

# **Main Protagonists in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* and Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's List*: A Comparison**

Tereza Mašíková

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**Keneally, Thomas. Schindler's Ark. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982.**

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**Styron, William. Sophie's Choice. New York: Vintage, 1992.**

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

**Gregory Jason Bell, B.A., M.B.A., M.A., Ph.D.**

Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Konzultant:

**Mgr. Vladimíra Fonfárová, Ph.D.**

Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur


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doc. Ing. Anežka Lengálová, Ph.D.  
děkanka



  
PhDr. Katarína Nemčoková, Ph.D.  
ředitelka ústavu

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na srovnání dvou hlavních postav, Sofii Zawistowskou a Oskara Schindlera v dílech *Sofiina volba* a *Schindlerův seznam*. Práce je rozdělena na dvě části. První část se soustřeďuje na období druhé světové války, konkrétně na situaci v okupovaném Polsku. Součástí této teoretické části je zmínka o koncentračním táboru v Osvětimi a objasnění pojmu antisemitismu a holocaustu. Druhá část se zabývá samotnou analýzou obou hlavních postav a jejich životy v průběhu války a v poválečném stavu. V závěru této práce bylo zjištěno, že obě postavy byly vlivem událostí druhé světové války těžce zasaženy a stávají se jejími oběťmi, i navzdory jejich prvotnímu odlišnému postavení.

Klíčová slova:

*Sofiina volba*, *Schindlerův seznam*, William Styron, Thomas Keneally, Sofie Zawistowska, Oskar Schindler, Osvětim, antisemitismus, srovnání

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis focuses on the comparison of two main characters, Sophie Zawistowska and Oskar Schindler, in the novels *Sophie's Choice* and *Schindler's List*. The work is divided into two main parts. The first part concentrates on the period of the Second World War, namely on the situation in the occupied Poland. This theoretical part includes also a mention of the concentration camp in Auschwitz and clarification of the concepts of anti-Semitism and Holocaust. The second part deals with an analysis of both main characters and their lives during the war and the post-war era. This bachelor thesis concludes that both characters are seriously affected by WWII and become victims of the war, despite their different initial positions.

Keywords:

*Sophie's Choice*, *Schindler's List*, William Styron, Thomas Keneally, Sophie Zawistowska, Oskar Schindler, Auschwitz, anti-Semitism, comparison

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis focuses on comparing two main characters, Sophie Zawistowka in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* and Oskar Schindler in Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's List*, whose lives were affected by the Second World War, and their stories reveal the tragic consequence of this war. Sophie is a young Polish inhabitant and Oskar is a factory owner and entrepreneur. The thesis is divided into two main parts. The theoretical part outlines the historical context to the reader, which is important for understanding the particular situations of the war, namely in the occupied Poland with which both characters are connected. Consequently, the development and construction of concentration camps, especially Auschwitz, are going to be described, because the main protagonist of *Sophie's Choice* was staying there under dramatic circumstances, and Oskar Schindler from *Schindler's List* was trying to protect his employees from being transported to this camp. Moreover, the concept of anti-Semitism is going to be briefly described, since both characters have been struggling with it since their childhood. A reference to the authors of both novels, William Styron and Thomas Keneally and their life and work forms an integral part of the thesis. Subsequently, the plots of both novels are briefly summarized in the next section.

The practical part of the thesis is an analysis of both main characters. It includes the initial conditions and the family background in which both characters grew up. It focuses especially on their relationship to their fathers, who formed their personality and fundamentally influenced their later behaviour in the society. Furthermore, it contains also a reference to their education and a more detailed analysis of their personal relationships with their families, children and life partners. The most important part of this bachelor thesis is a depiction of five particular situations, which are described in detail. It includes their cooperation and loyalty to their nation, their personal relationships with respective commanding officers of the German Empire, and their attitude towards the Jewish population. The next section describes the process of transformation of behaviour of both heroes, and last but not least, their life after the war.

It is also essential to mention that both books are written in a very different way. Concerning Styron's way of writing, the reader can see Sophie's feelings, contemplation, and the mental processes almost the whole time of reading, because she reveals her feelings to her friend. On the other hand, *Schindler's List* is written in a very descriptive

way providing the real historical events, data, names and situations. The reader can only guess Schindler's feelings, but they can be inferred from his reactions to particular situations.

The main aim of this thesis is to compare the similarities between the main characters, Sophie and Oskar, based on the situations mentioned above and to prove that both of them are the victims of the Second World War. It can be assumed that both literary works are different in their nature. Nevertheless, this work has the ambition to make a comparison and to find the similarities between the characters. The verification of the hypothesis will be based on the analysis of the initial conditions of the characters, their characteristic traits, events, their actions and the consequences of these actions. The primary purpose of this analysis is to find the similarities or differences in individual aspects. At the same time, it is going to be defined in what way, or in spite of what, these characters are similar. Then, the hypothesis will be confirmed or disproved after the evaluation of found similarities and differences. The comparative and historical method will be used within the processing of this work.

It should also be noted that Sophie is an entirely fictitious character, unlike Oskar, who is also described as a fictional character but his character is based and inspired by a real person who lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sophie is perceived as a victim of WWII, unlike Oskar who is considered to be a war hero. While it seems that both protagonists are characterised as different, it will find out that they have many traits in common at the end of the work. Their main goal is to save human lives. More specifically, Sophie wants to save her son, and Oskar's efforts are aimed at rescuing his Jewish and Polish employees.

# 1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BOTH NOVELS

## 1.1 Poland, WWII and its occupation

Both novels, *Sophie's Choice* and *Schindler's List*, are connected with the Polish city Krakow. As regards Keneally's *Schindler's List*, the main character Oskar operates his factory with Polish Jews working in it and in Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, Krakow is Sophie's native town where she grew up and worked for her father. It is necessary to highlight major events that occurred in this country, where the most famous concentration camp was situated, and namely from the point of view how these events influenced the life of both protagonists.

The plan of occupation of Poland was settled much earlier. This plan to invade Poland was a risk from Adolf Hitler's side. The German army was not in good condition and its economy was still recovering from the previous war. However, Hitler was quite convinced that this invasion would be a short and victorious war, mainly due to the British and French prime ministers, whom he considered to be indecisive in the sense that they would rather choose peace instead of war. Despite a formal agreement between Hitler and the British prime minister Chamberlain, according to whom Hitler was to reduce his territorial demands. However, Hitler ignored this agreement and ordered the German army to be prepared for the invasion of Poland. He counted on with British unwillingness to participate in the war and on French cowardice to act alone.<sup>1</sup> Things started to move on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 when German army invaded Polish borders. The appeasement policy was abandoned at the moment when Germany attacked Poland. This strategy is called the Blitzkrieg. Its aim was to avoid the trench warfare used during World War I. In addition, Germany was very advanced in the development of tanks, artillery and aircrafts compared to other countries and so it took advantage of it. This type of war was based on the moment of surprise of the enemy. Not only was the technique important, but primarily it relied on a tactical commander and his ability to use all their potential. This war strategy surprised

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<sup>1</sup> See Lightbody, "Invasion of Poland,"

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/invasion\\_poland\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/invasion_poland_01.shtml).

many of the other countries.<sup>2</sup> However, the Polish soldiers were not prepared for it and so they were defeated quite soon. It happened also because the backup troops did not come in time to help the Polish army. The next day, Germany was given ultimatum by France and Britain to withdraw from the territory. Germany did not do so. France and Great Britain declared war on Germany. The same was done by New Zealand and Australia.<sup>3</sup> The situation was not developing very well and so the Polish government left Warsaw and ordered the army to withdraw, because further Nazi units were moving too fast. The German army occupied Krakow. The suburbs of the capital city Warsaw were occupied on 8<sup>th</sup> September. Poland had, however, also success. The Polish troops gathered at the town Kutno and started a counter-attack. This attack is considered to be one of the most successful Polish attacks during the war.<sup>4</sup> The success was, however, only temporary. The defenders of Warsaw surrendered on 27<sup>th</sup> September. Nonetheless, the Nazi Germany was not the only enemy. The Soviet army also attacked Poland, based on a secret treaty between the Soviet Union and Germany called The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Moreover, Poland refused the alliance with the Soviet Union, which meant that the Red Army could not cross the borders to help Poland fighting the Wehrmacht.<sup>5</sup>

As it was already mentioned, the Polish government fled to Romania, where a government in exile was established. Many Polish soldiers joined the allies and left the defeated country. Consequently, Poland was divided into two zones – Russian and German. The boundary line was formed by the Bug River.<sup>6</sup> This invasion affected the country for a very long time. The leading member of the Nazi Party, Heinrich Himmler, wanted to divide Poland into the German and non-German parts. He needed to divide the country so that he could deal with it. Based on the German ideology, the Polish population should be perceived as slaves with elementary education. The Nazis tried to turn the entire country a country of illiterates. Polish children who appeared to be suitable for re-education were sent to Germany and they never met their biological parents again. Polish Jews were to be removed by transporting them on ships to the French colonies in Africa.

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<sup>2</sup> See Antony Shaw, *Druhá světová válka den po dni*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> See *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> See Lightbody, "Invasion of Poland,"

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/invasion\\_poland\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/invasion_poland_01.shtml).

