Remembrance and Research

The Journal of the Israel Oral History Association

Number 3 | May 2020

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The Journal of the Israel Oral History Association,
is dedicated to the promotion of knowledge, research and discussion on issues of oral history.

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Submissions are reviewed by the **Remembrance and Research** editors, as well as by external lectors.

Introductory Note

We are pleased to present our readers with the third issue *of Remembrance and Research* - the bi-lingual journal of the *Israel Oral History Association (ILOHA*). The objective of this journal is to provide those in the Israeli public who are interested in oral history, articles that deal with theoretical and practical aspects in the field. We also aim, to serve as a forum for the presentation of projects in diverse disciplines which are based on interviews, and to serve as a bridgehead for communication with scholars abroad. The articles in the present issue deal with the different perspective of interviewees in different phases in their lives, in the role of interviewers and the way they interpret what they are told, as well as the use of interviews for educational and communal purposes and in the scientific interpretation of oral histories. Please note that our contributors come from various countries so that there are instances of diverse English spellings.

The preparation of this issue of *Remembrance and Research* found us in a period in which the Covid 19 pandemic was – and still is - at its height. This is a time when we have to change our daily habits and to adapt to a changing reality in which personal communication became virtual, and we are experiencing distance together with nearness. Covid 19 has already left its imprint on the field of oral history in new topics for research, related to the period, specific issues and comparative perspectives, as well as with respect to technological changes, that became critical to the choice and implication of oral documentation. Moreover, interviewer and interviewee often share a similar personal, family and social situation, with a unique impact on the interview, and a common factual and emotional insight of both interviewer and interviewee.

On the one hand our sources of information and contacts with persons close to us become more elusive, and tend to disappear with time without leaving written traces. On the other, the new technologies, such as Zoom, facilitate interviewing, recording and filming of meetings with distant persons in distant places, crossing borders and oceans. This enables us to conduct meetings, conversations and interviews

throughout the world. Interviews, as sources of knowledge, are becoming more relevant than ever.

Abstract: The English Section

Slave Labour and Shoah – A View from Israel

Margalit Bejarano, Amija Boasson

This essay is the academic report of the project described in the Hebrew section of this journal, based on 25 interviews with Israeli survivors of forced labour camps during the reign of National Socialism. The interviews focus on the lifelong perspectives of the survivors regarding their wartime experiences. Unlike other national groups interviewed worldwide for this project, forced labour for the Jews – despite its hardships – was a ray of hope for those who were doomed to perish. Their stories reflect the changing role of the survivors within Israeli society, allowing their voices to be heard in 2005 - sixty years after the end of the war.

Oral History Via The Radio

Gesine Strempel

My professional life as a radio journalist began in April 1979, when the *SFB* (*Sender Freies Berlin* – The Radio of Free Berlin) initiated a complete reform of their radio broadcasts, including programing. I became one of five anchorwomen of a program entitled *Zeitpunkte* (News of the Times) which was broadcast daily for 55 minutes. This was an on air magazine that concentrated exclusively on all aspects of the daily life of women. This program aired segments covering sexual abuse, violence against women and children, health, politics, art, family and education. *Zeitpunkte also* devoted much of its programing into news, interviews and events dealing with Jewish life in Berlin - East and West, Jewish life on a national level as well as international. The life of Holocaust survivors was a strong component of *Zeitpunkte*, not only on Holocaust memorial days.

This radio program was unique in the German speaking countries. The continuous news about Jewish life was only possible because all the female employed editors of *Zeitpunkte* promoted this focus on Jewish life.

My relationship especially with the Israeli women I interviewed was unique. Since I had the chance to visit Israel often, these relationships were long lasting. They trusted me, when they talked to me. I felt honored. It was never important for me whether or not a story was absolutely true, because I knew, as Yoram Kaniuk phrased it in his book, *1948*, that: *"sometimes a lie that comes from searching for the truth, can be more real than the truth itself*".

The Construction of Testimony

Sharon Kangisser Cohen

Over the past 15 years I have been accompanying Pinchas Gutter, a child survivor of the Holocaust from Poland on educational trips to the site of his incarceration. For most of his life, Pinchas did not share his experiences with the wider public until the 1990's when he traveled back to Europe with his family in order to retell his story. For over three decades he has been communicating his past to students from around the world in order to fight racism. This article is a reflection on how Pinchas has told his story over time and in different medium.

Abstract: The Hebrew Section

Oral Documentation, Oral History and Ethics: Some Landmarks

Margalit Bejarano

This article briefly surveys the transformation of oral history from an instrumental conception which recognized oral documentation as a legitimate source for historical research, to the notion that oral history is an end in itself. The article discusses some of the theories that stress the importance of subjectivity, which views the interview as a reflection of culture and as a tool to understanding social and political

phenomena. At the same time, the article refers to the impact of technological advances and innovations which influences the formulation of basic rules for oral history institutions. It concludes with the importance of preparing an ethical code for oral historians in Israel.

What Remains After the Curtain Falls? An Oral Documentation of Theatre Artists

Leah Gilula

This article discusses the methodology of oral documentation of actors and theatre artists. It discusses the preparations for the interview, the interview itself and its aftermath. The article describes the characteristics and the differences between audio and video interviews and points out the unique aspects of oral documentation of actors and theatre artists.

Forced and Slave Labour in World War II: An International Oral History Project (2005-2006)

Amija Boasson

The project “Documentation of Life Story Interviews with Former Slave and Forced Labourers" was conducted in 27 countries utilizing uniform guidelines for all interviews. The article describes the project from the perspective of the interviewer who was based in Israel. The interviewer analyzes the formal aspects of the project as well as her relationship with the interviewees. The interviews were conducted as open conversations, and covered not only the war years, but the entire life of the participant. The article concludes with the personal experience and observations of the interviewer.

The Time Tunnel – A Historical, Social and Educational Program

Boaz Lev Tov, Aiala Wengrowicz Feller

The Time Tunnel Program of the Beit Berl College is a historical, social, educational and academic initiative which utilizes the methodology of oral history in order to document the everyday life of ordinary citizens in Israel. The Time Tunnel Program has been in existence for ten years.

During this time it has expanded its scope to include new groups, not previously documented. Throughout this time, the program has undergone a process of professionalization, both in the methodological aspects and the creative presentation of the findings resulting from this documentation.

During the process of developing our primary methodological framework, we were able to combine flexibility in face of diversity among the wide variety of groups and social sectors which participated in this unique program.

Dr. Margalit Bejarano and Dr. Judith Reifen-Ronen

Slave Labour and Shoah – A View from Israel

Margalit Bejarano, Amija Boasson

"What future awaits us? Forced labour and life or forced labour and death?"

Salek Perehodnik (1943)[1]

Introduction

The oral history project, *"Documentation of Life Story Interviews with Former Slave and Forced Laborers"* was initiated by the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation (Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft), that was established in Berlin in 2000. The objective of the project was to collect a large and representative corpus of oral histories which would be used for educational and academic purposes. These recollections would serve to record the first hand

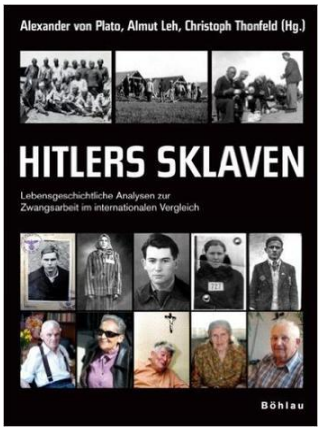
Dr. Margalit Bejarano is a historian. She was a teaching fellow in the Dept. of Romance and Latin American Studies and the director of the Oral History Division of the Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She published extensively on Cuban Jewry, Sephardim in Latin America, Latin American Jews in Miami and oral history.

Amija Boasson, is an interviewer and translator. She studied at the Violin Making School - Mittenwald, Germany. She opened, with the German representative, the first Goethe Institute-Jerusalem, worked at *Amcha* – Israel Support Center for Holocaust Survivors, and was the Director of the Association for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University. She studied oral history and is a member of the Israel Oral History Association.

[1] Salek Perehodnik, The Sad Task of Documentation: A Diary in Hiding, Keter: Jerusalem 1993. (Hebrew).

memories and documentation of those who suffered the atrocities and injustices inflicted onto them by the Nazi regime, the forced laborers.

The project was directed and coordinated by Prof. Alexander von Plato and his team at the Institute for History and Biography at the Fernuniversität Hagen. Interviewers were instructed to record the complete biography of their interviewees, and to encourage them to speak about their thoughts and feelings. During the years 2005 and 2006, 32 projects in 26 countries collected almost 600 interviews. This included 25 interviews in Israel, all of which were conducted in the mother tongue of the interviewees, 75% were conducted in audio, and 25% in video. Interviews are accessible to the public at the website "Forced Labor 1939-1945: Memory and History" (www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de).



In 2010 the accounts and analysis of the interviews conducted by the various institutions that participated in the project were published in the book *Hitler's Slaves: Life Stories of Forced Labourers in Nazi-Occupied Europe*, edited by Alexander von Plato, Almut Leh and Christoph Thonfeld, Berghahn Books: New York and Oxford 2010. The volume (originally published in German[2]) also includes several essays that analyze forced labour from transnational perspectives. It reflects the different approach and fate of former slave or forced labourers of different nationalities, as well as the impact on their lives after the war, including the way the interviewees interpreted their memories. The following article was published as a chapter in the book. We would like to convey our thanks to Prof. Von Plato for the permission to reprint his article in our journal.

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[2] Plato, Alexander von, Leh Almut, Thonfeld Christoph, (eds), *Hitlers Sklaven: Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien, Köln, Weimar 2008.

