

# Trauma Testimony Discourses

Genre Patterns and Innovation



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY  
Sackler Faculty of Medicine  
The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities

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## ABSTRACTS



Ministry of Health  
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### **1. PORTELLI, Alessandro:**

#### **Death and Survival in Harlan County, Kentucky: A case study and a methodological approach in Oral History and a case study**

“If you think about the way we grew up actually, it was a miracle that we survived. Before you're ever two years old, you've already beat the odds of survival” (Annie Napier, disabled miner's wife).

Oral history began as a somewhat positivistic enterprise, looking for the “first-hand” evidence of participants in historical events. Since then, scholarship and research have focused increasingly on the study of subjectivity and narrative. Thus, it has developed into an especially apt approach for the study of traumas as social and psychic experience.

This paper, based on many years of interviewing and field work in Harlan County, Ky., a coal mining area of Appalachian Eastern Kentucky with a long and dramatic history of labor conflict, mining disasters, and environmental destruction, will discuss some of the historical and cultural background for the Appalachian preoccupation with death, and social and personal ways of coping.

In fact, death and survival are closely related themes in the historical experience of Harlan County. Appalachian culture has a deep awareness of the presence of individual and mass death, and has developed a number of ways of coping with it, from fatalism to ritual to struggle.

### **2. SOLOMON, Zahava:**

#### **The Memory of Trauma – from Private Sphere to the Collective**

Traumatized individuals are bound by unseen strings to their traumatic experience. Unable to escape, they are doomed to fluctuate between two opposite faces. One face commands them to remember while the other encourages them to forget. Trapped in their past, their prison bars are made of memories, flashbacks and dreams, as they seek to escape by means of avoidance and memory repression.

Simultaneously, the society in which they take refuge is also constantly moving between a need to respect the trauma's memory and a need to move forward, away from a troubling past. In this lecture I wish to examine the shifts and changes in the Israeli society's attitude towards trauma survivors, Holocaust survivors and soldiers; from forgetfulness and repression to commemoration and treasuring of the personal and collective memories and testimonials.

### **3. ROBIN, Régine:**

#### **What to Do with "Traumatisme"?**

“When we had to go through a medical commission in order to decide what amount of money we would receive from the Germans, the doctor decided to give different sums to my mother

and my brother, but nothing for myself, because I was too young during the war, I didn't realize anything, so I wasn't "traumatized".

The purpose of my lecture is to highlight the components of a psychic process: what happens when one realizes that he was the victim of a traumatic experience but didn't know about it? I'm thinking about the Jewish children of the war, to who little has been explained to them immediately after the war. They experienced and knew almost everything, except that this one word would sooner or later apply to them: "traumatized". What happens to children from an existential and theoretical point of view, once this word starts to be a burden on their shoulders? Does it play a role in the theoretical choices that children make during the process of building or rebuilding their history and their past? What should we do with the manifestation and symptoms of this "trauma", that has first been denied and only been recognized in a very late chapter of the child's life story?

#### **4. LIEBLICH, Amia:**

##### **Trauma Testimony Discourse over Time**

For more than 30 years I have been interviewing Israelis and studying their life stories, which turned out to be more often than not 'pain discourses' of various kinds. These involved autobiographical narratives of loss or deprivation due to war, the Holocaust, immigration, poverty and disease. The vast majority of these narratives have a collective, historical calamity – rather than an individual tragedy – as an anchor of the entire story. In any case, almost every life story of an adult Jewish Israeli has severe crisis at its core, and literary theory, such as explicated by J. Bruner for example, proposes that this is always the case in 'good stories'. From an external point of view, my accumulated testimonies are indeed about trauma and recovery. This, however, has not been always the construction or the terms utilized by the narrators themselves.

Studying the place and nature of trauma discourse in people's life narratives, when using their own words and constructions, leads to interesting conclusions. The concept of 'trauma' is almost entirely absent in Israeli life stories of the 1970-1980. 'Trauma' has emerged as a term in individual's life autobiographical discourse only recently, and even now, not in all segments of the population. My paper will discuss the effects of periodical, social and political conditions on the construction of trauma and suffering discourse in life stories of Israeli-Jewish adults. Among the major reasons for the changing discourse, I will enlarge upon several inter-related polarities in the social-cultural history of Israeli society: the dialectics of heroism versus weakness, of perpetrator versus victim, of individualism versus collectivism, of religious versus secular, and of political versus medical-psychological frames of reference. Furthermore, the economic considerations, consciously or unconsciously underlying one's narrative construction, as well as aging effects on the narrators, will be discussed.

## **5. MENDLOVIC, Shlomo:**

### **Traumatized Multiple Selves: Society and the Curative Potential of TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission)**

Contemporary psychoanalysis conceptualize the *self* as multiple and contextual. Recently, it was suggested that the intra-psychic sphere could be conceptualized as a society of multiple self-s. Being so, socially decoding this multiple self-s society could provide new insights into developmental, psychopathological and interventional aspects of the psychic world.

Trauma is associated with dissociative defense mechanisms, as well as dissociative symptoms (either isolated [as in de-realization] or aggregated [as in Acute Stress Disorder]). In the presentation, I would conceptualize dissociation in terms of a split society of multiple self-s. Such a split society, in which traumatized and non-traumatized sets of multiple self-s are unable to communicate with each other, is unable to create a cohesive testimonial narrative, thus further fragmenting the intra-psychic.

Conceptualizing the traumatized as inhibited by non-communicating sets of multiple self-s invites the application of novel interventional techniques. One of these, closely studied by the Tel Aviv University Multiple Self-s Group (at the Psychoanalytic Studies Cluster, the Faculty of Humanities), is the application of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to the treatment of traumatized individuals. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a court-like body assembled in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid. Witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their experiences, and some were selected for public hearings. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, although criticized for failing to achieve reconciliation between the black and white communities, may be highly relevant to the treatment of traumatized individuals. It may promote the consolidation of an accepted narrative, thus bridging the dissociated sets of multiple self-s and restoring the communal cohesiveness of the intra-psychic.

The conceptual, clinical and technical aspects of the application of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in traumatized individuals will be discussed in the light of a short clinical presentation.

## **6. KEREN, Arnon:**

### **Collective Trauma, Collective Testimony: Can *Wikipedia* be believed?**

Much of what we think that we know, we believe on the basis of other people's testimony. The primary task of the epistemology of testimony is to explain how beliefs formed in this way can be justified, and constitute knowledge. Much of the epistemological attempt to address this question has focused on the testimony of individuals. In this paper, I will discuss the epistemological question of the credibility of collective testimony. Such testimony, of the kind one finds, e.g., in Wikipedia articles, is produced collaboratively by a group of individuals, in such a way that there is no individual that is known to be the author of any

particular statement. When can such collective testimony be believed, if at all? Can it be a source of knowledge in the same way that individual testimony can be?

While the question of the credibility of collective testimony is of general significance, it is of particular significance for the study of testimony concerning collective trauma, such as the holocaust. It is a familiar idea, that the testimony of the victim of a traumatic event has some special moral and epistemic status, such that the victim can demand not only to be heard, but also to be believed. But the idea that the testimony of a trauma victim has such a special epistemic status faces a challenge, when we are considering collective trauma. Collective trauma is trauma that is suffered not only by an individual, but by a collective. Can the collective then bear witness to such trauma and ask that her testimony be believed?

In asking this question, we must distinguish between two distinct ways in which we can rely on other people's testimony. One such way involves treating a speaker's testimony as we would treat any other piece of evidence. But this is not the normal way of reliance on a speaker's testimony. The normal way of relying on a speaker's testimony involves believing the speaker. The question raised by collective testimony is whether we can believe the source of such testimony. And if so, who is it that we can believe? Can a group of agents be believed? Or is it only individuals that compose the group that can be believed?

Even if a group of individuals can have beliefs, and can testify as a group, it is doubtful whether groups can be believed. For to believe someone involves attributing to her justified beliefs, and it is far from obvious that a group can have justified beliefs. I will argue against Hardwig's influential argument for the claim that groups can have justified beliefs, and that we have justification to believe many propositions that we believe, only if groups can have justified beliefs. I will then study the implications of the rejection of Hardwig's position for the credibility of collective testimony in general, and for the status of testimony about collective trauma in particular.

## **7. NOAH HARARI, Yuval:**

### **Do Just Wars cause Trauma?**

Combatants' trauma narratives are often viewed as intrinsically anti-war. Unpopular wars generate more trauma narratives, whereas the publication of combatants' trauma narratives undermines support for war. (For example, in the U.S.A. trauma narratives are more readily associated with the Vietnam War than with the Second World War, and in Israel with the Lebanon War more than with the Six Days War.) This stands in sharp contrast to narratives of physical injury, which may well be militaristic and drum up support for war, in the tradition of *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. How can we account for this difference?

One possibility is that whereas all wars cause bodily injury and death, regardless of their justness, mental trauma is caused mainly by unjust wars. At least according to cognitive theories of trauma, trauma is caused by cognitive dissonance, and unjust wars generate more cognitive dissonance among combatants.

