

Attachment Conference Talk
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Dr. Julie Salverson
<http://jsalverson.wordpress.com/>

Why Stories, How Stories?

In my early twenties, I had this notion that drama might be another language for people who nobody knew about, who weren't heard, or who were invisible in society. I wandered into a community centre in downtown Toronto – I was a drama major from Queen's who had a lot to learn – and persuaded one of the social workers to let me try out my ideas. He advised me to start with the Stroke Club – a group of people, mostly elderly but not all, who had suffered from a stroke fairly recently. The club was a way to get people out of the house and interacting with others. One afternoon early in this adventure I sat in a gymnasium with about twelve people – just as we will sit tomorrow in the workshop. I asked for two stories, one a lie, one the truth. One thin bald man thrust up his hand. Carl, his name was. “Story number one, I caught the biggest fish in Lake Superior the summer I was thirty, and I won a prize.” “Story number two. I was a lion tamer for the Barnum and Bailey Circus.” I looked around the group, and asked, “Ok. Who believes story number one, about the fish. How many of you believe that story?” Then, who believes Story Number Two?” Well, most of our

group picked the fish tale. Carl, with great gusto, started to unbutton his shirt. He proceeded to show us the scar he was so proud of, from that time so long ago when the lion had clawed him – by accident, he said. Carl then talked for several minutes about his circus experience. After that day, everyone saw Carl a little differently. But perhaps even more important – Carl remembered a part of himself he may have forgotten.

Because we are talking about story, I'm going to tell you a bit – one narrative thread if you like – about what has brought me here today. I've always wanted to help. I rescued birds as a kid, and hid from the traumas of childhood and adolescence in books, art and theatre. There I found questions not answers, a relief from the tyranny of certainty. The possibility for something else, something not named by those around me...the sense of something caught within language that couldn't be tamed. The domestic makes me nervous, I'm drawn to the uncapturable. I'm interested in the form of things that kills or lets live. And I guess I was, from the beginning, preoccupied with what it means to be listened to. As many children do, I wrote stories. I think I was trying to find a way to say, "life is more than this. I am more than the shy girl who is embarrassed to speak up. I am bigger than my confusion, bolder than my awkwardness, braver than my terror."

I became involved in community-engaged arts in my twenties when I discovered that art was a useful way to navigate and ‘give voice’ to untold stories and the challenges of how to live. In 1981, I formed a company called “Second Look – the stories that don’t get told” and got a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to develop a play for an audience who was mentally challenged. By accident, I found out that developing a play WITH them was much more satisfying. I discovered the electricity that happens when people speak and are heard...and I realized that what artists offer - writers, dancers, musicians, painters...is another language for that speech. That’s what I wanted to make and be part of! . This difficult place of desire and danger, this language that shapes loss and love and hope into a form, an invitation to imagine. The images that take that language beyond the everyday, raise it to something that can make us all tremble, just a little...these are found in the shaping of language into story – whether that language is with words, pictures, sounds or physical enactment. The world is a complex and confusing place and it is stories that both mark our place in it, and help us transform those places we find ourselves squeezed inside.

Louis Brassard writes, “I think that narrative pre-dated the evolution of homo sapiens and began to exist within the dreams of all mammals and birds. Dreams are narratives. Humans are the only animal who can dream

while being awake and so able to self-enact narratives. This is our imagination. We are also the only animal who thus can self-enact the story of our life . . .”

Tomorrow in my afternoon workshop I will demonstrate – with your help – some very simple ways to get a group – and sometimes an individual – to tell stories in the spirit of play, personal development, healing, and adventure. Today I want to briefly share a few ideas that help me approach engaging with narratives. Here are some things that I think telling stories makes possible:

- 1) Witnessing and being witnessed
- 2) Experiencing oneself inside a network of community, through multiple mirrors.
- 3) Experiencing oneself beyond the definition of one’s injury, or circumstance, or trauma
- 4) Allowing room for what is beyond words...including the somatic, the senses, but also what defies linear comprehension.
- 5) Having narrative options for restorying one’s life

First, I’ll talk about what it means to be a witness, and to listen. What do stories offer – and sometimes limit – about how to hear beyond words, to

listen towards what escapes language. Then, what investments and assumptions do we bring as listeners, and how do we invite stories not only of injury and pain, but also of agency, even joy? Then, how does storytelling offer ways to expand the narrative possibilities for not only how we speak about our lives, but how we live them? And finally, what is the real cost of listening?

