Chapter Two

The Present I: The disintegration of the monolithic construction

When I described the monolithic “Other” and “self”, as these were expressed in the interviews with Ze’ev and Yoav, I emphasized the need for this stage in the construction of the collective Zionist-Israeli identity. This is particularly true in the face of previous Jewish identity constructions: For example, religious and secular non-Zionist Jewish identities (like the Bund) developed during the 19th century emancipation in Europe. The monolithic construction in identity (as in geology) has one outstanding feature: People are represented only by one thing at a time. The purpose of this internal unity, even if fictitious (Said, 1979) is to create an external distinction and a process of internal unity in the face of other identities that threaten it internally and externally. The problem of this development is that the life span of the monolithic construction is limited, just as it is limited in Nature. In Nature, the process of cracking and erosion is active on rocks, as well as the wear and tear of heat and cold, water and chemical processes that alternate with damp and dryness. The same in social reality: the monolithic construction cracks and wears. It changes its “chemical” composition as a result of internal and external processes that could be defined as the “maturing" or "erosion" processes of collective identity. These are somewhat similar to the maturing processes of the personal identity (Sarup, 1996).

It is important to emphasize here that, in contrast to the unity and simplicity associated with the monolithic construction (black and white viewpoint), the monolithic construction of the Zionist-Israeli “self” was difficult to manage. This was particularly true as it developed in opposition to at least three[1] “Others” all of which have always had a complex relationship: The Jewish “Other” of the Diaspora, the ethnic Jewish “Other” emigrating to Israel from Afro-Asian countries (usually Arab countries), and the alien “Other” that threatened the Jewish-Israeli society from the outside. According to the psycho-dynamic approach, each of the “Others” represented an aspect of the collective “self” that was suppressed (Shapiro, 1965) and this is why it was projected onto these “Others”. The preservation of the monolithic construction of the “self” in the Zionist-Israeli identity therefore necessitated a rather complex process in which those representations of the “Other” relevant in time and situation were continually emphasized.

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1 - One can also add to the three presented here the gender “Other” (Israeli, 1997; Lomsky-Feder, 1994), the peripheral “Other” and the poor “Other” (Yiftachel, 1998). In this discussion, I shall relate only to the three “Others” I have hitherto discussed because the debate is complex as it is. I am not thereby taking a stand with regard to the relative significance of the “Others” in contemporary Israeli society, but with regard to their centrality in the present discussion where I describe the historical development.

This took place while repressing and undermining the incompatibility or contradictions that slowly manifested among them[2].

One might claim that the beginning of the disintegration of the monolithic construction in the collective Israeli identity was caused mainly by the simultaneous existence and activation of the various “Others” during the development of the monolithic construction. In time, this activation was suppressed by the artificial unity of the “self”. It was only a matter of time until internal contradictions would emerge to erode the monolithic construction from within. One may also claim that the process of disintegration could not evolve when unity was an existential need. It manifested itself through more relaxed situations that developed in the collective and its external environment. Once the peace process with Egypt was under way, these contradictions could surface more easily and be discussed openly. But even according to this claim, the potential for internal contradictions in the collective identity construction may have existed from the beginning.

One could also claim that at the beginning of the development of the Zionist-Israeli identity, a chronological order existed between the appearance of these “Others”, which we described briefly in the previous chapter: The beginning of Zionist history with the Jewish Diaspora “Other”, later joined by the ethnic “Other” in the early fifties, being accompanied by the alien “Other”, the external enemy. Nevertheless, one can claim that the three “Others” existed within the collective “self”, throughout its development, while in the collective memory, only one dominant “Other” could be realized at a time. It would appear that at a later stage of the development of Israeli-Jewish society, a more complex picture was formed: For different components of the population, or in different contexts, different “Others” were activated either in parallel or in succession, as being more relevant or meaningful for that situation. When the secular Israeli-Jews clashed with the religious – the voice of the Diaspora “Other” was being heard ("they don’t serve in the army"). When tensions arose in connection with the Shas political ethnic and religious party, the “ethnic demon” was released from the bottle (and even the use of this metaphor is not fortuitous), and when there was a terrorist attack, or anti-Semites slogan in Europe, attention naturally focused on the alien “Other” who was threatening to annihilate us from outside.

While there was a social consensus during the monolithic construction and public attention was primarily directed to one, dominant “Other” (toward the Arab neighbors at the eve

[2] - Some claim that the religious “Other” was never clearly distinguishable from the “self” in the Zionist Israeli identity and it was this, in fact, that later created the need for the remaining “Others” and destroyed the Zionist “self” from within (Shenhav, 2003). Other scholars, however, view the hatred toward the orthodox Jew in Israel as remnants of the scorn towards the Diaspora Jew during the early constructions of Zionist 'self' (Segev, 1992).

of the 1967 War), the monolithic construction of the “self” could be managed in a rather stable fashion. But when situations arose where, for various parts of the population, different “Others” became dominant (mainly during the '90th), the management of the monolithic construction of the “self” in Israeli identity became much more difficult and complicated. One could claim that in this sense, Itzhak Rabin’s murder by Yigal Amir in 1995 evoked a final fusion that made the continuation of the monolithic “self” almost impossible. At this point, the three dominant “Others” in Israeli identity united in one given situation: This murder brought to the surface the Diaspora “Other” (in the form of the religious extreme group), the ethnic “Other” (in the form of the Yemenites raging in pain over the kidnapping of their children in the fifties) and the alien “Other”, the Palestinian (it was for the "purpose" to avoid a compromise and “giving away” parts of Israel that Rabin was murdered). This combined, simultaneous appearance of the three “Others” had a destructive affect for the collective Jewish-Israeli “self”, accelerating the disintegration of the monolithic construction within the Israeli-Jewish identity. This was particularly true for those who perceived themselves as representing the collective “self”, who still believed in the possibility of the continued existence of the monolithic construction and did not understand the writing on the wall that indicated the process of disintegration. For these, Amir’s three bullets symbolized the end of the “childhood” of the Zionist monolithic “self”.

There were other causes to the accelerated disintegration of the monolithic construction of the collective identity: the growing discrepancy between the monolithic system of interpretation and the social reality which this system was meant to clarify (Lanir, 1990). The black and white meaning based on the monolithic construction of identity, failed to account for increasingly large parts of what was happening in Israeli reality. This discrepancy caused, for some people, massive processes of denial and distortion of reality (Garber & Seligman, 1980). For others, the growing discrepancy between Zionist ideological discourse and the feeling of the younger generations became too burdensome. For them this discourse constitutes only a thin cover of personal or group political interests, allowing one hegemonic group control the others (Ram, 1993).

No one could promise that the stage of disintegration will be characterized by an immediate recognition of the internal contradictions existing in the “self”. This was a gradual process of much suffering and pain, a sense of loss, grieving and helplessness (Wiztum, Malkinson & Rubin, 1993). Some researchers maintained that contradictions have always existed in the collective identity and the process of disintegration, meant, in fact, the “self” becoming aware of them in order to stimulate an open internal dialogue. Others emphasized the process that slowly evoked these contradictions in the identity construction as a result of local and Global

processes after the formation of the monolithic construction (Ram, 1993). According to the former concept (psycho-dynamic in nature), we project onto the “Other” those parts of the “self” we could not deal with in the early stage of the construction of our collective identity. According to the latter concept, tensions within the “self” are the fruit of changes in the external environment. Examples of the former possibility in the Zionist-Israeli identity are negative internal elements, such as 'primitive', ‘oriental', 'irrational' that have been projected onto the Jewish ethnic “Other”. Similarly, femininity, weakness and even internalized anti-Semitic aggression associated with distorted external appearances were projected onto the Jewish Diaspora “Other”. Examples of the latter possibility are the changes taking place in the collective “self” as a result of generation change in Israel, or as the result of external events such as the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the peace process with the Egyptians, the fall of the Communist Bloc in 1989. These political changes created pressures and tensions in various directions: For example, a redefining of heroism as a result of the Yom Kippur War (not only fighting, but also surviving can be seen as heroic), or the change in the balance of local and world power following the fall of the Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe. Each one of these external changes introduced pressures on the construction of the monolithic “self” requiring its reinterpretation, thereby creating internal contradictions within the “self”.

There was an ideal scenario visualizing the development of the collective Israeli-Jewish identity: When there will be no external threat in reality the monolithic construction of identity will not fulfill its role anymore and will disintegrate as part of its own maturity, shedding its skin like a snake. Then a new identity construction will be established in terms of physical, social and psychological meanings. This change will enable a gradual relinquishing of the projective and extreme process of rejected aspects of the ‘self” that characterized the monolithic construction. But usually optimal processes like this happen only in fairy tales. In the more realistic and less optimal scenario, the disintegration in the changing collective identity begins to take place before existential and psychological security have been established. Then a discrepancy might develop not only between a reliable representation of reality (already recognized through the multi-cultural voices within the collective “self”) and between the manner of monolithic, traditional representation, but also a discrepancy in the sense of the “right” timing for it to take place: After all, we are not able to bear the disintegration of the monolithic construction before our sense of internal and external security has been established. That will lead us later to account for the neo-monolithic backlash.

I will try to illustrate the process of disintegration in the monolithic construction of identity by means of several examples of recent research. As in the first chapter, these are examples on a

micro level, representing macro processes that I have hitherto described in the social arena. Since I demonstrated the monolithic construction in the context of the Holocaust, I shall begin by demonstrating the cracking of the monolithic construction in that same context. In the demonstration of the monolithic construction, through the interview with Ze'ev and Yoav, I have attempted to illustrate how the alien "Other" was interwoven with the Jewish Diaspora "Other": How, for both of them, 'Israeliness' constituted an adequate answer to the domestic and the external threat. I shall now attempt to illustrate how this 'Israeliness' is beginning to crack. I shall present extracts from an interview with Alon, the son of a Holocaust survivor[3] in which the interviewee attempts to tell his life story in the context of his being the son of an officer in the Israeli army, as part of a (heroic) Israeli 'Sabra' legend. But, despite his expressed reservation at the beginning of the interview, the Holocaust appeared in his life story as an alien and dissonant experience. The fact that his father was a child-survivor of the Holocaust appeared to have been suppressed in the family story. It was apparently not recognized as a meaningful part of the process of building their collective "self". But, this chapter of the family biography could not be completely suppressed or denied: Descriptions of the Holocaust broke through Alon's story at the least appropriate stage and in a way that bordered on pathological discourse.

This example shows that the crack in the monolithic construction of Israeli identity is also connected to an inability to recognize the masculine "self" that incorporates weakness, softness and helplessness. The memory of the Holocaust represents one such aspect and the memory of shell-shock in the early Israeli wars represents another such aspect in the same general direction. I shall present the second crack in the monolithic construction of the collective Israeli identity through research in which we attempted[4] to discover what happened to people who suffered from shell-shock in the 1948 war. Levy, Wiztum et al (1989) have already presented the premise that there were soldiers who were shell-shocked in the 1948 war, a fact that was consistently ignored by Israeli society. Although there was the expertise to diagnose and treat combat reactions in 1948, this knowledge was not formally implemented. The monolithic construction in the collective identity of that period legitimized only heroic stories but suppressed those stories of perceived weakness and helplessness, thus preventing for example, recognition and treatment of shell-shock, both then and later on. The people who suffered from battle shock in 1948 were labeled as "degenerates" or cowards, or as people who had "disappeared" – as if swallowed up by the earth. Some of the people we interviewed in 1996 still

[3] - The interview was conducted by Yael Mor, for her M.A. thesis, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, the Dept. of Behavioral Sciences, (Bar-On & Mor, 1996).
[4] - Carried out with Eldad Rom and Lital Bar, supervised research: Ben Gurion University, Dept. of Behavioral Sciences(1997).

insisted that in 1948, no one in the army at that time suffered from shell-shock. We found this interesting. The popular claim was: “There was no shell-shock in the Palmach. If there were any, some of the Gahal soldiers were like that (the soldiers who were Holocaust survivors)”. This 1948 version of the monolithic construction was preserved as late as 1997!

