Mediated Immediacy

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Mediated Immediacy: Constructing Authentic Testimony in Audiovisual Media

Abstract

The article argues that the power of witnessing is intimately linked to concepts of authenticity – it is the eyewitness who, it is believed, can truly give an account of 'what it was really like'. However, in order to ensure an impact on memory cultures, witness testimony must be recorded and fixed in a way that allows wider distribution. Such mediation can result in a perceived reduction in the authenticity of the narrative, as the person-to-person contact is lost. The recipient of the testimony is necessarily at a greater distance from the witness spatially and temporally than he or she would be in 'live' conversation. The article explores the methods deployed in audiovisual media (video testimony, memorial museums and documentary film) to lend authority and authenticity to the testimonies they record. In the process, it elaborates two new theoretical terms: *complementary authenticities* and *mediated remembering communities,* which have broad significance for our understanding of how first-person testimony can have an impact on collective engagement with the past. The article concludes that such stagings of witness testimony in public and popular history are a powerful method of lending a strong emotive element to representations of past conflicts. This emotive element can connect individuals more closely to the victims of state and inter-communal violence, but may also prevent a deeper understanding of the societal causes and consequences of that violence, which is essential for processes of post-conflict reconciliation. In this way, the article makes a significant contribution to understanding the role of testimony and mediated authenticity in what might be termed the 'era of the postwitness'.

Keywords: authenticity; secondary witnessing; mediated memory; audiovisual testimony; memorial museums; documentary film

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Mediated Immediacy: Constructing Authentic Testimony in Audiovisual Media[i]

The role of the historical eyewitness has undergone a radical shift in the last thirty years. Witness testimony has moved from being 'a democratic counter-narrative "from below"' to a position of 'hegemony' in public representations of the past (Sabrow, 2012, 22). Indeed, Martin Sabrow (2012, 20) argues that professional historians have lost much of their public status as interpreters of the past and that memorials, journalists, film producers and eyewitnesses have taken their place as the bridge between the academy and the public. The eyewitness has become near-ubiquitous in popular and public history, as the testimony of those who 'were there as it happened' is incorporated into documentary films, museums, memorials, archives, internet fora and autobiographical writing in all its forms (Jones, 2014). The power of the eyewitness lies undoubtedly in the perceived authenticity of the stories they tell – the sense that they must know what it was like because they were there and the promise that this experience can be transmitted to the listener, reader, visitor or viewer.

In this article, I aim to consider further our apparent obsession with the witness as the arbiter not of 'truth' but of 'experience'. I ask what it means to be a witness and how and why the witness is perceived to possess a special form of authenticity. In particular, I want to consider the relationship between physical presence and the construction of authenticity. If the special status of the witness relates to the fact that he or she was physically present at the event to which he or she testifies, what happens to that authenticity when the testimony is mediated? Does mediation result in a loss of authenticity? If so, what can be done about this loss? These questions are particularly pertinent as we move from the 'era of the witness' (Wieviorka, 2006) to what might be described as the era of the post-witness; that is, as those with direct experience of the cataclysmic events of World War II and the Holocaust are no longer able to tell their stories in face-to-face encounters. Memory must be mediated if it is to be

transmitted across time and space, but what is the impact of this mediation and (how) does it create new forms of authenticity?

My focus is on witnesses to extreme historical events, that is, to war, genocide, mass killings or state violence under authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. This is not to say that those who do not have such experiences do not also have stories to tell; however, as will be seen, it is the witness to suffering who is seen to occupy a position of particular importance in public and popular history and who has a unique relationship to the concept of authenticity. Particularly within Holocaust education, a great deal of concern has been expressed about the loss of those with direct experience of the genocide (e.g., Meseth, 2008; Welzer, 2012, 35-6). This concern has produced numerous projects to record their testimony, especially in audiovisual format. Notable examples include the Fortunoff Video Archive in Yale, the Shoah Foundation and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The UK National Holocaust Centre and Museum near Newark has also recently embarked on a digital project to preserve the voices of Holocaust survivors for subsequent generations. The examples of the museums in Washington and Newark highlight the use of mediated testimonies especially in public history – a practice that is drawn upon in representations of state or mass violence in numerous other contexts.