Another possibility is that all wars, whether just or unjust, have roughly the same potential to cause both physical injury and mental trauma. Yet whereas narratives of just wars can easily be squared with narratives of physical injury, they cannot be squared with narratives of mental trauma. Consequently, trauma narratives remain suppressed unless they are linked to doubts about the justness of war. Why might there be an inherent contradiction between narratives of just wars and narratives of trauma?

In many cultures, the story of “The Just War” tells how some spiritual ideal (national, religious, social, ideological) inspires people to make a sacrifice for its sake. The ideal cannot protect these people from physical harm, but the inspiration and guidance it provides are supposed to protect them from mental and spiritual harm. Indeed, as long as the combatants follow the ideal closely, their spirits are supposed to be elevated and purified. Whether it is Jihad, Crusade, National Liberation or Revolution, the armed struggle promises spiritual redemption and epiphany.

Narratives of physical injury and even death are easily squared with this story. If the Crusader loses limbs and life, the war might still be viewed positively, because the Crusader’s spirit is redeemed. Indeed, the fact that the Crusader was willing to sacrifice limbs and life is often cited as proof for the worthiness of the ideal and the justness of the war.

Narratives of mental injury and trauma cannot be squared with this story. If the Crusader’s spirit is broken and maimed, and if he/she is no longer willing to make a sacrifice for the cause, can this be redemption? The only way to account for such breakdown is by arguing that the Crusader’s faith and adherence to the ideal are faulty – or that the ideal itself is chimerical. In either case, this casts a huge doubt over the justness of the war, for either its cause was unworthy to begin with, or the army undertaking it has abandoned the righteous path. Consequently it is a very widespread opinion that if combatants suffer from trauma, it “proves” that they were fighting an unjust war.

## **8. WALLEN, Jeffrey:**

### **Trauma Testimony in the Era of the Archive**

We live in an era of information. The Internet in particular has radically changed our access to and interaction with information. But we also live in "the era of the witness," to borrow Annette Wieviorka's phrase. Trauma testimony discourse is both inherently personal - a bearing witness to what one has seen and experienced - and necessarily plural - a response to the pressures of the collective on the individual and a response shaped by the collection of information. The witness narrative seems to be the polar opposite of the bureaucratic archive of documents (that which is registered *elsewhere*; not in the memory of an individual, but in the walls of an institution). But trauma testimony is now also engaged with and necessarily shaped by the archive.

In what ways does the "era of information" require us to rethink ideas about trauma, and about the testimony that brings trauma into discourse? And in particular, in what ways does the proliferation and accessibility of testimony discourse reshape the relation between trauma and testimony?

In this paper, I will begin by exploring the inherent tensions between trauma and testimony. A witness narrative is both about the events that happened in the past, and a testimony *of* trauma - of the holes or the scars in the fabric of one's being that in some measure shape the testimony itself. Different situations - legal, historical, educational, therapeutic - each alter the uneasy balances between trauma and testimony. Acts of testimony also transform the trauma that they describe or reveal.

The central focus of my presentation will be on the ways in which trauma testimony is affected by the archive. The testimony of the eyewitness, of what an "I" witnessed, is also always on the way to becoming an archival document, part of a collection of papers (or tapes, or digitalizations) that are detached from the propriety of the individual subject. Trauma is a form of de-personalization, de-subjectification, de-humanization, and the archive is the institution that records the impersonal, that registers our interactions with bureaucracy. On the one hand, the archive seems inimical to trauma testimony; on the other, it is its necessary ground. The Spielberg Holocaust Video archive is perhaps the most striking collection mechanism of trauma testimony.

In my talk I will use some examples from Holocaust testimony, but I will also examine trauma testimonies that proceed from an awareness *of* the archive, such as the testimonies of East Germans after the opening of the Stasi archives. Here, the presence of the archive is itself one of the main vectors in producing trauma.

## **9. LAUB, Dori:**

### **Re-establishing the Internal "Thou" in Testimony of Trauma**

At the very core of the extreme traumatic experience (e.g. genocide, childhood sexual abuse) is the obliteration of the internalized, empathic communicative dyad. As the executioner does not heed the pleas for life, and relentlessly proceeds with the execution, the internal "Thou," the addressee with whom inner dialogue – a pre-requisite to symbolization and to internal world representation – ceases to exist. Without that internal dialogue with oneself, no psychic representation of the traumatic experience exists, and narrative cannot be formed to relate it to another. Therefore, to a large extent, the witness 'does not know' what she knows of her experience of extremity. It is only through the testimonial process, in the company of an intimate, totally present listener, that the lost internal "Thou" can begin to be reestablished and the process of internal dialogue, symbolization, and narrative formation can resume. A memory is thus created that can be both related and forgotten.

Failed attempts at narrativization of trauma, ranging from momentary lapses, through dissociative states, to total mutedness, are replete in trauma discourse. Examples of such "crisis of witnessing" will be given; both of cases in which the conflict remains unresolved, and of situations in which the addressee is reestablished and dialogue narrative resumes.

## **10. CHIANTARETTO, Jean-François:**

### **The Attack of the Internal Exchange of the Survival Witness (L'attaque de l'interlocution interne chez le témoin survivant).**

The apparition of the survived witness of the Shoah has caused an inversion within the testimonial model, differentiating itself from the ocular testimony. Where the latter is based on witnessed facts valued over experienced feelings, the former is inverted: based on experienced feelings rather than witnessed facts. The subjectivity of the witness doesn't weaken the testimony, but builds up its core.

The genocidary aim of the Nazi's has often been called, following Ferenczi, as an aim to 'murder the soul'. And as the witness's testimony speaks, we hear, even beyond the reference to collective murder, the attack and resistance of his subjectivity and his feeling of belonging to human kind. This testimony therefore also highlights a psychological aspect of surviving: the possibility of having an internal conversation, so to speak: the maintenance of something inside to whom one can talk to.

The attack by such an 'internal witness', giving us the feeling we exist and belong to human kind, is the traumatic scar the survived witness is carrying. We will study some of its aspects, starting with several testimonial oeuvres, in particular those of Primo Levi, Imre Kertész and Aharon Appelfeld.

## **11. GOLAN, Ruth:**

### **The Necessity and the Impossibility of Testimony: Testifying on Trauma as the Missed Encounter with the Real and as a Potential of Conscious Evolution**

One way to look at the process of psychoanalysis is as a process of testimony. In psychoanalysis we are dealing with two modes of testimony: a conscious one, through the use of language, and an unconscious one – through repetition. Repetition compulsion is the attempt to remember and testify to what has been partly and unsuccessfully repressed by an act (usually a symptomatic one). It is the return of the repressed through action. In that respect the traumatic is not connected to the realism of reality but to what we call The Real.

Repetition compulsion is a testimony that makes the traumatic present in its absence – something that cannot be described in words and that gives rise to the experience of the uncanny ('unheimliche'). One can say it is a missed encounter with the Real which creates trauma, an encounter that we cannot assimilate into our symbolic system. Trauma is not just a horrible external event but a combination of this with the internal experience of the unbearable. Therefore testimony as a symbolic act of speech is always partial, and in a sense is doomed to fail. It is a desperate attempt to give meaning to what is inherently meaningless, and it can lead the testifying subject to depression and even suicide (we see this especially among sensitive intellectuals like Primo Levi or Romain Gary).

We can say that the aim of psychoanalysis is to free the subject from the need to testify through actions (repetition compulsion) – i.e. to start to testify consciously by words, and to

free the witness from the morbid satisfaction (jouissance) that is inherent in testifying by accepting the impossibility of saying The Thing itself.

From a spiritual perspective we can say that since trauma is an occurrence beyond time and symbolic history it touches the eternal (which can be represented by the presence of Death or the Absolute). As such it can be approached solely by the traces it leaves behind.

I claim that what is crucial in testifying on personal or collective trauma is the position of the testifier and the position of the listener towards the testimony. The witness who testifies and the witness who listens can come from two opposed positions: the victim position and the liberated position. The traumatic event can capture one in an endless cycle of repetition and frustration or it can be an opportunity for radical transformation and evolution.

My paper will broaden these statements theoretically – looking at them from both a Freudian-Lacanian perspective and an evolutionary spirituality perspective. I will use clinical examples as well as literary ones like Etty Hillesum's Diary.

## **12. AMIR, Dana:**

### **The Inner Witness**

This paper deals with the uprooted psychic condition which results from an ongoing traumatization, sometimes cross-generational, a traumatization that prevented the self from building a good object that might therefore be lost. This condition of primary traumatization will be defined here as the erasure of the internalized witness, or of the inability to constitute the "function of the witness" within the psyche. Following an earlier discussion dealing with the three functions of mother tongue in creating psychic language, this paper claims that the "function of the witness", which is the function that validates the very experience of the self, is one that is based upon the ability to shift between the "first person" and the "third person" of the psychic syntax, or between "being oneself" and the ability to transcend the limits of the self. While facing an over-traumatized primary situation, one in which the infantile subject has neither the ability to constitute an experience of "I-ness" nor the possibility to transcend the helpless situation through creating a narrative – the function of the inner witness is annihilated, thereby annihilating the subject's ability to be the very owner of his own experience. The inability of the subject to become a valid witness to himself turns him into an "obsessive witness", "a witness to everything" while at the same time everything bears witness to him. As a result, a semi-psychotic existential condition is being created, one that locates the self within a territory of "false equality" between inside and outside, a territory which is in fact neither an inside nor an outside, and which does not enable a multi-dimensional existence between them. The above ideas will be illustrated by a case study and through a new reading of Samuel Becket's "Waiting for Godot".

