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**'Working Through' Holocaust Trauma in Ozick's *The Shawl***

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## ‘Working Through’ of Holocaust Trauma in Ozick’s *The Shawl*

### Abstract

*The present work makes an analysis of the fictional novel The Shawl authored by a female holocaust writer, Cynthia Ozick. It argues that the narrative construction of the novel adopts the post-traumatic method of ‘working through’ in order to establish the history of holocaust trauma from the perspective of female survivor. After the liberation of holocaust, many documents represented the holocaust trauma from male’s perspective. There was dominance of men’s writing whereas the women’s holocaust experiences were taken to be insignificant. Those narratives focused on the male survivors’ struggle of overcoming the traumatic past not a women’s struggle and their suffering. Rosa, the female protagonist in Ozick’s The Shawl, overcomes from the haunting memories of her daughter who was killed in the camp and starts a new life. As a fictional holocaust novel, it offers an alternative picture of how female survivor like Rosa who works through the traumatic history of holocaust. The Shawl revisits the history of holocaust from its female survivor’s perspective and reflects how female’s sufferings and struggles with their traumatic memories. In order to strengthen the argument, the paper borrows the theoretical insights from the theory “Writing Trauma Writing History” and “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History” by Dominick LaCapra and Cathy Caruth respectively. The paper concludes with the finding that some female survivors work through the traumatic memory of holocaust as men do.*

Keyword- working through, acting out, holocaust trauma, alternative history

The present research paper makes an investigation upon the holocaust novel *The Shawl* in order to argue that the novel adopts the progressive narrative through the use of post-traumatic method of working through and shows the happy ending of the

protagonist who overcomes the gruesome traumatic past memory. It further analyzes that the writer intentionally applies the progressive narrative that begins with the severely affected life of a protagonist who is haunted and tortured by the Nazis in the concentration camps and moves forward with the picture of the protagonist's pathetic struggle against the haunting memory of her daughter gasified in the gas chamber. The end of the narrative revives the protagonist from the painful traumatic past to the present with the new hope for life ahead. In this way, the protagonist's restoration of life after working through the traumatic memories of the holocaust reflects the author's intention in trying to offer an alternative perspective towards the holocaust history from the perspective of female survivor's struggle against the traumatic memory of holocaust trauma. It leads towards the path of reconciliation with the traumatic history for the peaceful and enlightening future. Probing into the protagonist's journey from the horrifying past memories to the reviving present, the research invests the primary analysis on the progressive narrative style of the novel from the theoretical concept of 'working through' in order to conclude that the novel as a holocaust representation reflects alternative picture of the holocaust trauma from the perspective of women's painful struggle against the traumatic which is different from the mainstream narrative of men's struggle against their holocaust trauma.

Cynthia Ozick's novella *The Shawl* (1980) depicts the horror and terror of Jews in time of holocaust. The genocidal discourse of Holocaust starts along with the Nazism in the historical account of the Second World War. Hitler was the founder of the autocratic system of Nazism, the then autocratic ruler. His instruction of the Jews extermination is a sign of retaliation for the huge damage and destruction that was suffered in the First World War. He had shown his power as a nationalist by killing the Jews from different continent of Europe. His discriminatory narrative of 'One

color one race' is centered on Aryan race and approved that the Jews as the responsible cause for the disastrous failure of German in the war. As he rose to the power, he turned authoritative and announced the full extermination of Jews from the land of German and directed for the construction of the concentration camps in order to gasify the physically and mentally disabled ones. His genocidal policy was targeted to exploit Jews as the means for the production of the war which help German to recover from the economic loss and suffering of the First World War. Under his directive, Nazi SS soldiers were deployed to capture the Jews of all age groups and load them into the concentration camps:

All in all, the holocaust originated from a century-old unbroken tradition of European anti-Semitism, which manifestation in Germany is determined by the emergence of the nationalist socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) and the establishment of a totalitarian, fascist regime which political agenda included the plan to exterminate the European Jews during the Second World War. (Faculty of Law 5)

Such genocidal act of killing of all Jews to destroy their existence was further carried out by the cultural discourse of 'one color one race'. This notion of Anti-Semitism created the division between Jews and Aryan and dragging to the development of hatred, discrimination and the genocidal thoughts about the Jews. That political step of holocaust of Jews taken by Hitler, as a genocidal crime devastated and destroyed the millions of Jews survivors under traumatized conditions:

The term Holocaust refers to genocide through the killing of approximate 6 million European Jews between 1941 and 1945. In particular, the Holocaust is defined by the singular nature of the systematic, administrative mass murder committed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators to exterminate the European

Jews and other groups, of which major parts of the German and European population were killed due to the intent to destroy these groups, such as political opponents, homosexuals, Jehovah's witnesses, Poles, Romani, Soviet prisoners of war, and persons with mental or physical disabilities. (Faculty of Law 4)

In these lines, the history and the purpose of holocaust as a genocidal system of exterminating Jews is clearly stated. Holocaust was a political game against the Jews which was the crime against the value of humanity. Indeed, it was an enemy to the humanity because it violated the ethics of kindness, generosity and mutual feeling of brotherhood. Instead, the ruling of Nazism promoted the essence of anti-Semitism and instigated the discriminative mindset of racial difference that leading finally to the death of humanity. The Jews who were physically and mentally tortured, harassed, oppressed alive by developing the traumatic experiences and that repeatedly haunting their life. So, trauma is a mental and neurotic response which paralyzed the life of Jews and eventually leads their existence towards the life without soul and feeling. Their surviving is in the form of lifeless body but no emotional will to live.

