

A SHAWL TO REMEMBER: CYNTHIA OZICK'S NARRATIVE AGAINST FOR GETTING IN *THE SHAWL*

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Abstract

In *The Shawl* (1990) Cynthia Ozick constructs a narrative of the Nazi genocide around women's experience, especially what it is like to be a mother in the time of the Holocaust. She creates a story about a Jewish woman, Rosa, whose daughter Magda, is slaughtered and Rosa has never recovered from this perennial shattering experience. After her identity as a mother has been disrupted and ultimately destroyed, she becomes obsessively preoccupied with the memories of her dead daughter and fantasizes a relationship with her. By forming the structural and symbolic center of the novella around the loss of Magda, Ozick manages to claim that the Holocaust survivors continue to suffer not only because they repeat their past experiences, but mostly because they start to define themselves by the absence of loved ones. By emphasizing the absence of her daughter through her obsession and fixation with the shawl that she used to wrap her in the concentration camp, Rosa creates a melancholic space that she can continue to live as a mother to Magda. Living in the darkness of that space, Ozick poses questions regarding the survival problems, such as feeling of guilt after surviving, lack of belief for the present or hope for the future. In addition to analyzing the novella with the perspective that it fictionalizes a person's compulsion to repeat the traumatic event and thus creates an endless mourning as a reaction to the Holocaust, this article will further the general criticism by focusing on being a mother during the Holocaust and how the survivors cope with not being a mother anymore once the genocide is over.

Key Words: *Holocaust, Motherhood, Remembering, Mourning.*

HATIRLANMASI GEREKEN BİR ŞAL: "THE SHAWL" DA CYNTHIA OZICK'İN UNUTMAYA KARŞI KULLANDIĞI ANLATIM

Özet

The Shawl adlı kısa romanda Cynthia Ozick Nazi soykırımı sırasında anne olmanın ne gibi zorluklar getirdiğini anlatır. Yahudi bir anne olan Rosa, kızı Magda'nın gözü önünde katledilmesine şahitlik etmeye zorlanarak kızının öldürülmesi hayatı boyunca unutamayacağı bir saplantı olarak hayatına dahil olur ve soykırımdan kurtulduktan sonraki yaşantısını ölmüş olan kızı ile kurabileceği hayatı hayal ederek geçirir. Hikayenin yapısal ve sembolik merkezini Magda'nın yokluğu üzerine kuran Ozick, Yahudi soykırımının sağ kalanların hayatlarını etkilemeye devam ettiğini, çünkü kurtulanların sadece geçmişlerini şimdiki hayatlarında tekrar etmekle kalmayıp kendilerini kaybettikleri sevdikleri ile tanımlamaya başladıklarını gösterir. Kızının yokluğunu ve kendisinin bu yokluğu takıntı haline getirdiğini şala olan bağlılığı ile ifade eden Rosa, bu saplantısı ile kendine melankolik bir alan yaratır ve bu alanda Magda'nın annesi olarak yaşamaya devam eder. Bu alan aracılığı ile Ozick, suçluluk duygusu, şimdiki zamana olan inançsızlık ve geleceğe dair ümitsizlik gibi sağ kalanların yaşadıkları sorunları ortaya koyar. Bu makale, soykırımı tepki olarak geçmişte yaşanan travmatik olaylarını günümüzde tekrarlama eğilimi ve bunun sonunda sonsuz bir matem yaratmanın yanı sıra, soykırım sırasında "anne" olmak ve soykırım sonrasında "anne" olmamak fikirlerini inceler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yahudi Soykırımı, Annelik, Hatırlama, Yas.*

In *The Shawl* (1990) Cynthia Ozick constructs a narrative of the Nazi genocide around women's experience, especially what it is like to be a mother in the time of the Holocaust. She creates a story about a Jewish woman, Rosa, whose daughter Magda, is slaughtered and Rosa has never recovered from this perennial shattering experience. After her identity as a mother has been disrupted and ultimately destroyed, she becomes obsessively preoccupied with the memories of her dead daughter and imagines a life with her. By forming the structural and symbolic center of the novella around the loss of Magda, Ozick manages to claim that the Holocaust survivors continue to suffer not only because they repeat their past experiences, but mostly because they start to define themselves by the absence of the loved ones. By emphasizing the absence of her daughter through her obsession and fixation with the shawl that she used to wrap her in the concentration camp, Rosa creates a melancholic space that she can continue to live as a mother to Magda. Living in the darkness of that space, Ozick poses questions regarding the survival problems, such as feeling of guilt after surviving, lack of belief for the present or hope for the future. In addition to analyzing the novella with the perspective that it fictionalizes a person's compulsion to repeat the traumatic event and thus creates an endless mourning as a reaction to the Holocaust, this article will further the general criticism by focusing on being a mother during the Holocaust and how the survivors cope with not being a mother anymore once the genocide is over.

