and neuroscientific epistemologies that facilitate an imaginative investment in the idea that ageing and age-related conditions such as dementia might be 'defeated'. At the heart of these claims is a model of health and wellbeing that extols the virtues of the independent, economically active and implicitly able-bodied person and repudiates physical frailty, dependence and need in later life…the rhetoric of crisis regarding ageing and dementia is increasingly bound up with the neoliberal reduction of human value to economic productivity and the logic of neoliberal marketization." See "Imagining a Future Imagining Without Dementia: Fictions of Regeneration and the Crises of Work and Sustainability" *Palgrave Communications* 3.52 (2017).

"critical intellectual work facilitates a fuller integration of the sociopolitical world—for the benefit of everyone. As with gender, race, sexuality, and class: to understand how disability operates is to understand what it is to be fully human" ("Integrating" 28). My focus on Alzheimer's and senile dementia also emphasizes that *age* is an important intersectional identity category, bringing disability studies into conversation with work being done in aging studies, dementia studies, and the medical humanities.

Moreover, exploring texts that engage with the memory of injustices such as war, genocide, and environmental degradation, *Entangled Stories* generates discussion relevant to fields of literary studies bordering trauma theory, memory studies, and postcolonialism. *Entangled Stories* showcases how dementia becomes a locus for authors' articulations of intersectional politics that are typically anti-imperialist, anti-war, anti-ageist, and often feminist. That is not to say all of the texts herein are liberatory or that they do not use dementia instrumentally; many reinforce negative stereotypes even as they challenge others. They are nevertheless fraught with productive tensions, echoing Tobin Siebers's call that "disability studies needs to account for both the negative and positive valences of disability, to resist the negative by advocating the positive and to resist the positive by acknowledging the negative" (*Disability Theory* 5). *Entangled Stories* thus highlights writers exploring the tensions between the positive and negative valences of dementia on personal and collective levels in generative ways.

In this sense, I consider these works as *revisionary narratives of dementia*: counternarratives to mainstream discourses that accept dementia as a cultural metaphor for "crisis, war, uncontrollable natural disaster, and death" (Zeilig 261). Thus, I approach dementia as a heuristic for understanding and writing about history, personhood, and relationships. These works self-reflexively deploy dementia as an imaginative, narrative, and ethical resource to address the stories of actual historical violence while asserting the agency and value of people with dementia. As such they also explore the value of the particular kind of imperfect, non-normative "remembering" that dementia engenders. Within these texts there is a dual sense of obligation to doing justice to dementia's representation and to the recuperative narration of traumatic histories. Emerging from a shared search for the most adequate way to formally represent the experiences and subjectivity of dementia, and forms of relationality that arise, these texts also prompt reflection on conventions of literary form and genre. Additionally, they raise questions of how and for whom one remembers; whose trauma is remembered; and how letting go of compulsory demands to remember might be conducive to personal and collective healing.

What might it mean to focus less on individual forgetting as deficit, and focus more on relational and supportive modes of remembering? Returning briefly to Appignanesi, *Losing the Dead* provocatively asks, in its epigraph from Jewish historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi: "Is it possible that the antonym of 'forgetting' is not 'remembering,' but *justice*?" Over the course of writing this dissertation, I found myself circling back to the ethics of memory implicit in this question. Read alongside the context of Hena's Alzheimer's, I find it instructive for placing the importance of pursuing justice collectively in front of the demand for remembering individually. The narratives I examine engage questions of justice on multiple levels: how to do justice to histories of those lost to violence; to the diverse experiences of historical trauma; and to the complexity of dementia experience and dementia care that emerges.

As members of the postmemory generation come to bear the weight of historical trauma, translational literature scholar Y-Dang Troeung asks, "Is there a space left for forgetting in our endeavours to develop a politics of loss?...[A] politics of loss should function not as an either/or prescription to remember or to forget, but rather as a mode of interrogation that seeks to maintain a careful, ethical balance in between" (1, 5). For Troeung, what is at stake in allowing a space for forgetting is "not only the psychic survival of those who have suffered atrocity first-hand, but also of those in the postmemorial generation who perhaps feel most acutely that it would be a failure to forget" (9). As contemporary authors more frequently turn to dementia, they too dramatize a longing to remember and know more than their parent(s), a desire that fuels personal and cultural fears of forgetting, aging, and dementia. What is at stake in a politics of (memory) loss is also holding space for the human value and meaning of those living with dementia being represented, which necessarily shapes the visions and possibilities of our own aging futures.

There have been a number of works on dementia and literature: Sarah Falcus and Katsura Sako's *Contemporary Narratives of Dementia: Ethics, Ageing, Politics* (2019) and Rebecca Bitenc's *Reconsidering Dementia Narratives: Empathy, Identity and Care* (2019) are the first broad surveys of dementia's representation across genres, focusing on the politics of care, interdependence, and vulnerability. Martina Zimmermann's inaugural monograph, *The Poetics and Politics of Alzheimer's Disease Life-Writing* (2017) centers first-person patient accounts, while Marlene Goldman's *Forgotten: Narratives of Age-Related Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease in Canada* (2017) more specifically foregrounds dementia's representation in literary fiction alongside conventions of gothic horror. Tess Maginess' edited collection, *Dementia and Literature: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2018) offers perspectives largely situated in the medical humanities, a more specific approach to Aagje Swinnen and Mark Schweda's earlier broad overview, *Popularizing Dementia: Public Expressions and Representations of Forgetfulness* (2015). *Entangled Stories* joins these efforts to interrogate the ways literary narrative shapes the discourse of dementia and aims to show how "life with dementia does have stories, stories that literary narratives can strive to tell" (Falcus and Sako 7).

More specifically, *Entangled Stories* is a foray into the politics and ethics of representing dementia at the nexus of historical memories pertaining to trauma and violence in both fictional and nonfictional narratives (many works I address blur this distinction). I offer a more sustained engagement with insights from disability studies, which the works above have gestured toward the importance of but have not fully taken up. What has resulted from this critical oversight are readings concerned with "diagnosing" texts as "about" dementia, interpretations that are inadvertently apolitical, ahistorical, and overly focused on the text's ability to foster empathy rather than a nuanced political, historical, social understanding of dementia and the historical contexts in which its representation and stories appear.

Relationality, Revisionary Narratives, and Crip Time

My inclusion of Alzheimer's and the general category of dementia under the rubric of disability are in line with other disability studies scholars and activists who approach dementia, like other disabilities, as a socio-political phenomenon. Following a social model of disability, I join efforts "to expand understandings of dementia beyond an individual biomedical condition, toward recognition of dementia as a social and political identity shaped by disabling processes and social orders" (Aubrecht and Keefe 2).[9] With Tom Shakespeare et al., I refute the medical model and pursue an alternative advocacy for a *relational model of dementia* that

> would take an adequate and nuanced approach to dementia whereby there was both medical research into deficits and treatments, and action to remove social, attitudinal and architectural barriers. Similarly, empowering people with dementia as far as possible is clearly an important goal, but policy should also recognize that people with dementia will require support and protection when their disease makes it impossible for them to be active. (8)[10]

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[9] To be clear, Alzheimer's refers to a specific disease, while dementia is a 'symptom' of a group of over 100 conditions that impairs memory, behavior, and thinking. Dementia is characterized as progressive decline of cognition that interferes with the activities of daily living. It is an umbrella term covering other forms of dementia that go with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Lewy Body dementia, and vascular dementia, fronto-temporal dementia. Dementia has many causes (stroke, tumors, disease, etc.). Dementia, as much as is focused on memory loss, encompasses a host of other experiences (such as different ways of perceiving time, hallucination, changes in relational identification) that the texts I examine also address as vital to recognize.

[10] Tom Shakespeare et al. have thoroughly critiqued the medical model of dementia arguing that it "maintains oppression, exclusive and passive dependency of the person" and is a "simplification of a very complex process whereby a person with dementia ends up being treated as dependent and denied a voice…when someone has dementia… she is viewed in terms of her inabilities, whether these are cognitive, relational or functional, and in comparison to an expected norm of personhood…On top of her diagnosis, a heavy weight of negative cultural representation…clouds the collective vision of this person living with dementia" (8).

This shift to considering dementia a social identity and set of corporeal conditions resonates in solidarity with several disability studies theorists' expansions of the social model.[11] It insists on accessibility and valuing aging with dementia as a part of the spectrum of human variation. I also acknowledge that there are many kinds of dementia with their own politics, sets of experiences, and degrees of social stigma.[12] My use of the terms Alzheimer's, dementia, and disability interchangeably when appropriate is not meant to elide these differences, but to highlight the shared politics and potentials for thinking them together.[13]

Despite the growth of the disability rights movement, dementia still predominantly remains under the purview of medical discourse (Shakespeare et al. 4). Only in recent years have the general public, health professionals, and other disabled people begun to consider people with dementia as part of the disability rights community (*ibid.* 9).[14] With that said, Basting argues that the dementia advocacy movement can contribute to the disability rights movement by challenging it "to more fully consider the complexity and value of *interdependency* as well as show the movement how to insist

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[11] E.g. Tobin Siebers' concept of "complex embodiment": "The theory of complex embodiment raises awareness of the effects of disabling environments on people's lived experience of the body, but it emphasizes as well that some factors affecting disability, such as chronic pain, secondary health effects, and aging, derive from the body. These last disabilities are neither less significant than disabilities caused by the environment nor to be considered defects or deviations merely because they are resistant to change. Rather, they belong to the spectrum of human variation, conceived both as variability between individuals and as variability within an individual's life cycle, and they need to be considered in tandem with social forces affecting disability. The theory of complex embodiment views the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal" (*Disability Theory* 25). Also see Alison Kafer's political/relational model in *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2013).

[12] Writer/activist/self-advocate Floyd Skloot points to this in *In the Shadow of Memory* when he admits his "form of dementia is not as grave as in Alzheimer's disease" (24). Even as Skloot lays claim to memory impairments as potentially "having positive connotations," conceiving of his "new, demented state" (22) as a more emotionally freeing, even joyful, way of living in and sensing the world, he contrastingly writes about his mother with Alzheimer's as "incarcerated by the enfolding dementia, and it's a life sentence" (243).

[13] On the affordances and challenges of building coalitional conceptual frameworks across cognitive impairments in disability studies see *Journal of Cultural & Literary Disability Studies*' special issue 2.1 (2008) guest-edited by Lucy Burke.

[14] It's important also to acknowledge the disability rights call "nothing about us without us." Because "self-advocacy is not straightforward in the case of dementia," Shakespeare et al. importantly note, "whether people with dementia think of themselves as disabled, will always be provisional…some people living with early-stage dementia have strongly articulated a disability identification; some are reluctant to do so; others are silent … Many will reject what they may perceive as another stigmatising label" (3). Also see Carol Thomas and Christine Milligan, "Dementia, Disability Rights and Disablism: Understanding the Social Position of People Living with Dementia" *Disability & Society* 33 (2018).

on person-centered care in nursing homes rather than simply allow them to be emptied out and shut down" (*Forget Memory* 159). Further, as Kafer argues: "To eliminate disability is to eliminate the possibility of discovering alternative ways of being in the world, to foreclose the possibility of recognizing and valuing our interdependence" (83). *Entangled Stories* contributes to Basting's call, foregrounding *revisionary narratives of dementia*, literary works that illuminate the intergenerational and social dynamics of dementia's interdependency and relationality. It also recognizes Kafer's caution, focusing not on narratives of "cure" or the future elimination of dementia, but on narratives asserting that dementia is a way of being in the world with particular interpersonal value.

The forms of *dementing relationalities* that these narratives dramatize project what Rayna Rapp and Faye Ginsberg call a "new kinship imaginary":

> disability is reconfigured around what we call the new kinship imaginary that takes shape when a family member – often a child – is diagnosed with a cognitive, emotional, or behavioral disability. The innovations in intimate daily life worlds that we have been chronicling are often the basis for what we think of as the "accidental activism" that results when loved ones "bring the disability rights movement into our home" as one parent phrased it. ("Cripping the Infrastructure" 1)

Rapp and Ginsberg primarily address the experiences of parents caring for disabled children, their insight that "families are both flesh-and-blood collaborations and always acts of cultural imagination" requiring "continual reinvention, from the rearrangement of caretaking responsibilities in the household to the production of family narratives embracing rather than excluding the fact of disability" ("Family" 82). The relational care and memory work of the revisionary narratives in *Entangled Stories* depict the changing relational roles between mother-daughter; the shifting temporalities of dementia experience; and the rhythms of the "alternate realities" that may manifest in loved ones' hallucinations. Collectively, they attest to the fact that "a new kinship imaginary that positively embraces family members with disabilities is emerging—even if unevenly" (Rapp and Ginsberg "Reverberations" 405).

As Rapp and Ginsberg argue, the new kinship imaginary has temporal and social implications: "Not only does this new imaginary map an emergent terrain that encompasses a broader range of humanity; it also reframes implicit norms and expectations of the life course as the 'difference of disability' reverberates through the domestic cycle, changing its rhythms in unanticipated ways" (*ibid.* 383). With attention to the way authors engage with dementia's effect on the changing rhythms of personal and family life, *Entangled Stories* also engages with (and brings to dementia studies) the increasingly important term disability scholars and activists call *crip time*—the temporality of non-normative embodiments.[15] A multivalent term, crip time denotes different, shifting embodied experiences of temporality; "a reorientation to time" which "requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time…[and challenging] normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling" (Kafer 27). Crip time might, for example, take the form of slowing down social norms around conversation and meals or approaching everyday routines with flexibility. The politics and practices of crip time are germane to thinking about relationality and dementia, as Raquel Medina suggests: "dementia's temporality is fluid. Its fluidity is not based on chronological temporality, or on a perpetual present, but on the principles of new and constantly regenerating temporalities which are defined by interpersonal relationships" (32). Observing this fluidity of time as a prominent motif in each revisionary narrative, *Entangled Stories* probes what it means to apply the frameworks of crip time as a metaphor in literary criticism and to dementia.

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[15] Since the disability rights movement in the 1970s the shorthand 'crip' from 'cripple' has gained usage in activist and academic circles as a reclaimed, subversive, contestatory term charged with political, social, and aesthetic connotations, and borrows its framework from queer studies. Both Carrie Sandahl's essay, "Queering the Crip or Cripping the Queer? Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in Solo Autobiographical Performance" and Robert McRuer's *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006) are foundational texts that established the term 'crip' as interchangeably noun and verb, a theoretical term for critique and disruption that, like queer, "is fluid and ever-changing, claimed by those whom it did not originally define…extended to include not only those with physical impairments but those with sensory or mental impairments as well" (Sandahl 27). For Kafer, "crip theory" allows one's work to stake "claim alongside activists and cultural workers engaged in…multiple sites of radical politics" (15). Basting similarly asks, if 'demented' can be reclaimed in the same way: "Rather than run from the deepest stereotypes, the disability movement successfully turned them on their heads by embracing them. 'Crips' and 'freaks' are now terms used within the movement with pride, much in the same way that 'queer' has been emptied as a pejorative. Could the worst words we can imagine to describe the experience of dementia be appropriated in a similar way?" (*Forget Memory* 158)

Entangled Stories theorizes how authors negotiate the representation of bodies that experience relationality and temporality differently. On one level, their narratives offer representations of the fluid temporalities of dementia in a number of ways, from capturing the joys of returning to a childhood state to the trauma of reliving the experiences of war, the latter dramatizing the exclusion and social estrangement that can arise in time.[16] On another level, they deploy dementia to play with narrative structure, form, and genre to enrich understandings of time, relationships, and the memory of (traumatic) history. Through dementia as formal and thematic resource, authors disable ordinary functions of narrative—causing time to slow or create feelings of temporal dissonance—forcing readers to slow down and consider what dementia has to teach about personhood, interdependence, and communication. Through modes of experimental life writing and fiction, they engage the embodied temporalities of dementia in order to take readers to previously unimaginable juxtapositions of time and space, looking productively at unjust pasts to alternative and inclusive futures.

Of course, revisionary narratives of dementia are not substitutes for the actual voices of people living with dementia, and I consider these narratives of complementary importance to the kinds that have emerged out of the creative care movement (which aims to infuse aging-care systems with community-engaged art practices).[17] Both of Basting's major collaborative storytelling projects (*TimeSlips* and The Penelope Project, for example, place people with dementia at the center of

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[16] Importantly, Petra Kuppers reminds us these "time experiences might be born out of pain and frustration, and these moments shouldn't be romanticized" ("Crip Time" n.p.). Kuppers's article references/responds to Australian author and activist Anne McDonald's writing on her perception of time living with cerebral palsy. McDonald asserts one's perception of time is dependent on one's dependency: "People will not enter my time to talk to me. Slow the conversation down to my speed, and everybody else wanders away; carry on talking while I finish my sentence, and the conversation has moved on. Too long sentences twenty times slowed try the patience and require better memories than my listeners posess."

[17] As Basting argues, "The ultimate promise of the creative community-building approach is that people living with dementia are consistently invited to become culture-makers in meaningful projects, and that care systems turn outward to rigorously engage with their communities to form partnerships to end the isolation and over-medicalization of the citizens in their care. Culture-making will not create a world without Alzheimer's. But it can radically transform the way we experience it" (753). See "Building Creative Communities of Care: Arts, Dementia, and Hope in the United States" *Dementia* 17.6 (2017): 744-754.

meaning/culture-making and stress performances of the self that do not depend on memory).[18] Shifting from the pressure to remember toward the freedom of shared imagination, the stories and interdependencies engendered by creative care methods produce alternative, positive narratives of aging as possibility, not just challenges. These methods honor and work with "dementia time," embracing improvisation, non-linear narrative, and being in the present moment.[19]

Together, revisionary narratives and new creative forms of personal expression encourage critical reflection on the norms around social belonging, how/whose lives are represented, and the productive possibilities of storytelling. These emergent kinds of cultural expressions and critiques of dementia care that consider dementia "in time"[20] also provide new foundations for the possibilities of democracy—for which inclusion and participation are fundamental—by fostering social change for marginalized peoples within and beyond disabled and aging communities.

Dementia and Formal Experimentation

Examining the formal and narrative significance of dementia alongside the concepts of dementing relationalities and crip time laid out above requires moving beyond critiquing negative portrayals of characters with dementia in literature.[21] As mentioned previously, criticism surrounding dementia in literature tends toward diagnostic interpretation and readings that view dementia as a

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[18] See Robin Mello and Anne Basting, "'The Sublime, the Unsettling, and the Exhuberant': Changing Students' Attitudes Toward Aging Through TimeSlips Creative Storytelling," *Creative Writing in the Community*, ed. Terry Ann Thaxton (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013). Also see Basting et al., *The Penelope Project: An Arts-Based Odyssey to Change Elder Care* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016).

[19] This is important to Jill Hayes' argument that "as witnesses to memory loss, we need to cultivate a different relationship with time in order to stay in contact with people with dementia…By quietly attending to our own body rhythms and those of the person with dementia, we are meeting them in a different place beyond the stories of this life." See *The Creative Arts in Dementia Care* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010).

[20] Echoing Kafer's call to "explore disability in time" (46) and Hailee Yoshizaki-Gibbon's effort to bring crip time to bear on "dementia time" within care settings. See "The (Im)Persistence of Memory: Crip Time and the Politics of Dementia" (unpublished article).

[21] See Martina Zimmermann, "Alzheimer's Disease Metaphors as Mirror and Lens to the Stigma of Dementia" *Literature and Medicine* 35.1 (2017): 71-97; and Aagje Swinnen and Mark Schweda, eds. *Popularizing Dementia Public Expressions and Representations of Forgetfulness* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2015).

simple plot device rather than having wider social and political meaning. *Entangled Stories* is influenced by the shift in literary disability studies criticism from the late-1990s and early-2000s, which began with an intensity of examining positive and negative characterizations, toward examining disability at the level of content alongside narrative form and reading practices. I take heed of Ato Quayson's cross-cultural approach to examining how thematic and textual disturbances can be hidden in literary representation, or how disability in a text can give rise to oscillations between domains of the aesthetic, ethical, and sociocultural—what he terms "aesthetic nervousness" (24).[22] I draw significantly from Michael Bérubé's recent work (building on Quayson) on "deployments of disability," which continues to move the trajectory of literary disability studies toward how disability operates as a narrative strategy. As Bérubé argues in *The Secret Life of Stories: From Don Quixote to Harry Potter, How Understanding Intellectual Disability Transforms the Way We Read* (2016), "narrative *deployments* of disability do not confine themselves to representation. They can also be narrative strategies, devices for exploring vast domains of human thought, experience, and action" (2). Importantly, Bérubé points out "disability and ideas about disability can be and have been put to use in fictional narratives in ways that go far beyond any specific rendering of any disabled character or characters," showing that a text can be haunted by the social stigma of disability even without the presence of a character with a disability (44).

Bérubé's notion of deployment helps me center the formal and ethical importance of dementia in texts in which the figure with dementia seems only ancillary. Bérubé's framework for reading literary fiction is usefully applied to works of life writing. Most criticism on dementia in life

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[22] As Quayson defines it, "Aesthetic nervousness is seen when the dominant protocols of representation within the literary text are short-circuited in relation to disability" (15). He suggests literary texts are often "undergirded not by the binary opposition of normal/abnormal, but by the dialectical interplay between unacknowledged social assumptions and the reminders of contingency as reflected in the body of the person with a disability" (21). For Quayson this "dialectical interplay" affects all levels of the literary texts: from the perspective of the narrator and characters to the temporal sequencing of and discourses that structure the plot (22).

writing and literature is read from analytical perspectives from the medical and health humanities, which predominantly operate on the assumption "literature brings us closer to reality by reflecting it, mimetically" (Maginess 10). This emphasis on how well a text gives insight to the "felt reality" (*ibid.*) of individual experiences of patients and caregivers has limited the interpretation of auto/biographical works dealing with dementia (and disability in general) to the logic of diagnosis and how well a text's "authentic" representation gives rise to empathetic identification. Broadening the scope of these localized interpretations, *Entangled Stories* unveils that contemporary authors frequently deploy dementia in their narratives as loci for addressing a range of social issues and relationships beyond the clinic (Bérubé 24).

Additionally, like Bérubé and Quayson (who each build on the influential work of Siebers' *Disability Aesthetic*), I emphasize how dementia operates in the aesthetic domain as a source of formal innovation and how that opens up space for social criticism.[23] To each their own degree, what is characteristic of revisionary narratives of dementia is their propensity for formal and generic experimentation with the intent to challenge readers' perspectives of temporality, reality, relationality, and historicity.

Finally, moving beyond representation, my analyses acknowledges and contends with how narrative often "does a disservice to actual people with disabilities, insofar as 'while stories rely upon the potency of disability as a symbolic figure, they rarely take up disability as an experience of social or political dimensions'" (Mitchell and Snyder qtd. in Bérubé 44).[24] Tracing the significance of both

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[23] "Disability aesthetics" is Siebers' critical concept emphasizing the presence of disability as a resource in modern artistic representation: "Disability aesthetics refuses to recognize the representation of the healthy body–and its definition of harmony, integrity, and beauty–as the sole determination of the aesthetic. Rather, disability aesthetics embraces beauty that seems by traditional standards to be broken, and yet it is not less beautiful, but more so as a result…[D]isability enriches and complicates notion of aesthetic…[it] does not express defect but enlarges our vision of human variation and difference" (3). See *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

[24] Bérubé is referring to the process Mitchell and Snyder describe as "narrative prosthesis" by which "disability inaugurates narrative, but narrative inevitably punishes its own prurient interests by overseeing the extermination of the object of its fascination" (56-57).

fictional characters and rendered lives of actual people with dementia in the context of authors' representations of historical violence and trauma, I pay particular attention to the environmental, historical and material conditions that circumscribe these narrated experiences.[25] Many of the narratives I examine raise an underexplored connection between dementia and the experience of historical trauma and the lived experiences of war. Without equating dementia as a "symptom" of these phenomena, these texts nevertheless demand us to account for how historical and material circumstances and relationship construct, mediate, and effect the experience of dementia.

Chapter Overview

Exploring how dementia operates as a formal, ethical, and narrative resource in contemporary literature and life writing about the memory of historical trauma and violence, each chapter loosely focuses on different major catastrophes of the 20th and 21st centuries. Since authors deploy dementia as a kind of connective narrative tissue between personal and collective stories across disparate locations and times, there is some overlap of events between chapters. Each chapter correspondingly interrogates the different tropes and metaphors of dementia that appear alongside the representation of those events: environmental disaster and memory loss in Chapter 1; war and borders in Chapter 2; national forgetting and trauma in Chapter 3; and alternate realities in Chapter 4.

Instead of moving chronologically across the histories being narrated, the chapters circumnavigate time disjointedly, embracing a praxis that reflects a similar flexible approach to

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[25] As scholars suggest, criticism guided by the early social model of disability has limited its ability to account for the historical and material conditions that shape it. For elaborations and critiques of the social model see: Kafer's "political/relational model" in *Feminist Queer Crip*; Nirmala Erevelles' "historical materialist framework" in *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Jasbir Puar's theory of capacity/debility in *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

temporality and form that the authors of this study thematize through their engagements with dementia and employ to create knowledge from spaces of disjuncture. This structure also reflects the dissertation's thematic concern with time, as each chapter also focuses on how the embodied temporalities of dementia serve as loci for formal experimentation and means of reflecting on history and relationality differently. Finally, it is important to note how *Entangled Stories* is structured fluidly by genre, beginning with semi-autobiographical imaginative fiction, experimental poetic memoir, and graphic life writing in Chapters 1-3 and ending with first-person detective fiction and speculative biography in Chapter 4. While the dissertation emphasizes works of life writing by postgeneration authors, fictional narratives written by those impacted by their family member's dementia are also included. Conversely, some of the authors writing in the mode of auto/biography use the conventions of fictive modes. Collectively, authors' deployments of dementia, in thinking through history differently, necessitate experimentations with form and drive generic hybridity.

Chapter 1, "Writing Dementia and Disaster in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*" examines the deployment of dementia in the context of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, legacies of war and occupation, and teachings of Zen Buddhism. I look at how dementia as narrative strategy plays with boundaries of auto/biographical genres alongside Ozeki's use of the diaristic mode. The chapter sets up the embodied temporality of dementia under the framework of crip time by theorizing how it operates as a narrative aesthetic and resource for thinking about the political inclusion of cognitively disabled and aging populations. Taking up the concept of dementia's "now" time, the text opens readers up to both the complex cognitive realities of dementia and the imaginative possibilities for relating to others and history when normative experiences of time and space have become deranged. Offering counternarratives to mainstream discursive constructions of dementia as natural disaster and disappearance, *A Tale* asks how readers might welcome fraught, natural processes of forgetting as moments that challenge normative expectations of narrative closure and certainty, linear temporality, cognition, and personhood. Furthermore, the text considers the meaningful forms of interpersonal and intergenerational connection and communication that dementia and other forms of "not-knowing" can offer.

Chapter 2, "The Poetics and Politics of Alzheimer's Dementia in Susan M. Schultz," elaborates on dementia's potential border-breaking temporal aesthetics through an examination of Hawai'i-based poet Susan Schultz's multi-genre writings about her mother's dementia, which are entangled with fragmented histories of imperialist and colonial violence. Written during the Bush administration, *Dementia Blog* is in part a pointed criticism of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and bricolage catalogue of seemingly disparate yet interlinked legacies of war and occupation across the globe. Challenging the both the War on Terror and "War on Alzheimer's," Schultz moves beyond typical metaphoric uses of dementia as a warning against the perils of forgetting histories of oppression and the notion that dementia is itself the battle to be fought. Instead, dementia operates as a formal, poetic resource that enables Schultz to draw empathetic connections between historical contexts and life experiences that are fundamentally distinct yet similar in their struggles for justice and self-determination. *Dementia Blog* is thus a meditation on how thinking-with-dementia helps re-envision our practices of reading and writing private and national history. Instead of constructing dementia as a detrimentally illogical way of thinking or a failure to remember, Schultz insists on dementia's value for alternate understandings of historicity, truth, and relationality. Resisting tropes of enemy infiltration and militarized violence, dementia in Schultz's work gives presence to oft-untold stories that live in temporalities our grammar struggles to convey.

Chapter 3, "Drawn to History: Dementia and Trauma in Graphic Life Narrative" examines what happens with dementia enters the realm of the visual. I look at the artistic juxtaposition of personal memory and public narrative in two graphic life writing texts, Dana Walrath's *Aliceheimer's: Alzheimer's Through the Looking Glass* and Stuart Campbell's web comic *These Memories Won't Last*. This section elaborates on the intersection of dementia and trauma as *Aliceheimer's* is also a text that skirts the authors' family history in the Armenian Genocide, and Campbell's text represents his grandfather's experience as a Hungarian veteran in World War II. Walrath's exploration of her family's past in the Armenian Genocide challenges dementia as a popular metaphor for political amnesia, trauma, and denial, while Campbell traces the complex intersections of dementia and post-traumatic stress while pushing the limits of the comics in a digital environment. Overall, this chapter is concerned with how graphic form can reframe the experience of dementia and violence temporally and spatially on the page, render bodies visible, and materialize witnessing to history through the embodied labor of drawing and image-making.

Chapter 4 hinges on literary explorations of the relationship between temporality and reality, or the perception of one's reality of time. "Reorienting Realities: Gender, Aging, and Care in the Genre Fictions of Emma Healey and Jo Walton" turns to popular novels that deliberately deploy, if not exaggerate, the notion of dementia's "alternative realities" as essential to their narrative forms, and to elaborate on what I identify to be an important trend to note in contemporary representations of dementia; that is, the engagement with values lying at the heart of person-centered dementia care. These works simultaneously take up the trope of dementia's "alternative realities" to narrate histories of gendered postwar violence and aging differently. Healey's text plays with the generic form of the detective and cozy mysteries, exposing how gender, ableism, and ageism and intertwined, while also dealing with the excavation of postwar traumatic memory. Walton's text offers a way to think about the validity of dementia's multiple realities through a speculative framework, while also insisting on the importance of attending to the actual material needs accompanying the realities of aging. Through fiction these texts reimagine life with dementia as a site of agency and opportunity for thinking about transformative approaches to care, community, and "and non-instrumentalist conceptions of human value" (Burke, "Dementia," 195).

At the same time, these authors deploy dementia as a means of challenging readers to conceive of the geographic reach and temporal duration of these histories as distant or "past" differently.

Together, these chapters demonstrate recurrent narrative patterns and themes paradigmatic of the way contemporary writers grapple with the boundaries between public and private history; remembering and forgetting; self and other. These texts also remind us that the body in this moment in time is richly implicated in broader cultural phenomenon. The multiplication of catastrophes in our lifetime—war, genocide, the sweeping reach of environmental degradation and nuclear disaster—are just a few of the prescient contemporary issues bringing the social and economic value and place of the (disabled) body into the forefront of American consciousness. Thus, the narrative and rhetorical patterns employed in these texts not only explore ethical issues involved in writing dementia and disability more broadly, but also how intimate and intertwined personal and public histories are in a global era.

CHAPTER I

Writing Dementia and Disaster in Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*

Within minutes following the Tōhoku earthquake, the onslaught of tsunamis that struck the northeast coast of Japan on March 11, 2011 destroyed 300 miles of coastline and swallowed entire towns. The cataclysm killed over 16,000 people and left nearly 3,000 missing, many of whom, alongside five million tons of debris, vanished into the ocean (NOAA). Subsequent meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant further exacerbated the disaster. To this day, radiation has rendered adjacent towns uninhabitable, and contaminants continue to migrate through air, soil, and water across the Pacific Ocean.

Setting in motion the narrative of Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being* is the drift, and arrival on the shore of British Columbia, of a "large scarred freezer bag," housing a Hello Kitty lunchbox.[26] Escaping the gyres of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, the lunchbox is a piece of flotsam "from people's homes in Japan that the tsunami swept out to sea," washing up "sooner than anyone expected" (14). Ruth, a writer who discovers and initially mistakes the parcel for trash, becomes consumed by the task of uncovering the mysterious origins of its contents: an antique wristwatch, a bundle of letters, and a diary of teenager Nao Yatsutani.[27] As the stories of these items unfold, readers are shuttled across collapsed geographies and temporalities—from transpacific

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[26] Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 9. Subsequent citations appear in parentheses.

[27] I refer to "Ruth" as the novel's narrator and character and use "Ozeki" when referring to the author. However, because of the deliberate use of autobiographical modes, I do consider there is fluidity between these two distinctions. As Mojca Krevel suggests, "The implicit autobiographicality contributes to a greater stability of Ruth's identity, and ensures the fluidity, compatibility and interchangeability of the author, narrator and literary character as an infinite internal differentiation of the same – fractal – self" (117).

aftereffects of the Fukushima nuclear disaster back to intergenerational histories of World War II and colonial dispossession in pre-modern Japan. The novel's chapters alternate between Nao's diary and Ruth's account of reading it, as well as her attempt to find out if Nao is still alive. Interleaved, these dual narratives explore the challenges of witnessing the legacy of disasters still unfolding and of knowing the stories of others gone and still missing.

The two narrators, Nao and Ruth, are invested in written projects of cross-generational remembering. Nao's intent is to reconstruct the life of her aging great-grandmother Jiko, while Ruth is failing to complete a memoir about caring for her mother, Masako, who has Alzheimer's disease: "During the long period of decline, Ruth had recorded the gradual erosion of her mother's mind…The tone of the writing bugged her—cloying, elegiac. It made her cringe. She was a novelist. She was interested in the lives of others. What had gotten into her, to think she could write a memoir?" (64). By the end of the novel, readers do not know if the course of Nao's life has led her to successfully compose Jiko's stories. The large-scale events—the earthquake and tsunami—that intrude on the intimate space of the diary are presumably what bring the writing to an end. What the reader does know, however, is that Ruth reads Nao's diary as distraction from her own struggle to finish writing about her mother.

The connection between acts of life writing, Alzheimer's, and disaster may seem inconsequential to readers by the very virtue of Ruth's inability to write about her mother. Critics and reviewers often gloss over Masako's dementia, framing Masako as simply an autobiographical index of Ozeki's experiences caring for her own mother with Alzheimer's.[28] Such a reading ignores the novel's formal and thematic reliance on the somatic orientations of dementia, relegating the

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[28] Ozeki's works regularly invite and refuse autobiographical readings. Slippages between fiction and reality are abetted by Ozeki use of her own name as the narrating protagonist and the novel's dedication page, "For Masako, for now and forever," referring to her late mother Masako Yokoyama Lounsbury, who died in 2004, among other details. In the official book trailer, Ozeki also appears as Ruth picking up Nao's diary on a shore.

representational stakes of disability as it intersects with memory, history, and care to the margins. Using a disability studies lens, I counter this shortfall by foregrounding the novel's formal and thematic reliance on the somatic orientations of dementia. Through the discourse and formal disruptions of dementia—and disability more broadly—*A Tale*'s central concerns surrounding social, historical, and environmental loss and disaster become legible.

The lack of critical attention to dementia in *A Tale* may be in part a symptom of the prevalent discursive mapping of "natural" disaster onto disability. Since the "ravages" of memory loss and cognitive impairment often forecast irrevocable tragedy in popular and biomedical imaginaries, disability lends itself to the language of environmental catastrophe.[29] Exemplifying this is the 2017 PBS documentary, *Alzheimer's: Every Minute Counts*, rife with metaphors of environmental disaster that insist the "tsunami of Alzheimer's disease in America…will be the financial sinkhole of the 21st century." The language of disaster frames disability as loss and a maligned state of dependency; dementia marking a slow yet violent dissolution of self, straining economic and social resources, threatening to inundate those around it. At its surface, *A Tale* refracts anxieties surrounding the threat and aftermath of natural disaster through its representation of dementia and appears to stigmatize dementia as a social and bodily disaster in its own right. But interpreted through a disability studies analytic, dementia in the novel becomes an important locus for critique, knowledge, and formal experimentation. Thus, *A Tale* illuminates complex relationships among embodied conditions, environmental disasters, and the effects of the experience and trope of dementia on imaginative literature.

Attending to dementia as it intersects with the novel's preoccupation with post-Fukushima, waste-filled ocean ecologies requires a cripped ecocritical reading practice, one that recognizes the

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[29] The rhetoric of natural disaster—especially tsunami—is commonplace in popular news media, scientific, and scholarly discourse about growing demographics of people living with conditions such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, and most frequently in recent years, dementia and autism.

generative possibilities of thinking with disability as "an agential, material, and affective embodiment" (Mitchell and Snyder 554). "Cripping," Carrie Sandahl writes, is about interpreting from the margins, "illuminat[ing] new meanings by attending to the marginalized perspectives of disabled people. Cripping spins mainstream representations or practices to reveal their able-bodied assumptions and exclusionary effects" (46). Dominant approaches in the environmental humanities generally focus on the disabled body as a dystopic sign of failure in or alienation from nature, a tragic symbol for or evidence of environmental injustice and degradation. Cognitive disability in particular is also often a negative signifier, such as in Rob Nixon's formulation of "slow violence," in which he uses the popular metaphor of "amnesia" to describe the violence of social neglect accompanying "attritional catastrophes that overspill clear boundaries in time and space" (7). This notion of amnesia invokes a complex and longstanding tradition of critique that encompasses the cultivation of forgetting in the service of reproducing ideology and forms of power, but it is nevertheless a damaging metaphor. As Sarah Gibbons points out, "amnesia" implies "disability itself might be a form of violence against the body," and this ableist logic, she argues, deserves its own disability studies critique (8). Following Gibbons, I ask how we might conceptualize states of forgetting—such as amnesia and dementia—beyond the framework of catastrophe, violence, and burden. Cripping must also engage with experiences of aging, to interrogate the state of disaster and fear associated with aging bodies and memory loss in cultural discourse. The presumed disaster or "living death" of dementia constructs forgetting as an individual failure and problem both in medical and political spheres, feeding ideologies warranting the disabled and elderly alike further marginalization, neglect, and institutional violence.

A Tale engages a disability studies agenda, not directly or polemically, but in its investments in dementia and the aging body as sites of knowledge about time and narrative as they appear alongside the ecological and social damages wrought by disasters such as Fukushima. In some ways, *A Tale* relies on the entrenched narratives of tragedy and crisis linked to the cognitive changes of dementia and aging as characters grapple with the imperative yet impossible task of knowing, telling, and remembering the uncertain stories accompanying disaster. But rather than read *A Tale*'s engagement with dementia, and its main association with forgetting, as solely a variation of Nixon's metaphoric use of amnesia, I consider processes of dementing as productive of formal experimentation and reflection on embodied states of difference. In the sections that follow, I explore how Ozeki engages with dementia in ways that position and resist disability as an undesirable symbol for cultural amnesia and environmental degradation. *A Tale*'s narrative strategies require us to consider how we might welcome fraught, natural processes of forgetting as moments to challenge normative expectations of narrative closure and certainty, linear temporality, cognition, and personhood. The novel also offers an opportunity to think about the meaningful forms of interpersonal and intergenerational connection and communication dementia can offer.

To highlight the overlooked representational stakes of dementia as it intersects with history and politics in *A Tale,* I first examine how forgetting and remembering play out along environmental and human axes through the novel's engagement with images of "dementing" oceanic gyres. Bringing together entangled locations and temporalities in unaccustomed ways, the novel's dementing gyres assemble surprising empathetic links between different interconnected forgotten and remembered histories. The latter sections turn to ways Masako, Nao (a homophone of 'now'), and Jiko embody alternate frameworks for thinking about and valuing forgetting by focusing readers' attention on the importance of the "now" time of dementia, Zen Buddhist meditation, and Nao's diary. Furthermore, I examine the novel's formal and generic features alongside dementia and disability's temporalities, tracing the moments in which the narrative relies on disability as an aesthetic resource to illustrate the challenges and imaginative possibilities of forgetting and (life) writing.

Throughout the novel, the importance of autobiographical forms, such as Nao's diary and Ruth's account of her simulated, paced reading "of the girl's life and its unfolding," not only provide the text with a sense of authenticity but also sense of urgency (38). At the heart of *A Tale*'s telling of disaster and dementia is the sense of connectedness through present time, one returning readers to the importance of the deictic 'now' on several occasions. If Nao's diary, written in the blank pages of a gutted copy of Marcel Proust's *À la recherché du temps perdu*, is an exercise "in search of lost time," its discovery by Ruth and readers such as ourselves marks its retrieval of what was once lost to the immediate, empathetic present (23).

Memory's Half Life: The Archive of the Gyre

Ruminating over the lunchbox containing Nao's diary, Ruth and her husband Oliver postulate its origins as tsunami flotsam. Oliver's subsequent tangents on the polluted ocean articulate the enduring yet transient temporality of ocean gyres and their archive of detritus:

> "The flotsam that rides the gyres is called drift. Drift that stays in the orbit of the gyre is considered to be part of the gyre memory. The rate of escape from the gyre determines the half-life of drift…" He picked up the Hello Kitty lunchbox and turned it over in his hands. (14)
>
> "Plastic is like that," Oliver was saying. "It never biodegrades. It gets churned around in the gyre and ground down into particles. Oceanographers call it confetti. In a granular state, it hangs around forever." (93)

Gyres such as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch are systems of circulating water currents in which debris amasses and moves along surface patterns of the Earth's global oceans. In the gyre, the refuse of human life comingles with the very substance of the oceans. Oliver's explanations of the oceanic ecosystem's "gyre memory" and the "half-life of drift" refer to the natural process by which a gyre, with every orbit, in theory expels half of its contents, in effect dispersing former memories and histories embodied in debris. Much like the mind, the material reality of the archive of the gyre is subject to change. And while the analogy to the temporality of half-life decay invokes the invisible persistence of radioactive fallout after Fukushima, it also resonates with the impermanency of organic memory as the gyre loses its artifacts—it "forgets" its contents. But as this section explores, the gyre's process of ejecting permanent plastic pollutants and transient debris, such as the lunchbox, also functions in the narrative to opens up space for the stories of those objects to be narrated and remembered across unexpected spatial and temporal locales.

The gyre's memory loss is *A Tale*'s recurrent image, an expression of what I call a *dementing ecology*: a mapping of dementia onto the environment as a natural process gravid with meaning rather than merely a sign of pathology and environmental degradation. The insistent link between neurological and oceanic ecosystems recurs throughout the novel on a suggestive etymological level in every invocation of the word 'gyre.' Lingering on the word, a thematic convergence between biomedical understandings and cultural imaginations of dementia surfaces. By the end of the 19th century, the etiological characterization of dementia was solidified as an impairment marked simultaneously by vascular degeneration, demyelination, and the enlargement of ventricles, creating widening gaps between folds of the brain known as "gyre formations." Neurologist Samuel Wilks referred to these as "wasted convolutions" in which "water…has taken their place" (383). *A Tale* takes up Wilks's conception of dementia as an inundation of the brain: like the Great Pacific Garbage Patch Oliver imagines, the atrophying gyres of dementia, too, have their own watery currents with drifts dislodging memories on a synaptic scale. Initiating the movement of the narrative between past and present, human and environment, and coupled with the subsequent appearance of Ruth's mother, the gyre cues readers into the wider importance of dementia to the novel.

In particular, the structure of *A Tale*'s telling of would-be forgotten memories and histories relies on narrating the gyre's dementing—the process of its artifacts escaping its center. The history of the lunchbox, for example, can only surface once it is expelled from the gyre and makes its telluric way from coast to coast to be discovered. The artifacts of histories jettisoned from the dementing gyre function to foster curiosity in readers while forging a sense of intimate responsibility for recovering the past. The gyre thus mimics an important understanding about dementia to keep in mind: dementia entails not only memory loss but also the resurfacing of remote and long-term memories. Rather than dismiss these rogue memories as extraneous, senseless, or trivial, the text posits the promise of important stories behind them.

The gyre warrants critical attention as a site of the narrative's unfolding concerns considering that it resonates strongly with, and reworks, William Butler Yeats's popular theory of gyres as a model of time and history. The displacement of memories, the ebb and flow of forgetting and remembering, closely recalls the incessant gyre pattern of history's making and unmaking described in Yeats's *A Vision* (1925). Yeats uses the figure of two interpenetrating gyres to conceptualize the course of history in which all moments in time move through opposing spirals, with one historical moment subsuming the other in cycles of precisely 2,000 years. As Claire Nally points out, Yeats's occult gyres of time were his attempt to understand cycles of social strife and violence, such as "the colonial legacy of Ireland's relationship to England, and the conflict inherent in that relationship" (76). For Yeats, the movement between these antithetical gyres of oppression and resistance shapes personal lives and understandings of time as cyclical. Evocative of Yeats's project, *A Tale*'s gyre memory—and the process of its dementing—drives the narrative, circulating anxieties surrounding the volatile temporal patterns of documenting and witnessing disastrous events related to, but not limited by, the Fukushima disaster. But while Yeats's gyres operate with a strict adherence to time, the dementing gyres of *A Tale* are not cyclical but random and spontaneous, disabling temporal predictability. The narrative function of the gyre's memory loss ironically enables the haphazard, if not serendipitous, shoring up of remembered stories of natural disaster as well as colonial and imperialist violence.

Like Yeats, Ruth (the character and narrator) is concerned with the ephemerality of historical temporalities, particularly in the digital age. In the wake of March 11, Ruth is inundated by "the images pouring in from Japan…aware that while these moments were captured online, so many other moments simply vanished":

> [T]he global bandwidth was flooded with images and reports from Japan…But then the uprising in Libya and the tornado in Joplin superseded the quake, and the keyword cloud shifted to *revolution* and *drought* and *unstable air masses* as the tide of information from Japan receded. (113)

Ruth's reference to the word cloud (a visual representation of weighted text data) recalls the "cloud" of radioactive air-bound emissions crossing North America nine days after the Fukushima disaster that media headlines sensationalized and then quickly abandoned (Thakur et al.). The ephemeral record and memory of news events prompts Ruth to question how we engage with history, and in doing so she turns us back to the language of half-life decay and dementing gyres:

> What is the half-life of information? Does its rate of decay correlate with the medium that conveys it?…Does the half-life of information correlate with the decay of our attention? Is the Internet a kind of temporal gyre, sucking up stories, like geodrift, into its orbit? What is its gyre memory? How do we measure the half-life of its drift?
> The tidal wave, observed, collapses into tiny particles, each one containing a story:
>
> - a mobile phone, ringing deep inside a mountain of sludge and debris;
> - a ring of soldiers, bowing to a body they've flagged;
> - a medical worker clad in full radiation hazmat, wanding a bare-faced baby who is squirming in his mother's arms;
> - a line of toddlers, waiting quietly for their turn to be tested.
>
> These images, a minuscule few representing the inconceivable many, eddy and grow old, degrading with each orbit around the gyre, slowing breaking down into razor-sharp fragments and brightly colored shards. Like plastic confetti, they're drawn into the gyre's becalmed center, the garbage patch of history and time. The gyre's memory is all the stuff that we've forgotten. (114)

As the language of radioactive decay turns from ocean gyres to forms of "information" and "attention" span, Ruth recycles and lands on the same turns of phrase as Oliver, relying on the notion of a dementing ecology to convey the natural contingency of memory, history, and their embodiment in material and digital forms. The half-life of memory or forgetting is invoked in the "gyre's memory" and the drift of oceanic forgetting becomes mapped onto human losses and radioactive exposure from the tsunami.[30] Ruth's bullet points attempt to compartmentalize lost lives and histories lodged in the "tiny particles" of the literal tsunami's "tidal wave," as well as the figurative currents within historical gyres. Her invocation of social media and the debris of endless ephemera of fragmented Internet storytelling also speak to orphaned sites and stories facing obscurity. Thus, collective and historical forgetting in the digital age and the permanent damage wrought by ecological disaster are drawn together as one interconnected concern in the "gyre's becalmed center," in which memories are always subject to becoming lost to time but also regained. Additionally, it is worth addressing that the diary in the lunchbox is written in a blank copy of Proust's *À la recherché du temps perdu*. To some extent the diary's infrastructural reliance on Proust conditions these views of memory and memory as process. One might argue Ruth's encounters with the textures and smells of the barnacle-crusted lunchbox stage a Proustian experience of memory: one of involuntary remembering, surfacing when she least expects it throughout the novel. But as I will explore, what Ruth remembers or comes to know are pasts that are not her own, which carries ethical implications for witnessing to lives lost to disasters across time.