In the context of cracks in the monolithic construction of Israeli-Jewish identity, it is interesting to compare Holocaust survivors and shell-shocked soldiers from 1948. In 1997 it was already permissible to relate what happened to survivors in the Holocaust, even the less heroic aspects of these stories (Langer, 1992). But there seems to be a taboo with regard to those shell-shocked in 1948. Perhaps we have here an indication of the depth of the masculine heroism inherent in the 'Sabra' monolithic construction that is still apparent in the collective Israeli identity till today. It is interesting to note the process of change taking place in the legitimization of shell-shock in Israeli society throughout the various Israeli wars. The first formal legitimization was given in 1973 following the Yom Kippur War, when the numbers of the shell-shocked could no longer be ignored or suppressed. As a result of lessons learned in that war, a military-medical-psychological procedure and unit were developed that was first implemented in 1982 Lebanon war to absorb, treat and document the shell-shocked in that war. Sufferers of this syndrome were indeed found and treated, even in larger numbers than in ’73, although objectively, analyzing the kind of battles fought, one could claim that the 1982 war created far less external justifications for these phenomena.

In terms of our debate, the interesting point is that with the first *Intifada*, in 1987-92 the legitimization of shell-shock vanished again. Formally, according to the Israeli army, there was no shell-shock or combat reaction during the years of the *Intifada*, but for different reasons than those of 1948 or ’56. Then the monolithic construction with regard to heroism was so powerful that there was a sort of taboo on recognizing shell-shock as a possible “weakness” among fighters. The *Intifada* brought an added political and moral meaning. It was now perceived by both psychologists and soldiers as not only part of the crack in the monolithic construction of identity, but also as taking a stand in the national debate concerning the recognition and method of struggle with the Palestinian national uprising. Thus, in terms of our debate, shell-shock in 1948 was evidence of the Diaspora “Other” in the Israeli “self”. Shell-shock during the *Intifada* indicates the power of the alien “Other” to undermine the moral superiority of the Israeli “self”. It sounds absurd that to this day, it is not clear whether or not the *Intifada* was recognized as a war. Recognition of this would indirectly have lead to recognition of the claims of the Palestinian “voices” and their struggle for their rights. An aspect of this ambiguity is that we do not yet know what happened to those suffering from phenomena of shell-shock during the

Intifada. Neither do we know what scars were left in the psyche of those who suffered from a moral and spiritual crisis during the course of their military activity. This argument is also relevant concerning the Al-Aqsa Intifada of 2000, though at that stage the neo-monolithic construction became dominant and we perceived ourselves as if we are "at war" again for our existence.

For some of the soldiers involved in its suppression, the *Intifada* created moral problems. That is, it was not only an inherent, physical threat to the person involved, but also moral-psychological threat to the Israeli-Jewish, monolithic "self". We will present quotations from an interview conducted with Shimon, a reserve officer who was exposed to a difficult situation in Gaza ("possible, imminent massacre") as the danger of "psychic death being worse than physical death". His experience and report of it indicated the inner cracks concerning his monolithic construction of his Israeli identity as a result of his military activity.

I shall attempt to illustrate my last example of a crack in the monolithic construction of the Israeli identity by means of an analysis of my interviews with the children of Nazis in Germany. It is through interviews with this group of people who, for Israeli-Jewish society, still belong even today to the most alien, totally evil "Other" (Hadar, 1991) that I attempt to indicate a certain human dimension that exists among their children. By means of an analysis of seven moral argumentations identified in the interviews with these descendants concerning the issue of their fathers' actions during the Holocaust, I demonstrate the various ways in which they tried to approach or distance themselves from the moral implications of this chapter in their family biography. Thus, cracks of human complexity have been shown that we did not anticipate, or that we refused to include in the construction of the cruelest "enemy" ever known to the Jewish-Zionist-Israeli "self". If this terrible, alien 'Other' of fifty years ago isn't one entity either, is there also a chance that the alien 'Other' facing us today - the Palestinians – won't be perceived in a similar monolithic and stereotyped fashion? This is a test still opening up before us and one that I shall relate to in the last chapter.

Personal window 2

The concept "ostensible Sabraness", that forms the basis of the next section, reminds me of a process I went through during my adolescence. I grew up in the home of German refugees: On Shabat, we played chamber music in our home and listened to the 10 AM music quiz with the same deference as others went to synagogue. The heavy, mahogany bookshelves were filled with the prose and poetry of Thomas Mann, Goethe and Schiller. Our food was European and German was the reigning language in conversation with friends, relatives and acquaintances. I grew up in that divided atmosphere: At home we actually lived in beautiful European atmosphere whereas, in the street, an inherently different, Israeli, Sabra atmosphere was in the making. There were years when I enjoyed both worlds, but, as I grew into adolescence, the tension between them became unbearable for me. I remember one particular conversation with a young neighbor who was at the same High School with me and who said bluntly: "If you continue coming to scout meetings in those pants, do you think any girl will look at you?" It became abundantly clear to me that there was some sort mysterious code here and that I was not a part of it.

My response was not long in coming. At the age of sixteen, I left home, took out an ID card and changed my name from Bruno to Bar-On (without my father's consent) and went to school at "Kaduri" (an agricultural boarding school in which heros like Rabin studies twenty years earlier). In short, I seemed to have decided to become a real "Sabra" and not only an "ostensible Sabra". To tell the truth, I didn't succeed too badly. I learned to dress untidily but according to the Sabra norm, I traveled round the Galilee on weekends, we organized ourselves into a group to go to Kibbutz Revivim, I learned to sing Palmach songs and bang rhythmically on the table. I also learned to become a farmer, to herd sheep and grow fruit trees. True, I did not become the complete farmer, this seemed to be a boundary I wasn't able to cross. I was undoubtedly happy then and felt part of something that was big and good.

The counter reaction came many years later when I returned from the Six- Days War. Perhaps it was the death of a good friend in that war, someone who had managed the orchards with me on Revivim and, perhaps, the shock of what I saw during the war itself, that overcame the Sabra trumpet of intoxicating victory. Somehow, I began to sense the cracks in my Sabraness, a shell underneath which were other processes that I tried earlier to ignore and deny. But it took a few more years and it was only after I returned from the Yom Kippur War that the cracks took on the lines of a chasm. It then became clear to me that I was living some sort of "ostensible Sabraness" that was not the whole truth for me anymore. I had already begun to wonder which of the 'real' Sabras living around me had this external envelope hiding layers that

were unfamiliar and unknown even to them. The concept of Sabra is actually a combination of a prickly exterior with something soft and tasty inside. However, the discrepancy between the Sabraness and the inside that was not like that, in my case anyway, was much greater than the ideal description of this tasty, prickly fruit.

Years after I had left the kibbutz, and become an 'academic' (here too one could elaborate and use the concept 'ostensible', but this is not a part of the present debate), we began to interview three generations of refugee families who had survived the Holocaust. It so happened that in the framework of the research, one of my students interviewed a family she knew on Revivim. When I read the interviews with them I was amazed. I had known this family for twenty-five years and had never thought of them as a family of Holocaust survivors. Over and above my own blindness and changing concepts, I wondered how much energy they had invested in not being identified with this social category. I am almost certain that, to this day, they would refuse to define themselves according to this category.

2.1 Being a "Sabra" in the Shadow of the Holocaust[1]

In contrast to the life story of Ze'ev the partisan-fighter, many of his contemporaries who endured the Holocaust and who emigrated to Israel during the forties, were required to deal not only with a new language, climate and culture, but also with a judgmental attitude like: "Why did you go like sheep to the slaughter?" This attitude was determined according to the criteria of the Israeli, monolithic "self" then fighting for the establishment of their State. Witztum, Malkinson and Rubin (1993, page 253) maintain: *"The Zionist idea... serves as a wide field for stories of heroism that are an antithesis to stories of the Diaspora and the Holocaust. An image of an Israeli native was created, a good-hearted, sociable, strong person who was good looking, with rough edges but a sweet interior like the fruit of the Sabra, a hero who never cries... A son of Israel, he symbolizes Israel's sons and daughters in a nation that is being renewed. He gives his life for his country... and Israel commemorates his memory forever as part of the cultural memory that is created over the years".*

And Tom Segev (1992) added:

"...the willingness of the survivors and their ability to change, to identify with the stereotype of the Sabra and be like him, were demanded as a 'declaration of loyalty', as an 'entrance exam', like a ritual demanded of those entering a tribe..." (Segev, 1992, page 164). Yehudit Handel added (in Segev, 1992, pages 163-4): *"...In Israel there were almost two races. One race was god-like; they had the privilege and the right to be born in Degania (the first Kibbutz) or in the Borochov neighborhood in Givatayim... and it was definitely possible to say out loud – an inferior race. People... with some sort of defect, some sort of hump and these were the people who came after the war..."* (pages 163-4).

The survivors who wished to integrate into this monolithic culture had to adopt the norms of Israeli 'Sabreness'. To a large extent they had to deny what they had experienced in the Diaspora in general and the Holocaust in particular, all that was not in accord with this concept of becoming an Israeli. Since changes in these heroic, monolithic concepts took place only after the passing of a generation, largely as a result of the Yom Kippur War, an unresolved, inter-generation transmission of inner conflicts took place concerning the monolithic construction of identity.

Alon grew up with a father who was an officer in the Israeli army. He apparently sensed the significance that this heroic component of identity had for his father, and how incompatible this component was for himself, a survivor's son. His father had emigrated to Israel from Galicia

[1] – The interview was conducted by Yael Mor as part of her M.A. thesis (Bar-On & Mor, 1996).

at the age of 16, immediately after the war. Most of his family had died in the Holocaust. I describe this process as the creating of a 'double wall' (1994): The father tries to separate the Israeli experience from his past by creating an emotional wall. The child growing up beside the father senses this wall and builds one of his own. Through the two walls, a message is transmitted from father to son that certain subjects must not be addressed between them. Even if the father had later tried to open a window in his own wall, he would probably have met with the wall of his son, and this is possibly what would have happened if his son had made such an attempt.

On the other hand, Alon was a *Sabra,* born and raised here among other *Sabras,* the son of a Moshav-born mother, herself a *Sabra,* the daughter of the founding generation. Had he wanted to, he ostensibly had every reason to feel good about the monolithic construction of his Israeli identity, like Yoav in the previous chapter. He could in fact have told the story of his life in the context of his mother being a *Sabra,* and emotionally distance himself from the subtle conflict inherent in his father's life story. But this is not what Alon chose to do. He tried to continue his father's army tradition and, at the age of 14, on his own initiative, he went to a military school in Haifa in order to begin a military career. But he left shortly afterwards, ostensibly for 'ideological reasons', and similar oscillations continued during army service and the police force, until recently, when he found his niche as a lawyer. Alon's narrative is full of failed behavioral attempts to adopt the ethic of the Israeli fighter. He seems to be battling with something he could explain. Perhaps this is why he begins his main narration (that continued for only 10 minutes) with a negative sentence: *"Ah, I will not tell my story in the context of the Holocaust... but the Holocaust will probably pop up here and there..."* From this statement, one could assume that Alon guessed the intention of the interviewer. But he states his complex attitude to the subject of identity with this opening sentence. An hypothesis already exists that he won't choose to tell his life story in the context of his mother being a *Sabra.* And this is borne out in the following sentence: *"I was born in Hadera, my father was then in the permanent forces. He emigrated after the Holocaust when he was quite young..."* Here three elements appear that form the rest of his life story and that constitute his identity: The fact that he was born in Israel, that his father was part of the Israeli fighter ethic and his previous affiliation with the Holocaust. But there is still no open conflict between them. In the following sentences, he does in fact mention his mother and her 'pure' Israeli affiliation, but she then disappears from the story (he maintains he does not remember her) and he concentrates on descriptions of his father: *"My father served in one of the Golani units... so I had direct contact with the army and with my father..."*. He describes an evening with his father's unit when he sang Israeli songs with all his

father's soldiers. He also describes the move to kibbutz and his brother's birth there as a 'very Israeli experience… very Israeli".