Much of the focus of research on testimonies has been on the ethics, aesthetics, politics and processes of witnessing (e.g., Young, 1988; Langer, 1991; Hartman, 1996; Kilby and Rowland, 2014). Nonetheless, 'media witnessing' of the kind described above has formed the basis of an emerging body of research that seeks to explore 'witnessing performed *in, by,* and *through* the media' (Frosh and Pinchevski, 2009, 1; see also Sabrow and Frei, 2012). Scholars have, for example, begun to analyse the structuring impact of the archive and the 'institutional embeddedness' of the testimonies gathered by organisations such as the Shoah Foundation and the Fortunoff Video Archive (Beim and Fine, 2007; see also Stier, 2003;

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Shenker, 2015). The status of documentary film as the 'creative treatment of actuality' (Grierson, cited in Rosenstone, 2006, 71) and 'a fiction (un)like any other' (Nichols, 1991, 110) – that is, as a constructed and staged representation of real-life events – is well established. And as I have shown elsewhere, the particular framing of eyewitness testimony in documentary film frequently forms an important part of this staging (Jones, 2013; 2014).[ii] The use of first person narratives in memorial museums has received less sustained attention in the academic literature,[iii] although the role of memory in the museum has been a central subject of study (e.g., Arnold-de Simine, 2013; Crane, 2000; Kavanagh, 2000; Landsberg, 2004; Williams, 2007).

In all of these contexts, the question of authenticity is key, whether the focus be on the production of eyewitness accounts by the victims of violence, or on the reception of mediated forms of testimony: as Berel Lang (in Greenspan et al., 2014, 197) states with regard to the term 'testimony': '[its] connotation, whatever the context, suggests authenticity, accuracy, precision'. However, despite this emphasis, in relation to research on testimony, the concept of authenticity itself is frequently under-theorised, with little reflection on the ways in which it is a social process negotiated between production and reception. In the following, and with a focus on three forms of media witnessing – video testimonies, documentary films and memorial museums – I seek to address this gap. Drawing on theoretical models developed in the exploration of popular history, I consider what strategies are used by those who can be termed 'mediators' (Ashuri and Pinchevski, 2009) (curators, memorial and museum managers, filmmakers) to ensure authenticity for their products.

In this way, I explore if and how mediators attempt to (re)construct the authenticating power of face-to-face encounters with the witness in media form. The article thus examines the apparently paradoxical concept of 'mediated immediacy' (Pirker and Rüdiger, 2010, p. 18; Zeller, 2010, pp. 1-19) as it relates to first-person accounts of the past. This analysis has

significance not only for our understanding of the staging and representation of testimony in diverse media: the power of authenticity also relates to the power to determine how the past is interpreted and by whom. As Edward M. Bruner states in relation to the representation of history at New Salem, 'the more fundamental question to ask here is not if an object or site is authentic, but rather who has the authority to authenticate, which is a matter of power – or, to put it another way, who has the right to tell the story of the site' (Bruner, 1994, 96).

Defining the Witness

Before addressing these questions, it is important to take a step back and consider what exactly it is that we understand by 'witnessing' and 'testimony'. Both concepts have a long history, which might be located in three areas: legal, religious and cultural-historical (Thomas, 2009). The forms of witnessing that take place in these contexts are distinct in terms of the role of the witness and audience, and their relationship to the events being described; nonetheless, they also show similarities which point towards common historical roots. The legal witness presents testimony that can be both a form of evidence and, where they are also the victim of the crime, an accusation of guilt directed towards the defendant. Yet, it is the testimony as evidence that is considered of most significance and which represents the purpose of legal testimony. In this way, the legal witness is only required where there is doubt or controversy, that is, when there is a case to answer (Thomas, 2009, 93). However, this necessarily leads to the problem of the 'false witness' (Thomas, 2009, 94) the possibility that the witness might lie about what he or she experienced. For this reason, the ideal witness in the legal context is the cold, mechanical, recording of the machine, devoid of emotions or sense of personal gain (Peters, 2009, 33).

The religious witness is intrinsically linked to the legal witness. As Günter Thomas shows, the legal witness emerged from religious texts: the Ten Commandments include the order not

to 'bear false witness', which Thomas (2009, 92) argues, is reference to a specific legal practice, rather than a religious one. Nonetheless, there is also a particular form of religious witnessing outside of the legal context, that of martyrdom. The martyr witnesses his or her adherence to faith and to God through physical suffering and (usually) death (Thomas, 2009, 95). In this sense, the martyr also enters into a contested territory with his or her testimony: that is, their act of witnessing asserts one particular version of 'truth' over another (Thomas, 2009, 96). For this reason, the martyr is dependent on another witness – the bystander who does not die and who is able 'to identify him or her as a martyr (rather than as a justly persecuted rebel), and to codify the story for future generations' (Assmann, 2006b, 268).

