THE TRANSFERENCE OF MEMORY WITHIN THE
WORKS OF DELBO AND MODISANE

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read The Transference of Memory Within the Works of Delbo and Modisane by Karen Elizabeth Wirsing, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in English Literature at San Francisco State University.

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Through close examination of two memoirs, *Auschwitz and After* by Charlotte Delbo and *Blame me on History* by Bloke Modisane, the human experience of surviving trauma proves to be the same regardless of class, race and sexual identity, and in effect, the very entity that connects all communities. This paper assesses the way in which trauma memory transfers from one state to another while shaping the intellectual oppressed identity and consequently, identity as a collective. While under the state of oppression, memory transfers from a survival mechanism to a mode of self-destruction until finally finding its way to the healing process through postmemory.
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INTRODUCTION

Literature of the exiled is a specialized genre of literary works that not only delves into the testimony of trauma survivors, but also examines the effects that trauma has on one's memory and personal identity. Traumatic events are woven through every fiber of our history and so long as war, oppression, and greed exist, trauma will as well. Surviving these events leaves a psychological stamp not only on the individuals involved, but also on the community and future generations. Through close examination of *Auschwitz and After* by Charlotte Delbo, and *Blame me on History* by Bloke Modisane, I will display how the human experience of surviving trauma is the same regardless of race, sexual identity and class, and in effect, an entity that unites us all.

Naturally, people associate who they are with where they are from and because of this, nationality is an essential part of the foundation from which one's first memories are formed and identity develops. When I speak of one's nationality, I am referring to the birthplace of the individual as well as the culture, values, religion and family that surrounds him/her. For those who have fallen into exile, it is not only the effects of political oppression that causes trauma, but also the actual displacement from their native land that causes the deeper void. Paul Tabori defines an exile as:

A person compelled to leave or remain outside his country of origin on account of well-founded fear of persecution or for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; a person who considers his exile temporary
(even though it may last a lifetime), hoping to return to his fatherland when circumstances permit—but unable or unwilling to do so as long as the factors that made him an exile persist. (Zepeda 14)

Most of those living in exile dream of dismantling the political oppression within their native countries and hope to return home. When living in exile, people undergo feelings of extreme loss, marginalization and dissociation from others as they adapt to the new cultures, environments, and languages in their host country. Nationalism and culture are fundamental fragments of each person's collective memory and aid in defining each person. It is through the testimonies of the exiled that readers get a glimpse of how truly traumatic exile is.

Before examining the transcendence of memory under the state of trauma, I must first define exactly what I mean by trauma. Trauma is a rare phenomenon that has been studied across multiple disciplines, with Literature quickly proving to be one of the most influential on the topic. For years psychologists have attempted to define trauma and to better understand its occurrences, but because of its unique qualities and the way in which it unfolds, scholars have had difficulty in doing so. Literature, however, has provided a space where critics and theorists are able to fill in some of the missing links. The word "trauma" originates from the ancient Greek word, "wound" (Marder 1). Yet, when most people think of a wound, they think of something that is visibly on the surface and promises the possibility of healing. In her essay, Trauma and Literary Studies: Some "Enabling Questions, Elissa Marder states, "There is no specific set of physical manifestations identifying trauma, and it almost invariably produces repeated, uncontrollable, and incalculable effects that
endure long after its ostensible 'precipitating cause' “(1). Through my research I have come to understand trauma as an occurrence of the unthinkable. Trauma is something that happens to a person, which lies outside the realm of human comprehension and knowledge. As stated by Frank Seeburger, “trauma is an event that, when it strikes, cannot be "processed" or "comprehended" by those it strikes” (“Screen Visions”). Through the memoirs of Charlotte Delbo and Bloke Modisane, the reader is invited to witness the vivid effects that trauma has on one’s psyche.

Delbo and Modisane are two survivors who have endured unthinkable political and physical oppression. Although their individual experiences of the oppressive state are very different, the human experience of their suffering is very similar, as is their search for identity within their fragmented lives. Bloke Modisane, a black South African living in the midst of Apartheid politics represents the black intellectual, whereas, Charlotte Delbo, a member of the French Resistance during World War II, exemplifies the intellectual living through the Holocaust. Modisane is born into the oppressive state from which he is forced to bear without ever having experienced freedom. On the contrary, Delbo is born into freedom and a socioeconomically privileged family from which everything is stripped. However, regardless of their different backgrounds, their individual recollections of surviving trauma are congruent.

Charlotte Delbo was born in France in 1913. In 1940 while her native country was in the beginning phases of being occupied by Nazi Germany, she was in South America working as an assistant to Louis Jouvet’s theater company. Delbo’s decision to return home during WWII came once she heard a friend’s life had been
taken by the Gestapo. Upon her return home, she accompanied her husband Georges Dudach in working for the French Resistance (Delbo x).

In the spring of 1942 French police officers arrested Delbo and her husband in their apartment where they were caught printing anti-German pamphlets. The couple was turned over to the Gestapo and immediately imprisoned. Her husband was tragically held before a firing squad and brutally murdered. Delbo, however, spent the first few months of captivity in French prisons until January of 1943, where she was then sent to Auschwitz. Over six million people were systematically killed during the holocaust, and of all the death camps, Auschwitz was the largest. Delbo began writing her memories down in 1946, but decided against publishing her testimony until she was sure it had “stood the test of time” (Delbo x). It was not until twenty years later in 1965 that *Auschwitz and After* was published. The novel is printed in three piece sections entitled, *None of Us Will Return, Useless Knowledge,* and *Measure of our Days.* Through captivating poetry and prose, each section takes the reader through different phases of trauma memory. Not only do Delbo’s words stand the test of time, but her contribution to holocaust literature could possibly be one of the most influential to touch on the topic of trauma memory.

Historically speaking, the holocaust was one of the most formidable events to have ever occurred. It created the unthinkable caesura of history. The number of lives lost during this tragedy is so vast that we will never know the full potential of those who were killed. Among the millions of brilliant minds that never had the opportunity to develop and be discovered were artists, psychologists, doctors, writers and scientists. Who is to say that among those killed were not the next
Leonardo DiVinci, William Shakespeare, or Bill Gates? Charlotte Delbo was deported with 230 other French women, none of whom were Jewish, but all were involved in anti-German politics (Delbo viiiii). Of these women, only 49 survived the atrocities of the holocaust. They were the lucky ones.

Another testimony, which describes the horror of Auschwitz and perhaps captures the most detail within a small window, is a statement given by survivor, Fritzie Fritshall. Fritshall was fifteen years old when she entered the death camp and wonders:

How does one describe walking into Auschwitz, the smell? And someone pointing out to you that those are gas chambers, that your parents went up in smoke. When I asked, "When will I see my mother?" several hours after I came into the camp, I was shown the smoke. This is how I found out where she went. (Berenbaum 132)

Even those who were removed from the immediate agency of experiencing Auschwitz firsthand describe the camp as unimaginable. A soldier who arrived at Auschwitz during the liberation testifies, "I have just seen the most terrible place on earth...a stack of bodies about 20 feet long and as high as a man could reach...it's beyond all comprehension...you just can't understand it even when you've seen it" (Berenbaum 2). These testimonies describe the most "unthinkable" acts of brutality that could possibly be done to another human being.

Throughout her novel, Delbo continues to refer to Auschwitz as a "one-way street" (Delbo 7). She is cognizant that all who experience the horror will go on to suffer permanent traumatic stress. Once a person enters the inconceivable place,
there is no returning. She begins her testimony with the following description of Auschwitz:

And when they have gotten there
they think they've arrived in Hell
maybe. And yet they did not believe in it.
They had no idea you could take a train to Hell but since they
were there they took their courage in their hands ready to face what’s
coming
together with their children, their wives and their aged parents
with family momentoes and family papers
They do not know there is no arriving in this station.
They expect the worst-not the unthinkable (Delbo 4).

Delbo closes with the phrase, “there is no arriving” because arrival implies
departure, and to depart suggests leaving something behind. Unfortunately,
memory does not allow for the departure of recalling the traumatic events of
Auschwitz.

Another of the most uniquely traumatic events to take place throughout
history is Apartheid. William ‘Bloke’ Modisane was born in 1923, in the midst of
South Africa’s increasingly oppressive ruling government. This same year the Urban
Areas Act was passed that prohibited natives from owning property in urban areas
or re-locating without the consent of the white lawmakers (Thompson 194).
However, racial discrimination in South Africa had been building since the early
seventeenth century when Dutch explorers first settled in the Cape of Good Hope.
Along with the Dutch, the British were also among the first colonizers to land in the territory. For years the two colonizing countries battled one another to gain sovereignty over South Africa’s resources. The only concept that the opposing parties agreed on was sustaining the economy with the continued enforced slave labor of the natives. Over the course of centuries South Africa has become a multi-cultural territory with several blended ethnicities and eleven recognized languages.

South Africa, a territory governed by the elite white population, passed The Natives Land Act of 1913, which paved the way for an unjust legal system. The law only allotted 7.5% of South Africa’s territory for blacks to be freehold landowners. Although blacks made up two-thirds of South Africa’s population at this time, they were prevented from even passing onto the remaining 92.7% of the territory owned by whites (Smythe 188). Long before this, Pass laws came into effect requiring blacks to carry proof of employment and identification whenever traveling outside of their assigned areas. The Apartheid era, of which Modisane and his family are victims of, was built over a 200-year span. Prior to his exile, Modisane witnessed an excessive amount of laws pass that further marginalized the black community from the white. By 1948 the term coined to describe this form of legal segregation was Apartheid, and by 1970 all voting rights for all black Africans and Coloureds were eliminated (Smythe 189).

