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**RESPONDING TO THE HOLOCAUST:
THE SURVIVOR'S COMPLEX IN REALITY AND
IN FICTION**

Diplomová práce

Autorka: Klára Míčková

Vedoucí diplomové práce: PhDr. Hana Ulmanová, PhD, M.A.

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V Praze 3. ledna 2007.

I declare that the following thesis is my own work and that I have used only the sources acknowledged in the footnotes and named in the list of references.

Prague, 3 January 2007

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A man is not made for defeat... a man can be destroyed but not defeated.

-Ernest Hemingway

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Defining the Indefinable: Surviving the Holocaust	3
1) Defining the Survivor’s Complex	3
1.1 “Death in a Nazi concentration camp requires no explanation. Survival does.” The Survivor’s Complex and the Survivor	3
1.2 “The world stood still, when we were burning.” The Survivor and the Post-War World	8
1.3 “He who has been tortured remains tortured...” The Survivors’ “Lives After”	11
1.4 The Creation of Israel	13
2) The Jews and the Holocaust in American Literature	16
2.1 The Jewish Literary Tradition in the American Literary Canon	18
2.1.1 “What of that special creature, the Holocaust writer?” The American Jewish Holocaust writers	24
2.1.2 “Nothing I wrote saved a single Jew from being gassed.” The guilt feeling as the motivity of the Holocaust writers	31
2.1.3 “No one can really write an imaginative work about the Nazi terror because art implies meaning and Hitler’s whole regime represented an organized annihilation of meaning.” The Holocaust works of fiction	33
II. Experiencing the Unexperienced: Reflecting the Holocaust Reality in Literary Works	38
1) Cynthia Ozick (born 1926) and Saul Bellow (1915-2005): The Leading Writers of the Holocaust Fiction	38

1.1 “If we blow into the narrow end of the shofar, we will be heard far. But if we choose to be mankind rather than Jewish and blow into the wide part, we will not be heard at all.”	
Cynthia Ozick	38
1.2 ““So he’s human. All right, he’s human.””	
Saul Bellow	42
2) Exploring the Characters	46
2.1 “‘I’m alive’ (...) simply lacks the moral resonance of ‘I survived.’”	
Rosa’s and Mr. Sammler’s “Lives After”	46
2.2 “Each [character] questions his own survival and, at the same time, searches for what is worth preserving in the destroyed past.”	54
Rosa’s and Mr. Sammler’s “Lives Before”	
2.3 “There are only two possibilities: either God caused (or at least permitted) the destruction of the Jews, the Gypsies and the other victims, or God does not care.”	
Rosa, Mr. Sammler and God	59
3) Language and style	61
III. Reading the Readable: Conclusion	68
Résumé	71
List of References	75

I. Defining the Indefinable: Surviving the Holocaust

1) Defining the Survivor's Complex

1.1 "Death in a Nazi concentration camp requires no explanation. Survival does."¹

The Survivor's Complex and the Survivor

Defining the survivor's complex from the survivor's point of view comes to mind as the very first, the most natural way of delineating the field. Nevertheless, as one dives deeper into the subject area, one has to admit that exploring the survivors' thoughts, their memories and thoughts of the past will often bring more confusion rather than light into the definition.

Many lives were lost during the Holocaust, but many men survived as well to tell later on in their lives about the hell they had gone through. The world should have listened but seemed not to want to.² It is important to understand, if at all possible, the mind of the Jew³ coming out of the concentration camps into the world which either had not wanted to listen, or simply had not been listening to their cries for as long as many war years. Why should "the others" listen now? Where was the point in telling things nobody would believe, anyway?⁴

The "wish to tell" might be looked upon (only crudely though) as a distinctive moment when talking about different groups of the survivors. There were those who shouted out and tried to make the hitherto unconcerned world a part of the nasty past they had to live

¹ H. O. Bluhm, "How did they survive?" *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 1948: 3.

² Primo Levi, for example, wrote a collection of poems on the Holocaust soon after the end of the Second World War (1946) and succeeded in having it published in 1947. However, it was not well sold and all the remaining issues vanished in a flood in the 1950s. (Portuno, Nicholas. *Understanding Primo Levi*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995.)

³ The author is not suggesting that there were not people of other than Jewish origin in the concentration camps during the Holocaust, but the Jews are of prime interest and for the sake of this thesis, other than Jewish people will not be concentrated on.

⁴ Although doubting, many survivors wrote their memoirs after the war precisely because of the need to tell the world about what had happened. One of the authors aptly named her memoir *I Promised I Would Tell* (Weitz, Sonia S. *I Promised I Would Tell*. Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, 1993.). The promise was what made the author both survive the camp and later on write about how she managed that.

through all by themselves; and then there were survivors who, exactly the other way round, wanted to blend in the unconcerned crowd and forget about the past as quickly as possible. The second group, however, kept their burden inside for many years afterwards as well, and it was not exceptional for a survivor to commit suicide as many as twenty years after the end of the war or even later.⁵

Moreover, some of those who had gone out of the Nazi hell did not even want to share their memories with their fellow inmates anymore. During a personal interview with a survivor in Sheffield, UK, I learned that it had taken more than 45 years for a group of survivors to form there: it was only in the 1990s that such a group began to meet on a regular basis!⁶ These people decided not to talk about what they had experienced during the Second World War immediately, but apparently the past remained buried and unchanged inside their souls. Hence the need to share their burden so many years later.

Furthermore, it was not only the generation of the Holocaust which was affected by the WWII events. The second generation, the children of the Holocaust survivors, have had, due to their parents' past, an unusual position among their peers. Quite justifiably, they felt overprotected by, and also more responsible for, their parents, and had a strange sense of the sanctity of life.⁷ Where a man intact by the Holocaust would look towards a better, post-war future, a Holocaust survivor kept looking over their shoulder into the past and never ceased being worried about the possibility of the past reaching them and recurring in the present. Anne Karpf, herself a Holocaust survivors' daughter, aptly observes: "Parenthood is probably intrinsically fearful, but our parents' fears were based not on an imagined future but their actual past."⁸ The real events of the parents' past have thus reached even their children's lives

⁵ This was also the case of Primo Levi, who tried to tell as early as 1946 (see note 2) but nobody would listen. Many years' speculations followed his death but it is agreed now that he did commit suicide. (Portuno)

⁶ Sue P. (one of the so-called *Winton's children*), Personal interview, 22 March 2006.

⁷ Anne Karpf, *The War After. Living with the Holocaust* (London: Heinemann, 1996) 9. Supported by a personal interview with Helen C., a Holocaust survivor's daughter, 11 May 2006.

⁸ Karpf 8.

and moulded their view of the future; while other children were playing light-heartedly, “the “children of the Holocaust”⁹ were hurrying home to see to their parents and make sure that they are safe and sound, and under no threat. The parents’ real piece of past has become their children’s threateningly possible piece of future.

Getting back to the question of defining the survivor’s complex from the survivor’s point of view, we need to encompass all the mentioned aspects surrounding the survivor. Their complex is the burden they were forced to carry from the years of the Second World War onwards; a melange of their forlorn past, the (often successful) present and irrational worries about the future.

Defining the survivor’s complex in any manner is clearly a difficult matter and it had not been until the 1960s that serious psychological and sociological studies were conducted with the Holocaust survivors as their object. The two authors whose works mean a turning point in the field are Leo Eitinger (himself a Holocaust survivor), who described traumatic aspects of the victims’ post-Holocaust lives, and most importantly William G. Niederland who was the first to actually name the psychiatric disorder of the formerly persecuted as the “survivor syndrome”, and included and explained the term “survivor guilt”.¹⁰

These two terms are crucial for the discussion of the Holocaust victims’ psychological condition – which often gets reflected in the Holocaust literature, too. The survivor syndrome is a complex of aspects attending the post-war lives of the inmates, encompassing the survivor guilt: a survivor’s guilty feeling for having survived, while most of the family were gassed; the victims are haunted by the persistently gnawing idea that they should have done more to save the others, that they failed while trying, or did not try at all, that they have no right to live once their relatives and friends are not amongst the living any more. How ironic that the

⁹ The allusion goes to Helen Epstein’s fine book of authentic stories *The Children of the Holocaust*. While Anne Karpf writes the story of her life, Helen Epstein includes various stories of the survivors and their children.

¹⁰ William G. Niederland, “Psychiatric Disorders among Persecution Victims,” *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* Nov. 1964: 458-474.

victims of the atrocious Nazi regime should feel guilty for having managed to survive a hell on the earth.

As Niederland suggests, and other researchers confirm, there are other characteristic points attending the survivor syndrome or, as it is called elsewhere, survivor's complex.¹¹ These cannot be fought, let alone won over. Those who had gone through Hitler's camps remain affected once and for all. Various studies (the Niederland's being the foremost one) have shown that the most serious problems from which the survivors suffer are among others a constant fear of the wartime persecution to reoccur, ensued by anxiety disorder and paranoid mistrustfulness. Some problems are clearly psychosomatic, such as insomnia and inexplicable, long-lasting depressions. Survivor guilt often leads to tensions and depressive states resulting in chronic somatic defects; moreover, the affected person starts to believe veridically in their part of guilt, which is then the cause of them expecting a retribution, a renewed oppression. The tense fear of becoming yet again the victim of a persecution is thus supported by a seemingly logical thought; the fact that there is nothing to be punished for, the first and foremost idea of a "normal" person, "an outsider" as the survivors would call them (i.e. people with no or little knowledge about what had been happening behind the barbed wire), is of no importance to a man or woman who suffers the guilt complex. This fixed idea of the survivors is, moreover, yet another reason why they expect all the less understanding from us, the "unaffected".

As far as the inner soul of the survivor is concerned, they remain preoccupied with the past experiences, often brood in apathy and avoid social contacts; from there, there is only a small step to feelings of alienation from the world, desperate seclusion and isolation. As

¹¹ For further study, see the work of Leo Eitinger, or the studies by I. Levav and J. Abramson, W. Eaton et al., D. Carmil and R. Carel. An interesting study on the second generation Holocaust victims is Aaron Hass's In the Shadow of the Holocaust (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991).

Niederland says bluntly, it is a “general incapacity to enjoy life.”¹² And as I will discuss in the second part of my thesis, these feelings often become the major part of the inner life of the American Holocaust novels’ heroes.

Nevertheless, as some of the researchers have aptly pointed out, the Holocaust experience should not, must not be taken as uniform for all the survivors. It is a collective experience, as the involved say, but not always is the outcome the same for each and every one of the survivors. Elsewhere, a former Auschwitz inmate says: “(...) when I am happy, I am *so* [sic] happy, because I know how horribly unhappy I can be.”¹³ Although they had gone through much the same, or at least very similar, experience, some of the survivors have chosen to bury it deep inside and try as hard as possible and live a normal life, or at least accommodate as best they could to the “normal” world, while others have given in to the overwhelming and insurmountable problem and did not even choose to try. However, in the end all seem to come to a point where they give up trying to acquaint the “outsiders”; the very same survivor admits: “You sort of don’t feel at home in this world any more, because this experience – (...) you never forget, you never get rid of it (...) and that sets you apart from other people.” No matter how hard they try, then, it seems that the survivors will never merge into the rest of the society. Yet another witness puts it even more clearly:

I recognized that in order to become part of society I had a choice to make: either to stay a survivor or a prisoner and be in prison for the rest of my life, or try to preserve my sanity by putting this away in my mind and integrating myself into society as if nothing had ever happened. (...) ¹⁴

Entering the “normal” society after the liberation of the death and labour camps brought more difficulties than the inmates had been imagining – and it is “only” the psychological aspect we

¹² Niederland 471. Aaron Hass comments on the mental state of the survivors as being that of “the inability to live in a normal way” (9).

¹³ Lawrence L. Langer, Holocaust Testimonies, The Ruins of Memory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 35. Quoting an unnamed Holocaust survivor.

¹⁴ Langer 142. Quoting Sigmund W., a Holocaust survivor.

are talking about now. When we add the material troubles they had to endure after the War ended, one cannot be surprised at most of the survivors' attitudes to the rest of the society, the rest of the world, or life itself.

Irrational, yet based on a real piece of experience, the survivor's complex is an illogical feeling that the Holocaust might return, and with it the worst experience a man can imagine. It is also a gnawing guilt feeling of living while the close ones are dead, a remorse for (an impossible) something which should have been done but was not. It is an attitude encompassing the past, the present and worries about the future, an attitude of fear extending to the following generations. It is a *complexity* which is difficult for us, the unconcerned, to grasp.

1.2 "The world stood still, when we were burning."¹⁵

The Survivor and the Post-War World

As I suggested before, it was difficult for the survivors to let the world know about what had been happening in the concentration camps. All the more so, as for a lot of those people the idea of telling the rest of the world about their "lives" therein after the Nazi hell ended had been the driving force that had kept them alive, but now the reality was different than they had been imagining, or wishing for. The end of the war did not bring the long-awaited open ears and eager listeners.

Not many people were willing or open to listen to the incredible stories from the concentration camps. For many former prisoners, though, they were the last resort. Unless the survivors found meaning in their suffering per se,¹⁶ they steered their hopes towards the

¹⁵ Langer 92. Quoting a Holocaust survivor.

¹⁶ On that, see further Viktor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning: and introduction to logotherapy*. Himself an Auschwitz survivor and a psychologist, Frankl creates a new concept of psychotherapy, the so-called *logotherapy*: rather than hopelessly analysing the past, he says, the survivor should look into the future and think

unaffected, the intact; there they were searching understanding and sympathetic words. Alas, those hardly ever came as most people “from the outside” just wanted to forget about the war, to go on living their (resurrected) lives, and did not care about the past – theirs, or anyone else’s.

Another important aspect affecting the post-war lives of the former inmates was the once again growing feelings of anti-Semitism, especially in Poland and some of the western countries, during the closing years – and after the end – of the Second World War. The survivors re-emerged into a society which either despised them (well-known are cases when the Jews came back to what had been their house and the new tenant disgustingly sent them away, keeping all of their property; those Jews, having often no proof of identity, let alone of their former residence, had no back-up and the only thing they could do was to leave and start anew somewhere else), or claimed that the Holocaust had been the Jews’ own fault, anyway – if they permitted its existence at all. Where there is a Jew, anti-Semitism will arise, says Anne Karpf, and if they try to assimilate, they will be accused of trying to hide their origins in order to decompose the society from the inside – therefore, assimilation was no escape from the prejudiced society either.¹⁷ In Britain, for example, a wartime opinion poll showed a high percentage of people’s hostility towards the Jews (based on no actual reason), and as early as in 1947, “Mass-Observation was already suggesting that people are no longer moved by the thought of Jewish suffering in concentration camps.”¹⁸ The situation “outside” was by no means welcoming any concentration camps accounts.

When some of the survivors resisted that silent, yet perceptible enough wish of the rest of the world (i.e. that they remained silent), and did try and tell, they found themselves at a

about possible reasons that left him alive and for which s/he might go on living. Not surprisingly, though his words did help a lot of inmates, not every single survivor was able to go on living after they re-emerged from the camps. (Frankl, Viktor E. Man’s Search for Meaning: an Introduction to Logotherapy. Trans. Ilse Lasch. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964.)

¹⁷ Karpf 169.

¹⁸ Toni Kushner, The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989) 199.

loss when it came to describing the horrible experience and all it took – the lack of proper expressions, of the right words which would fittingly depict the conditions in which they had had to exist from day to day proved most discouraging. Lawrence Langer expressed this difficulty in one simple statement: “No one has yet invented a vocabulary of annihilation.”¹⁹ The task of “telling the world” was exposed to yet another inconvenience.

There was in fact a double trouble where the survivors wanted to recount their experiences: there was no language they could use to describe the atrocities other than that invented in the camps, and that was one the outsiders would never understand. At the same time, the outsiders’ language was not apt enough to provide a full description of what had been taking place in the camps. And this vicious circle was encircled by yet another one – there were not enough open ears that would listen, and so support the teller.

