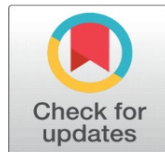


COMEDY OF IDEAS: STUDY OF OZICK'S BLOODSHED AND THREE NOVELLAS

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ABSTRACT

Cynthia Ozick is an emphatic voice of new Jewish American novels who reveals various issues that a Jew has to face while living in mainstream American culture. She advocates ethnicity and chooses the comic mode to reveal the truth. Charles Krauthammer's works try to define the issue of being Jewish in today's American society via his novels, short stories, and essays. Ozick uncovered a plethora of previously unexplored area by delving deep into Judaism's most ancient religious texts. The present paper aims at the in-depth study of the second collection of short stories "Bloodshed and three Novellas". In these stories Ozick which focuses on the betrayal of tradition by Jews. She brings out the hilarious situations and ideas by focusing on various flaws and blemishes in the personalities of her characters. She also mocks at their defective physical appearances. In fact, the comic elements in her fiction have a much higher purpose than only evoking laughter. The present paper also attempts to study how Ozick's comedy is a mirror of human reality and focuses on humanity. The present paper is an endeavor to show how Ozick's comedy has a fair share of flippancy, folly, and jest and how it manifests itself in forms like irony, satire, grotesque, and farce.

Keywords: Satire, Culture, Ideas, Judaism, Irony, Tradition, Ozick, Comedy

1. INTRODUCTION

The second Collection of Ozick," Bloodshed and three Novellas is about traditional Jewish dialectic: magic and reality. The characters in this collection of stories are either on margins of Judaism or have shown themselves of their rich Judaic heritage. Ozick depicts the implications of cultural rootlessness and the consequences of repudiating the traditional values in this collection. The novellas in this connection are paired. They afford contrasting views and illumine disparate perspectives. Ozick meditates on tradition in the novellas and talks about the betrayal of mosaic ideas by Jews. She feels that the loss of cultural integrity and

negation of the self has brought out the weakening of tradition. In her second collection of short fiction, the storyteller is mainly occupied with the betrayal of tradition. In all the four stories of this collection, Ozick explores the discontinuity with traditional values and its impact on the moral life. She clearly states in her essay "Towards a New Yiddish" that the "annihilation of idiosyncrasy assures the annihilation of culture". She also asserts that literature does not spring from the urge to Esperanto but from the Tribe. In this collection, Ozick meditates on tradition and makes the novellas "Tribal". [Woodward \(2000\)](#)

The first story of the collection "A Mercenary" is concerned with the problem of the Jewish identity after the Holocaust. Through the story, Ozick makes plain that a fabricated identity neither liberates nor ennobles and an impersonator does not belong anywhere. The protagonist of the story is a Polish Jew by birth who exchanges the savagery of Poland for the paganism of Africa and becomes a mercenary - the prime minister's gaudy pet - a well - paid slave kept for pleasure. His warm attachments to other cultures - African and American are stimulated by the stark fear to own his Jewish identity but his mistress and his UN assistants have little difficulty in penetrating the ironic mask of the intellectual and exposing the vulnerable Jew, the potential victim beneath. Ozick talks about the effect of the Holocaust on the Jews. In her interview to Osen she opines that the Holocaust is inescapable and inevitably marks-stains on the moral nature. [Epstein \(1984\)](#)

Ozick satirizes the Jews who depart from their culture. As a consequence, they are unacceptable to God and are destined to endure vengeance in desolation. The central character of the story Stanislaw Lushinski, though pretends to have belief in history yet does not return to the Jewish world. In the end, he transforms himself from a person who was terrified to a person who terrifies. The story also narrates the parallel events of life with Ngambe who the secret sharer of the protagonist is. Ozick highlights the atrocities of the Nazis that the Jews had to undergo during the Holocaust times. The terror still persists in their minds, and they are not able to lead their normal lives. Lushinski talks about his childhood as if narrating a legend. Lushinski talks about a real terror of his escape from the Nazis through the forests of Poland when he was six. The horror filled Polish forest resembles the forest encompassing Morris' village, a forest with all its sucking, whistling, croaking, gnawing, perilously breathing beasts and their fearful eyes luminous with moonlight "(23). The young Lushinski gouged out the eye of the ferocious bulldog, And or who "had chewed -up genitals and vomit on his lower jaws" and then threw him against his master whom the dog killed. Ozick gives the parallel hanging from Lushinski's and Morris's boyhoods - one a brutal torture inflicted by the peasants who stung Lushinski from a rafter by his wrists, the other an exercise by the village men to stretch the muscles of the boy's neck. This is the reason why he fled from that world. Thus, Ozick discloses the outcome of the personal decision and an aftermath of the historical event. [French \(1988\)](#)

