

I: Contextualizing Holocaust Literature and *Sophie's Choice*

This present research is based on William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* (1979). It attempts to explore the tragic outcome of holocaust of the World War II from Sophie's perspective. The plot revolves around a Polish catholic woman, Sophie, and her sufferings. Sophie has a tragic past associated with her stay in Auschwitz labor camp in which she has to sacrifice one of her children in exchange of her life. Taking this fact into consideration, the present research focuses on 'Trauma – a Holocaust,' as its tool.

Trauma is an extremely distressing experience that causes severe emotional shock and may have long-lasting psychological effects. It is a result of physical injury or wound to the body. Traumatic experiences borne by Sophie are the result of the Holocaust of the World War II. Holocaust comes from Hebrew terminology 'Shoah,' which means 'total destruction.' During the late 1930s and early 1940s Adolf Hitler, the then Chancellor of Germany imposed a policy of total abolishment of the Jews of Germany, and Europe popular as 'holocaust policy.' As such, Jews in Europe were subjected to progressively harsh persecution that ultimately led to the murder of six million Jews (1.5 Million of these being children) and the destruction of five thousand Jewish communities. To convey the unimaginable, devastating scale of destruction, postwar writers referred to the murder of the European Jews as the Holocaust.

On January 20, 1942, an extraordinary 90-minute meeting took place in a lakeside villa in the wealthy Wannsee district of Berlin, the Nazis decided to carry out mass evacuation of the Jews from Germany. Fifteen high-ranking Nazi party and German government leaders gathered to co-ordinate for carrying out the final solution of the Jewish question. Chairing the meeting was Lieutenant General Reinhardt Hydrich, head of the powerful Reich Security Main Office, a central police agency that included the secret police. Heydrich organized the meeting on the basis of a memorandum he had received six months

earlier from Adolf Hitler. Herman Goring was assigned as the deputy who confirms his authorization to implement the 'Final Solution.'

The 'final solution' was the Nazi regime's code name for the deliberate, planned mass murder of all European Jews. During the Wannsee meeting, government officials discussed 'extermination' without hesitation. Heydrich calculated that eleven million European Jews from more than twenty countries would be killed under this plan.

During the months before the Wannsee Conference, special units made up of the elite guard of the Nazi state, and police personnel slaughtered Jews in mass shootings on the territory of the Soviet Union that the Germans had occupied. Six weeks before the Wannsee meeting, the Nazi began to murder Jews at Chelmno, an agricultural estate located in the part of Poland annexed to Germany. Here, the police commandants used sealed vans into which they pumped carbon monoxide gas to suffocate their victims. This policy was expanded as state policy by Wannsee meeting and Jews killing was implemented as 'Final Solution.'

During 1942, trainloads of Jewish men, women and children were transported from countries all over Europe to Auschwitz, Treblinka and four other major killing centers in German-occupied Poland. At the end of the year, about 4 million Jews were dead. During World War II, the Germans and their collaborators killed or caused the death of up to six million Jews. Hundreds of Jewish communities in Europe, some centuries old, disappeared forever.

Centuries of religious prejudices against Jews in Christian Europe, financial insecurities, fear of communism and the so-called race science were the backdrop for the Holocaust. Hitler and other Nazi ideologies regarded Jews as a dangerous 'race' whose very existence threatened the 'Superior Aryan Race.'

Sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, etc are some of the topics William Styron deals with. Sexism is the most important topic Styron has addressed these issues in his fourth novel,

Sophie's Choice which was published in 1979. It has drawn attention of numerous critics and controversies as well, since its publication. The novel is basically critiqued for its issues of race, anti-Semitism, psychic characteristics of the protagonist, and its unique narrative technique. In this respect, a critic William Heath points to Stingo's egoistic nature that he has preserved as a writer:

When we first meet Stingo he is an ambitious young novelist of twenty two who is experiencing his first case of writer's block. I had the Syrup he says but it would not pour. His dreams are of destined fame but his lowly job involves reading isolated manuscript for McGrew Hill with the spirit that seems to make the literary world go around. Stingo rejects every single submission, all of them so frightened with hope and clubfooted syntax taking a sadistic delight in his work. (73)

When Styron is talking about his persona, Stingo, he tends to forget that the central story of the novel is Sophie's tragedy not Stingo's voyage of discovery.

Sophie's Choice basically deals with the character of Sophie, who is living in the holocaust of the World War II, and with the will of suicide. The plot revolves around, Sophie and her desire to commit suicide. Suicide is the act of killing oneself. It is an intentional, self-inflicted death. It is a distinctly human act that appears in all societies since the earliest times. Suicide is purely human as animals do not possess the will and intention to carry out suicide. Major differences exist, however, in society's attitudes towards suicide, in the way in which suicide is committed, and in the rates of frequency at various times in history.

Although the novel's title is *Sophie's Choice* Styron gets so caught up in his fable of how his narrator writes a novel, wins manhood and conquers grief that the novel might just as well be called Stingo's progress. From Stingo's point of view, Sophie and Nathan merely

are crewmen on his voyage of self-discovery. They teach him about the complexity of human nature, the evils of Auschwitz, the splendors of love and the horrors of madness. They become, in a sense, surrogate family for Stingo.

The elder Stingo, in describing his preparations to tell Sophie's story, displays the same egocentric pattern as his younger self. About the Stingo's voyage of discovery, Road Sirlin says:

Stingo's self-assessment at the beginning of the voyage is this: It was true that I had traveled great distance for one so young, but my spirit had remained landlocked unacquainted with love and all but a stranger to death. Stingo knows he needs a voyage of discovery. But little did he suspect at twenty-two that he would so quickly become acquainted with love and death in so-strange and place to him as Brooklyn in 1947. (170)

Though love and death are stingers to Stingo at the age of twenty-two, at his older age when he lived in Brooklyn in 1947, he becomes acquainted to both love and death. He becomes the participator of the tragic love story of Sophie and Nathan and also one of the viewers of their suicidal death.

Through the alternation complementary but quite different narrative perspective, the reader encounters Auschwitz, the labor camp where Jews were massacred in mass. In this regard, Richard Gm Law opines:

Because of its literally almost unspeakable subject, the manner of the unfolding of the tale is an exercise in overcoming or putting to sleep, reader resistance. To keep the reader's imagination from evading the nature of Sophie's experience Styron employs a varieties of stratagems some simple other Byzantine the elaborateness. (136)

The unfolding of the narrative is a kind of trick which simultaneously carries us towards and hides its destination in *Sophie's Choice*. The whole narrative is skillfully crafted to get us in a frame of mind where we can't evade or fail to imagine the experience of genocide from the point of view of one of its victims. Talking about the technique another critic Nancy Chin says:

The use of quotations, especially as epigraphs, to a novel is a technique that Styron has employed throughout his career. His last novel *Sophie's Choice* published in 1979 contains twelve passages from fiction or poetry including two epigraphs from Rilke's *Fourth Duino Elegy* and Andre Malraux's *Lazarus*. The range of these sources from the Bible to *Lazarus*, is consistent with the scope of the literary allusion which permeates the novel. (3-4)

The literary quotations not only are part of the fabric of the story, but also suggest that the novel is as much about Stingo as it is about Sophie. Of the five unidentified quotations, only one concerns death and the rest are references to Stingo's lack of experience. It clearly shows the lack of innovative experience of Stingo to become a writer. With experience, the older Stingo is able to tell both Sophie's story and his own story.

The novel has been looked from the angle of Christianity by Samuel Coole. He says, "The most common norm of human values, Styron undermines Christianity at the same time uses Christian imagery appropriately without irony to describe the scope and mythical archetypes of his materials" (17). Styron disregards Christianity directly, but indirectly, he brings references of Bible and Christianity to make his story reliable and strong.

Likewise *Sophie's Choice* is seen as an exploration of the inner psyche of the protagonist. In this matter, Elizabeth Harion-Sarafilds says:

Sophie's Choice is also again a narrative deeply engaged in exploring consciousness, in speaking the unspeakable in the charity of a quest for self-

knowledge: The Sophie of the title is yet another fragmented self one more protagonist torturously enmeshed in feeling of guilt, like Nat Turner "pursued by an obscure, unshakable grief . . . sheering in the knowledge of the futility of all ambition." What he sought to recreate, Styron explained in an interview, was the "agony" of the life of the women who was the inspiration for Sophie. (96)

The extent to which Styron's Sophie is an emotional ripple someone whose identity has been irrevocably shattered, is a matter which is discussed only gradually to the Stingo who and befriended one summer in New York in her life.

Sophie's Choice has been studied to explore how the dialogic worlds are working. In this respect, Govin Colagne-Brooks says:

In *Sophie's Choice* Styron is overtly and no, in dialogic with other accounts of Auschwitz and with Langer's view of the kind of art necessary of representing the world after the Holocaust. In this sense, the novel adheres to Lager's view that the need is to place disparate world in a single, disjunctive frame. (24)

The direct references to schizophrenia, evolving up to the news that Nathan is a paranoid schizophrenic are part of these dialogic worlds.

Issues of ego, journey of the narrator as a mature man, narrative technique, quotations used in the Christianity, protagonist as a fragmented self and dialogic worlds have been talked by different critics but no one has studied *Sophie's Choice* as one of the prominent novel written by Styron who draws our attention towards violence. Every chapter of the novel is loaded with the suffering of Sophie because of sexual harassment and violence done upon her by males physically as well as mentally. So, this research will be an attempt to show cycles of sufferings and sexual harassment borne by Sophie in a patriarchal society in pre-war Poland, and post-war America as well.

