Pedagogická fakulta
Faculty of Education
Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích
University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích

Pedagogická fakulta

Katedra anglistiky

Diplomová práce

The Holocaust in Jewish American Fiction

Holokaust v americké židovské literatuře

Vypracovala: Bc. Anna Senková

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Christopher Erwin Koy, M.A., Ph.D.

České Budějovice 2018

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V Českých Budějovicích dne …….

Anna Senková

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the supervisor of this thesis, PhDr. Christopher Erwin Koy, M.A., Ph.D., for his immense patience, for his remarks and advice essential for this thesis.

I would not be able to finish this work without the emotional support of my husband, who has my thanks as well.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to use the analysis of nine literary works to identify distinctive features of Holocaust fiction. The theoretical part of the thesis considers the various approaches of society towards the Holocaust, as well as the way Judaism perceives fiction, Holocaust fiction in particular. The analytical part operates with the individual stories of the following American authors: Rebecca Goldstein, Bernard Malamud, Gordon Lish, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Rebecca Makkai and Budd Schulberg. The analysis focuses on the position of the characters as well as the significant aspects of each story separately. The final part points out the differences and similarities, as well as the most prominent aspects of the Holocaust fiction.

Anotace

Cílem této diplomové práce je identifikovat charakteristické prvky literatury zabývající se Holokaustem. Teoretická část mapuje způsob, jakým společnost, a zvláště židovská společnost, chápe Holokaust. Zároveň řeší, jak se Judaismus dívá na fikci, zejména pak na fikci spojenou s Holokaustem. Druhá část se pak zabývá analýzou jednotlivých příběhů, osmi povídek a jednoho románu, od sedmi autorů, a to od Rebeccy Goldstein, Bernarda Malamuda, Gordona Lishe, Philipa Rotha, Cynthie Ozick, Rebeccy Makkai a Budda Schulberga. Příběhy jsou zkoumány odděleně, přičemž je hlavní důraz kladen na významné motivy vzhledem k Holokaustu a rozbor jednotlivých postav. Závěrečný oddíl poukazuje na společné prvky povídek, stejně jako na jejich rozdíly, a určuje nejvýraznější prvky literatury Holokaustu.

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Preface

More than seventy years have passed since the end of the Second World War and those events have changed the world forever. No matter how distant these events might seem now, the cruel reality of the Holocaust pervades. It haunts the survivors, the spectators and, most importantly, it is still present in various artworks that have been produced since the defeat of the Germans.

Due to the rising tension in this country and abroad, it is crucial to remember the sins of the past. Western society stands at the crossroads and the choice of the path lies in the hands of people pursuing nothing but their own selfish interests. The xenophobic and racist tendencies are growing and people seem detached from their past. Yet it is only through thorough analysis of our history that we can learn to understand our present. The comprehension of certain events in our past should help us prevent them from happening again in the future. The horrors of the Holocaust were not unique, yet the effects were global. The Second World War had a major impact on both the Jewish community and the rest of the world. Therefore, the Holocaust should be neither downgraded nor put on a pedestal. Today the Holocaust should be something to learn from.

While this thesis does not dare to provide expert knowledge of the Holocaust as a historical event, its aim is to instead focus on the literary responses to the Holocaust. It attempts to find common features in nine plots of seven Jewish American authors in order to grasp on the essential notions of Holocaust fiction. The first section provides the theoretical basis for the analysis, comprising of the Holocaust definition and processes and the specifics of the Holocaust fiction perceived through Judaism. The literary analysis approaches each story individually while taking into account secondary sources. The conclusion of the thesis sums up some of the reoccurring notions in the plots about the Holocaust.

1. Introduction

1.1. Holocaust and Trauma

1.1.1 Defining the Holocaust

Mass destruction has always been a part of the history of mankind. Religion used to be one of the most prominent motives for killing people. Nevertheless, the 20th century provided examples of other genocide impulses, such as ideology, class and nation clashes, greed for resources or simply politics. Society witnessed genocide in various countries for various reasons. Is there therefore any reason to think of the Holocaust as of a unique event? (Boender, 2012: 7)

Other genocides and massacres took place before and after the Second World War, including mass exterminations of Armenians, Bosnians or people in Rwanda. (Kolář, 2004:13) There is no way we can compare the amount of pain caused in particular genocides. Yehuda Bauer claims that the extreme examples of suffering cannot and should not be contrasted, as there is no such thing as „less horrible" or „better" mass murder. However, there are reasons to believe that the Holocaust, though it shares some similarities with other genocides, was a unique example. (Bauer, 2009: 31)

The Holocaust is often referred to as indescribable. This does not mean that there are no historical context or circumstances that led to that very event. Access to detailed historical descriptions and the analysis of torture and violence exist. The unexplainable aspect lies within. We cannot comprehend the motives of such actions of human beings treating other human beings in such ways and are not able to relate to the torturer. (Bauer, 2009: 35) That is what makes genocides different from any other crime. The Holocaust is not that different from the others in terms of sheer brutality, except for the fact that the Nazis went further than any of their predecessors in terms of the number of victims. (Bauer, 2009: 38)

The Holocaust is however often used as a starting point when describing genocides. Boender calls it the Holocaust paradigm. It is used to describe and compare other examples of genocide to the Holocaust for various reasons. (Boender, 2012:8) Not only was the aim of the Nazis to eliminate every single Jew – not only in Germany but in the world, but also the whole ideology of National Socialism was targeted specifically against the Jews. Even though other groups, such as Roma people were persecuted and killed, it was the anti-Semitism that represented a major part of Nazi beliefs. (Boender, 2012: 16) In addition, Jews were perceived as the roots of European civilization and the

Christian religion, another reason for them to be exterminated. The Nazis believed for some reason that their enemy was controlled by Jews and if they wanted to conquer Europe, they had to eliminate the Jews first. (Bauer, 2009: 44)

The Holocaust was also the reason why there is the term “genocide“ in the first place. At the Genocide Convention in 1948 it was established, that “genocide“ stands for the intentional destruction of a group in whole or in part. The Holocaust is therefore a reference point for all research dealing with genocide and to study the Holocaust is to study the process of genocidal tendencies. However, some historians are afraid that if the Holocaust is studied using a comparative method, the uniqueness is taken away, which may help denying it. (Boender, 2012:8) Bauer maintains that if we admit that the Holocaust was something unique and even irrational, it makes no sense analyzing it, therefore the uniqueness leads to a downgrading of its meaning. (Bauer, 2009: 31) It is believed that the Holocaust may happen again, due to various reasons, including the attempts to deny it. (Bauer, 2009: 32) Denial of the Holocaust is a living phenomenon and we have witnessed such attempts in our own country, which is why these concerns are justifiable.

The feeling of the “indescribability“ of the Holocaust is therefore a moral problem. We cannot affiliate with the tormentors and we cannot explain their actions. However, we may try to relate to the victims. Unable to “feel” the experience, we can nevertheless come as close to understanding as possible through notes, diaries, documentaries and, of course, works of fiction written by the survivors or their relatives. (Bauer, 2009: 39)

1.1.2 “What's in a name?“

Holocaust, *Shoah*, *Hurban*. Before trying to describe the different perspectives of post-war Jewish-American literature, I should concentrate on defining these terms.

The word „Holocaust“ is connected with great aversion among the Jews, not only because the event it refers to but due to its roots. Holocaust is originally a combination of two Greek words, *holos*, meaning „whole“ and kaustos, which is a verbal adjective „burned“. The expression used to mean something that is „burned as a whole“ and usually described a sacrifice or an offering consumed by fire. (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2018)

It is thus understandable that Jews do not accept that expression, as none of them wished to make a personal sacrifice or be sacrificed during World War II. As Stanislav Kolář puts it, the Holocaust was forced upon them, therefore it shall not have any religious meaning. While words „sacrifice“ and „offering“ suggest a free choice, a voluntary action, usually followed by a reward in

form of atonement of some sort, the term „Holocaust“ as we use it nowadays, though derived from those notions, offers no such thing. (Kolář, 2004:12)

Miriam Sivan argues that this expression belittles the traumatic experience of the Jews and, quoting Bruno Bettelheim, she states that using the term „Holocaust“ means establishing a false connection between the sacred ritual and mass murder. (Sivan, 2009: 204) That is why the term is often not acceptable to denote this trauma.

Shoah and Hurban are terms from Hebrew and Yiddish, both referring to a catastrophe or destruction. Yet does it make any difference? Although there is no longer that implication of voluntary sacrifice to God and in God's name, to call it a „disaster“ or a „calamity“ does not seem sufficient. Kolář inquires whether it is even possible to express the inexpressible, whether the event can indeed be captured and enclosed in an abstract detached unit. (Kolář, 2004: 13)

Can we define the undefinable? The philosophers of ancient Greek discussed the process of naming and whether names are dependent on the particular. While Protagoras believed that man is the measure of all things, meaning that the truth is subjective (Buckingham, 2013: 42); Socrates established the dialogue as a way to try to understand the world. Nothing is „carved in stone“ and we must doubt and question constantly in order to lead a meaningful life. (Buckingham, 2013: 46) Maybe it is impossible to get an acceptable term for the events of the Second World War. However, it is in the nature of human reason to denote the events in order to analyze them or even think about them. I believe it is acceptable to use any of the expressions mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, no matter how imprecisely they describe the reality, because the purpose of using them is to be able to discuss them and analyze and that is, in the spirit of Socrates, a proper way to live.

1.1.3 The Dehumanization and Trauma

Herbert Kelman believes that there are three conditions for making mass murder acceptable for such large number of people: authorization, routinization and dehumanization. The first one enhances people's readiness to commit the crime by ordering, encouraging or at least permitting. This implies that a person is involved in an action without actually making a decision to do so. (Kelman, 1973: 39)

Routinization serves to reduce the cases when moral questions arise. By renewing authorization and repeating justification, the person is allowed to focus on the details of the job without considering its meaning. The routine of a secretary and a participant of genocide is segmented and therefore it is easier for the perpetrator to focus on those smaller steps rather than

on the impact. Also, the orders go from one office to another, thus reducing the amount of responsibility as the decision comes down the chain. (Kelman, 1973: 47)

Dehumanization is the last step. As both authority and routine may reduce the amount of questions asked, the moral restrictions against mass murdering are generally strong. Therefore, it was necessary to strip the person of their humanity. Kelman defines two aspects of the humanity: identity and community. When speaking of the Holocaust, individual victims are rarely discussed, they were just Jews. For Nazis they were nothing but the people with the Star of David and with numbers tattooed on their arms, not individuals. This group of people or more of a category of beings was later denied their human aspects, the racial category stopped belonging to the human family, which made it easier to exterminate them. (Kelman, 1973: 49) This of course did not happen overnight. In the case of the Jews, it involved years of exclusion, distrust and their affiliation with different religion, causing labeling which later enabled the dehumanization process. (Kelman, 1973:50)

Bauer looks at the issue from a different perspective. He believes that the motivation of the perpetrator was to bring the victim down to his level. It is not assumed that all Nazis were people with no moral restraints. Rather, they transferred their own moral responsibility to someone else, in this case Adolf Hitler and his ideology, in order to avoid future feelings of guilt. (Bauer, 2009:50) Finally, Helen Fein speaks of removal of the victims from the *"universe of obligations"*. The members of a society tend to protect each other based on their mutual relations. They live by a set of rules and deserve protection. By placing victims outside this circle, we deprive them of these rights. (Markusen, 2000: 111) Overall the victims of the Holocaust were not perceived as humans anymore. They were assigned the role of an animal or even an object, so their slaughter was justifiable.

The victims deprived of their humanity either died in the Holocaust or survived. The survival itself does not mean victory though. Surviving the Holocaust means living with a horrible memory of a trauma. By definition, a traumatic experience is unexpected and threatens the mental health of an individual and the person sees the experience as traumatic. (McCann, 2000: 10) In case of the Holocaust the trauma is not only individual, though it is generally perceived as such.

The traumatic experience of the Holocaust had a direct effect on the survivors, a transmission effect on their children and a collective effect on the population of Jews, which makes it exceed the primary definition. (Kellermann, 2009: viii) The general public can attempt to imagine the horrors of the Holocaust but cannot come close enough. Moreover, we can always leave it as it is, while the survivors cannot forget. As Harold Bloom said: „Trauma, by its nature, has to be private." (Bloom,

2004: 1) The question therefore is not whether we should remember it or forget it. The Jewish people have no choice anyway, being unable to forget, and the rest of us should learn from it so that it never happens again. (Kellerman, 2009: 9)

1.2. The Holocaust, Judaism and Fiction

1.2.1 Judaism and Literature of Fiction

Jews, Christians and Muslims are often generally referred to as „The People of the Book". The Jews however are the only ones that interpreted the Book in a form of literary criticism – *The Talmud* is a sort of a set of instructions on how to read the Bible. Bloomfield believes that literature is the closest notion to religion and as the Jews lead disputes about the Bible, they also question the means and the aims of literature. (Bloomfield, 1971: 25)

Literature and religion used to „walk hand in hand". Specifically, in early societies all the literature could be considered religious. Also, what we now call secular literature was brought up in those times, when it was impossible to separate literature from religion.(Bloomfield, 1971: 21)

While the second commandment prohibits making and depicting idols, which is taken fairly seriously in orthodox Judaism – and reflected in various novels, such as Chaim Potok's *My Name Is Asher Lev* – literature as a form of art and its criticism plays a significant part of the religion. Dan Schifrin believes that literature has always helped Jews to renew their continuity after such events as the Holocaust. Expressing their tragedy through novels and poetry serves as a relief, so that they can find closure and be at peace. (Schifrin, 1997: 24)

On the other hand, there are those who suspect that fiction is a type of idolatry. Finkelstein challenges the entire idea of fiction and its respective connection with the Commandment and God's Covenant, the holy agreement with the Jews. He claims that fiction might be perceived as immoral, as if it is breaking the Commandment. The writer of fiction needs to be devoted to aesthetics, thus idolatry. (Finkelstein, 1992: 64)

The problem goes even deeper than that. Some orthodox Jewish communities fear the negative influence art and popular culture may have on their lives. They are worried about the impact on the spiritual dimension of Jewish life. Schifrin writes that it was the Jewish fear of joy that made them obsessed with interpreting the Holocaust. (Schifrin, 1997: 30)

However, arts have always been there to set aside conflicts, to bridge the gaps, to „educate and inspire". (Schifrin, 1997: 30) Moreover, language is a living organism, it evolves and changes,

which is why it always needs new literary creations. Schifrin believes that for a language to evolve, it is not enough to just study old texts or even write new prayers. The language is alive when it is present in people's minds and hearts and that is no job for a prayer but for art and literature. (Schifrin, 1997: 31)

The question remains whether it is necessary for Jewish literature to be written in Hebrew or Yiddish to be considered „Jewish". I believe it does not matter whether we speak of fiction written in Jewish languages or written by Jewish authors in other languages. While neither of these definitions are sufficient, it is quite clear that Jews as one of the „People of the Book" should keep writing and keep imagining, as it is part of preserving their culture.

As Rosenfeld puts it, fiction more than anything else deals with problems that are difficult to solve. Fiction does not describe the place or the event. It is more of an idea of a place or event. Fiction is transcending reality, it is abstract, and it searches for answers without finding them. However, it should keep searching and we should keep questioning it. (Rosenfeld, 2004: 44)

1.2.2 Definition of Holocaust Literature

Holocaust is more than just a topic or a subject. What we call „Holocaust literature" consists of wide variety of novels, stories, poems, essays, etc. If the Holocaust was merely a topic to write about, it would have been exhausted long ago. Yet new (not only) literary works that fall into this category are created every now and then and these days, when racism and religious hatred are becoming more and more dominant, it is even more crucial to be constantly reminded of what happened in the Holocaust.

Genre is a wider term, yet I believe it is still not sufficient. As Rosenfeld puts it, Holocaust changed society, it changed the way we think and also what we think about, because today „we know things that before could not even be imagined". (Rosenfeld, 2004: 22) The Holocaust was a groundbreaking event that changed the viewpoint of the writers, artists and the society as a whole.

Rosenfeld even defines Holocaust literature as „literature of decomposition". As the purpose of Holocaust was to destroy, the literary attempts that describe it are indeed dissolving and decomposing the reality, turning it into an irreality – significant shift from surrealism. (Rosenfeld, 2004: 37) Not only does it move away from other genres of its time, but the literature of Holocaust eventually rejects all precedent literary genres.

What makes Holocaust literature so difficult to define and understand is the fact, that it consists of series of stories, with different sets of characters, as Deborah Lipstadt asserts. She defines

three basic groups of roles reoccurring in Holocaust literature – criminals, victims and witnesses, represented by various characters. (Lipstadt, 2004: 112)

1.2.3 Adequacy of the Literature of the Holocaust

While defining Holocaust literature might be difficult, there is an issue even more complicated than that. Is writing about Holocaust appropriate and acceptable?

The critical theoretician Theodor Adorno once wrote:

> *„To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation." (Adorno, 1997: 34)*

This statement comes from his essay „Cultural Criticism and Society". Despite the fact that the author himself modified it in his later work, many critics and theorist return to it periodically. Even though Adorno speaks of poetry, the quote applies to the literature of fiction in general. Rosenfeld believes that this statement claims that it is both impossible and unethical to write or even attempt to write about the Holocaust. Arguments he provides to support that notion are various, but the main idea remains. Writing about the Holocaust belittles the experience. The Holocaust was full of terror and such terror cannot be sufficiently described in fiction. (Rosenfeld, 2004: 23)

Moreover, Auschwitz fiction is either not fiction or not about Auschwitz, as Elie Wiesel puts it. He states that people who survived it will never speak of the experience while people who did not experience it may never know, not completely. Wiesel defines Auschwitz not only as destruction of men but of language and thoughts, which is why it is impossible to depict it in fiction. He believes that all the testimonies of Holocaust survivors do not describe the experience but rather admit that they are unable to speak of it. Finally, Wiesel calls all attempts to write about Auschwitz a blasphemy. (Wiesel, 1975: 314)

This statement is what Rosenfeld confronts in his essay, claiming that if we assume that it is *impossible* to write about the Holocaust, it would be even worse not to attempt to write at all, to "remain silent". (Rosenfeld, 2004: 24) If the Holocaust was truly destroying words and language, if no efforts were made to describe it, it would be like giving up a fight without even trying. Nothing

should be capable of taking away our words forever, which is why attempts to write about the Holocaust should still be pursued, though it might seem impossible to some.