Cynthia Ozick depicts the pain and suffering of the Jews during the period of Second World War. This holocaust of Jews evokes negative emotion such as horror and terror within individual as well as collective to the Jew's ethnicity. So, to show this effect of war, Ozick depicts the traumatic character like Rosa and shows what looks like the life of holocaust survivor especially to the life of female survivor. Throughout the text reader can anticipate the fate of the mother and her suffering after losing her real world. The readers come across various questions in reading this novel. Such questions can be like why Cynthia Ozick narrates this story in the line of holocaust? How Ozick depicts the horror, departed and frustrated life of the holocaust

survivor? How Rosa's emotion and affect is represented in the story? And what sort of meaning is generated through the story of Rose? These questions strongly evoke the need for the deep analysis of the novel from the theoretical perspective of trauma theories. In answering them, the researcher looks into the narrative construction and the purpose behind it. Rosa's obsession with the Magda's shawl, her unbalanced psyche, imagination of Magda being a professor of Greek Philosophy in Columbia University, expression of her anger with Stella trace not only the story of Rosa individually but it sketches the whole ethnicity of Jews race underwent during holocaust and its affect after war. So, it is presumed that presentation of the character like Rose is the depiction of affected life of holocaust survivors and their emotion. The main purpose of Ozick to do such is to revisit the hidden history of holocaust, the time Jews were suffered to its fullest and make it known to the wider public of the world as well as raises the voice and emotion to the voiceless Jews.

Holocaust experiences are traumatic in nature because they are hallucinating, overwhelming and uncontrollable which frequently haunt the memory of the survivors. One of the leading trauma theorists is Cathy Caruth who coined the term 'trauma' in her famous theoretical work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History*. This theoretical essay establishes the medical condition of trauma formally and baptized the terminology as a mental response and a neurotic disorder. Characterizing the nature and source of traumatic experiences, Caruth defines trauma as: "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (81). In this pioneering definition, Caruth distinguishes traumatic experiences from any daily painful experiences by exploring the nature of

the traumatic shock as a mental reactions and neurotic disorder which derive from the direct encounter with the catastrophic events and circumstances. These traumatic effects are more repetitive, overwhelming and uncontrollable. Such traumatic experiences are so powerful and uncontrollable that the individuals can't easily cope up with them. They paralyze and destroy the person's life to the level that they remain unable to carry out their ordinary activities. Once they occur following the sudden catastrophic events, they linger on victimizing the persons. The emotional impact resulted from traumatic attack is seriously threatening and horrifying.

While recognizing that the traumatic experiences are more psychological because they don't get manifested physically, Caruth further argues that the representation of traumatic experiences in its direct expression is impossible because there is the discrepancy between the traumatic events and the memory of the victim. She insists that the biological case as the primary reason why the traumatic experiences can't be exactly narrated. The traumatic occurrences in the firsthand are beyond the individual's understanding and explanation but they remain unconscious of what happens during the course: "Caruth argues that trauma as it first occurs is incomprehensible. It is only later, after a period of latency, that it can be placed in a narrative" (Berger 577). Here, the lines on Caruth theoretical argument shed a clear light on the claim that the traumatic occurrences are not reachable and understandable during the time of occurrence. The victims suffer from the biological obstruction in the form of temporary memory breakdown and due to which the persons become unable to trace back to the traumatic moments. There lies no possibility of remembering the exact details of how everything occurred. It is after certain period of time that the victims recall the traumatic events and fall prey to its frequent haunting. Ozick in the novel divides the narrative into two parts in which the first section is

entitled as “The shawl” and the second section is called “Rosa”. While the first story is the scene of the concentration camps where the traumatic events like the brutal gasification of the Magda, the protagonist’s daughter are shown whereas the second part begins after thirty years in which the protagonist is seen in perpetual struggle against the threatening memory of traumatic scenes in the camp. The shift between the narratives carries what Cathy Caruth terms as the anti-mimetic representation of trauma. Unlike her theoretical conclusion, Ozick through the narrative break attempts to show the progressive development in protagonist’s struggle to fight the haunting memory. Hence, her protagonist succeeds in working through the traumatic past and lives in a new life.

