

5-2013

# Witnessing the Holocaust: More Than Just a Story

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## Recommended Citation

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# **Witnessing the Holocaust: More Than Just a Story**

An honors thesis presented to the Department of Communications and Rhetoric, University at Albany, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of requirements for graduation with Honors in Communications, an undergraduate Bachelors degree and graduation from The Honors College.

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May 2013

## **Abstract Summary**

In this paper, I use discourse analytic procedures informed by conversation analysis to understand the testimony of Holocaust witnessing. This is important because, in looking at Holocaust witness testimony, we can understand how witnesses use specific tactics to prove their ownership of a certain experience and event that has occurred, and make that experience available for his or her audience. I use video testimony, produced transcripts of that testimony, and analyzed the two. My conclusions are drawn from this evidence to explain how Edith sequentially builds her narrative. In doing so, we can see her stories as specific and different from other forms of storytelling.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and Foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Alan Zemel for his help throughout the year, and for putting up with my crazy schedule changes. You have been such a big help in forming and completing this thesis from helping me form my initial idea, to guiding me through its completion.

Thank you to Professor Barberich for serving as an advisor and mentor for several years, giving me advice and experience. Professor Husson has helped me acquire and gain credit for valuable internships in my field for which I am also thankful. I would also like to thank Professor Jeffrey Berman for inspiring me to continue writing and likewise for serving as a mentor for me since sophomore year.

Finally, I would like to thank my grandmother for talking to me when first developing this project and helping me form the basis for my thesis. I would like to thank my mother and father for their continuous support and the ongoing belief and praise that they provide me despite any mistakes I may make. You make me feel special every day and I would not be where I am today without your belief in me. Thank you to my entire family for their love and encouragement throughout my college experience. I hope I can continue to make you all proud as I embark on the next chapter of my life.

## Table of Contents

1. Abstract	Page 2
2. Acknowledgments	Page 3
3. Introduction	Page 5
4. Background research	Page 6
a. Witnessing as a form of narrative	Page 6
b. Narrative and Storytelling	Page 14
5. Methodology	Page 18
6. Analysis	Page 19
7. Conclusion	Page 34
8. Bibliography	Page 38

## **Introduction**

Witness testimony is important for so many reasons. The largest reason is that the job of a witness is to recount an event for people who were not at said event. Testimony is a way of talking about experience, which invites some form of participation and access to its listeners. Through witnessing, the audience is provided a more truthful experience than one receives when a speaker merely recounts a story he had heard from someone else. In this essay, I intend to explain how witnesses use different methods from everyday storytelling and narrative in order to create experiences that cannot be achieved in those other forms. Witnesses are concerned with evidence and credibility. Scholars identify direct reported speech as a way in which witnesses present something as though it is fact so the audience can achieve more direct access to the situation through their talk. Direct reported speech makes use of quoting people from events so that a listener can be given more direct access to an event and feel like he was there. This comes from the concrete example that only someone who was at the event can provide based on his personal hearing of the reported speech.

My research delves into the study of different types of narrative such as storytelling, narrative and witness testimony, and uncovers what makes a witness testimony different. I use the holocaust testimonial of Edith P. to pinpoint how these methods are used in an actual witness's testimony. From Edith's testimony, the audience can learn how the use of direct reported speech gives them a more authentic experience than that which they would receive from reading a book or

hearing a story. Edith uses direct reported speech and different sorts of evaluations so the audience will respond a certain way and hear her testimony as the telling of a genuine experience. She acts as an author, telling the audience of her relationship to the reported events. Her relationship to the events is made evident and real through this telling. Her intention at different points in the narrative is to make them believe her, to have them see her as authoritative, and give them means to be sympathetic and understanding of her situation. Through Edith, the audience learns that witnessing is not just telling a story; it is telling a story in certain ways so that people know it is witnessing as opposed to some other kind of storytelling.

### ***Background Research***

#### **Witnessing as a form of narrative**

Durham (2009) identifies the act of witnessing as the reconstruction of an experience for an audience who were not originally present at the events that are being presented. To witness an event is twofold. It involves being present when the event occurs and then proceeding to tell others about the event so that they too may engage in some sort of experience of that event. When I use the word experience, I mean to say that the speaker provides a means for his audience to gain access to particular occurrences through his talk and language. Through the telling of a testimonial, the audience gains insight into an event to which they had not previously had access, which gives them a new understanding of the situation at hand. As Zolf (2011) points out, the witness has a job as an actor who “advises and persuades.” He also acts as “co-author” of testimony that he says and the testimony

that he leaves out (Zolf, 2011). The audience is implicated as a potential author as well because they hear what the author says. They also read between the lines, understanding the story in the context of what is not said. Allison, Brimacombe, Hunter and Kadlec (2006) call the notes that are not said “elaboration” and explain that they use a tactic in which they make a statement, but do not present information outright. However, this information is still consistent with the other information given. What this means is that the narrator makes a statement using certain cues or signs, like making a certain gesture or facial expression to show how he feels, and these are just as important in understanding a narrative as the words themselves. Every element works to create an understanding by the audience. Therefore, what the story becomes has to do not only with what is being told, but also with who is listening. In other words, what is not said is just as important as what is said. As Iser (1980) says, no good author will try to present his whole story for his reader; the same rings true for listeners.