Ruth's recognition "[t]he gyre's memory is all the stuff that we've forgotten" is an urgent call for remembering disaster and its interminable effects. But the novel also points to the limits of remembering, and how the (re)discovery of histories is a process of unpredictable unfolding. In *A Tale*, the gyre's memory loss is imbricated in the person with dementia's forgetting, not as a process of erasure but one of reassembling—an opening for empathetic speculation and the co-production

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[30] The fear of radiation from Fukushima and its floating debris is entangled with Ruth's "biggest fear" of Alzheimer's, which she describes in terms of "swelling" waters of a tsunami (92). Yet the language of radiation is also a reminder of the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This conjoining of fears requires us to think more on the specific cultural and historical meanings of both those who've survived radioactive exposure (*hibakusha*) and the cognitive changes of those with dementia. As Clare Barker and Stuart Murray have suggested, "Caught between a general fear of radiation sickness and responses generated from the cultural memory of the bombings, the experiences of *hibakusha* are continually conditioned by their implication within the ongoing resonance of a collective trauma" (231). Likewise, how Ruth, as a Japanese-American, initially engages with and narrates her mother's dementia is predicated on deeply complicated relationships between violent histories and environmental factors.

of stories. The presumably inconsequential objects eddying in the periphery of the gyre embody the serendipitous stories of histories continually lost and found; they remind us remembering is relational, imaginative, and in fluid interaction with the present. We might say that Ozeki crips Yeats's gyres, as she figures a dementing ecology that defies expectations of cyclical or linear progression. Histories embodied in the lunchbox's contents emerge through the narrative out of time and pattern. Unstable and unpredictable in its temporal decay, the gyre's memory loss is the force driving the narrative and the comprehension of the difficult to represent Fukushima disaster.

Remembering disaster in the novel is not limited to Fukushima; disaster is also attached to legacies of war, imperialism, and colonialism. The diary washes up on a beach "below Jap Ranch," named after a homestead that "had once belonged to a Japanese family, who were forced to sell when they were interned during the war" (32). Michelle N. Huang's reading of this passage highlights "the stuff we've forgotten" as a site for the material effects of forgetting the transpacific histories of racial violence—the Garbage Patch being "just one archive of [Asian American politics'] forgotten, but not dead, waste" (105). There are also more violent gyres of history that overlap and obscure each other: Ruth and Oliver live on an island "named for a famous Spanish conquistador who overthrew the Aztec empire…which is why the inlets and sounds of coastal British Columbia are scattered with the names of famous Spanish mass murderers" (139). Jiko lives on "one of the last pieces of tribal land to be taken from the indigenous Emishi…until they were defeated by the Japanese Imperial Army in the eighth century" (141)—land also devastated on 3/11. These colonial violences surface like debris from the gyre as the narrative's flotsam: easily overlooked details not integral to the plot but crucial in their accumulative presence in the margins of the narrative.

The narratives that emerge from dementing ecologies makes visible patterns of overlapping histories that recall Yeats's gyres as expressions of (post)colonial conflict. In *A Tale*, it seems that every artifact that escapes the gyre, and every place touched by its transpacific flows, is an unexpected glimpse into those layered histories of injustice.[31] As Guy Beauregard observes, Ozeki's text does not simply promise dialogue "in the novel's narrative present" regarding these histories, it points to

> the limits of which lives we, as variously positioned readers, can presume to know. By representing spaces marked by commercial and militarized violence and by the forced removal of Indigenous and other racialized subjects, it underlines overlapping forms of violence and exclusion that have enabled the novel's "community of engagement" to come into being. (102)

Beauregard draws our attention to the community of characters in the novel that have "differential access to Nao's narrative and the other texts found on the beach, as each of these figures provides (variously) questions, insights, counter-positions, background information, and invaluable translations into English of texts written in French and Japanese" (100). Deciphering the texts that emerge from the archive of the gyre is a communal effort; making visible and re-remembering those histories becomes an act of stewardship. The logic of the dementing ecology is not only founded on forgetting, but the resurfacing of long-term memories of histories embodied in debris. Seen in this way, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is more than a figure of overwhelming environmental disaster, it is also a figurative diary or keeper of autobiographical artifacts (like the lunchbox) that, when discovered, tells its stories to patient listeners. The next section turns to how readers must also listen to Ruth's mother Masako. With her dementia, Masako is the source of a potent and provocative non-normative mode of communication that contributes to the text's exploration of the workings of historical memory of violence and colonialisms.

My concept of dementing ecologies has hoped to show that what Huang calls the "*humans in the gyre and the gyre in the humans*," requires us to attend critically to the narrative's overlooked engagement with disability (104; emphasis in original). "Getting caught up in the gyre's oscillating

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[31] As Burke similarly points out, "at the level of the cultural imaginary, a character with Alzheimer's often becomes a means of focusing upon the histories of the displaced, the migrant and the exiled" ("'The country of my disease'" 68).

vortex," Huang writes, "necessitates a willingness to contravene established boundaries, to allow for surprising juxtapositions to emerge, and to seek rapprochement with links that have been erased or disconnected" (104). An eco-crip reading enables a more capacious view of the "surprising juxtapositions" between bodies and environments the novel churns up. The gyre is at once a figure of neurological dementia, a site of the dementing environment, and a representational figure for the historical processes of the "memory loss" of various disasters and their afterlives. Through the backdrop of dementing ecologies, Ozeki highlights temporalities of unfolding stories to honor memory's half-life—one involving forgetting, unpredictability, and the persistence of the past in the differentiating present. Dementia thus emerges as the novel's key narrative and epistemic resource as the gyre's memory loss of colonialisms and their afterlives require readers to think these histories anew.

Masako, Forgetting, and The Politics of Now

In an interview about the impact her mother had on *A Tale*, Ozeki explains how "the now" of Alzheimer's helped reframe her relationship with time:

> You are slowing watching somebody drop out of time. She was moving backward but she was also rewinding…I think I loosened my grip on time…if I got too attached to time and measuring time as we measure it…she would get upset because she couldn't remember…so finally I realized there was no point. That actually, she was right, it didn't really matter whether it's Monday or Thursday or Saturday—it's now. (*OPB Arts and Life*)

Ozeki's loosened "grip on time" honors her mother's temporal reorientation as a useful, valid perception to be empathized with rather than mourned as absolute loss. Sidestepping the clench of calendar time, Alzheimer's calls attention to temporal regimes that marginalize both aging and disabled bodies in its demand for standardized routine, predictability, and remembering. As Anne Davis Basting stresses, focused labor on remembering "for ourselves and for future generations…exacerbate[s] the shame and fear surrounding forgetting and the human frailty, dependency, and morality with which forgetting is linked" (*Forget Memory* 23). Likewise, the novel takes up the value of "demented time," which Hailee Yoshizaki-Gibbons, drawing from Petra Kuppers and Alison Kafer's notion of "crip time," calls "individual moments [that] may be self-contained, nonlinear, intermittent, irrational, and idiosyncratic - *yet they are no less meaningful or valuable*…Due to its focus on being in the moment, demented time asks us to suspend our ideas about memory and the assumption memory is an essential aspect of building and maintaining relationships with others" (9). Through dialogue between Ruth and Masako, *A Tale* foregrounds the importance of living in the present, interrogating the norm of what constitutes a meaningful relationship to time and its connection to personhood. More provocatively, Ozeki uses this notion of "demented time" to critique the normative, linear mode of conceiving catastrophic historical events as past.

What are the significances of—and other meanings possible for—dementia in a narrative that stresses the very necessary task of remembering histories such as the ones explored in the previous section? In the "now" time of dementia things are discovered anew, such as during Ruth and Masako's ritual trips to the community thrift store: "When her closets got full and her dresser drawers no longer closed, Ruth slipped things out from the bottom of her piles and returned them to the Free Store, where her mother could discover them all over again" (222). Huang likens Masako's recurrent rediscovery of clothing to Ruth's happenstance discovery of the diary as the recuperation of garbage into personal responsibility: "Although Alzheimer's is a condition defined by forgetting," writes Huang (with an all too generic definition of forgetting), "Masako is continually attracted to the same objects, intimating the extent to which unconscious patterns and desires animate us…Masako's recovery of the sweater manifests responsibility; the sweater's affective pull allows for it to become legible as not-trash" (104). Huang's reflection on Masako centers the phenomenology of "the sweater's affective pull" (104) rather the particular embodied way of thinking and living with Alzheimer's itself. But it is precisely Masako's particular orientation to objects in "now" time that enable her to experience the pull of the sweater in the first place. As Masako's other appearances in the novel show, the now helps Ruth question and redefine for herself and readers what constitutes a meaningful relationship to time.

Masako's voice appears in two key parallel scenes of dialogue several chapters apart. In these moments Masako and Ruth discuss significant public events mediated through television: New Year's Eve and 9/11. The former sets up the novel's tenor of anxiety in relation to dementia early in the narrative:

> Every time a new burst of fireworks lit up the television screen, her mother would lean forward.
> "My, isn't that pretty! What are we celebrating?"
> "It's the New Year, Mom."
> "Really? What year is it?"
> "It's the year 2000. It's the new millennium."
> "No!" her mother would exclaim…And then she would close her eyes and doze off again until the next burst of fireworks woke her…
> "My, isn't that pretty! What are we celebrating?" (83)

The New Year, close of presidential elections, and this exchange with her mother lead Ruth to feel anxious about the future. It's not just Masako's incomprehension of a new year that alarms Ruth—it is her undoing of relations through the authority of her blanket resistance ("No!") to expectations of normative sociality (celebration). Masako's brusque discursive production isn't indicative of her 'irrationality,' but an expression of the agency she possesses to expose the constraining expectations of (predominantly verbal) social participation and rationality imposed on people with dementia.[32] The scene draws attention to a futurity Masako, denied political agency or rhetoricity, cannot normatively grasp or participate in. Masako's incomprehension of the year and the protracted conversation it engenders marks a reorientation in and to time that "reimagine[s] what public time

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[32] As I elaborate on later, communicative aspects of dementia can be productively aligned with Joshua St. Pierre's work on how nonnormative/"nonrational" speech can provide critiques of ableism within liberal humanist discourse ("Cripping").

and social relations can look like," a defining feature of "crip time" (Kafer 40). As crip time can be "liberatory" and "a time of loss" (Samuels, "Six Ways"), a source of "disability culture politics" but also "born out of pain and frustration" (Kuppers 29), Alzheimer's temporality shifts across complex terrain. *A Tale*'s conundrum is holding space for forgetting and the now in a narrative about remembering individual lives and major historical events in a century defined by the injunction to "never forget."

The second dialogue takes place on 9/11, after Ruth and Oliver rush home in fear Masako has panicked from watching the news alone. Anticlimactically, they arrive to Masako's fleeting understanding of the event's gravity:

> "What program is this?" her mother asked.
> It's the news, Mom," she answered.
> "I don't understand," her mother said. "It looks like a war. Are we at war?"
> "Yes, Mom," she said. "We're at war."
> "Oh that's terrible!" her mother exclaimed. "Who are we at war with?"
> "Afghanistan, Mom."
> They watched together in silence, until the commercial break. Her mother got up and shuffled to the bathroom. When she came back, she stopped and looked at the screen. "What program is this?"
> "It's the news, Mom."
> "Looks like a war. Are we at war?"
> "Yes Mom. We're at war."
> "Oh that's terrible! Who are we at war with?"
> "Iraq, Mom."
> "Really? But I thought that war was over."
> "No, Mom. It's never over. America has always been at war with Iraq."
> "Oh, that's terrible!" … Days pass, and weeks. Months pass, and then years.
> "Now who did you say we were at war with?" (273)

Masako's questions read as hallmark symptoms of Alzheimer's, but they are also "repetitions of *questionabilities*," which Michael Schillmeier argues, "enforces an on-going questioning of the humans, things and related practices experienced" (78). For Schillmeier, these questions are one of many events arising from illness and disability with the power to interrogate social reality and "disrupt, question, alter and even endanger the normativities of 'healthy' bodies, their practices and relations" (2). Masako's relation to war denaturalizes the normative conception of war as having a discreet beginning and end. Masako's questions elicit a cynical response from Ruth, reflecting reality through the hyperbole, "America has always been at war with Iraq." This scene is not only important because it highlights anxieties about one's alienation from the past due to forgetting. Tasking readers to question the finality implied in conceiving of violent histories and disasters as past, Masako's questions likewise impel Ruth to iterate, "It's never over." Masako's questioning deconstructs the temporal and spatial boundaries news media and dominant discourses impose on events such as war. If the images, sounds, and stories televised in homes are "electronic monuments" that give viewers "an enduring frame for organizing their personal recollection of events," Masako's forgetting exposes the inadequacy of such tropes of national remembering and narrative frames that script disaster as discreet progressions of past, present, and future (Mihelj 119). Here Masako's dementia is not merely a negative signifier for cultural amnesia, but an interrogation of how histories are always at risk of oppression or effacement in their mediation. Readers also are forced aware of the present absence of Masako's family history of internment during World War II, which Ruth mentions only briefly in conjunction with Jap Ranch. Masako tasks us to ask, how do we urge commemoration and remembrance for tragic and disastrous events that broach the impossibility of redress without perpetuating the fear and shame associated with individual forgetting? How do we include people with dementia in our desired futures, and as participants in—not enemies to—cultural and national memory?[33]

Whether it is the scripted cultural rituals of celebrating New Years, recognizing war or imperialist histories on news media, these events make demands on Masako's memory, articulation, and reason. Yet the narrative does not cast forgetting as individual loss or failure, instead implying

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[33] I extend Ellen Samuels' definition of crip time as "time travel" through individual "normative life stages" to collectively experienced historical junctures. If dementia reorients a person's relationship to history— abandoning claims to completeness and accuracy—it is imperative to broaden our understanding of what kinds of subjective experiences of history are possible and recognize them as valid realities, even if beyond normative bounds of rational understanding. See "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time" *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37.3 (2017).

histories are always already distorted and in progress of being forgotten in national memory, a reminder of the interdependency required in all acts of remembering. In these dialogues, Masako's memory loss is not non-meaningful or a hindrance to communication. Masako's questions are not literal inquires and failures to remember; they are indexes of a particular way of being social. Her questions are less about content and more about form and gesture—gestures that without a receptive listener often go overlooked as simply forgetting. Masako's nonlinear relationship to time and place asks readers to read anew, to suspend expectations of memory, and to think about the politics of forgetting when pulled into "the now." Considering forms of cognitive difference and their temporalities can thus serve to reframe normative constructions of memory-based identity but also deepen our ethical consciousness, radically challenging our perception of history and time.

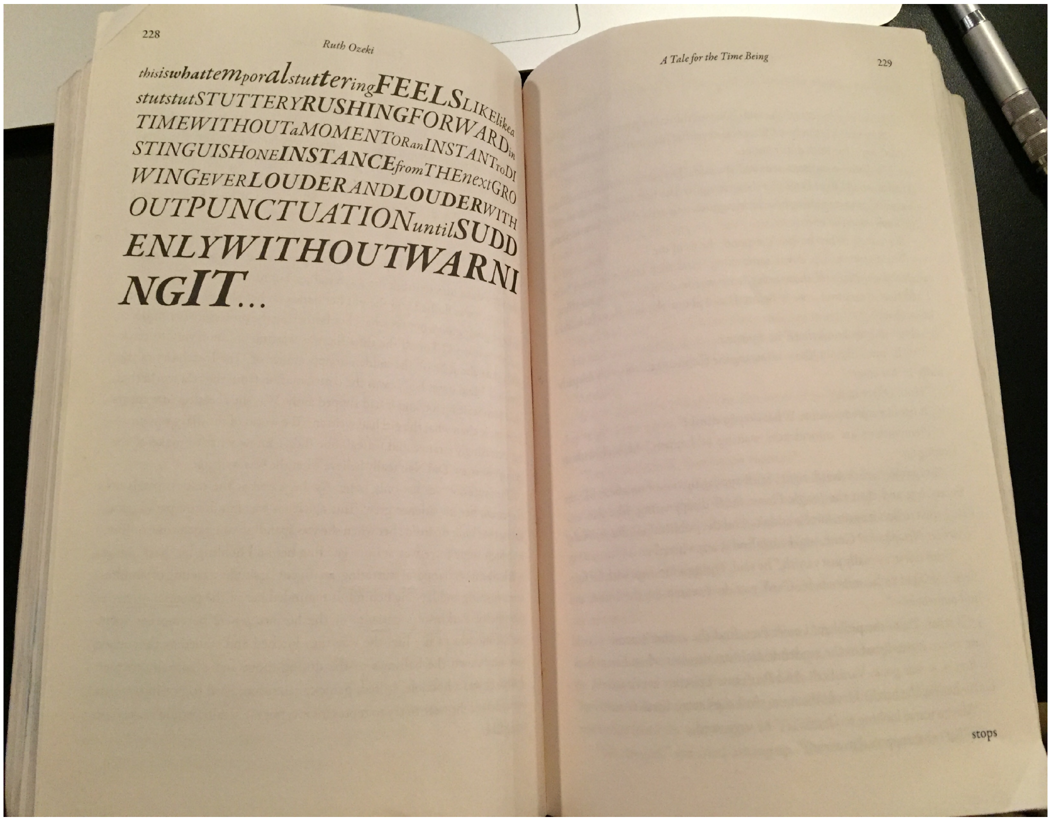
"Temporal Stuttering"

The most idiosyncratic moment of *A Tale*'s formal experimentation with representing time relies on disability to achieve its most dramatic moment of narrative and textual rupture. It is the culminating moment in which Ruth feels she has lost all potential material for confirming Nao's existence. The disappearance of an online article, "The Instability of the Female 'I'" (a clue to Nao's existence, potentially authored by Jiko), as well a Stanford professor's non-response to her inquiries regarding his connection to Nao's father, drives Ruth and the narrative to a breaking point of impatience. Like Masako asking questions over and over again, throughout the narrative Ruth keeps asking herself, *who and where is Nao?* Struggling to describe her agitation, Ruth falls onto the language of disability:

> How to describe it? A temporal stuttering, an urgent lassitude, a feeling of simultaneous rushing and lagging behind. It reminded her of the peculiar arrhythmic gait of Parkinson's patients in the hospice where her mother spent the last months of her life, the way they lurched and stalled as they made their way down the hallways to the dining room and eventually to their death. It was a horrible, stilted, panicky sensation, hard to put into words, but which, if she were trying to represent it typographically, would look something like:

> this is what temporal stuttering feels like stut stut stuttery rushing forward in time without a moment of an instant distinguishing one instance from the next growing ever louder and louder without punctuation until suddenly without warning it… [page break] stops. (227-229)

Attempting to narrate her anxiety of not knowing through the “temporal stuttering” and “arrhythmic gait” of Parkinson’s patients prompts Ruth to create a textual gap by experimenting with typography (fig. 1.1): her sentence is italicized, words run together and are capitalized and bolded in a semi-predictable pattern of differential size.



228 Ruth Ozeki

thisiswhattemporalstutteringFEELSLIKElikea
stutstutSTUTTERYRUSHINGFORWARDin
TIMEWITHOUTaMOMENTORanINSTANTtoDI
STINGUISHoneINSTANCEfromTHEnextGRO
WINGeverLOUDERANDLOUDERWITH
OUTPUNCTUATIONuntilSUDD
ENLYWITHOUTWARNI
NGIT…

A Tale for the Time Being 229

stops

Figure 1.1. Page spread of “temporal stuttering” in Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being*

As the sentence size grows exponentially larger, it halts at ellipses inaugurating an abundance of white space, until the next page, where the word “stops” appears at the bottom, virtually imperceptible to hasty readers. The next page begins with Ruth asking, “am I crazy?” (230), a query that extends the metaphor of the dementia to herself through its Latin meaning of being ‘out of one's mind.'[34] Readers are also reminded Alzheimer's is her "biggest fear" (92). These juxtapositions of mental illness, Parkinson's disease, and the stuttering body play on associations of disability as states of crisis, fright, and frustration in which the breakdown of meaning and relationships is ostensibly imminent. Yet this moment also plays on readers' expectations of form and readability predicated on the predicable interplay between text, font, and spacing—and their collapse generates new possibilities for meaning.

A cursory reading might suggest Ruth's invocation of Parkinson's dementia is simply a visual strategy to invoke discomfort in the reader, a form conveying her anxieties surrounding uncertainty and losing one's memory while mimetically attempting to represent an experience of living with Parkinson's. Inviting another reading, I argue that dementia operates as an aesthetic and rhetorical resource. In this graphic rupture of narrative continuity, the word becomes body as it lurches, challenging readers to pause—in fact, interrupt—their usual pace of engagement with the text and the state of not knowing. As Tobin Siebers argues, when words become bodies, they produce a "seizure of meaning, interrupting the ordinary transparency of the page, and expose the materiality of language…The word becomes image…It represents a form of behavior in which we direct ourselves toward a body, bringing it to our knowledge and making it exist in a more intimate sense" (*Disability Aesthetics* 124). Siebers's use of "seizure" is fitting in this context—invoking the image of both meanings of 'ictus' as a rhythmical stress and a fit associated with epilepsy, redolent of the Parkinsonian body's spasticity Ruth tries to capture here. This accrual of disability representations exudes formal excess that forces the narrative open, demanding it be expressed multimodally (i.e. the kinetic expression of font; the auditory rehearsal the line invites from the reader; the illusion of tactility in the arrangement of lines and sizes, etc.). Such multimodality foregrounds the materiality

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[34] As Schillmeier, drawing from Foucault, also insists "[t]he history of dementia cannot be thought without the history of madness" (15).

of the body and readers' own prolonged, embodied participation in the literary aesthetic experience, bringing the text a sense of immediacy. Readers' senses are deictically involved in the here and now of the page—focused and present—with Ruth experiencing and trying to understand, visually and kinetically, her stuttering. Stuttering emerges as a "meaningful rhetorical 'device'" that Jay Dolmage argues, embodies all struggle to find and make meaning (235). Seizing readers by erupting white space, "temporal stuttering" is a site of reflection on reading, writing, and narrative form. Ruth's thinking-with-"temporal stuttering" engenders a productive use of white space as a site of meaning—readers are literally seized—challenging the reader's desire for continuity or certainty, highlighting the artificiality of linear narrative structures that lead to closure or knowing, or by extension, a sense of wholeness that the dementing and disabled body resists as it stutters.[35]

"Temporal stuttering" on the page is a representational conflation of the physical (gait) and vocal (speech), illustrating the correlation that disability rights activist and scholar Joshua St. Pierre draws between the spastic and stuttering body: "both fail to move within fluid and calculable temporalities and thus both resist clear/stable meanings" ("Becoming" 345). Similar to Masako's function, the narrative's textual embodiment of stuttering productively arrests and resists normative temporal scripts to offer "a heuristic of instability and indeterminacy that generates multiple meanings and relations" (St. Pierre, "Cripping," 339). Ruth's deepest fear, perhaps more than Alzheimer's, is the inability to access the words for histories she wishes to write—a fear also dramatized by the writer's block barring her from finishing the memoir of Masako. It is a fear of being out of time (not having enough time to write) but also dropping out of time (failing to leave behind as well as find a written trace of a life, i.e. Nao's story). Her fear as a writer of stuttering

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[35] In medical discourse, "stuttering" invokes the clinical late stages of Alzheimer's and is associated with progressive aphasia characterized by slowed or halting speech, hesitation with or abnormal word finding, a forgetting of names or objects, as well as effortful or reduced speech. These all give the impression of stammering or stuttering; it's also important to distinguish Parkinson's dementia as different from Alzheimer's—but disability becomes conflated here.

before words is magnified by the felt necessity to produce a timely coherent narrative in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, which may or may not have killed Nao. The cultural expectation to construct a continuous and certain narrative, which stigmatizes forgetfulness and cognitive differences associated with disability and aging, is met by the inadequacy of linear narrative structures that impose closure.

In Ruth's textual imitation of the disabled body, the typographic stuttering rises and marches asynchronously as a body. Fittingly, Siebers insists the materiality of words have a corporeal presence that "rises to the surface of the page and moves into the emotional consciousness of the reader" (125). In this moment of Ruth's textual imitation of the dementing or disabled body, the typographic stuttering rises and marches asynchronously as a body, a body that encourages us to ask what meanings might emerge from gaps and elisions of memory. The textual lacuna emerging from the power of the disabled body represented illustrates the imaginative possibilities for narrative expression. Temporal stuttering halts readers in a moment of reflection alongside Ruth to consider: what happens when we embrace not knowing, look for meaning between the elisions and distortions of memory, and listen to what arises when memory, speech, and time are choreographed differently? Jay Dolmage has argued stuttering can be a powerful rhetorical form that dismantles logocentric paradigms and rigid conceptions of language, moving away from disability as deficit: "Instead disability is the very possibility (and concurrently the uncertainty) of human communication and knowledge. Disability then also resituates rhetoric, not as the flawless delivery of pure ideas, but the embodied struggle for meaning" (136). The textual moment of "temporal stuttering" employs disability as an aesthetic and rhetorical resource to illustrate the challenges of remembering and writing but also its imaginative possibilities for narrative expression.

Old Jiko, Forgetting, and the Politics of Nao/Now

Essential to the dramatic structure of the narrative, temporal stutterings become the moments in which objective time is suspended, histories are co-constituted, and lost stories are reconstructed through the imaginative present. The above scene of temporal stuttering connects to the next moment of narrative rupture: a pivotal scene in which a storm threatens to wipe out Ruth and Oliver's home island. With a turn of magical realism, the pages of Nao's diary go blank in front of Ruth's eyes, mirroring the indeterminacy of Nao's experience with the tsunami. Ruth again feels the anxiety of impending loss, taking readers back to images of the drifts and gyres that brought the diary to Ruth to begin with. With Nao's story erased, Ruth dreams herself into what appears to be Nao's past:

> She [Nao] is cold and swimming, and the sea is black and thick and filled with debris…*We sleeptogether in onelargeroom laid outing rowslike smallfishhungtodry*…But something's gone wrong with the words in time—syllables linger, refusing to dissipate or fall into silence—so that now there's a pileup of sounds, like cars colliding on a highway, turning meaning into cacophony, and before she knows it, she is adding to the din…Time swells. (347-8)

As in the previous episode of temporal stuttering, words rear end each other "like cars," embodying the collision of time. The dream bridges past and present, enabling Ruth to communicate with Nao and the dead. In her dream time travel, Ruth saves Nao's father from suicide and together they find the "Secret French Diary" of Haruki #1 (Jiko's son and kamikaze pilot). Placing the secret diary in Jiko's altar box for Nao to find, Ruth effectively *alters* the course of history. Subsequently, Ruth enables the re-writing of Nao's blank diary, so when she awakens, the pages are all there again.

This moment of magical realism springs from the temporal stuttering that Ozeki has thematized. These stutters in time and place account for the changing endings of Nao's diary, which perform the instability of its meanings. The script of each ending, readers learn, depends on the positionality of the reader. As a close friend, Muriel, suggests, the pages are blank because Ruth hasn't caught up to her own sense of the "now":

> "It's not about Nao's now. It's about yours. You haven't caught up with yourself yet, the now of *your* story, and you can't reach the ending until you do."
> Ruth thought about this…"I don't like it. I don't like having that much agency over someone else's narrative."
> Muriel laughed. "That's a fine way for a novelist to talk!" (377)

Nao's changing diary, interleaved with Ruth's life that alters it, is not only a form of the present, intimate now. It is a form of the now predicated on recording the search for and ethical responsibility of bringing another's life story into being, and an intimate awareness of one's own interconnected life in time. In this way, temporal stutterings are moments of transformation in which time is suspended, in which histories are co-constituted and lost stories reconstructed anew through the imaginative present.

It is also important to highlight that Ruth's comment about her discomfort over having too "much agency over someone else's narrative" is a moment in which the text prompts readers to consider the ethics of telling others' stories, particularly in narratives of disaster and dementia (both of which Ruth is struggling to write). The untellability of the stories of what happened to the tsunami victims and details of Masako's life history (including the internment of her family) are reproduced at the level of narrative in their absence from it. It seems that Ruth's inability to finish her memoir about Masako and reach the end of her own story (which is entangled with Nao's, as Muriel suggests), insists on an ethics of unknowability, or rather, a not-knowing that aligns with Buddhist practice and that must also be read alongside the trope of dementia.

Dementia, Buddhism, and Not-Knowing

My reading of *A Tale* so far has considered how Ozeki's immersion in living with a mother with dementia has illuminated for her new perspectives on time and memory, and that these perspectives make their way into what deliberately reads simultaneously as a semi-autobiographical and imaginative novel. Additionally, it is important to consider Ozeki's position as an ordained Zen

Buddhist priest, and how Zen Buddhism enters the novel alongside dementia. As I've explored, Ruth realizes the value of "the now" through her interactions with Masako as well as her imaginative, readerly kinship with Nao. By extension, Ruth also learns more about the value of now-time through the other matrilineal figure in the text: Nao's great-grandmother—an anarchist, feminist, Zen Buddhist nun affectionately known as "Old Jiko."

As the novel unfolds, Ruth dreams herself into both Nao and Jiko's life. In these occasions of temporal stuttering, Ruth alters history and rewrites the course of the diary, bringing disparate life histories into the now. What emerges in *A Tale* is an entangled life writing project of multiple women, a collective inquiry into what it means to be "a time being": "someone who lives in time, and that means you, and me, and every one of us who is, or was, or ever will be" (3). These musings on "time beings" stem from Jiko's Zen Buddhist teachings and are purposefully juxtaposed alongside the novel's preoccupation with dementia, providing spiritual and interdependent frameworks for coming to terms with and destigmatizing acts of forgetting.

Though different from Masako, the biographical Jiko that Nao writes about in her diary forgets many things—such as her birthday and age. In her forgetting she is, according to Nao, the only person "who really understands time" (24). After Jiko dies, Nao resolves to write the story of her life and teachings, including Jiko's outlook on the contingency of all memories and things: "It's true she's already dead, but her stories are still alive in my head at least for now, so I have to hurry up and write them down before I forget. I have a pretty good memory, but memories are time beings, too, like cherry blossoms or ginkgo leaves; for a while they are beautiful, and then they fade and die" (390). Nao's invocation of the natural world's ephemerality recalls the half-life of the gyre's memory. To consider memories "time beings," Nao suggests, is to honor memory's fallibility and impermanence.

By the novel's end, Nao's narrative provides Ruth with an alternative way of thinking about memory and forgetting, a way of thinking that stems from Jiko's teachings of zazen, Zen meditation, or how to "enter time completely" (181) by being present in the now. In her final reflections, Ruth adopts Zen Buddhist teachings into her own narrative: "zazen seemed like a kind of moment-by-moment observation of the self that apparently led to enlightenment…*To study the self is to forget the self*" (400). Like Masako's reorientation to time, Zen Buddhism forgetting of the self emphasizes the present, embracing uncertainty and not-knowing as "the most intimate way" (402). De-centering fixed points of view and the cultural demands to remember, the practices of zazen help Ruth come to terms with the ambiguity surrounding the lives lost in the earthquake and tsunami, including Nao: "I'd much rather know, but then again, not-knowing keeps all the possibilities open. It keeps all the worlds alive." (402). Not-knowing opens Ruth up to being present in the moment and centers her within a web of interconnection and expanded sense of connection to others. A counterpoint to Masako's literal forgetting and "not knowing," the ideas and practices of Zen Buddhism in *A Tale* prompt us to consider how might we extend these ideas to the forgetting of dementia.

Indeed, at the end of *A Tale,* Ruth extends the trope that people with dementia live "between worlds" to her own speculation of alternate realities:

> Maybe it wasn't so bad. In other worlds, she had finished her memoir. The memoir, and perhaps even a novel or two…"Do you really believe this?" she asked [Oliver]. "That there are other worlds where…no one died in the earthquake and tsunami? Where Nao is living and well, and maybe finishing her book of Jiko's life…Where there are no leaking nuclear reactors or garbage patching in the sea…" (399)

By the epilogue, Ruth takes up the Zen Buddhist teachings of Jiko with regards to "not-knowing," writing to Nao in the diaristic-epistolary form for the first time: "you quoted old Jiko saying something about not-knowing, how not-knowing is the most intimate way, or did I just dream that?…I think maybe it's true, even though I don't like uncertainty. I'd much rather *know*, but then again, not-knowing keeps all the possibilities open. It keeps all the worlds alive" (402). "Not knowing is hard," Ruth says at the end of the novel in reference to the lives lost and missing after March 11: "Their bodies were never found. Nobody would ever know what happened to them…'Do you think Nao is alive?'" (400). Circling back to the beginning images of the gyre's memory, this passage points back to the contingency of history and the impossibility of writing linear, finished histories. The memoir that may be finished in one world may be incomplete in another.

Continuing in appendices, too, the novel foregrounds as a takeaway the Zen Buddhist teachings of the "unbounded nature of not knowing" (409). Jiko and Nao open up the belief in alternative worlds as imaginative alternatives to closed, known, seemingly objective history. Neither Ruth nor Nao end up writing the life of their matrilineal line, leaving histories potentially forgotten. But what the novel does accomplish is leaving open the surprising possibility of meanings and histories that might emerge when readers, like Ozeki, loosen their grip on time.

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On a hilltop garden overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Otsuchi in northeastern Japan is a white, glass-paned phone booth housing a disconnected rotary phone, notebook, and pen for visitors to jot down their messages and thoughts. Visitors are often regulars, and calls are often made to home phone numbers no longer in service, and to loved ones no longer alive. Although no actual voice emerges from the receiver, for the time being, the callers' loved ones are present and listening. Since the devastating tsunami, the wind telephone (*kaze no denwa*)—erected and named by resident Itaru Sasaki—has facilitated conversations with the dead for over thousands of visitors wrestling with grief and loss. The wind telephone has been a way for people to stay in touch with those lost in the disaster. It also stands as a reminder for losses that cannot be forgotten.

In some ways, calls home from the wind telephone are similar to the imaginary conversations Ruth and Nao have with each other across time, location, and even worlds. "A lot of calls were just…straightforward updates about life," *This American Life* producer Miki Meek reports, "The kind of a quick highlights reel you might give to any family member you were catching up with on the phone." The space of the wind telephone elicits the diaristic performance of communicating to an absent interlocutor, conversations about the everyday, and a sense of dailiness that contributes to a sense of the intimate present for the caller. Bringing callers to the "now," the phone booth, like the narrative of *A Tale*, enables the memorialization of those who may have begun to drift out of national concern or public imagination. Calling home is not so much an attempt to reconstruct a past narrative as it is a project to imagine a future located in the present. It is an act that relies on imagination and the suspension of worldly time, as callers experience a connection with their loved ones that are beyond the bounds of reality.

Throughout this chapter I have hoped to show through a disability studies analytic how *A Tale* takes up the value of this imaginative point of view through the lens of engaging with dementia. As a theme and literary deployment dementia enables the creative (re)imagining of Ruth's relationships with the past and present as productively ruptured, incomplete, and unknown. Rather than signal loss and erasure, in *A Tale*, dementia features as a place of serendipitous re-imagining, of presentness pointing toward a futurity of an alternative narrative. Attending to dementia as a way of thinking through the consequences of forgetting and being forgotten in the novel also enables an interrogation of what gets remembered and what gets jettisoned in the waste streams of memory: from histories of colonial land dispossession and imperialism, to structurally disenfranchised communities devastated by "natural" disaster, to stories of the elderly, the dementing, and the disabled—all "time beings."

The vastly interconnected stories that circulate in *A Tale* open up space for readers to ponder what other stories might be lost and found in the gyre's memory. To presently read disaster and disability in *A Tale* would also be incomplete without acknowledging that what many call Japan's "worst mass killing" since World War II occurred at a center for the mentally disabled, a third of whose residents were elderly (Rich and Soble). To the dismay of disability rights advocates in and outside of Japan, the names of victims have remained withheld to this day, perpetuating the elimination of the disabled and elderly from public imagination and memorialization.

Taking to heart Ruth's regrets after reading Nao's diary—"wishing she'd done more to commemorate her mother's passing" (370)—reading *A Tale* as a narrative as much about dementia as it is about writing and disaster allows us to hold space for the presence of intertwined life stories that might otherwise go forgotten. As narrative continues to call upon the representational power of dementia, we must continue to examine how literature helps us imagine futures in which actual people with dementia can be collectively remembered and accounted for outside of narratives of disaster and burden.

CHAPTER II

The Poetics and Politics of Alzheimer's Dementia in Susan M. Schultz

> Writing about Alzheimer's, as I do, is nothing if not writing about personhood, what it is, how it alters, remains, how much it depends--or does not depend--on reciprocity and "reading." It's writing about existence at the point at which existence is called into question.
>
> —Susan Schultz, *Dementia Blog, Volume Two*

In an essay titled "Alzheimer's, Aliens, and the Cure of the Avant-Garde," Hawai'i-based writer Susan M. Schultz reflects on events taking place after the death of her mother, Martha Jean Keefe Schultz, in "an Alzheimer's 'home'" in 2011. What follows is a provocative set of derivations that string together notions of 'home,' 'homeland,' and 'homeland security.' In one paragraph, a news article in the *Yuma Sun* about a missing woman with dementia found in the desert is juxtaposed with a report of 160 pounds of marijuana discovered in that same area of the U.S.-Mexico border, one well-known for the "transport [of] drugs and illegal aliens" ("Alzheimer's, Aliens"). Another paragraph glosses the figure of the "illegal alien" in conservative and legal vocabulary alongside the pseudo-scientific claim that Alzheimer's unknown causes can be traced to the invasion of "foreign mind parasites" (*ibid.*). Across the essay, Schultz traces an affinity across the inhospitable landscapes that confront the person with Alzheimer's who has wandered away from home and "the smuggler, the illegal who crosses the national border and then hides" (*ibid.*).

Symbolized in terms of furtive non-human otherness that requires managing or elimination, the conflated homeland threat of immigration, drug trafficking, and terrorism at U.S. borders and the cognitive "invasions" of Alzheimer's may seem unlikely bedfellows. But the creation of the

Department of Homeland Security in 2002 after 9/11, bolstering operations of the U.S. Border Patrol, is also contemporaneous with the boom of genetic and biomedical initiatives beginning in 2003, centered on the detection and experimental policing of Alzheimer's with "revolutionary" and "powerful new weapons," placing Alzheimer's at the "frontline" of America's "national agenda" (alz.org).[36] Indeed, since the dawn of the 21st century, both Alzheimer's and immigration have been framed as national crises through the same ecological and military metaphors: they are "tidal waves" and "rising tides" poised to "inundate" American society (as Chapter 1 addressed) and in military rhetoric, "invasions" and "attacks" that must be "defended" against.[37] As Daniel R. George and Peter J. Whitehouse have explored, "[i]n the decade following the tragedies of 9/11, a US-led 'War on Terror' has dovetailed with a US-led "War on Alzheimer's disease (AD),"' arguing, "war metaphors – whether applied towards other human beings in actual military conflict or to social challenges such as drugs, poverty, or disease – always represent a rhetorical choice that minimizes or excludes alternative ways of behaving towards worldly challenges" (121).[38] Making the "War on Alzheimer's" all the more literal, in 2011 Congress authorized $15 million to the U.S. Department of Defense in support of research into the long-term consequences traumatic brain injury has on military personnel as it pertains to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias (CDMRP). What emerges in the post-9/11 decade is a public discourse in which dementia as an age-related *and* war-

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[36] This rhetoric is commonplace among neuroscientific and biomedical initiatives, for example the research-based organization named "UsAgainst Alzheimer's" (which, compounded, reads as the "USA" against Alzheimer's) is also characterized by patriotic fervor in its red, white, and blue marketing aesthetic and call-to-duty to "fight" Alzheimer's as a "national priority."

[37] See Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Leo R. Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008); and Daniel R. George, Erin R. Whitehouse, and Peter J. Whitehouse, "Asking More of Our Metaphors: Narrative Strategies to End the 'War on Alzheimer's' and Humanize Cognitive Aging," *The American Journal of Bioethics* 16.10 (2016): 22-24.

[38] As George and Whitehouse argue further, "for medical conditions rhetorically understood through war metaphors, the possibility of absolute victory (i.e. a cure) against a pathophysiological antagonist becomes the explicit goal, and this metaphorical positioning of subjects in relation to disease often overshadows less adversarial but no less important pursuits such as rehabilitation, basic care, and ecological prevention in public attention and funding" (121). For recent discussions on cure see Eunjung Kim, *Curative Violence: Rehabilitating Disability, Gender, and Sexuality in Modern Korea* (Durham: Duke UP, 2017) and Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham: Duke UP, 2017).

produced public health issue becomes intertwined with the material effects and language of violent social conflict.[39]

Literary texts can be powerful sites to contest and reimagine the antagonizing and alienating rhetoric of warfare surrounding mainstream Alzheimer's treatment and advocacy. Indeed, research-based Alzheimer's activism often draws on the apocalyptic and inflammatory rhetoric of homeland defense. Consider activist James W. Smith's speech at the 2008 Alzheimer's Public Policy Forum Candlelight Vigil, in which he warns attendees of the genocidal proportions of Alzheimer's destructive force, staging an urgent plea to "focus our national priorities and get in front of Alzheimer's now":

> WE cannot let our elected officials stand by and do nothing and allow Alzheimer's Disease to overwhelm us. The next time you are in front of your congressman or senator, ask them this question: "If you knew – without a shadow of a doubt – that someone was bringing to our shores a biological weapon of mass destruction SO POWERFUL that it would kill 16 million American citizens in a crippling, relentless and ruthlessly cruel manner – what would you be willing to do to stop that from happening?" Not just as an elected leader – but as a human being? Because that biological weapon of mass destruction is already here. That biological weapon of mass destruction is Alzheimer's. It has already infected over 5 million American citizens – and is attacking a new person every 71 seconds. ("Changing the Wind"; emphasis in the original)

Marked by extremist fervency, Smith's speech draws attention to how the construction of fear surrounding Alzheimer's disease and affected citizens is a convolution of fearful narratives toward hostile external forces (the offshore assault, the bioterrorist threat) and the internal menace "already here" in the nation (the hidden illegal, the smuggled goods).[40] Smith not only constructs an image of

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[39] Anne McGuire traces a similar phenomenon surrounding autism: "In the face of terror, what is required are immediate militarized acts of intervention and rehabilitation, invasion and occupation. In the name of life, the figure of death must be stopped up, silenced, eliminated at all cost. In this way, the war on autism and the war on terror can—and I argue should—be read as continuous biopolitical wars committed to a single aim of defining, preserving, and securing the borders of a normative homeland (or liberal versions of it) through the marking out of threatening types that (or rather who) require absolute eradication in the name of the life of the whole" (177). See *War on Autism: On the Cultural Logic of Normative Violence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

[40] In an ironic twist, Smith himself became fodder for public paranoia regarding hidden threats of a different kind. Smith was formerly one of America's chief "faces of Alzheimer's" research activism until convicted of fraudulently collecting Social Security benefits in 2013 (Browning). The diagnosis of early-onset dementia which conferred Smith with the status of authoritative spokesperson turned out to be an elaborate performance of memory loss and behaviors that

Alzheimer's as an enemy using the rhetoric of war, he also espouses an ideology that normalizes aggression as the only logical and moral response to any agent perceived as an enemy. The perpetuation of this kind of ideology has consequences on how real lives in actual conflict are devalued and acted upon. At stake in challenging these metaphors, then, is not just how to better approach and support the social challenges that accompany Alzheimer's care, but also the recognition of basic human and social rights of individuals that come under threat during political crises and war. As George and Whitehouse suggest,

> the War on AD may ultimately represent a rhetorical attack on ourselves in much the same way the War on Terror has elicited self-induced anxiety in the public sphere…At stake on the rhetorical battlefield of both wars is what constitutes full personhood in contemporary Western culture, and at what point that status – whether through illicit terrorist actions or unintentional physical and mental decline – is forfeited. (122)

With this context in mind, I want to return to the essay this chapter opens with. What are the representational stakes of Schultz's eliding of the illegal, smuggled goods and smuggler, and person with Alzheimer's, given that both immigration policy and Alzheimer's diagnosis and treatment have been viewed principally through the lens of national security since 9/11? Resonating with George and Whitehouse's question regarding the limits of personhood, Schultz is undoubtedly invested in asserting the humanity of her subjects. Linking together the dehumanizing constructs surrounding the "illegal alien" and Alzheimer's disease, Schultz's essay foregrounds the rhetorical production of "the other," highlighting the violent, metaphorical logic that accompanies any call for the policing and eradication of a threat, whether foreign, global, or biological.

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effectively deceived doctors, neurologists, policy makers, and everyday audiences. As what Ellen Samuels calls a "disability con"—"the masquerade of a nondisabled person who deceptively and deliberately performs disability, often for material gain" (*Fantasies* 70). Smith reinforces public suspicions surrounding disability, state parasitism, and the unreliability of dementia. Given the public sense of betrayal arising from his appropriation of a demented persona, Smith ironically emerges as an embodiment of the very threat to national security he set out to construct.

As a response to the twinned anxieties surround the security of both "national boundaries" and "mental borders," Schultz concludes her essay with a poetic call-to-action:

> A letting go of the boundaries, the borders, of self, of nation, and the respectful entering into a more chaotic, less limited, place. Not to imprison mother at home, but to wander with her…It's that ability to witness, to be mindful of, to listen to what is there instead of what we want to be there, that enables us to see these wanderers--whether they be sufferers from Alzheimer's or "illegal aliens"--more as themselves and less as what we most fear about ourselves. (n.p.)