Ozick's protagonist is lured by other cultures and wishes to be born somewhere else. When he narrates his story, everyone mocks at him except for his German Mistress, Louisa, who does not doubt her lover's veracity. She has often shaken him out of nightmares and comforted him with the reminder that he was now a "figure the world took notice of" (29). She resembles Morris' motherly aunt in this role who gave him confidence that he "would one day weigh the world". Lushinski has a German mistress and her large, fine nose "recall the powers Morris attributes to his mother's nose" (29). Ozick satirizes the people who neglect their culture and land up being ineffective. Morris Ngambe's mental annexation of another continent brought about by a departure from Africa and an education at Oxford is a reflection

of Lushinski's history. Despite his first-hand knowledge of Africa, Morris Ngambe is judged dull and futile by the secretary of state to whom he says there is no contradiction between the tribal and the universal (33) However this statement conjures up the distinction that Ozick makes in, an essay "Towards a New Yiddish" To declare tribal and universal as fundamentally the same, Ozick comments, "is to annihilate culture". Uninterested in biography, he does not care about the consequences of life. Morris Ngambe is an incarnation of paganism and the embodiment of Lushinski's deepest desires. [Kielsky \(1988\)](#)

Ozick brings into focus that the Holocaust instills fear in the minds of the Jews, and they still bear the aftermath of it. To a historical catastrophe, Lushinski attributes his freedom: "Every survivor is free. Everything that can happen to a human being has already happened inside the survivor. The future can invent nothing worse. What he owns now is recklessness without fear". (37) Lushinski is still frightened by the words "peasant" and "Jew" and insists on one topic of conversation - death and the record of it. He favours the accretion of data and tells Lulu that something liturgical is what really happened "(38). In her essay, "Towards a New Yiddish "Ozick explains that liturgical" is in command of the reciprocal moral imagination." However, Lushinski believes that there are no holy men of stories. Lushinski hates being part of the Jews. The very mention of the word Jew drives him to bathe, and this ritual suggests baptism and connects him to Disraeli, a baptized Jew. Ozick unmasks Lushinski's wish to have become a native in the forest from the African village rather than in the woods of Europe. He declares himself an African and tells Lulu, "I don't want Europe (41). Similarly, Morris calls New York a wilderness, a jungle" and Europe the "Dark Continent", a "hellish and horrible" place from which "you fled you ran like prey into shadows "(23). Having run from his tormentors through the dark and perilous forests of Poland, Lushinski dreads what he is. His terror impels him to flee and to regard Europe as the twentieth century's heart of darkness. [Ethos et al. \(1986\)](#)

He becomes a "dervish of travel" and fills his suitcase with "several complete sets of false papers ... passports of various identities ... and a no. Of diplomas in different languages" (36). He is thus, an impersonator who belongs nowhere. He has desire for acceptance at any cost and in any place. On the airplane leaving Africa after the war he has invented, Lushinski pictures the "tarred roofs of the guerilla camps" as the "dark nests of vultures and Lulu imagines herons inhabiting Africa" (49). Ozick thus talks about the birds who are destined to dwell in God's wilderness - away from all kin. Just like these birds, Lushinski also has the same fate because of his impersonation. He thus understands that he is undeserving of his protection and is destined to endure devastation. [Pinsker and Sanford \(1988\)](#)