<sup>6</sup> See Antony Shaw, *Druhá světová válka den po dni*, 13.

This Jewish problem was to be solved by sending them away to Madagascar.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the Jewish inhabitants in Eastern Poland were killed almost immediately after the German invasion. Simultaneously, the plans for extermination of the rest Jews in Europe were being prepared.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 Antisemitism and Jewish Holocaust

These two terms need to be clarified as they appear in both novels. The term anti-Semitism has been defined as irrational hostility towards Jews. It can be also described as: “modern political movement and ideology that arose in Central Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and achieved its evil apogee in the Holocaust.”<sup>9</sup> Under the term Holocaust, it is possible to imagine the mass murdering of European Jews and other nationalities by the Nazis during World War II. These murders included political opponents, mainly Communists, Slavs, gypsies, mentally or physically disabled people, homosexuals and others. Around six million men, women and children were killed just because of their Jewish origin. The roots of this perception of Jews as subjects of persecution come from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, Jews became the main target during the reign of Adolf Hitler, who tried to persuade other Germans that they are of ‘Aryan’ origin or a white superior nation and that the other nations are inferior.<sup>10</sup> When Hitler became the German prime minister in 1933, he and his supporters created a program of world extermination of Jews and the gradual control was gained over these subjects. Following the famous night known as the Night of

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<sup>7</sup> See Laurence Ress, *Auschwitz: A New History*, 19.

<sup>8</sup> See Anita J. Prazmowska, *A History of Poland*, [https://books.google.cz/books?id=r\\_0-BjHlkh4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=poland+history&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj20rjEjt3RAhVBuxQKHZEQAzUQ6AEIOzAE#v=onepage&q=poland%20history&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=r_0-BjHlkh4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=poland+history&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj20rjEjt3RAhVBuxQKHZEQAzUQ6AEIOzAE#v=onepage&q=poland%20history&f=false).

<sup>9</sup> See Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction*, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=dAI7CgAAQBAJ&pg=PT76&dq=german+antisemitism+short+definition&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiWjIuq8KvTAhWDnRoKHVFrDeQQ6AEIJDA#v=onepage&q=german%20antisemitism%20short%20definition&f=false>.

<sup>10</sup> See Fitzgerlad, *Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass: Igniting the Nazi War Against Jews*, 24, [https://books.google.cz/books?id=g\\_-fhCHrxQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=night+of+broken+glass&hl=cs&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=night%20of%20broken%20glass&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=g_-fhCHrxQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=night+of+broken+glass&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=night%20of%20broken%20glass&f=false).

the Broken Glass in 1938, Jews lost their jobs and around twenty thousand people were arrested and sent to concentration camps. When Poland was invaded in September 1939, the Nazis took control over the Europe's largest community of Jews and placed them in ghettos, where many of them died of starvation and diseases.<sup>11</sup>

It is essential to analyze the issue of anti-Semitism because both novels, *Schindler's List* in particular, deal with this issue. The readers could see how horribly and cruelly the Nazis treated Jews and the Polish population. It is also clear in Styron's *Sophie's Choice* that despite the fact that Sophie Zawistowska represents a typical image of Aryan woman with her fairy hair, fairy-skin and she also speaks German, she was treated as any other Jew. It did not really matter to the Nazis what the people looked like, what they studied or where they worked. As it can be seen in both novels, some highly educated people, e.g. professors at a university etc. had to lie about their profession during the selections and pretended to be someone else, who suited the German Reich at that moment.

This attitude towards Jews was mainly influenced by the simplification of Darwin's origin idea. Nazis kept the philosophy of survival of the fittest and they had to eliminate the weakest ones. This can be seen in *Schindler's List* where the Nazi units invaded a hospital and shot all the injured patients. The reason was that they were useless for them. Moreover, Hitler was concerned about Aryans breeding with non-Aryans. It was another reason why he considered himself as the saviour of humankind.<sup>12</sup> The main target of the Nazi terror was the Jewish population. At the beginning of 1930, more precisely after Hitler's victory in the 1933 elections, the members of SA wanted to humiliate Jews and show them that they are the lowest of the low. In 1935, the citizenship was removed from Jews and they were not allowed to marry Aryans. Jews were forced to leave their homes and abandon their property. Mainly the German population, children included, was not allowed to associate with Jews. The frightening caricatures of Jews depicting them as thieves and lechers were to help the general public to stay away from them. The key event

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<sup>11</sup> See "Schindler's List,"

<http://teachersites.schoolworld.com/webpages/sls/files/novels%20for%20students%20sample.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> See Fitzgerald, *Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass: Igniting the Nazi War Against Jews*, 24, [https://books.google.cz/books?id=g\\_-fhCHrxQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=night+of+broken+glass&hl=cs&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=night%20of%20broken%20glass&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=g_-fhCHrxQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=night+of+broken+glass&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=night%20of%20broken%20glass&f=false).

regarding the anti-Semitism was already mentioned, the Night of Broken Glass, when Hitler granted the request to assault all Jews. Many Jewish people were arrested that night. Ordinary Germans did not object to such behaviour. This night resulted in more than 400 murdered German Jews. The situation of the Jewish community was getting worse. They were not allowed to run businesses, own shops and sell products. Their businesses were sold to Germans. Moreover, Jews could not visit cinemas, theatres and sporting facilities. Young Jewish students were excluded from schools and universities in order that they could not obtain any further education.<sup>13</sup>

There were, of course, people who tried to mitigate the whole Jewish situation and who defended their rights. Unfortunately, those were disposed of very soon, too. At the beginning, the Nazis pursued a policy, the aim of which was to force Jews to leave the country voluntarily. However, this policy was not very successful as many Jews did not want to leave their homes and property. It could be witnessed in numbers. The total number of Jews in Germany was 503,000 until 1937 and merely 120,000 left the country. In 1939, 78,000 Jews were forced to move. The main problem was where they should go. Nazis cooperated with several organizations in order to establish the Jewish state far from Europe, where they would be far away from the German master race.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.3 Concentration Camps

It is necessary to mention that during the 1930s, the first concentration camps were established. The camps have their origin in South Africa. The British are considered to be the initiators of such camps.<sup>15</sup> This term was for the first time used in 1899 in connection with the Anglo-Boer war. Women and children were sent to these camps to prevent them from helping the opposition and were assembled there because they were ineligible for the military service. However, this concept was used several decades before the Third Reich. Hitler was very interested in this idea of camps. He viewed it as possibility to eliminate the

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<sup>13</sup> See Hughes and Mann, *Hitlerovo Německo: Život v období Třetí Říše*, 100.

<sup>14</sup> See *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> See Stone, *Concentration Camps*, 2,

[https://books.google.cz/books?id=4Pq4DQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=stone+concentration+camps&hl=cs&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=stone%20concentration%20camps&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=4Pq4DQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=stone+concentration+camps&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=stone%20concentration%20camps&f=false).

weakest individuals, included old and ill people, homosexuals, Jews and many others. Nazi concentration camps were set up to expel and eliminate the unwanted race.<sup>16</sup> Few months after 1933, three concentration camps were established: Dachau near Munich, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen near Berlin. One of the firsts prisoners were Jews, Communists, Catholics, Democrats, or Nazi traitors. In April 1944, 13 main camps and 500 subsidiary camps were located in the area controlled by Germans. The biggest camp of death was Auschwitz.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.3.1 Auschwitz

In this section, the best known concentration camp - Auschwitz in Poland which was occupied by Germany during World War II, is going to be introduced, because one of the main protagonists, Sophie, had first-hand experience with this camp and her stay there marked her for the rest of her life.

When it comes to the term Holocaust, almost everyone recalls Auschwitz as it became the scene of dreadful crimes and more than 1,200,000 people died there. It also turned into the main centre of Final Solution.<sup>18</sup> At the beginning, the camp was not designed to kill the Jews but only to separate them from other nationalities. Originally, this camp was designed for Polish political prisoners, but because of great numbers of prisoners, it was extended to a labour camp. This camp was divided into three parts: the original camp Auschwitz, the death camp Auschwitz in Birkenau, and the industrial centre Auschwitz.<sup>19</sup> The main aim of this camp was to complete extermination of the Jewish population.<sup>20</sup> It is situated in Southern Poland near Krakow. On 30 April 1940, a member of SS Rudolf Hoss was appointed the commandant of this Nazi concentration camp. He was in charge of

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<sup>16</sup> See Stone, *Concentration Camps*, 2,

[https://books.google.cz/books?id=4Pq4DQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=stone+concentration+camps&hl=cs&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=stone%20concentration%20camps&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=4Pq4DQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=stone+concentration+camps&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=stone%20concentration%20camps&f=false).

<sup>17</sup> See Hughes and Mann, *Hitlerovo Německo: Život v období Třetí Říše*, 202.

