Abstract

This project sets out to frame and examine the theoretical and practical challenges involved in the process and effect of translating Holocaust testimony, which has been largely overlooked in Holocaust discourses. Research pertaining to the fields of Holocaust memorialisation, historiography, literary theory, and translation studies is drawn together, with a view to shedding light on what it means to write Holocaust testimony, what it means to read it, and how these often conflicting processes affect and are affected by translation. Using a canonical testimonial text by Elie Wiesel as a case study allows the exploration of these questions to be grounded in detailed and wide-ranging textual analysis, demonstrating the extent to which translation impacts Holocaust testimony.

The Holocaust is an unparalleled event in the twentieth century and testimony to it is born of a unique desire to relate one’s experiences, coupled with a certainty that these experiences cannot be expressed. This dual set of challenges requires a distinctive approach to reading testimony, which is shaped through a range of textual and paratextual features. Furthermore, the reader’s perception of the author figure is argued here to have a discernible bearing on this reading process. Translation has the potential to unsettle this reading, by undermining the readers’ belief in the author figure and in the referential status of the text. The analysis of Wiesel's *La Nuit* in translation demonstrates that translation not only has a marked effect on the content and nature of this piece of testimony, but that the way in which this effect is presented to the readership is a reflection of the text’s shifting target locale and strongly impacts the reading of testimonial texts.
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Introduction

This thesis sets out to examine the effect that translation has on the transmission of Holocaust testimony. Elie Wiesel’s *La Nuit* is used as a case study, with the analysis of this text’s translations allowing the author of this thesis to draw wider conclusions regarding Holocaust memorialisation in different locales. This project’s methodology draws both on theoretical considerations of Holocaust writing, and on the practical implications of these issues for the translation process. The theoretical precepts for the thesis are wide-ranging, reflecting the broad and interdisciplinary responses which the Holocaust has incited. One of the main aims of this project is to demonstrate that at the intersection of these theoretical considerations sits the question of translation, and that this question is integral to international responses to this event. Evidence for this discussion is drawn from an analysis of the translations of Wiesel’s testimony. Its evolution from French to English, and from an initial English translation to a more contemporary rendering is traced (touching briefly on its Yiddish pre-history), highlighting fundamental differences in each locale’s responses to the Holocaust. A comparative approach is adopted, with each edition of the testimony considered alongside the others. This results in a four-way textual comparison which allows for a holistic consideration of the texts.

The first chapter of this project asks the fundamental question: what is Holocaust testimony? This seemingly innocuous question reveals itself to be rife with contradictions arising from the innate difficulties of both composing texts about the Holocaust, and reading them: the navigation of these challenges is an integral feature in testimonial texts. Building on these considerations, Chapter 2 moves forward to closely consider the importance of the testimonial author figure. The nature of this figure has long been a primary concern in literary theory, and this chapter examines the effect that readers’ perception of the author has on the reading of testimony. Chapter 3 aims to draw together Chapters 1 and 2’s theoretical considerations, and to explore how they parallel relevant translation theory. The potential impact of the translator figure is examined here: if the reader’s perception of the author is central to the transmission of Holocaust writing, what place might the translator have in this communication act? This chapter also makes tentative suggestions regarding the scope for the translator to positively impact the process of testifying. These three chapters establish a number of key theoretical premises upon
which the analytical aspects of this thesis are founded. By presenting the complex processes underlying the composition and transmission of testimony, these chapters pave the way for incisive analysis of the project’s case study.

Chapter 4 introduces *La Nuit*. Firstly, the French socio-historical context of the text is examined, and used to inform discussions regarding the text’s composition and reception. Secondly, this chapter presents a range of key features of *La Nuit*. It is argued that these features have a direct effect on the way in which the reader is encouraged to receive the text. The combination of these two spheres of analysis establishes the foundation for the later analysis of this testimony’s translations.

Chapter 5 is the first of three chapters which present the findings of the close textual analysis at the heart of this project. This chapter begins with an overview of *Night*’s publication history and a discussion of the effect that the changing locale of this testimony has upon the way in which this text is presented and read. From here, the chapter moves on to look at those translation strategies which are a direct response to this changing locale. It is suggested here that each strategy employed is indicative of a change in Holocaust memorialisation and discourses. Chapter 6, the second chapter discussing translation analysis findings, looks closely at the narrative voices associated with each of the three incarnations of Wiesel’s testimony. This chapter builds on Chapter 2’s examination of the author figure, but also considers issues such as the presentation of Holocaust ethics. Chapter 7 presents the notion of certainty in Wiesel’s testimony. There is clear evidence that the degree of certainty expressed in the text has altered through time. This chapter considers the evidence for this claim, as well as its potential causes and repercussions.

The eighth chapter of this thesis draws together the theoretical analysis presented in Chapters 1 through 3 with the fine detail of the textual analysis which makes up the body of Chapters 4 through 7. The way in which the differences between the versions are presented to readers is explored here, with reference to discussions of reader attitudes to factuality and the evolving status of a translation through time. Furthermore this chapter features an examination of the distinct prefaces associated with the most recent versions of Wiesel’s testimony, and posits reasons for the variations between these statements of intent on the part of the author. Through this varied analysis it is shown that translation has a marked effect
on the transmission of testimony, the nature of which ultimately depends on how the complexities of translation processes are presented to the readers.
Chapter 1: The Genre of Testimony

Normally we are willing to grant a great validity to the accounts of those who were there, and to withhold it from — or grant it only reluctantly to — the writings of those who were not. [...] Within the contexts of Holocaust literature, in fact, the question of what constitutes legitimacy promises to become even more important as the years pass and direct access to events becomes impossible.¹

In one sense, all writing about the Holocaust represents a retrospective effort to give meaningless history a context of meaning, to provide the mind with a framework for insight without mitigating the sorrow of the event itself [...] the need to understand meets stubborn resistance from recalcitrant facts that defy the mind’s urge to interpret. The events run in advance of critical attitudes that may one day unlock their mystery.²

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the key features of Holocaust testimony. A variety of sources are used to try to determine what makes testimony unique, providing the groundwork for discussion of this project’s case study. The case study of Elie Wiesel’s Holocaust testimony is distinctive because of the evolution of its composition and translation, and because it features a number of especially intriguing textual strategies that illuminate the reading of Holocaust testimony more generally. Wiesel’s testimony accentuates the challenges inherent in witnessing and truth-telling, challenges which are set out in this chapter. The first distinct feature of testimony is the writer’s reason for composing the text. This is significant because when a survivor writes a testimonial account of his or her experiences he or she is engaging in an interaction with a particular end in mind. His or her intention shapes the text and affects how the text is read. It is argued, here, though, that the defining feature of testimony is the way in which it read. A reader does not approach a piece of testimony in the same

way that he or she approaches a novel, a memoir or a historical document. Langer suggests that any written account of Holocaust experiences is falsely teleological and encourages the reader to falsely empathise with the account. Felman and Laub suggest that reading testimony is akin to engaging in psychoanalysis. Eaglestone outlines the difficulties of identifying with the survivor who has written the account. From their diverse backgrounds, each of these scholars argues that reading testimony engenders specific challenges. These challenges are discussed and evaluated in this chapter. This chapter moreover suggests that at the heart of testimonial writing there is a testimonial pact. My understanding of this pact draws on Philippe Lejeune’s work and serves as a framework for the way in which a writer encourages his or her audience to read testimony in a particular way.

1.2 Defining ‘testimony’

Elie Wiesel has argued that ‘our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony. We have all been witnesses and we all feel we have to bear testimony for the future’.\(^3\) In the context of Holocaust studies, the term ‘testimony’ is not clearly defined. Indeed, through time Holocaust testimony’s form and function have changed markedly. In a legal sense, testimony is a legally-binding deposition. In this context, it generally refers to an oral statement. The term ‘testimony’ is also used beyond the legal context to refer to all manner of solemn, purportedly truthful statements.\(^4\) Over

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\(^4\) Dictionary definitions of the term support this hypothesis: The Oxford English Dictionary defines testimony as: ‘personal or documentary evidence or attestation in support of a fact or statement; hence, any form of evidence or proof; any object or act serving as proof or evidence’; ‘a written certificate, a testimonial’. This differs little from the New Oxford American English dictionary definition of testimony as ‘a formal written or spoken statement, esp. one given in a court of law; ‘evidence or proof provided by the existence or appearance of something’; ‘a public recounting of a religious conversion or experience’ or ‘(archaic) a solemn protest or declaration’. The French term ‘témoignage’ is defined in the 2008 Larousse as a ‘déclaration faite par une personne de ce qu’elle a vu ou entendu’; ‘déclaration, déposition d’un témoin en justice’ or an ‘action qui témoigne d’un sentiment’.

the course of the twentieth century ‘testimony’ has also been used to refer to a particular literary genre of accounts dealing with traumatic, lived experiences. It is significant that no dictionary definitions (of American English, British English or French) include this literary form of testimony. This would imply that this use of the literary term is limited to a specific group of speakers, and has not been adopted wholesale. The adoption of this term in the field of Holocaust Studies is indicative of a changing lexis being used to discuss this genocide. In *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg discuss the ‘latency period’ and/or ‘cultural lag’ which followed the Holocaust. They note that:

> There is now broad consensus amongst scholars that public awareness of the Holocaust was low in the first decade and a half after the end of World War Two, an interval that many think of as a kind of ‘latency period’ but which might also be thought of in terms of what Marxist cultural theory describes as the inevitable ‘cultural lag’ between the emergence of the new and the development of a vocabulary – be it conceptual or artistic – to describe it.\(^5\)

Indeed, Holocaust testimony was not initially discussed in great detail, but through time and as a result of a number of key events, testimony has become a much-debated topic. The vocabulary used to describe survivors’ accounts of the Holocaust has shifted through time, and there is arguably still no single definition of what it means to testify. Levi and Rothberg have argued that testimony is ‘one of the most interesting cultural forms that has emerged in the aftermath of the Holocaust and that has become central to discussions of ethics, aesthetics, and memory’ (p. 15). The argument that the form of this genre is innovative is significant to this project. While Holocaust testimony may resemble other forms of writing or telling, it has unique features which differentiate it from other means of communication. Going into more detail, Levi and Rothberg explain how innovative the genre is:

> Because testimony does not fit easily into the categories of high or low culture and because it does not conform to the received patterns of literary and autobiographical....

narration, as critics including Lawrence Langer have argued, testimony helps to open up a new space of knowledge at the intersection of life history and collective historical experience. The emergence of the genre of testimony therefore stands as an instance of how, because of the very sense of a prohibition on received aesthetic forms in the wake of the Holocaust, culture after Auschwitz has in fact been compelled to innovate formally. (p. 15)

The idea of formal innovation resulting from an exceptional circumstance is important here as it hints at a development of the genre through time. Holocaust testimony has evolved into a form which is distinct from other, potentially similar genres. It has been argued by Lawrence Langer, for instance, that testimony does not ‘conform to the received patterns of literary and autobiographical narration’ (p. 15). Consider, for example, the similarities between written testimony and autobiography. Both types of text are based on one person’s accounts of experiences he or she has lived, yet these genres are quite distinct from each other. While both testimony and autobiography aim to relate experiences lived by the writer in a factually accurate way, the nature of the topic at hand is vastly different and has a significant effect on the way in which the texts are consumed. One of the most significant differences between these genres is the subject matter of testimony. Dornier and Dulong ask ‘Entre autobiographie, essai et témoignage, où situer la frontière ? La question renvoie à ce qui constitue un événement digne d’un témoignage, par sa dimension collective, sa possible signification historique, sa valeur cognitive’.6 There are, however, other, more subtle differences between these genres, which are related to how readers perceive and hope to interact with the writer of testimony. Lejeune has posited a model of autobiographical narrative in his works on autobiographical theory. Using his definitions of autobiography, we can begin to unpick the distinctions between autobiography and testimony in order to productively analyse the basis of the differences between these genres.

Lejeune observes that autobiography is ‘une catégorie complexe et instable’,7 which is not governed by hard and fast rules dictating its content or form. Indeed, he

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argues that the distinctions between autobiography and its neighbouring genres are becoming increasingly clear through time, and are no longer perceived by readers to be ‘un ensemble vague « la littérature où l’on parle de soi »’ (p. 13). Lejeune sets out a number of features which he considers essential for a text to be considered an autobiography. These are:

Définition : nous appelons autobiographie le récit rétrospectif en prose que quelqu’un fait de sa propre existence, quand il met l’accent principal sur la vie individuelle, en particulier sur l’histoire de sa propre personnalité.

Cette définition met en jeu des éléments qui appartiennent à trois catégories différentes :

Forme du langage : a) récit ; b) en prose

Le sujet traité : vie individuelle, histoire d’une personnalité

La situation de l’auteur : a) identité de l’auteur, du narrateur et du personnage ; b) perspective rétrospective du récit (p. 14)

The areas of convergence between autobiography and testimony are clear. Holocaust testimony tends to take the form of a prose account. While there is a large variety of other Holocaust writing, which takes a number of different forms (poems, novels, music), testimony itself is generally in the form of prose. The situation of the author is also the same as that specified by Lejeune for autobiography (the author, narrator and principal character must be one and the same and the account must be told retrospectively). Indeed, the only major area of discrepancy between the two genres is that of the subject material. Here, Lejeune specifies that an autobiography must discuss the individual’s life, or the history of a particular character. Lejeune highlights the importance of an effort being made to ‘ordonner ces souvenirs et en faire une histoire de la personnalité de l’auteur’ (p. 19), underlining that:

la personne s’explique par son histoire et en particulier par sa genèse dans l’enfance et l’adolescence. Écrire son autobiographie, c’est essayer de saisir sa personne dans sa totalité, dans un mouvement récapitulatif de synthèse du moi. Un des moyens les plus sûrs pour reconnaître une autobiographie, c’est donc de regarder si le récit d’enfance occupe une place significative, ou d’une manière plus générale si le récit met l’accent sur la genèse de la personnalité (p. 19)
One of the most important features in autobiography is the account of the writer’s childhood – a key formative period in his or her life – and the framing of this account as part of a broader description of how the writer came to be who he or she now is: his or her individual history. Testimony, however, usually recounts only one aspect of the writer’s life and would therefore be an example of what Lejeune refers to as ‘tous les récits qui portent sur un seul épisode de la vie de l’auteur, ou sur une période limitée de sa vie adulte’ (p. 19). Lejeune discounts these other accounts from the genre of autobiography. He later argues that if just one period of the writer’s life is focused upon and if this period is the writer’s childhood, the text may be an autobiography, provided that there is ‘au moins implicitement un lien solide […] établi entre cette enfance et la vie qui l’a suivie, qu’elle soit le premier acte d’une histoire’ (pp. 20-21). This notion of the ‘premier acte d’une histoire’ is central to any analogy drawn between autobiography and testimony. Although not all Holocaust testimonies describe a childhood lived in the camps, each survivor’s experience can be seen as a singularly formative experience, akin perhaps to the childhood of the survivor’s post-camp life. Lejeune’s argument that an autobiography must describe the writer’s formative years is based on the idea that autobiographical writing should not be seen as ‘l’exposition d’un sens déjà connu, mais comme la recherche du sens’ (p. 78).

This notion can be neatly paralleled with certain writers’ (discussed below) perception of testimony as a search for inaccessible memories: the act of ordering a written account of Holocaust memories is a way of searching for their meaning and moving on from them. As such, even this major differentiating factor between autobiography and Holocaust testimony can perhaps be seen as a commonality between the two genres.

A further limitation to any analogy drawn between autobiography and testimony is the renown of the author. Lejeune notes that ‘la plupart des autobiographes sont connus pour avoir réalisé quelque chose avant d’écrire leur vie, [donc] on n’a en général aucune peine à distinguer les textes qui sont le fruit d’un projet autobiographique, et ceux qui sont œuvres de fiction’ (p. 26). Given that most autobiographies are written by people who are well-known (albeit sometimes in a limited domain) we, as readers, are theoretically able to fact-check the content of the account and thereby differentiate it from a fictional narrative. Lejeune makes this point as a way of distinguishing between autobiographical writing and fiction, but it is
nonetheless a point of divergence between testimony and autobiography: while those who write autobiographical works have generally previously achieved a certain degree of prominence based on public endeavours, writers of testimony are largely anonymous, known beyond their social circle primarily for having survived the Holocaust. This poses a certain difficulty with regard to Lejeune’s next stipulation: ‘Pour établir s’il s’agit bien d’une autobiographie, il faut connaître, par d’autres sources d’information, la vie de l’auteur’ (p. 26). The notion of referentiality is central, in Lejeune’s definition, to the relationship the reader builds with the text. To be sure that the text is autobiographical, the reader must be able to obtain a certain amount of knowledge about the writer’s life, in order to verify that what is written in the account is true. While the reader is unlikely to check each detail of the text, flagrant lies or comments which are completely impossible to substantiate make it hard for the reader to believe what he or she is reading.

This observation regarding the reader’s need to have the ability to check the content of the account is related to the factual subject matter of the account. In her 2002 article regarding testimony and factuality, Susan Suleiman poses the crucial question: ‘In what kind of writing do facts matter most and why?’ The role and limitations of factuality in this genre are central to how it is read. In his volume Le Pacte autobiographique Lejeune notes that autobiography claims to ‘apporter une information sur une « réalité » extérieure au texte’, to have a factual basis beyond the text. In order for the reader to believe in this text-reality relationship, he argues that autobiographical texts should include a ‘pacte référentiel’. This referential pact between the writer and the reader should outline ‘une définition du champ du réel visé et un énoncé des modalités et du degré de ressemblance auxquels le texte prétend’ (p. 36), explaining the extent of the text’s factual basis and the way in which reality is presented in the text. In autobiography, this pact is at the heart of the reader-text interaction as it tells the reader that he or she is to expect a true account of the writer’s experiences.

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9 Philippe Lejeune, Le pacte autobiographique (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 36. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
In the case of testimony, however, providing a referential pact is a much more complicated issue and there are limitations to the account that a survivor can provide. Despite being a referential text, testimony is often only able to attain a limited ‘degré de ressemblance’ because the nature of the events being described is so wholly beyond the comprehension of those who have not experienced them and because the writer may not be able to fully recall or express his or her memories. The referential pact is, therefore, a major area of divergence between autobiographical texts and Holocaust testimony. A more detailed exploration of this divergence and the effect it has on the genre of testimony will follow later in this chapter.

Testimony closely resembles autobiography in a number of respects. A second similar genre, and one which further illuminates the testimonial genre, is that of memoir. Indeed, Langer (amongst others) refers to written accounts of the Holocaust by survivors as Holocaust memoir, reserving the term testimony for oral accounts. In L’Autobiographie en France, Lejeune observes one main difference between autobiography and memoir: in memoirs ‘il n’y a pas identité de l’auteur et du sujet traité. Dans l’autobiographie, au contraire, l’objet de discours est l’individu lui-même’ (p. 15). So the subject matter of an autobiography is the construction of the writer - his or her personal history - and the subject matter of a memoir is one particular aspect of the writer’s life (perhaps his or her career, interaction with someone else, or experience of a particular event), an aspect which has an impact on ‘l’histoire des groupes sociaux et historiques’ (p. 15). Since the issue of subject matter is one of the main differences between autobiography and testimony, it would appear that testimony more closely resembles the genre of memoir, which can take just one aspect of the writer’s life as its subject matter. Indeed, if a memoir should deal in some way with the history of a social group, Holocaust accounts almost certainly fall into the genre. However, despite the closer resemblance between Holocaust testimony and memoir than between Holocaust testimony and autobiography, major distinctions between these genres still persist. The question of the notoriety of the writer and the accessibility of the events described is just as valid in a comparison between memoir and testimony as they were in a comparison between autobiography and testimony. The nature of the writer and the subject at
hand sets Holocaust testimony apart from even its closest kin, because each engenders a unique reader-text interaction.

1.3 Holocaust testimony through time

This reader-text interaction has developed through time. Observing the different uses of the term ‘Holocaust testimony’ allows us to discuss the expectations of the person sending and the person receiving the testimony. The earliest widespread use of the term ‘testimony’ to refer to survivors’ accounts of the Holocaust can be traced back to the 1961 Eichmann trial. This trial has been seen as a tide change moment in Holocaust studies. Novick, for example, observes a ‘great upsurge in discussion of the Holocaust, occasioned by the capture [and trial] of Adolf Eichmann’,\textsuperscript{10} while Richard Rubenstein and John Roth note that ‘[t]he trial itself attracted worldwide attention and gave impetus to serious research on the Holocaust’.\textsuperscript{11} Adolf Eichmann was one of the key figures behind the organisation of the deportation of Jews and Roma to concentration camps and was put on trial after his arrest in South America. The trial of Eichmann took place in Jerusalem and ended in the sole instance of capital punishment in Israel.

Aside from its clear historical importance, the Eichmann trial was also a platform for survivors to express their experiences in both a legal and public forum, to give credence to the expression of their memories. The public aspect of this is perhaps a precursor to the public forum in which published testimony resides. The trial was televised and received media coverage. A particularly noteworthy portion of the coverage is Hannah Arendt’s work and her polemical discussion of the ‘banality of evil’ and its role in the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{12} Tom Lawson notes that ‘[b]ecause much of the prosecution case rested on surviving witnesses to Nazi persecution it [the trial] transformed the role of survivors and persuaded many to tell their own stories for the

first time’, while Levi and Rothberg argue that during the Eichmann trial ‘personal accounts of the events would begin to shape the historical memory of the Holocaust and eventually the theoretical discourse of literary and cultural studies’ (p. 7). This comment is a useful summation of the movement from testimony as oral, legal depositions to a cultural form. It also hints at the loaded discussions of the limits and role of testimony which would take place in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In the decades that followed the Eichmann trial, interest in Holocaust testimonies continued to grow. Lilian Kremer summarises that ‘critical discussion centers on two elements, literary silence or representation of the concentrationary universe and the notion of a sharp divide between pre- and post-Shoah thinking and aesthetics.’ She highlights the fact that ‘[h]istorical verity’ and ‘fidelity to the historic experience’ are recurrent themes in critical responses to Holocaust writing. As debates regarding the appropriate media with which to relate Holocaust experiences raged, different attempts were made to convey this period in history to both niche and wide audiences. An example of this is the establishment of Yale University’s Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies in 1981. This collection of videotaped testimonies was established by Dori Laub (Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist) and television specialist Laurel Vlock, and grew exponentially before being officially housed at Yale. One of the principles behind its foundation was that there is a finite amount of time to gather together records of survivors’ experiences first-hand. Furthermore, it was felt that by videotaping the testimony, and therefore putting a human face to the deposition being given, it would add a ‘compassionate and sensitive dimension to the historical record’.

The cultural significance of this type of collection of testimony is noted by Levi and Rothberg, who argue that it was created in part as a reaction to the Holocaust mini-series made in 1978 by NBC. They refer to this archive as a kind of ‘corrective’

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to the series' telling of the Holocaust, which was at the time, and has since been, criticised for presenting a “Hollywood” version of the Holocaust, and in so doing detracting from the reality of the actual events (p. 15). Mark Anderson analyses the nature and effect of this series in his incisive article about the role of children in re-tellings of the Holocaust. He argues that this series ‘knew how to appeal to mainstream American families’, noting that the characters are ‘Jewish in name only’ and that the account focuses heavily on the deaths of children, rather than the murder of an entire people. These two drastically different representations of the Holocaust are indicative of competing ways of expressing Holocaust memory and also of the kind of issues which plague Holocaust testimony. The notion of mediating Holocaust memory in order to express it to a range of audiences is at the heart of debates regarding the very definition of testimony. In this vein, Dornier and Dulong have suggested that the development from a judiciary form to a literary form has also changed readers’ expectations of testimonial texts:

Une chronique plate de ce qui a été vécu, simple consignation de détails factuels, peut-elle satisfaire le destinataire du témoignage ? Tant que le témoignage est considéré, sur le modèle de la déposition judiciaire, comme un document à exploiter par les historiens, la factualité du récit peut suffire. Mais le témoignage, particulièrement aujourd’hui, vise souvent à atteindre la société en général, un public de lecteurs ou de spectateurs, dans un contrat direct du témoin avec les membres de sa communauté, de sa nation, voire du monde.

Through time, different media have been used to recount the events of the Holocaust. Archives such as those found at Yale or Yad Vashem are just one form of account, destined for one type of audience. Televised depictions of events represent a different form of telling, for a different audience. Each type of account is indicative of a different motivation for testifying. The motivation behind testimony itself is a significant aspect of the definition of testimony. While a film such as Schindler’s List uses an adapted version of the truth to distil the events of the Holocaust in an attempt to transmit their emotional weight to a wide audience, oral testimony recorded at a Holocaust memorial for an archive aims to leave a personal record of

18 Dornier and Dulong, eds., Esthétique du témoignage, (p. xviii).
one person’s experiences of an event lived by millions. Each form of telling is
adapted to correspond with the teller’s needs and the receiver’s expectations. So
why does one testify, and what effect does this have on the genre of testimony?

1.4 Testifying

The underlying motivations which lead Holocaust survivors to narrate their traumatic
experiences through testimony, and the modes of expression present in testimony
have been explored by a range of scholars from a broad spectrum of disciplines.
One of the most influential works to examine this topic is Shoshana Felman and Dori
Laub’s volume entitled *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis
and History*. From the fields of comparative literature and psychoanalysis
(respectively), Felman and Laub explore the challenges faced by testifiers and also
the various artistic forms that testimony can take. Central to their discussion of the
difficulties of testifying is Laub’s psychoanalytical argument that there is a
fundamental difficulty in accessing the memories that survivors wish to express.
They argue that the severity of the trauma survivors have undergone means that
their memory of the events is either fragmented or parcelled away in the interests of
self-preservation. Laub suggests that survivors are ‘not truly in touch either with the
core of his[her] traumatic reality or with the fatedness of its re-enactments […]', and
thereby [remain] entrapped in both’.¹⁹ Not only can the survivor not access the
memories of the events in question, he or she remains ensnared in the memories
and destined to replay them.

The authors go on to suggest that trying to tell someone about the memories
is a way to process them. They believe that the ‘process of constructing a narrative,
of reconstructing a history and essentially of re-externalizing the event – has to be
set in motion’ in order for the survivor to truly ‘witness’ the trauma and thereby re-
externalize ‘the evil that affected and contaminated the trauma victim’ (p. 69).
Recounting testimony is therefore a way for survivors to become witnesses, and
obtain a certain degree of closure. Testifying is presented here as a necessary way
for a survivor to process the events he or she has lived. This necessity can be seen

¹⁹ Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), p. 69. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
as one of the defining features of testimony: the writer is not embarking on the endeavour for artistic or entertainment purposes: he or she is writing because it is an essential element of his or her own processing of the events he or she lived.

A desire to share Holocaust experiences does not equate to an ability to do so. There are numerous challenges involved in this telling, not least the inaccessibility of the memories in question. Felman and Laub argue that the Holocaust’s ‘uniquely devastating aspect’ can be ‘interpreted as the unprecedented, inconceivable, historical occurrence of “an event without a witness” – an event eliminating its own witness’ (p. xvii). Towards the end of the Second World War, moves were made to empty the concentration camps of all of their inmates – removing all living witnesses to the atrocities committed within. Furthermore, it has been observed that the survivors were stripped of all humanity by their experiences, leaving them unable to testify. Levi and Rothberg also make this point, drawing on Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s work to do so. In Remnants of Auschwitz, Agamben discusses the figure of the Muselmann, who:

> is nothing other than [...] the space empty of people at the centre of the camp that, in separating all life from itself, marks the point in which the citizen passes in to the Staatsangehöringe of non-Aryan descent, the non-Aryan into the Jew, the Jew into the deportee and, finally, the deported Jew beyond himself into the Muselmann, that is, into a bare, unassignable and unwitnessable life.20

Agamben traces the dehumanisation of this figure during the concentrationary experience, the way in which each layer of humanity is stripped from the inmates until such a time as there is nothing left but the empty shell of life without humanity. Levi and Rothberg analyse the figure of the Muselmann and the effect that this status has on the ability to testify, concluding that the individual ‘is simultaneously the absolute witness – the one who has experienced the limit in the camps – and yet, because of his physical state, the one incapable of speaking about what he has seen’ (p. 11). There is a question mark, therefore, over whether those who experienced the extremes of the camp would even be able to testify to what they

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witnessed, and at the heart of the testimonial genre and its promise to convey meaning to its readers.

1.5 Receiving testimony

The nature and limitations of this literature have been at the centre of numerous significant debates over the past decades, debates which call into question the very existence of a literary genre of testimony. The possibility of ‘accessing’ these experiences, for example, is hotly debated. Some believe that the experiences are inaccessible to anyone – the survivor included – while others believe that certain forms of testimony offer more ‘access’ than others. Levi and Rothberg suggest that testimony offers ‘an unparalleled access to the unfolding of the Holocaust and to this subjective experience of catastrophe’ (p. 25). Lawrence Langer, on the other hand, very intentionally distinguishes between what he refers to as ‘testimony’ (meaning exclusively oral testimony) and Holocaust memoirs. He argues that these forms of expressing Holocaust experiences differ substantially. The oral mode is central to many of the functions of testimony and its impact on the written mode should not be underestimated. Felman and Laub highlight ‘the psychoanalytical relation between speech and survival’ (p. xvii). The oral mode is central to psychoanalysis, and psychoanalysis is in turn connected to the process of testifying:

Autobiographical accounts of trauma [...] set in motion a testimonial process similar in nature to the psychoanalytic process, in that it is yet another medium which provides a listener to trauma, another medium of re-externalization (p. 70)

Central to this observation is the link between testifying and listening; the perception that one’s testimony is being actively received is necessary for it to succeed in its function of re-externalisation. Indeed, ‘Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody: to somebody they have been waiting for a long time’ (pp. 70-71). Similarly, Dornier and Dulong state that ‘Le témoin écrit à l’adresse de destinataires’ and that ‘La comparaison usuelle avec une bouteille jetée à la mer signifie cette attente d’un lecteur prêt à recevoir le message. Pour que l’intention de témoigner aboutisse, il faut d’un côté un public prêt à accueillir le message’.

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21 Dornier and Dulong, eds., *Esthétique du témoignage*, p. xiv.
This insistence upon the presence of a listener could be at odds with the medium of writing: the presence of a reader is presupposed, or implied, when the writing is undertaken, but the reception of a written text is much more distanced than the reception of an oral testimony. This distance necessarily affects the composition of the testimony, rendering written testimony distinct from its oral precursor. Langer differentiates between the way a recipient of testimony reacts to an oral account and to a written account. He argues that oral testimony is spared the falsely imposed teleology innate to a written account. A written account lacks, for example, “gesture[s], a periodic silence whose effect cannot be duplicated on the printed page, and above all a freedom from the legacy of literary form and precedent to which anyone attempting a written narrative on any subject is indebted”. Indeed, Langer questions ‘whether an unmediated text on this subject was ever achievable, given the extraordinary nature of the event’ (pp. 40-41).

There is a parallel to be drawn here between Langer’s argument and Lejeune’s discussion of the deforming capacities of written accounts. He posits that ‘l’autobiographie n’est qu’une fiction produite dans des conditions particulières’. The fact that an account of one’s own life experiences can resemble fiction is due in part to what Lejeune refers to as ‘une tension que l’on sent présente chez beaucoup d’autobiographes entre le désir « historicisant » (exactitude et sincérité) et le désir « structurant » (recherche de l’unité et du sens, élaboration du mythe personnel)’ (pp. 84-5). In order to recount his or her experiences convincingly, and in a way which is comprehensible to the reader, the writer employs textual features which are often seen in fictional accounts. This picks up on Dornier and Dulong’s argument that ‘il faut […] que le récit favorise cette transmission [du témoignage]. La fonction de la poétique narrative serait donc de soutenir une communication directe du narrateur au lecteur, d’établir et de maintenir le contact entre deux sensibilités humaines,

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22 Lawrence L. Langer, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 40-41. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).

parfois éloignées dans le temps" and Suleiman’s assertion that ‘fiction tells the truth far better than personal experience does’.

There is a direct correlation between this argument and Langer’s assertion that all memoirs (those recounting Holocaust experiences included) abide ‘by certain literary conventions: chronology, description, characterization, dialogue, and above all, perhaps, the invention of a narrative voice’ (pp. 40-41). Langer pauses on this notion of the narrative voice, noting that it is this voice which ‘seeks to impose on apparently chaotic episodes a perceived sequence, whether or not that sequence was perceived in an identical way during the period that is being rescued from oblivion by memory and language’ (pp. 40-41). He sees this imposition of a voice, which narrates and orders the experience being described, as being less immediate and more open to interpretation than the actual human voice of a speaking survivor. The notion of narrative voice is central to this project, and dissociable from that of the author figure (which is discussed in more detail in later chapters). Consider Langer’s example of Filip Müller’s accounts of his experience as part of the Sonderkommando. He states that '[the narrative voice in Müller’s written account] is simply not the same voice as the one that transfixes us in Claude Lanzmann’s film Shoah' and argues that the falsely imposed morality and orderliness apparent in Müller’s written account (but absent in his oral testimony) '[u]nittingly […] reminds us that we must establish the authenticity of the voice before we can respond to the reliability of the text' (p. 57). Where oral testimony confronts the listener with a real voice and markers of indisputable authenticity, written accounts must battle to establish the authenticity of their narrator’s voice. Langer argues that no narrative voice is as authentic as the spoken voice of the survivor, and this despite writers’ attempts to convey their own voice accurately.

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24 Dornier and Dulong, eds., Esthétique du témoignage, p. xiv.
26 ‘the team of prisoners, nearly all of them Jews, who supplied the labour to keep Auschwitz-Birkenau gas chambers and the crematoria running- shepherding victims into the chambers or manhandling them to the execution pits, and disposing of the corpses afterwards’ Inga Clendinnen, Reading the Holocaust (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 21-22.
A fundamental difference between oral testimony and written accounts, for Langer, is the role of imagination and interpretation in the interaction between the survivor and the reader/listener. When listening to a survivor speak, the experiences are conveyed in a vivid manner, apparently devoid of artifice. Furthermore, the speaker has clear ownership of the account, an account which tends to lack the type of narrative features which lead a listener or reader to partake in the account and follow its narration as he or she might follow the plot of a story. A written account does not have this clear feature of ownership and it does have the kind of features akin to prose and storytelling; indeed it represents a completely different form of telling. While a spoken account does not seek or invite the listener to partake in the story, a written account is reliant on the readers’ interpretative powers. It is Langer’s belief that the creation and consumption of a text is an interpretative act, an act which ‘invites reflection, commentary, interpretation, by the author as well as the reader’ (p. 57), and in so doing detracts from the authenticity of testimony. Langer suggests that ‘all surviving victims who write about their camp experiences must adopt some strategy for providing entry to the reader’s imagination into that distant world. […] The writer strives to narrow that abyss [separating words from the events they seek to animate]’ (p. 42). He argues here that when writing an account of Holocaust experiences the survivor must actively ensnare the reader into the account, to overcome the difficulty inherent in imagining the event being described.

The notion of imagination is fundamental here: while the reader can never experience for him- or herself the events the survivor experienced, his or her imagination is called into play when reading the text, to help visualise and comprehend the account. In Langer’s view, this is a particularity of written Holocaust accounts (that is to say, not a feature of oral accounts), and a feature which has a direct effect on the way in which readers interact with these texts. He states that: ‘Because they cannot talk back to a written text, readers are forced into silent collaboration with the narrative, which tests the inventive capacity of their imaginations by contriving an imaginative vision of its own’ (p. 63). This tallies with Rosenfeld’s argument that ‘we inevitably “complete” the narrative by bringing to the text material that it itself does not contain; we do that almost by reflex, filling in and
interpreting with knowledge gained through biographical or historical notes’, 27 and
Fine’s suggestion that ‘It is up to the reader to grasp the knowledge concealed
between the lines in order to complete the narrative. The reader is the taciturn yet
active recipient of the unfinished story’. 28 The reader of a piece of testimony is forced
to base his or her own interpretation of it on the text alone. He or she cannot
converse with the survivor, but only with his or her own imaginative interpretation of
the text the survivor has written. The narrative voice is nothing more than a created
figure who recounts the story written on the page, a figure with whom the reader
must collaborate and, to some degree “identify” when reading the account. This
differs vastly from the role of the survivor who orally relates his or her experiences to
an interlocutor. This question of interpretation of the text and identification with its
writer is fundamental to the definition of testimony and to the way in which the genre
is read and analysed.

These notions of interpretation and identification, which are brought to the fore
in examinations of written Holocaust testimony, have been explored in great depth
by Robert Eaglestone. Unlike Langer, Eaglestone defines testimony as a written
genre, arguing ‘that Holocaust testimonies are to be understood as a new genre in
their own right’. 29 To support this view he cites Wiesel, Maurice Blanchot (who states
that testimony is ‘not read and consumed in the same way as other books’) and
Felman and Laub (citing their comment that ‘we do not even know what testimony is
and […] in any case, it is not simply what we thought it was’) (p. 15). Despite this
major divergence between Eaglestone and Langer’s work, their discussions overlap
on a number of key points. Langer argues that oral testimony is the only true form of
testimony because of the way in which the oral account is structured and delivered,
and the way in which the interlocutor therefore interprets it. Just as Langer observes
the constructedness of written Holocaust accounts, and sees this constructedness
as a limitation, so Eaglestone observes it and uses it as a means of exploring the

27 Rosenfeld, ‘The Problematics of Holocaust Literature’, in Confronting the Holocaust: The
Impact of Elie Wiesel, ed. by Rosenfeld and Greenberg, pp. 6-7.
28 Ellen S. Fine, Legacy of Night: The Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel (Albany: State
29 Robert Eaglestone, The Holocaust and the Postmodern (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
2004), p. 8. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
way in which readers approach this unique genre of writing. Where Langer sees the reader of testimony as being forced into collaboration with the account because of the interpretative nature of reading, Eaglestone observes a complex process of identification: Langer notes that a written account ‘invites reflection, commentary, interpretation, by the author as well as the reader’ (p. 57), while Eaglestone similarly discusses the ‘day-to-day process of identification, in which a reader identifies with – becomes or relives in some way – the events of a book’ (p. 8). The similarity in the reading processes observed by both scholars is clear, but their interpretation of the processes differs. For Langer, the interpretation and identification processes detract from the transmission of the account, but for Eaglestone they are inevitable and their navigation is a fundamental feature of the genre of testimony itself.

Eaglestone’s work on Holocaust testimony is based upon the idea that while identification is commonplace and ‘[c]entral to reading’s affect’, ‘the texts that witness the Holocaust question this taken-for-granted process’ and in this way mark themselves apart, and form a new genre (p. 16). He sees the genre of testimony prose as being torn in two directions, on the one hand expressing something ‘other’, something that cannot undergo a process of identification, and on the other hand participating, as a narrative, in the seizing and consuming that postmodernists consider characteristic of Western thought. Eaglestone does not dispute Langer’s argument that written testimony features hallmarks of prose and invites interpretation. Instead, he argues that in the genre of testimony many texts contain features which resist this process too, and that it is precisely this resistance which defines the genre itself. Eaglestone is quick to clarify what he means by the term ‘identification’. He does not mean that readers actively replay or process the events lived by someone else – this would be out of the question because the basis for identification is nothing more than an ‘illicit and impossible grasping or comprehension of another’s real and represented experience’. Rather, he sees identification as the ‘grasping’ itself, grasping which is encouraged by the forms that written accounts take: the ‘representation or mediation of experience’ (pp. 22-23). Eaglestone furthermore states that ‘identification happens, despite a wish for [it] not to happen, because of basic assumptions about narratives and reading, because we expect identification to happen when we read prose narratives’ (pp. 22-23).
There are number of reasons to resist identification. For example, Felman and Laub argue that:

The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of “normal” reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after. This absence of categories that define it lends it a quality of “otherness”, a salience, a timelessness and a ubiquity that puts it outside the range of associatively linked experiences, outside the range of comprehension, of recounting and of memory (p. 69)

Here, as elsewhere, it is argued that anyone who has not experienced the events of the Holocaust first hand is unable to understand them. Their magnitude and nature are so unlike anything else experienced by man that claiming to understand them is seen as being both untrue and morally dubious. Indeed, this incomprehensibility undermines the very process of telling at the heart of testimony: why try to tell a story that you know no-one will be able to understand? Putting those events into words on a page is problematic because, as Eaglestone observes, when we read, we identify with what is being said and therefore (falsely, in the case of testimony) believe we can understand and empathise with the events unfolding.

All of the above authors agree that there is something unique in the interaction between the account and the recipient of Holocaust testimony. Langer argues that if the account is not oral the recipient does not “see” the survivor behind the account and that he or she is therefore forced into collusion with a falsely teleological representation of the camps. Felman and Laub suggest that the interaction has a psychoanalytical basis, providing a means for the survivor to re-externalise his or her inaccessible memories and casting the recipient in the role of facilitator. Levi and Rothberg discuss the uniqueness of the genre and its ability to provide the recipient with access to an understanding of the Holocaust. Like Langer, Eaglestone discusses the problematic of identifying with a written Holocaust account, suggesting that when faced with an ordered, written account the recipient cannot help but try to identify with the writer’s experiences, in a way which is deeply problematic given the context of the account.

At the heart of all of these discussions is the issue of interaction, of the relationship which develops between the narrator and the reader of a Holocaust
account. This is a contentious issue because although Holocaust testimony may resemble other forms of writing – such as autobiographies, novels, memoirs – the interaction is unique. The interaction is based on the reader’s prior knowledge of the subject, his or her knowledge of the writer, the stakes at hand and the challenges faced by the survivor. It is based also on the reader’s reason for reading the text and the writer’s reason for writing it. We will never be able to conclusively state why someone reads or writes a particular text. However, an analysis of the text can provide some indication of the way in which a reader is encouraged to approach the text and therefore the reader-narrator interaction.

1.6 The reader-narrator relationship

Addressing why people read testimony is essential when exploring how these texts are consumed. The Holocaust is a profoundly distressing and disturbing subject, yet millions of people opt to read first-hand accounts of it. We read testimony because we are curious about events which are completely unknown to us, because we want to know how an individual reacts to extreme situations, because the Holocaust is a pivotal moment in human history and understanding it helps our understanding of the world we live in. We do not read testimony for pleasure, entertainment or fun. The reader of a piece of testimony expects to increase his or her understanding of the event. This is a fundamentally challenging expectation because the Holocaust experience is so far beyond the reach of our imagination. The reader approaches the testimonial text looking for information and insight.

The writer of the testimony has his or her own expectations of the reader. Felman and Laub hypothesise that the testimony is like a dialogue:

Bearing witness to a trauma is, in fact, a process that includes the listener. For the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an other – in the position of one who hears. Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody: to somebody they have been waiting for a long time (pp. 70-71)

We return here to the concept of testifying as a re-externalisation of trauma, which cannot happen if there is no-one to hear the account being proffered. They suggest that when a survivor is composing a piece of testimony, he or she envisages someone listening to (or reading) the end product, much as Dornier and Dulong
equate the process with putting a message in a bottle. When the account is received, the experiences are externalised and the objective has perhaps been fulfilled. Felman and Laub go so far as to argue that ‘[t]he absence of an empathetic listener, or more radically, the absence of an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story’ (p. 68). Without the envisaged recipient the account fails because ‘only when the survivor knows he is being heard, will he stop to hear – and listen to – himself’ (p. 71). Here, though, the distinction between oral and written testimony is once again brought to the fore. Not only do these different media lead to different ways of structuring Holocaust accounts, they also change the way the survivor perceives the recipient of the testimony. No longer faced with a human being, whose presence he or she is sure of, the survivor must rather imagine the recipient of the testimony and tailor it to a faceless reader.

Felman and Laub see the listener as an integral part of the testimony itself. They suggest that the ‘listener [...] is a party to the creation of knowledge de novo. The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time’ (p. 57). In their view, testimony only exists once it is heard. Drawing on this notion, Geoffrey Hartman refers to the ‘midwife role of the interviewer-listener’.30 As such, Felman and Laub perceive the testifier-recipient relationship as one of ‘joint responsibility’, for a ‘reemerging truth’ (p. 85). Similarly, Fine suggests that ‘The act of listening transforms the [reader] into a co-narrator and, in a sense, co-author, for, he who listens to the witness becomes one [...] Mutually nurtured by each other’s presence, speaker and listener come to be partners in a story that transcends both of them’.31 There is a parallel to be drawn here between the notion of the receiver being responsible for the received message and the prominent role of the birth of the reader within Barthes’ theories of the author, which will be discussed in more depth in later chapters.

Felman and Laub furthermore argue that the recipient of the testimony must not expect the witness to have perfect recall of each moment of the experiences being described. To take part in the creation of the testimony, the recipient must bring to the interaction his or her own knowledge of the event and of the challenges the survivor faces when testifying. It is important for the recipient to 'know “the lay of the land” – the landmarks, the undercurrents, and the pitfalls in the witness and in himself. He needs to know that the trauma survivor who is bearing witness has no prior knowledge, no comprehension and no memory of what happened' (p. 58). We come to an intersection here between the psychoanalytical approach espoused by Felman and Laub and the observations grounded in literary theory from authors such as Eaglestone. The former see testimony as a dialogue in which the recipient of the testimony plays a pivotal, productive role. The latter observe processes of identification, collaboration, and imagination in the reading of testimony.

While these processes are problematic, it seems that they are also integral to the transmission of Holocaust accounts. The way in which the testimony is sculpted and framed affects the extent and nature of the identification. For example, as Langer argued, oral testimony is less susceptible to collaborative processes, while a written account inevitably leads to a certain degree of imaginative identification with the experiences described in the account. As Levi and Rothberg argue, the information that the recipient brings to the telling alters the effectiveness of the transmission. The generic features of testimony are grounded in this collaborative process at the heart of the survivor-recipient interaction.

1.7 The testimonial pact

The specific interaction between the testifying survivor and the recipient of written testimony is set in motion before the process of reading begins, through genre expectations. When a reader approaches a text he or she makes assessments about the kind of text it is and how he or she should read it. Abrams and Harpham summarise that a genre can be:

conceived as a set of constitutive conventions and codes, altering from age to age, but shared by a kind of implicit contract between writer and reader […] In the reader, these conventions generate a set of expectations, which may be controverted rather
than satisfied, but enable the reader to make the work intelligible – that is, to naturalize it, by relating it to the world as defined by codes in the prevailing culture.\textsuperscript{32}

Similarly, Yves Stalloni invokes Lejeune’s use of the term ‘pact’ to describe the establishment of a certain understanding between ‘l’œuvre et le public’\textsuperscript{33} generated by genre labels. Readers are made aware of the text’s genre in a number of ways. The book’s covers (both front and back), prefaces, retailing strategies, all contribute to the reader’s understanding of which genre the text can be assigned to. From this assignation, certain expectations regarding the text’s mode, content and style are generated. If a text is labelled as ‘testimony’, the reader expects a first-hand account of experiences of the Holocaust lived by the narrator. As is the case for autobiography, the reader expects the author, the narrator and the protagonist to be the same person (unless it is made clear that someone else had a hand in editing the account). If the preface suggests that the survivor is providing only a partial account of the experiences he or she lived, because failing memory prevents him or her from doing otherwise, the reader will look for (and hopefully accept without rancour) omissions or a lack of detailed information. All of this type of information forms part of a ‘pact’ into which the reader enters when he or she decides to read a testimonial text.

The notion of a pact is drawn from Lejeune’s work on the autobiographical pact. As we have already established, autobiography shares many key features with testimony. It is proposed here that there is also a comparable (but distinct) pact between the sender and receiver of the Holocaust testimony as between the autobiographer and the reader of an autobiography. In L’\textit{Autobiographie en France}, Lejeune defines the autobiographical pact as the ‘excuses, explications, préalables, déclaration d’intention, tout un rituel destiné à établir une communication directe’ (p. 24). The idea of a pact between the reader of testimony and the survivor is in line with the psychoanalytical approaches to testimony discussed above. Indeed, Felman and Laub refer to the testimonial process as a “a brief treatment contract”: a contract

\footnote{Meyer Howard Abrams, and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, \textit{A Glossary of Literary Terms} (Boston, MA.: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), pp. 135-36.}

\footnote{Yves Stalloni, \textit{Les genres littéraires} (Paris: Dunod, 1997), p. 21.}
between two people, one of whom is going to engage in a narration of her trauma, through the unfolding of her life account' (p. 70).

Framing the testimonial process in this way underlines the important role of trust in the relationship between the two participants in the testimonial process. Clearly, establishing a trusting relationship between a reader and a writer is more complicated than establishing a trusting relationship between two animate human beings. The writer creates an imaginary (or implied) audience when constructing his or her account, but has no way of knowing that the actual reader will be trustworthy. The reader imagines who the narrator, writer and protagonist is, but cannot form the same kind of relationship with a textually constructed figure as he or she can with a present interlocutor (as Langer notes). However, these limitations do not stop processes of trust establishment taking place. A certain amount of hypothetical trust is placed in the imagined sender and the imagined receiver when a piece of testimony is composed and read.

The pact makes clear the relationship between the narrator, author and main character in the narrative. Autobiography is reliant upon these figures being one and the same, a fact which is established through the name on the book’s cover, the name at the end of the preface, sometimes through use of the first person narrator (although not always), and the ability for the reader to go elsewhere and verify, to a certain extent, the veracity of the facts recounted. Having established that author-narrator-main character relationship, the writer will also go some way to excuse him or herself for any paucity of detail or factuality, requesting the forgiveness of the reader in order to set the sender-receiver relationship off on solid footing. The writer will also declare his or her intentions, be they the intention to recount just one formative period in the writer’s life, or to recount just one aspect of the writer’s life. These assertions are generally made in the preface in the first instance, although evidence of them is found throughout the text (in, for example, the way in which the narrator addresses the reader). It is suggested here that these features are also generally present in testimonial writing. The major distinction between the autobiographical pact and the testimonial pact is to be found in the handling of truth. Trust is based on a presumption of truth, yet it has already been suggested that a survivor’s ability to give a full, complete and truthful account is limited. The way in
which this difficulty is negotiated and presented to the reader is an integral feature of testimony.

In *Le Pacte autobiographique*, Lejeune suggests that this subject would be addressed in what he refers to as the ‘referential pact’. Mentioned earlier, the referential pact is an additional contract between the writer and reader. It is ‘en général coextensif au pacte autobiographique, difficile à dissocier’ (p. 36). Rather than being a standalone piece of writing which explicitly sets out the writer’s intent to recount his or her story truthfully, the referential pact (like the autobiographical pact) is composed of a number of elements, which, when considered as a whole, present the writer’s intent. The importance of the referential pact is related to Lejeune’s earlier assertion that autobiographical texts (and also testimony in this case) are a ‘genre «fiduciaire»’: trust-based writing. In the referential pact, which ‘prend rarement une forme […] abrupte et totale’ (p. 36), the writer provides:

une preuve supplémentaire d’honnêteté que de la restreindre au possible (la vérité telle qu’elle m’apparaît, dans la mesure où je puis la connaître, etc., faisant la part des inévitables oublis, erreurs, déformations involontaires, etc.), et que de signaler explicitement le champ auquel ce serment s’applique (la vérité sur tel aspect de ma vie, ne m’engageant en rien sur tel autre aspect). (p. 36)

The question of a referential pact is one of the most defining and problematic aspects of testimonial writing. The fact that testimony is factual and purports to truthfully retell experiences lived by a survivor does not mean that there are external reference points available to the reader. This means that the reader must place all the more trust in the account in order for the telling to be successful. This brings us back to the question of oral versus written accounts and the difficulty of imposing an order and structure to testimonial narrative. Exploring the precise limitations of the factuality expressed in testimony and examining the way this is presented to the reader will help us to better understand the interaction involved in testimonial writing and reading.

1.8 Testimony and Truth

One of the key issues affecting the referential aspect of the testimonial pact is the testifier’s ability to provide a truthful account of his or her experiences. Issues such as the way in which survivors remember their experiences and the power of the
words they can use to express these experiences directly affect the factuality of their testimony. Let us first consider the memories on which testimony is based. Testimony is a genre based on the return of memories and on the coming to terms with these memories, and the way in which these memories return is a thorny issue in the establishment of a trusting writer-reader relationship. Imperfection of memory is one of the perennial issues of life writing. However, Holocaust survivors’ memory is all the more complex. The extent of the trauma undergone and the chasm between the concentrationary world and the world we live in are so great that survivors’ memories may be disjointed, fragmented, distorted, or even absent. Recounting these memories is therefore a complicated process. Felman and Laub observe that memory returns to the survivor in ‘disjointed fragments’ (p. 71), while later referring to the memories as ‘elusive’ (p. 76).

The extent to which the fragmented nature of the memories affects the composition and reading of testimony is debatable. As is noted above, all memory is fragmented, and no writer is able to provide a complete, unmediated account of his or her life. Indeed, Lejeune argues in *L’Autobiographie en France* that the ‘exploration empirique et élémentaire de la mémoire’, which results in part from the ‘désordre des souvenirs’, ‘amène [celui qui écrit] à s’interroger sur les rapports de la mémoire et du récit’ (p. 77). He argues here that the disorder of one’s memories is actually at the heart of the autobiographical process, that it is their disorder which leads the writer to question his or her own narrative. He explains in greater detail that ‘La mémoire n’est pas structurée comme une histoire, elle a une richesse et une complexité qu’un récit linéaire ne peut que trahir’ (p. 77). This comment has echoes of Felman and Laub’s claim that the process of testifying is a process of discovery, but also of Langer’s argument that any attempt to write testimony involves a false ordering of events and betrays the truth of the experiences in some way. The way in which this challenge is presented to the reader - if, indeed, it is presented - is part of the testimonial pact, as it factors into the writer’s claims to referentiality.

A further problem faced by the survivor who wishes to provide a true account of his or her Holocaust experience is that of a lack of appropriate words. Just as the very nature of survivors’ camp memories is affected by the extraordinary nature of the experiences, so too are the words that may be used to describe these experiences. The concentrationary universe is so completely fractured from our
everyday life, that normal chains of associative understanding are broken. A ‘camp’
is no longer a location for tents, ‘guards’ are not present to protect, ‘ovens’ are not
used to cook food. Standard connotations and implied meanings shift drastically
when in the mouth or hands of survivors. Holocaust survivor, Charlotte Delbo, writes
about the challenges of putting the Holocaust experience into words:

Parce que, lorsque je vous parle d’Auschwitz ce n’est pas de la mémoire profonde
que viennent mes paroles. Les paroles viennent de la mémoire externe, si je puis
dire, la mémoire intellectuelle, la mémoire de la pensée. La mémoire profonde garde
les sensations, les empreintes physiques. C’est la mémoire des sens. Car ce ne sont
pas les mots qui sont gonflés de charge émotionnelle. Sinon quelqu’un qui a été
torturé par la soif pendant des semaines ne pourrait jamais dire : « J’ai soif. Faisons
une tasse de thé. » Le mot aussi s’est dédoublé. Soif est redevenu un mot d’usage
courant. Par contre, si je rêve de la soif dont j’ai souffert à Birkenau, je revois celle
que j’étais, hagarde, perdant la raison, titubante ; je ressens physiquement cette
vraie soif et c’est un cauchemar atroce.34

Lejeune argues in *L’Autobiographie en France* that the paucity of words is a
problem faced by all those writing an account based on life experiences, noting that
‘l’autobiographe a souvent l’impression qu’aucun des langages dont il dispose ne
peut traduire dans sa complexité ce que lui livre sa mémoire’ (p. 85). This notion is
echoed in Felman and Laub’s work. They argue that there are no words to express
the concentrationary experience:

There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the
right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that
cannot be fully captured in thought, memory and speech. (p. 78)

The Holocaust experience is so far beyond the realms of our comprehension – and
our imagination – that no words can ever capture it. Delbo’s comment confirms that
survivors are often well aware of this challenge. This presents a difficulty for the
referential aspect of the testimonial pact: the survivor knows that his or her words do
not accurately capture the account he or she wishes to present. Is this expressed to
the potential reader? Does the writer state in the preface or the body of the text that
the words the audience will read cannot express the truth of the experiences? This

varies from one account to another, but there are a number of survivors who have commented on this difficulty, if not in their testimony then in the public arena. This feature of the testimonial pact is tackled in more depth in later chapters.

There are, therefore, a number of obstacles to the writer of testimony presenting a factually accurate account of his or her experiences of the Holocaust. However, there is an important distinction between an account which is factually accurate and one which is truthful, and sincere. A text can be completely sincere, but not factually accurate. A text can be loaded with facts, but lack sincerity. The perception of what makes a text truthful is fluid, and dependent on the topic at hand. In *L’Autobiographie en France*, Lejeune discusses the challenge faced by an autobiographer when trying to present a truthful account of his or her life. He highlights that it is important not to ‘chicaner sur l’exactitude littéraire et historique du récit’, suggesting that readers should instead try to ‘juger l’intention de l’auteur’ (p. 26). Without knowing the survivor, the reader can only judge the writer’s intention by interpreting what he or she writes in and around the testimony. This compounds the importance of the referential pact.

Lejeune argues that the pact needs to make clear that the writer is undertaking ‘[un] projet, sincère, de ressaisir et de comprendre sa propre vie’ (p. 28). Lejeune is drawing attention to the importance of the writer’s intention to present a truthful account, and not his or her ability to do so:

C’est l’existence d’un tel projet qui importe, et non une sincérité à la limite impossible. Autant il est naturel d’exiger d’un autobiographe le projet de dire la vérité, autant il est naïf de lui reprocher de ne pas y être arrivé, pour deux raisons. La première raison, c’est qu’il n’est pas sûr qu’une telle vérité existe indépendamment des types de discours qu’on emploie. La seconde raison, c’est que ce qui nous intéresse dans l’autobiographie, c’est la perspective dans laquelle, arrivé à un certain âge, un homme envisage le déroulement et le sens de sa vie ; et comme cette perspective est le résultat de son histoire, elle nous renseigne autant sur celle-ci que le ferait un récit minutieux mais non orienté. (p. 28)

Here, Lejeune argues that absolute truth is quasi-impossible in autobiographical writing because this type of truth does not necessarily exist and because the truth of an autobiography is the perspective from which it is told: the way in which the writer
perceives his or her own life story and the way in which the narrative is put to paper is as important as the facts of the account itself. This latter argument is slightly problematic if we try to extend it to testimonial writing. While in autobiographical writing the perspective may be of primordial importance, testimonial writing purports to offer a factual account of a historical event.

In testimony, the factual content is arguably more important than in autobiographical writing, a fact which complicates the role of the referential pact. Consider Suleiman’s comment that ‘Any proof of inauthenticity creates “shockwaves” [...] all the more so [...] in the framework of collective experience, as in memoirs about war or genocide’. However, Lejeune’s argument that ‘à la problématique stérile de la sincérité, il faut substituer celle de l’authenticité : il ne s’agit pas d’avoir la vérité, mais de l’être’ (p. 84), can still be applied to the testimonial project. In saying this, Lejeune is arguing that although it is not necessarily possible to provide a factually indisputable account of the survivor’s Holocaust experiences, the survivor nonetheless tries to convey his or her intention to truthfully recount his or her experiences. In the genre of testimony, which has a more pronounced factual foundation than autobiography, the expression of this intention is all the more significant and important to the writer-reader interaction.

At the centre of the interaction between the person who writes testimony and the person who reads it is a belief that the account is true. However, as is discussed above, the very writing of testimony provides a challenge to the composition of a factually accurate account and poses questions of sincerity and truthfulness. This complicates the referential aspect of the testimonial pact and therefore has an impact on how readers approach testimony and how they perceive its writer. It might be argued that the inherent difficulties involved in composing testimony (the dangers of a falsely teleological account, the presence of features associated with fiction, the lack of appropriate words, the challenge of even accessing memories of the Holocaust) could undermine the reader’s belief that the account is truthful.

This is a problem which Lejeune has discussed in the context of autobiography. He argues that because, in part, of the ‘mythologie naïve de la

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35 Suleiman, 'Problems of Memory and Factuality in Recent Holocaust Memoirs: Wilkomirski/Wiesel', (p. 546 )
sincérité’ readers expect an account which draws on real life to be a perfectly accurate representation of the experiences being described (p. 23). When this is not the case, the reader becomes distrustful of the account. Lejeune observes that ‘si l’autobiographie éveille d’abord la curiosité du lecteur, elle suscite aussitôt après la méfiance. Genre ambigu, elle s’attire les procès les plus contradictoires’ (p. 9). As much as readers are fascinated by the personal experiences of the protagonist, so they are likely to seek out discrepancies in the text. This is just as applicable to testimony as it is to autobiography. If anything, testimony could be held up to even higher standards of factual accuracy because of its roots in legal depositions and its role in the memorialising of an historical event.