WHAT IS IT TO WITNESS STORIES OF TRAUMA, AND HOW DO WE DO IT?

Much of my work has been with survivors of violence. The presence of trauma brings another dimension to witnessing. Psychoanalyst Dori Laub and Yale Professor Shoshana Feldmanⁱ say testimony is about an occurrence that is so beyond comprehension it shatters any means we have of making sense. It is about an event that blasts into the consciousness of those who witness it. Testimony of trauma not only points to the evidence we acknowledge, like the kind of testimony that stands up in court. It also calls on us to remember “bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding. . . events in excess of our frame of witness.” So when we are listening to stories – and I expect you all know this more than anyone – we are listening beyond words.

How do we listen? The way we interact with patients, or people in a

community, informs both how we understand people and how they understand themselves. In the case of people who have experienced violence, both process and form (the methodologies we choose, and how we practice them) need to acknowledge the presence of trauma without making pain the only thing we allow ourselves to witness. This is part of the much deeper question of how a man, a woman, a family, a community, live through a ghastly rupture in the fabric of skin and sense and order and meaning of their lives – and then not remove the trauma, or hide the disfigurement, but live with it. It is common when approaching trauma to say that it is impossible to bear witness to atrocity because no language is equal to representing horror. But there is another problem. Witnessing trauma is structured by the terms by which survivors testify. What is the structure of the relationship between speaker and listener? If the victim always speaks through the hierarchy of helper and helped and the witness listens through this same dynamic, then a patronizing search-and-rescue mission can be reproduced.

Let me give some examples of this from my practice. My experience with the stroke club and with other community groups led me to form a theatre company called Second Look Community Arts Resource. For one of our projects, we hired a group of young people to do a project about HIV and

Aids. Many of the company had been living in shelters and group homes. We spent months together using drama and storytelling to help us share our experiences, our fears and assumptions – both the kids and the company members. One day one of the young women – Jill was sixteen, tattooed and angry – came in feeling down. She wouldn't say much. Finally we persuaded her to tell us what was wrong. "My mom and I had a fight, and I'm pissed. She was dumb but I was dumber." When we indicated we wanted to hear more, she looked at us with surprise. "But you hired me to tell you exciting stuff about living on the street. You aren't paying me for the boring stuff everybody goes through." Jill was amazed that we wanted to hear this part of her life. And we were sobered to realize that she had learned so well that it was the shocking narratives that captured attention. We had trained ourselves to listen for, and then perform, an aesthetic of injury. We listened more for the pain than the person who hurt.

Jill was much more than her "big" problems. In fact, she was more than problems at all. British scholar Frank Ferudi says we live in a "therapy culture" that produces meaning through diagnosis, transforms illness into an identity and disposes people to react to major catastrophes as potential trauma victims rather than concerned citizens. Does this cultural preoccupation mean something to my work, and to yours? How can we

name and be present to trauma in others – and ourselves – but also be present to agency, to joy, to possibility? Distinguish between loss and the people who lose?

Another story...I worked with a group of refugees – from Turkey, Sarajevo, El Salvador - to create a play about their experience of their first year in Canada. We toured the play to community centres and settlement houses, and then the sponsoring organization hired me to do workshops with community workers analyzing how their agencies functioned, using a film we had made of the play. One day I asked one group to make an image of a moment they found difficult in their work with refugees. The participants quickly created a number of frozen tableaux, and then we stood back to look. I happened to mention that it was interesting, that I couldn't tell in the image who was the refugee and who was the helper. They thought my comment meant they had made a mistake, and immediately changed the images. Suddenly there was a clear victim. "This is how it needs to look for you to recognize that someone is having a problem," someone said.