At first sight, it might appear that these forms of witnessing are far removed from the witnesses to be considered in this article, that is, the survivors of genocide, mass violence or authoritarian rule, who testify to their experiences in person or through a particular media form. However, these 'historical roots' (Thomas, 2009, 94) can be observed in approaches to witnesses to atrocity. The witness to extreme violence also testifies to 'disputed, unstable, conflicting, or transitory realities' (Thomas, 2009, 96). If there is no challenge to the memories that they narrate in the form of contestation, denial or forgetting, then there is no need for their testimony (Beim and Fine, 2007, 61). It is this that makes historical witnessing an 'inherently political practice' (Ashuri and Pinchevski, 2009, 133). The witness speaks in order to convince, persuade, remind and to consolidate or challenge prevailing interpretations of past events. In this way witnesses engage in 'symbolic and representational *politics*' (Frosh, 2009, 62).The politics of witnessing also circumscribe the question of who is entitled to bear witness and, in particular, the issue of perpetrator testimony. It is clear that it is possible for the perpetrators of mass and/or state violence to give an account of what happened – they too 'were really there'.[iv] And yet, it remains unclear if perpetrators can in fact bear witness to mass violence. Avishai Margalit's (2002, 148) definition of the 'moral

witness', for example, would exclude perpetrators from this special category of witnessing, based as it is on the direct experience of 'suffering, inflicted by an unmitigated evil regime'. I shall return to the issue of perpetrator testimony below.

The second way in which the witness to atrocity shows similarities to, in particular, the religious witness is in the concept of secondary witnessing and the need to witness on someone else's behalf. Echoing Primo Levi's much earlier Holocaust text *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), Giorgio Agamben (2002, pp. 33-4) describes a 'lacuna' in Holocaust testimony, 'which calls into question the very meaning of testimony', for 'the "true" witnesses, the "complete witnesses," are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness […]. The survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony.' This very specific concept of secondary witnessing has been extended to include witnesses to the witness; that is, to create a 'provisional community' (Hartman, 2000, 10) of those who listen and (it is hoped) respond to the testimony of the survivors. Dori Laub (1992, 85) has described the Holocaust as an 'event without a witness' and the efforts of, for example, the Fortunoff Video Archive, as essential to 'to enable, [...] the act of bearing witness […] to take place, belatedly', an act in which 'the interviewer-listener takes on the responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt he bore alone'. As will be demonstrated, the concept of secondary witnessing and of 'extending the remembering community' (Jones, 2014, 187) is central to understanding the impact of mass mediated testimony.

The Witness and Authenticity

The political nature of witnessing and the hope for transgenerational transmission (Assmann, 2006b) brings the problem of authenticity to the fore. Tamar Ashuri and Amit Pinchevski (2009, 137) describe witnessing as a field in the Bourdieusian sense, in which the agents

compete for the 'trust' of their designated audience. 'Trust' can be understood as a perception that the story the witness tells is 'true' in the sense that it corresponds to a lived reality. We might also say that witnessing within a given field is therefore a competition for authenticity – defined here as the belief that the witness experienced the events as he or she recounts them, not necessarily that his or her story is objectively correct. This competition exists whether the testimony is delivered in face-to-face encounters, or whether it is circulated in mediated form.

But what is authenticity? A common sense interpretation tells us that authenticity when it comes to witnessing is simple: to be authentic, the witness must have genuinely experienced the events that he or she recounts. In this view, to have 'been there' means to be authentic. This form of authenticity corresponds to what Eva Ulrike Pirker and Mark Rüdiger (2010, 17) term the mode of the 'authentic witness': 'the suggestion of an original, a relic from the past, which seems to have an effect through its historical genuineness'.[v] However, Pirker and Rüdiger (2010, 17) suggest a second form of authenticity, which complicates our view of the witness: the mode of the 'authentic experience'. This mode includes 'replicas, copies, imitation and re-enactment, the evoking of an "authentic feeling", mood or atmosphere of the time through coming close to the original or producing a plausible or typical past with the means of the present'. Indeed, if we start to think about authenticity outside of the realm of witnessing, we can observe that we often consider something to be 'authentic', when it does not, in fact, possess 'historical genuineness' – from reconstructed scenes in living history museums to historical feature films that stick closely to what is known about a particular period or set of events.

