

## THE “GROUND LEVEL” MEMORY OF WAR. A CULTURAL READING

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**Abstract:** “Ground level” memory as the autobiographical memory that records historical events in a personal manner in the construction of identity and of the multiple self can be a means of attenuating the oversimplifications made by historians and by psychologists in establishing the motivations of the participants in the event. In the context of the cultural history of war from a fundamental perspective, the history of war was reassessed throughout the years as a state of being of a world in which the “civic militancy”, from the Antiquity to the modern era, subsisted or was transmitted by “a history of memory”, by a cultural memory of war understood as a true “pantheon” of the greater history of western civilisation. The culture of war and of the battles from the viewpoint of the new cultural history, following a fundamental work of A.J. Lynn on the “combat culture”, essentially seems to be not a reconstruction of events, but rather a cultural interpretation of war, its memory and its instrumentalisation. The “ground level” memory of war in its development can be outlined by a polymorphism or by a complex scope that corresponds with the complexity of “first-hand” history. Seen from the “ground level”, besides the polymorphic descriptions and interpretations, war deconstructs a reality and multiplies it from the viewpoint of the timeline of the experience and the timeline of the recount. The moment of the historical fact confronts the moment of the memorable fact, a unique historical moment and a multiple personal moment, a subjective time (biographic time) and an objective time (historical time), a closed, sorted time and an open time, fluctuating between the speakable and the unspeakable (according to G. Agamben), a definitive time and a reproductive time. The testimonies carry a “cultural memory”, they were created within the cultural horizons of the soldiers, by their worldviews, by the ideas and obsessions of the soldiers as delegates of the socio-cultural environments from which they originated.

**Keywords:** World War I, war memory, cultural memory, war culture, social memory of war

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Before it became history, war became memory, since the experience of a great tragedy was felt at an individual, personal level. The narratives of war are thus made after an irrevocable “privatisation” of the tragedy; the “aerial” overview on war, from the “objective” viewpoint of war strategies or from the official position of the “chief of staff” remains detached from the explosion of the bomb dropped from high altitude, from an airplane.<sup>1</sup> The ground level of war, the soldiers and civilians directly affected by the tragedy are faced with the direct, concrete, detailed and un-mediated personal experience marked by a strong behavioural and emotional identification. “Bombardments are impersonal; bombarded people, however, die personally”.<sup>2</sup>

In the discourse on the subject of war, a *suprapersonal* level of perception is given by the statements, the agendas, the military commands and military reports, a level that was thus objectivised by plans, numbers, political and military decisions, treaties, armistices, negotiations, as well as a *personal* level of perception – a narrative, epic, emotional and direct level, seen as an experience, as a “subject” within the larger history. At the level of this personal discourse, history becomes memory and, even more so, memories, as the recount of the events or the “factuality” of the memories of war is not merely narrative, but “philosophical” as well, separated from “language theories”,<sup>3</sup> because it contains commentaries, explanations, evaluations, contextualisations.

This means of transferring the history of war into the memory of its participants, as processed information or as “first hand history” by comparing the experiences of war with the official, sovereign discourse also shows “the memory of war as a war of memories”.<sup>4</sup>

The “field” memory of war can be associated with an epistemologically essential itinerary that includes at least three historiographic acquisitions or experiments focused on the notion of scalar history, “de l'échelle en histoire”<sup>5</sup> or “jeux d'échelles”.<sup>6</sup> The first experiment comes from the scope of microhistory which offers a model of reconstruction or interpretation determined by the “variety of realities/the real” that implies a methodological approach that assumes an “order of necessity”, an inside observation of society at a cellular level, followed by a reverse of the historian’s gaze from “the base to the top” – in historical writings, the general cannot be seen merely through juxtaposition or through adding personal situations, thus

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<sup>1</sup> A. Portelli, “So much Depends on a Red Bus or Innocent Victims of the Liberating Gun,” in *Oral History Society*, vol. 34, Nr. 2., 2006, 29. The study conducts an analysis of the metaphor of the “aerial” view and the “ground level” view of the war victims. This analysis begins with the moment the red bus was destroyed by the NATO bombings on 1 May 1999, during the conflicts in Yugoslavia. The bus was commuting between Kosovo and Montenegro and all 40 passengers were killed during the aerial raid. The pilot and the military strategists had, in this case, an “aerial” view on war, death and tragedies, an impersonal and objective view.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> D. Koleva, “*Memories of the War and the War of Memories in Post-Communist Bulgaria*,” in *Oral History*, vol.34, 2 (2006), 54.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>5</sup> B. Lepetit, *Carnet de croquis. Sur la connaissance historique* (Paris: A. Michel, 1999), 88, et sq.

<sup>6</sup> J. Revel (dir.), *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Gallimard, Seuil), 1996.

facilitating an approach of a schematisation that is abusive<sup>7</sup> towards a multiple, varied and complex past.

The second historiographic acquisition or experiment is obtained from a cultural anthropology survey which, in relation with the “totalizing ideal” of social realities, substitutes the history of generalisations with the history of representations, which shows a world dominated by a system of signs and symbols, shared practices and behaviours, assumed through an individual idiosyncrasy expressed through text and language and which is in an indistinct circularity with the context, with the meaning of the behaviour and the individual representations. The recitative (the individual text) offers the context as a space for social experiences and as a horizon of meanings extracted from the multiplicity of individual practices.<sup>8</sup>

The third experiment is given by the historical paradigm seen “from below”, with meanings which are, on the one hand, connected to social history – one that is sometimes strongly marked by ideology –, with approaches from “labour history” or “subaltern studies” to “Alltagsgeschichte” – a field in which representative historiographic efforts were made by E. P. Thompson to M. Bakhtin, C. Ginzburg and A. Lüdke<sup>9</sup> – and, on the other hand, connected to a precarious efficiency of historical generalisation that coexists with the compatibilities of “des recherches, localisées et particularisées mais bâties sur des préoccupations partagées.”<sup>10</sup>

The “ground level” memory, treated from the theoretical and methodological perspective of scalar history, can be connected to the answers given by historiography to the survey regarding the diversity and particularities of reality-history and the “subjective dynamics of life” in relation with the *model* (the official history of the world) and with *moulding* (the process of historical research). From this viewpoint, the generalities and the inductive operations of historiography do not completely consecrate reality by adding multiplicity, as the individual and the particular are not validated solely through themselves. Historiography is thus tensioned between “the total explicative ability of the field”, just like in the case of other social sciences, and the indefeasible level of the individual past. In this case, the realist solution is the intelligent management of the reconstruction, explanation and representation of the past in which the scalar perspective must be accepted and used. This is why a known exegete in the theory of representation, L. Marin, exploiting B. Pascal’s words on the diversity of the world, re-centred the importance of the scalar gaze in which the viewpoint

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<sup>7</sup> B. Lepetit, *Carnet de croquis...*, 89.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Revel, “Micro-analyse et construction du social,” in J. Revel, *Jeux d’échelles...*, 16-35 ; B. Lepetit, *Carnet de croquis...*, 90-98 ; J. Revel, *L’histoire au ras du sol*, preface in G. Levi, *Le pouvoir au village* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), I-XXXIII.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: 1963); M. Bakhtin, *François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance* (Paris: 1970); C. Ginzburg, *Le fromage et les vers* (Paris: 1980); S. Kott, “De l’histoire sociale à l’Alltagsgeschichte. Entretien avec Lüdke,” in *Génèse*, 3 (1991).

<sup>10</sup> J. Boutier, A. Virmani, *Les voies de la polyphonie*, in *Passés recomposés. Champs et chantiers de l’histoire*, ed. J. Boutier, D. Julia (Paris: Ed. Autrement, 1995), 303.

of world unity does not exclude its heterogeneity: “Une ville, une campagne, de loin c’est une ville et une campagne...”<sup>11</sup>.

Establishing the “ground level view” as scalar perspective or retrospective on the past can rebuild the long lost unity between the historiographic discourse and the reality of the past, or it could solve the overrated intelligibility of the past to the detriment of its visibility. Thus, the “ground level” memory validates the scalar perspective on reality and it turns the historical texts or the *historical narrations* towards *stories* and *history* towards *memory*. In historical research, the “au ras du sol” view rebuilds the authenticity of the past and, therefore, of war as a “subjectivity of the experiences”, and places the historiographic discourse in its Antheic resupplying. This endeavour contains a possible paraphrase in Psalm 138:6 “Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off”<sup>12</sup>. In other words, the sovereign gaze of the Divinity is awarded to the small, the humble, the lowly, it is close to them through its gaze, while the higher ones are assessed through implied knowledge and distance.

On this disjunctive trajectory between the general and the particular, between the high scalar perspective and the low one, a discourse on war can be constructed between history and memory, although, according to P. Ricoeur, there is an unspeakable relationship between the two, since “la compétition entre la mémoire et l’histoire, entre la fidélité de l’une et la vérité de l’autre, ne peut être tranchée au plan épistémologique.”<sup>13</sup> However, we must accept the fact that memory shows the past of a subject, of an individual or collective self. In this case, memory is a primordial and founding layer of the individual self and of society – we constantly dive into memory since we cannot be ourselves without identity.<sup>14</sup> The outlines of subjectivity as memory are relevant especially from the viewpoint of its individual projections, of the “ground level” of memory, which is thus both memory per se and the memory “of the lowly”, of the anonymous individuals.

This double reduction – memory as a subjective and particular fact and memory as a means of relating to the past of “the lowly” – is a transcription of a paradigm that shows “la rupture avec le temps unique et linéaire et pluralisant les modes de rationalité”<sup>15</sup> of the past. From this viewpoint, we can only speak of a “personal history of memory”<sup>16</sup>, my history, a history in the first person (I, my, me), localised in time and space, specifically a localisation within a referential space (“tunc et illuc”) since, according to T. Todorov, memory is nothing more than the name given to these constituent faculties of identity that allow the subject to

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<sup>11</sup> L. Marin, *De la Représentation* (Paris: Gallimard, Seuil, 1994), 245 ; See also “Une ville, une campagne de loin : Paysages pascalien,” in *Littérature*, 16 (1986), 10.

<sup>12</sup> <http://biblehub.com/psalms/138-6.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 648.

<sup>14</sup> M. G. Cattell, J. Climo, *Introduction to Meaning in Social Memory and History. Anthropological Perspective in Social Memory and History* (New York, Oxford: Walnut Creek, 2002), 1.

<sup>15</sup> F. Dosse, “Travail et devoir de mémoire chez Paul Ricoeur,” in *La mémoire, pour quoi faire?* (Paris: Les éditions de l’Atelier/les éditions ouvrières, 2006), 97.

<sup>16</sup> R. R. Archibald, *A Personal History of Memory*, in *Social Memory and History...*, 65.

identically think of himself in time<sup>17</sup>. This individualisation of memory can only occur through an act of speaking, since words are not merely a means of expression and communication, but also the fabric of “words [which] are the raw material of thought, of self-consciousness, and story”.<sup>18</sup> The personalisation of memory into text suggests what P. Ricoeur and A. Giddens proposed regarding the idea that any identity as a reflexive project can only be understood as a narrative identity, because identity is constructed through memory as a biographical narration.<sup>19</sup> This mechanism of the narrative-reflexive text offers a “lower” level of memory, directed towards the individual, towards the bearer that “is aware of himself in time”.