Schultz's call to transgress the boundaries of the self, the nation, and the (nursing) home—by wandering with the mother with Alzheimer's—is a compelling precursor to witnessing the lives of others and building coalition beyond borders in her other work. For Schultz, doing this kind of work in literature requires going beyond normative narrative structures, and she draws from her experiences caring for her mother as inspiration. At the end of "Aliens," Schultz argues, "plasticity is the only way to approach such illness," bringing together the aims of avant-garde and experimental writing and Catherine Malabou's proposition that the altered brain's "destructive plasticity" is an occasion for "*creation through the destruction of form*" (Malabou qtd. in "Alzheimer's, Aliens").[41] Schultz concludes the essay with two criteria for writing "in the canon of plasticity" or "Demented Lit":

> To write with plasticity is to do two things: the first is to record the chaos of the disease, of a brain that can still—in many cases—generate language, but cannot organize words into grammatical phrases…The second is to create a relationship with the reader analogous to that between a person with Alzheimer's and her primary reader, daughter, spouse, friend. (To witness a person with Alzheimer's is to attempt to interpret sometimes uninterpretable clues.). (n.p.)

Schultz's essay is, importantly, a disquisition on her approach to life writing and the aims of its play with form. For Schultz the work of writing about her mother is two-fold: it is a project that seeks to adequately evoke for readers the act of witnessing the life of a loved one with Alzheimer's, and also a project that aims to give poetic witness to political violence without metaphorically equating the

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[41] For a critique of Malabou see Lucy Burke, "Missing Pieces: Trauma, Dementia, and the Ethics of Reading in *Elizabeth is Missing*," *Dementia and Literature: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Tess Maginess (New York: Routledge, 2018): 88-102.

two. As this chapter will explore, what emerges in Schultz's life writing projects about Martha is a juxtaposition of tensions between capturing the intimacy of personal life and communality of larger historical events.

To elaborate on the ethics of reading and writing practices that arise from her engagement with her mother, Schultz draws on Eileen A. Joy's concept of "speculative reading":

> a speculative reading practice might pay more attention to the ways in which any given unit of a text has its own propensities and relations that might pull against the system and open it to productive errancy (literally, 'rambling,' 'wandering' -- moments of becoming-stray)… literary criticism might re-purpose itself as the mapping of these (often in- and non-human) tensions and rifts, as well as of the excess of meanings that might pour out of these crevasses, or wormholes. We'll call this reading for the weird, which is fitting when you consider that the word 'weird' (traditionally linked to 'wyrd,' or 'fate') is related to the Old English weorðan ['to become'], rooted in Indo-European *wer- ['to turn, bend']. This will entail being open to incoherence as well, as one possible route toward a non-routinized un-disciplinarity that privileges unknowing over mastery of knowledge. ("Weird Reading" 29-30)

I quote Joy at length here because it is useful for thinking about the "weirdness" of juxtapositions and openings in Schultz's earlier work, and how Schultz develops a poetic style that draws upon her mother's Alzheimer's to lead readers into different speculative "wormholes" of history and experience.

I have opened this chapter with this reflection on the context and implications of Schulz's essay to show how Schultz's earlier experimental poetic memoirs about her mother posit the subversive potential of the person with Alzheimer's. That person becomes a figure that exposes the limits of inclusion to nationhood and challenges the construction of exclusionary geographic and human boundaries. What emerges throughout Schultz's work is the struggle to find an adequate a self-conscious search for a different literary form that can dramatize a transgression of these borders, resulting in texts that play with and break generic boundaries. The crux of representing Alzheimer's dementia for Schultz's is using it as a means to "approach the world-as-text as a place that is not a fixed home or homeland, rather a home that wanders" ("Alzheimer's, Aliens"). Although no guarantee, the promise of Schultz's poetics is to foster for readers a sense of interconnection that challenges social and territorial demarcations that establish both biomedical and political border regimes.[42]

Building on Chapter 1's concern with dementia as a formal and ethical resource for thinking through legacies of disaster and personal loss, this chapter expands on issues surrounding the use of dementia as a literary-aesthetic style to engage with the representational challenges of narrating global politics and temporalities of injustice. In this chapter, I track the poetics and politics of dementia that develops over the course of Schultz's life narrative project on Martha, consisting of *Dementia Blog* (2008) and its sequel, *"She's Welcome to Her Disease" [Dementia Blog, Volume Two]* (2013), which also emerged from blog posts that were taken down and then heavily edited into a book that ends with Martha's death. Leaving the blog format of first volume behind, the *Volume Two* is an eclectic collection of experimental poems, short essays, and vignettes. Reviewer Fred Wah describes it as a work that "gestures through theatre, choreography, poetry, medical, critical, and philosophical exposition, and yet manages to shape this all into an accessible and engaging journal" (*Vol 2* n.p.). I read this pair of multi-genre texts as works that enact a fluid space for empathetic connections across geopolitical borders, historical contexts, and marginalized life experiences to collide.

The first volume of *Dementia Blog* originated during the summer of 2006, when Schultz began keeping an informal travel weblog for family and friends. The blog took a turn in August when Schultz arrived in northern Virginia to visit Martha's home, becoming an experimental "poetic prose project" about the processes of her Alzheimer's.[43] What became published in print as *Dementia Blog* in 2008 are the series of entries Schultz wrote between August 1, 2006 and January 3, 2007,

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[42] I am drawing from Gesa Lindemann's conception of biomedicine as a "new border regime" that makes demarcations around life and death. See "Medicine as Practice and Culture: The Analysis of Border Regimes and the Necessity of a Hermeneutics of Physical Bodies" *Biomedicine as Culture: Instrumental Practices, Technoscientific Knowledge, and New Modes of Life,* eds. Regula Valérie Burri and Joseph Dumit (New York: Routledge, 2007): 6-47.

[43] Susan M. Schultz, *Dementia Blog* (San Diego: Singing Horse Press, 2008): 8. Subsequent citations appear in parentheses abbreviated as *DB Vol. 1*.

documenting the changing relationship with her mother and their unpredictable interactions through a series of fragmented, detailed notes. Schultz structures the narrative loosely around entries that chronicle telephone calls, trips to Martha's home, visits to prospective Alzheimer's care facilities, and the events of Martha's relocation into the latter. Each entry of the blog also indexes events from the world beyond of the walls of the care facility. Key events from the unfolding U.S. invasion of Iraq and the Bush administration's War on Terror bleed into the narrative. News discourse such as *LA Times* and *Washington Post* headlines, CNN reports, White House debriefs, political commentary, and remarks from then-President George W. Bush punctuate text. What emerges in Susan's notes is a bricolage catalogue of seemingly disparate yet interlinked legacies of war and occupation across the globe. Schultz's project to narrate her mother's life and the processes of her dementia is thus embedded in her engagement with the media that surrounds her and her mother. Throughout the text Susan also foregrounds Martha's reactions to the news and experiences hallucinations of being in the Middle East. These moments take on particular significance when read alongside Martha's own traumatic wartime experiences that surface in the narrative, and most saliently at the end of *Volume Two*. The broad aim of this chapter, then, is to explore the convergence of the subjective histories of dementia and war that Schultz sets up in the diaristic mode of the experimental blog as it unfolds retrospectively, out of chronological order, and in a deliberately confusing manner.

In the Foreword to the first volume of the printed book Schultz guides readers' in how they might understand their confusion in reading the blog: first, it operates to capture the confusion of Martha's dementia, and second, it reflects the American public's reception of deceptively confusing politics surrounding the reality of violence saturating the post-9/11 landscape, particularly with respect to the rhetoric used by the Bush administration to justify the preemptive strike against Iraq in 2003 and to sell the Global War on Terrorism:[44]

> I began to record what I saw. What had seemed awkward about the blog, the way in which it's written forward but read backward, suddenly made sense as a *form* in which to work on the process of memory and forgetting. Whatever is confusing about reading the story backward is intended by the form. The confusions offered by the form are similar (or at least apt metaphors) to the confusions of dementia.
>
> There is also a political content to this blog. During the time it was written, the Bush administration was pushing us closer to the abyss. The administration's uses of language seemed, to this reader, demented. The split between reader and author, between the person who suffers (or causes to suffer) and the person who reads about it, forms a significant part of my "plot." (7)

The blog occasions Schultz's reflections on dementia's formal representation, which are subsequently tied to how politics and global conflict get represented. Susan relies on the known reputation of Bush and his administration's responses to the events of 9/11—their reliance on what many scholars have analyzed as a strong rhetorical creation of the "identity" of the "enemy" and a "state of emergency"—the moment of exception "that one can witness the rhetorical sovereignty of the president" (Maggio 818). Schultz concludes with a dedication of the blog to "my mother's many friends, to my family and to everyone for whom dementia is a family and/or national event," reckoning, "Their losses of memory cause us to lose our loved ones; our loss of memory may cause us to lose our nation" (*ibid.*). The weight dementia carries here is complicated: as much as it is an aesthetic resource for Schultz, it also stands in for the "demented," outrageous unilateralism and militarism of Bush administration foreign policy and rhetoric and also serves as a metaphor for the potential of a personal-turned-historical forgetting so severe as to destroy the collective future and identity of a nation. The blog is thus a place of tensions, and this chapter aims to tease out the

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[44] See Babak Bahador, Jeremy Moses and William Lafi Youmans, "Rhetoric and Recollection: Recounting the George W. Bush Administration's Case for War in Iraq," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 48.1 (2018): 4-26.

moments in which dementia takes on meanings and functions that go against the grain of and beyond what the Foreword lays out.

Importantly, in grappling with how to narrate as well as personally cope with the "confusions of dementia" she encounters in her increased role as Martha's caretaker, Schultz centers on the relationship between the retrospective mode of reading the blog form and the temporal dimensions of Martha's "memory and forgetting." Throughout the text, Martha's confusions are foregrounded as a comingling of non-normative temporal reorientations, such as her retreat into past memories and inhabitations of multiple realities. I examine Schultz's formal investment in enabling readers to see through the lens of Martha's embodied temporal experiences, and how they are positioned as vantage points to address broader political concerns and histories beyond the personal. Thus this chapter asks: (1) why are the connections with war and violence so fundamental to the narration of Martha's dementia, and (2) how does Susan structure Martha's dementia as a productive and important lens through which to show and tell these histories?

The intermingling of different memories and stories of violence across the globe that emerge in Schultz's works can be productively read alongside Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory," which perhaps serves as a useful intersection for putting disability studies perspectives on dementia in dialogue with memory studies and decolonial views on trauma theory. Rothberg is interested in "what happens when different histories of extreme violence confront each other in the public sphere" (Témoigner 176). In his book, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Rothberg argues:

> the conceptual framework through which commentators and ordinary citizens have addressed the relationship between memory, identity, and violence is flawed. Against the framework that understands collective memory as competitive—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources—I suggest we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing: as productive and not privative. […] This interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive, intercultural dynamic that I call multidirectional memory. (3)

Rothberg's asserts that the focus on achieving recognition of one's individual memory as it is tied to one's individual identity necessarily excludes the memories and identities of others (5). Openness to memory's multidirectionality means calling into question the individual possession of memory and acknowledging,

> the borders of memory and identity are jagged; what looks at first like my own property often turns out to be a borrowing or adaption from a history that initially might seem foreign or distant. Memory's anachronistic quality—its bringing together or now and then, here and there—is actually the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones. (5)

Susan's adoption of Martha's memories and Martha's inhabitation of a world outside of her physical own puts into innovative literary form these productive, fractured borders of memory and identity Rothberg points to. Indeed, it is not so much the anachronistic quality of memory as it is the experiences of dementia that are the source of *Dementia Blog*'s creativity and ability to construct an interconnected world (and the retainment of the blog form also evokes the connectivity afforded by digital communications). Furthermore, Rothberg rejects the assumption "that a straight line runs from memory to identity and that the only kinds of memories and identities that are therefore possible are ones that exclude elements of alterity and forms of commonality with others" (4-5). Rothberg's rejection of that memory and identity are direct correlates is in line with a disability studies perspective on dementia that posits identity is not predicated on one's normative ability to remember.

Though Rothberg does not elaborate on what "elements of alterity" look like, I think *Dementia Blog* offers an occasion to think about dementia's alterity as a means of forming commonality, enabling Susan to articulate multiple global stories of colonialism, violence, and so forth without assigning rigid value judgments and placing them in contest with one another. Or as Gabriele Schwab puts it, "It is not so much that our memories come from many directions, but rather that they are always already composites of dynamically interrelated and conflicted histories"

(30). Even as *Dementia Blog* puts forth an urgent call to remember many different instances of political injury and historical violence—rendering dementia dangerously close to its typical function as a rigid cultural metaphor for collective forgetting and the limits of humanity—the text also suggests dementia is a lens through which to put conflicted histories into communal perspective and space differently, a valid means of engaging with the past.

Dementia Blog is not a typical Alzheimer's caregiver narrative which often depicts the tragedy of its "sufferers" (as if suffering were the only possible emotion). These narratives often receive criticism for amplifying the voice of the caregiver over its subject, reifying the mainstream conception of what Arthur Frank calls the dementia patient's "untellable silence" (101). Nor is the work mobilizing dementia in service of a political metaphor for unspeakable trauma as much fiction and non-fiction is wont to do. *Dementia Blog* instead wields the retrospective blog form alongside Martha's embodied temporal experiences—her conflations of past and present and movements through spacetime—putting her perspective in the fore. As this chapter will show, *Dementia Blog* memorializes Martha in a way that foregrounds her dementia as a heuristic for thinking about how one writes and understands history. *Dementia Blog* prompts reflection on how dementia can be an enabling narrative resource that can bring formal modes of life writing into dialogue. I posit that *Dementia Blog* creates a mode of life writing around dementia that emphasizes *vicarious imagination*; Susan adopts a dementia aesthetic to not simply speak for her mother but to recover and imagine her stories. Like Rothberg's understanding of multidirectional memory, her dementia represents a form "remembrance [that] cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal and cultural sites" (11). The other voices and histories that emerge across the globe in the narrative thus also work to highlight non-Western and minoritized traumas that occupy the margins.

As a through line to my exploration of dementia, war, and form in the book, I center my analysis around what Schultz names in the first volume "the demented tense" (89). I attempt to theorize what she means by this term, and how it develops over the course of the two volumes to name the embodied temporal experiences of Martha's dementia; an aesthetics of her poetic style and narrative technique; as well as a theme that structures the relationship between different histories and memories that closely aligns with multidirectional memory. In this way dementia emerges as a heuristic device or aid for understanding and writing (life) history. My three guiding foci for exploring the demented tense are as followed:

In the first section, I offer an overview of the differences of form in the two volumes of *Dementia Blog* and what is achieved in telling the story of Martha's dementia and her wartime experiences two different ways. I focus on the formal aspects of the two texts and how they position "the demented tense" as a poetic aesthetic. As Michael Davidson suggests in *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar*, "a poetics—as much as a politics—of disability is important: because it theorizes the way the poetry defamiliarizes not only language but the body normalized within language" (118).

In addition to a narrative structure, the demented tense is also explored in *Dementia Blog* in as an experiential shift in relational disposition and responsibility. Section two examines how dementia transforms Susan and Martha's mother-daughter relationship, setting up the importance for recognizing different ways of relating to each other. Susan's adoption of her mother's memories (and vice versa) is one aspect of what happens in the demented tense. This undoing and remaking of relationships is important because it sets up an ethics of identification and engagement crucial to the text's engagement with other histories distanced by time and place.

The third section then looks at how Schultz deploys dementia as a way of understanding history by positioning the demented tense as a counter to what she calls "empire's rigid grammar" (*DB 1* 16). Putting Alzheimer's somatic experiences and linguistic performances (i.e. hallucination, discourse tangentiality, and breaches of grammatical codes) into poetic form, Schultz fashions a critique of "empire's rigid grammar": a concept encompassing prescriptive notions of power and domination. I track how *Dementia Blog* frames Martha's altered perception of events in time as useful and legitimate ways of thinking—as well as thinking collectively about the endurance of national violence. The connections the demented tense forges functions as a heuristic for understanding external histories or violence and war. I also consider how the text also prompts readers to think about the limitations its critique. Indeed, in as much as *Dementia Blog* offers a counternarrative to the notion dementia is itself is the war to be fought, it draws on dementia as a metaphor for the rhetorical obfuscation wrought by the Bush administration to justify the War on Terror. Nevertheless, *Dementia Blog* takes on the challenges of language and metaphor and the writing of another's experience, offering multiple avenues for critical engagement. Overall, Schultz's experimental writing further throws into relief contemporary literature's growing investment in dementia as a site where the telling of global histories, personal narrative, and generic hybridity meet.

Narrative and Aesthetics of "the Demented Tense"

In the first volume, the template of the online diary weblog form aptly stages tensions between public and private experience, and the text emerges as a different way to assemble knowledge and history. In its reporting of large scale events and seemingly inconsequential personal details, Schultz's diary weblog "offers a context where interpretable elements that would otherwise be excluded are retained," and can be "usefully understood as a mosaic or assemblage" (Cardell 113). Much like interpreting the historical and cultural archive in the detritus of Ozeki's gyres, reading *Dementia Blog* requires acts of excavating the details that are juxtaposed in each entry. Working to convey the confusions of dementia in its plethora of spontaneous minutiae and ephemeral sequences of connectivity require readers to tune into details they might not ordinarily find instructive or consider valuable. The kind of active participation the blog requires puts forth an ethics of reading that counters uncritical consumption of media. Indeed, the text capitalizes on what Rebecca Hogan calls the paratactic form of the diary, which operates on the same principal as grammatical parataxis, "in which clauses are joined without connectives or with only coordinating conjunctions…avoid[ing] establishing transitional connectives that would suggest how the items are related" (qtd. in Sorapure 506). Madeleine Sorapure suggests such a form "engages the diary reader in assigning significance, and in the absence of transitions, making meaningful connections within and across entries" (506). This mode also parallels how Schultz writes about her mother, Martha Schultz, whose non-sequiturs, confabulations, and errant forms of communication require equally engaged and imaginative interpretation. Thus, the text is an invitation to "read" the life of Martha with Alzheimer's more carefully, paying attention to the gaps between reality and hallucination, the possibilities of what can and cannot be adequately represented in certain forms, rational discourse, and conventions of language.

Dementia Blog is in large part a search for the formal features adequate to witness the processes of Martha's Alzheimer's. Reflecting on the reverse chronological blog form as reading backward toward the past instead of forward into the future, Susan makes a suggestive analogy between reading the blog, the temporal facet of Martha's Alzheimer's, and a time she calls the "the demented tense":

> --If you read what is written as it is published, you read in *real time*. If you come to it *after a time*, you are reading from the present into the past. You read back into memory, rather than toward the future that promises more writing. You read as an old person remembers, if their memory works, not yet unspooling what had been the present and past into a new tense. The demented tense. (89)

What occurs throughout *Dementia Blog* is a looping back of the past into the present and future. Reading backward into the past, the blog enables readers themselves to travel back and forward in time. The picture of time that emerges is less a line than it is a dimensional plane that "folds" into a space in which one can turn around and look at the past. This section elaborates on the politics of reading "backward toward the past" that Schultz's two volume work enacts. In line with disability studies critics such as Michael Bérubé, I move beyond a diagnostic reading that might stop at the claim that the reverse order of the blog is meant to mimic the confusions or temporality of dementia as a reversion in developmental time. Rather, I focus on how the formal qualities of both texts express an aesthetics of "the demented tense" that Schultz develops to show what is productive about seeing through Martha's experience.

As the quote above suggests, the retrospective mode of reading Martha's life in the blog form is the foundation of the text's inquiries into memory and writing personal history. But *Dementia Blog* is not straightforwardly a blog—and in this section I begin with an overview of the ways the text plays with and breaks with from generic conventions of the weblog. Indeed, *Dementia Blog*'s investment in experimenting with form and generic hybridity makes it a rich site for exploring what Schultz explains to be a "place of paradoxes"[45]—it's balancing of individual experience with broader social issues; local and global histories; the tensions between remembering and forgetting. The text intertwines the diaristic mode of the blog and experimental poetry as a life writing medium, which automatically liberates Schultz from having to write about memories in the constraints of coherent, linear form.[46]

The first volume of *Dementia Blog* preserves the interface of its Blogger software packaging. It retains characteristics of the weblog genre of life writing through discrete posts as its fundamental organizing unit; date, time, and posted-by stamps; and other details such as the archive of previous posts titles. By doing so Schultz presents to readers a what appears to be a raw, unedited glimpse of her "obsessively-kept record" (*DB Vol. 2* 132) structured around regular visits to Martha's home and

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[45] Susan M. Schultz, *"She's Welcome to Her Disease" [Dementia Blog, Volume Two]* (San Diego: Singing Horse Press, 2013): 132; subsequent citations appear in parenthesis, abbreviated as *DB Vol. 2*.

[46] See Julia Novak, "Introduction," *Experiments in Life-Writing* eds. Lucia Boldrini and Julie Novak (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 1-36.

trips to prospective Alzheimer's care facilities. Each post is comprised of fragmented content in paragraph/list form delineated by two dashes. Despite what straightforwardness the interface may intimate, the text is decidedly disorienting as the content wanders in a rogue mode. "*Apologies: this is out of sequence*" one post begins, a caveat that rings true for the entire text (109). An entry may dated "August 16, 2006," but as it scrolls through disjointed declarative statements and reflections on the past, this date only loosely anchors readers, if at all. Encompassing a range of historical and present moments—whether factual, manipulated, or hallucinatory—each entry seems to transcend or make irrelevant the date of its timestamp, as Susan observes, "The blog assigns my entries a time, but it is always wrong" (31). Pairing the disjunction between historical date and Martha's impaired sense of time, *Dementia Blog* critiques generic and discursive impositions of chronology over histories not yet past.

As a whole, the blog reads as a catalog of tangents; the notes connect thematically at random intervals and at others seemingly not at all. Because the content in each entry is often arranged non-chronologically, and the entries themselves read from end to beginning, readers often lack reference points for who the subjects in the post even are. Added confusion is created in the haphazard dispersal of italicized direct quotations from Martha, Susan (by which I mean Schultz as the narrator), other people at the nursing home, and reportage overheard on the nursing home television. The demented tense as a poetic aesthetic carries more critical purchase than a conventional narrative structure and trajectory because it brings together disparate stories and plural readings of them.

Notably, news of key events from the War on Terror intrude on the narrative. Part of what makes *Dementia Blog* confusing is readers must traverse Susan's criticisms and observations of war alongside details of Martha's life; as I will show, these two tracks are deliberately inseparable rather than merely tangential. The entry of "Monday, October 16, 2006," for example, indexes the day of

Army Lieutenant Colonel Steven Jordon's hearing in the Abu Ghraib torture and prison scandal. As Susan records in the entry,

> --The congressman says Abu Ghraib was a "sex ring." The commentator says they were fraternity pranks. At least no one died, one said of the anti-pedophile pedophile's acts. Instant messaging makes a text of sex. *My master's eyes are nothing like this screen.* (39)

Here Susan offers how media reportage reinforces politicians' denial of rape, murder, humiliation, and torture—evacuating the photographs that emerged from Abu Ghraib of their brutality. The fantasy and practice of violence at Abu Ghraib by members of the U.S. Army is transformed into pornographic entertainment in the same way sexting transformed living bodies into digital form.[47] More significantly, it is the "administration's uses of language"—the rhetorical choices of the Bush Administration and power to define "a state of exception"—that "helped create a reality where the disturbing pictures of the mistreatment at Abu Graihb [*sic*] can coexist alongside the persistent belief that the United States still has moral responsibilities and duties in the world. The actions at Abu Graihb [*sic*] and the corresponding images are the fruits sown from the seeds of Bush's post-9/11 rhetoric" (Maggio 818-819).[48] Parodying a line from Shakespeare's "My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like The Sun," Susan concludes the note with the ensorceling pull of the voices and images of digital media, or in the context of mediatized war, the power of what James Der Derian calls the "military–industrial–media–entertainment complex."[49] In its constant relay of news, *Dementia Blog* critiques what scholars have described as the "failure of news media and political institutions to check presidential war making" and state power since "public recollection of the substance of the

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[47] See Judith Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 951-66.

[48] On the Bush administration's discursive distancing of accountability for the torture at Abu Ghraib and the visual representation and claims to legitimacy in the administration's War on Terror, see Laura J. Shepherd, "Visualising Violence: Legitimacy and Authority in The 'War on Terror'" *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1.2 (2008) 213-226.

[49] See *Virtuous War: Mapping The Military- Industrial-media-entertainment Network* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001).

official case for war is incomplete, filtered by years of critical commentary, media revision, apologetics, and selective memory" (Bahador et al. 4).[50]

Where does Martha's dementia fit in with the narrative's mobilization of news? A cursory reading might suggest that Martha's life is positioned as removed from these current events, unable to think rationally or reflect on them. As Susan writes in a later entry, "In her [Martha's] year of forgetting,…[i]n her year of assuming new facts, she forgave the president his lies (*he's not so bad; don't be so hard on him!)"* (16). However, I suggest that Susan captures moments in which Martha *is* deeply engaged with the current events around her, in a different way. In the same entry on Abu Ghraib, Susan observes and captures Martha's hallucinatory entanglements with global events (bombings in Iraq):

> --She kept breaking down. She said it was nerves, but each time her voice broke she'd said the word "Iraq." We live in space but we feel most deeply in our sound. The quaver of her voice altered our positions in the room. We moved forward and then away, as if she were the murderousness she decried. Dead from injuries sustained when a roadside bomb exploded next to his convey. We are told of a place. But we are told in words. The sound of after-shock. *It's coming again, I feel it.* (38)

Throughout *Dementia Blog*, entries like this position Susan as a kind of "on the ground" reporter to her mother's hallucinations, reinforced by her frequent shifts to present tense and sense-oriented descriptions. Blogging reportage on the news works to anchor Susan's entries in a sense of "real-time," demarcating the precise moments when private and public intersect when news media is consumed. But Martha's dementia adds another layer of immediacy to the news overheard on the television as she reacts to the noise of roadside bomb explosions as if she were there. Martha's voice alters "positions in the room" as she mediates the news through her performance and hallucination

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[50] On the immediacy of the diary form and coverage of the Iraq conflict see Cardell "The Ethics of Being There and Seeing: Thomas Goltz, Paul McGeough, and the Journalist's Diary of War," *Dear World: Contemporary Uses of the Diary* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014): 50.

within it, pulling Susan and readers into peculiarly close and immediate positions of witnesses to distance violence.

At the formal level, readers encounter notes within entries that take up the characteristics of dementia's discourse tangentiality, and these tangents take readers from concerns of the nation and to the nursing home. The post of "Monday, August 14, 2006," for example, concludes with the escalating US-Iran nuclear crisis:

> --Sy Hersh writes that Beirut is a test drive for Iran. They made their case to Cheney, and Bush followed quickly behind, then Condi. They will claim victory for Israel; they will bomb Iran. Anyone opposed to administration policy supports terrorist. Hallucination behind the eye. *The birth of a new Middle East.* Truck plastered with images of abortion, a child's translucent head, mass of blood without breath. These are images no one in this country has seen of Lebanon, Iraq.
> No leader of the Khmer Rouge has faced a court of law.
>
> --Email from Karen: Mom slept. (93-4)

The allusion to the false choices facing the Bush administration (bomb Iran or allow it to acquire a nuclear bomb) and the binary logic of supporting terrorists if opposed to "administration policy" are juxtaposed with "images of abortion" and a reference to the aftermath of violence in Susan's adopted son's country of birth (Cambodia). As each entry and note wanders across temporal and geographic boundaries, moving from the future tense of prospective decisions to bomb Iran to the oft-denied, vastly undocumented Cambodian genocide, Susan records the haphazard yet connected unfolding of timeless violence.[51] In an interview with Gillian Parrish, Schultz commented on the fragmentary nature of this passage in particular:

> Hard to say in retrospect how one of those led to the next and then the next, whether simple as being there, or as narrative leading from bad politics to the care of one person for another. Karen was the social worker at an agency in northern Virginia who was point

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[51] The genocide occurred at the height of non-interventionism and post-Vietnam syndrome and was denied by both members of the U.S. government and anti-war and humanitarian activists; see Michael Haas, *Genocide by Proxy: Cambodia Pawn on a Superpower Chessboard* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991) and Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002). The U.S.'s commitment to pursing justice for the victims of the genocide was not formally signaled until the 1994 signing of the Cambodian Genocide Justice Act. In 2013 Cambodian lawmakers approved a bill making it illegal to deny war crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge regime during the 1970s, echoing laws against Holocaust denial in European countries.

> person for my mother when she still lived at home, but couldn't deal with everyday life. These ways in which care moves between daughter and daughter surrogate (Karen reminded me of one of my cousins, down to a very similar name) are also intriguing to me." (n.p.)

Dementia Blog is a poetic memoir about her mother's Alzheimer's—and about war—but not in way it a reader would ordinarily expect. Rather than attempting to fit fragments of history into a narrative of cause-and-effect the narrative is fluid, and events are as "simple as being there." Susan's poetics of dementia, as "bricolage" and "collage," are where contexts and lives meet (132). This is different from the typical dementia narrative that employs Alzheimer's as a convenient political metaphor that ultimately culminates symbolically in incoherence or meaninglessness.[52] For Susan, setting down these disjointed juxtapositions force readers to make unexpected connections between dementia, history, and politics:

> --She says my life sounds fragmentary. I say fragments must be set down to see where their edges meet
> …
> --Radhika makes her own connect-the-dots pictures. Which come first, lines or dots? In desert country, there are dots for cities, very few river lines. Anbar Province: 11 Americans killed yesterday by IEDs that can pierce a tank's skin
> …
> -- To avoid fragments, join together mother's pneumonia with the IEDs in Anbar
> (*DB Vol. 1* 26-27)

What does it mean to join Martha's pneumonia with the Iraq War in Anbar Province, the former heartland of the Sunni insurgency? The piercing image of shrapnel fragments from IEDs or improvised explosive devices—one of the defining weapons of the Al Anbar campaign—stands in stark opposition to the domestic details of Martha's common nursing home-acquired respiratory infection. But it is precisely this disjunction between personal and public spheres that *Dementia Blog*

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[52] For example, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* juxtaposes patients in an Alzheimer's home with the protagonists' reactions to 9/11. According to Heike Hartung, both the terrorist attacks and Alzheimer's "read as metaphors for the end of individual agency and responsibility," a dissolution of language and narrative order that "dissolve into incoherence and meaninglessness" (215). See *Ageing, Gender, and Illness in Anglophone Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

suspends readers in a kind of dislocated present, constructing a present reality imaginatively out of fragments of remembrance.

Like web diaries written in war zones by citizens, *Dementia Blog* "link[s] the national events of the world with personal perceptions, hence incorporating historic time within the spaces of self expression," and reads as a "private narrative in a public space [that] challenges the temporality of war as well as the linearity of historicity" (Ibrahim). But Schultz also employs the blog form for its limits, and the presence of narrating dementia time pushes those limits even further. Schultz's use of the blog, then, also draws on and challenges assumptions about "diary writing as more authentic, more intimate, and more 'real' than other kinds of autobiographical representation" (Cardell 9). Figuring the person with Alzheimer's as a witness to alternative versions of history and reality of critical value to one's own sense of the world, Schultz attempts to expand what a "more real" account of personal life and violent history might look like. Schultz takes on the promise of the blog as a democratic form of public commemoration, expression, and history making, experimenting with what that history can look like when poetically rendered through the vantage point of her mother's dementia (which I explore more fully in the next sections). At many times, the disjointed, "demented" poetic style of Susan's narrating "I" melds with the disorienting narrative inventions of Martha's dementia. The text uses this merged "eye" of dementia as a different, if not experimental, means of narrating global conflict, which has always already been distorted by media. As Gillian Whitlock writes in *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*, there has always been a "'conspiracy' between the military and the television camera…effac[ing] the materiality of places, the presence of the natural world, and the corporeality of bodies; the [Iraq] war was presented to its audience 'as live yet distant, instantaneous yet remote, as dramatically real yet reassuringly televisual'" (29). Returning to Susan's critical stance toward news media coverage of American politics and its role in shaping national forgetting, it becomes clearer that Susan adopts her mother's hallucinations in the narrative to dramatize a different, felt viewpoint of war that is neither predicated on the "real" or the "televisual."

It is important to read *Dementia Blog* in the context of Schultz's engagements with war because it provides an important context for the life narrative Schultz builds around her mother Martha. Throughout *Dementia Blog* Martha has particular reactions to news reports on the War in Iraq and experiences hallucinations that place her in Afghanistan (which I will explore more in the later part of the chapter). For Schultz these are moments of importance that deserve recognition because they are not just Martha being irrational, they are moments in which she *feels* there—and there is an ethical obligation to witnessing this experience. Furthermore, these are moments which we can learn things about how war is represented and experienced and part of Schultz's political critique. What makes this all the more complicated is that readers do not get a full sense of how important Martha's relationship to war is until the end of the second volume of the blog. To get to this we need to read backward into Martha's life, "in the demented tense."

In the first volume, Martha's experience with war is limited to one parenthetical aside when her son-in-law Bryant asks about her experiences abroad: "--*What was Africa like?* Bryant asks mom. *Can't say that in one sentence. I'll let you have three. It was very pleasant.* (She was there during the second World War, told stories of ducking in ditches to avoid bombs, of seeing a dead body in a trash can.)" (128-129). Early in the second volume of the blog, readers get a glimpse into this history but it is not clear whose it is due to the non-sequitur nature of the entry in the form of a play:

> **Act One: 10 a.m.** …
> *A vicious German defense brought the Allied advance to a halt at a Casino. People say I look 10 years younger; I look 10 years younger.*
> "Do you remember World War II, mom?"
> "No." (37)

Fact and fiction blur together here as performance, history, and experience collide. It is not until the end of the second volume of *Dementia Blog* that readers learn about Martha's actual traumatic wartime experiences in North Africa and Europe.

The very last entry of *Volume Two* ends with comparatively lengthy entry, a seven-page elegy to Martha. This final entry operates as meta-commentary on pressure of the blog and what it could and could not tell. This delayed recognition caused by the backward unfolding of the blog invites retrospection on where the displacement of Martha's private, unarticulated war memories fit into the overall project. Her hallucinatory involvement in Afghanistan may be a resurfacing of traumatic memories—readers cannot be sure—but nevertheless her experience of war stands outside of officially sanctioned historical narratives as a means of criticizing the truth status assigned to such narratives.[53] Having been focused on her dementia, Susan reveals what the blog did not tell of her mother's life, beginning with her wartime experiences:

> It did not tell how she invaded Italy with the US Army (in her function as administrator of entertainment to US troops), how she witnessed battles, met men who never came back from their own bombing raids, got a pair of small combat boots from one of the "Neecy boys" of the 442nd.
>
> It did not tell of the time she was driving a truck—later she would say, you know I drove a truck in the War—and thought she'd run over a child.
>
> It did not tell of her experience of the Battle of the Bulge, or of how she was at Dachau when it was liberated, of how it took her several days to even know what she had seen--all the bodies on the train cars, bodies everywhere, men in pajamas making shelters for themselves out of anything they found around them. (133)

Martha's fading sense of the atrocities she witnessed during World War II embodies the transition from personal memory to collective memory of national history. Martha's inability to remember World War II marks the erosion of personal memory as it is tied more broadly to historical memory.

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[53] The concluding chapter in Susan Faludi's memoir *In the Darkroom* presents a more explicit example of this kind of case. Faludi describes how the traumatic histories of her father's past as a Jewish fugitive in Holocaust Budapest "flooded into every synapse" in his late life with dementia (407).

The absence of Martha's wartime stories is echoed in the loss of those from "men who never came back," as well as the loss of the last eyewitnesses to World War II. Susan mentions Martha's boots from the "Neecy boys" (a misnomer for '*Nisei*') of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team comprised of second-generation Japanese Americans from Hawaii and the mainland United States, but the story behind this picture is brief, as are the other mentions of Battle of the Bulge and the Liberation of Dachau. *Dementia Blog*'s investment in Martha's dementia more broadly raises the issue of—what happens when the last eyewitnesses to the history of the nation are gone, and how does this effect and play into the legacies and cycles of current and future wars? As senior editor of the *New York Times* Patrick Lyons comments, "a time always comes when the very last veterans of a war pass away, and [their deaths] relegate the cataclysm they saw with their own eyes to the bloodless abstraction of recorded history" (n.p.). More importantly, the text negotiates how to reconceptualize the popular deployment of dementia as a negative, political metaphor for the loss of collective memory.

The focus of *Dementia Blog* is not the failure and doom of Martha's personal forgetting. The burden of remembering does not fall on the survivor (Martha) but rather on Susan. Indeed, the text ends up focusing on Susan's position as a caretaker—specifically of the postwar generation—and the obligation to remember and tell that entails. *Dementia Blog* does share with other dementia *and* postgeneration narratives a signature anxiety over the of loss of stories and first-hand witnesses to war. Though *Dementia Blog* originates as an "obsessively-kept record that memorialized her [Martha's] forgetting," (*Vol 2* 132), it also about the desire to and impossibility of reconstructing and accessing Martha's past, particularly her history of having lived through World War II.

With this culminating outpour of Martha's wartime details, Susan's narrative is productively read alongside the framework of Marianne Hirsch's work on postmemory, describing "the relationship that 'the generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before" (5). Hirsch's coinage of postmemory as a deeply familial phenomenon emerged as a term to describe her own relationship to her parents' stories of survival during World War II (4); it describes a connection to the past that is "actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation…It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present" (5).

Revisionary narratives of dementia strongly resonate with the concepts of postmemory, but a more distinction term is needed describe the relationship I observe throughout many of the texts this dissertation explores: that is, the relationship between the caretaker as part of a "generation after" and a parent with dementia, whose dementing memories of traumatic and everyday events overwhelm the aesthetic structure of the text and are adopted into their own narrative and memory.[54] So when Susan says, in the first volume, "I called, I became her memory. She has not lost hers; it's been given to me to hold. So much have I forgotten that now I cannot call back" (60), I take this to be representative of the postgeneration conundrum Hirsch describes as "growing up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth…to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors" (5). The difference here is that it is the inheritance of memories Susan is tasked with holding—memories that overwhelm her so she "cannot call back"—begins at a later stage in her adult life, and these memories have more to do with the person with dementia's forgetting, hallucinations, etc. (inherited memories aren't necessarily more "real" anyway) and the realities of caregiving. Yet what I am trying to describe also departs from postmemory in that "the postgeneration" or "the generation after" (second-generation and beyond) can be characterized as either knowing too much or *knowing little*

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[54] Marlene Goldman mentions postmemory briefly in regard to John Mighton's *Half Life*, see *Forgotten: Narratives of Age-Related Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease in Canada* (Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

about what actually happened. It is the occasion of dementia unsettling the narrator's outlook on (family) history and memory that prompts the narrator to excavate and preserve that history and memory of the experiences of their antecedents, such as in Lisa Appignanesi's Holocaust survival memoir *Losing the Dead* (addressed in the Introduction) and Dana Walrath's work on the Armenian Genocide and her mother's Alzheimer's (the subject of the Chapter 3). These kinds of narratives often ask the person with dementia if they "remember the war" or their traumatic history, which sometimes can raise ethical questions about whether one should trigger remembering for the sake of preserving the past.[55]

The postgeneration of dementia (for lack of a better term) is characterized by its investment in imagination, projection, and creation, in ways similar and also different from the postmemory generation's "intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance," or a sort of "retrospective witnessing by adoption" (Hirsch 221). Indeed, dementia is what inaugurates the auto/biographical stories in the texts I explore, and it is the link between generation of witnesses and survivors and "the generation after." As the previous chapter explored, *A Tale for the Time Being*'s long, non-linear narrative arc from World War II to the War in Iraq surfaces in and around the narrative's "temporal stutters" of dementia. And Nao, like Ozeki, is a second-generation Japanese-American who had family interned during World War II, sharing with Susan a common call to yoke together traumatic pasts and violent histories.

Overall, the knowledge gained about Martha's past at the end of volume two renders the background noise of war over the news more palpable; it enables readers to go back to the first volume and consider Martha's relationship to war in a different way—as essential to her past and

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[55] Raquel Medina has discussed this "detective work" of recovering personal and collective memory in Spanish documentary films about reconstructing the lives of their loved ones with dementia in the context of the Spanish Civil War. Her work in progress on *El Tiempo Suspendedido* (2015), a documentary on the Dirty War in Argentina by the granddaughter of a survivor with dementia, critiques how the film forgets the personhood of the survivor in its manipulation and showcasing of her memory loss for the sake of remembering the war.

present rather than merely in tangent to it. *Dementia Blog* is about the continuity of war across a continuum of crisis that stretches, at the very least, from the beginning of World War II to the War in Iraq. The entanglement of Martha in the War in Iraq is made most strikingly clear in an entry titled, "Toward a Documentary Poem about Alzheimer's Care and the Carlyle Group" in *Volume Two*. In this entry Susan pieces together bits of news from December 21, 2007, in which the global private equity firm The Carlyle Group announce its acquisition of ManorCare, the nursing home chain in which Martha's residence of Arden Courts resides. Readers learn "The American based Carlyle Group is heavily involved in supplying arms to the Coalition forces fighting in the Iraqi war"—a line excerpted from a *Portugal News* report. This is juxtaposed with scenes of negligence due to a diverting of funds from care:

> A dementia patient was raped by another resident in July but wasn't taken to a hospital for more than 24 hours, a state investigation found (10/2007)
> …
> David Regan, the union's president, said private equity firms that buy nursing-home chains commonly reduce staffing to increase profits, causing residents to suffer
> …
> On my last visit, I noticed that the place was under-staffed and the caregivers were highly stressed. There were a lot of little crises and not enough caregivers to watch over everyone. (53)

The suggestion in this entry is that Martha's life is inextricable from the War in Iraq, her place of residence is networked to actors that have power over her quality of care. It is also ironic that dementia care is more intimately tied to the war than it seems. As I mentioned briefly in the introduction, in wake of the War on Terror the US Department of Defense has become increasingly invested in dementia research as related to traumatic brain injury (TBI) due to the profound use of IEDs. As George and Whitehouse note,

> TBI inflict[s] structural and functional damage that weaken one's cognitive reserve, leaving the brain less resilient to age-related processes (i.e. further neuronal loss, oxidative stress, inflammation, altered glucose metabolism, and vascular damage, etc.) over time. Therefore, upstream neurological and psychological damage wrought by the War on Terror will be felt in the dementia care field for decades to come. Not only must countries allied in the War on Terror provide appropriate healthcare coverage for affected veterans, communities will need

> to adapt to increasing numbers of persons who may experience the challenges of dementia earlier in their lifespan. (125)

Although larger global crises threaten to overshadow the "little crises" of the nursing home, Susan brings them visibility together in the narrative of *Dementia Blog*. We might recall the passage I discussed earlier in which Susan reports of IEDs exploding in Al Anbar alongside the Martha's nursing home acquired pneumonia as an illustration of this. So while the incursions of global politics through news media and war commentary overcrowd the first volume and seem tangential to Martha's experience (appearing as literal background noise in the nursing home), by reading backward into Martha's past in the second volume, we can see more clearly how these are all interconnected. Despite how tangled the rhetoric of the "war on terrorism" and the "War on AD" are, *Dementia Blog* approaches Martha's life story and dementia in a way that goes beyond "anguish towards persons affected by memory loss" and the expected "rhetoric of battle and victory" (George and Whitehouse 122, 121).

Even as Susan expresses how the blog "did not tell how her [Martha's] life was woven in with historical time, how one woman wandered through wars" (*Vol 2* 136), I suggest that taking these two texts together elicits a model of reading forward and backward across time that allows readers to see otherwise. Central to *Dementia Blog*'s narrative inquiry around dementia is not only an ethics of reading but also a relational ethics: Susan's relationship with Martha in her dementia—and Martha's own changing sense of relationships to others—has much to teach readers about their own relationship to others.

Dementing Relationality, Engendering Responsibility

Expanding on the meaning of "the demented tense" in *Dementia Blog [Volume Two]*, Susan writes, "Dementia offers us the conditional, the provisional tense, the not-present or not-past or not-future tense. Invent a new tense for those who have forgotten you. It changes you, to be forgotten so" (21). If tense structure is a blueprint for a particular way of locating an orientation in time, expressing the temporal relation between one or more situations, the demented tense maps out contingency, possibility, conjecture, and wonder in both senses of the word. What might be achieved in narrating what happens in the liminal, in-between temporality of Martha's dementia, and Susan's intimate witness to it? In her invention of the concept of the "demented tense," Susan positions forgetting not as an absolute loss of connection with her mother but an undoing and remaking of relationships, producing openings (or "wormholes," recalling Joy from the introduction) for meaning-making and ethical reflection. The altered perception of family relationships and history is not only experienced by Martha, but Susan as well, as she adopts and embraces her mother's point of view. What emerges in the text, then, is Susan's sense of responsibility and obligation as a caregiver to recognize Martha's hallucinations as conscious experiences that carry meaning. The narrative challenges readers too, to embrace the dementing quality of these relationships, to reevaluate the definition of irrationality often attributed to such confusions. This section explores how the narrative asks readers to take part in a shared sense of responsibility for the stories of others and interchange them with their own—as Susan and Martha do—an act of ethical consequence in an increasingly globalized yet divided world. Schultz is not just concerned with mimicking or describing effects of memory impairment, but engendering sense of unfamiliar connection with and obligation to the recognition of other histories and narratives.

Many of the posts in *Dementia Blog* track the recurrence of Martha searching for her mother. These are moments in which Martha moves about her surroundings, moments of liveliness:

> --To tell her the truth only agitates her. *Your mother is dead, mom*, doesn't work, because later she comes back into mind, alive in her being missing. (92)
>
> --She looks around the house for her mother; asks the caregiver where her mother has gone. Gets on the phone to ask someone else where her mother is. (128)

In her search Martha traverses not only space but also time, as Susan likens Martha's new sense of family history to that of unrelenting time travel, intensely kinetic and incommensurable in language:

> --Her mother lives in the future; she has gone but can perhaps be found…The old woman, my mother, folds her past into future. Where we see her future as a short space, she knows it goes as far as her mother has traveled. It's been days since she left, and those days are in the past. But the worry that summons her into presence…keeps going forward, which is back, which is only not still. This is no bridge into time; it is a train in the tunnel that has forgotten to stop. It is the blur of movement without the subtitles, or even the original, if unintelligible, tongue. (91)

Martha's experience of "going forward, which is back" is an embodied form of the "demented tense" Susan has emphasized to be a part of the blog's form. This is one of several passages in which Susan draws attention to the way readers relate to time differently than her mother. While readers "see her future as a short space" but her mother's dementia brings "past into future" which enables her sense of real connection with her dead mother (Susan's grandmother). This happens at a formal level of grammatical indeterminacy throughout the texts in which it is not clear who she/her/I refers to at many moments in the text. For example, in one note, Susan writes, "(her mother has gone for three days). The evasions must be mine, not hers. They must exist only in the composition. She will be composed, whether she is she or I" (83).

