

From Trauma to Recovery: An Interpretation of Singer's *Enemies: A Love Story*

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American Jewish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer's *Enemies: A Love Story* explores the experience of Holocaust survivors in post-Holocaust America. The novel takes the entangled relationship between the protagonists as the primary developmental clue, mirroring the plights that the American Jewish immigrants have encountered in this new land of promise. Through the description of the living conditions of those Holocaust survivors in the post-Holocaust era, the novel reveals the catastrophic trauma of the Jewish individuals and the whole Jewish nation. This article delves into the psychological trauma of those Holocaust survivors, and explores the journey of recovery they are searching by a combined analysis of their traumatic experience and symptoms. By applying the trauma theory to interpret this novel, it is aimed not merely to depict the traumatized history of the Holocaust and its universe evil from a new perspective, but to remind the readers that history cannot be forgotten.

Keywords: Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Enemies: A Love Story*, trauma study, traumatic symptoms, recovery strategies

Introduction

American Jewish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991) is internationally well-known among the literary critics for his notable writing style, keen insight, humorous language, and philosophical implications. In 1978, Singer became the second American Jewish writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. When Singer began writing *Enemies, A Love Story*, more than two decades had passed since the Holocaust. He focuses on East European Jews who are ripped by historical catastrophe from their traditional values, native towns, and generational family life (Siegel, 1978, p. 398). This novel compassionately shows the profound change and impact of the Holocaust on modern Jews. As Singer puts it in the foreword, "the characters are not only Nazi victims but victims of their own personalities and fates" (Singer, 2012, p. v), the novel not only presents a detailed description of the protagonists' physical trauma that results from the Holocaust, more importantly, it demonstrates the readers the frightening psychological trauma and the imprinted cultural trauma on the whole Jewish nation.

As for Singer, one of the most influential writers in American Jewish literature, foreign critics have studied his works from various perspectives, and the novel *Enemies, A Love Story* has also been widely interpreted

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among the academic circle. The academic research on this novel mainly focuses on analyzing character relationships, the diaspora of Singer's novels, the influence of discourse power, the impact of Americanization on modern Jews, the social psychological analysis of the Jewish characters, etc.

Forrey (1981) believes that the Herman Broader is a sorrowing character in the novel, and what makes him a sad character is his entangled relationships with the three women, while Bilik (1981) discusses the diaspora and thousands of years of persecution of the Jewish nation are indispensable in promoting the plot development. Chandler (1988) expresses that the protagonists display their characteristics through their control over the language, which plays a crucial role in determining their ultimate fate. Guzłowski (2001) shows his understanding about Americanization in Singer's depiction of America and its cultural influence on Jews. Spiz (2009) presents a comparative study of three well-known literary works including *Enemies* and displays the image of powerlessness of the male characters. Goodhart (2015) sorts out the whole plot and character relationships of the novel and reveals such themes as Jewish modernity, Jewish assimilation, and Holocaust studies. Zhang & Chen (2019) make a comparative study of Issac Bashevis Singer's *Enemies, A Love Story* and Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* and focuses on the social-psychological world of Jews and Germans in the post-Holocaust world.

Up to now, academia pays more attention to the character relationships and the social impact on the Jews, and reveals the relationship between their suffering and the social setting. Little attention is given to the analysis of his novels with the post-Holocaust subject from the perspective of trauma. The article combines trauma theory with the literary text analysis to interpret the novel, in the hope of providing a new perspective to broaden the research depth. Trauma, like a multi-faceted mirror, reflects the existential dilemma of the Jewish nation and the Jews in Singer's novel. Given that the theme of trauma for studying Singer and the plight of the Jews has a practical significance, this article selects trauma perspective to study Singer's *Enemies, A Love Story*, which sets the Holocaust victims as the main characters. The article focuses on the relationship between traumatic memories and the protagonists themselves, and hopes to achieve an overall understanding of Singer's intention of trauma writing.

This article consists of five sections. Section 2 introduces trauma theory. Section 3 mainly deals with the traumatic symptoms shown on the protagonists and their different effects. Section 4 dwells on the protagonists' recovery state and analyzes on how they manage the recovery strategies. Section 5 concludes the article with the research significance.

Trauma Theory

A trauma is an event that "overwhelms existing defences against anxiety in a form which also provides confirmation of those deepest universal anxieties" (Garland, 2018, p. 11). The word trauma generally refers to the physical injury caused by a direct external force, or the psychological trauma caused by a robust emotional damage, to be "traumatized" refers to "precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth, 1995, p. 5).