From a phenomenological perspective on memory, together with an analysis of the literary discourse of memory and orality, individual memory can be described as “ground level” memory – inner memory, recounted and communicated from the self, starting from the personal experiences from the past. This is why memory expresses an inner view, an “introspection” that uses “insight”, namely a transfer from the recounted real and referential frame.<sup>20</sup> The purpose is to reveal the “irreducibility of the individual”.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the purpose of individual memory is to place the individual in a social frame, as well as in a historical frame that has two functions: to transmit or to relive an event and to return oneself to their past in order to capture “the meaning in itself” and “the meaning for the self” (“Pour en signifier le sens en soi, mais aussi le sens pour soi”).<sup>22</sup> This meaning of both the past and present defines an agreed-upon memory that is basically a reflexive memory that shapes an individual existence that outlines the past and the individual’s life, the trajectory of his existence. Memory organises and reorganises an individual’s life<sup>23</sup> and is therefore not merely a trace: “Plus que trace, la mémoire est alors un tracé. Elle est énoncée à l’échelle d’une totalité signifiante, une vie, sa propre vie”.<sup>24</sup> From this viewpoint, memory operates with an open temporality, in the sense that the individual re-experiences and restructures his own past in relation with the future he desires,<sup>25</sup> and the re-experienced past is mediated by a memory that essentially assumes an existential negotiation that allows the individual to position himself both in the future and in the present in relation with his own past life.<sup>26</sup>

The communication of individual memory creates two levels of discourse: a subjective level of reflexivity that implies the uses of a relived and supratemporal past, and an objective

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<sup>17</sup> T. Todorov, “La mémoire devant l’histoire,” in *Terrain*, 25 Sept. 1995.

<sup>18</sup> R. Archibald, *A Personal History of Memory...*, 65.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: 1991) and E. Goffmann, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, New York: Double Day Anchor, 1959).

<sup>20</sup> A. Green, “La remémoration : effet de mémoire ou temporalité à l’oeuvre,” in *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 4 (1990), 96

<sup>21</sup> A. Muxel, *Individu et mémoire familiale* (Paris: Ed. Nathan, 1996), 30.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>23</sup> R.R. Archibald, *A Personal History of Memory...*, 66: the autobiographical narration illustrates “how we construct ourselves and how we order the world” around us.

<sup>24</sup> A. Muxel, *Individu et mémoire familiale*, 31.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. M. Bowie, *Freud, Proust et Lacan: la théorie comme fiction* (Paris: Denoël, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> A. Muxel, *Individu et mémoire familiale*, 32.

level of reflexivity in which the uses of time are meant to negotiate one's past in order to project oneself into becoming; in this case, time has a retrospective nature.<sup>27</sup> The "ground level" memory of war assumes the two levels of discourse and the two types of temporalities through which the individual positions himself in relation with a collective, historical and normative time and in which the narrative model is emitted by the first person authorial pole. The narrative tension between a subjectively relived memory and an objectified, normative memory creates an individual, "ground level", informal and multiple layer of the act of memory within the exterior, historical, precise discourse associated with an official memory of war.

The "ground level" individual memory, however, is not a simplified, univocal memory. It can be placed in a wider, connective functional and typological context. The subject of memory as the bearer of the "ground level" memory can be distributed among three memory formats. The *archaeological* memory is a cognitive endeavour into the "genealogical depths" of the history of a family/community. The temporality of this memory format places the individual within a space that preceded his existence. The *referential* memory relates to a collective norm. In this case, the precedence is mobilised in order to define a frame of "experiences, references and values", namely the mark-memory; it focuses less on the character/individual and more on principles, values, behaviours and beliefs. The *ritual memory* fetishises living; it is more "expressive than affective" and it ritualises the memory, it notes and sacralises habits, ways of life and, through repetition, through syntagmatic memory practices, it reproduces and conserves the cohesion within the group of which the individual and the individual memory are part.<sup>28</sup>

The psychological approaches of the "ground level" memory mainly focus on the explanations regarding the personality differences transmitted through autobiographic memory. Members of the same cultural and educational field, the individuals "had different views on reality, very different values, patterns and behaviours". A possible direction of approach and analysis of the differences and individualities could be given by surveying autobiographical memory in defining and redefining one's own life.<sup>29</sup> In comparison with social memory, which stores public, collective narrations, individual memory is stored at the level of the personal narrations ("histoires de vie", "life stories") which, from a scalar viewpoint, outlines the self, it imposes the self as the basis of our definition, of personal identity.<sup>30</sup> In this case, besides the construction of the self and the personal involvement in the trauma of a phenomenon or process from the "great history", "ground level" memory also implies a combination between personal memories (non-flash) and flash memories of major social and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 15-20; See also M. Halbwachs, *La Mémoire collective* (Paris: PUF, 1950), 270 et sq.; N. Ginzburg, *Les mots de la tribu* (Paris: Einaudi et Grasset, 1966), 36 et sq.; Fr. Zonabend, *La Mémoire longue. Temps et histoires au village* (Paris: PUF, 1980); Idem, "La mémoire familiale: de l'individuel au collectif," in *Croire mémoire? Approche critique de la mémoire orale*, Actes de l'encontre internationales, 16-18 Oct. 1986, Aoste, Avas, 1988; J.L. Trassard, *L'Espace antérieur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> T. Constantin, *Memoria autobiografică* (The autobiographical memory) (Iași: Institutul European, 2004), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 18.

political events, namely the personal context within the development of certain events (the assassination of J.F. Kennedy, Ceaușescu's flight in 1989).<sup>31</sup>

"Ground level" memory as the autobiographical memory that records historical events in a personal manner in the construction of identity and of the multiple self can be a means of attenuating the oversimplifications made by historians and by psychologists in establishing the motivations of the participants in the event. This "ground level" memory could diminish the impossibility that M. Bloch identified in knowing the meanings and the real implications of a historical event "at the time it was taking place"<sup>32</sup> precisely – an ideal proximity of the "ground level" memory to the occurrence and development of a certain historical event later recorded as an event that is part of the "great history", of the official discourse of history.

From the viewpoint of the relation between memory and anthropology, or, in other words, from the viewpoint of the anthropology of memory, the primordial "ground level" layer of the act of memory is connected to the nature and context of the remembered event. The best recall indicators are the ones associated with events from the subject/individual's life.<sup>33</sup> The event as a phenomenal experience is formed by the individual memory, which is approached "in the first person", which is why it cannot be shared with others.<sup>34</sup> The unrequited nature of individual memory as a discourse on personal experiences outlines different itineraries of the collective memory and of the personal memory. From this perspective, individual memory based on experience is concrete, distinctive, while the collective memory refers to constructing a common, suprapersonal, abstract identity, a mental construct that is maintained and developed through a series of strategies and mental bridging which creates the illusion of historical continuity. In this case, perennial marks of space and time are used, as well as a discourse heavy with analogies that are meant to cancel the differences between past and present.<sup>35</sup>

The disjunction between the official and the vernacular memory is definitive, but they are not parallel, since they are placed in an incidental proximity. If the official memory is institutionalised, ideological, vernacular memory is generated by the dilemmas and necessities of the common man.<sup>36</sup> The connection between the two generated a new form of memory – public memory, that offers a mediated version of the two. The individual "ground level" memory as a personal experience – if it is told – is transferred through a series of filters and mediations, therefore "Entre la memorisation des situations, evenements et actions et leur évocation ulterieur s'interposent la mediation des significations," since what the subject lived

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 245; See also M. Bloch, *Historian's Craft* (London, 1953).

<sup>33</sup> J. Candau, *Anthropologie de la mémoire* (Paris: PUF, 1996), 102; Cf. A. Baddeley, *La mémoire humaine. Théorie et pratique* (Grenoble: PUG, 1993).

<sup>34</sup> G. M. Edelman, *Biologie de la conscience* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1992), 34.

<sup>35</sup> E. Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago University Press), 11; See also N. Fairclough, *Language and Power* (New York, London: 1984).

<sup>36</sup> J. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 14.

and totalised, “et ce qu’il consent à en dire aujourd’hui s’interposent encore des médiations”.<sup>37</sup> The “ground level” memory that records the memory of an experience is constructed by “events, situations, projects and actions” through which “a war, a revolution, a coup d’état” affect millions of individual existences or millions of individual trajectories.<sup>38</sup> They form a series of geometric lines, zigzag lines. These lines have been fixed according to a cultural model at the level of the individual, of the “category of the individual” (philosophically, judiciary, politically, economically and culturally) as a coherent, dominant existence, based on the concept of “biographical ideology” or “biographical illusion”.<sup>39</sup>

The contemporary approaches regarding biographies, life histories, life stories, essentially focus on surveying the individual “ground level” memory, which offers the individual’s unique viewpoint and life experiences, since subjective retrospection can be both coherent and discontinuous. It offers a personal construction of reality. These contemporary approaches that are part of a “new ethnography” focus both on fact and on fiction and, since certain key experiences like the ones during a war can offer more than just fact and fiction, we could obtain personal definitions of what it means to be caught in a moral conflict, to win or to lose, and to better understand human life, particularly the “life of an individual together with the people around him”<sup>40</sup>. The “new ethnography”, which is quite similar to the postmodern emergence of memory in the public and historical discourse reconstructs and re-presents the past in a manner that is open to its contemporary uses, providing answers to questions which the epistemological and anthropological crisis could not solve.<sup>41</sup>

The “ground level” memory is marked by an intense subjectivity, with wide layers and differentiations. The near-death experiences, the social and individual traumas<sup>42</sup> recorded by autobiographical memory are relevant due to the way in which, in the construction of identity and history, they explain the trauma of the past and its relationship with the present. These “unspeakable”<sup>43</sup> traumatic aspects can be found in the “ground level” memory that calibrates the connections between the past, present and future. The possibility of speaking the unspeakable is one of the advantages of reliving “ground level” memory. The subjectivity of traumatic experiences, of the “shell-shock” experiences, can be shown through “ground level” memory even if the public, historiographic discourse contains collective aspects of the

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<sup>37</sup> D. Bertaux, *Le récit de vie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005), 36-38 ; Cf. D. Lungu, *Povestirile vieții. Teorie și documente* (The tales of life. Theory and documents) (Iași: Ed. Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2003), 30-31.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. D. Bertaux, *Histoire de vie ou récit de pratique?* (Paris: Cordes, 1976); P. Bourdieu, “L’illusion biographique,” in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Nr. 62-62/1986.

<sup>40</sup> R. Atkinson, *Povestea vieții* (The life story) (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 14-40 ; See also J. A. Holstein, J. F. Gubrium, *The Active Interview. Thousand Oaks* (C.A. Sage, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> B. Moșneagu, “Discurs istoric și postmodernitate. Opțiuni metodologice” (Historical discourse and Postmodernity. Methodological options), in *Xenopoliana* (Iași, 2001), 1.

<sup>42</sup> L. Passerini, *Storia e soggettività. Le fonti orali, La Memoria* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1988), 171.

<sup>43</sup> M. Bozou, A. M. Thiess, *Faire dire l’indicible* and P. Gaudiu, C. Reverchon, “Le sens du tragique dans la mémoire historique,” in *IV Colloque International d’Histoire Orale, Aix en Provence, 24 – 26 Sept. 1982*, See also M. Pollak, “La gestion de l’indicible,” in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 62/63, 1986.

traumatic memory. Listening to the “unspeakable” from the testimonies of those who lived radical traumas fathoms the stories that were lived and survived within the great collective tragedy through a narrative mechanism that is insufficient to comprehend and represent reality. *Traumatic memory*, a form of “ground level” memory, has its own limits in representation. This form of transmitting a traumatic memory contains a “means of listening to the unspeakable”,<sup>44</sup> since there are insufficient words to recount radical, tragic experiences on the narrow line between life and death, situated in a reality that must exceed its own “factual elements”. This depletion of the lexical mechanism of representing great traumas, as is the case of war, the Holocaust and the Gulag, naturally leads to a greater difficulty in transcribing them historiographically.<sup>45</sup> These radical, traumatic, near-death events transgress “the borders of the historiographic discourse”, which is why they can only be assigned to “ground level” memory, the single potential means to elude the history understood as a totalising and normalising discourse<sup>46</sup>.