1.9 Conclusions

The genre of testimony is ambiguous and challenging to define. Through time, the use of the term ‘testimony’ has shifted in line with socio-historical trends. Furthermore, it is a contentious term, embroiled in debates about what of the Holocaust can be recounted and what is beyond expression. These debates cut to the heart of what it is to read and how we, as readers, consume texts. It has been suggested here that it is this process of reading which defines the genre itself. Testimonial texts simultaneously require reading, yet pose unique challenges to the reader: the reader will not be able to grasp the entirety of the text’s content, and there is a fundamental doubt regarding whether this grasping is even morally appropriate. The role of the reader is furthermore a profoundly complex role, implicated as it is in the survivor’s own healing process. The reading process is largely governed by what is referred to here as the testimonial pact. This pact (formed through both textual and paratextual features) guides the reader through the text, instructing him or her how to navigate the terrain of the account, how to avoid blindly consuming its content and how best to play a role in the re-externalisation of the survivor’s trauma. It is the notion of this testimonial pact which is at the heart of this study of La Nuit by Elie Wiesel and translations of it. In the next chapter, the role of the author and the reader’s perception of this case study’s author are examined, with a view to enhancing our understanding of this figure’s role in the proposed testimonial pact.
Chapter 2: Elie Wiesel and the author of testimony

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine the role of the author figure in the reading of testimony. The previous chapter established that, like autobiography, testimony requires the author, the narrator and the protagonist of the text to be the same person. This makes the reader’s perception of the author particularly important, all the more so in testimony than in autobiography because of the relative anonymity of the writer. Beyond the text, the reader’s impression of the author figure is formed through paratextual features, for example by public appearances and his or her life story. In this chapter, the idea of the author figure as an orientating feature which plays a role in the reader’s interpretation of a text is discussed, with reference to the testimonial pact and the unique way in which readers approach testimony. The case study of Elie Wiesel as author is explored in this chapter. Wiesel is a prominent public figure who frequently discusses his views about the Holocaust, memorialisation, and the Israel-Palestine conflict in the public arena. He has also published a significant body of work and his life story is relatively well known. Given these factors, it is fair to assume that someone reading his testimony is likely to bring certain preconceptions about Wiesel to his or her reading of his testimony. The effect of these preconceived ideas about the author of a piece of testimony is discussed in this chapter, where it is suggested that the reader’s knowledge of Wiesel forms part of the testimonial pact. By examining a range of Wiesel’s views, their effect on the process of reading testimony is examined.

2.2 The author and autobiography

Lejeune highlights the notion that any text which is purportedly autobiographical requires close examination of the author figure:

Comme le « je » implique un « tu », ce type de récit mime une communication avec la personne à qui s'adresse le récit : dans l’étude de l’autobiographie, il est important de déterminer qui est cet interlocuteur (imaginaire) auquel le récit s’adresse, et quel type de relation le narrateur entretient avec lui (de la séduction au défi) ; ce qui mène à l’analyse des types de discours et de tons, et
The reader's perception of the author is a significant aspect of his or her reading of a piece of autobiography. It is argued here that it is also a significant aspect of the reading of testimony. However, the reader's impression of the writer of a piece of testimony is markedly different to the impression he or she will have of the author of a piece of autobiography. As noted in the previous chapter, while the writer of autobiography is generally a well-known figure, the writer of testimony is often primarily known for having survived the Holocaust and having recounted his or her Holocaust experience. There are, evidently, exceptions to this observation (Holocaust survivors who are known for endeavours other than testifying) but broadly speaking, it can be argued that a reader reads testimony for an insight into the Holocaust, more than an insight into the writer's life story.

Despite this distinction, the reader's belief in the author figure is still an essential feature of testimony. The reader must trust that the author is the person who lived the experiences being described if he or she is to believe in the factuality of the account. Lejeune observes that in autobiography this relationship is established in a number of ways:

Dans les textes imprimés, toute l’énonciation est prise en charge par une personne qui a coutume de placer son nom sur la couverture du livre, et sur la page de garde, au-dessus ou au-dessous du titre du volume. C’est dans ce nom que se résume toute l’existence de ce qu’on appelle l’auteur : seule marque dans le texte d’un indubitable hors-texte, renvoyant à une personne réelle, qui demande ainsi qu’on lui attribue, en dernier ressort, la responsabilité de l’énonciation de tout le texte écrit.

The simple act of putting one's name on the cover of a piece of life writing and of labelling it as such instructs the reader to conceive of the author as the narrator and the protagonist. This act establishes a relationship between the

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2 Although a number of survivors who have written testimony have gone on to be well known (Wiesel, Levi, Delbo, for example), they are mainly known for this, rather than for their previous accomplishments in unrelated fields.
3 Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, p. 23
written text and a ‘real person’ beyond the text, who can account for its truthfulness and take responsibility for it. It is this relationship between the name featured on the cover of the book and the human being who wrote the words contained in the book which is problematic. Lejeune sums up this issue concisely:

Un auteur, ce n’est pas une personne. C’est une personne qui écrit et qui publie. A cheval sur le hors-texte et le texte, c’est la ligne de contact des deux. L’auteur se définit donc comme étant simultanément une personne réelle socialement responsable, et le producteur d’un discours. Pour le lecteur, qui ne connaît pas la personne réelle, tout en croyant à son existence, l’auteur se définit comme la personne capable de produire ce discours, et il l’imagine donc à partir de ce qu’elle produit. (p. 26)

This chapter examines how the reader’s image of the author is shaped and also how his or her perception of the author shapes the reading of testimony.

2.3 Who the reader sees in a text

For a reader, there are a number of people involved in a text. There is the author, who created the text, the narrator, who speaks the words in the text, and the protagonist, who is living the events described in the text. As previously discussed, in autobiography (and testimony) these three figures are supposed to be the same person. The narrator is the voice of the text, and is created through the words used in the text. This figure can take a wide range of forms: he or she may be a third-party omniscient figure; a participant in the events being described; a fictional figure; a narrator who claims to have lived the events being described. In the case of autobiographical writing, the reader mentally amalgamates the image of the person who wrote the text with the person narrating the story. The previous chapter showed that this amalgamation requires a number of trust features being built into the body of the text so that the reader can more easily see these two figures as one. It is, however, important to be clear that the narrator is not the person who wrote the text. Much as the reader may believe that through an autobiographical text he or she has unmediated access to the person who wrote the text, this is not the case: through the text we build an understanding of the narrator, of the narrator’s viewpoint, of the narrator’s experiences. The narrator is a carefully constructed
figure whose utterances form part of the reader’s interaction with the text. An understanding of the difference between the author and narrator is essential to our understanding of the text.

A useful way of looking at the relationship between the author and the narrator was proposed by Wayne Booth in the 1960s. He suggested that the notion of an ‘implied author’ could be used to conceptualise the figure the reader perceives, arguing that ‘[a]s [an author] writes, he creates not simply an ideal, impersonal “man in general” but an implied version of “himself” that is different from the implied authors we meet in other men’s works’. Since its conception, the term has been ‘attacked, defended, deconstructed, resurrected, refined and redefined’, but it remains a useful tool for this discussion. Seymour Chatman’s discussion of the implied author notes that this figure is:

reconstructed by the reader from the narrative. He is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative, that stacked the cards in this particular way, had these things happen to these characters, in these words or images. Unlike the narrator, the implied author can tell us nothing. He, or better, it has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn.

This conception of the author underlines the impotence of the writer and the distance between the writer, the implied author, and the narrator. In a 2003 publication, Emer O’Sullivan presented an adapted version of Chatman’s diagram describing the process of narrative communication. O’Sullivan’s version of this diagram focuses just on the figures involved in the

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5 Susan S. Lanser, ‘(Im)plying the Author’, *Narrative*, 9 (2001), 153-60 (p. 153).
7 Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 267.
communication act, summarising the role of the narrator in the reading process:

![Diagram of narrative text flow]

Figure 1: From the "real author" to the "real reader" (O'Sullivan, 2003), p. 199

Through the narrator, the narratee constructs an image of the implied author. The narrator does not provide direct access to the author, but there is a chain of association stretching from the reader, to the narrator, to the author. The importance of the caveat 'implied' must not be understated, for it is this implication which is at the heart of the reader's belief that the account is true (in the case of life writing). However, the narrator is just one of the three figures evoked in testimonial texts. Furthermore, information exterior to the narrator informs the reader's perception of who the author is and what this says about the text.

2.4 The role of the author figure

There are two theorists in particular whose work has shed further light on the role of the author. Foucault and Barthes both published texts which have profoundly affected the perception of the author in recent literary theory. Influenced by the political climate of the time, and particularly the French student uprisings, Barthes published 'La mort de l'auteur' in 1968. In this essay he argues that 'Personne (c'est à dire aucune «personne») ne [...] dit [une phrase]: sa source, sa voix n'est pas le vrai lieu de l'écriture, c'est la lecture'. In this scenario, the author 'n'est jamais rien de plus que celui qui écrit' (p. 63); his or her presence is not mandatory, and no fixed meaning can be determined. His conception of author death, and the resulting reader birth, repositions the interpreter as the key agent in the creation of meaning. Instead of looking to the

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author as a source of signification, the reader is seen as the source, as it is essentially his or her world view which will inform his or her understanding of the text. The concept of the death of the author is problematic in the field of testimony: the author figure is an essential element in the reading of testimonial writing and if the author is no longer seen as the origin of the text’s meaning, this destabilises the reader’s hypothetical interaction with the text. If the author can no longer be seen as the referential guarantee of the text’s factual accuracy, what role does he or she play in the reading of testimony?

Foucault has argued that the author is a ‘regulating element’\textsuperscript{10} and not ‘une source indéfinie de significations’.\textsuperscript{11} His perception of the author figure is called the author function, a notion which indirectly builds on Barthes’ discussion of the author death. Foucault states that the ‘nom d’auteur fonctionne pour caractériser un certain mode d’être du discours’ (p. 798). That is to say, the reader associates the author figure with a particular set of preconceived notions, meaning that the author has the function of curtailing the potentially limitless meaning of a text. This re-balancing of the author-reader-text relationship directly affects testimony because instead of seeing the author as the origin of all of the text’s meaning, he or she can be seen as one of many ways in which meaning can be discerned from a text. The author’s name itself has particular associations, which inform the reader’s interpretation of the text and the discourses of which the text is a part.

2.5 Elie Wiesel as author

The idea that the author is not the sole origin of meaning in a text, but one of a number of sources of meaning, has wide-ranging effects on the reading of


testimony. The reader’s perception of the author indisputably affects how testimony is read, especially because the oneness of the author, the narrator and the protagonist is an essential aspect of the genre. The ramifications of this observation are explored here, through an examination of Elie Wiesel as a case study. This case study sets out to suggest the type of effect that extra-textual representations of this writer might have on the reader’s understanding of the given piece of testimony. *La Nuit* offers a key case study because the textual devices employed throughout it problematise the telling of Holocaust accounts. Tropes such as silence, unfinished narratives and direct comment draw the readers’ attention to the limitations of the text and create a distinct testimonial pact. This pact is also created through the readers’ perception of the author. As this chapter will demonstrate, Wiesel’s engagement with Holocaust memorialisation and frankness with regard to the challenges faced by testifiers also feed into how the readers of his testimony decode his words. The complex evolution of *La Nuit*’s translation history lends itself particularly well to the interests of this study. Having been translated into English twice (with a significant time lag between the translations), this text can offer insight into how the development of Wiesel’s public persona and of culture-specific responses to the Holocaust can affect the re-telling of Holocaust experiences, bringing up questions of authenticity, uncertainty, and reader expectations. In this chapter, comments Wiesel has made in the public domain, and relevant comments from his memoirs are both discussed, with a view to assessing the effect that Wiesel’s changing public persona might have on the reading of *La Nuit."

Born in Transylvania, at the age of 15 Wiesel and his family were deported to Auschwitz (in 1944), where his mother and one sister died. He was subsequently moved to Buchenwald with his father, who died there. Freed from Buchenwald upon its liberation by Allied forces, Wiesel relocated to Paris, where he went on to study at the Sorbonne. Having begun a journalistic career in the 1950s, Wiesel travelled to the US as a correspondent for the Tel Aviv newspaper he was working for in the late 1950s. While in New York, he was struck by a taxi and in 1963, while recovering from this accident, he opted to become a naturalized American citizen. In the period following the publication of *Night*, Wiesel became an increasingly prominent figure in America, working with the Commission on the Holocaust, playing a central role in the foundation of the
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, teaching at universities such as Boston, amongst other activities. He is also seen as an intellectual figure. He became known for his outspoken views regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict and a range of humanitarian crises. Daniel O’Connell discusses the perception of Wiesel in his various adopted homelands, highlighting the fact that he is a mediatised figure, called upon to discuss contemporary issues and continued Holocaust memorialisation:

“Daniel O’Connell discusses the perception of Wiesel in his various adopted homelands, highlighting the fact that he is a mediatised figure, called upon to discuss contemporary issues and continued Holocaust memorialisation:”

Similarly, as early as 1978 Des Pres had highlighted the fact that Wiesel is perhaps better known for his humanitarian work than for his writing, noting that ‘as a survivor and a witness [Wiesel] is accorded a respect bordering on reverence, but as an artist Wiesel has received little recognition’.13

2.6 The construction of a public persona

Elie Wiesel is a prominent public figure, making hundreds of public appearances each year. It might be argued that he is one of the most famous living Holocaust survivors, partly because of his ongoing work in memorialisation (particularly with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Wiesel’s public appearances vary widely, from addressing world leaders, to visiting local schools, to appearing on television programmes. He uses these media appearances to convey what he sees to be two essential messages for humanity: the memory of Holocaust survivors, and pleas against

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indifference. For instance, Wiesel accompanied President Barack Obama and Chancellor Angela Merkel on a tour of Buchenwald in 2009 (a visit which he apparently instigated).\(^ {14}\) A further very recent example of this is the advert he took out in the *New York Times* on December 18 2013, decrying the ongoing negotiations the United States have entered into with Iran.\(^ {15}\) His strong media presence reflects a desire to enter into a dialogue with the public, to discuss with them and respond to them. His media appearances are intended to reach a wide, loosely defined audience. Published interviews in local daily newspapers or televised interviews reaching audiences of millions will target a different audience to, for example, his uniquely religious publications (such as the ‘Celebrations’ series), which are likely to reach a more niche religious audience. It is useful to consider the immediacy of his media expression: through this outlet Wiesel makes current pronouncements, reacting deftly to the mood, time and place in which he is speaking. This provides a unique insight into how his views and views of him change through time. Wiesel’s prominence in the public domain is a key feature of his persona as an author; when his name is evoked, it is with associations of social activism, and his texts form part of these highly visible discourses.

In addition to his testimony, Wiesel has also published (to date) two volumes of memoirs.\(^ {16}\) Chapter One discussed how testimony differs from memoirs, broadly arguing that testimony purports to discuss one, traumatic, (possibly historically significant) period in the writer’s life, while memoirs describe a wider time-span, without a pronounced traumatic element. The referential aspect of the text also differs, as memoirs are generally written by


someone who is well known, whereas testimony is generally written who is previously unknown, but for having experienced the traumatic event being described. The scope of the project is therefore different, as is the reader’s knowledge of the author.

*Tous les fleuves vont à la mer*, published in translation as *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, is Wiesel’s first volume of memoirs, published in France in 1994 by Le Seuil and in 1995 in America by Random House. It spans the years from Wiesel’s childhood to 1969, the year he met his wife and sometime translator, Marion. The next volume in the series is entitled *Et la mer n’est pas remplie* (1996, *And the Sea is Never Full*, 1999). It has been suggested that a third volume will also be published, but (as noted above), more than a decade after the initial publication of the most recent volume, no such follow-up has appeared. The time lag between the publication of Wiesel’s memoirs and his testimony is significant, because it means that the views he expresses in them are the product of vastly different life experiences. Furthermore, the longer processing period allows him to comment on his Holocaust experiences from a different perspective.

These memoirs provide a useful tool for considering what knowledge of Wiesel readers might bring to the reading of his testimony. This resource is both similar to and distinct from statements Wiesel makes to the media. It is similar in that it also offers the opportunity to consider the extra-textual ways in which the testimonial pact is established, but it is distinct because its target audience is so different. While anyone might pick up a newspaper and glance at comments made by Wiesel, it takes more volition on the part of the reader to seek out and read a whole memoir. Inferences about the effect that the memoir has on the reader’s understanding of Wiesel are therefore limited to those readers who already have some knowledge of Wiesel. Furthermore, the following analysis is based on the idea that for the reader, the author is the same in both works, and that the comments made by the author figure are therefore applicable to both works.¹⁷

¹⁷ Indeed, Lisa Downing has observed that Foucault’s work on the author function suggests that our perception of the author is ‘the means by which we establish unity
The motivation for this approach is drawn in large part from the nature of prior studies of Wiesel and his works. There is a strong tendency to consider his oeuvre as a single unit, rather than distinguishing between the author figures associated with each individual text. For instance, Carole J. Lambert’s study of Wiesel’s ethical responses to the Holocaust draws on his entire body of work, without differentiating between the author figures associated with each piece of writing, while Irving Abrahamson adopts a similar approach in his three volume collection entitled Against silence: the voice and vision of Elie Wiesel.\textsuperscript{18}

Although, as Wayne Booth notes, ‘regardless of how sincere an author may try to be, his different works will imply different versions [of himself]’ (p. 71), these different versions of the author figure are not necessarily apparent to the reader. This is particularly the case for Wiesel, whose extra-textual persona is now so well known and formative in readers’ perception of him as an author.

This chapter focuses primarily on the first of the two volumes of memoirs. This volume features a more developed discussion of factors which would directly affect the reading of La Nuit (reflections on his concentrationary experience, descriptions of the composition of his testimony, etc.). Tous les fleuves vont à la mer chronicles a number of periods, episodes and aspects of Wiesel’s life. It is loosely thematically structured, although the division of content does not always appear particularly consistent. A number of topics and episodes are discussed in each of the ten chapters. The memoir begins with a chapter entitled ‘Enfance’, which describes Wiesel’s pre-concentrationary existence. No introductory chapter precedes ‘Enfance’ so a number of introductory passages are also incorporated here. We see, therefore, a juxtaposition of childhood memories, family memories, and commentaries regarding the importance of memory telling, which serves to emphasise the strong ties between childhood and memory. The entire second chapter is devoted to Wiesel’s concentrationary experiences, under the title of ‘Ténèbres’. This chapter especially highlights the self-reflexive nature of Wiesel’s writing

given that his first piece of life writing (*La Nuit*) also explicitly discusses these events. He revisits these memories, and discusses how they tie into his later life. The subsequent chapter provides a noteworthy contrast to the first and second, which are largely narrative in style. The third chapter is entitled ‘La souffrance de Dieu: Commentaire’ and is comprised of a religious reflection upon the themes of God and suffering. From here, Wiesel goes on to discuss (in this order) ‘Formation,’ ‘Journaliste,’ ‘Partir,’ ‘Paris,’ ‘New York,’ ‘Ecrire’ and ‘Jérusalem’. As noted above, this thematic division leads to a blurring of boundaries between the chapters and the content of the chapters is not chronologically ordered. Within each chapter, the reader is given insights into Wiesel’s memories, his interactions with others (be they notable figures or family members and friends) and a contextualised discussion of world events, most notably those concerning the Jewish faith (the plight of Soviet Jews, the evolution of Israel, and so on).

2.6.1 Wiesel and the writing process

Wiesel comments on his reasons for writing, and the cathartic aspects of the writing process. In his memoirs he notes that ‘Ecrire, c’est à la fois semer et récolter’.¹⁹ This statement suggests that the writing process both helps the writer to come to terms with his or her own experiences and informs the reader about these experiences. This idea is underlined in the following description of how Wiesel feels when he reads back his own writing: ‘Je relis ce que je viens d’écrire, et ma main tremble, tout mon être tremble. Je pleure, moi qui pleure rarement. Je revois les flammes, et les enfants, et je me répète qu’il ne suffit pas de pleurer’ (p. 102). This is an active example of the process of re-externalisation described by Felman and Laub and discussed in Chapter 1, in which telling someone about traumatic experiences can permit the speaker to process these memories and gain some closure from the trauma. This process is described by Wiesel in a little more depth when he writes that ‘La mémoire ne risque-t-elle pas de se montrer vorace et envahissante, et pire: réconfortante? Se souvenir, c’est quoi ? C’est faire revivre un passé, éclairer visages et événements d’une lumière noire et blanche, c’est dire non au sable qui

recoître les mots, dire non à l’oubli, à la mort. N’est-ce pas trop ambitieux?’ (p. 26). If the reader associates these reflections regarding the cathartic nature of writing with Wiesel, this will influence the testimonial pact associated with *La Nuit*: the reader is made privy to the interrelationship of memory and writing which is at the heart of the text he or she is reading.

When discussing how he writes, Wiesel draws attention to the amount of mediation involved in the composition of his texts. This is significant because readers may equate this type of process with a manipulation of the facts of the account, and find this disconcerting. Wiesel openly acknowledges the influence of his editor in the composition of his testimony: ‘[s]eul Jérôme Lindon l’a accepté, nous avons travaillé ensemble et c’est ainsi qu’en 1958 [*La Nuit*] est parue, dans une version bien plus courte [que la version en Yiddish], aux Editions de Minuit’.20 This quotation makes it clear that the reader of his testimony is in no way receiving an unabridged account of Wiesel’s experiences. Similarly, he describes his composition process: ‘Je compose tous mes livres en trois fois : d’abord je me laisse aller, comme pour un chant, puis j’entreprends un travail d’auteur, ascétique. Dans ce processus, le silence occupe une place essentielle’.21 Attention is drawn here to the editing process involved in Wiesel’s writing. In addition to this, the reader’s attention is also drawn to Wiesel’s active manipulation of his texts’ content. Take, for example, his comment regarding what he writes about the Jews in his hometown of Sighet: ‘Et les Juifs de ma ville, les Juifs du ghetto, je les aime. Voilà pourquoi je les glorifie dans mes écrits – et je ne m’en cache pas’ (p. 88). The teleological process at the heart of putting one’s experiences into words is laid out for the reader, who will now associate this idea with his or her perception of the author, and bear it in mind when reading his texts.

A final way in which Wiesel makes readers aware of the composition processes behind his texts is through his expression of hindsight. By making the role of hindsight in his writing quite clear to his readers, Wiesel removes any illusion of immediacy and once again draws attention to the amount of

20 ‘Elie Wiesel, L’Otage et le messie’, *Le Point*, 9 September 2010, p. 20.
21 Fabienne Dumontet, ‘Elie Wiesel; ”C’est la langue française qui m’a choisi”’, *Le Monde*, 8 October 2010, p. 10.
mediation and construction which goes into his memoir (and, by extension, testimony) writing. Examples of this include simple framing statements such as ‘Avec le recul, je me rends compte que’ (p.88), and ‘Ce n’est que des années après que je compris’ (p. 101), which demonstrate the extra level of analysis that Wiesel is able to bring to his memoir by allowing the knowledge of the intervening years to overlay his memories. A second, more extreme example demonstrates the effect that the passing of time can have on the survivor’s ability to process his or her Holocaust memories: Wiesel says of his camp experiences that ‘Je vois tout, j’entends tout, je sais tout, j’enregistre tout, mais c’est plus tard seulement que je tenterai d’ordonner ces sensations, ces souvenirs’ (p. 103). This comment makes it clear to his readers that the passing of time can be a positive aspect of the testimonial process. This might go some way towards countering their possible supposition that a long period of time between an experience being lived and it being described could only result in an erosion of the memories.

In summary, associated with Wiesel’s name and his persona is a frank portrayal of the structuring and mediation involved in writing about his memories. If a reader is aware of these comments made by him, he or she will have this in mind when reading his testimony and perhaps either look more favourably upon the clearly constructed nature of his account or distrust the narrative because of this reflexivity. This portrayal includes discussion of the therapeutic qualities of the writing process, the extent of self-editing which is involved in the composition of his texts, and the effect of hindsight on his writing. In this way, the comments Wiesel makes about how he writes form a part of the testimonial pact associated with La Nuit.

2.6.2 Wiesel and the limitations of Holocaust writing

In addition to making it clear to potential readers that his accounts are mediated and constructed, Wiesel also makes it very clear to his readership that writing about Holocaust experiences is inherently problematic. A large proportion of these comments relate specifically to the lack of appropriate words with which to describe Holocaust experiences. Some of them are general, while others are more directly targeted at the particular challenges Wiesel himself has faced when writing. The first example of a general comment about these difficulties is
taken from his memoirs: ‘une distance s’est creusée entre la parole et son contenu. La parole ne recouvre plus le sens qu’elle abrite’, words can become ‘entraves plutôt que repères’ (p. 186). This comment recalls a number of the issues evoked in the previous chapter, specifically regarding the extent to which the Holocaust can even be described. Furthermore, it tells Wiesel’s readers that even the words they are reading, through which they hope to glean some kind of an understanding of him and his life experiences, are not adequate. This is a curious statement to make to readers, but also one which might make them think twice about why it is that these words cannot convey the meaning of the camps. Rather than falsely claiming to be able to recreate for the reader the experiences he has lived, Wiesel forthrightly states that this is just not possible.

Speaking more specifically about his own writing experiences, Wiesel makes it clear to his readers that they are reading imperfect accounts of the events they want to know about. He stated that ‘I use all kinds of other words to say that I don’t know the words [for this tragedy]’,22 and noted in 2005 that he was still ‘not sure the words are the proper words’,23 echoing his earlier assertion that no words can fully express the events about which he writes, but also indicating a failure on his part. Indeed, in 1994 he admitted that ‘I’m never satisfied with any of my books. If I were satisfied, I could not be happy’,24 while a 2005 interview with Canadian Jewish News cites him stating that ‘every one [of the 40 books he has written] has been a failure. He feels a sense of inadequacy but has a compulsion to write’.25 This idea of failure of expression is due in part to the fact that, in Wiesel’s opinion, words themselves have been perverted by the Holocaust: ‘il y a des mots que je n’arrive pas à employer ; chargés d’un sens autre, ils me paralysent. Je ne peux pas écrire

«concentration», «nuit et brouillard», «sélection» ou «transport» sans en retirer une sensation de sacrilège' (p. 414).

Even the term ‘Holocaust’ is problematic, according to Wiesel. He feels it has lost its meaning through time, that it has been ‘taken by so many people to describe other tragedies’ and can therefore no longer describe the singularity of the tragedy it seeks to encompass. As early as 1987, Wiesel argued that the term had become ‘cheap and commercial’ and that it ‘does not conjure the nightmare that [he] wanted it to conjure’. This range of comments, both from interviews with the press and from his own memoirs, shows that Wiesel makes his potential readers very aware of the problems associated with any words used to describe the Holocaust. This forms part of the reader’s perception of who Wiesel (as an author) is and what is behind his texts. This perception then feeds into the way in which these readers approach his testimony, forming part of the testimonial pact.

Two longer comments from his memoirs go into more detail regarding the challenges inherent in any attempt to write about the concentrationary experience:

On me dit : écrire ses Mémoires, c’est prendre un engagement, conclure un pacte spécial avec le lecteur. Cela implique une promesse, la volonté de tout lui révéler, de ne rien omettre ni dissimuler. […] N’as-tu pas toi-même écrit qu’il existe des expériences incommunicables ; que certains événements, aucun mot ne peut les rapporter ; qu’il arrive de ne pas avoir les mots pour dire ce qu’on n’a pas le droit de taire ? Alors, comment vas-tu t’accommoder de cette contradiction, dis ? […] Comment espères-tu transmettre des vérités qui, selon tes propres paroles, se situent toujours, et se situeront à tout jamais, au-delà de l’entendement humain ? […] Existe-t-il un langage qui contienne un silence autre, un silence façonné et approfondi par la parole ? (p. 27)

This comment is taken from early in his memoirs, and discusses what it means to write one’s memoirs. As the previous chapter has shown, there are certain correlations between memoirs and testimony, and the comments which Wiesel

makes here can also be applied to his testimonial writing. Indeed, when he
remarks that memoirs involve a special ‘pact’ the echoes with autobiographical
and testimonial writing are particularly striking. In this quotation, Wiesel queries
his very ability to communicate certain experiences, using rhetorical questions
to draw the reader into these reflections. Associating these questions with
Wiesel will make the reader more closely consider the limits of his testimony, in
addition to those of his memoir.

The following comment is taken from later in the memoirs, and explains
quite how difficult it was for Wiesel to write about his camp experiences.

Naturellement, je pourrais rédiger mes souvenirs du camp. Je les porte en moi
comme un poison. […] Matin et soir, j’y réfléchis avec appréhension. Le devoir
de témoigner. Déposer pour l’histoire. Servir la mémoire. […] [J]e me dis que je
devrais écrire. Mais patience. Un jour, dans quelques années, je célébrerai la
mémoire. Pas encore. Il est trop tôt. Je sais déjà les carences, les défaillances
du langage. Les mots me font peur. La parole, c’est quoi au juste : œuvre divine
ou diabolique ? La parole dite et la parole écrite ne reflètent pas la même
expérience. Le mysticisme dont mon adolescence fut imprégnée se méfiait de
l’écriture. (p. 185)

He writes here about his inner conflict and the torment of wanting to express
something he knows he cannot. We see here the same idea that language itself
is deficient, and also how this makes the author feel (‘peur’). Perhaps most
importantly, the reader is categorically informed that ‘La parole dite et la parole
écrite ne reflètent pas la même expérience’. The author of these memoirs and
(also of La Nuit) tells his readers that they will not be able to apprehend any
experience of the Holocaust through his texts, because no words are able to
convey the same meaning as the events on which they are based. This
becomes part of the readers’ understanding of who this author is and of the way
in which his testimony should be read.

2.6.3 Wiesel and Factual Accuracy

These examples have shown that Wiesel makes his readers well aware that, in
his view, any writing about the Holocaust is innately limited. In addition to this,
he also demonstrates an attitude to factuality which might be surprising. Rather
than stating that each and every detail of every Holocaust account can and
must be one hundred percent accurate, Wiesel demonstrates a flexible attitude with regard to factuality. For example, he asserts that as a result of continuing Holocaust scholarship and memorialisation, ‘there will always be voices to correct innocent errors and wilful misjudgements’.  

This quotation shows that he does not necessarily place the onus of factual accuracy on just the survivor. Furthermore, in his memoirs Wiesel makes a number of comments which show that he is aware that his own writing is not infallibly accurate, that his own memories do not permit him perfect recall of all aspects of his Holocaust experience. Indeed, he states that he is uncertain about some of his memories. Three examples illustrate this observation clearly:

Je l’admets volontiers aujourd’hui: beaucoup de choses m’ont échappé. (p. 47)

Je la cherche dans mes souvenirs du ghetto ; elle n’y est pas (p. 96)


All three examples occur in the ‘Enfance’ and ‘Ténèbres’ chapters, which deal with the oldest memories, and perhaps the most traumatic memories. The first example is not only of interest because the narrator states that his observations are not comprehensive (he is discussing here the scandals of his hometown of Sighet which escaped his childhood notice), but also because of its structure. The ‘Je l’admets’, sets up his pronouncement as a sort of defence, the kind of assertion made by one who is used to having his or her knowledge and/or factual accuracy questioned. By fronting his pronouncement in this way, Wiesel reacts to the high standard of factual accuracy expected of writing about the Holocaust. Furthermore, positioning such a statement relatively early in the memoir sets a precedent for the rest of the text. This precedent is compounded by the second example. Occurring in the ‘Ténèbres’ chapter, Wiesel’s admission that he has no memory of his aunt being in the ghetto is candid. Despite the possibility of omitting this admission, Wiesel tells his audience that

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28 Israel Zoberman, ‘Humanitarian Wiesel Shares Thoughts, Beliefs in “Conversations”’, *The Virginian Pilot*, 2 June 2002. p. 3
his memory fails him. This device is employed often, and frames his memory telling within its own limitations, reminding the reader that he does not remember everything. What is more, the third example demonstrates volition to forget (or, rather, to not remember) certain things. Building a striking internal juxtaposition, Wiesel insists upon his ability to remember (‘Je me souviens, je me souviens’), before asserting that there are certain things he does not remember (‘Pas tout’). Placing these contradictory claims adjacent to each other, Wiesel draws attention to the caveat he places upon his memories, again making the reader aware of his selective recollections.

In the press, we can see how Wiesel reacts to perceived factual inaccuracies in his Holocaust testimony. In this first example, Wiesel seems to take such criticism with a pinch of salt, apparently making light of a critic’s punctilious approach to the details of his account:

Un monsieur a fait toute une polémique à propos d’un livre de Mémoires inexact. Au passage, il a cru bon de m’inclure dans cette polémique! Pour être tout à fait précis, j’ai écrit que j’avais 15 ans à mon arrivée à Auschwitz, alors que j’avais 15 ans et demi!29

Wiesel gives an idea of the level of accuracy certain readers expect from Holocaust writing, and ridicules the reaction that some people can have to the slightest inaccuracy contained in a text. This demonstrates to readers that he, as an author, is well aware of the genre expectations in this respect. However, he also informs his potential readers that, in his view, an overly fastidious approach to these minor details is unnecessary, a message which readers will have in mind when reading his testimony. This is not to say that Wiesel takes all attacks on his testimony lightly. Indeed, when Alfred Kazin suggested ‘in a review of Night that parts of it may have been embellished’,30 Wiesel reacted angrily because ‘[Kazin] questioned the veracity of my account’.31 Indeed, ‘Wiesel told Bill Marx, a columnist for the Boston Phoenix, that Kazin “is a man

who has the arrogance to doubt the words of the victims. He has committed a mortal sin in the historical sense.”  

A significant line is drawn here between being aware that minor details can either escape the witness’ attention, be forgotten, not be selected for inclusion in the account, or be misrepresented, and doubting the referential basis of testimony: while a witness cannot and should not be expected to have perfect recall and expression, calling the truthfulness of his or her testimony into question is completely unacceptable to Wiesel. If aware of these statements, Wiesel’s reader will know that he does not claim to have rendered each detail of his experience with absolute accuracy, but that he also does not expect to have his whole testimony doubted because of this.

2.6.4 Wiesel and Holocaust Fiction

Finally, a further particularly pertinent topic which Wiesel has discussed in the media is that of the Holocaust and genre. This is related to the above discussion of factuality in Holocaust writing, but also to wider questions of Holocaust memorialisation. Wiesel’s public views on this topic affect how his readers might look upon his testimonial writing: if Wiesel were very supportive of fictionalised works, for example, his readers would perhaps be more likely to think that his own testimony is partly fictionalised. Wiesel’s views on this matter are nuanced. He is not completely averse to fictional works based on the Holocaust, nor is he unreservedly accepting of them. The main thrust of his publicly voiced view is that witnesses to the Holocaust must share what they saw: ‘Tant que le témoin est là, il doit témoigner. Il faut écrire, écrire, écrire. J’entends parler de saturation, mais comment refuser à celui qui a vécu une tragédie de relater son récit. Chaque histoire est unique’.  

This is very much in keeping with the focus of his life’s work, ensuring that the Holocaust is not forgotten nor that similar atrocities are allowed to recur. However, he does also evoke a major problem in Holocaust memorialisation: ‘Qui a le droit de témoigner : celui qui a vécu, subi l’événement ? Celui qui le relate ? Celui qui le


restitue à sa manière tel le romancier? Wiesel does not offer a cut and dried response to this question, but the views he expresses in a number of other sources make it clear that he is not closed to the idea of novels expressing Holocaust experiences: ‘Jorge Semprun a dit « sans la fiction, le souvenir périt », la littérature ne peut-elle pas rendre service à la mémoire ? Celle-ci peut-elle se transmettre par le roman ?

From here, we can trace the nuances of his views regarding the possibilities of using fiction to remember the Holocaust. For example, Wiesel prefers factual accounts of the Holocaust:

I am always worried when something is presented as the truth, when it is really drama. My own preference is for documentary.

Jamais, on ne dépassera la force d’un document, de journaux, de témoignages écrits. Jamais, on ne pourrait atteindre la profondeur du désespoir de celui qui l’a vécu. Il y a quelques années, j’avais préfacé le livre de témoignages - des lettres, des textes, des messages - d’hommes et de femmes embarqués à destination d’Auschwitz […] personne ne peut décrire la douleur, la foi avec autant de vérité. Mais le roman peut aider la mémoire, il peut aider à entretenir la flamme. On peut aussi construire des fictions à partir de ces documents. Libre à l’écrivain de le faire.

Wiesel not only states that he prefers documentaries, but also that fiction can be a dangerous medium through which to remember. Wiesel states that he personally could not write a novel about the Holocaust (indeed, although a number of his novels evoke themes inspired by the Holocaust and witnessing, he has not written a novel which is categorically based on the events of the Holocaust):

Pour ma part, je n’ai jamais voulu écrire un roman sur la Shoah. Mais je comprends que d’autres le fassent, c’est leur droit. Moi, je ne peux pas … Le

36 Richards, ‘Persuading Tomorrow to Remember’, p. 17.
seul risque de la fiction est de travestir la réalité, mais il en va de la responsabilité de l’écrivain.\textsuperscript{38}

Je ne suis pas sûr de devoir moralement faire œuvre de fiction avec une réalité si dure. Je ne peux pas le faire des grandes tragédies: je ne peux pas écrire un roman sur Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{39}

In both of these statements Wiesel again suggests that fictional works about the Holocaust can be inappropriate or even dangerous. The idea of fiction making a travesty of reality is evoked, as are the scale of the real drama and the moral implications of using this as the basis for a story. In other interviews Wiesel has gone into greater detail when explaining the risks of fiction in Holocaust discourses.

j’ai peur de la banalisation de cette mémoire, surtout quand on fait des films. Je n’aime pas le mot ‘docudrame’, qui est tellement à la mode (aux Etats-Unis, ndlr), on n’a pas le droit de mêler la fiction et la vérité, pas à ce niveau-là.\textsuperscript{40}

les romanciers peuvent tout se permettre... Mais il y a un danger : quand l’imaginaire remplace la réalité\textsuperscript{41}

dans les années 1970, la chaîne américaine NBC avait diffusé une série sur l’Holocauste. Quand je l’ai vue, j’étais sidéré, démoli. Ils en ont fait une version « kitsch » ! On n’a pas le droit de faire cela\textsuperscript{42}

Here Wiesel expresses his fear that the Holocaust will start to become ‘banal’, that it will be normalised and consumed in the same way as so many other topics are in popular culture. He sees this as an inappropriate blending of fact and fiction. In the second quotation we learn more about his views regarding the interrelation of fact and fiction, as Wiesel states that he is mainly concerned that such fictional representations take the place of factual documents, that imagery replaces reality. For Wiesel, using novels to describe the Holocaust is acceptable as long as there is a clear line between the realms of the real and of

\textsuperscript{38} Aissaoui, ‘Élie Wiesel «Le roman peut aider la mémoire»’, p. 8.


\textsuperscript{40} Catherine Hours, ‘60 ans après Auschwitz, le combat perpétuel d’Elie Wiesel, du Darfour à Harry ’, \textit{Agence France Presse}, 24 January 2005, (np).

\textsuperscript{41} Aissaoui, ‘Élie Wiesel «Le roman peut aider la mémoire»’, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 8.
the imagined. Furthermore, certain fictional evocations of the Holocaust are completely unacceptable to Wiesel. NBC’s *Holocaust* (also discussed in the previous chapter) is one such example, because he felt that this was a kitsch version of the events of the Holocaust. Wiesel’s comments on this matter will orientate his readers (or those of his readers who are aware of these comments) to read his testimony as a factual account, because he has made it clear that not only would he not write a novel about the Holocaust, but also that fictional works about this event can be deeply problematic if they are not properly executed.

2.7 Conclusions

The author figure is one essential aspect of the reader’s perception of a piece of testimony. When reading testimony, the reader will have in mind what he or she knows of the author. This affects his or her perception of the narrator and of the events being described. Indeed, the author figure is a key aspect of the testimonial pact, figuring particularly in referential aspects of the pact. If the reader feels he or she can trust the person who wrote the text (based on what he or she knows about this person) the text will be more readily consumed as a factual account. In the case of Elie Wiesel, readers know that he is a Holocaust survivor with an international profile, who is vocal in his support of Holocaust memorialisation. If the reader has read his memoirs or any interviews with him, he or she will also know that the texts he produces are mediated, played with, adapted, that his memory is not perfect and that his tools (words) are not either. He or she will know that writing about the Holocaust is not a simple undertaking, but an exploration of the survivor’s memories. He or she will furthermore know that factual inaccuracies may figure in his texts, but that his writing is sincere and based in fact. Each of these pieces of knowledge about Elie Wiesel as an author plays a part in the testimonial pact associated with *La Nuit*. The following chapter goes on to examine how this perception of the author is affected by the process of translation, and how this very process might undermine the referential aspects of the testimonial pact.
Chapter 3: Translating the testimonial pact

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key theoretical premises which can be used to discuss the translation of Holocaust testimony. As previous chapters have posited that a unique testimonial pact is at the heart of the writing and reading of testimony, this chapter outlines some of the effects that translation may have on this interaction. Some of the main challenges involved in translating testimony are also examined, with particular reference to the very notion of ‘meaning’. Key theories discussed include the idea of translator invisibility, the possibility of a translator’s voice or discursive presence in translated writing and the potential for these factors to disrupt the testimonial pact discussed in previous chapters. It is argued that there is a prevalent trend for translators to be ‘invisible’ in texts. They have little or no visible presence in published translations. Although this is not always the case, the dominance of this tendency reflects the high status of the author figure. It is argued here that a very visible translator would detract from the author’s role and disrupt the testimonial pact. Indeed, it has been suggested that it is possible to discern a translator’s discursive presence in a text. Work on this idea is discussed and used to support the discussion of the effect that such a presence may have on the genre of testimony.

3.2 The reader, the writer, and the text

It is argued here that testimony brings with it particular generic expectations and that it is not read in the same way as other texts. The composition of testimony is fraught with difficulties and reading testimony puts the reader in a singular situation, challenging his or her conception of truth, fidelity and understanding. These challenges are partly negotiated in the testimonial pact. This is composed of a number of textual and extra-textual features which signal the writer’s abilities and intentions, establish the unity of the author, narrator and protagonist, and in so doing provide the reader with parameters for reading the text. The importance of the author, narrator and protagonist being one and the same cannot be understated, particularly when the issue of translation is called into question. Lejeune states that this unity can be signalled in two main ways:
L’identité de nom entre auteur, narrateur et personnage peut être établie de deux manières :


L’emploi de titres ne laissant aucun doute sur le fait que la première personne renvoie au nom de l’auteur (*Histoire de ma vie, Autobiographie, etc.*) ;

**Section initiale** du texte où le narrateur prend des engagements vis-à-vis du lecteur en se comportant comme s’il était l’auteur, de telle manière que le lecteur n’a aucun doute sur le fait que le « je » renvoie au nom porté sur la couverture, alors même que le nom n’est pas répété dans le texte.

**De manière patente**, au niveau du nom que se donne le narrateur-personnage dans le récit lui-même, et qui est le même que celui de l’auteur sur la couverture.

Il est nécessaire que l’identité soit établie au moins par l’un de ces deux moyens ; il arrive souvent qu’elle le soit par les deux à la fois.

There are, therefore, two ways to establish that these figures are all the same person: implicitly, through textual features; and explicitly, stating it on, for example, the cover of the book. Regardless of how it is established, the establishment of the relationship between the author, narrator and protagonist is essential to both autobiography and testimony. Lejeune has argued that this feature not only defines autobiography, but also defines the readers’ attitude toward the text. The way in which the relationship is presented to the reader is important because:

il détermine en fait l’attitude du lecteur : si l’identité n’est pas affirmée (cas de fiction), le lecteur cherchera à établir des ressemblances, malgré l’auteur ; si elle est affirmée (cas de l’autobiographie), il aura tendance à vouloir chercher les différences (erreurs, déformation, etc.). (p. 26)

This reasoning can also be applied to Holocaust testimony. Indeed, it is particularly applicable to Holocaust testimony, given the historical importance of the genre and its relationship with historical and legal documentation.

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1 Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, p. 27.
3.3 The reader, the writer, the text - and the translator?

If the reader is aware that a text is translated, the relationship between the narrator, author and protagonist is thrown into doubt. The reader is no longer reading the words the survivor chose, and the person who wrote the text is neither the narrator, nor the protagonist. A central concern of this thesis is how, and if, this information is presented to the reader and the eventual effect that this information might have upon the way testimony is read. Let us consider, for example, Lejeune’s argument that readers are inherently dubious about texts which claim that the author is also the protagonist and the narrator: ‘si l’autobiographie éveille d’abord la curiosité du lecteur, elle suscite aussitôt après la méfiance’ (p. 9).

This distrust is just as likely to affect testimony. Indeed, readers are perhaps more likely to distrust testimony given the aforementioned challenges involved in composing testimonial texts. If we add to this distrust the knowledge that someone other than the author, the survivor and the protagonist has changed all of the words in the text, replacing them with words in a different language, we can easily see how a reader would be ill at ease with the referential aspect of the text. The great trust placed in the writer of testimony could be very much undermined if the reader were made aware of the translator’s influence upon the text. This issue of distrust takes us back to the central question of the testimonial pact. It is argued in this thesis that the way in which the translator of testimony is presented to the readership, both in the body of the text and in para-textual features, is an integral part of the testimonial pact, because of the potentially disruptive effect that the translator might have on the unique reader-writer interaction involved in testimony.

3.4 Translating testimony: the challenges

Before examining the effect that knowledge of a translator might have on the testimonial pact, it is important to consider some of the basic challenges involved in translating Holocaust testimony. For example: the inherent difficulty in pinning down the meaning of any words, and specifically Holocaust terminology; the lack of an appropriate idiom through which to express the Holocaust experience; the transformative nature of translation; and the possibility of being ‘faithful’ to either a text or a writer. A particularly rich
framework for the investigation of these issues can be found in postmodern approaches to both Holocaust Studies and Translation Studies. This area of critical reflection offers productive insights into how meaning is constructed and how readers consume texts.

A foundational issue in the field of Translation Studies is that of the limitations of direct correspondence between seemingly equivalent terms in different languages, and the effect that these limitations have on the translation process. The process of translation involves taking a message inscribed in one language and recreating it in a different language. The process will vary according to the nature of the source text and the requirements of the target audience. As simple as this process may seem, in practice it is immensely complex. One to one correspondence between words in different languages does not exist. Every word, in every language, and every context has potentially limitless meanings. Faced with the word ‘flower’ one person will extrapolate an image of a bouquet, while another person will envisage allergy medicine. Faced with the word ‘fleur’, a French speaker may also envisage bouquets and allergy medicine, but he or she might also make the associative connection with ‘fleur de sel’, which someone presented with the word ‘flower’ would not make.\(^2\)

Because each individual understands each word in a different way, translating a text becomes a process in which a translator attaches a value judgement to a specific word in a specific context, using his or her expert knowledge of both languages involved and both the source and target context. The translator must know the propositional sense of individual words (their so-

\(^2\) Mona Baker offers a developed discussion of the difficulties of establishing equivalence at word level. Her volume *In Other Words* devotes a chapter to this subject. Of particular interest here is her comment that: ‘[t]here may be a target-language word which has the same propositional meaning as the source-language word, but it may have a different expressive meaning. The difference may be considerable or it may be subtle but important enough to pose a translation problem in a given context’. (Mona Baker, *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 23.) Similarly, Peter Fawcett states that ‘comparative linguistics demonstrates clearly that meanings and meaning structures do not match between languages’ (Peter Fawcett, *Translation and Language: Linguistic Theories Explained, Translation Theories Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1997), p. 19.)
called dictionary meaning), the evoked meaning, or the type of reaction the individual word provokes in the receiver, and the social and temporal context in which the word is used. The translator must be aware of all of these types of meaning in order to best recreate the meaning expressed in the source text to the target reader. This project specifically examines the way in which these challenges affect the translation of Holocaust writing.

A useful way of understanding how a reader derives meaning from a text is to consider meaning as ‘an effect of language, not a prior presence merely expressed in language’. Meaning is not inherent in a word. Rather, it is the product of the interrelation of linguistic items. Readers understand one word through its similarities and differences with other words. Meaning changes and shifts interminably, and cannot be singularly defined. It is evident that an idea which frames meaning in such a non-static way would have a bearing on how we consider translation. For example, Venuti explores the idea that meaning ‘is an effect of relations and differences among signifiers along a potentially endless chain [...] never present as an original unity’; Davis extrapolates that the effect of this ‘differential plurality’ of meaning is that ‘[meaning] cannot be simply extracted from language and transferred’, as earlier translation theories may have suggested. If translation is not a simple process of finding words with the same meaning in a different language, this implies that a more complex process is undertaken. Instead of a question of one-to-one transfer, it has been suggested that translation is a transformative process. Derrida, for example, argues that translation is ‘une transformation réglée d’une langue par une autre, d’un texte par un autre’. When a text is translated, the process of putting the

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4 This is the basis of Derrida’s highly influential concept of différance, a notion which expresses ‘the condition of possibility for meanings, which are effects of its movement or “play”’. Kathleen Davis has argued that différance has had a considerable impact on Translation Studies. (Davis, Deconstruction and Translation, p. 14.)  
5 Lawrence Venuti, The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 17. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).  
6 Kathleen Davis, Deconstruction and Translation, p. 13.  
original text into a new language transforms it entirely, resulting in the creation of a unique work.

If grasping and re-presenting meaning is always a highly complex process, then the context of Holocaust testimony complicates the issue even more. Schwarz concisely problematises the application of these theories to the domain of Holocaust writing, noting that ‘for those, like Wiesel, who have experienced the Holocaust first hand, for whom Auschwitz is not a metaphor but a memory, language is more than the free play of signifiers’. Furthermore, previous chapters have referred to Charlotte Delbo’s description of surface and deep memory, and her argument that words ‘split in two’, their surface relaying their propositional meaning, yet unable to capture the evocative meaning of the words for the survivor who composed the text.

Try as he or she might, the translator cannot access this deep meaning, any more than anyone else who has not experienced the events at hand can. Although a translator is never able to fully recreate the precise meaning of a word, as perceived by its original user, the words used in testimonial writing magnify this difficulty. While a translator of a specialised text will inform him- or herself about the technical vocabulary employed in order to most accurately recreate the meaning of the source text, this is not a possibility for a translator of testimony. Evidently, the translator can ensure he or she has sufficient knowledge of camp terms, historical information, and even cultural aspects of the text, but it is impossible to inform oneself about the deep memory aspect of the text. The closest the translator can come is to ‘know “the lay of the land” – the landmarks, the underrcURRENTS, and the pitfalls in the witness and in himself’. This knowledge at least permits the translator to reconstruct some of the context of the words being used.

The extent to which the translator can know the lay of the land (in this context, of Holocaust experiences) is, however, very limited. As we have already ascertained, the events of the Holocaust are ‘outside the range of

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10 Ibid., p. 222.
associatively linked experiences, outside the range of comprehension’. Without a network of ‘associatively linked experiences’, from which to draw, the translator’s ability to translate is limited to a certain extent. There is, however, a question as to whether a reader would be aware of this challenge. To a reader, the deep memory aspect of words is inaccessible in any language, be it a word in the source or the target text. What difference does it really make to the reader of a translation? The answer is to be found in the way in which the translation process is presented to the reader. If the reader is told that the translation can only go so far in re-presenting the source testimony, then the reader will consider this while reading, perhaps questioning how faithfully the testimony has been translated. If the challenges are never evoked, it is arguable that the reader will be none the wiser and never think to second guess the words chosen in the target language. At the heart of this issue is the idea of fidelity, and the extent to which the reader is made aware of the challenges faced by the translator.

The concept of fidelity is recurrent in both translation and Holocaust studies. ‘Fidelity’ is often evoked as a criterion for a successful translation, while it is felt that being faithful to a Holocaust survivor’s memory is an important value in transmitting Holocaust memory. It is, however, a problematic concept, which implies a greater access to writers than is possible in reality. There is no person inhabiting a text, to whom the reader or translator can be unfaithful. This figure is only a textual construction. Furthermore, the idea of faithfully recreating an author’s text suggests that a text has only one meaning to which a translator can be faithful. Regarding this question of fidelity, Venuti proposes that our estimation of fidelity varies through time and place. He argues that deconstructionist views about meaning have had the effect of making discussions of fidelity less black and white, suggesting that ‘translation is [not] forever banished to the realm of freedom or error, but that canons of accuracy are culturally specific and historically variable’ (p. 37). The proposition here is that our understanding of texts changes through time and place, and so too does our perception of fidelity.

Felman and Laub, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, p. 69.
Philip Lewis makes a similar suggestion. He argues that a translation must be faithful to ‘much more than semantic substance’\(^\text{12}\). This implies that instead of seeking to capture the precise meaning of one word, a translator should embrace the ‘abuses’ of translation, the changes which are incurred when a text is recreated in a second language. He proposes that a translator pursue a ‘new axiomatic of fidelity, one that requires attention to the chain of signifiers, to syntactic processes, to discursive structures, to the incidence of language mechanisms on thought and reality formation, and so forth’ (p. 262). The actual, concrete effect of this new axiomatic is not clear and it might be argued that all translators aim to consider the aspects of meaning suggested by Lewis when undertaking a translation. He proposes that the translator should aim to employ Derrida’s own skill for ‘double articulation’, for ‘pluralized, dislocutory, paralogical writing practice’ (p. 264), in order to recreate the abuses that the source text author created in his or her writing. The extent to which this practice could be used to navigate the challenges involved in translating Holocaust testimony is debatable: try as he or she might, the translator is not able to re-present the meaning of a word as perceived by the survivor. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Lewis’ suggestion is the potential effect it has on the reader of a translation, and not necessarily the practice of translation itself.

The reader’s understanding of fidelity is an essential aspect of reading translated testimony. If the reader feels that he or she is reading a text which does not accurately represent the experiences of the survivor, he or she will not approach the text in the same way as if it were an un-translated text. As previous chapters have outlined, the reader of testimony is generally encouraged to trust in the text and in the writer’s trustworthiness. Despite the problematic of identifying with a Holocaust survivor’s account, the process of reading the text and believing in its content is still constructed around the ability to believe that the account being read is an accurate representation of experiences of the Holocaust.

The very concept of fidelity is underpinned by the process of identification. The reader’s ability and willingness to believe in a text’s content is undermined if it is clear that the words used in the translation are not an accurate representation of those used in the source text. The possibility of presenting an accurate representation of the source text’s words is limited (as the above discussion of the concept of meaning has outlined), and all the more so in the case of testimony. The way in which this is presented to the reader is a central concern of the testimonial pact. Lejeune’s argument that autobiography arouses readers’ suspicions is doubly applicable to texts which have been translated. Indeed, his argument that distrust is created either if the reader ‘soupçonne l’autobiographie d’être écrite par un autre que l’intéressé ; soit que l’on prétende que le récit fait par l’intéressé est trop éloigné de la « vérité ».’

It is possible that if the reader is not made aware that the text has been translated (because this is not made apparent on the front cover of the book, for example) and if the text is translated in such a way as to not mark it as translated (no translator’s footnotes, no unidiomatic turns of phrase, no preservations of source text lexis) he or she may never question how faithfully the text was translated. If, however, the text is clearly marked as a translation, it is possible that the reader will not trust the account. If a translation is presented as such, the manner of its presentation is central to the success of the text’s reading. Returning to Lejeune’s description of the pact is useful here. He proposes that the pact ‘se nourrit des réfutations qu’il a provoquées. Son but est de paralyser la critique en la devançant : on comprend qu’à ce jeu il ait intérêt à se montrer aussi agile qu’elle.’ The pact must show an awareness of the reader’s potential concerns, and address them in order to neutralise them. In the case of translated testimony, which is marked as such, this means presenting the credentials of the translator and the fidelity of the translation.

3.5 Translator (in?)visibility

The extent to which a reader is aware that a text has been translated is variable. Translation is a hidden practice, and translators work in the shadows. The translators of major literary works are rarely, if ever, prominently featured.

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14 Ibid, p. 81.
The author’s name retains its power even when the words published are no longer his or her own. This issue has been evoked by a number of translation theorists. Here, Venuti’s work *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* is given particular consideration, as is Rosemary Arrojo’s discussion of it. Venuti’s work proposes causes of the translator’s invisibility and also discusses why it is problematic. Venuti argues that the translator’s invisibility is a norm in today’s publishing industry. He believes this invisibility to be socio-culturally driven, particularly within the Anglo-American context. He suggests that this invisibility is in part the result of the dominant Anglo-American literary trend towards ‘a neutral transparent prose style […] where the words seem meant to be looked through’.\(^{15}\) Venuti believes that modern readers are not confronted with the workings of textual composition, that there is a desire to be presented with nothing but the finished product, ready for easy consumption.

This idea can also be related to his discussion of ‘the individualist conception of authorship that continues to prevail in Anglo-American culture’ (p. 6). The individualist conception of authorship to which Venuti refers is the idea that the author’s own voice is presented, via the text, in an ‘original and transparent self-representation, unmediated by transindividual determinants […] that might complicate authorial originality’ (p. 6). The reader’s desire to access the writer through the text is deeply held, but complicated by the process of translation. Indeed, this conception of authorship leaves little room for a visible translator, who would be seen as an undesirable form of mediation in this relationship. Theo Hermans has noted that one effect of this perception of the author is the ‘norm of the “faithful translator”’ and that this norm ‘calls on translators to be so discreet as to spirit themselves away for the sake of the original’s integrity’.\(^{16}\)

Venuti proposes that translators should adopt an approach to translation which signifies the effect that they have had on the translated text. In this proposal, he evokes the terms ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignization’, as two

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opposing translation strategies. Venuti argues that there are certain ‘humanist assumptions underlying domestication’ (p. 24), that is to say, the belief that the author is the sole origin of the text’s content leads translators to try to recreate texts which give the reader access to this author. Texts which are translated in this way are referred to by Venuti as domesticated. That is to say, they are assimilated so fully into the target language that their own identity and foreignness is eclipsed. Contrary to this domesticating tendency, Venuti favours a foreignizing approach. Such an approach is built on the idea that source texts are made up of ‘cultural and social determinations that are diverse and even conflicting’ (p. 24). A foreignized translation ‘signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language’ (p. 20). The cultural codes are drawn from an infinite range of sources, be they literary, historical, political, linguistic, or a combination of all of these. Producing a translation which does not submit to the target language cultural codes marks the translated text as not having originated in the target culture, and also signifies the translator’s textual presence.

3.6 The translator and the author

There is evidently tension between the role of the author and the role of the translator of a text. While it used to be generally considered that the author was the primary source of meaning in a text and that what the author wrote the reader read, with little or no mediation or alteration, more contemporary views suggest that the reader plays a greater role in the creation of meaning, and that once written, the author’s words take on a new life. As Seán Burke notes (drawing on Barthes), in the latter part of the twentieth century, the ‘reader became the producer rather than the consumer of the text; literature’s significance was to be found not in its origins, but in its destination’.\(^{17}\) As he so concisely states, it came to be felt that ‘once woven, the web has no need of its spider’.\(^{18}\) This changing perception of the author has in turn affected how the role of the translator is understood. The translator is no longer considered as a lens through which the author’s words are refracted. Rather, the translator’s role


\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 487.
in the creation of meaning is being questioned, and the visibility of the translator is being contemplated. One of the main objectives of this thesis is to examine how the reader perceives the writer of a text, and how this in turn affects how he or she reads a translated version of the writer’s words.

A fruitful avenue of research to consider here is Hermans’ discussion of the process of ‘authorisation’. When an author stamps his or her seal of approval to a text, the ‘singularity of intent, the coincidence of voice, the illusion of equivalence and, of course, the unmistakable relation of power and authority’ is confirmed, and the translator is effectively effaced from the text.\(^\text{19}\) As Hermans concludes, ‘[t]he translator may claim authorship of the target text’s words, but we want the original author to authorize them’ (p. 63). Given the importance of the author-narrator-protagonist figure in the reading of Holocaust testimony, the author’s definitive acceptance of the translation becomes a highly desirable asset: it reduces the distance between the translated text and the source text author. However, in later work, Hermans argues that once a translation has been authorised, it is no longer a translation, but instead an equivalent text.\(^\text{20}\) This idea is examined contextually in more detail in the Chapter 8, which considers the effect and presentation of new versions of testimony.

