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The Perpetual Search of Jewish Identity in Cynthia Ozick's "*The Shawl*"

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in Literature and Civilization.

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Declaration

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

Dedications

I dedicate this work to my parents for their continuous support. Their ceaseless faith in me was so precious.

I would also dedicate this humble work to Leila Benghanem for her implication in this research and whose great help should not be ignored.

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Abstract

Literature and history are two major fields in which a multitude of scholars operate, and the lines between the two are often blurred since the latter provides plausible explanations of the former. This present study is an attempt to analyze Cynthia Ozick's "*The Shawl*" from literary and historical perspectives and attempts to draw a line between the case study and the perpetual search of Jewish identity. The research begins by addressing the concept of identity in fields such as literature, psychology and philosophy in addition to the impacts of both the holocaust and anti-Semitism on both Jewish identity and Jewish writings respectively. As this research submits, the audience would possibly reach a moral, rational stance and conclusion about Ozick's implicit use of the Judaic mode of retelling as a principal aspect of her writing.

Keywords: anti-Semitism, Jewish, Holocaust, Holocaust fiction, identity, Ozick, Shoah.

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General Introduction

Since its creation, the world knew an incredible amount of wars. Many lives were lost, many cities were burned to the ground, and many civilizations ceased to exist. From the start of all conflicts, the main cause that led to all the wars that happened was the desire of the ones who wanted to reign, stay in command and become more powerful in order to have total control and hegemony of the world.

One of the most horrendous historical events that happened was the holocaust. It left many scars on its survivors. As time flies literature becomes a sort of group therapy as it treats personal and common individual's problems. It was of a big importance for the survivors to talk about their scars and inner emotional conflict. Retelling and confessing their experiences and stories was the only way for them to do so. Those testimonies and diaries gave birth to a genre that is entitled The Holocaust Literature. In a book written by Naomi Diamant and David Roskies, *Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry: Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide* (2013), they argue that: "Holocaust literature comprises all forms of writing, both documentary and discursive, and in any language, that have shaped the public memory of the Holocaust and been shaped by it" (2). Books, letters and diaries are the most expressive of all because they make it easy for the reader to follow the history of the Shoah with their chronological order. Works that have been written by people who were not witnesses to the Holocaust are also a part of the Holocaust literature.

Hitler's and The Nazi Party cruelty resonated all over the world and touched a big portion of the world's population which resulted in a sympathetic reaction toward the victims of the Shoah. Holocaust literature erects as a reaction to an event that would render the capacity both for response and for literary expression impossible (Patterson et al. 14).

Harold Bloom gives another definition to the Shoah Literature genre:

Holocaust literature occupies another sphere of study, one that is not only topical in interest but that extends so far as to force us to contemplate what may be fundamental changes in our modes of perception and expression, our altered way of being-in-the-world. What needs to be stressed is this: the nature and magnitude of the Holocaust were such as to mark, almost certainly, the end of one era of consciousness and the beginning of another (Bloom 109,110).

Literature in itself is a large field of study; it deals with different topics such as culture, poverty, racism, romance, adventure and identity among infinity of other subjects. Usually, the writers try to cast upon their readers their personal point of views on a matter in order to enlarge their horizon. Many literary works were written under tragic situations or dealt with them in the most realistic way, for the first category, they used literature as a mean to escape the hollow reality that people lived through. More often, authors used their works to cast strings of optimism on their readers by showing them that they can get through anything and especially in the post war periods as life's major mission is: Survival.

Thus, the present paper will discuss the novel's relation with the constant search of Jewish identity and how the author's liturgical literature does implicitly convey Jewish literary tradition's devices.

In an attempt for finding a resolution to this problematic, the core of this work will present two major questions:

1) How can a person live and find meaning where there is none after witnessing such destruction and losing everything?

2) How can the death of a loved one resonate through one's life and distort the very foundations of his existence?

In the light of the questions above, first, it can be hypothesized that Ozick's text is deeply inoculated with Jewish tradition even though it is not apparent to the reader. Second, the reappearance of Rosa's dead child later in her life, making her see only the ugly side of existence.

The study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the concept of identity in literature, the relation between identity and literature and finally the exploration of the concept of identity in both psychology and philosophy respectively. The second chapter depicts in its first part the role of anti-Semitism and the holocaust historically in the development of Jewish identity. The second part deals with how the Shoah impacted Jewish writings both historically and literary. By the end it will mainly be concluded how deeply Ozick's text is implicitly inoculated with traditional Judaic writing techniques and how she conveys the image of the tenacity of Jews through her protagonist.

The major impediments faced during the course of this study were the lack of documentation due to the absence of sources especially regarding the third part of the first

chapter and the last part of the memoir, the global pandemic did not help also as I did not meet with my supervisor to discuss the chapters face to face.

Introduction

Since the present dissertation is concerned with “The Perpetual Search for Jewish Identity in Cynthia Ozick’s *The Shawl*”, it is of a major importance to deal first with the term Identity as a whole. There is no doubt that identity and literature are interconnected. Immigration as a phenomenon also contributes to that. Therefore, to understand the areas of effects, it is necessary to deal with the concept of identity in literature in detail. Mainly, this chapter will be centered on the literary definition of identity and its impacts on literature.

1.1 Identity in Literature

Identity is not a simple term that can be easily defined as there are many ways to comprehend it. For instance beginning from the ‘me’ that we consider one’s self to be, to a wider array of concepts that can be found in a lot of areas of study such as philosophy, cultural studies and ideology.

The word identity can be defined as the agglomeration of personal and behavioral characteristics which distinguish an individual as a member of a certain group. Lots of factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture permit to people to cast themselves in a particular group and to be distinguishable from other groups which will eventually build their understanding and pride in the construct that they formed (who they are). Identity cannot be belittled only to a certain category as people may have more than one identity because of geography, social mobility and their choice or desire to belong to a particular community.

Across several sorts of literature, the theme of identity shines due to the fact that characters play as the basis to a textual content and form the plot. It does not matter when the text was written. It is always crucial for readers to scrutinize a characters’ identity and recall why they are the way they are and why they behave the way they behave. By so doing, this would help readers to have a deep and complete understanding of the overall and general content. The genre of ethnic literature developed through time as it deals with problems of formation of new identity, migration and exile in immigrants. Identity in literature may mean the appropriation of a new culture and language as a way of wording after migrating from his country of origin to another one. (Identity in Literature)

The term 'migrant literature' can be referred to as 'immigrant literature', 'migration literature' or 'ethnic literature' sometimes, and it describes the writings of writers who migrated from their native country to a new one. These writings deal with the experiences of the writer in his/her new country and how is s/he treated or accepted by the local people. The term is regarded as being negative as the writers feel that it belittles their works and efforts and projects such works as not a central or important type of literature.

After the two World Wars, the United States of America witnessed an important number of people moving in from different places such as Europe, Asia and people coming from former colonies to Europe, refugees, exiled people and guest workers. As a result, migrants were forced to leave behind them their culture and native language and to immerse themselves in their newly acquired identity in order to be included and assimilated in societies. Some of the writers preferred to write in their native language as they felt that it best expressed their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

When immigrants come to a new place where they have to work on themselves and build a new identity, they are obliged to be bi-cultural and bilingual in order to be accepted. The most prevalent themes in migrant literature stress on the process of integration, acculturation and identity formation. Migrant writers usually write about the problems of their native countries and the reasons behind their immigration. But, they also stress on how they feel in their new society, the difficulties they encounter abroad, the feeling of displacement, hostility, racism and nostalgia. Almost every country in the world has migrant writings as migration is considered as being a global phenomenon. The term 'migrant literature' covers wide types of writings such as 'post-colonial literature,' 'exile literature' and 'Gastarbeiter literature', the latter two, respectively, deal with migration and social, political and economic problems in the mother country. (Identity in Literature) 'Post-colonial literature', is the literature that resulted from people who moved from formerly colonized countries to imperial centers.

Migrant literature is described and well known as 'ethnic literature' in the United States. There is a multitude of literary works of various writers that are coming from different backgrounds such as Native Americans, Jewish Americans, African Americans, Chicano/Latino and Asian Americans in which their individual ethnic identity is stressed upon. One of the dominant and prevalent kinds of migrant literature is the modernized Jewish American literature which is the product of Jewish people and writers who were living in

Europe and fled to the United States seeking a home and refuge after the persecution of the Nazis in Europe right after the Second World War (WWII).

1.2 Ethnic Literature Defined

We cannot delve in ethnic literature without having a grasp of what “ethnic” means as it is the word that highlights the difference between “normal” literature and ethnic literature. According to Webster’s Dictionary, the word ethnic means relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background (Definition of ETHNIC, 2020).

People can be classified according to their ethnicity and thus we can classify Hispanics or Latinos according to their language (Spanish) more so than their race. African-Americans are being classed according to race, Asian-Americans are classed according to race, but often also subdivided according to their national origin, and for example a person that came from China can be referred to as a Chinese-American rather than Asian American. (hpuengprof.) Native Americans are usually classified by tribe, but sometimes by race as indigenous or native people. There can also be regional identifications in regards to where the person is from in the country such as-- New Yorkers, Californians, locals... etc.