### **13. KIDRON, Carol A.:**

#### **Testifying to the Distant Past: A Comparative Study of Cambodian Canadian and Israeli Holocaust Trauma Descendant Memory**

With the pending demise of the 'first' generation of trauma survivors in Israel and in other sites of genocide around the globe scholarly attention may be seen to be shifting to the legacy of descendant generations. Foundational paradigms in psychology and Holocaust and genocide studies have asserted that trauma descendants share in common a legacy of PTSD - related psycho-social scars and childhood memories of a familial 'conspiracy of silence'. Mental health professionals, genocide scholars and political activists alike call our attention to descendants' commitment to psychological working through and the voicing of silenced familial narratives of suffering and their desire to give testimony to their parents' past thereby contributing to public forms of commemoration. This descendant 'post-memory' and redemptive voice, according to the discourse, is dependent upon the intervention of expert cultural brokers – the therapist, political activist, historian or even the anthropologist.

When globally exporting Eurocentric models of traumatic suffering and resistant testimonial voice to victims around the world, to what degree has interventionist discourse and practice taken culture-specific conceptions of suffering, healing and memory-work into account? Has Euro-centric psycho-social and politicized memory work weakened the survivor's link to traditional culture-specific forms of healing and remembrance? The holistic and emic perspectives of Anthropology could pave the way for a more grounded and culturally sensitive exploration of the descendant's phenomenological experience of transmitted PTSD, familial silence and the enlistment in public forms of memory work, allowing descendants to articulate their 'lived experience' of suffering and voice.

My ethnographic fieldwork, first in Israel with the descendants of Holocaust survivors, and then in Canada with descendants of the Cambodian Genocide, challenges the underlying theoretical assumptions of trauma discourse. This comparative work points to the ways in which the adult children of trauma victims reject the pathological profile of transmitted PTSD, show a disinterest in historicizing their familial past and avoid public forms of commemoration. Instead, both descendant groups depict the tacit, non-pathological, yet no less constitutive impact of the past in the survivor home. For Holocaust descendants, visceral embodied practices, parent-child silent non-verbal facial inter-subjective interaction, and fragmented mythic tales of survival create a silent, or partially silent, matrix of Holocaust presence, which is perpetually interwoven within the everyday domestic life-world (Kidron 2009). In contrast, Cambodian-Canadian descendants, recount the almost total absence of non-verbal presence of the genocidal past and only infrequent verbal references to the past. Nevertheless, Cambodian or Khmer descendants assert that the Genocide tacitly constituted personally enriching and empowering 'modes of being', which morally frame a forward-looking sense of descendant selfhood. Distinctive Jewish-Israeli and Buddhist-Cambodian attitudes regarding the centrality/marginality and function of memory work and testimony, shaped in part by divergent political and historical contexts, account for such divergent legacies. Therefore, this study questions both the centrality of therapeutic intervention within

ethnically diverse traumatized populations, and the enlistment of survivors/descendants in public testimonial commemorative projects.

#### **15. TOKER, Leona:**

##### **Hindsight on Latency: Representation of the End of World War II in Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales***

Whereas the depleted inmates of concentration camps, well on the way to becoming what Primo Levi called “the true witnesses” (i.e., the dead), were often unable to evaluate the significance of the incipient developments in their environment, in retrospective telling of their experience the survivors can already project their hindsight into the representation of the past events.

My paper shows the techniques of such projection in some of the stories by Varlam Shalamov: the latency of the tendencies underappreciated by his protagonists is rendered not by way of plain anticipation, which would emphasize the distance between the focal characters and the narrating voice, but by recurrence of motifs across the borderlines of separate stories. My main example will be the stories “June” and “May,” both written in 1959, placed side by side in “The Artist of the Spade” cycle of Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*, and dealing with the camp inmate's attitude to, respectively, the beginning and the end of the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

#### **16. RAZINSKY, Liran:**

##### **Death and the Missing Experience**

In my lecture I wish to address the problem of ‘the missing experience,’ namely the question of how can one bear witness to something which has not been, properly speaking, experienced. How to report, as part of a personal discourse in writing, what has not been experienced, or could not, in principle, be experienced? How to integrate it into subjectivity, i.e. how can, what the subject never experienced, be part of the subjects' formative experiences? How can an event that ipso facto puts our trustworthiness as witness in question be reported? The question of the missing experience is actually a very pertinent one to the whole field of trauma and testimony as it is often a characteristic of a traumatic situation. To address this question I will read selected passages of psychoanalytic thinkers, theoreticians and writers, moving between two major points of view. First, I will discuss the impossibility of imaging one's own death, not to mention experiencing it. This impossibility was described by several authors as a barrier to full self-knowledge. Though one's future death remains a future event, some of the characteristics of this cognitive-existential situation render it also an emblem of a similar difficulty in past experience and testimony, and I will discuss this aspect. My second point of view, which will stand at the center of my lecture, is that of the past event in which the subject was, so to speak, absent – fainting, coma, mental crisis, or the feeling that one has, symbolically speaking died, following a severe trauma. I will look at literary texts which describe such death-like experiences, or missing experiences, to ask, not only how such

missing events are put into writing, but also what relation, in the deep sense, does this kind of missing experience hold with the very question of writing.

## **17. ROUND TABLE (chair: SHARON-ZISSER, Shirley)**

### **Literature, Trauma, Testimony.**

Testimony always “goes hand in hand with at least the possibility of fiction,” Jacques Derrida writes in *Fiction and Testimony*, that is to say, with what in Freudian terms might be described as the *proton pseudos*, the primal lie that is the very stuff of subjectivity. At the same time, when fiction itself takes the form of the literary, that is, of art, its own place is that of the witness bearing testimony. Works of art supposedly depicting martyrdom, Jacques Lacan says in his twentieth seminar, are in and of themselves martyrs – “of a more or less pure suffering”: that of those who presentify themselves before art at the moment of an aesthetic encounter. Such suffering is registered, psychoanalysis teaches, in a primal moment beyond the pleasure principle, retroactively resignified as a trauma repeated in life as an opaque mode of enjoyment, satisfaction in suffering. What, then, is the specificity, aesthetic and clinical, of the traumatic as it appears in testimony that not only constitutively manifests the possibility of fiction, but as artistic fiction, is itself quintessentially testimonial?

This round table will explore these questions by bringing together young researchers working on the aesthetics of trauma in testimonial discourse that is specifically literary: the pastoral from Virgil to Alain Resnais and Claude Lanzmann, that posits the poet as a medium between language and death, only ever registereable in it as the empty grave, fictional version of the mnemonic *topoi* of classical rhetoric; poetry written in the English language as an effect of battlefield experiences during WWI, which evinces a particular rhetoric of the unsayable in which signifiers are wrenched from conventional signifieds, suggesting that the non-delineability of new experiences within available linguistic and literary forms is at least part of what renders them traumatic; poetic rhyme as a two-part linguistic “event,” split across time, coming into being only retrospectively and hence resting on a temporal structure Freud ascribes to trauma and hence specifying literary rhyme as, to a certain extent, isomorphic with trauma; the plays of Holocaust survivor George Tabori, whose rhetoric and ethics of translation attempt not to reconstruct a reality but to exemplify the very structure of the work of mourning as a form of testimonial.

Working from the particularity of literary examples, the round table will aim at a specification of a rhetoric of trauma and testimony that, far from regarding testimony as descriptive, informative narration, locates it in the poetic form as opaque presentification of a testimonial act.

## **18. CONSONNI, Manuela:**

### **The Survivor, the Witness and the Authenticity of Language**

In facing the Shoah, one has to deal with ruthlessly radical forms of evil and of suffering, reconsider one's ideas of human nature, and accept a destabilization of one's moral reactions to disaster.

This paper intends to analyze testimony in terms of the ethical aspect of the categories of the "general" and "exceptional." The survivor of such a devastating experience as the Shoah, him- or her-self an exception, when available as a witness, challenges gnosiological and ontological positivism in constructions of history and relentlessly contradicts the dictum that whatever is has a meaning. The paper deals with the explicit clash between Adorno's and Heidegger's approaches to the question of "authenticity," as well as Agamben's position on the issue. At stake is the tension between valorizing authenticity in witness's testimonies on the one hand and valorizing recourse to literary and historiographical topoi on the other. Whereas the topoi are often perceived as akin to clichés, I shall argue for a more positive view of the inter-subjective in the writing of witnesses.

