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**Representing the Horrors of Holocaust: Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947) and Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2005)**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for a **Master degree in English Language,  
Literature, and Civilization**

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## **Declaration**

This is to certify that the material embodied in the present work is based on my original research work. It has not been submitted in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any other university. My indebtedness to other works has been duly acknowledged in relevant places.

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## **Abstract**

My dissertation proposes to analyze two literary texts. The first text is *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, and the second is *The Book Thief* by Marcus Suzak. The study explores the form and content in both texts and takes into account biographical elements to help us see similarities and differences.

Key words: Holocaust, Holocaust narratives, testimony, diary, autobiography, novel

## Résumé:

Ma dissertation propose d'analyser deux textes littéraires. Le premier texte est *The Diary of a Young Girl* écrit par Anne Frank, et le deuxième est *The Book Thief* écrit par Markus Zusak. Mon étude explore la forme et le contenu des deux textes, et prend en considération les éléments autobiographiques pour nous aider à voir les ressemblances et les différences.

Mots clés : Holocauste, écriture Holocauste, témoignage, journal intime, Autobiographie, Roman.

## الملخص:

في هذا العمل، بحثي يقترح تحليل نصين أدبيين. النص الأول هو *The Diary of a Young Girl* لـ Anne Frank، والثاني هو *The Book Thief* لـ Marcus Suzak. و توضح الدراسة أن هناك أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في الشكل والمضمون في كلا النصين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المحرقة، روايات المحرقة، الشهادة، مذكرات، السيرة الذاتية، الرواية.

## **Dedication**

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## **General Introduction**

### Background to the Research Topic

Since its creation, the world knew an unfinished series of Wars. Many cities were destroyed; many civilizations disappeared; and most importantly, many lives were taken away. From the beginning, the main cause of all the wars occur was the desire of the most powerful to remain on the top and the desire of the powerful to become the most powerful in order to control the world.

After the Holocaust, the survivors were traumatized. It was important for them to express their deep injury and their inner emotional conflict. The only way to do so was by confessing and retelling their personal experiences, and stories. Those testimonies and novels created what is known as The Holocaust Literature. David Roskies and Naomi Diamant in their book, *Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry: Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide* (2013), explain that “Holocaust literature comprises all forms of writing, both documentary and discursive, and in any language, that have shaped the public memory of the Holocaust and been shaped by it” (2). Especially letters, and diaries, they are more expressive, and it is easy to follow the History of Holocaust through their chronological order. Even the works that deals with the Holocaust and that are written by people who did not experience it, are part of the Holocaust Literature. All people over the world were influenced and touched by the cruelty of Hitler and The Nazi Party and sympathized with the victims. Holocaust literature arises in response to an event that would render the capacity both for response and for literary expression impossible <sup>(1)</sup>.

The victims are an equally diverse group and any discussion of their  
behavior must take those different attributes and experiences into

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<sup>(1)</sup> Patterson David, Alan L. Berger, and Sarita Cargas. *Encyclopedia of Holocaust Literature*. USA : Oryx Press, 2002. (P.14)

consideration. They were old and young, rich and poor, highly assimilated and extremely traditional Jews. There were those who lived in countries where Jews were barely distinguishable from the majority population and those who lived in virtual isolation from their non-Jewish neighbors. There were those who fought and those who did not; those who tried to escape and those who followed orders; and those who maintained their religious faith and those who lost it. <sup>(2)</sup>

Harold Bloom introduces another definition to Holocaust Literature:

Holocaust literature occupies another sphere of study, one that is not only topical in interest but that extends so far as to force us to contemplate what may be fundamental changes in our modes of perception and expression, our altered way of being-in-the-world. What needs to be stressed is this: the nature and magnitude of the Holocaust were such as to mark, almost certainly, the end of one era of consciousness and the beginning of another. <sup>(3)</sup>

The present research attempts to investigate two well known texts; one written by an eyewitness and the other by somebody who was not a spectator of the Holocaust horrors. Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1995) and Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2005) are the subjects of our comparison. Of importance is the fact that the two texts belong to different categories. I will use throughout this paper the term text or narrative instead of novel simply because a diary is a non-fictional work. That said, my intention in writing this dissertation is to prove that the texts under study are strikingly similar although they are different in form.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Bloom, Harold. *Literature of The Holocaust*. USA : Chelsea House, 2004. (P.109-110)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. (21)

### Review of Relevant Literature:

The Holocaust tragedy targeted the hearts of many authors, and gave birth to many literary works that deal and refer to that period of time. Since its first publication in 1947, Anne's *Diary* had been translated to more than sixty five different languages. Her story was spread, and known all over the world. Her biography became general information. Many writers and critics wrote about her *Diary*, and numerous documents and film were produced. What follows is a review of books and essays which studied the text.

*Anne Frank in the World: Essays and Reflections* written by Carol Ann Rittner in 1998 contains essays by different scholars, teachers, and writers. It is about the different themes of Anne Frank's *Diary*. Likewise, *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Postwar Families in Holland* written By Diane L. Wolf (2007) analyses how Anne Frank shaped the image of the hidden Jewish child. She also makes interviews with seventy Holocaust survivors. The book makes us understand the holocaust by focusing on postwar lives. Clearly, the two studies treat the novel as a historical document but not as a literary work.

*The Nation Behind The Diary: Anne Frank and the Holocaust of the Dutch Jews* (2010) written by Jennifer L. Foray examines how Anne's *Diary* reflects the history of the Jews, and how they were persecuted by Nazis. Foray also discusses the celebrity of Anne Frank in modern times.

Another study that dealt with the genre of Anne Frank's narrative is Philippe Lejeune's influential book *On Diary* (2009). The book is interesting because it provides us with theory and method, it studies the history of the genre, and it examines examples of diaries written by European writers. In "How Anne Frank Rewrote the Diary of Anne Frank", Lejeune *tells* the extraordinary story of Anne Frank's story.

Because it is a recent work there are not many critiques about Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*. But this did not prevent other writers and journalists to review it. Here are some examples of reviews that are worth mentioning.

In 2006, Janet Maslin and Gohn Green wrote an article in *The New York time* about Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*. Maslin said that this novel represents the human misery during the Second World War, and that it encourages adolescents to read and to discover the power of the words. She considers *The Book Thief* as a treasure.