As a holocaust novel, *The Shawl* shows the trauma of being killed in concentration camps and of being separated with family members as well as its aftermath affect. Rosa, the major figure in the novel, always concerns to save herself and her little daughter named Magda though it is sure that they will no longer be alive there in the camp. She already knows that death is omnipresent in such a place of horror. She is haunted by the terrible fear of being killed and scene of killing in the camp is too much panic for her. Rosa witnesses the real picture of the concentration camps. The feeling of pity and horror has been evoked in Rosa of being separated with her very innocent fifteen months daughter, Magda. Similarly, all of them Rosa, Magda and Stella suffer from coldness and starvation in the camp. Because of this extreme suffering of starvation, it is Stella who is waiting for Magda to die so that she can eat her and satisfies her hunger. The ‘Shawl’ is the only one tool to keep Magda silent and maintain her warmth. She sucks the Shawl and it makes her satisfied. Rosa is terrified to Stella as she notices her intention to kill Magda to eat and satisfy her hunger. This horror and fear make Rosa panic. Furthermore, Rosa fears that if Magda

cries, the guard will hear and the secret of Magda will be discovered and kills her very soon. This fear of Rosa at last becomes true. One day Stella steals Magda's shawl to put over herself. Then Magda toddles outside the barrack and screaming. Rosa cannot run to Magda, instead, she runs to the Shawl hoping to return to the courtyard in time to stop Magda's screaming and toddling before her discovered. But, Rosa happens to be too late. Only she observes Magda being carried off by a guard who throws her into the electric fence for killing.

So, through this narration Cynthia Ozick tries to show the reality of the then holocaust of the female Jews in such concentration camps. The writer depicts Rosa as an affected character who wants to survive and save her innocent daughter Magda from suffering, even though she cannot save her little child from suffering. But, she loses her innocent daughter eventually. This pain and emotion make her as insane. This scene of Magda's killing haunts Rosa each and every time. In her traumatic sufferings, the maternal affection is seen unlike any other men's representation of holocaust experiences. Men's holocaust experiences and sufferings rarely describe the pains and sufferings that Jews women had to go through as a female and a mother. Most of the writings representing holocaust history come from the male's perspective. Women's holocaust writings came much later:

No scholars studying the Holocaust deny the universal sufferings of male and female prisoners: however, the ways in which they suffered were often gendered. I argue that the specific, gendered suffering women experienced during the Holocaust delayed the recording of their experiences for many decades, during which time language evolved for women to discuss the suffering, resulting in the increasing publication of Holocaust memoirs by women in the 1990s. (Shana Latimer 11)

In these lines, Shana clearly shows the reasons why women's holocaust experiences are different from men's and how women's writings about their holocaust experiences were not given any social privilege until much later. The society was male-oriented society in which the men held importance in the social sphere. Male's experiences were valued as the mainstream experiences and represent the authentic public history. So, the history of holocaust was only believed to be men's experience of holocaust. Since the patriarchal discourse of society gave more power and supremacy on men as a public figure, women's experiences never found a recognition in the mainstream representation of holocaust history as Michele Foucault, the father new historicism, argues, "Discourse is controlled, limited, defined and exercised by power and draws to the way boundaries between the true and false are erected within the context" (42). The discourse of the patriarchal society always undermines women's experiences and sufferings as domestic and insignificant while the men's experiences as universal. This is the primary reason why female Jews' holocaust traumatic experiences, pains and sufferings remained unclaimed in the mainstream representation of holocaust history. Pointing out the role of the discourse of patriarchal influence in the documentation of holocaust history, gender trauma critic, Louise O. Vasvari identifies, "Holocaust scholarship still tends to privilege the Holocaust experience of men as universal and is reluctant to acknowledge testimony that does not follow preconceived gender stereotypes and suitable female behavior or pre-existing narratives of survival" (2). Here, Louise clearly observes the influence of the conventional gender perspective in ignoring women's holocaust experiences and their struggle for surviving the holocaust trauma. As a fictional representation of a female protagonist's holocaust sufferings, Ozick sheds an alternative history on female survivors' traumatic memory and their struggle for surviving from life-threatening

holocaust trauma.

After her daughter's brutal murder, the haunting memory of daughter's memory affects her in her later life in Miami. She memorizes all horrendous events whatever she witnesses in the camp. She becomes emotionally unbalanced at last. Thirty-five years later she lives in Maimi, struggling with her losses such as her parents, home and little daughter. She survives frustrated life. At the time her traumatic psyche imagines a narrative about Magda. She writes letter to Magda. She imagines Magda is alive and a professor of Greek Philosophy in Colombian University. So, in her imagination Magda is alive. This is the real life of Jewish holocaust affected. She acts out those terrific events one after another. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to probe into the narration that portrays the horror, terror, frustration and suffering of the Second World War and along with the successful journey of the protagonist to overcome the traumatic past after a series of struggles depicted in this novella through the theoretical lens of LaCapra's post-traumatic method of working through.

In the research, the researcher also looks at Ozick's novella, *The Shawl* through the view point of trauma to describe the bitterness of the holocaust reality. The research studies how the Jews were affected by the Second World War and how the sufferings react after the war. How the Hitler's assumption works negative impact to the war survivor. Therefore, the researcher tends to analyze the inner psyche and emotion of the characters and its manifestation to reflect upon the hardships that the protagonist undergoes in order to work through the triggering traumatic past.

