

# Memory, Trauma and Self-Narration

# An Introduction - The Holocaust

- The Shoah - 'catastrophe'
- 1941-1945
- Genocide of - Jews, Slavs, Roma('gypsies'), gay people, political opponents.
- 17 million deaths overall out of which 6 million were Jews.
- Boycott, concentration camps, ghettos, mass shootings, extermination camps ('the final solution').

# An Introduction

- Memory - The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information.
- Trauma - A psychological, emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing.
- Self narration - An introspective recounting of a person's development or experiences.

# MEMORY

- Historical memory of the Holocaust is characterized by both heightened interest in the event and trivialization of the past.
- An evolving historical memory is reflected, and finds some of its impetus in the literary and other forms of popular culture.
- Those who seek to exploit the current fascination with Nazism for their own ends, through blatant disregard for historical truth, gain from this confusion.
- The trend in popular Holocaust fiction to appeal to the cravings of the tabloid imagination points to a progressive erosion of historical memory of the Nazi crimes against the Jews.

# MEMORY-Article written by Irene Fogel

- “On about 17th January 1945, the SS dragged thousands of us out of the camp to walk to a concentration camp deep into central Germany. We were in terrible straits with no proper clothes, nothing suitable for marching through the snow. It was as if the cruelty would never end. If anyone sat down out of exhaustion, they were shot.”
- “Eventually I discovered that of around 100 people from my town who were deported, only about 10 survived, only two of whom were children – my sister and me. But there was not one parent and child who lived.”



# Textual Reference

- Train journey to the concentration camp
- Display of work of his lifetime to one of the old prisoner
- The emotional disconnect
- Torture and insult by SS men
- Nightmare vs Reality
- Memories of his beloved

# Trauma

- The Holocaust as described by many authors and the survivors was depicted quite frankly put, as “Hell”.
- The inhumane doings of the Nazi regime left a deep scar in all those who experienced this horrific period in time.
- A large number of people died to the traumatic experiences they were forced into. Such as:
  - 1.The fear of not knowing when a soldier would come and shoot you
  - 2.Having to sit with countless others in small wagons with no means of hygiene, dead bodies and sickly old people.
  - 3.Being Stripped of all their hair and humanity.
- The trauma was described to be to such an extremity that, it is scientifically proven that children of holocaust survivors are far more prone to PTSD than others.

# Holocaust and PTSD

- Depersonalization
- Symptoms prevail, even half a century later
- Living by finding meaning of their life
- Severe effects of PTSD
- Altered stress hormones In descendants





# Textual Reference

- “We dislike talking about our experiences. No explanations are needed for those who have been inside, and the others will understand neither how we felt then nor how we feel now.”
- “No one could yet grasp the fact that everything would be taken away.”
- “But more important the cigarettes could be exchanged for twelve soups, and twelve soups were often a very real respite from starvation.”
- “Detachment, forward march Left-2-3-4! Left-2-3-4! First man about, left and left and left! Caps off!” These words sound in my ears even now.

# Self- Narration

- Reliving the experience
- Hard to accept the reality
- There were two categories of people among the survivors
  - 1.The ones who wanted to tell the world about the unimaginable cruelty that they faced.
  - 2.The ones who wanted to forget their past

- Freddie Knoller-

For 35 years, the horrors he saw went unsaid, but were ever present in his life.

- Henry Korman-

“I don’t remember the number. It’s there still, but I never look at it because it brings back too many painful memories.”

- Elie Wiesel, Night-

“To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.”

# Self Narration of Anne Frank

- Diary of a young jew girl in hiding
- Writes letters as her diary entries
- This book is one of the most searingly honest and lucid first-person portraits of both teenage life and life during the horrors of the Holocaust.
- Anne is aware of the persecution, and then the genocide, of European Jews under the Third Reich.



- Difficulties faced by a young girl to accept the situation
- Anne feels isolated and cut off from her family and the other members of the Secret Annex throughout The Diary of Anne Frank, even while the group is crammed together in shared isolation from the world.
- This book was published by her father after her death
- Its immense popularity inspired award-winning stage and movie versions

# Joseph Mandrowitz

- We had a quiet life until the day they took 1,000 Jews away from my village of Czemierniki.
- I had trained as a tailor and had left home before we were deported, when I went to work four miles away on a ranch.
- We were transported to Majdanek, which was only 19 miles away – a torture camp.
- For 500 metres there were just ditches full of bodies, legs, heads. I was given the number 128164 on my left arm and from that point on I was a number, no longer a name.
- In 1944 we were sent on a death march. From there we walked back to Buchenwald. Whoever was incapable of walking was shot.
- For 17 days we had no water, no food, nothing. We were liberated from the Russians at Theresienstadt on 9 May. I developed typhus and spent several weeks in hospital before I could go anywhere.
- When I finally returned to Czemierniki in 1993, despite the years in which Jews had lived there I could not find a trace either of my family or of Jewish life.
- I have to go back to Auschwitz one last time. I feel like I own the place, having spent almost two years of my life there. I never forget it and I don't want to forget it because it's effectively the story of my life."

Thank You!