Both regional and national identifications can be strengthened by moving away from the group because when they are dominant they are often taken for granted. Linguistic and cultural identifications are weakened through exposure to a dominant alternative culture as members of ethnic groups become assimilated. In her poem *Immigrants*, Pat Mora describes the process of assimilation as follow:

Wrap their babies in the American flag,
Feed them mashed hot dogs and apple pie,
Name them Bill and Daisy,
Buy them blonde dolls that blink blue
Eyes or a football and tiny cleats
Before the baby can even walk,
Speak to them in thick English
Hallo, babee, hallo
Whisper in Spanish or Polish
When the babies sleep, whisper
In a dark parent bed, that dark
Parent fear, 'Will they like
Our boy, our girl, our fine American boy,
Our fine American girl? (Pat, 1)

Ethnic literature is the literature in which the protagonists or, as in the case of poetry, the speakers, are conscious of being members of a group of people sharing a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic, or cultural heritage (hpuengprof). It's mostly defined by subject matter rather than the ethnic background of the author as this may raise some logical questions on who can and cannot write ethnic literature. For example, members of ethnic groups can write literature that is not "ethnic"; or people who are not part of a specific ethnic group can write ethnic literature about that group, but this will certainly raise difficult questions about authenticity that is why for the most part the majority of readers lean towards works written by 'insiders' rather than 'outsiders'(hpuengprof).

1.3 Generic Characteristics of Ethnic Literature

The first characteristic that comes to mind and is the most dominant throughout any ethnic literature book is hybridization of the characters of the book or even the mixture of

styles and genres used by the author. A major aspect that can also be noted when mentioning hybridization is the mixture of traditions from different cultures. In the book that is our case of study *The Shawl* by Cynthia Ozick we notice that Rosa, the main protagonist, is living trapped between two worlds struggling to belong to both, remembering how she used to live in her familial household with her parents and finding it hard to belong to the country where she resides as it was cited in the book “Can you imagine a family like us-my father who had been the director-general of the Bank of Warsaw, my sheltered mother, almost Japanese in her shyness and refinement, my two young brothers, my older brother, and me-all of us, who had lived in a tall house with four floors and a glorious attic.” (Ozick. 66)

Another characteristic is the presence of a culture transmitter-older person who passes the culture, traditions and wisdom to other personages. The multi or bilingualism of the characters is also a strong emphasis on the ethnicity of the characters, the incorporation of dreams, visions and other supernatural elements.

1.4 Themes of Ethnic Literature

The themes found in this type are repeated in numerous books as they are the pillar of the genre. For someone who comes from a different background being assimilated to a new culture is not something that can be done easily. Thus, the character and especially the author can endure some social pressure that comes from prejudices that are cast upon him by society, a challenge that can also be considered a burden for ethnic authors to be conquered and dealt with in their writings. If not the paramount challenge present in the genre, is the challenge of prejudice and cultural division. The author then faces two difficult options, either he portrays what he lived or what his ancestors lived in his writings which means that the author seeks an empathetic cultural response from his readers, or he can dodge the subject altogether out of fear of forgetting to mention important ethnic details. (Unit Two, 2020)

In her book *Cynthia Ozick's comic art* originally published in 1994, Cohen Sarah Blacher stated that Ozick was often criticized about writing Holocaust fiction but not participating in the historical event. Shortly after she published “*The Shawl*” there was a backlash as she was accused by many reviewers of “not only falsifying the awesome events, but [of] desecrating a text a sacred text whose ritual sanctity, historical accuracy, and literary authenticity, must at all cost, be preserved”(Cohen 157-158).

In the book *The Golde Redux: From Prague to Post-Holocaust Fiction* (2012) Elizabeth R. Baer mentioned that Ozick despised the feeling of being treated as an outsider, she

was asked to stop writing about the holocaust as she did not take part of it, for her the idea of making minor historical mistakes wasn't an excuse to be cast out of the circle. She could not afford being treated as an outsider and being looked at as an unaffiliated American writer with a detached conduct toward the Shoah (Baer 153). To that, as mentioned in Cohan Sarah Blacher's book *Cynthia Ozick's comic art*, she immediately replied "Every Jew":

Should feel as if himself came out of Egypt... The Exodus too place 4000 years ago, and yet the Haggadah enjoins me to incorporate it into my own mind and flesh, to so act as if it happened directly and intensely to me, not as mere witness but as participant. Well, if I am enjoined to belong to an event that occurred 4000 years ago, how much more strongly am I obliged to belong to an event that occurred only 40 years ago (Cohan 148).

In addition to the aforementioned societal expectation and racism, the facets of cultural division and prejudice require significant detail and thought on the part of the author.

We can find the theme of racism prominent as experiences of segregation and discrimination tend to be common in books of ethnic literature. Another prominent theme is the difference between generations and the conflicts that are begotten by it, especially between immigrant parents and their American born children or grandchildren. The latter will have, somehow, an updated set of values and a different perception than the one that their parents have because of the constant contact that they had with the American culture from their childhood, their way of dressing will change, their way of thinking too. Their religious values are also subject to change and this will lead to tensions in regards to their relationship with their parents. Duality and hybridity are also a common theme where the character struggles to belong to both places and this will lead-up to feeling lost and losing all sense of originality in regards to his culture of origin, since Miriam Sivan, in her book that is titled *Belonging Too Well: Portraits of Identity in Cynthia Ozick's Fiction* (2009), argues that:

Disengagement such as this is not uncommon among many of America's minorities when the tension of belonging too well to the majority culture comes at the expense of site-specific ethnic and religious identities. In a bid for normalcy, according to standards preexistent in the mainstream, members of minority groups change names and dress, compromise religious observance, and intermarry with

other ethnic groups, contributing to a deconstruction of originary distinctiveness. (Sivan 1)

1.4.1 Ethnicity and Identity

Race, class, ethnicity and nationality are complexly intertwined. Cultural identity can be perceived as a collective one true self that envelops shared cultural codes and same history("Ethnicity and Identity"). One might ask how so? And the logical answer is that these traits are a common post-colonial frame, where collective dignity, meaning and sense of belonging are derived from ancestral roots(Hall, and Morley, 223). Difference can also be a key factor in understanding cultural identity meaning that history constantly changes ancestral histories and this will lead to the constant dynamic of “becoming” rather than just “being” (Du Gay, and Hall, 4). The quest for meaning is constantly active which leads the person to search for who he truly is. So the person will take this quest seriously and will be flexible about it. This will lead the person to a state of creation, creation of something that is new and that conveys meaning rather than re-discovery and thus leading to more potential and power.

Ethnic trauma can be extrapolated from the sense of oneself as the ‘other’, where the real subject is the class that dominates and you are their not-me, then identity is given to the subject but stripped from the other (Hall, and Morley, 223).Furthermore Stuart Hall argues that the representation of blacks passed through two phases, from challenging the racist stereotypes to sticking and asserting a positive view on the black identity in regimes of representation (Hall, and Morley, 290).

When people are scattered and there has been a diaspora, their reunification re-creates identity, leading to the creation of new cultural codes and giving shared meaning by these people. Separation leads to the distortion of identity and even its loss, but re-unification intonates as restoration of the things lost due to separation. Re-discovery is served by hidden histories, re-telling and rebirth in identities that cast off identities that emerged because of abuse and especially oppression, thus giving hope for a more radiant and better future, as this was afflicted upon Jews by the Nazi oppression. This oppression resulted in Jews exodus to the United States that happened after the events of the *Shoah*;the literature indicates:

Each wave of immigrants brought along, besides a common but abstract sense of people hood, its own cultural baggage – e.g. its own language (Ladino, German, Yiddish), its own religious and cultural traditions (Sephardi, Reform, Hassidic, and Misnagdic), its own particular collective memories (expulsion, emancipation, pogroms) –and each produced a

literature reflecting both its distinct heritage and its peculiar experience of acculturation(Nesher and Kramer, 3).

1.4.2 Identity in Psychology and Philosophy

“In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity” (Erikson, 38).

Edwards claims in his *book Language and Identity an introduction (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics)* which was published in 2009 that the principal substance of identity is resemblance, things that look alike are the same even the word itself is derived from the Latin idem (19.) As he explains that this basic sense is what supports the notion of identity as it envelops personality too. He continues further by stating that the ‘sameness’ through times and circumstances, that this person remains the same and will not become another person and will continue to be the same through the long path that is life (19).

Many factors shape the creation of the ‘I’ of the person, in other words the identity of the person is the fusion of a lot of ingredients such as their experiences, memories, relationships and values. All these create one’s sense of self (Identity, 01).

Over time, a steady sense of which one is, is created and even new aspects are developed and incorporated into one’s identity. The father of identity research Erik Erikson proposed a theory where the lifecycle is divided into eight phases(Identity, 01). Where each includes a conflict that is resolved which leads to the development of the personality of one’s self. He claimed that the discord that happens during the adolescence is “role confusion versus identity.” (Identity, 01)

Edwards further argues that Jenkins stresses upon two ‘primary identifications’ that are the sense of self of the person and one’s gender identity but also ethnicity and kinship are considered as the other two principal identities even though that in his eyes they lack the global usability of self and gender. (19)

People struggle with a lot of and different facets of identity, from selecting an appropriate career path to collecting political and moral beliefs to becoming a lover, husband, partner or a friend. Not following through one’s path will result in role confusion as they both are the result of each. After that, people experiment before sticking or committing the pieces of their identity. The identity creation is at its peak during adolescence but the process does not end there. For example, when one becomes a parent, this means he is taking a new role and can make this process of ‘self-definition’ a lifelong process (Identity, 01)

Erikson also made up the term “ego identity”, which he explained as being the continuous and enduring sense of who the person is. The ego identity is the tool that merges all the facets of the persona of the person (the sexual self, the parent self and the career self) into a whole entity. So that when anything bad happens unexpectedly the person always leans on herself and knows that there’s a stable sense of self. When growing old Identity achievement is the main goal, but life happens and brings unexpected things to the table, such as retirement, divorce, or the death of a close person. These traumas lead the person to explore and redefine themselves and their identities.

