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The portrayal of holocaust experience in Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution*

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Abstract--The present paper highlights how Michael Chabon's novel *The Final Solution* focuses on the Holocaust Experience in the twenty-first century American Literature. The Holocaust is known as the Shoah was the genocide of European Jews during World War II between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany. Its collaborators systematically murdered six million Jews across German occupied Europe around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. The segregation of Jews in ghettos culminated in the policy of extermination the Nazis called the Final Solution to the Jewish Question. The title of the novel refer Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story "The Final Problem" in which Holmes confronts his greatest enemy, Professor Moriarty, at Reichenbach Falls. *The Final Solution* is the Nazis' plan for the genocide of the Jewish people, as well as *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, a 1974 novel written in homage to Conan Doyle by Nicholas Meyer. However, *The Final Solution* supplements and complicates the standard interpretation of the novel as an exercise in Holocaust piety by focusing on an "impious" subtext that appears to contradict some of the text's more overt assumptions. This paper also argues that Chabon's *The Final Solution* challenges the dominant conception of the Holocaust as an incomprehensible, ineffable, sacred event by returning the Nazi genocide to the realm of history especially, the history of a colonizing Western modernity.

Keywords--holocaust, homage, jewish extermination, segregation, genocide, impious.

Introduction

Michael Chabon is a contemporary American novelist, screen writer, columnist, and short story writer. The novel *The Final Solution* was published in 2004 and it is about an investigation led by an unknown old man. The readers understand him as Sherlock Holmes, during the final years of World War II. The centre level of the permanent exhibition looks at how Nazi policies are changed to the Jews during the war, from persecution to mass slaughter. Nazi leaders separated Jews from the rest of Europe's population as Germany increased its influence across the continent using laws, distinctive markings, and relocation to ghettos. The world of the concentration camp, which grew quickly in the 1940s, is a main emphasis of this level. Jews, Soviet POWs, Poles, political prisoners, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, and others were among the hundreds of thousands of detainees held in the dozens of camps the Nazis constructed. These prisoners endured degrading treatment, forced labour, and even death. This floor of the show covers Jewish experience in ghettos, concentration camps, and hiding. It efforts to preserve the evidence of Jewish life during the Nazi era, armed resistance in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and Anne Frank's legacy are some of the highlights. The Holocaust is a subtle, delicately interwoven but also pervasive element of the plot, despite this detective story taking place in Sussex 1944.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to trace how the Holocaust experience portrayed in Micheal Chabon's novel, *The Final Solution*. This research paper aims to bring the following objectives:

1. To study how the theme of Holocaust is effective in the novel *The Final Solution* to get the better kind of problem of twenty first century's, moral, reality, and identity crisis.
2. To bring into focal point in varied aspects of the novelist language, experience, vision, and from a different angle.
3. To find a realistic picture of Chabon's characters portrayed in the novel.
4. To study the lives of nine year old Jewish refugee.
5. To recognize and undertake that the protagonist Linus Steinman life being Jewish and
6. how he underwent the struggles for his identity.
7. To recognizes other protagonist Eighty- nine year old man's detective knowledge in the novel.

Scope of the Study

The Scope of the study is developed from different aspects. The Holocaust is frequently described as unrepresentable horrors. However a new generation of Jewish American writers have been returning to this history repeatedly insisting on engaging with "impious" way. Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution's* main theme is focusing on the Holocaust from both animal and human perspectives. It engages with the parrot's and the elderly man's points of view, and examines at their significance to the representation of the protagonist's Holocaust

recollections. The parrot's animal and the old man's Holmesian perspectives, aided by Holocaust imagery and consciousness representation techniques, evoke Holocaust scenes and Nazi images, and show a Holocaust that is irrational, unknowable, and unspeakable. In this novel Chabon reconfigures the focalization structure of Holmesian canon to demonstrate the inability of Holmesian reason to solve the Holocaust mystery, and the inability of human language to speak about the Holocaust. According to Chabon, this unusual focalization pattern aids in presenting the protagonist's trauma and existential dilemma, as well as artistically narrating his Holocaust recollections. This novel argues that the Holocaust in ways that renews and ensures its significance for contemporary generations.