Ozick however transforms her protagonist from the person who was victimized to the one who victimizes towards the end of the story. In Africa aware that "Morris saw him as an impersonator", that his assistant has "uncovered him", "had called him Jew", the prime minister's gaudy pet sits on a blue sofa before an open widow "and is cast back into the past "under the shadow of bluish snow ... under the stone white hanging stars of Poland". (51) Exchanging the savagery of Poland for the paganism of Africa, he becomes a mercenary - a well-paid slave kept for pleasure. He transforms himself from a person who was terrified to a person who terrifies. The story thus brings out the plight of the Jews to whom impersonation neither ennobles liberates. They end up being only victimizers. Ozick reveals the problem of Jewish identity after the Holocaust. [Woodward \(2000\)](#)

Just like "A Mercenary" Ozick's "Bloodshed" also reveals the change in the protagonist after half of the story is finished. It is about the difference between the

Jews who are at the margins of their culture and the Jews who are rooted in their culture. The protagonist of the story is lured by the group of who follow hasidim and believe in mysticism. Suspicious of fraudulence in the others, he is forced during the course of an interview with the rebbe to acknowledge his own deceit and demonic practices. Ozick thus, places the rebbe at the centre of the Jewish culture and the protagonist at the margins of the culture. Thus, the story constitutes a cardinal sin against God and forfeits a place in the world to come. Ozick also brings out the antithetical theological responses to the human condition after the Holocaust. The story is about a Jewish fundraiser, Bleilip, who visits his distant relative in a newly established Hasidic community outside New York. He regards the survivors of the Holocaust as comprising a town of dead men (60) and wants to penetrate the mystery of the town's inhabitants. Including himself in society at large "away from its shtetl, he thinks he enjoys his life" excessively, but as Yussel, his cousin, observes, Bleilip is looking for something. He wants to find" (58). His attitude towards the Hasidim is sharply divided. [Wilkinson \(2008\)](#)

As he and Yussel turn toward the schoolhouse to attend the evening prayers, Bleilip is startled by the sight of Toby entering the darkened door of her house with her two "pairs of boys with golden earlocks," for it is Asif a "beam of divinity had fixed on her head, her house (60). He envisions his cousin as the owner of a divinely protected and blessed existence, a gift from the Messiah. The rebbe brings to his reading the passages from the Talmud and also gives of the fresh interpretation of the traditional texts. He hears them and retreats to the centre of doubt and despair whereupon he scrutinizes the rebbe noting his posture and his funny flat nose, Bleilip concludes that the rebbe is a self-stabber. In his discourse the rebbe conflates the prayer of the high priest for the people of Sharon in the Talmud with the scapegoat's fate as it is reported in yoma. [Rawls \(1971\)](#)

However, Bleilip's confrontation with the rebbe contains a rigid truth "which illuminates the fundraiser's fundamental" darkly hidden intentions and the rebbe's fundamental convictions. Addressing himself as a visitor, the rebbe demands Bleilip to identify himself in a schoolroom. He speaks his name and admits that he is a visitor who wants "a certain piece of truth" (67). The rebbe only understands that he has not come as a pilgrim but to get certain idea of Hasidim. He is lured by his narrow reading, including legends of miraculous deeds, the notion that some "rabbis" achieved levitation and hung in the air without end. But the magical does not engage the rebbe. He calls himself a secularist and denies that life is mistake and he is in despair. However, the rebbe points out at the plastic gun that Bleilip hiding in his pocket and calls him "Beast! Lion. To him he is a devourer who would eat them up" (67).

Humiliated like a child caught with a forbidden toy, he is amazed by the rebbe's clairvoyance and the rebbe declares the toy as the thing "we have to fear, the incapable" (70). He feels that which is incapable in itself of killing is the most lethal Instrument for its ability to deceive, removes fear and replaces it with susceptibility. Alone with the rebbe in the schoolhouse, Bleilip thinks about the bulb dangling on cords' envisioning, just as he visualized his grandfather and God of Israel. However, bulbs are not the images of magical levitation but the sources of light that afford him a brief view of the rebbe's power. He is lured by Hasidism discloses Bleilip's desire to witness the lives of those whose beliefs have brightened the darkness of futility with the light of hope. [Wenar \(2008\)](#)