Writing literature about holocaust of Jews was dominant after Second World War and numerous literary figures wrote literatures about holocaust and its effects to the survivor. Cynthia Ozick was one of the prominent literary writers at the time. She

herself as a war survivor narrates her own experience as well as the Jews ethnicity mass murder. She wrote numerous fictions and short stories in the line of the holocaust, in which *The Shawl* is a short story about Rosa's struggling to rid out from the war and her existence in which she tries to show the hidden history of Jews ethnicity of Nazi occupied Eastern Europe. So, numerous critics have examined Ozick's novella *The Shawl* under the frame of holocaust narrative. Whatever the critics evaluate is based on their own perspective. The researcher presents numerous critics reviews and research for the study of the holocaust survivor through the lens of trauma study.

One of the critics is Billie J. Jones who observes that Ozick's *The Shawl* is the symbolic representation of Rosa's sexuality. The depiction of Rosa's white nylon, bloomer-style underwear symbolizes her sexual identity or her sexual activity. He argues that, "Rosa's life is a series of contradiction and Ozick uses clothes as recurring and powerful symbols of the binaries that makes up Rosa's life: life and death, maternal purity and innate sexuality, and even magic and reality" (72). Using of shawl is one the one hand it is a source of Magda's safety, her food, shelter and one the other hand it is a shroud for her. So, this Shawl seems contradictory in the narrative. Likewise, Peter Kerry Power analyses the narrative of *The Shawl* with disruptive memories and invented past of Rosa. He shows that the past memories of Rosa disrupt her later life in Miami and she invent the horrific past. He concludes that "Rosa's stasis in the past does not embrace tradition and memory, but instead separates Rosa from others with whom she might manage to have fruitful ethical relationship" (90-91). He means that living with the past memories never and ever reconcile with Rosa's real life. That's why she becomes unbalance with her later life in Miami. Similarly, Linda Weinhouse claims that *The Shawl* is the reflection of the

writer's experience with the war. She says, "the story she tries to tell is not the horror of her daughter's death but the banal one of how a tramcar full of ordinary police citizens passed through the ghetto every day, past starving, half dead children and the passenger did not see, did not care to notice the pain of other" (66). She means that Ozick tries her best to depict the reality of her time, the time of Jews holocaust, where the millions of Jews were slaughtered. Her real witnesses are narrating through the medium of word or the story of Rosa. This is not only the story of Rosa individually but Jews ethnicity collectively. Cheryl Alexander Malcolm comments to *The Shawl* and says Miami is worst and empty vessel for Rosa's existence. He says, "To Rosa, Miami is regarded as an empty vessel, lacking in cultivation, a temporal place of exile for its aging inhabitants until death releases them from it" (126). Here the place Miami is where the Rosa lived and her life is in destruction and she remembers her earlier life in Polish. Her life in Polish was fruitful and prosperous. Miami is such a place where there is no hope of life, life of pessimistic is there. It is just an empty vessel. That's why her existence in Miami is meaningless. So, directly and indirectly these reviews are highly focused on the symbolic significance of the use of the shawl that carries the memory of her daughter in Rosa's life. As long as the shawl is with her, the traumatic memory of the daughter's brutal murder hunts her. Yet, these critics rarely touch the aspect of narration that has the progressive development on the traumatic psychological journey of the protagonist. The progression on the part of the protagonist is structurally depicted by dividing the story into two sections in which the first is entitled *The Shawl* whereas the second section which begins after thirty years after the brutal killings of the protagonist's daughter is entitled in *Rosa*. The narrative shift from the Rosa's family's suffering, their struggle and Magda's killing that is from the scene of the concentration camps to the present struggle of the

protagonist to reconcile the traumatic memory. This shift of narration from one part to another speaks a lot about the writer's purpose of adopting progressive narration to revisit the history of holocaust violence on the female Jews without showing the traditional model of men's narration of their physical tortures and struggles during the concentration camp.

So, many critics have commented on Ozick's narrative on their own perspective. It is crucial to look this narrative on the basis of holocaust of Jews through the working through of the holocaust survivor. The traumatic condition of Rosa is the cause of losing her family, home and little child during holocaust. That's why the purpose of this research is to analyze the narrative through the lens of the post-traumatic technique of working through of the protagonist. The researcher will analyze the inner psyche of the major character Rosa in the story.

Miriam Silver evaluates *The Shawl* through the line of language. How the language is used and what the meaning is generated in the story is his main focus. The language is a powerful tool for the expression of the emotions and feelings. In literary writings like the novel, the writer makes an intentional play of the words and the style of the linguistic exploitation because it can be experimented in order to speak the inner psyche of the character. In doing so, the writer is trying to use the figurative language to communicate the essential message which is the major part of writing literature. He asserts that, "narrative comprises *The Shawl*, the staccato like language, the relentless maternal perspective, which reveals the pressure and the will to protect the baby at all costs" (44). Here, the linguistic analysis of the text by Sivan focuses on the fact that the language in the novel is overloaded with the maternal overtone. In the narration the protagonist is a mother whose unconditional devotion and sacrifice for the protection of the daughters from the brutal gasification of Nazis moves the plot

forward. To show her affection towards the daughter Ozick tactfully applied the maternal languages in the narration. The female protagonist, Rosa as a mother figure tries her best to protect her child Magda from the discovery of the guard in the camp. She restlessly uses her mind, soul and her physicality to live long her child. She uses the language of maternal means the word that is used by mother with her child like the word 'butterfly' in the story. Furthermore, he says, "she does not use the word "Jew", Nazi", "concentration camp" and even the "war" (43). This word shows the violence and terrific life of the Jews. That's why Ozick tries her best to show the mother's love and affection to their child and the horrific reality of the Jews mother of the time by avoiding the words like war, Jews, Nazi and concentration camp. Likewise, Sivan concludes with his assertion that, "this extremely brief rendering of a mother's aborted attempt to keep her infant daughter alive in Nazi occupied Europe is told tight terse sentences" (43).