The position of the survivors amid the rest of the world they were thrown into after the end of the war was thus more than difficult. Stripped of all their worldly possessions, often literally stripped naked, hungry, ill and neglected, the walking skeletons appeared in the decimated society. People whose only hope were other people, whose wish was to tell, who survived to tell, met people whose only hope was the future without any memories of the past, whose only wish was to forget. The world did not (want to) listen.

The war ended but for the Jews of the camps another one started right away. Only a small number of them were aiming for more than a normal life and in 1945, after a quick disillusionment, it was very unusual for a survivor to really decide and pursue the long cherished dream. However, some of them managed in various forms of art – art as a means to convey a most significant message. Pictures and writings became ways to deliver what the others did not want to hear. Rather than art, then, the survivors’ works of art could, and should be perceived as disguised stories of life, especially its hidden, painful parts. Literature, the

¹⁹ Lawrence L. Langer, Versions of Survival (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982) 68.

written word, I believe, was the fittest way to show the inner life of the author. I said before that it was difficult to use words to describe the barbarity of the Nazi concentration camps, and it might seem all the more difficult to find some in written language – but then again, a literary work of art offers ranges of metaphors, images and other devices to express oneself where concrete concepts are missing. The poets of the Holocaust, such as Charlotte Delbo, created beautiful pieces, all the more moving as one reads the fine lines of poems and at the same time realizes what horror they stand for.²⁰ One of her little poems touches upon the problematic use of language:

You don't believe what we say
Because if what we say were true
We wouldn't be here to say it.
We'd have to explain
The inexplicable.

Cleverly Delbo, through the simple poem and the language supposedly not convenient enough to convey the survivors' message, shows exactly this weakness of the language. One of the best means to fight the language's deficiency, poems speak where the survivors could not.²¹

1.3 “He who has been tortured remains tortured...”²²

The Survivors' “Lives After”

Where one would expect a world full of understanding, there was only a society where anti-Semitic feelings were only too deeply rooted in people's minds. The stories of former Polish inmates begging the liberators to shoot them rather than send them back to their

²⁰ Charlotte Delbo, a French political prisoner and survivor of the Holocaust, known especially for the highly unconventional work *Auschwitz and After* (*Auschwitz et après*), where direct speech frames short fragmented memories and poems.

²¹ Among others (Charlotte Delbo, Paul Celan, or Jakob Glatstein) the one Holocaust poet worth reading is Jean Améry, an Austrian survivor of Auschwitz.

²² Jean Améry quoted by Lawrence L. Langer, *Versions of Survival*, without a further reference provided.

homeland where anti-Semitism was on its rise again are quite well-known and not infrequent, other speak of people's disgust over "the manners" of former prisoners, their fearful behaviour and the inability to comply with the rules of demeanour.²³ These days, although the extent of the Nazi atrocities remains ungraspable, we can look back at the various researches done and understand better that for a human being exposed to an animal-like or worse treatment for a prolonged period of time (one has to bear in mind that the first racist provision in Germany was taken as early as 1919)²⁴ it was simply impossible to return among the "normal" people and behave as they were expected to. On the other hand, for the outsiders it was not easy to understand the released prisoners' behaviour and their approach to them reflected that fact. When the ex-inmates tried to explain, they would not be believed, so they stopped – and without (an acceptable) explanation, the world did not, *could* not understand. There was no escaping this vicious circle of half-truths, disbelief and reluctance – on the side of the outsiders the reluctance to accept the unimaginable, on the side of the survivors to go on explaining and trying to tell to the purposely deaf world.²⁵

The unwelcoming situation called for quick decisions. The one and most important aim for most of the Jews coming out of the war (be it from camps or hiding, or wherever else) was to blend in, never to be picked up as "the other" and suffer for that. However, there seemed to be no way to make that wish come true, as if the stigma given to the Jews stuck too fast and tight to them. Assimilation, as shown before, was no way to survive either. The only escape route that those who could afford it decided for was the literal escape from Europe – the Europe where their nation had been almost exterminated was no longer a suitable home

²³ Paul Johnson, *Dějiny židovského národa*, Trans. Věra a Jan Lamperovi (Praha: Rozmluvy, 1995) 489-490.

²⁴ Johnson 455. The 1919 Eisenach Resolution forbade the Jews from entering certain university student brotherhoods.

²⁵ In authentic literary works of (and about) the Holocaust, it is not usual for the author to include the post-war time, unless it is related to the camp experience. This is partly because they write mostly about what had been happening in the camps (such as Primo Levi), partly because the post-war negative experience is still incomparable to that of the camps. There are not many works of art which include a direct mention of the post-war situation; the best-known one, Art Spiegelman's *Maus, a Survivor's Tale I, II*, refers to the immediate post-Holocaust situation in Poland and to the situation in America years after the end of the war.

for them. After the war, many states loosened the immigration quota for the Jews and although it was by no means easy to seek asylum in a foreign country, at least – and the very last – it was finally *possible*.²⁶

1.4 The Creation of Israel

As is clear from the previous paragraphs, what the majority of people after the truce in 1945 wanted was to forget about the war, move on and look into the (hopefully bright) future. As I mentioned before, the opinion polls proved a high rate of anti-Semitism, especially in the western countries. Unbelievable as it may seem, the Jews were despised once again; one of the reasons might have been that only a small number of the uninvolved believed the “stories” of Holocaust they were striving to deliver. One of the Dachau concentration camp survivors recalls:

The SS guards took pleasure in telling us that we had no chance of coming out alive, a point they emphasized with particular relish by insisting that after the war the rest of the world would not believe what happened; there would be rumours, speculations, but no clear evidence, and people would conclude that evil on such a scale was just not possible.²⁷

And it has to be admitted, there is something to what the Nazi guard had predicted.

The world was not ready to grasp the hideousness of the camps but at least was willing to support the creation of an independent Jewish state. While after the First World War, the idea of the Jewish state became an option, after World War II, it was already a necessity.²⁸

²⁶ The USA and Canada had very low immigration quota set during the WWII and were in no hurry to loosen them when the Jewish agencies urged them to do so during the first war years. However, after the end of the war, although the horrible accounts from the camps seemed unbelievable, many countries submitted to the insistent pressure of the Jewish organizations and in the light of the new discoveries about Hitler’s plan and its almost fully successful outcome decided to lift the restricting quotas up. [Irving Abella and Troper, H. None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948 (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1982) x.]

²⁷ Terrence Des Pres, The Survivor, an Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps (New York: OUP, 1980) 35.

²⁸ Johnson 493.

Most of the Jews left for Palestine (later to become Israel) or the United States after the armistice, but what was awaiting them was by no means an open-arms society. In the States, the Jewish Community had little or no knowledge about what had been happening in Europe, and although there had been keen individuals or groups who tried to help, vast majority of American Jews did not want to learn or care more.²⁹ The question which still remains to be answered, though, is whether the settled American Jews overlooked the refugees' troubles (as they often did) out of pure ignorance, or whether that was a way to escape the haunting remorse. That is to say – even those who had not been in Europe during the Second World War and had not endured what the persecuted European Jews, suffered a kind of survivor guilt arising from the awareness of their quite bearable and not that much war-affected lives between 1939 and 1945 in America and of the slowly uncovered fate of their less lucky friends in Europe. Feelings similar to those of the men who had come out of the camps ensued: denial, alienation, pretence that nothing like the Holocaust could ever have happened. Sadly, managing to evoke such feelings and attitudes, the Nazis “won” once again.

In 1948, the state of Israel was created. One might think that at least there those who came back from the Nazi hell would find support. The truth is, the newly created state “afforded an opportunity to develop positive self-images as pioneers building a homeland and refuge for Jews” and also, due to the unstable military situation and initial wars, offered many occasions to give way to the long-pent-up personal anger (sad to say, meaning costs of other nation's lives once again).³⁰ However, some of the Jews who had managed to escape to Palestine before the war broke out (or during its early stages) looked upon the survivors contemptuously, claiming that only cowards could have given up to the Nazis entirely and sheepishly follow their orders as those who went through the camps had done.

²⁹ Aaron Hass, In the Shadow of the Holocaust. The Second Generation (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991) 15.

³⁰ Hass 15.

Furthermore, the creation of the state (as well as the years to follow) was affected by an immediate reaction of disapproval from the neighbouring Arabian countries: the night after the day in May 1948 when David Ben Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister, read the Declaration of Independence, the Arabian armies (already deployed at the intended borders) attacked the land of Israel.³¹ Although this initial conflict came to an early end, it foreshadowed the sad future of recurring war conflicts in Israel.

Thus the Jews had their own state but still could not take their lives for granted. Saul Bellow expresses the desperate situation accurately:

There is one fact of Jewish life unchanged by the creation of a Jewish State; you cannot take your right to live for granted. Others can; you cannot. (...) Jews, because they are Jews, have never been able to take the right to live as a natural right. (...) The Jews [became nationalistic] because they alone, amongst the peoples of the earth, had not established a natural right to exist unquestioned in the *lands* [emphases mine] of their birth. This right is still clearly not granted to them (...).³²

Not even there, in the state they could call their homeland after almost two thousand years of the forced Diaspora, had the survivors found peace.

³¹ Johnson 508. Apart from the armies of the future neighbours (i.e. Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria), an Iraqi troop fought against the Israelis as well.

³² Saul Bellow, To Jerusalem and Back (New York, Avon Books, 1976) 35-36.

2) The Jews and the Holocaust in American Literature

Before I start dealing with the origins of Jewish literature in the American context, I would like to point out that the definition of an “American Jewish author” still remains quite unclear. There are many ways to approach the subject out of which I am choosing the following:³³

a) An American Jewish author is a person of Jewish origin who in their works addresses matters in one way or another connected to the Jewish background, traditions or typical characters. (The authors thus classified are for example Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Isaac B. Singer or other well-known post-war Jewish writers.)

b) An American Jewish author is someone without the Jewish descent, nevertheless devoting parts of their art to the Jewish themes. (Typically, William Styron and his *Sophie's Choice* would be included in this group.)

c) An American Jewish author is someone whose origins are Jewish, but whose work does not necessarily reflect this fact. (The author included here is for example Joseph Heller, although parts of his work do show some Jewish influence.)

The same goes for the Holocaust writers, be it Jews, Americans or any other nations, although this theme might call for a somewhat finer approach. Does a Holocaust writer necessarily have to have the first-hand Holocaust experience? Does it suffice that his or her protagonists are the survivors of the Holocaust to make one a Holocaust writer? Does it have to be a survival story at all or can a probe into a survivor's mind be considered a piece of

³³ This way of dividing the authors is taken over from Hana Ulmanová, *Americká židovská literatura* (Praha: ŽMP, 2002) 16. Irving Howe, on the other hand, describes an American Jewish author with greater regards to their childhood milieu, the family they come from etc. For further study see the introduction to *Jewish American Stories* (New York: Mentor, 1977).

Holocaust literature as well?³⁴ These and other questions arise when the writings anyhow connected to the Holocaust are discussed. It is my personal opinion that the Holocaust should be perceived as a world-wide matter and as such, anyone can write about it and discuss it as much as they like.

European authors dealing with the Holocaust theme are to a great extent themselves Holocaust survivors, therefore the works found in Europe would mostly be classified as memoirs, or novels based on personal experience.³⁵ Ordinarily, they do not lack an intimate insight into the minds of the survivors/authors and their fellow inmates; precisely that, the “collective memory” is also what distinguishes the Holocaust works from the pre-Second World War Jewish writings which mostly deal with an individual and his fate.

I have chosen Saul Bellow and Cynthia Ozick as the leading literary figures of my thesis, both of whom are American Jews who occupy themselves with the Holocaust theme in their works.³⁶ With reference to the previous division of American Jewish writers, then, the American Jewish Holocaust writer is for the sake of this thesis one who was born in America, one who has Jewish origins, but one who has not gone through the Holocaust him/herself.

³⁴ A wonderful feat in the field of exploring the mental processes is the work of Martin Amis *Time's Arrow or, the Nature of the Offence* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1991). His protagonist, an aging former Nazi doctor, is living his life “backwards” in the literal meaning of the word. From getting up in the evening to ending his relationship where in “normal timing” it would begin, the hero leads the reader inconspicuously near his Nazi past.

³⁵ The authors included in this group are first and foremost Primo Levi and his personal account *If This Is a Man* (also known as *The Survival in Auschwitz*) with the sequel *The Truce*; Tadeusz Bórowski and his collection of stories *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*; Charlotte Delbo and Ida Fink. Although the last three named authors were political, not Jewish prisoners of the camps, they more than deserve their place in the group of the Holocaust writers. It is highly questionable whether or not to include Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments*. This cleverly written story of a two-year-old boy's fragments of memories from Treblinka death camp, supposedly the author's, have been proven fake despite Wilkomirski's persistent insistence on its truthfulness. As a literary work of imagination, though, I think it can be easily classified as a piece of Holocaust fiction.

³⁶ See Part II, Chapter 1 of this thesis where I argue my choice.

2.1 The Jewish Literary Tradition in the American Literary Canon

Before the outbreak of the Second World War and the creation of the state of Israel after the armistice, the Jews had no other choice but to live in the Diaspora, dispersed in every part of the world. But there have always been Jewish “centres”, states where the concentration of the Jews was higher than in other places. In Europe, the strongest (Ashkenazi) community lived in Poland, further on to the Asian continent in Russia; and overseas, it was the United States which formed a centre of non-European Jewish community: it was the country where most of the Jews would flee from Europe when necessary.

There had been several waves of Jewish immigration to North America in modern times, usually following a nasty European pogrom. The last major influx in the 19th century occurred after the 1881 Russian pogroms: masses of the Jews from Russia and the Russian-governed Poland fled either to Palestine (the following twenty-year Jewish Palestinian immigration is also referred to as the first *aliyah*, an exodus of the Jewish people to the land of Israel) or to the United States. After 1904, more massacres of the Jews in Russia erupted and until 1914, when the First World War broke out, more than two million Jews arrived in America.³⁷

Although hard-working (or maybe just because of it), the Jews were not accepted easily; rather than a warm welcome, the Americans offered subtle but persistent shades of anti-Semitism. That, along with the events in Europe, might have been the reason for the pioneering Jewish writers to turn to the typical Jewish characteristics (both physical and mental), and traditions in their early American Jewish works. Although having come to America to search for a new life, often suppressing their backgrounds and past when looking for a new, bright and (at the best) successful future, manifestations of anti-Semitism or Jewish

³⁷ Johnson 351, 417.

pogroms in Europe had always stung a certain mark of Jewish traditions, customs and spirituality in both the newcomers and old residents. For the Jewish man or woman it was very difficult to divest themselves of such remnants of the ghetto they came from, or at least to hide them successfully.

One of the earliest literary artists of Jewish origins in whose work this tendency is perceptible is the poet and playwright Emma Lazarus. A descendant of Portuguese Jews, she started off as an “ordinary” 1880s transcendentalist writer whose early work bore almost no traces of her descent. Nevertheless, the 1881 pogroms hit her so hard that she turned her works towards the Jewish issue and addressed some of the typical events causing the persecution and ensuing massacres of the Jewish population; in *The Dance of Death*, a play included in her 1882 book *Songs of a Semite*, Lazarus draws from the 1349 plague tragedy in Europe.³⁸ Known for their sense of cleanliness and strong hygienic habits, the Jewish communities had managed to avoid the disastrous pestilence; however, they were not so lucky with the subsequent rage of the remaining affected people. It is the nature of men that they need to find (and punish) the culprits of catastrophes. How many times in the history of mankind has it been the Jewish nation that has become the scapegoat for the wrath of men who blamed them for sins the Jews have never committed? Emma Lazarus was a 1880s solitary Jewish writer to proclaim the unfair treatment of the Jews, although she was doing so cautiously. Nevertheless, she might be taken as the first American Jewish writer who was drawn back to her origins by events which had been taking place in Europe, and who was for the same reasons made to speak up for “her” nation. Whether her aim was to defend the Jews or simply to draw attention to the issue remains quite unclear, but the mere fact that there was someone who did not remain silent was crucial. The American Jewish writers addressing the Holocaust may well have been driven by the same feelings as Emma Lazarus seems to be.