The twenty five former Jewish forced labourers interviewed in Israel, were born in twelve different countries: Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Transylvania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece, Germany, Austria, Holland, Tunisia and Libya.[3] Their common denominator is not the territory of memory but the territory of retrospect: they all look back at their lives and interpret their experiences during the Shoah from an Israeli and Jewish perspective. They feel different from other national groups who suffered the hardships of forced labour but were not doomed to perish. Knowing that for the Jews, slave labour was life on borrowed time, they define themselves as survivors, not as slave labourers.

Historical Background

According to the ideology of National Socialism, Jews had no place in human society.[4] Their systematic discrimination and brutal persecutions started in Nazi Germany, but until the outbreak of WWII they were directed to force them to emigrate from the Reich.[5] After the invasion of Poland (September 1939), its territory was divided between Germany and the Soviet Union. The Eastern part was annexed to the U.S.S.R, the Western part was annexed to the Reich and the central part – the *Generalgouvernement* - was put under a German civil administration.[6] Until May 1941 the Jews were persecuted and humiliated losing their basic human rights. They were concentrated in ghettoes and sent to forced labour under extremely difficult conditions. Jews from other occupied countries (including Holland, Yugoslavia and Greece) as well as from Austria and Czechoslovakia were deported to

[3] Names of countries are given according to the frontiers in 1939.

[4] The short historical survey that follows is based on *Shoá: Enciclopedia del Holocausto*, Yad Vashem & E.D.Z. Nativ Ediciones, Jerusalem 2004.

[5] See interview with Walter Gutman (born 1928). All the interviews were conducted by Amija Boasson in 2005-2006. Copies of the interviews were deposited in the Oral History Archive of the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

[6] See interviews with: Binem Wrzonski (b. 1928), Chava Slutzki (b. 1930), Noach Lasman (b. 1924), Meir Eldar (b. 1930), Zecharija Shagrin (b. 1925). The interviewees came from western and central Poland.

occupied Poland and recruited to forced labour in conditions that were termed *indirect extermination*.[7]

With the invasion of the Soviet Union (June 1941) units of the *Einsatzgruppen* started the mass murder of the Jews, in territories that included Lithuania, where the local society eagerly collaborated in the extermination of the Jews.[8] At the same time started the Final Solution – the plan for the systematic annihilation of all European Jewry, using the gas chambers in Auschwitz as well as in other extermination camps. Most of the Jews of Poland were murdered until the autumn of 1943. The last to be deported from the ghettoes were those considered fit to serve as slave labourers. In the case of the ghetto of Lodz, whose Jewish population was economically useful, the liquidation of the ghetto was delayed until May 1944. The Jews from other occupied countries that included Holland, Yugoslavia and Greece were sent to the gas chambers upon their arrival to Auschwitz.[9] Transylvania was under Rumanian rule from 1920 to 1940, when the Northern part was annexed to Hungary that was a German satellite. Like the Hungarian Jews, they were denied human rights and forced to do coercive labour. With the German occupation (March 1944), the Jews of Hungary and Transylvania were deported to Poland, where most of them perished in Auschwitz.[10]

A different situation existed in the countries of North Africa that fell under the rule of National Socialism but the German occupation did not last long enough as to impose the Final Solution on the Jewish

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[7] See interviews with Judith Mogendorff (b. Holland 1916), Yehoshua Neubauer (b. Austria 1930), Lilly Har Kochav (b. Czechoslovakia 1925), Yaffa Hanigal (b. Czechoslovakia 1920) and Giselle Cycowicz (b. 1927 in Karpato-Russ - a conflicting zone between the Czechs and Hungarians).

[8] See interviews with Rivka Wollbe (b. Lithuania, 1922) and Uri Chanoch (b. Lithuania 1928).

[9] See interviews with Chava Michaeli (b. Yugoslavia 1928), Moshe Weiss (b. Yugoslavia 1925), Jacques Stroumsa (b. Greece 1913), Jackie Yaacov Chandaly (b. Greece 1927).

[10] Interviews with Miriam Gross (b. Hungary 1922), Shmuel Bogler (b. Hungary 1929), Martin Kieselstein (b. Transylvania, 1925), Malka Jacobson (b. Transylvania 1929) and the brothers from Transylvania Joseph Pinsker (b. 1924) and Arie Pinsker (b. 1930).

population. In Tunisia, the occupation of Germany and Italy (November 1942) was accompanied by anti-Jewish measures that included arrests and deportations of leaders as well as the coercive recruitment of men to labour camps where they were treated brutally.[11] In Libya, the Italian authorities imposed the same racial laws that were valid in Italy, and sent all the Jewish men aged 18-45 to forced labour camps.[12] The liberation of Libya by the British army (January 1943) brought to the abrogation of the anti-Jewish policy and was accompanied by the attack and massacre of Jews by the Moslem population.

In Europe, the defeat in Stalingrad did not alter the rate of extermination, but the scarcity of men power increased the demand for Jewish labourers that were forced to work until death. As they retreated from the front, the Germans tried to conceal their crimes and to destruct the extermination and labour camps, killing most of the prisoners. In late 1944 started the Death Marches of prisoners, evacuated from the camps, who were forced to walk long distances to Germany and in it in the most unbearable conditions, dying on the threshold of liberation.

Most Holocaust survivors had lost all their families and many could not remain in their hometowns where they were met with hostility by the local population. 250,000 joined the movement of *Bricha* (Escape), aimed towards Eretz Israel (Palestine), finding transitory refuge in DP (Displaced Persons) camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. Immigration to Palestine was restricted by the British mandatory government, and the illegal immigrants caught at sea were sent to detention camps in Atlit (near Haifa) or in Cyprus. Only with the establishment of the State of Israel (May 1948) the Jewish people found a country that opened its doors to all the Jews.

The Interviewees' Experience of Forced Labour

Most of our interviewees, regardless of their place of origin, came from an urban background of middle or lower middle class. Many of them came from religious families, with different degrees of orthodoxy,

[11] Interview with Gad Shachar (b. Tunisia, 1923).

[12] Interview with Shalom Arbiv (b. Libya1923).

and a considerable number had been exposed to Zionism. All of them had some degree of general and Jewish education, and their domination of languages was remarkable, particularly in regions with a multi-national population. Families were closely knit together, but memories of a happy childhood were often tainted by anti-Semitic episodes and economic difficulties. The four Sephardi interviewees (two from Salonica, Greece, and two from North Africa) shared similar characteristics.

At least half of the interviewees were taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau where they were separated from their families and in most cases lost their closest relatives. Others were taken directly to labour camps or were engaged in forced labour in other frameworks. The labour and concentration camps where interviewees were interned, include some well known ones in Germany (Ravensbrück, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Buchenwald, Gross Rosen, Dora-Mittelbau), Poland (Czenstochowa, Plaszów, Skarzysko-Kamienna, Stutthof, Siedelce), Czechoslovakia (Theresienstadt) Holland (Westerbork) and Austria (Mauthausen), as well as in North Africa (Sidi-Azaz, Sedjenane and Mateur).

It is beyond the scope of this article to trace personal stories, though each individual interview contains wealth of factual information that often reflect the changing circumstances in the respective region following the Nazi invasion. We will limit ourselves to the impact of forced labour on human behaviour, as portrayed by the interviewees.

Most of the interviewees did hard physical work that included the building of roads, taking stones out of quarries, placing railways and building airports. The professional work of construction was generally done by free persons or other nationals, and the Jewish forced labourers carried bricks and other material, such as heavy bags of cement, cleared the ground from heavy stones or uprooted and removed trees.[13] Others had to dig trenches and bunkers, or clear the

[13] Interviews with Noach Lasman, Lilly Har Kochav, Rivka Wollbe, Miriam Gross, Shmuel Bogler, Zecharija Shagrin.

ground after the bombing. In the forests they removed the burnt trees and in the cities they cleared the ruins of the devastated buildings.[14] An exceptional case was that of a Dutch nurse who was employed in her profession in the hospitals in Westerbork and Bergen Belsen.[15]

A few women were involved in work in factories of ammunition or producing parts of airplanes. Others were employed by private enterprises, such as for the Schindler industries in Plaszow or E.G. Farben in Buna (Auscwhitz 3) and Wolfer & Goebel near Siedelce. Oddly enough, the professional work that required precision, gave prisoners some interest in their work and was considered as means of survival.[16]

One of them worked in her home town Skarzysko, acquiring great talent in the recycling of bullets. Luckily for her, she was not placed in the *Werke C* where prisoners were exposed to poisonous sulphur, becoming yellow and dying quickly.[17]

In North Africa, the roads were not adequate for heavy transportation, and Jews were employed in the construction of roads. In Tunisia, forced labourers were used as porters, to carry food and ammunition to the front, from the point that the paved way ended.[18] The luckiest prisoners were those exposed to some contact with food, working in the fields or in the kitchen. In Libya a Jew was stationed in the kitchen because the Italian officer liked his cooking; in Germany, because he peeled potatoes with the thinnest peels.[19]

Interviewees recall with precision the small rations of food that they received in each camp, but also the fights over every crumb of bread in which: *"we were stripped of our humanity; we became*

[14] Interview with Chava Michaeli, Shmuel Bogler, Uri Chanoch.

[15] Interview with Judith Mogendorff.

[16] Interviews Cycowicz. See also Shagrin, Slutzki, Gutmann, Eldar, Wrzonski.

[17] Interview with Chava Slutzki; see also Giselle Cycowicz, Zecharija Shagrin, Binem Wrzonskia

[18] Interview with Gad Shahar, Shalom Arbiv.