Rosenfeld believes that as there are many literary works about Auschwitz, the writers chose to negate the silence forced upon them by the event. No matter how they might struggle, no matter who reads it or hears it, the story will be told over and over again. (Rosenfeld, 2004: 41)

The question is whether there truly is something ethically wrong with post-Holocaust fiction. In *Unwanted Beauty*, Brett Ashley Kaplan states that while it is not morally right to find pleasure in the depiction of other people's pain, Holocaust literature provides much more than that. It is not the suffering of others that is beautiful, it is the complexity of the images that makes us contemplate the Holocaust. (Kaplan, 2007: 21)

Theodor Adorno discussed the appropriateness of Auschwitz literature in another way, in his work *Negative Dialectics*. He questions his previous statement, saying that if a suffering person has a right to scream, people have a right to write about Holocaust. However, he asks whether it is even possible to continue living if one survives the horrors of Holocaust. In the spirit of existentialism, the absurdity of life is at its climax during Auschwitz and nothing really comes after it. Adorno claims that the life of Holocaust survivor may only be imaginary since then. (Adorno, 2004: 362-3)

Fiction plays a significant part in constructing reality. It would be ludicrous to think that such an event as the Holocaust should be avoided in the literature of fiction, as it had a considerable impact on many subsequent events and eventually on the present time. We can question whether it is impossible or immoral, yet I believe it is necessary, both for the spectators and the survivors. It may be a part of a psychotherapy for the survivors, a way to go on living with the experience, while the spectator might get closer to understanding it.

2. Literary reflection of the Holocaust

There are number of questions one shall ask when analyzing the literature of the Holocaust. Apart from traditional issues of common text analysis such as the plot, the narrative, or the characteristics of certain roles I want to set a framework to analyze aspects typical for literature dealing with some sort of trauma. First, I would like to distinguish between the authentic survivors and those, whose experience is derived from someone else, let it be close relatives or not – speaking both of the authors and the characters.

Generally speaking, we recognize three categories of characters in Holocaust fiction: the perpetrators, victims and bystanders. However, each category offers several options and sometimes the groups can even overlap, which makes the distinction even more vague. (Lipstadt, 2004:110) The categories can only serve as a point of orientation, not a dogmatic statement, for not all the victims were good people, not every officer was evil and there is a wide scale of reasons to be a bystander. It needs to be taken under consideration that all the actors of the Second World War were people and these categories should not be seen as black and white, because humanity does not usually work that way. (Kellerman, 2009:9) Nevertheless, intend to use those categories as a starting point from which I shall analyze the individual persons in the stories in all shades of grey.

The aspect of morality plays a significant part in each story of the Holocaust, which is why it shall be the secondary focus of this analysis.

Finally, I wish to look into some transcendental aspects of the stories, which may result in asking philosophical questions without finding answers for them. Yet if the Holocaust is indescribable, the fiction it „produced“ possesses similar attributes.

2.1. **Rebecca Goldstein: “The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish: A Story”**

2.1.1 Rebecca Goldstein

Rebecca Goldstein was born after the Second World War. However, we can observe aspects of coping with the Holocaust in her family. Her father was a Polish refugee, a gentle and sad man, who never really got over the experience and every child in her extended family, including herself, was named after a relative that died in Auschwitz. (Jacobsen, 2016)

She grew up in a large Orthodox Jewish family in rather poor conditions but with tradition of library visits. Despite her Orthodox roots she turned out to be secular humanist and a philosopher. (Jacobsen, 2016) She has got a Ph.D. in philosophy and writes about philosophers and ethics, and her book on Spinoza, a Jewish philosopher has been especially influential. (Goldstein, 1998:407)

2.1.2 “The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish” - Summary

The story, told by a first-person narrator, is about a woman given a name Raizel (Yiddish for Rose) after a girl who died in Buchenwald and whom her mother once knew. We learn about her growing up with the stories from the death camps her mother told her and later the moral theory she was taught. We witness Raizel later stood up to her mother and blamed her for being irrational in one moment of revolt. Finally, before her mother died, she told her daughter that it was because of her that Raizel Kaidish was killed.

Some inspiration by the author's life is undeniable. The story possesses both philosophical and ethical aspects and Saul is apparently based on her own father. Also, both the author and the narrator experience the derivative effect of the Holocaust trauma through one of their parents.

2.1.3 Characters

2.1.3.1 Raizel, Raizele and Rose

Rose is the main protagonist and the narrator of the story. To distinguish between her and Raizel Kaidish, I chose to designate her as Rose, though she was given the Yiddish name of the dead woman. At the beginning of the story, Rose finds it interesting that she was named after an unknown girl, because all her relatives from her mother's side died during the war too. (Goldstein, 1998:407)

She was educated in ethics from very young age, at first in form of stories. She learned so much about the death camps that the stories seemed more real to her than the actual reality around her. (Goldstein, 1998:408) What started as stories went on as a theory of morality, when Rose turned fourteen – the age at which Raizel Kaidish died. Marta told her that one should act in a way to minimize other people's suffering. (Goldstein,1998: 409)

It is worth mentioning how Rose dealt with her teenage years. Like many teenagers in the world she rebelled against her parents. She wished to be with different parents, who „had no numbers burned into their arms“(Goldstein, 1998: 411); however, these ordinary feelings of a young person were also accompanied by guilt. Rose even felt that by hating her mother, in some way she sides with her mother's enemies, with the villains, which felt unacceptable. She felt anger aimed at her mother and simultaneously she was mad at herself for that. (Goldstein, 1998:411)

Eventually she describes the only direct case of rebellion, when she told her mother that truth is nonsense, therefore everything her mother taught her made no sense at all. Marta never raised her voice, she just replied that Rose did not deserve to be named after Raizel Kaidish. (Goldstein,

1998: 414)

Rose is not a victim of a holocaust, yet she experiences the transmission effect of her mother's trauma. She carries the burden of the legacy and of her mother's trauma and as the next generation of a Holocaust victim she tries to make some objective sense out of it. She questions the absolute validity of her mother's ethical theory, though when she actually tries to discuss it with Marta, she runs out of arguments.

2.1.3.2 Mother Marta

The personality of the mother is probably the most complicated of all the characters. At the beginning of the short story it is revealed that she met Raizel Kaidish in the camp and decided to name her daughter after the girl. She also dedicated her life to educating her daughter in terms of morality, which she does through „tales from the camp". (Goldstein, 1998: 408)

For most of the story the question comes up about why whether she named her daughter Raizel. Was it because she admired her courage or because she wanted her spirit to live on? Marta told Rose, that she had honored both Raizel and Rose in choosing her name. (Goldstein, 1998:409) Eventually we learn that while both motives might be valid, there is a third one: guilt. Marta's action caused the death of both Raizel and the other unnamed girl. (Goldstein, 1998: 414)

Marta therefore fits neither in the victim's nor villain's category. Did she inform on the girls because she was afraid or was it some other reason? The main consequence of dehumanization is that the person is stripped of dignity, humanity and morals. The decision she made was perhaps not her own – because in the death camp you are no longer a free human being. You become an animal, a creature of mere instincts and one of the most powerful instincts is self-preservation. For some reason she might have thought that it was essential to inform on the girls in order to survive. In an extreme situation, we have only limited control over our self-preservation urge, and when nothing of one's humanity is left, there might be no control at all.

Marta eventually got out of the camp and she chose to remember the death camp. She got to live with the guilt – which only appeared after she got out, after she became a human being again. Living with such a burden of guilt is never easy. Moreover, she named her daughter after the girl, so she was constantly reminded of what happened. Marta wanted to teach her daughter everything she knew from the camp. She wanted to give Rose the moral basis she learned while suffering in the death camp. She also hoped that Rose would one day be capable of such an act of courage as Raizel Kaidish. (Goldstein, 1998: 409)

Marta died at the end of the story, and unlike many she did not fight the fate. She died grateful for those extra 30 years which Raizel Kaidish never got. All she cared about were the people around her and how they were coping. (Goldstein, 1998: 414)

However, the final revelation changed the whole perspective of both the story and the character. When Marta concealed such an important "detail" of Raize Kaidish story, was not everything else a lie? Marta probably did not want to reveal the true reason for her guilt, for she herself struggled intensely with it. On the other hand, it seems hypocritical of Marta to preach constantly about morals and to claim to philosophically comprehend evil, when she only concealed her own immoral past. She betrayed the moral principles she has been teaching Rose and her knowledge of evil came from the knowledge that her own deed in the death camp was evil, yet she kept it a secret almost to the end of her life.

2.1.3.3 Father Saul

The father figure, though present the whole time is not so prominent in the story, but merely a bystander. At the beginning, he had a dispute with Marta. Unlike his wife he wished to forget what happened and live a normal life and he did not approve of the tales from the camp being told to Rose at such a young age. (Goldstein, 1998:408)

He is described as a gentle man who hated to fight. He appears only twice, at the beginning when Rose is just a child and then during the dispute about the rationality of truth. (Goldstein, 1998" 413) However, Saul is modeled after the author's own father, whom she described in an interview:

> *"…a gentle and compassionate man, of great intellectual potential, who had no ambition beyond never again seeing the worst that humanity can do to each other. He was exquisitely sensitive to others' pain..." (Jacobsen, 2016)*

Those words could describe the character of Saul as well. He possibly wished not only to never see the horrors of the Holocaust, but he also did not want to transfer the experience onto anyone else, including Rose.

2.1.3.4 Raizel Kaidish

Raizel Kaidish died in Buchenwald and despite being present in just a short paragraph at the beginning, she influences the whole story. She is both the victim and a hero, and she shows pure courage despite the desperate situation she is in. She decides to sacrifice herself for someone else and that someone is a girl she never knew before the imprisonment. That might be something

beyond comprehension. However, as another character says just one page later, when there is war, you find only greatness, both good and bad. (Goldstein, 1998: 408)

The choice of the surname is not random. It is neither an ordinary surname nor a typical Jewish one. However, it is a direct reference to Kaddish, a Jewish prayer primarily recognized as a prayer for the dead. It was written in Aramaic and used to finish a Rabbi's lesson. Later it became a custom to say Kaddish after rabbi's death and eventually it was extended to all the loved ones. Jews mourning for their parents, siblings or children ought to say Kaddish every day for eleven months, though this practice is often not kept. (Karesh, 2006: 263)

The prayer speaks of the meaning of life and death as well as the redemption and the vision of afterlife. (Diamant, 1998:14) However, who would say Kaddish for Raizel when all the members of her family were already dead? It is not important whether Marta actually said the prayer or not, yet by naming her daughter Raizel she chose to remember the dead girl, to mourn for her and to give her death a meaning.

Goldstein suggests that even though Marta was there to "say Kaddish" for Raizel, thousands of Jews died in the death camps without having anyone alive to do so. She pointed out that while there might be no relatives to mourn for the dead, there are still millions of Jews alive, who grieve for the lost souls and who also experience the collective trauma of the Holocaust.

As for the name of the story, it is self-explanatory – the legacy of one girl that not only influences the lives of all the other characters but turns out to be a pervasive force that touches every aspect of their being.

2.1.4 Family Relations

Though it is obvious that the mother-daughter relationship was a strong one in this story, it was rather ambivalent. Rose believed that her mother „had her for some definite reason and she would always see her in terms of this reason" (Goldstein, 1998:411). This might suggest that the only reason Marta had a daughter was to name her Raizel and to constantly remind her of the legacy. Did Marta perceive her daughter as an independent individual or did she imagine raising an actual Raizel Kaidish? Later in her life, after escaping the death camp, Marta may have decided not only to live with a constant reminder of her guilt, but she probably transferred the spirit of Raizel Kaidish into her own progeny. That was not only the purpose of Rose but also her meaning. Rose therefore represented the original Raizel in Marta's eyes.

At some point the narrator questions the reasons for having a child. She asks whether there are any circumstances under which having a child could be right. If one's own reasons are not enough, then whose should be? (Goldstein, 1998: 411) I see a parallel with other human decisions. All the decisions we make should be backed up with our own reasons, not anyone else's. That was one of the problems of the decision-making of Nazi officers. The decision to kill other human beings was no longer their own due to the authorization, routinization and dehumanization processes.

The decision to bring someone new to life is as difficult as choosing to end somebody's life. Neither of those decisions should be made without deep consideration. The consequences of such decisions have a lasting effect and they might even haunt the person. In terms of moral aspects, creating a new life is logical and ethical whereas destroying a life is neither.

2.1.5 Humanity and Morals

At the very beginning of the story Goldstein provides an example of humanity in a death camp, a place where people were actually dehumanized. A motive of sacrifice is also present, in how Raizel Kaidish wanted to take her friend's place, knowing that though her chances might be bigger than her friend's, she might end up dead as well. (Goldstein, 1998:407) This simple yet difficult act of humanity proves that no matter how hard the Nazis may have tried to turn their victims into objects, they did not and could not succeed.

A moral and ethical theory accompanies the plot throughout the whole story. We are obliged to act in the way that should lessen the amount of pain. We can observe this part of the theory in Carl Popper's philosophy, who claimed that the utilitarian theory of „maximizing happiness“ should be replaced by „minimizing suffering“ - a humanitarian perspective. (O'Hear, 2008: 287)

In this story however, this humanitarian formula is accompanied by philosophical foundations. Marta believes that morality is just a kind of logic. If a person admits that his own pain matters and that there are other people that can experience pain, he grants that everyone's pain matters equally. The tale of Raizel Kaidish's sacrifice appears to follow this pattern. It was logical to assume, that the stronger girl would have a better chance to live, and the fact that Raizel was the stronger one made no difference; therefore, the sacrifice was both a logical and moral step. (Goldstein, 1998:410)

However, Marta’s moral theory turned out to be beyond the concept of utilitarian theories. She had her own motivation to educate her daughter, to transform her into the dead girl. Her main aim was not to honor Raizel Kaidish, but to gain her forgiveness. As the Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, no one, not even God, can forgive crimes committed against other people. Such

crimes are not theirs to forgive, therefore in Jewish tradition, the only person to forgive is the one who has been hurt or offended. (Stowe, 2016:165)

Marta knew she was guilty for Raizel's death and she could not find rest unless forgiven. However, the only person that could forgive her was dead. Marta therefore "created her own" Raizel Kaidish. Not only did she name her daughter Raizel but also raised her in a way to make sure Rose turns out to be as honorable and moral as the original Raizel. Only then, basically at her deathbed, did she dare to ask for forgiveness. Preposterous, hypocritical, outrageous. Rose felt sorry for her mother, ashamed for rebelling against her, yet everything Marta told her was on purpose, her own selfish purpose.

Despite not explicitly being mentioned, Rose probably forgave her mother, as she named her own daughter Marta. It could be assumed so, for she would not give her progeny a name of a woman she could blame for both the immoral deed in the camp and her own messed up education. However, she might have had no choice. Also, rejecting a dying woman, not to mention her own mother, would be against the moral framework she was raised in. It turns out to be a paradox. Rose was taught about ethics by a woman who broke her own set of ethical rules. The same woman told Rose about the purpose of the education, yet at the point of this revelation, Rose can no longer refuse Marta's request, for it would be against the ethics she was taught.

2.1.6 Essential Truth

Exploring the nature and validity of Truth is one of the main concerns of the story and of the narrator herself. As soon as she enters college Rose focuses on the limits of objectivity of Truth. (Goldstein, 1998:412) Though truth is often subjective and therefore dependent on the individual, as well as good and evil, there are some concepts generally perceived as universally true. When it comes to ethics, the decision regarding what is true and what is not may be a bit more complicated, yet even in this field there are some generally valid statements. The question arises whether truth in terms of ethics is rational or merely emotional. Marta believes that the rational and the valid are interconnected. In fact, it was the rational dialogue that presupposed the importance of truth. In addition, valid statement or action must be based on logical consistency. (Goldstein, 1998: 413)

While moral judgments may be based on emotions, this does not mean they are illogical or untrue. In case of such statement as "The Holocaust was wrong," for instance, two notions are apparent: 1) it can be perceived as a subjective moral judgement or as a universal statement based on years of research; 2) no matter whether it is a judgement or fact-based statement, it is generally

perceived as true. The Truth is essential.

The identity of the good and the bad is also a subject of deeper examination. Marta claims that it is much easier to identify evil than good. Is it though? When it comes to the Holocaust, the answer to that might be positive, because we are much more certain about what was wrong or evil. In ordinary life however, this might not be exact. Both “good” and “bad” are related to the person who makes the statement and to the general perception of the action. In my opinion, both display the same amount of uncertainty.

2.1.7 Conclusion

“The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish” is a philosophical tale, which means that it provides questions rather than answers. The questions it brings are important, whether they ask about importance of truth, the logical aspects of morality, the humanitarian perspective or simple coping with the Holocaust with the family circle.

The narrator, Rose, eventually gives birth to her own daughter whom she names Marta. She made peace with her mother at the end and she might have also chosen another legacy that should be preserved for the next generations. The Holocaust trauma is not an issue troubling just one generation but is rather a complex problem that gravitates from generation to generation and that is probably a good thing as we should not forget about great evil in history.

2.2. **Bernard Malamud: “The German Refugee” and “The Jewbird”**

2.2.1 Bernard Malamud

Bernard Malamud, a Brooklyn-born author who died in 1986, is a significant Jewish-American novelist and short story writer. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018) His parents were Russian Jews - or more precisely, they were born in the Russian part of Ukraine – who came to America in the early 20th century. The family was poor, and the parents were not educated, yet they wished proper education for their son. (Leviant, 1991:47-48) He studied at City College of New York (B.A.) and later at Columbia University (M.A.). He taught English at high schools in New York City, at Oregon State University and creative writing at Bennington College in Vermont. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018)

Malamud did not regard himself as an authentic Jewish writer, but considered himself a part of a fusion of American, Jewish and Western literary tradition, feeling most influenced by American

authors like Henry James or Nathaniel Hawthorne. (Leviant, 1991:49) Ezra Cappell believes that although Malamud has a talent for capturing the language of Jewish immigrants and though he writes about Jews and Jewish topics, he tends to use Christian symbols and motifs rather than typically Jewish ones. (Cappell, 2012: 37) That may have been caused by his lack of Jewish education – unlike many Jewish kids Malamud was taught neither Yiddish nor Hebrew. As for personal experience, he visited Russia, but he spent a mere two weeks in Israel. (Leviant, 1991:49)

Bernard Malamud experienced the "collective" trauma of Jewish people, as neither he nor his relatives were direct victims of the Holocaust. He writes about Jews and Jewish issues because he feels that he knows them, and it seems appropriate. Also, he believes that Jewish history is full of drama and it serves as a metaphor for the life and fate of all people. (Leviant, 1991:50)

2.2.2 "The German Refugee" - Summary

This short story was first published in Malamud's collection of stories entitled *Idiots First* in 1963 and it is the last story of the book. Compared to other stories from the collection like „The Jewbird" it received little attention of the critics. (Lasher, 1990: 73)

The story is told in a first-person narrative by a teacher, yet the story revolves around a different character, a fugitive from Germany named Oskar Gassner. The narrator, Martin Goldberg is merely an observer, like Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*, so the thoughts and conflicts of the main character are only portrayed through his perspective. (Dreifus, 2013)

The main protagonist, Oskar Gassner left Germany shortly after the Night of Broken Glass, a Nazi pogrom, and all alone he came to America to give lectures at the Institute for Public Studies in New York. His non-Jewish wife and their child stayed in Germany and Oskar is not just lonely in New York but also struggles with speaking English and writing his first lecture. That is when he meets the young narrator Martin, who gives him English lessons and witnesses Oskar's struggles not only with English but with language in general. (Malamud, 2000:440)

Eventually they form a bond and manage to write and practice speaking for the first lecture, which he successfully delivers. However, Oskar kills himself two days later, leaving all his possessions to Martin. (Malamud, 1986:448)

2.2.3 The Narrator and the Refugee

2.2.3.1 Martin Goldberg

Although Martin's narrative perspective was that of an observer, he clearly meant more than that. His relationship with Oskar went beyond the usual boundaries of teacher-student dynamics. Apparently, there are two Martins, while one is the narrator, trying to make sense out of something that happened in the past, the other one is the protagonist, a young student, who, out of simple human solidarity, tries to help another person return back to life.