³⁸ Allen Guttman, *The Jewish Writer in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) 22.

The immigration to America continued during the first twenty years of the 20th century until 1924, when due to the Johnson Act the Jewish immigration on a mass scale ceased completely.³⁹ By then, there was quite a large Jewish community in the States but for many Jews of Europe, the introduction of the Johnson Act meant the death warrant. Scarce immigration continued and increased again after 1933 when Hitler took power in Germany. The number of Jews coming to America was still very low, though; nevertheless, within three years after 1938, when the Nazi Germany had occupied half of the European states, just until the 1941 American entry into the War, the number of Jewish incomers almost quadrupled. Still, we are talking about one and a quarter hundreds Jews, not the two million as before World War I.⁴⁰

In the beginning of the 20th century, the predominant topic of the rare Jewish novels was that of an immigrant coming to the United States in order to set up a better life and work himself through to a better future. It is important to realize the crucial point which, as Dorothy S. Bilik, a great Holocaust and literary scholar observes, will later on distinguish these works from those after the Second World War. The reason for the pre-Second World War immigrants' arrival in America is their *own* decision. Sometimes, the immigrant might be forced to make that decision by a pogrom or a politically induced massacre on the Jews, but that would still mean an instantaneous situation and an immediate reaction to that situation. It was not a constant threat to the lives of the Jews leaving no other way of survival than to flee their mother country, as was the case during the years of the Holocaust.

³⁹ Dorothy S. Bilik, Immigrant-Survivors. Post-Holocaust Consciousness in Recent Jewish American Fiction (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981) 13.

⁴⁰ Bilik 14. According to Bilik, 33,000 immigrant Jews entered the United States between 1933 and 1937, while between 1938 and 1941 (when upon the United States' entering the Second World War the immigration stopped almost completely) it was 124,000 European Jews.

It is difficult (if not impossible) to appoint the "correct" number of the Jews emigrating from Europe to America as various sources differ. According to Ulmanová, there were approximately 250,000 Jews who immigrated to the United States in the 1930s following Hitler's ascent in 1933 (Ulmanová 11). Johnson quotes the same number as Bilik (157,000 immigrant Jews between 1933 and 1941) but on the other hand includes the attribute "German" Jews (Johnson 441), while Bilik does not specify their nationality.

In literature, the immigrants to America of the first three decades are the heroes of the notable pre-Second World War authors Abraham Cahan (1860 – 1951) and Henry Roth (1906 – 1995) and their novels *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917) and *Call It Sleep* (1934) respectively. However, unlike the post-war novels, these two are depicting “a perfect process of Americanization, accompanied by the secularization of the newcomers”.⁴¹ The objective of these and similar novels was to portray an immigrant coming to America to fulfil his idea of the American dream, to improve his social status or gain a better material background; in other words, these immigrants came to America in order to gain profit, to improve their position in the society. The heroes of Cahan’s and Roth’s novels mirror the stereotype of the incoming Jew accurately, including their wish to get rid of “all Jewish” and rigidly fighting any characteristics which might betray their origins (be it clothing, accent, or any standardized pattern of behaviour). Their lives were driven by the wish to become Americans and cease to be Jewish. Paradoxically, the reader learnt about the Jewish tradition through the characters’ longing to suppress and forget it; thus the authors in fact managed the opposite to their heroes’ wish, but that again might have been the authors’ intention. After the Second World War, though, it became the intention and wish of both the authors *and* their heroes to preserve the Jewish tradition with all its aspects.

In the late 1930s, the Jewish immigration to America was decreasing; despite the Jewish Communities’ urges, the American Establishment continued with the hostile low-quota immigration policy towards the masses of the Jews fleeing the Nazi Europe; prominent European personalities managed to enter the States,⁴² but for thousands of other Jews, the border remained closed.

During the war years the Jews were apparently too much preoccupied with different matters to care about literature: those who were in the camps kept having their minds on mere

⁴¹ Bilik 20.

⁴² Hana Ulmanová, *Americká židovská literatura* (Praha: ŽMP, 2002) 11.

surviving, those who were in hiding concentrated very much on the same thing plus on being invisible, and those who were free, for example the Jews in America, either did not care (or at least not enough) or did not want to admit that something horrid like the events in Europe was really happening. Those who did care were aiming their efforts at saving the immigrating Jews or trying anyhow to support the Jews of Europe, which included spreading the news of their conditions under the Nazi Germany – but these were usually perceived as too unbelievable to be true and thus rejected completely.

Immediately after the end of the war, the appearance of a work of a Jewish author with the Holocaust as its main theme was quite uncommon both in Europe and in America. As I suggested earlier, it was either because there was not enough interest on the side of the reading public to deal with the war issues, let alone the Holocaust; or, especially in America, the reason might have been that without having a firm literary basis in the mainstream, the Jewish writers would feel highly uncomfortable entering the field with such a controversial topic as the Holocaust.⁴³

However, that does not mean that Jewish works were missing completely from the American canon. Some did appear even in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Quite usually, though, they expressed longing for (European) homeland and also for the preservation of the German language (funnily enough, most of these works were written in German – or Yiddish).⁴⁴ Still, these works would be classified as an “exile literature” to use Dorothy Bilik’s term; as exiles, moreover, the authors were not yet perceived as the *American* Jewish writers. And why did they avoid the theme of the Holocaust? Dorothy Bilik says:

American writers were not yet ready to use the particulars of refugee experience as material for fiction. Instead, during the most tragic decade in Jewish

⁴³ Ulmanová 71.

⁴⁴ Yiddish, as opposed to Hebrew, is an informal language spoken by many Jews at home, on the street or among Jewish friends. Hebrew is more formal, it is a language of the synagogue and prayers. Yiddish is strongly influenced by Old German and resembles modern German in writing and sound. For further study see Baumann, Arnulf H. Co by měl každý vědět o židovství. Trans. Lydie Cejpková. Praha: Kalich, 2000.

experience, the Jew was universalized and mythologized as a symbol of twentieth-century man, a homeless victim in an indifferent universe.⁴⁵

The Jew was actually portrayed as a common man; his distinct “Jewishness – a body of inherited traditions, values and attitudes”⁴⁶ – which might get reflected in his manners was ignored in order to make him fit the universal-man conception.

Nevertheless, further on into the 1950s and later, Jewish literature slowly stepped out of the shadow of the almost impenetrable immigrant settings and became to be perceived as a separate stream in the American literary canon, with its own distinctive protagonists, settings and narrative techniques. As Irving Howe puts it,

(...) they [i.e. the Jewish writers] are indisputably *American* writers. They write in English. They live and publish in America. Their work is usually set in this country. And while their novels, stories and poems cannot finally be understood without some awareness of their Jewish origins, still, they are not part of any Jewish literature. They are not part of Hebrew or Yiddish literature.⁴⁷

It is undoubtedly true that if determined by these attributes, all the Jewish authors born and publishing in America are bound to be classified as American writers as well. Nonetheless, this seems to me as a mere geographical classification with only a slender importance for the Jewish authors – I consider it more important to discuss which authors and what kind of works could be classified as *Jewish* rather than American.

An interesting point emerges when one is to discuss the role of the themes in the works by Jewish authors. The “proto-authors”, the first Jewish authors writing in America about the Jewish immigrants from the Old World, are considered *Jewish immigrant writers* and their works are called “exile literature.” However, those authors, as I explained earlier, were preoccupied with an individual’s process of adaptation to American surroundings, to a

⁴⁵ Bilik 15.

⁴⁶ Irving Howe, “Introduction,” *Jewish American Stories*, ed. Irving Howe (New York: Mentor, 1977) 10.

⁴⁷ Howe 3-4.

new language and way of living; their heroes tried to make the American dream come true and assimilate as quickly as possible. On the other hand, the post-war writers who concentrate on showing and preserving the Jewish tradition in their novels and stories are now called American. Hence an interesting paradox of the American literary scene: while those authors whose protagonists try to divest themselves of their Jewish origin and blend into the huge American crowd are still considered immigrant writers, those who aim at the reconstruction of Jewish themes and who re-introduce the specific Jewish character in their works are already called American.

Although the best-known Jewish authors whose major works were published after the Second World War (e.g. Saul Bellow, Phillip Roth or Bernard Malamud)⁴⁸ never felt like being a part of a certain group of writers, let alone a tight literary school, certain similarities can be found in their works: the Jewish milieu, together with its typical figures, the English language often interwoven with Yiddish expressions or grammatical or syntactic patterns in the narrative (especially in Bellow's works), the Jewish thought, tradition and spirit surfacing in the settings and heroes of the short stories and novels – the two genres those authors most often turned to.⁴⁹

2.1.1 “What of that special creature, the Holocaust writer?”⁵⁰

The American Jewish Holocaust writers

Prose proved to be the favourite genre of the American Jewish writers; that was not surprising given the tradition of Jewish oral storytelling. Prose was also the major writing

⁴⁸ One might question not-including Isaac Bashevis Singer, another well-known Jewish author writing and publishing in America, among those writers. Although no less outstanding, I.B. Singer often stands solely outside the artificially created group of writers because he kept writing his works in Yiddish even after his arrival to America. For further study of I. B. Singer's life and works, it is worth reading Tuszyńska, Agata. Singer: Krajiny paměti. Trans. Vlasta Dvořáčková. Jinočany: H&H, 2006.

⁴⁹ Howe 2.

⁵⁰ Piotr Rawicz quoted by Alvin H. Rosenfeld, A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature (Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press, 1980) vii.

form of the authors using the Holocaust as the main theme, be it the survivors or the fiction writers. In Europe, some of the Holocaust survivors preferred poetry to convey their experience, probably because of its metaphorical function and somehow lesser responsibility towards the language and the audience as well, as one expects more “hidden” meanings in poems rather than in prosaic forms.⁵¹ Nevertheless, prose was definitely the one form of language preferred by the Holocaust writers both in Europe and in America.

For an American Jewish writer, it was more difficult to approach the Holocaust theme than for the European one. Dorothy Bilik contrasts:

The difference between European and American experiences clearly indicates why American writers were reluctant to write directly of the Holocaust experience.⁵²

The different historical experience certainly played a significant role in the formation of people’s attitude to the life after the armistice. Although the United States had taken part in the Second World War, its land remained intact and most of general public had no direct contact with the war – while in Europe most inhabitants either lost a family member due to war fighting, or suffered another way (the lack of food and almost complete incapability to meet the basic life requirements affected most European families), the American people were

⁵¹ The best-known survivors writing poetry are the French poets Charlotte Delbo or Paul Celan, or the Austrian Jean Améry. The author of this thesis has no knowledge of any non-survivor Holocaust poet. Theodor Adorno, a well-known German philosopher and sociologist, remarked in 1949: “After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric.” Later, he recanted and admitted that “(…) it may have been wrong to say that no poem could be written after Auschwitz.” [quoted in Berel Lang, ed., Writing and the Holocaust (London & New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992) 179.] It is interesting that such a great mind should doubt the eloquence of poetry in conveying human grief and sorrow, all the more painful for the survivors had been deprived of the right to express their grief in the camps, right after the deaths of their family and friends. A bitterly amusing story is related to Adorno’s initial disapproval of the Holocaust poetry. When once again the philosopher complained: “How can one write poetry after Auschwitz?” Mark Strand, an American poet, retorted: “And how can one eat lunch?” [quoted in Susan Gubar, Poetry after Auschwitz: Remembering What One Never Knew (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) 11.] Further into the post-war years, the reading public lived to see the Holocaust portrayed as a documentary (e.g. Alain Resnais’s *Night and Fog*), a comics (Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*), a movie (e.g. Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*) or even a drama (e.g. George Tabori’s *The Cannibals*) and one might find it difficult to believe that the mere use of poetry could have been questioned; however, in 1949, some four years after the armistice, Holocaust still presented a rather emotional matter for many people and in the times when whether to talk about the Holocaust or not was a hot issue, the form of its presentation was much bigger a problem than it might seem to a contemporary reader.

⁵² Bilik 32.

not so badly hit. The need to address war hardships thus might have not been as urgent with American writers as it probably was with the Europeans. On the other hand, those Americans who wanted to address a part of the European wartime history might have felt not entitled to, as I will explore later with regards to the Jewish authors.

As mentioned before, it took the first decade or more after the Second World War for a group of Jewish writers to establish themselves and it could have been precarious to address the then still delicate topic of Holocaust instantaneously. Furthermore, it was arduous to decide upon the “right”, or better “acceptable,” way of representing the Holocaust:⁵³ first, none of the authors in question had experienced the Holocaust first-hand. The 1950s was still early after the war and most of the non-survivors were at a loss when it came to discussing the survivors’ fate and plight. Was it then fair to write about the Holocaust when one had not been there? Or should they respect some kind of “priority claim” of the survivors? Could the Holocaust become a theme of a work of fiction at all?⁵⁴

It is my personal opinion that the Holocaust not only can, but should and must be portrayed by both the eyewitnesses and the outsiders⁵⁵; it is a historical event and should be approached as such, although some Jews, be it survivors or their descendants, or even Jews whose family has had no direct experience with the Holocaust, still believe it is “theirs” and theirs only – a part of the Jewish tradition, the Jewish history, the Jewish collective memory.⁵⁶ Hardly anybody came out unaffected after the Second World War and the horrid event and it

⁵³ For further information on the struggle of finding the “proper” ways of representing the Holocaust see note 51.

⁵⁴ Elie Wiesel once said: “A novel about Auschwitz is not a novel, or else is not about Auschwitz.” [quoted in Sara Horowitz, *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) 14.] He raises the most serious question when it comes to works on the Holocaust: Can the Holocaust become a major theme of fiction?

⁵⁵ For the definition of the term “outsider” used in the context of the Holocaust see page 6.

⁵⁶ Some of the survivors to whom I spoke in Sheffield (spring 2006) still believe that the Holocaust should be “kept sacred”, that it should remain a strictly Jewish matter and that no “gentile” should have the right to “use” the Holocaust as a subject to any kind of their work of art. Being a “gentile” myself, I asked a young Jewish friend of mine whose grandparents had gone through the Holocaust what he thinks could make those people think that way. His answer was unexpected and quite surprising: “It is hard for me to accept the fact that gentiles spy into our affairs, too. You see, we have learned throughout history that everyone is our friend until a catastrophe comes. But then we are happy if they just cease to be friends. Because more often, we end up with a stab in the back.” A simple but fair enough consideration.

is only fair to allow everybody to take their stand and express it in a way they find appropriate. Some people might have been disgusted by the Nazi brutality, others might have favoured the regime, still others might have only amazedly listened while they learned in more detail about the event without inclining to any party. In summary, though, only a small number of people who have learned about the Holocaust just forget, and soon after the war, emotions were bound to play a much bigger role in people's attitudes.

Even these days, sixty years after the war, with eyewitnesses' testimonies, documentaries and thorough studies on the Holocaust, we sometimes encounter attempts to deny the Holocaust⁵⁷ and for that reason it is all the more important not to leave the topic unattended. In the 1950s, though, when detailed descriptions of the brutal machinery of the camps were still missing for general public, it might have been easier not to believe and more difficult to tell; telling without having seen, which was the task of an American Jewish author who wanted to address the Holocaust in his/her works, seems to have been the most perplexing task.

I suggested before that many American authors felt uneasy about addressing such a controversial theme as the Holocaust was (and in many fields still is, for that matter) in the late 1940s and 1950s. Dorothy Bilik notes:

During the 1940s and early fifties, Jewish American writers did not write about the tragedy of European Jewry. Fear of American anti-Semitism and horror at a more virulent German strain contributed to a bland Jewish American fiction that extolled sameness, brotherhood, and caution.⁵⁸

Here we are back to the notion of a Jewish everyman, of a person who wants to blend into the crowd and preferably become invisible, just like the majority of the survivors wanted.

⁵⁷ The last infamous case was the 2006 trial with David Irving, the British historian who was charged with the Holocaust denial and sentenced to a three-years imprisonment (later reduced) by a court in Austria.