‘Who am I’ is the global existential question that comes to everyone’s head in a certain period of time. This question in itself intrigued a lot of scholars through time and had numerous books written about it just to solve the problem of identity. In a lot of cases it’s related to the ‘who do I want my future self to be?’ and the answer to these question is really complex. Identity in itself is the result of ideas, political opinions, religious beliefs and moral attitudes. All of these push the person to their everyday choices that he/she makes. External characteristics are also involved in the makings of identity. Such as the things that a person has no control over, like race, socioeconomic class and height to name a few. It also includes the mixture of relationships in a person’s life, their childhood identity, parent, partner and friend.

Unity: we can consider “identity” as a single entity or as Maturana and Varela called a ‘Unity’, it is an individual thing that can be named clearly.

What makes the unity different in comparison to other unities is its own boundaries. ‘I am not ‘YOU’. Unity can be defined by a singular, magisterial other that defines the ‘it’. Ideology and culture are the two main creators of the depersonalized identity that is served to an object or human subject. They [culture and ideology] are the two elements who give the person a role and incorporate him/her in it. Which eventually they will lead him to find himself aware and accepting the position that was imposed or given to him with all its rules and implications.

The perception of identity can be described as having many and separate building blocks, and that is looking well beyond the simple unity. Freud explained it with describing the id, ego and super ego, which are considered the building blocks that make the persona of the person. Most evidently, the awake and conscious ‘me’ who thinks that he is the one in control of the vehicle, and there is the deep, obscure unconscious that has a say in what ‘I’ think, do, believe and feel as a result leading it to be who I am. (*"Identity Is"*)

The multiple personality theory claims that we are a collection of separate identities. For example, a person that has schizophrenia has layers of identities so far and separates each from another that they may not seem to recognize each other. If looked at meticulously, we are not the same person when at work than when we are at home or in the gym. 'I' am also the accumulation of my memories and histories, and therefore a seven-year old boy as well as a forty three year old man("Identity Is").Edwards further argues that in Orwell's discussion about the cultural continuity of the English, the links between the England of 1840 and 1940: 'What have you in common with the child of five whose photograph your mother keeps on the mantelpiece? Nothing, except that you happen to be the same person (Edwards 19; Orwell 64)

Under the collective identity theory lens, it is considered that the spectrum of identity is a large kit of parts with a familiar and common theme. As there is not a net boundary and the actual extent of identity is hard to discern or name, as the individual fragments may be connected in a temporary way with the other parts. Nations are known from their identity, crowds too, and each mirrors back to the individual. People tend to connect with each other that they become an essential part of who we are. But the collectives may change over time as they can connect between themselves or disassemble, forming and distorting identity. Whereas, the classic approaches to identity are easier and simpler and widely open to criticism. For example, I know who 'I' am under a lucid spirit most of the time and do not worry about who I might also be. Individual identity in classic psychology appears to culminate over time and especially during the childhood stages according to the Freudian theories and Lacanian psychoanalysis. 'Finding the self' is a game played by humans in religion since thousands of years, or in therapy, recently. It's believed that if we dive deep enough and heal the broken layers, then a complete and gorgeous 'real me' will arise.("Identity Is")

From the deconstructive standpoint of postmodernism and critical theory, identity raises deep interrogations of difficult detail, as it [identity] is not looked at as a thing but a process a continuous reaction and response to external incitation or stimuli. As it is difference that is regarded as the constructor of identity. Dissimilarity leads to separation and opposition from which identity arises. We are created by others and the constant contact with society. Otherness is key in order for a person to recognize herself, as he has to be separate from others but still be himself. In his book Richard Webster entitled *The Cult of Lacan: Freud, Lacan and the Mirror Stage*(2002),claims that Lacan's concept of the mirror stage was

strongly inspired by earlier work by psychologist Henri Wallon, who speculated based on observations of animals and humans responding to their reflections in the mirror. Lacan claims that the mirror is an early means of separation.

The process of identification is the core process that gives identity birth. For example, you talk to me and I accept the position to be a subject. The time passes and my investment in that role increases, little by little its rules are adopted by me, its benefits and limitations too. What I will say is the product of culture and ideology, and identities are arising unexpectedly, appearing in the bilateral space between us while we are speaking to each other, I realize who I am and then change that realization with each conversation that we are having.

I am shaped and reshaped everyday as identities are imperfect and incomplete, as we humans have narrow rationality and definite time, in looking for closure on perceptiveness and concepts. We set a limit and wear the 'this is me' mask, although we don't have an idea if this is limited or not ("Identity").

Language also plays a big role in the formation of identity, as both are two faces of the same coin, meaning first, the identity of the person that is speaking emerged through his spoken words, then there are the other identities named and created through words. In writing, Roland Barthes suggests to the reader that he should consider the death of the author so as he can be liberated from the burden of guessing at what is intended (*Barthes et al. 148*). A notion similar to that of Auerbach's narrative tyranny in biblical texts (*Auerbach, 22-23*) Unities are created and given life by language, as words are unique and each word means something different and describes a whole separate thing, which translates to without division a word is not logical or possible. Moreover, to give something a name, we must firstly have to feel, perceive and conceive its difference from other things. Language gives the ability to create opposites and differences. Down makes up and good makes bad as bellow makes above and not me makes I as I make not-me. ("Identity")

Dictionaries give insight by giving basic explanations to words and meaning, but these two change individually and in combination with the situation. The person and the moment which resonates to what I said two days ago means entirely something different when I think about it now and this leads us to understand that language is also time and context dependent. ("Identity")

In the end, identity is a word, and it is in itself subject to change depending on the context, time and the various reasons mentioned above meaning that anybody can be whoever he wants to be.

It is with the help of death that life has a sense, what most people consider as a duality between death and life, is in fact just two faces of the same coin. We as humans tend to fear the unknown, and thus this fear lets us speculate and imagine what really happens in the after life. Every person that is not bound by religion asks where does the soul go? For example Hindus ask if the person that died will be reincarnated. Where does spirituality stand in all of this? As death can begets traumas to the persons that lost someone dear to them and sometimes even the identity of the deceased can carry on in various ways in the heads of his relatives or anyone who had a connection with him. (*Death and identity*)

Identity is related to time, thus leading it [identity] to be situated in it. When thinking about someone deceased we unconsciously put him into a period of time. By doing, so the memories of that time that are in our head gives them definition and fixed, irremovable meaning. The death of a young person makes them young forever in our perception, when a parent loses his child he is forced to live the rest of his life remembering the ghost identity of his child. For example, in Ozick's "*The Shawl*", Rosa a young Jewish woman loses her only child in the most horrendous way possible. A Nazi soldier throws Magda, which was fifteen-month-old at that time, on an electrified fence and kills her instantly without hesitation. This experience traumatized Rosa for the rest of her life and anchored in her head even though time passed by. The idea of Magda living resonated in Rosa's head for the rest of the story as she could not let the thought of her daughter get out of her head. The narrator in the novel carried out:

And Rosa too, never mind how Stella was sour over it, she would tell about Magda, a beautiful young woman of thirty, thirty-one: a doctor married to a doctor; large house in Mamaroneck, New York; two medical offices, one on the first floor, one in the finished basement. Stella was alive, why not Magda? Who was Stella, coarse Stella, to insist that Magda was not alive? Stella the Angel of Death. Magda alive, the pure eyes, the bright hair. Stella, never a mother, who was Stella to mock the kisses Rosa put in Magda's shawl? She meant to crush it into her mouth. (Ozick 35)

Identities get overemphasized after the death of a dear person to us, as we glorify and stereotype the departed. Death freezes and magnifies affection, as the person that was dear to

us and passed away will live on in our head and can be idealized as he/she can no longer do wrong or harm.

Identity can be easily influenced and distorted via external elements such as immigration, language, place, death and time among an infinity of other elements. Identity in literature is interconnected with ethnicity as seen in the chapter above as writers tend to lean toward their ethnic roots when writing pieces of literature.

Globally, Jews have always been subject to hate, violence, oppression and anti-Semitism. It begun from Pharaoh's time and reached its peak in Hitler's Nazi Germany where the holocaust took place, but this kind of oppression in itself helped shape Jewish identity and is indivisible from it. The present chapter will deal with how both anti-Semitism and the Holocaust played a role in the making of modern day Jewish identity and its writings.