## **19. SHARON-ZISSER, Shirley:**

### **The Literary Sinthome as Testimonial of Trauma: The Case of Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt**

Under what conditions, poetic and clinical, does a literary text become testimonial of a trauma? In *Fiction and Testimony*, Jacques Derrida suggests that the poetic coordinates of testimony "cannot necessarily be reduced to narration, that is, to descriptive, informative relations." Similarly but even more radically, psychoanalysis in the orientation of Freud and Lacan teaches that such coordinates are not to be searched for in articulated memories because "consciousness and memory are mutually exclusive." Psychoanalytically speaking, then, trauma as an irruption of the real cannot be captured in the contents of a work of narrative fiction. On the contrary, psychoanalytically speaking, conscious narratives of events thematized as involving the suffering of actants are phantasmatic constructions whose psychic function is not to attest to trauma, quintessentially narratocidal because predicated on the absence of relations (or in Levi-Strauss's terms, bundles of relations) subtending narrativity, but to veil it. Yet the traumatic *Unnerkant* – a shock shattering the limits of representation, is not only the constitutively opaque navel point around which unconscious signifiers are knotted. This kernel influences the combinatory of these signifiers, a combinatory whose structures are elocutionary. The effects of this elocutionary combinatory are manifest not only in the formations of the unconscious, all of which have a textual dimension, but in a dimension of textuality exceeding the signifier while serving as its material support: elocution or style. It is through its style, then, that a subject's language might function as testimonial to a trauma, as well as to the singular way, which might be that of literary artistry, that the subject invents to treat this trauma: a way which Lacan calls the "sinthome."

The literary writing of Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt might be a case in point. A child refugee who fled to France to escape Nazi persecution, Goldschmidt is the author of many works of

narrative fiction such as *Fist in the Mouth* (2004) whose plots enchain kernel events of the life-history of a traumatized subject. Yet what makes Goldschmidt's writing the literary testimonial of trauma indexed (and veiled), by the psychonarratorial image of the "fist in the mouth," is neither this image nor the arrangement of motifs to which this image/title serves as paratext, nor the narrativization of what can be remembered. It is his singular sinthomatic invention in the face of what cannot be remembered and narrativized. In the case of Goldschmidt, this sinthomatic invention is a singular style of writing, whose matter is the psychic debris effected by trauma: fragments of German literary texts cathected early in life, fragments of German words, re-collected and fitted into the syntax of a foreign language (French), whose very Otherness renders it a possible substrate for the fabrication of a way of life, rendering the jouissance of trauma not mortifying but tolerable. It is as sinthomatic invention of a way of life that Goldschmidt's literary style, made of the debris of a language rendered intolerable for the subject who writes with its debris that Goldschmidt's literary style is testimonial at once of the traumatic real which assails this subject and of this subject's literary-psychic *savoir-y-faire* in the face of it.

## **20. YACOBI, Tamar:**

### **The Addressee's Viewpoint on Testimony: Irene Kacandes's *Daddy's War*.**

*Daddy's War: [Greek American Stories]* is a hybrid, combining (1) a personal memoir, (2) a report of a historical investigation and (3) an analysis of inter-generational traumatic experience. The author, Irene Kacandes, brings together her personal and professional backgrounds to create what she terms a "paramemoir." Personally, she is the daughter of a Greek American (John Kacandes) who suffered a prolonged traumatic experience as a child, when he was stranded during the Second World War in occupied Greece. Professionally, she is a narratologist, specializing in the study of the Holocaust. In her book, she juxtaposes facts gathered from historical documents with ("Greek American Stories") narrated in the family and updated in various interviews that she held with her father and other relatives. To the story of "Daddy's War" and the report of her emotionally loaded research (a story in its own right, full of twists and surprises), Kacandes adds a theoretical dimension in the analytical portions of the book. There, she uses the concepts of storytelling, memory, trauma, witnessing, postmemory, and co-witnessing to explain the challenge and difficulties of researching a traumatic past experience and coming to terms with that past.

Throughout, the book represents and enacts the complexity of being an addressee (listener, reader) under these circumstances. It is this dimension of the book - amply manifest but not theoretically analyzed by Kacandes herself - that I would like to explore. For whereas in a successful act of communication the speaker wishes to transmit information, and the addressee is willing to receive that information, here we encounter the problems as well as the consequences of situations where addressers and addressees do not or cannot match and complement each other.

Kacandes thus opens the book with what she retained in her mind about her father's war experience when she was still too young to understand either the facts or the words that she

now repeats. Later she reviews her performance during her active quest for information, noting critically her omissions and failures as an addressee. Her "paramemoir" accordingly embodies a double narrative discourse. There, the active past addressee (the experiencing-self) becomes the present addresser (or the narrating-self vis-à-vis another audience), who alternates narratives: her adventure of receiving information (from whom, when and where, under what circumstances) and the narrative of the information received (what she managed to learn about her father's traumatic past).

My paper will attempt (1) to differentiate the positions of receivers of information: intended or direct addressees vs. unintended hearers; (2) to map the spectrum of addressees (from the unconscious and unwilling to the active participant); (3) to assess the burden of responsibility for unsuccessful communication between addressers and addressees, as well as the sources of (mis)understanding and (in)compatibility between them.

## **21. RONEN, Ruth:**

### **Trauma in the Future Anterior**

“...why is the primal scene so traumatic? Why is it always too early or too late? Why does the subject take either too much pleasure in it or too little?” These questions raised by Lacan in his eleventh seminar point at three cardinal facts regarding the psychoanalytic understanding of trauma: that it assumes a prior event (the primary scene), that it assumes an impossible temporality and that it is a key to the subject's libidinal investments. Freud referred to trauma within an impossible time frame: while the trauma is a return of a past event, it is met with as an event of the present thus constituting *the past as traumatic*.

Trauma is located in an impossible temporality because it is interlaced with the erotization of time which also produces a strange modality. When trauma is met with in psychical reality, it is enacted as a necessary encounter: trauma is what cannot be avoided. A posteriori we can say the trauma necessarily reemerged because it was always already there. But the encounter with the trauma also touches trauma's contingent modality. Trauma, when discovered, creates a surprise thus re-shuffling past events from among which trauma emerges as a contingent yet fatal occurrence.

Trauma is hence both necessary and contingent, both of the past and of the future.

My paper will be dedicated to the positioning of trauma vis-à-vis the erotic of time and modality in the psychoanalytic thought of Freud and of Lacan and to the investigating of the implications of the psychoanalytic insights for the representation of traumas.

## **22. SCHMIDT, Sibylle:**

### **The Philosophy of Testimony: Between Epistemology and Ethics**

The philosophical discussion of testimony today seems to be split up into two disparate scientific discourses: while the analytical debate broaches rather the issue of testimony as a source of knowledge and epistemological problems of witnessing, postmodern authors like

Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben have focused on the difficulties and the aporia of survivors' witnessing after the Holocaust and its ethical and political dimensions.

The paper aims to synthesize both discourses, and thus to work out the implications of the postmodernist discourse for a comprehensive philosophy of testimony, as well as to point out its limits. Both the epistemological and the ethical perspective, so the theses, are necessary to understand the complex figure of the witness. The specific "wit" of witnessing consists in the fact that it reveals the deep interrelation of epistemic and ethical questions, of knowledge and acknowledgment.

### **23. BETHLEHEM, Louise:**

#### **Anxieties of Influence: Holocaust Testimony and the Genres of Postcolonial Witness**

For all that the Jewish body remains, by and large, unmourned in the canonical texts of postcolonial theory, the Holocaust has, I argue, made an engagement with elegiac witness compelling for post colonialism precisely because post colonialism, too, inhabits a state of aftermath.

This paper risks the propositions that post colonialism, for all that it seems to maintain a tangential relationship with the Holocaust, has incorporated central tenets of Holocaust testimony into its disciplinary orbit, tenets that derive specifically from the ascendancy of witness in Holocaust memory. Although the ethical imperative posed by the corpse has structured canonical interventions in the evolution of postcolonial studies from Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955) through Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's well known engagements with the *sati* ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1985, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* 1999), the shift towards testimony, identification and mourning-work becomes pronounced in the more recent corpus. Spivak, in particular, reworks the colonial subject's structural relation to the past by driving it through the intimate performance of elegy calibrated as a familial reprise of sati-suicide. In other words, I claim that she mobilizes genres associated with "the survivor" in the consolidation of an alternative taxonomy of memorialization.

The paper argues that the interrogation of the postcolonial ethics of witness needs to engage more fully with the encoding of the Holocaust in shaping its occluded testimonial practices. At the same time, Spivak's treatment of aporetic testimony in the face of an archive that refuses to be rendered transparent will, it appears to me, become increasingly salient for investigations of the ethics of testimony in face of, precisely, the changing contours of Holocaust memory as we outlive the presence of the survivor among us. Through moving the Holocaust Studies and Postcolonial Studies into an unaccustomed juxtaposition, my intervention seeks to shed light on the academic genres which have contributed to the preeminence of trauma and testimony in contemporary historiography.