3.7 Wiesel and translation

In terms of how the reader perceives the creation of a text, there is an intersection between the author and the translator. The reader will generally think that the words he or she is reading were selected by the author, and his or her perception of the author will affect how the text is interpreted. The role of the translator is variably clear to the readers. He or she is not generally seen as the person who selected the words used in a text, even though this is the case for translated texts. The way in which the author presents the translator of his or her texts is one way in which the translator can be ascribed some kind of role in the meaning production (in the eyes of the reader). As has already been

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\(^{19}\) Theo Hermans, ‘Translation and Normativity’, \textit{Current Issues in Language and Society}, 5 (1998), 51-72 (p. 63). (Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text).

\(^{20}\) Hermans, \textit{The Conference of the Tongues}, p. 27.
established, extra-textual comments, statements or events in which the author plays a role all shape how the reader draws meaning from a text, and this logic can be extended to include comments the author makes regarding the translator and the translation process. As Hermans suggests, the way in which Wiesel frames the translation of his own writing affects how readers approach his texts. Here, a number of his views regarding translation are discussed, and their impact on the reading of his translated works is considered.

Wiesel is a polyglot and explains in some depth why he chooses to use certain languages for certain tasks and other languages for other tasks. This may have the effect of making his readers think about what different languages can and cannot express, and therefore draw their attention to the limitations of translation. Yiddish is Wiesel's mother tongue, although the complexity of his home town's history meant that he also spoke Hungarian, Romanian and German, indeed he ‘écrit à nouveau en yiddish pour un hebdomadaire publié en Amérique’. His decision not to publish literary works in any of these languages, but in French, has been discussed by a number of critics. It is also something he discusses in some depth in his media appearances. He cites the influence of French writers as motivation to write in French, in addition to the appeal of using a wholly different language:

[J]e me considère comme un juif de culture française. J'ai appris cette langue tard, à l'âge de 17 ans, à une époque où j'avais besoin d'une autre langue, comme d'un autre foyer : la langue française est devenue mon foyer. Mon tuteur, celui qui m'a enseigné le français, fait découvrir Racine, Pascal, Sartre et Camus, était un homme exceptionnel, François Wahl.

This comment highlights two interesting points: firstly, the effect that influential writers can have on decisions such as which language to write in, and secondly, the personal significance of French for Wiesel in the post-war period. Wiesel states that he actively decided to find shelter in a new language, which underlines the importance of his linguistic selection. He states that he feels spiritually and mentally more able to live and express his post-Holocaust experience in French:

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21 Dufay, 'Elie Wiesel, le sage et la folie', (np).
22 Ibid, (np).
I needed something new in my life, I had lost a skin and the language was like a new skin, a new home. Not a new identity, but a different envelope – Yiddish before, French now.  

Here again, Wiesel makes the distinction between adopting a new persona, which he does not claim to do, and packaging one’s expression in a different form, perhaps one more suited to the time, place and situation. This idea is tied to his discussion of which languages are most apt for which topics and what makes particular languages more or less suited to different situations. Wiesel evokes the Cartesian nature of the French language, arguing that he found it stimulating in a way that other languages were not, particularly when used to express his religious beliefs: ‘Le mysticisme de la tradition juive et le cartésianisme de la langue française ne vivent pas en paix : ce qui m’attire, c’est d’opérer la synthèse des deux !’ In trying to express himself in these two conflicting languages, Wiesel found that he advanced his search for linguistic clarity, a clarity he thinks is innate in the French language: ‘l’esprit français cherche et se recherche dans une quête permanente de clarté’. It would appear that Wiesel’s experience of French is one of liberation, one of purification, and one of discovery of meaning. He states explicitly that ‘[le français] est une libération. J’ai compris, en français en tout cas, qu’il faut d’abord libérer le langage, libérer le mot, le verbe, et ensuite le discipliner’. He has stated that the process of translating concentrationary experiences that he had lived in Yiddish into French was challenging, but that it highlighted the suitability of certain languages for certain writing tasks:

Transformer, retraduire en français les notions, les concepts, les découvertes, les secrets du monde mystique, c’était une gageure, un pari, donc ça m’a tenté. Je peux écrire un article en hébreu, pas un livre. Je peux écrire un article en anglais, pas un livre. Le livre vient d’une zone à part.

23 Richards, ‘Persuading Tomorrow to Remember’, p. 17.
26 Mihaileanu, ‘Entretien avec Elie Wiesel; « Pourquoi j’écris en français »’.
27 Ibid.
Wiesel’s main comments about writing in particular languages do not suggest that translating his writing would be a simple task. He makes it clear that certain languages are more suited to certain tasks than others and these comments would make potential readers aware that if they plan to read one of his texts, it would have been written first in French.

Wiesel does not, however, speak at length in the media about the translation of his work. Despite making it clear that his writing was not originally composed in English (the main language in which it is read), he does not explain how the works come to be translated, or even by whom. One exception to this is from an interview with a critic:

M.B: Are you satisfied that the translations of your work are a true reflection of your writing?

E.W: Some yes, some no. Some are better than others, unfortunately. It is very hard for an author to judge for himself. Some are written in English anyway. Four Hasidic Masters and Five Biblical Portraits are written in English. Furthermore, there are translations in other languages which I cannot judge: in Japanese, for example. But, the English translations, at least the later translations, I am more or less satisfied with. I have collaborated on two – A Beggar in Jerusalem and The Jews of Silence. Since then my wife has done the translations. I would like some of the earlier ones redone. Night should be redone.28

It is noteworthy that the interviewer chose to ask this question, as it is not a question which is often asked of Wiesel. Wiesel’s observation that it is difficult for an author to judge the quality of a translation makes it clear to someone who reads this interview (namely someone with a particular interest in Wiesel and his oeuvre, since this is taken from a scholarly publication) that Wiesel is quite detached from the translation process, unable to put his seal of approval on translated editions. He then draws attention to the fact that his wife has translated a number of his texts, making her much more visible to those who read this interview. Lastly, he states that Night should be retranslated. This is a bold statement to make about his best-known text, which is primarily read in

translation. It is curious that this statement is made in the same breath as one in which he states that it is hard to comment on the quality of his own translations. Furthermore, he offers no explanation for his opinion, no reason for which it should be retranslated. Much of this response foregrounds questions which are addressed in greater detail around the time of the publication of Night's retranslation. This, as well as other divergences from the tendency to not discuss the translation of his works is explored in later chapters, but generally it holds that in the public domain, Wiesel does not buck the trend of invisible translation.

A further salient point to consider is the reach of these comments. Despite certain of these remarks being published in well-known newspapers, there is no guarantee that someone who chose to read Wiesel's testimony in English translation would have previously encountered his thoughts about the languages in which he chooses to compose his texts. If we are to argue that readers' reactions to translated texts are partly shaped by the visibility of the translator, and that in the case of Holocaust testimony this is part of the testimonial pact, we must carefully consider how the reader comes to be aware of the translation process. While public comments on the subject are one way of exploring this, it is also important to assess the extent to which the translator's effect on the text is visible in the actual reading of the text. The possibility of a translator's distinct narrative voice must be explored.

3.8 The translator's narrative presence

The extent to which a translator is visible in a text has been discussed on a number of occasions. Venuti, for example, discusses the textual manifestations of the translator (as reader)'s interference, as he undertakes a symptomatic reading of translations. He posits that the process of transformation at the heart of translation 'puts to work various linguistic and cultural materials which make the text discontinuous' and that these 'discontinuities – between the source language text and the translation and within the translation itself – [...] are symptomatic of its ethnocentric violence' and may be discernible if one undertakes a 'symptomatic reading' of a translation (pp. 24-29). A more contemporary discussion of interference is to be found in Theo Hermans’ 2007 publication The Conference of the Tongues. He notes that ‘translating requires
the deployment of linguistic means in the host language, and this will involve dimensions other than those of the original [...] the translator’s utterances are [therefore] necessarily marked, revealing a discursively positioned subject’.29

Hermans’ work on this question is especially illuminating. While drawing particularly on examples of direct translator comments in the text (either in paratexts, footnotes, or brackets) he also proposes that the translator’s discursive presence is visible in each translation choice he or she makes. Hermans categorises translation as a self-referential form (and sometimes a self-reflexive form, in more extreme instances) in which the text inevitably refers to itself, draws on itself. Each translational decision is a sign of the target text’s source, and of the dialogue involved in making the decision. Hermans argues that self-referential statements ‘are inscribed in the choices translators make as they translate’ (pp. 50-51). He suggests that ‘[e]ven when self-reference remains latent and submerged, we can tease it out by focussing on translation-specific intertextual links and on the provisionality of every rendering, and by reading translations differentially, based on choices which fall in with or diverge from prevailing patterns and expectations’ (p. 51). According to Hermans, therefore, each translator does leave a ‘stylistic signature’ on a text (p. 28), and if we look for it, we can extrapolate a great deal of information about the prevailing trends and requirements of the translational context from this signature.

What is less sure is the extent to which one is aware of the translator’s discursive presence if one is not actively seeking it out, for this is what could jeopardise the testimonial pact. Hermans cites his own work which looks at instances when ‘the translator’s discursive presence could not help but become directly visible in the translated text’,30 giving examples of cases when:

[T]ranslators could be seen struggling with cultural references (not just by adding explanatory footnotes but also by providing manifestly redundant or


inadequate information in the text itself), cases in which the self-reflexiveness of texts invoked the language in which the original was written, thus threatening the translation with self-contradiction, and cases of ‘contextual overdetermination’, where a particular phrase might become untranslatable because too many other textual elements depend on this or that exact phrase.(p. 27)

It would seem that unless the translator is clearly established in direct paratexts, footnotes, or textual comments, or he or she stumbles over one of the above-described challenges, the translator’s discursive presence is likely to be invisible to the naked eye. A reader who has no cause to seek out the translator’s narrative voice would likely never perceive it. This is not to say that the translator of testimony should aim for this to be the case. Rather, this observation underscores the importance of the manner in which the translator is presented to the reader. If the possibilities for a translator’s narrative presence are to be made between: complete invisibility; accidental discovery (which implies prior deceit); and full disclosure with explanation, surely the latter would sit most easily alongside the notion of a testimonial pact?

3.9 Translator as co-witness

The idea that the translator could actually be seen as a productive presence in the testimonial process is alluring. A large proportion of the best known Holocaust writing is read in translation, but the translator’s presence is rarely acknowledged or discussed. And yet, the process of translating is not completely incompatible with the objectives of testimony. There is more than one way of conceptualising the potential role of the translator. Firstly, the translator could be seen as a proxy-testifier. Dornier and Dulong discuss this possibility of a third-party witness, a notion which correlates closely with the role of the translator in this context. They refer back to the authorial function in the genre of testimony and ask whether it is possible for anyone but the person who lived the traumatic event to write testimony, noting that the ‘relations entre fonction auctoriale et fonction testimoniale interrogent en effet la mise en forme par un tiers des paroles de témoins, afin de les faire entendre, de les transmettre’.\footnote{Dornier and Dulong, eds., \textit{Esthétique du témoignage}, pp. xv-xvi.} Translation would seem to be an example of making testimony
heard and transmitting it. They go on to address the potential concerns a reader might have about this third party intervention, stating that if:

Been: il y a abus de langage à parler de ce tiers comme d’un témoin, il est cependant témoin d’un témoin, ou passeur, qui a recueilli une parole de témoin. Là encore la crainte de trahison par rapport à l’intention de témoin, ou par rapport à des exigences de neutralité ou de respect du caractère exceptionnel de l’événement, engage une réflexion sur des choix d’ordre esthétique.\(^{32}\)

Their argument is that if someone acts as a witness of a witness, this might create a fear of betraying the witness, requirements of neutrality or event-specific factors, and that this fear is in part to do with the aesthetic choices made in the text. If we were to extend this to propose that the translator could be the witness of a witness the logical conclusion would be that the extent of the translator’s visible intervention in the text would affect how much the reader fears that the original witness might have been betrayed.

The second way of perceiving the translator is as the most attentive of listeners for the testifier. As we have established, the reader is an essential figure in the survivor’s handling of his or her memories. If testimony is written, it is in part a way of processing memories, and bringing about a re-externalisation of these memories. The hypothetical reader of the text is born in mind by the survivor when he or she composes the text, as the figure to whom the account is being told: the addressable other. As Felman and Laub have argued, the interlocutor in a testimonial interaction must demonstrate a certain degree of empathy: the imagined reader of the text would be attentive to each detail of the account and try to comprehend the survivor’s words. In other words, the hypothetical reader would ‘hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness’ (p. 68).

It might be argued that the translator is the ultimate reader. When translating a text the translator must carefully consider each word or phrase in turn, and question its very meaning. This level of detailed analysis of the text is surely the closest a survivor can get to someone fully understanding the meaning of his or her account. Indeed, this level of understanding and attentiveness has clear parallels with Levi and Rothberg’s definition of the ideal

\(^{32}\) Ibid., pp xv-xvi.
the ‘co-witness’. This notion of co-witness could be another productive way of conceptualising the translator’s role. Levi and Rothberg argue that the interlocutor ‘can serve as co-witness and help the victim reconstruct trust in the world’ (p. 191). The role of co-witness is delicate, as this role must in no way undermine the subject position of the survivor; rather, the co-witness would serve as a guide in the re-externalisation of the trauma. This fine line is explained by Levi and Rothberg:

As distinguished analytically from structural trauma, historical trauma is specific, and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it. It is dubious to identify with the victim to the point of making oneself a surrogate victim who has a right to the victim’s voice or subject position [a footnote here clarifies that this criticism targets Lanzmann’s *Shoah*]. The role of empathy and empathetic unsettlement in the attentive secondary witness does not entail this identity; it involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other’s position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place. Opening oneself to empathetic unsettlement is, as I intimated, a desirable affective dimension of enquiry (p. 200)

There are parallels between this conception of empathy and Eaglestone’s discussion of identification. While Eaglestone argues that identification is inevitable when one reads narrative account, Levi and Rothberg suggest that ‘empathy’ involves the interlocutor putting ‘oneself in the other’s position while

33 In their introduction to this edited volume’s section about psychoanalysis, trauma and memory, Levi and Rothberg state that Laub’s work ‘brings the question of trauma back to the immediacy of the encounter between victims and those who listen to them in therapeutic or scholarly contexts. Because of the unassimilated nature of traumatic experience, narratives by victims are a necessary part of a process of reclaiming selfhood and healing from the wounds of violence. Such narratives also demand a listener who can serve as co-witness and help the victim reconstruct trust in the world’. Levi and Rothberg, eds, *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, pp. 190-91 (emphasis my own). Consider also Fine’s use of the term, with reference to Wiesel’s writing: ‘The act of listening transforms the young man into a co-narrator and, in a sense, co-author, for, he who listens to the witness becomes one [...] Mutually nurtured by each other’s presence, speaker and listener come to be partners in a story that transcends both of them. (Fine, *Legacy of Night, the Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel*, p. 134).
recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place’. Both processes have a significant bearing on the process of translation: the notion of a ‘virtual experience’ correlates closely with the translation process, as the translator tries to fully comprehend and relay the testifier’s words, without claiming any authorial role.

It is this last aspect of empathy which is the most contentious. The extent to which a translator assumes an authorial role is problematic in the construction of the testimonial pact. As long as the translator is presented to the reader as nothing more than a lens or, at best, a productive co-witness, the testimonial pact remains unthreatened. In this case, the reader will approach the piece of Holocaust testimony with the expectation that the words presented on the page are those written by the author, presented by the narrator, and lived by the protagonist – all three of whom are the same person. If it is suggested that the translator assisted in the composition of the testimony, that he or she helped the survivor to put into words an experience which defies telling, then perhaps the translator would be accepted as a productive presence in the text. This underscores the importance of the translator’s textual presence and opens up a discussion about the generic norms pertaining to translator visibility in Holocaust testimony.

3.10 Conclusions

The testimonial pact directly affects the reception of translated testimony. Because it is essential that the reader of testimony is aware that the person who wrote the text is also the person who narrates it and who lived through the experiences described, the way in which the testimonial pact presents the presence and role of the translator takes on particular importance. Given that translators are not generally particularly visible in texts, it is likely that their effect on the text could go unnoticed by readers of testimony. However, if the reader of the testimony were to become aware of the translator’s mediation, he or she may be uncomfortable with this. The way in which this discomfort is addressed and neutralised (if, indeed, it is) is a key aspect of the testimonial pact. A further essential part of the pact is the way in which the challenges involved in translation are expressed to readers: the translation of testimony
involves representing the meaning of a source text in which each word is loaded with associations which no-one other than the testifier can hope to grasp.

Wiesel’s discussion of the translation of his texts and the importance of writing in certain languages provides an example of the relationship between the reader’s perception of the author and his or her perception of the translator, and the way in which these perceptions interrelate and affect the reading of translated testimony. This, too, forms part of the testimonial pact. And perhaps the most tantalising aspect of the testimonial pact is the idea that it could be used to tell the reader that translation can enrich the testimonial process. Above and beyond neutralising readers’ potential reservations about the presence of a third party in the testimony, the pact could perhaps inform the reader that this third party played a positive role in the survivor’s processing of his or her traumatic memories. The reader could be informed that the translator was able to play the role of a co-witness who helps in the transmission of the survivor’s memories and in so doing enhances the testimony for both the survivor and the reader.
Chapter 4: *La Nuit* and the testimonial pact

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the testimonial pact associated with *La Nuit*, examining the way the key features of the text interact with genre associations. As discussed in Chapter 1, the testimonial pact has a direct effect on the way in which a reader approaches a piece of testimony. Specific features of *La Nuit* which are felt to shape this pact include the effect of silence in the text, uncertainty, and the destabilisation of the narrative voice. The discussion of these features are drawn in part from a range of scholars’ readings of this text, and also from Eaglestone’s work on identification, previously discussed in chapter one. His discussion of this phenomenon and its effect on the composition of testimony is a foil for discussion of the pact, which in the case of testimony often seeks to prevent over-identification on the part of the reader.

The social and historical context of the text’s publication are also analysed, and this analysis feeds into discussion of what readers expect from texts associated with the genre. Lastly, this chapter provides a foundation for the following chapters’ detailed textual analysis, which will be derived from a close examination of both the French and English versions of the text.

4.2 The publication of *La Nuit*

The publication of *La Nuit* was a long and complex process. At the end of World War Two, Wiesel was relocated to France as part of a group of young displaced persons. In the ten years that followed he learned the French language, studied French literature, and forged a career in journalism. At the end of this ten-year period, during a long sea voyage to Brazil for a news story he was working on, Wiesel composed an initial piece of testimony about his deportation and internment at various concentration camps. He wrote this testimony in Yiddish and entitled it *Un di velt hot geschvign* (And The World Remained Silent). The original manuscript of this version was 862 pages long and was published in 1956 as part of a collection entitled ‘Polish Jewry’.\(^1\) Two years later, following a

meeting with François Mauriac, Wiesel edited (re-wrote?) his testimony in French. This version was eventually published in France by Editions de Minuit, under the title *La Nuit.* In 1960, an initial translation of *Night* appeared, translated by Stella Rodway. This was published by MacGibbon and Key. A number of editions were subsequently printed, including various volumes which include *La Nuit* and *L’Aube* and *Le Jour* (both fictional works, with only thematic links to Wiesel’s Holocaust experience) and certain editions aimed at school-age readers, such as the Cliff Notes version. In 2006 a new translation by Wiesel’s wife, Marion, was published in the United States and the United Kingdom. Following the publication of this retranslation, a new French edition was also published. This new French edition includes a French version of the new preface to the retranslation.

4.3 Structure of the text

*La Nuit* spans the period directly preceding Wiesel’s deportation to Auschwitz then Birkenau, until his eventual liberation when the American army liberated Buchenwald. The account begins in 1941, with a description of Wiesel’s hometown of Sighet (in what was then Transylvania), its inhabitants, and their largely optimistic perspective on the outcome of the war. It outlines the measures undertaken against the Jewish population as the political situation in Hungary changed. This includes a description of Wiesel’s pious religious studies. The pace of the narrative shifts with the arrival of German troops in spring of 1944 and the subsequent seclusion of the Jewish population into ghettos shortly after Passover of that year. The May 1944 deportation of the Jewish population to Birkenau is described: this includes a description of their journey in cattle cars and the eventual separation of male and female internees upon arrival. The narrator goes on to describe being transferred to Auschwitz and his subsequent life there, relating anecdotes about specific events (such as hangings, air raids, acts of malice and kindness) rather than providing an all-encompassing, chronological account of the concentrationary experience. The pace of the narrative shifts once more with the evacuation of the camp as the Allies approached at the very end of 1944. The evacuation phase includes a description of the march to Gleiwitz and the following cattle wagon journey to Buchenwald. The narrative ends with the death of the narrator’s father and the eventual liberation of the camp by American troops. The period between the
death of the father and the liberation of the camp (approximately four months) is not described, nor is any account given of the narrator's life after his liberation.

4.4 The socio-historical context of La Nuit's publication

This section will outline how and when La Nuit was published, briefly considering the socio-historical context of this text and the effect that this would have on the readers' approach to this testimony. For example, at certain periods in time, fictional accounts of historical events might be more frowned upon than at others, leading publishers to market a text in a particular way. Alternatively, the interest in translated texts may rise and fall, which would affect the likelihood of a publisher taking on a foreign-language text. These factors affect the testimonial pact established between the reader and the narrator because they inform the readers’ expectations of the text. An understanding of how the text was published in France and the way this affected the testimonial pact established with French readers also provides a baseline for analysis of the English target text. Factors to consider here include contemporaneous publications by the same publishing house; French attitudes to memorialisation of the Holocaust; and the influence of external figures on the publication of the text.

Memorialisation is a key aspect of the socio-historical context of La Nuit's publication, particularly the way in which France was handling its memory of the war years and of the Occupation. Henry Rousso’s acclaimed research into France’s changing reactions to the Occupation can go some way towards situating the appearance of this text in its national historical context.² Rousso divides France’s reaction to the Second World War into four broad phases. Although these phases of memory relate specifically to France’s Occupation experience, it can be argued that they also have an effect on its memorialisation of the Holocaust. As the Vichy regime deported tens of thousands of French Jews to the concentration camps, there is an inherent link between France’s memory of the regime and the Holocaust. From 1945 until 1953 Rousso argues that France was undergoing a period of ‘deuil inachevé’, mourning the loss of half a million citizens in a range of circumstances (acts of resistance, casualties on the front, deportation). During this period there was a tension between

avenging the acts of the occupying Nazi forces, and not necessarily facing up to the French authorities’ autonomous role in similar acts. De Gaulle coming to power marks the start of the second phase identified by Rousso, referred to as ‘le refoulement’. This period is closely aligned with the so-called Gaullist myth, wherein the role of the Resistance was much feted and the role of the collaborators was played down, reduced to the acts of a deranged minority. From 1972 until 1980 Rousso suggests that a phase known as ‘le miroir brisé’ took place. During this period, Occupation memories which had been distorted or repressed over the previous twenty-five years or so returned, with a vengeance. This is typified by Marcel Ophüls’ cuttingly honest documentary *Le Chagrin et la pitié*, and the translation of Paxton’s critical *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944* in 1973, for example. From 1980 onwards, Rousso argues that France has been living through a period of ‘obsession’ as new information and revelations about the Occupation are sought out and pored over by the media and the public.

*La Nuit* was published in 1958 at a time when, according to Rousso, the role of France’s own volition in the extermination of its Jewish population was not being broadly acknowledged. As a text which recounts the experiences of the Holocaust in the French language, but does not implicate the French authorities in any way, this piece of testimony can be seen as a relatively innocuous (with regard to French national identity and remembrance) addition to the field of Holocaust writing. Furthermore, *La Nuit*’s opening chapter strongly argues that a general sense of apathy and optimism on the part of Sighet’s inhabitants led in part to their deportation, suggesting that had warning signs been heeded, the population would have had the opportunity to resist the tide of anti-Semitism.\(^3\) This sentiment would arguably ring true for a nation which was taking stock of its own acts of resistance at that time. Therefore, according to Rousso’s schema, *La Nuit* was published at a point in France’s Second World War memorialisation when the public would be receptive to a text of its kind.

*La Nuit* did not initially garner much interest from publishers. Wiesel has observed that a number of publishers were approached with the manuscript before it was eventually taken on by Editions de Minuit. This publishing house,

which was established in 1941, had published clandestine resistance texts by distinguished authors (including Mauriac) during the Occupation, indeed, Leff describes it as ‘the most popular and prestigious of the clandestine publishing houses which sprang up in the wake of the Nazi invasion’.\(^4\) He furthermore argues that the context of this house’s establishment is of vital importance to the reading of the texts it produces: ‘Knowing the context of a work’s production necessarily changes its meaning in the eyes of its readers, and Les Editions de Minuit becomes political because of its context of production’.\(^5\)

From the mid 1950s, Editions de Minuit went on to publish a number of testimonial texts, including *La Nuit*, but also work by Jean Moulin, David Rousset and Charlotte Delbo. Interestingly, these other pieces of testimony were written by political deportees and not French Jewish deportees, which also seems to parallel Rousso’s schematic. Around this time, the house also courted controversy for publishing texts which were highly critical of the Algerian War.\(^6\) The publication of *La Nuit* by Editions de Minuit was therefore not an isolated occurrence in this house’s history; rather, this text appeared alongside a number of historically charged and potentially contentious texts. It might be argued that a reader who selects a text published by Editions de Minuit would expect to read a text dealing with contemporary issues in a potentially antagonistic manner. The reader may also be aware that the text could be ahead of the curve, in terms of public acceptability and interest. Lastly, as the text appeared alongside a number of literary successes, readers may expect a certain literary standard from *La Nuit*.

To examine the publication of *La Nuit* from a wider angle, we can also consider the dominant trends in French literary representation at the time of its publication. In the ‘Memory and Innovation in post-Holocaust France’ special issue of the journal *French Studies* (2005), editors Best and Robson observe that the reception of a piece of testimony is affected by the form of


representation it employs. They refer to ‘the tension between individual experience and the normative cultural forms of representation available’: if the expression of the individual experience does not conform to the normative cultural forms of representation available it is unlikely to be assimilated into the cultural memory of the locale in question.\(^7\) They also argue that if the memory is expressed in a group before that group has developed a narrative to articulate such memories ‘individuals can struggle to have their experiences validated and their identities confirmed by the collective narratives that make up cultural memory’.\(^8\) That is to say, until such a time as France developed a collective narrative to handle memories of the Holocaust, it would be hard to express individual memories. The situation of La Nuit alongside other texts related to the concentrationary experience in the Editions de Minuit collection implies that a collective narrative was in the process of construction. Furthermore, its publication by a publisher with a reputation for publishing renowned works suggests that the text was in a form which complied with the normative cultural forms for its target audience.

4.5 Mauriac

A further pertinent factor in the publication of La Nuit, which unquestionably affected readers’ reactions to this piece of testimony, is the influence of François Mauriac in its composition and publication. As noted in Chapter 2, Wiesel openly recognises the impact that Mauriac had upon both the composition and success of La Nuit in his first volume of memoirs, commenting ‘Je lui dois beaucoup’,\(^9\) that it is ‘grâce à François Mauriac que, libéré de mon serment, je pus commencer à raconter à voix haute’,\(^10\) and that ‘what success I had in France was really due to him’.\(^11\) His influence has also been discussed by a number of critics, all of whom perceive the men’s meeting and relationship differently. Broadly speaking, it is accepted that Wiesel met with Mauriac as part


\(^8\) Best, and Robson, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

\(^9\) Elie Wiesel, Tous les fleuves vont à la mer, p. 338


of his work as a journalist and that the two came to speak about the atrocities of the Holocaust, with Wiesel eventually confiding that he was a camp survivor. In his memoirs, Wiesel describes how Mauriac urged him to write about his experiences, and states that it was at his insistence that Wiesel composed *La Nuit*.

Mauriac went on to edit a number of drafts of the French testimony and to help secure publication of the work by mining his contacts in the publishing industry (particularly with Jérôme Lindon, who was at the head of Editions de Minuit at the time). Mauriac wrote an emotional account of this meeting with Wiesel and his reactions to the text as a foreword to the testimony, a foreword which has appeared in each edition of the text to date. The two men continued to correspond until Mauriac’s death and a small number of these letters have been released to the public, while the rest remain in Wiesel’s possession. This correspondence included discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the men’s religious beliefs, topics which, it has been suggested, caused a certain amount of tension between them.\(^\text{12}\)

The influence that Mauriac had upon the text is outlined on the publisher’s website. The relatively prominent position of this description is indicative of the frank way that his role in the text tends to be addressed. The letter that Mauriac wrote to Lindon to recommend an early reworking of the Yiddish text into French is cited: ‘« Voici le livre de “l’enfant juif”. Je vous le recommande chaudement »’. We are also presented with Wiesel’s carte blanche to Lindon, urging him to edit the text at will: ‘Elie Wiesel répond à Jérôme Lindon qu’il lui donne toute latitude pour effectuer les « corrections de détail »’. Lastly, Wiesel’s reaction to the joint editing effort is cited: ‘« Oui, ce livre vous exprime autant qu’il m'exprime, moi. La voix est la mienne. Mais l'ingénieur du son, c'est vous »’.\(^\text{13}\) This overt acknowledgement on the


publisher’s website of both Mauriac and Lindon’s influence makes the reader very aware that the text he or she is reading was the result of a collaborative effort, and not just the transcription of Wiesel’s memories.

This impression is compounded for readers of Wiesel’s memoirs (Tous les fleuves vont à la mer). Here he gives a detailed account of Lindon’s response to the original manuscript of La Nuit:

Lindon n’aime pas le titre : « Et le monde se taisait » ne sonne pas bien à ses oreilles. Il préférerait un verset biblique, peut-être tire du Livre de Jérémie. Après diverses suggestions, nous finissons par nous mettre d’accord sur « La Nuit ». Mais il n’est pas encore satisfait : il me demande de reprendre le récit pour le resserrer. Pourtant la version française qu’il a reçue de Mauriac […] je l’ai moi-même élaguée et considérablement abrégée. Il me propose de nouvelles coupures au début, au milieu, à la fin. Résultat: une différence de volume considérable entre les versions successives. Le manuscrit original compte 862 pages. En édition Yiddish, le livre est ramené à 245. Et chez Lindon à 178.14

He goes on to provide extracts of passages which Lindon felt it best to omit, before stating that ‘[a]vec le recul, je reconnais que Lindon avait raison. Je n’ai jamais regretté d’avoir raccourci un texte. Les passages supprimés n’en sont pas absents. Dans le cas d’Auschwitz, le non-dit pèse plus que le reste’.15 For those readers of La Nuit who also read Wiesel’s memoir, this reiterates the fact that his testimony is a mediated text, in no way a transparent representation of his memories.

The extent to which Mauriac influenced the composition and the reception of the text has been debated by critics. In a somewhat scathing piece about the relationship between Mauriac and Wiesel, David O’Connell suggests that Wiesel not only overstated the men’s relationship to further his own career, but also that he entrapped Mauriac into the relationship in the first place.16 To

14 Ibid., p. 409.
15 Ibid., p. 413.
16 O’Connell, ‘François Mauriac et Elie Wiesel: Une amitié troublée’, in L’amitié, ce pur fleuve : textes offerts en hommage à Bernard Cocula, ed. by Caroline Casseville and Philippe Boudorre. (Further references to this chapter are given after quotations in the text).
support this argument, O'Connell draws on the fact that Wiesel had already written one version of his testimony in Yiddish and suggests that he wanted to meet this significant literary figure purely to ‘profiter des bons offices de Mauriac pour publier une rédaction française du livre qu’il avait déjà écrit en yiddish’, that he wanted to ‘recruter Mauriac pour l’aider avec la transposition de son livre en français et pour trouver un éditeur français’ (p. 472). O’Connell furthermore argues that Mauriac's role in the editing of the French text was essential to La Nuit’s success, stating that: ‘Bref, La Nuit est une œuvre littéraire, tandis que l’original yiddish, publié dans une collection de témoignages de survivants, ne l’est pas’ (p. 475).

It is sure that Mauriac's position as a respected writer drew the public's eye to Wiesel's testimony, and that it would also have given the text a more “literary” patina than other pieces of writing by survivors may have had. O’Connell’s view is that Wiesel wilfully misled Mauriac into launching his literary career, then fabricated subsequent aspects of their relationship to continue to profit from the influence of Mauriac’s name, and employed Mauriac's literary skill to publish a respected piece of writing. It is noteworthy that Wiesel makes no mention of Mauriac editing the text of La Nuit in any way in his memoirs, despite being frank with regard to Lindon’s intervention in the text. This may suggest that Mauriac had no direct effect on the content of the text, or that Wiesel does not feel he can discuss the impact Mauriac did have. Whether or not O’Connell’s accusations are well-founded, and be it through intentional trickery or genuine friendship, Mauriac's influence did secure the publication of La Nuit and frame this unknown text in a respected, French, literary context.

Naomi Seidman argues that Mauriac's influence went one step further than this. In a 1996 article entitled ‘Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage’ (an updated version of which appeared in her 2006 volume Faithful Renderings) she argues that as Mauriac was a pillar of the French literary scene and a devout Christian, and as La Nuit was destined for a post-Occupation French audience, Wiesel sublimated the prominent theme of Jewish rage when transforming Un di Velt hot Geshvign into La Nuit. Through an analysis of the two versions she identifies a number of passages which were edited out of the French version, the effect of which is a markedly more measured and less vengeful text. Specific examples include the change in the title of the testimony:
Seidman argues that ‘The Yiddish title indicts the world that did nothing to stop the Holocaust and allows its perpetrators to carry on normal lives; La Nuit names no human or even divine agents in the events it describes’. Similarly, the ending of the text differs from one version to the other. In the Yiddish version, the narrator looks upon his own ghoulish reflection and then smashes the mirror into which he is looking. Seidman argues that this represents the destruction of ‘the deathly existence the Nazis willed on him’ (p. 7). However, the French edition ends with the narrator gazing at himself, a ‘death haunted’ figure who neither seeks nor finds vengeance or escape from the legacy of the camps (p. 7). This is a stance which Daniel R. Schwarz has contested, arguing that Seidman ‘appropriates Wiesel for her own purposes, namely to indict Wiesel and his successors for eschewing a rhetoric of revenge’.18

From her observations, Seidman concludes that Mauriac’s role in the creation of the French testimony was powerful. Her overriding opinion is that La Nuit presents an entirely different narrator from Un di Velt hot geschvign. She states that ‘There are two survivors, then, a Yiddish and a French – or perhaps we should say one survivor who speaks to a Jewish audience and one whose first reader is a French Catholic’ (p. 8). Furthermore, Seidman declares that this less vengeful narrator is the key to Wiesel’s subsequent success, that the rage which he sublimated ‘was Wiesel’s ticket into the literature of non-Jewish Europe’ (p. 15). This argument can be tied to Alan Astro’s observation that ‘French Jews tend to express whatever particularities they have as Jews with great reserve’.19 Seidman sees the transformation of the testimony into French as very problematic. She asks whether the larger audience secured by Mauriac’s influence was worth translating this survivor’s account ‘into the language of those who were, at best, absent, and at worst, complicitous in the genocide?’ (p. 16).

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17 Naomi Seidman, ‘Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage’, Jewish Social Studies, 3 (1996), 1-19 (p. 5). (Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text).
18 Schwarz, Imagining the Holocaust, p. 67.
The influence of Mauriac upon *La Nuit* is substantial. Not only did he have considerable sway in securing its publication, he also played a role in its composition. The extent and effect of this role is debatable: O’Connell would argue that Mauriac made the text literary enough to be accepted by the French literary scene, while Seidman argues that by sublimating the rage he may have felt towards the rest of the world Wiesel edited the text to suit Christian, French Mauriac. In terms of how the text is read, the influence of Mauriac is twofold. On the one hand, it helped to garner interest in the text and to encourage readers to see the text as a “literary” work, as opposed to a purely historical text. On the other hand, this literary frame may be seen to undermine the veracity of the text. Furthermore, Mauriac’s intervention in the text may also make readers question the relationship that they endeavour to enter into with the narrator. Are they reading the survivor’s words or Mauriac’s words? O’Connell’s derisive commentary would seem to imply that his influence in the text has indeed led certain readers to question whose work they are actually reading when they read *La Nuit*.

4.6 The genre of *La Nuit*

*La Nuit* has been labelled in a number of different ways since its publication. Reviewing these labels provides a gateway into discussion of the effect this may have upon the testimonial pact that readers of *La Nuit* enter into. John Frow explains the importance of labels, or frames, for a reader. He describes the effect that a particular framing of a text can have on the reader’s perception of the text’s content:

> the generic structure of [a] text is established, and many of [its] other dimensions activated, by a physical setting which takes on the force of a regulative frame. This frame differentiates the genre of this text from other possible genres, alerts us to the way it works (its rhetorical function), and draws our attention towards some of its features and away from others.²⁰

There are a number of places where readers may become aware of the testimonial mode of a text they go on to read. Reviews of a text generally state its genre categorically (consider, for example, the New York Times ‘fiction’ and ‘non-fiction’ best-seller lists as a broad example). Book-sellers (whether online

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or physical shops) group their merchandise by genre. This grouping is influenced by the publisher’s categorisation of the text and by the label that appears on the book. Other sources of information regarding a text’s genre include critical responses and study guides.

The first edition of *La Nuit* does not state the text’s genre on the cover; this is fairly typical of French publications as the covers tend to be very sparse. However, Mauriac’s preface calls the text a ‘témoignage’.

The newer edition’s back cover refers to it as ‘le récit de ses souvenirs’. The 1982 Bantam edition refers to the text as a memoir, while the 2006 Hill and Wang edition sidesteps a generic title by referring to the text as ‘record’. All of these titles denote a factual account of lived experiences and make it clear that the account has never been published as anything but non-fiction. However, reviews and critical responses have been less clear on the matter. In a 2006 review, it is noted that the text resembles a novel, and that the famous Cliffs Notes educational guides labelled it as such.

It’s another memoir that might be considered a novel, but this time, Oprah Winfrey’s book-club pick is a classic by a Nobel laureate. […] *Night* has been called a novel - particularly by the study guide Cliffs Notes. But Wiesel’s foundation labels it a memoir, as does the book’s publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

This is a common trend in teaching resources, certain of which refer to *La Nuit* as a novel. However, the trend extends beyond the field of education. A number of critics also refer to *La Nuit* as a novel. Graham B. Walker Jr. describes Wiesel correcting him on this matter during an interview he undertook:

One event, however, I did not anticipate was the correction I received when I referred to *Night* as a novel. Almost in mid-sentence, Elie Wiesel corrected my

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25 Ibid., p. 2
categorical error and referred to Night as autobiographical history. [...] When it comes to Night, the issue of categorization was not mine alone. Daniel R. Schwarz\(^\text{26}\) writes:

“I am not interested in indicting Wiesel for transforming his nominalistic memoir into novelistic form, but in how, in response to publishing circumstances and perhaps his own transformation, he reconfigured an existential novel about the descent into moral night into a somewhat affirmative reemergence to life. While the narrator is a fifteen-year-old boy, Wiesel was born in 1928 and would have been sixteen for most of the 1944-45 period. Is not this age discrepancy one reason why we ought to think of Night as a novel as well as memoir?”\(^\text{27}\)

Schwarz argues that the significant editing process which transformed Wiesel’s Yiddish testimony into his French-language testimony means that ‘Night is a novel’, a novel with ‘a central agon, a structure of affects, a narrative voice, an imagined narratee (the implied listener to the narrator), and an ending that transforms, modifies, and reformulates what precedes’.\(^\text{28}\) Other examples of critics referring to this text as a novel include Jack Colbert who, in his 1995 contribution to the edited collection ‘The Contemporary Novel in France’, refers to La Nuit as ‘Wiesel’s first French-language novel’.\(^\text{29}\) Mihai Mindra refers to La Nuit as a novel, calling it a ‘hybrid text born of the author’s personal experience’.\(^\text{30}\)

A number of other critics have felt it necessary to clarify the genre to which the text belongs. Colin Davis, for example, refers to it as the ‘nonfictional basis of Wiesel’s subsequent fiction’,\(^\text{31}\) thereby shoring up the distinction

\(^{26}\) (citing: Schwarz, Imagining the Holocaust, p. 50.)


\(^{28}\) Schwarz, Imagining the Holocaust pp. 50-51.


\(^{30}\) M. Mindra, ‘Narrative Constructs and Border Transgressions in Holocaust Literature within the American Context’, Studies in American Jewish Literature, 28 (2009), 46-54 (p. 47).

\(^{31}\) Colin Davis, ‘The Conversion to Ambiguity (Early Works)’, in Elie Wiesel’s Night ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001), p. 95. (Further references to this chapter are given after quotations in the text).
between this text and the fictional texts which follow it. This throws light on the
genetic blurring that is caused by Wiesel’s subsequent body of work, much of
which draws indirectly on Wiesel’s life in a way which is recognisable, but not to
the point of being autobiographical. Fine also opens her chapter in Bloom’s
edited volume about Night by summarising that ‘It has been described as a
personal memoir, autobiographical narrative, fictionalized autobiography,
nonfictional novel, and human document. Essentially it is a témoignage, a first-
hand account of the concentration experience’. To sidestep the apparent
confusion regarding the text’s genre, a number of people use vaguer
superordinate terms. For example, Zoe Trodd refers to the text as an
autobiography while others call it a récit, a tale, a memoir, or an account.
These more neutral terms are less loaded in terms of factual expectations than
the term ‘testimony’. The fact that so many people hold reservations about the
text’s genre is intriguing for this project. In some way, La Nuit does not comply
with readers’ expectations of a piece of testimony. They are wary of its factuality
so err of the side of fiction when labouring it.

4.7 La Nuit’s testimonial pact

The analysis of certain recurrent features (for example the complex narrative
voice, the influence of Wiesel’s religious readings, the literary feature of silence)
demonstrates how La Nuit’s testimonial pact is presented to the reader and
simultaneously contested. Having established that this text (which is seminal in
the genre) has been called fictional on more than one occasion, this
examination of the text will in part aim to explain what it is in this piece of
testimony that might unsettle the testimonial pact and lead readers to mistake
the text for a fictional work, and how the reader is encouraged to approach the
reading of the text. A number of sources are used to frame this discussion. A
review of critical responses to the text provides a useful summary of those

32 Ellen S. Fine, ‘Witness of the Night’, in Elie Wiesel’s Night, ed. by Harold Bloom
(Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001), p. 47. (Further references to this
chapter are given after quotations in the text).
33 Zoe Trodd, ‘Mosaics and Mirrors: Wiesel, American Autobiographies and the
Shaping of a Storied Subject’, in Elie Wiesel and the Art of Storytelling, ed. by
references to this chapter are given after quotations in the text).
features which are considered the most important in the text, while a taxonomy of features common to testimony is also exploited in order to contemplate the text alongside some of its generic peers.

4.7.1 La Nuit: A simple text

On the surface, La Nuit would appear to be a simple text. There is not a cluttering of prominent literary devices in the narrative which would give the text an air of artifice. Indeed, a common observation about the text is that it is slim, simple, brief, sparse. Deborah Ames notes that Wiesel ‘uses thoughts thoughtfully, sparsely, and reflectively’, and comments upon the ‘brevity of words’ employed (p. 98). She goes on to state that ‘With over seven hundred pages deleted [from the original Yiddish testimony], Night is the very definition of terse and elliptical. Staggering images are painted with only a few words; the barest brush of his use of words conveys overwhelming loss and tension’ (pp. 98-99). Colin Davis comments upon the text’s ‘apparent simplicity’ (p. 104), while Ellen Fine notes that the narrative is ‘succinctly related’ (pp. 47-48). It might be argued that this simplicity is partly what draws people to the text, and indeed why it commonly features on syllabi. The reader feels that he or she is being presented with an unmediated account.

However, this plainness is in fact deceptive in that it conceals a number of effective literary devices. Seidman states that ‘the complexity of Wiesel’s interpretive craft, his writing in other words, has been very nearly invisible’ (p. 3), while Davis argues that La Nuit ‘is a deeply paradoxical work’ (p. 104), despite appearing to be a straightforward narrative in many respects. As the narrative seems very simple, or, as Seidman describes it ‘unmediated’ (p. 3), it bears fewer hallmarks of a literary, fictional text, hallmarks which may cause the reader to question the factual basis of the narrative. Davis frames a similar observation in a way which recalls Langer’s discussion of structured narratives. He argues that the ‘retrospective stance of the narrator and the control he exhibits over the presentation of his material’ (p. 101), can be seen to ‘put him in a privileged position of authority and understanding’ (p. 101). The controlled

nature of the narrative does give an impression of understanding and a particular kind of certainty. However, because the text does not flaunt this control by fronting complex narrative features, the reader does not necessarily question the extent to which the account has been manipulated by the writer. There is a telling contrast to be drawn between the author who is candid about how hard it is to relay an account of Holocaust experiences and the testimony, which seems simple and comparatively palatable. An analysis of the underlying features which are present in the text will help to unravel how these conflicting impressions might affect the how this piece of testimony is read.

4.7.2 Narrating La Nuit

The narrator is the voice the reader hears when he or she reads a text. This is the primary means of communication between the author and the reader. The impression the reader has of the narrator both reflects upon and feeds into his or her perception of the author. Therefore, in an analysis of the testimonial pact associated with La Nuit it is essential to establish how the narrator is characterised. The narrator of La Nuit is a recurrent theme in secondary criticism. In his chapter entitled ‘The Conversion to Ambiguity (Early Works)’ from Harold Bloom’s edited volume called Elie Wiesel’s Night, Colin Davis writes at length about the divided nature of this text’s narrator, while Zoe Trodd deals with a similar topic in her contribution to Horowitz’s volume. Colin Davis remarks that:

The force of La Nuit as a témoignage depends upon the reader’s identification of the author Elie with the narrator Eliezer. The claim of the text that “all this really happened,” and hence also its moral urgency, flounder if we refuse to invest the narrative voice with the authority of a witness. Interestingly, it is the narrator not the author of La Nuit who bears the “proper name” of the historical protagonist, since Elie is a French version of the name given to the child at birth. In a sense then, Wiesel is already playing with his own name by indicating a possible distinction between the victim of the concentration camps (Eliezer) and the author of the text (Elie). Such a distinction does not deny the autobiographical status of the text, though it may indicate the author’s desire to

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35 As discussed in Chapter 2, the narrator can be seen as the link between the author (via the implied author, the narratee, and the implied reader) and the reader. (Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, pp. 70-75).
disassociate himself from his narrator, while also being identified with him. (pp. 105-6)

Here, Davis introduces the idea that the narrator of *La Nuit* is distanced from the author figure from the very outset of the narrative. This distancing is significant because, as Davis recalls, the idea that the author and narrator are one and the same is central to the testimonial pact. However, the notion of narratorial ‘disassociation’ is recurrent in criticism of *La Nuit*. Trodd’s 2006 piece discusses this notion at length, arguing that *La Nuit* presents a fragmented narrator and that there is a distance between the narrator and the protagonist: ‘The narrator of *Night* had put his real self into hibernation on entering the death camp: he walks into his own funeral procession, and then offers his identity as that of an eighteen-year-old farmer rather than a fourteen-year-old student, so creating a self-imposed distance from his own story as it unfolded real-time’ (p. 16). Trodd is referring here to the passage wherein the narrator describes lying about his age and occupation at the entry to the camp in order to ensure his survival, and the comparison the narrator draws between a funeral procession and the separation into groups of those who would remain to work at the camp and those who would be gassed immediately.36

Both Davis and Trodd convincingly argue that the narrator of *La Nuit* is in some way distanced from both the author and the protagonist, the former through the difference in his name, and the latter through devices such as creating a new identity within the camp and identifying with hanged internees, for example. Seidman echoes this, noting that ‘[i]n the final lines of *Night* when the recently liberated Eliezer gazes at his own face in a mirror, the reader is presented with the survivor as both subject and object, through his inner experience and through the outward image of what he has become’ (p. 3). This observation refers to the much-discussed closing episode of the narrative. Upon awakening in a hospital, post-liberation, Eliezer stands to see himself in a mirror for the first time since his forced departure from his hometown of Sighet. He states that:

36 Elie Wiesel, *La Nuit* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1958), pp. 54-7. (Further references to this volume (n.b. this is the 1958 French edition) are given after quotations in the text).
Du fond du miroir, un cadavre me contemplait.

Son regard dans mes yeux ne me quitte plus. (p. 175)

This shift from the third to the first person (‘Son regard’ > ‘mes yeux’) has been seen as evidence of this splitting of the author-narrator-protagonist. Fine succinctly argues that: ‘When [Wiesel] looks at himself in the mirror for the first time since the ghetto […] [there is a] distinction made between his eyes and mine, conveying the notion of the fragmented self […]. The staring corpse is a permanent reminder of the “dead” self, that part of the narrator which was engulfed by the black smoke of Auschwitz and which will plague him for the rest of his life’.37 This splintering of the narrator figure clearly demonstrates to the reader that the internees suffered from a loss of self and a significant questioning of their identities, but it also creates a pervasive uncertainty in the text: the reader is unsure if the account he or she is reading is attributed to the author figure, or the narrator of the text, if these two figures are really one and the same, and if either of them is really the person who lived the experiences being described.

Despite the presence of these features which have been presented as indications of a fractured narrator, Davis nonetheless argues that the narrative provided by the narrator is coherent:

La Nuit can be read as an attempt to achieve existential self-recognition, as the narrator attempts to understand himself and his place in history. This is emblematized – and its failure underscored – in the final lines of the text when he looks in a mirror and sees a corpse looking back at him. La Nuit does not offer unmediated, uninterpreted realities. Events are filtered through the eyes of a narrator, Eliezer, whose primary function is to seize their meaning as he organizes them into a coherent narrative. He exhibits considerable control in his organization of material. (p. 97)

Through the search for coherency then, the narrator presents an organised and considered account of his experiences. Fine argues that ‘Night is more than a témoignage, and the narrator is more than a witness. While he effaces himself before the events, we also hear his own voice – a voice that recounts more than

Original emphasis.
mere circumstances’ (p. 48). That is to say, the narrative presents a considered account of the experiences and also develops a distinct ‘voice’ for the narrator. Fine and Davis therefore argue that the fractured narrator is part and parcel of the narrative voice, and that the fracturing does not undermine the text’s coherency.

4.7.3 Interruption with distinct narrator

In addition to these aspects of the narration which seem to separate the narrator (Eliezer) from the author (Elie Wiesel), there are a number of instances in the narration of the testimony when the narrator seems to split in two, making Elie’s the more prominent voice. These take the form of what are referred to here as ‘interruptions’. The use of this term is drawn from Eaglestone’s discussion of features which are commonly seen in testimonial texts. He argues that ‘[t]estimony texts are […] riven with interruptions that break up the flow of narrative’, proposing that this has the effect of marking ‘a distinction between the time of the events and the narration of the events, […] interrupt[ing] the narrative and so foreground[ing] the authorial voice’ (p. 58). Eaglestone suggests that in testimonial writing this feature is used in part to distance the reader from the account and prevent over-identification with either the teller or the tale. The type of interruptions discussed here reflects the narrator’s frame of mind while writing the testimony, as opposed to when experiencing the events being described. On certain occasions, the narrator seems to reflect the author figure more explicitly, either by changing his mode of address, or by commenting on his emotions in later life. This shift in the time of narration recalls to the reader that the narrator is both the person who lived the events and the person describing them. One example of this is the episode in which Wiesel’s narrator reflects upon the long-term effect these images will have on his life:

Jamais je n’oublierai cette nuit, la première nuit de camp qui a fait de ma vie une nuit longue et sept fois verrouillée.

Jamais je n’oublierai cette fumée.

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38 Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*, p. 56.
Jamais je n’oublierai les petits visages des enfants dont j’avais vu les corps se transformer en volutes sous un azur muet.

Jamais je n’oublierai ces flammes qui consumèrent pour toujours ma Foi.

Jamais je n’oublierai ce silence nocturne qui m’a privé pour l’éternité du désir de vivre.

Jamais je n’oublierai ces instants qui assassinèrent mon Dieu et mon âme, et mes rêves qui prirent le visage du désert.

Jamais je n’oublierai cela, même si j’étais condamné à vivre aussi longtemps que Dieu lui-même. Jamais. (pp. 58-59)

Eaglestone cites this passage as an example of a ‘signified […] narrative interruption’ in which the use of repetition decisively interrupts the narrative (p. 58). Breaking the flow of the narrative so conclusively disrupts the chronology of the account and gives the impression of a different voice in the text. The importance of the voice in testimonial accounts has already been highlighted, and instances in the text such as these confuse this voice. They bring a different pitch to the narrative, and a different perspective, framing the statement differently to the rest of the account. The reader is, in this way, told that he or she is to handle this information differently too. In this particular instance, the repetition of the same phrase seven times has a religious significance. The number seven is recurrent in Judaism and figures in a number of religious practices, such as weddings and the organisation of holy days. This repetition therefore recalls the profound impact that the events of the camps had upon the narrator. This interruption also projects into the narrator’s future and as such also distances the reader from assimilating the account.

Similarly, interruptions which refer to the narrator’s current emotional state also explain that he continues to be haunted by his experiences, saying ‘(Est-ce donc étonnant si depuis ce temps-là le sommeil fuit mes yeux?)’ (p. 55). Similarly, the narrator states that listening to Beethoven still evokes feelings of

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great sadness because of its association with a particular internee (p. 147). Perhaps the most striking instance of a retrospective interruption are the aforementioned final lines of the work (‘Du fond du miroir, un cadavre me contemplait. Son regard dans mes yeux ne me quitte plus’ (p. 175)). Here, the use of the present tense, juxtaposed with the imperfect is an expression of the way in which the narrator’s past experiences still live on within him. It draws a line around these experiences and distances the reader from them by asserting the narrator’s possession of the memories. As this is the final line of the work, it signifies a definitive rupture between the reader and the narrative.

4.7.4 Direct comment

This feature is echoed in the author’s use of direct comment. Davis has also observed that this is a prominent feature in La Nuit, stating that ‘The narrator interrupts his description of events and comments directly’ (p. 98). There is a parallel to be drawn here with Eaglestone’s discussion of what he calls ‘inserted tags’. These are specific textual features which resemble spoken language and therefore ‘frame the narrator as exactly that’ (p. 50), that is to say, they reinforce the narrator’s role in the events being described and in so doing enforce a distance between the reader and the events being recounted. Significantly, the vast majority of these tags occur in the first chapter of the text. In this chapter, the narrator is recounting his experiences in Sighet prior to the war and explaining how the town’s inhabitants react (or do not react) to the changing political situation and the new regulations imposed upon the Jewish population. Here, tags include ‘Certes’ (p. 24), and ‘Oui,’ (pp. 24, 32, 55). These are words which signal an oral style in French and in this way recall that the account is being narrated, and not lived by the reader.

Similarly, there are occasional interjections by the narrator. These are positioned between parentheses and give the impression that the narrator is stepping back from the story to directly address his audience in an aside. Examples include:

(Quel mot!) (p. 37)

(Oui, nous les voyions, les flammes) (p. 53)

(Est-ce donc étonnant si depuis ce temps-là le sommeil fuit mes yeux ?) (p. 55)
These parenthetical comments signal a change in the narration of the account in a way which is similar to the more sustained interruptions described above. They also prevent identification by reminding the reader that the account is being described to them, and that the he or she is not involved first-hand in the experiences. This is part of the testimonial pact, suggesting to the reader that his or her role is one of listener, and that he or she cannot occupy a subject position because, as Eaglestone notes, he or she is being addressed by ‘a narrator and a witness and not somebody whose experiences can be assimilated to one’s own’ (p. 50). As suggested in Chapter 1, this distancing is a key aspect of testimonial texts and the pacts associated with them.

4.7.5 Uncertainty

A further striking feature in La Nuit is the role which uncertainty plays in the narration, and the resonances of this conception of uncertainty in Jewish religious writing. Ames argues that ‘the spirit of search, inquiry and speculation that is at the heart of the Midrash is also at the heart of Wiesel’s stories. […] he contextualizes the Holocaust as an event of Biblical proportions; he uses thoughts thoughtfully, sparely, and reflectively as did the midrashic commentators’ (p. 91). She clarifies the reference to the Midrash by explaining that ‘the Midrash records the rabbis’ search for meaning within Scripture’ (p. 91). Davis also notes that ‘Wiesel adopts a form and techniques that seem to confirm the Jewish expectation of the meaning of history and the interpretability of experience’ (p. 100). Specific features which are testament to this spirit of enquiry and speculation include the use of rhetorical questions (‘Pourquoi je priais ? Étrange question. Pourquoi vivais-je ? Pourquoi respirais-je ?’ (p. 33), ‘Pour la première fois, je sentis la révolte grandir en moi. Pourquoi devais-je sanctifier Son Nom ? L’Éternel, Maître de l’univers, l’Éternel Tout-Puissant et Terrible se taisait, de quoi allais-je Le remercier ?’ (p. 77)), questions posed between characters in the narrative, and the use of features such as ellipsis, which resist an over-simplification or over-explanation of events.
Furthermore, _La Nuit_ features a number of religious asides wherein the narrator pauses his account to make a theological observation or question his faith. These include the narrator questioning the presence of God in the camps when he sees children being burned alive, and positing that God himself is being hanged when the angelic child is executed. Similarly, the Rosh Hashanah celebrations described in the account evoke questions of faith. These religious asides generally mark a break from the narrative – they take the form of rhetorical questions, for example:

- de quoi allais-je Le remercier ? (p. 57)
- Que signifie Ta grandeur, maître de l'Univers, en face de toute cette faiblesse, en face de cette décomposition et de cette pourriture ? (p. 105)
- Loué soit Ton Saint Nom, Toi qui nous as choisis pour être égorgés sur Ton autel ? (p. 106)

This is not to say that all religious comments take the form of rhetorical questions, rather that these particular instances mark an interruption in the otherwise linear structure of the narrative. The narrator’s faith is a central theme of the book and other occasions of religious reflection take the form of discussions with other internees or the narrator’s father. These interruptions in the account also have a similar effect to those observed earlier, in the sense that both introduce a second voice to the narrative, a voice which relays distinct information to the reader. This alternative voice has a midrashic tone to it, imbued with the uncertainty and questioning which is typical in the adult author’s religious beliefs.

A further aspect of the text which suggests midrashic speculation is the continuing quest for meaning and understanding. Rather than portraying a narrative as a cut and dried product, there are moments when the limitations of words are highlighted, and when the failure of narratives is discussed. It has already been suggested that this is a key aspect of the transmission of Holocaust memories, and that Wiesel as an author discusses this openly. Davis argues that within this piece of testimony, the ‘failure of narration to command belief’ is highlighted by the Moché-le-Bedeau scenes at the outset of the narrative, which foreground the challenges of comprehension or belief of such a narrative (pp. 100-01). The scenes to which Davis refers describe how one of
the town’s inhabitants (who is deported earlier than the rest of the Jews in the town because he was also foreign, but who manages to escape) tries to warn the rest of the town’s Jews that they are in grave danger (‘Juifs, écoutez-moi. C’est tout ce que je vous demande. Pas d’argent, pas de pitié. Mais que vous m’écoutez’ (p. 17)), but is not believed (‘Les gens refusaient non seulement de croire à ses histoires mais encore de les écouter’ (pp. 16-17)). He describes the atrocities he has seen, the mass shooting of all those who were deported (‘ils abattirent leurs prisonniers’ (p. 16)), which he only escaped by feigning death (‘Blessé à la jambe, on le crut mort…’ (p. 16)), but the inhabitants of Sighet do not listen, believing that only a madman could describe such things as children being executed. For the reader this epitomises the limitations of narration and belief of descriptions of Holocaust experiences, both within the text and more widely.

Davis also argues that this motif of failed narratives is ‘reflected in the writing of the text as a whole’ (pp. 100-01), citing examples such as Eliezer’s father not being able to finish his stories, characters’ stories or warnings not being believed, and a widespread ‘collapse of interpretative authority’ (p. 101). Indeed, Ellen S. Fine suggests that ‘Wiesel writes from the perspective of a witness storyteller who knows that the essence of his story [...] is impossible to communicate’.40 We see the people of Sighet incredulous about Hitler’s intentions, for example: ‘Il irait anéantir tout un peuple ? Exterminer une population dispersée à travers tant de pays ? Tant de millions de gens ! Avec quels moyens ? Et en plein vingtième siècle !’ (p. 19). The disbelief of narratives begins at this stage, with a whole town not believing this most unbelievable of stories. Similarly, the townspeople had heard of the rise of Fascism ‘mais cela restait une abstraction’ (p. 20).

