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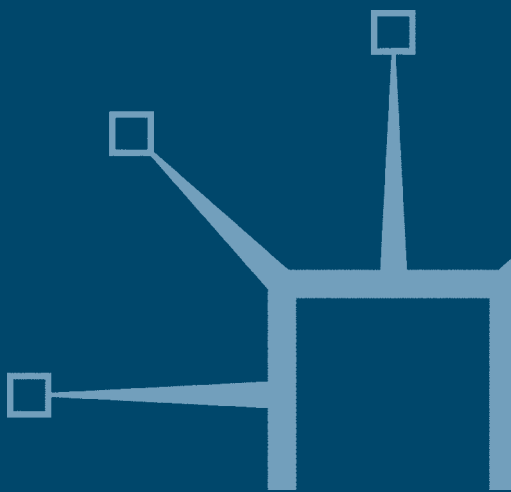
Post-War Jewish Fiction

Ambivalence, Self-Explanation and Transatlantic Connections

David Brauner



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David Brauner
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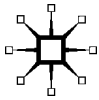

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For Anne, Joseph and Jessica

If you ask what a Jew is – Well, he is a man who has to offer a long explanation for his existence [. . .]

Chaim Weizmann, quoted in Linda Grant's
When I Lived in Modern Times

The poor bastard had Jew on the brain. Why can't Jews with their Jewish problems be human beings with their human problems?

Philip Roth, *The Counterlife*

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those who have helped me complete this book. I owe a large debt to Professor Dan Jacobson, who helped me refine my original scheme, and to Professor Daniel Karlin, who supervised my doctoral thesis, out of which this project grew. Thanks are also due to my colleague at the University of Reading, Christine MacLeod, for her meticulous reading of my manuscript, to Nick Brock, for his eagle-eyed copy-editing, and to my father, Jacob Brauner, for the use of his PC and printer at various times when my own hardware was playing up or breaking down. But my biggest thanks go to my wife, Anne, who has patiently and sensitively read numerous drafts of the book, and discussed the issues involved: I am solely responsible for all the weaknesses of this book, but she should share the credit with me for many of its strengths.

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Preface

The seeds of this study were sown during the writing of my doctoral thesis, which explored ideas of self-explanation in the work of Saul Bellow, Philip Roth and Joseph Heller. When I first mooted the idea of working on these authors, in my final year as an undergraduate, I was told that the subject was *passé*, that American-Jewish literature had been 'done', if not done to death, in the 1960s and 1970s. When I began work on the thesis in 1991, then, I felt as though I were flying somewhat in the face of literary fashion. Now, conversely, my concern is that this book might be drowned in the flood of new studies of Jewish literature: such has been the growth of interest during the intervening decade in what these days is called (in line with the trend in the humanities towards increasing interdisciplinarity) Jewish Studies. Much of this work has been interesting and valuable, displaying a confidence and maturity often lacking in earlier criticism, which tended to be either defensively apologetic for, or haughtily dismissive of, its subject.

It would be premature, however, to imagine that all the old prejudices have been swept away, the old taboos broken. I can testify from personal experience to the fact that many anxieties still remain within the academic community regarding the subject of Jewishness in literature, particularly Jewish self-representation. When I submitted a version of one of the chapters of this book for publication in a well-known journal, I received, together with a rejection note, a copy of a report on the article by an anonymous reader which accused me of 'shar[ing] [...] anti-Semitic attitudes'. The final sentence of the report reads as follows:

> The whole essay suffers from a failure to consider Jewish contributions to society in a positive light, as if Einstein, Freud, Marx [...] and countless other creative Jewish artists [...] were all encompassed by Sartrean theory.

At first I was incredulous: I couldn't believe that anyone at the beginning of the twenty-first century still felt that the duty of a Jewish (or any other) critic was to promote 'Jewish contributions to society'. Later I came upon Peter Gay's observation that in the modern era

> It became a ritual (among proud Jews and nervous anti-Semites alike) to invoke the magical names of Marx, Freud and Einstein to demonstrate the disproportionate share and dramatic influence of Jews in changing culture. (Gay 1978: 20–1)

Quite apart from the irony of nominating as exemplary Jews Marx (a notoriously self-hating Jew), Freud (whose profound ambivalence about his Jewishness is manifest in *Moses and Monotheism* [1938]), and Einstein (whose theories arguably did more than anything since Darwinism to undermine traditional religious belief systems), there is, as Gay's parenthesis implies, a sense in which 'proud Jews' who invoke this trinity as proof of 'the disproportionate share' of Jewish influence on modern culture are inadvertently allying themselves with 'nervous anti-Semites' in perpetuating the mythology of Jewish cultural predominance.[1] The reader of my article clearly felt I had let the (Jewish) side down by exploring the ambivalence of Jewish writers towards their own Jewishness, rather than concentrating on more 'positive' aspects of Jewish culture, failing to appreciate that it is only when such ghetto fears have been consigned to the past that justice can truly be done to that culture.

In spite of the great progress of recent years, then, there is still much work to be done in bringing the study of Jewish literature up to date, and I hope that this book will contribute to that process. More specifically, I hope to shed light on an area of Jewish writing that has languished in the shadows for many years. Over the last few years, whenever I have mentioned the subject of my work in progress to friends and colleagues, their first response has been invariably to ask, with various degrees of flippancy, whether there is any British-Jewish fiction. The eminent British-Jewish historian David Cesarani has written:

> Until quite recently Anglo-Jewish history and culture has been one of the most neglected areas in the study of modern Jewish life. Sandwiched between the rich heritage of Eastern and Central European Jewry before World War Two and the massive Jewish presence in North America, Anglo-Jewry has appeared numerically insignificant and overshadowed by the Jewish learning and prodigious economic, social and cultural energies of these Jewish super-populations. (Cesarani 1990: 1)

His remarks are particularly pertinent to British-Jewish fiction.

Whereas most serious students of literature will have heard of pre-war European-Jewish authors such as Isaac Babel and Franz Kafka and post-war American-Jewish figures such as Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, few non-specialists can bring to mind the name of even one British-Jewish novelist, past or present. While much attention has been paid to Asian-British writers, including Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Hanif Kureishi, Anita Desai, Amit Chaudhuri, Timothy Mo and Kazuo Ishiguro (all of whom have been nominated for, and/or have won the Booker Prize for fiction in recent years), the enthusiasm for ethnic British voices has not extended to Jewish writers. The publication of Brian Cheyette's anthology (the first of its kind) of *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Britain and Ireland* (1988) may begin to attract more attention to the field, but at the time of writing, this book will be only the second published monograph on post-war British-Jewish literature, and the first to concentrate on fiction.[2] Moreover, it is the first full-length comparative study of American- and British-Jewish fiction.

The book is not intended to be in any way comprehensive, and my selection of writers is necessarily subjective, though not entirely arbitrary: I have tried to juxtapose texts that share certain preoccupations and that shed light on each other, and to include a reasonably representative range of material, some of it already much written about, some of it having never received any prior critical attention. My aim has been to make this book accessible to readers who are not familiar with the writers and works discussed, but at the same time interesting to those who are. Each chapter should make sense in its own right, and I have deliberately avoided a chronological approach, both in the structure of the book as a whole and within individual chapters, preferring to trace thematic connections which are the result not of a chain of influence, but of a shared transatlantic Jewish sensibility. However, there are a number of central ideas that recur throughout, acquiring a cumulative resonance that the reader of a discrete section will not necessarily apprehend. These ideas are discussed, and the key terms of the book elaborated on, in Chapter 1.

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1

Explaining Themselves: Ambivalent Representations of Jewishness in Post-War British- and American-Jewish Fiction

It seems sensible to begin a book about self-explanation with an explanation of itself, so this introduction will be divided into seven sections, each of which will discuss one of the key terms of the book.

Jewishness

> To be a Jew leads not to a final definition, but to further questions [. . .] (Gold 1973: 233)

> [A]n American Jewish writer is a Jew who is an American who is a writer. Everybody knows what an American is; everyone knows what a writer is; but very few people seem to know what a Jew is, including Jews, and including American Jewish writers. (Shapiro 1967: 281)

> I was [. . .] more and more confused about what a Jew is – in light of the fact that I can still call myself by that once tribal, sectarian name, though I have abandoned the traditional religion, almost completely lost the traditional culture and no longer speak the languages traditionally associated with Jewishness. (Fiedler 1992: xvii)

What is a Jew? From St Paul to Sartre, from Maimonides to Marx, from Herod to Hitler, the Jewish 'question' has attracted theories grand and grotesque, 'solutions' barbaric and banal, and has continually exercised the minds of theologians and philosophers, sociologists and politicians, historians and ethnographers, biologists and psychoanalysts. Post-war Jewish thinkers are divided not just on the answer to the question, but on whether the question itself is legitimate. Arguably

the most eminent American-Jewish critic of his generation, Harold Bloom, bemoans the 'tendency [on Jewish Studies courses] to plead that the Jewish condition is a special case amidst the rest of humanity [...] when it fact it provides a paradigm for humanity' (Bloom 1999: 32). His British counterpart, George Steiner, on the other hand, insists on the uniqueness of the Jewish experience:

> *Of course there is a Jewish question*. Only cant or a self-deluding investment in normalcy could deny that. The political map, the plethora of ethnic-historical legacies, the patchwork of societies, faiths, communal identifications across our globe teems with unresolved conflicts, with religious-racial enmities, with non-negotiable claims to an empowering past, to sacred grounds. None the less, the Jewish condition differs. Irreducibly, maddeningly, it embodies what modern physics calls a 'singularity', a construct or happening outside the norms, extraterritorial to probability and the findings of common reason. (Steiner 1998: 48)

Steiner's use of the phrase 'Jewish condition', which could denote either an irrevocable existential state or a treatable malady, encapsulates nicely the terms of the debate surrounding Jewish identity; and the very fact that this debate has raged for centuries, and continues to rage unabated, suggests that Steiner's position is more tenable than Bloom's. What is less clear is *why* this should be so. According to orthodox Judaism, after all, Jewishness is simply a matter of genetics: a Jew is anyone born of a Jewish mother, irrespective of the degree of religious belief held by that individual.[1] While traditional Jewish authorities require potential converts to Judaism to meet the most exacting standards of religious knowledge and piety, such expectations do not apply to those who inherit, rather than choose, their Jewishness. If becoming Jewish is difficult, ceasing to be Jewish is even more difficult, as many of Hitler's victims – convinced of their irrefutable secularity, and in some cases entirely ignorant of their Jewish ancestry – were shocked to discover. Yet Jewishness is rather more intractable than the absolutist dogmas of orthodox Judaism on the one hand and National Socialism on the other would allow. The fact that Steiner has recourse to the vocabularies of so many different intellectual disciplines, from theology ('sacred grounds') to physics ('singularity'), from geography ('extraterritorial') to economics ('non-negotiable claims'), is indicative not just of his own polymathy, but of the extraordinary complexity of the phenomenon he is seeking to

explain. In fact, the only consensus on the problem of how to define Jewishness is that there is no consensus.

In his introduction to a collection of essays on American-Jewish women's fiction, Ben Siegel claims that 'the most generally accepted definition is that a Jew is any person who identifies him or herself as such' (Halio and Siegel 1997: 18), and this is indeed the liberal basis on which Israel's Law of Return (the legislation allowing any Jew to claim Israeli citizenship) operates. But should such tolerance be extended to someone who fraudulently claims to be Jewish for personal or material gain (as, for example, in the case of Benjamin Wilkomirski, which I discuss briefly at the end of Chapter 4)? If, as Karl Shapiro claims, 'Being a Jew is the consciousness of being a Jew' (quoted in Malin and Stark 1974: 670), does this still apply if that consciousness is deluded? If, as may have been the case with Wilkomirksi and, as I argue in Chapter 2, is the case with a number of protagonists of post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction, a Gentile mistakes himself for a Jew as the result of mental illness, or if (as occurs in Clive Sinclair's *Blood Libels* [1985], which I discuss in Chapter 5) a Gentile is adopted by Jewish parents and brought up in the belief that he is Jewish, does that make him Jewish? For Marilyn Reizbaum Jewishness can be either a matter of self-determination, or the result of external designation, something that 'accrues to someone who identifies him/herself or is identified as Jewish' (Reizbaum 1999: 3). On the other hand, there is the theory that Jewishness is a psychological trait. Towards the end of his life Freud confessed that he detected in himself 'the clear consciousness of an inner identity, the intimacy that comes from the same psychic structure [as other Jews]' (quoted in Reizbaum 1999: 86), a view that still has its adherents. Cynthia Ozick, for example, argues that 'Jews have many languages but one mind' (Stavans et al. 1999: 49), and Ivan Kalmar insists that the risk of being tainted, by association, with the emphasis in Nazi propaganda on the 'Jewish mentality' should not deter us from acknowledging that 'There is such a thing as a distinctive [...] Jewish [...] "mind"' (Kalmar 1993: 37).

For some, then, Jewishness is an innate, inalienable property, for others a learned tradition; for some, a belief system, for others a cultural construct; for some a race, for others a religion; for some a nationality, for others a sensibility; for some a historical legacy, for others a metaphysical state. The extent to which this ambiguity, or multivalency, is reflected in literary representations of Jewishness has been the subject of some debate. In his survey of *The Image of the Jew in American Literature* (1924), Louis Harap argues that most American

writers 'uncritically accepted the current lore about the Jews' because 'the Jews lay at the periphery of their interest', resulting in the reproduction of second-hand stereotypes that 'did justice to neither the broad spectrum of Jewish roles and identities in American life nor the richness and complexity of individual characters within the spectrum' (Harap 1974: 14–15). In his compendious study of the Jew in English and American literature, Harold Fisch foregrounds what he calls the 'radical ambiguity' of fictional Jews, but presents this ambiguity in antithetical terms: 'Whether he appears as Saint or Devil, or both simultaneously, the Jew functions as a literary archetype' (Fisch 1971: 6). Following Edgar Rosenberg,[2] whose earlier study of Jewish stereotypes in English fiction had focused on 'the Jewish criminal and the Jewish paragon' (Rosenberg 1960: 3), Fisch argues that the Jew in literature 'is inevitably a figure of polarity' (Fisch 1971: 5), whose 'dual image [. . .] excites horror, fear, hatred; but [. . .] also [. . .] wonder, awe, and love' (Fisch 1971: 13). More recently, Brian Cheyette has also discovered a 'stark doubleness' in what he calls the 'semitic discourse' of Victorian and modernist English literature. Whereas Fisch had explained the dual image of the Jew in theological terms ('The Jews were a deicide nation but they were also a nation which is redeemed, and on whose redemption the fate of mankind hangs' [Fisch 1971: 15]), in Cheyette's account the construction of Jews in English literature as 'embodying the aspirations of an enlightened State and as undermining the essential characteristics of a particularist nation' (Cheyette 1993: 269) owes more to the political ideologies of the day. In direct contrast to Harap's thesis that Jews existed only at the margins of the American literary imagination, Cheyette claims that 'race-thinking about Jews was [. . .] a key ingredient in the emerging cultural identity of modern Britain' (Cheyette 1993: xi) and that 'the disturbing ambivalence of "the Jew"' (Cheyette 1993: 272) in literature of this period reflects the anxieties of its Gentile authors.[3] Cheyette goes further than Rosenberg and Fisch, locating these constructions of the Jew not simply in archetypal binary oppositions between good and evil, but in 'an incommensurable number of subject positions which traverse a range of contradictory discourses' and which appear 'in a bewildering variety of contexts' (Cheyette 1993: 9). Whereas for Rosenberg and Fisch these 'fixed and recurrent caricatures and their antipodes' reflect the limitations of their Gentile authors' imaginative sympathies (Rosenberg 1960: 8), for Cheyette 'it is the very slipperiness and indeterminacy of "the Jew" [. . .] that enables an uncertain literary text to explore the limits of its own foundations' (Cheyette

1993: 11) and that 'within a modernist aesthetic made "the Jew" an ideal objective correlative' for the 'impossibility of fully "knowing" anything' (Cheyette 1993: 267, 9). Moreover, 'In a post-modern context, "semitic confusion" is not only a virtue but a prototype for the lack of fixity in language as a whole' (Cheyette 1993: 274).

Since the appearance of Cheyette's book, a number of other scholars have followed his lead in writing Jewishness (back) into the heart of the canon, and in making grand claims for the centrality of Jewishness to ideas of modernity.[4] Ilan Stavans, for example, claims that 'transculturalism [. . .] and especially the need to use literature as a mirror of modernity, are the vertebrae of the contemporary Jewish literary tradition' (Stavans 1998: xii); and Marilyn Reizbaum, in her compelling study *Ulysses, James Joyce's Judaic Other* (1999), argues that, for Joyce, Leopold Bloom's 'particular combination of affiliation and apostasy signif[ies] modernity' and that his Jewishness symbolizes the extraterritoriality of the modern artist: 'Jewishness in this century, at least, informs a sense of the homelessness of language itself, or conversely, of the home that language may become' (Reizbaum 1999: 4, 52). Whereas Cheyette argues that 'the one ironically consistent feature [of semitic discourse] is the protean instability of "the Jew" as a signifier' (Cheyette 1993: 8), but at the same time that the Jew is 'the most tenacious of signifiers' (Cheyette 1996: 12), for Reizbaum the symbolic potency of Jewishness derives, paradoxically, from the fact that it is 'a signifier of insignificance' (Reizbaum 1999: 2).

Some contemporary theorists, such as Jean-François Lyotard, have seen this 'protean instability' as paradigmatic of the postmodernist rejection of Cartesian ideas of selfhood, but I will argue that, on the contrary, Jewishness, as it is typically represented in post-war Jewish fiction, is predicated on the notion of a stable, if divided, self that can be explained.

Jewish fiction

> If one were to compile an anthology of all the unabashed nonsense written by literary critics over the past fifty years, a good many pages would have to be devoted to what has been advanced about the Jewish values, vision, and world view of a wide variety of apostates, supposed descendants of Jews, offspring of mixed marriages, or merely assimilated Jews, from St. Theresa and Heine down to Proust and even J.D. Salinger. (Alter 1969: 18)

> Whether he celebrates the triumphs or torments of his people or whether he denigrates them, whether he clings to his past or detaches himself from it, he will reflect his background in more than one way. Jewish by conviction or Jewish in spite of himself, the Jewish writer *cannot* be anything else. What is most ironic is that even his rejection of his Jewishness identifies him. (Elie Wiesel quoted in Shapiro et al. 1994: 2)
>
> Jews are no metaphors. (Cynthia Ozick quoted in Berger 1985: 33)

If defining Jewishness in literature is problematic, determining what constitutes Jewish literature is no less fraught with difficulties. As the British-Jewish poet, critic and novelist Emanuel Litvinoff puts it in his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Jewish Short Stories* (1979): 'The problem of defining what makes a story Jewish touches on the ambiguity of Jews as a people. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to reach an agreed definition of a Jew in racial, religious or social terms and the same goes for Jewish writing' (Litvinoff 1979: 7). In fact, the criteria for admission into the category of Jewish writer are both more and less stringent than those for 'Jews as a people'. Less stringent, because editors of anthologies of Jewish writing are often happy to stretch a point and include writers who have Jewish fathers but not mothers (such as Tillie Olsen, who appears in a number of such collections), or who have repudiated their Jewishness altogether (Litvinoff's anthology features a story by Muriel Spark, who was born a Jew but converted to Catholicism). More stringent, because writers who are, halachically speaking (that is, according to orthodox Jewish law), Jewish, but whose work doesn't reflect or reveal this in any way, are often excluded not just from anthologies, but from monographs, critical bibliographies and other reference works devoted to the study and classification of Jewish literature. Nathanael West (né Nathan Weinstein) and Norman Mailer, for example, are routinely omitted from the canon of modern Jewish literature (because they tend to be aligned with a Gentile tradition of American letters), as are Gertrude Stein and Susan Sontag (whose work is more influenced by French than American-Jewish culture) and, more mysteriously, E.L. Doctorow and Paul Auster.[5]

Jonathan Wilson, a cosmopolitan contemporary Jewish author, whose novel *The Hiding Room* (1995) I discuss in Chapter 2, has suggested that 'Jewish writing simply means writing by Jews' (Wilson 2000), but not everyone subscribes to such an inclusive description. Irving Malin, for example, argues that 'only when a Jewish (by birth)

writer moved by religious tensions shows "ultimate concern" in creating a new structure of belief, can he be said to create "Jewish" literature' (quoted in Lyons 1988: 62),[6] while Alan Berger declares that

> Jewish writing, a genre dear to the hearts of literary critics, is not restricted to Jews, and bears no necessary relationship to writing as a Jew. The difference is comparable to, say, enjoying a chopped liver sandwich as opposed to reading a page of the Talmud. (Berger 1985: 34)

Malin's prescription for Jewish literature is full of ambiguities (indicated by his use of quotation marks to bracket the terms 'ultimate concern' and 'Jewish'), and Berger's premise that reading a page of the Talmud is a more authentically Jewish activity than eating a chopped liver sandwich is questionable, but the distinction between 'Jewish writing' and 'writing as a Jew' deserves attention. For the editors of a recent collection of essays on contemporary American-Jewish women writers, 'A Jewish book [. . .] is one that deals with characters motivated to action by their sense of Jewishness' (Halio and Siegel 1997: 20), but, of course, it is quite possible for a non-Jewish author to write such a book. Indeed, the criteria for eligibility for the annual *Jewish Quarterly* literary awards are that 'writers [do] not have to be Jewish but they [do] have to be writing about subject matter which further[s] an interest in Jewish life' (Grant 1998b: 66). Is it the content rather than the provenance of a book that determines its Jewishness, then? For the editors of *Here I Am* (1988), a global anthology of short Jewish fiction, their selection of stories 'illustrates the way in which the common threads of Jewish communities all over the world are transmuted into certain universal themes' (Berkman and Starkman 1998: 4), in spite of the fact that Jews today are 'defined by enormous dissimilarities based on our religious affiliation (or lack of it), where we live in the world, the languages we speak, our place in the Jewish community (or outside it), our political views, our age and gender, our sexual orientation' (Berkman and Starkman 1998: 3). For others, it is the readership (intended or actual) of a book that invests it with Jewishness: Nessa Rapoport argues that 'The Jewish novel has been a book for Jews, about Jews, or even against Jews' (Rapoport 1993: 41); Jack Gratus that 'stories will be "Jewish" only in the sense that some Jewish readers may respond to them in a way that perhaps non-Jewish readers may not' (quoted in Lyndon and Paskin 1996: 4), and Ilan Stavans that 'what

makes a book Jewish is neither its author nor its subject matter but its reader' (Stavans et al. 1999: 47).

What about the case of Kafka, in whose work the word 'Jew' never appears, and who desired no readership, Jewish or otherwise, but who nonetheless is acclaimed by many critics as the most quintessentially Jewish of writers?[7] Would Harold Bloom be able to state with such serene assurance that Kafka's 'subject, although sometimes not immediately manifest, is always the dilemmas of Jewishness' (Bloom 1999: 31) if he did not know that Kafka was born a Jew, or if he had not read his letters and diaries, in which Kafka does wrestle with his Jewish identity? How can Ilan Stavans reconcile his decision to exclude from *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories* (1998) Norman Mailer and Gertrude Stein on the grounds that they are 'not openly engaged in their Jewishness' while including a story by Kafka? Stavans asks the question 'Is he [Kafka] a Jewish author?' and then answers 'Well, of course', without explaining what it is that makes him one (Stavans 1998: xi). Later on, Stavans claims that 'Modern Jewish literature [...] is less about content than about a sensibility expressed through language' (Stavans 1998: 17), but again this begs a number of questions. Language, after all, divides Jews more than it unites them: Yiddish, once the lingua franca of most European Jews, is now moribund, few Diasporan (that is, non-Israeli) Jews understand modern Hebrew, and only devout Jews (or those with a special scholarly interest) have any knowledge of ancient Hebrew. So what exactly does Stavans have in mind when he writes of a Jewish sensibility? It seems to involve a 'polyglotism' that enables Jewish writers to function 'as a bridge between diverse national literatures and cultures' (Stavans 1998: xii, 4) and yet disables them from participating fully in their native tradition, for he finishes by asking: 'what is a Jewish book if not a text that feels as if it were written originally in translation?' (Stavans 1998: 5). If Jews do not have in common one language, Stavans suggests that they occupy the paradoxical position of knowing many languages while owning none.[8]

Because Stavans' anthology ranges from mid-nineteenth-century Yiddish to contemporary Latin-American writers, he is naturally concerned with continuity, with what binds together Jewish writing in different languages and different eras, but the danger with this approach is of course that differences are elided. In the context of twentieth-century history, in particular, the transition between pre- and post-Holocaust Jewish literature and identity is one that needs closer attention than Stavans can give it.

Post-war

> It is a fact everywhere acknowledged [...] that between roughly 1945 and 1960 the terrain of American literature underwent a radical change, and that Jewish writers, critics, and intellectuals played an essential role in that change. (Schechner 1990: 1)

> [After the war] Schwartz, Bellow, Rosenfeld, Kazin, Fiedler and Howe [...] all proclaimed their Jewishness, took relish in it, wrote stories, poems, articles about it [...] more was involved here than the influence of Freud: Hitler's altogether irrefutable demonstration of the inescapability of Jewishness was no doubt an even more important factor in the emergence of this new attitude. (Podhoretz 1968: 122)

> Hitler has made me more of a Jew than Moses [sic]. (Abse et al. 1980: 85)

For post-war Jewish novelists, the fate of European Jewry during the war should, one would imagine, assume proportions of an irresistible magnitude and seriousness, be *the* great subject. Yet, while there has been no shortage of writing about the Holocaust by Jewish authors (ranging from the shrill ahistorical populism of Leon Uris to the restrained eyewitness documentary of Primo Levi), the subject has, until recently, proved more attractive to non-Jewish novelists (among many others, Thomas Keneally, William Styron, D.M. Thomas and Martin Amis have produced controversial novels dealing with the Nazi persecution of the Jews). Mark Schechner explains that the Holocaust in post-war American-Jewish literature 'was a hidden wound, shrouded in darkness and suffered in silence, felt everywhere but confronted virtually nowhere' (Schechner 1990: 4), and Chaim Bermant observes that 'If one studies the Anglo-Jewish novels written since the war, one can sometimes get the impression that Hitler had never lived, and that post-war Jewish life was but a tranquil development of pre-war life' (Bermant 1969: 173). But if the Holocaust was conspicuously absent from post-war American- and British-Jewish fiction (a phenomenon which I discuss in Chapter 4), its impact on Jewish intellectual life was profound.

Before the war, most American-Jewish intellectuals distanced themselves from, where they acknowledged at all, their Jewish roots. Many were affiliated to, or at least in sympathy with, some branch of Marxism, one of whose tenets, of course, is the rejection of all religious

ties. One such figure, Irving Howe, writes of his pre-war attitude to Jewishness in the following terms:

> [P]eople like me tended to subordinate our sense of Jewishness to cosmopolitan culture and socialist politics. We did not think well or deeply on the matter of Jewishness – you might say we avoided thinking about it. Jewishness [. . .] did not form part of a conscious commitment, it was not regarded as a major component of the culture I wanted to make my own [. . .] While it would be shameful to deny its presence or seek to flee its stigma, my friends and I could hardly be said to have thought Jewishness could do much for us or we for it. (Howe 1983a: 251)

Howe's urbane humility (his reluctance to identify himself with Jewish culture, he implies, deriving as much from his feeling that he could do little 'for it' as from the feeling that it could do little for him) does not quite conceal the underlying sense that it was precisely the stigma that an overt Jewishness carried – the obstacle that it presented to effective assimilation – that led him and his friends to minimize its importance. The culture that they wished to 'make [their] own' was *American* culture, and any other cultural allegiances would have to be discarded. After the war, however, the knowledge that 'but for an accident of geography we might now also be bars of soap' (Howe 1983b: 607) precipitated a rediscovery of Jewish identity. Howe's post-war enthusiasm for Yiddish writing (he edited several different collections of Yiddish literature and was largely responsible for the 'discovery' of Isaac Bashevis Singer for English-speaking readers) and his persistent championing of Jewish writers (apart from those, like Philip Roth, whom he felt to be undermining the Jewish tradition) make him a representative figure in the evolution of the American-Jewish intellectual.

Alfred Kazin, part of the same generation as Howe, provides an equally instructive example of the change wrought by the Holocaust (and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) in the attitude of American-Jewish writers towards their Jewishness. The title of Kazin's first book, *On Native Grounds* (1942), declared his sense of himself as an American, and, in response to a symposium in the *Contemporary Jewish Record* in 1944, he wrote: 'I learned long ago to accept the fact that I was Jewish without being a part of any meaningful Jewish life or culture' (quoted in Guttman 1971: 91). Yet after the war he publishes a three-volume series of memoirs, the last of which he calls *New York Jew* (1978), and

devotes a significant amount of space in his 1962 critical account of the domestic literary scene (*Contemporaries*) to discussions of Jewish writers such as Bellow, Roth, Mailer, Malamud and Singer. Writing of the sense of guilt and impotence felt by his generation of American-Jewish intellectuals who tried, after the war, to forge (in both senses of the word) links with their history, Kazin remarks: 'The more "Jewish" we became, the more we were open to the new horror: *the past did not exist unless you had lived it yourself*' (Kazin 1978: 258). This sense of guilt at having been spared the suffering of European Jewry was compounded by the less than enthusiastic reception that Jewish refugees from Nazism settling in Britain and America encountered, both during the war and afterwards.

Persecuted and sometimes massacred in the Middle Ages, expelled in 1290, readmitted in 1656 but not granted full civil liberties until 1858, in exchange for which they agreed to 'abandon all claims to nationality, and exist instead solely as a religious community [... who] publicly proclaimed their patriotism' (Karpf 1997: 171), the position of British Jews had always been precarious. Prior to the Second World War the British-Jewish community was 'dominated by an elite composed of a small group of wealthy families [...] who for the most part looked, sounded, and acted like members of the English aristocracy' and for whom the arrival of 'Foreign-born Jews, so flagrantly distinct in appearance, speech and culture, so self-evidently Jewish and therefore alien' (171) represented a threat to their hard-won privileges. Their response was to indoctrinate the newcomers in the British way of life, and to oppose further immigration.

As Anne Karpf, the child of Holocaust survivors who emigrated to England after the war, points out, during wartime 'there was such hostility to refugee aliens that even the *Jewish Chronicle* [the most prominent British-Jewish newspaper, with nationwide distribution] supported the principle of internment, as did whole sections of Anglo-Jewish society' (181).[9] Moreover, 'At no point did British Jewry unite in a campaign to attempt to persuade the government [... to] strik[e] directly at the Nazis' extermination programme' (186). Even after the war 'Though there were individual acts of generosity, and child survivors [...] did receive organised help, adult survivors met with few communal attempts to ease their transition or material hardship, and no one to mediate between them and the alien new culture' (165–6).

Things were not much better in America.[10] After the great waves of Jewish immigration at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth (mostly refugees from the pogroms and Eastern

Europe), US policy on admissions of Jews became less liberal. Although the United States government allowed Jews into the country in greater numbers than its British counterpart during and after the war (about 100 000 Jews entered the US, compared with 1 200 Jews who found refuge in Britain), it also enforced rigid quotas on Jewish immigration and made the process of obtaining visas prohibitively complicated (Arthur A. Goren quotes a State Department memorandum ordering officials to employ every conceivable strategy to '"postpone and postpone and postpone the granting of visas"' [Goren 1982: 86]). Those Jews who managed to overcome these obstacles often found themselves unwelcome in established Jewish communities which were anxious to distance themselves from these new, embarrassingly unassimilated arrivals:

> For those Jews who had quit Europe before the years of Nazi terror, their Eastern European kin brought with them to the new and shining world something of the taint and pollution and perfidy of persecution, an acrid whiff of the death camps. Guilt, mingled with not a little fear of contamination, surfaced with their proximity. It was almost as if it were better if they could be mourned or at least kept at arm's length by distant acts of charity. (Appignanesi 2000: 14)

Whether or not they personally shared these attitudes, American-Jewish intellectuals were implicated in them, particularly because in the early years of the war most of them had opposed American intervention. The contrast between this pre-war diffidence and inter-war indifference towards, and their enthusiastic post-war identification with, Jewishness has been treated with some cynicism by a younger generation of Jewish writers. Norman Podhoretz, part of what he calls the 'third generation' of the 'Family' of American-Jewish intellectuals, notes that when older members of this fraternity (such as Howe, Kazin, Leslie Fiedler and Lionel Trilling) belatedly developed an interest in Jewish writers and thinkers, they tended to objectify – and justify – their work by scrupulously tracing resemblances to, and affinities with, the Gentile canon:[11]

> [T]hey praised Maimonides and Sholom Aleichem [...] in terms of St. Thomas, Wordsworth, Blake and Chekhov. In other words, before they would permit themselves the luxury of investigating their own origins, they had to be persuaded that these origins were

> objects of general interest. They had, as it were, to get the smell of garlic out of the breath of Jewish culture. (Podhoretz 1974: 661)

Morris Dickstein is similarly scathing, and uses similar olfactory imagery, in his characterization of the attitudes of this older group of writers to what he too (somewhat tendentiously, in the title of his essay) calls their 'Origins':

> The older generation of intellectuals was embarrassed by Judaism: they saw it through gentile eyes as a disability, a burden [...] It reeked of poverty and the ghetto. It stank of provinciality, tribalism. (Dickstein 1985: 358).

Podhoretz's and Dickstein's rhetoric of shame is somewhat self-righteous and, in its rush to condemn their forbears (a case of slaying the literary father, perhaps), rather glibly dismissive of the environment in which men like Trilling (one of the first American Jews to achieve tenure in the literature faculty of an Ivy League university) had to work.[12] Whether rational or not, the suspicion that this generation of American Jews was somehow complicit in the fate of their European brethren was clearly a key factor both in the post-Holocaust examination of conscience by the older American-Jewish writers and in the heightened consciousness of Jewishness among their heirs.[13] Yet, as Leslie Fiedler candidly confesses, there was also perhaps an element of opportunism, a willingness to exploit what had become, by the 1960s, a fashionable ethnicity, in the alacrity with which he and others embraced their Jewishness, and became ambassadors of Jewish culture: 'I have shamelessly played the role in which I have been cast, becoming a literary Fiedler on the roof of academe' (Fiedler 1992: 177). At any rate, the progress of critics like Howe, Kazin and Fiedler within the American academy was mirrored in the careers of writers like Saul Bellow, Philip Roth and Bernard Malamud, all of whom moved from the margins into the mainstream of American culture during this period, garnering numerous literary awards and impressive sales figures along the way.[14]

This post-war breakthrough of American-Jewish writers was not, however, replicated in Britain, partly because there simply was no British equivalent to the 'New York intellectuals' (a term used to describe a group of anti-Stalinist left-wing Jewish writers who emerged in the 1940s and 1950s and whose work appeared regularly in journals such as *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*), and partly because of their

own and their host culture's ambivalence towards Jewishness.[15] While American-Jewish writers were revelling in their hybridity, British-Jewish writers were denying theirs. Whereas post-war American-Jewish novelists could draw on a pre-war tradition that had already produced some notable fiction (Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* [1917], Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* [1925], Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* [1930], Daniel Fuchs' *Summer in Williamsburg* [1934], and Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* [1934] spring to mind), as well as novels like Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1941) and Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* (1944), which came out during the war years, British-Jewish novelists had no comparable tradition to inspire them. Although there had been a number of British-Jewish novelists publishing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[16] unlike the fiction of Yezierska, Cahan et al., which grew out of a particular shared immigrant experience and which formed a recognizable genre, they tended to work in isolation and to eschew the particularities of the British-Jewish experience. Amy Levy's *Reuben Sachs* (1888), Israel Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto* (1892), Louis Golding's *Magnolia Street* (1932), Simon Blumenfeld's *Jew Boy* (1935) and William Goldman's *East End My Cradle* (1940) were notable exceptions, but only Blumenfeld and Goldman manage to avoid altogether the sentimentalization of the relationship between British Jews and their Gentile neighbours which made Zangwill's and Golding's novels bestsellers, aspiring instead to a proletarian Jewish fiction like that of American contemporaries such as Michael Gold.

In the 1950s and 1960s a number of new British-Jewish writers of fiction emerged, giving rise in some quarters to the belief that an 'Elizabethan age' of modern Jewish literature was dawning,[17] in which Alexander Baron, Emanuel Litvinoff, Wolf Mankowitz, Dannie Abse, Chaim Bermant, Gerda Charles, Dan Jacobson, Frederic Raphael, Brian Glanville, Bernard Kops, Arnold Wesker, Bernice Rubens, and Eva Figes would play prominent roles. Of these writers, Baron's and Charles' careers came to an abrupt, premature end, Litvinoff's gradually petered out, Abse became better known for his poetry, Figes for her literary criticism, Mankowitz and Raphael for their screenplays (they both won Oscars), Kops and Wesker for their drama, and Glanville and Bermant for their journalism. It was Bermant who coined the term 'Golders Green novelists' (Golders Green being a suburb in north-west London renowned for its Jewish population) by which many of these writers came to be – somewhat derisively, and often misleadingly – known. Only Rubens and Jacobson have sustained careers as serious novelists,

publishing consistently well-received, at times prize-winning, fiction.

In retrospect, the fate of this 'new wave' of British-Jewish writers seems all too predictable. From December 1958 to January 1959 the *Jewish Chronicle* published a series of interviews with many of them, asking about the importance of the Jewish heritage to their work. In the words of David Cesarani, 'Almost every one [...] was indifferent or hostile towards Judaism [...] and complained that Anglo-Jewry was a cultural wasteland' (Cesarani 1994: xi). To judge from the defensive responses to a 1963 survey in the *Jewish Quarterly* on 'Being English and Jewish', nothing in the intervening four years had changed their minds. Alexander Baron remarked dismissively that 'All the argument on Anglo-Jewish writing seems to me to be of a cat-chasing-tail kind, and a waste of time', though he goes on to concede that 'as time goes on, Jewish preoccupations, obsessions, and symbols have more and more taken possession of me and consequently entered my work' (Abse et al. 1980: 66, 68); Frederic Raphael stated flatly 'I do not think, quite frankly, that I am a Jewish writer at all', though he is careful to point out that 'I am not English either' (76, 77), and Emanuel Litvinoff claimed to feel 'no less English for the fact of being Jewish' (94). On the other side of the argument, Gerda Charles (the only Orthodox Jew among the interviewees) complained that 'Questions which presuppose a dichotomy between one's self and one's Jewishness always leave me slightly bewildered' (78). Although Wolf Mankowitz was happy to describe his work as 'a synthesis of English and Jewish cultural elements' (81), Brian Glanville was the only respondent to acknowledge that there might be a problematic tension between a writer's Englishness and Jewishness. However, he is quick to stress that 'the Jewish writer's dilemma is [...] a source of passion and vitality', since 'If he has been brought up among the English, their mentality will not be foreign to him; it will be accessible, and he will have two strings to his bow' (74).

In fact Glanville's own diction belies his optimism (phrases such as 'the English' and 'their mentality' clearly demonstrate his alienation from the native tradition) and confirms what that apparently inconsequential conjunction 'and' in 'Being English and Jewish' implies: namely, that the two identities are potentially incompatible, if not irreconcilable.[18] In the face of strong hostility from within the community, and indifference from outside it, writers like Glanville soon abandoned Jewishness as subject-matter for their fiction and subsequently abandoned their fiction altogether (or were abandoned by their publishers).[19] Whereas, according to Leslie Fiedler, his

generation of American-Jewish writers and intellectuals were able in the post-war period to profit 'from a philo-Semitism as undiscriminating as the anti-Semitism in reaction to which it originated' (Fiedler 1992: 177), and while their successors (such as Geoffrey Hartmann, Harold Bloom and Stephen Greenblatt) have consolidated and extended the strong Jewish presence in the American academy, their British-Jewish contemporaries have not been so fortunate. However, the greater tenacity and insidiousness of British anti-Semitism[20] is only one factor among many that have contributed to this historical divergence between post-war British-Jewish and American-Jewish fiction, and I want now to examine some of these.

British-Jewish

> There was no significant Anglo-Jewish literature to speak of. There were Jewish authors [...] but no body of work matching the American-Jewish authors in prestige and confidence. (Karpf 1997: 50)
>
> Whereas American Jews can constantly reinvent themselves using prevalent American mythologies, English 'national culture' is made up of a peculiarly homogenous and unchanging construction of the past. (Cheyette 1996: 22)
>
> I was a Jewish child in a country [England] where, unlike America, there was no contribution I could make to the forging of the national identity. It was fixed already, centuries ago. (Grant 2000: 12)

In a review of A.S. Byatt's *Oxford Book of English Short Stories* (1998), the British-Jewish fiction writer Clive Sinclair notes that 'there is no room for the likes of [...] Elaine Feinstein, Will Self, Jonathan Wilson [...] What are they if they are not English writers? [...] Anglo-Jewish [...]? True. But also English' (Sinclair 1998b). Sinclair detects in Byatt's selection of writers with 'pure English national credentials' a sort of literary ethnic cleansing that is at best misguided, since 'the English – like it or not – have become a mongrel breed' (Sinclair 1988b). Strong though his case is in literary terms (the omission of one of Sinclair's own short stories, though he is too self-deprecating to include himself in the list above, in itself impoverishes Byatt's collection), and demographic terms, the fact remains that ideas of multiculturalism have been much slower to gain ground in Britain than in the United States. Partly this

is to do with history: whereas America is an immigrant nation, founded on the theory, if not the practice, of the inalienable rights of all men, irrespective of creed or colour, England has traditionally prided itself on its exclusivist national identity. While it has been happy to integrate Welsh, Scottish and Irish nationalities into the United Kingdom, and to absorb its colonies into the British Empire, it has been rather less willing to accommodate their distinctive cultures, preferring instead to subsume their difference within a transcendent discourse of 'Britishness' (which in practice has been synonomous with 'Englishness'[21]), or to marginalize and stigmatize it, often in the form of dubious comedy.[22] As Anne Karpf notes: 'Britain isn't comfortable with a strong sense of ethnic identity: there are no accepted hyphenated equivalents to African-American or Irish-American' (Karpf 1997: 216).

It may be no coincidence, then, that when Brian Cheyette published an anthology (the first of its kind) of British-Jewish fiction, he avoided hyphenation altogether, opting instead for the title *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Britain and Ireland* (1988).[23] In her review of the book Natasha Lehrer comments:

> [I]t is clear that a great chasm remains between the experience of the Jewish writer in Britain and that of the Jewish writer in America. For those two great American novelists Saul Bellow and Philip Roth being Jewish is an integral part of being American; it is not a question of one or the other or an uncertain marriage of them both. Ethnicity is part of the experience, traditionally a constituent part of the openness of American society and of its literature. Is Philip Roth a great American writer or a great American-Jewish writer? Is the fact that he is both emblematic of the fact that he is a better writer than any of the writers in this anthology, or of the fact that only in America is it possible to be both canonized and Jewish? (Lehrer 1998: 74)

Lehrer's review accurately diagnoses what Cheyette himself calls 'the malaise at the heart of British-Jewish culture' (Cheyette 1998: xxviii), while at the same time manifesting symptoms of it. British-Jewish culture is forever looking wistfully across the Atlantic, coveting the achievements of American Jews, and it is the great curse of British-Jewish novelists that their work is invariably judged according to the standards of American-Jewish fiction. If Roth is a better writer than any in Cheyette's anthology this does not in itself constitute a

damning judgment since he has few peers (Jewish or non-Jewish). Then again, the case that Cheyette tries to make in his introduction for the existence of a vibrant contemporary British-Jewish tradition is not helped by the somewhat spurious reasons he gives for including Harold Pinter, in whose early autobiographical novel *The Dwarfs* (1990) he finds 'numerous Yiddish jokes and references to the Talmud' (xxxii), Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, whose (Jewless) Indian fiction he sees as 'a way of indirectly encompassing the loss of her family and childhood friends' (xlii), and Anita Brookner, in whose studious avoidance of questions of Jewish identity he detects 'a self-consciousness [. . .] which raises crucial questions about the nature of the silence imposed on ethnic voices' (xl). It is understandable that Cheyette should want to include Pinter, unquestionably the most eminent British-Jewish writer of his generation (though of course as a dramatist rather than as a novelist), along with Jhabvala and Brookner (both of whom have won the Booker Prize, the most prestigious British award for fiction), in spite of the fact that Jewishness is most conspicuous by its absence from their work, since there are few among the less problematically Jewish contributors of their literary stature. It does, however, tend to suggest that he, as much as Lehrer, lacks faith in the ability of those other writers to justify (or perhaps, to sell) the anthology. It also begs the question of why he omits a writer such as Will Self, whose recent fiction has been explicitly engaged with questions of Jewish identity, and whose earlier work was clearly influenced by Martin Amis, who, in his turn, is deeply indepbted to American-Jewish novelists like Philip Roth and Saul Bellow. In the absence of a British-Jewish Roth, Cheyette recruits Pinter, the most canonical British-Jewish figure available, though his Jewishness is at best marginal to his work and though he hasn't written any fiction since the juvenilia of *The Dwarfs*, but ignores Self, whose status as a Jewish writer and as an important writer of contemporary fiction is much clearer.

However, the comparison between American- and British-Jewish fiction is an unequal one. Partly, it is a case of simple arithmetic: in 1968 Britain had an estimated Jewish population of 410 000, which had declined (due mainly to intermarriage and a decline in birth-rates) by the early 1980s to 354 000 (Alderman 1998: 322), and which now stands at 'something like 280 000' (Freedland 1999: 37). Though the Jewish population in America is also diminishing, there are still approximately 5 500 000 American Jews. It's not simply that we might expect there to be, according to mathematical probability, a greater chance of a writer like Roth emerging in America than in Britain, but

that the difference in the size of the respective communities reflects, and is reflected in, social, cultural and political differences.

Whereas the post-war political influence of American Jewry has been such that it is frequently referred to in the news media as 'the Jewish lobby', British Jewry has remained self-effacing. While there have been a number of prominent Jewish politicians in government (particularly during the Thatcher years),[24] the national political profile of the British-Jewish community[25] is negligible. Whereas in America organizations such as the B'nai Brith actively campaign against all expressions of anti-Semitism, in Britain 'the anglo-Jewish establishment persists in a softly-softly approach, playing down the seriousness of the [anti-Semitic] attacks, and refusing publicity about anti-Semitic incidents in the enduring belief that it will stir up further anti-Semitism' (Karpf 1997: 215).

The ramifications of this 'neurosis which at time verge[s] on self-hatred', as Richard Bolchover has described it (quoted in Karpf 1997: 186), are perceptible in every area of British-Jewish culture, from the conservatism of its religious practices[26] to the parochialism of its journalism.[27] Whereas in the United States there are currently over thirty Jewish journals and newspapers, some of which enjoy international readerships, in Britain there is only one weekly newspaper (the *Jewish Chronicle*, established in 1841) and one cultural magazine (the *Jewish Quarterly*, established in 1953) of any standing. While numerous rivals to these publications have come and gone, they remain the only serious forums for the discussion of British-Jewish culture. While the *Jewish Quarterly* takes this responsibility very seriously and has maintained the highest standards of intellectual debate (in spite of circulation figures that rarely rise above 2000), the record of the *Jewish Chronicle* is not quite so admirable. Too often over the years it seems to have devoted as much energy to 'outing' as Jewish any prominent public figure with the faintest links to Judaism as it has to serious news coverage. As Chaim Bermant, a long-time columnist in the paper, has wryly observed: 'No matter how far a man may be removed from Jewish life [...] if he has as much as an MBE, and some remote Jewish antecedents, he will be taken as a Jew unless he can show definite proof to the contrary' (Bermant 1969: 166). It has also tended until recently to offer uncritical support of the policies of the Israeli government, rather than reflecting the deep divisions that exist among British Jews, on the question of Israeli-Palestinian relations in particular.[28] Its arts coverage has never been very extensive or adventurous, and it was no great surprise when Clive Sinclair's brief appointment as

literary editor ended abruptly, 'with claims of cultural philistinism on one side and literary incest on the other' (Cesarani 1994: 238). Sinclair went on to take a form of literary revenge in his novel *Blood Libels*, but the source of his grievances remains.

Sinclair's contemporary, Howard Jacobson, whose second novel, *Peeping Tom* (1984) I discuss in Chapter 3, has written of his 'exasperation [...] with the philistine Jewish population of this country' and his envy of the 'intellectual Jewish readership' available to American-Jewish novelists (Jacobson 1999: 70). Nor does he feel able to tap into this market himself, since 'Americans don't get [...] the English-Jewish thing [...] the fact that there's a more put-upon minority feeling here' (70). For Jacobson, it's not just that any potential British-Jewish audience for his work is small, but that it has no interest in serious fiction. Whereas an earlier generation of British-Jewish novelists yearned nostalgically for their lost European heritage,[29] Jacobson and his contemporaries 'can't help but envy American Jews for the centrality they occupy in North American culture' (Karpf 1997: 218). Ilan Stavans claims that 'In its distrust towards intellectuals, America is not a land where serious literature is appreciated' (Stavans 1998: 21), but these things are relative. British-Jewish writers would happily accept a culture which distrusts intellectuals, when their own is one which derides them. As Stephen Brook has pointed out, the traditional Jewish reverence for intellect is directly at odds with the British disdain for it: 'The English language must be one of the few in the world to possess a phrase such as "too clever by half". The Jew relishes cleverness [...] but in Britain where such manifestations are clearly bad form, it must have been very tempting to play down such leanings' (Brook 1989: 320). For Jacobson this native anti-intellectualism is amplified by anti-Semitism, so that 'the English don't like Jewish intellectuals. They don't like intellectuals either. But they really don't like clever Jewish boys' (Jacobson 1999: 68).

Overall, then, the picture that emerges is of a British-Jewish culture characterized by 'a tradition of self-deprecation and a lack of collective self-esteem' (Cesarani 1994: 2), paralyzed by the deeply-ingrained fear that to assert itself would be to risk raising the spectre of anti-Semitism, and awed by American-Jewish culture into a perennial inferiority complex. Whether, as Tony Kushner suggests, 'British society [...] has failed to provide an environment for the healthy existence of a positive Anglo-Jewish identity' (Kushner 1990: 207), or whether responsibility lies with the British-Jewish community itself for failing to foster such a positive identity, the consensus seems to be

that the gulf between British-Jewish and American-Jewish culture is incommensurable and unalterable. And yet, real and important as these differences are, it is easy to exaggerate them; to underestimate the changes that have taken place, and are continuing to take place, in British-Jewish culture and to overstate the extent to which American Jews have resolved the tensions between their Americanness and their Jewishness. As a child, Anne Karpf 'experienced a permanent struggle between Jewish and English [sic]' and envied Jewish Americans, who lived in a country where 'everyone was an outsider: outsiders were insiders', as opposed to England, where 'an outsider was an outsider. Britain had an identifiable in-group, and palpable indices of Englishness' (Karpf 1997: 49). Later, however, she recognized 'how idealised was this notion of the "melting-pot"' and 'that Englishness too wasn't as monolithic and homogenous as it appeared' (49).

Although the British-Jewish population has been steadily declining for years, there are clear indications of a greater confidence and stronger sense of identity among those Jews, secular and religious, who still think of themselves as such. As Geoffrey Alderman points out, 'There are probably more Jews – and Jewesses – undertaking advanced studies in Judaism in Britain today than there have ever been [. . .] The demand for full-time Jewish schooling [. . .] cannot be satisfied' (Alderman 1998: 367). Linda Grant, who admits to having longed as a child for 'a dry, mild, laconic father with a name like James or Charles or Timothy', notes that 'In the early 1970s some of the children of those who anglicized their surnames for assimilation into their new lives, to keep their heads down, began to revert to the Bermans and Greenbaums and Rosenbergs that their parents had abandoned long ago' (Grant 1998a: 71, 59). This symbolic reclamation by a younger generation of British Jews of the Jewishness which had embarrassed an older generation has been matched by a shift in social behaviour. Jonathan Freedland draws attention to the contrast between a previous era when 'people sat on underground trains hiding their copy of the *Jewish Chronicle* inside their evening paper' and the present-day sight of 'young men walk[ing] around wearing little knitted skullcaps' (Freedland 1999: 37), and Anne Karpf notices that 'my daughter [. . .] is already confident about her Jewishness in ways I never was, and which seem to me more American than British' (Karpf 1997: 315). When David Cesarani proclaims proudly that 'The massive Jewish population of the USA has proved unable to sustain an independent publication of similar quality and scope [to the *Jewish Chronicle*]' (Cesarani 1994: 253), I detect more than a hint of overstatement, and when its current

(American) editor, Ned Temko, argues that '"We have strengths here that should make American Jews jealous"' (quoted in Freedland 1999: 38) I am tempted to attribute his views to the subjective enthusiasm for all things British of American anglophiles, but there's no doubt that today's generation of British Jews, though they may still envy their American cousins, have more in common with them than ever before. Moreover, this narrowing of the gap between the cultures is visible, as I argue in the Afterword, in the work of a number of contemporary Jewish writers for whom the notion of national identity is fluid, and whose work might best be described as mid-Atlantic or Anglo-American Jewish.

American-Jewish

> [I]t is by no means clear whether Jews, when they address national issues such as racism, do so as Jews or Americans. (Budick 1998: 6)
>
> [T]he so-called American Jewish writers are [. . .] culturally American in all important respects and only peripherally or vestigially Jewish. (Alter 1969: 38)
>
> It is the experience of the modern Jew [. . .] to be neither wholly Jewish, nor cozily American, a predicament that renders the hyphen in his identity the cutting edge of his wit. (Schechner 1990: 57)

If British Jews are renowned for their reticence, the assertiveness of American Jews is no less legendary. Almost half the world's Jewish population live in America and the prominence of American Jews in almost every field, from stand-up comedy to nuclear physics, is usually taken as ample evidence that, as Marlene Adler Marks puts it, 'Full participation of Jews in American life is taken for granted now' (Marks 1996: 5). Jewish Studies courses are now offered in universities all over America, Holocaust memorials are a feature of many American cities, and in the American Presidential election of 2000 the Democratic candidate for Vice-President was a religious Jew. Indeed, Gerald Shapiro's view that 'Jews aren't even thought of as an "ethnic" group in our society anymore – they've moved so far into the power structure of contemporary mainstream America that in many ways they've become an indistinguishable part of it' (Shapiro 1998: xiv) is broadly representative. According to this view, American Jews have transformed themselves from alienated deprived minority to privileged

members of the establishment and in so doing have become the model for (but also implicitly the oppressor of) all other aspiring immigrant groups.