## **24. PICK HAMOU, Michal:**

### **Changes in the Representations of TTD in Israeli Cinema – from Mental Pathology to Political Discourse**

The lecture is based on my PhD research tracking the influence of the trauma testimony discourse (TTD) on the dialectics powering the changing models in Israeli narrative cinema, and marking the cinematic model of the years 2000-2006 as being symptomatic of a posttraumatic dissociative social response.

Since its beginnings, Israeli narrative cinema has represented the presence of signs (symptoms) of trauma and posited a connection between them and the emotional and moral conduct of its protagonists. These signs were embedded in minor incidents in the films, and therefore were not grasped as an expression of the socio-historical tensions and the geopolitical changes impacting Israeli society. Likewise, Israeli cinema has only infrequently represented the treatment of the experience of trauma, and therefore the implied discourse cannot be extracted from testimony assigned to a character that represents therapeutic authority, but only from conversation with a close friend or by means of rumination (voiceover), and sometimes even by means of "the presence of absence," which attests to the traces of trauma inscribed upon the victim's consciousness. With the exception of three films that were produced in the 1980s and explicitly dealt with the "combat fatigue" (shell shock) response and the way their protagonists were doomed to contend with the influence of a life threatening experience, and the movie *Waltz with Bashir* two decades later, which exposed viewers to the influence of the "Lebanon War" on the protagonist's consciousness and to his treatment – the representation of the experience of trauma, or testimony regarding it, has been limited to symptoms that burst their way through the esthetic interpretation provided by the filmmakers for the psycho-ideological processes that impact Israeli society and change its values. It is therefore necessary to track the trauma testimony discourse also by extrapolation from the irruption of these symptoms.

Even though representations of trauma are an inseparable part of Israeli narrative cinema, until the year 2000, Israeli cinema represented the lack of legitimacy implied by TTD. Recent years, however, have seen a surge in the popularity of the concepts of trauma and PTSD. Whereas they used to describe the pathology of mental disease arising in an individual, they have become accepted as a socio-political discourse that characterizes shared beliefs and values which dictate the perception of reality and even shape individual identity. TTD is understood today as a discourse that drives the changes taking place in the meta-narrative shared by society – a transformation in the wake of which Israeli cinema, too, is changing its attitude toward the representation of the discourse. During these years, the shared meta-narrative has been influenced mainly by terror attacks, both domestic and foreign, which have spawned an experience of horror and loss, and a perception of the society as being on the verge of collapse. Correspondingly, the representation of TTD, as manifested in the model of Israeli cinema produced during the years 2000-2006, expresses a dissociative response which is characterized by emotional disengagement, resignation towards an intolerable situation, and introversion. The Israeli cinema produced in this period employs four cinematic tactics that are typical of posttraumatic dissociative responses. The corpus of films produced during these

years attests to the transformation in the representation of TTD and to the cultural and ideological ramifications of this change. During these years Israeli cinema does not represent the signs of trauma, but itself turns into a component of TTD, while the dissociative rhetoric it employs is characterized by an ideological consistency, a lack of narrative daring, an adherence to central values, and a moral impasse.

## **26. MORAG, Raya:**

### **Current Israeli Documentary Cinema and the Trauma of the Israeli Soldiers**

In stark contrast to narrative films produced during the second *Intifadah* (2000-2008), recent Israeli documentaries focus on the trauma suffered by the Israeli soldier who has participated in atrocities, rather than that of the Palestinian victim of the occupation. This new wave of documentary cinema has changed the Israeli cinematic-cultural agenda, raising vehement controversy while at the same receiving many prizes. Films such as *To See If I'm Smiling* (Tamar Yarom, 2007), *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008), and *Z 32* (Avi Mograbi, 2008) present the subject position of the post-traumatic veteran through confessions and diverse levels of autobiographization. They not only reopen a debate about perpetration, but for the first time open the way for women's confession.

The complex subject position of the post-traumatic Israeli soldier is structured through a series of tensions, including total exposure vs. concealment behind masks, archive footage vs. documentary animation, musical vs. essay, and realist reenactment vs. Brechtian reenactment. The paper will therefore address the questions of whether this trauma indeed exists and how we might understand the somatic – and epistemological – conditions of guilt. How should we define the trauma of the wrongdoer in contrast to that of the victim? And most importantly, does this cinematic trend pave the way for Israelis to assume responsibility for their deeds?

## **27. YOSEF, Raz:**

### **War Fantasies: Memory, Trauma and Ethics in Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*.**

This paper explores the relations between memory, trauma and ethics in the Israeli war film *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008). I argue that *Waltz with Bashir* highlights and exposes a traumatic rupture between history (or historical national memory) and memory, and points to the decline of national collective memory in Israel.

In the film, the war is represented as the private memory of a distinct social group – soldiers who fought in the First Lebanon War – and is no longer a collective memory, a lived and practiced tradition that conditions Israeli society. The director, Ari Folman, constructs the film as a kind of “*lieu de mémoire*” that preserves and houses repressed traumatic events that have been denied entry into the nation's historical narrative, and which he and the other soldiers feel duty-bound to remember. This detachment from the national collective memory pulls the film into a world signified by the constant blurring of historical context as well as by private and subjective images – a timeless world of dreams, hallucinations and fantasies. The film does not aspire to reveal the true details of the war. Rather it is concerned with memory and

the very process of remembering, as well as with the ethical questions that they pose to both the film's protagonists and its viewers. These questions are reflected both in the film's narrative and in its unique aesthetics.

## **28. DORNIER, Carole:**

### **Poetic of the Contingent Detail in Witness Narrative about the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution**

The French Revolution and particularly the period called The Terror (June 1793 – 27 July 1794) induced by conflict between rival political factions, was marked by mass executions of "enemies of the revolution". Aristocrats, Girondins (the rival political faction of Jacobins, the dominant one), and all the citizens suspected of furthering a return to Monarchy were threatened. All this period can be considered in fact as traumatic. That is the reason why in order to bear witness to a disappearing world, to plead one's own cause, and to testify to overwhelming and horrifying events, memoirs and written accounts proliferated during the following decades.

Among a lot of accounts, those whose authors were known enough and which possessed the rhetoric and literary qualities necessary to interest a public were published. At the same time the surviving victims, as witnesses, had the will to share their feelings, to make readers understand their traumatic experience. The rhetoric and poetic heritage, requiring verisimilitude and decorum, acted as a brake on the achievement of this purpose. To pass on their experience, the narrators had to create specific ways to show and to make readers feel what they saw and what they felt. Leaning on three testimonies of witnesses having escaped death during the Terror and possessing rhetoric and literary competences, I will study in their accounts the different devices used to create a strong effect of presence at the traumatic scene, especially by contingent details and narrative processes of *showing*, restitution of sensory perceptions, internal focusing and confined point of view, reported speech and narrative slowing down...Subverting the requirements of a traditional plot - a narrative logic and a chain of plausible events-, erasing the marks of causality, these kinds of narrative, far from attempting to convince or please, try to convey the strangeness of the scene. These accounts of traumatic events are all the more specific in their historical context as the narratives of the period, in history as well as in novels, remain submitted to rhetoric and aesthetic canons and to a limited set of techniques.

## **29. WEINE, Stevan:**

### **Terrorism Testimonies**

Victims, witnesses, and producers of terrorism of all nationalities and religions often have stories to tell about what they experienced, saw, and did. Victims' testimonies are typically seen as serving personal needs, such as healing and compensation. The media plays a key role in transmitting (or not) victim's stories, often raising concerns about sensitivity. But in the global struggle between Al Qaeda (and Al Shabaab) and the U.S. and its allies, victims'

voices have become more and more subject to institutional, governmental, and societal priorities. Because terrorist organizations and governments are engaged in a conflict over the attitudes and affiliations of civilians, terrorism victims' efforts to communicate, are subject to high intensity forces. It may come from community or family members, from the media, from health professionals, clergy, terrorist organizations, or government. As a consequence of these forces, voices and narratives may be silenced, amplified, or altered.

Testimonies are regarded as essential elements of both jihadist propaganda as well as counter-terrorism strategies. Militant jihadist organizations create heroic narratives of suicide bombers. The Bush administration portrayed the 9/11 attacks and used the voices of American heroes to support its global war on terror, but the story it told was seen as deepening the divide and escalating the conflict. The Obama administration has sought to engage Muslims and promote more moderate voices to speak out. This has not yet begun to include the voices of victims and witnesses of terrorism but it could, especially concerning the killing of Muslims. More than that, the telling of terrorist victims stories is at risk of being overly constrained by the instrumental approaches to testimony (for the sake of short-term aims, or preferred theory or methods) that have so often narrowed the voices of victims of political violence.

Alternatively, literary models of testimony could assist victims, witnesses, and those working with them, in producing testimonies that are more open, personal, ethical, innovative, and hopeful and could better let the powers inherent in the testimony story exert itself in the present environments. By drawing upon a model of testimony derived from Bakhtin's dialogic narrative, I propose practical strategies for using the terrorist testimony as an act of *active-dialogic understanding* that may help serve the interests of healing, truth-telling, and prevention concerning terrorist violence.