Review of Literature

Anna Richardson (2010), in her article "Crime Narrative as a Paradigm for Exploring Responses to the Holocaust in *The Final Solution*," explores that the narrative device of distorter as Detective is practically a standardized feature of contemporary Holocaust fiction, replicating as it does the reader's own quest for understanding of the Holocaust. Contemporary Holocaust narratives can be seen to borrow heavily from some of the most recognizable narrative patterns of crime fiction. Specifically, the individual quest for knowledge in the face of a crisis that threatens the fabric of social order, creating dialectic between knowing and unknowing that is played out in the symbiotic relationship between two or more narrative strands. This article highlights how Chabon employs in his narratives in order to engage the reader's knowledge of the Holocaust as a powerful tool.

Stef Craps and Gert Buelens (2015), in their article "Traumatic Mirroring: Holocaust and Colonial Trauma in Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution*," reflects how the Holocaust infused, and also trauma in Chabon's novel. The connection between the Holocaust and colonialism is reinforced in chapter ten, the penultimate chapter of the novel, which highlights the tragedy of animal suffering. The fact that animals feature prominently in the story can be accounted by the implicit Metaphorical link with the victims of the Holocaust including Linus's parents were herded like cattle into boxcars and dispatched to the human slaughter houses of the extermination camps. The novel is not much a parable about the loss of a rational and moral world brought about by the Holocaust as a complex, multilayered text that contextualizes the Holocaust within a broader history of European imperialism and colonialism, suggesting that the old order embodied by the Holmes figure a modern icon and the epitome of rational thought was itself inherently violent and generative of untold suffering. In this article how Chabon's novel *the Final Solution* makes visible and how Gilroy calls the "knotted intersection" of different histories of violence perpetrated in the name of racist ideologies and imperialist political projects.

Gustavo Sanchez Canales (2013), in his article, "Holocaust Imagery in Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution*," discusses that the trope of muteness, predominant in Holocaust narratives of all sorts, functions in fiction deliberately and explicitly to raise and explore connections and disjuncture's among fictional constructs, textual omissions, and historical events. However, the muteness symbolizes the source of trauma, the Holocaust itself and the effect of such trauma throughout a

character's life. He explores the significance of four Holocaust images that are a reminder of the Nazi horror through the story of little Linus's life. The images are trains, electrified fence/barbed wire, heat and burning, numbers in German uttered by the parrot. The last prominent "Holocaust image" used within Chabon's narrative is the numbers in German uttered by the parrot. Throughout the article, Chabon's choice of Conan Doyle's detective story in *The Final Solution* to address the issue of the Holocaust. The novelist finds it most interesting how Doyle deals with and manages the psychological and logical elements of this kind of narrative. It seems to be confronted with the appropriateness or resorting to fiction in order to approach the Nazi horror.

Guanghai Shang (2022), in his article, "Narrating the Holocaust: A Focalization Reading of Michael Chabon's *The Final Solution*," explains how Michael Chabon narrates the Holocaust both animal and human perspectives. It draws on the existing scholarship regarding focalization, it engages with the parrot's and the old man's points of view, and looks at their significance to the representation of the protagonist's Holocaust memories. The Holocaust imagery and consciousness representation techniques, the parrot's animal and the old man's Holmesian perspectives evoke the scenes of the Holocaust and the Nazi images. Chabon reconfigures the focalization structure of Holmesian canon to demonstrate the inability of Holmesian reason to solve the mystery of the Holocaust. He portrayed the inability of human language to speak about the horror and trauma of the Holocaust. He narrates Chabon's unique focalization pattern helps to present the trauma and existential crisis of the protagonist, and narrate his Holocaust memories artistically.