One compelling example of the latter is the extensive debate surrounding the authenticity of Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's 2006 Oscar-winning film, *The Lives of Others*, which depicted the efforts of the East German State Security Service (Stasi) to observe and control

intellectual life in the GDR (see, e.g., Cooke, 2011; Seegers, 2008). Although the director

used as props a number of objects which might lay claim to possessing 'witness authenticity',

essentially this debate focused on whether the film was an accurate representation of history,

that is whether it produced 'a plausible or typical past with the means of the present' (Pirker

and Rüdiger, 2010, 17). Those who criticised the film for its failures in terms of historical

accuracy (e.g., Eckert, 2006; Gieseke, 2008) were not criticising the fact that the film did not

originate from the period depicted, rather that its representation of that period did not

correspond to their understanding of that historical reality. Those who defended the film did

so either because they felt it did, in fact, correspond to that reality (e.g., Wilke, 2008), if not

in its detail then in its 'political sound' (Biermann, 2006), or on the basis that the claims of

fiction are not the same as the claims of documentary in this regard (e.g., Gauck, 2006; Stein,

2008, 577). In reference to *The Lives of Others*, Owen Evans (2010, 173), for example,

describes, the 'authenticity of affect', which 'provokes an emotional response from its

audience, by foregrounding the way in which the GDR systematically sought to break those

individuals it deemed a menace.'

So how does this relate to witnessing? Exploring the concept of authenticity in relation to

feature film should alert us to a similar complexity in relation to the authenticity of

testimony: in particular, the importance of the audience. If authenticity is (also) a form of

experience, then it is not sufficient for the testimony to be authentic in the sense of possessing

historical genuineness, it must also be perceived as such. This observation points us to the

intricacy of witnessing as a concept, which, as Peters (2009, 25) argues 'involves all three

points of a basic communication triangle': the agent, the text and the audience. The act of

witnessing has two modes: the first is the passive experience of an event or series of events,

the second is the active narrating of that experience for a specific audience and purpose

(Peters, 2009, 25). In order to carry out the second function, the witness must translate their

experience into language, which necessarily leads to what Peters (2009, 26) describes as the 'veracity gap' caused by the problem of communication: put succinctly, 'words can be exchanged, experiences cannot'.

Thus although we might be able to verify that a witness was physically present at the events he or she is reporting on – that he or she witnessed in the passive sense – this does not guarantee an acceptance of his or her active witnessing as an authentic representation of those events. Witnesses can be and frequently are challenged in their accounts. The distinction between passive and active witnessing also highlights the fact that in most cases we are not dealing with witnesses per se, rather with 'witnessing texts' (Frosh, 2009, 60), that is, the written, filmic, spoken or other accounts that are the 'semiotic residue' (Peters, 2009, 25) of the active witnessing process. It is here that Frosh's (2009) 'reception-oriented' approach is of significance. Frosh (2009, 56) calls for scholars 'to attack witnessing from the wrong end', that is, to assume 'that testimony […] is created in the interaction between audience and text, rather than between the witness and his or her own utterance'. This approach also allows us to consider if and why one witnessing text might be received as authentic where another is not, even where it is acknowledged that both witnesses have direct experience of the events recounted. It is also active witnessing, rather than passive experience, which contributes to the field of symbolic and representational politics. It is the witnessing text that circulates in the 'witnessing field' and which competes for acceptance as authentic. A witnessing text must assert its legitimacy and accuracy above what Frosh (2009, 62) calls 'rival testimonies', that is, similarly taken reports that modify or challenge the witness's account.

Key to the power of the witness to assert the authority of his or her account is, as Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009, 138) note, his or her identity. They add that 'insofar as the field of witnessing is concerned, being a victim may count as a resource, a form of capital in producing testimony' (Ashuri and Pinchevski, 2009, 138). This 'capital' is reflected in the

ethical charge that victim testimonies appear to exert: in Wallen's (2009, 262) terms 'the eyewitness narrative […] *demands* our time. It insists that *we* remember, and no longer be allowed to forget, what has been lived through and suffered by others.' This ethical imperative underpins Margalit's (2002) concept of the 'moral witness'. As noted above, the moral witness is a witness who has experienced suffering directly and who has a 'moral purpose' (151) in reporting that suffering to an audience who has not. That purpose should relate to the 'intrinsic value' he or she ascribes to the testimony, rather than to political goals (167). In this way, the moral witness is invested with a 'special sort of charisma' that 'comes from having a special kind of experience which is elevated to some sort of high spirituality that makes the witness a moral force' (178). The concept of the 'moral witness' has been justly criticised as suggesting that the suffering of the survivors of atrocity is in some way 'worthwhile, purposeful, and ennobling, rather than random, outrageous, and meaningless' (Horowitz in Greenspan et al., 2014, 205). However, it does alert us to the value placed on victim accounts as seemingly providing access to extreme experience.