The influence of Oskar's personal story on the development of Martin's character is intriguing. At the beginning of the story, Martin is a naive poor twenty-year-old student, trying to make a living by teaching fugitives English and having a hard time forming a relationship with any of them. (Malamud, 1986:438) Over time not only bonding of the two main protagonists develops but also Martin's attitude changes. Upon their first meeting, Martin mentions that he „would rather be elsewhere but had to make a living. “(Malamud, 2000:439)

He is Oskar's third tutor, as the previous ones had given up on him. (Malamud, 2000:440) Perhaps it was this fact that compelled Martin to stay and try to help the man. What started as mere determination evolved into a concern and later a true and mutual companionship.

Martin means more than just a teacher. As it turns out, Oskar often needs a listener or just someone to sit with him in silence. An ordinary person and ordinary tutor would not allow that, he would focus on the specific purpose of his job. Martin on the other hand listened and perhaps learned a lot about human personality and behavior and about Oskar’s traumatic personal experience. It cannot be called proper transmission effect, as Martin was not seriously coping with the events Oskar went through. It was rather the call of human nature that urged him to try to help the man.

As a teacher he turned out to be successful. He managed to get the lecture done. When he came to see the lecture, Martin felt proud of the job he had done, and he thought how easy it was to hide the wounds. (Malamud, 2000:448) At the very beginning, Martin did not seem to enjoy his job, perceiving it only as a way to make some money. He managed to give meaning to his work and his life and that meaning came with helping Oskar. Also, he did not use to bother with things like other people's scars and problems until the end.

He troubled himself a lot with Oskar's situation. He wondered whether there were more than just the usual problems of a refugee in an unknown country and an unknown language. (Malamud,

2000: 444) He even tried to write a part of the lecture himself, and when Oskar told him he got it all wrong, he left and thought he would never come back, losing his faith. It takes a very strong personality not to get carried away by despair and defeat which surround Oskar. Although Martin claims that at one point he had given up, he still managed to give the old man hope when he most needed it. At that very moment however, Oskar's situation improved as he „awakened from defeat“ they managed to return to former outline of their lessons. (Malamud, 2000: 447)

Martin showed up at Oskar's apartment at the very moment two firemen were trying to revive Oskar, unsuccessfully. The intensity with which Martin receives the news is breathtaking. He knew Oskar for approximately three months and by the time Oskar committed suicide, Martin not only bonded with the man but somehow felt responsible for him and wanted to stop Oskar's suicidal tendencies – to be more precise, he "felt a frenzied desire to prevent that." (Malamud, 2000:445) When he found out he was not successful, he became sick. The sickness was probably based on his conviction that he had failed Oskar, if not as a teacher then definitely as a human being and as a friend. (Malamud, 2000:449)

2.2.3.2 Oskar Gassner

Even though Oskar Gassner managed to escape Europe before greatest horrors of the Second World War took place, he can be assigned to the category of victims. Even though the mass segregation of Jews began after the invasion of Poland, meaning he could not have experienced a death camp, he had to know what was coming and he had to give up all he had to save himself, thus he was directly affected by the Nazi's actions. Oskar was more a German than a Jew (as well as Malamud felt more as an American than as a Jew), had a Christian wife and therefore would be considered assimilated. Yet he got uprooted from his German environment for being a Jew, thus he was left with only a part of his personality.

Although we observe Oskar's pain through another character's eyes, the descriptions and the atmosphere seem very vivid. Oskar is the German refugee who struggles not only with „ordinary“ immigrant difficulties, such as unknown language and culture or an identity crisis, but also the suffering connected with the fate of his family left in Europe. He misses his gentile wife who remained in Berlin; the immensity of his affection is revealed on the final page.

Oskar's appearance somehow corresponds with his state of mind. He is portrayed with sagging shoulders, as if he were slouching, and with heavy hands and eyes. (Malamud, 2000:438) It is not

only defeat that is mirrored in his posture, but it is also resignation. Throughout the story Oskar surrendered many times, yet there were brief moments of hope.

The narrator mentions at the beginning that doubt shows in Oskar's behavior like „underwater currents“ (Malamud, 2000:439). Another water-related parallel comes to mind when speaking of the changes in Oskar's behavior and feelings. They seem to come in waves, as Oskar is at some point able to keep up with the outline of the lessons and then he is incapable of speaking.

At the end of the story Oskar committed suicide by poisoning himself with gas. (Malamud, 2000: 448) The contrast between his successful ability to finish and carry out the lecture he was struggling with and the despair he felt because of the invasion of Poland was evident. However, the most prominent reason to kill himself is very personal – he is informed that his wife had been killed.

The situation proves the couple’s mutual affection, despite Oskar's frequently stating otherwise. Oskar described his wife several times, speaking of her as a „Jew-hater“ (Malamud, 2000:443) and as „ambivalent towards their Jewish friends and his relatives“ (Malamud, 2000:446). However, the depth of her real feelings is revealed in the illogical and eventually fatal gesture, when she got converted to Judaism shortly after his departure, she got captured, shot and tossed into a mass grave with other Jews and Gypsies. (Malamud, 2000:449)

Oskar's response to receiving this information from his mother-in-law is rather symbolic. The fact that he committed suicide is not that surprising. He did tell Martin that he had attempted to kill himself during his first week in America. (Malamud, 2000:443) The timing of his successful attempt might seem strange at first, but apparently the combination of one successful lecture - connected with the need to write more and considering how much time and effort it took to write one, Oskar probably did not feel very calm about this –; invasion of Poland and finally his wife's death was definitely too much for one lonely man.

The fact that a Jew who managed to escape the Nazis and start a life in America chose gas as a way to kill himself shows a strange combination of irony and compassion. We do not have sufficient information to decide whether it was an intentional choice or purely convenient or easy. Also, if it were a direct response to his wife's demise, it would make more sense to use a gun. While Oskar could not have known about the gas chambers planned for the Jews, the fact that he managed to avoid the fate in the gas chamber and chose gas as his weapon is rather ironic.

2.2.4 Language Destruction

Az Ezra Cappell said, Bernard Malamud has a talent for capturing language patterns of Jewish

immigrants (Cappell, 2012:37). From a linguistic point of view, it is not just the speech patterns but also the absence of language or specifically Oskar's inability to speak that are depicted very carefully. The language of the two characters is probably the most unique aspect of the story providing an outline of the development of the atmosphere.

The Holocaust not only represents the destruction of people but also thoughts and words, as Elie Wiesel puts it (Wiesel, 1975: 314), and Bernard Malamud portrays that language loss quite precisely. The narrator of the story describes the loss of language as an inability to „say what was in them to say." (Malamud, 2000:441) The despair connected with a feeling of a useless tongue and with inexpressibility is beyond our comprehension, as is the whole experience of the Holocaust.

The main protagonist Oskar, though originally a German citizen who learned English, is unable to express himself, in either language he once knew. We observe him making progress in pronunciation and grammar only to see him fall back to despair and complete silence. At one point he gives up on writing the lecture in German because of the hatred he felt towards the country and the people there. (Malamud, 2000:442) At the same time he was unable to write in English, due to lack of knowledge, which puts him in a very unpleasant situation. Apparently, there are mental obstacles in using his mother tongue and actual restraints in speaking English, leaving Oskar with no way to express himself. It frustrated him when he could not remember the word that would fit the situation. Therefore he was left with gestures, „er"s and other completely insufficient options. His inability to speak, clearly and understandably as a man of letters, a Berlin journalist, must therefore have been suffocating.

2.2.5 Unending Heat

While the language struggles sketch the story, other aspects provide colors, among them the weather descriptions. Bernard Malamud chose heat to accompany the desperate times of the protagonists. From the very start, when Oskar refers to the weather as „Zis heat" (Malamud, 2000:469) to a „sticky, hot July" when the heat „didn't help at all" (Malamud, 1986:442), the language difficulties and the conditions somehow correspond.

In the most desperate moments of the story, when Oskar is nothing but mute, the heat is unbearable, oppressive and relentless. (Malamud, 2000: 445). On the other hand, the changes of weather relate to developments in Oskar's behavior. It is after a „cooling rainstorm" when Oskar managed to talk about the Nazis and how they uprooted his life, though it is a brief moment. (Malamud, 2000:443)

Similarly, the purchase of the secondhand fan and its sudden nonfunctioning after the nonaggression pact was signed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union is somehow symbolic. The way it affected Oskar's further actions was devastating. It makes no difference whether it was the ongoing heat and no way to hide from it or the Nazis progress, Oskar could not sleep nor write afterwards. (Malamud, 2000:446)

The final change of Oskar's behavior corresponds with the weather change too. He managed to finish the lecture in September, when the temperature dropped. Martin claimed, that „the weather had changed and so, slowly, had he.“ (Malamud, 2000:447) The numbing presence of the sweaty and sticky summer was gone, and it somehow released the pressure. Oskar not only managed to write and carry out the lecture, but his eyes started focusing and he returned to life, even for that brief period.

2.2.6 Conclusion

Two aspects that characterize „The German Refugee“, are heat and silence. The correspondence of the weather and the language loss is intriguing and so is the choice of heat in particular. Malamud chose to connect the „useless tongue“ (Malamud, 2000:441) not with the stiffness of winter, with cold and freezing weather, which would be logical under these circumstances, but rather with hot summer, which we usually relate to pleasant actions and memories. Therefore, it is not the characters that „make the story“ in this case, it is Malamud’s genius portrayal of the burdensome atmosphere and exceptional linguistic skills that help us to imagine the Jewish immigrant struggles.

2.2.7 “The Jewbird” - Summary

“The Jewbird” was first published in the same collection of stories as “The German Refugee”, in *Idiots first* in 1963. Unlike “The German Refugee” it is somewhat experimental, very symbolic and as such received more critical attention. “The Jewbird” can be perceived as a serious satirical story.

The plot of the story is fairly simple, speaking of an ordinary Jewish family, whose life changed when a bird – a Jewbird - flew into their apartment in New York. (Malamud, 1963:190)

Even though the head of the family disliked the bird and wanted him to leave, he stays in a birdhouse on their balcony for quite some time. However, Harry Cohen never accepted his presence, so the

bird is a subject of several domestic quarrels which eventually result in a secret war between a man and a bird. Cohen started by adding cat food to the bird's meal and later he even brought a living cat into the apartment in order to terrify the bird. (Malamud, 1963:197)

“The Jewbird” is scared of the cat but even more scared to leave, so he tried hard to ignore all the inconveniences. Eventually Cohen himself attacked the bird and after a short fight tossed him out of the window. It was not until the snow melted when the family found out that he died.

The story is told in a third person narrative and possesses several attributes of a fable.

2.2.8 Characters

2.2.8.1 Cohen

Harry Cohen is the father of the family and also the main “villain“ of the story. Cohen is always referred to only by his last name, except for the first paragraph, where “The Jewbird” flew in the window of “Harry Cohen's top-floor apartment“ (Malamud, 1963:190). Described as a heavy man with hairy chest (Malamud, 1963:190), he feels rather sceptical towards Schwartz and eventually this scepticism grows into open hatred.

The choice of the surname “Cohen“ seems intentional. Cohen originates from the term “kohanim“, who were Jewish priests, descendants of Aaron. They were responsible for sacrifices and other complex sacred ceremonies. Although their importance diminished, and their place was taken by rabbis, their lineage was still traced. Not all Cohens are “kohanim“, yet the heritage connected with the name is undeniable. The name “Cohen“ therefore denotes a higher caste, the „influencers“ or the „head“ of the society. (Karesh, 2006:277)

Harry Cohen himself is the “head“ of the family and a sovereign of the apartment. As such, Cohen is annoyed by the intruder who lives on his balcony and eats his food. The only reason why he puts up with Schwartz's presence is that his son Maurie grew fond of the bird and his school performance was better under Schwartz's tutelage and supervision. (Malamud, 1963:194)

As soon as Maurice failed an arithmetic test, Cohen showed no remorse. (Malamud, 1963:198) Until then Cohen thought that by making the bird's life difficult and terrifying him, he would manage to make Schwartz leave by choice. Eventually he openly attacked the bird and caused his death. It is not explicitly said that Cohen killed Schwartz, as the bird was still alive when he flung him out of the

window, however, the bird did not return and was found dead a few months later, so it can be concluded that it was Cohen's fault. (Malamud, 1963:199)

Cohen fits the category of perpetrators, treating the bird aggressively from the very beginning of the story. However, the bird did enter his home without permission and stayed despite the owner's disapproval. Therefore Cohen, a Jewish man with little education, represents at least the anti-Semitic supporter of pogroms if not the Holocaust.

2.2.8.2 Schwartz

The main character of the story is a crow, a Jewbird called Schwartz. Fables are typical for its animal protagonists, who speak and act human, and “The Jewbird” fits the standard. Schwartz not only speaks and eats pickled herring, not very typical dish for a bird, but he also prays as a Jew. (Malamud, 1963: 191) He even wishes to read a Jewish newspaper. (Malamud, 1963:193)

Schwartz appears meek and even servile throughout the story, despite asking for charity. He eats whatever he is given, and he even claims that he will not complain. (Malamud, 1963: 193) Eventually he tries to make it up for his hosts by tutoring their son Maurie whom he plays with. On the other hand, he refuses to change his old habits. When Edie asked him to take a bath, he claims that he is too old for it and his feathers might fall out. (Malamud, 1963: 196)

Despite being teased and repeatedly urged to leave, Schwartz stayed in the apartment and tried not to mind the impairments. He feared that the outside world would be even worse than what he was experiencing in Cohen’s realm. Eventually he is attacked and kicked out of the apartment, though he managed to fight back and injure Cohen. We cannot tell whether he died due to his injuries caused by this attack or due to some other causes, yet at the end of the story a dead crow is found nearby, presumably Schwartz, with broken wings, twisted neck and plucked eyes. (Malamud, 1963:199)

His name poses several implications. First, it is quite typical Jewish name, though not exclusively. Second, it originates from German, so unlike Cohen, it cannot be perceived as “pure” Jewish surname, it corresponds with the colour of the bird, as it means “black”. (SDB, 2017) Similar word “schvartze” also appears in Yiddish, referring to a black person. (Dictionary.com) Calling a Jewbird by a German-Jewish name which implies the colour (in a slightly pejorative manner) is another Malamud’s linguistic games, as well as the way Schwartz pronounces the word “anti-Semites”. (Malamud, 1963:191)

Schwartz can be considered a victim of both the world and the intrigues of Cohen. It is rather fascinating how Malamud portrayed the dehumanization process in this case. As a victim, Schwartz is not a human being, in fact, he never was one. Despite being treated as an unwanted animal, he still possesses attributes of a person. He is not just talking and thinking bird, he also shows fear, meekness and compassion. It echoes that no matter how hard the Nazis may have tried to dehumanize their victims, their thoughts and feelings are not that easily removed, even though they can be supressed for some time.

2.2.8.3 The bystanders – Edie and Maurie

Not much can be said about the two remaining characters individually, besides how they share some similar attributes, such as their initial fondness of the bird and eventual rather neutral position in the war between Cohen and the bird.

Edie, Harry's wife, as the only female character in the story represents female characteristics: a motherly figure both towards Maurie and Schwartz. She is happy to see them get along: for the sake of her child's success in school she wishes the bird to stay. (Malamud, 1963:193) As the proverb says, "A man builds a house, a woman makes it home", so Edie not only gives meal to the family and the bird, she also buys Schwartz a birdhouse, and she tries to ease the tension between Harry and Schwartz.

Edie persuaded Cohen to let the bird stay, claiming that Maurie would be badly affected by Schwartz's departure (Malamud,1963:194). She was not that successful with making the bird's habits more acceptable to the "master of the apartment", as she did not manage to persuade Schwartz to keep himself clean. (Malamud, 1963:196)

She was a good-hearted and perhaps a little naive woman who believed that the cat and the bird would eventually get along. (Malamud, 1963: 197) Though she said nothing when her husband informed the family that Schwartz was gone, she probably shed a few tears. (Malamud, 1963:198)

Maurice is a ten-year-old, a "nice kid, though not overly bright" (Malamud, 1963:190), son of Harry and Edie. He liked Schwartz from the very beginning and enjoyed his company, as he got lonely over the holiday. (Malamud, 1963:193) Moreover, Schwartz also helped him with his homework and violin practice, as Maurie was the restless type and by having someone to tutor him in his studies, he improved significantly. (Malamud, 1963: 194)

On the other hand, when Harry brought a cat into the apartment with the intention of spooking Schwartz, Maurie, instead of rejecting the potentially dangerous animal, he grows fond of the cat too. He cannot be blamed, as he is just a child. In the story, Maurie "had always wanted a pussy" (Malamud, 1963:197), yet it made Schwartz's life difficult, to which Maurie seemed rather indifferent, like the mass of Germans in the population.

The exact reasons for Maurie's failure in the test, which turned out to be crucial for the subsequent development of the story, are unknown. We may only guess whether it was the death of his grandmother or the weakening influence of the bird that caused the failing mark. (Malamud, 1963: 198) At the end of the plot we learn that Maurie went looking for Schwartz and he wept when he found a dead crow, supposedly Mr. Schwartz. (Malamud, 1963:199)

It is clear that both these minor characters liked the bird and missed him, however, neither of them protested or really helped out when they were informed that Schwartz was gone, or helped out earlier either.

2.2.9 The Crow

Bernard Malamud was influenced by many American writers and Edgar Allan Poe might have served as a great inspiration for this story, as the motif of a speaking black bird that drives a person mad could be derived from *The Raven*. Unlike the raven, Schwartz has a wider vocabulary than "Nevermore". Moreover, both blackbirds somehow mock the main human character, though each of them approaches it differently. (Wirth-Nesher, 2003:117)

Even though each bird appears in a different story genre, they represent somewhat allegorical characters. The raven utters nothing but one word and appears in a spooky and even mournful atmosphere evoking fate or death. However the man in the story feels that the raven is making fun of him and so he condemns the bird. Poe's raven's mysterious and the satire in his story is a non-primary aspect, whereas the satirical mood of "The Jewbird" is quite prominent.

