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Politics of Memory in Gerda Weissmann Klein's *All But My Life*

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Letter of Recommendation.

Mr. Sangam Babu Malla has completed his thesis entitled “Politics of Memory in Gerda Weissmann Klein’s *All But My Life*” under my supervision. He carried out his research work from November 2018 to April 2019. I hereby recommended this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled Politics of Memory in Gerda Weissmann Klein's *All But My Life* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Sangam Babu Malla has been approved by undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

The present research project examines the politics of memory in Gerda Weissmann Klein's memoir All But My Life in order to analyze how Klein's act of remembering her traumatic past documents, the alternative picture of Holocaust history and shows how there is a politics behind remembering. It further explores how Klein, through her humanistic contemplation to remember past, develops her knowledge of humanity as the men's responsibility and imparts it as a message for the world to learn. It claims the writer's position as an ethical humanist whose painful memory aims at not lamenting the past but learning from it to heal and cope with the trauma. While doing it, the researcher has incorporated the theoretical insights of 'working through' by Dominick LaCapra from the field of Trauma theory and the philosophical ideas of Levinas' ethical humanism in order to strengthen the major argument to its fullest logic. The research concludes with the findings that the writer's politics behind remembering her traumatic past in the memoir is to heal her from the Holocaust trauma as well as to awaken the world for the preservation of humanity.

Keywords; Politics of memory, ethical humanism, Working through, Holocaust

Introduction

This research deals with the issue of Holocaust and its memory represented in Klein's *All But My Life*. It pays particular attention to an issue related to the real woman survival of the Holocaust. Particularly, it explores the politics of Holocaust memory with the reference of women survival Gerda Weissmann Klein. As Klein is a real survival of Holocaust, this memoir deals with her own along with the suffering of her family and her friends in a concentration camp. In this autobiographical memoir, she especially shows the sufferings of female rather than a male. She narrates her own experience of the Holocaust as well as her family and neighbor. She shows the pathetic condition of Jews in labor camp like sexual harassment, emotional blackmail, indoor work, painful torture, hunger, forceful physical work. She does not only mention pathetic condition of Jews but she also shows the female cooperation, development of community within Jews and creation of surrogate family to cope with the situation. This research paper makes an intensive analysis behind the author's motive in sharing these private experiences to the public. This paper tries to show the hidden meaning behind remembering.

Klein as the real witness of the world tragic history of Holocaust, writes her painful experience to the public. This paper tries to explore the reason behind her unspeakable memories. It observes her struggles, painful tortures, emotional crisis, traumatic moments, animalistic brutality and the extremely fearful situations during her stay in concentration camps. It further explores how Klein's contemplation of her traumatic past exposes the actual history of the inhumanity of Nazism. This memoir could prevent the possibility of reoccurrence of such inhumanity and establish a peaceful world informing the present generation. Being a witness to the worst period of human history, Klein felt morally compelled to record the reality of the Holocaust

with an aim to aware the present generations. It serves her to recover from the traumatized memories of the Holocaust. Thus, Klein's intention of remembering the past actuality of Holocaust in the form of literary artifact is not to terrorize her readers but rather, to educate the world by advocating the values of humanity.

Gerda Weissmann Klein, as a survivor of the Holocaust, sketches the alarming pictures of the Nazism by painting the extreme tortures inflicted upon her and her brother, her neighbors and other innocent Jews children, women, older ones and the sick ones. She becomes successful to sketch very clear images of the family separation, sexual harassment, physical harassment, emotional torture, female as goods and the maddening atmosphere of the camp through the narrative form of language. Her remembrance of the memory of the Holocaust becomes autobiographical memoir which emphasis humanism and spreads the philanthropic message for humanity. Therefore, the researcher gives major focus on the politics behind remembering the brutal experience of Klein believing the remembering creates some meaning as Smith and Julia writes "the remembering subject actively creates the meaning of the past in the act of remembering" (16). Researcher brings evidence from the book and tries to dig out the hidden meaning behind narration with the light of trauma theory of 'working through' as a theoretical methodology as well as with the concept of 'ethical humanism' so that Klein's mission of spreading the values of humanism and peace is materialized.

The text *All But My Life* is the collection of Holocaust experiences. Memory is the one important subject of autobiographical writing which involves in the process of meaning making. In our simple understanding, memory is understood as a mere act of recalling past moments. But, in literary studies, the act of remembering indicates the personal process of the meaning making and formation of identity. In the

autobiographical memoir, writers do not write their personal experience just for enjoying but they recollect their past experiences and explore their identity with the help of language and that helps to discourse in the society. So, the recollection of memory in the form of memoir comes to the publication having some purposes to the society. Klein articulates her memories in 1957 after many years of her releasing from the torture of Nazi. Now she has migrated to US and she is a motivational speaker, writer and human right activist. Here, with the help of her memories she is trying to construct her identity as well as trying to aware the world with her humanistic message. She is trying to heal herself and wants to make her future strong and better. Thus memory can be taken as an essential feature for the autobiography to construct the identity and give an intentional message to the world. Scholar Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have talked about the importance of memory in autobiographical writing and argues writers of autobiography should depend on the historic past to tell retrospective narrative. They write “the writer of an autobiography depends on access to memory to tell a retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that experiential history. Memory, thus, is both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts” (16). These lines clearly emphasize the role of memory in the articulation of one’s past and decipher a certain meaning. Memory expression is the major source of memoir writing which functions both as source and authenticator of autobiography.

