

***Violence and Cultural Politics of Trauma.* Jane Kilby. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2007; illustrations; xvi +130 pages; ISBN 978-0 7486-1816 3; \$80.00US (paper).**

Through a broad reading of various cultural institutions and artifacts across North America and Britain, Jane Kilby looks at the political implications of speaking out about incest and rape contemporarily and explains the implications of how such testimony has drastically changed since the late 1970s and 1980s. Kilby says she is "[L]ooking to develop a language that can sustain our understanding of victim experience precisely when securing recognition of that experience is a tenuous possibility" (3). She analyzes the debates on recovered memory therapy, false memory syndrome, and the critiques of various visual and literary pieces created by survivors of incest and rape. Throughout these sections of her book, Kilby's own stance is only eluded to, showing her desire to move through these debates, avoiding "forever and forlornly acting out...traumatic history" (76) instead of offering a political response to trauma culture. Smartly, she rarely provides the details of traumatic experiences thus making sure her work does not fall into the category of work she frequently criticizes as "peep-show mentality" (119), that is, being fascinated with the details of abuse, and which does not move towards the political treatment of trauma.

Kilby believes a move away from representational realism in survivor art can provide possibilities for both audience and artist by invoking the pop art technique of repetition (96). In her last chapter, Kilby turns to the phenomenon of survivors of trauma sharing their stories on daytime talk shows. In this section Kilby discusses how testimony on television usually results in disappearance or erasure through editing or leading questions. This is an excellent observation, discussed in tandem with the graffiti in women's washrooms at Brown University naming sexual predators, which could have been discussed further but will no doubt come up in Kilby's future work. Ultimately, Kilby seems to be calling for the continued speaking out by survivors while maintaining certain reservations based on the awareness of the possible implications of the context or medium where the speaking out occurs, invoking "a politics that is not based on the guaranteed promise of change but on the promise of change as a contingent possibility" (129). Though I am unsure whether Kilby has successfully developed the type of language she says that she is searching for in the introduction to this volume, she critically exposes many of the discourses surrounding trauma culture and has begun to conceive of a space in which to think about trauma and violence outside of current, mainstream debates.

Mary Shearman
Simon Fraser University