However, when it comes to *Sophie's Choice*, it seems the central character, Sophie has no other choice to relief self from the internal pain and woes except suicide. She, finally, succumbs to self imposed death to sooth her burning past, in which she had sacrificed one of her children to be killed by the Nazis, in exchange of her life.

Since the publication of the novel, there have been several criticisms on the novel. Samuel Klinger, claims that Styron exposes the sense of self discovery in his writings. He opines:

William Styron is best known for the mystical fables told in simple yet symbolic language. His wide popularity rests on the fact that his characters realized the meaning of life, once they face the bitter reality of life. He is acclaim both in and internationally for his work about spiritual quests of self-discovery. (72)

The trend in *Sophie's Choice* is also of the same fashion, where, he depicts the mystic realization for love of life by Sophie, only after she fall trap to the death jaws.

Similarly, Ronald V. Evans sees the work as an outcome of the social structure, in which the youths are negated and neglected. In *Guide to Literature for Young Adults*, he writes, "Death wish, besides being a wish is the growing tendency as if a sports game among the youths of the world. Styron presents a ground breaking concept of life and death, and a general tendency of youths towards it" (32). As such, death wish is not mere an intention but a strong urge to carry out the desire to destroy own self. This often leads the victim to harm him/herself.

Similarly *Time Out*, a magazine on literary review from London opines, "The global bestseller Styron's *Sophie's Choice* has reaffirmed the intensely poetic and powerful unsettling concept of pre-war experience: a reminder that we must always seize the day to avoid the trauma of holocaust" (8). The pre-war trauma of hundreds of innocent people is

against the concept of justice and equality. In no name and reasons, should natural right to life, property and equality can be challenged in a civilized nation.

Similarly, Anne Robinson regards this novel as a voice of black comedy. Robinson writes, “The characters in the novel are lively, yet, a nuisance and unrealistic as they present the other side of life. It is a fact that all people do not get the due share in life, and are often led to abrupt end, so the unrealistic final is doubtful” (24). Another critic Michael Mason, further comments, “The text is one of the best examples of depiction of hidden reality of people and their faces. It is, besides a detective novel is the exposition of human nature” (67). As rightly said, human nature is most mystifying and amusing.

Since its publication, there have been several attempts of research on *Sophie's World*, but none focusing on ‘suicide’ as the outcome of ‘trauma.’ So, the present research takes this issue for the research of the work. For the same, the first chapter is ‘Contextualizing Holocaust Literature and *Sophie's Choice*’ and the second chapter will be ‘Trauma: A Holocaust Perspective’ to justify the suffering of the victims of the World War II. The third chapter will be ‘Politics of Suicide in *Sophie's Choice*.’ Finally, the fourth chapter will sum up the thesis with a short summary of the research as ‘Exposition of War Crimes.’

II. Trauma: A Holocaust Perspective

Sigmund Freud used trauma theory in course of providing treatment to the people who were mentally and physically wounded, disturbed and disordered in World War I. As such, the trauma theory has its root in the psychoanalytical approach promulgated by Freud. Today, the phenomenon of trauma seems all-inclusive trauma which can be defined from the two approaches: first, psychoanalytic-formalistic approach and second, cultural approach. According to the first approach, a victimized subject does not disclose the real distressing experience; she rather exposes and expresses the testimony, in a very distorted and deceptive manner due to the fear of social death. Regarding the psychoanalytical approach, Freud's ideas are very much significant.

In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud is committed to the view that the "reminiscences that cause hysterical suffering are historical in the sense that they linked to actual traumas in the patient's life" (186). The effect associated with the past trauma can't be acknowledged and the amnesia that results means that the force of the affect becomes dammed up. The injured person's reaction to the trauma "only exercises a completely cathartic effect if it is an adequate reaction. The past that continues to wound is the past originally found and it has no outlet" (187).

Unlike the psychoanalytic-formalistic approach, cultural approach examines the undercurrents of the distorted by contextualizing it in the network of cultural-politics. It is, in that sense, trauma brings home the limitations of our understanding and at the same time it dislocates the so-called traditional disciplinary boundaries leading us to rethink our notions of experiences and of communication. In a person's telling of trauma, according to Freud, it is, "What remains to be said is the disaster, ruin of words, and demise of writing for both the speaker and listener" (188). As such, trauma is as what is narrated by a patient in connection to his sufferings and expression.

Trauma theory is a privileged critical category which includes diverse fields, with its specific focus on psychological, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic questions about the nature and representation of traumatic events. These concerns of trauma theory “range from the public and historical to the private and memorial” (Luckhurst 497). Trauma is intrinsically multidisciplinary so it needs to displace older paradigms and attend to new configuration of cultural knowledge. Geoffrey Hartman, Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCarpa, Ryan Lamothe, James Berger and others, basing their theory of trauma on Freud’s psychoanalysis speak and argue about the need for ‘acting-out’ or ‘working-through’ of the trauma for leading life as healthy citizens.

Similarly, Freud in “Mourning and Melancholy” describes two opposite forces that act simultaneously to convert traumatic experience in all form of writing:

The literary form gets its strength from the struggle between the urge to cry out from the burning core of traumatic experience on the one hand, and the drive to rationally construct the core of the trauma as a symbolic representation molded in language and literature, thus keeping it at a safe distance. (8)

The urge to explain sufferings is given an escape by one’s crying and yelling, which serves as an outlet to it.

In other words, all forms of expressions and writings on traumatic history is based on two forms of remembering trauma- the first result in the process of “working-through,” the other is based on denial and results in “acting-out.” Both concepts come from Freud and have been developed in such a way that it could be used in historical studies.

In 1980s, psychological trauma surfaced as a topic of serious and intense debate within the community of clinical psychologists and psychotherapists. By the mid-1990s, trauma therapies had mushroomed into an entire Industry. The disorder’s acronym, PTSD,

become a household word, a metonym that stands for a whole constellation of symptoms, reinforced by popular culture images ranging from the now well-known phenomenon of “flashbacks” to the stereotype of the “crazy vet”, to the claims of some women that they have recovered memories of child sexual abuse. Literary interest in trauma and traumatic events is long-standing, and works of both creative artists and critics have always reflected and helped to shape contemporary cultural understanding of the nature of psychological trauma. Much of the recent literary critical writing on trauma and memory is rooted in psychoanalytical approaches. As a body, it draws heavily on Freud and Lacan.

In the analysis of the relation between traumatic memory and history, expanding Freud’s ideas, Caruth and Felman have added some more. Trauma’s meaning in Western medicine extends from a surgeon’s description of a wound to the head in the early nineteenth century to a much more complex and puzzling narrative about a wound to the psyche toward the century’s end. This transformation has about it a compelling social character: trauma becomes attached to psychic injury when train accident victims complain of lingering mental and physical disorders despite the fact that they emerge from accident scenes “unharmd.” Giving a general definition of trauma in her essay “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History,” Caruth says:

Trauma describes an overwhelming experiences 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. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relieve it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring images of trauma in our century. (181)

The trauma theory has aroused a vivid interest among the cultural and literary theorists. The reason behind why trauma theory has begun to drag the attention of theorists pushes us to look at popular culture and mass media obsessed by repetitions of violent disaster. James Berger says in this regard:

It has become popular because of the successions of Die Hards, Terminators and Robocops, as well as Nightmares on Elm Street, disease and epidemic films, and now the return of the “classic” disaster films and twisters and turbulence and the repeated sequence of miniapocalypses within each films: at “real life” cop shows; and at the news itself, that never exhausted source of pure horror. (571)

By the same token of why trauma theory has become popular and inevitable makes us look at the preoccupation with family dysfunctions, child abuse, incest, spousal abuse in the media, most strikingly on the talk show circuit. There appears to be the sense both that family is the only hope for curing all social ills and that the family is “damaged beyond hope” (571). Along with the interest in family breakdown and violence comes the interest of enigmatic figure of the survivor, the one who has faced the catastrophe and can tell us what it is like. The survivor is a kind of living “black box,” a source of final knowledge of authority. Over the past fifteen years there has been an enormous growth in the interest in eyewitness accounts and testimonies of all kinds: by victims of child abuse, holocaust survivor, survivor of near death experiences.