Bloke Modisane wrote his memoir, *Blame Me On History* while living in exile in Germany. The novel details his traumatic experience growing up submerged in South Africa’s racial prejudices and the book was banned from being published in the country until 1963 (Modisane vii). Modisane was one of the first black
journalists to write for *Drum* magazine, a progressive liberal publication with a largely black readership. He makes it clear that while working for the magazine, racial prejudices are to be checked at the door, except of course when it comes to salary, then blacks are, "paid far below the minimum... whilst the whites were paid the full rate" (Modisane 307).

*Blame Me On History* describes the routine of everyday life living as a black man in South Africa, and demonstrates that the daily existence of a black man in South Africa is anything but routine. Each day Modisane lives in fear that death will come knocking at his door and he too will fall victim to the violence that surrounds him. Due to the unjust treatment from the white community, many blacks took their aggression out on their own community resulting in a high volume of black on black violence. Modisane bears witness to the frequent brutality of neighborhood murders, the most traumatic being that of his father. After witnessing the remains of the inhumane aftermath, Modisane is haunted by the vision:

The battered and grotesquely ballooned nightmare, hardly recognizable as a human being, was my father; the swollen mass of broken flesh and blood, which was his face, had no definition; there were no eyes nor mouth, nose, only a motionless ball, and the only sign of life was the heaving chest.

Recognition was impossible. (Modisane 26)

Several times throughout the book, Modisane comes back to this memory in an attempt to recollect what his father looked like before his death; however, it is the death that consumes his memory.
Modisane also bears witness to the unfair treatment of his mother, and the death of his sister due to malnutrition. He witnesses the mistreatment of his community, who as a whole has been stripped of civil rights and silenced. Modisane attempts to understand the reasoning behind the prejudices he and his family are subjected to. Searching for answers, Modisane concludes that the dissolute and inexplicable hate driven by the oppressive government is something beyond comprehension. He writes:

The African is a collective which cannot be classified and distinguished apart, or hated apart, as an individual; this is perfectly justified, there are nine million of us, it is humanly impossible to hate nine million people individually, it is, however, less exacting to hate them collectively.

(Modisane 243)

Here the reader is given insight to the disgrace of the government, but more so is offered the true wit of the writer. Modisane challenges the white authorities to get to know an individual before choosing to hate him/her. Hate is an impassioned emotion that usually requires an intimate knowledge of someone or something. It is not possible to know nine million people, so how can hate grow? Modisane cleverly demonstrates the ignorance of his own government who chooses to hate without knowledge, which in essence is the very definition of ignorance.

In their works, Modisane and Delbo take the reader on a journey through their troubled existences. Though both writers experience very different forms of trauma, their testimonies demonstrate how memory transfers from one state to another. Each day presents new and difficult challenges and it becomes difficult to
say whether each writer is lucky to survive or if each makes the conscious
decision to go on living. Either way both testimonies offer a deeper understanding
of how trauma memory works while under the state of oppression. *Auschwitz and
After* and *Blame Me on History* stand as thorough explorations of the conscious,
unconscious and subconscious memory and go on to prove that memory and
remembering shape the intellectual oppressed identity. The two testimonies also
delve into the concept of how individual memory and postmemory go on to shape
identity as a collective, bringing awareness to the fact that "an assault on the
liberties of any group in society is an assault against the whole society" (Modisane
130). While victims of oppression are under the state of trauma, memory serves as
a survival mechanism bringing forth memories of nostalgia. Then, when the
immediacy of the trauma is lifted, the pathology of the traumatic stress sets in,
causing self-destruction. Through postmemory and universal memorandum,
victims are able to work through their self-destruction and find solace in the
community. Within the works of Delbo and Modisane, memory works as a
transference trope that takes the reader on a journey through survival, self-
destruction and the sorting of the existential crisis.
CHAPTER ONE

REMEMBERING HOME, SURVIVING TRAUMA

Memory is a central component to the incredibly multi-faceted structure of personal identity. A person’s memory is the very entity that allows him/her to recall past experiences, and it is within those past experiences that the foundation for a strong sense of self is built. Psychoanalysts once believed that memory had the ability to recall every past experience in a person’s life and replay it like an old movie screen reeling through time; however, it is now understood that such an occurrence would be impossible. Although the phenomenon of memory is capable of many wonders, the brain only has the capacity to recall a small fraction of its acquired knowledge, and therefore compartmentalizes various learned information.

Sigmund Freud is one of the most influential theorists to ever explore how the mind stores information. He is also often accredited for bringing concepts of the conscious and unconscious memory systems to the forefront of psychological discussion. In his book, *An Outline on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud delves into how memory forms three major functions of personal identity through the id, the ego, and the super-ego. The ego is a representation of the conscious mind and is the place where memories, thoughts and emotions are stored. The id stores all of the unconscious memories and provides people with the basic instinctual necessities for survival, and the super-ego reflects how people wish to be perceived (Freud 14). Freud’s theories were revolutionary during his time and continue to be relevant to modern literature. While Charlotte Delbo and Bloke Modisane reach their most
vulnerable state, their subconscious memories provide them with the strength to persevere through the inhumane circumstances with which they are currently living. Freud believes that this is the ego's way of surviving. He writes:

The ego...has the task of self-preservation. As regards external events, it performs that task by becoming aware of stimuli, by storing up experiences about them (in memory), by avoiding excessively strong stimuli (through flight), by dealing with moderate stimuli (through adaptation) and finally by learning to bring about expedient changes in the external world to its own advantage (through activity). (Freud 14)

In Delbo and Modisane's memoirs, the reader gets a glimpse into the reality of how trauma memory works for all people under the state of oppression. Although Delbo is a white woman born into a free country and Modisane is a black man born into oppression, their minds take them on a similar journey. As readers, we begin to see how the oppressed intellectual's memory functions by storing and recalling past experiences in the same way. I refer to this first phase of trauma memory, as what Freud would call the “task of self-preservation,” which works as a mode for survival bringing forth memories of nostalgia and familiarity.

Nostalgia is analogous to the most formative years of a person's life when self-esteem and self worth are developed. While under the state of oppression, Delbo and Modisane find nostalgia in memories of home, which bring them back to a temporal space where they are able to reassess their self-knowledge. Nostalgia used to be thought of as a medical condition, but has recently become recognized as remembrances of a "time when life was “good" (Wilson 21). The word “nostalgia"
itself originates from the Greek word nostos, which means “return home” and “algia” meaning “pain or longing” (Wilson 21). Today, the word is closely associated with an emotion where “nostalgic memories connote a pleasant or good time in the past” (Wilson 21). When traumatic events such as the Holocaust and Apartheid take place, a victim’s sense of self and his/her ego are violated. In order for the super-ego to remain intact, memories of home stabilize the psyche and defend the ego (Baumeister 1082). A secure sense of self is maintained by having ownership over something that belongs solely to you, like having sovereignty over your own life and knowing that life holds some sort of truth. As stated by Geoffrey Cubitt in his book, History and Memory: Historical Approaches, “memories seem...‘indissolubly ours’, so much ‘a part of us’ that to deprive us of them would be to jeopardize our sense of personal identity” (66). For trauma survivors, memories of home are the only possessions that remain “indissolubly” theirs and “each of us has, in memory, a kind of access to his own past history which no one other than himself can have” (Miri 2). Memories of home offer these victims the only form of true knowledge they wish to remember while under the state of crisis. Delbo’s and Modisane’s personal identities are formed by memories of home, which provide them with familiarity, faith and hope prior to the pathology of the traumatic state setting in.

While Delbo is in Auschwitz memories of home emerge within her consciousness as a way for her to remain in contact with her super-ego, the super-ego she identifies with prior to her experiences in the camp. Through these memories, the mind resists the carbon copy of the trauma experienced in Auschwitz. Delbo introduces the reader to her memories of home early on in her memoir. Each
night that she spends within the prison walls brings forth dreams of being back in her kitchen at home. She writes, "We must return, return home, return in order to touch with our hands the stone kitchen sink" (Delbo 56). Even though Delbo refers to the kitchen sink, the kitchen sink is not essentially what she longs for. Most nostalgic memories do not consist of inanimate objects, but rather look back to a certain temporal time. Delbo is in search of a time where she felt safe and secure within her own skin, and the kitchen sink returns her to the familiarity of that routine. She goes on to discuss the environment that she and her comrades are forced to work in. Submerged in dysentery, thirst and hunger, they are required to carry heavy bricks through muddy marshes for endless hours.1 The cold bricks remind Delbo of the, "cold of the stone sink" in her kitchen back home (Delbo 56). Freud refers to this sequence of memory as free association, the subconscious coming forth and connecting past experiences with the current. The bricks act as a trigger igniting Delbo’s subconscious memory. The memories then transfer from the kitchen sink to memories of her mother. Here, we begin to recognize that nostalgia occurs within the subconscious and reveals a person’s true underlying longing. Through free association, “memories are distributed all over the brain and linked together by networks of connections” (Heath 63). The subconscious is working to creating a space where Delbo can be temporarily freed from the anguish she is suffering.