The question of the 'moral witness' also returns us to the difficult question of perpetrator testimony. It is clear that perpetrators cannot be 'moral witnesses' as the term is defined by Margalit (2002). Nor does perpetrator testimony exert the same ethical imperative to remember that is demanded by the testimony of survivors. The perpetrator is viewed with suspicion because it seems that he or she would have more reason than the survivor to lie or distort his or her memory of events. Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009, 137) note that in order to compete in the field of witnessing, one must first be admitted to that field. Exclusion from the field means being 'relegated to silence'. We can add that exclusion means being deprived of the right to compete for 'trust', that is, for one's account to be received as authentic. This process of exclusion and silencing does not necessarily take the form of refusing to provide such individuals a publishing platform. As I have demonstrated with regard to literary

autobiographies by intellectuals involved with the East German State Security Service (Stasi) and a documentary made up of accounts by high-ranking former Stasi officers, perpetrators can be allowed to speak, but the framing and reception of their narratives might simultaneously deny them the possibility of authenticity (Jones, 2014, 47-69 and 176-182).

Mediated Immediacy

The potential for exclusion in relation to perpetrator testimony thus brings us back to the issue of mediation. Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009, 139) argue that 'mediators determine who qualifies as a witness'. More than this, the mediators also determine the framing of the witness testimony and, therefore, influence its reception as (in)authentic. The important role played by the mediator can be seen if we consider what it is that gives survivor testimony its special status. Aleida Assmann's (2006a, 90) interpretation of the 'moral witness' hints that this relates to the survivor's physical presence. She states that the 'moral witness' is a witness 'who experienced the crime to which they testify on their own body'. Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (2009, 155) also point towards the physical aspects of testimony when they argue: 'if the *main* function of testimony *now* is not to inform factually but to transmit affectively, it cannot do so by purely verbal means, whether oral or written' (emphasis in original). However, if it is the body of the witness that authenticates his or her narrative, mediated testimony – that is, testimony which does not take place in a face-to-face encounter – necessarily suffers a loss of authenticity. Mediation creates distance between the survivor and the audience and distance can create distrust (Peters, 2009, 34). This, I would argue, is an important part of the concern in political education with the loss of those with direct experience of the Holocaust and World War II: as Berel Lang (in Greenspan et al., 2014, 207) puts it, 'the live testimony of a survivor differs in impact from recorded testimony, even when the words spoken are identical'.

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Nonetheless, for individual memories to have an impact on what Erll and Rigney (2009, 9) describe as 'society's commemorative agenda', they *must* in fact be mediated in a form that allows distribution across space and time. Face-to-face encounters may be particularly powerful in terms of the affective response they produce in the audience; however, they are limited in terms of the number of people that can be reached by a single individual and their potential for transgenerational transmission beyond the lifespan of the survivor. The media technology – be it in video archives, memorial museums or documentary films – 'implies an unlimited potential of reproduction, circulation, and broadcasting' and simultaneously provides that testimony with an audience (Frosh and Pinchevski, 2009, 4). However, in order to compete for authenticity in the witnessing field, the mediator of these witnessing texts must compensate for the loss of authenticity implied by the mediation. In the remainder of this article, I will consider the methods that are used to achieve this in video archives, memorial museums and documentary films.

Authenticity Effects

One technique of authentication in relation to mediated testimony is an effect of the sheer number of testimonies that have been collected, circulated and broadcasted in diverse forms. The Fortunoff Video Archive currently holds 4,400 testimonies[vi] and the Shoah Foundation boasts 53,000 audiovisual testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides.[vii] These testimonies are individual and distinct, and yet are collected together as an archival whole. The indexing of the witness testimonies at both institutions by geographical location and topics discussed collates testimonies according to the logic of the archive, bringing together the witnessing texts of individuals who may themselves never have met in person. This is seen especially clearly in the 'Edited Programs' of testimony available on the website of the Fortunoff Video Archive. Under 'thematic programs', the witnessing texts of survivors, bystanders and liberators are brought together under specific headings; for

example, 'seeing', 'future perfect', 'parallel paths', 'and everything else was history', or 'voices from the Holocaust'.[viii] Similarly, the website of the Shoah Foundation allows the visitor to watch video testimonies grouped by 'topic' – to give just a few examples: 'messages to the future', 'responses to discrimination', 'feelings', 'Kindertransport', '70 stories of Auschwitz' and 'women and the Holocaust'.[ix]