[19] Interviews Moshe Weiss, Martin Kieselstein.

animals". The meaning of dying of hunger was real, and a dying person was searched for the last piece of bread that he held in his fist: "*because it was a luxury to bury him with the bread"*.[20] Practically every interviewee was haunted by hunger, and many were ready to risk their life for a piece of uncooked potato. The difficulty to convey to the listener today the meaning of real hunger is reflected in one interview: "*The hunger …maddened me. It's extremely difficult to explain what is hunger […] for an adolescent child. It was painful, terribly painful. […] I resisted being flogged; I didn't resist this pain*".[21]

Interviewees described with details their daily life in each camp, including accommodation, clothing and hygienic conditions. The protection of the body against cold, lice, skin infections and disease were a constant struggle that did not discriminate between the sexes.

Women, however, paid a heavy price for the loss of their femininity. The shaving of their hair and their nakedness before men was far more humiliating. One interviewee recalls that on her way to Auschwitz she was sitting next to her boyfriend, paying little attention to the suffering around her. Still unaware of the meaning of what was happening, she was forced to undress and was shaved: "*It was awful, awful, simply awful! I would rather die than appear naked before men*". A few hours later she happened to meet her boyfriend behind the barbed wires. When he saw her without hair he told her: *"Go away quickly. I don't want to see you!*"[22] The shaving of their hair transformed them from women to monsters, not to be recognized even by their closest relatives and all of them lost in that period their menstruation.

Only with liberation women discovered how they looked: *"I saw a mirror in the hall. I looked at it and started crying. I cried because I didn't recognize myself […] I saw two big eyes and I don't have a face!*"[23] Their monstrous appearance of walking skeletons with bald

[20] Interview Zecharija Shagrin.

[21] Interview with Uri Chanoch. See also: Bogler, Michaeli, Slutzki, Gross.

[22] Interview Chava Michaeli. See also Giselle Cycowicz, Malka Jacobson.

[23] Interview Lilly Har Kochav. See also Chava Michaeli.

head and infected skin gave them some protection against being raped by Russian soldiers that was one of the major threats immediately after liberation.

Though living in totally inhuman conditions, forced labourers were also able to have a limited cultural activity, such as concerts or the celebration of Sabbath and holidays. The most popular activity, however, was to speak about food, preparing and eating in their imagination wonderful meals. An important cultural activity was singing songs, sometimes inventing new words to popular melodies. One prisoner remembers that in their free time they sometimes sang songs or recited poetry: "*we even laughed sometimes. Everything we did was around food – how we cooked, we exchanged recipes. We never spoke of despair*".

Forced labour in the Context of the Shoah

The exceptional interviewees in our project are the two men from Tunisia and Libya, who were taken to do forced labour while their families remained at home.[24] They were humiliated and physically punished, but they did not face deportation to extermination camps. Another unusual case is that of a child from Austria whose parents received a certificate, which released the father from Dachau, and allowed them to immigrate to Palestine, but without children. He was sent to relatives in Slovakia and Hungary, where he was forced to work for the Hungarians, as an adult, being only ten years old. In 1941 he was sent in a children's transport, arranged by the *Youth Aliyah Organization* (*Aliyat Hanoar)* to Palestine.[25]

The other 22 stories were totally different: Thirteen of the interviewees were taken to Auschwitz and others went through similar experiences of being torn brutally from their parents and siblings, whom often they never saw again. The stories are well known, and the interviews may not add new historical facts, but they are essential for

[24] Interview Gad Shahar (Tunisia) and Shalom Arbiv (Tripoli).

[25] Interview Yehoshua Neubauer.

placing the chapter of forced labour in its real proportion, also in the eyes of the interviewees themselves.

After the horrible trip by train in the most inhuman conditions – that in the case of the interviewees from Salonica lasted eight days – came what in later years interviewees perceived as the most tragic moments of their lives. The stories are composed of different layers of awareness: what they knew or ignored at the moment of arrival, the discovery of the inevitable death of their loved ones charged with all the information they have been accumulating throughout their lives, as well as with bitter remorse for what they did not do at that moment of helplessness: *"I don't forgive myself that I did not look at them in the last moment; at least to see them […] before we were separated*".[26]

Most interviewees pointed out the self-denial, even in view of the chimney and the smell of burning flesh:

> *Who could imagine to himself! […] only to stand there, to see, to breathe the air, the air of burning flesh and the sight of the flames. […] and to know that they are burning (they already burnt our parents two days ago) but they are burning persons that are maybe our cousins, friends, anyway they are Jews. He who has never been there will never understand.*[27]

Self-denial is expressed also by an interviewee employed in tearing apart the piles of shoes arriving from Auschwitz, so that the leather could be used again: "*I didn't want to believe it, although I had already known […] but one doesn't want to believe such things […] to understand from where came the shoes*".[28] Only a few claim that they or their parents understood the meaning of the first selection: "*Papa*

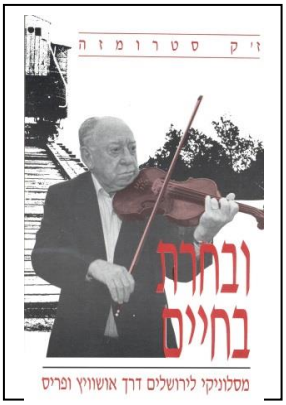
[26] Interview Joseph Pinsker.

[27] Interview Joseph Pinsker. See also Arie Pinsker, Chava Michaeli, Miriam Gross, Shmuel Bogler.

[28] Interview Gutmann.

told us to say that we are older and to volunteer to work […] only work will save you, and take care of mama".[29]

An unusual story is that of Jacques Stroumsa from Salonica who upon discovering that his parents, brother and pregnant wife had been murdered was forced to play the violin, becoming the first violinist in the Auschwitz orchestra. Referring to his absurd situation he says: "*On the one hand they kill and on the other they give me a cigarette because they heard the concerto of Mozart; this was unbelievable*".[30]



The Auschwitz experience created an association between a gas chamber and a regular shower, but also placed 'normal' suffering in a different dimension. One interviewee recalls that he was terrified when he was taken to a shower in Buchenwald, not knowing that it was a concentration and not an extermination camp. He was undressed and razed, and started to recite *Shma Israel*,[31] and then was disinfected by an extremely painful liquid: "*It was horrible, it burnt, it was an unbearable suffering…but you are alive!*"[32]

What was the meaning of remaining alive? Those who were M*uselmann* were too sick to rejoice; they were taken to hospitals starting a long way of physical recuperation that in a few cases lasted for years.[33] Weakness, however, was not only physical. Interviewees remember the depression they felt when they realized that they had lost all their families, and they had nowhere to return:

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[29] Interviews Cycowitz. Gross.

[30] Interview Jacques Stroumsa.

[31] 'Hear O Israel' the last pray recited before dying.

[32] Interview Binem Wrzonski.

[33] Interviews Joseph Pinsker, Wrzonski, Meir Eldar, Lilly Har Kochav, Gutman, Lasman.

> *But what now? Where? For what were we liberated? Why? Where do we want to return? Do we want to live among the people who did us all these troubles? […] we didn't study, we have no money, we have no clothes and winter is coming. Who is living? Where are mother, sister and father? All this suddenly exploded inside*.[34]

Several interviewees found their way to Palestine, often illegally, after a relatively short period. Others were caught behind the Iron-Curtain and migrated during the 1950s. Only one interviewee migrated to the United States and only about ten years ago settled in Israel.

One of the questions that arouse after liberation was the attitude towards religion. During the Holocaust period circumstances did not permit keeping with religious commands, although interviewees recount also attempts to celebrate, even symbolically, the holidays. Most interviewees became less observant as a consequence of their Holocaust experience, or even abandoned religion altogether: "*People who asked the question 'how God permitted this to happen' lost their faith*".[35]

Two of the interviewees came from very Orthodox families, one being the daughter of a famous rabbi. Both arrived at an Orthodox boarding school, especially established for Jewish girls, by rabbis, in Sweden – one as a student and the other as a teacher – creating a protective framework that served as a substitute for lost families and offered spiritual answers to their existential problems. "*The atmosphere was such that it united them so much, and they were consoled, and they [the rabbis] explained to them the situation from the aspect of belief so that they recuperated spiritually"*.[36] Others like the *Buchenwald-Children*, were brought to France, where they were placed in warm boarding-homes, run by Jewish organizations.[37]

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[34] Interview Giselle Cycowicz. See also Wrzonski, Bogler, Michaeli, Lasman.

[35] Interview Joseph Pinsker. See also Martin Kieselstein, Arie Pinsker.

[36] Interviews Rivka Wollbe, Malka Jacobson.

[37] Binem Wrzonski.

Another protective framework sought by the interviewees was marriage. Some married very young, as early as they could, trying to escape solitude and hoping to start a new life by creating a new family. They wanted to raise normal children and tried to protect them from the knowledge of what they went through.[38]

Interviews as the Interpretation of Memories

The interviews reflect the motivation of the interviewees to participate in the oral history project and the tension between speaking up and remaining silent. Only a few of the persons approached refused to be interviewed, but all were very cooperative and even urged their friends to give a testimony. Some of them spoke for the first time while others have already been interviewed for other frameworks or even published their memories.[39] Most of the interviewees, if not all of them, refer to their silence for long years, due to the lack of understanding from the surrounding society, the necessity of building a new life and their feeling that it was worthless to talk. They refer to their desire to forget, to start a new life and to protect their children from knowledge.

