Transmitted Wounds
Media and the Mediation of Trauma
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Speaker: Amit Pinchevski

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00:15	Amit Pinchevski: So in my talk today, I would like to present one thread of the argument I develop in my book, *Transmitted Wounds*. And in the book, in general, I explore the relation between media and trauma and the way trauma, logic, and technology inform the conception and understanding of trauma and traumatic memory. It includes a number of case studies from the role of radio broadcasts during the Eichmann trial to videotape and testimony, television on 9/11, virtual reality and testimony, and virtual therapy for post-trauma. Each of these cases represent different instantiations of the tension that is encapsulated in the book's title. It is the imparting of painful personal experience, which by definition, resists imparting. And in the time available to me today, I will be able to touch upon a discussion running through roughly two chapters of the book, which concern specifically the media of Holocaust testimony. So let me begin by clarifying how I understand the role of media technology in the context of testimony. The media of testimony, be they audio recording, film, video, or digital media, are more than just carriers of testimony. They are the operational platforms that make the documenting and disseminating of testimonies possible. As such, the media of testimony are not simply conduits of already shaped narratives, but themselves participate in the shaping of narratives.	INTRODUCTION ● Media and trauma: the way media logic and technology inform the understanding of trauma and traumatic memory
02:03	Amit Pinchevski: Not simply deliverers of experience, but creating the conditions of possibility for the living of experience. Media shape that which they convey. And in this sense, can be said to be productive of meaning and experience as much as conductive of meaning and experience. The media of testimony, that is, the technical devices for recording, storing, and dissemination, have a defining role in how testimonies come to be. What I will be focusing on today is the manifestation of traumatic memory in Holocaust testimony. The way traumatic memory figures in testimony has been a	INTRODUCTION ● Media of testimony: not simply conduits of already shaped narratives but participate in the shaping of narratives ● Traumatic memory: a failed memory, the inability to express and recount an experience so

consistent preoccupation in recent debates in, and research on, the memory of the Holocaust. Often, traumatic memory is described as a failed memory. As the inability to express and recount an experience so overwhelming that it resists, or defies, its own narration. What gets expressed in testimonies is not only the individual memory of survivors but sometimes also their inability to fully express what they had experienced.

overwhelming that it defies narration

03:19   Amit Pinchevski: What I want to argue is that the specific manifestation of traumatic memory, as arising in testimony, is a function of the media of testimony. In other words, media technology plays a key role in shaping the performance of traumatic memory. And so, different media would give rise to different configurations of traumatic memory, or may even altogether preclude its expression. I will try to explicate and demonstrate this claim by tracing the changing status of traumatic memory in testimony, from analog to digital media and from audio recording and video recording to virtual reality and algorithmic-holographic witnessing. And one additional qualification about media before diving in. My concern here is with audio and visual media, and one may justifiably say that written testimony is also mediated, namely, textually. And this is evidently true, but as I will suggest, the specific configuration of traumatic memory in testimony could've only arisen in the context of audio-visual media, specifically, videotape recording. This is because audio and visual media capture not only the testimonial narrative, as recounted by the survivor, but also the very event of recounting. The performing of testimony. And this proves critical in my analysis of the status of traumatic memory in testimony to follow. Now, at the base of all Holocaust testimony projects lies a common commitment. To record and preserve the stories of those who survived the catastrophe, as told in their own voices. When it comes to survivor's testimony, the messenger is as important as the message. The first to subscribe to this reasoning was the American psychologist David Boder, who in 1946 set out to interview survivors in refugee camps across western Europe.

INTRODUCTION
- Argument: the specific manifestation of traumatic memory in testimony is a function of the media of testimony. Different media would give rise to different configurations of traumatic memory -- or altogether preclude its expression.
- Itinerary: tracing the changing status of traumatic memory from analog to digital media -- from audio recording and video recording to virtual reality and algorithmic-holographic witnessing

05:32   Amit Pinchevski: Equipped with what was then the state-of-the-art technology, an Armour Model 50 Wire Recorder, Boder went on to produce what was the first audio testimony of the Holocaust. As Boder later commented, and I quote, through the wire recorder, the displaced person could relate in his own

David Boder with the Armour Model 50 Wire Recorder, Europe, 1946

language and in his own voice the story of his concentration camp life. Studying wire-recorded narratives led him to devise what he called a traumatic index, by means of which, quote, each narrative may be assessed as to the category and number of experiences bound to have a traumatizing effect upon the victim. Boder's 1949 monograph, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, invites readers to find indications of trauma implicit in selected transcripts of recorded narratives. The premise seems to be that, to the extent that such traumatic impact exists, it should be discoverable textually in the narratives. Yet the same technology that made Boder's project ingenuous was also the reason for its relative obscurity. Wire recording was soon to give way to tape recording, consequently condemning Boder's wire spools to obsolescence and the testimonies they held to near oblivion. The short-lived medium precluded access to the recorded material. To be sure, access was never a concern for Boder, who saw no problem in adducing transcripts as equivalent to recordings. Today, however, we seem to have different expectations of the media of testimony. Preservation is no longer enough. Access and availability are the norm, and appropriately enough, Boder's wire recordings have been recently digitized and made available online. So if you're interested, you can actually listen to them.
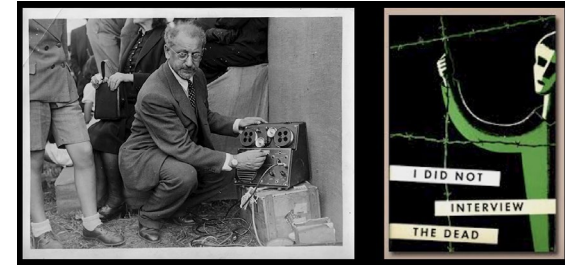
I Did Not Interview the Dead (1949)