<sup>18</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See Dwork and van Pelt, *Auschwitz*, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=DX9ga-jWBtEC&dq=auschwitz&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi7yamDz9rRAhVBQJoKHaM6AK8Q6AEISzAG>.



supervising the construction and running of this camp. The first prisoners were sent there on 14 June, 1940. They were transported there from several ghettos, which were established in some countries of Europe and where Jews performed physically demanding work for free. The Nazis believed that Jews should be kept separate at a place far away from the towns near which ghettos were located because of their diseases. The ghettos were only temporary solution before their deportation.<sup>21</sup> This situation can be noticed in *Schindler's List* as well. Prisoners were transported by trains and, in most cases they had to wait for hours in these trains with no personal space, without food and water during the journey that lasted up to several weeks. Nobody cared about them anymore. Many of them, primarily old people and children, died in those trains because of the conditions. Those conditions were appalling and inhuman. Schindler could not stand such treatment and tried to do his best to help these people, e.g. by hosing them to give them some water and many more.

This concentration camp was perceived as a 'holding camp' which means that prisoners were there only temporarily before being sent to another camp. The Nazis called it a 'quarantine camp'. But within a short time it was obvious the prisoners were supposed to stay there for a much longer time. In September 1941, the deadly gas – Cyclone B was firstly used in this camp to exterminate Jews and other captives who were not convenient for the German race. This experiment had been successful and it started to be used on a regular basis.<sup>22</sup> In 1942, the first gas chambers were used and the majority of arrested Jews were transported there. As the facts confirm, more than one million Jews were deported to Auschwitz, but only 205,000 were registered. This means that more than 800,000 Jews were killed on their arrival.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, based on numbers, it can be observed that Auschwitz had higher death rate than any other concentration camp in Third Reich. The task for the prisoners was to build this camp. They had to work hard many hours a day and if they were too slow, they were

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<sup>21</sup> See Ress, *Auschwitz: A New History*, 17.

<https://books.google.cz/books?id=Wh9QVS3A5QIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=auschwitz+a+new+history&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiKw6XAxNXTAhUHkRQKHWEaAmsQ6AEIjAA>.

<sup>22</sup> See Shaw, *Druhá světová válka den po dni*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> See Van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial*, 115,  
[https://books.google.cz/books?id=S1gWDgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+case+for+auschwitz&hl=cs&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=the%20case%20for%20auschwitz&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=S1gWDgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+case+for+auschwitz&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=the%20case%20for%20auschwitz&f=false).

beaten or even shot.<sup>24</sup> When the war was approaching the end, these concentration camps were burned down and their prisoners were sent to camps in Germany. Unfortunately, many of them did not survive this transportation because of the cold, exhaustion and suffocation.<sup>25</sup> As it can also be read at the end of Kenelly's novel, the Soviet army liberated the captives on 27 January 1945.<sup>26</sup> The people who were able to return from these camps were physically and mentally wrecked. They tried to find a new life somewhere else. For example, Israel became a haven for Jews when it was established as a state in 1948.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Shaw, *Druhá světová válka den po dni*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> See Aroneanu, *Inside the Concentration Camps: Eyewitness Accounts of Life in Hitler's Death Camps*, 4-5,

[https://books.google.cz/books?id=hNrjjiYIOhYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=what+was+with+concentration+camps+after+the+war&hl=cs&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=what%20was%20with%20concentration%20camps%20after%20the%20war&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=hNrjjiYIOhYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=what+was+with+concentration+camps+after+the+war&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=what%20was%20with%20concentration%20camps%20after%20the%20war&f=false).

<sup>26</sup> See Shaw, *Druhá světová válka den po dni*, 168.

<sup>27</sup> See Aviv and Shneer, *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*, 12,  
<https://books.google.cz/books?id=d3ubW1dTTnEC&pg=PA12&dq=Jews+after+WWII+Israel&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiZgqW3xtXTAhWCuhQKHQ7DCawQ6AEIKTAB#v=onepage&q=Jews%20after%20WWII%20Israel&f=false>.

## 2 THOMAS KENEALLY'S *SCHINDLER'S LIST*: AN INTRODUCTION

Thomas Keneally is an Australian prose writer, novelist, playwright and essayist born into an Irish Catholic family. Keneally is well-known for his novel *Schindler's List* (1982) for which he received the Booker Prize. He was born on 7 October 1935 in Sydney. From his childhood to the end of the high school, he attended the Christian Brother's school at Strathfield. He was going to be ordained and become a Catholic priest but few months before that, he left. This experience influenced him a lot in his further writing.<sup>28</sup> Firstly he started to work as a clerk. Then he continued as a teacher at Waverley Collage, which is a catholic high school in Sydney, and had some lectures at the University of New England. He was bored with life and so he was trying to filtrate it through writing. Before he finished with teaching, he had written two novels – *The Place at Whitton* (1964, which is considered to be his first book where he mentioned his attitudes to the priesthood) and *The Fear* (1965). He became to be thrilled with writing and became fully dedicated to it.<sup>29</sup>

As regards his personal life, in August 1965, Keneally married Judith Martin who was working as a nurse at Lewisham Hospital. They have two daughters. In 1966 he received Commonwealth Literary Fund awards for writing *Bring Larks and Heroes* (1967) and *Three Cheers for the Paraclete* (1968). His true dedication could be seen when he was working on the novel form 1969 called *The Survivor*. Due to this, he visited Antarctica to experience the rough conditions and at the same time beautiful nature of this continent.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.1 Schindler's List

Schindler' List is based on a true historical event, which was firstly published in 1982, but under a different title – Schindler's Ark, which referred to the Bible event when many people and animals were rescued. Keneally tried to narrate the true story as accurately as he could based on the conversations with Jews who were saved by Oskar Schindler, and

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<sup>28</sup> See Cantrell, "Perspective on Thomas Keneally," 54-57.

<sup>29</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> See Beston, "An Interview with Thomas Keneally," 48-52.

also based on the detailed study of historical documents. The book is considered to be one of the best books dealing with the theme of Holocaust.<sup>31</sup> The real names of real-life persons can be encountered there. E.g. Oskar Schindler himself, his wife Emilie Schindler, his assistant Leopold Pfefferberg, Schindler's accountant Itzhak Stern, the commanders of the concentration camp in Płaszów Amon Göth, and many other names. This novel is made up of several stories of different people who were in close contact with Schindler.<sup>32</sup> It means that the parallels of the book and real historical events are often seen there, whether it concerns the occupied Krakow, Jewish ghettos across the country or the relocation of ghettos to concentration camps. The readers can find resemblance between events and characters in the novel and the actual period of time in history.

The characters in the book are characters with historical counterparts who experienced some of these events and situations which correspond to true historical ones. At the beginning of the story, the readers can learn that Oskar does not come to Krakow to admire the city but he wants to achieve something to prove him to be a member of a superior nation. He thinks he could gain something from this occupied country. So the readers can see that he does not come to Krakow to help Jews at first. The main reason is that Krakow is the city where entrepreneurs come to make money. And Oskar seems to be one of them. He enjoys good alcohol, beauty of women, and elegance, which he expects to find in this city.<sup>33</sup>

As the story progresses, the transformation of Oskar's personality could be seen through the change of his priorities.<sup>34</sup> The turning point for Schindler is the look on the city, from where the Nazis are forcing Jews to leave and lynching them. Through this experience the readers could recognize the situation which actually occurred during World War II when Jewish population was expelled. People were hiding in various hideouts including walls, sewage systems and other places in order to save their own lives. Many of them tried to hide their property as well, which became usually fatal for them. The Nazis had a clear assignment. They had to find all the inhabitants of the city. But they were not

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<sup>31</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> See Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> See *Ibid.*, 17-18.

always successful. So they undertook night actions during which they were checking the houses and shooting around, in case that some of them were still hiding.

The novel Schindler's List is probably well-known also because of the movie which was directed by Steven Spielberg, and which, as Thomas Fensch claimed, brought significant attention to the Holocaust and other related issues.<sup>35</sup> This caused huge interest in this theme. The news and magazines competed with each other and almost everyone praised the saviour of more than 1,200 Jews. Sometimes, people expressed their negative attitude to Schindler's personality. Oskar became famous mostly thanks to Thomas Keneally and his reconstruction of Schindler's life. Keneally managed to write it with the help of one of the prisoners called Leopold Pffefferberg, who helped him to better understand the background of the whole story in more detail. Keneally was not acquainted in depth with the war issue, but he gathered the information from conversations with 50 Schindler's Jews from seven countries: Australia, Israel, West Germany, Austria, the United States, Argentina and Brazil.<sup>36</sup> As Gruntová also claimed, Keneally tried to reconstruct the story as objectively as possible, but sometimes happens in writing, some information is highlighted and some not. But the author did his best to avoid fictitious information.<sup>37</sup>

The story begins with Oskar's arrival to Krakow at the end of 1939. He is one of the members of the Nazi Party and also entrepreneur, who want to make money. He makes a deal with Jews to provide him with financial support in order to buy a factory manufacturing enamel dishes. This factory is located in Lipova street. Jews from the ghetto work in his factory as well. The former accountant Itzhak Stern helps Schindler to find as many Jews as possible to employ them in his factory and saved them from being transported to concentration camps. Many of them are not suitable for this work, many of them are old and injured (e.g. a man without arm also works in this factory) and they have

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<sup>35</sup> See Fensch, preface to *Oskar Schindler and His List: The Man, The Book, The Film, The Holocaust and Its Survivors*,

[https://books.google.cz/books?hl=cs&lr=&id=lshVDQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT8&dq=thomas+keneally+biography&ots=4ppCVTDKq6&sig=DzT2\\_yXw1R2ya8lk-#v=onepage&q=thomas%20keneally%20biography&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?hl=cs&lr=&id=lshVDQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT8&dq=thomas+keneally+biography&ots=4ppCVTDKq6&sig=DzT2_yXw1R2ya8lk-#v=onepage&q=thomas%20keneally%20biography&f=false).