Trauma theory covers a range of aspects, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and their influence on the development and personal relationship of the traumatized. In the past century, there have been three waves of trauma studies. The first wave arose in the late 19th century in France and the scholars mainly emphasizes the study of hysteria, i.e., the archetypal psychological disorder of women. The second wave flourished in England

and the United States after the First World War and reached its peak after the Vietnam War, in which the scholars are interested in the study of combat neurosis. The last and most recent wave develops in Western Europe and North America, concentrating on sexual and domestic violence.

In 1980, in the political context of the anti-war movement after the Vietnam War, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first included as a new category by the American Psychiatric Association in its official manual of mental disorders (Herman, 2015, p. 40), which is seen as the origin of contemporary trauma studies. PTSD refers to the responses to natural calamities and human misfortunes, including the symptoms of combat stress, shell shock, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis (Caruth, 1995, p. 3). Generally, post-traumatic stress disorder is understood as a response to an overwhelming event, manifested in the form of "repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience" (Caruth, 1995, p. 4), and with possible increased arousal or avoidance stimuli to the event. PTSD has been studied primarily with Holocaust survivors, concentration camp survivors, Vietnam veterans, battered women, disaster survivors, refugees, and others. The symptoms of PTSD generally can be grouped into intrusion, constriction, and hyperarousal. Intrusion shows traumatic memories that frequently haunt the victims; constriction reveals the callous response and indifferent attitude towards trauma; hyperarousal indicates the constant anticipation of possible danger (Herman, 2015, p. 49).

After prolonged exposure to the traumatic events, the victims, trapped in the intolerable pain, are eager to find a way to heal their trauma gradually. The most core features of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Thus, traumatic recovery is established upon power regaining and new connections with the world (Herman, 2015, p. 152). Hence, the process of trauma recovery is divided into four stages: reconstructing the story, mourning the traumatic loss, reconnecting with others, resolving the trauma. Only grasp the essence of the recovery strategies mentioned above can the traumatized achieve their healing gradually.

This article chooses Singer's *Enemies: A Love Story* as the research subject from the perspective of trauma is because the protagonists are almost holocaust survivors. Their career, belief, self-recognition are almost totally destroyed in the traumatic experience, thus they are plagued by different symptoms to various extents. By applying the trauma theory to interpret this novel, it is aimed not only to depict the traumatized history of the Holocaust and its universe evil from a new perspective, but also to remind the readers that history cannot be forgotten.

Analysis of Traumatic Symptoms in *Enemies: A Love Story*

Those who are inflicted with trauma will experience different traumatic symptoms. Traumatic events may lead to various psychological disorders such as fear, horror, anxiety, helplessness, or develop into a series of unexpected symptoms. Various traumatic symptoms, including avoidance, vigilance, flashback, depression, and sleeping disorder, are shown on the protagonists to different extents. Singer believes that these characters have the dual roles of victims of Nazis and victims of their fate, thus the treatment to the traumatic symptoms are varied due to their different personalities. The article will analyze their traumatic symptoms from the following three aspects: intrusion, constriction, hyperarousal.

Intrusion

Generally, trauma means not only a blow to the body, but more frequently, a shock to the mind, which will shatter one's sense of security and create a sense of helplessness instead. Most of the time the trauma is invasive and not easy to be found as it "invades you, takes you over, becomes a dominating feature of your interior landscape ... and in the process threatens to drain you and leave you empty" (Caruth, 1995, p. 183). The traumatic past will haunt the traumatized for long, and they will accordingly re-experience it for the rest of their life.

Intrusion refers to the feelings that sudden and unwanted traumatic memories will intrude into or replace what's happening now. The fact is that the feelings or emotions generated in the past are felt by people as they are happening in the present. Nightmare, flashback, and illusion are the most common forms of intrusion. Almost all of the characters in *Enemies: A Love Story* are the Nazi victims, as they all have lived through the cruel Holocaust. Although it has been a time since the massacre ended, it is not easy to erase the traces left by this traumatic event from their heart, and the traumatic shadow still haunts their later lives.

The novel begins with the scene that Herman Broader is tormented by a nightmare of chaos in which he can not distinguish whether he is in America, in Tzivkev, or a German camp. In this state of re-experience, his past experiences staying at the hayloft are splintered into his present dream and drive him to lose his essential judgemental ability as an ordinary man. He needs to utilize his volition to force himself to wake up from the chaotic dreaming state. Additionally, Herman often has a habit of spinning a fantasy, without regard to what situation it is. When he is taking a bath at his apartment, he conceives of the scene that the Nazis come back to take control of New York so that he is busy hiding safe and sound in the bathroom where Yadwiga will bring him food to keep his survival as in Lipsk. When he is walking along the street as usual, his eyes involuntarily keep searching for hiding places in case to avoid the Nazis' possible chase.