07:29   Amit Pinchevski: Moreover, testimony is now expected to reach out and address, to touch the audience. No longer only about documentation and preservation, testimony is now increasingly about connection and dialogue. And insofar as traumatic memory is concerned, its impact has become entangled with the performance of bearing witness itself. And especially with performing the inner ability to fully bear witness. The way we have come to engage with the Holocaust testimonies owes much to the first video archive, initiated in the late 1970s around Yale University. And this is not to say that there were no significant intersections of media and testimony before that time. In fact, in the book, I explore at some length the radio broadcasting of the testimonies during the Eichmann trial in 1961. And at the time, radio was the only broadcasting medium in Israel. Television became available only in 1969. And as such, had a tremendous impact on public perception of the Holocaust in Israel, giving voice, literally, to the previously silent, and some would say silenced survivors and their agonizing memories. Time does not allow me to elaborate more, so let me just say that while a few precedents do

The Eichmann Trial, 1961

exist, I believe that the Yale archive, now known as the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, constitutes a paradigm shift insofar as the media of testimony is concerned.

09:11   Amit Pinchevski: It began as a collaboration between Laurel Vlock, a television producer and a commentarian, and Dori Laub, the psychoanalyst and child survivor. This combination is already suggestive of the testimony genre they were to produce, a cross between a psychoanalytic session and a television interview. From the outset, the Yale Archive was a videotape-based operation. And presumably, the documenting of testimonies could've been undertaken by means of transcription, audio recording, or even film. Videotape technology had two main advantages for a project like the Yale archive. It provided a cheap solution for in-house filming and production, but more importantly, the videotape, unlike film, could be easily pre-configured for television broadcasting.

Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony, Yale University

10:03   Amit Pinchevski: The videotape constitutes at once a medium of archiving and a medium of potential broadcasting. As affirmed by Geoffrey Hartman, who served as the director of the archive for more than 30 years, and I quote this, the principle of giving survivors their voice has been a sustaining one. Also that of giving a face to that voice; of choosing video over audio, because of the immediacy and evidentiality it added to the interview. The embodiment of the survivors, their gestures and bearing, is part of the testimony. Audiences, he continues, audiences now and in the future would surely be audiovisual. We decided to make video recordings of public broadcast quality, to build an archive of conscience on which future educators and filmmakers might rely. The video testimonies collected at Yale meant, were meant to be more than mere archival material. They were to transcend the cold storage of history, to reach an audience. Dori Laub's psychoanalytic approach to testimony and trauma provided a model for the interviews conducted with survivors at Yale. According to Laub, bearing witness involved coming to grips with the traumatic memory of loss and survival, a process that can only take place with an empathic listener who accompanies the survivor in reliving the traumatic experience.

VIDEOGRAPHY AND TESTIMONY
"The principle of giving survivors their voice has been a sustaining one. Also that of giving a face to that voice: of choosing video over audio, because of the immediacy and evidentiality it added to the interview. The "embodiment" of the survivors, their gestures and bearing, is a part of the testimony…Audiences now and in the future would surely be audiovisual. We decided to make video recordings of public broadcast quality, to build an Archive of Conscience on which future educators and filmmakers might rely."
Geoffrey Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, p.144

11:37   Amit Pinchevski: As Laub puts it, the listener takes on the responsibility for

bearing witness that previously the narrator felt he bore alone, and therefore could not carry out. The listener has a facilitating role in bearing witness, providing the survivor with the support of addressee, possibly for the first time. But there is another witnessing party at the witnessing scene, one that Laub curiously leaves out. The video camera. Bearing witness, indeed, bearing witness to the traumatic memory of the Holocaust, is not a dyadic but a triadic process. The camera's role is not unlike that of the listener. In fact, it may even be said to anticipate the listener's bearing witness to the witness. If the listener is the facilitator of testimony, as Laub suggests, the camera facilitates the listener's facilitating. It serves as a technological surrogate for a potential audience, the audience for which many survivors have been or had been waiting for a lifetime, providing them with the holding environment that is unattainable in the solitude of an off-camera interview. The act of recording itself constitutes another equally fundamental factor in witnessing.