For Green, he considers it as a life-changing book, and represents Hope, that is growing up inside Liesel. He also admires the fact that Liesel became a good human that even Death loved despite the suffering around her.

*The Book Thief* was reviewed in 2006, in Hebrew Union College Press by Laura Baum, who is a co-founder and rabbi of Our Jewish Community, and a rabbi at Congregation Beth Adam <sup>(4)</sup> in Loveland, Ohio. She expressed how the book influenced her and how it taught the story of her ancestors. *The Book Thief* is "A good book can help us connect to our roots and better understand who we are. *The Book Thief* certainly played that role for me."

In 2007, Philip Ardagh, an English children's author, reviewed *The Book Thief* in *The Guardian*. He recommended everyone to read it because it is "unsettling, thought-provoking, life-affirming, triumphant and tragic, this is a novel of breathtaking scope, masterfully told. It is an important piece of work, but also a wonderful page-turner. I cannot recommend it highly enough."

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<sup>(4)</sup> is a Jewish congregation located in Cincinnati, Ohio. Beth Adam has a humanistic Judaism perspective

In fact, this novel belongs to young adult fiction. Although the book was made a movie and won many prizes, it did not win critical approval and was not taken seriously as a work of fiction. This explains the scarceness of academic studies on this novel.

The present research is significant in the sense that it explores the form and substance of two texts that have been already compared and contrasted as two historical documents, but not as serious works of art. The selected texts were seen simply as narratives belonging to adult literature. This project will help fill a critical void as the topic has yet to be directly dealt with by existing scholarships. Authenticity in Holocaust literature is a fresh debate and an object of meticulous studies; nevertheless, as argued above, existing research focus mainly on thematic concerns in the texts under study but do not investigate the narrative strategies or the genres used by Frank and Zusak.

This paper aims at studying the selected texts from a new perspective, putting much emphasis on the genres to which they belong. Another objective is to demonstrate that although the two selected texts are totally different in genre and written by two different authors, two different cultures and generations, they have many things in common and function as stories to remember the horrors of Holocaust.

This research paper is divided into three chapters. Chapter One introduces the writers and their texts. Chapter Two is an exhaustive analysis of genres, strategies, and formal devices used by writers in telling and shaping their stories. In this chapter, Lejeune's and Lacapra's theories are employed to show that *The Diary of a Young Girl* and *The Book Thief* do not belong to the same type of writing (*écriture de soi*' as Lejeune calls it) although Zusak makes use of first person to tell the story. The third chapter puts emphasis on similarities and differences between the texts under study.

# **Chapter One**

## **Biographical Backgrounds and Summaries**

“No great artist ever sees things as they really are.  
If he did, he would cease to be an artist.” Oscar  
Wild”

Before starting my analysis, it is important to introduce the authors and their works in order to have a general understanding that is why I devoted this chapter for the biography of the two authors and the summary of their works under study, in addition to a small introduction of their historical context.

### **I. The Historical Context of Anne Frank's Diary :**

In 1940, Germany invaded the Netherlands under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. After taking control over it, Hitler wanted to establish a German civil administration, so he used many cruel techniques to achieve his goal. Hundreds of people were jailed and executed, especially the Jews. The Jewish population was the most touched. The most dramatic event was the extermination of the Jewish population. Jews were purchased from their homes, and executed. The term Jews was associated to murder. So many Jews fled their country and went to hidden places.

Among those Jews who run away to survive were the Frank Family. They went to a hidden place for a long time until their arrest. During their hiding, Anne heard on a radio that Jews people were asked to keep and preserve all their personal testimonies, diaries, memories:

Dearest Kitty,

Mr. Bolkestein, the Cabinet Minister, speaking on the Dutch broadcast from London, said that after the war a collection would be made of diaries and letters dealing with the war. Of course, everyone pounced on my diary. Just imagine how interesting it would be if I were to publish a novel about the Secret Annex. (March 29, 194)

Anne Frank wrote a diary in form of letters where she expressed all her pains and those of Jews in General. The Diary reflects the miserable life Jews had under the Holocaust.



**II. Anne Frank's Life:**

Anne Frank was born as Annelies Marie on June 12, 1929, in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She is the daughter of Otto Frank, who was from a wealthy family. He wanted to become a banker and to follow his father's and grandfather's footsteps. O. Frank was a cultured man with many interests, and during First World War he served German army as lieutenant. After the war he became a very successful businessman. In 1925, he married Edith Hollander from Aachen, and in 1926 they had their first daughter Margot. The Frank were usual upper middle-class German-Jewish family living in a quiet, religiously diverse neighborhood near the outskirts of Frankfurt.

Things changed in Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler; Jews were discriminated. In 1933 Otto Frank immigrated to Holland, and once he had settled there and became the managing Director of the Dutch Opekta Company, he wrote to his wife suggesting she should join him in the New Year. Edith came with the older of the two girls, Margot in September, and Anne followed at the beginning of 1934.

Anne attended the sixth Amsterdam Montessori School in the Niersstraat close to her home. The surrounding streets became a centre of activities for Jewish refugees from Germany, and Anne's best friends were also daughters of Jewish refugee Hannah Goslar and (Su) Susanne Ledermann. Anne was a quick, bright, inquisitive learner, and very popular with teachers and other children. Because her dream was to become a much known writer, Anne Frank wanted to be a writer, and to "bring enjoyment to all people, even those I've never met." (April 5, 1944) she decided to write the story of her life in a diary that she received on her thirteenth birthday as a present. She kept the diary from June 12, 1942 to August 1, 1944, four days later Anne and all her family were arrested and transported to the concentration camps where they all died except her father, the only member who survived.

### III. *The Diary of a Young Girl's Summary:*

*The Diary of a Young Girl* is a real story of a young girl named Anne Frank. The book begins on her thirteenth birthday on June 12, 1942, in Holland, during the Second World War. As a gift, her family offered her a diary. Anne Frank was so excited and so happy for having that diary, that she decided to name it Kitty, and to consider it as her best friend to whom she would write every day and confess all her personal secrets, thoughts, and emotions.