The majority of critics on *The Shawl*, including Harold Bloom, Gerhard Back, Marianne M. Friedrich, agree that the novella focuses on the protagonist during the process of re/forming her identity in the corridors of memory, all the while creating her dead daughter as an object of worship. They suggest that Rosa cannot leave the memories of her dead daughter behind, thus she cannot forget the inhumanity of the Holocaust. Since she continues to remember her daughter and because the image of her daughter is dominantly attached to the Holocaust, the present becomes a shadow of the past and thus the past becomes an everlasting period that defines Rosa's present and probably future. In the readings

of "The Shawl", remembering is therefore presented as freezing in the past so that it will never be forgotten. The present study traces the narrative of "remembering" as a deliberate act of re-living the past, rather than an unconsciously acted narrative. Therefore this article will not present "remembering" as a process of "working through the past trauma" by focusing on what is repeated to be able to locate what is remembered as Freud suggests in "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through" (1914), but as an act of denying the present for the sake of remaining in the past that once constituted a nightmarish world.

Since the narrative of *The Shawl* is constructed around the concept of "remembering", as in many other literary, historical texts, "memory" is extended as a significant notion to be analyzed. According to Dominick LaCapra historians have been interested in memory because history has a desire to be attentive to the problems of the past and "memory- along with its lapses and tricks- poses questions to history in that it points to problems that are still alive or invested with emotion and value" (1998: 8). LaCapra also points a negative aspect of memory by arguing that "One of the forces behind the turn of the memory is the threat posed by negationists and the wish-fulfilling desires or demands they satisfy, a threat that looms ever larger to the extent that survivors with primary memory of events pass from the historical scene" (1998: 12). Memory that comes into surface, is possibly an instrument to satisfy certain desires, and therefore individuals are under the threat of "an obsession with, or fixation on, memory" (1998: 12) What is remembered from the past is repeated in the present and as LaCapra puts it, is under the threat of turning into an obsession or fixation.

The first part of *The Shawl* "The Shawl" introduces the past of Rosa as a guideline to the second part "Rosa" so as to understand how her present is shaped and why she chooses to re-live her past trauma. In order to provoke readers emotional response, in the first story Ozick painfully illustrates the experiences of Rosa as a young mother in a Nazi concentration camp and her strategies to survive in that nightmarish world of the concentration camp.

Instead of creating an objective documentary narrative of a concentration camp reality as a result of Ozick's belief that "the Holocaust should not enter fiction but rather be rendered in a strictly documentary style" (Prose, 1989) because she fears that the Holocaust will be corrupted by fiction, she communicates the Holocaust through a more emotional narrative. By doing so she helps her readers "to comprehend the writings of the victims, the survivors, the survivors-who-became victims, and the kinds-of-survivors, those who were never there but know more than the outlines of the place" (Rosenfield, 1980: 19). According to Norma Rosen such mimetic fiction allows readers to "enter into a state of being that for whatever reasons make porous those membranes through which empathy passes, or deep memory with its peculiar 'thereness' so that we can move, as far as it is given to us to do so, into the pain of the Holocaust" (Rosen, 1987: 59) That is why, rather than opening the novella with the outlines of the place or the facts, Ozick starts with a passage introducing the inhumanity that her three female characters Rosa, Stella (Rosa's niece) and Magda (Rosa's daughter), face with, through a fragmented language that lacks verbs.

Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell. How they walked on the roads together, Rosa with Magda curled up between sore breasts, Magda wound up in the shawl [...] (3-4).

Fragmented language as a medium of narration allows Ozick to represent this monumental historical event as an atrocity that disturbs the continuity of life. Although the language she uses does not empty the meaning as a whole, a sentence deprived of verb of being-to be, illustrates Ozick's linguistic attempt to demonstrate the Holocaust as a catastrophe that creates huge existential gaps in the lives of victims. It also allows readers to see that the victims' experience comes from outside the linguistic system, because even the defining power of words is incompatible to describe the mood. What is more, by presenting the lives in the concentration camp through a fragmented language, Ozick also manages to exhibit the Holocaust as an experience of

a mode of disconnection- disconnected from the language, disconnected from the world. She uses a non-linear narrative to convey a new reality that linearity of time has been shattered after the Holocaust.

In concentration camps inhumanity of the Holocaust is dominantly created by enforced silence that forbids the victims to create any humanly contact and indirectly present their absolute resignation to the Nazi's demands of racial cleansing. Besides the physical suffering in a concentration camp including whipping, random killing and rape, the victims faced with psychological torture, such as witnessing a loved one being tortured and gauge their reaction. In the novel, Magda's death is an example of such torture. She is forced to be an onlooker to her daughter's slaughter by a concentration camp guard.

She only stood, because if she ran they would shoot, and if she tried to pick up the sticks of Magda's body they would shoot, and if she let the wolf's screech ascending now through the ladder of her skeleton break out, they would shoot; so she took Magda's shawl and filled her own mouth with it, stuffed it in and stuffed it in, until she was swallowing up the wolf's screech and tasting the cinnamon and almond depth of Magda's saliva; and Rosa drank Magda's shawl until it dried (10).

Unable to move, Rosa holds tight the shawl that she used to wrap her daughter's body. The shawl replaces Magda and Rosa holds on to it as if she is holding her daughter, until the saliva on it dried, until Magda died. The shawl that used to nurture Magda, a symbol of life and a shield that protects Magda against the power of death, now nurtures Rosa and it becomes her daughter even with her saliva on it.