Crucially, what happens in the demented tense is a folding of time that reverses the familiar sense of relationship between mother and child. Susan observes Martha becoming her mother ("Shown a photograph of herself…2 or 3 years ago…she doesn't recognize herself. *That's my mother*, she says" [128]), while Susan and Martha become intertwined. A sense of responsibility emerges for Susan as well, to enter into the demented tense and also search for Martha's mother: "My mother's mother is stronger than her daughter's imagination. She is. And she is missing. And I've been tasked with finding her" (96).

What is the significance of the time travel that occurs in the demented tense, what does it mean that Susan and her mother become entangled with one another? Martha's dementia is positioned not only a loss of memories; her disorientation in time and place is narrated by Susan as a gaining of a past that is not hers, which opens up to wider histories. Consider these two passages in which Susan describes Martha and her histories becoming one:

> -- Figures of speech. Something having to do with two facts becoming a single invented irreality. She remembers her past, but forgets that it is hers. She has forgotten my past, replaced it with hers. It does not quite fit, and yet it cannot quite fit, either. When she sees that the car is gone, she asks, *where's Pa?* That was our past, yes. The one I remember. (120)
>
> --She often confuses us. She told Bryant I was born in 1917, which is her birth year. She was born on the day of one of the Russian Revolutions. She tells me now that I went away to school when I was a child. I wonder what happens to her past, once it becomes mine. (124)

Susan becomes a kind of surrogate of her mother's memory and thus becomes her, while Martha's forgetting leads the memories of Susan to become her. In these exchanges of memory, the text prompts us to ask readers to suspend 'authentic' memory-based connection, making room for connections in spaces of memory that cannot quite fit with what is logical. By insisting memory is something that can be shared as an act of care, Susan moves readers away from the individualized notion of memory as belonging an individual alone, displacing the idea one's past resides in one body and thus can ever truly be lost. The intimacy between Martha and Susan here are instead founded on suspension of disbelief, on an emphasis on the imagination. The question, "I wonder what happens to her past, once it becomes mine," might also be one to be ventriloquized more generally by the reader. In this adoption of Martha's past as an act of care, Susan stages for readers an ethical obligation. The ethics that may emerge from taking on the past of others is clearer in the latter note in which histories about the Russian Revolution converge. In the entry, Martha's past becoming Susan's finds parallel in the transnational effects of the Russian Revolution and its intertwining history with, for example, Hawai'i's past. In a racist scheme to make Hawai'i "more white" and subdue "yellow peril," the Hawaiian Board of Immigration brought 1,500 Russians (many active revolutionaries) from Siberia (also a site of indigenous conquest) to replace Asian sugarcane laborers on strike (Khisamutdinov). Between the lines of the text, this subtle intimation of this failed Russian immigration scheme is one of many histories left for readers to wander into.

The text stages Susan's responsibility for Martha's memory in ways that take us back to the book's concern with violence and war. Fragments—of sentences, memory, and bombs—return in the narrative on Wednesday, September 06, 2006, the day news outlets reported seven casualties from a suicide attack in Kandahar. In this entry, the intimacy of caretaking and memory work on Martha's behalf coalesce with the figure of the suicide bomber:

> --Mom was in the ER last night: difficulties breathing, several broken ribs. She could not remember anything. I called, became her memory. She has not lost hers; it's been given to me to hold.
> …
> --It's ritual, this mother daughter forgetting. What she remembers of me is now her. And what I remember or her is now fact: she fell on a sprinkler and later complained of pains in her side. That's all I know.
> …
> --She and she bear no responsibilities in this exchange…It is I who must remember, in order to sort the useful from what can be used against. A human shield. The bomber kills self before others. So the self must be held hostage to our care. (60)

As "a human shield," Susan cannot think her caretaking apart from protecting her mother from the figure of the suicide bomber's "lethal altruism" (Tobeña) on one hand and "sacrificial militancy" on the other (Houen). Alluding to the 2003 anti-war human shield movement in Iraq (the deployment of large numbers of western citizens to make U.S. invasion untenable), Susan moves herself from the private sphere into enemy territory. What makes this passage particularly striking is how the intimacy of caretaking (including Susan's duty to her mother's memory) is tied together with the acts of resistance to imperial occupation.[56] And the violence of imperial occupation itself is also critiqued if we consider the other tangential threads that have emerged in the narrative connecting to neo-

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[56] The maternal intimacy of caretaking also erupts through the hegemonic masculinity of governmental and media "war talk" as Ehrenreich writes, "Media coverage of Gulf War II, in particular, has expressed and enforced this construction of masculinity, disguising American imperialism as noble expressions of civilizing, manly power…popular discourse on war and terrorism enacts and reinforces an image of masculinity as nationalistic, racially aggressive, homophobic, and sexist." (133).

colonial, racist U.S. immigration schemes and the Bush administration's justifications for U.S. occupation. Schultz's approach to representing care relationships alongside the politics of borders and war speaks to Amelia DeFalco's assertion that the representation of caregiving in dementia narratives can be "a private demonstration of fidelity that speaks to national and political policies of exclusion and abandonment…demonstrat[ing] the relevance of ethics of care philosophy to discussions of identity, both personal and familial, and political and historical" (139). The crisscross between dementia and global politics is essential to Schultz's demented poetics, through which the text exacts its critique and exploration of ongoing cycles of violence.

Dementia and the Memory of Violence

As the previous sections have explored, throughout the text the demented tense necessarily involves the intertwining histories of the personal and the global, establishing narrative connections between Susan's recording of Martha's life and political conflict at home and abroad through tangential fragments. In this section I explore further how Susan develops a poetic aesthetic of dementia to link interrelated yet contradictory contexts and histories of domination and colonization that are fundamentally different from each other but similar in their experiences of marginalization and struggles for self-determination. More than a metaphor or warning against the perils of forgetting war and history, the demented tense helps resist the violent logic of what Susan names in the antepenultimate entry of December 23, 2006, "empire's rigid grammar" (16). This is a key juncture in the text in which the subversive logic of Schultz's demented poetics is brought to the fore. Susan's observations on Martha's dementia evolves into a compelling counterpoint to the project of U.S. imperialism; particularly the imperial ambitions of the "New American Empire" pursued by the Bush administration in Iraq (Lake).

Like many of the entries in *Dementia Blog*, this one opens with fragments of news reportage on the war in Iraq. Susan's recording of Martha's forgetting becomes an occasion to topically draw together multi-decades of selective memory:

> --*Bad year for empire*. Occlusions of memory. Do not tell us what you did in Vietnam or Panama or the Philippines, Cuba or Cambodia. We have chosen to tivo those out. Shiites "reorganize" neighborhoods. Once mixed, they're now "purified." *We've created a culture of dependency in Iraq*, the governor opines. If only they'd grown up to be like us…The journalist compares Iraqis to American Indians. Forgetting is not easy; there is blood on its hatchet, too.
>
> -- In her year of greatest dependency, she lashed out at others…In her year of forgetting, she took on new memories…In her year of assuming new facts, she forgave the president his lies (*he's not so bad; don't be so hard on him*!). (16)

The italicized opening of the note is the title of journalist Jim Lobe's article, "A Bad Year for Empire," in which he points to the failure of the U.S.'s overwhelming demonstration of military power in Afghanistan and Iraq in shocking "the rest of the world – and particularly Washington's foes and aspiring rivals – into accepting its benevolent hegemony" (n.p.). In what follows, Susan calls attention to truncated histories of countries affected by U.S. imperialism and military involvement at the speaker's behest ("Do not tell us what you did") and points to how these histories have already been forgotten, quite literally, through technological media (represented by the selective digital recording program, "tivo"). Additionally, the invocation of a journalist's comparison of "Iraqis and American Indians" on public news media "summons the history of Native American and US military encounters" in a way that signals how the past is "forgotten" or retold through present political filters to justify the present state of U.S. military imperialism in the Middle East (Silliman).[57] Overall, the note offers a condensed critique of ongoing imperial violence distanced and

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[57] As Stephen Silliman writes, the "Indian Country" metaphor of Iraq and Afghanistan on news media is "rooted in colonialism and aggression, and it feeds on a belief in the continued historical legitimacy, and expected military success of the United States," a discourse that "also seems to feed on elements of White supremacy, because, historically, the racialized metaphor has been used in nonwhite, non-Western regions such as Vietnam and Iraq that can be rendered as 'savage.'" (242)

fragmented by media, geography, and time. As Hannah Zeilig has argued, *Dementia Blog* "exposes the extent to which our lives are fragmentary, whether we are living with dementia [or not], and the illusion of coherence in the political stories that we are continually told" (265). Susan's project of blogging her mother's memory and forgetting is thus bound up with struggles over collective memory and the denial of violent history. That Martha cannot herself remember the Bush administration's aggressive wielding of power ("she forgave the president his lies") presents an ethical question for the reader: is one to read dementia as the marker for a national amnesia, the ultimate "forgetting" of political violence? Susan offers an alternative to this view in the remainder of the entry.

The rest of the entry proceeds with several notes that keep reader's attention on the subject of empire. First is Susan's statement of locatedness in Hawai'i, told through a description of an adjacent road that crosses a popular symbol of American cultural imperialism (McDonald's) before concluding with her son's inquiries into the complex political negotiations that earned the Nepali state independence: "--I live in `Ahuimanu, Temple Valley, Kāne`ohe, on Hui Kelu Street, near the cemetery and the McDonalds, windward side of the Ko`olaus, mauka of the highway, parking lot 5. *Were they part of the British empire?* he asks about Nepal. They gave their soldiers to the British and kept their land" (16).[58] The concluding notes of the entry shift attention to the topic of empire as it has to Martha, and it is here that Susan sets up the demented tense as the foil to "empire's rigid grammar":

> --She writes about Jerusalem. Old Arab man attacked by young Arab men. Enter the Israeli police. Blame put where it always is. Hers is not a defense of empire, but a puncturing of

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[58] It is worth noting that Susan's location (marked at the end of every blog "page") of writing is Kāne`ohe, Hawai`i; Schultz has lived in Hawai'i since 1990 and has reflected at length on how being a *haole* (white, non-native) in Hawai'i has impacted her views on gender, race, writing, and language on a regular basis. What emerges in the demented tense is a productive dialogue between indigenous and disabled perspectives of temporality as a means to think differently about relationships with the past and the now as nonlinear, a kind of decolonial alliance that goes beyond the colonial legacy of Western linear time. See Schultz's Tinfish Editor blog entries, "'Be a Haole, a Dumb Haole, or a Dumb F-ing Haole': On White Writing in Hawai`i," "Writing While White: Thoughts on Writing Race as a White Poet," and "When the author is dead: Posthumous collections of poetry from Hawai`i."
On temporality from the perspective of native Hawaiians see Lilikalā Kame`elehiwa *Native Lands and Foreign Desires* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992).

> story that fails to acknowledge particular fact. Not a call to action, but to observation. Dangerous to see amoeba in the microscope where there is sea!
>
> --The brain is wider than. Oh for an ounce of your poetry's acid, Emily, to sear through this empire's rigid grammar. (16-17)

If we continue from the previous notes (on Martha forgiving the president), the vague pronoun reference to 'she' here continues to be Martha, writing perhaps on the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict over the boundary of national territory. Susan notes that wherever Martha puts the "blame," her blame is "not a defense of empire" due to the fact she is perceived incapable of making rational judgments. However, the text nonetheless attempts to capture a different way that Martha exercises agency by emphasizing the disruptive poetic agency she possesses and bestows upon Susan as the observer and writer of her life.

The entry's references to empire across the globe end with a reference to Emily Dickinson's "The Brain—is wider than the Sky—" (1863), a poem celebrating the capacity of human imagination and the plasticity of the mind by comparing it to the sky, sea, and God.[59] As Sabine Sielke notes, Dickinson's poems such as this one

> are preoccupied with physiological operations and, more significantly, with their disruption and failure…Loss of consciousness, paralysis, pain, and the limits of perception are central to her poetry and poetics–a poetics that explores the lacunae and gaps of cognition and exposes the brain's capacity to break down information and remember experiences and sense impressions in a highly selective and associative manner. (68)

Dementia Blog is similarly concerned with the reconfiguring of perception and remembering, and thus one could read Susan's invocation of "The Brain" as a comment on how the mind persists with dementia. And certainly, *Dementia Blog*'s fragmentary form at many moments nods to Dickinson's

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[59] Many neuroscientists have turned to this poem as a reflection on the operations of the human mind, for example, late Nobel laureate Gerald Edelman uses the poem's opening line as the title of his book, *Wider Than the Sky: the Phenomenal Gift of Consciousness*, while French neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene uses the first stanza in the epigraph to *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts*. But I agree with Sabine Sielke's sentiment that "we need to resist reading into her poetics the insights about cognition that evolved during the second half of the twentieth century and, in particular, the 1990s, the so-called 'decade of the brain'" since "both art and science work by way of metaphor and mediation" (69-70).

fragmentated aesthetic, as both writers employ dashes as a means to create "a poetry whose interpretation becomes a process of decoding the way each fragment signals meaning" (Denman 33). Thus, the most obvious significance of Susan's evocation of Dickinson here is that the challenge of putting Martha's dementia into form closely approximates Dickinson's own poetic endeavors, as Kamilla Denman points out, "Dickinson conducted her most intense exploration of language and used punctuation to disrupt conventional linguistic relations, whether in an attempt to express inexpressible psychological states or purely to vivify language" (33). For Susan, Martha's dementia is the "inexpressible psychological state" she is obligated to give language to. As Susan asks, "My mother is an involuntary poet. Who is there to workshop her verses, refine her craft, edit her lines? …the question remains of how to attend to its repetitions, its failures of completion, its half-steps…If dementia is endless repetition, then how to write it down without altering it, so that it is at once legible to the reader and varied enough for her to absorb it?" (80, 115-116).

But I want to focus on how Schultz's invocation of Dickinson here is also political. Bringing the recitation of the poem's first line to a full stop, Susan interrupts the line with a longing for Dickinson's poeticism and its ability to "sear through this empire's rigid grammar." This is a significant moment in the text because it connects Susan's poetics and aesthetics of dementia to political and social resistance against the logic of empire building: the imperatives of expansion and conquest. In the context of the War on Terror this U.S. empire building process is based on "the ideological cover, the appearance of being unaffiliated to empire, of being 'international' rather than imperial… conver[ing] international aggrandizement to an 'internal struggle' between local antagonist, and provide an ideological cover of 'expanding democracy' to justify imperial hegemony or dominion" (Petras 8).

If *Dementia Blog* is a poetic commentary on Martha's dementia inseparable from the historical context of violence during the War on Terror, it finds strategic alignment with Dickinson's poetry as deeply embedded in the political history and civilian experience of the American Civil War. As Betsy Erkkila points out, Dickinson criticism has overemphasized the poet's "isolation from the war and history" despite over half of the poems in the Franklin variorum edition being written during the Civil War between 1861 and 1865 (158). Erkkila reveals in her study of Dickinson's poetry and letters that Dickinson was in fact intensely against "the public rhetoric of blood sacrifice for the Union cause or the sin of slavery," expressing "doubt about the larger meaning and value of war, suffering, and death":

> Locating her poems historically amid the 'charnel steps' of the war at the same time that she suggests the role of poetry in singing 'off'—or against—the blood site of democratic history, Dickinson's comments reveals the ways the internecine carnage and trauma of the war inflects and intensifies her struggle against the specters of loss, change, unmeaning, and death during the war years and after (159-160).[60]

Although "The Brain" does not take up the topic of war directly, it is one of 300 poems Dickinson wrote during 1863, "a year of crisis and turning point in the war" and also the year in which Dickinson most vocally expresses in her letters her resistance to the "redemptive democratic vision of the Gettysburg Address (1863) in which Lincoln locates the blood sacrifice of the Civil War within a consoling national narrative of 'a new birth of freedom'" (158, 160). The public discursive context of the Civil War that Dickinson positions her anti-war sentiments against is not unlike the euphemistic discourse of 'democratization' and 'regime change' propounded by the Bush administration and critiqued in Schultz's text. While it may be an interpretive stretch to stay Susan invokes "The Brain" as an allusion to Dickinson's political perspectives, I suggest that following Susan's lead in wandering with the juxtaposition of empire and Dickinson is intended to lead reader to a consideration of poetic responses to historical cycles of war. This passage thus sets up for the reader how *Dementia Blog* envisions the demented tense as a kind of poetics of resistance.

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[60] Erkkila specifically discusses "Victory comes late" and "The Eagle's Golden Breakfast."

Dickinson's experimental approach to thinking and writing about the mind as the "acid" that can undo "empire's rigid grammar" is concomitant with Susan's concept of the "demented tense." The grammar of empire seems to signify several things: it recalls linguistic imperialism (i.e. global English as a key dimension of U.S. empire) and what Bliss Cua Lim calls "the temporal logic of colonialism, a linear, evolutionary view of history that spatialized time and cultural difference…in which radical cultural differences brought to colonial contact were framed as primitive or anachronistic" (13). It seems then that writing history and a life in the demented tense, a form that emerges from the imaginative depths of the changing mind, is a resistance to linearity in narrative patterns that have been mobilized in service of upholding colonial ideologies. Susan posits that the subject's forgetting isn't a "defense of empire" but a way of thinking that destabilizes the way we remember. It is an alternative way of constructing a narrative; and in many paratactic moments of the blog, Susan demonstrates that writing in the demented tense exceeds what our grammar and templates for writing history can convey. The poetics that emerges is, for Susan, the aesthetic gift that interpreting and writing Martha's life bestows upon her. All the while, the text is careful to point out the ethics of this kind of representation, as Susan admits, "I read her style, her life, her dying as my appropriation" (64).[61] Here readers are reminded of Martha's actual life at stake being lived, and that it is a life Susan mediates to certain political and metaphorical ends that Martha may not be aware of.

Returning to Susan's critique of the U.S. public image of war, the notion of empire's rigid grammar also resonates with what Christopher Corker and others have called "the grammar of killing": "the articulation of an act: how we perceive it, how we reflect on why others do what they do and how we tend to experience once done…Killing is rhetorical. It aspires to be heard and to

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[61] For more perspectives on disability poetry as it "opens up the problems and possibilities of speaking for others" see Alice Hall, *Disability and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2016): 169.

persuade, which is why it is grammatical." (115-116). Similarly, Sebastian Kaempf suggests the "grammar of killing" in Western military operations hinges on media representation of war that is bloodless and clean, suggesting the "mediatisation of warfare has not only altered the physical experience of conflict through the means of technology, but has also sought to obscure the fact that waging war is still about killing others" (598). Susan's articulation of "empire's rigid grammar" might thus also be understood as the hegemonic, rigid framing of conflict or any representation of war in a digital age. Judith Butler, writing about the photographs of Abu Ghraib, points to how visual news of war is delivered in service of the "digitalization of evil" (960). For Butler what is troublesome about this contemporary moment is the "inability to register human loss and devastation across global distance" (955):

> It is this numbing of the senses…the decimation of the capacity to feel outrage in the face of human suffering, the belief that any suffering one inflicts is justified by the suffering that one has undergone, or others have undergone. It is not that some stray people in the military or in security contracts failed to see, to feel, to maintain a moral perception of other persons as persons. This 'not seeing' in the midst of seeing, this not-seeing that is the condition of seeing, has become the visual norm, and it is that norm that is a national norm[.] (966)

In its accumulation of references to war and other violent histories, *Dementia Blog* launches readers into meandering tangents on Abu Ghraib, Vietnam, Panama, the Philippines, the Nazi regime and so on; they point towards these grammars of killing and challenges to register the reality of global violence.

Given there is a critical tendency to idealize "exceptional" figures, I want to be clear that I do not mean to suggest *Dementia Blog* valorizes dementia as a certain kind of epistemological ideal or access to "truth," or that it glamorizes Martha's impairment as a kind of symbolically decolonial embodiment.[62] But I do think close attention to Martha's dementia and the hallucinations Susan

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[62] There's also gendered critique here given the demented tense's focus on maternal relationships and how it stands in opposition to "empire's rigid grammar"—empire being by and large conceived in terms of paternal authority and patrilineal power.

records are important because they demand readers to broaden their imagination of what kind of subjective experiences of time, space, and place are possible—and these imaginative openings are essential to fostering senses of human connection across global distances.

If empire's grammar is rigid, the demented tense is fluid, concept that is perhaps best captured in Susan's writing down of Martha's hallucinatory conflations of past and present; in this way Susan creates a poetics of dementia that hinges on disjointed juxtapositions that perform the breakdown of conventional ways of writing history. As I touched on previously, Susan's recordings of her mother's hallucinations focus on Martha's sense of direct presence in the Middle East. Consider this note on the 2004 bombings and assassinations in and around Beirut:

> --She drives in her car, dreaming of Lebanon. She pays for gas, feels bombs in that other air, which is also hers. The disease is not empathy; empathy is a symptom, side-effect, erosion, self-wound rendered in another tongue. *Her mother is not capable.* I call her mother, say they do not know where she is. (56)

Susan is careful to state Alzheimer's "is not empathy" but rather, her mother's identification and sense of shared air with those in Lebanon is an effect of her own reality "rendered in another tongue"—the demented tense. The nursing home deems Martha incapable, unlocatable in normative terms, but Susan, "call[ing] her mother" holds space for her dislocation. In the dislocated past-made-present, the demented tense makes visible different histories and relationships to people and place that do not fit in current grammatical modalities.[63] These "wormholes" or moments of errancy and weirdness (to return to Joy's sense of the word) in the text open up different channels and transverse connections for relating to others in and out of time, disrupting normative notions of sociality and the notion that history lives in the past tense.

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[63] On the relationship between place and Alzheimer's see Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands: "Alzheimer's shows the deep particularity of experiencing and reflecting bodies in their relations to place…in Alzheimer's disease the question of *memory* ties together bodies and landscapes in ways that reveal the inextricable connection between physicality and reflection and also the ways in which different types of memory combine to enable (or not) socially sanctioned and culturally meaningful interactions with the more-than-human world" (271). See "Landscape, Memory, and Forgetting: Thinking Through (my Mother's) Body and Place," *Material Feminisms*, eds Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008): 265-287.

The heart of what is at stake in the demented tense—this different sense of identification and relationality with others across private realms (i.e. Martha and her dead mother) and public spheres—emerges most powerfully in a telephone call Susan has with Martha. Recounting their conversation on Saturday, August 19, 2006, Susan begins with a record of Martha's hallucination, written in italics:

> *--I'm in a nursing home in Afghanistan and I need to get home to Wooster; Ohio; I need to find myself a train. I have my checkbook and you know I can take care of myself. I'm so glad you called; I don't have anyone's number. I might be on the road for a few days, so you won't hear from me…*
>
> --What is the function of the word *Afghanistan* in the statement above? It is far away; it is dangerous; she has never been there before. *Wooster* is where Joe, Mary, and Karen lived, and Mother in her old age…
>
> --The names remain, however. Wooster, Afghanistan. There's history there, and it's not just hers. (84-85)

In these entries, in the demented tense, Martha occupies her home of Wooster as well as Afghanistan—proper nouns that name geographical location coalesce into a shared history that is beyond normative bounds of rational understanding. Martha has never been to Afghanistan, but her dementia draws her into a history beyond her own. Stressing the importance of linking the self to others, and the constructed nature of national borders, Susan prompts readers to consider what it might mean to recognize Martha's hallucinations not as signs of pathology but as valid realities, openings into histories "not just hers."

Dementia Blog, then, seems to frame dementia as a window into different, unimaginable realities—those of Martha and those of others—that deserve social recognition. But in this entry Susan is also careful not to idealize Martha's sense of dislocation, writing that her change of home is like "living a fairy tale of origins," and "Like many tales, it contains no happiness, only struggle" (85). Nevertheless, Martha's occupation of Afghanistan is something the narrative returns to repetitively, gesturing at questions regarding the limits of representation and identification: "--…If she uses Afghanistan as a word, and I know it as a war zone, can I not still say she suffers for being there—apart from where she is? When is a word only a word? When is a word no longer a word?" (78). Wandering into and adopting the histories of Afghanistan, Martha highlights the limits of occupation, blurring the boundaries between enemy and ally, interrogating the presumption of dementia as an apolitical, individualistic matter. To consider Martha's suffering in Afghanistan as real is to acknowledge that war's reach extends beyond what is immediately visible—that war and violence, even in its hallucinatory form as Martha experiences it, transgresses national and geographic borders and shapes domestic everyday life in real and subtle ways.

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What ultimately emerges from the demented tense is an ethics of different identification: the narrative of Martha's dementia and the personal narrative between Susan and Martha draw into connection wars that feel far away and the lives of others that ordinarily seem far away. *Dementia Blog* makes these connections possible through the narrative's accretion of tangents laid down from fragments in the demented tense. Though increased discourse tangentiality is in neurolinguistics terms is a sign of Alzheimer's pathology, *Dementia Blog*'s dissemination of tangential memories creates possibilities for unexpected moments of historical and personal connectivity.

I hope to have illustrated some of the ways *Dementia Blog* makes imaginative space for Schultz's call to action in the essay "Alien's" this chapter began with: the need to let go of "the boundaries, the borders, of self, of nation." Playing with generic borders and invested in the formal expression of the temporal and geographical boundary crossing of Martha's dementia, Schultz puts forth an ethics of identification and imagination that encourages a reaching out to unexpected stories and experiences. Giving voice to Martha's experience as both a poet and a kind of caregiver-as-translator, Schultz offers readers an invitation to wander with her mother through what many readers will find to be foreign experiences. The work of Schultz's life narrative project is making

Martha's experience accessible, putting into form the history and experience of her life into a form that captures its complexity.

In Chapter 3, I continue exploring issues surrounding the representation of dementia, historical violence, and intergenerational spaces of remembrance relationship in life narrative. I specifically turn to graphic life writing because the unique freedom of expression afforded by the visual-verbal medium tackles this intersection most innovatively; comics can re-draw borders in the most literal sense of the word. Dementia, trauma, and the absence/abundance of history, all push on the boundaries of what is accessible and (un)representable through language. The artists I explore wield the graphic form to transform existing medico-scientific and cultural narratives of dementia and aging but also representations of traumatic history.

CHAPTER III

Drawn to History: Dementia and Trauma in Graphic Life Narrative

In the last chapter, I examined how Susan Schultz's poetics of a "demented tense" weaves together personal and global histories, dramatizing an ethics of reading these entangled stories as that which is enriched by "being with" the perspective of the person with dementia. Continuing with the contention that hybrid literary forms can forcefully enact fluid spaces of collision for readers' confrontation with disparate historical contexts and life experiences, this chapter turns to how graphic life writing can uniquely orchestrate the embodied representation of dementia alongside the memory of historical violence. Dana Walrath's *Alicehiemer's: Alzheimer's Through the Looking Glass* (2016) and Stuart Campbell's *These Memories Won't Last* (2015) are two unconventional graphic narratives about family members with dementia and traumatic, historical memories of the Armenian Genocide and World War II, respectively. In my readings of these texts, I ask: how do these authors use the graphic form to engender and critique readers' affective engagement with people with dementia—and the subject of forgetting—alongside the fraught memory and history of traumatic pasts that must be remembered? Inversely, how do they deploy dementia as an innovative narrative resource to re-imagine trauma, thereby expanding the possibilities of personal and collective memorialization and storytelling?[64] Lastly, I elaborate on the previous chapters' explorations of thinking alongside and honoring the differences of people with dementia's subjectivity and

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[64] The expansion of these possibilities in graphic memoir was heralded by Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (serialized from 1980 to 1991).

experiences by looking at how the graphic form bestows space for these authors to destabilize empathetic reading from a position of "being like" someone to one that emphasizes "being with."[65] By turning to their experiences with a family member with dementia, Walrath and Campbell do the dual work of rewriting dominant medical narratives through graphic form and of inviting ethical reflection on readers' imaginative and empathetic engagement with personal, political, and historical experiences potentially very different from their own.

Comics scholars like Scott McCloud, Hillary Chute, and Jared Garner have established how the graphic form typically draws metareflective attention to its own materiality and status as representation; invites a high degree of reader participation; and provokes questions regarding the ethics of spectatorship and identification that play out between narrators, authors, subjects, avatars, and readers. Recent criticism in disability and comics studies (as both separate and overlapping fields) have explored the various ways that graphic narrative is a powerful medium with which to represent both disability and extreme experiences of personal and collective trauma. The visuality and materiality of graphic narrative pushes against the conception of what critics frequently refer to as the "unsayable" or "unrepresentable"—a term Kate Polak interrogates as "a coded term for the real ethical demands of empathy…an immense intellectual, emotional, and experiential undertaking" (215). While Polak is referring to the demands of reading historical fiction in comics, it applies to the demands of reading narratives of dementia as well, since dementia is often written off as an "untellable silence" posing significant interpretive barriers to readers' comprehension (Frank 101).[66]

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[65] I am borrowing Cynthia L. Bennett and Daniela K. Rosner's phrasing; their approach to design resonates with how one might approach graphic works and the boundaries between reader/subject. In their words, "being with" entails holding onto the "inevitable asymmetries" of empathy, and they argue reworking "empathy as 'being with' could raise asymmetries not as things to be avoided but as things to be ongoingly accountable to." Furthermore, they insist on "rejecting empathy as an accomplishment, a means to an end," and instead encourage "being with" as "learning to be affected and attending to difference without reifying that difference once again…In so doing, we imagine empathy not only as a type of affective partnership but as a point for destabilizing and reimagining imposed boundaries (e.g., between categories of "disabled" and "designing" or "designer" and "user")" (11).

[66] Interestingly, Arthur Frank's category of these untellable "chaos narratives"—describing the plotless experience of illness (especially Alzheimer's)—originates from his reading of stories about the Holocaust: "What cannot be evaded in

What concerns me is how the "ethical demands of empathy" are particularly redoubled in graphic narratives that set out to represent dementia *and* extreme experience concurrently, an undertaking which can often risk reifying negative metaphors.[67] Subordinating the experiential history of dementing to the larger historical issues of memorializing catastrophic violence is also another risk. Conversely, because the texts at hand are generically categorized as being works "about dementia," their broader historical engagements can be easily missed. The texts I address take on these risks, challenging prevailing views of both dementia and trauma as disappearance, inarticulable, and unrepresentable, while also productively grappling with how much a reader can really empathetically identify with the trauma and history of others (the person with dementia, but also the experience of caregivers and relatives who are the main agents of telling these stories).

Before elaborating on the texts, I offer a brief survey of the main critical and generic context framing their reception. Within the last decade the literary marketplace has seen an explosion of graphic life writing narratives centered on disability and illness. The sheer diversity of approaches and audiences for these works is reflected in the myriad terms that have emerged to describe the burgeoning genre. Medical and health humanities circles most often default to the phrase "graphic pathographies," intended to highlight both the rhetorical appeal of *pathos* and underscore the portrayal of 'disease' and 'suffering' that 'patho-' implies (Meyers and Goldenberg). G. Thomas Couser however suggests the term is still pathologizing, reinforcing subjects' positions as patients; and thus he prefers the more neutral designation, "graphic auto/somatography," which shifts the

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stories told by Holocaust witnesses is the hole in the narrative that cannot be filled in…The story traces the edges of a wound that can only be told around. Words suggest its rawness, but that wound is so much of the body, its insults, agonies, and losses, that words necessarily fail" (98).

[67] By which I mean disability metaphor can come at an expense or overshadow the materiality of disability. For example, parts of David B.'s graphic auto/biography *Epileptic* give visual form to his brother's epilepsy using highly stylized flashbacks of war, fantasies of Adolf Hitler and Genghis Khan, and animal imagery. Epilepsy becomes metaphorically charged with the imagination (or reality) of the violent historical crimes committed by dictators and tyrants, and also becomes a complicatedly "Other" threat to his brother's identity as images of animality, monstrosity, and racial difference blur together.

focus from disease to the *soma* or 'body' (*Signifying Bodies*). More recently, the designation "graphic medicine" has gained popularity. British physician Ian Williams coined the phrase in 2007 to categorize texts at the intersection of comics, medicine, and healthcare discourse, which he collated on his website, GraphicMedicine.org. The website attracted a core group of participants in medicine and the humanities who became founding contributors to the Eisner Award-nominated scholarly volume, *Graphic Medicine Manifesto* (2015). Today, graphic medicine has grown to denote not just a genre but also medium, practice, and entire field of study predominantly grounded in medical education, patient care, and health literacy.[68] While graphic medicine is undoubtedly a pathbreaking subcategory of comics practice and scholarship, it structures some disciplinary, interpretive gaps that this chapter seeks to fill.

Rooted in the medical humanities, graphic medicine "combines the principles of narrative medicine with an exploration of the visual systems of comic art" (Czerwiec et at. 2), an approach founded on physician and literary scholar Rita Charon's concept of "narrative medicine." According to Charon, narrative medicine is "medicine practiced with narrative competence to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by stories of illness…[providing] health care professionals with practical wisdom in comprehending what patients endure in illness" (vii). I agree with feminist disability studies scholar Ally Day who rightly cautions against narrative medicine's "insistence on knowing" or solicitation of as much personal information as possible to improve medical treatment at the expense of privacy and of honoring "spaces of unknowing" (92). Indeed, narrative medicine arguably leaves the power dynamics of doctor-patient relationships unchallenged, reinforcing the authority of medical practitioners as narrative experts, entitled to access patients' presumably

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[68] The U.S. National Library of Medicine recognizes graphic medicine as "a growing literary genre that uses comics to tell personal stories of illness and health." Attesting to its rising popularity over the last ten years, graphic medicine takes the form of an annual conference, book series, and reference category in university and public library collections. Funded by a Will Eisner Graphic Novel Grant in 2014, the Ypsilanti District Library houses the largest graphic medicine collection in the U.S. and provides book club kits on various health topics.

knowable and diagnostic "truth." Subjects of this narrative gaze are relegated to the script of the "sufferer" (a term Charon uses exclusively throughout her book), while doctors are elevated to the roles of empathetic witnesses to the "plights of their patients…join[ing] courageously with their patients in their struggles toward recovery, with chronic illness, or in facing death" (vii). Sentimental narrative expectations, a focus on individual diagnoses, and assumptions of direct access to patients' subjectivities are just a few of the limits of narrative medicine, the approach on which graphic medicine is founded.[69]

Although graphic medicine purports to "resist the notion of a universal patient," its dependency on visualizing the very category of patienthood can leave the medical model unchallenged.[70] Furthermore, graphic medicine's central pedagogical focus on using comics (predominantly auto/biographical ones) as a tool to "cultivate an understanding of and empathy for patients' experiences with illness" can detract from the exploration of broader, structural and systemic conflicts and politics encircling these experiences (Meyers 88).[71] In other words, using graphic memoirs about disability and illness to create more empathetic healthcare professionals is a

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[69] For further criticism see Jeffrey P. Bishop, "Rejecting Medical Humanism." Bishop questions both the claims of fostering empathy and the field's general approach: "insofar as the humanities must show effectiveness, the medical humanities do not escape instrumental thinking about humans…In a way, narrative medicine becomes a tool that gains the trust of the patient, a more subtle tool because it masquerades as an authentic relationship. Medical Humanism, like all other humanisms, promises intimacy, but is really about control…subjectification and objectification are the necessary conditions for the kind of medicine that is practiced today in the West; humanism is the add-on that makes the power more palatable." (21-22).

[70] For example, in Alex Demetris' comic *Dad's Not All There Anymore* (2016), the representation of his father's life with Lewy body dementia is limited to clinical settings and understandings. The text is also dominated by images of his father as a marionette and an incomplete puzzle that presumably only biomedicine can solve. The text's pervasive use of puzzle-piece imagery to represent dementia echoes what has been said to be problematic about puzzle pieces used to represent autistic people "as puzzling mysterious, less-than-human entities who are 'short a few cognitive pieces,' who are utterly self-contained, disconnected, and [who] need to 'fit in'" (Heilker and Yergeau 494).

[71] Brian Fries' Eisner-winning memoir *Mom's Cancer* (2006) is a prime example given its wide use in medical humanities courses. In one series of images Fries depicts young cigarette smokers and their eventual selves "in front of the cancer clinic" as "the walking dead" with "oxygen strapped to their wheelchairs." This image at the entrance to the hospital is captioned, "Their weak, willful, selfish stupidity disgusts me. They deserve whatever they get. **All** of them" (55-56). Fries' comic does little to explore smoking and cancer beyond a matter of personal agency and fault; missing the opportunity to interrogate the sociopolitical, cultural, and biological factors at play. Rather than critique the aggressive marketing and strategic manipulation of the multinational tobacco industry, *Mom's Cancer* (as the title suggests) reinforces a cultural norm tobacco companies have long exploited to their success: that individuals are uniquely responsible for their health.

significant objective, but I share feminist cultural studies scholar Carolyn Pedwell's dismay at how empathy can "become a kind of end-point. Precisely because it is so widely and unquestioningly viewed as 'good', its naming can represent a conceptual stoppage in conversation or analysis" (x).[72]

The question of empathy and ethics in both graphic narrative and disability representation writ large is a central one. In *Ethics in the Gutter: Empathy and Historical Fiction in Comics*, Polak locates "[r]eader's feelings, their level of identification and affective attitude" as key components to the successful reception and comprehension of a text's political project (11). But using the promise of empathetic identification to measure the "success" of a text in comics criticism sets up ableist norms and expectations of what it means to read. As disability scholars note, treated as a means to an end, empathy can frequently reify difference and distance (Bennett and Rosner), and the presumption that empathy is a "fundamental human trait" fuels deficit views of cognitive difference (Dinishak). Walrath and Campbell's texts are self-reflexive about mobilizing reader's feelings, but they also experiment with how to read their works as a means of ethical reflection. What I want to focus on is how they experiment with graphic form to accommodate and spur multiple kinds of encounters with the subject of dementia and historical traumas, and how they do so by playing with the distance between story and reader—an essential function of the comics medium (McCloud, *Understanding Comics*).

I do not intend to read how Walrath and Campbell's texts operate as "graphic medicine"—that is, how they bolster audiences' empathy, including medical practitioners, and "offer patients

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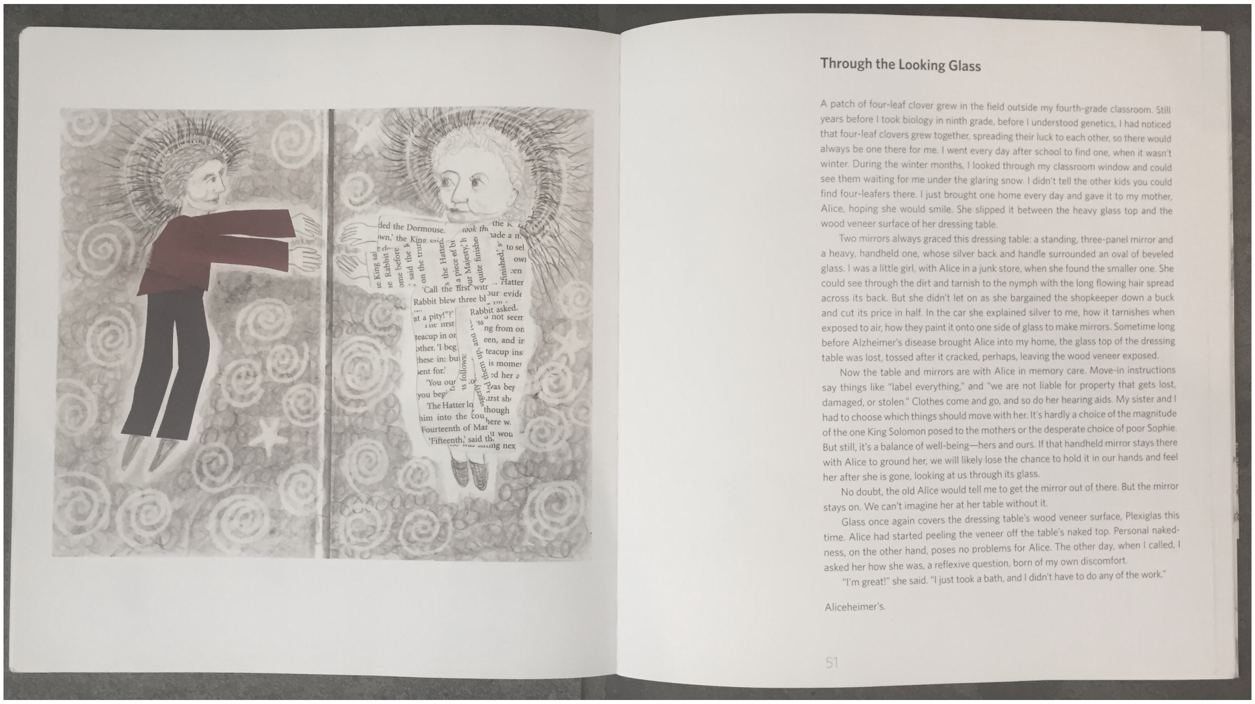
[72] Suzanne Keen expresses a similar skepticism of empathy in the medical humanities: "Despite the broad assumptions about the value of empathy embedded in educational programs such as narrative medicine, we still have limited knowledge about how well empathy can be taught through reading…altruistic acts prompted by empathy may conflict with justice" (12, 56). However, Keen and other narrative theorists still rely on medicalized notions of "deficiencies in empathy" as "psychopathlogy" (9), problematically reifying the supposed "lack" of autistic people and mental disability. See Melanie Yergeau's critique of "autism as disempathy" (90) in "Occupying Autism: Rhetoric, Involuntarity, and the Meaning of Autistic Lives," *Occupying Disability: Critical Approaches to Community, Justice, and Decolonizing Disability*, eds. Pamela Block et al. Chicago: Springer, 2016): 83-96. For more on the tensions of empathy in the medical humanities with perspectives from disability studies in literature see Anne Whitehead, *Medicine and Empathy in Contemporary British Fiction: An Intervention in Medical Humanities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2017).

accessible, subject-inflected iconographies with which to 'learn how to be ill'" (Williams, qtd. in Chidgey 130). Instead, I explore ways they heed bioethics scholar Rebecca Garden's warning: "Thinking that empathy is more first-person experiential knowledge than firstperson observation, that 'I am you' is a more ethical way of framing 'I and you,' risks denying the subjectivity and agency of the patient" (560). Both texts play with readers' distance to/from characters, settings, and stories to stress the individual agency and uniqueness of their loved ones' experience; keep open unknowable spaces and discussions of difficult histories; and thus, preserve a shared search for meaning which forestalls easy ethical and formal closure. My reading echoes Molly Abel Travis' insistence that rather than "domesticate difference" and "overcome otherness," "the most ethical act for literature is not the bridging of gaps through the creation of empathy, but the articulation and keeping alive of intractable ethical questions about the asymmetrical relationship between self and other…It is only through openness to alterity that there can be an ethical relation" (232).

The main portion of this chapter focuses on *Aliceheimer's* and the surprising juxtapositions Walrath makes between her mother's Alice's dementia and the subject of genocide, creating affective complexity in the narrative. Published through Penn State's Graphic Medicine book series, *Aliceheimer's* is from the onset positioned for readers as a text that solely sets out to transform dominant medico-scientific and cultural narratives of dementia and aging, as Walrath writes in the introduction:

> People with Alzheimer's are perceived as zombies, bodies without minds, waiting for valiant researchers to find a cure. For Alice and me, the story was different. Alzheimer's was a time of healing and magic. Of course, there is loss with dementia, but what matters is how we approach our losses and our gains. Reframing dementia as a different way of being, as a window into another reality, lets people living in that state be our teachers—useful, true humans who contribute to our collective good. (4)

But Walrath's reframing of dementia is also the occasion for exploring her family history and identity as a second-generation Armenian. Indeed, *Aliceheimer's* demonstrates a broader investment in grappling with how to visualize private and public traumatic history, a distinction that often destabilizes and dissolves in the particular embodied experiences of dementia, such as in hallucinations and changes in time perception—something explored throughout this dissertation. Pairing personal essay with the visual-verbal affordances of the graphic form, Walrath's *Aliceheimer's* links her experiences of caregiving, her mother Alice's dementia, and Armenian family history to the adventures of Lewis Carroll's Alice, creating a sense of both dissonance and exploratory freedom to approach subjects that might ordinarily be regarded as unapproachable: aging and coping with Alzheimer's, death, and the Armenian Genocide. A deceptively simple sketchbook within a book, *Aliceheimer's* visual-verbal form highlights nested narratives, reverberations of space and time, and interrelationships that reach across pages (fig. 2.1).



Through the Looking Glass

A patch of four-leaf clover grew in the field outside my fourth-grade classroom. Still years before I took biology in ninth grade, before I understood genetics, I had noticed that four-leaf clovers grew together, spreading their luck to each other, so there would always be one there for me. I went every day after school to find one, when it wasn't winter. During the winter months, I looked through my classroom window and could see them waiting for me under the glaring snow. I didn't tell the other kids you could find four-leafers there. I just brought one home every day and gave it to my mother, Alice, hoping she would smile. She slipped it between the heavy glass top and the wood veneer surface of her dressing table.

Two mirrors always graced this dressing table: a standing, three-panel mirror and a heavy, handheld one, whose silver back and handle surrounded an oval of beveled glass. I was a little girl, with Alice in a junk store, when she found the smaller one. She could see through the dirt and tarnish to the nymph with the long flowing hair spread across its back. But she didn't let on as she bargained the shopkeeper down a buck and cut its price in half. In the car she explained silver to me, how it tarnishes when exposed to air, how they paint it onto one side of glass to make mirrors. Sometime long before Alzheimer's disease brought Alice into my home, the glass top of the dressing table was lost, tossed after it cracked, perhaps, leaving the wood veneer exposed.

Now the table and mirrors are with Alice in memory care. Move-in instructions say things like "label everything," and "we are not liable for property that gets lost, damaged, or stolen." Clothes come and go, and so do her hearing aids. My sister and I had to choose which things should move with her. It's hardly a choice of the magnitude of the one King Solomon posed to the mothers or the desperate choice of poor Sophie. But still, it's a balance of well-being—hers and ours. If that handheld mirror stays there with Alice to ground her, we will likely lose the chance to hold it in our hands and feel her after she is gone, looking at us through its glass.

No doubt, the old Alice would tell me to get the mirror out of there. But the mirror stays on. We can't imagine her at her table without it.

Glass once again covers the dressing table's wood veneer surface, Plexiglas this time. Alice had started peeling the veneer off the table's naked top. Personal nakedness, on the other hand, poses no problems for Alice. The other day, when I called, I asked her how she was, a reflexive question, born of my own discomfort.

"I'm great!" she said. "I just took a bath, and I didn't have to do any of the work."

Aliceheimer's.

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Figure 2.1 Page spread from *Aliceheimer's,* Dana Walrath. On the left side of the page, a scanned drawing of Alice and her late husband appears. They are reaching out toward each other across the centerfold of the sketchbook page. On the right, an essay titled "Through the Looking Glass" appears, with ample white space between it and the image on the left (51).