Some of the interviewees for the project argued that even though they tried to suppress their memories and outwardly they seem to live normally, the presence of the Shoah has always been a part of their daily life and they could not escape from it. Their experiences during the war continued to haunt them in their nightmares, or in sleepless nights. They complain about poor health, loss of teeth, wounds that were caused by punishment, such as a bullet in the leg, continuous illness or a deaf ear.[40]

In many cases interviewees broke their silence at the request of their grand children. They admit that they were emotionally injured by

[38] See for example Gross, Hanigal.

[39] Rivka Wollbe, *Veemunatecha Baleilot*, Jerusalem 1997; Yaacov Chandaly, *Mehamigdal Halavan Leshaarei Auschwitz*, Tel Aviv, 2nd. Ed. 1997; Jacques Stroumsa, *Geiger in Auschwitz*, Konstanz 1996; Judith Rosenblit-Mogendorf, *Zichronot midor ledor*, Raanana 2002; Noach Lasmann, *Hakvish*, Tel Aviv 1996.

[40] See for example interviews Lilly Har Kochav, Joseph Pinsker, Shalom Arbiv, Walter Gutman, Noach Lasman, Malka Jacobson.

their experiences during the Shoah, that they were not able to show tenderness and love to their children as they do now with their grandchildren. They were busy to survive and later to make a living and were unable to expose their feelings and memories.[41] Communication with their grandchildren was heart opening, and in most cases a trigger to give their testimony.

Speaking out is also described as a way to close a cycle or to find a peace of mind. One interviewee said that he had hoped that by speaking he would find some tranquillity to his soul, but in the end he felt that it was futile.[42]

Interviewees explain the reasons for their recent decision to tell their story, and the painful process of exposing themselves to speaking in public. Some of them participated as witnesses in the March of The Living that brings to Poland, Jewish school children, or lectured in different frameworks about their experience during the Holocaust. Despite their emotional difficulties, they feel an urge to participate in what they perceive as an important mission, to pass on their personal experiences as Jewish victims of National Socialism to the younger generation. One of them explained to his listeners, both in Israel and in Germany: *"you have the privilege to see a Shoah survivor. Soon we will not be here and you will not have what to ask and whom to ask". This is why it is important for me*".[43]

One of the problems faced by the interviewees is their conflicting feelings with respect to the capacity of others to comprehend. On the one hand they feel the incapacity of the common language to convey what they went through: "*It is impossible to transmit this… there is no expression for this situation. There are no lexicologists who can write an expression suitable for this exasperation*".[44] On the other hand,

[41] Interviews Miriam Gross, Uri Chanoch.

[42] Interview Shmuel Bogler.

[43] Interview Uri Chanoch. See also Wrzonski, Stroumsa, Har Kochav.

[44] Interview Lilly Har Kochav. See also: Naomi Rosh White, 'Marking absences: Holocaust testimony and history', in Robert Perks & Alistair Thomson (eds.) The Oral History Reader, London & New York 1998, pp. 172-182.

however, they refer to the common knowledge shared with the interviewer: "*What happened in Auschwitz you know. I don't have to tell you*".[45]

Interviewees use oral history to interpret to themselves, as well as to others, the meaning of what they went through. During the interview they build up their personal story by interweaving the remembered events with the information that they have been accumulating throughout their lives. Memory is re-examined in view of that additional knowledge, with interviewees being able to distinguish between the different layers of time.

One interviewee uses his reminiscences and personal investigation to criticize the conventions shared by other survivors. He has been dedicating himself since his retirement to clear some historical misconceptions and injustices, such as in the case of a Kapo in Auschwitz, who gained the confidence of the Germans which he used to help his fellow Jews, but in the end became a victim of his reputation being considered by his fellow Jews as a collaborator.[46]

The interviews serve also as a means to explain the reasons of survival, against all odds. The presence of a relative or a good friend appears as one of the most important sources of support: "*Being together gave us the force to continue, so that one protected the other all the time*". In a few cases interviewees were adopted by older persons: "*I was her Lager-daughter and she was my Lager-mother"*.[47] A common explanation is the combination of chance with an unexpected intervention of a powerful person. An SS guard who pushed to the left in a selection or a medical doctor who forced to go to work were later considered life savers. A boy from Salonica who was sent to work in the kitchen with fierce looking men who were known to be criminals was saved by a boxer from his home town who took him under

[45] Interview Yaffa Hanigal.

[46] Meir Eldar, *Yaacov Kozolcyk, Hagibor mikriniki beblok 11*, Jerusalem 2001. Interview Meir Eldar. (The Hero from Kriniki in Block 11).

[47] Interviews Bogler, Gross, Michaeli, Joseph Pinsker, Wrzonski, Arie Pinsker.

his protection.[48] One interviewee explained that he owes his survival to the small lights that appeared in crucial moments in the period of darkness: "*How many stars I saw in my way, how many angels […] they were the persons who helped me, who put me on my feet again*".[49]

Interviewees often realize that they were doomed to die, and were only saved by a blind chance:

> *Nobody will tell me that he was saved because he was more intelligent, or because someone hid him or because he was a great combinator. It was all a question of luck. You were lucky if you were successful to escape one aktzie, but then they could […] drag you to work, or a guard who, just for caprice, took out a revolver and killed you. Obviously, it was just luck*.[50]

Whether by mere luck or by a series of miracles, the interviewees describe with details the fragile chain of events that saved them from extermination: "*Along my story the leading thread is chance. [Without] one positive chance in one place I could not reach the end*".[51]

A central interpreted issue is the building of personal identity and its links with the national identity. The great desire to build a new life is interrelated with the discovery of the possibility to migrate to Palestine. Many of our interviewees arrived illegally to Palestine during the Mandate period and were interned in the refugee camp of Atlit or were sent to Cyprus. One of them found a direct line between his experience in Auschwitz, his internment in Cyprus and his captivity by the Jordanian Legion during the War of Independence:

> *I would like to point out the trauma that remained with me from Auschwitz that increased with the capture of our boat when we were brought to Cyprus. And that night in which they informed me: 'you are going to captivity'. This left a trauma until this very day. I dream*

[48] Interview Jackie Chandalay. See alsoArie Pinsker, Martin Kieselstein.

[49] Interview Binem Wrzonski.

[50] Interview Uri Chanoch. See also Martin Kieselstein, Jackie Chandaly.

[51] Interview Moshe Weiss.

> *often about concentration camps, and I cannot see anything connected with war […] or with violence. It always reminds me of my past*.[52]

Through the transmission of national ideology interviewees find a meaning to their sacrifice. They stress the importance of having a Jewish homeland, becoming advocates of Israeli patriotism: "*this is the only state that we have. Nowhere the Jews are liked. So we have to guard this small country to build it and to protect it. This is the message that I want to give to those who will hear my story*".

The State of Israel is perceived not just as a home for its inhabitants, but also as the insurance company of the Jewish people, a guarantee that the Holocaust should never happen again: "*Thanks God that we live in a different reality. We have a state of our own and we have to protect it. […] this is what I told IDF soldiers two years ago […]: Don't ever leave this country…this is the place that guarantees that what happened then will never happen again*".[53]

By telling their story in this particular historical moment, survivors acquire the role of prophets:

> *I think that [to forget] is an injustice not towards us, but towards the coming generations, because […] the enemy is always here. The enemy yesterday was Hitler, today he may be […] an Iranian […] who says that the Jews have no place in Israel. […] My story is interesting only if you understand that you are in danger, by you I mean the Jewish people ….] You, your children, your grandchildren and whoever is born will always be in danger.*[54]

Another question related to the contemporary Israeli discourse is that of the incorporation of the Jews from Moslem countries into the national history of the Holocaust. The two interviewees from North

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[52] Interview Shmuel Bogler.

[53] Interview with Joseph Pinsker, Uri Chanoch, Binem Wrzonski.

[54] Interview Jacques Stroumsa.

Africa define their identity with respect to their experience as forced labourers. The interviewee from Libya argues that he is a witness but not a survivor, although he claims that potentially every Jew is a survivor: "*I was in the Shoah. Every Jew living today is a Shoah survivor, because who knows […] everybody could have been exterminated*".[55] The interviewee from Tunisia, who grew up in a wealthy family that adopted the French culture, remembers that when he was taken to the labour camp his group was marched to the train station passing through the street in which he was born and his neighbours, who were all Europeans, applauded to the Germans: *"At that moment, I remember, I said: 'That's it. I don't belong here'. […] It was broken once and for all. […] These terms, of course, are taken from the future*". [56]

Conclusions

The 25 oral histories in our project are based on the reminiscences of Jewish Holocaust survivors living in Israel. Their main academic contribution does not lie in new historical evidence, but in the interpretation of their experience as forced or slave labourers under National Socialism in the context of their fate during the Shoah from a life long perspective. It also contributes to the analysis of the changing role of the survivors in the Israeli society bringing their voice sixty years after the end of the war.

Interviewees appraise the impact of forced labour on their lives during the Shoah by comparing experiences: their own at different stages of the war, such as while they lived in the ghetto, in an extermination camp or in a labour camp, or their confrontation with what other persons went through, that put their own sufferings in a different dimension.

For those who were sent to Auschwitz the most painful memories are related to the separation from their closest relatives and the discovery of their fate. The traumatic memories of the utmost brutality,

[55] Interview Shalom Arbiv.

[56] Interview Gad Shachar.

their own helplessness and shame, the smell of burning flesh and screaming of victims and the last glance of their loved ones overshadow all their later experiences. In these oral histories forced labour, despite the hard physical work, starvation, disease and human cruelty, is remembered above all as a ray of hope to remain alive.

With respect to their role in the Israeli society, these interpreted memories reveal the transformation of the silent voice of survivors during long decades to the position of the last living witnesses.