In general, the term ‘Politics’ is taken as “art of government, public affairs, compromise and consensus” (9). This line projects the literal meaning of the term ‘Politics’. However, in literary studies, it has a different definition and understanding. In literary research, the word ‘Politics’ is used when trying to figure out the reasons. So, politics is the study of ‘Whyness’ (Smith and Watson 185) – meaning why

something is used or deployed. It shows that politics is the searching of reasons: why someone writes something, what is the hidden intention of doing something. So this paper investigates politics behind Klein's torture and her articulation of the torture to the public. Searching the reasons behind her sufferings and remembering her traumatic memory is the main concern of this research paper. Klein mentions in her book "they undressed and lay naked on the stone, face down and murders" (134). With the help of this single line, readers can feel the suffering of women. Women were naked and stoned to death. Here researcher tries to dig out why she is remembering such a traumatic and painful private thing in public.

Gerda Weissmann Klein was born on May 8, 1924, Bielsko, Poland. She is a writer, motivational speaker and human right activist. She is from Jews community and she undergoes through all the suffering and brutality of Nazi during the Second World War. Her happy family is killed by Nazi and remains alone at the end of the war. She suffers from family separation, emotional blackmail, sexual harassment, hunger, physical punishment as well. When she is released by American troops from Nazi concentration camp, she marries with the American army, Kurt Klein. She is still alive and writing many books as well as active in favor of the human right. She writes *All But My Life* (1957) as the collection of her experiences during the concentration camp which is taken as the story of the short film 'One Survivor' (1995).

Gerda Weissmann Klein has written many books among them *All But My Life* is her autobiographical memoir where she shares her painful experience of Nazi torture. It was written in 1957 and carries the pathetic experiences of Klein during the Holocaust period. Klein's memoir begins on September 3, 1939 in Klein's home Bielitz, Poland. At the time of Nazi's invasion, she was fifteen years old and there were four family members' father, mother and Arthur, her brother. The Klein family

was a Jewish and they were living in Bielitz where most of the people were Jews. It was the day of invasion; Klein's family received a telegram from her uncle. He said that family had to leave the Bielitz as soon as possible but her father was ill so they could not leave.

After the attack on Bielitz, Gerda saw many neighbours were saluting to Hitler saying 'Hail Hitler! Hail Hitler!' (3) which made her surprised. Some days later, Weissmann's family and neighbour get a letter by German Army that forces to register male between 16 and 50 for the army. Arthur, her older brother is compelled to register his name with other young men in the Nazi army and he never returned back. Gerda and her family were forced to switch their homes into a Jewish ghetto. In 1942, their family was forced to Jews ghetto forcing her father to go to death camp and mother to a company and she never saw her parents again. Gerda and her friend Ilse fortunately get the same camp and Gerda meets Abek Feigenblatt, who falls in love with her very soon but Gerda thinks of Abek is a friend. Abek family tries to release Gerda from concentration camp with the hope that she will marry with him but she denies. Gerda gets a letter from her friend Erika where she had written about the torture her mother, brother and boyfriend faced before their death. They were forced to lie naked and stoned to death that made her aware of the horrifying situation for Jews.

Gerda and Ilse were shifted from one camp to another camp frequently. They were transported to the labour camp and weaving for the German was their work. After that, girls were divided and sent to another labour camp. They had to carry bricks. Nazi used to give insufficient foods but they used to share with each other. Nazi male did many sexual harassments to many girls and once she was also proposed but she escapes from the place. The life was so pathetic in concentration camp. In the

winter of 1945, more than four thousand young women were forced into a three-hundred-mile “death march” from a number of labour camps in Germany and Poland to Czechoslovakia. Among them, Gerda is only one of 120 women in her group of 2000 who survives this march. They passed the very painful journey by feet with hunger and suffering. They reached in the new camp. America had declared war against German. Klein and other survived Jews girls locked into new the factory building and lift there. American attacked the Nazi and released Jews girls from that camp and announced that war was over. Finally, Klein married with American army and settled in America.

