

The fiftieth gate – the last days

[History](#)



History alone is too factual, memory alone is too personal. However when these two are combined they are then able to paint a holistic image of a certain event, situation or personality. Mark Baker in *The Fiftieth Gate* and James Moll's *The Last Days* both represent the experiences of the Holocaust through the bringing together of historical documents and personal memories in order to show the importance of interplay between them.

By merging personal experiences and historical events Baker, when he describes the trip to Treblinka, is representing a common experience shared by the Jewish people. He uses the poem 'Written in pencil in a sealed railway-car', to express the collective memory of the Holocaust through the use of an incomplete sentence.

"There in this carload I am Eve with Abel my son Cain son of man tell him that I" The cut off, of 'tell him that I' alludes to the way the Jewish people were treated during the Holocaust. It reflects the idea that the Jewish lives were too, cut off. By referencing 'Eve, Abel and Cain', the Baker creates universal meaning to represent a shared collective memory of their transportation to the camps. The mistreatment they received during the Holocaust is further portrayed through the use of factual information while retelling Leib's experience at the camps. "a pair of shoes, with no consideration for size a collective locker which contain their sole person possessions: a metal bowl, a pot and a single spoon".

The cumulation of historical facts that Baker adds to Leib's memory allows the reader to gain a total insight into this event. It shows the little possessions they own while the lack of shoe size shows the neglect they received and the careless attitudes of the soldiers in the camp. The Last

Days, directed by James Moll, also expresses the idea of a collective memory through the interplay of both history and memory to give a complete understanding of the events during the Holocaust. He blends the stories of various survivors together through editing, so as to present their memories as shared.

Renee Firestone: ... We realised that we are not going on passenger trains. The cattle cars were waiting for us... Irene Zisblatt: My father said they ran out of the other trains because its war time Alice Cahana: Anybody who didn't go and didn't go fast was beaten. As Renee, Irene and Alice ? Nish each other's sentences, as they recall the day they left for the camps, their memories told in voiceover are supported by historical ? Im depicting the jewish gathering at train stations and revealing the horror which took place.

By doing this Moll is suggesting that it is the interplay between history and memory that allows the representation of a whole event. " The Last Days" further represents the Hungarian experience of the Holocaust through historical documents and Irene's personal memory. Moll interweaves archival footage and photographs of the trains, the Auschwitz camp and people waiting for " selection" with the voice over of irene. " I remember the man telling the story about the children. I was holding him so tight and I said to my self I will never let him go.

Here Irene recounts the experiences of her transportation focusing in particular on what was personal to her, feeling fear for her brother and having an urge to protect him. Moll uses a close up of her hands to physically demonstrate how tightly she was holding her brother. Here he is trying to expose a physical recollection. Moll prefaces her recollection with footage of <https://assignbuster.com/the-fiftieth-gate-the-last-days/>

the train marrying both history and myth. Whilst Baker uses the interplay of history and memory he also believes history has the ability to validate memory.

When Yossel's memory fails to account for his experiences at Auschwitz, Baker's historical evidence provides context. " I can't remember nothing", Baker provides him with historical evidence to assist in his recollection: " So I help him, I hand him the family tree I have constructed from the archives in Poland. " This validates the personal dimension of memory as it is this which contributes to a universal understanding of an historical event. The verbs, ' help', ' hand' and ' construct', all demonstrate Baker using his knowledge of history to provide a context for his father's memory.