2.1 How Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust Helped Shape Jewish Identity

Without anti-Semitism, Nazism would have been inconceivable, both as an ideology and as a catalyst of the emotions. As for German society only two of its many sub-groups, the cultivated liberal minority among the bourgeoisie, and the politically educated segment of the working class, were relatively immune to anti-Semitism. (Grunberger, 466)

Anti-Semitism and the holocaust both have become principal to Jewish Identity. Throughout time a lot of people and scholars showed interest in their centrality in the role they play in the making of Jewish identity. Some view the holocaust memory as an over accentuation in the daily lives of Jews. While others claim that a Jew cannot be a Jew without anti-Semitism as it is written deeply in their psychological and sociological sides. With these reflections an important question arises: Does anti-Semitism and the Holocaust play too large a role in the shaping of Jewish identity?

Anti-Semitism (ăn'tēsēm'ĭtĭz'əm, ăn'tī) as explained in Webster's dictionary is the hostility or discrimination towards Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group. (MWD)It is a form of prejudice against Jews going from antipathy to violent loathing. Before it became political, anti-Semitism was especially religious as Jews were regarded as the ones that betrayed Jesus Christ and led to his crucifixion. Before the 19th century Jews were persecuted and expelled from the areas they occupied—especially their expulsion from Spain under the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. The persecutions that they endured as an ethnic group did not stop only to the religious side but they expanded and went on to be economical and personal restrictions. This persecution in its roots was economical as Jews did not have the right to pursue occupations that were 'taboo' such as money lending(Roth 18).

Cohen argues that Jewish identity was shaped by the history of anti-Semitism. Its beginning is rooted in biblical times, where Pharaoh was the first that acknowledged the national identity of the Hebrews and immediately wanted to cast them out (Cohen 18).

Thus meaning that anti-Semitism is a principal external element that constitutes Jewish identity.

After the liberation of Jews that was gained from the French revolution and 18th century enlightenment they were looked at as being a different and distinct race. Before that, they were met with resentment that had its roots in economy and religion. 19th century marked the rising of nationalism and this in itself played a huge role in the treatment that Jews received (“Antisemitism in History”, 01).

The stance of conscious preservation that was taken by Orthodox Jews did not help in the matter as they created religious and cultural barriers that isolated Jewish minorities from the rest of societies where they lived. Between the periods where Napoleon fell and Hitler rose the Catholic Church contributed to the amplification of anti-Semitism as it failed miserably to condemn it. The rise of Zionism was the natural reaction to the anti-Semitic actions that were inflicted on Jews, as it [Zionism] was the cradle that held their [Jews] political views and expressions (“Antisemitism in History”, 01).

In France, provocateurs such as Eduard Drummond used the Jews as a pretext to stir the masses against the existing government. In Russia it was the other way around, as the government was the one that used the Jews as the principal outlet where people had to channel their hate and discontent towards [Jews].

In 1881 Alexander II was assassinated, this led to the migration of millions of Russian and Polish Jews who were seeking refuge in other countries. This exodus in itself put emphasis on the feeling that Jews were intruders and strangers to the societies they went to. In addition, a document that goes by the title *‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’* made its way from Russia to the world in the 20th century. In it there was an outline that described how the Jews plan to dominate the world. Right after the Russian Revolution of 1917 Jews were accused of plotting to dominate the world by their international financial power or by a Bolshevik revolution.

In the 19th century, theories that were pseudoscientific in nature emerged and emphasized on the point that the Aryan race is the superior race to exist. These theories found refuge in the writings of Joseph Arthur Gobinau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain but climaxed in Alfred Rosenberg’s thoughts and writings. Adolf Hitler’s doctrine of German National Socialism adopted these theories that helped shape the thinking of Nazis. It is

estimated that between 1939 and 1945 five to six million Jews were exterminated, which makes this racial extermination that took place during World War II unparalleled in history.

Cohen argues that negative attitudes towards Jews by well-respected philosophers and social scientists have had an impact on the field of ethnic studies. Jewish identity may be said to challenge philosophical, psychological, and socio-historical approaches (Cohen 18)

Sartre argued in his book *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1948) that anti-Semitism is a principal factor in the creation of Jewish identity, and their existence as a different distinct group would stop without it. (Sartre 61)

Furthermore in his article Cohen claims that a lot of studies have been conducted on the matter of internal cohesion of the Jewish people. And the bond of loyalty between them [Jews] stems in the external pressure that is caused by anti-Semitism. He further argued that Jewish researchers examined the abundance of anti-Semitic impacts on Jewish identity both in Jewish circles and outside of them, meaning Jews vis-à-vis Jews and Jews vis-à-vis non-Jewish people. In their research they highlighted on the long term effects, the sociological and psychological impacts left by the Shoah on Jewish identity. In his book entitled *Jewish Identity Research: A State of the Art*, Cohen stated that:

The intertwined histories of the Shoah and the birth of the State of Israel have had a deep and lasting impact on Israeli national identity (Auron, 2006, 2008; Levy, 1996; Zertal, 1998). This connection is being reinforced and emphasized among today's Israeli youth through educational programs, visits to YadVashem, and pilgrimages to sites in Europe (Auron, 2008; Feldman, 2000, 2001). (Cohen 19)

In 1988, the March of the Living was founded as an annual pilgrimage that starts from the Nazi concentration camps in Poland to Israel. In the official website it is claimed that it uses the holocaust to "strengthen Jewish identity, connections to Israel and build a community of future Jewish leaders." In its 31th march until now, over a quarter million of Jewish teens and adults have participated in the March of the Living. The program is considered widely effective and deeply meaningful to Jewish people.

The march and Fackenheim's idea, that Jews must always stay vigilant by not giving Hitler what he had in mind especially posthumously, complete each other. Fackenheim commented on his article *Jewish Faith and the Holocaust* that was published in 1968 that "Jews are forbidden to hand Hitler posthumous victories" he further continued:

They are commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz, lest their memory perish. They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape into either cynicism or otherworldliness, lest they cooperate in delivering the world over to the forces of Auschwitz. Finally, they are forbidden to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish. A secularist Jew cannot make himself believe by a mere act of will, nor can he be commanded to do so ... And a religious Jew who has stayed with his God may be forced into new, possibly revolutionary relationships with Him. One possibility, however, is wholly unthinkable. As Jews may not respond to Hitler's attempt to destroy Judaism by himself co-operating in its destruction. In ancient times, the unthinkable Jewish sin was idolatry. Today, it is to respond to Hitler by doing his work. (Fackenheim)

In 2013 a survey was conducted by Pew Research Center of Jews in the United States, which 73 percent of the Jews that took part in it claimed that “remembering the Holocaust” was necessary to being Jewish. This response was the most rated among others to the question of “what makes you feel Jewish?” getting more votes than values such as “leading an ethical and moral life,” “working for justice/equality,” “being part of a Jewish community,” “caring about Israel” or “observing Jewish law.

The result of the survey in itself presents a strong argument of the place that the holocaust holds in the eyes and hearts of Jews.

In an essay adapted from a video lecture that is entitled *Beyond Dispute: debates that shape Jewish life*, Historian in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Edna Friedberg argues that:

The paradox of the dominant American Jewish approach to the Holocaust is that it is both the vehicle to define our distinct identity, our separateness, and it simultaneously works to draw us closer to the non-Jewish majority. The legendary

Jewish historian Salo Baron criticized what he called the “lachrymose view of Jewish history,” which stressed persecutions and Jewish suffering in place of a more nuanced understanding of Jewish-gentile interaction. Are Holocaust education and memorialization different from or consistent with a Jewish tradition that has always made a ritual out of remembering tragedies from the past? How do we achieve balance between painful memory, and literacy in Judaism and other Jewish historical events and culture? Grappling with these difficult and persistent questions can help us reflect on how the Holocaust has shaped our collective American Jewish identity and consider the role we want the Holocaust to play in shaping our Jewish future. (Friedberg)

It was until 1999 that the United Nations condemned anti-Semitism as a form of racism, as it was widely accepted internationally. Politically, the existence of anti-Semitism has put pressure and complication on the internal politics. Political opposition to Israeli policies in other countries surged through time especially in Arab and Islamic countries. It [anti-Semitism] increased because of the treatment inflicted by Jews on Palestinians and the existence of Israel as a country. Rightwing nationalistic movements, which are anti-Semitic, raised their voices in certain European countries, former Soviet Union and Germany in the 1990s. In the United States, anti-Semitism was never considered as an instrument of national policy but there was a rise in hostility in certain communities and states that led to exclusion of Jews from housing, schools and the denial of membership in certain private clubs.

Holocaust is considered as the weak spot of Jewish people. Anyone who wants to hurt or discriminate a Jew will attack him using negatively or making fun of the holocaust. In 2006 and 2016 respectively the Iranian government did this. Iran did a contest where holocaust cartoons were made and the selected winners were a cartoon that featured Israeli soldiers as Nazis and the second showed Anne Frank sleeping with Hitler.

2.2 The Impact of the Shoah on Jewish Writings

As explained in Webster’s dictionary the word Shoah literally means catastrophe in Hebrew (MWD).

It [Shoah] is the name of the period that European Jews were persecuted and exterminated by the Nazis. Jews were not the only ones that suffered from the holocaust. Gypsies, disables persons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and homosexuals to name a few were also its victims. Even though anti-Semitism was present in Europe way before Nazis conducted their

atrocities as mentioned above, the organized persecution of German Jews started once Hitler was in charge in 1933. Jews were deprived from their legal rights, then terrified in anti-Jewish riots (such as Kristallnacht), then sent to ghettos and had everything taken from them. The final step was to divide them on the 27 main concentration camps and the 1000 sub camps. It was the Schutzstaffel that was the responsible for the camps under the control of Heinrich Himmler (Stefansson et al.).