In her description of Magda's death, Ozick manages to present Rosa's reaction as an outcome of the Nazi's barbarism. Rosa is voiceless while witnessing the murder of her daughter not only because she is in shock, but also she is unintentionally protecting herself.

According to Sara Horowitz, "destroying the victim's voice is the desired outcome" of the Nazi's massacre because "the silencing of the victim affirms that the perpetrator possesses all the power, and the victim none" (Horowitz, 1997: 72). Through the enforced silence, the Nazis proved themselves powerful, and the Jews powerless. Threat of being killed if reacted governed the lives in the concentration camp and in the case of Rosa she knew if she ran she would be shot. Thus, she is forced to repress her maternal instinct of protection by silently witnessing her daughter's murder and sacrifice Magda for herself so as to survive.

Along with using a traditional holocaust narrative of strategies of surviving, Ozick demonstrates strategies of separation from the loved ones as an additional theme. Considering the multiple function of the shawl, it is possible to suggest Magda provides spiritual hindrance for Rosa and creates a subtle dilemma in her life. Is Rosa attached to the shawl because it keeps Magda out of the enemies' sight, or of Rosa's sight?

In the first part of the novella the shawl is both a symbol of protection and separation. Through the constant emphasis on the shawl, one can suggest the mothering instinct of protection is dominantly achieved by the shawl. It provides comfort that a mother normally renders possible, because it is not Rosa that keeps Magda calm, nor her that feeds the baby, but the shawl. Unable to breastfeed Magda, Rosa feels like a "dead volcano, blind eye, chill hole" (4). So Magda takes "the corner of the shawl and milked it instead" (4). The shawl replaces all the maternal duties that Rosa feels she should have fulfilled and therefore the shawl functions as an object of protection.

One should also note the shawl does not only protect Magda because she is invisible, but also separates her from everyone, including Rosa. By being wrapped up in the shawl, Rosa is only able to feel the body of Magda in her arms, and seems to cherish this invisibility not only because it keeps her away from the enemies, but also herself because as a result of her appearance, Magda is a reminder of the enemy.

The face, very round, a pocket mirror of a

face: but it was not Rosa's bleak complexion, dark like cholera, it was another kind of face altogether, eyes blue as air, smooth feathers of hair nearly as yellow as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat. You could think she was one of *their babies* (4).

Magda does not have dark complexion like Rosa, but is blond as the star. When Rosa looks at her, she sees a miniature of her enemies, which hints the possibility that Magda was conceived in a rape. When she wraps her up in the shawl, she manages to keep her off her sight, keeping the consequence of the torture she had undergone hidden. Magda is like the scarlet letter embroidered onto Rosa's chest, serving both as her punishment and her reward. Magda is Rosa's punishment because she reminds her that she is being tortured since she has a natural ability to contribute to the continuity of Jewish race. On the other hand Magda is Rosa's reward because in Jewish culture, she is cherished due to this ability.

In addition to using the shawl as a medium to separate Magda from Rosa, Rosa turns Magda to a metaphor as another way of separating her from herself.

All at once Magda was swimming through the air. The whole of Magda traveled through loftiness. She looked like a butterfly touching a silver vine. And the moment Magda's feathered round head and her pencil legs and balloonish belly and zigzag arms splashed against the fence, the steel voices went mad in their growling, urging Rosa to run and run to the spot where Magda had fallen from her flight against the electrified fence (9-10).

Magda swinging through the air is likened to a butterfly and has completed her metamorphosis, so her death is expected and natural. Although the Nazis attempt to relate Jews to vermin, by turning Magda into a butterfly, Rosa creates her as a reminder of a tender world. With this scene, the first part of the novella ends, also encourages the readers to interpret it as the end of Rosa's will to live.

In the first part of the novella, Ozick presents Rosa not as an adult, but as a child who is reduced from her adulthood by not being able to fulfill her adult responsibilities. The second

part of the novella, "Rosa", takes place 30 years after Magda's murder. 59 years old Rosa moves to New York and opens a secondhand furniture store in Brooklyn. After smashing it up, she moves to Miami. There she starts to live in a "dark hole, a single room in a "hotel" (13), similar to the barracks she was once forced to live in. She starves herself by living on "toast with a bit of sour cream and half a sardine, or a small can of peas heated in a Pyrex mug" (14), barely gets by with financial help from her niece Stella. She writes letters to her dead daughter in Polish, creating countless lives for her, imagining her as a "professor of Greek philosophy at Colombia University".

According to Elaine M. Kauvar "doubling is the organizing principle of the novella" (1993: 185) and creating two separate stories that are wedded by a mutual metaphor- the shawl, and the imagery of hell, Ozick makes use of an important theme that governs most of the Holocaust literature: continuity. Yet this theme is twofold. The first one is how the Holocaust continues to torment its victims and perpetuates victimization. The second one is the desire to maintain the Jewish identity and the consequent fear of losing it. Presented in a rather afflictive narrative, Rosa sees everything and everyone as a threat to her Jewish identity, thus isolates herself from everything that is non-Jewish and attaches to anything that reminds her of her Jewish self. Ozick uses three subjects that Rosa is attached to as a guard against assimilation and therefore renders the continuity of Jewish memory possible: the shawl, Polish, and Magda.