13:01   Amit Pinchevski: Here is Laub, here is how Laub describes massive trauma, and I quote, the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out malfunction. Hence the trauma - sorry - hence the challenge of the listener is searching for an experience whose registration is still pending. And I quote again, a record that has yet to be made. That's Laub. And record stands both for the outcome of a psychoanalytic process by which an event is to be retroactively restored, but equally, albeit implicitly, as the actual record, the video recording, capturing the process of restoring the missing mental record, a record by which the testimony may also be retroactively replayed. Indeed, the two senses of record are inescapably linked. The technological observing and recording mechanisms work as a restorative prosthetic, if you will, for the once-blocked mental observing and recording mechanisms. Testimony is the search for a missing record, on record. It was not immediately clear what might be the best way to record survivors bearing witness. As Hartman affirms, after experimenting with different types of camera work, the decision was to give up what he calls the expressive potential and remain fixed, except for enough motion to satisfy more naturally the viewer's eye. We were not filmmakers, Hartman continues, our technique, or lack of it, was homeopathic. It used television to cure television, to turn the medium against itself, limiting even while exploiting its visualizing power. While using television technology, the recording of

testimonies was not to be completely televisual. It was, rather, to make the image an extension of the voice, to act as an audiovisual amplification of the testimonial narrative, along with the incidentals of speech.

15:08   Amit Pinchevski: Gestures, facial expressions, pauses, silences, all markers of what Hartman calls the survivor's embodied voice. The audiovisual serves to register the performing of testimony, capturing the witnessing body as its ultimate reference. Consider Laub's often-cited depiction of a woman recounting her memories of the uprising in Auschwitz. Laub describes her as, and I quote, slight, self-effacing, almost talking in whispers, mostly to herself. But then a sudden intensity, passion, and color were infused into the narrative. She was fully there. All of a sudden she said, we saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding. Laub then recounts a debate following the screening of this testimony at a conference, where attending historians disqualified the testimony, claiming that historically, only one chimney had been blown up, not four. Insisting on its importance, Laub argued that what the woman was testifying to was not empirical history, but something more radical: as he puts it, an event that broke the all-compelling frame of Auschwitz. What the historians failed to acknowledge is the performative aspect of testimony, the tone and cadence of the voice, gesture, and nonverbal cues, which arguably convey a more profound meaning than the mere historical. In challenging the historians' judgment, Laub effectively challenges their conception of what constitutes a legitimate historical record, a position that relies on the technological capability to record and reproduce spoken words together with their accompanying emotive markers.

17:06   Amit Pinchevski: The debate between the psychoanalysts and the historians can therefore be read as underwritten by their respective media of record. Several Holocaust scholars have noted the special expressive potential of audiovisual testimonies. Lawrence Langer, for instance, suggests, and I quote, that a written narrative is finished when we begin to read it, its opening, middle, and end already established between the covers of the book. In videotape oral testimony, by contrast, narrative is produced in real-time. And I quote again, it unfolds before our eyes and ears. We are present at the invention of what, when we speak of written texts, we call style. Whereas written accounts draw on literary conventions and devices to engage the

audience, videotaped testimonies draw on the mediated presence of the speaker, which, quote, in addition to language, includes gesture, a periodic silence, whose effect cannot be duplicated on the printed page. Of particular significance is what Langer calls, following survivor and author Charlotte Delbo, deep memory. Whereas common memory, what he calls common memory, and I quote, restores the self to its normal pre- and post-camp routines, while offering detached portraits from the vantage point of today. Deep memory, by contrast, tries to recall the Auschwitz-self as it was then. It suspects and depends on common memory, knowing what common memory cannot know, but tries nonetheless to express. Deep memories, therefore, the subterranean memory that lurks beneath common memory, the traumatic den, infecting and intruding the habitual now. Langer makes much of a testimony by a woman survivor who, while telling her memories, suddenly pauses as if hypnotized and says, forgive me, I was kind of back there. This, according to Langer, is an instance of how deep memory manifests itself by intruding into conscious narrative and common memory.

19:29   Amit Pinchevski: Now, although Langer is clearly aware of the videotape medium, he nevertheless misses its fundamental significance to his understanding of traumatic memory in testimony. For how could it be possible to detect and locate deep memory, without the ability to pause, rewind, and replay? How else would it be possible to analyze the moments where deep memory intrudes into the narrative without being able to reproduce these memories or these moments, time and again? These telltale moments of traumatic memory can be rendered meaningful only as they are audio-visually reproduced, which means that deep memory is in fact an offshoot of video testimony. Holocaust historian Saul Friedländer asks whether, on the collective level, and I quote him, an event like the Shoah may, after all the survivors have disappeared, leave traces of a deep memory beyond individual recall, which will defy any attempt to give it meaning. Now, to the extent that deep memory is a byproduct of the audiovisual archive, this question seems only partially relevant to me. For deep memory is not properly an individual memory, within the reach of personal recall, it is rather a mediated form of that memory. It's recorded afterlife, which makes it not only safe from oblivion but also infinitely reproducible. And far from disappearing with the survivors, the audiovisual archive is the ultimate depository of deep memory.

