

AYLA LEFKOWITZ

**Don't talk about rape, but watch it on television**

Cross legged on soft carpet  
How young I was  
When I learned  
About the birthmarks  
Tattooed  
On my grandmother's arm.  
A lineage;  
An offshoot of bark;  
A barcode—  
My family tree.

Auschwitz. Birkenau.  
The gas chamber.  
Cyclone of Bees swarming lungs  
Gnawing their way out  
Leaving room for the flies.  
My first exposure to pubic hair. How young I was  
to see,  
The naked bodies,  
Piled.  
I wondered if my body would be like hers  
Hairy.  
Murdered.  
My child brain,  
Filled with  
Dying bumble bees  
And dead bodies.

But never once  
Did I ever hear the word  
Rape.

It was illegal for Nazis to sleep with Jewish women  
That did not stop them. With a little bit of force  
And a lot of murder  
Jewish women were found  
Breastless and  
Raped.

After the Nazis,  
Came the Soviet Liberators,  
Who invaded the camps  
And the women inside of them.  
In solidarity,  
Came those Jewish men  
Who fought alongside brave women  
And used them to take their own power.

Even women that can taste their freedom  
End up gagging.

Rape

is written in dirt.  
As in soil.  
As in soiled, dirty laundry.  
As in "shonda"  
Yiddish for shame and pity.  
I wonder why rape is not in the history books,  
But all over the television.

Hollywood  
Like history  
Is written by men.  
Men,  
Mics,  
Various phallic instruments.  
Quiet on set to make room for her screams.  
Season one,  
Episode Nine,  
13 reasons why the show sells,  
Why death camps were profit filled,  
Pulling out gold teeth  
Money so easily made off women's pain.

Let boys  
Practise seduction  
With clenched fists and Rohypnol.  
Let vomit come out like cum  
While victims heave "shonda" for the rest of their  
lives.  
History wants to leave those pages blank,  
But just because we don't speak of it,  
Doesn't mean it didn't happen.

In Hebrew school,  
I learned to "never forget"  
To keep the past alive,  
In fear it would repeat.  
With the ink  
From my grandmother's arm  
Let me make a footnote,  
In the history books,  
In the screenplays,  
Uprooted from the soil.  
My "shonda"  
Their rape  
Will not be forgotten.

*Ayla Lefkowitz is a graduate of McGill University and The London School of Economics and Political Science. As a spoken word poet, Ayla was on the Toronto Poetry Slam Team performing on National and International stages, gaining her a National Championship win at the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word. In 2018, Ayla published her first poetry anthology titled Armour.*