By highlighting the absence of her daughter through the melancholic space that she desires to belong to which eventually becomes the drive that initiates a search for the lost other, in the second part of the novella the readers see that in her post-Holocaust life Rosa defines herself with what she lacks in the present: a child. Only through that absence Rosa manages to give voice to her Holocaust trauma and reveal her increasing torment. In consequence the loss of Rosa's daughter becomes an endless aporia that she unites with. Given the centrality of the Holocaust, "Rosa" calls into the question of Rosa's way of constructing a personal identity as a survivor

who creates her existence through absence and destruction.

Ozick dramatizes the severity of Rosa's lasting torment by creating her as a "madwoman and a scavenger" who "gave up her store- smashed it up herself- and moved to Miami" and lives in a "dark hole, a single room in a hotel" (14). Just as the Nazis crushed her life and she was forced to see other lives destroyed, she smashes her life in New York that she is put in. The reason why Rosa becomes extremely destructive is twofold. One is that she needs others to listen to her but she cannot find anyone:

When I had my store I used to "meet the public" and I wanted to tell everybody- not only our story but other stories as well [...] I said all this in my store, talking to the deaf" (69).

Rosa considers the Holocaust to be the climax of her story of being. When she realizes the contemporary society fails to respond to her story, she responds to this deafness both with great rage by destroying her shop and later on by disconnecting herself from any humanly contact, as once the Nazi's attempt to do so by forcing her to be silent.

The second reason why Rosa becomes destructive is to reflect the madness of the Holocaust. According to Emily Miller Budick, "Rosa speaks the language of Holocaust trauma" because everywhere she "sees the inscription of her traumatized past and so she responds through a series of unconscious, repressive behaviors that, with pain and suffering, and perhaps, with considerable dysfunction and psychic cost" (2003: 221). Miriam Sivian suggests, because Rosa's pain has been silenced during the Holocaust, "in America she intends to rectify this terrible void, this silence does not honor the dead, but rather continues to metaphorically 'blot out their names'" (2009: 144). Her destructiveness is a response long overdue to the atrocity of the Nazis and America as the land of freedom allocates that space so she can respond at the cost of being called as a madwoman. However, as Jane Statlander argues, Rosa's madness is "the creation of another existence" (2002: 325) as a mirroring of the destructiveness of the Holocaust. Although Rosa finally manages to respond to this atrocity, she begins to re-live

her Holocaust drama over and over again. In the light of the Freudian example of the fort-da game, one can suggest that Rosa restages her holocaust experience so that she can create a usable past.

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" Freud describes a game played by his grandson. In the simplest form of the game, the child restages his mother's leave for work by taking small objects and throwing them away into a corner, accompanied by an expression of satisfaction by causing things to be "gone" (50). Freud associates this game with a child's attempt to obtain an unconscious gratification from the disappearance of an object, in which he asserts mastery to balance an emotional distress where he had no control over the actual act. Since the subject cannot react to the disappearance of a loved one or the death in some cases, he can only form an idea of these concepts mainly by losing sight of objects. In order to repeat the experience without repeating the feeling that is attached to the experience, the individual gives himself an active role so he has the control of avoiding the pain whenever it is likely to occur. Although repetition always leads back to the repetition of the original loss, Freud suggests that "in doing so they abreact the intensity of the experience and make themselves so to speak master of the situation" (Freud, 1922: 55). By the help of abreacting, that is to say re-living the experience in a controlled environment, the individual attempts to master the sensation of loss and he gains pleasure by this mastery. In general, Freud uses the fort-da game to introduce the perception of the return of the repressed. In "Rosa", although the readers are presented with the post-Holocaust period, they are constantly reminded of the past by the present Rosa creates. The idea of hell during the Holocaust, as the repressed imagery returns when Rosa creates her own hell by living in a "dark hole" under the heat in Miami that awakens memories of the barracks that once she feels the "coldness" (4).

What Ozick specifically demonstrates about the Holocaust through the doubling technique that emphasizes the repetition of the past in the present is that, it is a defining element in who Rosa is at the present and that she defines herself with what she lacks by

attaching herself to the memories of her dead daughter. What is of interest here is to see that the death of Magda is more than a loss for Rosa. It is an absence and henceforth an "endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted" (LaCapra, 1999: 698).

LaCapra claims absence lacks a particular time span because it is not a specific event and thus cannot be narrated. On the other hand loss is a particular event and henceforth can be narrated. When loss is converted into absence, in other words when the lost object is transferred into a more abstract concept, the lost object of the past repeats itself in the present and thus "one remains possessed or haunted by the past" (LaCapra, 1999: 699). One may well argue what is absent is turned into an object of fixation and allows itself to be privileged over its binary opposite "presence". One defines oneself by the absence, thus working through the trauma and leaving the emotional freight behind becomes an impossible mission. The question then arises as to why one would convert loss into absence and intoxicate themselves with incommunicable sorrow.