Rather than resist the associations of graphic narratives with juvenilia and dementia as a reversion to childhood, Walrath wields these notions to her advantage, fusing the personal and the political across irresolvable stories that are discordantly about both trauma and transformative "healing and magic." This is particularly important because stories of dementia typically focus on what it "might feel like to be so marginalized, bewildered, and neglected" (Kruger 118) at the expense of capturing the humanity and life that still exists. Visualizing and materializing the body, the texts in this chapter are counternarratives to mainstream conceptions of persons with dementia as "empty shells of themselves," "already gone," and "ruins" of a former self. These stereotypical sentiments toward dementia suggest some of the profound limits of empathy: how can one empathize with an "empty shell" or "ruin," without that empathy being borne out of feelings like pity and fear? In typical representations of dementia, sources of empathy are often over-determined and based on the reification of these absences of self. Through the graphic form of storytelling, these texts assert the presence of the self, but also prompt reflection on readers' affective engagement with the representation of those lives.

This chapter concludes with Stuart Campbell's Eisner-nominated web comic, *These Memories Won't Last,* which I consider to be another exemplary, unconventional graphic narrative that offers an expanded view of how bodily and temporal experiences of dementia and trauma can be visualized and addressed. Like Walrath, Campbell politicizes the representation of his grandfather's experiences with dementia as a Hungarian World War II veteran, and I explore how his use of the digital form presents unique affordances to representing some of the issues that arise in *Aliceheimer's.* Unlike a paper comic, *These Memories* is characterized by user-initiated scrolling motion and disappearance, as scenes fade to nothing after several seconds of appearing on the screen (fig. 2.2). Requiring intense viewer participation, *These Memories* stages a difficult encounter, thwarting readers' easy access to the narrative. It innovatively and self-consciously reflects on how history can be told through the vantage point of dementia, prompting audiences to examine their emotional and ethical relationship to the inseparable interplay between form and content.[73] The text offers an opportunity to think further about the ethics of representation and aesthetics of dementia in autographics, as well as the affordances and constraints of the digital interface in engaging readers in the life experiences of others.[74] For Campbell the stakes of representing the life of his grandfather, Ladislav 'Jim' Szoke, are high: "I'm sure my grandfather would like to be remembered for his sense of humor. But my wish is that his story helps us all to remember the toll of war and to use that memory to resist future wars" (*docubase*).

Figure 2.2. Screenshots from Stuart Campbell's *These Memories Won't Last*

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[73] Web comics are often approached as two distinct categories: form-based comics showcase what can be done with comics on the web, while content-based comics are less concerned with formal experimentation (hence using traditional formats, such as the comic strip), focusing more on the themes of the story. *These Memories* is exemplary of melding both.

[74] I use Gillian Whitlock and Anna Poletti's term "autographic," which draws to the fore the cross-discursive, multimodal and -media composition involved in the act of assembling a life narrative. They describe "autographic" as both a product and a practice: "Life narrative fabricated in and through drawing and design using various technologies, modes, and materials," one that "emerges in and through specific attention to the phenomenology of reading these multimodal cross-discursive texts, and this is accompanied by self-consciousness about the process of interpretation that distinguishes this work of textual criticism" (v-viii).

A key issue in this chapter is how Campbell and Walrath mobilize the comic mode to navigate and entwine two thematics: the importance of collective memory as resistance to violence and the necessity of interrogating the stigma attached to personal memory impairment. My examination of *Aliceheimer's* and *These Memories* is located at the intersection of a foundational body of graphic life narrative criticism focused on personal trauma and historical violence (Chute, Hirsch, Whitlock, Gilmore) and a growing chorus of scholars rethinking comics theory through the lens of disability studies (Alaniz, Dolmage, Squier). This kind of work, the editors of *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Narratives* write, "calls for attention not just to how meaning is attached to disability, but that views the knowledge and meaning which disability generates, moving beyond policing negative portrayals of disability to recognizing disability as an engine of innovation and rhetorical invention" (Foss et al. 15). Using dementia as their "engine," Walrath and Campbell raise questions about the relationship of dementia to history and how that history (whether real, imagined, or denied) is visualized. What does it mean to bear witness through physical and digital marks on a page but also through the "materialization of perception" based on the perceptions of dementia? (Chute, *Disaster*, 25).[75] And since Walrath and Campbell are formally invested in using dementia to make meaning (in)accessible in different ways, their texts also put pressure on some of the defining expectations of comics.

Imagination Beyond Horror: Art as Alchemy in *Aliceheimer's*

In his introduction to *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004), renowned comic artist Art Spiegelman writes 9/11 left him "reeling on the faultline where World History and Personal History

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[75] "Materializing history," Chute elaborates, "through the work of marks on the page creates it as space and substance, gives it a corporeality, a physical shape–like a suit, perhaps, for an absent body, or to make evident the kind of space-time many bodies move in and through; to make, in other words, the twisting lines of history legible through form" (*Disaster Drawn* 27).

collide—the intersection my parents, Auschwitz survivors, had warned me about when they taught me to always keep my bags packed" (n.p.). This evocative remark reflects *No Tower*'s ambition to balance the representation of both the local and the global, the personal and the political—a task Spiegelman suggests is one of the major challenges facing artists, especially after 9/11 (Melnick 123). The rise of graphic narrative and criticism since the mid-twentieth century arguably originates from such fraught questions of how best to represent devastating events in history (Polak 2). How graphic form can reframe violence temporally and spatially on the page, render bodies visible or invisible, and materialize witnessing to history through the embodied labor of drawing are all crucial inquiries encircling the artistic juxtaposition of personal memory and public narrative. Graphic narratives have a long tradition of connecting readers to historical and personal circumstances distant from their own, reclaiming images and stories from hegemonic sources of information in ways unique to their medium. They can, as Polak writes of J.P. Stassen's *Deogratias*, a graphic novel on the Rwandan Genocide, "work cross-culturally and transnationally as objects that may confront the Western viewer with an alternative perspective, representation, and method of memorialization" (41). Contemporary graphic auto/biographical narratives on the Holocaust (Art Spiegelman), the bombing of Hiroshima (Keiji Nakazawa), and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Joe Sacco), to name a few, are just a small sampling of works attesting to artists' pursuit for meaningful strategies to negotiate the relationship between individual and collective experiences of trauma.

Dana Walrath's approach to these intersections in *Aliceheimer's* is disarming if one considers it a text as much about the Armenian Genocide as it is a work of graphic somatography. As often as *Aliceheimer's* circulates on medical humanities reading lists, it also appears on the shelves of London's Armenian Institute Library as an artifact of Armenian-American culture-making and history. Featuring whimsical sketches, collage, and elements from *Alice in Wonderland*, *Aliceheimer's* might easily be mistaken for a children's book, as it also withholds sensational written details and visual traces of "violence" and "trauma" that already saturate mainstream consciousness. What scholars observe of Marjane Satrapi's minimalist approach to the Iranian Revolution in *Persepolis* is arguably also true of Walrath's aesthetic: as both a narrative and political choice, its style claims the "historically traumatic need not be visually traumatic" (Chute, *Graphic Women*, 135). In an interview on her time in Armenia as a Fulbright scholar, Walrath recalls that when she told people there about her mother's memory loss, "they immediately asked if she were a genocide survivor, linking trauma to memory loss" (Miller-Lachmann).

To be clear, I refer to 'Walrath' as the author/artist of *Aliceheimer's*, who I also consider to be the narrating "I" of the text's introduction. I refer to 'Dana' as the narrated "I," or Walrath's construction of herself in the text's vignettes. 'Alice' refers to Walrath's real mother, while "Alice" in double quotes denotes the narrating Alice (the mother's story narrator). This narrated "Alice" also appears as a hand-drawn/collaged image and voices her memories in the vignettes and comic panels. Lastly, there is Lewis Carroll's "Alice," to which I will refer to as such. This array of narrative figures speaks to *Aliceheimer's* visual and intertextual complexity. Formally, this multitude of perspectives and voices offers readers a more decentralized and pluralistic form of storytelling. As such, Carroll's "Alice" brings both relief and nuance to *Aliceheimer's* story of trauma.

Indeed, part of what *Aliceheiemer's* sets out to do is maintain a level of formal and thematic distance from trauma; it seeks to spark readers' imaginations of both historical atrocity and aging with dementia beyond horror. Rather than tell one sustained traumatic narrative, Walrath scatters the stories of her family's experience in the Armenian Genocide piecemeal throughout the text. As I explore below, the lack of traumatic or 'graphic' images accompanying the brief, fragmented stories is a deliberate withholding in response to "photo fatigue" surrounding mainstream forms of reportage on distant violence (Orbán 123). There is no dearth of photographic evidence of what happened: between 1915 and 1923 more than half of the Ottoman Empire's Armenian population was killed via mass execution, starvation, deportations, and serial massacres; what artifacts of their cultural heritage survived were either destroyed or co-opted as Muslim or Turkish in origin (Melson). But as Peter Balakian notes, despite the Armenian Genocide emerging alongside an evolutionary era of war documentary photography, its visual culture has been lost up until the last 40 years of scholarly work (92). Historians and political scientists echo that the "forgotten history" of the Armenians is barely known to international audiences due to the Turkish government's ongoing campaign to falsify its past (Balakian 92). In the United States, many public officials and media outlets still tactically avoid the word 'genocide' to assume an "in-between" position that is neither denial nor recognition (Zarifian).[76]

This lack of public acknowledgment, as perpetuating the rawnesss of historical trauma and forestalling individual and communal healing, is often the focal point of memoirs on the Armenian Genocide. Meline Toumani's *There Was and There was Not* (2014), for example, focuses on "the pathology of genocide denial as it upends archival records, thwarts recognition and restitution, and thereby frustrates the process of communal healing in the public sphere" (Kalaidjian). Not unsurprisingly, the "pathology of genocide denial" is often expressed through the trope of the dementing mind—a popular character trait in contemporary representations of genocide deniers, as well as a figure for the anxieties surrounding the loss of eyewitness accounts of injustice.[77]

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[76] The U.S. administration has long prioritized good relations with Turkey over acknowledging historical truth, equivocally avoiding the word 'genocide' out of geopolitical and diplomatic strategy. Although 49 states have recognized the genocide through resolution or proclamation, it has not received formal recognition as national policy or presidential recognition as 'genocide' since Ronald Regan in 1981. Similarly, while several major American media outlets are definitive about the genocide as such, there are others that align themselves more closely with revisionism and government interests; the *Washington Times* for instance has published articles signed by deniers. As of April 2019 yet another Senate Resolution to formally recognize the genocide is pending before the Foreign Relations Committee. See Julien Zarifian, "The United States and the (Non-)Recognition of Genocide" and Jessica L. Taylor, "Through the Eyes of the Post: American Media Coverage of the Armenian Genocide."

[77] Atom Egoyan's film *Remember* (2015) captures many of these historical and generational anxieties as it follows a Zev, a Holocaust survivor with dementia and the last person able to identify a particular Nazi war criminal who he must kill (it turns out, Zev *is* the war criminal, and kills himself upon this recognition at the end of the film). Dementia and age-related memory impairment is also frequently deployed in fiction and nonfiction as a pretense to discussing the lack of access to survivors' histories of atrocity, and an end of an era of witness (i.e. Lisa Appignanesi's *Losing the Dead* and Susan Faludi's *In the Darkroom*).

Aliceheimer's rejects these usages—which infuse the lived experience of dementia with guilt, villainy, and fault—instead exploring how communal and personal healing is possible through the imaginative storytelling and perspectives that emerge from Alice's newfound "innocence" with regard to the atrocities of the past. Ultimately, Walrath's healing of transgenerational trauma is framed as only possible when explored alongside and through the lens of Alice's dementia. Rather than use Alice's dementia to comment on the loss of personal and historical memory, Walrath presents Alice as an important agent in recuperating trauma through story and history making.

In a keynote speech, "Transmuting Transgenerational Trauma," Walrath asserts that the powers of art and drawing lie in their ability to turn "horror into human connection."[78] This transmutation is not simple change, but rather signifies a "cognitive shift" that takes place for the reader—through a kind of identification based on encountering the text at one's own pace and on one's own terms. This connection with the text is not characterized by getting to know exactly what that horror was like, but "being with" those experiences and acknowledging one's distance from it. These shifts in identification lie at the heart of Walrath's approach to reclaiming the social stigma of Alzheimer's and the history of the Armenian Genocide through graphic form. For Walrath, tapping into collective memory and creating capacious, new shared social meaning are the keys to healing through story. She writes *Aliceheimer's* introduction: "Healing is not the same as curing a disease. Healing involves creating shared social meaning. It does not take place inside of individual bodies…This social process depends on sharing stories with others, on letting our collective memories meet. By meeting through story, we make peace and move on" (5). *Aliceheimer's* dramatizes

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[78] Keynote given at the *Dementia, Violence, and Politics of Memory* (2018) conference. Walrath's talk mainly focused on her interactive digital and museum piece, "View from the High Ground," intended to help audiences engage hands-on with material embodiments of nine genocides from the past 500 years. Walrath writes on the project's website, "The interactive component of the piece—the handmade books presented here—forces the viewer to experience dehumanization, to literally feel their hand in it, as they page through the images." See viewfromthehighground.com/about-1/

Walrath's own performance of healing over the course of the text and invites readers to be part of similar processes of collective memory and meaning making through its form. Critically, this transmutation (the "alchemy of art" that Walrath points to in her talk) occurs by means of the interpretive gaps, distances, and surprises of meaning that emerge from *Aliceheimer's* juxtapositions of disparate images and narratives.

Juxtaposing Alice(s)

Aliceheimer's images originated from drawings Walrath created in 2010 and e-mailed regularly to her friend, Beijing-based artist Patty Hudak. In 2011 Walrath contributed the images to the Brooklyn Art Library's Sketchbook Project (a global art project, community space, and largest museum collection of sketchbooks in the world). Subsequently, Walrath wrote a series of essays to accompany the images and published them on her personal blog. Like Schultz's *Dementia Blog*, these were later extracted and formatted for publication as *Aliceheimer's*.[79]

Playing with its medium, in *Aliceheimer's* Walrath eschews conventional uses of panels and gutters, transparently preserving its origins in the form of a sketchbook. The sketchbook portion of *Aliceheimer's* typically appears on the left side of each page spread. It features pencil drawings collaged with paperback cut outs of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and occasional scraps of colored paper and photographs. In many images, the center crease of the journal is visible. On the right side of each page spread, vignettes titled after phrases from Carroll's work appear opposite the images. Irene Velentzas observes that "the sketchbook's compilations are not structured under a linear chronological narrative; rather, the preparatory images offer a more freely associated collection of observations" (n.p.). *Aliceheimer's* thus draws attention to itself as a multifacted composition, an assemblage of perspectives, materialities, and histories. It is as well a

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[79] See www.danawalrath.wordpress.com

text showcasing, visually and textually, a collectivity of voices: Walrath's mother Alice, the figure and narrated "Alice," Walrath's narrating "I" as Dana, and Carroll's "Alice."

In the introduction to the text, Walrath speaks to how Carroll's work plays an essential intertextual role in *Aliceheimer's*, both formally and thematically:

> I found the story's voice the day I cut up a cheap paperback copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, using the page fragments to make her bathrobe, Alice's favorite garment. "Apples are Better" was the first picture that I made for the book. It was only after drawing it in its entirety that I realized that the haloes that had appeared around Alice's head were reminiscent of Armenian manuscripts, a subconscious reference to her first language, to her reversion to childhood, and to her altered magical state. (3)

This is certainly an aspect of the graphic narrative taken up by critics who focus their attention on how the text's use of Carroll challenges negative representational paradigms, offering an alternative, more positive perspective on Alzheimer's as a "magical state." As one set of scholars argue,

> While collage as a compositional strategy concretizes Alice's ineffable and surreal experience of AD, it also vividly enmeshes myriad realities to illustrate her altered state. Most important in many ways, through appropriating Carroll's fantasy narrative, Walrath poignantly depicts AD as a magical state that unravels novel facets of subjectivity. Specifically, instead of grieving her mother's loss of cognitive abilities and incapacitation, Walrath encourages her readers to acknowledge and accommodate the new selves that emerge during AD. (Venkatesan and Kasthuri 79)

And certainly, Carroll's books "offer an exemplary, iconic narrative of the movement between ontologically and sensually distinct worlds" (Bonner and Jacobs 41), which resonates well with Walrath's conception of Alice's Alzheimer's. But there is far more to the intertexuality Walrath deploys, involving the ethical and representational consequences of appropriating Carroll not only in looking at Alice's Alzheimer's, but telling the story of historical trauma. the collaged juxtapositions of *Alice in Wonderland* also serve as contact points for *Aliceheimer's* exploration of the intergenerational relationship of memory to the Armenian Genocide. In this way the text can be read with more nuance as one that grapples with the most effective and ethical way of conveying the relationship of traumatic and impaired memory to the present in a manner that is relatable to readers without collapsing distance and becoming voyeuristic or too easily consumed.

Let us consider how juxtaposition functions in the page spread, "Apples Are Better," featuring the aforementioned first image Walrath created for the text. In this vignette, the text introduces readers to the subject of the Armenian Genocide for the first time. The story begins, "Alice was never a starving Armenian…Most people with Alzheimer's lose interest in meals. Instead, hunger consumed her. Her particular conformation of plaques and tangles set up short circuits that reintroduced hunger within an hour of eating…She went from trim and stylish to quite large. Off to Lane Bryant" (25). This lighthearted narrative segues into Dana's more serious recount:

> Alice's parents did in fact starve, barely surviving the genocide of 1915, when hundreds of thousands of Armenians were marched into the Mesopotamian desert, without food, to die a slow death. I used to wonder if starvation in one generation might account for a run of obesity in the next…Now that Alice is simultaneously starving and fat, I sometimes wonder if her hunger is a distant childhood memory, perhaps one that even spans generations. (25)

Dana is concerned with transgenerational trauma and the (in)visibility of its transmission through eating habits, but the visual language with which she approaches these speculations materializes on the page in ways that are pictorially palatable. The accompanying image to this story signals plenitude and (agricultural) fertility: three figures of "Alice" with colored broccoli and apple trees growing out of her ears are captioned, "The night that broccoli grew out of Alice's ears, she saw endless possibilities. Broccoli is good, but apples are better" (24, fig. 2.3). The whimsical comics page is rich with subtle details to be discovered due to the collage form—a trend that runs throughout—and adds a level of surprise and opacity to the reading experience. The story of starvation juxtaposed with the image of fantastical growth effectually makes the horror of the former visually inaccessible and distant. It mirrors Dana's pondering how trauma can extend across the distance of generations in ways not apparent to how they affect those of the postmemory generations.

The page also calls attention to *Aliceheimer's* overall project of keeping readers' appetites for easy interpretive closure and sensational imagery at a distance. Though there are no traumatic images per se,[80] the interaction between images and text creates a discordance that arguably slows readers' encounter with the page as they (potentially) draw upon their existing knowledge (or lack thereof) of *Alice in Wonderland.* Performing closure or "closing the gap between what is shown and what can be known" to "mentally construct a continuous, unified reality" is a task that requires deliberate, slow engagement with the elements of *Alice in Wonderland* collaged into the images (McCloud, "Understanding," 67).

Figure 2.3 Image of page accompanying the essay "Apples Are Better," *Aliceheimer's*. The figure of Alice appears twice with florets of broccoli and apple trees growing horizontally out of her ears. The caption reads, "The night that broccoli grew out of Alice's ears, she saw endless possibilities. Broccoli is good, but apples are better."

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[80] By which I mean conventional representations of war, extreme violence, death, etc. Undoubtedly, what constitutes a traumatic image is subjective and relational (what might be traumatic or triggering for one reader might not be for another). In this case, for example, images of food can be read as both innocuously whimsical and also a reminder of the traumatic hunger Dana narrates in the attendant description of Alice being simultaneously "starving and fat" (25).

For example, looking closer at the largest collaged image of "Alice" on this page, a reader may notice the use of pages from the scene in which Carroll's "Alice" is confronted with the 'EAT ME' cakes. Readers familiar with *Alice in Wonderland* and the accompanying illustrations might recall that eating is fraught with dangers throughout the book, and that Alice's control over her body is tenuous as her body size changes in accordance with what she consumes. If readers are familiar with *Alice in Wonderland* as a text widely interpreted to dramatize the "arbitrary and unjust authority systems that threaten the innocence of the child" (Lim 386), how does this affect the reading of Walrath's depiction of her mother's "reversion to childhood, and to her altered magical state" and the story accompanying the image? One might argue Walrath refuses to visually and thematically depict her mother as an inheritor of transgenerational trauma all together and instead draws readers' focus to her identity as far more complex and inaccessible as an ethical move. Of course, this aim is complicated by the prevalent societal infantilization of older adults (especially with dementia) and disabled people, a process of disablement that defines dependency as undesirable and bodies as incomplete or near death (Luborsky). As Karin Jongsma and Mark Schweda caution,

> the underlying analogy drawn between the vulnerabilities and losses of cognitive capacities and independence caused by dementia on the one hand and certain childhood vulnerabilities, capacities, and dependencies on the other is superficial and problematic. First, it is based on a narrow neurocognitive understanding of dementia and therefore promotes misleading conceptions of the condition. Second, it neglects the central significance of human temporality and the individual life course for ethical reasoning. People with dementia are at another point in their lives than children and the fact that they have developed their own values and have their own narrative and identity is morally significant. For these reasons, the second-childhood trope can also have ethically problematic practical consequences for dementia research and care. (416)

Walrath's well-intentioned recourse to the trope of childhood raises these ethical issues of representation, but at the same time, the text also troubles the cultural logic that devalues dementia as social immaturity and a regression toward a lack of narrative agency. Rather, Walrath uses the iconography of the child in nuanced ways.

Firstly, since childhood plays such a large role in both the Carroll and Walrath texts, one might consider Walrath's reappropriation of Carroll's "Alice" as a reworking of how the image of child and mother have been typically mobilized in visual narratives of the Armenian Genocide. For instance, *Aliceheimer's* deliberately withholds images typical in popular pictorial representations of Armenian suffering created and mobilized by the Near East Relief's humanitarian campaign, which aimed to depict the "suffering innocence" and "martyrdom" of starving women and children (Balakian 110). According to Balakian, "These images embodied encoded meanings and metonyms for Victorian and Christian moral values…appeal[ing] to the mainstream American viewer who encountered such symbols of innocence in captivity and death through a deeply emotive Victorian Christian lens" (111). In addition to photographs, Near East Relief's internationally sensational, Carroll-inspired documentary fiction *Alice in Hungerland* (1921) depicted a singular American child's visit to orphanages in Armenia and Turkey as an effective means to convey "the history of a whole crowd of starving people" (Abrahamyan n.p.). Walrath's use of Carroll imposes a different Victorian lens for audience appeal. Instead of adding to an already saturated market of "wrenching images" of atrocity (Balakian 112), Walrath offers a counterimage of her nourished mother as child- and doll-like (literally growing food from her body) "with new fruits appearing every time she reached out to pick one" (25). It is a story and image of regeneration and flourishing above all else. Unlike *Alice in Hungerland, Aliceheiemer's* refuses to turn the child image of her mother into a figure of suffering. If the usual aim of representing the atrocities of genocide and losses accompanying Alzheimer's is to make suffering transparent, *Aliceheimer's* does the opposite by withholding conventional images to distance readers' comprehension of the histories at hand.

Secondly, the collaging of child Alices creates a kaleidoscopic range of interpretations to be likewise approached with a child-like exploratory freedom. Juxtaposing *Alice in Wonderland* with the child-like avatar of her mother, Walrath calls upon her readers' potential knowledge of Carroll to encourage making connections between disparate stories. But *Alice in Wonderland* is also a work of fantasy and literary nonsense, and *Aliceheimer's* too, is also about enabling a kind of encounter that holds space for delight in contradiction, unknowability, and interpretive play. This kind of encounter is important because it recreates, to an extent, the acts of imagining Walrath herself performs in caring for Alice and retracing her family history. Like the story above, Walrath's descriptions of her family history are just snapshots—often interrogatory and conjectural in nature—and they are often inaugurated in the narrative by one of Alice's utterances. According to Walrath, the intimacy between her and Alice was "born of Alzheimer's, expressed in its language of hallucinations, assertions, and questions" (33).

Caring for Alice in her so-called return to childhood entails being open to the twists in language and logic that arise in her dementia, which in turn enables Dana to connect to aspects of her family's history that were once hidden or unspoken. Dana notes that Alice "hardly spoke about Armenian school until Alzheimer's brought her back to that time and place" (59), and "[w]ith each passing day, Alice was becoming developmentally younger. Soon she might speak only her first language, as she did sometimes when she woke up from a nap" (61). Here, Dana falls on the discourse of developmentalism—predicated on assumptions of normative stage-like, linear progression defined by neurotypical milestones. But rather than conceive of Alice's "second-childhood" as a deficiency or regression of linguistic and communicative skill, Dana frames it as a meaningful resurfacing of her first language, a cultural aspect of her and her family's identity that was once oppressed by pressures of assimilation ("As a child, I didn't understand her distorted affinity to all things blond…we spoke no Armenian at home. Our job was to fit in, to leave most everything Armenian behind, to become blond" [17]). In her return to the Armenian language, Alice is able to name a version of herself that once belonged to the past: when the *Der Hayr* ('married

priest') asks Alice for her name at church one day, Walrath recounts how Alice surprisingly answered, "'Aghavni'…*Dove,* it was the name her father, Yeghishe, had given her" (61).
Dana attempts to destigmatize if not normalize this conception of Alzheimer's as a reversion to a childhood self by framing it as a means by which Alice reclaims part of her identity and family history. So while the trope of second-childhood often disempowers the person with dementia, in *Aliceheimer's* it serves to convey Alice as a valid contributor to shared creation of the narrative of their family history: Alice's transformation becomes an occasion for Dana to "make the missing pieces of our past into more than ideas" (61). In other words, the text values Alice's non-normative ways of thinking in her "second-childhood" as a means of uniquely contributing to knowledge.[81]

At another point in the text, Dana recounts Alice's delusion that she has just had her first menstruation (" just got my period…it's the first time, you know" [57]). This prompts Dana to reflect, "Though I never knew my maternal grandmother, I could imagine her response to young Alice's first time…And what about my grandmother's first time [having a period], perhaps at the orphanage in Aleppo in the years after the Armenian genocide? Maybe it took years to recover from starvation, so it didn't happen till she was older, on the boat to France perhaps." (57). This act of imagining, of filling in the blanks of her family history, of not definitively knowing that history, is formally conveyed in the accompanying image on page 56: a photocopy of Alice's Armenian grade school photo is cut out and pasted onto pencil drawings of a class picture with colored paper cut outs to create the American and Armenian flags. This image emphasizes Walrath's literal retracing

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[81] Jongsma and Schweda are instructive here: "while we should definitely avoid *equating* childhood and dementia, a *comparison* of these life phases within a life-course perspective can provide important theoretical as well as practical insights. Ultimately, it may even help to reconstruct the ethically respectable motives behind the second-childhood trope: the promotion of a positive view of and accepting attitude towards aspects and phases of human existence that rationalistic and individualistic strands of ethical thought tend to neglect or even abominate." See "Return to Childhood? Against the Infantilization of People with Dementia," *Bioethics* 32 (2018): 414-420.

and subjective recreation of her family's history. As with the others in the text, this image rests on cut outs of *Alice in Wonderland.*

Alice in Wonderland functions as more than aesthetic decoration or background. How *Alice in Wonderland* functions as a visual intertext that is juxtaposed with the vignettes in *Aliceheimer's* is perhaps best viewed through Thierry Groensteen's theory of *tressage* or "braiding" in comics:

> Braiding can sometimes be likened to the more common procedure of quotation. When a work or an image, quoted from elsewhere, makes an appearance in a comic (and contemporary comics cultivates all kinds of intertextuality and intericonicity), readers who have the correct reference in their personal encyclopaedia are offered the pleasure of spotting it; in principle, if the quotation goes unnoticed, the reader is not disconcerted by an absence of meaning; the narrative can be understood on a simpler, more naive level. (n.p.)

Braiding is essential to Groensteen's concept of "general arthrology" or connections across a given page. This concept of arthrology can also describe the relationship between elements on nonadjacent pages (what Groensteen calls "tele-arthrology"). *Aliceheimer's* braids *Alice in Wonderland* into its narrative—it can be understood on multiple levels of the kind Groensteen suggests. Readers with critical knowledge or familiarity with Carroll may draw more complicated conclusions from the braiding of *Alice in Wonderland* in *Aliceheimer's*, especially with regard to the topic of political violence.

For example, in the page spread of "Drink Me," readers learn Alice's father Yeghishe Mashoian "had lost his sons to the genocide and Down syndrome" (61), a story fragmented across several vignettes. The emotive dissonance between the title of Carroll's "Drink Me" reference and the tragedy of Yeghishe's experiences is jarring. In *Alice in Wonderland,* Alice's confrontation with the potion labeled "Drink Me" is a moment in which Carroll's "Alice" is aware of how one's bodily integrity is connected to the ability to follow the rules. This parallels the understanding Dana narrates of her mother "becoming developmentally younger" against the rules of "various social negotiations" (61). But the double page and element of braiding go further, and they can place immense pressure on readers pausing over the unsettling juxtaposition between *Alice in Wonderland* and Armenian Genocide. Consider how the vignette is juxtaposed with an image of ageless, smiling

"Alice" assembled out of pages from Carroll's "The Queen's Croquet-Ground"—a famous scene featuring the Queen of Hearts "settling all difficulties, great or small" with the brutal decree, "Off with his head!" (#). The invocation of the Queen's penchant for execution is worth dwelling on here. Daniel Bivona's work on imperialism in *Alice in Wonderland* reads the Queen's croquet match as a chapter "dominated by Alice's attempt to gauge the power of the 'savage' Queen…the rules of the English game of 'croquet' and the official power of the King and Queen over life and death" (163).[82] The braiding of this page spread invites reflection on authoritarianism, power, and powerlessness over life and death on multiple levels. Like the other pages in *Alicehiemer's*, text and image work together subtly, even serendipitously, to create layers of potential interpretation that are both amusing and disturbing. Presenting the traumatic narrative of Yeghishe from a distance, *Aliceheimer's* provides space for a new readership to come into contact with the subject. And in this hybrid format, with its uncertain and surprising connections to a well-known children's classic, the genocide narrative acquires a relevance that does not necessarily further a clearer understanding of the event but maintains a measure of distance and interpretive closure from it so as to simply raise questions.

Another jarring juxtaposition exists between the image of Alice as a child and the absent history of Yeghishe's son with Down syndrome, mentioned only once. It is conjecture what happened, but historically known that "defective" children (and many children in general) were forcibly institutionalized in state orphanages as part of the Ottoman Turkish government's plan to collectively erase Armenian cultural identity (Sargsyan et al.). The image and text may not directly relate the institutionalization of children as a systemic form of cultural genocide, but the invocation

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[82] On the Armenian Genocide, news correspondent Azer Ahmadbayli has similarly cited the Queen's adage "sentence first - verdict afterwards" as representative of the current Turkey-Armenia conflict of political recognition. See "The Armenian genocide – still stuck in Wonderland."

of the Queen and distance kept from Yeghishe's story is evocative of persons disappeared; the way lives are controlled and manipulated; how stories are kept unread and unknown.

Walrath's juxtaposition of stories from Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland,* Alice's Alzheimer's, and the Armenian Genocide raise ethical questions of representation. Walrath's use of Carroll is striking not just because it offers an analogy for the strange landscape of embodied Alzheimer's her mother experiences, but also because it expresses the "playful intellectual interest in political issues" that Carroll's work embodies as well (Bivona 144). As Anna M. Wittmann suggests, *Alice in Wonderland* is particularly relevant for contemporary readers struggling to understand the terms used to designate violent conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries: "Just as Alice moves through the unfamiliar and illogical dystopia of Wonderland in a state of confusion, constantly asking or being asked the 'meaning' of terms and situations she encounters, so the contemporary reader faces similar problems, asking an untold number of questions" (xv). Readers of *Aliceheiemer's* likewise face a recursive search for meaning in attempting to make sense of the juxtaposed meanings that may emerge from the visual-verbal collages and Alice's Alzheimer's.

As much as *Aliceheimer's* invites readers to partake in the process of revising and reimagining the past, it also entrusts them with the obligation to bear witness to the objective reality of past atrocity, which is of particular urgency because the past in question—the Armenian Genocide—is one that is arduously denied by its perpetrators and their political allies. Walrath refuses the popular metaphor of dementia as national forgetting, instead favoring what arguably is an analogy between the purposeful denial of the reality of the Armenian Genocide and the denial of simultaneous or alternative realities of Alice's dementia. Walrath ultimately highlights how (in Alice's case), dementia is a resurfacing or rediscovering of stories, their Armenian heritage, and an opportunity to assert the presence of her family in the process of retracing their history through the graphic form.

Overall, these pages of *Aliceheimer's* exemplify how complementary and competing stories work synergistically together throughout the text, enacting the book's narrative focus on multiple storylines and histories. To an extent, the text's use of collage as a composition strategy invites readers to undergo a process of discovery that is similar to the one Walrath embarks on in the process of creating *Aliceheimer's*. For Walrath, this ability of the image to tap into the "subconscious processes both the composer and the reader" is what "give[s] graphic storytelling its power" (3). Walrath takes the revelations she has from her mother's utterances and recreates this process for her reader through the slant associations that may emerge from the formal juxtapositions of image and text. Each page spread forms a kind of diptych, encouraging readers to make their free own associations between the image and vignette. Rather than follow the definition of comics as sequential art, Walrath's use of illustrated, juxtaposed vignettes approximate what Groensteen calls "the double page": "pages situated opposite each other are dependent on a natural solidarity, and predisposed to speak to each other" (*System* 35). Rather than describe or illustrate each other, the image and text function "nonsynchronously"—Chute explains the effect in this way: "a reader of comics not only fills in the gaps between panels but also works with the often disjunctive back-and-forth of *reading* and *looking* for meaning" (Chute, "Comics," 452). In other words, image and text do not necessarily map onto one another, they work to an extent separately, encouraging an ethics of reading that keeps interpretation fluid and open. The comic form offers a transferrable lesson to the subject of dementia, because it is not unlike the kind of understanding Walrath argues Alice requires. With Alzheimer's, Alice's stories do not always coincide or add up to a neat, linear, comprehensive narrative; there are multiple perspectives to piece together and witness in their fragmentation or irresolvability. This is also of ethical consequence for *Aliceheimer's* because it reminds readers the story of her mother's Alzheimer's is not a metaphor or story of historical amnesia—it is, foremost, simply the way Alice exists.

However, it's important to note that this ethics of distant and slower-paced, engaged encounter is premised on an audience that reads in conventional terms. Jason Helms gestures towards this interpretive inaccessibility when he points out that "[c]omics make reading difficult by depending on *readers who are capable of shifting* between looking at the pictures and through the words (and vice versa). They create ethical readers by training them in interpretive instability and hermeneutic hesitation" (n.p., emphasis mine). In her introduction, Walrath is mindful of this bias toward non-disabled readers and encourages differing kinds of engagement with the text. She sees comics as a "medium that someone with dementia could access," and calls on her audience to read the book in several ways: "Page through to feel the storyline as it exists in the drawings on their own; read it cover to cover, feeling the long narrative…and finally, when your attention is short, as it is for anyone with memory challenges or simply pressed for time, leaf through the book to any page and take in a single vignette along with the image that set that story into motion" (5-6). Walrath's open invitation to different kinds of encounters de-emphasizes or de-hierarchizes what might constitute a more ethical encounter based on normative expectations of empathetic identification or logical understanding. Alice herself "devoured every graphic narrative that came into the house, even without the benefit of a short-term memory" (5), demonstrating how images are understood—and enjoyed—long after words stop making meaning. Put simply, the text relieves interpretive pressure; Walrath insists readers need not conform to the compulsory cognitive demands that graphic criticism insists comics create for its audiences. She thus cedes the pace of and approach to reading to her audience, releasing them from the strictures of experiencing the memoir in a particular linear or logical manner as a means to a certain interpretive end. This encourages an ethically different kind of encounter necessary for presenting and honoring the narrative of Alice's Alzheimer's as well as the narratives of trauma Walrath chooses to share that readers might find tasking to witness.

Overall, the fantasy and historical worlds that Walrath juxtaposes her mother within differ starkly from typical graphic memoirs about dementia (and disability/illness in general) that unfold around the hospital, nursing home, and other clinical sites.[83] In this way, Walrath seeks to sustain Alice's humanity—by drawing her into a world that doesn't appear visually traumatic or horrific at all—as well as reclaim traumatic (post)memories. As I elaborate on below, the collaged images and form of *Aliceheiemer's* also harbor important juxtapositions that attest to Alice's personhood and the transformative power of graphic art.

Altered Embodiment and the Altered Book

The pictorial embodiment of the graphic and disabled subject is a defining concern of both comics and disability studies criticism. In his keynote address at the 2016 "Pathography and Graphic Medicine" conference, G. Thomas Couser argued: "if the great advantage of the graphic memoir of illness and disability is that it features the body in the text, for greatest effectiveness—and affectiveness—the body ought to be recognizable as a particular human's, manifestly a thing of flesh, blood, and bone, a truly *corporeal* body" (qtd as published in *a/b: Auto/biography Studies* 356). For Couser, the most salient aspect of an effective and affective graphic memoir is its depiction of a *particular* human body, one that portrays "recognizable individuals rather than self-caricatures" (356). Running counter to McCloud's theorization that more realistic images are less universal, and thus harder for readers to identify with (36), Couser contends avatars and visual substitutes are counterproductive to readers' engagement with the memoir's subject.[84]

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[83] E.g. Alex Demetris's *Dad's Not All There Any More* (2015) and Paco Roca's *Winkles* (2011).

[84] McCloud argues that iconic abstractions, or cartoons, enable a reader "us to travel in another realm…we don't just observe the cartoon, we become it"; realistic representations, on the other hand, give readers less room for interpretation and perception (36). Between Couser and McCloud, I find it impossible to definitively say which approach is more effective or valid, as I believe each work needs to be approached on a case-by-case basis, accounting for the artist's stylistic choices in the context of the work as a whole. As Chute points out, drawings that lack realistic detail can be mobilized in service of more than simple identification—they can "unsettle selfsame subjectivity" (*Graphic* 31) and be off-putting as a political maneuver. Indeed, identification need not be the absolute end goal of readerly encounters—conflict and discord are necessary and productive for engagement as well.

Underlying Couser's preference for a high register of mimetic representation is the assumption that artistic realism best approximates the "authenticity" of one's individual experience of illness and disability, and that that experience is in itself individual—experienced by no other body—and best represented as such. Walrath's stylistic approach to representing Alice through collaged sources however takes a different tack. On McCloud's scale of progression from realistic iconic representation, the figure of Alice falls close to the latter.[85] But the figure of Alice is not just an iconic abstraction or cartoon in McCloud's typical sense. As the previous section explored, Walrath's work indexes *Alice in Wonderland* as a book, a material object, crucial to the narrative story. The materiality of *Alice in Wonderland* is also an essential part of Alice's iconicity—the figure of Alice is not simply a singular cartoon, but composite of sources, breaching the limits of McCloud's scale.

Like Spiegelman's treatment the Holocaust in *Maus* (which depicts humans as animals) and the criticism leveled against it, Walrath's visual representation of the auto/biographical and traumatic narrative is not "realistic." Walrath's non-realistic depiction of her mother as a literal *textual* body is the antithesis of the fleshy body to which Couser refers. Walrath's artistic experimentation with Alice's body—or specifically what I call "altered embodiment"—must be understood in context with the of practices of collage and the altered book—a craft or form of art in which a previously existing book is recycled into a new work of visual art (Brazelton).[86] These experimentations with Alice's iconicity, I argue, actually serve to reinforce the referential for readers, helping to make the experiences depicted more forceful.[87]

Making both collages and altered books are time-intensive tactile, visual, and physical experiences, and to consider *Aliceheimer's* in these overlapping traditions, one might say the text in its

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[85] See *Understanding Comics* p. 29.

[86] Any type of book can be used, as well as an array of other art processes to alter it, including gluing, tearing, writing, painting, and collage. See Harrison.

[87] I am taking a point from Irene Kacandes, who argues "unlike authors who 'have engaged with forms of life-writing – biography, autobiography, memoir, diary, journal – increasingly *for the purposes of fiction*' (Saunders 2010: 14, my emphasis),

physical form is a very "real" embodied tracing of Walrath's own intimate process of understanding her mother's "altered magical state" and their family history. The embodied labor of Walrath's meticulous collaging manifests the extensive contemplation and process involved in the desire to reimagine Alice and their family history through nondominant modes of knowing such as the visual arts and dementia.[88]

Walrath's representation of Alice's body runs counter to Couser's criteria and desire for a body that is "manifestly a thing of flesh" because she urges readers to read the body as extended beyond the individual. Trained as a medical anthropologist, Walrath's approach to the body is not as individual but collective. She locates sickness and health in three interconnected bodies: "the political, the social, and the physical…not in individuals but instead in families and communities" (4).[89] Capitalizing on the materiality of the collage form and altered book to create Alice's body, her representation is effective and affective precisely because it is uniquely not "a truly *corporeal* body"—but literally an intertextual one that is meant to be communal and symbolic in meaning. As Alison Gibbons argues, altered books are dialogic: "[t]hey bring about an exchange of ideas…have a polysemous and polyvocal quality…That is, readers' perceptions of character voice and the visual world of the narrative is inflected by both the original collage novel they are reading and the contexts, perhaps numerous, that the source texts signify" (431). Relying on readers' potential familiarity with *Alice in Wonderland* imbues the icon of Alice with a high degree of intersubjectivity as

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our topic here needs to be authors who experiment *for the purposes of autobiography*, that is to say, life writers who employ a technique for the purposes of fact or of enhancing, reinforcing or drawing attention to the referential level. Such authors aim to convey some aspect of the "realness" of certain life experiences that could not be conveyed as well without pushing at the form itself, without playing with the pact" (383).

[88] This experimentation with collage also resonates with Schultz's formulation "[d]ementia is bricolage, is collage, is mixed-up syntax" (132) in *Dementia Blog*, and her attempt to express its epistemic border crossings through the bricolage of generic forms.

[89] Echoing Martha Stoddard Holmes' observation, "While most practitioners would agree that the body's material reality is both powerful and nonnegotiable, most would also assert that the meanings of that materiality are, in contrast, continually created and renegotiated through social and cultural agents, and shaped by the verbal and visual narratives individuals, families, and institutions generate: stories of the body." See "Embodied Storytellers" (11).

the reader becomes a participant in determining the meaning of the texts' juxtapositions. In other words, the text positions the altered embodiment of Alice's body as something dually alienating or distant (not easily seen as "real" or relatable as "human" from Couser's perspective), yet familiar (due to its collaging of the popular *Alice* text), to foster readers' curiosity for—rather than immediate identification with—the different relationships between contexts and stories that Alice literally carries on her body and expresses in her experience of Alzheimer's.

To state Alice's experience is not all horror and trauma is one thing. To see it approachably in Wonderland-esque images of Alice's unmoored travels through hallucinatory landscapes and simultaneous realities is another. Walrath's experimentation with the non-realistic forms of collage and altered book also enables readers to reflect on the validity of Alice's nonnormative relationship to time and space (an aim shared by all authors in this dissertation): might readers' escape to the imaginative space afforded by any creative art be similar to Alice's? Or if readers are capable of identifying with these imagined spaces, might they not also be able to hold space for Alice's sense of "altered" sense of reality and time as well?

Indeed, one of the most crucial themes of *Aliceheimer's* (and a repeated trope this dissertation examines) is the notion of dementia as time travel, as Alice's hallucinations repeatedly appear in the text as a point of narrative interest. Dementia as time travel frames differently the developmental notions of Alice's reversion to childhood I explored earlier, alternatively recognizing Alice's non-normative, non-linear experiences of time and space as painful but also liberating.[90] Collaging Alice

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[90] As I also referred to in Chapter 1, I am drawing from Ellen Samuels' formulation in "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time": "*Crip time is time travel.* Disability and illness have the power to extract us from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages and cast us into a wormhole of backward and forward acceleration, jerky stops and starts, tedious intervals and abrupt endings. Some of us contend with the impairments of old age while still young; some of us are treated like children no matter how old we get. The medical language of illness tries to reimpose the linear, speaking in terms of the chronic, the progressive, and the terminal, of relapses and stages. But we who occupy the bodies of crip time know that we are never linear, and we rage silently—or not so silently—at the calm straightforwardness of those who live in the sheltered space of normative time."

into different settings and universes to visualize Alice's recurrent time travel (alongside the material index of the travels of Carroll's Alice cut and pasted to make up her body), Walrath makes sense of Alice's altered state (for herself and readers). And since some of these hallucinations are of traumatic situations, Walrath uses the graphic form as a tool to redraw her mother (and readers) out of them. In "Sundowning" Dana describes how "sunsets sometimes bring a different kind of magic. Black magic…Newsreels from her [Alice's] childhood come back through the ether" (35), bringing her to the time when she watched World War II unfold on the television. This is the only vignette with an accompanying image in the text that utilizes conventional comic panels, effectually mimicking Alice's sense of containment as the "Japanese soldiers surround the house" (34). For Walrath, the collaged graphic form's ability to capture multiple temporalities is essential for illustrating for readers the "magic" release of Alice's experience. The power of recognizing Alice's reality through co-storytelling and the graphic from to release Alice from this horror is dramatized in the page spread immediately following. In this vignette titled "Light, Years, Later," the accompanying image is of Alice flying free from the previous image. This breaking free is suggested by the dotted line travelling across the page. The figure of Alice is not depicted as hostage to her reality of being in the World War II era but freed with the assistance of Walrath's understanding and artistic reinterpretation:

> "Are you in World War II?" She nodded…We needed more than biomedicine could offer to make peace with the Japanese soldiers that sometimes emerged from her memory of a 1945 newsreel to surround our house at sunset. Instead of insisting that the soldiers weren't there, we used another branch of science to interpret Alice's visions: space time travel, her special power, accommodated simultaneous realities. (37)

Walrath meets Alice where she is—Walrath's turn to the imaginative realms of "space time travel" recalls the unrelenting time travel Schultz describes her mother to experience in her inhabitation of scenes from the War in Iraq overheard on the television. While Schultz turns to experimental poetry and the blog form to capture dementia's temporality, Walrath uses the collage and graphic form's unique ability to juxtapose styles, timescapes, and spatial arrangement dynamically from page to page to "make peace" or give form to Alice's hallucinations. These images attest to the fact that Alice's understanding of time is not "broken"; rather, "different temporalities cogently intersect and together produce new narratives" (Chidgey 134). At the experimental juncture of the real and fantasy, Walrath's depiction of her mother's altered embodiment tell stories that hold space for her realities and imagination, speak to the importance of seeing the "real" in the non-real, and attest to the transformative graphic effects of art.

