

Surviving the Unsurvivable – the Holocaust Experiences through Diaries and Paintings

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The present research explored the diaries and drawings created by people who lived in extreme and traumatic situations, during the Holocaust.

In writing diaries, there is an element of introspection, a perspective of reflecting the inner world of the individual, describing emotions, aspirations, dreams and their realization or crumbling, expectations and decisions the writers made. We can say that diaries are reflections of the self in context of the writer's life world. The text of diaries is emotional and spontaneous, never clearly organized, has no clear grammatical and logical structure, it is often incoherent and has many contradictions and paradoxes, and reflects the complexities of the lives of the writers in extreme conditions.

Paintings and drawings were additional avenues of self-expression during the Holocaust and many Jewish artists left their artworks in their inheritance. The literature review covered three themes: the historical context, the diaries written during the Holocaust and drawing and painting during the Holocaust. The study was performed in the naturalist approach using qualitative methodology. The underlying assumption of naturalistic inquiry is one of multiple realities. The descriptive phenomenological method was used which is based on reduction, description and interpretation. Three diaries have been analyzed and 16 paintings were analyzed by three artists.

The major themes identified by content analysis were: loss and destruction of identity as an outcome of captivity; existential situations characteristic of living in captivity such as waiting, being persecuted, life in illusions; life among others; death and the ability to deal with it; morality in the camps and lastly, captivity. An integrative discussion followed these findings and implications for intervention are suggested.

Keywords: Holocaust, diaries, identity, existential situations characteristic, life among others, death, morality.

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