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1 Auschwitz was the largest camp in the holocaust, housing over a million prisoners. The camp subjected many political resistance groups to slave labor where victims were literally worked until their deaths.
Delbo’s subconscious memory reappears as a survival mechanism in the following chapter when she undergoes one of the most unthinkable and traumatic events of her memoir. Delbo and her comrades are forced to carry their deceased friends’ bodies and place them in separate piles with the mounds of other dead bodies. She describes the escalating violence of the SS when the women do not carry the bodies as quickly as the prison guards would like. In this moment, the dead are treated as poorly as trash being divided on garbage day, and the living are treated worse than the dead. Delbo refers to this, and similar unthinkable circumstances of life in Auschwitz, as “useless knowledge.” Useless knowledge is information gained that is of absolutely no value. One must ask, “what good can come from the holocaust experience?” Delbo suggests that the answer is: useless knowledge, and therefore nothing. Within this horrific scene she implies to her audience that the “useless knowledge” she acquires on this day is learning the best procedure for carrying those who have lost their lives. Delbo writes:

They are not stiff yet. When we grab the ankles and the wrists the body bends, touches the ground, and it is impossible to keep it high. It would be better to lift from under the knees and shoulders, but we cannot get a good hold that way. (Delbo 80)

In the midst of witnessing the unthinkable mistreatment of the dead, and the further mistreatment of those who are still living, physical illness pulls at every fiber of Delbo’s being. In such an event as this, it would seem impossible for her to recall one positive life experience. However, it is in this moment that Delbo’s memory is immediately drawn to the “pale soft evening” and she remembers, “back home the
trees are budding" (Delbo 80). Rather than succumb to hysteria that most would fall into, Delbo’s memory brings her back to the nostalgia of home. In the middle of the most unbearable and inhumane circumstance, her memories offer her a small sliver of hope for a chance at returning home. She is reminded of a time before, when the beauty of the days are not entrenched with the useless knowledge of carrying your own dead.

Towards the end of her trilogy, in The Measure of Our Days, we become aware that Delbo is conscious of the role that nostalgia plays in her survival. She describes the continuity between remembering home and identity by writing:

Over there we had our entire past, all our memories, even memories from long ago passed on by our parents. We armed ourselves with this past for protection, erecting it between horror and us in order to stay whole, keep our true selves, our being. We kept on dipping into our past, our childhood, into whatever formed our personality, our character, tastes, ideas, so we might recognize ourselves, preserve something of what we were, not letting this situation dent us, annihilate us...Each one of us recounted her life thousands and thousands of times, resurrecting her childhood, the time of freedom and happiness, just to make sure all this had existed...Our past was our lifeline and reassurance. (Delbo 258)

Delbo’s words are transparent. Her definition of home is much deeper than the four walls and rooftop that makeup the structure of a house. She considers home to be something more significant than a kitchen sink and other miscellaneous, inanimate objects. Delbo’s mind returns home in search of the self-awareness she once
possessed and she asserts that in order to feel whole, she must continue to remember the familiar. Home for her is about the familiarity of a time and space when she understood who she was as a person. Those who forget where they come from become dissociated and lost.

Although Modisane's memories of home may be less than the ideal memories that Delbo describes, they are still a representation of his personal identity and bring forth nostalgia. Delbo is always hopeful to return to her homeland, whereas Modisane is in search of the "inner space of psychic and emotional resonance" (Godobo-Madikizela 255). According to Pumla Godobo-Madikizela, in her essay, Nostalgia, Trauma, and The Legacy of Apartheid, nostalgia is a yearning for "a home that no longer exists or has ever existed," and that longing does not necessarily include a "home in the physical sense" (Godobo-Madikizela 255). Modisane's nostalgia is filled with childhood memories of the people he loves and a dream that political policies and race prejudices can and will change within his country.

Modisane narrates his entire memoir while walking through the bulldozed streets of Sophiatown, the only home he has ever known. The reader becomes acquainted with every picture he paints, which is infused with a longing for a better frame on life. By structuring his testimony within this context, it becomes vividly clear that the destruction of the shantytown acts as a metaphor for the destruction within his own life. Unlike Delbo's memories of home, Modisane's include the poisonous venom of the oppressive world that surrounds him. Even though Modisane treads the waves of violence, addiction and suppression, Sophiatown is still his "home" where he says:
we made the desert bloom; made alterations, converted half-verandas into kitchens, decorated the houses and filled them with music. We were house-proud. We took the ugliness of life in a slum and wove a kind of beauty; we established bonds of human relationships which set a pattern of communal living, far richer and more satisfying-materially and spiritually-than any model housing could substitute. (Modisane 16)

Far from a democratic and free oasis, Sophiatown is nonetheless familiar in all its chaos, offering Modisane a semblance of what he knows to be true. His memory elicits idealized visions of the place he considers home, regardless of the reality of its existence. He describes every minute detail of his home as he remembers it: from the shebeen queens, to late night jazz, and “nice-time parties” (Modisane 9). Janelle Wilson in her essay *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*, writes, “time longed for... might be individual, but it might also be collective and historical. Indeed, it might never have been present at all” (Wilson 23). That is not to say that the “nice time parties” never existed; however, there are many moments that the reader is carried through the grotesque details of Sophiatown’s true malice: the violence, exploitation of women, and the mistreatment of children. By identifying with the back alleys and cornerstones of Sophiatown, Modisane defends his home and unveils the phenomenon of nostalgic memories. His memories do not stem from South Africa, but directly from his home in Sophiatown, and by keeping the memory of Sophiatown alive he is able to keep his identity alive. Modisane resonates, “we did not live in it, we were Sophiatown” (Modisane 9). Through the sorting of past
memories, Modisane is given the space to properly grieve the traumatic events that he once could not face.

While Modisane revisits the perilous streets of Sophiatown, he is reminded that the violence projected from the white community circulates within his own native community. Modisane discusses one night in particular when his memories of home provide him with a drive and urgency to survive. Alone in his home, Modisane hears the screaming of a woman being harassed. While venturing out to investigate further into the commotion, he comes across a childhood friend attempting to rape a woman. After he frees the woman from her attacker, Modisane suffers the ramifications of being positioned in the wrong place at the wrong time. The woman returns with “six armed men” and Modisane is almost beaten to death. He writes:

I was struck with a stick on the head, the blow staggering me on to the street; blows descended on my body from all sides...I did not scream, I resigned myself to my fate, the fate which was linking my destiny with that of my father; this was a communion with him, we would switch back our identities, my coffin would carry his name, as his had carried mine. (Modisane 66)

While Modisane suffers the traumatic beating, he is reminded of his departed father who is killed by a brutal attack similar to the one that Modisane endures in this scene. In the midst of his struggle, Modisane remembers that, “another voice began screaming” in his head, telling him to “Run, run!” (Modisane 66). This imagined voice is his mother’s, which in turn triggers memories of returning home to the safety of his house. Modisane picks himself up amid his attackers and wills his body
"into motion" (Modisane 66). He writes, "I was going home" (Modisane 66). For Modisane, the memory of his father transitions into a memory of his mother, and the nostalgia of returning home gives him strength to bear the torture. His subconscious memory provides him with just enough power to pick himself up and run home. Modisane goes on to describe that under the circumstances from which he almost dies, for some inexplicable reason it is the first time he "had not been afraid" (Modisane 66). When Modisane’s Sophiatown becomes too much to bear, memory recall brings him back to the safety of his sanctuary; that small room where Ma-Willie and his father, Joseph were at one time alive and well. Although the voice in Modisane’s head is imaginary, he understands that “what is being fondly recalled wasn’t really that way, but the heart finds comfort in the feeling. Nostalgia realigns cognition and emotion to produce comfort and security” for survival purposes (Wilson 23).

As the reader approaches the end of Modisane’s novel, (s)he discovers that the decision to seek exile rather than live within the constructs of an oppressive government is weighed down by idealized memories infused with nostalgia. Modisane is given an assignment for Drum magazine that requires the examination of the independent churches of South Africa. Modisane has been raised as a “dutiful Christian,” who becomes educated and begins to question all things he is taught, including religion. Modisane becomes cognizant that the white government is placating the natives with a hypocritical institution under the name of God. His family and the majority of other black families within Sophiatown have fallen into accepting that
any and every action was predestined and willed by God: the poverty, the starvation, the oppression, the degradation, all these were willed by God. If a child died of malnutrition, it was the will of God: when a black farm labourer was flogged to death or if an African was shot down by a farmer who later pleaded in court that he thought it was a monkey ravaging his farm, Ma-Bloke said it was the will of God. (Modisane 182)

Modisane begins to reject the idea that the god who preaches, "love thy neighbor as thyself" is the same god who defines the black community as "savage" and a class "among beasts" (Modisane 183).

Modisane’s assignment at *Drum* is to assess whether or not, “black Christians and white Christians were, in fact, brothers in Christ” (Modisane 186). Although Modisane and the black community know the answer to this rhetorical question, it offers him the opportunity to document the hypocrisy within the foundation, not only of the church, but more importantly of all Christian schools that black natives are required to attend. Modisane accepts the assignment and begins investigating the “unashamed godlessness of the white Christians” by entering various white congregations (Modisane 191). Throughout his research, Modisane is the subject of multiple embarrassing situations, experiencing the forced removal from several churches, as well as an arrest. The journalist confesses that the assignment is one of the most traumatic events of his Apartheid experience and is ultimately the determining factor for his choosing “permanent exile” from his country (Modisane 191). His research quickly confirms his previous theory that racism within South Africa is perpetrated through religion.
As Modisane details the traumatic public denouncement that takes place in the middle of a church service, his subconscious triggers memories of nostalgia. Similar to Delbo’s episode of free association with the bricks, Modisane’s bible sparks memories of teatime at home. As he looks down and sees his “bible,” he realizes that it belongs to “Ma-Willie,” which reminds him in essence, that she is a spiritual woman of worship. Modisane correlates worship with “Sunday,” and the word “Sunday” triggers memories from the date that his researching excursions began (Modisane 195). Before long Modisane’s memories take him all the way back to every past winter that he can remember. Although the winters are cold, and the cold is used as a metaphor for the coolness of the unjust government, Modisane’s memory brings him back to a time when he feels free. He writes:

The cold seemed to filter and to creep and crawl through the very structure of the walls, and I remember the interminable nights of shivering out of the blankets to stuff pieces of clothing and old newspapers under the doors, between the rattling windows; there were nights of dreaming myself against a woman’s breasts. (Modisane 195)

Modisane is only allowed to be the truest form of himself within the confinement of his own home. Therefore, more often than not his subconscious takes him back to that very location. As soon as he envisions the four walls of his home his memory transfers from the point of panic to nostalgia. During one of the worst memories in his adult life, the moment he realizes that he will leave his country, nostalgia brings him a sense of meaning. He goes on to express that each year he surrenders “to the cold just a little more, and each year...made determinations that next year will be
better" (Modisane 195). Modisane is well aware that the liberation of black South Africans is far from a reality at this time in his life, yet nostalgia provides him hope for a better future. He continues to dream of the possibilities of overcoming his current state and goes on to remember calling his sister Daisy, "for another cup of tea," confiding that, "the comforts of a little respite warmed my mind" (Modisane 196). After concluding his thoughts, the reader realizes (s)he just witnessed the unraveling of free association. Modisane’s memory triggers nostalgia to reinforce his hope for the future. This is the phenomenon of memory, providing victims with a purpose to persevere.