My friend, a prosecutor in Vancouver, says she has to coach people in court to be victims, or they won't be heard. This says a lot about our culture and what gets currency, or funding. I was just told by a graduate student in

England who is working with asylum seekers that people seeking support in the system there need to have PTSD or they do not qualify. It is a box on the list of qualifications that must be checked off. But, according to my graduate student – and she may be wrong – only 25% of asylum seekers who go through the system in England have PTSD.

A few years ago I visited an aboriginal community in the NWT. I had learned about the connection that place, Deline, had to uranium production and the atomic bomb. My visit was the beginning of a trip that took me to New Mexico, and eventually Hiroshima, following the highway of the atom. ⁱⁱI arrived in Deline filled with concern and urgency, wanting to understand better this place that was called “The Village of Widows” because of the many grandfathers who had worked at the uranium mine and died of cancer. But all I could see during that visit was the sadness and loss of the place. When I returned ten years later, it was in part to correct this imbalance. When I returned, I was able to hear more than just the stories of loss. There are productive tensions at the heart of witnessing. The witness listens for and confirms the familiar, the predictable – I first came to Deline knowing there has been illness and loss – but the witness must be available to surprise – I later listened to the dynamic and exuberant radio programs some of the young people were creating. I also learned that some people would like to

reopen the uranium mine. Listening is not only how I hear the stories of others. The tension of witnessing is also about witnessing my own stories. In order to be available to another person I must be available to myself, to know what I am bringing to the table.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE LISTENER?

Dori Laub says that psychic survival depends on an addressable other, an “inner witness.” This witness is produced by relationship, through interaction with other people. “To conceive of oneself as a subject is to have the ability to address oneself to another...” What does it mean to you as counselors, as psychologists, to include yourselves as witnessing subjects? Do you have your own “inner witness?” What happens to you when you listen, and listen long, to all that pain?

I’ve just returned from a 3-day workshop run by an organization in Alberta called the War Horse Foundationⁱⁱⁱ. This is run by Deanna Lennox. Deanna used to be in the RCMP and she left and started War Horse as a way to provide the support to first responders that she hadn’t experienced herself. Over those three days, responders – police, fire fighters, cops paramedics – said a few things. They talked about how the armor they developed to survive their encounters became a prison. They said that the idea that as

helpers, they were bottomless wells of resources was hogwash. That being a secondary witness to trauma carried a burden. That they came home and found it hard to play with their kids, or talk to their spouses. Dr. Jacqui Linder, a psychologist who works with first responders and with human trafficking in Edmonton, told the group that their symptoms – the symptoms of the first responders– were identical to the symptoms of the homeless people on the street who she also counsels. Identical. “In policing, there aren’t many programs for the police,” someone said. “We aren’t taught about boundaries, or how to deal with our own fear, or how to deal with compassion fatigue.” I was in Alberta to do a workshop on storytelling and resiliency. Over the three days these first responders spent together, telling stories was part of what helped. Laub says that when we listen to accounts of trauma, the danger is we become caught unaware in “the abundance or holding and emotional investment” of the encounter with trauma memory. As we listen, we need to witness ourselves witnessing. It’s not only the patient’s narratives that enter the relationship, but also those of the listener.

SO, WHAT IS IT AGAIN THAT STORIES DO?

First, they provide a witness. An addressable other. That can mirror

back the inner witness. The story is received, taken seriously, taken in.

When this happens in a group – and we'll see this tomorrow when we make more than one image from someone's story – the witnessing can happen through multiple mirrors.

Next, stories let the body talk. **What does the body know?**

I once heard an interview with German historian Barbara Duden about the knowledge we hold under our skin. She described the changing ways medicine has understood the body. I think what caught my attention, so many years ago, was the thought that my body could speak but I didn't know how to listen to the world not captured in words. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu used the term *embodied history* to describe how all of the past is active in the present, not only what we remember or what has been written down. Passions, deep feelings and imaginative guesses are part of creative acts and discoveries. "We can know more than we can tell."^{iv}