According to Aulagnier (1994), in order for one to be able to express and feel emotions, one needs to accept an historical version of one's life as a reason for living. The person is in need of knowledge concerning the question: Where do I come from? If he or she is surrounded with silence instead of answers, a difficult and basic dilemma is aroused. It is at this stage, when Alon managed to establish his being a *Sabra* and an Israeli in relation to the military and Israeli character of his father, that the next extract appears about his maternal grandmother, when his verbal narrative breaks down with an outburst of laughter, and a story of vague implications and unconscious meanings is described: *"…Now this grandmother was an intellectual type and she had a book that she loved very much (he begins to laugh) a small black book with pictures of horrors from the Holocaust. (he laughs) Now, how did I learn about the Holocaust, you may ask. She would take me into bed with her, sometimes with one of my cousins, boys and girls, (it is not clear whether he says "one of ours") and she would open the book and turn the pages and cries of "oy oy" would escape from her throat (a loud laugh) and now, ah, my father was a Counselor in the army officers' course then (he laughs and I join in) I don't know if all the officers in this military base would wear peaked caps and the Germans (he laughs loudly) the SS and the Wermacht also had peaked caps (he can't get the words out because he is laughing so hard) and I didn't (slowly) understand (laughter) it, that is, what I am trying to say is that the matter (quickly) of the army was also quite important for me, for my father; when I saw him in his uniform and I saw the black and white photographs, I didn't quite understand – she was whining about the actions of the soldiers and these soldiers appeared positive to me and I am not a psychologist, but I imagine that this made me look at the Holocaust in a special way and I must add that I liked that book very much…"*

Here the slightly romantic monolithic picture that Alon tried to paint around his Israeli identity in the previous paragraph, all at once disintegrates. But this disintegration is unconscious and distressing for Alon. With the help of laughter he tries to overcome the alarm, confusion and helplessness, as if forcefully attempting to imprint them far beyond the words. The fantasy about his father's army cap in relation to SS officers caps and the explanation that the soldiers (in the Holocaust) seemed "positive" in the military context of his father, represent in a paradoxical minimalism Alon's confusion with regard to the question: "Where do I come from and where am I going?". The Israeli fighter father is momentarily perceived as a perpetrator, similar to the Nazi soldiers. It might be more important to Alon that he is active and a fighter, and he is thus not obliged to relate to the fact that his father, seen from childhood as an Israeli hero, was, during the

Holocaust, a weak and helpless victim of those SS officers. He later admits: *"I couldn't picture him (my father) among the many variations of victims there... self confidence for instance... the look in his eyes... details of clothing... and the fact that he had a revolver or a rifle... I could not identify him with the victims"*.

The more he avoided presenting his life story in relation to the Holocaust, the more trapped he became in this confusion. In the second part of the interview, he tells about his dreams in which the figures of dead people from the Holocaust appear. They appear as *"people's black hair"...* as *"someone following me... looking at me from a distance"...* When his grandmother died he tells about her death but immediately, in the same breath, he adds: *"She of course did not die in the Holocaust, but her entire family died... and my grandfather had a cousin... the survivor of a family that was murdered in Rumania"*. Alon has another uncle who survived the Holocaust and who had a severe emotional crisis at the age of 60. It might be easier for Alon to characterize the "Other" emerging from the Holocaust through his uncles (the "pathological liar" and the one who had a severe emotional crisis). He is afraid of this "Other" and is therefore trying to eradicate it from his own biography, his life story.

Alon completes his story thus: *"That's it, that's what I can tell you about myself"*. And what else could he tell? Alongside the enormous desire to preserve the mask of the *Sabra,* the image of the father as an active fighter, Alon is hounded by figures and fantasies from his father's past. He went through a process that was still subconscious, of his monolithic construction disintegrating while he spoke. It would appear that Alon no longer owned his monolithic biography construction, but he was unable to cope consciously and contain the varied content which constituted it. He vacillated between them, sometimes hanging onto the "Other" (the Holocaust-Diaspora other) and sometimes onto the Israeli "self" and, as yet, he did not find a way to create an open dialogue between these two parts.

Personal window 3

As a child, the generation of 1948 was, for me, one of giants. It began with the fact that my late brother Michael, who was 6 years older than I, did not belong to this generation. I remember the two of us during a rare moment of togetherness in our youth, sitting and yearningly singing "Bat Sheva" and "Bab El Wad" and feeling his longing, perhaps even more than my own, to be a part of this great experience. Later on, when I got to "Kaduri", there, looking down at me from the walls, were photographs of the first classes, among them Yigal Alon, Chaim Guri, Itzhak Rabin, almost hallowed figures. Our wonderful headmaster, the late Ya'akov Piat, could tell about these legendary days as his personal memories. We were the eleventh class and they were from the first to the fifth classes…and when we joined Kibbutz Revivim, affiliated with the Kibbutz Hameuchad Movement, this journey of admiration continued and it was pleasant to rub shoulders with people who were protagonists in S. Yizhar's book – "Hizbat Hizaa."

But, as with any natural maturing process, the time comes when idols are deconstrcuted. For me, this stage began after the Six-Day War when, together with Giora Mosinson, I confronted Israel Galilee and Golda Meir on the Palestinian issue. In 1970 I even dared to write an article in the Kibbutz Hameuchad Weekly concerning the need for establishing a Palestinian State. A week later, Galilee arrived at Revivim to participate in the general meeting where he spoke about the need to pull out "bad weeds" at the roots. At this time we established a branch of "Sheli" (left wing political movement) in Revivim, the largest in the Kibbutz Hameuchad Movement, to the mortification of Golda Meir who related to Revivim as "her" kibbutz. As far as she was concerned, the Palestinians were not a people, and they were, quite simply, "not nice".

But during this time, I began to perceive the 'absolute good' I had once admired as the 'absolute evil' that must now be resisted. It was only during the research discussed further on, in the 'nineties, when I began to interview the generation of 1948 on the subject of shell shock that was not reported, that I truly grew up. Now I could sense their helplessness and weakness that they could express in public. Only now could I relate to them as people, mortals, acknowledge their pain that was held in with no legitimate outlet. How long it has taken me to mature with regard to the issues of identity! Does this stem from my own limitations or from the slowness of the social process taking place around me, or perhaps both of them together?

2.2 The Social Role in Avoiding Acknowledgement of Battle shock in the 1948 war[1]

The disintegration of the monolithic construction with regard to shell shock during the 1948 war is difficult to assess, even more difficult perhaps than with regard to the silence or silencing of Holocaust survivors. The War of Independence undoubtedly constituted a formative event in the history of the State of Israel. The course of the war, and moreover, its results, have to a great extent formed its image, its boundaries and the power patterns of the entire area. The war, initially a violent struggle between Jews and Arabs within the boundaries of Mandatory Israel, became a struggle beyond State borders with the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel and the invasion of Arab armies (Horwitz & Lisak, 1971). The Jewish Settlement in Israel paid a heavy price: about 6000 people were killed and an even greater number wounded. In the spring of '49, the war ended with the signing of cease-fire agreements between Israel and several Arab States.

A romantic, almost yearning image has been created around that war, especially by what is known as the generation of 1948, who wholeheartedly adopted the monolithic ethos of the 'fighter': An ethos that is still strongly rooted in the personal and collective consciousness of Israeli society. A unique significance was attributed to it that stemmed from the essential naivete inherent in the Zionist revolution and the collective memory of the Jewish nation: "the new Jew" and "the *Sabra* myth", "the trauma of the Holocaust" and "a besieged society". Lomski-Feder (1994) defined the basic codes of the ethos as determination, initiative and resourcefulness, friendship, daring, danger, sacrifice, the "purity" of weapons, professionalism etc. Lomski-Feder maintained that this ethos originated during the struggle for the existence of the Yishuv and the State. The War of '48 constituted a foundation and a heroic reference point in the course of collective memory. It is therefore easy to understand Doctor Wolman's words in relation to the Hebrew youth in '48: *"The Hebrew soldier has the highest standard of ethics and ideology. Hebrew youth is imbued with love for the homeland and his heart's desire is to serve his nation and his country faithfully. Every young man in Israel is always prepared to report for the duty of protection. From childhood they are educated in an atmosphere of pioneering nationalism and when they reach maturity, their hearts are burning with the elevated ideals of the nation".* (Quoted by Wiztum & Levy, 1989).

[1] - This chapter, "The Social Role in Avoiding Acknowledgement of Battle Reactions in 1948" is based on research carried out together with Eldad Rom and Lital Bar during 1996-7. Seventy-three ex-combatants from 1948 were interviewed. 23 refused to cooperate or claimed there was no phenomenon of shell shock in 1948. 17 had a vague partial memory of combatants' battle reactions. 18 could remember in detail cases of battle reactions, 4 of whom reported their own personal battle reactions. The interview presented here is one of these four.

Recent interviews with members of that generation indicate that battle reactions, in their various forms, were almost completely absent from the reports of the '48 War. For instance, C.R claimed - *"I know of no case of shell shock…there were no such cases. Absolutely not... I do know of shirkers; cowards who simply ran away from the fighting… That's all. No shell shock"*. Declarations of this kind consistently appeared in conversations held with members of this generation. However, in the light of what we know today about battle reactions and their frequency among combatants exposed to difficult experiences during the war, their relative rarity among 1948 combatants seemed surprising and doubtful. It is more probable that society played a role in silencing the phenomenon of shell shock in 1948: It helped pre-State Israel or Jewish settlements in Palestine preserve the monolithic aspect of the 'fighter' ethos. In this framework, the phenomenon of shell shock was turned by the military hegemony then as a conscious or unconscious wish to shirk army service.

Battle reaction is not a new phenomenon. The phenomenon has been universally known since the first World War and it has since then been recognized that those wounded emotionally, or 'shell shocked' in varying degrees, are an inevitable part of war (Noy, 1991). Solomon (1993) sees participation in battle as a situation of particularly extreme stress requiring massive coping resources in order to overcome external and internal pressures. When a soldier is confronted by extreme demands of this kind and feels he cannot implement an effective coping mechanism, then "battle reaction", also known as "shell shock", will occur. It sometimes seems that in such extreme conditions of pressure as war, the "normal" response to such an "abnormal" situation would be to escape from 'external madness' to 'internal madness' (Guri, 1985).