After the start of WW II, death camps were established as part of Hitler's plan and were called "the final solution of the Jewish question." Nazis Germany counted a shocking 42,500 slave labor, brothels, ghettos, concentration camps among other facilities used to confine and/or to exterminate Jews in the parts that were annexed by Nazis then. Outside of Kiev at BabiYar (Ukr. *BabynYar*), in one operation alone over 30000 Jews were exterminated. From 1942—42 in Soviet Europe 1.7 million Jews were shot to death. According to a study conducted by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum a colossal 15 to 20 million people were imprisoned or died at the hands of the Nazis of which six million Jews had been killed. He continued that while Zionists helped send some to Palestine principal the only way Jews resisted to the persecution that was inflicted on them was spiritual resistance. 60,000 Jews rebelled in 1943 after they saw more than 450000 of their own being taken from Warsaw Ghetto to death camps. The rebels fought their lives off, some were captured while others were killed and those who remained alive joined the resistance. It is well known that the European church didn't help, but some non-Jewish priests and men of God saved many Jewish lives. The biggest example is when Danes sent most of Danish Jews who remained there in private boats to Sweden even though they were under Nazi occupation (Stefansson et al., 30).

After the war billions of dollars were paid to survivors who were persecuted by Nazis. Nazi leaders were tried for war crimes at Nuremburg and either sentenced or killed. The church officially admitted in 1998 the Catholic involvement in the ever-existing European anti-Semitism that stirred the holocaust. Poetry, diaries, memoirs, novels, histories and prayer saw light in an attempt to understand the Holocaust religiously and secularly. Religious materials put emphasis on the issue whether one can still use traditional Jewish terms of a god, active in history, who recompenses the ones who are virtuous and who has a unique relationship with Jewish people. On the other hand, the secular materials have tried to view and investigate how the Shoah happened and the reactions it begot out of the victims that endured it. Some suggested that an implicit form of anti-Semitism had spread into Germany.

It was fueled by a deeply rooted and full-scale despair paired with a damaged and unacknowledged sense of worthlessness that was the result of the crushing and humiliation of hardships and the disintegration of the Weimar republic. There has been museums and memorials established worldwide to preserve the memory of the holocaust such as the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Hesse, Germany, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and YadVashem in Jerusalem.(Literature on the Holocaust, p.1)

In American Jewish literature or Hebrew literature or even in any language that Jewish literature was written in, the events of the Shoah are depicted through drama, poetry and literature. Some literature about it [Shoah] is written under the veil of historical fiction that depicts the true events, adding only a dose of dialogue that goes logically with the events depicted. Other writings are removed from the real course of events while using parables and other literary means to get to the idea they want to convey.

As an example, in his third Zuckerman novel, Philip Roth wrote the following shocking detail about the protagonist's ill mother:

A year after his [father's] death she developed a brain tumor. [F]our months later, when they admitted her again, she was able to recognize her neurologist when he came by the room, but when he asked if she could write her name for him on a piece of paper, she took the pen from his hand and instead of "Selma" wrote the word "Holocaust" perfectly spelled. This was in Miami Beach in 1970, inscribed by a woman whose writings otherwise consisted of recipes on index cards, several thousand thank-you notes, and a voluminous file of knitting instructions. Zuckerman was pretty sure that before that morning she'd never even spoken the word aloud. Her responsibility wasn't brooding on horrors but sitting at night getting the knitting done and planning the next day's chores. But she had a tumor in her head the size of a lemon, and it seemed to have forced out everything except the one word. That it couldn't dislodge. It must have been there all the time without their even knowing. (Roth 447-448)

Both Jewish and non-Jewish writers have written about the Shoah in the French language, especially putting an emphasis on how Jews used to live in camps. Jorge Semprun and Charlotte Delbo are between the most well-known non-Jewish figures who dealt with this subject under a lens. On the other hand, Elie Wiesel works are considered as the best known pieces of literature that dealt with the Shoah written by a French Jewish writer. His first work was written in Yiddish and published in French in 1958. It was titled *La Nuit* and later

published in English as *Night* in 1964. In a passage from the book he weighs in on the impact that the camp had on him as he notes:

NEVER SHALL I FORGET that night, the first night in camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky. Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith for-ever. Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes. Never shall I forget those things; even were I condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never. (Wiesel 34)

The novel has been translated into many languages and is almost autobiographical. His later works depict a poetic world that has its roots in Jewish tradition and transcend real life lived holocaust experience.

Another important novel that depicts realistically the universe of concentration camps is *The Whole Land Brimstone* written by French Jewish author Anna Langfus and published in English in 1962. Another book that holds a big significance on the matter of Holocaust literature is *The Last of the Just* that was written by Andre Schwarz-Bart. This book uses parables and allegories by using the Jewish folk tradition regarding the role of the 36 righteous people in sustaining the world. The author touches to subjects such as the significance of the sanctity of the name of God. (Literature on the Holocaust, 2)

By the end of the 1980s, the majority of German writers viewed holocaust themes as being taboo and avoided them altogether. But before the 1980s the most known writer who dealt with the Nazi regime (although he dealt with the holocaust indirectly) was probably Gunther Grass. Somewhat less known than Grass was Jacob Lind, who dealt explicitly with Jewish themes in his writings. (Literature on the Holocaust, 2)

It is no surprise that the Holocaust comes as the main theme or a secondary theme in infinity of literary works in Hebrew. Some of Israel's most top-notch and bestselling authors have dealt with Holocaust including HaimGuri, Dan Ben Amotz, and David Grossman among many others. Some such as YehielDinur and AharonAppelfeld are known especially for their holocaust writings. Besides, numerous translations of Hebrew works about the Shoah have been done to other languages. Hebrew drama has also been touched by the subject of the

Shoah as playwrights such as Yehoshua Sobol and Motti Lerner have touched to sensitive subjects such as collaboration with the Nazis and the theatres that existed in the ghettos. (Literature on the Holocaust, 4)

Hebrew literature and poetry dealing with the holocaust has been created by three generations of writers and poets. The 1940s generation did not write firsthand, their works were based on the basis of the dreadfulness of the holocaust. The second generation was the one who witnessed the rise and creation of the state of Israel. Most of these [second generation] writers and poets changed the direct approach that was used by their predecessors for a newer one that consisted in using indirect means to express the horrors of the Shoah. Personal and national trauma was expressed by poets such as Itamar Yezerski, Dan Pagis and Yaakov Besser among others as they lived their childhood or youth in the peak of WW II. The third and last generation of Hebrew writers and poets who dealt with the Shoah consists mainly of children of Shoah survivors. (Literature on the Holocaust, 4)

After the end of the war, a wave of writing that dealt especially with the holocaust saw the light in Poland, but it was silenced under the Stalinist regime. But in late 1960s after a wave of anti-Semitism ended a great deal of attention was put towards Jewish-Polish relations in the time of the Holocaust. Janusz Korczak is considered as the pillar that dealt Polish Holocaust Literature.

When the communist regime fell, an infinity of works was published. Ida Frank's short stories are considered as one of the most realistic pieces of writings that have been written. Her works have been published and translated into English, Hebrew and other languages. Subjects such as the lack of choices or the terrible choices that Jews encountered during the reign of the Nazis are dealt with.

The quantity of English literature that dealt with the Shoah both as translated and in original form is immense. This surge in itself represented the amount of interest that was given to the subject in the United States at the end of the 20th century, especially the last three decades. In the American culture the holocaust was viewed through the eyes of others such as immigrant survivors that came seeking for refuge and soldiers who were in the front lines of the war. The first traces of the writings that dealt with the holocaust in America can be found in the journals of the soldiers who survived and returned. The horrors that they saw exceeded what language could convey, a perfect example is the works of John Hersey (*The Wall*, 1950), Bernard Malamud (*The Assistant*, 1957), and Lewis Wallant (*The Pawnbroker*, 1961). The 1970 marked the period where the voices of the survivors begun to be heard. In the American

diaspora it was Elie Wiesel's works that made the bigger impact on the American reading public. In addition, Jewish and non-Jewish writers used the holocaust as a theme in their works. Among them are Cynthia Ozik (*The Shawl*, 1989), Saul Bellow (*Mr. Sammler's Planet*, 1972), and William Styron (*Sophie's Choice*, 1979). In the last decade of the 20th century the impact of holocaust literature was so big and great that it has been taught as a principal subject in many universities and colleges across America. (Literature on the Holocaust, 4)

Modern Yiddish literature was stopped by the holocaust. Nevertheless, refugees and Jews who lived in ghettos never stopped writing it as it was the principal source that provided spiritual nourishment for the population there. In the camps there was no place where the Jews could hide their works as it was hard to find a hiding spot there, even the ones that came back alive, came empty-handed. But somehow, a little number of works was saved such as Zalman Gradowski's *In Harts fun Gehenem* (*In the Heart of Hell*). Some of songs that were sung in Auschwitz, Chelmno, Treblinka and other camps were published by Nahum Blumenthal.