Except for the last fight with Cohen, Schwartz never really attacked anyone in the household. However, he opposes the head of the family several times, be it their dispute over the inadequacy of corn (Malamud, 1963:193), a different vision of Maurie's future (Malamud, 1963:194) or the issue of stench. (Malamud, 1963:195)

The last quarrel almost ended badly for the bird (if it were not for Maurie coming out of the

bathroom), as Schwartz showed his sharp tongue. He suggested solving the situation with his stench by feeding him flowers. He blessed God for not making snoring a sin and while assuring Cohen that he does not intend to lay with his wife, he also mentioned his contribution to Maurie's improved school grades. Finally, he called Cohen a "*grubber yung*". ((Malamud, 1963:195)

Grubber yung is a Yiddish expression for an impolite young man, while *grubber* is related to German word *grob*, meaning coarse. (Urdiales, 2000: 318) No wonder that Cohen became furious when he heard it from a bird he barely tolerated in his home.

The presence of death in both the stories draws another connection between the birds. When the raven entered the chamber, the narrator was mourning his lost love Lenore and he saw the raven as the symbol of death, therefore he asked the bird whether he shall meet his love in death. (Poe, 2014:19) The Cohens experienced the presence of death too, Harry's mother was dying when Schwartz entered their lives. (Malamud, 1963:190) Eventually, the mother did die and Harry Cohen did not accept that message very well, so he chose to "kill the messenger". He attacked the bird, the symbol of death and the annoyance that had been present in his flat for a few months. (Malamud, 1963:198)

While both the raven and the crow introduce madness upon their entrance, the outcome differs in a way. Poe's raven managed to drive the inhabitant of the chamber insane, only to look upon him from a bust of the goddess of wisdom, silently mocking his madness. (Poe, 2014:20) While Schwartz succeeded in driving Cohen crazy, he was not nearly as lucky as Poe's raven. His actions resulted in his own death, so he did not get to enjoy any victory.

2.2.10 Jewish Self-Hatred

Eileen Watts suggests that the only land the Jews "own" is Israel, whereas in other countries they are simple tenants. Tenancy status accompanies the Jews throughout the history and it mirrors in their personality. When a person rents an apartment, he ought to follow the rules of the landlord in order not to get evicted. Jews in diaspora possess the same attributes as the renter. (Watts, 1996:157)

The tenancy of the Jews lies within the assimilation, therefore the assimilated Jews grew to despise those of their kin who refused to assimilate or did not have the time to do so yet. We observe this hatred in "The Jewbird" as well. Harry Cohen represents the assimilated Jew or German, prospering

in the gentile environment as a frozen foods salesman, whereas the bird, who enters his apartment squeaking “Gevalt, a pogrom!” shows as the Ostjude or possibly an orthodox Jew. (Malamud, 1963:191)

Not only we see the unassimilated Jew portrayed as a bird, a creature used to migrate from one place to another – the wandering Jew motif - but it also represents his inferior position in the Jewish hierarchy. Watts claims that the only way for a Jew to escape the anti-Semitism coming from both the Gentile and the Jews is to assimilate – to lose everything typically Jewish. (Watts, 1996: 159)

The fact that Cohen sells frozen food is somewhat metaphorical too. Watts believes that his heart is frozen as well as his way of living, which is why he treats Schwartz badly. Also, Cohen seems rather stuck in his environment and makes no real compromises, leaving the bird with two choices: adjust or leave. (Watts, 1996:159)

While Cohen hates Schwartz and wants him to conform to the rules of his apartment and of the society, Schwartz, though trying not to bother Cohen much, refuses to change his habits. Edie suggested that if the bird did some of the things Harry wanted him to do, they would get along. (Malamud, 1963:196) However, Cohen would probably hate “The Jewbird” no matter what adjustments he made, even if he managed to take bath, as in Cohen’s eyes Schwartz represents the Ostjude and his hatred may not only stem from the strange old customs but also from the constant reminder of something he himself had given up.

The open window at the very beginning of the story also serves as a metaphor. The migrating Jews came to those countries which accepted them, therefore the “window was open”. If it were not, they did not enter. (Malamud, 1963:190) Schwartz simply used an opportunity for a better life, and as Cohen reminded him, he was lucky to be allowed in and to get the corn, even though he wished something else. (Malamud, 1963: 193)

Religious clashes in our society are evident every day in the world, be it the hatred towards the Muslims, atheists, Christians or Jews or within those groups. Malamud’s allegory builds on this reality of intolerance and warns us about the consequences of such behaviour. We have the tendency to dislike the unknown, the old and those who possess something we want or once wanted. People hate being reminded of their flaws or failures, such as the inability to tutor one’s own children (Malamud, 1963: 194) or the detachment from their culture.

2.2.11 The Holocaust Parallel

While Watts concentrates on the issue of Jewish self-hatred, she makes a point regarding the Holocaust. She believes that the man-bird war in the story is a symbolic representation of the oppression of Jews during the Holocaust. (Watts, 1996:162)

Hitler's *Mein Kampf* related to the notion of Jews as parasites within healthy nations and about the self-hatred which would result in their extermination – conducted by the Jews toward other Jews. (Naimark, 2002: 64) Apart from searching for a place to "dump" the Jews the Nazi's policy was increasing the pressure on the Jews through propaganda in the newspaper, later through the Nuremberg Laws, which undermined legal status of Jews and limited their ability to make a living. (Naimark, 2002:66)

Like the Germans, Cohen continuously increased pressure on Schwartz, starting off with compromising his food, popping paper bags and later he bringing a cat into the apartment. (Malamud, 1963:197) The Nazis eventually stepped forward in their plan and the elimination of Jews significantly escalated. (Naimark, 2002: 74) Harry Cohen did likewise when he attacked the bird and tossed him out of the window. (Malamud, 1963:198)

The beginning of the last page says it all: "Nobody said no…"(Malamud, 1963:199). Though Edie and Maurie were sad, they did not protest. Watts compares it once again with the Jews in Nazi Germany, where for a long time nobody protested Hitler or any of the restrictions towards the Jews, they all just watched. (Watts, 1996:162)

As it turns out, Schwartz was running from "anti-Semeets" only to end up in the worst kind of anti-Semitic environment – the one created by another Jew, by the one who is detached from his former culture and customs, stranded in a country which left him no choice but to assimilate, thus he places the same requirements upon another being, though it is just a Jewbird.

2.2.12 Conclusion

"The Jewbird" manages to combine several seemingly uncombinable features. Malamud points out several ongoing issues, such as the interreligious and intrareligious disagreements, and relates them to the horrible experience of the Holocaust. Extraordinary skills are required for such a combination to remain coherent. Bernard Malamud shows that he is capable of mixing the unexpected succesfully.

2.3. **Gordon Lish: "The Dog"**

2.3.1 Gordon Lish

Gordon Lish was born in 1934 in Hewlett, Long Island to Jewish parents. However, not much is written about his attitude to Judaism. He was teased by other kids because of psoriasis, his skin condition, yet the incident that made him drop out of the prestigious wasp secondary school Phillips Academy, Massachusetts, involved rather anti-Semitic insults. (Sklenicka, 2009:148)

After spending some time in a mental hospital due to a hypomanic episode caused by experimental treatment of his psoriasis, he worked for Radio Weli while keeping the correspondence with poet Hayden Carruth, who advised him to go to college. Lish majored in English and German at the University of Arizona while running on avantgarde literary journal on the side. Later, in 1960, started teaching English at Mills High School. (Sklenicka, 2009:148)

Later in the sixties he started working as an editor of *Esquire*, thus starting his editorial career. He worked for the Knopf Publishing and edited the *Quarterly.* He worked as editor for various writers of that time, including the famed short story writer Raymond Carver and novelist Don DeLillo. Apart from editoring, he taught fiction at Yale University for decades and managed to publish several books under his own name, including *Collected Fictions*, which among others included the short story "The Dog".

He was a popular teacher, though he often used drastic pedagogical measures. He believed in the importance of extreme human truth, claiming that fiction is about being outrageous and telling the reader something he has never heard before rather than comforting the reader. He abandons typical notion of fiction such as plot, characters or ideas. Rather he wishes to reveal the bestiality of human nature. Gordon Lish unravels the unspeakable, thus secrets are central in his ideas about fiction, as well as seduction. Gordon Lish was very charismatic as well as manipulative, meaning both of these characteristics reflect in his works. (Kramer, 1986:38)

2.3.2 "The Dog" – Summary

"The Dog" was first published in the collection *Mourner at the Door* in 1988 and it is a minimalistic story. It is merely three pages long, there are no names, no character development and no plot, which is characteristic for Gordon Lish's view of fiction. However, the idea addressed in the story is quite peculiar.

The story does follows the typical pattern for the minimalist subgenre, thus excludes introduction, climax or conclusion. As if the narrator started in the middle of the process of thinking and then, few pages later, suddenly stopped. Therefore, a reflection would be a more proper label than a story.
While the narrator remembers how he used to visit his father at work and how he would get a haircut, he ponders whether there was a barber at the death camps, what kind of person he was, which gender, how old and most importantly, how the barber felt about the job. (Lish, 1988: 186-187)The main idea as well as the characters are basically sketches, nothing really complex, yet it poses some interesting and rarely asked questions.

2.3.3 Characters

2.3.3.1 The Narrator

If the story was detached from the author, meaning that the reader would know nothing of the author's personal background, one would have to assume that the story is very vague. However, the story includes enough data to assume that the narrator is Gordon Lish himself, recalling moments of his childhood. Philip Lish, Gordon's father, was partner in Lish Brothers, a company that manufactured hats for women. (Sklenicka, 2009: 148) The memory of a boy visiting his father and getting a haircut may or may not be real, nevertheless it leads the reader where Lish wants him to be.
The narrating is very simple, involving short sentences and limited vocabulary, as if thought by the child experiencing the haircut. The kid-like expressions are most prominent in the second part where he describes how his father's business was "in business with his brothers". (Lish, 1988:187) Observing the ordinary situation of a boy getting an ordinary haircut together with the contemplation over the existence of barbers performing this labour in deathcamps is haunting.

2.3.3.2 Barber at Treblinka

The author considers whether there was a person who cut the hair off all the women that came into the death camp and what qualities such a person would have. (Lish, 2010:263) What kind of person would not grow tired of trimming women's hair and who would do it professionally despite their nudity. The interesting part is that while the question looks completely arbitrary, Gordon Lish must

have known the answer, at least regarding one specific death camp, the one in Treblinka, as the case had been quite well analysed.

Avraham Bomba gave several interviews about his death camp experience, including the most famous one in the end of 1970s. Bomba was deported to Treblinka with his wife and son in September 1943. While the other members of his family were killed as soon as they arrived, he was forced to sort clothes and, as his previous occupation was a barber, to cut the hair of women and children before they were gassed. (Atkinson, 2013:61)

Later in 1990 Bomba gave another interview, speaking about the process. He mentioned he was not the only one, there were more people forced to cut hair. He mentions fourteen or fifteen barbers. The officers wanted them to cut the women's hair in the gas chamber, before the actual extermination. He also wanted the women and children to believe they were going to get a shower. (Kuzmack, 1990:8)

The worst part of it was that they were not allowed to speak to the people, even if they knew them. While the barbers knew what was going to happen with the women and kids in the following few minutes, the people did not. It is beyond our comprehension how they must have felt when seeing for example their acquaintances about to be gassed and knowing that they cannot comfort them. Moreover, they had no more than two minutes for each person, as they had a long line of people waiting. (Kuzmack, 1990:8-9)

After two weeks they stopped cutting the hair in the chambers and moved out to the barracks instead). Bomba described how working for a mere week in Treblinka changed a person and made him old. (Kuzmack, 1990:12) Bomba even mentioned knowing the infamous Ivan the Terrible, an officer in Treblinka, who is also referred to a lot in Roth's novel *Operation Shylock*. (Kuzmack, 1990:27)

Gordon Lish therefore draws attention to interviews like that of the Avraham Bomba. Although he mentions no details and he gives no answers, he points out that there were many people, who worked in the death camp, knowing that they were compelled to do what they did, hoping that one day all the terror might stop, that one day they escape and would never have to experience such a horror again.

It is settled that the barbers were present in Treblinka, Buchenwald and other camps. We could consider them bystanders, yet their position was more complicated than that. "The Dog" shows that the categories established to distinguish the roles people played during the Holocaust are neither definite nor accurate.

2.3.4 Haunting Secrets

Revealing secrets is the main purpose of Gordon Lish's fiction and also the prevailing aspect of "The Dog". The Holocaust not only destroyed human ability to speak, it also reinforced the silence through seemingly trivial situations, such as the barber's work. Bomba mentioned that they were not allowed to speak to the people whose hair they cut, because if they did, both would get killed. (Kuzmack, 1990:10) Accordingly, Gordon Lish mentions how his father would slip the money to the barber after the haircut, slipped it as if in a secretive way that involved no speaking. (Lish, 1988:188) The situation itself is rather unusual, as there are no words exchanged between the barber and the father, no "thank you", no "good bye", nothing. One may believe that it is simply because they do not want anyone to know how big the tip is. Maybe the situation is such a routine that they do not need to talk anymore. However, the fact that Lish presented this memory right after the theory of the Holocaust barbers leads to another conclusion.

There is silence between the customer and the barber, as well as the victim and the barber. While an adult might have seen no connection between the two situations, in a child's perspective these might look weirdly similar. No words, just the haircut, no "Hello" and "Goodbye", just stripping off or slipping the money. Both the barber and the victim at a deathcamp wished to speak knowing they could not, meaning the silence was forced upon them. In case of a barber and the father in New York, or any other customer in any city, the silence is voluntary and perhaps convenient. However, people in both situations benefit from silence. The people in the death camp remain silent to hold on to their lives in obedience to army guards. People in New York keep it quiet because they either want to keep the tips coming or they do not want to be bothered by small talk. Different motivation, same situation, at least that is what Gordon Lish's child perceives and relates in the story.

2.3.5 Collective Responsibility

The revelation of the resemblance between the New York barbershop and gas chamber was not depressing enough for Gordon Lish. He chose to strengthen the tension by implying that it is up to the reader to choose who the barber at Treblinka should be.

> *"You think they would give this job to what kind of a person?*
>
> *Tell me which gender, at least, and how old in years you would want this person to be."*

(Lish, 1988:187)

The real question there is, who you, the reader, are. First enquiry still involves the word "they", therefore he only asks for "your" assessment of the qualities of a person *they* would choose. If that were the end of it, the reader could assume nothing but an innocent rhetorical question. The second one however leaves no doubt that Lish wants the reader to take full responsibility for such a decision. Lish makes the reader choose what kind of a person should perform the labour. He paraphrases the saying "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you who you are" in a most brutal way: "Tell me how you understand the question, answer it and I will tell you who you side with." Lish is attempting to do the seemingly impossible, to make people identify themselves not with the victims, which is logical, but with the Nazis.

Gordon Lish, a master of manipulation, deceives the reader who, while thinking about the question, does not even realize being misled to thinking as the Nazi. Lish shows that it is not as difficult as people think to become the villain. Simple question or a simple task may be all it takes.

What kind of a person would the victim want the barber to be? Would the victim even want the barber? Such a suggestion is perhaps even more ferocious than joining the Nazi's side. The victims of the Holocaust had very little choice. Bomba described how once, after it has become known that Treblinka was no work camp, more than fifty people chose to drown themselves instead of going to the gas chamber. (Kuzmack, 1990:8) That was the kind of choice the Jews had in the death camps. To commit suicide or to savour every minute of the remainder of their lives knowing that death is near, that no one leaves the gas chamber alive. How outrageous would it be to make them choose the person who should cut their hair before the execution?

As it turns out, when Lish asks a question, it is never an innocent one but rather an elaborate manipulation that makes the reader change perspective, no matter if the reader wants it or not. He really puts the reader out of his place and onto those of the participants.

2.3.6 Genocide in New York?

Gordon Lish chose to finish his story with four place names. Birkenau, Carthage, Oz and New York. (Lish, 1988:188) At first sight there is nothing these places have in common. However, knowing that Lish has no interest in empty words, one has to consider their supposed meaning.

The camp in Birkenau was not mentioned until 12 September 1941. However, roughly three million prisoners were taken during the invasion of the Soviet Union and the Nazis had to put them

somewhere, so the area of the evacuated village Brzezinka was chosen and thus the construction of the Birkenau death camp started. The prisoners built the camp over the winter, in terrible weather conditions. (Rawson, 2015:21) It was not until February 1942, when Birkenau was transformed into a Jew-extermination camp. (Rawson, 2015:29) The Nazis could eventually slaughter and dispose of 4700 people a day; thus Birkenau became a "factory of death". (Rawson, 2015:33)

The destruction of Carthage in 146 BC is possibly the most famous example of genocide in the ancient world. At the end of Third Punic War, Scipio Aemilianus destroyed the city located in the area of today's Tunisia, slaughtered around 200 000 inhabitants of Carthage. Approximately fifty thousand Carthaginians were sold as slaves. Though the sources do not sufficiently prove it, Carthage ruins were supposedly covered in salt in order to prevent any form of life from returning, including plants. (Rubinstein, 2014:25)

The Land of Oz was not a site of such a massacre, yet other works of L. Frank Baum include racist comments and genocidal schemes. The author himself used to support the annihilation of Native Americans for the safety of white settlers. (Lebovic, 2013) The fact that Lish wrote "Oz" among the other places perhaps implies none of it. It might also be a reference to fictional worlds in general, as genocides, massacres or racist tendencies are there as well.

New York is the very last expression of the story. Is Lish trying to suggest that a genocide is coming to New York or that it is already there? Again, Lish wants his readers to think, not to hand them all the answers on a silver platter. Therefore his fiction, like the dramas of Brecht, triggers questions rather than responses. He might be implying that the xenophobic atmosphere in all our cities is growing thicker and it is only a matter of time when something really bad happens. The Holocaust is not generally perceived as a one-time event. The historians warn the public that such a slaughter may happen again. It will, if the people stop remembering and stop reminding themselves and the others of all the things one human being is capable of doing to another human being.

2.3.7 Conclusion

Gordon Lish wants a work of fiction to help people "live or die", otherwise it makes no sense. Personally, I cannot tell whether "The Dog" was beneficial for my life. However, it does bring up many crucial questions and it makes the reader think. It makes the reader scream and cry, if not out loud then definitely in one's mind. While other authors often trigger either love or hate, Gordon Lish does both at the same time.