The stakes of “ground level” memory in recounting traumatic experiences show the necessity of positioning the subject of the near-death, radical experiences within the reality of history and within the act of memory. As a witness and a participant, the individual positions himself in a discursive *Jemeinigkeit*<sup>47</sup>, since the testimony is given from within a life that constitutes a testimony in itself<sup>48</sup>. However, these stakes of “ground level” memory are determined by the inflections of the experiences or recounted experiences in which the emotional and cognitive meanings cannot always be expressed and which sometimes make the recount of tragic events impossible. Since trauma is both the event and the memory of the event, it is difficult to construct the memory of a certain event. Therefore, according to A. Thomson, in the case of the “ground level” memory of the First World War of an Australian soldier, Fred Ferrel, the “psychic wounds of trauma can fester and then erupt in unexpected and incoherent ways, in nightmares, with intrusive and fragmenting recollections, or through disassociation.”<sup>49</sup> The circumspections regarding the indistinct, cognitive and emotional coherence of the “ground level” memory are part of the analysis of the plausibility and of the limits of the representation of war.

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<sup>44</sup> G. Agamben, *Ce rămâne după Auschwitz. Arhiva și martorul* (Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive) (Cluj: Idea Print, 2006), 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and Final Solution*, ed. S. Friedlander (Harvard University Press, 1992), 2-3; Cf. Idem, *History and Psychoanalysis: An Inquiry into Possibilities and Limits of Psychohistory* (New York, 1978).

<sup>46</sup> D. La Capra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, New York, 1998), 8-10; M. Roth, *The Ironist at Cage: Memory, Trauma and the Construction of History* (New York, 1999), 6.

<sup>47</sup> D. Radosav, “Holocaustul între istorie și memorie. Câteva considerații” (The Holocaust between history and memory. Some considerations), in *AIO. Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Orală* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006), 5.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. R. Dulong, *Le témoin oculaire. Les conditions sociales de l'attestation personnelle* (Paris: Ed. de l'EHESS, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> A. Thomson, “Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History,” in *The Oral History Review*, vol.42/1, 2015, 18.

The historiographic outlines of the reconstruction of war through memory, the stages and the inflections, the emergence of memory in the historiographic discourse as a first concentric circumscription, as well as the typology of the “ground level” memory or, more precisely, the possible thematic or generic dissociations of this memory, as is the second concentric circle, could argue for the descriptive and interpretive dimensions of war as an event approached at the crossroads between history and memory.

The positions taken by memory, more precisely by the “ground level” memory in the reconstruction of war”, are visible starting with the launch of the *cultural history* of war from the end of the 1980s which surpasses the military, political and diplomatic history of war and focuses on “first-hand” history, on the collective and individual impact of war – this implies a variety of sources (personal letters, journals, memoirs, literary and artistic creations, oral surveys etc.) and assembles history, psychology, sociology, anthropology and medicine<sup>50</sup> into a multidisciplinary approach that formed a culture and representation of war.

Besides this much invoked and overbid cultural history of war we must also take into account the acquisitions and directions of the *new military history* of war. The academic military history from the last few decades was developed in the “new tent” paradigm (the very epitome of the big tent). There are three great groups or directions in this “new tent”. The first group conducts research on “war and society” and it represents the so-called “new military history” that focuses on the connections between the *army and society*, rather than on the history of the battles. The second group focuses on the *traditional history* of military operations and conducts research on the details of war and strategy, in which case the best approach is considered to be one that surpasses the classic “drum and trumpet” and “good general or bad general”. The third group is the most innovative and it focuses on the *history of the memory and culture of war*, on military history in its broadest sense.<sup>51</sup> The approach taken by this third group, focusing on the cultural history of war, is a form of interest for the history of war in the public space, dominated by the media (History Channel and cinematographic productions, like C. Eastwood’s *Flags of our Fathers* and *Letters from Iwo Jima*<sup>52</sup>).

Prefaced by the theoretical acquisitions regarding M. Halbwachs and P. Nora’s concept of memory, in a historiographic climate in which the notion of “truth” seems to be standing in quicksand, the discourses on war were released from their classic, academic

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. T. Nicoară, “Marele Război, în istoriografie: de la istoria politico-diplomatică la noua istorie culturală” (The Great War in historiography: from the political and diplomatic history, to the new cultural history), in Idem, *Clio în orizontul mileniului trei (2): Noi explorări în istoriografia contemporană* (Clio on the horizon of the third millennium (2): New explorations in the contemporary historiography) (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2009); See also G. Negustor, “Lupta și nebunia: nevrozele și disciplina militară în timpul Marelui Război” (Battle and madness: the military neuroses and discipline during the Great War), in *Caiete de antropologie istorică* (X, Jan.-Dec., 2011, Supplement), “Disciplinarea socială și modernitatea în societatea modernă și contemporană (sec. XVI-XXI)” (Social discipline and modernity in the modern and contemporary society) (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> R.M. Citino, “Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction,” in *American Historical Review*, Oct. 2007, 1070-1071.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 1070.

shekels; the effects placed war in its “ground levels” in which the tensions between the individual behaviour and the strictly military regulations, the role of the contingencies in the war were emphasised. Therefore, the historiographic classic “official” nature of the discourse started to be dismantled. For instance, the battles from Omaha Beach during the Allied landing in Normandy were reassessed as a victory with many deficiencies;<sup>53</sup> other researches on the “culture of war” offered analyses on the concept of “equality of sacrifice” on the front and at home, or focused on a military or war culture in which the operations taking place on the front are radically separated by the daily life of society.<sup>54</sup> There were other research projects that focused on the way in which military history, as a “battle narration”, coexists with the social history of the anti-war movements and their influence on the mentality of the active soldiers, all under the wide umbrella of the memory of war.<sup>55</sup>

Starting with the ease of the themes and of the historical, political and military-diplomatic research, the cultural history of war exploited its transfigurations in literature. The “ground level” memory of war as a literary memory is fuelled by a significant trajectory from the literature generated by war to the war transfigured in literature. P. Fussell’s book “The Great War and Modern Memory”, in which war was “remembered, conventionalised and mythologised” by literary means also illustrates, from the viewpoint of a non-fictional reading of war, the way in which the Great War changed a generation, opened the modern era and revolutionised “how the world must be seen”.<sup>56</sup> The “ground level” memory of war therefore implies a dissemination of memory in the official discourse towards a literary, transfiguring, fictional, visual (cinematographic) memory. This type of “ground level” memory requires a study of war from the viewpoint of “the ways in which people wrote about it” and a way of analysing the relation between “wounds and words”. In the end, words are the ones that perpetuated it, more than “the brief war that generated them”.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the “ground level” memory of war is productive, seminal, extensive and reverberating when the *epic*, rather than the *history* of war represents its memory, disseminated, extended and placed within a multiple social field.

In the context of the cultural history of war from a fundamental perspective, the history of war was reassessed throughout the years as a state of being of a world in which the “civic militancy”, from the Antiquity to the modern era, subsisted or was transmitted by “a history of memory”, by a cultural memory of war understood as a true “pantheon” of the

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. A.R. Lewis, *Omaha Beach: A Flawed Victory* (Chapel Hill&London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Idem, *The American Culture of War. The History of US Military Force from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. C. Reardon, *Launch the Intruders: A Naval Attack Squadron in the Vietnam War, 1972* (Lawrence: Univ Pr of Kansas, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York, Oxford, University Press, 2000), IX.

<sup>57</sup> R.M. Citino, “Military Histories Old and New...”, 1082; See also J. Lepore, *The Name of War: King Phillip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York, 1998); E.S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

greater history of western civilisation.<sup>58</sup> The culture of war and of the battles from the viewpoint of the new cultural history, following a fundamental work of A.J. Lynn on the “combat culture”, essentially seems to be not a reconstruction of events, but rather a cultural interpretation of war, its memory and its instrumentalisation.<sup>59</sup>

From a *cultural history of war* to *war and culture*, the historiographic discourse recorded a condensation of the interest in World War I in the last three or four decades. This interest can be explained through a “generational phenomenon” that was significantly influenced threefold. Some of the people who took part in the war between 1914-1918 asserted themselves or participated in World War II. The third generation studied the history of war at the time of the Vietnam war. In both cases, the image of the war between 1914-1918 assumes its profound effects on high culture and on folk culture. The cultural impact of the war (it caused a deep caesura in European cultural history) was recovered through a distributive memory of war: gender, class, daily life. The gender history of World War I, besides the cultural ruptures with the period before the war, maintained the men’s privileged relation to women, but it also brought a progress regarding women’s suffrage.<sup>60</sup> The studies that focus on the cultural history of the two world wars also approach the feminine “ground level” memory of war that recorded the role played by women in the military industry during the war. Ironically, the war freed women from the private life of “Küche, Kinder, Kirchen” (from the kitchen, to childcare, to religious worship), and feminine memory recalled “the factory working conditions”. When men returned from the war, women returned to their private lives.<sup>61</sup>

The history of the social and cultural structures regarded the war from the viewpoint of the soldiers, of the participants as distributors of the social memory of war.<sup>62</sup> During wartime, a daily life centred on work, family, sexuality<sup>63</sup> exploited the memories of different social categories as expressions and refractions of the “ground level” memory. This “ground level” memory of war is experiential, since testimonies, oral history and interviews show a variety of viewpoints on the same event. Individual memories equally project the impact of war on each participant and on society, the way in which war was understood, signified and

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. V. Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> J.A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture from Ancient Greece to Modern America* (New York: Westview Press, 2003), XIV.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. M. Higgonet et al, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>61</sup> S. Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York, London: New Press, 1990), 30.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. J. M. Winter, “Catastrophe and Culture: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the First World War,” in *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (Chicago University Press, 1992); G. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); S. Audoin-Ronzeau, *Les combattants des tranchées* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986); S. Hynes, *A War Imagined: the First War and English Culture* (London: Badley head, 1991); K. Silver, *Esprit de corps: the Art of Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, eds. R.M. Wall and J. M. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); H.C. Fischer, E.X. Dubois, *Sexual Life during the World War*, London, 1929.

interpreted.<sup>64</sup> The methodological and epistemological preliminaries related to memory from the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the emergence of oral history, were generated by reference works on the role played by orality in man's culture and identity, like the ones authored by C. Levi-Strauss, M. Mc Luhan, E. A. Havelock, W. Ong.<sup>65</sup> These works can be linked with earlier ideas from 1942, when J. Gould emphasised the necessity of "each time period having its own oral history", since "what people say is history".<sup>66</sup> Oral history projects regarding the war surveyed the "ground level" memory through interviews on combat, interviews taken in the proximity of the military events of World War II. It is a well-known fact that oral history projects or "ground level" memory surveys were usually conducted in the post-war period. The USA Government during World War II deemed it important to conduct oral history projects even during the war. Thus, interviews were conducted with soldiers immediately after combat ended – the US army contained interviewers who accompanied the American troops during both World War II and the wars fought in Korea, Afghanistan and Iraq. Interviews were taken from strategists, soldiers, prisoners and the peaceful protestors of war and they contributed to constructing a more inclusive memory. The information agencies used these interviews for internal interests and they stored them in their own archives.<sup>67</sup> The transcriptions resulted from orality and memory led to the institutionalisation of oral history in which the subject of war, which had already been a subject of research for A. Nevins, from Columbia University in 1948,<sup>68</sup> remained a subject of great importance, in which the "first-hand" history of war was re-centred on the combatants within the greater history ever since.