21:10   Amit Pinchevski: So let me now make kind of an intermediate conclusion. What video recording provided for testimony is capturing not only the testimonial narrative but also the event of telling. The details of survival, together with the incidentals of speaking, halts, silences, slips, gestures, timbre, and tone. By recording the punctures and punctuations accompanying the flow of narrative, video testimony captures something that can never be fully narrativized: the gap between the spoken and the unspoken. It bears witness to and archives the attempts and failures of narrative in giving an account of the traumatic past, the expression of the inability to express. It is therefore possible to point out the emergence of a distinctive audiovisual manifestation of traumatic memory, one that is made possible by videography. Now, audiovisual testimony has become the standard for other Holocaust memory projects, as you may all know, and for commemorative projects of genocide and persecution war generally.

22:29   Amit Pinchevski: A most notable example, of course, is the Visual History Archive of the Shoah Foundation, which has multiplied the production of video testimonies and also extended them to new platforms, most importantly, to the internet. And others, sooner or later, let's put it this way, followed suit.

VIDEOGRAPHY AND TESTIMONY
- Video recording captures not only the testimonial narrative but the event of telling the details of survival together with the incidentals of speaking
- Videotestimony captures the gap between the spoken and the unspoken
- It bears witness to and archives the attempts and failures of narrative in giving an account of the traumatic past - the expression of the inability to express
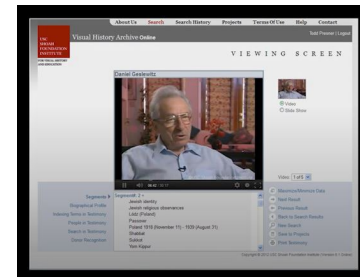
Visual History Archive Online
The Shoah Foundation Institute

22:53   Amit Pinchevski: Here you see a similar project from the Yad Vashem Collections, and also making video testimonies accessible to viewers online. While these digital platforms are clearly game changers, as far as accessibility and spread go, I think they still subscribe to the original Yale format, namely, recording a linear personal account with an interviewer and camera on sight. Yet there is one recent testimony project that poses a completely new model of Holocaust testimony, and one which redefines the relation between media and witnessing.
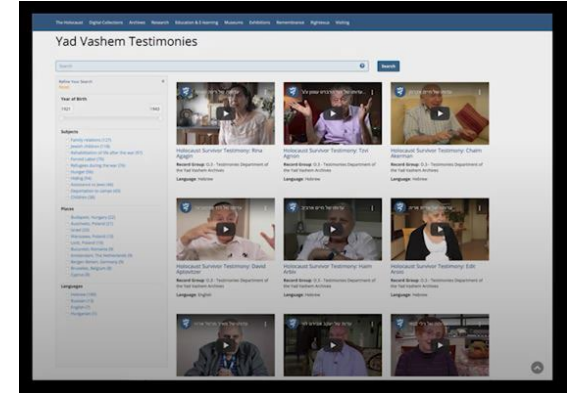
Yad Vashem Testimonies Online
Collection

23:40   Amit Pinchevski: And I'm talking about this project, Dimensions in Testimony. It used to be called New Dimensions in Testimony, the "New" was dropped for whatever reason, I don't know why. Now it's Dimensions in Testimony. And Dimensions in Testimony, a project developed at the Institute for Creative Technologies at the University of South California [University of Southern California] sees its aim as, and I quote, continuing the dialogue between Holocaust survivors and learners far into the future, combining human-computer speech interaction with three-dimensional holographic imaging. The project promises to create an immersive experience of a live conversation with the survivor. What makes this project worthy of serious consideration is not only its high-tech gloss of testimony but more importantly the way it reconfigures the testimony genre altogether. If Boder's wire recorder represents the first generation of the media of Holocaust testimony, whose primary concern was preservation, and if video recording at Yale represents the second generation, which combined preservation and audience reception, Dimensions of Testimony represents, perhaps, the third generation of the media of testimony, which is clearly about interaction.
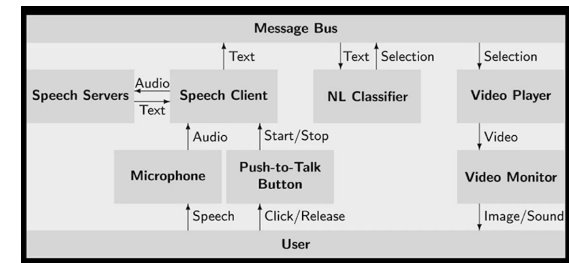

Dimensions in Testimony
USC and Shoah Foundation

24:58   Amit Pinchevski: This reconfiguration of testimony, I suggest, marks the uncoupling of traumatic memory from the testimonial narrative as its carrier. And what was a defining feature of bearing witness in the context of the video

archive, namely, the acting out of traumatic memory upon testimony, becomes extraneous in the context of the digital database. This shift might have some important consequences for the future of Holocaust memory, as I will suggest. Now, some background on Dimensions in Testimony, on this project. The first to partake in the project was Pinchas Gutter, a survivor that you can see here. A survivor of six concentration camps, born in Łódź, and currently living in Toronto. And to date, about 20 other survivors have been filmed to this project. And Gutter spent five days of filmed interviews answering several hundred questions collected from both experts and laypeople. His responses were then integrated into a human-computer interface, which consists of two main components: speech recognition module and natural language processing module. So this is roughly how it works, without being too technical. Not that I understand it too much. But this is basically the idea.