Steinby and Klapuri (2013) understand Voloshinov’s conceptions on this topic in their book. They state “Word... is a product and mechanism of a relation between addresser and addressee. This reciprocity means that the word is oriented not only towards the hearer, but towards the hearer’s potential response” (p 88). The speaker structures his words in expectation of the hearer and his reception to them. As Voloshinov (1973) argues, “In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener*,



*addresser and addressee*" (p 86). Therefore, the audience is just as important to the act of sharing as the speaker himself.

Many authors believe that it is crucial to witnessing that the witness be present at the event about which he is providing testimony. Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009) posit that a witness must either be present in time and in space, present in time but removed from space or present in space but removed from time. The main idea is that having a presence at an event gives the witness a type of access over, and authority, to report said event that one who was not there cannot claim. They understand witnessing as a "triangle" between the agents, the utterance itself and the audience. The agent, or witness, tells the utterance, or account of the event, to the audience who understand the experience with which they are presented. The witness is important as a means to provide the experience, as the audience has no other means of gaining access to it. The utterance itself is important because the words and inflection chosen help create a mediated access for the audience. In using certain words and vocal cues, the audience understands the experience in a certain way, such as happy, sad, terrifying, etc. The audience is important because they hear and respond to the utterance, thereby giving meaning and purpose to the testimony. They claim "presence and rhetoric thus form the basis for witnessing discourse" (p 138).

Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009) also stress the importance of understanding that, in film, there are mediators who take part in creating the film. Essentially, they act as co-creators with the witness. When a filmed testimony is edited, the

mediators are deciding what part of the witness's narrative is important enough to include in their finished product, and what parts of the story to leave out. As the witness has formed his testimony and decided what he will include, this further editing is important in that it gives an even more framed view of the events that occurred. It is because of this that the audience's experience will be shaped in a certain way based on the information they are given. The audience then acts as a witness to the witness. They observe the witness's testimony from a distance and reflect on the experiences presented.

Ellis (2009) understands that another important distinction to make is the difference between film or television representations of events and the testimony of what he calls a "mundane witness" (p 74). A television depiction will more likely be an intentional or unintentional mixture of the actual events with what the filmmaker or producer decides would present the event in such a way that it fits his needs or interests. In contrast, a mundane witness, he argues, gives relevance, significance and meaning to his testimony, thereby giving it intention. A witness's emotional appeal creates a commitment from the audience and awareness that they are part of a specific historic event, whereas a television or film representation just presents the story to achieve an outside purpose.

From this we understand that what the audience does not see or hear is important to a witness's testimony as well. Similar to Zolf's (2011) idea giving importance to what is not said, Felman (1993) writes that it is important to note what a witness does or does not see. As mentioned before, it is largely believed that

a witness must actually see an event. Felman (1993) questions whether testimony can be carried out by anyone besides the person who claimed to witness. Based on arguments I presented earlier in this paper, it would seem implausible for that to be true. A witness's presence at the event gives him sole privilege to recount that event. Someone who is essentially witnessing a witness's testimony cannot then provide a testimony for the actual event. The experience reported by the witness is his and his alone. The witness's audience can only provide their understanding of the previous witness's testimony.

Pinchevski and Frosh (2009) emphasize certain traits of a witness's testimony. A witness sees an event, but cannot replicate that precise event; instead, he testifies to his witness and reiterates what he experienced. Witnessing is further described as a method of enabling judgment and reflecting on behavior of the past. Felman (1993) further posits that a witness must take responsibility for the truth of an event that he is witnessing. By providing testimony, he is telling the audience that his account is truthful and they should believe that it actually occurred. Holt (2000) understands one tactic that allows the witness to take responsibility for his talk as "direct reported speech." In direct reported speech, the witness substantively recounts the speech or talk of the original speaker, lending his voice to the person whose speech he is reporting. He quotes the speaker and, in doing so, claims that he was witness to the actual event. Holt (2000) understands Voloshinov's stance to be that direct reported speech is a way for the witness to preserve the integrity of the original speaker and report an utterance as accurately as possible. It is a way to show, instead of tell, using voice and pitch to display how something was said. By

doing so, the witness shows that he had access to the event that transpired and is not just reiterating another's story.

Another aspect of witnessing is explored by Brönnimann et al (2013). They focus on the witness's act of responding to some kind of prompt. In thinking about this, Edith may be responding to her interviewer's desire to preserve the memory of the Holocaust. The knowledge that another shares her interest in this act shows that it has historical imperative and an awareness of the importance of her presence in shaping an understanding of that imperative. According to Brönnimann et al (2013), witnesses in court give their testimonials as a response to lawyers who are questioning them on the events that transpired. Therefore, the questions that are asked and the people who are asking those questions may sculpt some witness's testimony. Their results found that witnesses expressed different emotion, cognitive process, and perceptual process when questioned by people of varying occupation, gender and parties involved in the proceedings (Brönnimann et al, 2013). However, the testimony on which this study focuses is witness testimony of a different kind. The kind of witnessing explored by their essay is that of court testimony, not memorial or educational.