It is often problematic for the individual to elaborate on the most painful moments in their memories. These memory fragments will lead the individual to repeatedly experience the threat as if it were still existing at present, without being aware it was long ago. Sensory cues that overlap with feelings experienced during a traumatic event, such as a similar sound, color, smell, movement, or physical sensation, will trigger intrusive traumatic memories in an instant.

Masha, Herman's obsessed lover, a Holocaust survivor who escapes by betraying sex, bears the same traumatic symptom as Herman. Masha needs significantly less sleep and often wakes up refreshed by just several minutes of doze. She is frequently plagued by her dream in which she will talk in different languages, and the dead are continually haunting her. More surprisingly, she even shows Herman the scars the dead had left on her arms, breasts and thighs in the dream, which is beyond the common understanding. Every time she sleeps, she will re-experience the savagery and humiliation in the dream as she describes it as "If I do fall asleep, then I'm back with them immediately. They're dragging me, beating me, chasing me" (Singer, 2012, p. 76). From her description, it is easy to detect the horror and tension of a vulnerable Nazi victim. Even as she was making out with Herman, she suddenly wakes up with a start and asks where she was five years ago, and all that coming to her mind reminds her she was still living with the dead at that time, soon she gets stuck in the painful recollection of the Holocaust. To alleviate the sleeping disorder, Masha turns to the help of the sleeping pills, but it doesn't work at all as nightmares still haunt her in her sleep.

For the traumatized, “it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; that survival itself, in other words, can be a crisis” (Caruth, 1995, p. 9). Masha’s mother, Shifrah Puah, another survivor who has a narrow escape from the Holocaust, suffers from similar symptom of intrusion. A scar made by a Nazi bayonet is still left on her left cheek. She represents the traditional Jews who still mourns for the past related to the ghettos and death camps. She insists on wearing black to express her condolences for her dead family and relatives. Though she survives the massacre, she never regards her survival as a fortune. Instead, she claims that remaining alive is the greatest sin she had committed as she stands at the back of those innocent men and women who have been martyred. She even envies the dead and hopes that “my bones would be buried in the Holy Land” (Singer, 2012, p. 150). This sense of “survivor guilt” grows more severe when the survivor witnesses the suffering or death of others, which will create a heavy burden of conscience (Herman, 2015, p. 69). The sense of guilt and self-blame makes Shifrah Puah’s traumatic syndrome more severe in her life. She is greatly afflicted by the frequent illusions in her daily life. She often has an illusionary sense of burnt smell, while breaking the dishes as well as spilling over milk are her regular occurrences so that her daughter Masha attributes all those abnormal behaviors to the “Hitler sickness” (Singer, 2012, p. 28). She often immerses in the flashbacks of past life, and it is due to so many times of re-experience of those past miserable memories that she often makes mistakes in real life. Once at that very moment she was breaking a glass, she is reminded of the tragic picture of how the Rabbi’s daughter is humiliated by the Nazis: “Only God in heaven knew how much she suffered, how tortured she was by nightmares. How can one stay alive remembering all she remembered?” (Singer, 2012, p. 40). Though Shifrah Puah escapes the nightmarish upheaval from the death camp and restarts her new life in the post-Holocaust America, she cannot shake off the traumatic memories, getting immersed in the reminiscence of the past days of darkness, death and decay.

Tamara, Herman’s original wife, shares the same problem of intrusion in the initial stage, suffering the most tremendous grief of losing her two children during the Hitler invasion. Though Tamara is fortunate to escape from the shot of the Nazis and remains alive to start a new life by immigrating to New York, she cannot escape the fate of bearing the same traumatic symptom. The typical one shown on her is intrusion as she has severe sleep disorder when she first arrives in America. She describes her sleeping state as “I don’t sleep but sink into an abyss. I fall and fall and never reach bottom. Then I hang suspended...I get through the days all right, but my nights are filled with terror” (Singer, 2012, p. 111). In her torturing dream, she often dreams of her dead children who will talk with her all the whole night. Although relying on the sleeping pills, the intrusion of her dead children in the dream cannot be alleviated because there is no incredible trauma than the loss of the children for Tamara as a mother.

Constriction

The constrictive process brings about the formation of a truncated memory, devoid of emotion and meaning (Herman, 2015, p. 60), which interferes with anticipation for the future (Herman, 2015, p. 61). The people with constrictive symptom disallow themselves to overthink about the symptom, which may bring them pain, terror, etc.

