

Handout 1.5: Three memoirs

Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*

He cannot go to his café, to his office, to his club, to his cousins. He has no café, no club, no cousins. He cannot sit on a public bench anymore: the benches in the park have 'Not for Jews' stenciled on them. He cannot go to the restaurants or to the bookshops. He cannot go to the barber or walk through the park. He cannot go on a tram: Jews and those who look Jewish have been thrown off. He cannot go to the cinema. He cannot go to the Opera, even if he could, he would not hear music written by Jews, played by Jews or sung by Jews – no Mahler and no Mendelssohn. Opera has been 'Aryanised'. There are SA men stationed at the end of the tram line to prevent Jews strolling in the Vienna Woods. Where can he go? How can they get out?

(de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*)

John Lawrence, *Jewish schoolboy, Vienna*

From six years old I began to hear about socialists and the Nazis, oh yes. I must say that although we had a lot of fun in the family, we had no youth. We had literally to fight almost daily – in school, in the streets. Antisemitism in Vienna was rampant and had always been. Even before Hitler came to the Austrian stage, we knew what was coming. I had to fight almost daily. My mother was a very astute woman and she engaged an expert boxing champion to train me in self-defence – ju jitsu and boxing. When I returned to school after the summer holidays, the six foot something chap who used to bully me came up again, and I floored him. His name was Bum!

(Smith, *Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust*, p. 9)

Arek Hersh, *Jewish schoolboy, Poland*

Suddenly we heard the sound of jackboots marching in the street, and, thinking that the German army were undertaking manoeuvres, I dashed to the door to watch. What I saw chilled me. Soldiers were stopping at every door, four armed men to each house. It was obvious their intentions were hostile. I shouted to my father and my brother to hide, and I myself dashed up to the pigeon loft where I could observe more clearly what was going on. Disturbed pigeons flew everywhere at my panicked entrance, but the loft provided a very good vantage point. I saw German soldiers dragging Jewish men from their houses, and kicking and beating them in the street. With horror I noticed that my father was among them. The Jewish men were forced to run towards the market place, whereupon two rows of armed German soldiers were waiting for them. They then had to run through the German gauntlet where they were savagely kicked and clubbed with rifle butts. My cousin, Idle Natal, only twenty-one years old, was kicked to death in this melee.