<sup>36</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> See Ibid.

to make every effort to hide it from the Germans. The situation develops well until the arrival of a new protector of the ghetto – Amon Göth. He is known as the hater of Jews. Oskar has many problems with Amon and it costs him a lot of money and bribes to keep his Jews safe from Göth. Göth can be characterised as a person who does not care about the lives of others much less the Jews' lives. Despite his inappropriate behaviour, he sympathizes with his Jewish maid Helen, which is contrary to his conviction.

When the war is approaching the end, the Third Reich decides to transfer all Jews to Auschwitz, including Schindler's Jews. Schindler buys Göth's Jews and transfer them to Brännlitz. The paradox is that no ammunition was produced there during their stay. He buys it from other manufacturers. Oskar does everything what is in his powers to prevent the Jew's transfer. Fortunately, he succeeds and saves more than 1,200 Jews. Afterwards, their roles are switched. Oskar becomes a refugee. He would be judged as a war criminal which means that he has to leave the country. The Jews saved by him signed the document in which they declare that Schindler was involved in the rescue of their lives.

### 3 WILLIAM STYRON'S *SOPHIE'S CHOICE*: AN INTRODUCTION

William Styron was born on 11 June 1925 in Newport News in Virginia. He was an American prose writer and a representative of the South prose. He is characterized as an American writer with roots in the South. He also participated in World War II in the American army and took part in the battles in the Pacific. In the period from 1940 to 1942, he attended an Episcopal boy's school in his native town. After the war, he entered Duke University and started to be influenced by William Blackburn. In 1947 Styron graduated from Duke and started to work as an associate editor at Whittlesey House in New York. Two years later he moved to Brooklyn and started writing his first novel *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951).<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, the more than a year writing of *Lie Down in Darkness* did not go well and he even stopped the writing of this novel for 6 months. At the beginning of 1950's, he won the Prix de Rome for this novel and it established him as a writer. He decided to write as a full time job. During his writing career he wrote four famous novels. The first one *Lie Down in Darkness* was published in 1951, the second one called *Set This House on Fire* from 1960, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* from 1967, which is based on true story and it brought him The Pulitzer Prize, and the fourth well-known *Sophie's Choice* from 1979.<sup>39</sup> Styron is looking for answers in the mentioned works, especially the unanswered questions concerning the Holocaust or slavery and the questions related the war time. After the publication of this novel he took a break until 1990's when *Darkness Visible* (1990) and *A Tidewater morning* (1990) were published.<sup>40</sup> Styron received numerous awards for his work. The most valuable one is The Pulitzer Prize for *The Confessions of Nat Turner* which he got in 1968. Other awards which are worth mentioning are American Book reward and National Magazine Award.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, it is known that Styron had

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<sup>38</sup> See Houdková, "Family Tragedy in William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*."

<sup>39</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> See West III, *Conversation with William Styron*,

[https://books.google.cz/books?hl=cs&lr=&id=BO1K6mLZK\\_4C&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=william+styron+conversation&ots=xInVYrX-72&sig=WMIxdOg\\_4gE7-](https://books.google.cz/books?hl=cs&lr=&id=BO1K6mLZK_4C&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=william+styron+conversation&ots=xInVYrX-72&sig=WMIxdOg_4gE7-CbPnd8CKdJBGIE&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=william%20styron%20conversation&f=false)

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problems with clinical depression and alcohol abuse. In 1985 Styron had a mental breakdown and had to be treated.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.1 Sophie's Choice

It is a fictional novel which was published in 1979 in the second wave of post-war prose. The book reveals a few autobiographical features of the author himself through the main character Stingo, who is the narrator. But some parts of the novel, e.g. when Sophie's experiences are narrated, the direct speech is used. In contrast to *Schindler's List*, this novel is not based on true story, but the audience can infer that many WWII victims could have faced such circumstances. Many parents lost their children and vice versa due to population selection. Sophie as a Holocaust survivor tries not to think about the past that is painful for her. It is very difficult for her. But she opens herself to Stingo and recounts her story. He is the only person to whom she confides her secret, and he is an observant listener. Even after he learns the truth, he does not condemn her.

Now the brief plot is going to be introduced. This story begins with the narration of a young journalist coming from South – Stingo. He desperately wants to become a writer. Despite the fact that his writing is of no good. This character is to be a portrayal of Styron himself. Stingo is dismissed by the publisher, but it does not bother him a lot. He moves to Brooklyn and hires an apartment in a boarding house which belongs to an older lady. There he is thinking about his hometown and flirting with the idea of returning back – to the South. But the priority is to work on his novel.

Then he meets other roomers and gradually they become friends. They are a couple, a beautiful Polish immigrant, Sophie, and her Jewish boyfriend Nathan, who has a very strange behaviour. It does not last long and Stingo falls in love with Sophie. He spends a lot of time with her and they are talking for hours. He also finds out about the cruel personality of Nathan. Stingo is a witness of his abnormal behaviour and this allows him to be with Sophie more and more, because Sophie is looking for being treated nicely, which Stingo can provide. Sophie often visits him in his apartment. Based on their conversation he finds out about Sophie's past, about her childhood in Poland, the war and the

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<sup>42</sup> See Klein, "William Styron's Life and Work," 9-13.



concentration camp – Auschwitz, which she had to go through. Before she was sent to the camp, she had to make the most difficult decision in her life.

She had to choose between her two children. She had to decide about their future and life. She was forced to do that on the order of a Nazi medical doctor. This situation is unimaginable for each parent. But Sophie wanted to save at least one of her children. She picked the boy based on her rational thinking that he has better probability to survive. But the sacrifice of her little girl had affected her for the rest of her life. Stingo comes to know the reality about Nathan as well. Nathan is mentally disordered and takes drugs. Stingo and Sophie decide to leave Brooklyn after Nathan's another burst of anger. Nevertheless, Sophie comes back as she loves Nathan unconditionally and they commit suicide together.

## 4 INITIAL CONDITIONS

In this part of the thesis, the initial conditions of both main characters, Sophie and Oskar, are going to be introduced. The reader can observe that Sophie and Oskar have many features in common from the very beginning. These features relate to their family background, religion, education, but also their personal attitude to marriage.

### 4.1 Family Background

The main protagonists are characterized by several common features, but also by certain differences when the family background is concerned. Sophie comes from the Polish city Krakow. Both her parents are well-educated people who are comfortably well-off at that time. The whole family is also very culturally minded, which is evidenced by the fact that they very often visit theatres, concerts of classical music and cinemas. The whole family is strong Catholic believers and they attend the services very regularly. As regards Sophie's appearance, she is a young, beautiful woman who has her personal charm and charisma, which is what she has in common with Schindler. Sophie has a Scandinavian look. She has long blond hair, straw-coloured, velvety white skin and very sharp facial features. She can be characterised by the talent and ability to quickly learn how to read and write in a foreign language. Apart from her native language, she can speak several languages, including for her so important German, French and Russian. Her father encourages her in learning German, because he sympathizes with this country. Another ability that she learns is shorthand, through which she obtains the post of a secretary.<sup>43</sup> All this, including her appearance and language skills, will influence her life a lot in the future, e.g. she gets a job as a recorder for the German Reich, mainly because she is experienced in this field due to her work for her father, but also because she looks like typical German citizen and speaks fluently German.

On the other hand, Oskar has German nationality. He was born on 28 April 1908 in an industrial town in Czechoslovakia – Zwittau in then Sudetenland. Three nations lived together in this specific territory – Czechs, Germans and Jews. When Oskar was a little

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<sup>43</sup> See Styron, *Sophie's Choice*, 86-90.

boy, he used to play also with children Jewish nationality. Unlike Sophie, he was not raised in anti-Semitic environment, and so he does not distinguish between their origins. However, similarly to Sophie, his family is also deeply religious. They are pure Catholics. More accurately, Oskar's mother, Louisa Schindler, is a devoted Catholic. Her husband, Hans Schindler, is quite indifferent to religion as well as Oskar. Oskar's parents are financial secure as well as Sophie's. They live in a modern villa with its own garden. His father owns a farm-machinery plant and Oskar is expected to inherit it. So Oscar's childhood and maturing is quite carefree.