In her story Ozick also highlights the Nazi atrocities on the Jews. Applying his explanation of Azazel to the darkness of the present, the rebbe registers his response to the Nazi brutality. "Instead of freedom, we have the red cord around our throats,

we were in villages, they drove us into camps, we were in trains, they drove us into showers of poison in the absence of Messiah the secular ones made a nation, enemies bite at it ... all our prayers are bleats and neighbours on the way to forsaken altar a teeming Azazel. Little fathers, how it is possible to live "166, 67). Ozick also hints at the work - permit custom of the Nazis when she talks about the messages kept in the pockets. "I am but dust and ashes". In the other "For my sake was the world created". Demonically contrived to divide those Jews, who were to be murdered immediately, the Nazis secretly planned to murder later, the horrendous custom gave false hopes. Separating those who were allowed to live temporarily from those who were doomed to die immediately, the work permit system approximates the rebbe's interpretation of the world devoid of Messiah. "We are assigned our lot, we are designated for the altar or for Azazel, in either case we are meant to be cut down "(66). Ozick thus satirizes the Nazi hypocrisy. Thus, through her story, Cynthia Ozick not only satirizes the Jews who are on the margins, turning their backs on their rich tradition but also gives psychological responses of different people after the Holocaust. She also derides the Nazis for their brutality. Placing her protagonist at the margins of the Jewish culture and the rabbi at the centre of the Jewish culture, she makes the protagonist aware of the rebbe's powers. [Will \(1990\)](#)

The third fiction is yoked to the fourth fiction of this collection. Both the stories are against idolatry. Ozick in her story "An Education" explores the central importance of cultural rootedness and the dangers of idolatry. The story focuses on the Jews who lampoon their own culture and are lured towards Christianity. She denounces idolatry and investigates its psychological and intellectual facets. The story "reinterprets the commandment crucial to Jewish identity." It is an ironic treatment of a student who tries and fails to understand life by the ideals of grammar.

The protagonist of the story Una Meyer enters her college Latin class and by twenty-four she has acquired a "master's degree in classics and most of a Ph.D. "(76). She is pure and innocent, and she has kissed none but her parents' (75). She is naïve emotionally and sophisticated intellectually. She has a strong distaste for marriage and is convinced that "there were no new revelations to be had "(80). Calling herself a Platonist who believes in the perfection of man, she argues against the idea of "cultural relativity ". When her friend Rosalie introduces her to Clement and Mary Chimes and tells her about their card catalogue of books, Una thinks that she has discovered perfection. Clement Chimes believes in "non action" and "stasis". Rootless culturally, he is destroyed creatively unable to complete his work at the seminary. He cannot progress past the title page of his book, "Social Cancer: A Diagnosis in Verse and Anger."

Una Meyer idolizes Chimeses and becomes a kind of self-proclaimed slave to both of them. Una identifies her first meeting with the Chimeses as the one that came just when she had decided that there were no revelations to be had "(80). The Chimeses, Una and Rosalie read King Lear aloud on the beach and Ozick unequally reverses their roles where Una plays Regan, Lear's selfish and ungrateful daughter. In the play, Lear's is an education that rewards and redeems him but for Una it is otherwise: Unlike Lear she gets no awareness and "rejects her essential belief in the perfection of man, her rapture without a fault" which she attributes to Chimeses (81). To fulfil Clement's requirements, she stops working on her dissertation and stops looking at the "world in terms of (her) own self-gratification" (88). When she comes to know that there is less of money in the family, she like a dutiful daughter bicycle to the market and buys the food. She idolises Chimeses to such an extent that when a daughter is born to them, she regards an infant as a combination of two perfections. Enthralled to her adopted parents she takes over Mary's

responsibilities for her daughter Christina, writes Clement's letters, works at Woolworth's so that he can write, pays a good chunk them for rent and also prepares breakfast for them. [Pols \(2010\)](#)

Then she meets the student in her college Latin class who was once a failure at conjugation. Borris Organske has become a medical student. Unlike Una, he thinks the Chimeses "worse than perfect". He tells them their child is malnourished and also protests their maltreatment of Una. However, her perfect parents complain about her obsequiousness and her cooking and when she comes back, they object her boyfriend. The medical student diagnoses Una's obsession and prescribes a dose of reality to her.