The memoir presents the alternative picture of holocaust relating with Gerda Weissmann Klein where she has documented traumatic sufferings about her, her family and whole Jewish focusing on women. Gerda has bothered to remember those painful and unspeakable experiences of the Holocaust. In the concentration camp, she goes through traumatic suffering. She has shown the gender biases even in the treatment of Nazi in a concentration camp. She and her friends were badly treated with sexual violence, forced physical work, emotional harassment, physical punishment, forced sterilization etc. They undergo physical violence but still they stay alive. This research paper excavates the hidden meaning of her remembering among the different views by different scholars and Critics. This book can be taken as the alternative female voice of Holocaust experience where Klein has intended to show the world. So with the help of textual and many other scholar’s references this paper intends to show the politics of remembering by keeping politics of memory as a title.

This memoir has been critiqued by different scholars and critics. Critics have defied *All But My Life* as holocaust survivor text. Nancy Lukens comment “female narrative focuses on peer relationship among women as female survival strategy,

whether in privileged position or situation of extreme abuse” (Lukens 198). Here, Lukens argues women get privileged in the extreme abuse and peer relationship is among women to a survival strategy. The women are doing the same in the holocaust as a survival strategy as the line deploys “come, let’s talk about our boyfriend” (Klein 167). The scholar Lukens is simply pointing out the situation. He argues that female have strong bonding even in a critical situation but he does not talk about the politics of doing this. This paper is different than other critics because this researcher tries to dig out the alternative meaning of remembering such unspeakable suffering.

Another critic Myrna Goldenberg argues from the same line as previous “The experience of women during holocaust shows that traditionally feminist values of cooperating and caring are important tradition” (Goldenberg 78). This also focuses on the cooperation and caring of women during the holocaust period but do not search behind the reason of such tradition more importantly why Gerda Weismann Klein is bringing such very personal events in public. Goldenberg again argues “The experiences of Jewish men have been documented and generalized as if they were as true for women as they were for men” (79). As his claim, many other holocaust memoirs by male writers such as Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi show the male experience being influenced by mainstream power politics so they do not show the alternative truth of holocaust. In the line of another memoir *Night* “My father was a cultured man. The Jewish community of Sighet held him in highest esteem; his advice on public and even private matters was frequently sought” (Night 4). Here, the writer is focusing on the experience of male but he is not talking about women sufferings were different than male suffering and how they used to survive making the alternative family but these are projected in the Gerda Weismann Klein memoir. Elie Wiesel

does not talk about the female experience and its hidden meaning of Holocaust remembrance.

Harold M. Foster a school teacher, in his journal, *Embracing All But My Life* by Gerda Weissmann Klein critiques as “one of the means of transmitting our knowledge of history and culture to our emotional lives is through literary experience”. He talks Klein’s memoir as only as the transformation of knowledge, history and culture. He is saying Klein has written this and transformed history on generation to another. He further says “what makes *All But My Life* different and transcendent from many Holocaust works is Klein’s affirmation of life. Gerda and Jewish girls who live in the slave labour camps keep alive; keep the trappings of life even during the hardest of circumstances” (56). He is focusing on women’s unique way of surviving even in a critical situation saying “Clandestinely, they write and perform plays; they celebrate birthdays; they share what little food they have, they talk and they listen to the great ordeal. These girls, through Gerda’s eyes, create a community of friendship. They create surrogate families to replace the families they lost” (56-57). Gerda and Jewish women had to face unbearable suffering but they still remained alive by making different cooperation and exercises. The feeling of Gerda is not personal feeling in Ghetto but representational experience of all women in the concentration camp. Foster looks for making history from one personal experience. This critic just explains the things what has been written in a text but he does not try to excavate why they still want to be alive even in the hardest of time and why she is showing this private experience into the public. So, even in such a traumatic situation why she wants to survive and she is sharing her painful suffering is the main concern of researcher. This research shows the alternative truth of the Holocaust.

The identity of the survivor has been reflected through the documentation of the experiences, they had gone through in the time of Nazi brutality. Many critics have taken the experiences of Klein and interpreted the suffering as single experiences. Her suffering should not be generalized as an individual experience, so it should be observed as there is hidden identity. Karen Remmler in his journal *Gender Identity* argues, “The construction and formation of the identities would shift by raising questions about the continued death of critical writing on the significance of gender differences for both the remembrance of the Holocaust” (167). Remmler focuses on the writing of Holocaust survivor is to make their identity. Similarly, his writing elaborates that sharing an experience is creating a history like Gerda and Elie have added in the history of genocide.

Trauma theory uses to dig out the reason behind remembering. Trauma emerged in the field of medical science. It has Greek origin which refers “to pierce”. It is described a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time which indicates, trauma memory always haunts. In another sense, trauma can be described as emotionally painful and tortured experiences and that always troubles people's ability to cope with the situation. There are many traumatic situations like sexual abuse, police brutality, discrimination, thread, domestic violence, racism, poverty and oppressions which cause to trauma victimization. People can witness or experience the catastrophic events like volcanic eruption, earthquake, war distress so that these memory and mind haunt for longtime.