Herman is a typical example of attempting to avoid talking about any subject about children since his two children were shot by the Nazis during the war. Among his papers are the photographs of his two children, “but

he never dared to look at them” (Singer, 2012, p. 57). Even at the reunion with Tamara for the first time in New York, he remains to avoid asking about any information about their children, which is not how a father should react. Herman’s avoidance of taking responsibility as a father is shown obviously in his multi-relationship with other women. He will immediately change the topic of having a baby when Yadviga or Masha expresses their wish of being a mother. He admits that “of all his fears, the greatest was his fear of again becoming a father” (Singer, 2012, p. 121). Herman never acts like a father to his children from beginning to end. When Masha seduces him to give up the role of a family man to elope with her, he deserts the pregnant Yadviga right away, who is about to give birth. In this sense, the portrayal of Herman is seen as a man who avoids taking responsibility as a father. He tries to constrict the thoughts, feelings, and any reminder associated with the trauma of losing his children, and in turn, the traumatic event of losing children worsens his sense of fear and helplessness.

Moreover, Herman constricts his connection with his fellow countrymen and distant relatives. He prefers not merely to keep distance from the fellow countrymen from Tzivkev, but also he never tries to make contact with any distant relative somewhere in America, on account of his belief that “every human contact was a potential danger to him” (Singer, 2012, p. 45). He even guides Yadviga to keep their apartment door chained all day long and teaches her to say the simple English “Excuse me, I have no time” to stay away from the curious neighbors. After Herman survives the Holocaust, he never attempts to inquire about the whereabouts of his wife Tamara and two children, who are taken away by the Nazis during the war. When he immigrates to America, he never looks through the information for missing people in the Yiddish newspaper for his lost relatives. When he comes across the information looking for him posted by Tamara’s uncle, the first thought comes to his mind is “I’ll pretend I didn’t see it” (Singer, 2012, p. 47). Even when Shifrah Puah kindly reminds him of the newspaper message again, he makes a lie to pretend that is just something unimportant. As to the reason for Herman’s constriction, on the one hand, he refuses to make connections with the old relatives so that to avoid any trigger of the traumatic memories. On the other hand, he fears that his polygamous state will be revealed by others, and then he will be arrested and deported by the U.S. government.

Masha behaves similarly to Herman in representing her constriction to get connected to the outside world. When she escapes to America to start a new life, she keeps alienated from all her refugee friends and lives a lonely life with her mother. Besides, she also estranges herself from the connection with the neighbors, for her mother is scared to see people: “If someone knocks at the door, she thinks it’s a Nazi” (Singer, 2012, p. 88). Her miserable experience in the death camp leaves her with fear and distrust when contacting people after the war. The shadow of the humiliation of the Nazis haunts and hurts Masha, making her unable to interact with people in a usual way. Consequently, She forms a habit of avoiding “unnecessary” emotional communication and acts in a numb and indifferent way.

The protagonists like Herman and Masha try to deliberately constrict their feelings and avoid everything related to the traumatic experience, so as not to cause unnecessary traumatic stimulation, and not to trigger the traumatic memories. The Holocaust is over, but it is not easy to erase its impact on the suffering of the Jews. The traumatic memory of the Holocaust will accompany the Jewish victims for long.

Hyperarousal

The third typical symptom, hyperarousal refers to the over-alert state of the traumatized, which makes them easy to be frightened. Their bodies are constantly alert to danger. They always have a somewhat startled and intense response to unexpected stimuli associated with traumatic events (Herman, 2015, p. 50). People with the symptom of hyperarousal will be more sensitive to any sound, hard to get asleep, and wake up more often. It seems that the traumatic events reset their nervous system. In *Enemies: A Love Story*, the symptom of hyperarousal shows respectively in Herman, Masha and Yadwiga.