Oral History Via The Radio

Gesine Strempel

The following radio segments discussed in this article were created and produced by myself prior to being broadcast nationwide and internationally on a national Berlin radio station which focuses on cultural life in Germany. In addition, this advertisement free radio program included news every hour on the hour and traffic updates.[1]

This essay provides insights regarding the way a story via radio is told. These stories are described to the listener and provide information by those who have experienced it and are eyewitnesses to a specific event or story. Since this is an essay, I would like to explain the fascination of a radio interview and why I love it: As opposed to reading or watching a video or film, those that listen to a radio program can experience the essence of oral history which is unaffected by transcription or the retelling via film which can either embellish or leave out critical details.

The fundamental message relayed in a radio interview is the spoken word, how the words are chosen, and how the sentences are

Gesine Strempel, Born in Berlin, 1940. First 4 years in Königsberg, formerly East Prussia, Today Russia. Education in West Berlin, Magister Artium (MA in Art history, journalism and American studies) in 1966. Worked in National Radio Stations, Mostly Freelance.
Translations: Belletristic, from English/American into German since 1972. gesine.strempel@web.de

[1] *Sender Freies Berlin* (*SFB*) - *Radio Free Berlin* - was the public radio and television service for West Berlin, established during the *cold war era.* Berlin was a city divided into four zones: Three of the Western Allies (French, British and American) and one in the East which was Russian. *SFB* transmitted from the free Berlin to the non-free East Berlin, from 1954 until 1990 and for Berlin after the reunification until 2003. After the wall came down in 1989 the radio station changed its contents due to the commercial radio stations which were not there before and caused a lot of competition. As a result, in 2003 *SFB* fused with *RBB* (*Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg*) station. Radio programs were questioned among which also *zeitpunkte*. Editors and journalists lost their jobs.

constructed. Imagination and comprehension is set into motion, not only by the story itself but also by the intonations of the interviewee. When one listens to a voice one enters a new world where the voice becomes an undercover persuader. The listeners can hear for themselves the trembles, the breaks and the actual breathing of the story teller.

The Fascination of a Radio Interview

In this article I will discuss my work on my radio program which included the sound of the language and the background sounds of the stories. They were broadcast not only with words but with the addition of music which I felt would complement the story and enhance the interest of the listeners.

Gesine Strempel (left) interviewing the TV actress Ulrike Folkerts in RBB studio, 1995 (Photo: SFB)

My work was mostly focused on women and how they see the world. Many decades ago, I had the chance to work for a West Berlin, later Berlin radio station (*Sender Freies Berlin)*, which broadcast a daily program, Zeitpunkte, on women.[2] This program was the result of the West Berlin women's movement, which was an autonomic (independent from political parties or the church or the unions) revision of a women's movement, which began at the end of the sixties. It was influenced by the US Women's Movement and the West German and international (European) students' movement. The first wave of this autonomic Women's Movement in Germany began at the turn of the 20th century and was focused on the rights of women to vote and the right to have an abortion.

[2] The cultural program of *SFB* was established in 1979. From that time on I worked with *SFB* as a freelancer, mostly for a program called *Zeitpunkte* (*News of The Times*), that addressed female listeners. The second wave of women's movement influenced all branches of society and headed the *zeitpunkte* agenda.

As a female German journalist born in 1940 to parents who were both members of the Nazi party,[3] I was educated in post war Germany in West Berlin, I was horrified to learn in school about the murder of Jewish people. Initially, I wanted to talk to those, who I thought were responsible, e.g. my mother. My father did not return from the war. During the war he went missing in Russia and declared dead in 1954. So my older sister and I were not able to confront him. However, our mother refused to talk to my sister and I about the war and about the role of our father. Furthermore we had little time to talk to each other. Today I think that we were quite cruel to our mother, always challenging her past, especially of her membership in the Nazi party and that she did not prevent the killing. She worked long hours outside of the house as a secretary for the Siemens Company. We her three daughters, the youngest born in March 1945, went to school and she, provided for our studies.

My mother never denied that she was a National Socialist, but she always said that she or my father never did anything to a Jewish person. My mother changed her political attitudes, this I know. But she never discussed it with us. She was against feminism but she backed my older sister, who, in the seventies became a Communist and belonged to the authoritarian Communist Party of Germany KPD ML (ML noting following Marx/Lenin).

It is notable that I never went to any archives to conduct a search to see if I would be able to find the name of my father in connection with crimes against Jewish people as well as war crimes. My father was the director, the Procurist of the Electricity Company (Preußenelektra*),* in what was then the Prussian city of Königsberg where we all lived. According to "*what my mother told us in 1944 when we still lived in Königsberg*", he voluntarily joined the army so that he could "save Hitler".

My goal was to find out the truth about my family, however this goal faded away because neither my relatives nor the friends, family

[3] The National-Socialist German Workers Party, (NSDAP - Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei).

and colleagues of my mother who lived in Berlin wanted to talk about the past. But, in all honesty, while I was growing up other interests like university and love took over.

Years later, in the seventies, I met people in the USA (San Francisco) who did not want to share a flat with me because I was German. I was shocked. So the fog on my wanting to find out lifted again, this time by concentrating on those whose families suffered and /or were killed. I avoid the word victim, culprit, and offender.

In 1979 I was able to channel my interest in the past because of my involvement in the radio program when I began working at a local Berlin radio station. With the great support of the female editors.[4] I started to conduct interviews which reported on Jewish life in Berlin, Germany, and in Israel. The program emphasised the past and the Holocaust by speaking with survivors and their children. I tried to find German speaking survivors in Israel and with the help of friends in Israel I found many. I conducted many interviews which were later broadcast on the Berlin radio station.

Gesine Strempel in the office of *Zeitpunkte*, working there for over 30 years. (Photo: private)

Why did I choose German speaking people? Because if I had interviewed people in English or Hebrew I would have had to translate and make an overlay. I felt that this would interfere with the concentration of the listener who would not hear the interviewee speak for themselves in their own intonations.

I interviewed German Zionist pioneers in Israel, some who left Germany out of conviction, such as the well-known author and

[4] Magdalena Kemper, born 1947 in Berlin, a journalist, educated in West Berlin, was one of the first editors of the program *Zeitpunkte.* We had female editors, not male editors, who supported my interest in Jewish history and Jewish life today in Europe and in Israel. She not only supported but triggered interest in the subject. With her support I published many interviews that otherwise would not have been broadcasted.

Graphologist Ruth Zucker.[5] I also interviewed people who came as refugees during the 30s and 40s to Palestine (Eretz Israel prior to the establishment of the State of Israel) and I spoke to the Second Generation of German Jews in Israel and to the Second Generation of Jews in Germany.

Who Is/Was Interested in the Interviews?

Again, I would like to review the history of my radio work at the radio station. You have to keep in mind that what I do is not academically related as for a University. The broadcasts which I refer to as Oral History, were recorded for an everyday radio program and for everyday listeners. Radio was and is still a very popular and influential media in Germany, especially in Berlin and especially before November 1989 when The Wall came down. Radio waves do not respect walls.[6]

Since 1979 the radio program I was involved in, *Zeitpunkte*[7] (*News of The Times)*, was a radio magazine focusing on women's politics. Concentrating on women also meant focussing on health, politics, and talking about family and children including men. Besides the political aspects of the program, we concentrated not only on the annual Shoah remembrances, but Jewish life in Germany, Berlin and abroad.

The Stories I Collect – Having In Mind to Broadcast Them

The stories I collected are of conversations I conducted between two people without camera, just microphone and a recorder. They were mostly conducted in the home of the interviewee. I told the interviewees

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[5] Ruth Zucker (1914 -2014) lived in Haifa, an author. She wrote her autobiography: *Meine sieben Leben*, München, 2000.

[6] The day after the wall came down on Nov. 9th 1989, women came into the building of the radio station on Masuren Street, Berlin, where we broadcast. They wanted to meet the women they were listening to in secrecy in their homes for 10 years. We knew that we had many listeners in East Berlin but we never knew how many. Vgl. Zeitpunkte on Wikipedia. A well written research on *Zeitpunkte*.

[7] In *zeitpunkte* which was first broadcast on April 5th 1979, on *SFB 2*, we concentrated on the work of women, either in pop music or women composers as well as politicians, working in the health sector etc.

in advance, that I collect these stories in order that they would be broadcast on my radio program in Berlin. I also edited them. When the programs are broadcast, I sometimes only air parts of the stories, sometimes I describe the surroundings and I always announce the name of the interviewee, the age, the profession etc. unless the interviewee objects.

Some Examples of How I Met the Interviewees and Their History[8]

Gila Maor

One of my first friends in Israel, whom I first met in Tel Aviv in 1998, was Gila Maor, a Zionist from Plauen, Germany who came to Palestine in 1933. In the 1950's she returned to Germany because her husband, Harry, received tenure there. Gila related that she was very happy to return to Israel in the 1970's which viewed as her home and country.

GS*: When did you come to this country?*

GM*: I came in 1933. In August 1933. In the burning, certainly completely strange, heat. And I was lucky, because of my brother, [David],[9] who arrived before me. He had made Aliyah as a Chalutz [pioneer] to this country in 1931, to what was then Palestine. He was able to get (...) the certificate that made it possible for me to immigrate to this country (…) I did not want to emigrate [from Germany] at all, but the situation was such, that even a Communist friend of mine, gave the advice, that I should go. I was told that I could return to Germany when everything was over.*

GS*: You lived in Tel Aviv, as a young woman, in a foreign country, with a foreign language you did not speak, how did you feel?*

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[8] Gesine Strempel translated the following interviews from German into English: Gila Maor, Ester Golan, Vera Spiegler and Ruth Almog.