Disappearance as Discovery

Importantly, the altered book and collaging strategy Walrath employs asserts the material presence of Alice's enduring selfhood in her altered state. Despite not being "realistic," in each image and each new collage, Alice's body and presence is made anew and reasserted. From the onset of the text, it is clear that Walrath sets out to redefine the "disappearance" narrative of Alzheimer's by using the graphic form to imaginatively capture her mother's dementia as a meaningful transformation. On the second graphic page of the book, the text "Alice is disappearing, soon there will be none" takes the place of Alice's absent head, where only a cut out of the Cheshire cat's broad grin remains. Alice's disappearance is framed as a curiously fantastic power, a transformation in identity that opens up new ways of relating rather than a loss of self.

In the vignette that accompanies this image, Dana explains, "Often, the 'internal governor' of people with Alzheimer's also disappears: they say exactly what's on their mind. This disappearance lets new things appear. Alice found parts of herself that she had kept hidden, from her children anyway. She wished out loud she had gone to medical school…The years of her pushing me…away from creative work made sense at last" (11). Rather than dwell on the loss of Alice's memory, *Aliceheimer's* emphasizes discovery and the emergence of new family and personal stories. Disappearance as discovery is dramatized on pages 16-17 in which various parts of Alice's face are erased, accompanied by the text, "She isn't losing tangible parts though she is disappearing" (fig. 2.4, 17).

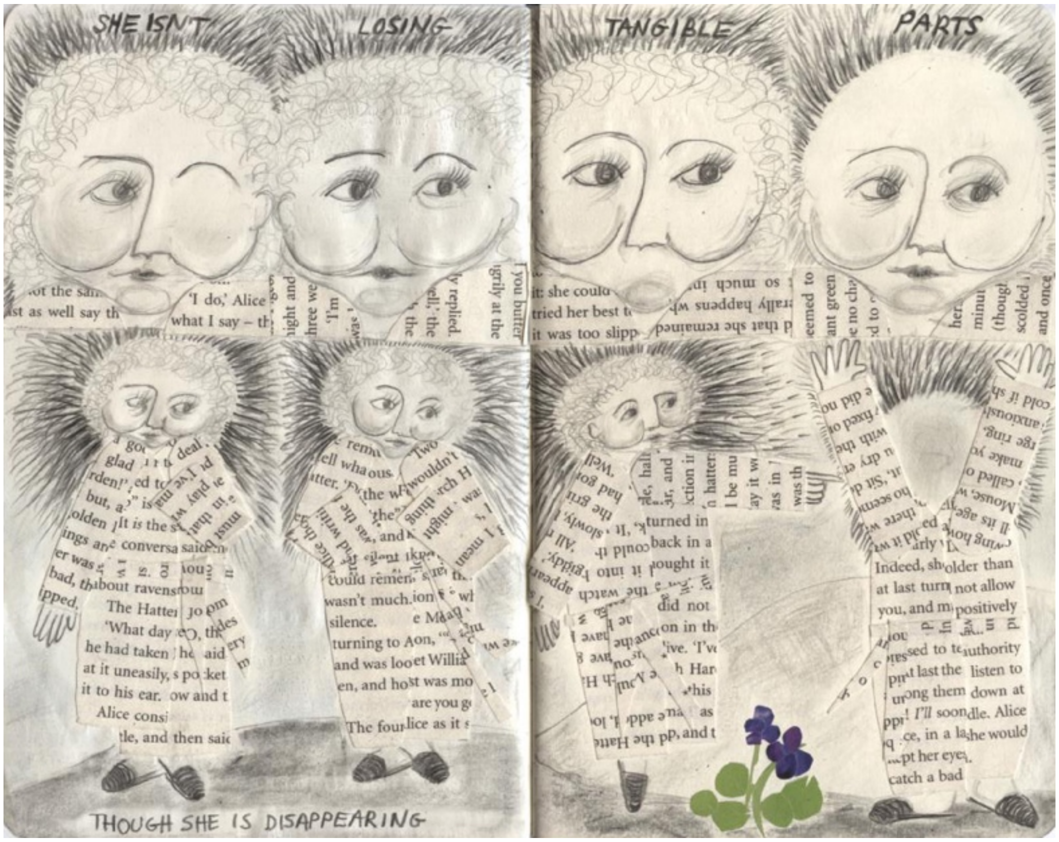

Figure 2.4 "She isn't losing tangible parts though she is disappearing," *Aliceheimer's*. Panels of Alice's face with different parts erased and Alice dancing below them (4).

This image is followed by a vignette in which Walrath describes her mother's physical appearance and identity as Armenian for the first time:

> Alice was always beautiful—Armenian immigrant beautiful, with thick, curly black hair, olive skin, and big dark eyes…Alice is still beautiful…Until the end stages, when facial expressions and the ability to move disappear, Alzheimer's remains invisible. The missing pieces stay hidden. Hiding has always been Alice's friend. As a child, I didn't understand her distorted affinity to all things blond…we spoke no Armenian at home. Our job was to fit in, to leave most everything Armenian behind, to become blond. Now, when she looks in the mirror, I guess it isn't just age, or the weight she has gained with Alzheimer's, that drives her to say, "I look awful." But other times, blond values disappear. She comes down from her room for dinner…like an Armenian princess. (17)

This spread of image and text establishes Alice's experience with Alzheimer's as importantly a resurfacing and renewal of her Armenian identity lost to assimilation that Walrath is prompted to learn more about and reclaim. As Walrath writes later on, her mother "hardly spoke about Armenian school until Alzheimer's brought her back to that time and place" (59). The altered embodiment of Alice becomes reflective of bodily and cultural hybridity—American and Armenian identities—but also the intense sense of presence Alice has of herself even with Alzheimer's. In this page spread readers also see how the materiality of the collaged text keep the figure of Alice dancing through the pages in the midst of her "disappearance." In effect, the book literalizes the idea that the self is kept alive through the stories and imagination of others. Through the collage form of storytelling Walrath's memoir gestures toward how life with Alzheimer's—and bodies in general—are always already socially situated and given meaning by others. Despite its avoidance of corporeal "realness" *Aliceheimer's* asserts the presence of the self and identity, offering reflection on how the meaning of the body's materiality can be positively shaped by narratives told by individuals and families.

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Overall, *Aliceheimer's* is an example of transgenerational storytelling that is invested in healing on a personal and collective level, it offers a unique lens through which to bear witness to one family's experience with dementia and difficult histories. As Alice rarely discussed stories from the past or spoke in Armenian prior to her Alzheimer's, *Aliceheimer's* highlights how the precariousness of family and collective history lies in in a complex web of language, cultural, and personal barriers inhibiting the transmission of family stories, not merely the forgetting of dementia. On the contrary, Walrath's memoir shows how intimate contact with the perspectives that arose in her mother's Alzheimer's led to the personal discovery of fragments of histories below the surface.

In its collaged, hybrid approach to telling these stories, Walrath's memoir is a site where her investigation into the memories of the past and imagination of the present meet, creating a new mode of expressing family history. *Aliceheimer's* reorients readers to different ways of being in relation to new and surprising contexts, inviting consideration of how reading alongside altered perspectives—of memory impairment as well as the collaged, "altered" book form—can enable productive shifts in expression and understanding. In its materiality and emphasis on process and healing, Walrath also suggests readers consider the memoir—and the graphic form in general—not merely as a passive receptacle or 'thing,' but a therapeutic space. *Aliceheimer's* recalls something cartoonist Lynda Barry writes of in her graphic memoir how-to sketchbook, *Picture This* (2010): "I believe making lines and shapes and coloring them in can still help us in the way it helped us when we were kids. When we used paper as if it were a place, rather than a thing. A place where something alive can happen through motion. The motion of our bare hands—the original digital devices; wireless, biofueled, completely ours. Drawing is one of our oldest ways of working things out" (110). Thinking about paper as a place akin to a stage or other space of creative expression points to the affordances that experimentations with the graphic medium have for giving imaginative and recuperative space to the dislocating experiences of dementia and traumatic history.

Digitalizing Dementia in Stuart Campbell's *These Memories Won't Last*

Artists like Walrath and Barry favor the work of "bare hands," wherein hand-crafted images are believed to more effectively and affectively represent their subjects in ways mediums like photography cannot. Comics scholars, too, seem to agree that "the act of reading and looking at a text that is entirely handwritten…creates an intriguing aesthetic intimacy," demanding prolonged engagement. This slowed engagement is often hailed as a key ethical feature of auto/biographical graphic narratives of violent and traumatic histories, from *Maus* to *Fun Home* (Chute, *Graphic*, 6). Frequently, this aesthetic intimacy is attributed to the intrinsic narrative capacity of comics to make personal and collective memories multimodally accessible or 'visible' (to sighted readers), leading artists and scholars alike to theorize comics *as* memory. Cartoonist Chris Ware observes that comics are themselves “a possible metaphor for memory and recollection” (xxii), while Chute argues that “[t]he art of crafting words and pictures together into a narrative punctuated by pausing or absence, as in comics, also mimics the procedure of memory” (*Graphic* 4). Chute focuses on the formal similarities auto/biographical comics share with traumatic memory and the excavation of childhood memory, but the same might be said for the impairment of memory that accompanies dementia and aging. In this concluding section, I explore further questions of reader intimacy and representing memory and trauma when the graphic form and representation of dementia goes digital.

Through the affordances of digital space, *These Memories* takes storytelling through the lens of its subject’s dementia to an extreme. Alongside the digital form, *These Memories* offers an example of how dementia serves as a driving force of innovative experimentation for comics. In setting out to aesthetically render the experience of his grandfather’s dementia and wartime trauma through the digital mode of the web comic, Stuart Campbell plays critically with many of the expectations and definitions associated with contemporary comics: namely, that they are universally easy to comprehend and thus identify with or “relate to” at first glance. Print comics are associated with “aesthetic intimacy” due to their hand-drawn nature and reliance on readers to participate in meaning-making, also known as performing “closure.” McCloud argues, if “visual iconography is the vocabulary of comics, closure is the grammar, and comics is closure” (*Understanding* 67). “Closure” relies on readers to “clos[e] the gap between what is shown and what can be known,” thus “mentally construct[ing] a continuous, unified reality” (*ibid.* 67). This interpretive expectation of readers is taken for granted as an automatic, natural response to reading comics as a universal language. As disability scholars note, comics criticism often theorizes “graphic narrative as a semantic structure based on (abled) embodiment" (Foss et al. 7).[91] Campbell's web comic draws attention to the normative cognitive assumptions underlying the expectation of print-based closure by deliberately impeding it through digital techniques. Unlike a print-based, static comic, the images and panels of *These Memories* blur, fade away, and disappear after roughly 10 seconds—forcing a certain pace of engagement and drastically reducing the amount of time readers have to perform closure in a single encounter. Moreover, *These Memories* distinguishes itself from other web comics in that most works are characterized by an investment in facilitating readers' navigation of the unusual or experimental form of the text. For example, McCloud's first web comic, "Porphyria's Lover" (1998) uses flowchart lines to help readers through in correct sequence, while the interface of Marvel Infinite Comics is straightforward in helping readers through different areas of the text. Indeed, many web comics have arrow markers or table of content-like pages that make it "easy" for readers to go back to previous "pages" to refresh their memories. The perceived success of web comics using what McCloud calls the web's "infinite canvas" in particular must be built a "reader-centered philosophy," as he writes on his webpage: "The only way the infinite canvas approach can ever come of age is if the readers' needs come first. Advancing from one panel to the next should be as easy as hitting a spacebar or tapping the screen. Bookmarking locations for return reading should be as easy as, well... a bookmark. If all-in-one downloads would be convenient, readers should have that option" ("The Infinite Canvas"). *These Memories*' features such as disappearing panels and the impossibility of back scrolling fly in the face of McCloud's wish list. Like *Aliceheimer's*, part of *These Memories'* ethical project is to play with creating distance between reader and the histories being read.

These Memories opens with the figure of 93-year-old Jim in a sofa chair, clutching a rope dangling from above with his right hand; readers will help him "pull" through his memories by

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[91] For example, Foss et al. point out how Groensteen uses the medical term "arthrology" (referring to the study of joints) to describe the visual structure of comics. Groensteen's analogy theorizes comics' as a particularly kind of body, underlying able-bodied assumptions (8).

scrolling their mouse or trackpad to initiate the comic's moving images. A red line also runs through the frame, embodying Campbell's curation of the images or the narrative 'thread'. While many digital texts mimic the modern book form through virtual "pages" that flip, *These Memories* takes advantage of "infinite canvas," using parallax scrolling to take readers through the story (*Reinventing* 200). As readers scroll down, the background moves more slowly than foreground, creating illusion of depth, distance, and instability as the narrative 'thread' and images (connected by the rope) never quite align. A nod to the scroll as an early book form, *These Memories* does not have markers that might assist readers' in assessing their location in the text.

These Memories is purposefully unstable, meant to dissolve from visibility, and prevent the reader from scrolling back to check past details and revisit images. As users scroll down (or "forward") through the story, previous images fade away. This hastens the temporal experience and sense of urgency to get through the story before it disappears, challenging readers' agency. In my own encounter, comprehending the entire story took multiple "refreshes," including several inadvertent re-readings due to accidental trackpad swipes "back" (exiting the webpage). Andrew Kunka suggests, "The cumulative effect of the work allows the reader to experience the ephemeral nature of the present and the blending of the past and present that is an approximation of the grandfather's daily existence" (144). Kunka's reading typifies other reviewers' statements about the function of *These Memories* as a kind of embodied dementia simulation exercise. As one reviewer writes, "Disappearing Interactive Comic Simulates What it's like to Have Dementia" (Ehrhardt). But as much as *These Memories* sets out to show what the comic-as-memory looks like when it becomes "demented," it also draws attention to the ethics of using comics to mimic memory impairment for readers as a means to promote empathetic identification with someone with dementia.

From a disability studies standpoint, embodied simulations are often problematic, buttressing a medicalized model of disability and reinforcing stereotypes.[92] As Tobin Siebers argues,

> Disability simulations fail to give the student pretenders a sense of the embodied knowledge contained in disabled identities. Disability simulations of this kind fail because they place students in a time-one position of disability, before knowledge about disability is acquired, usually resulting in emotions of loss, shock, and pity at how dreadful it is to be disabled. Students experience their body relative to their usual embodiment, and they become so preoccupied with sensations of bodily inadequacy that they cannot perceive the extent to which their "disability" results from social rather than physical causes. (*Disability Theory* 28)

Reading *These Memories* as a simulation of "what it's like to have dementia" downplays social and cultural aspects of aging and age-related impairments and reduces dementia as a disability to a set of cognitive difficulties with reading comprehension that can be temporarily experienced by readers and rendered through Javascript and HTML5. Reviewers' reports of their frustration with reading *These Memories* is indicative of the way Campbell's attempt to "replicate" the "frustration of memory" may serve to reinforce the stereotypes and prejudicial notions readers may have about the horrible and confusing life (aging) people with memory impairment live ("Dreamtime"). Thus, in some ways *These Memories* attests to the limits of empathy vis-à-vis simulation, in that the user's perception of the experience of dementia is predicated on imagining themselves to be different ("being like"), instead of offering mindful reflection one's own positionality and relationality as a means of affecting change in how one approaches others ("being with").

Yet, I want to suggest the text nevertheless can be productively read beyond embodied simulation. As *These Memories* forces re-readings (by users' choice or accidental "exits" that restart the comic), its pathways through (and obstructions thereof) panels can be characterized as also experimenting with the affordances of what Espen J. Aarseth terms the "ergodic" (from the Greek

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[92] Also see Lydia Brown, "A Critique of Disability/Impairment Simulations" which critiques the ableism accompanying age-related impairment simulation exercises; and Victoria Pitts-Taylor's argument against the basic assumptions of embodied simulation serving as the universal basis for empathy and intersubjectivity in *The Brain's Body: Neuroscience and Corporeal Politics*.

ergon, 'work' and *hodos*, 'path'). Ergodic literature is exemplary of "cybertext," which according to Aarseth is not limited to "electronic textuality," but refers to the "mechanical organization" of a text that poses "the intricacies of the medium as an integral part of the literary exchange…[and] centers attention on the consumer, or user, of the text, as a more integrated figure than even reader-response theorists would claim" (1).[93] Aarseth's concept of cybertext is a useful perspective on *These Memories* in that it effects an engagement that constantly reminds readers of "inaccessible strategies and paths not taken, voices not heard" (3).[94] Characteristic of multimodal experiments in literature, *These Memories* activates reading—"not just as using, but also as engaging and performing" (Bray et al. 421). While the text's programmed speed arguably thwarts readers' agency in managing their encounter with the text, only the reader can initiate the continuation of the story (the comic does not scroll itself; panels disappear after approximately 10 seconds, leaving the canvas blank until readers initiate a transition to the next image). Drawing readers in through non-trivial or "difficult" comprehension and navigation bestows readers with responsibility to carry out the completion of Jim's story's. Arguably the text shifts emphasis away from Jim's memory difficulties to the reader's own involvement in keeping another's story alive, an ethical act that, as I explore in the next section, carries particular weight when interpretive attention is broadened to include how *These Memories* grapples with visualizing dementia as it intersects with historical trauma and post-traumatic stress.

Forgetting "The Toll of War"

While *Aliceheimer's* plays with the visual and affective distance between Alice's dementia and

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[93] Such a text, Aarseth argues, instills responsibilities on a reader that go beyond "eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages" (1). As others have pointed out, the term "ergodic" has its own ableist assumptions since it assumes a reader's "eye movements" and "periodic or arbitrary turning of pages" are "trivial" responsibilities, assuming a universal kind of reader for which these actions are in fact trivial (Landow 42).

[94] On the ergodic form, the distance enacted by (medical) archives, disability and black history, see the collaborative, experimental "anti-archive" of *The Anarcha Project*: liminalities.net/4-2/anarcha/

the trauma of the Armenian Genocide, *These Memories* speaks loudly to the complex entanglement of dementia with the social trauma of war. Much of the narrative of *These Memories* takes readers through Jim's wartime memories in World War II, to which he was drafted at age 21: the bullying he experienced, the clever pranks he would play on his supervising officer, the bloodshed he witnessed on the battlefield resulting in the death of his friends, and his migration to Australia as a Hungarian refugee. One question this comic raises is how historical trauma and the experience of post-traumatic stress mediates the experience of dementia. In the visualization of these overlaps, *These Memories* is not only interested in simulating and depicting dementia or memory loss as an individual embodied phenomenon (a reading that reproduces a depoliticized framework for understanding both dementia and post-traumatic stress disorder); it also intends to offer readers a re-politicized and historicized picture of Jim's dementia as situated in the social conditions of perpetual war.

The text's pivotal moment is when Jim has a blood clot and the ambulance ride to the hospital triggers a "psychotic episode" flashing back to combat during the war (fig. 2.5). In this longest stretch of horizontal-moving images, readers move through a smoky battlefield, blood splattering. Militarizing the space of the hospital room, a soldier emerges to drag Jim in his sofa chair across a field of carnage while a tank fires red into the distance behind them. The intensity of the past wells up and surfaces in Jim's physical aggression: "He hit two nurses and threatened to hit another, he was convinced the nurses were poisoning the patients' food" (n.p.). The continuous movement of the animated panels bring violent history into the present in an immediate, explicit way; but just as quickly, violent scenes fade from sight. The narrative ushers readers' through a level of the uncertainty as to whether Jim's hallucinations are a result of dementia or post-traumatic stress, speaking to how the "cumulative, fluid nature of traumatic injury and consequent disability indicates that notions of 'traumatized' and 'disabled' are emergent, changeable across time, and inevitably contested" (Morrison and Casper n.p.).[95] Jim's aggressive "behavioral problems" are curbed by the anti-psychotics given to him at the hospital, but readers get the sense this quick-fix and resultant happiness, like the comics' images themselves, are temporary, as Jim's conspiratorial delusions and verbal aggressions recur at the end of the narrative. The text illustrates the challenges of individual pharmacological treatment, and the ending importantly interrogates to what extent the persistence of personal and historical trauma is remediable through individualized, biomedical intervention.

Figure 2.5 Screenshot of image from *These Memories* of Jim in a sofa. Jim is dragged backward by a soldier through a battlefield. The caption reads, "My mother called the ambulance and grandpa as rushed to the hospital. The ordeal triggered a psychotic episode that thrust his mind back into the war."

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[95] Daniel Morrison and Monica Casper write, "Diagnostic categories are fluid, and their use may say as much about embodied phenomena as about history, politics, culture, and institutions…Connections between PTSD, TBI, and a more diffuse 'combat stress' (historically known as 'shell shock') are complex and ambiguous—it is often unclear where one condition ends and the next begins." See "Intersections of Disability Studies and Critical Trauma Studies: A Provocation," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 32.2 (2012).

As *These Memories* approaches its end, Campbell narrates how Jim's delusions and subsequent agitation make caregiving and social interaction difficult. In the final panels, Campbell's avatar reflects how the social losses are double-edged: "grandpa was forgetting us / and the world was forgetting him." There is a visual moment of uncanny recognition following this assertion, as Jim and Campbell look at each other as mirror images, sitting on their respective chairs (fig. 2.6). Far more than suggesting Campbell (and readers) will eventually grow old and potentially lose their bearings on memory, the text powerfully ends on the larger issue of the perpetually disabling cycle of contemporary imperialist war. Jim's last words concludes the text: "Too much of my life was spent watching friends die" / "What have I even lived for?" These two comments on senseless violence are followed by the penultimate image of Jim, gazing distraughtly and directly at the reader, with a newspaper headlined, "Australia Supports Airstrikes in Iraq" (fig. 2.7). The ruthless cycle of violence Jim has witnessed in his lifetime propels the final image of him falling off the narrative's visual rope, his disappearance concluding the comic.

Figure 2.6 "Too much of my life was spent watching friends die," *These Memories*

Figure 2.7 Jim with newspaper titled, "Australia Supports Airstrikes in Iraq," *These Memories*

The challenge the fading panels intend to pose to readers' access to and remembrance of the narrative forces readers to grapple with the actual disappearance of Jim—as a grandfather, but also a veteran—from collective memory. Jim fades from view not because of the presumed dissolution of his identity due to dementia but under the march of history repeating itself and his felt inconsequence within it. The tragic experience *These Memories* attempts to convey is more than "about" aging and dementia; it is the "social wounding caused by war" (Goler 177). The ethical confrontation—or what Ato Quayson might call "aesthetic nervousness"—that occurs between the reader and Jim requires an engaged consideration of not only the social marginalization of his impairment but the imperialist interventions and that perhaps gave rise to it.[96] Like *Aliceheimer's*, what is most productive about *These Memories* is how the story reverses the narrative and popular metaphor that dementia abets national forgetting. Instead, Jim's narrative gestures towards an awareness of the historical and political contexts that give rise to and shape his dementia, highlighting its social and relational constructions. And while Walrath narrates Alice's return to her Armenian history as occasions for rediscovery and healing, Campbell shows Jim's reliving of trauma as acutely painful and disruptive to his family life and care circles. To this the disappearing form of *These Memories* insists on readers' reflections on the ease with which traumatic images dissipate from their view, in comparison to Jim's lifelong reliving of these images. By forcing readers to un-see trauma at every turn, the ephemeral images of *These Memories* question the impulse of laying claim to another's trauma and even questions the value of flawlessly preserving individual memories in contexts like post-traumatic stress. Its temporal experimentations with visualizing intense yet fleeting

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[96] I echo Laura Jordan Jaffee's writing on the production of cognitive and psychiatric disability under the conditions of imperialist war. She argues, "While disability studies scholars and activists should doubtless be concerned with reducing the marginalization of individuals labeled with PTSD, they should also be actively engaged in preventing the imperialist interventions that give rise to PTSD…Uncritical support and advocacy for a social model that does not account for global power imbalances risks invisibilizing instances wherein disability is created through imperialist violence and broader geopolitical injustices." (489)

violence and trauma prompt reflection on ethical tensions surrounding one's "right to forget" traumatic memories, alongside the collective necessity to "remember the toll of war and to use that memory to resist future wars" (*docubase*).[97] Ending with an image that criticizes Australia's involvement in the U.S.-led occupation of Afghanistan, Campbell foregrounds not merely the toll of memory loss but the toll of war; especially how the military apparatus debilitates those occupied and oppressed by imperialist forces as well as the individuals called upon to perpetuate it.

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Walrath and Campbell employ the unique qualities of the graphic medium to embody their understandings of their loved ones' dementia; explore the overlaps in personal and historical memory and trauma; and bring into view the intimacy of nevertheless unknowable experiences. They draw our attention to the ethical obligation to read dementia and trauma as inextricably tied, but not necessarily causational.[98] While these texts are careful not to definitively suggest dementia is a "symptom" of war or trauma, they nevertheless draw attention to what it might mean to consider aging with dementia as embedded in issues related to the legacies of structural and militarized violence. Furthermore, *Aliceheimer's* and *These Memories* attest to the importance of broadening the understanding of dementia beyond medical discourses and stigmatizing metaphors for cultural forgetting, while considering the "healing and magic" that might inhere in these new perspectives.

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[97] Raquel Medina poses a similar ethical question of whether traumatic experience should be remembered for the sake of preserving the past for others in her talk on *El Tiempo Suspendido* (2015), a documentary on the Dirty War in Argentina. Medina critiques how filmmaker Natalia Bruschtein unethically triggers her grandmother Laura Boneparte's memories of the war, which she has largely forgotten due to Alzheimer's. Medina argues eliciting testimony from a person with dementia is retraumatizing: by insisting on their remembering for the sake of collective and national memory, one neglects the personhood of the person who lived through that trauma.

[98] Beyond reducing stigma and increasing accessibility, Morrison and Casper ask what the "curb cuts for social traumas such as war" are, noting that certain types of social trauma (such as empire-building, genocide, and other violence conflicts) "are not acute, one-time ordeals" (n.p.). They instructively suggest, "In understanding these enduring traumas that are written on and in turn harm the body, we must consider the structural, historical, and geopolitical arrangements that shape human affairs at their most intimate and global levels" (n.p.).

In reading dementia as an artistic resource for these writers, and a heuristic for thinking about history, I do not mean to romanticize it or obscure the importance of the actual lived experiences of the people in these texts. I echo Laura Jordan Jaffee writing on cognitive and psychiatric disability in the context of imperialist war; Jaffee writes that "romanticizing neurodiversity can dangerously depoliticize disability and hinder calls for political action" (489). Instead I have aimed to highlight how these works explore the very necessary question of how to support and remember loved ones with dementia in individualized ways while recognizing the historical and social circumstances in which they are written.

Thus, I have also hoped to show how the usual interpretive framework of "graphic medicine" is not capacious enough to capture the functions of these texts, as they much more than about dementia as it relates to health discourse and the construction of a disease; they are reflections on representing and bearing witness to violent histories and temporalities of ongoing injustice. As texts typically read as only "about dementia," *Aliceheimer's* and *These Memories* importantly invite audiences to examine, perhaps unexpectedly, their own positions as witnesses to stories of the potentially distant historical and geopolitical contexts of genocide and war. Indeed, these texts lead readers to confront the relational "materiality of difference within specific historical contexts" (Erevelles, "Thinking With," n.p.) in which their subjects' cognitive impairment is embedded, and animate discussions relevant to medical humanities, disability studies, and trauma studies at the intersection of contemporary conversations on imperialism and war.

As Shane Denson argues in the afterword to *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives*, "the transnational work of comics and graphic narratives—their propensity toward various acts of border-crossing, adaptation, and reimagination—[is] a more or less natural extension of volatile core processes at work in the act of reading comics" (272). To Denson and other comics scholars' suggestions that comics go hand-in-hand with reimagining borders, I would add that the experimental, border-crossing work of the texts I have explored in this dissertation is also a natural extension of authors' attempts to represent and interpret the complex experiences of dementia.

The next chapter continues exploring the connections between the representation of historical trauma, post-traumatic stress, and dementia. As I shift to popular fiction over the remainder of this dissertation, I delve deeper into how the narrative deployment of dementia, genre, and gender are strategically tied. Playing with the conventions of their respective genres, the subsequent authors I examine center on dramatizing the tensions between the "alternative realities" and "lived realities" of dementia—something each "entangled story" has touched on. Turning to writers' attempts to represent the experience of dementia through popular genres, I highlight works that show the utility of fiction in commenting on the realities of aging and dementia care as well as different possibilities for imagining aging futures.

CHAPTER IV

Reorienting Realities: Gender, Aging, and Care in the Genre Fictions of Emma Healey and Jo Walton

In many of the texts this dissertation has explored, authors grapple with the representation of a family member's experience of fluctuating realities accompanying dementia-related cognitive changes. Dramatizing moments of lucidity, confusion, and states in-between, writers like Ruth Ozeki, Susan M. Schultz, and Dana Walrath draw upon the lived experience and trope of dementia's "alternative realities" as a means to contemplate shifting mother-daughter relationships, temporalities of injustice, traumatic histories, and enduring legacies of violence. They also present readers with ways of thinking about life with dementia that move beyond detrimentally popular "zombie" and "living death" narratives often attached to mainstream representations of dementia's "non-reality."[99] Instead, the authors I have chosen to highlight are united by a purpose to take the realities of persons with dementia as valid and meaningful—having heuristic, epistemic, and ontological value. They foreground opportunities for reflective connection and consideration of the expressions of insight and joy that can emerge from non-normative orientations to reality. This chapter turns to works of genre fiction that deliberately deploy, if not exaggerate, the notion of dementia's alternative realities as essential to their narrative forms, and to elaborate on what I

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[99] See Susan M. Behuniak, "The Living Dead? The Construction of People with Alzheimer's Disease as Zombies." *Ageing & Society* 31 (2011): 70-92.

identify to be an important trend to note in contemporary representations of dementia; that is, the engagement with values lying at the heart of person-centered dementia care.

Recognizing the realities of people with dementia is a value at the heart of person-centered dementia care: a philosophy of care Tom Kitwood, Kathleen Bredin, and others have advocated for since the 1990s and is now the core of the 2018 Alzheimer's Association Dementia Care Practice Recommendations.[100] Challenging traditional (bio)medical models of care favoring psychotropic drugs and behavioral policing, person-centered care stresses the importance of "personal choice and autonomy," its key components being:

> (a) valuing and respecting persons with dementia and those who care for them; (b) treating people with dementia as individuals with unique needs; (c) *seeing the world from the perspective of the person with dementia, so as to understand the person's behavior and what is being communicated, and validating the subjective experience that is being perceived as the reality of the individual*; and (d) creating a positive social environment in which the person with dementia can experience relative well-being through care that promotes the building of relationships. (Fazio 12; emphasis mine)[101]

This shift to the necessity of understanding the "reality of the individual" rejects an earlier approach to dementia treatment known as "reality orientation." Echoing previous chapters' exploration of connections between dementia, trauma, and post-traumatic stress, it is perhaps not surprising that reality orientation began as an attempt to help rehabilitate war veterans by presenting them with facts and truths related to time, place, and person, the aim being to enforce their understanding of their surroundings and selves—their reality—through rote memorization.[102] Employing props such as clocks, calendars, maps, and weather charts, administrators of reality orientation sought to cure "the problems of confused elderly people" through the rehearsal of facts (Folsom 343). Day in and

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[100] See Tom Kitwood and Kathleen Bredin, "Toward a Theory of Dementia Care: Personhood and Well-being" *Ageing and Society* 12 (1992): 269-287.

[101] See Dawn Brooker "What is person centred-care for people with dementia?" *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology* 13 (2004): 215-222.

[102] Lucille Taulbee and James Folsom popularized the use of reality orientation for dementia treatment in the 1960s, marking the advent of psychological therapy in the care of dementia, which previously had been viewed as a medical problem with medical intervention; see Taulbee and Folsom, "Reality Orientation for Geriatric Patients," *Hosp Community Psychiatry* (1966) 17.5 (1966): 133-5.

day out, doctors and staff continually reminded patients of the "correct" reality they were to inhabit. Contrastingly, person-centered care is founded on the premise dementia should be understood as a neurological impairment with psychosocial factors, and thus seeks to accommodate and affirm the fluctuating realities of dementia as integral to personhood through interpersonal approaches (Kitwood "The Technical"). Through reminiscence therapy and role playing, for instance, caregivers and others can facilitate opportunities for people with dementia to embody and express conflicting realities simultaneously, offering them means for expressing "a sense of continuity with the past; and hence a 'narrative,' a story to present to others" (Kitwood *Dementia Reconsidered* 83). This emphasis on freedom of the imagination over retention of memory is central to the kinds of "creative care" projects that, for example, MacArthur award-winning theater artist and educator Anne Davis Basting has been developing over the last 15 years.[103] With the importance of storytelling to care in mind, this chapter examines the nexus between the representation of dementia, realities, and writing that is productively (re)imagined through popular genres, which have a profound influence on the societal perception of dementia in mainstream culture.

Practices of person-centered care that stress "seeing the world from the perspective of the individual with dementia" can be imaginatively rehearsed through reading literary texts, particularly first-person narratives. Since autobiographical accounts written by people with later stages of dementia are not common or possible, popular fiction has a monopoly on mainstream perceptions of what the realities of dementia are like. In this chapter, I explore two award-winning genre fiction novels, Emma Healey's *Elizabeth is Missing* and Jo Walton's *My Real Children*. Both texts take up the notion that people with dementia live in "alternate" or "multiple" realities thematically and at the level of narrative form. Each text focalizes their protagonists' relationship with the past in a way that

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[103] See TimeSlips and *The Penelope Project: An Arts-Based Odyssey to Change in Elder Care* ed. Anne Basting, Maureen Towey, Allie Rose (University of Iowa Press, 2016).

is inseparable from their experience of differing realities, as well as their embeddedness in networks of care and marginalization. Raising ethical, epistemological, and representational issues, these texts play with generic conventions to communicate the subjective experience of dementia differently: *Elizabeth is Missing* is told through first-person narration in the mode of a detective mystery, while *My Real Children* relies on the realism of fictional biography within the frame of speculative fiction. Together, they highlight the perspectives of "old women with memory problems,"[104] and underscore the value in validating alternate realities and foregrounding the voices of aging, vulnerable subjects. More than serving a discussion exclusively surrounding dementia, these texts also contribute to discussion regarding the material, social, and environmental factors that shape the experience of plural, fluctuating realities that all aging and contingent bodies and minds may eventually experience.

I heed Michael Bérubé's caution against reading "a literary text in one hand and the DSM-5 in the other," recognizing that a disability studies analytic can limit itself unnecessarily "whenever it confines itself to determining the disability status of individual characters" (20). My reading moves beyond evaluating the diagnostic accuracy of dementia representation and attends to *how* and *why* authors formally frame their representations to comment on social structures and practices surrounding dementia and aging.[105] Importantly, I explore how Healey and Walton mobilize dementia in the context of the generic "role" their characters assume in the context of the respective popular genres they inhabit, offering insights into how these texts ask audiences to read mainstream conceptions of dementia differently.[106] Indeed, both dementia and popular genres such as detective and science fiction present "possibilities for readers to consider profound questions about the nature of reality, as well as the potency and limits of human understanding" (Cohran and Cannon 2). In

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[104] Jo Walton, *My Real Children* 315. Subsequent quotations appear in parenthesis.

[105] For an example of a diagnostic reading of *Elizabeth* see Chloe Harrison, "Finding Elizabeth: Construing memory in Elizabeth is Missing by Emma Healey" *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 46.2 (2017): 131-151.

[106] Extending the concerns Ria Cheyne writes of in the introduction to the 2012 special issue of *Journal of Cultural and Literary Disability Studies*, "Popular Genres and Disability Representation."

other words, in each text, gender, genre, and dementia are strategically linked, and both Healey and Walton play with the conventions of their fictions in order to raise ethical consciousness surrounding gendered issues of power, choice, agency, and care.

Through Healey and Walton's texts, I highlight the significance of literary representation within popular generic frameworks in the context of thinking about issues related to the actual experience and public imagination of dementia as a gendered experience that disproportionately affects women as both receivers and givers of care.[107] Both published in 2014, Healey and Walton's novels dovetail with a slew of public discourses sensationalizing facts and figures that locate women at "the epicenter of Alzheimer's disease" (Geiger qtd. in *Alzheimer's Association* 2014). As such, news media and medical research headlines from the *Telegraph* to *Alzheimer's Research* have been fervent in arraigning the personification of Alzheimer's and dementia as Britain's (and other nation's) "biggest killer of women" ("Women and Dementia" 3). In their literature review on women and dementia, Katherine Ludwin and Gillian Parker point out, "Women's voices within the dementia field are relatively quiet and we know little about their experiences, in relation to gendered issues such as power, control, choice and influence" (n.p.). Healey and Walton's novels offer audiences an imaginative window into these voices and experiences in a way that policy discourse and research literature cannot, providing counternarratives to "the endless and systemic negative discourse in the public domain…by care partners and others not diagnosed with dementia" that factor into current shortcomings to care (Swaffer xii).

Winner of the 2014 Costa First Book Award—given to works of high literary merit and broad appeal—*Elizabeth* draws on popular genres of psychological thriller, crime fiction, and the

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[107] In a Western context. However, research from the 2015 World Alzheimer Report shows this gendered dimension spans across geographic locations and economic differences. On the socioeconomic factors contributing to the overrepresentation of women in the population of people with dementia and caregiving see Rosie Erol et al. "Women and Dementia: A Global Research Review."

detective novel, and is based on Healey's experience with her own family members with dementia.[108] In *Elizabeth*, the trope of living two realities sets the stage for the aging Maud Horsham's concurrent investigations into her missing friend Elizabeth and the unsolved murder of her sister Sukey. Dementia enables Maud to recollect, albeit unreliably, buried clues from her childhood in postwar Britain and structures an alternating yet porous narrative between past and present. I focus my analysis on how the gendered dimensions of Maud's dementia and her role as detective counter masculinist conventions of what Ria Cheyne calls the "cognitively exceptional detective" (185); challenge the medical model of dementia and ableism embedded in "aging well"; and ultimately requires readers to not only reflect on the logics of crime and clues in the frame of the detective novel, but the ethics of care.[109] Overall, I show how the interplay between "demented" detection and reading in *Elizabeth* attests to the importance of attending to the reality and perspective of those with dementia as a means of forging meaningful encounters and alternate paths to knowledge.

The second section of this chapter examines Jo Walton's *My Real Children*, winner of the 2014 James Tiptree, Jr. Award for best literary work of science fiction/fantasy that encourages the "exploration and expansion of gender" (Tiptree.org). The award, named after the male pseudonym Alice B. Sheldon strategically employed during her science fiction career, signals the novel's inventive engagement with the construction of gendered identities. Tracking the two life courses of 89-year-old Patricia Cowan following her decisions to a marriage ultimatum, the narrative unfolds in alternating biographical timelines. The possibility of two lives is also premised on Cowan's experience with dementia, enabling Walton to explore differing outcomes of World War II and the

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[108] As Healey told Frances Atkinson at the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the inspiration for the novel came from inspiration for the novel: "Several members of my family have, or have had, one form of dementia or another…I was in the car with my grandmother Nancy who said 'My friend is missing'." Her friend wasn't missing, but the remark ignited an idea that quickly turned into something more substantial."

[109] Following Ria Cheyne I am using 'detective fiction/novel' as an umbrella term encompassing crime and mystery genres. See "Disability in Genre Fiction" *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability* ed. Clare Barker and Stuart Murray. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018): 185-198.

multiple trajectories of feminist politics and motherhood that ensue. The aging female subject with dementia is instrumental to the novel's investment in gendered issues and challenging the construction of life as a singular identity through its expansion and exploration of multiple situated realities. Crossings into subgenres of biographical fiction and alternate history, the novel puts Cowan's dual lives into a lucid narrative to talk about access, care, and family. Using dementia as its speculative framework, *My Real Children* invites readers to imagine the possibilities to be found in recognizing a kind of life history and experience often dismissed as unreliable.

My juxtaposition of two different genres takes up Rick Carpenter's injunction that "We must recall that genres are not simply conduits by which individuals express themselves; rather, genres both shape and reproduce communicative situations and identities" (n.p.). How do the chosen genres Healey and Walton write in enable, shape, and limit the realities and social relations of their characters in terms of dementia, age, and gender? How do readers' unexpected encounters with them create avenues for change? Read together, *Elizabeth* and *My Real Children* co-opt and challenge genre-specific conventions of disability and gender representation, suspending readers' expectations of a narrative of dementia as a progressive descent into non-identity. Instead, these texts are invested in the ingenuity and validity of the reorienting realities of their characters' dementia and therefore assert the importance of perspectives dementia and aging have to offer imaginative fiction and imagined worlds. Both texts amplify the contribution popular literary narrative offers in challenging and transforming the cultural discourse of dementia, aging, and thinking about ethics of care.

Gender, Dementia, and Detection in *Elizabeth is Missing*

An image of the lower-half of a young woman wearing heels and a knee-length skirt carrying a suitcase walks across the 2015 Harper Perennial cover of *Elizabeth is Missing*. "HOW DO YOU SOLVE A MYSTERY WHEN YOU CAN'T REMEMBER THE CLUES?" reads the blurb under the main title, swiftly calling market audiences' attention to the way memory impairment will supply the drama for an unsolved crime. *Elizabeth* crosses several genres, but also emerges out of a long tradition of "cozy mysteries," a subgenre of detective stories traditionally (though not exclusively) dominated by white, female authors and marketed to female audiences (Oleksiw).[110] Light in tone and defined by an eruption of violence in an apparently tranquil, closed world, the cozy has been criticized for taking crime frivolously, but at its best, the form effectively raises questions about community (*ibid.*). Katharina Vester observes that cozy mysteries "usually do not have an explicit feminist agenda, although they commonly feature capable, strong, and smart women at their center," pointing out that the female sleuths in these texts typically "solve crimes with skills that are stereotyped as feminine, such as relating to other people, listening, gossiping, community-building, and networking. Feminine-connoted knowledge…gives the women sleuths an edge over the male police detectives…who are depicted as rational and evidence—rather than intuition-driven—thus, directly juxtaposing normative masculine and feminine behavior" (33). Vester and other scholars have pointed to Agatha Christie's Miss Marple as the archetypical female sleuth who "utilizes her ubiquitous and unobtrusive position in society as a vantage point from which to collect information" (Maslin 106). The "ubiquitous and unobtrusive" position in society female sleuths occupy is thus achieved through their performance of gendered tasks and, in the case of Miss Marple and Maud Horsham, their performance and perception as "old women."

Like Miss Marple, Maud is an unassuming, unexpected sleuth due to the societal underestimation of elders; as she says, "I am old and nobody is looking at me" (78).[111] In the following remark about how she is dressed at church, Maud presents her invisible status as an

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[110] The cozy mystery developed from classic English detective stories and dominated the genre of detection throughout the 1920s and 30s until thriller and hard-boiled genres rose in the 1940s and 50s. It resurged in popularity in the 1980s and continues to be popular today.

[111] Echoing Miss Marple's remarks about her own sleuthing in *Nemesis*: "She had no suspicion, I think, that I had any wish for the information apart from being well, rather muddle-headed, elderly and very worried" (387).

octogenarian as a performance of an unfortunate role: “I only really need glasses for reading, but they make you wear them all the time once you reach a certain age. It’s part of the uniform. How would they know you were an old duffer otherwise? They want you to have the right props so they can tell you apart from people who have the decency to be under seventy. False teeth, hearing aid, glasses, I’ve been given them all” (35). Maud’s community, the “you” she addresses, presumes her incompetent, and they are often “frightened off” by her “inarticulacy” (80). Maud is unlike her “sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued” generic predecessor, Miss Marple (Barnard 96). Critics point out that what Christie’s Miss Marple novels “propose is that there is a logic which is structured around the minutiae of life which can nevertheless inexorably reach into the very depths of human society and the human psyche. And they suggest that women, particularly old women, because they are attuned to the trivia of existence, are therefore endowed with logical powers which make them ideal arbiters of justice” (Shaw and Vanacker 34). Absent from the critical conversation is how the cozy mystery’s archetypical “old woman” detective hinges on cognitive normalcy and exceptionalism as a conduit to reasoning through a crime as much as the masculine tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction does. Miss Marple’s mental abilities of observation become keener with the experience that comes with age and time spent in her village, and she is typically granted social recognition from characters.[112] While Miss Marple eavesdrops on key conversations to garner clues because young people don’t think she’s listening, the absence of conversation in Maud’s presence precludes her from listening. Maud’s behavior with dementia (i.e. repeatedly asking questions and her difficulties accessing language) deters those around her from speaking plainly to her, and thus characters withhold information regarding Elizabeth throughout the novel. The female sleuth’s means of detection and the dynamics of her social in/visibility must be examined with nuanced attention to gender, age, as

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[112] For example, in *What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw!* an inspector notes, “Everybody in St. Mary Mead knew Miss Marple; fluffy and dithery in appearance but inwardly, as sharp and shrewd as they make them” (16-17).

well as cognitive disability.

Chronicling Maud's detection, *Elizabeth* facilitates critical investigation into the assumptions and attitudes surrounding aging women, age-related impairment, and gendered, ableist norms of genre that privilege exceptional cognition. These norms buttress Sherlock Holmesian masculine values of "observation, rationalism, factuality, [and] logic" (Kestner 2) as well as the "powers of shrewd observation and manipulation" typical of "older," "spinster" female sleuths such as Miss Marple (Mezei 104). Agreeing with Casey A. Cothran and Mercy Cannon's assertion that because the detective genre "has taken hold of the public imagination in popular and pleasurable ways, it is uniquely positioned to intervene in social ideologies and assumptions," I begin this chapter with how *Elizabeth* challenges intertwined expectations surrounding dementia, gender, and genre (3).

Disability as a category of inquiry in detective fiction is an emergent field.[113] Critics' focus on the archetype of the "defective detectives" that emerged in popularity the 1930s were of exclusively male characters, typically in hard-boiled genres (Hoppenstand and Browne). The representation of disability in detective fiction has been limited to the "super crip" narrative, in which the detective is physically impaired in some way yet is "remedially endowed with super-human intellect" such as John Dickson Carr's corpulent Doctor Fell (Hafferty and Foster 189). Likewise, cognitive impairment has a long-standing place in the detective genre as cognitive *exceptionality*, as Sonya Freeman Loftis points out in her examination of "the stereotype of the detective with autistic traits" in Arthur Conan Doyle's stories (n.p.).[114] Stuart Murray and Kathleen McHugh have pointed out that some recent contemporary detective fictions have set out to revise these tropes with more

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[113] Susannah B. Mintz's forthcoming *The Disabled Detective: Sleuthing Disability in Contemporary Crime Fiction* (2019) published by Bloomsbury is the first monograph to explore the topic; also see Irving Kenneth Zola, "Any Distinguishing Features? -- the Portrayal of Disability in the Crime-Mystery Genre," *Policy Studies Journal* 15.3 (1987): 485-513.