Finding and Discussion

Michael Chabon's novel *The Final Solution* is a detective narrative. The story takes place in 1944; centres on an unnamed 89-year-old long-retired detective may or may not be Sherlock Holmes. He always referred to simply as "the old man," is primarily interest in beekeeping and his quest to locate a missing parrot who was a mute Jewish boy's only friend. The novel's title eludes both *the Final Solution*, the Nazis' plot to exterminate the Jewish people, and Doyle's Sherlock Holmes tale "*The Final Problem*," in which Holmes faces off against Professor Moriarty at Reichenbach Falls. It also alludes to the book *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*. Chabon's detective has retired to a sleepy Sussex village, where he is mainly known as an eccentric beekeeper who takes no interest in the local community. These facts are entirely in line with the data provided in the Sherlock Holmes canon. Many of the facts on which Chabon draws can be found in one particular story, "His Last Bow." As the title of this story suggests, in terms of his chronological age, it recounts the detective's final case.

Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes has been acting as a spy on behalf of the Germans and is on the point of delivering to his main contact, Von Bork, a crucial bit of information or this man thinks. Holmes uses this as a ruse to capture the German master spy. "His Last Bow" places Holmes's year of birth around 1854 and also mentions the retirement to the Sussex Downs and the beekeeping. In Conan Doyle's tale, Holmes is called out of retirement to aid the British government in thwarting the German threat as the First World War approaches.

Conan Doyle's most well-known literary character returns from retirement in *The Final Solution*, which takes place during World War II and deals with the murder of a British intelligence officer and the capture of a talking parrot. Linus Steinman, a young German Jewish refugee who appears to have been severely traumatised and made dumb, always has a parrot named Bruno by his side. The unique personality of the parrot serves as the inspiration for the detective story. It is an African grey, a species renowned for its remarkable mimicry of language. The parrot is portrayed as having more than a hint of magical realism, often reciting passages from Goethe's "Erlkonig" with a delivery. This novel remains unavailable to any of the other human characters in the novel, including the Holmes figure, but the reader is privy to thanks to a few carefully dropped hints, starting with the book's title.

The novel "*The Final Solution*" shows the limitations of reason in the face of the genocide mystery of the Holocaust, whose truth eludes even the best detectives, that the Holmes character solves the mysteries of the murder and the missing parrot but falls far short of solving the unspeakable secret shared by the parrot and the boy. *The Final Solution*, stars an aged, deteriorating Sherlock Holmes, appears to be less of a detective narrative than it is an elegy for the detective story, a sombre reflection on the loss of the moral and rational order of the universe, which is a prerequisite for the genre. The senior age and diminishing abilities of Sherlock Holmes, the final representative of the old order, to whom the reader's attention is repeatedly called that the world in which investigative talents were useful. Occasionally, Chabon's detective experiences a type of seizure that causes him to become disoriented. He enters a situation that seems to have some significance, only to be overcome by the horrible knowledge that he is unable to grasp its significance since his rational faculties are failing him:

When he came into the garden he saw a number of familiar objects and entities set about on an expanse of green as if arranged to a desired effect or inferable purpose, like counters or chessmen in some kingly recreation. Regarding them the old man experienced a moment of vertiginous horror during which he could neither reckon their number nor recall their names or purposes. He felt—with all his body, as one felt the force of gravity or inertia—the inevitability of his failure. The conquest of his mind by age was not a mere blunting or slowing down but an erasure, as of a desert capital by a drifting millennium of sand. Time had bleached away the ornate pattern of his intellect, leaving a blank white scrap. (FS 37)

The Old Man's failure to get Linus's notepad, which the boy most dropped while playing, results in another such existential dread moment of helping the old man to harvest honey from his beehives: "Meaning drained from the world like light fleeing the operation of an eclipse. The vast body of experience and lore, of corollaries and observed results, of which he felt himself the master, was at a stroke rendered useless. The world around him was a page of alien text" (FS 85). These "eclipses," are coming more and more frequently, are premonitions of the detective's ultimate failure to fully solve the mysteries facing him. At the end of the narrative, the old man never the less senses that something escapes him; he even comes to suspect that:

Meaning dwelled solely in the mind of the analyst" (FS 125). Continuing this line of thought, he speculates "that it was the insoluble problems . . . that reflected the true nature of things. The apparent significance and pattern had no more intrinsic sense than the chatter of an African grey parrot. One might so conclude; really, he thought, one might." (FS 125)

It seems neither the boy nor the detective can cope with the insoluble mystery of the Nazi genocide hinted at by the parrot's ostensibly senseless number sequences. The unthinkable evil of the Holocaust, which has made Linus mute, exceeds the old man's legendary powers of deductive reasoning. By declaring the Holocaust out of bounds of rational analysis, *The Final Solution* seems to effectively sacralise the Nazi genocide.