Firstly, the word trauma has been employed in the field of clinical study with the purpose of treatment to traumatic injuries in war and accidents. Physical and psychological, both effects were taken as the cause for trauma victimization but more importantly psychological pain is taken as a consequence of stressful moment which

becomes the main cause for trauma victimization. Especially in First World War, Second World War and Vietnam War people and soldiers had to face many tortures and sufferings which made mentally distress among them and they became traumatic people who went through the experience. There are many books, films, novels, dramas were published by accumulating their experiences among them this memoir is one which carries the experience of the Holocaust. To address such a situation, trauma theory came on the level of the surface.

Klein being both the protagonist and the writer, shares her traumatic past experiences in the form of a memoir. All the painful experiences of the Second World War that she renders through are traumatic for her to remember and read as well. So, Klein remembers her traumatic private experiences in the public domain with purpose. She is as the real survivor of holocaust so it is very important to take her real experience in focus with its hidden meanings. There are many theorists who talk about the trauma. Klein is remembering her experience not just for remembrance, but she has hidden intention. She has definite reasons behind memorizing the past. This memoir shows Klein's bitter and unimaginable personal experiences of the Holocaust. She tells the most painful traumatic scenes and situation that haunt her overwhelmingly. They are so traumatic that she cannot handle dealing with them except for articulating them in the linguistic narration. Characterizing the nature of traumatic state of one's experience, Cathy Caruth, the pioneer of the concept 'Trauma', defines, "trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomenon" (181). Going by this definition, traumatic experiences are more overwhelming, uncontrollable, repetitive and very hallucinating in nature. In another

word, trauma means the horrible experiences of a certain event that appears in the mind of the victim time and again. So, trauma is not the exact event but the response of the subject of that event.

Cathy Caruth gives another idea about trauma that there is a gap between the time of events and traumatic response to the victim of the event tries to remember the actual cause of the event but victim develops various responses. This process of developing a series of traumatic response is called “traumatic neurosis” (186). Klein documents her traumatic feelings and her family along with the traumatic realities as seen in other during the Second World War atrocity of fascism. The memoir is a trauma narrative through which Klein represents her own painful memory of her tortured past by Nazi. So, Klein’s representation of the Holocaust is more realistic.

All But My Life is a trauma narrative, it has a social and cultural link. Trauma theorist Susannah Radstone argues, “political and cultural contexts within which this theory has risen to prominence” (9). Which means trauma does not happen at the time of the event but it happens when our mind associates the events with different context like social, cultural, political, regional as well as racial. So trauma happens at the time of association the traumatic events with the context of outside. Klein writes this memoir as a traumatized narrative associating her feelings with Jews. She happens to think that only Jews were tortured and suffered by Nazi so she became traumatize as Redstone says, “a memory becomes traumatic when it becomes associated, later, with inadmissible meanings, wishes, fantasies” (17).

Trauma theorist Jeffrey C. Alexander states that the traumatic experiences are such painful, repressed and uncontrollable feeling that keeps haunting the victims and the later search a vent whole in different forms to cope up with the situation.

Alexander further insists that the literature becomes one of the easiest ways of

commemoration in the pent-up traumatic emotions of loss and mourning so that it helps them restore the psychological health order to express and peace:

There is an increasing body of literature that addresses the effects of the repression in terms of the traumas it caused. The aim of is to restore collective psychological health by lifting societal repression and restoring memory. To achieve this, social scientists stress on the importance of finding – through public acts of commemoration, cultural representation, and public political struggle- some collective means for undoing repression and allowing the pent-up emotions of loss and mourning to be expressed. (89)

These lines speak on how literary writing has become the primary source for the articulation of one's traumatic past. Expressing the repressed traumatic feeling of loss and mourning in the narrative form of literary works is, according to Alexander, an act of public commemoration and representation that enables the object of the victim to tackle with his past and restore the stable sense of life. Such process of commemoration to relive the past to maintain one's life for the better future is what Dominick LaCapra defines as post-traumatic act of 'working through' in which the victim adopts the free articulator practice to the extent that one works through the intensive traumatic pain. Outlining the specific quality of 'working through' post-traumatic process, LaCapra defines:

An articulatory practice to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transferential relations in general), one is able to distinguish between the past and present and to recall its memory that something happened to one...working through, including mourning and modes of critical thought and practice, involve the possibility of making distinctions or developing articulations that are recognized as problematic. (22)

Here, LaCapra emphasis on the expression of one's memories so that the sufferer can reach in the depth of his/her sufferings and understand. So, the victim takes own position about repressed traumatic issues and ultimately settles his/her problem down. It matures the victim to be critical over the overwhelming situations and thoughtfully sort it out.