Ozick now turns the straight flow of her story. Christina is hospitalized and Una witness the terrible sight of Clement and Mary "at war". Borris evaluates it as "An attack, yes. An attack of guilt" (177). But Una accepts the responsibility for Christina's illness and clears away the plunder the next day. Under the heap of newspapers, she discovers Clement' manuscript which is incomplete. Although she has worked at Woolworth's so that Clement could write, Una denies this evidence of her exploitation. Christina dies and Chimesis leave the city without inspiring anyone. In spite of Borris's admonitions, Una cannot forget Chimesis. She continues to look for them in newspapers. "Neither repaired nor reconverted" by her education, she refuses to marry her Borris because to her there is no education in it. (125). She decides to complete her thesis at Midwestern university. [Cohen \(1990\)](#)

At one of the parties, she is reunited with Rosalic, and she tells Una about her contempt for Chimesis. She arranges a marriage between Borris and Rosalie. A decade later she visits Organskis that their household "has no glory and no wars". The opposite marriages of Organskis and Chimesis approximates for Una the attributes of imperfection and perfection, thus symbolizing Hellenism and Hebraism, respectively. Ozick's protagonist violates the law of Judaism which advocates against idolatry and ends up being disillusioned and disappointed. She idolises Chimesis to such an extent that she leaves all her work and works for them so that Clement could write. Though in turn they backbite about her with Borris, yet she refuses to believe Borris when he acquaints her with this. Even when she witnesses the evidence that Clement has not worked on his "diagnosis" and is all the time exploiting her by making her do household chores, does not pay heed to it. They leave the place when their daughter dies and do not even inform her, about it Later on also they never contacted her. She is so disturbed that she continues to look for two of them "to jump out at her from a newspaper". (123) Ozick's protagonist thus violates Judaism and lands up in a state of disillusionment.

Ozick brings to the focus the Jews who run from their identity and disclaim their heritage. Clement Chimes has changed his name word send to meaning from Chaim, the word meaning life in Hebrew, to Chimes meaning like what a bell does ". For him, the word" Holocaust "means nothing more than a pun of Heidegger and the Holy Ghost. Ozick thus satirizes the Jews who do not respect their culture. [Kim \(1990\)](#)

Ozick also ridicules the Jews who are lured by Christianity and forget about their own culture. Chimes Clement's enrolment in the seminary, his wife's name Mary and their decision to call their He daughter "Christina" suggests an attraction to Christianity Call (292 believes in "Non action", and "Stasis" (88) w/c, according to Ozick are the characteristics of Hellenism. Rootless culturally, he lacks the courage to affirm his true being and to participate in the world. Ozick thus brings out that the Jews who evade their identity do not end up anywhere. [Kim \(1990\)](#)

Just like "Education" the theme of "Usurpation" is the betrayal of Judaism. It maintains that Jewish writers, fashioning a make - believe reality through words, are

committing idolatrous acts in direct violation of the second commandment. The story brings out her desire to adhere to the teachings of the patriarchs. It depicts the fate of the writer who turns his back on his tradition to change his identity. But Ozick makes it clear that when Jewish storytellers choose to write about the heathen rather than the holy in the next world, then its pagan inhabitants do not allow them to forget they are Jews. [Woodword, K. L. \(2000\)](#)

In Ozick's view, these writers are usurpers. In a preface to the book she says, 'Usurpation is a story written against story telling against the Muse Goddesses: against Apollo. It is against magic and mystification, against sham and "miracles and going deeper into darkness, against idolatry. It is an invention directing against inventing the point being that story making corruptions and abominations of idol worship, or the adoration of magical event. She obeys the commandment of Judaism and also meditates on the loss of values and beliefs in the present-day world. The story is about a Jewish writer identifiable with the author. She corrupts the work of others in her own need to make a perfect story and to win the "magic crown" of fame and immortality. Ozick also shows the conflict between the Hellenism and the Hebraism in her story. [Will \(1990\)](#)