Any attempt, however, to attribute qualities of ostensible 'softness' to the *Sabra* combatants of 1948 (by recognizing emotional battle reactions as a normal response to the pressure of battle) – were doomed in advance. Nonetheless, total repression of the phenomenon became impossible, if only because of its many expressions. A solution was found, for instance, by projecting the phenomenon onto an opportune 'Other', e.g., onto the image of the new immigrants, the Gahal army recruits[2], as they were engraved in the common memory. Rising up distinctly and sharply, in contrast to the "fighter" and the brave *Sabra* ethos, was the figure of immigrants from the "Diaspora". Wiztum & Levy (1989) maintained that all national-social discourse indicated a contrast between the volunteer who was native-born and imbued with heroic spirit, and those who were recruited later on in the general recruitment, particularly those

[2] – Gahal was a unit of military recruits who had survived the Holocaust. Many of the young ones were recruited upon arrival from Europe in the midst of the fighting, with very little training. As a result, many of them died in a very difficult battle around Latrun, the battle against the siege on Jerusalem that took place in the spring of 1948.

immigrants who came after the Holocaust, and who were regarded as ‘cowards’ and unfit for fighting.

With this kind of prejudice, it was almost required to relate battle reactions in 1948 solely to Gahal people. And indeed, some of our interviewees claimed that *“if any, there may have been cases like that among Gahal people”.* An echo of this approach was found in the words of Professor Halperin, neurologist and psychiatrist and who was, for a time, the well known editor of the Hebrew “Medical Weekly”. At the time he said: *We were surprised by the relative rarity of emotional problems among our soldiers… in our youth beat a strong, fearless heart… the psychotic cases increased as the entire army increased… the storm of the war swept away the fainthearted as well… the cases among new immigrants still not released from the emotional blows of their tragic past… and who are unable to withstand the mirror of the shock of what happened in the war”* (In Wiztum & Levy, 1989). We found no empirical evidence of this claim. The opposite claim will be made in the following testimony of C.R.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that the historical survey of the treatment of battle reactions carried out by Neuman & Levy (1989) indicated that despite the large number of casualties, virtually no emotional casualties were observed in the war of ’48. However, the state of affairs in Israel during that period made it difficult to accept this picture. Today we know that battle reactions occurred on all fronts and in all units, including the elite units of the ‘Palmach’ and ‘Givati’ (Wiztum & Levy, 1989). Nonetheless, it was difficult for Wiztum and Levy to find any indication of battle reaction in the scanty medical literature of the time. Such concepts as: “cowards, hypochondriacs, shirkers psychopaths, those who couldn’t take it, those who lacked the spirit of willingness for military activity”, and so on, frequently appeared in descriptions of the shell-shocked.

Wiztum & Levy (1989) claimed that there were many emotional casualties in the war; some severe casualties, sometimes mass battle reactions. It seems that we must look for psychosocial explanations for the absence of battle reaction testimonies and reports from the ’48 war. The labeling inflicted on those ‘shell shocked’ seemed judgmental-moral (cowards, degenerates) in nature, a clearly negative labeling. Social condemnation was so severe that when 15 of the "degenerates” in the ‘Harel’ unit hid under a house in Kiryat Anavim (after being bombed by the Arabs), their ‘healthy’ friends took malicious pleasure in the fact that these particular men had been wounded due to their hiding that was associated to their 'cowardness'.

The power of these mechanisms is indicated by the fact that even today, 55 years after the war, many ’48 combatants continue firmly to deny both the existence of the phenomenon in their midst and the issue itself. The condemnation and denial of the phenomenon are so rooted that we

had difficulty exposing the full extent of the phenomenon even in interviews we carried out during 1997. The bond of silence is still maintained and preoccupation with the subject is akin to putting salt on open wounds that should be ignored, and is preferred, so it seems, to an attempt to acknowledge and heal them.

What happened, then, to people who did suffer from battle shock in '48 when this was 'forbidden' according to the predominant social code? How did these people cope with shell shock without receiving treatment at the time? How have they coped with the social labeling all these years since then, while living and raising their children and grandchildren within Israeli society? For this purpose I shall present an extract from an interview conducted with C.R. in 1996, in which he tells his story, including the shell shock he had suffered from in '48 and which he only recognized years later, in retrospect.

"I am 65 and I was 17 then. The age difference between us is so great, he hides inside me, but he is only a small part of me". "Can I give you an example?... I am not typical of that period but this event is typical. I had a friend, he was older than I... I'd prefer not to give his name, but he was a veteran 'Palmachnik', he was a hunk of a man, like those Palmachniks who later became truck drivers or worked in construction or things like that. He was a real man, I mean, I was a little kid and to us he seemed a real man. During the battle at the Kastel, we were on top and... it was a tough battle and suddenly the guy was terrified. He ran the whole way from the Kastel to Kiryat Anavim and... hid somewhere... I remember him screaming, the guy screamed – "mama, mama", or something like that. It didn't, I couldn't even grasp it. How a strong, healthy man like that, ... afterwards I didn't see him again, I mean... the man with shell shock was so ashamed, and all the others were so ashamed, that they transferred him and the whole matter was forgotten, and I don't know if there are five men today who would admit "He had shell shock". They'd say "he ran to get help", or they'd say... I don't know what... but... and there were lots of cowards among the heroes.

In the battle when I got shell shock, my commander... he ran away from that battle, what can I say. He denies it, others defend him. Everyone who was there knows he ran away from the battle. Now, to this very day he can't accept it, he can't accept that he ran away from the battle, he abandoned us because he was overwhelmed with terrible fear. Now the connection between fear and shell shock wasn't understood then, because in fact the fear wasn't rational, not exactly - everyone was afraid, but you get over the fear, you're young, you're a fighter. I was frightened all the time but I fought. Everyone was frightened and they all fought, except for Raful[3] *maybe,*

[3] – Later Chief of Staff during the Lebanon War of 1982 and, then, a Member of Parliament. The places mention in this interview are all on the main road to Jerusalem. My part in the interview appear with the letter 'D'.

who was always enthusiastic. But... but people got over it and what is today called "shell shock" was misunderstood then. It was understood then as someone's attempt to say about someone else that he was afraid. They transmitted this in all sorts of ways.

As I see it, a lot of things happened as a result of this. For instance, someone else had shell shock in the war. He wasn't frightened of the battle itself but of the responsibility of the battle so in his case the process was simply to fall asleep and he missed the battle. So I don't really know where the boundary lies, what exactly to call it. Because it wasn't shell shock, it was fear of responsibility. Maybe for my commander it was fear of the situation he faced as commander... when he was ambushed. With me it was simpler. With me it was really like classic shell shock. It was on the way to Jerusalem. I was in other battles but I didn't get shell shock.

The big mistake was, I'm beginning at the end, if it had happened in a modern war, someone would have noticed me, and spoken to me, or would have... done something with me, my entire life would have been different. I wouldn't have hidden it away inside myself for so many years, it wouldn't have bothered me so much, it wouldn't have become a nightmare I've had almost every week since '48, and it's been many years now. I mean, somehow, I'm not... I'm not much in favor of psychiatric treatment. I mean I don't have anything for or against it. But, there's a place, when something happens, if someone opens you up or you express what you are feeling, you can talk about it... there was no one to talk to then... The main problem that I vaguely remember about all the people around me was that... it was forbidden to be afraid, it was forbidden to cry. Ah, you can't take children of 17, 18, and turn them into robots without even, let's say, appropriate preparation. In America, for instance, they take them for a year's training in the desert with iron discipline, what did we know in the Palmach? There was no discipline, nothing. I mean, there was no military-school background like the parachutists today. For instance, they go through backbreaking training and in the end they get through proud and prepared. They took us from our homes, put us through a little mini-course and sent us to war. Our commanders hadn't fought a single battle before they took command of us, and then 400 people were killed in our unit, a third of the battalion (silence).

So I think that this subject...is not researched today, but... it's still taboo. Because... we still can't talk about the commanders who got shell shock, and there are a lot of them. My own story was very simple. I... we went out there, three or four armored vehicles, most of us were demolition experts, and we had to, sort of cover for the other side in a battle where the main line failed and... we were ambushed and... there was a tough battle and... the commander turned the vehicle round, the only one who managed to turn the vehicle and fled, said he was going to get help and he knew there was no help to be brought, it was just an excuse, and we were left there

without command and... without going into details, about twenty or twenty-two men were left there in the end. The other armored vehicles went over mines. The only operable vehicle was the commander's. The driver was excellent and … when he gave evidence, he said that he took the commander and they went to get help. If you think about it for a moment, the commander – why didn't he send me to get help? Why did he send himself? It wasn't the driver – the driver was carrying out an order. I suddenly remember they refused to take some of the wounded because they were in a hurry and... but we were left, and this... and we were left there, surrounded, and… the Arabs in the ambush were afraid and waited for the Jordanian legion to arrive.

So we were left, each one in his own corner, most of us pretended to be dead, it's hard to know what the others did, I pretended to be dead, (quietly): I don't know about the others, I only know that… the Arabs were sitting round us a few tens of meters away. They were sitting on hills and… there's a small wadi there and… we had a lot of wounded. They were slowly dying. Now, the Arabs around us had time and they were making coffee, we saw them… the smoke and the smell and… they didn't have anything to do so they shot at the dead, at who they thought was dead. I, and others beside me, were pretending to be dead, and they kept shooting at the dead and they didn't hit me. For some reason – all it took – it took an hour or two, hundreds of bullets were fired and… my friend was lying next to me, I could feel him trembling, his blood draining onto me, and how he died. And they kept on shooting, shooting and laughing, I mean they didn't think they were shooting at us, it was just to get rid of tension, and… at some point, I don't know when, maybe round about 4.30 or 5 o'clock, a cloud or shadow came down against the far mountain, and it got dark… and… suddenly, I got up, at the same time two other men got up and we started running (silence) it was as if… without deciding together. We were the only ones who survived. I don't know how many died there, I don't know. How many died before, how many died afterwards, I don't know, but three of us remained alive – one was killed later on and two of us were left. The other guy wanted to take revenge on the commander for years afterwards, then, that very night they took the commander in… an airplane to… the Negev. And there, he, he was promoted and transferred from our unit.

We ran to Kiryat Anavim or Ma'aleh HaHamisha, I don't remember which, we ran to where there were people, then I lost a day and a half, to this day I don't know what happened (quietly) that time is lost. What came back later was the day … I didn't remember it all. I… I remembered that something had happened and I kept telling a different story. When I got to the top, and I remembered, and I knew that something terrible had happened. I didn't know what had happened. It's hard to explain, but I didn't know exactly what had happened. And

immediately after that they took me to the frontline, to fight. They gave me a day to rest, and no one behaved as if something unusual had happened.

D: Did anyone talk to you at all?

C.R.: No one! I don't remember anyone asking anything, I mean, it was all… out of twenty, three people returned one of whom was dead, they didn't even ask what we'd done… I don't remember anything and I was sent off to fight immediately after that. I mean, I fought for two months in harder battles. And… there was someone, I don't remember if he was with us or not, in any case, he knows the whole story of that battle, and he always talked about me and I didn't remember that it was me, he would talk about me and I didn't remember a thing. And then… about 20 years later, this memory suddenly came back. I remember being near Caesarea or Herzilyia and suddenly the story came back to me. And I was in shock, for a few weeks, I couldn't move, and then I wrote it down. I mean, I haven't gotten over the nightmare. Once or twice I tried going to a psychologist, but it didn't help, and then this discovery came too late… It came as a story – it wasn't me anymore. I am already 65 and I was 17 then… the gap between us is so big, that 17 year-old is hiding inside me but today he is only a small part of myself (silence).