In his essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Sigmund Freud proposes the loss of an object provokes a reaction known as mourning and the mourner knows whom or what one has lost. However, he also adds the same loss can produce melancholia as a reaction instead of mourning because even though what has been lost is known, what that lost stands for is perplexing. Hence Freud suggests melancholia is related to an object lost which is withdrawn from consciousness. What is lost is absent therefore cannot be observed. In mourning, the libido withdraws itself from the lost object and finds a substitute to replace it with, in melancholia; the libido withdraws into ego and identifies with the lost object. In addition to Freud's theory Melanie Klein states in melancholy lost object is not an actual person, but an internal object thus the subject internalizes the loss of something outside of himself.

Like Klein and Freud before her, Julia

Kristeva responds to sadness that is caused by the loss of a loved object¹ as mourning. In addition to such "objectal" depression², Kristeva adapts Freud's theory of death wish and introduce a new notion of depression which is more "narcissistic" and Kristeva uses the term melancholia to refer to narcissistic depression. In narcissistic depression, the depressive mourns not to an object but to a thing because she argues that the subject lacks the ability to name what is lost and thus the "thing" does not lend itself to signification. Since the subject does not know what it is that is lost, it will never be an "object" but a "thing". That is why instead of feeling hate towards the lost object, because as Freud states the subject has been undermined by its loss, the subject embraces the sadness making it hers alone, something that she cannot share in the symbolic realm. For Kristeva, melancholy is therefore a defense mechanism against the possibility of separation and fragmentation caused by the symbolic/social realm (Kristeva, 1987: 9)

Consequently Kristeva claims melancholia to be a state of denial of the separation by turning away from symbolic and entering a world that lends itself to no signification. According to Kristeva, the subject severs itself from the symbolic through abandonment of language. That is why the melancholic hardly speaks and instead of engaging in the symbolic realm, the melancholic creates an alternative life. Kristeva assumes this episode of the narcissistic depression is akin to Freud's death drive as a wish to return to an inorganic state, because the self loses attachment with the symbolic realm. Yet, she departs from Freudian theory of the death drive as a wish to kill others or destroy oneself as a method of severing from the symbolic and suggests the melancholic unites with sadness finds meaning only in despair that cannot be signified and reduces itself to meaninglessness. Therefore, sadness

¹ In Kristeva's theory this sadness is caused by the separation of the infant-mother dyad.

² Although Kristeva makes a subtle distinction between depression and melancholia, as depression is of a lesser intensity, she suggests that both are the same mourning for the maternal object, she neglects the differences between the two and thus uses the two terms interchangeably (BS 11)

becomes the sole object that the melancholic replaces the lost object with. It becomes "an object they tame and cherish for lack of another" (Kristeva, 1987: 12)

"Rosa", read through the lens of the theory of melancholy from Freud to Kristeva confirms the observation that Rosa's obsession with the shawl is nonetheless her desire to unite with her sadness and what is more her reluctance to speak is her wish to sever herself from the symbolic realm, isolate herself from everything and everyone around her. A prominent example of Rosa's desire to "keep death and sick fantasy alive" (Statlander, 2002: 322) so that she can unite with the absence, is her attitude towards Magda's shawl upon its arrival. Just as she enters to the hotel she stays in, after her encounter with Simon Persky, she receives the package that she asked Stella to send. She "squashed the box into her breasts" "carried [it] to the bed", "turned [it] round and round" and put it "to her nose, to her lips" (31) as if she was once again a mother holding her daughter in her arms and putting her to sleep. "She tidied all around" the room because "everything had to be nice when the box was opened" (34) as if she is preparing her room as a stage and herself as an actress to act on:

She put on her good shoes, a nice dress, she arranged her hair, brushed her teeth, poured mouthwash on the brush, sucked it up through the nylon bristles, gargled rapidly. As an afterthought she changed her bra and slip; it meant getting out of her dress and into it again. Her mouth she reddened very slightly—a smudge of lipstick rubbed on with a finger (44)

Rosa, who used to look like a "ragged old bird with worn feathers" and did not care how she looked, now takes extra care of the way she appears when she is in the presence of the shawl. With the arrival of the shawl, Rosa enters to her room as if she was entering a cemetery, puts the box with great care and respect to her bed as if she was burying Magda.

According to Lillian Kremer Rosa's personal grooming that is juxtaposed with her "slovenly room [...] signifies the importance of the long-lost child to Rosa's contemporary emotions". (1999: 160). Kremer suggests with

the arrival of the shawl, Rosa finds a room to follow the rituals of mourning after the death of her daughter, which states the final stage of accepting the death of a beloved. What Kremer also points out is the importance of normal grief after the loss of the loved ones and since the Holocaust survivors are forbidden to react, due to the absolute necessity of silence as demonstrated in "The Shawl", their attachment to the lost ones carries on and thus they "keep the death alive". Since the grief cannot lend itself to signification, the survivor blocks out the words and as Kristeva utters turns away from the symbolic for the sake of denying the reality of the separation. Acceptance of the loss is prolonged by forbidding the survivor to absorb what she witnessed.

