



Reply No. 5

'Testimonies and testimonies'¹

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*There are blows in life, so harsh... I don't know!
Blows like God's wrath; as if before them,
the undertow of all that has been suffered
pooled in the soul... I don't know! (...)
They are perhaps the colts of barbaric Attilas
or the dark heralds Death sends our way.
César Vallejo (1918), "The black heralds"*

In the previous reply Carmine Marrazzo takes up and expands on a point touched on in the Argument of the School Day of the IV European Convention, that of the relationship between experience, transmission and testimony in the Pass, in a comparison with another domain where these notions apply: wars, the Holocaust and traumas in general. Marrazzo refers to several authors who have written about the Holocaust, some of them survivors of that dreadful horror, and asks thought-provoking questions about possible effects or similarities with psychoanalysis in general, and the pass in particular. The subject had already been addressed by

¹ This text benefits from the debate of some points of Ana Alonso's presentation on 'Transmission and training of the analyst', in the session of 05/05/2025 of the Seminar 'The training of the analyst, from Freud to Lacan', activity open to the IF-EPFCL, inscribed in the Barcelona Psychoanalytic Forum. Available on video.

Didier Castanet in his article 'Testimony: between truth and act', in *Wunsch* 25 (p. 17), recently published.

Although the emphasis on the Holocaust is understandable, as an extreme form of genocide, the history of mankind is full of appalling mass killings, as well as group and individual atrocities. I feel a certain shame to mention these, some of the most abominable deeds attributable to man, without denouncing them, attacking them, demeaning them. The fragment from 'The black heralds' in the epigraph is a way of allowing myself not to do so.

Those who testify of a trauma suffered, whether in masse, in a group or individually, do so from their own subjectivity. The reasons for doing so can be quite varied: the need to erase something of the terrible mark left on them, an attempt to assimilate to some extent the horror of what they have lived through, a search for recognition of their condition as victims and denunciation of the perpetrator, among others. Does the testimony lose its value because it is a subjective account? In my opinion, no, but a more in-depth analysis would have to be carried out, which is beyond the scope of this brief text.

In psychoanalysis we have the practice of testimony, I think in two different ways. Firstly, the patients' accounts during their analysis, even if we don't call them that, include testimonies of the sufferings they have endured in the course of their lives, whatever their nature, individual, group or collective. On the other hand, we have the testimonies of the Pass, those of the passands before the passers. There are also those of the passers to the cartel of the Pass, but for the moment I am not including them in this elaboration.

Although the device of the Pass is to testify to the passage from analysand to analyst, the reasons for requesting it can be quite diverse, as I explain in my article 'Why the pass?', included in *Wunsch* 25 (p. 28). For the present text I will limit myself to those cases in which an analyst has indeed emerged as a product of the analysis, and thus there has been a conclusive ending, or is in the process of arriving at that place.

The 'testimonies' made in the course of the analysis are similar to those of the victims of atrocities, in that both are made from the subjectivity of each one. They

take place, however, in very different spaces, one public and the other private, one from the character of semblant, the other conducive to the elaboration of the real. In both cases it is a solitary *"'I' who desperately seeks the Other and its guarantee'*, to put it in the words of Anastasia Tzavidopoulou"².

As for the testimonies of the Pass, they are also made from subjectivity, but in this case it is a transformed subjectivity, so to speak. At the end of the analysis, there is no longer a phantasmatic view of what has been experienced, the Other has lost its consistency, and the course of the analysis must have produced a great draining of *jouissance*, to mention but three elements that mark an insurmountable difference. In addition, while the witness of a trauma seeks in some way to assimilate what happened, to reduce the horror, he who testifies in the pass is someone who has already done it, who has already achieved it, that and more, after many years and countless occasions of 'testifying' and elaborating it in his analysis.

Is one truer than the other? Well, one would undoubtedly expect a Pass testimony to be less subjectively biased and less charged with *jouissance*, closer to 'objective' reality. On the other hand, in psychoanalysis, truth has a very different meaning and value than in the public sphere, in science or in law, for example.

A necessary digression, in relation to the signifier 'refuse' [*rebut*]. This notion has for us, Lacanian psychoanalysts, a great theoretical and clinical value, referring to the desire for knowledge in the real as a product of the passage from analysand to analyst: *'There is an analyst only in so far as this desire comes to him; namely that already, through this, he is the refuse [rebut] of the aforesaid (humanity)'*.³ I cannot, however, make a comparison, not without a minimum of development, with the signifier 'refuse' [*rebut*] in reference to genocides and other atrocities committed by man against his fellow man. My comment in the second paragraph, at the beginning, explains why.

To conclude, I would like to comment succinctly that, when examining the stories of witnesses to war crimes, the occurrence of false testimonies is striking. In relation to the Holocaust, the cases of Enric Marco, Benjamin Wilkomirski, Misha Defonseca

² 'The imperative of solitude: epistemic satisfactions, ephemeral enthusiasm', in *Wunsch* 24, p. 39.

³ Lacan, J. (1973). "Italian Note", available at:

<https://www.champlacanian.net/public/docu/2/LACAN-Note-italienne-english-2021-09.pdf>

and Joseph Hirt, among others, are well known. Similarly in any other genocide. Leaving aside the reasons why false witnesses occur, the question arises: are there false testimonies in psychoanalysis? As far as the course of analysis is concerned, of course patients not only tell their story subjectively, but may even incorporate falsehoods, memories that conceal, and other manifestations of lying truth. That does not surprise us. It is part of the working material.

And in the Pass? It is an interesting question whether a passand who has not made the passage from analysand to analyst, nor reached a conclusive end of analysis, can nevertheless simulate it so well that he or she manages to deceive the passers and the cartel of the Pass. I don't know if it is possible to arrive at a definitive answer via logic, but in any case it is necessary to consider that in the testimony of the Pass, what one tries to transmit is non-transmissible via the sayings and from the semblant, it is something of the order of saying and jouissance (is there a way to simulate them?). I don't know if such a brilliant actor exists or has existed among the hundreds of analysts who have undergone the Pass, although I wouldn't be surprised if someone had tried it or would try it in the future. But I would doubt very much the success of such a task.

I stop at this point, and pass the baton for the next reply.

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