Both Oskar and Sophie come from deeply religious Catholic families and their mothers try to encourage them to pursue this religion. Their standard of living is, thanks to the work of their parents, especially the fathers, very high. Sophie's father works as a university professor, which is very important profession in the society at that time. This profession is also sufficiently well-paid. Oskar's father owns a flourishing business. Both are connected with Krakow, but in a completely different meaning. Sophie lives in this city from her birth and is used to it, but paradoxically, she finds doom in this city as she is deported to Auschwitz. Furthermore, her sense of life ends there because it is the last place, where she meets her children and other people, whom she loves. In contrast to Schindler, who comes to Krakow just because of his vision to earn easy money thanks to the war situation. His life actually starts in Krakow, because he achieves success and mainly the goal of his life there.

## **4.2 Relationships to Fathers**

As it was mentioned, Sophie's father works as a renowned professor of law at Polish university. At the beginning, he was the paragon for Sophie. He was always a good father to her during her childhood. He also gives her work as his assistant. So during this demanding period, she is busy translating his ideas and thoughts concerning the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in the German language and transcripts of them. At first, she does not take in the contents of these ideas. After some time, however, she begins to realize what her father is actually doing, that he encourages Germans in their idea to exterminate all Jewish population. This is absolutely contrary to Sophie's way of thinking as she perceives Jews as ordinary people who pose definitely no threat to the country. She comes to dislike him more and more because of his attitude towards Jews. This

demonstrates that even if her father is a well-educated man, she disappointed of him as an advocate of such opinions.

Throughout Oskar's childhood and subsequent adolescence, he did not get on well with his father. Their views and outlook for the life are very different. Schindler's father is reckless and apparently has a weakness for women. His father belongs to a small group of entrepreneurs running businesses in Brno. Oskar is employed there after his unfinished studies. During his employment there, even the bigger conflicts occur between. Compared to Sophie, Oskar's relationship with his father was not good from the beginning. But Oskar begins to despise him not because of his political beliefs, as Sophie does, but because of moral aspects. These feelings surface when his father leaves the family for another woman. Oskar becomes even more obdurate to his father and does not intend to forgive him for his act even in the future. However, as Oskar is getting older, his behaviour becomes clearly similar to his father, whom Oskar has been denouncing his whole life.<sup>44</sup>

Both characters have a much more positive relationship with their mothers, as the relationships to their fathers change significantly over time. In Sophie's case, it is a disappointment in her father's views on the political attitude to the current situation, and especially of his anti-Semitism, when he tries to help the German Empire in the Final solution through various essays and lectures at the university. Moreover, Sophie's father forces her to help him with spreading his anti-Semitic opinions, which she refuses as she does not want to have anything to do with it. Neither of them agrees with their father's approaches.

### 4.3 Education and Employment

The other common features of the main protagonists include their unfinished studies. As was already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Sophie is a very intelligent and talented woman who has the prerequisites for achieving the highest level of education. She has talent for languages, and she is also capable to cope with all responsibilities of secretarial work, including shorthand. Among other things, she inherits her mother's artistic talent.

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<sup>44</sup> See Keneally, *Schindler's list*, 32.

She wants to continue in her studies of music, similarly as her mother did. Hers vision for the future is to become a piano teacher.

When Casimir and I were married we had these plans to go to Vienna like my mother and father did. It was going to be very much like the way they done their study. Casimir would get this supèrieur degree inmathematics at the Austrian Academy and I would study music.<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, in the circumstances of the continuing war, it is impossible for her. Moreover, both main protagonists work for their fathers for some period of time. Sophie translates her father's essays and is able to write shorthand, which is of great assistance in his work, because he needs to have things done as quickly as possible. Oskar, as well as Sophie, has the potential to complete higher or vocational school, particularly because of his father's influence. He graduates from a German grammar school and goes to a college. However, he does not complete his studies because of illegal activities that he had done allegedly. These activities concern falsification of study results documents. Oskar is expelled from the school for this disciplinary offence.<sup>46</sup> After that, the entrepreneurial spirit starts to manifest in Oskar thanks to his work experience and the environment where he grew up. His following jobs are diverse. He gets to like the area of Jeseniky mountains in the north of Czechoslovakia, where he also briefly settles and works there as a driving instructor. Shortly after his marriage with Emilie Pelzl, he enlists in the army. After the completion of his compulsory military service, he returns to his father's company equipped with business experiences in other areas. The areas include e.g. work at a poultry farm or as a sales representative of banking institutions, or selling of bonds. His active nature reflected not only in his work, but also in his personal life. He often reacts aggressively, for which he is repeatedly prosecuted. He is sentenced to prison for one such act.<sup>47</sup> In 1938, Oskar settles in Zwittau and starts thinking about the police and army organization in cooperation with Germany. He meets more and more with people working for the German intelligence. He is to be sentenced for this cooperation with the German secret service, but due to the Munich events, he is granted amnesty. Oskar is allocated to the territory belonging to the Third Reich as Zwittau was occupied as a part of Sudetenland. Another

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<sup>45</sup> See Styron, *Sophie's Choice*, 90.

<sup>46</sup> See "Oskar Schindler," <http://www.muzeum.svitavy.cz/stale-exp/oskar-schindler/biografie/44-1/>.

<sup>47</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 10.

place, where Schindler works in the Czechoslovak Republic is the Moravian Ostrava, where he begins a career as an agent of Abwehrstelle.<sup>48</sup> It was a German intelligence organization, whose task was to protect the Third Reich and its inhabitants.

It is obvious that Oskar's character is different to Sophie's. He lacks self-discipline, thoroughness, sense for responsibility and enthusiasm as regards education. He experiences his studies only marginally. He is more devoted to his personal interests and his attitudes are dilatory. He does not finish his further studies not because of the war, as Sophie does, but because of his youthful indiscretions and inconsistency. Finally, the attempt to forge his study results contributes to his exclusion.

#### 4.4 Personal Relationships

As regards Oskar's personal life, he has a weakness for the female sex and constantly cheats on his wife with numerous women. He is wasteful and lives a very hedonistic life. He spends his money on expensive and branded alcohol, cigarettes, and good quality food, cars, and last but not least, fast motorcycles. In his youth, he is trying to assert himself and succeed in motorcycle racing. Unfortunately, he is not successful. He lives on a very high level, which is evidenced by the fact that he owns several apartments in Czechoslovakia and Poland, and several expensive cars. He has a liking for luxurious things as was already mentioned. This luxury is afforded not only to him but also to his wife and mistresses. He is very popular in the society because of his elegant appearance, charm and ability to mix business with pleasure. He has many love affairs with beautiful women. As it was written at the beginning, he criticizes his father for the same conduct as is his own conduct later in his life. Despite Oskar's affairs, his wife tries to help him at least by small acts, such as securing the food and medicine for his employees during the harsh time.<sup>49</sup>

As regards Sophie, her marriage is quite different. She and her husband have two children together. And as Sophie mentions during the conversation with her friend Stingo, she confesses that she never loved her husband. She married because her parents expected it and she did not give it much thought. Moreover, Sophie's husband, Casimir, has the

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<sup>48</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 9-13.

<sup>49</sup> See Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 229.

same opinions as her father. He also works as an assistant of mathematics at a University. This means another big disappointment in her personal life. Paradoxically, Sophie loses her father and husband when they are transported to the concentration camp by SS units. It happens even though they have supported and sympathized with the German Reich. Shortly after their arrest, they are executed along with other educated professors and teachers who represent a threat to the German nation. Evidently, no one is safe before the Nazis. Both of them, Sophie and Oskar, are seeking the support in other relationships in this critical situation in order to take their mind off things. Sophie needs to feel safe and loved in a man's arms. After her husband's death, she feels alone and has nobody to help her. This situation works for her younger lover who works for the resistance. Even if she does not share the same life philosophy, she just likes spending her time with him.

## 5 SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

In this chapter, the most important situations which the main protagonists of both novels have to go through are going to be analyzed. This part will deal with several particular situations which are to demonstrate that despite the fact that both main characters are in completely different positions, it is possible to find several common features based on this analysis. It is evident that both of them experience different terrifying events which affect their lives. Some of these events are very similar, despite the fact that Sophie is an entirely fictional character and Oskar is based on a real-life person.

### 5.1 Loyalty towards Own Nation

As was written in the previous chapter, Sophie meets with people working for the resistance. Sophie's lover is a member of the resistance and it is due to him that she is a part of this movement. Since she disagrees with the methods they are using (murdering traitors etc.), she refuses to participate in this activity in any way whatsoever even though she is under pressure, which is mainly caused by Joseph's sister Wanda. She cannot understand why Sophie does not want to help them. But this murdering is against Sophie's strong faith in God and probably the main reason of her rejection is her two small children, whom she has to take care of. At the moment when her lover is killed, Sophie interrupts the connections with Wanda and this movement. This indicates a certain change in the behaviour and thinking of Sophie. Her characteristic features of sensitivity, thoroughness, responsibility, loyalty, especially towards her father slowly change due to the situations which she has to face, into courage and she is able to handle the escalated situations more easily. Sophie does not want to get involved in problems that could threaten her family in any way, because the family is the most precious thing for her. Under the circumstances it is obvious, on the one hand, that Sophie as a single mother, first of all, is concerned about her children, but on the other hand, she is quite self-centred when comes to her excellent language skills through which she could help a lot the resistance movement and other people in danger. This act shows that Sophie is a stubborn woman who stands her ground. Sophie's clear decision to terminate the cooperation because of fears for the safety of her children and family, even though she meets all prerequisites for a successful development



of the cooperation, results from the following passage from the book, when she strictly refuses the cooperation to her lover's sister Wanda.

