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Analysis of Impact of the Holocaust on the Characters in *Enermies, A Love Story* from the Perspective of Trauma Theory

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Abstract: Holocaust literature has been widely concerned in the field of literature. Based on trauma theory, this article analyzes the impact of the Holocaust on the characters in Singer's Enemy, A Love Story. This study is mainly divided into three parts: trauma theory and overview of war trauma, trauma sources of characters, trauma symptoms of characters and trauma recovery status. The study found that the characters in the novel are generally traumatized by the Holocaust. They suffer from flashbacks of painful memories, hypervigilance and fear, but they are also repairing the trauma through their own efforts or the help of others. Further research is needed to explore the wider impact of the Holocaust on individuals and groups and the effectiveness of different strategies for repairing trauma.

Keywords: Trauma Theory, Holocaust, *Enemies, A Love Story*.

1. Introduction

Isaac Bashevis Singer was a Jewish-American writer born in Warsaw, Poland. He wrote in Yiddish and is known for his insightful portrayal of Jewish life in Poland and the United States. Singer received the 1967 Newbery Medal Silver Medal and the 1978 Nobel Prize for Literature, solidifying his status as a celebrated author. His works capture the essence of Jewish existence and resonate with readers worldwide. Singer's talent and legacy continue to leave a lasting impact on the literary world.

Enemies, A Love Story, one of Singer's works, is a post-World War II novel set in New York City. The story revolves around Herman Broder, a Jewish man with waning faith, who is married to Yadwiga Pracz, a non-Jewish Polish woman. Herman's life is complicated by his assumed-deceased first wife, Tamara, and his mistress, Marsha, a concentration camp survivor. The novel explores Herman's attempts to keep his three wives from discovering one another and depicts the trauma of the Holocaust on the Jewish people.

This research aims at analyzing impact of the holocaust on the characters in "*Enermies, A Love Story*" from the perspective of trauma theory.

2. Trauma Theory and War trauma

2.1. Trauma Theory

The word "trauma" is etymologically related to the word "injury," which is used to describe physical harm inflicted on the human body by outside forces. It first appeared as a technical medical term in medical literature. The term "trauma" underwent systematic study in the early 1990s by academics like Judith Herman, which prompted a wider theoretical investigation. Trauma theory subsequently found wide application in literary studies as well as in a number of humanities fields, such as philosophy, sociology, and history. Herman examines the sense of helplessness that victims of traumatic events—whether brought on by natural disasters or intentional atrocities—experience in his book Trauma and Recovery. The psychological trauma that results from this profound helplessness causes people to go through a psychological process that is marked by intense fear, helplessness, and the looming threat of doom. Not their rarity, but the profound disruption to one's capacity to adapt to daily life and the destruction of the sense of security required for a normal existence distinguish traumatic events. Death-threatening repercussions may result. Herman divides the signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) into three distinct categories: Hypervigilance - a persistent anticipation that one will be in danger; Re- experiencing-having sudden and unwanted traumatic memories that intrude into or even seem to replace what's happening now; Confined flinching - the traumatized person exhibits a paralyzing response after giving in and giving up. And in the part three, hypervigilance and re- experiencing will be applied to analyze the characters in the novel. Herman claims that a variety of factors, such as the historical setting, societal changes, and changes in interpersonal relationships, have an impact on how trauma develops. The theory lays a foundation for the analysis of the impact of the holocaust on the characters in *Enermies, A Love Story*.

2.2. War Trauma

War could be traumatic. War trauma could often lead to severe and sustained health consequences on people's physical and psychological health. War trauma is often prevalent in people who either participated in the war or lived near conflict zones, such as military professionals, refugees, and health workers.(Su et al.)

The trauma suffered by the Jews as a result of the war can be seen as a haunting lifelong nightmare, a tragic demonstration of the genocidal slaughter of the Jews by Hitler's fascists, perhaps one of the most tragic events in human history, which caused unparalleled damage to the modern Jewish psyche and changed the way they perceived the world and themselves.

In the Holocaust, fascist Nazi policies were brutally implemented, using all "effective means", such as the establishment of slaughterhouses and the use of chemical gas. Thousands of Jews were driven to concentration camps such

as Auschwitz, Heimno, Bełżec, Buchenwald, etc., where they were subjected to "workshop-style treatment" and became complete objects of slaughter for the fascists. These massacres deprived Jews of their human dignity, freedom and even their most basic humanity. Throughout the Second World War, as many as six million Jews perished under the fascist knife, compared to a total of just over ten million Jews worldwide.