26:23   Amit Pinchevski: When the system receives a question, basically, someone would speak out and ask a question into a mic, it converts it into a textual representation, which is then processed by a statistical algorithm that predicts the most likely words to appear in an answer. It then ranks all stored responses according to their closeness to the prediction and selects the most appropriate. Thus, the system must have a representation of the answer's main variables before proceeding to locate the best match.

New Dimensions in Testimony System Architecture From: Traum et al (2015)

27:00   Amit Pinchevski: During interviews, Gutter was filmed sitting at the center of a geodesic dome, mounted with some 50 or even more high-resolution digital cameras. The system then utilizes multiple projectors to produce a three-dimensional hologram of the survivor that can adapt to different settings and lighting conditions, as you can see here. And there are different iterations of this project, some with an actual hologram, some are on a screen, a big screen, a smaller screen, different types of configuration of the same idea. And designers of Dimensions in Testimony are well aware of the previous audiovisual projects and are keen to break from that tradition. In their view, earlier employment of technology in testimony was largely about

Pinchas Gutter interviewing for New Dimensions in Testimony, March 2014

documentation. Their declared goal is to replace the documentary model with the conversational one, based on a simulation of face-to-face dialogue with the survivor.

28:07   Amit Pinchevski: And I would like to make four points, in order to explicate my claim as to the uncoupling of traumatic memory from testimony and the problems I think this might entail. So the first point I want to make about this new technology and this new project concerns the temporality of testimony. And as said, the Yale archive was the context for the emergence of a distinctive audiovisual manifestation of traumatic memory. This is because video recording captures not only the testimonial narrative, but also the event of telling, and in this sense can be said to be a medium for the performing of trauma upon testimony. The digital basis of virtual testimony, if we want to call it like that, produces an entirely different media temporality of witnessing. All digital processing, be they textual, visual, or audio, is underpinned by micro-temporal calculations taking place well below human perception.

29:11   Amit Pinchevski: This is also the case with the algorithm at the core of Dimensions in Testimony, determining the most probable outcome to any given question. Gutter's testimony, quote unquote testimony, is based on statistical probability, its media temporality being micro-processual rather than chronological. Non-linear. Since the system already knows all the possible answers before receiving any question, the result is what may be called narrative ex-machina. At each run time, a different stringing of responses, depending on the queries presented. If video testimony provides a repository of narrative-bound incidents that are ripe with interpretive possibilities, the virtual testimony is based on discreet semantically pre-classified narrative units that are unsusceptible to real-time irregularities. What is lost? This is, I think, the important point is the precariousness of the testimonial narrative, which no longer operates as the carrier of lapses and parapraxis as telltale of traumatic memory.

30:31   Amit Pinchevski: Second point I want to make about this project has to do with presence and absence. According to designers of the Dimensions in Testimony, what distinguishes their project, and I quote, is the ability to connect on a personal level with the survivor and the history, even when that

THE TEMPORALITY OF TESTIMONY
- Gutter's "testimony" is based on statistical probability
- Virtual testimony process pre-classified narrative units unsusceptible to real-time irregularities
- What is lost is the precariousness of testimony

PRESENCE AND ABSENCE
- DT: "What makes our project unique is the ability to connect on a personal level with a survivor,

survivor is not present. While every kind of technological memorialization is in one way or another about making the absent present, the Dimensions in Testimony version proceeds to take the extra step of denying the absence of that which is made present. Virtual testimony simulates the co-presence of witness and audience, producing just enough suspension of disbelief so as to keep the interaction going. In a promotional clip, Dimensions in Testimony designers expressed the wish, and I quote it here, to break away this frame that puts them, that is, survivors, in one place, and puts you, that is, audience, in another, seeking instead to put both in the same place, which is where all great storytelling can happen.

- and the history, even when that survivor is not present"
- DT: "to break the frame that puts them [survivors] in one place and you [audience] in another, and put you at the same place, which is where all great storytelling can happen
- DT's premise: absence and separation are technologically resolvable predicaments

31:47   Amit Pinchevski: What this expulsion of the frame, the iconic metaphor for the screen, which supposedly separates witness and audience [unclear] of course, is that the frame does not simply separate, but also connects. Indeed, it connects because it also separates. In retaining this tension within testimony, between connection and separation, and between absence and presence, has been an enduring concern for Holocaust testimony scholars such as Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman and Geoffrey Hartman and Lawrence Langer, and others, all associated with the Yale Video Archive. What they all emphasize in different ways is the importance of upholding the incommunicable and inarticulate aspect of testimony, as these corroborate the impossibility of full reception and the irrecusable gap between survivors' experiences and those of their audiences. Dimensions in Testimony seems to operate under the opposite assumption. Namely, that absence and separation are technologically resolvable predicaments.