In addition to the impossible mourning and lack of signification, Dominick LaCapra suggests the feeling of guilt is another reason why the survivor cannot let the past remain safely in the past (1994: 200). He suggests victims of trauma "may experience not only "guilt" about surviving but intense anxiety about rebuilding a life and beginning again [...] rebuilding a new life is a betrayal of loved ones who died" (1994: 200). Ozick's application of this component into her Holocaust survivor elucidates why Rosa ignores the present in favor of the past by repeating her past experience as a mother. She feels guilty about not being able to save her daughter, so rather than moving on as a healing process she moves backwards so that she can be with her daughter and avoid the feeling of guilt. Consequently, after the death of her daughter, she makes herself forever a mother without a child and thus defines herself by what she lacks. By doing so she denies the reality that her daughter is dead, and she is not a mother anymore.

Lawrence Langer refers to this surviving as "a new and unexpected form of imprisonment. Survival was synonymous with the recognition of deprivation" (1994: 70), thus, rather than being perceived as a survivor, she is once more a victim, who is tortured by the reality of the present. For her, survivor is a word that is like "parasite[s] on the throat of suffering" (37), causing sickness instead of freedom. That is why Rosa is a resentful survivor because her survival results in separation from the loved

ones, from the culture she was born in and from the language she grew up with. For her, survival is leaving your human values behind and being perceived as "a number- counted apart from the ordinary swam. Blue digits on the arm" (36). Thus, she perceives survival as hell, and she passionately awaits the arrival of the shawl which serves as a medium in her fantasy of escape from the present. With the shawl, she will distance herself from the hell she is presently in.

In addition to "keep[ing] the death alive" (Statlander, 2002: 322), by creating a narrative that revolves around the question of why the survivors reject their present for the sake of the past, Ozick also proposes another reason: the survivors deny contemporary social environment so that they can ensure the continuity of a living and acceptable Jewish community. In this line of the argument, Ozick creates two characters, who are in stark opposition with Rosa; Stella and Simon Persky. Stella is Rosa's niece and was only fourteen years old when she was in the concentration camp with Rosa and Magda. Stella "the angel of death" (15) is an example of a kind of survivor who forgets her past "as if not there" (28). 30 years after the Holocaust, she is presented as a working woman living in New York with a good command of English. She is, if anything, as disconnected from tradition or people as ever. As opposed to Rosa's continuous mourning, Stella is free of the Holocaust trauma as well as Jewish culture.

In her letter, Stella accuses Rosa of making herself "crazy" (31) with the obsession of the shawl and denounces Rosa's idolatrous connection with it. For her it is an object that renders Rosa relinquish the past, an object that makes Rosa crazy. On the other hand Rosa thinks "every vestige of former existence is an insult to her [Stella]. Because she fears the past she distrusts the future- it, too, will turn into the past" (41). For her Stella forgets the past and everything that is related to it for the sake of the future, and on the other hand Rosa clings to the past because for a woman of Rosa's experience, terms like "after" or "future" are horrifying. As Rosa says, "Before is a dream. After is a joke. Only during stays. And to call it a life is a lie" (58).

Many Holocaust critics, including Alan L. Berger and Gloria L. Cronin, agree that the Holocaust is a tragedy that divides the Jewish culture into a before and an after. Jewish timeline is therefore made of "before the Holocaust" and "after the Holocaust", creating it as a defining term. Although in general "before" has a connotation of past and "after" of future, for the Jews after the Holocaust, the rigid boundary between the two time span became blurry. Past that refers to Holocaust period is also the present, future is the continuation of the present, and present is the continuation of the past, so the future is the continuation of the past. Holocaust elicits a timeline in which everything is defined by it, and that defining moment in their lives is the past, the present and the future.

The reason why everything is defined by the Holocaust and that it will never safely remain in the past is because forgetting the past can be threatening to Jewish identity and that is another reason why Rosa is attached to the past. She fears forgetting what she went through, which is of great significance to the story of her existence.

Emily Miller Budick suggests "for American Jews what is threatened with extinction in the forgetting of the Holocaust is not merely the events themselves, with their historical meanings and lessons, but Jewish identity itself [...] Forget the past and the Jewish component falls away" (Budick, 2003: 218). Alongside with Budick's argument, Neil Postman also claims that "a cultural and religious identity remains unstructured, fuzzy, as long as there is an absence of story" (Postman, 1989: 79). With an emphasis on the significance of remembering the Holocaust, Jews start to accept the Holocaust as a component of their identity: what they are at the present is what they experienced in the past. As Yosef Hayim claims the Holocaust is an important part in Jewish culture since "history, not a sacred text, becomes the arbiter of Judaism" (1982: 86). Their existence began with the establishment of a nation in Sinai and carried on through the Shoah. Thus, dismissing the Holocaust could create a huge gap in their story of being.

Here Ozick demonstrates Polish language as an additional subject to the shawl that renders

the continuity of Jewish identity possible. Two different approaches to Polish are embodied in two different characters. Rosa uses Polish to dismiss the present and Stella refuses Polish to dismiss the past. The fact that Stella speaks fluent English is problematic for Rosa since it demonstrates a denial of mother tongue and the beginning of assimilation to a foreign nation and culture. This used to be the aim of the Nazi government during the Holocaust; to annihilate both Jews and their culture. Even if Stella was saved from the genocide, she rejects her Jewishness, thus by forgetting the Jewish racial and cultural elements, she furthers Nazi's genocidal goal.