A clear example of the failure of narration can be found in the use of non-verbal communication to express important news. For example, one of Eliezer’s elderly neighbours does not understand what Eliezer is trying to explain to him when he goes to wake him to prepare for entry into the ghetto: ‘il n’avait rien compris de ce que je lui disais’, but a look tells him more than any words could:

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40 Ellen S. Fine, Legacy of Night: The Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel, pp. 1-2. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
'Je ne pouvais plus rien lui dire. Alors il comprit' (p. 29). The attention to the failure of language and narrative invites the reader to speculate about the sincerity and breadth of the narrative and to seek out its meaning. This is a prime example of how the content of the text can play a part in the construction of the testimonial pact: even the characters in the text and their actions and failures relay to the reader that he or she should not expect a completely successful communication of the experiences being described.

An additional way in which the idea of failed narrative is conveyed to the reader is through the prominent motif of seeing and knowing. This is a feature acknowledged in Eaglestone’s taxonomy, and one which is evident throughout *La Nuit*. Eaglestone sees this motif as part of the narrative frame, and a further way in which testimonial texts prevent reader over-identification. He cites Delbo’s work in particular when discussing the distinction between ‘knowing’ what happened in the camps and having seen it with one’s own eyes. By fronting this distinction, the narrator holds the reader at arm’s length from the narrative, making it clear that by reading the testimony he or she will have some knowledge of the events being described, but will not ‘know’ it as he or she did not see the events with his or her own eyes.

This is thematically linked to the motif of failed understanding, in which people who are merely told of the camp atrocities fail to understand them. By citing examples of people being unable to grasp these experiences the narrator typifies the impossibility of understanding the Holocaust if you have not experienced it. The Moché-le-Bedeau passages of *La Nuit* feature this motif prominently. They can be seen as an analogy for not being able to comprehend the horrors of the concentration experience without having lived them, as they are so far beyond the normal realms of comprehension. Indeed, Moché-le-Bedeau eventually categorically states ‘Tu ne peux pas comprendre’ (p. 17),

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41 Specifically, Eaglestone describes the use of this narrative frame throughout Delbo’s *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, arguing that ‘seeing and knowing, experiencing and remembering, dominate her work’. He observes that ‘seeing and knowing are posed with each other in different combinations’ highlighting the differences between what one is able to see and what one is able to know, particularly with regard to the concentrationary experience. (Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*, pp. 50-51.)
before becoming increasingly reclusive and fleeing the danger to which his fellow townspeople are unknowingly blind. Throughout the first chapter the narrator describes how his community failed to believe or understand the dangers they were facing. In this way, and through the allegorical figure of Moché-le-Bedau the narrator foreshadows the difficulty of understanding the atrocities of the Holocaust.

In all, the narration of this piece of testimony draws attention to the challenges of comprehending the Holocaust. The narrator of *La Nuit* is a fractured figure, and both religious questions and issues specifically related to the telling of Holocaust experiences are presented to the reader as challenges to his or her understanding of the text. The narrator’s frank expression of the challenges to understanding presented by his account is an integral part of the text’s testimonial pact. The combination of this and the textual division of the narrator and author present the reader with a text which is challenging to consume. Davis’ comments regarding the fractured narrator and the lack of certainty in the text are particularly useful here. He argues that ‘what he [the narrator] describes is the destruction of all points of certainty, resulting in the collapse of the interpretative authority that his stance as narrator seems to arrogate’ (p. 101). Indeed, ‘[w]hile *La Nuit* never discredits the authority of its narrator, significant aspects of the text seem to resist acknowledging what Eliezer nevertheless knows to be true’ (p. 101). For example, the narrator questions what he sees, interrogates his own belief system, and disbelieves the accounts of others. Davis concludes that *La Nuit* is ‘a témoignage in which the narrator wants most urgently to undermine his own credibility, a coherent account of the collapse of coherence, an attempt to describe what the author of the text insists cannot be described’ (p. 104). Writing this into the testimonial pact means that the writer will guide the reader into certain expectations of the text, leading him or her to question how the tale is being told, and how much he or she can hope to understand of the Holocaust having read the account.

4.7.6 Silence

The concept of failed narratives is inextricable from that of silence. Silence (as a literary device) is perhaps the feature most commonly associated with *La Nuit*, indeed Langer has argued that Wiesel is a ‘leading spokesman’ for ‘the idea
that silence must be integrated into the vision of [the] reality [of the Holocaust].

Silence is a prominent concept throughout Holocaust studies. Many feel that it is the only appropriate response to the gravity of the Holocaust and its horrors. Ernestine Schlant writes a concise analysis of why many feel that silence is the only appropriate response to the Holocaust, discussing Saul Friedländer’s view that because our means of representing experience are ‘insufficient’ to express what the Holocaust means, ‘language itself [is] problematic’ and Steiner’s argument that the Holocaust ‘lies outside speech as it lies outside reason’. Of most interest to this project is Schlant’s comment that the ‘complex ambiguity of silence and narration is particularly evident in Elie Wiesel, who has been one of the most adamant proponents of silence despite the fact that his oeuvre seems to contradict his position.’

A wide range of scholars have written about both why and how Wiesel incorporates silence into his writing. The ‘why’ aspect of this is part of the same problematic which leads him to draw attention to the limitations of any storytelling – and particularly storytelling relating to the Holocaust: words cannot convey the Holocaust, but perhaps silence can. Terrence des Pres describes this as a ‘problem of meaning and communication’, relating the use of silence to the recurrence of questions in Wiesel’s writing: ‘There are no answers, no meanings to be discerned, only the intolerable weights of the event itself, to be faced in the quiet of an endless sorrow’. Similarly, Mona Berman argues that at ‘the core of [Wiesel’s] writing is the tension between the need to keep silent

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46 Ibid., p. 57.
and the compulsion to speak out': 47 there is a compulsion to express his Holocaust experience, but an inability to do so, a desire to ask questions, but no answers to these questions. In her volume *Legacy of Night: The Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel*, Fine provides a more detailed analysis of this paradox:

> [Wiesel] has felt frustrated in his attempts to communicate and has gravitated towards silence as an alternative form of testimony. Throughout his texts there is an unresolved conflict between the urge to cry out and the need to remain silent, resulting in a complex thematic interplay. Silence is both destructive and beneficial: it is death, absence, betrayal, and exile, as well as purification and affirmation of being. Words, too, are double-edged: they can misrepresent what they aim to describe, but have the power to create, reconstruct, and render immortal. The dialectic of silence and language – of transmitting silence through language – is at the core of the theme of the witness. (*Legacy*, p. 9)

The fundamental limits of Holocaust expression are visible in the way in which Wiesel uses words in *La Nuit*. As Fine suggests above, the presence of silence in this text is bound up with the potential for words to misrepresent experiences. Instead of piling words upon words upon words in an attempt to find the right combination to express what he has experienced, Wiesel leaves certain things unsaid. Fine has argued in her chapter ‘Witness of the Night’ that the narrator of *La Nuit* ‘does not interpret or explain the facts but allows them to speak for themselves’ (*Witness*, pp. 47-48), and that textually, ‘the unutterable resonates through the selection of certain words and the exclusion of others’ (*Legacy*, pp. 120-21).

There is a range of ways in which silence manifests itself textually in *La Nuit*. Berman’s work enumerates a number of strategies which create the impression of silence in the text. She cites the frequency with which the word ‘silence’ itself appears, the use of fragmented phrases and disjointed images, ‘[s]cenes crowded with objects but devoid of life and people’, and the general presence of death in the account. 48 Jack Kolbert’s study of Wiesel cites the further example of God’s silence in the testimony; despite the narrator’s pleas,

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48 Ibid., p. 39.
God does not make himself or his intentions known. Des Pres observes in Wiesel's writing 'the palpable presence of the dead, the purest voice of those millions murdered, who are most insistently present in their absence', suggesting that this is in part created by the recurrent motif of 'dialogues with the dead' throughout Wiesel's œuvre.

An example of this from *La Nuit* is the narrator directly addressing his dead father to ask what led to his death, if not the imposition of anti-Semitic laws in their town (p. 23). In addition to these strategies, the use of ellipsis and sparse descriptions goes a long way to creating the impression of silence within the text. Ames comments upon this feature at some length:

> The lacuna that silence offers when Wiesel barely touches on an image or the ellipsis that he frequently employs textualizes the tension as he navigates between the words that must be used and the enormity of the Event that demands silence. His characteristic use of the ellipsis hints at all that may not be said; his fondness for the phrase “and yet” implies that life’s circumstances constantly and unpredictably change, just as our interpretations of those changes may also shift and refocus (p. 99)

As briefly noted in the earlier discussion of uncertainty in the text, the use of ellipsis is widespread in *La Nuit*, with examples on most every page, both in direct speech and in descriptive passages. Despite the understatement of many events in the testimony, the account still conveys strong emotion. As Ames notes '[s]taggering images are painted with only a few words; the barest brush of his use of words conveys overwhelming loss and tension' (pp. 98-99).

Examples of this emotional power are rife. The passages dealing with the loss of the narrator’s mother and sisters are particularly emotive, as are those passages recounting the destruction of other family units:

> - Hommes à gauche ! Femmes à droite !

> Quatre mots dits tranquillement, indifféremment, sans émotion. Quatre mots simples, brefs. C’est l’instant pourtant où je quittai ma mère. Je n’avais pas eu

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le temps de penser, que déjà je sentais la pression de la main de mon père : nous restions seuls. En une fraction de seconde, je pus voir ma mère, mes sœurs, partir vers la droite. Je les vis s’éloigner ; ma mère caressait les cheveux blonds de ma sœur, comme pour la protéger et moi, je continuais à marcher avec mon père, avec les hommes. Et je ne savais point qu’en ce lieu, en cet instant, je quittais ma mère et Tzipora pour toujours. Je continuai de marcher. Mon père me tenait par la main. (pp. 50-51)

This example of the use of silence to convey strong emotion is particularly striking. Despite the fact that no ellipsis is used to signify a pause in the narrative, a moment of silence to be used by the reader for reflection, the syntax of the passage suggests a narrative mode approaching silence. The short, single-clause phrases are stripped back. They are striking in their simplicity. They give the impression of someone recounting the barest facts of an event because to say any more is impossible. This is underscored by the narrator’s own observation that just four simple, brief words would have such a profound effect on the rest of his life. At no point does the narrator describe his feelings. There is no elaboration on the sadness he might have felt, the fear, or the desolation.

This is a typical example of how the narrative stops short of deciphering events in the place of the reader; strong, recurrent images (fire, for example is particularly prominent\(^51\)) evoke an emotional response in the reader, which is supplemented by the addition of his or her own factual understanding of the events being described. Rather than being asked to read a string of words which try to describe the narrator’s feelings, the reader is provided with an image which provokes a strong feeling (the image of fire, for example evokes fear, notions of destruction, cremation, hell, more strongly than a verbose description does). These images are not accompanied by a narrative - by the voices of the dead, for instance – but are left to stand alone and provoke a human response in the reader. The impression of silence is written into the testimonial pact associated with *La Nuit*: the narrator and author encourage the reader to respond emotionally to the text, rather than looking to it for an account of each and every feeling that the events generated. This the readers cannot know, but they may be able to emotionally respond to the text.

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\(^{51}\) Wiesel, *La Nuit*, pp. 44-50, 53-8, for example.
4.7.7 History

The feature of silence is reliant on certain assumptions about what the reader is bringing to the text. The narrator can leave certain things unsaid, in the assumption that the reader of the text will have sufficient understanding of the historical facts to be able to extrapolate the missing words. Davis suggests that this is one of the most prominent features of *La Nuit*: ‘Much of *La Nuit* is written in a terse, telegraphic style. Eliezer avoids commentary or explanation when the reader’s knowledge of history can be expected to fill in gaps’ (p. 98). This provides an interesting counter-foil to Eaglestone’s discussion of the use of historical data in testimony. Eaglestone suggests that ‘most testimony narratives follow an autobiographical chronology, [while] several have moments where the flow of the narrative stops and the text, in its style or content, becomes ‘historical’, offering descriptive history or reportage’ (p. 44). *La Nuit* features a number of instances of small interruptions where historical narrative is included. Eaglestone would argue that this kind of interruption prevents the reader from identifying with the narrator because it resituates the narrative in a factual, historical context rather than a more readily relatable fictional context.

While a number of testifiers employ historical data to root their account in factual information, the narrator of *La Nuit* only uses this device occasionally. Rather, the reader is asked to call on his or her own historical knowledge to supplement the account. This is related to the feature of silence, but also suggests a certain expectation of how the reader will approach the text. Rather than framing the text as a factual account, which the reader needs to read attentively in order to acquire certain facts about the history of the Holocaust, the limited use of historical data implies that it is the personal journey of dehumanisation which is of central importance in this account.

The main examples of historical information provided in the account are found in the opening section of the testimony, giving the reader an introduction to the period of the account. Although the residents of the narrator’s hometown of Sighet seem largely unaware of the gravity of the situation their community is facing, the reader is told of occasional updates from the wider world. These take the form of news heard on the radio:
La radio de Londres, que nous écoutions tous les soirs, annonçait des nouvelles réjouissantes : bombardement quotidien de l’Allemagne, Stalingrad, préparation du deuxième front [...] (p. 18)

La radio de Budapest annonça la prise du pouvoir par le parti fasciste. Horthy Miklos fut forcé de demander à un chef du parti Nyilas de former le nouveau gouvernement (p. 20)

This format for the interspersing of the main narrative with historical data is noteworthy. Rather than reminding the reader that he or she is reading a factual account by recalling its factual context, the details of historical facts are incorporated into the telling of the account. The effect of this is for the reader to be made aware of the historical context at (apparently) the same time as the narrator is made aware of it. Similarly, the narrator relays anecdotal historical information learnt during his time in the camps without concretising it with historical data. In this way, the reader learns the historical context in a way which is similar to that in which the inmates did: second-hand, unsubstantiated news, framed in suspicion. At no point does the account mirror any historical genre, nor does it include any historical documents as appendices. The use of historical data does not discourage the reader’s empathy with the narrative, nor does it make the historical facts a priority in the pact.

4.7.8 Retrospective viewpoint

The idea of what the reader can be expected to know is an essential part of the testimonial pact. So too is the idea of what the narrator/author can be expected to have learned since being liberated from the camps. As noted earlier, the narrator of La Nuit is seemingly the adolescent Eliezer. However, the testimony was written ten years after Eliezer’s liberation, and the narrator can be expected to have learned certain things about the camps that he did not know at the time of the events being experienced. In expressing this more newly acquired knowledge there is a slippage between the established voice of the narrator (who is perpetually 15 and named Eliezer) and the implied voice of the author, Elie Wiesel, the internationally renowned Holocaust memorialist. The expression of any retrospective remarks highlights for the reader the distance between these two figures, and the way in which this is handled is a key part of the testimonial pact. Davis discusses the retrospective viewpoint employed in
La Nuit, noting that ‘the narrator can explain what he did not know at the time of the events being described due to knowledge acquired in the period between experiencing and describing’ (p. 99). Furthermore, the presence of retrospective comments can be seen as another type of interruption (using Eaglestone’s definition of the term). As Eaglestone suggests, these comments remind the reader that he or she is reading a narrated account and therefore prevent easy assimilation of the account.

Certain retrospective comments in La Nuit simply provide more information about an event or circumstance being described: For example, Wiesel (rather than Eliezer, perhaps) provides the reader with supplementary information regarding the role of children in the concentration camps: ‘(En réalité, cette affection n’était pas désintéressée : les enfants faisaient ici l’objet, entre homosexuels, d’une véritable traite, je l’ai appris plus tard.)’ (p. 78). In a second example, Wiesel tells the reader that inmates who were hospitalised at the time of the camp’s evacuation went on to be liberated by Allied troops, rather than murdered by the camp authorities when the camp was liquidated: ‘J’appris après la guerre le sort de ceux qui étaient restés à l’hôpital. Ils furent libérés par les Russes, tout simplement, deux jours après l’évacuation’ (p. 128).

In addition to these insertions of supplemental historical information, the account also refers to specific dates which situate the account in a broader historical context. Other retrospective comments describe events which occurred after the war, or information learned after the war. Examples include Wiesel learning that had his family responded to a knock at the door two nights prior to their deportation, his family could have been saved:

C’est seulement après la guerre que j’appris qui avait frappé [à notre fenêtre la nuit deux nuits avant la déportation]. C’était un inspecteur de la police hongroise, un ami de mon père. Il nous avait dit avant notre entrée au ghetto : « soyez tranquilles. Si quelque danger vous menace, je vous avertirai. » S’il avait pu, ce soir-là, nous parler, nous aurions pu encore fuir… Mais lorsque nous réussîmes à ouvrir la fenêtre, il était trop tard. Il n’y avait plus personne dehors. (p. 28)

Similarly, Wiesel comments that he was unaware of the fate that his family would suffer when he arrived at the camps: ‘Je ne savais point qu’en ce lieu, en cet instant, je quittais ma mère et Tzipora pour toujours’ (p. 52). He states that he had made a wise choice when avoiding being selected for a particular kommando, as this turned out to be the Sonderkommando: ‘(Plus tard nous devions apprendre que nous avions eu raison. Ceux qui avaient été choisis ce jour-là furent incorporés dans la Sonder-Kommando, le Kommando qui travaillait aux crématoires)’ (pp. 59-60).

We also have comments from Wiesel regarding his later life in Paris, and the chance occurrence of re-encountering an inmate at this time: ‘Bien des années plus tard, à Paris, je lisais mon journal dans le métro. En face de moi était assise une dame très belle, aux cheveux noirs, aux yeux rêveurs. J’avais déjà vu ces yeux quelque part. C’était elle’ (p. 86). A last example is also drawn from Wiesel’s later life, and parallels which he draws between this and his camp experiences. Specifically, his perception of bystanders’ reactions to hardship is described:

Des années plus tard, j’assistai à un spectacle du même genre à Aden. Les passagers de notre navire s’amusaient à jeter des pièces de monnaie aux « natifs », qui plongeaient pour les ramener. Une Parisienne d’allure aristocratique s’amusait beaucoup à ce jeu. J’aperçus soudain deux enfants qui se battaient à mort, l’un essayant d’étrangler l’autre, et j’implorai la dame :

Je vous en prie, ne jetez plus de monnaie !

Pourquoi pas ? dit-elle. J’aime faire la charité… (p. 153)

All of these comments provide additional information for the reader. Sometimes this information makes the account more poignant by telling the reader that if the characters had acted differently they would not have perished (particularly the case in the first and second examples). Other examples reframe the account in more contemporary circumstances: the example of the lady throwing coins in Aden, for example, highlights that certain aspects of the Holocaust experience are still perpetuated in more modern contexts. All of these comments have the effect of both underlining that the narrator went on to live a life other than that lived in the camps, and also creating a certain type of distance between the teenaged narrator and the adult author.
On certain occasions, it seems that the addressee of the account changes during these retrospective interruptions and that the narrator addresses the reader more personally than during the rest of the account. An exception to this observation is a moment when the narrator uses parentheses to directly address his dead father: ‘(Pauvre père ! De quoi es-tu donc mort ?)’ (p. 23). This example certainly prevents identification with the narrator, as he stops addressing his account to the reader and reiterates that this experience was uniquely personal. It also disrupts the chronology and forewarns the reader that the father dies during his time at the camp. This serves to undermine one of the central “plot” features of the narrative and remove the element of mystery in the narrative which so enthrals readers. By telling the reader the end of the narrative before he or she reaches the end of the account, the narrator hinders the typical reading process, preventing the kind of falsely teleological telling which Langer describes.

4.7.9 Epiphanies

The use of retrospective comments serves to highlight the emotional power of certain passages of the testimony. Other passages are particularly emotionally powerful simply because of what is being described. Eaglestone refers to these moments as ‘epiphanies’. His use of this term is derived from postmodernist writing and criticism to denote ‘a moment of ‘showing’ or ‘revealing’ some truth’, moments which, in the context of Holocaust testimonies, are ‘simply so awful that identifying with the narrators who describe them is impossible’. These sequences ‘focus the horror in a specific, revealing moment’ and have an ‘emblematic power’ (pp. 54-56). Eaglestone provides an example of this feature from La Nuit, citing a passage where the narrator describes seeing babies being burned in a pit (La Nuit, p. 55). There are a number of other instances of such epiphanies in the text, however. For example, upon his return to the town of Sighet, Moché-le-Bedeau describes seeing babies being used as target practice for soldiers (p. 16). The residents of Sighet do not believe his account, but the reader of the testimony does. This has the function of a double-epiphany; the reader is shocked both by the singular horror of the described event, and by the knowledge that the inhabitants do not comprehend the extent of the atrocities being committed and therefore do not heed his warnings.
According to Eaglestone, these epiphanies are often ‘confronted with moments of normality’ (p. 55). Specific examples of this from La Nuit involve the hanging of detainees. After describing how one inmate is hanged, the narrator comments, ‘Je me souviens que j’ai trouvé ce soir-là la soupe excellente…’ (p. 100). This provides a stark contrast to the minutely described hanging and the eerie depiction of the assembled detainees being made to raise their caps as a sign of respect for the execution process. This juxtaposition serves to underscore the atrociousness of the hanging by a) framing it with comparatively normal events, and b) showing the extent to which the narrator had become desensitised to this type of atrocity during his time in the camp. Similarly, Davis refers to the ‘preparation of effects’ in the text, defining this as ‘striking or unexpected details that seem out of place at first, but that reinforce the impact of what comes later’ (p. 99).

There is a second hanging scene described in the testimony which highlights this feature. This time a well-liked child is hanged (a scene which Mauriac discusses in his preface) and the experience is different to the first described hanging for all of those involved. The hanging is once again described in detail, as is the angelic aspect of the child in question. The event provokes a crisis of faith in some of those watching: ‘Où il est [Dieu]? Le voici – il est pendu ici, à cette potence…’ (p. 103). This account is positioned only shortly after the first description of a hanging and the contrast between the two is striking. While the first account triggers no crisis of faith, and the narrator is able to return to his soup in an eerily unaffected way, the second hanging has a much greater effect on him. Seeing the child hanged in a most hideous manner deeply affects the narrator and leads him to his own epiphany: the hanging of the child is symbolic of the destruction of faith engendered by the camps.53 This

53 This passage has furthermore been seen as one of the more theologically contentious parts of the testimony. Seidman discusses, for example, Mauriac’s take on it, stating that: ‘It would also be wrong to ignore the contribution of Wiesel's own narrative to Mauriac's Christological framing. Wiesel enables, if not invites, such a reading, in at least one passage in Night-the one Mauriac quotes most fully. Three Jews are being hanged, the middle victim a child who dies agonizingly slowly: “Behind me, I heard the same man asking: Where is God now?” And I heard a voice within me answer him: “Where is He? Here He is. He is hanging here in this gallows”’ (p. 62).
scene is contrasted with a second observation about the quality of the soup that evening: ‘Ce soir-là, la soupe avait un goû de cadavre’ (p. 103). This observation, while seemingly everyday in nature, demonstrates the extent to which the narrator is marked by his epiphany.

Eaglestone also observes that these epiphanies often signify 'the end of community at the deepest level' (p. 55). A number of instances of this in La Nuit focus on the destruction of the father-son relationship. For the narrator, the father-son relationship is primal, and the collapse of his own relationship with his father is a central theme of this work. Arguably, the father-son relationship is a foundation for community. A number of examples of this in La Nuit feature the narrator being surprised and revolted by his own lack of reaction when his father is the victim of violence. After seeing his father being beaten shortly after his arrival in the camp the narrator asks, ‘Que m’étais-il donc arrivé?’ (p. 66), while later, after his father is beaten with an iron bar, he says:

J'avais assisté à toute cette scène sans bouger. Je me taisais. Je pensais plutôt à m’éloigner pour ne pas recevoir de coups. Bien plus : si j’étais en colère à ce moment, ce n’était pas contre le kapo, mais contre mon père. Je lui en voulais de ne pas avoir su éviter la crise d’Idek. Voilà ce que la vie concentrationnaire avait fait de moi… (p. 88)

When the narrator witnesses other sons betraying their fathers he expresses his hope that he will not come to betray his father in the same way: ‘Mon Dieu, Maître de l’Univers, donne-moi la force de ne jamais faire ce que le fils de Rabi Eliahou a fait’ (p. 142).

Towards the end of the testimony, however, the narrator recounts such experiences with much less emotion. When, in the cattle car on the way to their final camp (Buchenwald), a son attacks his father for a piece of bread, the narrator describes the event dispassionately:

Assommé, ivre de coups, le vieillard criait :

Without denying the Christian echoes in this passage, I would argue that the narrator’s words here must be read ironically, as a rebuttal to the concept of the religious (Jewish as well as Christian) significance of suffering. To read the strangling child as Christ is to turn the dying child into God, rather than signal that God has died alongside him'. (Naomi Seidman, 'Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage', footnote 29).
Méir, mon petit Méir ! Tu ne me reconnais pas ? Je suis ton père... Tu me fais mal... Tu assassines ton père... J'ai du pain... pour toi aussi... pour toi aussi...

[...]

Son fils le fouilla, prit le morceau et commença à le dévorer. Il ne put aller bien loin. Deux hommes l’avaient vu et se précipitèrent sur lui. D’autres se joignirent à eux. Lorsqu’ils se retirèrent, il y avait près de moi deux morts côte à côte, le père et le fils. J’avais quinze ans. (pp. 154-56)

It seems, then, that towards the end of the testimony, these moments of epiphany lose their impact – for the narrator at least. He recounts an instance of brutal patricide without giving any hint of how he was emotionally affected by it. This realisation has all the more impact for the reader because the narrator highlights his age at the time of his desensitisation. This type of epiphany has lost its initial power over the narrator (and perhaps the reader) because this type of occurrence has become so commonplace. From this point on the narrator recounts with more and more frequency his occasional desire to be rid of his father. After every such admission the narrator observes how guilty he feels, but the very fact of his admitting those feelings is indicative of the ‘end of community’ described by Eaglestone. Indeed, by the end of the testimony, when the narrator’s father is beaten by an officer while on his deathbed, the narrator simply states: ‘Je ne bougeai pas’ (p. 169). There are no feelings of guilt to accompany this statement. By these final pages of the testimony, epiphanies regarding the camp or about the destruction of community and society are few and far between. The narrator (and perhaps the reader in turn) is aware that there is no more community of which to speak.

54 Eaglestone uses this phrase to describe one of the main effects of the concentrationary experience, that of the destruction of all rational points of reference, and thus of community itself. Citing this as an example of a moment of epiphany, or realisation of the true extent of the annihilation of man, Eaglestone discussed Levi’s belief that there was no ‘why’ in the camps, no rationale behind the cruelty. ’[F]or Levi, the “there is no why here” is the inversion of reason, the end of the possibility of understanding, the inverse of science, the making central of what is forbidden. Meaning “you are not allowed to ask why here: you are below human conversation”, it shows the division between the murderers and the victims and so the end of community at the deepest level’. Robert Eaglestone, The Holocaust and the Postmodern, pp. 54-55.
The last type of epiphany we encounter in *La Nuit* is the epiphany of a spiritual nature. The theological impact of the Holocaust has been discussed at length. Eliezer Berkovits, for instance, notes that the Holocaust is ‘frequently met [with an] attitude of questioning and doubt, a position that may ultimately lead to outright rebellion against the very idea of a beneficent providence’. This is arguably thematically linked to the breakdown of community discussed above: for the narrator, religion and faith are fundamental aspects of community. On a number of occasions, however, he questions the role or presence of a divine figure. This generally happens when the narrator has witnessed an atrocity, which in turn makes him doubt the possibility of God. One such example of this has already been discussed above, with reference to the angelic child being hanged. Other examples include the description of his arrival and the initial selection at the camps. Here, the narrator says:

Pour la première fois, je sentis la révolte grandir en moi. Pourquoi devais-je sanctifier Son Nom ? L’Eternel, Maître de l’univers, L’Eternel Tout-Puissant et Terrible se taisait, de quoi allais-je Le remercier ? (p. 57)

Similarly, around the time of Rosh Hashanah the narrator revolts against his god, stating: ‘J’étais l’accusateur. Et l’accusé : Dieu. Mes yeux s’étaient ouverts et j’étais seul, terriblement seul dans le monde, sans Dieu, sans hommes’ (p. 107). This type of epiphany on the part of the narrator demonstrates the horror and the power of the camps, an effect which is reinforced by the first chapter’s description of the narrator’s pious studies.

The overall effect of these standout moments in the account, of these epiphanies, as Eaglestone refers to them, is complex. On the one hand they underline that the Holocaust is comprised of unique events, which are beyond the comprehension of the reader. The nature of the events described makes the reader stand back from the narrative and take stock of the distance between his or her life and the experiences of the narrator. On the other hand, they have a cumulative effect, providing a backbone of sorts to the narrative. Each epiphany signifies the destruction of humanity, the destruction of our understanding of

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how people, community and faith function. This destabilises the reader, removing his or her signposts and undermining even the most basic assumptions about how people and narratives function. This is a key element of the testimonial pact associated with this text: the author and the narrator both make it clear to the reader that the narrative is relating a set of experiences which the reader cannot and will not understand, no matter how attentively he or she reads the account, because there is no coherence or sense to the events being described.

4.7.10 Lack of closure

The notion of coherence and certainty is particularly significant in this case study. Part of the testimonial pact associated with this piece of testimony is the frank discussion of narratives which do not work, words which do not work, communications which do not work. The reader is made aware that the story he or she is reading cannot accurately represent the experiences the survivor has had. Despite the apparent coherence of the telling, and the subtle use of literary techniques used to construct the narrative, the reader is told that what he or she is reading is no more than a narrative, and narratives may fail. This is not to say that they cannot be re-told, in the hope of telling them differently, or even more effectively. The idea of re-telling the account of a Holocaust experience is identified by Eaglestone as a recurrent feature in testimonial writing. He refers to it as ‘lack of closure’, stating that ‘once [the testifiers] have told their tales, they tell them again: another characteristic of testimony writing is the lack of closure’ and that ‘survivors return again and again to write about the Holocaust’ (pp. 64-65). He refers both to a lack of closure within a particular text, and also to the survivor returning to the same experiences time and again throughout his or her œuvre.

In explaining this concept, Eaglestone relates it to postmodern theory, stating that it can partly be seen as a refusal to provide a final, definitive conclusion. He notes that ‘In postmodern writing [lack of closure] is usually understood as a disavowal of, in Henry James’s words, “a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks”, in favour of an incomplete, unfinished ending’ (p. 64). Eaglestone then goes into more detail, suggesting that for the survivors, the Holocaust
experience does not come to an end. The survivor does not get back to normal life. Rather he or she is entrapped interminably in the Holocaust experience, an entrapment which is conveyed in the work of those who choose to write about their experiences.

Eaglestone particularly cites Wiesel’s body of work to support his argument. In *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, Wiesel discusses the recurrence of his Holocaust experiences in his writing, and argues that they pervade all his thinking. This is part of what Eaglestone sees as a ‘compulsion’ to write (p. 67): to write is to process and to seek meaning in the events. Furthermore, he suggests that different renditions of the testimony are tailored to the changing nature of Holocaust reception. While Holocaust accounts initially garnered little interest, more recent decades have opened minds to a wider range of Holocaust accounts – both in content and form. As Eaglestone’s discussion suggests, this idea of a ‘lack of closure’ can be directly applied to Wiesel’s work. Not only does his whole body of work draw (in different ways) on his concentrationary experience, his only piece of testimony has been rewritten in a number of different ways. The following chapter will suggest that each elective rewriting of *La Nuit* is indicative of this phenomenon. Each version represents a different phase of Holocaust reception, and, in certain instances, a different phase in the survivor’s re-externalisation process.

4.8 Conclusions

*La Nuit* is a strikingly popular book, which is deemed both accessible and moving. Since its publication, and throughout its complex evolutions, it has succeeded in its mission of transmitting an account of what the writer experienced while in various concentration camps. The story of its publication is intrinsically linked to wider social and historical questions of Holocaust memorialisation (particularly in France, in this instance). It comprises a range of noteworthy features, each of which forms part of its testimonial pact. Despite its apparent simplicity (its sentences are short, it is unembellished, and so on), there are a number of powerful stylistic effects apparent in the work. Its narrator is a fractured figure, which complicates the reader’s compulsion to identify with him. The narrative recurrently signals that there is distance between the narrator and the writer, potentially unsettling the readers’ impression that the
writer, narrator and protagonist are one and the same. A clear case of this is the presence of direct comment in the text, wherein the author figure (Wiesel) seemingly becomes a stronger textual presence than Eliezer in order to make a particular comment to the reader. In addition to this complex narrator, the text includes a number of features which demonstrate to the reader that the account is uncertain, that it is fallible, and that it may not meet his or her expectations of fullness, accuracy and veracity. Specific manifestations of this include the presence of rhetorical questions, ellipsis, and the recurrent discussion and presence of failed narratives within the account. This becomes an integral aspect of the testimonial pact. This feature is related to the impression of silence which pervades the text.

Through a number of means, the reader is given the space to draw his or her own conclusions from the events being described, rather than being allowed to rely on the narrator to supply simple conclusions from the text. This relies on the reader’s understanding of the historical context of the account, which is only occasionally supplemented by the narrator. The description of particularly horrifying events also compounds the impression that the reader will not be able to fully grasp the depth or horror of what is being described by the narrator. Throughout the text, a testimonial pact is constructed, in which the reader is asked to hold him- or herself at arm’s length from what is being described, because this is not a text to be consumed like other texts, because it does not describe an event like other events.
5.1 Introduction

By examining when and by whom the translations of Wiesel’s testimony were undertaken and published, it is possible to draw certain conclusions regarding the literary and social norms affecting Holocaust testimony in different locales. Exploring the body of the translated text, it is possible to discern terminological variations through time, variations which are indicative of different phases of Holocaust memorialisation. Furthermore, the evolution of this thesis’ argument has paved the way for conclusions to be drawn regarding the visibility of the translator and the effect that this figure might have on the reading of the testimony. The constant retranslation of the text can be seen as a figure for the survivor’s lack of closure, and as a unique re-externalisation of the trauma he underwent.

Despite the fact that Wiesel does not write each translation, it is proposed here that the translation process itself may nonetheless be a cathartic form of externalisation for him, particularly given his close relationship with the re-translator. At the heart of these analyses is the notion of the testimonial pact: each version of the testimony presents a different testimonial pact, asks to be read differently, tells the story differently. Each pact is uniquely adapted to its target audience and tells us something about that audience, and about the relationship between that audience and the writer of the testimony. The analysis of these translations is divided into three chapters, the first of which mainly considers the visibility of the translator in the two English translations of La Nuit, the second of which examines the respective narrative voices presented in the different versions, and the third of which looks specifically at the notion of certainty in the various versions of Wiesel’s testimony.

5.2 Seidman and the Unfaithful Renderings of La Nuit

Surprisingly little has been written about the translation of La Nuit. In 1996 Naomi Seidman published an article entitled ‘Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage’ (discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis) in which she discussed

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1 Naomi Seidman, ‘Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage’. (Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text).
the considerable differences between the various versions of Wiesel’s testimony. She largely argues that the Yiddish version expresses a specifically Jewish rage toward the rest of the world, while the French version is less confrontational, having been adapted to suit the expectations of the target audience. An updated version of Seidman’s article appeared as a chapter in her 2006 book *Faithful Renderings*. This version of the article is called ‘The Holocaust in Every Tongue’ and features a more developed discussion of translation theory than its predecessor. In this newer version Seidman outlines the importance of translation in Holocaust discourses, observing that the process of translation in the transmission of Holocaust writing is ‘often invisible’ despite the fact that many of these texts were written in what she calls ‘minor languages’ such as ‘Yiddish or Hebrew, Czech, Polish, and Hungarian’ and that their transmission therefore ‘depended almost entirely on translation’ (*Faithful*, p. 201). She argues that the importance of translation in this field was apparent from the very outset of the war, when one’s language skills could mean the difference between life and death (*Faithful*, p. 201). Having established the importance of translation in these discourses, Seidman then draws on Walter Benjamin’s (1923) notion of translation as ‘afterlife’, extrapolating that in the case of translated testimony translation constitutes ‘the only, or nearly the only, opportunity for survival for a text, by which a text is reconstituted elsewhere – in a less endangered language – at the very moment the original is obliterated’ (*Faithful*, p. 202). Seidman also draws on André Lefevere’s work, referring to the translation of Holocaust writing as the ‘rewriting of this historical event for

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2 Seidman, *Faithful renderings : Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation, Afterlives of the Bible*, p. 200. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).

3 Benjamin argues that ‘a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life’ Walter Benjamin, ‘The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire’s Tableaux parisiens’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 75-83, (p. 76).

Having outlined why translation is paramount in Holocaust discourses, she then goes on to suggest a number of reasons why it is so seldom discussed: firstly, critics often cannot read the source texts of Holocaust writing and as such cannot comment on their translations; and secondly, there is a common conception that the witness is but a neutral lens through which the testimony is delivered and that the language in which it is delivered is therefore of no importance (Faithful, pp. 204-05). She suggests that translation is seen as ‘an unwelcome, even scandalous, guest in Holocaust studies, the garish mistress at a dignitary’s solemn funeral’ by those who are uncomfortable with any ‘critical examination’ of Holocaust writing (Faithful, p. 207). She furthermore argues that parallels can be drawn between bible translation and the translation of Holocaust testimony, commenting that the Holocaust has taken ‘on theological significance, and the witness becomes both priest and prophet of this new religion’ (‘Scandal’, p. 2), suggesting that this parallel is one of the reasons why we, as readers, are generally uncomfortable with discussion of translation.

Building on her more general discussion of the position of translation within Holocaust discourses, Seidman goes on to speak more specifically about the translation of La Nuit. She focuses her study on the transition from the Yiddish text to the French text. She argues that this is an instance of covert translation – a target text whose source text’s existence is not recognised – because although there is a patent link between the French and English versions, the original Yiddish version is not referenced as a source text (Faithful, p. 206). It might, however, be argued that the source-target relationship between these two versions is not made apparent because this is not the nature of the textual relationship between the two texts. Given the breadth of the changes between the Yiddish and the French versions, it would seem that the writer did not set out to rewrite his testimony in another language. Rather, it would appear that the French account is a standalone text which handles the same subject matter as the Yiddish version. A more decisive judgement on this matter would require a more in-depth comparison of the two versions, which is beyond the scope of this study. However, it would appear that
many of Seidman’s comments regarding the more vengeful tone of the Yiddish piece are not the result of changes through translation, but of an entirely separate composition process, an argument she herself supports in response to criticism of the earlier article (‘It [...] seems clear to me now that Wiesel’s Yiddish-French revisions should be read not in the rather stricter light of ordinary translation but as part of the more flexible and fascinating practice of self-translation’ (Faithful, p. 235)).

In contrast to this complex relationship between the Yiddish and French versions, the French-English versions are the result of a more standard translation process. Seidman observes that ‘the English translation closely follows the original French version of Night’ (‘Scandal’, p. 5). Indeed, this is the sum total of her discussion of the Rodway translation. She examines the retranslation in a little more depth, but overall devotes surprisingly little space to the French-English translations. Nonetheless Seidman’s work is – to date – the most thorough critical discussion of the translation of La Nuit. Despite the significant number of critical works which have been written about Wiesel’s testimony (and his writing in general), no analysis of the French-English translation has been undertaken. This lacuna in itself is indicative of Seidman’s argument that translation is an under-examined area of Holocaust discourses. This thesis sets out to begin to address this lacuna, by providing an analysis of the various editions of Wiesel’s testimony, exploring how each relates to each other and to the unique requirements of its context.

5.3 The when, where and whom of the translations

The first translation of La Nuit was published in 1960 by MacGibbon and Key. This translation was undertaken by Stella Rodway. A brief examination of the translator’s career and the publishing house’s collections shows that neither she, nor they, had a particular history of working with Holocaust writing. Rodway also translated works by Joseph Kessel (Mogok: the Valley of Rubies (1960)), René Goscinny and Jean-Jacques Sempé (Young Nicholas (1961)), Jean Prasteau (The Lady of the Camellias: a story of Marie Duplessis (1965)), as well as a text about Rome and the Romans (1964). Rodway published a number of translations with MacGibbon and Key, and her repertoire of publications does not seem to indicate a particular ideological investment in Holocaust testimony.
The publishing house MacGibbon and Key was particularly active in the 1960s, having been founded in the post-war years by Robert Kee and James MacGibbon – both of whom had served in the military during World War Two.\textsuperscript{5} MacGibbon has been described as being ‘behind generations of fine writers’ and ‘engaged in political idealism’, two traits which may explain his interest in \textit{La Nuit}. The fact that neither the publishing house, nor the translator had an established record of working with testimony is significant, because it implies that the text is discrete, not part of a larger network of testimony published by a particular house. The translator most likely did not have established strategies for dealing with the genre of testimony, or a particular, ready lexis of equivalent terms to render topic-specific words. Similarly, the publishing house in all likelihood did not have a particular expectation of the outcome of the translation, not having worked with many texts of this genre.

The retranslation was published by Hill and Wang, which was by 2006 a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Hill and Wang, according to Farrar, Straus and Giroux's own résumé, ‘focuses on hardcover and soft cover books of nonfiction written for the educated reader’. They have a particular focus on ‘American history, world history, and politics’ and include ‘Roland Barthes, John Allen Paulos, William Cronon, Thomas Bender, William Poundstone, and Elie Wiesel’ in their list of notable affiliated authors.\textsuperscript{6} A number of earlier American editions of \textit{Night} had also been carried by this house, but not all.\textsuperscript{7} In addition to publishing \textit{Night}, Hill and Wang also published \textit{Dawn} and \textit{The Accident}, and a trilogy of these three works.


The retranslation of *La Nuit* was carried out by Wiesel’s wife, Marion Wiesel. In the years between the first translation and the retranslation, Marion Wiesel carried out a number of translations of Wiesel’s writing.\(^8\) These texts cover a range of genres, from theatre, to essay, to novel, to religious treatise. For this reason alone, it can be argued that Marion Wiesel would have developed specific strategies to translate Wiesel’s writing: his particular style and strategies would have become familiar, and the translator would therefore have been able to develop specific tactics to handle his texts. It goes without saying that Marion Wiesel also has unparalleled access to the writer of the source texts. This changes the nature of the translation process entirely, drawing in an element of collaboration. The effect of this collaborative aspect is evoked in greater detail in later discussion of the testimonial pact associated with this translation.

In addition to having translated a number of texts by Wiesel and having a personal relationship with him, Marion Wiesel is herself a Holocaust survivor. In 1940 Marion Wiesel (née Erster) and her family fled Vienna in the wake of the Anschluss. They were subsequently interned at the processing camp in Gurs, France, for 8 months, before being moved to a further camp at Récébéoudou.\(^9\) To date, Marion Wiesel has not written an account of her experiences. Given her particularly young age (8 years old) at the time, and the different nature of the camp in which she was interned, it is sure that her experiences differ notably from those of Wiesel. However, she is nonetheless able to relate to the experiences described in Wiesel’s testimony to a certain extent. Although his


Holocaust experience is most certainly unique to him, Marion has lived a similar experience and therefore has more associative understanding of the account to bring to her translation of the text. As such, a number of the challenges involved in translating testimony that were evoked in Chapter 3 are diminished in the case of this particular translator: she already has a wider range of associative meanings to draw on when reading Wiesel’s text than most other translators, and if his meaning is not clear to her, she can speak to the source text author. Chapter 1 noted that the reading of testimonial texts generally involves a certain degree of interpretation and imagination: in this instance, the interpretative process can be guided by a dialogue with the author of the text. It might also be argued that if the retranslation involved collaboration with the source text author, this would make the text a more effective re-externalisation for Wiesel, for whom the process would have included a certain analysis of the events being described. This compounds the argument that this retranslation can be seen as an example of the lack of closure associated with this piece of testimonial writing.

5.4 Sales and prominence of the text

When examining the evolution of this text, it is useful to consider how well it sold and how well it was received, as this gives some insight into the changing position of this text in the target literary system. The notion of texts existing within a wider system of other texts is significant to this thesis. Even-Zohar’s influential 1978 work on (poly)systems conceptualises a framework for literature, drawn from that of language. If language can be considered a system, incorporating a range of registers, dialects and signs, then literature too can be viewed as a system, comprised of constantly revolving spheres of texts. Texts can be central or peripheral, primary or secondary, according to ‘the specific constellation of the polysystem under study’. Factors affecting this constellation include whether there is a literary lacuna (or a particular literary style or topic which is absent from this system), the dominance of the imparting culture, and the receiving culture’s desire for innovative texts. For this study, it is

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important to ascertain how popular the text was in each locale, because increased popularity would in turn lead to increased scrutiny. Furthermore, if a particular manner of translation resulted in a particularly popular text, it can be inferred that this translation strategy was deemed acceptable by the target audience.

Reviews note that Night initially sold poorly, in part due to a lack of interest in the subject matter. Indeed, Wiesel’s literary agent struggled to find a publisher for the translation. In an interview from The New York Times, the difficulty of publishing the text in America is discussed. It is stated, for example, that the text ‘was rejected in the late 1950s by major American publishers before it finally found a home, for a $100 advance, at a courageous then-independent house called Hill & Wang. The first print run of Night was 3,000 copies and took three years to sell’. Another interview notes that ‘[i]n its first year and half in print, a mere 1,046 copies were sold’. However, the sales of the text picked up. Wiesel stated in a 2006 interview that he was surprised by this success: ‘In truth, it came as a great surprise. [...] I didn’t know [...] that my Pocket Penguin sold six million copies. I found out from [published reports] ... I had no idea’. Part of the first translation’s success has been put down to it having appeared on school curricula, particularly in America. Also, as has been discussed in earlier chapters, Wiesel’s own social prominence increased from the 1960s onwards: the greater his prominence, the more people are likely to buy his work. A further marker of the text’s success is the number of re-editions of the translation. The Rodway translation appeared in the later trilogy editions and in all of the study guides and anniversary editions.

To summarise, the sales of the book were not initially staggering, but increased through time to the point that Rodway’s Night was a very successful

14 Jeff Diamante, 'Elie Wiesel on his Beliefs', The Toronto Star, 29 July 2006, p. 10.
book in its own right. Since the retranslation, the book has continued to sell very well. The aforementioned *New York Times* article noted that in the two years since its release, the retranslation sold three million copies. The book was also chosen as Oprah’s Book Club selection and as such garnered a great deal of media attention. Indeed, the book spent eighty weeks in the *New York Times* best-seller list before being removed – it had come to be considered a classic and was as such no longer eligible for inclusion in the list.\(^{15}\)

5.5 Holocaust memorialisation and *La Nuit*

The growing success of this book parallels a growing interest in the Holocaust in the anglophone world. It is broadly accepted that the Holocaust has become an increasingly prominent feature in American cultural history, particularly since the 1970s. Indeed, Mark Anderson refers to a ‘veritable flood of memoirs, academic studies, and popular representations’ relating to this subject.\(^{16}\) Evidence of this phenomenon can be seen on a number of levels. Institutional evidence includes the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council (established by Congress in 1980), and the 1993 construction (and subsequent high visitor figures\(^{17}\)) of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Secondly, the Holocaust is now a common feature in higher education courses, while specific study centres have been established to research this event. Culturally, the release and popularity of films which take the Holocaust as a central theme can be seen as evidence of broader social awareness of this genocide. Examples include *Schindler’s List*, *The Pianist*, and more recently, films such as *X Men*. In her 2006 article, Emily Budick discusses the genre of second generation witness writing and the wide range of literary forms which are now used to discuss the Holocaust, particularly in America.\(^{18}\) This evolving

\(^{15}\) Rachel Donadio, 'The Story of 'Night".

\(^{16}\) Anderson, 'The Child Victim as Witness to the Holocaust: An American Story?', p. 2


\(^{18}\) Emily Miller Budick, 'The Holocaust in the Jewish American Literary Imagination', in *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge
variety of ways of presenting the Holocaust to a diverse range of people is indicative of its primacy in American culture.

A number of factors may have contributed to the mainstream position of Holocaust memorialisation in American life. Lilian Friedberg refers to Norman Finkelstein’s argument suggesting that the political relationship between the United States and the Israeli state has played a role in the development of a ‘Holocaust industry’. The American relationship with the Holocaust has also been typified as ‘self-congratulating’: remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust casts the American way of life in a particularly positive light, recalling that “it would never have happened here”. A particularly significant line of enquiry is the idea that Holocaust memorialisation has become a ‘symbol of unity’ for American Jews. At a time when the Jewish way of life is changing in America, the Holocaust continues to draw the community together to remember this act of genocide which is so specific to their community. The notion of modern, American Judaism, and the effect that this may have had on Holocaust memorialisation is tantalising. Consider Budick’s argument:

The way that the Holocaust gets taken up in Jewish American writing is part and parcel of the project of creating a Jewish American tradition distinct from any other national Jewish (or, for that matter, ethnic American) tradition. (pp. 216-17)

She argues that a process of creating a ‘new American reality of the Jew’ is underway (p. 217). This idea not only goes some way toward explaining the increasing interest in (and sales of) testimony such as Wiesel’s, but might also have an effect on the translation of such texts. Translation can be indicative of a desire for literary innovation in the target system, for the absorption of one language’s texts to nourish a second locale’s body of writing in a particular

University Press, 2003), pp. 212-31. (Further references to this chapter are given after quotations in the text).

21 Friedberg, ‘Dare to Compare’, pp. 354 and 366.
genre or relating to a particular subject. It is plausible that the retranslation of *Night* was related to the creation of a unique American response to the events of the Holocaust and a distinct vein of American Judaism. In this case, the text would have been retranslated to feed this developing literary system, and strategies adopted in its translation would tell us something unique about this nascent system.

5.6 Retranslation

Reasons for the commission of this retranslation are unclear. As noted above, the Rodway translation was selling well, and the text was successful throughout the world. The reasons for which the text was retranslated may have been complex. Increased American interest in the Holocaust and the development of a distinct American response to this genocide may have played a role in the translation. However, the Holocaust being a subject of interest in the target locale does not translate directly into a new translation being commissioned. Generally, there is a textual reason for an established translation being usurped by a new version: the current edition will perhaps be considered outdated in terms of its syntax or lexis, or errors in translation will have become apparent through time, for example. If a retranslation is commissioned it is because there is an interest in the text and this interest has brought scrutiny upon the nature or quality of the published translation. It might otherwise be the case that an individual has undertaken a retranslation out of personal interest and has subsequently proposed it to the publishing house for consideration. Alternatively, the source text author might feel that the current translation is not an accurate representation of his or her text, and therefore request that it be retranslated.

In the case of *Night*, some justification for the retranslation is provided on the back cover of the new edition and also in a new preface written by Wiesel (discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 of this project). It is stated on the back cover that:

> This new translation by his wife and most frequent translator, Marion Wiesel, corrects important details and presents the most accurate rendering in English

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The reader is told that this new edition is both more accurate and correct than the first edition, and that the translator is more qualified for the task of translating this text than any other translator. Furthermore, the importance of this accuracy is highlighted through the juxtaposition of the idea of accuracy and Wiesel’s message for humanity. In the preface, Wiesel directly addresses the audience to justify why he waited so long to replace the original translation, stating that at the outset of his career he accepted the translation which was offered to him and also that his English was not good enough to know better. He notes that in the intervening period his wife had translated a number of his works and that she knows his ‘voice and how to transmit it better than anyone else’. He recounts that his publisher (Farrar, Straus and Giroux in this instance) approached her about a new translation and that she agreed. Lastly, Wiesel says that he is ‘convinced that the readers will appreciate her work’ and that ‘in fact, as a result of her rigorous editing, [he] was able to correct and revise a number of important details’ (p. xiii). This comment is the last sentence of the short paragraph dedicated to justifying the retranslation.

The progression of the paragraph is noteworthy. Wiesel begins by explaining why he allowed us to read and accept the “faulty” translation for so long, thereby excusing himself and ingratiating himself to the readers. He goes on to state the credentials of the new translator, urging us to trust her and her new, “better” version. Only once these statements have been made does Wiesel mention that certain ‘important details’ have been changed. The fact that this is placed at the end of the paragraph, once the readers have been put at ease with the notion of retranslation, shows an awareness that the readers may be uncomfortable and untrusting about changes being made to a referential text. The terms used to qualify the new translation compound this suggestion. The reader is not told that the text is simply being brought up to date, or made more similar to contemporary texts. Rather, the accuracy of the new text is lauded. It is unclear whether the tone of the text accurately represents the tone

Wiesel hoped to achieve, whether the facts are more accurate (although one would imagine that this would not change markedly from one edition to the other), whether the words are simply better chosen in the second translation than in the first. ‘Accurate’ is a relative term, but one which covers a number of bases when putting the reader at ease with changes being made to the testimony. There is a clear suggestion that this text is more similar to the source text than the first translation was, which is used to quell the readers’ uncertainty about a new version of *Night*.

In her 2009 article ‘(Re)translation Revisited’, Isabelle Desmidt discusses the norms associated with retranslation. She critically assesses the ‘so-called retranslation hypothesis’ that retranslations are generally more source-oriented than initial translations, using the case study of translated children’s literature.\(^\text{24}\) Desmidt evokes the question of relativity in translation, arguing that our understanding of what it is that makes a target text accurate and appropriate changes through time and place, noting that this makes it ‘impossible to dissociate translation from its broader historical context’ (p. 670). Desmidt summarises the suggested reasons for which retranslations would seemingly become more source-oriented, namely because:

> first translations determine whether or not a text (and its author) is (are) going to be accepted in the target culture; the text is therefore adapted to the norms that govern the target audience. At a later stage, when it has become familiar with the text (and author), the target culture allows for and demands new translations – retranslations – that are no longer definitively target oriented, but source text oriented. (p. 670)

However, Desmidt goes on to argue that the hypothesis does not hold for her case study. In the texts she analysed, ‘recent re-rewritings did continue to deviate from the original to quite a large extent’ (p. 676). She suggests that this is in part due to the text type since children’s literature tends ‘to prioritise target culture norms’ (p. 678). She also proposes that the canonical status of the work in question may have played a role because ‘classics are often considered as common property also in the target culture and as a consequence the

\(^{24}\) I. Desmidt, ‘(Re)translation Revisited’, *Meta*, 54 (2009), 669-83 (p. 669), further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.
justification of change may be taken for granted' (p. 678). Finally, she suggests that the time-frame commonly associated with the retranslation hypothesis is generally larger than that of her case study: questions of copyright and socio-literary shifts have a different effect over a short time-span than over a longer period of time. Desmidt concludes that the retranslation hypothesis, although largely true, does require certain caveats. It would seem that the retranslation hypothesis does not necessarily hold true in the case of Night, either.

5.7 From Night to Night

The two Nights demonstrate markedly different translation strategies. While Rodway’s Night is broadly source-oriented, Marion Wiesel’s is largely target-oriented. While the 1960 version is now identifiably a dated text (in terms of its turns of phrase and lexis) the retranslation has been brought up to date, and reads as though it were written in current American English. This differs from the retranslation hypothesis and suggests that this text is subject to a set of norms which is different to that associated with other retranslated texts (as was also the case in Desmidt’s case study). Furthermore, and perhaps of more interest to this thesis, the different versions present different testimonial pacts. The reader is asked to respond to these texts in different ways. The differences between these texts and their respective pacts is analysed here, with a view to drawing wider conclusions regarding changing expectations of the genre of testimony and the visibility of translators within this genre. The three versions of the text were compared concurrently. A three-way comparison of this kind is used to illuminate key features in both translations, through a discussion of their differences and the ways in which they each differ from the source text. Significant changes were grouped thematically, therefore permitting discussion of trends or patterns in the changes from one edition to another.

A period of forty-six years elapsed between the publication of the first and second translations of La Nuit. The first translation was undertaken for a British publisher, while the second was undertaken for an American publisher. These facts are two major vehicles for change in the translation. A certain number of changes are to be expected given the movement of the text through time and place. That is not to say that these relatively predictable changes are insignificant or without consequence. Rather, each of these alterations is
indicative of a transformation in the domain of Holocaust writing, and in general usage: terms which were once felt appropriate to describe certain experiences are no longer felt to be appropriate, but the reasons for this change in perception merit exploration.

Choosing to render the source text into idiomatic, modern, familiar target language phrases tells us something about the translator’s interpretation of the message of the testimony, and about what he or she expects of the text’s readers (especially regarding translator visibility). Adaptations made to suit a particular audience’s understanding of a religion or a period in history also tell us something about who is thought to be reading the text, why he or she is reading it, and what he or she should take away from the text. Indeed, far from being inconsequential, these small and often unsurprising alterations made in the retranslation offer a wealth of information about how we are encouraged to read this piece of testimony.

5.7.1 Names

The first area where a number of differences can be noted is in the spelling and rendering of certain names (Table 1)\(^{25}\):

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moshé-le-Bedeau (p. 31)</td>
<td>Moshe the Beadle (p. 1)</td>
<td>Moishe the Beadle (p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shlomo (p. 180)</td>
<td>Chlomo (p. 97)</td>
<td>Shlomo (p. 102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bela Katz (p. 80)</td>
<td>Bela Katz (p. 33)</td>
<td>Béla Katz (p. 35)</td>
</tr>
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Table 1: Name spellings

These changes fall into different broad categories. The first three examples demonstrate minor spelling alterations in two directions (‘Chlomo’ strays from the original in the 1960 translation, before returning to the original spelling in the 2006 edition, while ‘Moishe’ and ‘Béla’ both differ from the source text). It would appear that the spellings are being brought in line with the spelling in the native

\(^{25}\mathrm{Further\ references\ to\ La\ Nuit\ and\ Night\ are\ given\ after\ quotations\ in\ the\ text.\ Page\ references\ refer\ to:\ Elie\ Wiesel,\ La\ Nuit\ (Paris:\ Les\ Éditions\ de\ Minuit,\ 2007),\ Elie\ Wiesel,\ Night.\ trans.\ Stella\ Rodway\ (London:\ Macgibbon\ &\ Kee,\ 1960),\ and\ Elie\ Wiesel,\ Night.\ trans.\ Marion\ Wiesel\ (New\ York:\ Hill\ and\ Wang,\ a\ division\ of\ Farrar,\ Straus\ and\ Giroux,\ 2006).\}
locale, rather than the French or English spellings of these names. This suggests that the translator expects the target text readers to be receptive to foreign names, or even to expect them of a text which is clearly depicting foreign setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>La Nuit</em></th>
<th><em>Night (1960)</em></th>
<th><em>Night (2006)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>madame Schächter</td>
<td>Madame Schächter</td>
<td>Mrs. Schächter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maman</td>
<td>Mummy</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la benjamine, Judith</td>
<td>Tzipora</td>
<td>Tzipora</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mon oncle</td>
<td>my uncle</td>
<td>my Uncle Mendel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkowitz</td>
<td>Berkowitz</td>
<td>Moishe Chaim Berkowitz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Name changes

The next set of differences (Table 2) represents more major changes to names in the text. Changing ‘Madame Schächter’ into ‘Mrs Schächter’ in the 2006 edition provides more distance from the French original than was provided in the 1960 version, which had a curiously French undertone. ‘Maria’ becoming ‘Martha’ before returning to her original name of ‘Maria’ once more is a striking example of the first translation employing a name which is present only in this edition, seemingly anglicising the more exotic ‘Maria’. By 2006 ‘Maria’ was perhaps no longer considered an exotic name and (most likely in the interest of factual accuracy) the name is returned to its original form. In the next example, the retranslation uses ‘Mother’ to render the source text ‘maman’ (affectionate and intimate in connotation) while the 1960 version opts for ‘Mummy’ (also affectionate and suggesting intimacy, although nowadays used primarily by young children). The scene from which this example is taken features young children asking their mothers for water while waiting under the heat of the midday sun before being boarded onto deportation transports. The use of either ‘maman’ or ‘Mummy’ does not seem inappropriate given this context, and ‘Mother’ is much more formal and neutral than either of these terms. The retranslator perhaps chose to use ‘Mother’ to create a more neutral tone, which would be consistent with the source text’s tendency to describe emotional passages in a relatively detached manner.
A further unusual modification is made to Wiesel’s youngest sister’s name. In the source text she is referred to as ‘Judith’ before being changed into ‘Tzipora’ in both English editions. This represents not so much a change in the translation strategy as a factual alteration, most likely at the instigation of the author. *La Nuit* is dedicated to this young sister (who perished in the camps), and in each edition’s dedication, she is referred to as Tzipora. There are two further examples of factual alterations being made to proper names: the addition of the proper name ‘Mendel’ within the reference to the narrator’s uncle, and the addition of more detail to Berkowitz’s name. These changes made to names would suggest that there is a strong desire for factual accuracy on the part of the author and the translator, and that the opportunity to make alterations to this version of the text is being taken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le jardin d’Ezra Malik (p. 45)</td>
<td>in the Ezra Malik gardens (p. 10)</td>
<td>in Ezra Malik’s garden (p. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dans le métro (p. 108)</td>
<td>in the Metro (p. 51)</td>
<td>in the Métro (p. 53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Place names

Two further examples (Table 3) refer to place names. The first example would seem to be a correction: the French ‘le jardin de Ezra Malik’ could well refer to a proper noun, and without clarification from the editor or author, the translator would be unable to definitively state whether the ‘de’ is being used possessively or as part of the garden’s name. This minor detail is amended in the later translation to reflect that the garden was owned by Ezra Malik. The Paris Métro regains its acute accent in the 2006 text, giving it a more foreign flavour than in the 1960 edition. Since it is common and accepted to use the term without an accent when referring to this proper noun in English, it can be assumed that the accent was returned with the intention of providing some realia from the context in question. Furthermore, in the period between the two translations, a number of American underground rail systems have developed (the District of Colombia metro system for instance), so using the accent when referring to the French system definitively distinguishes them.
Horthy had been forced to ask one of the leaders of the Nyilas party to form a new government.