32:58   Amit Pinchevski: Third point. I call it from witness to witnessee, a new word, I guess. Dimensions in Testimony can be placed within a broader context of contemporary Holocaust memory projects, which put the emphasis on the side of the recipients. Memory study scholars have already noted the role of media technologies in producing new experiential dimensions for remembering publics and individuals. And when it comes to testimony, however, there seems to be a trend encompassing a range of digital media platforms of involving recipients in the very production and reproduction of testimony. Such platforms typically consist of user-centered design, which

FROM WITNESS TO WITNESSEE
- Shift of emphasis from witness as deliverer of testimony to witnessee as digitally-enabled participatory recipient
- Customizing testimony to fit recipients' context
- Embodiment of witnessee replaces that of the witness

shifts the emphasis from the witness as the deliverer of testimony, to what might be called the witnessee, the digitally enabled participatory recipient. Thus, for example, I have a couple of examples here.

34:00   Amit Pinchevski: A mobile application under development offers to deliver audiovisual testimonies related to the location of the user. So, let's say when visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau, relevant camp survivors' testimonies can be played automatically based on the visitors' GPS position. This would be played through a cellular phone, for instance. Another project is an augmented reality project at Bergen-Belsen, I think it's already operational, which utilizes tablets to simulate, for visitors, camp buildings that no longer exist. So you would raise the tablet, and it would show you where buildings and other structures used to be. And another example is a 2013 campaign, you can see it on the left here, called *People. Not Numbers.*, for raising Holocaust awareness among Israeli adolescents, which involved distributing removable tattoos, coupled with postcards displaying a QR code that when scanned by a mobile device, links to an audiovisual testimony by a survivor marked with the same tattoo. And a most, I guess, recent example is a virtual reality tour which we can see a short clip. The whole thing, I guess, is about 20 minutes, and it features, again, Pinchas Gutter, the first one to be filmed for the hologram.

35:42   Pinchas Gutter: I come back to Majdanek, to this camp, to convey the truth of what actually happened. This place, this camp, was a place of torture. I think that you have to confront pain to be able to heal it. Unless you have somebody that can say, I was here, I saw this, this was done to me, I don't think people would accept it as the gospel truth.

           Walk Alongside a Holocaust Survivor's Testimony in Virtual Reality

36:19   Amit Pinchevski: So the way that that works is you would wear virtual reality goggles, and would virtually follow a survivor walking around the camp, and would be able to look around and feel as if, being there. So these are different examples of what I think is happening in the shift of the emphasis. All these examples, in all these examples, I think, technology invites users to assert their own presence, themselves, as a way to invoke and perhaps compensate for the increasing disappearance of survivors. The Dimensions in Testimony project takes this trend even further by completely customizing testimony to fit

the recipient's context from conversation topics all through lighting conditions. In this new arrangement of technology and embodiment, what is being fore fronted is the intervention of those observing, rather than the interpolation of those depicted. It is as though the embodiment of the witnessee comes to replace that of the witness, and with it, the removal of the mediation of traumatic memory.

37:38   Amit Pinchevski: Fourth and last point on this, digitizing traumatic memory. So here is a speculative question. The processing of testimony into database invites the following speculation. What if the audiovisual markers of traumatic memory, those that came out of the videotape, the slips, the silences, the gaps, and all those things, could somehow be coded by an algorithm? Would that serve to recreate the traumatic dimension of testimony under digitization? In order to be coded, such latent content would first have to be made definable and identifiable. But this would further mean not only classification but also discretization, making the coded content classifiable only as discretes. And digitization of audiovisual markers of trauma, to the extent that it is even possible, would result in itemization of such markers. And once itemized, these markers are no longer imbricated within the unfolding of the testimonial narrative. They become detached from narrative as their carrier, and as such, recast from latent to explicit content and from symptom, if you will, to sense. Saul Friedländer's worry about the disappearance of deep memory, a worry that was largely unwarranted, in my mind in the context of the videotape, might become justified again if we follow the speculation in the context of digitization, though for a different reason. At stake is not the loss of what I called deep memory, but its reification, not oblivion, but objectification. Indexing testimonial instances as traumatic, as defying meaning, as resisting experience, cannot but collect them under a concrete designation. And thereby turning them into a semantic formula, in turning the inarticulate into a concrete category, sacrifices its expressive precariousness. What was incidental in the performing of narrative on videotape will become overdetermined in the coding of narrative by algorithm.

40:13   Amit Pinchevski: So, let me start concluding. So having said all that, my intention here is not to lament the obsolescence or the disappearance of videotape, nor the loss of the analog traces of traumatic memory in the digital

DIGITIZING TRAUMATIC MEMORY
● What if audiovisual markers of trauma could be coded into an algorithm?
● Once classified and itemized these markers are no longer imbricated within testimonial narrative
● At stake is not the loss of "deep memory" but its reification

CONCLUSION
● Not a lament for the analog traces of traumatic memory

age. Indeed, it may well be that what was particular to one technology becomes apparent when it is replaced by a new one. Nostalgia for the old might disguise fear of the new. Yet at the same time, I am suspicious of the impulse to scrap the old ways in favor of complete revamp of the media of testimony. My position, therefore, is of partial release of the past and partial embrace of the future, which I think is the preferable position to hold in order to assess the present. Recall that the Yale Archive had also set itself as a channel for relaying Holocaust testimony into the future, similarly attempting to do this by using the latest technology available, which at the time was television and videotape. Each generation justifiably wants to employ the most advanced means to advance Holocaust memory. And so, on the one hand, it would be problematic to continue subscribing to the logic of television and attempt to recreate the effects of the analog videotape within digital platforms, just as it would have been problematic to recreate Boder's traumatic index, what he called in the [19]40s, which had been drawn from wire recording in the context of the videotape. Each media would have its own manifestation.