As the unjust legal system of Apartheid continues to gain momentum and the rest of the world’s segregation laws become more progressive, one would think a simple solution to the issue would be fleeing the country and seeking refuge in a free state. After all, how can a person long for his/her home when being denied the most basic forms of civil rights? While Modisane struggles to make his final decision, he demonstrates the organic connection all people share with their native countries, regardless of unjust legal systems. Choosing exile is not only a vital decision, but also a traumatic experience that bolsters memories of a better time. A study done by the American Psychological Association in 2006 found that nostalgia is triggered through experiencing negative affects; therefore, subjects are most likely to experience nostalgia while feeling down, depressed or while under the state of trauma. The results of this study confirm that "nostalgia" serves "to counteract negative mood," which in turn makes choosing exile even more difficult (Wildschut 985). Delbo and Modisane’s memories of home are triggered at the most
opportune times, providing a sense of self-awareness, security and survival while in crisis mode.

Prior to WWII very little analysis of a person's self-awareness had been examined. However, once war victims and veterans began losing their sense of self worth, psychologists began to further seek the continuing effects that trauma has on one's psyche long after a traumatic event has been concluded. Within this search the term "ego identity" was coined. It was first used by Erik Erikson (1963) as he sought to describe the central means by which individuals come to experience a sense of being "at home" in themselves – at home in their own bodies, with their own unique blends of psychological drives and defenses, and in their own cultural and societal neighborhoods, recognizing and being recognized by others who count.

(Kroger 2)

The idea of providing a home for one's self through self-discovery and contentment within, becomes the ultimate healing aspiration for those living in exile. As Delbo and Modisane work through their experiences they begin to understand that in order to heal they must first find nostalgia within themselves, instead of searching through the past and the un-promised future for validation. Modisane writes that, "in spite of everything that was doctrinated into me, in spite of my colour, I believed that I belonged to the enormous family of man" (Modisane 168). Delbo asserts herself in a similar light, hoping to find inner peace with her place in society. She writes, "I know why the flowers, the sky, the sun were beautiful, and human voices
deeply moving. The earth was beautiful in having been found again. Beautiful and uninhabited. And so I came back You did not know" (Delbo 223-224). As idyllic as these statements are, both writers realize that the trauma they have endured will eventually begin to outweigh their current nostalgic state. When this transition occurs, each writer fears losing a piece of their super-ego, which is the way they wish to be perceived. As stated by author Thomas Reid:

Our own personal identity and continued existence, as far back as we remember anything distinctly...we know immediately, and not by reasoning. It seems, indeed to be a part of the testimony of memory. Everything we remember has such a relation to ourselves as to imply necessarily our existence at the time remembered. (Klein 678)

Modisane and Delbo long to hold on to their “ego identity” through memories of their most cherished moments. However, the nostalgia that each experience only comes to fruition in the moments that the traumatic state becomes unbearable. As soon as the immediacy of the crisis comes to an end, nostalgia fades into the abyss and the writers struggle not to fall victim to the ensuing self-destruction.
CHAPTER TWO
MEMORY: SELF DESTRUCTION AND THE EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

The second phase of trauma memory eradicates previous memories of nostalgia and transfers into self-destruction. When a person survives a traumatic event (s)he is often haunted by unwanted dreams, thoughts and memories of the past trauma. Both Delbo and Modisane suffer from symptoms that the American Psychiatric Association defines as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). When PTSD occurs,

there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience. (Caruth 4)

Since Delbo and Modisane experience very different forms of trauma, their PTSD symptoms manifest in different ways. However, when the pathology of the traumatic state sets in, both writers experience the loss of constructive memories causing them to question their self-identity. One of their common symptoms is dissociation, which is the mind's way of putting up a defense after the immediate acute trauma has ended. 2 Many trauma victims describe the sensation of feeling as if they were floating above their bodies looking down on the events taking place.

Dissociative disorders take various shapes, but one characteristic of the disorder is

2 Trauma and Dissociation: Implications for Borderline Personality Disorder by Eric Vermetten and David Spiegel define acute trauma as extreme violence or extended abuse.
"feeling as if one's entire body or a part of one's body does not belong to oneself" (Vermetten 2). While Delbo experiences a more severe form of dissociation, such as a detachment from her body, Modisane experiences a more mild form where he becomes numb and emotionless towards his surroundings. Both Delbo and Modisane experience a splitting of self-identity, which results in the “inability to remember key personal information,” (Dissociative Identity Disorder). Identity separation is different than Dissociative Identity Disorder in that the separate identity never fully develops stronger than the original. Rather than taking on multiple complete identities, Delbo and Modisane describe their experiences as conscious separation from the person they had originally come to identify as “the self.” In one scene Delbo says, “It’s as though I were split in two, one part of me is dream, and the other comes from elsewhere” (Delbo 262). For Delbo this conscious separation comes after Auschwitz, whereas for Modisane the separation becomes part of his cultural appropriation. *Auschwitz and After* and *Blame me on History* demonstrate that when new memories of trauma are formed, they override previous memories of home and safety causing psychological dissociation, self-destruction and the existential crisis.

While in Auschwitz, memories of home allow Delbo to hold claim over her identity and sense of self, but once she is liberated, she becomes “imprisoned in memories and repetitions” of life during the holocaust (Delbo 261). Delbo’s symptoms surface in dreams and self-destructive thoughts creating further fragmentation of her identity. In *Measure of Our Days*, the final chapter of Delbo’s trilogy, she realizes that her post-Auschwitz self is not capable of remembering the
events that she identified with as her pre-Auschwitz self. This has come to be one of the major recurrences in her memoir. After surviving Auschwitz, the memories of the trauma she endured replace all previous memories of happiness that she once knew. She writes:

Today, my memories, my past are over there. When I project my thoughts backward they never overstep these bounds. They go knocking against the milestone. All the efforts we made to prevent our destruction, preserve our identity, kept our former being, all these efforts could only be put to use over there. When we returned, this hard kernel we had forged at the core of our hearts, believing it to be solid since it had been won through boundless striving, melted, dissolved. Nothing left. My life started over there. Before there was nothing. I no longer have what I had over there, what I was before.

(Delbo 259)

Delbo argues that in order for a person to regain their identity, (s)he must be able to remember the components of his/her life that made the person who (s)he is. Delbo struggles to remember those faculties, of “childhood memories” with the newly acquired knowledge of Auschwitz. As previously discussed, a traumatic event is something that occurs outside the realm of comprehension. Therefore, the mind is assiduously attempting to understand and make sense of the unfathomable. In an essay entitled, Recapturing the Past: Introduction, Cathy Caruth, writes:

traumatic recall remains insistent and unchanged to the precise extent that it has never, from the beginning, been fully integrated into understanding. The
trauma is the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge.

(Caruth 153)

As Delbo attempts to integrate the useless knowledge of Auschwitz with the consistency of her congruent memories, we as readers begin to see how she compartmentalizes various memories and becomes incapable of recalling the positive. Greg J. Neimeyer and Maragaret B. suggest that memories are either, "congruent or incongruent with existing self-concepts" and it is when "an incongruent memory reflects the recall of an incident that it is inconsistent with one's self image" and PTSD sets in (Neimeyer 564). Delbo's mind repeatedly attempts to place the schema of trauma in its appropriate space, but until this happens a blockage occurs and the traumatic memories continue to replay.

Delbo experiences posttraumatic stress disorder through subconscious memories of Auschwitz that are relived in recurring thoughts and dreams. While reuniting with fellow survivors after their liberation, Delbo's comrades discuss the different symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder that each bears. Some of the women admit to remembering "nothing" while others are too frightened to sleep because of the endless returning nightmares. One of the women describes her experience saying, "I'm not well. I can't sleep...When I came back I had nightmares. I was so terrified of having them that I invented all kinds of excuses to post-pone going to sleep. Finally, I lost the ability to sleep" (Delbo 344). Another survivor cannot comprehend why such dreams occur and questions,
Can you imagine leaving Auschwitz and then returning there in a dream, on one's own initiative? In that moment, when I go through the barbed-wire enclosure realizing I'll never have the opportunity to leave again, is so horrible, so oppressive, that I want to cry out, and yet I cannot shout because of the pain in my chest. (Delbo 45)

Trauma survivors are not only consumed by reoccurring nightmares of their crises, but are also surrounded by triggers of association.