In this study's focus, we will observe holocaust witness testimony in which a survivor of the event attempts to give her audience an understanding of her experience. The stories she tells may be affected by the questions the interviewer asks her. Another factor to consider is that she is being filmed and does not know how many people will view her testimony after it is recorded. The methods that

these factors inspire, such as prosodic and language choices, are important in understanding how witnessing differs from other forms of storytelling and narrative.

Holocaust witnessing is different from other types of witnessing in several ways. Many holocaust survivors whose accounts we now record or hear were children during the years 1933 to 1945. Edith was a child when the Holocaust occurred. Therefore, her worldview and the way she perceived specific events will differ from the perspective she would have had had she been an adult at that time. Most survivors will take the stance of a victim to certain acts of the Nazis because of the way they were persecuted. The survivor posits himself as one to whom the Nazis have done intolerable acts and in understanding these actions, the audience can see the witness as someone who had no hand in his own fate. Being a victim means that they are not at fault for the actions someone took against them. Additionally, she is not being asked questions to simply determine that a crime was committed or to attest to another's story. Edith may also be recounting details of her own experiences, telling her own story which does not determine another's fate, but explains events so that they will not be forgotten.

In addition to the effect of an interviewer, Schurich's (2013) analysis gives significance to child witnesses. As a child, a person is naïve and vulnerable to the actions of those around them. Much like a victim, they cannot fully understand why things happen and must make sense of what is going on around them. The age of a witness is yet another important factor in understanding the methods a person may

choose to use. He studied sexually abused children and their responses to interviewer questions. The age and emotional background of a person's upbringing will affect their comfort with answering certain prompts and providing some private information. Children, like adults, respond differently depending on environmental factors and the identity of those who are questioning them. However, with children, Schurich (2013) notes that their credibility is not as easily accepted. The reason this is important is that when one recalls a story from his childhood, it will be clouded by their lack of knowledge at the time. Therefore, his understanding of what had been happening during the event will be different than it would be had he witnessed those same events as an adult. His testimony is based on his childhood memory. Therefore, with witnessing, as opposed to normal stories, the age of a person affects the credibility of his story. The age of the teller at the time of the experience and the age of the teller at the time of the telling are both significant in understanding his perspective. His research is also specifically important in relation to holocaust witnessing because, like these children, survivors have been through something incredibly traumatic. Hawk (2013) explains Powers' argument that traumatic events cause a character or person to work through his issues in order to achieve a new self- understanding. A witness may do so when providing testimony, so the audience gains new access to his experience by watching as he pieces the story together. Once these issues have been worked through, a person who has suffered from trauma can take on the role of a witness so that he can potentially prevent others from suffering as he did.

### **Narrative and Storytelling**

Another way in which narrative is utilized is through storytelling. Allison et al (2006) define narrative in its most general sense, as a “story that contains plot and characters” (p 289-314). Stories all have some significance and use certain tactics to explain or present these significances. Ripley (2011) notes that narrative is important in creating and sharing knowledge. Romano, Porto and Molina (2013) analyzed the structure of a story’s narrative qualities, explaining that the key elements are its orientation, complication, evaluation and resolution. Evaluation, they say, includes the reason for the story and its emotional core. Based on these explanations, we can see that a story relies on a certain structure and has a specific form.

Ripley (2011) also discusses the elements of a narrative, saying that understanding its elements, as well as its narrator, is important to understanding the narrative itself. These elements include the text, the story time, and the discourse time. A story’s text includes the actual words of the narrative and the rhetorical tactics that the narrator uses to make a point. The story time seems to be the time period when the actual story or event took place; in other words, it is the story’s context. An audience must understand a story in relation to its context in order to understand the story itself properly. They have to know some basic background about when the story took place. In addition, they must understand the story from the point of view of the present, looking back to the time when the story supposedly occurred.

In understanding these different elements, Ripley (2011) seems to also argue that the orator must acknowledge that an audience may not be right in front of him when he is telling his story. The story will take on a different meaning when told orally because there is a subjective nature to it, as opposed to the objective nature that one receives from reading a book. When reading, the narrative is in the reader's mind, so each person can shape individual understandings of the text based on how he hears it in his head as he reads. When a narrator orates a story, whether fictitious or personal, the way he tells the story will have some sort of personal touch, which will elicit further understanding. He may give certain vocal inflections, or use certain gestures to indicate to the audience that they should receive the information in a specific way.

Iser's (1980) understanding of written text is more elaborate. He explains that the reader is the one who brings literary text into existence by combining his understanding of the text with the author's actual explanation. The text has the ability to engage a reader's imagination through certain tactics. The reader anticipates and forms expectations that may or may not be fulfilled based on "intentional sentence correlatives" that bring sentences together (p 52). These correlatives can be understood as trigger words or phrases that the reader recognizes as connecting to something he has previously read. He also mentions the author's use of a "hiatus" (p 55). The hiatus is a sentence with no tangible connection to its prior and requires the reader to fill in the gap. No good author will present the whole story for his reader. Instead, a good story requires the reader to



participate in it in order to understand the text. We can apply the same ideas to verbal narrative and storytelling.