Trauma has now crossed the boundaries of psychiatry and mediclinal field and has shown an increasing insistence on the direct effects of external violence in psychic disorder. This happened after the multi-culturalist’s celebration of decenter and meaninglessness. Within psychiatry, recent discussion has been dominated by two disorders that entered the official diagnostic manual of the American psychiatric Association in 1980s; Post-Traumatic

Stress Disorder and Multiple Personality Disorder. Multiculturalists and post-colonial critics share an interest in dismantling those intuitional mechanisms that reinscribed a power structure that favored the interests and continuing privilege of certain groups and nation. This interest did not arise in a vacuum; however its emergence had been prepared by the Civil Rights, woman's and Gay Liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These movements provided strength from a radical questioning of federal authority to which the protest against Vietnam War had given vent and which contributed to its conception as a 'national trauma'. In order to clarify this issue, Berger points out:

A theory of trauma in addition suggests ways of reconceptualizing important directions in critical theory itself. In particular, the recent crisis in post structuralist thought brought on by Heidegger and Paul de Man controversies seems to require a way of thinking about how events in the past return to haunt the present. More fundamentally, it may be useful to look again at the rhetoric of post structuralist and post modern theory-their emphasis on decentring, fragmentation, the sublime of apocalyptic- and explore what relation they might have to the traumatic historical events of mid-century [. . .] like Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois-Lyotard and Hayden white while writing explicitly about the Holocaust in the 1980s in ways that seem uncannily to echo earlier works. (573)

Similarly, in *Violence and Time: Traumatic Survivals*, Cathy Caruth further clarifies that traumatic disorders reflect the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events where impact of violence cannot be registered. Trauma is constituted not only by the destructive force of a violent event but by the very act of its survival. In this point she posits:

In recent years an increasing insistence in psychiatry in relation to external violence in psychic disorder has culminated in the study of “Post-Traumatic Streets Disorder.” As it is generally understood today, [. . .] as the most real, and also most destructive psychic experience. If we are to register the impact of violence we cannot, therefore, locate it only in the destructive moment of the past, but in an ongoing survival that belongs to the future. It is because violence inhabits; incomprehensibly, the very survival of those who have lived beyond it that it may be witnessed best in the future generation to whom this survival is passed on. (25)

In the same way, Dominick LaCapra’s theory of trauma focuses on three psychoanalytic topics: the return of the repressed; acting out versus working through; and the dynamics of transference. A traumatic historical event, as LaCapra argues, tends first to be repressed and then to return in forms of compulsive repetition. LaCapra is primarily concerned with the return of the repressed as discourse, rather than with physical returns such as the genocidal repetitions in Cambodia and Bosnia, and he outlines two symptomatic possibilities for the return of historical trauma as discourse. LaCapra emphasizes more in trauma’s nature which denies compulsively fixated but accepts the role of paradox and aporia. In this regard, Berger writes:

LaCapra wants to create a position that avoids both redemptive narrative and sublime acting out. He sets out to describe a way to work through trauma that does not deny the irreducibility fixated [...]. If there is no acting out at all, no repetition of the traumatic disruption, the resulting account of the historical trauma will be that teleological, redemptive fetishizing that denies the trauma’s reality. (575)

Among the three, transference is the most pervasive concern of LaCapra that the failure to come to terms with the discursive returns of some traumatic event usually signals the failure to recognize one's own emotional and ideological investments in the event and its representation. Transference in psychoanalysis is itself a return of the repressed, or rather a more conscious summoning of the repressed; it repeats or acts out a past event a relationship in a new therapeutic setting that allows for critical evaluation and change. Transference is the occasion for working through the traumatic symptom. It is imperative therefore to recognize the symptom and the trauma as one's own, to acknowledge that the trauma still is active and that one is implicated in its destructive effects.

South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) provided a forum for the voice of-often the repressed, suppressed or uneasily accommodated voice of certain victims who were being heard for the first time in the public sphere. In "Trauma Absence and loss," LaCapra tries his best to draw and elaborate the distinction between absence and loss. These stakes certainly include intellectual clarity and cogency but they also have ethical and political dimensions. Post-apartheid South Africa and post-Nazi Germany face the problem of acknowledging and working through historical losses in ways that affect different groups differently. Indeed the problem for beneficiaries of earlier oppression in both countries is how to recognize and mourn the losses of former victims and simultaneously to find a legitimate way to represent and mourn for their own losses without having a self-directed process occlude victims' losses or enter into an objectionable balancing of accounts.

Loss is often correlated with lack, for as loss is to the past, so lack is to the present and further. By contrast to absence, loss is situated on a historical level and is the consequence of particular events. The nature of losses varies with the nature of events and responses to them and some losses may be traumatic while others are not. Furthermore, the conflation of absence and loss would facilitate the appropriation of particular traumas by

those who did not experience them, typically in a movement of identify formation. In this regard, LaCapra writes:

Losses occur in any life of society, but it is still important not to specify them prematurely or conflate them with absence. 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)

Trauma theory is a discourse of the unrepresentable, of the events or objects that “destabilizes language and demands a vocabulary and syntax in some sense incommensurable with what went before” (Berger 573). In troubling ways, these discourses often blur into each other, creating a traumatic-sacred-sublime alterity in which historical complexity and historical pain are effaced or redeemed.

Trauma may be in the form of natural and technological disasters, war or individual trauma. Emotional trauma occurs when the psychological pain of a traumatic event involves damage or threat of damage to an individual’s psychic integrity or sense of self. Trauma effects may also be evidenced as, multiple personalities, paranoia, anger, and sleep problems; tendencies towards suicidability, irritability, mood swings and odd rituals; difficulty in trusting people and difficult relationships; and general despair, aimlessness, and helplessness.

Trauma theory, which focuses on acting out has its own issues and it cannot be explained within its limited territory for it is interconnected “with specific ethical and socio-cultural tension” (Hartman 269). This arises from an awareness of persistence of violence in a culture that no longer condones the martial virtues of war. After Nazism and Totalitarianism generally, yearning for the arts of peace has never been greater. But

continuous ethnic conflict, genocidal episodes, and irrational and bloody event, reported as the main staple of the news, set up an intolerable contrast between the yearning and intractable. As a matter of fact, the trans-historical awareness of the incidence of trauma-personals should make us realize the extent of human suffering.

Likewise, trauma theory synthesizes resource from a number of critical schools. In “Mixing Memory and Desire: Psychoanalysis, Psychology and Trauma Theory,” Roger Luckhurst regarding the different aspects about the trauma mentions:

Fredian psychoanalysis provided a model of traumatic subjectivity and various accounts about the effects of trauma on memory. Feminism generated not only the crucial political context but also a model of community for speaking out about forms of physical and sexual abuse that has been borrowed by subsequent “Survivor” groups. New Historical, fascinated by ideological omissions and repressions of historical narrative [. . .]. Finally, deconstruction particularly in its American Yale school version redirected its concerns with reference, representation, and the limits of knowledge to the problem of trauma. (497)

Thus, trauma is a crux, speaking to the undecidability of representation and the limits of knowledge. The major thrust of Geoffrey Hartman in his “Trauma within the Limits of Literature” is to consider trauma within the limits of language and literature. In order to clarify this issue about the limitation of language of literature, he further argues:

I am considering trauma within the limits of language and especially literature. Respect for the formal integrity of literature has a salutary side effect: it prevents theory from being applied reductively. Theory should not insist, in particular, on the psychic would be located in a single biographical

events, a would occulted by literary device that must be cleared always as if they were defensive structures. (267)

The art of trauma study explores the relation between psychic wounds and signification. Hartman further discusses about how trauma affects the formation of words or how words deal with trauma. Similarly, in “On Traumatic Knowledge and Literature Studies,” he talks about the literary studies and then posits that the theory derives mainly from psychoanalytical sources, though it is strongly affected by literary practices. Here, he points out:

The theory holds that the knowledge of trauma, or the knowledge which comes from that source, is composed two contradictory elements. One is the traumatic event, register rather than experienced. It seems to have bypassed perception and consciousness, and falls directly into the psyche. The other is a kind of memory of the event, in the form of a perpetual trooping of it by the bypassed or severely split [. . .]. (537)

Hartman further argues that trauma theory throws light on figurative of poetic language, and perhaps symbolic process in general, as something other than an enhanced imaging or vicarious repetition of a prior experience. He again asserts that the emphasis falls on the imaginative use of language rather than on an ideal transparency of meaning. “The real-the empirical of historical origin-cannot be known as such because it presents itself always within the resonances or fields of the traumatic” (544).

By the same way in “The Location of Cultural Experience,” Winnicott has defined trauma as “the interruption of a sense of going on being, a fracture of the sense of the continuity of the self” (114). He describes this event as it occurs in the mother/baby relationship. The mental representation of the good object in the inner world (that is the idea

of loving mother in the mind) is kept alive by the external, actual mother, responding to the baby with her continual care.

Again, Dominick LaCapra in *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory and Trauma* talks about two related goals: to intervene in and clarify some of the recent public controversies regarding holocaust representation and to elaborate a theory of historical trauma and its transmission. His contribution to the trauma theory and its cultural transmission is extraordinarily lucid and insightful. A traumatic historical event as LaCapra argues, “tends to be repressed and then to return in forms of compulsive repetition.” (574)

Showing the connection between trauma, violence and political community, Edkins Jenny in “Introduction: Trauma, Violence and Political Community,” points out how traumas such as wars or persecutions are inscribed and rein scribed into everyday narratives. She further states, “[...] takes place in practices of remembrance, demoralization and witnessing. It also takes place in political action. All these practices are the site of struggle” (15). These lines clearly show that temporality and inexpressibility of trauma makes the role of the witness almost an unbearable one. Similarly, she puts forwards her idea about trauma and posits, “Memory is not straightforward, especially in case of traumatic memory” (16). Jenny further argues that some forms of remembering can be seen as ways of forgetting: ways of recovering form trauma by putting its lessons to one side, refusing to acknowledge that anything has changed, restoring the pretence. So, after traumatic events, there is struggle over memory. In this regard she points out:

As far as memory is concerned, how we remember a war, for example, and the way in which we acknowledge and describe what we call trauma can be very much influenced by dominant views, that is, by the state [. . .], can be contested and challenged. Forms of statehood in contemporary society, as

forms of political community, are themselves produced and reproduced through social practice, including practices of trauma and memory. (11)

In fact, this definition about traumatic memory clarifies that memory is not straightforward, especially traumatic memory. So forms of state hold in contemporary society are produced and reproduced themselves through social practices, including practices of trauma and memory. In this way, the essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated in to our symbolic universe. They cannot forget, and some are haunted by nightmares and flashbacks to scene of unimaginable horror.

