

FORGOTTEN, REMEMBERED AND RE-FORGOTTEN:  
THE ROLE OF FORGETTING IN WORKING THROUGH THE  
HOLOCAUST TRAUMA WITHIN LITERARY TEXTS

*Rina Dudai*

In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus struggles persistently not to forget Ithaca, his birthplace to which he strives to return. The notion of “forgetting” in Homer is particularly connected to memories of home and homeland. Furthermore, it is assumed that such forgetting might result in the disintegration of personality. In this sense the Homeric Epic epitomizes the struggle of Western culture to immortalize memory as a center pillar of self-identity. By this account, “forgetting” questions the reliability of memory and humans’ ability to cope with reality. But is this view a faithful representation of the role of forgetting in molding the self? Or might forgetting have an active, indispensable role in establishing and maintaining self-identity? In this article I examine, through literary texts, the role of forgetting in the memory of Holocaust and trauma. I identify three types of forgetting: *deep forgetting*, *shallow forgetting*, and *intentional forgetting*. I then proceed to describe how forgetting is not necessarily a “failure of memory”, but rather plays an important role in shaping the individual’s identity and sense of self, and is a key process in understanding the dynamics of traumatic memory.