The "ground level" memory of war in its development can be outlined by a polymorphism or by a complex scope that corresponds with the complexity of "first-hand" history. Seen from the "ground level", besides the polymorphic descriptions and interpretations, war deconstructs a reality and multiplies it from the viewpoint of the timeline of the experience and the timeline of the recount. Therefore, the moment of the *historical fact* confronts the moment of the *memorable fact*, a unique historical moment and a multiple personal moment, a subjective time (biographic time) and an objective time (historical time), a closed, sorted time and an open time, fluctuating between the speakable and the unspeakable<sup>69</sup> (according to G. Agamben), a definitive time and a reproductive time.

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<sup>64</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. D. Ritchie (New York, London: Oxford University Press, 2010), 233-242.

<sup>65</sup> L. Passerini, *Storia e soggettività...*, 2-3.

<sup>66</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History...*, 3; See also J. Mitchell, *Joe Gould's Secret* (New York: Viking, 1965).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. A. Nevins, "The Uses of Oral History," in *Oral History at Arrowhead: The Proceedings of the First National Colloquium of Oral History* (Los Angeles: Oral History Association, 1966). The military theme of war became a crucial part of the identity and history of the US military forces that established remarkable oral history centres: Army Military History Division, Naval History Division, Marine Corps Historical Division, Air Force Historical Research Center.

<sup>69</sup> G. Agamben, *Ce a rămas din Auschwitz...*, 100.

The thematic polyphony of the “ground level” memory locates the historical reality and the individual relations within the timeline in the rhetoric and in the re-signification of the experienced past as a witness and a participant. From this viewpoint, a typological series of the “ground level” memory appears. The first thematic emanation of the “ground level” memory is the **survival memory** in relation with the official, historical memory of war strategies. The differentiation that appears between *strategy* and *survival* represents the difference between “high” memory and “ground level” memory. S. Terkel, in his work entitled *The Good War. An Oral History of World War II*, records the testimonies of the participants in the war and thus shows the two memories in the chapter entitled “The Bombers and the Bombed”.<sup>70</sup> The meta-semantics of the title show a “high” memory (the bombers) and a “ground level” memory (the bombed), one of which focuses on a strategic plan of the high command and of the generals and the other focuses on the behaviour of the soldiers and of the civilians in order to survive. The complexity of the “ground level” memory, of survival, creates a story or a testimony of the participants extracted from the soldiers’ memory, in which survival is the central theme or motif of the “ground level” narration. Therefore, an analysis of the case of soldiers who fought in the war from the south Pacific during World War II shows that “Alan Robert’s memories of invading Peleliu in the Palau group of islands in 1944 reminds us what being in action is like for the individual in the front line. It is not straightforward, more often it is chaotic. There is danger, noise, death and injury, and often contact with those giving orders is lost. People must rely on their mates, their own sense of self-preservation, and their ability to adapt to circumstances beyond their control. As Roberto Rabel reminds us, wars are resolved collectively, but they are experienced individually.”<sup>71</sup>

The prevalence of survival in the recounts of the “ground level” memory of war recaptures its human dimensions in which the tragedies are felt at an individual level. The narrative trauma of the “ground level” memories recognises these dramatic turning points, recounting the epicentre of near-death experiences and of survival tactics and procedures for exiting such situations. Recounting such moments leads to organising the “ground level” memory around such situations. Thus, S. Bocu, in his war memoirs entitled “Drumuri și răscruci războinice. Memorii” (Bellicose roads and crossroads. Memoirs), notes one such episode from World War I: “Înainte de a trece mai departe, notez aici un incident care m-a impresionat printr-un hazard tragic. Leșeam pe la două după masă de la popotă în grupuri de ofițeri. Căzuse zăpada proaspătă căreia îi da scânteieri pe la prânz soarele de noiembrie. Deodată, deasupra capului nostru apărură două aeroplane inamice. Nu ajunseră până exact deasupra noastră și văzurăm că o luară îndărăt, spre Curtea de Argeș. Ne înșelau. Au disimulat o retragere luând numai un punct de reper, s-au reîntors de unde au plecat, dar la o mai mare înălțime, până unde nu ne ajungea vizibilitatea și lăsară o bombă care căzu la câțiva pași numai de noi, în stradă. Efectele fură teribile. Din grupul nostru, 8-10 fură omorâți și vreo câțiva răniți mai grav

<sup>70</sup> S. Terkel, *The Good War...*, 198-225.

<sup>71</sup> M. Hutching, “After Action: Oral History and War,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History...*, 232; see also R. Rabel, “Introduction” to *A Fair Sort of Battery: New Zealanders Remember the Italian Campaign* (Oakland: Harper Collins, 2004).

sau mai puțin. Prin mila lui Dumnezeu am scăpat teafăr eu cu încă unul sau doi. Eu însumi nu mi dădui seama în prima clipă ce e cu mine.”<sup>72</sup> [Before going forward, I must note an incident that impressed me through tragic chance. We exited the mess in groups of officers at around two in the afternoon. At noon, the November sun glittered on the fresh snow. All of a sudden, two enemy planes appeared over our heads. They had not yet reached the space directly above us and we saw them go back towards Curtea de Argeș. They were deceiving us. They dissimulated a retreat taking only one reference point, they returned to where they came from, at a greater height, where we could not see them and they launched a bomb that landed only a few steps from us, in the street. The effects were terrible. From our group, 8-10 were killed and a few were more or less badly wounded. Only through the grace of God was I spared, along with one or two others. At first, I was unable to realize what had happened].

The projection of survival in the act of memory, through the escalated near-death experiences, can be placed in the area of the traumatic memory. The “ground level” memory, the one that realistically and authentically focuses on trauma and survival, is the carrier of the traces or inscriptions of the third level identified by Paul Ricoeur, namely the one that resides in the persistency of the first impressions as passive elements: they were impressed, affected by an event, and an affective mark is left on our minds.<sup>73</sup> The “ground level” memory, understood as trauma and survival, or a survival that assumed, internalized a trauma, is connected to the historical events, to the “linear historical model of temporality.” The “ground level” memory of survival gives priority to the moment of the survival in the narration, but it also offers the possibility to overcome the opposition between memory and history.<sup>74</sup> The researches conducted on traumatic memory mostly examine the connections between the inner world of memory and the outer world of the historical events by focusing on pain and survival, both of which are placed in the centre of the act of memory.<sup>75</sup> The traces and inscriptions form a cultural “ground level” memory of the survivor or of the traumatized individual. The corporal or cortical inscriptions of the trauma or overcoming death through survival are the ones on which the act of memory focuses; thus, the post-traumatic “ground level” memory is repetitive in its effects and the mental images<sup>76</sup> that are unlike any other external recounts.

In the case of “ground level” memory, trauma and survival construct a particular, lively, intrusive, uncontrollable and persistent memory that is always accompanied by fervid

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<sup>72</sup> S. Bocu, “Drumuri și răscruci războinice” (Bellicose paths and crossroads) in *Marele război în memoria bănățeană, 1914-1919* (The Great War in the memory of the Banat region 1914-1919), eds. V. Leu and N. Bocșan (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012), 310.

<sup>73</sup> See P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2000).

<sup>74</sup> S. Radstone, *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 84.

<sup>75</sup> B. A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Mainhead, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003), 141; see also *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. M. Bal, J. Crewe, L. Spitzer (Hanover, V.T.: University Press of New England, 1999), 39-54.

<sup>76</sup> S. Weigel, *Body-and Image-Space. Re-reading Walter Benjamin* (London; Routledge, 1996), 154.

sensations and psychological flash-backs.<sup>77</sup> This is why, in S. Bocu's war memories, the moments of his survival of certain near-death experiences insistently reoccur in his daily life: "Au trecut de atunci 20 de ani. Și azi îmi revine, din când în când, noaptea în somn, coșmarul de atunci în sensul strict al cuvântului, n-am fost păziți decât de Dumnezeu! Viața ne era absolut în mâna acelor indivizi feroce care ne puteau împușca fără nici un motiv, numai așa din porniri bestiale, din necesități de teroare. Trupurile noastre ar fi fost aruncate în gropi de holerici, fără a se fi putut afla nici urma noastră."<sup>78</sup> [Twenty years have passed. Even today, from time to time, at night, in my sleep, I relive that nightmare, in the truest sense of the term; we had been protected by God Himself! Our lives were completely in the hands of those fierce individuals who could have shot us with no reason, out of mere brutal impulses, out of terror needs. Our bodies would have been thrown in cholera pits, leaving nothing behind].

The second pillar or component of the typology of "ground level" memory, a highly complex and interferential pillar is represented by the **egocentric, deconstructivist and private** nature of this memory. This means through which the "ground level" memory of war receives its subjective focus, in the proximity of its explanation-interpretation-representation,<sup>79</sup> forms the triad that assumes a new paradigm of understanding the past, a paradigm that is part of the age of hermeneutics. Besides its personal and subjective implications, the "ground level" memory singularizes the witness, the narrator, through the warning it displays or through which it positions itself in relation with the larger history, so that a witness and a participant in the war can offer a significant testimony: "World War Two has affected me in many ways ever since. In a short period of time, I had the most tremendous experiences of all life: of fear, of jubilation, of misery, of hope, of comradeship, and of endless excitement. I honestly feel grateful for having been a witness to an event as monumental as anything in history and, in a very small way, a participant."<sup>80</sup> This means of self-positioning includes a self-analysis of the "bellicose" biography, in interpretive relation to the great events and an ethical conclusion that illustrates a review opinion. The interference between the personal experiences during the war, between the complexity of the unique experiences that only war can provide and the accounts of the place or the relation with a major event creates a narrative tension and an acute, personal memory between the self and the war, between the historical past and the subjective present as a reliving of the war. First of all, there is a narration of one's own experiences as a preeminence of "ground level" memory and, lastly, there is a reference to "greater history", to the war that connects to a memory in an ethical manner ("I had the honour of being a participant"), the "ground level" memory to the war, namely a connection between memory and history. *The witness thinks of himself, he is egocentric in relation to everyone's war.*

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<sup>77</sup> B.A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering...*, 142; see also S. Brison, "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of Self," in *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present...*, 39-54.

<sup>78</sup> S. Bocu, "Drumuri și răscruci războinice" ..., 350.

<sup>79</sup> F. R. Ankersmit, *History and Topology. The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), 97.

<sup>80</sup> S. Terkel, *The Good War...*, 16.

Generally, the “ground level” memory of war is marked by the egocentric experience or recount placed within the most dramatic and negative perceptions: “the worst world is that of the war” is the conclusion of the experiences of war. For each person, for each individual, the experience of war was unique and it left its mark, an “indelible mark on each person, for the rest of their lives”, which is why the “ground level” memory establishes an outwards view from the inside on war itself. This tragic, negative mark on war, as a characteristic of the “ground level” memory, is not specific to the autonomous individuals, the soldiers; it also appears in the memories of the generals, of the commanders. The tragic experiences of war recorded by the “ground level” memory are stored and interpreted in a demonizing manner on the egocentric level of the generals’ memory. Therefore, the confession-memoires of the American general Sherman mention: “‘War is Hell,’ and a good number confessed, ‘I wouldn’t take a million dollars for the experience, but neither would I be willing to go through it again for a million dollars’<sup>81</sup>

A relevant characteristic of egocentric memory as a form of “ground level” memory is the personified record of individual communication and memory. This personification, or “embodiment” of memory or of oral communication shows a certain form of hermeneutics of orality. This means of embodying memory is connected to the existing or present communication between “mind and body”, between “spirit and body”, to the resonances ambivalently made between “the personification of thought” and “the spiritually awakened body”. The analysis or the hermeneutics of the nonverbal or corporeal channels that appear within the memory bestirred through interviews is necessary. The semantics of the voice, body, expression, communication or gestures push the memory towards an egocentric context of “living the world” which is thus remembered<sup>82</sup>.