This grouping of the witnessing narratives of individuals with diverse experiences of the same event is echoed in other audiovisual forms. It has become common practice for memorial museums to incorporate eyewitness accounts in support of an overarching curatorial concept or message. This might include extracts from video and audio testimonies, written autobiographical texts, and, in the case of more recent conflicts, eyewitness guides. By way of example, the use of testimonies in these various formats is seen in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (see Shenker, 2015), the House of Terror in Budapest, the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool (see Arnold-de Simine, 2013) and the 9/11 Memorial in New York. We can see this as part of the particular framing of this new kind of museum, which, Williams (2007, 8) argues, brings together the functions of the memorial and the museum as part of 'an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts'. The witnessing texts add a personal and emotional element to the account of past violence, which, as will be discussed below, has the potential to promote identification with the victim group and has an authenticating effect.

The 'talking heads' format, in which individual eyewitnesses tell their personal stories in relation to the specific topic at hand, has also become commonplace in documentaries about past events. I have looked at this phenomenon in detail in relation to documentaries about the Stasi (Jones, 2013; 2014). Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker's (2010) edited volume contains further examples of 'documentary testimonies' in contexts as diverse as post-Katrina New

Orleans (Janet Walker), Korean "comfort women" (Hye Jean Chung) and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (Mick Broderick). Classen (2012, 302) goes so far as to describe the use of the filmed autobiographical accounts in TV documentaries as having become 'canonical' to the extent that actors are used where 'real life' witnesses cannot be found. Again the use of eyewitness testimony gives a face to the past violence that the documentary narrates and which can offer a figure of identification for the viewer, as well as support the account of the past provided by the documentary as a whole.

In this context, the visitor of the memorial museum or viewer of documentary very rarely (if ever) sees the individual testimony in its entirety, isolated from the memorial museum exhibit or separated from the story the documentary is aiming to tell. Rather these testimonies are cut, edited and grouped according to the needs of the curator, designer or filmmaker and frequently in a way that highlights their similarities above the differences in their accounts of the past. The framing of the eyewitness testimony in the archive, memorial museum or documentary means that the emphasis is placed on aspects that the witnessing texts share (common experiences or feelings, for example), or on a specific moment in the witness's account (seen, for example, in the 'messages to the future' theme on the Shoah Foundation's website). One example of this phenomenon can be seen in the permanent exhibition at the Stasi prison memorial at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, which makes extensive use of audiovisual witness testimonies. Eyewitness accounts under the thematic heading 'Violence' include extracts that recount the experience of rape, forced sleep deprivation, psychological abuse and physical violence. Through the organisation of these accounts under one common theme, the visitor's attention is directed towards the violence inherent to all of these experiences and away from the very different forms that this violence took, as well as the fact that these prisoners were incarcerated at different times, in different places, and for different reasons.

It is here that the significance of Frosh's 'reception-oriented' account becomes apparent. Through the grouping of eyewitness accounts in this way, the individual testimonies appear to connect to one another. As they are brought together, the visitor or viewer can recognise where the witness accounts overlap, converge and confirm each other, or perhaps where there is disagreement over common experiences. This effect is seen clearly in Geoffrey Hartman's (1996, 134) description of the Fortunoff Video Archive's purpose as 'the documentation of a collective fate, the depiction through converging witness-accounts of a single event unparalleled in its murderous scope'. We might understand this apparent communication between the witnessing texts using theoretical models that have been developed to understand the processes of remembering in intimate remembering groups. Assmann (2006, 24) describes how autobiographical memories are both specific to the individual and yet do not exist in isolation. They are 'networked' with the memories of others and through these connections they 'confirm and support one another', thereby achieving 'coherence and believability'. This process is also community-building. In a similar way, the mediation of several eyewitness accounts alongside one another has an authenticating function. The individual eyewitness does not stand alone; rather he or she is supported in his or her account by the overlapping and converging narratives of numerous other eyewitnesses.