"The body can hold what has passed out of mind," writes Canadian geographer Joy Parr^v. In a study of Canadian communities affected by environmental disaster she says that we make sense of the world directly through our sensing bodies. This means it isn't enough to ask people what

they think about something. It's important to try to find language for what they wouldn't think to tell us, and to pay attention to what doesn't qualify as important. If we want to know a fuller story – be better witnesses - we have to listen to the invisible. When Parr did her study she realized that most historical studies ask questions about property lost, or physical health. “The grief for which they could not find words is often dismissed as nostalgia.”^{vi}

The language of the body is more obvious in drama – this we will also see tomorrow - but the body is always speaking. I'm surprised when researchers who rely on recorded interviews ask me how the images people create with their bodies in a drama workshop, the intakes of breath, the shrug of the shoulders - can count as knowledge – These researchers only know how to write down the words. But when someone speaks to you in an interview, isn't his or her body telling you something? In drama we ask the body to speak explicitly without words. And this, of course, is another resource for sharing stories.

Next, stories let us create **new narrative possibilities**.

One of the dynamics in work with the creative arts is an expansion of the possible narratives survivors of trauma and their families can use to interpret and frame their experience. Here's an example. Canadian researchers Brett

Smith and Andrew Sparks^{vii} describe a group of men who have suffered spinal cord injuries as having few narrative options for re-telling their testimonies. They cite a study that analyzed three disability magazines in the U.S. The plots, events and characters in these stories of men with SCI fell into three categories:

- 1) commitment to battle
- 2) heroic qualities
- 3) heroic action

These magazines act as narrative scripts for newcomers to the world of injury and can be inspirational or confining. To the extent that these narratives reinforce, rely and actively cultivate a particular model of masculinity, they may hinder the transformative potential of disability. Transformative not in the sense of triumph, but in the sense of moving through trauma and being allowed to become a new person, whose self is not continually referencing what the researchers call ‘heroic masculinity’.

“Problems arise when people become fixated on one kind of body and sense of self in situations where the restitution and hero narrative are not appropriate.”¹ Having the narrative resources to contemplate options for re-

¹ From pg. 194, “Men, Sport, and Spinal Cord Injury: Identity Dilemmas, Embodied Time, and the Construction of Coherence,” by Brett Smith and Andrew C. Sparks, 2007, *Unfitting Stories: Narrative Approaches To Disease, Disability, and*

telling their life stories - to re-imagine or re-invent themselves- is not easy. This is the kind of thing that can be explored, played with, in a creative arts situation and when stories are central in a process.

Next, stories help us **learn about each other**. As adjunct professor and former artist in residence for the Royal Military College of Canada, every year I give theatre and story making workshops. I bring members of my Queen's drama class with me. The two groups show each other stereotypes and assumptions each have about the other. They laugh. They ask questions. The Queen's students say everyone thinks they are rich and only want to drink. The RMCC students say everyone thinks they are brainwashed and only want to fight. Then the stories get more layered, more complex, and truer. One military student says, "When I go home for Christmas everyone thinks I'm the same. I'm not." Another talks about visiting a local restaurant with his girlfriend and being refused service because he is in uniform. We talk about making a play to show people in Kingston about what it means to be in the Canadian military, and who these young people really are.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT **THE COST OF LISTENING**

Trauma, Valerie Raoul, Connie Canam, Angela D. Henderson and Carla Paterson (Ed's)
Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier Press: 191-199

In 1996 I was commissioned by the Canadian Red Cross to create a play about land mines. The play^{viii}, called *Boom*, (original version co-written with Patricia Fraser) was developed through drama workshops with pre-service teachers and then performed by high school students in Canada, the US and Thailand. It is a clown play, about the absurdity of a world with land mines and the impossible task of friendship across difference, across violence, across cultural and social barriers. *Boom* is about a young Canadian high school student named Roger who meets a girl named Ana. Ana is Croatian and comes from Bosnia. Ana lost her father to a land mine. She wants to be Canadian, to be a scientist, and she doesn't want to talk about her homeland but, instead, tries to control her trauma by designing a land clearance device that will rid the earth of land mines. When Roger tries to befriend her and approaches her world, he finds his own becoming disrupted. In this excerpt, the teacher has assigned the students an eyewitness report. Roger has heard that Ana is from Europe, so he thinks he will ask her questions and his answers will be his assignment. In the play, Ana tries to talk to Roger in her own way, but he is unable to listen. Ana's answers are not what he expects.