The semantics of the “corporeality” of communicating the memory resides in the natural, human tendency to place oneself in situations different from the present, past or future with all their quasi-structure – “quasi-present, quasi-past”. The act of memory is thus symbolically transferred into “the horizon of the past where a course of life that once had been present is repeated in tokens; we move in the past as if it were present, hence, quasi-present”.<sup>83</sup>

The compression of the three time phases (present, past and future) is possible through our narrative abilities that transform the objective world into a subjective one, in which we find ourselves and which is “thus created by us”; therefore, the egocentric nature of

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<sup>81</sup> M. Mayer Culpepper, *Never Will We Forget. Oral Histories of World War II* (Westport Connecticut, London: Praeger Security International, 2008), 277.

<sup>82</sup> J. Friedman, “Oral History Hermeneutics and Embodiment,” in *The Oral History Review*, 41, 2 (2014), 291-300; See also *Handbook of Methods*, eds. K. Scherer, P. Ekman, *Handbook of Methods in Nonverbal Communication Research in Nonverbal Behavior Research*, eds. K. Scherer, P. Ekman (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982); W. Lamb, E. Watson, *Body Code: The Meaning of Movement* (Princeton: Princeton Books, 1987).

<sup>83</sup> J. Patocka, *Body, Community, Language, World* (Chicago: Chicago Open Court, 1998), 3.

memory sustains the narration<sup>84</sup> and accounts for time as a recall or for the sense of time as a recall.<sup>85</sup>

The “ground level” memory of the witness and of the participant in the war offers an inner reading of reality within the limits of a “random uninterrupted motion”, as a multiplicity of the “self” that reads itself and which triggers events, creates characters, all of which are generated by the autobiographical hero<sup>86</sup>. From this type of reading and auctorial egocentric story, logocentric projections of the dominant, historical meaning of the story unravel. Memory constructs a text that creates meanings and that opposes “the metaphor of organizing historical knowledge” through which the past receives its meanings within a dominant narration. Individual stories thus deconstruct the dominant meaning of time succession and of the intelligibility of the past<sup>87</sup>.

The mechanisms of deconstruction oppose the totality and the centre and, in this case, they oppose the prescribed and processed official history or the collective memory of war that creates a type of close reading that draws away from the reality of the past. The official story of the past, from the viewpoint of deconstruction, must be replaced by a text that requires a performative function of language through oral narration and by transmitting the individual memory of the “ground level” memory, a function that imposes a new form of referentiality resulted from the clash between an allegorically understood rhetoric and a performatively understood rhetoric. This clash results in the creation of an uninterrupted interpretive movement.<sup>88</sup> The defectiveness of the official “closed” discourse on war creates a distance and an *ill-favoured* misunderstanding of the past reality, as opposed to the *empathy* induced by transmitting a memory as an individual and egocentric experience: “In 1982, a woman of thirty, doing just fine in Washington, D.C., let me know how things are in her precincts: ‘I can’t relate to World War Two. It’s in schoolbook texts, that’s all. Battles that were won, battles that were lost. Or costume dramas you see on TV. It’s just a story in the past. It’s so distant, so abstract. I don’t get myself up in a bunch about it.’”<sup>89</sup>

The “uninterrupted interpreting motion” of a permanently open deconstructionist, ever-changing text like the one produced by orality and by the memory that creates and recreates other stories within an unending self-deconstruction implies the necessity to surpass the collective, formalised memory and to analyse the “egocentre” of the individual, multiple, disruptive and never-ending memory. Therefore, S. Terkel stated that: “The memory of the rifleman is what this book is about; and of his sudden comrades, thrown, higger-mugger, together; and of those men, women, and children on the home front who knew or did not know what the shouting was all about; and of occasional actors from other worlds, accidentally

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<sup>84</sup> J. Friedman, “Oral History Hermeneutics and Embodiment,” 295.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Temps et récit. Les temps racontés*, Vol. III (Paris: Seuil, 1985).

<sup>86</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *Etica lecturii* (The Ethics of Reading) (Bucharest: Ed. Art, 2007), 124 et sq.

<sup>87</sup> K. Jenkins, *Why History? Etics and Postmodernity* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 32 et sq.; F. Ankersmit, *History and Topology...*, 216-225.

<sup>88</sup> M. Martin, *Deconstrucție și lectură*, preface to J. Hillis Miller, *Etica lecturii...*, 13.

<sup>89</sup> S. Terkel, *The Good War...*, 3.

encountered; and of lives lost and bucks found. And of a moment in history, as recalled by an ex-corporal, 'when buddies felt they were more important, were better men who amounted to more than they do now. It's a precious memory.'"<sup>90</sup> This valuable memory is egocentric and self-deconstructivist and, in the end, besides a rich multiplication of communication and documentation, it produces a difficult form of pleasure of interpretation<sup>91</sup>.

Besides the interpretive self-deconstruction, the "ground level" memory is stereoscopic, since it creates multiple and tridimensional images. The reconstructive field of vision is broadened and deepened by associating different actors from the field of memory in which the war belongs not only to the guilty, but also to the victims, the grownups and the children, the witnesses of the war, the survivors of a war lived through personal memories and feelings. The "ground level" perspective of children, as subjects of a war filtered and represented through the eyes of the children who had a limited understanding of the world around them, who were impressionable and unfamiliar with the war, potentiates the view on war, be it through the eyes of the children enlisted in the Hitler Youth, or that of the persecuted Jewish children.<sup>92</sup> The "ground level" memory, as a deconstruction of the official memory, cumulates the interviews and journals of the soldiers that could reconstruct a filmed history of the war in which the wartime memoirs and "emotional relations" characteristic to a *war narrative* can differentiate between myths and "the true histories of war".

The ideological deconstruction of war through the "ground level" memory, divided between the authentic experiences and the official war ideology as mobilisation and self sacrifice can also be made, in researching the past, by focusing on the personal testimonies. Thus, in the case of the soviet soldiers, from the beginning of World War II, the individual memory was dominated by the continuous propagation of an "epic myth" of war that depicted the soviet soldier as a "good and fearless" hero. None of the soviet books on war ever mentioned "panic, self-mutilation, cowardice or rape".<sup>93</sup> From this viewpoint, the soldiers' stories were as banal as any formal history of war. They tended to adopt the vain language of the state propaganda, speaking of honour and pride, of the justification for revenge, of the mother land, of Stalin and of the necessity for the absolute submission to him. All individual battles were set aside, as if "we were all looking at the story through a screen. There were bodies and there were tears but there was no blood, no shit, no nervous strain."<sup>94</sup>

This over-monitored, purged and abstracted memory was confronted with documents, letters, journals and interviews conducted with the soldiers that bore the "ground level" memory. The ideological uncovering of the "ground level" memory of war, however, showed a *protective layer* of this memory, a rigid layer in the case of most interviewees. This layer provided the clue for the existence of the "spirit of endurance" without which the Red

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> J. Hillis Miller, "The Critic as Host," in H. Bloom, J. Derrida, G. Hartmann, G.H. Miller, *Deconstructivism and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 252.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. N. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives Under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Kape, 2005).

<sup>93</sup> C. Merridale, *Ivan's War. The Red Army* (London: Faber, 2005), 6-7.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 332.

Army could never have won the war. Inside the “official myth” of war, the soldiers had their own survival myth. The images used by the veterans in telling their stories and their silence and use of euphemisms basically gave away the secret of their endurance during the war. Their survival depended on stoic acceptance, on their focus on the task at hand. This was thus a means used by a generation of soldiers to keep their dignity, and this reluctance in telling the story of the war indirectly helped them win it.<sup>95</sup> This indelible mechanism of euphemisms, in the form of a myth inside the official myth, constructed an optimistic and hopeful morale for the soldiers to pass through the war.

The *private memory* of war is complementary to the egocentric and deconstructive “ground level” memory. As usual, memory is mistaken for oblivion, or, in other words, it is defined in relation with oblivion. Memory establishes and re-establishes a historical and identity establishing endeavour in a positive way (a discovery, an assembly, a victory) or in a negative way (pain, a tragedy, the Holocaust, the Gulag). A positive memory implies a celebration and a negative memory implies mourning and commemoration. The first situation regards a duty, a way of honouring a memory (*devoir de mémoire*) and the second situation regards the unease of memory that operates a memory in an epistemological sense that can be completed or substituted by a duty of memory in an ethical sense of commemorating the victims. It is present in situations in which, before answering a “duty of memory (*devoir de mémoire*)”, the historian is confronted with the unease of memory (*travail de mémoire*), in the sense of an unease or the unavoidable mourning (*travail de deuil*)<sup>96</sup>.

Private memory can be assigned to a “*travail de deuil*”, when the acute sense of death imposes a fixation of an acute personal memory of the tragedy, of losing a loved one during the war. the duty of mourning is assumed, first and foremost, within the family, through a tragedy privatised by mourning or by the duty of mourning. Tragic death thus becomes immortal. Mourning as a means to privatise memory, to privately assume the death of a loved one during the war encloses the “ground level” memory within its smallest circle, within the painful memory of death shared in the family. A representative example would be that of the writer Rudyard Kipling who, after the loss of his son during World War I, spent years roaming the villages of France in his Rolls Royce in the hope of finding the least bit of information regarding the location of his death. From this viewpoint, the “ground level” memory of war implies a “biographical” connection to war, more precisely, an ethically affected private memory, since finding the traces of Kipling’s son’s death also includes an ethical memory, of the intangibility of mourning that is enshrined in life and death in a cycle that includes life and death, in a memory or a duty of memory and of the compulsoriness of mourning. This is why the private memory of war is also the memory of a biographical cyclicity that induces a personal memory, a “feeling in itself”, regarding the labour of mourning that completes the interiorisation of a loss. In the case of the private memory, the pathetic part of memory and

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>96</sup> Fr. Dosse, “Travail et devoir de mémoire chez Paul Ricoeur,” in *La mémoire pour quoi faire?...*, 78–79; See also P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2000), 108.

the active part of remembering thus appear.<sup>97</sup> The private memory is felt acutely, internally, cyclically and ritually. The personal death within a family, in this case, produces a private memory.

Another type of “ground level” memory is the **testimonial memory**. Considering the assertion that individual memory cannot exist outside of the “collective contexts”, far from simply being a “singular interiority”, individual memory has a double collective dimension. On the one hand, the memories are connected to others and they have a common memory patrimony in which life alongside others means sharing and orienting the individual memory in accordance with the others. This is a means of cohabiting with the others, while the individual memories depend on the so called memory carriers: books, letters, journals, photographs, recordings, images. The “memory for oneself” and the “memory for the others”<sup>98</sup> are part of the complex mechanisms of memory policies that require the communication, transmission and construction of heritage and identity, as well as legal, , ethical and political. Equally, the individual memory and especially the collective memory imply a series of types of representation (commemorative, historical, fictional) and a multitude of uses (political, ideological, aesthetic). From the viewpoint of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the century of the great wars, and considering the tens of millions of lives lost during the two wars as tragic human and global experiences, modernity has to face a difficult decision: Which of the memories are just? Is a just memory even possible?<sup>99</sup>

The testimonial memory of war includes recounts and depositions at the crossroads between war and the personal biographies. The testimonials of the interviewees, as was the case of S. Terkel’s book “The Good War” (1984) are recounts of a “biographical” war, namely individual experiences and narrations regarding the great events of World War II (Pearl Harbour, The Pacific War etc.), such as the war present in the everyday lives outside the front, testimonies given by the war journalists, the types of weapons used on the front by the military, all of which were filtered by personal biographical chapters. All of the testimonies, depositions, stories and interviews plead for a “good war”, for a just memory of war. Thus, an ex-admiral stated: “World War Two has warped our view of how we look at things today. We see things in terms of that war, which in a sense was a good war. But the twisted memory of it encourages the men of my generation to be willing, almost eager, to use military force anywhere in the word.”<sup>100</sup> In the case of this balance-testimony, there is a tension between the “ground level” memory (“World War Two has warped our view of how we look at things today”) and the “upper level” memory (“that war, which in a sense was a good war”, “to use military force anywhere in the word”). The testimony shows that this type of tension is resolved at the level of a balance-opinion that incorporates an ambivalent legitimacy of this

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<sup>97</sup> See P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2000).