The Franks are composed of four members: the parents, Otto and Edith Frank, and the two daughters Margot and Anne. The Frank Family was living in harmony, but things changed later on. Discrimination laws against Jews were passed, and the Frank family received a call to the concentration camp where Jews were imprisoned and enslaved. To save their lives, Otto Frank and his family decided to go to a hidden place called “the secret annex”. The secret annex had been prepared before by Otto and his friends Kraler with his sister Miep, it is situated in the rooms above their business place, and later on they were joined by another Jewish family, the Van Daans and an old dentist Dussel to hide there too.

The story takes place in that secret annex, where the eight members live. Every day, Anne writes about herself, her father, how she feels alone and rejected by the others, how her mother and sister treat her, and even about the other members, their conversations, conflicts, problems, and their happiness and sadness. Through her diary, we see Anne growing up, we feel like we are living with her, experiencing her fear, her joy, and her dreams.

*The Diary of a Young Girl* takes us also to the external world and introduces to us the history of Germany and the history of Jews at that time. The book shows us the cruelty of the war, and how miserable are their living conditions. Anne Frank says in her diary that she has to be happy because she is protected in that secret Annex since no one knows about it

contrary to the other Jews. She hopes that one day the war will end and both Germans and Jews will live in peace again.

Anne Frank ends her diary on August 1, 1944, few days after the secret Annex is found and all the members are arrested and taken to different concentration camps where they will be tortured and later on killed. Anne's father, Otto Frank is the only survivor, and the one who publishes the book of his daughter.

Anne's Diary is written in form of letters, destined to her friend Kitty (her Diary), and in a chronological order. She writes constantly during two years. She begins on June 12, 1942 until August 1, 1944. Anne confesses everything to her diary, her secrets, her thoughts, her inner problems, about her family and the other members, about Religion, Politics, Education and mainly Holocaust. Anne's Diary is among the most read books in the world. Her story is spread all over the countries, her memories gives inspiration to many authors.

#### **IV. The Historical Context of Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*:**

Influenced by his parent's stories about their childhood and war, Markus Zusak decides to become a writer so that his parent's stories will be spread and read all over the world, and indeed he does. The circumstances in which the events of the story occur are the same of Anne Frank's in her Diary. *The Book Thief* is based on the Second World War, and the Holocaust. The characters, and places are fictionalized but they are inspired from true facts. Even though the narrative is not written during that period of time, and the writer is not a victim of the Holocaust, it is considered as a historical document.

#### **V. Markus Zusak's Life:**

Markus Zusak is an Australian author born in 1975, in Sydney, Australia. He is the youngest of four children of immigrant German and Austrian parents. His parents experienced

hardships and struggled to live a decent life. Neither parent could read or write English when they first arrived in Australia, but they wanted their children to master the language and strongly encouraged them to read and communicate in English from an early age.

Zusak grew up wanting to be a house-painter just like his father. Unfortunately, when he went to work with his father, he often messed up and had a gift for knocking over paint and painting himself into corners. Zusak realized what he wanted to do with his life during his teen years. As a teenager, he read two books that greatly inspired him: *The Old Man and the Sea* and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. These books helped Zusak to realize that he wanted to become a writer but publishing his first book would be a challenge. Zusak began writing fiction at age 16. By age 18, he finished his manuscript, but it took nearly seven years to get his first book published, he experienced numerous failures and rejections.

In 1999 Zusak published his first book, *The Underdog*. He also studied to become a teacher. Before becoming a professional author, Zusak worked briefly as a house painter, a janitor, and a high school English teacher. Zusak published his next book in Australia in 2000, *Fighting Ruben Wolfe*, and a sequel to *The Underdog*. The following year, Zusak continued history line in the next sequel published in Australia as *When Dogs Cry*. The American title of the book, *Getting the Girl*, was published in 2003. Following the Wolfe trilogy came Zusak's highly popular award winning 2002 novel, *The Messenger*, published as *I Am the Messenger* in America. *I Am the Messenger* is a 2006 Michael L. Printz Award Honor book and a 2006 Bulletin Blue Ribbon book. The book also earned Zusak Publishers Weekly Best Books of the year in 2005 for children's book and the 2003 New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature.

*The Book Thief* is inspired from stories his mother told him throughout his childhood, followed in 2005, and was met with even more critical and popular success. *The Book Thief*

was published as a novel for adults in Australia and as a young adult novel in the United States. Zusak received many awards for *The Book Thief*, including the Michael L. Printz Honor and the Kathleen Mitchell Award (Australia). It was named a Best Book by the *School Library Journal* and the Young Adult Library Services Association, and was the Editors' Choice in the *Kirkus Review* and *Booklist*. Zusak lives in Sydney, Australia with his wife and children, and continues to write fiction.

## VI. *The Book Thief*: Summary

*The Book Thief* is a novel. Markus Zusak made a difficult and audacious choice by making Death the narrator of the story. The story takes place in a small town of Molching, in Germany during the Second World War. Death narrated about a nine-year-old German girl named Liesel Miminger. The story begins when death took Liesel's brother. On her way to Molching with her mother and her small brother, Werner, a tragedy happens; her small brother dies.

Liesel finds a book in the cemetery where her brother is buried, and takes it with her even though she is illiterate, but the book represents her lovely brother that she will never forget. Given up by her mother, Liesel is taken to Himmel Street to live with foster parents, Hans Hobermann and his wife Rosa. With the death of her brother and the desertion of her mother, Liesel is traumatized and experiences nightmares every night. To make her feel good, Hans decides to teach her the book she stole, and this is the beginning of a strong love affair with books and words. She begins reading, writing, and soon stealing books even from Nazi book-burning, where Jewish books are reduced to nothing, and also from the mayor's wife's library.

Keeping a promise that he made to the man who saved his life during the First World War, Hans and Rosa welcome a young Jew named Max Vendenberg. They hide him in their basement. Later on Max and Liesel build a strong friendship; he helps her to improve herself and teaches her literature. After a bomb attack on Himmel Street, Liesel loses all those she loves; her father Hans, her mother Rosa, and her lover Rudy Steiner. Liesel survives the war as does Max, and their friendship continuous. She goes on to live a long life and dies on an old age. *The Book Thief* ends with death taking away her soul from her body.