2.4. Philip Roth: "'I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting'; or, Looking at Kafka" and *Operation Shylock*

2.4.1 Philip Roth

Philip Roth was born in 1933 as a second-generation Jewish American, and as such was often bullied, especially during years spent on Jewish Weequahic High School. He got his bachelor's degree in English at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania and a year later, in 1955, he earned his M.A. at the University of Chicago. While the novel *American Pastoral* earned him a Pulitzer prize, different novel got him in the center of critical attention, not to mention incredibly popular: *Portnoy's Complaint*. (Pozorski, 2013)

Roth is often criticized for his offensive humor targeted at the flaws and weaknesses of individual Jews, Jewish communities and Judaism in general. However, Roth focuses his satirical skills not only on mocking the others but on making fun of himself, especially for his own psychological feebleness. (Safer, 2006:1)

Roth uses satire to show his readers the absurdity of the world they live in. He is often compared to a stand-up comedian. As such he often makes his "audience" both laugh and cry and his preferred method to do so is through fast-moving exchanges, word play and clashes. (Safer, 2006:1)

Gordon Lish once dismissed Roth's work as unsatisfactory, to put it delicately. (Nazaryan, 2014) It is interesting how one author can belittle the other while having so much in common with him. Both Lish and Roth enjoy using sexuality as one of their primary focus. Works of Roth are supposed to shock the reader by revealing the truth and mocking the traditional and Lish chose haunting secrets to be the center of his fiction as well. Both the authors enjoy leading their readers on, deceiving them, though each uses a different rhetoric. While Lish is a rather minimalistic writer, Roth possibly likes reading himself, which is why even his stories take some time to get to the point.

2.4.2 "'I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting'; or, Looking at Kafka" – Summary

The story is divided into two parts, both narrated by Philip Roth himself in first person narrative. The first part is a nonfictional biography, dedicated to final months of Kafka's life, yet introduced by an interesting concept – What if Kafka had not died of tuberculosis in 1924 but had lived long enough to see and perhaps escape the Holocaust? Would he become famous or would all

his works be forgotten? (Roth, 1996:247)

The following part presents a fictional biography of Kafka as an elderly man living and teaching in New Jersey in 1942. Roth elaborates the impact Kafka's survival could have on the writer's legacy. In his vision Kafka lived, met his aunt Rhoda and eventually died in the Deborah Tuberculosis Sanitorium at the age of seventy, leaving neither survivors nor literary masterpieces to the world. (Roth, 1996:265)

Roth concludes the story saying that for Kafka to become the Kafka from his story would be even stranger than a man turning into an insect. It was not meant to be and though people cannot be grateful for someone dying at such a young age, they should appreciate the legacy he left.

2.4.3 Characters

2.4.3.1 Franz Kafka

Roth's version of Kafka is based on the counterfactual premise that he survived the tuberculosis and managed to escape from the Nazis, probably with his friend Max Brod. Roth first encountered fifty-nine-year-old Dr. Kafka at his New Jersey school, himself being nine (though Kafka actually died a decade before Philip Roth was even born). He admitted that he gave his teacher a nickname "Kishka", an expression usually referring to a Jewish sausage or stuffed intestines.

Roth related the physical appearance of 39-year old Kafka in the photograph to that of a Holocaust survivor: sharp and skeletal with chiseled skull and an intense gaze. (Roth, 1998:246) According to Koy, Kafka's resemblance to a starving death camp victim lead him to the idea to bring the famous writer to New Jersey twenty years after the real Kafka died. (Koy, 2002:186)

Roth decided to portray Kafka according to what is known about him, either from biographies or his stories, hence he makes him a *"meshugeh*". Kafka was invited to dinner in order to match with Philip's older unmarried aunt Rhoda. The father of Philip comically tried to persuade him to "join the clan" by showing the family network, its size and wealth and claiming that "alone is a stone". (Roth, 1998: 259) Kafka's response to all these attempts are short and polite. He listened in silence, looked at whatever he was given to look at, yet aunt Rhoda described this behavior as a result of his "superiority complex". (Roth, 1998: 260)

Philip described his surprise over the fact that Kafka called some time later and asked his aunt to go to a movie. (Roth, 1998:260) Although the positive response of his aunt caused shock too, the

improbability of Kafka calling reflects accurately that he was a quiet and shy man, as Roth quotes from Kafka's diary: "I have hardly anything in common with myself and should stand very quietly in a corner, content that I can breathe." (Roth, 1998: 253)

The two spent some time together, aunt Rhoda eventually changing her mind about Franz after he persuaded her mother about the meaningfulness of an acting job by reading a Chekhov play. (Roth, 1998:262) Everyone in the family believed that things were going well and the two are about to get engaged when after their trip to Atlantic City all of sudden everything ends, not unlike the two relationships real Kafka had in Berlin.

Roth usually has no restraints when describing sex. However in this case he chose not to deal with the reason of the breakup in details. At first, the reader only suspects some sexual connotations of the problem. Rhoda's refusal to speak of the subject in front of the kids, father's verdict that there is something wrong with Kafka, those whispery conversations at the kitchen table, all leads to the conclusion that something went wrong on an intimate level. (Roth, 1998:263) The suspicion is confirmed just one page later, through simple silly utterance of Philip's brother: "Sex!" (Roth, 1998:264)

Kafka dies eventually in 1953, leaving nothing but four weird letters hidden in a dresser of Aunt Rhoda. (Roth, 1998:265) A peculiar man, a refugee from the Nazis, a Hebrew teacher, those are the words describing his life. Although Roth gave him 30 more years, he also stripped Kafka of everything he was famous for, except for his strange manners. Whether it was the consequence of the Holocaust or simply because Kafka never intended to release any of his works in the first place, we never learn. One of the most influential authors of 20th century died in 1924. In Roth's vision he never lived.

2.4.3.2 Philip

While Philip Roth tells the first part of the story as an omniscient narrator of nonfiction, second section is fictionally and counterfactually narrated by his younger self, knowing very little and understanding even less.

Young Philip possesses attributes of a typical child, including the tendency to belittle the teachers and awkward feelings about his father's attempts at matchmaking. However, he shows more advanced feelings, such as guilt. Philip realized that despite finding it funny at first to mock his teacher, after the whole class implemented the nickname "Kishka", he felt guilty and chose to "save" his teacher. (Roth, 1998:256)

Almost every child feels guilty every once in a while, usually for doing something they were

not allowed to, yet the guilt Philip describes exceeds the traditional children's feeling. His version of guilt is connected with the "redemptive fantasies of heroism" (Roth, 1998:256)

On one hand, Philip feels bad for mocking his poor awkward teacher, a refugee, a Holocaust survivor whose whole family either died before the Second World War or perished in a deathcamp. He might have felt he went too far, by disrespecting the refugee Philip got closer to the personality of Nazi villains than he ever wanted to. Therefore, he sought redemption, both for himself and for Kafka, by inviting him to a family dinner.

By saving Kafka, young Philip intended to soothe his own feeling of guilt, but also make it up for all the Jews he could not possibly save. Philip asks: "If not me, who? (…) And if not now, when?" (Roth, 1998:256) Though he relates the questions to the individual case of Franz Kafka, they could have been applied to the victims of the Holocaust in general. We did not save them, but we can help those who survived the horrors. They need to be comforted, they need the help and, most importantly, they need to know that their losses will not be forgotten. Though young Philip in 1942 could not know what was going to happen to the Jews in Europe, he still wanted to ease the oppression not participate in it.

2.4.4 Back from the Dead

"Looking at Kafka" is not Roth's only attempt to revive a Jewish author. Amy Bellette in his novel *The Ghost Writer* is supposedly Anne Frank who managed to survive the Holocaust and lives in anonymity in the United States. While Roth's counterfactual Anne Frank must deal with her past and with the legacy connected with her published diary, Franz Kafka dies alone and unknown.

Most of Kafka's famous works were published by Max Brod, his friend whom he requested to destroy the manuscripts after his death, thus the world would be left with only a handful of short stories, including *The Metamorphosis* published in Germany in 1915. However, if it were not for Kafka's novels, the world would hardly ever have known him, which is the point Roth is trying to make.

Many famous writers and artists died young or under horrible circumstances. That does not mean their life would make a bigger impact if they had lived on to an old age. No matter how awful it may sound, some masterpieces would never be created in happier conditions, for as Thomas Mann wrote, pain is great for art.

What if Kafka had the choice? To look at the life he had and the impact he made and chose whether he wanted to keep it that way or to have a longer life, yet in literary terms meaningless.

What if they all had a choice? Would they all choose to change the world, the literary perspective, the arts regardless the price they had to pay? Or would they settle for a simple ordinary life, full of ups and downs of ordinary people and eventually die unnoticed by most?

2.4.5 Survivor's Burden

The fictional Kafka that lived untill the early 1950s led no easy life. His personality condemned him to constantly being misunderstood and standing at the corner of the society, just as he did in Prague, Vienna and Berlin. Moreover, he would have carried the burden of the collective trauma of a Holocaust witness and survivor.

Philip Roth tried to portray the impact the Holocaust would have on a fragile and peculiar human being which Kafka definitely was. As Roth writes, the survivor Kafka would be just a Jew lucky enough to have escaped with his life, author of a few eccentric stories only a few people had ever read, none of whom resides in the United States. Nothing would be left of the "religious humorist" but a specter, a mere shadow of a writer he could have become by dying early as he did. (Roth, 1998:247)

The scene where Roth's family tried to encourage Kafka to join their family is somewhat ironic. Bragging about the size and interconnection of their wide range of close and distant relatives in front of a man who lost all his family seems rather cruel. (Roth, 1998:258) Yes, Kafka escaped, according to Roth in 1938 but at what cost? Although no member of his family is specifically mentioned in the story, their destiny was presumably not changed, therefore they either died soon enough not to see the Holocaust or they were exterminated. Kafka has to live with not only the trauma of the witness but also with the burden of being the last survivor of his own "tribe".

2.4.6 Conclusion

Roth wrote the story at the age of 39, looking at the photo of 39-year old Kafka, a year before his demise. Kafka was not meant to live through the Holocaust. Not only because his legacy would be lost forever. By dying too soon for the Holocaust he also avoided the pain he would have experienced knowing that his sisters had been murdered. Perhaps he was the lucky one, not living long enough. He did not have to see and experience what other Jews did. No one could say that he actually missed something good. Roth does not think so, nor does he believe it could possibly happen. Kafka himself would not believe it. (Roth, 1998: 266)

2.4.7 "Operation Shylock" - Summary

First published in 1992, *Operation Shylock* is considered a last piece of Roth's "nonfictional trilogy". According to Parrish, *Operation Shylock* reflects and addresses everything Roth wrote until then as well as every criticism addressed against him. In the novel, Roth abandons his alter ego Nathan Zuckerman and instead uses his own name, for two different protagonists, possibly to make it up for those years of portraying him negatively as another character. (Parrish, 1999:579)

A former Halcion addict, Philip Roth comes to Israel as a journalist to cover the trial of John Demjanjuk and encounters Moishe Pipik, the second Philip Roth, thus his impostor. The author not only presents the two viewpoints of the future of Jews in Israel or in the Diaspora, but he chose to depict other issues from this dual perspective. In the trial of John Demjanjuk, we face the clash of truth and lie, as Demjanjuk claims in his defense not to be Ivan the Terrible from Treblinka despite eyewitness and the evidence. Even the line between reality and fiction is erased in the confrontations of the two Philip Roths. The epilogue is another example of surreality, as Roth claims that the final chapter was deleted after the character from the book advised him to remove it. *Operation Shylock* points out not only the issues and disputes of contemporary Jews but also demonstrates how the Holocaust affects their life and community, as well as lives of other people.

Since this novel was addressed in my bachelor thesis, I shall analyze only those segments relevant to the topic of Holocaust.

2.4.8 Characters

2.4.8.1 Moishe Pipik

Philip Roth's "evil twin" is a very odd character. He appeared out of nowhere, presenting himself as Philip Roth in the paper and then he vanished, without letting Philip Roth or the reader know what had happened to him. As the author chose the story to balance above all the border between reality and fiction, the reader is unable to tell whether Moishe Pipik is a real person- as much as a fictional character can be "real" – or merely a fantasy caused by medication. One way or another, for the writer himself he may still be an impersonation of mental struggles.

Moishe Pipik is indeed a "mental case". His proclamations are inconsistent, and he tends to use very emotional language. As if he represented that inner voice which keeps saying things that no sane person would ever say out loud. Whatever he said was supposed to plant a seed of doubt, not only regarding Roth's beliefs about certain situations or events but also the concept of reality

itself.

At the beginning of the plot he defended the Jews, believing that they have a future in Diaspora, as Europe shall welcome them with open arms. He worried about Israel as the circumstances of its establishment and the area itself put the country in a very dangerous and unstable position, surrounded as it is by Arab states. (Roth, 2008: 39-40)

Yet later, on the tapes he left behind he claimed that nobody ever liked Jews. Jews cause antipathy wherever they go due to their inability to assimilate. Pipik also attacked the worth of Jewish art and culture, labeling it shallow and worthless. (Roth, 2008:241)

Moishe Pipik also demonstrated how Jews are always easily offended. All they do is whine and complain about the oppression and anti-Semitism. Every single Jew has described how anti-Semitism affected his life, no matter if he was beaten up as a kid or he did not get the job he should have because of his religion. To Moishe Pipik all of these is an exaggeration, a proof that Jews do not deserve the attention they get. (Roth, 2008: 243)

Despite getting enough space to express himself in the novel, his declarations are not taken very seriously, neither by the characters nor by the author himself. Although Roth used Moishe Pipik to express radical thoughts, he also gave him an artificial penis, the ultimate symbol of humiliation of a man, which this character exposed to Philip Roth in a hotel room. (Roth, 2008: 192) Pipik therefore exposed the most prominent part of his being, which is also fake and absurd. The exact same characteristics could be applied to his beliefs.

2.4.8.2 George Ziad

George Ziad provides an outsider perspective on the Jews and their issues. Ziad is an Arab from Jerusalem who fled to Cairo, spent some time studying in Chicago only to come back to Jerusalem. As such he had many reasons to hate the Jews while knowing much since he had an American education, something unique to his generation of Arabs. He described the damage the Jews had done on their family property, yet he shows no real antisemitism, rather an “anti-Israelism”.

Ziad not only expressed his disapproval of Jewish behavior in Israel, the state that was built with the blood of Arabs, but he also observed the hatred growing within the Jewish community. George Ziad pointed out that the Jews in Israel feel superior. He used a bit of exaggeration while saying that the Israeli kids are taught to look down on a Jew that speaks a different language than Hebrew. (Roth, 2008: 116)

According to Ziad, Jews tend to despise not only the true “Goyim” but also the Jews still living

in Diaspora. (Roth, 2008: 116) The misunderstanding of the Israelis and the Diasporic Jews is however deeper, as it can be traced back to the disputes between the Orthodox and the Reform Jews. While Orthodox Jews refuse to change their habits, they also deny the significance and legitimacy to the state of Israel. On the other hand, Reform Jews often abandon some of the customs and many of them are Zionists. Yet if a Jew comes to Israel, he somehow becomes radical and ultra-orthodox, thus superior to both the Orthodox and the Reformists that remained elsewhere.

Choosing an Arab, a person that could be labeled as a "Jew-hater", to advocate such a complicated issue is rather symbolic. It is as if Philip Roth tried to demonstrate that Jews might not realize that the gap between their own factions is growing and that only an outsider can reveal that. Moreover, this outsider is perhaps too familiar with the means Jews have at their disposal, therefore he might be the most appropriate person to point out their flaws.

2.4.8.3 John Demjanjuk

The historical Demjanjuk was a Ukranian-born Nazi collaborator, who then immigrated to the US and worked on an auto assembly-line to his retirement in Ohio. He was twice stripped of his American citizenship, he had to defend himself in four trials, accused of crimes against humanity during the Second World War. After the last trial in Munich he was sentenced to five years of prison, yet he used his right to appeal and died in 2012 while the appeal was pending, therefore he remained legally an innocent man. (USHMM, n.d.) The novel *Operation Shylock* takes place during Demjanjuk's trials in Jerusalem and despite the fact that he is no fictional character, the way Roth chose to portray Demjanjuk should be assessed.

Philip Roth attended the trial with Demjanjuk and his first encounter with the supposed murderer of Jews was rather emotional:

> *There he was. Once upon a time, drove two, three hundred of them into a room barely big enough for fifty, wedged them in every which way, bolted the doors shut, and started up the engine. Pumped out carbon monoxide for half an hour, waited to hear the screams die down, then sent in the live ones to pry out the dead ones and clean up the place for the next big load. "Get that shit out of there," he told them. (Roth, 1993:60)*

At the very moment he found Demjanjuk in the crowd of people in the court room, Roth claimed that everything, including himself stopped existing. Roth continued in a similar manner for two pages only to conclude about Ivan the Terrible: "So there he was. Or wasn't." (Roth, 1993:62)

This statement corresponds with the atmosphere of the novel, both duality and questioning reality is inescapable. The man named Demjanjuk standing in the courtroom is both the brutal mass murderer Ivan the Terrible and an innocent man who has been misidentified, the only difference between the two being the court sentence. Roth is also both a serious, well-known writer and an insane radical Moishe Pipik, yet the line between those two is much more blurry.

Roth later dealt with the difference between truth and lie. During his conversation with Jinx he learned that Demjanjuk told a lie because of his son. (Roth, 2008: 89) All mammals, including humans, are protective of their offspring. If it were assumed that Demjanjuk was indeed guilty, are his lies justifiable if their purpose was to protect his own children?

Roth eventually imagined expressing to Demjanjuk's son his understanding of the difficulties he has been through. Yet he also pointed out that many Jews have been through a lot too. (Roth, 2008: 89) No matter how the trial ended, the family will never recover from it, just as the Jews will never recover from the horrors of the Holocaust.

Comparing the effect of the trial of the murderer on the murderer's family to the effect of the Holocaust seems preposterous, especially considering the fact that that murderer - though legally innocent of any crime – was involved minimally as a guard at one concentration camp in the Holocaust.

Roth eventually comes to no conclusion regarding Demjanjuk. He observed him laughing in the courtroom, assuming that Demjanjuk is either innocent or impersonated devil. (Roth, 2008: 284) Therefore, neither Roth nor the society exhausted the issue and the question of Demjanjuk's guilt was never fully answered, either historically or in the novel.

2.4.9 The Institutionalization of the Holocaust

At one point in the novel, Philip Roth puts together a set of questions for his friend Aharon and asks, what did the survivors of the Holocaust accomplish and in what way did the experience change them. (Roth, 2008:200) That seems to be a central issue of Roth's Holocaust perspective. Roth intentionally concentrates all doubts about the significance of the Holocaust onto two of his major characters: George Ziad and Moishe Pipik.