“You must reconsider, Zosia. This is becoming indecent of you. Consider what you can do for all of us. Consider your country! Consider Poland!” [...] “You must come to a decision!” she heard Wanda say insistently. [...] “I have already made my choice, as I told you. I will not get involved. I mean this! Schluss!”<sup>50</sup>

When Sophie and Oskar are compared at the beginning of their story, both of them are different as regards their behaviour. Compared to Sophie, who is a significantly weaker personality, Oskar is quite the opposite. His arrival to Krakow represents a very important phase in Schindler's life. He came to the town simultaneously with the occupation German army after the brief Polish offensive that was defeated by the German troops in few days. Here he was assigned the important task. Here he acquired the factory necessary for his work. Many local people believed that his role as an industrialist was only a camouflage.<sup>51</sup> It is possible to find various testimonies of Gestapo members, who claimed Schindler had his own intelligence network.<sup>52</sup> That factory had belonged to a Jewish merchant, which enabled him later not to raise much suspicion among the other residents of the city.<sup>53</sup> Then Schindler established a partnership with the trader Simon Jeret, who also came from Krakow. The wood trading was connected with acquiring new information for Abwher.<sup>54</sup> When his responsibilities are concerned, he is very competent which earns him a decent salary. He often meets with important and high-ranking officers. Dealing with these officers evokes in Schindler a sense of confidence and importance, which is logically reflected in his behaviour. Due to his ambition and ability, he is often assigned dangerous tasks for which he is extraordinarily rewarded. In 1938, he is about to be arrested of alleged espionage. Schindler confesses to collaboration with the intelligence of the Reich. This situation is not easy for him and he fears punishment, and so he reveals the names of

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<sup>50</sup> See Styron, *Sophie's Choice*, 389.

<sup>51</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 24.

<sup>52</sup> See *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>53</sup> See *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> See *Ibid.*, 24.

people working with him.<sup>55</sup> In order to further protect himself, Oskar states that he is a member of the operation only because of money. In this way, the reader can observe how the negative traits such as egocentrism, selfishness, indifference, disloyalty towards colleagues and greed and pursuit of his own property interests are revealed in the main protagonist. His desire for wealth drives him on. Schindler sees the coming to Krakow as one way of becoming rich, he does not initially come here as a man plans to save Jewish lives, but as a man who wants to make a lot of money. He is also portrayed as a nationalist, who wants to help his country during the war.

## 5.2 Personality Change

To start with, it should be noted that Sophie's and Oskar's hardships of life, especially Sophie's, masterfully capture the most precious thing which was the time. Sophie is experiencing a quite unlucky period until the end of the war, when the time does not work in her favour. The very first fatal situation for Sophie, which concerns timing, is her journey to the city, where in an effort for saving her ill mother from death and trying to feed her children, she decides to get sufficient food, which is very difficult or even impossible to get at this time. All nutritious food, such as meat, potatoes, bread etc. is given to German inhabitants and soldiers, and so it is not allowed to sell it to the ordinary people. Sophie is captured during one of her attempts at getting such food. This attempt is essential for the future events, when she is included in the transport to Auschwitz concentration camp as well as her two children. Originally, she wanted to get this food a day later. This situation demonstrates how Sophie is self-sacrificing and willing to do anything to save her immediate family, which includes her children and mother, whom Sophie admires, probably because she is completely different from Sophie's father, who is a tenacious anti-Semite. She assumes a significant male role in the household, the aim of which is to provide all necessary supplies for the rest of the family. This role is fatal to her, since the fear and any thoughts whatsoever that something bad might happen, have disappeared. It also highlights her courageousness, which partially changed the perception of her, as she was described at the beginning as a fragile young woman who is not so self-

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<sup>55</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 10.

assertive, especially when she is close to her father. On the other hand, it shows Sophie as a thoughtless person, because she does not consider all contingencies which could happen and also happened. She does not think what would happen to her children who have nobody else but her. Perhaps she considered it, but she has no other choice than to risk in an effort at saving the rest of her family. Her risky and ill-considered action results in fatal consequences.

The situation that follows the previous one is crucial in an entirely different sense, because it changes her life and her perception of life completely. Before her deportation, she experiences the worst situation in the life, in life of each parent. During the selection of prisoners sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sophie accidentally meets the German doctor, who separates her children. She is forced to choose between the lives of her two children. In an effort to save the lives of both children, Sophie tries to explain to him that she is not a Jew, but a native Pole and devout Catholic, not communist at all, therefore her children cannot be Jews neither. She also demonstrates her excellent German in an effort to impress him as a supporter of Third Reich. His reaction to this situation is unexpected. He provides her a privilege, as she is a Polish citizen that she can choose one of the children who will be able to go to the camp with her.

After a few minutes, Sophie realises that both of them cannot be saved even by sacrificing herself. She has no other option than to choose. Her response has to be swift and after a few demanding seconds, she chooses. She chooses the boy and the younger daughter is sent to certain death. A few minutes later, the doctor is replaced by another one. So it is also about the timing, which does not work in Sophie's favour. Subsequently, Sophie arrives to Auschwitz, where she experiences inhumane conditions and treatment. Later, her son Jan is sent to other children's camp and she never sees him again.<sup>56</sup> This choice which she has to make affects her for the rest of her life. Despite this unimaginable situation, Sophie is still able to think rationally. She probably believes that her older and stronger son, Jan, has a greater chance to survive in the camp in contrast to her tiny and thin daughter, who is sent straight to the death camp because she would be of no use in the camp. Sophie blames herself that she could not have prevented it. Her whole life has changed. After this, the only one reason to live is the hope to see her son in the future, or at least learn something about him. Sophie is very vulnerable from the very beginning as she

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<sup>56</sup> See Styron, *Sophie's Choice*, 504-507.

let a lot of things to happen, despite the fact she does not agree with them, e.g. the situation with his father. So it is not so unexpected when she attempts to commit a suicide during her stay in the camp because she cannot cope with it. Moreover, Sophie mentions in one of her discussions with Stingo, that even though she is a devoted Catholic, she lost her faith which she justifies as follows: “Isn’t that enough to make you not believe in this God. Who can believe in God who turn [sic] His back on people like that?”<sup>57</sup>

After Sophie’s first suicide attempt during her imprisonment in Auschwitz, which is not successful, she tries to recover and begins to be much tougher on herself. Her thinking becomes logical and pragmatic, not only because she wants to survive, but also because it may help her to find her son. She knows that if she does not do that, her existence would be pointless and she does not want to please the Germans by committing a suicide. This unsuccessful act gives her the strength to fight.

After some period of time, it is evident that Sophie has gone through a certain change in her behaviour, she becomes much stronger mentally. Her only aim is to save her son’s life. In contrast with Oskar, the transformation in his behaviour and thinking is noticeable towards people, whose lives are worthless to the Germans. It should be noted that these people have no family ties to him, but he depends on their lives, even though they are virtually strangers to him. He tries to make their stay at his factory more pleasant and protect them from the SS units. He does not distinguish between particular employees, but he first of all strives to save any person. During the occupation, Oskar started his own business and bought factories, where he employed Polish workers and later also the Jewish minority. The factory was called Deutsche Emailenwaren Fabric. Soon, he becomes recognized for his humane and dignified treatment of the factory employees and by not denying them their religion. Schindler tries to get the people from the surrounding areas to his factory. However, this behaviour catches the attention of German SS officers, who focused on Schindler. He risks his business to save the lives of his employees, even though his factory does not produce anything. He procures the products from other manufacturers and sold them as his own. Jewish employees are grateful to Oskar and advise him how to penetrate the black market. Schindler is successful and prospers primarily thanks to the substantial help of Itzhak Stern.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See Styron, *Sophie’s Choice*, 209.

<sup>58</sup> See Styron, *Sophie’s Choice*, 24-26.

Further cooperation with former Jewish traders is developing with Schindler's arrival. He tries to convince these traders of his good intentions. The effort of German Reich is to completely exclude Jewish population from the economic life, and so it happens that they have to abandon their property which is automatically allocated to the Reich. Thanks to that, Schindler acquires the enamel factory, which is called Deutche Email Fabrik, and known also as Emalia.<sup>59</sup> The factory is owned by three Jewish partners, who are forced to leave after all Jewish accounts are blocked, which means that Schindler becomes the sole owner of the factory. Unfortunately, he does not know anything about the manufacture of cookware, and so he needs to find someone experienced who could help him. This person is a Jewish businessman who initiates Schindler into illegal trade during the war. The production volume is increasing and Schindler has to hire new workers. In the beginning, the factory had about 100 employees. After some time, 300 workers are employed, out of which one half is of Jewish origin and comes from the ghetto in Krakow. It is necessary to note that Schindler's workers are not treated brutally and have not such physically demanding work as in other labour camps despite the fact they are controlled by the SS units. Moreover, they are allowed to pursue their religious beliefs during their stay. It might be because of the fact that Schindler comes from a very religious family, namely Catholic family, and he is aware of the faith being an integral part of all believers.