Now, I think that it was characteristic, that the commander of that battle was shell shocked, I was shell shocked, and others were also shell shocked, all of us were, each one in a different way, and nothing was investigated, nothing… no one drew conclusions. Did a certain commander fall asleep or was he tired? Was he really so tired that he couldn't get up for a battle he had planned and that later failed. That battle was meant to be the largest in that area during that time. A battle that was meant to open up the way to Jerusalem at the hardest point, when the Kastel was already in our hands, that place remained in Jordanian hands until '67. Then they were very afraid of it, so that… many people were left with a scar. People were killed there… a whole generation of commanders brought to take care of us was killed there. But I was half a kid… I joined up when I was 17. I was maybe the youngest there. And... I was extremely sensitive and afraid, and I fought rather well to overcome it, and maybe I fought a bit too much, I mean, someone even told me once – what do you want, do you want to be a strainer? A grater? When I was wounded. I even sought that challenge, but… now, I know it was a kind of shell shock.

D: How did you get through the fighting after that?

C.R.: I only know I was there because there were witnesses, but I hardly remember a thing. I was like a robot. I think I got through that whole period, from that day, to the day I was wounded during the attack on the Old City, and we were taken to hospital. There, part of my memory slowly came back to me. But in the middle of the battles, I no longer remember the order, but I participated in at least… let's say 5-6 large, hard battles. I hardly remember a thing. Now,

people remember me wandering around the Catacombs, but I don't remember anything. That moment... when we were lying there pretending to be dead, I remember every detail – going there, how many we were, who was in the armored cars, and how we were suddenly ambushed and... how the mines... and how they fired at us and how we got out of the armored cars, and how the commander's armored car turned around... I remember lying there. I didn't remember it all immediately but after twenty years when I remembered... I remember lying there in a... a kind of execution... I mean, I can only translate it in terms of - putting me up against a wall, covering my eyes, because I could hardly see through half-closed eyes, 20 soldiers firing at me - each one firing and no one hitting me. I don't know, the feeling of being shot at, at least once a week I wake up from a nightmare of them still shooting. I see them shooting me and... I want to scream.

I'm really sorry that there were no... no more precise investigations then. If you try and research the War of Independence today, I will tell you one thing, someone else will tell you something else, there is no history, each one writes his own history from his own point of view. What is left of the War of Independence is not only inaccurate, it is... each one has his own version. There is no one truth. All I know is that there is not one single version of the truth. How can they know? No one can, there were no photographers, no reporters, a reporter came once or twice but nothing else was documented. After all there are no photographs – all the photographs we see were taken afterwards, none were taken at the time...

My nightmares began in Israel and I had them overseas too. I began to be depressed, people were afraid. For instance, there was a party 6 months after the war and... everyone who had been together in the Movement came. I got up on a chair and made the sort of speech that made everyone run away. I was good-looking, and I would go out with a girl and she would run away after half an hour. I brought death with me. It stayed with me, I wore black. And I was left with a sort of depression, till now, I mean, I can get into a depression for a week, and I have tried all sorts of medication, decided it wouldn't help. But the nightmares began after I was already depressed. I got it out in all sorts of ways. I went back to the war and couldn't get over it.

I fell, the first thing that happened, I fell, and then they put me on board ship to fetch immigrants, Holocaust refugees and bring them to Israel, people whose suffering was a thousand times greater than my own. As for me, my identification with them was so deep that I was able not to think – it was the first and best therapy I had. When I got to the ship I met survivors, all of them from Auschwitz and camps like that. We traveled by train to fetch them. There were 3000 people on the journey, packed in like sardines. And they still talked then – told me the story once

or twice a day. Some of them talked and I talked with some of them, I felt as if what I had gone through was dwarfed because I could not remember the true story. I suddenly thought – about the Kastel – we fired, they fired at us, it… there… they had no weapons… I remember the story of someone who searched Jews' rectums, found diamonds and sold them… stories, stories they still told then, before they also stopped talking, before they learned to be silent and before they again learned to talk about it later on. When people came and talked. (silence) and… my identification with them was an escape… from what I had gone through. Because… if someone went through the Holocaust, it was like overcoming something much more difficult than what I went through for instance. That was my way…

D: Maybe they didn't want to listen when you would talk about it.

C.R.: No, no one wanted to listen and I didn't want them to. The truth is that, until five years ago, I don't remember ever having talked about what happened there. I talked about it in general and they related as if it was a wonderful war. And why was I giving this kind of testimony, and what about the Palmach spirit, where was the heroism… look, I didn't have a satisfactory explanation for seeing things differently. Maybe I didn't remember stealing chickens and how – how we sat around on the grass… and how we screwed some gorgeous kibbutz girl, or something like that. I only really remember that fear – the dead, the wounded. I mean, if an evening were arranged today, with 20 people from my generation, and I were to say what I have said to you – they'd kill me.

D: Still?

C.R.: I mean, they wouldn't kill me, they know me, they'd say "poor guy, he had shell shock" and – "he's crazy, unbalanced…" but, no, it wouldn't be something to take to heart. I'm still a macabre sort of joke…

D: Has someone ever approached you over the years and said - "listen, something similar happened to me" - and told you a story that he felt you were open to hearing?

C.R.: No one has approached me. The first time I saw shell shock victims, was in Nes Tziona during the 'seventies. There were a few more who were hospitalized from the Six-Day war – then they hid in trenches… look, I think that my story has elements of a great many problems… the problems of veteran Israeli society and its effects… and maybe in a certain sense, it has an effect to this day. Because, after a year or two the new immigrants stopped talking and after a few years the entire generation is unaware of it, and today there is already a young generation that says "I'm afraid". At that time, being different was impossible. In my children's generation, being different is far more acceptable. At first I wasn't different I was a good fighter, and I was

one of them, and I joined the Palmach at only 17, I was among the builders of this country, this cannot be denied. All these things, it all began from the fact that no one told the truth. No one investigated, no one was questioned, no-one gave an account Maybe too much is accounted for today, maybe too much is done, but the… but what happened was that I had shell shock and I am not ashamed of it, I don't have a problem with it. But, to say at this stage, "well, he had shell shock" – how can this lead to real research? How can it…

Look, after the war we would all sit around, we all had a period when we were – mentally ill – it's impossible to describe… we came… before I went on board the ship, I don't remember much before that time, more or less during that year, then we returned from the war and there was a place in Tel Aviv called "Institute for Determining the Condition of Soldiers Who Left the Army through no Fault of Their Own" and there were wounded Palmach people there. We would walk about at night. During the day we would sit around at Kasit Cafe and go to a matinee, and go and eat at Geula's and we would sit in Cafe Nussbaum and I remember, we had a need, we had a need to be together… and we didn't talk about… we talked about all sorts of things, looking for things and there were new immigrants selling watches and guys, a few guys from the Palmach who brought gold teeth from an Arab, it was a… when I think about it today, it makes me shudder, but then, I suppose I was, I was restless and didn't know what was happening to me and no one came and asked, what's making you… and I, rather hung around all the guys during that time… And to this day they sit around, sit around the whole day, for two-three hours and talk. They say – "D'you remember eating…" "It cost 2 pennies for a kilo in Or Yehuda, and then I went there", but it wasn't in Or Yehuda, it was in Ramat Gan", no it wasn't, it wasn't in Ramat Gan, it was…" Sitting around for hours and they remember the names, and what projector they used. And there is always someone, who said – "listen, what was the name of that girl who slept around…" And that's what they have talked about all day for all these years, they come and they talk. They've moved somewhere else now, but it isn't the same anymore. They only remember up to '48, after that, nothing! 30 years have passed in Solel Boneh Construction Company, 30 years in Ma'atz Road Construction Company, they've made money, raised children, they've got grandchildren, today they come from America for this! They come from… some come and sit, I tell you they live in America today, I don't know how long they've been there, they come for one or two months, they sit, and they talk the whole time. It starts off with, let's say, "Macabi Tel Aviv lost, "Ah. Yes". "D'you remember…Halevi when he was the goal keeper?" "He got three goals then from Patz", "Not from Patz", "Patz was in Beitar Tel Aviv then and it starts like that and it always gets back to the same things, not the difficult things though, not the fears, God forbid.

I sat there listening to them for a whole year. They didn't mention a word about the hardships I told you about before, and nonetheless, they're people who have participated in a lot of battles, a lot of wars. Not all of them are guys who say they were in the Palmach, and in Etsel and in Lechi (the Underground movements 1946-8) – so they had to be in all the places… to this day, I, when I think back over the years, I mean, I met a few guys from America who were in the Palmach with me. One of them was a porter, another worked in a shoe shop… brilliant guys, I mean – something happened to them. After the war they were never the same again. One of them, he's been stuck in America for 50 years already and no one has seen or heard from him, no one… and I'm sure that what you are dealing with (addresses me), is much wider than what someone like myself is willing to tell.

D: During those first years, did anyone ever say to you, "listen, something's happened to you", did anyone manage to sense something of all this?

C.R.: No. None of those guys. You can talk about it in Sweden, but not here. Who can you talk to about it - the young guys? It won't mean anything to them. I have, let's say, if I think about it, 10 people I'm close to, and, except for one… not one of them really knows the story. Who knows? What it did to me doesn't interest them either. A few months ago some American published a book about depression and it was translated into Hebrew. And this book did something good in Israel, for the first time it legitimized the depression of men. Because when I used to say "I'm not coming…" Why, are you in a bad mood? Got a fever? Up till 6 months ago, the people of my generation and a little younger, did not accept the word "depression", unless it related to people who fitted the theoretical profile of psychologists and psychiatrists. But, in my group… serious people, I don't know, that word "depression", they didn't understand it. There were periods when I would just sit around without moving, something like that. Who could I explain that to? To my wife, or to a couple of younger people, but I couldn't explain it to my friends. And then this book did something very important for us. A person, a man, someone born in this country and so on, can get depressed! It is suffering that – cannot be measured, not by fever and not in a laboratory. I think this whole generation is messed up. I keep my distance today (silence). But, sometimes one feels something, you know.

D: Among the doctors then, or people in the medical profession, wasn't there, wasn't there anyone who tried to relate to it?

C.R: Look, firstly, from '51 I went overseas to get away from myself. Not so much from Israel. And then I was able to be in a different reality. And there, no one knew the difference between Catacombs and valleys… I painted and did all sorts of things and traveled around. I lived a

rather American-style life – in the sense of… an America that no longer exists, that of Charlie Parker… but there, stories of battles and wars were offensive, and they didn't know that I had been through hard things. There was a psychiatrist, a great one, studied with Freud, and... he was a family friend. I was sent to him and he tried to help me, but he always looked for the connection between my stories and what had happened to me in my childhood with my parents. Though this too was problematic. But every time I'd relate to the war in any way, I still didn't remember, but I would relate to fears, nightmares, I didn't know where they came from, I knew something had happened, but I said to him – I lost two days during the war. And he always tried to connect this with things that happened to me when I was 3-4… so it didn't help me. Later on, when I came back, there wasn't anyone who asked.

I worked on myself for years, and some of the nightmares have disappeared. I have overcome a lot of the fears I used to have. I was afraid to go out, I was afraid to be with people, afraid of closed places, of elevators… I was afraid of sitting in the middle of a row. There wasn't anything I wasn't afraid of… no phobia that didn't attach itself to me, almost all of them, I overcame them. I mean, it's still hard for me to be with a lot of people, still hard, I dream at night, I wake up. There were also times in New York when I … really broke down emotionally. There was no one there to share it with. I would get to the root of it, of the age of 17, and suddenly, a hell you never got out of. So today it's finished, but that hell was inside me, and I softened it through Holocaust survivors, but it isn't my story. Nonetheless, I think that shell shock of the kind I went through, in such hard conditions, after all there was no army and no rear. It was – we were besieged. There was no food, no water. So it was something that… never, one can't… and who knows, how many people there are in this country, and who knows how many mistakes, how many errors, and how many blunders and how many terrible things have happened because they did not know how to relate to emotional things. I don't know, there are people at the head of this State today, people who were soldiers, and they probably haven't resolved their emotional problems from that period or others later on. I don't know how it affects them today, how it affects their decision-making, don't know... you see it all the time but you can't put your finger on it, can't place it.