To look at the representation of the holocaust history for the social relevance, Dominick LaCapra comes up with the trauma theory of 'Writing History Writing trauma' in which he recommends the approaches for the proper historiography of the traumatic experiences. He talks about two basic approaches for writing holocaust history or holocaust experiences that is positivist approach or mainstream approach and constructivist approach. In which the positivist approach representing traumatic experiences in the form of the facts and physical evidences. Further he says that the collection of facts and evidences for representing holocaust history is impossible nowadays. So, LaCapra offers an alternative way of representing history which he calls the constructivism:

I would initially distinguish between two approaches to historiography. The first is what I would term a documentary or self-sufficient research model, or

which positivism is the extreme form. On this first approach, gathering evidence and making referential statements in the form of truth claims based on that evidence constitute necessary and sufficient conditions of historiography. The second approach which is the negative mirror image of the first is radical constructivism. For it, referential statements making truth claims apply at best only to events and are performative, figurative, aesthetic, rhetorical, ideological, and political factors that “construct” structures- stories, plots, arguments, interpretations, explanations – in which referential statements are embedded and take on meaning and significance. (34)

In these theoretical explanations, LaCapra shows the distinctions between the positivist approach and constructivist approach and recommends the constructivist approach for the proper and authentic representation of the traumatic history. For him, constructivism way of historiography can be written through the means of story, explanations, arguments, plots which means the literature is one of the constructivist ways of representing the traumatic experiences in which the certain meaning and significance is communicated.

LaCapra provides literature as a proper way of revisiting the holocaust history and constructing the meaning and significance which benefit the present society from its moral and ethical message. Ozick’s *The Shawl* as an artistic form of novel which recounts and represents the holocaust history through the means of the fictional plots which take the readers back to the period of Nazism and make them visualize the brutality Nazism. However, Ozick’s constructivist representation of trauma history through the novel leads towards the fact that unlike the most of the holocaust documents that seem obsessed with the graphic and violent accounts of the concentration camps as experienced by the male but this novel shows the maternal

sufferings and traumatic struggles of a mother whose life is devastated due to the traumatic memory of her daughter's murder. As a mother, Rosa endures heavy traumatic experience and still struggles to survive it.

The novel unfolds with its first section of narration entitled "The Shawl" that shows the scenes of the concentration camps where the three female characters: Rosa, Stella and Magda are under the oppression of the Nazis soldiers. It begins with the pathetic conditions of these characters along with other Jews around. The story totally revolves around the troublesome and horrifying circumstances that the mother, Rosa and her two daughters undergo. Their pathetic and miserable condition in the concentration camps is characterized by the gasification of the weaker Jews which constantly threaten and traumatize them by fearing that the next to be gasified that would be one of them. Mostly, Rosa as a mother is always under a mental depression and psychological fear of losing her daughters. The entire novel forms the plot around her struggle to protect her child from the brutal death of the camp and her struggle to overcome the traumatic memory of her daughter's gruesome death in the camp. Without any graphic and violent description of the killings and murders, Ozick presents the terrible conditions of the characters. Magda, the daughter is very young. Rosa continuously wraps her up under the shawl in order to prevent her from being seen by the Nazis soldiers because they used to kill the weaker Jews like physically weak and children. Rosa knows that she would lose her daughter but she was effortful with all the possible means within her reach to preserve her daughter's life. On the other hand, the starvation and hunger were in the horrific situations. All the Jews including her and daughters were made to walk a long distance to be shifted to another camp. It would exhaust them physically and mentally "the weight of Rosa was becoming less and less: Rosa and Stella slowly turning into air" (6). Food was not

provided on time. As a result, Mother has sore breast. She was getting thinner and skinny with no production of milk in her breast but keeping her daughter safe was her immediate crisis. As a Mother, she knew how to protect her. Despite her sore and swollen breasts with no drop of milk produced, she allowed Magda to breastfeed. Magda would suckle the corner of the shawl to satisfy the hunger:

Without complaining, Magda relinquished Rosa's teats, first the left, then the right; both were cracked, not a sniff of milk. The duct-crevice extinct, a dead volcano, blind eye, chill hole, so Magda too the corner of the shawl and milked it instead. She sucked and sucked, flooding the threads with wetness.