The Jews who survived the slaughterhouse of Europe were confronted with a world gone mad, and their faith in God and their perception of life changed radically. The Holocaust persisted like a ghost in the Jewish soul, affecting their reality. A growing number of writers poured out their anger at the trauma of war brought on by the genocide, and a wealth of literature set in the Holocaust emerged, reflecting the Jewish experience.

Singer wrote in 2006, "My people have endured a frenzy of blows unprecedented in human history, and as a member of this people, I cannot take the impending danger lightly." The trauma of the Jewish people's experience of war has led Singer to develop a strong national sentiment of "tormenting thoughts", and the fate of the Jewish people is constantly on his mind.

The Holocaust had a paralysing and restraining effect on the Jewish national consciousness, which caused him mixed feelings and anxiety. Literature became a way of relieving his trauma and expressing his grief. Although Singer did not personally experience the Holocaust (he moved to the United States before it broke out and was spared), his mother and brother were persecuted by the Nazis and eventually died of starvation and cold. Singer deliberately avoids directly depicting the catastrophic events of the Holocaust in his writing, instead depicting them indirectly through imaginative reconstructions of history, culture and national identity. Writing with his own strong Jewish identity, he responds to the Holocaust by devoting his ethical concerns to the fate of the Jewish people.

3. Origins of Characters' War Trauma

3.1. Herman: Loss of his family and the macabre life in the hayloft

In the book Enemies, A Love Story, the main character Herman, has deep scars from war trauma that stem from a number of eerie events. While he avoided the horrors of a concentration camp, his harrowing journey took place in the shadows of a hayloft where he sought safety from the devastation brought on by Hitler's regime. Herman's psyche was forever changed by his years of secret existence, which influenced the way he would later describe the Holocaust. Herman was in Tzivkev when the Nazis swept through Poland, imprisoned by their ruthless grip. Unfortunately, the brutality of the invaders claimed his parents, leaving Herman to bear the burden of their death. He miraculously avoided the catastrophe that claimed the lives of countless people. He quickly discovered an unexpected savior in Yadwiga, his devoted maid, while seeking refuge inside the walls of Tzivkev. She brought him covertly to her home country, where a hayloft that would serve as both his refuge and prison awaited him.

Although it gave a false sense of security, the hayloft did not offer any relief from the nagging fear. Herman was haunted by the sounds of gunshots and the ferocious cries of the Nazi oppressors as he was trapped inside the engulfing darkness. His fragile existence was threatened by their menacing presence as their bayonets pierced the air, even though he never saw their faces. He hid himself in the hay and prayed for deliverance in the oppressive stillness. But the price paid in terms of his body and mind was incalculable. The trauma left an indelible mark on him, leaving him to struggle with severe rheumatism(“Rheumatic Diseases”) and crippling sciatica(Cleveland Clinic) that continued to bother him long after he was set free. Physical suffering combined with the emotional scars he carried into a torment every day.

Herman's pain was made even worse by the loss of his two children, which plunged him into a pit of regret and guilt. Herman's emotional connection to his children was hampered by a profound sense of guilt, in contrast to Tamara, whose love for their children radiated passionately. He had given up on the idea of getting married and having children because of his devotion to Schopenhauer's teachings, striving for a life free of such ties. However, Tamara's pregnancy forced their hand and fate worked against his beliefs. Although they exchanged vows, their relationship was tumultuous and characterized by constant arguments and emotional distance. The gap between them was not filled by the birth of their son or the subsequent arrival of their daughter. Herman was emotionally apathetic because of his intense sense of burden and conviction that his ties to his family restricted his freedom. He had a detached perspective on his children and believed in the cynical philosophy that characterized his daughter as a hollow vessel devoid of morality and reason. After the Holocaust, he experienced a tragedy that was devastating and shattered any hope of redemption. He fell into a pit of shame and self-loathing after learning of his children's brutal deaths and the passing of his wife. He developed into a tortured soul, marked as a transgressor by his own conscience, and forever burdened by the weight of his shortcomings as a father.