### **30. FRIEDMAN, Régine-Michal:**

#### **Traumas within and without: The Personal Testimonial Film**

These last decades have been defined, in literature as well as in the visual and performing arts, as the "Age of Testimony" that blurs the boundaries between history and memory, the public and the private, in the cultural sphere of our times.

Mainly in the wake of Claude Lanzmann's "*Shoah*" (1985), testimonies relating to one of the darkest chapters in the history of inhumanity are now predominantly expressed through "lens and visuals", and less by "words and verbal images", according to Elie Wiesel. Worldwide, films are initiated, written, produced and directed by the "generations of the Aftermath", the children and grandchildren (not necessarily in the biological sense) of the survivors.

Sometimes labeled "vicarious witnesses", their endeavor has been prompted by an impelling momentum: the vulnerable state of the aging eyewitness and the Revisionist and Negationist scheme regarding "*dass was war*", in Paul Celan's elliptic formulation. Moreover, they attempt to tacitly refute the poet's desperate assessment in his *Aschenglorie*: "*Niemand/zeugt/für den Zeugen*" (Nobody bears witness for the witness).

Eager to “probe differently the limits of representation”, in Saul Friedlander’s terms, these “surrogate witnesses” have helped develop a new sub-genre in the growing category of the so-called non-fiction cinema. The personal testimonial film, as it will be called hereafter, differs significantly from the audio-visual interviews collected by the main commemorative foundations, due to the empathetic quality of the pact established between survivor and interviewer. Expressed with passionate artistic creativity, some of these endeavors have retained the attention of both academic research and the public.

Indeed, present academic research underscores the applicability of some cardinal Freudian concepts to individual as well as collective phenomena. Concerned with trauma, like other eminent scholars, Dominick LaCapra has distinguished between existential or structural trauma, recognizable in all societies, but differently experienced individually, versus the specificities of a historical trauma like the Holocaust. While mourning as working-through has long been confronted to melancholia as acting-out, current Trauma studies stress that both must be reconsidered as necessary and interacting processes. Henceforth, different types of memory have been discerned and elaborated: re-memory (Herman), received memory (Young), prosthetic memory (Landsberg), post-memory (Hirsch) and disremembering (Walker). In spite of some nuances, however, all draw closely on the distinction between “deep” and “common memory” suggested by the French Resistance fighter Charlotte Delbo in her “Auschwitz remembrances”, a most helpful heuristic tool, later to be adopted by Holocaust scholars like Lawrence Langer and Saul Friedlander. From *Because of that War* (Orna Ben-Dor) in the late eighties to the recent *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008) through *Choice and Destiny* (Tsipi Reibenbach, 1993); from *Don’t Touch my Holocaust* (Asher Tlalim, 1994) and his double: *Balagan* (Andreas Weiel, 1993) till, perhaps, *Z32* (Avi Mograbi, 2009), and through *The Last Card* (Sylvain Biegeleisen, 2007), the personal testimonial film blurs established categories, collapses generic distinctions. Most boldly indeed, it confronts present injuries with more ancient ones, the inherited ordeal hiding behind the later one and vice-versa: trauma begets trauma.

Essentially, though, the personal testimonial film testifies that the pervading preoccupation with trauma, together with a keen consideration for the new generations’ artistic accomplishments, point essentially, as Dori Laub has shown, to a legacy of pain: an unavoidable contamination of grief bequeathed by the survivors’ reminiscences and transmitted to those “Children of Job” who “bear the scar without the wound” (Arthur Cohen). Even more acutely now they bear “the scar and the wound”.

### **31. SAXTON, Libby:**

#### **Reading Holocaust Testimony in Contemporary French Cinema**

This paper will explore the function of quotations from Holocaust testimonies in two recent French fiction films. Instead of survivors bearing witness in front of the camera, as we see, for example, in *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), a documentary to which both pay homage, the films concerned here feature protagonists who borrow words from witnesses’ written accounts. In *Drancy Avenir* (Arnaud des Pallières, 1996), actors read excerpts from first-hand

descriptions of the camps by Robert Antelme, Charlotte Delbo, Annette Muller and Noël Calef and Holocaust writing by Georges Perec and Marguerite Duras. These testimonies are accompanied not by Holocaust-era footage but by present-day images of the Cité de la Muette, a housing project which was used between 1941 and 1944 as an internment camp for Jews. In the culminating scene of the corporate thriller *La Question humaine* (Nicolas Klotz and Elisabeth Perceval, 2007), dead witnesses ventriloquise the central protagonist. Over close-up shots of living faces, Simon Kessler intones a litany for the dead which juxtaposes the degraded language of a Nazi memorandum concerning modifications to gas vans with allusions to Antelme and the *Sonderkommando* manuscripts known as the ‘Auschwitz Scrolls’.

These films, I will argue, draw attention to the textuality of testimony, presenting it not as a complete, self-contained object but rather as an entity created through imaginative acts of reading, listening, interpretation and recontextualisation. By layering multiple historical texts over visual images of the present, *Drancy Avenir* and *La Question humaine* produce audio-visual palimpsests in which the witness’s response to the camps resonates with current concerns about social and racial marginalization. Moreover, in reflecting on the relationship between speech and writing, both films pose questions about the transmission of Holocaust memory in a future when (to cite des Pallières) ‘the living words of the survivors will no longer stand as a rampart against lies’.

### **32. DOR, Judith:**

#### **Who Is the Witness? - Goals, Process and Mental Positions of Narrator and Listener at Natal's Video Testimony**

In this lecture I would like to present the testimony process taking place at Natal, its goals, and the complex positions and roles of the narrator and listener of the testimony.

NATAL's testimony project has been on the organization's agenda since its establishment 13 years ago. The testimony center opened in 2007 as a component of the comprehensive therapeutic concept of NATAL, with the aspiration to establish a psycho-historic center that will contain the narratives, mental aspects and ways of coping of the witnesses, and will serve for education and research purposes. The staff of listeners includes five professionals, receiving continuous training and supervision and so far, 60 testimonies have been conducted.

It is known that victims of physical and mental trauma suffer from unprocessed experiences, often fragmented, without sequence and order, and without the ability to share the suffering and horror they experienced. Our working assumption is that testimony is one of the ways of relieving distress. It allows the suffering individual to tell a complete and continuous narrative, sometimes for the first time, in the presence of an attentive listener.

The testimony process in Natal is a psycho-historic one, emphasizing the inter-psyche and intra-psyche aspects across the entire history of the individual – before, during and after the traumatic event. It relates to the trauma implications at the functional, family and social levels.

Another working assumption is that trauma victims feel lonely and encapsulated with the traumatic story. Breaking silence and sharing are often conflictual and become easier with time. This might account for the applications to bear testimony being made by veterans of the Independence and Yom Kipur Wars.

The listener comes to perform his role with an inner personal agenda and a complex counter-transference experience. The difficult experience of the narrator often confronts personal experiences of the listener, arousing unconscious and suppressed memories. These memories are usually painful and the listener cannot avoid their reverberation at the meeting, sometimes with verbal response, sometimes with nonverbal unconscious gestures and sometimes by shutting himself out of the narrative of the witness.

In the lecture I shall illustrate the above issues by several vignettes taken from video testimonies.

### **33. TUVAL-MASHIACH, Rivka:**

#### **The Telling of Trauma: What Can Testimonies Tell Us about Coping and Adaptation Following Trauma?**

Within the narrative approach, trauma is conceived as a break in the person's life story and its continuity, during which beliefs and self-concepts are shaken and new adaptation is required. Therefore, it has been suggested that narratives of traumatized survivors will reflect the core experience of the trauma, and coping processes, through both the contents and form of the narratives. In addition, it has been documented that writing about personal trauma, and the telling of trauma, may bear beneficial consequences for narrator's wellbeing.

The presentation will be based on an in-depth analysis of 15 testimonies collected in NATAL, of trauma survivors from different national traumatic events (including captivity, war and terrorism). The purpose of this presentation is twofold: First, we will present several analytic tools for understanding psychological aspects of testimonies. These tools include: Analysis of the narrative form, analysis of silences, linguistic aspects of the narrative, and content analysis. Specifically, we will look at themes of agency, self-perceptions, and ability to find meaning in life following the trauma. We will classify common themes and processes described by narrators, as well as try to elucidate pathways of adaptation following the trauma. Second, in light of the literature of possible positive impact of telling the trauma for some, but not all narrators, we will try to identify factors in the narrative which may contribute to our understanding of how and when is the telling process contributing to narrator's wellbeing. According to the findings of this stage, an effort will be made to identify different coping patterns and pathways. The findings will be discussed on light of the literature of narrative and trauma.

### **34. FRIEDMAN-PELEG, Keren:**

#### **Between the Clinical and the Cultural, the Private and the Collective: "The Testimony Act" in the Israeli Context**

The idioms of trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have gained currency in the discourse on suffering in contemporary Israel (Bilu & Witztum, 2000; Bleich, Gelkopf & Solomon, 2003). While this pattern resonates with the tendency in areas of violence and war world-wide, the peculiarities of the Israeli case should be noted. The cultural meaning system of "cognitive militarism" that evolved in the state's formative years (Kimmerling, 1993), and the myth of heroism it canonized, fostered a collective mood that made light of the psychic toll of war and military violence, and stigmatized its emotional manifestations. In this complex context, the Israeli society gives space for the "act of testimony": narratives in first person voice, "I", to events that are pronounced usually as "We".