In this way, Cathy Caruth's famous idea of latency argues that trauma as it first takes place is uncertain but that the survivors' uncertainty is not a simple amnesia; for the event returns, as Freud points out insistently and against their will. Her ideas reinforce the fact that trauma can't be forgotten. She gives emphasis on the part of latency, the temporary delay which should not be misunderstood as repression because trauma by its nature, displays with a vengeance over a period of time, especially when triggered by a similar event. For the person who has experienced unbearable pain, the psychological defense of dissociation allows life to go on but at great internal cost. Similarly, her another essay "The wound and the voice" opens a new ground on a problematic explore by Geoffrey Hartman, Elaine Scamy and Slavoj Zizek in the relation between pain and language, narrative, historical and ethnic dimensions. Caruth posits that the trauma as it first occurs is incomprehensible. It is only later, after a period of latency that it can be placed in a narrative, "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located" (Berger 577). Traumatic narrative, then is strongly referential, but not in any simple or direct way. And the construction of a history develops from this delayed response to trauma which permits "history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (578).

On the contrary, Kali Tal, in “Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma” takes an approach entirely different from those of Caruth and LaCapra. Tal is hostile to psychoanalysis and bases her views of trauma on cognitive psychology and a feminist politics that identifies strongly with the testimonies of rape and incest survivors. This strategy has certain strengths—a keen awareness of systematic violence against women and a sense of how traumatic literature might produce social change—but certain limitations as well. Defining the trauma, Tal opines:

Trauma does not stand alone, as, should be understood in identity to another terminology. Pointing to the work of the critic in relation to the literature of trauma is both “to identify and explicate literature by members of survivor groups and to deconstruct the process by which the dominant culture codifies their traumatic experience. 18)

But for Berger, Tal’s criticisms seem to him overstated and ill-formed because Tal has no sense of a traumatic return of the repressed, of widespread cultural symptoms and fetishes, of the role trauma in ideology and most notably, Tal is “unable to discuss the social symptoms, the transmission and reverberations of widespread or systematic violence into forms not overly testimonial” (580).

Caruth relies heavily upon Freud to provide her with a framework for her examination of trauma, returning again and again to the passages of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Moses and Monotheism*, Caruth presents de Manian reference as a literary symptom, an unconscious, inevitable imprint of events on texts in the form of verbal tricks, or tropes; and she quite effectively reinterprets de Man’s blindness and insight model in terms of traumatic impact and later inscriptions. Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, is concerned principally with questions of reference and representation: how trauma becomes text, or as she puts it in her introduction, how wound

becomes voice. She sketches a theory of trauma as instigator of historical narrative through an analysis of *Moses and Monotheism*, describes the intersections of traumatic narratives which outlines a theory of reference as the imprint of a catastrophic fall in a discussion of de Man and H.V. Kleist, and ends with a reading of Lacan's gloss on Freud's interpretation of the dream of the burning child, in which she proposes testimony as providing an ethical relation to trauma.

Soshana Felman agrees with Caruth in the way of history writing that history is always written from the position of those in power. However, traumatic history is reliable in the sense that it does not claim to project reality and it is based upon the testimony of the survivor and not those in power. Felman's concept of "bearing witness" – the narrative recapitulation of trauma- in Freudian terms "psychoanalytic dialogue" is a critical activity. In her text *Testimony: Cries of Witnessing in Literature, psychoanalysis, and History*, she explains the act of bearing witness as:

To bear witness is to take responsibility for truth: to speak, implicitly, from within the legal pledge and the juridical of the witness's oath. To testify- before a court of law or before the court of history and future, to testify, likewise before an audience of readers and spectators-is more than simply to report a fact of an event or relate what has been lived, recorded and remembered. Memory is conjured here essentially, to address another, to impress upon a listener, to a appeal to a community. (45)

So, Freud is of the opinion that the witness's "act of seeing" or what is called the "testimonial witnessing" is a responsible affair and irreplaceable performance. The testimonial witnessing is act of seeing thing through his/her own eyes, and whatever is witnessed gets accumulated in the mind in the form of memory. Such memory needs to be

shared because it is special memory consisting of first hand seeing; it is unique and irreplaceable.

Trauma disrupts the core of identity. Yet people do manage to reestablish a sense of purpose and identity after major loss compounded by traumatic experience. For many, they try to cope by blocking all memory of shattered past. Referring to Freud, in *Refugee Trauma-The Assault on Meaning*, Miranda Alcock points out:

[...] deep attachment to this object has been shattered, due to rejection, indifference or disappointment. Survival requires that the love of the lost object somehow be preserved. Unable to bear the painful reality, the person omnipotently identifies [...]. Instead of anger and frustration being directed towards the loved object, the aggression is turned on the self. To preserve the attachment, not to give up the love relationship, although the object is gone, the attack has been redirected, so the idealization of the loved object can be retained, preserved from the hatred and rage provoked by the narcissistic wounding of the initial abandonment. (298)

So, these different ranges of concerns can be conceptualized under the category of trauma. It has been now stretched from psychic life to public history, reading materials that can include romantic poetry, psychiatric histories, accounts of sexual abuse, memoirs, testimonies, documentaries, the symptoms, silences, omissions and so many others in national histories. Trauma theory can be understood as a place where different critical approaches converge. Therefore, Hartman turns from work on the undecidability of interpretation in literature to problems with work on the Holocaust memory and witness in the early 1990s.

Concerning to trauma experiences, people in this modern world suffer from anxiety, frustration, alienation, depression, broken relationships, dislocation, robbery and many kinds of physical and mental diseases created by the chaotic and destructive world affairs of World

Wars I and II. The undergoing suffering from all sorts of experiences somehow leads to path near to traumatic experience by of the survivor. As witnessed in the case of Sophie, who is a tragic outcome of the holocaust of the World War II victim.

III. Traumatic Experiences in *Sophie's Choice*

Sophie's Choice revolves around Sophie, the central character and her will to commit suicide. It depicts the story of a fiery Jewish intellect Nathan, and Sophie, a beautiful but fragile Polish Catholic who has a traumatic past for which she seeks refuge in suicide. Stingo, the narrator is drawn into the heart of their passionate and destructive relationship as witness, confidant and supplicant. Ultimately, he arrives at the dark core of Sophie's past: her memories of pre-war Poland, the concentration camp and – the essence of her terrible secret – her choice that leads her to commit suicide.

The novel revolves around the summer of 1947 in Brooklyn, outskirts of New York, with frequent flashbacks through Sophie's eyes to either her pre-war and war time experiences or her relationship with Nathan, a philosopher at heart, but a violent drunkard. Their pair is a mysterious one in the area, as the Hotel reception comments on the mysterious connection between these two of different tastes and desires, as:

Nathan's got an education, he's a biologist. He works in a laboratory near Borough Hall where they make medicine and drugs and things like that.

Sophie Z., I don't know what she does exactly, I heard she's some kind of receptionist for a Polish doctor who's got a whole lot of Polish clients.

Naturally, she speaks Polish like a native. Anyway, Nathan and Sophie are beach nuts. (48)

The plot of the novel moves slowly, and we learn of her past, the events that shaped her childhood and the horrors she experienced in the war that led to her overwhelming sense of guilt at surviving.

At the same time, we discover more about her relationship with Nathan, simultaneously her salvation and an extreme source of violence during Nathan's bouts of jealous rage. Styron meditates frequently in the historical dimension of the Holocaust and

how such a thing could happen letting the matter resonate with his knowledge of oppression that occurred in the life of Sophie, along with two major characters Nathan, a Jewish scholar and Stingo, a renowned writer cum narrator of the plot.

The characters are powerfully and engagingly drawn, often with wit and humor and the novel speaks with great humanity. The structure of *Sophie's Choice* has the most intriguing effect as well. Styron offers two stories that are separate but interrelated. In the first narrative we find Stingo a very uninteresting character whose love life is fumbling and sometimes intentionally laughable. Stingo's youthful frustrations are meant to contrast with the energetic full-hearted love making of Nathan and Sophie. The polarities may not be perfectly realized in Styron's art but they provide foundation for the whole work.

Sophie's Choice is narrated by Stingo, a writer recalling the summer when he began his first novel.

The story begins in the early summer of 1947. Stingo, the hero cum narrator of the story is jobless, as he has been recently fired from his low-level reader's job at the publisher McGraw Hill. He has moved into a cheap apartment building in Brooklyn, where he hopes to devote some months to his writing. While he is working on his novel, he is drawn into the lives of the lovers Nathan Landau and Sophie Zawistowska, fellow inhabitants of the building, who are involved in an intense and difficult relationship. Sophie is a beautiful, Polish-Catholic survivor of the concentration camps of World War II, and Nathan is a Jewish-American and, purportedly, a genius.

Although Nathan claims to be a Harvard graduate and a cellular biologist with a pharmaceutical company, it is later revealed that this is a fabrication; however, his gist for scientific tools is evident. He is actually a paranoid schizophrenic, though almost no one knows, including Sophie and Stingo, though Sophie is aware that Nathan is self-medicating with drugs, including cocaine that he easily obtains at Pfizer, his employer. Although, he

often behaves quite normally and generously, there are times that he becomes frighteningly jealous, violent, and delusional.

As the story progresses, Sophie tells Stingo of her past, of which she has never before spoken. She describes her violently anti-Semitic father, a law professor in Krakow; her unwillingness to help him spread his ideas; her arrest by the Nazis for smuggling ham to her mother, who was on her deathbed; and particularly, her brief stint as a stenographer-typist in the home of Rudolph Höß, the commander of Auschwitz, where she was interned. She specifically relates her attempts to seduce Höß in an effort to persuade him that her blonde, blue-eyed, German-speaking son, called Jan, should be allowed to leave the camp and enter the Lebensborn program, in which he would be raised as a German child. She failed in this attempt and, ultimately, never learned of her son's fate. Only at the end of the book do we also learn what became of Sophie's daughter, named Eva.