Finally, literature and poetry that deal with the holocaust is considered as a language that is a way to feel and relate to the atrocities that were inflicted on Jews as it is a tool to remember their sufferings and somehow to be in their shoes. As Jewish tradition always made a ritual from remembering past tragedies. Jewish literature and poetry on the holocaust was written in many languages as original creations of translated works, an infinity of books has been written in Russian, Czech, Dutch, Italian, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian and French to cite a few.

As an author of short stories, Ozick balances herself between Judaism and modernism seeking to blend the two when she can. In *The Shawl* and through Rosa as a character, especially Ozick tries to convey a subliminal message: how to survive after losing everything including yourself. The third chapter will focus mainly on Ozick's implicit use of liturgy in a non-religious text and its inoculation with Judaic tradition.

3.1 Liturgy in Ozick's *The Shawl*: between Past and Continuity

"*The Shawl*" (1980) begins brusquely with this line 'Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell.' (01) Ozick begins her book this way in order to put the reader in her character's shoes. While putting the reader in a limbo of discomfort by using techniques such as surprise and paradox to enhance the pictures she wants to convey.

"*The Shawl*" is also deeply inoculated with tradition, as Ozick also uses what Elisabeth Rose refers to as liturgical postmodernism that combines "traditionalism, didacticism, and mysticism, yet also counter-traditionalism, meaning-reversion, and self-referentialism." (Rose 93)

Ozick stresses on an important aspect of narration, which is: fiction can transmit moral truths which will in their turn give birth to stories. She highlights the Judaic atmosphere in which the victims who were led to the concentration camps with other Jews were feeling just the same as their ancestors in Egypt felt when Pharaoh wanted to exterminate them. Thus Ozick here is making a parallel line between Pharaoh's time and Hitler's and thus including tradition in a non-traditional text.

From the beginning the reader is directly led to share the protagonist's toil while she is taken to a Nazi concentration camp where her baby will be murdered there by a Nazi soldier. In "*The Shawl*", Ozick liturgically bound in non-traditional writing answers this question "How can we live after a destruction?" (Ezek. 33:10) that is found in the Old Testament by exploring another question that is: How is it possible to witness such a destruction and still not lose yourself?

In her essay "Toward New Yiddish" Ozick uses the term "liturgical literature" to define her writings. In essence the word liturgy means the typical public worship performed by a religious group. In the Judaic religion, Jewish liturgy means prayer recitations that are a

part of Rabbinic Judaism. Thus, Ozick's liturgical literature is part of her New Yiddish language, which has the religious Judaic sanctity just as the old Yiddish. Both her writings and Judaism share one characteristic and that is they are both historically informed yet where her writings differ from Judaism is that they are not explicitly religious. She further cements this claim in her essay by arguing that: "There is nothing artistically confining about a liturgical literature: on the contrary, to include history is to include everything." (Ozick 338) Her writings are directly written for the Yavneh and especially American Jewish community specifically, she further argues in her essay

...Can there be a Yavneh in America, where all the Jews speak a Gentile language and breathe a Gentile culture? My answer is this: it can happen if the Jews of America learn to speak a new language appropriate to the task of a Yavneh. (336)

In her liturgical literature Ozick avoids what she calls a unique voice created mainly to reward the author but instead of that this kind of literature takes on "a public instead of a coterie form." (339) This combined accentuation is open to any kind of artistic innovation but prevents experimentation in order to remain. For her, tradition and history are the unique parents of all the creative techniques. Flexibility, fluidity and surprise are preferred and chosen upon "the didactic or prescriptive" "It [liturgical literature] will itself induce new forms, will in fact be a new form] (343)

As far as the researcher's case study the liturgical momentum in "*The Shawl*" is highlighted in four different aspects. First, experimentation is key in the liturgical literature and this is what Ozick did while writing the book. By experimenting this way her book can't be easily classified in the category of "Holocaust literature." Second, it contains a critical gesture of immense risk: the transmutation, expressive and nasty description of Magda's inhuman murder. In the book Magda is considered as the ultimate symbol of beauty that later reappears in order to put emphasis on the ugliness of Rosa's later existence. Third, in the book Magda is the unique audience for Rosa's testimony about the holocaust even though she is dead thus meaning that in the eyes of Ozick she fits her theological condition of a collective purpose for the story. Finally, Magda's death resonates all along the story by giving meaning where there is none and be Rosa's guide just in order for her to survive the destruction that was inflicted on her.(Omori 96)

Not being able to classify "*The Shawl*" in a literary column makes it an irregularity in the literature field and is on par with Ozick's explanation of 'Liturgical literature' as a result leading it to be where she wants it to be in both the intellectual and religious context. In

Judaism one of the biggest and powerful commandments is to bear witness; Irving Greenberg puts it this way “To be a Jew is to hear stories and claim them as one’s own ... to keep telling them to someone else” (Greenberg 12) Yet the story of the Nazi Shoah, hits right in the center of Judaism which is the persistence and continuity of the Jewish race on earth. In telling this [Shoah] story, they [Jews] have the “obligation, self-imposed and self-accepted (however ineluctably), to describe a meaning and wrest instruction from the historical.” (Berger 11) Right before he was shot dead by Nazis, Simon Dubnow who was a strict secular nationalist shouted “Yidn – Fahrschreibt! Fahrschreibt! [Jews, record! record!] (Fein xvii) Elie Wiesel highlighted in his book ‘A Jew Today’ the facts that he [Dubnow] shouted ‘record’ and not ‘create’ stating that “Holocaust Literature” in itself is a contradiction, he later argued that Auschwitz rejects and denies all doctrines and theories and stresses the fact that locking it into a philosophy means restricting it. (197)

In 1969 Ozick stated that Jewish writers must “retrieve the holocaust freight car by car, town by town, road by road, document by document. The task is to save it from becoming literature” (Ozick 19); meaning that Ozick always showed her concern regarding art and recorded history.

She [Ozick] always advised against “bare” literature that exists just to exist and thus leading it to devoid the Holocaust from its real literary background. She further argued that such literary figment has its “corona of moral purpose” removed and thus is considered a form of idolization, and hence is a transgression of the second Commandment. Her [Ozick’s] stance has changed since then as she cannot ax unambiguously this form of literature as she did a long time ago, admitting in a recent interview that the Shoah comes into her work “unbidden, unsummoned.” (Kremer 218)

Because of the momentum of its horrors, the events of the Shoah somehow are incommunicable, yet that feeling of in expression must never be summoned.

“*The Shawl*” is composed of two interconnected yet separate stories (*The Shawl* and *Rosa*) which are between being a short fiction and a novella. Through this oddity *The Shawl*’s meets Ozick’s view of limiting experimentation for its own sake and thus pushing her [Ozick] to cast a new way to tell her story.

Having only sixty-five pages “*The Shawl*” is a brief book that has a particular structure. This shortness and unique construct of the text highlight its liturgical nature. In only a matter of short pages the reader is immersed in the horrors of the Shoah then the inhumane

murder of a baby and finally a broken mother between all of this who is pursuing to be a witness of it all. In his book *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction*, Alan Berger argues that: “after the holocaust there are no answers but only questions. Authentic post-holocaust answers are, therefore, fragmentary rather than comprehensive in nature” (194-195). Ozick’s reaction to the Shoah is an experimental narrative that has fragmentation and defragmentation that use “every innovative device” while stressing on a natural “verbal experiment and permutation.” (Ozick 339)

“*The Shawl*” starts presenting a journey of ambiguity, inversion and contradiction. The first two lines of the book are distorted and acute: “Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell. How they walked on the roads together, Rosa with Magda curled up between sore breasts, Magda wound up in the shawl.” (01) Stella is the symbol of inversion that is present in the world as she is the coldhearted reversed star from Gehenna who reflects the abyss and paradox of Nazi Germany. In an interview in 1982 in the magazine the *Partisan Review*, Ozick states that in order to convey the message she must recreate the haunting images of Auschwitz in her fiction: “the power to penetrate evil, to take on evil, to become evil”(296). It is virtually impossible for both Ozick and the reader to enter a world that they were not part of; so as an author she uses inversion, assertions and denials: Rosa did not feel hunger. She felt light, not like someone walking but like someone in a faint, in trance, arrested in a fit, someone who is already a floating angel, alert and seeing everything, but in the air, not there, not touching the road. As if teetering on the tips of her fingernails. (“*The Shawl*” 3-4)

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Throughout the first book, contradiction is all over the characters. First, Magda is “a squirrel in a nest” then she can be taken for “one of their babies” that has “eyes blue as air, smooth feathers of hair nearly as yellow as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat”(The *Shawl*, 4). Death and life signs intertwine to take place of each other as symbols, what was life becomes death vice versa. In the book Rosa is described as a “walking cradle” but in fact she looks quite the opposite of that when her milk is all dried-up, her breasts are “duct-crevice extinct, a dead volcano, blind eye, chill hole.” Ozick argues that like her explanation of imagination “*The Shawl* seeks out the unsayable and the undoable, and says and does them, with a string

of paradox (“Partisan Review” 296). Through the story, contradiction is prevalent “Rosa was ravenous, but also not” while Magda’s belly is “fat with air, full and round,” and she drinks what cannot be drunk – “the shawl's good flavor, milk of linen.” Rosa learns from Magda how to find sustenance where there is none – “how to drink the taste of a finger in one's mouth”(The *Shawl* 5-6). Magda, thinks Rosa, “should have been dead already, but she had been buried away deep inside the magic shawl”: what sustains Magda is her own burial (The *shawl* 6). Furthermore, Ozick’s stance is loaded with setbacks, reversals and dichotomies. Her lines turn upon themselves and create paradoxical sentences: “She was afraid to fall asleep; she slept with the weight of her thigh on Magda’s body; she was afraid she would smother Magda under her thigh,” still the “weight of Rosa was becoming less and less; Rosa and Stella were slowing turning into air.” The shawl of Magda is also a spot for further contradictions: “No one could touch it; only Rosa could touch it.” (The *shawl* 6)