The book is not only the story of Liesel Miminger, the Hobermanns or Max, but it is the story of all Germany and the story of all the victims of the War. It deals with the daily distress of people during the Second World War under the brutality of Adolf Hitler. When reading the novel, we feel a struggle between anger and pain. *The book Thief* represents the holocaust history and literature.

The book is divided into ten parts and each part is divided into subtitles. Each title summarizes the story of the next pages. The setting is in Germany during the Second World War. Zusak uses an elevated style in writing his book, he uses many literary devices one of them is the metaphor of Death. Zusak chooses Death to be the narrator of his book because he believes that no one can introduce us the real meaning of eath, life, pain, and guilt as death itself. For him Death and war are friends and it is. At the beginning Death was enjoying his job, but later on things changes. Death became a sensible person, he is humanized, and feel no joy when taking a soul. At the end of the book Death confesses:

I wanted to tell the book thief many things, about beauty and brutality.

But what could I tell her about those things that she didn't already know? I wanted to explain that I am constantly overestimating and underestimating the human race\_that rarely do I ever simply estimate

it. I wanted to ask her how the same thing could be so ugly and so glorious, and its words and stories so damning and brilliant. None of those things, however, came out of my mouth. All I was able to do was turn to Liesel Mimming and tell her the only truth I truly know. I said it to the book thief and I say it now to you. A last note from your narrator, I am haunted by humans. (550)

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Fact and Fict: Holocaust Remembered, Holocaust Imagined**

« Les mémoires ne sont jamais qu'à demi sincères, si grand que soit le souci de vérité : tout est toujours plus compliqué qu'on ne le dit. Peut être même approche-t-on de plus près la vérité dans le roman » André Gide

« Seule la fiction ne ment pas » François Mauriac



*The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank and *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak are among the greatest books that testify and portray the horrors of the Holocaust and the suffering of the Jews. With their remarkable, unique, and sensational style, *The Diary of a Young Girl* and *The Book Thief* are considered as valid texts, documents, heritage, and are among books most known and read in the world. The two books are different from each other in form, but after reading them, we experienced the same struggle of emotions and the same desire to read the story again and again.

### **I. The Autobiographical Pact: *The Diary of Anne Frank***

Most of the Holocaust narratives are personal testimonies or what we can call autobiographies. The word autobiography comes from the Greek auto which means self and bio which means life. That literally means a self-written account of one's life. In 1975, Philippe Lejeune, a celebrated literary critic, and a scholar specialized in autobiography, published a book titled *Le Pacte autobiographique*, in which he introduced autobiography as a genre and explained in details its characteristics. Lejeune defines the genre as “a retrospective prose narrative that a real person makes on his/her own existence, when s/he stresses on his individual life, in particular on the history of his/her personality.” (14, my translation), and “what defines the autobiography for the reader is above all the contract of the identity that is sealed by the proper name.” (33)

According to Lejeune, a work declared as being an autobiography should contain all the conditions that he considers important and necessary. The conditions referred in the book *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (1975) are:

#### **1. Language form**

- a. Narration
- b. Prose

### 2. Subject Treated

- a. Individual life
- b. History of a personality

### 3. Situation of the author: identity of the author (the name refers to a real person) and the narrator

### 4. Position of the narrator

- a. Identity of the narrator and the main character
- b. Retrospective perspective of the narrative

Anne Frank tells her story in a diary titled *The Diary of a Young Girl*, where she confesses all her secrets and thoughts. This means that the first condition explained above by Lejeune is present. The book, from its title “Diary”, inspires a whole comprehension; it is a writing that deals with the personal experience, emotions, and individual life of the author. In Encyclopedia Britannica, a diary as

a form of autobiographical writing, a regularly kept record of the diarist’s activities and reflections. Written primarily for the writer’s use alone, the diary has a frankness that is unlike writing done for publication. Its ancient lineage is indicated by the existence of the term in Latin, *diarium*, itself derived from *dies* (“day”).

And Lejeune in his book *On Diary* (2009) defines it as

not only a place of asylum in space; it is also an archive in time. I escape the present and make contact with a vast future. I lay by provisions for a future writer, and leave traces for a future adult whom I am helping by recoding his history, someone who will later help me better understand the confusion I am experiencing. We are helping each other across time (324).

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From this, we can say that the second condition (the subject treated should be about a personal life is perfectly applied) is there too. *The Diary of a Young Girl* is the mirror of Anne Frank's life; everything is illustrated in that diary. Anne Frank says explicitly that the diary is hers and contains every moment of her life in deep details, and she considers the diary as her imaginary friend Kitty: "I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support." (Frank, June 12, 1942), and "I want the diary to be my friend, and I'm going to call this friend Kitty" (Frank, June 20, 1942).

Lejeune (1975) spoke a lot about the identity of the author, the narrator, and the main character. He considers them the most important elements to distinguish between the autobiography and other personal literature; "in return, two conditions....that oppose autobiography from biography and personal novel: are the conditions (3) and (4a)" (15). According to Lejeune, a work is an autobiography if the author is the same as the narrator, and if the work refers to the author's life.

*The Diary of a Young Girl* is a diary of Anne Frank written by her. The title page does not explicitly mention the name of Anne Frank while the author's signature is Anne Frank. In one part, the title does not explicitly refer as her diary, but the word "Diary" expresses a lot, we know that a diary is written by a person to speak about himself/herself, his/her personal life, about things and secrets that no one else know about them. In the other part, there is her name on the book which deletes all the suspicions about her ownership. A diary is so personal and it is impossible to write a diary of another person. Anne Frank in her writing also declared her name; for example, when her teacher decided to punish her, she carried his words: "Anne Frank, as a punishment for talking in class, write an essay entitled 'Quack, Quack, Quack,' said Mistress Chatterback." (Frank, June 21, 1942), and she always finished her stories or

## CHAPTER TWO

letters with her name as a signature “Yours Anne Frank” or just by “Yours Anne”, and this means that the Narrator is Frank. Her name is not the only example found in the book, but also other personal information like the name of her mother and sister, the exact day and place of her birthday, her sister’s birthday, and even the name of her teacher:

My father, the most adorable father I’ve ever seen, didn’t marry my mother until he was thirty-six and she was twenty-five. My sister Margot was born in Frankfurt am Main in Germany in 1926. I was born on June 12 1929. I lived in Frankfurt until I was four. Because we’re Jewish, my father immigrated to Holland in 1933, when he became the Managing Director of the Dutch Opekta Company, which manufactures products used in making jam. My mother, Edith Hollander Frank, went with him to Holland in September, while Margot and I were sent to Aachen to stay with our grandmother. Margot went to Holland in December, and I followed in February, when I was plunked down on the table as a birthday present for Margot. I started right away at the Montessori nursery school.....In sixth grade my teacher was Mrs. Kuperus (Frank, June 20.1942).