- Survivors should be allowed to pass on so as to be survived by their testimonies
- Absence as a creative possibility in testimony
- The incommensurability of past and present

42:07   Amit Pinchevski: Yet, on the other hand, it would be equally problematic to do away with the lessons of previous testimony projects, specifically the fraught relation between then and now, experience and expression. Witness and audience. All this in favor of a model that reconfigures testimony as a simulation of free-flowing conversation with a survivor. Dimensions in Testimony celebrates the technical ability of rectifying the loss of survivors by simulating their presence. That survivors will soon be gone is indeed a challenge, but not so much as a problem to overcome, but as a condition to be reckoned with. Their disappearance in and of itself does not necessarily bode ill for the future of Holocaust memory. Acknowledging loss does not amount to forgetting, but may instead encourage developing alternative ways of remembering that embrace, the unbridgeable gap between those who were there and those who are here. Especially given today's technological capabilities, Holocaust remembrance calls for a modicum of release. Survivors should be allowed to pass on so as to be survived by their testimonies. Nowadays, we're surrounded by digital applications that are geared to the personalization of content from news items to shopping options. New digital platforms also encourage user involvement and participation,

including what is now called UGC, or user-generated content. All these capabilities are now evident in the use of digital media for Holocaust memory. And it remains to be determined how best to use them in order to serve the cause. Now, I do not mean to sound like the older man that I guess I am, disparaging the cherished devices of the young.

44:15   Amit Pinchevski: Memory is necessarily tied to the media of its transference, and that has always been the case. But when it comes, reaching into the future demands embracing the best means that can get us there. But when it comes to Holocaust testimony, I worry that the push to user involvement and personalization of content, what I referred to as the shift to the witnessee, might sacrifice something essential to the duty of remembering. No technology can compensate for the disappearance of survivors, nor should it. The question is how to both acknowledge loss and incorporate its absence in whatever shape digital testimony might take. Absence may be a creative possibility involving not only the relaying of experience but also the relating of the impossibility of relating certain experiences. To be sure, it is not traumatic memory itself as a specific kind of content that necessarily demands preservation. Rather, it is the function that traumatic memory has served under videography, namely, the insertion of absence into presence as a reminder of the incommensurability of past and present. This, I think, is perhaps the greatest challenge for the future of testimony on the conditions of digitization. Thank you very much.

45:54   Speaker 1: Thank you, that was extremely illuminating. I have some subversive questions for you, and I'll just go to them. So the first one has to do with, what is the purpose of remembering the Holocaust. Is it to defeat Holocaust deniers? Is it a Jewish act of preserving a unique Jewish suffering? Clearly, the aim to help the survivor, as you talked about in the psychoanalytic, is going to be out of the question in the future. And what disturbs me about the balance here between feeling and thinking, it seems to me that all of the testimonies, and you know, I co-founded this project, so I'm deeply committed to it. But it seems that the focus is on, how does what you call the witnessee feel about the Holocaust when we're sitting in the library, we have a room this size, filled with books that try to explain fascism, explain Hitler. Is this the best use of our resources, as compared to writing books,

reading books, teaching courses?

47:12   Amit Pinchevski: Well, clearly not, I guess. I think the fascination with the technology here is part of the problem, in a way. Right? Technology is cast as the answer to a perennial question, right? How to convey that memory. And I think we haven't done enough studying and getting what we can from the actual traditional testimonies. There are hundreds, well, I guess tens of thousands of recorded, either audio or videotaped testimonies of which only a fraction has been studied or acknowledged. And I think there's a lot to be done, even with the old material, before we try to configure a new way of doing it. And I completely agree that it puts the emphasis on how you feel, or I guess, the way they would put it, it would be the experience. So it's an experiential process, rather than an intellectual or cognitive one, right? The fascination with the ability to ask any question that you would like, and then get an answer, which of course, most, I guess, kids, would try to mess with the system, right? Ask, so what is the weather today? So they would have specific answers to try to deal with that, right? The hologram would say, well, I don't have an answer for that, or let's keep to the topic, whatever. Anyway, the point here, I think, it's an incredibly sophisticated, technologically, project. But I think it's wrongheaded. I think it puts the emphasis in the wrong direction. Putting the focus on how the recipient, the user, feels and experiences a live conversation. It's all about what interests me. Certainly, we can't get the big questions that you referred to there.

49:35   Speaker 2: Everything you have here is telling the story from the victim's side, from the survivor's side. Is there any work being done on capturing testimony and experience of the perpetrators, the Sonderkommandos, the Einsatzgruppen, and maybe even more difficult than that, the Jewish collaborators, the one that formed the police forces, and pushed Jews into the trains that took them to Auschwitz? So is anything being done to get a sense of these people, why they did what they did? Was it compulsion, their family would be taken away if they didn't cooperate? What's the story on the opposite side of the coin?