The tangled web of trauma that is woven into Herman's persona in Enemies, A Love Story is revealed by the analysis above. His psychological turmoil is woven together in a complex way by a variety of experiences, from his secret life in the hayloft to his deep guilt over what happened to his children.

3.2. Tamara: Death of Family and Betrayal of Husband

Tamara's traumatic experiences during the Holocaust, specifically the deaths of her parents and children as well as the betrayal of her husband Herman, were the cause of these tragic occurrences. Tamara had been a passionate and radical activist before the war, fighting for the salvation of mankind, the plight of the Jews, and the place of women in society. She was naturally optimistic and enthusiastic, but the Holocaust changed her forever.

She was more dependent on her parents and kids for support because Tamara and Herman had a strained relationship. Tamara saw her fellow villagers, including her own parents, being brutally killed and humiliated by the Nazis when they invaded their village. She will always be haunted by the horrifying events that occurred, which have left her with painful memories and a severe emotional scar. Although Tamara herself narrowly avoided being raped by Nazis, the traumatic event has stayed with her.

After losing her parents, Tamara and her two kids were captured and taken to a concentration camp, where they were

subjected to cruel treatment and saw other people suffer. Tamara continued to be plagued by the memories of the grueling work, chilly nights, and the unexpected deaths of fellow prisoners even after being freed. She barely made it, and now she carries a physical memento of a bullet fragment in her hip.

Although Tamara had to deal with physical suffering, exhaustion, and starvation, it was the loss of her children that left her completely broken. Herman did not show much interest in their kids, and their marriage was characterized by constant conflict. Tamara, who was a loving mother, raised the kids by herself and treasured them. Sadly, the Nazis executed Tamara's children in front of her without showing any mercy. Tamara was unable to forgive herself because of the intense guilt and grief she was experiencing.

Tamara's trauma was exacerbated by Herman, whom she had loved unconditionally, leaving her. Herman dispensed with her, fought with her, and ultimately abandoned her and their children despite her unwavering devotion to him. The heartbreaking discovery that Herman had remarried and had a new family brought an end to Tamara's search for him in America. Tamara's already broken heart took a serious hit from this abandonment. Tamara suffered severe physical and psychological injuries as a result of losing her parents, seeing her children die, and having her husband leave her. Despite her initial attempts to conceal her vulnerability, she eventually confronted Herman and vented her frustrations. Tamara's pain and suffering were shaped by these experiences, and they had a long-lasting effect on her.

3.3. Marsha: Inhumane Experience in the Concentration Camp

Marsha was enduring the harshest hardships in the concentration camp in the novel, which left an indelible mark on her both physically and psychologically. These agonizing memories remained permanently etched in her heart, casting a long shadow over her life. She was subjected to inhumane treatment in the camp, which caused an unexpectedly devastating emotional shock that ultimately led to her breakdown. She entered into an emotional relationship with Herman in an effort to find comfort for her traumatized heart. But instead of providing her with solace, this entanglement only made her trauma worse.

Meyer Bloch, Marsha's father, was a well-known writer and art collector in Hebrew. Marsha and her father had a special bond, and even decades later, she was still able to recall the enjoyable times they had together while watching movies. Unfortunately, her father fled Warsaw before the arrival of the Nazis and died in Kazakhstan from dysentery and malnutrition. Marsha had an upsetting and challenging childhood as a result of growing up with her mother, Shifrah Puah. Marsha and her mother were split up and sent to various ghettos during the war. After the liberation, they weren't reunited with one another until 1945. More horrifying than death itself, ghetto life was abhorrent. Jews living there experienced extreme starvation, and the crowded ghettos were rife with infectious diseases. They were constantly afraid of being killed by German and Polish soldiers. Marsha was subsequently relocated to a concentration camp where she experienced different types of violence.

Even if Marsha's terrifying experiences in the camp aren't explicitly described in the book, bits of her memories do offer a glimpse into her traumatic ordeal.(Jennings) Marsha developed a fear of doing any labor voluntarily even after she was freed because she had been forced into hard physical labor. She was nearly starved to death by the Nazis' constant oppression and deprivation. She even considered compromising her own dignity and self-respect in her frantic search for food by working with smugglers and black marketeers. Marsha had to engage in promiscuity with the camp's male residents in order to survive because of the unwanted attention that her attractiveness attracted. She was deeply hurt and ashamed of this act, which was against her own morals and principles. In the years following the Holocaust, even her own mother despised and referred to her as a prostitute. The psychological damage caused by such a humiliating and horrifying experience was long-lasting.