The act of testimony enables us to shed light on two related concepts of trauma idioms: the clinical idiom that refers to Trauma as a puzzle of emotional, cognitive and behavioral symptoms and the cultural, everyday, concept that refers to Trauma as a subjective experience and identity molder. Against the obvious tendency of the clinical concept to focus on the "I", within the cultural concept, the obvious tendency is to focus on "We" and to emphasize common, national, political and gender-oriented aspects in the Trauma story.

This paper will ask to follow the affinity between the two kinds of concepts in the context of the testimony acts of IDF soldiers and people who were injured in terrorist attacks, as they were given within the work of NATAL. By characterizing the narrative strategies that helps them in constructing the testimony story, I would like to point out any overlaps between the two kinds of concepts of the traumatic idiom, the clinical and the cultural, and in places of tension, in which the cultural concept is objects the clinical and produce alternative for it.

### **35. GELKOPF, Marc:**

#### **A Study of Video Testimonials of Individuals Having Undergone Traumatic War and Terror-Related Experiences (*a quantitative evaluation*).**

Many Trauma survivors do not voluntarily disclose their traumatic experiences. This experience is often interwoven with unexpressed and secretive shame, guilt, sadness, loneliness and anger. Furthermore many individuals who have suffered trauma neither seek nor receive treatment, and therefore may not have the opportunity to talk about their past, express their emotions and weave the story of their losses within a life supporting narrative. This 'hole-filled' narrative may become a lifelong burden affecting all aspects of life. The testimony method has been shown to improve well being and alleviate distress and post traumatic symptoms by transforming a painful trauma story into a cathartic experience and a document that could be useful to others.

NATAL is performing an ongoing testimonial project of personal stories of individuals who were involved in traumatic experiences (mainly related to the Israeli-Arab conflict) in order to

promote knowledge of "trauma related to national aspects", and the treatment of the casualties.

We present a study of video testimony (VT) of individuals with war and terror related trauma, having undergone 2-3 sessions of testimony, in a therapeutic orientation. VT is framed by its purpose: the creation of an autobiographical document that has as its centerpiece the traumatic experience. It is a collaborative venture during which the interviewer recedes into the background and the individual is assisted in entering a new social context by means of the narration of personal experience.

This testimony procedure is accompanied by the administration of questionnaires assessing demographic and clinical information, expectations regarding the testimony and how they were fulfilled, the way in which the testimony affected the participants' life (social, vocational, family, activism, emotions etc.), what the person did with the final product of VT - a disc that was handed to them (shared it or not, and with whom); and finally whether VT influenced posttraumatic symptomatology.

Primary results may support the potential therapeutic effects of VT when being done in therapeutic orientation, and also express the significance of the social message of testimony in the context of these traumatic events.

### **36. LAVOCAT, Françoise:**

#### **Shaping the Amorphous: Eyewitness of the Plague in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

“Shaping the Chaos”: such is the purpose of Benedetto Cinquanta, a priest and dramatist who published *The Plague of 1630* (*La Peste del 1630*) in Milan. He called it “a tragedy”, there is, however, no other example of such a work in the theater of this time. Such a claim is by no means obvious. It means that catastrophe (here an epidemic of plague) is conceived of as an exceptional event and experience. It also implies a kind of faith in the capacity of language, art and fiction (understood as the Latin “*fingere*”) to shape a new world, and consequently to help to give new foundations to the present world.

Disaster (as an epidemic, a volcano eruption, a fire) is understood as a catastrophic event, which breaks radically the run of history and the frame of ethics, yielding for a repair through esthetic representation. This conception is not peculiar to the seventeenth century, if we think of Boccaccio. What is new as of the 1630s is the fact that the witness is progressively made to appear explicitly in the text, that he is, so to say, written-into-the-text. His distance with the events tends to diminish: he may become an investigator, a prosecutor, his voice may be emphatic or menaced, and this new written-into-voice marks the development of the narrative of the catastrophe in the seventeenth century. This paper presents an analysis of how the surviving witness, in particular after the plague, writes the traces of his experience into his narrative or his treatise. The question is which point of view gives “shape to the chaos” and how. This leads to examine how the form and the style of his report will be affected by the catastrophe, how the author, who is not always a professional writer, is led to question himself on the means and ends of his endeavor.

### **37. AFEK, Arnon & LIVNAT, Aviv:**

#### **“Non Omnis Moriar”– I Shall Not Wholly Die: A Study on Hunger by Jewish Physicians in the Warsaw Ghetto**

The title of the lecture calls to mind the words of Horace, “I shall not wholly die”, as the way in which he related to the eternalness of his poetry. This sentence is quoted by Dr. Milejkowski, head of the medical unit of the Judenrat in the Warsaw Ghetto, leader and promoter of a study rare in its emotional intensity and scientific value, at the conclusion of the medical study that was conducted by a group of 28 Jewish physicians confined within the Ghetto walls.

The study, “Hunger Disease”, a scientific study on the disease of hunger, was conducted by objective scientific methods like any other study. The medical language, the professional reporting, does not betray for even a fraction of a second, the personal traumatic conditions of the study originators. These were people who themselves, suffered from “Hunger Disease” (starvation), and choose to conduct a scientific study as their way of coping.

With steadfast devotion to the loftiest human values, humanism, and the advancement of science, they initiated a study detailing the clinical and pathological phenomena of starvation. They believed, first of all, by doing this, that they were documenting the harshest and firmest evidence of mass hunger disease as perpetrated by the Nazis. Furthermore, they also believed that there would never be another occasion to repeat a study on the horrific phenomena of hunger disease and they could, therefore, throw a spotlight, in scientific and medical terms, on the very process that was meant to kill them.

There are two approaches to the story – the first approach is from a historical point of view: who were the physicians? In what manner did they reach the decision to initiate the study? How was it possible to conduct the study within the confines of the ghetto? How was the necessary medical equipment acquired? How was it that the Germans didn’t discover their activities? And, finally, how was the handwritten work saved and smuggled out?

To approach the story from a medical point of view, one must clarify various issues that arose during the course of the study (it was divided into five sub-groups, with a lead physician and a team of investigators). What findings were demonstrated? What was their contribution to this field of studies, in what manner did it correlate with findings from previous studies, and most importantly, in the area of pediatrics and pathology since the Second World War?

The study on Hunger Disease is a chilling and moving testament between two poles: the power and resolve of the human spirit revealed by the Jewish physicians in face of the Jewish bodies, starving and withering away in the Ghetto. The question, among questions is – how is it that this story is not given the attention it deserves? Does it raise ethical questions? Is there something in the story that is outside the realm of our human or emotional ability to absorb? Is there not also something noble that testifies to the strength of the human spirit on one hand, in the midst of sinking to the lowest abyss possible?

The lecture will be accompanied by audio-visual material and photographs taken from the study that illustrate the historical, medical and biographical aspects.

### **38. ROKOTNITZ, Naomi:**

#### **“In the Aftermath of Personal Apocalypse”: From Traumatic ‘Acting Out’ to Curative Acting Into-the-World in Lionel Shriver’s *We Need to Talk About Kevin***

When Eva Khachédourian’s son Kevin commits multiple, brutal murders, her despair is accompanied by various symptoms of PTSD. When, in “the aftermath of personal apocalypse” (Shriver 2005: 10) a civil suit for parental neglect is issued against her, she remains publicly impassive, fiercely guarding the depths of her mortification. However, after almost two years of fixation with fierce routines and self-flagellation, Eva decides to write a series of self-critical letters to her estranged husband. At first, this initiative seems to be an ‘acting out’ of her trauma by obsessing over its every detail. But, gradually, her narrative journey leads Eva to form a new conception of herself, her family and the very processes by which self is constructed through a continually evolving, creative endeavor. The story that her letters end up telling is not the one she had previously imagined but, rather, a significantly different story worked out in its telling.

Although this is a novel, and so Eva’s experiences are necessarily fictional, Shriver’s treatment of Eva’s post-traumatic processes closely match those described by current empirical studies regarding the psychological impact of written testimony. Moreover, through this private testimony, Eva achieves not merely a reconfiguration of her own story but also masters the tools with which to redirect its course.

This paper examines how Eva’s narrative metamorphosis inspires curative change, so that her assumption of moral accountability instigates commitment to active intervention in her son’s life. This transition from private testimony to interactive agency allows the insights gained through narrative-construction to impact the external world. Shriver’s novel thereby suggests that trauma may be most effectively overcome when its representation is followed by a course of action. In particular, Eva forces herself to visit Kevin regularly. These excruciating meetings develop into a testimonial dialogue that proves more productive than either of them could have anticipated. Repeating becomes reworking, until both Eva and Kevin transcend their fury, guilt and shame, overcome ‘fidelity to trauma,’ and begin to foster hope for a new life-trajectory.