Yet, as Alan Dershowitz argues, many American Jews (even those who are third- and fourth-generation Americans) retain the sense of being 'guests in another people's land' and are preoccupied with 'what the "real" Americans will think of [them]' (Dershowitz 1992: 3). Rather than being 'truly first-class citizens', Dershowitz asks whether American Jews have simply 'managed to achieve a greater degree of toleration than Jews have been accorded by other "host nations" throughout history?' (3). He insists that 'Because the U.S. constitution requires the separation of church and state, no particular sect has achieved the status of the official American faith' (arguably only a lawyer would demonstrate such literal faith in constitutional safeguards, when the mere existence of the American acronym WASP tells a different story). However, he also points out that it is 'harder even today for a qualified Jew to get certain jobs and to gain admission to some universities than it is for an equally qualified non-Jew' (8, 4). Indeed, while Dershowitz acknowledges that anti-Semitism in its old forms is no longer acceptable in American society, he argues that a new, more insidious form of intolerance, which he terms 'anti-*Jewishness*', and which manifests itself in 'the super-scrutiny of things Jewish' for moral defects, is thriving in contemporary America (121). For Dershowitz, American Jews are at one and the same time 'a powerful and powerless people' (122), powerful in that the majority of American Jews occupy a privileged socioeconomical position, powerless in that collectively they remain cautious and conservative, cowed by the charges of dual loyalty that resurface periodically (notably during the trials of the Rosenbergs in the 1950s and Jonathan Pollard in the 1980s) and anxious not to offend the WASP establishment.[30]

If the pre-eminence of some American Jews conceals as much as it reveals about the extent to which Jewishness has become accepted as an authentic part of American life, the same may be said of the pre-eminence of some American-Jewish novelists. Almost as soon as it had begun to establish itself as a real force in American literature, the demise of American-Jewish fiction was being confidently prophesied. In the preface to a collection of essays entitled *After the Tradition* (1969), the American-Jewish literary critic and biblical scholar Robert Alter observed loftily that 'The excitement caused by the rise to prominence in American literature during the 50's and 60's [sic] of writers of Jewish origins is [...] difficult to justify critically' (Alter 1969: 9). He

went on to say that 'The vogue of Jewish writing, quickly exhausting its artistic possibilities, offers many indications that it may be falling into a declining phase of unwitting self-parody' (Alter 1969: 9). Ever since Nietzsche's indictment of Euripides in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) it has been a critical commonplace that self-parody is the death-knell of a genre, and the publication of Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) in the same year as Alter's collection of essays must have seemed to him to confirm his bleak prognosis for American-Jewish fiction. Certainly this was the case for Irving Howe, who was so dismayed by what he saw as Roth's irreverence towards the Jewish tradition that he was moved to write what was effectively a literary obituary for him in 1972 (in an essay entitled 'Philip Roth Reconsidered', which I discuss, alongside other examples of Roth's reception by American-Jewish critics, in Chapter 5). For Howe, American-Jewish literature was 'a transitional experience', a staging post on the road to complete assimilation that had failed to produce 'one Jewish writer comparable to the great nineteenth- and twentieth-century gentile American novelists and poets' (Howe 1993: 68, 71). With the disappearance of the distinctive immigrant culture celebrated by Howe in *World of Our Fathers* (1976), American-Jewish writers faced 'a crisis of subject matter' (Howe 1993: 70). While Howe was lamenting the loss of *Yiddishkeit* (old-world Jewish culture), Allen Guttmann argued that it was the loss of religious faith that spelled the end for American-Jewish fiction and that 'the survival in America of a significant and identifiably Jewish literature depends upon the unlikely conversion to Judaism [...] of a generation [of Jews] that no longer chooses to be chosen' (quoted in Bilik 1981: 4).

Yet rumours of the demise of the American-Jewish novel, like those of the death of Mark Twain, have been somewhat exaggerated. Self-parody can, after all, be knowing as well as unwitting, signifying maturity, confidence and reinvigoration, rather than exhaustion, and *Portnoy's Complaint* marked neither the end of Roth's career nor the fag-end of American-Jewish fiction, but rather the inception of a new phase in both. As Ted Solotaroff and Nessa Rapoport put it:

> There was a clear distinction between the writer who was a Jew and the Jew who was a writer, the former insisting on the right to explore the Jewish subject, as one did any other, by one's experience and imagination; the latter insisting that her or his experience and imagination were largely formed by and served the history and mission of the Jewish people. It was fairly easy to tell the 'marginal'

> writers from the 'authentic' ones since the protagonists of each were, broadly speaking, the antagonists of the other.
>
> Things are no longer so clear-cut. (Solotaroff and Rapoport 1996: xx)

Controversy still abounds over the role of the American-Jewish writer in the American and Jewish traditions, but the terms of the debate have shifted. While Bonnie Lyons, writing in 1988, still sees the 'the inheritance of *Yidishkayt* [sic]' as central to post-war American-Jewish fiction (Lyons 1988: 62), most commentators agree that contemporary American-Jewish fiction has, for better or worse, become progressively more American and less Jewish.

According to one school of opinion, the problem with American-Jewish literature is that it has sacrificed religion (sold its soul, as it were) in order to gain acceptance into the American mainstream. Miriyam Glazer, for example, argues that 'Even as they claimed alienation, the canonized "American-Jewish" writers were implicitly eliminating the prickly source of true difference: not the "Jewishness" which could be bleached into apparent "universality," but rather the Judaism, which [...] could not', and that 'the subtle de-Judaicizing of the Jewish became a sluice-gate through which the male literature could flow into the deceptively inclusive American gentile sea' (Glazer 1997: 91). For Linda Grant, however, Bellow, Roth and Malamud did not universalize their Jewishness, but rather made 'Jewishness an aspect of modern consciousness' (Grant 1999: 23). Perhaps Grant's argument accounts for the fact (on the face of it, somewhat perplexing) that Cynthia Ozick, the most militantly Jewish of contemporary American-Jewish novelists, (a 'hortatory prophet censuring American Jewry for its self-destructive embrace of an alien culture's aesthetics', as Sarah Blacher Cohen puts it [Cohen 1994: 28]), is also one of Philip Roth's greatest admirers.

Many younger American-Jewish fiction writers are in fact affiliated to the very Jewish traditions that Alter, Howe and Guttmann bemoaned the absence of in writers like Roth, but their fiction is no more pious, and no less American, than Roth's. One of these writers, Allegra Goodman, calls on her peers to 'recapture the spiritual and religious dimension of Judaism' (Goodman 1997: 273), but at the same time makes a more radical claim for the universality of American-Jewish fiction than any of her secular predecessors when she writes that 'Ultimately [...] all writing is ethnic writing, and all writers are ethnic writers grappling with [...] a particular language and culture'

(Goodman 1997: 273, 274). This last statement is both enabled by, and at the same time inimical to, the movement known as multiculturalism that has come to dominate the politics of the American academy over the last decade, since if all writing is ethnic writing, then the campaign for certain ethnic voices to be heard above others (without which Goodman would not be writing in such terms) can no longer be justified. Indeed, it is arguably the relationship of American-Jewish writing to African-American and other ethnic American literature, rather than its relationship to the WASP tradition, that now takes precedence. The question of where (and whether) the American-Jewish writer fits in to the debates over how literary canons are formed (and whether they should be formed) has become the most urgent, problematic and divisive one for contemporary American-Jewish writers.

In common with many American-Jewish authors of her generation, Carol Bergman embraces the idea of multiculturalism and sees her own writing as a product of it:

> There is so much cultural cross-fertilization in New York that although the voice in my stories is distinctly contemporary, distinctly American and very Jewish-New York, Afro-Americans speak like this too, as do the Latinos, and I speak like them. We trade/share vocabulary, idiom, rage. (quoted in Lyndon and Paskin 1996: 4)

However, not all American Jews would agree with Bergman's enthusiastic endorsement of multiculturalism or share her sense of ethnic solidarity. For the editors of *The Schocken Book of Contemporary Jewish Fiction* (1996), multiculturalism is an irrelevance, a form of positive discrimination no longer required by American Jews:

> Jews today, rightly or wrongly, are perceived to be part of the white mainstream. Their formerly marginal status is now occupied by the people of color. Their literature now rivals the Wasp one in prestige and sales. The multicultural movement passes them by and anti-Semitism is mostly a demagogic way of attacking the power structure. (Solotaroff and Rapoport 1996: xx)

For Solotaroff and Rapoport, the literary achievements of American Jews are a direct analogue of their social progress. According to this teleological narrative, the exclusion of Jews from multiculturalism is simply a reflection of their successful assimilation into American

culture, and anti-Semitism simply another form of political dissent, but if this is so why do they still find it necessary, or indeed possible, to distinguish between their literature and 'the Wasp one'? Moreover, if Jews are really 'perceived to be part of the white mainstream', why is it that media coverage during the American Presidential campaign of 2000 of Al Gore's nomination of Senator Joe Lieberman as his running mate focused so intently on the latter's Jewishness?

The editors of a more recent anthology of American-Jewish fiction take a bleaker view, complaining that

> American Jewish writing no longer receives the attention it deserves. As a result of our assimilation – and acceptance – into the fabric of American life, multiculturalism, which has so captivated the public's imagination, has ceased to include Jewish writings as a separate genre. (Berkman and Starkman 1998: 7)

Like Solotaroff and Rapoport, Berkman and Starkman assume that American-Jewish literature has been absorbed into the American tradition, but for them this 'acceptance' has paradoxically led to neglect: whereas American-Jewish writing used to be a big fish in a small ethnic sea, it is now a small fish in a big WASP sea. For Cynthia Ozick, too, the advent of multiculturalism has ironically served to marginalize American-Jewish writers, rather than to celebrate their ethnicity:

> Multiculturalism has played a dirty trick on American writers who are Jews. First they were marginalized because they were not like F. Scott Fitzgerald; today, in an age where everyone is, willy-nilly, an 'ethnic', they are marginalized because they are considered to be too close to the mainstream. And at the same time the mainstream [...] will not accept them as mainstream. (Stavans et al. 1999: 50)

Crucially, Ozick dissents from the view that American-Jewish writers have, to paraphrase the title of Norman Podhoretz's triumphalist autobiography, 'made it' in America. Whereas Leslie Fiedler believes that 'The writing of the American-Jewish novel is essentially [...] an act of assimilation: a demonstration that there is an American Jew [...] and that he feels at home!' (Fiedler 1958: 570), for Ozick it is an act of resistance, a defiant insistence on the unassimilability of Jewishness. If Alan Berger is right when he claims that nowadays 'many American Jews depend on novels [...] for their knowledge about fundamental Jewish issues' and American-Jewish

novelists have become the 'theologians of Jewish culture' (Berger 1985: 37), then this may account for the shift in emphasis in contemporary American-Jewish fiction from 'the comic sociology of the American Jewish present' to 'the tragedy of the Jewish historical past' (Bilik 1981: 8). Certainly, Gerald Shapiro detects a commemorative function in recent American-Jewish fiction, a compulsion to 'writ[e] directly about their Jewishness – not *despite* the disappearance of what Howe identified as the world, the "literary region," of Jewish-American fiction, but *because* of this disappearance' (Shapiro 1998: ix). There has also undoubtedly been something of a backlash against what Richard Zimler calls the 'tired and clichéd' 'humorous-macho school of American-Jewish fiction' (quoted in Lyndon and Paskin 1996: 2), a backlash which has manifested itself particularly in the writing of a younger generation of American-Jewish women, whose response to the legacy of writers like Bellow, Roth and Malamud I discuss in Chapter 4, and whose work has led some critics to claim that 'The tradition of American Jewish women's writing has emphatically come of age' (Antler 1990: 18).

Whatever the reasons for it, that there has been, *pace* Irving Howe, a new efflorescence of writing about Jewishness by American Jews, is undeniable. Whether, as Harold Bloom suggests, far from being moribund, 'American Jewish culture [is . . .] still very much in a formative phase' (Bloom 1999: 32), or whether its present vibrancy derives from the rediscovery of its past, it is difficult to argue with Stephen Wade's assertion that this is 'the most exciting and rewarding time to study the literature of the Jewish-Americans' [sic] (Wade 1999: 3). Yet Wade's conclusion – that 'As each generation of immigrants has moved further into assimilated American life, the more [sic] the deeper and wider religious and political meanings of being Jewish have been preserved and studied' (Wade 1999: 3) – which turns Howe's apocalyptic vision of assimilation on its head, is, like that vision, an oversimplification. Whether or not you agree with Melvin Jules Bukiet's claim that 'Acculturation allows us to become more Jewish and to live more fully on the left-hand side of the Jewish-American hyphen' (Stavans et al. 1999: 50) probably depends on your definition of 'Jewish', but what seems clear is that Jewish assimilation in America, as in Britain, has neither destroyed nor preserved the 'meanings of being Jewish'; instead it has deepened the ambivalence of Jews towards both their Americanness and their Jewishness.

Ambivalence

> Why must Jews be in conflict with one another? Why must they be in conflict with themselves? Because the divisiveness is not just between Jew and Jew – it is within the individual Jew. Is there a more manifold personality in all the world? I don't say divided. Divided is nothing. Even the goyim [non-Jews] are divided. But inside every Jew there is a *mob* of Jews. The good Jew, the bad Jew. The new Jew, the old Jew. The lover of Jews, the hater of Jews. The friend of the goy, the enemy of the goy. The arrogant Jew, the wounded Jew. The pious Jew, the rascal Jew. The coarse Jew, the gentle Jew. The defiant Jew, the appeasing Jew. The Jewish Jew, the de-Jewed Jew. [. . .] Is it any wonder that the Jew is always disputing? He *is* a dispute, incarnate! (Roth 1993: 334)

> Wherever a Jewish writer is active, a battle of opposites is always at work: for every shade of light, there is a counterpart of darkness, for every yes a no. (Stavans 1998: 11)

> If there has to be a hallmark [of American-Jewish literature], a defining quality that may be relied on, it is perhaps the Jewish-American writer's wish to insist on both arrogance and tolerance, and on self-belief and tragic doubt in the core of his or her work. (Wade 1999: 191)

There is a fundamental tension between self-assertion and self-denial in British- and American-Jewish literature. On the one hand, Jewish writers wish to escape the parochial concerns of their own community and resent the label of Jewish writer as an imposition that marginalizes and trivializes their work; on the other hand, they jealously guard their Jewishness, in the face of the scepticism of the Gentile literary establishment, as a literary asset, giving them access to a sensibility not available to other writers. Irving Howe sums up the paradox in his autobiography *A Margin of Hope* (1982):

> We wanted to shake off the fears and constraints of the world into which we had been born, but when up against the impenetrable walls of gentile politeness we would aggressively proclaim our 'difference,' as if to raise Jewishness to a higher cosmopolitan power. (Howe 1983a: 137)

Rather like the teenager who fiercely denounces his/her parents'

views over the dinnertable at home, but staunchly defends their values in the company of his/her peers, the Jewish writer is caught between the desire to rebel against, and perpetuate, the tradition of which s/he is and is not a part. The dual loyalty of Jewish writers is not to their host country and to Israel, but to their Jewishness and their writing, which they often see as inimical to each other. After all, as George Steiner reminds us, 'Judaism is iconoclastic. It fears the image, it distrusts the metaphor [...it is] not altogether at ease with [...] the mustard-seed of "falsehood" or fiction, with the rivalry to God the creator inherent in the arts' (Steiner 1998: 11–12). For Jewish writers, then, their choice of career has often seemed, to themselves as well as their communities, both a betrayal of their religion and their culture and a product of them.

Writing of his (and his Jewish friends') childhood in Manchester in the 1950s, Howard Jacobson describes the sense of self-contradiction at the heart of the second-generation Jewish immigrant experience in Britain.

> We were free of the ghetto and we weren't. We were philosophers now and not pedlars, and we weren't. If we had any identity at all, that was it: we countermanded ourselves, we faced in opposite directions, we were our own antithesis. (Jacobson 1993a: 3)

One route out of the ghetto, of removing one's roots from the Old World and replanting them in native soil – 'the aesthetic version of assimilation', as Jacobson puts it (Jacobson 1993a: 84) – is to become a writer. Yet for Diaspora Jews, writing in a language which is and yet isn't their own, becoming a writer is as liable to highlight their Jewishness as it is to efface it. In fact, for a Jew to write in the language of his/her 'host' nation is both an act of assimilation and self-sublimation – sanctioning the discourse of the adopted land by entering into it (the Foucauldian view of writing as, inescapably, complicit with the prevailing power structures) – *and* of colonization and self-assertion – appropriating the language and, implicitly, enriching it. For any writer, the publishing of his or her work is an act of self-exposure, an event that makes the author vulnerable, but for Jews in particular, the decision to give public voice to yourself is one that has historically been fraught with political implications and internal conflict.

In an interview to mark the re-release of his collection of autobiographical fiction, *Journey Through a Small Planet* (1972), Emanuel Litvinoff, whose novel *The Man Next Door* (1968) I discuss in Chapter

2, tells a joke that illustrates the traditional Jewish anxiety not to aggravate the Gentile, the host who might at any moment try to expel or murder his alien guests, if they do not behave themselves.

> Two Jews are lined up in front of a firing squad, and one of them starts protesting about his rights. He demands a last cigarette, and also the blindfold to which he is also [sic] entitled. But his companion takes him by the sleeve and begs him, in a pacifying tone, not to make trouble. (Litvinoff 1993b: 23)

If the exaggerated fear of provoking the Gentile suggested by this joke seems far removed from the likely concerns of any serious writer, consider Arthur Miller's explanation, in 1947, of his decision to abandon the subject of Jewishness after the publication of *Focus* (1945) (one of the novels which I discuss in Chapter 2):

> I think I gave up the Jews as literary material because I was afraid that even an innocent allusion to individual wrong-doing of an individual Jew would be inflamed by the atmosphere, ignited by the hatred I was suddenly aware of, and my love, [sic] would be twisted into a weapon of persecution against Jews. (quoted in Chapman 1974: xxviii)

This historical fear of contributing unwittingly to anti-Semitism, combined with the fact that the overwhelming majority of post-war Jewish writers have been secular Jews, has led many Jewish writers to remain silent on questions of Jewish identity, and many others to write of it uneasily, tentatively, elusively, ambivalently. The American-Jewish novelist Herbert Gold's autobiography begins with the paradoxical assertion, 'By a wide and narrow road I found my way back to an allegiance [to Jewishness] I didn't possess' (Gold 1973: 7); and Howard Jacobson describes the rediscovery of his Jewishness in similar terms, as 'a slow, unfolding conviction of ancient certainties, of quiet in disquiet, of the self-possession available only to the dispossessed' (Jacobson 1993a: 1).[31]

That these writers represent their Jewishness oxymoronically is no mere linguistic conceit, but reflects their anomalous situation as modern Jewish writers. In anti-Semitic folklore, Jews are frequently represented in apparently contradictory guises. The secretive miser, hoarding his wealth, and the ostentatious arriviste, throwing his money around; the Communist subversive and the Capitalist

exploiter; the Christ-killing, child-sacrificing, woman-raping aggressor and the sickly, cowering, masochistic victim; the international conspirator and the ghetto-bound parochialist: all these are staple ingredients of anti-Semitic propaganda.[32] Such lurid stereotypes are of course the product of irrational prejudice and paranoia, and so their self-contradictory nature is hardly surprising, but Jews – particularly Jewish writers – themselves often represent Jewish identity as essentially dualistic, even dialectical.[33] Morbidly sensitive to (and likely to equate with anti-Semitism) any Gentile criticism of anything connected with things Jewish, but at the same time fiercely self-critical; proud and ashamed of their 'difference'; intellectually vain and self-deprecating; emotionally effusive and given to sceptical detachment: these are all 'Jewish' traits commonly found in the Jews of post-war Jewish fiction. Although these traits reflect a more sophisticated and sympathetic understanding of Jewishness than those identified by the anti-Semites, there is a sense in which they, too, are part of a process of mythologization which leads to the creation of Jewish archetypes, a manifestation of what Zygmunt Bauman has termed 'allo-semitism'.[34]

For some critics, this process of self-mythologization is the product of self-hatred. Sander Gilman, for example, reads the work of Saul Bellow and Philip Roth 'as a means of seeing the characters not as reflections of the authors' sense of self but as negative projections of that which they are perceived as being and from which they want to distance themselves' (Gilman 1990: 379), and Harold Fisch argues that

> the Diaspora Jew is committed, like his non-Jewish colleague, to a version of the dual image. It is a different version from that of the non-Jewish writer, of course: its negative component is less grotesque; its positive component is less unrealistic and remote from life. But it issues from a similar region of spiritual conflict [...] When the Jew seeks to escape from the awful challenge of Jewish history, he sees in the face of his People and in his own image, not majesty and greatness, but ugliness, pusillanimity, self-contempt and all the moral and physical ills that flesh is heir to. (Fisch 1971: 78–9)

However, the archetypes that I discuss in this book – the Gentile who mistakes himself for a Jew, the anti-pastoral Jew, the protagonists of Jewish Holocaust fiction and memoirs, the Jewish artist and Jewish Other – are more complex than Fisch's or Gilman's formulas would allow, and

are characterized by ambivalence rather than self-hatred. This is a crucial distinction: whereas it is undoubtedly the case that 'We all internalise the discourse of the master, the coloniser, the aggressor' (Appignanesi 2000: 35), the fiction that I discuss here is inflected not just by this dominant discourse, but by others that challenge and complicate it. Unlike self-hatred, then, ambivalence is not (at least in my use of it) a pejorative term; on the contrary, with post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction, as with all other literature, it is the unresolved tensions in the work – tensions that find expression in ambivalent representations of Jewishness – that make it rich and compelling.

In this respect, I agree with Eric Homberger, who argues that 'ambivalence is [...] a significant though often silenced current within Jewish culture [...] which has played a part in the emergence of Jewish writers in the United States' and that Sander Gilman's definition of self-hatred (which I discuss in Chapter 2) 'rests upon a comprehensive obliteration of nuance through the process of reification – of "the Jew," of "the Other," of antisemitism itself' (Homberger 1996: 165, 167). It is my intention to identify patterns of ambivalence in the representations of Jewishness by post-war Jewish fiction writers without ignoring the nuances that distinguish different works of fiction. In this respect, my use of archetypes resembles L.S. Dembo's, whose 'monological Jew'[35] is not a reification but 'a Proteus who at least once in a while can be caught in a revealing position' (Dembo 1998: 32). Whereas Ivan Kalmar argues that 'The root of the modern Jewish efflorescence is [...] a kind of neurosis [...] about being Jewish' which 'sometimes manifest[s] itself in exaggerated pride, and other times in masochistic self-hatred' (Kalmar 1993: 7), I want to suggest that much of post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction manages to negotiate between these extremes (which are actually two sides of the same coin). If, as Linda Nochlin suggests, the key question for the modern Jewish artist is whether s/he can 'establish a Jewish typology [...] without resorting to caricature or "negative" [...] imagery?' (Nochlin and Garb 1995: 11), then I believe that the answer is 'yes', and that its *modus operandi* is self-explanation.

Explaining themselves

> [T]he root of Jewish disquietude is the necessity imposed upon the Jew of subjecting himself to endless self-examination [...]. (Sartre 1995: 78)

> The need to explain himself to himself, to put his own house in order, was a basic drive behind many a Jewish writer. (Kazin 1974: 591)
>
> I agreed in principle with Whitman about the evils of solitary self-absorption. Nevertheless I am bound to point out that the market man, the furniture remover, the steamfitter, the tool-and-die maker, had easier lives. They were spared the labor of explaining themselves. (Bellow 1994: 126)

For many post-war British and American Jews, the need to explain themselves has been a very literal one. In her family biography, *Remind Me Who I Am, Again* (1998), Linda Grant writes:

> My family had by necessity reconstructed itself and its past for the life it would live in a new land. Cut off from [...] its own line of continuity with its memory, it made itself up. All the lies and evasions and tall stories are what you must have when you are bent on self-invention. (Grant 1998a: 156)

As the descendants of immigrants whose roots lie in the remote corners of Eastern Europe, and who deliberately reinvented their family history to facilitate the process of settling in their adoptive lands (whether in small details, like the shedding of a year or two, or the changing of a Jewish name like Cohen to an Anglo-Saxon one like Conway, or, more radically, by erasing all trace of their Jewishness), many post-war Jews only began belatedly to recognize, or become concerned about, the extent of their ignorance about themselves. Among a younger generation of British-Jewish writers (whose work I discuss in Chapter 5), the catalyst for this concern is often the actual, or impending, death of a parent, and the attempt to reconstruct the past as a way of explaining the present involves both a physical journey (usually to Poland, the country with the greatest pre-war Jewish population) and a metaphysical one (involving a confrontation with the vagaries of history and the ambiguities of Jewishness). Typically, the author's quest is inconclusive, raising more questions than answers, and it is the process of self-explanation itself, rather than its results, which becomes both the subject and the medium of the book.

However, the sheer number[36] of post-war autobiographies and/or family biographies (often the boundary between the two is blurred) by British- and American-Jewish writers which have, as explicit or implicit agendas, the desire to explain the meaning of their

Jewishness, cannot be accounted for solely in terms of the immigrant experience. Sartre identifies 'an almost continuously reflective attitude' as a common feature of Jewish intellectuals who wish to 'escape' from their Jewishness (I discuss Sartre's theories at greater length in Chapter 2), but this modern reflectiveness seems, on the contrary, to be the result of an impulse to return to, or recover, a sense of Jewishness. Moreover, this impulse is not restricted to non-fiction, but in fact is a keynote in much of post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction.

The protagonists of many post-war Jewish novels and short stories are characterized, above all, by their insatiable desire to acknowledge, advertise and *explain* their Jewishness.[37] When the father of the hero of Nathanael West's early novel, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell* (1931), exclaims 'I am a Jew! and whenever anything Jewish is mentioned, I find it necessary to say that I am a Jew. I'm a Jew! A Jew!' (quoted in Fiedler 1977: 229), he anticipates the exacerbated self-consciousness, comic and yet over-wrought, of many Jewish fathers (and sons) in post-war Jewish fiction.[38] Ironically, it was a non-Jew, James Joyce, who anticipated most closely the convoluted self-reflexiveness of these Jewish characters, in the following passage from *Ulysses* (1922):

> What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom's thoughts about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom's thoughts about Stephen?
>
> He thought that he thought that he was a jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not. (quoted in Reizbaum 1999: 126)

Although Bloom is only forced to explain his Jewishness in the episode with the Citizen, he is always conscious that he may be judged on the basis of his Jewishness, as this passage illustrates. The Tunisian-Jewish writer, Albert Memmi, writes that 'To be a Jew is first and foremost to find oneself called to account, to feel continuously accused, explicitly or implicitly, clearly or obscurely' (quoted in Howe 1983a: 257). The British-Jewish novelist Dan Jacobson traces this idea back to the covenant between the Jews and Yahveh (the Hebrew term for God), under the terms of which there existed 'the sense of being forever *on trial*, which is one of the consequences of the apparent arbitrariness of the claim to have been specifically chosen [and which], is a constant in Israelite and Jewish history' (Jacobson 1982: 48). Supposnik, the rare-book dealer (and possible Mossad operative) in

Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* (1993), finds its origin in Shakespeare: 'In the modern world, the Jew has been perpetually on trial; still today the Jew is on trial, in the person of the Israeli – and this modern trial of the Jew, this trial which never ends, begins with the trial of Shylock' (Roth 1993: 274). Ivan Kalmar sees it as the product of centuries of anti-Semitism: 'It is difficult to believe that you can be hated so, yet be totally innocent. You feel the weight of the guilt, though you are not aware of having committed any crime' (Kalmar 1993: 108). The common interpretation of Kafka's *The Trial* (1925) as an archetypally Jewish work, despite the absence of any Jewish references, also rests to a large degree on the notion that Jews have often felt themselves perpetually on trial; their freedom, or indeed their very existence, probationary.

There are conflicting strategies that have been (and continue to be) advocated as the most efficacious means of prolonging this existence. These strategies revolve around one central question – to assimilate or not to assimilate? Or, as Howard Jacobson puts it, surveying the differing forms of Jewishness manifested in New York:

> [T]o be seen or not to be seen. To make oneself distinguished by becoming invisible versus securing one's safety and bondedness by becoming as conspicuous as possible. Both positions are paradoxical, both were tried out in pre-war Germany and, as adherents of both will tell you, both failed. (Jacobson 1993a: 126–7)

Becoming an artist is likely to be frowned upon by both camps. If the artist's Jewishness is merely incidental to his work, he is an assimilationist, denying his heritage; if his Jewishness is the subject of his art, he is taken to be representing the community at large and, consequently – inevitably – to be *mis*representing that community. The Jewish writer is therefore doubly on trial: as a writer before his fellow Jews (for 'putting the authority of Judaism on trial', as Dan Vogel puts it [quoted in Knopp 1975: 2]), and as a Jew before the outside world (Isaac Rosenfeld wrote that 'a Jewish writer unconsciously feels that he may at any time be called to account not for his art, not even for his life, but for his Jewishness' [Rosenfeld 1962: 67]).

More often than not, post-war Jewish writers have responded preemptively by calling themselves to account for their Jewishness, by explaining themselves. In his essay on 'The Jewish Writer in America', the American-Jewish poet Karl Shapiro writes of the time when, preparing a collection of critical pieces for publication, he made

> the awful discovery that I must define my Jewishness. What has being a Jew got to do with literary criticism? Quite a bit, evidently. The mere act of defending oneself against the shallow Jew-baiting of Pound or the profound racism of Eliot constitutes a 'position'. And insofar as I have a position, it is bound to be something of a 'Jewish position'. (Shapiro 1967: 279)

The slippage here between defining and defending himself highlights the dual emphasis which the phrase 'explaining themselves' has in this study, which is to say that throughout I use the term self-explanation to mean both self-definition and self-justification, while being aware that one tends to shade into the other. I do not want to suggest that all the portraits of Jews in post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction are veiled self-portraits, but rather that the insistence with which many of these writers explore ideas of Jewishness in their work itself constitutes their own Jewish identity. Whether you believe, as Henry Thoreau did, that 'In most books, the *I*, or first person, is omitted [...but] it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking' (Thoreau 1957: 5–6), or whether you share Roland Barthes' dismay that 'The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* "confiding" in us' (Barthes 1988: 168), the fact that so many (mostly secular) post-war Jewish writers worry away at Jewishness like a raw scab in their fiction seems to me a phenomenon worth investigating, and the rest of this book represents my attempt to provide some explanations for this phenomenon (which are also, of course, explanations of myself).

2
The Gentile Who Mistook Himself for a Jew

> Every man is a Jew though he may not know it. (Bernard Malamud in Lasher 1991: 30)
>
> The Jews are like everyone else, only more so. (attrib. Heine quoted in Kalmar 1993: 9)
>
> He [the anti-Semite] is a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews [...] but of himself, of his own consciousness [...]. (Sartre 1995: 53)

In his controversial study of Jewish identity, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946), Jean-Paul Sartre notoriously argues that the relationship between anti-Semites and Jews is not so much antithetical as symbiotic: 'the anti-Semite is in the unhappy position of having a vital need for the very enemy he wishes to destroy', while 'The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew [...] it is the anti-Semite who *makes* the Jew' (Sartre 1995: 28, 69). He goes on to draw a distinction between the 'authentic Jew', 'who asserts his claim in the face of the disdain shown toward him', and the 'inauthentic Jew', 'whom other men take for [a] Jew [...] and who [...] runs[s] away from this insupportable situation' (91, 93).[1] Furthermore, his attempts at flight are doomed to failure because 'he cannot choose not to be a Jew. Or, rather, if he does so choose, if he [...] denies with violence and desperation the Jewish character in himself, it is precisely in this that he is a Jew' (89). This 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' conundrum leads, in turn, to compulsive second-guessing, and to self-alienation:

> [T]he Jew is not content to act or think; he sees himself act, he sees himself think [...] The Jew, because he knows he is under observation, takes the initiative and attempts to look at himself through

> the eyes of others [...] while he contemplates himself with the 'detachment' of another, he feels himself in effect *detached* from himself; he becomes another person, a pure witness. (96–7)

Sartre's conception of Jewish identity as essentially reactive, the product not of an autonomous history, tradition, or religion, but of a dialectic with the hostile perception of the Gentile other, is disempowering, deterministic and arguably (in spite of the obvious philo-Semitic inclinations of the book) anti-Semitic.[2] However, it continues to define the theoretical terms of the debate over Jewish identity. Sander Gilman's seminal study *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (1986), for example, though it only mentions *Anti-Semite and Jew* briefly, is predicated on the Sartrean premise that Jews cannot escape the identity imposed upon them by the (anti-Semitic) Other because 'As Jews react to the world by altering their sense of identity [...] so they become what the group labeling them as Other had determined them to be' (Gilman 1990: 12). Even Alain Finkielkraut, who, in *The Imaginary Jew* (1980), argues that 'what made me Jewish was not the gaze of the Other, but the competitive desire to capture his attention for myself when it was being sought by everyone else' (Finkielkraut 1994: 171–2) implicitly confirms the very thesis that he seeks to invert. Although Finkielkraut attributes to himself as a Jew the agency that Sartre denies, he too seeks reification of his (Jewish) self in the 'attention' of the (non-Jewish) Other, so that his Jewish identity is still dependent on the way in which non-Jews perceive him (or whether they perceive him at all). Whatever their limitations, Sartre's observations provide a very useful model for considering the ways in which post-war Jewish novelists represent Jews, anti-Semites, and the relations between them. In particular, I want to suggest that in a number of post-war British- and American-Jewish novels – Arthur Miller's *Focus* (1945), Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* (1957), Frederic Raphael's *Lindmann* (1963), Emily Prager's *Eve's Tattoo* (1992) and Jonathan Wilson's *The Hiding Room* (1995) – the process of self-detachment that Sartre describes is embodied in the form of Gentiles who mistake themselves for Jews. However, whereas Sartre's definition of Jewishness (whether of the 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' kind) takes as a *donné*... the presence of an internalized racism, or self-hatred, in the Jew, these novels represent Jewishness (as it manifests itself in converted Gentile and Jewish-born Jew) in characteristically ambivalent terms.

That some Jews have often wished themselves Gentiles is incontestable:

whether the result of a desire for cultural assimilation, for socioeconomic advantage, or as a safeguard against religious persecution, Jews have, for centuries, changed names, neighbourhoods, professions and religions in order to pass themselves off as Gentiles. Even when remaining recognizably Jewish, they have often sought to minimize or elide differences between themselves and their host communities. It is hardly surprising that many protagonists in post-war Jewish fiction are, to use Ivan Kalmar's term, distinctly 'eji' about their Jewishness, if not actually at pains to disguise or deny it.[3] What is perhaps rather odd is the number of Jewish post-war novels featuring Gentiles who, in various ways and to various extents, become Jewish.[4] Hollywood studios (many of them historically owned by Jews) have frequently employed non-Jews to portray Jews on film in order to facilitate sympathy between these characters and the (predominantly Gentile) audience, and in Laura Z. Hobson's novel *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) – which was made into a highly successful Hollywood film with Gregory Peck in the lead role – a non-Jewish investigative journalist pretends to be Jewish in order to discover for himself, and reveal to his readers, the extent to which anti-Semitism is endemic in genteel American society. In the novels that I want to look at, however, the process of Gentile identification with Jewishness goes well beyond this sort of temporary expedient, so that, taken together, they form a subgenre of post-war Jewish fiction.[5]

Perhaps the most famous example in fiction of a Gentile who mistakes himself for a Jew is Frank Alpine in Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*. Malamud, like most of his contemporaries, disliked the term American-Jewish writer, finding it 'schematic and reductive' and insisting 'I'm an American, I'm a Jew, and I write for all men' (Lasher 1991: 39, 63). Typically, 'American' takes precedence over 'Jew' when Malamud defines his identity. In interviews, he consistently argues that the Jewishness of his writing, far from indicating a parochial ethnicity, actually reflects a desire to transcend the particular and peculiar and deal with the general and universal: 'I try to see the Jew as universal man [. . .] The Jewish drama is prototypic, a symbol of the fight for existence in the highest possible human terms' (30). This universalist, humanist view of Jewishness is articulated in *The Assistant* by Morris Bober, the Jewish grocer whose assistant the Gentile Frank Alpine becomes.

Having worked at Bober's side for some time (partly to atone for his role in a robbery in which his accomplice had beaten Bober, and partly because of a growing attachment to the grocer's daughter, Helen), his

casual, unreflective anti-Semitism gradually modulating into a more thoughtful curiosity,[6] Alpine finally raises the issue of Jewish identity with Bober: 'What I like [*sic*] to know is what is a Jew anyway?' (Malamud 1959: 114). This theme unsettles the grocer somewhat, and he struggles to find answers to Frank's questions, frequently having recourse to the rather abstract notion of a respect for 'the [Jewish] Law' (which seems not to involve the observance of Jewish holidays or dietary restrictions). More perplexing than these apparent contradictions for Alpine, however, is the masochism that he detects in Bober and associates with Jews in general.

> '[W]hy is it that Jews suffer so damn much, Morris? It seems to me that they like to suffer, don't they?'
> 'Do you like to suffer? They suffer because they are Jews.'
> 'That's what I mean, they suffer more than they have to.'
> 'If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more, but not because they want. But I think if a Jew don't suffer for the Law, he will suffer for nothing.'
> 'What do you suffer for, Morris?'
> 'I suffer for you' [. . .]
> 'What do you mean?'
> 'I mean you suffer for me.' (113)

Bober's replies are characteristically enigmatic, containing implicit references both to Jewish martyrdom (''if a Jew don't suffer for the Law, he will suffer for nothing'') and to Christian (the claim that ''I suffer for you'' seems to cast Bober in the role of Christ, taking on the sins of Alpine), but the subsequent inversion of pronouns hints at a symbiotic relationship between the two men that is spectacularly confirmed by the conclusion to the novel, in which Alpine seems almost to metamorphose into Bober.

That Alpine's relationship to Bober is not so much assistant (*pace* the novel's title) as substitute, or surrogate, is signalled from the outset. In one of the first conversations they have, Bober reflects sadly to himself that 'I am sixty and he talks like me' (37) and he is soon warning Alpine, with proleptic irony, 'A young man without a family is free. Don't do what I did' (78), but when Bober collapses with pneumonia, Alpine symbolically removes the grocer's apron and puts it (like an albatross) round his neck.

> The Jew lay white and motionless on the couch. Frank gently

> removed his apron. Draping the loop over his own head, he tied the tapes around him.
>
> 'I need the experience,' he muttered. (53)

The connotations of 'experience' here – encompassing both Alpine's practical need for knowledge of retailing and his moral desire to assume Bober's familial responsibilities, to prove himself worthy of bearing Bober's emotional, spiritual and financial burdens – are extended when Bober later suffers a relapse and dies suddenly.

At the funeral, the Rabbi's eulogy restates Bober's definition of Jewishness in pluralist terms: '"There are many ways to be a Jew [. . .] Morris Bober was to me a true Jew because he lived in the Jewish experience, which he remembered, and with the Jewish heart"' (207–8). Just as Bober's own explanation of Jewishness raised more questions than it answered, so here what the Rabbi means by 'the Jewish experience' and 'the Jewish heart' is not entirely clear. For Alpine, however, the funeral is a defining moment. During the ceremony, he falls into the grocer's open grave, thereby symbolically asserting his right to Bober's patrimony, and when the grieving mother and daughter return home, it is no surprise either to them or to the reader that the old grocer's place has been taken by him: 'As they toiled up the stairs they heard the dull cling of the register in the store and knew the grocer was the one who had danced on the grocer's coffin' (210).

The impression of patriarchal succession is reinforced here by the fact that both men are referred to not by name, but, generically, by profession. When Alpine emerges from Bober's grave, Bober is resurrected in him; he has become the son and heir that Bober yearned for, ever since the death of his real son, Ephraim. Of course, the phrase 'danced on the grocer's coffin' is more suggestive of triumph over a rival than of filial duty, or redemptive suffering on his behalf. Certainly there is an implicit element of primal conflict in the relationship between the men: though they have an instinctive sympathy for each other, there is also mutual distrust (Bober tries to get rid of Alpine on more than one occasion, in the first place to pacify his wife, who suspects – correctly – that he has designs on their daughter, Helen, and later when he finds out that he is stealing from him). Yet, finally, it is difficult to see Alpine's conversion to Judaism (which is related, abruptly, in the final paragraph of the novel) as anything other than a – paradoxically quasi-Christian attempt – to do penance for his past wrongs by adopting not just Bober's family, but also his ethical values, signified by his Jewishness:

> One day in April Frank went to the hospital and had himself circumcised. For a couple of days he dragged himself around with a pain between his legs. The pain enraged and inspired him. After Passover he became a Jew. (222)

These wrongs now include the rape of Helen, whose bitter reproach ('Afterward, she cried, 'Dog – uncircumcised dog!'' [7] [154]), coupled with his disgust at his sense of his own (unrestrained, Gentile) sexuality, arguably contributes as much as any spiritual revelation to Alpine's metamorphosis (so that the circumcision is a self-inflicted punishment, a self-emasculation, as well as a declaration of religious commitment). Although Alpine has not given up his romantic interest in Helen altogether ('He wanted to ask her if he still had any chance with her but decided to let that wait till a later time' [221]), by the end of the novel his attitude towards her seems more paternalistic than amorous. Deferring any renewal of his suit might be a pragmatic move on Alpine's part – he might have calculated that his newly circumcised (and circumscribed) masculinity will, in the long run, make him more acceptable to Helen – but it seems to me to signal a real change of priorities. His most cherished goal now is, apparently, no longer to seduce or even to marry Helen, but to earn the money to send her to college (something that Bober had tried, and failed, to do). If, as Malamud has suggested, 'Jewish history [... is] a metaphor for the fate of all men' (Lasher 1991: 50), then Alpine's conversion would seem to represent the consummation of his moral journey from disaffected, self-pitying, self-loathing delinquency to industrious, altruistic, responsible respectability. In embracing Judaism, Alpine is realizing (both in the sense of recognizing, and fulfilling) his own humanity: the fact that Bober is frequently referred to as 'the Jew' reinforces the impression that this is a novel that operates more on a metaphorical than a literal level of signification.

In these humanist terms, Alpine's transformation from anti-Semite to Jew is a rite of passage: Alpine rejects his immature hostility and prejudice towards others, learning to accept his essential kinship with them, their common humanity. For Sartre, however, the attraction of humanism for Jewish intellectuals was precisely that it enabled them to deny their difference (that is, their Jewishness). Alpine's acceptance of his responsibilities may well seem characteristic of the authentic Jew; then again, if we see the conversion as an internalization of his anti-Semitism (that is, by becoming a Jew, Alpine justifies his own self-hatred, because in the eyes of the anti-Semite the Jew, by virtue of his

Jewishness, is a legitimate object of hatred) then he comes to resemble the inauthentic Jew whose attempts to deny his own Jewishness only confirm it, and his conversion comes to seem less like a celebration of new-found humanity and more like an act of grim resignation, or even masochism. After all, Alpine's identification of Jewishness with masochism persists throughout the novel: shortly before his conversion he reflects that 'Suffering [...] is like a piece of goods. I bet the Jews could make a suit of clothes out of it' (204). Unexpected though it is in one respect, in another Alpine's conversion seems to be the logical outcome of his ambivalent fascination with Jewishness. When Robert Alter dismisses Alpine's conversion as 'a merely symbolic contrivance' (Alter 1969: 42) he is missing the point: it is entirely appropriate that Alpine's conversion should be symbolic, that his motives for it should be obscure, and that the status of his Jewishness should be uncertain, since his model is Bober, whose own Jewishness is no less ambiguous.

Alpine's journey from anti-Semite to Jew is one that had already been undertaken by Laurence Newman, the protagonist of Arthur Miller's novel, *Focus*, some twelve years earlier. However, if Malamud offers little explanation of the psychological processes that this journey might entail, in Miller's novel each stage of Newman's progress is carefully analyzed. Whereas Malamud's is always one of the first names in any list of post-war American-Jewish fiction writers, Miller's rarely appears at all. In part this is because he is much better known as a playwright (apart from *Focus*, he has only published three other books of fiction in his long career), in part because his Jewishness has rarely been reflected explicitly in his work (*Incident at Vichy* [1964] and *Broken Glass* [1994] being obvious exceptions).[8]

Like Malamud, Miller is, ideologically, a humanist and a moralist. In his autobiography, he describes how the popularity of Charles E. Coughlin's Nazi propaganda wartime broadcasts in America moved him to pledge himself to use his writing to combat notions of ethnic difference:

> I had somehow arrived at the psychological role of mediator between the Jews and America, and among Americans themselves as well. No doubt as a defense against the immensity of the domestic and European fascistic threat, which in my depths I interpreted as the threat of my own extinction, I had the wish, if not yet the conviction, that art could express the universality of human beings, their common emotions and ideas. (Miller 1988: 83)

The vehicle the young Miller (not yet established as a playwright) chose for his universalist message was *Focus*.

The novel opens with a symbolic episode in which Newman, whose name is carefully chosen for its racial ambiguity (in that it might or might not be a Jewish name) and for its emblematically American resonance (in that it alludes to the American myth of itself as a new Eden, in which a new man is born),[9] is woken in the night by the sounds of a fracas in the street and a voice shouting '"Police!"' (Miller 1949: 2). Rather than calling 911, however, he ignores the woman's cries for help, reasoning that 'she could take care of herself because she was used to this sort of treatment. Puerto Ricans were, he knew' (2–3).

Newman's prejudice, it soon becomes clear, is not confined to Puerto Ricans. As part of his job – recruiting secretarial staff for a large corporation – he routinely sifts out any Jewish applicants at the behest of the management. However, Newman is literally as well as metaphorically (which is to say, morally) myopic and when he lets one slip through the net, he is summarily reprimanded for his oversight and ordered to get a pair of glasses.[10] Ironically, it turns out that his reluctance to do so stems from the conviction that wearing glasses makes him look Jewish. When he is forced by these events at work to buy a pair, he comes home, tries them on, and his worst fears are confirmed:

> In the mirror in his bathroom, the bathroom he had used for nearly seven years, he was looking at what might very properly be called the face of a Jew. A Jew, in effect, had gotten into his bathroom. (24)

Newman's initial response to this sense of self-alienation (it is his own reflection that he sees, but his face now seems to be the face of another, an intruder, an impostor) is to reaffirm his Gentile identity by resuming his anti-Semitic practices at work with renewed zeal. Whilst conducting interviews to replace the Jewish girl, Newman encounters a candidate, Gertrude Hart, whom he decides is Jewish; he tries to dismiss her, but she becomes increasingly indignant, until the tables are turned and he becomes convinced that she believes him to be Jewish. Thoroughly discomfited, both by the implied accusation in her behaviour, and by a strong sexual attraction for her, which he struggles to master, Newman finds that he cannot defend himself:

> [H]e could not say he was not Jewish without colouring the word with his repugnance for it, and thus for her. And in his inability to

> speak, in his embarrassment she seemed to see conclusive proof, and strangely – quite insanely – he conceded that it was almost proof. For to him Jew had always meant impostor [. . .]
>
> He was sitting there in the guilt of the fact that the evil nature of the Jews and their numberless deceits, especially their sensuous lust for women [. . .] all were reflections of his own desires with which he had invested them. For this moment he knew it and perhaps never again, for in this moment her eyes had made a Jew of him [. . .] (34)

When he looked at his own reflection in the bathroom mirror, Newman tried to displace his feelings of self-hatred, seeing the Jew looking back at him as an interloper who had, somehow, inexplicably, 'gotten into his bathroom', but when he sees his own (suspicions of her) Jewishness mirrored in Gertrude Hart's eyes, he recognizes himself as the impostor – and therefore, by association, as Jewish. Moreover, he is forced, momentarily, to recognize that the 'evil nature' of the Jews, as he has hitherto understood it, is no more than a projection of these feelings of self-hatred.

In this novel, published a year before Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Miller anticipates Sartre's belief that Jewish identity is in the eye of the (anti-Semitic) beholder: Hart's hostile scrutiny makes a Jew out of Newman. In this instance, Newman's own anti-Semitism is reflected back at him, so that his hatred of the other becomes hatred of himself. Whereas Sander Gilman argues that 'the first key to the structure of self-hatred [. . .] is how Jews see the dominant society seeing them and how they project their anxiety about this manner of being seen onto other Jews as a means of externalizing their own status anxiety' (Gilman 1990: 11), here Newman's fear of being seen as a Jew is projected onto Hart, whose own fear of being seen as a Jew is projected onto Newman, so that their mutual (self-)hatred binds them together in a cycle of self-perpetuating suspicion.

When Newman is sacked from his job, refused an alternative post in another company, and berated by a fellow-passenger on the subway ('"You people! When are you going to learn your manners?"' [72]), all clearly as a result of the fact that he now 'looks Jewish', his racist conviction that Jews can be identified by their appearance is both confirmed and undermined: confirmed in that others now see in his physiognomy the same unmistakable signs of Jewishness that he does; undermined in that if he, a Gentile, can be mistaken for a Jew, then these facial characteristics cannot, after all, be uniquely Jewish. Sartre

points out that popular visual stereotypes of Jewishness actually vary considerably from one country to another, and that 'even admitting that all Jews have certain physical traits in common [...] I can on a moment's notice find any of them in an '"Aryan"'(62). The point is, however, that it is precisely because Jews are *not* always easily distinguishable from WASPS in the way that, say, Afro-Caribbeans are, that anti-Semitic propaganda insists that they are, while paradoxically warning of their undetected infiltration of the white race. It is arguably a weakness of the novel that we are asked to believe that such a dramatic change in Newman's appearance could be brought about by a pair of glasses (formerly recognized as irreproachably Gentile, he is now universally mistaken for a Jew), but it is the premise on which the entire action of the novel is built, and, if Miller's didactic purpose is to be achieved, disbelief must be suspended (as it is in the *Superman* comic strip – devised, incidentally[11], by two Jews – in which no one notices Clark Kent's resemblance to the man of steel when he's out of costume and in a pair of spectacles).

Finding himself taken for a Jew, Newman is forced to consider how he might authenticate his credentials as a Gentile (a problem faced by many citizens of the Third Reich, confronted by long-forgotten or entirely unknown Jewish ancestors, or merely by the suspicions of hostile neighbours).

> There must be something he could do that would henceforth indicate to employers that he was what he was, a man of great fidelity and good manners. What could he do, what *new man*ner could he adopt? Had he changed his old manner? [...] He reviewed himself and decided that he was the same *outwardly* as he had always been. Then what in the world could he do to show *these people* that he was still Laurence Newman? [...] They were trying to make two people out of him! They were looking at him as though he were guilty of something [...] (62, my italics)

The implication here is that Newman has changed inwardly, and the formulation 'these people' hints at the nature of that change: whereas until now Newman has always felt himself to be part of the WASP hegemony, able to generalize complacently about the traits of Puerto Ricans or Jews from a comfortable position of mainstream conformity, he now finds himself suddenly marginalized. Now it is the attitudes of the very group he had thought himself a member of that seem inexplicable and irrational. Now the 'we' has become a 'they', the crime

that 'they' suspect him of, because of his appearance, is the very crime he used to convict others of, on the basis of their appearance: the crime of being Jewish. The answer to Newman's anguished question 'what new manner could he adopt?' is, of course, 'none', since it is not his manners (which are the same as they were when he had been securely Gentile) that are being appraised. It is not because s/he is suspected of bad manners or a lack of fidelity, that the Jew is despised by the anti-Semite, but because s/he is suspected of being a Jew, a charge which can never be refuted, since for an anti-Semite the suspicion that someone is Jewish is sufficient evidence that s/he is.

Ironically, Newman finally finds employment at a company that is partly Jewish-owned, where he encounters Gertrude Hart again. Meeting her in this new context (he is now the interviewee, she the interviewer), he quickly revises his opinion of her.

> Her loud way of talking no longer seemed offensive. He felt rather that it was forthright, and where it had then indicated crudeness now it bespoke a contempt for evasions. As a Jewess she had seemed dressed in cheap taste, too gaudily. But as a gentile he found her merely colourful in the same dress [...] As a Jewess she had seemed vitriolic and pushy [...] but now [...]
>
> He could not understand how he had ever mistaken her. There was nothing about her that was Jewish. Nothing. (83)

That the very same characteristics could seem both damningly Jewish and attractively Gentile to Newman is proof of the arbitrariness of such classifications, and yet Newman is not the first, nor the last, of Hart's acquaintances to mistake her for a Jew. That both Newman and Hart are Gentiles whom others mistake for Jews (and who mistake each other for Jews), may seem rather implausible but, again, it is a necessary expedient for Miller if he is successfully to dramatize the different responses that such a situation might provoke. The two begin a relationship, get married, and settle into a conventional suburban existence, but it soon becomes clear that they have been targeted by the Christian Front, an anti-Semitic organization active in the neighbourhood. Despite Newman's appeals to his next-door neighbour, Front activist and erstwhile friend, Fred, to intervene on his behalf, a campaign of intimidation begins to gather momentum, and Hart insists that the only way for Newman to identify himself unequivocally as a Gentile is to participate in the anti-Semitic activities of the Front himself. Torn between increasing distaste for their bigotry (they

organize a boycott of the store owned by the only local Jew, Finkelstein, to which Newman queasily adheres) and fear of being its victim, Newman reluctantly agrees to attend one of their public meetings. In the event, however, he is violently ejected from the hall, when a fascist sitting next to him denounces him as a Jew, because he fails to applaud the speakers and, again, because of his appearance ('"He's a Jew [. . .] Can't you see he's a Sammy?"' the man exclaims [161]). Incredulous at this latest ignominy, Newman reflects on the injustice of it all:

> They had to understand that he was Laurence Newman of a family named Newman which had come from Aldwych, England, in the year 1861, and that he had pictures at home showing his baptism and [. . .] he could explain how he had been employed for more than twenty years by one of the most anti-Semitic corporations in America [. . .] (163)

There is a sort of grim humour operating here at Newman's expense (note the absurdity of his misplaced pride at having been 'employed [. . .] by one of the most anti-Semitic corporations in America'), but also a pathos in his desperate, futile, incongruous fantasy of displaying family portraits of his baptism to the racist thugs at the Front rally.

On his way home, dishevelled and demoralized, Newman encounters Finkelstein, who attempts to engage him in conversation about the Front. Newman affects a lofty detachment, yet soon begins to realize that he is actually in a worse position than Finkelstein, because he is just as vulnerable to attack, yet he cannot accept the reality of this situation, as the Jew can, because he continues to be two people: the Gentile he was once acknowledged to be, and the Jew he is now taken to be. The strain of this dual identity – of attempting to reconcile his old self with his 'secret new personality' (185) – now haunts his every action, imbues his every gesture with that painful self-consciousness that Sartre describes as characteristic of Jewishness:

> He could no longer simply enter a restaurant and innocently sit down to a meal. [. . .] he found himself speaking quite softly, always wary of any loudness in his tone. Before reaching for something on the table, he first unconsciously made sure that he would not knock anything over. When he spoke he kept his hands under the table, although he had always needed gestures. [. . .] to destroy any impression of tightfistedness, he left larger tips than he used to [. . .]

> The things he had done all his life as a gentile, the most innocent habits of his person, had been turned into the tokens of an alien and evil personality, a personality that was slowly, he felt, implacably being foisted upon him. And wherever he went he was trying to underplay that personality, discarding it in every way he knew while at the same time denying that he possessed it. (185–6)

By this late stage in the novel, Newman resembles the self-hating Jew who wishes to assimilate but cannot because of his own and others' continued awareness of his Jewishness. The constant second-guessing, the overinterpretation of insignificant details, above all the internalization of prejudice (Newman now seems to believe that he might actually exhibit the stereotypical Jewish characteristics – miserliness, vulgarity, clumsiness – of anti-Semitic folklore), identify Newman as one of Sartre's inauthentic Jews. His efforts to slough off this Jewishness – to disown this 'evil personality' – are futile, because it is something that is being imposed on him externally, 'implacably [. . .] foisted upon him'.