In addition to that personal information, there are also other information like the representation of the “Secret Annex” , while at that time no one knows about its existence, but the Frank family with the other members of the hidden place, and the description of the miserable conditions and laws Jews submitted at that time:

The door to the right of the landing leads to the “Secret Annex” at the back of the house. No one would ever suspect there were so many

rooms behind that plain gray door. There's just one small step in front of the door, and you're inside. Straight ahead of you is a deep flight of stairs. (Frank, July 9, 1942)

After May 1940 the good times were few and far between....Our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees: Jews were required to wear a yellow star; Jews were required to turn in their bicycles; Jews were forbidden to use street-cars; Jews were forbidden to ride cars, even their own; Jews (Frank, June 20, 1942).

Anne Frank was not a known author; she never wrote or published a book before; that is to say, the reader does not know how truthful she is. Through those given information that can be checked and examined, the author confirms his authenticity, and it is what Lejeune calls *le pacte référentiel*. According to him, it is when the author gives information outside the text, and pretends to be true. Just like in scientific or historic discourse; the information should be examined and verified.

Par opposition à toutes les formes de fiction, la biographie et l'autobiographie sont des textes *référentiels*: exactement comme le discours scientifique ou historique, ils prétendent apporter une information sur une "réalité" extérieure au texte, et donc se soumettre à une épreuve de vérification. Leur but n'est pas la simple vraisemblance, mais la ressemblance au vrai. Nom "l'effet de réel", mais l'image du réel. Tous les textes référentiels comportent donc ce que j'appellerai un "Pacte Référentiel"(36).

The use of the author's name in the text is very important when it comes to autobiography. Most of the time, the name of the author is not repeated all along the text, but it is referred to by using the personal pronoun "I" (in rare cases "she" or "he"). The personal pronoun "I" is not always referring to the author, but it depends on the speaker or the narrator of the speech; "I" refers to the author when the narrator and the author are the same. Sometimes the narrator does not have a name; it is through reading the text that we understand the relation between them. *In the Diary of a Young Girl*, Anne Frank reveals explicitly that she is the narrator by telling to her diary she will "confide everything", and as I said before, her name appears on the title page as the writer and confirms along the text with the personal information she gives about herself; it means that from the beginning, we know the identity of the narrator, and we know that "I" refers to the author. Since the text is a diary, it means that the main character is the young Anne Frank.

The diary, also called the book of days, is a sub-genre of autobiography. There are also formal devices which distinguish a diary from an autobiography. Although both genres are personal, there are many remarkable divergences which make them two separate types. The autobiography is an examination of life from a particular moment in time while the diary looks at a series of moments in time.

Lejeune in his first full-length study of autobiography did not say much about diaries, and one can feel that the diary is an ignored genre. It is (much) later that Lejeune devoted a whole book to this neglected and marginalized literary type. Of big importance to our study in Lejeune's second book is the chapter dedicated to study Anne Frank's diary. The chapter could be easily titled *The True Story behind the True Story of Anne Frank* (2009).

## CHAPTER TWO

The study informs us that A. Frank revised her texts many times before her death, and her father Otto Frank omitted some parts and probably manipulated the text. At the beginning of the *Diary*, Susan Massotty explains in the foreword:

Anne Frank kept a diary from June 12, 1942, to August 1, 1944. Initially, she wrote it strictly for herself. Then, one day in 1944, Gerrit Bolkestein, a member of the Dutch government in exile, announced in a radio broadcast from London that after the war he hoped to collect eyewitness accounts of the suffering of the Dutch people under the German occupation, which could be made available to the public. As an example, he specifically mentioned letters and diaries. Impressed by this speech, Anne Frank decided that when the war was over she would publish a book based on her diary. She began rewriting and editing her diary, improving on the text, omitting passages she didn't think were interesting enough and adding others from memory. At the same time, she kept up her original diary. In the scholarly work *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition* (1989), Anne's first, unedited diary is referred to as version (a), to distinguish it from her second, edited diary, which is known as version (b). After long deliberation, Otto Frank decided to fulfill his daughter's wish and publish her diary. He selected material from versions (a) and (b), editing them into a shorter version later referred to as version (c). Readers all over the world know this as *The Diary of a young Girl*.

Clearly, the manipulation-revision resulted in the alteration (or even deformation) of the first document. In addition, the father, Otto Frank, was accused of re-writing his

daughter's diary. Lejeune insists in his book dedicated to autobiography that the autobiographer, unlike the diarist, shapes his/her life into a logical and consistent story.

Did A. Frank want to rewrite her text to make it more coherent when she revised it? Lejeune himself in the chapter devoted to A. Frank's diary admits that "the paradox is that this story raises questions about the status of the text" (237). It seems that Lejeune also revises his hypothesis that the journal and the diary are inferior to the genre of autobiography. It is true that diaries are genuine and ingenuous because they are non-fictional types, and they comprise many aesthetic defects like contradictions, gaps, repetitions. But, one should not forget that diarists are not professional writers, and not all diarists publish their texts.

It is noteworthy to remind that *The diary of Anne Frank* is different from other novels which imitate the diary form or even the autobiography like Dorris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* or Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*. The aforementioned examples take the diary form or the autobiography, but they are fictional works.