Ozick argues that “literature means is meaning” this allusion finds cradle later in descriptions such as “ash-strippled wind,” which translates to literally the burned flesh of the dead.(“Partisan Review” 296; The *Shawl* 7)

Pregnant women who were discovered by Nazi guards were forced to undergo induced labors in which after it their babies would be killed. If a woman was found pregnant this would result in additional tortures, beatings and even cremation. Death was the punishment cast upon women who birthed their babies in the camps but the mother could survive if she killed her baby. Olga Lengyel, stated that even though “And so, the Germans succeeded in making murderers of even us,” but we still managed “to save the mothers” (qtd. in Heinemann 26)

The same thing can be said about “*The Shawl*” as the acts of murder and survival position it with the previous testimonies thus mixing history and art together. Ozick’s description of Magda’s death throughout an episode of lyrical images can be seen as her most eminent ideological risk in writing about the Shoah. This risky move gives way to multiple readings, which of course will result in a problematic. Ozick states that: “I constantly violate this tenet; my brother’s blood cries out from the ground, and I am drawn and driven.” (“Roundtable Discussion” 284) But her way of writing evidently contradicts her opposition to transforming the Holocaust to a form of “literature,” but also depicts a beautiful scene of liberation. For her, possibility begets redemption, the action of “turning away from, or turning toward, deliverance.” It “insists on the freedom to change one’s life”; containing “amazement, marveling, suspense,” redemption means, “above all, that we can surprise

ourselves.” (“Partisan Review” 295) The multitude of the reading that this action engenders is itself enormous in *The Shawl*’s redemptive context. Still, the risk is still there.

When Ozick chose to decorate a child’s death by electrocution, she gambled by covering the horror of the Shoah in favor of aesthetics. At the same time, she gives the most innocent and powerless of victims a transcendent closure, and later makes this epistemological dilemma the center of her text that will be regarded as a transformative historical tool for our protagonist. Ozick reflects power and beauty in Magda. Described gracefully, her eyes are “like blue tigers”; she smells of sweet spices; aesthetically, Magda’s Aryan appearance is pleasing, even as it conjures the Nazi example, even when her stomach was full with air, even when she was thrown on the electric fence by the guard: All at once Magda was swimming in the air. The whole of Magda traveled through loftiness. She looked like a butterfly touching a silver vine. . . . Magda’s feathered round head and her pencil legs and balloonish belly and zigzag arms splashed against the fence. (*The Shawl* 9-10)

As the plot thickens and the horror scenes buildup in the amazing poetic description of Magda’s death, Ozick faces an obvious challenge. A phrase such “ash-stippled wind” is mainly built on aesthetics. Margo Martin draws a conclusion in her book *The Theme of Survival in Cynthia Ozick’s “The Shawl”* (1988) where she claims that: “the soldier has freed [Magda] from her bondage to enjoy immortality, to join with the humming voices, and possibly to cross into that beautiful world beyond the fence.” (Margot 35)

As stated above, there can be many ways to read and understand the text, thus beautifying a history full of horrors can beget literary problems, such as getting the reader carried away by Ozick’s description of this image and making him/her think of the Nazi soldier as a freedom agent. Yet the reader can argue that the stressed character here is Magda rather than the soldier. Ozick tries to avoid putting the soldier where the reader will solely focus on him and forget Magda, she [Ozick] never even mentions a ‘he’ just to stress that there are no connection between him and Magda as she puts him in a fragmented pieces of lyrical images such as: “someone’s shoulder,” then, “black body like a domino and a pair of black boots” (*The Shawl* 09).

Ozick affirms that literature’s moral purpose is to distinguish one life from another but the reader maybe drawn to extract his/her own conclusion by thinking if she [Ozick] betrayed her principle of not idolizing art and if she forgot her own stance by beautifying Magda’s death. But in fact “beauty” in this context is the singular and also problematic element. But actually, in this gloomy landscape Magda’s death represents a moment of transcendence as

she highlights the brutality and inhumanity of the Shoah but also does not give the Nazis the upper hand to obliterate Jewish resiliency which was their motive as explained below by Adolph Eichman's belief:

Adolph Eichmann, master bureaucrat of murder, he was absolutely convinced if he could succeed in destroying the biological basis of Jewry in the east by complete extermination, then Jewry as whole would never recover from the blow. The assimilated Jews of the west, including America, would, in his opinion be in no position (and would have no desire) to make up this enormous loss of blood and there would therefore be no future generation worth mentioning (qtd. in Berger 12)

Fearful of the removal of Jewish identity by force that stems from the Shoah to modern assimilation, Ozick creates a personage that does not want to be "assimilated" into the skin of a victim but rather flies off and turns into a butterfly that conveys strength and meaning.

Furthermore, *The Shawl* insists upon a painful memory to draw the line of continuity in the text, as the story highlights the violent death of one child out of six million victims, a baby's death that directs the remaining skeleton of the text.

Rosa chooses to look for grace where there is none as this gesture gives her a last vision of her baby daughter that reappears later in her life. She [Rosa] sees beauty only when she dreams or remembers her daughter, thus Magda constitutes a big fragment of Rosa's imagination. She writes her infinity of letters where she calls her a "lioness" and continues "You are tawny and you stretch apart your furry toes in all their power. Whoever steals you steals her own death" (*The Shawl* 15) in writing to her daughter Rosa's tone is positive and beautiful, making description of her past in a good way with "the most excellent Literary Polish" (*The Shawl* 14) rather than using her sour English. Lyrical sections in the text describe how the mother of Rosa had such a "dense poetry" that "you had to open it out like a fan to get at all the meanings"; her family's "wonderful ink drawings, the black so black and miraculous, how it measured out a hand and then the shadow of the hand." (*The Shawl* 42- 68)

Magda is the only vessel in which the lyrical moments of the text pass through, making, the researcher believes that memory and loss linked with the fabulous, and the present with aversion. Rosa finds beauty in memory although her existence in 1980s Florida is horrendous. This similarity can be put next to Ozick's notion of diasporic being as she does not praise the virtues of the surrounding culture stating that: I have a revulsion against Greek

and pagan modes, whether in their Christian or post-Christian vessels . . . against what is called, strangely, Western Civilization. (*Art & Ardor* 156)

Rosa strongly believes that this “Western civilization” is determined to remove all meaning from the historic horror that she lived, as she cannot escape the things that remind her of the period of the war that she lived in. The barbed wire that she finds around private beaches reminds her of her past; the blue stripes on people’s clothes remind her of that period too, she even states that “whatever was dangerous and repugnant they made prevalent, frivolous” (*The Shawl* 53). The ugliness encountered in the second tale “Rosa” can be interpreted as calculated move from Ozick as a counter move to the act of forgetting. Forced to remember everything and at all costs, Rosa becomes furious when Stella sent her a dress that has blue strips on her as she remembered the uniform that they wore in Auschwitz: “As if innocent, as if ignorant, as if not there” (*The Shawl* 33). Ugliness and disgust are all over Rosa’s surroundings, this loathing casts light upon Jewish present and past.

The Shoah left an eternal mark on Ozick’s characters, thus a healing that heals all scars is an impossible task in what Berger called in his book *The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction* (1985) an “Auschwitz planet” (Berger 194).

This permanent wound permits to Rosa to view beauty only in where there is the ever-agreeable figure of Magda, but where Magda is not present ugly images are: “Squads of dying flies” make the rope of Rosa’s dumbwaiter black, her clothes are dirty and smell like fish. Up in the sky the sun is “an executioner” the alleys are “a furnace” these images here cannot be taken gently especially from the point of view of a Shoah survivor. When she is in the cafeteria, she cannot help but examine every person that passes by and catalogs the effects that aging left on them: “mottled skin, ferocious clavicles, and the wrinkled foundations of wasted breasts” (*The Shawl* 24). She is afraid that if she moves from her chair “an odor would fly up: urine, salt, old woman’s fatigue” (*The Shawl* 24). Her neighbors have “rolls of wide fat” around their neck and they wear “red gloss on their drawstring mouths” (*The Shawl* 28). She even manages to pay attention to the desk clerk movement when she “clayey sweat balls up from the naked place between her breasts with two fingers” (*The Shawl* 29).