Maybe it doesn't matter today, but, to sit in some room, for an entire night, with 3-4 other people: let's share what we went through. How we hid it, how ashamed we were… because I assume I was ashamed, otherwise how could I have forgotten it like that? If you take a young guy today, put him through shell-shock, put him in... pretend to be dead... look, I am really alive… then they'll bring him to hospital – the psychiatrist will talk with him, there will be people he can talk to. Whereas two days afterwards, I was already fighting again.

Now, there was no shell shock in Gahal. They were the bravest combatants, the ones I fought with, and they outdid everyone. One of them was killed next to me, someone who had arrived by boat from Cyprus maybe two weeks before, maybe before they closed the route. What a fighter! But we didn't know how to talk to him, we forgot to ask him for his name, and he died, and when I went to the commander, and I told him – "Do me a favor. There's an unknown partisan here" and he thought about it, said "OK". And I didn't know who he was, didn't know what… and… just a moment, they're all "weaklings"… And the only time in my life, the only time, apart from once when I hit some Arab during a battle, when he tried to kill me with a knife. The only time I hit someone was when he called a new immigrant a "weakling". It sounded terrible to me but then when I worked on the boat and I saw them and when they came to Israel…"

The deconstruction of the monolithic myth of the 'Sabra' fighter of 1948

C.R was willing to tell about his personal case of shell shock in 1948. Through reflecting on that period he was also able to identify others with the phenomenon of battle reaction (the soldier who ran from the Kastel), battle exhaustion (the commander who fell asleep), and shell-shock of the commander who ostensibly went with the armored car to bring help although he knew he couldn't do a thing for his soldiers who were scattered about in the area. He gives us a detailed description of shock and paralysis during battle, the resulting 'robot'-like action, the total, immediate and ongoing amnesia, the difficult depression accompanying the amnesia, the never-ending nightmares (to this very day) and the memory that overwhelmed him 20 years later. C.R. describes how the encounter with Holocaust survivors on the boat to Israel created a relative perspective for him regarding his own distress ("the first and best therapy I had"). He denies the popular notion that it was the Gahal people who tended to get shell shock. He describes the limited ability of his friends to talk about the difficult things then and now and how this difficulty made brilliant people wretched. A painful atmosphere accompanies his words: a description of the less heroic aspect of the battles that deconstructs the monolithic nature of the myth of the tough fighter.

Talking to someone who was willing to listen, willing to contain the difficult things he experienced might have helped a younger C.R. Today C.R. is 65. He may be willing to reconstruct the horror of the 17-year-old, the person who experienced these things, but that youngster is already a small part of the whole personality formed in the meantime and of the biography written and re-written many times during his life. Thus the interview is accompanied

by a heavy sense of loss that, to an extent, aided continued suppression of these impressions – because if it has hitherto been impossible to release the burden – would it still be worthwhile? I felt a sense of missed opportunities – of "where have you been all this time?" particularly among people like C.R. who have spoken out and who nonetheless feel the loneliness inherent in both bearing shell shock and its being silenced. This silencing remains to this very day and is an unbearable burden. This is particularly difficult in the light of other silences that have since been broken in Israeli society: for instance, the legitimized acceptance of those shell-shocked during recent Israeli wars or the legitimization given to Holocaust survivors to tell their stories, including the less heroic chapters therein. It is the shell shock of 1948 that is still being totally silenced. Is it the last shred of the monolithic construction in the Israeli collective identity?

Some Palmach people from the war of '48 still feel that this legitimization has not been granted them, or they feel they are unworthy of it. They are still required to serve as a collective symbol – or, perhaps, they are unable to escape this image of themselves. Even when cases of shell-shock are talked about they are often accompanied by the sharp self-criticism of that time, by lack of forgiveness, lack of acceptance of fear and weakness as human reactions, an echo of the distress of those times, as if this denial is still being enforced. An example of this is N.G's testimony. Having told us about cases of shell shock, in the end he still feels impelled to repeat the initial principle: "*Look, **serious people** didn't get shell-shock or anything like it*".

In a sense, these people still live with a feeling of siege, on one hand there is still someone firing at them at close range, and on the other hand they bear the burden of responsibility for the monolithic existence of the entire collective and of themselves as a part of it. Nonetheless – there is the pain of loss, an absence of tenderness, of acceptance of weakness that they so badly needed. In this sense one can only wonder at the ability of individuals like C.R. who find a personal, private way – in the face of the collective silence – to discover for themselves what happened and cope with the heavy burden, perhaps thereby overcoming, even if only partially, its negative effects.

It is better, at this stage, to present things spoken, including what is incomplete and rough, or inter-personal or internal half sentences and contradictions. Out of all the testimonies collected, we have tried to place ourselves within the wide area between absolute denial, that we, the psychologists, have invented the phenomenon, of lack of cooperation because we are traitors and denigrators, and the decisive, affirmative statement: Of course there were such phenomena, maybe everybody had shell-shock, or that it was only human that these things happened during and after the '48 war. This helped us accept the fact that the same person goes from one extreme of total denial to the opposite extreme of telling us about his ongoing nightmares and the

inability, his own and that of his friends, to talk about these aspects during their frequent encounters.

We noted the details of the phenomena, from battle exhaustion and stress to examples of suicide, as well as other examples of battle reaction, both before and after battle. It was significant that when someone opened up and told about cases or about himself through our questions, as in the case of C.R., memories returned and the examples were different and varied. But they were still accompanied by a feeling of guilt or a sense of loneliness and reticence. C.R.'s statement stood out here: when he asked for help, the psychiatrist in New York preferred the familiar, psychoanalytic interpretation (C.R. had problems with his father) to the possibility of post-traumatic syndrome that was perhaps unfamiliar to him at that time (the 70th). It is important to note the fact that female combatants (or aides) we spoke to did not relate to the possibility of shell shock any more openly than the men in our small sample.

It seems that we have opened up a Pandora's box, and it is by no means clear what still lies concealed there. As a psychologist, perhaps I should have gathered all those who could tell about themselves, and helped them develop a 'voice' for themselves, a voice that would encourage others to discover the long-term effects of those events on themselves and their children. But there were now new questions concerning shell-shock that may not have been identified or investigated during the *Intifada.* And, apart from this, who, at the beginning of the millenium, had time to deal with unrecognized stress from 50 years ago, when our schedule was burdened with current, new and unresolved events, with questions concerning our future? Despite this, we have not yet begun to investigate how the silencing and suppression of the 1948 shell-shock affected following generations. Could some of those shell-shocked in '73 or '82 be the children of untreated shell-shock victims from'48 or '56? Could our present disquiet be affected in a more general way by our inability to contain those events, ingrained in the psyche of those 1948 combatants, and many others who were not combatants, and who were marked by wordless havoc? Could these very factors that aided in the preservation of the monolithic construction in the past (heroism, silence, ignoring feelings and identity conflicts), also have been instrumental in its disintegration from within in our time?

2.3 The deconstruction of the monolithic myth in the 1987 intifada: Shimon's testimony.

If the silence surrounding the battle stress of 1948 had a unifying function (preservation of the monolithic construction of the collective identity regarding heroism, in the framework of the European Jewish-Diaspora 'Other'), the silence surrounding battle stress during the *Intifada* was inherently different. The political consensus of the first years of the State has long since been replaced by a deep chasm between the political Right and Left, particularly with regard to recognizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. If, at the beginning of the 'seventies, Golda Meir could still claim that there was no Palestinian nation (meaning that we did not even see them as a legitimate 'Other'), then the Camp David agreement and the War of Lebanon (against the PLO), made it clear that there can be no political solution in our region without taking these rights into account. The significant alien Arab 'Other' has now become the Palestinian 'Other'. Nonetheless, when the *Intifada* broke out, in December 1987, the Palestinian determination and persistence surprised military and political leadership. But the warning was there long before: Those who read *The Yellow Time* by David Grossman (1985) attentively and were aware of the level of despair in the Palestinian Street, were not surprised. The concept of the 'enlightened oppressor' was replaced by a vague concept of 'breaking arms and legs' on one hand and 'preserving public order' on the other.

In this atmosphere of political and social schism, the army attempted to preserve a monolithic front and remove themselves as best it could from the political debate. Among other things, the army blurred the definition of the *Intifada* as a war and tried to develop a concept of "low intensity conflict" in which there was no reason for battle stress (Bar-On, 1993). Simple as that, when there isn't a war, there cannot be battle stress. Whoever claimed that there were such phenomena ostensibly took part in the political debate, particularly in the context of the question of whether the *Intifada* is harmful to us or not. It is particularly interesting that this kind of reasoning was internalized, not only by senior officers, but also by psychologists (who cooperated with the system by not diagnosing or treating the phenomena) and also by regular soldiers. The latter preferred to keep their experiences to themselves and deny the psychological effects of their 'operations', if there were any, when they had to pursue and catch stone-throwing children, or enter homes in the middle of the night to look for suspects. In situations that were partially violent (from the army side) without the use of bullets or comprehensively violent (from the Palestinian side), (Gal, 1992), the definition of the enemy faded. In fact, in the eyes of the soldiers, the whole population became a potential enemy, as 'every child could throw stones, and a wanted terrorist could be standing behind every woman'. To sum up, physical danger to

soldiers was less (in comparison to known battle situations) but the emotional and moral risks became significantly greater when the military had to suppress civilian protests.

The silencing of moral dilemmas and the question regarding the emotional stress of soldiers therefore constituted a sound systematic solution that allowed the army, and perhaps not only the army, to preserve a kind of monolithic perspective. According to Spence (1982) there is no hermetic silence: there is always some kind of ‘leak’ into the discourse of topics that are rendered totally taboo. According to his description, this constitutes the paradoxical basis of denial: one is partially aware of the denied area, because in order to deny something, one must know what one can discuss freely without unwittingly penetrating the ‘denied area’. Spence compared this with the young man standing in a room where there is a picture of a naked girl he does not wish to see. The young man must find a way to move about the room, ostensibly freely, in such a way that he avoids the picture he does not wish to see.

The question is, whether the silence surrounding the dilemmas and stress of the *Intifada* also helped to preserve remnants of the monolithic construction of identity? One might claim that the monolithic construction of the collective Israeli identity no longer exists as the political and social polarization since 1982 has already caused its disintegration. But, in the present context, this claim contradicts itself. The very need of the army to preserve a national front in the atmosphere of social and political polarization, and the silencing of the phenomenon of battle stress, indicates some sort of monolithic concept of identity within the system, at least in relation to the Palestinian alien 'Other'. If, as part of the political and social polarization, the army became a volunteer army for instance, then one might assume that when operations were carried out against part of the population, only those who supported such activity would volunteer (for example, Settlers or the National Religious Right). One might then assume that either the phenomena of battle stress would hardly exist (its frequency rising particularly in situations of disorientation and perceived threat), or there would be no need to deny them for, after all, they did not threaten a consensus that in any case has ceased to exist. Accordingly, the silencing of these phenomena bears witness to an indirect need to preserve monolithic remnants of identity construction, despite the difficulty of preserving them in the tough conditions of a political polarization within the society.