⁵⁸ Bilik 29.

That was to change with the coming of the 1960s. The war had been over for more than fifteen years; that was long enough for the initial displeasure at talking about the Holocaust to vanish, and maybe lift up some of the survivors' reluctance to share their experience after the post-war public refusal, but also short enough for the personal observer not to forget the war times. As far as the Holocaust studies are concerned, this young branch of history was supported by serious studies carried out and published: the best-known and most contributing are the researches of the survivors' psychological and mental state and possible affects the war might have had on them organized by William G. Neiderland and Leo Eitinger.⁵⁹ These were the two pioneers later on to be followed by other researchers.⁶⁰

Furthermore, socio-political conditions might have played a certain role in the world's re-gaining interest in Jewish matters – and Israel. In 1960, one of the most important events in Jewish history took place: after years of preparations, the Israeli intelligence managed to capture Adolf Eichmann, the chief organizer of the transports of millions of Jews to labour and death camps during the Second World War, in Argentine, his new homeland. After his secret transportation to Israel, Eichmann was brought to justice and after an exhaustive trial sentenced to death in 1962.⁶¹ The Eichmann trial was important for the Israelis for various reasons: first, it was a great emotional and highly satisfactory event for the Holocaust witnesses – the man who personified the hell the Jews had been put through was finally

⁵⁹ For further study see page 5 and note 11.

⁶⁰ For further study see William G. Neiderland's conclusions (see note 11) and Leo Eitinger's detailed study of the post-war lives of a sample of survivors in Norway and Israel published in Concentration Camp Survivors in Norway and Israel (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964). Another "wave" of the Holocaust research came in the 1980s, notably by I. Levav and J. Abramson, D. Carmil and R. Carel, and W. Eaton et al. For full reference to their works see the list of consulted works.

⁶¹ Johnson 536-537.

For further study see a thoroughgoing and extremely readable book written by one of the agents who were in charge of capturing Eichmann: Isser Harel, Dům v Garibaldiho ulici: Dopadení Adolfa Eichmanna, trans. Eva Kondrysová (Praha, Litomyšl: Paseka, 2003). Harel claims that during the arduous carjack, Eichmann actually started to recite *Shema Israel*, the most important of Jewish prayers, in Hebrew. Apart from making his kidnapppers as angry as one can imagine, he thus admitted he knew instantly who the carjackers were. Surprisingly enough, Eichmann was very cooperative both during his kidnap and the court trial, probably in the hope of not being sentenced to death. His hopes were quite well-founded, as the Israelis have not been in favour of the death sentence. However, in the end he became the one and only man in the history of the young State of Israel ever to be condemned to the capital punishment.

caught and justice had been done. Equally importantly, though, it was a trial watched by the whole world that thus learned more about the Holocaust, about one of its main instigators, about its brutality and unrelenting after-effects. It is sadly paradoxical that thanks to the trial with one of the most dangerous Nazi officials, the Holocaust entered the consciousness of the outsiders with greater force than it had done after so many eye-witnesses had tried to unfold the horrors of the camps in their testimonies.

Apart from the Eichmann trial, another important event occurred which once again attracted the world's attention to Israel: the Six-Day war of 1967. When looking into the history of Israel, it has been tainted by armed conflicts since the very first day of its existence, it actually has had not more than five years of peace ever since its creation. Until these days, it has not been recognized by some of the Arab countries and when there is not an open war with one of them, the state is being constantly threatened by terrorist attacks from within. The Six-Day war was only one in a row but it is remarkable for two facts: first, Israel took control over the Sinai Peninsula (which was returned to Egypt only in 1979 when Anwar Sadat, the then Egyptian president, officially recognized the independence of Israel) and also secured defensible borders, and second, for the first time in history Israel took over the whole of Jerusalem and proclaimed it the capital of the State. This war re-assured the existence of the state and proved to the world that the Jewish people were firmly resolved to defend and protect their lives and their homeland.⁶²

Moreover, the social conditions in the Western world were also favourable to open discussions. The 1960s in the United States is a decade of loosening conditions, rebellions against the establishment (very well-known are for example the riots in support of the young men protesting against the war in Vietnam, accompanied by the burning of the call-up papers),

⁶² Johnson 514-516.

Ironically enough, when the Jews were dispersed in the Diaspora, the Jewish people as such could have felt more secure in terms of its sustenance. The Jews now have their own state, but the trouble is that if somebody attacked it as a whole, using, say, a nuclear weapon, two thirds of the world Jewry would be destroyed. Whereas while living in the Diaspora, such a thing clearly could never have happened.

and standing up for human rights, especially the rights of minorities such as Afro-Americans, Jews and others. The general public tendency of the 1960s was to turn the attention to anything and anyone that was not the previously promoted ideal of an average.

In literature, the first group of writers (although they, as well as the Jewish authors, refused to be regarded as a compact literary stream) to manifest their discontent with the post-war society too much (even though quite understandably) oriented towards material well-being were the Beat generation. The peak of their literary efforts were the late 1950s and with the beginning of the 1960s, other minor literary currents emerged as stronger than in their beginnings – quite understandably given the 1960s’ strife for minorities’ rights, Afro-American, Chicano/-a or Southern authors enjoyed a wider reading audience than before. The same went for the Jewish authors: in a literary situation where there was no longer one major, tight stream, but several lesser (in number, not in significance) ones instead, it is less difficult for the authors of one of those streams to receive recognition than it would have been had there been only writers of a single major literary canon and others trying to avoid it, but aiming at establishing themselves along the canon, too. The American post-war literature is thus characteristically formed by various smaller streams, and that definitely contributed to the Jewish literature being able to get credit as an independent literature *sui generis*. The position of Jewish writers amid other American (non-Jewish) authors is fittingly described by Irving Howe:

(...) insofar as the American Jewish writers respond to the past – and nothing is more deeply ingrained in the Jewish experience than the idea of the past, the claim of memory – they must still feel a profound, even a mysterious sense of distinctiveness. (...) being Jewish remains something “special.” (...) it still affects crucial portions and moments in life. Nor can the hospitality, tolerance, and generosity of American democracy quite dispel the Jewish sense of distinctiveness. There is too much history, too much pain, behind that sense of distinctiveness. What the American Jewish writers make of it in the context of

their experience, how they transform, play with, and try sometimes to suppress it – this forms the major burden of their art.⁶³

The Holocaust theme stood in the same position within the Jewish literary current as the Jewish writers did within the stream of the already established authors in America. It took time before the inconspicuous hints to Holocaust (such as those of Saul Bellow in *The Victim*, 1947) became obvious works of the Holocaust. Discussing the unenviable position of the Holocaust writers, one might ask themselves: what was it that made the authors who had no personal experience with the Holocaust (apart from that indicated earlier – that of a man who must have been affected by the brutality of the *l'univers concentrationnaire*⁶⁴ when s/he learned about it) write about it? Just what was the driving force of the literary efforts in this field?

2.1.2 “Nothing I wrote saved a single Jew from being gassed.”⁶⁵

The guilt feeling as the motivity of the Holocaust writers

Even in modern society, the Jews are still frequently despised and not tolerated for their undisguised sense of separateness, a strange stand of distinctiveness.⁶⁶ It is worth looking into the cause of this acquired stance of the Jews: people who are treated in a certain way (in this case we are talking about the Jews having almost always been set aside from the

⁶³ Howe 4.

⁶⁴ The term is usually ascribed to Charlotte Delbo. As quoted in Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies* 200. Interestingly, in secondary academic literature this term is used quite often without an in-the-footnote explanation. Northrop Frye asserts “One of the most affective methods of conveying meaning in translation, for instance, is to leave a key word untranslated, so that the reader has to pick up its contextual associations in the original language from his own.” [Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973) 334-335.] The term *l'univers concentrationnaire* aptly functions in this sense and the authors make a good use of it.

⁶⁵ W.H. Auden quoted in Judith Woolf, *The Memory of the Offence* (Market Harborough: University Texts, 1995) 51.

⁶⁶ The most recent displays of anti-Semitism, such as the 2005 burnings of Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and other tabernacles in France, and recurring attacks on Jewish communities in many European countries (the Czech republic not excepted) show that anti-Jewish feelings and tendencies are far from superannuated; on the contrary, with conflicts growing in the Near East, waves of anti-Semitism both in Europe and in America reappear more and more often.

majority society for whatever reason at hand) usually start to behave as they were forced to get used to. It is no longer necessary to appoint the Jews as unwanted for them to feel that way and behave accordingly.

The Jewish people had long been left without one of the basic necessities of a nation: their own land. Although they have now had their state for almost sixty years, a great number of the Jews continue to live in the Diaspora;⁶⁷ nonetheless, most of them share the burden of having been born Jewish and either try to break free from that fate, or continue preserving not only the blood, but also, and maybe more importantly, the spiritual heritage of a continuing history of a cosmopolitan nation.

However difficult it might be for a nation without a homeland to protect and sustain its spiritual tradition, the Jews managed. One of the key indicating factors when discussing the Jewish people is their sense of distinctiveness, but rather a collective, national one than that of individuals. The term *collective* is very important here as it significantly denotes the basic characteristics of the Jewish people: although dispersed all around the world, they have been put through very similar, almost the same events – pogroms, attacks on synagogues, displays of anti-Semitism. Hence the sense of *collective history* of one people, although a long time without a mother country.

Collective history and collective burden necessarily lead to the sense of collective guilt. Emma Lazarus already showed that a Jew, wherever s/he stays or lives, can be and usually is influenced by the fate of their fellow Jews. I believe that what made the American Jewish authors write about the Holocaust was precisely this sense of guilt, the collective

⁶⁷ The reasons for not moving to Israel are various, be it an already established position in the momentary place of residence, financial situation not allowing one to move, or simply lacking the need to move there etc. I would like to point out, though, that not all the Jews are happy that there *is* a state of Israel created by the Jews at all. Orthodox Jews [for the distinction between orthodox, liberal (or reformed) and conservative Jews see Arnulf H. Baumann, *Co by měl každý vědět o židovství*, trans. Lydie Cejmová (Praha: Kalich, 2000) 45.] believe that the State of Israel can be founded only by the Messiah whose coming they still await. The fact that it was men, and mostly secularized, though believing men who laid the foundations for the creation of the State has always been a thorn in the orthodox Jews' side. For further reference see for example Eli Barnavi, ed. *Atlas univerzálních dějin židovského národa*, Trans. Dušan Zbavítel (Praha: Victoria Publishing, 1995) 297.

perception of the nation's history, with all its plight and suffering. Addressing the most horrid and brutal event in the history of the Jews in their works might be seen as "a manifestation by Jewish American writers of a delayed post-Holocaust consciousness."⁶⁸ Furthermore, George Steiner, a French-born American critic and literary comparatist proclaimed:

The idea that Jews everywhere have been maimed by the European catastrophe, that the massacre has left all who survived (even if they were nowhere near the actual scene) off balance, as does the tearing of a limb, is one which American Jews can understand in an intellectual sense.⁶⁹

Imagining the body of Jews, the American ones are the "limb torn off" trying to re-attach to the whole by imagining, reliving and conveying the experience they have never been put through.

2.1.3 "No one can really write an imaginative work about the Nazi terror because art implies meaning and Hitler's whole regime represented an organized annihilation of meaning."⁷⁰

The Holocaust works of fiction

As I tried to show, the 1960s became the crucial decade for the American Jewish literature. Henry Roth's and Abraham Cahan's novels got republished and a new kind of immigrant novel appeared on the American Jewish literary scene: not a literature of assimilation but one of "continuing importance of Jewish experience."⁷¹ The survivor as the new hero of the post-war Jewish literature began to appear in the late 1960s and became the central figure of the Jewish fiction in the 1970s. There are several points which connect the Holocaust works of fiction together.

⁶⁸ Bilik 3.

⁶⁹ George Steiner, "A Kind of Survivor," *Language and Silence* (New York: Atheneum, 1966) 143-44.

⁷⁰ Alfred Kazin paraphrased by Robert Alter, "Confronting the Holocaust," *After the Tradition* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969) 63.

⁷¹ Bilik 3.

The immigrant protagonist. The novels, novellas or short stories concerned with the Holocaust obviously had to choose an immigrant hero as the main protagonist – *l'univers concentrationnaire* was based in Europe and the reader encounters the fate of men and women who come to America after they had been set free. The 1960s' immigrant is significantly different from the pre-war one. The *immigrant-survivor*⁷² is a preserver of the moral values of Jewish heritage which were almost completely destroyed by the Nazi regime in Europe, and which are gradually disappearing in America. S/he can be perceived as the “modern, secular version of the tsadik of traditional Yiddish and Hebrew literature.”⁷³ The authors focus on the original (usually European) background, such as language, education, culture and tradition of the Jews, much less on their assimilation in America, which in this case is something the characters have to endure, much less something they wish to do – as opposed to their pre-war precursors.

Apart from restoring and guarding the traditional Jewish values, the immigrant-survivors also serve as the linking element between the Old and the New Worlds:

Remnants of a vanished European Jewish culture, the immigrant-survivors in America bridge the historical and psychological distance between the modern Jewish American writer and the sombre events that the writer confronts through the fictive imagination,⁷⁴

says Bilik. No longer trying to escape the old milieu, the new immigrant is the bearer of the tradition, spirituality and values of the Jewish legacy, and the works “center on the survival of individuals, and of Jewish traditions, language, history and morality.”⁷⁵

⁷² Term used by Dorothy Bilik. From this point onwards, no reference will be made to the acknowledged author when using this term.

⁷³ Bilik 5.

⁷⁴ Bilik 5.

⁷⁵ Bilik 9.

Questioning the existence of God. “The most important lesson one can learn from Auschwitz is that God does not exist.”⁷⁶ It is a recurring theme in the post-Holocaust novels (both authentic and fictional) that they doubt God’s existence, and if not that, at least His⁷⁷ omnipotence. The Jews have been brought up sufferers; they live with the knowledge that they should endure what God has arranged for them and try and reach accord rather than militantly rail against His plan:

The Jews have been persecuted for fifteen hundred years and thanks to this long-term experience they have come to realize that resistance does not save lives, it loses them. Their history, *theology* [emphasis mine], folklore, their social structure and even their language have brought them up to negotiating, pleading, paying ransom and protesting, but never to fighting back.⁷⁸
[translation mine]

Nevertheless, the Holocaust was plainly too much to bear even for a nation used to having been the scapegoat for all human troubles for many hundreds of years, and to negotiating with everyone including God rather than fighting. Eli Wiesel asks God where He was when the gruesome events were taking place in Auschwitz but never stops believing in Him;⁷⁹ on the other hand, Primo Levi reveals his scepticism openly: “Today I think that if for no other reason than that an Auschwitz existed, no one in our age should speak of Providence.”⁸⁰ The two authors represent two basic attitudes to the question of faith after the Holocaust between which the vast majority of survivors split: there might be God, but He has never been in Auschwitz, or simply there is none.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Wallace, “What I Learned from Auschwitz,” *An Auschwitz Alphabet*, 30 Nov. 2006 <<http://www.spectacle.org/695/essay.html> >.

⁷⁷ The author of this work is aware of the recent tendencies not to appoint God solely as a male figure. However, in order not to complicate the paper, male pronouns will be used when referring to God. To make the reference to God clear, capital “H” is used in the possessive pronoun.

⁷⁸ Johnson 483.

⁷⁹ Read for example Wiesel’s *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).

⁸⁰ Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man. The Truce*, trans. Stuart Woolf (London: Abacus, 1995) 177.