EXCERPT (more than I read for the presentation):

SCENE ONE

SOUND OF DRUM FLOURISH. CLOWN, ANA AND ROGER ENTER.

ALL: (WHISPERING)

This is a play from beginning to end
So don't take things too seriously

This is a play from beginning to end
So don't take things too seriously

CLOWN: We've all gone mad, it's all gone mad, so
What should we, what could we, what should we do?

ROGER & ANA: What should we, what could we, what should we do?

CLOWN: Don't take things too seriously.

ROGER: She's hard to explain. I mean, Ana's different. Keeps to herself, doesn't go to parties n' stuff. She's only been in the school about a year. We just started talkin' on the field trip last spring, I got stuck at the front of the bus but it turned out ok. Cause I got to sit with her, eh? Then she won this big prize, like the best science student for all Canada. But she's still okay. I told her she should date or she'd look like too much of a brainer. She laughed, kinda.

ANA: Scientific equipment is so fantastic. Clean, measurable, predictable. Mostly I like to be alone and work on my invention. It takes hours of work and it's going to make me world famous. I'm not going out with roger, he's a friend. I kinda like him though. He's funny and sort of weird like if he wanted to, he could care about things.

ANA: (TO ROGER) Did you hear, we had a test yesterday in English?

ROGER: No way! I was at hockey practice, she knew I was missing class.

ANA: Totally unfair. She has to let you make it up. Hey, tell her you'll write her a story about the finals. Like, from an eye witness point of view.

ROGER: I can't write like that.

ANA: You can, just do it like a diary or something. I'll be your editor.

DRUM BEAT. CLOWN BECOMES TEACHER

TEACHER: Class...(ROGER AND ANA KEEP TALKING) Class! What would you do? If I was to tell you something you didn't want to hear?

ANA: (TO ROGER) I would ask myself, how do you know I don't want to hear it?

ROGER: (JOKING TO ANA) I'd wonder if it's about me!

ANA: (PUTS HER HAND UP) Is it about what happened in the newspaper yesterday?

TEACHER: Which part? The horrible made up things or the horrible things that are true?

ROGER: Did you hear about...the ten-car pile-up?

ANA: The terrorist bomb attack?

ROGER: The bird flu?

ANA: The computer virus that ate New York?

TEACHER: Roger, what do you think you'd do? If I told you something you didn't want to hear?

ROGER: I guess it kinda depends on what happens after you hear a bad story. I mean, does it mean you have to feel bad about it?

ANA: Oh, you'll feel bad when you hear about this.

ROGER AND ANA: Shhhhhhh!

TEACHER: Today we are studying the humanitarian crisis caused by antipersonnel landmines. That means, mines that hurt people. Imagine millions of acres of green farmland you couldn't walk across because it was filled with explosives. Couldn't walk to gather food, or get fresh water, or visit friends, or play. Canada has signed a ban on the production and use of landmines. I would like each of you to write a report about what you, yourself, might do.

ANA: (PUTS UP HER HAND) Did you say, million of acres?

TEACHER: (BECOMES AUTOMATON-LIKE, AND DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH FIGURES APPEAR ON THE OVERHEAD, SCRIBBLING, TRYING TO KEEP TRACK, CROSSING OUT ONE NUMBER, ADDING ANOTHER. THIS CAN BE DONE BY ANA OR THE TEACHER)

TEACHER: There are an estimated 110 million active landmines scattered over 70 countries, one for every 52 people in our world. A further 110 million have been stockpiled. 2,000 people are involved in accidents every month.

Landmines are left from really old wars and put in every day from brand new ones. One goes off every twenty minutes.

CLOCK APPEARS ON SCREEN. ROGER EXAMINES IT.

ROGER: Statistics make my brain hurt.

ANA: What brain?

DRUM BEAT. SCREEN GOES DARK.

ALL THREE: Only the bold, forward please!
Only the bold, forward please!
Only the bold, should stay in their beds
Only the bold, should stay in their heads
Only the bold, come forward!