Similar to Stella's resistance to speak Polish, Rosa resists English. Her English is defective, just as she is, and she refuses to learn because she "didn't ask for it, [she] got nothing to do with it" (23), just as she is rejecting the present, because she did not ask for such a life. She was thrown into a foreign culture as once she was thrown into a Nazi occupied camp. While detaching herself from English she is stubbornly attached to Polish so that she can isolate herself from the surrounding she dreads. However, she has to use English to write to Stella because it is Stella that financially supports Rosa and thus cannot detain herself from her. She feels "like a dog paying respects to its mistress" (40). Just as she was deprived of humanity in the Nazi concentration camp, the feeling returns as she has to speak in English when asking for money from Stella. This present moment can also be seen as repetition of Rosa's concentration camp experience in a way that in both cases, Rosa has no control of her life. She has been forced to act in an undesired way so she can survive. Her reluctance to act in accordance with the new life she is put in can be seen as her resistance to lose the control of herself once more. It is not the present she denies, but the idea of new Rosa. She wishes to return to who she was thirty- nine year ago, "a chemist [...] "ambitious, responsible, a future Marie Curie" (20).

As much as it is problematic for Rosa that Stella hides her Jewishness behind everything that is American, even "Stella's handwriting instructed, pretending to be American, leaving out the little stroke that goes across 7" (39), the

irony here is that before the Holocaust, Rosa was proud of the choice of being anything other than Jewish. In her letter to Magda, she talks about her family and Magda's father:

"Your father was the son of my mother's closest friend. She was a converted Jew married to a Gentile: you can be a Jew if you like, or a Gentile, it's up to you. You have a legacy of choice, they say choice is the only freedom" (43).

Although Rosa was given the choice to be a non-Jew, and allowed Magda to have the same choice, she criticizes Stella of using this freedom and moving away from Jewishness. With the occurrence of this irony, one can argue that Rosa's reaction to Stella is not because she moves away from Jewishness, but moves close to Americans that is unresponsive to the Jewish history and thus Stella becomes one of them. She is no longer the only person that shared Rosa's trauma but also as Kremer suggests she is "Rosa's psychological foil" (1999: 157) and becomes a phantom of Rosa's fears; fear of forgetting the past and moving on.

Apart from the unresponsiveness of American population, Kremer points out that "the physically and psychologically oppressive American setting does not replicate Rosa's camp ordeal- it becomes a metaphoric extension of her perpetual grief" (1999: 160). Ozick explicitly presents this similarity when Rosa goes to the beach to look for her missing underpants because she assumes "if someone wanted to hide a pair of underpants, [he] would put them under the sand. Rolled up and buried" (47). She blames Persky of stealing her underwear because Persky was already at the launderette when Rosa arrived and he was the only one that walked with her while she was pushing her cart back to the hotel. It is "degrading" for her because "an old woman who couldn't even hang on to her own underwear" (33) is a shame and she "was ashamed for him to touch [it]" (19). One can assume that Rosa's obsession with finding her underwear serves as a metaphoric extension of her shame caused by the sexual assault she faced in the camp. Through various methods of torture women faced with during the Holocaust, with the sexual assault,

the feeling of purity was diminished and thus the feeling of dirt haunted women who were raped. Rosa's lack of physical grooming is a mirroring of their physical conditions in the concentration camp and her fear of losing her underwear is a sign of the sexual assault she faced with in the concentration camp. With the disappearance of her underwear not only does she feel exposed, but also shame because "the stains in the crotch" (34) may be seen by others. Losing her underpants on her way back to the hotel from laundry is symbolic in a way that it represents all the feelings that have been noncommunicable for Rosa, and Persky is the reason these repressed feelings come to surface.

Rosa's relation with Persky is also very interesting in a sense that he is the one who is willing to listen to Rosa and yet she tries to dismiss him. However, in the end, he is the only person that Rosa trusts with the box and lets him open it and touch the shawl. The question then arises as to why Rosa decides to trust Simon.

According to Jane Statlander, Simon Persky "begins the process of untangling Rosa's life" (2002: 334). With Simon, the readers start to hear Rosa's voice through a direct narrative. Persky begins to talk about his wife, who is institutionalized because "she's mixed up that she's somebody else" (27) and Rosa feels more comfortable around him because she begins to see that since the "thieves" took her life and "without a life, a person lives where they can" and when they are left with nothing but memories "that's where they live" (28-29). Through her communication with Persky, the readers begin to acknowledge that Rosa has a clear distinction of present and past. She is not unconsciously repeating the past as a way of working through the trauma, as Freud's theory of repetition compulsion would suggest, but she consciously chooses to remain in the past memories because she lacks the present.