The simplest things that made Delbo happiest before the camps shift into the very things that bring back images of the Auschwitz experience. Prior to Auschwitz, Delbo found pleasure in the simplicity of walking down the city streets, taking in the beauty of her surroundings. While she is under the state of acute trauma, she portrays springtime strolls as her fondest nostalgic memories. Delbo writes, “In the spring, we walk along Seine’s embankment, looking at the Louvre’s plane trees so finely etched next to the Tuileries’ chestnut trees...we walk across the Luxembourg gardens” (Delbo 111). However, after Auschwitz the thought of walking only brings back memories of her time in the death camp. She informs the reader that her previous recollections of long walks have been replaced with walking amongst “sliding corpses” in perfect “rank formation,” and being forced to continually “walk faster” (Delbo 82/44/83). Her post Auschwitz memories are consumed by memories of walking “with difficulty through the snow and the mud” to mound the dead bodies of women who did not survive (Delbo 67). In the final chapter of her trilogy, Delbo visits one of her fellow comrades and abruptly implies that walking will always be symbolical of the one-way street for “arrivals” that never had the
chance to return to their pre-Auschwitz existence (Delbo 7). Delbo recalls her friend begging her to, "come back before winter...for a walk in the woods" (Delbo 288). In this moment, Delbo's silence speaks more volume than language. She responds by leaving her friend, "standing on the threshold of [her] pretty house at the end of a cool, shady walk lined with pine trees" (Delbo 288). For Delbo, walking changes from an emblem of freedom to a symbol of oppression. A free self-governing person can walk for pleasure or simply move from one room to the next. A free person can stand up and walk away from a situation that (s)he is uncomfortable with. This is one of the simplest forms of freedom that is stripped from Delbo while in Auschwitz. Walking is now stained with memories of violence, torture, and death. Delbo hopes she will never have to walk again, as her worn feet have already taken too many strides.

Similar to Delbo's experience, Modisane's nostalgic memories are replaced with memories of oppression. Eventually Modisane leaves South Africa and writes his testimony as a free man in Germany; however, his nostalgic memories are fogged over by the discrimination he was always subjected to. In the beginning of Modisane's memoir, the reader is provided with a sense of hopefulness as the narrator takes him/her on a journey through the streets of Sophiatown, but that hopefulness dissipates in the second chapter as undertones of cynicism are fashioned. What is first described as the Shangri-La of South Africa, Sophiatown becomes the very entity that revenges "herself against the overcrowding, the congestion of hate, the prejudice, the starvation, the frustrating life in a ghetto" (Modisane 66). Modisane writes that his ambition of growing into a successful black
man in South Africa is, “annihilated, it is languishing among ruins like black South African dreams” (Modisane 33). He begins to resent the blackness of his own skin after witnessing the South African police take advantage of his mother. After the death of his father, Modisane’s mother, Ma-Willie begins to run a shebeen to afford Modisane’s school tuition. During Apartheid, shebeens are the targets of frequent police raids, and as expected, proprietors are encouraged to “settle” the differences out of court. Modisane remembers, “listening to the young constables scream obscenities” at his mother and “because she was black she was despised and humiliated, called ‘kafir meid’ and ‘swart hell’” (Modisane 36). He writes, “I was helpless in the coffin of my skin and began to resent the black of my skin, it offered no protection” (Modisane 36). As his memoir goes on, the reader witnesses Modisane’s continual struggle to find acceptance within himself.

Modisane becomes consumed by memories of his father’s death. Each friend or acquaintance that is murdered after his father’s tragedy brings Modisane back to the viewing of his father’s dismantled body. When asked to identify the body of a friend, Modisane cannot bear the thought. He writes, “I saw the mutilated body of my father, the blood and the broken flesh, and this woman was asking me to look again at this sight which nineteen years had failed to purge from my mind” (Modisane 265). This is not the first moment in the novel that readers are taken back to that tragic day, but it is the moment when we grasp the permanency of the pain he has suffered. For nineteen years Modisane lives with this tragedy replaying in his mind and the burden of the guilt he feels weighing on him. He can no longer recall memories of his father as a recognizable person and admits to growing numb
to the world around him. He writes, “I have no use for human feelings, I stripped myself of them that day I looked upon the battered remains of the man who was my father...refused to cry and never cried since...I cannot feel anything, I have no emotional responses” (Modisane 77). Memories of Modisane’s father result in “dissociative symptoms, especially numbing” which is “a rather strong predictor of later posttraumatic stress disorder” and eventually leads to self-destructive behaviors (Spiegel 229). Modisane, haunted by his father’s death since childhood, transitions into that boy standing helplessly in his front yard each time he witnesses a violent act against another black man. His memories disallow him recollections of his father’s face. He writes, “I ravaged through my mind for the details of that face, gnawing at anything to bring back that face, the little things to piece it together, but all that I could remember were the manacled hands” (Modisane 53). Once death’s mask bears its mantle, it replaces all memories of the man Modisane remembers as father. He later attests, “my chest was bloated almost to pain by that bilious feeling which death and remembrances of it always caused” (Modisane 70). The subconscious memory, which acted as a survival mechanism while under the initial acute trauma has transferred into a force to be reckoned. Modisane’s powerlessness to help those he loves the most becomes the catalyst for the self-destruction that ensues.

As Modisane struggles with his oppression, he experiences the splitting of his ego and becomes reckless with his actions. Participating in nights of binge drinking and seeking sexual pleasures, Modisane’s unconscious id takes over and attempts to
rid his ego of negative memories. Freud defines this as a defense mechanism called the pleasure principle. In his essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he writes:

> the course of mental processes is automatically regulated by 'the pleasure-principle': that is to say, we believe that any given process originates in an unpleasant state of tension and thereupon determines for itself such a path that its ultimate issue coincides with a relaxation of this tension, i.e. with avoidance of 'pain' or with production of pleasure. (Freud 1)

The pleasure principle is the idea that the id splits from the ego when difficulties of the external world arise. The id is a person's unconscious natural instinct, which is constantly seeking animalistic pleasures, and the ego is the enforcement that "postpones the satisfaction" preventing the person from giving into those primitive instincts and also creating a stabilized and well-balanced individual. When an individual, such as Modisane experiences constant repression, he in turn experiences a splitting of the id from the ego. The id kicks into overdrive seeking pleasure and resulting in the subject's loss of reality. Freud suggests that the ego is frightened by an experience which teaches it that the continuance of...satisfaction will result in an almost intolerable real danger. It must...decide either to recognize the real danger, give way to it and renounce the instinctual satisfaction, or to disavow reality and make itself believe that there is no reason for fear, so that it may be able to retain the satisfaction. (Bokanowski Loc 247 of 3774)

Modisane falls victim to the latter and loses touch with his reality. His natural instincts overpower his ego and he seeks pleasure wherever possible. Modisane
acknowledges that his actions begin to shape what his oppressors have labeled him as and he acknowledges that, "Western civilization’s system of beliefs, savagery is black and promiscuity a heathen indulgence-and heathendom is black-I am persuaded into believing that this is the standard which is expected of me" (Modisane 207). Modisane assimilates white South Africa’s stigmatized ideals of black culture and begins to lead a life of debauchery filled with drinking and promiscuity to “prove,” as he claims, “myself to myself. I am a man” (Modisane 213). In this phrase the reader begins to understand how truly emasculated Modisane feels inside and because he is denied the basic civil liberties allotted to the white community, he seeks pleasure wherever he can find it. Modisane goes on to state, “I surrendered myself to the numbness of the pleasure, but there was only the exhaustion in the end, not even forgetfulness and satisfaction” (Modisane 212). Modisane feels responsible for his inability to protect those he cares for from the oppressive government, and in his search for self-satisfaction loses his sense of self. After a night of casual sex with multiple women, who were not his wife, Modisane writes, “I became lonely afterwards, my body was saturated with sex and I was dissatisfied, there was the compulsion to scream a prayer to Fiki for forgiveness; the things for which I was looking were not all to be found in sex” (Modisane 265). Within his quest for acceptance, Modisane only feels even more segregated. Freud suggests that this is the ego’s “reality principle” balancing out the id and causing more pain for the subject, due to the guilt one feels after giving in to instinctual drive.
Modisane's cultural appropriation results in an existential crisis. Stuck between two worlds, he feels an obligation to maintain the traditional native rituals of his ancestors while also adopting white westernized progressive stereotypes. Modisane is caught between longing for the acceptance of the white community and maintaining the acceptance among his black community. A. P. J. Roux suggests in his book *The African Philosophy Reader* that this existential "situation," (as Modisane refers to it) is caused by, "The colonial enterprise...aimed at transforming the black man by his progressive approximation to the ideals of Western civilization through education. This implied in most cases his dissociation from the basic personality pattern imprinted in him by his original culture" (Coetzee 40). As readers, we witness Modisane teetering between staying true to his "native" self and his "westernized," educated ideal self. He writes, "being alone is unbearable. I am the eternal alien between two worlds; the Africans call me a Situation, by Western standards I am uneducated. If I had my life again, although I would select to be black, I would want a university education (Modisane 218).

Modisane is not only shut out by the white community, but also experiences the same discard from his native community. He informs the reader that the "educated African is resented equally by the blacks because he speaks English, which is one of the symbols of white supremacy, he is resentfully called a Situation" (Modisane 94). Much of Modisane's novel addresses the necessary adoption of multiple personalities in order to fit in amongst the various social classes. Modisane recognizes that he is the buoy in the middle of the ocean that divides the shallow from the deep. He is the educated black intellectual who defies how whites view the
native, as well as how blacks view their fellow blacks. This marginalization forces Modisane to adopt different masks, which he tiresomely swaps based upon who he is in the process of entertaining. Modisane conforms to what the white community expects of him. He writes, "We transform into the traditional good Native, the respectful, non-cheeky Native who has been educated and conditioned into an acceptance of his inferiority" (Modisane 55). He later goes on to say, "we wear our different racial masks and become synthetically polite to each other, in a kind of masquerade where Africans are being educated into an acceptance of their inferior position" (Modisane 158). The masks Modisane refers to are symbiotic of his transforming identities. Throughout history masks have played a vital role within the performing arts and ancient spiritual rituals. The mask has evolved into a symbol of identity and personhood. As stated by Donald Pollock in his essay *Masks and The Semiotics of Identity*, "the mask is normally considered a technique for transforming identity, either through the modification of the representation of identity, or through the temporary – and – representational – extinction of identity" (Pollock 582). Modisane is conscious that his identity adapts to his surroundings and the masks become the "plague" which causes Modisane to question the meaning and significance of his life.