As Nathan's "outbreaks" become more violent and abusive, Stingo receives a summons from Nathan's brother, Larry. He learns that Nathan is schizophrenic and is not a cellular biologist, although, as Larry says, "He could have been fantastically brilliant at anything he might have tried out ... But he never got his mind in order" (67). Nathan's delusions have led him to believe that Stingo is having an affair with Sophie, and he threatens to kill them both.

Sophie and Stingo attempt to flee to a peanut farm in Virginia that Stingo's father has inherited. On the way there, Sophie reveals her deepest, darkest secret: on the night that she arrived at Auschwitz, a sadistic doctor made her choose which of her two children would die immediately by "gassing and which would continue to live, albeit in the camp" (106). Of her two children, Sophie chose to sacrifice her seven-year-old daughter, Eva, in a heart-rending decision that has left her in mourning and filled with a guilt that she cannot overcome. By now alcoholic and deeply depressed, she is clearly willing to self-destruct with Nathan, who

has already tried to persuade her to commit suicide with him. Despite the fact that Stingo proposes marriage to her, and despite a shared night that relieves Stingo of his embarrassing virginity and fulfills many of his sexual fantasies, Sophie disappears, leaving only a note in which she says that she must return to Nathan, as:

My dearest Stingo, your such a beautiful lover, I hate to leave and forgive me for not saying Good-bye but I must go back to Nathan. Believe me you will find some wonderful Mademoiselle to make you happy on the Farm. I am so fond of you – you must not think bei this I am being cruel. But when I woke I was feeling so terrible and in despair about Nathan, bei that I mean so filled wih guilt and thoughts of death it was like eis ice flowing in my blut. (612)

As such, Sophie cannot have solace in life due to her past experience. Her guilt feeling is so strong that though she has eloped in the safety of Stingo, a genuine gentleman wants to come back to savage, Nathan. She is so desperate that death alone can provide solace and freedom from her present state of woes.

Since then Sophie is living a life to die; possessing desire to suicide. The incident of sacrifice of her daughter, Eva to the doctor, has its toll on her very heavily. She cannot forget it, nor can she stop from forgiving herself.

Sophie, the heroine is one of the survival of the first systematic murdered of German and Austrian Jews occurred after the Nazi's organized-riot known as *Kristallnacht*. It is supposed that when approximately 30,000 Jewish men were deported to Dachu and other concentration camp, and several hundred Jewish women were sent to local jails. The wave of arrests in 1938 also included several thousand German and Austrian Gypsies.

In between 1933 and 1939, about half the German Jewish population and more than two thirds of Austrian Jewish fled Nazi persecution. They emigrated mainly to the United States, Palestine, and elsewhere in Europe, Latin America, and Japanese-occupied Shanghai.

Jews who remained under Nazi rule were either unwilling to uproot themselves or unable to obtain visas, sponsors in host countries and found no emigration. Most foreign countries, including the United States, Canada, Britain, and France were unwilling to admit very large number of refugees.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began within weeks. The German army defeated the Polish and began their campaign to destroy the Polish culture and enslave the Polish people, whom they viewed as 'subhuman.' Killing police leader was the first step and German soldiers carried out massacres of university professors, artists, writers, politicians, and many catholic priests. To create new living space for the 'Superior Germanic Race' large segment of the Polish population were resettled and German families moved into the emptied land. Other poles, including many Jews, were imprisoned in concentration camps. The Nazis also kidnapped as many as 50,000 Aryan-looking Polish children from their parents and took them to Germany to be adopted by German families. Many of these children were later rejected as not capable of Germanization and were sent to special children's camps where some died of starvation, lethal injection, and disease.

During the War, ghettos, transit camps, and forced labour camps, in addition to the concentration camps, were created by the Germans and their collaborators to imprison Jews, Gypsies, people of racial and ethnic origins, as well as political opponents and resistance fighters. With the invasion of Poland, 3 million Polish Jews were forced into approximately 400 newly established ghettos, where they were segregated from the rest of the world. Large number of the Jews also was deported from other cities and countries, including Germany, to ghettos and camps in Poland and German-occupied territories further east.

In the time of Holocaust at Auschwitz and Bricknew, female also participated in the secret revolutionary group against the Nazi's oppression. A lot of female revolutionary group was formed like home army in Warsaw. Though there was lots of female awareness seen

about the exploitation, the heroine of the novel Sophie can't come out of the grip of patriarchy. The novel shows Sophie's refusal to help the Home Army in Warsaw, and even her children out of fear. Through our identification with Wanda and the resistance Movement we come to regard Sophie as not only morally weak and irresponsible, but also a coward. Hence, in the novel Styrene carefully develops the comparison between Poland and American south to show the double-edged exploitation of female "domination over female" (203).

One such victim of the camp is Sophie Zawistowska, a gorgeous Polish woman living in the same house where Stingo lived, is a troubled survivor of the concentration camps during World War II. Throughout the book her story is revealed through the monologues and stories told by Stingo, the narrator. Sophie is shown as a vulnerable character, a lover of music and her boyfriend. Sophie is never given the opportunity to grieve properly for her loss of father, husband, son and daughter. Instead, she is castled into a world where she has no choice but to be happy. One thing that gives her hope for true happiness outwardly is Nathan, a man she meets in the library one day. Nathan plays the role of her hero. He is a biologist who has plenty of financial resources. He nurses her back to health and the two become lovers. Nathan is excessively addicted to drugs and drinks. More than once he is thrown into a rage caused by a chemical imbalance in his brain, he hits and screams at Sophie and anyone else near him. He threatens to leave Sophie.

Sophie the fun-loving Polish girl has been twice widowed and lost two children. One day, while driving Nathan goes out of control. Because he is high on drugs, Sophie, who goes along for the ride, wants to scream and tell him to stop the car, but like many who suppress their problems, Sophie too chooses to suppress her scream, a mentality to bear the trauma. She is as it is traumatized by her past experience, hence can not take much violence from external situation. Therefore, the internal pressure resulting from suppressing ones

feelings inevitably leads to catastrophe. The last pages of the book are filled with shocking details of Nathan and Sophie's fate. After a spontaneous and intimate night with Stingo, a good friend of Sophie who indirectly falls in love with her is the participator in this tragedy of a love story of Sophie and Nathan at America. Sophie leaves Stingo's farm in Virginia to return to Brooklyn, and to Nathan because she cannot overcome her past.

Sophie is in such a situation that she hates life and God, and self. She is engulfed by a strong zeal to finish self. Her hate for self is one of the prime reasons, she finds solace in the company of Nathan, despite he uses her wildly and unjustly. As in one of the aftermath of violent fight between Nathan and Sophie, as:

[. . .] "What happened?" I whispered

Nathan went off his trolley again. This time it's real bad. The miserable fucker.

'Sophie!' I said, 'How's Sophie?'

[. . .] He beat her up again, but she's all right. He said he was goin' to kill her.

She ran out of the house and I don't know where she is. (537)

As such, Sophie is living a violent life, where she is on the verge of being demolished at any time. But it is what she loves. She has a death wish, which seems the only way to provide her aching heart a solution to her distressing past.

After she flees with Stingo and they make love, she finds self empty. She immediately know that she is not for Stingo but for Nathan, who by his violent act provides her soothe and relief. As she writes in the note before she leaves Stingo for forever, as, "I love Nathan but now feel this hate of life and god. Fuck go and all his handwork. And life too. And even what remain of Love" (612). Her anger finally burst inside of her and all of the issues within her could no longer be suppressed and both Nathan and Sophie commit suicide by taking sodium cyanide. When Stingo returns to Brooklyn he finds police, an ambulance,

and a room of shocked people. He came to know that Nathan and Sophie took their own lives by taking sodium cyanide together.

Sophie's Choice has the role of men and women in a patriarchal society, which leads to death-wish for the suppressed ones. Not only is Sophie's narrative punctuated with reminders of Stingo's presence, but in most cases Stingo and not Sophie actual recounts her past. In the presses of telling the story her story becomes the 'History of woman.' From the narrative pattern we can find the female narrative different from male narrative. Sophie tells her story only when she is lying or confessing precious lies. Sophie's major lies involve her creation of a false childhood in crew, a misleading representation of Nathan as a supporting and loving "prince charming" (168), her malignant misrepresentation of female becomes the voice of false representation. So, the issue is Nathan is 'prince charming' as he can dominate and handle Sophie than no other else. It is the domination of male upon the female in which the latter is made to think that the punishment by the male is justification to her disturbing past.

Similarly, the narrator is constantly obliged to identify with the female as liar. To prove Sophie as a liar, he says: "but now it again becomes necessary to mention that Sophie was not quite straightforward in her recital of past events . . ." (158). It helps to show Sophie as a liar. She tells something at a time and another thing at other time. Her study does not go smoothly because she has to tell lie about her past events.

The accusation of Sophie's lying about her sexual fidelity with Hoss at Auschwitz is further reinforced by Nathan's accusations when he was high in drug that she is a whore. A woman is a whore, and the male is seldom accused. A whore can find meaning in suicide, as it is her punishment, but the male who uses her are hardly under any scrutiny. Styron creates Nathan- a male in accordance to patriarchal definitions and by using his voice to criticize Sophie undermines patriarchy itself. Styron exposes how patriarchy has been suppressing

female. Though, Nathan is insane and a pathological liar, he has been established as credible. His insights, his power to predict correctly, are associated with the concept of patriarchy, which believes male as a possessor of knowledge.