This is also one of the major differences between the pre-war and the post-Holocaust immigrant literature. However secularized or assimilated the pre-war heroes may be, they never question “the existence and meaning” of God;⁸¹ they might get rid of orthodoxy, but faith in God is something they do not cease to treasure – not so the immigrant-survivors. In many works by the survivors – diaries, memoirs, testimonies, short stories or novels – they often appoint *luck* as the main reason they survived. When asked how he managed surviving Auschwitz where he had been sent for about six months before the end of the Second World War, a survivor of Auschwitz answered

I was immensely lucky. I was lucky that a beard would never grow on my face, because that gave me a healthy look compared to the other men’s stubble. I was lucky enough to come so late in the war and look strong enough to run, because [in yet another camp] I got chosen as a runner for one of the commanders – I had to stay near him and had to be constantly ready for him, but that also brought a piece of luck with it, because staying near him meant staying in a considerably warmer hut than the barracks were.⁸²

Otto J. had not been very religious before the war either, but his words express aptly the shift in Jewish thinking about God. It was no longer His will or Providence which enabled one to survive, it was pure luck and bits of common sense and intuition which told one where to run and where to stay still, when to speak and when to remain silent, which saved them. God’s position was shattered.

Historicity. While the pre-war immigrants concentrated on their *present* lives, the immigrant-survivor is obsessed with his/her life before the war. The war was something that destroyed their lives – as explored in detail in chapter 2.1, they have not chosen to come to America to find a better life, they have come because they had no other choice. Their longing

⁸¹ Bilik 22.

⁸² Otto J. (an Auschwitz survivor, paraphrased), Personal interview, 07 May 2006.

for the pre-war lives encompasses the past and they become more and more aware of the importance of the Jewishness in their contemporary, dismal living. Writers of the Holocaust fiction react to this in their works because they, too, need to come to terms with the European disaster.⁸³ As Dorothy Bilik observes,

[The] evocation of particularity and historicity [of Jewish past] and [the] direct portrayal of Holocaust survivors are aspects of the Jewish American writers' response to the destruction of European Jewry and are central to [the] representation of post-Holocaust consciousness.⁸⁴

From all the above said it is now clear that preserving and showing the Jewish traditions, spirituality and customs has become the major point of interest of the Holocaust writers.

⁸³ For a detailed analysis of the inducements of the American Jewish Holocaust writers see Chapter 2.1.1.

⁸⁴ Bilik 44-45.

II. Experiencing the Unexperienced: Reflecting the Holocaust Reality in Literary Works

1) Cynthia Ozick (born 1926) and Saul Bellow (1915-2005): The Leading Writers of the Holocaust Fiction

1.1 **“If we blow into the narrow end of the shofar, we will be heard far. But if we choose to be mankind rather than Jewish and blow into the wide part, we will not be heard at all.”⁸⁵**

Cynthia Ozick

Speaking about the American Jewish Literature, the names of Philip Roth (born 1933), Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991), Bernard Malamud (1914-1986) or Saul Bellow will promptly cross one’s mind. Cynthia Ozick (born 1926), although none the less worse in any aspect than the renowned authors, still waits for the world-wide reading public’s acclaim. Ozick was brave enough to enter the literary world with her first novel *Trust* (1966) immediately addressing the Holocaust. It is difficult to say whether or not her choice of the topic could play a significant role in her establishing herself as a writer, but interestingly enough, although her works do not lack any of the artistic values of her more famous contemporaries, she was not assorted with the main Jewish writers. I agree with Elaine Kauvar, a professor of English who engages in the works of American Jewish writers, who in her treatment of Ozick’s works claims:

I decline an ethnic designation for Cynthia Ozick because it smacks of marginality both for the Jew as a writer and for the writer who is a Jew; and

⁸⁵ Cynthia Ozick quoted by Bilik, 46.

marginality is precisely the issue against which Ozick inveighs and the state over which her work triumphs.⁸⁶

In Cynthia Ozick's own proclamation, one might see the trace of what seems her own disapproval when it comes to classing her merely on the basis of her ethnic origin:

The writer must put herself aside as a Jew while in the act of writing, or the writing will turn out prescriptive, tendentious, conscientious. And imagination cannot sustain, imagination will die under the ministrations of, conscience, prescription, persuasion.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, it is difficult to decide whether "putting oneself aside as a Jew" in the process of writing means also putting the author aside as a Jew in the process of reading. I believe that Cynthia Ozick should not be classified *only* on the basis of her origins, but I also believe that it is important to take her background into account. Her being a Jew and using a piece of Jewish history supports the idea of the specific Jewish collective consciousness of history, the inexplicable need to comment on the events even though the author was not present when they were taking place, and last but not least it shows the will to determine oneself openly as a Jew – on the grounds of such assumptions, Ozick's motivation resembles that of the nineteenth century Emma Lazarus. Both Kauvar's and Ozick's considerations could serve as an explanation for Cynthia Ozick standing aside the main Jewish literary stream, but not as the reason for her position amid the more renowned writers.

Neither would it be appropriate to appoint Cynthia Ozick as a feminist writer. Feminism is a movement aiming at equalling women's rights to those of men, which is not what Ozick attempts to in her works. The novel I have chosen, though, is an important landmark in Holocaust literature in that it is probing into the post-Holocaust life of a woman, rather than that of a man, furthermore written by a woman (the author's sex might actually be

⁸⁶ Elaine M. Kauvar, *Cynthia Ozick's Fiction. Tradition and Invention* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) xix.

⁸⁷ As quoted by Kauvar xviii.

partly responsible for her lesser popularity). Ozick thus might not be so well-known in the context of the pioneering Jewish writers, but she is the best-known female non-survivor writer who creates fiction in which a survivor of the Holocaust appears.⁸⁸ Her best-known works closely engaged with the Holocaust are her short story *The Shawl* and its sequel, novella *Rosa*.

The two works were written in 1977 but Ozick waited four years to publish *The Shawl* and seven to publish *Rosa*, both in *The New Yorker*. Their first issue in one volume appeared only in 1983.⁸⁹ Cynthia Ozick explains the long period between writing and publishing the writings by asserting that she felt “aversion to making a work of art about the death camps.”⁹⁰ Why she felt such an aversion she does not explain; Strandberg suggests that it might be her view of all fiction as idolatry which restrained her from producing such a work. Apart from that, it might have been feelings of inappropriateness, or of unjustly (ab-)using the Holocaust Ozick herself did not go through.⁹¹

Interestingly, after publishing *The Shawl* in 1980 Cynthia Ozick received two completely different letters which reacted to the story:

‘The first was from a psychiatrist who said he dealt with many Holocaust survivors. He said he was certain that I was such a survivor because only a survivor could write such a story. I was shocked by the utter confidence of his assumption; he knew nothing about imagination. The second was a very angry letter from a Holocaust survivor. She found my use of imagination utterly out of place and considered it both emotionally and morally disruptive. I sided with the

⁸⁸ In the Holocaust non-fiction works, woman authors are also less frequent. Several explanations come to mind: women were more likely to be put to death by the Nazis because they were not as “durable” as men when it came to workforce. For that reason as well, more survivors are male and the probability that a woman survivor writing about the Holocaust will appear is quite low. Furthermore, men rather than women tended to write about their experience from the wartime years – women longed for families and an undisturbed life amid “normal” people after the worst time of their lives and were more able to “blend into the crowd” after the war. (Sue Vice, “Representing the Holocaust” Seminar Discussion, University of Sheffield, 15 Feb. 2006.)

⁸⁹ Victor Strandberg, *Greek Mind/Jewish Soul: The Conflicted Art of Cynthia Ozick* (Wisconsin and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994) 139.

⁹⁰ Strandberg 139.

⁹¹ For reasons which might have prevented some writers from writing about the Holocaust see Part I, Chapter 2.1.1.

survivor and thought the psychiatrist foolish. I finally assuaged the survivor by convincing her that I was not an enemy of her unreplicable experience.’⁹²

These two reactions show how strong a fictional work about the holocaust might be: on one hand it is a work of imagination which, however, is positively capable of faithful mirroring of the survivor’s Holocaust and post-Holocaust worlds, but on the other the poetic language can induce unpleasant emotions amid those who are the work’s original model and be viewed as misusing the specific piece of Jewish experience. Moreover, the survivor’s letter expresses displeasure which the authors of Holocaust fiction feared and their doubts when it came to representing the Holocaust in literary works thus may be considered as well-founded.

I have chosen the novella *Rosa* as one of the basic works of my analysis because it is perfectly compliant with the requirements of the kind of literary work I wish to explore: it is a work of fiction about a survivor of the Holocaust, written by a non-survivor and published in the United States, a country not directly affected by the Second World War in terms of its land and inhabitants. The author is not as well-known as some of the others I mentioned, but her works deserve the reading public’s attention. Furthermore, the novella is a compelling probe into the mind of a survivor, an easily believable story (powerful enough to mislead an expert specialist as seen above) – almost as if the author had been “an insider” herself (even more noticeable in the previous story *Rosa*). It leads the reader through the heroine’s brief period of life during which they are present at a fundamental mental process regarding the character’s past and present. It is a readable book not lacking any of the narrative qualities that a respected work of art should have.

⁹² Cynthia Ozick quoted in “The many faces of Cynthia Ozick,” [The Atlantic Online](http://www.theatlantic.com), 15 May, 1997, reprinted, 19 Dec 2006, <http://209.85.135.104/search?q=cache:YqZzQAQe2L8J:www.legacy-project.org/index.php%3Fpage%3Dlit_detail%26litID%3D34+%22Cynthia+Ozick%22+letter+from+survivor&hl=cs&gl=cz&ct=clnk&cd=3>.

1.2 “So he’s human. All right, he’s human.”⁹³

Saul Bellow

Contrary to Cynthia Ozick, Saul Bellow is one of the best-known American Jewish writers of the twentieth century. His numerous works comprise short stories, novels, theatre plays and a work of non-fiction, out of which the prosaic works of fiction are the most important. Bellow’s main characters are usually rootless, irresolute, and far from what they are expected to be by their surroundings. They are lost in a chaotic world in which they are trying to find a system in order to orient themselves.⁹⁴ Artur Sammler, through the voice of the narrator, on one occasion muses:

Communicating chaos. Getting to be oppressive. (...) Sammler had ideas about this chaos – *he had his own view of everything, an intensely peculiar one, but what else was here to go by?* [emphasis mine] Of course he made allowances for error. He was a European, and these were American phenomena. Europeans often misunderstood America comically.⁹⁵

In this particular example, Sammler expresses a resolute individualistic position amongst people for reasons of his past (having an “intensely peculiar view of everything”), and also his different way of thinking given his European background. The *system* according to which he is finding his way through troublesome times in a still foreign society (even after as many as over twenty years, there are days when Sammler “[feels] extremely foreign – voice, accent, syntax, manner, face, mind, everything, foreign.”⁹⁶) is thus his own determination.

A kind of “antihero”, the typical protagonist of Bellow’s works will hesitate and meditate over what changes the society and he himself should undergo rather than do it; the

⁹³ Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977) 303. Bellow in the voice of Angela, Mr. Sammler’s benefactor nephew’s daughter.

⁹⁴ Ulmanová 36.

⁹⁵ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 67.

⁹⁶ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 287.

same vacillation would accompany the deliberations of the American dream,⁹⁷ which in the characters' case is an almost inappropriate idea, a pointless effort.

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, the hero is strongly affected by his past, out of which the time of the Holocaust sticks out markedly. Usually, the novel first published in 1970 is also regarded as a reflection of the revolutionary year of 1969, "a crisis book for a crisis year, 1969, the year of high radical passions and moon shot."⁹⁸ Therefore, it can be considered a very contemporary writing mirroring the development of the late 1960s society and its technical evolution, but at the same time it is again a probe into the mental processes of a survivor who perceives all the events more intensively than others, whose attitude has been shaped by the unique past experience. Its theme is broader than that of Ozick's *Rosa* in that it largely addresses contemporary issues, but those are explored on the basis of their inner perception of a man whose understanding is rather unusual, whose explanations are bound to be different from the majority of the society he inhabits. This is also the main connecting point between the two writings – the characters' way of perceiving the world, different from the rest of people.

Another connection between the two works lies in the profound exploration of their inner lives, of the thoughts following seemingly simple events which a "normal" person would probably overcome with as little as a shrug (Rosa's lost piece of underwear, or Sammler's notice of a bus pickpocket). Occurrences which would most probably be either unnoticed or quickly forgotten by others become essential parts of the post-Holocaust lives of the survivors – Rosa is obsessed with searching the lost piece of underwear and the Negro pickpocket follows Sammler (one time literally) throughout the whole of the book.

In both writings as well the reader is confronted with the society which expects different behaviour from the main characters. The protagonists then undergo an inner struggle

⁹⁷ Ulmanová 36-37.

⁹⁸ Malcolm Bradbury, *Saul Bellow* (New York: Methuen, 1982) 78.

concerning both their chances and their un-/willingness to change their attitudes according to other people's expectations. The "proper way" she should live her life and think her thoughts is in *Rosa* imposed on the survivor by Stella, Rosa's co-survivor niece; Sammler is mostly left alone by his close relatives in terms of judging the way he lives, nevertheless he is viewed by them as an icon, a person aloof from the majority society because of his past. In both the works the family members could therefore be regarded as representatives of the majority society.

A family member is also the one who supports the survivor financially: another linking point between the two writings is that although extremely capable of handling their own lives (suffice it to realize that they both survived the Nazi death camps), the characters seem unable to live independent lives. However, while Artur Sammler receives only financial support but still pursues his own interests (e.g. reading despite his bad eye), Rosa seems resolutely resigned – a state she deliberately got herself into by smashing the antique shop, her former means of livelihood.

The main contrast between the novel and the novella lies in the space given to the contemporary society matters. In *Rosa*, the only aspects of the world outside the heroine's head the reader gets to see are always somehow connected to her inner soul (Persky comes from her hometown, the hotel whose estate protected by a barbed wire fence she trespasses will host a conference of researchers dealing with the post-Holocaust survivor's syndrome). Mr. Sammler, on the other hand, has to encounter aspects of a world completely detached from his life, his past or his troubles (a thief on a bus is nothing unusual in America, his giving a lecture where nobody pays attention does not depend on him being a Holocaust survivor or not). I assume that it might be for this reason as well that Bellow's book, although its narrative is much more difficult to follow than that of Ozick's, has attained more reading public acclaim than that by Cynthia Ozick – digesting the painful theme of the Holocaust is

much easier when the reader has the possibility to escape the serious leitmotif into matters more familiar with their own lives from time to time (or page to page). Furthermore, using everyday, ordinary images might make Bellow's work more accessible to wider reading public – although Cynthia Ozick's novella is an elaborate one, its narrow focus on the Holocaust aftermaths in the mental state of a survivor make it a brilliant work of fiction for enthusiasts, but unfortunately not for a wide audience.

Nevertheless, past is an important component of the protagonists' present in both narrations. Perfectly accurate descriptions of the Warsaw ghetto in *Rosa* or of the “mad Jewish King of Lodz”⁹⁹ Rumkowski in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* are pieces of “objective reality” protruding in the heroes' minds whenever they meet with an incentive which draws their attention to their “lives before.” As said before, however, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* addresses also very contemporary issues, e.g. a collapsing society (or at least its value system) in the end of the 1960s, or launching the first rocket to the moon.

I believe that the two works I have chosen for a detailed exploration of the characters, settings, main themes and narratives, are the leading prosaic writings of the American Jewish Holocaust fiction. Their authors' Jewish background and the use of the specifically Jewish topic in their works support the idea of the Jewish collective consciousness. *Rosa* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* are two works reminding of an event which – as well as the writings themselves – should not be forgotten.

⁹⁹ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 230.

Rumkowski, an unsuccessful businessman was made the “town senior” by the Nazis when Lodz was taken and fenced off. Either mad or trying to divert Nazis' attention from “serious action”, Rumkowski started to behave like a well-off, 19th century despotic king including dressing up in ermine and riding an old carriage etc. He died in Auschwitz after deprecating the deportation of the Lodz's Jewish council.