Persky's occupation is also significant to his character and thus can be seen as another reason why Rosa creates a humanly contact with him. He is in business of buttons and for Rosa buttons signifies the smallest presence in the world, like herself:

She considered Persky's life: how trivial it must always have been: buttons, himself no more significant than a button. It was plain he took her to be another button like himself, battered now and out of fashion, rolled into Florida. All of Miami Beach, a box for useless buttons! (55)

In Rosa's view Persky and herself share the same faith of being thrown away like a button and as a result of this similarity, it is the first time Rosa considers the life of someone other than herself. Through Simon, she sees herself and Simon reconnects Rosa with the human community, like the function of button connecting two separate sides. That is why since Simon and Rosa are alike, she privileges him to open the box that contains Magda's shawl.

She did not falter. What her own hands long to do she was yielding to a stranger, a man with pockets; she knew why. To prove herself pure: a Madonna. Supposing he had vile old man's thoughts: let him see her with the eye of truth: A mother. (59)

Through the image of Madonna, Rosa likens her holocaust experience to Jesus' crucifixion, which makes her the holy mother and Magda, Jesus. Just as Virgin Mary suffered with every nail pierced Jesus' flesh, Rosa suffered witnessing her daughter's death. Therefore, Rosa represents everything that the Virgin Mary represents: an emblem of honor, purity of body and soul, sinlessness, eternal innocence and chastity. What is more, through the similarity, Rosa secures her physical and mental connection with Magda. Since Madonna is rarely depicted without her child, Rosa regains an eternal connection with Magda, which can never be destroyed. In addition to recreating herself through a Madonna image, she also recreated Magda's image. Rosa is Madonna and Magda is Jesus. With the similarity of Magda's death, depicted in a similar way to Jesus' crucifixion, the way the Nazi's threw her to the electrical fences Magda begins to represent what Jesus' crucifixion represents: a willing sacrifice to atone for humanity's sin and salvation. By allowing Persky to open the box, she assigns him the role of humanity who acknowledges the suffering of both Virgin Mary and Jesus, and appreciates the eternal connection

between a mother and a child.

As well as the symbolic level in her wish to be seen as Madonna and start anew and sinless, Rosa's search for her underwear at the beach helps her to dismiss the "old" Rosa; mute and withdrawn, and relieve the "new", who is more than an object to be looked at but a human who can be loud and demanding. "She came to a gate; mottled beach spread behind it [...] The latch opened" (47) She entered, walked on the sand, "when she came back to the gate, the latch would not budge. A cunning design, it trapped the trespasser. She gazed up, and thought of climbing; but there was barbed wire on top [...] Her wrists were trembling" (48-49) Locked behind barbed wire, a scene with all the signatures of concentration camps, Rosa's trauma comes to full circle but this time she screams her disgust at the world that does not care about their sufferings. "Where were you when we was there? [...] Dancing in the pool in the lobby, that's where. Eat your barbed wire, Mr. Finkelstein, chew it and choke on it!" (51). By the help of her anger, Rosa's grief lends itself to signification, hence begins to exist in a linguistic system. However, one may wonder why Rosa's anger elaborates although both the room Rosa lives in and the beach she finds herself in are reminders of the barracks and the Nazi camp. In the first one she willingly chooses to live in such a room which is a reminder of her past trauma, in the second one she does not have the choice, she finds herself thrown to that setting which she does not have mastery on. Again Ozick emphasizes the importance of choice, and how when it is not given, creates catastrophe. She is able, finally, to let her anger out and by doing so Ozick implies a beginning of a new period in Rosa's life. She no longer accepts to be silent, in hiding and being treated as a vermin. Since she has the right to refuse, she feels herself human again and finally manages to chant prayers for her dead daughter. When she finally received the box, she hugged it;

she was feeling foolish, trivial. Everything was frivolous here, even the deepest property of being. It seemed to her someone had cut out her life-organs and given them to her to hold. (56)

As if she was hugging her daughter as once

she held tight the shawl while watching Magda got killed, Rosa hugs the box. She needs Magda, and whatever there is related to her, so that she can remain a mother. Without Magda, Rosa refuses to function because without her, she is similar to a skeleton lacking life organs. Without Magda, who belongs to Rosa's past, the present is foolish and her presence is frivolous.

As Ozick presents in *The Shawl*, the Holocaust was a racial war and continued to torture its victims once it is over by confirming that the word "survivor" comes to be a synonym for "victim" and that the survivors create every opportunity to repeat their past trauma because they feel guilty about surviving. They start to suffer under the reality that they were unable to act in a way they would ordinarily have thought appropriate (save people, resist the victimizers, etc." (Lifton, 1926: 26) and

according to Kremer, "female sexuality and motherhood added burdens to the normative Holocaust ordeal" (1999: 4) and thus doubles the feeling of guilt. In order to intensify the idea that Holocaust was a racial war and thus women, biological basis of Jewry, suffered oppression differently, Ozick creates a maternal response to the atrocity of the Holocaust by arranging the subject-matter around the dilemma of whether to trust a stranger with her child or let the child maintain her life in the mother's existing deadly surrounding. The consequences of this choice create additional suffering in women's post-Holocaust life, which they try to justify. Rosa, thus, denies the reality that her daughter got killed as a result of her inability to save her and begins to live in the past because she cannot continue to live in the present, without Magda.

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