Although Delbo’s situation is unique, she also assumes different identities to fit in with those who do not understand the holocaust experience. Throughout her novel, Delbo refers to two primary identities, her "Auschwitz" self and her "After Auschwitz" self. However, after her liberation, she discusses the various masks she appropriates to live her day-to-day life amongst the others. Delbo reunites with
Jeanne, a friend from the camp, whom she has not seen in years. Much to her surprise, Delbo finds the woman unrecognizable until she begins to speak, at which point Delbo realizes that under the exterior, Jeanne is the same girl who existed in Auschwitz. Delbo writes:

Retouched, washed clean by our memories, she was again the Jeanne we knew. I thought: How strange...Do I also have several faces? It seems that each one of us has one face-weary, worn down, frozen-and under that ruined face another-full of light, mobile, the one in our memories-and, covering both of these, a latchkey mask, the one we put on to go out, move through life, approach people... (Delbo 338)

Here, Delbo refers to her various identities as faces that survivors must adopt and wear to survive amongst the general public. The first of the three identities is her Auschwitz self, which has become frozen in time and worn from memories that invade her psychological space. Beneath the face of Auschwitz lies the face of the super ego. This is the self that Delbo wishes she could go back to. It is the person who is capable of remembering past experiences of home and the nostalgia of walking in the spring. This is the face that the survivor identifies with prior to Auschwitz. The third face is Delbo's current face, which she consciously covers with a façade of living normally without the restraint of being trapped in the first face. This mask hides the painful memories to accommodate those who will never understand the holocaust experience. Freud refers to this form of dissociation as depersonalization and suggests that, "Depersonalization leads us to the extraordinary condition of double consciousness, which is more correctly described
as split personality” (Caruth 166). Delbo and Modisane each mask their true identities from different communities by consciously taking on various roles of personhood. Eventually this mode of masquerading becomes problematic when trying to better understand oneself and healing from the trauma endured.

While in Auschwitz, Delbo turns to many methods of memory recall in hopes of regaining the person she identifies with prior to Auschwitz. In effort to maintain a piece of her super ego, she practices recalling the knowledge that she hopes to hold on to, knowing that it could be the difference between survival and death. She writes:

I had invented all kinds of exercises to put my memory to work: memorize all the telephone numbers I used to know... I had succeeded, at the price of infinite efforts, in recalling fifty-seven poems. I was so afraid they might escape my mind that I recited them to myself every day, all of them, one after the other, during roll call...I learned *Le Misanthrope* by heart. (Delbo 188)

Delbo is conscious that a person’s memories are vital to their very existence. She turns to memorizing her favorite pieces of literature as they provide her with a sense of security. While in the camps, Delbo pursues every type of memory game to postpone the memories of Auschwitz that attempt to invade her mental capacity. She writes, “Since Auschwitz, I always feared losing my memory. To lose one’s memory is to lose oneself, to no longer be oneself” (Delbo 188). Once liberated, Delbo believes that her life began in Auschwitz, as she is no longer able to remember the events from before. She searches for meaning in her life after Auschwitz and concludes that
To live in the past is not to live. It is to cut oneself off from the living...We have no way of grasping the present...I try at times to imagine what I'd be like were I like everyone else, that is, if I had not been taken over there. I don't succeed...I am other. I speak and my voice sounds like something other than a voice...I speak and what I say is not said by me. (Delbo 264)

Delbo experiences the ultimate existential crisis caught between identifying with those who have died, all the while continuing to live. Her memories are haunted by her experiences with death and she is incapable of continuing to masquerade in order to appease those who do not understand. Delbo reaches a point where she no longer recognizes her own voice, a voice she has waited a long time to utilize. As a result, she wonders if her "return must...assume some meaning" (Delbo 260).

Modisane chooses exile because he can no longer imagine his life without, "the simple things that make for happiness a home to sleep in comfort, the food to nourish the body, the right to friends of ones own choice, to dream, to love, to mate, all in perfect peace" (Modisane 261). He admits that his life seems empty and meaningless, writing, "all around me there was the futility and the apathy, the dying of the children, the empty gestures of the life reflected in the seemingly meaningless destruction of that life (Modisane 117). Modisane is tired of "trying to reconstruct the pieces, to find some sense...some purpose" and finally admits that all he can find is "the nagging monosyllabic why?" (Modisane 120). This is the "why" that seeps into the daily consciousness not only of those who have endured the political oppression, but also of the communities, which that oppression affects. The lingering ubiquitous "why" can be answered with a multitude of theories, but none
that give justice to the lives that have been lost or the destruction that occurs within the process of oppression. Although it is important to ask the "why," it is equally as important for those who bear witness through readership to address questions concerning the "what" and the "where?" What can communities do to ensure these tragedies never occur again and what does trauma memory mean for our collective identity as a human race? Furthermore, where do individuals go after experiencing such trauma?
Testimony becomes the eternal voice for those who were once silenced by providing a temporal space where trauma survivors can stand "the test of time" (Delbo x). Through their personal stories, survivors sanction future generations to remember and learn from past tragedies. Delbo and Modisane recognize that remembering history can lead to preventing future catastrophes and both express concern for what their traumatic experiences mean for future generations. The two intellectuals not only show concern for their immediate survival, but also for the survival of their children and communities. Both writers consider concepts of postmemory long before the term had even been coined. In fact, the titles of their memoirs alone hint at the obligation each individual has to think about his/her past and question what that past means for the future. Modisane's title, *Blame me on History*, requires of his reader an understanding of the complexity of South Africa's past. He suggests that without that historical knowledge, a person will never be capable of truly understanding who Modisane is. Furthermore, with these four powerful words, he addresses those who may not appreciate the intricacy of his identity as if saying, "if you do not like who I am, do not blame me. Instead, blame the race prejudices, the unjust laws, my forefathers and your expectations of who you think I ought to be." By asking readers to learn something about history, Modisane places emphasis on the importance of uncovering origins. Many critics believe that testimony is not representational of true history; however, it is indeed a
form of historical representation. Not only are the writers in and of themselves historical figures, but their works transcend what non-fiction is capable of. Robert Eaglestone, author of The Holocaust and The Postmodern writes:

The genre of testimony clearly has a relationship with the discipline of history... many testimonies use history. While most testimony narratives follow an autobiographical chronology, several have moments where the flow of narrative stops and the text, in its style or content, becomes 'historical', offering descriptive history or reportage. (Loc 542 of 5158 11%)

Modisane uses the framework of the novel to encourage his audience to further grasp how history has molded his future. While Modisane urges his readers to look at the past, Delbo asks of her readers to look towards the future. She titles her trilogy, Auschwitz and After, to entice readers to examine her prose through analytical lens that question, “where does one go after Auschwitz?” It is a question woven into each page of her written work and leads her audience towards the conceptualization of postmemory.

Postmemory is a term used to describe the way in which second and third generation survivors carry on the memories of their parents and grandparents. Although the term was originally created in direct relation to describe the holocaust experience, it is a genre that can be readily applied to all victims of exile. Postmemory serves as a double-edged sword. On the one hand it ensures that the testimonies of those who have survived trauma will live on, while on the other hand it acts as a hurdle for second and third-generation survivors to overcome. The children of trauma survivors bear two major burdens: the historical representation
of their ancestors, and the pain of surviving the trauma that has been transferred onto them. Not only does this place a lot of responsibility on second-generation victims, but it also opens the doors for their imaginations to soar. Often, when an event is not personally lived through, the mere images and assumptions of that unfamiliar memory can be just as traumatizing, if not more traumatizing than the first-hand experience itself. Second generation holocaust survivor Marianne Hirsch advises:

Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection, but through an imaginative investment and creation...Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created (Past Lives 662).

Postmemory creates a void where second and third-generation victims are incapable of fully understanding the experiences of their parents, yet still feel directly linked to the stories they have been told and obligated to carry on the memories. While both, Delbo and Modisane discuss the idea that their experiences can go on living through future generations, it is Modisane who relives the memories of his ancestors and assumes the responsibility of postmemory himself.

Modisane frequently remembers the traditions of his ancestors and feels a deep obligation to carry on their legacies. While in the middle of a spiritual crisis, he finds himself questioning the idea of Christianity, which the white oppressors have
forced upon him. Modisane addresses the common belief among natives that his deceased ancestors are in a mystical realm, controlling what happens in the secular world. Many natives credit the current black repression as a direct result of the black community adopting white religious beliefs, rather than practicing the traditional spiritual rituals of the natives. Modisane recognizes that traditionalists pontificate about the African's abandonment of the ways of our ancestors, that the acceptance of an alien culture has emasculated us, that the gods of our ancestors have cast their shadow on us; they claim that the prophets of Africa had warned against this calamity. (Modisane 165)

Although Modisane discards the idea of organized religion altogether, he nonetheless takes the time to address the spiritual beliefs of his descendants. Modisane pays respect to the traditions of his ancestors during the most critical periods of his life: when he marries, when experiencing the death of loved ones, and yet again when learning and reciting the history of his origins.

The Apartheid administrated schools teach black students history lessons that challenge the stories they learned as children. History has always been largely biased to benefit the person or community telling the story. Modisane is given information that vastly differs from the history he remembers learning from his parents. The history lessons in school are permeated with the white objective. Modisane however, sees through this objective and questions everything he is being taught:

The history teacher recounted-as documented-the wars of the Boers against the 'savage and barbaric black hordes' for the dark interior of Africa; the
ancestral heroes of our fathers, the great chiefs which our parents told stories about, were in a class described as blood-thirsty animal brutes; Tshaka, the brilliant general who welded the Mnguni tribelets into a unified and powerful Zulu nation, the greatest war machine in South African history, was described as a psychopath. (Modisane 41).