[9] David Reifen, Gila Maor's brother, brought his family in the 30s from Germany to Eretz Israel. He was nominated in 1950, as the first Juvenile Court Judge of the State of Israel.

GM: *(…) this was not how I felt. In the area where I lived and worked, all the Immigrants spoke German. There was a huge number of immigrants. In the shops we talked German, even if the sales people did not speak German. In the streets you heard German, even though the officials did not like it, it was not wanted. But it went without saying, we spoke German. Because, everybody here was German… When Eleanor, my daughter, started school at the age of six, her German was better than her Ivrit.*

In 1953 the family went back to live in Germany.

GS: *I often ask myself, how the Germans reacted to Jewish people who came back.*

GM: *When my son, [Maimon], got sick in the early fifties in Germany, he had to be hospitalized. Another sick child, also a boy, did not want to share the room with a Jewish boy (…)*

And on the train (…) these trains had small compartments, maybe six seats, and there I experienced absolute strange things. Either I did not say anything, and the others talked to each other, and then somebody asked, where you were during the war (…), and that always was embarrassing. When you said that you had been in Palestine, this was followed by utter silence. And then they started telling how much they helped the Jews. One time somebody said that the Jews are human beings too, and that it was awful what was done to them. This to be told, in a conversation, was absolutely horrible (…) I never really felt like a part of the German society. No.

And today [age 90] I am independent. I love my independence. I want to be like that until the last day of my life. I cannot say that I am lonely. But I am alone. This is true. I am interested in everything, I hope, I will remain like that. The secret of aging in a decent way is nothing more but an honest deal with loneliness.

Through Gila the Chaluza [Pioneer], I met Gila's niece, Judith, who introduced me to Ester Golan from Jerusalem. Ester insisted on spelling her name Ester. Her story was told in the exhibition in Berlin,

2004, entitled: *Letters Became Children. The Rescue of Jewish Children from Nazi Germany*, 2004.[10] Ester read some of the letters which were sent to her by her parents and were published in 1995.[11]

The interview with Ester was broadcast on Sept. 21st 2004:

Length: 8´44`` Music. I included the music of the Israeli singer, Sarit Hadad (Sh´ma Israel). In this broadcast Ester described her feelings when reading these letters, which she received from her parents who were killed in Auschwitz. She emphasized their many attempts to leave Germany pleading for help in these letters to her. Ester, a Kindertransport refugee in Whittingham, Scotland, was 15 years old when she received the letters. There was nothing she could do to save her parents.

When Ester spoke with me in her home in Jerusalem, she spoke in a fluent and very educated German. She was very sad, a sadness that did not vanish in all these years. She gave many details such as what was packed in her suitcase when she went to England on the Kindertransport, why she was not chosen by the Youth Aliyah to go to Eretz Israel, as she said: "*too thin, too ugly*". I tried to broadcast as much as possible, nearly ten minutes plus music, which is considered quite long for a program of 56 minutes.

For another feature I interviewed three female artists, Sophie Jungreis, the sculptress, Lizzie Doron, the writer and Tzipi Reibenbach, a film director of documentary films. All three were born in DP Camps in Europe. I created a feature with these three women, titled: *The Art of Women Artists, Second Generation in Israel.* It was broadcast on Jan. 23rd 2008. The feature was 24 minutes long, (Kulturtermin, Radio Berlin Brandenburg (RBB), Kulturradio, Time: 19:06 – 19:30).

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[10] Gudrun Maierhof, Chana Schütz, Hermann Simon, *Aus Kindern wurden Briefe: Die Rettung jüdischer Kinder aus Nazi-Deutschland,* Berlin: Metropol, 2004.

[11] Ester Golan, *Auf Wiedersehen in unserem Land*, ECON Verlag, 1995.

When do I Deliberately Edit?

Not because of time pressures, but rather because of the emotions that the conversations ignited.

Sophie Jungreis

I did not broadcast the tears and the sobs of Sophie Jungreis, the sculptress, a second generation woman, who grew up in a kibbutz and remembered a song. She did not know, where she knew it from nor who sang it to her. When she sang it, in Yiddish, she started to cry. I did not want us, the Germans, to hear her sobbing. Because for me it shows, that we, the Germans can still hurt "them", the second generation survivors.

Sophie Jungreis was born in a DP camp (Displaced Persons camp) in Austria in 1946. I met her via Varda Getzow, an Israeli artist who lives in Berlin, whose works of art are connected with being the second generation.

In the interview broadcast on Jan. 23rd 2008, Sophie Jungreis reflected on her work as a sculptress in Tel Aviv and how her past influenced her work. She creates stones that look so soft, like velvet, shapes that look female and erotic in an abstract way, they glow, but when you touch them, they are cold, like stone. "*Like my mother*", she said, when I asked her about these shapes. Her mother, a survivor who was in a deep depression, was unable to love her daughter, according to what her daughter felt. Sophie spoke to me in English, about her growing up as the only child of two Auschwitz survivors in a kibbutz:

> *And those years in the kibbutz, I think I am very angry at the way they treated me, or treated my mother. But that was the thing that was happening all over Israel. They did not want to talk about the Holocaust, and if you showed any damage, you were considered crazy, you were an outcast, and people didn't want anything to do with you. So I never thought of myself as being one of those. But in the kibbutz I remember a few such families, and everybody said, oh, they are crazy. They came from there. They had that stigma of being crazy, and Israeli society on the whole tried to hide these cases and*

they were not accepted or received. I mean that´s one of the worst things. You had these people, damaged people, I mean, back, here, thinking that they are among other Jews, and they are treated as lepers, somebody that you just stay away from (...). There was never any help. As a child, ever since that I can remember, I had to take care of myself. I think it was only luck that I was in a kibbutz, if I were on the city-streets, I do not know what would have happened. But nobody ever touched the point of the Holocaust. I was something that people did not talk about.

I think that Israel is only now opening the wounds and starting to speak about it. It is only through a few artists and maybe now a person can say: "I am second generation, I am third generation", but before that it was something you just, you know, hushed. As if you did something wrong. Not that something wrong was done to you but that you did something wrong.

Batia Brutin

Sophie Jungreis suggested that I should meet Dr. Batya Brutin, whom I had interviewed in 2009 for another feature that dealt with the art of the second generation. Batya Brutin, an art historian, was the founder and director of the Holocaust Teaching Program at Beit Berl College. She curated in Tel Aviv the first exhibition of the Second Generation artists, emphasizing that it would now be appropriate to concentrate on the art work of the second generation. I remember that Batya Brutin did not want to speak to me in German, even though she grew up in Israel with the German language. She explained, that after all her research and delving deep into the Holocaust, she would rather not speak German.

She made it quite clear, that she herself never thought about gender differences in art, but changed her opinion. Her following statement was broadcasted:

When I first met all the many many artists that I interviewed for my research, I did not pay attention to the difference at all. And step by step I realized that women addressed some issues that men did not.

I found out that there is a bond, a connection between mothers and daughters which affects the daughters very much. And the daughters, they deal with subjects like what happened to their mother being a woman during the holocaust, how it affected her as a woman, her sex situation, being a woman there. It started with a woman living in dirt, in terrible conditions, and then the daughters asked some questions like: "what would I have done if I were there?"

Vera Spiegler

Vera Spiegler lived in Haifa and survived the holocaust together with her family in the Czech Carpathian Mountains. She spoke to me in German. She had a very charming East European accent. Like Kafka´s, I imagine. Her mother tongues were Czech and German. She survived as a sixteen year old girl in the Carpathians, above the timberline, where the winters were bitter cold and the snow was very deep.

People lived in holes and were infested with lice. While remembering and telling the story, she started to shiver, although we were in Haifa. We both shivered and she started scratching herself, and we decided not to broadcast this. I intervened and edited this part of the interview on my own because, again, I did not want to prove the power that we, the Germans, still have to make Jewish people suffer, shiver and be unhappy

Vera Spiegler said, that after surviving and returning with her family to their hometown in 1945, a girl from her neighbourhood saw her , "*the Jewish girl*", who wore a dress made of old bedlinen, because they were so poor and this girl proclaimed: "*oh, here comes Vera, again in velvet and silk"* . And at that moment she, Vera, knew, she could not and would not live there any longer, that she and her family had to go to Israel. This sneering was the turning point for her.

They immigrated to Israel where she met her husband on the first day she disembarked from the ship. She arrived in 1948 to the new State, and this is what she definitely wanted to express in the interview that she wanted the German listeners to realize, how important an option Israel was.

Ruth Almog

We spoke to each other in German in her apartment near King George, Tel Aviv, in 2004 when Ruth was awarded the German Literature Prize, *Gerti-Spies-Preis* awarded every two years. She hesitated to accept it because it is a German prize. She mentioned, that an old man, a Holocaust survivor whom she asked, advised her to take it. Of all the books she published, I read the German translation of *Ein Engel aus Papier*, (*An Angel Made of Paper*, 2000), a novel about a boy in Israel, traumatized after surviving Auschwitz, about memories, the future and the importance of music, e.g. arias by Rossini and the weighty importance of sensitive grownups outside the family to help a child to live.