The unnamed narrator-protagonist of the story, just like Edelshtien of "Envy or Yiddish in America" has a secret desire for western civilization. She is a little-known author with an oversized ego who feels entitled to a larger readership and is driven to take drastic steps to obtain it like Edelshtien, who character assassinates the Yankel Ostrover. Ozick's narrator accuses the famous American Jewish author committing wrongs against what is forbidden the story brings out the writer's clash with tradition. She encounters an eminent writer at New York's 92nd Y street, listens to him and reads his unpublished story. The Magic Crown, only to discover that it was her work that is, a work she intended to write. Ozick does not depict the theft seriously but treats it mock heroically. She has her narrator lust after another storyteller's power invention, yet falsely accuses him of violating her power. She charges him with the premature composition and manuscript molestation. Ozick thus satirizes the author's inflated notion of originality. [Sider et al. \(2009\)](#)

Ozick's protagonist is irrevocably drawn to everything that is anti-Moses. She does not pilfer from newspapers for other people's stories. Before she reconstructs their work, she criticizes, demolishes it. She criticizes the Malamud's tale. Ozick depicts Hebraism and Hellenism controversy symbolized by an old writer and the poet Tchernikhovsky. Fable of old writer, the Nobel prize winner's best, the ghost of Tchernikhovsky misconstrues the point of tale and satisfied "that Messiah is prevented from coming" (145) and the Hebrew poet's poem suggest that it celebrates the appearance of Greek God Apollo. His poem pays pagan homage to a Greek God of the poem's inventor, an old writer observes, "All that pantheism and earth worship! The pursuit of the old gods of Canaan! ... All pantheists are fools How can a piece of creation be its own creator?" (144) He repudiates Tchernikhovsky's Hellenism but also the crown giving it to the student who has come in quest of fame. [Friedman \(1991\)](#)

Ozick also questions the difference between religion and magic and finds them to be the same. The narrator of Usurpation tells the reason of the student's death, "I killed off the student to punish him USE reak for arrogance. The goat was a ba'alga'avah! ... only a ba'alga'avah would dare to write about religion so I punished him for it. How? By transmuting piety into magic "(157-58). Thus, she deems religion to be a subject that only the self-idolator can write about. Breaking the chain of tradition between old and new the narrator of usurpation lusts after magic. The ending of " Usurpation' is not only about Ozick's dread of idolatry and desire to

adhere to the teachings of patriarchs but by her enduring last after stories. Usurpation therefore unfolds the last and most serious betrayal of Judaism and upholds its obedience to its Commandment. Ozick's four fictions in 'Bloodshed and three Novellas' pertain directly to the present times. The writer is concerned with rootlessness, idolatry, and disbelief. She invites her readers to examine the basis of attraction to discontinuity, rupture with tradition and eschewal of moral life. She urges us to relinquish the idols. The collection is a meditation on the loss of values and beliefs threatening contemporary life. [Yudkin \(1880\)](#)

2. CONCLUSION

Ozick's exploratory beginning, that gives information just on creative process and the final product, is divided into the four expressly labelled "fictions" As the author asserts, "Fantasy should assess as well as explain the world. He uses the ancient Jewish dialectic—gods as well as God; magic and reality—to his benefit once again in *The Pagan Rabbi* (1971). "Secularist" Ozick Bleilip takes on a Hasidic Rebbe inside the title piece, and in between the two of them are his real or toy guns. An organism's fatal potential may be portrayed by a toy that seems "impossibility," making it more dangerous. Place at a single point in "A Soldier," we see a Pole pretending to be an African ambassador fall victim to his own self-deception. Ozick's "The Education" also makes fun of the idea of perfectionists in the classroom. Since Ozick's imagery, imagination, and conjuring are so rich as well as thick, his torchlight explication in the Preface to "Usurpation" is greatly appreciated. According to the narrator, this is a tale against storytelling ability, magic, and devotion. Sharing and stealing stories, myths, and media stories among writers (including the author) reveals the creative imagination as a liar. They all seek for the fabled "silver crown" of fame. This great skill is so intricate and graceful that it can only pray that this will not be suffocated by it.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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