Seeing the crimes that have been committed on the inhabitants of the Jewish ghetto, Schindler begins to realize the seriousness of the situation, which happens not only in Krakow. He also becomes aware that he belongs partially to the German nation, which mindlessly kills and exterminates not only the Jewish population. One of the turning point comes when witnesses the mass murdering of Polish inhabitants of the Krakow's ghetto. He is extremely shaken by this act, and this is probably the moment when he gets the idea of saving human lives irrespective of their nationality and religion.

As was already mentioned, here Oskar establishes close relationship with a former accountant Itzhak Stern, who is Jewish, who helps him and is loyal to Schindler throughout the war. He might be one of the motives why Schindler decided to save so many people,

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<sup>59</sup> See Soumerai and Schulz, *Daily Life during the Holocaust*, 259,

[https://books.google.cz/books?id=ZXH2bHJjtsUC&pg=PA259&dq=Deutsche+Email+Fabrik&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjR\\_u7gytXTAhXBOhQKHdbWA24Q6AEIJTAA#v=onepage&q=Deutsche%20Email%20Fabrik&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=ZXH2bHJjtsUC&pg=PA259&dq=Deutsche+Email+Fabrik&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjR_u7gytXTAhXBOhQKHdbWA24Q6AEIJTAA#v=onepage&q=Deutsche%20Email%20Fabrik&f=false).

because in one of their conversations, when they are talking about God and religion, Stern argues that: “Who saves the life of one man saves the entire world.”<sup>60</sup> Due to these events, Schindler completely revises his attitudes and thinking and becomes more perceptive, sensitive and attentive to the fate of these alien people. All of this is stronger than his desire to be rich and enjoy certain standard of living.

### 5.3 Close Association with Officers

Sophie’s Scandinavian look and her practical experience as a secretary working for her father, secures her the job of a reporter for the German lieutenant colonel Rudolf Höss. She sees an opportunity in meeting his family and mostly him to get at least some information about her imprisoned son. She stays there for ten days and experiences moments of certain security in contrast to her stay in Auschwitz. Sophie has several advantages over other women in Auschwitz as regards basic needs. She learns to make use of every moment of a particular situation, to quickly decide for an action, and last but not least, to strategize. She realizes that when she tells the truth, nobody listens to her. So she chooses the option to lie, which seems to be more suitable for achieving her goals. So she provides false information about her life which she maintains also in the post-war life. She is determined to do anything, which includes lying and trying to impress the commander by her femininity. All the time she has a hidden part of her father’s essay through which she is trying to prove that she does not encourage the Jews and is not on their side. She claims that this part of the essay was written by her in the hope that through these ideas she will find a way to achieve her son’s release.<sup>61</sup> This part of the extract of the book proves that she has tried to win Göth’s favour by lying which confirms that she would do anything to be rescued:

I honestly do not see how they could expect to escape retribution when they have committed such a blasphemy for so many years in the sight of Christians.” (Suddenly the image of her father loomed, monstrous.) With anxiety she hesitated, then resumed, spinning out another of her lies, impelled forward like a splinter bobbingly afloat upon a rushing stream of fabrication and falsehood.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See Keneally, *Schindler’s List*, 26.

<sup>61</sup> See Styron, *Sophie’s Choice*, 298-301.

<sup>62</sup> See Styron, *Sophie’s Choice*, 289.

Unfortunately, the governance of SS decides to terminate the activity of Rudolf Höss in this camp. And Sophie has to return to the previous camp, where she survives until the end of the war. Despite all the repressed fear, she tries to maintain her dignity, act confidently with a certain hint of humility. She benefits from her appearance when it is possible, mainly with her cooperation with Höss, but also later when she meets her boyfriend Nathan and Stingo. It is possible to say that in some way, she manipulates with them too, but unconsciously.

Similarly as Sophie, who meets the high-ranking commander of the concentration camp in Auschwitz – Rudolf Höss, Schindler meets one of the most prominent Commandants, a member of a SS unit and a key person to him - Amon Göth, with whom he is in a close contact. Both of them are very important and almost indispensable for the main protagonists. In Schindler's case, Amon was the mediator through whom Schindler is able to keep his workers alive, even though it costs him a fortune and unimaginable effort. To avoid suspicion of Oskar trying to protect the Jewish workers in his factory, he pretends to live lavishly in order to inspire confidence in Göth. Schindler tries to go well with him, irrespective of Göth's abusive practices, which is his usual pleasure in shooting prisoners etc. On the other hand, both of them are similar by liking money and alcohol. Oskar is a regular participant at the parties in Göth's villa, where he wants to get closer to him for his own benefit and mainly for benefit of his workers, because Göth is in charge of extermination of the Krakow ghetto. Therefore, the fate of Schindler's factory lies in Göth's hands. Schindler's pretence of friendship works excellently, even though Göth is not sure, why Schindler is attached so much to his workers, but he does not assign much importance to it. Göth considers Schindler as a friend as it is obvious from the excerpt:

What they knew was that each of them was in Cracow to make a fortune; that therefore Oskar would pay for favors. At that level Oskar and Commandant understood each other well. Oskar had the characteristic salesman's gift of treating men he abhorred as if they were spiritual brothers, and it would deceive the Herr Commandant so completely that Amon would always believe Oskar a friend.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 110-111.

In this particular situation, Schindler uses his manipulative ability, which he used also before during his business negotiations. It is no wonder that he can tactically manipulate Göth to achieve his goals, i.e. to protect and help his employees. Due to Schindler's intellectual demeanour and charisma, he is able to influence the high-ranking persons in their decision making for his benefit. In this case, Oskar does not hesitate to use his own funds in order that a decision is made in favour of his prisoners. These are not bribes from which Oskar would benefit himself, but the funds they are spent on matter of honour.

#### 5.4 Attitudes towards Jews

Another important milestone in Schindler's life was the building of a new branch in Brünnlitz, in which ammunition was to be manufactured. It is crucial to remove some of the German factories outside the country due to increasingly frequent attacks on these objects, and Sudetenland is chosen as the new destination.<sup>64</sup> Bigger numbers of workers are transported to Schindler's factory. This new factory is located near Schindler's home and it also has a convenient position for rail transportation. Schindler sees the relocation as an opportunity to escape the supervision of the SS units and to protect his workers and accumulated wealth.<sup>65</sup> He personally selects the prisoners and his list is being compiled. In the very beginning, the list consists of 50-60 people. This list is created with the help of his friend Stern and for each prisoners, Schindler has to pay to the SS units. Some of them receive the value in the form of good food, alcohol, cigarettes, diamonds, but of course also money. Stern is the only person who knows how much Schindler has sacrificed to save these prisoners who are virtually strangers to him.<sup>66</sup> About 800 men are among the first arrivals to the new camp, and they are to take care of all camp operations. The subsequent transport of 300 women is accidentally sent to Auschwitz. Oskar fights almost one month to get them back. Luckily, he succeeds.<sup>67</sup> He is one of the few employers who respect the working rules. His workers receive special rewards for their work in the form of cigarettes etc. Schindler tries to persuade the Germans to let him establish a branch of the

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<sup>64</sup> See Gruntová, *Oskar Schindler: Legenda a fakta*, 47.

<sup>65</sup> See *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>66</sup> See *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>67</sup> See *Ibid.*, 54.



camp near his factory arguing that it as it would improve productivity because his employees do not have to go back and forth to Plaszow, which was the labour camp. Nevertheless, it was not Schindler's main aim. He wanted to protect them from the horrible conditions in the camp. As it was already mentioned, Schindler did his best to relocate his factory, including his employees, to Moravian Brännlitz and this factory had to be transformed into an ammunition plant. He managed to transfer also the prisoners who were too old, weak or ill, because he knew they would be killed otherwise. In this new camp, Schindler did everything he could to provide them with sufficient supply of food (potatoes, bread) and medicines. His wife Emilie helped him a lot with procuring these things. Another horrid situation occurs, when a transport of Jewish prisoners is abandoned, and the prisoners are left to die in a severe winter without food and water.<sup>68</sup> His kind and sensitive approach toward his employees is obvious for example from this particular situation:

It is hard to describe what they saw when the doors were at last opened. In each car, a pyramid of frozen corpses, their limbs madly contorted, occupied the center. The hundred or more still living stank awesomely, were seared black by the cold, were skeletal. Not one of them would be found weight more than 75 pounds.<sup>69</sup>

When Oskar discovered what had happened, he and his workers immediately hurry to save ale least a few of them, who were still alive. They managed to rescue 100 men and women who were still breathing. Those, who unfortunately died, were buried according to Jewish rites. Based on this experience, it is possible to see that Schindler was always thoughtful and unselfish towards Jews.<sup>70</sup> One of the possible reasons of his attitude towards them could be rooted in his childhood, when he was usually meeting Jews and playing with them because they lived in the same town and Schindler did not see anything wrong with them. He respects Jewish nationality as any other nationality, and he does not see them as enemies or a threat. He regards them as equal. Sophie thinks in similar way. She is not a Jew. She does not show any sign of racism, and one of the possible evidence was her subsequent cooperation with a Jewish chiropractor and moreover, she falls in love

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<sup>68</sup> See Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, 168.