At the beginning of the novel, Moishe Pipik presents his fears of a second Holocaust in an interview, pretending to be Philip Roth. He claims that the probability of another genocide of Jews is much higher in Israel than anywhere else in the world. He believes that Jews have a right to return to Europe, not only because Europe needs Jews but also to continue the legacy of those who were

murdered in the Holocaust. (Roth, 2008:26)

The same character later denies the Holocaust when stating that there were not even six million Jews in Europe. (Roth, 2008:238) He claims that survivors are all frauds and that everything written about the Holocaust is copied from a "text book", which is why every book about the Holocaust reads the same. (Roth, 2008:245)

The accusation that there was no suffering, that extermination camps were merely work camps belittles both the Jewish individual and collective trauma. Moreover, Pipik's statement undermines the foundations of what we call "the literature of the Holocaust".

George Ziad specifically mentioned the institutionalization of the Holocaust in connection with the establishment of Israel. The Holocaust serves as an alibi for Jews to slaughter Arabs in the name of justice and sacrifice. (Roth, 2008: 123) The Jews use the Holocaust as part of their propaganda to make the world feel sorry for them. Moreover, they exploit the guilt of the American Jewry to get away with the oppression of Palestinians. (Roth, 2008: 125)

Ziad believed that the only reason why Jews still discuss and remember the Holocaust is because they would be nothing without it, thus he calls them frauds as well. (Roth, 2008: 125) He claimed that without the Holocaust, the Jewish communities would not be interconnected, as the Jews that moved to America earlier chose to forget their European Jewish identity and denounce their old countries for new one, United States, the land of opportunity. If it were not for the Holocaust, these people would never think of those left in Europe and the Jews would remain scattered around the globe without this feeling of solidarity towards one another. (Roth, 2008:121)

Using these two characters Roth puts a human face on the problematics revolving around the Holocaust. It should not and cannot be forgotten, yet it should not be used as an excuse. For "the real Philipp Roth", the Holocaust does not define the Jews and their literature, nor it gives them authorization of any kind. Jews should be able to find balance and so should all people in general.

2.4.10 Live and Let Die

While Pipik denounced the survivors and their literature, he contradictorily also mentioned that many Jews actually made it through the genocide because they informed on their fellow Jewish friends. (Roth, 2008:245) Whether the person escaped the horrors at the expense of another human being often remains unknown. Should the Jews that betrayed their fellow prisoners have a right to call themselves victims? As dehumanization progressed, people stopped being people, both in the eyes of their murderers and in their own view. As all creatures seek self-preservation in the first

place, many of the crimes against morality could be understood. Yet there is a difference between understanding and forgiveness. Also, who should be the judge? When it comes to real genocide crimes, the law is quite clear but what about all those wrongs that happened between the prisoners? Should they also be chastised by our legal system?

Some war crimes are not punishable by law, yet it does not mean they actually stay unpunished. Most of the survivors can never forgive themselves for what they did. They must live with the knowledge, it haunts and devours them. Most of them will never forgive themselves and eventually they will die with that knowledge. Some feel so guilty that they commit suicide, such as Bruno Bettleheim or Roth's friend Primo Levi. Those who never experienced such horrors have no right to judge, as they might have done the same thing.

2.4.11 Conclusion

In some of Roth's fictional works, fantasy and reality often merge so closely that it is impossible to distinguish between the two. *Operation Shylock* is a typical example of these techniques. Roth often uses dual perspectives, yet sometimes the issues he deals with are not simple enough for a bipolar scheme. While it is easy to say that the Holocaust was wrong and Nazis are bad, the question of Israeli superiority or Holocaust institutionalization is difficult to resolve. This is perhaps the reason why Roth rarely provides definitive answers.

2.5. **Cynthia Ozick: "The Shawl"**

2.5.1 Cynthia Ozick

Considered one of the greatest living fiction writers and critics, Ozick was born in 1928 in New York City to Russian immigrants. She claims to be a feminist ever since a rabbi told her that "girls do not need to study" at the age of five. She got a bachelor's degree in English at New York State University and a year later, in 1950, a M.A. at Ohio State University. She published several poems, yet it was her novel Trust that received attention of the public in 1966. (Gale, 2017)

Ozick spoke of her love of books, remembering that since they did not have a library in Bronx, she used to wait for the green truck, the travelling library, to get something to read. She studied at high school during the Second World War and she thought of it as a happiest time of her life, despite the horrors happening elsewhere. She also noted that she was roughly the same age as Anne Frank,

yet unlike her Ozick was studying and happy. (Bridges, 2009)

Brockes believes that while Cynthia Ozick is rather serious when it comes to the choice of the topic and theme, she is skilled in word play and even funny. Ozick herself considers all writing a mere presumption, as no one can possibly know what it is like to be someone else. (Brockes, 2011) However, she manages to drag the reader right into her stories and come as close to that feeling as possible.

Cynthia Ozick wrote several novels and short stories as well as two nonfiction works, *Art and Ardor* and *Metaphor and Memory*. (Gale, 2017) While she repeatedly claimed that the Holocaust should be only reflected in a non-fiction in order to remain authentic, she also published one of the most frequently discussed Holocaust stories – "The Shawl".

2.5.2 "The Shawl" – Summary

"The Shawl" was first published in 1980 in *The New Yorker*, nine years later it was included in a book with the same title, followed by a sequel story *Rosa.* Ozick was inspired by a single line she read in The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich about a baby thrown at the electric fence, yet she argues that it was not a decision she made to write "The Shawl", she just sat and wrote it, without struggling with sentences. (Bridges, 2009)

"The Shawl" is a story told from an omniscient third person point of view. It speaks of three females, Rosa, her daughter Magda and Stella, Rosa's niece in a death march and later a death camp. The relations between the three remain concealed throughout the story, yet they are revealed in the novella *Rosa*.

The plot revolves the child Magda, who was tucked in a "magic" shawl, which is why she survived the march and was not discovered by the Nazis. As soon as she was taken the shawl, she died, being thrown at the electrified fence of the death camp.

2.5.3 Characters

2.5.3.1 Stella

Stella is described as a "thin girl of fourteen, too small, with thin breasts of her own..." (Ozick, 1980: par. 1). As for her behavior, she does not come out of the story very positively. Such expressions as jealous, ravenous or cold-hearted accompany her actions and feelings. However, it

would be presumptuous to consider her a bad person.

First of all, Stella is merely a child, whose mental development was interrupted by the horrors of the Holocaust. It is tremendously hard to judge the adult victims of the holocaust for the choices they made in order to survive. The assessment of children's decisions is even more difficult.

Stella found herself in very desperate situation, hence it is understandable that she sought the illusion of safety represented by the shawl. She wanted to be wrapped in the shawl, hidden from the sight of the Nazis, soothed and protected, yet she was there, visible and vulnerable, not to mention cold, starving and exhausted. (Ozick, 1980, par. 1)

Stella eventually took the shawl and shrouded herself with it at a terrible cost – "she made Magda die." (Ozick, 1980: par. 8) Ozick writes that after the deed Stella was always cold. Actually, Stella felt cold from the very start, cold surrounded and suffocated her. She thought that by taking the shawl she would get rid of the cold and all the struggles with it. Yet Stella found out that the shawl was not miraculous, it could not help her. Moreover, the fact that she took it made cold crawl deeper, devour her heart and stay with her forever, both physically and mentally.

Although an objection could be made that Anne Frank was roughly the same age and she appears intelligent and mature, there are no records of Anne's behavior inside a death camp or during a death march. Stella on the other hand is only observed within those, thus it cannot be decided whether the two girls had anything else in common apart from young age.

2.5.3.2 Rosa

Rosa is the mother of Magda, the "walking cradle". Even in such a desperate situation she showed strong mother instincts exceeding the natural feeling of self-preservation, at least till the very end of the story. Rosa did not describe much the abilities she still had, rather she mentioned the lack of the others, such as feeling of hunger and pity or the ability to sleep, menstruate or breastfeed.

Rosa probably lost her mind at the end, yet signs of insanity appear throughout the story. She felt like in trance, like floating in the air during the death march. (Ozick, 1980: par. 2) She believed in the magic of the shawl as well, desperately holding on the only sign of hope for her baby. (Ozick, 1980: par.4) Eventually, when witnessing Magda's death, she stuffed her mouth with the shawl and "drank Magda's shawl until it dried." (Ozick, 1980: par. 13)

Rosa faced different dilemma from Sophie in Sophie's choice, yet somehow similar. She had

struggled deciding whether she should keep the baby or try to hand it to any of the women standing on the side of the road, while both the decisions could result in the death of her baby. Though she was aware of the fact, that Magda would die sooner or later anyway, she worried more about a stranger dropping Magda on the ground than everything that could happen to the baby once they got to the death camp. (Ozick, 1980: par. 3) Kolář points out that Rosa's motherhood was doomed from the very start due to the inhumane circumstances of both the march and the camp, which Ozick managed to depict persuasively. (Kolář, 2004:127)

Cynthia Ozick believes that Rosa cannot be judged for anything she had or had not done in the situation she was forced into. (Bridges, 2009) Blaming Rosa for not giving away her child to a stranger or for standing in silence instead of running to save or pick up her child would be remorseless. Rosa as well had to live with her choice instead of dying for it. Although sometimes claiming otherwise, most humans do not wish to die for their beliefs or loved ones, the instinct to save oneself remains stronger than that. Yet sometimes not dying for something causes more suffering than getting shot, at least I presume so.

2.5.3.3 Magda

Although Magda is just a fifteen-month old infant, not only she learned to walk but as if somehow, she knew that silence is her only friend. If she remained silence, she would live. Rosa believed that there was something wrong with Magda, as the last time she made a sound was on the road when Rosa could no longer breastfeed her. (Ozick, 1980: par. 9) As it turned out, Magda was not mute, she was quiet as long as she had the shawl, which could not be touched by anyone but Rosa. (Ozick, 1980: par. 7)

The last scene in which Magda is alive is full of opposing imagery, such as the *light* into which Magda stepped on her skinny legs from the *darkness* of the barracks that concealed her. The feelings of her mother are the most prominent of these. The "fearful joy" represents the combination of fear of Magda's death and simultaneously Rosa felt delighted by seeing her daughter walking in the sunlight and finally making a sound. (Ozick, 1980: par. 9)

The crucial moment of her demise is conveyed as a water-related metaphor. Magda swam through the air and her body splashed against the fence. (Ozick, 1980: par. 13) First of all, if gives an idea about the relative speed of the movement. Rosa saw the slow motion, as if the child moved in the water instead of air. Secondly, Magda was a person in the first part of the image, whereas in the

second part it was her body that splashed, implying that Magda became the water she had swum in. (Ozick, 1980: par. 13)

2.5.4 Magic of the Shawl

The title itself suggests the importance of the shawl. The shawl was Magda's "own baby, her pet, her little sister." (Ozick, 1980: par. 7) Apart from that, the shawl represents a safe spot, a sanctuary of a sort. If one possesses the shawl, one is safe. That applies not only to Magda but the other protagonists as well. Stella wished to have the shawl in order to be warm and safe, hidden away. (Ozick, 1980: par. 1) The shawl keeps Magda alive, both because she remains hidden from the Nazis and everyone else, but Magda also feeds on it. She sucked the shawl, hence she survived. (Ozick, 1980: par. 3) As long as Magda felt safe and had something to occupy her mouth with, she kept the silence, which was also crucial for her survival. Rosa's life is eventually saved because of the shawl, as if she did not have it, she would scream or run towards her baby's body, which would result in her own death. (Ozick, 1980: par. 13)

Alan Berger matches the smell of cinnamon and almonds of the magic shawl with *tallit*, the Jewish prayer shawl, hence assigning it a religious meaning. (Kolář, 2004:128) While the Jewishness was the reason why the women were brought to the death camp, it is the religion that provides the sanctuary, the protection the three protagonists needed. They believed in the "magic" of the shawl, the spiritual aspects of it. Symbolically, the religious beliefs saved both Magda and Rosa at some point, while Stella was not remedied.

Stella, in a way, symbolizes a perpetrator, though she herself is not one. In the story, Stella deprived Magda of her religion, she stripped away her shawl and the protection it gave her. Yet by taking away the spirituality from someone else one does not acquire it. Ozick tried to show that no matter how hard the Nazis tried to deprive the Jews of their religion, dignity and humanity, they could not succeed. Moreover, it was impossible to transfer the religion, humanity and protection, as those cannot be stolen.

According to Kolář, the shawl also symbolizes life. Magda lived wrapped in the shawl, once the shawl was removed she died. At the moment of Magda's death, the shawl moved to Rosa to save her life instead. Rosa understood the shawl as the life preserver of her daughter and when she could not save her anymore, at least she managed to help herself. (Kolář, 2004: 129)

2.5.5 Inanimate Objects

While the shawl is a simple object, it is treated as if it were magic and to Magda it is not even an object. Ozick chose to treat other objects and subjects in an unexpected way. At the end of the story when Magda stepped out into the sunlight, Rosa went to find the shawl and when she returned, Magda was carried away and tossed on the fence, yet not by a person.

The Nazi that killed Magda had neither name nor a face, moreover he was not a living being. The officers in the death camps deprived the victims of their humanity, moreover they were often an instrument of someone else's will. Both of these realities are reflected in the story, hence there is no person, but a shoulder carrying Magda away, no face but a helmet and a domino-like body with black boots. (Ozick, 1980: par. 12)

While Magda's killer's body was merely a sum of inanimate parts, the limbs of the three females possess strange attributes as well. Rosa is described as walking cradle, Stella's knees were tumors on sticks and her elbows chicken bones (Ozick, 1980: par. 1), and Magda's legs were pencils and her belly a balloon. (Ozick, 1980: par. 13) The number of similar figures not only provides a picture of a starving person, but also corresponds with the dehumanization. If Rosa was a walking cradle, she was no longer a human being. And if presumed that being a cradle was her main purpose, as soon as her baby died, she lost that purpose, which left her in her despair and insanity.

2.5.6 Silence Transmission

The absence of language is a strong motive of Cynthia Ozick's story. Ozick chose to depict the deconstruction of language and speech by actually making no one speak. Except for Magda's cry, there are but two cases in which direct speech appeared, both short and left without a response.

The muteness of Magda worried Rosa. She believed that there was something physically wrong with her daughter's vocal cords that left her voiceless. (Ozick, 1980: par. 9) However, Rosa is silent throughout the story as well, though it is not explicitly mentioned. As it seems, nobody, no other prisoner speaks in the story but Stella, which again pushes her away from the victim's position. The prisoners were not allowed to speak, as they would be shot, yet Stella spoke, two short utterances, possibly very quiet, yet it was more than anyone else got the chance to say.

Rosa on the other hand feels, she worries and takes care of Magda, all of it without uttering a word, which only adds to the heavy atmosphere of the story. The continuous descriptions of Rosa as floating, flying or in trance somehow contrast this weight. Both Rosa and Stella were turning into

air due to the lack of nutrition. (Ozick, 1980: par. 6) Rosa was also losing her mind, not just weight, thus the feeling of floating corresponds with the actual physical mass of her body.

On one hand silence is the heavy element of the story, yet it also corresponds with the preservation ability of the shawl. The shawl itself would not save anyone, if it were not for the silence. Magda is wrapped in the shawl, which keeps her hidden but if she screamed and cried, the magic would not help her. She sucked on the shawl as if it were a pacifier and remained quiet, hence alive. When Magda got murdered, the shawl remained in Rosa's hands and as if the magic aspects of the object passed to her too. Rosa stuffed her mouth with it, as there was nothing else she could do. She could neither run nor speak, for she would be killed. Instead, she muted the "wolf's screech" by the shawl, hence the silence protected her the same way as it used to protect Magda. (Ozick, 1980: par. 13)

2.5.7 The Elements and Nature Powers

Cynthia Ozick shows a powerful play with nature aspects, as well as light and dark. However, she twists the usual connotations of some of these elements.

The cold guides us through the story, cold is the weather, cold are the hearts. Cold was matched with hell, the inhumane conditions of the death march and the death camp. Again, the shawl showed its powers, this time in terms of preserving heat. The baby was alive, quiet and warm, unlike Stella.

Stella was cold from the beginning of the story, as if the author tried to imply her future. Stella never got rid of the cold she had been struggling with. The magic shawl could not save her when stolen, it only worsened her condition. Not only she was always cold ever since, but the cold "went into her heart." (Ozick, 1980: par. 8) Whether it means she became remorseless and cruel can only be guessed, nevertheless she carried her own burden as well as Rosa.

While cold and warm stand on the expected sides of the positive-negative scale, the position of light and darkness is a bit different. Despite sunlight brought a brief moment of joy to Rosa, seeing her baby walk and speak in the "jolly light" (Ozick, 1980: par. 9); it also anticipates Magda's death. In "The Shawl", light is connected with exposure or revelation and together with the open space of the "arena" it induces the feeling of uncertainty, unsafety and even bareness.

On the other hand, the darkness of the barracks is not connected with scary and unknown environment but a safe hideout. During the Holocaust, as long as one was hidden, one was safe, the doom came with the exposure and the revelation of the hideout. The same applied to Magda, for as

long she was unseen by others, concealed in the dark of the barracks, she was alive. In Ozick's story darkness no longer means death but life.

2.5.8 Conclusion

Cynthia Ozick said in an interview that the book *The Shawl* (including both the story "The Shawl" and novella *Rosa*) is neither about Rosa nor Stella. It is Magda's book, the testament of a child who never lived. Transcendentally, the book is about all the children who were deprived off their lives and who never got the chance to speak about the Holocaust. (Bridges, 2009)

Despite the horrifying image Ozick chose as her inspiration, the magic shawl serves as the symbol of hope, the only thing that the Jews were often left with. The story provides an intense and powerful image of the suffering in the death camps. Despite being very short, the story comprises of significant number of figures and motifs. Moreover, the intensity is notable from the very beginning, as a weight on the shoulders.

2.6. **Rebecca Makkai: "The Briefcase"**

2.6.1 Rebecca Makkai

Rebecca Makkai is relatively young compared to the other assessed authors, being born in 1978, and not much has been written about her yet. She got her BA at Washington and Lee University and MA at Middlebury College's Bread Loaf School of English. She spent twelve years teaching at Montessori elementary school before publishing her first novel, *The Borrower* (2011). (Makkai, c2018)

Her family history however is rather controversial. In her essay *Other Types of Poison*, she wrote about her Hungarian grandparents and their legacy. While her grandmother, a writer and a former actress painted faces in the closet, her husband János Makkai helped pass the Second Jewish Law of 1939, thus reducing the number of Jewish employees in most sectors to six percent. Possibly due to their political disagreements the two divorced later that year, while Rebecca's father Adam was four-years old. (Makkai, 2013)

Rebecca's father Adam escaped Hungary after the revolution in 1956 and he sheltered many refugees from both Hungary and Romania during the 1980's, while Rebecca was growing up.