Coonfield (2009) posits stories as a central part in shaping society. He explains stories as the mode to transmitting values, traditions, meanings and practices. He also stresses the fact that storytelling is a relational art. It is based on the audience's reception and understanding of a speaker's position. As Ripley (2011) understands, oral storytelling requires the participation of a real narrator, an implied listener and, a real listener. A story, then, is what he calls "au' oral," which means, "What is heard born of what is spoken" (p 6). In other words, narrative occurs when the audience hears what the narrator says and forms an understanding based on what is spoken. Coonfield (2009) concludes that we should consider stories a communicative act in which the audience is called to attention and is asked to react and then act on the empathy they feel.

Stories, such as those heard in De Fina's (2008) analysis could include travel accounts, heritage narratives, narratives about stereotypes, and more. She argues that they are used to claim legitimization and social power when used in social groups. Storytelling uses interactional and structural mechanisms to modify the position of members with respect to one another, to implement a particular collective image of a group, and to help members of a group negotiate and construct new perceptions about social position and identity of the group to which they claim allegiance.

An important note about narrative by Romano, Porto and Molina (2013) is that each one is imprinted with various side stories. The listener mixes these stories, which they call “*narrative spaces*” with the other elements of the narrative to form an “*emergent narrative*” (p 76). These *emergent narratives* include the act of the narrator bringing in background information such as feelings, explanations using “*space builders*” and “*narrative anchors*” (p 76). *Space builders* are understood to be physical signs like sighs, tense shifts, and repetition. *Narrative anchors* are linguistic expressions, concepts or ideas. *Space builders* and *narrative anchors* are repeated or re-elaborated at different points in the narrative to “help the listener link the different fragments of a space” (p 84).

In relation to the subject of the holocaust, the type of testimony at which we will be looking, Vermuelle (2011) explains Flesh’s argument that stories often have a political agenda in which they express moral outrage. Vermeulle (2011) agrees, generalizing this political agenda to the idea that stories are told with some sort of message that the teller is trying to convey. The conscience or gut feeling, he argues, is what makes a good story. When a person tells a story, he takes a moral and affective stance in his telling, and the way he does so will guide and convey the information he provides. In hearing a story, the audience gains a certain understanding of the teller’s purpose, and the emotions stirred by the teller’s layout of his purpose are what make the story good.

As Coonfield (2009) mentions, a story is just as important to the narrator as it is to the audience. Similarly, Ripley (2011) discusses the different types of

narrative stakes in a story. A story can have either a “*homodiegetic narrator*” who also serves as a character in said story, or a “*heterodiegetic narrator*” who tells of the events but does not participate in them (p 3-4).

### ***Methodology***

For the purpose of my study, I have chosen to use discourse analysis to understand the interactional organization of this form of telling, i.e. testimony. By interactional organization, I mean that storytelling is an interaction between the teller and the listener. According to Iser (1974), the teller and the reader in written discourse work together to form a deeper understanding of the narrative. The author carefully chooses his or her words to convey certain messages to the listener. Simultaneously, the reader takes what the author says, as well as what he leaves out, and develops his own understanding, giving a new substance to the story. Text is supposed to engage a reader’s mind and invite him to participate in the story’s unfolding. I found that verbal storytelling does the same.

I have engaged in a close analysis of a video testimony by a woman named Edith P., which I have transcribed, from the Yale University public library. I have looked for discursive procedures and methods by which her story is built, paying specific attention to the speaking techniques involved.

Borrowing from conversation analysis, there is a notion that stories organize the way things happen. An audience should have some kind of response or reaction to a story (Sacks, 1992). If the audience does not react, something will seem wrong. Regardless of the fact that audience is not directly in front of storyteller, the story is

built to provide resources for whoever is viewing the story to come up with a response. It does not matter whether the audience is directly in front of him or not, the speaker builds the story with an intended notion and wants a certain response. In watching this testimony, we can see examples of how Edith P. uses certain tactics to elicit a response from her audience.

### ***Analysis***

Edith serves as a witness to certain events that occurred during the Holocaust. As a method of introducing her position about these events to her listener, she uses certain tactics. Affiliation involves some kind of acknowledgment that the listener hears and understands whatever position the speaker is espousing. To align with him or her, the audience must be convinced, through his or her words, that the particular position or “stance,” as Stivers (2008) refers to it, is the correct one in the given circumstance. Stivers notes that the preferred response from a listener is one in which he or she mimics the stance that a storyteller takes because this shows that he or she affiliates with the information given, and that the storyteller’s purpose was served (Stivers, 2008).

The method that narrators use for affiliation and alignment that I would like to explore is that of direct reported speech. Reported speech is the direct or indirect speech that a person tells to another in which he or she is retelling a summary or main idea of an event to the audience using certain methods in order to get them to take a certain position on said event. In direct reported speech, the speaker is using what the audience can assume is the original speakers’ words as they were spoken

in the story. The audience does not know whether the words their narrator is recounting to them are the actual words spoken in the past or not, but for the sake of listening, they assume the words to be true or close to their original form because the witness is quoting them and not simply recounting the experience in her own words. In these cases, the narrator does not alter what was said, but may lead into the quote or follow up the quote with some kind of tool to direct the audience in affiliating with a certain position based on what is being said (Holt, 2000).