Since immigrating to the US, Herman has lived an extremely isolated life, avoiding unnecessary contact with people, including his neighbors. He even asks Yadwiga to chain the door to keep the neighbors out when he is not at home. Herman is always on high alert, ready for any imaginary potential danger. When he is walking along the street, taking a bath, going on a relaxed holiday with Masha, or even at Rabbi's noisy party, his eyes keep searching a good hiding place in case the Nazis were to come to America to arrest him. A three-year enclosed stay at the hayloft drives Herman to be very timid and cowardly. He is highly sensitive to his surroundings and in extreme lack of insecurity. Whenever taking a seat at the cafeteria, the seat at the corner or next to the wall is always his priority for less contact with others: "He preferred a table next to the wall or, if possible, in a corner between two walls, so that no one could come up behind him" (Singer, 2012, p. 41). Herman constantly feels imperiled by those imaginary threats and lives in a life full of fear and stress. His world is full of insecurity and disbelief in that he is too coward to take responsibility as a husband, a father as well as a lover, and lack of courage to face the current entangling life with three women. He confesses that he "want(s) to have all three" (Singer, 2012, p. 71), but he frequently worries that he will be arrested and deported by the government due to the revelation of his polygamy. When Masha learns about Herman's actual polygamous status at the Rabbi's party, a sharp rebuke from her at their break-up moment reasonably comments on Herman's cowardice: "You're not only a Nazi but a coward afraid of his own shadow" (Singer, 2012, p. 188).

Masha also suffers from hyperarousal. On the one hand, she has great difficulty in getting regular sleep. From sleeping little to relying on sleeping pills and alcohol to sleep more, she cultivates a lousy sleeping habit in which her sleep is often interrupted by strange nightmares, and she remains in a state of high tension during the sleeping process. On the other hand, she has bad temper and irritates quickly, which results in her tense and inexplicable relationship with her mother. She often quarrels with her sick and aging mother for some trifles, and they defend themselves and hurt each other with harsh words. Masha loves her mother deeply at heart, but both are the traumatized victims of the Holocaust whose ability to love has been significantly damaged. They express their love for each other in such a weird way that they keep high vigilance for long time during the war, and it is too hard for them to change this habit even in the post-Holocaust world. Furthermore, due to prolonged suffering from high vigilance emotionally, Masha eats her ultimate bitter fruit. She fancies that she is pregnant and even imagines the signs of pregnancy such as menstrual disruption, growing belly and baby kicking, but it turns out that everything is just a fantasy. The doctor gives his diagnosis: "'Her whole pregnancy was here!' the doctor said, pointing his index finger to his temple" (Singer, 2012, p. 148). The truth is that Masha longs to have a child by Herman and places her hope on the child's birth to help her alleviate her trauma, but the exposure of her false pregnancy makes the bubble of hope dashed. Masha's inner desire for a child is too strong to bring about this

mirthless farce, and all the pregnant signs she experiences are the inevitable result of her long-term nervous tension.

The loyal Yadviga represents the image of a typical Polish peasant woman who retains the traditional Polish life convention. She saves her beloved man Herman from the persecution of the Nazis by hiding him in the hayloft for almost three years at the great risk of jeopardizing her family. After immigrating to America with Herman, she cannot change her true nature as a country girl and shows her vulnerable and nervous personality vividly. As a newcomer to the United States, she cannot adapt herself well to the fast pace of modern American life. She is afraid of traveling alone on the subway and never dares to go beyond the block she lives. Due to her illiteracy, Herman buys her a locket in which a slip of paper with her name and address written on it contained for fear she may get lost. But Yadviga never trusts anything in written form and is always on high alert to the unfamiliar world. When strolling with Herman, she always holds him firmly by the arm even though Herman repeatedly comforts her that he won't run away. Singer describes her loyalty as "she clung to him with the devotion of a dog" (Singer, 2012, p. 13). Whenever Herman plays the role of the so-called traveling book salesman and stays away from home, she is afraid that he won't come back. Before Herman's departure, Yadviga says goodbye to him as if the Nazis were to rule America and his life were in danger. Though Yadviga gets married to Herman in America and the neighbors call her Mrs. Broader, they maintain an unequal relationship like master and servant as in the old time, which is a critical factor in facilitating Yadviga's lack of security and high alertness to the unknown fear.

There is no denying that traumatic events not only hurt the traumatized's emotions and feelings, but leave tremendous negative impact on their self-worth and love for life. It is known to the traumatized that to shrug off the shadow of the past is very hard, but they still strive to struggle against the haunting of the past. As a consequence, some of them let go of the past pain and move toward the bright future by utilizing the trauma healing strategies correctly, while some of them fail to overcome the pain and lead to a tragedy.

Analysis of Trauma Recovery in the Novel

In the *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman indicates that the core experiences of psychological trauma are the loss of empowerment and connection with the world (Herman, 2015, p. 152). Therefore, the healing process is established upon the empowerment of the traumatized and the restoration of interpersonal relationships. As to analysis of trauma recovery, Herman and Masha fail to get recovery from the past trauma, and the reasons can be traced from their disconnection with the world, disbelief in God and inability to forge a new identity.