Actually Nathan is the only person who sees through Sophie, although he doesn't know her details about her past. Both of them come from similar Jewish background; Jews. He berates Sophie, "What did you do to survive when others died?" (103). She sold her soul to arrive to safety and now is bereaving the moment of her decision. But, nor she, or the male society is letting her forget and, her only way out is to finish self.

Sophie's representation as a bearer of truth is compared to that of key male characters, a stark difference emerges. Where Sophie's speech is necessarily deceitful or hysterical, Nathan's and Stingo's speech, though outwardly labeled as deceiving, is characterized paradoxically as truthful and rational. Nathan is declared certifiably mad, but his madness is presented in strikingly rational terms. The greatest sign of his madness is in accusing Sophie of loses sexuality and complicities behaviors during the war. It is also revealed from Sophie's confession that she had done so at Auschwitz in the name of humanity to come out of the camp. But, patriarchal society labeled her as a whore. Nathan's paranoid accusations align with the text's rational discourse that is patriarchal discourse. Nathan's behavior is considered rational and even Stingo by giving voice to Nathan's rationality is authenticating and validating patriarchal truths.

Sophie has been presented as passive and helpless. This character is illustrated when Wilhelmine, the prisoner-housekeeper of the commandant's Auschwitz home, sexually assaults Sophie. She responds in this manner:

. . . having made her decision moments before Sophie was not about to resist or protest-in a kind of headlong auto hypothesis she has placed herself beyond revelation, realizing in any case that she was a helpless as crippled

moth and not able to disjoint from her dilemma of if her action was justified or not. (321)

She sees herself as helpless and as she would not be able to resist decides to take thing passively. She has to act to make her inner voice that claimed her guilty and the only way out was to punish her, which she was doing during her companionship with furious and violent Nathan.

The stereotype about women proves the accusation that the retinal seeming female victim of male violence is passively helpless and perverse in patriarchal society, in place of masculine wills to truth, woman is provided with will to deceive and will to succumb. So Sophie-a female is presented as irrational though she behaves rationally in the name of humanity because of such biased sexist value. Her rational behavior is suspiciously tainted. So that, her rational behaviors is translated back into a kind of madness. Hence, Sophie is presented as irrational and accustomed with these stereotypes.

Sophie is also presented as a liar by sexist patriarchal society. In her very first attempt to gain Stingo's sympathy she lies. In defense against Nathan's accusation that Sophie was a whore; she lies and claims that Nathan was "The only man I had ever made love to except my husband. And my husband is dead!" (105). Stingo latter learns that Sophie had in fact had a lover in between her husband and Nathan, and had had sexual relations with a woman as well. It proves that Sophie has not only physical relation with her husband Casimir, at Poland and a Nathan; she had a relation with a commandant of Auschwitz Hoss. This is reality is revealed latter but Sophie does not tell it directly. But none of these relationships have proved fruitful in her life. Her husband turned away from her when she needed him most, and Hoss was mere a devil to pounce on her flesh. As such, she alters the story of her past to disguise details that show that she was less a victim, than would otherwise be supposed.

Sophie's lies are revealed further in the text. Sophie claims that her father was a liberal pacifist who risked his life to hide Jews from a program; in fact, he was a virulent anti-Semite who wrote a hateful pamphlet against Jews. She also lies that she and her late husband were happy together, when he was contemptuous of her. Sophie specially lies not for to hide the truth, but to save herself at Nazi concentration camp. She presented herself as a anti-Semitic who helped her father's pamphlets typing and distributing against the Jews. She does not realize until quite late in her confession that she had children and that she had chosen her son not her daughter to be spared from the gas chamber.

Sophie's life is in trauma in the broad day light, as well as when the light goes off. She is frequently haunted by dreams, where she sees that her past has come to her and she cannot be free, ever. Dream, as they say, is the depicter of one's past, comes to Sophie in the following form:

So in the dream that has returned to me over and over I see princess Czartoryska in her handsome gown go to the phonograph and she turns and always says, as if she were talking to me "would you like to hear the Brems Lider?" and I always try to say yes. But just before I can say anything my father interrupts. He is standing next to the princess and he is looking directly at me, and he says places don't play that music for the child. She is must too stupid to understand: And then I woke up with this pain . . . only this time it was even worse, Stingo. Because in the dream I had just now he seems to be talking to the princess not about the music but about . . . "Sophie hesitated, then murmured." About my death he wanted me to die, I think. (529)

Her longings for music and art and the right-guy comes to her in mere dream – a pathetic reality of the poor girl. She wants a life full of peace and love but could not and, it often is reflected in the form of dream which also haunts her.

The above lines of Sophie's dream, also shows that Sophie is not telling the truth about her father. She, at first, presents her father as a loving, truthful and handsome but latter she says her father wanted her to die. He denies her to listen and learn music which is her favorite hobby in life. Likewise, she presents her husband, Casimir, as a helpful out in reality, she does not like him who suppresses Sophie like her father. She also presents Black Stock as a loving husband to Sylvia they are the boss of Sophie's office, though Black Stock calls Sylvia naming her a 'pet'. Which symbolizes the male way of treating women at the ground of animal not as a human being

Sophia has no sense of self because her identity is entirely relational alienated in that of the men who control and protect her. Her only opportunity to experience self-esteem is to belong to men of whom she and other think well. When her hated father and the husband, who is his mirror image, are murdered, Sophie grieves not for their death but for her own, "her entire sense of self-of her identity-was unfastened" (23). Nathan offers Sophie an exact replica of her relationship with her father. She receives protections and identity at the price of childlike dependence, a total self alienation that Nathan correctly identifies. Sophie's father kills Sophie's desire of learning music by employing her in the job of typing and distributing the pamphlet against the Jews. She should be satisfied in the desire of her father. Her intention does not get any place. She has to obey what her father says.

Likewise, in America-Nathan plays the same role by protecting and treating her as a submissive woman. She is compelled to feel happy in the desire of male. She accepts what Nathan gives. Nathan says:

My darling, I think you have absolutely no ego at all! And she thinks as now:
I would do anything for you, anything, *and anything*. But now somehow his attempt to piss down on her begins to unloose his first panic in the day. "Open your mouth wide", he orders her. She waits watches, mouth agape, receptive

lips quivering. But he fails. She shuts her eyes waiting there is only the sense of hovering above her, and the damp and the cold beneath. (393)

In this context, the story of Blakstock, a Jewish businessman in America and also the boss of Sophie's office and his wife Sylva is seen appropriate. Blakstock's adoration for Sylvia turns her into a pet, a doll, a pampered child. Sylvia destroys her self in an automobile accident. She never got chance to use her head but got chance to use her body and lust. Because Sylvia is treated as a doll not as a rational human being who can use his/her instinct. So, she becomes only the plaything of Blackstock. It also shows the tendency of patriarchal social values to give superior, truthful, authentic and factual role to male and presents male as less credible. Hence, they treat woman as a pet, doll, incredible, liar etc.

However, the promotion of Nathan to a figure of authority permits Styron to expose the irrational bias of systematic sexism. Nathan is established as credible though he is insane, pathological liar. He is presented as a researcher of the Nazi anti-Semitism, Civil War and the biologist. He has given the instance elsewhere on his presence, his insight, his power to predict correctly, and by general association with the representation of the male as the possessor of knowledge. Thus, the superiority of Nathan over Sophie is to justify the existent trend of male supremacy and that the female are made to suffer sometime in the labor camp, and at other times, on the hand of societal bringing ups and set ups.

Likewise, Sophie's pain comes from her lack of credibility, which is directly and significantly linked to the lack of sexual fidelity, where women are presented as whores and liars. Sophie, too, at occasions had acted like a whore. We can see that in the context in which the issue of Sophie's credibility is first raised: "Blackstock was a truly happy man. He adores Sylvia more than life itself. Only the fact he was childless. He once told Sophie kept him from being absolutely the happiest man on earth . . ." (104). By juxtaposing the first mention of Sophie's lying to the protestation of Blackstock that he is truly happy man who

adores his wife, Stingo at last suggests that Sophie's lies may include her denial of sexual involvement with Blackstock. However, the tragedy remains; she cannot free self from the horrible experience and wish to die.

In any case, Sophie's initial lie to Stingo falsely represents her sexual fidelity. Stingo says:

I note that Sophie told me a lie within moments after we first set eyes on each other and instantly knew that there was something more than evident. This was when, after the ghastly fight with Nathan, she revealed upon me her look of desperation and declared that Nathan was the only man I have ever loved beside my husband. (105)

The possibility that Sophie might be lying about her fidelity is, but her attempt to find a meaningful life, but which she does not. Instead, she is further reinforced by Nathan's accusations. Nathan assumes Sophie as a whore because he thinks that Sophie comes out of the concentration camp by putting sexual relation with the commandant, Hoss. Because of the structure of sexist society, Nathan's accusation proves true. Sexist society puts Nathan at the place of authority who defines women.

All these details show not only that Stingo's reassurances are suspiciously overdone, but they make it clear that truth is male defined as to merit belief. Sophie's story must receive male validation. Because of sexist social structure male writing gets authentic place but female writing does not get authenticity and they are less credible. So, Sophie delegates her story to Stingo.