[114] In the last decade, male detectives with dementia have made frequent appearance on popular television, such as in Nic Pizzolatto's *True Detective* Season 3. On male detectives with dementia in crime drama, see Sadie Wearing, "Troubled Men: Ageing, Dementia and Masculinity in Contemporary British Crime Drama," *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 14.2 (2017): 125-142. Wearing observes how these shows hinge on anxieties surrounding age-related mental impairment as they trouble masculine ideals and gendered roles related to self-reliance, power, and authority.

nuanced understandings of cognitive difference.[115] But more often than not, hard-boiled and cozy mysteries alike that feature "unusually minded protagonists" rely on the trope of "cognitive exceptionality" regardless of gender (Cheyne 187). Cozy mysteries may "depict women's bodies in unusual ways," but female protagonists such as Selma Eicher's Desiree Shapiro are often endowed with "mind[s] as sharp as a Cuisinart" (qtd in Vester 34). The untrained senior citizen detectives in Rita Lakin's *Getting Old is Murder* (2015) and Linda Stone's *What's Going on at the Montcliff?* (2012) likewise show the continuity of mental ability in old age with superficial attention to the realities of memory impairment. Miss Marple, too, embodies a privileged societal position within the medical model of "successful aging."[116] So even as these texts resist the assumption and stigma of mental decline in old age, they corroborate in ageist *and* ableist models of successful aging associated with maintaining youthful lifestyles and one's cognitive abilities.

One of my goals is to show how the perspective of the female detective with dementia in *Elizabeth* forcefully contributes to deprivileging the expected qualities of reason, objectivity, and self-reliance archetypal of male detectives and the able-mindedness accompanying aging female sleuths, while positing dementia as a meaningful, complex lived reality inscribed by relational experiences. In short, Healey's creation of an "old duffer" like Maud offers a fresh perspective to discussions in gender, disability, and detective fiction. Glenwood Irons' introduction to *Feminism in Women's Detective Fiction* explains that female authors "who have chosen to create a woman (and sometimes a feminist) detective have altered the male prototype to the extent that their detectives speak from a

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[115] The figure of the "neurotect" in texts such as Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* (2000) and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2004), Murray argues, are productively read in the context of neurodiversity; see Stuart Murray, "Neurotecs: Detectives, Disability and Cognitive Exceptionality in Contemporary Fiction," ed. Christiana Gregoriou, *Constructing Crime: Discourse and Cultural Representation of Crime and "Deviance"* (Bastingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 177-89; also see Hugh, "The Female Detective, Neurodiversity, and Felt Knowledge in *Engrenages* and *Bron/Broen*" *Television and New Media* 19.6: 535-552.

[116] In 1987, John Rowe and Robert Kahn introduced a distinction between "usual" aging and "successful" aging, defined as "avoidance of disease and disability, followed by maintenance of cognitive and physical function, which should enable social engagement" (Berridge and Martinson 84). I discuss the ableism and ageism inherent in the model of "successful aging" in more depth in the next section on *My Real Children*.

woman's perspective and address the problems which women face in modern society" (13).[117] But as the essays in the collection show, both critics and writers have tended to either focus on the perspectives of youthful, able-bodied/-minded women or take the cognitive abilities of older sleuths as givens. Unlike Miss Marple who represents "the intelligence of women and their undeniable function in establishing order" *Elizabeth*'s confused and often disoriented Maud attests to a different kind of mental capacity that characters around her are conditioned to overlook (Köseoglu 136).

Like other texts this dissertation has explored, dementia is deployed in *Elizabeth* as a trope and to drive the narrative. As in *A Tale for the Time Being* and *Dementia Blog*, dementia's temporal fluctuation between past and present is used to structure the temporality of the narrative and as a trope to reflect the lived perception of violent histories inconceivable as finished. For example, as the novel moves between Maud's narration of the present and her adolescence, two parallel worlds emerge in which Maud searches for two important missing women in her life: her friend Elizabeth and sister Sukey, who was murdered after World War II. Readers have a sense Elizabeth is *not* actually missing—Maud just can't remember where she is—but nevertheless Maud is propelled by immense concern for both women and the sense that the atmosphere of violence against women engendered by the war has never dissipated. These two narrative strands of past and present crisscross as objects, smells, sounds, and people in Maud's environment trigger flashbacks as well as flashforwards, such as when Maud's memory of Sukey's "Victory Red" lipstick triggers a skip in the narrative to Maud's present-day search for a shade of Victory Red at the department store (and she is there, associatively, because of her last memory of "[o]ne of the last times Elizabeth went shopping" [34]) (40). Thus, the mystery of two unsolved disappearances are intertwined in Maud's confusions of time and place, and Maud's obsession with them drives the narrative.

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[117] For a feminist account of crime writing by women that work to destabilize tropes of the heroic male detective see Susan Rowland, *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British Women Writers in Detective and Crime Fiction.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

Critics and reviewers of the novel have tended to focus on how these confusions are "symptoms" of dementia contributing to a "haunting depiction of mental illness" (*The Observer*). In these readings, Maud's dementia is sensationalized as a "harrowing" source of unreliable narration, facilitating the novel's crossings into "psychological thriller" (*Sunday Times*, *BBC*, etc.). However, these readings overlook the nuance with which Healey approaches Maud's reality—not just as a potent plot driver or trope as I point out above—but also as a means of offering social critique on gendered roles and the labels and generic expectations that circumscribe her reality. As Katsura Sako similarly argues, the novel avoids "reducing dementia to a biophysical condition that only affects individuals with the condition," and instead

> imagines the experience of living with dementia in the social and interpersonal space. Maud's interactions with others – from a shopkeeper at the corner shop and Elizabeth's son to her GP and a police officer who receives and dismisses Maud's multiple missing person's reports for Elizabeth -- illustrate encounters in which Maud's psychological reality is dismissed by the normative logic of society. This structure of marginalization is also suggested in the parallel drawn in the narrative between Maud and Violet, Douglas's mentally disturbed mother, who knows what has happened to Sukey but is dismissed by the community, including Maud, every time she tries to tell what she knows. (322-323)

I would add to Sako's argument that Maud's psychological reality is also a commentary on the primacy emotion plays in her detection and the gendered nature of emotional labor that goes under acknowledged by people around her. From the onset of the novel Maud is exasperated by those around her, including her daughter Helen, who refuse to acknowledge her fluctuating realities:

> Helen sighs again. She's doing a lot of that lately. She won't listen, won't take me seriously, imagines that I want to live in the past. I know what she's thinking, that I've lost my marbles…I forget things—I know that—but I'm not mad. Not yet. And I'm sick of being treated as if I am. I'm tired of the sympathetic smiles and the little pats people give you when you get things confused, and I'm bloody fed up with everyone deferring to Helen rather than listening to what I have to say. (19-20)

Characters Maud encounters not only dismiss her because dementia places her outside of "the normative logic of society"—it is also because she challenges gendered expectations of rational production that dominate her world, and the novel is self-reflexive about the masculine conventions that structure the generic world in which her character lives.

Maud emerges as a subversive detective figure not just because she doesn't think rationally or logically due to her memory impairment; it is also because her pull toward investigating the missing cases of Elizabeth and Sukey is motivated by her embodied emotional knowledge and what reads as an instinctual responsibility to care (both traditionally regarded as feminine performative acts). As many scholars have already explored, the dominance of rational, logical thinking in Western thought and crime and detective fiction is steeped in the discourse of masculinity (Ross-Smith and Kornberger). Consequently, as Bendelow and Williams point out, "emotions have tended to be dismissed as private, 'irrational', inner sensations that have been tied, historically to women's 'dangerous desires' and 'hysterical bodies'…emotions [that] need to be…'driven out' by the steady hand of (male) reason" (131). Maud, then, embodies a subversion to this image of reason as both male and able-bodied/minded.

Maud's "irrational" "inner sensations" are dramatized through her impulsive and animalistic desire to dig. She constantly "digging a pen and bit of paper" (127) from her handbag to write down clues as a route to knowing. But going further, when the prologue introduces Maud's initial discovery of a clue (Sukey's makeup compact), it does so through a primal image of Maud digging as if instinctually for food: "I've missed this tiny thing for nearly seventy years. And now the earth, made sludgy and chewable with the melting snow, has spat out a relic. Spat it into my hand. But where from? That's what I can't discover. Where did it lie before it became the gristle in the earth's meal?" (2) Maud's affective pull to dig in the soil as a means of locating Sukey runs parallel with the digging and foraging tendencies of the "mad woman." As readers learn late in the novel, the mad woman, Violet, roams the streets of Maud's narrative past also mourning and searching for a lost loved one: her daughter Dora "run over by a bus, before the war" (270). I will address Violet in more depth later in this chapter, but for now, it's important to note how both Maud and Violet are constructed as "hysterical" social outliers because they figuratively embody, obsessively, the extremes of a feminized instinct to care. Unlike the rational male detective, in both narrative strands, Maud's role as detective in locating Elizabeth is also figured in similar terms of emotion over logic. When Maud goes to the site of her old house, she expresses her difficulty with reasoning: "I'm not sure what to do. I see a light on in the kitchen, but I can't think how to get there. It all seems so familiar, as if it should call up memories, but I can't reach them. There's a layer of other people's lives on top…'Elizabeth is missing!' I shout…I shout it again and again" (260). Maud is not rationally tactful in this scene but rather exercises her will through emotive shouting as a means of finding the person she is looking for in the layers of other people's lives in the house, piled up like the soil she often digs through. There is no formal plan underlying Maud's digging for objects, instead, it is a process of emotional excavation. Maud's safekeeping of found objects or "piles of junk" is viewed by characters in the novel to be a pathological sign of dementia and senile behavior, as Helen exasperatedly insists to Maud not to "collect old rubbish" (163). However, the novel eventually reveals the importance this emotionally-driven act of digging to Maud's sleuthing.

This motif of (emotional) "digging" returns at the novel's end and stages the uncovering of the mystery of Sukey's disappearance. Maud's emotional pull toward the garden of Elizabeth's home is strengthened by every flashback she has to the past, through which memories of Sukey, the mad woman, and others emerge as clues. In the last chapter, Maud's daughter Helen finally takes her repetitive insistence someone is buried in Elizabeth's garden seriously. Observing Helen dig up the garden, Maud notes: "as more dirt is displaced I see it has a missing piece, a crack, a mark of violence, hollow and dark against the pallor" (286). At this point readers learn Maud has in fact pieced together the mystery and lead us to Sukey's body, and Helen realizes the value of Maud's perspective. The narrative suggests Sukey's alcoholic husband Frank was the culprit, ostensibly bringing closure to the seventy-year-old mystery. This happenstance discovery in the context of the detective novel, Sako argues, "draws attention to Maud's cognitive failure, presenting her as an incapable detective. The novel, however, re-imagines the self with dementia in the social and interpersonal space, in ways that challenge the masculine detective agency and the ableist conception of subjectivity" (320). For Sako the discovery of Sukey's body "doubly subverts the premise of the classical model of detection in its coincidental and collaborative nature" while also pointing to "the possibility of agency in dementia in the intersubjective space" (324). Importantly this scene's emphasis on Maud's "irrational," intersubjective agency disrupts the traditional masculine premises of classic crime and detection narratives in which truth is obtained through intuitive logic, observation, and inference (what Edgar Allan Poe referred to as "tales of ratiocination"[118]).

Elizabeth's tracing of Maud's investigative detective work as an emotional rather than practical matter makes visible a pattern of how rational investigative logic embodied by the police consistently fails to do the missing women in the novel justice and take women's experiences of violence seriously. Law enforcement often functions to confirm or legitimize the intuitive knowledge of female detectives, but this convention operates differently in *Elizabeth* since Maud's experience of reality is multiple, and thus some crimes unresolvable by conventional means. The paradox Kimberly Maslin observes to surround Miss Marple offers a useful counterpoint here. Maslin argues that although Christie's novels gesture "toward the establishment of intuition and situational knowledge as legitimate ways of knowing," they still seek "legitimation in traditional sources of authority" and "evidence gained through sense perception; objective, detached sources; and methodically acquired means" (106). While Miss Marple's knowledge is often verified by inspectors or policemen, Maud's investigation is always already taken as jest (Maslin 110).

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[118] See *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. John Ward Ostrom (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), p. 328.

The novel comments on how patriarchy intersects with ageism and ableism, and how these shape Maud and other women's experience as well as the response of policemen. When Maud reports Elizabeth as missing, the police officer demeaningly dismisses her concern with no empathy or interest in understanding her desire to take action in the search for Elizabeth:

> He laughs. "Oh yeah. I've got every man on the force out. Sniffer dogs, forensics, flying squad. They're all out there"—he pauses to skim a hand through the air—"looking for your friend Elizabeth." I go hot at his words. My armpits pickle. I can see what he thinks of me now, and I feel sick. The tears spill over, finally, and I turn away so he won't see them…If the police won't take me seriously, what chance is there of ever seeing Elizabeth again?" (85)

Maud's emotional response to this dismissal prompts her to relive a moment from her childhood when a policeman responds to Sukey's missing person report and arrives at her family's home. In this scene, readers learn Sergeant Needham does not pursue Sukey's case with urgency—for there was "not much of a case" (87)—rationalizing Sukey to be a runaway rather than a targeted victim of violence: "The men can't get used to being back on Civvy Street, or the women can't get used to having their husbands home again, and so they're off. And we get the poor abandoned folk crying to us" (86). Needham's skepticism reflects a postwar culture that normalizes and minimalizes male violence against women, something that haunts Maud's search for Elizabeth, as she feels Peter, Elizabeth's son, has done something terrible to her. Needham and the officer in the previous scene fail Elizabeth, Sukey, and Maud because their inability to think and act outside the patterns of their masculine detective roles, underpinned by reason and logic, forecloses further investigation.

Maud's drive and ability to solve the crime due to her dementia positions her as a subversive figure that challenges masculine detective agency while also commenting on gendered and internalized vulnerability. The first line of the first chapter begins with Maud's carer, Carla, asking Maud, "You know there was an old woman murdered around here?…They found her with half her face smashed in" (3). This not only sets up concern for what might have potentially happened to Elizabeth but is the first of many recurring incidences of violence against women that go unsolved by the police—all of whom are male in the novel, and thus also a symbol of patriarchal crime control. In a casually cruel pattern of caregiver abuse, Carla's question frightens Maud ("I wish Carla wouldn't tell me these things; they leave me with an uneasy feeling long after I've forgotten the stories themselves" [3]). It also is the first of several references to news headlines about violence to women that have permeated Maud's life since Sukey's disappearance (i.e. reportage on the "Grosvenor Hotel murder" that sends her town into a panic, "worrying that more of their women folk had become victims of the vile murderer" [215]). Maud's response to Carla illustrates how she has also internalized these expectations of violence, indoctrinated since childhood, responding with a sketchy recital of the quintessential fable of elder violence, "Little Red Riding Hood": "Once upon a time in a deep, dark forest, there lived an old, old woman named Maud. I can't think what the next bit should be" (3). Alluding to the grandmother who will be eaten by the wolf in her home, the opening scene of *Elizabeth* foregrounds women as targets of violence but also signals that Maud will, to some degree, try to write her own story.

The novel most succinctly illustrates Maud's subversion of gender roles in Chapter 11 when Maud, acting on emotion, steps out of the domestic and private domain of the home into the streets of the neighborhood in her late husband's clothing. Fluctuating between her childhood and present-day reality, she senses: "Something's happened. I have to get up, get out, get to Sukey. I pull on a man's striped shirt and worn, unfamiliar trousers…I wonder if this is a dream. I don't think it is…I set off toward Frank's house" (153). Taking the search for Sukey into her own hands, Maud's autonomy challenges the patriarchal structure of the police culture that has both infantilized and subordinated her on many occasions. Maud's detective work is framed as so much of a disruption to gendered expectations that she must literally be arrested by a police officer for it. Maud's arrest—essentially a criminalization of her wandering—is also told in the terms of an abduction: preceded by the appearance of a fox (a classic trickster figure), the police officer is narrated by Maud in a way that suggests he might be a stalker or rapist rather than public protector: "A car stops at the end of the road and a man gets out. He wanders toward me, his hands hooked in his belt…I begin to back away. 'Where are you going, love?' he says…'Home,' I call as I turn away, trying to force my legs to go faster…I want to leave something behind me, something to tell people I was here…'Frank,' I say. 'Frank.'" (154-55). That the officer reminds Maud of Frank, Sukey's presumed murderer, comments on Maud's sense of shared vulnerability with other women in the novel, something I will address more later in the chapter.

What I want to emphasize here is the text's dramatization of how Maud's mode of detection and status as a detective—in both her world and the generic world of the novel—renders her a subject to be policed rather than accommodated or understood. In attending to the gendered representation of dementia in the context of the detective genre, I have tried to examine what Bérubé refers to as the "systems of sociality" that include "characters who either are or are presumed by their fellow characters to be constitutively incapable of understanding or abiding by the social systems by which their worlds operate" (21). Maud's presumed incompetence by the characters around her is influenced by intertwined ageist, ableist, and patriarchal norms. Transgressing the traditional expectations of "the greater powers of observation and superior mind of the [male] detective" (Merriam-Webster 323)—Maud's emotionally-driven, and at times irrational and accidental, detective work makes visible a logic of care and communication whose coherence or meaning is not immediately obvious to those around her.

Elizabeth is thus pertinent to discussions of how the "dementia figure occupies the subject position of the other in relationship to dominate realities" (Stirling 150). As Jeannette Stirling asks,

> So when do the 'right minded' stop listening in any meaningful way to the dementia speaker? When do we start to disassociate the dementia subject from the person who shared our life before the metamorphosis began? When does the notion of a shared language, and therefore a shared conceptual universe or 'reality', become so fractured and dissipated by the sufferer's pathology that we begin to discount statements made and questions asked by them simply because it is easier not to listen? (151)

Exploring the necessity of validating Maud's subjective experience in solving the novel's mystery, Healey capitalizes on the detective genre's thematic reliance on the communication of evidence and memory to explore these questions. When "right minded" characters refuse to listen to Maud, they strip her of her sense of self-esteem and deny themselves of the opportunity to discover more about what she is experiencing and make sense of her reality. As the novel's final lines suggest ("I can see they won't listen, won't take me seriously. So I must do something. I must, because Elizabeth is missing. [301]), the case will always be open for Maud, and so the pressing issue is how to support that reality interpersonally. In this way, the novel's focus on the social reception of Maud's reality productively contributes to discussions surrounding the social construction of dementia.[119]

Going further, the novel's deployment of dementia within the frame of the detective genre—and its reliance on tropes of detection, i.e. Maud's search for clues in her environment—brings into relief how Maud's dementia is imbricated in normative expectations of literacy and able-mindedness. Drawing from material feminist concepts of "misfitting" and "literate misfitting," in the next section I argue the detective frame of *Elizabeth* draws attention to Maud's experience of dementia as a material, relational arrangement.

"My paper memory": Reading, Remembering, and Misfitting

> There are bits of paper all over the house, lying in piles or stuck upon different surfaces. Scribbled shopping lists and recipes, telephone numbers and appointments, notes about things that have already happened. My paper memory. It's supposed to stop me from forgetting things. (14)

Paper surrounds Maud throughout the novel. From the switch labelled "KETTLE" to the "jar marked TEA," notes left by Maud's carers are strewn around the house to help her recognize

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[119] Elaborating on the social construction of dementia see Nancy H. Harding and Colin Palfrey, *The Social Construction of Dementia: Confused Professionals?* (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1997).

things (11). These material reminders are efforts to ground Maud in their reality; after all, the very notion of 'reality' originates from *realis*, the 'relating to things' (OED).[120] Maud also writes down and collects reminders and "information"—for her, these "little snippets of news are things to talk about" (25). These material traces of writing are not merely extraneous details or familiar markers of a household of a person with dementia, but also operate as crucial components of *Elizabeth*'s detective story. The action and central mystery of the novel literally unfolds from Maud's notes:

> I have this piece of paper tucked into my sleeve: *No word from Elizabeth*. It has an old date on one side. I have a horrible feeling something happened to her. Anything could have. There was something on the news yesterday, I think. About an old woman. Something unpleasant. And now Elizabeth's disappeared. What if she's been mugged and left for dead?…But these bits of paper on the table beside my chair, this system for remembering, it's not perfect. So many of the notes are old, no longer relevant, and I get them muddled. And even the new ones don't seem to contain the right information. There's one here with writing still shiny: *Haven't heard from Elizabeth*. I run my finger over the words, smudging them slightly. Is that true? I must have just written it. I certainly can't remember having heard from her recently. I reach for the phone" (15).

The novel is premised on Maud's repetitive forgetting of her notes, and in doing it calls attention Maud's act of writing and interpreting her notes as both a means and barrier to find Elizabeth. If, as Ellen O'Gorman argues, "the most important feature of the detective novel is not the story of the crime but the story of its detection…not the witness or the clue or the crime or the criminal, but the questioning, the scrutiny, the process of recovery, and the act of detection" then what is important to focus on is the way the processes of reading and writing that Maud experiences in her dementia figure into the novel (21). Getting information "muddled," and "smudging" her notes, Maud points to how her embodied skills of reading and writing are now different—the literate practice and identity she once had has changed with the processes of age-related dementia. With literacy deeply

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[120] Ruth Ozeki's *All Over Creation* (2003) also touches on the discursive construction of reality through things in the scene when Phoenix moves around the "lettered signs" his father had made "to trip up his grandma" with dementia: "The living room belonged to the kids and Momoko now; one by one, its ties to any external, verifiable reality were being severed, and it was developing a demented logic of its own…The living room wall now said BEDROOM. The chair had turned into the CEILING. The teapot was a REFRIDGERATOR…As a result Momoko was now sitting on the CEILING, at a desk that was a DOORSTOP." (117)

linked to citizenship, social equality, and the very perception of what is quintessentially human (in Western, bibliocentric cultures)—Maud's character asks how those connections might be more inclusionary. As Christopher Kliewer and others suggest, the "*DSM* characterization of literate (im)possibility and the dominant worldview it represents may be less a biologically based actuality and much more akin to social impositions…the ongoing denial of literate citizenship for people with perceived intellectual disabilities…is socially linked to historic practices of general human devaluation" (165). Using the framework of detective fiction, which is largely about the act of reading itself, *Elizabeth* expands social understandings of literate practice.[121]

The conventions of the detective genre demand Maud's able-minded engagement with these notes-as-clues, which she continually challenges. Maud resides in a generic world in which, as a detective, she is expected by readers to meet certain "writerly" expectations and performances: "The thing is to be systematic, try to write everything down. Elizabeth is missing and I must do something to find out what's happening. But I'm so muddled…Search for clues. And whatever I find I will write it down. I must put pens into my handbag now. The thing is to be systematic. I've written that down, too." (24) The story of Maud's detection is thus about reading and writing "failures," the failure of "system[s] for remembering," as well as how that failure is scripted by what Elizabeth L. Miller calls "literate misfitting"—the conflict between impaired bodies, minds, and normative materials, "systematic" practices, and expectations of literacy (38). In this light, we can see how the

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[121] Takayuki Tatsumi has explored how Poe is not only the "father of detective fiction" but also "the discoverer of the significance of 'reading.' For him, reading seems to be the means by which to discover something true, but what he discovered actually is the act of reading as such…it seems more plausible that rereading Poe carries us to the historiographical recognition of 'reading as a literary genre' from the Foucauldian perspective." See "Literacy, Literality, Literature: The Rise of Cultural Aristocracy in 'The Murder in the Rue Morgue' *Journal of American and Canadian Studies* 12 (1994): 2.
Interesting, W.H. Auden writes that for many readers like himself, the pleasure in reading detective fiction actually resides in the ease with which one can forget it: "I forget the story as soon as I have finished it, and have no wish to read it again. If, as sometimes happens, I start reading one and find after a few pages that I have read it before, I cannot go on" (15). See "The Guilty Vicarage" 1948. Detective Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Robin W. Winks. Eaglewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1980. 15-24. Print.

"system[s] for remembering"—not unlike the approaches of reality orientation—fail Maud, and thus the novel invites reflection on the importance of support systems for nonnormative ways of writing, reading, and communicating. As such, Healey's emphasis on generic multiplicity and the rearrangement of formulaic parameters of the detective novel and cozy mystery aptly explores Maud's processes of reading for clues. Healey's novel interrogates what it means to interact with words in the "right" or "wrong" ways as Maud's access to language and memory changes, while highlighting the need to attend to the unique way Maud reads the world around her.

The concept of misfitting emerges from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's elaboration of a materialist feminist understanding of disability which "lodges injustice and discrimination in the materiality of the world more than in social attitudes or representational practices, even while it recognizes their mutually constituting entanglement" (593). As Garland-Thomson theorizes,

> Fitting occurs when a generic body enters a generic world, a world conceptualized, designed, and built in anticipation of bodies considered in the dominant perspective as uniform, standard, majority bodies. In contrast, misfitting emphasizes particularity by focusing on the specific singularities of shape, size, and function of the person in question. Those singularities emerge and gain definition only through their unstable disjunctive encounter with an environment. The relational reciprocity between body and world materializes both, demanding in the process an attentiveness to the distinctive, dynamic thingness of each as they come together in time and space. In one moment and place there is a fit; in another moment and place a misfit. One citizen walks into a voting booth; another rolls across a curb cut; yet another bumps her wheels against a stair; someone passes fingers across the brailled elevator button; somebody else waits with a white cane before a voiceless ATM machine; some other blind user retrieves messages with a screen reader. Each meeting between subject and environment will be a fit or misfit depending on the choreography that plays out. (595)

I make two extensions of Garland-Thomson's concept here: first, while her use of the word 'generic' is intended to mean *nonspecific, predictable,* or *general*, I ask what it might mean to consider 'generic' in the context of the generic world of detective fiction.[122] Secondly, the examples of "minority forms of

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[122] Krystal Cleary makes a similar interpretive question regarding the genre of reality television in "Misfitting and Hater Blocking: A Feminist Disability Analysis of the Extraordinary Body on Reality Television" *Disability Studies Quarterly* 36.4 http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/5442/4471

embodiment" that appear in Garland-Thomson's article are ageless and physical (594). Reading Maud as a "literate misfit" extends intersections of misfitting to both aging and cognitive difference.

Thus, I argue Maud's "demented" reading practices as a detective serve to amplify and materialize the generic conventions of detection as literate and literary practice. Healey's novel shows how aspects of Maud's dementia, as a communicative disability, is socially distributed across the network of people she interacts with as well the textual materials she encounters. The novel self-reflexively foregrounds the importance of reading, materials of literacy, and the environment in which these appear as they intersect with Maud's dementia in the scene when Maud visits the library "looking for something," as she tells the librarian:

> "I just can't recall, you know."
> "A book?"
> I say I suppose it must be, and he asks what sort of book it is, but I don't know. He asks if it's fiction."
> "Oh no," I say. "It's a true story, only no one will believe me…It's about Elizabeth," I say.
> "Elizabeth. Could that be the title?"
> I watch as he taps at letters on his computer.
> "There's something with that name in the crime section," he says[.] (142)

Maud's experience of reality is posed as an oscillation between her life and the materials of fiction, as she says after going to books in the "CRIME" section: "I don't think I'm quite up to that. I have enough mystery in my life as it is" (142).[123] The scene ends with Maud searching for clues in a copy of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and getting scolded for interacting with it inappropriately: "I put it up, weigh it in my hands, and then, holding it by its hard covers, I shake it to see if anything falls out…'Hey! Hey!' the man at the desk says. 'What are you doing? You can't treat books like that'" (143). This scene draws attention to how Maud's behavior and process of detection is tied up with her interaction with books, words, and notes throughout the novel, and the scene is as much about reading with dementia as much as it is about how "the design of books assume what a reading body

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[123] David Orr reads this scene as an example of how people with dementia actively employ detection in aspects of life on a daily basis, offering a counternarrative to the idea that dementia is "an agent of crime itself" (5).

can and should do: they must be held open to particular pages, pages that must be turned…built into all materials are expectations for what bodies and minds should do" (Miller 41).

My analysis of the significance of Maud as a character with dementia draws from Miller's research on the writing practices and identities of people with language disability after stroke and other brain injuries.[124] Miller builds on Garland-Thomson to coin the term "literate misfit," describing the conflict "between body, mind, and the materials of literacy" which "sheds light on how the relationship between the embodied, material, and social aspects of literacy operates on all writers, disabled and normatively abled" (34). Maud offers a literary case study for observing how dementia undoes the "naturalness" of language, processes of writing and reading. Maud's barriers to these processes appear throughout the text: "Beneath the note is a list of care homes and I feel a sudden weight in my chest…One or two of the cross-throughs have 'NOE' next to them. What does it mean? NOE. It looks like my handwriting…*Mill Lane NOE.* Or perhaps more like NoE" (133). Maud experiences twinned anxieties over being put in a care home and her difficulty with reading and recognizing what she has written. Maud's search for Elizabeth is also framed as a matter entangled in word retrieval and spelling, as she muddles through "all the different names there are for Elizabeth. Eliza, Lizzie, Liz, Lisa, Betty, Betsy, Bet, Beth, Bess, Bessie…" (197). In addition to dramatizing Maud's difficulty with words and her embeddedness in a society and generic world that emphasizes literate practices as a means of ordering reality (and defining what it means to be in touch with reality), the novel also shows the importance of Maud's own unique way of navigating clues. In other words, Maud's experience of literate misfitting generates the knowledge needed to

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[124] Miller draws on case studies with people with aphasia, as she elaborates: "The accounts of literate misfitting and the innovative strategies of people with aphasia to address that exclusion show how the imbrication of the social and the material aspects of literacy both enable and constrain literate practices and identities. Literate misfitting, then, reveals both how people with disabilities are often excluded from normative conceptions of literacy and how their experiences adapting and innovating in the face of literate misfits offer vital insights into the social and material aspects of literacy" (36-7).

enable her to discover the buried body of her sister—her ingenuity (and not deficiency) as a detective is rooted in the nonnormative way she interacts with the material words around her.

As I explored in the previous section, Maud's processes of detection are driven by emotion over reason, and her encounters with written and printed letters are likewise informed by an affective pull whose logic is not immediately clear to characters around her. For instance, Maud has a haptic connection with the menu at The Olive Grill restaurant: "It's heavy, the cover leathery; I trace the indented letters with a finger, though the name means nothing to me. I pull it on to my lap and read the contents out loud" (17). Like the act of smudging the letters on her note about Elizabeth, Maud shows how intensely physical reading is for her now—the physicality of interacting with text is more important than the comprehension of the text, and just as "real" of a reading experience. Helen's response to Maud reflects the social attitudes that render her a misfit: "She [Helen] doesn't like me reading things out, it causes her to sigh and roll her eyes. Sometimes she makes gestures behind my back. I've seen her in the mirror, pretending to strangle me" (17). But Maud's affective pull to textual objects and textuality is what ultimately enables her to access the embodied memories of her past that will lead to Sukey's body.

This scene in the restaurant orients readers to Maud's perspective of the world which, at times, approximates her difficulty with comprehending materials of literacy: "He [the waiter] nods and wanders off, still writing, past walls streaked with black paint. The restaurant is like a sheet of smudged newsprint, one that's been scrunched around an apple for the winter, unreadable except for the advertisements" (19). Similarly, in a later scene, Maud compares her thoughts to the unreadable faces of newspaper-wrapped packages: "I yawn and put a newspaper package on the floor next to another…they are strange muffled shapes and I push them away. There is something frightening about their facelessness. That must be what my thoughts look like, masked and unrecognizable. I search for something else to wrap" (202). The image of newspaper around apples and Maud's act of wrapping text around objects plays a vital role in her process of detection as a way of remembering through the body and making sense of her world.

In the middle of the novel, the significance of wrapping becomes clearer, as the following scene leads to Maud's flashbacks of key memories that lead to the discovery of Sukey's body:

> The only paper I can find is a newspaper on the hall table, a *Daily Echo,* and I'm not sure if it will do. The front page comes away as I try to read the headlines, but I take it along to a sitting room anyway and settle into a comfy chair spreading the sheets over my knees. There's something narrow and hard lying on the cushion next to me…I wrap it in the paper and look for apples, but I can't see any, so I wrap a pen instead and then I wrap a set of keys …"Where are the apples, Helen?" I say. "We'd better put them away, or they won't last till the spring." (212)

This scene launches readers immediately into Maud's childhood, in which she recalls she "used to like wrapping apples…and can "still recall the sharp smell of the newspaper ink mixed with the sharp smell of the fruit" (213). As Maud recalls how her family and lodger scrunched pages of newspaper around apples to store, she remembers how Frank fixed up the gardens of the new houses in their neighborhood—one in which Sukey's body is later discovered to be buried. It is also interesting to note how Maud also remembers "a headline bunched around the apple's stalk: WOMEN CONTACT YOUR HUSBAND," alluding to the panic surrounding murdered women and a slew of missing women cases due to "hasty war marriages" (215). Seeing this headline launches young Maud into "the pile of papers on the table with a new sense of purpose" to find out what happened to Sukey (215). The discarded newspapers intentionally call attention to the profusion and disposability of the missing lives being reported on, and the rapid temporal succession of days Maud struggles to keep up comprehending with in her old age and dementia.[125] Importantly, the novel sets up a continuity between Maud's younger self as a reader and detective and her older self.

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[125] Newspapers, according to Miller, are also about "designers' desire to save space" in which "it is clear that the assumptions of a 'fit' or 'normal' body and mind are also bound up with economic interests and built into the materials of literacy. Newspaper producers minimize resources, keeping costs down and pushing on individuals' bodies to bear the labor of literacy…That need slams against the fundamental expectations of neoliberal literate subjects: that they quickly

The disability studies lens of literate misfitting makes apparent that the narrative's focus on Maud's wrapping and her fixation on material texts serves to show how these are embodied expressions of an unmet need for justice, an attempt to communicate the memories of her past and her concern for the missing women in her life. The scene when Maud is trying to put her own missing persons advertisement in the newspaper illustrates how an alternate literate practice is needed to make her desires possible. In this scene that form of writing is has to be collaborative and interpersonal. Unlike the policeman and shopkeeper Maud encounters, the woman in the advertisements office approaches Maud as a communicative partner, rather than discredits her:

> The woman slides me a form with lots of boxes and spaces for writing. I look at it, and I must look at it for some time because she leans over and puts her head close to mine.
> "Write what you can. I'll help if you're struggling."
> "Right, I say, lifting my pen and pointing it at the form as if it were a wand and could think up the sentences for me.
> …
> "Here," she says. "Let me." She spins the paper toward her and rests against the counter.
> …
> "I look at the sheet. It's a strange jumble of words and lines and I'm not even sure which bit I'm supposed to read. But there is a title: "Missing Cat." "I don't want this, I say "I don't want this word." I put my finger over it, trying to lift it off the page." (226-227)

Although there is miscommunication, the woman eventually helps put in the ad for Maud's lost "old friend" (228). The success of this interaction catalyzes the end of the "mystery" of where Elizabeth is (her son, Peter, is furious to see the advertisement, but also recognizes the need to allow Maud to visit his mother in the stroke rehabilitation unit of the hospital). And it is coming home from this particular visit that Maud and Helen together discover Sukey's body in Elizabeth's garden. Sako writes that this "accidental nature of the discovery reiterates the danger of negligence in listening and attending to the subject with dementia" and Helen's involvement marks a shift from individual authority to "co-operative discovery" characteristic of women's contemporary detective fiction

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and efficiently do the work of reading and writing. Conflicting economic interests and ableist views of the body are imbricated in the very materials of literacy—an insight offered by literate misfitting" (46).

(324). But it is also important to credit this discovery to Maud's nonnormative engagement with clues, that her way of engaging with materials is posited as an inventive means of detection that emphasizes interdependence between social and material aspects of communication and experience. In this way, Healey attests through fiction how attending to the reality and perspective of those with dementia can forge meaningful encounters and make visible alternate paths to knowledge.

Elizabeth is a text that reflects on negative social responses to communicative barriers that people with dementia may encounter.[126] When Maud attempts to converse with her former friends at church, she finds herself biting her "lip in humiliation," observing they are "frightened off" by her "inarticulacy" (80). *Elizabeth* draws attention to the stigma and fear surrounding dementia and aging as a slide into the realm of incommunicability. David Orr rightly notes that the novel "encourages the reader to reflect on what happens when talk by people with dementia is ignored as fabulation, stray and misplaced memories, or foolish ramblings, and to ask what this failure to listen actively might cause to be missed" (11). Through the strategic use of crime and detective genres, Healey not only trains an imagined reader to become more "like a detective, alert to matters that might seem otherwise inconsequential," but better "readers" of the realities people with dementia may attempt to communicate or express, a skill essential to person-centered care (Bradford 121).

Old/Mad/Missing Women: Care and Trauma in Postwar Britain

From "young women's hysteria to old women's senile dementia," the figures of "mental anguish" that haunt Western religion, thought, and medicine have historically been gendered (Cohen

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[126] As Richard Taylor writes in his 2007 memoir, *Alzheimer's from the Inside Out*: "I have become keenly aware of a patterned response from some individuals as soon as they find out I have Alzheimer's disease. They switch their eye contact and attention to whomever I am with. It is as if knowledge of the disease immediately cloaks me in invisibility" (152). For voices from non-fiction see Marilyn Truscott "Life in the Slow Lane," *Alzheimer's Care Quarterly* (2003) 4.1: 11–17 and Cary Smith Henderson, *Partial Wiew: An Alzheimer's Journal* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1998).

4-5). In his introduction to *Thinking about Dementia: Culture, Loss, and the Anthropology of Senility*, Lawrence Cohen offers a brief history of the oppression of women's voices, starting with how, during the Inquisition, "the problem of the old voice [was] feminized as the witch's curse" (4). From the Reformation onward, physicians' claims to women's voices shifted the discourse from "devilry" to the "natural process of dotage," but by the nineteenth-century, interest in "doting old women" fell wayside to cultural and biomedical fascinations with "the voice of the hysteric" (5). Cohen highlights that although hysteria and senility became increasingly understood as "marked disorders of memory" over the course the twentieth century, senility failed to capture the imagination and concern of the public and professionals due to what was perceived as a lack of voice: for neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and his successors, for instance, "senility [stood] as a problem of life but not of the subject: it no longer *speaks*" (5, emphasis in the original). As the narrating protagonist, Maud gives literary voice to the figure Cohen charts above, a figure marginalized threefold: as a woman, as a subject dominated by male-written narratives (i.e. in the realms of medical science, psychiatry, and detective fiction), and as a figure imbricated in histories of persecution and institutionalization.

In this section, I explore how Healey brings together the trope of dementia with that of "the mad woman," building coalition between Maud and the mentally ill female character, Violet, to comment on how personal and historical trauma mediates both experiences. My reading elaborates on what constitutes the novel's depiction of what Lucy Burke points out to be a "culture of violence" (93). As Burke argues, *Elizabeth* "does not simply tell a story in which a narrator with dementia eventually…dig[s] up a long buried secret from her past, it also tells a story about ways of thinking about and living with dementia in a fundamentally inhospitable culture" (96). Burke persuasively claims what makes this culture "inhospitable" is the "systemic marginalization and stigmatization" of people with mental difference, as Maud and Violet are "articulated in the context of a cultural environment in which their 'madness' is to be ignored or pathologized and thus explained away" (96). Yet Burke locates the "profound vulnerability" these characters face in "events and forces beyond our control"—attributing the death of Violet's daughter and Violet's experience of trauma to the accidental nature of a traffic accident and Sukey's murder to the random, alcohol-induced violence of her husband—which cuts her analysis of just what constitutes the novel's "cultural environment" short (96-7).

Elizabeth, I add, is a text that is also about how the protracted violent conflict and aftermath of World War II gives rise to the "culture of violence" in which its characters live.[127] As the narrative alternates between Maud's childhood preoccupations with postwar rationing and disappearances that persist into present day, *Elizabeth* tunes readers into postwar conditions in which male violence against women becomes socially permissible and excusable. As the first section discussed, Sukey's disappearance is dismissed by police as a runaway rather than murder case; the possibility of Frank's domestic violence is overlooked with the emphasis placed on the fault of women who "can't get used to having their husbands home again" (86). The novel's focus on Frank's alcohol abuse (as a coping mechanism) after the war sets Sukey up as a classic crime fiction victim to the jealous husband, but also underlines Healey's representational preoccupation with war's destructive effect on family life and structure and subsequently, mental health, across gender. As Frank explains to young Maud why his bartender's family lives at the hotel: "Her husband's an ex-POW. Poor bastard, touched, he is. Can't bear to live at home, so they live here." (189).

But my focus here is on the significance of Maud and Violet, and how as both women search for loved ones they've lost in postwar Britain, the novel dramatizes the affective strength of female relations and practices of care as resistance. Staging commonality between Maud and Violet, *Elizabeth* exemplifies what Kathleen Gregory Klein calls an "ethic of responsibility…common

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[127] Healey explained writing *Elizabeth* involved reading the diaries housewife Nella Last wrote for the Mass Observation Archive, hence the strong female perspective on war years (*Sydney Morning Herald*).

among women…where [the detective's] role is not simply to discover the murderer and restore order, but also work with and develop a sense of community with and among many of the characters" (qtd in Irons, 15). Critics like Sako and Burke have both pointed out the similarities between aged Maud and Violet in terms of their alienation from the community and their odd, compulsive behaviors.[128] The two women merge formally at the end of the novel when Violet's opaque witness description of Sukey's murder ("The glass smashed and the birds flew around her head") are mistakenly perceived as Maud's own by the police officer (291).

I want to focus on a taken for granted aspect of the thematic dialogue between these two characters: they are both shaped by experiences of individual and historical trauma. The traumas of bodily hunger and witnessed destruction are woven together throughout the novel, coloring Maud's experience. Maud's reality and memories surrounding Sukey's disappearance is littered with enumerable postwar memories on war rations as a child—these memories echo out of the anxieties she expresses to her carers over food ("there's no cake left because of the sergeant" [90]), and she fears Elizabeth is being abused by her son putting her on "starvation rations" (277). Likewise, Maud's navigation of her present-day world is also colored by the haunting presence of postwar Britain's urban devastation. Walking through town, she notes, her confusion is similar to that of her childhood: "The shop isn't far…and for some reason I keep taking the wrong turn…I feel like I did at the end of the war. I often got lost on my way onto town, what with houses bombed to rubble, and sudden open spaces, and roads blocked by bricks and masonry and broken furniture" (7).

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[128] Drawing on the "medieval figuration of wisdom in folly" Michel Foucault discusses in *Madness in Civilization*, Burke argues readers' perspectives of Maud and the mad woman "indicates the degree to which we remain culturally attached to historically and intellectually residual forms of symbolism and meaning-making alongside contemporary epistemologies of selfhood. However, it is also significant that this fundamentally ethical figuration of both women as agents of truth -- almost as the embodiment of a will or drive to truth -- insatiable, furious and relentless ('it's dark out here' says Maud … 'and I must finish this' [Healey, 2014, p. 62]) is articulated in the context of a cultural environment in which their madness is to be ignored or pathologized and this explained a way. The story…traces one failure to listen and attend to Maud after another in tandem with the increasing frequency of her 'symptoms'--moments of confusion, lapses in short term memory, aphasia, disinhibition, anger and perseveration" ("Missing Pieces" 96).

Similarly, Violet's search for Dora and "madness" is triggered by her experience in the war, as her son Douglas reveals at the end of the novel:

> 'Dora was run over by a bus, before the war…And then my dad went to France in 1940 and never came home again. That's when she got a lot worse…we'd only moved in a few weeks before those bombs were dropped. I thought she'd gone in the raid. I'm ashamed to say I almost found it a relief, but then it turned out she was living in the wreck of the house. I tried to help her, but she was so difficult. You couldn't make her see sense. She only wanted to stay in the house, bombed as it was, because Dora's dolls and her Woolworth's handbag and her *Rupert* annuals were still inside somewhere.' (270).

In the aftermath of her husband's death and traumatizing air raids, Violet's obsession with Dora's objects is what leads her to wander the streets. Like Maud, Violet's affective pull to objects of her absent loved one are perceived by the community as pathological, warranting institutionalization, as Douglas tells young Maud: "She [Sukey] told me I should send my mother away somewhere, to an institution. But I couldn't do that. It was bad enough the old house had been gone, and then my sister's things were buried beneath the rubble of the new house. I couldn't lock Mother away, too. All she ever wanted was to go home, to touch the things my sister had touched" (272). The sublimation of Violet's suffering as insanity in the community she inhabits and throughout the narrative structurally reflects the ignored and untreated experiences of women's trauma on the home front. More than "demented" or "mad," both Maud and Violet are arguably traumatized subjects, enriching the reading of *Elizabeth* as a novel that explores unmapped connections between historical trauma, post-traumatic stress, and dementia.[129] This casual web of connections serves to undermine the notion that there is a 'given' nature of Maud's dementia to be uncovered—there is no direct

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[129] "How does historical trauma experienced by specific cultural groups mediate the dementia experience?" is a question Stern and Hulko ask, calling for research that helps understand how dementia "can be shaped and embodied over the life course and within a specific socio-cultural historic context" and applied to adults who have face historical traumas such as the Holocaust, wars, and persecution due to sexual orientation and religion. See "Historical Trauma, PTSD, And Dementia: Implications For Trauma-Informed Social Work," *The Gerontologist* 56, Issue Suppl_3, 1 (2016): 311, https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1093/geront/gnw162.1270

cause or definitive cure, no diagnosis that 'solves' the text—turning readers' attention outward to broader social and historical contexts.

Highlighting sources of violence and fragmentation in the aftermath of World War II that carry into the present day, the fragmentation of the narrative into Maud's two realities reflects not only the cognitive processes of dementia, but perhaps also the manifestations of historical trauma—a possibility many authors in this dissertation have similarly grappled with. The social meanings and lived reality of Maud's dementia (and Violet's mental illness) in the novel need to be expanded to histories of modern warfare that scar the environmental landscapes and domestic relations in which these characters live. Cathy Caruth, writing about post-traumatic stress in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, provocatively suggests that "if PTSD must be understood as a pathological symptom, then it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history. The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of history that they cannot entirely possess" (5). What might it mean to read Maud as embodying "a symptom of history" without ignoring her lived reality? For Caruth "the impact it [trauma, or PTSD] has on the lives of those who live it, [is] intimately bound up with the question of truth. The problem arises not only in regard to those who listen to the traumatized, not knowing how to establish the reality of their hallucinations and dreams; it occurs rather and most disturbingly often within the very knowledge and experience of the traumatized themselves (5). Caruth's identification of a "crisis of truth" extends beyond "the question of individual cure" to how others can access "a history…whose truth there is no simple access" is perhaps productively approached through the values of person-centered dementia care, in which the reality of the person must simply be validated and listened to, not excavated for truths (6). But as the narrating protagonist of the novel, Maud emerges not as a passive "symptom of history"; her reconstruction of the past into the present in her detective work enables her to write herself *into* history as an active subject. Read this way, *Elizabeth* emerges as a work that complicatedly layers tropes of the detective story and dementia to consider issues of agency both within and without the worlds of fiction.