Once again, Sartre's conception of Jewishness holds sway: what matters is not whether you perceive yourself to be Jewish, but whether others – specifically anti-Semites – perceive you to be Jewish. Moreover, the signifiers of Jewishness are so slippery that the innocent habits of a Gentile, once attributed to a Jew, become tokens of depravity (just as, conversely, the very things that had disgusted Newman about Gertrude Hart when he thought she was Jewish, become endearing when he realizes that she isn't). The complication with Newman is that he is now both anti-Semite and Jew, so that in him Sartre's dichotomy breaks down, and in place of symbiosis we get synthesis. Seeing himself – this Jewish *new man* – through the eyes of his old Gentile, anti-Semitic self Newman realizes that, just as he ignored the Puerto Rican woman's cries for help, so, when the Front come to get him, his Gentile neighbours will turn a blind eye: 'They would not come out because he would be a Jew in their eyes, and therefore guilty. Somehow, in some unsayable way, guilty' (158).

Just as the signifiers of Jewishness are represented as at once indeterminate and manifest, so the guilt of the Jew is inexplicable and yet incontrovertible, 'unsayable' and yet ungainsayable. In fact, it is precisely because the anti-Semite's conviction of the Jew's guilt is irrational that it cannot be disputed: arguments can be met by counter-arguments, but prejudice and superstition are immune to debate. Newman's recognition that Shylock's plea for compassion on

the grounds of a shared humanity will not prevail for him, anymore than it does for Shakespeare's Jew ('if he cried out [. . .] that he was hurt by blows as they would be still they would not come' [158]), combined with a growing sense of moral outrage at the activities of the Front, convince him to reject his wife's offer to intervene on their behalf (it turns out that Hart became involved with an anti-Semitic organization whilst living in California, though she is now as much an object of suspicion as Newman himself).

One night, returning home from an evening out, the two of them are attacked, Hart flees and Newman is only saved from a severe beating by the timely intervention of Finkelstein. In the final scene of the novel Newman reports the incident to the police, representing himself as a Jewish victim of anti-Semitic violence (or rather not correcting the policeman when he makes that assumption). As he does so, he 'felt as though he were setting down a weight which for some reason he had been carrying and carrying' (217). Having spent most of the novel defying and denying the Jewishness that he and others have located in him, Newman ultimately resigns himself to it, if he does not quite embrace it. Like Frank Alpine, however, the suspicion remains that Newman's belated identification of himself as a Jew is as much a consummation of his self-loathing as a rejection of it. Whereas Alpine is weighed down by his new identity ('he dragged himself around with a pain between his legs'), Newman is liberated by it, but for both men their conversions seem more like penitential acts of moral solidarity than affirmations of belief. Like *The Assistant*, then, *Focus* ends with a formerly anti-Semitic Gentile redefining himself as a Jew. In Emily Prager's novel, *Eve's Tattoo*, however, this process is replayed in reverse.

Prager is one of a growing number of prominent young American-Jewish women writers of fiction, but unlike many of her contemporaries she is not to be found in any anthologies or bibliographical sourcebooks of Jewish fiction,[12] and she tends to be reticent on the subject of her Jewishness (preferring to emphasize her Catholic/Baptist upbringing). Partly as a result of this, and also perhaps because of her notoriety as a *Penthouse* columnist and former soap actress, when *Eve's Tattoo* (the only one of her fictions to display an interest in Jewishness) was published, many British reviewers, apparently unaware of the fact that Prager's father was Jewish, bracketed the novel with others by non-Jewish writers (such as Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* [1991]), as an example of what one of them termed 'Holocaust chic' and another the 'designer death-camp novel'.[13] Since

then, Prager has consolidated her reputation as an audacious novelist who takes on controversial subjects (her most recent novel, *Roger Fishbite* [1999], is a reworking of *Lolita* from the nymphet's point of view), but she remains best known for *Eve's Tattoo*.

The novel begins with Eve Flick, a Gentile columnist living in New York, getting herself tattooed on her fortieth birthday with the number of a concentration camp victim, a woman whose photograph she discovers accidentally 'at the back of a file cabinet belonging to [her French Catholic boyfriend] Charles César' (Prager 1992: 10). Arriving at Big Dan's Tattoo Parlor, Eve encounters an extraordinary range of Nazi memorabilia, including, on one of the proprietor's arms, 'the full insignia of the elite Totenkopf, or Death's-head squadron of the SS [...] perfectly inked with its lightning bolts and skull [...] swastikas and iron crosses, ending on top of his hand with ACHTUNG, around which coiled a naked blonde with red lips and a rolled hairdo from the 1940s' (6–7).

In one sense, Eve's decision to preserve the memory of the woman in the photograph by having the tattoo done is clearly an implied rebuke to this glamourization of Nazism, and the austerity of the tattoo itself (the numbers 500123, 'squiggly, done in a hurry [...] That's just how I want them' [8]) acts as a sort of antidote to the ornate, eroticized imagery of the Nazi tattoo. Most importantly for Eve, however, the tattoo is indelible. Explaining her actions later that day to an incredulous and indignant Charles, Eve explains herself by pointing out that:

> 'in a very few years [...] the people who lived through the Third Reich will all be dead. And when the people who experienced an event are no longer walking the planet, it's as if that event never existed at all. There'll be books and museums and monuments, but things move so fast now, the only difference between fantasy and history is living people. I'm going to keep Eva alive. She'll go on living, here, with me.' (11)

Living in a trivializing and trivialized society preoccupied with ephemeral matters (a world whose values are revealed by the initial responses to Eve's tattoo),[14] Eve hopes that her tattoo will connect her with a time and place when more was at stake and will act as 'the emblem of a different perspective' (13). However, there is more involved here than a mid-life crisis. Eve's tattoo is to serve a didactic purpose: '"people will ask me about this tattoo and I'm going to tell them tales, based on facts from my reading, tales specially chosen for

them, so they can identify, so they can learn"' (12). This is no sudden whim: Eve has been studying the Nazi regime for some time now (to the distaste and incomprehension of Charles) and her research has led her not just to revise her view of this period of European history, but to question her own previous complacency:

> [I]n the forty-five years since the war, Americans had simplified the hideous phenomenon that was the Third Reich, tying it up into a neat package labeled: MAD HITLER – KILLED JEWS. Eve had done that herself. For years she read histories and witness accounts, and, though she found them profoundly disturbing, she always had an out. A little WASP voice in her brain would shield her. I would have been okay, it echoed. I'm not Jewish. I would have been safe. (30)

What Eve's reading reveals – and what her educational tales illustrate – is that you didn't have to be Jewish to fall victim to the Nazi reign of terrror, and moreover, that the very question of who was Jewish and who wasn't was often a vexed one. The protagonist of one of Eve's tales is Eva[15] Klein, a Jew who 'was blond and blue-eyed and snub-nosed, a paradigm of racial eugenics' (26) and married to a Gentile, while another relates the (imagined) history of Eva Hofler, who had been 'baptized and confirmed' as a child, 'grew up in a Lutheran orphanage', and became an ardent supporter of Hitler as an adult until renovations on the orphanage brought to light a set of papers indicating that her parents had been Jews: 'A Mr. and Mrs. Tannenbaum, killed in an automobile accident' (47).

Eva Hofler's story provides a counterpoint to that of Charles César, who, it turns out, was himself born Jewish but had later converted and been confirmed into the Catholic church. When Eve discovers this, she assumes that it explains his implacable hostility to her tattoo (he leaves her because of it): as a Jew himself he must regard her actions as presumptuous and offensive, a 'bizarre overidentification' (20), an affront to those, like himself, whose connection to concentration camp victims was familial rather than conceptual, real rather than imagined. As it turns out, however, Charles' family history is rather murkier than Eve had imagined: his parents had been collaborators, 'catchers' of fellow Jews for the Nazis, and Charles' resentment of Eve's interest in the Nazis has more to do with his own guilty self-hatred than with scepticism about her entitlement to, or motivation for, the tattoo.

The irony of Charles' inherited guilt is compounded by the fact that Eve's investigations into Nazi history are prompted, in part, by her

own feelings of hereditary complicity in the Nazi persecution of the Jews. When she discovers the photograph of the camp inmate, whom she resembles, Eve is moved to wonder '"I'm of German ancestry. I'm a Christian [. . .] do I have mass murder in my blood or what?"' (51). Indeed much of the novel is taken up with Eve's theories about the relationship between Christianity and Nazism, and in particular the role that Christian women played in the Nazi regime: '"Christian women in Nazi Germany [. . .] How could they be Christian and do what they did? [. . .] I am implicated by association"' (32). It is, after all, Eve's own personal history (as an Episcopalian and, racially, a German), as much as any intellectual curiosity or liberal guilt, that underpins the relationship she forms with the woman in the photograph, a relationship that gradually takes over her life: 'Her alliance with 500123, the woman she called Eva, was the strongest bond she had ever formed' (49). Although two of the women in Eve's tales (those already mentioned) turn out to be Jewish, the other three Evas are not, and indeed the real woman in the photograph, it emerges, was a devout Gentile follower of Hitler, imprisoned as a result of the activities of her insubordinate sons, and subsequently tattooed and executed at Auschwitz as the result of an administrative error.

Just as the revelation of Charles' history subverts Eve's (and the reader's) expectations, so with the historical Eva things turn out 'different [sic] than either of them [Eve and Charles] had imagined, 180 degrees different' (193). Yet in a sense, the fact that the real Eva was an anti-Semite rather than a Jew makes Eve's identification with her more authentic, rather than less so. Eve's radical act of remembrance seems at first to be a classic case of a Gentile mistaking herself for a Jew, and in fact she does try to pass herself off as a Jew on two occasions in the novel: once when a naive young musician asks her whether she had been in a concentration camp, and once when questioned by a member of the audience for one of her stories.[16] However, as the novel proceeds her quintessential non-Jewishness (accompanied by anti-Semitism, as it always is in novels in which a Gentile mistakes him/herself for a Jew) reasserts itself in disturbing ways.

When she first discovers that Charles is Jewish, certain of his characteristics seem suddenly to be illuminated, retrospectively:

> And then there was that earthiness about him, a hotness that up until now she had ascribed to Catholicism. She had thought, perhaps, he had Italian or Irish blood, some genetic drop that made the difference. But no, she thought, he's Jewish. (13)

Just as the very habits that had always seemed unimpeachably genteel and Gentile, suddenly appear vulgar and Jewish in Miller's Laurence Newman once his latent Jewishness has been activated, as it were, so here traits of Charles that had seemed perfectly consistent with his Catholicism before Eve discovered his Jewishness, now seem explicable only by reference to this new identity.

That the revelation of Charles' Jewishness has altered irrevocably the way that Eve thinks about him is made clear in the final words of the second chapter: '"Jewish, Eva," she said to her look-alike in the photo. "My boyfriend is Jewish. Are you?"' (14). Later, Charles tells her '"You know how Christians are just Christians? [. . .] I wanted to be a Jew like that. I didn't want to be a Jew in quotes"' (17), yet it is exactly as a Jew in quotes – that is to say, with an omnipresent awareness of his Jewishness – that Eve does see him.

After a period of separation, Eve gatecrashes the premiere of a film that Charles has produced, and meets him again for the first time in the company of his new girlfriend: 'Jewish, Eve whispered to Eva, Jewish. She looks Jewish' (141). The repetition of the word 'Jewish' here echoes the earlier passage and has a similar effect (that of placing a peculiar emphasis on it, or putting it 'in quotes', as Charles would have it), and Eva's heightened awareness of Jewish 'looks' (reminiscent of Newman's) smacks of anti-Semitism. More damningly, perhaps, it is on this occasion that Eve, trying to conjure up an image of Charles as a Catholic priest, as she was wont to do, finds herself unable to do so.

> What was wrong? What was it? She tried picturing him as a Vatican cardinal in his cassock and zucchetto but it wasn't working. Why? Why? And then she knew. The zucchetto no longer looked like a cardinal's skullcap, it looked like a yarmulke. And he no longer looked like Charlie, the priest. He looked Jewish. (141–2)

After some stilted conversation, Charles finally turns on Eve and asks her why she has come. Stung by this, and by sexual jealousy, Eve responds, vindictively, by exposing Charles as a Jew to the assembled company, before fainting. She is tended to by an old man, Jacob Schlaren, who turns out to be a camp survivor. He spots her tattoo before she can conceal it and when he says '"You're not a Jew"', Eve, ashamed of her imposture and of her behaviour to Charles, begins to reproach herself bitterly: '"No, I'm a Christian, a WASP, the enemy. I'm an anti-Semite"' (145). As we've seen already, the recognition of one's own anti-Semitism is a necessary stage in the process by which

the Gentile becomes a Jew, but in this case the old man ironically acts as a confessor, effectively granting her absolution by telling her that '"All Christians are anti-Semites"', and by explaining that he himself is an '"anti-Hamite [...] From Ham, the man who fathered the first tribe of Christians [...] I hate Christians"' (145).

Towards the end of the novel Charles is reconciled with Eve and to his Jewishness, and Eve, her tattoo having been conveniently erased by an accident in which she is run over by a van, is reconciled to her own imperfect self. Yet in its closing chapter the novel's ambiguities persist, indeed deepen. It turns out that the photograph of Eva was bought by a film-maker friend of Charles 'from a Neo-Nazi booth in a flea market in Berlin'; when Charles smiles at her, 'once more he was her Vatican cardinal, once more he was her prince of the church'; and the final image of the novel is of the two of them examining 'a Star of David armband from the Nazi era [...] The yellow of the star was faded now. A weak yellow, as weak as a dying sun' (194).

This is, in a number of ways, an unsettling ending to an unsettling novel. To begin with, the provenance of the photograph is disturbing, particularly as the events of the novel unravel against the background of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the prospective reunification of Germany with the attendant fears of a resurgence of German fascism. Moreover, two questions remain unresolved: does Eve's restored image of Charles as a Vatican cardinal represent her triumph over anti-Semitism, or a deliberate retreat into the pre-tattoo era of their relationship? And does the dying sun represent the waning of anti-Semitism (of which the armband – which Jews were forced to wear under the Nazi regime – may be a symbol), or the terminal decline of Jewish identity itself (if the Star symbolizes Jewish history and tradition)? Perhaps, like the improbable obliteration of Eve's supposedly permanent tattoo, the image of the fading star suggests a corresponding weakening of Eve's own interest in, and ability to identify with, Jews themselves, who have become simultaneously more and less alien to her during the course of the novel. Whereas at the start of the novel, Eve sacrifices her erotic relationship with Charles for her political relationship with Eva, by the end her willed, wilful attempt to participate vicariously in Jewish suffering (in the form of Eva, the Gentile she mistakes for a Jew) has given way to her unwitting, accidental connection to it (in the form of Charles, the Jew she mistakes for a Gentile). That Charles is an 'inauthentic', self-hating Jew whose determination to reject his Jewishness has been as fervent as Eve's desire to fabricate hers only complicates matters further.[17]

Perhaps the most disquieting aspect of the ending, however, is the question that is not posed at all, even implicitly: namely, how is Eve to survive without her tattoo and all that it has come to represent for her? After all, for much of the novel Eve allows her (re)construction(s) of Eva to take over her life, to the extent that her own identity becomes indistinguishable from (the various) Eva's. While she believes that Eva may be Jewish, Eve effectively adopts the role of the authentic Jew, asserting her claim to memorialize her suffering in the face of ignorance, bewilderment and scepticism, if not disdain, but once she discovers that she has mistaken Eva (herself) for a Jew, this claim (like the tattoo) vanishes without trace. Although she sets out simply to tell these women's stories, she ends up, as we have seen, having internal dialogues with them. In fact, it is no exaggeration to suggest that, for much of the novel, Eve appears to be suffering from a form of schizophrenia: 'Eve had begun to talk to Eva in her mind. Their relationship had progressed from remembrance to co-habitation, from the past to the present' (93). In this respect, Eve is much closer to the protagonist of Frederic Raphael's novel *Lindmann* than she is to either Frank Alpine or Laurence Newman.

Born in America of anglophile American parents, Frederic Raphael came to England when he was nearly eight years old and remained because his father 'took the view that it was better [...] to grow up an Englishman rather than an American Jew' (Raphael 1979: 82). One of a number of British-Jewish novelists to come to prominence at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s (sometimes dismissively referred to as the 'Golders Green novelists'), Raphael is now perhaps better known for his translations (of classical texts), his journalism (which has been collected in a number of volumes, the most recent being *The Necessity of Anti-Semitism* [1998]) and his screenplays (he won an Oscar for *The Darling* in 1969 and his most recent book, *Eyes Wide Open* [2000], is an account of his contribution to Stanley Kubrick's final film). Although he continues to publish fiction, he has been unable to sustain the critical and popular acclaim – helped enormously by a television adaptation starring Tom Conti – that greeted *The Glittering Prizes* (1979).

In his non-fiction Raphael has always been at pains to explain and explain away his Jewishness. As a schoolboy at one of England's most conservative public schools, he tells us, he 'feared the word Jew itself [...] as if it were the pointing finger of damnation', but, in spite of his efforts 'to juggle [...] with my accent', he continued to be 'singled out, "Jew", by small boys who envied my brains' (Raphael 1979: 83, 84).

Raphael's experience seems to have confirmed for him Sartre's view that it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew: 'I was a Jew, not by choice or by belief, but merely because I was called one' (86). Later on, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, he continued, in typical British-Jewish fashion, to keep his head down, making 'no more allusion to being a Jew than absolute honesty or absolute caution required' (88), and he has remained deeply ambivalent about his own Jewishness, acknowledging that he is 'a hybrid' who is 'not particularly fond of Jews' (84) and yet 'not English either' (Abse et al. 1980: 77). As a writer, he has always worn his Jewishness on his sleeve, while at the same time attempting to distance himself from it. Although he claims to 'have no sense of religious certainty or racial allegiance' (Raphael 1979: 82), he has consistently explored questions of Jewish identity in his work.

One of the first British-Jewish writers to write about the Holocaust (his third novel, *The Limits of Love* [1960], examines the effect on a suburban English-Jewish family of the arrival in their midst of Otto Kahane, a survivor of Dachau), he combatively rejects the attendant accusations of parochialism: 'I have been accused of going on about the Jews (as if it were somehow *selfish* to be haunted by such a scandal as the holocaust). Personally I consider myself to have been a miracle of reticence' (Raphael 1979: 3). He admits that he originally became a writer both because of the 'indelible distinction' of his Jewishness, and because of the prospect of erasing it: 'to be published was to be accepted [by the Gentile establishment]' (87). As a mature artist, Raphael seems to have become acutely aware of this cultural schizophrenia – 'Among the Gentiles I am disposed to play the gadfly, but among Jews I ape the professor and sigh when folk with guttural accents tell me once more of what was lost in the holocaust' (95) – and it forms the subject-matter of what is arguably his finest novel, *Lindmann*.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, whose careers have long since dwindled or petered out altogether, Raphael is still going strong, producing fiction, translations, travel writing, screenplays and journalism at a prolific rate. In spite of this continuous output, however, most of his early fiction (including *Lindmann*) has been out of print for many years and is now largely forgotten. Yet I would argue that in *Lindmann* he treats the theme of the Gentile assuming a Jewish identity in a way that is psychologically subtler and formally more adventurous than Malamud, Miller or Prager manage in their more celebrated novels. In fact it is because of its formal daring that it is able to explore the psychological implications of its material with such conviction. Whereas Frank Alpine and Eve Flick mark their transition

from Gentile to Jew literally (in a sense both Eve's tattoo and Frank's circumcision are acts of self-mutilation, Frank excising a piece of skin, representing the Christian part of himself, and Eve puncturing part of hers with a sign of Jewish suffering), and Laurence Newman finally allies himself with the Jews in a formal statement to the police, in Raphael's novel the transformation of James Shepherd, Gentile English diplomat, into Jacob Lindmann, Jewish Austrian intellectual, is achieved not through any grand gesture or symbolic act, but rather by stealth. Indeed, so unobtrusive – so convincing – is Shepherd's disguise that the reader is not even aware that it is one until well over halfway through the novel. For most of the novel Raphael writes in the third person, representing Lindmann as others see him (that is, as the only survivor of a ship of Jewish refugees that sinks off the coast of Turkey, having been refused entry to Palestine by the British authorities), only moving belatedly, gradually and partially, into the first person, to reveal Shepherd's real identity. Because of this, and because Shepherd is suffering from a mental illness – that is to say, he really does *mistake himself* for a Jew – the process of identification (Shepherd's, with Lindmann, and the reader's, of Shepherd as Lindmann) is confused and confusing.[18]

The central section of *Lindmann* is given over to a screenplay, written by Milstein, a friend and fellow-Jew of 'Lindmann's', dramatizing the conflict between the British authorities in Turkey (where the S.S. *Broda* is temporarily moored) and the crew of the ship of Jewish refugees (Lindmann among them) seeking asylum in Palestine. What neither Milstein nor the reader realizes is that these are the very events that precipitated Shepherd's mental breakdown and subsequent assumption of Lindmann's identity. When Milstein asks 'Lindmann' for his reaction to his work, he simply walks away in disgust, but later, when pressed by Kate, the girlfriend of Loomis (the aspiring director of the film), he reluctantly explains himself: 'It justified, where there is no justice, favoured where there was no favour' (244). Later, we are told that 'Lindmann tried [...] to dedicate himself to a non-narrative form of remembering. Narrative is outmoded. Milstein's lies are narrative lies: stories' (267). Later still, 'Lindmann' vows to 'Avoid narrative, avoid claiming what should make no difference' (312).

Unlike Eve, then, for 'Lindmann' telling stories about the suffering of the Jews is not a commemorative act, but rather a betrayal of the truth, a deception in the sense that the phrase has when children are told off for 'telling stories'. Narrative, in its desire to create order (privileging some viewpoints over others, offering to explain the

inexplicable, justify the unjustifiable) inevitably distorts, deceives, lies, so 'Lindmann' dedicates himself to a non-narrative form of remembering by adopting the identity of one of the dead secretly, thus ensuring that no self-explanations – no stories – will be necessary, rather than openly, with the explicit aim of self-explanation, as Eve does. 'Lindmann's' suspicion of narrative is shared by Raphael, who, in this novel, attempts to eschew straightforward storytelling in favour of more allusive, and elusive, modes of representation. Rather than recounting how Shepherd comes to be 'Lindmann' in a conventional linear narrative, Raphael reveals it obliquely, gradually, retrospectively, in fragmented form, the texture of the narrative reflecting the state of the protagonist's mind. Rather than delineating the transition from Gentile to Jew (as Malamud and Miller do), or beginning with the Gentile's decision to appropriate an *ersatz* Jewishness and then exploring the consequences of that decision (as Prager does), Raphael traces the disintegration of the Jewish identity already assumed by the Gentile before the start of the novel. Instead of a scene of symbolic conversion from Gentile to Jew, we get a scene in which the putative Jew exposes himself (literally) as a Gentile.

The evening after the reading of Milstein's script, 'Lindmann' attends a Jewish fund-raising event, and when a businessman asks him to make a contribution and 'pull something out' (320), instead of producing the expected financial donation he withdraws his uncircumcised penis. Although we are never told explicitly why 'Lindmann' chooses this moment to reveal himself as a Gentile, the implication is that Milstein's script (in which an official of the British consulate in Turkey wrestles with his conscience over whether to intervene on behalf of the Jewish refugees onboard the S.S. *Broda*) has revived the long-buried traumatic memories of his own role in the real-life episode on which the scenario is based. Certainly, this is consistent with the fact that two days later he apparently attempts to drown himself, the form of the attempted suicide serving as a reminder of the way the real Lindmann and his fellow passengers died (we discover, through snatches of remembered dialogue, that Lindmann, though he survives the initial disaster, subsequently 'died of exposure' [289]).[19] 'Lindmann' spends the hours leading up to this climactic event (which, nonetheless, takes place off-stage, as it were) sitting on the London Underground Circle Line (which functions as a metaphor for death and is also an allusion to Dante's circles of hell), reflecting, in 'a spiral of self-regarding' (264), on the mystery of his identity.

At this stage of the novel the truth about 'Lindmann' begins to seep

through ruptures in the fabric of the novel. What emerges from this fractured narrative is that Shepherd, having refused, in his capacity as a diplomat working for the British consulate in Turkey during the war, to allow the occupants of a ship full of Jewish refugees to disembark, is then haunted by guilt when the ship capsizes with no survivors. He suffers a nervous breakdown, and subsequently takes on the identity of one of the deceased, Lindmann: 'His name is given officially in the records as Jacob Lindmann, formerly an Austrian subject, now stateless' (289). The pun here on stateless (meaning both without nationality, and devoid of life), like the earlier pun on 'exposure', is typical of the intricacy of Raphael's prose, and when Shepherd suffers his second breakdown (having read Milstein's script) he too begins to gravitate towards a condition of lifelessness, of existential void. This is signified typographically, as lacunae begin to appear in the text where the name 'Lindmann' ought to be. Moreover, the boundary between the third-person narrative voice and 'Lindmann's' consciousness becomes increasingly blurred, so that at times he seems to be both the subject of the narrative and its agent: 'What is this story? To whom and to what is it relevant? Who is telling it? Lindmann? I, Lindmann? What makes Lindmann of it? What of it makes Lindmann?' (272). As 'Lindmann's' mind continues to disintegrate, its different constitutent parts begin to communicate with each other:

> Who are you who address me? You have no place. Leave me. There is no space for you. I am Lindmann, I am Lindmann. I will not be distanced from myself. Leave me. Lindmann, where did you get that name? (260)

There is an ironic echo here, in 'Lindmann's' rejection of Shepherd ('There is no space for you'), of the British authorities' refusal to allow the Jewish refugees to enter Palestine (and by extension of Shepherd's own refusal to accommodate Lindmann), and at this stage it is still the 'Lindmann' aspect of Shepherd's personality that holds sway. As this section of the novel develops, however, and Shepherd's memories become more intrusive, his old self begins to reassert its claims, until eventually it expels the interloper from his psyche.

> You are not Lindmann. You are not he. You are James Shepherd and you must come to me. Let Lindmann bury his Lindmanns. You have hidden too long in his belly, it is time to come forth. You are discovered. (313–14)

The allusion to the tale of Jonah and the whale (reinforced by the biblical cadences employed here by Raphael) is instructive: like Jonah, who flees from his duties as prophet and finds temporary refuge in the darkness of the whale's belly, Shepherd retreats from his personal responsibilities, and, as much as possible, from human contact ('Lindmann' is very much a loner) by hiding in the shadow of an assumed persona. Having initially taken on the identity of the dead Jew in order to memorialize him (and, through him, the other Jewish victims of the shipwreck, as the use of 'Lindmanns' in the plural – signifying 'Jews' – indicates), and to atone for his part in his death, Shepherd now takes the view that 'the most subtle and nauseous forms of plagiarism are those which occur in living, when we take others' misfortunes to ourselves and at once dramatize ourselves and diminish them' (268). This recognition of the futility, dishonesty, and inauthenticity of his actions is not accompanied by any desire to resume his previous existence, however, and the novel ends, bleakly, with Shepherd in a coma, suspended in a limbo between life and death, and between his two personalities. His only movements in this condition are the motions of a man swimming, and we are told that his chances of recovery rest on 'whether he can find a place to land', but, as Milstein observes, 'He's rejected – the idea of landing. There's nowhere he can' (334). These final words of the novel allude to the plight of the Jewish refugees, and carry the sense that Shepherd's enterprise was a doomed one. As he tells himself during one of his internalized schizophrenic dialogues:

> No, Shepherd, these things cannot be willed. Your father, in his will [. . .] made you British and British you will stay [. . .]
> You have no common blood with these people. You cannot join them. They have nothing in common with you. (317)

The discrepancy between the different meanings of 'will' here (desire, bequest, demand) emphasizes the fundamental incongruity between the identities of Shepherd and Lindmann. The humanist Utopian dream – that there are common values, common ideals, shared by Gentile and Jew – founders in this novel on the harsh historical reality of British rule in Palestine, and Shepherd ends up stranded between an Englishness he has rejected forever, and a Jewishness to which he is denied admittance ('Now are you alone [. . .] Now are you nothing, James or Jacob' [320]). Yet the dream remains a potent and alluring one, and it has been revived in a recent novel by another

British-Jewish writer, Jonathan Wilson.

Wilson has undergone Raphael's transatlantic journey in reverse: born and educated in England, he moved to America in his thirties and now lives and works there full-time. His first book, an assured collection of short stories entitled *Schoom* (1992), gave rise to expectations which some reviewers felt were not fulfilled by his first novel, *The Hiding Room*, though it was runner-up in the annual *Jewish Quarterly* awards for fiction. If a planned film version of the novel (to be scripted by Frederic Raphael) makes it to general release, it may well prompt a reappraisal of its merits, and attract a new readership for Wilson. Part of a generation of British-Jewish writers who grew up in the 1960s and were heavily influenced by the great American-Jewish novelists publishing in that decade, Wilson now finds himself teaching them in his capacity as Head of English Literature at Tufts University, while at the same time aspiring to join their august ranks through his fiction.

In response to a series of questions which I sent to him by e-mail, Wilson confessed that he would be 'deliriously happy if anyone once muttered my name in the same breath as these guys', yet at the same time pointed out that he feels 'much closer as a writer to the English novelist William Cooper than to, say, Cynthia Ozick' (Wilson 2000). Although he readily acknowledges that 'If I wasn't Jewish [. . .] I clearly wouldn't write the way that I do', he insists that 'when I'm writing my "Jewishness" is not a thing that I'm at all conscious of' (Wilson 2000). For Wilson, 'Jewishness is a floating metaphor and means different things in different books or sometimes different things in the same book', but in *The Hiding Room* it occupies a fixed position, representing a humanity that is always defined in opposition to Englishness.

The protagonist of this novel, Archie Rawlins, is, like James Shepherd, a British civil servant dispatched abroad (in Rawlins' case, to Cairo) during the war. Like Shepherd, one of his duties is routinely to listen to and deny pleas for asylum made by and on behalf of Jewish refugees wishing to enter Palestine. Like Shepherd, his complacent participation in this bureaucratic tyranny is disturbed when he becomes emotionally involved with one of these refugees, Esta Weiss. Like Raphael's novel, Wilson's has a third-person narrator and a first-person narrator. However, the formal differences between the novels are as striking as their thematic similarities. Whereas in *Lindmann* the distinction between the two narrative voices breaks down, in *The Hiding Room* they remain formally demarcated: narrative duties alternate with each section of the book, between an anonymous, omniscient voice which deals with the main – historical – narrative, and the son of this narrative's hero

and heroine, whose contemporary mission is to bury his mother in Israel and discover the identity of his father. Where Raphael gives us no conventional storyline to follow, Wilson hangs his exploration of the relationship between Gentile and Jew on the strong traditional generic hooks of romance, adventure and war. Whereas almost nothing actually *happens* in *Lindmann*, Milstein's melodramatic screenplay apart (instead of narrative incident we get psychological meditation), *The Hiding Room* has sex, violence, betrayal and suspense aplenty. Finally, whereas in *Lindmann* a Gentile successfully passes himself off as a Jew for most of the novel, only to find finally that he can no longer continue to deceive himself and others, in *The Hiding Room* a Gentile strives unsuccessfully for much of the novel to be accepted by, and as a Jew, but only succeeds posthumously, when, in the final act of the novel, his son has kaddish (the prayer for the Jewish dead) said for him by a Jewish minister.

When Esta first comes to see Rawlins, to beg him to help her trace her parents, he is told by his superior to '"Make her wait. She's only going to tell you the same cock-and-bull story as the other one.[20] Harfield threw him out on his ear, the little scrounger. He had Shylock; now you've got Jessica"' (Wilson 1995: 11). At first he acquiesces in this institutionalized anti-Semitism, but when he finally grants the girl an audience, Rawlins is compelled, by the grim integrity of her story, and by an intense physical attraction to her, to pursue her and her case. His subsequent entanglement with her leads him initially to defy orders and finally to double-cross the British authorities, risking disgrace, dismissal, imprisonment and even execution: all, apparently, as a result of this grand passion. Actually, however, Rawlins' motives for renouncing his duty, his history, his very identity, are more complex than this summary would suggest. In a sense, Esta is simply the catalyst for Rawlins' rebellion. He is, from the outset, an outsider, ill at ease with his colleagues.

> They didn't really like him, Harfield and Phillips. He knew that. It wasn't that he had gone to the wrong school or otherwise defiled their beautifully standardized origins. It was worse; it was because he had gone to the right school but emerged with the wrong ideas. He wasn't a good 'social type,' he couldn't banter, and if you didn't banter, it meant you were on unhealthy terms with reality. (20)

Even before he has met Esta, then, it is clear that Rawlins has not been moulded by the establishment in the usual way. Moreover, this

is not simply due to a failure of bonhomie; rather, there is a profound sense of alienation from his own culture.

While on leave in Tel Aviv, Rawlins meets up with his secretary, Harriet, and conversation turns naturally to home.

> 'Do you miss England?'
> 'We're supposed to, aren't we.'
> 'Well, do you?' [. . .]
> 'I thought I did. But what I missed was only an idea about my future: a feeling of certainty. I want something else now, but I'm not going to be able to get it.'
> 'What else?'
> 'I can't put it into words. It's a feeling. I want to go past the limits, to break them. You can't do that in England.' (75)

Ironically, the terms in which Rawlins attempts to articulate his inchoate desires – to explain himself – suggest that he is more English than he realizes. He interprets his dissatisfaction with himself as a desire to transgress (and therefore, by implication, to sin). Reflecting further on the origin of this desire, he begins to suspect that it had always been within him, lying dormant.

> Perhaps he had never been who he thought he was. He was waiting, on all those long, quiet afternoons in school and at university, for his other self to emerge: the self that would rip and tear at a woman's body, that would lie and betray. It was hidden, like a dormant virus in his body, waiting for a shift in his metabolism to release it. (87)

What was implicit in the conversation with Harriet becomes explicit here: namely, that Rawlins' loathing is reserved not for the restrained, repressed Englishman that he has always taken himself to be, but for this new self, this foreign body which has invaded his own. Rawlins characterizes this other self in unequivocally negative terms: he is treacherous, his sexuality is rapacious (as the verbs 'rip' and 'tear' suggest). In these details, he resembles anti-Semitic stereotypes of the Jew, the Other whom Rawlins is accused of harbouring internally and externally.

In their earlier conversation Harriet, whose own sexual interest in Rawlins has been signalled from the outset, teases him about Esta, whom she has identified as a rival.

> 'You have a soft spot for her, don't you?'
> 'I have nothing for her.'
> 'It's because you have a Jewish mentality yourself.'
> 'What's that supposed to mean?' Rawlins snapped.
> 'Injustice. You think everyone's against you.' (74)

Not wishing to concede that there may be physical, emotional or moral grounds for Rawlins' attraction to Esta, Harriet diagnoses it as a symptom of a psychological condition. In doing so, she hits a raw nerve (as Rawlins' reaction indicates), because her understanding of the 'Jewish mentality' echoes his own prejudices.

When he first becomes involved with Esta, Rawlins feels a compelling need to talk to someone about his situation. None of his English fellow officers will do, he decides, because they 'would make a few predictable and ugly remarks about Jews, or maybe a joke or two' (31), so instead he decides to visit a Jewish chaplain attached to the British army, Mendoza, whom he has encountered earlier in the novel. Mendoza is highly irascible when Rawlins first comes to see him, partly out of disappointment and sexual jealousy (he too, it becomes clear, is sexually attracted to Rawlins), but mostly at the assumption implied in Rawlins' visit: that he will understand Esta, because he shares with her a Jewish sensibility, or mentality.

> 'Why on earth should I want to meet her? Are the two of us the only Jews in town? Or is there something else that you have to tell me? Is she from Cairo, London, Berlin? What exactly is the issue here? Are we talking about the fate of the Jews or a pregnancy?' (35)

Mendoza's irritation here is evident in the scornful tone and sheer volume of interrogatives that issue from his mouth, as is his intention of deriding the notion that there is a universal Jewishness to which he has access, and Rawlins leaves abruptly rather than answer any of Mendoza's questions. Yet his initial instinct – that Mendoza, as a fellow Jew, will be sympathetic to Esta's plight – remains unshaken, and he soon returns to ask the Rabbi explicitly for help in spiriting Esta (now suspected by the British authorities of having been involved in the murder of a high-ranking English officer) out of Palestine.[21] Once again, Mendoza is indignant.

> 'Do you think I am a Zionist agent? [...] I see that you know very little about English Jews. Perhaps I am the first Jew you've ever met?

> You're not from London, are you? If you were, you might have heard of my family. We have been there since the seventeenth century. My relatives are quite well known merchant bankers [. . .] But perhaps we had better not talk about banking. It's not quite the same – is it? – as if *your* relatives were merchant bankers.' (55)

Mendoza's tone here – a mixture of the patronizing and the defensive – reveals the contradictions inherent in his position as a Captain in the British army, and a Jewish minister, a position made all the more precarious because of his known homosexuality. In spite of his fears that, if found out, he would confirm all the worst prejudices of his superior officers ('"I could lose everything, everything [. . .] And they'd love that, wouldn't they? 'Knew all along he couldn't be trusted. Not really one of us, you know. Like to look after their own first.'"' [57]), Mendoza eventually agrees to help Esta: '"I've been compromising too long. My whole damn career. I'll take the risk. If they want a Jew to play with, let them take me"' (108). Moreover, he resolves that, if arrested, he will meet their accusations with counter-accusations:

> He would face them down. Let them bring him in, let them come with their clever, polite interrogation, their sharp, nimble minds. He would tell them about every joke or slight, every offhand remark or ugly gesture, every 'jewed me out of this' or wringing of the hands. (110)

Typically, for a Jew as proud of his Englishness as the Rabbi's reference to his family's history implies, Mendoza, even at his most defiant, attributes to his superior officers the urbanity – the *gentility* – that he knows they will not grant him. Beneath their civility, however, is a profound contempt for Jews, a contempt that even enlightened Englishmen like Rawlins find hard to slough off altogether.

During their first sexual encounters, Rawlins and Esta hardly speak, but as their relationship develops, their physical intimacy is accompanied by growing tenderness: 'Now when they made love she said his name [. . .] Her accent was absurd but lovely, 'European,' not Jewish' (59). Gratified though Rawlins is to hear Esta pronounce his name, he can only allow himself to feel charmed by her accent if he interprets it as 'not Jewish'.

At this stage, Rawlins is apparently unaware of his own anti-Semitism, but he is forced to come to terms with it later in the novel, when he sees Esta exchange glances with Mendoza.

> It was horrible, the bubbles of evil that surfaced unbidden in his brain: Jews, clubby, look after their own, not our types, stick together, no loyalty, wouldn't trust a single one of them. Who was speaking? (108)

It is the voice of inbred bigotry that is speaking, of course: the evil that surfaces unbidden in Rawlins' brain is the anti-Semitism that seems to be endemic in the British army, right up to the highest echelons of command.[22] Like Shepherd in *Lindmann*, Rawlins discovers that, though he has severed the ties to his own past (he has effectively disowned not just his profession, but his family and his nationality[23]), the process of self-reinvention is at best vulnerable to setbacks, at worst a futile enterprise.

Travelling to Palestine by train, Rawlins observes the behaviour of a Jewish wedding party with increasing queasiness.

> The members of the wedding party began to talk among themselves again. There was something about the groom that disturbed Rawlins. He knew what it was: the groom reminded him of Hafner. Hafner, who had been unable to look him in the eye and had sat so passively that time in the café when he grabbed Esta's arm. But look at him here, this Hafner, comfortable and confident [. . .]
> It's me, Rawlins thought. I'm the Jew here. His lips moved silently and involuntarily around the phrase. (67)

This passage reveals both Rawlins' residual anti-Semitism (to him, one Jewish male seems much like another – hence the fact that he thinks of the Jewish bridegroom as 'this Hafner', rather than as an individual) and his desire to reconstruct himself as a Jew (although he feels uncomfortable at first with the unfamiliar feeling of being the outsider, once he has articulated this feeling to himself in the formula 'I'm the Jew', the seductive power of the idea makes him actually mouth the words.)

From tentatively trying out the feeling of being a Jew, Rawlins soon moves on to attempting to pass himself off as one. When he agrees to smuggle Esta to safety, he drives over the Egyptian-Palestinian border in Mendoza's jeep, posing as his assistant, Rabbi Weiss. Despite a moment of panic when a Jewish soldier at a checkpoint insists on speaking to him ('What if Grossman began to talk to him about things he knew nothing of? What if he said something in Hebrew?' [115]), Rawlins manages to convey Esta to a Zionist safe house in Palestine.

However, Esta is by this time gravely ill, and Rawlins is barely able to keep her alive until the arrival of a Jewish doctor, Lewis Marks, who begins immediately to question Rawlins aggressively:

> 'Why didn't send you send for me earlier?' [. . .]
> 'She didn't want me to leave. I had to wait for the driver.'
> 'And you listened to her.'
> 'I didn't [. . .] I mean, I thought [. . .]'
> 'You thought what? That a person with pneumonia can sip a little water and pull through?'
> 'You're *English*.' [. . .]
> 'I *was* [. . .] although that's hardly what matters here, is it?'
> Rawlins blushed. (141)

Marks' brusqueness turns out to be due not just to anxiety at the seriousness of the situation, but to a deep-seated distrust of Rawlins, based on his own experience as an English Jew. When Rawlins goes missing (after an unsuccessful attempt to reunite Esta with her father, whom he has tracked down, he is shot, and nursed back to health by an Arab woman), Marks, who by now has fallen in love with Esta, tries to convince her that Rawlins might be a double agent.

> 'We're not sure about him.'
> 'I am.'
> 'He's a British officer.'
> 'So, I believe, are some Zionists.'
> 'Yes, but they're Jews.'
> 'He's risked everything for me.'
> 'Maybe.'
> 'You don't know him at all.'
> 'No, but I know his type. I grew up in England.' (184)

Ironically, Marks' experience of anti-Semitism has left him with a prejudice as narrow towards Englishmen (hence Rawlins is denied his individuality, and becomes a 'type'). Whereas Marks is able unequivocally to renounce his Englishness (witness his emphatic reply to Rawlins' recognition of his nationality – '"I *was*"' – and the fact that he tells Esta only that he '"grew up"' in England), Rawlins' Englishness clings tenaciously to him, both because others (like Marks) insist on it, and because he himself continues to feel self-conscious among Jews.

At one point, while nursing Esta, Rawlins becomes aware of Marks' gaze on him and

> he began to overdo his solicitousness to Esta, to append an exaggerated tenderness to the gesture of his hand on her head. Was it because he wasn't a Jew that he felt he had to demonstrate the sincerity of his feelings for her? (143)

Just as he had done in the train earlier, Rawlins undergoes that process of self-detachment that Sartre describes as typical of the inauthentic Jew here, and, in his attempt to demonstrate his sincerity, he overcompensates and simply reinforces the stereotype of the unfeeling Englishman that Marks's scrutiny imposes on him. Ultimately, in spite of his genuine disgust at his own culture, and his devotion to Esta, Rawlins cannot become Jewish, any more than Mendoza, his family's venerable English history notwithstanding, can become English.

During his interrogation by the British authorities in Cairo (who have arrested him for his part in Esta's flight) Mendoza is taunted by the presiding officer.

> 'So you *acquired*, in a way, position and, perhaps, accent?' [. . .]
> 'I'm as English as you are.'
> 'Are you? Yes, of course you are. Much to be admired. A lot of struggle involved.' (151)

The italics here indicate the contemptuous inflection that the English officer gives to the word 'acquire', and, notwithstanding the fact that the reader's sympathies are with Mendoza (and with Rawlins), overall *The Hiding Room*, like *Lindmann*, represents Englishness and Jewishness as mutually exclusive properties. Although Rawlins is accepted posthumously as a Jew by his Jewish son, he can never be accepted as a Jew by other Jews during his lifetime, a fact that he himself implicitly recognizes when he decides not to seek a romantic reunion with Esta, but instead to pass the rest of his days living in obscurity in an Arab village.

The overriding sense conveyed by these two novels – and by *Eve's Tattoo* – is that Gentiles who mistake themselves for Jews do just that (they err, they delude themselves) because Jewishness, like Englishness, is not something that can be acquired. Even in Malamud's and Miller's novels, in which the identification of Gentile with Jew is arguably presented in a more positive light, the motivation

of the protagonists' conversions are questionable. In fact I would suggest that the protagonist in each of these novels displays psychopathological symptoms not unlike those described by Oliver Sacks in his book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985): hence the title of this chapter. James Shepherd's impersonation of Jacob Lindmann is clearly the consequence of a serious episode of mental illness; the internal dialogues that Eve conducts with her various Eva personas (like those between the Shepherd and Lindmann parts of 'Lindmann's' split personality) suggest schizophrenia; Frank Alpine's conversion to Judaism is arguably as masochistic as it is idealistic and Laurence Newman's belated attempt at what might be called counter-assimilation is as much a product of his distorted vision of himself as of any positive identification with Jewishness. If Sartre is right when he identifies an existential uneasiness in authentic and inauthentic Jew alike, then Alpine's and Newman's ambivalence makes their Jewishness more, rather than less, convincing. Indeed, one explanation for the periodic recurrence of this quirky plot device is that it reflects an uneasiness on the part of the authors themselves, a reluctance to confront openly the question of Jewish identity. Instead of representing Jewish ambivalence directly, it is externalized (in the form of a Gentile who is both anti- and philo-Semitic), before being reintegrated into the Jewish identity when the Gentile mistakes himself for a Jew.

At any rate, the question remains: what is the meaning behind these plots? Are they manifestations, in inverted form, of the Jewish anxiety to assimilate; fictional arguments in support of the notion of universal brotherhood? Certainly there is a strong didactic pull in this direction in Miller's and Malamud's novels; the message in the former being that if, as a Gentile, you don't make a stand against racism and bigotry, you might find yourself a victim of it, while the latter seems to bear out Malamud's assertion that 'Every man is a Jew'. For Sartre, this impulse to deny the differences between Jews and others is characteristic of the humanist Jew who 'seeks to dissolve by critical analysis all that may separate men and lead them to violence, since it is he who will be the first victim of that violence' (115). Yet he himself uses similar humanist rhetoric, describing the Jews as the 'quintessence of man' and ending his essay with an appeal to his (Gentile) readers' self-interest: 'anti-Semitism is [. . .] *our* problem [. . .] we [. . .] run the risk of being its victims [. . .] What must be done is to point out to each one [Gentile] that the fate of the Jews is *his* fate' (153). In this context, the suffering undergone in these novels by the Gentile in his/her guise as

Jew seems to represent a form of wish-fulfilment – a revenge fantasy in which Jewish authors punish Gentiles for their anti-Semitism by turning them into Jews, so that the perpetrators of anti-Semitism get a taste of their own medicine.

Equally, the plot of these novels might be seen, in psychoanalytical terms, as Jewish fantasies of Gentile guilt, or as projections onto the Gentile of the guilt of Jews untouched by the Holocaust: the guilt of Miller's and Malamud's generation of Jews who lived through the war 'not dar[ing] to demand that rescue efforts be put in motion, such was the fear of exacerbating the people's hostility [...] to Jews' (Miller 1988: 63); the guilt of Raphael's generation 'caught, as all survivors are, between gratitude [for having been spared] and horror [at the fate of those were not so fortunate]' (Raphael 1979: 5), and the guilt of Prager's and Wilson's generation, many of whom owe their lives to the serendipitous emigration or fortuitous survival of parents and/or grandparents. Certainly, guilt is a crucial motivating factor in all the conversions: Frank Alpine's guilt for having taken part in the robbery of Bober's store (and later for having stolen from him and raped his daughter); Laurence Newman's guilt for his cowardly complicity in the upsurge of anti-Semitism; Eve's guilt for being of German ancestry; Shepherd's guilt for his role in the deaths of the drowned Jewish refugees denied access to Palestine; Rawlins' guilt for colluding in the dehumanizing treatment of those Jews who had managed to get as far as Egypt.[24] For all these figures, identifying themselves with, and as Jews, is an attempt to expiate the guilt of anti-Semitism, whether that of personal prejudice (as in the cases of Alpine, Newman and Eve), or of institutionalized discrimination (as in the cases of Shepherd and Rawlins).

That there was, in the aftermath of the Second World War, a sense of collective guilt on the part of many Gentiles (or at least their political representatives) for the Holocaust is undeniable: the establishment of the state of Israel would have been impossible without it.[25] Yet none of these novels deal with the events of the Holocaust directly: *Lindmann* and *The Hiding Room* deal with the plight of Jews fleeing from Nazi terror, but not with the terror itself; *Eve's Tattoo* touches on it incidentally, but is more concerned with the seductive and insidious power of Nazi ideology – in particular its hold over German women; *Focus*, though written during the war, makes no reference to the plight of European Jews, while *The Assistant*, as Philip Roth has observed, is a curiously ahistorical novel, apparently taking place in 'a timeless depression and a placeless Lower East Side' (Roth 1985b: 127).

If, as Sander Gilman argues, 'Self-hatred results from the outsider's acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group – that group in society which they see as defining them – as a reality' (Gilman 1990: 2), then the silence of these authors on the subject of the Holocaust might be seen as evasiveness, a sign of Sartrean inauthenticity. On the other hand, in an era when what has been called the 'Holocaust industry' has become big business,[26] their reticence might on the contrary be explained as a desire to preserve authenticity: a principled refusal to appropriate the suffering of others, to indulge in glib overidentification with Hitler's victims. (I discuss these and other theories that have been advanced to account for the phenomenon of the absence of the Holocaust from much of post-war Jewish fiction in Chapter 4).

In this light, the decision of these novelists to represent Gentile protagonists who embrace Jewishness both as an escape from, and confirmation of, their own self-hatred, becomes a strategy for exploring their own ambivalence towards Jewish identity, a way of explaining themselves through characters who are, and are not, Jews. To use a theatrical analogy, just as a male actor playing a female playing a male (as was often the case in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre) serves to highlight and at the same time problematize gender difference, so a Jewish writer ventriloquizing a Gentile impersonating a Jew both blurs and redefines the boundaries of Jewish identity. Whereas Sartre sees Jewishness as a response, positive or negative, to the monolithic hostility of the anti-Semite, in these novels, and in those I discuss in the next chapter, Jewishness and anti-Semitism enter into ambivalent negotiations with each other.

3

Nature Anxiety, Homosocial Desire and (Sub)urban Paranoia: the Jewish Anti-Pastoral

> [My family] believed that only in cities can you breathe freedom's air away from the diurnal tyranny of the land and an ignorant, anti-Semitic peasantry. We used to take my grandfather for runs in the motor to the Lake District, a sort of vacuum between towns without bookshops or bookmakers. Among the low hills, in the dense loneliness of the still air, he would cry in Yiddish: 'Here they could build houses for the workers'. (Grant 1998a: 11)

> Pity the poor Jew. Let him gentrify and ruralize himself all he likes, let him surround himself with acres of goyische [non-Jewish] greenery, he will never know what it is to take a turn around a garden. (Jacobson 1985: 252)

> There's no bigger schmuck than a Jew with a boat. (Jackie Mason)

Two characteristics, above all, define the Jewish protagonists of post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction: they are paranoid and they are urban. Furthermore, they are paranoid about being urban. This urbanness is not simply a matter of geography or demography, but of temperament. Typically, the fictional Jew is ignorant of, and at the same time has an instinctive aversion to, Nature in all its guises, particularly insofar as it symbolizes rural life. Sometimes this phenomenon manifests itself in a casual aside, such as when Nathan Zuckerman in Philip Roth's novel *My Life As a Man* (1974), taking tea with his college mentor, Caroline Benson, in her 'English' garden, finds himself 'amid the hundreds of varieties of flowers, none of whose names he knew' (Roth 1974: 17).[1] Or when, at the beginning of *The Ghost Writer* (1979), Zuckerman, attending his 'first Manhattan publishing party,' hears the writer E. I. Lonoff dismissed as a subject for serious discussion, 'as though it were

comical that a Jew [. . .] should have [. . .] lived all these years "in the country" – that is to say, in the *goyish* wilderness of birds and trees' (Roth 1979: 4). Or when Alvin Pepler, in *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), tells Zuckerman how, when he is told to 'take a dive' on a national television quiz show to give way to a Gentile champion, he pleaded with the producers to 'Let him beat me on a subject like Trees [. . .] which is their specialty' (Roth 1981: 37). Or when Alex Portnoy, in *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), realizing that the street where his Gentile girlfriend lives is called Elm Street because there are elms there, reflects on the Jewish indifference to such arboreal distinctions: 'At home who knows the name of what grows from the pavement at the front of our house? It's a tree – and that's it' (Roth 1969: 203).

Often this antipathy towards Nature takes the form of satirical jokes, which aim to deflate the Utopian myths of the pastoral. So in Joseph Heller's *God Knows* (1984) we find King David, the most rustic of Jewish heroes, bemoaning his lot as a shepherd boy:

> Tending sheep is not a vocation for an active mind. I myself preferred the corrupting life of the town to the bucolic diversions of the pasture. At night you were cold, in the daytime you sought shelter from the scorching sun. Where could you go for a good time? (Heller 1984: 66)

In Woody Allen's films, too, the country, far from being an Edenic paradise, is simply a place where there is no culture and where you are vulnerable to all sorts of dangers (from anti-Semitism to insect life). *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* (1982) is full of jokes based on the Jewish fear of country life, and when the eponymous hero of *Zelig* (1983) is placed under hypnosis at the country home of Dr Eudora Fletcher the first thing he mentions is his distaste for his surroundings.

> Dr. Fletcher: Now how do you feel about it here?
> Leonard Zelig: (Slowly, in a trancelike voice) It's the worst [. . .] I hate the country [. . .] I hate the grass and mosquitos [. . .] (Allen 1987: 78)

So entrenched is this distrust of, and anxiety about, Nature – so recognizable as a stereotypical Jewish attribute – that, in common with other clichés of Jewish comedy, it tends to mutate into self-parody. In Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), for example, Humboldt 'suffer[s] keen Jewish terrors in the country' (Bellow 1975: 27), as does the

eponymous hero of *Ravelstein* (2000), for whom 'Nature and solitude are poison' (Bellow 2000: 154) while in 'Memoirs of a Bootlegger's Son' (an extract from an unfinished novel), the narrator and his father dream of moving to the country, but the mother objects on the grounds that there would be 'No synagogue, no rabbis, no kosher food, no music teachers, no neighbors, no young men for Zelda [...] she wasn't going to have us grow into cowherds, no finer feelings, no learning' (Bellow 1992: 20). In the Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld's novella, *The Retreat* (1984), the self-parody has more of a satirical edge to it, and the threat posed by Nature is figured not simply in terms of the presence of insects or the absence of Jewish culture but as a fundamental threat to Jewish identity. In a grotesque appeal to self-hatred, the opportunist Balaban offers to 'painlessly eradicate embarrassing Jewish gestures and ugly accents' through a programme of 'horse-riding, swimming, seasonal hunting, organised hikes and what he called assimilation into the countryside' (quoted in Sinclair 1987: 169).

Sometimes the Jewish critique of pastoral manifests itself in a vehemently anti-pastoral sensibility, an almost Manichean dichotomy between city and country in which the pastoral view of the country as a haven of innocence and purity and the city as a hotbed of sin and corruption, is turned on its head. In the final section of Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* (1987), for example, Nathan Zuckerman postulates a significance for the Jewish ritual of circumcision that defines it as an antidote for a pastoral malaise, a dose of Jewish realism to combat Gentile romanticism.

> In dead seriousness, we all create imagined worlds, often green and breast-like, where we may be 'ourselves' [...] Think of all those Christians [...] piping out their virginal vision of Momma and invoking that boring old Mother Goose manger [...]
>
> Circumcision is startling [...] but then maybe that's what the Jews had in mind and what makes the act seem quintessentially Jewish[2] and the mark of their reality. Circumcision makes it clear as can be that you are here and not there, that you are out and not in [...] Circumcision is everything that the pastoral is not and, to my mind, reinforces what life is about, which isn't strifeless unity. Quite convincingly, circumcision gives the lie to the womb-dream of life in the beautiful state of innocent prehistory, the appealing idyll of living unencumbered by man-made ritual. (Roth 1987: 327)

For Roth, Christianity is essentially a pastoral religion, a mythology that mystifies, sentimentalizes and sanitizes the harsh realities of life; Judaism, by way of contrast, embraces life with all its vicissitudes. Hence to be Jewish is to be inherently anti-pastoral, and to be a male Jew is to be indelibly marked, like Cain, with the scar of exile; to be excluded from the Arcadian dream of universal harmony, banished from Nature's nurturing (but also, for the adult male, implicitly eroticized) breast. Roth's continuing preoccupation with the seductive delusions of pastoralism, and his instinctive sense that it poses a threat to Jewish male sexuality, is evident in the ironic title of one of his most recent novels, *American Pastoral* (1998). It is, however, in novels by Roth's American contemporaries, Bruce Jay Friedman and Saul Bellow, and by the British-Jewish novelists Emanuel Litvinoff and Howard Jacobson, that these themes are elevated to the status of a genre, which I will call the Jewish Anti-Pastoral.

In common with most British-Jewish novelists over the years, Howard Jacobson has had to divide his attention between his fiction and other activities (he writes a weekly column for the Saturday edition of the *Independent* and has become a minor television celebrity, making a number of films for Channel Four and appearing regularly as a pundit on arts review programmes). In spite of this, he has built up an impressive body of work and his most recent novel, *The Mighty Walzer* (2000), to which I will return in the Afterword, is arguably the nearest thing we have to a great British-Jewish novel.

Growing up in a 'very Jewish part of Manchester', Jacobson recalls that for his circle of Jewish friends 'it was actually important not to be Jewish [...] not exactly to be gentile but to have gentile interests', an example of which was 'To read Jane Austen' (Jacobson 1993b: 20). His early literary influences were not, like most of his British-Jewish contemporaries, Bellow, Roth et al. but D.H. Lawrence and Henry James and he is a self-confessed 'Leavisite', a worshipper of the (exclusively Gentile) Great Tradition (Jacobson 1999: 68, 69). Yet his writing is more preoccupied with, and radically inflected by, Jewishness than that of any other contemporary British-Jewish writer and he is contemptuous of the 'sort of books that go with being white, English, swept and anguished [...] all those things associated with English novel-writing which give you a kind of caché [sic] in the literary world which you don't have if you've slapped yourself all over your books and things feel altogether a bit too confessional' (Jacobson 1993b: 22). This ambivalence towards both English culture – 'we [Jews] love it precisely because we hold it so precariously' – and Jewish – 'You disso-

ciate yourself from this baggage of ancient stuff but if you talk about Jewishness then this is part of what you are claiming' – is what drives his best fiction (Jacobson 1999: 68, 70).

In Jacobson's first novel, *Coming From Behind* (1983), the acutely self-conscious Jewish protagonist, Sefton Goldberg (a lecturer in English Literature) tries to define Jewishness negatively, in terms of what is antithetical to it.

> In the highly improbable event of his being asked to nominate the one most un-Jewish thing he could think of, Sefton Goldberg would have been hard pressed to decide between Nature – that's to say birds, trees, flowers and country walks[3] – and football – that's to say beer, bikies [*sic*], mud, and physical pain. (Jacobson 1984: 58)

This throwaway remark becomes the theme of his second novel, *Peeping Tom* (1984), in which Barney Fugelman, a Jewish author of occasional literary articles with 'a dislike for the English rural tradition [. . .] for novels set primarily in the outside, on moors or under greenwood trees' (Jacobson 1985: 36), discovers, to his horror, that he was Thomas Hardy – one of the greatest exponents of that tradition – in a former life. The novel begins with Barney, exiled from his natural habitat of north-west London, sardonically acknowledging the advent of Spring in a Cornish village.

> Signs are, even to my drugged eye, that the village is finally coming out of winter. I am not witnessing a return to robustness and sanity exactly – that's too much to expect down here, so far from the soundness of cities, so deep into the obsessional neurosis of Nature – but there is an atmosphere of fragile convalescence abroad, as if the patients have been allowed their first unaccompanied turn around the walled gardens of the institution. (Jacobson 1985: 7)

This inversion of the conventional literary representation of rural life (signifying rude health of mind and body) and urban life (signifying physical debilitation and spiritual depravity), in which Nature becomes both the site and cause of mental illness, signals from the outset Jacobson's iconoclastic intentions. This is a novel which deconstructs the English pastoral tradition with acerbic wit, and which portrays Hardy, who, in Barney's view, epitomizes it,[4] as 'a morbid superstitious little rustic who confused high peevishness with tragedy, niggardliness with humour, mean naturedness with melancholy, and

put it on history, genealogy, blood, evolution and the Prime Mover that he couldn't get his end away' (57). Yet, as is clear from the more detailed, if still irreverent, readings of Hardy that provide some of the many incidental pleasures of the novel, and from the fact that several of its key scenes are reworkings of famous episodes from Hardy's fiction, *Peeping Tom* is also something of a homage to the tradition it affects to despise.

Barney Fugelman is, at first sight, unambiguously Jewish: though not particularly religious, he is married to a Jewish woman, Sharon, lives in one of the most Jewish of London suburbs, Finchley, and was brought up in a Jewish household where 'you rang an electrical contractor when you wanted a plug fixing' (32) (this ineptitude at and disdain for any sort of manual labour being another staple Jewish joke).[5] However, when Sharon invites a local hypnotist, Harry Vilbert (named after a rather unsavoury character from *Jude the Obscure* [1896]), to demonstrate his art during a promotional event at her bookshop, and Barney reluctantly agrees to be his subject, a chain of events is set in motion which leads, with Hardyesque irrevocability, to an identity crisis of the kind which, in fiction, is anathema to him ('My other pet dislike was for works that consisted of people asking Whether There Was Anyone Who Could Tell Them Who They Were' [36]).

Under hypnosis, Barney regresses to a former existence in which, as a 16-year-old boy named Tommy in 1856, he witnesses, with an obvious frisson of erotic excitement ('I can see all her shape' [30], he says, breathlessly), the execution of a woman named Martha Brown. When research by a local journal of the occult reveals that someone of this name was indeed 'publicly hanged from a scaffold outside Dorchester prison' (31) in 1856, Barney's hitherto resolute scepticism begins to waver, but he continues nonetheless to disown any kinship with the boy, prompting Vilbert to ask 'Why can't you accept him? What's wrong with him?' (44). To which Barney offers no response:

> I didn't feel that I could say that for a start he wasn't Jewish [. . .] How was I going to explain [. . .] without giving offence that Jews are particular in some areas; that they didn't eat pig or light fires on Saturday and that they preferred, if they had to be taken over by someone else's spirit, that it should at least be one of their own – one of *unserer* [ours]? (44)

As it turns out, however, Barney's reluctance to accept Tommy is not due simply to Jewish fastidiousness, but to the repressed recognition of

shared scopophilic tendencies. Like the young Thomas Hardy (for it is he), Barney is a voyeur, and although there are no nubile dead women hanging from scaffolds to be ogled in 1970s Finchley, this is the age of swinging and wife-swapping. Before long, Barney, enamoured with the theory that Hardy brought together his cousin Tryphena and his friend Horace Moule, Pandarus-like, in order to experience vicariously a forbidden sexual liaison with her (just as Jude and Michael Henchard give away their wives, wittingly or unwittingly, to their friends and rivals), is encouraging his wife to begin an affair with his old schoolmate, Rowland Fitzpiers. For Barney, however, there is an additional ingredient to this heady brew of sexual perversity: his 'eager[ness] to see Sharon appraised, apprized, by one of Horace Moule's discernment and worth – a slightly older man of learning and refinement, the son of a good Christian family' (99). For Barney, it is the fact that Fitzpiers is a Gentile (as well as being an eminent literary critic and reviewer) that lends the brief ensuing *menage à trois* its piquancy. If, as Barney observes epigrammatically, 'The voyeur [...] is scarcely more than an exhibitionist with small confidence and limited opportunities', then by the same paradoxical, Freudian logic the paranoid fear of the Jewish husband that he will be cuckolded by a Gentile (with an intact, and therefore more potent, phallus) is in fact a repressed desire.

In her ground-breaking study of male sexuality in English literature, *Between Men: English Literature and Homosocial Desire* (1985), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick draws on Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory that men often use women as the '"conduit of a relationship" in which the true *partner* is a man' and on René Girard's contention that 'the bond between [male] rivals in an erotic triangle [... is] stronger [...] than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the beloved' (Sedgwick 1992: 26, 21). She goes on to analyse the 'the *structure* of men's relations with other men' in English literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in terms of a 'continuum', ranging from homosexuality to homophobia, which she defines as 'male homosocial desire' (Sedgwick 1992: 2). I find this formulation very useful for thinking about the dynamics at work in the erotic triangles of the Jewish Anti-Pastoral, in which male rivals (usually a Jew and a Gentile) express their homosocial desire for each other through an amorous rivalry for a woman (the wife of the Jewish man). Unmanned in and by Nature, the Jewish male in these novels undergoes a crisis of masculinity that manifests itself through homosocial desire. Because the circumcised – which is to say, in psychosexual terms, effeminate – male protagonist of the Jewish Anti-Pastoral feels that he is not up to

the challenge of taming (the wild, sexually female) Nature, and fears, envies and desires the virility of the uncircumcised Gentile who is (and who, in his turn, fears, envies and desires the androgynous Jewish male), his erotic energies are expressed through triangulation. In this way, nature anxiety and homosocial desire are intimately linked.

When Sharon accuses Barney of being 'a latent homosexual – that's to say employing her as a proxy to have done to her by Fitzpiers what I really wanted Fitzpiers to do to me' (163), he insists, with comical incongruity, that 'There had never been the faintest suggestion of any impropriety between us' (164), but of course he is (deliberately?) missing the point. As Camilla, Barney's Gentile second wife, puts it: '"You're all hot to know the secret of each other's potency, you men. The woman is merely incidental – she simply serves as the post box you communicate through"' (228). To put it in Sedgwick's terms, in the Jewish Anti-Pastoral women are the 'conduits' through which Jewish and Gentile men express their shared paranoia about each other's sexual potency.

Once Barney's curiosity has been satisfied, or perhaps I should say unsatisfied, since he finds the three-in-a-bed experience 'a much more commonplace event than I could ever have anticipated' (146), the marriage soon deteriorates. Eventually he leaves the now-pregnant Sharon with Fitzpiers (in spite of the fact that she assures him that he is the father of the unborn child) and travels to Cornwall to find solace in the arms of Camilla Marteline, a Hardy scholar and fellow Hardy-hater, for whom Michael Henchard is a '*schmuck* who couldn't organize a garden party, who couldn't keep the affections of his friends and lovers, who gave dead birds for wedding presents and asked that no flours [sic] be planted on his grave' (222).

Although the second section of the novel tells the story of this second, doomed marriage (which ends, like the first, when Barney colludes in his own cuckolding), it is as much concerned with Barney's antagonistic relationship with his environment – with the theme of the Jew in Nature as fish out of water – as it is with the failed romance between him and Camilla.

When he first arrives in Cornwall, Barney is all insouciant charm and swagger, boasting that 'You can't keep a smart Jewish city boy down: I hadn't been in the village above two hours and already I was getting the hang of the way things worked here' (218). Soon enough, though, his customary Jewish self-consciousness (and with it his insecurities about his manhood) reasserts itself. When Camilla offers him a sleeping bag, he flinches:

> I'd never been camping before, not even indoors. And I'm not ashamed to say that this was the first sleeping bag I had ever seen. By and large Jews don't bother with them; there is something needlessly spartan, to the Jewish mind, about the idea of putting yourself in a bag at bedtime.[6] (230)

Despite his protests that he is 'not ashamed' of his lack of hardiness (a pun that Jacobson bravely resists making), the fact that Barney explains himself by invoking the abstraction of 'the Jewish mind', rather than attributing his squeamishness to personal idiosyncrasy, testifies to his uneasiness. This revelation is accompanied, predictably, by jokes about his inability to swim ('True, the stream was shallow, but I [. . .] was quite capable of drowning in a hip bath' [17]) and about his ignorance of Nature:

> Camilla couldn't believe how little *I* knew about the creatures with whom I shared the miracle of existence. 'What's that?' she would ask me, grabbing me by the arm and pointing at something twitching in the sky.
>
> 'A bird,' I would say, proudly.
>
> 'Barney, it's a sparrow-hawk. And that one there, bobbing in the water, is a guillemot.'
>
> I followed her finger, conscientiously enough, God knows, but all I could see was some duck. (248)

If she is incredulous at Barney's indifference to, and inability to differentiate between, the various species of wildlife whose habitat he now shares, Camilla seems, at least, to share his literary (dis)tastes:

> Camilla was always very wary of my conspiracy theories; she believed she could smell in them the airless odour of ghetto fears. But we differed not a jot about this one: some rural plot it is, hatched over the centuries in countless village halls and parlours, that convinces the English there is an indissoluble connection between literature and lakes, between meaning and mountains, between poets and peasants, between honesty and haylofts. (15)

Camilla's anti-pastoralism is symptomatic of a general cultural élitism, and a specific feminist disgust at the 'insolent pastoral certainties about female frailty' (227). Barney's, however, as she rightly suspects, issues from his sense of himself as a Jew. Indeed, it is only

when she leaves him (for Max Loveday, an expert on the French New Novel, another one of Barney's literary *bêtes noire*) – when he is truly alone with Nature, that is – that the extent of Barney's paranoia becomes clear. This is Barney, for example, on his encounters with local tourists:

> I meet them in the early morning during my penitential walks along the harbour walls or out on the cliff paths, and although they all nod me a bracing greeting or wave their blackthorn sticks, I can see that I am an extraneity and a blemish for them. In my long sleek-piled fur coat [. . .] and my Bally slip-on shoes decorated [. . .] with a delicate gold chain and having the added advantage of built-up heels, I am not what they have taken a week off work and kissed goodbye to their children and strapped methane stoves to their backs to find. At a stroke I domesticate the cliffs for them. Many of them, I fancy, will spend the rest of the day in a pet, not even noticing the wild sea below; fearing that at the next precipitous turn of the path, beneath the overhanging crags, above the foaming waterfall, they will come upon more like me, wearing jewels and stoles, contradicting one another in broken accents, and picnicking on smoked salmon sandwiches from the boot of a white Daimler. That's the extent to which I have blotted their landscape. (8)

Without the Gentile companionship of Camilla to confer legitimacy on his alien presence in this area of natural beauty, Barney becomes convinced that his Jewishness (signified by his inappropriate urban attire) is not simply conspicuous but offensive to the holiday-goers, a polluting stain ('blemish', 'blot') on the pristine pastoral landscape. He even projects onto them the anti-Semitic fear that his presence heralds the arrival of other Jews (he uses the euphemism 'more like me', as though afraid to defile his prose with the word), identifiable by their vulgar ostentation (the jewels, stoles, smoked salmon sandwiches and white Daimlers) and their loud foreign conversation ('contradicting one another in broken accents'), who will invade this corner of England's green and pleasant land.

Yet, in spite of this recidivist conviction that his Jewishness is a stigma that excludes him from the England of pastoral mythology, Barney retains the residual ambition of reinventing himself in terms that will allow him to participate in the *literary* tradition of English pastoral.

> There has been a touch of Heathcliff about me recently, I fear, that is if someone who is called Barney Fugelman and what's more *looks* as if he is called Barney Fugelman can approximate to such a gentile, such a Christian, such an English [...] fantasy [...] Dogs I have always wanted to kick [...] but now, I swear, and this is absolutely uncharacteristic of me, if I knew what an ash tree looked like or where one was to be found I could very easily fall to dashing my head against it. (12–13)

The old joke about Jews not knowing one tree from another notwithstanding, what this passage, with its characteristic mixture of parody and self-parody (mocking both the melodramatic absurdity of Heathcliff's behaviour and the absurdity of Barney's pretentious self-dramatization), reveals is Barney's (and, by implication, Jacobson's) profound ambivalence towards his host culture, as represented by English pastoral literature, and towards his own Jewishness. In a sense Barney's struggle to accommodate his internal Hardy without sacrificing his (Jewish) sense of himself is Jacobson's struggle to find a place for himself in the (Gentile) tradition of English Literature without compromising his distinctive Jewish voice. His triumph in *Peeping Tom* is to exploit the tensions between these two sides of himself (his enthusiasm, as an English novelist, and an erstwhile lecturer in English literature, for the great pastoral Victorian novelists like Hardy and the Brontës, and his sense, as a Jewish novelist, of their preposterous parochialism), rather than to reconcile them.

This dual ambivalence is also highly visible in the work of Saul Bellow. Most of Bellow's fictional protagonists are Jews, although the significance of their Jewishness (to themselves and in the scheme of the novels) varies considerably,[7] yet he is unequivocal in his rejection of the label of 'Jewish' writer:

> I am often described as a Jewish writer; in much the same way as one might be called a Samoan astronomer or an Eskimo cellist or a Zulu Gainsborough expert. There is some oddity about it. I am a Jew, and I have written some books. I have tried to fit my soul into the Jewish-writer category, but it does not feel accommodated there [...] the contempt I feel [is great] for the opportunists, wise guys, and career types who impose such labels [...] (Bellow 1974: 72)[8]

Bellow's *reductio ad absurdum* is not convincing. First of all, it is at least arguable that a Zulu Gainsborough expert and an Eskimo cellist

would share a consciousness of the strangeness of their choice of profession – of the fact that their interests were unusual in terms of their cultural backgrounds. This might in turn lead them to feel that they had something to prove to the more established authorities in their fields. They might have the same anxieties, in fact, with regard to their relationship to the art history and musical establishments as the young Bellow seems to have had with regard to the literary establishment.[9] Moreover, even if we accept the essential terms of Bellow's argument, the fact remains that a writer who thinks of himself as a Jew – as Bellow acknowledges here that he does – and whose fictions are heavily populated by Jewish characters, does not stand in the same relation to his Jewishness as these heuristic examples do to their heritage. There is, after all, no profession in which self-consciousness is so central and inescapable as that of writing. The astronomer does not *create*, he studies; he cannot fill the universe with Samoan galaxies in the way that a writer can people his or her universe with Samoans, or with Jews.

'I did not go the public library to read the Talmud but the novels and poems of Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, Edgar Lee Masters, and Vachel Lindsay,' Bellow points out, but this discounts extra-literary influences (Bellow 1974: 73). Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser might have admired, but could not have written, *The Victim* (1948) or *Ravelstein*, any more than Bellow could have written *An American Tragedy* (1922) or *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). Bellow's fiction is certainly not exclusively Jewish, but it seems foolish to deny that his Jewishness has shaped his writing in important ways.[10]

Arguably his greatest novel, and also arguably (apart from the two mentioned above) the one in which the protagonist's Jewishness is most central to its concerns, is *Herzog* (1964). *Herzog* has generated a great deal of literary-critical debate, for example about the extent to which it is an intellectual novel, or what is sometimes called a novel of ideas (much of it is given over to a series of mental letters in which Herzog, a former lecturer and author of a famous study of Romanticism, takes issue with the theories of great minds dead and alive, ranging from Heidegger's philosophy to Hoyle's cosmology). Critics have also argued about how autobiographical, comical, political, or misogynist it is, and about whether or not it is an example of that chimerical animal, the great Jewish novel. Very little, however, has been written about its use of pastoral conventions, or about the relationship between Herzog's Jewishness and his battle with Nature, as represented by his country estate.

Like *Peeping Tom*, *Herzog* has a cyclical narrative structure, beginning and ending in the present, with the eponymous protagonist recuperating from a second failed marriage in his isolated, abandoned, half-ruined rural retreat, and in between relating retrospectively the events that have led him to this self-imposed exile. The novel boasts one of the most audacious, frequently-quoted opening lines in post-war fiction – 'If I am out of my mind, it's all right with me, thought Moses Herzog' (Bellow 1965: 1) – but restored to its context the fusion of self-possession and self-alienation that makes this statement so startling begins to make more sense.

> Hidden in the country, he wrote endlessly, fanatically [...]
>
> Herzog was alone in the big old house [...] Now and then he picked raspberries in the overgrown garden, lifting up the thorny canes with absent-minded caution [...] Tall bearded grass and locust and maple seedlings surrounded him in the yard [...] Herzog sometimes wiped mouse droppings from the table with his sleeve [...] A rat chewed into a package of bread, leaving the shape of its body in the layers of slices. Herzog ate the other half of the loaf with jam. He could share with rats too. (1–2)

As in the opening of *Peeping Tom*, there is an immediate association between insanity and country living: Herzog's fanatical letter-writing is enabled and inspired by the fact that he is 'hidden in the country', living a solitary existence and sharing his house not with other humans but with the local wildlife. The dilapidated, chaotic country house is both an allegory for and a cause of, his mental disintegration. Yet for Herzog his proximity to nature is also a source of pleasure and serenity: he finds the 'harsh call' of the crows in the morning 'delicious' (2), 'calmly wonder[s] why field mice should have such a passion for wax and paraffin' (1) and is surprised to find that his reflection in one of the cobwebbed windows looks 'weirdly tranquil' (2). This ambivalence is encapsulated in Herzog's oxymoronic description of the house late on in the novel as 'this lovely green hole' (331). As the opening line of the novel implies, then, he is both beside himself, and at the same time in touch with himself, as modern therapeutic jargon would have it. Herzog's Nature is both the hostile, enervating force of Jewish anti-pastoralism and a catalyst of self-knowledge and self-reliance in the American Transcendentalist tradition of works like Thoreau's *Walden*. As Herzog puts it in a letter to Nietzsche: '*Nature (itself) and I are alone together, in the Berkshires, and*

this is my chance to understand' (319).

Unlike Barney Fugelman, Moses Herzog has always had something of the pioneer spirit in him:

> For a big-city Jew he was peculiarly devoted to country life. He had forced Daisy [his first wife, a 'conventional Jewish woman' (126)] to endure a freezing winter in eastern Connecticut [. . .] in a cottage where the pipes had to be thawed with candles and freezing blasts penetrated the clapboard walls [. . .]. (Bellow 1965: 118–19)

When his second wife, Madeleine née Pontritter (who hails from a famous patrician family and who, though her mother, and thus she herself, is Jewish, converts to Catholicism), encourages him to retire from his academic career and buy a big country estate in the Berkshires in a small village called Ludeyville, he needs little persuading. In spite of her initial enthusiasm, however, Madeleine, '"stuck away in the woods"' (70), starved of attention as Herzog tries to write his magnum opus, begins to feel increasingly isolated and 'avid for scholarly conversation' (70) and the other consolations of culture. At her instigation, Herzog agrees to move back to the city (Chicago) and arranges for their mutual friends, Valentine and Phoebe Gersbach, to accompany them, but instead of saving the marriage, it precipitates its collapse, as Madeleine and Valentine begin (or continue?) an affair and eventually set up home together.

It is Valentine Gersbach, then, (himself a Jew, though his first name makes him amply suited to the role of pastoral lover) who fulfils the symbolic function of the rival lover in this Jewish Anti-Pastoral. In this sense, the novel appears to depart from Jewish anti-pastoral convention, in which there is a cuckolded Jew-husband and adulterous Gentile-lover (typified in *Peeping Tom* by Barney Fugelman and Rowland Fitzpiers – later Max Loveday – respectively). Insofar as the adulterous affair between Valentine and Madeleine is more a displaced expression of male homosocial desire than the result of heterosexual passion, however, it conforms absolutely to the generic pattern.

Early on in the novel we are told that Herzog, who had always 'had an odd habit of completing people's sentences for them' (14) had now been 'overcome by the need to explain' (2); later Herzog observes that Gersbach 'finished all your sentences, rephrased all your thoughts, explained everything' (155) and that 'People say that Gersbach imitates me – my walk, my expressions. He's a second Herzog' (190). Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but it can also be a

sublimated manifestation of sexual desire: as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, there is a 'slippery relation [...] between desire and identification' (Sedgwick 1992: 24). To put it another way, it is a short step from desiring the Other to wanting to *be* the Other (or vice versa). Except that, in this case, as I've already noted, the other isn't an Other: both Herzog and Gersbach are Jews. As we shall see in Chapter 5, however, it is not uncommon in post-war Jewish fiction for a Jew's Other to be another Jew. Consider the following passage:

> Valentine loved to use Yiddish expressions, to misuse them, rather. Herzog's Yiddish background was genteel. He heard with instinctive snobbery Valentine's [...] commoner's accent, and he put himself down for it [...] (60)

In spite of his guilty conscience, however, Herzog cannot help correcting his friend's Yiddish, and it is difficult to resist the suspicion that the distaste he feels for Gersbach's vulgarity (of which his garbled Yiddish is just one aspect) is, at least in part, a fear of being contaminated by association with him as 'a recognizable Jewish type. One of those noisy crooks with a booming voice' (217), as Simkin, Herzog's lawyer, describes him. In other words, his friendship with Gersbach jeopardizes his pastoral dream because it exposes him as a Jewish interloper in the Gentile enclave of Ludeyville. Insofar as Herzog has gentrified (and Gentilized) himself, then, the lachrymose, flamboyant Gersbach, with his wooden leg (a symbol of the emasculated – that is circumcised – Jewish phallus) 'abundant hair' (60) and 'long curling coppery lashes' (62) represents the androgynous male Jew[11] whose sexuality the Gentile male (as impersonated by Herzog) both fears and desires.

During his discussion with Simkin, the latter says, of Gersbach, ''there was something about his looks, his clothes [...] I didn't like the way he hugged you. Even kissed you'', and though he qualifies his remarks by adding '' I'm not saying he's queer, exactly'' (211), the implication of homoerotic desire is clear enough. Moreover, when Herzog visits Gersbach's wife, Phoebe, she refuses even to acknowledge Madeleine's role in leading her husband astray, insisting that ''He fell for you. Adored you. Tried to become an intellectual because he wanted to help you'' (261), an analysis which Herzog himself apparently comes to accept when he writes one of his mental letters to his old friend enjoining him to *'Enjoy her* [Madeleine] *– rejoice in her. You will not reach me through her, however. I know you sought me in her flesh.*

But I am no longer there' (318).

As the tone of this letter implies, there is a sense in which Herzog (like Barney) derives an exquisite masochistic pleasure from conferring his blessing on, even tacitly encouraging, the union of his erstwhile friend and ex-wife. There are several references in the novel to the fact that Herzog's own sexual relations with Madeleine are hampered by premature ejaculation and of course it is he who facilitates (albeit unwittingly) their adulterous relationship by arranging for the Gersbachs to move with the Herzogs to Chicago. He even goes so far as to find them a house (and Valentine a job in the area), because, as Madeleine puts it (presumably with an ulterior motive in mind), 'You couldn't leave people like Valentine and Phoebe [i.e. Jews?] stuck in this mournful countryside, alone' (6). However, none of this would have happened had Herzog not agreed to move to the country with Madeleine in the first place, a fact which neither he nor anyone else will allow him to forget.

After the breakdown of the marriage, Herzog's friends and relatives are unanimous as to its cause. His Aunt Zelda tells him '"You were a fool to bury yourself and her, a young woman, in the Berkshires, with nobody to talk to"' (39); Phoebe reminds him of 'how reckless you were, rushing out to the country with Madeleine' (261); when Herzog tells Sandor Himmelstein '"I hoped that Madeleine and I would settle down,"' his friend scoffs at his naivety: '"Out in the sticks? Don't be nuts. With that chick? Are you kidding? Come back to the home town. You're a West Side Jew"' (90); and when his brother's doctor remarks, 'with thin-lipped amusement', '"Will tells me you're a country gentleman. You've got a farm in the Berkshires? An estate?"' Herzog guiltily replies, '"It's in bad repair. Miles from a synagogue"' (307).

As this last apparent non sequitur implies, Herzog, too, reproaches himself for having had the temerity, as an urban Jew, to imagine that he could reinvent himself as a 'country gentleman', feeling it to be a betrayal of his roots. The narrator (whose viewpoint is, for the most part, indistinguishable from Herzog's own and whose third-person narrative often blends into the first-person voice of the protagonist) refers to the estate as 'Herzog's folly! [. . .] symbol of his Jewish struggle for a solid footing in White Anglo-Saxon Protestant America' (309) and as

> one of his biggest mistakes. It was bought in a dream of happiness [. . .] Someone came in the night and left a used sanitary napkin in a covered dish on his desk, where he kept bundles of notes for his

> Romantic studies. That was his reception by the natives. A momentary light of self-humor passed over his face [. . .] Suppose I accepted the challenge. I could be Moses, the old Jew-man of Ludeyville, with a white beard, cutting the grass under the washline with my antique reel-mower. Eating woodchucks. (48–9)

Like Barney Fugelman, Herzog suffers a rude awakening from his (pastoral) 'dream of happiness'. Once established in his rural retreat, he instinctively begins to see himself not as an individual but as a type ('the old Jew-man of Ludeyville'); his 'self-humor' is a symptom of his awkward self-consciousness, his ambivalent feelings about his own Jewishness. Like Barney, his anxiety at being a Jew surrounded by Nature leads him to detect evidence of anti-Semitism where there is none: he seems to interpret the presence of the 'used sanitary napkin' as a deliberately hostile gesture, on the part of the (Gentile) 'natives', towards the arrival of his alien (Jewish) presence in their territory. After Madeleine's flight, he imagines the locals revelling in his discomfort, becoming convinced that 'the grotesque facts of the entire Herzog scandal had been overheard on the party line and become the meat and drink of Ludeyville's fantasy life' (318). This paranoia is fuelled by the fact that the local minister, Reverend Idwal, with whom he had formed a friendship, 'started to give him testimonials by orthodox rabbis who had embraced the Christian faith' (127–8). Ultimately, however, it is the Ludeyville estate itself, and the house in particular, rather than the village community, that is his greatest adversary.

Like Barney, who moves from one cold, damp, decaying Cornish cottage to another, each with 'beams that were even older and prettier and wetter than the last ones' (Jacobson 1985: 308), Herzog seems to feel that in order to experience Nature authentically, you must be deprived of all creature comforts, all civilizing amenities. Intoxicated by his pastoral fantasy, Herzog doesn't seem at first to notice the state of disrepair into which his country house has fallen.

> But after the papers were signed he inspected the house as if for the first time. It was unpainted, gloomy, with rotting Victorian ornaments. Nothing on the ground floor but a huge hole like a shell crater. The plaster was coming down – moldy, thready, sickening stuff hung from the laths. The old-fashioned knob-and-tube wiring was dangerous. Bricks were dropping from the foundations. The windows leaked. (120)

Worse still are the grounds: 'the soil was damp and black, and Herzog looked with despair on the thriving luxuriant life of the plants' (121). Towards the end of the novel, when his new girlfriend, Ramona, is due to visit he rouses himself and 'he took up the scythe to clear the yard, so that Ramona would have a better view of the house. But after he had cut a few swathes his ribs began to ache' (339). No Levin (the hero of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* [1876], whose epiphany while scything wheat on his country estate is also deliciously parodied in Woody Allen's *Love and Death* [1975]), Herzog, still suffering the after-effects of a car accident, cannot tame the wilderness of Ludeyville and in the end has to give up his pioneering ambitions. By the end of the novel, he has decided to sell the estate, and has enlisted the help of a local couple, Mr and Mrs Tuttle, to maintain it until a sale has been agreed. Herzog has been punished for his presumption. Nature has expelled its foreign body. The house has won. And yet in spite – or perhaps *because* – of this defeat, Herzog finally finds the peace and harmony that he had always sought at Ludeyville. Just as Barney is only able fully to appreciate the austere beauty of Cornwall once he has been thoroughly humiliated ('Rocked and wrapped around by it in my misery, I actually fell in love with the wretched place!' [329]), so Herzog, in his most abject state, in a 'posture of collapse' (10), is able at last to pick fruit and flowers in his overgrown garden, and share his food and shelter happily with rats and mice.

Published two years earlier, Bruce Jay Friedman's *Stern* (1962) anticipates many of *Herzog*'s concerns, though it has none of its intellectual pretensions. Bracketed more often than not with contemporary (non-Jewish) American practitioners of black humour (a term which he himself coined) than with American-Jewish peers like Bellow, Friedman's reputation as a novelist has diminished together with the currency of (and vogue for) this comic mode. There are, so far as I have been able to ascertain, very few comments on record by Friedman on the subject of Jewishness, but in his early fiction (particularly in his first two novels, *Stern* and *A Mother's Kisses* [1964]), his preoccupation with, and ambivalence towards, Jewishness, is notable.

Like *Herzog*, *Stern* begins with the eponymous Jewish anti-hero locked in a perpetual war with his American home. Indeed, the first lines of the Prologue to the novel are:

> One day in early summer it seemed, miraculously, that Stern would not have to sell his house and move away. Some small blossoms had appeared on one of the black and mottled trees of what Stern called

> his Cancer Garden [...] A saint-like man in brown bowler had come to Stern with a plan for a new furnace whose efficient ducts would eliminate the giant froglike oil burner that squatted in Stern's basement, grunting away his dollars and his hopes [...]
>
> It was as though a giant eraser had swept across Stern's mind, and he was ready to start fresh again, enjoying finally this strange house so far from the safety of his city. (Friedman 1983: 9–10)

Like Herzog's country house in Ludeyville, Stern's home is defined as an antagonist, alien and hostile, first and foremost because it is not in the city, in '*his* city'. For Stern, the city represents safety because there his Jewishness is inconspicuous. Indeed this temporary truce with his house is shattered in the next paragraph when his wife returns home, dishevelled and distressed, explaining that a neighbour (the father of a friend of their son) had prevented the children playing together, shoving her into the gutter with the words '"No playing here for kikes"' (10). In his introduction to a reprinting of the novel, Jack Richardson speculates that

> perhaps in another hundred years readers will have to be directed to a footnote to decipher the meaning of 'kike' [...] even if this were to be the case, it would not diminish the real relevance of *Stern* [...] all the [...] furies that rise from the pages of Friedman's novel pursue Stern past narrow ethnic boundaries into the open territory of Everyman. (6)

But this is missing the point: it is not principally Stern's experience of anti-Semitism that makes him a peculiarly Jewish protagonist – anything but an Everyman, in fact – but his painful perception of himself as Jewish. This perception relies not just on the actual racism of 'the kike man', as Stern denominates the neighbourhood anti-Semite, but on imagined threats of persecution from all quarters, and from a deep-seated conviction of his innate difference from Gentiles.

The beginning of the main body of the novel returns to the theme of Stern's battle with his home.

> It was a lovely house, seated in the middle of what had once been a pear orchard, and yet it had seemed way out on a limb, a giddy place to live, so far from the protection of Stern's city. (17)

It is a lovely *house*, but it is not a home to Stern and never will be, for

the very qualities that make it attractive also make it un-Jewish (although it is a suburban home, it functions symbolically as a pastoral site because of its location 'in the middle of what had once been a pear orchard'). Stern belongs in the city, and the city belongs to him, metaphorically (it is 'his city'); outside the city he is an exile, a trespasser, whose very presence offends not just his anti-Semitic neighbour, but also, apparently, the local environment. Soon after Stern moves into the new house with his family, the garden is besieged by ravenous caterpillars, which, in spite of Stern's repeated attempts to repel them, soon ravage all the plants:

> In front of the house stood a wild cherry tree, lovely and fruitful on one side, black, gnarled, and cancerous on the other. The plants never went back to normal, and since it was too massive a job to replace each one, Stern and his wife learned to approach them only from certain angles, ones from which they looked complete, and pretend they were whole shrubs instead of half ones. Stern was sickened by the diseased shrubs; it was not so much their appearance that troubled him as the feeling that he had betrayed a sacred trust. 'The house has been standing here for thirty years with whole shrubs,' he said to his wife. 'We're in it a month and there are halves.' (26–7)

Like Herzog, who had felt more like the 'caretaker' (Bellow 1965: 120) of his house than its owner, Stern seems to feel that he inhabits his house not by right, but by a privilege conditional upon his ability properly to maintain it. Although his explanation for the plague of caterpillars is that, Old Testament-like, it has been visited upon him as a punishment for his dereliction of duty, for Stern the blight afflicting his garden is more a symbolic manifestation of his inherent unworthiness to be its owner than of his failure to honour his custodial obligations. Whereas in the Bible, plagues are sent to torment the enemies of the children of Israel, here it is upon Stern's Jewishness – and the affront that this represents to the patrician tradition of the land he now occupies – that the curse falls. This Nature anxiety is typical of Stern's thinking; indeed a significant portion of the novel is taken up by Stern's paranoid fantasies, many of which are lurid and surreal, with sexual and/or morbid tendencies. Some of these have no explicit connection with his Jewishness, but most have at their roots his ambivalence about his Jewish identity.

When Stern is courting his Gentile wife-to-be at college, it is his

difference (clearly a euphemism for his Jewishness) that she is drawn to: '"You really are different [. . .] You're the most different person I know"' (40). Like Desdemona devouring Othello's exotic tales with a greedy ear, Stern's wife (who, like his son, is never named in the novel) 'would listen to Stern [. . .] sitting with great and shimmering eyes as he told of New York' (40). Like Othello, Stern, though happy to exploit the novelty of his otherness to charm a lover, is at the same time profoundly threatened by the consciousness of this difference, constantly fearing public exposure as a Jew. On his way home from work one day, for example, the following episode occurs:

> After the train started, the men began to read their newspapers, one of them holding his in such a way that the edge of it cut into Stern's neck, chafing it as he turned the pages. Stern wanted to turn around and ask the man to hold it another way, but he was sure the man would rise and make a speech to the other passengers about Stern, unveiling him as a Jewish newcomer to the train, editor of sin-town stories. (99)

Notice again Stern's anti-pastoral association of his Jewishness with his urbanness: he imagines his fellow passenger denouncing him as a Jew from 'sin-town'. Conversely, when he fantasizes about leaving his Jewishness behind, his first strategy is to relocate himself in an environment in which he can conceal his difference.

> Each night he would buy his newspaper at the station, sit among groups of hearty men, and when one named 'Ole Charlie' told a drainpipe anecdote, Stern would raise his head and guffaw at the punch line as though he understood, that he was riding home to a faulty drainpipe too, and that bad drainage was his major concern in life also. And then Stern would bury his head in his newspaper and turn to an important section, like maritime shipping, and look very serious, making an almost physical effort to blend in with the men alongside him, as though if he looked exactly like them, he would become exactly like them, speeding home to drainpipes and suburban pleasures. But then, as his stop grew nearer, a panic would start in his throat. The maritime section would become a blur and he would think how nice it would be to go one stop too far on the railroad and get off in a new place, where he could go to a home fully furnished with early American chairs, a wife educated at European schools, neighbors named 'Ole Charlie,' and

> a street devoid of kike men. (93)

Trying to blend in by imitating the behaviour and demeanour of those around him (anticipating the strategy of Woody Allen's human chameleon Zelig), Stern soon realizes that he cannot act this part with conviction, and thus has to resort to a more radical fantasy of assimilation. He cannot simply behave as though he is one of these hearty men, he must actually reinvent himself as one of them; he must imaginatively divest himself of all that adheres to him that is different – that is, Jewish – and acquire everything that signifies gentility (in both senses of the word). Thus, his Utopian ideal is not to live in a street where there are no kike men, but in a street where there are no kikes (because he himself will have effectively ceased to be one). And yet, classic example of self-hatred though this appears to be (Stern has actually internalized the anti-Semitic desire for a Jewless universe), there is, in his inability to convince himself that 'bad drainage was his major concern in life' or to interest himself in the maritime section of his newspaper an implied satire on the numbing banality of these suburban commuters. Stern's feelings of (Jewish) inadequacy are interspersed with feelings of (Jewish) superiority; his self-exterminating fantasy of becoming 'exactly like them' is balanced by his self-preserving fear of doing so. This tension between the desire to justify, and the desire to deny (to explain, and explain away) his Jewishness recurs throughout the novel.

When first confronted with the kike man's hostility, Stern's instincts are not of defiance or outrage, but of resignation ("he had waited [. . .] for the day his wife would say this to him" [11]) and appeasement:

> Stern [. . .] wanted to go out of his house and say to the man who kiked his wife and peered between her legs, 'You've got me wrong. I'm no kike. Come and see my empty house. My bank account is lean. I drive an old car, too [. . .] No synagogue has seen me in ten years. It's true my hips are wide, but I have a plan for thinness. I'm no kike.' (74)

Like Sartre's inauthentic Jew, Stern tries to see himself as the anti-Semite does, and thereby to cast off the signifiers of Jewishness (material wealth, religious affiliation, physical effeminacy) which he fears will stigmatize him. The telling detail here, however, is the implicit connection that Stern makes between the man's racist abuse of his son (and, by implication, himself) and his sexual desire for his

wife. Like Barney and Herzog, Stern feeds his own sexual insecurities by creating sexual rivals for his wife. When his wife tells him of the kike man's attack on her, she reports that she '"wasn't wearing anything underneath"' and that she fears that he '"saw me"' (10) while she was lying prone in the gutter. Apparently more disturbed (and fascinated) by the kike man's voyeurism than his violence, Stern cross-examines her minutely on this point, even going so far as to re-enact the scene with his wife, with him [Stern] taking her role. Having 'flung [his ...] overcoat back over his hips, his legs sprawling', Stern 'ran upstairs to sink in agony upon the bed. But he felt excited, too' (48). During the rest of the novel he repeatedly imagines his wife committing infidelities with Gentile men: with a young gardener (24), with her dancing instructor (109), and, of course, with the kike man himself (94), but his unmistakable sexual arousal here arises, as Max Schulz has argued, from the fact that he not only 'wish[es] to emulate the [kike] man's presumed masculinity, but he also wishes to be the object of that masculinity's desire' (Schulz 1974: 48). Indeed, although the relationship between Stern and the kike man is never developed, in the way that Barney's relationship with Fitzpiers, and Herzog's with Gersbach's are, it is clear that Stern's wife is the currency for a homosocial transaction between them: if Stern cannot share a joke with the likes of the kike man, he can at least share his wife.

In spite of his (imagined) protestations, his use of the noun kike as a verb ('the man who kiked his wife') reveals that for Stern, as for Sartre, the condition of Jewishness is not self-elected, but rather imposed by the perception of the anti-Semite. Stern makes this speech in his head only, because he knows that in reality it would have no bearing on the matter. If the kike man thinks of him as a kike, then that is what he must be. Moreover, what is implicit in Stern's recourse to popular anti-Semitic images of the Jew here is made explicit elsewhere in the novel: that is, that Stern himself has internalized such images.

During the war, for example, Stern serves as an administrator in the American Air Force.

> Somehow Stern connected his nonflying status with his Jewishness, as though flying were a golden, crew-cut gentile thing while Jewishness was a cautious and scholarly quality that crept into engines and prevented planes from lurching off the ground with recklessness. (66)

His belief that his Jewishness makes him unfit to fly is confirmed by a subsequent incident.

> Stern [. . .] rode once to California as a guest on a general's luxury B-17, sitting alone in the bombardier's bubble and feeling over Grand Canyon that he had been put in a special Jewish seat and sealed off from the camaraderie in the plane's center. After eight hours of self-control, Stern felt the plane shudder and then hang uncertainly for a moment as it circled a West Coast Air Force base. He spread a thin layer of vomit around his bubble and then kneeled inside it as the plane landed, the pilots and other flying personnel filing by him in silence. Cowardly Jewish vomit staining a golden plane. (67)

This episode recalls the Jackie Mason joke that is the third epigraph to this chapter: for 'with a boat' read 'in a plane'. Boats and planes, like guns and power tools, are symbols of Gentile virility, and as such alien to Jews. Whether the final sardonic judgement on Stern's ignominy ('Cowardly Jewish vomit staining a golden plane') is to be attributed to the other flying personnel, or to Stern himself, makes little difference in the end, as throughout the novel there is no clear distinction between what Stern thinks of his Jewishness, and what he thinks others think of his Jewishness. Although Stern encounters genuine instances of racism, anti-Semitism in *Stern*, as in *Peeping Tom* and *Herzog*, is, more often than not, imagined rather than actually experienced. When he is diagnosed as having an ulcer, for example, Stern takes pains to conceal the nature of his malady from his work colleagues:

> Stern had the feeling that ulcers would be frowned upon by the board as being dirty, Jewish, unsophisticated, only for fat people, and he was careful not to identify his condition. Only dueling scars and broken legs suffered while skiing would receive high grades. (88)

Yet the ironic hyperbole of the final sentence here suggests that even Stern himself is faintly aware of the absurdity of his paranoia, and implies, like the earlier representation of the Gentile commuters as more concerned with bad drainage than matters of real consequence, a critique of distorted Gentile values. This satirical note recurs when Stern, having had the ulcer removed, checks in to the Grove Lodge clinic for a period of convalescence.

> A giant picture of a somber, bewhiskered, constitutional-looking man hung in the reception lobby. Stern took this to be Grove himself. The lobby was a great, darkened, drafty place, and as Stern passed the picture he instinctively ducked down a little, certain that Grove, in setting up the home, had no idea people such as Stern would be applying for admission. As Stern stood before the reception desk he expected an entourage of Grove's descendants to run out with clenched fists and veto him. (115)

As Grove's name suggests (and as the leafy grounds of the convalescent home confirm), the Lodge, like Stern's suburban house, functions symbolically as an emblem of Nature, so that Stern's sense that he is an interloper, an imposter liable to be apprehended and exposed at any moment, is another manifestation of Nature anxiety. However, his fear of being 'vetoed' by Grove's descendants (as though he were applying for membership of an exclusive club that excludes 'people such as Stern' – that is, Jews), like his fantasy of being awarded 'high grades' for sustaining injuries in a duel, borders on self-parody, and indeed Stern's paranoia, even more than Barney's and Herzog's, is played for laughs. If *Stern* is primarily a comic novel, even at times an absurdist one, it has nevertheless an element of didacticism that centres on Stern's explanation of himself – of his Jewish identity – to himself.

For the most part, the kike man acts as a sort of bogeyman in the novel, an embodiment of Stern's worst paranoid delusions, and an excuse for him to indulge those delusions to the full. For many weeks, Stern drives slowly past his house, trying in vain to memorize the number plates of the kike man's car, 'But he remembered the letters and made up a [sic] organization they might have stood for, Guardian Sons, a group of twenty who sat around on Monday nights and cackled over kikes' (53). It is with this characteristic mixture of extravagant self-pity and subversive self-parody (exemplified by the word-play of the final phrase, 'cackled over kikes'), and with the spectre of the kike man literally and metaphorically on the horizon, that Stern begins to 'think about his Jewishness' (54):

> No great religious traditions were handed down to Stern by his small, round-shouldered father. He was self-conscious on the subject, and a favorite joke of his was to create some outrageous supposition, such as 'Do you know why we're not allowed in the Chrysler building after eleven at night?' When Stern and his mother

> would answer 'Why?' Stern's small dad would say slyly, 'Because we're Jews,' mouthing the final word with great relish and pronouncing it 'chooze' [...] Stern's small dad had great fun with such phrases as 'orange Jews' and 'grapefruit Jews' [...] (56)

The facetiousness of Stern's father's puns seems scarcely to belie a deep-seated embarrassment at the sound and signification of the word 'Jew',[12] just as his 'outrageous suppositions' (which are hardly more outrageous, however, than some of Stern's own) attempt to banish fears of anti-Semitism by pre-empting and exaggerating them. Similar strategies are employed by Stern and two Jewish friends ('Footsy' and 'One-Gag') with whom he shares a boarding house at college, 'where the air was thick with self-consciousness' (62).

> There grew up among the three a jargon and patter, all of which hinged on Jewishness [... Footsy] might suddenly arise during a study period, hold his stomach, and leave the room. 'Where are you going?' the redhead [One-Gag] might ask, to which Footsy would answer, 'I can't stand the Jewishness in the room,' bringing forth howls of amusement [...] If Stern were to utter a pronouncement of any kind, one of his roommates would invariably retort: 'Said with characteristic Jewishness.' [... Footsy] would often do a storm trooper imitation, in which he got to say, 'Line dem opp against the fwall [*sic*] and commence mit the shooting,' and a boy down the hall named Wiegel would come in and do another German officer, saying, 'Brink in the Jewish child. Child, ve eff had to execute your parents.' [...] Footsy would lie in bed for hours twisting lyrics of popular songs to get Jews into them: 'Beware my foolish heart' became 'Beware my Jewish heart,' 'Fool that I am' turned into 'Jew that I am,' and 'I'm glad I met you, wonderful you' emerged 'I'm glad you're Jewish, you wonderful Jew'. (62–3)

It is entirely typical of this period of American-Jewish fiction (which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, with *Focus* and *The Assistant*, tended to avoid all mention of the wartime suffering of European Jewry) that this allusion to the Holocaust – the only one in the novel, in spite of its obsessive preoccupation with anti-Semitism – comes in the form of sophomoric high jinks. Like Stern's father, the Jewish boys' method of containing their fears is to parody them; like him, too, their preferred approach to the question of their difference is at once to emphasize it and defuse it by treating it as a recurring punchline.

Amongst themselves, their Jewishness is something they feel happy to announce at every opportunity; when Stern takes to calling Footsy 'Little Jew' in public as well as in private, however, the harmony of the group's shared self-consciousness is shattered.

For much of the novel, then, Jewishness is represented as crippling, something to be joked away among fellow Jews and erased among Gentiles. Whilst recuperating from his ulcer operation at Grove Lodge, Stern dreams of

> coming home and finding out that the [kike] man had moved away, unable to make his mortgage payments. Or that he had developed a lower-back injury, so that the least motion would cause him agony. Stern saw himself running over with extended hand and showing the man that he would not take advantage of him, that he would not fight him in his weakened condition, that Jews forgive. He wanted opportunities to demonstrate that Jews are magnanimous, that Jews are sweet and hold no grudges. (119)

Once again, Stern's anxiety to demonstrate that Jews are capable of forgiveness and magnanimity reveals his belief that, to the kike man (and others) they are, by nature, vengeful and spiteful. Indeed, up until this point in the novel Jewishness seems to signify for Stern cowardice, avarice, vindictiveness – a roll-call of vices – while Americanness (as exemplified by the rightful inhabitants of Stern's pastoral suburb) is synonymous with virtue and justice. At one point Stern considers informing the kike man of his ill health in the apparent conviction that 'he would never fling Stern's wife down again [...] You don't do that [...] if he has an ulcer [...] and you're supposed to be American and fair' (93).

Yet, towards the end of his period of convalescence, Stern experiences an epiphany of sorts, a revelatory encounter with one of his fellow patients. Throughout his stay at Grove Lodge, Stern had tried to shun contact with a patient known to the inmates as the half man, because half his body (like the trees in Stern's garden) has been blasted by (an unspecified) disease. Early on in his stay, Stern sees

> the half man [...] waiting for him, a bandage around his neck. As Stern approached, he flung open his bathrobe in the shadows and said, 'Look what they did to me,' [...] Stern pushed by him, making himself thin so as not to touch him, closing his eyes so as not to see him, not daring to breathe for fear he would have to smell the neck

> bandage. He got into his narrow room and shut the door tight and wondered whether the half man would wait outside the door until he was sleeping and then slip into bed beside him, enclosing the two of them in his bathrobe. (126)

At the time this seems like just another instance of Stern's morbid paranoia, accompanied by the homophobia that, as Sedgwick demonstrates, is so closely aligned to homoeroticism in the discourse of homosocial relations. Later on, however, just before Stern is due to be discharged from the clinic, he encounters the half man again.

> 'You Jewish?' the man asked, croaking so close his mouth worked against Stern's ear.
> 'Yes,' said Stern, shutting his eyes until they hurt.
> 'Me, too,' croaked the man, wheeling Stern around so that he had to face him. 'I'm Jewish, too.'
>
> It did not thrill Stern to hear this [...] but as he walked away a crumbling chill seemed to invade him, starting between his shoulder blades and pouring through all of him. He turned and kissed the man and hugged him and put his nose up against the man's toothache towel, and then [...] embraced the man's bad side, too. (158)

In the light of this episode, it seems clear that the half man represents Jewishness itself, and that Stern's initial repugnance for, and subsequent embrace of him, symbolizes a move from the rejection of Jewishness – and by implication a rejection of half of himself, rendering him a sort of half man (like the half shrubs which spoil his garden) – to the acceptance of it. This allegorical interpretation of the role of the half man is reinforced by the uncharacteristically sanguine nature of Stern's meditations on his way home from the clinic:

> [W]hen they approached the outskirts of Stern's town, they drove past small houses with neatly kept lawns and Stern nodded in a friendly way to the people who stood outside them. He knew they were all gentiles and wondered what would happen in a pogrom. Which ones, if any, would hide him and his family from the authorities? Probably quite a few [...] Probably the people with the most forbidding gentile faces. Ordinarily they'd never have anything to do with Stern, but if it came to a pogrom, with New England crustiness they'd spirit Stern and his family off to attics, saying to one

another, 'No one's going to tell us what to do with our Jews.' (163)

Instead of the usual lurid scenarios of racial hatred conjured up whenever Stern considers the relations of Jews and Gentiles, here he envisages a more benign response to anti-Semitism, albeit one based more on 'New England crustiness' than on any liberal tolerance of difference. The novel ends, too, on a tentative note of optimism, with Stern – in an echo of his embrace with the half man – hugging his wife and son to him:

> [I]t occurred to him that he would like to try something a little theatrical, just kneel there quietly with his arms protectively draped around his wife and child. He tried and wound up holding them a fraction longer than he'd intended. (191)

Just as, when he embraces the half man, Stern's feelings of compassionate humanity overcome his fear of intimacy, so here his self-consciousness is banished (if only momentarily) by genuine emotion: an imitation of a gesture of tenderness becomes, in its enactment, the authentic expression of that tenderness. For all its misanthropic, grim humour, the novel teeters uneasily here on the edge of sentimentality, implicitly endorsing the very pastoralism that it has earlier satirized. For most of the novel, Friedman rejects both Jewish self-hatred and Jewish pride in favour of an uneasy ambivalence, but in its conclusion *Stern* reinforces the (very American) idea that to love others you have first to love yourself.

Six years after the publication of *Stern* a novel called *The Man Next Door* (1968), by the British-Jewish poet and novelist Emanuel Litvinoff, appeared, which tells a similar tale, but from the perspective of the anti-Semite, rather than his Jewish neighbour. Best known for his fictionalized memoir of his childhood in the Jewish East End of London in the 1930s, *Journey Through a Small Planet* (1972), Litvinoff has also edited *The Penguin Jewish Book of Short Stories* (1979), an eclectic collection which ranges from the great Yiddish writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (such as I. L. Peretz and Scholem Aleichem) to Muriel Spark, a British-Jewish convert to Catholicism. This diversity of Jewishness is reflected in his own work, which at times reflects the 'racial memories' absorbed at an early age through listening to 'stories of far lands we would never see with our own eyes, of wonder rabbis and terrible Cossacks spearing Jewish babies with their lances' (Litvninoff 1993a: 30), and the conviction

that 'Jewishness [...] should [...] be defended from extinction', but which at other times seems to contribute to the very 'haemorrhage of assimilation' which he diagnoses as the malady of modern Diaspora Jewry (Litvinoff 1979: 8). *The Man Next Door* exemplifies this ambivalence.

The novel charts the decline, over a summer, of a middle-aged, middle-ranking, businessman living in middle England. Harold Bollam, as the title of the novel implies, is a representative figure: like many Englishmen of his generation in the late 1960s, he feels threatened by recent social, political, economic and sexual developments. Having spent 17 years working for his firm in Africa, he finds on his return to England that

> The country had gone mad for gimmicks. Young smart alecks were getting in everywhere. Long-haired pop singers bought up the stately homes, public opinion media were in the hands of the queers and sensation-mongers who made England look cheap in the eyes of the world. Cheap, indeed, when black college boys became prime ministers of ridiculous 'independent' states, dined with the Queen and lectured the British on the what's-what of democracy. (Litvinoff 1968: 9)

Bollam's reactionary alarm at the erosion of established hierarchies (youth no longer deferring to experience, old class distinctions breaking down, former colonies asserting themselves), his homophobia and xenophobia, even his complacent conflation of England-Queen-British, captures accurately the paranoid fears of many white middle-class men of the time. However, these generalized fears are heightened by particular anxieties: Bollam feels increasingly undermined at work by a 'young smart aleck' named Dick Wiggin and under siege at home from his disgruntled, depressive wife, Edna. The Bollams live in Maidenford in 'one of a group of detached houses, known as 'The Manors'' (the name itself an attempt to invoke England's feudal past), whose owners 'voted Conservative, never bought at the Co-op, had their household goods delivered at the back door, and sent their children to boarding schools' (11). The narrator further explains that

> Maidenford is an urbanised village, some twenty-four miles from London in what is known as the Green Belt, an irregular area of farmland and open country surrounding the metropolis and designed to

> stop the swelling tide of brick and concrete from swallowing the entire south-eastern corner of England. Thirty years earlier the village had been truly rural, its sixteenth and seventeenth century cottages grouped around the village green, the Norman Church flanked by a small mossy cemetery of ancient tombstones shaded by cypresses [. . .]
>
> When Harold and Edna Bollam had come there, nine years before, Maidenford was already swamped by the greasy tide of its new prosperity, but it was still possible with determination to pretend it wasn't happening. (11)

The ugly oxymoron of 'urbanized village' encapsulates the sense that the Bollams have, of the city irresistibly encroaching on their pastoral home, and the language used to describe this creeping urbanization of the countryside ('swelling . . . swallowing . . . greasy tide') emphasizes their powerlessness in the face of it, as well as hinting (in the word 'greasy', a term often used to describe Jews in Victorian and Edwardian English fiction) at the association of this urban corruption with Jewishness. When the neighbouring house becomes vacant, then, there is, mixed up with the customary speculation and anticipation that any new arrival in such a neighbourhood excites, some apprehension: will the new neighbours be the right sort of people?

The novel opens with a very deliberate evocation of the English rural idyll, in which, however, the strain of nostalgia, that very English 'determination to pretend it wasn't happening', is lurking beneath the surface:

> The whirr of grass-mowers droned in the hot afternoon. Water hissing from sprinklers threw mists of rainbow on the green lawns. Thrush, linnet, blackbird and chaffinch trilled, whistled, cooed, shrilled, while fat bees staggered from flower to flower like drunks on a pub-crawl. Edna Bollam knitted in the shade of an apple tree, relishing the Sunday smell of cut grass, sweet flowers and damp soil that rose from all the neighbouring gardens. Somewhere near, a genteel rattle of teacups, children calling in play. It was the afterglow of a vanishing time, inducing memories of distant summers in Wimbledon, of proud riders cantering across the Common to silver trays of tea in the big houses, of tennis parties and summer flirtations, the gramophone playing 'Embraceable You' in the warm dusk [. . .]
>
> 'This plant's got mildew. If it's not greenfly, then it's some other

> damned thing,' he remarked despondently, wandering off to the toolshed for some chemical. (5)

Leaving aside the jarring note of the mildew (to which I shall return later), the nostalgic mist which hangs over this scene barely conceals a sense of numbing ennui ('God, sometimes you could scream with boredom! You almost hoped that anything would happen, *anything*', Harold thinks [12]), which is heightened when the passage is reprised, word for word, at the beginning of Chapter 9. Coming just after the revelation that the Bollams' new neighbours are Jewish, however, the passage also takes on new resonances: the 'genteel [always a synonym for, as well as a near-pun on, 'gentile' in the Jewish Anti-Pastoral] rattle of teacups' is not as genteel as it has been, the 'vanishing time' has receded a little further. It is not just the tranquillity of this pseudo-pastoral world that is disturbed by the new arrivals at 'The Manors', but the fragile sanity of Harold Bollam.

When the Bollams invite their new neighbours, David and Sylvia Winston, over for drinks one evening and talk turns naturally enough to the relative merits of city and country life, it soon becomes clear that Sylvia feels ambivalent, at best, about her new home.

> 'I quite like the country. What I miss is – you know – when you get a sudden feeling you want to buy a new dress, or even just look in the shops, and you pop on a bus down to Oxford Street [. . .] You can't really *spoil* yourself round here, can you?' (38)

In spite of this unguarded comment, and Edna's reservations, Harold's verdict on the newcomers is positive, though it carries a sting in the tail: '"They're lively, they're amusing and they're damned friendly. The way things are going people like that are top of the heap and we all might as well get used to it"'(42). What exactly Harold means by 'people like that' is not clear: though it is often used as a euphemism for 'Jews', it seems more likely in this instance that Harold is referring to the Winstons' class (Edna has already designated them as 'Cockneys' [33]) rather than their ethnicity.

By the time the Bollams' invitation has been reciprocated Sylvia's mother, Mrs. Sheffield (a name 'which didn't seem right at all' [61]), has moved in and Harold's feelings of insecurity at work have been exacerbated by Wiggins' latest initiative. As the conversation become more animated, the Winstons undergo a subtle transformation:

> Under the influence of the old woman, both he [David Winston] and Sylvia were gesturing more freely, nodding their heads, waving their hands and emphasising everything with abrupt movements of their bodies [. . .]
> 'I was asking you, Mrs. Edna, how you like the country?'
> 'I like it very well –' Edna began, but was immediately interrupted.
> 'Ach give me a place where you can see a human being once in a while. Where there's a bit of life,' the old woman said. 'I've got nothing against trees,' she went on, with a charitable extension of her palms. 'In the parks, what else? But a place like this? with little pieces of grass and a pig factory round the corner? Is it so wonderful? And they're too proud to talk to one another, if you don't mind. Like they've got more than tuppence-ha'penny to scratch themselves.'
> 'Do you even know the place, mum?' Sylvia laughed. 'You've hardly seen it.'
> 'You don't have to see it. You can smell it ten miles away!'
> 'The air here's very good, Mrs. Sheffield,' Harold said with a hint of reproof. (61–2)

What really offends the Bollams about Mrs Sheffield's remarks is not her indifference to trees, but rather the way in which she exposes the absurdity of their genteel pretensions; whereas Sylvia Winston at least had the grace to collude in Maidenford's pastoral myth of itself as a leafy haven, untainted by the commercialism of the city, her mother recognizes it immediately for what it is: a glorified suburb of London.

In spite of his earlier enthusiasm for the Winstons, Harold Bollam manages now to convince himself that 'From the very beginning he'd felt in his bones that David Winston was a Jew [. . .] Everything Winston said, and the way he said it, gave the game away' (64) (though he still feels the need to check by ringing up Winston's company, when he finds out that his real name is Weinstein). In one sense this is a convenient self-delusion (the anti-Semite reassuring himself of the infallibility of his own prejudice), but in another it is true. There is, after all, a suggestion that he identifies the Winstons as Jews *subconsciously* at that first meeting for, as he falls asleep that night, Harold 'conjured up the image of Sylvia Winston [. . .] She was willing and lascivious, her phantom voice husky with tender obscenities' (44).

For Harold, the confirmation of Sylvia's Jewishness paradoxically legitimizes his desire for her, because he is able to objectify her erotically in a way that he cannot Edna:

> West Africa had rotted him a little, too. A boy not much more than twenty dreaming of girls as cool as butterflies, he'd made do with [...] rancid negresses [...] A 'screw', a 'grind', 'a piece of down under'. All the time longing for somebody sweet and decent you could hold hands with in a cinema, kiss on the grass by a cool English river [...] That was really why he'd fallen in love with Edna [...] she kissed with closed, cool, virginal lips. (44)

Whereas he has never been able to reconcile his image of Edna as a chaste pastoral lover with the coarseness (as he sees it) of his sexual impulses (which he relieves by visiting a prostitute), Sylvia inspires in him precisely the mixture of fear and desire, of 'Resentment mingled with admiration' (85), that he requires. On the one hand, that is, she empowers him sexually because she fulfils the erotic stereotype (which recurs frequently in the English literary tradition, from Sir Walter Scott to James Joyce) of the lascivious Jewess, the 'exotic flower of centuries of usury' (85) who can only be satisfied by the (intact) phallus of a Gentile male. On the other hand, the fact that she is married to a Jew fuels Harold's sexual insecurities, the suspicion that Jewish males possess 'something hidden and secret, something no Gentile would ever be permitted to know' (64).[13] This mysterious 'some*thing*' is of course the circumcised phallus, and the second pun (on 'to know' in the sense of carnal knowledge) reinforces the sense that Harold's fascination with Sylvia has at its roots his homosocial rivalry with David Winston.

When Edna discovers Harold 'acting the peeping Tom' (72) by looking on as Sylvia 'recline[s] on an inflated rubber mattress in the briefest of bikinis' (71), she has a nervous breakdown and goes to stay with her mother in Hastings to recuperate. With David Winston also conveniently away 'selling in the Midlands' (85), the opportunity arrives for Harold to act on his fantasies. He gives Sylvia a lift into London and arranges to meet her in the evening to take her home again. Before setting off, however, he persuades to her have dinner with him at a restaurant in Curzon Street. As the two of them are ushered in by a deferential doorman, 'a silly phrase jumped about in his head: "Me and my Jew girl. Me and my Jew girl"'(89), and this mood of exultant conquest escalates as they order drinks:

> From the moment Sylvia appeared he'd had the feeling this one was for him. They said that Jewish women were hard to get, a jealous and exclusive race with a built in instinct to stay with their own

> kind. But some of them were irresistibly attracted to Gentile men – the Jew wasn't much of a physical specimen. He'd make two of Winston. It would be quite something to have one of them as a mistress. Every time you had it off you'd be thinking that's one up on them. (90)

The process implied by the proprietorial refrain ('Me and my Jew girl'), in which the particular charms of Sylvia as an individual begin to recede behind racial stereotypes, continues here with Harold's paradoxical characterization of 'Jewish women' as both inaccessible to, and infatuated by, Gentile men, but it is the abrupt transition in Harold's mind from the sexuality of Jewish women to that of Jewish men that is most striking. Typically for the Jewish Anti-Pastoral, the emphasis here is firmly on the homosocial aspect of the sexual rivalry between the Gentile and Jew: for Harold Sylvia's attraction lies chiefly in the means which she provides for him to prove his masculinity superior to David Winston's. Moreover, the grammatical ambiguity of the line 'It would be quite something to have one of them as a mistress' ('one of them' presumably refers to Jewish women, but it actually follows directly his reflections on Jewish men), and the homoerotic implications of 'thinking that's one up on them [that is, Jewish men]' while having intercourse with their wives, seems to reiterate the fact that such affairs are primarily transactions between men.

Later, on the journey home, Harold is overcome by a sudden urge to drive into the back of a truck, killing himself and Sylvia. He imagines the bereaved David Winston 'shocked because his wife had died with a goy [non-Jew], her kosher flesh and blood intermingled with his in an intimacy closer than any act of sex' (96). Once again, the seductive power of this fantasy seems to derive not from the idea of uniting his fate with Sylvia's *per se*, but from the triumph of his virility which their commingled blood would signify. In the event, however, Harold, conventional soul that he is, settles for the less radical intimacy of sex: he parks in a romantic spot by the river Thames near Hampton Court and makes a clumsy pass at Sylvia. When she resists, he assaults her, but she manages to escape and Harold has no choice but to drive home despondently.

When he arrives, Edna, who has returned unexpectedly early from her convalescence, is there to greet him, and the Winstons' home 'By some alchemy [. . .] now looked like a Jew's house, as if the ritual ornament [that is, the mezuzah, a decorative scroll containing verses from the Hebrew scriptures] nailed to the lintel of the door endowed it with

the strangeness of a severe alien and accusing spirit' (100). Just as David Winston's every utterance became, for Harold, retrospectively tainted by the revelation of his Jewishness, so the house itself has now mysteriously been transformed into 'a Jew's house'. Although Sylvia has decided not to go to the police, Harold nonetheless feels that

> her existence next door, in the very next house, laid a crippling burden on his whole life. He wouldn't ever again be able to use the garden. Her eyes would stare at him with loathing and contempt from every window. (125)

There is a nice irony here, in that Harold's paranoid fantasy that he will become the object of Sylvia's constant surveillance turns his own voyeuristic gaze back on himself, but what seems finally to make the burden of his guilt (projected in the form of Sylvia's vengeful vigilance) intolerable is the fact that 'He wouldn't ever again be able to use the garden'. In the Jewish Anti-Pastoral, for the Jew the worst form of punishment is to be forced outdoors; for the Gentile it is to be confined indoors.

A few days later, hounded by his own conscience, and by increasingly paranoid hallucinations (fuelled by the rapid consumption of pep pills provided by his secretary at work, followed by several pints of beer), Harold, returning home late after a humiliating abortive attempt at sex with his prostitute, runs into David Winston. At the sight of him, Harold imagines

> Beyond the door, another chamber of fear. They would stretch him naked on their altar and sharpen the blade of circumcision. A piercing squawk and the cock's head would drip blood from the severed neck [...] (148)

In his drink-and-drug-addled state, Harold's primal fear and envy of the Jewish phallus (the unconscious source of his anti-Semitism) is revealed in the form his fantasy now takes. His horror of (and desire for) the circumcised phallus is transmuted here into the fantasy of being circumcised himself – paradoxically punished by forcible conversion to Judaism – for attempting to violate a Jewess. As this fantasy implies, in a sense it is Bollam who occupies the position in this novel typically reserved for the Jewish protagonist of the Anti-Pastoral. It is Bollam whose masculinity is undermined by male rivals at work and at home, Bollam whose Nature anxiety (symbolized by the

mildew in his garden) manifests itself in homosocial desire and suburban paranoia. In the event, he suffers a less drastic form of emasculation: after trying in vain to land the first punch, Harold is beaten up by Winston, who attempts, despairingly, all the while, to reason with him, asking: '"why should you persecute us? What good will it do you? Is there any profit in it?"'(149).[14]

After lying in a stupor for a while, Harold returns, in a trance-like state, to the garden, breaks into the Winstons' garage, sprinkles paraffin on some rags, sets them alight and goes back to bed. Roused minutes later by Edna, he watches the progress of the fire 'with superstitious terror, a fire-breathing monster advancing across the interval of night to destroy him' (152). Apparently unaware that he himself has started the blaze, he reflects that

> as soon as the Winstons arrived he'd guessed it would all end badly. They didn't fit. Apart from being Jews, there was something alien and disruptive about them. They were the kind who carried the germ of misfortune wherever they went, like spores of an invisible cancer [...] (153)

Having made a futile attempt to rescue Mrs Sheffield from the burning house, Harold is himself rescued by the firemen and the novel finishes with Edna expressing the opinion that '"it would be a mistake for them [the Winstons] to come back [...] It would be nice to have a decent, middle-class English family next door. Just like us"', while Harold 'drifted helplessly into the darkness where the adroit shapes of his enemies lurked' (158). The implication seems to be that Harold's paranoia – the mirror-image of the Jewish paranoia that characterizes the Jewish Anti-Pastoral – will outlive the destruction of the Winstons' home and their (presumed) departure: his fumbled attempt at heroism has not redeemed him.

It is part of the deliberate ambiguity of the novel's title that it can be understood to refer to Harold Bollam, whose normal abnormality and abnormal normality is representative both of a particular type of Englishman of a particular era, and, more generally, of the 'decent middle-class English family next door', and/or to David Winston, whose naïve faith in the possibility of assimilation (expressed in his change of name and in his bland insistence, even when confronted directly with Bollam's anti-Semitic abuse, that '"We're ordinary, simple people, no different from anybody else"' [149]) is representative both of a particular type of upwardly mobile Jewish businessman

of the 1960s, and, more generally, of the aspirations of all outsiders in English society to be accepted. What Winston fails to realize, of course, is that, to paraphrase Sartre, Jewishness is in the eye of the anti-Semitic beholder; his attempts to explain himself to Harold – to explain that he is not The Jew, but simply a man, the proverbial man (as opposed to girl) next door in fact – are doomed to failure, because an anti-Semite's definition of a Jew is always incontrovertible.

When Harold decides that the Winstons were 'the kind who carried the germ of misfortune wherever they went, like spores of an invisible cancer' he is, of course, (whether knowingly or not) using precisely the sort of medical metaphor that pervaded Nazi propaganda against the Jews. Yet this pseudo-medical discourse is also peculiarly appropriate for the embattled English version of the pastoral that Harold desperately tries to preserve. Ultimately, the Winstons contaminate the purity of the Maidenford air not because they are Jewish *per se*, but because their Jewishness enables them to diagnose it is as *already contaminated* (a contamination symbolized both by the proximity of the pig factory and by Harold's discovery of the blasted plant in the apparently healthy garden).

This dual function of the Jew in Nature – at once the agent and exposer of the corruption at the heart of the pastoral dream – goes a long way towards explaining the paradoxical relationship between the two. It is precisely because Jews don't believe in the concept of original sin that they cannot participate in the dream of recreating a prelapsarian era which the pastoral articulates: the Jewish Anti-Pastoral, therefore, is not simply an extended joke about the irredeemable urbanness (and redeeming urbanity) of Jews, but the expression of a fundamental philosophical and epistemological difference, a manifesto of worldliness set against the other-worldliness of the pastoral tradition.

In her family memoir, *Remind Me Who I Am, Again* (1988), the British-Jewish novelist Linda Grant makes repeated references to the fact that 'Jews are not considered great nature lovers' (Grant 1998a: 203), and that she was brought up in a 'culture which keeps its children out of the garden and indoors improving their minds with a book' (115). Her mother, she remarks wryly, 'has never got her hands dirty in wellingtons, bending down among the flowerbeds' (3), and she recalls the whole family spending 'many puzzled hours' watching the gardeners on neighbouring allotments 'who for no apparent reason chose to spend their leisure hours in old clothes, growing things they could have easily bought' (92). As is usually the case with

such jokes, the comedy here derives both from the apparently simple-minded behaviour of the Gentile gardeners, who paradoxically relax by doing hard labour, and from the equally simple-minded failure of the Jewish onlookers to understand that the work is its own reward; that these people are growing vegetables not because they need to, but because of the satisfaction that comes from doing so successfully.

Yet for Grant, as for other Jewish anti-pastoralists, this comical clash of cultures both hints at and conceals a more serious incompatibility of perspectives. Observing that 'The war cast the longest shadow over my childhood', Grant goes on to ask, rhetorically,

> 'What did [...] I know about country childhoods and the names of flowers and shapes of leaves and texture of bark, who did not have parents who turned the television off in distaste when the mountains of corpses and skeletal survivors appeared on the screen?' (66)

The implication here is that Jews lack an appreciation of the finer points of Nature not simply because of their preference for urban living, or because of some congenital insensitivity, but because it is a luxury they cannot afford. Because of the legacy of their historical suffering, Grant suggests (in particular, for post-war Jews, the oppressive omnipresent consciousness of the Holocaust) Jews cannot subscribe to a pastoral worldview predicated on the notion of harmony between man and his environment, or between man and his fellow man.[15] Nature anxiety, homosocial desire, and (sub)urban paranoia, in this analysis, are the products of a post-Holocaust Jewish sensibility. But if this is so, it begs the question, once again, of why the Holocaust itself is barely mentioned in any of these novels. It is to this question of the absence of the Holocaust from post-Holocaust Jewish fiction that I now wish to turn my attention.

4

Breaking the Silence: Jewish Women Writing the War and the War After

American-Jewish women and the short story

> Literature is often a matter of response to the challenge of the literature that went before. Work by women swings not only on this pendulum, as most writing does; it swings on a second pendulum, within the first. Women reply to what is expected of them as women – complying if they are compliant, rebelling if they are not. (Rosen 1992: 152–3)

> [T]he greatest paradox forms about the Holocaust, it seems to me, for novelists, in the tension between writing and not writing about it. If the writer treats the subject, the risk is that it may be falsified, trivialized. Even a 'successful' treatment of the subject risks an aestheticizing or a false ordering of it, since whatever is expressed in art conveys the impression that it, too, is subject to the laws of composition. Yet not to write means omitting the central event of the twentieth century. (Rosen 1992: 49)

> In approaching the Holocaust, the canniest writers keep a wary distance. They know or sense that their subject cannot be met full face. It must be taken on a tangent [. . .] through strategies of indirection and circuitous narratives that leave untouched the central horror – that leave it untouched but always invoke or evoke it as a hovering shadow. (Howe 1988: 194)

One of the most striking developments in post-war American fiction has been the emergence of a number of male American-Jewish novelists as mainstream – even canonical – figures. In the latest edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* (1999), Saul Bellow, Philip

Roth and Bernard Malamud all have entries; among contemporary American-Jewish women only Grace Paley rates a mention. The gender imbalance is even greater in Tony Hilfer's *Longman Guide to Post-1940 American Fiction* (1992), in which Bellow, Roth, Malamud, J.D. Salinger, Norman Mailer and Joseph Heller are all given individual consideration, whereas Cynthia Ozick's is the lone female Jewish entry. When Martin Amis observes that 'The twentieth-century novel belongs to [...] Jewish Americans' (Amis 1993) it is these male writers he is referring to, rather than their female counterparts: Anzia Yezierska, Hortense Calisher, Tillie Olsen, Ozick, Paley et al. Leaving aside Amis's personal enthusiasm – amounting almost to discipleship – for the work of Bellow, and the question of whether his aesthetic values are underpinned by peculiarly male sensibilities, there is undeniably a generic, if not a gender, bias operating here. Although he has himself written a collection of short stories, for Amis (and indeed for most of the – still predominantly male – academic establishment) it is *the novel* that is the index of greatness in fiction. This immediately loads the dice against women fiction writers, who have often been – and still are – drawn to the short story form.[1] When it comes to American-Jewish women writers, certainly, the three most influential figures – Ozick, Paley and Olsen – are all best known for their work in this genre. Moreover, in the last ten years or so, there has been an explosion of writing, most of it in the form of short stories, by American-Jewish women.[2] Not all of this writing concerns itself with Jewish identity. Indeed Sharon Niederman, writing in 1990, conceded that 'Although we have a blooming garden of Jewish women writers, only a handful have chosen to address in their fiction the historic, moral, folkloric, practical, philosophical and psychological issues of the Jewish condition' (Niederman 1990: 1). Two years later, however, Sylvia Fishman, while celebrating 'the extent of change in the lives of contemporary Jewish women' and the resulting 'broad spectrum of themes' in their fiction, was also able to make a case for a distinctively female tradition of American-Jewish writing about Jewishness (Fishman 1992: 44). If it was once possible to speak of American-Jewish fiction and mean male American-Jewish fiction, it should be so no longer. While Bellow and Mailer are still writing and Philip Roth continues to go from strength to strength, many of the old guard (Malamud, Heller, Harold Brodkey, Stanley Elkin) are now dead, and among the younger generation it is women writers (most of whom have made their names writing short stories) who are leading the way.

Along with this shift in the balance of power, has come a movement

away from angst-ridden, solipsistic, secular comedy, towards fiction preoccupied with family, religion and the legacy of the Holocaust. Until the 1970s the Holocaust was conspicuous by its absence from post-war American-Jewish fiction: while there were a number of novels in the immediate post-war years dealing with domestic anti-Semitism (Arthur Miller's *Focus* [1945], Saul Bellow's *The Victim* [1946], and Laura Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement* [1947] being obvious examples), and a handful published in the 1960s and early 1970s (such as Edward Lewis Wallant's *The Pawnbroker* [1962], Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* [1965], and Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* [1970]) in which the wartime fate of European Jewry casts a long shadow, it was not until the publication of Susan Fromberg Schaeffer's *Anya* (1974) and Norma Rosen's *Touching Evil* (1977) that the subject was treated explicitly. Yet by 1989 S. Lilian Kremer was proclaiming (albeit somewhat prematurely) that 'we now have in American literature an admirable body of fiction addressing the Holocaust' (Kremer 1989: 17).

Most commentators agree that this 'delayed expression by Jewish American writers of a post-Holocaust consciousness' (Bilik 1981: 5) was precipitated by the intense media coverage of the trial of the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1961 (and the heated debate provoked by Hannah Arendt's account of it, *Eichmann in Jersusalem* [1963]), and by the increased sense of Jewish solidarity in the Diaspora inspired by the Arab–Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, but there is less consensus on the reasons for the long silence that preceded it. It has been explained in the following terms: moral (to write about such events would inevitably distort, and implicitly diminish, their horrific reality); pragmatic (Kremer suggests that 'Perhaps since Jewish writers had only recently gained acceptance by the literary establishment, they were unwilling to broach a topic as controversial as the Holocaust' [Kremer 1989: 16]); aesthetic (as Lawrence L. Langer puts it, 'Literature generalises human experience, while the events of [...] the Holocaust insist on their singularity' [Langer 1996: 77]); psychoanalytical (repression of the trauma – Alan Dershowitz recalls that 'the Jewish community of my school years had experienced a collective amnesia about the Holocaust [...] The tragedy was too recent, too painful, too evocative of guilt' [Dershowitz 1991: 49]); geographical (American Jews, because of their remoteness from the events of wartime Europe, did not feel entitled to claim the Holocaust as their legacy); sociological (Deborah Lipstadt suggests that 'A post-Holocaust generation of 'baby boomers,' [...] used the Holocaust as a means of differentiating between themselves and their parents' quiescent generation' [Lipstadt 1992: 129]),

and political (the result of the post-war realignment of Germany as an American ally in the Cold War and/or of the foundation of the State of Israel).[3] However, the central questions, posed pithily by Alan L. Berger in his book *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction* (1985), continue to divide critical opinion: 'Did the silence of Jewish novelists indicate a period of reflection? Or did it reveal the depth of the American acculturation process?' (Berger 1985: 35).

Norma Rosen, writing in 1974, takes up the latter position, seeing it as symptomatic of moral failure, a bewildering and perverse aporia which impoverishes American-Jewish fiction, resulting in a literature that 'shame[s] us by proceeding as if the Holocaust had never been' (Rosen 1992: 17). For Philip Roth, writing ten years later, however, the reluctance of American-Jewish writers 'to take the Holocaust up so nakedly as a subject' is, rather, the result of tact and humility. In fact, Roth implies, it subtly inflects the very literature in which Rosen can detect no trace of it, since 'For most reflective Jews, it is simply there, hidden, submerged, emerging, disappearing, unforgotten' (Roth 1985b: 186).

The divergence between Rosen and Roth on this issue is representative of a larger divergence between male and female American-Jewish writers of fiction, but their comments are beginning now to seem anachronistic. As Victoria Aarons observes, of recent American-Jewish fiction by women, whereas 'one would expect that a preoccupation with the past would fade as the immigrant's marginalized status in America became less distinct [...] we find a growing preoccupation with an even more vigorously imagined past' (Aarons 1996: 170). Part of this growing preoccupation with the past is manifesting itself in a steady stream, if not yet a flood, of writing about the Holocaust. It seems to me that this increased readiness to engage with the Holocaust is not an incidental by-product, but a direct consequence of the recent flowering of female American-Jewish fiction and the accompanying collapse of male hegemony in the field: American-Jewish women are choosing to break their silence by breaking this other silence.

As many have argued (most memorably Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* [1929] and Tillie Olsen in *Silences* [1980]), socioeconomic factors have always disadvantaged women writers, and in many cases (not least Olsen's own) severely curtailed or extinguished their careers. In the case of Jewish women, as Miriyam Glazer points out, they have also had to contend with 'a religious tradition ambivalent at best, exclusionary at the worst [sic], toward females' (Glazer 1997: 83). For these women the very act of becoming writers – emerging from the

intimidating shadow cast by the canonical male American-Jewish colossi (Bellow, Roth, Malamud et al.) – constitutes a rebellion against both 'the essentially conservative expectations of Jewish women within the Jewish community' (Niederman 1990: 2–3)[4] and those of the literary establishment (for whom American-Jewish fiction is male American-Jewish fiction). To write about the Holocaust – which is so pointedly omitted from the work of these male writers – constitutes a further rebellion, a radical redefinition of the parameters of American-Jewish fiction. I want to devote the rest of the first section of this chapter to a consideration of three short stories that, in their different ways, illustrate the connection between what Rosen calls 'Writing as a Woman and a Jew in America',[5] and writing about the Holocaust.

Rosen has written of her resolution 'never to invent Holocaust scenes' lest she 'might add to the sum of pain' (Rosen 1992: 105); hence her novel *Touching Evil*, like Emily Prager's more recent *Eve's Tattoo*, focuses on the efforts of a Gentile woman to understand – and sympathize with – the victims of Nazism. Cynthia Ozick, too, is 'not in favour of making fiction of [the Holocaust . . .] or of mythologizing or poeticizing it' and yet 'I constantly violate this tenet; my brother's blood cries out from the ground, and I am drawn and driven' (Ozick 1988: 284). In her story 'The Shawl', first published in its own right in 1980 and then, nine years later, in a slim volume of the same name (together with a sequel, 'Rosa'), Ozick boldly imagines what life in the death camps might have been like for a mother, Rosa, and her two daughters, Stella, 'A thin girl of fourteen', and Magda, 'a round infant in arms', whom Rosa conceals in the shawl of the title (Ozick 1990: 3). Yet the boldness of Ozick's subject matter is, arguably, vitiated somewhat by its treatment.

Certainly, there is no conscious attempt to sanitize or sentimentalize the events depicted; on the contrary, Ozick is at pains to emphasize the brutal and brutalizing conditions in which Rosa, Stella and Magda exist. The starvation and malnutrition that has shrunk Stella's frame so that 'Her knees were tumors on sticks, her elbows chicken bones' has, in a cruel irony, had the opposite effect on Magda, distending her stomach so that it is 'fat with air, full and round' (3, 5). Moreover, Magda, with her 'eyes blue as air, smooth feathers of hair nearly as yellow as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat', resembles neither her sister nor her mother, whose complexion is 'dark like cholera', but rather might pass for 'one of *their* babies' (4). These differences amplify the natural jealousy that an adolescent girl might feel towards a baby sister monopolizing her mother's attention, and indeed it is Stella, feeling

'the coldness of hell', who 'took the shawl away and made Magda die' (3, 6). Even before this moment of crisis, however, it is clear that conventional family bonds no longer obtain in this world.

When Stella looks at Magda's blue eyes she pronounces the one word '"Aryan"', 'and Rosa thought how Stella gazed at Magda like a young cannibal' (5). It is difficult to decide whether Stella's loathing of her sister (in response to the Nazis' anathematization of 'Jew', she invests the word 'Aryan' with reciprocal hatred), or her mother's suspicions of Stella are more disturbing. At any rate Ozick tells us, by way of explanation, that 'They were in a place without pity, all pity was annihilated in Rosa, she looked at Stella's bones without pity' (5).

In spite of this emphasis on the pitilessness of life in the camp, and an attempt on Ozick's part to find a suitably spare, yet unsparing, style to describe it ('Stella was ravenous, a growing child herself, but not growing much. Stella did not menstruate. Rosa did not menstruate. Rosa was ravenous, but also not' [5]) the narrative is drawn towards the allegorical, the redemptive, the transcendent, and, finally, towards the silence that it had tried to break. In his essay 'Myth and Truth in Cynthia Ozick's 'The Shawl' and 'Rosa'', Lawrence L. Langer quotes Ozick's treatment of the moment when a Nazi officer throws Magda against the electrified fence ('She looked like a butterfly touching a silver vine') and asks whether this 'poetry of similitude is itself a form of denial [. . .] ?' (Langer 1996: 140). He then quotes her description of 'the slow stinking maroon waterfall that slunk down from the upper bunks, the stink mixed with a bitter fatty floating smoke that greased Rosa's skin' and observes that 'This imagery conceals nothing' (140, 140–1). Langer's conclusion is that Ozick is 'brutally frank' and that Rosa (and by implication the story itself) 'does not seek to beautify the truth' (141, 140). If the image of the 'maroon waterfall' is restored to its context, however, I think the questions which Langer is debating become rather more complex:

> Rosa entered the dark. It was easy to discover the shawl. Stella was heaped under it, asleep in her thin bones. Rosa tore the shawl free and flew – she could fly, she was only air – into the arena. The sunbeat murmured of another life, of butterflies in summer. The light was placid, mellow. On the other side of the steel fence, far away, there were green meadows speckled with dandelions and deep-colored violets; beyond them, even farther, innocent tiger lilies, tall, lifting their orange bonnets. In the barracks they spoke of 'flowers," of 'rain": excrement, thick turd-braids, and the slow

> stinking maroon waterfall that slunk down from the upper bunks, the stink mixed with a bitter fatty floating smoke that greased Rosa's skin. (8–9)

There is an ostensible distinction here between the euphemistic language employed by the camp inmates to designate defecation and micturition, and the story's own uncompromising, 'brutally frank' formulations. Actually, the distinction is somewhat blurred, because Ozick's images of excrement (turd-*braids)* and urine ('stinking maroon *waterfall*') implicate themselves in, at the same time as they expose, this beautification of the sordid. Moreover, the lyrical description of the flowers, with its hint of the pathetic fallacy ('*innocent* tiger lilies'), though it is intended to highlight the rank foulness of life in the camp by symbolizing 'another life' beyond, and before it, may, again, blur the boundary, rather than reinforce it. The fact that Magda's death is described as a vision of transcendent beauty in terms that explicitly recall the first of these images of another life, the humming of the electric fence (which becomes both the barrier and the gateway to another life) recalling the humming of the butterflies in the green meadows on the other side of it, while the trajectory of Magda's own body in flight evokes (with deliberate incongruity?) their graceful progress, further complicates matters.

Finally, however, the ambiguity of the story rests not with Magda's death itself, but with Rosa's anticipation of, and response to it. Magda survives in the camp as long as she does (long enough to learn to walk, so that when the shawl that comforts and warms her is snatched away, she totters out into the yard in search of it) only because she remains eerily silent.

> Every day Magda was silent, and so she did not die. Rosa saw that today Magda was going to die, and at the same time a fearful joy ran in Rosa's two palms, her fingers were on fire, she was astonished, febrile: Magda, in the sunlight, swaying on her pencil legs, was howling. Ever since the drying up of Rosa's nipples, ever since Magda's last scream on the road, Magda had been devoid of any syllable; Magda was a mute.[6] Rosa believed that something had gone wrong with her vocal cords, with her windpipe, with the cave of her larynx; Magda was defective, without a voice; perhaps she was deaf; there might be something amiss with her intelligence; Magda was dumb. (7)

Ironically, it is the very moment when Magda finally finds her voice that seals her fate; but although Rosa knows that this breaking of the silence will result in her death, she cannot simply regret it. Even in this dehumanizing environment, Rosa retains the instinctive maternal fears (fears that come crowding in) that her child may be disabled and experiences the instinctive joy of discovering that these fears are unfounded. The greater fear – that she will die – makes hers (in a felicitous oxymoron) a 'fearful joy', but the sense that there is a redemptive aspect to Magda's death remains. However, the story does not finish on a note of triumphant, liberated expression, but rather with another image of repression, of (self-)enforced silence:

> And the moment Magda's feathered round head and her pencil legs and her balloonish belly and zigzag arms splashed against the fence, the steel voices went mad in their growling, urging Rosa to run to the spot where Magda had fallen from her flight against the electrified fence; but of course Rosa did not obey them. She only stood, because if she ran they would shoot, and if she tried to pick up the sticks of Magda's body they would shoot, and if she let the wolf's screech ascending now through the ladder of her skeleton break out, they would shoot; so she took Magda's shawl and filled her own mouth with it, stuffed it in and stuffed it in, until she was swallowing up the wolf's screech and tasting the cinammon and almond depth of Magda's saliva; and Rosa drank Magda's shawl until it dried. (9–10)

'Until it dried' – not, as we might expect, 'until she died'. Indeed, as the later story, 'Rosa', confirms, the implication of this ending is that Rosa will survive, but that she has to silence herself forever to do it. Even in the midst of her dreadful grief, she is pragmatic enough to realize that to give vent to it would mean her death, as it did Magda's. Is it to read the story too allegorically to suggest that this functions as a parable for the ambivalence of the American-Jewish writer, whose desire to speak of the Holocaust, to give voice to his or her personal grief at the loss of six million Jews, co-exists with the fear that to do so would mean being found, in Langer's words, 'guilty of some unprincipled violation of a sacred shrine' (Langer 1996: 76)? As 'successful' as Ozick's treatment of the Holocaust is (and it is a powerful, memorable story), it cannot help 'aestheticizing' and 'poeticizing' it. Moreover, because Ozick herself is aware of this tendency, her diction throughout manifests a tension between elaboration and reticence, a tension

which is finally resolved when Rosa (and the story itself) retreats, guiltily, into silence. This tension between the desire to speak – to break the silence – and the compulsion to preserve intact what Jane Smiley, in a different context, has called 'the unbroken surface of the unsaid' (Smiley 1992: 94) – the conviction that some things are unspeakable – recurs in two more of the best (and most frequently anthologized) short stories of the 1980s, Lesléa Newman's 'A Letter to Harvey Milk' and Rebecca Goldstein's 'The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish'.[7]

Newman is probably best known as the lesbian author of a number of childrens' books – the most (in)famous of which is *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1990) – which have sought to challenge homophobic attitudes towards gay parents.[8] She began her literary career as a poet but in the last ten years she has emerged as one of the most exciting new voices in American-Jewish fiction, typically dealing with controversial subjects (child abuse, eating disorders, anti-Semitism and gay sexuality) in a Yiddish-inflected English which she has called 'Yinglish' (quoted in Shapiro et al. 1994: 240). Goldstein is a very different sort of writer: her fiction is self-consciously intellectual (as the titles of her first two novels, *The Mind-Body Problem* [1983] and *The Late-Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind* [1989] suggest), and unapologetically literary. Like many of her contemporaries, she struggles both within her fiction and without to reconcile a deep-seated commitment to Judaism with a feminist sensibility that often seems at odds with it, and in 'Raizel Kaidish' she characteristically explores the impact of ideology on the lives of individuals.

Unlike Ozick's story, in which the context and location of the action is never explicitly specified, but is instead implied, through the accumulation of small details (such as the descriptions of 'the Star sewn into Rosa's coat', of 'the bad wind with pieces of black in it', which later becomes 'the ash-stippled wind' and then 'the bitter fatty floating smoke' [6, 7, 9] and the references to Magda's 'Aryan' features), Goldstein's story formally announces its subject in its opening sentence: 'In 1945 the following incident took place in the death camp of Buchenwald' (Goldstein 1994: 227). Yet, as its title implies, this is a story as much about the legacy – the afterlife, as it were – of the Holocaust, as it is about the event itself. In 'Raizel Kaidish' the very existence of the narrator, Rose, is bound up with the events of the Holocaust: she is named after a fellow inmate of her mother's, who plans to save a friend condemned to death for being 'too weak to work' by impersonating her, 'and when they saw how strong and fit for work

she was, it would be all right' (229). Whether she really believes that this might happen, or whether she intends simply to sacrifice herself in her friend's place is not clear, but at any rate 'Someone informed on the girls and they were both gassed' (229).

Like Linda Grant, the British-Jewish novelist whose parents believed that 'you were never too young to learn about the Holocaust' (Grant 1998a: 66), Rose's 'moral education began at an early age. It consisted at first of tales from the camp [...] in the tales there were only saints and sinners, heroes and villains' (Goldstein 1994: 229). Rose resents the burden that is placed on her, but at the same time feels that this resentment is illegitimate, a betrayal of her mother, and so guiltily represses it:

> Hadn't she suffered enough? Shouldn't I try to do everything to make it up to her? By hating her I joined the ranks of her enemies. I allied myself with the murderers. (Goldstein 1994: 234).

The irony of this last sentence is only confirmed at the end of the story (though the acute reader may have guessed the truth from the outset), when Rose's mother, on her deathbed, reveals 'that it had been she who had informed on Raizel Kaidish. She asked my forgiveness' (240). However, this revelation conceals as much as it reveals. The final sentence begs the question: forgiveness for what? For having allied herself with the murderers of Raizel? For having deceived Rose? Or for using Rose as a means of expiating her guilt, atoning for the destruction of one young life by creating another? After all, what Rose comes to resent more than anything is not so much the rigidity and relentless didactic intensity of her upbringing, but what this implied: 'I knew what no child should ever know: that my mother had had for me some definite reason, and that she would always see me in terms of this reason' (235).

The moral ambiguities of Goldstein's story do not begin and end here. Rather, there is throughout the tale a disconcerting use of what Norma Rosen has called 'The Second Life of Holocaust Imagery':[9]

> For a mind engraved with the Holocaust, gas is always *that* gas. Shower means their shower. Ovens are those ovens. A train is a freight car crammed with suffocating children: it arrives at the suburban station in a burst of power and noise, there is a moment of hideous hallucination that is really only remembering, and then one steps onto the train and opens the newspaper. Of course this

> does not always happen. Some days the sky is simply blue and we do not wonder how a blue sky looked to those on their way to the crematoria. (Rosen 1992: 52)

Because of the context of her story, Goldstein's mind (and Rose's) is indeed engraved with the Holocaust, and for those readers similarly alive to the resonances of the imagery to which Rosen refers, the language of 'Raizel Kaidish', like that of Rose's mother, simultaneously illuminates and obscures the truth. As a child, Rose tells us,

> my images of the camp were vivid and detailed [. . .] It seemed to me that I knew the feel through decaying shoes of the sharp stones in the main square, the sight, twice daily, of the terrifying roll call.
>
> It seemed I, too, had glanced up at the open sky, and wondered that others saw the same sky. (230)

While Rosen, on certain days, 'wonder[s] how a blue sky looked to those on their way to the crematoria', and Rose's empathy with the camp inmates is so great that she 'wonder[s] that others outside saw the same sky', they are both haunted by this second life of Holocaust imagery. As she grows older, however, Rose 'felt anger: an unvoiced and unacknowledged outrage' which manifests itself in the (guilt-ridden) fantasy of belonging to 'another family, with parents who were frivolously pursuing happiness, and didn't have numbers burned into their arms' (234).

For Rose the cherished American ideal – enshrined in the constitution – of the individual's pursuit of happiness is enviable and, as the Jewish daughter of Holocaust survivors, unattainable. Yet, because of the persistence in her consciousness of Holocaust imagery (in this case the prisoner numbers branded on her parents' arms) she also associates it with frivolity, so that her fantasy (and, by implication, her attitude towards her own Jewishness) is ambivalent: Rose craves a life without the historical burden of Jewish suffering, but also fears that such a life would be inconsequential, meaningless. Likewise, her attraction to the positivist theories she encounters at college (which give her the intellectual ammunition to challenge her mother's philosophy, with its unquestioning faith in moral absolutes and objective truth) is compromised by the very terms in which it is articulated. When her 'self-intoxicated young professor' tells her and her fellow students 'why we were lucky, insofar as we were philosophy students, to have been born now; that it was now possible to see that previous genera-

tions had devoted themselves to pseudo-questions concerning the nature of Reality, Truth, and the Good; and that such questions were expressions of logical confusion' (235) the reader whose mind is engraved with the Holocaust will realize that Rose is lucky to have been born when she was *insofar as she is a Jew* (to have been of a previous generation – her parents' – would have meant certain suffering and likely death) and that to dismiss concepts of reality, truth and good can end in the moral relativism and intellectual bankruptcy of Holocaust revisionism.

When she comes home after her first semester at college, having '*cramm[ed]* for the visit home' with 'a *concentration* I've never attained since' (236, my italics), she confronts her mother with her new ideas. Initially, however, to Rose's incredulity and indignation, she will not take the bait: 'Impossible woman! What was wrong with her? Her *kindling point* was usually so frighteningly low, but tonight she wouldn't *burn*. She wouldn't even *flicker*' (238, my italics). When, eventually, her mother does respond to her goading, she accuses Rose of having '*so little substance* that at your first *exposure* to the jargon of these anti-thinkers you *disintegrate*', and Rose feels the '*deadening fog*, of shame and guilt [...] settling back over everything' (239, my italics).[10]

I am not suggesting that all these phrases must be read figuratively, but taken cumulatively they tend (at least to the reader sensitized in the way Rosen suggests) to invoke the processes of extermination employed in the Nazi death camps. Goldstein's diction operates on two levels, literal and metaphorical, and part of the story's power resides in the tension between these different levels of meaning; between the compulsion to speak of the Holocaust and the desire to repress consciousness of it. It is also one of the strengths of the story that, just as the narrative offers these different interpretive possibilities (rather than insisting on one) so the debate between Rose's positivism and her mother's utilitarianism remains just that – a debate.

Although Rose's mother is alive to the dangers implicit in the seductive rhetoric of positivism, she is blind to the disturbing implications, personal and ideological, of her own philosophical position. For the mother, 'the ethical view is the impersonal view', 'The moral obligation is nothing over and above the obligation to be logically consistent, and virtue reduces to rationality' and the individual has no 'special metaphysical existence' (231–2). Yet this implacable utilitarianism is uncomfortably close to Nazism itself, which justified the elimination of undesirable minorities and degenerate individuals in

the name of the greater good of the German people. The mother's 'uncompromising rationality' (232) effectively denies individuality itself, and therefore the possibility of heroism or cowardice. If virtue is simply rationality, vice irrationality, then there is no *moral* distinction between the behaviour of Raizel Kaidish and the mother in the camp; instead their conduct is the result of their differing capacity for intellectual reasoning. This is a convenient sophistry, but the consolation of philosophy is not sufficient to assuage the mother's guilt. The irony of her embroidering Socrates' famous maxim 'The unexamined life is not worth living' and hanging it over her daughter's bed, like the irony of her fetishization of the Truth, is neither simple nor stark: it is not that the mother is a hypocrite who lies about the past and refuses to examine her life, but rather that she does and does not lie, does and does not examine her life, does and does not break the silence. Saul Bellow's rejoinder to Socrates is worth recalling here: '*if the unexplained life is not worth living, the explained life is unbearable, too*' (Bellow 1965: 322). It is because she cannot help examining and explaining herself, and yet cannot help falling short of doing so thoroughly, that she only half-names her daughter after Raizel (her name is Rose, not Raizel, though 'She called me Raizel [. . .] in rare moments of tenderness' [231]), just as she only half-tells the truth. Only when she is in the final stages of terminal cancer, knowing that she will soon retreat, finally, into silence, can she articulate her own role in the death of Raizel Kaidish.

Like 'Raizel Kaidish', 'Harvey Milk' deals with the legacy of Holocaust stories, told and untold, and with the relationship between a camp survivor and a young woman (theirs, however, is a surrogate, rather than an actual, parent-child relationship). Newman's is an intricately structured story, written in the form of a series of journal entries and letters by Harry Weinberg, a 77-year-old widower and camp survivor. At the start of the story Harry has begun, somewhat diffidently, attending a writing class ('why not, something to pass the time') taught by an idealistic young Jewish woman ('She says everybody has something important to say [. . .] when you're young you believe things like that' [Newman 1990: 324]). The opening line of the story – 'The teacher says we should write about our life [. . .] So *nu*, what's there to tell?' (324) – alerts us immediately to Harry's scepticism, and when he is given his next assignment, 'to write a letter to somebody from our past, somebody who's no longer with us' (325), his initial reaction is that 'it's a little *meshugeh* [mad]' (325). In 'Rosa', the sequel to 'The Shawl', Rosa, now living in Florida, writes endless

mental letters to her dead baby; Harry's first thoughts, too, are of his family killed in the Holocaust: 'my sister Frieda, my mother, my father, may they all rest in peace' (325). In the event, however, he writes neither to them, nor to his recently deceased wife, Fannie, but to his friend, the assassinated former mayor of San Francisco, Jew, and gay rights campaigner, Harvey Milk. With a mixture of indignation and resignation, he recalls the treatment of Milk's killer, Dan White:

> In the old country, I saw things you shouldn't know from [sic], things you couldn't imagine one person could do to another. But here in America, a man climbs through the window, kills the Mayor of San Francisco, kills Harvey Milk, and a couple years later he's walking around on the street? This I never thought I'd see in my whole life. But from a country that kills the Rosenbergs, I should expect something different? (326)

Harry's response to Harvey's death is framed by references to the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust (which he cannot, or will not, name explicitly, alluding vaguely to 'things you couldn't imagine one person doing to another'), and to the execution for spying of the Jewish couple, the Rosenbergs, by the American state. By placing him in the company of these Jewish victims of intolerance, Harvey's homosexuality is implicitly linked with his Jewishness: just as the Jews of the Holocaust had unspeakable things done to them because of their difference, and the Rosenbergs are killed for their political dissidence, so, too, Harvey Milk dies as the result of society's prejudices.

It turns out that Harry's teacher is also gay, and that her parents have disowned her: 'I tried to explain I couldn't help being gay, like I couldn't help being a Jew, but that they didn't want to hear' (331). In order to compensate for this enforced exile from her Jewish roots, she wants to 'know about her own people, maybe write a book' (332), hence her special interest in her students' stories. In particular, she wants to know about Harry's past:

> about my childhood in the old country [. . .] about the boat ride to America, she wants to know did my parents speak Yiddish to me when I was growing up. 'Harry [. . .] when I hear old people talking Yiddish, it's like a love letter blowing in the wind. I try to run after them, and sometimes I catch a phrase that makes me cry or a word that makes me laugh. Even if I don't understand, it always touches my heart.'[11] (330–1)

> Harry's response is characteristically deflating:
> *Oy*, this teacher has some strange ideas. 'Why do you want to speak Jewish?
> [. . .] Here in America, everybody speaks English. You don't need it [. . .] You shouldn't think about the old days so much, let the dead rest in peace'. (331)

This exchange is typical of the ambivalence with which Newman, like Ozick and Goldstein, approaches the subject of the Holocaust. The teacher is careful, when questioning Harry, not to mention the Holocaust, instead talking around it. Yet Harry's response – 'let the dead rest in peace' – makes it clear that he knows what she wants to hear, and is unwilling to oblige. He also challenges her sentimentalization of Yiddish by taking a pragmatic view ('"You don't need it"') and by calling it 'Jewish' (thereby emphasizing that, unlike English, it is a language connoting ethnic difference).

However, when the teacher turns up to class one day sporting a pink triangle on her bag, Harry is wounded into breaking his silence.

> What right does she have to walk in here with that, that thing on her bag, to remind us of what we been through? Haven't we seen enough?
>
> Stories she wants. She wants we should cut our hearts open and give her stories so she could write a book. Well, alright, now I'll tell her a story. (334)

On the face of it, what we have here is an inversion of the situation in 'Raizel Kaidish': whereas in Goldstein's story the mother insists on telling, and retelling her tales of camp life, in 'Harvey Milk' it is the young woman who repeatedly attempts to persuade the recalcitrant old man to tell his tale; whereas in 'Raizel Kaidish' Rose is constantly being reminded by her mother of life in the camps, here it is the young woman who is reminding the old man, who would rather forget, of what he has gone through (even as he is vowing to break the taboo he cannot bring himself to name the pink triangle, resorting instead, as before, to the amorphous 'thing'). Yet when Harry finally tells his tale it is, like Rose's mother, not of his own suffering that he speaks, but that of his old friend Izzie.

One day Izzie arrives at Harry's apartment, distraught. He has seen a young man wearing a pink triangle and he tells Harry that '"The gays are wearing pink triangles just like in the war, just like in the camps"'

(335). Harry is incredulous and dismayed ('"No, this I can't believe. Why would they do a thing like that?"' [335]), but it soon becomes clear that what has upset Izzie is not the symbolism of the act itself, but rather the personal memories it has evoked.

Like Raizel Kaidish, Izzie forms a close friendship in the camp with one of his fellow inmates, Yussl. Like Raizel, he intervenes to save him when he is selected for execution:

> 'One morning [. . .] they pointed me to the right, *Yussl* to the left. I went a little crazy, I ran after him. "No, he stays with me, they made a mistake," I said, and I grabbed him by the hand and dragged him back in line. Why the guard didn't kill us right then, I couldn't tell you. Nothing made sense in that place.' (335–6)

From then on, the bond between them is strengthened, and they begin a homosexual relationship (which expresses itself in occasional mutual masturbation). Eventually, someone informs on Yussl, and, despite being brutally whipped and finally shot in front of the other prisoners, he refuses to divulge the name of his lover.

> 'I wanted to run to his side, but I didn't dare, so afraid I was. At one point he looked at me, right in the eye, as though he was saying, *Izzie, save yourself. Me, I'm finished, but you, you got a chance to live through this and tell the world our story*.' (337)

Just as Rosa will never forgive herself for not breaking her silence – for failing to identify herself as Magda's mother, for failing to join her in death – so Izzie cannot forgive himself for failing to identify himself as Yussl's lover and sharing his fate. Is it, in fact, precisely because to identify himself in this way would be to inscribe himself as homosexual that he cannot repeat his earlier instinctive gesture of solidarity, when he grabs Yussl and drags him away from the line of condemned men? If this were so, it might explain why Izzie's guilt is compounded by a second betrayal, a second silence: the fact that he does not tell the world their story for so long. When he finally does, the experience is so traumatic for him that Harry wonders whether 'maybe he was having a nervous breakdown' (337). In the end, the only comfort that Harry can offer him is physical:

> I stroked his head, I held him tight [. . .] I said his name over and over [. . .] He said my name once softly, *Heshel*, or maybe he said

> *Yussl*, I don't remember, but thank God he finally fell asleep. I tried to get up from the bed, but Izzie held onto me tight. So what could I do? [. . .] I held him all night long, and he slept like a baby. (337–8)

Has Harry really forgotten whether Izzie calls him 'Heshel' or 'Yussl'? Or is it that he doesn't want to remember? Or is it that he remembers only too well, but wants to preserve his silence? (Is it that, like Izzie himself, he does not want to acknowledge the extent of the intimacy he has shared with another man?) At any rate Harry's guilty secret, like Izzie's, confirms the connection (made implicitly in his letter to Harvey Milk) between the persecution of homosexuals and Jews. In spite of his outrage at the analogy between the stigmatization and victimization of Jews and gays implied by the pink triangle – in spite of the fact that he tells his story as an admonishment to the teacher ('Stories she wants [. . .] Well, alright, now I'll tell her a story') – Harry's response to the teacher's badge, like Izzie's response to the young man's, seems to validate the analogy even while it seeks to discredit it. This is not to say, of course, that homophobia in contemporary America is analogous to anti-Semitism in wartime Europe; but rather that gays, as well as Jews, were systematically rounded up and executed by the Nazis, and that protests against contemporary homophobia, like protests against contemporary anti-Semitism, may legitimately invoke the Holocaust.

Shortly after this incident, Izzie dies and Harry believes that this is no coincidence, hoping for the same fate for himself: 'now that he had told someone his deepest secret, he was ready to go, he could die in peace. Maybe now that I told, I can die in peace, too?' (338). Yet Newman's story is anything but an anodyne endorsement of the therapeutic culture now so dominant in America (and manifested most visibly in the plethora of daytime confessional talk shows popularized by Oprah Winfrey), in which to tell all is to achieve some sort of personal salvation. After all, Harry tells us that 'We [he and Izzie] never talked about that night' (338) and the story ends without Harry having spoken of his own Holocaust experiences. If the teacher's promptings and Izzie's confession have persuaded him to excavate his own long-buried past, then, far from providing any sense of resolution or redemption, it has stirred up feelings that he cannot cope with, and at the end of the story he vows to renew his silence: '*I can't write in this notebook no more [. . .] these stories are like a knife in my heart*' (338). Just as Magda and Rose's mother breaks her silence only to die, so Harry's storytelling has arguably not so much prepared him for, as

precipitated, his death (indeed his final letter has the tone of a suicide note, though there are no explicit indications that it is one).

There are important formal and thematic differences between the three stories I have discussed. Whereas Ozick's story is set during the Holocaust itself, Goldstein's and Newman's, in common with most American-Jewish Holocaust fiction, tell their tales retrospectively. Ozick's story is a third-person narrative written in a terse, visceral and yet at the same time poetical prose while Goldstein's and Newman's stories are meditative first-person narratives, the former in the analytical, sophisticated voice of a second-generation, university-educated woman, the latter in the emotional, garrulous, Yiddish-inflected voice of an ageing male camp survivor.

All the stories, however, are haunted by betrayal (and the resulting guilt): Stella's betrayal of her sister, when she steals her shawl; Rosa's betrayal of Magda when she witnesses her death in silence; Rose's mother's betrayal of Raizel; Rose's betrayal of her mother (by allying herself with the positivists); Izzie's betrayal of Yussl. This may be simply in the nature of the material they are dealing with (after all, even those who betrayed no one are said often to suffer from what is called 'survivor guilt', that is guilt at the mere fact of having had the luck to survive when so many perished), but I would argue that these ambivalent representations of Jewishness reflect the writers' own uneasiness with their material. To write about the Holocaust is, inescapably, to aestheticize it, because to write about anything is to aestheticize it; the artistic process necessitates selecting and ordering, heightening and transforming, rather than simply reproducing, reality. Because of the peculiar (arguably unique) status of the Holocaust, this process becomes hedged about with guilt: if, as Adorno famously claimed, to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric, how much more barbaric is it to write poetry (or fiction) *about* Auschwitz? My own view is that no serious writer should be self-censoring, that these short stories are successful not in spite of their aestheticizing of their subject matter, but because of it. Fiction cannot succeed as fiction if it is constrained by fact (though it may have a better chance of succeeding if it is *informed* by fact). As the camp survivor Jorge Semprun has observed: 'Telling a story well, that means: so as to be understood. You can't manage it without a bit of artifice. Enough artifice to make it art' (Semprun quoted in Sinclair 1998a: 43).

Ultimately, the tension between the desire to write about the Holocaust and the guilt at doing so (an irresolvable tension) is, as much as the Holocaust itself, the theme of these stories. Each story

manifests what I would call the ambivalent aesthetic of Holocaust fiction written by American-Jewish women. On the one hand, they share the conviction that they have the right to violate (indeed the responsibility of violating) the twin taboos of American-Jewish male literary pre-eminence and the Holocaust – to defy the expectation that they will remain silent – if they are to explain themselves; on the other hand, they fear that if they do not comply with these expectations, and retreat once again into silence, they risk betraying their heritage and compromising themselves as writers, women and Jews.

British-Jewish women: life as fiction, fiction as life

> There is no fiction or non-fiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative. (E.L. Doctorow quoted in Young 1988: 200)
>
> I decided to treat both fictions and autobiographies as 'stories' because I believe that genre boundaries have softened between the cultural pressures on women to be silent [...] and the equal and opposite pressure of their need to become subjects by writing 'the female self in process'. (Burstein 1996: 14)
>
> Because we do not remember everything that has ever happened to us, because we must filter and select and edit the experiences and information that enter our senses every day and transform it into a meaningful narrative, our lives are essentially stories. Starting out to find out the 'facts' about my mother, I always had to bear in mind that in the end all I was going to have was a fable. (Grant 1998a: 293)

If the breakthrough for American-Jewish women as fiction writers has only really happened over the last two decades, for British-Jewish women it is still an elusive goal. There have been a number of false dawns: in 1970 Bernice Rubens won the Booker Prize for her novel, *The Elected Member* (1969), about the mental illness of a Rabbi's son, and Elaine Feinstein published her first novel, *The Circle* (1970), to great acclaim. In the following year Ruth Fainlight published her first collection of short stories, *Daylife and Nightlife* (1971), several of which had Jewish themes, and Gerda Charles published her fifth, and most ambitious novel, *The Destiny Waltz* (1971), which, in the words of the flyleaf of the first edition, provides 'a panoramic view of English and

Jewish life [note the implied dissociation of the two] on many levels of society over the last fifty years' (Charles 1971). Of these writers, Rubens and Feinstein continue to write well-received novels (though Feinstein's reputation rests more on her poetry than her fiction), Fainlight has published only one further collection of stories (she is better known for her poetry and for being the wife of the English novelist Alan Sillitoe), and Charles gave up writing altogether after *The Destiny Waltz* to care for her mother and never published another novel. A number of fine British-Jewish women writers have emerged since then – Lisa Appignanesi, Leila Berg, Anita Brookner, Cheryl Moskowitz, Jenny Diski, Lucy Ellmann, Eva Figes, Esther Freud, Karen Gershon, Linda Grant, Anne Karpf, Elena Lappin, Deborah Levy, Julia Pascal, Zina Rohan, Diane Samuels and Michelene Wandor chief among them – but of these only Brookner, Diski, and Figes have established solid reputations as novelists (though Ellmann, Freud, Grant and Moskowitz have made promising starts). Of the others, Levy, Pascal, Samuels and Wandor are best known for their drama (though Levy and Wandor also write fiction), Berg for her children's stories, and Karpf and Rohan for their journalism. Even Diski and Grant, two of the most successful of the current crop of British-Jewish novelists, reach wider readerships through their journalism (they publish regularly in *The Guardian* and *The London Review of Books*, respectively) than their fiction. Moreover, their best works are arguably the non-fiction *Skating To Antarctica* (1997) and *Remind Me Who I Am, Again* (1998), respectively. These two books, together with Gillian Rose's *Love's Work* (1995), Leila Berg's *Flickerbook* (1997), Rachel Liechtenstein's *Rodinstksy's Room* (2000),[12] Louise Kehoe's *In This Dark House* (1995),[13] Anne Karpf's *The War After* (1996), and Lisa Appignanesi's *Losing the Dead* (1999), constitute a body of autobiographical work by British-Jewish women that far outstrips anything they have produced under the rubric of fiction.

However, the demarcation between fiction and non-fiction, if we accept that there is one at all, is troubling in all of these works, and particularly so in the case of the last three, which all deal with the Holocaust and its psychological aftermath by self-consciously problematizing the relationship between memory and imagination, history and story, fact and fiction.

Lisa Appignanesi is the author of several popular psychological and historical thrillers, of scholarly books on James, Proust and Musil, Simone de Beauvoir, the women of Freud's circle (with John Forrester), and of a history of cabaret. In *Losing the Dead* she turns her

hand to writing what the subtitle of the book designates 'A Family Memoir', which is both an attempt to retrieve and immortalize her family history, and a meditation on the impossibility of doing so. The book opens with a disturbing account of her father's delirious death-bed hallucinations in which 'he transformed the ordinary London hospital ward where he lay into an SS camp' (Appignanesi 2000: 3), doctors becoming Nazi officers and medical equipment instruments of torture. As one might expect from a Freudian, Appignanesi interprets this as a return of the repressed, noting that 'He hadn't talked of the war years since my childhood. Yet at the end they were there intact – like some wilfully obscured and venomous secret, which all his later experience couldn't obliterate' (4), but also as a graphic illustration of the slippage between past and present, of the fact that 'Memory can [...] pollute as well as clarify' (6). Appignanesi has always been interested in the processes of memory (as her work on Freud and the title of one of her novels, *Memory and Desire* [1991] suggest), but the particular impetus for this memoir is provided by the recognition that, with the death of her father and the onset of Alzheimer's Disease in her mother – her 'last gateway to family memory' (7) – her own identity is mysteriously threatened. As Linda Grant (whose mother's Alzheimer's Disease is both the stimulus for and the subject of her own family memoir, *Remind Me Who I Am, Again*) is told by a care worker:

> 'When a member of the family starts to lose their memory [...] It's almost a challenge to your own existence. If you live in the memory of someone else and their memory starts to fade [...] it's almost like you don't exist yourself'. (Grant 1998a: 268).

Like Grant, then, Appignanesi sets out to salvage what she can from the remains of her mother's memory, 'scraps of unruly experience which refuse the consecutive shape of story' (7), in order to shore up her own sense of identity, to explain herself. From the outset, however, she is acutely aware of the difficulty of establishing the veracity of Holocaust narratives.

> The objects sought for, alluded to in story, even documented in the formality of 'survivor interviews' may or may not be there, or they may be so written over by tales and the passage of history, that one can only guess from their traces at their original use and shape. (8)

Hence, she recognizes, her desire 'to give my mother's past back to her, intact [...] is impossible. The dead are lost. But maybe [...] by remembering them, we lose them properly' (8). Rather than attempting to restore what is lost, then, Appignanesi resolves instead, paradoxically, to lose the dead properly by *imaginatively* reconstructing their lives; to embrace, rather than resist, 'the Machiavellian slippage between truth and fiction' (30); to exploit, rather than suppress, her novelistic skills in the service of her family biography.

To a degree this is a pragmatic decision (in order to fill in the gaps, to piece together a narrative with 'the consecutive shape of story' [7] she must invent scenes and speculate about motives), but there is also a sense in which to treat her parents' wartime experiences in the same way as she would fiction is to be faithful to her own experience of them. After all, as a child her parents' Holocaust stories, like those told to the narrator of 'Raizel Kaidish' by her mother, 'were my childhood fairy tales [...] No one bothered with Grimm' (Appignanesi 2000: 22).

Her response to these tales, like Rose's in Goldstein's story, is a longing

> to bury the past and its traces. Above all, I longed to be as ordinary as all my suburban friends. They had nice, bland, bridge-playing, club-going parents. Parents who could speak English in full unaccented sentences. Parents who talked of mundane things, and not of concentration camps and ghettos and anti-Semitic laws and the dead and the missing. (61)

Yet Appignanesi's family romance, like Rose's, is riven by ambivalence: attractive though her friends' Gentile parents might seem to an adolescent desperate to fit in, the price of comfortable conformity is high, as the connotations of the words 'ordinary', 'suburban', 'bland' and 'mundane' suggest: to be assimilated, this passage implies, is to lead a banal, trivial existence. This ambivalence is shared by Appignanesi's parents, who retain (one of) the Gentile alias(es) adopted out of necessity during the war when they settle in Quebec in the 1950s, in an attempt to erase the 'shameful taint' of their Jewishness (35), while at the same time insisting that their son undergo 'that ritual passage into manhood which is a Bar Mitzvah' (26). In particular Appignanesi's mother, while on the one hand contemptuous of the peasant Poles with whom she grew up (they were 'too simple, not on a par with the cultivated Jews' [34]), on the other tells with great pride the story of how her prospective mother-

in-law mistook her (because of her blonde hair and blue eyes) for one of them.

This ambivalence also infiltrates the (conflicting) stories of their own history that they tell their children, stories which increasingly resemble a series of 'tableaux [that] took on brighter and brighter colours, painted over the horrors of the War from which they had emerged' (81), to the extent that Appignanesi undergoes an existential and epistemological crisis:

> Truth is a slippery substance and can easily slip away in a kind of familial osmosis. I got to the point where I was no longer sure where I had been born [...] Well into my teens, I remember going into a kind of shivering panic when asked my name, but especially when asked my place of birth [...] Even when I told the truth, I had a shuddering sense that I was probably lying. (32–3)

Paradoxically, the more Appignanesi hears about her parents' wartime experiences, the less she feels she knows, until eventually her private uncertainty about her own identity becomes a more philosophical uncertainty about the nature of truth and knowledge. In an attempt to establish some of the facts of her family history, Appignanesi travels to Poland, but instead of clarification what she finds is more confusion. The Poles are involved in their own collective rewriting of history, in which the virulent anti-Semitism for which they are notorious is erased: Appignanesi is shown 'a dramatised documentary about the Lódz ghetto in which not a single Pole was portrayed, so that the ghetto existed in a nowhere, a floating island removed from context' (77). Moreover, when she meets the son of old family friends, he denies that his mother was Jewish, leaving her to wonder whether his father 'simply found it more expedient [...] not to taint his son [...] with his wife's ambiguous origins' (93). This middle section of the book alternates between Appignanesi's account of her (mostly futile) attempts to find documentation relating to her family, and her narration of their wartime adventures. There is no attempt to disguise the tension between the two – between the stubborn opacity of her experiences in present-day Poland and the dramatic clarity of the experiences of her family in wartime Poland – nor any attempt to conceal the means by which the latter is achieved. Take the following episode, for example:

I imagine the scene of the family reunion in the apartment in

> Pruszków. The curtains are tightly drawn. There is a small fire burning in the grate. A candle at the centre of the dinner table sheds a desultory light. My grandmother, Sara, weeps. She weeps with joy because her son is alive and with her. She weeps in distress because of the news he brings. She urges him to eat. My father paces and smokes, his ears ever alert to the sounds on the staircase. (122, my italics)

Appignanesi begins by drawing the reader's attention to the fact that what follows is an imaginative reconstruction of events at which the author herself was of course not present. Yet there is nothing apologetic, speculative or hypothetical about the tone of this passage: on the contrary, the series of short, declarative sentences, couched in the present tense, has a compelling immediacy and authority that only fiction (without the inhibiting concerns for factual accuracy, and the need for evidence to substantiate personal motivation, which constrain the scrupulous historian) can attain. But if this is the case, why, one might ask, not simply write a novel based on her family's experiences? Here is Linda Grant again, explaining the genesis of her family memoir:

> I had been struggling for some months to write a novel based on my family. I felt that the fictional characters I was creating were in some bizarre way robbing my relatives of their own biographies. The characters were flat, inauthentic, every made-up incident an insult to my family's many, varied truths. So I agreed to go ahead [and write her memoir instead]. (Grant 1998a: 298)

Like Grant, Appignanesi found, I suspect, that, paradoxically, she was able to give her novelistic instincts freer rein in the (auto)biographical format of *Losing the Dead* than would have been the case with conventional fiction. There are also compelling pragmatic reasons for adopting such a strategy: readers are more willing to believe the unbelievable if it is presented in the form of non-fiction, and Appignanesi is acutely aware of the 'incommensurability of wartime atrocities spoken of in the safety [of peacetime]' (63). Ultimately, Appignanesi's book is about precisely this disjunction (and yet at the same time intimate relationship) between her identity and her parents' lives. As she comments: 'My reality and my parents' wartime realities are worlds apart. But psychic states float about in families and can land wherever there's space for them' (16). The war

for her is both remote and near, both inaccessible and intensely felt, something that finished before she was born, and something that will only finish when she dies:

> My parents' war was over. But the war they had internalised didn't really end for a long time. It played out its pressures, its disguises and its pain in the living for at least the length of my childhood. And its traces lingered on. Like some ghost, it haunted our lives and appeared in odd places. (217)

It is this internalized war – this spectre of the Holocaust that haunts Holocaust survivors and their children – that Louise Kehoe and Anne Karpf focus on in their family memoirs.

Although Louise Kehoe's book is subtitled 'A Memoir' it has a prefatory note which immediately alerts us to the fundamental tension between the aesthetic imperatives of the narrative form (the need to select and shape material) and the claims to historical fidelity implicit in autobiographical writing:

> This book represents the truth as I see it, but because of the sheer complexity of the story it has been necessary to introduce occasional elements of fiction. In addition the names of a number of individuals and places have been changed in order to protect certain individuals' privacy. (Kehoe 1997)

Clearly intended as an honest disclosure of authorial subjectivity, and as such an attempt to gain the trust of the reader, Kehoe's ingenuousness nonetheless risks mitigating the impact of the book: to concede that a narrative represents only a partial truth may invite the suspicion that it is not simply partial, but partisan; to admit that there are occasional elements of fiction is to invite the speculation that everything may be fictional; to acknowledge that the names of some individuals and places have been changed raises the question of which, if any, have not been changed. The very next words we encounter, after all, are the name of a house – 'World's End' – which a sceptical reader might deem suspiciously portentous: too symbolically convenient to be true. Such suspicions may rather be confirmed than allayed by the explanation provided: 'Because of its blissful remoteness – *but also, I suspect, because of the catastrophe that was about to engulf Europe* – they called the house World's End' (5, my italics). The italicized phrase highlights two of the central problems which Kehoe has in telling her

story: first, that she has to resort to speculation when attempting to account for her parents' actions before she was born and during the period when she was too young to have any personal recollection of the events described;[14] and second, the temptation faced by any autobiographer, or biographer (and this is, in fact, like Appignanesi's book, both a family memoir and an autobiography), to imbue history with a retrospective significance. In fact, Kehoe suggests that her parents named their house because of the catastrophe (which acts here as a synonym, or codename for the Holocaust, which cannot be named for reasons that emerge towards the end of the book) which was about to engulf Europe not because she wants to attribute to them an unlikely prescience, but because she wishes (like a good fiction writer) to foreshadow the disclosure which forms the climax of her narrative. That is to say, she employs many of the techniques of fiction to create suspense by withholding vital information, while at the same time carefully embedding hints of future developments within the narrative.

This she does with such consummate skill that when the central revelation finally arrives – that her father, Berthold Lubetkin, a well-known expatriate Russian architect who marries an Englishwoman and, at the height of his career in London, decides to retreat to a remote part of rural England and become a reclusive farmer, is actually a Jew whose parents died in the Holocaust – it is, in the manner of great fictional denouements, both startling and predictable. Just as the narrator, when she finally discovers the truth, realizes that Lubetkin's own memoir 'was full of clues, if only one knew what one was looking for [...] viewed through the prism of Dad's Jewishness, the anecdotes took on terrible significance: each one seemed to have an allegorical twist in the tail' (221), so her own narrative is punctuated by incidents which, with what she calls 'the ineffable wisdom of hindsight' (219), become pregnant with meaning.

On her first visit to Europe, for example, she notices 'a memorial to the thousands of Jews who were zealously rounded up by the Vichy regime and deported to their deaths in Auschwitz' (97). She goes on to say that

> These images terrified me. They haunted my dreams – they still do – refusing to be dispelled by daylight. And long after the Renaissance palaces and Rococo interiors, the frescoes, pilasters and pediments had melted into a gilded blur in my memory, the images of Europe's brutal past stayed doggedly in focus, stark and

> incontrovertible, as though in some strange way, whether I liked it or not, they belonged to me. (97)

Again, because Kehoe alerts us to the presence of her adult consciousness (in the phrase 'they still do') co-existing with, and perhaps superimposing itself upon, her youthful impressions, her intuition that she is mysteriously connected to the Jewish victims of the Nazis may seem the product of retrospective consideration, rather than an authentic recollection. Yet ultimately none of this diminishes the power of her memoir, or compromises its integrity; on the contrary, it enhances both.

Early in the book Lubetkin announces, in the manner of Rose's positivist lecturer in 'Raizel Kaidish', that 'Facts [. . .] do not exist. The data one chooses to select and record depend solely upon the theory one is trying to prove. Facts are purely a matter of opinion' (33). At this point Kehoe draws attention to the discrepancy between her childish incomprehension and her mature understanding of her father's beliefs: 'Little did I realize [. . .] that Dad's disdain for facts was not the product of some lofty philosophical purism, nor even of simple sophistry, but came instead from the desperate desire he felt to escape from the awful realities of his own sad past' (33–4).

Kehoe's narrative is an attempt to restore the ruins of her childhood by reinstating into her own life story the facts that Lubetkin hid from her for so long, the facts that she hopes will explain, and consequently provide some consolation for, her father's brutal treatment of her and her family. And these facts are the familiar ones of Holocaust survival: guilt, betrayal, self-hatred.[15]

Recalling the relationship between her brother, Robby, and her father, Kehoe observes that

> Dad used to taunt Robby [. . .] about his nose. Despite the fact that Robby's nose and Dad's were identical in every respect [. . .] Dad used to comment at every opportunity about how ugly and prominent Robby's nose was, and how he was going to take Robby to Vienna and make him have plastic surgery on it to abate its intrusive presence and bring it down to a more acceptable shape and size. (67)

At the time this seems to be simply one of many examples of Lubetkin's sadism, but when the truth about his identity emerges, it becomes clear that his derisive remarks are really manifestations of

internalized anti-Semitism: he is disturbed by the prominence of Robby's nose not in spite of, but because of, its resemblance to his own, and because of the Jewishness which he takes it to signify. Kehoe sees the origin of this self-hatred in the 'deracinated sort of Jewishness' with which Lubetkin was raised, concluding that, as the son of 'privileged, assimilated Jews' who sent him to 'exclusive schools where he was often the only Jew and where, inevitably, he became the target of endless bullying and cruelty', he resented his Jewishness 'as a curse and a blight' (214). Yet it is the events of the war that turn this typical desire to efface one's difference in order to be accepted, into a pathological self-hatred.

Having fled their home in St Petersburg in 1917 after the Revolution, Lubetkin's parents, to whom Kehoe's book is dedicated, settled in Warsaw, where Lubetkin studied architecture. As a committed Marxist himself, however, Lubetkin was constantly in trouble with the authorities, and with his father, who demanded that he renounce his Bolshevik activities. The rift between father and son worsened until Lubetkin left Poland, eventually settling in London and establishing the architectural practice which was to make him a minor celebrity in the 1930s. While he was rising to eminence in England, however, his parents had been arrested and imprisoned in the Warsaw ghetto and were subsequently deported to Auschwitz and killed. How much of this Lubetkin knew, and when he knew it, is not entirely clear, and so the key question remains unanswered:[16]

> Did he try to rescue his parents? I hope so. Maybe he tried and failed – who could have known, after all [...] what unspeakable horrors lay in store for European Jewry? One thing is certain, though. He hated himself for failing to save them, hated himself for surviving, for living through the war in the safety and serenity of rural England. And, having hated himself to capacity, he let his bitter self-loathing spill over to taint his children, those three dark-eyed, dark-haired echoes of himself, who reminded him daily of his parents and his past.
>
> Somehow he had to find a way to deal with this terrible burden of guilt and self-hatred. The identity and fate of his parents must remain a profound secret, and to that end he must reinvent himself. Every thread connecting him to his past must be severed – most of all the fact of his Jewishness. (215)

Kehoe's rhetorical question ('who could have known [...] what

unspeakable horrors lay in store for European Jewry?') seems to undermine her earlier claim that the naming of 'World's End' implied such foreknowledge, or at least an intimation of the fate of European Jewry, and to offer the possibility of extenuating circumstances for her father's failure to rescue his parents. However, it is clear that, the final chapter of the book notwithstanding (which is addressed to Lubetkin and which finishes on a note of reconciliation), Kehoe does not intend to grant absolution to her father. For her, his greatest crime against his parents was not the fact that he escaped (selfishly or fortuitously) their fate, but that he deliberately suppressed all knowledge of them, telling his children that he had assumed the name Lubetkin (and with it a false identity) in order to flee from political persecution. In 'ruthlessly effacing their memory', and disowning his past (and also, by implication, in marrying a non-Jewish woman whose 'fair-skinned Englishness' [23] would ensure that his children's Jewishness was genetically diluted and religiously annulled), Lubetkin denies his children the legacy of a Jewish identity and gains for Hitler 'a posthumous victory' (212).

This victory seems complete when Kehoe, having fled the terrors of World's End and embarked on a life of her own in London, changes her name to Whittaker because it 'sounded so thoroughly unremarkable, so neutral and so unquestionably English' (128). In fact, the final chapter is an epilogue, or coda: the real ending of the book comes at the end of the penultimate chapter, when Kehoe reclaims this legacy by formally converting to Judaism. Moreover, the whole book is in a sense a righting – as well as a (re)writing – of the past. By breaking her father's silence about his own Jewishness, and about the Holocaust in particular, she performs an act which is at once redemptive and vengeful: redemptive in that her own suffering is given meaning, vengeful in that she exposes not just Lubetkin's deceit and fraudulence, but also his manipulative cruelty (the harrowing account of his mental and physical violence towards Kehoe, her sister Vicky and her brother Robby lingers in the mind long after the book has been finished).

If Kehoe's book is about the damage that ignorance of their parents' suffering can inflict on the children of Holocaust survivors, Anne Karpf's book, *The War After: Living with the Holocaust*, is about the damage that knowledge of that suffering can wreak. Part autobiography, part biography (of her parents), part interview (with her parents), part social history (of the Jewish community in Britain), and part sociological study (of the children of Holocaust survivors), Karpf's

book is anything (almost everything) but a work of fiction. And yet, like *Losing the Dead* and *In a Dark House*, *The War After* uses fictional techniques to mould historical facts into a compelling narrative. Like Appignanesi and Kehoe, Karpf is determined to confront, rather than evade, the problems raised by this approach. Before reproducing the first of several transcriptions of taped interviews with her parents, she warns us to bear in mind that

> the accounts we produced are a combination of what I was then ready and able to hear, and they were then ready and able to tell. What's more they've been edited and shaped by a later self, one with a different perspective and its own preoccupations. (18)

Like Kehoe, Karpf repeatedly foregrounds this discrepancy between the perspectives of her younger and older selves. She begins her final chapter by announcing 'I am not a case-history' and goes on to warn her readers not to read her book in these terms: 'Reading this kind of literature [that is, therapeutic], with its "finished" endings [...] is always for me an exercise in disappointment and envy; by comparison my own accommodations seem flawed and contingent' (313). However, she then goes on to acknowledge that her own self-explanations may be misleading in that they make her seem

> even more obsessed with the Holocaust than I actually am, someone whose preoccupation with it is relentless and total. (Yet, paradoxically, I and other children of survivors seem to feel much greater ambivalence at drawing on the iconography and metaphor of the Holocaust to describe our own personal experience than non-Jews like the poet Sylvia Plath, who metamorphosed herself in her poetry into a concentration camp victim without apparently worrying about the ethics. While the Holocaust is culturally available as a reference for most post-war writers and citizens, we who are and yet aren't so intimately connected with it police the distinction between survivor and the rest with care.) (314)

In common with the other writers I have been discussing in this chapter, Karpf is concerned with questions of authenticity, entitlement and fidelity. The fact that her book is, ostensibly, a work of non-fiction does not resolve the dilemmas of writing about the Holocaust; in some ways it heightens them, since work that does not claim the license of fiction (and Karpf's book has no prefatory note

along the lines of Kehoe's) is likely to be judged by more stringent criteria. Moreover, as Karpf points out, 'when you take your life as a text, you invite it to be read and judged like one' (314), irrespective of the generic status of that text. Any autobiographical or biographical work must by its very nature be 'a highly speculative venture' (314), not just because of the selecting, editing and revising involved in the process of turning a life into a text, but also because of the distorting nature of memory, which means that any act of retelling is also, inevitably, an act of (re)creation, any act of representation invariably, to a degree, an act of misrepresentation. Aware as she clearly is of all these complicating factors, Karpf still insists on the essential distinction between the exploitation of the metaphorical power of Holocaust imagery by a non-Jewish writer like Plath, and the (more reticent) invocation of such imagery by those who are, and yet aren't, so intimately connected with it. However, this paradoxical formulation itself demonstrates the difficulty of preserving a hierarchy of entitlement: on the one hand the children of survivors have no greater claim to intimacy with the Holocaust than Plath, as they did not experience it themselves; on the other, they inherit, to an extent, the suffering of those who did.

Karpf attempts to establish that the children of survivors, as well as the survivors themselves, have suffered and continued to suffer from the effects of the Holocaust; as the title and subtitle of her book imply, for survivors and their children the war did not end in 1945 and the Holocaust is not an event that can be confined within, or consigned to, the past. At the same time, Karpf does not want to be seen simply as a victim; she does not want to be defined by her status as the child of a survivor. Unlike Kehoe, whose book documents her struggle to penetrate her parents' conspiracy of silence regarding the family's connection to the Holocaust, Karpf's book tells of her resentment at its omnipresence. For Karpf, as for Appignanesi, 'The Holocaust was our fairytale' (94). Reflecting on her inability as a child to assimilate the facts of her parents' experiences, Karpf asks:

> How does a child cope with information about the past brutalisation of its parents? [...] Perhaps it becomes another story. You mythicise it, structure it around the rhetorical devices and narrative features of the other fables you know [...]
>
> Through constant recounting, my mother's story also acquired a kind of mythical quality. It was as if the narrative had taken on a life of its own, detached from the original events to which it

> referred [. . .] I knew only the abbreviated drama I regularly told, and if anyone quizzed me [. . .] I [. . .] had the awful feeling that what I told might be untrue. It was as if my certainty about the story derived from my own repeated retelling rather than from the events themselves. (94–5)

Like Appignanesi, the Holocaust tales told to Karpf by her parents generate anxiety about their own authenticity and precipitate in Karpf herself fears and doubts about her own history. As a child, Karpf's response to being constantly regaled with tales of the Holocaust (which, in their mixture of gruesome detail and didactic morality, resemble, while in their realism they entirely eclipse, conventional fairy tales) is to treat them as fiction; to mythicize, structure and refine them until the act of storytelling becomes more real than the events of which the story tells.

As an adult, she decides to restore the 'documentary version' of events by preserving her parents' eyewitness accounts on tape. Yet these, too, in their turn, are 'edited and shaped' (18), that is given the contours of a fictional narrative. Whereas Kehoe, after being deprived of her Jewishness for so long, embraces it wholeheartedly, Karpf spends much of her childhood and early adulthood trying to shed it. As an adolescent she invents for herself a fantasy figure, Toni, who, in addition to her other enviable qualities, was devoid of 'one more particularly unwanted characteristic: she contained no cell of Jewishness' (41). At college she 'simply broke off my Jewish bits and dispatched them to my least accessible recesses, where so much else that was unwanted was already stored' (45). When, at the age of twenty-seven, she becomes involved in a serious relationship with a non-Jewish man identified only as 'P', her mother, echoing Louise Kehoe's accusation against her father, 'told me I was doing what Hitler hadn't managed to – finishing off the Jewish race' (97).

Typically for a survivor, however, Karpf's mother (who, like Kehoe's father, achieved minor celebrity in her own right, in her case as a concert pianist) is far from unambiguously proud of her Jewishness, explaining to her daughter that she did not emigrate to Israel after the war because

> I didn't want to be among so many Jews: I'd been only among Jews during the war in the camps and there were so many unpleasant types there (it was difficult to survive, and mostly those who were pushy without any consideration for others survived) that I didn't

> want to live any more only among Jews [. . .] (153–4)

The familiar phenomenon of the victim adopting the values of the aggressor is clearly visible here, both in the tone of distaste with which she refers to her fellow inmates ('unpleasant types') and in her description of Jews as 'pushy', a characteristic which she implicitly attributes not only to those Jews who survived the camps, but to the Jews she would have encountered in Israel (which is to say, to any and all Jews). Typically, too, there is an intimate relationship between this internalized anti-Semitism and survivor guilt, in that her harsh judgement of her fellow inmates may well reflect her own shame at having behaved unscrupulously enough to live.

When, as a young journalist, Karpf wrote about Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement) in a national newspaper, her parents 'expressed a mixture of pleasure and anxiety at this public coming out' (13).[17] Indeed, Karpf's own feelings about identifying oneself openly as a Jew are somewhat ambivalent, as she makes clear when she admits to being 'delighted but also a little disconcerted hearing her [her own daughter] talk so breezily in public about being Jewish' (315). Like so many of her contemporaries, Karpf is both infuriated and infected by her parents' stubborn parochialism, their insistence on the unassailable otherness of the Gentile.

> As a child [. . .] I'd always found it maddening when my mother asked if someone was 'English' – her euphemism for non-Jewish – partly because I felt she was withholding judgement on their worthfulness [*sic*] as a person until she knew. And partly also because it implied you couldn't be simultaneously English and Jewish – you weren't *really* English. But she was right all along [. . .] I've always automatically said 'they' about the English. (51)

True to her training as a journalist, almost half of Karpf's book is given over to an exploration of the relationship between Englishness and Jewishness, as exemplified in particular by the reaction of English Jews during and after the war to the fate of their European brethren. Cogent and well-researched though this section of the book is, however, *The War After* remains, like *In a Dark House*, first and foremost a profoundly personal meditation on the consequences of speaking, and not speaking, about the Holocaust. However, whereas Kehoe is punished as a child for crimes of which she is entirely ignorant, Karpf's burden is the knowledge that 'something awful had befallen our parents before

we [she and her sister] were born, and our unstated mission was to assuage its impact – we were somehow charged with their redemption' (97).[18] Whereas Kehoe's book is an act of self-redemption, then, Karpf's is both an attempt to fulfil her 'unstated mission' to redeem her parents, and an assertion of the impossibility of doing so. Just as her parents 'had to armour themselves against the terrible serendipity of their survival' (14), so (at the risk of making the book sound dangerously like the case history that Karpf insists it isn't) she has to free herself from the emotional constraints that their 'necessary autism' place upon her (249), to learn to stop punishing herself for living with, and at the same time without, the Holocaust.

If Karpf's book suggests that this may (with some difficulty) be possible for the child of a survivor, then Myra Kaye's novel *The Way to Hanita* (1995) implies that for a survivor it is impossible. One of a number of recent novels by British-Jewish women[19] set in Israel (Linda Grant's *When I Lived in Modern Times* [2000] being another), Kaye's book deals with the relationship between Rachel, a survivor of Mauthausen death camp, where she was used as a child prostitute, and her social worker, Gerda, the narrator of the novel. Like *The War After*, which moves back and forth between Karpf's narrative and those of her parents, Kaye's novel alternates between Gerda's narrative (set in late 1970s Israel) and Rachel's stories of her past, which she recounts, at first reluctantly, and then more freely (as the relationship shifts from a social worker–client footing to one of mutual friendship), in a number of meetings with Gerda. In spite of the growing intimacy between the two women, however, these stories are presented more as documentary evidence – a series of questions and answers resembling Karpf's interviews with her parents in *The War After* – than in the manner of conventional fictional dialogue.

The novel opens with the first meeting between the two women, in which Gerda interviews Rachel as part of the routine processing of her application for welfare aid. When she first sees her, Gerda immediately identifies her as 'an Ashkenazi [i.e. central or Eastern European Jew] [. . .] I knew her type', but when she questions her 'The family name was Arabic. So also was the accent' (Kaye 1995: 13). When asked about her religion, Rachel, instead of replying, 'hesitated for a moment, then extended her hand and drew up her sleeve' (14) to reveal the tattooed numbers of a concentration camp inmate. This prompts Gerda to reflect on the ubiquity of the Holocaust in Israeli life: 'Here, the Holocaust existed around us, also within us. We had passed it on to our children, too, without conscious volition, because it was a part of

what we were [. . .] All this floated briefly through my mind as I wrote down 'Jewish"' (14).

In spite of her customary professional detachment, and the fact that 'Fraternising with the clients is strictly forbidden' (17), Gerda befriends Rachel, taking a personal interest in her case and meeting her regularly over the ensuing weeks and months. It soon becomes clear that this interest is motivated by her desire to come to terms with her own family history: as a child she had enjoyed a close relationship with her grandmother, Tanta, whose family was killed in the Holocaust. In her last years, Tanta, confined to a nursing home and estranged from her daughter (who believes she is senile), tells Gerda tales of her family history, and in particular of her favourite sister Scheindele, whom Gerda resembles. As a consequence of this intimacy, Gerda feels herself to be her grandmother's true heir:

> I was the one who closed her eyes. I was the one who wept at her funeral, I was the one who received this heritage [. . .] lime pits with the burnt flesh and the splintered bones. Tanta gave me all this, injected it into my blood, as surely as if by a hypodermic syringe. (55)

In effect, Gerda has assumed the mantle of the child of a survivor, even though none of her closest relations actually experienced the events of the Holocaust at first hand. When Rachel asks her to explain her curiosity about her own wartime experiences, Gerda acknowledges to herself that

> There was a connection I couldn't comprehend with the Holocaust, the Holocaust in all of us, as well as my own personal Holocaust.
>
> So I didn't answer, and Rachel looked at me [. . .] and I knew I was being judged and I begged silently, 'Don't send me to the left, to the gas chamber, send me to the right, to life' [. . .]
>
> As soon as I realised what I was thinking, I was appalled. It was melodrama. It was cheap. Sacrilegious, even. I wasn't the type. Yet it was not wrong; my life was drifting by me, I was not in my life. It was a matter of survival. (30)

Just as Rachel remains silent when asked about her religion, leaving Gerda to draw the conclusion that she is Jewish, so here Gerda's refusal to speak imposes a burden of trust on Rachel: she must trust that Rachel will believe that her interest in her history is sympathetic,

rather than voyeuristic. Yet in both cases these silences hide a guilty secret. Rachel, it turns out, is the daughter of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother and thus, according to religious tradition, not Jewish at all. The hesitation that had seemed simply to betoken a reluctance to expose herself literally (that is, to display her tattoo), in the light of this revelation implies a fear of exposing herself metaphorically, as an impostor. Although she claims that '"I never doubted I was a Jew; if I had not been one they [the Nazis] had made me one, I was entitled. Still, to absolve any doubts, I got myself converted"' (94), when Gerda asks to see the documentation Rachel tells her that she tore it up. Consequently, it is never clear if the conversion story is a prudent lie or if, indeed, like Louise Kehoe, her sense of entitlement alone being insufficient, she had taken steps formally to legitimize her Jewishness. Whatever the truth, her explanations of her own Jewishness are shot through with ambiguities and inconsistencies (though this doesn't, in itself, make them unconvincing, since inconsistency and ambiguity are themselves often characteristic of such self-explanations). On the one hand, she claims that her Jewish identity is her redemption ('"It gave me a reason to live. To survive as Rachel; I had to survive because the Jews had to survive"' [101]); on the other hand it seems to be the site of a deep-rooted self-loathing, which she attributes to her childhood exposure to Nazi propaganda.

> 'They showed us films at school, about Jews. Jews were compared to rats. They were not human, they were subhuman. Like vermin, they had to be destroyed [. . .]
>
> [N]o one said it wasn't true. So I believed it. I knew I was fit only to die. When I didn't die, when I wasn't exterminated for being a Jew, I knew I had to punish myself [. . .]
>
> What you learn as a child is never unlearnt. We all believe it. Always.' (168)

The use of 'they' to describe Jews implies that Rachel does not, after all, think of herself as Jewish, and perhaps it is this sense of detachment that she wishes to punish herself for and purge herself of. In common with the other survivors discussed in this chapter, however, Rachel's internalized anti-Semitism originates not just from her German education, but also directly from her experiences in the camps. Like these other survivors, her suffering was not in any sense ennobling, but rather debasing and dehumanizing. Moreover, like the others, she has a particular burden of guilt to bear. She tells Gerda that

the inmates of Mauthausen used to sleep on shelves in threes, and that her closest neighbour at night was a field worker, whose privileges she resented.

> This night she had diarrhoea. She was moaning and dripping over me. The smell, the sounds, the feel of her – I pushed her off the shelf. I was angry. Probably envious, too. She landed on the floor and the brittle bones cracked. She whimpered a bit, then stopped. I stretched myself out. I could bend my legs. What luxury! I could breathe. My hand touched two small roundish objects near where her head had lain. They were potatoes, probably meant for her sister, separated by chance from her in the next block. With great will-power, I crunched them very slowly, lying on my side. Then I turned on my back, relaxed and comfortable. I was in heaven.
>
> In the morning the kapos[20] got us to haul out her body, together with the others who had died during the night. Her sister came over. She screamed and flopped down and began to caress that dirty, smelly body, covered with flies, with the blood seeping out of the corner of its mouth and faeces seeping out the other end.
>
> She held it in her arms and called it by its name, Lisa; the sister was called Ilse, I think. We never thought of each other as having names, just numbers.
>
> I saw with astonishment that to Ilse, Lisa wasn't just another animal [. . .] She was a human being with a distinct personality who had been loved [. . .] With this astounding discovery came a sense of joy. (68–9)

Like Rose's mother, who informs on Raizel Kaidish, Rachel tries to live with her guilt by interpreting her betrayal as a morally transforming episode in her life; like the death of Magda in 'The Shawl', Lisa's death, or, to be more precise, Ilse's mourning of her, is presented as an epiphany (as in Ozick's story graphic realism – blood, faeces and so on – nestles alongside redemptive allegory, though Ozick handles the juxtaposition more deftly, avoiding the clichés of the passage above). Vowing never again to let the Nazi 'predators' 'succeed in degrading me [. . .] into an animal' (69), it seems as though, having sacrificed Lisa (and her own humanity) to her animal needs, Ilse's grief has helped Rachel to recognize the humanity of her fellow inmates, and thereby regain her own. Yet, like Rose's mother in Goldstein's story, and Izzie in Newman's, Rachel's guilt is stronger than her desire to atone for it: in saving herself physically, she destroys herself morally and spiritually, not just by killing

Lisa, but also by learning to satisfy the sexual appetites of Nazi officers. This is one of the paradoxes of Holocaust fiction: those who are saved are damned, while those who are killed achieve a kind of posthumous salvation.

For Gerda, responsibility for Rachel's self-hatred lies as much with her own parents as with the Nazi education system:

> [H]ad not all her childhood been a preparation for the Holocaust's dictate? 'Being Jewish' – something not quite nice, spoken of in hushed tones, like cancer or tuberculosis, or being a cripple. This was the way her parents had seen their Jewishness – as a handicap, a mark on the escutcheon, something to be suppressed, glossed over, till it became no more than an unimportant foible, like wearing unmatched socks. The step from condemnation by parental authority to condemnation by society was a small one. (169–70)

Gerda's explanation of Rachel's attitude to her own Jewishness is as self-contradictory as Rachel's: on the one hand, she suggests that her parents demonized Jewishness as though it were an unspeakable disease; on the other hand, she argues that they ignored it altogether, treating it like an incidental eccentricity. Moreover, Gerda's own pride in her Jewishness is, arguably, another side of the same coin: to feel pride, as opposed to disgust, at the accidental circumstances of one's birth – to appropriate Jewish suffering as a mark of distinction rather than to conceal it as a shameful stigma – is neither more logical nor more ethical. Gerda is guilty of dressing up ennui ('my life was drifting by me, I was not in my life') in the borrowed clothes of Holocaust suffering ('"Don't send me to the left, to the gas chamber, send me to the right, to life"'). In spite of her awareness of the presumptuousness of the analogy, she continues to dramatize the crises of her life in terms that invoke the Holocaust. Distanced from the Holocaust by space and time, Gerda nonetheless claims her share in its suffering by both universalizing and personalizing it when she refers to 'the Holocaust in all of us [. . .] my own personal Holocaust'. Unable to experience this suffering directly, she attempts to do so vicariously, by identifying herself first with Tanta and Scheindele, and then with Rachel. Indeed, she explicitly conflates these women with each other, and with herself, in a sort of mystical sorority:

> As well as Scheindele, Tanta was in me. Rachel was Tanta, just as she was also Scheindele.

> These women who had not survived in life survived in Rachel, and in me. We all flowed into each other. (172)

In *The Imaginary Jew* (1980) the French cultural critic Alain Finkielkraut, himself the child of survivors, writes of the 'intoxicating power to confuse myself with the martyrs' (11) with which the deaths of so many of his family in the Holocaust invested him. Although he 'did not deliberately turn the catastrophe to the shallow ends of self-aggrandizement' (11), his tales of the Holocaust lent him the lustre, the reflected glory, of inherited martyrdom. For Finkielkraut, his generation's attempt to identify with the dead of the previous generation served only to emphasize the incommensurable gulf between them:

> Our frantic masquerade sought to appease bad conscience, to deny the gap between our enjoyment of baby-boom comforts and the momentous, terrifying events of the recent past. Through such acts of fictive intensity, we exorcised the vapidity of our lives. (21)

It is one thing to have a mind engraved with the Holocaust, to encounter in the safety of post-Holocaust existence what Norma Rosen calls the second life of Holocaust imagery (as Gerda does when, enjoying a hotel breakfast in Germany, she reflects that 'they certainly know how to bake bread, the rolls were delicious (rolls, I thought, ovens I thought') [175]), but quite another to equate the routine frustrations of that existence with the extraordinary extremity of life in the camps, to diffuse the uncompromising glare of Holocaust suffering into what Irving Howe has called 'the comforting grandiose' (Howe 1988: 187). When Gerda claims, in the context of Rachel's history of suffering, that 'It was a matter of survival' for her (Gerda) to be made privy to that history, she is at best guilty of narcissistic self-deception, at worst of what Finkielkraut calls the temptation 'to mimic persecution [. . .] [and] make theater of the Holocaust' (34). In a novel full of feigned identities (Rachel, whose Jewishness is itself doubtful, lives as an Arab for thirty years, as does her grandson, Mahmoud, who is actually Jewish if Rachel is, while Avi, Gerda's Israeli Arab boyfriend, passes himself off as a Jew), Gerda's reinvention of herself as a Holocaust victim is the most outrageous and least convincing disguise. Referring twice to a set of 'invisible numbers' (114, 179) tattooed on her wrist, Gerda, like the protagonist of *Eve's Tattoo*, seeks to commemorate Jewish suffering but ends up trivializing and diminishing it.

For Alain Finkielkraut

> the Holocaust has no heirs. No one can cloak himself in such an experience, incommunicable, if not the survivors. Among the peoples that constitute our generation, it is given to no one to say: I am the child of Auschwitz. (34)

Whether one subscribes to this view, or to that of Appignanesi, Kehoe and Karpf, that survivors do pass on their suffering, in some form, to their children, or to Gerda's view (and, by implication, Kaye's, since there are no indications of any ironic distance between author and narrator), that 'everyone [is], to some degree of extension, a victim' (189), the moral and aesthetic problems of how best to 'keep this moment in Jewish history' (as Finkielkraut acknowledges that writers must) without consigning it to history remain. Whereas Appignanesi, Kehoe and Karpf narrate their family histories with the 'fictive intensity' of a novel, Kaye attempts to invest her fiction with the authority of history.[21] As James E. Young has observed, novelists writing about the Holocaust 'seem to share the fear that the essential rhetoricity of their literary medium inadvertently confers a certain fictionality onto events themselves' (Young 1988: 200). But as the case of Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments* (1995) demonstrates (an apparently autobiographical account of a childhood spent in the death camps by a Polish Jew which, like *In This Dark House*, won the National Jewish Book Award for autobiography, before it was discovered that its author was actually a Swiss Gentile whose 'testimony' was the product of imagination rather than memory), neither the provenance nor the genre of a Holocaust narrative determines its success. Once Wilkomirski was exposed, his publishers hastily withdrew the book from circulation, and the *Jewish Quarterly*, among others, retracted the award it had conferred on him on the grounds that 'if what purports to be Holocaust testimony is subsequently revealed to be fiction, it can only provide ammunition for Holocaust deniers' (Richmond 2000: 50). In the wake of the libel trial of 2000, in which the notorious fascist historian David Irving unsuccessfully sought damages from the publishers of a book naming him as a Holocaust denier by reopening old painful debates about the nature of Holocaust testimony, this judgment is certainly understandable. But, questionable though Wilkomirski's motives for writing it might be, if his book was a valuable Holocaust narrative before the revelation of his true identity, it ought to remain so afterwards. As Sue Vice observes:

> as soon as he was discovered to have masqueraded as a Holocaust survivor, Wilkomirski's book was suddenly found to be not very good. This is a slippage between moral and aesthetic judgments characteristic of reactions to Holocaust fiction. (Vice 2000: 51)

Ultimately it is the rhetorical power of Wilkomirski's book, its 'literary cogency' (Vice 2000: 53), that made it ring true, and that continues to make it ring true, even now that we know that its truth is what Tim O'Brien (in a different context) has called 'story-truth' as opposed to 'happening-truth' (O'Brien 1991: 179). Conversely, the memoir of a genuine survivor, such as Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1958), can seem contrived and artificial because of its imaginative paucity. Likewise, *The Way to Hanita* fails as a novel not because of any historical implausibility, but because it lacks the fictive intensity of the best autobiographical writing, whereas *Losing The Dead*, *In This Dark House* and *The War After* succeed as autobiographies not because of their factual accuracy, but because they possess the imaginative resonance of good fiction. In the next chapter, I explore further the problematic relationship between fact and fiction by looking at the autobiographical fictions and fictional autobiographies of Clive Sinclair and Philip Roth.

5

Philip Roth and Clive Sinclair: Portraits of the Artist as a Jew(ish Other)

> The greatest initial accolade for the young Jewish writer is the accusation of anti-Semitism. (Fiedler 1958: 580)
>
> Defying gravity I compare myself to the fishermen of Stockholm, as I try to pull a prize from my swirling inheritance of English culture and Jewish history. (Sinclair 1998a: 218)
>
> [H]is self is to many a novelist what his own physiognomy is to a painter of portraits: the closest subject at hand demanding scrutiny, a problem for his art to solve – given the enormous obstacles to truthfulness, *the* artistic problem. (Roth 1974: 240)

Philip Roth

In *Reading Myself and Others* (1985), a collection of essays, interviews and reviews, Philip Roth defines himself neologistically as a 'redface', a hybrid of the dichotomized categories of American writer that Philip Rahv outlined in his famous essay 'Paleface and Redskin' (1939). Whereas Rahv, writing on the eve of the Second World War, had diagnosed American literature itself as schizophrenic ('The national literature suffers from the ills of a split personality'), caught between the 'fatal Antipodes' represented by the austere refinement of Henry James on the one hand and the fervid sensuality of Walt Whitman on the other, Roth suggests that post-war American writers have internalized these warring factions, 'feeling [. . .] *fundamentally ill at ease in, and at odds with, both worlds*' (Roth 1985b: 83). The 'redface', Roth argues,

> reenacts the argument [between paleface and redskin] within the body of his own work [. . .] bad conscience is the medium in which

> his literary sensibility moves. Thus the continuing need for self-analysis and self-justification. (Roth 1985b: 84)

Although Roth is ostensibly speaking here of an American problem, his nomination of himself and Saul Bellow as representative redfaces suggests that this hybrid may be characteristically American-Jewish. Certainly, Roth's 'bad conscience', his compulsive need to explain himself, originates more from his Jewishness – specifically from the reception that his treatment of Jewishness in his fiction has received from Jewish readers – than from the problems which Rahv (himself an ambivalent Jew) attributed to the native tradition.

Introducing a collection of essays on Roth in 1982, Sanford Pinsker observed that 'Neutral criticism [...] hardly exists where Roth is concerned. His readers have strong attachments to one end or the other of the evaluative yardstick; they either love his work or hate it' (Pinsker 1982: 2–3) and six years later the editors of *Reading Philip Roth* (1988) lamented the lack of sophistication in Roth criticism, noting that all too often 'critical responses [...] are permeated by a constant confusion of tale and teller' (Milbauer and Watson 1988: ix). Certainly much of the criticism on Roth (particularly in the earlier years of his career) is narrowly polemical, centring on the moral values (or lack of them) that his supporters and detractors claim to find (or find lacking) in his work. In particular, controversy has surrounded his representation of Jewishness in his fiction, with many Jewish critics in the 1960s and 1970s launching vituperative attacks on what Irving Howe called Roth's disconnection from his Jewish heritage.

Jeremy Larner writes that 'Roth seeks only to cheapen the people he writes about' and accuses him of being 'a liar' (Larner 1960: 28); John Gross finds in Roth's work 'the ugliness of bad art' and 'an intolerable knowingness about lubricants and deodorants, menstruation and masturbation' (Gross 1982: 41); Robert Alter charges him with harbouring 'a vendetta against human nature' (Alter 1967: 45); and Irving Howe found Roth guilty of a 'failure in literary tact', of 'free-floating contempt and animus', of 'vulgarity', and of displaying a 'need to rub our noses in the muck of squalid daily existence', a 'swelling nausea before the ordinariness of human existence' and a 'horror before the sewage of the quotidian' (Howe 1972: 234, 237, 243, 238). The intemperate, even hysterical, tone of some of this smacks of character assassination rather than literary criticism, and begs the question of why a serious writer like Roth, whose first book, *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), had won the National Book Award and had been

highly praised by Jewish critics, including Howe, should now find himself vilified in such terms. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot's famous remarks about *Hamlet*, what seemed to be missing in all this invective was an objective correlative. It was left to Gershom Scholem to provide it: in an attack that Roth later reprised almost word for word in *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), Scholem claimed that Roth had written a book (*Portnoy's Complaint*) that would have 'warmed the heart of a Goebbels or a Streicher'. The sin that dared not speak its name was self-hatred: what inflamed Howe and the others was not just the suspicion that Roth was inciting anti-Semitism with his portraits of licentious, blasphemous Jews like Alexander Portnoy, but the accompanying realization that they could not afford to acknowledge such ghetto fears openly. A sophisticated critic like Howe could not bring himself to accuse Roth directly of washing the dirty linen of the Jews in public, so he had to generalize his attack and speak instead of his 'need to rub our noses in the muck of squalid daily existence'. In spite (or perhaps because) of this criticism Roth readily acknowledges the importance of his Jewish patrimony to his work. Like most of his American-Jewish contemporaries, he was keen early in his career to establish his credentials as an American writer ('I was, at sixteen and seventeen, strongly under the sway of Thomas Wolfe [...] I'd read Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson and Mark Twain' [Roth 1985b: 122–3]) and tended to chafe at the suggestion that he belonged to a school of American-Jewish writing.

> If we [Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Roth himself] constitute a Jewish school, it is only in the odd sense of having each found his own means of transcending the immediate parochialism of his Jewish background and transforming what had once been the imaginative property of anecdotal local colorists [...] into a fiction having entirely different intentions, but which nonetheless remains grounded in the colorful specificity of the locale. (Roth 1985b: 126)

As a mature writer, however, he began to cite as key influences on his work two European Jews – Franz Kafka and Bruno Schulz – who, although they 'could barely identify [themselves] with reality, let alone with the Jews' (Roth 1985b: 221), nevertheless produced fiction which has seemed to many critics to be quintessentially Jewish.[1] Over the years he has also professed his admiration for, and formed friendships with, Jewish contemporaries such as Bellow (to whom he dedicated *Reading Myself and Others*), Malamud, Isaac Bashevis Singer,

the Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld, and the painter R.B. Kitaj (whose 'The Jewish Rider' adorns the front cover of this book), as well as Clive Sinclair, the British-Jewish novelist whose work I discuss in the second half of this chapter. In the 1980s and early 1990s, moreover, Roth's work became increasingly confessional and concerned with questions of Jewish identity, and it is this period of his career that I want to focus on in the first part of this chapter.

Roth's ambivalence towards his own treatment of Jewishness as a theme can be traced in the course of two interviews he gave in the mid-1980s to publicize his series of Zuckerman novels. In an interview with the *Sunday Times*, in 1984, he plays down the importance of Zuckerman's Jewishness, saying 'My trilogy is about the vocation of an American writer, who is a Jew to boot' (Roth 1985b: 131). In a subsequent interview in the *Paris Review*, he elaborates on this.

> Zuckerman's struggle with Jewishness and Jewish criticism is seen in the context of his comical career as an American writer [...] The Jewish quality of books like mine doesn't really reside in their subject matter [...] It's a kind of sensibility [...] the nervousness, the excitability, the arguing, the dramatising, the indignation, the obsessiveness, the touchiness, the play-acting – above all the *talking*. (Roth 1985b: 162)

Later on in the same interview, however, Roth has this to say about *The Ghost Writer* (1979):

> The difficulties of telling a Jewish story – How should it be told? In what tone? To whom should it be told? To what end? Should it be told at all? – was finally to become *The Ghost Writer*'s theme. (Roth 1985b: 166)

In this progression – from initially implying that Zuckerman's Jewishness is purely incidental, to acknowledging that there is an identifiable Jewish sensibility in the Zuckerman novels, to defining *the* theme of the first novel in this series as 'The difficulties of telling a *Jewish* story' – we can see that Jewish sensibility at work, a sensibility characterized above all by its continual need – the one attribute that Roth omits from his list – to *explain* itself.

Historically, such explanations have been necessary defensive measures for Jewish writers anxious to placate, and find acceptance with, a (potentially anti-Semitic) Gentile audience. For Roth, however,

anxiety over the Jewishness of his discourse springs not from the prejudice of Gentiles, but from accusations of self-hatred and betrayal from his fellow Jews. In a conversation with Issac Bashevis Singer on Bruno Schulz, Roth asks the Nobel-Prize winner about Jewish critical responses to his work and Singer complains: 'they [some critics] said, "Why do you write about Jewish thieves and Jewish prostitutes?" And I said, "Shall I write about Spanish thieves and Spanish prostitutes? I write about the thieves and prostitutes that I know"' (Roth 1977: 14).

This summarizes Roth's own position rather well; indeed, it closely echoes the terms of the debate that surrounded Roth's early short story, 'Epstein' (1959), about an adulterous episode in the life of a middle-aged Jewish businessman. In *Reading Myself and Others*, Roth answers the criticism of a Jewish reader, who asks, in an irate letter to the author, whether adultery is a Jewish trait, by observing that 'Anna Karenina commits adultery with Vronsky, with consequences more disastrous than those Epstein brings about. Who thinks to ask, "Is it a Russian trait?"'(Roth 1985b: 208). Characteristically, Roth invokes a great literary precedent to justify his own fictional practice and, indeed, Roth's tone when dealing with this sort of criticism in *Reading Myself and Others* is often that of the embattled high-minded artist who resents having to explain himself to simple-minded readers unable to distinguish between the demands of fiction and public relations. Yet though the attacks of a critic like Howe (whom he had admired) certainly stung him, the more mature Roth of *The Facts* (1988) recognizes that 'the angry Jewish resistance that I aroused virtually from the start – was the luckiest break I could have had' (Roth 1988: 130).

Early on in his career Roth was dismayed by the popular identification of Alexander Portnoy (the hero of his most infamous novel, *Portnoy's Complaint* [1969]) with himself, denouncing as absurd that 'a novel in the guise of a confession was received and judged [...] as a confession in the guise of a novel' (Roth 1985b: 274). Later he treats the theme in his fiction (Nathan Zuckerman is repeatedly taken for his fictional Portnoy-like protagonist, Carnovsky, in the *Zuckerman Bound* novels), and deliberately blurs the line between fiction and autobiography by writing an autobiography in which Zuckerman appears (*The Facts*) and publishing a book that presents itself as a confession in the guise of a novel (*Operation Shylock*).[2] Much of Roth's later work, like Nathan Zuckerman's, is 'an ever-recurring story that's at once [his] invention and the invention of [him]' (Roth 1985a: 88), an increasingly tangled skein of autobiographical fictions and fictional autobiographies; of 'self-protective writing postures' and 'merciless

self-evisceration' (Roth 1988: 65, 185).

Called to account for himself as a writer and a Jew, Roth responds by launching possibly the most sustained and unstinting self-inquiry in modern fiction, repeatedly placing himself in the dock and prosecuting himself in his fiction with even greater gusto than that with which he defends himself outside it.[3] It is as though, infuriated by the injustice of the attacks on him and yet tormented by a nagging sense of guilt induced by their cumulative vehemence, he feels compelled to make them the subject of his fiction, to do justice to the idea, suggested by his own predicament, of the writer at odds with his community, his family and himself. In doing so, Roth creates his own sub-genre: fiction as self-accusation.

In *The Ghost Writer*, Nathan Zuckerman, surveying the fictional author E. I. Lonoff's short stories, comments that the ones he most admires are those in which 'the pitiless author seems to me to teeter just at the edge of self-impalement' (Roth 1979: 14). In his previous novel, *The Professor of Desire* (1977), David Kepesh, the devotee of earnest moral literature, asks Ralph Baumgarten, the writer to whose 'blend of shameless erotomania, microscopic fetishism, and rather dazzling imperiousness' he finds himself irresistibly drawn, why he has never written about his family (Roth 1978: 137). Baumgarten replies:

> 'spare me the subject of the Jewish family and its travails. Can you actually get worked up over another son and another daughter and another mother and another father driving each other nuts? [. . .]
>
> Has it not been done – and done? [. . .] For me the books count [. . .] where the writer incriminates *himself*.' (Roth 1978: 138–9)

Roth's achievement has been to transform the conventional (melo)drama of 'the Jewish family and its travails' into a fiction of self-impalement and self-incrimination. Baumgarten and Lonoff, who, on the face of it, represent the two poles of American-Jewish fiction (the self-aggrandizing, self-publicizing, politicized amoralist epitomized by Norman Mailer, and the self-deprecating, reclusive, apolitical moralist in the mould of Bernard Malamud), nevertheless share this trait, and their roles as mentors/rivals to the narrator-heroes (alter-egos living counter-lives that attract and repel in equal measure) anticipate the subsequent development of what I will call the Jewish Other in Roth's work.

After these two final novels of the 1970s, Roth's preoccupation with questions of authentic Jewishness (is there such a thing? how can it be

achieved? where can it be achieved? is it worth achieving?) becomes the predominant theme of his fiction. Surveying the whole gamut of Jewry (from the fanatically orthodox to the aggressively secular, from the militant Zionist to the radical Diasporist), Roth engages in a quest for quintessential Jewhood, something like the state that Zuckerman finds himself in at the close of *The Counterlife* (1987): 'A Jew without Jews [. . .] without Jewishness [. . .] just the object itself, like a glass or an apple' (Roth 1987: 328).[4] The Jewish protagonists of these novels are locked in protracted debates with other Jews, or rather (as these characters tend to represent suppressed facets – alternative versions – of themselves) with Jewish Others, over these questions.

Whereas Baumgarten and Lonoff are older writers and potential role-models for Kepesh and Zuckerman, the later Jewish Others are often would-be, amateur writers, whose role-models are the heroes of the novels, and whose literary ambitions (although usually half-baked and half-cocked) culminate in struggles for authority that revolve around struggles for authenticity. To write or be written, to imagine or be imagined, to be real or be realized, to be a Jew or not to be – these are the challenges posed to Roth's heroes by his Jewish Others.

Alvin Pepler is the first of these rival authors, rival Jews, rival selves. Pepler introduces himself at the beginning of *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981) as a fan of Zuckerman's, flattering him with comparisons with Marcel Proust and Stephen Crane. Soon, he is claiming kinship as a fellow Newarker and, moreover, as a fellow writer: '"This is probably going to make you laugh. But I'm trying to write myself. You don't have to worry about the competition, I assure you"' (Roth 1981: 15). The subject of Pepler's book, it turns out, is the television quiz show scandal of the late 1950s (the same scandal which Alex Portnoy investigates in *Portnoy's Complaint*), in which it emerged that answers were being fed to contestants in advance. Pepler claims that he had vigorously opposed this rigging and has been unfairly vilified (his desire to '"write myself"' is also a desire to right himself). His book is to be an attempt not merely to vindicate his own reputation, but, more importantly, that of the Jews, whose champion Pepler believes himself to have been on 'Smart Money':[5]

> 'I wouldn't dream [. . .] of comparing the two of us. An educated artist like yourself and a person who happens to have been born with a photographic memory are two different things entirely. But while I was on "Smart Money", deservedly or not I had the respect of the entire nation. If I have to say so myself, I don't think it did

> the Jewish people any harm having a Marine veteran of two wars representing them on prime-time national television for three consecutive weeks. I made no bones about my religion. I said it right out. I wanted the country to know that a Jew in the Marine Corps could be as tough on the battlefield as anyone [. . .] [I]f I could write a publishable book [. . .] Whoever innocent I harmed and left besmirched, all the millions I let down, Jews particularly – well, they would finally understand the truth of what happened. They would forgive me.' (Roth 1981: 146–7)

Pepler's disavowal of any intended parallel between himself and Zuckerman is, of course, completely disingenuous. As someone who has himself been unjustly accused of tarnishing the reputation of Jews, Zuckerman will, Pepler hopes, sympathize with his plight. The difference between them, however, is not merely a question of intellectual pedigree (Zuckerman as the representative of high-brow Jewish culture, Pepler of low-brow), as Pepler implies, but of identification with Jewishness. Whereas Zuckerman, like Roth, always refutes the suggestion that representing Jews in the mimetic sense (that is, portraying Jewish characters in fiction) is tantamount to representing them in a political sense (that is, becoming a spokesperson for their interests), Pepler is, by self-appointment, not simply an individual game-show contestant, but The Jew. Malamud is reputed to have said that if a Jew ever forgets he is a Jew, a Gentile will remind him, but in Roth's fiction if a Jew ever forgets he is a Jew, it is another Jew who will remind him. Pepler is making an appeal for sympathy on the basis of a shared background in much the same way as Sheldon Grossbart tries to elicit preferential treatment from his superior officer Nathan Marx, in Roth's early story, 'Defender of the Faith' (1959), by appealing to clan loyalty.

Later, Pepler shows Zuckerman a piece of 'literary criticism' that he has written and asks for his opinion (Roth 1981: 145). It turns out to be the beginning of a review of *Carnovsky*, the novel that propelled Zuckerman to fame ('"in many ways that book is the story of my life no less than yours"', Pepler assures him [Roth 1981: 148]). Reluctantly bowing to Pepler's insistence that he be candid, Zuckerman tells him that he's not sure whether the review is '"worth the effort"' (Roth 1981: 154). Stung by this response, Pepler launches into a diatribe, accusing his erstwhile literary hero of sentimentalizing Newark and culminating in the accusation that Zuckerman has '"stolen"' his life: '"From what my Aunt Lottie told your cousin Essie that she told to

your mother that she told to you. About me. About my past"' (Roth 1981: 155).

The thin line between adulation and envy has been crossed; what began as praise for the verisimilitude of Zuckerman's novel becomes resentment for his (supposed) appropriation of Pepler's own biography. Musing over this incident in his notebook (typically, Zuckerman cannot resist explaining his run-in with Pepler in literary terms – subjecting his life to his own brand of literary criticism), Zuckerman writes:

> This Peplerian barrage is what? Zeitgeist overspill? Newark poltergeist? Tribal retribution? Secret sharer? P. as my pop self? Not far from how P. sees it. He [i.e. Zuckerman himself] who's made fantasy of others now fantasy of others. (Roth 1981: 159)

Zuckerman's interpretive emphasis falls on Pepler's Jewishness ('*Tribal* retribution') and on his literary pretensions (the allusion to Conrad's short story 'The Secret Sharer', momentarily dignifying Pepler's claim to kinship, is swiftly deflated by the comical, quasi-oxymoronic phrase 'pop self'), the characteristic battlegrounds for the Rothian hero and his Jewish Other. In Sartrean terms, Pepler is more authentic than Zuckerman, because he 'asserts his claim in the face of the disdain shown toward him', whereas Zuckerman's Jewishness is hedged with ambivalence (Sartre 1995: 91). In the sense that Lionel Trilling defines it in *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972), however, it is Zuckerman whose selfhood is authentic. For Trilling, authenticity involves

> a more strenuous moral experience than 'sincerity' does, a more exigent conception of the self and of what being true to it consists in [...] The concept of authenticity can deny art itself, yet at the same time it figures as the dark source of art. (Trilling 1972: 11)

For Zuckerman, as much as for Trilling, the index of values against which the self must be measured – and according to which the self must be defined – is the Jamesian literary one of moral exigencies, intellectual paradoxes (such as Trilling's notion of authenticity both denying and inspiring art) and 'the madness of art',[6] rather than the ethnic one invoked by Pepler and Sartre. Zuckerman's authenticity is the authenticity of the writer, Pepler's the authenticity of the Jew (and it is revealing that Trilling, himself a Jewish novelist as well as a critic, should define authenticity in aesthetic rather than spiritual terms).

Whereas Pepler indicts Zuckerman for his (lack of) Jewishness, Zuckerman convicts Pepler of the charge of peddling poor prose.

The struggle between vulgar reality and refined art, between the two types of authenticity, between the writer and the Jew, continues unresolved, however. Towards the end of the novel – having become convinced that Pepler is responsible for the series of bizarre and abusive phone calls which culminate in the threat to kidnap his mother, and which finally cease after his father's death – Zuckerman speculates:

> Was that the end of this barrage? Or would Zuckerman's imagination beget still other Peplers conjuring up novels out of his – novels disguising themselves as actuality itself, as nothing less than real? (Roth 1981: 198)

This passage anticipates directly the themes of *Operation Shylock*, a book which purports to be reality disguising itself as fiction, but which is actually a novel disguised as a factual account.[7] Like *Zuckerman Unbound*, this novel has at its centre a conflict between a Jewish writer and his alter ego for the ownership of their lives. Whereas in the earlier novel, it is Pepler, the Jewish Other, who alleges that Zuckerman has plagiarized his biography, here it is the protagonist, 'Roth', whose identity is usurped by a Doppelganger.[8] 'Roth' it is, too, who disguises his voice and phones up his Other, in a bid to discover the truth of the rumours that have reached him from Israel of a man bearing his name, preaching the strange doctrine of 'Diasporism', a sort of counter-Zionism that advocates the repatriation of all Ashkenazi Jews from Israel to their European homelands. This impostor is the quintessential Rothian Jewish Other: not only does he invoke the hero's Jewishness in the most radical way possible, by claiming to *be* him and then publically identifying himself as the figurehead of a new Jewish ideology, he also proposes an alternative – or other – destiny for the Jewish people at large.

When 'Roth' first confronts Pipik (as he later calls him), the latter's approach is very similar to Pepler's: that of the star-struck fan. He greets his hero with a stream of effusive, barely coherent exclamations.

> 'I can't tell you what it's like for me! In Israel! In Jerusalem! I don't know what to say! I don't know where to begin! The books! Those books! I go back to *Letting Go*, my favorite to this day! [...] Your women! Ann! Barbara! Claire! Such terrific women! I'm sorry, but

imagine yourself in my place.' (Roth 1993: 71)

Pipik's enthusiasm is not feigned and his claim to be 'Roth's' '"greatest admirer"' ('"I know your *life* inside out. I could be your biographer. I *am* your biographer"') is no idle boast (Roth 1993: 73). His knowledge of the author's life and career is encyclopaedic, his admiration boundless (if Pipik were 'Roth's' biographer, he would produce a hagiography); his apologetic invitation to '"imagine yourself in my place"' is entirely ingenuous. 'Roth' proceeds to do just this, however. Finding himself mistaken – by his old friend George Ziad, and by an enigmatic elderly disciple of Pipik's, Smilesburger – for the father of Diasporism, he plays along, impersonating his own impersonator.[9] When he discusses his situation with his friend, the Israeli novelist Aharon Appelfeld, Appelfeld concludes that 'Roth's' resentment at Pipik's imposture is due not so much to its audacity as its inauthenticity (in the Trillingian sense): to the inadequacy of Pipik's assumption of the novelist's prerogative.

> 'He has less talent for impersonating you than you have – maybe that's the irritation. Substitute selves? Alter egos? The writer's medium. It's all too shallow and too porous for you, without the proper weight and substance. Is this the double that is going to be my own? An aesthetic outrage. The great wonders performed on the golem by Rabbi Liva of Prague you are now going to perform on him. Why? Because you have a better conception of him than he does [. . .] You are going to rewrite him.' (Roth 1993: 107)

Of course Appelfeld is yet another Jewish Other, as his choice of analogy demonstrates (by comparing Roth's transformation, through the alchemy of fiction, of dull matter into the stuff of drama, with Rabbi Liva's legendary animation of the stone creature – the golem – he is implicitly reminding 'Roth' of the injunction in Jewish mythology against confusing artistic creation with divine inspiration). And – of course – his words are prophetic.

Like Pepler, Pipik soon submits a sample of his own prose for his hero's inspection (the Ten Tenets of Anti-Semites Anonymous, his organization for curing anti-Semitism) which 'Roth' literally rewrites, but, as Appelfeld predicts, it is the larger, metaphorical project – that of rewriting Pipik's *life* – that inevitably attracts the author. If Pipik is an amateur chronicler of 'Roth's' life, 'Roth' becomes the professional chronicler of Pipik's, so that in a sense the novel itself is the author's

revenge on his Other. 'Other' is indeed, in 'Roth's' view, a more appropriate term for Pipik than Appelfeld's 'double', precisely because of this distinction between professionalism and amateurism, between the vocational imagination of the artist and the opportunistic vision of the dilettante.

> To think of him as a *double* was to bestow on him the destructive status of a famously real and prestigious archetype, and *impostor* was no improvement; it only intensified the menace I'd conceded with the Dostoyevskian epithet by imputing professional credentials in duplicitous cunning to this [...] this *what*? (Roth 1993: 115)

This is the moment when 'Roth' names his impersonator Moishe Pipik:

> The derogatory, joking nonsense name that translates literally to Moses Bellybutton and that probably connoted something slightly different to every Jewish family on our block – the little guy who wants to be a big shot, the kid who pisses in his pants, the someone who is a bit ridiculous, a bit funny, a bit childish, the comical shadow alongside whom we had all grown up, that little folkloric fall guy whose surname somehow designated the *thing* that for most children was neither here nor there, neither a part nor an orifice, somehow a concavity and a convexity both, something neither upper nor lower, neither lewd nor entirely respectable either, a short enough distance from the genitals to make it suspiciously intriguing and yet, despite this teasing proximity, this conspicuously puzzling centrality, as meaningless as it was without function [...] (Roth 1993: 116)

This extravagant passage, moving from an explanation of the derivation of the nonsense-name to a comic *tour de force* on the perplexing ambiguity of the bellybutton, is typical of the way that Roth's imagination works. Whereas writers such as Ernst Hoffman, James Hogg, Edgar Allan Poe, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Robert Louis Stevenson and Gustav Meyrink find in the Doppelganger a subject for metaphysical terror, Roth (along with Plautus, Shakespeare and Mark Twain) treats it as existential comedy.[10] Pipik's explanation of himself is vague, blurred, insufficiently realized, so 'Roth' invests him with the vividness of a folkloric figure, one whose very distinguishing feature is his comical indistinctness, and indistinction. Portraying this would-be

Jewish visionary as the comic butt of Jewish childhood, a *schlemiel* with absurdly inflated pretensions – 'the little guy who wants to be a big shot' – is also a shrewdly disabling tactic in the battle for supremacy that develops between the two rival Roths.

Having discovered that 'Roth' has accepted a check for a million dollars from Smilesburger (a donation to the Diasporist cause) in his name, Pipik angrily confronts the author and demands its return. Like Pepler, Pipik appeals to his hero not on his own behalf, but in his role as self-appointed representative of the Jews: '"You're not stealing from me stealing that check [...] you're stealing from the Jewish people"' (Roth 1993: 183).[11] What galls him more than the purloining of his check, however, is the discovery of his hero's nickname for him. Once he hears this, the reverence that he had shown at the start of the novel, like Pepler's for Zuckerman, is rapidly replaced by contempt (both Pepler and Pipik resemble their counterparts in nothing so much as their craving to be taken seriously, their fear of ignominy). After he has been abducted by Mossad (the Israeli secret service), and left alone in a classroom for three hours, 'Roth' makes a series of appeals to Pipik (whom he mistakenly believes is responsible for his predicament) before finally arriving (as he thinks) at the reason for his supposed abductor's silence. His fatal mistake has been 'to deny this impostor the thing that any impostor covets and can least do without and that only I could meaningfully anoint him with' (Roth 1993: 320). Namely, his (assumed) name.

As the use of the word 'anoint' here (with its biblical resonances) implies, naming (and being named) can bestow or withdraw power on or from the namer and named. By imposing a joke name on Pipik, 'Roth' robs him of his seriousness, and divests him of his chosen (albeit fraudulent) identity, and, by implication, of his very autonomy. However, in Roth's fiction naming and renaming tends to involve not just a struggle over identity, but more specifically a struggle over Jewish identity. Thus the novel is concerned not just with the competing claims of the two men over their respective rights to the name 'Roth', but over the right that the name confers on its owner(s)/author(s) to speak about, as, and for, Jews. In this respect, the conflict echoes not only that of Zuckerman and Pepler in *Zuckerman Unbound*, but also that of the Zuckerman brothers in another of Roth's series of Zuckerman novels, *The Counterlife*.

According to one of the contradictory narratives that compete with one another for ascendancy in this novel, Henry Zuckerman, Nathan's older brother, having survived heart-bypass surgery, suddenly leaves

his wife, his children, his lover and his thriving dental practice for a new life in Israel. Like Eli Peck in Roth's early story, 'Eli, the Fanatic' (1959) (which features an early version of the Jewish Other, the unnamed orthodox Jew with whom Peck exchanges clothes), Henry has a sort of Jewish epiphany. Whereas Eli symbolically sheds his old secular identity and adopts a new religious one, Henry formally Hebraisizes his name (to Hanoch). Nor is this a purely cosmetic measure: he actually renounces his old self altogether – renounces the very concept of selfhood – in favour of a new role as an element of a larger entity, the Jewish people. When Nathan visits him in his new home on a kibbutz in Agor, Henry immediately becomes defensive about his new name.

> 'And no shit, please, about my name.'
>
> 'Relax. Anybody can call you anything they want, as far as I'm concerned.'
>
> 'You *still* don't get it. The hell with *me*, forget *me*. *Me* is somebody *I* have forgotten. *Me* no longer exists out here. There isn't time for *me*, there isn't need of *me* – here Judea counts, not *me*!' (Roth 1987: 109)

The iterated italicization here ironically undermines Henry/Hanoch's attitude of self-denial and tends to support Nathan's thesis that his brother's flight represents not an escape from self, but a bid to reassert his sense of self, after a lifetime of fulfilling his duty to others (his parents, his wife, his children, his patients). In particular, Nathan surmises, his migration to Israel is the belated realization of an earlier, abortive plan to elope with an old lover to Switzerland.

> What purpose is hidden in what he now calls 'Jew' – or is 'Jew' just something he now hides behind? He tells me that here he is essential, he belongs, he fits in – but isn't it more likely that what he has finally found is the unchallengeable means to escape his hedged-in life? Who hasn't been driven crazy by that temptation – yet how many pull it off like this? Not even Henry could, so long as he called his flight plan 'Basel' – it's designating it 'Judea' that's done the trick. If so, what inspirational nomenclature! Moses against the Egyptians, Judah Macabee against the Greeks, Bar Kochba against the Romans, and now, in our era, Hanoch of Judea against Henry of Jersey! (Roth 1987: 123)

According to this interpretation, Hanoch represents a Jewish Other not just for Nathan, but for himself (that is, for his old American self named Henry). Nathan's inclusion of Hanoch in the company of the great Jewish revolutionaries (Moses, Judah Macabee and Bar Kochba) and of Henry in the roll call of historical oppressors of the Jews (the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans) once again ironically deflates Hanoch's grandiose messianic rhetoric. In spite of his obvious scorn for this religiosity, however, when he meets Hanoch's mentor, the militant Zionist settler, Mordecai Lippman, Nathan is almost as mesmerized as his brother. Lippman's diabolical hold over Henry may derive partly, as Nathan believes, from his resemblance to their father, whose own lectures on Jewish history punctuate the earlier Zuckerman novels. Yet Lippman's diatribes on the subject of The Jew, in spite (or perhaps because) of their fanatical and paranoid demagoguery, have a potency all their own. Saul Bellow has written that 'The degree to which you challenge your own beliefs and expose them to destruction is a test of your worth as a novelist' (Bellow 1994: 46), and certainly one of Roth's great strengths is that he endows characters like Lippman, whose views are most directly opposed to his own, with considerable persuasive power. Like Pipik, Lippman is a fanatical visionary who advocates radical action to safeguard the future of the Jewish people. Whereas Pipik foresees a second, Arab-sponsored Holocaust taking place if the Jews remain in Israel, Lippman prophesies a second Holocaust in America, a 'Great American Pogrom out of which American white purity will be restored' (Roth 1987: 128). Whereas for Pipik '"*authenticity* as a Jew means living in the Diaspora"' (Roth 1993: 170), for Lippman the only meaningful existence for the Jews – and their only hope of survival – is in 'their biblical homeland' (Roth 1987: 120).

Lippman is not the only apocalyptic Jewish prophet in the novel, however. There is also the curious figure of Jimmy Ben-Joseph, who bears more than a passing resemblance both to Pipik and to Alvin Pepler. Jimmy accosts Nathan by the Wailing Wall, in words that echo Pepler's greeting in *Zuckerman Unbound* and anticipate Pipik's in *Operation Shylock*.

> 'It's really you! Here! Great! I've read all your books! You wrote about my family! The Lustigs of West Orange! In *Higher Education*! That's them! I'm your biggest admirer in the world!' (Roth 1987: 95)

As with Pepler, so with Jimmy it is a short step from expressing admiration for his hero's work to claiming comprehensive knowledge of his

biography, to establishing his own literary claims: '"I know everything about you. I write too. I wrote the Five Books of Jimmy!"' (Roth 1987: 96). Jimmy then informs Nathan that he is studying at the Diaspora Yeshiva, enthuses about baseball, and abruptly disappears: his is apparently just a walk-on part.

On Zuckerman's flight out of Israel, however, Jimmy unexpectedly reappears in an adjoining seat (dressed in the garb of an orthodox Jew, so that Nathan at first fails to recognize him), and calmly tells Nathan that he intends to hijack the plane and demand the closure of Yad Vashem, the Israeli museum dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. When Nathan tries to warn him of the likely consequences of such an attempt (i.e. that he will be killed), Jimmy replies by emphasizing that his own fate is unimportant, as he is merely the instrument of a larger destiny – none other than that of the Jewish people.

> 'What happens to me doesn't *matter*, Nathan. How can I care about myself when I have penetrated to the core of *the last Jewish problem*? We are torturing ourselves with memories! With masochism! And torturing goyisch [non-Jewish] mankind! The key to Israel's survival is no more Yad Vashems! No more Remembrance Halls of the Holocaust! Now what we have to suffer is *the loss of suffering*! Otherwise, Nathan – and here is my prophecy as written in the Five Books of Jimmy – otherwise they will annihilate the State of Israel *in order to annihilate its Jewish conscience*! We have reminded them enough, we have reminded ourselves enough – *we must forget*!' (Roth 1987: 170)

Jimmy's redemptive project is almost as bizarre as Pipik's Diasporism and just as provocative in its inversion of conventional Jewish thinking (through these two characters' paranoid fantasies, Roth radically rethinks the course of recent Jewish history, and challenges the inviolability of its two central pillars – the Holocaust and Zionism).[12] Roth is at once the most sincere and the most disingenuous of writers, a paradox compounded by the fact that he is invariably disingenuous about his sincerity and sincere about his disingenuousness. Acutely self-conscious, his writing has increasingly taken its own self-consciousness as its subject. At once defensive and self-incriminating, intensely subjective and rigorously objective about its own subjectivity, self-obsessed and self-detached, his work has exploited polarities and has tended to elicit polarized critical responses. Ironically, the

same ideological iconoclasm – the slaughtering of sacred cows – that has made him such a *bête noire* for conservative Jews, has also made him an inspiration for younger Jewish writers, particularly in Britain, where, until quite recently, such taboo-breaking Jewish fiction seemed inconceivable.

Clive Sinclair

It has been the inevitable fate of every bright young male British-Jewish novelist since the 1960s to be labelled 'the British (answer to) Philip Roth'. Unfortunately, it has also been the epitaph for many of them. From Brian Glanville (whose first novel, *The Bankrupts* [1956], tried to do for, and to, a new class of bourgeois British Jews what *Goodbye, Columbus* had with American Jews) to Bernard Kops (whose rebellious, sex-obsessed Jewish teenager Dominick Shapiro owed more than a little to Alex Portnoy) to Simon Louvish (whose novel *City of Blok* [1988] quotes on the front cover of its paperback edition a reviewer claiming 'If Roth makes you laugh, Louvish will make you clutch your belly with hysterics' [Louvish 1989]), the candidates for the title have all fallen by the wayside. Apart from Howard Jacobson, the only British-Jewish novelist to have survived the comparison is Clive Sinclair.[13] Indeed, whereas in the case of most of these others the analogy was at best misleading, at worst wildly inaccurate, and the accompanying burden of expectation crushing, Sinclair's work, as I shall argue, is both influenced by and an influence on Roth's. The affinities between the two writers reside partly in their common influences (notably Kafka),[14] partly in their stylistic attributes (they share a penchant for the grotesque, and for the juxtaposition of demotic and literary registers), but primarily in their common preoccupations: with guilt, sexuality, and their offspring, psychosomatic illness;[15] and, above all, with the nature of writing, and of Jewishness, and the relationship between them.

Like Roth, Sinclair has always had a stormy relationship with his Jewish critics. Although he was at one point considered respectable enough to be literary editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, he was never comfortable in the role and soon found the constraints of the paper's editorial policy intolerable. Though never arousing controversy on the scale of *Goodbye, Columbus* or *Portnoy's Complaint* (not least because they never reached such a wide audience), several of Sinclair's novels (notably *Blood Libels* [1985] and *Cosmetic Effects* [1989]) received hostile reviews in the Jewish press in Britain. In *Diaspora Blues* (1987),

his account of his relationship with Israel and some of its citizens, Sinclair himself quotes from one such review in which he is rebuked for launching 'a thinly disguised attack on the establishment' and for indulging his 'apparent obsessions with the bodily functions and sex' (Sinclair 1987: 184). The reviewer goes on to say: 'What I found most distasteful was the fact that Clive Sinclair chose such subjects as a rabbi, Israeli embassy staff and an Israeli woman for the vehicles of his sexual fantasy' (184). The terms of this attack are eerily reminiscent of those on Roth's early work, and Sinclair's response, which is to wonder 'why my treatment of rabbis and Israelis left such a bad taste. Would it be all right with her if only goyim got shot or raped?' (184), has the weary air of someone who has heard all this before (which, as an admirer of Roth's and a biographer of Issac Bashevis Singer, of course he has). Like Roth, however, Sinclair's impatience with the accusations of self-hatred levelled at him from within the Jewish community does not prevent him from making similar accusations, albeit in a more sophisticated form, of himself. Indeed, he self-consciously aligns himself with Roth when he writes 'As Irving Howe said of Philip Roth, I seem to be cut off from any Jewish tradition' (199). Like Roth, Sinclair places himself firmly in the vernacular literary tradition ('Shakespeare, Pope and Dickens are as much part of my cultural heritage as they are of my more native contemporaries', he claims, somewhat defensively), but 'Culture [...] is one thing, history another. You can inherit a country's language in a way that you can never inherit its history' (51). Sinclair happily confesses to the old anti-Semitic charge that Jews' true allegiance will always be not to their host nation but to their fellow Jews, or rather he admits to having 'a dual loyalty: to the language of England and the history of Israel' (65). Yet to have a dual loyalty is also to be doubly ambivalent: in *Diaspora Blues* Sinclair describes himself both as 'an Englishman with a thin coating of Jewishness. Though I am not very English either' (197) and as an 'alienated Israeli' (65).

Diaspora Blues is, among other things, Sinclair's attempt to explain himself in these ambivalent terms: to account on the one hand for his sense of alienation from the Jewish tradition, and in particular his decision not to reconnect himself with it by emigrating to Israel; and on the other to emphasize that he is 'not comfortable here [in England], which – again – is not to say that I would be more comfortable elsewhere' (52). Typically, Sinclair is also ambivalent about this sense of homelessness: it means that 'there will always be friction in my work, as my almost pristine prose rubs against stories that properly belong in another language', but then again 'perhaps there is some-

thing to be gained from having a language but no history, a history but no language' (53). For Sinclair, being an exile is not simply a consequence of particular geographical, demographical or cultural circumstances (of being a Diasporan Jew), but rather an existential condition endured or embraced by all artists. Sinclair's work is not so much an attempt to reconcile the 'sweet words' of his English heritage with the 'bitter experience' of his Jewish one (Sinclair 1998a: 218) as a continuous exploitation of the tensions between them. If, as he has said, his writing 'is a search for a place in which I may feel at home, where my literacy will not be in question' it is a search which deliberately frustrates its own ends, because 'if I did [find this home] what would I have to write about?' (Sinclair 1987: 51). Like Roth, then, Sinclair turns what might have been a curse into a blessing; he makes his predicament as an ambivalent hybrid into fictional material.

In spite of the affinities between Sinclair's work and Roth's, however, their relationship is hardly an equal one: it is Sinclair who contributes an enthusiastic essay to a collection of essays on Roth, and it is Sinclair who repeatedly alludes to Roth in his fiction (rather than the other way around). Indeed, Roth is mentioned by name in the opening line of 'The Luftmensch', from Sinclair's first collection of short stories, *Hearts of Gold* (1979): 'What is Joshua Smolinsky,[16] private eye, doing in Philip Roth's former room at a colony for writers?' (Sinclair 1982: 51). The answer to this question (posed by the detective narrator himself) involves a pun invoked by the title of Roth's novel of the same year, *The Ghost Writer* (1979).[17] Smolinsky the private eye has been retained by his namesake, the author of 'A string of scandalous best-sellers, much praised by the critics' (51), now fallen into obscurity, to help him find the Yiddish writer Victor Stenzil, whose biography he has been commissioned to write. When the two Smolinskys first meet, they have the following exchange: '"Sit down", I [Smolinsky the detective] said, "you look like a ghost."[...] "That's just what I am," he said, "not a ghost, but a ghost-writer"' (51).

This doubling of names and doubling of writers is, as we have seen, typical of much of Roth's later fiction, but it is anticipated in this early story of Sinclair's. It may be no coincidence, then, that Smolinsky the writer is approached by his double – who turns out to be his Jewish Other – in the room at the writer's colony once occupied by Roth. That Stenzil disturbs Smolinksy during writing time, thus breaking the rules of the colony, in order to deliver his message is entirely appropriate, since the import of that message is to reject the very idea that the

colony exists to serve: that a writer should be able to retreat from the outside world into a secluded refuge, to devote him or herself exclusively to his/her art without distractions from life. Stenzil is Smolinsky's Jewish Other because his sudden, insistent intervention into, and subsequent colonization of, the latter's life represents the claims of Jewishness against the hermetic, aesthetic claims of art represented by the writer's colony. This is how Smolinsky the writer explains to Smolinsky the detective how he came to take on the job of ghost-writing Stenzil's autobiography:

> 'I have chosen you,' he said. 'For what?' I said. 'I want you to tell the story of my life,' he said. 'You are a writer', I said, 'tell it yourself.' 'I cannot, I am cursed', he said, 'I am a wanderer, always a wanderer.' As we spoke in my doorway, streamers of breath floated from our mouths, mingled, and became a single cloud. 'Listen to me,' said Victor, 'it is my tragedy that the Nazis never reached New York. You think I am crazy? Perhaps. But look at me. What am I ? A *luftmensch*. A man of air. Without substance. Possessed by history. Full of dreams and nightmares. All the war I was safe. Until the first survivors arrived from Europe. Oy, the guilt I felt then! I was ashamed. Come summer I wouldn't turn up my sleeve in case someone saw that I had no number on my arm. The mark of Abel! Because I was not a victim I felt like a murderer. I wanted to explain my guilt to you all. But no [...] You ran away to your tootsies in town. Now you will not escape so easily.' 'Why me?' I said. 'Choose someone else.' But the next day a contract arrived from my agent. Which I signed. Don't ask me why. The fact is that Victor grew [...] from an object of irritation into a living obsession. He became my subject, and I his.(53)

Just as Pepler justifies his peremptory, apparently crazed demand that Zuckerman tell his story to the world by appealing to him as a fellow Jew, as well as a fellow (would-be) writer, so Stenzil's hope that Smolinsky will explain him (a sort of self-explanation by proxy) to the world is, implicitly, an appeal to their shared Jewishness as well as their shared profession. Smolinsky becomes a ghost writer who is haunted by the ghost of another writer, Stenzil, and who in his turn haunts his detective namesake (who, as the narrator, is also ghosting his story), but the real ghosts of the story are those of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Indeed, this passage is full of ambiguous resonances that play on the relationship between ancient and modern

Jewish history, and between Jewishness and writing. Stenzil's apparently arbitrary, yet irrevocable, nomination of Smolinsky as the man to tell his story, and Smolinsky's ambivalent acceptance of the role, alludes to the contract between the Old Testament God and the Jews (an allusion reinforced by the abrupt, enigmatic words with which Stenzil announces his decision – '"I have chosen you"'), while Stenzil's reference to himself as a perpetual wanderer who is cursed recalls the story of Cain, as well as that of his New Testament successor, the Wandering Jew. However, because he has no mark of suffering on him (such as Cain and the former inmates of the Nazi camps have), it is Abel whom he compares himself to. In addition to these biblical references, the passage also seems to parody, while at the same time poignantly expressing, the sort of guilt articulated by British and American Jews who spent the war at a safe distance from the atrocities being visited on their European brethren. Stenzil's desire to conceal his forearm because it would identify him as someone who had not been interned in the death camps is clearly absurd on one level, and yet, as *Eve's Tattoo* implies, on another it accurately symbolizes the sort of guilt that paradoxically seems to border on envy, felt by those spared from such horrors – Jews and Gentiles alike – for those who suffered. After all, if one response to the Holocaust is to feel, as Adorno did, that it is too hallowed a subject, too awful an experience, to be profaned by art, then another is to feel that it is the greatest gift an artist could have: a subject so serious that it makes all others seem trivial by comparison, an experience so profound that it makes other experiences seem shallow ('"Without substance"', in Stenzil's words). Finally, the symbiotic nature of the relationship between Stenzil and Smolinsky the writer is signified by the mingling and uniting of their breaths, and by Smolinsky's closing words – '"He became my subject and I his"' – which contain a pun on the word subject. Stenzil is Smolinsky's subject in the sense that he is what – or whom – he writes about; Smolinsky is Stenzil's in that he is in thrall to him, compelled by the mysterious power apparently exerted by the older writer to carry out his (com)mission.

However, his task is complicated by the fact that Stenzil, having got his man, promptly disappears, leaving Smolinsky the writer, unable to get any 'facts', condemned to a life 'inventing his life'; that is, writing fictional biographies of a ghost (53). When the two Smolinksys (the doubling of names here, too, reveals a deeper affinity, indicated by Smolinsky the detective's observation that 'There is only one difference between writers and detectives; writers invent plots whereas

detectives discover them' [53])[18] finally track Stenzil down to a bar in New Orleans, he performs the following monologue:

> 'Which would you rather be [...] a warder in a concentration camp or a prisoner? A Cain or an Abel? Let me tell you people something. I used to thank God for the holocaust [sic]. You want to know why? Because it gave us Jews the right to sit in judgment on this stinking world. But now I am not sure. Why? On account of Israel, that's why. In our own country we Jews are also not perfect. Now answer my question! Cain or Abel? One or the other?' (57)

Stenzil's claim that the Holocaust provided the Jews with the moral high ground, which they subsequently exploited and therefore forfeited in Israel (which anticipates a joke from Roth's *Operation Shylock*)[19] seems at first to be more the expression of a political philosophy than personal remorse, but it turns out that Stenzil's survivor guilt is not of the universal, abstract, existential kind. Instead, it derives from the fact that when he fled to America he knowingly left behind his Aunt Zelda (under whose superstitious, punitive religious regime he had been brought up in fear and ignorance) to the fate of the European Jews. The story ends, surreally, with Stenzil purging his guilt by liberating a colony of black slaves on the Mississippi State line, and Smolinsky the writer learning Yiddish. This last detail is the pay-off for a joke made earlier on when Smolinsky the detective recovers some of Stenzil's property, among which is a Yiddish phrase book, causing him to reflect on the absurdity of 'its section on how to deal with Customs and Passport Control [...] I ask you, what country is there where Yiddish is the spoken language? A country of displaced persons and ghosts, not marked on any maps' (54).

This observation anticipates the concerns of 'Ashkenazia', one of the stories in Sinclair's second collection, *Bedbugs* (1982), and another one of Sinclair's fictions featuring a Roth-like figure. In this story, Sinclair creates what Brian Cheyette has termed an 'imaginary homeland' for the Jews, a central European state called Ashkenzia, where the official language is Yiddish. The nameless narrator has been commissioned to write 'the official English-language *Guide to Ashkenazia*' (Sinclair 1983: 113), a copy of which is to be distributed to each delegate to the first International Conference in Yiddish Language and Literature. Among these delegates is the Roth-figure, Jake Tarnopol, a 'notorious' egotistical American novelist,[20] whose patronage the narrator – himself a novelist – craves, and whose

reputation he envies, as he confides to the reader:

> Meaning it as a compliment, a critic in the *Forverts* recently called my latest novel 'Tarnopolian'. What fame, to be an adjective! When I buttonhole my qualifier I will beg him to sponsor my publication in America. In America I will be somebody! (Sinclair 1983: 113)

The fact that the critics in his own country praise the narrator's fiction by noting its resemblance (and therefore, implicitly, its debt, and inferiority) to a more eminent American-Jewish writer should ring a few bells: in this respect, the plight of the Ashkenazian writer is analogous to that of the British-Jewish writer. But the narrator suffers from a handicap that his inventor does not: he writes in Yiddish. Like Edelshtein in Cynthia Ozick's much-anthologized short story 'Envy; or Yiddish in America' (1969), the narrator desires, above all, to be read by a wider audience and envies the good fortune of his compatriot, Simcha Nisref (just as Edelshtein envies Yankel Ostrover).[21] For this to happen, however, he needs to be published in translation. His wife, Olga, whose mother is English, and who is bilingual, has translated his novel into English and he hopes that she can persuade Tarnopol to sponsor it for publication. At the same time she wishes to obtain the rights to translate Tarnopol's latest novel into Yiddish. The unscrupulous narrator is happy to exploit Tarnopol's lascivious interest in his wife ('His eyes are scoops, my wife's breasts the flavour of the month' [118]) and his desire to make amends when a manuscript of the narrator's novel in translation given to him by Olga goes up in flames ('Actually we have a copy, but why spoil his guilt? America, here we come!'[120]) for the sake of his ambition. However, the last laugh is on him, as Tarnopol cuckolds him. What might have been a fairly straightforward, even rather predictable, triangular tale of rivalry, jealousy and infidelity among writers becomes more than that because, like 'The Luftmensch', it uses and finally subverts the conventions of this popular plot (as 'The Luftmensch' does the detective story) in order to examine the competing claims of fidelity and imagination in the life and work of the Jewish writer.

When the narrator discovers his wife and Tarnopol 'copulating like animals' (122), he says to Olga:

> 'Isn't the most terrible implication of infidelity the contemplation of eternal loss? Translated into words your actions say, "I am prepared to risk never seeing you again." You and Tarnopol have created a world in which I do not exist.' (122)

As a translator herself, Olga, the narrator implies, should realize that an act of infidelity (whether of the literary, or sexual kind) may result in the eternal loss of whatever (or whomever) is written out. Moreover, the narrator's words have a wider resonance, because the story itself is set in a world that does not exist (except in the form of Sinclair's fiction) and in a country whose existence, even within the confines of that fiction, is precarious.

Tarnopol, it turns out, is visiting Ashkenazia not just in his capacity as a writer (he has been invited to address a literary conference), but as a Jew in search of his roots. While looking at some of the old synagogues, he tells Olga, he encountered his grandfather's ghost: '"The strangest thing is that today is the anniversary of my grandfather's death. Look, I even brought an electric *yortzeit* from America to burn for him [...] What more can he want?"' (119).[22] Olga replies:

> 'Perhaps he wants his freedom, like the rest of us [...] Sometimes I think we are all ghosts in Ashkenazia. We do not live in the twentieth century, but in a timeless zone. Figments of your imagination. Perhaps your grandfather is sick of being your conscience. You want our burdens, we want your freedoms.' (119)

Like Stenzil in 'The Luftmensch', Tarnopol has the guilty conscience of an American who enjoys freedoms denied his fellow Jews in Europe; like Stenzil, however, as a writer he also envies their burdens, or rather the material that such burdens can give a writer. In this place of historical weight (which is also, paradoxically, an ahistorical, 'timeless zone'), he feels his freedom as an American Jew not as liberating, but as trivializing, diminishing (feels himself to be, in other words, a 'luftmensch'). When, later, 'a black-garbed ancient grabs his arm and tugs him towards a dilapidated synagogue', urging him to 'say a prayer for your grandfather's soul', Tarnopol faints in shock. When he recovers, he comments ironically: '"If only Tarnopol didn't really exist"' (122). For him, Olga and the narrator are Jewish Others: fellow Jews and fellow writers whose Jewishness he simultaneously resents as an oppressive claim on him and enjoys as a fictional opportunity. Paradoxically, he can verify their existence in this way, because, as the narrator begins the story by observing, it is difficult to believe in your own existence as a writer if no one reads your words:

> Many of my fellow-countrymen do not believe in the existence of God. I am more modest. I do not believe in myself. What proof can

I have when no one reads what I write? (113)

Olga's feeling that 'we are all ghosts in Ashkenazia', which echoes this existential anxiety, is not just the intuition of a character endowed with a post-modernist awareness of her own fictionality, but a premonition, within the terms of the story, of the destiny of Ashkenazia itself (and, by implication, of European Jewry). Despite the anachronistic presence of Tarnopol (whose voice seems distinctly post-war '"I celebrated the publication of my first story with my first ever fuck"' [118]), Sinclair's story is apparently set sometime in the 1930s: it begins with the Prime Minister of Ashkenazia having just concluded a treaty with Hitler, and ends with the destruction of Ashkenazia by the Nazis, to which the crazed narrator is the only witness: 'All that remains of my dumb heart-broken country is a field of wooden skeletons. [...] Now the world will listen to me, for I am the guide to Ashkenazia. I am Ashkenazia!' (123)

Ending in this way, the story seems to be a fable about (writing about) the Holocaust, a way of dealing with this most terrible and tremendous of events in, perhaps, the only way it can be dealt with, imaginatively: obliquely. Yet in the context of Sinclair's work as a whole, it seems to me primarily another meditation on what it means to be a Jewish writer. The narrator ends the story as a sort of Jewish Ishmael,[23] an orphan whose statelessness seems to be a metaphor for the Jewish condition and whose attempts to explain himself seem doomed to solipsistic oblivion.

'Ashkenazia' is the story that concludes Sinclair's second collection of short stories, but he returns to many of its themes, and to its method of imagining an alternative history, in his next book, *Blood Libels*. Here, too, the fate of the narrator is intimately linked to that of a Jewish nation: like the narrator of *Midnight's Children* (1981), who is born at the same moment as the Indian nation, Jake Silkstone's birth coincides symbolically with that of Israel (as well as with Sinclair's own birthday). It is not Israel's history, however, that Sinclair reinvents here, but England's. Silkstone, like Sinclair himself at the time of writing, is the literary editor of a Jewish newspaper in England (the *Jewish Chronicle* becomes the *Jewish Voice*) and a novelist. This is an extraordinarily self-referential, indeed self-cannibalistic novel: a significant chunk of one of Sinclair's short stories ('Wingate Football Club') is recycled, and Sinclair himself makes a cameo appearance (Roth-like) interviewing another one of Sinclair's Roth-like figures, 'the notorious American novelist Jerry Unger' (Sinclair 1986: 48). While the interview

is going on, Jake's future wife, Lena, whispers to him: '"You should be up there [. . .] you're the English Jerry Unger"' (48).[24]

When Silkstone shows his first novel, *Rabbi Nathan's Folly* (based on the foiled attempt of his rabbi to force himself on the family's German au pair on the occasion of Jake's barmitzvah) to his parents, they react in the manner that readers of Roth's novels have come to expect:

> 'Are you satisfied?' asked my mother, pointing to an empty bottle of valium, beside which was cast the offending manuscript, like a suicide note. 'Why don't you write something nice about the Jews, instead of *dreck* [dirt] like this?'
>
> 'There are plenty of others to do that,' I said. 'Besides, you are confusing fact with fiction. I write stories.' (43)

To the accusation of self-hatred that has been repeatedly levelled at Roth's protagonists (and Roth himself), then, Silkstone gives the same reply as they (and he): the aesthetic reply, the reply that draws the distinction between life and art, the reply that claims for literature an immunity to charges of incitement to racial hatred. Yet just as, in Roth's novels, these charges come back, again and again, to haunt Zuckerman and the others, so, in Sinclair's novel, the paranoid fantasies of Silkstone's parents (and of countless Jewish readers and critics who have accused writers like Roth and Sinclair of encouraging anti-Semitism) are fulfilled: by the end of the novel it has become clear that *Rabbi Nathan's Folly* has played a part in sparking off anti-Semitic riots in north-west London.

The young Jake first encounters English anti-Semitism when the Jewish soccer club he avidly follows is due to play a cup final on the afternoon of his barmitzvah. This clash of fixtures prompts a crisis not just for Jake, but for his father:

> Although he went to synagogue for my sake my father no longer possessed any real religious beliefs. Yet he thought of himself as Jewish, and was only fully alive when he could express those sentiments. So for 'Friday evening' read 'Saturday afternoon', and for 'father's hall' read 'Wingate Football Club'. Soccer may seem a poor substitute for religion, but it alone provided that missing sense of community. Religion, race or culture? It wasn't a question that bothered the anti-semites who saved us that afternoon. For suddenly there was Mr. Mendel knocking at our front door breathless with the news that vandals had daubed swastikas on the synagogue walls. (36)

This timely manifestation of anti-Semitism, which allows him and his father to watch the game (the Barmitzvah has to be postponed until the synagogue walls have been cleansed), is soon succeeded by another. After Wingate recover from a two-goal deficit to win the London League Cup by three goals to two, the disenchanted supporters of the opposition give vent to their resentment.

> 'It's a pity Hitler didn't finish the lot of 'em off,' said a peroxide blonde in a fake leopard-skin coat and toreador pants, unable to stomach the sight of Jews rejoicing.
>
> 'Fucking bitch,' I replied. At which she dispensed with language and slapped me around the face. So I slapped her back – placing my father in an untenable position; I had used foul language and struck a woman, indefensible acts, but the provocation was undeniable.
>
> 'Jacob,' he said, 'do not sink to the level of this scum.'
>
> I wanted to inform him that scum rises, but was only able to demonstrate that Jews tend to fall down when hit in the eye by bums with fists the size of hams. (40–1)

The day is saved by the fortuitous presence of Al Pinsky, 'once the lightweight champion of Great Britain' (41), who knocks out 'the Christian gentleman' as he threatens Jake's father with further physical violence. Incidents like this one establish the environment of simmering English anti-Semitism that is eventually brought to the boil by the Oswald Mosley-like figure of Bruno Gascoyne. At the close of the novel Gascoyne's fascist followers, the Children of Albion, their ranks swelled by the desire to avenge the murder of his daughter (shot by Israeli secret servicemen), go on the rampage in the Jewish strongholds of Golders Green and Hendon. Meanwhile, Gascoyne himself explains his daughter's death during a live television debate with Rabbi Nathan by invoking the ancient blood libel that Jews require Christian blood for their rituals. When the Rabbi registers his indignation at the fact 'the BBC [is] permitting the broadcast of such foul libels, the likes of which have not been heard since the days of Goebbels and Streicher'[25] (176–7), Gascoyne responds by paraphrasing a passage from Silkstone's novel:

> GASCOYNE: Can Rabbi Nathan deny that on 21 May 1961 in the ladies' lavatory of the Cafe Royal he forced the act of fellatio upon the unwilling person of Helga M, then the German au pair of the *Jewish Voice*'s current literary editor? [. . .]

> And he raises aloft in triumph a copy of that rare book, *Rabbi Nathan's Folly*. (177)

He goes on to read the infamous passage from Chaucer's 'The Prioress' Tale' (c.1390) in which the narrator rehearses a topical blood libel according to which the Jews of Lincoln were responsible for the murder of a local Christian boy. Rabbi Nathan insists that '"Literature is not life!"' (178), ironically the same argument with which Jake had defended the book to his parents earlier in the novel, but by this time he has been routed, and Jake has become an unwitting accomplice to Gascoyne's anti-Semitic campaign.

On one level, then, this novel is a fictional enactment of the worst neurotic fears of the Jewish writer – that his writing will, as his most fanatical Jewish critics claim, perpetuate – or revive – anti-Semitism in the writer's host nation.[26] Certainly, by pitting Gascoyne's urbane, if lunatic, eloquence against the lame threats of Rabbi Nathan ('"I'll sue for libel"' [177]) Sinclair is playing devil's advocate in a way that will, again, be familiar to readers of Roth (who often gives the antagonists of his writer-heroes the best lines). After all, if Rabbi Nathan can sue Gascoyne for defamation of his character (a move which would be unwise, however, as we know that the charges against him are true), he cannot sue him on behalf of the Jewish people for the more serious of his libels. Indeed, the very tenacity of the blood libel is explained by the fact that it circulates as rumour, superstition, myth: things that cannot be disproved.[27] Yet Jake's real antagonist – the threat to his identity as a Jewish writer – is not the anti-Semitic Gascoyne, but the philosemitic Ziz, a Polish poet whom he befriends in London and later visits in Israel.

In the aftermath of the publication of *Rabbi Nathan's Folly*, Jake is afflicted by a condition which he calls scriptophobia:

> It was only with the utmost difficulty that I was able to put my ideas down on paper, concentrating on the form to such an extent that the content got lost. Why didn't I use a typewriter, you're probably thinking? I'll tell you, it was even worse. The letters danced on the page, copulating indiscriminately in strange combinations. I had, in short, lost my voice, for only when my thoughts were written down did they fully exist. Let's be more succinct, I had been gagged, or maybe I had chastened myself in anticipation of the worse punishment that awaited me. *Rabbi Nathan's Folly* turned out to be my folly too. (45)

The image of the letters 'copulating indiscriminately in strange combinations' is typical of Sinclair in its yoking of sex and writing, and indeed Jake's scriptophobia is presented as a sort of emasculation, a loss of potency brought on by guilt at having written a book that he hopes (and fears) 'will shake the Anglo-Jewish establishment to its foundations' (44).[28] It is when Jake has 'lost his voice' that he becomes literary editor of the *Jewish Voice*, a position which ironically situates him at the heart of the Anglo-Jewish establishment, making him 'a spokesman for the very values I was meant to have destroyed [...] a ventriloquist's dummy' (49). For Jake, this humiliating confirmation of his impotence as a writer constitutes 'a sort of poetic justice': having given free rein to his iconoclastic impulses, he must now conform.

It is in this capacity that he first meets Ziz, at a reception being held in the poet's honour at the Israeli Embassy in London. Why is the Israeli embassy feting a Polish Catholic poet?