Styron places Sophie in an impossible situation, which have particular metaphoric significance for women. If women prove appropriately selfless, they participate in their own alienation and destruction and if they make any claim of the right to self, it instantly backfires by proclaiming them to be selfish. For examples Sophie justifies her attempt to

seduce Hoss as the disinterested and courageous effort of a mother to save her son. Sophie demands what she desperately needs and deserves which we are led to condemn her for her egotism, for telling to live up to the female selfishness or motherhood. But Sophie can not win. When she acts as the good mother, she is also condemned for the same female sin for selfishness.

Both Sophie's refusal to help the Home Army in Warshaw, out of fear for her children's safety, and her inability to steal Ema's radio demonstrate the selfless other oriented traditionally required of women. But through our identifications with Wanda and the resistance movement, we come to call Sophie as not only morally weak and irresponsible but indeed as selfish. She uses her children as an excuse to hide her own cowardice. At last she is proved morally guilty of infanticide. Because she told Wanda she could not join the Home Army because she has the children. She has to protect them. But later when Jemand Van Niemand gives her a command to choose she left her daughter to die and choose a son.

Styron carefully constructs a globally sexist world where the residents are made to degrade the status of woman. A woman is a scapegoat to the male desire and wishes. The choice that the Doctor Jemand Van Nemad imposes on Sophie marks the logical extension of all male behavior towards women. Jemand Van Nemad fits into a clearly established pattern of sexist/patriarchal society. He makes Sophie the same proposition that virtually every other man in the novel implicitly or explicitly makes to her. He says: "I'd like to get you into bed with me" (527). When she fails to respond, he destroys her. Sophie, who always understood the necessity of female submission in a male world fails to react quickly enough at the single moment. Stingo-a narrator of the story too wants to go to bed with Sophie. The fact of Stingo's intention towards Sophie can be cleared from the incident both Stingo and Sophie's night stay at the hotel where they had put physical relations. So, Stingo says:

I will never forget how eagerly and how naturally she moved to demonstrate to me her appetite and her devotion, planting her knees firmly between my legs like the fine craftswoman she was, knowing the thrust of the male, then bending down and taking into their mouth my no longer quite so shrunken little comrade. (54)

Their night of inexhaustible sex at hotel changes nothing except to conform how Sophie learns her lesson of sexual exploitation and submission at Auschwitz.

The role of sexual oppressor that links all men and the use of sexism as paradigm to connect Nazi Germany to postwar America, extend to the reader as well. In Nazi Germany she is taken as a submissive woman who is suppressed by the male. In post war America, she suffers like that from Nathan and Stingo. And our knowledge of history, which is a sexist history, prepares us/reader to suspect Sophie's involvement in sexual crimes at Auschwitz. One of the most remarkable successes of Styron's attack on patriarchy/sexism comes from his ability to implicate the reader and himself in the system that victimizes Sophie. All males or females are forced to view Sophie from masculine perspective.

Since male pronoun is authentic, our knowledge of history prepares us to suspect Sophie's involvement in sexual crimes at Auschwitz. The mysterious secret announced in the novel's title *Sophie's Choice* encourages us to believe that she participated more as collaborator than as victim. Nathan serves as a male in the text, who is the representative of male chauvinism. He makes the life of Sophie miserable and, which ultimately develops in her the feelings and wish to die. He gradually plants the idea that Sophie's survival at Auschwitz is due to her sexual behaviors, a traumatic experience which Sophie wants to forget. This is made clear by Nathan's identifying Sophie with Irma Griese: "Hey Irma how many SS pricks did you suck to get out of there, how much master race come swallowed for Freiheit?" (367). Thus, the flame of past continues to haunt Sophie making her firm to die.

The fact that women are mere objects of sex; be it by husband, or master or lover make life of Sophie more miserable. She has a past to forget, but the societal structure does not let her do so. She is reduced to interchangeable sex object, because sexist/patriarchal society denies them a personal identity, a sense of self. Styron's novel locates the origin and the model of female oppression in the father dominance of the traditional family. Sophie's father reduces her to virtually menial submission though Sophie was interested in music. The representation throughout the novel of her identity, her individuality is gradually erased by the male:

This was the constant, overwhelming reality of the father, a man who had exercised over his household, and hid dominance especially over Sophie, a tyrannical domination so inflexible yet so cunningly subtle that she was a grown woman, fully come of age, before she realized that she loathed him past all telling. (258)

It clearly shows how Sophie's father ruled over the family members making her dominated within the domesticity of her house. All female members of the family are supposed to obey his demands without objection. Sophie's mother was genuinely disillusioned by her father. She is presented as weak, unthinking, submissive women. She could not get faithful love from her husband and Sophie being a daughter/female couldn't do anything but grieve for her mother's grief whose sufferings were similar to her.

Likewise, Stingo suppresses woman, though he seems to a disciplined character. He is a good example of sexist male in patriarchal dominated society, where he wants to fulfill his desire through the help of people like Nathan and Sophie. These sorts of people sees women as a sex object only, giving internal pains and sufferings to the females. For Stingo, "Little Miss Cock teases" (143) epitomizes the era of the fifties and he assimilates to the standard male dualistic view of women. Stingo's division of the female sex into Cock teaser

and cock suckers shows the double view of male towards female. The apparent idealization of women as pure and virginal reflects, in facts, a belief that such women are teases, frigid and inhuman.

Thus, the societal system corresponds to an absolute degradation of woman making them feel guilty of self to the eyes of male, as well as, to owns' (woman) eye. Non sexual relationships with women are inconceivable for Stingo. The loneliness on which he insists throughout the period of Stingo and Leslie's relation translates unambiguously as sexual frustration, "She could not know what she did to the loneliest junior editor in New York. My lust was incredible . . ." (191). Stingo fantasizes he women as cock sucker and cock teaser. Stingo idealizes the female as sexual initiator and always responsive to male advances. Stingo's social system is such that women are cock sucker and cock teaser, which is another form of trauma existing, hard on females. Stingo idealizes the female as sexual initiator and always responsive to male advances. In Stingo's social system, women are allowed volition to want what man does or women get how much men provide them.

A profound sense of traumatic experience can be witnessed in the novel. The mental sufferings of the central character is because of Sophie has its background on her past. The central story emerges piecemeal from Sophie, who tells Stingo about her life over the past decade of living in Cracow, Poland, the daughter of a university professor; of her marriage to her father's protégé; of living with her two children in Warsaw after her father and husband are murdered; and of her imprisonment at Auschwitz. Because she survived, Sophie feels implicated in Nazi atrocities. She is ashamed of her father's fascist beliefs and guilt-ridden for having helped with his pamphlet advocating the extermination of the Jews, for failing to protect her children, and for using her father's views as an argument to wangle her freedom from the camp. Her abusive relationship with Nathan exacerbates these feelings. Alcohol abuse by all three characters makes matters worse.

Stingo's initial encounter with Sophie occurs as Nathan defines her as “cunt” and “whore” (47). Stingo's and Sophie and Nathan's rooms are in face to face. So, Stingo knows what happened at the room of Sophie. He heard, Nathan says: “Get out of her, you whore!” Sophie does not say anything, just lay there crying, I guess, and Nathan says, "Get your ass out of here, whore I'm leaving” (103). It proves how Sophie and Nathan's relation is. Then Stingo's attention focuses immediately o her body and her sexuality. His desire to win the affection of Sophie marks at best a necessary step toward his real goal that is to share the bed abandoned by Nathan. Stingo finds Sophie most arousing when she is least erotic. Her tender, affectionate and vulnerable moments becomes an invitation to seduction.

During the desperate and exhausting flight south, to escape Nathan, the sight of Sophie asleep produces in Stingo a similar seizure of pure lust. This lust is a part of attempt to forget her past. Stingo narrates:

I lay down next to Sophie on the bed, which had become usurping in the middle not so much allowing me as forcing me to roll towards her as . . . and her simple touch and proximity made me stir squirm fidget, unable to sleep I heard a distant bell chime the noon hour, Sophie slept against me with lips apart (500)

Sophie stands apart form other women as an ideal she is the perfect women as defined and perceived in the male/patriarchal world. Sophie's behavior perpetuates the particularly vicious myth that women respond to physical and mental violence as pleasurable. In the mist of an orgy of abuse, Sophie blissfully sucks Nathan's genitals and after hours of torture involving physical beating verbal abuse. And psychological assault Sophie welcomes immediately and without hesitation Nathan's invitation to have an intercourse. She says:

I was still ready for Nathan to piss on me, rape me stab me, beat me, do anything with me that he desired. Anyway a long time passed before he spoke

to me. Then he said "Sophie love," I'm insane, you know I want to apologize for my insanity: And after a bit he said want to fuck? I said right away without even thinking twice, 'yes oh yes'. And we made love all afternoon, which made me forget the pain but forget God too, and Jan, and all the other things I had lost. And I know Nathan and me would live for a while together. (376)

For everyman Sophie encounters, she becomes an object of desire a seducible prize. But in the sexist/patriarchal world that Styron portrays, once Sophie has allowed herself to be seduced, she becomes a whore. Her very submission to Nathan confirms the justice and accuracy of his accusation according to the patriarchy thus marriage locally becomes a prize that Nathan withdraws on the basis of his current beliefs about Sophie's sexual fidelity.

Likewise, Stingo as perfect member of sexist patriarchal society views Sophie as a sex object not as a human being. Stingo tormented for months by his desire for Sophie to have physical relation. He characterized her seduction of him on the beach as forthrightly lewd. Stingo describes the scene when Sophie turns and begins to scamper towards the beach.