To Ozick, beauty is not compatible with this horrendous world and especially when she is in contact with other human beings: when she walked on a beach that was full of couples, she “nearly stepped on the sweated faces of two lovers plugged into a kiss. A pair of water animals in suction” (*The Shawl* 48). Built on such wicked scenarios and visions, Rosa’s present is eternally distorted by her last glance of beauty: the picture of her murdered baby

girl. That image foreshadows the last moment of “*The Shawl*”, which goes from the electrocution of Magda to Rosa’s disabled scream of silence. Rosa stands without any motion while stuffing Magda’s shawl in her mouth “until she was swallowing up the wolf’s screech and tasting the cinnamon and almond depth of Magda’s saliva; and Rosa drank Magda’s shawl until it dried” (*The Shawl* 10) because she knew that if she moved or made any sound, they would have killed her there. This impossibility that is put within a rational grammatical framework repeats in another form Elie Wiesel’s in his book *A Jew Today* (1978) words: “To substitute words, any words, for [the Holocaust] is to distort it” (Wiesel 197).

In a book entitled *Nature’s Silent Scream: A Commentary on Cynthia Ozick’s “The Shawl”* published in (1989), Scrafford Barbara claimed that Ozick thoughtfully turned the silent howl in “*The Shawl*” to an exodus of writing in “Rosa”, by doing so she contradicts the image of Rosa’s being transformed “to a wild animal” by presenting a Judicially informed stress upon a written story. (Scrafford 14-15)

In the second tale the author moves from a fragmented form to a more usual-direct form, a declarative sentence from an omniscient narrator’s standpoint: “Rosa Lublin, a madwoman and a scavenger, gave up her store - she smashed it up herself- and moved to Miami. It was a mad thing to do” (*The Shawl* 13). The terms of sanity and reality are inverted here just like in “*The Shawl*”, turning the textual nature of the work head to toe. “It was a mad thing to do,” But as Alan Berger puts it in his book (1985) *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction*, this can be viewed as a sane form of rebellion against Rosa’s clients, they were indifferent to her Shoah memories: deeply rooted in the prophetic ancestry of Judaism, this type of protest happened usually in the face of Israelist pact abandonment. ... If Auschwitz is the present world, then moral madness is preferred to “sanity.” (Berger 122)

Rosa’s testimony is ignored by her entourage, so she records her own history in a form of long letters to her daughter. Therefore, these letters are a liturgical audience of her dead baby. Thus, her daughter as an audience meets Ozick’s conditions of a “reciprocal moral imagination”; and because of that, Rosa’s voice is no longer “private” (Ozick327). Despite the superior attitude of Rosa’s attitude toward the Jews that shared the Warsaw ghettos with her, the letters represent a religious and historical rite. The customers may also be put on the same level of ignorance as the villagers that were on the other side of the steel fences in *the shawl* as she did not find a communal audience in both of them respectively:

When I had my store I used to "meet the public," and I wanted to tell everybody - not only our story, but other stories as well. Nobody knew anything. . . . Nobody remembered what happened only a little while ago. They didn't remember because they didn't know.... In my store I didn't tell [everything] to everyone; who would have the patience to hear it all out? So I used to pick out one little thing here, one little thing there, for each customer. (*The Shawl* 66-69)

In the "*The Shawl*", Stella is Rosa's only relative that survived the Shoah and she calls her "self-indulgent" since she "wants to wipe out memory" (*The Shawl* 58). But still trying to remove a memory from her head, Stella's technique can be viewed as a survival mode, as she states in her letter to Rosa: "... You're the older one, I 'm the niece, I shouldn't lecture, but my God! It's thirty years, forty, who knows, give it a rest. It isn't as if I don't know just exactly how you do it, what it's like. What a scene, disgusting! . . . Believe me Rosa, by now, it's time you have to have a life" (*The Shawl* 31-32). Her interlocutor, Simon Persky also says to her: "Sometimes a little forgetting is necessary, it's finished. Long ago it's finished" (*The Shawl* 58). But mixing up forgetting with survival is also a kind of murder as how can she easily forget her past without repeating the act of killing her child again? Importantly, for Rosa to forget means to throw herself into oblivion and therefore neglect the most important commandment of late twentieth-century Judaism: "Never again." Persky and Stella forget Magda who represents both all of the Jews that died in the Shoah and also is the silhouette of memory. When Rosa changes the stance of her testimony from oral to written her images are deeply rooted in the Judaic tradition of written history and also by historical elements of the Shoah. The literary images in this cuneiform convey the emphasis on Rosa's intellectual legacy, and also the importance of Judaism's emphasis on recorded history. These images above also show the quantity of imagination that any re-coded history has. As shown by the death of Magda, as this scene makes it easy to make history flexible in order to tell it but it also comes with the risk of denying meaning in such a case. Built upon its critical of a dying baby girl, the text goes back and forth between the world of the dead and the living, between history's ultimatum of telling and the risks of art that comes with beautifying such scenarios. Ozick argued that imagination beyond being only "the flesh and blood of literature" but also "something deeply perilous": it has an ever ending craving to break down meaning, to destroy interpretation, to erase the logical, to deride the surprise of redemption, to cut out the mobile force of suspense with an image of immobility; to block rather than to urge.... The

imagination, like Moloch, can take you nowhere except back to its own jaw (Partisan Review 296).

It has been shown by literary and historical theories such as New Historicism separating history from art can have grave effects and also be deceiving. (Liu 741) The plot of “*The Shawl*” moves ceaselessly between fluidity and “mere literature”, but never seems to find a concrete answer to the tension that is born from this conflict. “*The shawl*” is holy and life sustaining in the first part; it is on par with a tallit which is a garment that is traditionally worn as a prayer shawl by religious Jews. It gives Magda’s breath an odor of cinnamon and almonds, an aroma that conjures “a mystical image of the Besamin which Jews sniff at the end of the Sabbath to prepare for the conditions of the week that follows” (Berger 54). On the other hand, in the second tale “Rosa”, the shawl becomes a “colorless cloth” by losing its religious sense to Rosa; “an old bandage; a discarded sling. For some reason it did not instantly restore Magda, as usually happened” (*The Shawl* 62). It is not a tallit anymore; it no longer invokes the image of Magda’s breath. We can also view other objects that were transformed along the story, such as the telephone at her apartment that becomes her daughter that is 16years old, the beach that turned into Auschwitz because of the humming of its barbed wire. The story ends between healing and madness. Rosa agrees to see Persky, but “*The Shawl*” concludes with these lines:”Magda was not there. Shy, she ran from Persky. Magda was away” (*The Shawl* 70).Ozick refuses to neglect human choice to reach a moral commandment.

In “*The Shawl*” Rosa is the ultimate symbol that defies victimization. The writer repeatedly admits the solidity of Jewish identity, its written tradition, its community, humor and cohesiveness. The final line of Rosa is the perfect example of her strength. When Persky comes to look for her, she tells the receptionist: “He’s used to crazy women, so let him come up” (*The Shawl* 65).

General Conclusion

Fundamental factors such as Holocaust and anti-Semitism impacted the very foundations of Jewish identity and distorted it leaving Jews with deep scars that gave their identity a new facet. This research study has undertaken the study of “*The Shawl*” by Cynthia Ozick as a corpus for the sake of studying how identity can be distorted by immigration to a foreign land as well as the impacts of the death of loved ones on it. Philosophical notions concerning identity also have been tackled in the research giving the reader a broad definition regarding limited subfields in the philosophical doctrine sphere. The effects of the holocaust and anti-Semitism on both Jewish identity and Jewish writings also have been discussed in a whole chapter. Based on what has been exposed, it can be said that the Cynthia Ozick tries in her text to remodel her inherited traditional Jewish literary techniques and make a new one, a newer version that looks towards continuity, but has its roots in antiquity. As stated before, Ozick tries to answer a biblical question “How can we live after a destruction?” This question in essence gives the text its traditional Jewish sanctity and by answering it Ozick was able to show how meaning can be searched for after Jews have been put through this destruction.

The text in itself is the story of a woman who lost all meaning, but in the end chose to let herself bear life as it is and thus exist after being destroyed. By her toughness Rosa showed the resiliency of the Jewish race, their will to live and their choice to seek wholeness after witnessing a stream of destruction, to hold on tight to both their legacy and survive in a hostile world. The first chapter introduced the concept of identity in literature, its importance, characteristics and different genres, then in the fields of psychology and philosophy. The second chapter dealt primarily with historical facts tackling the impacts that anti-Semitism has had on Jews and its spread to other countries, then in the second part of chapter two, the research showed how Jewish writings have been influenced by the Shoah and its deep impact on them. Finally, the third chapter dealt deeply with the notion of Ozick’s liturgical literature, how the text was written based on such notion and how the Jewish resiliency was depicted in the book.

Although this research study attempted to answer some inquiries and illuminate some ambiguities about the topic, there is still some research and analysis to be done on the matter. Subjects such as the trauma in “*The shawl*” and its implications on the psyche of the

characters are a good example or even a new perspective of the same issue presented in this research paper for the sake of giving a different answer on the matter.

The present chapter has been devoted to the use of liturgy in *The Shawl* as a mean for Ozick to convey her point of view regarding what Jews endured as a race under Hitler's regime. While mixing between postmodernist techniques and Judaic techniques in order to stay faithful to both but in doing so Ozick stresses on one important aspect, which is: fiction can transmit moral truths which will in their turn give birth to stories, and by that cementing her position that literature must have an objective and must not be generic which will lead it to lose its holiness. She also answers the question of continuity and resiliency of the Jewish race after the destruction they witnessed through Rosa and how her daughter is the ultimate symbol of beauty that haunts her later in life.

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