All But My Life as a memoir is an example of trauma literature that concerns with the unspeakable experiences of the Holocaust survivor. Very few survivors enabled to deliver their traumatic past for the sake of the world's understanding of the tragedy. As a trauma narrative inspired by the true events of the Holocaust, Klein in this memoir makes emphasis on "exploration and inquiry" (Roth 66). While talking about the need to rememorize the history of Holocaust, John K. Roth argues, "Holocaust demands interrogation and calls everything into question" (63). Here, the critic stresses on the necessity of relocating one's memory of the Holocaust in order to contextualize them in the betterment of the present. Most of the Holocaust writers tend to rewrite their painful memories of the fascism as a witness so that they can recover from the traumatic mind. One of the prominent Holocaust survivor and a writer, Primo Levi, acknowledges that he bears the witness to the horrendous history of Holocaust so that he earns a peaceful balance within his life "I am at peace with myself because I bore witness" (qtd. in Agamben 17). Here, Levi's intention of

sharing his experiences as an escape from the traumatic past for maintaining the ordinary peaceful life.

The text recounts the real story of a young girl whose painful experiences of family separation, physical and emotional torture during the course of Nazism contribute to the narrative plot. It centers around the unspeakable tragedy of a girl, the writer, who was captured along with her family members and relatives from Bielitz by the Nazi soldiers and are brutally treated on so-called concentration camps. Even though it is a privatized memorization, it also exchanges close proximity to the public reality. The act of remembering by a subject simultaneously reflects the social dimension where the remembering subject belongs to individual communicates his/her personal experiences, it integrates itself with the public space that is bound with one's memory. Such transition of personal memory in communication with the public is what Avishai Margalit terms as a 'shared memory': "A shared memory is not a simple aggregate of individual memories. It requires communication. A shared memory integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode" (51-52). This memoir is an archive of personal memory by Klein, a survivor, helps the readers discover the social reality of Nazism and its darkest truth "The race toward death had begun" (10). Reading it answers how the regime of Hitler emerged with the radical discourse of Aryan nationality and adopted the anti-Semitic policy of 'one color- one race' to avenge their loss during the First World War.

The mentioned theoretical insights characterize literature as the source for expression of traumatic memories to cope with the situation and restore the peaceful and stable life by working through extreme traumatic situations. Klein's an autobiographical memoir is no exception. According to LaCapra as a literary form, memoir functions as a therapeutic tool for Klein's expression of her traumatic

experiences of family separation, animalistic punishment, sexual abuse, physical and emotional harassment, barbaric treatment and animalistic punishment. It helps her to reduce the intensity of painful traumatic past. However, by expressing traumatic experiences in her memoir, Klein not only takes literary writing as an instrument of 'working through' to achieve personal psychological peace, but also employs her memoir as a source to articulate her memories of the Holocaust so that she can succeed in spreading the message of humanity as representative voice of voiceless dead Jews which enlightens the present generations. Such ethical commitment occupies central politics of her memorization of the Holocaust.

The concept of remembering trauma was taken from Sigmund Freud by LaCapra one of the historical trauma theorists. To explain the trauma historically, LaCapra has developed two terms as his traumatic concept that the desirable one "working through" which goes with the healing process of trauma remembering on another hand there is "acting out" which goes by denial and ignoring in remembering. LaCapra writes in his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma*:

I'm obviously trying to take the concept of "acting out" and "working through" from Freud and from psychoanalysis and then developing them in a way that makes them especially interesting for use historical studies. This means that I don't try to be orthodox as a psychoanalyst but really aim to develop the concepts in a manner that engages significant historical problems and for me, the Holocaust is one of the most important of these problems. (141)

The mentioned lines are accepting that the term "acting out" and "working through" was taken from the concept of Sigmund Freud. He does not remain a limited with Freud idea and further he explains emotional implication of trauma writing relating to the signification of the historical problem of trauma. For him, Holocaust is one of the

most important problem for trauma to be resolved from the mind of survival.

LaCapra talks about the model of trauma history writing as “positivist model” and “constructive model”. “Positivist” trauma history writing focuses on official and factual history on the other hand “constructivist model” focuses on morality, humanity, true, right which is the base for ‘working through’ response of trauma history writing. LaCapra focuses on “middle voice” while trauma writing which can be only way of balanced trauma history writing. The middle voice always talks about balancing the painful traumatic experience of the past. He writes in his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma* “the middle voice would thus be the ‘in-between’ voice of undesirability and the unavailability or radical ambivalence of clear-cut positions” (20). These lines talk about the in-between voice of trauma history writing. It means that while trauma history writing there should not be biased and ambivalence. It should speak middle voice for humanity and cope up with the situation.