The shawl's good flavor, milk of linen. (5)

These narrative lines offer vivid images of how Rosa and her daughter fought their life under the deadening oppression of the concentration brutality. The shawl of the mother becomes the source for her life. It is through the language that creates an image; Ozick familiarizes her readers with the kinds of traumatic and terrifying incidents and events that her characters undergo. The dry breasts, hunger baby, exhausted and drained body and mind of mother, tiny lips sucking, skinny body are the images which give the traumatic picture of the camp. Despite the dangers and threats that could happen any time, Rosa doesn't give up on protecting her baby. She keeps hanging with her shawl to hide the baby from the notice of the concentration camp guards:

Rosa knew Magda was going to die very soon; she should have been dead already, but she had been buried away deep inside the magic shawl, mistaken there for shivering mound of Rosa's breasts; Rosa clung to the shawl as if it covered only herself. No one took it away from her. Magda was mute. She never cried. Rosa hid her in the barracks, under the shawl. (6)

These narrative lines depict the miserable and pathetic life that Rosa and her daughter had to live. It is a very touching and moving scene that shakes every heart. Despite her continuous efforts to save her daughter's life, her temporary happiness of being able to feel her daughter on her lap away from the death instantly turns into an ocean of tears and fears. In one of the scenes when Magda releases her muteness and calls 'Maaaa', the very soft voice gives Rosa a lovely feeling and maternal love but it unfortunately sets a grave for her daughter to be buried away. Hearing her from the wrapped lap of Rosa, the concentration camp guards immediately and inhumanly seize and grab the daughter and burn her alive throwing her into the fence. Rosa is compelled to become the witness of her own daughter's gruesome and traumatizing death:

She was high up, elevated, riding someone's shoulder. But the shoulder that carried Magda was not coming toward Rosa and the shawl, it was drifting away, the speck of Magda was moving more and more into the smoky distance...Magda's feathered round head and her pencil legs and balloonist belly and zigzag arms splashed against the fence, the steel voices went mad in their growling, urging Rosa to run and run to the spot where Magda had fallen her flight against the electrified fence. (10)

These narrative lines evoke the sense of anger and helplessness during the time of the concentration camps. The clear image of a daughter being stolen away from the mother's lap and gasified into the smoke of the gas stimulates the feeling of trauma and sympathetic emotions. Rosa saw such horrifying and terrifying scene of her own daughter turning into the ashes. She couldn't run to the spot because she knew her death could turn up any time. Rather she held the shawl and started sucking saliva of her daughter. The death of her daughter was the end of her maternal existence.

However, Ozick empowers her to endure the horrific scene of her daughter's cruel killing. She gives her the shawl as a powerful object through which the mother stands able to deny the death and leads further for self-preservation in spite of the hallucinating traumas of the loss of her dear daughter.

The second narration entitled "Rosa" appears after the thirty years following the traumatic scene of her daughter's gasification in the concentration camp. Ozick artistically takes the long duration between the two narrations in order to reflect the traumatic reality during the holocaust and post-holocaust. The holocaust in the concentration camps become the source for the emergence of the traumatic events and incidents while the post-holocaust deals with the victims and their struggle to cope up with the traumatic past memories. Ozick's protagonist starts a post-traumatic struggle to cope up with the trauma of her daughter's loss in the second narrative. Ozick presents Rosa in a constant battle against the triggering past of the daughter's horrific death and the physical and mental consequences and effects she endures leads her to revive the peaceful life ahead. Finally, she works out these traumatic past experiences and lives in a present life. Such type of progressive narration as applied by Ozick is theoretically proposed by one popular trauma theorists, Dominick LaCapra in his theoretical work "Writing History Writing Trauma" in which he categories the post-traumatic responses into two strategies: acting-out and working through. To him, these are two models of narratives through which the trauma history can be represented but he insists on the application of the working through model as the writer's ethical responsibility to transform the thoughts, mindsets and beliefs of the society as well as encouraging the value of reconciliation with the evil past for the sake of the peaceful present. Showing the differences between the acting-out and working through post-traumatic responses, Lacapra puts forth the discussion of the

post-traumatic responses that displayed by the trauma victims. He divides the post-traumatic responses or post-traumatic coping up strategies into two types: working through and acting out. Characterizing the nature of ‘Acting out’, he describes:

In this stage, the victim is uncontrollably and against his will confronted with his past. The traumatic event is now prevailing over all other memories, both past and future ones. The trauma governs the victim’s life and this aggravates the trauma even more...the possessing memory causes them to have hallucinations and nightmares in which they relive the traumatic event over and over again. The traumatized’s behavior clearly demonstrates a fractured state of mind. In this stage, the victim realizes that they have been through a traumatic experience, but they are convinced that it will control the rest of their lives. They are stuck in their past and do not see how they can possibly unify their fragmented mind in order to come to “suturing”. (193)

Here, LaCapra demonstrates the pessimistic character of the acting-out traumatic response in which the trauma victim relives the traumatic past while the idea of future is blocked. Likewise, the trauma sufferer undergoes a restless traumatic past memory and that keeps triggering repeatedly. The person ever gains peace in mind but a psychological and mental fragmentation consumes the victim’s life. They get stuck in the past and are unable to reconcile with the past to come to term with the present. Such situations are filled with the hallucination and nightmares that gradually ruin and devastate the person’s life. The person is in the present physically but relives the past mentally. This kind of representation of holocaust characters, for LaCapra, leads the society not towards the peaceful reconciliation but towards the evocation of violent and retaliatory as well as pessimistic attitudes.