### **II. La Captatio Illusionis or The Pact of Illusion: *The Book Thief***

This text is neither an autobiography nor an autobiographical novel; in fact, it is simply a novel, a fictional novel. The author does not ask the reader to wait for the text to complete the autobiographical pact. Some of the facts are imaginary but are inspired from real events. Zusak's *The Book Thief* is inspired from his parent's childhood stories; they were victims of the Second World War, and the Holocaust. He grew up hearing stories about Hitler and the Jews. In many interviews Zusak confirms that the life of the protagonist Liesel Miminger is inspired from his mother's childhood. He also revealed that two stories in particular impacted him deeply. His mother told him about the bombing of Munich and how the sky was on fire, and she also told him about something terrible she witnessed. She saw Jewish people being



marched to Dachau, the concentration camp, and it is what Liesel will see in the novel, but in a fictional way.

Zusak answered in an interview with Heidi Stillman, in 2012 about his inspiration saying that:

The luckiest part about my childhood was to have two parents with amazing stories who both happened to be great storytellers on top of it. With no disrespect to my dad, it was my mum's world at the outskirts of Munich that had the greatest influence on me. That's why I chose Liesel. Of course, the instant I fictionalized something, it wasn't her anymore. Liesel ceased being my mother on page eight or nine and became herself, even when I borrowed from my mother's life story."

So, the story is not "true", but it is coherent and likely to be true. Names and locations are 'untrue', and events are recreated. In fact, Zusak imagines Holocaust; he insists from the beginning that his text is a novel. It is written at the beginning of his novel that: "This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locals is entirely coincidental".

In addition, the phrase 'based on true events' is not used as a subtitle. The word "novel" appears under the title on the cover page; therefore, it would be a mistake to read *The Book Thief* as a historical document or a historical novel because the characters are not historical figures, and the setting is fictional. However, this novel is a good example to demonstrate how fiction conflates with fact. The aforementioned paratextual elements all support the hypothesis that *The Book Thief* is not the story of the writer's life.

*The Book Thief* is not a testimony, a memory, or a report; it presents itself as work of fiction which (re)invents truth. The writer is not an eye-witness and did not live in a concentration camp; in fact, he lives thousands of miles away from Europe. As explained in the first part of this chapter, identity is vital to the classification of a text as a biographical one but truth is not. When someone writes about his/her life, s/he writes about a portion of it; therefore, we must confess that there is a *gap* between the ‘lived’ life and the ‘written’ life, as Roza-Auria Munté explained in her article (2011). In a diary, contrary to the autobiography, the writer does not construct his/her life, and the text of Ann Frank is a good example to illustrate the point. Although Zusak’s text is not a memory, we as readers feel some sincerity and genuineness in the story because of the writer’s use of the “I”. But this does not mean that we accept everything told in the story as real since the personal pronoun “I” in the novel refers to the narrator which is not the author himself.

To remember Holocaust, Zusak uses fiction, he mixes between reality and fiction, and he creates a narrator who is neither his double nor himself. Here, the narrator and the writer are not the same person. Unpredictably, the story is told from the point of view of a non-human, using a technique which is common in autobiographies, memories, and diaries.

Zusak writes in his “Prologue”: “a mountain range of rubble in which our narrator introduces: himself—the colors—and the book thief”. The prologue is vague and does say much about the identity of the narrator. The narrator, Death, says at the beginning of the story:

“I am in all truthfulness attempting to be cheerful about this whole topic, though most people find themselves hindered in believing me, no matter my protestations. Please, trust me. I most definitely *can* be cheerful. I can be amiable. Agreeable. Affable. And that’s only the A’s. Just don’t ask me to be nice. Nice has nothing to do with me (3).

It is in the opening chapter titled ‘Death and Chocolate’ that the narrator/storyteller introduces himself using the first person pronoun “I” that we see in autobiographical writings. He also speaks to the reader or this what we understand when we read these lines: First the colors. Then the humans. That’s usually how I see things. Or at least, how I try. **“HERE IS A SMALL FACT. You are going to die”**(3). Some words as we see are capitalized and emphasized to show their importance and accentuate the theme of death which permeates the narrative. He continues introducing himself saying:

**REACTION TO THE  
AFOREMENTIONED FACT**

**Does this worry you?**

**I urge you—don’t be afraid.**

**I’m nothing if not fair.**

—Of course, an introduction.

A beginning.

Where are my manners?

I could introduce myself properly, but it’s not really necessary. You will know me well enough and soon enough, depending on a diverse range of variables. It suffices to say that at some point in time, I will be standing over you, as genially as possible. Your soul will be in my arms. A color will be perched on my shoulder. I will carry you gently away (4).

## CHAPTER TWO

The words are so perplexing; Death's tone is threatening and we feel that he enjoys what he is doing (it is his job). The "I" / "You" exchange is something we do not see in fiction. There are few examples of novels where we see the narrator speaking to the narratee like Assia Djebar's *Ombre Sultane* or Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*. The following lines give us the impression that it is the writer who is speaking through the narrator:

At that moment, you will be lying there (I rarely find people standing up). You will be caked in your own body. There might be a discovery; a scream will dribble down the air. The only sound I'll hear after that will be my own breathing, and the sound of the smell, of my footsteps.

Actually, Zusak mimics autobiography but does not write one. He makes a non-human narrator tell the stories of human characters just like any reliable narrator we meet in any autobiography. This is not a conventional choice. By humanizing death, he makes us believe and trust his narrator. As we see here, the novel plays with notions like fiction and reality. Although the opening words said by the narrator, Death, are bewildering, we feel that he is going to tell us the truth. In fact, *The Book Thief* is not a traditional testimony like the diary of Anne Frank, but it certainly testifies the memories and traumas of fictional characters who might have existed.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **Memory and Trauma**

“The trauma said, ‘Don’t write these poems. Nobody wants to hear you cry about the grief inside your bones.’” Andrea Gibson, “The Madness Vase”

Judith Lewis Herman says in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) that the clash between the determination to reject horrifying events and the determination to assert them is the essential dialectic of psychological trauma. People who have survived violence frequently tell their stories in a very poignant, incongruous, and split manner that undermines their reliability and in that way provides the twin imperatives of truth-telling and silence. Survivors can begin their healing when the reality is at last known. However, frequently concealment wins through, and the story of the disturbing event surfaces not as a written account but as a sign.

Anne Frank's *Diary* and *The Book Thief* are two beautiful and popular narratives that are written by two different writers, in two different periods of time, two different styles, and two different languages. *The Diary of Anne Frank* is during the Second World War. It is written in German and in a simple style. It deals with her personal life, point of view, and emotions. It is the most popular and the most read non-fictional book in the world even in our present days.