50:23   Amit Pinchevski: This is a very good question, and I don't know if I have the whole answer, but it's a complicated one, for sure. Because for a long time,

there was resistance, I think a justified one, not to put survivors and perpetrators on the same level and take testimonies in the same way from both. That would be kind of, you know, counterproductive, in terms of justifying, ethically, the cause. There were some instances in which most people would not be willing to interview, to begin with, right? That's not something that you would be, even if you were part of it, you would not be willing to partake in it. So I don't know of any project that is using it, but there is one recent case, which is kind of interesting, that uses virtual reality in a recent court case. I think it was in Germany, where there was, I think he was a guard, I can't remember which camp that was.

51:43   Speaker 3: Sobibór?

51:45   Amit Pinchevski: Probably, yes. And he denied the fact that he was, he didn't deny the fact that he was there, but he denied his ability to be able to see, from where he was posted, from his position, to see what was going on in the barracks and in the camp. So it was really a question of if he was even, he was there, but he was not a witness to what was going on. So they built a whole virtual reality environment to prove that from where he stood, he could definitely see what was going on, right? So I guess the biggest challenge with this type of testimony is that it would not even take place. Most people would not want to be interviewed.

52:37   Speaker 4: I've never heard of the hologram process, so I'm still spinning with that. But I'm wondering, when we talk about how you are separate from and how the video or the hologram creates that, the breaking of the frame, I'm wondering then what place might actors have when we talk about taking these stories and these transcripts, and then when we captivate, what is more, captivating than a live body? So especially a performance within museum spaces or these different contexts, where maybe is your opinion that the live actor who could potentially interact? I know that there's a number of children's museums throughout the country that have these programs, and so while we keep moving toward this, the digital, at the same time I think that we're just gonna end up back to the real.

53:29   Amit Pinchevski: Could be. I know of one project that used something like

that. I think it was, it wasn't in the context of Holocaust memory, I think it was in the context of refugees. And they were using actors to retell their experiences and that was, what I saw of it was quite interesting and compelling. Because, precisely because it involved someone acting it and using someone else's words. The point, since the [19]40s, in recording testimonies, was precisely to have people tell their stories in their own voice. Even if it were, you know, jumbled, it made no sense, whatever. It was about capturing their own experiences in their own voice, and as they speak. I'm not sure if that could be conveyed with actors. That's a question. If that could be reenacted, I'm not sure.

54:37   Speaker 5: This is all fascinating, and all I keep thinking through the presentation was when you look at, the Holocaust deniers kept saying this was all made up. Is there a danger, with the use of this technology, the Holocaust deniers say, see? They just all made it up? You know, they put it in the computer, they Photoshopped it, and then look, it was never real.

55:02   Amit Pinchevski: So the thing with deniers is that they will always say, I mean, they'll find what to say that will deny it. And it was before, and it would still be. Personally, I think the best way to deal with that is just to ignore it. Because if you engage in a kind of an old debate and conversation, you only feed into the denying kind of argument. It's manufactured. This testimony is manufactured, certainly. It's not a story that someone told and then was cut up into pieces and then reprocessed. Not even that. It's just single answers and single questions that now are being put into the computer, and the computer finds the best match to the question that you would ask. So you would come up and ask, well, how was it to have no food? And it would pick up a question that was closest to what you, right? Someone else would ask, were you hungry? And it will come up with the same answer. Someone else would say, what do you remember mostly from the ghetto? And it would come up with the same thing. So it means that every time you would ask, someone would come up and ask questions, it would come up with a different narrative, as it were. So there's no real testimony there. It's just different segments that come up together. Now if that, that would be helpful to deniers or not, I'm not

sure. I'm sure they will be able to deal with everything that comes up and find ways to deny. I'm not so much concerned about that. I don't think the technology, this technology at least, works either way, in that respect.

57:04   Susanne Hillman: Please join me to thank Professor Amit Pinchevski for a wonderful lecture.

57:09   Amit Pinchevski: Thank you so much. Thank you.

57:10   [Transmitted Wounds: Media and the Meditation of trauma / February 19, 2020]

57:17   [Featuring / Amit Pinchevski / Department of Communication and Journalism / The Hebrew University of Jerusalem]

57:22   [Presented by / The Holocaust Living History Workshop / Deborah Hertz / Director, The Jewish Studies Program UC San Diego / Susanne Hillman / Program Coordinator, The Holocaust Living History Workshop]

57:27   [UC San Diego Library / Erik Mitchell / The Audrey Geisel University Librarian / Nikki Kolupailo / Director of Communications and Engagement]

57:32   [UCTV / Producer, Lynn Burnstan / Camera Operators, Steve Anderson, John Menier / Editor, Matt Alioto / Post-Production, Mike Weber]

57:37   [The views, contents, and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the University of California]

57:44   [Read Write Think Dream / The Library Channel UC San Diego / www.uctv.tv/library-channel]

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