**How Does One Feel the Holocaust?**

**A Comparison of Cinematic and Educational Practices in Representing the Trauma of the Holocaust**

**Abstract**

In this article, we examine two key practices that are used to construct memory of the Holocaust: Holocaust films and educational trips to Poland for Israeli youth. Cinematic directors and tour guides both contend with dilemmas about how to represent the trauma, as relates to the gap between two opposing approaches: on the one hand, there is the wish to “reconstruct” the past in the most historical and realistic way possible, and on the other hand, the need to invoke cinematic/educational strategies that echo the traumatic structure through concealment, truncation, implicit and fractured representations, or detecting traces of the trauma in the faces and language of its witnesses. In our study, we analyze a corpus of Holocaust films and place them on an axis that reflects the technique(s) used to represent the trauma. Through a comparative lens, we analyze the methods used by tour guides on trips to Poland along the same axis.

In this context, we argue that the use of each extreme alone to represent the trauma of the Holocaust creates what the Holocaust historian Dominick LaCapra calls an “acting out,” engraved into the collective memory. To create a “working-through” of the trauma, the different poles must be integrated: attention to the objective historical aspects of the traumatic events while also making room for the traumatic excess, which finds expression in deliberately fractured representations that echo the post-traumatic consciousness. We show that in both ways of constructing the memory—by cinematic representation and via educational trips to Poland—the ladder of escape from the cauldron of the traumatic memory of the Holocaust has two legs: an encounter with the objective historical facts and measured exposure to the intensity of the post-traumatic impact. This combination makes it possible to position the participants in an empathetic but distanced cognitive stance, which is necessary for establishing a constructive ethical stance.