Rosa, in the second narration entitled “Rosa” displays what LaCapra terms as

the post-traumatic responses. The second narration shows a series of Rosa's behaviors and attitudes as well as the activities she performs in order to make the self-preservation. Even after thirty years, Rosa has not been able to free herself from the traumatic scene of her daughter's death. The haunting memory still overwhelms her and she is fractured, frustrated, depressed and traumatized every moment. She is described as a madwoman and scavenger because of her traumatized condition of life resulted from the painful traumatic event of the daughter's loss. The world she lives after thirty years is full of illusions, emptiness, alienations and frustrations. She lived in Brooklyn running a junk shop which destroyed out of anger and traumatic force of memory. Her act of destroying the shop reflects the devastating and destructive nature of acting-out traumatic response. However, Ozick takes her through the process of acting-out into the working through where she finally succeeds to overcome the devastating traumatic memory and lives a new life. LaCapra also asserts that the working through of the traumatic past can happen after the phase of acting-out is completed. Just opposite to the acting-out, LaCapra further discusses about the next type of post-traumatic behavior which he calls working through. LaCapra, in describing 'Working through', observes:

They must come to the final approach of working through the trauma if they want to be freed from the ghosts of their past. However, working-through does not stand in opposition to acting-out as the former presupposes and even requires the former...In the process of working through a traumatic experience, there is also a constant repetition of the event. The difference with acting-out is that this time, the repetition is controlled by the victim. He willfully thinks back on the past until he is able to retrieve the memory of the traumatic experience in a selective and critical way. (174)

In light of this definition, it can be observed that working-through is the most recuperative process than acting-out. If acting-out can lead to possible consequences due to the frequent reliving on the past, working-through develops the critical ability in the victim to accept the traumatic shock and learn to fight it by perceiving it positively. In this process, the victim holds the great amount of optimism, strength and hope even from the traumatic experience. Rosa's acting-out is seen at her aggressive act of destroying the shop out of frustration and alienation. Her pessimist attitude towards life can be sense at her dialogue "Before is a dream. After is a joke, only during stays. And to call it a life is a lie" (58). Later on, her encounters with some people whose constant supportive encouragement and consolation help her forget the traumatic memory of her daughter. The memory of shawl keeps her memory alive.

Later on, Rosa moves to Miami, Florida where lives in a retirement hotel supported by her next daughter Stella. Stella has already worked through the past and suggests Rosa to get rid out from the past memory. Rosa encounters another man who came from the ghetto, Simon Persky. Their growing intimacy is how Ozick empowers Rosa to slowly forget the traumatic past. Similarly, she keeps writings the letters to her daughter imagining her to be the professor at university and other figures. It is the hallucinating effects of her traumatic past. Her isolated and alienated condition is realized at loneliness and imaginative act of seeing her dead daughters in different figures: "My Gold, my wealth, my treasure, my Hidden sesame, my Paradise, my Yellow Flower and my Magda! Queen of Bloom and Blossom!" (66). Here, the line portrays how Rosa has stuck in the past traumatic memory. However, the shawl she has in mind keeps helping her wipe out the memory of her daughter. The intimacy with Mr. Persky ultimately washes away her traumatic past. In a letter to Stella, she

says, “Where I put myself is in hell. Once I thought the worst was the worst, after that nothing could be the worst. But now I see, even after the worst there’s still more”

(14). Here, the line by Rosa clearly manifests her transformation from being a pathetic victim of traumatic past, divided self, fragmented psyche to the restored and revived self. The climax of her restoration comes when she imagines her daughter turning into the butterfly after she looks at the shawl:

The whole room was full of Magda. She was like a butterfly, in this corner and in that corner, all at once...how nice, a girl of sixteen; girls in their bloom move so swiftly that their boluses and skirts balloon; they are always butterflies at sixteen. There was Magda, all in flower. She was wearing one of Rosa’s dresses from high school. (64)

In the narrative dialogue, Rosa’s memory of her daughter changes from a horrific image of her dead body to an image of butterfly and in which we can see the redemption of Rosa’s traumatic past. Exploring the scene of transformation in Ozick’s holocaust representation and scene of forming the image of butterfly to memorize her daughter, Amy Gottfried claims, “Ozick centers her text upon a transformative motif...Magda’s metaphoric transformation into a butterfly is a gift of redemption for those who suffered in the Holocaust” (42-3). Standing on her observation, it is wise to claim that Rosa works through the traumatic holocaust memory and reconciles with the present for the peaceful future which is seen when she forgets everything about the shawl and welcomes Mr. Persky into her room. The novel ends with her being able to completely forget the shawl and accept the peaceful present life: “He’s used to crazy women, so let him come up’ Rosa told the Cuban. She took the shawl off the phone. Magda was not there. Shy, she ran from Persky. Magda was away” (70). These last sentences indicate how Rosa’s haunting memory of Magda is replaced by the

arrival of the present reality, Persky. The phrase “Magda was away” marks the complete transformation of Rosa’s life from the frustrated, depressed and traumatized past being to the restored and reconciled being at present. This is where one can notice Ozick’s moral redemption in her character as Irving Helperin in his book “Messengers from the Dead: Literature of the Holocaust” views the text as, “a particular welcome achievement of the moral redemption” (712). Here, the moral redemption on the part of Rosa shows the fact that female survivors’ like Rosa worked through the trauma by reconciling her traumatic past of holocaust like men did in their narratives. However, the nature of female traumatic experiences like Rosa come from maternal position while male survivors suffered mostly physical and outdoor tortures.