The regent Miklós Horthy was forced to ask a leader of the pro-Nazi Nyilas party to form a new government.

Table 4: Explication of names

The last example (Table 4) of names being altered across the various editions is perhaps the most striking. Here we see a clear case of the retranslation being altered to suit the target audience requirements. Two main additions to the source text phrase can be observed. Firstly, the reader is provided with an explanation of who the source text ‘Horty’ is: he or she is informed that Horty is the regent in the country, and is given the longer version of his name. This alteration has two main implications: firstly, that the reader of the source text and the 1960 version either would have been expected to know these details, or that they were not considered essential to his or her reading of the text; secondly, that the retranslation’s target readership would both not know these details and that they would find them significant and interesting. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the explication provided for the political leanings of the Nyilas party. This information is useful to the reader’s understanding of the political evolution of the country, and its explication shows that the target readership of the retranslation would be expected to find these details useful. The strategy of explication employed in this phrase is an effective demonstration of the effect that the passage of time can have on the way in which proper nouns are rendered in different periods and locales.

While the types of changes in the spelling of names have but a minor effect on the testimony as a whole, they are nonetheless significant, with each shift telling us something about the various versions of the testimony. Overall, the retranslation comes across as being a little more foreign than the 1960 edition, with the addition of accents and letters and small details are closer to the source text than the 1960 edition was. This trend would suggest that the target readership is expected to be comfortable with foreign names (more so than the readership of the first translation) and that the use of these names is
perhaps an important factor in presenting what is seen to be an authentic account (rather than a domesticated one).

5.7.2 Modernising the language

A certain proportion of the changes made from one translation to the other is primarily indicative of the passage of time and is without major effect on the content of the account (Table 5). For instance, there are certain terms used in the 1960 edition which now seem archaic. These have been replaced in the retranslation by less marked terms or phrases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>se jetèrent des mots d’amour (p. 97)</td>
<td>shouting blandishments (p. 43)</td>
<td>passing love notes to one another (p. 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la mitraillette (p. 71)</td>
<td>tommy gun (p. 27)</td>
<td>machine gun (p. 29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les Boches (p. 58)</td>
<td>The Boche (p. 18)</td>
<td>The Germans (p. 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle me semblait être juive</td>
<td>She seemed to me to be a Jewess (p. 50)</td>
<td>I thought she looked Jewish (p. 52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p. 107)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ses fiançailles (p. 39)</td>
<td>its betrothals (p. 6)</td>
<td>its engagements (p. 8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Archaisms

Each of these phrases is strikingly constructed or contains terms which are now archaic or seldom used. ‘Blandishments’ is a particularly striking example of a word which would now either not be understood, or would be remarked upon as being dated. Similarly, while ‘tommy guns’ and the ‘Boche’ used to be current terms, their use is now considerably less widespread, as is ‘Jewess’. While a reader would understand the term ‘betrothals’, it now sounds formal and outdated.
Table 6: Updating dated phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Que racontes-tu? (p. 49)</td>
<td>What tale is this? (p. 12)</td>
<td>What are you saying? (p. 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’ai comme un mauvais pressentiment (p. 46)</td>
<td>I’ve got a premonition of evil (p. 10)</td>
<td>I have a bad feeling (p. 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solides gaillards (p. 74)</td>
<td>sturdy young fellows (p. 29)</td>
<td>tough young men (p. 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ce qui se passe en lui (p. 28)</td>
<td>what passed within him (p. ix)</td>
<td>what goes on in his mind (p. xix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous ordonnait de nous réjouir (p. 42)</td>
<td>bade us rejoice (p. 8)</td>
<td>commands us to rejoice (p. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me donner la mort (p. 77)</td>
<td>bring about my own death (p. 31)</td>
<td>kill myself p. 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pour coucher avec une fille (p. 113)</td>
<td>so that he could lie with a girl (p. 54)</td>
<td>so that he could copulate with this girl (p. 57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other examples cited in Table 6 employ turns of phrase which are either calqued from the French, or were current in the late 1950s but are less so now. While the French ‘Que racontes-tu?’ is still used widely and does not reflect a particular era or sociolect, ‘What tale is this?’ now sounds unidiomatic and stilted, if not a little theatrical. A similar observation can be made with regard to the ‘premonition of evil’, which has undertones of horror scenarios and otherworldly beings. While the phrase ‘sturdy young fellows’ would certainly be understood now, it does reflect a certain age and class in English. These are the kind of changes one would expect of a retranslation: particularly dated phrases have been exchanged for less marked alternatives. In terms of the translation strategy, this creates a less remarkable text, one which does not upset the expectations of the contemporary readership. It is significant to note that none of these dated 1960 phrases were incorrect, or marked as foreign. Rather, they were clearly identifiable as belonging to the lexis of 50 years ago. These terms have been updated for no reason other than that they no longer reflect contemporary language, and this in itself is felt to be a hindrance to the transmission of Wiesel’s message. In terms of translator visibility, the 2006 version of the testimony is much more transparent, with very few remarkable
linguistic choices which could make the reader question whether someone else had had a hand in the text.

A further set of changes which demonstrate this point even more clearly are those updates made that reflect contemporary turns of phrase. While the above extracts from the 1960 edition definitely stood out as being from the late 1950s and were altered to be less remarkable, the following examples (Table 7) are all phrases which have been replaced by contemporary, fixed phrases with strong internal collocations. This type of change from one edition to another demonstrates that the retranslation has been adapted to suit the target language norms, using phrases which read smoothly and at no point betray that they were originally written in a foreign language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le pauvre va-nu-pieds (p. 34)</td>
<td>the poor barefoot (p. 3)</td>
<td>the poorest of the poor (p. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une ruche (p. 149)</td>
<td>a hive (p. 77)</td>
<td>a hive of activity (p. 81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piller (p. 60)</td>
<td>pillage (p. 19)</td>
<td>loot (p. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il n’y avait qu’à se servir</td>
<td>It was simply a matter of helping oneself (p. 15)</td>
<td>It was there for the taking (p. 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p. 54)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous calciner! (p. 73)</td>
<td>Frizzled away. (p. 28)</td>
<td>Burned to a cinder! (p. 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la lièrent et lui mirent un baïllon dans la bouche (p. 66)</td>
<td>tied her up and put a gag in her mouth (p. 23)</td>
<td>bound and gagged her (p. 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bon-à-tout-faire (p. 31)</td>
<td>man of all work (p. 1)</td>
<td>jack-of-all-trades (p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voir brûler son fils unique</td>
<td>see the burning of this only son (p. 76)</td>
<td>see his only son go up in flames (p. 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p. 76)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous voulez nous attirer un malheur? (p. 84)</td>
<td>Do you want to bring trouble on us all? (p. 35)</td>
<td>Do you want to get us all in trouble? (p. 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comme si le choix avait été entre nos mains. (p. 99)</td>
<td>As if the choice were in our own hands. (p. 45)</td>
<td>As if we had a choice… (p. 48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Addition of modern idiom

In a number of instances the retranslation moves away from the word for word rendering employed in the 1960 translation. For example, while the 1960
version renders all but one lexical item of the phrase ‘pauvre va-nu-pieds’ (neglecting to render ‘va’, which is used as part of a fixed expression and does not carry a meaning which is integral to the phrase) in the construction ‘poor barefoot’, the retranslation takes just one element of the phrase (‘pauvre’) and repeats it twice, using the superlative form to emphasise it. The use of a set target language phrase, with strong internal collocation provides an idiomatic effect but does so at the expense of accurately conveying the propositional meaning of the source language phrase.

Other examples of fixed target language phrases being used in the retranslation but not the original translation do effectively and idiomatically convey each aspect of the source language phrase. For instance, using ‘a hive of activity’ instead of ‘a hive’ transmits the image of a place wherein a large number of people are productively occupied, and does so while using a familiar phrase. The propositional meaning of ‘loot’ (2006 version) and ‘pillage’ (1960 version) is very similar, although ‘pillage’ is more specifically used to refer to the act of stealing in the context of war. The French ‘il n’y avait qu’à se servir’ translates word for word into something closely resembling the 1960 rendering (‘it was only necessary to help oneself’: the 1960 version uses ‘simply’ to render the notion of ‘only’ and makes the addition of ‘a matter’ to provide a referent for the impersonal ‘it’). The 2006 version ‘It was there for the taking’ clearly conveys the idea that the articles present were openly available for anyone to take. No aspect of the propositional meaning of the source text phrase is lost, even if not each lexical item is replaced one-for-one in the target language.

What does change is the effect in the two English renderings: the perfectly clear phrase used in the first translation is replaced by something which seems even more “English” in the retranslation. Similarly, ‘Burned to a cinder’ is a typically English phrase, much more so than ‘Frizzled’, and ‘bound and gagged’ collocates much more strongly than the 1960 version ‘tied her up and put a gag in her mouth’, despite relaying the same series of events.

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26 The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb ‘to pillage’ as: ‘To rob (a person); (now usually) to plunder, loot, or sack (a place), esp. in war’ and that of ‘to loot’ as: ‘To plunder, sack (a city, building)’ (‘Pillage’, in Oxford English Dictionary <http://www.oed.com> [accessed 8 July 2013].
The 2006 retranslation opts, on each occasion, for the most idiomatic phrase, favouring a translation strategy which operates at the phrasal level rather than at the word level. The effect of this is a translation which reads as though it were written originally in English, complete with set phrases which make it seem more authentically English. For the reader, this could have two effects, depending on his or her knowledge of the text and its history. If the reader is aware that the text is not only translated, but translated twice, a text which reads idiomatically and in strikingly coherent and palatable English, would likely make him or her think that the text has been masterfully (and by association, accurately) translated. A translation which does not come across as foreign arouses no suspicions with regard to its accuracy. If the reader is unaware that the text is translated, the 2006 rendering will certainly give him or her no cause to question that assumption, so idiomatic is it.

5.7.3 Modern American English

Beyond these modernisations applied to the 2006 text, which remove strikingly archaic terms and turns of phrase, replacing them with more idiomatic English phrases, there is also a raft of changes made to adapt the retranslation to an American audience (Table 8). Given Wiesel's status in America and the recognition his text has garnered in America, it seems understandable that his American publisher would endorse a new, “American” translation of the text. This piece of testimony is nowhere near as well-known in the British locale, for which it was initially translated. Furthermore, as was discussed above, there is a great interest in the Holocaust in the American locale. Therefore, modifying the text to suit the target locale American linguistic norms is to be expected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>en vacances (p. 59)</td>
<td>on holiday (p. 19)</td>
<td>on vacation (p. 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pantalons (p. 69)</td>
<td>trousers (p. 25)</td>
<td>pants (p. 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu es courageux (p. 146)</td>
<td>You're brave (p. 75)</td>
<td>You have spunk (p. 79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: American English
Here are three clear examples of terms which are specific to the American locale, and not commonly used in British English. There is no motivation for altering these terms other than to make the text American rather than British.

5.7.4 Jewish American audience

However, the retranslation is not only adapted to suit an American audience. It is specifically adapted to suit a Jewish American audience. It is useful at this juncture to reconsider Budick’s suggestion that a uniquely American Jewish literary system is developing in response to the situation of Judaism in America: the retranslation can be seen as part of the development of this literary system, in which translated texts play a pivotal role. Specific examples (Table 9) of the handling of Jewish terms in the retranslation include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Text (French)</th>
<th>First Translation (English)</th>
<th>Retranslation (English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>une synagogue hassidique (p. 31)</td>
<td>Hasidic synagogue (p. 1)</td>
<td>Hasidic house of prayer, a Shtibl (p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samedi (p. 61)</td>
<td>Saturday (p. 19)</td>
<td>Saturday - the Sabbath – (p. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rentrant de la capitale, (p. 40)</td>
<td>who had just returned from the capital, (p. 7)</td>
<td>returned from the capital for Passover (p. 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l'Exil de la Providence (p. 32)</td>
<td>the Exile of Providence (p. 1)</td>
<td>the Shekhinah in Exile (p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la fête du Nouvel An (p. 38)</td>
<td>the New Year (p. 5)</td>
<td>Rosh Hashanah (p. 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecôte (p. 45)</td>
<td>Pentecost (p. 10)</td>
<td>Shavuot (p. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le grand rabbin (p. 53)</td>
<td>the Rabbi (p. 14)</td>
<td>the Chief Rabbi (p. 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le frère du Rabbi de Sighet (p. 81)</td>
<td>brother of the rabbi of Sighet (p. 33)</td>
<td>Sigheter rebbe’s brother (p. 36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Jewish cultural references

In each instance a specialised Jewish term is introduced, where it was not used in either the source text or the first translation. A ‘shtibl’ is a precise term derived from Yiddish, denoting a smaller house of prayer/synagogue than the superordinate term ‘synagogue’. This term is used with a gloss, which would suggest that not all readers would be expected to understand the term, but that they would be interested to know it regardless. A similar strategy is used in the
case of the ‘Sabbath’, which is added as a supplementary piece of cultural information to the word ‘Saturday’, for those who may not know the significance of this day in the Jewish faith. A further example of additional culturally-specific information being provided in the retranslation is the inclusion of the detail ‘for Passover’ when detailing a friend’s trip to the capital. This minor detail provides a little more religious anchoring for the narrative, making it clear to the reader that the community and the narrator’s social circle are practicing Jews.

‘Providence’ is a loose translation of ‘Shekhinah’, although the latter refers more specifically to a feminine figure, and is unique to Judaism. The use of the term ‘providence’ in the first translation is both indicative of the source-oriented approach adopted therein and of the tendency to use terms which would be familiar to 1960s Britain rather than introducing foreign terms. The Hebrew term ‘Rosh Hashanah’ refers to the celebration of the Jewish New Year. It denotes a different time of the year to the secular celebration of New Year, generally falling in late autumn. This is significant, because using this term in the retranslation changes both the evoked meaning (evoking the Jewish faith much more directly than the 1960 translation) and the propositional meaning (referring to a different time of year entirely). ‘Shavuot’ is derived from the Hebrew and refers to a Jewish harvest festival, which predates the Christian Pentecost celebration, whose name is nonetheless used sometimes in place of the term ‘Shavuot’. Referring to ‘Shavuot’ instead of ‘Pentecost’ clearly differentiates between these two similar celebrations, marking it as a Jewish point of reference.

The addition of all of these terms in the retranslation can be seen to have two main effects. For those readers unfamiliar with the Jewish faith the additions provide an insight into the religious life of the narrator, informing them about terms commonly used within this faith. For readers who are familiar with Judaism or who are Jewish, the retranslation employs terms which are accurate and which speak directly to their community. In both cases, the retranslation shows more openness to the religious specificity of the testimony, proclaiming its religious grounding much more clearly than the first translation. It might be

27 It is also interesting to note that the French text does employ the term ‘Roch-Hachanah’ later in the account (on page 126).
argued that this re-externalisation of Wiesel’s traumatic experience contains more faith-specific references than its previous incarnations.

In addition to the supplementary or modified religious terminology employed in the retranslation, there are a number of fixed religious expressions which change markedly from one translation to the next (Table 10). These changes are indicative of a shift in the commonly accepted terms of reference in religious expression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le Bon Dieu (p. 124)</td>
<td>God (p. 61)</td>
<td>merciful God (p. 64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>les jours de Sabbat et les</td>
<td>on Sundays and feast days (p. 64)</td>
<td>Sabbath and the Holy Days (p. 67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jours de fête (p. 127)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>élevé et sanctifié (p. 78)</td>
<td>blessed and magnified (p. 31)</td>
<td>exalted and sanctified (p. 34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sept fois verrouillée (p. 78)</td>
<td>seven times cursed and</td>
<td>seven times sealed (p. 34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>seven times sealed (p. 32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Religious expression (1)

More often than not, additions or notable changes in expression have been made in the retranslation. Exceptions to this are the renderings of 'le Bon Dieu', which becomes simply ‘God’ in the first translation. It is probable that ‘bon’ was omitted because the phrase ‘good God’ suggests shock or outrage, rather than reverence. The retranslation makes the addition of ‘merciful’, a word which is completely absent from the source text and represents an inference on the part of the translator.

A second instance of the 1960 translation using a term which differs from the source text is the adaptation of the ‘Sabbath’ into ‘Sunday’. It might be inferred that the target audience of the 1960 translation would not understand what the Sabbath was, which was seemingly no longer the case of the 2006 audience. The choice of ‘Sunday’ as an alternative rendering is curious. The use of the Christian holy day suggests that the first translation was tailored to suit a primarily Christian readership or at least a readership with more Christian than Jewish points of cultural reference. This chimes with Seidman’s suggestion that the French version of Wiesel’s testimony was adapted to suit Christian
values and expectations, and it might be argued that this strategy was applied to the first English translation of his testimony too.

There are two further instances of the 1960 translation differing more from the source text than the retranslation does. Firstly, we see God’s name being ‘blessed and magnified’ instead of ‘exalted and sanctified’. In this case, the retranslation more closely resembles the source text’s ‘élevé et sanctifié’. The final example is a curious addition made to the first translation, but not to the retranslation. In the source text we see the phrase ‘sept fois verouillée’ referring here to the long night into which Wiesel’s life transformed after his first night in the camp. In the source text, there is an addition of ‘seven times cursed’. While it is an understandable addition (the source text clearly implies that the transformation of a lifetime into darkness is akin to a curse) it is nonetheless unnecessary. The source text does not reference a curse or malediction, yet the first translation adds this. It might be that Rodway felt the meaning of ‘seven times sealed’ was unclear without further specification that it was sealed in a spiritual sense. It is certain that the addition of ‘cursed’ gives more prominence to the spiritual aspect of Wiesel’s ongoing struggle with the everlasting night. This curious addition is removed in the new retranslation, where (in this instance) the translation mirrors the source text closely.

Aside from these examples, there is a tendency for the retranslation to resemble the source text less closely than the first translation does (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L’Éternel, Maître de l’univers, l’Éternel Tout-Puissant et Terrible (p. 77)</td>
<td>The Eternal, Lord of the Universe, the All-Powerful and Terrible (p. 31)</td>
<td>The Almighty, the eternal and terrible Master of the Universe (p. 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Béni soit le nom de l’Éternel! (p. 127)</td>
<td>Blessed be the Name of the Eternal! (p. 64)</td>
<td>Blessed be God’s name… (p. 67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le feu et le soufre (p. 128)</td>
<td>fire and sulphur (p. 64)</td>
<td>fire and damnation (p. 68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chants hébreux (p. 103)</td>
<td>Hebrew chants (p. 48)</td>
<td>Hebrew songs (p. 50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la Délivrance (p. 104)</td>
<td>the deliverance (p. 48)</td>
<td>Redemption (p. 51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bénissez l’Éternel… (p. 127)</td>
<td>Bless the Eternal… (p. 63)</td>
<td>Blessed be the Almighty… (p. 67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Religious expression (2)
On some occasions, the retranslation changes the word order of the source text more than the 1960 translation, as is the case for the 1960 edition’s ‘The Eternal, Lord of the Universe, the All-Powerful and Terrible’, which mirrors the source text ‘L'Eternel, Maître de l'univers, l'Eternel Tout-Puissant et Terrible’ almost perfectly (aside from the omission of the second ‘eternal’), while the retranslation employs markedly different word order in its formulation ‘The Almighty, the eternal and terrible Master of the Universe’. On other occasions, the first translation opts for a word or formulation which is very similar to the source text (‘chant’ for ‘chant’, ‘deliverance for ‘Délivrance’, for instance) while the retranslation differs (the ‘Eternal’ becomes the ‘Almighty’ in the retranslation, the ‘Name of the Eternal’ becomes ‘God’s name’ and ‘sulphur’ becomes ‘damnation’).

We can note here a systematic, strategic variation in the rendering of these religious phrases. The retranslation opts for phrases or lexis which are perhaps considered more current or accessible, while the first translation stays as close to the source text as is possible (while remaining correct in the target language). In effect, the retranslation does not change the propositional meaning of these phrases so much as the extent to which they reflect the target language idiom. Phrases with strong internal collocation are selected (‘fire and damnation’ and ‘Blessed be God’s name’ being two clear examples of this), while potentially jarring turns of phrase are omitted (the reference to ‘sulphur’ may be unclear, as might the reference to a Hebrew ‘chant’, which has connotations of more extreme religious practices). While there is a tendency throughout the retranslation to opt for more target-orientated expressions, the modification of fixed religious phrases can be seen as indicative of temporal change in this specific lexical field: the ceremonial aspect of their use means that exceptions to their standard usage would be more noticeable than in other, less fixed, expressions.

5.7.5 Camp terminology

A second lexical field with fixed expressions is that of the camps themselves. Through time, and as Holocaust discourses have developed, it would seem that certain set terms are coming to be understood and used to discuss features of the camp. This was not necessarily the case at the time of the first translation’s
publication. However, as the Holocaust has been discussed more and more, in an ever-increasing range of media, a specific lexical set appears to be becoming more established. In the retranslation we see the incorporation of these terms. This furthermore includes the use of certain German terms, which were not used in the previous editions. This shift is indicative of the text being brought into line with the norms of its literary peers, and perhaps also of changes in how the Holocaust is referred to at the present time. The differences observed between the two English editions can be subdivided into a number of themes. Each area of divergence tells us something unique about how we conceive of the Holocaust and about the development of Holocaust discourses.

To date, there appears to have been relatively little quantitative research targeting the lexical field of Holocaust discourses. Related research has included discussion of the widespread use of English within these discourses, the differences between different linguistic spheres’ research output within the domain of Holocaust studies, and the use of different languages within the camps. In addition to this, a large number of Holocaust dictionaries and glossaries have also been published, aiming to provide access to the complex web of terminology employed in this field of studies. A particularly incisive study into the use of English in these discourses has been undertaken by Alan Rosen in his volume entitled *Sounds of Defiance: The Holocaust, Multilingualism, and the Problem of English*. Here, Rosen notes that while English has been felt to be a “neutral” language in which to write about the Holocaust, it is in fact ‘in the thick of the fray’ of Holocaust discourses, itself loaded with meaning.\(^{28}\) On the question of language-specific research output, Dan Michman notes that:

> The German research sphere deals mainly with ‘perpetrators’ (or ‘murderers’ or ‘criminals’), the Israeli sphere deals mainly with ‘victims’, the French sphere mostly emphasizes ‘bystanders’ (collaborators or rescuers) under the Nazi occupation regime, and the English sphere devotes much room to issues of

rescue and the actions of governments in the Free World. Each sphere is influenced by its own collective memory and contemporary agenda.29 He concludes that ‘the walls between the different linguistic-culture domains remain high. Even if they cannot be demolished in the near future, it is important to be aware of their existence and impact’ (p. 380).

The use of German in the camps and the effect that this has had upon the German language has also been discussed by Rosen. It has been framed as a language of survival in the camps, making communication with camp personnel possible, but also as a ‘debased’ language, which is now inexorably linked with the atrocities of the Nazi era.30 The range of languages used in Holocaust discourses has also been noted. Epstein and Rosen’s Dictionary of the Holocaust, for example, draws attention to its inclusion of ‘a number of foreign terms’, stating that ‘they are important in understanding the period’.31 This is a trend which can be observed in many glossaries and dictionaries, almost all of which contain German-language terms routinely used in discussion of the Holocaust.

Robert Michael and Karen Doerr have compiled a lexicon of Nazi German terminology, which gives some insight into why the use of this language for specific terms continues to be widespread. Paul Rose, in his accompanying foreword, notes that ‘harmless English words do not convey the powerful emotional resonance’ of the German words originally used in situ.32 Focussing specifically on the phenomenon of Nazi German, that is to say, the use (misuse?) of this language by the Nazis during their time in power, Michael and Doerr highlight the importance of the specific usage of German language terms in this particular context. This focus on context-specific language speaks directly to problems of translation, and the following examples of noteworthy

29 Dan Michman, Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective; Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches, and Fundamental Issues (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), p. 379. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
30 Rosen, Sounds of Defiance, p. 147.
translation strategies employed in the two English language editions of Wiesel’s testimony demonstrate the extent to which change in both time and place can alter our perception of Holocaust terminology.

The first group of terminological variations relates to relatively simple changes in military terms (Table 12). Here, it is not a question of either translation more or less closely resembling the source text. Rather, we see a change in accepted military expressions, both through time and place:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Première mesure: (p. 43)</td>
<td>The first step: (p. 8)</td>
<td>First edict: (p. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dénombrement (p. 56)</td>
<td>Count off (p. 16)</td>
<td>Roll call (p. 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En rangs par cinq. (p. 72)</td>
<td>Form fives! (p. 27)</td>
<td>Form ranks of fives! (p. 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En rangs, par cinq! (p. 87)</td>
<td>Form fives! (p. 37)</td>
<td>Fall in, five by five! (p. 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Découvrez-vous! (p. 119)</td>
<td>Bare your heads! (p. 58)</td>
<td>Caps off! (p. 61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Military terms

The propositional meaning of each phrase remains unaltered, but those which may now seem more dated or unidiomatic (‘bare your heads’) are updated. Two similar examples of more contemporary phrases being used in the camp context are noted in Table 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fosses (p. 127)</td>
<td>pits (p. 64)</td>
<td>mass graves (p. 67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiens de bergers (p. 153)</td>
<td>sheepdogs (p. 80)</td>
<td>police dogs (p. 84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Modern lexis of war

The first example demonstrates the inclusion of what has come to be an accepted term to refer to post-genocide/wartime burial sites. While ‘pits’ is a perfect translation of the propositional meaning of ‘fosses’, the term ‘mass graves’ has (in the years between the 1960 and 2006 editions) become more common parlance in this context. Similarly, ‘sheepdogs’ is a perfectly accurate translation of the French ‘chiens de bergers’, but in the context of the camps, the term ‘police dogs’ conjures up stronger associations of enforced order. ‘Sheepdogs’ connotes dogs used for herding, which despite their status as a working dog are nonetheless relatively docile and friendly. The use of the non-breed-specific hyperordinate term ‘police dogs’ sidesteps these connotations, and more aptly suits reader expectations of the type of canine used to herd the
prisoners. Both of these examples show that where the 1960 translation used terms which closely represent the propositional meaning of the source text word or phrase, the retranslation employs terms which are more specifically derived from the lexical field of war, law and order, or genocide, thereby adapting to suit the terminology which has come to be employed in the Holocaust discourses.

A comparable strategy is employed in the translation of the terms used to refer to places and people involved in camp life (Table 14). Through time, we can observe that the terminology employed in these domains seems to have become more specific and settled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«blocks» (p. 88)</td>
<td>prison blocks (p. 38)</td>
<td>&quot;blocks&quot; (p. 41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le camp des gitans (p. 84)</td>
<td>the &quot;gypsies' camp&quot; (p. 35)</td>
<td>the Gypsy camp (p. 37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Birkenau (p. 70)</td>
<td>at Birkenau, reception center for Auschwitz. (p. 26)</td>
<td>In Birkenau. (p. 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buna (p. 118)</td>
<td>Buna (p. 57)</td>
<td>the Buna factory (p. 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le cachot (p. 120)</td>
<td>the cells (p. 59)</td>
<td>the solitary confinement cell (p. 61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Camp locations

The first of these examples is a relatively rare example of an addition to the 1960 edition. The inverted commas from the source text are removed, and the word ‘blocks’ is given more precision through the addition of the noun ‘prison’. This is one of the first references to the ‘blocks’ as the scene from which this example is taken occurs just after the initial selection process. Although the addition of ‘prison’ is understandable (‘blocks’ is a very general term) it is arguably not necessary, as the context of the ‘block’ in the 1960 edition is quite clear:

First impression: this was better than Birkenau. There were two-storied buildings of concrete instead of wooden barracks. There were little gardens here and there. We were led to one of these prison blocks. Seated on the ground by the entrance, we began another session of waiting. (p. 38)

It would therefore appear that the term ‘prison’ was added in order to be doubly sure that the meaning was clear. However, by 2006 it might be considered
erroneous or unnecessary to refer to these blocks as ‘prison blocks’. The concentration camps were not prisons wherein lawfully tried convicts were housed. Rather, they were instruments of genocide, where innocent people were killed. It would seem inappropriate to refer to these blocks as prisons, in this sense. In the retranslation, ‘prison’ is retracted, and the inverted commas are reinstated, thereby making it clear that a new term is being introduced to refer to this structure, which is distinct from the barracks described before.

The second example pertaining to place names also involves the use or absence of inverted commas. The 1960 edition employs inverted commas for the term ‘Gypsy camp’. This would suggest that at the time of its publication, the term ‘Gypsy’ was less commonplace or accepted than it now is. This addition is removed in the new translation and the term is capitalised, signifying the increased recognition of this people and of their suffering during the Holocaust: the extermination of a large portion of the Gypsy population during the Holocaust is now widely recognised. For many years the Nazi volition to eradicate the Roma people went largely unrecognised. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum states that: ‘Only in late 1979 did the West German Federal Parliament identify the Nazi persecution of Roma as being racially motivated, creating eligibility for most Roma to apply for compensation for their suffering and loss under the Nazi regime’. In more recent years, it would seem that there has been increasing recognition of this aspect of the Nazi genocide. For example, the publication of Radu Ioanid’s *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* and Viorel Achim’s edited anthology of deportation documents entitled *The Romanian Gypsies During the Holocaust: Documents of Deportation* (2004) might be seen as indicative of greater academic acknowledgment of this aspect of the Holocaust. Furthermore, a one-day symposium entitled ‘Roma and Sinti -- Under-Studied Victims of Nazism’ took place at the United Studies Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2000, suggesting that this is a burgeoning field of research, garnering more and more interest through time.

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The following example also demonstrates our changing understanding of the events and locations of the Holocaust. This is another case of the first translator using the strategy of explication. The function of the Birkenau site is explained for the 1960 readers, presumably because they were not expected to know this. This explication is removed in the retranslation, which would suggest that the readers of this text are expected to be aware of this camp’s purpose.

The final two examples are more typical of the predominant retranslation strategy, in that there are additions or precisions made that further orient the text toward the target audience and ensure that the factual accuracy of the passages involved cannot be called into question. While the 1960 version translates ‘Buna’ and the ‘cachot’ word for word, the retranslation makes it clear that the bombing being described in the passage refers to the bombing of the Buna synthetic rubber factory (and not a building which housed prisoners), and that the cells from which a prisoner is collected are solitary confinement cells and not the standard accommodation of the prisoners. Any shadow of doubt regarding the precise meaning in the account is erased through the addition of small clarifications and details. This takes into account both the increased understanding of the infrastructure of the camps, and also the readers’ expectations for full and complete factual accuracy.

The terms used to refer to the people involved in the concentration camps have evolved through time (Table 15), and this evolution is marked in the retranslation of Night.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les kommandos de travailleurs (p. 91)</td>
<td>The working units (p. 39)</td>
<td>The work Kommandos (p. 42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kommando de travail (p. 99)</td>
<td>labor unit (p. 45)</td>
<td>Kommando (p. 47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kommando (p. 100)</td>
<td>unit (p. 46)</td>
<td>Kommando (p. 48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Camp people

This is a clear example of the target system normalisation of the term ‘Kommando’ through time. While it was felt that the term was understandable to the French source audience of the late 1950s, the first translation into English modified this word. Opting for variations on the theme of ‘units’, the first
translation uses a less precise term than the source text. By 2006, the term was seemingly felt to be sufficiently understandable for the target audience.\textsuperscript{34} Indeed, it may have been seen as more accurate to employ what is now the standard terminology used to refer to this work group of camp prisoners. For example, this term appears in the Jewish Virtual Library’s glossary and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s glossary.\textsuperscript{35}

The terminology used to refer to the relocation of prisoners has also changed through time and place (Table 16). This reflects changing attitudes with regard to the transport of prisoners, and those updates made to the retranslation show that the testimony is being brought into line with current norms in this field of reference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wagon (p. 26)</td>
<td>trainloads (p. viii)</td>
<td>trainloads (p. xviii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des transports. (p. 47)</td>
<td>Deportation (p. 11)</td>
<td>Transports. (p. 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>éviter les départs (p. 94)</td>
<td>avoid moves (p. 41)</td>
<td>avoid the transports (p. 44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fait passer (p. 54)</td>
<td>had to go through (p. 15)</td>
<td>had been herded (p. 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wagons (p. 25)</td>
<td>trainloads (p. vii)</td>
<td>cattle cars (p. xvii)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Camp transportation

We can see here a general trend to use the term ‘transports’ where the 1960 edition used ‘deportation’ or ‘moves’. This suggests that this term is now broadly accepted within this context. Indeed, the noun ‘transport’ seems to be used

\textsuperscript{34} A number of testimonies have been written by inmates who were part of the \textit{Sonderkommando}, which may in part account for the recognisability of the term ‘kommando’ as a work group. Greif provides a thorough account of these testimonies in: Gideon Greif, ‘Between Sanity and Insanity: Spheres of Everyday Life in the Auschwitz-Birkenau \textit{Sonderkommando}’, in \textit{Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and its Aftermath}, ed. by Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 37-61.

widely to refer to the movement of concentration camp prisoners. A noteworthy strategy employed in the new translation is the use of words from the lexical fields of farming and cattle to refer to moving prisoners. On two occasions we see that the retranslation draws from this lexical field, once in the widespread use of the term ‘cattle cars’ and secondly referring to ‘herding’ people. These represent changes in the retranslation which emphasise the process of dehumanisation to which prisoners were subjected.

A further terminological set in which there has been some shifting and solidifying in the period between the two translations is that of the crematoria found at certain camps (Table 17). A number of small shifts from one translation to another demonstrate this process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la chambre à gaz et le crématoire (p. 26)</td>
<td>the gas chamber and the crematory (p. viii)</td>
<td>the gas chambers and the crematoria (p. xviii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le four (p. 26)</td>
<td>oven (p. viii)</td>
<td>furnace (p. xviii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crématoire (p. 75)</td>
<td>crematory (p. 30)</td>
<td>crematoria (p. 32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le four crématoire (p. 80)</td>
<td>the crematory oven (p. 33)</td>
<td>the furnace (p. 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la cheminée (p. 85)</td>
<td>the furnace (p. 36)</td>
<td>the chimney (p. 39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: Crematoria

We see here a systematic shift from the use of ‘crematory’ in the singular to ‘crematoria’ in the plural in the retranslation. This is a divergence from the source text and shows that our historical knowledge of the camps has changed, now acknowledging the presence of more than one crematory. We can also observe a pluralisation of the term ‘gas chamber’ in the preface, quite possibly also because of our more accurate knowledge of the working of the concentration camps. Alternatively, the use of the pluralised forms in the preface may be context driven: Mauriac is making a broad observation

36 The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for example, uses it throughout its encyclopaedia when referring to the enforced journeys to and between camps.

37 Consider here Fine’s observation that ‘Throughout Night there are numerous comparisons of men to animals, such as dogs, pigs, lambs, cattle, wild beasts, and even insects such as worms and ants, all used to demonstrate the reduction of man to a subhuman state in the camps’ (Fine, Legacy of Night, p. 152).
regarding the incongruity of these machines of death being used in what is supposed to be an enlightened time for humankind, as such it would seem appropriate to refer to these machines in general.

There is also an observable shift from the use of the term ‘oven’ (a direct translation of the French ‘four’) to the use of ‘furnace’. The first instance of this switch occurs in Mauriac’s preface, while the second refers to a prisoner having to put his father’s body into a furnace. Despite being an accurate translation of the source text term, ‘oven’ seems inappropriate in this context, having strong domestic connotations. The retranslation opts for the more widely recognised and specific term ‘furnace’, thereby showing an awareness of the target audience expectations. Curiously, the first translation strays more from the source text in its rendering of ‘cheminée’ than the retranslation. It might be argued that at the time of the first translation the propositional meaning of the term ‘chimney’ was limited to those chimneys offering ventilation in a standard building, and not a concentration camp crematory.

The context of this example merits closer consideration, as it illuminates a significant point about the meaning of the words used to refer to the camps. Shortly after their arrival in the camps, Eliezer and the other new prisoners are addressed by an SS officer. He states:

 Vous êtes à Auschwitz. Et Auschwitz n’est pas une maison de convalescence. C’est un camp de concentration. Ici, vous devez travailler. Sinon, vous irez droit à la cheminée. Au crématoire. Travailler ou le crématoire – le choix est entre vos mains. […]

Le mot « cheminée » n’était pas ici un mot vide de sens : il flottait dans l’air, mêlé à la fumée. C’était peut-être le seul mot qui eût ici un sens réel. (pp. 85-86)

The first translation renders this passage as follows:

“You are at Auschwitz. And Auschwitz is not a convalescent home. It’s a concentration camp. Here, you have got to work. If not, you will go straight to the furnace. To the crematory. Work or the crematory – the choice is in your hands.” […] Here the word “furnace” was not a word empty of meaning: it floated on the air, mingling with the smoke. It was perhaps the only word which did have any real meaning here. (p. 36)
While the retranslation is formulated as:

> You are in Auschwitz. And Auschwitz is not a convalescent home. It is a concentration camp. Here, you must work. If you don’t you will go straight to the chimney. To the crematorium. Work or crematorium – the choice is yours.” […] The word “chimney” here was not an abstraction; it floated in the air, mingled with the smoke. It was, perhaps, the only word that had a real meaning in this place. (pp. 38-39)

The narrator’s comment centres on the importance of the very word ‘cheminée’. This underscores the centrality of the ‘cheminée’s in camp life and recalls Delbo’s discussion of the different meaning words take on when used in the concentrationary context. The narrator is highlighting the importance of this word (and the very real object to which that word refers) and the translated text therefore cannot alter that word without consequence. The difference between a furnace and a chimney is not vast, but it is significant. While a furnace signifies the structure in which something is burnt at a very high temperature (implicitly a higher temperature than an oven, for instance) a chimney refers to the flue structure through which the by-product of smoke is funnelled during and after the burning process. The chimney is a spectral remnant of atrocities completed, while a furnace is an actively vicious tool used to destroy life. The meaning for a Holocaust survivor is completely different. The reversion to the closer equivalent to the source text’s ‘cheminée’ restores this aspect of the anecdote related by the narrator.

The final subset of camp terms affected by the retranslation involves those terms rendered in German (Table 18). This is perhaps one of the most visible changes made in the retranslation, and it indicates a noteworthy shift in how we talk about the Holocaust. The international nature of the event, and the multilingual nature of the event, is seemingly more recognised now than it was fifty years ago. There are a number of terms which are now rendered in their “source” language of German, instead of being adapted into broadly equivalent English terms. Relating experiences using the words in which those experiences were lived could maybe be seen to provide the reader with a more authentic account of those experiences, as Rose noted. Or, it might be felt that the specific German terms used in the camps have a meaning unique from any words in English (or other languages in which Holocaust accounts are told). In
the 2006 edition of Night we see a number of additions in German made to the text:

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«Le travail, c'est la liberté!»</td>
<td>&quot;Work is liberty!&quot; (p. 38)</td>
<td>ARBEIT MACHT FREI. Work makes you free. (p. 40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: German terms for signage

These additions are made in a number of ways. The first example provided is perhaps the most predictable. The sign at the entrance of Auschwitz states that ‘Arbeit macht frei’. This is now a commonly known historical fact, and these German words have taken on an internationally understood meaning in the context of the Holocaust. This seems not to have been the case at the time of the source text’s composition, or at the time of its first translation. Additionally, the words are presented in capital letters, thereby more accurately representing the actual design of the sign found at Auschwitz, and more clearly evoking an emblematic visual memory of the camps. Furthermore, we can note that the gloss translation of the sign provided by the re-translator differs substantially from the translation of the sign provided in the 1960 edition. The retranslation closely resembles the German, employing the target language ‘make’ which closely resembles the German ‘machen’ (to make or do) and ‘free’, which again resembles the source language ‘frei’. However, having employed the verb ‘to make’ an object pronoun must be added, which has the effect of rendering the sign much more targeted and personal than that presented in the first translation. It is also worth noting that on a later page (p. 46) the retranslation uses an English rendering of the sign’s meaning (‘at the gate, the sign proclaimed that work meant freedom’), therefore making doubly sure that the meaning of this iconic symbol was clear for the reader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>son petit pipel (p. 123)</td>
<td>his little servant (p. 61)</td>
<td>his young pipel (p. 64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reichsführer Himmler (p. 120)</td>
<td>Himmler (p. 59)</td>
<td>Reichsführer Himmler (p. 62)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Reinstatement of German terms for people
The next two examples (Table 19) are cases wherein the first translation omitted a German term that was present in the source text, and which was subsequently reinstated in the retranslation (*pipel* and *Reichsführer*). This would suggest that at the time of publishing the first translation it was felt to be more appropriate not to use any German in the translation. By 2006, and in line with the relatively widespread use of German throughout the retranslation, the source text German term is felt to be more fitting. This speaks to the internationalisation of Holocaust memorialisation, and the relatively standardised range of terminology now used to describe life in the concentration camps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>près de la place d'appel (p. 118)</td>
<td>near the assembly point (p. 58)</td>
<td>near the Appelplatz, the assembly point (p. 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chef de camp (p. 119)</td>
<td>The head of the camp (p. 58)</td>
<td>The head of the camp, the Lagerälteste, (p. 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notre chef de block (p. 94)</td>
<td>the prisoner in charge of our block (p. 41)</td>
<td>our Blockälteste (p. 44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Addition of German terms with glosses

Further evidence of this is the addition of German terms, with target language glosses for explanation (Table 20). While the source text uses a noun phrase to describe a place or person ('la place d'appel', ‘Le chef de camp’) and the first translation employs the same strategy, the retranslation adds German terms too (‘Appelplatz’, and ‘Lagerälteste’ respectively). Two observations can be made regarding these additions. One the one hand, it might be that these are now felt to be commonly understood terms, without which the text would seem archaic or out of synch with comparable texts in the genre. On the other hand, these might have been added to lend an additional air of authenticity to the testimony, giving a “flavour” of a foreign language experience.

The third example of this phenomenon is perhaps the most noteworthy: in this instance no target language gloss is provided for ‘Blockälteste’ in the retranslation, while the source text and the first translation both use noun phrases to convey the identity of this figure (‘notre chef de block’ and ‘the prisoner in charge of our block’). In this case it would seem that the German term was felt to most precisely convey the role and status of this person, and
that it would be sufficiently familiar or comprehensible to an English target audience to not require any further explanation. The context of this term is key: it is used to refer to a relatively kindly Blockälteste who is introduced a few pages earlier, but who is not given this title at this point:

we came to a new block. The man in charge was waiting. He was a young Pole, who was smiling at us (p. 41) […] At the start of the third week, our Blockälteste was removed; he was judged too humane (p. 44)

Since the reader is introduced to the kindly Pole and told that he is in charge of the block, he or she is prepared for the German term which is used to refer to the same kindly Pole a short number of pages later. Without this context the term would most likely not be understood. It is nonetheless a rather daring strategy to employ a German term in the English text without any gloss, which indicates that the translator expects the reader to either understand (due to the standardisation in terms used to refer to the camps) or make the effort to understand the term in the interests of getting an authentic impression of the camp experience.

5.8 Conclusions

Each English language version of the testimony is indicative of its presupposed audience’s expectations, and the retranslation is not in line with the retranslation hypothesis’ suggestion that new translations tend to be more source-oriented than their predecessors. Rather, it would appear that as the testimony has become much more well-known in America and as the Holocaust has become a prominent feature in American culture, so the testimony has been orientated toward this new target audience. Evidence to support this claim includes simple adaptations made to the text to bring it into line with American English norms and the bringing to the fore of Jewish aspects of the text. Further evidence suggesting that this version is more target-oriented is the highly idiomatic use of the target language: little or no indication is given that this text was first written in French. It is furthermore clear from the text that our increased understanding of the Holocaust, and indeed, its international memorialisation, have affected the terminology used to refer to the concentrationary experience. This lexical homogenisation has led to a number of changes being made to the retranslation.
These changes relate both to attitudes to translation and to the testimonial pact associated with Wiesel's account. It was seemingly felt that this translation needed to read as though it were not a translation. Its (American) English is entirely palatable. This is part of the testimonial pact: despite all of the features within this text which encourage its readers to question the infallibility of narratives, and which encourage them to bring their own reading to the text, there is little or no indication within the text that a third-party has influenced the composition of the account. The text presented to these readers is transparent, presenting a seemingly unmediated representation of the writer's camp experiences, using English which does not inherently challenge readers’ expectations of this language. Readers of the new translation of Night are not asked to make an effort to comprehend the language of this piece of testimony, which elsewhere contains a wide range of features which resist comprehension. The next chapter of analysis builds on this discussion, examining the question of the texts' narrative voices, and how these affect the testimonial pact associated with each version of Wiesel's testimony.
Chapter 6: Voices of the Nights

6.1 Introduction

Authenticity and accuracy are complex concepts in the transmission and reception of Holocaust testimony. The reader of testimony wants to know what happened, how it happened, and how it affected the writer. It is perhaps for this reason that ‘survivors often have to read testimonies and works of history to fill the gaps in their memories [and so avoid] making factual mistakes’, as Zoë Vania Waxman has observed.¹ Michael Bernard-Donals’ reflection regarding readers’ attitudes to factually inaccurate accounts also compounds this suggestion: ‘But cannot a testimony about the Shoah, regardless of its ability to make sense, be called into question if we impeach the character or the veracity of the speaker? How can what an unreliable speaker says be possible, we might ask?’.² The changes outlined in the previous chapter do not alter the fundamental impression of what happened in the camps in which Wiesel was interned. Rather, they are adaptations made to suit a particular target audience. They are changes which are primarily of interest to this study because they show that the retranslation is conspicuously transparent in its English, drawing little or no attention to its status as a translated text.

There are, however, changes made to the substance of the testimony which alter the representation of events and people at the camp. Alterations regarding the characters involved in the narrative have a significant effect on the portrayal of the events, but also on the narrator of the testimonial account. This is a diverse group of changes, each of which is indicative of the distinctive nature of the different versions’ narrators. For example, we see instances when the author figure’s voice appears to be distinguished from that of the narrator, varied techniques which emphasise or downplay the presence of the narrator, and modulations in the tone of the narrator’s voice. Furthermore, the benevolence of the narrator seems to vary from one edition to the other. This is apparent in the language used by the narrator and the way in which he

describes particular people and events. It is argued here that each distinct narrator caters to the perceived interest or standpoint of the testimony’s hypothetical audience. As such, an analysis of these features can help us to frame questions regarding the variations in Holocaust discourses through both time and place.

6.2 Authorial voices

Each translation contains features which make the voice of the author more or less prominent at certain times in the account. As outlined in Chapter 4, there are instances in the testimony when it seems that it is the author figure rather than the narrator who is addressing the reader. These mark a break in the account and offer an opportunity to intercede with remarks which are distinct from the events being described. The following examples (Table 21) relate to the intervention of the author figure representative of Elie Wiesel in account.3 It is clear that Elie Wiesel wrote this testimony, but there are moments in the text when a voice which is apparently that of Wiesel himself is heard much more clearly than that of Eliezer. At these times it becomes apparent that it is Elie Wiesel (mature man, humanitarian, award-winning writer) who is addressing the readers. The first example is another instance of addition in the retranslation, while the latter is a case of the narrator stating that he is opting not to tell part of his story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[…] (p. 74)</td>
<td>[…] (p. 29)</td>
<td>though I didn’t know it then (p. 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je ne parlerai pas de ma vie durant ce temps-là. (p. 196)</td>
<td>I have nothing to say of my life during this period. (p. 107)</td>
<td>I shall not describe my life during that period. (p. 113)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Representation of the authorial voice

The author or translator of the 2006 version felt it necessary to make it clear that part of an observation regarding Mengele was made with the benefit of hindsight. Mengele was present at Eliezer’s first selection, during which he had to state his age and his general state of health. In the source text the narrator says:

Au centre se tenait le docteur Mengele, ce fameux docteur Mengele (officier S.S. typique, visage cruel, non dépourvu d’intelligence, monocle), une baguette de chef d’orchestre à la main, au milieu d’autres officiers. (p. 74)

However, in the retranslation, the narrator adds ‘Standing in the middle of it was, though I didn’t know it then, Dr. Mengele, the notorious Dr. Mengele’ (p. 31). The motivation for this addition is hard to pin down. It is evident that the young Eliezer, who had known so little about the concentration camps, would not have known who the doctor was and what his role was in the camps. With this in mind, it seems unnecessary to state that this information was gleaned in the years following his release from the camps. The presence of this caveat in the retranslation would suggest that the author wishes to signal to the reader that he is drawing on his post-camp life to make this observation, creating the impression that it is the representative of this part of the tripartite figure behind the text which is addressing him or her at this point in the account.

It is possible that amendments have been made to the retranslation that defuse possible critiques levelled against its accuracy, a suggestion which is discussed in greater depth in later portions of this chapter and in Chapters 7 and 8. It is possible that readers would see Eliezer’s remark that Mengele was there and question how a teenage boy with no prior knowledge of the concentration camps could have known who this man was. If such readers were to ask themselves questions of this kind, their trust in the truthfulness of the text would be undermined, and the primary function of the text (conveying the writer’s Holocaust experiences) would fail.

The second example to be discussed is taken from the closing pages of the testimony. After the death of his father, the narrator opts to not describe his time in the camps. From the outset, this piece of testimony has focussed on the destruction of what the narrator sees as the fundamental bases of humanity: family and faith. We see him struggle with his faith and we see a range of family
bonds being destroyed. The shift in his perception of his own father and in his relationship with his father is the main thrust of the narrative. After the harrowing scenes describing the father’s final days, all that remains of the testimony is a four-page description of his eventual release from the camps, including the uprising that preceded the Americans’ arrival and the well-known scene describing Eliezer staring at his own reflection in a mirror. This final, brief chapter begins with a warning to the reader: ‘Je devais encore rester à Buchenwald jusqu’au 11 avril. Je ne parlerai pas de ma vie durant ce temps-là. Elle n’avait pas d’importance. Depuis la mort de mon père, plus rien ne me touchait’ (p. 196). The source text narrator clearly and clinically states that he will not describe what happened in the intervening two and a half months. This is a curious statement, as it might make the reader wonder what else the narrator has opted to omit from his account, and therefore how accurate the account is. It also highlights the extent to which the account is mediated and recalls the distance between the narrator and the author, reminding the reader that he or she has been reading a text which has been shaped and edited, and that the narrator is nothing more than a textual construct.

The two translations deal with this statement quite differently. It is the retranslation which presents it in a way which most closely recreates the source text’s lexis and syntax, using ‘shall’ to convey the French simple future and ‘during’, which is very similar to the source text ‘durant’. The first translation expresses a different sentiment entirely. Rather than expressing the author’s lucid choice to not write about these two and a half months, the first translation states that the narrator has ‘nothing to say’. There is a distinction between deciding not to write something, and having nothing to write: having nothing to write implies that nothing noteworthy happened, while choosing not to write signifies an active sorting of the events being included in the account. In the 1960 translation the impression that the author is editing his account is reduced, while this impression is restored in the retranslation.

6.3 Emphasising the narrative voice

Tables 22 and 23 demonstrate that there is an indisputable trend to add more emphasis in the retranslation than was present in either the source text or the Rodway translation. Each addition of italics in the retranslation gives emphasis
to a different word, so it is impossible to say that this strategy has just one effect on the testimony, but it does have a particular effect on the way in which the testimony is read: the reader is guided into paying more attention to certain words than to others. He or she is given clues to reading the testimony, and to which parts of the text are particularly significant. Just as the use of very idiomatic and easy-to-read English in the retranslation makes the testimony easy to digest (from a linguistic point of view at the very least) so the use of italics provides signposts for reading. Furthermore, the italics have an effect on the reader’s perception of the narrator: he becomes a narrator who speaks emphatically at certain moments, rather than one who delivers much of his testimony in a slightly detached tone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De vraies nouvelles. (p. 95)</td>
<td>Real news. (p. 42)</td>
<td>The real news. (p. 45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Reinstated italics

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4 Pratt et al suggest that ‘it seems clear that speakers and writers do have a variety of techniques at their disposal for influencing listeners’ or readers’ interpretations of discourse. Presumably one way such techniques can have their effect is by eliciting the appropriate interpretive schema in a listener’s or reader’s mind. Chafe (1976) has discussed a broad class of these techniques, using the term “packaging variables” to describe them. In general, these packaging techniques provide ways for the communicator to signal the appropriate interpretation of the message to the recipient, and to ease the burden of interpretation’. The italicisation of key words is included in these ‘packaging variables’. The experiment conducted by this team demonstrated that these variables can play a role in the interpretation of ‘ambiguous passages’. (Michael W. Pratt, Ann Robins Krane, and Janet Ross Kendall, ‘Triggering a Schema: The Role of Italics and Intonation in the Interpretation of Ambiguous Discourse’, *American Educational Research Journal*, 18 (1981), 303-15 (p. 304), citing: Wallace L. Chafe, ‘Givenness, Contrastiveness, Definiteness, Subjects, Topics, and Point of View’, in *Subject and topic*, ed. by Charles N. Li (University of California at Santa Barbara: Academic Press, 1975), pp. 25-55.
We see here nine instances of added italics, and one instance of a reinstated italic. The reinstated italic (Table 22) is taken from a passage about the narrator having lied to a distant relative in the camp, telling this relative that he believed the man’s family to be alive and well. His deception is eventually uncovered, and in the source text and the retranslation emphasis is put on the relative having heard real news from another source. Emphasising that this news is real recalls for the reader that the narrator himself had given fictitious information to the man. The omission of this feature in the first translation is curious: removing the emphasis seems to serve little purpose, other than perhaps to suit target language norms, or create a more neutral tone.

The first example of italics found only in the retranslation (Table 23) is from Mauriac’s preface. In the final paragraph he asks:
Lui ai-je affirmé que ce qui fut pour lui pierre d’achoppement est devenu pierre d’angle pour moi ? (p. 30)

Did I explain to him that what had been a stumbling block for his faith had become a cornerstone for mine? (xxi)

The retranslation presents a curious rendering of this source text formulation, employing explication to state that it is Mauriac’s faith which was affected by his impression of the Holocaust: this is not made explicit in the source text, but is underlined in the second translation. In addition to this, italics are employed to highlight the different effect that the Holocaust had on the men’s respective faiths. The overall impact of these two strategies is to underscore the theological aspect of Wiesel and Mauriac’s relationship, both with each other and with the Holocaust.

The second example is a reaction to a sign stating ‘Attention! Danger de mort’. The narrator observes the irony in this sign, because the internees were always in danger of death. This comment is stated with more emphatic derision in the retranslation (as a result of the additional italics) than in either of the other versions. This has the effect of making the narrator seem more embittered than the narrator of the source text or the first translation, who makes this statement in a more neutral tone. This more emphatic tone is seen again in a passage in which the narrator’s father belatedly realises that he did fail a selection process (and that he would subsequently be sent to his death), and announces the news to his son. In the source text he does so in a relatively neutral tone, albeit with an exclamation mark to signify the gravity of the situation. The retranslation adds further emphasis through the use of italics on the word ‘did’: this makes it very clear to the reader that this new information is in contrast to older information by drawing attention to the past participle, which is used here to provide emphasis in an affirmative statement.

A similar process can be observed in a later example: near the end of the account, the narrator describes a son leaving his frail father behind, and emphasis is added to the auxiliary ‘had’. This changes the narrator’s tone, having him insist more strongly on the son’s apparent betrayal of his father. This is coupled with a further example, taken from just a few lines later. The narrator states that he had ‘bien fait d’oublier cela’ (p. 165). Here, the second translator
has added emphasis (on the auxiliary once again ‘It was good that I had forgotten that’ (p. 91)). This has the effect of emphasising how distressing it would have been for the father to learn the truth of his son’s abandonment. Just one page later this more emphatic narrator appears again. Italics are used to accentuate his statement that the guards accompanying the internees on the death march were also tired, as evidenced by their decreasing ferocity: ‘Our column had lost all appearance of discipline. Everyone walked as he wished, as he could. No more gunshots. Our guards surely were tired’ (p. 92). The italics here highlight the contrast between this behaviour and their earlier behaviour. The tone in the retranslation is almost sardonic, while that of the source text (‘Nos gardiens devaient être fatigués’ (p. 165)) is much less so.

The final examples are all taken from the closing pages of the testimony. These passages describe the narrator’s father’s final days. These are highly emotionally charged moments, which are accentuated in the retranslation through the successive addition of italics. The first of these final three examples recounts the father telling his son where the family riches were buried, knowing that he was near death:

J’essayai de lui expliquer que tout n’était pas encore fini, qu’on rentrerait ensemble à la maison, mais lui ne voulait plus m’écouter. Il ne pouvait plus m’écouter. Il était épuisé. Un filet de bave, mêlé de sang, lui coulait des lèvres. Il avait clos ses paupières. Sa respiration se fit haletante.

The context of this passage makes it clear that the father is physically unable to continue to speak, and the source text opts not to use italics to stress this point, nor does the 1960 translation. The retranslation, however, does (‘He could no longer listen to me’ (p. 108)). This is in line with the more insistent narrator we have seen elsewhere in this version of the testimony. The penultimate example is added to a doctor’s suggestion that instead of Eliezer giving his meagre ration of food to his ailing father, he should be eating that of his father (whose death was inevitable at this point). Just after hearing him say this, the narrator comments: ‘Il avait raison, pensais-je au plus secret de moi-même, sans oser me l’avouer. Trop tard pour sauver ton vieux père, me disais-je’ (p. 193). In the source text, the relationship between this secret admission and the doctor’s comment is implicit. The retranslation makes it more explicit by emphasising the
idea that the son should be eating the dying father's food ('you should be getting his rations...' (p. 111)).

The final example of added emphasis in the retranslation is found in one of the testimony's most harrowing passages, describing an event which by all accounts still haunts the author. In his final hours, the narrator's father was in great discomfort, and moaning. This attracted the attention of the guard, who beat him, while he cried out for his son in the bunk above.

Il continuait à m'appeler. L'officier lui asséna alors un coup violent de matraque sur la tête.

Je ne bougeai pas. Je craignais, mon corps craignait de recevoir à son tour un coup.

Mon père eut encore un râle – et ce fut mon nom : « Eliezer. » (p. 194)

In the source text, there is a disassociation between the narrator and his body. By shifting from the first person subject to the third person, the narrator states that his reaction was one of physical fear of being beaten. He distances this reaction from his mind or his heart: the decision to not move was dictated by his body's reticence, and was not a rationalised, heartfelt choice. The retranslation renders this passage as follows:

He continued to call me. The officer wielded his club and dealt him a violent blow to the head.

I didn't move. I was afraid, my body was afraid of another blow, this time to my head.

My father groaned once more, I heard:

“Eliezer...” (p. 111)

The beginning of the phrase closely mirrors the syntax and lexis of the source text, also shifting from the first to the third person. The rendering of 'de recevoir à son tour un coup' is more complicated. The infinitive 'recevoir [...] un coup' is nominalised ('blow'). This parallels the use of 'blow' in a previous phrase, making it clear that it was the earlier violence which caused his fear. The adverbial phrase 'à son tour' is partly conveyed in the target text term 'another', although this does not express the object of the violence, which the source text
makes clear through the use of the possessive adjective ‘son’. The retranslation compensates for this loss by adding a further clause ‘this time to my head’. This sense is implied in the source text, but verbalised in the target text. This formulation negates the disassociation between the narrator’s body and his sentient reactions, all the more so because of the italics used in the new phrase. The narrator gives the reader a significantly more explicit justification of his reaction, leaving the reader with the impression that it was much more carefully considered than it was in the source text passage.