Herman and Masha's Failure in Recovery

The traumatic victims become more vulnerable after a traumatic event, and their sense of self has been shattered, and the only effective way to rebuild it is to reconnect with others. However, Herman does not realize the essence of the trauma healing strategies and wraps himself tightly to keep away from touch with the outside world. As a new Jewish immigrant to America, Herman endeavors to avoid contact with his relatives in this new country and never takes the initiative to seek help from them in such a tough and unfamiliar environment. Even with the three women who signify the intimate family members, he behaves like an elusive liar who is hard to capture his true nature. To cover up his polygamy, Herman keeps weaving different lies between them. He tells the innocent Yadviga that he is a traveling bookseller for better consort with Masha, conceals the fact about

Tamara's return to Masha for the avoidance of Masha's suspicion, and disguises his true self before Tamara for a perfect self-image.

For another, Herman's disbelief in God is attributed to his failure to recover from his trauma. During the Holocaust, most people went through the pain of being betrayed by a merciless God, which inevitably led them to question the fundamental values of their faith (Herman, 2015, p. 88). Herman expresses his changed stand clearly, which is reflected in his reply to Yadwiga's questioning about why he breaks God's commandment: "There is no God, do you hear? And even there were, I would defy Him" (Singer, 2012, p. 84). The image of God in his mind becomes merciless and senseless after the Holocaust, not the loving one he once believed in, "If a God of mercy did exist in the heavenly hierarchy, then he was only a helpless godlet, a kind of heavenly Jew among the heavenly Nazis" (Singer, 2012, p. 99). These doubts about belief lead to unbearable psychological loss, and even to an entwined depression for the traumatized. Herman often feels that "phrases like 'a better world' and 'a brighter tomorrow' seemed to him a blasphemy on the ashes of the tormented" (Singer, 2012, p. 16), and his anger rises when hearing about those seemingly positive descriptions of the future. This dehumanizing experience of hiding in a hayloft for almost three years deprives him of the enthusiasm and expectation for future life. More seriously, he begins to doubt his value as an individual and deems himself as "a riddle... a fraud, a transgressor - a hypocrite, too" (Singer, 2012, p. 13). In other words, he is a victim of himself as he stays in a world in which the traumatic past has deprived him of spiritual aspirations (Sherman, 1983, p. 149). His disappearance at the end of the story turns his recurring indecisions into a permanent resignation as he has excluded from the participation of the story (Gil, 2016, p. 368).

Besides, Herman's inability to forge a new Jewish identity in the post-Holocaust world is one more important factor for his healing failure. Religious doubts that followed the Holocaust reflects widespread trauma and psychological suffering (Zhang & Chen, 2019, p. 298). Herman wavers on whether to adhere to his Jewish faith, and appears to be losing his faith in Judaism. "Herman fasted but did not go to the synagogue" (Singer, 2012, p. 120) though he knew the neighbor may spit at the mention of his name. In the vast crowd, Herman feels so perplexed about the Jewish identity that he gradually gets lost in this new world and cannot find his proper place. He wonders where his Jewishness is in the great tide of assimilation, and reckons his fellow "all had the same wish: to assimilate as quickly as possible and get rid of their accents. Herman belonged neither to them nor to America, Polish, or Russian Jews" (Singer, 2012, p. 92), he is well aware that he has distanced himself from the Jewish community, and his traditional philosophy of religious belief has collapsed in the wake of the Holocaust. Although Herman resents the way modern Jews are abandoning their traditions and actively assimilating themselves into secular life, he can't help but engage in this assimilation he despises. "How many times had he tried to spit in the face of worldliness, and each time been kicked away. Yet here he was on his way to a party. Half of the people had been tortured and murdered, and the other half were giving parties" (Singer, 2012, p. 173).

The most regrettable way to end the traumatic misery is at the sacrifice of one's life, and Masha is the very one who cannot escape from this heart-wrenching fate. As the daughter of a prestigious Hebrew family, she is caught by the Nazis and suffers from inhuman torture, in which she sustains her life by her promiscuity with men at the camp. After the war, her traumatic symptoms as flashbacks and nightmares are shown in cognitional level, irritability and over-excitement in emotional level, and argumentative and alcohol-addictive trend in behavioral

level. Her failure to achieve ultimate healing is attributed to two factors: For one thing, she chooses the wrong listeners to retell her traumatic story and accordingly disconnects with the world. For another, she loses her faith in God and her hope for future, and thus becomes unable to find any meaning in life.