"Come on Stingo", she cried. "Talk off your clothes and lets go in the water!"

I got up then and watched her go transfixed mean it when I say that no chaste and famished grail-tormented Christian knight could have gazed with as slack-Jawed admiration as the object of his quest than I did at my first glimpse Sophie's bouncing behind-a delectable upside-down valentine. Then I saw her splash into the murky ocean. (389)

When Sophie initiates lovemaking, immediately after her latest revelations about her past, Stingo implicitly condemns her for frivolity, capriciousness, and her inability to feel deeply.

The novel is clinically an expression of Warsaw expositions; its insights and aftermaths. As the writer exposes: "The shift in mood-the grisly chronicle of Warsaw,

followed in a flesh by this wanton playfulness. What in hell did it mean?" (390). Stingo had yet imagine and leads him to one of the novels relatively rare generalization about women could women then so instantaneously turn off their lust like a light switch? So, sexism remains at the centre of the helm, even in the labor camps.

In a sexist/patriarchal social structure as Styron depicted female has to play a subordinate, submissive role. Sophie should depend on male all the time. Her own desire does not get any place. She should be happy in the desire of male as her own. The typing and distribution of Sophie's father's murderous tact force, Sophie to acknowledge her tragic responsibility. Volition too strong to allow her the comforting status of victim but too weak to permit her to revolt:

And this terrible emptiness came over me when I realized just then there was nothing I could do about it no way of saying no, no way possible to say, 'papa I'm, not going to help you spread this things.' . . . And I was a grown women and I wanted to play Bach, and at that moment I just thought I must die-I mean, to die not so much for what he was making me so but become I had no way of saying no. (267)

Hence, Sophie is obliged to obey the father. She is presented as the weak and coward to go against the desire of her father. She feels dominated but can not revolt. At last Sophie selects death over new loss of identity in the marriage and motherhood that Stingo offers because she now does not want more oppression from male.

Throughout *Sophie's Choice*, all questions of sex and sexism are linked to language and literature. For Stingo, writing and sex are interchangeable. To Stingo as the hero, the equivalence of language and sex becomes a source of almost unbearable frustration. He finds himself a sexual eavesdropper or a sort of role voyeur. For Stingo, knowledge of the act of love is limited to the words other people pronounce during sex and this is that which

reduces the painful experiences. The women Stingo selects as his sexual initiator has a totally lingual sex life. Leslie only kisses and talks about sex and the single concrete result Stingo gleams from the adventures is an inflamed love.

Sophie has an intention to write her own history by herself but she is weak in English, though she is perfect in French Polish and German. Because of language she has to depend on male for writing her own story. So the single language English in which Stingo and Nathan retain total superiority. At our first encounter with Sophie, Nathan is accusing her for the parallel female sins of sexual and linguistic fidelity; "I can't be a cunt you dumb fucking Polack, When are you going to learn to speak English?" (71) Nathan shows superiority over Sophie by only knowing how to speak a single language that is English.

At the same time, Sophie expresses her desire to write a novel, which she can use as an escape to get rid of her horrible past. She wants to narrate her own experiences and, her linguistic competence has been sufficiently prove to be incapable hence project her as an improbable and comic character. To make her English perfect and write her own story she has to accept the linguistic degradation by male:

You must begin to learn just what and when and where to add the preposition 'to' to the infinitive verb, and when to leave it out. And it is tough you see, because in English there's no hard fast rule. You have to use your instinct . . . "stop it!" Sophie said, laughing. "Too much!" Too many word the English. In French is so simple. You just say "Vite". (71)

Hence, Nathan shows superiority through the medium of language, which is again a suppression of Sophie's choice. Nathan says to know perfect English, one has to use instinct. Here, he wants to say that instinct is possessed by male (he). So Sophie has to depend on the male. Since Sophie retains a terrible obsession with her personal history, she delegates her story to a man as an escape she logs for, unfortunately, which she cannot achieve.

In *Sophie's Choice* the story of Sophie is like one-way-traffic, a way that leads to death. It is only death that seems to settle cases related to Sophie. She, who turns out to be in the service of the male, finds solace in company of violent male, as her feminine mentality makes her think that she can have solace only in self immolation. In patriarchal society female becomes a victim. Sophie's status as a victim is complicated by the multiple ways in which she is abused. She is not only compelled to choose between her children, but is also portrayed by a cruel father. She is married to a crude husband and later becomes a widow. In New York, she is raped in a subway train. She is both verbally and physically brutalized by Nathan. Finally even the sympathetic narrator Stingo uses Sophie's story to become a mature writer. Stingo patronizes Sophie and appropriates her story for his therapy and for his art.

The nature of evil and the widening circle of implicating others in its perpetuation constitute the central subject in this novel. This consists of the novel's features which is the experience of Sophie and her tragic past. In addition to that subject, however, the novel takes itself as its subject. In a surprisingly self-referential and reflexive way, the novel is about writing a novel. It describes Stingo's uncertainty and writer's block; it includes drafts from 1947 and criticizes them from the narrator's 1977 perspective.

As such, the novel can be seen as Sophie's suffering as an emotional subjugation by the male characters. Sophie is almost an archetypal figure of the female who is beset upon by every male she meets, and tragically made to believe that death is only the solution out of the traumatic past. Sophie's victimization before and during the Holocaust is delivered in part as a traumatic experience against her. Sophie's masochistic sexual life with Nathan would seem at least to represent her inability to emerge from that traumatic past and the sense of her own guilty complicity with it. Sexual life with Nathan would seem at least to represent her inability to merge from that traumatic past and the sense of her own guilty complicity with it. Sexual obsessions and sexual violence also serve as the link between the

stories of Stingo, the narrator, and the stories of Sophie. The nose' representation for patriarchal sexual oppression of women and Sophie's masochistic participation in it is the way out to minimize her past. However, the societal institutions and system of oppression compel victims like Sophie to find redemption in suicide.

IV. Outcome of Traumatic Experience

William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* is a depiction of the sufferings and woes invited by the atrocities of the World War II into the life of Sophie, one of the victims of the holocaust. The war, imposed in the name of elimination of Jewish population of Europe, left hundreds and thousands of Jews as its victim. They were forced to live a horrible life, and many of them not being able to resist the ordeal seek escape in suicide, like Sophie, the central character in *Sophie's Choice*.

The story is narrated by Stingo, who wants to get into the business of writing. After he is fired from his job, Stingo goes to live in Brooklyn where he encounters Nathan and Sophie. Nathan is a crazy, drug-addicted, phony sexist male, who treats Sophie, his room partner, harshly and violently. Stingo is one of those gifted and talented persons specialising in creating havoc in other people's lives, including Sophie and Nathan.

Then there is Sophie, a purely pathetic character, lacking in almost all worldly characters that it becomes comical that she is alive after all the happenings in her life. Her only wish is to be a collaborator, a turncoat, a stool-pigeon, a traitor, a whore; all because she has no charm and ray of hope left in her life. Her past is tragically worth-forgetting, as she has to trade for her lame daughter in exchange of her life. She has no convictions, and only cares about herself; being deeply bothered by the fact that she is a war victim. Yet it is her selfishness and lack of any noble acts during the war that leads her to her guilt and depression resulting in a strong urge to punish herself, and ultimately to finish her material possession.

Sophie is the daughter of a Polish professor who loves Nazis, hates Jews, and writes pamphlets extolling the final solution. She dutifully passes out those pamphlets, and even keeps one hidden in her boots to hopefully use to her advantage. When at the Auschwitz camp, she hopes at every turn to seduce a German and be taken into a privileged position.

First, she fantasizes about the German industrialist that her father entertains before his demise. Later, after she is captured for stealing a piece of ham, not for being a member of the resistance, though ironically she is rounded up with them, she tries very hard to seduce the camp commandant for whom she does translations and secretarial work.

Sophie's dual character is exposed when she produces the pamphlet in hopes of gaining an advantage only to find out that Germans think of Poles as exterminable, to be taken care of after the Jews are finished off. The commandant is disgusted with her effort at allying herself with him. And she fails to steal the radio that her compatriots could have made good use of, about her only worthwhile try. Finally, she realizes that she is no better than the Jew and allows herself to be tormented and abused by Nathan, the American Jew she meets in New York after her release from the camp.

Actually Nathan is the only person who sees through Sophie, although he doesn't know the details. He berates Sophie, "what did you do to survive when others died?" On the surface, he appears overly jealous and suspicious of Sophie, accusing her of having relations with the men at her work. Sophie insists to Stingo that she has been faithful to Nathan, but as the story worms its way along, we see one lie after another peeled away and she is exposed as a sham. Thus she has been living a life full of fraud and sham; however, only to avoid their hateful and disgusting past, which hangs on her every second of the day. Despite the terrific treatment by Nathan, she simply cannot be away from him.

Finally, Stingo, the sexually dissatisfied, and Sophie decide to elope to make a new world away from Nathan. However, Sophie's past is so horrible that she has no other options rather than 'death.' So, despite escaping from Nathan and having a fiery relationship with Stingo, Sophie cannot stay a night with him. She has no other options, but Nathan, as he is the only one who can make her forget her sinful past. So, she comes back to Nathan, only to die.

So, the politics of suicide takes its toll in the form of suicide-pact of Nathan and Sophie. Sophie, since long was willing to die as there was no option to relieve her of the atrocious past. They ingest double cyanide tablets and die together on Sophie's bed, which was probably the only way to relieve of their hideous traumatic experience. Thus, the act of 'killing self' becomes the destiny of Sophie, an outcome of the atrocities of the Second World War.

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