In her autobiographical memoir, Klein maintains the middle voice as LaCapra writes there should be in-between voice in trauma history writing thought it is Holocaust experiences. Klein writes all her past painful experience in middle voice to cope up with the situation by balancing all sufferings. She does not only talk about the negative sides of Nazi's brutality but also clearly writes that not all Nazi were so cruel and inhuman as she writes "the German women who worked for the SS had saved my life" (133). In Poland while Nazi was killing the Jews, reading English by Jews was stickily prohibited as one of Nazi officer speaks "come to the police station. Learning English will be the last pleasure of your life" (49). Klein was trying to learn English so she is captured by the Nazi. She had loosed her hope to remain alive as that soldier speaks learning English is the last pleasure of your life. However, she is released by Nazi as she narrates;

I have often thought about that officer, and wondered why he let me go. Was he really kind? Did he have a daughter my own age? I wish I knew. I met many hundreds of Germans in the years that followed, but only two, and he was the first, who behaved as though they were human (51).

In these lines, she is trying to present Nazi positively that there were also kind Nazi who could also save the life of Jews. As LaCapra writes there should be a middle voice to heal the trauma out Klein is doing the same thing in her Memoir. Hereby showing Nazi in a positive manner, she is trying to maintain the middle voice to working through the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust. She is going showing that there were not only cruel Nazi but also kind and benevolent they love as their daughter to Jews.

In 'working through' victim goes with the articulation of the painful and extremely overwhelming past experiences with the hope that by going through such

articulation of traumatic past experience, the victim can detach from such experience and cope the situation. According to LaCapra points 'working through' is taken to be a post-traumatic response of painful experiences of the past in which victim tries to detach themselves from the extremely overwhelming past experiences. Victims go through the process of articulation and expression of their past experiences in different ways and forms. One of the forms is the literature. Public can articulate the bitter personal experiences and this expression in the form of literature can work an act of public commemoration in the larger cultural context. LaCapra argues:

Working through is an articulatory practice; to the extent one works trauma (as well as transference relations in general) one distinguishes between past and present and recall in memory that something happened to one (or one people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future. This does not imply wither that there is a pure opposition between past and present. (21-22)

LaCapra writes working through is a process of articulation that enables the victim to distinguish between past and present by making them realized present realities then it opens the future door to live a very healthy and happy life. It means to say that by expressing the painful and bitter experience of the past one can differentiate the past pain and present realities then the victim can persuade themselves from the past. By persuading themselves, he/she can cope with the situation and search for a better situation.

As LaCapra argues, articulation of painful memory of the past reliefs the victim and can cope with the painful past in present and future living in his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Klein does the same. She articulates all her painful traumatic past experience related to sexual violence, forceful physical work and

torture, sexual harassment, emotional blackmail, indoor work, hunger and tries to heal the situation. Klein as the female tries to focus on torture with a female in concentration camp than male. She reveals all her private experience of the Holocaust in public and tries to heal herself to be a happy and healthy life. She articulates her past in her autobiographical memoir *All But My Life* and she suggests:

An overwhelming feeling of pity and pain swept over me. I embraced Papa. The touch of my arms made him shiver, and a suppressed and terrible sobbing cry rose from his throat, a cry which I will never forget, which had no resemblance to the human voice; it sounded rather like the cry of an animal when it has been stabbed and is dying. I was to hear that cry later, many times, when people were being killed. (20)

She writes these lines to show her painful experiences of the departure of Arthur from family. Arthur, the brother of the Klein, is fixed to join in concentration camp by Nazi and they all become panic. She embraces her father and father starts to weep. The cry of her father was like the cry of an animal while it has been stabbed and dying. She is remembering all these events to purify her painful past experience and she believes that heals the situation for better future as she writes “remembering the past, using these fragments to weave dreams for the future” (23). She remembers all her fragments of the past to weave the better future. She is aware of the past and wants to make her present and future peaceful. Lamentation does not make happy so we have to take our bad memories as the source of a better future is her hidden meaning to remember her past experience as LaCapra says in his theory working through.

Working through by LaCapra focuses on critical thought of the traumatic events where the victims analyze their past painful events by using critical point of view. On the basis of this theoretical insight, Klein’s act of sharing her private

traumatic experiences of Holocaust is a process of 'working through' where she is bringing her experience in the form of a memoir in order to advance the present and she appeals the message of humanity for a coming generation instead of violence or destruction. Klein as the real witness of the holocaust, she is not an exception from trauma narration. The trauma theorist LaCapra argues:

The process of working through including mourning and modes of critical thought and practice involve the possibility of making distinctions or developing articulation that are recognized as problematic but still function as limits and as possibly desirable resistances to decidability, particularly when the latter is tantamount to confusion and the obliteration or blurring of all distinctions. (22)

This line speaks about the strength of articulating painful experience being critical over the events. LaCapra argues by mourning or workings through of the traumatic events make the victim aware of distinction of past and present which gives way to decide in confusion of traumatic mind. Articulation of traumatic experience recognizes the problem of past and functions to resist the unnecessary thought over the events. LaCapra focuses on remembering the past to give way to traumatic experience for making a better future. In the same line, Klein in her memoir argues,