Her mother also experienced severe psychological trauma, displaying anxiety all day long and having frequent nightmares. One specific nightmare she related revealed the horrifying and traumatic events Marsha had gone through, where she was made to suffer public humiliation and degradation by Germans, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians. Marsha had endured unspeakable suffering, as evidenced by the vivid picture of her perched on a log over excrement, taunted and insulted until she finally fell.

Even decades later, it was clear that Marsha's body had taken a toll. She had lost a lot of weight—only 72 pounds—and her body had been acting strangely when she was freed. She complained of pain, her period stopped for no apparent reason, and her belly started to grow, which led some people to believe she was pregnant. All of these signs and symptoms were the result of the trauma she experienced in the concentration camp, where her emotional and physical wounds remained unhealed. The physical and psychological scars she had from that historical catastrophe served as powerful reminders of the painful memories they had left her with.

4. Symptoms of Characters' War Trauma

4.1. Hypervigilance

Hypervigilance, the raised state of continually evaluating potential dangers around you, is usually the result of an injury. Individuals who have been in combat, have survived manhandle, or have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can display hypervigilance. (WebMD Editorial Contributors)

Herman's constant sense of impending danger and his reclusive lifestyle are clear signs of his hypervigilance. He continues to be on guard, imagining dangers even in the course of daily life. Fearing that the Nazis might come to arrest him, he moves through the streets with his eyes constantly scanning for places to hide. His thoughts frequently center on the places from which, if necessary, he could defend himself. He has a deep-seated insecurity and lack of trust in other people, which is reflected in his increased level of vigilance. He keeps to himself and prefers to live in a remote area where he feels safer. His constant state of hypervigilance is a result of his concerns about being deported and arrested by the government.

Marsha's hypervigilance is also evidenced by her frequent nightmares, emotional instability, and insomnia. She has trouble falling asleep, and once she does, nightmares keep her awake. Her psyche is forever changed by the presence of death in her dreams, and she imagines physical scars from

these fictitious encounters. She and her mother often argue because of her easily agitated temperament. She has a strong sense of mistrust and is always on high alert thanks to the trauma of the war. Her high levels of sensitivity and strong emotions make her even more hypervigilant.

As for Yadwiga, despite her valiant actions during the war, Yadwiga also demonstrates hypervigilant behavior. She is a new immigrant to America and is afraid to ride the subway alone, so she stays close to home most of the time. She relies on Herman's spoken instructions because she is illiterate and does not trust written information. Out of concern for potential threats and thieves, she chains the door and keeps the neighbors at a distance. She expresses a deep-seated fear of loss and abandonment even when Herman is absent, longing for his company and worrying about his safe return. Her constant need for assurance and her hypervigilant attitude are caused by her loyalty and devotion to Herman, despite their marital status.

4.2. Re-experiencing

Re-experiencing—having sudden and unwanted traumatic memories that intrude into or even seem to replace what's happening now—is a core symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).(Brewin) If someone has PTSD, chances are you've had symptoms of re-experiencing.

The characters in the "Enemies: A Love Story," who are Holocaust survivors, struggle with the long-lasting effects of their traumatic past. They frequently experience re-experiencing symptoms like nightmares and bothersome memories, which highlights the profound psychological effects of their experiences.

The protagonist, Herman Broader, has frightening dreams that mix up the present with the past. In these dreams, he hears Nazi cries and confuses his current surroundings with the concentration camps. He even envisions a scenario in which Nazis are in control of New York once more. These nightmares appear suddenly and are sparked by small stimuli, and cause aggressive responses. In addition, Herman frequently has illusions in which the room spins and the colors shift quickly, creating a sense of disarray and disorder. His trauma and memories of staying in the Lipsk hayloft are frequently the causes of these delusions.

Marsha is also the victim of nightmares, who is Herman's lover. She frequently shouts in various languages while she sleeps and has dreams about her late father. She feels pursued and threatened as a result of the nightmares, which bring back memories of brutality and humiliation. Marsha relies on smoking and drinking to dull her pain because her fear and trauma continue to affect her in the present. Every time she feels like taking action, she visualizes a German with a gun because she thinks the Nazis have taken away her freedom.