<sup>98</sup> M. Crépon, “La mémoire des guerres. A propos de la modernisation des commémorations,” in *L’Esprit*, Jan., 2011, 106-118; See also Idem, *La pensée de la mort et la mémoire des guerres* (Paris: Hermann, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> J. Cl. Monod, “Que faire de la mémoire de guerre du XX-è siècle. Les troubles de la mémoire et de l’histoire,” in *L’Esprit*, Jan., 103.

<sup>100</sup> S. Terkel, *The Good War...*, 13.

war, from a personal and from an official perspective. We must remember that this balance-testimony belongs to a commander, an active participant in the strategic discourse of war, not to the discourse of survival. The personal worldview connected to the “ground level” memory of war, in the ex-admiral’s case, is linked to the act of defending the idea of a “collective” war, not as a personal, “biographic” war. The memory of this war, from the ex-admiral’s perspective, is capitalised at the level of an ethical, just patrimony that legitimises any force action taken in the service of human freedom.

The fragments of narrated biography, together with the “monumental” history of war, are both depositions regarding the commitment of war, the connections to war, the first-hand history of war. The journalistic survey of S. Terkel transforms the autobiographical memory into testimonies regarding life, death, heroism, a commitment strongly marked by significance and interpretation of the war experienced on the battle field or outside of it. Another thematic, geographical and chronological history of war regarding the great events (the Normandy landings, the Pacific War, the war in Europe) and the war “at home” (the women in the war, the Victory over Japan Day, the homecoming) is constructed through the testimonies of over 400 men and women, documents that contain recounts of “‘the other side of war’ – the personal side”<sup>101</sup> and that represent the main theme of M. Mayer Culpepper’s book, *Never Will We Forget* (2008).

A. Thomson’s book *Anzac Memories: Living and the Legend* (1994)<sup>102</sup> contains a complex testimony on the participation in the war, on suffering, trauma and the post-war biography of the veteran Fred Farrel – an extensive narration of a memory, a personal deposition, an exclusively biographical construct. The testimony-memory, in this case limited to a single witness and a single biography, is marked by a step-by-step narration of life during the war and after the war, Fred Farrel’s war which, through his own testimony, is revealed metonymically in relation with other biographies or with the collective biography of an entire generation that participated in and survived World War I. The war generation, as a personal biography of a veteran, on the one hand, shows the personal relevance of the participation in, and the “first-hand experience” of war and of post-war and, on the other hand, the research conducted in oral history creates a complete image, which is just as revealing, in which the war generation is dominated by a communion of actions and commitments, but which also shows the diversity of perceptions, representations and interpretations of war. Furthermore, the testimonial memory of a war veteran shows a *narrative culture* specific to the war generation. The path from the testimonial memory to the narrative culture is the same as the one from the “personal experience of war” to the performative nature of communicating a memory through the “dialogic art” of oral history.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> M. Mayer Culpepper, *Never Will We Forget. Oral Histories of World War II* (Westport Connecticut, London: Praeger Security International, 2008), IX.

<sup>102</sup> A. Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living and the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *Remembering Oral History as Performance*, ed. D. Pollok (New York, Palgrave: McMillan, 2005); M. Frisch, *A Shared Authority. Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

A very interesting historiographic experiment regarding the exploitation of testimonial memory was the one launched by Jean Norton Cru's works,<sup>104</sup> a French witness and participant in World War I, entitled *Témoins* (1929), which is a critical analysis of the memory sources belonging to the soldiers from World War I, and *Du Témoignage* (1930), which was written based on letters from the front during the war. A transcription of the "ground level" memory of war onto personal correspondence implies accrediting the epistolary genre that carries the testimonial memory as "documents historiques".<sup>105</sup> J. Norton Cru wished to give a voice to "à la piétaille que fait la guerre et la subit et qui de son point de vue n'avait pas accès à l'Histoire"..<sup>106</sup> In French historiography, he is seen as a "baron of testimony", of a "ground level" of history against the official, upper level history.<sup>107</sup> The Norton Cru phenomenon as a historiographic event imposed a "ground level" memory from epistolary fragments, but it equally generated a biographical inquiry of himself, in the circumstances in which the personification of the "ground level" memory as a testimonial memory was established. The reprinting of his work *Témoins*<sup>108</sup> in 2006 led to Norton Cru's biographical and historiographic reassessment – an intense debate in the field of journalism on the "ground level" memory, considering the behaviour of the soldiers *forced* to go to war and the soldiers who *consented* to go to war, an idea that also led to a pro-con division regarding Norton Cru. What is certain is that the project of testimonial memory in the historiography that treats the two world wars was given greater importance and there were even voices that asserted that "certain forme de la dictature du témoignage"<sup>109</sup> would be a consequence.

A memory reconstruction of the past gradually came into being in relation with the historiographic reconstruction. This innovative means of reconstructing the past by addressing the testimonial memory received its own methodology and models of analysis of this type of historical writing that established a "short historiography", characterised by proximity to the events and authors. Thus, a documentary transcription of testimonial memory implies setting it within a story framed by language norms, by a vocabulary used to express emotions and images. The testimony thus becomes a representation of the truths of the narrator under the influence of different factors, such as culture, the ability to stage the event, the influence of other writings on the narrated subject. However, we must acknowledge the fact that there is a

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<sup>104</sup> N. Cru was born in 1879. He was an English professor who taught in schools in France and, in 1908, he became an English professor at the "William's College", USA. Between 1914–1918, he was on the front, having been mobilised as a reservist. In September 1918 he was sent on a propaganda mission in USA. In 1919, he was demobilised and is once again hired by "William's College", where he worked until 1945. He died in 1949. Cf. J. Norton Cru, *Lettres du front et d'Amerique, 1914-1919* (Aix en Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2007), 339-341; H. Vogel, "Jean Norton Cru. Sa vie par rapport à Témoin," in *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciances Humaines d'Aix en Provence*, t. XXXV (1961), 37-68.

<sup>105</sup> J. Norton Cru, *Lettres...*, 7; See also A. Prost, J. Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre. Un essai d'historiographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 116.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. F. Rousseau, *Le procès des témoins de la Grande Guerre. L'affaire Norton Cru* (Paris: Seuil, 2003).

<sup>108</sup> J. Norton Cru, *Témoins*, Preface by F. Rousseau (Nancy: Presse Universitaire de Nancy, 2006).

<sup>109</sup> S. Audoin Rouzeau, A. Becker, *14-18, Retrouver la Guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 52.

“borderline” between the experienced reality and the recounted one. This “borderline” is also a historical subject.<sup>110</sup>

J. Norton Cru was the first to introduce testimonial memory in the historiographic discourse, which, from the very beginning, assumed a critical, rational stance, in an attempt to eliminate the pathos characteristic to the memories of war. He critically analysed his own memories in relation with other testimonies and writings, obsessed with finding a measurable standard for the accuracy of testimonial memory, a standard that was in fact his own experience of war, namely “*récit codé sur sa propre expérience*”.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, he recognised his testimonial memory to be a subjective story, but he constantly tried to transmit “*une vérité commune, objective, tirée de la répétition d’éléments – faits, attitudes, sentiments – présents dans l’expérience de ses camarades.*”<sup>112</sup> The general attitude present in testimonial memories of war is one of visceral rejection,<sup>113</sup> but Norton Cru, in the spirit of Christian humanism, liberal Protestantism and in the name of an enlightened patriotism, ethically constructed his testimonial memory based on the truth about war, together with a refusal of violence and death, stating, in Rousseauist terms, that “*la guerre n’est l’état normal de l’homme, mais l’effet de son intoxication par les mensonges, la “tradition”, en somme la mauvaise éducation et les mauvais maîtres*”.<sup>114</sup>

J. Norton Cru’s testimonial memory is critical and nonconformist. First of all, this critique implies an ethical component, a component of truth and authenticity that censors the heroic excesses of war recounts: “*Je songe aux excès de cette guerre, à l’hypertrophie émotionnelle qu’elle a créée, à la défaite de la pouvre logique, qui s’enfuit sous les huées des enthousiastes bien intentionnés*”.<sup>115</sup> The second critical component of J. Norton Cru’s testimonial memory is communicational, the duty of telling: “*Cette guerre sera intéressante à raconter – he said in the autumn of 1914 – Je vois par mon expérience que qui n’y a pas passé s’en fait [une] idée bien vague*”.<sup>116</sup> The third critical component is the proximity characteristic to the “ground level” memory of war, which validates the testimonial memory of the soldier, completely, morally and physically involved on the battlefield. Furthermore, this proximity analysis of the testimonial memory establishes the indefeasible features of the “ground level” memory of war: “*Telle est donc l’idée fondamentale de mon travail: rassembler les relations des narrateurs qui ont agi et récu les faits, à l’exclusion des récits des spectateurs, qu’ils soient du quartier general à quelques kilomètres de la scène dans leur bureau à Paris.*”<sup>117</sup>

One recognised version of testimonial memory treated by the historiography of World War I is the one created through surveys carried out after the war – a *structured* testimonial

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<sup>110</sup> J. Norton Cru, *Lettres...*, 11.

<sup>111</sup> L. Smith, “Jean Norton Cru, Lecteur des livres de guerre,” in *Annales du Midi*, No. 232/2000, 527.

<sup>112</sup> J. Norton Cru, *Lettres...*, 13.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. A. Prost, *Les anciens combattants, 1914-1930* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

<sup>114</sup> J. Norton Cru, *Du Témoignage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1930), 129.

<sup>115</sup> J. Norton Cru, *Lettres...*, 69.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>117</sup> J. Norton Cru, *Témoignage...*, 9.

memory that, in the spirit of a true “Et in Arcadia ego”, shows post eventum recounts that are either legitimising or their primary purpose is that of communicating the experiences on both individual and collective levels. In the inter-war period, in the Romanian historiography field, two well-known surveys were carried out – one, conducted by Prof. N. Ilieșiu in the Banat region (1934) and the other, conducted by Prof. D. Caracostea (1922) as part of a university course that aimed to analyse the psychology of the World War I soldiers.<sup>118</sup> In the case of N. Ilieșiu’s survey, this type of structured testimonial memory carries genetic labels: recollections, remembrances, paths and crossroads, the world war or “this is exactly what happened” as evidence of authenticity, or as a truth authoritatively imposed that provoked the testimonial memory. The authors are culturally and socially different, from peasants to intellectuals to politicians, therefore the war recollections offer individual testimonies with intertextual values. The narratives of these testimonial memories define a cultural and intellectual phenomenon from the world of the Banat region, namely the “ground level” writing phenomenon from a world of ploughmen<sup>119</sup> to a world of the elites (priests, teachers, journalists, politicians). The narratives that transcribe the individual memory can also be considered an intellectual, “time wasting” exercise of a “ground level”, rural or non-rural world that offers a “sui generis” overview on the greater history, but it also portrays individualities, individual consciousnesses through Illuminist impulses. The testimonial memory of war, in this case, is conclusive, it completely assumes a retrospective (post-eventum) writing marked by the beatitude of the triumph of the Great Union of 1 December 1918; it surpasses the detailed recount of military history, a text that is “glued” to historical reality, a mimetic, less narrative text, towards succinct account-like opinions. This type of reality-narration can, over time, be connected to the dense event-based epic of Nicolae Stoica of Hațeg, which can be understood as a prototype of these autobiographical genres.