When I look back now over the years, thinking of their happy faces, I remember too how pitifully few lived to know the joy of freedom. When I remember the forests of Czechoslovakia, where most of them lie in unmarked graves, I thank God that I was able to make them forget. Even now, when I meet the few girls who survived and they remind me of those performances, I feel humble and grateful. I know that that was the greatest thing I have done in my life. (141)

As LaCapra expression of the past traumatic experience makes the victim critical in thinking and comforts their life. Gerda Weissmann Klein's autobiographical memoir talks about her traumatic experience of Holocaust and she takes her experience as the greatest things she has done in her life. She goes with the remembrance of all her pain and tortured experiences of Holocaust but she does not go with the lamentation rather she remembers her pathetic situation to strengthen her feelings as LaCapra writes in working through that articulation of the traumatic experience in the public generate the power to cope the situation. Klein is not feeling sad by remembering her past tortured experience but she feels humble and grateful which means she healed the past traumatic experiences to make her present and future better as she writes "I knew that I must get away from the dead, away from the past, away from my thoughts. I had a future to face" (238). So, it can be said that she is not remembering her past not just for remembrance but she also has politics.

LaCapra explains working through as the reengagement of life. It means, life has been destroyed by traumatic experiences but it can be recovered by articulating traumatic past in the public forum. He further writes 'working through' relieve the pain and sufferings as he writes "in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or a reengagement in life, one is betraying the those who were overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past" (22). It means to say that sharing your personal pain and sufferings to the audience gives relief. One can go with the deep sufferings which overwhelmed the traumatic past but with the articulation in different forms give the power to survive.

In *All But My Life* by Klein uses her memoir for mourning to cope with her traumatic past experience of the holocaust by Nazi. She is not lamenting by

remembering rather she is taking it as the platform for her refreshment by purifying her tortured. She narrates:

I was fortunate to have had a happy childhood, one that in all probability was not as perfect as I have chosen to remember. But its memory has helped me survive, and I have used it as a beacon to illuminate the darkness of the tragedy that followed, just as I often use the darkness of past despair to show me the blessings which I might otherwise take for granted. As I have grown and matured, I have learned better to understand my parents, to grasp the burden which this period of horror imposed on them. (258)

These lines are speaking about Klein's positively and creatively with her traumatic experiences. She is using her memory as the source knowledge as well as inspiration for the future. She is going through with 'working through' of her memory and taking it as the blessing which matured her. She is not treating her past experience as an unforgettable event rather she takes that as her lesson for future which is the feature of 'working through' by LaCapra points.

Klein's humanistic approach at bearing witness to Holocaust memory, though it was really painful to remember, is seen when she writes "as I finish the last chapter of my book, I feel at peace at last. I have discharged a burden, and paid a debt to many nameless heroes, resting in their unmarked graves" (preface). With the help of these words, we can clearly claim that Klein's this memoir is a process of 'working through' that she does not merely revisit her past but she attempts to excavate the meaning of humanity and believes that she is fulfilling the burden of many nameless heroes who were unknown to the world. It means to say that by writing this memoir she is not only getting peace in her mind but also fulfilling her responsibilities of

recognizing unknown Jewish heroes to the world. She is using her past for the betterment of the collective community which is the future generations.

Klein's politics of memorizing her past for awakening the world that stops the repetition of dark historic episode as Holocaust and focus on the importance of humanity for the peace as well as betterment of future generations shows the characteristic of ethical humanism as proposed by a humanist, Emmanuel Levinas whose mission of humanism is similar with Klein's ethical responsibility of being responsible for Holocaust survivor's welfare without showing indifference towards human. Levinas believes in the "humanism of the other man" (qtd. in Schweiker 253) which is his main philosophy. He accepts that the importance of the self is dependent on the other. The self-identity is formed with the help of responsibility towards others. Thus, Levinas promotes the humanistic approach that respecting other means respect to you. He argues, there is our life because there is the presence of the other.

Explaining the concept of ethical humanism by Levinas' a critic Schweiker describes:

On the other hand, advocates of responsibility ethics, like Levinas, begin with the other and not self-cultivation. The command of the other constitutes the self. The event of lateral transcendence, we can say, is from the other to the self rather than from the self to its finality in the you, as it is for neohumanists.

The constitutive datum of life is boundness to the other. (Schweiker 258)

These lines glorify the other without centering the self and give equal importance of self and others. In this twenty first century where people think of themselves, Levinas counters that notion of centering the self with the other at the margin. Levinas notion of being self-centric by giving equal focus on others is the main philosophy of Levinas. Ethical humanism gives importance of human responsibilities being human is similar to what Klein dreams of humanity.