Nonetheless, there is a crucial difference between the witnessing texts in the archive, exhibit or documentary film and the intimate remembering communities described by Assmann. The former are mediated and the communication takes place only at the point of reception, that is, through the media text: the individuals producing the witnessing texts may never have met in person. The accounts are produced diachronically, rather than synchronically, and they cannot modify one another at the point of production, as has been observed with regard to memories produced in the course of conversational remembering (Welzer, 2010). Thus I describe this use of witnessing texts in audiovisual media as '*mediated remembering*

communities' (Jones, 2014). The authenticating power of mediated remembering

communities can be understood by drawing on the concept of 'remediation'. Bolter and

Grusin (1999) use this term to describe the incorporation of existing media into new media

forms. Erll (2011, 141) notes the link between 'remediation' and authenticity: the 'integration

of older media, which are commonly held to have "witnessed" the past, into a new medium

produces an *effet de réel'*. Indeed, the extensive use of testimony in these formats is in part

recognition of the authenticating power of the eyewitness, particularly of the survivor of

atrocity. The 'trust' in the testimony of the 'moral witness' generates 'trust' in the account of

the past conveyed by the memorial medium.

However, as we have seen the authenticity of the survivor-witness relates not only to the fact

that he or she was 'really there'; it is also a result of his or her physical presence. The body of

the witness testifies to the authenticity of his or her experience. As Assmann (2006a, 90)

describes in reference to the 'moral witness': 'the truth and authority of this witness lies only

in the immediate connection to the Holocaust, in the inexpressible bodily experience of

violence'. Our response to the testimony of the survivor is also a physical one. It is difficult

not to respond affectively to the harrowing accounts of violence experienced by an individual

whom we can see and hear. James E. Young (1988, 163-64) expresses this particularly well:

'images and pictures of faces, in particular, affect us viscerally, evoking emotional,

parasympathetic responses over which viewers have little control'. This physical link

between witness and audience can be explained using Jane M. Gaines's (1999, 90) concept of

'political mimesis'. In reference to documentary films, Gaines describes 'political mimesis'

as the 'relationship between bodies in two locations – on the screen and in the audience – [...]

the starting point for the consideration of what the one body makes the other do'. In the filmic

texts analysed by Gaines (1999, 91), bodies in physical struggle inspire 'audiences to carry on

that same struggle'. In audiovisual testimony, bodies demonstrating a psychological and emotional struggle inspire mimicry of those emotions in the viewer or visitor.

This also relates to the call for those who hear and see, in particular, Holocaust testimony to act as secondary witnesses (Hirsch and Spitzer, 2009, 163) or to form a 'moral community' (Assmann, 2006b, 269). The ways in which this might work can be understood through what Landsberg (2004, 2) describes as 'prosthetic memory'; a 'new form of memory' generated by the submersion in an 'experiential site'. Landsberg (2004, 2) argues that 'in this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history […]. In the process […] a person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live'. Importantly, 'the resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics'.[x] Landsberg is thinking particularly of feature films or interactive museums that situate the viewer or visitor in the subject position of the survivor or victim. However, we might consider that physical and emotional response created by the viewing of eyewitness testimony can also result in a form of empathy that is based on visceral experience and a sense of connection to the testifier.

This returns us to the dual nature of authenticity described by Pirker and Rüdiger (2010, 17): the authenticity of the witness and the authenticity of experience. Principally, the witness authenticates because he or she is a witness, because they have direct experience of the past that they narrate. This relates also to the focus on the witness's body, for it is the body that was 'really there'. However, in these mediated forms, the visitor or viewer does not in fact have direct contact to the witness; rather, they are granted the experience of direct contact through the apparent transparency of the medium. As Stier (2003, 70) notes, particularly in reference to video testimonies, critics have frequently ignored the 'framing' of testimony involved in its recording in this format, seeing it as providing unmediated access to the

witness's account. However, this apparently unmediated access is an illusion created by the technology itself. In this way, the two modes of authenticity – that of the witness and that of experience – are intimately connected.

The affective response of the viewer or visitor suggests, moreover, that a third form of authenticity is also at play in these different media: that is, the 'authenticity of affect' (Evans, 2010, 173): the genuine emotional response to the violence experienced by others. We can once again observe that this form of authenticity is closely intertwined with the other two modes. It is the knowledge that the individual testifying was 'really there' and 'really experienced' the atrocities to which he or she testifies on his or her own body which, in part, creates this affective response.[xi] However, our encounter with the testifying individual and, therefore, of their physical and emotional response to telling their stories (a response that the audience may 'mimic' in the sense described above) is an experience constructed by the perceived transparency of the medium. I term this intertwining of the different modes of authenticity and the dependency of one upon the other *complementary authenticities* (Jones, 2014). Complementary authenticities are a powerful method of generating trust in testimony and their use highlights the fact that the 'prosthetic' (Landsberg, 2004) is, perhaps counter-intuitively, closely linked to the authentic.