<sup>69</sup> See Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 244-245.

<sup>70</sup> See Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, 168.

with a Jewish man during her stay in the USA. Sophie does not feel hatred towards him unlike her father.

## 5.5 The Life after War

After the end of the war, Sophie leaves Europe for the United States, where she seeks peace and safety and mainly recovery from the horrors of war. She starts learning English and finds a job at a Jewish chiropractor, which she needs for her living. Her health and mental condition is very bad since the effects of the war are still reverberating. Unfortunately, Sophie does not have enough money for her treatment. She is emaciated, tired, mentally and physically exhausted. This all causes her collapse due to which she meets her future partner Nathan, who is of Jewish origin. He takes charge of her and tried to take care of her at the most. He provides her adequate food, medicines, vitamins and many more. After some time, Nathan moves in Sophie's apartment. She starts to be happy and satisfied again. After some time Sophie reveals her life in Europe and also her stay in Auschwitz. Despite all the horrors which Nathan hears from her, he is not sympathetic to her as Sophie expected. She does not want to tell him about the horrors which she had to go through, about her survival and return from the concentration camp because he cannot understand, and probably does not want to. He is always asking her why she is the chosen one whom it was allowed to return. Sophie is often thinking about her life in Poland due to Nathan's pressure, who is always asking her about it. Sophie becomes shy and timid again under Nathan's influence. Therefore, she does not tell him all the details of her previous life. Their relationship is very complicated mainly because of Nathan's psychological condition. He is not in good health. He often has mood deviation, abuses alcohol and takes drugs. Then he becomes aggressive and attacks Sophie physically and also mentally. How Sophie feels deep inside when Nathan treats her in his bad mood can be perceived from the following extract, when she is not able to continue in their relationship:

Okay, so he helped me a lot, make me well, but so what? Do you think he done that out of love, out of kindness? No, Stingo, he done such a thing only so he could use me, have me, fuck me, beat me, have some object to possess! That's all, some object.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> See Styron, *Sophie's Choice*, 369.

Nevertheless, Sophie stays in this relationship with varied feelings that she probably does not deserve anything else after her experience. Her self-confidence falls rapidly and she sees the only way out in her relationship with Nathan. Afterwards, she meets a close friend Stingo, who is a young journalist. Gradually, she reveals him her truthful real-life story with all details. The most likely explanation of her honesty towards him is that he inspires confidence, loyalty and devotion in her. In return, Stingo admires and loves her and he tries to give her all tenderness and love, which Sophie needs desperately. She flees with Stingo to the South thinking of a new beginning. But this love is not reciprocated on her part due to her past, she is emotionally disturbed and is not able to trust anyone. She suffers from remorse that she could not have saved her children, lover and Wanda. She always returns to Nathan when they break up. On the other hand, Nathan sometimes has his moments, when he treats Sophie with love and kindness. During these moments, he gives her a sense of security and always tries to cheer her up and takes her mind off things by means of various situations and gifts, which makes her world joyful, more pleasant and bearable for a while. These deviations are caused by his illness. However, neither Nathan sees the world always positive and under the weight of his mental problems that are accompanied by black moods, he and Sophie decide to end this merciless life by committing suicide.

As regards Oskar's life after the end of the war, he is forced to leave his factory on grounds that he will be triad as a war criminal. Together with his wife and several prisoners, he leaves for Prague and then Sweden, where they are controlled. But before his departure, his prisoners wrote a letter explaining all that Schindler did for them. Thanks to this document, he is not arrested and continues his journey. Afterwards, he and his wife move to Munich, where he does not achieve success. Similarly as Sophie, Oskar leaves for America, namely Argentina, where he sets up a farm. However, this farm does not prosper and he finds no satisfaction there unlike Sophie who is quite happy there for a while. Oskar returns to Europe and gets a divorce from Emilie. He spends the last years of his life in seclusion, with nearly no financial means and lonely. He often suffers from black moods. The German government awarded him for his war acts in 1966. After Oskar's death, he was buried in Jerusalem and his grave is visited by all his saved prisoners whom Oskar

employed in order pay Oskar honour and express their thanks for saving their lives.<sup>72</sup> The incredible fact is that the general public is not aware of his deeds, otherwise he would be viewed differently during his post-war life and be allowed to live in respect, friendship and in better financial conditions.

Many people wonder, what Schindler's motivation was to help those people, even though he did not know them personally. He claimed that he hated brutality, sadism, and inhumane behaviour of the Nazis.<sup>73</sup> He also said: "I just couldn't stand by and see people destroyed. I did what I could, what I had to do, what my conscience told me I must do. That's all there is to it. Really, nothing more."<sup>74</sup> The reader clearly perceives that Schindler underwent a personal transformation during this story. At the beginning, he did not hide his desire for money and his capability of finding ways how to make more money. Approaching the end, Schindler completely reconsidered his life values.

Both, Sophie and Oskar, suffer from mental problems in their post-war life and they cope with difficulty with all the situations they experienced during the war. They feel they disappointed themselves and their surroundings. Sophie feels guilt that she did not save either of her children, and as regards Oskar, he regrets that he was not able to save many more lives. Both of them feel exhausted with no desire for further life. Sophie could not bear the burden of her ideas and she constantly returns to the past.

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<sup>72</sup> See Fensch, *Oskar Schindler and His List: The Man, The Book, The Film, The Holocaust and Its Survivors*, <https://books.google.cz/books?id=lshVDQAAQBAJ&pg=PT191&dq=Schindler%27s+post-war+life&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwids9jHz9XTAhWHyRQKHc1XBGM4ChDoAQgoMAE#v=onepage&q=Schindler%27s%20post-war%20life&f=false>.

<sup>73</sup> See Fensch, *Oskar Schindler and His List: The Man, The Book, The Film, The Holocaust and Its Survivors*, [https://books.google.cz/books?id=lshVDQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=thomas+fensch+oskar+schindler&hl=cs&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=thomas%20fensch%20oskar%20schindler&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=lshVDQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=thomas+fensch+oskar+schindler&hl=cs&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=thomas%20fensch%20oskar%20schindler&f=false).

<sup>74</sup> See Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*, 168-169.

## CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis deals with a comparison of two main characters, Sophie Zawostowska and Oskar Schindler, who are placed in the context of WWII, and analyze their initial conditions and situations. Based on this, the aim was to demonstrate their similarities, even though they deal with quite different situations. The theoretical part contains a description of the occupied Poland, life in Auschwitz and the concept of anti-Semitism. The practical part focuses on the family background, relationship with their fathers, their education, personal relations with their partners and descriptions of the particular situation they went through. Both protagonists come from religious families, their relationship with their fathers is complicated, as well as the period of time when they are employed by their fathers. Both fail to complete their further studies and face difficulties with their partners, both in marriage and in other relationships. Both have to face Nazism and deal with moral dilemma. Their resemblance can also be found in their cooperation and loyalty to the nation, when Sophie meets people who work for the resistance, and Oskar works as an agent of the secret service of the German Reich. Moreover, the same attitude and approach to the Jewish population is clear from their behaviour. Sophie does not distinguish between Jewish and Polish prisoners. She does not put emphasis on the imprisonment of herself. She does not ask why she was sent to the camp, even though she is not a Jew. Oskar's attitude is similar to hers. He does not distinguish between his Jewish or Polish employees in his efforts at saving as many lives as possible. Both come in contact with high-ranking commanders of the German Reich and have to deal with such situations, even though they put their lives in danger every day. Last but not least, the common feature of both protagonists is the transformation of their personality, which is reflected in their behaviour and actions, which they are forced to by the circumstances of the war. Sophie takes a stand on her situation, begins to be self-confident, and feels she has to be strong, independent, and uncompromising in order to achieve her goals. While Oskar, who is heavily affected by the Holocaust, is not so self-confident anymore, and he keeps scheming more and more. Each day, he is under pressure because of this desire to save as many human lives as possible. Therefore, he does not hesitate to use all his fortune for this purpose.

These characters are very similar despite the fact that their personalities seem different at the very beginning. Sophie is a shy, fragile young woman dependent on her family and she is perceived as a victim of WWII, as opposed to Oskar, who acts as a hero. His actions

are prompt, well thought out, non-standard and show high level of self-confidence. He actively collaborates with Abwehr and at the same time builds a commercial network under the pretence of own enrichment.

At the end of the analysis, it is confirmed that both characters are badly affected by the war events and become the victims of the war. It is evidenced also by their post-war lives. Oskar travels abroad, namely to Argentina, where he lives for some years in isolation and poverty, because his deeds consisting in the saving of many people's lives have not been sufficiently recognized. The satisfaction comes only after his death, when he is appreciated and revered by the families of the Schindler's Jews whom he helped to survive. Similarly as Oskar, Sophie seeks refuge in another country and tries to establish new relationships. However, she is so marked by the war, that neither her new work, nor her relationship with a man can help her forget. She takes her own life at a fairly young age.

To conclude, the hypothesis of this bachelor thesis was confirmed and brought enriching knowledge within the comparison of both literary works from the perspective of comparison of both main protagonists.

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