For the sake of comparison, it should be noted that its contrast is indirect speech in which the speaker reiterates an occasion or event by quoting someone in his or her own words. Indirect speech alters the original voice in order to promote affiliation of a certain nature as well (Holt, 2000). For my thesis, I would like to investigate the narrator's purpose in using direct reported speech, as opposed to indirect, and what this does for the audience in terms of helping them affiliate better with the stories they are given. The use of direct reported speech is important in displaying the witness's access to these events, thereby making her account more than any normal story.

Direct reported speech, as explained by Holt, is based on what Voloshinov calls "linear style" (Holt, 2000). With this style of speech, the teller tries to preserve the truthfulness of the original text and accurately reproduce what a person said in the past. She explains it further as the teller lending his or her voice to the original speaker, "adopting his point of view," thereby giving access to an event. However, she is careful to explain that unlike indirect reported speech, direct reported speech

does not change the voice of the original speaker to include the teller's own interpretation within that part of the narrative. Instead, the teller uses methods before and after the reported speech that allow the audience to be better prepared to understand it in a certain way, as the speaker intended it to be understood (Holt, 2000).

One significant method is called formulation. Heritage and Watson (1979) discuss formulation as a way to give a summary or "gist" of an utterance, or an extended turn of talk, of the speaker so that the reason for such an utterance can be understood better by the listener. Formulations elaborate on the circumstances they describe to "preserve or reestablish the relevancies (for members) inherent in... descriptions" (p 245-46); in doing so, the member's use part of a conversation to describe, explain, characterize, explicate, translate, summarize, or furnish the gist of it. The authors posit that describing in formulation is "a vehicle" that helps to achieve an end such as persuading, making a claim, justifying, et cetera (p 247).

Let us examine Edith's analysis at 7 minutes and 50 seconds. In this analysis, the audience can see subtle cues in Edith's story that lead the audience to understand her purpose in telling this story in a certain way. She speaks the words of the original speaker's, but we can still see that there is a certain stance that she would like us to take once the story is finished because of additional comments she provides once after her quotations.

1 Edith: But my sister, before we arrived to

2 Auschwitz, I remember my sister told

3           him, "Father, we have always been a  
4           very G-d loving people. How come that  
5           G-d has forsaken us?" I remember that  
6           very vividly, she in her anguish. And  
7           my father said, "You know, we have  
8           forsaked him before." And I'm so happy  
9           about that; that I heard it because my  
10          father was such a devout religious  
11          man, that he believed really that he  
12          left G-d before G-d has left him. That  
13          he went and died, not in vain. Maybe.  
14          I don't know.

Edith uses quotes from her sister and father, and using these quotes gives the audience access to the event she witnessed. She assumes that the audience will understand the situation she is depicting. The way she forms her words shows that she presumes knowledge because she leaves out certain details. For example, she brings up Auschwitz but does not explain what it is, assuming the audience already knows this information. By saying they were on their way to Auschwitz, the audience also knows the form of transportation she is taking, i.e. cattle cars or trains, not busses or cars, etc. By leaving out this information, Edith expects a response based on her presentation of specific information to elicit a specific understanding. She, therefore, uses her own words to follow her direct reported

speech to take a stance with her own depiction of the event that transpired. This allows audience members to interpret her father and sister's conflicting beliefs, and how the two understand the issue they are discussing. The use of a direct quote removes the audience's suspicion as to whether some details upon which they are judging Edith's testimony were altered by Edith's opinion because they understand her words to be a close depiction of the situation; additionally, her opinion that has been added implies that the previous statements were closer to fact. Here, in lines 3-5, her sister is questioning G-d's role in their suffering. She asks her father why G-d has abandoned them and stopped helping them. Her father's response allows the audience to infer that he believes that G-d has forsaken them because they had forsaken him before.

After quoting her sister, Edith mentions how she remembers her sister questioning her father "very vividly;" she also uses the word "anguish" to describe her sister's state. She wants the audience to understand her sister's quote in a certain way and frames the quote in her own words with her own evaluative framework in order to form said understanding. If she had just quoted her sister without adding her evaluation, then the audience would be open to many interpretations. Her inclusion of these formulating details allows them to understand that Edith saw this as an important question. From this the audience can understand that this question stuck out in her mind enough to recount to an audience for a particular reason. Her inclusion of this specific question as opposed to the many other quotes she could have chosen tells us that. In addition, the mention of her sister's anguish shows that her sister was distressed when asking the



question. Edith implies that her sister was being influenced by the torment that she was experiencing, and this torment led to her questioning of religion. By quoting it and commenting on the fact that it was a vivid memory, the audience can understand that it is important to Edith and should therefore be important to them as well.