### **39. POLLIN-GALAY, Hannah:**

#### **Testifying on the Scene of the Crime: Jews in Contemporary Lithuania Remember the Holocaust**

This work analyzes problems of place and physical presence in Holocaust testimony. The textual basis for this analysis is the testimony of five Lithuanian Jews, who were all born before 1935 and still living in Lithuania in 2004-2005, the time during which they were interviewed.

Their perspective on the Holocaust is different from those found in most Holocaust testimony in two ways. To begin with, these individuals fled to the unoccupied Soviet Union immediately after the outbreak of war in Lithuania and were thus present for only the

beginning of the event. In addition, they all returned to their home country and remained there for the rest of their lives, rather than emigrating to Israel or the West. Thus, on the one hand, they were uniquely absent from the traumatic scene at the time the Holocaust took place and, on the other hand, uniquely present in this same location for the remainder of their lives.

The examination of their testimony is guided by two overarching questions. The first question addresses their unique form of absence during the Holocaust. How do the informants establish the authority to testify about this catastrophe, given that they were not there to physically see or experience most of the event? This section argues that the informants have at their disposal a wide, and sometimes surprising, array of ways to connect first-hand experience to their claims to tell the truth. Despite these different methods of witnessing, the informants all assert that they are both able and compelled to share the truth about the Holocaust, that their connection to the event is not lessened by their absence at the moment it took place.

The second overarching question addresses their unique, extended form of presence on the traumatic scene. As part of the testimonial process, the informants must negotiate between their memories of Lithuania as the locus of trauma with their rendering of the place as a mundane, manageable and even restorative cite of day-to-day life. By focusing on three specific elements of the texts—narrative form, the theme of place, and the theme of people—this study uncovers two incongruous tendencies: an inclination to portray their world as being continuous and unchanged, as well as a reluctant admission of disruption.

In considering the testimonial patterns of this specific community, the work also reflects on Holocaust historiography in general. It posits that traditional historical approaches to testimony, in which scholars primarily extract factual evidence from the content of what is said, do not take into account the complexity of bearing witness. As a result, they forego the advantages of the sources, as texts that teach us about how people today assign meaning to this singularly traumatic historical event.

#### **40. LEIBNER, Gerardo:**

##### **Do you Really Think It Was a Defeat?**

Uruguayan communist activists from the 60s and 70s, interviewed during 2000-2003, reacted with surprise when at a certain point in the interview I asked them how they explain the failure of their party's (PCU) strategy during the early 70s. The mere idea that their party's revolutionary strategy during the late 70s can be seen as a failure surprised them. This despite the fact that Uruguay experienced twelve years of rightist dictatorship (1973-1985). Their spontaneous reactions to such suggestions were confused in most cases. While some tell me that they don't consider it as a failure and tried to find reasons to support their view, others express some kind of surprise, uneasiness and admitted "we didn't think of it as a failure, but you may be right, there is something in your words...". Before my questions, during their spontaneous accounts about the late 60s and early 70s, they used to talk proudly about their party's strategy as particularly successful.

The activists interviewed suffered considerably during the years of dictatorship. Some were detained, tortured and jailed for years; others just lost their jobs, left their studies and led

clandestine lives, sometimes detached from their families and even having to leave the country to exile in order to avoid detention. Many lost a family member or a friend who was killed or disappeared by the armed forces of Uruguay or Argentina. Fear and extreme anxiety were a daily experience for those who succeeded to maintain a clandestine life. The long years of dictatorship were traumatic all for those in prison, in exile or in clandestine activities. Many of the persons interviewed experienced more than one condition.

The narrative produced by the Communist Party during the years of the dictatorship and after, tried to give answers and make sense of the traumatic experiences as part of a heroic and epic collective and conscious fight against fascism. This ideological narrative however was in many aspects inconsistent with the party's revolutionary narrative and expectations before the June 1973 coup.

These changes were assumed by the activists without questioning or even noticing its contradictions with previous party expectations, even after 30 years. Undoubtedly, their capacity to readapt and assume a new strategic narrative adequate to the new political conditions was related to their loyalty, discipline and confidence in their party's leadership.

I will argue that the act of remembering, as well as the construction of both a personal and collective narrative, which would allow them to assume the suffering and anxiety of the years of the dictatorship, caused them to idealize the party's successes during the previous period, even if that required partially "forgetting" their revolutionary expectations. In their narrations, the communist optimism of the 60s and 70s is revived, as the period is described as one of growth, achievements and victories, attributed to the application of an extremely successful political line. By analyzing some of the testimonies and the life experiences of the activists interviewed, as well as their party trajectory, I will attempt to explain how a hard defeat is remembered and recounted as a political of a success.

#### **41. BEN-GERSHON, Bella:**

##### **In Treatment: A Glimpse into the Experience of the Therapist in Engaging Traumatic Testimony**

The horror of the past is revealed in the therapist's room, sometimes for the first time since the patient was sexually abused, or hurt by a disaster or terrorist attack. Shame, self-blaming, guilt, unbearable pain, and loss of trust create a unique "explosive therapeutic situation", when the patient and the therapist are dealing with reenactment of traumatic experiences.

They reenact roles in turns: the seducer and the seduced; the prosecutor and the victim; the omnipotent rescuer and the helpless child – roles that are replayed again and again. A powerful dissociation process takes place, and different parts of the patient's personality are revealed in front of the therapist's eyes. As the therapists, we are obliged to be the witnesses for all the atrocities and cruelty that patients had experienced in their lives, in order to promote the healing process. How does this influence us? The samples from the therapy sessions will illustrate the unique process of transference and counter-transference during the traumatic testimony.

## **42. COQUIO, Catherine:**

### **Questioning Catharsis**

The notion of catharsis is often refused when talking about the literature of the Shoah, but sometimes is now being proposed again, and an analogy is drawn between the literature of testimony and the genre of tragedy. What is more, the cathartic model inspires socio-political projects of “reparation” which conceive of testimony as an obligatory, almost ritual, step in the process of recognition. This process is placed within a certain culture of mourning and memory politics today: this has been seen in post-apartheid South Africa, and in post-genocide Cambodia and Rwanda, in relation to different juridical processes.

We will try to understand and to differentiate the various domains – juridical, political, psychological, and literary – where the notion of catharsis is used, the places where it has been revived and refined, and to measure its legitimacy regarding the literature of testimony and the culture of memory, as this culture becomes globalized today.

We will try to interpret the reasons that study of post-genocide brings back the old idea of catharsis, whether the tragic model is assumed or, on the contrary, refused, as is the case for Imre Kertész. We will show that the notion of catharsis, after the genocide, tends to liberate itself from the poetics of tragedy in order to attain a new anthropological status and a specific ethic and political content.

## LIST OF LECTURERS (In alphabetical order)

AFEK, Arnon & LIVNAT, Aviv	(lecture 37.)
AMIR, Dana	(lecture 12.)
BEN-GERSHON, Bella	(lecture 41.)
BETHLEHEM, Louise	(lecture 23.)
BOKOBZA KAHAN, Michèle	(lecture 25.)
CHIANTARETTO, Jean-François	(lecture 10.)
CONSONNI, Manuela	(lecture 18.)
COQUIO, Catherine	(lecture 42.)
DOR, Judith	(lecture 32.)
DORNIER, Carole	(lecture 28.)
FRIEDMAN, Régine-Michal	(lecture 30.)
FRIEDMAN-PELEG, Keren	(lecture 34.)
GELKOPF, Marc	(lecture 35.)
GOLAN, Ruth	(lecture 11.)
KEREN, Arnon	(lecture 6.)
KIDRON, Carol A.	(lecture 13.)
LAUB, Dori	(lecture 9.)
LAVOCAT, Françoise	(lecture 36.)
LEIBNER, Gerardo	(lecture 40.)
LIEBLICH, Amia	(lecture 4.)
MENDLOVIC, Shlomo	(lecture 5.)
MORAG, Raya	(lecture 26.)
NOAH HARARI, Yuval	(lecture 7.)
PICK HAMOU, Michal	(lecture 24.)
POLLIN-GALAY, Hannah	(lecture 39.)
PORTELLI, Alessandro	(lecture 1.)
RAZINSKY, Liran	(lecture 16.)
ROBIN, Régine	(lecture 3.)
ROKOTNITZ, Naomi	(lecture 38.)
RONEN, Ruth	(lecture 21.)

RUBINSTEIN, Zohar	(lecture 14.)
SAXTON, Libby	(lecture 31.)
SHARON-ZISSER, Shirley	(lecture 17. & 19.)
SCHMIDT, Sibylle	(lecture 22.)
SOLOMON, Zahava	(lecture 2.)
TOKER, Leona	(lecture 15.)
TUVAL-MASHIACH, Rivka	(lecture 33.)
WALLEN, Jeffrey	(lecture 8.)
WEINE, Stevan	(lecture 29.)
YACOBI, Tamar	(lecture 20.)
YOSEF, Raz	(lecture 27.)