The expression of emphasis through italicisation has a notable effect on the expression of Wiesel’s text. It serves to stress certain words, and therefore certain features of the text. The voice of the narrator is notably more emphatic in certain parts of the retranslated text than it is in the other versions of the testimony. The reader is guided to a particular point and made to notice ideas which are subtly implied in the other versions. This suggests that these were felt to be unclear in the source text, that readers of the retranslation would need or prefer these parts of the text to be explained more clearly. The narrator’s voice is more authoritative, which is perhaps a more accurate representation of the author’s actual tone in the present day: he has become an assured public speaker and an authority on questions of Holocaust memorialisation. Alternatively, this is how he always wanted the text to come across, and it is only through the process of retranslation and editing that this voice has become audible.

6.4 Exclamatory variation

Exclamation marks are a further significant feature which affects the narrative voice presented in this account’s testimonial pact.\(^5\) Unlike the regularly

\(^5\) The form and function of exclamatory statements is variable, but the use of an exclamation mark seems to be one categorical means in which this function is established. Inger Rosengren summarises that ‘exclamatives at the same time inform about a state of affairs – and thereby resemble declaratives – and express an emotion’. The nature of this emotion is context dependent and variable. Inger Rosengren, ‘Expressive Sentence Types - A Contradiction in Terms: The Case of Exclamation’, in *Modality in Germanic languages: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Toril
patterned use of italics, their use varies substantially across the three editions. Broadly speaking, the first translation renders exclamation marks less consistently than the retranslation, which tends to consistently retain those from the source text (Table 24). Let us first consider those which were added in the 1960 edition, and the effect they have on the reader’s impression of the narrator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>La Nuit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Night (1960)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Night (2006)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>de mes yeux, (p. 26)</td>
<td>see them myself! (p. vii)</td>
<td>my own eyes. (p. xvii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne s’est-elle pas accomplie? (p. 29)</td>
<td>have experienced this death! (p. ix)</td>
<td>endured such a death? (p. xx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S’il avait pu durer dix fois dix heures… (p. 118)</td>
<td>If it could only have lasted ten times ten hours!… (p. 57)</td>
<td>If only it could have gone on for ten times ten hours… (p. 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moi aussi… Moi aussi… (p. 139)</td>
<td>Me too… Me too…! (p. 71)</td>
<td>Me too, me too… (p. 74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dites quelque chose… (p. 47)</td>
<td>Say something! (p. 11)</td>
<td>Say something… (p. 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alerte. (p. 198)</td>
<td>An alert! (p. 108)</td>
<td>Alert. (p. 114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comme s’il s’agissait d’un jeu. (p. 134)</td>
<td>As if this were a game! (p. 68)</td>
<td>As if this were a game. (p. 72)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: 1960 added exclamation marks

The first two examples are taken from the translation of Mauriac’s preface to the testimony. To a certain degree, the preface establishes reader expectations, so despite being narrated by a figure distinct from that of the author-protagonist, it is nonetheless a formative aspect of the reader’s expectations of the text. In the 1960 edition, Mauriac’s shock at the idea of children being deported in cattle wagons is accentuated in comparison to his expression in the source text. The second example is in reference to the death of God in the hearts of some of the Jews who experienced the Holocaust first hand.

Dieu est mort, le Dieu d’amour, de douceur et de consolation, le Dieu d’Abraham, d’Isaac et de Jacob s’est à jamais dissipé, sous le regard de cet

enfant, dans la fumée de l’holocauste humain exigé par la Race, la plus goulue de toutes les idoles. Et cette mort, chez combien de Juifs pieux ne s’est-elle pas accomplie ? (p. 29)

Rendering this statement with an exclamation mark transforms this profound religious question (which is at the heart of Mauriac’s reading of the testimony) from one of wondering and reflection, into a shocked statement of fact. The reader is not asked to reflect on the question when reading the text, but is told outright that a great number of Jews felt this way with regard to their faith.

The next example refers to the bombing of Buna by Allied forces. The source text employs ellipsis at the end of the reflection regarding what would have happened had the bombing continued for longer. This leaves the reader a mental pause to consider the hypothetical ramifications of a more sustained period of bombing: knowing at this point that the narrator’s father dies, the implication is that this might not have been the case if the bombing were to have continued. The use of ellipsis is understated, whereas the exclamation mark added in the first translation gives the comment a frantic note, transforming the moment of reflection into a frustrated, angry, desperate statement. The reader’s space for reflection is reduced and the narrator’s voice is accentuated.

This is also the case in the next four examples. We have here two cases of ellipsis either being accentuated with or replaced by an exclamation mark, the first in an exclamation from the narrator’s father that he too had been told to remain at the camp after a selection (the implication being that he was going to be sent to the crematoria), and the second from a townsperson asking the narrator’s father for information about the imminent deportation. The example of ‘moi aussi…’ is particularly poignant. We see a shift in the father’s voice; he goes from quietly stating his fate, without drama or rancour, giving the reader the impression that he is not surprised by this turn of events, to making a shocking and desperate statement to his son. This changes not only the reader’s impression of the event and how surprising it is, but also the portrayal of the father-son dynamic: for the father to make a stunned exclamation to his son is a different proposition to him quietly stating what, for him, was inevitable. A similar impression is created in the example from the town meeting: rather than the character demanding information in a panicked tone, there is an
element of resignation and fear in the ellipsis used in the source text and the retranslation.

The final two examples are those wherein a full stop is replaced by an exclamation mark. The reader is given an impression of finality, rather than one of shock, panic or agitation. The first of these examples is taken from the very end of the testimony. On one of the narrator’s last days at Buchenwald, just prior to a planned evacuation of the camp, an alert is sounded. Rather than evacuating the internees at this late stage, the decision is made to kill those who remain. At this point, a group of resisting internees staged a successful uprising. The American tanks arrived shortly after. The tone of this passage in the source text is one of cool detachment and resignation:

Nous étions donc massés sur l’immense place d’appel, en rangs par cinq, attendant de voir s’ouvrir le portail. Tout à coup, les sirènes se mirent à hurler. Alerté. On regagna les blocks. Il était trop tard pour nous faire évacuer ce soir-là. L’évacuation fut remise au lendemain. (p. 198)

As is typical of this piece of testimony, there is no analysis of the narrator’s feelings or reactions, no grand exclamations of sentiment. The events are depicted in a neutral, measured tone. This is particularly the case for the closing passages of the testimony, after the death of the narrator’s father: when he died the narrator’s struggle (both for life, and against his increasing feelings of frustration and anger toward his frail father) died too. The narrator becomes, at this point, a shadow of himself. The use of a full stop after ‘Alerte’ is consistent with this tone, while the addition of an exclamation mark is jarring. It would seem reasonable to infer a certain degree of panic or excitement given the situation, so it is understandable that the translator should have added one here, but it nonetheless creates a notable change in the expression of the passage.

The last example of this set also marks a significant shift in expression. Taken from a passage describing a selection process overseen by Mengele, the source text once again presents a detached description of how the process played out: ‘Le docteur Mengele tenait une liste à la main : nos numéros. Il fit signe au chef de block : « On peut commencer ! » Comme s’il s’agissait d’un jeu’ (p. 134). A key feature in this passage is the contrast between the
internees’ fear and resignation, and Mengele’s apparent excitement (glee, almost) at what seems to be a game for him. This is made clear in the source text through the use of an exclamation mark in his statement, and the lack of one in the narrator’s. This distinction is lost in the first translation, where the translator has added an exclamation mark, expressing horror, shock or surprise at Mengele’s comment. As in the previous example, these feelings would be understandable, but they are not what is expressed in the source text. The retranslation returns to the source text contrast, reinstating the complexity of the situation.

The free use of exclamation marks in the first translation is a curious exception to its general tendency toward source orientation (Table 25). It is all the more curious because it does not only add exclamation marks – it also removes them from the source text. This seems to be one area of the text where the translator has opted to use punctuation as she felt appropriate, rather than as was used in the source text. It might be suggested that exclamation marks were not felt to be integral to the meaning of the text, and that they could therefore be altered more freely than other features in the testimony. The following examples are cases where exclamation marks were removed from the 1960 edition, and later restored in the retranslation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De l’eau ! (p. 52)</td>
<td>Water? (p. 14)</td>
<td>Water! (p. 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l’un d’eux! (p. 26)</td>
<td>one of them. (p. viii)</td>
<td>one of them! (p. xviii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Béni soit le nom de l’Eternel! (p. 29)</td>
<td>Blessed be the name of the Eternal. (p. x)</td>
<td>Blessed be the Almighty! (p. xx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ne te laisse pas aller! […] Il faut résister! Ne perds pas confiance en toi! (p. 180)</td>
<td>Don’t let yourself go under, […] You must resist. Don’t lose faith in yourself. (p. 97)</td>
<td>Don’t give in! […] You must resist! Don’t lose faith in yourself! (p. 102)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: 1960 omitted exclamation marks

In the first example we see an exclamation mark being replaced by a question mark. This extract is taken from the same passage as the one in which we saw ‘maman’ being translated first as ‘Mummy’ and subsequently as ‘Mother’. Children have been waiting for the transports under the heat of the midday sun and they are thirsty and asking for water:
Des enfants pleuraient pour avoir de l’eau!

De l’eau ! Il y en avait, toute proche, dans les maisons, dans les cours, mais il était interdit de quitter les rangs. (p. 52)

It is the second exclamation mark which is removed in the first translation and replaced with a question mark. In the source text, the exclamation mark expresses incredulity that children could be made to suffer when such an easy solution to their distress was at hand. The 1960 translation removes this sentiment, replacing it with a question mark that leads into the following sentence as an answer to the question posed. The aspect of disbelief at the cruelty is erased.

The following two examples are taken from Mauriac’s preface. As noted above, these do not affect the content of the testimony, but the way in which it is presented to the reader. Taken with the previous two examples of exclamation marks being added to the preface, there does seem to be a high proportion of alterations made to the punctuation in this part of the text. The first example here is taken from a key part of the preface: Mauriac tells the young Jewish reporter who has come to speak with him (Wiesel) that he had been profoundly marked by images of Jewish children being loaded into cattle cars for deportation: ‘« Que de fois j’ai pensé à ces enfants ! » Il me dit : « Je suis l’un d’eux. » Il était l’un d’eux !’ (p. 26) This is a turning point in the men’s relationship: Mauriac goes from seeing Wiesel as a journalist to seeing him as a survivor. This epiphany, this turning point, is marked in the source text with an exclamation mark. On a related note, it is significant for this thesis that Mauriac’s perception of Wiesel should change so markedly just as a result of learning that he is a Holocaust survivor. The knowledge that one is conversing with someone who lived those experiences first-hand is a powerful thing. This is expressed with less force in the 1960 translation than in either of the other editions.

The second preface example is from a passage wherein Mauriac cites Wiesel’s account of the marking of Rosh Hashanah in the camp, and the crisis of faith he underwent. He quotes from the description of the men chanting ‘Béni soit le nom de l’Eternel!’. This is a direct quotation from the testimony (p. 127 of the French edition). In the 1960 translation the equivalent phrase (p. 64) retains
the exclamation mark: it is only removed in the preface citation from the text. Removing it from the text takes away some of the force of the chant, thereby making it a solemn statement more than a rallying cry for the religious faithful. This is turn changes our impression of Wiesel and how he reacted to the religious ceremony, suggesting that Mauriac perceives a different version of Wiesel than is presented in the body of the testimony.

The final example of exclamation marks being removed is particularly noteworthy as we see three of them being removed from one short passage. It would seem that Rodway felt that the sentiments in this episode were being expressed too forcefully, and that it needed to be toned down. This passage describes the narrator’s father trying to encourage a long-standing friend to remain strong in the face of the challenges they faced. It is taken from very near the end of the testimony, at a time when the father himself is weak and tired. There is, therefore, a contrast between the father’s own state and the strength he is trying to inspire. This contrast is more marked in the source text because the exclamation marks show the reader that the father is speaking forcefully and with conviction. In the 1960 edition, the contrast is less clear: we, as readers, are not given the impression that the father is really able to generate much force in his interlocutor, given that he himself does not seem to have much at this point.

Compared to this relatively large number of exclamation mark alterations in the first translation, there are relatively few in the retranslation (Table 26). There are three examples of exclamation marks being removed, and one of them being added:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Béni soit le nom de l’Eternel! (p. 127)</td>
<td>Blessed be the Name of the Eternal! (p. 64)</td>
<td>Blessed be God’s name… (p. 67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moi, son fils unique! (p. 192)</td>
<td>I, his only son! (p. 104)</td>
<td>I, his only son… (p. 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comme on respirait, maintenant! (p. 137)</td>
<td>How we breathed again, now! (p. 69)</td>
<td>We were able to breathe again. (p. 73)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: 2006 omitted exclamation marks
The first example is related to the last case of Rodway removing exclamation marks. This is the religious chant to which Mauriac refers in his preface, in which no exclamation mark is used. Here, we see that the 2006 edition removes the exclamation mark, and replaces it with ellipsis. As will be discussed below, the addition of ellipsis is a recurrent feature in the retranslation, and indeed, the use of ellipsis is a defining feature in this piece of testimony. In this context, the ellipsis leaves the reader a moment to consider the momentousness of what is being said by the character presiding over the service, and what it might mean to the narrator. In contrast to a rousing exclamation of faith, the reader is presented with a thought-provoking statement.

The second example also sees an exclamation mark being replaced with an instance of ellipsis. This extract is taken from near the end of the testimony, when the narrator's father is dying. He is thirsty, but water will only worsen his illness:

Je savais qu'il ne fallait pas qu'il boive. Mais il m'implora si longtemps que je cédai. L'eau était pour lui le pire poison, mais que pouvais-je encore faire pour lui ? Avec de l'eau, sans eau, cela finirait de toute façon bientôt…

Toi, au moins, aie pitié de moi…

Avoir pitié de lui ! Moi, son fils unique ! (p. 192)

There is already a precedent for ellipsis in this passage, so its presence is not incongruous. It does, however, change the tone of the passage. Rather than the narrator expressing shock and dismay at the situation (as is the case in the source text and the 1960 edition) the remark seems reflective, poignant (‘I, his only son…’ (p. 110)). The final example of an omitted exclamation mark in the retranslation is from just after a selection, from which the narrator and those closest to him seem to have escaped unscathed. Expressing his relief at it being over, the narrator states ‘Comme on respirait, maintenant!’ There is great relief in this sentiment, which is attenuated in the retranslation. In the retranslation the narrator makes the remark in a much more measured way, stating ‘We were able to breathe again’. This plays down the stress they were feeling prior to the selection, and their relief at it being over.
Table 27: 2006 added exclamation mark

There is just one example of an exclamation mark being added to the retranslation. This occurs right at the beginning of the account. Moshé-le-Bedeau is imploring the townspeople to believe his account of the atrocities being committed beyond Sighet. No-one believes what he is saying, so he cries (‘pleurer’, not ‘crier’) ‘Juifs, écoutez-moi’, speaking directly to them as a religious group. He is not desperate or pleading, but lucid and almost resigned to them not listening. In the retranslation, this imperative is more emphatic because of the presence of the exclamation mark. This is related to the question of premonition in the text: the people of Sighet were warned about the acts of the German army, Wiesel even implores his father to relocate their family, but the warnings were ignored, and the people perished. This notion is emphasised in the retranslation, where the warning is made more emphatically with an exclamation mark.

Changes in the strength of expression across the various editions have a considerable, if not patterned, effect on the testimony. It is not possible to say that the varying use of exclamation marks renders one version routinely more forceful in its tone than the others, nor that there is one version which plays down dramatic statements throughout the testimony. Rather, there is a range of changes effectuated. There are considerably more changes in the first translation (where exclamation marks seem to be an exception to the otherwise source-oriented approach), than in the retranslation. Each change in use has a context-specific effect on the testimony, accentuating or neutralising specific textual features or key themes in the text. The reader's impression of the narrator is altered by each more or less exclamatory statement, resulting in distinct narrators in each version of the testimony.

6.5 Narrating the ethical

Thus far, this analysis has demonstrated that each version of Wiesel’s testimony renders features such as italics, exclamation marks, and direct comment on the part of the author in unique ways, each of which presents the reader with a distinct narrative voice. The narrative voice varies further still,
because the content and evoked meaning of his remarks regarding ethical issues alters with each version too. There are two main areas where this is apparent: the words chosen to describe insults levelled at the internees; and the way in which the narrator describes internees behaving toward one another. These ethical features are of particular importance because they speak to the author’s expectations of what the reader will want or need to hear, and the way in which he or she will want or need to hear it. Each account of the events is the result of translation (French would not have been the language originally used in the interactions described), which means that there is little question of the ‘accuracy’ of the English renderings of the French words the author chose to use to recreate the interactions he is describing. Rather, each rendering is a discrete representation of the scene being described, carefully crafted in line with the author’s and translator’s perception of the events and the readers.

The representation of these figures is intrinsically linked to ethical reactions to the Holocaust. The way in which behaviours and actions are presented to readers demonstrates a value judgement regarding each character’s ethics, or lack thereof. The question of Holocaust ethics is contentious, arousing passionate responses on the part of the public and scholars alike. Representations of the perpetrators of the Holocaust present a particularly emotive example, which is pertinent to this study because the representations of perpetrators shift from one version of Wiesel’s testimony to another. An essential example of these ethical responses can be found in Levi’s discussion of the ethical ‘gray zone’. Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth state that this term refers to the ‘moral ambiguity and compromise’ engendered by Auschwitz. Applying this term, Gideon Greif argues that the structure of the camps broke ‘all kinds of existing barriers between perpetrators and victims, between good and evil, between morality and immorality, between civilisation

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and havoc’. It is this breakdown of barriers which is portrayed in distinct ways in the different versions of Wiesel’s testimony.

A key example of the contentious nature of this issue in Holocaust discourses is the heated debate between Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen regarding the actions of the Reserve Police Battalion 101. Their debate shows the extent to which our perceptions of the actions which constitute the Holocaust and the ethical choices governing these actions are varied and changeable. Indeed, Browning notes the continuing salience of this line of enquiry: ‘we are still left with an unresolved question that cannot be solved by simple assertion: Is a culture of hatred the necessary precondition for such a culture of cruelty? Goldhagen has posed [this] important question. I do not believe that we have as yet found a satisfactory answer’. Through time, any analysis of Holocaust ethics is becoming increasingly acute: the small number of survivors and perpetrators still alive to tell their stories and face punishment for their crimes forces us to correlate our instinctive responses to someone who slaughtered innocent human beings with the old, frail person that this slaughterer has become. Humanising perpetrators becomes an inescapable aspect of any value judgement regarding their actions during the war and the execution of Hitler’s racial and social policies. Each successive representation of perpetrators (and internees) is indicative of a distinct perception of these individuals, shaped by the personal and social context of the translation process.

Wiesel’s own role in our perception of post-Holocaust ethics also merits consideration here. Schwarz has argued that ‘Night […] demands an ethical response’ and an ‘ethical reader’. La Nuit’s prominent position in Holocaust

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9 Browning, Ordinary Men, pp. 208-9.
10 Schwarz, Imagining the Holocaust, p. 56.
remembrance and Wiesel's own pleas for an awareness of and action against human suffering and cruelty highlight the importance of these references to specific individuals' behaviour in the camps. This piece of testimony describes the process of dehumanisation to which both internees and personnel were subjected (or, at the very least, depicts the end result of this process), demanding that the reader respond to this description with a moral and ethical judgement.

Beyond his testimony, Wiesel has also commented on the responsibility of those who were active participants in the slaughter of the Jews. Regarding Eichmann’s trial, Wiesel stated in the *New York Post* in 1961 that ‘the most fascinating thing about Eichmann is that he is human. If he were inhuman, he would be easy to understand’. He goes on to question how a human being could partake in acts of genocide, asking ‘What is there about man that we do not know - but must find out before we destroy each other?’.\(^\text{11}\) In a 1966 lecture given in Wisconsin, Wiesel stated that ‘I believe that the whole German people who were adult and who could commit crimes either actively or passively were guilty’, showing a very strong opinion on this contentious issue.\(^\text{12}\) Carole J. Lambert suggests that ‘both [Levi and Wiesel] emphasize respect for human dignity, reject indifference to the sufferings of others, and refuse hate’.\(^\text{13}\) These ethical responses to acts of cruelty perpetuated during the Holocaust give the impression that Wiesel, while not hateful, does hold perpetrators responsible for their acts.

It is also useful to consider France and America’s varying ethical responses to the Holocaust, which might colour the writer’s and translators’ perceptions of appropriate portrayals of the events and perpetrators. France’s ethical responses to the Holocaust are partly shaped by the Occupation of France and the era of the Vichy regime (as was discussed in Chapter 4). Conan and Rousso argue that ‘les contradictions, les paradoxes, les bégaiements de [la mémoire de la guerre] sont trop éclatants pour ne pas constituer un réel phénomène de société’, suggesting that the ethical challenges posed by the

\(^{11}\) Abrahamson, *Against silence*, p. 47.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 134.
\(^{13}\) Lambert, *Ethics After Auschwitz?*, p. 2.
Occupation and its relationship with the Holocaust form part of the fabric of French society. Similarly, Robert Paxton argued in 1982 that ‘emotionally, the Vichy regime has not yet been re-integrated into any consistent sense of the past’. Furthermore, Paxton suggests that France and America’s responses to the Occupation (and, by extension, the Holocaust), are mutually incomprehensible:

It is indeed hard for the [French and American] people to comprehend each other across the chasm of two such different experiences: recent America, with its “good war” against Hitler and its casual acceptance as normal of its extraordinary post-1945 privileges, and millennial and sceptical France with its long history of ups and downs. (p. xv)

This degree of cultural specificity regarding each audience’s ethical responses to the Holocaust feeds into the distinct testimonial pact associated with each version of Wiesel’s testimony.

6.5.1 Insults

The first manifestation of the varying ethical responses to acts of cruelty perpetrated in the camps is representations of how the camp personnel are seen to interact with the internees. Fundamental to this discussion is the use and translation of insults across the various editions. The strength and nature of the insults vary from one version of the testimony to another, thereby giving the reader a distinct impression of the way in which the internees were addressed. It is argued here that the insults in the first translation are slightly stronger than those in the retranslation. This gives the impression that the internees were treated more cruelly in this edition than in the later edition. This is a challenging lexical field to assess: insults, like swear words, have a primarily evocative meaning, which is highly context-dependent and complicated to gauge objectively. As Jean and Marie-Jo Derive note, ‘L’insulte n’est pas toujours une catégorie lexicale a priori (dans le cas d’un nom unique proféré en apostrophe à

l’encontre d’un allocutaire) et pas systématiquement non plus une catégorie rhétorique (dans le cas d’une séquence d’adresse plus complexe) identifiable comme telle en dehors d’un contexte de communication’. Similarly, Susan Bassnett notes that: ‘Insults and curses do not translate easily, and even when they are translated the weight they carry with native speakers is very difficult to determine’, and that ‘The weight of an insult is one of the hardest ideas of all to grasp for the non-native speaker, yet it is crucial to both the insulter and the person insulted’. These factors complicate the analysis of this type of expression, underscoring the importance of a context-driven analysis of these terms.\textsuperscript{16}

Below (in Table 28) are two examples of different renderings of source text insults, which are (broadly speaking) equivalent in their cruelty, but distinct in their connotations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fainéants (p. 56)</td>
<td>lazy swine (p. 17)</td>
<td>lazy good-for-nothings (p. 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canailles (p. 155)</td>
<td>swine (p. 81)</td>
<td>tramps (p. 85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28: Variation in insult connotation

In these two examples, both translations capture the propositional meaning of the source text term, in the first instance telling somebody that he or she is idle, and in the second referring to somebody as useless or of little social standing. Neither source text term is particularly vicious, although both are pejorative. Both translations achieve what seems to be a similar degree of cruelty, although each in different ways. The 1960 edition opts to use the term ‘swine’ for both French terms. This is a general insult, which can be employed in a variety of situations and contexts, referring to a range of people (it is not specifically adapted to offend people on account of their age, race or gender). It is perhaps less commonly used now than it was fifty years ago, but it is far from being

unheard of: this is quite possibly the main reason why it is not used in the retranslation.

In three further examples (Table 29), we see the first translation opt for insults which seem harsher than those employed in the source text. The retranslation then returns to a phrase which more closely resembles the propositional meaning of the source text, and which carries a more similar evoked meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fils de chiens (p. 73)</td>
<td>dumb bastards (p. 28)</td>
<td>sons of bitches (p. 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fils de cochon (p. 115)</td>
<td>bastard (p. 56)</td>
<td>son of a swine (p. 58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiens pouilleux (p. 155)</td>
<td>filthy sons of bitches (p. 81)</td>
<td>flea-ridden dogs (p. 85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29: Cruelty of 1960 insults

Each time, the retranslation presents a rendering which tallies closely with the propositional meaning of the source text. ‘Chiens’ become ‘bitches’, which, despite being a more offensive term than ‘dogs’ still relates closely to the propositional meaning of the term. Furthermore, there is strong internal collocation in this target language formulation. The 1960 translation, on the other hand, employs the term ‘bastards’, which has little or no relationship to the words used in the source text, and adds in the word ‘dumb’, giving more weight to the sentiment. Similarly, we see ‘swine’ used to render ‘cochon’ in the retranslation (a close propositional approximation), while the first translation again uses a more insulting term from the leftfield. Finally, we have the example of ‘chiens pouilleux’, which is once again retranslated in a way which retains the propositional sense of each lexical item, having been initially translated in a more offensive way (‘dogs’ becoming ‘bitches’ and ‘flea-ridden’ becoming ‘filthy’). In each example the use of an animal metaphor is somehow distorted in the first translation, either through the omission of the metaphor, or through the use of a more pejorative term.

The retranslation reinstates the animal nature of the insults, thereby highlighting the dehumanisation of the internees, rather than the vicious attitude of those insulting them. The first translation of Night does seem to highlight the cruelty of the guards toward the internees, using harsher insults than those
used in the source text or the retranslation. This change in the representation of the guards is curious: it was perhaps felt that a British audience in 1960 would be more receptive to the idea of particularly unpleasant guards. Alternatively, it might be that in recent years public opinion regarding camp personnel has altered to take into account the idea that not all those in charge at the camp were necessarily viciously cruel or motivated by hatred of those interned there.

6.5.2 Inter-internee relations

It is not only representations of the guards which have changed across the various editions. The way in which the internees are seen to treat each other and speak to each other is also portrayed in unique ways in each translation (Table 30). This is in part related to how our perception of concentration camps has changed through time, place and audience. While the guards in the first translation seem to be crueller than those portrayed in the source text or the retranslation, the internees seem to be portrayed more positively in the retranslation than in the other versions of the testimony.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>La Nuit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Night (1960)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Night (2006)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nous l’assassinions en pensé. (p. 117)</td>
<td>In our thoughts we were murdering him. (p. 57)</td>
<td>In our minds he was already dead. (p. 59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je pensai à mon père (p. 118)</td>
<td>I thought of my father. (p. 57)</td>
<td>I anxiously thought of my father, who was at work. (p. 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serre les dents. (p. 146)</td>
<td>Grit your teeth. (p. 75)</td>
<td>Be brave. (p. 79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il avait voulu se débarrasser de son père! (p. 165)</td>
<td>he had wanted to get rid of his father! (p. 87)</td>
<td>What if he had wanted to be rid of his father? (p. 91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endoloris (p. 167)</td>
<td>pain-racked (p. 88)</td>
<td>numbed (p. 93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les vivants réjouissaient. (p. 175)</td>
<td>The living rejoiced. (p. 94)</td>
<td>The living were glad. (p. 99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s’entretuèrent pour quelques miettes. (p. 177)</td>
<td>fought each other to the death for a few crumbs. (p. 95)</td>
<td>fought desperately over a few crumbs. (p. 100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu me fais mal (p. 179)</td>
<td>you’re hurting me (p. 96)</td>
<td>[…] (p. 101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se battait (p. 186)</td>
<td>fighting (p. 101)</td>
<td>quarreled (p. 106)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 30: Portrayal of inter-internee relationships**

The first example is a particularly stark instance of the portrayal of the internees changing. It is taken from a passage wherein one internee makes a dash for an abandoned cauldron of soup during an air raid. When he reaches the soup in the source text, it is remarked that ‘il avait réussi. La jalousie nous dévorait, nous consumait comme de la paille. Nous ne pensions pas un instant à l’admirer. Pauvre héros qui allait au suicide pour une ration de soupe, nous l’assassinions en pensée’ (p. 117). The internees feel jealousy, not admiration for the suicidal internee, but jealousy to the point of wanting to kill him. This is a complex expression of the mixed feelings aroused by the man’s act: all of the internees were hungry enough to envy the man who had reached the soup, despite being conscious that he would die getting to it. The source text represents the viciousness of this jealousy and the complexity of the feelings elicited by the internee’s actions, retaining the active phrase, the first person plural subject pronoun, both the propositional and evoked meanings of
‘assassiner’ as killing with intent. The retranslation, however, alters this reaction considerably. We see a shift from ‘thoughts’ to ‘mind’ (the former denoting a more active cognitive space than the more abstract ‘mind’), from ‘murdering’ the internee to him being passively ‘dead’. The other internees are, in this case, merely observing his imminent death, rather than wishing it upon him. This transforms them from vengeful victims of a horrific situation, into bystanders to a desperate act. For the reader, this gives a very different impression of the situation, playing down any impression of malevolence which the previous version’s narrator might have implied.

The second example directly affects our impression of the protagonist (and the narrator, given the implied relationship between these figures). Also taken from the bomb alert passage, we can observe a shift in the way the protagonist thinks about his father. While in the source text and the Rodway translation he thinks of his father (with no more emotional detail described), in the retranslation the narrator states that he thought of his father ‘anxiously’. Although one would presume that the protagonist of the first two editions thought ‘anxiously’ of his father, this is not stated. The fact that it is stated in the 2006 version suggests that the author or translator felt it necessary to explicate this detail, lest it pass the reader by. The effect is that there is no doubt regarding the narrator’s concern for his father, and that he consequently comes across as unambiguously caring for him. The additional information regarding the father’s whereabouts at the time of the bombing compounds this: telling the reader where the father was makes it clear that the narrator was aware of his father’s location at the time, demonstrating his care for him.

We see another large change in the representation of a camp resident in the example of ‘Be brave’. Here, Eliezer is in the hospital block, suffering from an infected wound on his foot. The doctor who treats him is kindly and encouraging, urging him to be courageous while he undertakes a painful procedure to treat the wound. The kindliness of the doctor is more pronounced in the second translation, where, unlike the source text and the first translation he does not tell Eliezer to ‘grit [his] teeth’, but to ‘be brave’. Given that ‘grit your teeth’ is a precise, word-for-word, and idiomatic translation of the source text ‘serre les dents’, it must be assumed that the more emotionally evocative ‘be brave’ was chosen with the intention of altering the representation of the doctor.
The reasons for making the doctor seem more benevolent are unclear, but this is consistent with the strategy of making internees seem more benevolent which is seen throughout the text.

The next example of this strategy is related to the trend of uncertainty, which will be discussed in the following chapter. In this instance, we see the cruelty of an internee being expressed with doubt, rather than certainty, thereby giving the reader an entirely different impression of him. When describing how a son slipped from his father’s sight during the death march in the snow, the narrator recounts his realisation that the son had done this intentionally. In both the source and first target texts this epiphany is accompanied by an exclamation point: the realisation is sure and certain and shocking to the narrator. The narrator of the retranslation is less sure, less able to believe that one of the internees (a son, no less) could disown his father in such a way. What is, in the first two editions, a realisation about the breakdown of community at its most fundamental level, becomes a moment of self-doubt, and questioning.

The various renderings of the source text ‘endoloris’ beg the question as to whether there has been an error in translation. If not, the use of two diametrically opposed words to translate this term is hard to comprehend. This adjective is used to describe the state of bodies which were being trampled upon by an influx of internees being herded into shelter:

Des kapos nous installèrent rapidement dans les baraques. On se poussait, on se bousculait comme si ç’avait été le suprême refuge, la porte donnant sur la vie. On marchait sur des corps endoloris. On piétinait des visages déchirés. (p. 167)

Stating that the internees walked over each other’s ‘pain-racked’ body is an entirely different proposition to internees walking over ‘numbed’ internees. The adjective ‘endoloris’ literally means ‘qui souffre, éprouve une douleur’. The adjective ‘numbed’ does not convey this sense. If this is an error, it is a curious one. If it is an intended change it would seem to indicate that the translator wanted to give a more positive impression of the internees. It is clear that both descriptions are harrowing, and the retranslation certainly does not detract from
the atrocity of the situation, but it does provide a different account to that given in either of the other editions.

This strategy is apparent once again in the translation of the French ‘Les vivants réjouissaient’, a statement which is used to refer to the internees’ reaction to their fellow internees dying during the cattle car journey to Buchenwald. It is explained that this reaction was due to the fact that fewer passengers in the wagons meant more space and resources for those remaining. The retranslation rendering of this phrase nonetheless expresses this sentiment less strongly than either the source text or the first translation. ‘Réjouir’ literally means to derive joy from, a feeling which is neutralised in the 2006 edition, therefore reducing the impression that the internees in the cattle cars were happy to see each other die. A similar example is that of internees fighting over crumbs from an end of bread thrown to them by a bystander. While the source text makes it clear that this was a fight to the death (‘s’entretuer’ meaning ‘to kill each other’), a fact which is made clear in the literal translation found in the source text, the retranslation completely omits this aspect of the observation. Instead, the internees are said to fight ‘desperately’. Once again, the extreme behaviours to which the internees were driven by the concentrationary universe are attenuated in the retranslation.

The overall effect of the changing representation of the internees’ behaviours and reactions is to cast them in a more positive light. In all, the 2006 version of the testimony seems to play down the cruelty that the concentration camp created among the internees. This might indicate that it was felt to be inappropriate to portray the internees in a negative light. It might also be the case that with the text’s increasing prominence it has become more problematic to portray characters negatively: the likelihood of someone who knows the people involved reading the testimony and taking exception to his or her portrayal has increased.

6.6 Conclusions

Each version of Wiesel’s testimony speaks differently to the reader. The retranslation is more emphatic than either of the other versions, highlighting key points for the readers, and guiding them to particularly significant parts of the text. The first translation adopts a very free strategy with regard to exclamation
marks, adding them to several passages and removing them from others, creating a unique rendering of the narrative voice in each instance. The rendering of direct authorial comments furthermore affects the reader’s perception of both the author and the narrator of this text, drawing his or her attention to the process of self-editing which was involved in the composition of Wiesel’s testimony. Each distinct narrative voice furthermore presents instances of benevolence and malevolence differently, offering a distinct ethical response to the events being described. This has a direct effect on the reader’s perception of both the camp experience and the narrator who describes those experiences. Specifically, the narrator of the first translation seems to highlight the cruelty inflicted on the internees, while the retranslation’s narrator appears to attenuate the impression that internees may have behaved cruelly to one another. Each different translation decision regarding these features is indicative of the way in which the translator perceived the content of the testimony and the reader’s expectations of this text. In a variety of ways, the narrator and the protagonists of Wiesel’s accounts make a journey through time, altering their voices and behaviours along their way. In the following chapter of analysis, the idea of uncertainty in the three versions of Wiesel’s testimony is considered, revealing how this too shifts to take into account each target audience’s supposed expectations.
7.1 Certainty and Holocaust Writing

This third chapter of close textual analysis examines the degree of certainty expressed in the various versions of Wiesel’s testimony. Certainty in Holocaust writing is a problematic question, related to a number of central concerns regarding testimonial writing. The extent to which a survivor can be certain of his or her memories is not a straightforward issue. Caruth, for example, has discussed the notion of uncertainty in the context of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. She notes that Post-traumatic Stress Disorder is unique because the traumatic event which the sufferer experienced returns ‘against the will of the one it inhabits’.¹ She relates this uncontrollable return of memories to the ‘delay or incompletion in knowing, or even in seeing, an overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its insistent return, absolutely true to the event’ (p. 5): the extent of the trauma resists processing, so the trauma returns time and again. ‘Yet the fact that this scene or thought [which returns to the sufferer] is not a possessed knowledge, but itself possesses, at will, the one it inhabits, often produces a deep uncertainty as to its very truth’ (p. 6). Indeed, ‘[i]t is not […] having too little or indirect access to an experience that places its truth in question, in this case, but paradoxically enough, its very overwhelming immediacy, that produces belated uncertainty’ (p. 6). Caruth argues, therefore, that a highly traumatic event cannot necessarily be processed by the victim (which chimes with Laub’s work), but instead remains an unprocessed memory which is liable to return vividly at any given time. This in turn leads to uncertainty and further uncertainty in narration, because the way in which the memory returns is not ordered and managed, but raw and vicious.

A further example of the difficulties of providing a sure and certain account of Holocaust memories can be found in Laub’s discussion of a testifier’s certainty that four chimneys were blown up during the Auschwitz uprising which she witnessed. The testifier was convinced of this detail, despite it being factually inaccurate. Laub argues that her certainty was born of the fact

¹ Cathy Caruth, ‘Trauma and Experience: Introduction’, in Trauma: Explorations in Memory, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 5. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
that the uprising was an ‘incredible’ event and that ‘the number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence’. Laub summarises that this testifier ‘testified to the breakage of a framework. That was the historical truth’.\(^2\) The certainty of her memory was not a black and white issue, and the formation of her memory was in part a result of her emotional interaction with this memory, as well as the process of describing the event to a third-party. As Laub notes, ‘the listener […] is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*.\(^3\)

This can be related to Fine’s observation about Wiesel's testimony, where she argues that in this text ‘[h]e has been able to relate to and to order the event so as to transmit a coherent literary work. Language and memory are mobilized as instruments of healing, and telling the story becomes an act of restitution, as well as a protest against forgetfulness. By bearing witness the author transforms his voice into a life-giving force’.\(^4\) The notion that composing an account of traumatic memories can help the victim to process them, and that the composition process can provide a means of accessing these memories, has a direct effect on the degree of certainty the testifier can express in his or her account. If the knowledge is being sought through the process of recounting the events, then only a limited degree of certainty will be present in said account. Indeed, even if the testifier feels that he or she is providing a sure and accurate account, the extent to which this is possible is called into question by the nature of the events which were witnessed.

Wiesel’s own discussion of the limitations of narratives and of factual accuracy has already been evoked in earlier chapters. He makes it clear to his readers that his account cannot be one hundred percent infallible, that he is not certain of being able to provide a wholly certain account of his camp experiences. This discussion by Wiesel calls into question the extent to which a reader would be uncomfortable with the idea that the testimony he or she is reading might not be completely reliable. Readers’ reactions to this are tempered by the desire for referentiality associated with life writing. Lejeune’s discussion of the referential pact (such as his observation that autobiographical


\(^3\) Ibid., p. 221.

writing claims to ‘apporter une information sur une « réalité » extérieure au
texte’,\textsuperscript{5} as discussed in Chapter 1), has thrown light on the importance of a
reader being confident that the text he or she is reading is factually accurate.
This is an aspect of the testimonial pact which might be unsettled by a markedly
uncertain text. The following examination of the three versions of \textit{La Nuit/Night}
considers how this problematic aspect of testimonial writing has been handled
in three different temporal and geographical contexts.

7.2 Certainty in the \textit{Nights}

In the two preceding chapters a number of significant variations across the
three editions of Wiesel’s testimony have been evoked: the updating of the
retranslation to remove archaic turns of phrase and render it in a more modern,
fluid idiom which does not betray its status as a translation, the adaptations
made in the retranslation to include more Jewish terms and alter the religious
references in the text, the various renderings of concentration camp-specific
terminology, and also the shifting ways in which the camps’ inhabitants are
presented to the reader. These differences can be attributed to a number of
pressures exerted on the various figures involved in the composition of the text,
and their analysis informs us about the changing nature and form of Holocaust
discourses in the text’s distinct destinations. These variations have a greater or
lesser effect on the \textit{content} of the account. For example, the modern idiom
employed in the retranslation very rarely changes the detail of the testimony,
although it does give the reader a particular impression of the narrator and
facilitate his or her reading of the text. The changing portrayals of the internees
and guards discussed in the preceding chapter do, however, change the
content of the account and the readers’ perception of the narrator.

In this chapter we analyse a group of differences which affect both the
content of the account and the reader’s impression of the narrator. Through a
number of changes in the text, the degree of certainty in the narrator’s account
is altered. The presence or absence of ellipsis, the use of question marks and
the use of softeners such as ‘perhaps’: all of these factors combine to give the
reader an idea of how certain the narrator is, and how accurate the account is.

\textsuperscript{5} Lejeune, \textit{Le pacte autobiographique}, p. 36
This is integral to the testimonial pact present in each text as it affects how the reader looks at the text, whether he or she is aware of the limitations associated with the account’s telling. The facts of the story are, broadly speaking, consistent across the various editions, but the content changes greatly according to the certainty with which it is presented. There is, therefore, a distinct testimonial pact (and, specifically, a distinct referential pact) presented in each version of the testimony.

7.2.1 Ellipsis

One of the defining features of this piece of testimony is the motif of silence. As discussed with reference to *La Nuit*, ellipsis plays a pivotal role in the impression of silence in the text. Along with clipped, stripped back phrases, and a resistance to over-analysis and over-explanation, ellipsis encourages the reader to pause and reflect on what is written, and to absorb its magnitude. At this juncture it is useful to consider the feature of aposiopesis and its relationship with ellipsis and the effect of uncertainty. The distinction between ellipsis and aposiopesis is discussed by Jonathon Sell: ‘ellipsis [is] generally classified as a figure of speech or *schema* whereas aposiopesis [is] a figure of thought or trope, the difference being that the former result[s] from the omission of a word that could easily be supplied by the audience, the latter from the omission of a whole sentence and, therefore, of a whole thought’. Sell goes on to describe the effect of this feature in greater depth, arguing that employing this figure is akin to ‘foreclosing the communicative act in which [the writers] and their readers are involved and thereby exposing their incomplete works to the charge of formal imperfection and aesthetic impairment’ (p. 169). Finally, he describes this figure in terms of the inexpressible, suggesting that ‘[a]posiopesis is, then, a form of self-censorship or an acknowledgement of defeat before the ineffable’ (p. 171).

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Many parallels can be drawn between Sell’s discussion of this feature and the oft-noted use of ellipsis and silence in Wiesel’s testimony. As the following analysis will demonstrate, ellipsis is often employed in this text as a way of communicating something which words cannot access, a way of leaving these things unsaid. As Sell suggests, this ‘foreclos[es] the communicative act’ at the heart of the testimonial interaction, resisting simple consumption of the account. Indeed, Sell’s reference to the ineffable rings particularly true in the case of testimonial writing, suggesting that it is ellipsis as aposiopesis, rather than as a figure of speech, which is employed so consistently throughout La Nuit.

The rendering of this feature varies systematically from one edition to the other. There is a noteworthy amount of ellipsis in the source text. The first translation reduces this, while the retranslation increases it. It seems likely that some ellipses were removed from the 1960 edition in the interest of standardisation: ellipsis is not necessarily a widespread feature in English (seemingly less so than in French), so it may have been played down in order to make the text less remarkable. It can also be suggested that ellipsis was added in the 2006 edition in order to magnify a feature which is commonly associated with the text. This would imply that the text has become prominent in its field, and that it is no longer required to bend to target language norms in every way. Ellipsis is related to uncertainty, because it transforms an indicative statement into one which is much less definitive, encouraging the reader to reflect upon the statement’s content, instead of taking it at face value. The frequent omission of this feature therefore has more than a stylistic effect on the

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8 David Coward has observed the rise in the use of ellipsis in the French novel: ‘by 1950, many novelists had challenged the accepted practices of fiction by adopting multiple points of view, ellipsis, narrative disruption and expanded time’ (emphasis my own), David Coward, History of French Literature From Chanson de Geste to Cinema (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), p. 396.
first translation: it attenuates the impression of uncertainty in the text. The same is true of the addition of this feature in the retranslation: the impression that the account is fixed and definitive is diminished.

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<td>d’Austerlitz…</td>
<td>Austerlitz station. (p. vii)</td>
<td>Austerlitz train station… (p. xvii)</td>
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<td>ne contenait</td>
<td>not lie in the answer. (p. 2)</td>
<td>lost in the answer… (p. 5)</td>
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<td>une farce…</td>
<td>a joke. (p. 12)</td>
<td>in jest… (p. 15)</td>
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<td>Ils avaient</td>
<td>They had probably already seen quite a few</td>
<td>No doubt they had already seen quite a</td>
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<td>probablement</td>
<td>of these processions. (p. 43)</td>
<td>few of these processions… (p. 46)</td>
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<td>déjà vu pas mal</td>
<td>so very alone. (p. 71)</td>
<td>so alone… (p. 75)</td>
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<td>de ces</td>
<td>The inheritance. (p. 71)</td>
<td>My inheritance… (p. 75)</td>
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<td>processions…</td>
<td>relax your body and your nerves (p. 75)</td>
<td>relax your body and your nerves… (p. 79)</td>
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<td>si seul…</td>
<td>Say something! (p. 11)</td>
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<td>L’héritage…</td>
<td>during my whole childhood. (p. 101)</td>
<td>than during my entire childhood… (p. 107)</td>
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<td>tu détendras</td>
<td>his ration. (p. 105)</td>
<td>his rations… (p. 111)</td>
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<td>ton corps et</td>
<td>He may still have been breathing. (p. 106)</td>
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<td>tes nerfs…</td>
<td>relax your body and your nerves (p. 75)</td>
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<td>Dites quelque</td>
<td>Say something! (p. 11)</td>
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<td>que durant toute</td>
<td>than during my entire childhood… (p. 107)</td>
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<td>mon enfance…</td>
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<td>sa ration…</td>
<td>his ration. (p. 105)</td>
<td>his rations… (p. 111)</td>
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<td>Il respirait</td>
<td>He may still have been breathing. (p. 106)</td>
<td>Perhaps he was still breathing… (p. 112)</td>
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<td>peut-être encore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enfin libre!…</td>
<td>free at last! (p. 106)</td>
<td>Free at last!… (p. 112)</td>
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<td>(p. 195)</td>
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Table 31: 1960 omitted ellipsis

We see in Table 31 twelve examples of ellipsis being removed in the first translation. In each case it is reinstated in the retranslation. The examples span the entirety of the work and do not affect one type of phrase or subject more than any other. This seems to correlate with the idea that they were primarily removed for stylistic reasons. However, it might also be suggested that removing this ellipsis was a means of attenuating the impression of the ‘ineffable’. This is an interesting contrast to the otherwise source-oriented approach adopted in this translation. Perhaps, as seems to have been the case for exclamation marks, it was felt that punctuation did not have a major effect on the content of the testimony and that it could therefore be treated more freely
than other aspects of the text. The accumulated effect of the successive omissions does, nonetheless, have a significant impact on the degree of certainty expressed in the account. The specific phrase level effect of each omission is considered here.

The first example is taken from Mauriac's preface. He describes telling Wiesel that 'aucune vision de ces sombres années [de l'Occupation] ne [l'] a marqué autant que ces wagons remplis d'enfants juifs, à la gare d'Austerlitz... [Il] ne les [a] pourtant pas vus de [ses] yeux' (pp.25-26). The source text ellipsis marks a pause in his account, a moment for the reader to consider the relatively well-known image of the transports of Jewish children. It also creates distance between that statement and the following one, in which Mauriac states that he did not see them first-hand. This is a significant moment in the account because Wiesel goes on to tell him that he was one of those children. The contrast between Mauriac, who was profoundly marked by a described image of the children in the cattle cars, and Wiesel, who lived through the experience, is central to Mauriac's relationship with this text. It is partly why he offered his patronage (of sorts) to Wiesel's testimony, having recognised the significance of a first-hand account of what happened in the camps. Although this idea is still conveyed in the first translation, the omission of the ellipsis frames the contrasting experiences in a less marked manner.

The second example is taken from an early piece of dialogue between Moshé-le-Bedeau and Eliezer. They discuss why it is that Eliezer prays, and then embark on a theological relationship, meeting regularly to discuss questions pertaining to faith and religion. The narrator states that: 'Il m'expliquait avec beaucoup d'insistance que chaque question possédait une force que la réponse ne contenait plus...' (p. 33). This notion is central to Wiesel's testimony, and to his style of writing: rather than providing a definitive, cut and dried account or pronouncement, he favours thought-provoking statements. Indeed, the use of ellipsis in his writing seems to encourage the type of reflection Moshé-le-Bedeau endorses, giving the reader time to consider what has been stated. This pairing of form and content is lost in the first translation, where the ellipsis is replaced with a full stop. The reader is not given the same incitement to ruminate on the narrator's (and Moshé-le-Bedeau's) statement. The retranslation reinstates this feature.
The next example of omitted ellipsis in the first translation is taken from a passage describing preparations for the relocation of the town’s inhabitants into a ghetto. As briefly noted in chapter four, Eliezer is sent to wake an elderly family friend and inform him that he must move his family to the ghetto. The man is slow to awaken and does not at first understand what is being asked of him:

A moitié endormi encore, il me dévisagea, son regard chargé de terreur, comme s’il avait attendu de moi que j’éclate de rire pour lui avouer finalement :

- Remettez-vous au lit ; dormez. Rêvez. Il n’est rien arrivé du tout. Ce n’était qu’une farce… (p. 50)

In the source text, the ellipsis has the effect of underlining that this is an imagined interaction, and that the true situation is dire. The ellipsis gives the reader a moment to reflect on the ‘if only’ aspect of the imagined scene, contrasting it with the sad reality which is described in the following paragraphs. Indeed, the next lines are: ‘Ma gorge était desséchée et les mots s’y étranglaient, paralysant mes lèvres. Je ne pouvais plus rien lui dire. Alors il comprit.’ (p. 50). The juxtaposition of the ellipsis and the description of the narrator finding himself unable to speak highlights the discordance between the ‘farce’ and the true situation. The 1960 edition does not include this instance of ellipsis, instead finishing the paragraph with a full stop. This removes the pause from the account, positioning the two paragraphs directly adjacent to each other. This lessens the emotional impact of the dream-like scene, instead providing a more definitive, certain tone. Once again, the ellipsis is reinstated in the retranslation, thereby recreating the effect of the source text.

The fourth example is from a scene describing the internees’ arrival at Buna. The narrator remarks that: ‘A la traversée des villages, beaucoup d’Allemands [les] dévisageaient sans étonnement. Ils avaient probablement déjà vu pas mal de ces processions…’ (pp. 96-7). We see here an intersection between the narrator as Eliezer and the narrator as Wiesel: it is unclear whether the young narrator would have known that these convoys had already taken place on a number of occasions, or whether the narrator is supplementing the account with knowledge gained after the fact. The use of ellipsis frames the statement, making it not a definitive factual statement (an effect also created by
the use of the softener ‘probablement’), but a supposition for the reader to consider. Either the young narrator is guessing that this is the case (based on the nature of the infrastructure and the way in which the bystanders are reacting) or the adult narrator is interjecting at this point. The use of ellipsis furthermore invites the reader to consider his or her moral reaction to the bystanders’ behaviour: should they not have done something? Why did they not, or could they, not? The narrator does not offer his own judgement, but by stating the facts of the event and including ellipsis, he invites the reader to reflect on it in more detail. The narrator of the first translation does not do this, but the narrator of the retranslation does.

The following two examples are taken from the same page of the testimony. This is the passage describing that the father had not met the selection criteria and would subsequently be sent to his death. When speaking to Eliezer, the father’s speech is marked by ellipsis. This gives the impression that he is breathless, hesitant, jumping from one topic to the next:

Moi aussi… moi aussi…

[…]

Ils vont faire aujourd’hui une deuxième sélection… une sélection décisive… (p. 139)

It is made clear that the father is panicked and not expressing himself coherently. But there is also a second use of ellipsis in this account. The narrator’s reactions to the father’s words are marked with ellipsis, of which two examples are omitted in the 1960 translation.

Il savait qu’il me faudrait partir dans quelques instants. Il allait rester seul, si seul…

- Tiens, prends ce couteau, me dit-il, je n’en ai plus besoin. Il pourra te servir, à toi. Et prends aussi cette cuiller. Ne les vends pas. Vite! Allons, prends ce que je te donne!

L’héritage… (p. 139)

As in the earlier instances of ellipsis, these examples give the reader time to pause and consider the wider implications of what the narrator is describing.
They do so in such a way as to not tell the reader what to infer, but to highlight that these are noteworthy moments or observations, which resist an oversimplified telling. The first example underscores Eliezer’s realisation and sadness that his father will face his final moments alone. It might also imply that he too would be profoundly alone without his father. The second example draws attention to the incongruity of a knife and spoon being the sum total of his family inheritance, the only things his father could leave him in the context of the camps. This is indicative of how far they have come from their relatively comfortable life in Sighet, surrounded by friends, family and community. The omission of these ellipses in the first translation alters the way in which this event and its ramifications are presented to the reader. Instead of being given time to draw his or her own conclusions about the narrator’s statements, the reader of the first translation is presented with a more harried, rapid account. By directly juxtaposing ‘so alone’ with the passing on of the precious knife and spoon, the sting is taken out of the narrator’s realisation about his father’s solitude. Similarly, the clash between the notion of inheritance and the reality of what is being inherited is played down. Both of these features are restored in the retranslation.

Many of the examples of ellipsis in La Nuit are from dialogue. This gives the impression of pregnant pauses, frantic statements, or prophetic statements. It is found both within phrases (‘Je pleurais parce que… parce que quelque chose en moi éprouvait le besoin de pleurer.’ (p. 33), signifying a pause in the statement being made, and at the end of phrases, giving the impression that the phrase is left hanging. In the following examples of omitted ellipsis from the first translation, we see the effect that this feature (and its removal) can have on the account. The first example is taken from shortly after Eliezer has his foot treated, and the words are spoken by the doctor taking care of him. He urges his patient to relax his ‘corps’ and his ‘nerfs…’ (p. 146). This statement ends in ellipsis, partly because Eliezer is still coming around from the procedure. Directly after the ellipsis, the narrator states that he ‘ne faisait que suivre les mouvements de ses lèvres’. The ellipsis gives the impression that, for the interlocutor, the doctor’s voice faded away. In contrast to this effect, the first translation ends the doctor’s statement with a full stop, thereby attenuating the dream-like effect and making the statement seem somewhat curter than in the
source text. The retranslation reinstates the ellipsis and the drowsy impression the reader has of the protagonist.

The second dialogue-based example has been briefly mentioned because of the inserted exclamation mark it contains. This is a curious example: it combines the first translation’s tendencies to insert exclamation marks and to omit ellipsis. Here, an attendee of the town meeting implores Eliezer’s father to give him some news regarding the transports, seemingly suspecting that the news will be bad. This is conveyed in the source text and the retranslation through the use of ellipsis, which leaves the request hanging ominously. This portentous tone is replaced in the 1960 edition with a tone of desperation. The broader effect of this is to change the reader’s understanding of the town’s mood. In just this edition the reader is given the impression that the people are unsuspecting of what is to come, while in the other editions we have the impression that the truth they had perhaps been trying to deny was becoming undeniable.

The final examples are all taken from the closing pages of the testimony, primarily describing the father’s death. In the source text, these pages are laden with conflicting feelings, which the narrator is trying to fight. The reader has the impression that Eliezer fears his father’s death, that he knows it is inevitable, and that it will simultaneously make his own struggle harder and more senseless. The cruelties of camp life seem all the more pronounced when inflicted on a frail, dying man, and there is a pervasive sense of futility throughout this part of the account. After the evacuation of the camp and the large-scale slaughter of the internees during the march to relocate them it seems apparent, possibly even to the remaining internees, that the battle is nearing an end. This makes the father’s death, and the emotional turmoil that surrounds it, all the more difficult to accept.

The use of ellipsis is widespread in this part of the book, suggesting silence where words cannot convey the truth of the events. It gives the reader a chance to reflect on what is being described, suggests contemplation or distress on the part of the narrator, and reflects broken, pained interactions. We see here four instances of omitted ellipsis in the first translation. The first example is taken from a page with nine examples of ellipsis. Most are contained in the
dialogue between the father (who is begging his son for water, water which
would only make him sicker) and Eliezer. The ellipsis generally suggests that
the father is speaking in a broken way, indicative of his frail state. The omitted
example, however, is from the narrator’s comment after Eliezer finally gives his
father something to drink:

Je n’oublierai jamais la gratitude qui allumait ses yeux lorsqu’il avala ce
breuvage. La reconnaissance d’une bête. Avec ces quelques gorgées d’eau
chaude, je lui avais sans doute procuré plus de satisfaction que durant toute
mon enfance… (p. 187)

This quotation illustrates some of the internal conflict found in these final pages.
We see that these final memories of the beloved father are still precious to the
narrator. We also see that he looks on his father with pity, seeing him as a
dehumanised figure, a ‘bête’. We also see residual childhood tensions between
the father and son still causing bitterness. Despite Eliezer’s best efforts he
always felt that he came up short of his father’s expectations, a feeling which
remained even in the camps. This last statement is left hanging in the source
text. Ellipsis is used to underscore the absurdity and sadness of the situation. In
just the 1960 version, this ellipsis is removed and replaced with a full stop. This
changes the tone of the statement into something much more hard and fast,
with a more bitter edge to it.

The final three examples of omitted ellipsis are taken from just a few
pages later. The first has already been mentioned with regard to the addition of
italics to the retranslation (‘his rations…’). The ellipsis used at the end of this
piece of advice is removed in the 1960 edition. In the source text and the
retranslation the ellipsis has the effect of leaving the idea hanging, showing
perhaps how alluring it is, and how conflicted Eliezer feels upon hearing it. The
1960 edition presents the statement as a matter of fact piece of guidance and
reduces the idea that it might make the narrator do a double take. The next
example is from the following page, and is perhaps one of the most poignant
remarks in the testimony.

Je m’éveillai le 29 janvier à l’aube. A la place de mon père gisait un autre
malade. On avait dû l’enlever avant l’aube pour le porter au crématoire. Il
respirait peut-être encore… (p. 194)
After surviving the ordeals of deportations and camp life together for so long, Eliezer was not by his father's side when he died. The use of ellipsis at the end of these statements underlines that the narrator is afflicted with uncertainty and has no closure. It also puts in mind that the father's last minutes may have been at the crematory and not near his son. Even for the reader this is a difficult notion to consider, which gives some small inkling of the horror of uncertainty with which the author has had to live. The idea of uncertainty and lack of closure is central to the very account being transmitted: there is no ending to the story for those who lived it. Removing this instance of ellipsis in the 1960 edition changes the reader's understanding of this statement, making it seem much more final and curt than in the other editions.

The last example of omitted ellipsis occurs just a few lines later, at another key moment in the book. Directly after the example discussed above, the narrator goes on to describe his emotions following his father's death:

Il n'y eut pas de prière sur sa tombe. Pas de bougie allumée pour sa mémoire. Son dernier mot avait été mon nom. Un appel, et je n'avais pas répondu.

Je ne pleurais pas, et cela me faisait mal de ne pas pouvoir pleurer. Mais je n'avais plus de larmes. Et, au fond de moi-même, si j'avais fouillé les profondeurs de ma conscience débile, j'aurais peut-être trouvé quelque chose comme : enfin libre !... (pp. 194-5)

This short passage sums up many of the complex feelings the narrator has expressed with regard to his father's death. The idea that his death will bring Eliezer a certain kind of freedom is very difficult to state and to process. The narrator frames it on the one hand with the caveat that these feelings were very deep inside of him, and certainly not on the tip of his tongue, and on the other hand with an exclamation mark and ellipsis. The exclamation mark denotes both the relief that would go hand in hand with such a feeling of freedom, but also the shock at having felt and expressed such a thought. Following this exclamation mark with ellipsis indicates that the reader should take a moment to reflect on what is being said, because it is not being said in an off-hand manner. Indeed, the ellipsis here works together with the preceding caveat, making it clear that this reaction is complex and challenging, like so much else in Wiesel's testimony.
It has been suggested here that a number of occurrences of ellipsis were removed in the Rodway translation because they were felt to not suit the target language norms of usage. Furthermore, given that this goes against the generally source-oriented approach adopted in this translation, it might be inferred that the feature was felt to be inconsequential to the meaning of the testimony. However, the above analysis has shown that each omission changes the certainty of the narrator’s tone and the implications of what is being described: the ellipsis is a significant feature in the testimony. Furthermore, ellipsis goes a long way toward creating the impression of silence in the testimony that has been noted by a number of critics. Indeed, this might account in part for the addition of ellipsis to a number of phrases in the retranslation (Table 32).