In the beginning, Masha attempts to share her traumatic story to get healing. Since she is alienated from her refugee friends after the immigration, she has less audiences to choose, from which only her mother Shifrah Puah and Herman are included. But these audience, both victims of holocaust trauma, are not the suitable options. The first listener Shifrah Puah loses her family members in the death camp. Because of that she has severe post-traumatic stress disorder such as hallucination, flashbacks, and vigilance, etc. Most of the details Masha shares with her mother are their remembrance of the hateful Holocaust. Consequently, when the two PTSD victims share in a wrong way, instead of alleviating their trauma, they become more traumatized than before. On the other hand, Masha's reconstruction of her past stories fills the gap of Herman's blank three-year hiding in the hayloft, which leads to the new problem that Masha cannot acquire any comfort from her story retelling. Still, her listener Herman becomes increasingly obsessed with the appealing camp stories.

Masha's failure also relates to her loss of faith in God and hope for a future life after the Holocaust. The trauma shatters her faith, in which what she experienced in the camp makes her impossibly to hold on to her faith in God any longer. "God himself eats meat - human flesh... If you have seen what I have seen, you would know that God approves of slaughter" (Singer, 2012, p. 27). She expresses her great dissatisfaction and hatred towards God many times for His indifference and ruthlessness in the face of the Jewish persecution. She gradually loses her hope and faith: "if God can instill such violence in innocent beasts, there is no hope...It made me hate God" (Singer, 2012, p. 31).

Furthermore, Masha has been separated from her unfeeling husband and longs to establish a true family with Herman, and gain a new identity as a wife and a mother. She hopes that the child's arrival will soothe her past trauma and bring her happiness instead, since children are seen as the symbol of hope in different cultural traditions (Zhang & Chen, 2019, p. 294). In the end, the revelation of the false pregnancy symbolizes the destruction of hope for the future. Masha's trauma has worsened as a consequence, which prompts her to put an end to all the traumas accompanied by ending her life.

Tamara and Yadwiga's Success in Recovery

By contrast, Tamara and Yadwiga discover that the essence of self reconstruction and trauma recovery is to live in the moment with expectations for the future. They manage to find a way to work through the negative impact of the traumatic event and lead a brand new life instead.

As the witness of the ruthless murder of her dearest parents and children, Tamara firstly shows disappointment and hopelessness about life and lives like a walking dead. The Holocaust experience drives her from a passionate activist to an indifferent pessimist. However, she is not content with her trauma-trapped state and begins to find a way to get rid of her self-enclosure, reaching out to the outside world. She begins to abandon her old self and takes the initiative to find a new identity. She starts to take over her uncle's bookstore and gradually discovers her management talents, which solidifies her social identity as an actual bookstore owner. More than that, she actively participates in reconstructing her new life, rediscovering the meaning of children in her life, which is reflected in her constant help and care of pregnant Yadwiga. She confesses she is willing to be a

second mother to the baby as she understands the better way to heal the traumatic loss of her children is to rediscover the role as a non-biological mother. Giving to others is the essence of the survivor's mission in the recovery for the traumatized. In the process of caring for others, trauma survivors feel recognized, loved, and cared for themselves (Herman, 2015, p. 233), which significantly helps them better heal.

Tamara is willing to listen to and share the experience with others in that she endeavors to pursue more intimate interpersonal relationships and strives to create a new self-identity to embrace the new life actively: "Herman, you can tell me everything. In the first place, we were once together... Perhaps I can help you" (Singer, 2012, p. 81). When Herman loses his job as well as his hope for life, Tamara offers to help him as much as she can like an angel and guides him out of his temporary predicament: "Let me be your manager. Put yourself entirely in my hands" (Singer, 2012, p. 194), "I'll do something. Beginning tomorrow, I'll take care of all your needs" (Singer, 2012, p. 195). Masha deserts Herman, but Tamara shows him compassion, and she would like to teach and guide Herman to gain the power of self-reliance as she is willing to work with him to manage her uncle's bookstore. More importantly, Tamara decides to undergo an operation to take out the bullet left by the Nazis in her body in the end, which implies Tamara is ready to turn over a new leaf for future life. In other words, Tamara represents a new generation of Holocaust survivors who can overcome the past trauma and cherish hope for the future.