2) Exploring the Characters¹⁰⁰

2.1 “‘I’m alive’ (...) simply lacks the moral resonance of ‘I survived.’”¹⁰¹

Rosa’s and Mr. Sammler’s “Lives After”

Rosa and Artur Sammler came out of the Holocaust alive. The reader gets to know that Rosa had experienced the Warsaw ghetto and thanks to the preceding short story *The Shawl* it is clear that she was later interned in a death camp. How she survived, though, is never revealed. Artur Sammler’s survival, on the other hand, is described quite explicitly:

So (...) it happened that Sammler, with his wife and others, on a perfectly clear day, had had to strip naked. Waiting, then, to be shot in the mass grave. (...) Sammler had already that day been struck in the eye by a gun butt and blinded. In contraction from life, when naked, he already felt himself dead. But somehow *he had failed, unlike the others* [emphasis mine] (...): death had not picked up the receiver to answer his ring.¹⁰²

Apart from providing quite a simple account of the landmark event of his life, the extract also shows a rudiment of the complex with which many survivors came out of the war: I survived while the others died.¹⁰³ Sammler’s grief is directed towards his wife who, unlike him, had not escaped the Nazi bullet by a stroke of luck, and the confusion is still present in his life years after the end of the war:

When she [Sammler’s wife] faltered, he tried to help her. (...) he tried to convey something to her and fortify her. But as it had turned out, he had prepared her

¹⁰⁰ The author is aware of the existence of those studies of *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* and *Rosa* which are included in the list of consulted works. Nevertheless, the aim of this work is to apply the findings of the first part of this thesis to representative passages of the two works. Some conclusions might resemble those in the studies because they simply “suggest themselves,” however, all the analyses and interpretations are an original work of the author.

¹⁰¹ Baruch G., a Holocaust survivor, paraphrased by Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies* 23.

¹⁰² Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 137-138.

¹⁰³ For further exploration of the survivor’s complex see Part I, Chapter 1.1.

for death without sharing it. She was killed, not he. She had passed the course, and he had not.¹⁰⁴

Escaping death is not perceived as a success by Sammler: he was *merely* following natural instincts and crawled out of certain death when digging his way up through the pile of corpses mingled with soil. But considering survival an achievement? “It seldom occurred to him to consider it an achievement. Where was the achievement? He had clawed his way out.”¹⁰⁵ The act of surviving *per se* does not entail a moral or any other kind of accomplishment, it is usually a moment of physical or mental mastery over the fate which, luckily for the intended victim, staggered and missed the target. It is surviving “the life after” in a society which became, or *had to become* for want of other choices, the survivor’s new home which needs to be regarded as an achievement – the new life is what drags strength out of the survivor, what needs thinking and deliberating various choices presented by each and every undecided situation in one’s life. Blending into a crowd of “outsiders” with the intention of never being picked up as “the other” again and for the most part remaining an invisible part of the great moloch of humankind is what requires an effort worth praising.¹⁰⁶

The survivors’ grief over the death of close friends and family and the complex springing from the irrational impression of an undeserved survival in the shadow of the deaths of millions fellow Jews may not always be turned necessarily against the survivor him/herself only. Ozick’s Rosa turns her rage and despair of Magda’s, her daughter’s death in a death camp towards her niece whom she blames for Magda’s being dead. Where Sammler mourns his wife and blames himself for not having been able to help her out, Rosa mourns Magda and

¹⁰⁴ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 273.

¹⁰⁵ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 273.

¹⁰⁶ On the authentic survivors’ post-Holocaust lives see Part I, Chapter 1.3. For the definition of the term “outsider” used in the context of the Holocaust see page 6.

blames her niece Stella, “the Angel of Death”,¹⁰⁷ for having taken away Magda’s one and only protection, her shawl, and thus inadvertently having caused her death:

Then Stella took the shawl away and made Magda die.

Afterward Stella said: ‘I was cold.’¹⁰⁸

(...)

Stella was alive, why not Magda? Who was Stella, coarse Stella, to insist that Magda was not alive? Stella the Angel of Death. (...) Stella, never a mother, who was Stella to mock the kisses Rosa put in Magda’s shawl?¹⁰⁹

As for herself, Rosa feels uncertain in the world she lives in and creates a parallel universe in her mind where Magda, the toddler murdered by the Nazis in the camp, is a beautiful adult woman, a married doctor of Greek philosophy living in a luxurious apartment in New York. Rosa’s own little room in a hotel filled with “flirts of seventy” (who did not wish “to restore youth,” only “to continue it”¹¹⁰ trying to escape their aging) is piled with letters for Magda written “in the most excellent literary Polish”¹¹¹ which she never sends; objectively, it is because

it was hard to get them mailed – the post office was a block farther off than the Laundromat, and the hotel lobby’s stamp machine had been marked “Out of Order” for years,¹¹²

but it might also serve as a hint to the careful reader that Rosa herself is well aware of the absurdity of her fantasy world featuring her daughter’s perfect life – “I don’t like to give myself lies,”¹¹³ says Rosa at one point of the book but she also proclaims: “Without a life

¹⁰⁷ Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* (New York: Vintage International, 1990) 15, 35 and elsewhere. In Jewish tradition, the Angel of Death is either a figure floating half-way between heaven and earth, deciding for himself to punish people and standing always ready with a sword in his hands to do so without waiting for God’s consent, or “his powers are limited and depend[ant] on his master’s (God’s) decrees and orders.” (“The Angel of Death,” *Jewish Heritage Online Magazine*, 14 Dec. 2006 < <http://www.jhom.com/topics/angels/death.htm>>.)

¹⁰⁸ Ozick 6.

¹⁰⁹ Ozick 35.

¹¹⁰ All three quotations: Ozick 28.

¹¹¹ Ozick 14.

¹¹² Ozick 14.

¹¹³ Ozick 56.

(...), a person lives where they can. If all they got is thoughts, that's where they live.”¹¹⁴

Thoughts, and the lies Rosa thought up, are the basis of her life after the Holocaust – them and the worst period of her life; for Rosa, nothing but the Holocaust seems to exist and constitute her life:

‘(...) we got three [lives]. The life before, the life during, the life after.’ She saw that Persky did not follow. She said, ‘The life after is now. The life before is our *real* life, at home, where we was born.’

‘And during?’

‘This was Hitler.’

(...)

‘After, after, that’s all Stella cares. For me there’s one time only; there’s no after.’

Persky speculated. ‘You want everything the way it was before.’

‘No, no, no,’ Rosa said. ‘It can’t be. (...) Before is a dream. After is a joke.

Only *during* [emphasis mine] stays. (...)’¹¹⁵

Rosa is obsessed with her past and seems both unable and unwilling to step out of it. From her point of view, there was no other way to survive her survival than that of turning inwards, to an alternative life to the one which “thieves [i.e. the Nazis] took.”¹¹⁶

One can apprehend Rosa’s attitude as one of a surrender capitulating from the challenges she would have to face had she decided to live in her present. That, on the other hand, is not the case of Artur Sammler whose approach to the new life is unquestionably proactive. Although financially supported by his nephew (and obtaining a “small payment from the West Germans”¹¹⁷), Sammler tries to live his own life in the post-Holocaust world and rather than with the past he is consternated with the present world and the state of contemporary society. He takes his experience as enriching, nevertheless not determining the

¹¹⁴ Ozick 27-28.

¹¹⁵ Ozick 57-58.

¹¹⁶ Ozick 28, 32 and elsewhere.

¹¹⁷ Bellow, Mr. Sammler’s Planet 85.

course of the life he lives now. The past protrudes in some of his present actions or such events which somehow evoke the war memories. When trying to escape the Negro pickpocket, for example, the reader learns that Sammler “(...) knew something about lying low. He had learned in Poland, in the war, in forests, cellars, passageways, cemeteries.”¹¹⁸ Rosa, on the contrary, does not make any use of her experience, most of the time she lingers in her memories and dawdles over blaming the Nazis, or Stella for her *status quo*. Artur Sammler’s past projects many times throughout *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* but the above quotation is actually one of the few where the past experience is perceived as an indisputably *helpful* one in the “life after.” Here the distinguishing difference between Rosa and Artur Sammler emerges clearly again: Rosa *decided* to have no life in the present and loiter in her past, while Artur tries to make the best use in the present of what has been left to him from the past – which is nothing but his experience.

Notwithstanding Sammler’s resolve to go on with his life and even to try and be of use to the society (when he tries to pinpoint the bus pickpocket to the police for the sake of common welfare), his close friends and relatives constantly remind him of what he went through during the war. For his experience only he is put on a pedestal he does not want to stand on:

Mr. Sammler had a symbolic character. He, personally, was a symbol. His friends and family had made him a judge and a priest. And of what was he a symbol? He didn’t even know. Was it because he had survived?¹¹⁹

The personality behind the name almost omitted, Artur Sammler is perceived by the outsiders only as a survivor as if surviving were the greatest deed he has ever accomplished. It might seem so to those who “know it from the movies but were not there”¹²⁰ in Rosa’s words, but as shown earlier, Artur Sammler himself sees his survival as a mere arbitrary occurrence: “He

¹¹⁸ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 48.

¹¹⁹ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 91.

¹²⁰ Ozick 58, paraphrased.

hadn't even done that [i.e. survived], since so much of the earlier person had disappeared. It wasn't surviving, it was only lasting. He had lasted."¹²¹ Calling his life lasting, Mr. Sammler would happily exchange the respect others pay him – basically on the grounds of his experience – for what could be called simply “a life.” The name Rosa gives her “life after” one never learns but what she makes clear is that “to call it a life is a lie.”¹²²

Although probably well-meant, by exaggerating Sammler's experience rather than concentrating on his new persona his close ones actually set him aside once again. Surviving entails a label which seems to be impossible to remove and forget. Rosa Lublin faces the same trouble when approached by a “scholar of social pathology” who expresses interest in “survivor syndroming [sic].”¹²³ As suggested in the first part of this work, most of Holocaust survivors' wished to become *a man or a woman of the crowd*¹²⁴ and forget about (or at least suppress the memories of) the inhuman barbarity they had been put through. Labelling a person with the telling name of a “survivor” makes that hardly possible; Rosa's thoughts after reading the letter inviting her to participate on a study of the traumatic neurological consequences of imprisonment, malnutrition and other negative factors are expressive enough of the feelings shared by those survivors who refused to be treated as such:

Consider also the special word they used: *survivor*. (...) As long as they didn't have to say *human being*. (...) A name like a number – counted apart from the ordinary swarm. (...) They don't call you a woman anyhow. *Survivor*. Even when your bones get melted in to the grains of the earth, still they'll forget *human being*. Survivor and survivor and survivor; always and always.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 91.

¹²² Ozick 58.

¹²³ Ozick 37 and 38.

¹²⁴ Taken into account the death camps' conditions and anonymity it might seem paradoxical that so many Jews wanted to be nameless again, but then again, they were chosen (no irony intended) on the basis of their being “different” from the majority society – and all they wanted after the war was to blend in.

¹²⁵ Ozick 36-37.

The stigma of the Holocaust is too strong to dispose of; not even Rosa, “a mad woman and a scavenger,”¹²⁶ can go unnoticed by the interested scientist.

This unwanted categorization might be one of the reasons for Rosa to withdraw from society into the seclusion of her little room. Moreover, she seems to renounce people and peoplehood entirely because of her experience with closed ears of the former customers of her old antique shop she smashed up with an axe, thus voluntarily depriving herself of her subsistence. Did she see a meaning in an independent life as long as she saw the chance to talk about her experience? Could Rosa’s giving up delivering the message of her past lead to her deliberately abandoning all hope in self-reliant living? She explains her decision in reaction to Persky’s enquiry:

‘How come you smashed up your business?’

‘(...) I didn’t like who came in it.’

‘Spanish? Colored?’¹²⁷

Apparently, Persky, a man she met in the laundry, does not expect the point she wants to make – he only learns in the lines which follow:

‘What do I care who came? Whoever came, *they were like deaf people* [emphasis mine]. Whatever you explained to them, they didn’t understand.’¹²⁸

The primary point of having a store was not to sell antiques, it was rather to have the chance to *talk* to people about the Holocaust. However, the shoppers showed neither interest nor patience with Rosa and being declined by them seems to be one of the reasons for Rosa destroying her independent life and retracting into her inner soul. In one of the letters to Magda, Rosa reveals her thoughts:

¹²⁶ Ozick 13.

¹²⁷ Ozick 27.

¹²⁸ Ozick 27.

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 up out one little thing here, one little thing there, for each customer.¹²⁹

Nevertheless, that does not seem to have helped for in the end of the letter which apart from Rosa's inner processes includes a detailed depiction of the Warsaw ghetto, its conditions and relations amid its Jewish inhabitants, Rosa concludes:

I said all this in my store, talking to the deaf.¹³⁰

Precisely as was the case with many survivors in reality, Rosa suffers most from people's indifference and inattention.¹³¹

Unconcerned and listless, such was, according to the Jews of the camps, the attitude of the majority of people "outside" during the war; and many years after it was hardly different. Just like the war years, even the contemporary society was short of people willing to help those who needed it. When Sammler reveals a thief on the bus and tries to alert the police, nobody takes him seriously and it turns out the police is unwilling to do anything about it. Moreover, when at the end of the book an acquaintance of Sammler's confronts the Black thief and finds himself too weak to fight him, Sammler encounters yet another manifest of people's reluctance to help: "'Some of you (...). Help him. (...)' But of course 'some of you' did not exist. No one would do anything (...)."¹³² During the war, lots of Jews turned to complete strangers seeking asylum – but only a small number of them were heard out and helped. More often people turned away and the Jews ended up in ghettos and later on in the camps; there, in order not to go insane, they had to suppress the awareness of the horrors they were undergoing and many of them found themselves mentally detached – and yet a part of a

¹²⁹ Ozick 67.

¹³⁰ Ozick 69.

¹³¹ For further discussion of the troubled mind of authentic survivors to whom nobody listened see Part I, Chapter 1.1.

¹³² Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 287.

mass of humans undergoing the same fate. Sammler, standing in the middle of the crowd watching the affray, feels the same way:

Then it struck him that what united everybody was a beatitude of presence. As if it were – yes – blessed are the present. They are here and not there. They are present while absent.¹³³

Rosa sustains an encounter very similar to her memories of the Holocaust when she finds herself lost on the beach behind a barbed wire of a private estate unable to find her way out. When she turns to men lying on the ground and asks for help, she feels there is “No one to help,”¹³⁴ as they reject her harshly. Past and present thus interconnect.

2.2 “Each [character] questions his own survival and, at the same time, searches for what is worth preserving in the destroyed past.”¹³⁵

Rosa’s and Mr. Sammler’s “Lives Before”

Memories of their past lives still influence Rosa’s and Sammler’s present. However, the way they treat their past, their attitudes to its meaning and its importance in the present differ. Ozick’s main character is not really able even to *perceive* reality, let alone live in it. Artur Sammler, on the other hand, thinks about his experience mostly when the situations he goes through, or people he meets and talks to, remind him of it and then he tries to make the best use of his past in the *real* present – unlike Rosa, who makes the past her escapist world and lives in a self-imposed banishment paying little (if any at all) attention to what is happening around her. Sammler, to the contrary, not only observes the events taking place but tries to take an active stand as well. Apart from the affair with the bus pickpocket to whom he tries to bring the police’s attention, his pro-active approach can be also documented by the

¹³³ Bellow, Mr. Sammler’s Planet 289.

¹³⁴ Ozick 49.

¹³⁵ Bilik 187.

effort he is ready to take to return dr. Govinda Lal's, a Hindu lecturer's manuscript stolen for his sake by Shula, his daughter, or by his consent to give a lecture in a university. Nevertheless, the most convincing evidence of all is Sammler's will to take part (as much as his health allows him) in one of the never-ending row of wars in the Jewish state;¹³⁶ he decides to go to Israel and report on the Six-Day war, for

he could not sit in New York reading the world press. If only because for the second time in twenty five years the same people were threatened by extermination,¹³⁷

adding to that that being killed there would be "[t]he finest death [he] could imagine."¹³⁸ The reason for his decision to voluntarily put himself at risk might spring in the Jewish collective consciousness in accordance with which he simply must have helped his fellow Jewish friends in peril,¹³⁹ or it might be the fear of the past to reoccur.¹⁴⁰ Sammler himself claims that he does not care much for Jewish matters, but most probably because he survived the Nazi attempt to murder all his people, he cannot just "stay in Manhattan watching television."¹⁴¹

However much Sammler tries to get fully integrated into the society he now lives in, in the end he finds himself in "involuntary loneliness"¹⁴² anyway. Already alienated from his family members, Sammler cannot get anywhere near the younger generation either.¹⁴³ This is especially clear after his lecture on the 1930s British society delivered to a group of

¹³⁶ For further information about the creation of Israel and its role in the survivors' post-Holocaust lives see Part I, Chapter 1.4.