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<tr>
<td>(Le troisième jour, je mangeais n’importe quelle soupe avec appétit). (p. 91)</td>
<td>(By the third day I was eating any kind of soup hungrily.) (p. 40)</td>
<td>By the third day, I was eagerly eating any kind of soup … (p. 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comme si le choix avait été entre nos mains. (p. 99)</td>
<td>As if the choice were in our own hands. (p. 45)</td>
<td>As if we had a choice… (p. 48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se donner une chance de survivre. (p. 145)</td>
<td>give himself a chance to survive (p. 75)</td>
<td>give himself a chance to survive… (p. 79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moi, son fils unique! (p. 192)</td>
<td>I, his only son! (p. 104)</td>
<td>I, his only son… (p. 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Béni soit le nom de l’Eternel! (p. 127)</td>
<td>Blessed be the Name of the Eternal! (p. 64)</td>
<td>Blessed be God’s name… (p. 67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 32: 2006 added ellipsis

We see five instances of ellipsis being added to the retranslation where it was not present in either of the other editions. Just as the removal of ellipsis has a range of effects in the first translation, so the addition of ellipsis has a range of effects in the retranslation. However, it seems fair to say that the new ellipses serve to accentuate a significant feature which was already present in the source text. There are three examples of a full stop being exchanged for ellipsis, and two examples of an exclamation mark being exchanged for ellipsis.
The first example is taken from a passage shortly after Eliezer’s transfer from Birkenau to Auschwitz. This is an intriguing case because ellipsis is used in place of parentheses. As was noted in Chapter 4, parentheses are used in this work to interrupt the account and, to a certain extent, unsettle the narrative voice. They introduce a secondary voice into the testimony. This is certainly the effect of the parentheses in the source text and the first translation: the narrator is making an intratextual reference to a comment on the previous page wherein he remarks that ‘bien que tenaillé par la faim, [il] refus[a]’ the soup offered to him. This intratextual aspect is played down in the retranslation, where ellipsis instead gives the reader a moment to reflect on what type of soup he might have had to eat and to consider what is not being said.

The second example has a similar effect. This is also a clear instance of the type of idiomatic language used throughout the retranslation (moving away from the word for word approach generally so prevalent in the first translation). The addition of ellipsis in the phrase creates an open-ended effect, inciting the reader to reflect on what has been left unsaid. This example is taken from a passage describing Eliezer’s first days in Auschwitz. Early on he is told that ‘[l]’essentiel est de ne pas être affecté au kommando de la construction…’, to which the narrator responds ‘Comme si le choix avait été entre nos mains’. (p. 99). The retranslation adds a second ellipsis to this comment, in addition to the source text use at the end of the advice. The retranslated text calls on the reader to interpret why it is that the internees were unable to control into which Kommando they were incorporated, relying on his or her understanding of the camps and the authoritarian regime in place within them, instead of stating this outright in a definitive manner.

The final example of a full stop being exchanged for ellipsis is taken from the account of Eliezer’s time in the hospital block. This period of his time in the camps coincided with their evacuation and he is faced with a choice of whether to stay in the hospital blocks (and face extermination as part of the Nazis’ efforts to leave no evidence of their atrocities) or leave with the rest of the internees. A fellow patient encourages Eliezer to flee, telling him that there is no way he will be left alive in the hospital block after the evacuation. Eliezer is uncertain whether he can trust this advice:
Mais peut-être mon voisin sans visage, craignant d’être parmi les premières victimes, voulait-il simplement me chasser, libérer mon lit pour se donner une chance de survivre. Peut-être ne voulait-il que m’effrayer. Pourtant, s’il disait vrai ? Je décidai d’attendre les événements. (p. 145)

In the retranslation this passage is rendered as follows:

But then perhaps my faceless neighbour, afraid of being among the first displaced, simply wanted to get rid of me, to free my bed, to give himself a chance to survive… Perhaps he only wanted to frighten me. But then again, what if he was telling the truth? I decided to wait and see. (pp. 78-9)

It seems that the ellipsis is being used at the end of this list of potential reasons in order to signify that there may be more such reasons, and to demonstrate the protagonist’s uncertainty with regard to this question.

When examining translation strategies, it has been suggested by Jiri Levý that it is useful to consider whether alterations made to the text are necessary or unnecessary and motivated or unmotivated. 9 There are certain things which have to change when one is translating (consider the rendering of ‘tu’ and ‘vous’ in English, for example), and such changes can be classified as necessary. Other changes have a clear motivation (such as adding a gloss to explain a very culturally specific term when the translator knows that he or she is translating for a non-expert audience). This latter classification is trickier to pin down, because the translator’s motivation may not always be clear to someone outside the translation process. However, Levý’s is a useful framework for assessing the types of changes made during the translation process. This example of added ellipsis seems to be unmotivated: it does not clarify anything in the text or provide new and important information, nor is it stylistically significant. It seems to be a change for the sake of making a change, which is quite striking. When alterations of this kind are made to a target text, it suggests that the translation strategy is quite free and that the target audience (and not necessarily the source text) is foremost in the

9 ‘The translator’s decisions may be necessary or unnecessary, motivated or unmotivated’, Jiri Levý, ‘Translation as a Decision Process’, in The Translation Studies Reader, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 148-59 (p. 149), original emphasis.
translator’s mind. In this case, it seems that the alteration was perhaps made in order to suit the expectation that this text contains many moments of silent reflection and uncertainty.

The final two examples certainly seem to support this suggestion. We have here two cases of exclamation marks being removed in favour of ellipsis, marking a major shift in the tone of the passages concerned. The first instance examined here is again taken from the very end of the account, when the narrator’s father is gravely ill. As discussed above, these passages are emotionally conflicted and feature many ellipses. Here, Eliezer’s father begs his son to take pity on him, to which the narrator comments ‘Avoir pitié de lui ! Moi, son fils unique !’ (p. 192). This statement is exclamatory, denoting shock at this abhorrent change in circumstance. Eliezer grew up in awe of his powerful and wise father, and seeing him broken in this way is profoundly challenging for him. This is one of very few examples of exclamation marks in these final pages, and its presence marks a particularly strong emotional reaction being presented to the reader. In the retranslation, this is replaced with an ellipsis. Rather than directly presenting the extent of the narrator’s shock to the reader, the retranslation uses ellipsis to encourage him or her to reflect on the change in the father and what it means for the narrator. While this is broadly in keeping with the source text’s stylistic use of ellipsis, it nonetheless alters the way in which this event is described to the reader.

The final example is taken from a religious passage. As we have already seen, religious passages feature some noteworthy translation strategies in the 2006 edition. Indeed, this passage contains a number of major changes from the source text to the retranslation:

Dix mille hommes étaient venus assister à l’office solennel, chefs de blocks, kapos, fonctionnaires de la mort.

- Bénissez l’Eternel…

La voix de l’officiant venait de se faire entendre. Je crus d’abord que c’était le vent.

- Béni soit le nom de l’Eternel !
Des milliers de bouches répétaient la bénédiction, se prosternaient comme des arbres dans la tempête.

Béni soit le nom de l’Eternel !

Pourquoi, mais pourquoi Le bénirais-je ? Toutes mes fibres se révoltaient. (p. 127)

This passage is followed by an interrogation of God and of his role in the atrocities taking place in the concentration camps. The translation of the above passage in the 2006 version is striking in its differences:

Some ten thousand men had come to participate in a solemn service, including the Blockälteste, the Kapos, all bureaucrats in the service of Death.

“Blessed be the Almighty…”

The voice of the officiating inmate had just become audible. At first I thought it was the wind.

“Blessed be God’s name…”

Thousands of lips repeated the benediction, bent over like trees in a storm.

Blessed by God’s name?

Why, but why would I bless Him? Every fiber in me rebelled. (p. 67)

The tone of this passage is altered in a number of ways. Firstly, we see the aforementioned use of specific terms to refer to the camp personnel, ‘Blockälteste’ in this case. We also see variation in specific religious terms used to refer to God, possibly bringing the text into line with modern usage. The spelling of ‘fiber’ furthermore represents American norms, and not British norms, therefore indicating that the text has been adapted to suit this more numerous audience. Perhaps most significantly though, we see a number of large changes made to the punctuation of the passage, including the addition of ellipsis. While the first blessing retains the source text punctuation, the exclamation mark in the second blessing is replaced by a second instance of ellipsis. Where the source text uses an exclamation mark to signify the growing rapture and the rising momentum in the religious proceedings (marked also by the internees’ response), the retranslation’s ellipsis gives the impression that the blessing is made in a ponderous or uncertain or prophetic tone. This tone
segues into the third repetition of the blessing, this time in the narrator’s mind. Here, the source text’s full stop is replaced with a question mark. This changes the tone from one of flat repetition (in contrast to the source text’s previous exclamation) into one of out and out doubt. This is coherent with the tone of the following passage, which is rife with theological doubt and questioning, so is clearly a motivated choice. It is, however, a very different tone to that created in the source text. In the French version the distance between what the officiating inmate is saying and what Eliezer is feeling is much more marked. This stark contrast underlines the hypocrisy of the statements being made. By using the punctuation to segue from the blessings into the monologue, this contrast is played down. Overall, this gives a different impression of the narrator’s crisis of faith, which seems in the retranslation to be more of a simmering doubt which explodes than a distinct turning point in his relationship with God.

7.2.2 Questions

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<tr>
<td>Je lui en voulais de ne pas avoir su éviter la crise d’Idek. Voilà ce que la vie concentrationnaire avait fait de moi… (p. 109)</td>
<td>I was angry with him, for not knowing how to avoid Idek’s outbreak. That is what concentration camp life had made of me. (p. 52)</td>
<td>Why couldn’t he have avoided Idek’s wrath? That was what life in a concentration camp had made of me… (p. 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il avait voulu se débarasser de son père! (p. 165)</td>
<td>He had wanted to get rid of his father! (p. 87)</td>
<td>What if he had wanted to be rid of his father? (p. 91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le son d’un violon dans la baraque obscure où des morts s’entassaient sur les vivants. (p. 170)</td>
<td>The sound of a violin, in this dark shed, where the dead were heaped on the living. (p. 90)</td>
<td>A violin in a dark barrack where the dead were piled on top of the living? (p. 94)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33: 2006 added question marks

It is suggested here that the retranslation of Wiesel’s testimony presents more features portraying uncertainty than the previous editions of this text. One of the main ways in which this is achieved is through the addition of question marks which signify uncertainty (Table 33). One instance of an added question mark was explored in the final example of additional ellipses. This example
made it clear that the addition of just one question mark can have a noteworthy effect on the tone of the passage affected. There are further such examples from the retranslation.

The first of this set of examples is taken from a passage which has already been discussed because of the first translation’s omission of its ellipsis. The narrator is describing the anger he felt toward his father, who was beaten with an iron bar by one of the camp supervisors. While in both the source text and the Rodway translation this sentiment is presented as a factual statement, it is phrased as a question in the retranslation. In the first two versions Eliezer’s anger is explained, rationalised, unquestionable. In the retranslation, it is framed as a rhetorical question, in which the anger itself is somewhat attenuated (the reference to ‘je lui en voulais de […]’ is completely omitted in this formulation). Eliezer is not lucidly angry with his father, instead he questions his behaviour. This alters the reader’s perception of the narrator and his ability to provide cut and dried justifications for his actions and feelings.

The next two examples are clear cases of the retranslated testimony providing a less definitive account of events the author experienced. The first example is related to the way in which the internees are presented to the reader. Taken from a passage briefly discussed in two previous sections (6.3 and 6.5.2), the second example of an added question mark describes the narrator’s reaction to a young inmate abandoning his father. In the source text and the 1960 translation this abandonment is expressed as a fact, albeit a shocking fact with an exclamation mark. In contrast, the retranslation presents this too as a question. Not only is the reader not definitively told that the son abandoned the father, he or she is also given the impression that Eliezer struggles to even conceive of this possibility. Furthermore, expressing this as a question gives less of an impression of factual infallibility than in the other versions.

A similar example is taken from later in the text, in a passage describing how the internees piled on top of each other in a shelter after the deadly evacuation march. While lying in this crush of bodies, Eliezer hears a violin. He is surprised to find that a musician friend from the camp is nearby and that he is playing his violin. There is a heightened effect of unreality and incongruity in this
sequence in the source text: we are surprised that the two adolescents should cross paths, that the musician should be playing his violin, and that he would even have been able to bring his violin with him. It is not made completely clear to the reader whether he or she is dealing with a factually described event or if this is perhaps imagined by Eliezer, who is very weak at this point. The uncertainty regarding this passage is more pronounced still in the retranslation, where the very observation that someone is playing a violin is phrased as a question.

7.2.3 Adverbs of uncertainty

While the retranslation is in some ways more uncertain than the source text, the 1960 translation is on the whole more certain than the source text. We see two examples of the first translation omitting adverbs which express a lack of certainty (Table 34). Although this is a small number of examples, it might nevertheless be argued that this reflects a desire on the part of the translator to make the translated account more definite than the source text was.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Il devait brûler de fièvre. (p. 187)</td>
<td>He was burning with fever. (p. 101)</td>
<td>He seemed to be burning with fever. (p. 106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un ton qui se voulait peut-être paternel (p. 74)</td>
<td>paternal (p. 29)</td>
<td>perhaps trying to sound paternal (p. 31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34: 1960 omission of adverbs of uncertainty

In the first example we see the imperfect use of the modal ‘devoir’ (‘must’) omitted in the 1960 translation. In French, ‘devait’ might have two meanings: on the one hand it can signify a past obligation, while on the other hand it can denote a supposition in the past tense. Given the context, the latter seems like the more probable meaning here. Omitting this modal has the effect of making the comment much more definite, expressing the narrator’s certainty that his father was running a fever. Furthermore, the retranslation opts for a somewhat uncertain way of expressing the past supposition (using ‘seemed’ instead of other options such as ‘must have been’, ‘would have been’, ‘had to have been’). This gives an indication of the type of uncertainty expressed in the retranslation.
The second example demonstrates this tendency again. Taken from the account of the selection overseen by Mengele, the narrator is describing the SS doctor’s tone of voice when addressing the internees. The source text uses the adverb ‘peut-être’ to make it clear that he is presenting a supposition concerning Mengele’s intention. This adverb is removed from the first translation, making the narrator’s comment seem much more definite than in either of the other editions. While these two instances of omission may have been primarily stylistic choices on the part of the translator, they do nevertheless suggest that she was not enormously concerned with relaying the source text author’s ambiguity on these points.

Conveying Wiesel’s hesitation does seem to be a priority in the retranslation. This would imply that expressing facts as facts and thoughts as thoughts has become a major concern in this field of writing, or perhaps that there is a growing acceptance of the uncertain basis of truth claims. Given how exacting readers of testimony can be (particularly those who are seeking to deny the Holocaust) this shift is understandable. This might account for the addition of a number of adverbs expressing doubt or vagueness in the 2006 retranslation (Table 35).

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<tr>
<td>il devait prier (p. 134)</td>
<td>He must have been praying (p. 68)</td>
<td>He probably was praying (p. 71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se promenaient insouciants (p. 45)</td>
<td>strolled, carefree and unheeding (p. 10)</td>
<td>strolled seemingly carefree and unheeding (p. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Après un long moment d’attente (p. 121)</td>
<td>After a long moment of waiting (p. 59)</td>
<td>After what seemed like a long moment (p. 62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dix mille hommes (p. 127)</td>
<td>Ten thousand men (p. 63)</td>
<td>Some ten thousand men (p. 67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’entendis qu’on se souhaitait une bonne année! (p. 129)</td>
<td>I heard people wishing one another a Happy New Year! (p. 65)</td>
<td>I thought that I heard them wishing each other a Happy New Year! (p. 68)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35: 2006 added adverbs of uncertainty

These five cases of addition demonstrate that there is a tendency in the retranslation to express things in less certain terms than in either of the other editions. The first example is similar in nature to the first example of omitted
uncertainty from the first translation. This case also features the imperfect modal ‘devait’, which is used here to frame the narrator’s observation that his friend was praying, and that this was surprising because he had not known that this friend was a practicing Jew. In the previous example involving ‘devait’ the first translation simply omitted it; in this case it is translated as ‘must have’, presenting the observation as a well-founded supposition. The retranslation opts to use the much less certain ‘probably’, preferring to express the guess less certainly than the previous translation.

The second example comes from early in the account when the narrator is describing how despite the anti-Jewish measures which had been put in place in Sighet (such as the arrival of German troops, the creation of the ghettos, the obligation to wear the yellow star) the townspeople were still relatively carefree even the day before they learned that they were to be deported. This passage is part of a larger narrative about how apparently oblivious the people of Sighet were to the fate that awaited them. The narrator insists that despite the warning from Moshé-le-Bedeau and the tide of ill news from neighbouring countries, the people of this town were sure that nothing terrible would happen to them. This is a key part of Wiesel’s account and of its telling: for the reader (who knows how this story will end) it is painful and illuminating to read how sure of their safety these people felt. The first translator uses two adjectives to describe the attitude of the townspeople in this passage. This may be because she did not feel that either one accurately conveyed the propositional meaning of the source text’s ‘insouciant’, so used two subtly different terms to cover all of the meaning she perceived in this French term. The use of ‘unheeding’ does seem to accentuate the idea that the people were not taking stock of the warning signs around them, perhaps playing up this narrative device. The retranslation, on the other hand, adds ‘seemingly’ to this phrase. Rather than stating outright that the inhabitants of Sighet were ‘carefree’, the narrator of this version just tells the reader that he had the impression that they were carefree. He does not directly comment on the state of mind of the people of his town.

This alteration brings us to a curious question regarding how this translation was undertaken: given the relationship between the source text author and the retranslator, could it not be suggested that Marion Wiesel
changed this description at his bidding? The addition of this word does have a significant effect on the portrayal of these people and either the translator or the author wanted to bring about this change. As a reader, it is impossible to know who is behind this alteration, however. For someone reading just the retranslation, the passage suggests that the people of Sighet appeared to be carefree (with the implication that behind this appearance there might have been concern regarding the changing political landscape).

The third example is taken from considerably later in the testimony, when an internee is hanged for a theft committed during the air raid. The source text states that after ‘un long moment d’attente, le bourreau lui mit la corde autour du cou’ (p. 121). This long pause may well be seen as an act of cruelty, a way of prolonging the inevitably unpleasant death of the internee. In the first translation this phrase is translated almost word for word (‘after a long moment of waiting’), but in the retranslation an adverbial phrase (‘what seemed like’) is added to the statement. This transforms a simple declarative into a phrase which suggests supposition, rather than certainty. It is useful here to question the necessity and motivation of this change: it is an unnecessary change in terms of the factual content of the source text; furthermore, the motivation for the change is unclear. Again, it may well be the case that the source text author had become uncertain whether it really was a long moment and therefore wished to make this statement less definite, or that the translator felt that this statement needed to be made less strongly. For the reader, the effect is one of making the comment less definitive and more tentative.

A similar effect is created in the next example, which is taken from the description of the ceremony to mark Rosh Hashanah. While the source text states that ‘dix mille hommes’ (p. 127) were in attendance, the retranslation states this in less certain terms by adding the adverb ‘some’ to the figure. This is likely a reaction to people having questioned the facts of Wiesel’s account: there is a whole website dedicated to the idea that Wiesel’s account is untrue, and the issue of inaccuracies in the account has been discussed in a number of

10 Carolyn Yeager, ‘Elie Wiesel Cons the World: A website dedicated to exposing the false testimony of the world’s most famous Holocaust survivor’, <http://www.eliewieseltattoo.com> [Accessed 1 May 2013].
interviews with Wiesel. This seemingly minor alteration transforms the statement from one of fact into one of estimation, therefore limiting the potential for critics to attack the accuracy of the description.

The final observed case of the retranslation adding an adverb which expresses a degree of uncertainty occurs just one page later. As mentioned previously, this ceremony triggers a latent crisis of faith in Eliezer, who cannot bear what he sees as the hypocrisy of celebrating a new year in the camps. His exclamatory statement that he heard people wishing each other a happy new year signifies how ludicrous he finds this sentiment, given the circumstances. The source text makes this statement with no hesitation (as it is rendered in the first translation) but the retranslation adds in the clause ‘I thought that’. This changes the statement into something which Eliezer believes he heard, rather than something he unquestionably heard. The motivation for this addition is likely similar to that suggested for the previous two examples: when the statements are made less definitive, they are also made less open to criticism and correction. Furthermore, by presenting an account which is uncertain and which resists our urge to know the whole, infallible truth of everything, the narrator is presenting an account which perhaps more accurately represents his own ability to retell what he has lived. This becomes part of the pact made with the reader: by using words that frame the account as a potentially imperfect description, the narrator is making the reader aware of the limitations of the account.

7.3 Omissions

A most curious feature of the retranslation is the use of omission as a translation strategy on a number of occasions (Table 36). Omission is a relatively extreme translation strategy, mainly employed when a feature of the source text is considered untranslatable, or when that feature is completely redundant in the target text. Baker, for instance, notes that omission should be used ‘only as last resort, when the advantages of producing a smooth, readable

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11 One such example is the following interview which appeared in *Le Point* around the same time as the retranslation was published. In this article Wiesel discusses a scandal surrounding his stated age at the time of his deportation: Dufay, 'Elie Wiesel, le sage et la folie', (np).
translation clearly outweigh the value of rendering a particular meaning in a
given context’. She suggests that it might be used when, for example, ‘the
target language lacks a grammatical category which exists in the source
language’. In the context of this piece of testimony and the translation
strategies employed in its renderings into English, it might be argued that
omission is an extension of the elliptical style of Wiesel’s account. Throughout
each version of this testimony, although more so in the retranslation, we are
struck by what is not said. Omitting these phrases might be seen as another
instance of aposiopesis, of breaking the communication act before it reaches
completion, and in so doing introducing a further element of uncertainty into this
account. The first translation omits just two short phrases from the source text:

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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La nourriture du camp ne lui avait pas mal profité : c’est tout juste s’il pouvait se remuer. (p. 99)</td>
<td>[...] He was so fat he could hardly move. (p. 45)</td>
<td>The camp’s food had agreed with him; he could hardly move, he was so fat. (p. 48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’étais décidé à accompagner mon père n’importe où. (p. 150)</td>
<td>[...] (p. 78)</td>
<td>I had made up my mind to accompany my father wherever he went. (p. 82)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 36: 1960 omissions

The reasons for omitting these phrases are unclear. The first case leaves out the comment that an unpleasant ‘tent leader’ (p. 48) had benefitted from the camp food. Perhaps the translator felt it unlikely that someone at the camp could have gained weight given the type of food available. However, given that this tent leader is shown to be cruel and lacking in scruples, he may have put on weight as a result of eating more than his fair share of the food available. The second example seems all the more unusual: having carefully considered whether it would be better to remain in the hospital block (after smuggling in his father) or leaving the camp when it was evacuated, the narrator states that he decided to remain with his father. This is a central motif of the narrative, as Eliezer stays with his father through all of the challenges they face, being separated from him only by death. The choice to omit this phrase (‘J’étais décidé à accompagner mon père n’importe où’ (p. 150)) seems both unfounded

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12 Baker, In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation. pp. 42 and 86.
and flawed. Cases of omission from the first translation are nonetheless few and far between. This is in line with the generally source-oriented approach adopted by Rodway.

The retranslation, however, contains no fewer than nine examples of omission. Three of these relate to just one word being omitted (Table 37), with generally little effect on the rest of the testimony.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revolvers, mitrailletpes, chiens policiers. (p. 88)</td>
<td>Revolvers, machine guns, police dogs. (p. 37)</td>
<td>with [...] machine guns and police dogs. (p. 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.S. armes (p. 153)</td>
<td>armed SS men (p. 80)</td>
<td>[...] SS (p. 84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le soleil baissait vers l'ouest (p. 88)</td>
<td>The sun was setting in the west. (p. 37)</td>
<td>The sun was setting [...]. (p. 40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37: 2006 one-word omissions

The first two examples describe the weapons carried by guards. We see the omission of the details that guards were armed with revolvers at the time of Eliezer's arrival at Auschwitz, and that they were armed when evacuating the camp. It is possible that the author or the translator had learned that the guards were not armed on these occasions, or that this was impossible to accurately verify, and that these details were subsequently left out of this version of the testimony. The next example describes how the sun was setting in the west when Eliezer arrived at Auschwitz. It is possible that this geographical detail was felt to be too obvious to require stating and that this is therefore a deliberate attempt to eliminate redundancy in the retranslation.
La Nuit

Night (1960)

Night (2006)

Le cœur battait plus fort depuis quelques jours. (p. 42)
Our hearts had been beating more rapidly for some days. (p. 8)
[…](p. 10)

Ou bien suivre les autres. (p. 150)
Or else we could follow the others. (p. 78)
[…](p. 82)

malgré la course (p. 158)
despite the running (p. 83)
[…](p. 87)

tu me fais mal (p. 179)
you're hurting me (p. 96)
[…](p. 101)

Sans savoir contre qui.

Sans savoir pourquoi. (p. 181)
Not knowing against whom we cried. Not knowing why. (p. 97)
[…](p. 103)

après avoir rassemblé toutes mes forces. (p. 199)
after gathering all my strength. (p. 101)
[…](p. 115)

Table 38: 2006 longer omissions

The remaining six examples are longer and more difficult to justify (Table 38, above). Some of them have a marked effect on the testimony, while others have little discernible impact. The first of these examples states that the inhabitants of Sighet were feeling concerned in the wake of the closure of the town’s synagogues. It might be argued that omitting this phrase would play down the inhabitants’ concern and therefore give weight to the idea that they were completely taken aback by the events that followed, but the rest of the paragraph makes it clear that they were uneasy: ‘The Bible commands us to rejoice during the eight days of celebration, but our hearts were not in it. We wished the holiday would end so as not to have to pretend’ (p. 10). No other strategies are employed to attenuate the impression of anxiety. The other reason for omitting this phrase would be a linguistic impediment to expressing it in English. The rendering in the first translation makes it clear that this is not the case. Indeed, there are a number of ways of idiomatically rendering this statement in English. The reason for omitting this phrase is, therefore, unclear.

The same is true of the next example, which is taken from the passage where Eliezer is deciding whether or not to stay in the hospital during the evacuation. In the source text it seems that the protagonist is weighing up his options: ‘Pour une fois, nous pouvions décider nous-mêmes de notre sort. Rester tous deux à l'hôpital, où je pouvais le faire entrer comme malade ou
comme infirmier, grâce à mon docteur. Ou bien suivre les autres' (p. 150). Both options are presented to the reader, who is made aware that this is a fifty-fifty decision. The retranslation simply does not present the second option. It is implied, given that the protagonist has been weighing up this decision in the previous passages, but not stated directly. This has the effect of putting slightly more emphasis on the option of staying in the hospital. The grounds for omitting this second option are not clear. It is not difficult to translate, nor does its inclusion or omission have a particularly marked effect on the account. To employ Levý’s terminology, this seems to be an unnecessary and unmotivated translation decision.

The third example of omission is equally hard to understand. This is taken from a passage describing how cold the internees were during the long march following their evacuation. While the source text and the first translation note that their limbs are cold despite the long run, the retranslation omits this last piece of information. Perhaps it was felt that this was an unnecessary addition to the passage (just as the precision that the sun was setting ‘in the west’ may have been considered redundant). However, the detail does give additional information regarding the degree of cold to which they were subjected: being cold despite running for hours makes it clear that the temperature was very low. As this piece of information seems in no way to hinder the transmission of the account, it seems strange that it should be left out of this new translation.

The final three examples have a more notable effect on the account. The next instance is part of the description of a son killing his father for a morsel of bread. The description of this event is harrowing, and in the source text and the 1960 translation contains a piece of dialogue in which the father tells the son:

‘Méir, mon petit Méir ! Tu ne me reconnais pas ? Je suis ton père... Tu me fais mal... Tu assassines ton père... J’ai du pain... pour toi aussi... pour toi aussi...’ (p. 179). In the retranslation the statement ‘tu me fais mal’ is omitted. This is arguably one of the most poignant parts of the dialogue. It may be that it was left out as part of the aforementioned strategy in which internees are portrayed a little more kindly in the retranslation. However, this seems somewhat unlikely given that the act being described is not fundamentally altered by omitting this one element of the dialogue. The sadness of the events is certainly not
diminished by leaving out this phrase, despite the description of the interaction being changed quite significantly. The motivation for this change is therefore unclear.

The penultimate example is also part of the description of this cattle car journey. At one point in the journey, the men begin to wail. The narrator describes this as a ‘contagion’. He states that they were wailing ‘Sans savoir contre qui. Sans savoir pourquoi.’ (p. 181). In the source text, this expresses the notion that all the cruelty suffered by these men and their families had been inflicted by a faceless force, without justification, without rationalisation. Their anger is directed at everyone and no-one, because without rationalisation for the cruelty, they cannot target their pain at one particular figure. They do not even know why they are wailing, because no-one will listen and no-one will act. The sound is an involuntary expression of anguish, without direction and without intent, because by this point direction and intent are impossibilities. Omitting these statements has the effect of erasing this almost bestial emotion. It makes the act seem less significant, and more random. Perhaps the translator felt that these statements made the internees seem blind to the perpetrators of the crimes committed against them, or unable to realise the cause of their anguish. Or perhaps the author no longer felt that they accurately represented the events he was describing. It is impossible to know why this passage was altered, despite the change having such a considerable effect on the passage itself.

The final example of omission from the retranslation occurs in the closing passage of the book. The narrator describes how after he spent two weeks in a hospital following the liberation of the camps, he gathered all his strength to stand up and look at himself in a mirror for the first time since deportation. In the 2006 version, the translator omits the clause ‘après avoir rassemblé toutes mes forces’ (p. 199). This seems a peculiar phrase to omit: it seems likely that he would have had to gather all of his strength before standing up, and it is therefore improbable that the author no longer felt this to be an accurate representation of how the moment occurred. Furthermore, this part of the passage in no way detracts from the emotional weight of the experience. Possibly the translator or author felt that the comment was not stylistically appropriate. The passage in the retranslation is sparse:
One day when I was able to get up, I decided to look at myself in the mirror on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto.

From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me.

The look in this eyes as he gazed at me has never left me. (p. 115)

Arguably, if the omitted phrase had been retained, the syntax would have been less strikingly simple. This is nonetheless a momentous instant in the account, and editing it in this way seems to be a bold translation decision. As striking as these hard to understand omissions are, they are not the most extreme translation techniques in the new translation. Indeed, there are a number of factual alterations made in the account, which are discussed in the following chapter, in light of the effect they have had on the French source text.

7.4 Conclusions

It is clear from this textual analysis that three very different versions of Wiesel’s testimony have been created. The fact that the most recent version of this testimony seems to have been created, if not at the instigation of the survivor, then at least with some input on his behalf, supports the lack of closure hypothesis proposed by Eaglestone, implying that the survivor may wish to continue to re-externalise his or her trauma through time. This formulation of his account fronts the uncertainty in his memory of his experiences, but also in the ability to relay one’s experiences to a third party. While the first translation seems to play down the feature of ellipsis, the retranslation plays up this feature which creates the impression of silence and gives the reader pause to reflect rather than blindly consuming the account.

The increased use of questions marks in the account would also seem to suggest that it was felt that the account could highlight the uncertainty of its content and its telling to a greater degree, that the audience would need or want this, or that the author felt that this had become necessary. This might, in part, be seen as a response to the rise of highly critical figures who seek out inconsistencies in Holocaust accounts with a view to denying that the Holocaust took place.\(^\text{13}\) The final uncertainty feature examined is perhaps the most

\(^{13}\) Yeager’s website dedicated to discrediting Wiesel’s Holocaust account is just one symptom of this phenomenon. As Deborah Lipstadt notes in her highly influential
striking: the addition of a number of adverbs implying uncertainty to the retranslations supports the hypothesis that there was a need and desire to present this version of Wiesel’s testimony in more uncertain terms, which better represent the inherent difficulties in testifying to the horror of the Holocaust. The discussion of omission in the retranslation, and the relationship between this translation strategy and the degree of certainty Wiesel expresses in his testimony is directly linked to the following chapter’s examination of further extreme translation strategies employed in this text.

volume, *Denying the Holocaust*: ‘If Holocaust denial has demonstrated anything, it is the fragility of memory, truth, reason and history. The deniers’ campaign has been carefully designed to take advantage of those vulnerabilities’. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 216.
8.1 Introduction

This chapter closely considers the evolution of Night and the effect that it and its author’s increasing prominence have had on the relationship between the various versions of the testimony. This discussion is centred on work by Theo Hermans and, later, Susan Suleiman. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 3 (‘Translating the Testimonial Pact’), Hermans discussed the idea of ‘authorisation’ in his 2007 book The Conference of the Tongues. Framing his argument in the idea of ‘equivalence’, he suggests that true equivalence is only possible when the translator is entirely effaced from the (no longer) translated text and the author puts his or her seal of approval on this version of the text, that ‘it would have attained equivalence and no longer be a translation’.¹ This is a tantalising idea in the context of Holocaust testimony: the reader of testimony’s desire for an authentic and factually accurate account surely only compounds Hermans’ suggestion that readers generally ‘want the original author to authorize’ the translator’s version of his or her words.² This idea is considered in greater depth below in relation to Suleiman’s take on the issue.

It is argued here that Night (2006) is now the ‘definitive version’ of Wiesel’s testimony, that it has ‘attained equivalence’ and is ‘no longer […] a translation’. So canonical is this text, it can now be considered alongside other authorised translations (which have in turn become ‘authentic versions’) such as Hermans’ examples of the Book of Mormon and the Septuagint. This is a text which is primarily read in translation, and which has known its greatest success in the target language and locale. A number of processes have contributed to the authentication of La Nuit. Hermans states that in order for a version to become a ‘fully authenticated equivalent’ the author has to put his or her seal of approval on it, in ‘an external performative speech act’ which creates ‘the fiction of equivalence and in so doing lever[s the] translation up beyond itself’ (p. 26). In the case of Night, this performative speech act can be found in the text’s

¹ Hermans, The Conference of the Tongues, p. 26. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
preface, wherein the author states clearly that this is the most authoritative version of the text (as briefly mentioned in section 5.6 of Chapter 5).

Perhaps the most compelling evidence supporting the argument that Night is now the definitive version of Wiesel’s testimony is the effect that this text has had on La Nuit. A significant number of changes implemented in the retranslation have been reflected back on the French version of the testimony. This reversal in the relationship between the texts is the result of a dramatic shift in the power relations between the versions. Where the French version had been presented as the source, the basis, the reference text, it is now at the mercy of the English version. This change in the texts’ correlation can also be considered in terms of systems, as discussed in Chapter 5: La Nuit was initially a minority text in a strong source literary system (the late fifties and early sixties were a strong period in French literature, and French literature had – and still has – enormous prestige); having been translated into English, the text became more prominent in the target locale (particularly the American locale), in part because of the evolution of Holocaust discourses and the increasing prominence of the contingent literary sub-system; a desire for factual accuracy and continued broad readership led to the text being retranslated, which in turn led to it becoming even more deeply entrenched in the target system, where it now remains in a central position in a culturally dominant system with a powerful voice in Holocaust discourses. Night’s broader systemic evolution, coupled with the well-known author’s own approval, account for this text’s ability to effectively retrospectively modify its own original.

8.2 Alterations to the 2007 French edition

In 2007 a new French edition of Wiesel’s testimony was published. This version differs from its predecessor in a number of small but significant ways. These alterations are presented and discussed here, with a view to assessing how each version has been adapted for different target audiences. The format of this analysis is a four-way comparison of the various editions of the testimony, allowing for a diachronic examination of the text’s evolution.³ Certain changes

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³ References to Wiesel’s testimony are given after quotations in the text, and refer to the following editions: Elie Wiesel, La Nuit. (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1958); Elie Wiesel, La Nuit (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2007) ; Elie Wiesel, Night. trans. Stella
are specific to the two French editions, while others are indicative of changes made in the English versions too. The extent of these changes is indicated by the shading in each cell – pale grey indicates that an alteration has been made.

8.2.1 Updating the text

As was the case in the evolution between the two versions of *Night*, a number of the changes made in the French 2007 edition represent little more than a modernisation of the text to bring it into line with contemporary language and publishing standards (Table 39). For example, while the 1958 version did not accent capital letters, the 2007 edition does. One example of this is provided below, but the rule is applied throughout the text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>l’Eternel (p. 106)</td>
<td>Eternal (p. 64)</td>
<td>Almighty (p. 68)</td>
<td>l’Éternel (p. 129)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39: Accent capitalisation

Other alterations represent changes in recognised spelling of certain words (Table 40):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L’entr’acte (p. 97)</td>
<td>the interlude (p. 58)</td>
<td>intermission (p. 61)</td>
<td>L’entracte (p. 119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grand’chose (p. 115)</td>
<td>much (p. 70)</td>
<td>much (p. 74)</td>
<td>grand-chose (p. 138)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entr’ouvrir (p. 139)</td>
<td>half opened (p. 85)</td>
<td>half opened (p. 90)</td>
<td>entrouvrit (p. 162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commandos de travail (p. 77)</td>
<td>labor units (p. 45)</td>
<td>work Kommandos (p. 47)</td>
<td>kommandos de travail (p. 98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlomo (p. 156)</td>
<td>Chlomo (p. 97)</td>
<td>Shlomo (p. 102)</td>
<td>Shlomo (p. 180)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 40: Spelling variation

The first three examples demonstrate a shift in the use of internal elision to signal liaison between two morphemes, a spelling variation which is now relatively rare. Two noteworthy comments can be made regarding the fourth example. Firstly, we can see that the spelling used in the retranslation for the concentration camp work units is adopted in the later version, showing that the

precedent set in the retranslation (for adoption of perhaps more standard international terminology) is also in effect in this edition. Secondly, while the 2007 edition spells this term with a ‘k’ throughout, the 1958 edition was less orthographically homogenous, sometimes spelling it with a ‘c’ and sometimes with a ‘k’. The 2007 edition can therefore be seen as more terminologically standardised than the 1958 version. The final change is a first example of the retranslation having a direct effect on the French version. The narrator’s father’s name is initially spelled with an initial ‘C’, which is replaced with an ‘S’ in both the retranslation and the newest French edition. This is presumably an alteration which the author wished to make (in order to more accurately render his father’s name) and also a change which was felt to be acceptable given that our understanding and tolerance of markedly foreign names has increased through time.

The next series of relatively standard changes made to the text relates to the capitalisation of certain words (Table 41). This is an area where the retranslation does not seem to have directly affected the French edition, although there are a small number of exceptions to this rule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«soyez tranquilles</td>
<td>“Don’t worry (p. 12)</td>
<td>“Don’t worry (p. 14)</td>
<td>« Soyez tranquilles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p. 28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(p. 49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lumières (p. 6)</td>
<td>enlightenment (p. viii)</td>
<td>Enlightenment (p. xviii)</td>
<td>Lumières (p. 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maman (p. 51)</td>
<td>Mother (p. 27)</td>
<td>Mother (p. 29)</td>
<td>maman (p. 72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascistes (p. 20)</td>
<td>Fascists (p. 7)</td>
<td>Fascists (p. 9)</td>
<td>fascistes (p. 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>les Nazis (p. 148)</td>
<td>the Nazis (p. 91)</td>
<td>the Germans (p. 96)</td>
<td>les nazis (p. 171)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kommando (p. 60)</td>
<td>unit (p. 32)</td>
<td>Kommando (p. 35)</td>
<td>kommando (p. 80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapos (p. 65)</td>
<td>Kapos (p. 36)</td>
<td>Kapos (p. 39)</td>
<td>kapos (p. 86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le Bloc 17 (p. 69)</td>
<td>Block 17 (p. 39)</td>
<td>Block 17 (p. 41)</td>
<td>le block 17 (p. 90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le président du</td>
<td>the President of the</td>
<td>the president of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil Juif (p. 27)</td>
<td>Jewish Council (p. 11)</td>
<td>Jewish Council (p. 13)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41: Capitalisation
The first example seems to be a case of an error being rectified in the latest version. The quotation follows a colon, so would logically be capitalised, as it is in both English language versions. The second example seems to represent a change through time in our use of the term ‘enlightenment’. This example is taken from Mauriac’s preface:

Le rêve que l’homme d’occident a conçu au XVIIIe siècle, dont il crut voir l’aurore en 1789, qui, jusqu’au 2 août 1914, s’est fortifié du progrès des Lumières, des découvertes de la science, ce rêve a achève de se dissiper pour moi devant ces wagons bourrés de petits garçons, - et j’étais pourtant à mille lieux de penser qu’ils allaient ravitailler la chambre à gaz et le crématoire. (p. 26)

It is clear that this term is being used to refer to the cultural and intellectual movement, which is now commonly capitalised as a proper noun in both languages. In the remaining examples we see a switch from upper to lower case. The majority of these changes are from the lexical fields of Nazism and the concentration camps, suggesting that there has been some standardisation within these fields too, or within this text at the very least.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«blocs» (p. 68)</td>
<td>prison blocks (p. 38)</td>
<td>“blocks” (p. 41)</td>
<td>«blocks» (p. 88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La déportation (p. 27)</td>
<td>Deportation (p. 11)</td>
<td>Transports (p. 13)</td>
<td>Des transports (p. 47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aum nom de Himmler (p. 99)</td>
<td>In the name of Himmler (p. 59)</td>
<td>In the name of Reichsführer Himmler (p. 62)</td>
<td>Au nom du Reichsführer Himmler (p. 120)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 42: Terminology

The suggestion that there has been terminological standardisation from one French edition to the other is supported by the above examples of changes

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made to these texts (Table 42). In the first example we see that the spelling of ‘blocks’ has been standardised (a change implemented throughout the new version), bringing it into line with the English (and international) spelling of the term. This also removes any ambiguity arising from the ‘bloc’ spelling (which has a distinct propositional meaning). The next two examples clearly demonstrate the effect that the new, authorised retranslation has had on what was once the source text. In both cases we see that the (now more acceptable and recognised term) used in the retranslation is also imported into the French text. This brings the text into line with contemporary lexical standards and demonstrates the dominance of the 2006 version of the testimony.

The next group of changes represents what appear to be corrections in the French version (Table 43).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>du front russes (p. 18)</td>
<td>the Russian front (p. 6)</td>
<td>the Russian Front (p. 8)</td>
<td>du front russe (p. 39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nos père (p. 106)</td>
<td>our fathers (p. 64)</td>
<td>our fathers (p. 67)</td>
<td>nos pères (p. 128)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>des juifs malades (p. 122)</td>
<td>sick Jews (p. 74)</td>
<td>sick Jews (p. 78)</td>
<td>des Juifs malades (p. 145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brisait le cœur et sa voix grave (p. 75)</td>
<td>break our hearts with his deep, solemn voice (p. 42)</td>
<td>break our hearts with his deep, grave voice (p. 45)</td>
<td>brisait le cœur de sa voix grave (p. 95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ses yeux bleus cendrés (p. 77)</td>
<td>his gray-blue eyes (p. 45)</td>
<td>his gray-blue eyes (p. 47)</td>
<td>ses yeux bleu cendré (p. 98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>les fenêtres des blocs voilés (p. 127)</td>
<td>the windows of the block were veiled (p. 78)</td>
<td>the blocks’ windows veiled (p. 82)</td>
<td>les fenêtres des blocks voilées (p. 150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 43: Correction?

In the first four cases we see grammatical errors being remedied in the new version. A superfluous ‘s’ is removed from the adjective ‘russe’, while a missing ‘s’ is added to the noun ‘père’ and ‘Juif’ is capitalised, as it is being used here as a noun and not an adjective. The fourth case involves a phrase which makes little sense in the source text and seems to have been rectified (and brought
into line with both English editions, incidentally) in the 2007 French version. The next two examples are more complicated. They are potentially ambiguous in the 1958 edition, and the 2007 edition contains minor alterations which engender a small shift in meaning each time. It can only be imagined that these ambiguities came to light during the translation process (which puts a spotlight on the minutiae of a text). In the first of these the adjective ‘cendré’ was originally made to agree with ‘ses yeux’, suggesting that his eyes were both ‘blue’ and ‘ashen’. The new edition removes this agreement, instead using this adjective to qualify the shade of blue. This creates a French phrase which perfectly mirrors both English translations, neither of which suggested that the eyes were ashen. The other case involves a similar question of adjective agreement: in the 1958 edition it is the ‘blocs’ which are veiled (the agreement made is not feminine, and therefore not referring to the windows); while the 2007 edition adds a feminine agreement, making the adjective refer to the windows. Once again, this brings the description into line with the translations.

8.2.2 Altering the text

Thus far, the changes made to La Nuit (2007) show that the text has been brought up to modern linguistic and terminological standards, and that minor corrections to the body of the text have been made. The next groups of changes represent more substantial alterations made to the text, and more clearly demonstrate the influence of the American retranslation. Firstly, in Table 44 we see the addition of two sets of inverted commas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>normale (p. 24)</td>
<td>normal (p. 9)</td>
<td>&quot;normal&quot; (p. 11)</td>
<td>«normale» (p. 44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bien vêtus (p. 77)</td>
<td>well-clad (p. 45)</td>
<td>&quot;well-dressed&quot; (p. 47)</td>
<td>« bien vêtus » (p. 98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 44: Inverted commas

The first example is taken from a passage describing life in Sighet after the arrival of German troops and the creation of two ghettoes. The first two editions both use the term ‘normal’ to describe life at the time, but the retranslation (and subsequently the 2007 French edition) qualifies this description by using inverted commas. The inverted commas suggest that life was not normal by common standards, but relatively normal, given the situation. Given that this is
rather a small detail, it nonetheless alters the reader’s understanding of the townspeople’s state of mind just prior to their deportation. The inverted commas attenuate the impression that these people were oblivious to what was going on around them and give the impression that the narrator was aware (at least to some degree) of the strangeness of what was going on around him.

In the second example we see a similar use of the inverted commas. The term ‘bien-vêtus’ is being used here to refer to detainees at Buna. The narrator observes that the detainees at the camp were ‘bien-vêtus’. It is, of course, implied that these detainees are not well-dressed by all standards, but by camp standards. This implication is made more explicit in the more recent versions, through the use of inverted commas implying a sense of relativity to the observation. This corresponds with Chapter 6’s argument that the readers of the new versions are guided more forcefully to understandings which are implicit in the earlier versions, therefore reducing the chances of misinterpretations and missed inferences (6.3). Furthermore, these alterations from the retranslation were evidently felt to be very significant to the expression of the testimony, otherwise they would not have been made in the new French edition. Indeed, not all of the minor shifts between the two English editions are represented in the 2007 French version.

8.2.3 The facts of the matter

The most significant group of alterations made to the 2007 version are factual changes. As mentioned briefly at the end of Chapter 7, making factual alterations during the translation process is an extreme strategy. It suggests that the information contained in the source text and the original translation is now considered to be incorrect, or at the very least, incorrect for the target audience. There are a number of possible origins for factual changes made in a translation. Either the translator makes the changes at his or her own instigation, or the publisher or editor requests that the changes are made, or the source text author requests or authorises that certain changes are made. In this case it seems likely that the source text author requested that these changes be made: as his wife was translating the text Wiesel would have had ample opportunity to discuss these alterations with her.
The changes fall into a number of loose groupings: dates and temperatures; people and actions; locations; and ages. In each of these groupings we can see a range of different ways in which factual changes are implemented across the various editions. Some sets of alterations occur across the board, while others are made only in the 2007 French edition or the first translation. A significant proportion of the changes are first made in the 2006 retranslation and then applied to the French re-edition. Of the 21 factual alterations observed, seven were first made in the retranslation and then applied to the 2007 French edition. Two are variations which occur only in the 1960 English edition, seven occur only in the retranslation and four occur only in the 2007 French edition. This variation in the reach of the alterations is discussed below, with reference to specific examples.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>il faisait moins trente (p. 110)</td>
<td>it was below thirty degrees (p. 66)</td>
<td>the temperature was thirty below (p. 70)</td>
<td>il faisait moins trente (p. 132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les huit jours de Pâques. (p. 22)</td>
<td>The week of Passover. (p. 8)</td>
<td>The eight days of Passover. (p. 10)</td>
<td>Les huit jours de Pâques. (p. 42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>une belle journée de mai (p. 67)</td>
<td>a beautiful April day. (p. 37)</td>
<td>a beautiful day in May. (p. 40)</td>
<td>une belle journée de mai (p. 88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le samedi précédant la Pentecôte (p. 25)</td>
<td>On the Saturday before Pentecost (p. 10)</td>
<td>Some two weeks before Shavuot (p. 12)</td>
<td>Deux samedis avant la Pentecôte (p. 45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dix jours, dix nuits de voyage. (p. 153)</td>
<td>Ten days, ten nights of traveling (p. 95)</td>
<td>There followed days and nights of travelling (p. 100)</td>
<td>Combien de jours, combien de nuits de voyage? (p. 177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deux jours après l’évacuation (p. 128)</td>
<td>two days after the evacuation (p. 78)</td>
<td>two days after the evacuation (p. 82)</td>
<td>neuf jours après l’évacuation (p. 151)</td>
</tr>
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Table 45: Facts: dates and temperatures

The group in which the factual changes vary most across the different editions is that of dates and temperatures (Table 45). Within this grouping we see changes made to just the first translation, just the 2007 edition, and to the
retranslation and 2007 edition. The first example from this grouping demonstrates the challenges brought about by delocalising texts. The varying use of Fahrenheit and Celsius in France and America makes the precise temperature being described by the narrator unclear. While France typically uses Celsius, America typically uses Fahrenheit. Since none of the editions states which denomination is being employed, each edition seems to be stating a different temperature: the 1958 and 2007 editions seem to suggest that it was minus thirty degrees Celsius, the 1960 edition that it was below thirty degrees (presumably Fahrenheit, since this scale was widely used in English-speaking countries at the time of this edition’s publication) so colder than minus one degree Celsius, the retranslation states that it was minus thirty degrees Fahrenheit (the commonplace temperature scale in America, where ‘below’ is stated after the temperature where British English would state ‘minus’ before the temperature) so minus thirty-four degrees Celsius. The variation from minus thirty-four degrees Celsius to an indeterminate amount below one degree Celsius is factually significant, even if it does not have a major impact on the truth of the account.

In the next of these examples, it would appear that the first translation simplified the time period from ‘eight days’ to the marginally more concise ‘week’, perhaps in the interest of making the timeline of events more straightforward. It is plausible that this edition’s use of ‘April’ instead of ‘May’ was perhaps an error on the part of the translator as this appears in no other editions of the testimony. The next two examples are clear-cut cases of factual alterations being put in place in the retranslation and subsequently applied in the new French edition too. The first of these relates to the timeline of events preceding the transports, citing a longer period of time elapsing in these two later editions. It seems that the earlier editions contained a factual inaccuracy here, which was subsequently amended by those involved in the text.

Similarly, the period of time spent in the train transporting the internees to Buchenwald varies. The rendering of this alteration is in line with the strategy of uncertainty observed in the previous chapter. While both earlier editions state with absolute certainty that the journey lasted ten days and nights, the later editions use less definite formulations (with the retranslation simply omitting a figure of any sort and the new French edition employing an interrogative form).
This might suggest that our (and Wiesel's) knowledge of the precise details of these transports is now more refined than it was nearly fifty years earlier when the account was originally written. Bringing the account into line with contemporary knowledge of these events increases its factual accuracy and reduces the chances of deniers using precise details such as this to throw Wiesel's entire account into question.

The most striking example from this grouping is the new French edition's alteration of the length of time that hospitalised internees (who were not evacuated as part of the death marches) remained in the camps before being liberated. Only the French 2007 edition prolongs this period by a full week. The motivation for this change is not clear. Presumably, if the author had learned that they waited nine days, this change would also have been made to the retranslation. Indeed, later groupings show that similarly significant factual changes have been made in the retranslation. Perhaps it was felt that this change was just too great, and would truly undermine the text's claims to factual accuracy. Alternatively, the change did not originate with the author, but with the French publishing house, who may have disagreed with this detail and opted to alter it.

We can observe a similar range in the extent of factual alterations regarding people and their actions (Table 46). Here too, certain changes are made only in the retranslation, others only in the new French edition and just one in both.
Table 46: Facts: People and their actions

The only case of the retranslation having a clear and indisputable effect on the new French edition is the insertion in both of these editions of the title ‘Chief’ with reference to a Rabbi. This would seem to be a case of increasing the factual detail in the account, or perhaps amending what had come to be seen as an inaccuracy in the account. This term is taken from a passage describing the loading of the transports, and the image of the Chief Rabbi as a broken man, is arguably even more striking than that of a Rabbi.

The first example involving just the retranslation reduces the number of workmen throwing bread crusts to the passing train full of famished internees.
This passage precedes Wiesel’s observation regarding spectators or do-gooders giving a sought-after commodity to those in need, and simultaneously congratulating him or herself for the act of charity and enjoying the spectacle as the needy fight over the offering. In just the retranslation the reader is told that only one from the group of labourers throws something to the internees and watches the resultant scrum. This alters the portrayal of the event significantly.

The following three examples relate to the representation of children’s ages. Since precise ages are not given in these cases, these changes represent smaller alterations than those pertaining to the narrator’s age (which are examined below).

There is an odd inconsistency in these examples. In the first case, taken from a passage describing the hanging of an internee after the bomb alert, the executed male is described as a ‘youth’ in the first translation (a propositionally accurate rendering of the source text ‘jeune’) but reduced in age in the retranslation to a ‘young boy’. Possibly new information regarding this hanging came to light, causing the author to adjust his account, or perhaps the passage was felt to be more affecting if it involved a younger person. Either way, the alteration was not made in the 2007 French edition. This is possibly in part because the noun ‘jeune’ is a relatively vague term, used to refer to a fairly large age range. However, two other alterations regarding the age of hanged internees are made in the new French edition. Firstly, we see the gender of a young victim being clarified (‘jeune enfant’ becomes ‘jeune garçon’), which is a curious alteration given that all the internees in Wiesel’s account are male. It is noteworthy that both of the English versions refer to a ‘young boy’, and possible that that French account was altered for this reason. In the second case, an ‘enfant’ becomes a ‘petit garçon’. This mirrors the use of ‘garçon’ in the previous example and is therefore coherent, but the change from ‘enfant’ to ‘petit garçon’ nonetheless amplifies the horror of the passage.

The next example, involving the establishment of the Jewish Council, is a clear demonstration of the challenges of rendering impersonal pronouns in English. While in French it is possible to use ‘il’ (particularly in set phrases) or ‘on’ to express an action without a clear subject, this is much harder to achieve in idiomatic English. Ways of rendering this source language construction include use of the passive voice, the formal ‘one’, the plural non-specific ‘they’,
or the selection of a subject to carry out the action. Furthermore, ‘on’ is also used to convey the first person plural in French, and in this case ‘we’ can be used in English. This is the strategy adopted in this example, in which it is therefore clearly stated that the Jewish community created a council of their own accord. This passage describes the after-effects of the creation of ghettos in Sighet, recounting how the people became used to this new situation and the fact of being a completely Jewish enclave. The description is positive, noting that the inhabitants were more comfortable being away from those who treated them with disdain. The 1960 use of ‘we’ seems coherent in this context, highlighting the relative autonomy of the Jewish community and their ability to create a self-sustaining population in the ghettos.

In the retranslation, the impersonal use of ‘on’ is brought to the fore, rendered in this case with the passive voice. This does not give quite the same impression that the Jewish community took it upon itself to create an organisational body, but does accurately convey the source text’s term. The new 2007 edition goes one step further, removing the ‘on’ and inserting the noun ‘les autorités’ in place of the pronoun. It seems that there has been a gradual slide in the meaning of this phrase, perhaps resulting from the ambiguity of the source text ‘on’: we can trace a movement from this neutral term to one implying self-governance, to a passive construction which attenuates this impression, ending with a formulation which suggests no autonomy at all. This can be seen as an example of the retranslation’s formulation indirectly influencing the source text. Furthermore, this shift in expression might be seen as indicative of changing perceptions of these Jewish Councils. Novick has observed that in the wake of Arendt’s Eichmann in Jerusalem, in which she discusses the collaboration of certain Jews within these councils, there was a ‘good deal of scholarly writing about the Judenräten’, and that the ‘evidence turned out to be ambiguous and contradictory’.5

While these first two groupings of factual variations are applied inconsistently across the different editions of Wiesel’s testimony, the final two groupings are very regular. The next grouping (Table 47) of location-related

facts only affects the retranslated edition. It is unclear why none of these alterations were applied to the 2007 edition when a large number of other changes were made to it.

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<tr>
<td>Puis ce fut le ghetto. (p. 23)</td>
<td>Then came the ghetto. (p. 9)</td>
<td>Then came the ghettos. (p. 11)</td>
<td>Puis ce fut le ghetto. (p. 44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en Allemagne, à Buna (p. 87)</td>
<td>in Germany, at Buna (p. 51)</td>
<td>in Poland, in Buna (p. 53)</td>
<td>en Allemagne, à Buna (p. 108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soixante-dix kilomètres (p. 136)</td>
<td>forty-two miles (p. 83)</td>
<td>twenty kilometers (p. 87)</td>
<td>soixante-dix kilomètres (p. 159)</td>
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Table 47: Facts: Locations

The first example seems to be a clarification provided in the retranslation. It is clear in the account that there were two ghettos in Sighet, one large and one small. In this particular phrase in the source text it seems that the term is being used in the singular because a statement is being made about the next phase of the transport process rather than about the specifics of the account. Using the term in the singular seems reasonable in this context. The retranslation does, however, seem less ambiguous, and making this detail unquestionably clear is in line with the aforementioned retranslation strategy of clarification. Since this is arguably more a question of making the fact clear than actually altering it, there was perhaps no need felt to alter the French phrase.

The second example is more complex. Only in the retranslation is it stated that Buna is located in Poland. This seems to refer to the country’s post-war borders, while each of the other editions refers to German occupied lands as part of Germany. It would once again appear that the retranslation’s desire for exactitude has resulted in a change in the testimony’s content.

The final example in this grouping is perhaps attributable to increasing historical knowledge of the concentrationary universe. Here, the narrator is describing the death march. He states that a Kommandant informed the internees that they had covered a certain distance since leaving the camps. The reader is given no other information regarding the distance they may have travelled (no information about landmarks, for example), but knows that the internees were evacuated at approximately six in the evening and, at this point, had continued marching until the sun was beginning to rise. Given that the
march took place during the winter months, we can presume that this was a period of approximately twelve hours. In both French editions it is stated that they had covered seventy kilometres, a distance which is converted into miles in the first translation (respecting the target language norms of length measurement). In just the retranslation, this distance is reduced greatly, to just twenty kilometres. This would suggest that they were moving at a rate of approximately one and half kilometres per hour, rather than the roughly six kilometres an hour stated in the other editions. This changes the reader's perception of the march markedly. It is intriguing that this distance is stated in kilometres, despite the almost uniform use of miles as a unit of distance in America. It can only be imagined that the author (or someone else involved in the composition of the new translation) had information which contradicted the earlier statement that they had travelled seventy kilometres. Why this alteration was not made to the new French edition (when other similar alterations were) is not apparent.

The group of changes most consistently applied throughout the different editions is that affecting references to the narrator's age (Table 48). Every reference to the narrator's age is altered in the retranslation. As mentioned in earlier chapters, there have been some queries regarding the narrator's age at the time of the events described. It seems to be for this reason that these ages have been amended and then standardised.

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<tr>
<td>J'avais douze ans (p. 12)</td>
<td>I was twelve (p. 1)</td>
<td>I was almost thirteen (p. 3)</td>
<td>J'avais presque treize ans (p. 32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pas encore quinze ans (p. 52)</td>
<td>I'm not quite 15 yet (p. 28)</td>
<td>Fifteen (p. 30)</td>
<td>Quinze ans (p. 72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J'avais quinze ans (p. 155)</td>
<td>I was fifteen years old (p. 96)</td>
<td>I was sixteen (p. 102)</td>
<td>J'avais seize ans (p. 179)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 48: Facts: age

These changes in no way affect either the meaning of the testimony or the gravity of what the author experienced. They do, however make certain that critics cannot query the factual accuracy of this aspect of his account. Although a reader who first read the 1958 French edition and then read the 2006 English version or 2007 French edition might notice that there is a discrepancy between
these ages and take umbrage with the changing facts, this reader would not be able to state that the facts of the new account do not tally with the author’s biography. Furthermore, the fact that these changes made in the retranslation have been directly applied to the new French edition provides strong evidence for the argument that this English language version of Wiesel’s testimony has usurped the authority of the French source text. More than a simple case of retranslation, it seems that the new English version of this account has encroached on the place of the French original. The effect of this more major shift in the source-target text relationship might also affect readers’ perception of the text’s authority and trustworthiness. The way in which the relationship obtaining between these texts is presented to the reader is a key factor in the testimonial pact associated with this work.