Rosa’s complete transformation by leaving behind the holocaust traumatic memory of her daughter’s violent murder and accept the present reality for the peaceful life ahead. Such progressive narration shows the characters turning the loss into an opportunity to learn from. They step further for their redemption from the gruesome past and think of the better future as LaCapra theoretically outlines:

Losses occur in any life of society, but it is still important not to specify them prematurely or conflate them with absences. Historical losses can conceivably be avoided or, when they occur, at least in part be compensated for, worked through, and even to some extent overcome. Absence, along with the anxiety it brings, could be worked through only in the sense that one may learn better to live with it and not convert it into a loss or lack. (712)

Here, LaCapra suggests for the representation of loss or absence such as the holocaust tragedy in which the loss is compensated by the working through it partially or fully so that society may learn from it for better. Ozick’s representation of holocaust history

with her female protagonist working through the gruesome and horrifying traumatic memories to redeem for the peaceful life ahead does not evoke the sense of retaliation and violent aggression as it was found in earlier holocaust documents but it advocates for the need to reconcile the traumatic past, work through them and restore a peaceful life. So it offers an alternative picture of holocaust from the perspective of Jews women's painful struggle against the intolerable traumatic memory of holocaust history.

This way, Ozick's *The Shawl* as a piece of fictional representation follows the narrative technique of post-traumatic method of working through. Giving the leading role to the female protagonist who faces the tortures, conflicts, sufferings and traumatic memories of the concentration camp, Ozick succeeds to offer the alternative picture of the holocaust history from the perspective of the female holocaust victim. Rosa, the female protagonist undergoes a number of gruesome events and incidents by the brutal murder of her daughter in the camp. The daughter's death becomes the root cause for the painful and traumatic memory that goes on overwhelming her later part of life. The novel entirely moves around the maternal affection and dedication as well as the sacrifice for her child. Despite all the obstacles, the female protagonist takes all the risks in order to save the life of her innocent life. She struggles with starvation and humiliation as well as the fearful situations for the protection of her child. This kind of struggle for the protection of the child with complete maternal impulses among the oppressive and threatening atmosphere of the camp was hardly spoken in the mainstream representation of the holocaust history. After the liberation of the camp, there were many immediate productions to represent the holocaust experiences but most of them were dominated by the male writers. Male version of holocaust primarily focused on the male survivor's struggle for life. It only

represented the outdoor struggles, confrontations, physical tortures, and male's painful memory of severe physical punishment. There was the dominance of the male in the writing field. The society was still male-dominated. Only male's experiences were considered to the public and authentic as well as mainstream source of the holocaust history. Much of the holocaust discussion was drawn to male's struggle against their traumatic memories.

However, female Jews and their suffering remained unnoticed. Since the male dominated the power of the society, their voice was given the priority. Their holocaust experiences were taken to be universal. Jews female survivors couldn't dare to write about their experiences because they knew that it would get no recognition. Like Freud says, those in power are heard in the mainstream history whereas those in margin remain unnoticed. The patriarchal discourse of the society established male's narrative as the authentic voice for the representation of the history. Like Cathy Caruth suggests that the mainstream history is often manipulated by the power politics. Coining the term 'Trauma' for the first time in her theoretical work on the subject of trauma, she offers the alternative way of approaching the trauma history. She suggests recreating the mainstream history by offering the alternative accounts. These alternative accounts, according to her, enable us to get closer to the truth. On that note, Ozick's fictional representation of holocaust from the perspective of female survivor becomes one alternative account for the complete picture of the holocaust history.

It draws the history of the holocaust through the traumatic struggle of the female Jews whose holocaust struggle is different from that of the male survivors. Ozick adopts the post-traumatic response of working through to show the painful struggle of the Jews female survivor during the fearful atmosphere of the

concentration camp. As LaCapra suggests that the writer should bear the ethical responsibility towards the society when representing the traumatic history, Ozick shapes the narrative construction of the novel from the acting out struggle of the female protagonist, Rosa and ends with the working through success of the protagonist. As LaCapra explains that any traumatic victim undergoes the acting out before working through the traumatic memory, Rosa suffers many acting out incidents and painful memories. However, Ozick presents the narrative in the progressive mode to empower her female protagonist strength to overcome the traumatic memory of her daughter's bloody murder and start the normal life again. Such a peaceful ending when representing the dark picture of the holocaust history ethically changes the perspective of the society towards the history of the holocaust without any further violent thoughts. On the other hand, having a female protagonist go through the holocaust traumatic experiences add the account to the totality of the holocaust history. Thus, Ozick's fictional representation of female Jews and her struggle to overcome the traumatic memory of the holocaust in the progressive narrative construction of working through offers an alternative picture of the holocaust history.

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