



Gestures of Testimony: Torture, Trauma, and Affect in Literature

Michael Richardson

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After 9/11, the United States became a nation that sanctioned torture. Detainees across the globe were waterboarded, deprived of sleep, beaten by guards, blasted with deafening music and forced into obscene acts. Their torture presents a profound problem for literature: torturous pain and its traumatic aftermath have long been held to destroy language, shatter experience, and refuse representation. Challenging accepted thinking, *Gestures of Testimony* asks how literature might bear witness to the tortures of a war waged against fear itself.

Bringing the vibrant field of affect theory to bear on theories of torture and power, Richardson adopts an interdisciplinary approach to show how testimony founded in affect can bear witness to torture and its traumas. Grounded in provocative readings of poems by Guantanamo detainees, memoirs of interrogators and detainees, contemporary films, the Bush Administration's Torture Memos, and fiction by George Orwell, Franz Kafka, Arthur Koestler, Anne Michaels, and Janette Turner Hospital, Michael Richardson traces the workings of affect, biopower, and aesthetics to re-think literary testimony. *Gestures of Testimony* gives shape to a mode of affective witnessing, a reaching beyond the page in the writing of torture that reveals violent trauma - even as it embodies its veiling.

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