The 'us' to whom she refers could be the Jews, her family, just the sister and father, people on the train, etc. Edith does not explain this when she offers her own evaluation so the audience can understand that she thinks they will be able to deduce to whom the word 'us' refers from her narrative. In formulating her description, she leaves 'us' ambiguous. This ambiguity is another method that Edith uses because it presumes a background knowledge from its readers that allows her to abstain from giving extra information. This contrasts normal stories, which are usually told in great detail, sparing no information from the reader. In the context in which her sister is speaking, it seems that 'us' should refer to either Edith's family, or the people being brought to Auschwitz. However, it could also refer to the Jewish people as a whole, excluding the other minorities and prisoners of the Nazis. Edith's decision in excluding this detail also means that she does not consider it important. Whether her sister is referring to the Jews as a whole, the people on the train or everyone going to Auschwitz is not the important element. The important fact is their anguish and fear that G-d has forsaken them.

Essentially her father's quote can be understood as an eye-for-an-eye attitude. From this response, the audience can deduce that her father believes that

the fact that they are being forsaken is a result of their previous similar behavior in deserting G-d. However, her father does not use the word 'because' to begin his answer. It is not that G-d has forgotten them; G-d is punishing them because they have done wrong. Her sister blames their situation on the fact that "G-d has forsaken" them, but her father is saying that it is not G-d who has forsaken them, but they who have forsaken G-d. He urges her to understand that she is not completely innocent. He offers a prompt that may allow her to think about whether she has done something to deserve what she is getting. It is important to Edith that he said this because it helps her to make sense of the situation. When someone acts as a witness, the story she is going to present may not have been preplanned. She is building the narrative as she goes and therefore has to piece it together as she goes. This state of internal confusion and disorganization shows the audience that it is something personal to her as a person, not just another story she is passing on.

In thinking about this, we can understand Edith's following narrative to be a formulation of the gist of the talk. She is summarizing the situation for the audience and asking them to understand what she thinks about the conversation. This formulation makes the audience's assessment and affiliation conditionally relevant as next actions to perform.

In an anguished state, it is easy to forget what one has done and believe that the pain they are in is unwarranted, but Edith's father says that perhaps it is not. Edith's happiness at this response indicates her stance towards his response. She verbalizes her agreement that it is possible that there is a greater purpose for

everything that is occurring, beyond just making people suffer.

Following this, Edith provides the audience with her opinion about the situation. We know this because of several indicators that Edith uses. In line 9, the first word 'that' makes the audience realize that Edith is referring to a previous statement based on their assumed knowledge that the word can be used to apply to something that has been said. According to Sacks and Schegloff's view based on Heritage and Watson (1980), this is known as an "adjacency pair". An "adjacency pair" is the use of utterances that are strategically placed with a previous utterance to form a connection between the two. They usually make use of "proterms" or "tying terms," which act as substitutions to eliminate the repetition of words or ideas (Heritage and Watson, 1979). Based on the "tying term," the word 'that', the audience can infer that Edith is referring to her father's statement because it is the most recent previous statement. As she continues, on the same line, she uses the word 'it'. She refers to 'it' as something she heard. This follows the same assumptions as the previous word 'that'. The words 'it' and 'that' can both be used as "tying terms" that refer to a previous statement; in this case, they refer to those statements, which her father had made, and which she had overheard.

In lines 11-12, she mentions 'G-d', saying, "that he believed really that he left G-d before G-d has left him." Since her reported conversation between her father and sister expresses their discussion of G-d as well, the audience can use this as a "tying term" to connect this statement to their conversation, as it directly follows that example. The repetition of the word 'G-d' allows them to infer a connection

between the two statements. The repetition plants the word in their heads and helps them to understand Edith's narrative in lines 8-14 as an analysis of the example she has given.

In line 12 she repeats the word G-d instead of substituting a pronoun because saying "He left G-d before he left him" or "He left G-d before he left my father" may have been too confusing to understand. She chooses to talk about the father, not the sister and offers a sort of moral for the story. Her reason for this is explained after her quotations. She likes her father's beliefs better than the moral question posed to him. The audience can affiliate with this stance because of her expression of this happiness. She then further evaluates it in an attempt to get them to align with her opinion. She says that her father did not die in vain and that G-d did not simply abandon them without reason. The audience is meant to take this evaluation as a cue to align with her stance that her father's views are good.

While she admires her father's views and is happy with them, she does not necessarily agree with him. Her finishing her assertion with the word 'maybe' dilutes her stance. She does not seem to be completely convinced in her father's moral. While she would love to believe as her father does, that G-d did not simply forsake them in vain, she seems to have some doubts. She, therefore, leaves it up to audience to agree or disagree, and makes them think about whether it is true or not that they are not dying in vain. This is another example of Edith formulating her narrative as she goes along. The audience sees her thinking about the past and

trying to make sense of it as she recalls her memories, which makes them question the morals they had considered about that time as well.

The “Maybe. I don’t know” is noted in the transcript as starting strong and ending uncertain. It refers to whether her father died in vain or not. Who judges whether someone dies with purpose or meaning? The people who survived judge this fact, not those who are already dead. She is the one who has to live with his death. The decision as to whether he died in vain depends on her opinion of whether he died for a good reason rather than being just one of six million. Presenting to an audience representing a huge conflict over understanding what happened. She does not take a stance on whether her father has done something to make his life “worthy” and his death “not in vain.” The only stance she can truly make to the audience is that he believed that G-d was with them when the Jews remained true to G-d; G-d would not leave them without a reason.