The detachment from reality-narration is usually achieved through a shy, political critique of the Great War that assumes common stances on the events that took place. These recounts are deeply marked by the ideology of the supremacy and obsession for the national ideal, of the national unity that screens the recounts focused on the tragedy of war. This divergence of war narrative towards the happy end of the accomplishment of state unity places a political burden on the memory of war. The long term “military service memories” are readdressed in the “ground level” memory of the Great War, in which the exactness of the recounts often inhibits a personal, emotional, “ground level” memory of proximity.

Another component of the “ground level” memory typology is a **cultural memory** of war. Today, the cultural approaches on war are often prioritised to the detriment of the political, military and diplomatic history, as a means of reconstructing and understanding wars. The cultural perspective, as means to treat the proximity to the war, a human reading of the

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<sup>118</sup> *Marele război în memoria bănățeană, 1914-1919* (The Great War in the memory of the Banat region, 1914-1919), eds. V. Leu, N. Bocșan (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012), 18-19; D. Caracostea, *Aspectul psihologic al războiului* (The psychological side of war) (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1922).

<sup>119</sup> Cf. G. Țepelea, *Plugarii condeieri din Banat* (Ploughman writers from Banat) (Bucharest: Ed. Cercul bănățenilor, 1943).

behaviour and of the representation of war that thus treats the human nucleus of the history of war, of war culture, of war “as a genre”, are all today part of a fruitful field of historiography.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, cultural history is an alternative, a “censored” history in which the military theme gives way to “a history of the human condition”<sup>121</sup> during wartime. The testimonies of war seen through the eyes of its social actors, both men and women, become important sources for “writing this micro-socio-history” that symbolically gravitates around three verbs: “partir, tuer, écrire”<sup>122</sup>.

The path from the cultural history of war to “war culture” is marked by a very dynamic phenomenon at the level of the historiographic discourse in which memory plays an important role as a source for the proximity to the war. This cultural history of war and “war culture” indirectly testifies to a descent of the historiographic discourse as a first circumscription of the human aspect of war. The second concentric aperture is that in which history connects to memory and is multiplied through memory. In turn, memory is individually and collectively structured, but it must be realigned particularly at the level of the soldiers, at the level of a “micro-socio-history”. The cultural variable from the “ground level” memory typology implies a thematic shift in the reconstruction of the war and a cultural discharge of the testimonies and of the recollections that recompile the “ground level” memory of war. The two alignments or dynamic approaches in the scalar architecture of the historiographic discourse define the characteristics of the “ground level” cultural memory.

The thematic shift from the *high command* to the *active soldiers* represents a true history of war that assumes a shift from strategy to survival which, in the end, implies a shift from *history* to *memory*. The issue of cultural memory understood as a variable of the “ground level” memory of war was restructured in accordance with these shifts, focusing on the unknown, “censored” side of war, its human component, one that is directly involved in the war – the soldiers on the front, as well as the “smaller” world at home, greatly impacted by the war. From a documentary viewpoint, these shifts exploit the testimonies of people during wartime. The thematisation of war culture must also take into account the main actor, who is ambivalent in his circumstances and who finds himself in a reciprocity of experiences, alternatively transferred between two essential states: the *human-soldier* and the *soldier-human*. This is why the thematic structure of Rousseau’s book entitled *La guerre censurée* (2014), which constructs an iconoclasm around the official historiographic discourse on war, namely the “censored war”, is relevant to the cultural nature of the thematic construct.

By treating the testimony-soldiers (*le combattants-témoins*) who hold a true “power of words” (*le pouvoir de mots*), in a chapter dedicated to “the simplified people”, namely the

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<sup>120</sup> J. Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the 20th Century* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2006); A. Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre: humanitaire et culture de guerre, 1914-1919* (Paris: Hachette, 2003); N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War. Explaining World War I* (New York: Basic Book, 1999); F. Rousseau, *La guerre censurée. Une histoire des combattants européens de 14-18* (Paris: Seuil, 2014).

<sup>121</sup> F. Rousseau, *La guerre censure...*, 29.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

enrolled, the author analyses certain aspects regarding the troop culture, the information branch of the soldier, the correspondence understood as the vital connection to the outside world, the military hierarchies and requirements, death on the battlefield, dramatised military justice, the bravery of the soldiers, patriotism, *esprit de corps* and its hidden sides, military training etc. From testimony-sources, all of the above reconstruct the mechanisms and nature of the *human-soldier*. In the second chapter, entitled “Les homes nus”, namely the concept of the *soldier-human*, the “one hundred faces of happiness” are analysed and reconstructed – refuge and madness, the neuroses of war, death, the sexes during the war, the war outcasts, the view on women, “sex and the homeland”, sex trade, hygiene policies during the war, venereal diseases etc.<sup>123</sup> This complexity of war culture engages a cultural memory reconstructed from hundreds of testimonies and thousands of testimony fragments from the participants in the “ground level” war which had been censored by the official discourse.

This cultural thematisation of war is achieved through the testimonies that carry a “cultural memory”, that were created within the cultural horizons of the soldiers, by their worldviews, by the ideas and obsessions of the soldiers as delegates of the socio-cultural environments from which they originated. The recounts of the war, the letters sent from the front illustrate these cultural perforations from the “ground level” memory, that individualise the emotional and behavioural world of the active soldier. The letters from the front, besides their epistolary clichés (wishes of wellbeing and good health, the reciprocal request to further exchange letters), mostly express the soldiers’ affection for the people back home, alternating with succinct information from the front. The most extensive descriptions present in these letters were given to the homes, households and rural chores from which the soldiers were now absent: “...mă aflu bine și sănătos - scrisoare trimisă de pe front la 13 februarie 1944 - care sănătate vi-o doresc și domniilor voastre. Ve-ți ști că cu cățania o duc bine, puțin cam greu acuma până ne mai învățăm cu mitraliera... dar vițelu ce face?, scroafa a fătat? și grijiți de ele cum îți putea, mai ales tu mamă, că știm că tata nu poate serios pe afară...”<sup>124</sup> [...please know that I am well and healthy – letter sent from the front on 13 February 1944 – and I also wish you health. Military service treats me well, it is a little more difficult at the moment, until we get used to the machine guns... How’s the calf? Has the sow farrowed down yet? Please care for them as best you can, especially you, mother, we both know father is not able to handle farm work that well]. The perceptive association of the two worlds, the rural world and the front, is present in the spirit of a cultural memory that shows the state of mind of the peasant-soldier who was torn by his worries for his home, by the fear for his life as an expression of the construction of the memory of survival: “...să-mi trimiteți carte ca să știu că apucatu-v-ați de sapă la Caba Boeși ori ba și socru apucatu-sa la nengesu de sapă și cum sunt țarinile pe la noi... cum sunt cucuruzii și perele și ce faceți nu sunteți beteje?... și eu vă fac de știre că voi mai trimite eu de acolo dacă m-oî duce și dacă ne-om așeza pe câmpul de luptă ca să știți unde

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., passim.

<sup>124</sup> F. Rus, *Al Doilea Război Mondial. Război și pace ca istorie trăită în Țaga. 1940-1944* (World War II. War and peace as a first-hand history in Țaga. 1940-1944), master’s degree dissertation led by Prof. Dr. Doru Radosav, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, 99-100.

sînt... și să vă mai aduceți aminte batră cîteodată și de mine...”<sup>125</sup> [Please write to me to let me know whether or not you began working the fields in Caba Boeși and whether my father in law began working the fields and how the fields are at home... how are the corn and the pears? How are you? Are you ill?... I’m also letting you know that I will be writing to you again from there, if they send me and if we settle somewhere on the battlefield, so that you know where I am... and so that you can sometimes think of me...].

The same associations as the ones from the epistolary memories are also present in the recounts of the realities of the front through messages and visible rural memory connected to long term military service in which the prose text is accompanied by soldiers’ songs that reconstruct the cultural mark of this peasantry memory of war: “și dacă nu ai căpătat să-mi scrii și acuma capeți un tom trimis, 24 penghii ți-aș trimite mai mulți, dar nu pot căci nu am voie numai atîta pe lună și de mine nu fiți necăjiți că mi așa de bine ca și în cătane, numai de acasă sunt foarte necăjit căci n-are cine lucra. Frunză verde de secară/ Vă trimit o veste-n Țară/ Cum e a mea viață amară/Pe aicea prin altă țară/ Frunză verde de trei flori/ Vai de noi sāraci feciori/ Suntem tare înstrăinați/ Și prin Rusia băgați/ Cu rusu să ne luptăm/ Țara să o apărăm/ Lupta-i mare frigu-i mare/ Nu-i nădejde de scăpare/ *Ploaie, plouă* (s.n.). (3 iulie 1944).”<sup>126</sup> [“and if you haven’t managed to write to me yet and just now you’re receiving my letter and 24 pengő – I would have sent you more, but this is all we’re allowed each month. Don’t worry about me, military service treats me very well, but I worry that there’s nobody home to do the farm work.” The letter continues in verse following the rhythm of traditional Romanian folk songs. Rough translation: “Green leaf of rye/ I’m sending news / My life is bitter / Here, on foreign soil / Green leaf of clover / Woe to us, poor lads / We’re very estranged / In the heart of Russia / Fighting the Russians / To defend our homeland / The battle’s hard, the cold is callous / There’s no hope to escape / Rain, rain” 3 July 1944].

The focus on the rural world from which the soldiers originated is also connected to the rural sensibility towards the world around their families and communities, their households, the harvest, the farm animals as expressive details of a psychological rural world. Farming and animal husbandry are part of the milieu of daily life and of the survival of the rural world, of rural identity, of the ideals and purposes of rural life. Furthermore, in order to cope with the adversity and the strangeness of the front, the soldiers take refuge in the world back home as a “means to connect to the moral energy of the family”<sup>127</sup> and of the village. Additionally, the hostile world of the front is endured and transfigured by narrating the soldiers’ dreams, understood both as filters for perceiving the war through a rural sensibility and as fragments of cultural memorization of the tension created by the soldier-human state. Taking refuge in the memory of home life is naturally achieved through the dreams that

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<sup>125</sup> I. Bolovan. *Primul Război Mondial și realitățile demografice din Transilvania. Familia, moralitatea și raporturi de gen*, (World War I and the demographic realities from Transylvania. Family, morality and gender relations) (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Scoala Ardeleană, 2015), 100.

<sup>126</sup> F. Rus, *Al Doilea Război Mondial...*, 103.

<sup>127</sup> E. Bîrlea, *Perspectiva lumii rurale asupra Primului Război Mondial* (The rural world’s view on World War I) (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2004), 252.

envelop the psychological and discursive universe of the rural world. The cultural mark born by the epistolary text that functions as an exercise in communicating the “ground level” memory of war individualises the impact of war on human emotions distributed between *biography* and *history*. Thus, Ștef Iosif, a Romanian soldier enrolled in the Hungarian army, writes in a letter from July 1944: “Dragă socrule și scumpa mea copilă Marioară ve-ți ști despre mine că am primit scrisoarea în care când am citit am rămas ca și mut aducându-mi aminte ce bine am trăit când eram acasă, iar când ne-am despărțit n-am știut că altu nu ne mai vedem (s.n.). Numai prin vis (s.n.) să știți dragii mei socrii căci astăzi așa frumos am visat pe scumpa mea soție și așa ne-am povestit de bine”<sup>128</sup>. [Dear father in law and my dear child Marioara, I have received your letter and, after reading it, I was astounded by the memory of how good my life was at home; when I left, I did not know that we would never see each other again, only in my dreams. Dear in-laws, please know that I had a wonderful dream about my beloved wife in which we were sharing tales]. We must also take note of the fact that Ștef Iosif died on the front and this letter was a premonition of his death in the war.