GS*: You write sensually, emphatically and completely non-sentimentally. The words don´t hit, they touch and the touch stays.*

RA*: I think I am very much influenced by my childhood. In the house were we lived, there were simply only German Jews. They came from Germany, from Austria, and they spoke German. All were refugees. That was the reality I grew up with, the only reality I knew. Both my parents were medical doctors, but they earned a living by becoming bee keepers and cultivating honey. When they were finished raising bees, my father went with a chauffeur and an eye-specialist (ophthalmologist) to an Arab village near Petach Tikva where we were living and took care of ill and poor people. As doctors, they were not paid but came home with eggs, vegetable and fruit. On other occasions, these people came to our apartment to get treatment. All of this and other things I carry inside.*

I have to describe them, so that nothing gets lost. It was a totally different reality than today. Today you do not understand the sensation food can trigger. I tasted my first chocolate when I was seven years old. An uncle, who worked with the British in Egypt came to see us and gave me a chewing gum. Sensational for me and all the other kids. Yes. I want to tell of this past, bygone reality.

GS*: You wrote, this country needs compassion (Erbarmen), and the essence of compassion would be pity.*

RA*: I am often desperate. Pessimistic. But then, you see, The Wall in Berlin came down and in Russia as well, things changed. Maybe the situation here might change too. Maybe. Even if you do not expect it. And this is the aim of literature. To change people in small small bits, that they might see the other human being, to develop compassion and pity. But people do not read much anymore these days. So the impact of literature is less strong.*

GS: Back to the German prize you will get, what does it mean to you? You already got Israeli prizes, Brenner and Bialik …

RA: I am glad to receive it, but I still do not know what it really can do for me. It certainly is an honour. And it is a hope, maybe more books of mine will be translated. I would like to see another book in German in my lifetime. I have many friends in Germany. The memories are still there. And I still know people there with numbers on their arms. The past is not dead. It is there and it is here. Alive. So the prize, I am torn, but it also is an honour.

I have decided to choose one more encounter, which was very important to me because of the way this woman analysed how to transmit the memory of the Holocaust into the future.

Nava Semel

In 2007 the small German publishing house *Persona Verlag*[12] published a book by Nava Semel, a well-known Israeli writer of children's books. The small novel had the German Title: Und *die Ratte lacht* (*And the Rat Laughed*). Before the book was published in Germany it was also an opera performed for three years very successfully in the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv. Libretto: Nava Semel, Music: Ella Milch-Sharif. I was invited to attend the performance by Nava Semel after our interview.

[12] *Persona Verlag* was established in 1983 by Lisette Buchholz with the intention of publishing forgotten German and Austrian literature of emigrants in the years 1933 until 1945.

When I met Nava Semel, we first went to a café, then she invited me to her home, where her daughters were packing, they were leaving home to start their service in the army. Yet she invited me and concentrated on this interview. I was so very sad to hear that she died in 2017. I broadcast the interview with Nava Semel on Jan. 31st 2008.

Nava Semel was the daughter of an Auschwitz Survivor (mother) and a resistance fighter (father), and she proudly told me about her famous brother, the singer Shlomo Arzti. Then she concentrated on her work, her aim, to show how important memory is. She wanted her work to be an "*assembly line of memory*". Her question: "*who will remember and what is remembered in one hundred, two hundred years – let's say in 2099?"*

She created *And the Rat Laughed*, a world which became a puzzle, bits of the puzzle show a future in cyberspace, others contain voices from the grandmother as told to the granddaughter. This story tells the saga of a five year old girl hidden in a hole in the earth by a farmer whose son rapes the girl. The girl's only company is a rat. And this girl is envious, because the rat is happy. The rat laughs.

GS*: Why this story now?*

NS*: Because I think (…) [this] it is the time phase, were the true dialogue is taking place between the grandmother, the survivors and their grandchildren. The dialogue with the survivors and their own children, meaning me, was difficult, painful, they could not share their traumatic experience with their children, because they wanted us to be true Israelis, very strong, very bold (…) they wanted to depart from the Jewish identity that betrayed them. This Jewish identity is what sent them to the gas chambers. They wanted us to be Israelis, A new form of a Jew – that's why they did not share the memory that was hovering all over the house.*

Both the opera and the book carry emotional memory, which is the most important thing for me, because historical memory will always be there. It's in the library, it's in history books, it will probably be part of the curriculum, but what about emotional memory. (…) this was

> *my mission, and I am very glad that the message gets through because many of my readers in Israel were young people. I was bombarded with letters, from young people, sometimes from the age of twelve, or thirteen which horrified me. I was not sure this is the book for them, never the less, they got so emotional, and the best gift I received is that they told me that it helps them, that the book provided them with the emotional key to approach their grandparents, who are the survivors and start an emotional dialogue.*

Now, in 2020, 72 years of Israeli history and 75 years after 1945, I have this treasure of oral history in the form of cut and uncut CDs, recordings, all these stories, in my archive, plus book reviews, film reviews. But now, out of necessity because of my point of view that antisemitism is always existent but hidden. Antisemitism in Germany and Europe has risen once again to the surface compelling me to concentrate on life in Germany after the war, the silence, the ghosts that wait behind every door of every house of a German family. Many books have been published about this now. There are films, novels, research at universities and German family histories. It is very interesting how the silence about what has happened and the participation in it, mostly by the fathers (soldiers) has poisoned relationships within the families.[13]

Utopia

If you are interested in Oral History via radio, and if it is not possible for you to broadcast to as many listeners as you would like, there are various alternatives such as podcasts and YouTube that can enable you to reach a wider audience.

The most exceptional event that I would have liked to broadcast, took place last year (2019) in Plauen Germany Entitled *Glashäuser* [14] (*Houses of Glass*). Regretfully I did not bring my microphone because

[13] Florian Huber, *Hinter den Türen warten die Gespenster*. *Das deutsche Familiendrama der Nachkriegszeit*, München/Berlin, 2017

[14] Glashäuser בתי זכוכית www.theater-plauen-zwickau.de

I assumed, knowing the MDR,[15] that I would not be able to sell it to them. *Glashäuser* was staged in Plauen by the Israeli choreographer Oded Ronen, a dance theatre work, which was performed by the professional and talented ballet company of the Plauen-Zwickau theatre, headed by its artistic director, Annett Göhre.

Glashäuser – Choreography: O. Ronen, Stage, Costumes & Video: S. Motta (Photo S. Fortapelsson)

Ronen was born in Israel into a family whose origins are from the Plauen Saxony area of Germany. He created this impressive artistic work which focused on the terrible consequences that result from an atmosphere of hatred, violence, cruelty and the rejection of the "other" in the past as well as today. All three performances in 2019 were sold out. This past year 2020, out of eight planned performances only the Premier was presented. The others were cancelled due to the Covid 19 Virus. It was such an important work as well as moving experience that I would have gone to see it again, even though it meant a six hour train ride from Berlin to Plauen.

Why would I have travelled again? So that I would be able to introduce other friends who work at well-known Media and newspapers such as *Die Zeit*, *Die Welt*, or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, to experience this work and to give it the attention it deserved in their respective media outlets. I felt so strongly about it that I was convinced that it should be performed in Berlin, New York and certainly in Tel Aviv. A work of art of this nature should be a reminder of the poisonous atmosphere created by suspicions, hatred and

[15] The MDR (Central German Broadcasting) is the largest radio station in Saxony. Based on my past experience, they were not interested in covering Jewish events. They work mostly with East German editors and artists who grew up in East Germany (DDR).

intolerance. It needs to be told and retold, not only on Holocaust Memorial days.

I am convinced that this work might positively influence viewers to reflect on its message of tolerance and understanding at a time when this is lacking in so many places.

The Construction of Testimony

Sharon Kangisser Cohen

Narrative theorists have always argued that the interview is a co-constructed phenomenon, one in which through the interaction a conversation is produced.[1] Thus, in order for there to be a meaningful conversation, a meaningful relationship needs to be created and sustained. If we are to view survivor testimony (Survivors of the Shoah) as a text that produced in the context of an interview, we need to acknowledge and understand that the survivors' account of their traumatic past is one that is constructed through a conversation and not a replica of the individual's experience. In this way, the constructed nature of the survivors' account – which is influenced by a myriad of factors, internal and external is a complex articulation of one's memories within a particular context. Thus, it is imperative that when we view a testimony, we understand that what we are seeing and listening to is a conversation and one that can change over time. Perhaps most importantly, the testimony represents the survivor and his/her relationship to their past at a particular point in time which may be flexible and can change.

One of the survivors who I have worked with and listened to on countless occasions, whose persona and relationship to the past has changed, is Pinchas Gutter. In my years working alongside him on educational trips to Poland and also in the making of a documentary film regarding his life, I thought it would be interesting to look at his early

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[1] Kvale, Steinar. *InterViews: an introduction to qualitive research interviewing*. (Sage, 1996.)

interviews and assess consistency and changes in the way he presents his story.

Pinchas Gutter was born in Lodz in 1929. He was seven years old when the war broke out and soon after he together with his mother and twin sister fled to Warsaw. Pinchas's father joined them a while later and the family moved into their family's apartment in Warsaw. The family endured the Warsaw ghetto for three and half years until the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising broke out in April 1943. During the uprising they were caught and deported together with other Jews to the Majdanek concentration camp. In Majdanek Pinchas was separated from his mother and sister who were murdered on arrival and he entered the area of the undressing room with his father. While Pinchas was disinfected and selected to work in the camp, his father was gassed shortly after his arrival. Pinchas was imprisoned in Majdanek for a few weeks before volunteering to join a transport. He was sent to the forced labour camp of *Skarżysko-Kamienna*. There he worked as a slave labourer for a year before being deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp and from there to the labour camp of Kolditz. As the front approached the prisoners were forced on a death march to Theresienstadt, where he was eventually liberated.