(Rushdie, 2008:333)

Makkai wrote three novels so far, *The Borrower*, *The Hundred-Year House* (2014) and *The Great Believers* (to be published in June 2018). She published a collection of stories *Music for Wartime* (2015), her short stories also appeared in several anthologies. (Makkai, c2018)

2.6.2 "The Briefcase" – Summary

The Briefcase was first published in the *New England Review, Vol. 29 No. 2* (2008), and appeared in Makkai's *Music for Wartime*. Kiesling described the story as "Kafkaesque", for the people and places are nameless. The time setting of the story is not very specific either. Though at the beginning there is the "December first", no year is written. However, Makkai pointed out that the story was based on her distant relative, a university professor, who was forced into a prisoners' march during World War II and was never seen again. (Sebold, 2009:325) Therefore the story possesses attributes that could be matched to certain situations of the Holocaust.

At the beginning of the story, the chef marching as a prisoner through a town freed himself of his chain and hides in a nearby building. From a window he saw that the soldiers replaced him with a random person from the crowd – a professor of some sort. The chef then came back to the street and took the professor's possessions.

Despite being unable to substitute the professor, the chef chose to pretend to be the professor, asking the people from his address book to send money. He spent a year in hiding and the situation in the land got worse. Eventually the chef met the professor's wife, whom he tried to persuade that he is the only piece of the professor left alive. Though he was not successful and the wife called the police, the chef himself begun to believe to be the professor and that someone should believe him eventually.

2.6.3 Characters

Though the Holocaust is not explicitly mentioned in the story, the fact that none of the characters has a name corresponds with the name loss of the Holocaust victims. Every Jew brought to a death camp was either sent to a gas chamber or received a number, first as a stamp on a piece of clothing, later as a tattoo on their forearm. Hence for the Nazi officers the Jews were nameless as well and the people they slaughtered in gas chambers often had no identification at all, meaning they lost their names forever in a way.

The names themselves had no meaning, yet the numbers played a significant part. In *The*

Briefcase, it was because of the numbers that the professor involuntarily took the chef's place in the prisoners march.

2.6.3.1 The Professor

The professor appeared in person for only a brief moment, being dragged as a prisoner instead of the chef. Yet he haunts the story until its very end. Despite being absent, he was studied thoroughly by the chef and there is more information about him than the chef who stayed alive.

The bearded teacher of physics had a wife, a list of students and friends in his briefcase together with other memories of his life; all of this transferred to the chef. (Makkai, 2009: 188)

The details about the professor's life are revealed through the letters that came with the money the chef asked for. His father-in-law died the year he got married, he had a son and problems with balance. (Makkai, 2009: 189) Yet the closest to pronouncing his name was the postman who called him "Professor T-----". (Makkai, 2009: 190) Comparing the story to Kafka's writing seems appropriate, as he was famous for using letters instead of names.

The professor was an innocent man – at least as innocent as any other person – yet he was to suffer instead of someone else. Also, the choice was completely random, as he just happened to be walking down the street. Makkai demonstrates how chance can be marginal as well as life-changing.

As soon as the professor is taken, he is stripped of his belongings. (Makkai, 2009: 185) Metaphorically, he is deprived of warmth, as the coat in December would be more than desirable. His shirt represented his dignity, as no man could be considered honourable while not wearing a shirt. Finally, his briefcase that holds his documents, memories and the people he knew, is the ultimate symbol of one's life. Taking all three items left the man in a position of a no name victim of the march, resulting in his presumed death.

2.6.3.2 The Chef

The chef's portrayal is dependent on his transformation into another person. Despite being innocent, as he only happened to work in the restaurant that served as the base of revolutionaries, he was dragged in chains. Naturally he wished to escape and as he succeeded, he did not look back even as his escape cost another person's life. Instead the chef chose to participate in taking that person's life by taking what was left of him. (Makkai, 2009: 185)

The chef can be perceived as a mere victim lucky enough to escape his guards, who sought nothing but safety and self-preservation. In such case, letting the professor take his place in the chains would be logical, yet immoral. However, the act of stealing the professor's possessions is much less understandable. The motivation to do so could be to raise the chance to survive, as the chef had no money and nowhere to go. Yet claiming someone else's life for himself is not that different from actually taking their life.

The chef metaphorically killed the professor and simultaneously he became the professor, thus letting him live as a part of his own personality. Yet he never managed to truly become the professor. In the briefcase the chef found among other things the question considering the Sun's movement in relation to Earth. The chef tried to resolve the question in order to make use of everything he found in the briefcase. He came back to the question over and over, yet the answer never seemed sufficient. Therefore, he never really merged with the professor, which was the point of his attempts – if he could answer the question, he would be the professor and the universe would be intact again. (Makkai, 2009: 186)

Insanity is a significant aspect of the chef's personality. The logic of him taking the briefcase is at least questionable, yet does not imply madness. However, the certainty that "the professor would not die, because he himself would become the professor" (Makkai, 2009:186) is highly irrational. The delusion the chef surrounded himself with got stronger as the story advanced. Eventually, he believed that he would convince someone, he would prove to the high court that he was the professor and he could eve try to convince professor's son. (Makkai, 2009: 192)

Therefore, at the end of the story the chef's madness is complete. As a delusional person, he is neither the chef he used to be at the beginning nor the professor he tried to be. The chef wanted to keep the professor alive but instead both unique personalities are lost.

2.6.4 A Timeless Story

Rebecca Makkai wrote a story inspired by the Holocaust experience of her distant relative, yet it is not explicitly set amidst the Holocaust. In fact, her story lacks any details, thus it could refer to any war conflict whatsoever. However, a march of chained men, who are starved and cold resembles the death march of the Jews. (Makkai, 2009:184) Other aspects reminding of the situation of Jews during the Holocaust include hiding in the basements, such as the one the chef spent his year as a professor in. (Makkai, 2009: 186) As the story progressed, the war situation got worse. While no one

knew why the “professor” ran away, later it became clear that the purge is advancing and all the culture and intelligence is being wiped out. (Makkai, 2009: 190)

One of the aims of the National Socialism was to eradicate not only the Jews and other inconvenient groups of people, but also wipe their existence off the face of the earth, hence destroy their culture, language and everything else that might remain after the people were gone. Makkai mentioned artists, journalist and professors by no coincidence, pointing out that the intelligence goes first.

The absence of time setting also suggests that such conflicts connected with brutal persecution and elimination of certain groups of people occur periodically. Corresponding with the theory the chef tried to solve, the years are not separate, rather they pile up and exist all at the same time. The same logic applies to places. As the Earth spins, the place of one city will be occupied by another, therefore “this city is all cities at all times” (Makkai, 2009: 189) Makkai not only implies that the Holocaust may happen again. The Holocaust is transcending the traditional concept of time and space; therefore, it is happening simultaneously in the past and in the future, in Europe or South Africa. The pattern does not reappear, for there is no pattern. The same situation occurs on the pile of distant years and distant places, all at once.

2.6.5 To Kill a Man

The professor disappears from the story very early at the beginning, yet the question is who to blame for it. The circumstances of the unspecified conflict led to the imprisonment of seemingly random men and to their presence in the chained march. Therefore, part of the guilt could be assigned to the society or the group of people that caused the conflict – yet there are no details in the story, hence no way one could blame someone in particular.

As for the chef, he followed his instinct when he released himself from the chains, the most basic will to survive. He assumed that while trying to run away was dangerous, staying in the chains would be deadly, hence he took his chances. He cannot be criticised for trying to avoid death.

The soldiers were assigned a task to move the 200 men from one place to another, yet at one point one of their prisoners went missing. They were described as “children who barely filled the shoulders of their uniform” (Makkai, 2009:185). They were young and gullible and possibly frightened, knowing that they would have to face the consequences from their military superiors for losing a prisoner. They focused on nothing but the task, thus they were supposedly a subject of the

three processes described in the context of the Holocaust: authorization, routinization and dehumanization. However, choosing a random person to fill the gap seems to lack a proper motive that would correspond with their principle. The professor was not a prisoner deprived of his rights, yet to the soldiers it seemed appropriate to turn him into a number on their list. The soldiers did not intend to look for the lost prisoner, instead, out of pure convenience and laziness, they took someone else.

Sometimes it does not matter whether the person is good or bad, convicted or innocent. The war makes no exceptions and the often brainwashed people do not make a difference between those categories. To describe the soldiers as pure evil would be presumptuous, as their motives might have included their fear of punishment or the pressure of time limit.

While the chef's escape was the cause of the professor's doom, he cannot be blamed for running away. However, the chef's action resulted in soldiers taking someone else's life. The briefcase, described as a vacant life of the professor, the chef claimed for himself, for which he must take full responsibility. Although his motivation may be traced by the need for self-preservation, he had no right to acquire the briefcase, hence the chef is the real perpetrator here.

Makkai demonstrates how the guilt and responsibility are relative attributes. While the soldiers were in fact those who supposedly killed the professor and disposed of his body, the chef's choice was to take away his soul. One's life is a notion transcending the physical body, thus a crime against the body is never greater than a crime against one's soul and purpose. The worst part of the Holocaust was not the attempt to kill all the people, but the fact that the Nazis tried to destroy those transcending aspects of their being, including their soul, religion or culture. Therefore, the chef is the greater villain and the fact that he intended to keep the professor alive by taking his life proves that his own mind is distorted.

2.6.6 Conclusion

Makkai intended to end the story differently. She wished for the professor's wife to recognize the chef as her husband, for the chef to actually "become" the professor and the two to live happily ever after. However, she claims that she was not able to do so, partially because of the people close to the professor who was once a member of her family before he disappeared. (Sebold, 2009:325)

Rebecca Makkai transcends the historical boundaries of the Holocaust while focusing on the attributes usually connected with Holocaust analysis, such as suffering and guilt, as well as secrecy. The story demonstrates that while the Holocaust is often considered unique, the horrors connected

with it are not. The outcome of the Holocaust is well known to many, yet the future is unclear. As written in the story: “History was safer than the news, because there was no question of how it would end.” (Makkai, 2009: 188)

It is easier to analyse an event that has already happened than the one still in progress. Then again, the event is happening simultaneously at all times, not just following the pattern, therefore the outcome should remain the same. Whether the society is capable of learning enough of the consequences to stop such horrors from happening at our time, is a question Makkai does not answer.

2.7. **Budd Schulberg: “Passport to Nowhere”**

2.7.1 Budd Schulberg

Born in 1914 to a first-generation American Jewish father and a Russian-born mother, Schulberg grew up in California among the Hollywood elite, his father being one of the first scenarists, so he was surrounded by wealth and glamour as a child. (Shatzky, 1997:355) Yet he found out that Hollywood was not a Dream Factory but a suburb of Los Angeles with many companies full of hard and tedious work. (Schulberg, 2003: 125)

After graduating from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire in 1936, he worked for David O. Selznik and joined the Communist Party. He began to write ironic stories about the Hollywood and got married the same year. In 1939 he worked on a screenplay with Francis Scott Fitzgerald, yet due to Fitzgerald’s heavy drinking they both got fired and the author of The Great Gatsby was admitted to a hospital; Schulberg later reflected this incident in his memoirs. Yet the same year Schulberg began to write a novel describing the issues of the Jewish people in Hollywood. (Homberger, 2009)

Apart from *What Makes Sammy Run?* Schulberg wrote a number of short stories and novels including *The Harder They Fall* (1947); he is also the author of various screenplays, among others the Oscar-winning *On the Waterfront* (1954). (Homberger, 2009) *The Passport to Nowhere* as Schulberg’s first novella was published in the magazine *Story* in 1938 and later included in his collection of stories *Love, Action, Laughter and Other Sad Tales: Stories* (1989).

2.7.2 “Passport to Nowhere” - Summary

The plot of “Passport to Nowhere” revolves around a Jewish painter from Poland, Nathan Solomon, who after being warned about a pogrom by his love Irma escaped to Warsaw. When he

learned that Irma had died, he fell into despair and his paintings always ended up black. After being called a Nazi for his not typical Jewish appearance, Nathan decided to leave for Paris. He joined a Communist Party to fight the Fascists and wanted to become French citizen, yet he was not allowed to. He concluded that as a Jew he belonged to Palestine, so he set sail on a ship called Venus de Milo. Nathan bonded with several passengers, one of which even became interested in his paintings. Before the arrival to Jaffa Nathan learned that he needed forty pounds to be allowed in, hence he went to Mrs. MacKnowlton, the lady who admired his pictures, and begged her to buy them. Even though she could not afford the pictures, she collected the money from other passengers. However, the ship's captain forbade the money collection for it would not please the Fascists. Thus, Nathan is condemned to remain on the ship and watch the other passengers leave for the promised land. Eventually Nathan was told that his fare was not paid for a route back to France, so he had to depart the ship at Larnaca, Cyprus, an unknown place where he was unexpected and unwanted.

A third person narrator tells the story of Nathan's struggles and inner conflicts; moreover, it discusses the issues of a Jewish refugee, such as s search for a sanctuary, the compassion for the Jews and eventually the unwanted exile.

2.7.3 Characters

The story has just one main protagonist, yet a number of minor characters. Apart from Irma, Nathan's love interest, none of them played a significant part in Nathan's life.

Uncle Max let Nathan live in his room for a while; he was a tailor and a pious Jew. He took Nathan to *schul*, a prayer room in a cellar. The air was suffocating and so was the atmosphere of the Jewish ghetto Nathan later explored. Nathan came to conclusion that there was no God in the cellar and probably not even in the "Jewish slums". (Schulberg, 2012:72)

Jacques was a French painter, whom Nathan met upon his arrival in Paris. He showed Nathan the acceptance he yearned for and later introduced him to the members of the Communist party. Nathan then participated in the demonstration, exhilarated about the march of life and freedom instead of a pogrom. (Schulberg, 2012:79) Moreover, Jacques helped Nathan raise money to pay for his faire to Palestine. Jacques therefore showed Nathan the compassion of an individual goy, when the whole world otherwise rejected him.

Sol and Sadie Brownstein were a Jewish American couple who travelled to Palestine to Sadie's father and they spent some time with Nathan on the ship. Upon their first meeting Sol recognized Nathan as a Jew unlike many others before him. Yet Nathan saw something strange in the man's

eyes, so he just reluctantly shook his hand. (Schulberg, 2012:84) Sol behaved like a businessman. When Nathan encountered Mrs. MacKnowlton who wanted to see his paintings, He offered to help Nathan sell them for ten percent interest. (Schulberg, 2012:89) Later he suggested setting up a shop in order to sell the paintings to "Yids". (Schulberg, 2012:92) The use of a rather offensive word for his own kin is unsettling, which is perhaps why Nathan first saw something odd in Sol's eyes.

Mrs. Hazel McKnowlton saw Nathan painting on the deck and when she learned that she could not communicate with Nathan directly, she found herself an interpreter. She organized a meeting of several women to show off Nathan as an animal in the zoo, as random entertainment. (Schulberg, 2012:90) As it turned out, she did not mean to hurt him, for when he asked her for help with the Palestinian "entrance fee", she managed to collect the money for Nathan, regardless that it was all in vain in the end. (Schulberg, 2012:96)

The captain of the ship is never named, yet he directly influenced two major changes in Nathan's plan. First the captain did not allow the money collection, thus forbidding Nathan to enter Jaffa. (Schulberg, 2012:96) After Nathan watched his promised homeland disappear in the distance, the captain sent a messenger to inform Nathan that he cannot return with them back to Naples but will be put off at the first stop at Cyprus, being unable to work his way back. (Schulberg, 2012:97) Therefore, the nameless captain, not unlike a nameless officer in the camp, prevented Nathan from pursuing his life and dreams, leaving him in the darkness of the unknown.

2.7.3.1 Nathan Solomon

Nathan Solomon is a Polish Jew, yet somehow not a "typical" Jew. Apart from his appearance – for he is tall, tanned and blond – he is also a painter, which contradicts the general Jewish attitude towards arts. Painting, as well as fiction writing, can be considered a type of idolatry, thus breaking the Second Commandment. Unlike Asher Lev, Nathan is not denounced by the Jews for his artwork, despite painting such things as three burning Christs. (Schulberg, 2012: 86)

Nathan's use of colours corresponds with his current situation and mood. He described how he wanted to paint "his Poland" in yellow and green, yet it always turned out black. Even before he escaped his village and then learned that his love interest had died, his paintings always ended up black, black for the Jews. (Schulberg, 2012: 65) Schulberg used the colours as the metaphor for mourning and possibly for the horrible fate that awaited the Jews. The story was written at the beginning of the Second World War, when the annihilation of the Jews had not yet begun, but something awful was expected.

His love for the Christian girl Irma somehow corresponded with what followed. His fondness of the goyish world was never mutual and always ended badly for Nathan. Irma refused to marry him (Schulberg, 2012:66) and that circumstance resembled the situation in Paris, where he was denied French citizenship. (Schulberg, 2012:80) Both cases represented Nathan being rejected by the goyish world he so desperately wanted to be a part of. When Irma died, so did the control Nathan had over his painting. As the painter was forbidden to enter Palestine, his hope perished again, and he was then brought to Cyprus, without money or even an idea of what to do, thus once again losing control of his life. (Schulberg, 2012:98)

Nathan's appearance is not the only thing that distanced him from the Jewish community. He spoke of the Jews with disparage: "Jews always fight. Nothing is ever right for them." (Schulberg, 2012:67); as if he was not one of them. Later in Warsaw he felt he was dying in the "slums of the Jews" (Schulberg, 2012:73), comparing the ghetto to a prison without bars. Nathan therefore never felt a part of the Jewish community. After his request for French citizenship was denied, he felt small and Jewish, hence he finally accepted his heritage. As a "newborn Jew" he believed that the only place he would belong to was Palestine, the promised land, the ultimate sanctuary of Jewish people. (Schulberg, 2012:81) However, both the goyish and the Jewish world rejected him, which left him exiled on an island he knew nothing about.

Nathan is a Jew doomed to always wander. After he fled his home village, he did find no rest in either Warsaw, Paris or Palestine. Irma once told him that he wanted to live on an island without the Jews and the Jew-haters. (Schulberg, 2012: 66) Nathan eventually ends up on Cyprus, which served as a transfer centre during the war, therefore an island full of Jews. Though he managed to find temporary safety in Larnaca, he spoke of the darkness being his only refuge. (Schulberg, 2012:99) Palestine was the only goal he pursued and once he was robbed of it, he saw nothing but uncertainty and darkness ahead.

2.7.3.2 Irma

Irma appeared only in the initial part of the story, yet Nathan often recalled the meaningful experience he had with her. It is clear that Irma had very strong feelings for Nathan, in spite of the fact that she rejected his marriage proposal.