TEACHER: (STARTING TO LOOK SLIGHTLY MAD) Doctors say the injuries from landmines are more horrible than anything. Most people injured are just going about their daily lives. Most are too poor to pay for medical help, artificial limbs, or even anesthetic. (HOLDS UP PICTURES FACING UPSTAGE, SO WE CAN'T SEE THEM) These are the pictures that I will not show you because you would not sleep at night.

ANA & ROGER: (RUSH UP TO LOOK AT PICTURES)

ROGER: Why should I listen to this? Why? I'm not even finished my school year. I didn't put them there. There are a lot of problems right here in this town that need sorting out. Landmines aren't my problem.

ANA: Problem: something hard to understand. Doubtful or difficult matter requiring a solution. (SHE STANDS AND CROSSES TO HER EXPERIMENT) I'll find the solution. It's my invention.

ROGER: What invention?

ANA: A probe. A kind of probe that doesn't rely on human hands at the end of it. That's what they do now, use bayonet, and metal poles inch by inch over the surface of a mined area. Real people hold the probes. Now if...

ROGER: Just a sec. There were landmines in your country right? I mean the country you came from. Serbia.

ANA: Bosnia. I mean, we went to Croatia, but I am from Bosnia.

ROGER: So you're Bosnian?

ANA: I'm Croatian.

ROGER: Oh.

ANA: It's like being French Canadian and not living in Quebec. My mother says people are French all through Canada. Isn't that why you take French?

TEACHER: A landmine goes off every 20 minutes, stepped on in a field or on a road, by a child playing, a woman going to market. (CLOCK ON SCREEN MOVES FROM FIVE TO TEN TO FIFTEEN MINUTES, AND WE HEAR SOUNDS OF EXPLOSIONS) Weapons of mass destruction in slow motion, they lie waiting for years. Landmines don't know the war is over. If you step on one, they don't know you're not a soldier. Just a kid. Or a farmer. Or a Canadian tourist.

CLOWN DROPS TEACHER ROLE.

ALL SING:

Mines are the stars of this show
They don't sleep, and they never go
They wait forever and ever
They never let you know
Just when the whole thing will blow

ROGER: How long is forever?

CLOWN: As long as it takes.

CLOWN GOES TO SIDE OF STAGE, OR LEAVES. ANA TRIES TO WORK

ROGER: When you lived in Croatia, did you see any?

ANA: Of course.

ROGER: What was it like?

ANA: What do you think?

ROGER: I don't know.

ANA: You must know. You get good marks in class. What do you think?

ROGER: Scary. Lonely?

ANA: Lonely, why? I had my whole family then.

ROGER: But when I'm scared it's like there's nobody. Even if there is, you know?

ANA: What are you scared of? The math test? Your father chewin' you out? Really scary stuff.

ROGER: Don't act like I'm a jerk just cause I'm askin' questions. Don't think I'm stupid. Bosnia or Serbia, it's just this mine thing, why should I have to know? I'm sorry. I just know that you're from Europe and there was a war.

ANA: You're life's here, maybe nobody tells you anything. You want me to make you feel better about that?

ROGER: No.

ANA: You want to know about my country, read about it. You've got a million t.v. channels, do you watch them?

ROGER: But that's just t.v. You know, you were there.

ANA: You see this experiment I'm designing? The molecules have strong attraction, polarized by the water and the magnets. I have to learn what these instruments do, put my hands on the cold metal, feel the tension in my body waiting to balance the magnetic force. Carefully, so carefully. A wrong move and it dissipates or explodes. My breath learns to move with the water sliding down the tube. I shut out the other noises in the room, I listen to the crystals, the tiny particles moving. But first...before I can try the experiment, I have to read. Everything, all the scientists. I learn how much the container can hold, I respect the instruments, the delicate balance I must achieve. The molecules are alive, they breathe, I know this before I use them in my experiment. It's my life you're asking about, Roger. Go find out something. Anything.

ROGER: Okay. Um, what about Saturday night? To work on the story? I mean, my finals story.