The main reasons why Yadwiga can get recovery gradually are attributed to two aspects: one is that she abandons the past family identity as a wife and establishes her new identity as a mother. The other is that she finds the new religious identity in Judaism due to her final conversion. As Herman's lies are constantly exposed, Yadwiga's attitude towards him changes from the unconditional trust as "the devotion of a dog" (Singer, 2012, p. 13) at the beginning to growing suspicion, and then to her defense for the rights as a legal wife. "Yadwiga suspected that he sometimes spent time with other women on his trips" (Singer, 2012, p. 85). She shows her suspicion directly and interrogates him with the calling "liar": "She now poured out her resentment at Herman, accused him of running around with other women" (Singer, 2012, p. 119), she sees through Herman's disloyalty in effect and begins to know how to fight for her interests as a wife. At the last time when Herman leaves the pregnant Yadwiga for Masha's tempting elopement, Yadwiga expresses her indifference to his irresponsible leave and keeps silent all the way, which is out of Herman's expectation. Silence is her loudest reply to Herman's disloyalty and irresponsibility. Instead of counting on Herman whole-heartedly as her original spiritual support, her baby became the substitute of her spiritual sustenance, which is also her light of hope for the future life.

Additionally, Yadwiga's conversion to Judaism brings her a brand new religious identity as a Jew. Before her conversion, "she tried to observe traditional Judaism. She remembered the Jewish rituals from the time she had worked for Herman's parents" (Singer, 2012, p. 84), and she insists on fasting on Yom Kippur. She goes to the synagogue dressed up as a Jew, and the entrance ticket costs her ten dollars that she had worked so hard to save from living expenses. When she became a convert to Judaism, "she observed the laws of purification and Kashruh" (Singer, 2012, p. 144), and even "reprimanded him (Herman) more and more for not conducting himself like other Jews" (Singer, 2012, p. 144). Yadwiga's conversion to Judaism is accompanied by a significant change in her attitude toward her neighbors. "Yadwiga no longer kept her neighbors at a distance. They visited, shared secrets, and gossiped with her" (Singer, 2012, p. 144). The neighbors give her instruction in Judaism and kindly remind her to pay attention to whether her husband is having an affair. Regaining decision-making power

and rebuilding a sense of connection play a crucial part in the process of trauma recovery. As Yadviga is no longer held back by past trauma, she learns to develop new relationships out of her small self-enclosed world and focuses on becoming the person she truly wants to be. She has always longed for an independent job and is willing to participate in social community life. She yearns for a new life at heart, though with a pointed belly, she buys paint to redecorate the walls for a holiday. Her relationship with Tamara has evolved from a master and servant relationship to a supportive sisterhood. They are united in a relentless effort to forget the past and start anew. Meanwhile, Yadviga's firm faith in Judaism and her igniting hope for a better future are rewarded with her long-awaited baby. The misery she witnesses doesn't suppress her firm will to survive and live for the future, life in America is a new start for her, and her baby in the post-Holocaust world is a symbol of rebirth after the destruction instead.

Conclusion

The Holocaust became an evil that recalled a trauma of atrocity and terror which should be distinguished from the other traumatizing events in the world (Alexander, 2013, p. 97). This historical event of Jewish mass murder plays an indispensable role in the construction of modern Jewish identity. The traumatic memories of the Holocaust constantly influence the Jews' adherence to their self-identity and national identity. The fragments of traumatic memory of the Holocaust will not be erased entirely. Still, the Jews eventually have to learn how to transcend the trauma of the Holocaust and struggle for an opportunity to be reborn, thus finding a new way for the Jewish nation to break through the siege of anti-Semitism in the process of modernization.

Through the collage of traumatic memories, Singer's *Enemies: A Love Story* vividly depicts the inhuman suffering of Holocaust survivors. Most of them are in the torture of post-traumatic stress order, and their everyday lives are severely affected by diverse traumatic symptoms. Trauma is difficult to dissolve by nature, but the traumatized first should acknowledge the existence of trauma, gradually find strategies to alleviate its impact, learn to abandon the past traumatic identity, rebuild the sense of security and regain the connection with everyday life.

Those trapped in trauma are bound to seek a way to recover from its torture. In the novel, the characters are struggling to get rid of the constraint of trauma, and some of them end up in tragedy due to their failure to grasp the essence of recovery strategies. Herman and Masha's inability to get recovery from the past trauma results from their disconnection with the world, disbelief in God and inability to forge a new identity. As to the protagonists who are successfully utilizing recovery strategies, Tamara is willing to look for a new identity and pursue more intimate relationships with others, while Yadviga tries to establish her new identity as a loving mother instead of a loyal wife and finds her subjectivity by converting to Judaism.

Trauma will not merely leave an indelible imprint on one's mind, but also has a specific impact on their character and ultimate fate. Given that Singer's works tend to focus on the plight of the existence of human beings, this article studies Singer's Holocaust-related novel from the perspective of trauma. It will further broaden the research depth on Singer's works and draw public attention to the dilemma of human survival in modern times.

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