Rethinking Empathy

This exercise in rethinking how authenticity is constructed in audiovisual media allows us to (re)consider to what end and to what effect testimony is mediated. In particular, the demands placed on the audiences of these testimonies. As we have seen above, the academic literature on mediated testimonies repeatedly expresses the hope that the viewer will become 'secondary witnesses', that they will form a 'provisional' (Hartmann, 2000, 10), 'moral' (Assmann, 2006b, 269), or 'ethical' (Sarkar and Walker, 2010) community. This hope is also

seen in Hirsch's (2008, 115) discussion of 'affiliative postmemory', that is, the anticipation that the re-embodiment of memory enacted by the children of survivors can be extended through 'structures of mediation that would be broadly appropriable, available, and indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission'.

Mediated remembering communities bring together groups of victims and survivors to construct the impression of a community of remembrance within these media. As mediated remembering communities are combined with complementary authenticities, this community of remembrance is extended outwards: those without direct experience of the represented pasts may feel not only that they know what happened, but also 'what it was like'. This concept of 'vicarious witnessing' – of 'selling [and buying] the pain of others' has met with criticism as a form of appropriation and voyeurism of other people's pasts (see, e.g., Rothe, 2011; Weissman, 2004). While I share this concern, I would argue that it is nonetheless possible for people to feel themselves part of a remembering community based on a visceral and emotional response to the survivors' testimonies, without believing that they have in any way shared in the survivors' trauma. In this respect, the combination of mediated remembering communities and complementary authenticities is a powerful method of ensuring that commemoration of the victims of violent pasts are firmly embedded in contemporary memory cultures.

Nevertheless, we might ask what is lost by the focus on the witness and the 'hegemony' of first-person testimony (Sabrow, 2012, 22). If we, as visitors or viewers, are repeatedly overwhelmed by the power of complementary authenticities – the combination of witnessing, experiencing and feeling – does this in fact make us less able to think deeply about the political, social and cultural structures that brought about the violence in the first place? The empathy generated by prosthetic memory, Landsberg (2004, 2) argues, can motivate political action on behalf of the victim groups. However, others have argued that 'secondary' or

'vicarious' witnessing might also inspire a sense of moral superiority or even mastery in relation to the past; a 're-living of the pain' of others can, in this sense, promote a concern with one's own distress (Arnold-de Simine, 2013, 92), rather than an engaged response that aims to prevent a reoccurrence of that violence. In this regard, we should be cautious that our ethical engagement with testimony complements, rather than supersedes, the continuous, careful and nuanced representation of the past that many would see as the principal public role of the historian.

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[i] The theoretical concepts of *mediated remembering communities* and *complementary authenticities* described in this article have been explored in more detail in the context of remembering the East German Stasi in my recent book (Jones, 2014).

ii See also Stier's (2003, 104-109) discussion of the framing of eyewitness testimony in documentaries produced by the Shoah Foundation.

iii One exception is Jones (2014), in which I examine eyewitness testimony in memorial museums relating to the Stasi. See also the chapter on 'Testimonial Video Installation' in Arnold-de Simine, 2013, 97-105. Noah Schenker (2015) considers the collection and use of testimonies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

iv Indeed, Antony Rowland (2010) indicates that the examination of perpetrator accounts is in fact one future direction in the study of testimony.

v All translations from German are my own.

vi See http://web.library.yale.edu/testimonies/about (accessed 4 December 2015)

vii See https://sfi.usc.edu/vha/about (accessed 4 December 2015)

viii See http://web.library.yale.edu/testimonies/testimony-excerpts-thematic-programs (accessed 5 December 2015).

ix See https://sfi.usc.edu/video-topics (accessed 5 December 2015).

x For criticism of Landsberg's approach see Berger, 2007.

xi This is not to say that 'authenticity of affect' cannot be engendered by fiction, as seen in Evans's (2010) analysis of *Das Leben der Anderen*. However, I would argue that here the authenticity relates, at least to a large extent, to the knowledge that the fiction is a representation of events that did happen to real people in the past.