Dreams and miracles are part of the ordinary rural psychology and imagination, at wartime, their functions are exacerbated. The miracle of salvation is another mark of cultural memory: “Aveam 22 de ani, mă aflam în Austria; lângă o pădure, la granița cu Germania. La un moment dat au venit avioanele rusești deasupra noastră. Toți camarazii s-au aruncat să se adăpostească în șanțurile de la marginea drumului. Eu am rămas în mijlocul drumului, nu știam unde să mă duc și ce să fac, acolo erau niște plopi mari pe marginea drumului. M-am dus și m-am răzimat cu spatele de un plop. Au tras de mai multe ori, dar pe mine nu m-au nimerit, m-a ajutat Dumezeu (s.n.) și atâția au murit, în șanț era numai sânge... eram acolo cu popul ăla săracu, singur, că în toată seara când mă culc îmi fac cruce și mă gândesc cum eram acolo.”<sup>129</sup> [I was 22 years old and I was in Austria; near a forest, near the German border. At a certain point, the Russian warplanes were above us. All of my comrades lunged to take shelter in the ditches on the sides of the road. I stood still in the middle of the road, not knowing where to go or what to do; there were some tall poplars on the side of the road. I leaned against a poplar. They fired on us several times, but they did not hit me; God helped me. So many of us died, the ditches were full of blood... I stood there, alone with that poor poplar. Every night I make the sign of the cross and I think of how I stood there].

The discursive and performative aspects of communicating the cultural memory of war received a lexical and argotic repertoire that marks the socio-cultural and communication context of the war epoch. The recurrence of certain military, technical, medical or borrowed terms that illustrate the interactions with the enemy or allied otherness is relevant in the reconstruction of the cultural perspective on war and in the *lexical construction* of a cultural collective memory of war. For example, a chapter entitled “Dire la guerre” 1914-1919 of a French lexical inventory marks the significant frequency of the following words in public and private communication: *front*, *arrière*, *embusqué poilu* (soldier), *gaz*, *gazé*, *l'ypérite*,

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<sup>128</sup> F. Rus, 105.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

*grenadage, dynamitage, lance-bomb, lance-flammes, tank, Tomies* (the name used for the English soldiers), *Fritz* (the name used for the German soldiers), *fridolin, antiaérien, contra-offensive, interallié, neutralism, défaitisme, bolchevism, zouaves, grype espagniole* etc.<sup>130</sup> These words are part of the public circulation and they articulate a type of memory in which slang is expressed through borrowings and lexical adoptions that illustrate a world of war that communicates through the people's "ground level" memory.

For a very long time, the memory of war in general represented a founding memory by exalting the victories, by glorifying the heroes, by compiling a national, identity and self-celebrating epos that erased the uncomfortable aspects from the past (the injustice, the killing of others, the collateral crimes etc.). It represented a memory that was manipulated and performed through commemorative practices.<sup>131</sup> There are countless examples of the "pitfalls of memory". In the Douaumont Ossuary, near Verdun, over 130.000 unknown French soldiers are buried over the remains of thousands of German soldiers that are just as unknown. There was a clear intention to separate the dead, the victorious "*poilus*" French soldiers from the "*boches*" (the defeated German soldiers), "comme pour suggérer que leur combat se poursuivait outre-tombe".<sup>132</sup>

In the face of this manipulated memory, the "ground level" memory is indispensable and polemical. This **polemical and controversial memory**, as a variable of the "ground level" memory, restores the state of grace of the whole memory, one unaffected, unmarked by oblivion and uncompelled to abide by the memory abuse that transpires through the statement "obligation se fait de se souvenir de ceci ... et non de cela".<sup>133</sup> The "ground level" memory is, thus, provocatively polemical and controversial because it reassesses and reconstructs the war, from the viewpoint of both the victors and the vanquished. It is basically an indistinctive memory that equally assumes "the abominable, the indefeasible, the commendable" sides of war, it assumes both the just and the unjust perspectives on war. The "ground level" memory gives voice to both the victors and the vanquished. It enters into a polemic with the official memory accepted by the authorities who only celebrate the heroism of the victors and ignores the sacrifices of the vanquished.

There are several theoretical preliminaries regarding the "ground level" memory as a polemical and controversial memory, theoretical and philosophical preliminaries based on the concept of the Heideggerian historicity of the human being that assumes death as a condition for living, and R. Koselleck's works who added the being-towards-manslaughter (*Sein zum Todschlag*) to the concept of "being-towards-death" (*Sein zum Tode*), which puts the definition of the "warrior heroism"<sup>134</sup> at obvious difficulty. R. Koselleck states that death does

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<sup>130</sup> A. Rey, F. Duval, G. Siouffi, *Mille ans de langue française* (Paris: Perrin, 2013), 2069-2075; See also A. Dauzat, *L'Argot de la guerre* (Paris: A. Colin, 1919); G. Esnault, *Le Poilu tel qu'il se parle* (Paris, 1919).

<sup>131</sup> J.C. Monod, "L'horrible, l'imprescriptible et l'admirable. Une relecture de la Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli de Paul Ricoeur," in *Esprit*, Jan., 2011, 137.

<sup>132</sup> A. J. Mayer, "Les pièges du souvenir," in *Esprit*, Juillet (1993), 51.

<sup>133</sup> J.C. Monod, 138.

<sup>134</sup> Chr. Bouton, "Pouvoir mourir et pouvoir tuer. Questions sur l'héroïsme guerrier," in *Esprit*, Jan. 2011, 119.

not exist in the absence of the power to kill, which, in essence, secretes History: “Sans la capacité de pouvoir assassiner son prochain, sans la capacité de pouvoir violemment écourter sa durée de vie, les histories que nous connaissons n’existeraient tout simplement pas.”<sup>135</sup> In other words, the historicity of the human being is articulated through “the ability to die” and “the ability to kill” as the essence of history, since history is nothing more than a succession of crises, wars and of means in which an individual regards death. This is why Hegel stated that “periods de Bonheur sont pour l’histoire de pages vides”.<sup>136</sup>

The polemical “ground level” memory records this duality of dying and killing, distributed between victims and murderers, victors and vanquished, and, for this reason, this type of memory enters a polemic with the self-celebrated heroism that only assumes the right or the power to kill, and not the crime committed against the adversary. The “ground level” memory of the vanquished, wounded or killed is in contradiction with that of the victor, who holds the “power to kill”. The hero who sacrifices himself often has blood on his hands. The categories of “can die” and “can kill” are two faces of the same medal “pinned to the hero’s vest”, and “the power to kill is rather the reverse of the medal”.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, the “ground level” memory is polemical and anti-ideological and it comes into conflict with the unanimity of the official, heroic, totalising discourse on memory. This polemical and controversial memory also instates a damning view on war, which connects the “memories of the conflict” and “the conflict of memory”.<sup>138</sup> It was often also ideologically adjudicated by the pacifist movements, allocated to the vanquished at a “ground level” and to those who opposed the war, as well as to the “mutins”<sup>139</sup> who evaded the battlefields and rebelled in France during World War I. This is why the polemical, controversial “ground level” memory must be distributed between the soldiers, the deserters and the executed. The viewpoints of the “ground level” memory on the war are, in this case, different, polemical, conflicting.

The polyphony of the “ground level” memory of war illustrates, on the one hand, the individual experiences on the front and, on the other hand, it surveys the collective state of mind. It is a channel that connects to the “greater history” and it creates connections and convergences within a warlike sociability continuously fuelled by the perception and identification of the allies, enemies and fellow countrymen. The “ground level” memory also replaces historical anthropology with the “anthropology of survival”; it neutralises the historiographic discourse and depoliticises the legitimising and reparative discourse. This descent of the war from the upper level of the armies, states and alliances to the soldiers’ level

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<sup>135</sup> R. Kosellek, *Expérience de l’histoire* (Paris: Seuil, Gallimard, 1997), 186.

<sup>136</sup> G. F. Hegel, *La Philosophie de l’histoire* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 2009), 160.

<sup>137</sup> Chr. Bouton, 121.

<sup>138</sup> Fr. Rousseau, “Maudite soit la guerre! Mémoire des conflits et conflits de mémoire,” in *Concurrence des passés. Usages politiques du passé* (dir. M. Crivello, P. Garcia, N. Offenstadt) (Aix en Provence, Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2006), 223 et sq.

<sup>139</sup> N. Offenstadt, “Les mutins de 1917 dans l’espace publique ou les conroverses,” in *Concurrences des passés...*, 233 et sq.

implies an individualising force of the narration of the individual memory<sup>140</sup>. The “ground level” memory protects the tragic past not only from oblivion, but also from generalizations, clichés and anthropological trivializations.

In the context of certain current historiographic and social sciences debates, memory takes part in the return of the event in history and in the social sciences, since the questions regarding a past or present event are answered through Michel de Certeau’s words, stating that “the event is what it becomes”. Therefore, this potential fruitfulness qualifies a fact or an occurrence as an event. The testimony, the transmitted memory, oral history are associated with the phenomenon of returning to the event, since memory cannot exist outside the occurrence and of the event. Therefore, the “ground level” memory can be an event-based memory in its true sense. It incorporates three event functions, namely, potential fruitfulness, a heuristic function and a return to the difference. It gives the historical meaning its eventness. If the potential fruitfulness places the event between causality and consequences, the second function represents an opening towards new facts and new horizons of factuality and the return of the difference is imposed and maintained by the special focus placed on the story and storytelling. Transmitting a memory is a construction of the event, since instead of being shaped by the event, memory shapes the event<sup>141</sup>. The act of storytelling does not allow the event to fall into its impersonal neutrality.<sup>142</sup>

The credited events created by the testimonies and memories of the witnesses and participants are, on the one hand, constructivist in the sense that the testimony becomes material and event-based evidence inside a judiciary history and, on the other hand, besides the reality of the events, memory emphasises the interpreted event, namely the event “déployé dans certains de ses virtualités signifiantes.” The testimonies that re-centre the event therefore imply “exchanges between memory and history in order to construct a social history of memory”.<sup>143</sup>

The individualisations of the “ground level” memory, the re-centring of the soldier as the speaker are all openings that surpass both the standards of monumental history and those of the cultural history of war. They institutionalise “the plurality of the collective memory” and they deconstruct the process of remembering, understanding and mythologizing the past; they are able to construct and reproduce “the myths of modern memory,” since myths are “a fibre of our being.”<sup>144</sup>

Translated from the Romanian by Anca Chiorean

<sup>140</sup> J. Cl. Monod, “Les troubles de la mémoire et de l’histoire,” in *Concurrences des passés...*, 104.

<sup>141</sup> Ph. Joutard, “L’événement,” in *Actes des colloques d’Aix en Provence. Centre d’histoire orale*, 1986, 3.

<sup>142</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 169.

<sup>143</sup> Fr. Dosse, *Renaissance de l’événement* (Paris: PUF, 2010), 295; See also A. Wieviorka, *L’ère du témoin* (Paris: Plon, 1998), 99; D. Radosav, “Memorie și eveniment. Câteva considerații” (Memory and event. Some considerations), in *AIO, Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Orală*, VIII (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007), 7-43.

<sup>144</sup> P. Fussel, IX.