Memory and The Truth

Institutional Affiliation

Date

Like much more else, memory is unreliable for what it changes but for what it exposes and reveals. This is according to the Stasiland by Anna Funders who in her book had some opinions concerning memory and truth. For historical facts and reality to be revealed, personal experiences and stories of the people who existed or had an impact have to be shared. Anna Funder strongly holds on to this and her literary work "Stasisland" in the year 2002 reviewed the current effects of the unsuccessful German democratic republic on those who impacted on it, including the victims, perpetrators in the dictatorial regime, as well as the supporters. Although her interviews were initially termed to be true, she went on to quickly question her respondents' recount and dismissed their stories as the products or outcomes of damaged minds.

This shows that the memory cannot be trusted to deliver the truth about historical events because the narrators or interviewees minds may be damaged. In the book, she initially appears to be an impartial observer, but her real motives come clear when she starts to doubt and criticize the stories she is told by her respondents, meaning that she begins to doubt the ability of the memory to deliver the truth. Funder also quickly labels Frau Paul as a sad victim, and the description by Paul and her story about the wall penetrate through her heart to prompt empathy from leaders. However, Paul perceives her as being both a mother dentist and criminal, something which hurts her. The evidence of Paul assisting Germans to escape from the Democratic Republic of Germany is missing from the text given to Funder on "notes of her life." This highlights a denial of her real past, shows her memory as being changed and reworked in such a way that it cannot forget about her. She also chooses to leave out the story about her rebellion over the German democratic republicans which shows a sign of attempts to alternate her attitude from the initial one given by Stasis to another option where she is not described as a criminal.

Anna Funders also believes that we cannot rely on memory to deliver the truth which is illustrated in her book whereby she undermines the memory of Frau Paul about her life behind the iron curtain. Funder doubts her story's reliability and consistency and goes further to doubt others have been changed to be safer, more valiant and less stressful memory. Through her adventures in Stasiland, Funder describes the feebleness or the memory's frailty she comes across as being "the outcome or result of psychological damage and distress." By this statement, she means that the memory cannot be reliable, to tell the truth about past events as it is affected by psychological problems such as stress which affects the retention ability of the past events and stories. Although some of the stories might be true and reliable, we cannot depend on the memory to deliver a hundred percent truth about past events and stories, as some can be affected by the psychological problems of the memory. Funder outlines these psychological problems where she questioned the Germans' psychological integrity which makes a reader question the reliability of their stories regarding truth and validity. It led her to perceive that their memories have been affected by psychological distress, drug abuse or other mental disorders.

According to Funder, therefore, the memory cannot be trusted to deliver the truth while relying on stories about past events. She supported this through her biases when conducting the interviews in Germany which continued to diminish the reliability of the stories. Therefore, the truth and memory are related in that the ability of the memory to deliver historical truth depends on its psychological condition, whether it has been subjected to stressful events or substance abuse.

**Reference**

Anna, F. (2002). Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall.