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A TRAUMATIC STUDY ON
THE HISTORY OF LOVE

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By

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摘要

妮可·克劳斯(Nicole Krauss, 1974-)是美国当代杰出的犹太裔女作家,2010 年曾被《纽约客》杂志评选为 40 岁以下优秀的小说家。她的小说以复杂的叙事结构和深远的社会意义见长。她的经典之作——《爱的历史》,从多个方面体现了她独特的创作技巧和创作理念。

《爱的历史》以一本同名小说的遗失手稿为线索,艺术地再现了三个移民美洲的犹太家庭所经历的战争创伤、文化创伤、家庭创伤和情感创伤。克劳斯运用交错时空、转换叙述视角的现代主义手法,直观地揭示了创伤给几位人物造成的肉体和精神的双重伤害,以及他们凭借顽强意志在苦痛和绝望中摆脱创伤、重建信仰、开启新生活的过程。因此,本文拟立足于创伤理论,深入分析人物创伤的表症、原因和复原,彰显《爱的历史》的艺术价值和现实意义。

除引言和结论之外,本文的主体部分由三个章节构成。第一章细致分析了几位人物的创伤表现。他们的症状主要体现为孤独、沉默、交际障碍、自我分裂和身份困惑。第二章深入挖掘产生这些症状的原因。纳粹大屠杀严重冲击了他们的生存环境和精神世界,迫使他们逃亡美洲,然而犹太文化和美洲文化的激烈冲突使他们无法融入主流社会,只能在边缘社会饱尝孤独和恐惧。此外,人物各自的家庭悲剧和情感挫折加重了他们的心理创伤。挚爱的离去击垮了利欧的生存支撑,使他逐渐迷失自我;父亲的去世导致艾尔玛和弟弟受困于畸形的生活环境;对朋友的背叛使里特维诺夫饱受良心的谴责。第三章主要探讨了他们治疗创伤的方法。利欧通过书写自己的创伤与过去达成和解,并在他人的帮助下重塑身份,走出创伤阴影;艾尔玛以日记的方式重新认识自己的创伤,同时又通过阅读找回自己的身份,最终开启了新生活;里特维诺夫在妻子的悉心照料下,在他的作品中承认自己的过错,获得了内心的平静与祥和。通过剖析几位人物创伤的症状、原因和复原,本文得出结论:主观意愿上的努力是受伤者挣脱创伤枷锁的决定因素。只有自我救赎,才能让受伤者真正地克服过去的恐惧,迈向新生活。

关键词:《爱的历史》; 创伤表症; 创伤原因; 创伤复原; 自我救赎

Abstract

Nicole Krauss is a prominent contemporary Jewish female writer in the United States, who has been voted by New Yorker as an outstanding novelist under forty in 2010. Her novels are known for their complex narrative structures and profound social significance. *The History of Love* as her classic work instantiates her unique writing skills and creative principles from many perspectives.

The History of Love juxtaposes several story lines around three Jewish families who immigrate to the Americas, interweaved by the lost manuscript of the same name. These strands of plot, from different aspects, unfold that main characters in the novel respectively experience the war trauma, the cultural trauma, the domestic trauma and the emotional trauma. Through modernist methods, Krauss reveals the physical and psychological traumas those Jews suffer from, and the process of their recovery. Although *The History of Love* artfully recreates the traumatic experiences of Jews, it is a novel of hope rather despair: main figures in the novel exert themselves to heal traumas, rebuild the faith and start a new life, even though they live in bitterness and depression. Therefore, under the framework of trauma theory, this thesis aims to deeply analyze the traumatic symptoms of each character, find out the collective and individual reasons of their traumas, and expound how they actively seek traumatic recovery.

Besides the introduction and the conclusion, the main part of this thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter analyzes the traumatic symptoms of key characters in *The History of Love* in detail. The traumatic symptoms of them mainly include loneliness, silence, communicative impediments, split self and identity anxieties. Then the second chapter probes into the causes of psychological traumas, according to symptoms discovered in the previous chapter. The Holocaust damages main characters' living environments and shatters their beliefs, forcing them to flee to the Americas as refugees. While fierce conflicts between Jewish and American culture exclude them from mainstream society, which casts them into states of loneliness and terror. In addition, family tragedies and emotional setbacks aggravate their own psychological traumas. The loss of beloved makes Leo lose the support of his existence; because of the death of father, Alma and her brother live in an abnormal environment; Litvinoff is tormented by his conscience due to his betrayal of friend. The third chapter discusses how they actively seek recovery from traumas. Leo copes with the past through narrating his traumatic experiences and reconstructs his identity

with the help of the community, and eventually he works through his traumas. By keeping writing diaries, Alma recalls her traumatic memories. Meanwhile, under the guidance of bibliotherapy, she retrieves her identity. Thus Alma escapes from the shadows of traumas and starts a new life. With the tender care of his wife, Litvinoff gradually has the courage to face his own past and eventually confesses his fault through his publication. Through interpreting *The History of Love* in the light of trauma theory, this thesis concludes that: the fundamental element of working through traumas lies in the victim's conscious effort. Only self-redemption can help the victim extricate himself from the terror of traumas and open a new chapter of life.

Key words: *The History of Love*; traumatic symptoms; traumatic causes; traumatic recovery; self-redemption

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Introduction

0.1 Nicole Krauss and *The History of Love*

Nicole Krauss (1974-) is a contemporary Jewish American female writer, who is admittedly regarded as one of the greatest writers under forty in American literature. Her works are famous for ingenious narrative structures and profound social significance, which won many praises and awards.

Nicole Krauss was born in 1974 in Manhattan, New York City. When she was in adolescence, Krauss read numerous literary works thoughtfully and showed her talent on poetry. In 1992, she entered in Stanford University where she encountered Joseph Brodsky who gave her valuable guidance on poetry. In an interview, Krauss admitted that: “Joseph told me read, for example ‘The Beginning of Herbert’ who is a polish poet who has guided what kind of writer I wish to be, and also just a sense of how serious a product of writing should be.” (Krauss, “Analysis”) His insightful directions make Krauss reconsider her own identity, belief and nation.

In fact, Krauss is a grandchild of the survivors of the Holocaust. “Her maternal grandparents were born in Germany and Ukraine and later found refuge in London, while her paternal grandparents, who met in Israel and then moved to New York, were born in Hungary and Slonim, White Russia”. (Berger 66) And “her great-grandparents and lots of great uncles and aunts died in the Holocaust.” (qtd in Berger 66) Although she is “chronologically separated and shielded from the horrors of the historical realities of the Holocaust by her grandparents and parents”, (Berger 64) the disaster still has profound influences on her. The tragic fate of her predecessors “casts a long shadow over Krauss’s literary landscape”. (Berger 67) In her first novel *Man Walks into a Room* which was published in 2002, Krauss expresses her meditations on memory and personal history. (Wei Lan 13) Her debut is a great success, wining many critics’ praises. Her second novel, *The History of Love*, was published in 2005. This novel is a significant one and win many awards. In this work Krauss recounts her own experiences as a grandchild of Holocaust survivors through delicate narration. In 2010, Krauss released her third novel, *Great House*, which was nominated for the National Book Award for Fiction in the same year and was nominated for the Orange Prize in 2011. These three major works establish her fame as a famous writer nationwide as well as worldwide.

Because she described the enormous impact of Holocaust in her works, Krauss is labelled as a Holocaust writer. In an interview, she argued that “I’ve written very little about the Holocaust in terms of the actual events”. (Krauss, “Fame”) She thinks that there is something inherited in blood, and she has a sense to say or write something about the past. Therefore, Krauss focuses on the “the response to catastrophic loss” rather than the historical realities. (Krauss, “Fame”) Indeed, her grandparents’ experiences of Holocaust and displacement make Krauss apprehend “not about tragedy, not about what had happened to their families, but simply about living.” (Berger 67) Just as the words she writes on the cover of *The History of Love*: “For my grandparents, who taught me the opposite of disappearing.” (Krauss, *History*)

The History of Love is Nicole Krauss’s second novel, which instantiates her unique writing skills and creative principles from many perspectives. In this novel, Krauss depicts many vivid Jews who are suffering from their own psychological traumas, which are extensively based on her family’s histories.

The History of Love is a book about a book, about a group of Jewish Americans who suffer from their traumas still love life, extending in labyrinthine narration. Leopold Gursky (Leo) is a young aspiring Polish writer. He falls in love with Alma Mereminski and writes a novel in Yiddish to his sweetheart, which also called *The History of Love*. Then Poland is invaded by Nazis. “No Jew was safe.” (Krauss, *History* 8) Leo’s beloved leaves for America, and Leo entrusts his manuscript to his friend, another aspiring Polish writer Zvi Litvinoff, just before the latter flees to Chile. (Codde, “Keeping History” 685) Leo hides in trees, cracks, cellars, holes, and becomes an invisible man, in which way, he escapes death. (Krauss, *History* 12) Although he survives Holocaust and tries his best to get to America to find his lover, Alma has married and has a son who does not know his biological father. Leo still loves Alma, therefore, he obeys her wishes to disappear, to become invisible to her and his son. And from then on, he cannot write any word to describe the world, to express himself.

Zvi translates Leo’s manuscript into Spanish and releases it as his own work, which brings him praise, fame and love of Rosa. But he has been living in nightmares and guilty till his death. Many years later, David Singer buys the Spanish book for his girlfriend, Charlotte, a translator and knowing well several languages. After they get married, they name their daughter Alma Singer. When Alma is seven years old, her father dies of cancer, which is a heavy hit to the whole family. Since then Charlotte has lived in great grief. The loss of father and the depression of mother make Alma and Bird have communicative

predicaments and behave absurd.

At present, Leo is eighty years old and is waiting for death in his apartment. He suddenly realizes that there is no proof of his existence in the world, except himself. Thus he wants to find his lost works. And young Alma is trying her best to work through the grief of loss and the loneliness by seeking for “the real Alma” in the book. With the help of Bird, Leo and Alma meet each other and find their own answer.

Nicole Krauss juxtaposes various narrators in *The History of Love*. These narrators through different ways recount their own indelible scars, which forms a postmodern collage about Jews in the Americas suffering from various traumatic experiences. Old Leo waits for his death in loneliness and despair; Litvinoff usually wakes from nightmares and lives in panic; Charlotte indulges in the past and separates herself from the world; young Alma and her brother have no ability to develop normal relationships, and then they lose all of friends. From a horizontal perspective, these strands of plot exhibit the painful conditions of three generations of Holocaust survivors; from a vertical perspective, these depict a Jew living in America who fights against his psychological traumas for the whole life. It can be said that *The History of Love* recreates the traumatic experiences of Jews through artistic means. Therefore, it is practicable to deeply analyze the traumatic symptoms of each character, find out the collective and individual causes of their traumas, and expound how they actively seek traumatic recovery.

0.2 Literature Review

As a third-generation writer of Holocaust, Nicole Krauss follows her urge to witness the past. *The History of Love*, regarded as her classic work, records the experiences of a group of Jews who praise life through structured narrative designs. Owing to its distinctive narrative styles and its meditation on the Holocaust memory and Jewishness, *The History of Love* has attracted much attention of scholars and critics both home and abroad, since its publication.

There is plenty of overseas research on *The History of Love*, exploring it from multiple perspectives. Philippe Codde in his several articles analyzes its writing techniques and themes with detailed illustrations. There are four distinctive narrators in this work, Leo Gursky, Alma Singer, Bird, and an omniscient narrator, and each one is accompanied by an avatar respectively: a heart, a compass, an Ark and a book. In “On the Problematic Omniscient Narrator in Nicole Krauss’s *The History of Love*”, Codde studies the omniscient narrator and then points out the omniscient voice belongs to Leo and the story recounted by the fourth

narrator actually is Leo's imagination, basing on Rosa's introduction. He continues to probe into the metafictional elements in the same article. The suggestion that the final chapter of the inset *The History of Love* is Leo's obituary which exactly coincides with the book in readers' hands reveals the "true" author of the work in our hands is Leo. (Codde, "Problematic" 49-50) It sounds a little farfetched. If Leo is the true author, then how about Alma Singer and her brother? Are they and their stories only Leo's fantasies? In the writer's opinion, the fourth voice belongs to God, which provides a panoramic view over several generations of the Holocaust survivors. In his another essay, "Keeping History at Bay", Codde presents there are two kinds of "memorial candles" in *The History of Love*. First of all, Alma Singer and Bird, named after dead relatives, shoulder the burden to make up for the lives lost during the Shoah. Then Bruno serves as another memorial candle, referring to Bruno Schulz who is a Polish writer and graphic artist and is shot by Nazi in 1942. By analyzing these characters, designed according to histories of Krauss's family and nation, Codde concludes that Krauss is haunted by spectral elements of Holocaust and she always involves an attempt to undo the past via fiction and to keep history at bay. ("Keeping History" 674-686) Indeed, as a third-generation Holocaust writer, Krauss is still under the shadow of the past, however, she has the courage to face to the past. And through writing traumas, writing histories in her novels, she copes with the past and enjoys a happy life. This view of Codde is echoed by Alan L. Berger and Asher Z. Milbauer in their "The Burden of Inheritance". They assert that *The History of Love* is dedicated both to Krauss's four grandparents, who has experienced the Holocaust, and her husband, Jonathan Safran Foer, whose family has been attacked by the Shoah. Through insightful descriptions, Krauss reveals to her readers how writing becomes a way of coping with the past while investing the future with a measure of hope. (67-83) Jessica Lang also addresses the transmission of Holocaust memory. Lang examines the presences of the Holocaust in the work and Krauss's unique strategies, and then points out the novel is "built on a fraught triumvirate: history, a wary critical community, and a contemporary audience longing for an imaginative connection between themselves and the historical event." (43) Literature serves as a passage to transmit memories and histories between generations, and it enables contemporary readers to know the past through artistic representations.

Besides themes mentioned above, there is another theme explored by Stacey Gottlieb in "All We Need Is Love". Gottlieb acclaims that *The History of Love* moves easily and eloquently through time and around the world, because love is indeed the very center of it all. (30) Krauss in an interview admits that. "Those

who find it, it changes their lives in some way and it connects them, move them toward each other”. (Krauss, “Analysis”) *The History of Love* is a work about love: everyone who holds the inset book written by Leo wins love. In the “Hearts Full of Sorrow”, Rebecca Newberger Goldstein points out that this work is not about despair, but about hope. She illustrates that, “Gursky does not choose to be excluded from normal life, but rather strives, with futility, to achieve the ordinary.” (10) Although Leo is tormented by psychological traumas all the time, he never give up the hope of life. He always exerts himself to work through his traumas, even though he has failed many times.

There are some studies discussing the writing styles of *The History of Love*. Karolina Krasuska in her article acclaims that Krauss seems to give rise to and rely on different familial/ genealogical narratives in *The History of Love*. She makes a further explanation that the narratives of generationality “project a vision of community that is quite open and make us question various hegemonic coordinates of Jewishness”. (285) Although they are surrounded by American culture and lifestyles, the main characters in this novel still remain their beliefs and some Jewish traditions. The Jewishness in the work actually is a reflection of Nicole Krauss and other Jewish American writers. They inherit something from their nation and have an urge to narrate themselves. Except for the Jewishness, in “The Opposite of Disappearing”, Corina Selejan discusses the hybridity of *The History of Love*. Various genres or elements of heteroglossia are inserted into the fabric of the novel, such as Leo’s obituary, Bird’s dairy entries, and a diagram draw by Charlotte to show the hybridity of her own identity. The generic stratification of language defines the work as a mixture of Jewishness and globality both in form and theme. (89-96) In fact, it is the tendency for the literature to combine the uniqueness and cosmopolitanism into together.

However, there are still some critical remarks on *The History of Love*. Ruth Franklin satirizes the writing techniques in this novel by explaining the parable of an angel who is drowned by a human being. “This is something irresistible about this story, but also something trite”. “This is a fault not only of the parable, but also of the voice of Gursky, who dominates the novel but is never entirely believable.” (Franklin 42) The writer of this thesis disapproves of this view. The angel is the beloved of God, however, he does not get any response when he pleas for God. The helplessness and despair of the angel is a reflection of the Jews who are experiencing the Holocaust. Therefore Leo, the survivor of the Holocaust, is the most suitable person to narrate the parable. Laura Miller criticizes that “[s]he (Nicole Krauss) has written almost entirely under the influence of powerful literary fathers, an assemblage of canonical figures

including Isaac Babel, Frank Kafka and Bruno Schulz.” (19) Krauss’ writing skills and creating ideas are not influenced by the group of powerful writers, but by the massacre. Actually, the Holocaust casts a long shadow over all of them, resulting in their similar writing styles.

At home, there is only several research on this work, because it was just introduced in 2009. And these studies mainly focus on this novel’s writing techniques. Ma Lijuan in “Seeking for love in an Alienated World” by analyzing the shift of different narrators concludes that the integration of different narrative modes can expand narrative space, promote the development of plots and highlight the theme of this novel, as well can arouse the enthusiasm of readers’ re-creation in maximum. (43) The metafictional strategies of this novel has been studied in other papers. They address that the whole story is developed in fragments and pieces. The writer of this thesis considers that the fragmented narration actually is a true reflection of characters’ spiritual world, who are longing for love. In 2016, there is a MA thesis to explore its themes, “A Thematic Study on *The History of Love* by Nicole Krauss”. Through detailed explanations, it summarizes three themes of the work. First of all, Krauss provides some ways to survive the loss and loneliness; then these two means, inheritance of Jewish culture and convergence of the Jewish and the American, should be juxtaposed to enrich the Jewish culture. The third theme is that this work tells people to establish sound relationships among others, as well, with nature. (Yuan 43) Although this thesis makes elaborate explanations on multiple themes involved in this novel, there still are some aspects not been explored.

Through the above literature review, it can be seen that studies on *The History of Love* mainly range from its writing techniques to its themes, which leaves gaps for further research. In fact, this novel instantiates features of trauma literature. Moreover, there are some oversea essays involving the traumatic study on this work, but they mainly focus on its war trauma, and have not made systematic analyses. Therefore, it is feasible to study *The History of Love* under the framework of trauma theory.

0.3 Trauma and Trauma Theory

The initial trauma is a Greek word that means prick or tear out the skin, which refers to physical wounds. (Tao Jiajun 117) In its later usage, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not only upon the body but also upon the mind. (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 3) In late 19th century, Jean Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud study “trauma” in the medical and psychiatric fields. And they define it as “the wounding of the mind brought about by sudden, unexpected, emotional shock.” (Leys 4) Freud

believes the causes that resulting the “hysteria” or other mental disorders lying in the sexuality and desires. Therefore, early trauma theory has an emphasis on sexuality and desires. After witnessing the inhumanity of the First World War and experiencing the Holocaust, Freud begins to focus on psychological traumas which are caused by modern industrialism and wars. In his work, *Civilization and Its Discontent*, Freud makes a further development on his trauma theory. The core concepts of this book are that modernism and industrialism give human great power to conquer the nature, however, which are the origins of people’s pains and traumas. The rapid developments of modern civilization or industrial society make human beings live in an alienated world and deprive them of intuitive desires which are regarded as the source of happiness by Freud. His analyses of the types of trauma, its social roots, and its psychological symptoms lay a solid theoretical foundation for further studies. In the light of Freud’s theory, the research of traumas gradually spreads on political, cultural, social and other fields.

As a contemporary popular discourse and research paradigm, trauma research has different focuses in different historical stages. In 1960s and 1970s, the development of feminist movement in western countries urges the states to pay close attention to abused children, battered women, victims of sexual assault. Therefore, trauma study combined with feminism at that time. In 1970s, with the rise of anti-war movements in America, the government has begun to concern traumas of Vietnam veterans. Then trauma research has paid attention to the cruelty of wars inflicting wounds on mind or psyche. While at the beginning of the 1980s, the study of trauma was carried out from the clinical practice of psychosis, from public political discourse around sex, race and war, to the fields of history, literature, philosophy, cultural studies and criticism. (Tao Jiajun 123)

Contemporary trauma theorist Cathy Caruth in her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, defines trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.” (11) According to this description, there are three characteristics of trauma: “delayed, uncontrolled repetitive, and intrusive”. And she makes it clear that “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on”(Caruth, *Unclaimed* 4) The traumatized not only are tormented by the “violent or original event”, but also its resemblances. Therefore the victim seems to be in the shadows of traumas all the time, causing

disorders of his spirit. And because of the differences of traumas and the diversities of individuals, there are various traumatic symptoms, which can be divided into three main categories— “hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction”. (Herman 35) Generally speaking, the psychological disorders of the victim show several symptoms simultaneously. These symptoms may sometimes contradict each other, aggravating the mental traumas.

Trauma is an incident which is too sudden and too harsh for the mind to adapt to, thus traumatic memories often recurred in victims’ lives through nightmares and illusions, bringing about mental disorders. Traumas can be shared with contemporaries because of experiencing same catastrophic events; as well trauma memories can be transmitted to next generations through testimony. Consequently, the individual traumas spread both in horizontal and vertical directions, which forms the collective trauma. And the traumatic experiences lead to the decrease of attention and the weakening of utterance competence, resulting in difficulties in narrative. The sufferers often cannot clearly recount the past, and cannot explain the traumatic events. (Wang Xin, “Trauma Narrative” 73) Therefore, trauma narrative is usually seen as a sign of healing or not. In this milieu, trauma literature is a way to help victims relieve from sufferings and work through traumas. Basing on the history, contemporary writers compose catastrophic events in their works, which can help people reconsider the past. Through participating, explaining the text by themselves, the traumatized can cope with the past and open a hopeful chapter of life.

0.4 Organization of the Thesis

Traumatic memories “are not encoded like the ordinary memories of adults in a verbal, linear narrative that is assimilated into an ongoing life story.” (Herman 37) These unusual qualities determines that trauma literature is distinct from other literary works. Trauma literature inherently resists linear narrative structures, resulting in difficulties in reading. (Li Manman255) In *The History of Love*, Krauss adeptly utilizes non-linear narrative methods, such as shifting time and space and changing narrative perspectives, to reveal catastrophes causing severe damages on her characters’ psyches. Thus *The History of Love* instantiates features of the trauma literature.

This thesis aims to interpret this novel under the framework of trauma theory and answer the following research questions: 1) What are the traumatic symptoms of characters in *The History of Love*? 2) What are the causes of their traumas? 3) How do they work through their traumas?

The introduction of this thesis, firstly, makes a brief presentation of Nicole Krauss and *The History of Love*, literature reviews on this novel and trauma theory. It provides a solid foundation for the writer's further analyses. And the main body of this thesis includes three chapters. The first chapter focuses on the traumatic symptoms of the key figures. It will be developed in three aspects: identity anxieties, communicative impediments and split self, which are cardinal symptoms in this novel.

Then the second chapter probes into the causes of traumas, according to symptoms discovered in the previous chapter. Psychological traumas of each character in *The History of Love* are produced by collective and individual factors. The Holocaust causes deconstructive effects to main characters, shattering their beliefs and casting long shadows over their lives. After arriving in the Americas as refugees, the fierce conflicts between Jewish and American cultures make them be excluded from mainstream society, pushing them into loneliness and isolation. Besides these collective causes, there are various individual causes of their traumas. The loss of beloved makes Leo lose the support of his existence; because of the death of father, Alma and her brother live in an abnormal environment; Litvinoff is tormented by his conscience due to his betrayal of friend. The third chapter concentrates on how they actively seek recovery from traumas. As a result of the overwhelming force of traumas, each character attempts several ways to work through his traumas. Leo copes with the past through narrating his traumatic experiences and reconstructs his identity with the help of the community, and eventually he works through his traumas. By keeping writing diaries, Alma recalls her traumatic memories. Meanwhile, under the guidance of bibliotherapy, she retrieves her identity. Thus Alma escapes from the shadows of traumas and starts a new life. With the tender care of his wife, Litvinoff gradually has the courage to face his own past and eventually confesses his fault in his publication.

Through analyzing this novel with the guidance of trauma theory, this thesis concludes that the fundamental element of working through traumas lies in the victim's conscious effort. Only self-redemption can help the victim extricate himself from the terror of traumas and open a new chapter of life. And the writer hopes this thesis can provide a positive meaning for those who fight against psychological traumas.

Chapter I Symptoms of Traumas in *The History of Love*

Traumatic symptoms are the physical or mental imbalances after the subject has experienced a traumatic event, which are the manifestations of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorders). According to most descriptions of PTSD, it can be summarized that, “there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event”. (Caruth, *Trauma* 4) Traumatic events are too sudden and too harsh for the traumatized to adapt to, which results in the physical or mental imbalances. And because of the features of “delayed, uncontrolled repetitive, and intrusive”, traumatic memories often recurred in victims’ lives through nightmares and illusions, bringing about mental disorders.

“[T]he experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unrelenting, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will”. (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 2) The repetition makes individuals feel fearful, helpless and frightened, which causes insomnia, over-shock, sensitivity, depression, split personality and other symptoms. The traumatized usually evades the trauma-related stimuli subconsciously, then this continuous suppression leads to the avoidance of the things, such as characters, situations, languages, related to the traumatic experience. The wounded keeps alienated from their actions and emotions, which is akin to a reactionary numbness or aphasia.

The wounded often experience a latent period of the traumatic memory during which fragments of the traumatic event linger in the wounded’s mind in the form of flashback or nightmare. Therefore victims are always tormented by the past traumatic experiences, showing some symptoms of past experiences. Just as Freud describes that, “the traumatic experience is constantly forcing itself upon the patient even in his sleep is a proof of the strength of that experience: the patient is, as one might say, fixated to his trauma”. (qtd. in Caruth, *Unclaimed* 61) In other words, the traumatized is “fixed” to the past, and he cannot or does not know how to extricate himself from the past, thus he lives in an alien world in which the past runs parallel with the present. In order to keep balance between the past and the present, the wounded often fabricates some characters or stories. However, living in this situation over a long period, the wounded would have

anxieties in self or identity, would be disconnected with the world.

1.1 Leo and Charlotte's Identity Anxieties

As mentioned above, people who experienced a traumatic event often have physical or mental disorders, showing some traumatic symptoms. The traumatized often cannot remember what has happened to him; and in order to protect himself, he usually does not think about or mention things related to traumatic experiences. But traumatic events still have destructive impacts on the traumatized's physiological mechanism and psychological life. The traumatized has no ability to live a normal life, but only to immerse himself in the memories, so that he loses social relations and his identity gradually. Just as Judith Herman addresses in her *Trauma and Recovery*.

Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into the state of existential crisis. (51)

After undergoing a series of historical and individual events, almost all characters in *The History of Love* have scars on their minds and show various symptoms. Leo Gursky, ever was an aspiring writer, now is a lonely octogenarian waiting for the death in the dirty apartment. "When they write my obituary. Tomorrow. Or the next day. It will say, *Leo Gursky is survived by an apartment full of shit*". (Krauss, *History* 3) The word he uses most frequently to describe himself is "invisible". Actually, he lives in an invisible world; he has no family, no friend, and no possession. What is worse, he loses the ability of writing. In other words, there is no connection between him and the world and no proof of his existence. Therefore, traumatic events bring about Leo's anxieties of identity.

Traumatic events cause damage to all relationships, thus there is nothing in Leo's life but loneliness. However, it is too desperate to live in loneliness. Then Leo tries his best to escape from it. Sometimes he suddenly laughs, he goes "laughing and crying, laughing and singing, laughing so as to forget that I am alone". (Krauss, *History* 7) Because he thinks that "loneliness: there is no organ that can take it all" (Krauss, *History* 11) And he does not want to die on a day when he went unseen. (Krauss, *History* 4) In order to

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become “visible” or not to make himself look lonely, he does many things to attract other’s attention.

I try to make a point of being seen. Sometimes when I’m out, I’ll buy a juice even though I’m not thirsty. If the store is crowded I’ll even go so far as dropping my change all over the floor, the nickels and dimes skidding in every direction. I’ll get down on my knees. It’s a big effort for me to get down on my knees, and even bigger effort to get up. And yet. Maybe I look like a fool. I’ll go into the Athlete’s Foot and say, What do you have in sneakers? The clerk will look me over like the poor schmuck. [...] I never actually buy. All I want is not to die on a day when I went unseen. (Krauss, *History* 3-4)

However, these actions do not reduce his feelings of loneliness and isolation, but make him look foolish and absurd. People deliberately stay away from him, which makes him angry. And he begins to fight against the whole world.

I scowled at the world. And the world scowled back. We were locked in a stare of mutual disgust. I used to let the door slam in people’s faces. I farted where I wanted to fart. I accused cashiers of cheating me out of penny, while holding the penny in my hand. And then one day I realized I was on my way to being the sort of schmuck who poisons pigeons. People crossed the street to avoid me. I was human cancer. (Krauss, *History* 18)

He wants to extricate himself from the isolation, while things do not happen as he intends. He and the world are locked in a stare of mutual disgust, and he becomes human cancer. Therefore, he feels much lonelier than before.

Leo shares his feelings with his only partner, Bruno, who is his oldest, best, faithful friend. They accompany each other at the end of their lives. They often make little excuses to check on whether the other one is still alive or not. “There would be a knock on my door. I lost my TV Guide, he’d explain, and I’d go and find mine, even though I knew his was right there where it always was on his couch”. (Krauss, *History* 4) The main aim of their trivial talks or visits is that they cannot tolerate loneliness. It seems that they cannot survive without each other. However, at the end of *The History of Love*, it reveals that Bruno is an imaginary character who is invented by Leo. “He (Bruno) is the friend I didn’t have. [...] He’s the greatest character I ever wrote. [...] He’s dead. [...] He died on a July day in 1941”. (Krauss, *History* 249) He wants

to prove he is not alone by the company of Bruno, while the fictional person becomes the strong evidence of his loneliness on the contrary. What is more, the figment of his imagination makes it apparent that Leo's memories remain before the traumatic events; he still immerses himself in the past during which he plays happily with Bruno in Slonim, their hometown. But as for disasters, he only can think of some fragments and cannot figure out what has happened. "To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance. For the individual victim, this social context is created by relationships with friends, lovers, and family." (Herman 9) The only partner of Leo is an imaginary figure which shows that Leo fights against traumatic experiences alone. Without the protection or support, without any alliance, Leo has difficulties in remembering the traumatic reality. And the traumatic events haunt Leo's mind through flashbacks and nightmares all the time, so that he loses the connection with the world gradually, and at last he loses the self.

At his youth, Leo is an aspiring writer. Writing is the only thing he wants to do with his life, however, now he cannot write any word. (Krauss, *History* 7) Traumatic events deprive him of personal relationships, but also the capacity of writing. He loses all the things which are the foundations of his existence. He "feels utterly abandoned, utterly alone, casts out of the human and divine system of care and protection that sustain life." (Herman 52) Thus he becomes a living-dead.

The other one who feels utterly abandoned is Charlotte Singer. The stories of Charlotte are narrated by her daughter Alma Singer in diaries. Alma depicts her mother as a woman who is big reader, attractive, funny, opinionated, and stubborn, also with high IQ. (Krauss, *History* 48-49) Charlotte graduates from Oxford University and is a professional translator, mastering several languages. She ever lived a happy life: she has a beloved husband, a daughter and a son who names Emanuel Chaim, but people often call him Bird. But now her life seems like a mess. "One day my mother got up from the bed she had been lying in for almost a year. It seemed like the first time we had seen her not through all the water glasses that had collected around her bed" (Krauss, *History* 43) She lies in bed almost every day; she has no desire to take care of herself and her children. There are only two things in her life: missing her dead husband and translating books by mostly dead people. "Before Dad died, she used to be neater. But now if you wanted to find her all you had to do was follow the pages of crosses-out words, and at the end of the trail she'd be there, looking out the window or into a glass of water as if there were a fish in it that only she could see."

(Krauss, *History* 43-44) Although her husband has been dead for several years, Charlotte still lives in the grief of loss “My mother keeps a photograph of my father on the wall next to her desk. Once or twice I passed her door and heard her talking aloud to it. My mother is lonely even when we’re around her” (Krauss, *History* 50) It seems that her husband is the only one whom she wants to accompany. The death of her husband makes her feel utterly abandoned, so that she loses the basic unit of being herself.

“The wall of dictionaries between my mother and the world gets taller every year”. (Krauss, *History* 46) “My mother has only been on two dates since my father died”. (Ibid) Charlotte separates herself from the world by dictionaries; she refuses almost all invitations. It seems that the death of David Singer deprives Charlotte of vitality and hope. She does not know how to exist without him. Therefore, she chooses to do what David likes, creating a feeling that they still live together so as to support her own existence. Charlotte accepts the request of a stranger who names Jacob Marcus, to translate the Spanish version of *The History of Love* (the inset story of this novel) into English. Because this book is a token of their love, and they names their daughter Alma which is the name of all girls in this book. Thus she translates it day and night. “For two months my mother hardly left the house”. (Krauss, *History* 60) Moreover, she is getting interested in gardening which is David’s hobby. “Outside the window, in the middle of our backyard overgrown and full of weeds, was my mother. [...] She was holding a gardening trowel. I didn’t have time to stop and think about why she was holding a gardening trowel since it was my father, not her, who’d gardened, and since it was already nine-thirty at night.” (Krauss, *History* 108) She gradually develops habits which her husband had but at the cost of her own life. “My mother never fell out of love with my father. She’s kept her love for him as alive as the summer they first met. In order to do this, she’s turned life away. [...] She chose my father, and to hold on to a certain feeling, she sacrificed the world”. (Krauss, *History* 45-46) Charlotte drowns herself in the memories of their happy time. Consequently, she is abandoned by the world. Thereafter, “a sense of alienation, of disconnection pervades every relationship”, (Herman 52) at last destroys her sense of self.

Traumatic events cause serious damage not only on the body, but also on the psyche. After experiencing traumatic events, both Leo and Charlotte become entangled in loneliness deeply, which makes them be separated with the world. The shattered social relationships lead to their identity anxieties.

1.2 Alma and Bird's Communicative Impediments

“Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life.” (Herman 31) They sever the normal connections of traumatized people with others, resulting in the decrease of attention and the weakening of utterance competence. Furthermore, the trauma symptoms of victims can affect surrounding people, leaving them to show similar symptoms.

Traumatic events seriously damage the relational life of Charlotte, which casts her into a state of existential crisis. Thus she abandons herself to loneliness and despair. The symptoms of Charlotte influence her kids deeply. Alma Singer and Bird have no abilities to develop normal relationships with others. In Alma's diaries, she records the details of her family in gloomy tone. Traumatic experiences call into question Alma's belief that “one can be oneself in relations to others”.(Herman 53) She believes “I'm American”, however, her mother points out the complexities of her identity, “You can actually make sixteen different pie of charts, each of them accurate”, and her brother Bird is firmly certain that, “You're Jewish”. (Krauss, *History* 96-97) The uncertainties of her identity make Alma be jealous of her friend Misha, who is Russian and has an accurate identity. She even thirsts for having a Russian accent. It shows that she has an unhealthy psychological condition; she feels herself inferior to others in relationships.

Like her mother, Alma has lived in the grief of David's death. She treasures the effects of her father. She collects all of them in a backpack, including a Swiss Army knife, a tent, a compass, a pen that could work without gravity, some books and other things. One year, Alma wore her father's sweater for forty-two days straight. When she passed by her friends, they said, “What's up with that disgusting sweater?” (Krauss, *History* 49) Her abnormal behaviors cause her friends' antipathy. Living in a morbid state for many years, leads to the communicative impediments. Alma feels embarrassed, or even disgusted when talking about personal topics or doing intimate actions. When her mother expresses the affection and care to her, Alma only wants to escape and to plead, “Love me less”. (Krauss, *History* 43) Bubbe, her paternal grandmother, asks her “You don't have a bosom?”, “You have boyfriends?” (Krauss, *History* 97-98) She feels her face get hot and pretends not to have heard, and then stays some distance from Bubbe. Her communicative impediments are getting worse. Misha is the only one that Alma trusts. She tells him everything; there are no secret between them. Then they falls in love with each other. However, when Misha wants to kiss her,

she feels confused and awful.

His tongue was in my mouth. I didn't know if I should touch my tongue to his, or leave it off to the side so his tongue could move unconstrained by mine. [...] He tucked a strand of my hair around my ear, and started to kiss me again. "Misha?" I whispered. "Shh," he said, and slipped his hand under my shirt around my waist. "Don't," I said, and sat up. And then I said: "I like someone else." As soon as I said it regretted it. (Krauss, *History* 141-142)

Although she deeply regrets what she has said, there still is no possibility to restore their relationship. "A week passed and Misha and I didn't speak." (Krauss, *History* 142) The leaving of Misha marks that Alma loses all friends. The lie, which they both know it is not true, is a reflection of her subconsciousness: she rejects all intimate relations.

Traumatic events cause Alma's identity anxieties and communicative impediments; she is unable to adapt herself to normal relationships. While the conditions of Bird's interpersonal communication are worse than Alma's. Bird is regarded as a demented person by his friends and his family. Bird is the nickname of Emanuel Chaim. He believes in God firmly and convinces himself as messiah, a lamed vovnik. He writes "the four Hebrew letters of God's name" (Krauss, *History* 37) on everywhere, which is extremely queer in others' eyes. Therefore, "the couple of friend he'd had stopped coming by to play", and some people laugh at him. When he tells employees in airport that he is messiah, they take him to a special room and give him an El Al pin. (Krauss, *History* 203) The actions of Bird cast Charlotte and Alma into states of worry and suspicion. They send him to see the psychiatrist and please him to try his best to be normal. Actually, Bird's almost crazy behaviors are symptoms of his traumas. Trauma events lead to the decrease of his utterance competence, thus he has no capacity to express his ideas and feelings exactly. Then there is no one who helps him get out of isolation and the shadow of terror. Generally speaking, traumatic events produce profound and lasting effects on the utterance competence of Alma and Bird, which results in the inability in relation to others.

1.3 Litvinoff's Split Self

"After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment. Physiological arousal continues unabated. [...] the traumatized

person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations and sleeps poorly.” (Herman 35) Zvi Litvinoff is tormented by traumatic events all the time. He re-experiences the traumatic moments in his sleep as well as the waking life, which destroys his system of self-preservation. The decline of his sense of security leads to his silence, insomnia, and split self.

The stories about Litvinoff are recounted by an omniscient narrator, which provides an overall observation. Litvinoff has been born in Poland and moved to Chile in 1941, where he has still lived to his death. (Krauss, *History* 74) He ever was a journalist, to write obituaries in a press; and now he is a famous writer who has the damaged self. It is accidental that he lies to his neighbors that he is writing poems. Then it starts a rumor: he is a poet. In order to protect his reputation, he every day carries a novel or a poetry journal with him to read at the cafés. In fact, he has no interest in what he is reading. “But really he just wanted to steal a little more time before he had go home again where the truth would be waiting”. (Krauss, *History* 156) Because his house is filled with traumatic memories, which makes him feel helpless, frightened and despairing. It is apparent that Litvinoff lives in two entirely different lives. When he is surrounded by others, he pretends to be a calm, humorous, learned poet, however, when he stays alone, he shows his real condition: he is a shell of a man, he is empty. (Krauss, *History* 158)

Long after traumatic events have past, Litvinoff still relives them through flashbacks and nightmares in the present, as if his memories remain at the moments of traumas. Meanwhile, the trivial reminders can evoke his traumatic memories, which makes him always in terror of danger may return at any time. Thus the intrusions of traumas destroy Litvinoff’s normally safe environment, resulting in his insomnia and helpless.

He learned to live with the truth. Not to accept it, but to live with it. It was like living with an elephant. His room was tiny, and every morning he had to squeeze around the truth just to get to the bathroom. To reach the armoire to get a pair of underpants he had to crawl under the truth, praying it wouldn’t choose that moment to sit on his face. At night, when he closed his eyes, he felt it looming above him. (Krauss, *History* 156)

His life is squeezed into a perverted state by the overwhelming force of traumatic memories. Then it breaches his physical and psychological health heavily. “He lost weight. Everything about him seemed to shrink, except his ears and nose, which sagged and grew longer, giving him a melancholy look. The year he

turned thirty-two, his hair came out in fistfuls.” (Ibid) The “melancholy look” reflects his negative attitude towards life. He only wants to live warily with “an elephant” in his tiny room to the death. Prolonged torment leads to the decrease of attention and the weakening of utterance competence, thus Litvinoff usually stares blankly and keeps long silence.

While the encounter with Rosa revitalizes him. Litvinoff is willing to discuss about literature, philosophy, religion, and other topics with Rosa, except for himself and his past. With the development of their relationship, Litvinoff gradually falls into a dilemma. He has a strong urge to tell her all the truth, in case Rosa recognizes his disguise. But he finds that he has no ability and no courage to face the aftermath.

The more time passed, the more he longed to say it, and the more impossible saying it became. Sometimes he woke in a panic from his dreams. Rosa! He’d shout. But before the words were out of his mouth he’d feel her hand on his chest, and at the sound of her voice—What is it? What’s wrong, sweetheart? He’d lost his courage, overcome with fear of the consequences. And so instead of saying what he wanted to say, he said: it’s nothing. Just a bad dream, and waited for her to fall back asleep before pushing off the covers and stepping out to the balcony. (Krauss, *History* 110)

From this quotation, it is apparent that Litvinoff exists both in two times and realities. The one is the present: he attempts to confess his faults. The other is the past: he is still in shadows of traumas. And these two forces contradict each other, aggravating his psychological traumas. And eventually Litvinoff loses control of himself. He sleeps poorly, startles easily and behaves abnormally.

The traumatic memories are too harsh and sudden, causing difficulties in assimilating them into ordinary memories. Consequently, Litvinoff relives his traumatic memories all the time, resulting in the breach in his mind and the split in self.

Chapter II Causes of Traumas in *The History of Love*

Traumatic events are those that cause catastrophic reactions and serious threats to physical or spiritual integrity, threatening the individual's social status or social relations. While traumatic events do not always refer to unexpected catastrophes, sometimes trivialities in life. That is to say, psychological traumas not only result from historical events or natural disasters, but also from our daily lives. Kai Erikson pinpoints that, “trauma can issue from a sustained exposure to battle as well as from a moment of numbing shock, from a continuing pattern of abuse as well as from a single searing assault, from a period of severe attenuation and erosion as well as from a sudden flash and fear.” (“Notes” 185) Therefore, according to the content, the causes of traumas can be divided into four categories, namely natural disasters, accidents, man-made calamities and misfortunes in life; and according to the nature, there are collective causes and individual causes.

Psychological traumas of each character in *The History of Love* are produced by collective factors and individual factors together. In this novel, all figures are survivors or offspring of survivors of the Holocaust. The memory about the Holocaust leaves indelible marks in their minds, casting lasting shadows over their lives. After arriving in America as refugees, they are regarded as “queer” by the surroundings because of their Jewish culture. They are rejected by the mainstream culture, which pushes them into the state of isolation and seriously damages their identities. Besides the Holocaust memory and cultural conflicts, there are various individual causes of each person's traumas. The loss of his beloved makes Leo lose the support for his existence; he is like a living-dead. Because of the death of their father, Alma and Bird live in great grief and loneliness. They gradually lose their abilities to establish relationships with others. Litvinoff is always tormented by nightmares due to betrayal of his friend.

2.1 Collective Causes

People who experience the same catastrophic events may have similar traumatic symptoms, forming collective traumas. Main figures in *The History of Love* are survivors of the Holocaust, and are still in the terror of it. After arriving in America, the fierce cultural conflicts make them be excluded from mainstream

society, aggravating their mental traumas. It can be said that the Holocaust memory and cultural conflicts are two factors causing their collective traumas. And the collective trauma “damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality.” (Erikson, “Buffalo Greek”154) Thus almost all victims in this novel have identity confusions, living in loneliness and depression. Moreover, trauma can be shared “in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can.” (Erikson, “Notes” 186) Therefore, the offspring of survivors are also affected seriously by the Holocaust memory and cultural conflicts.

2.1.1 The Holocaust Memory

According to statistics, since the advent of Hitler on January 30, 1933, the German Nazis had established six concentration camps such as Auschwitz in Poland, and had killed approximately 6 million Jews. (Wang Xin, “Holocaust Testimony” 14) The Holocaust is so brutal and cruel that victims “response to it with a deep sense of loss— a nameless feeling that something had gone grotesquely awry”. (Erikson, “Buffalo Greek” 153)

In *The History of Love*, there is no elaborate description about the Holocaust, but it narrates serious hurts that the catastrophe leaves on the sufferers, especially on their minds. “As a watershed event in human history, the painful ramifications of the Holocaust extend well beyond the generations that actually lived through it or perished because of it.” (Codde, “Keeping History” 673) The genocide causes severe injuries to the survivors as well as to their offspring. It “confronts human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror”, (Herman 33) which destroys the victim’s sense of security, bringing about confusion, numbness, isolation and other symptoms of psychological traumas. The Holocaust leaves indelible scars so that victims cannot assimilate it into ordinary memories.

As the survivor of the Holocaust, Leo has always been unable to look directly at the heinous acts of the Nazis. “In the summer of 1941, the Einsatzgruppen drove deeper east, killing hundreds of thousands of Jew.” (Krauss, *History* 12) It seems that he wants to describe the painful memories with a dull phrase because he is clearly aware that the pain is too acute to suffer.

No Jew was safe. [...] The Germans pushes east. They got closer and closer. The morning we heard their tanks approaching, my mother told me to hide in the woods. I wanted to take my

youngest brother, he was only thirteen, but she said she would take him herself. Why did I listen? Because it was easier? I ran out to the woods. I lay still on the ground. Dogs barked in the distance. Hours went by. And then the shots. So many shots. For some reason, they didn't scream. Or maybe I couldn't hear their screams. Afterwards, only silence. My body was numb, I remember I tasted blood in my mouth. (Krauss, *History* 8)

The Holocaust is a sudden and shattering blow to Leo, resulting his numbing and delayed responses. His memory is fixed to that morning, however, he only remembers bark, shots and huge silence. He could not hear screams of victims and he cannot figure out what has happened. In order to protect himself, "he'd spent three and a half years hiding, mostly in trees, but also cracks, cellars, holes." (Krauss, *History* 12) Eventually, "the boy became a man who became invisible. In this way, he escaped death." (Ibid) Although he survives, he does not feel the joy of surviving, but lonely, fearful and guilty. In this massacre, he loses his capacity of writing. "When I got up again, I'd shed the only part of me that had ever thought I'd find words for even the smallest bit of life." (Krauss, *History* 8) He loses his parents and brother. "Why did I listen? Because it was easier?" His conscience torments him more and more. "Survivors of disaster and war are haunted by images of the dying whom they could not rescue." (Herman 54) Leo regrets he does not take his brother to escape. He often makes nightmares. "We were in the woods, the cold bit at our behinds. Steam rose from the snow. Josef turned to me, smiling. A beautiful child, blond with gray eyes. [...] A siren sounded in the distance." (Krauss, *History* 19) "The siren" represents that the dream of Leo includes fragments of the Holocaust, which compels him to relive the sense of remorse, helplessness and terror. Prolonged suffering results in damages to his identity. "I dreamed I was standing in a railway station. The train came in and my father got off. He was wearing a camel-hair coat. I ran to him. He didn't recognize me. I told him who I was. He shook his head no. He said: I only had daughters. I dreamed my teeth crumbled, that my blankets suffocated me." (Krauss, *History* 80) His father denies his identity, which announces his non-existence. Although he "escapes death", he loses his parents, brother, and all possessions because of the Holocaust. Therefore, Leo loses the bases of his identity and becomes "invisible".

Another one who is tormented by memories of the Holocaust is Litvinoff. After the Nazis attacked Slonim, Litvinoff flees to Chile. While he still lives in the shadow of the disaster. "He listened with horror to the progress of the Nazis. Hitler broke his pact with Russia and invaded Poland. Things went from bad to

terrifying. The few letters from friends and relatives came less and less often, and it was difficult to know what was really happening.” (Krauss, *History* 155) Due to the fear, he deliberately does not think about what has happened to his families and friends. But he eventually gets details of the catastrophe. “The War ended. Bit by bit, Litvinoff learned what had happened to his sister Miriam, and to his parents, and to four of his other siblings.” (Krauss, *History* 156) “His sister was shot in the head by a Nazi officer in the Warsaw Ghetto. Litvinoff had no surviving relatives except for his nephew, Boris, who escaped on a kindertransport and lived out the remaining years of the War, and his childhood, in an orphanage in Surrey.” (Krauss, *History* 68) The fact is so cruel that he cannot believe it. “He learned to live with the truth. Not to accept it, but to live it.” (Krauss, *History* 156) Litvinoff is shrouded by the truth, which makes him fall into despair. The experience of the Holocaust causes severe traumas on him, which leads to physical and mental disorders. He often feels lonely and keeps long silence even though he is surrounded by others; he sleeps poorly and is often awake by nightmares; he grows older quickly and his hands shake spontaneously. Generally speaking, the Holocaust engenders unbearable pains to Litvinoff.

The traumatic memory has negative effects on members of the same community, and it also can be passed on from generation to generation. Indeed, the children of survivors not only suffer from the reality of the Holocaust, but also representations of their parents’ psychic states and scars. The children of survivors, “tend to suffer— less outspokenly— from some of the symptoms that affect their parents, ranging from depression, grumpiness, nightmares, and panic attacks based on irrational fears, to obsessive-compulsive behavior, over-protectiveness, emotional numbing, and feelings of guilt.” (Codde, “Keeping History” 674)

As the second generation of the survivor, Charlotte is haunted by the Holocaust memory. She believes that it is the sacrifice of others in exchange for her parents’ and her own lives. Thus she feels guilt for her existence and has an urge to mourn for her relatives, compatriot and the nation that are killed or damaged in cruel ways.

She named my brother Emanuel Chaim after the Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum, who buried milk cans filled with testimony in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Jewish cellist Emanuel Feunermann, who was one of the great musical prodigies of the twentieth century, and also the Jewish writer of genius Issac Emmanuilovich Babel, and her uncle Chaim, and who died by the

Nazi. (Krauss, *History* 35)

Alma's Hebrew name, Devorah, is from her great-aunt Dora who died in the Warsaw Ghetto. (Krauss, *History* 176) Alma and Bird are "named after dead relatives, they are burdened by the charge to make up for the lives lost during the Holocaust". (Codde, "Keeping History" 685) They are shaped as "memorial candles" by their mother to mourn those who are killed in a meaningless and capricious way. Thus, their names are reminders of the vulnerability of life and the absurdity of the world.

However, the thoughts and behaviors of Charlotte impel her children to live in the shadow of the Holocaust. As "memorial candles", both Alma and Bird have double identities: the one is themselves; the other is the relative who perished in the Holocaust. (Zhong Zhiqing 25) While as the third generation of the survivor, they have little acquaintance of the Holocaust, so that they cannot figure out "why do people always get named after dead people?" (Krauss, *History* 176) Therefore, they both dislike and reject their own name. The incomprehension and abnegation of their names bring about their identity confusions.

The experience of the Holocaust is too severe to understand and forget. It is difficult for victims to integrate traumatic memories into ordinary memories. Even they face to the most intimate family or friend, they still cannot describe clearly about the traumatic experience. This narrative obstacle causes the division of life, making them live in two worlds: one is the traumatic moment, the other is the present life. Consequently, the memory of the Holocaust causes indelible scars to survivors and their offspring.

2.1.2 Cultural Conflicts

In order to escape death, numerous Jews immigrate to American countries. However, they are seen as weird and cannot be accepted by the mainstream culture. Then they live in loneliness and isolation and the negative emotions of Jews are produced. As time passes, this psychological crux that has been suppressed in the heart becomes a psychological trauma.

American society is generally ruled by the Christian culture, which has many contradictions with Jewish culture. Thus since the colonial period, Jewish immigrants in the United States have always been excluded from mainstream society and have been subjected to the test of "revising" the religion. The 'revising' religion refers to the Christian community to ask or force the Jews to abandon their faith, give up their own Jewish identity, and convert Christian and then become a member of their nation. (Qiao

Guoqiang 23) The fact that a large number of Jews flee to America during the World War II aggravates the anti-Semitism in the United States. The characters in *The History of Love* truly reproduce the living conditions and spiritual predicaments of Jewish immigrants.

As a representative of Jewish immigrants, Leo has always struggled for the life in the margins of society. He lives in a dilapidated building, and his apartment is full of rubbishes, exuding odor. This is a portrayal of the tragic life of Jewish immigrants who are at the bottom of society. Such people and the environment are out of tune with the modern metropolis of the United States. He is humiliated by others almost every day. “I’m at the bus stop and some kids come up behind me and say, Who smells shit?” (Krauss, *History* 10) Although living in the strong enclave of heterogeneous culture, Leo still retains part of the Jewish tradition. Every week, he buys a hot bagel, which is a kind of Jewish daily food. After taking a drink, he wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, repeating the gesture that was made a hundred times by his father and his grandfather and his grandfather’s father. He dances like his ancestors. (Krauss, *History* 84) Likewise, Litvinoff keeps some Jewish habits. The most important words of all Jewish prayer are carved on his drafting table, so that every time Litvinoff sits down to write at its sloped surface he would consciously or unconsciously utter a prayer. (Krauss, *History* 67) But they only can do these in their private rooms. This shows that Jewish culture in the United States is difficult to survive, and the space is very small.

The fierce conflicts between Jewish culture and American culture create crises of identity for individuals. When Leo communicates with his childhood friend, they cannot use their mother tongue. “We never speak in Yiddish. The words of our childhood became strangers to us— we couldn’t use them in the same way and so we chose not to use them at all. Life demanded a new language.” (Krauss, *History* 6) The language is a symbol of one’s identity. They want to integrate into mainstream society at the expense of giving up their mother tongue, but they fail. Now, they do not know they are Jews or Americans.

Alma’s question for her identity is the most obvious manifestation of this confusion. Bubbe’s (Alma’s paternal grandmother) parents are from Poland before they move to Nuremberg; Zeyde’s (Alma’s paternal grandfather) town was in Hungary before 1918, and in Czechoslovakia after; Sasha’s (Alma’s maternal grandmother) town was originally in Belarus, or White Russia, before it became part of Poland; Simon (Alma’s maternal grandfather) left Poland for England when he was nine. (Krauss, *History* 95-96) Then Alma’s mother is English, father is Israeli. So when her mother tells her there are sixteen different charts

about her identity, and everyone is accurate, or she can just stick with half English and half Israeli. (Krauss, *History* 96-97) It upsets her. She shouts impatiently, “I’m American”. (Krauss, *History* 97) Actually, Alma is confused with her identity. She clearly knows that there are some memories passed down to her from her father. She remembers stories about Israel; she grasps some Yiddish words; she reads *The Book of Jewish Thoughts*, and uses the words “every Israelite holds the honor of his entire people in his hands” to name her diary. She goes to Yad- Vashem which is the Holocaust museum in Israel to mourn those who are killed by the Nazis. Needless to say, Alma is nourished by Jewish culture unconsciously. However, she does not believe in God. She feels sad or worried when she sees her brother every morning daven outside, facing Jerusalem. (Krauss, *History* 37) She cannot figure out why her brother is so faithful to God. It is apparent that Alma is affected strongly by both American culture and Jewish culture, which causes a crisis of identity. Alma lives in a way just like Americans do, but she has not been accepted by the society. She has no friend. Indeed, the whole family of her is in the loneliness and isolation. Because of the anxiety of identity, she feels inferior to others, resulting in her inability to establish social relationships.

Jewish immigrants in the United States live in dilemmas. They cannot give up ties with traditional culture. However, they are surrounded by American culture and affected by American lifestyles. Therefore, they keep themselves dangling between two kinds of culture, leading to identity anxieties.

2.2 Individual Causes

Psychological traumas not only can be caused by sudden outbreaks of catastrophes, but also by the accumulation of minor traumatic events. The strong fluctuations of feelings, the failures in lives, and the disloyal behaviors all can damage individuals’ psyches, showing spiritual disorders. In *The History of Love*, all figures have to bear their own sufferings. The loss of beloved makes Leo lose the support of his existence; because of the death of father, Alma and her brother live in an abnormal environment; Litvinoff is tormented by his conscience due to his betrayal of friend.

2.2.1 Loss of Lover

The emotion plays a very important role in the psychological development of people. The harmonious emotional atmosphere can promote the healthy growth of people; conversely, the absence of emotion would

cause traumas on individual's psyche.

Alma Mereminski is the one whom Leo loves for all his life. "Her laughter was a question he wanted to spend his whole life answer". (Krauss, *History* 11) Leo fell in love with Alma when he was ten and he promises he would love her forever, even she dies. He believes that her love is the most precious thing in the world. Leo writes a book, *The History of Love* (the inset story of the novel), to express his affection to Alma. Because of her love, he escapes death. When the Nazis attack Slonim, Leo "lies on his back in the woods thinking about the girl. You could say it was his love for her that saved him." (Krauss, *History* 12) After experiencing the Holocaust, his body and mind have been severely hurt, he just wants to go to America to stay with his beloved. But he finds that Alma is married, and he has a son who cannot recognize. Alma is pregnant before she immigrates to America; she writes many letters to Leo, however she receives no answer but rather the news that a lot of Jews are killed. In desperation, she marries to another man. Then Leo "did the hardest thing he'd ever done in his life: he picked up his hat and walked away". (Krauss, *History* 13)

Leo is convinced that it is strange to live in the world without Alma. Therefore, he transfers all his love and hope to Issac, their only son. "Every time Issac moved, I mapped out the route between my place and his. The first time he was eleven. I used to stand across the street from his school in Brooklyn and wait for him, just to catch a glimpse; maybe, if I was lucky, hear the sound of his voice." (Krauss, *History* 162) As for Leo, Issac is like a substitute for Alma. Then he feels happy and hopeful, if he can glance at or listen to Issac. "I wanted to see what he saw, and hear what he heard. I kept abreast, as much as possible, of popular music." (Ibid) Leo imagines that he is doing same things with his son, as if they live together. After his son becoming a famous writer, he collects all his clippings, subscribes to the magazine where occasionally he publishes, studies every photo of him. (Krauss, *History* 77) Leo tries his best to seize the slightest touch with Issac, because the son is his only connection with Alma, as well the only contact with the world.

The sudden death of his son is a serious blow to Leo. He loses all people and things which are related to him. After hearing the news of his son's death, Leo behaves extremely crazy and plumbs the depths of despair. He thinks "life is butiful and a joke forever". (Krauss, *History* 79) He drinks, laughs, cries and dances until there is blood under his toenail. He dances until he prostrates on the floor, "so close to death I could spit into it and whisper: L'chaim". (Krauss, *History* 84) In fact, the "L'chaim" is an expression that

shows Leo's ironic attitude to the absurdity of the world. Then he enters in the house of his son. "I draped in his coat, his shoes on my feet. I was as close as I'd ever been to him. As far away." "I learned something new about Issac, and with each new thing I learned, his absence became more real, and the more real, the more impossible to believe." (Krauss, *History* 165,166) He has to face to the truth which seems preposterous. And he gradually realizes that he has been living for his son. "When I woke up in the morning it was because he existed, and when I ordered food it was because he existed, and when I wrote my book it was because he existed to read it." (Krauss, *History* 80) The death of Issac leads Leo to lose hope to exist. "Aside from myself, there was no sign of me." (Krauss, *History* 169) There is no proof of his existence. It is exceedingly painful for Leo to live in a lonely world.

Because of thinking about Alma's love, Leo can accomplish his novels, escape death and bear various pains. In one word, Alma is the support for his life. While the reality that she gets married with another person forces Leo to transfer his love and hope to Issac. The death of Issac shatters Leo's faith towards the world, resulting in a crisis of identity. Therefore, he lives in loneliness and hopelessness, waiting for the death.

2.2.2 Death of Father

Childhood is a period of vulnerability and sensitivity during one's growth. The child needs love and protection of parents. "A secure sense of connection with caring people is the foundation of personality development." (Herman 52) The lack of affection would cause traumas on the child's psyche. Because of the death of their father, Alma and Bird live in a broken family, which brings about communicative predicaments and destroys their basic senses of the self.

David Singer has been dead for many years, but the whole family still lives in the memories about him. In Alma's eyes, her father is a great man who can "start a fire with his hands, fix things that were broken", and survive alone in the wild. (Krauss, *History* 41) Then Alma hopes to be a person like her father. She preserves her father's Swiss Army knife, a flashlight, a plastic tarp, a compass and other things. She reads many books to study how to survive in the wild. In order to sense her father's existence, she wears her father's sweater for forty-two days and sleeps in her father's tent. It seems that Alma continues her father's life, but rather to have her own life.

When David died, Bird was only four years old, thus he has few memories about him. To fill in blanks

in the memory, he often pleases Alma to tell stories about father. “He uses to throw you up in the air and catch you.” “He calls you lots of things. Buddy, Little Guy, Punch. Mostly, Manny.” (Krauss, *History* 52) Bird cares about whether his father loves him or not, as if the intimate relationship is an evidence of his identity. “The only person I really miss is Dad. Sometimes I get jealous of Alma because she knew Dad more than I did and can remember so much about him.” (Krauss, *History* 214) The strong dependence on memories of their father shows that Alma and Bird are still living in the pain of losing father.

The loss of father makes Alma and Bird depend deeply on their mother during their growth. However, Charlotte buries herself in the memories of her husband. She usually speaks to the photo of David; she occupies herself with translating and gardening. She has no mind to take care of herself and her children. Therefore, Alma and Bird do not have any caring and protection from their parents, which causes their distorted characters. Alma tries her best to win her mother’s attention, so that she can prove the value of her existence. She pays a close eye on her mother’s emotions; she hopes to find someone who can make her mother happy. But she fails. “I finally understood that no matter what I did, or who I found, I— he—none of us— would ever be able to win over the memories she had of Dad, memories that soothed her even while they made her sad, because she’d built a world out of them she knew how to survive in, even if no one else could.” (Krauss, *History* 181) The failure hits her strongly, which aggravates her traumas even further. Lacking of care and love, Alma does not believe in herself and other people. She lose her abilities to establish social relations. “Trauma impels people both to withdraw from close relationships and to seek them desperately.” (Herman 56) Alma wants to extricate herself from isolation, however, she feels sick and fear when Missa kisses her.

The condition of Bird is much worse than Alma’s. Others all have many things to talk about his father, while he has little memories about him. This makes Bird feel depressed. Then he views himself as the messiah who is willing to be a scapegoat and save the human being. However, he is regarded as abnormal and abandoned by his friends, even his mother and sister.

Parents play vital roles in the development of children. The death of father and the apathy of mother lead Alma and Bird feel inferior to others, resulting in their communicative predicaments. They want to build close relationships with others, but the feeling of shame or inferiority withdraw them from social life. Psychological traumas shatter their connection with the community, which bring them crises of the self.

2.2.3 Betrayal of Friend

The betrayal of his friend is one of the origins of Litvinoff's traumas. He has been tortured by his conscience all the time, which brings about a series of mental and spiritual disorders.

Zvi Litvinoff has been a journalist at a daily, writing obituaries. He works hard and gets some achievements. His editor congratulates him on his work and his colleagues compliments him. He feels happy and proud. (Krauss, *History* 113) He happens to see some articles written by Leo those are much better than his. Then the truth reveals to him: he is an average man, which makes him feel jealous as well inferior to his friend. (Krauss, *History* 116) And he expects to be a writer like Leo one day.

After the outbreak of the World War II, Litvinoff manages to flee to Chile with the manuscript of *The History of Love* which is entrusted by Leo. And he promises to keep it until they meet again. However, in order to satisfy his vanity, Litvinoff publishes this work under his own name. The novel is a great success, which brings fame and love of Rosa to him. But from then on, he falls into the depths of guilt and self-accusation. The words his friend writes on the envelope of the manuscript, reminds frequently him of his plagiarism. "Later, no matter how many times he tried to bury that sentence in the trash under orange peels and coffee filters, it always seemed to rise again to the surface." (Krauss, *History* 159) Even though he burns the envelope, the words still haunt him, as if they are marked on his mind. He is afraid that Rosa finds the manuscript and then recognizes he is "a shell of a man", (Krauss, *History* 158) he buries it in the garden in which plants the hydrangea. "Whenever he would close his eyes to sleep, the huge white flowers would appear in his mind to taunt him. Things only got worse, his conscience tormented him more and more," until the manuscript is destroyed in the flood. (Krauss, *History* 187)

The betrayal of friend leaves an indelible scar to Litvinoff. He often locks himself in his study to condemn himself. Sometimes he attempts to comfort himself that Leo is killed by the Nazis and he would be happy if he knows his work is published in this way. While his attempts do not work. His hands shake spontaneously and becomes more pessimistic than before. As time passes, this psychological crux that has been suppressed in the heart becomes a psychological trauma. He always lives in terror and panic, due to the intrusive repetition of traumatic event. Thus he cannot sleep well and have a normal life. Furthermore, because of his betrayal of friend, Litvinoff does not consider himself is eligible to make friends. He fixes his memories on the traumatic event and restrict his life. Therefore Litvinoff lives in loneliness and remorse

till his death.

The traumatic events severely harm Litvinoff, especially his psyche. He loses the belief of himself, thus he cannot build normal social relationships. Moreover, the traumatic moment “interfere with anticipation and planning for the future”. (Herman 46) Generally speaking, the psychological traumas cast Litvinoff into the state of loneliness and hopelessness.

Chapter III Working Through of Traumas in *The History of Love*

“Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning”, resulting in physical or mental disorders. (Herman 33) And the traumatic experience frequently repeats itself against the victim’s will, which drives him back to the moment of helplessness and terror. The traumatized attempts to extricate himself from painful memories yet is haunted by them. He sometimes chooses to evade the trauma-related stimuli, aiming to relieve the symptoms of traumas, but finds that it aggravates the psychological trauma. Judith Herman pinpoints that: “The first principle of recovery is the empowerment of the survivor. He must be the author and arbiter of his own recovery.” (133) Therefore the survivor’s conscious effort plays an essential role during his working through of traumas.

Working through is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transference relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future. [...] These processes of working through, including mourning and modes of critical thought and practice, involve the possibility of making distinctions or developing articulations that are recognized as problematic but still function as limits and as possibly desirable resistances to undecidability, particularly when the latter is tantamount to confusion and the obliteration or blurring of all distinctions (states that may indeed occur in trauma or in acting out post traumatic conditions). (Lacapa 21-22)

That is to say, the processes of working through traumas involve the traumatic writing, the establishment of social relations and the construction of identity. Through mourning the past or writing traumas, victims can recall what has happened to them, and then integrate the past and the present, which is the foundation to establish the sense of secure. Living in the safe environment, the traumatized gradually has the ability to develop social relations, and then to construct the basic faith of self or identity. In addition, the trauma often repeats itself against the victim’s will, thus the recovery from trauma is not a smooth process. The traumatized usually tries different ways and goes through several stages to work through his traumas.

After experiencing traumatic events, protagonists in *The History of Love* are trying to find ways to escape from the shadows of traumas. Leo through writing traumas remembers the painful past and becomes “visible” to others. By reading *The History of Love* (the inset story of the novel), Alma has a clear understanding of her identity and has the capacity to establish intimate relations with others. The meeting and dialogue between Leo and Alma at the end of this book, are evidences of recovery of them two. With the help of his wife, Litvinoff confesses his guilt to the public in his work, which is a great relief for him. Although Leo and Litvinoff encounter their deaths, they works through their traumas, and they are content with their lives. And because of the healing of traumas, Alma opens a hopeful chapter of her life.

3.1 Traumatic Writing

The traumatic event is too harsh to be fully absorbed at the moment it occurs and cannot be interpreted in the usual way. The traumatic experiences lead to the decrease of attention and the weakening of utterance competence, resulting in difficulties in narrative. The sufferers often cannot clearly recount the past, and cannot explain the traumatic events. (Wang Xin, “Trauma Narrative” 73) Therefore, trauma narrative is usually seen as a sign of healing or not. Just as Sigmund Freud addresses that hysteria, one of the symptoms of psychological traumas, can be alleviated when the traumatic memory is excavated and expressed in words. (qtd. in Mo Huanran 79)

As a way of narration, writing enables writers to construct stories about themselves and the world, so as to interpret themselves and the world, thus obtaining some kind of emotional catharsis. (Shi Tieru138) Writing therapy, as an important part of narrative therapy, mainly aims at helping the traumatized to rebuild or rewrite the leading story of his life, transforming the unspeakable memories into representations which are not so horrible. Then those negative or neglected segments of life are reintroduced into the leading story, resulting in a new version that is the reverse of the original memory of the traumatic event, which can promote the traumatized to integrate his memories and fulfill himself. (Shi Tieru144) Therefore, through writing traumas, the injured individual can recollect and understand the past, distinguish the past and the present, thereby realizing the integration of the self.

At his youth, Leo writes many books which are full of imaginations. However, he cannot “find words for even the smallest bit of life” (Krauss, *History* 8) after experiencing traumatic events. He gradually senses that living “in an undescribed world was too lonely”, thus “fifty-seven years after I’d given it up, I

started to write again”. (Krauss, *History* 7, 9) He shows all of his stories to Alma formerly, but now “I did it for myself alone, not for anyone else, and that was the difference.” “I made me happy, like talking aloud to myself”. (Krauss, *History* 9) Every day, he writes a few words to reflect on his own life, to reminisce about his family and love, and to review the Holocaust. He defines his work as “words for everything: laughing & crying & writing & waiting”. (Krauss, *History* 31, 33) Although at first he earnestly hopes his son, Isaac, read his words and admit his existence, the sudden death of his son makes him realize that it is less important whether his work is read or not. What is more important is that he recollects and understands what has happened to him during his narration.

Because I lost you, Tateh. One day, in the spring of 1938, on a rainy day that gave way to a break in the clouds, I lost you. [...] Three years later, I lost Mameh. [...] She told me she’d follow the next day. We chose a spot we both knew in the woods. [...] She never came. Since then I’ve lived with the guilt of understanding too late that she thought she would have been a burden to me. I lose Fritzzy. He was studying in Vilna, Tateh—someone who knew someone told me he’d last been seen on a train. I lost Sari and Hanna to the dogs. I lost Herschel to the rain. I lost Josef to a crack in time. I lost the sound of laughter. [...] I lost the only woman I ever wanted to love. I lost years. I lost books. I lost the house where I was born. And I lost Issac. (Krauss, *History* 168-169)

In the process of writing, the memories of negative events are embodied in the story, reducing the accessibility of those painful memories and preventing the interruption of the current operation of the entire cognitive system. In other words, the traumatic writing enables the traumatized recall the past smoothly. Leo is tormented by traumatic experiences almost the whole life. He only remembers some fragments and relives them in his nightmares. In his *Words for Everything*, Leo recounts all of catastrophic events he has experienced in details. In addition, Leo has the capacity to distinguish the past and the present. At the end of the novel, he admits that Bruno is a friend he imagines. “Bruno died on a July day in 1941.” (Krauss, *History* 249) The traumatic events destroy Leo’s cognitive system seriously, leading he lives in an abnormal world in which the past and the present are intertwined. With the help of writing, Leo is aware that the memory about Bruno is a part of his past. The narrative organizes, through language, fragments of events scattered in the space of consciousness, constructing a consistent narrative of the terrorist incidents and increasing the level of clear awareness of the incidents. Through narrating his traumas, Leo distinguishes

the past and the present, which is conducive to integrating the self. Therefore, the traumatic writing assists Leo to actively review and reflect the past, reducing disorders of the stress and going out of shadows of traumas.

In order to gain the affection of Rosa, Litvinoff disguises himself as the author of *The History of Love* (the inset story of the novel). He secretly translates the Yiddish version into Spanish, and he changes names of all characters and places, except for Alma's name. The more he plagiarize, the guiltier and more self-blaming he is. He feels desperate when the book is about to be published. At last, "he took a fresh sheet of paper out of his desk drawer. At the top, he wrote, Chapter 39: The death of Leopold Gursky." then he translates the obituary of Leo into Spanish, "to the best of his ability". (Krauss, *History* 189) Although others are opposed to adding the new last chapter, Litvinoff insists on his own decision. In this way he confesses his guilt to the public, which is a great relief for him. "Which is why, when the rain at last ceased the next morning, and Litvinoff died quietly in his bed bathed in sunlight, and he didn't take his secret with him. Or not entirely. All anyone had to do was turn to the last page, and there they would find, spelled out in black and white, the name of the true author of *The History of Love*." (Ibid) It seems that the translation is a reflection of his traumatic writing. During the process of the translating, Litvinoff faces to his guilt directly and admits his fault. Recounting his traumas is helpful for him to escape the shadows of painful memories. The fact that Litvinoff dies in quiet and peace is a representation of his recovery from traumas.

The death of David Singer casts a shadow to the whole family. Charlotte reminisces about the happy past; Alma and Bird loses their father and lacks mother's care and love, living in helplessness. Hence, the unsatisfactory relationship leaves Alma and Bird to have the feeling of inferiority. The terror of the traumatic event severely disrupts the Alma's basic belief in social life, withdrawing her from intimate relationships. "All the friend I ever had are gone." (Krauss, *History* 50) The rupture in relations between Alma and Misha casts Alma into a state of isolation. Therefore, she occupies herself in reading and writing to forget the pains of loneliness. Under the guidance of traumatic writing and bibliotherapy, Alma gradually extricates herself from the torment of traumas. She through reading *The History of Love*, rewrites new versions of traumatic events and then obtains a real and overall understanding of herself and the past. During the process of reading, Alma senses the power of the love between her parents and comprehends the Holocaust and the exile of Jews. Meanwhile, she keeps an account of every detail she discovers in the novel. Indeed, her diaries serve as her own understandings of the traumatic events. Alma gradually accepts

the Jewish culture, which is conducive to integrating her own identity. Moreover, through reading Alma understands the complexities of human behaviors and enhances interpersonal and communication skills. Reading helps her improve the ability to recognize and solve problems, cultivate positive attitude, which assists her better adapt to society. She struggles against the loneliness and the grief of loss for a long time, leading to her inability in making friends. With the help of bibliotherapy, Alma becomes more brave and confident. At last, she actively invites Herman Cooper, her neighbor, to go out. It shows that Alma gradually works through her traumas.

The process of reflection occurs now, however, it can point to past time and space, so that past events can be related to narrative behaviors, which is helpful for the traumatized to work through traumas. Through writing traumas, Leo recalls what has happened to him and distinguishes the past and the present. Litvinoff places Leo's obituary as the last chapter of his publication, which represents his repentance for his guilt. And then he relieves himself from his nightmares. With the help of reading, Alma has a clear understanding of her own identity and the Jewish culture. She records her senses in diaries and rebuilds a new version of the traumatic experience, so that she can enhance interpersonal skills and construct social relationships.

3.2 Improving Relationships with Others

"The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation." (Herman 133) The traumatic events shatter the basic human relationships and destroy severely the victim's faith. Thus, the traumatized lives in loneliness and hopelessness. In order to work through traumas, he must create new connections or improve relationships with others. With the help of others or the community, the victim can establish a sense of secure and work through traumas smoothly.

After experiencing traumatic events, Leo loses his family, beloved, writings and all possessions, living in an "invisible" world. It is too desperate for him to burden the loneliness. Thus he tries many ways to escape from it. He imagines Bruno to accompany himself and share all things with him, aiming at relieving the acute pain. Meanwhile, he deliberately drops his changes in the crowd and even works as a nude model to attract others' attentions and become "visible". However, these abnormal behaviors cause everyone's

detestation. Leo becomes a human cancer, being spurned and isolated by the whole world. “Crossing the street, I was hit head-on by a brutal loneliness. I felt dark and hollow. Abandoned, unnoticed, forgotten, I stood on the sidewalk, a nothing, a gatherer of dust. People hurried past me. And everyone who walked by was happier than I. I felt the old envy. I would have given anything to be one of them.” (Krauss, *History* 129) He wants to be a member of the society. Then he conforms his behaviors to the society to improve the relationships with others. He “pour the milk like a normal person, a citizen of the world, and sat down in an easy chair across from a man reading the newspaper”. (Krauss, *History* 76) He feels warmth after being accepted by others. When he hears the dialogue between a mother and her child, “the plural of elf is elves”, (Ibid) he is delighted with the life. “A wave of happiness came over me. It felt giddy to be a part of all.” (Ibid) The harmonious relationships with others make him considers, “Life is a beauty and a joy forever”. (Krauss, *History* 77) Thus the support of community makes it possible for Leo to envisage the continuity of life with hope. Basic trust is the core element of the belief to the world, which gives him great help to work through his traumas.

“The emotional support that traumatized people seek from family, lovers, and close friends” (Herman 61) is of great importance in rebuilding the secure sense that is the primary task during the process of working through traumas. The death of father and the apathy of mother impel Alma to ask her uncle for help and support. “After my father died, Uncle Julian, my mother’s brother, who is an art historian and lives in London, sent me a Swiss Army knife that he said belong to Dad.” (Krauss, *History* 42) Alma adores her father and expects to be a person like him. Julian realizes that and shows greatest respect to her opinions. He sends Alma the Swiss Army knife and introduces how to use it in the wild. His support provides profound encouragement for Alma to construct basic trust with others. She gradually shares her feelings with Julian and conveys her questions about complexities in human relationships. As their conversations deepen, Alma tentatively talks to her uncle about her own traumatic memories. Julian recognizes the psychological harm and accepts her traumatic symptoms. Meanwhile, his enlightening words on communicative skills and meaning of life support Alma to adapt to the society better. Herman points out that “[t]he survivors needs the assistance of others in her struggle to overcome her shame and to arrive at a fair assessment of her conduct. [...] Realistic judgments diminish the feelings of humiliation and guilt.” (66) The positive responses of Julian towards Alma’s declarations encourage her to re-assess the traumatic experiences and to connect with others. Furthermore, Julian treats Alma as an adult, which

intensifies the empowerment of herself. Eventually Alma actively invites her neighbor to have a ride and recounts her experiences to him. Her relaxing performances indicate that she is no longer anxious in close relationships. Therefore, the guidance of Uncle Julian plays an essential role during Alma's recovery process.

Besides Julian's assistance, Bird's supports also help Alma expedite her working through of traumas. He gives a generous hand to Alma in finding the author of *The History of Love* and secretly arranges a date for Alma and Leo, which is the key step during Alma's recovery process. Through their appointment, Alma reveals all mysteries in the book, as well in her identity. She redefines the power of love and the meaning of her name, forming an overall understanding of her identity. In a word, the supports of Bird promote Alma to regain the sense of her own and the ability in blending into society.

Indeed, Bird unwittingly helps himself when he assists his sister. He is a devout Jew and confirms that he is one of the lamed vovniks. "The ones that the existence of the world depends on." (Krauss, *History* 52) But he has been criticized and rejected by others, even her sister, because of his words and behaviors. "You have to stop talking about God, OK?" "You have to just push your feeling down and try to be normal." (Krauss, *History* 197-198) Others' reproofs violate his belief in the divine order. "When I was almost 100 percent positive that I was a lamed vovnik I used to think G-d could hear me. But I'm not sure anymore." (Krauss, *History* 207) While that he successfully helps Alma find answers makes he believe he does one good thing that a real lamed vovnik would do. In other words, through his meritorious actions, Bird firms his faith again and looks forward to the future.

Although he survives the Holocaust, Litvinoff is still haunted by the memories of it. The truth what almost all his relatives are killed by the Nazis is too heavy to accept; he has to live with it. The prolonged torment causes Litvinoff to lose his vitality and hope for the life. In addition, he often blames himself for his plagiarism. He wants to confess his guilt, but he has no courage to face the aftermath. "The more time passed, the more he longed to say it, and the more impossible saying it became." (Krauss, *History* 110) Therefore, he suffers from the psychological traumas all by himself. However, the appearance of Rosa provides a great support for Litvinoff to work through his traumas. His whole body reverberated with the affection of Rosa. After their first kiss, "Litvinoff was giddy on the bus ride home. He flashed a smile at anyone who looked his way. He walked down his street whistling." (Krauss, *History* 158) It seems that the love of Rosa makes him rebuild the basic trust to the life. "Sometimes he woke in a panic from his dreams.

Rosa! he'd shout." Then "he'd feel her hand on his chest, and at the sound of her voice—What is it? What's wrong, sweetheart?" (Krauss, *History* 110) Rosa always takes care of him with tenderness, which helps him reestablish a positive view towards the life. "[T]he survivor is lucky enough to have supportive family, lovers, or friends, their care and protection can have a strong healing influence." (Herman 63) Under the meticulous care and protection of his wife, Litvinoff gets rid of the psychological traumas. Finally he confesses his guilt in his publication and relieves himself from his traumas.

"Because traumatic life events invariably cause damage to relationships, people in the survivor's social world have the power to influence the eventual outcome of the trauma. A supportive response from other people may mitigate the impact of the event". (Herman 61) The victims in *The History of Love* obtain emotional support from their families or lovers, which ensures them to rebuild the basic trust and the safety. Once the belief systems have been reestablished, the survivors gradually regain the initiative in rebuilding a positive sense of themselves. Meanwhile, others show some tolerance and respect towards the victims' traumatic symptoms, which promotes them to reestablish autonomy and self-control. In a word, with the support of others or the community, the victims in this novel "re-create the psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience." (Herman 133) They regain the empowerment and renew connections with the society, and then they eventually extricate themselves from the torment of their traumas.

3.3 Reconstruction of Identity

Psychological traumas cause "the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world", (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 4) resulting the delayed appearance of traumatic memory. Survivors exist both in two realities and two points in time. The experience of the present is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility, while the intruded past is immediate and clear. (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 92) Traumatic events are difficult to absorb into ordinary memories, ultimately resulting in the separation of the victim's body and mind. Although he lives in the present, his psyche has still been subjected to the terror of the past. In other words, the traumatic experience brings about severe damages to the survivor's spirit, disintegrating the basic sense of self and the world. As Herman argues, "traumatic events destroy the victim's fundamental assumption about the safety of the world, the positive value of the self, and the meaning order of creation." (51) Generally speaking, traumatic events violate the basic assumption of the identity; the

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survivor is uncertain about who he is.

The development of identity requires a stable society and culture. Consequently, any defect of these factors may increase the possibility of identity crisis or confusion. However, the Holocaust brings devastating destruction to the Jewish society and culture, shattering all the bases of Leo's identity. Although Leo survives, almost all of his family and friends are killed in preposterous ways; "everything fell apart." (Krauss, *History* 8) In order to escape from death, he hides in trees or holes; as time passes, he loses "whatever the thing is that makes people indelible." (Krauss, *History* 81) In the Holocaust, Leo loses his family, friends, and capacity of writing; he becomes invisible. This catastrophe overwhelms his consciousness system. He fails to assimilate it into ordinary memories, but to relive it in his dreams. Then he deliberately avoids the trauma-related stimuli and flees to America. However, he cannot be accepted by the mainstream society because of the cultural conflicts, which aggravates his psychological traumas.

Because of the fear of being repatriated, Leo hides his Jewish identity and struggles for a living at the bottom of the society. In the present, he is a retired locksmith and has a son who does not know his existence. This real identity is totally different with the ideal one. In his imagination, he is a professional writer, a considerate husband and a good father. The huge gap between reality and ideality causes his identity confusion. Meanwhile, he is always living in an abnormal world in which the present is paralleled with the past. Although he lives in the present, his memories are fixed to the past. Due to his morbid condition, his identity fluctuates between the real and the ideal one. Therefore, Leo is uncertain about who he is. The uncertainty of identity creates his inability in building social relationships and casts him into states of loneliness and isolation. The sudden death of his son makes Leo realize that there is no evidence of his existence, except for himself. Thus he decides to retrieve his books that encompass all his stories. Moreover, the books are lasting proofs of his identity.

At another side, young Alma is confused with her identity as well. As we have mentioned above, Alma serves as "memorial candle"; her name carries the memory of their dead relatives and bears the history of their nation. It shows that she has double identities: the one is herself; the other is the relative who perished in the Holocaust. (Zhong Zhiqing 25) However, she cannot figure out "why do people always get named after dead people?" (Krauss, *History* 176) As a third-generation of Holocaust survivor, "chronologically separated and shielded from the horrors of the historical realities of the Holocaust" by her ancestors, (Berger 64) the Shoah has little impact on Alma's own existence. And she acquaints that pitiful history only

through others' narration or her imagination. Thus it is difficult for her to sense the pains that her grandparents and parents suffer from and the meaning of her name. Moreover, Alma lives in American culture all the time, so that she does not have a sense of identity of Jewish culture; she even feels it weird. Therefore, she claims "I'm American", but her brother confirms, "No, you're not. You're Jewish." (Krauss, *History* 97) "Here Alma's sense of identity is challenged by her own family history." (Lang 48) She attempts to construct a fresh identity which is detached from the past, however, her brother's response shows the impossibility of her wishes. Thus her identity fluctuates between Jewish and American. She cannot make sure who she is.

In addition, the depression of mother causes negative effects to Alma's psyche. Charlotte buries herself in the memories of her husband, even though he has been dead for many years. She has built a world of memories "she knew how to survive in, even if no one else could". (Krauss, *History* 181) The affection between them makes Charlotte still be in the grief of losing husband, then she gradually loses her vitality and lives in her husband's way. This leaves a huge shadow on Alma. She considers love as a horrible thing and a "thing I am never going to do when I grow up". (Krauss, *History* 54) However, her name "Alma" is a symbol of her parents' love. Therefore, she has contradicted feelings towards her name. In order to figure out the significance of her name, she attempts to find old Alma the one that is the heroine of *The History of Love* (the inset story of the novel). Indeed she is seeking for something is connected to her identity.

At last, Leo and Alma meet in the Central Park Zoo. They introduce themselves to each other. "I stood in front of him. He barely seemed to notice. I said, 'My name is Alma.'" "She looked different than I remembered her. And yet. The same. The eyes: that's how I knew her." (Krauss, *History* 241, 242) "Alma's very name recalls Leo's world in Poland before it collapsed around him." (Lang 48) The appearance of Alma Singer helps Leo remember what has happened to him. "Bruno died on a July day in 1941"; "I had a son who never knew I existed"; he writes two books: "*The History of Love* was one, and *Words for Everything* was another"; he loves Alma Mereminski for all his life. (Krauss, *History* 247-251) The obituary of Leo represents his reconstruction of identity. "He was a great writer. He fell in love. It was his life." (Krauss, *History* 255)

During the process of searching, young Alma gradually knows Jewish culture and accepts her Jewish identity. And the conversation between Alma and Leo makes her realize the enormous power of love.

Therefore she attempts to build intimate relationships with others. All in all, the rendezvous with Leo helps Alma uncover all answers, assisting her to reconstruct the identity.

Conclusion

In *The History of Love*, Nicole Krauss uses a non-linear narrative style to depict a sense of suffocation when characters in the novel suffer from traumas, as well as the bliss of embracing the new life after traumas have been healed. Through analyzing the symptoms of traumas, the causes of traumas, and the working through of traumas in this novel, this thesis concludes that the conscious effort of the victim plays an essential role during his own process of recovery.

This thesis firstly discusses the traumatic symptoms of each character respectively. The traumatic experiences overwhelm Leopold Gursky's ordinary consciousness system, resulting in his numbness and weakening of utterance competence. Furthermore, Leo's memories are fixed on the painful past so that each trauma-related stimuli reminds him of traumatic experiences. He relives the horror of catastrophes almost every day. The cumulative effects of traumas eventually cast Leo into states of loneliness and despair. A prolonged isolation causes his thoughts and behaviors to become abnormal. Generally speaking, traumatic events seriously damage Leo's psychological health and destroy his social relationships, resulting in his identity anxieties.

The death of David casts a profound shadow on the whole family. In order to hold on to a certain feeling of her husband, Charlotte sacrifices the whole world, including herself. She is no longer a professional translator, neat housekeeper, but a sloppy gardener. The depression of Charlotte influences her children heavily. "The developing child's positive sense of self depends upon a caretaker's benign use of power." (Herman 52) Thus the loss of father and the apathy of mother make Alma and Bird have no support in their growth, causing their communicative impediments. They seek close relationships desperately, however, the feelings of shame and inferiority withdraw them from intimate connections. Finally they lose all their friends.

Long after traumatic events have past, Litvinoff still relives them through flashbacks and nightmares in the present, as if his memories remain at the moments of traumas. He cannot accept the truths of catastrophes, but to live with them, which gives him a sense of suffocation. Meanwhile, the trivial reminders can evoke his traumatic memories, which makes him always in terror of danger may return at any time. Long-term torture has caused tremendous damage to his body and spirit.

In *The History of Love*, psychological traumas of each character are produced by collective and individual factors together. In this novel, all figures are survivors or offspring of survivors of the Holocaust. In the Holocaust, Leo and Litvinoff lose almost all their relatives. The absurdity of the genocide violates their ordinary consciousness and leaves indelible scars in their minds. Thus they have always been unable to look directly at the heinous acts of the Nazis. Furthermore, witnessing the death of family members creates serious burden of conscience. Leo and Litvinoff are always “haunted by images of the dying whom they could not rescue”. (Herman 54) In a word, the Holocaust destroys their belief in the divine order and himself. Thus he wants to find his lost works. And young Alma is trying her best to work through the grief of on their later generations. As the child of Holocaust survivor, Charlotte thinks there is a burden to mourn those who are killed in preposterous ways and to bear the history of her nation. She does it by naming her children after the dead people. Thus her children are shaped as “memorial candles” by her urges. However, this foists double identities upon them: the one is themselves; the other is their namesake relatives. Then they cannot figure out who they are exactly. In other words, the Holocaust causes damages on the third generation indirectly, resulting in their identity confusion.

The victims of the Holocaust flee to the Americas as refugees. While because of the anti-Semitism in the United States, they are excluded from the main society. Then they struggle for lives in loneliness and isolation, which aggravates their psychological traumas. In addition, Jewish immigrants in the United States cannot give up ties with their traditional culture. Therefore, they keeps themselves dangling between two kinds of culture, leading to identity anxieties.

Besides the Holocaust memory and cultural conflicts, family tragedies and emotional setbacks aggravate their own psychological traumas. The loss of his beloved makes Leo lose the support for his existence; he is like a living-dead. The death of father and the depression of mother force Alma and Bird to live in an abnormal environment, creating their distorted characters and communicative impediments. Due to the betrayal of friend, Litvinoff has been tortured by the conscience all the time, which brings about a series of mental and spiritual disorders. Moreover, the traumatic moment destroys his belief in himself and in the continuity of life. Thus the psychological traumas cast Litvinoff into the state of loneliness and hopelessness.

Since the trauma often repeats itself against the victim’s will, the victim usually goes through several stages to work through his traumas, and the fundamental principle of the recovery from traumas lies in his

conscious effort. Through writing traumas, Leo absorbs traumatic experiences into his memory. At the same time, he actively improves relationships with others so that he attains the support of society that plays an essential role during his recovery. Eventually, Leo finds his works, and then he reconstructs his identity, which is a manifestation of his recovery. Writing diaries enables Alma to narrate her psychological traumas smoothly. Meanwhile, by reading the translation of *The History of Love*, Alma becomes aware of her identity and the beauty of love. With the help of her family, Alma makes new friends and opens a new chapter of life. Charlotte and Bird gradually reestablish their sense of basic safety during they provides support to Alma, which is conducive to rebuilding positive views of themselves and working through their traumas. Under the tender care of his wife, Litvinoff gradually has the courage to face his own past and eventually confesses his fault through his publication. The fact that Litvinoff dies in peace is a representation of his recovery from traumas.

It can be said that although *The History of Love* depicts a group of Jews suffering from various traumas, it “is a novel of hope and not solely despair”. (Berger 83) All characters in this novel actively looks for ways to work through their own traumas, and eventually they obtain the recovery from traumas through their conscious efforts. The practices of them set examples for those who are tormented by traumas: only self-salvation can extricate oneself from traumas and continue a hopeful life.

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