ANA: I don't know. I have to baby-sit. I'm too busy.

ROGER: Busy doin' what? All you do is play around with experiments, wanting to be a hero.

ANA: And what's wrong with that?

ANA GOES BACK TO HER COMPUTER TERMINAL

ROGER: What'd I do? Just asked a question? What's the big deal about a question? So the world's a lousy place, I'm not blaming her! I don't care.

Listening is not easy. When Roger tries to befriend Ana and approaches her world, he finds his own becoming disrupted. Overwhelmed, he says: "Why should I have to listen to this? I'm not even finished grade twelve? I have enough to worry about, land mines are not my problem."

Yale scholar Ora Avni^{ix} has written that we need to take seriously what it means not only to speak, but also to listen to accounts of violence. When a child grows up in multiple foster homes, suffers repeated acts of violation, to whom can she or he speak? How will anyone understand? Avni describes a character in the Elie Wiesel story *Night*. Moshe has been taken from his home by the Nazis, survived the murder of his convoy of foreign Jews and returns to warn the others. However, those to whom he returns do not, and more importantly, cannot believe him. Accepting his story would disrupt the very foundations of what they understand to be human. Moshe's return to town is an attempt to reaffirm ties with the human community of his past, whose integrity was put into question by the incomprehensibility of what he had witnessed. Listening to your story will change the world I live in, and I do not want my world to change.

Avni says it is essential that Moshe speak not just privately to a friend, but publicly to the community network to which he seeks readmission.

“Only by having a community integrate his dehumanizing experience into the narratives of self-representation that it shares and infer a new code of behaviour based on the information he is imparting, only by becoming part of this community’s history can Moshe hope to reclaim his lost humanity.”²

What is true for Wiesel’s character is true for the first responders I have begun to work with; perhaps it is true for many people in your practices. If the community’s job is to shift our understanding of what makes sense in this world and what this world IS - both beautiful and terrible –we must take seriously the cost of listening. To be a witness – as a spouse, a parent, a neighbour, a counselor – involves both hearing someone’s story and allowing our attitudes and behaviours to be changed by it. This is only possible if, first, we allow ourselves and others to be afraid to know, afraid to hear, and risk the anger our fear of listening can bring in survivors. This kind of project is about education. Stories, exchanged in both private and more public ways, can help develop in people the capacity to hear and be changed by what they hear.

To sum up, there some key elements inside a drama or creative arts process: exchanging stories without judgment/ imagining multiple narratives for framing your sense of self and trying those narratives out/ witnessing and being witnessed/ experiencing oneself inside the network of one's community and beyond the definition of one's injury. The creative exchange of stories engages both the private and the public human being and allows room for what evades language or definition. It is communal, it can't be done alone but its process can invite a deeper and more complex self; and, perhaps most importantly, give permission to be that self.

ⁱ Felman, Shoshana and Laub, Dori. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Routledge, 1992

ⁱⁱ <http://maisonneuve.org/article/2011/08/12/they-never-told-us-these-things/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.warhorseawareness.com/>

^{iv} Polyani, Michael. *The Tacit Dimension*, 1967, pg 4

^v Parr, Joy. *Sensing Changes: Technologies, Environments, and the Everyday, 1953-2003*. UBC Press, 2010

^{vii} From pg. 194, "Men, Sport, and Spinal Cord Injury: Identity Dilemmas, Embodied Time, and the Construction of Coherence," by Brett Smith and Andrew C. Sparks, 2007, *Unfitting Stories: Narrative Approaches To Disease, Disability, and Trauma*, Valerie Raoul, Connie Canam, Angela D. Henderson and Carla Patrson (Ed's) Waterloo, Wilfred

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viii *BOOM* (playscript). International Plays for Young Audiences II. Meriwether Publishing/Contemporary Drama Service, Colorado Springs, 2001.

ix From pg. 212, "Beyond Psychoanalysis: Elie Wiesel's Night," by Ora Avni, 1995, Historical Perspective. *Auschwitz and After: Race, Culture, and "the Jewish Question" in France*. Lawrence D. Kritzman (Ed) New York: Routledge: 203-118.