These same methods are seen as early as 12 seconds into Edith’s narrative.

1 Edith P: My father was a high official. very  
2 religious man. ([deep breath]) We were,  
3 six children.. four boys. my sister was  
4 the oldest; I was the youngest. We  
5 (breathes) did not hear much.. because  
6 by this time the Hungarian press mostly  
7 was censored. We listened to the  
8 British- the BBC. And we knew that

9           there were concentration camps. But s-  
10           in some miraculous way we thought we,  
11           we are, we are never going to go there.  
12           It- its impossible. We had refugees  
13           f..from Poland. Polish Jews, who told  
14           us ((deep breath)) "Do something! Go.  
15           Go to the Am- go to America. Go to  
16           Israel. Go to Palestine. Do something.  
17           Escape. Because that's what's going to  
18           happen to you"- And we thought, 'That's  
19           impossible! 'I mean my father was born  
20           here. His father was born here. And I-  
21           my great grandfather's a, uh, uh.. was  
22           born here. How- it's impossible. But we  
23           didn't know enough. Had we known  
24           enough, I think we would have done  
25           more.

Lines 1-12 are the information that Edith is having the audience interpret themselves. We can understand Edith's 'we' to mean that she is referring to Hungarian Jews because of her mention of the "Hungarian Press." The mention of "Hungarian Press" implies that Hungary is their home. If they receive this newspaper, then they must live there. Therefore, when Edith references that her

family did not think they would go to the concentration camps because of what 'we' [they] heard, the audience understands that Edith's 'we' refers to people from Hungary.

Edith gains access to the situation that she is depicting when Jewish, Polish refugees came to warn her family and her. She presents the Polish Jews' warning as direct reported speech because it displays to the audience that Edith was there, even if she is not repeating the refugees' exact words. Her quotation of the refugees gives legitimacy to her presence at the event that a simple recounting of the story could not. Recounting a story can be based on hearsay, which may not give justice or even be similar to the original account. Quotes provide a more legitimate knowledge than one receives when hearing someone else recount a story in her own words because they imply that the narrator is in a position to quote those in the story; this means that she presents events as though she was there to hear and see the events firsthand. It asserts her credibility and the fact that she can make a more forceful claim in her case. The refugees gave Edith access to their experience, and she is giving us access to her access of their experience.

Edith's depiction of the situation is made even more intense because of her inclusion of the Polish refugees' warnings. Ignoring radio or television news is understandable as these sources are not always trustworthy, but now, Edith is showing us that she received the same news from people who had been through the reported situations themselves. The refugees' witnessed the deportation firsthand and gave an uncensored warning to Edith and her family that they did not hear from

the newspapers. However, Edith's family continued to ignore signs. They ignored physical evidence and did not believe that they would be deported, regardless of the source from which the warnings came.

Because Hungarian news is censored, Edith's family found that reliable news in Hungary was scarce, so they go out of their way to get news from BBC and other sources. In hindsight, the places from which they got their information were either censored or far away. Hungary was a huge empire in the center of the world. Everything seemed isolated from where they lived and it did not seem like much could happen to her family. Edith and her family knew that they were not getting the full story from Hungarian sources and that their situation at present may be different from the rest of the world. They knew about concentration camps. They knew that Jews were being rounded up and stuck in these camps. They could not imagine being taken away. She is trying to say that upon looking back she cannot see how it is possible they did not see what was happening. She formulates a response in which the audience can understand her confusion. By depicting their actions as Edith does, it seems even less logical to the audience that Edith's family would not act upon what they were learning (i.e. the fact that people all over were being shipped to concentration camps). It would seem that the reason they wanted more knowledge would be to prepare themselves for what was to come, but they still did nothing once they gathered this new knowledge. Edith's explanation of these phenomena helps the audience understand how crazy it is that despite all of their efforts and sources, they still believed they would be spared from, and be the exception to, the mass terror that had emerged.



At the end of her narrative, Edith says, “I think we would have done more,” which is not a strong statement. This statement connects to the “maybe. I don’t know” that we saw earlier. Again, here, she gives morals with a weak, ambiguous response. She seems to assert a stance with which the audience can affiliate, but then she disregards it by making statements involving words like ‘maybe’ and ‘I think’. I believe Edith’s purpose in doing so is to formulate a situation in which her audience will truly empathize with her. By making her thoughts ambiguous, the audience has to really put themselves into her frame of mind. They must think ‘if I were a young girl in Hungary in the 1940’s, seeing and hearing all that is going on in the same context as Edith and her family, would I believe that these actions could happen to me? Would I believe that a family who is rooted in a home in a big, strong country for generations could be picked up and deported so easily? Would I believe that G-d is still with me while I have been placed in anguishing conditions such as these?’ It is a true empathetic stance in which the audience is asked to think that, although Edith’s actions, and those of her family, seem to make little sense now, their position in that time, place, and at their ages would make all of their actions make sense at the time. It is an attempt to get people to stop questioning how the Jews could not have been more prepared, or how they could not have taken more action. They are made to realize that further action was less attainable, and thought to be less necessary, than it seems to us in hindsight. In presenting her family’s decision-making process, Edith posits herself as one who was ‘in on the action’. Therefore, the audience can see her as an authority on this topic because she was directly involved in the situation.

