



**Memory & Trauma WG  
+  
WG Witnessing  
Virtual Work-in-Progress  
Sessions, Spring 2024**

Join us at <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/87697106647?pwd=T3NXbjNSc0YxbmNPMFR3QzNkOXILZz09>

Scholars share current work-in-progress in the fields of Memory Studies and trauma Studies (Memory Studies Association), with discussion and helpful insights to follow. All are welcome.

**March 19, 2024 at 10:00 am EST**

**Presenters: Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska, Annie St. John-Stark**

**Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska:** Holocaust Distortion in Eastern Europe: The Case of Moldova

**Abstract:** Moldova is an Eastern European country where the Holocaust has often been distorted. The presentation focuses on Holocaust denial and distortion and its interconnectedness with national identity-building processes. There are several competing versions of contemporary Moldovan national identity (three main ideal types: pan-Romanian, pan-Soviet/Slavic, and Moldovenist). They influence social life and politics in the context of nation-building and memory, including Holocaust memory. The phenomenon of Holocaust distortion in Moldova is strongly connected with a similar phenomenon in Romania, but parallels can also be seen with the wider international phenomenon of Holocaust denial. The methodological approach used in the study is the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the Discourse-History Approach, applied to the primary sources: public and academic discourses and political statements. Nevertheless, in both Moldova and Romania today the distorters and negationists are increasingly opposed by civil society, the Jewish and Romani communities, intellectuals, and artists.

**Bio:** Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska is a Holocaust scholar and educator. Born in Moldova and a citizen of Poland, her experience includes work at the POLIN Museum of the History of the Polish Jews in Warsaw as well as cooperation with the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh. She has also worked with the NEVER AGAIN Association. In cooperation with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), she co-developed the project on countering Holocaust denial in Southeast Asia. She was a European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Fellow at the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Bucharest and a Rotary Peace Fellow at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. She has written for numerous publications including 'The Holocaust. Studies and Materials of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research.'

**Annie St. John-Stark:** Endlessness and Address: Trauma and Responsibilising in the Lisbon Earthquake, Hurricane Katrina and Past and Present Pandemics

**Abstract:** The endlessness of the Covid-19 pandemic, considered in the context of analysis of what Cathy Caruth has described as a “collapse of address” in catastrophe prompts questions about the nature of address within catastrophic circumstances. This endlessness – the sense that things will never end, much less resolve into a return to before the catastrophe – is entwined with the action of responsabilising. The assignment of responsibility for a catastrophe and for its resolution is historically evident, as much as it is evident currently in the Covid-19 pandemic. This paper examines address within a trauma context – the catastrophe of the Covid-19 pandemic (2022), the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the plague pandemics of the 14<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Hurricane Katrina (2005). This paper argues that the trauma now – within the pandemic and hurricane Katrina settings – is not directly the collapse of address, it is the means of address of and about the *endlessness* of catastrophe. Historic responses to the endlessness of plague pandemics of the 14<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were forms of address through the tropes of providence and divine arbitrary, mysterious and inaccessible purpose. Forms of address in these historic settings meant that catastrophe’s endlessness was not the trauma. Pandemic experience now, and experience in Louisiana’s hurricane Katrina in 2005, is situated for many in a largely non-divine providence: the providential entity is the state and human institutions. Endlessness now is increasingly the fault of a human entity and created by or addressed through a human institution.

**Bio:** Annie St. John-Stark is Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy, History and Politics at Thompson Rivers University, in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. In her research, St. John-Stark focuses on the historic incidence of catastrophe and trauma, and most especially on language and behavior in past societies involving perceptions of catastrophe, trauma, heroism and rescue. Using a multi-disciplinary approach which integrates facets of literary and discourse analysis with those of memory studies, cultural studies (involving perspectives on master narratives), and history she examines action and introspection of persons within and after catastrophic and altering events. St. John-Stark is a Co-Editor for a transdisciplinary book series on trauma (*Transdisciplinary Trauma Studies*, De Gruyter Press), which provides a “hub” for researchers across disciplines who study many facets of trauma and its expression. St. John-Stark is currently developing a prospectus for a book for this series on the flow of historic trauma and the discourse surrounding it into current perspectives on rescue, heroism and survival. She is also writing an article on historic perspectives on survival in the context of society-wide trauma (pandemics among these instances).

MEMORY STUDIES ASSOCIATION (MSA)