Marsha's mother, Shifrah Puah, laments the passing of her family members and sees herself as a living corpse. She secludes herself in a pitch-black space and wears all-black clothing as a sign of mourning. Shifrah Puah experiences sleep issues, walks by herself at night, and behaves in ways that other people might consider foolish. She is similar to the other characters in that she also struggles with sleep. She always has delusions which she attributes to the Hitler illness. Even as she attempts to build a new life in America, her memories of the persecution she endured under Hitler's rule still plague her.

The Holocaust survivor Tamara, who is Herman's legal wife, also struggles with reliving the past. She struggles mightily with insomnia since she worries that if she nods off, she will fall into a void. Her constant communication with her deceased children in her dreams fills her with dread and longing. Tamara's traumatic memories have a serious impact on her wellbeing, even though it is still unknown if she has a mental illness.

These characters' re-experiencing symptoms show how the Holocaust still affects them today. Their nightmarish imaginings, obtrusive memories, and nightmares serve as painful reminders of the horrors they suffered and their ongoing battle to come to terms with the past.

5. Characters' Recovery from War Trauma

Herman Broder goes through a protracted process of healing from his war trauma. Herman initially has a hard time separating reality from his traumatic past because he is plagued by memories and reliving the past. But as the narrative progresses, Herman gradually finds comfort and redemption in his interactions with Tamara, Yadwiga, and Marsha. These relationships give him a sense of healing and purpose.

Tamara, who miraculously survived the war, initially experiences severe grief and has trouble falling asleep. She is haunted by the death of her children and feels trapped in an unending state of emptiness. However, as the plot develops, Tamara starts to recover thanks to her interactions with Herman and her fresh bond with Yadwiga. She gradually recovers from her trauma and gathers the courage to move forward as she finds comfort and a fresh sense of purpose.

Marsha experiences post-traumatic stress disorder as well. Intense feelings of vulnerability and fear are experienced by her, along with nightmares and hallucinations. Marsha uses smoking and alcohol as a coping mechanism for her trauma, hoping to dull the pain. However, Marsha starts to reclaim a sense of stability and direction thanks to her relationship with Herman. In facing her past and using those lessons to fight for justice, she finds strength.

At first, Yadwiga is portrayed as being brittle and emotionally Vulnerable. She finds it difficult to adjust to her new life and feels dislocated and lost. However, Yadwiga's recovery progresses as she forms a relationship with Tamara, who she views as a mother figure. Yadwiga is assisted by Tamara's love and support in overcoming her trauma and discovering her place in the world. Yadwiga develops resiliency and the confidence to face her future thanks to this relationship.

The characters in Enemies, A Love Story go through extensive healing processes from their war trauma. They struggle with their memories, their nightmares, and the eerie repercussions of their earlier experiences. They gradually begin to heal and rebuild their lives as a result of the comfort, assistance, and renewed purpose they discover through their relationships with one another. The individual and complex nature of trauma is reflected in how each character recovers. In the end, their narratives show the tenacity of the human spirit as well as the healing effects of connection and love.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to analyze the impact of the holocaust on the characters in "*Enermies, A Love Story*" through the lens of trauma theory. The analysis in this paper is divided into three parts, including the introduction of trauma theory and war trauma, origins of characters' war trauma, symptoms of the characters' war trauma and characters' recovery from war trauma. The findings of the analysis demonstrate that the characters in the novel have been deeply affected by their traumatic past. They exhibit a range of symptoms associated with war trauma, including re-experiencing traumatic events, nightmares, sleep disturbances, a sense of being haunted by the past etc. These symptoms manifest in different ways for each character, reflecting the individual nature of their experiences and coping mechanisms. However, it is important to acknowledge that the limitations of this analysis. The focus of the study was solely on the characters in Enemies, A Love Story and their experiences of war trauma within the context of the Holocaust. Further research could explore the broader impact of the Holocaust on individuals and communities, as well as investigate the intergenerational transmission of trauma.(LIN et al.) For future study, it is recommended to explore the effectiveness of various therapeutic approaches and support systems in aiding the characters' recovery from war trauma. Additionally, examining the role of community engagement and cultural identity in promoting resilience and healing would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the characters' recovery journeys.

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