In lines 19-25, Edith says, "I mean my father was born here. His father was born here. And I- my great grandfather's... was born here. How- it's impossible. But we didn't know enough. Had we known enough, I think we would have done more." The audience can understand this to be an evaluation by Edith in her attempt to understand her family's actions today. This is evident by Edith's use of similar tactics to the previous transcription. In line 19, Edith uses the words "I mean." Therefore, the audience can understand Edith's lines in 19-25 to be some sort of explanation for her narrative in lines 1-18. Edith assumes that the audience will use her list of the members of her family in lines 3-4 to connect that information with her repeated reference to family members, like her father and grandfather, in lines 19-21. This seems to be another example of Sacks and Schegloff's 'adjacency pair', in which certain words connect to those in previous statements to claim a connection to one another. Edith mentions her father and grandfather and their ties to the land.

Edith's narrative in lines 8-19 reference the idea of leaving for the concentration camps, or at least moving away from their home. Edith assumes that the audience understands that leaving, or going somewhere, means having to abandon their home, and therefore does not elaborate on this in her reported speech. This is probably based on each audience member's individual experience with leaving to go somewhere else. Based on this presumed knowledge, she connects the idea of *leaving* in the reported speech with the understanding that this means leaving home.

The word “here” refers to Hungary. The mention of “Hungarian Press” implies that Hungary is their home. If this is the newspaper Edith’s family receives, and the Hungarian Press is delivered in Hungary, then they must live there. Therefore, when Edith references where her father lives, the audience understands that she is talking about Hungary.

Ultimately, there is a lot of evidence to prove that the holocaust did in fact happen. Edith's testimony is not necessary to actually prove its existence. Edith's testimony digs deeper into the story, and gives the audience access to the events that they know happened. This helps them understand the situation at hand better. It is not just a proof of the occurrence of an event, but an entrance into the world of events that allows the audience to feel as though they can truly affiliate with the events to which they are given access, and thereby understand those events better.

### ***Conclusion***

The act of witnessing is complex and interwoven. It requires the ability of a speaker to position himself as one who has access to an event and can then lend his experience to those with whom he is sharing this access. A witness, therefore, is a particular kind of storyteller in several ways. The main difference is that a storyteller does not always have access to the events that he is sharing. Sometimes a story can be hearsay, sometimes it can be read from another’s account, but it is not necessarily a depiction of an event that was witnessed in person. As such, witnesses develop certain methods to present their stories as a particular type of storytelling, in which the teller is part of the evidence, and part of the story through the way the

telling is accomplished. This presents the story as somehow as authentic and credible, and provides a somewhat physical connection to the storyteller and the story itself.

An important method by which a witness can establish 'authenticity' is the use of direct reported speech. The witness quotes someone who spoke in the situation in order to demonstrate his access to the event. His ability to repeat a key moment of talk lets the audience know that he was there and that he can claim ownership of his experience and the entitlement to report the events. When formulating the event into an experience for the audience, the witness may sum up or give the gist of what he has reported. All of this serves the purpose of the witness's testimony, which is to make some kind of experience accessible to others. In doing so, the witness presents a stance to the audience and has them understand the message the witness is trying to convey, as well as agree with it. The witness's goal in using said tactics is to have the audience affiliate with the interpretation of the witness and to align with his or her views.

In reporting these events, witnesses are telling the audience that this is important. The act of telling marks the matter as tellable for the speaker, and projects the tellability for the audience. The vitality that Edith gives to her information, and the importance in not forgetting these events, forms this tellability for the audience. The very act of telling declares that the events in her life are not only important, but also memorable enough to share with others. The fact that she remembers these events shows the audience that they mean something to her, and

therefore, should mean something to them. The importance of Holocaust testimony has been widely discussed. The phrase “Never Forget” is synonymous with the idea of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive. In providing testimony and witness statements, survivors can ensure that their stories will never be forgotten. The testimony of the survivor’s is recorded so that people can go back and watch them repeatedly. In addition, the fact that these stories become important to the audience will make them pass the stories along as well.

Edith’s testimony is different from reading a story of the Holocaust in a book. It is personal, interactional, and demands interpersonal engagement from its audience. The audience witnesses Edith’s witnessing and is in the position of taking a certain stance. The experience of witnessing the telling creates a new generation of witnesses. This means that they will have their own stories to tell and they will be able to provide these stories for others. Additionally, they can use Edith’s witnessing as proof in their own witnessing, testifying to their own experience in seeing this film and actually creating a similar experience for others. They can do this both by providing their own telling, and directing their audience to Edith’s videos. By watching Edith’s videos, they are keeping her original stories intact, creating more witnesses to the original experience and giving credibility to their witnessing. Their witnessing is what fulfills the idea that each person who views this testimony will “never forget” the events that occurred.

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