*The Book Thief*, in contrast, is a fictional novel written by Markus Zusak, who is a professional writer, in the present days (2005). The novel is written in English with an elevated style, and has nothing to do with the personal life of the author. From here we can say that the two books are totally different from each other. But although they are different in form, they have many things in common. One of the similarities is the setting. The two stories take place in Germany during the Second World War, and speak about the Holocaust, "June 12, 1942" and "January 1939", correspondingly.

Anne's *Diary* and Zusak's *Book Thief* are considered as part of the Holocaust Literature. They contain real historical events and facts that occurred in the real life during the Second World War. They present the daily suffering of the Jewish population during the Holocaust, and under the leadership of the Nazi party. They illustrate how people were tortured, persecuted, murdered, and discriminated by The Nazi Regime especially the Jewish

population as we read in Anne Frank's Diary: "our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees." (Anne Frank June 20, 1942).

In Zusak's novel, we learn that Nazis were "forbidding Jews to have German citizenship and for Germans and Jews to intermarry" (Zusak, p192). Jews were not considered as human beings but as evil and dangerous race; "the stream of Jews was a murky disaster of arms and legs" (Zusak 511).

Many discriminatory laws were passed. Anne Frank describes a series of those laws, and from this quotation we understand the suffering of the Jews, and how they were treated:

Jews were required to turn in their bicycle; Jews were forbidden to use street-cars; Jews were forbidden to ride in cars, even their own; Jews were required to do their shopping between 3 and 5 P.M.; Jews were required to frequent only Jewish-owned barbershops and beauty parlors; Jews were forbidden to be out on the streets between 8 P.M. and 6 A.M.; Jews were forbidden to attend theaters, movies or any other forms of entertainment; Jews were forbidden to use swimming pools, tennis courts, hockey fields or any other athletic fields; Jews were forbidden to go rowing; Jews were forbidden to take part in any friends activity in public; Jews were forbidden to sit in their gardens or those of their friends after 8 P.M.; Jews were forbidden to visit Christians in their homes; Jews were required to attend Jewish schools, etc." (June 20, 1942)

In Zusak's *Book Thief*, we notice one of those laws which is the execution of the Jews and communists because they are seen as shameful: "The immoral! The Kommunisten!." (110)

Another similarity represented in the two texts, and that took place in real life is the Yellow Badge, or Star of David; “Jews were required to wear a yellow star.”(June 20, 1942) and “the star of David was painted on their doors.” (Zusak 51) The Yellow Star was a symbol used in order to distinguish and to identify the Jews. Jews were treated as sub- humans. The Nazi resurrected this practice as part of their persecutions during Holocaust. Forcing Jews to wear the Yellow Star was but one of many psychological tactics in order to isolate and dehumanize the Jews. This technique pushed Jews to be separated from society and if someone refuses to wear it he/she will be punished and death is included. The Nazi did not stop here, but they created another technique that is presented in the two books to dehumanize and to kill Jews. It is what we call the concentration camps as referred to in these lines from Anne Frank’s diary:

Father has received a call-up notice from SS..... Everyone knows what that means. Visions of concentration camps and lonely cells raced through my head. (July 8, 1942).

Our many Jewish friends and acquaintances are being taken away in droves. The Gestapo is treating them very roughly and transporting them in cattle cars to Westerbork, the big camp in Drenthe to which they're sending all the Jews. It must be terrible in Westerbork. (October 9, 1942).

In *The book Thief*, too, the protagonist witnesses Jewish people or prisoners in their way to Dachau in a concentration camp as described by the narrator:

The soldiers and Jews made their way through several towns and were arriving now in Molching. It was possible that more work needed to



be done in the camp, or several prisoners had died. Whatever the reason, a new batch of fresh, tired Jews was being taken on foot to Dachau” (Zusak 508).

The concentration camps existed in real life. In 1933, the first concentration camp was established at Dachau in southeast Germany. At the beginning, it was for the political opponents of the Nazi regime. But different people such as Jews and criminals were placed in concentration camps all in the name of Nazis’ racial ideology. Forced labor has great importance in the concentration camps. Jews were used as slaves and they have to work to death as this example shows:

then the ragged chain of clinking Jews.....They were taken through to the neighboring town of Nebling to scrub the streets and do the cleanup work that the army refused to do. Late in the day, they were marched back to camp, slow and tired, defeated (Zusak 501).

The Frank family was one of those who suffered from the concentration camps. On August 4, 1944 Anne Frank and her family were taken to the concentration camps where they all died except Anne’s father Otto Frank, he was the only survivor.

Also, both novels’ protagonists are young female characters. In Anne Frank’s diary, the central character is “a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl” while in Zusak’s novel, the main character “she [is] nine years old, soon to be teen.” (Zusak 21) Both characters share the same trauma and are victims of the Holocaust. Anne’s family is Jewish, and Liesel’s is Communist. In addition, the two girls hate Hitler as these quotations show: “I’m finally getting optimistic. Now, at last, things are going well! They really are! Great news! An assassination attempt has been made on Hitler’s life.” (July 21, 1944), and in Zusak’s book “I hate the fuhrer, she said I hate him.” (115)

When reading the two texts together, one feels that Zusak was rewriting the diary of Anne Frank; in fact, Zusak's heroine is not different from Anne Frank, the writer and character. There are few differences, but the similarities are so remarkable. They have the same strategies to survive; one writes her story, and the other reads stories. Clearly, both characters are fascinated by the power of words to flee trauma.

Anne Frank, the character, experiences pain. To grasp her pain, she decides to write her life. Not only does A. Frank write her story, but she also writes herself. When we finish reading her story, we feel that Anne at the end is not the same Anne we meet at the beginning, and even Anne realizes it. After one year she rereads her Diary and she writes: "I'm surprised at my childish innocence. Deep down I know I could never be that innocent again, however much I'd like to be." (January 22, 1944).