Irma stayed beside Nathan through all the gossip and rumour in their village about the Jew "ruining a Christian girl", yet their relationship was doomed for other reasons than just the religion. While Nathan was a dreamer, wanting them "on the moon", Irma was a realist and a fighter, who

believed that it was necessary to fight against power that thrived on hate. (Schulberg, 2012:67) Nathan sought a sanctuary, a utopia, a magical place without hatred where they would be happy, while Irma was willing to fight and die for what she believed. Nathan later described the difference between them in the following words: “I love one village. She loves the world. I love one human being. She loves a billion.”(Schulberg, 2012:75)

Irma was not depicted very objectively, as she was always perceived through Nathan’s eyes. Yet to him she was not only the love of his life and thus a perfect woman. He saw her moreover as a generous human being, capable of self-sacrifice. Eventually Irma turned out to be a very brave woman, warning Nathan early enough for him to escape the pogrom. One of her friends later wrote a note to Nathan, informing him of her death and that she asked for him at the end. (Schulberg, 2012:73)

Nathan painted her immediately after he got the note, and just as the painting was nothing but Irma, his life revolved around her as well. Even at the end upon finding himself in a desperate situation on an unknown island, he thought of her, remembering all the things he held dear that were lost or far away. Irma, Poland, revolution, hope, forty pounds, all of these he did not have at the end, all the things he missed. (Schulberg, 2012:99)

2.7.4 The Fate of a Lone Jew

Nathan managed to sum up his situation in one simple utterance: “Always I am alone, alone or being chased.” (Schulberg, 2012: 88) This is the central motif of the story, depicting a Jew in various situations, all of which correspond with this statement, though they might seem different at first reading.

Nathan is explicitly chased twice in the story. At the beginning Irma warned him about a crowd coming through the village killing every Jew. Hence Nathan runs away, chased by Jew-haters, condemned to exile, living away from home and the woman he loved. (Schulberg, 2012:69)

On his journey to Palestine, Mrs. MacKnowlton became interested in his paintings, and as a very persistent woman, she did not stop until she found a way to communicate with Nathan. (Schulberg, 2012: 88) However, she did not leave it at that. She organized a meeting of her female friends to participate in the “chase”, to gaze upon his painting as if he were a mere object of temporary indulgence. (Schulberg, 2012: 90)

However, Nathan is chased all the time, haunted by the memories and rejected by the world.

He moved from one place to another in the search for the one place he could belong to, eventually forced to find a shelter in the desolate town of Larnaca, for he was given no other option.

On the other hand, Nathan always felt alone. He was alone when Irma rejected him and then after he escaped to Poland. He was surrounded by fellow communists in Paris, yet France abandoned him by denying him the citizenship. Finally, he was travelling alone to Palestine only to find himself stranded on an island.

Rather than "alone or being chased" Nathan is always alone AND chased. Throughout the story it became obvious that he was being pushed into the corner, forced to run for as long as he could until he finally reached a place where he was safe, yet temporarily. The story does not have a happy ending, it is rather open-ended. Nathan is still alone and lonely in the darkness. The uncertainty of not knowing what would happen or whether he would be finally allowed to stay in Larnaca, is somewhat symbolic for the entire story. Nathan is forever doomed to wander, not to know what would come the following day. Irma claimed he wanted to be on the moon, on an island with no hate, no Jews, just him and Irma. Even though Irma died, he did end up on an island, with the memories of her and with the uncertainty that would forever chase him.

2.7.5 Jew-Haters

Hatred towards the Jews is a pervasive aspect of the story. Schulberg chose not to deal with the issue of antipathy within the Jewish community much. Instead he described how the "outsiders" treat the Jews. Nathan described how the hate grew each year and so his pictures became darker. The worse the situation, the blacker they were. Nathan spoke of stones several times, first as a reference to Jews being stoned, later as a metaphor for the burden in his heart. (Schulberg, 2012: 65) Irma even spoke of walls the Jews always looked for, either to cry against or to hide behind. (Schulberg, 2012:66) It is suggested that the walls and the stones are connected. Metaphorically, the stones were used to build the walls between the Jews and the rest of the world.

The angry crowd was eventually the reason for Nathan's swift departure. While he occasionally managed to find a friendly soul, be it Jacques or Mrs. MacKnowlton, Nathan was rejected by most and so was the Jewry. Nathan perceived the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw as a prison without bars, wondering how society pushed the Jews into living under such conditions. (Schulberg, 2012:73) Just as he realized that the Jewish community was not in fact united but rather "severed in a million pieces", fighting against each other, he is attacked by yet another crowd, this time a Jewish one. As

Nathan did not resemble a Jew, he is automatically labelled as a Nazi, despite the fact that he has been through the same kind of oppression. (Schulberg, 2012:75) Therefore Nathan is not only targeted by the non-Jewish world but ironically also his own community.

Schulberg may have meant to show the problematic relations within the community. In fact, Nathan pointed out after the incident, that the unity of Jews is an illusion, therefore Nathan is doomed to walk alone. (Schulberg, 2012:75) On the other hand, the case also shows that hatred between the Jews and the non-Jews is reciprocal. The crown called Nathan a "Nazi", meaning that they did not see him as one of them, as the member of the community. Thus, the world might repulse the Jews, yet the Jews themselves regard the outsiders in exactly the same way.

Later on the boat, Nathan thought of Palestine as the refuge he longed for twenty-five thousand years. In his mind, hatred resembled worms biting their way through wood, persistent and destructive. (Schulberg, 2012: 85) These worms were everywhere, including the ship that was supposed to carry Nathan to the promised land. He described that even a strange African black was better than a Jew, yet even the black man did not trust him. (Schulberg, 2012: 86) The ambiguity of Jew hatred is concealed within this sentence, as the black man might not have liked Nathan. However, Nathan did not speak of that man very well either. Nathan probably felt that way because he learned to fight back against the world that rejected him, yet he presumably had similar prejudices on his own.

2.7.6 Conclusion

Describing Nathan as a wandering Jew seems accurate. Shatzky assumed that Nathan is an impersonation of the instability of Jewish community and identity. The absence of roots has great impact on both the individual personality and the mentality of the group. (Shatzky, 1997:358)

The inability to settle as well as the feeling of being hunted creates a powerful image of the fate of many Jews during the war. Unlike theirs, Nathan's story has no ending, therefore it can be assumed that his life story continued, at least for some time. Though he might have felt desperate and lost, he might as well be one of the luckier Jews, though not necessarily happy.

3. Conclusion

The stories analysed in this thesis vary in many aspects, including the length, topic, mood or the time setting. However, there are several reoccurring themes. The following four subchapters will conclude the evaluation of these works of fiction in this diploma work.

3.1. Secrets and Guilt

Secrets appear to be one of the major motifs. Gordon Lish chose to compare the secretive way his father slipped money to a barber with the inability of the barber in Treblinka to tell his "customer" that he is about to die. In "The Shawl", secrecy is life, for as long as Magda is concealed in the shawl, she gets to live. In "The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish" and *Operation Shylock*, the characters exploit their secrets to pursue another goal: Marta sought forgiveness and John Demjanjuk refused to plead guilty to protect his son. In "The Briefcase", the chef pretended to be the professor and hid in someone's basement in order to get money from the professor's acquaintances.

The Holocaust victims often feel guilty for the acts they had done in order to survive, yet Lieberman mentions a concept of "survivor's guilt" – originally studied by Erich Lindemann - that builds on the premise that the survivor is guilty because he managed to live while others died. (Lieberman, 2014:111) Yet most of the stories connect guilt with personal experience rather than a general feeling of responsibility. Survivor's guilt is therefore implied, though not focused on. In "The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish", *Operation Shylock* and "The Briefcase" the secrets are accompanied by guilt. In Marta's case, it could be presumed that part of her guilt stemmed from survivor's trauma, as she was indeed grateful for the extra years she got. However, she did commit a crime, at least against her own moral theory, therefore her guilt is more connected with her personal sins, as well as John Demjanjuk's and the chef's.

In the case of John Demjanjuk, Roth relates the issue of guilt to the problematics of truth and mendacity. A few pages later Roth turned survivor's guilt into a weapon used against American Jewry by the Israelis. George Ziad argued that if it were not for the guilt of the American Jews who were lucky enough to "observe" the Holocaust from their safe haven, the state of Israel would be revealed as remorseless and violent. Ziad believed that the loyalty towards Israel depended on that survivor's guilt of Jews in the Diaspora and on the illusion that Israel is a moral state, the promised land which the Jews had hoped for. (Roth, 2008:125)

"The German Refugee" deals with the feeling of guilt as well, in this case connected with Oskar Gassner leaving his family behind. However, as soon as he learned of his wife's demise, he killed

himself. (Malamud, 1986:448) This suggest either a very strong affection for his wife or the intensification of the survivor's guilt. It is plausible that both of these had their share on Oskar's fatal decision.

Roth's fictional and counterfactual Kafka was a Holocaust survivor. As such he possibly blamed himself not only for being alive while others had died, but on a more personal level, for the death of his three sisters. Kafka was timid, shy and peculiar, yet he had to suffer like anyone else. His very foreign behaviour together with the survivor's guilt led to his inability to settle down, start a family and leave a legacy – though even under different circumstances he would probably not do so, as Roth cites from his letter, marriage was "barred" for him. (Roth, 1996:248) Roth extended Kafka's nonfictional behaviour to New Jersey, so while no guilt was explicitly mentioned in the depiction of Kafka, it might have been one of his attributes.

Survivor's guilt is also implied in "The Shawl", as both the surviving protagonists had to deal with it in Ozick's sequel novella. While Stella's coldness of heart suggests that she blamed herself for both Magda's death and her own survival, Rosa's situation was a bit more complicated. She was unable to hand Magda over to a stranger. Instead she chose to keep her, an understandable choice, given the strength of maternal instincts. However, Rosa felt responsible for the decision which she knew would eventually result in her child's death. Rosa survived, while many others did not, including Magda. Therefore Rosa had to live with both survivor's guilt and the image of the murder of her daughter, for which she partially blamed herself.

Makkai's version of guilt is connected with the madness of the chef. In "The Briefcase" the chef chose to supress his guilt by persuading himself that if he became the professor, both of them would survive. The logic of claiming someone's life for oneself in order to keep that someone alive is controversial. The victims cannot be brought back to life by the impostors, therefore the chef cannot shake off the guilt by pretending to be the professor.

3.2. **Sound of Silence**

Silence is also a major motif. Whether it appears as an overwhelming atmosphere or a simple attribute of a single character, silence reappears in most of the stories. Silence is necessary for completing the feeling of weight or the inevitability of fate. As the Holocaust destroyed both people and words, silence is often the only way to communicate and cope with the horrors of the war. Holocaust fiction therefore uses the absence of sounds as a major motif to depict the true horror of the Second World War – the inability to speak in the death camp or to speak of the death camp.

In “The Dog”, silence is required between the barber and the victim. Lish demonstrates how silence was not only the outcome of the Holocaust, it was present all the time. Lish transforms an ordinary situation in a barber shop through simple steps into a horrifying image of tension and hopelessness. The silence between a barber and a customer in New York seems voluntary and convenient, though it is a little odd. However, the muteness forced upon the barber at Treblinka and the person he is supposed to prepare for death is absurd. (Lish, 1988: 187)

While the other stories use the force of silence to increase tension and to enhance the atmosphere of despair, Lish chose absurdity as the main attribute of silence. The barber wished to speak to the victims, even if it meant only to warn them or comfort them, yet neither the barber nor the victim were allowed to make any sound.

Permission plays a significant part in Ozick’s “The Shawl” as well. In the final scene, Rosa knew that she was not allowed to speak or scream, for she would get shot if she did so. In order to save herself she stuffed the shawl into her mouth in order to prevent the “wolf’s screech” from coming out. (Ozick, 1980: par. 13) On the other hand, Ozick used silence not only to express the suppression of the victims to speak but also as a motive of a life preserver. Though in both “The Dog” and “The Shawl” the victims would die upon speaking, Ozick stressed the rather soothing aspect of silence. As long as Magda was silent, she was safe and so was Rosa. Though Rosa was terrified that a moment would come when Magda could no longer remain quiet and she worried about Magda’s mental and physical health, the silence of her baby gave her a glimmer of hope that they might get out of the death camp alive. (Ozick, 1980: par. 9)

Unlike the other two, Malamud brought silence into a different situation than in the middle of the death camp. As it appears, silence is a powerful aspect in the process of coping with the horrors of the Second World War as well as in the centre of Auschwitz. In Oskar Gassner’s life, silence is a pervasive force that he is unable to shake off his shoulders. While in “The Shawl” and “The Dog” the protagonists are capable of speaking but not allowed to, Oskar is expected to speak yet unable to do so. Oskar is therefore in a different situation. His muteness had roots within the Holocaust, yet it prevailed in his life even as he managed to escape Germany. Malamud therefore shows how surviving the Holocaust does not automatically mean victory: for a Jew it is not even necessary to experience the death camp directly to be affected by the Holocaust.

In Ozick’s camp story and Malamud’s refugee story, silence took over. Both Rosa and Oskar chose the ultimate silence, Rosa silenced herself to save her life and Oskar ended his life, thus becoming forever silent. Lish avoided this definiteness in his story, for “The Dog” is merely a sketch

designed to think about.

While silence is not as prominent in *"*Looking at Kafka*"*, the famous writer eventually died without sharing most of his art with the world. Thus he is silenced by the circumstances and possibly by his own mindset. In *Operation Shylock*, Smilesburger suggested that silence is the only way to prevent the Jews from speaking loshon hora about the others and about oneself. (Roth, 2008:313)

At the end of "The Jewbird" when Schwartz was tossed out of the window Cohen informed the other members of his family that the bird left. He received no response from them. In this case, the absence of protest resembles the silence of the people allowing the Nazis to take over and commit their crimes. "The Jewbird" therefore shows the awful consequences of silence (in the form of lack of protest), rather than developing the story around it.

3.3. Anti-Semitism

As the Holocaust was an event full of horrors and hatred, it is only logical that hatred prominently appears in Holocaust fiction. However, some of the stories consider not only the way the non- Jewish world despised them, but also the loathing within the Jewish community.

In "Passport to Nowhere", the hatred of both Goyim and Jews was the reason why Nathan ended up in Larnaca. Nathan was hunted by Jew-haters in his village, attacked by Jews in the ghetto in Poland, refused citizenship in France and finally denied entrance to Palestine. In the open-ended story Nathan was alone on an unknown island.

Schwartz in "The Jewbird" happened to find an open window. Yet he learned that an open window does not necessarily mean he was welcomed. Despite the loathing Cohen showed Schwartz, the bird did not leave, being more afraid of the unknown than of the familiar terror.

In *Operation Shylock*, Smilesburger believed that Jews lack basic politeness and they detest each other because their personality is split. A Jew is both good and bad, pious and rude, arrogant and loving. A Jew is an impersonated conflict, therefore he attracts other conflicts. (Roth, 2008:314)

3.4. Conclusion

The aim of Holocaust fiction is to get the reader as close to the atmosphere of the death camp or the despair of a survivor by means of provoking intense emotions. The plots use quite a variety

of motifs and means. For a sensitive human being, these can be really frustrating. However, that is one of the purposes of Holocaust fiction after all, to make one feel so desperate so as to comprehend that these horrors should never be allowed to happen again.

Cynthia Ozick once said in an interview: “In the madness of despair lies the sanity of hope.” (Bridges, 2009) She explained that despite the fact that her protagonist Rosa fell into madness, she still recalled the uncorrupted world, the version of world in which her child was still alive. The victims of the Holocaust may be delusional: they may believe in things that never happened in order to cope with those that did really occur. The outer world may and shall feel sorry for the victims. Yet there is always hope. While some of the stories ended tragically, there might still be hope for Raizel, Martin, Stella and Rosa or Nathan, as well as the others. Hope for the Jews, hope for other victims of torture, suffering and oppression and hope for the world.

Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá zkoumáním literatury Holokaustu, tedy prvků pro ni typických v osmi povídkách a jednom románu. Cílem pak je určit ty nejzásadnější a nejvýznamnější, které se v povídkách objevují.

Teoretická část je rozdělena na dva hlavní úseky. První úsek definuje Holokaust ve vztahu k ostatním genocidám a řeší, jaké procesy byly zapotřebí k tomu, aby bylo masové vraždění přijatelné pro tak velké množství lidí. Zkoumá také samotný pojem „Holokaust“ a rozpor jeho významu s povahou takto označované události, a uvádí další dvě označení, *Shoah* a *Hurban*, vycházející z jidiš a hebrejštiny. Druhý úsek pak řeší rozdílné postoje Judaismu nejprve obecně k psané literatuře a posléze konkrétně k fikci. Je zde také zmíněna samotná definice toho, co považujeme za „literaturu Holokaustu“ a také jisté kontroverze doprovázející žánr, neboť je otázkou, zda je přípustné pokoušet se zachytit hrůzy Holokaustu, a pokud ano, pak za jakým účelem.

Část praktická pak nejprve uvádí základní východiska pro následnou analýzu a poté věnuje samostatnou kapitolu každému autorovi. Spisovatel je vždy uveden krátkým výběrem ze životopisu, následuje rozbor jeho povídky, případně povídek, přičemž každá povídka je podrobena rozboru postav, hlavních motivů a prvků a je následně shrnuta.

Závěrečná část pak rekapituluje zkoumané příběhy a vybírá z nich nejdůležitější motivy. Kromě motivu světla a stínu povídky často doplňuje konkrétní počasí, které má vyvolat buď pocit chladu v srdci nebo neúnosnost horka. Důležitým aspektem je i nenávist nežidovského světa vůči Židům ale také nevraživost mezi jednotlivými frakcemi Judaismu.

Dále je srovnáván vztah tajemství či skrytosti a viny. Zabývá se otázkou nejen tzv. „syndromu viny přeživších“ ale i vinou individuální a kolektivní. Stejně tak se i daná tajemství vztahují k jednotlivcům či skupinám, mají sloužit k ochraně nebo naopak někomu přitížit.

A konečně, významným motivem je ticho, se kterým sice přímo pracuje jen šest příběhů, do jisté míry jej ale lze považovat za všudypřítomný, co se literatury Holokaustu týče. Ve dvou z nich, konkrétně v „The Shawl“ a v *Operaci Shylock* je ticho prostředkem záchrany, ať už života konkrétního člověka nebo celé židovské společnosti. Naproti tomu „The Dog“ a „The German Refugee“ vykreslují pomocí ticha tíživou atmosféru, která odpovídá procesu „destrukce jazyka“, který byl jedním z cílů Holokaustu. Nakonec, „The Jewbird“ a “’I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting’; or, Looking at Kafka” spojují ticho spíše s jeho důsledky. Zatímco první povídka poukazuje na mlčenlivost tisíců lidí, která vedla k vzestupu nacismu, druhá ukazuje jak „umlčení“ jediného hlasu může poměrně zásadně změnit literární scénu 20. století.

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