8.3 Attitudes to Factuality

Chapter 1 of this thesis discussed reader expectations of the genre of testimony and the way in which these are negotiated through a testimonial pact. It was argued that readers generally expect a high degree of factual accuracy from testimony, but that this is hard to attain and express. This notion is aptly summarised by Friedlander who states that ‘record[s of the Holocaust] should not be distorted or banalized by grossly inadequate representations. Some claim to “truth” appears particularly imperative’. However, the notion of authenticity is one of shades of grey. As Andrea Tyndall notes:

> The debate over authenticity is one of degrees, and is a question of interpretations, not exactitude. Is authenticity the clearest print, the earliest narrative, the closest thing to “fact” as we know it? Is authenticity separate from us, or is authenticity the image, the narrative that best corresponds to our views that are ever changing and ever becoming?

The changes made in both the retranslation and the new edition of Wiesel’s testimony throw these issues into sharp relief. It is to be expected that readers

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would be uncomfortable with the fact of (what they thought to be) a factually accurate text changing. This could engender a break-down in the testimonial pact and the contingent communication act. Susan Suleiman’s 2000 article discusses just this, noting that the ‘equation of “lack of artifice” with authenticity – and conversely, of “artifice” with inauthenticity – is symptomatic of the factual appeal of memoir’. Suleiman suggests that ‘Imaginative efforts in the area of Holocaust studies are always surrounded by a whiff of suspicion, if not potential scandal’. Any proof of inauthenticity creates ‘shockwaves’, ‘all the more so [...] in the framework of collective experience, as in memoirs about war or genocide’ (p. 546). Factual changes made to the account could be seen as a clear example of inauthenticity.

Suleiman’s primary argument is that in certain cases, revision on the part of the author can ‘enrich’ the possible ‘interpretations of a life-shattering experience’ (p. 543). There is an enticing intersection between this suggestion and Hermans’ discussion of authority and equivalence: Suleiman suggests that changes made to accounts can have an enriching effect, while Hermans suggests that in some circumstances a translated (or ‘revised’, if we were to draw on Suleiman’s terminology) text can assume the authority of an earlier version. Let us examine how these ideas work together in the case of Wiesel’s *La Nuit*/*Night*: Significant alterations were made to this piece of testimony, but this can be seen as an enriching process, and the new version can now even be seen as the authoritative version of his account.

Suleiman’s argument is based on her analysis of the evolution of Wiesel’s testimony and of Wilkomirski’s *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*. She considers these two texts alongside each other because both raise questions of factuality in testimony. The Wilkomirski text was published in 1996 and presented as a Holocaust memoir. It was originally published in 1995.

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8 Suleiman, ‘Problems of Memory and Factuality in Recent Holocaust Memoirs: Wilkomirski/Wiesel’, p. 548 n. (Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text).

German, before being translated into English. The text found much success throughout the world and the Swiss author was interviewed as a Holocaust survivor. As in La Nuit, the text is narrated by the child survivor. Through time, however, it became clear that the text was fictionalised, although the extent to which the author believed it to be true remains unclear (pp. 548-49). Suleiman discusses how and why this fictionalisation is problematic, citing a number of highly effective autobiographical texts which blur the lines of fiction and fact.

What is different in the case of Wilkomirski’s text is the fact that the author ‘obfuscates’ its fictionality and continues to claim that the account is true (p. 552). She concludes her discussion of this troubling case by noting that ‘Fake memoirs can be works of art and they can be instructive, but they leave a bad taste in the mouth, especially when they concern a subject as fraught with emotion and collective significance as the Holocaust’ (p. 554). Having outlined how disconcerting it is for a reader to discover that a text he or she believed to be factually accurate is actually derived from fiction, Suleiman goes on to discuss a secondary permutation of this argument. Drawing on Wiesel’s first volume of memoirs (Tous les fleuves vont à la mer), she discusses an ‘exhilarating rather than depressing—problem of memory and factuality concerning the Holocaust’ (p. 554).

In the French edition of these memoirs, Wiesel discusses the fact that certain readers of La Nuit and acquaintances had taken umbrage with a specific term used in a description of teenagers’ behaviour in the train during the journey to the camps. He goes on to write that this issue forced him to question what he had written and why, suggesting that latent desires or shame may have led to him using a stronger term in this passages of his account than he might have intended. He concludes this passage with the statement ‘Je m’en souviens’, underlining that despite his reservations about the term employed in the French

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11 For instance, Suleiman cites the example of George Perec’s W ou le souvenir d’enfance, in which parallel narratives are told in within one text. Suleiman, ‘Problems of Memory and Factuality in Recent Holocaust Memoirs’, pp. 551-52.

12 Wiesel, Tous les fleuves vont à la mer, p. 99. (Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text).
version of his testimony, he does not doubt his own recollection of the events. The original French sentence was: ‘Libérés de toute censure sociale, les jeunes se laissaient aller ouvertement à leurs instincts et, à la faveur de la nuit, s’accouplaient au milieu de nous, sans se préoccuper de qui que ce fût, seuls au monde. Les autres faisaient semblant de ne rien voir’ (p. 99).

This is a relatively controversial observation, and might be seen to undermine the memory of those involved. Suleiman argues that Wiesel’s reflections on this term are ‘extraordinarily rich’ and demonstrate that ‘the way around that problem [of constantly shifting memory] is not to keep silent, nor to confine oneself to fiction, but (to borrow a phrase from James Young) to keep on writing and rewriting’ (p. 557). She finds that the self-referentiality at play between La Nuit and Tous les fleuves vont à la mer enriches our understanding of Holocaust memory and could lead to a more nuanced approach to factuality in Holocaust writing. Suleiman concludes that ‘the revised memory adds a new layer to both Wiesel’s and the reader’s interpretations of a life-shattering experience, one that has the virtually endless potential to be reviewed and re-interpreted’ (p. 556).

The discussion of this term does not, however, stop at a common reference between two of Wiesel’s works. Indeed, Suleiman notes that this issue is even more complex because this self-referential passage is omitted from the English translation of Tous les fleuves vont à la mer. This is because the term in question had already been altered in the published English translation of Night by the time All Rivers Run to the Sea was published in English. The point was therefore moot and the reflection not felt to be necessary. Suleiman states that ‘Elie Wiesel recently explained that the first English edition of Night (1960) had the correct translation from the French (itself, as we have seen, a mistranslation): “coupled”. It was only about fifteen years ago that, prompted indeed by a desire for exactitude, he asked the American publisher to modify the sentence’ (pp. 556-57). Suleiman finds it unfortunate that this passage was omitted from All Rivers Run to the Sea but is ‘glad that Wiesel never corrected the French text of La Nuit’ (p. 557). However, six years after the publication of her article, the term was changed once again. Its evolution is outlined in Table 49 below:
We see here that in the 2006 retranslation ‘flirt’ is exchanged for ‘caressed one another’, much closer to what Wiesel says was contained in the Yiddish version of his testimony (‘succombé à leurs sens excités’) and his subsequent further explanation in the memoirs (‘contacts timides’, ‘attouchements hésitants qui ne dépassèrent jamais les limites de la décence’ (p. 99)). Furthermore, the French 2007 edition is subsequently brought into line with this authoritative English edition, now employing ‘s’attouchaient’. If anything, this is even less suggestive than the English term. It remains to be seen whether Tous les fleuves vont à la mer now also omits the self-referential passage so lauded by Suleiman.

If, as Suleiman suggests, self-referentiality and revision can enrich our understanding of Holocaust memory, where does translation fit into this process? It seems that translation is a clear example of revision (or perhaps ‘lack of closure’, to employ Eaglestone’s term), and that it can enhance both the process of testifying and the process of reading testimony. However, this does not eradicate readers’ unease with changing factual accounts. The changes made can have a positive effect on our understanding of the Holocaust and of the transmission of memory, but this is largely reliant on the way in which they are presented to readers through the testimonial pact. The authorisation of the changes and of the text, particularly by a respected figure who is known for discussing the evolution of memory, will play a key role in the readers’ acceptance of these alterations.

8.4 Presenting changes to the reader

The testimonial pact is established in a number of ways, for example, through the body of the text, the reader’s knowledge of the writer, and the text’s paratextual features: the covers of the book, and the preface of the text. As discussed by Lejeune with reference to autobiography, the preface is where the writer addresses the reader to explain the limits of the text and ask for his or her understanding of these limits. Lejeune highlights the importance of the preface in autobiography.

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<tr>
<td>s’accouplaient (p. 42)</td>
<td>(coupled &gt;) flirt (p. 21)</td>
<td>caressed one another (p. 23)</td>
<td>s’attouchaient (p. 62)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 49: ‘s’accouplaient’ to ‘s’attouchaient’
Pour le pacte, je voulais repérer tous les éléments qui conditionnent la lecture. Ceux qui tiennent à la forme même du texte, certes (voix narrative, objet du récit, etc.), mais surtout ceux qui dépendent de ce que Gérard Genette a depuis appelé le « paratexte » : titre, couverture du livre, nom de l’éditeur, collection, préface, interviews… la particularité de l’autobiographie est qu’elle affiche plus que d’autres genres son contrat de lecture.\(^{13}\)

Furthermore, he explains that the outset of the text is the moment to establish the relationship with the reader: ‘D’où d’ailleurs, de la part des autobiographes, le souci de bien établir au début de leur texte une sorte de « pacte autobiographique », avec excuses, explications, préalables, déclaration d’intention, tout un rituel destiné à établir une communication directe’.\(^{14}\) Lastly, he suggests that an integral part of the pact is the act of disarming the readers’ potential concerns regarding the autobiographical text: ‘Le pacte autobiographique se nourrit des réfutations qu’il a provoquées. Son but est de paralyser la critique en la devançant : on comprend qu’à ce jeu il ait intérêt à se montrer aussi agile qu’elle’.\(^{15}\) It is argued here that the preface is also a key factor in the visibility of the translator. If, as is suggested above, the way in which textual alterations are presented has an effect on the readers’ acceptance of these changes, then the prominence of the translator is a significant aspect of this too. If the translation is clearly authorised, the translator is on the one hand less visible (as per Hermans’ argument that an authorised translation is no longer a translation but an equivalent version) but on the other hand potentially more visible (their work perhaps being discussed by the author as justification for this translator’s version being superior to any other’s). These ideas are discussed in the context of La Nuit’s retranslation and the authorisation of it.

8.4.1 The American testimonial pact

Marion Wiesel is an obvious presence in 2006’s *Night*. Her name is on the front and back covers of the book, she is discussed in the book’s preface, and she makes her own dedication in the book. In all the places one would expect to

\(^{13}\) Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, p. 360.


\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 81.
“see” the author, we also see the translator (see appendix 1). Putting the translator’s name on the front cover of the text makes her noticeable to the reader and gives her an author-like status. This translator’s name is also very significant: if, as Lejeune argues, autobiography is dependent on the author, protagonist and narrator having the same name, surely the fact that the translator carries the same surname as the author factors into the reader’s perception of this figure.

On the back cover of the book, it is stated that the new translation was carried out by Wiesel’s ‘wife and most frequent translator’ who ‘corrects important details and presents the most accurate rendering in English’ of his testimony. This statement clearly establishes this version’s superiority over the other English language edition. While it does not state that this version is superior to the original French version, the fact that ‘important details’ are corrected in this version implies that it is in some way more accurate than the older versions. Mentioning on the back cover that the text features certain factual changes sets up these changes for the reader: rather than obfuscating (to borrow Suleiman’s term) the alterations made to the text, this process is presented to the reader, forming part of the testimonial pact. Furthermore, they are presented as part of the translation process, suggesting that the translation and translator have improved the text. Before even opening the book, the reader has been told that the text features a superior translation, carried out by the best qualified translator, and including changes to make the text more accurate and authoritative.

Beyond the text’s covers, the translator and her work are also presented in the preface to this new version. This major paratext functions as an authorial intervention in the process of retranslation, and contributes significantly to this text’s authorisation. This preface could be classified as a ‘préface ultérieure’, according to Genette’s discussion of prefaces as paratextual features. Genette writes that ‘la preface ultérieure peut être le lieu d’expression de l’esprit de l’escalier, ou de ce que’on nomme en anglais l’*afterthought*,16 and that it can also be the place to ‘signaler les corrections, matérielles ou autres, portées sur

cette nouvelle édition’ (p. 222), which certainly seems to be one of the objectives of Wiesel’s preface for the newest editions of his testimony.

Of interest to this study is Genette’s remark that ‘la préface ultérieure disparaît en grande partie faute de fonctions : les corrections matérielles se font sur épreuves, ou tacitement d’une édition à l’autre, la critique moralisante n’est plus de mise […] ou ses derniers tenants ne méritent plus de réponse’ (p. 228). Written in 1987, this comment throws light on the role of prefaces in testimonial texts. Whereas later prefaces might be generally declining in prevalence, this particular piece of testimonial writing includes one. This speaks to the nature of ‘moralizing criticism’ which is perhaps less widespread, but which is still very much associated with testimony, and which perhaps led Wiesel to feel that a later preface was necessary in this instances. It was not felt that correction could be made ‘tacitement d’une edition à l’autre’, or that the last dogged critics ‘ne méritent plus de réponse’. Rather, it was felt that some acknowledgement of the criticism likely to be levelled at this text was required, in the form of a late preface.

Briefly discussed in Chapter 5, this preface goes into some detail when discussing the evolution of the testimony. The presence of the preface is mentioned on the front cover of the text, drawing the readers’ attention to it. As such, a part of the text which might otherwise be overlooked is made into a focal point. The preface to this new American edition covers a number of points: Wiesel’s reasons for writing his testimony (‘Why did I write it?’ (p. vii)); the Nazi’s intent to remove all traces of European Jews (‘a world in ruins in which Jews would never have existed’ (p. viii)); his limitations when putting his memories into words on a page (‘I watched helplessly as language became an obstacle’ (p. ix)); challenges involved in understanding testimony (‘others will never know’ (p. ix)); the need to break the silence (‘one could not keep silent’ (p. x)); still failing to find the right words (‘“it” is still not right’ (p. x)); a brief history of the publication of his testimony and the challenges it faced (‘rejected by every major publisher’ (p. x)); the process of editing the original Yiddish text into French, and the role of editors in this process, complete with translated passages of the Yiddish version; why some passages from the Yiddish (such as a more detailed analysis of his father’s death and the anger he felt toward the world) were not added to the new English translation (‘Too personal, too private,
perhaps’ (p. xi); the reasons for the new translation; whether even this new version uses the right words; and finally Wiesel’s surprise regarding, and possible reasons for, the increasing success of his testimony.

The crux of this nine-page preface is to explain to the reader the how and the why of both the testimony’s composition and its continual change. Explaining why the text is difficult to compose, Wiesel makes his readers aware that the testimony they are about to read may not be perfect. This tallies with Lejeune’s argument that the autobiographical pact is in part established in the preface, where the author states the limits of the project. For Wiesel, the limits are established by the fact that no words can express the events he experienced, and by the very nature of the events:

Was there a way to describe the last journey in sealed cattle cars, the last voyage toward the unknown? Or the discovery of a demented and glacial universe where to be inhuman was human, where disciplined, educated men in uniform came to kill, and innocent children and weary old men came to die? Or the countless separations on a single fiery night, the tearing apart of entire families, entire communities? Or, incredibly, the vanishing of a beautiful, well-behaved little Jewish girl with golden hair and a sad smile, murdered with her mother the very night of their arrival? How was one to speak of them without trembling and a heart broken for all eternity? (p. ix)

Having made it clear to the reader just how hard it is to write about Holocaust experiences, Wiesel then goes on to talk about the translation. It is against this backdrop that he sets his announcement about changing certain facts, having already made it clear to the reader that writing about the Holocaust is unlike any other kind of writing process.

The way in which Wiesel introduces the issue of the new translation is striking: ‘The reader would be entitled to ask: Why this new translation, since the earlier one has been around for forty-five years?’ (p. xiii). In posing this as a rhetorical question, he goes some way towards neutralising the readers’ possible apprehension about the new translation. This is indeed the question the reader is likely to ask him or herself, and Wiesel addresses it directly, thereby establishing an open testimonial pact in which translation is not a taboo topic. He then goes on to ask ‘If it is not faithful or not good enough, why did I wait so long to replace it with one better and closer to the original?’ (p. xiii),
suggesting authorial agency in the translation process and addressing questions of fidelity and accuracy. These are two other major issues with which a reader who had been made aware of the translation process may be concerned. Having posed these questions, Wiesel devotes one paragraph to addressing them:

In response, I would say only that back then, I was an unknown writer who was just getting started. My English was far from good. When my British publisher told me that he had found a translator, I was pleased. I later read the translation and it seemed all right. I never reread it. Since then, many of my other works have been translated by Marion, my wife, who knows my voice and how to transmit it better than anyone else. I am fortunate: when Farrar, Straus and Giroux asked her to prepare a new translation, she accepted. I am convinced that the readers will appreciate her work. In fact, as a result of her rigorous editing, I was able to correct and revise a number of important details. (p. xiii)

There are a number of significant points to extrapolate from this passage. In terms of the translation process, the comments regarding his own role in the original publication are telling: as an unknown author, he had no real say in the English edition, a fact which changed as he became more well-known. Secondly, he was initially uninterested in the English translation, perhaps not knowing that it would be widely read or not feeling concerned about the potential differences between the original and this new version. Thirdly, we see that the retranslation was instigated by the publishing house, and not Wiesel, although the reasons for which they felt it necessary to undertake a new translation are not made clear.

Further observations relate to the translator herself. Wiesel begins by stating that Marion has a track record for translating his writing, assuring the reader that she has experience. Secondly, he talks about her ability to transmit his ‘voice’. This is a particularly slippery term, but one which is widely used. It evokes here the personal connection between the author and the translator, and a reader is likely to believe wholeheartedly in the wife’s ability to convey the voice of her husband, as it is she who lives by his side. The idea of faithfully recreating his voice covers all manner of textual features, implying that the tone, implications and meaning of his words would all be “correctly” recreated in the English text. Next, Wiesel anticipates the readers’ reaction to the new
translation, and in so doing, puts his own seal of approval on the text. He
directly relates his perception of the translation process to the reader’s
appreciation of the text, binding both himself and the reader with a pact.

Only at the very end of this passage does he mention the factual
changes made in the text. He associates the changes with ‘rigorous editing’,
and uses the terms ‘correct’ and ‘revise’ rather than ‘change’, therefore framing
the changes as a positive feature of the text. What is not made clear in this
passage is whether the corrections relate to the source text or to the first
translation. The reader is not informed that these changes have also been
applied (by and large) to the source text. It is intriguing that no mention is made
of updating the terminology or language of the text, despite this accounting for a
large proportion of the changes made to the English version. Perhaps it was felt
that readers would not want to be patronised by having the text changed to
make it more accessible and easy to read.

In all, this passage has a marked effect on the testimonial pact
associated with Night (2006): Wiesel demonstrates that he understands the
readers’ potential reticence with regard to the new translation, makes the
readers very aware of the translation process, outlines why his wife is uniquely
qualified to translate this text, assures them that the translation is up to scratch
and highlights the positive feature that this text is now the most accurate version
of his account (although it is not made clear whether it is more accurate than
the earlier English version or than the source text itself). The parameters of the
pact are set out, with the translation process and its merits prominently
addressed. By giving the translator such a prominent position in the testimonial
pact, and authenticating the translation so convincingly, Wiesel provides space
for the enriching revisions discussed by Suleiman. Instead of concealing the
challenges involved in writing about Holocaust experiences, he openly
addresses these difficulties and shares his methods of dealing with them.

In terms of authorisation, it can be argued that the 2006 English edition
of Wiesel’s testimony is a partially authenticated version. Hermans suggests
that translations ‘may be partially authenticated, or they may have a degree of
authority bestowed on them without being fully authenticated’ (p. 18). The
relationship between the source text and this retranslation is made perfectly
clear, and the retranslation is very clearly presented as such. Therefore, it cannot be argued that this version has completely subsumed the French edition. It has however, had a patina of authentication cast over it. This preface forms the ‘external performative speech act’ to which Hermans refers. The prominent position of the translator’s name throughout the work’s paratexts only serves to compound this. Hermans’ discussion of self-translation and of collaboration shed yet more light on the authentication of this version of Wiesel’s testimony. Considering the relationship between Wiesel and Marion, it seems indisputable that some degree of collaboration went into the new version. Hermans states that ‘[w]hen authors collaborate with translators, some authorial authority is transferred to the translation’ noting that ‘[t]here are plenty of cases in which authors assist their translators, and in so doing control and authorise the result’ (p. 22). This seems to be the case of 2006’s Night, unlike the process of the 1960 translation. Going into more detail, Hermans suggests that:

Translations authorised by the original author’s active participation in the constitution of the text are comparable to authorised biographies to which the subject of the biography has lent his or her cooperation. They flaunt the signs of privileged access to the source and can thus claim a degree of authenticity. In a sense, this is authentication in a minor key (p. 22).

Given the implied complicity between the author and translator, one might even go so far as to consider whether this new translation could go beyond the limits of collaboration, reaching into the realms of self-translation. It is impossible to know the precise extent of the author’s role in the composition of this new translation, but it is possible that Hermans’ argument regarding authorial intent might be applicable here too: ‘[w]orks translated by their own authors do not refer back to their originals in the way translations do. Rather, they share a common authorial intent with these originals’ (p. 19). Originating from the same home, the same family, the French and the English texts stand alongside each other, almost certainly sharing a ‘common authorial intent’. The relationship between the French text and the retranslation is unusual to say the least. It blurs the lines between original and translation and, despite making the translator’s role clear, dissimulates that of the author. Indeed, the line between author and translator is not distinct. However, despite this haziness the
retranslation is presented to the reader in a way which makes its authority clear and which assumes its evolution through time.

8.4.2 The French testimonial pact

The way in which this complex intertextual relationship is presented to French readers is a different question entirely. The extent to which the French audience is made aware of *Night*'s influence on *La Nuit* is examined here. This question can shed light on the extent of *Night*'s authentication as well as on the presumed differences between the pacts felt to be necessary for French and American readers of Wiesel’s testimony. The new French edition is very clearly a response to the English retranslation. On the back cover of the text it is stated that: ‘Aux Etats-Unis, une nouvelle traduction de *La Nuit*, avec une préface d’Elie Wiesel, connaît depuis janvier 2006 un succès considérable. C’est cette nouvelle édition que nous faisons paraître’. It is not explicitly stated how a new translation could alter the French source text. That is to say, the reader is not informed at this juncture that certain factual inaccuracies have been amended. Indeed, the mention of the new preface suggests that this is perhaps the extent of the differences between the two French editions.

It is significant that the success of the text in America is mentioned. It was perhaps felt that a successful American text would be particularly appealing to French readers, given the cultural dominance of the United States. Alternatively, this success is noted as a justification for re-releasing the text in France. At this point, the reader is certainly not being presented with the changes in the text in the same way that American readers were. As is to be expected, Marion’s name does not appear anywhere on the book’s covers, nor does she make a dedication. In terms of the relationship between the two texts, it is very clear to the reader that this French edition is drawn from the American edition, which supports the idea that the French edition is now in some way subordinate to *Night*. The extent of this relationship is not yet made clear to the reader, however.

The preface of 2007’s *La Nuit* goes some way toward explaining the relationship between these texts. It is noteworthy that a preface written in part to justify a new translation should appear in an un-translated text. Indeed, the way in which the English translation is discussed is a key element in establishing the
link between the texts. The preface to the French edition is entitled ‘Préface d’Elie Wiesel à cette nouvelle édition’. The provenance of this preface is not made clear. It is, in fact, a covert translation, Wiesel having translated or had translated the preface from the American retranslation.\(^{17}\) Since the English preface presents a translated text, while this preface presents an un-translated text, the function of the preface alters markedly. Not only is there a shift in the language used, there is also a shift in the purpose of the text. This engenders a range of highly significant translation strategies. An analysis of these strategies sheds light on what it was felt necessary to establish in the testimonial pact associated with each text. This analysis examines each paragraph of the preface in turn, with reference to the specific strategies employed in each. This opens into a discussion of which parts of the prefaces were felt to need the most modification for the new target audience.

The first section of the preface deals with why Wiesel initially chose to write his testimony. Here we see a number of phrases in the French preface which are not present in the English preface. For example, Wiesel suggests that he might write either so as not to go mad, or to go mad and so come to understand this madness. In the French version the madness is said to be present in humanity’s conscience, ‘oscillante entre la puissance du mal et la souffrance de ses victimes’ (p. 9). This qualification is completely absent from the English edition, suggesting that the author felt it to be a reflection which was more suited to the French audience than the English language audience. Why this was felt to be the case is difficult to decipher: the qualification is not derogatory or offensive to the American audience, nor is it specific to the French audience.

Similarly hard to understand is the qualification of history as having an ‘implacable attrait pour la violence’ (p. 10). Wiesel makes this statement as justification for wanting to write his testimony and in so doing give mankind a chance to not replay history, so stating that history is often violent seems coherent here. The absence of these short phrases is indicative of the type of

\(^{17}\) Personal communication with Editions de Minuit revealed that: ‘La préface parue dans notre édition de poche en 2007, est bien la traduction de la préface à l’édition américaine. Il est possible qu’Elie Wiesel ait fait quelques modifications.’ (July 2013)
differences recurrent in the two versions: while the prefaces closely resemble one another, they differ in both content and nuance. Thus far, it seems that the French readership are offered more complex comments regarding the nature of humanity and of history, suggesting that they are felt to be more able or willing to consider these concepts than their American counterparts.

Other, smaller-scale changes in this section include Wiesel saying that he did not know why he had survived his Holocaust experiences as he was generally ‘trop faible et trop timide’ (p. 10), instead of ‘I was weak, rather shy’ (p. vii), suggesting that he writes to ‘dégager’ (p. 10) meaning from his Holocaust experiences rather than to ‘protect’ (p. viii) this meaning and making clear that to forget about the Holocaust would be according his enemies ‘une victoire posthume’ (p. 10), where the American version does not use this term. These changes each have a subtle effect on the meaning of the phrase in which they are situated.

The second section (about the eradication of Jewish memory) features many more of these small disparities. For example, the ‘Nazis in Germany’ (p. viii) become ‘les S.S.’ (p. 11) in the French edition, the Final Solution is written with inverted commas (suggesting the term is not so widely recognised) and the ‘peuple juif’ (p. 11) who were targeted are more specifically referred to as Jewish men, women and children (p. viii), personalising them more in the English than in the French. Other distinctions relate to terms or phrases which are present in one edition but not the other. ‘Russie Blanche’ (p. 11) is cited in the French version as one place where the Einsatzgruppen put the Final Solution into action, but not in the English edition. Victims were shoved into pits dug ‘just moments before’ (p. viii) in the English version, but no time period is given in the French account. The victims’ disinterred bodies were then burned ‘à ciel ouvert’ (p. 11) in the French version, while this is not stated in the English version.

These minor divergences affect each text as much as the other (there is not one version with markedly fewer adjectives than the other, for example). In terms of content, however, there do seem to be a number of whole phrases which are present in just the French version. For example, when Wiesel notes that the extent of the Final Solution is now becoming clear ‘thanks to recently
discovered documents’ (p. viii), the French version goes into much more detail stating that our increased understanding is ‘grâce aux documents authentiques qui nous parviennent de nombreuses sources’ (pp. 10-11). While the English evidence is qualified only as ‘recently discovered’, for the French audience it is made clear that the evidence is both authentic and derived from a number of sources. This suggests that the author believes the readers of the French version to be more exacting with regard to factual evidence.

A number of variations are also peppered throughout the next section, which presents the difficulties of putting Holocaust memories into words. While in the French version Wiesel frankly states that when he came to testify he ‘ne savai[t] pas comment [s’y prendre’ (p. 11), this admission is omitted in the English version, where it was perhaps considered too blunt. Similarly, while in French he had ‘trop de choses à dire’ (p. 11), in English he simply had ‘many things to say’ (p. ix). We see a pair of adverbs added in the English passage: he is ‘painfully’ conscious of the paucity of words, and ‘helplessly’ observes language becoming an obstacle in itself. In the French preface Wiesel questions whether words could ever be rehabilitated or whether it is possible to ‘humaniser’ them (p. 12), while in the English version he questions whether it is possible to ‘transform’ them (p. ix). Here too we see whole phrases which are present in one edition but not the other. For instance, the French version asks whether it is possible to write about the ‘rupture de tous les liens’ (p. 12), but the English does not, and the English preface states that ‘After all, it [the testimony] deals with an event that sprang from the darkest zone of man’ (p. ix), a comment which is absent in the French version. Broadly speaking, the content of the French and English versions of this section is the same, despite a number of variations in specific terms and phrases. There certainly is not an overarching, obvious strategy (such as a systematic introduction of adverbs of uncertainty, or omission of specific terms or ideas) applied to the translation of Wiesel’s thoughts about how difficult it is to write about Holocaust experiences.

The following section about whether readers can even understand testimony is short, but contains a number of small and striking divergences. While in the English version Wiesel suggests that most people find it ‘normal’ (p. ix) to take care of each other, in French they consider it a ‘devoir humain, noble et impératif’ (p. 13). Similarly, most people (according to the French version)
think it normal to ‘protéger les faibles’, and ‘aimer les enfants’ (p. 13), while the English version suggests that most people ‘assist’ the weak and ‘protect’ the ‘small children’ (p. x). These minor differences have an almost indiscernible effect on the preface, rendering them quite distinct from each other, if remarkably similar. This section does also contain one large disparity. The following passage regarding the difficulty of understanding testimony is present in the French, but completely absent from the American version:

Est-ce parce que le témoin s’exprime si mal ? La raison est différente. Ce n’est pas parce que, maladroit, il s’exprime pauvrement que vous ne comprendrez pas ; c’est parce que vous ne comprendrez pas qu’il s’explique si pauvrement. (p. 13)

This passage frankly states that as a reader, you are unable to understand the experiences of someone who lived through the Holocaust. Knowing this makes expressing these experiences even harder for the testifier. It is possible that this was felt to be just a little too bold a statement to make to an American audience. Or, perhaps this paragraph was added to the French after the composition of the American preface, in this case felt to be a necessary or desirable statement to incorporate into the French testimonial pact. This statement does have a marked effect on the French testimonial pact: directly addressing the reader, the author unquestionably states that he or she will not understand the text he or she is about to read. This leads the reader to approach the text in a way which is quite distinct to how the American reader will approach it.

The next short section expresses why Wiesel felt it necessary to testify, despite the challenges involved in this process. Here too we see a range of small distinctions, ranging from occasional omitted or added words (such as silence which ‘habite’ words as well as enveloping them (p. 13), and stating that one must ‘tenter’ to trust this silence (p. 13)) to entire phrases present in only one version (‘Il fallait donc persévérer. Et parler sans paroles’ (p. 13)). In the French preface it is stated that just one ‘poignée’ (p. 14) of ashes from Birkenau would have more weight than any Holocaust account, but in the English version there is a ‘field’ (p. x) of these ashes (providing a much more momentous image). It is significant that the English version refers in this paragraph to

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18 Underlining signifying passage missing from the English preface.
‘testimonies’ (p. x) while the French version refers to ‘récits’ (p. 14). This demonstrates that even the term testimony is more widespread and acceptable in the American locale than in the French locale.

Moving on to the next section we can observe some clear examples of localisation. Here Wiesel is explaining that the text was originally met with reluctance. In the French edition he states that ‘parisien’ and ‘américain’ publishers rejected the text (p. 14) while in the English edition he says that ‘French’ and ‘American’ publishers rejected it. For the French audience it was seen as more appropriate to specify that the editors were based in Paris, the literary hub of France. Similarly, in the French preface Mauriac is the ‘grand François Mauriac’, while the English preface describes him as ‘the great Catholic French writer and Nobel Laureate’ (p. x). This suggests that the American reader may not have been presumed to know who Mauriac is, and also makes it clear that he is Catholic, a salient point when reading his religiously inspired preface.

In the following section, the exhaustive editing undertaken by Editions de Minuit is described. Here, the French preface states that ‘la petite maison d’édition prestigieuse Les Editions de Minuit […] retravailla’ (p. 14) the text, while the English describes the process as having ‘edited and further cut’ it (p. x) – a much more severe procedure. Wiesel states that he was anxious that some content that may ‘paraître superflu’ or ‘be superfluous’ (p. 14 and p. x, respectively). The meaning of these verbs is clearly different, with the French suggesting that readers would find the content superfluous, while the English version implies that the writer might find the content superfluous. The role of the Yiddish testimony is presented subtly differently too. Here, we see that a shift in the tense used can alter the meaning of a passage: The French states that ‘la version originale en Yiddish est longue’ (p. 14), while the English preface says that it ‘the original Yiddish version was still long’ (p. x). Situating the Yiddish text in the past in this way makes it a less prominent component of the present text’s evolution, relegating it further to the past. The French version employs the present tense and, in so doing, positions the text as the current testimony’s peer.
This section also features a phrase which is present only in the French: ‘Vider le fond de sa mémoire n’est pas plus sain que de la laisser déborder’ (p. 14). This is the fifth statement that is made in the French but not in the English. None of these statements would be completely unnecessary in the English version (relating only to the French text, for example) but instead are examples of statements which were felt to be more integral to the French testimonial pact than the English pact. These statements are generally ponderous or explaining frankly the limitations of memory, expression and comprehension. This particular phrase implies that the writer has not plundered the depths of his memory and told the reader everything. This statement is not made to the American readership.

The next passage returns to the Yiddish text, giving examples of whole passages from this text which are markedly different from the French or English versions of the testimony. These passages are taken from: the opening of the Yiddish text (which speaks much more vengefully about religion); the passages describing the father’s death (more detailed and bitter than the French or English versions); and the closing passage (which is also more enraged than that of the other versions). These passages are translated from Yiddish into English and French. Drawn from the same source text, they resemble each other much more closely than the other parts of these prefaces. We see many fewer cases of missing or added words and phrases, for example. One main difference between the English and French versions is the rendering of the protagonist’s name. In the English translation of the Yiddish, this is given as ‘Eliezer’ – as we have seen throughout the testimony – but in the French version it is given as ‘Leizer (en yiddish pour Eliézer)’ (p. 15). This marks distance between the protagonists of these testimonies, risking upsetting readers’ expectations concerning the oneness of the protagonist, author and narrator. This risk is not taken in the American version.

In addition to this, there are two small variations in the description of the father’s death. In the French version the narrator does not respond to his father’s calls ‘pour ne pas être battu par les responsables du bloc’ and is angry with his father for having provoked ‘les coups...’ (p. 16). In the English version he does not respond to his father ‘So afraid was I to incur the wrath of the SS’ and is angry with his father for provoking ‘the wrath of the SS.’ (pp. xi-xii). The
narrator feels rage toward the world for having made him into ‘un autre homme’ or ‘a stranger’ and awakening the ‘diable’ in him (but not in the English version). The expression here is stronger in the French: the violence is more explicit and the effect of the world’s inaction is more pronounced. In this passage (and other extracts from the Yiddish) we also see a number of instances of ellipsis in just the French edition.

The closing passage is where we see most variation in the translation of the Yiddish testimony. This is a rare area in which the English version is slightly lengthier than the French version. Discussing how the world has moved on from (read forgotten about) the Holocaust, the narrator of the Yiddish text (written in 1956) is irate. He states that ‘scarcely’ (an adverb present only in the English) ten years after Buchenwald the world is forgetting ‘quickly’ (a second English-only adverb) (p. xii). While Isle Koch is described as the ‘femme sadique’ in French, she is described as ‘the notorious sadistic monster’. And while in French she ‘a’ children, in English she ‘was allowed to have’ children, and in French she ‘est heureuse’ (p. 17) but in English she lives ‘happily ever after’ (p. xii). In English the past ‘seems to have been erased’ (p. xii), while in French it most definitely ‘s’est effacé’ (p. 17) (note here the use of the reflexive form too, allowing the author to omit an active subject). This whole paragraph is more oral in nature and less decisive in tone than the French rendition.

The following paragraph of this passage from the Yiddish also differs in tone from one edition to the other. Tackling the phenomenon of Holocaust denial, the narrator notes that ‘Today, there are anti-Semites in Germany, France and even the United States who tell the world that […]’ (p. xii) while the French text states that ‘Des Allemands et des antisémites disent au monde que […]’ (p. 17). While in the English it is clear that there are a number of anti-Semites in a range of countries throughout the world who are deniers, in the French it seems that Germans, plus anti-Semites (in unspecified places) are deniers. This seems inaccurate (especially given the large amount of denial propaganda which originates in France) and would seem to suggest that the author did not wish to offend the French readership by stating that there are French deniers. Furthermore, the American text refers to the deniers stating that the Holocaust is a ‘hoax’, but the French text calls this a ‘légende’ – a much softer term. It would seem that a process of localisation is at play in this
paragraph. In addition to the striking differences between the ending of the Yiddish testimony and the ending of *La Nuit/Night*, the translations of the Yiddish closing passages differ greatly from each other. The rage is differently targeted and the historical references presented in different terms. This demonstrates Wiesel’s awareness of the varying ways in which France and America perceive this period and willingness on his part to adapt the preface accordingly (even when translating a standardised Yiddish source text).

The question of adapting the preface for each readership is most prominent in the next section. In the English preface, this section explains why the retranslation was carried out and the fact that certain factual details have been altered in this retranslation. The French preface is not for a retranslation, but for a new edition. Since the function of the preface alters significantly, it would not be all that surprising if this section were omitted: explaining why the retranslation was carried out when the readers are not reading the retranslation is perplexing. However, since the retranslation has retroactively altered the French source text, an explanation of its occurrence is important. Wiesel could gloss over the effect of the retranslation on the source text (by omitting this section entirely) but has instead opted to keep it and explain the new relationship between these texts in a very frank manner. The passage has, however, been adapted to suit its French audience, who are reading the French (source) text.

When discussing the Yiddish version of his testimony and why he did not include more material from it in the new translation/edition, Wiesel refers to the new French edition as ‘une nouvelle traduction’ (p. 15). This is an unexpected way for him to refer to the new French edition, which theoretically is not a translation at all. In the discussion of the English retranslation, Wiesel no longer refers to the French text in this way. Rather he says ‘pourquoi cette nouvelle édition, alors que la première existe depuis quarante-cinq ans? Si elle n’est pas assez fidèle ou bonne, pourquoi avoir attendu si longtemps pour la remplacer par une qui serait meilleure et plus proche de l’original?’ (p. 18). When asking these questions of a new edition and not of a new translation, they seem out of place. The question of fidelity, for example, is unexpected (loyal to what, if this is the source text?), as is the notion of replacing a sub-standard version with one that is closer to the original (is this not the original?). If these questions
were asked of the retranslation, they would be perfectly logical (indeed, they are in the English preface) but they are jarring and confusing in the French preface.

Furthermore, these statements make it unclear which version of the text is even being referred to (the Yiddish?). In the context of the preface these remarks call into question which version of the testimony is the “original” version, thereby undermining the authority of each edition. The next sentence makes this a little clearer: ‘Ce que je dis de la traduction anglaise vaut pour le français’ (p. 18). However, this is still not particularly clear, and makes it doubly patent that this preface was primarily written for the English edition. Where Wiesel comments in the English preface that his level of English was not very high when the texts were originally published, he notes in the French that his ‘anglais, comme mon français d’ailleurs, laissait encore à désirer’, adding this remark regarding his level of French. This comment is surprising, given that he wrote his testimony in French. He seems here to be undermining the source text by saying that his command of French was not very good when he wrote his testimony. He then goes on to explain how the translation came to be (that his editor found a translator, and so on) but goes into more detail regarding who his French agent was - ‘l’agent des Editions de Minuit, Georges Borchardt’ (p. 18) - perhaps thinking that this would be of interest to French readers who may know who he is.

When discussing Marion’s role and the effect that she has had on the text, we start to see more small variations. Where ‘many’ of his texts ‘have been translated by Marion’ (p. xiii) in the English, only ‘certains’ of his texts ‘eurent le bonheur d’être traduits’ by her in the French. This gives less the impression that he is justifying her skills and more the impression that he is complimenting her work. Indeed, in just the French version he goes on to state that she is a ‘[t]raductrice hors du commun’ before stating how well she knows his voice. The personal nature of this description continues:

In fact, as a result of her rigorous editing, I was able to correct and revise a number of important details (p. xiii)

Grâce à elle, il me fut permis de corriger ça et là une expression ou une impression erronées (p. 19)
In the French preface the ability to change the text is attributed directly to the
translator herself, and not to the rigorous editing involved in the retranslation
process. This short sentence is also of note because it is where the alterations
to the text are mentioned. For the French reader, it is the first time he or she is
made aware that the body of the text has changed. So far, he or she has been
told that a new English version has appeared, and that this preface is
associated with it. It has been explained to him or her why the new translation
was carried out. He or she had not thus far been told in what way the new
edition has affected the French text. The extent of the changes is presented
differently in the two prefaces. Where the verbs ‘correct’ and ‘revise’ are used in
the English, we just see ‘corriger’ in the French. The idea of revision is
completely omitted. The scope of the changes also varies, from ‘ça et là’ in the
French (denoting relatively few) to ‘a number’ (a wonderfully vague term which,
broadly speaking, suggests a number greater than five) in the English.

These variations may be attributed to the breadth of the changes made
to the respective texts – perhaps the English text required more alterations
because of the first translation. The final discrepancy cannot be attributed to
this, however. The change from ‘important details’ to ‘une expression ou une
impression erronées’ is much greater, and gives that impression that very little
in the French text has been changed. In terms of the testimonial pact and the
presentation of the semi-authorised English version in the pact, this passage is
significant. The French reader is told here that the English version is significant
and that its revision has directly affected the French text. However, the
impression of authentication is softened by suggesting that only small changes
have been reflected back onto the French source text. The authority of the
French text has been undermined to a certain extent, but less than it could have
been.

This strategy is carried through to the next sections. These sections
represent the single greatest divergence across the editions. In the English
edition, the mention of a number of factual changes having been made leads
straight into Wiesel questioning whether this edition uses ‘the right words’ (p.
xiii). In the French edition, however, a full page is devoted to examples of the
changes made:

Autre exemple, mineur celui-là : il s’agit d’un raccourci. En évoquant la prière collective improvisée, le soir de Rosh Hashana, je raconte que je suis allé retrouver mon père pour lui embrasser la main, ainsi que je le faisais à la maison ; j’ai oublié de noter que nous étions perdus dans la foule. C’est Marion qui, toujours soucieuse de précision, a relevé ce détail aussi. (pp. 19-20)

The examples cited by Wiesel are significant for a number of reasons: both for what they are, and for what they are not. The first example is of great consequence because of the passage from Tous les fleuves vont à la mer discussed by Suleiman. This passage, which she cites to support her argument that authorial revision can be enriching, is virtually reproduced in this preface. Citing an example of a change engendered by the retranslation, Wiesel actually draws on an example of something changed many years earlier (and at his behest). A comparison of how this change is presented to the readers of the memoir and how it is presented to readers of the testimony is illuminating. As discussed above, the memoir states that the inaccuracy or inappropriateness of this passage was brought to Wiesel’s attention by certain (‘puritanical’) readers and by companions. In the new justification it is implied that Marion alone was dubious about this passage. The memoir goes into some detail when explaining what these interactions between the young deportees actually involved (‘attouchements hésitants’), whereas the testimony’s preface merely states that the original statement was categorically false. The memoir goes into a little
more detail suggesting why he might have written that passage in the first place, but makes essentially the same argument (that it was his own shameful, teenage desires which he was projecting onto the figures in his book).

The justification provided in the memoirs still has hints of the rich layering of memories lauded by Suleiman, and does demonstrate to the reader that revision through translation can reap fruitful rewards, but it does beg the question: why cite this as an example of an alteration made in translation, when it is not one? And why basically rewrite a passage which has already appeared in another publication? It seems possible that this was seen by Wiesel as a good example of the kind of thing that can be changed. There is a clear explanation for why it was inaccurate in the first place, and the alteration made brings the passage into line with reader expectations of the deportees’ behaviour. In some ways, it is a profoundly uncontentious passage given the context (whereas in the memoirs it is more contentious). The same can be said of the second example he cites: Marion noticing that a point was not made completely clearly is an innocuous change to highlight.

This brings us to the question of what is not said in the examples Wiesel provides. The changes brought about in the new French edition have been analysed above, and they range from names to ages, dates, locations, actions: incontrovertible facts. Not one of these changes is mentioned or justified to the reader. While in the English preface no examples of the type of changes made are provided (which would imply that the readers were felt to be unnerved by the minutiae of the alterations), the French preface provides only the most harmless of examples, suggesting both that the readers were presumed to be interested in the type of changes and circumspect enough to want some justified examples, but also that they too would be ill at ease with facts (such as dates and ages) being altered in the account.

The examples provided (or not provided, in the case of the English preface) tell us a great deal about what the writer presumes about his readers and what he feels necessary to put into the testimonial pact. Although he is frank with the American readers about having altered the text, he does not go so far as to cite the facts and figures which have been changed: he takes them into his confidence, but does not undermine their confidence in him. On the
other hand, the French testimonial pact still offers an honest appraisal of the need and desire to alter details of the account, and goes one step further than the American preface in providing some (albeit relatively innocuous) examples of the changes made, but will also not unsettle the readers by specifying that hard facts have been changed. Curiously, the changes made to the French text are attributed wholly to Marion and to the retranslation process, reinforcing the impression that the new American text is dominant and influential, without going so far as to tell French readers that the American edition has led to factual alterations in the French edition.

The next section of the preface goes on to assess whether even the new editions use the “right words” to talk about Wiesel’s Holocaust experiences. This passage varies little from one edition to the other, although two notable discrepancies merit examination. The first of these is the expression of Wiesel’s remaining doubt about the expression of his experiences. In English he states: ‘And yet, I still wonder: Have I used the right words?’ (p. xiii) but in French he notes that ‘Avec les années, je me surprenais – à tort – à douter de certains épisodes’ (p. 20). The object of Wiesel’s uncertainty shifts across these two formulations, from a doubt about the words, to a doubt about his memory of the episodes. He goes on to cite which particular episodes mostly caused this doubt, including references to the selection process, the chimneys, the murder of infants. With reference to this last example, Wiesel states that his impression that live babies were thrown into flaming pits is confirmed by historians. This serves to reassure the reader that even if Wiesel sometimes doubts the accuracy of his memory or his expression, these doubts are unfounded as his impressions have been verified. This part of the English preface ends with the statement ‘And yet somehow I did not lose my mind’ (p. xiv). This phrase is also present in the French preface, but another sentence follows it, closing the section: ‘Cette vision cauchemardesque apparaîtra dans la nouvelle édition’ (p. 20). This phrase implies that in the new French edition a differently nightmarish vision will be presented, that his description of this episode has been clarified following discussion with other internees and historians. But this passage has not been altered: in each of the four versions of his testimony the same description is used to render this episode. This makes this phrase a curious addition to his French discussion of doubted memories and expression.
The final section of the preface deals with the destiny of Wiesel’s testimony, with its growing success and changing attitudes to the Holocaust. This is an area where we would expect to see noteworthy examples of localisation, given that the book’s status, and Holocaust memorialisation in general, both vary from one locale to another. For example, while the English preface says ‘I described the difficulties encountered by Night before its publication in French’ (p. xiv), the French says ‘j’ai décrit les difficultés que La Nuit avait rencontrées ici lors de sa parution’ (p. 21). Unexpectedly, the English preface states that the French testimony was published ‘forty-seven’ years ago, while the French says ‘quarante-cinq’. The French version was originally published in 1958 with the new preface appearing in 2007 (after a period of forty-nine years), since the retranslation was published in 2006, there is a forty-eight year period between the original French publication and this edition. Even the English edition was originally published in 1960 before being re-released in 2006 (after forty-six years). This might suggest a lag between the writing of the preface and its publication, but this discrepancy is peculiar nonetheless. Other differences are the result of the incompatible education systems (distinct terminology is employed for each) and the use of Wiesel’s testimony in secondary school curricula (‘Today, students in high schools and colleges in the United States and elsewhere read it as part of their curriculum’ (p. xiv), ‘Aujourd’hui ce sont surtout les jeunes qui le lisent en classe et à l’Université. Et ils sont nombreux’ (p. 21)).

The final two examples of significant divergences which affect the testimonial pact associated with each text are both cases of whole sentences present in the French, but absent in the English preface. Commenting on the importance of nurturing Holocaust memories, Wiesel states: ‘il s’agit de la mémoire […] Je le répète: son débordement risque d’être aussi nuisible que son appauvrissement. Entre les deux, il nous incombe de choisir la mesure tout en espérant qu’elle sera proche de la vérité’ (p. 22). Highlighting the importance of dealing even-handedly with memory, and not over-mining it, Wiesel is making a comment which he seems to feel would not be appreciated by an American audience. Is this perhaps because of this nation’s still-growing interest in the Holocaust? It was possibly felt that the best-known Holocaust survivor counselling restraint on this front would not be appropriate.
The second sentence is taken from a short paragraph outlining the dangers of forgetting, stating that forgetting the dead is to kill them a second time. In the French, this paragraph ends with the reflection: ‘Et si, les tueurs et leurs complices exceptés, nul n’est responsable de leur première mort, nous le sommes de la seconde’ (p. 23). The use of the present tense here is striking. Wiesel is not saying (in the conditional) that we, collectively, would be responsible for the second death engendered by forgetting, but that we are. The use of the indicative voice seems to indict the French readers for forgetting the victims of the Holocaust. This indictment is not made of the American audience. This represents yet another incisive comment which is present in the French, but not in the American preface, indicating both that the French readers are expected to be able to handle these comments without being turned off the text, and that Holocaust memorialisation in France perhaps necessitates these comments being made.

8.5 Conclusions

The new English translation of Night has indisputably affected the French source text. As has been established in earlier chapters, ‘truth’ is integral to the reading of testimony, and as such it might be expected that the changes brought about by the retranslation would have a negative impact on the reader’s perception of this text. However, if we consider the notion of authorisation and the effect of Wiesel’s vocal support of the retranslation, we can start to see how translation could be another way of accessing the type of ‘enriching’ revisions Suleiman praises. The extent of the positive effect translational alterations might have is dictated by the testimonial pact. If the author makes it clear to the reader what has been changed and why it has been changed, the reader is more likely to welcome these alterations. A study of the prefaces from both the English and French texts has shown that Wiesel felt it necessary to present these changes differently to each target audience, taking both into his confidence (the French audience a little more so than the English audience), but revealing to neither of them the full extent of the recent changes in his account.
Chapter 9: Discussion

This thesis set out to examine the effect that translation might have on the transmission of Holocaust testimony. Exploring this topic means drawing back layers of ethical, linguistic and historical complexity in order to begin to consider how the thorny issues of Holocaust memorialisation and translation intersect each other. This exploration has led to a number of scintillating discoveries and propositions. The primary finding of this study is that each translated rendering of a piece of testimony features its own, distinct testimonial pact, which is tailored to its locale. The construction of this pact involves a number of textual features, created by a range of different figures. In the case of Wiesel’s testimony and its translations, a variety of significant discoveries show that the testimonial pact has undergone a transformation through time and space.

9.1 Factual conclusions

There are a number of factual conclusions which can be drawn from this research to support the argument that the testimonial pact has changed markedly. Chapter 2 has demonstrated that Wiesel’s own public persona can play a role in the construction of a testimonial pact associated with *La Nuit* and *Night*. Research into his public statements has shown that Wiesel is open with regard to the mediation behind his texts, and the imperfect nature of his own memories, and it is proposed here that this openness becomes part of the reader’s perception of his testimony. The study has furthermore found that the body of Wiesel’s testimonial text contains a number of features which directly contribute to the testimonial pact. For instance, textual analysis has shown that the fragmented narrator figure and the distance signalled between the text’s narrator and its author draw the readers’ attention to the fact that a testimonial text is not novel, it is not an autobiography, it is not an account to be consumed as others are. This is compounded by the fact that the text highlights the uncertainty and fallibility of any account describing Holocaust experiences, and by the pervasive feature of silence – often described as the only appropriate response to the Holocaust’s atrocities.

A host of factual findings were drawn from the analysis of the various versions of Wiesel’s testimony. Comparing the three editions showed that the second translation was more target oriented than the first translation, and that
the translator’s presence in the text was not apparent. Rather, the retranslation is rendered in remarkably idiomatic English (a result, perhaps, of the dominance of American Holocaust discourses), making the translation easy to consume. Furthermore, the retranslation brings Jewish aspects of the text to the fore and responds lexically to shifts in Holocaust discourses, adopting current terms to refer to the concentrationary experience.

A second set of findings arising from the analysis showed that each version of Wiesel’s testimony presents a distinct narrative voice, which directly affects the testimonial pact. Specifically, it was discovered that the narrative voice in the retranslation is more emphatic, forcefully guiding the reader to a specific reading of the source text’s subtleties. This chapter also revealed that there are specific depictions of the author’s ethical responses to the events described in each version of the testimony. The cruelty inflicted on internees is more pronounced in the retranslation, whereas the malevolence of the internees is played down. Perhaps the most striking finding of this thesis is the great divergence in the degree of certainty expressed in each edition of the testimony. The retranslation is markedly less certain than either of the previous editions studied. This is indicative of a large shift in the writer’s and translator’s perception of what is appropriate expression of the survivor’s memories. The presence of ellipsis, the addition of adverbs of uncertainty and the increased use of questions are the specific sources of evidence for this conclusion.

One of this thesis’ most intriguing discoveries is the presence of certain extreme translation strategies: the omission of a number of phrases from the retranslation is an as yet unexplained phenomenon which merits further enquiry. The second radical strategy is the alteration of a range of factual details in the account. While this author in no way suggests that these alterations indicate a lack of accuracy in the account, the way in which these changes are presented to the reader is noteworthy. The study of Night/La Nuit’s recent prefaces provided evidence that the author and editorial team felt it necessary to present these changes in different ways in each account, and in so doing create a distinct testimonial pact for each account. Indeed, the extent of the changes made to the account is not made clear to the readership of either locale. This is a particularly noteworthy finding given that this study has revealed that a number of changes made during the retranslation were also
refracted back onto the French source text, completely shifting the source-target
text relationship.

9.2 Conceptual conclusions and propositions

From these factual conclusions it is possible to draw a number of broader,
conceptual conclusions regarding the translation of Holocaust testimony. This
thesis’ focus on the rich case study of Wiesel’s testimony has implications for
the reach of these conceptual conclusions, but a number of clear conclusions
can nonetheless be proposed. Certain of these conclusions concern the genre
of testimony. It is argued in this project that the genre of testimony is defined by
the unique interaction between the reader and the writer of the testimonial text.
The writer of the text is subject to a unique set of challenges and limitations
(such as the extent to which he or she can recall the events at hand, the ability
to put his or her experiences into words, the knowledge that no reader will be
able to understand his or her account), while the reader approaches a
testimonial text with a particular set of expectations (a degree of referentiality,
an accurate account, a belief that the author, narrator and protagonist are one
in the same). This thesis finds that the negotiation of this dual set of
expectations takes place in the testimonial pact, where the writer states his or her intentions and capabilities. This in turn guides the reader, explaining what
can be expected from the text.

A second conceptual finding of this thesis is that the author figure is an
essential aspect of the testimonial pact: because the reader has a belief that the
author is also the narrator and the protagonist, what he or she knows of this
author feeds into the very reading of the testimony. It is argued here that the
translator could be seen as a disruptive presence in this reader-writer
interaction, that the limitations of translation could unsettle the reader’s
expectations of the text (specifically the referential aspect of the text and the
author-narrator-protagonist relationship). However, one of this thesis’
propositions is to suggest that the translator could play an enriching role in the
testimonial process (perhaps even that of a co-witness). This process requires
an attentive listener, and the survivor needs to be aware that his or her account
is being heeded. It is claimed here that the translator could be the most qualified
of readers, that the translation process could enhance the testimonial process.
This thesis also proposes that if the reader is made aware of this potentially enriching process, this could become a beneficial aspect of the testimonial pact associated with a translated text.

A number of conceptual conclusions can be drawn from the textual analysis of *La Nuit* and its translations undertaken in this thesis. It can be surmised that this text’s testimonial pact asks the reader to hold him- or herself at arm’s length from the account, to be aware of its limitations, and to not read it as she or he would read another type of text. The retranslation of this text also has conceptual ramifications for the retranslation hypothesis discussed in Chapter 5. It challenges this hypothesis and suggests that its reach is limited. This project has concluded that the retranslation of this piece of testimony is indicative of a number of developments in Holocaust discourses: the text is adapted to suit an American audience, suggesting that this is the dominant cultural force in the translation process; the translation is transparent and the translator is not present as a narrative voice, because at present his or her voice is not welcomed in the body of the text. Each of the observed changes in the narrative voice shows that the translator’s (and perhaps the author’s) perception of the events described, the people involved, and the readers’ expectations has changed through time.

Changes in Holocaust discourses have had a direct effect on the content and translation of this account. Chapter 7 of this thesis revealed a number of findings. The increase in the retranslation of features denoting uncertainty leads us to conclude that it was felt to be more appropriate to word this piece of testimony in a more tentative manner, most likely because attitudes to factuality in Holocaust testimony are becoming more demanding: stating as fact anything which might be uncertain or unverifiable has become problematic. It is suggested here that Holocaust denial might have played a role in this shift in attitude and behaviour. A major conceptual conclusion of this thesis pertains to the presentation of a translated testimonial text and to the intersection of authorisation and the enriching qualities of textual revisions. This project proposes that an authorised translation can bring to the fore the elevating qualities of the translation process. If authorisation of a translation is written into the testimonial pact associated with translated testimony, the work and effect of the translator can play a positive role in the reading of the text.
9.3 Contributions to knowledge

In addition to deducing a range of factual and conceptual findings, this research project also contributes to our knowledge of this field. It provides new understanding of an existing issue by drawing questions of translation theory and practice into discussions of Holocaust writing and reading. As yet, very few scholars have considered the intersection of Holocaust and translation studies. Exceptions to this trend include the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project led by Peter Davies and Andrea Hammel entitled Holocaust Writing and Translation, and Seidman’s *Faithful Renderings*. Davies’ 2011 ‘Translation and the Uses of a Holocaust Testimony: Elie Wiesel’s *La Nuit* in German Translation’ (published in *German Life and Letters*) is a notable contribution the field, as is the special issue of *Translation and Literature* entitled ‘Holocaust Testimony and Translation’ (23.2, Summer 2014). Despite the prevalence of translated writing in Holocaust discourses, astoundingly little scholarly work has examined the effect that translation might have on our understanding of the Holocaust. Drawing together these fields of study in an original and innovative way has provided an insight into an under-examined sphere of knowledge. This project has also drawn together research covering a range of disparate issues: Holocaust historiography is considered alongside literary theory and linguistic approaches to translation studies. This project furthermore addresses a vital issue, which has a direct effect on continued Holocaust memorialisation. It has been demonstrated here that the process of translation has a marked effect on testimonial writing, and that the way in which this effect is presented to readers directly impacts the communication of Holocaust memories.

9.4 Further research

The field of Holocaust Studies is vast. Responses to this act of genocide span numerous areas of research, and while this thesis has drawn together a number of these, there is certainly scope to consider the question of Holocaust translation through the lens of any number of other fields of research. A second way in which the span of this project could be extended through further study would be through the inclusion of different testimonial texts. The use of a highly renowned piece of testimony has allowed this author to pose and explore a
number of research questions, but extending this project’s preliminary findings
to other texts is an essential next step. A fruitful research methodology might
compare the processes at play in the translation of this well-known text and
those at play in a lesser known French text. Such a comparison would allow for
more profound discussion of the changing shapes of Holocaust memorialisation
and increase our understanding of the testimonial pact. Furthermore, the
analysis of texts from other (potentially minority) languages could open these
findings into a consideration of the power relations pertaining between different
locales.

9.5 C’est quoi, ça?

The Holocaust continues, rightly, to horrify us. We continue to study and
memorialise this pivotal event in world history. Holocaust research centres
abound, Holocaust Memorial Day is an increasingly concerted international
effort of memorialisation, millions of people continue to flock to the United
States Holocaust Memorial Museum as part of their time in the American
Capitol, the Holocaust features in blockbuster movies, we are developing
increasingly nuanced responses to this most heinous of acts. And yet, we do
not know enough. While teaching at a Paris secondary school, I was recently
asked by a pupil what I researched. I explained that I study ‘l’Holocauste, la
Shoah’. The pupil responded ‘c’est quoi, ça?’. Had this been a one-off
occurrence, it might not have been so arresting, but this interaction was
repeated on a number of occasions, with a wide range of pupils. There are
those who still do not know what we are capable of doing to one another given
the right circumstances. We must continue to reach those who do not know, we
must continue to question how we convey the Holocaust, because through time
the suffering of the Jews, the Roma, the homosexuals, the disabled targets of
Nazi discrimination is becoming an abstract concept. Translation is fundamental
in this task, and we must not continue to overlook it.
Appendix 1: Front cover of the retranslation
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