Anne is only thirteen years old, and she experiences and witnesses things bigger than her age, things that even adults and old persons could not overcome, and resist. She loses her innocent childhood, she discovers the world's horrors, and monstrosities at an early age. As a young girl, she has questions that she cannot ask, feelings that she cannot show. Under her miserable conditions, she feels alone and rejected. Her Diary is her only refuge and shelter, her unique arm against the external oppressing world. Here an example of what a young girl witnesses:

In the evenings when it's dark, I often see long lines of good, innocent people, accompanied by crying children, walking on and on, ordered about by a handful of men who bully and beat them until they nearly drop. I feel wicked sleeping in a warm bed, while somewhere out there my dearest friends are dropping from exhaustion or being knocked to the ground. I get frightened myself when I think of close

friends who are now at the mercy of the cruelest monsters ever to stalk the earth. And all because they're Jews (November 19, 1942).

Liesel experiences a series of traumas. First, she loses her brother and soon after she is abandoned by her mother. At her brother's interment, she steals her *first* book, titled *The Gravediggers Handbook*. In fact, she is incapable to read by herself; she is obliged to steal the book for two reasons. First, she needs a tactic to seal the breach left by the *loss* of her brother and mother. Secondly, she uses the same tactic to handle other traumas. Narratives or stories are her means by which she can survive traumas. Papa consequently understands the bond between Liesel's pain and narrative as an instrument to manage trauma. Liesel has a returning traumatic dream where she sees her dead brother gazing at her on the train. Progressively, these dreams become mixed with other images like her mother's face, brown shirts and other split and indistinguishable signs of her current trauma.

Later we are informed that Liesel wets the bed. Bedwetting is a frequent result of trauma. Undoubtedly, Liesel is incapable to process trauma and is afraid. Hans offers Liesel the devices to deal with distress by initiating her to reading and even writing. He suddenly discovers *The Gravediggers Handbook* while removing her wet sheets and understands Liesel's anxiety and need to conquer her ordeal. Reading, therefore, lessens Liesel's apprehension and comforts her. Later, in the bomb shelter, to calm herself and the other people around her, she reads books. They are absorbed and forget temporarily their pain. It is also Liesel who helps Mrs Holtzapfel who lost her son by reading to her. "She opened the book, and again, the words found their way upon all those present in the shelter." (442)

Max Vandenburg, another character in the novel, also finds comfort in words. *Mein Kampf* (My struggle) by Adolf Hitler is what keeps Max alive. As he is forced to mask himself to flee discrimination, he covers his face with a copy of *Mein Kampf*. Like Liesel, he uses some

pages of the book to write his story and deal with his trauma. One of the things he writes: “Now I think we are friends, the girl and me. On her birthday, it was she who gave a gift- to me. It makes me understand that the best standover man I’ve ever know is not a man at all.”(235)

Another parallel between the two texts is the religion aspect. Both Anne and Liesel have a strong faith in God. They are always thanking God and they never forget to mention Him, and they believe that God will always be on their side, and will protect them. As Anne expresses “ my life here has gotten better, much better. God has not forsaken me, and he never will.” (March 31, 1944)

Another extract that I found so expressive:

Who has inflicted this on us? Who has set us apart from all the rest?  
Who has put us through such suffering? It's God who has made us the way we are, but it's also God who will lift us up again. In the eyes of the world, we're doomed, but if, after all this suffering, there are still Jews left, the Jewish people will be held up as an example.

The last parallel between the two stories is the use of the basement as both setting and symbol. Liesel and Anne learn to read/or write and deal with trauma in the basement or underground room. The setting is highly symbolic; it is more than a shelter or a safe haven. Both characters grow up in the basement and reconstruct their lives. It is in that dark basement that Anne decides to become a writer and finally become one. Liesel, on the other hand, learns to read and write in a basement. The basement offers them isolation, intimacy, and safety; indispensable ingredients to read/write, set free their imagination, and handle their sufferings.

**Conclusion :**

## CONCLUSION

When reading *The Diary of a Young Girl*, we wonder how such a young girl overcomes all the disasters, and Horrors she witnesses. We feel like emotions are struggling inside us. The Diary is a combination of Pain, Joy and Hope all at the same time. What make the Diary a world's masterpiece are the simplicity, and the sincerity of its writer. Anne Frank herself is considered as a hope. She is always optimistic, and thankful. Her great dream is to see Germans and Jews gathered again.

Zusak writes to capture truth; his family's truth in fact. Through an all-pervading narrator, who roams everywhere and acts like a storyteller; we learn about characters and their stories. Death (both narrator and concept) pervades the story. Death, the narrator who can be compared to a bloodthirsty fanatic, discloses the traumas of all characters-victims, and also the writer. The novel demonstrates how storytelling can be curative and healing, lightening the weight by sharing with others family recollections, memories, and stories. By imitating a true war story and employing the first person narrator, Zusak brilliantly presents a traumatic account.

*The book Thief* is a work of fiction as we already said, it has nothing to do with his personal life. The characters are unreal, the place and the story are fictionalized, but his story is inspired from a real one, from his parent's stories and witnesses, and the historical events he uses are all real that is why when reading it, we are confused whether we are reading fiction or non-fiction. Zusak uses fiction to present truth about the Second World War, Nazi Germany, and the Holocaust. In fact he does not introduce only the negative, or the black side of it, but he also reveals the other side of Nazi Germany, how Germans were hiding, and protecting Jews.

*The Book Thief* demonstrates how Germans are affected and how they suffered from the Nazi Germany and the war. Also the book gives a good example of humanity that is illustrated in the Hubermann's.

## CONCLUSION

In reference to Lejeune's autobiographical pact, and after a deep analysis of Anne's text we come to the conclusion that Anne's Diary is an autobiography, and in applying it to Zusak's *The Book Thief* we affirm that the book is not an autobiography, it is a fictional novel. Readers are mistaken because the writer uses some aspect of the autobiographical pact such as the use of the personal pronoun "I", the humanization of Death, and the choice of making it the narrator. Also the use of personal accounts like memories, and diaries.

Even though the two texts are totally different from each other in form, they are very close in content. Many affinities are shared. The stronger theme that dominated the two books the *Diary of a Young Girl*, and *The Book Thief* is the representation of the Holocaust and the Jews' history. With their different and unique styles both Anne Frank, and Markus Zusak introduce the truth.

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