

# Abstract

This bachelor thesis focuses on the Holocaust trauma and its depiction in William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice*. Many novelists have endeavoured to describe this phenomenon in their works of art, but most of them were confronted with a great challenge – to depict the story they didn't experience, a story of the Holocaust survivor. William Styron is one of them. Therefore it is necessary to consider how precise depiction the novelist offers to his readers. The aim of this work is to analyze Styron's novel and discover whether *Sophie's choice* includes an authentic depiction of the Holocaust survivor's trauma.

The first chapter of the work focuses on trauma. Its aim is to define trauma and research this phenomenon in wider context. There are many psychological theories of trauma and its treatment. For the purpose of this work Jungian psychoanalytic approach has been chosen. C. G. Jung and his disciples have widely explored the inner world of patients suffering from trauma. Moreover, psychoanalysis has made great effort to describe how trauma manifests itself through archetypal imagery and symbols present in dreams and fantasies of traumatized patients. Therefore this psychological theory is applicable when analyzing a work of art.

The most widespread psychological diagnosis of people who have experienced a traumatic event is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This work focuses on symptoms of PTSD whose presence indicates that a person has experienced trauma. That allows analyzing the depiction of Sophie's character in the novel through symptomatology.

The second chapter of the work focuses on the Holocaust trauma. The first part describes the phenomenon of the Holocaust – its definition and various expressions used for naming this unprecedented event. The aim of this chapter is to research the impact of the Holocaust (to western civilization as a whole and individuals as well) which is usually called the Holocaust trauma. However, the survivors and their experience are the main theme of this work. Another part of this chapter thus offers a closer look to common stress response of the Holocaust survivors called Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome (CCSS) and its symptoms.

The analytical part of this work focuses on the character of Sophie Zawistowska and the depiction of her Holocaust trauma, which is analyzed through its main symptoms. The analysis consists of two parts: The first part researches the symptomatology of PTSD and CCSS to

consider whether these disorders could be diagnosed in Sophie or not. The second part focuses on some important features of trauma which Jungian psychoanalysts have described - dissociation and compulsion to repeat the trauma. The inner world of Sophie's trauma is explored through the archetypal imagery present in Styron's depiction of Sophie's life.

The conclusion of the work summarizes findings of the theoretical part and presents the results of the analytical part. It also considers some other aspects directly connected with the theme – Styron's sources of inspiration and the genesis of psychological approaches to trauma and its treatment.