¹³⁷ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 142.

¹³⁸ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 201.

¹³⁹ For further information about the Jewish collective consciousness see Part I, Chapter 2.1.2.

¹⁴⁰ Constant fear of the wartime persecution to reoccur is one of the survivors' main psychogenic disorders. For further information see Part I, Chapter 1.1.

¹⁴¹ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 142. For further information about the Six-Day war see Part I, Chapter 2.1.1.

¹⁴² Stanislav Kolář, Seven Responses to the Holocaust in American Fiction (Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita, Šenov u Ostravy: Tilia, 2004) 68.

¹⁴³ Kolář 69.

(supposedly) university students which ends in fiasco. The age, though, seems to play just a minor role in Sammler's distance, as he

did feel somewhat separated from the rest of his species, if not in some fashion severed – severed not so much by age as by preoccupations too different and remote (...).¹⁴⁴

The discrepancy between his own views, based on classical education and “his European culture,”¹⁴⁵ and the modern world is one of the reasons Sammler retires to a lonely life. People, as it turns out, are the main cause of his retirement. Watching the crowd of viewers captivated by the fray with the thief but at the same time unwilling to do anything to help the attacked acquaintance of his, Sammler suddenly becomes very aware of himself:

It was a feeling of horror and grew in strength, grew and grew. What was it? How was it to be put? He was a man who had come back. He had rejoined life. He was near to others. But in some essential way he was also companionless. (...) He knew what to do, but had no power to execute it. He had to turn to someone else (...). Sammler was powerless. To be powerless was death. And suddenly he saw himself as a *past* person. That was not himself. It was someone (...) between the human and not-human states, between content and emptiness, between full and void, meaning and not-meaning, between this world and no world.¹⁴⁶

Sammler's strange sense of aloofness is typical of Bellow's characters, but what's more, his irrational estrangement is enhanced by his Holocaust past which thwarts his chances “to reach a state of liberty, the indispensable precondition of achieving individuality.”¹⁴⁷

Contrary to Sammler, Rosa readily confines herself to a voluntary confinement of the memories of her past. Stella, her niece and only unchallenged connection to reality, is

¹⁴⁴ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 43.

¹⁴⁵ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 96.

¹⁴⁶ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 289-90.

¹⁴⁷ Kolář 68.

perceived as “cold” and “having no heart.”¹⁴⁸ Rosa has no intention to become a part of the society, she detests talking to people and longs for nothing but spending time alone in her room. However, her stance changes when she becomes acquainted with a Mr. Persky who comes from Warsaw, her hometown. Apparently insecure in his company, she seems to be almost artificially trying to stick to her indifferent attitude,

She was afraid to shift (...). If she moved even a little, an odor would fly up: urine, old woman’s fatigue. She (...) shivered. What do I care? I’m used to everything. (...) All the same, she took out two hairpins and caught up the hanging strands.¹⁴⁹

Unwillingly and possibly unknowingly, with the appearance of Persky Rosa starts to come out of her shell. Therefore, where people were the ultimate cause for Sammler’s retirement, Persky’s presence is the very cause of Rosa slowly leaving her imaginary world behind; allowing him into her apartment she allows him into her life, and the fantasy world embodied in the illusory presence of Magda seems to, at least for some time, disappear: “Magda was not there. Shy, she ran from Persky. Magda was away.”¹⁵⁰ Whether at this point Rosa decided to abandon her past entirely or not remains unclear, but admitting Persky is at least the beginning of the end of her seclusion.

Nevertheless, this was not Rosa’s immediate reaction to the sudden emergence of a stranger in her life. Unable to fully understand her, Persky is despised and ridiculed by her on a few occasions – scorning him for not understanding the importance of the Holocaust in her life, she ponders, “She recognized that she had shamed him; she had long ago discovered this power to shame.”¹⁵¹ When Persky offers her to “unload on him” her distress she retorts:

¹⁴⁸ Ozick 15.

¹⁴⁹ Ozick 15.

¹⁵⁰ Ozick 70.

¹⁵¹ Ozick 58.

“Whatever I would say, you would be deaf.”¹⁵² Rosa’s failure when she tried to unload the burden of her past on the former customers of her shop prevents her from willing to try again.

Furthermore, she constantly reminds both of them that she is a somewhat different immigrant than Persky. Whereas the fact that they both come from the same city of Warsaw would probably contribute to a quicker befriending in other cases, Rosa takes a rather negative attitude. “My Warsaw isn’t your Warsaw,”¹⁵³ she repeats to Persky who, having left in 1920, could not have encountered the notorious ghetto Rosa was interned in and most probably refers to. Moreover, it is quite obvious that she considers herself somewhat superior to Persky – he left Poland for America and in Rosa’s eyes must be a traitor to Poland, the Polish language and culture – all of which are conceptions Rosa wants to treasure¹⁵⁴ and which in her eyes undoubtedly surpass the cultural development of the 1960s America, presented by its inhabitants as “*the* most desirable, most exemplary of all nations[,]”¹⁵⁵ as Bellow remarks ironically. Rosa longs for “lost and kidnapped Polish” and sighs bitterly at the realization that “now she wrote and spoke English as helplessly as this old immigrant [Persky].”¹⁵⁶ European cultural background once again, just as in Sammler’s case, forms a gap between the survivor and an (assimilated) American.

On other occasions Rosa refers to the past treatment of the Jews. “My niece Stella (...) says that in America cats have nine lives, but we – we’re less than cats (...)[,]”¹⁵⁷ she observes. The allusion to Nazi imagery of the Jews as subhuman creatures cannot go unnoticed. Seeing herself at once as a “better immigrant” than Persky and a less-than-animal being, in addition to living a second, “unreal” life in her thoughts, Rosa still cannot

¹⁵² Ozick 27.

¹⁵³ Ozick 19.

¹⁵⁴ Many survivors longed for their homelands, because coming to America was not a voluntary decision – with the Second World War, fleeing to America became more or less a necessity rather than a matter of free choice. For further reference see Part I, Chapter 2.1.

¹⁵⁵ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 14.

¹⁵⁶ Ozick 20.

¹⁵⁷ Ozick 58. One cannot miss the allusion to Art Spiegelman’s *Maus, a Survivor’s Tale*, a cartoon where the Jews are portrayed as mice.

trick herself and in the end admits she is a “crazy woman.”¹⁵⁸ By admitting that she also acknowledges the absurdity of her dreamt-up life and finally allows herself to become a “member of peoplehood,” a part of objective reality.

2.3 “There are only two possibilities: either God caused (or at least permitted) the destruction of the Jews, the Gypsies and the other victims, or God does not care.”¹⁵⁹

Rosa, Mr. Sammler and God

The question of God is one where Rosa’s and Mr. Sammler’s approaches differ once more. Artur Sammler perceives the Holocaust as a phase which enabled him to move on with his life and perception of his own self. Taken solely as a piece of experience, the Holocaust allows his soul to be “released from Nature (...) and from everyday life.”¹⁶⁰ He feels to be closer to God, wishing to be “with God, free from the bondage of the ordinary and the finite[,]” for “a man who has been killed and buried should have no other interest.”¹⁶¹ Artur Sammler literally survived his own death two times (first being overlooked by the Nazis in a mass grave, and second, hiding from the Polish partisans towards the end of the war¹⁶²) and still managed to keep faith in God – or maybe to *recover* it, as the reader learns that “[d]uring the war, [Sammler] had no belief, and (...) saw that God was not impressed by death.”¹⁶³ Nevertheless, one might look upon the resurrection of Sammler’s faith in God the other way

¹⁵⁸ Ozick 70.

¹⁵⁹ Jonathan Wallace, “What I Learned from Auschwitz,” An Auschwitz Alphabet, 30 Nov. 2006 <<http://www.spectacle.org/695/essay.html> >.

¹⁶⁰ Bellow, Mr. Sammler’s Planet 117.

¹⁶¹ Bellow, Mr. Sammler’s Planet 117.

¹⁶² “When Mr. Sammler hid later in the mausoleum, it was not from the Germans but from the Poles. In Zamosht Forest the Polish partisans turned on the Jewish fighters. The war was ending (...) and the decision seems to have been taken to reconstruct a Jewless Poland.” (Bellow, Mr. Sammler’s Planet 140.)

Towards the end of the Second World War, waves of anti-Semitism spread in Europe. Poland was one of the countries where anti-Semitism was very strong and where non-Jewish people would kill the Jews after the end of the war; it would not be unusual for the Polish partisans to kill their fellow Jewish combatants when it became clear that the Russian army was approaching. For further reference see Part I, Chapter 1.2 of this work, or read the closing passages of Art Spiegelman’s *Maus, a Survivor’s Tale II*.

¹⁶³ Bellow, Mr. Sammler’s Planet 236.

round – was it *because* he survived two times that he found God again? As he puts it, “What besides the spirit should a man care for who has come back from the grave?”¹⁶⁴

Rosa, on the other hand, confesses to having no faith whatsoever. In one of her letters to Magda, she writes plainly: “I don’t believe in God.”¹⁶⁵ Whether or not she lost her faith in the death camp or had never had it is not clear enough, though.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Bellow, Mr. Sammler’s Planet 118.

¹⁶⁵ Ozick 41.

¹⁶⁶ On the authentic survivors’ perception of God after the Holocaust, see Part I, Chapter 2.1.3.

3) Language and style

As much as the authors of Holocaust fiction found themselves at a disadvantage when it came to the lack of personal experience, there was something that could have made their writing an easier task – unlike the authentic survivors, they were not striving to search for (or invent) a “proper vocabulary” to describe the events ensuing the WWII persecution of the Jews or the conditions in the death camps.¹⁶⁷ This is also thanks to the fact that the authors of fiction usually depicted the post-war lives of their protagonists, therefore they were spared the linguistic difficulty.

Nevertheless, Saul Bellow’s *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* is a distinctive novel as far as the narrative is concerned. Not only does Sammler return to his past in his mind, but the reader can see the mental processes related to the present as well. The interesting point is that although the novel has an omniscient 3rd person narrator, Sammler’s own mental processes protrude through the layer of the narration. After a few lines of direct speech when Sammler converses with his daughter, the narration continues as follows:

Yes. O.K. He was sipping his morning coffee. Today, this very afternoon, he was going to speak at Columbia University. One of his young Columbia friends had persuaded him. Also, he must call about his nephew. Dr. Gruner. (...) He had had, so Sammler was told, minor surgery. *One could do without that seminar today. It was a mistake. Could he back out, beg off? No, probably not.*¹⁶⁸ [emphasis mine]

The four emphasised sentences are clearly expressing Sammler’s hesitation and although the narrator remains a 3rd person objective one, I believe the sentences could as well be ascribed to Sammler, thus shifting the passage close to the protagonist’s internal speech delivered by a

¹⁶⁷ On the survivors’ difficulty to find the proper words to depict what they had been through see Part I, Chapter 1.2.

¹⁶⁸ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* 35.

mediator. Further on into the book, there is even a passage where Sammler steps fully into the narration: contemplating his nephew-benefactor's figure, he says:

Elya had a tall figure and wide stiff shoulder, too wide, considering the flatness of his body. His buttocks were too high. *Like my own, for that matter.* [emphasis mine] Sammler (...) saw the resemblance.¹⁶⁹

Clearly enough, no authorial speech is intended in the emphasised sentence; it is a part of the paragraph without any hint to who utters it – it is quite evident again, though, that it is Sammler who does. His own thoughts as if “jump out” of his mind whose processes are most often strictly mediated by the 3rd person narrator and that makes the whole narrative unique.

Another specific feature appears when discussing Sammler's arguments. His style is plainly following the argumentation typical of Jewish oral tradition – that of posing questions and answering them by the same speaker, along with using rhetorical questions as an argument. During a conversation with Margotte, one of his relatives, Sammler responds to her allusion to the war times:

‘The idea of making the century's great crime look dull is not banal. (...) the Germans had an idea of genius. The banality was only a camouflage. What better way to get the curse out of murder than to make it look ordinary, boring, or trite? With horrible political insight they found a way to disguise the thing. (...) But do you think the Nazis didn't know what murder was? Everybody (...) knows what murder is. That is very old human knowledge. (...) Banality is the adopted disguise of a very powerful will to abolish conscience. Is such a project trivial? Only if human life is trivial. (...)’¹⁷⁰

The whole argument is closed by an exclamation already put in the narrative, but this time announce by the narrator: “Arguments! Explanations! thought Sammler.”¹⁷¹ And what

¹⁶⁹ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 283.

¹⁷⁰ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 18.

¹⁷¹ Bellow, Mr. Sammler's Planet 19.

Sammler thought are the two main means of Jewish argumentation – argument without an explanation is rare.

The last point I wish to make concerns the use of words coming from different languages in Mr. Sammler's Planet. Northrop Frye declares:

One of the most affective methods of conveying meaning in translation, for instance, is to leave a key word untranslated, so that the reader has to pick up its contextual associations in the original language from his own.¹⁷²

Bellow works well with that idea, as from time to time Russian, French or German words appear in the text without any translation provided; each of the languages connotes to typical memories which evoke its usage. The German language, for example, appears when there is an allusion to the war and Sammler talks about the conditions in the Lodz ghetto:

(...) as they were starving, (...) they felt less and less. Even starving mothers could not feel for more than a day or two the children torn from them. Hunger pains out grief. *Erst kommt das Fressen*, you see. (...) ¹⁷³

Even without knowing German, the reader will probably assume that the sentence is somehow connected to hunger or food. However, leaving it untranslated moreover evokes the German occupation and the feeling of many people not speaking German – one of complete loss for not understanding what was being said or what the German orders meant.¹⁷⁴ A slightly different case might be Sammler's description of the "King of Lodz," about whom he says: "The Nazis made him *Judenältester*."¹⁷⁵ In no other language but German could he achieve the proper sound of the word, and besides, the "position" is so distinctly a wartime one that a word from any other language would seem inappropriate.

¹⁷² Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973) 334-335.

¹⁷³ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 233.

¹⁷⁴ Primo Levi in *If This Is a Man* masters the use of vocabulary coming from various languages different from the one in which the book is written, e.g. Polish, Russian or German, and manages perfectly to evoke the feelings of confusion of the camp universe where there were people of various different nationalities speaking various different languages and where orders came in yet another language.

¹⁷⁵ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 231.

French appears for example when Sammler doubts himself and his capability of living. After a brief discrepancy with Angela, his nephew's daughter, he muses, "He was out of it. A tall, dry, not agreeable old man, censorious, giving himself airs. Who in hell was he? *Hors d'usage*."¹⁷⁶ Why Bellow uses French in this particular point I can only speculate, maybe because French is stereotypically considered an echoic language and the phrase sounds nicer than the crude English "out of order." Whatever the author's intention, though, the use of the few French words still manages to create an atmosphere of something incomplete which involves the reader more intensely with the book's contents.

The Russian *kulturnaya* emerges when Sammler is thinking about his daughter Shula. Shula is devoted "to culture and traditional values," which singularizes her from the "ignorant and rather shallow youth of America."¹⁷⁷ Viewing his daughter as "(...) *kulturnaya*. Shula was so *kulturnaya*["]"¹⁷⁸ Sammler seemingly expresses respect towards his daughter, whom at other times he sees as a scavenging lunatic, but he might as well be subtly ironizing Shula's devotion, adding that "[n]othing was more suitable than this philistine Russian word. *Kulturny*." Using the male grammatical gender (which is easily discernible for a Slavonic language speaker but less apparent for native speakers of English), Bellow in the voice of Sammler contributes to the ambiguity of Sammler's relationship to his daughter.