Modisane and his classmates confront the teacher and are told that if they wish to pass the course, they must repeat what they are being taught verbatim. This is the moment that Modisane learns he must discover the truth about history for himself. He comes to the conclusion that, "the white man petitioned history to argue his case and state his case, to represent the truth as he saw it," and opts to trust the stories, which have been passed down from his ancestors (Modisane 41). Modisane is an example of how "history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (Caruth 192). Identifying with his ancestors, Modisane chooses to believe those who have already gained his trust and those with whom he shares a traumatic history. Hirsch suggests that, "those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (The Generation 106). Although Modisane never experienced the Boer war of his ancestors, he bears witness to the stories through generations of storytelling. These personalized testimonies greatly exceed any account that has been printed by an unfamiliar and unrelated party.
Modisane longs to keep the memory of his father alive and is plagued with guilt for placing the blame of his current condition onto him and his forefathers. Throughout the novel, we witness Modisane regard his father as a coward who could not stand up to his white oppressors. Although this memory does not include a generational gap, it nonetheless necessitates Modisane’s postmemory as he projects his concern for how he will be perceived to future generations. Postmemory is more “than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath” it does not mean “an end” to something, but rather “its troubling continuity” (The Generation 106). Modisane remembers a night when he and his father are passing through Sophiatown and suddenly stopped by police officers who degrade them with obscenities. In order to eliminate further problems, Modisane’s father politely discards the insults and quietly hands the officers his identification card. In this instant, Modisane says his father’s “hero image disintegrated, crumbling into an inch high heap of ashes” (Modisane 24). Through the idyllic lens of a child, he simply cannot understand why his father would allow a white man to disrespect him in such a manner. Fast-forward twenty years, Modisane, as a father figure and victim to the same oppression his father was subjected to, realizes that his accusations were unfair. He admits, “In my prejudiced world of absolutes, my judgment was cruel, imposing upon him the standards of my own world of fancy” (Modisane 24). The reader begins to see Modisane’s resolution; regardless of sexual identity, some occurrences lie outside the realm of one’s control even as a man. As a boy, Modisane is ashamed of his father’s lack of masculinity and equates masculinity to fighting for one’s family. However, as a father retelling the story, Modisane
understands that by refraining from acting out in violence that day, his father
very well could have saved both of their lives. Remembering this event causes
Modisane to fear that his daughter will place the same blame on him for his inability
to free her from the same oppression he is born into. He fears that she will bear the
burden of his trauma, just as he bore that of his father and his forefathers.

The day Modisane’s firstborn child enters the world is robbed of joy and
instead, filled with anguish. Most new parents anxiously await the moment they get
to lay their eyes on the miraculous breathing creature they have created. This
moment is different for those who have experienced acute trauma, or are currently
under the state of suffering. Modisane describes the stress and anger that overrides
what is supposed to be a day filled with the euphoria of welcoming a newborn baby
into existence. He struggles:

Our lives were the pieces on the board being manipulated by a man-made
fate, children born into a social position and playing out a patterned destiny;
I seemed to see us all...on the draughtboard, manouvred into a trap, and
devoured by South Africa, one colour against the other. (Modisane 70)

Modisane fears that his future generation of children will suffer just as he has. He
feels trapped in a cyclone of race-prejudiced politics, which he cannot escape. The
moment Modisane lays eyes on his daughter, he is overwhelmed with feelings of
guilt, lamenting:

We are entrapped, this consciousness was never more vivid than on that July
day when Chris was born...I was a slave in the land of my ancestors,
condemned to a life of servitude, into which life I had inadvertently committed my daughter; the life I held in my hands was my personal offering to the jackals of South Africa, my individual contribution placed at the foot of the master; it was my investment towards the maintenance and continuance of the slave dynasty, I had added my share to the nourishment of the cosmic life of the slave. (Modisane 74)

Modisane recalls this moment with the unbearable fear that his daughter will become him, the subject of South Africa's postmemory, forced to carry on the torch of trauma memory. Instead of enjoying the moment, he is filled with contempt for bringing an innocent life into an unjust world. Modisane feels as if he has failed his “children as my father and my forefathers and ancestral gods of my fathers had failed me; they had lost a country, a continent, but I had failed to secure a patch of weeds for my children” (Modisane 10). Once the government bulldozes Sophiatown, Modisane searches for remnants to piece back together the only home he has ever known. He longs for his children to have some sort of reference to their origins. He holds a deep desire to understand where his ancestors came from and regrets that his children will never witness their true home. As Marianne Hirsch writes:

Home is always elsewhere, even for those who return...because the cities to which they can return are no longer those in which their parents had lived...before the genocide, but are in-stead the cities where the genocide happened and from which they and their memory have been expelled.

(Past Lives 662)
Although Hirsch directly references the holocaust experience, the same can be applied to others who have experienced exile. Second-generation survivors always think about the home that their parents came from, and because “home” is always elsewhere,” it is never tangible, creating a deep void within (Past Lives 662).

In *Measure of Our Days*, Delbo pays homage to the women who have survived alongside her. She writes this chapter masked as her comrades, returning to them the voices they have been denied for so long. Through the appropriation of her fellow comrades, Delbo provides a space for them to be recognized as part of post holocaust memory. Within this emotional concluding chapter, Delbo shows a passionate concern for what the future holds for second-generation survivors.

Delbo’s vignette of her friend, Mado addresses the idea of postmemory, while also bringing to surface the psychological pain associated with giving birth. Mado reveals that the day her son is born is a day predominated by great sadness. She writes:

> I was suffused with joy... At the vary same moment...my room was invaded by the ghosts of my companions...all the young women who died without knowing what it meant to be suffused by this joy...my joy was changed to sticky mud, sooty snow, fetid marshes. (Delbo 261)

Mado is filled with a mixture of joy and guilt. When she looks at her baby, she is reminded of all the women who were not fortunate enough to survive the camps and therefore, not fortunate enough to have children through which their legacies can live on. She is not only reminded of the women who died giving birth in the camps or while protecting their children in the camps, but is also reminded of the
infants themselves who never returned. Mado continues by showing concern for the future of her son, "I wanted to have a child who would grow fearlessly into manhood...Except for some unforeseeable twist of fate, he is bound to have a frightful future" (Delbo 262). Mado becomes conscious that she might not be able to provide her son with the kind of affection and emotional connection he needs. She worries that her detachment from her family will end up tarnishing her son's future, and discloses to Delbo that her family is "not present within me, not part of me" (Delbo 262). Those who survive extreme trauma feel isolated from those who have not shared their experiences. All the while second and third-generation survivors feel isolated from their parents, because their parents shut them out emotionally. Mado goes even further to suggest that she is not connected with the living. Although she embodies all characteristics associated with living, the joys that come with life have been omitted from her. The only people she feels as though she can confide in are those who understand and share her Auschwitz experience. As Kai Erikson suggests, trauma, although tragic, does result in a unique kinship:

Traumatic experiences work their way so thoroughly into the grain of the affected community that they come to supply its prevailing mood and temper, dominate its imagery and its sense of self, govern the way its members relate to one another...the shared experience becomes almost like a common culture, a source of kinship (Caruth 190).

Furthermore, through their written testimonies, survivors are able to provide a literary space, which allows them to feel as though they are restructuring their own personal identities.
Delbo's next vignette gives a detailed account of Ida, another survivor who experiences motherhood. Ida discloses feelings of postpartum depression combined with posttraumatic stress disorder. She explains that after her daughter is born she begins questioning her existence, "Why am I here? What am I doing here?" (Delbo 299). Ida tries to escape her fragmented identity by running away in the middle of the night and in doing so, jumps out of a window. She in turn fractures her body in five different places and spends the course of her life in and out of psych wards under observation. While relaying this information to Delbo, Ida speaks of her daughter describing the day of her birth as one of great joy, she states, "It's true she was cute, our Sophie" (Delbo 298). A comment seemingly void of emotion, but obligatory and expected of new mothers. She then continues, "One day, just when everything was going so well...I was seized with an insurmountable anguish" (Delbo 298). Once the panic of motherhood sets in for Ida, it is the last straw. She loses all sense of self and is incapable of parenting. The psychological effects of trauma passed on from one generation to the next are consequential. A recent study by Haifa University in Israel found that even third generation descendants of holocaust victims suffer from traumatic stress. The study also discovered that many second-generation survivors feel that their parents are "unable to develop warm, supportive relationships, when they needed such support in their childhood years" (Even). Many holocaust survivors live in a constant state of fear that something terrible will happen again at any given moment. These fears are passed onto their children, who in turn become anxious and obsessed with healing their parents' wounds.
Testimony from second-and-third-generation descendants of holocaust survivors is a relatively new genre of literature. Within this genre the concept of postmemory has been cultivated. Marianne Hirsch argues, “the children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and the destruction of home, remain always marginal or exiled, always in the diaspora” (Past Lives 662). As shown throughout this paper, literature of the exiled largely includes prose that expresses a search for identity and longing for home. Within the works of Delbo and Modisane, the notion of home and identity are interlaced. One cannot understand selfhood without a concept of where that selfhood has evolved from. Along with postmemory, there is also a form of “absent memory,” which is the result of second-generation survivors whose parents did not communicate their past experiences, but instead remained silent. *Measure of Our Days* gives insight into the countless approaches that survivors take when disclosing their personal traumatic experiences with others. For instance, Marie-Louise speaks about her experiences frequently, whereas Mado never discloses her past to her husband or her child. For the children of survivors who experience their parents’ silence, this silence has created an even further separation from understanding oneself. Second-generation survivor, Hirsch quotes Henri Raczymow, “I try to restore a non-memory, which by definition cannot be billed in or recovered...if the earth is turning to the right...I must turn left in order to catch up with the past.” Hirsch continues:

European Jews of the postwar generation are forever turning left, but we can never catch up with the past; inasmuch as we remember, we remain in
perpetual temporal and spatial exile. Our past is literally a foreign country
we can never hope to visit. And our postmemory is shaped...by our sense of
belatedness and disconnection" (Past Lives 663).

