

WITNESSING AND MEMORIZING: ON NARRATIVE MEDIATION OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

SUMMARY

The author argues the theoretical-methodological and moral implications of ethnographic analysis of testimonies as oral history genre and testimonial literature as autobiographic genre. She points out the role of the witnessing issue in mediation of alternative histories - personal, family, local histories - and, in addition, the importance of narrating the lived experience as historical memory in such media as literature, historiography and national narrative.

Testimonial discourse varies from that of written narrative and public history, being a polyphonic and ambivalent discourse whose moral strength questions the legitimacy of mediating history through language, facts and figures. Above all, testimonies affect with their appellate function, with their ultimate personal experience, therefore, any attempt at depersonalization, objectification and quantification would invalidate this genre. The same applies to anthropology-oriented analysis which is primarily interested in conventions of representation and evaluation of personal experiences within the cultural, simbolical and ideological models of community.