The novel has laid bare points to a deeper connection between the boy and the parrot is apparent at first glance. The parrot, which echoes the boy in repeating the numbers on the box cars in which the boy's parents were deported, emerges as not just a secondary witness to the Nazi persecution of the Jews but as a victim of empire in its own right. In fact, the parrot's own history of suffering seems to give it a special affinity with the boy, enabling it to effectively bear witness to the catastrophe evoked by the numbers the boy recited before going mute. Indeed, it is the parrot's testimony that keeps the memory of the Holocaust alive throughout the narrative, albeit for an uncomprehending audience, the train song is misinterpreted by all the adult characters and eventually dismissed by the old man as senseless chatter. In a sense, the parrot also serves as a therapist who helps the boy to rearticulate his trauma. After all, it is upon being reunited with his parrot that Linus finally regains his speech. Bruno's testimony turns out to have a healing effect on the therapist as well. By singing the train song, the parrot manages to ease the pain somewhat of its own tragic history:

If he sang the train song, which had lingered far longer and more vividly in his mind than any of the thousand other songs he could sing, for reasons unclear even to him but having to do with sadness, with the sadness of his captivity, of his wanderings, of his finding the boy, of the rolling trains, of the boy's Mama and Papa and the mad silence that had come over the boy when he was banished from them, then the rawness would be soothed. It was bliss to sing the train song. (FS 113)

Thus, Bruno's testimony thus ends up playing a beneficial role in relation to both the boy's history and the parrot's own history, which, as we have seen, resonates powerfully with the histories of slavery and colonialism. These overtones do not register with the human characters in the novel. The Holocaust remains an insoluble mystery hovering behind the story, so the horrors of slavery and colonial oppression do not enter anyone's consciousness, except in the form of casual similes and metaphors whose full import no one seems to realize. Indeed, Mrs. Panicker's association of the old man with "all the vanished vigour and rectitude of the Empire" (FS 53), indicates that the characters cling to a nostalgic view of empire as a glorious and noble enterprise that occludes the unsavoury reality of imperial domination.

Children born before or during the Holocaust suffered from drastic changes in their environment. Many of these children were separated from their parents and, they attached themselves to anything that they felt belonged to their own world. Linus is attached to his parrot Bruno, who plays a crucial role in the kid's post-Holocaust experience. This is probably due to the fact that by keeping a beloved object which the survivor associates with the deceased, the child survivor feels a sense of relief. In this way, the object enables the survivor to establish a link between the deceased and him/her. To some extent, it is a form to create a space of belonging. A true friendship become even more important than they were during latency, and the loss of a friend is felt like the loss of part of oneself. It is clear that after Linus's parents' disappearance, the kid can only find comfort in his parrot. Every single evening, Linus listens to Bruno's train song, a traumatic event as proved by the fact that his performance of the song is only delivered at night, when the trains packed with Jews were transported to the concentration camps:

If he sang the train song, which had lingered far longer and more vividly in his mind than any of the thousand other songs he could sing, for reasons unclear even to him but having to do with sadness, with the sadness of his captivity, of his wanderings, of his finding the boy, of the rolling trains, of the boy's mama and papa and the mad silence that had come over the boy when he was banished from them, then the rawness would be soothed. It was bliss to sing the train song. The sound of the train song, arising in the middle of the night, would jar the man from his slumber, send him scrabbling for his pencil and pad. When at last he was awake, sitting in a circle of light from the lamp with pencil clutched in his fingers, then—of course—Bruno would leave off singing. Night after night, this performance was repeated. (FS 115 -117)