But, as we have seen in the discussion concerning shell shock during the War of Independence, silence does not stop the process of the disintegration of the monolithic construction, but only pushes it forward in time. One therefore asks what has happened to those young men in action during the *Intifada?* Will they, like C.R. tell us in fifty years later how they had to suffer for years from phenomena that Israeli society did not wish to recognize, no one

helping them to cope. I will demonstrate, with the help of extracts from an interview[1] how *Shimon* coped with the monolithic construction of his Israeli identity, during their activity as army officer in the 1987-93 *Intifada.*

Shimon: "The Death of the Soul is Worse than the Death of the Body"

Shimon, married and the father of an infant, describes his reactions to an event that took place in 1990 while serving in Reserves in Gaza. His narrative describes a situation that took place when they first started serving in the reserves. He and a unit of his soldiers were trapped in an enraged crowd while on reconnaissance in a refugee camp. The crowd was returning from the funeral of a Palestinian who had been killed by IDF soldiers the day before. Shimon and his soldiers tried to retreat, but found themselves surrounded by a furious crowd advancing on them from all sides and throwing stones, pieces of iron and other items. Shimon placed his soldiers in a circle and radioed for help while firing into the air. It was clear to Shimon that if the crowd continued to advance he would have to shoot into it in order to save himself and his soldiers. This situation of 'pre-massacre' continued for about 40 minutes until a rescue force of border guards arrived and enabled them to get out with relatively few wounded on both sides:

"We waited a long time. To us it seemed endless. My life wasn't in danger as it was during the War of Lebanon but here my soul was in danger... Everything I believe in. I wanted to scream and I hated those who had put me in this impossible, crazy situation. I'd already experienced these overwhelming feelings inside but now I couldn't stop them. The death of the soul is harder for me than the death of the body... I had participated in the War of Lebanon and moved through areas of booby traps and land mines. My commander was killed by a booby trap in a car and one of my soldiers and a few others were wounded when they went over a mine... When you understand the necessity of a task you are prepared to sacrifice, even your life. But when you feel as if someone were moving you about like a pawn on a chess board... then I cried and didn't understand why my parents might have to look at my headstone, another statistic... But the whole situation of Lebanon was easier to bear than the one in the refugee camp.

I tried to imagine what would have happened if I had had to protect myself and my soldiers by firing into the crowd, women, children and old people... How could I live with this afterwards? Maybe I could have excused what happened because I had no other choice, but inside myself I would have known. My mother was born in Egypt and I have heard Arabic from childhood. Arabs are human beings too. I neither hate nor have a need to kill them. How could I have continued to live knowing that I had participated in the massacre of these people? I would

[1] – Shimon gave his testimony in 1992 (Bar-On, 1993).

have wanted to bring members of the Knesset to this Square and let them press the trigger and turn women and little children to paste...

I was raised to love people and revere life. I am still so young. I have already seen so much death... What right does anyone have to deny me laughter and the pleasure of sunsets over the sea or the love of my child's smile? Isn't there a drop of sanity left in this country? That evening I spoke with a veteran soldier in the unit, an exemplary soldier, who throughout the years always visited the families of fallen soldiers from our unit ... He told me he couldn't bear it any longer...from then on he intended to be a 'bastard' and avoid going out on operations... I envied him... I too didn't want to have the blood of a five or eight year-old on my hands... I wanted to yell – this war is intolerable: its tearing me apart! I can't go on like this but I can't abandon my soldiers in this situation... I feel so helpless... This whole thing is so depressing... I can't discuss it with my wife because I don't have anymore words, but for weeks now I haven't stopped thinking about this situation... It would take a thousand loving eyes to even partially close this wound... There are probably some who would say I am cowardly and emotional and a few other expressions of weakness. To those people I want to say that they already neither see nor hear nor feel anything and therefore there is no point in arguing with them. The truth is that strength is the capacity to stand before the truth even when it is almost unbearable. We have already forgotten this, but we don't have much time left...this way we will lose our humanity...and I am not talking about money for dentists or even about a change in the voting method, all right...but I simply want to stay alive and stay human, tell me, is this asking too much?"

Shimon's story is not like C.R.'s difficult description. He focuses on the fear of the death of his soul as the result of firing into a crowd (which, in the end, he was apparently spared). One could claim that Shimon did not suffer from battle stress as a result of the *Intifada,* or, at most, suffered from battle stress as a result of the war in Lebanon and which manifested itself only in the incident during the *Intifada.* In relation to this debate, however, there is a rather poignant expression of his searing doubts when caught between his commitment to his soldiers and his attitude to Arabs and the sacredness of their lives. Over and above this, there is no one he can talk to about his doubts, not even with his wife as "he doesn't have anymore words". He only manages to talk to the exemplary soldier who had already decided to avoid any military activity in the Occupied Territories. In his own descriptive way, Shimon wishes to attract attention: "Is staying alive and staying human asking too much?"

What should a psychologist have done, had Shimon turned to him? Help him re-adjust to military activity, or help him preserve his humanistic identity while refusing to carry out certain

orders? This is undoubtedly a dilemma that has paralyzed not a few psychologists in a time of contradiction between the capacity to adjust and the preservation of what Shimon calls 'the human image'. We are, in fact, witnessing the disintegration of Shimon's monolithic construction of his Israeli identity: the principle of preserving humanism and the sacredness of life, according to which he had been raised. Like the veteran soldier whom he admires, Shimon too would like to avoid having the 'blood of an 8 year-old on his hands'. But he is torn between a sense of responsibility, humanism and his principles, with no further means of containing all these together in the chaotic reality of the Intifada.

In the next chapter we will see that in contrast to Shimon's cry, that one can at least define as severe emotional tension, or even repressed battle stress, Adi represents a combination of the more monolithic construction that does not let itself express emotional cry and a neo-monolithic construction of the Palestinian 'Other' who is not trustworthy. Adi's narrative is therefore more typical for the Israeli-Jewish discourse during the Al Aqsa Intifada, after the new outbreak of violence in October 2000.

Personal window 4

I was in the middle of writing Legacy of Silence when the Intifada broke out in December, 1987. The incomprehensible connection between the interviews with Nazis' children and the Israeli soldiers running after children in the alleys of Gaza and Hebron simply gave me no peace. With the appearance of the first pictures of what was then called "the breaking of norms" (and bones…), it was impossible to remain silent. On one hand, as far as I was concerned, there was the professional norm of the psychologist, consultant to an organization with the role of helping it function better[2], particularly when it was in a state of emergency. On the other hand, there was also the human norm and the possibility of crossing red lines. Like many others then, I asked myself whether statesmen had the right to order soldiers to break arms and legs. Was this what the words - Israeli Defense Forces meant? Or was this violence for the sake of violence, the function of which was to break the spirit of Palestinian civilians in revolt against an endless oppression, so that they would continue to work for us and accept their fate with resignation, as they had done for several decades. Did statesmen have the right to make soldiers carry out any role they demanded, even when it was clear that by so doing, another generation of youngsters (Israelis and Palestinians) would be imprinted with this violent conflict, thereby irrevocably losing hope of living together: that is, "to live by the sword forever". The well-known survey, in which I was involved together with Professor Charlie Greenbaum from the Hebrew University, sharpened the sense that, from a purely military point of view, breaking the norms of today will create the norms of tomorrow. I mean, a new situation had arisen whereby, in a sense, the army had to be saved from itself and from negative, long-term effects that might take place within it. Regretfully, all our grim forecasts materialized. The IDF today cannot be compared with what it was before the Intifada: a more violent army with fewer truthful reports, a politically split army threatened by refusal to carry out orders and the shirking of duty in both political extremes. And, moreover, the Intifada has penetrated our lives in every area: violence, patterns of conversation, the need to create an 'Intifada' in every subject under contention for, otherwise, no-one will listen to you. It has already been said that the conquerors lose their human image at least at the same pace as the conquered lose their property and their people.

[2] – At this time I held the official post of Chief Psychologist in the Southern region in the Reserve Army.

2.4 The Logic of Moral Argumentations of descendants of Nazi perpetrators in Germany.

In this final part of the debate on the disintegration of the monolithic aspect of the collective Israeli identity, I will enter the Holy of Holies: the Nazi component in the definition of the alien 'Other'. If there is a subject that still unites the Israeli collective, even in the beginning of the new millennium, it is that of the totally negative attitude towards the Nazis who perpetrated the Shoah – the extermination of European Jewry during the 'thirties and 'forties. They are perceived as an expression of something beyond the spectrum of humanity, thus allowing the Israeli collective to define itself in terms of 'absolute good' as opposed to 'absolute evil' (Hadar, 1991). Evil that manifested in the murder of children, women and old people whose only mistake lay in their being Jews according to Nazi racial laws.

In a personal attempt to move beyond this severe, dichotomous assessment (through retrospective self-examination), I went to Germany several times during the 'eighties in my capacity as a researcher. There I found and interviewed about 90 of my contemporaries, about half of whom were sons or daughters of Nazi perpetrators (Bar-on, 1989). The fathers of my interviewees were doctors who had participated in the 'Euthanasia' program, a man who had killed a Jew in his town on Kristallnacht, Einsatzgruppen officers who had carried out killings in the Ukraine and an SS general who had been responsible for the extermination of the Jews in the whole of Northern Russia, commanders and perpetrators in extermination and labor camps, Gestapo officers, Nazi government officials etc. The parents of the other half of my interviewees also lived in Germany during the war. Some were enthusiastic members of the Nazi Party while others were not. What made them different from Nazi perpetrators was, in my opinion, the fact that they did not actively participate in any part of the extermination process. This does not mean that they did not know or did not hear about it either directly or indirectly. But I can quite confidently conclude that that they were not directly involved in this process. Thus, as far as I am concerned, they constituted a 'control group' for Nazi perpetrators, despite any scientific reservations with regard to such an assessment and which, perhaps, do not concern us here.

One question that interested me was: how did the descendants live and deal with this part of their family biography and what were their characteristic reactions? It is important to note here that, during this period, the concept of descendants of Nazi perpetrators did not exist in German society, neither in professional literature nor in the media – literature, newspapers or television. The concept was discussed for the first time in an article published in Die Zeit in 1987, by a German journalist, the daughter of a Nazi perpetrator whom I had interviewed. The article was published shortly after the publication of Peter Zichrovsky – "Born Guilty" (1987). I

was already aware of the concept 'inter-generational transference', as it was termed in the literature, with regard to families of Holocaust survivors and I wondered to what extent there was any kind of transference among the families from the 'other side'.

In order to reach my interviewees, I had to cross quite a few barriers of denial. I remember one instance when I was the guest of a German engineer, in charge of an association in his town of friends with Israel. During a casual conversation, I asked him what his father had done during the war.

"*He also worked on the railroad*", he answered, "*but he only drove ammunition trains*".

I was surprised by the curious addition to the sentence and asked him if he knew where his father was stationed at the time.

"*Yes, it was in the region of Bialistok*".

"*When?"*

"*Around '43*".

"*Aha…there were a lot of trains going to the death camps then. And how do you know that he only drove ammunition trains?"*

"*Because he told me so", he answered with great naivete.*

"You're a train driver, tell me how they organized it then? Did some drive ammunition trains while others drove trains taking Jews to their deaths"? My companion shifted uncomfortably in his seat:

"If you like I could ask him again. I'll be seeing him at the end of this week".

We met again a week later. He came to take me from the hotel to a lecture before a group of Friends of Israel. When I had sat down in the car, he at once returned enthusiastically to our previous conversation:

"I asked my father again and he reconfirmed that he had only driven ammunition trains during the war".