Moreover, not all the characters speak English all the time. Shula uses yet another language, Polish, when she feels insecure and wants to evoke sympathy from her father. When Sammler scolds her for having stolen Govinda Lal's manuscript, Shula "(...) began to speak Polish. (...) She was trying to invoke her terrible times of hiding (...)." ¹⁷⁹ The native language is thus still an important factor in her post-Holocaust life, which corresponds to many authentic survivors.

¹⁷⁶ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 307.

¹⁷⁷ Kolář 69.

¹⁷⁸ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 198.

¹⁷⁹ Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* 195.

Retracting to the haven of the native language connects Shula to Ozick's counterpart Rosa who writes to her long-dead daughter in Polish, "the living language."¹⁸⁰ English and Yiddish Rosa despises as unworthy, but in Polish she finds peace, and when she uses it, she feels "a lock removed from the tongue," a tongue which otherwise is "chained to the teeth and palate,"¹⁸¹ for English so often uses dental and palatal phonemes.

The structure of *Rosa* is interestingly formed by the 3rd person narrative alongside Rosa's letters to Magda where 1st person narrative and sometimes also inner monologues are used. This adds to the credibility of the story and makes the heroine more accessible to the reader, for it offers an insight to her thoughts without the mediating narrator who always forms an obstacle between the reader and the character.

Letters to Magda are Rosa's ultimate refuge, it is from those letters that the reader learns about the heroine's inner struggle which would otherwise remain unexposed. "[H]alf a day passes without my taking up my pen to speak to you[,]"¹⁸² says Rosa in the opening of the first letter to Magda; while in actuality she "says nothing", "bites off", "murmurs,"¹⁸³ and mostly gives one word or a simple sentence for an answer, in the realm of her private world devoted to her murdered daughter she feels "[a] pleasure, the deepest pleasure, home bliss to speak in our own language."¹⁸⁴ The pen does not form an obstacle – the "small pointed stick (...) that speaks, miraculously, Polish"¹⁸⁵ is the gateway to the world where Rosa feels free to speak out, with Polish as the key.

Letters in general are an important constitutive element of the novella, however, while letters to Magda are Rosa's "retrieve and reprieve,"¹⁸⁶ the other ones (e.g. from her niece Stella or from the scholar interested in the survivor's complex) work rather as a barrier

¹⁸⁰ Ozick 44.

¹⁸¹ Ozick 44.

¹⁸² Ozick 40.

¹⁸³ Ozick 18, 25 and 26 respectively, all paraphrased.

¹⁸⁴ Ozick 40.

¹⁸⁵ Ozick 44.

¹⁸⁶ Ozick 44, paraphrased.

between the writer and the addressee. Moreover, to read them is an extremely unpleasant act for Rosa. Apart from those intended for Magda, the letters are a source of Rosa's annoyance; reading the letter sent by the scholar interested in the survivor's complex she muses on its contents: "Disease, disease!" she exclaims in her mind contemplating how the outsiders see the survivor's complex, "An excitement over other people's suffering. (...) what muck."¹⁸⁷ Besides, Rosa's own thoughts, similarly to *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, protrude through the narrative suppressing the voice of the narrator.

A similar stand is taken as far as Stella's letters are concerned. Reading the one where her niece reproaches Rosa for being a financial burden and furthermore urges her aunt to "have a life," the heroine of the novella thinks aloud:

'And you, Stella, *you* have a life?'

(...)

'(..) Would you be alive if I didn't take you out of there? Dead. You'd be dead!

So don't talk to me how much an old woman costs! I didn't give you from my store? (...) you forget who gave you presents!'¹⁸⁸

None of these judgements penetrate through her words when Rosa calls her despised niece in answer; Rosa's tone is certainly not kind ("A Tree is none of my business? He gets rich on our blood!"¹⁸⁹), but she seems more open than for example with Persky – she does not expose her inner soul, however, Stella gets to know the immediate troubles of her aunt. Rosa's hasty exclamations do not always fit in the dialogue and sometimes not even in a sole utterance:

'(...) you come here,' Rosa said.

'Oh my God, I can't afford it. (...) What would I do down there?'

'I don't like it alone. A man stole my underwear.'

¹⁸⁷ Ozick 36.

¹⁸⁸ Ozick 32.

¹⁸⁹ Ozick 63. A lot of authentic survivors felt the same way as Rosa does about the scientific research conducted on the survivor's complex and for that reason refused to take part in any of the studies. Ozick cleverly named the doctor character *Tree* to enable her heroine to mock him by calling him "A Tree."

‘Your *what?*’

‘My panties. There’s plenty of perverts in the streets. Yesterday in the sand I saw two naked men.’¹⁹⁰

Although, as is clearly visible from the last sentence, there is a mental connection between Rosa’s announcements, the urgency with which she voices her despair cannot go unnoticed. The need for a listener apparently prevails and as much as Rosa disdains Stella for having got used to the new environment and maybe even for actual *living*, she still feels her niece is the closest (possibly the only) person who could understand her troubles – irrationally but understandably again, Rosa’s presumption rises from the women’s mutual past rather than their personal characteristics’ resemblance.

To sum up, both *Rosa* and *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* are works of great importance in the field of the Holocaust fiction. They are certainly analysable from other points of view – the protagonists’ positions as immigrants in the American society, “objective” obstacles in their effort to accommodate to the new environment or other people’s approach to them could all be explored in greater detail. An analysis of “humanity,” or interpersonal relationships and their impacts – a strong motif in both works – could serve as the theme of a separate thesis.

Nevertheless, what I was aiming at was to show the relevance of the authentic survivors’ post-Holocaust lives to works of literary imagination and vice versa. For that reason I picked up those passages from the novel and the novella which reflect findings of the first part of this thesis, and disregarded those which are not directly connected to the survivor’s complex, or other aspects (especially social and political ones as discussed in the first part) of the survivors’ post-Holocaust lives.

¹⁹⁰ Ozick 64.

III. Reading the Readable: Conclusion

The survivor's complex is indeed a complicated matter which in itself might be discussed in greater detail than suggested here. Defining it mainly on psychological and psychiatric grounds is best suitable for the attempted literary analysis of the characters' inner souls and mental burdens. However, it could also be approached from social or cultural views which for the sake of the main theme of my thesis, which is to apply conclusions regarding authentic survivors and their real post-Holocaust lives to the characters created by the imaginative minds of fiction writers, I omit.

Likewise, Cynthia Ozick's *Rosa* and Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* can be treated purely as works of literary imagination without taking the survivor's complex into account and discussed in terms of their narrations or themes only. Nevertheless, without studying the survivor's complex, an important part of the works', or better characters' analyses would be neglected. I am not suggesting that all fiction about the Holocaust incorporates and displays the survivor's complex, but the complex still remains a part of most (both authentic and fictional) survivors' post-Holocaust lives and should therefore be given enough space in the analyses of works which deal with the theme of the Holocaust.

The aim of the first part of this work was to prepare ground for the literary analysis of the works by Cynthia Ozick and Saul Bellow, not necessarily an exhaustive description the post-Holocaust conditions of the survivors. The objective was rather to outline the post-war development in the society in which most of the Jews found themselves after the war, i.e. the United States, and to pick up socio-political events important for the Jews after the Second World War and at the same time relevant for Ozick's novella *Rosa* and Bellow's novel *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, such as the creation of the Jewish State of Israel, the Eichmann trial or the Six-Day war.

The second part is based on close reading of the two works in question and a number of footnotes refer to relevant passages in the first part which discuss the same issue as is being analysed at the point in the literary-analytical part. I believe I succeeded in the analysis of the works in the appointed areas, such as the inner soul of the characters, their hesitation about the meaning of the “life after” and their (both mental and factual) battle with the lives they were involuntarily thrown into after the end of the war. The effects of pieces of “objective” reality on the protagonists is also discussed, be it with reference to generally known occurrences in *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*, or to fictional events created by the author and influencing the heroine in *Rosa*, to show that although deeply obsessed with their psyche and psychic processes the protagonists cannot escape the world and reality entirely.

The discussion of the language and style of the two works is important for better understanding of the works and explores layers of the works which are not as obvious as for example the main themes and thus might easily go unnoticed by readers. However, the analysis of the use of foreign expressions, especially in *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*, is definitely not an exhaustive one; although sufficient for the intended aim, i.e. the demonstration of the unique function of untranslated words or phrases from languages different from English, the examples included are only few and could be explored in greater detail. In *Rosa*, the most stylistically interesting device – letters – has been analysed mainly with regards to their content. Representative passages related to Rosa’s mentally tense states, thus important for understanding the inner soul of the heroine, have been chosen. However, these could still be explored in greater detail, e.g. in terms of their syntactic structure, and further analysis of letters not included in the thesis could also be carried out.

Extensive footnotes in both parts of the thesis suggest works which provide greater insight into the field dealing with the survivor’s complex at relevant places; both scholarly works and studies and works of fiction are included.

I consider this thesis as a successful one in terms of summing up the conclusions of the best-known medical studies conducted on the survivors, enumerating the important socio-political and cultural events and relating them to the two chosen works of fiction. However, each of the studies and events included in the first part could obviously be discussed in greater detail. On the other hand, I admit a failure when it comes to implementing notes from the personal interviews with authentic survivors – these come out only as marginal pieces of information in the paper and make the conclusions referring to the survivor's complex in the first part of the work rather a summary of data collected by someone else than an original piece of research. In that respect, further work is essential.

RÉSUMÉ

Diplomová práce „Reakce na Holocaust: komplex přeživšího ve skutečnosti a v literatuře“ si klade za cíl uvést čtenáře do problematiky nejednoduché oblasti, která se zabývá jevem specificky příznačným pro ty, jimž se podařilo přežít éru nacistické hrůzovlády a nelidského zacházení s lidmi, a poznatky z reálné sféry poté nacházet ve dvou předních literárních dílech amerických židovských spisovatelů, kteří se tématem Holocaustu zabývají.

V první části práce se opírám o závěry psychologických studií odborníků na komplex (někdy také „syndrom“) přeživšího, jako například Williama G. Niederlanda nebo Leo Eitingera, kteří v rozmezí několika let zkoumali dopady na psychický i somatický stav jedinců, již v době druhé světové války neunikli brutální realitě koncentračních táborů. Studie byly prováděny s vybranými dobrovolníky z řad Židů; na ty se také s ohledem na výběr děl zaměřuji a pro účely práce opomím jiné národnostní skupiny, kterých se Holocaust rovněž dotýkal.

S pomocí výše zmíněných studií i poznatků z několika vlastních interview definuji komplex přeživšího jako souhrn iracionálních pocitů a přístupů k životu vyvolaných „pobytem“ v koncentračních táborech, které se nepřestávají projevovat i po skončení války. Život mnoha přeživších je provázen stavy úzkosti, depresiemi, nechutenstvím, nelogickým pocitem viny za smrt blízkých a vlastní přežití – povětšinou se pak tito lidé uchylují do vnitřního světa myšlenek, úvah a nekonečných zoufalých výtek. Toto vše se odráží i v literárních dílech autorů, kteří sami přeživšími nebyli, ale tématem přeživších se zabývají.

Zamýšlím se dále nad socio-politickými událostmi, které nemalou měrou přispěly k povědomí světa o židovském národu, o (vzniku a existenci) státu Izrael a v neposlední řadě o pozici (nejen přeživších) Židů v něm. Za nejdůležitější považuji založení židovského státu v roce 1948, okamžitou bojovou pohotovost sousedních arabských států, se kterou se Izrael

rychle vypořádal, neméně úspěšnou šestidenní válku roku 1967 a také proces s Adolfem Eichmannem v letech 1960-1962. Ačkoliv je smutné, že ozbrojené konflikty provázejí Izrael od samého počátku jeho existence, nutno připustit, že i díky nim se dostal do povědomí i jinak nezajímavých osob.

Toto širší povědomí o Židech přispělo i ve Spojených Státech (jejichž dva autoři, resp. jejich dvě díla, jsou předmětem práce) k šíření literatury psané židovskými autory s tématy pojednávajícími o židovských reáliích, hrdinech, historii či takzvané „kolektivní zkušenosti.“ Ta může být také jedním z důvodů, proč se vůbec američtí autoři v některých svých dílech k otázkám evropského židovstva vyjadřují – jiným pak, že předválečná „základna“ světového židovstva, zejména před masivním úprkem aškenázkých Židů do Ameriky ke konci devatenáctého století, byla právě v Evropě a většina amerických autorů patřila teprve k první či druhé generaci Židů narozených ve Spojených Státech. Po krátké „definici“ amerického židovského spisovatele jsou v nastíněném vývoji židovské literatury zmíněni průkopníci židovského tématu v literatuře Emma Lazarusová, dva významní autoři třicátých let dvacátého století Abraham Cahan a Henry Roth, a posléze autoři, kteří se řadí k poválečné skupině židovských autorů, ačkoliv oni sami zařazení do ucelené „kategorie“ spisovatelů odmítají – například Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth či Saul Bellow. Analogicky k definici amerického židovského spisovatele je určen takový z nich, který se nadto ve svém díle věnuje Holocaustu, a popsána jsou i hlavní témata literárních děl o Holocaustu, zejména postava poválečného židovského imigranta, téma pochybnosti o existenci boha nebo jejich historicita.

Od obecného pojednání o literatuře Holocaustu se dostávám ve druhé části diplomové práce výhradně k literárním zpracováním tématu, konkrétně k dílům Saula Bellowa *Mr. Sammler's Planet (Planeta pana Sammlera)* a Cynthie Ozickové *Rosa*. Oba autoři jsou stručně charakterizováni a zařazeni do kontextu americké židovské literatury. Jejich díla jsou

pak rozebrána z několika hledisek, z nichž je největší důraz kladen na analýzu hlavních postav a při nich pak životů před Holocaustem a po něm. Samostatná podkapitola také pojednává o jejich vztahu k bohu, neboť pochyby o jeho existenci provázejí od doby Holocaustu mnoho přeživších i těch, kteří se narodili až v době poválečné, a byly jednou z příčin krize židovského náboženství a víry. V průběhu literárněanalytické části odkazuje množství poznámek pod čarou k relevantním úsekům z části úvodní teoretické.

Poslední úsek druhé části je věnován rozboru jazykově stylistickému, neboť obě díla se v tomto ohledu liší od většiny soudobých výtvorů – *Planeta pana Sammlera* v mnoha ohledech připomíná židovskou tradici ústního vyprávění, *Rosa* pak zase kombinuje vševědoucího vypravěče s osobními dopisy zavražděné dceři hlavní hrdinky i dopisy jiných postav. Postoj hrdinů k jiným jazykům nezůstal stranou a zmíněn je také vliv cizích výrazů jak na ně samotné tak i na čtenáře.

V závěru se pak čtenář dovídá, do jaké míry lze považovat cíl diplomové práce za dosažený, a jakým směrem by se mohlo či mělo ubírat další zkoumání komplexu přeživšího i děl, v nichž se objevuje. Osobně považuji diplomovou práci za úspěšnou v nastínění problematiky komplexu přeživšího i v analýze literárních děl, ve kterých se toto téma objevuje. Za poměrně kvalitně zvládnuté považuji i propojení první a druhé části práce díky vhodné volbě předmětů rozboru v části první a relevantních pasáží v části druhé.

Přesto je nepochybné, že jak komplex přeživšího, tak i rozebírané poválečné události, které se nějakým způsobem váží k židovským přeživším, by se daly rozebrat detailněji. Na komplex přeživšího lze nahlížet z úhlu sociálního či sociálně-kulturního, zatímco zde je pro účely analýzy vnitřního světa fiktivních postav děl upřednostněn pohled psychologický. Stejně tak by bylo lze věnovat širší prostor studiím, jejichž závěry uvádím při definici komplexu. V oblasti studií považuji za nezdár, že se mi nepodařilo vpravit do textu závěry

z vlastních interview, neboť první část se tak stává hlavně sumarizací prací jiných autorů a nikoliv studií vlastní. V tomto ohledu také vidím největší prostor pro další zkoumání.

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