Chabon's novel *The Final Solution* is written in the detective story style, it revolves around the violent murder of Richard Woolsey Shane. The reader finds that Mr. Shane's skull is smashed and the kid's parrot is missing. The old man finds the murderer. Curiously, the detective has travelled to London to try to find out more about the murderer. In a clear allusion to "Holocaust trains," he returns from London by train: Chabon says, "The old man stood on the top of the carriage stairs with the wire cage, hooded, at his feet. The train swayed slowly toward the end of the platform." (FS 125)

A second prominent example of "Holocaust Experience" is the references made to the electrified fence. Earlier in the narrative, when the old detective sees the boy trying to cross the fence, he shouts at him and says "For pity's sake, you'd be fried like a smelt! [...] One can only imagine the *stench*" (FS 4). Later in the story, the boy catches his hand on barbed wire. While the man is helping him get the wire out of his hand, the boy bursts into tears: "He took hold of the boy's hand. On the back, just below the wrist, a puffy nipple of flesh, tipped with the black filament of the barb. [...] The boy wept freely during this procedure" (FS 78). Significantly, the boy "wept freely" and finally "The barb tumbled free" (FS 79). The child's entrapment of his hand in the fence does not only account for his incapacity as epitome of the survivor's to escape the horrors of his background, but it is also a reminder of the impossibility of leaving history aside. The Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp was encircled by a high concrete wall

and surrounded by a double row of barbed-wire fencing, which covered a perimeter of approximately 16 kilometers. The barbed-wire fence, an effective way to prevent inmates from escaping, was closely guarded by SS soldiers armed with rifles and machine guns. There were also watch towers around the perimeter of the concentration camp which enabled the Nazis to keep the prisoners under control. If a prisoner was caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, he/she was immediately shot to death.

The Holocaust Experience shows the suggestive connections between slavery, colonialism, and the Holocaust that traverse in the novel, but which it is left up to the reader to detect may draw the Holocaust back into the realm of history, but the novel refrained from resolving horror into ready comprehensibility and from suggesting easy comparability between discrete instances of extreme suffering. It shows the evoking of traumatic modern history that embraces both the Holocaust and empire. *The Final Solution* collapsed these distinct strands of history into one another, suggesting equivalence, nor maintains their irreducible particularity. By bringing to light connections between dark histories lying just beneath the surface of the narrative, we shown how Chabon's novel made visible. Gilroy calls the "knotted intersection" of different histories of violence perpetrated in the name of racist ideologies and imperialist political projects. In our reading, then, *The Final Solution* is not so much a parable about the loss of a rational and moral world brought about by the Holocaust as a complex, multilayered novel. It contextualizes the Holocaust experience of the characters within a broader history of European imperialism and colonialism, suggesting that the old order embodied by the Holmes figure a modern icon and the epitome of rational thought was itself inherently violent and generative of untold suffering.

Conclusion

Chabon portrayed the holocaust experience of the Protagonist in *The Final Solution*, and the revelation of truth is a problematic concept for Holocaust narrative. It implies that it is possible for one who has not experienced the event to know, and by implication understand, that experience. It is within this problematic that detective fiction can be most useful as a frame for representing the Holocaust. The phenomenology of reception that Chabon employs in his narratives in order to engage the reader's knowledge of the Holocaust is a powerful tool; it is also a dangerous one. Although encouraging the reader to participate in a joint act of problem solving that corresponds to that of the protagonist. As it is in the cases noted above, providing the signposts that enable the reader to complete the narrative on his/her own terms, thus facilitating an active engagement with the text. Chabon explained in the novel the generation, which shares the terrible experience of bewilderment and helplessness, underwent the transformation of their world from some degree of stability and security to some degree of chaos. Probably, it lies one of the keys to both children's most shocking feature, their muteness. This symptom, which accounts for the traumatic experience of the tragedy of the Shoah can be interpreted as an epitome of the view held by many scholars that there is no appropriate language to explain what happened during the Holocaust.

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