Pinchas Gutter has become very prominent as a survivor who has spent most of the last 30 years educating about the Holocaust and sharing his personal story. One of the most high profile projects he has been involved with is the Shoah Foundation's *New Dimensions in Testimony Project*, where he was filmed answering over 2000 questions so that students in the future would be able to communicate with a survivor through a series of questions and recorded answers. The Virtual reality film *The Last Goodbye* which came out in 2017 is a 15 minute film whereby viewers can enter the world of Majdanek with Pinchas as a guide who tells his story. These two projects are using highly progressive technology to search for new and different ways to keep the Shoah and the individual survivor in front of our eyes and in relationship with the next generation. Over the past 25 years Pinchas has accompanied countless study tours to Poland and Germany, spoken to dozens of schools around Canada. He is a highly visible

survivor witness whose story, message and demeanor have an enormous impact on those who listen to him and meet him.

When I first viewed his testimony I was struck by the change in Pinchas's physicality and demeanor over time. In his interview with the Shoah Foundation in 1995 we see a very restrained man who relates his story with sensitivity yet with little emotion. Obviously the content of his story is emotional and there are moments in which Pinchas is overcome by emotion. Yet, he appears very different to later appearances in which over time he has become a better story teller and is more dramatic and lively in his telling. The physical difference is glaring. Obviously as he ages he changes, but the aging is less jarring – it is the manner in which he tells his story that is so different.

One issue that we would need to consider is that for students or researchers looking at his 1995[2] testimony and not viewing the other interviews or films, is the different way the interviewee comes across – his/her demeanor and the way they relate their past. The video interview is representative of only the particular moment and not of others. In this early testimony I was struck by restraint and deep sadness, which is not as apparent in his later ones. This could be a result of the interaction between him and the interviewer or a reflection of the *newness* of telling – one of the first times that Pinchas relates his story in such a format. However, there is an earlier testimony from 1994[3], done by the Holocaust center in Toronto and it is this testimony that Pinchas has recalled as being his *best* one. He appears to be more involved and engaged in telling his story and responds to the empathic questions that are asked by the interviewer

In this 1994 interview, Pinchas tells the interviewer that he never wanted to give testimony but was "*pushed and pushed and pushed*". Throughout the post war period he chose not to share his experiences

[2] Interview with Pinchas Gutter, USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, Interview Code:534, 1995

[3] Interview with Pinchas Gutter. Interview with Pinchas Gutter, 1994. Yad Vashem Archives, 03.4262 Original interview recorded by the Neuberger Holocaust Memorial Centre, Toronto. Canada,1994

publicly. In a conversation with him he recalls when he decided not to speak about it with his family. One day in a conversation with his daughter he began telling her about his family and their experiences. Whilst he was telling her the story he suddenly noticed that the young girl had her fingers in her ears and he understood that his past was too difficult to hear. From then on he decided not to tell his children about the past. The fact that he spent decades in *silence* is jarring when we think of how much Pinchas has shared over the past three decades. His ambivalence in sharing his past cannot be deduced from his more recent testimonies he has given. In viewing his earlier and later testimonies, his transformation from a survivor to a witness to an educator is clear, but only when we view all of them can we see this change.

Beyond his physical countenance and demeanor, what can we learn from his earlier testimonies? Pinchas, who is exceptionally astute makes some very important statements which remind us as viewers that testimony is constructed. In his 1994 interview with Paula Draper, he remarks that telling the past is far removed from the reality of the past. In a sense, it is almost impossible to capture it. When reflecting on being deloused in Majdanek shortly after his arrival and separation from his family he remarks: "*I am telling you all this in like kind of slow manner. This was going on in a most chaotic maelstrom ...it was as if you were in the eye of the storm*".[4]

Telling, ordering, describing these terrifying chaotic events changes and arguably has the power to impact on memory of the past. Calm recounting bears no resemblance to the chaotic and awful reality. The calm of his recounting relates to his relationship to the painful memories and not the events themselves.

Another important reflection that he makes in the 1995 testimony is that while he is able to recall and recount scenes and events, he

[4] Interview with Pinchas Gutter, 1994. Yad Vashem Archives., 03.4262 Original interview recorded by the Neuberger Holocaust Memorial Centre, Toronto. Canada.

explains that it was only afterward that he was able to understand what these events actually meant. A significant part of his testimony is his own interpretation of behaviors and explanations regarding what happened during the time of chaos. Thus, his 1995 testimony which is characteristic of later testimony includes the interpretations and ruminations over events that are usually absent in immediate post-war testimonies which are an outpouring of the sequence of events surrounding the individuals' survival.

The 1995 testimony also illuminates the tension that exists between the objectives of the testimony project and the survivors' agenda which might be based on the same on the basic commitment to Holocaust education and documentation, however at times is in conflict during the interview. There are instances in his 1995 testimony where Pinchas's needs and the Visual History Archive's agenda are not in tandem.

In a few scenes we witness a conflict of interest between the organization and Pinchas. One of the issues relates to the interviewer's guidelines, deadlines and technological experience which sometimes is in conflict with the survivors story telling. An example of this is when Pinchas relates the moment his war-time reality became a frightening one for him. In his testimony he explains that before the ghetto was established in Warsaw, the apartment where he and his extended family were living was searched by the Nazis.

> *For a little boy who was used to quite modest behavior it was quite a shocking experience to see my cousin of 18 being …the Germans pulling up her dresses and pulling down her underwear and abusing her and you know doing things like that to her....I think that that was one of the first experiences where…even when they came to take my father I didn't see what they did…they just took him away.*[5]

This is the first time he becomes emotional in his interview. It is at this point when the interviewer stops Pinchas and tells him that they

[5] Interview with Pinchas Gutter, USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History archive, Interview Code: 534, 1995

have reached the end of the tape and need to stop the interview. As oral historians we recognize that this moment in Pinchas's story is essential and would loathe stopping. However, the prerogative of the organization is to record everything even at the risk of losing the moment. This scene draws in sharp relief possible conflict of interests in the testimony projects – where the needs and concerns of the *archive* are not parallel to the mission and concern of the interviewee. It begs the question of the highly constructed nature of survivor testimony and how close it is to near-experience of the survivors and if we collecting and listening to stories from the past which are constructed through the needs of the present?

When I first saw this scene I was critical of the interviewer but then came to realize how the technological needs and not an emotional inability to contain Pinchas's pain was at play. Another moment where there are conflicting concerns is seen at the end of his interview were he gives a message to the audience (part of the interview protocol of the VHA) which is also cut short because of technological issues. It is ironic that in the moments which are more emotional, the tape ends and the interviewer stops Pinchas speaking.

The interview as a medium for telling

In many of the testimonies and talks that Pinchas gives he uses the image of a video camera in order to describe himself during his time in the Warsaw ghetto and his phenomenal memory of the events. I was interested in this image he presented of himself and began to examine the testimonies, listening closely to where he made this comparison. The first time this image emerges is in his 1994 interview in response to the house search in Warsaw during which he *retreated into myself*.

The interview of 1994 he first describes his role as observer by referring to himself as: "*I can only describe it like nocturnal animal* not foraging for food but foraging for *maybe knowledge?...maybe…I…I was*

like an observer and whatever I did...It was almost like a camera, like the camera I am looking into…"[6]

He explains in his later testimony that he views his role when giving testimony as an "*onlooker and recorder of events that were happening*…"[7]

From what I regard as this powerful scene I had a keen sense of how the interview context plays a role in developing the conversation. The video interview became an image through which Pinchas could communicate his experience. He adopted an image from the *now* to explain *then*. The interview as a conversation provided him with a way to convey his past. This aspect of the conversation – the construction of a narrative and the construction of a means to communicate the past becomes an interesting aspect of oral history that is worthy to investigate further.

Finally, one of the issues we need to consider is that the interview cannot represent the whole experience. In both interviews Pinchas tells the interviewer and thus the audience that there are stories that are too difficult to talk about. We gain a keen sense that even if we as an audience believe we are getting the whole story, Pinchas is clear that we are not. Obviously a two or four hour interview cannot capture 12 years of horror, but he explicitly states that there are experiences which he will not share. Buchenwald is one of those camps that he is unable to speak about.

In his interviews Pinchas makes it clear that there are some stories and experiences that he will not share because they are too difficult. Some of the stories he will not speak about relate to his incarceration in Buchenwald and Theresienstadt.

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[6] Interview with Pinchas Gutter, 1994. Yad Vashem Archives., 03.4262 Original interview recorded by the Neuberger Holocaust Memorial Centre, Toronto. Canada.

[7] Interview with Pinchas Gutter, USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive,.Interview Code: 534, 1995

Thus, in his testimonies, Pinchas is informing us that testimony is a negotiation – between what the survivor experienced and what they are able and willing to share. Thus testimony which is co-created reflects the conversation that is constructed and may become for some the scaffolding through which they are able to relate their past.

Despite the fact that his testimony is only a few hours and therefore cannot encapsulate his entire experience, perhaps it is the demand to create a story within a limited time that Pinchas and countless others are able to create a narrative, as what Henry Greenspan has repeatedly stated to "*making a story of what is not a story*".[8]

After accompanying Pinchas on numerous educational journeys to Poland and Germany, it is obvious that over the years he has developed into a powerful storyteller. Captivating his audience, who have seen him as a heroic figure who has managed to transform his life after endless horror and suffering. For many of the students who listen to his story he becomes a role model: triumphing over adversity is indeed possible. However, it is only within his video testimony do you get a glimpse that the painful memories are still part of his everyday, and that while he has become a remarkable man, he always reminds me that he has a *disability* because of his past. Over time and having told his story in multiple settings and on countless occasions, Pinchas has developed a narrative script of his past and has adopted techniques that originated in the interview itself which facilitated his role as a powerful public storyteller.

[8] Greenspan, Henry. *On listening to Holocaust survivors: Recounting and life history*. Praeger Publishers, 1998.