I got angry: *"And did he also tell you that he didn't even know about the death trains? Tell me, train drivers used to sit and talk over a tankard of beer in the evenings. Did he never hear anything from anyone?*"

Again I had made my companion feel uncomfortable.

"Generally speaking, he didn't know. Just once someone told him something and made him swear not to tell anyone else".

I despaired of this dialogue and then, just as we were getting out of the car, he suddenly added:

"This time, for the first time, he told me that towards the end of the war, he witnessed the execution of a group of Russian prisoners at a station they stopped at. The soldiers took them off the train and shot them there in the station".

I was amazed: *"That's a terrible story. Is this the first time he has told you about it?"*

My companion nodded slightly. I was rather stunned by the story but we didn't have an opportunity to continue talking. That entire evening I noticed that my companion continued to behave completely naturally, with no sign of distress, while I was 'churned up' inside by his father's last story. About a year later, I decided to edit some video-recorded interviews. I asked this train driver if he would come to the studio and he willingly agreed. We conducted a lengthy interview concerning his childhood and adolescence, but I noticed that he did not repeat his father's story. Towards the end of the interview, I asked him if there was anything else he would like to tell me. When he did not respond, I asked him if he remembered our last discussion, if he remembered what his father had told him for the first time about his experience towards the end of the war. My partner searched his memory but nothing came up. He had simply forgotten his father's story.

In retrospect, I had to acknowledge the fact, that the question my companion had passed on from me to his father, had caused the latter to open up a chink in his wall of silence and to pass on to his son a 'little' story from the days of the war that apparently still weighed on him. The son had passed his father's story on to me without internalizing it: Probably, the story so threatened the monolithic construction of his identity that he did not open up a chink in his own wall of silence. And, therefore, during the interview with him at the recording studio a year later, it appeared that the son had totally 'forgotten' his father's story and was unable to recall it. This incident showed me the power of the walls of silence and denial that are still active among many of my interviewees in Germany. To what extent could minimal information concerning the participation of their fathers in the process of extermination completely deconstruct their concept of 'ideal self', crumble the identity they had painstakingly constructed after the war.

I deliberated for a long time regarding what to do with the interviews I had recorded, written and translated into English. At first, I tried a conservative research approach, attempting to characterize them according to various research variables: who came from a large city, who from a small village; how many siblings were there in the family and whether my interviewee was a practicing Catholic or a secular Protestant? Had the father already died? Was he prosecuted, had he committed suicide or been executed? How and when does the mother appear in the story; did the son or daughter know about their father's actions during the war? And which of my interviewee's reactions could be attributed to this chapter in their family biography? Of all

the defining and counting of these variables, the only significant result to emerge was that perpetrators' children tended less to marry or have children than their control group (Bar-On, 1989). None of the other subjects revealed any clear findings. Except for my discovering that I had taken this path for my own particular reason: it was my way of maintaining a distance from the material evoked by the interviews. It was apparently my need to try and preserve that monolithic construction of my own identity that was threatened by the complex information in the interviews.

Having understood my motive, I again listened to and read the interviews. Then I began to analyze them in terms of content. Together with Prof. Israel Charny (Bar-On & Charny, 1992), I attempted to find the logic of the moral argumentation used by my interviewees in order to discover the question of their identity without running into problems that stemmed from the fact of their parents being part of the Nazi regime and its perpetrators. Altogether, we defined 7 types of moral argumentation. We defined some of the argumentations before analyzing the interviews, according to what we discovered in the literature and newspapers. Others were defined only in retrospect during an initial analysis of the interviews. We hypothesized that most of the interviews would be structured around one, perhaps two central argumentations. We also hypothesized that the analysis of the interviews would reveal a concealed argumentation, one that might be uncomfortable for the interviewee to express openly to a Jewish, Israeli interviewer. I will now specify the various argumentations:

1. "The Holocaust did not happen or was justified": although, from our point of view, these two argumentations were very different, they offered a similar exemption from moral deliberation. If the Holocaust did not take place or was justified, the holder of such a claim had no moral dilemma concerning his father's participation in the Nazi regime. Although we were familiar with both argumentations from the literature and newspapers, not one interview has been found to contain one, even in a disguised form. It may well be that some of the people who refused to be interviewed (9/90) held such claims and, therefore, refused to be interviewed by an Israeli-Jewish psychologist.

2. "The Jews did it to themselves": We were familiar with this argumentation from professional literature. In an analysis of children's essays during the 'seventies (1978), in an effort to deal with the question "What do you know about Adolf Hitler"? about 300 of them related to the subject of the persecution of Jews. About a quarter of these used the argument that "the Jews did it to themselves" and they (the German children) are therefore exempt from being troubled by this subject. This argumentation conformed to the hypothesis of the *'Just World'* by Lerner (1974): if someone falls victim to misfortune, he is probably responsible for some aspect

of the incident. Among my interviewees, only four indicated this argument in a disguised form. Again, it could be that people who used these argumentations did not feel comfortable to expose them to a Jewish-Israeli interviewer.

3. "Things like Auschwitz happened before and after the Second World War": In this argumentation, there were already certain moral doubts: crimes were apparently committed by Germans against Jews or other ethnic minorities. But the argumentation implied an attempt to diminish the burden, claiming that other nations beared a similar burden. In *Legacy of Silence* (Bar-On, 1989, chapter one), Peter relied on this type of argumentation for almost the entire interview. Likewise, a limited number of other interviewees were found to use the same 'line of defense'.

4. "We suffered too": This was not necessarily a moral argumentation. The interviews revealed many descriptions of the suffering of German families during the war: hunger, destruction and fear of the bombs, and a father who returns from Russian captivity and so on and so forth. These were the events of that time as they were reflected in the stories of the same generation. But, when the interview began and ended with this argumentation, it also became a moral defense. It is as if the interviewee were saying to his interviewer: With the help of the descriptions of my suffering and that of my family and nation, I am trying to ignore or at least diminish the meaning of the suffering caused by my own people to other people, especially your people. Approximately a quarter of the sample used this type of argumentation, most of them not descendants of Nazi perpetrators. It seems that moral argumentation of this kind did not constitute sufficient protection for the identity construction of someone who knows that his father actively participated in the systematic annihilation of other human beings. It offered a certain refuge for those who knew their parents lived through that time, but did not actively participate in extermination process themselves.

5. "Atrocities were carried out by the Germans. But none of my family were involved in this or forced to do things against their will": This argumentation showed significant moral deliberation. Germans undoubtedly perpetrated the Holocaust against European Jewry and other minorities. Except that this person was trying to distinguish between the phenomenon of evil in the German society of that time and his own 'good' family. This boundary perhaps protected the monolithic construction of the collective and personal identity of the interviewee. Again, understandably, this argument was more prevalent among war children whose parents did not take active part in the process of extermination, but some of the perpetrators descendants have also been found to use this argument.

6. "Atrocities were carried out by Germans. My father/parents participated in these actions". In this argument, the 'line of evil' came one step closer to the interviewee. In this argument the interviewees are accusing their parents, especially their fathers. They were accusing them of active participation in the process of extermination. But, by means of this accusation, the interviewees are cleansing themselves of evil. They were ostensibly saying: If I acknowledge my father's responsibility for atrocities, I am a good person who is incapable of carrying out similar actions. This argument created a contradiction between the moral aspect (it is good for a person to acknowledge the perpetrators' responsibility for their actions), and the aspect of mental health (it is not so good for a person who is past adolescence to continue to relate to his parents through a mirror that is 'black and white') (Erikson, 1968). Most interviewees who espoused this argument naturally belonged to the sample of Nazi perpetrators' descendants.

7. Atrocities were carried out by the Germans. My father/parents also participated in these actions. But I am not sure that if I had been in that situation, I would have acted any differently". This argument eliminated any protective distinction between the interviewee and the evil. This person was exposed to the criminal acts of his/her father during the Holocaust, and he had no defense, escape or any other means of protection from these acts. Very few perpetrators' descendants were found to use this moral argumentation, and one could feel the extent of their daily distress with regard to this part of their family biography.

In a second content analysis, I tried to discover which stages of working through were found in the various interviews, how the interviewees located their identity in relation to their father being a Holocaust perpetrator. I found about 5 different stages:

1. The process of psychological processing did not begin without knowing new facts concerning the period of the Holocaust and the father's role in it.
2. When these facts became known, the interviewee had to understand their historical, moral, political, psychological or religious meaning. Without understanding the meaning (the creation of a 'picture' in which the facts were located as parts of a puzzle where the connection between them did not previously appear to be comprehensible) it was impossible to make any progress in this process.
3. Understanding the meaning usually evokes a strong emotional reaction. This could be a very negative one towards the father in that the daughter felt he deceived her by hiding from her his actions in the extermination process. Or, it could be very positive in that the daughter was reacting to the positive image of her father.

4. Following this reaction is the fourth stage of the emotional conflict between the first reaction and its opposite: For instance, after anger at the father, the daughter remembered her love for him (or his for her). Or, protection of the positive image of the father was followed by anger.
5. Very few of my interviewees reached the fifth stage by themselves in which they were able to integrate the knowledge, understanding meaning, the first emotional reaction and the emotional conflict into one complexity whereupon the son or daughter may say to themselves: "Now I am living my life independently of my father's life". In certain cases, as a result of being exposed to new facts, (for instance, before the father was placed in extermination units, someone else had refused to undertake this role and had been released unharmed), the entire processing began again. Because the interviewee had successfully gone through this process once before, she might again be able to go through the stages successfully, but this result is by no means promised in advance.

Those interviewees who made successful progress in their process of working through, were helped by their spouses and, occasionally, by successful therapy. What mainly helped them was their participation in a self-help group of perpetrators' descendants that began in Germany following my research in 1988. This group continued to meet regularly until 1992. They then began to meet with a group of Holocaust survivors' descendants from the USA and Israel with whom they continue to meet once a year to this very day (Bar-On, in press). I will come back to this group in the Postscript.

In terms of our present debate, the difference in moral argumentations and stages of working through among the descendants of Nazi perpetrators was not a simple matter for the Israeli-Jewish monolithic approach toward the German alien 'Other'. The descendants of the Nazi perpetrators could now be perceived as varied: They were in different stages in the process of working through, and gave different moral argumentations for their fathers'/parents' actions. Moreover, some of them could describe how the same perpetrator-fathers were warm and loving at home, both to their spouses and their children. One could occasionally sense the close proximity of good and evil in these perpetrators and that it was the different situations that activated the one or the other in their psyches. In the light of this data, it was difficult to maintain the concept that personality or identity was one, monolithic entity existing in people over and above all the situations. It was more likely that, according to this research data, personality or identity were fragmented: Fragments that appeared and disappeared in various situations. But, in our need for coherent stories, we tried to reconstruct a coherent story out of fragments, emphasizing those parts of these people that suited us, helping us to preserve the monolithic construction of our identity in opposition to the alien and evil 'Other'. From this point of view,

the disintegration of the monolithic construction was perceived as part of the maturing process that clarified these differences. The monolithic construction was particularly distinctive as a artificial way of avoiding acknowledgement of the variance that exist within the German society and the change processes that took place within the German society over the last few decades.

In addition, it seems that the variance among the descendants of the perpetrators (in terms of their working-through process and the moral argumentations) could help deconstruct the Israeli-Jewish image of them as the continuation of the ‘total evil’. For many Israeli-Jews, even sixty years after the Shoah, the Germans still represented that 'total evil'. The results of this research were a challenge to that attitude, providing a richer and more complex mosaic of intermediate shades between the black and the white dominant representation within the Israeli society.