Overall, Maud and Violet attest to the importance of marginalized voices and nonnormative and feminine modes of knowing. Violet's cryptic attempts to tell young Maud how she witnessed Sukey's assault initially go ignored, but ultimately help Maud piece together the mystery. What also emerges as important in the novel are the importance of care and support systems through the affective strength of female care relations, dramatized between Helen and Maud, Maud and Sukey, and Maud and Elizabeth. Violet's stalking of following of Sukey and Maud, which is misunderstood by the community as insanity, is as Douglas points out merely out of a maternal desire to see her daughter again: "I think she wanted to be near Sukey. You see, she looked a bit like my sister…So do you, Maud" (271). The uncanny linkages between Sukey, Maud, and Dora, as well as old Maud and Violet, speak to novel's stress on the importance of relational identification and community between women. This is particularly important when considering the novel's centering of gendered dimensions of dementia and dementia care (Maud's son Tom is completely absent from care roles, the role of caretaking falling to Helen). When Helen jokes about having "[e]arly onset" dementia and Maud calls Helen's daughter "mad" in jest in the same scene, the novel points toward the ubiquity of stigma associated with mental illness and its gendering (218). How one's social networks will respond and care for each other in the future is one of the novel's questions. This concern that drives the novel is also intensely personal, as Healey told the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Several members of my family have, or have had, one form of dementia or another. I really wanted to explore what it might like in fiction but I didn't know how to start…I was in the car with my grandmother Nancy who said 'My friend is missing'. Her friend wasn't missing, but the remark ignited an idea." A grounding commonality of nearly all the texts this dissertation explores is the writer's personal investment in dementia as family rather than individual matter. *Elizabeth*'s exploration of the networks of social support that do or do not surround Maud and Violet stress how selfhood is sustained by one's environment and embedded practices of care.

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The epilogue of the novel is set at Elizabeth's funeral, but the final words, spoken by Maud, suggest the case is still open: "I can see they won't listen, won't take me seriously. So I must do something, I must, because Elizabeth is missing" (301). Despite discovering Sukey's body and attending Elizabeth's funeral, Maud is not done; her version of history is interminable, the trauma is ongoing. This conclusion confronts readers with a different way of understanding Maud's repeated phrase: who or what is 'missing' is now no longer only understood in the genre of the detective novel, but in the elegiac mode of a history telling. Maud's utterance emerges not so much as a sign of her forgetting, but a valid statement of her reality: as long as Maud yearns for them, Elizabeth and Sukey *are* missing—not just dead. Haunted by actual and imagined lost lives, the fixity of this reality speaks to the broader unresolvable crimes in the novel, perhaps the indeterminate long reaching effects of war on civilians. Yet what also persists is Maud's unwavering concern, her searching as an expression of care against rational thought.

The importance of care that *Elizabeth* addresses raises a question posed by anthropologist Janelle S. Taylor: "If someone cannot recognize you, can they still care about you?" (313). Writing about her mother with progressive dementia, Taylor delves into how care ties into broader questions about social and political recognition. Her article pivots on a staggering moment in which she reads her mother's shaky handwriting in the header of an old letter, listing the names of her children: "Please try to keep cares together! We will try to keep Diana, Janelle, Mike and Pat. Will try to keep the cares together" (331). Observing the letter to have been written "quite far along her path of progressive dementia," Taylor reflects on her mother's "literate misfitting":

> Mom can no longer write. If I were to show her this note today, she would not be able to read it, nor would she recognize the words as her own…At some point—struggling to order

> her thoughts and her life—my mother named us, her children, as "the cares," and exhorted herself to "try to keep the cares together!" and promised to do so…Why then should a person be cast out and abandoned, condemned to social death, and denied recognition as a friend, a person, a fellow human being, just because she shows signs of succumbing to the same forces that we know will eventually claim each one of us?…Rather than make an individual's claim to social and political "recognition" contingent on the narrowly cognitive ability to "recognize" people, words, and things, we would do well to emulate this humble, ailing individual woman's effort to hold fast to "the cares"—what she has cared about, who she has cared for and taken care of. Let us strive to hold on to "care" as something that makes life worthwhile. (332-33)

Taylor's account of her mother's "effort to hold fast to 'the cares'" of her life resonates with Maud's recursive longing for and seeking out of the missing women in her life—her refusal to close the case on Elizabeth, and by extension, Sukey. The novel concludes tasking readers to reflect on the value and meaning in the "mystery" that animates the novel and Maud's reality, one that keeps her search in motion and world alive.

Aging Futures: Feminism and Dementia in Jo Walton's Speculative Biography

In the previous section I explored how conventional generic frameworks of the detective novel and cozy mystery demand the maintenance of normative cognitive function well into the old age of their protagonists. Healey's strategic use of genre puts into relief how Maud's demented detection amplifies and challenges the gendered ableist and ageist expectations of sleuths that have preceded her. Important to Maud's success as the detective is not the end result of closing the case, but the ability to actualize the yearning she feels in her multiple realities, and the eventual social recognition received from others like Helen. As such, the life that *Elizabeth* paints of Maud is not only about the ableism, ageism, and sexism she encounters—it is also about her determination for self-worth and purpose, her drive for justice and resistance to established authority, and the relations of care and compassion that can (and need to) exist between women across time. *Elizabeth* brings to the cultural imagination of dementia a different perspective on what is valuable in life, such as the opportunity to express, share, and exercise one's desires and realities defined on one's own terms.

Building on the dialogue that *Elizabeth* opens up between feminist and disability studies through my analysis of dementia and genre, I turn to Jo Walton's *My Real Children* to elaborate on the ableism and ageism embedded in the notion of "aging well," or what I referred to in the introduction as "successful aging." Presenting readers with two alternate biographies of Patricia Cowan, *My Real Children* interrogates gendered definitions of success and happiness in aging attendant on networks of care. That the narrative of both lives is framed by Cowan's residence in a nursing home is also significant, as the novel problematizes the implication of choice in successful aging discourses and insists on the priority of care needs in society's visions of the future. Indeed, *My Real Children* is less about entertaining the cultural paranoia that dementia is an inevitable part of growing old than it is about inevitable dependency and how to accommodate it.[130] Finally I explore how through the mode of speculative (biographical) fiction, Walton paradoxically validates and empowers Cowan's sense of two alternate histories as real possibilities (not unlike the speculations of many-worlds in quantum mechanics). Reframing the culture of care surrounding dementia, the novel suggests, involves thinking outside of established criteria and imaginaries of what constitutes (un)successful biographies of aging.

Before delving into the novel, I want to elaborate on some of the critical intersections in feminist studies as well as aging studies that the discussion of *My Real Children* brings together, given the recognition it garnered with the James Tiptree, Jr. Award, named after feminist science fiction writer Alice B. Sheldon's male pseudonym.[131] Furthermore, my aim in this section is to show how

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[130] My use of the phrase "inevitable dependency" acknowledges dependency as the *sine qua non* of human experience, drawing from Eva Feder Kittay's "The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability" and Martha Albertson Fineman's *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory Of Dependency*.

[131] James Tiptree, Jr. emerged as a major figure in the male-dominated science fiction scene in the late 1960s. Tiptree won numerous coveted awards and was often likened in style to Hemingway (Silverberg xv). For over a decade, Tiptree carried on intimate correspondences in letters with well-known science fiction writers like Philip K. Dick and Ursula K. Le Guin, but never spoke to them on the telephone—his private and reclusive habits made him an object of curiosity. Shattering all readers' assumptions in 1977, Tiptree came out as "a nice old lady in McLean," Virginia—a 61-year-old woman named Alice Bradley Sheldon ("Contemporary" 351).

bringing a disability studies lens to these intersections can lend nuance to reading the narrative's exploration of a gendered consciousness and experience of aging with dementia.

At the 1985 National Women's Studies Association convention Barbara Macdonald, a pioneer in feminist aging studies, tasked her audience when she asked: "Has it never occurred to you as you build feminist theory that ageism is a central feminist issue?" (21). In the following decades Macdonald's query gained traction, evidenced by edited volumes such as Kathleen Woodward's *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, and Generations* (1999) and Toni M. Calasanti and Kathleen Slevin's *Age Matters: Realigning Feminist Thinking* (2006). In the introduction to *Feminist Formation*'s 2006 special issue on aging and ageism, Leni Marshall observed that examining the "prescriptive and negative constructs of old age" has become an important part of the feminist cultural studies agenda, but not without "serious theoretical flaws" (ix). Marshall notes that revising the concept of aging as positive has relied on youthful "values [of] *doing* over *being*," that there has still been little done to challenge "the negative valuations of advanced aging" (*ibid.*). This critical hurdle is owed to the ubiquitous and privileged cultural position "successful aging" has assumed as the only way to age well.

Developed by John Rowe and Robert Kahn, the conceptual framework of successful aging in their words, "encompass[es] three distinct domains: avoidance of disease and disability, maintenance of high physical and cognitive function, and sustained engagement in social and productive activities" ("Successful Aging" 439).[132] Care in this context emphasizes the promotion of "active and productive" lifestyles and maximizing "high cognitive and physical function" (*ibid.* 438, 434). I agree with Clara W. Berridge and Marty Martinson that the criteria for "success" in aging "based primarily on the avoidance of disease, disability, and functional loss sets up the vast majority

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[132] The term "successful aging" first appeared in Robert Havighurst's 1961 article in *The Gerontologist*, intended to challenge the dominant narrative of old age as loss, decline, and illness. Since the 1980s, owing to Rowe and Kahn's MacArthur Foundation-funded study on aging and subsequent landmark book *Successful Aging* (1998), successful aging has persisted as the dominant paradigm in gerontological research (See "Introduction" Lamb et al.); on gerontology and feminism see J. Dianne Garner, "Feminism and Feminist Gerontology," *Journal of Women & Aging* 11.2-3 (1999) 3-12.

of the older adult population for failure—a majority of whom are women, and in particular, women of color" (85). Needless to say, Rowe and Kahn's popular model of aging has received ample critique from scholars in aging studies and feminist studies for constructing a binary between the "ill-derly" and "well-derly," for being "expressions of the same ageist culture…two sides of the same judgmental coin…signifying that it is not okay to be old" (Lamb et al. 13). Though many have critiqued the successful aging model as ageist due to its emphasis on maintaining lifestyles and activities associated with youth and ability instead of other possibilities and goals, the intersection between ageism, gender, and *ableism* is still an emergent intersection of critical exploration.[133]

The medical model of successful aging, after all, presents growing old "successfully" and becoming disabled as (mutually exclusive) choices, as Rowe and Kahn proclaim in their book: "successful aging is dependent on individual choices and behaviors. It can be attained through individual choice and effort" (37).[134] Hailee Yoshizaki-Gibbons rejects this model with insights from disability and queer theory, coining the term "compulsory youthfulness," which

> highlights the ways in which ableism and ageism intersect within successful aging discourses to falsely present both being old and being disabled as choices, rather than the result of biological changes and cultural, political, economic, and social structures. As a result, old disabled people are labeled as failures for aging "unsuccessfully" and perceived as responsible for their own vulnerability. (2)[135]

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[133] See Clemens Tesch-Römer, Hans-Werner Wahl, "Toward a More Comprehensive Concept of Successful Aging: Disability and Care Needs," *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, Volume 72.2 2017: 310–318 and Christine Overall "Old Age and Ageism, Impairment and Ableism: Exploring the Conceptual and Material Connections." *NWSA Journal* 18.1, 2006: 126-137.

[134] As they elaborate, "Our concept of success connotes more than a happy outcome; it implies achievement rather than mere good luck…To succeed in something requires more than falling into it; it means having desired it, planned it, worked for it. All these factors are critical to our view of aging, which, even in this era of human genetics, we regard as largely under the control of the individual." (37)

[135] Gibbons elaborates, "Successful aging and compulsory youthfulness place the onus on the individual by framing old age and disability as choices and preventable states of being. Thus, if people cannot age while 'avoiding disease and disability,' 'maintaining high physical and cognitive function' and having 'active engagement with life,' it is the result of their own lack of effort and poor choices they have made. This ideology reflects the neoliberal campaign to 'limit the state's responsibility to provide social and other supports for elders and people with disabilities' (Martinson & Berridge, 2015, p. 63). Hence, the movement to lessen government spending and eradicate state support for old and disabled people is tied to the belief that becoming old and disabled is the result of individual (in)action. Consequently, compulsory youthfulness creates a structural and societal context in which old and disabled individuals are blamed for their failure to age without disease or disability and their subsequent dependence on the welfare state" (12).

My Real Children is poised at the intersection of these discussions, exploring the limits of successful aging as an individual responsibility by framing Cowan's life "choices" as culminating in her dementia. The novel raises the question of how dementia intervenes in conversations about valuing old age without leveraging ableism (Berridge and Martinson). It is also a literary exploration of how a more inclusive concept of successful aging is required—one that stresses supportive structures for aging *with* rather than against disability and care needs—to promote more desirable aging futures (Clemens and Wahl). As a work of speculative fiction *My Real Children* is aptly poised to investigate these possibilities—as the narrative suspends the cultural "rules of reality" (Schalk 62), creating space for imagining the alternate realities of aging with dementia as both loss and processes of self-discovery and affirmation.

The narrative of *My Real Children* begins and ends in a nursing home, and like in *Elizabeth*, 89-year-old Cowan is surrounded by paper—notes written by nurses defining her state of existence, at any given time, along a spectrum of confusion and literate capacity:

> "Confused. Less confused. Very confused." That last was written frequently, sometimes abbreviated by the nurses to just "VC"…Her name was on the notes too—just her first name, Patricia, as if in old age she were demoted to childhood and denied both the dignity of surname and title and the familiarity of the form of her name she preferred. The notes reminded her of a school report with the little boxes and fixed categories into which it was so difficult to express the real complexity of any situation. "Spelling atrocious." (9)

Similar to Maud in Healey's narrative, the primacy of Cowan's dementia is established in very first page as a *doing* by others—enacted through daily sociomaterial and ordering practices.[136] Reflecting

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[136] My claim that dementia is enacted in care and diagnostic practices stems from Annemarie Mol's concept of "multiple ontologies" in which she argues disease is not a singular or stable entity but a series of enactments of "doings" from various actors—from medical instruments to doctor-patient interviews—through which the apparent unity of a disease as an object comes into being. See *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). For scholars who have applied Mol to thinking about Alzheimer's and dementia see Cecilia Åsberg and Jennifer Lum, "Picturizing the scattered ontologies of Alzheimer's disease: Towards a materialist feminist approach to visual technoscience studies" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17(4) 2010: 323-345 and Ingunn Moser, "Dementia and the Limits to Life: Anthropological Sensibilities, STS Interferences, and Possibilities for Action in Care" *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 36.5, (2011): 704-722.

on her past from the dubious vantage point of living with senile dementia, Cowan senses she has perhaps lived two disparate lives:

> If there were two worlds.
> If there were two worlds, then what caused her to slide between them?…She had four children, or three…She could remember things that couldn't simultaneously be true. She remembered Kennedy being assassinated and she remembered him declining to run again after the Cuban missile exchange. They couldn't both have happened, yet she remembered them both happening. Had she made a choice that could have gone two ways and thereafter had two lives? Two lives that both began in Twickenham in 1926 and both ended here in this nursing home in 2014 or 2015, whichever it was? (17)

Framed by the nursing home, the dual biography of Cowan's two lives unfolds in alternating chapters, beginning at the moment she either accepts or refuses her marriage proposal from Mark, a failing scholar at Oxford. The Cowan who marries becomes "Trish" and lives an unfulfilled family and professional life restricted by patriarchal ideologies of white female domesticity and motherhood; although hers is a life that bears witness to progressive social change and an era of world peace. In contrast, the other Cowan flourishes as "Pat," finding purpose, happiness, and refuge in her same-sex partnership with Bee even as global political conflict and nuclear warfare continues to transpire after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While the two narratives explore liberating visions of gender and sexuality, the oppression of patriarchy and imperial policies (of war, occupation, and assassination) through the "choice" of saying yes or no to a marriage, that freedom and fantasy of choice feels circumscribed by the fate of Cowan's dementia: "She had made choices. Thinking about that she felt the strange doubling, the contradictory memories, as if she had two histories that both led her to this point, this nursing home" (14).

Dramatizing two worlds arising out of Cowan's dementia, *My Real Children* echoes a reminder posed by science fiction scholar, writer, and activist adrienne maree brown: "We hold so many worlds inside us. So many futures. It is our radical responsibility to share these worlds, to plant them in the soil of our society as seeds for the type of justice we want and need" (279). I thus dwell on the importance of Cowan's experience of multiple worlds with dementia as the focal point of

Walton's social critique. While Walton uses the marriage ultimatum as the narrative's pivot point to explore the conditions and consequences of choice as they relate to gender norms, I want to draw attention to how dementia operates as an essential motive force in enabling, if not deepening, the text's critique of those norms. Structuring the form and premise of the novel, Cowan's dementia must also be read within the context of the hybrid genre that deploys it. Similar to previous authors' work I have examined, the use of dementia in Walton's narrative opens up to different social and relational possibilities, pathways through time and space, and bends genre and established tropes. As I explore more in the later section, science and fantasy fiction are genres rife with "deviant and impaired bodies," although those depictions have not always been fair or positive (Allan 7). All too often the escapism of fantasy and the promise of science's miracles bait writers into the trap of showcasing a "magical cure," as Jane Stemp argues, "science fiction writers, however willing to cast a satirical eye on earlier notions of 'progress', seem reluctant to abandon the hope that a perfected medical system will yet cure all the ills of the world" (n.p.). As such, novels rely on the character with dementia as "narrative prosthesis"—to further a dystopian or apocalyptic plot based on the search for or fantasy of a cure (Mitchell and Snyder). Examples of characters include "Alzheimer's survivor" Robert Gu in Vernor Vinge's *Rainbows End* (2006) and the first dementia "returnee" or person to be cured in Karen Kaplan's *Curiosity Seekers* (2017). And as Susan Schultz notes in "Alzheimer's, Aliens, and the Cure of the Avant-garde," "[s]cience fiction is often scary, terrifying. What is more horrifying than memory loss, identity diffusion?" (n.p.). It is no surprise dementia has become a popular, over-determined subject in contemporary speculative fiction "as an unmanageable and unsustainable burden intrinsic to the nature of the condition itself rather than to the ways in which we might manage care, organise our lives, conceive of our communitarian responsibilities to each other or even embrace the possibility of living and dying well with an impairment" (Burke "Imagining" 3).[137]

But even as *My Real Children* grapples frankly with the Western fear of aging in contemporary culture it surprisingly neither engages with the possibility of nor the desire for dementia's cure. It is this absence of a hypothetical cure that is perhaps Walton's most subversive point of all. Indeed, the novel does not use dementia as a marker of an apocalyptic or horrific fate. Instead, the novel affirms the validity of Cowan's confusion as a convention of mental time travel, translating her dual lives into a lucid chronological narrative through a realist tone (matter-of-fact third-person reporting) and crossings into subgenres of biographical fiction and alternate history. That *Publisher's Weekly* praised Walton for keeping Cowan's character "deeply and recognizably herself" is significant here, for it reveals how genres help make certain experiences and identities legible, as well as how dementia in fiction can motivate certain generic maneuvers that expand the discourse surrounding it (Grossman).

Ultimately, the novel's chosen narrative framework and thematic handling of dementia deserves particular attention because it is integral to Walton's exploration of the aging female body within (hetero)reproductive temporalities and domestic and institutional spaces. *My Real Children* explores the limits of successful aging as choice through its presentation of the intertwined, gendered, heteronormative, and able-bodied expectations that structure both of Cowan's lives differently. As in *Elizabeth*, the protagonist with dementia inhabits time differently, and for Cowan, that provides the possibilities for resistance and happiness.

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[137] Lucy Burke's article, "Imagining A Future Without Dementia: Fictions of Regeneration and the Crises of Work and Sustainability" focuses on "popular genre texts" (science fiction) that are specifically invested in the promise of dementia's cure. Burke argues, "Read against the grain, these fictional narratives reveal the systemic violence, contradictions and pressures that underpin the kind of economic and political arguments that ask us to imagine that a future without dementia is the answer to the social and economic challenges presented by an ageing population" (2).

The Queer, Crip Time of Aging with Dementia

The future-with-dementia looms in *My Real Children* as a multigenerational issue that is specifically maternal, as both versions of Cowan (Trish and Pat) fear ending up like their mother ("She watched her mother's decline and knew what lay ahead" [11]). But in both narratives, Cowan's mother dies due to a chill and not dementia, avoiding a storyline that would reinforce the militaristic notion of dementia as her fateful "killer." The greater scourge in the text turns out to be the violence of patriarchy and normative expectations of motherhood that uphold it. Trish and Pat conform and deviate, respectively, from the ideal mother traditionally envisioned as "repronormatively" heterosexual, selflessly homebound, and financially reliant on a husband (who is also the father of the children).[138] But the onset of senile dementia disrupts both women's reliability to meet another crucial part of the ideal: a mother "always has a connection with her children" (Green 127). As in *A Tale* and *Dementia Blog*, relational "connection" becomes redefined in *My Real Children*, and the text's exploration of the meaning of children, gender norms, and dementia are intertwined in the process.

The two narratives of *My Real Children* set readers up to make an interpretive choice: as a woman, which is the life best (read: happiest) lived? Reviewers typically approach the novel with rhetorical questions such as, "Would you rather have a slightly sad life in a happy world, or a happy life in a world on the brink of disaster?" (Newitz). *The Guardian* reviewer Gwyneth Jones posed a similar question specific to the challenges surrounding feminism: "Are women who grasp at personal happiness betraying the cause [of feminism]? Was it somehow right for Trish to say yes, and endure that horrible marriage? Are women who evade the struggle for gender equality letting the world go to hell?" Walton's novel raises more questions than it answers, and I want to focus on how the dual life history Walton tells through the two worlds of Cowan's dementia is central to the

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[138] Katherine Franke's term "repronormativity" refers to the ways women are incentivized to bear and raise children and the naturalized treatment of these activities as inevitable. See "Theorizing Yes: An Essay on Feminism, Law, and Desire," *Columbia Law Review* 101.1 (2001): 181-208.

question of happiness underlining *My Real Children.*

Happiness, Sara Ahmed argues, is contingent upon how well one aligns with the prescriptive timetable of a heteronormative life course:

> Happiness scripts could be understood as straightening devices, ways of aligning bodies with what is already lined up…The "whole world," it might seem, depends on subjects being directed in the right way, toward the right kind of things. To deviate is always to risk a world even if you don't always lose the world you risk. Queer and feminist histories are the histories of those who are willing to risk the consequences of deviation. (91)

Dementia manifests as two life trajectories in the pursuit of happiness, and it also places both of Cowan's worlds (which includes the relationships with and the memory of her children) at risk. In short, to read Walton's exploration of gendered scripts of happiness one has to consider the queer, crip time of aging with dementia. Readers are forced to consider the place dementia has in the conception of a happy future, and how dementia is used to critique deviations from "happiness scripts" and gender norms in productive ways.

Building on Ahmed, Linn Sanberg and Barbara Marshall's work in "Queering Aging Futures" is instructive here. Their analysis of news media and pharmaceutical advertisements highlights how ill health and disability become markers for the tragic end of relationships, particularly when images of successful aging and life are positioned in relation to "the imagery of reproductive success with happy older adults consistently positioned in relation to children and happy intimacies with grandchildren, pointing to (hetero)kinship as that which makes later life meaningful and positive" (3). To queer aging futures, Sanberg and Marshall insist there must also be "a simultaneous cripping of aging futures, constantly interrogating the role disability plays in the production of 'failed' aging futures" (5). As the title of Walton's novel suggests, the narrative foregrounds Cowan's cognitive impairment as an inability to recognize who her "real" children and grandchildren are, which in turn produces the notion of a failed, unsuccessful, unhappy future. Indeed, for Sanberg and Marshall, the threat of disability "to successful aging futures figures most clearly in the case of dementia":

> Parallel to the monstrosity of the older gay man's disjoint with futurity, the person with dementia emerges as monstrous partly because of her lack of—or disruption of—futures. If the success of hetero-aging futures lies partly in its links to generativity, then dementia—through loss of memory—threatens to disrupt that generativity and represents as such a form of queer crip temporality. Thinking of the term 'familiar' as connoting both family and the well-known and expected, dementia disrupts the familiar both in the sense of disorientation, in that we do not know where we will end up, and a troubling of generativity in the heteronormative life course. The specter of dementia is fearful because it proposes an unknown and muddy future as well as a lost past, and this also threatens hetero-reproductive temporalities. (5)

Dementia in *My Real Children* similarly disrupts these two meanings of the "familiar." Dementia operates thematically and structurally, splitting the narrative to enable Walton to explore the contingency of not knowing "where we will end up" through an illusion of two definitive choices to make. But Cowan's opportunity to choose is bound by the fact that the identities she has to choose from must revolve around the life course of having children. And dementia also threatens the notion of generativity as it disrupts the "happy intimacies" between Cowan and her children. In fact, the novel begins with the unhappy premise that children are the source of Cowan's confusion.

> It was when she thought of her children that she was most truly confused. Sometimes she knew with solid certainty that she had four children, and five more stillbirths…At other times she knew equally well that she has two children, both by caesarean section late in her life after she had given up hope…She recognized them and felt that mother's ache. She was not yet as confused as her own mother had been at last when she had not known her, had wept and fled from her and accused her of terrible crimes. (10-11)

Cowan's relationship to her two worlds and her sense of identity is restricted within a generational narrative as well as a narrative of reproduction. The passage points less to the fatalism of dementia than it does to how few choices Cowan had that did not involve children. The promise of happiness through children constitutes a powerful narrative in *My Real Children*, one that organizes both Trish and Pat's understandings of what a good life and aging future should be. But the two-story structure of the novel that Cowan's dementia facilitates makes visible how (un)happiness is shaped less by her disability and more by the constraints of gender roles and patriarchal expectations of conjugality, sacrifice, and childbearing. In fact, it is only in the moment of Cowan's dementing memory that the idea of two lives and the freedom of options appears real.[139]

The narrative strand of Trish's world explores the myth of marital happiness based on heterosexual expectations of reproduction. Her children are born out of non-consensual sex. Almost immediately after the birth of Trish and Mark's first child, Mark uses the dictatorial 'we' to tell Trish, in an autocratic manner, "We want more children," to which Trish replies, "We do" with her "heart sinking" (79). For Trish, "It was not the birth she dreaded but the conception" (79). Trish's responses to Mark's advances are unsettling ("Please, no, she said when he came in" [80]), giving readers a picture of motherhood that is built on forced intimacy and the pressures of bearing children at all costs (Trish is told over and over she must forego her teaching career in order to rear children). Bearing children is also a literal threat to Trish's life that Mark ignores: "The doctor told Mark that he was endangering Tricia's life by insisting on more children. All the same time he persisted [to have sex with her], and she had another stillbirth" (98). Furthermore, Trish contradicts the expectations of the "ideal" mother's unconditional love, expressing a certain disconnect from her children from the very onset of the novel: "Even now when she saw their faces, impossibly middle-aged, she felt that same burden of unconditional loving tugging at her, their needs and problems, and her inability to keep them safe and give them what they need" (11). This disconnect is circled back to at the end of the novel as she reflects on not knowing her children again: "although she'd never been away from them except when she was in the hospital giving birth, she found it difficult to understand how she had come to be in this position" (110).

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[139] Speculative fiction writer Amal El-Mohtar's NPR review gestures toward the importance of literature's imaginings of such possibilities. Reflecting on her grandmother's experience with Alzheimer's, she comments on *My Real Children*: "I won't say it's [Cowan's experience] comforting per se, but it is, perhaps, a support of a kind, to think that in her last days my grandmother too might have reflected on more than one personal history — at least one in a different, happier, easier world — and that she, too, might have hovered on the cusp of a choice of which one to keep." To imagine the later stages of another's life as imbued with meaning and possibility is an important step in challenging the cultural equation of aging—with and without dementia—with social death.

In Trish's narrative, patriarchal ideals foreclose her opportunities to pursue satisfaction through her own career and the expectations of "reproductive success" come at the expense of her health and happiness. The deployment of dementia, though, provides readers with an alternate world. Dementia offers Cowan a means to live in a counterpoint world to the life of Trish. In this life Pat and Bee each bear the children of their friend Michael and raise them together, inherently challenging the heterosexual nuclear family, while the process of conceiving and legally adopting each other's children pose a challenge to the heteronormative status quo. As Laura Mamo reminds us in her work, while relationships like Pat and Bee's may reinforce the traditional family form in some ways, it nonetheless "trouble[s] the normal" (6).

Pat's subversively happy life also troubles the notion that dementia is solely a source of unhappiness in an aging life. As Pat's life unfolds over the backdrop of "yet another assassination of the president in the US," a war between Uruguay and Brazil that is "threatened to go nuclear" and widespread military injustice around the globe, the forgetting of dementia becomes almost a pardon for Pat (273). As Pat's son Philip puts it, when Pat can't remember the news, "That's your memory being merciful" (304). And in response to having to leave Florence for the last time toward the end of Bee's life with cancer, Pat admits, "I hope I forget" (293).

Using dementia as part of a speculative dual world making, Walton leaves readers with no easy choice as to which one is better, no definitive answer of what a successful aging future looks like. But it does give us a vision that dementia is not a non-future, but a present made up of futures past. Similar to *Elizabeth*, My *Real Children* speculates on dementia as an opening into ways of living otherwise, outside of the notion of a singular reality. It is a vision that recalls Andrew Hostetler's definition of a queer vision, one that is "not beholden to specific narratives of the past," but gestures toward an "always provisional imagined future informed by the multiplicity of present lived realities"

(419). Narrating the queer, crip time of Cowan's dementia and her two realities creates a multilogue that rewrites the past in multiple ways, a past that centers the perspectives and possibilities of aging.

Real-izing Alternate and Accessible Worlds

My Real Children comments on the realities of aging and dementia care through the affordances of speculative fiction, namely its conventions of rationality and reasonableness—what Patrick Brantlinger refers to as the genre's commitment to the "realism of the future" (30). By framing of Cowan's sense of two worlds through speculative fiction, the novel paradoxically rationalizes, even legitimizes, the ostensibly "unreal" nature of dementia's alternate worlds. Such is the power of genre, building on a point Sami Schalk makes in *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*: "Since speculative fiction includes stories in the future, other worlds, altered pasts, and altered present periods, this genre can shift, challenge, and play on what readers expect of bodyminds and reveal how such expectations shape definitions of (dis)ability, race, and gender" (18). Schalk addresses how black women's speculative fiction in particular challenges the "rules of reality—particularly the assumption that there is only a single reality" to deconstruct able-mindedness, noting that "people who experience realities considered dramatically unlike the realities of the majority are labeled and treated differently, depending on their race, gender, and (dis)ability statuses" (62). Though Walton's novel is focused on the experiences of a white, lower-middle class character, it does point to how *age* is also a key intersectional category. Cowan's experience of multiple realities is read by nurses as symptomatic of pathology because she is "old." The novel helps readers resist this interpretive trap, however, because the tropes of speculative fiction work to normalize and make credible Cowan's perception of two lives, carrying ethical implications. I do not mean to say Walton's novel implies there is something inherently science fictional about having age-related dementia, but rather, the novel serves to disarm the incredulity of readers, and hence may serve to alter societal perceptions.

Rather than choose one or the other, the end of the novel affirms Cowan's experience of multiple realities as a decidedly real possibility: "How many worlds were there? One? Two? An infinite number? Was there a world where she could have both happiness and peace?…Now or never, Trish or Pat, peace or war, loneliness or love? She wouldn't have been the person her life had made her if she could have made any other answer" (316-7). This sense of realism is accomplished through what critics have pointed out to be the trope of many-worlds or multiverses inspired by quantum theory, as Lev Grossman writes:

> "*My Real Children* is a bit like a novel written from the point of view of Schrödinger's cat, except that instead of a cat we have a smart, sympathetic Englishwoman named Patricia, and she's not alive and dead, she's alive twice—she lives two parallel lives, in two distinct worlds, both of which are apparently equally real. While the premise of *My Real Children* is science fictional, its tone is that of literary realism." (*Publisher's Weekly*)

The crossover between literary imaginings of memory impairment and quantum mechanics by way of Schrödinger's cat also takes place in the epilogue to *A Tale for the Time Being*, in which Ruth ruminates on the "mutually unknowable, web of many worlds"—and how "not-knowing keeps all the possibilities open. It keeps all the worlds alive" (415, 402).[140] The foundational uncertainty of quantum mechanics' conjectures works aptly alongside Walton's exploration of Cowan's experience of two realities to achieve the sense of "realism" Grossman points out.

Probing the "literary realism" Grossman attributes to the novel further, I want to highlight that elements of the biographical novel are also working within the alternate history framework and genre of science fiction/fantasy, manifesting in a hybrid literary expression: a "speculative biography" of dementia. The biographical lends the novel a sense of the referential, enhancing the

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[140] Ozeki writes in *A Tale for the Time Being*, "you are plural. You can't inexact and talk to your other yous, or even know about your other existences in other worlds, because you can't remember…Could this explain her lousy memory?" (398)

authenticity and plausibility of Cowan's experience. This is held in conscious tension with Hayden White's consideration of historical narratives as "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (82). Cowan's speculative biography underlines how all historical and biographical narratives are essentially 'fictional'; for Cowan, "real life" and fiction is interchangeable, an irresolvable ambiguity that captures the constructed nature of all life stories.

The realist mode of the biographical Walton employs on one hand rehabilitates Cowan, privileging a rational voice that tells a narrative in a recognizably coherent and linear manner. In this way the novel reinforces "societal expectations regarding the dementia patient's performance and productivity [that] impose successful narrative articulation as central to the perception of identity, social assertion and self." (Zimmerman 21). On the other hand, the legibility it bestows Cowan's perception of two lives does the work of destigmatizing dementia as each world becomes "real" to the reader as a viable reality. That the "cure" for dementia is not sought is striking for a novel in which the cures for AIDS and leukemia have been found. Instead, dementia remains at both the beginning and the end—the frame narrative performs to readers that aging and forgetting are inevitable parts of the human condition—and the stories we tell—and so are the disabilities that may come with it. *My Real Children* thus shifts the priority of discussion away from cure and toward access and ethical obligations of care. As Pat says comfortingly, "Life always comes down to bedpans…But it doesn't matter when there's love as well" (304).

The narratives of either Cowan are not intent on finding the cure for dementia or romanticizing it as an epistemological perspective. Instead, they tend to the realities of aging, and by doing so Walton mobilizes a critique of aging individuals' lack of autonomy in institutionalized settings. Both Trish and Pat grapple with the ideas and impairments of getting old. Trish "didn't like to think of herself as old, still less old and senile" (279). Pat "became deaf and needed hearing aids, which were one more barrier to communication and one more thing for her to constantly lose" (309). But for how often both narratives emphasize "[o]ld age is terrifying" and "senility is the worst of all" (160), the novel avoids any turns toward promises of immortality (i.e. longevity and freedom from aging), one of science fiction's most conventional motifs (Clute and Nicholls). Instead, Walton keeps a realist eye on how Trish and Pat's anxieties of aging are caused and exacerbated by the lack of resources and loss of agency in the nursing home environment. In other words, *My Real Children* provides a glimpse into the institutional and structural production of vulnerability as a part of aging.

As Trish and Pat "come of age" (defined by their proximity to nursing home care), Walton concludes the novel on how the physiological realities of aging and age-related impairment are made worse by insufficient regard for assistive technology in institutionalized settings. The aged Trish for example relies on a Macintosh computer to "make up for not being able to remember," using the Google application that helps her "fill the holes" of her memory (300). As this dialogue with one of her daughters shows, this important part of her daily life is bound to be taken away:

> The worse thing about going into the home was they wouldn't let her take the Mac. "I need it, I need it more than anything else," she said…"It helps me remember things," she begged. "My pills, I'll never remembering my blood pressure pills without the Mac." (298)…"You won't be able to go online. You won't be able to use Google or email. What did you use Google for anyway?"…"To remember things." Trish said with all the dignity she could manage, though she was starting to cry. (300)

These simple, seemingly inconsequential exchanges between Trish and her daughters capture how Walton subverts the science fiction/fantasy trope of immortality by instead focusing on some of the very real vulnerabilities nursing home residents in Cowan's world face. While the invocation of Google may sound far from futuristic for a contemporary audience, "Google was what Trish had wanted for years, the ability to search for something she had forgotten" (280). Google is integral to Trish's sense of well-being, a technology that is not a "cure" for dementia but an essential nonmedical assistive technology. That Google will be taken away from Trish is an understated example of a socially disabling practice experienced in institutionalized settings.

This concern with access is paralleled in Pat's narrative after Bee loses her legs during a city bombing and begins to "[devour] everything she could find on assisted technology for the handicapped" (215). Trish's preoccupation with Google and Bee's observations of the inaccessible landscape of Florence ("No ramps. All those cobbles. No toilets" [217]) accrue in the novel perhaps as banal details to readers in a work of science fiction/fantasy. However, together they present readers not with any magical cure but a realistic, achievable vision of foregrounding accessibility as a means for how societies can hold space for aging and disabled populations.

What does it mean, then, that ultimately both women end up with the same fate: in an inadequate assisted living facility, lacking accessible technology, and empathic care? In the end, "she was just an old woman with memory problems. Or maybe two old women with memory problems" (315). Does the structure of the novel merely reinforce the patroiophobia surrounding dementia, reinscribing Cowan as the inevitable victim, in which the futurity of having children is possibly the only redemption? This is indeed one of the criticisms leveled at *My Real Children*. One reviewer from *The Guardian* lamented, "Our heroine can only conclude, it seems, that the state of the world doesn't really matter to women – having children makes up for everything." This critique that the novel reinforces a script of happiness that privileges reproduction might be complicated by taking into consideration that the reliable existence of Cowan's children is destabilized by her own dementia and the subsequent split narrative. Walton keeps ambiguous who Cowan's "real children" are—"Then she thought about her children. Which were her real children?…Only one set of them could possibly be real, but which? She loved them all, and there was no real difference in the quality of her love for them" (314). Rather than stress the objective fact of who her biological children are, the novel speaks to the creation of life as narrative, or multiple narratives, as that which gives meaning to life based on imagination; narrative offers Cowan an 'escape,' not unlike the ends of creative storytelling in person-centered care. Through the suspension of disbelief that fantasy/science fiction requires, the novel deemphasizes ties of biological kinship, instead privileging a relationship rooted in *feeling* in the present similar to what authors like Healey and Schultz have also addressed. Just as *Elizabeth* concludes with Elizabeth still missing, *My Real Children* ends on the openness of both worlds: "whichever way she chose she'd break her heart to lose her children. All of them were her real children" (316). Cowan's consolation in the end is perhaps not actual children per se, but the freedom of imagination accompanying the narrative choices made possible by her dementia.

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Keeping with the previous texts this dissertation has explored, *My Real Children* resists the mainstream discourse of dementia as the defining crisis of the contemporary era. Instead, *My Real Children* focuses on the crises of environmental desecration, resource exhaustion, and nuclear and military violence that both produce disability and affect populations as they age. These crises constitute the backdrop of the novel, particularly Pat's life. As Bee expresses to Pat,

> If you like I'll say we're totally doomed—I'm dying and you're going senile, and I think I have the best of it. But what good does that do? Might as well live while we can…I'm not angry with you. I'm angry with the cancer, with the stupid Americans who had to retaliate with an H-bomb and no thought about the winds and who they were hurting, with the equally stupid Russians who thought they could get respect by taking out Miami, and with the Indians and the Chinese…We've only got one habitable planet and it's so fragile, and we keep on screwing it up. Dropping nukes and burning oil. That's what makes me angry, not your infirmity. (289-290)

The inexhaustible violence and turmoil Cowan lives through serves to highlight the illusory nature of choice in unrelentingly precarious worlds. *My Real Children* untethers readers from the discourse of dementia as societal threat and pulls them into contemplating the shared, pressing realities of military, environmental, and global violence. Cowan is a subject of "profound vulnerability" produced by circumstances out of her control similar to characters in *Elizabeth*, and both novels stress the importance of recognizing the humanity and perspectives of their characters, the necessity of listening to their realities, and engaging issues of access and care. But also, one must consider the power relations of gender, race, and class that play out in the worlds characters like Cowan and

Maud inhabit. What would have happened to Maud, on the night of her arrest wandering through the streets, if she were not a white woman of the British middle-class? Or Cowan were she not ever given the privileges of nursing home care? How might these worlds have been shaped differently?

Overall, by using dementia as its speculative framework, *My Real Children* invites readers to imagine the possibility of a kind of life history often cast aside as unreliable, one that is multiple and fundamentally unknowable. Systematically traversing the two worlds that arise from Cowan's senile dementia, Walton's narrative is less about capturing an apocalyptic vision of the chaos and confusion of memory loss and aging than it is normalizing that experience by using it to produce two believable, readable versions of the 20th century. The novel stages listening to and recognizing Cowan's two lives as its ethical crux, for we all live identities that are in some ways plural. Using Trish/Pat to reflect back on readers, the novel echoes an insistence Simone de Beauvoir makes in *The Coming of Age*, that "[w]e must stop cheating: the whole meaning of our life is in question in the future that is waiting for us. If we do not know what we are going to be, we cannot know what we are: let us recognize ourselves in this old man or in that old woman" (5). Walton's novel offers an opportunity to reflect on how one might recognize oneself in the future(s) of aging subjects.

CODA

Dementia Care Beyond the Page

It's the 1950s and 60s and a Seaburg jukebox plays in a diner with Formica tables. Portraits of Fifties screen stars like James Dean and Audrey Hepburn decorate the walls, while a 1959 Ford Thunderbird sits outside. This is Glenner Town Square: an 8,500 square foot indoor community with 12 storefronts and 24 buildings, rotary telephones and black and white televisions. Built in collaboration with the San Diego Opera Scenic studio, Glenner Town Square is the U.S.'s first large-scale "dementia village" (Kragen).[141] The $3 million nursing home alternative is also the largest U.S. investment in reminiscence therapy: a multi-sensorial approach to care that involves triggering the positive, typically intact, long-term memories of people with dementia with the aid of props and cues from the past—designs that are anticipated to be updated with each coming generation.

Reminiscence therapy's emphasis on the sharing of stories is less about soliciting historically accurate accounts of the past than it is about the process of facilitating communication, an approach that stands in radical contrast to "reality orientation" discussed in Chapter 4. With this historical context in mind, the premise of facilities like Glenner—the pairing of reminiscence therapy with the creation of an "actual" historical environment—indexes a promising shift in societal attitudes and accommodations that recognize and validate the lived, plural realities that people with dementia may inhabit.

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[141] Designed after Hogewek, a 24/7 residential care town in the Netherlands. Many U.S. and U.K. memory-care units and nursing homes are making nostalgic environments or "nostalgia rooms" designed to look like they're from its residents' childhoods, e.g. Ohio's Chagrin Valley.

But places like Glenner are not panaceas, as these privately-owned "dementia villages" are financially unaffordable to a vast majority of families. They are also heavy-handedly Anglo-Western-centric, making them potentially ill-equipped to accommodate racial and ethnic disparities or incompatible with non-Western values and practices (my grandfather would certainly have not felt "at home" in Glenner). Reconciling reminiscence therapy with different cultures of caring remains a project under construction. Nevertheless, the premise behind investment in these worlds and their "inhabitants" (rather than 'patients') offers a counternarrative to unmercifully negative mainstream media portrayals of dementia and Alzheimer's "alternative reality," which is construed as no reality at all. One journalist notes that places like Glenner are imaginative models for aging-friendly cities, spaces "adapted for a vulnerable population," built around life rather than death, operating as a kind of "simulacrum of an inclusive space" (Hurley). Places like Glenner also highlight how built environments are never neutral but typically designed privileging able-bodied and -minded subjects. Operating as "real-life time capsules" (*Inside Edition*), these fictitious spaces attempt to align the incongruency between the person with dementia's sense of reality and the physical present-day reality as is normatively perceived.

As in all the texts *Entangled Stories* has explored, "alternative reality villages" rely on the creation of generic worlds, as one *Atlantic* journalist calls attention to in their description of "dementia villages" as "*Truman Show*-style nursing homes," referring to the science fictional feel of staged realities. But Glenner and the works I've discussed also speak to the way genre and generic arrangements (material and literary) reproduce and enact our realities—not only facilitating communication and interactions and constituting the "scene of action," but the actors themselves (Carpenter n.p.). Borrowing terms from material feminism, the world-making of Glenner is premised on a type of care that is attentive to the world as shifting intra-actions of becoming (Barad); in other words, dementia is not a fixed diagnosis but enacted through its entanglements with human and non-human actors, technologies, and material surroundings. This approach shifts the "afflictive dimensions of dementia" away from the individual and to "effects of configurations shaping everyday life…the collective in which they take part" (Lotherington). As this last chapter's particular focus on genre fiction has shown, literature can raise these relational dynamics to critical consciousness, making them more apparent to readers by breaking and playing with the constraints of the generic world in which their characters with dementia reside. In this way they speak to the assertions Charles Bazerman, building on Carolyn Miller, makes on the promise of genre: "Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact" (19). For this reason, critical attention to dementia representation in the context of genre and form remains important for contesting the interlocking socio-cultural norms of disability, aging, and gender, and urging more humanizing and diverse perspectives and practices in our shared worlds.

More than serving a discussion exclusively surrounding dementia, *Entangled Stories* contributes to discussion regarding the material, social, and environmental factors that shape the experience of plural, fluctuating realities that all aging and contingent bodies and minds may eventually experience. It broadens the purview of (literary) disability studies to include the discussion of dementia and aging. Furthermore, as many of the chapters have demonstrated, representing dementia is deployed toward putting forth an anti-imperialist stance, recognizing the lingering temporalities of injustice, and invoking often unheard voices. Thus, these revisionary narratives of dementia have carryover importance for thinking about inclusive and just futures in the broadest sense.

As temporal possibilities multiply in contemporary culture, the conventional sense of linear chronology imposed on bodies and minds becomes more apparently inadequate in its exclusion of a wide range of experiences felt by disabled and other minoritized groups. Taking seriously radically different notions and experiences of embodied time is an urgent task in activism and critical inquiry. Exploring the subjectivity of dementia, the works herein perform this work; they take readers to previously unimaginable juxtapositions of time and space in order to look productively at and from unjust pasts to alternative and inclusive futures. Putting pressure on our assumptions about the body, time, and what narrative should look like, revisionary narratives use disability to imagine different temporalities and ways of being human that are politically productive for those inhabiting marginalized embodiments.

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