The concept of Levinas 'ethical humanism' focuses on being responsible towards other has influenced Klein's politics behind sharing her unimaginable personal traumatic memory in the public for the sake of awakening the coming generations that violence does not give any solution for humanity. She argues in the epilogue of her memoir *All But My Life*, the graphic description of her memory as brutal violence by Nazi is not misjudged as a promotion for further violence rather it should be understood as her mission of humanism which focuses on peace and security in the world. By expressing her painful past to the audience she is not terrorizing the readers' rather enlightening the future generations about the importance of life, peace and security for life. Klein argues:

I wanted to reach out to young people, make them aware of the preciousness of life, and show them that it was not to be thrown away thoughtlessly, even under conditions of extreme hardship. I always wanted to impress upon them how wrong it is to seek a permanent solution to a temporary problem. (250)

These words from Klein's Epilogue in the memoir focus on the value of life. She argues people should not throw their life being self centric rather they should take stand for other's right and humanity. Each person should not live for herself/himself so it is wrong to search death as the permanent solution to a temporary problem thinking oneself. Klein wants to forward the value of life even in hardship and put her position in humanistic advocacy. She uses the tragic history of Nazism in order to honor those dead and protect future responsibility towards the other. She further writes "I have written my story, with tears and with love, in the hope that my children, safely asleep in their cribs, should not awake from a nightmare and find it to be reality" (preface). She writes her story with tears and love with the hope of children can sleep safely. It means to say that she is using her memory as the knowledge for

future generation that by understanding her pain nobody can dare to repeat the violence. Everybody understands the value of humanity so that all sleep in peace and security. Klein believes her act of memorizing is dedicated to learning the lessons from the past and promise to better the future without the repetition of that past. She remembers traumatic experiences though it is very painful for the sake of preventing its reoccurrence in the future so that the future generations suffer the loss of humanity the way six million Jews like himself suffered. He transformed his painful experiences into the language in memoir for he holds the belief that his painful experiences lead the world toward the positive actions that safeguard for humanity.

Klein shows her side of humanism even at the suffocating climate of violence in the concentration camps. Her regular company with her friend Ilse even in the physically weak situation to cope with the hardship of concentration camp shows her humanism. She always thought of others in the concentration camp where they were mindlessly tortured. Nazi did not give enough food so all Jews had to remain in hunger. They used to provide insufficient bread in a fixed time but Klein always thinks of those weak and unhealthy Jews and used to share her portion of small bread which is the symbol of humanity. She writes in her book “I shared a portion of our bread. It wasn’t enough” (183). The fifteen years young Klein fulfills her moral responsibility by keeping her life at the risk. She shared the portion of bread to weak and unhealthy though it was insufficient for herself. This part of her memory can be taken as the inspiration for the readers in cultivating the message of humanism towards others as suggested by Levinas. The process of inspiring others for life while her own life was in the turmoil establishes her as an epitome of humanity. She represents the image of humanist that Levinas imagined at his philosophy of ethical humanism.

In short, Klein's autobiographical memoir *All But My Life* draws the picture of entire realities of the dark historical phenomenon of Holocaust. She as a Jewish woman, documents all her personal experiences of the Holocaust with some purpose. She presents the picture of physical torture, emotional harassment, sexual violence, humiliations, hunger, animalistic behaviors, family separation, and pathetic images of dead corpses in her memoir. In fact, Klein's memoir is a process of storytelling what she had gone through in her past. Trauma writing is said as a mere documentation of objective truth which contains real happening, the Klein's memoir is not an exception. It documents Klein's traumatic past Holocaust experiences in such a way that audience put themselves in the situation and feels the pain. So, trauma writing is not only fictionalization rather it focuses on the realistic depiction of real painful experience to awaken the world. Since the act of memorization is not a neutral phenomenon, the motive of the Holocaust writer is not to entertain as well as terrorize the audiences but to historicize the unspeakable experiences of the dead Jews and bear the witness to testify the inhumanity. Klein remembers her past and believes she has given honor to those dead ones with whom she shared the brutality of Nazi and produce the knowledge to the world for its betterment in the future.

Klein is writing her pathetic situation of the Holocaust in a hope that her writing corrects the future generation. She believes by knowing her past, people understand the injustice of Nazism and it prevents the repetition of such massacre. She is spreading the philanthropic message for the preservation of humanity by her recollection of past. She scripted her memories in the form of narrative to heal her traumatic past with 'working through'. She suffered from unimaginable torture in Holocaust and she wanted to cope with the suffering to make her future better. She wants to live a peaceful and healthy life by using her traumatic past as a greatest

knowledge for her present. She wants to spread the knowledge of humanity to the world with the common discourse of ethical humanism where the morality and humanity stand above any race, religion and culture. Klein's real intention of remembering her past is to lead us to the peaceful world of humanity by healing herself with working through to cope with her traumatic past. Thus, politics behind her remembering dominantly concerns with her message for humanity and healing herself by the prevention of the recurrence of any inhuman history like Holocaust to safeguard the lives of the future generations.

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