Postmemory, and memory as a collective, allow trauma survivors and writers of
exile to seek solace for the wrong that has been done. In a personal interview with
theorist Rose Lamont, Delbo reveals the following:

I wrote this text so that people might envision what l'univers
concentrationnaire was like... Of course it wasn’t ‘like’ anything one had ever
known. It was profoundly, utterly ‘unlike.’ And so, I knew I had to raise
before the eyes of the future reader the hellish image of a death camp...I hope
that these texts will make the reoccurrence of this horror impossible... This is
my dearest wish...was the manuscript to acquire a life of its own, it could
journey through time, and reach future generations. (485/6)

Prior to understanding the immediate benefit of writing one’s personal story,
survivors are immediately concerned with getting some sort of normalcy back into
their lives. However, once they take on the endeavor of writing down their
traumatic memories, a new form of life emerges.

Auschwitz survivor, Lillian Judd, a Czechoslovakian native regained her sense
of self after 60 years of liberation. Judd believes that she owes her renewed
consciousness to testimony, claiming that writing her personal stories “saved her”
(Judd). Together with her son Dennis, a second-generation survivor, she published
her first memoir entitled, From Nightmare to Freedom. Her title is an exact
description of her personal experience. Judd details the endless years she lived
waking up each night, screaming from nightmares of being back in Auschwitz. Dennis shares these memories and recalls his confusion as a boy who never understood his mother's anguish. Judd decided not to disclose her history with her family, leaving them unaware of her Auschwitz experience. She felt as if, "I couldn't tell anybody...I was so angry...I was so frustrated" (Judd). Judd realized that the hate and anger controlled her for far too many years and decided to write down her story - a recommendation given from her son, in pursuit of his own healing from the pain he endured growing up with an emotionally detached and angry mother. The moment Judd sat down and took to the pen, "a miraculous" thing happened, she went to bed that night and for the first time since her liberation, she slept until the morning. Judd informs that with each stroke of the pen, her burden became, "lighter and lighter with each page" (Judd). The moment Judd began telling her story, is the moment she began living. Dennis attests to getting to know the woman he did not know for the first 40 years of his life. He admits that his mother is a completely different person, who can now laugh and let go.

Modisane too understands that the power of the written word lasts much longer than any other form of animosity. He writes, "I directed my energy to my writing, determined to use it as the weapon for gate-crashing into the worlds which rejected me" (Modisane 88). Delbo and Modisane invite their readers to witness the trauma they have endured, asking that they not only remember the experiences they have suffered, but to also make choices that better the future. Their writings are their lifelines. Both writers suggest that history and the future are connected
and if a person understands history, then (s)he is better prepared to understand the future.

Since Delbo and Modisane have passed, their written words act as agents of postmemory. Author Marianne Hirsch defines postmemory as "someone who gives narrative shape to the surviving fragments of an irretrievable past" (Past Lives 665). This goes on to include not only the written words of those who bear witness, but also future generations who are able to carry on their parents' and grandparents' legacies. Delbo and Modisane show great concern for the future generations and their descendants. Although Delbo never had children of her own, she always referred to her memoir as her "baby." However, without readership and community engagement, postmemory could not exist. Postmemory calls on society to provide the framework for memory and remembering to function, as Maurice Halbwachs suggesting, "memory needs continuous feeding from collective sources and is sustained by social and moral props... memory needs others" (Russell 794). While writers of exile do not expect readers to understand their personal experiences, they do ask of their audience one simple thing, to be remembered.
CONCLUSION

Trauma memory emerged as a popular literary study following World War I. Today, the topic continues to be prevalent as scholars strive to better understand the human experience. As human beings, traumatic events are woven throughout every fiber of our history, and as direct descendants of postcolonialism, a foundation that we are all a product of. While some traumatic events are not within human control, others are a direct result of human indulgence. Even if it takes a little digging, in some fashion each of us is directly connected to a long-line of ancestors who have either endured the unthinkable, or assisted in its transmission. Each country has experienced its share of wars, natural disasters, or mental illnesses; and while these events continue to arise, it is our responsibility to come together in our humanness and empathize with those who are suffering. Through the testimonies of Charlotte Delbo and Bloke Modisane, we as readers better understand the transference and permanency of psychological trauma. By engaging with these written works, readers are taken through the journey of the transference of trauma memory and accept responsibility to prevent similar occurrences from taking place in the future.

While under the state of acute trauma, memory acts as a survival mechanism providing a space where the victims are brought back to their fondest memories of nostalgia. For Delbo, these instances are triggered when she is at her breaking point. Moments when she feels as if lifting one more finger will result in death, she envisions a blooming flower, or something as simple as a brick and is immediately
drawn back to memories of home. While surrounded by “diarrhea and corpses,” she notices that spring is on the horizon and remembers that, “Spring sang in the memory, in my memory” (Delbo 111). In moments of crisis, rather than succumb to the death that she longs to “give in” to, Delbo’s memory disengages from the unbearable reality of her Auschwitz existence (Delbo 65). Similarly, Modisane experiences the same memory stimulation when life-threatening moments arise. As the victim of a brutal attack, Modisane’s memory sparks remembrances of the safety of his own home in Sophiatown. Just as he is giving into death, he remembers “home” and finds the endurance to continue living (Modisane 66).

The second phase of trauma memory transfers into posttraumatic stress disorder leading survivors towards self-destruction and dissociation. This phase is a common occurrence, which many trauma victims experience. When PTSD was first identified, psychologists thought it a rare hysteria. However, after WWI psychoanalysts began to see similar sets of symptoms within war veterans. Delbo and Modisane describe variations of these recognized symptoms within their written works, and although their symptoms are different, they are examples defined by the American Psychological Association as PTSD. For Delbo, these symptoms erupt after her liberation, whereas for Modisane, they become a part of his cultural appropriation in his search for identity.

As readers, we witness Delbo struggle with memories of her existence in the camps. She continues to be haunted by the death, which consumes each day that she spends in Auschwitz. The atrocities from bearing the unthinkable, result in her dissociation from the external world. She writes of her immediate liberation as a
memory of numbness. Delbo recalls, “I felt nothing, did not feel myself existing, did not exist. How long did I remain thus, in a state of suspension?” (Delbo 236).

While Delbo searches for her voice, she continues to feel divided from those who do not share her personal connection with the holocaust. She begins to question, “what is real?” and discovers that her newfound knowledge of the world is the truth she acquires in Auschwitz. With that, she questions the meaning of her existence, asking:

How can one continue living in a world stripped of mystery? How can one exist in a world where lies are brightly, blindingly colored, separating themselves form truth, as in decomposing amalgams where each ingredient finally assumes its own color and destiny?” (Delbo 239)

Modisane finds himself immersed in self-destructive behavior, asking the same questions about existence and searching for “meaning in all the chaos” (Modisane 255). His posttraumatic stress is displayed through reckless abandon, as he seeks pleasure with complete disregard for any repercussions. Modisane describes feeling, “automated by this craving he could not free” himself from (Modisane 212). He furthermore, becomes exhausted with “pretending an existence without consciousness, an existence of accommodating the smell of insult, the assegai wound of humiliation, in which every hurt is pushed down” (Modisane 70). Modisane is conscious that his repressed emotions towards his white oppressors may result in violence at any given moment. He continues to search “for a larger existence” as he is currently stuck, “between the scorn and hatred of both the white and the black
world” (Modisane 229). Modisane is at a constant standstill. He is torn between two identities and searching for an undivided sense of self.

The final phase of transference, as displayed within the works of Delbo and Modisane, is the concept of postmemory. Both writers show concern for how their legacies will be remembered, and how their projected traumas will affect future generations. Delbo is concerned that this event, which has consumed so much of her life and her identity, may have caused irrefutable damage. Modisane also fears that his trauma memory will be passed onto his daughter and future grandchildren to bear. However, each writer embodies the same objective within their written testimonies, which is the hope that their personal story will be shared and learned from.

Through testimony, survivors are given a platform to be heard, indefinitely. Their legacies live on through their written words and within the writing process, then form their own identities. Historians will agree that the holocaust and apartheid are extremely unique cases of human subjugation; however, they do not agree that testimony should be viewed as historical evidence of past occurrences. Although the documentation *Blame Me On History* and *Auschwitz and After* are fictional historical accounts, their context brings readers closer to an understanding of the human experience than any form of non-fiction is capable of.

With close examination of two completely different individuals, I have come to the conclusion that trauma brings people together unlike any other event. Charlotte Delbo, a white woman from a middle class democratic society describes the same exact experiences lived by an oppressed black man from South Africa. And
in turn, Bloke Modisane, a black man from an impoverished oppressed society describes the same exact experiences lived by a free white woman from France, proving that the human experience of suffering is the same regardless of the language one speaks, or the piece of land that person originates from. Modisane writes:

Man has failed. His principles have no integrity, his laws accommodate the inequality of man. The annihilation of the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru by the Spaniards; the extermination of the Red Indians in North America and the Maoris in New Zealand by the English; the obliteration of the Hottentots by the Dutch, indicate that the white men did believe themselves so superior, and their civilization so unique, and others so inferior that they had very little compunction in exterminating them, with the same disregard as one destroys vermin. (Modisane 179)

All across the world, suffering connects people. As readers we are brought in as witnesses of two magnificent testimonies about the human struggle for survival. While watching these individuals weave their fragmented identities back together, we must understand that it is through universal memorandum that survivors can heal. The world remains largely unchanged since these memoirs have been published, and acts of genocide and religious warfare continue. However, through speaking it, listening to it and providing social awareness about these uncomfortable, intricate details that make up our world history, change is possible. And as these ensuing issues continue to pour over societies throughout, Modisane
and Delbo will be honored to know that their testimonies continue to be relevant, discussed, learned from, and always remembered.
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