> Just after the Second World War he published a series of sonnets, standard in form but extraordinary in substance. Instead of addressing the Motherland as a suitor might, the convention of the time, Ziz spoke to the Jews. His message was simple: 'Come home.' (51)

Here we have an anticipation of Pipik's vision of Diasporism in *Operation Shylock*: a Pole urging the return of the Jews to their homeland – not Israel, but Poland. Like Pipik, Ziz seems to be a Jewish Other, representing the claims of Jewishness on the protagonist: his engagement with the destiny and reputation of the Jewish people (he also speaks out against post-war Polish anti-Semitism, and is accused of being a Zionist sympathizer for his pains) contrasts with Jake's more parochial preoccupations (the Anglo-Jewish establishment) and subsequent (semi-comical) disowning of all matters Jewish: '"I am allergic to Jews [...] in particular their history"' (68). Yet Ziz is not Jewish at all. Or is he? When it turns out that Ziz was a close friend of the grandfather of Jake's lover, Hannah, Jake and Hannah go and visit Ziz and he tells them that Abe Ratskin, a resistance fighter during the war, had once saved his life. Then he addresses Hannah, Abe's granddaughter, for whom he apparently feels a strong physical attraction:[29] '"We are, in a manner of speaking, brother and sister [...] for Abe Ratskin gave us both life. Otherwise I would beg you to stay the night [...] Incest is too strong a taboo"' (69).

At the time this seems like a characteristically extravagant piece of poetic rhetoric on the part of Ziz, but later on it transpires that he is genuinely worried about committing incest, though not of the brother-sister kind. Ziz tells Jake that he had an affair with Abe's wife and that Hannah may well be his granddaughter: '"Now you know why [. . .] I am so committed to Israel. I want my great-grandchildren to live in peace"' (165). Though not a Jew by birth, then, Ziz is an honorary Jew, by virtue of his association with Jewish causes and his familial connection with Hannah. Jake's own Jewishness, on the other hand, turns out to be another blood libel: the novel closes with his discovery of a letter to his wife, Lena, from his father, in which he discloses the truth about Jake's parentage:

> I must tell you a secret we have kept from everyone, including Jakie, for 35 years. Until now we have always loved him as if he were our own son, but enough is enough. If Rabbi Nathan hadn't made such a big deal in the synagogue about his birth we wouldn't have had to keep so quiet about it. But after that, how could we tell everyone that Jakie wasn't even Jewish? I may not know who his parents were, but of that I am certain: there isn't a drop of Jewish blood in him. (191)

This final blow follows hard upon Lena's revelation that the editor of the *Jewish Voice* (with whom she secretly slept in order to secure Jake his job) may be the father of her son. Thus Jake ends the novel stripped of both his patrimony and his paternity, his credentials as both a Jew and a writer thoroughly undermined.

In the work of Roth and Sinclair, then, Jewish identity is figured not primarily in terms of difference from the host culture – from Americanness, or Englishness – but in terms of differences between Jews. For both novelists, to be a Jewish writer is something of an oxymoron, and many of their best fictions attempt not so much to reconcile the competing demands of Jewishness and writing, as to dramatize the conflict between them, incarnating the claims of writing in the form of solipsistic Jewish artists (disfigured self-portraits) and the claims of Jewishness in the form of Jewish Others, who themselves reflect distorted images of these artists. In this way, Roth and Sinclair are exemplars of the impulse in post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction writers to explain themselves: insofar as they themselves, and their peculiar dilemmas as writers, are the subjects of their fiction, it is insular to the point of self-obsession; but

insofar as their explorations of their fictional practices involve an attempt to define the very nature of Jewishness and writing, it is as intellectually and philosophically wide-ranging as the most ambitious of modern fiction.

Afterword

> When I'm in England I think of myself most, but not all of the time, as primarily Jewish, secondarily English and sometimes American. When I'm in America I frequently feel quite English, definitely Jewish and rarely American. When I'm in Israel I feel Anglo-Jewish and not at all American. One year, 1994, I had a short story appear in *Best American Stories* and another in *Best Stories* (UK). (Wilson 2000)

> In Jewish identity, the desire for totality can lead toward attempts either to reify or to dissolve Jewish distinctiveness. (Boyarin 1992: 50)

> [T]he Jewish writer is not necessarily the one who charters the word 'Jew' in his writings, but the one for whom the word 'Jew' is contained in all the words of the dictionary, a word the more absent for being, by itself, every one of them. (Jabés quoted in Boyarin 1992: 65)

Rather than pursuing a particular route towards a predetermined final destination, I have sought to make connections, identify landmarks and navigate pathways through the treacherous terrain of Jewish identity as it is mapped in post-war Jewish fiction. In the absence of any grand conclusions, I would like to finish by reviewing this journey and offering some signposts for future travellers. It was clear from the outset that I could not hope to cover all the ground, or to provide a comprehensive survey of it. I have had, of necessity, to bypass some notable sites: among British-Jewish writers, I have reluctantly not been able to consider the work of Dan Jacobson (arguably the finest post-war British-Jewish novelist, whose *The Rape of Tamar* [1973] and *Her Story* [1988] will feature in my next project),[1] Gabriel Josipovici (whose reputation as a writer of fiction has never quite matched his reputation as a critic), Bernice Rubens (who has produced a steady stream of thoughtful, at times daring, fiction for over thirty years) and Elaine Feinstein (whose own poetry and translations of Marina Tsvetaeva have tended to overshadow what is an impressive body of fiction);

among American-Jewish writers, I particularly regret not finding space for the work of Stanley Elkin, Grace Paley, Hortense Calisher and Tillie Olsen, all of whom are well known in the United States, but (particularly in the case of Elkin and Calisher, whose work is rarely published in the United Kingdom) not as well known as they ought to be in Britain and elsewhere.

If I have not been able to say all that I would have wanted to, what I have said is also rather different from what I anticipated saying. When I set out, I expected to find that the differences between British- and American-Jewish fiction were more striking than the similarities, and that the degree to which questions of Jewish identity were examined in any given writer would largely depend on the extent to which they thought of themselves as Jewish writers. Instead of which, I have found that the border between British- and American-Jewish fiction is becoming increasingly difficult to locate, and that the more ambivalent a writer's attitude towards his/her own Jewishness, the more likely their fiction is to explore questions of Jewish identity thoroughly.

As the first of the epigraphs above demonstrates, classifications like 'English', 'American' and 'Jewish' are neither fixed nor finite, but rather tend to shift, the nuances of the terms modulating according to the environment one finds oneself in. Jonathan Wilson's case is, after all, hardly exceptional: many of the writers I discuss in this book have lived, worked, or been educated in both Britain and America (not to mention Israel), and many others (such as Alan Isler, who is British-born, but has lived in America for most of his life, or Ruth Fainlight, who is American-born but has lived in Britain for most of her life) can claim a dual nationality. In a recent anthology of Jewish short stories in English, eight of the contributors (Wilson, Frederic Raphael, Nessa Rapoport, Carol Bergman, Ellen Galford, Rozanne Rabinowitz, Stephen Walker and Tamar Yellin) had lived in Britain and North America, and most of the others had lived in more than one country (including South Africa, Israel, Turkey and Portugal). When you take into account the investment in Israeli identity that Wilson's comments implies, it is clear that national identity is, for many post-war Jewish writers, no less provisional and confused than it was for their ancestors. If Jews are no longer nomadic of necessity, they seem to be so by inclination. Partly as a result of this international cross-fertilization, and, in particular, of the ever-increasing proximity of British and American culture (some would say dominance of the former by the latter), but also, I would argue, because of an insistent transnational (and to some extent transhistorical) sense of Jewishness, it is possible to speak in general terms

of British- *and* American-Jewish fiction. In the case of someone like Wilson, or Allegra Goodman (an American-Jewish writer several of whose stories are based on her experiences of British-Jewish culture, while she was studying in Oxford), or Will Self (whose *How the Dead Live* [2000] tells the story of the life and death of a Jewish woman who is both a New Yorker and a Londoner) it might even make sense to use a term like mid-Atlantic or Anglo-American Jewish fiction. Furthermore, though there is still no body of British-Jewish fiction that can match the rich diversity of American-Jewish fiction, there are signs that the current crop of British-Jewish novelists and short-story writers may succeed where their predecessors have failed. It would be premature to proclaim, as Ephraim Sicher did in 1985, that 'The Jewish voice claims as much place in British culture as the Roman Catholicism of Graham Greene or T.S. Eliot' (Sicher 1985: 167), but some of the British-Jewish fiction published in the last few years suggests that the old paralyzing polarization of the identities on either side of the hyphen may finally be breaking down, and a more self-confident hybridity taking its place.[2]

In a period of multiculturalism and interdisciplinarity, where traditional ethnic and generic labels are being re-examined, and the temptations to 'reify or to dissolve Jewish distinctiveness', as Boyarin puts it, are stronger than ever, it may be deeply unfashionable to insist that there are particular properties that adhere to, and inhere in, British- and American-Jewish fiction. Much of the recent work on Jewish literature has, in fact, been produced by writers who, like Boyarin, were trained in other fields of inquiry and for whom 'cultural studies offers a way out of the schizoid disciplinary dilemma of trying to squeeze the Jews into definition as a historical or cultural people, a literary or anthropological phenomenon' (Boyarin 1992: xv). Yet I would like to finish by suggesting that much post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction, for all its diversity, is united in a common enterprise, which is precisely to constitute Jewishness as a *literary* phenomenon. If, as Jabés suggests, the final index of a writer's Jewishness is his/her capacity to see Jewishness everywhere, to have, as Henry/Hanoch Zuckerman puts it in *The Counterlife*, 'Jew on the brain' (Roth 1987: 232), then it is those ambivalent Jews (like Jabés and Roth) for whom it is most problematic, and hence most in need of explanation, who are most Jewish.

The argument (particularly popular in the 1960s, when 'alienation' was the great buzzword in literary criticism) that Jewish protagonists in post-war Jewish fiction are Everymen, has been used to explain both

their presence and their absence: if Philip Roth favoured Jewish protagonists, it was because Jewishness is a metaphor for the human condition; if Norman Mailer's heroes were Gentiles, it was because, as Malamud put it, 'Every man is a Jew'. Its (post)modern equivalent is that Jewishness is an unstable, indeterminate, slippery set of signifiers that resists definition and defies description: a paradigm of (post)modernity, in which nothing is certain except that nothing is certain. And yet there is, in much of post-war British- and American-Jewish fiction an insistence on Jewish difference, that these arguments cannot account for. This is not to say that there is no intersection between Jewish and non-Jewish fiction: each of the five chapters of this book deal with themes that reverberate throughout western literature of the post-war period: the struggle for self-definition in Chapter 1; the relationship between Self and Other in Chapters 2 and 3; the crisis of masculinity and the impact of feminism on established gender roles in Chapters 3 and 4, and the relationship between fact and fiction in Chapters 4 and 5. If there is one overarching concern that binds these chapters together, and that justifies the use of the term 'post-war' at a time when it might seem anachronistic (more than fifty years after the end of the war, and at the beginning of a new century and new millennium), however, it is the ways in which the Holocaust is and is not visible in post-war Jewish fiction. If writing this book has taught me anything, it is this: that for British- and American-Jewish writers, the term 'post-war', far from becoming redundant, has become increasingly pertinent as the historical event itself has receded.

Notes

Preface

1. Sander Gilman thoroughly deconstructs this mythology in *Smart Jews* (1996).
2. Efraim Sicher's *Beyond Marginality: Anglo-Jewish Literature After the Holocaust* (1985) is a wide-ranging, but somewhat superficial, survey of British-Jewish literature based on rather spurious regional distinctions.

Explaining Themselves: Ambivalent Representations of Jewishness in Post-War British- and American-Jewish Fiction

1. As the historian Geoffrey Alderman points out, however, the apparent clarity of this definition by matriarchal lineage always begs the question of how the Jewishness of the mother is itself to be verified if not by reference to her mother, and so on (see Alderman 1998: 1). For the purposes of his own study, Alderman 'define[s] as Jewish any person who considered or considers him or herself to be such, or who was or is so regarded by his or her contemporaries' (Alderman 1998: 1).
2. See Rosenberg 1960: 13–19 for a useful review of studies of representations of the Jew in English literature prior to his own.
3. He goes so far as to attribute Pound's and Eliot's anti-Semitism to, respectively, a 'horror of becoming semitically indistinct', and a 'repressed identification with "the Jew"' (Cheyette 1993: 272, 271).
4. Jacqueline Rose's book, *Judaism and Modernity* (1993), published in the same year as *Constructions of the Jew in English Literature and Society*, makes the case for this association in philosophical terms.
5. One of Doctorow's short stories appears in *The Schocken Book of Contemporary Jewish Fiction* (1996), but he is rarely mentioned in articles or books on American-Jewish fiction, even though two of his novels – *The Book of Daniel* (1971) and *World's Fair* (1985) – feature Jewish protagonists. Apart from Stephen Wade's recent book *Jewish American Literature Since 1945* (1999), which has a brief section on Auster, no other work on Jewish literature that I know of so much as mentions him. Yet, although none of his fiction deals explicitly with Jewish themes, he has (unlike Mailer, say) explored his own and others' Jewishness elsewhere: in his memoir *The Invention of Solitude* (1982); in conversation with the French-Jewish writer Edmond Jabés, and in essays on Kafka and Charles Reznikoff (collected in *The Art of Hunger* [1988]).
6. For a useful sample of definitions of Jewish literature in general, and American-Jewish fiction in particular, see Lyons 1988: 61–2.
7. Robert Alter, for example, claims that 'No other Jew who has contributed sig-

nificantly to European literature appears so intensely, perhaps disturbingly, Jewish in the quality of his imagination as Kafka' (Alter 1969: 25).

8. For a thorough discussion of the notion that Jews mongrelize the language of their host nations, producing what the Germans called 'mauscheln', see Gilman 1990: passim.
9. The British-Jewish novelist, Zina Rohan, deals with the wartime British internment of Jewish refugees in her novel *The Sandbeetle* (1992).
10. For detailed accounts of the anti-Semitism of British government officials, and of the reluctance of British-Jewish organizations to lobby openly for a more liberal immigration policy, or for military intervention on behalf of European Jewry, see Bernard Wasserstein's *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (1998) and Kushner 1990. For similar arguments about the culpability of the American government and American-Jewish community, see David S. Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust* (1986) and Haskel Lookstein's *Were We Our Brother's Keepers: The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust 1938–1944* (1988).
11. See, for example, Trilling's essay on 'Wordsworth and the Rabbis' (1950). Before the war, Trilling had dismissed Jewishness as a potential source of inspiration for American-Jewish writers:

> As the Jewish community now exists it can give no sustenance to the American artist or intellectual who is born a Jew [...] I know of no writer in English who has added a micromillimetre to his stature by 'realizing his Jewishness,' although I know of some who have curtailed their promise by trying to heighten their Jewish consciousness. (quoted in Schechner 1990: 136)

12. George Steiner recalls that 'A brief visit to Yale [in 1949] [. . .] made it plain to me that Jews there were consigned to a ghetto of pinched politeness' (Steiner 1998: 40). Indeed, a degree of institutional anti-Semitism was still in evidence at Yale in the 1960s, to judge from an anecdote that Stephen Greenblatt tells about attending an appointment at the Financial Aid office, to receive funding for a position as research assistant. He 'assumed that the appointment would be routine', but in the event his application was rejected by an official who told him that 'we're sick and tired at [sic] the number of Jews who are coming into our office trying to wheedle money out of Yale University' (Greenblatt 2000: 12).
13. George Ziad, in Philip Roth's novel *Operation Shylock* (1983), gives an extreme, but ingenious, interpretation of this guilt:

> "The destruction of European Jewry registered as a cataclysmic shock on American Jews not only because of its sheer horror but also because this horror, viewed irrationally through the prism of their grief, seemed to them in some indefinable way *ignited* by them – yes, instigated by the wish to put an end to Jewish life in Europe that their massive emigration had embodied, as though between the bestial destructiveness of Hitlerian anti-Semitism and their own passionate desire to be delivered from the humiliations of their European imprisonment there had existed some horrible, unthinkable inter-relationship, bordering on complicity. (Roth 1993: 130–1)

Ziad's diagnosis echoes sentiments (and the imagery of conflagration) articulated some years earlier by Alfred Kazin, who writes of his guilty conviction that 'The Jews burned every day in Europe were being consumed in a fire that I had helped to light' (Kazin 1978: 96).

14. All three won the National Book Award (Roth for *Goodbye, Columbus*, Bellow for *The Adventures of Augie March* [1953] and *Herzog* [1964], and Malamud for *The Magic Barrel* [1958] and *The Fixer* [1966], this last also winning the Pulitzer Prize), as well as producing bestsellers (Roth with *Portnoy's Complaint* [1969], Bellow with *Herzog*, and Malamud with *The Fixer*). Bellow also won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1985.
15. Although a number of British-Jewish literary critics (notably A. Alvarez, David Daiches, John Gross, Gabriel Josipovici, Dan Jacobson and George Steiner) began to build reputations for themselves in the 1960s, and although Josipovici, Jacobson and Steiner all wrote fiction as well as literary criticism, they had little or no connection with each other and little interest in the state of British-Jewish fiction (though Daiches did publish an essay on the subject in the *Jewish Quarterly*, reprinted in *Jewish Perspectives: 25 Years of Modern Jewish Writing* [1980]).
16. For an overview of these writers' work see Sicher 1985: 3–14 and Cheyette 1998: xiv–xxvi. For more detailed discussion of some of these writers, see Linda Zatlin's *The Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Jewish Novel* (1981), Michael Galchinsky's *The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England* (1996), and *Victorian Literature and Culture,* vol. 27 (1), 1999 (a special edition devoted to Anglo-Jewish writers in Victorian England).
17. See Charles 1961.
18. This implication becomes even stronger when the conjunction is 'or', as in a history conference organized by the Jewish Historical Society of England entitled 'British or Jewish: Assimilation and Acculturation, 1700–2000'.
19. Glanville, in particular, was, the object of bitter recrimination (see Sicher 1985: 119) from Jewish critics, while Brian Cheyette complains that 'Workaday literary journalists [...] treat the Jewishness of British-born writers as a form of embarrassment, a guilty secret to be passed over with unseemly haste or ignored altogether' (Cheyette 1998: xi).
20. Anne Karpf notes that 'British post-war immigration policy specifically proscribed Jews' and that 'renewed antagonism towards Germany after its defeat once again produced hostility towards German-Jewish refugees, while the violent exploits of the Jewish underground in Palestine also helped foster British antipathy towards Jews in general, giving rise to anti-Jewish riots in almost every major British city in 1947' (Karpf 1997: 193). There is also much anecdotal evidence to suggest that anti-Semitism has remained endemic in post-war Britain. From Jenny Diski's memories of her schooldays when 'the other kids told me I was not English, but Jewish. Killing Christ was still something [...] I was held responsible for in the playground' (Diski 1998: 104–5) to the testimony of Anthony Julius (who represented the Princess of Wales during her divorce and who has also published a book on the anti-Semitism of T.S. Eliot) that '"When I was looking for articles, many of the bigger firms didn't take Jews, so there was

no point in applying"' (quoted in Freedland 1999: 42), the attitude of British Jews encountering this sort of prejudice seems to be one of resignation rather than indignation.

21. The slippage between 'English' and 'British' is apparent everywhere in English and British culture and illustrates the extent to which, in England, if not in the rest of Britain, the two are regarded as coterminous. I have chosen to use the term 'British-Jewish' throughout the book, so as not to exclude (or appropriate as English) Jewish writers of Welsh origin (such as Dannie Abse and Bernice Rubens), Scottish origin (Simon Louvish) or emigrés such as Dan Jacobson and George Steiner.
22. Jokes (some of them quite vicious, some more mildly racist) about the Irish, Scots, Welsh, Pakistanis, West Indians and Jews were, until quite recently, ubiquitous in British culture, and even today there are those who dismiss ethical objections to such material as humourless 'political correctness'. As Stephen Greenblatt has noticed (with the clarity of perception that outsiders often bring to a foreign culture), 'though England is a multicultural nation, ethnic difference is still registered – and often registered as risible – in a way that it has ceased to be in the United States' (Greenblatt 2000: 11).
23. The inclusion of Ireland is somewhat misleading, since only one of the contributors (Ronit Lentin) is Irish.
24. Michael Freedland recalls that 'there was a Jewish foreign secretary (Malcom Rifkind), two home secretaries (Leon Brittan and Michael Howard) and a chancellor of the exchequer (Nigel Lawson) [. . . and a] trade secretary, Lord Young' (Freedland 1999: 37).
25. Indeed, the very term 'community' has been questioned by Geoffrey Alderman, who argues that 'There is today no such thing, but rather a series of communities some of which overlap to a greater or lesser extent' and that 'Judaism once united the Jews of Britain; now it divides them' (Alderman 1998: 378, 410).
26. Whereas in America most religious Jews are affiliated to one or other of the progressive branches of Judaism, in Britain by far the largest number of synagogues are orthodox, to the extent that the Chief Rabbi of this branch of Judaism has, until recently, been unquestioningly accepted as the official religious leader of and spokesperson for British Jewry. These differences are particularly glaring on the question of the role of women in religious life. Whereas the American-Jewish writer Marlene Adler Marks is able to assert unequivocally that 'the rights to full participation of women in Jewish life and learning have been basically established in most denominations' (Marks 1996: 5), the same cannot be said in Britain, where even the most basic concessions to feminism (such as women taking an active role in religious services) are fiercely resisted within the Orthodox movement.
27. Illustrating what he calls 'the blinkered banalities of the *Jewish Chronicle*', Frederic Raphael tells the 'possibly apocryphal story of the *JC's* report on the International Cross-Country Race which was headed: "Goldstone Fourteenth"' (Raphael 1979: 96).
28. During the 1970s the paper ran a weekly column in which Philip Kleinman vigilantly recorded, and condemned as anti-Semitic, every criticism of

Israeli government policy he could find in the British press.

29. Gerda Charles, for example, complained that 'if we consider our own Jewish past we see that there was probably more "reason for living" in many a shtetl in Eastern Europe in the last century with the interest in ideas, its ability to express them, its eagerness and respect for knowledge, than in many a London suburb today' (Charles 1963: 11).
30. Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were an American–Jewish couple who were convicted of passing details of America's atomic weapons programme to the Russians. They were sentenced to death in 1951 and finally executed by electric chair in 1953. Their story is told in fictionalized form in both E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* (1971) and Robert Coover's *The Public Burning* (1977). Jonathan Pollard was an American-Jewish intelligence analyst who was convicted in 1987 of spying for Israel and is currently serving a life sentence.
31. The contrast with Alex Haley's *Roots* (1977), which the title of Jacobson's work parodies, is pointed: whereas Haley's protagonist famously finds his way back to a black homeland (that is to say his journey has a final destination), Jacobson can only journey *amongst* Jews. Israel does not function in the same way for Jewish writers as Africa has for many black writers (except ironically, as in *Portnoy's Complaint*, in which Portnoy's flight to Israel only exacerbates his identity crisis).
32. For other examples of contradictory anti-Semitic Jewish stereotypes, see Reizbaum 1999: 9, Nochlin and Garb 1995: 7, and Cheyette 1993: 9.
33. Abraham Herschel, for example, writes that 'Jewish thinking and living can only be adequately understood in terms of a dialectical pattern, containing opposite or contrasted properties [... There is] a polarity which lies at the very heart of Judaism [...]' (quoted in Malin 1965: 80).
34. A term borrowed from the Polish critic and novelist Artur Sandauer to describe any representation of Jews (whether anti-Semitic or philosemitic) as fundamentally different from non-Jews (see Cheyette 1996: 14).
35. Dembo's definition of the monological Jew is 'a Jew of the Diaspora who has abandoned monotheism but who [...] still feels himself to be a Jew – and yet not a Jew' (Dembo 1988: 4).
36. In addition to the books I discuss in Chapter 4, examples of the genre include: Meyer Levin's *In Search* (1950), Alfred Kazin's trilogy *Walker in the City* (1951), *Starting Out in the Thirties* (1965), and *New York Jew* (1978); Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers* (1976) and *A Margin of Hope* (1982), Norman Podhoretz's *Making It* (1968), Herbert Gold's *My Last Two Thousand Years* (1973), Gershom Scholem's *From Berlin to Jerusalem* (1980), Kim Chernin's *In My Mother's House* (1983), Vivian Gornick's *Fierce Attachments* (1987), Alan Dershowitz's *Chutzpah* (1991), George Steiner's *Errata* (1997), Dan Jacobson's *Heschel's Kingdom* (1998), Leon Wieseltier's *Kaddish* (1999) and Rachel Lichtenstein's half of *Rodintsky's Room* (1999).
37. Those who deny it, like the protagonist of Malamud's 'The Lady of the Lake' (1958), who loses the glamorous Isabella del Dongo because he fails to realize that her anxiety over his origins betrays her own – as a survivor of a concentration camp – are punished or portrayed as soulless opportunists, whose arid existence is its own punishment (cf Hortense Calisher's

'Old Stock' [1950], Philip Roth's 'Eli, the Fanatic' [1959], and Leslie Fiedler's 'The Last Jew in America' [1966]).

38. Compare Alex Portnoy's outburst: 'Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew! It is coming out of my ears already, the saga of the suffering Jews!' (Roth 1969: 72).

2 The Gentile Who Mistook Himself for a Jew

1. Sartre stresses – perhaps disingenuously – that the term inauthentic 'impl[ies] no moral blame' (Sartre 1995: 93). Certainly, his definition of authenticity – 'having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation [...] assuming the responsibilities that it involves [...] accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror or hate' (90) – though strictly morally ambiguous (the positive terms 'true', 'lucid' and 'pride' are balanced by the negative 'humiliation', 'horror' and 'hate'), seems ethically preferable, in that it always involves an acceptance (whether reluctant and resentful or not) of responsibility.
2. L.S. Dembo, in his study *The Monological Jew* (1988), argues that 'Sartre's position on Jewish authenticity is indefensible; it is so because he ignores the positive values and ideals associated with Judaism in general and with the Jew's vision of himself', and that 'The term "Inauthentic Jew," insofar as it is normative as well as descriptive, carries an opprobrium with it that leads to caricature rather than realistic portrayal' (Dembo 1988: 21, 25). Susan Suleiman, in her essay 'The Jew in Sartre's *Reflexions sur la question juive*: An Exercise in Historical Reading', takes a more balanced view, arguing that the first section of Sartre's book is, as Sartre himself later described it, an effective 'declaration of war against anti-Semites' (Sartre quoted in Suleiman 1995: 201), but that in the final section of the book he '*thinks* he is defending the Jew against the anti-Semite's myth, but actually reinforces the myth' (214).
3. An acronym for 'Embarrassed Jewish Individual', Kalmar also uses the term adjectivally, to denote the 'edginess [...] about being Jewish' that is symptomatic of the 'cultural condition' which his book explores (Kalmar 1993: 6).
4. In addition to those I discuss here, there have been two notable recent examples: the hero of Philip Roth's novel, *The Human Stain* (2000), who is a black man who passes himself off as a Jew, and the protagonist of Nathan Englander's short story, 'The Gilgul of Park Avenue', a WASP who suddenly and inexplicably becomes convinced that 'he was the bearer of a Jewish soul' (Englander 1999: 109).
5. In using the term subgenre I do not wish to imply either that the authors of these works are consciously locating themselves within an established tradition of Jewish writing (there is no evidence that any of these novels have been directly influenced by any of the others) or that there has been any critical recognition of the affinities between them. As far as I am aware, only Robert Alter, in a brief passage in an essay entitled 'Sentimentalizing the Jews' has written on what he calls 'the motif of conversion or quasi-conversion' (Alter 1969: 42). The novels Alter refers to are *The Assistant*, Edward Lewis Wallant's *The Children at the Gate* (1964) and Jerome Charyn's *On the Darkening Green* (1965).

6. When Alpine first offers to help Bober, he remarks '"You people are Jews [. . .] I always liked Jews"' (38), but this attempt to ingratiate himself actually conceals deep-seated suspicion. It soon emerges that he agreed, albeit reluctantly, to hold up Bober's store in the first place (rather than, as originally planned, Karp's neighbouring, and more prosperous liquor store), on the grounds that '"A Jew is a Jew"' (67). Moreover, after he moves into the apartment above the store, 'he felt [. . .] repugnance [. . .] for himself because he had never lived this close to Jews before' (57) and he justifies his desire for Helen, the grocer's daughter, by observing that 'she didn't look Jewish, which was all to the good' (60). Later, when his relationship with Helen suffers a setback, he consoles himself by asking, 'Yet what was the pay-off [. . .] of marrying a dame like her and having to do with Jews the rest of his life?' (110). Towards the end of the novel, however, he 'read a book about the Jews, a short history [. . .] He skimmed the bloody chapters but read slowly the ones about their civilization and accomplishment' (174).
7. One of many Shakespearean allusions in the novel, 'uncircumcised dog' is the phrase Othello uses, in his final speech, to describe the Turk whom he killed for traducing the state. Other references include the scene in which Alpine falls into Bober's grave and his rival for the affections of Helen, Nat Pearl, rebukes him, which echoes that in *Hamlet*, in which Hamlet and Laertes confront each other in Ophelia's grave. In order to ingratiate himself with Helen, Alpine had earlier given her a copy of the complete works of Shakespeare.
8. Though in his autobiography, *Timebends* (1987), Miller makes it clear that the genesis of *The Crucible* had something to do with his personal affinity, as a Jew, with the Puritan society of Salem:

   > I felt strangely at home with these New Englanders, moved in the darkest part of my mind by some instinct that they were putative ur-Hebrews, with the same fierce idealism, devotion to God, tendency to legalistic reductiveness, the same longings for the pure and intellectually elegant argument. (Miller 1988: 42)

   A number of critics have also argued that the idioms and concerns of the Loman family in *Death of a Salesman* are distinctively Jewish.
9. It is no coincidence that this is also the name Henry James chooses for the protagonist of his first novel, *The American* (1876–7).
10. The title of the novel alludes to Newman's impaired vision, and Miller is preoccupied throughout with the processes of perception.
11. Or perhaps not so incidentally (see Kalmar 1993: 255–61).
12 With the exception of the *Babel Guide to Jewish Fiction*, in which there is an entry for *Eve's Tattoo* (Keenoy and Brown 1998: 143–6).
13. Penny Perrick, writing in the *Sunday Times* (1992: 4) and Paul Taylor, in the *Independent on Sunday* (1992: 5), respectively. Joanna Briscoe, who interviewed Prager for *The Guardian*, seemed to assume that she wasn't Jewish, when she wrote that 'Prager's act in writing the novel is the equivalent of her heroine's tattoo' (1992: 6). In her interview with Kate Pullinger in the *Daily Telegraph* the truth about Prager's ethnicity emerged: 'Contained within my body are these two different things [her father's Jewishness and

mother's Christianity]' (1992: 28). Pullinger comments, mystifyingly, that 'this internal struggle has forced her to consider both Christian anti-Semitic hatred and Jewish anti-Christian bigotry' (1992: 28), as though the two were comparable.

14. At her birthday party one of her friends remarks '"Darling, what is that? Your supermarket PIN number, I hope? Your cash machine code number, perhaps?"'(19), while one of the male guests notes that '"A lot of rock bands have tattoos now [. . .] It's really in"' (24). Later in the novel, at a show-business function, a young actress, envious of what she assumes is a brilliant stroke of self-publicity, says: '"Damn, I wish I'd thought of that!"' (58). If these reactions seem implausible, we need only refer to the experience of a real-life camp survivor, Natalia Karpf, who tells of the time she 'went once to a reception at a friend's house [. . .] and there was a lady there who saw the number on my arm, and she [. . .] said, 'What have you put here – your telephone number?' (Karpf 1997: 149).
15. To emphasize her identification with the protagonists of her stories, Eve names each one Eva.
16. The fictionalized account that Eve gives of her background on this second occasion – '"I'm baptized Catholic, confirmed Episcopalian [. . .] my father's family was Jewish but never practised the religion"' (114) – resembles Prager's accounts of her own upbringing.
17. When Eve tells him that '"There's anti-semitism in me [. . .] You don't want that"', Charles replies '"I'm used to it [. . .] I chose it. It's in me too"' (177).
18. In order to avoid confusion for the reader, I will distinguish between the real Lindmann and Shepherd's impersonation of him by referring to the latter as 'Lindmann'.
19. There is, as so often in this novel, a pun intended here: Lindmann's death due to one sort of exposure anticipates the demise of his reincarnation as the result of another.
20. The 'other one' is Falik Hafner, another Jewish refugee from Europe, whom Rawlins later meets in the company of Esta.
21. It emerges that the officer in question, Waterlow, was responsible for forcing a ship full of Jewish refugees bound for Palestine to turn back. As in *Lindmann*, the ship sinks, taking with it hundreds of Jews. In both novels, there is an implied analogy between the zealous devotion to duty of the Nazi bureaucrats, which ensured the efficient murder of so many Jews, and that of the English bureaucrats in Palestine, whose allegiance to the dictates of their government ensured that many of those who had escaped Nazi Europe, denied entry to Palestine in ships that were not seaworthy, died by drowning rather than by gassing. In *Lindmann*, 'Lindmann' observes, aphoristically, that '"The worst thing about the British is [. . .] their incorruptibility [. . .] When you can't buy someone, you know the last shreds of their humanity have disappeared"' (109), while the narrator of Wilson's novel notes that 'All the authorities, all the *bureaucracies of death* in both England and Israel, have been very helpful and efficient' (4, my italics).
22. When Rawlins goes to see General Dryborough, a visiting bigwig, with details of the atrocities that Esta has told him of, the General listens patiently and then says:

> 'Let me give you a general rule. Jews are inclined by nature to exaggerate. Does that sound harsh? It's what makes them such great entertainers – I'm sure you love the Marx Brothers as much as I do. Don't misunderstand. They have been done unto. But they have a tendency to magnify their persecutions.' (45)

Like Frank Alpine, to whom it seems that Jews 'like to suffer [. . .] they suffer more than they have to' (113), Dryborough apparently believes that there is an innate self-dramatizing, self-pitying quality to Jewish suffering. His prejudice echoes closely that of an actual British official in the Colonial Office responsible for immigration, who warned against giving credence to the stories of 'wailing Jews' who exhibited the 'Jewish tendency to superlative', were 'inclined to magnify their persecution' and consequently 'spoilt their case by laying it on too thick' (quoted in Karpf 1997: 188–9).

23. Wilson's omniscient narrator comments:

> He had almost forgotten his own family. He hadn't written to them in weeks. They probably thought he was dead. He imagined a frozen moment: arriving at his parents' house with his Jewish war bride. His father emerging from the long drawing room that showed oak trees in the west. His mother looking Esta up and down, appalled by her skinniness, her accent, her wild hair. (155)

24. In each case, there is a redemptive Jew who pricks their consciences and in so doing becomes the catalyst for their conversions: for Alpine, it is Helen Bober; for Newman, Finkelstein (who fights to save him in spite of the fact that Newman had participated in the boycott of his shop); for Eve, Jacob Schlaren, the survivor of the death camp who ministers to her when she faints in the foyer of the film theatre; for Shepherd, Lindmann; and for Rawlins, Mendoza.
25. A sense of guilt that must have been heightened by the fact that, during the war itself, anti-Semitism increased markedly both in America and England, as Miller makes clear in *Focus* (Gertrude Hart tells Fred that the activities of the Christian Front are typical – 'There's a million organizations like that out there. Against the Jews' [114]) and Wilson in *The Hiding Room* (one of the army officers who interrogates Mendoza observes that '"anti-Semitism [is] on the *increase* in Britain. Hard to believe [. . .] isn't it?"' [120]).
26. See Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999) for a discussion of this phenomenon.

3 Nature Anxiety, Homosocial Desire and (Sub)urban Paranoia: the Jewish Anti-Pastoral

1. Zuckerman's ignorance is partly due to his urban upbringing, but may also be a legacy of his Jewish roots, for, as Stephen Whitfield notes: 'Eastern European Jewry was so cut off from its environment that its Yiddish vocabulary contained no indigenous names for wild birds and only two for flowers (rose, violet)' (Whitfield 1984: 212). In an interview with David

Plante, Roth himself joked 'Here I live in the country and I don't even know the names of the trees' (Searles 1992: 151).

2. Although circumcision is routinely performed on many non-Jewish male children in the United States (not the case in Britain), for Roth and for the other Jewish writers, American and British, whose work I discuss in this chapter, the circumcised penis remains a symbol of Jewish masculinity.
3. One of Jacobson's contemporaries, Jenny Diski, records her own bewilderment at the enthusiasm of Gentiles for this activity: 'I cannot recollect a time when the idea of going for a walk was not a torment to me [. . .] The aim on these walks is to get cold and damp and head for the pleasure of some pub or café before setting off again into the cold and damp to return to the warm, satisfactory haven we had abandoned in the first place' (Diski 1998: 63–4).
4. Not all literary critics would place Hardy so centrally, or unproblematically, in the pastoral tradition; his representation of Nature is much more ambivalent than the classical models followed in poems such as Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) and Ben Jonson's *The Forest* (1616).
5. Another example of this is provided by the British-Jewish novelist Linda Grant in her family memoir, *Remind Me Who I Am, Again* (1998), who refers to her father as 'a man who needed to hire in a team of specialists to put up a cup hook' (Grant 1998a: 190).
6. Confirmation that Barney's experience is not unique among British Jews is provided by Anne Karpf, who writes in her family memoir that 'I never learned to ride a bike, I never climbed, I never camped' (Karpf 1997: 9).
7. As Philip Roth points out, it is fairly incidental in the case of Augie March, but crucial in the cases of Leventhal, Herzog and Sammler (see Roth 1985b: 282–6).
8. Bellow is using the art of writing here in much the same way as Sartre uses mathematics in his explanation of one of the common strategies used by the Jew to dissociate himself from his Jewishness: 'The best way to feel oneself no longer a Jew is to reason, for reasoning is valid for all and can be retraced by all. There is not a Jewish way of mathematics; the Jewish mathematician becomes a universal man when he reasons' (Sartre 1995: 111–12).
9. Bellow admits, in an interview with *Paris Review* in 1966, that his early timidity as a writer was the result of feeling 'the incredible effrontery of announcing myself to the world (in part I mean the WASP world) as a writer and an artist' and goes on, more explicitly, to claim that he 'had good reason to fear that I would be put down as a foreigner, an interloper [. . .]' (Bellow 1966: 55–6). This fear of rejection by the WASP world is voiced by many of Bellow's Jewish protagonists: Herzog, for example, is disturbed because Ramona 'did not recognize him as an American [. . .] In the service his mates had also considered him a foreigner' (Bellow 1965: 159), while Charlie Citrine, in *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), feels 'mysteriously a misfit [. . .] what ailed me was my unlikeness [. . .] I was not wholly American' (Bellow 1975: 215).
10. Critical opinion is deeply divided on the question of the importance of Bellow's Jewishness to his work, sometimes even within the writings of the same critic. L.H. Goldman, for example, complained in 1983 that the

Bellow hero 'has no interest in Jewish affairs, is not affiliated with a synagogue [...] is not beset by problems that disturb most Jews' and that his Jewish protagonists 'are stereotypic presentations similar to the presentation of the Jew by various Gentile writers of the early part of the century' (Goldman 1983: 101, 100). Yet nine years later, in a reworking of the same article, she proclaimed approvingly that 'The quality of Bellow's Jewishness is incontrovertible. Saul Bellow's perspective is unmistakably Jewish' (Goldman 1992: 19). Other critical views range from the claim at one extreme that 'The ultimate aspiration of Bellow's characters [...] is the fantasy of Aliyah [that is, emigration to Israel] ' (Goodman 1983: 123) to, at the other end of the spectrum, the accusation that Bellow displays 'insensitivity to the Jewish experience' (Louis Ehrenkrantz quoted in Miller 1991: 250), or that 'since the days of *The Victim*, [the] Jewishness [of Bellow's characters] has dwindled to a matter of mere ethnicity' (Raphael 1979: 218).

11. For a discussion of the anti-Semitic tradition of constructing the male Jew as androgynous, in particular as manifested in the myth of male menstruation, see Gilman 1990: 74–76.
12. As Ivan Kalmar observes:

> 'Jewish' is related to other ethnic terms by its suffix [...] 'Jew' on the other hand, singles out a people in its stark, isolated individuality [...] In anti-Semitic diatribes, the Jewish businessman becomes a 'Jew businessman,' a Jewish doctor a 'Jew doctor'. (Kalmar 1993: 123)

13. Later in the novel Harold's secretary, Jennifer Boodle, rehearses the concomitant myth that Jews 'ma[k]e good husbands' (66).
14. Ironically, the very language that Winston uses here, with its iterated interrogatives, and the materialistic connotations of the word 'profit', would confirm rather than deny his difference to Bollam.
15. Not even in Israel. When the British-Jewish heroine of Grant's novel *When I Lived in Modern Times* (2000), Evelyn Sert, arrives in Palestine to find cypresses, olives and pines 1946, she

> had no idea at all what I was looking at. I had come from a city [London] where a few unnamed trees grew out of asphalt pavements, ignored, unseen. I could identify dandelions and daisies and florists' roses but that was [...] the extent of my excursions into the kingdom of the natural world. (Grant 2000: 20)

But it soon becomes clear that the unspoilt landscape will not remain so for long: on a kibbutz Evelyn discovers palm trees 'scientifically modified in an institute to make them closer to the ground and easier to pick fruit from. Nature was in retreat under Jewish hands' (36). Though they hope to build a new Eden where 'The new Jew [...] the new human being' 'could be created' (Grant 2000: 41–2), the Jews of Palestine will do so by conquering their old adversary, Nature, rather than working harmoniously with her like Adam and the first Eve did before the Fall.

4 Breaking the Silence: Jewish Women Writing the War and the War After

1. Many critics have suggested, as Joyce Antler does, that 'because the short story articulates ordinary private matters in a pointed and compressed form, it appeals especially to women writers' (Antler 1990: 2), but Hermione Lee offers a dissenting view, arguing that 'There is no value in suggesting that women writers are better suited to the short story form than men' (Lee 1995: x). For the view that Jewish writers have a particular affinity for the form, see Aarons 1996: 18–19.
2. Since 1990, four anthologies of writing by American-Jewish women have been published: *America & I* (1990), *Shaking Eve's Tree* (1990), *Her Face in the Mirror* (1994) and *Nice Jewish Girls* (1996), the first two being collections of short stories, the other two miscellanies of short stories, poems and memoirs. In addition, six other collections of American and international Jewish short stories have appeared, in which women writers usually predominate: *The Global Anthology of Jewish Women Writers* (1990), *The Schocken Book of Contemporary Jewish Fiction* (1992), *The Slow Mirror and Other Stories* (1998), *Here I Am* (1998), *American Jewish Fiction* (1998) and *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories* (1998).
3. For a detailed discussion of these theories, see Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999) and Norman Finkelstein's review of Novick's book in *The London Review of Books* (6 January 2000: 33–6).
4. As Faye Moskowitz puts it:

   > 'Until recently there have been few avenues for self-expression within the tradition. A Jewish woman's canvas, if she had one at all, would depict the details of domesticity, the food and furnishings and the ritual celebrations both religious and secular that have traditionally been both a woman's purview and her purdah, the means by which she was at once empowered and, some would say, kept powerless. (Moskowitz 1994: xvi–xvii).

5. The title of one of the essays in (and the subtitle of) *Accidents of Influence* (Rosen 1992: 133–8).
6. Ozick is not the first American-Jewish writer to exploit the metaphorical possibilities of a Jewish child 'without speech' in the context of wartime Europe: the protagonist of Jerzy Kosinski's novel *The Painted Bird* is also a mute child.
7. In the following discussion, I will refer to these stories in the abbreviated form 'Raizel Kaidish' and 'Harvey Milk'.
8. Newman is one of a number of important American-Jewish lesbian writers, others being Andrea Freud Loewenstein, Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz, Irena Klepfisz, Andrea Dworkin, Alice Bloch and Edith Konecky. Indeed, in addition to the other anthologies mentioned above (in note 2), there have been three collections specifically devoted to American-Jewish lesbian fiction: *Nice Jewish Girls: a Lesbian Anthology* (1984); *The Tribe of Dina: a Jewish Woman's Anthology* (1989) and *Speaking for Ourselves: Short Stories by Jewish Lesbians* (1990).

9. The title of one of the essays in *Accidents of Influence* (Rosen 1992).
10. In an ironic echo of her mother's response to her own shame and guilt, Rose tries to appease her conscience (after her mother's death) by naming her own daughter after her.
11. The teacher's sentiments here echo Newman's own: 'When I hear Yiddish I get all choked up' (quoted in Shapiro et al. 1994: 241).
12. Co-authored with Iain Sinclair.
13. Kehoe has lived and worked in America for many years now, but is British by birth and spent her childhood and early adulthood (the period covered by the book) in England.
14. The frequency with which phrases such as 'must have seemed' and words such as 'perhaps' and 'maybe' recur in the early stages of the narrative suggest that Kehoe's strategy – consistent with the prefatory note – is not to present such speculation as authoritative, but rather to offer her attempts to recreate this inaccessible past as candidly hypothetical.
15. Though not a survivor in the strict sense of having lived through a period of internment in a concentration or death camp, Lubetkin's psychological profile, as it emerges in Kehoe's book, is entirely consistent with that of the fictional survivors dealt with in the earlier part of this chapter.
16. Kehoe discovers the truth about Lubetkin when she comes upon a letter from his cousin, Mira, in which she relays to him the contents of a letter dated May 19, 1940, but Kehoe never discovers when Lubetkin received it, or whether he ever replied to Mira or attempted to contact his parents: *'Your parents [. . .] live in the old house still, but only in the kitchen because the other part of the house was bombed by the Nazis and burned down. Your father is astonished that he has heard nothing from you. Why do you not write to him?*' (Kehoe 1997: 201).
17. The analogy with being gay implied in the phrase 'coming out' is developed explicitly later in the book:

    > Being Jewish in England, unless you chose to live mainly or exclusively among Jews, was a little like being gay. You didn't so much meet other Jews as detect them by sonar. You gave off discreet clues, but never vaunted. Making contact provided the pleasure of mutuality, but it was also an ambivalent, potentially exposing act: you might lose your cover. (Karpf 1997: 48)

18. As Appignanesi observes, and as 'Raizel Kaidish' confirms:

    > There is sometimes a parent–child dynamic at work in which a messianic hope is attached to the child who must enact great deeds to justify prior loss [. . .] Children can experience the tragic weight of their parents' past lives as something which is so much greater than their ordinary everyday plaints, that these can never be voiced or shared. As a result, their own feelings are nullified. (Appignasi 2000: 220)

19. Kaye was born, brought up and educated in Britain, but emigrated to Israel in 1955. She still writes in English. When considering whether or not I could legitimately include her work in this chapter, I was swayed by a conversation between Clive Sinclair and the British–Jewish author of a

number of best-selling action novels, Lionel Davidson. At one point Sinclair asks Davidson whether his emigration to Israel has made him forfeit his old identity:

> In turning into an Israeli, have you ceased to feel British?' [. . .] 'No [. . .] I won't cease to be British [. . .] because I'm writing in English [. . .] it's a bit odd to write books about Israel as an Israeli and to write them in English. (Sinclair 1987: 114)

20. The name given to groups of inmates (themselves usually Jews) employed by the Nazis to help enforce their regime in the camps.
21. Not just in her presentation of Rachel's testimony, but also in her use of documentary-style headings (for example, 'Israel, 1979', 'Mauthausen, 1943–5' and so on) to divide the book into different sections.

5 Philip Roth and Clive Sinclair: Portraits of the Artist as a Jew(ish Other)

1. Roth is speaking of Schulz here, but his words seem to apply equally well to Kafka, who famously wrote: 'What have I in common with Jews? I have hardly anything in common with myself and should stand very quietly in a corner, content that I should breathe' (quoted in Malin 1973: 58). It was of course his interest in Kafka that inspired Roth to visit Czechoslovakia, and that led to him becoming General Editor of Penguin's 'Writers from the Other Europe' series, in which Schulz's stories first became available in English translation. Schulz's reputation has since burgeoned, and he is frequently invoked in post-war Jewish fiction. Notable examples are Roth's own novella *The Prague Orgy* (1985), Cynthia Ozick's novel *The Messiah of Stockholm* (1987), in which a Swedish critic believes himself to be Schulz's son, and the Israeli writer David Grossman's novel *See Under: Love* (1996), in which Schulz undergoes an Ovidian metamorphosis into a salmon. His work has also been popularized by Theatre de Complicité's highly-acclaimed stage-adaptation of one of his fictions, *Street of Crocodiles*.
2. In *Deception* (1990), the protagonist Philip complains that '"I write fiction and I'm told it's autobiography, I write autobiography and I'm told it's fiction"' (Roth 1990: 184).
3. The number of fantasy trials that Roth's heroes undergo bears testimony to this self-adversarial stance. There are mock-court scenes in which the hero is indicted in *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), in *My Life As a Man* (1974) and in *Deception*, as well as numerous de facto trials, such as the one Nathan Zuckerman endures at the hands of his brother's fellow Yeshiva students in *The Counterlife* (1987).
4. I think the analogy Roth has in mind here is with an artist's still life study, which, by isolating everyday objects (like a glass or an apple) and subjecting them to intense scrutiny, manages to encapsulate, and heighten, their innate properties.
5. In Robert Redford's acclaimed film, *Quiz Show* (1994), based on the real-life scandal, the racial element of the fixing (the urbane, charming WASP professor, Charles Van Doren, is granted a much longer run of success than

the awkward, gawky Jew Herb Stempel) is highlighted. The latter's apparently paranoid belief that Gentiles are always favoured by the show's producers (ever mindful of ratings) turns out to be accurate, and the extra twist is provided by the fact that the investigating attorney is also (ambivalently) Jewish.

6. A phrase that appears in James' short story 'The Middle Years', part of a passage that E. I. Lonoff types out and places over his desk in *The Ghost Writer*: '"We work in the dark – we do what we can – we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art"' (Roth 1979: 77)
7. The novel is subtitled 'A Confession', and in a preface to the main narrative Roth claims that 'The book is as accurate an account as I am able to give of actual occurrences that I lived through' (Roth 1993: 13), but in a 'Note to the Reader' at the end of the book, he makes an apparently contradictory statement, announcing that 'This book is a work of fiction [. . .] This confession is false' (Roth 1993: 399). This last sentence only exacerbates the confusion, since the word 'confession' might refer to the novel itself, or to the admission that the book is a work of fiction.
8. The idea of presenting himself as the protagonist of his own novel may have come from the Polish author, Tadeusz Konwicki, one of the authors published in the Penguin 'Writers from the Other Europe' series, of which Roth was the General Editor. In an interview with Hermione Lee in 1984, Roth commented on Konwicki's strategy of introducing a character bearing his own name into one of his novels: 'He strengthens the illusion that the novel is true – and not to be discounted as "fiction" – by impersonating himself' (Searles 1992: 168). In order to preserve the distinctions between Roth the author and Roth the character, the latter will be distinguished typographically through the use of quotation marks. Roth's impersonator in the novel will always be referred to by the nickname given him by 'Roth': Moishe Pipik.
9. This impromptu impersonation also has a precedent in the Zuckerman novels. In *The Anatomy Lesson* (1984), Zuckerman pretends to be Milton Appel, an adversarial critic (and yet another Jewish Other, since Appel's criticism of Zuckerman's work is motivated, at least according to Zuckerman's own interpretation, by Appel's guilt at his own youthful rejection of his Jewish heritage), reinventing him as the editor of a pornographic magazine, *Lickety Split*. This improvisation is at least partly fuelled by the cocktail of drink and drugs that Zuckerman is taking to subdue the raging pain in his neck, another detail that anticipates the plot of *Operation Shylock*, which, 'Roth' implies, may originate in the hallucinatory effects of the subsequently-banned (in America) sleeping-pill, Halcion, to which he is unwittingly addicted at the start of the novel.
10. See Hoffman's *The Devil's Elixir* (1815–16), Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Poe's 'William Wilson' (1839), Dostoyevsky's 'The Double' (1846), Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Gustav Meyrink's *The Golem* (1915), Plautus's *Amphitryon* (date unknown), Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1591), and Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894).
11. This is a common refrain in Roth's fiction. In *Portnoy's Complaint*, for

example, when the young Alex proclaims his atheism, his father berates him for betraying his ancestors: '"And what about the Jewish people?"' (Roth 1969: 60).

12. In *The Ghost Writer* he dares to imagine a counter-life for Anne Frank (the nearest thing to a Jewish saint and martyr for a religion which has neither), in which she survives the war and lives anonymously in America as Amy Bellette (a pun on belles-lettres), an aspiring young writer having an affair with E.I. Lonoff.
13. Brian Cheyette has made the comparison in his essay 'Philip Roth and Clive Sinclair: Representations of an "Imaginary Homeland" in Post-War British and American-Jewish Literature' in Ann Massa and A. Stead (eds), *Forked Tongues?: Comprising Twentieth-Century British and American Literature*. (1994), and Sinclair himself has made no secret of his admiration for Roth, in his fiction and non-fiction.
14. The cover of the paperback edition of Sinclair's second collection of stories, *Bedbugs* (1982), implicitly acknowledges Sinclair's debt to Kafka, by reproducing a painting by the Israeli artist Yosl Bergner inspired by Kafka's short story 'Metamorphosis', though Kafka's influence is arguably more evident in stories from his earlier collection, *Hearts of Gold* (1979), such as 'The Evolution of the Jews' and 'The Creature on My Back'. In *Diaspora Blues* (1987) Sinclair devotes a section of the book to Kafka.

    Kafka's influence on Roth has been well-documented: two of Roth's novellas (*The Breast* [1972], in which David Kepesh wakes up one morning to discover that he has become a massive mammary gland, and *The Prague Orgy* [1985], in which a character known as Kafka's whore plays a key role) pay homage to him explicitly, and many of his other fictions contain allusions to his work. One of Roth's best short stories, '"I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting"; or, Looking at Kafka' (1975) combines literary criticism and fictional biography: Roth imagines Kafka surviving the war, emigrating to America and becoming the Hebrew teacher (and diffident admirer) of one of Roth's aunts.
15. See, among Roth's works, *The Breast* again, 'Novotny's Pain' (1971), *Portnoy's Complaint,* and *The Anatomy Lesson*; among Sinclair's 'The Creature on My Back', 'Kayn Aynhoreh', *Blood Libels* and *Cosmetic Effects*.
16. Sinclair has given his alter ego the name that he himself might have had: his father changed his name from Smolinsky to Sinclair when he joined the army in 1939 and Clive's given first name is Joshua. Sinclair comments wryly that Joshua Smolinksy 'ought to be the essential me, but isn't. I am stuck as Clive Sinclair, because my mother tongue is English' (Sinclair 1987: 49).
17. The first of the Zuckerman series of novels, *The Ghost Writer*, deals with the young Nathan Zuckerman's relationship with his hero and – as he hopes – future mentor, E.I. Lonoff, and also with Amy Bellette (alias Anne Frank, whom Zuckerman reincarnates in the form of Lonoff's lover). Hence Zuckerman is a ghost writer in the sense that he effectively ghost-writes a sequel to Anne Frank's diary, and Bellette is a ghost writer in the sense that she is a writer who is presumed to be dead.
18. For a more elaborate exploration of this thesis, and another brilliant treatment of doubling, see Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* (1987).

19. 'Marlboro has the Marlboro Man, Israel has its Holocaust Man [...] FOR THE SMOKESCREEN THAT HIDES EVERYTHING, SMOKE HOLOCAUST' (Roth 1993: 296).
20. I call him the Roth-figure not simply because he is described in these terms, but because his surname is clearly taken from Peter Tarnopol, the novelist-narrator of one of Roth's novels, *My Life as a Man*.
21. Both Nisref, who, we are told, has won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and Ostrover, whose fame in America in Ozick's story so galls his obscure fellow-writers in Yiddish, are clearly modelled on Isaac Bashevis Singer. Sinclair has published a critical biography of Singer and his lesser-known brother, Israel Joshua Singer.
22. Traditionally, Jews light a small candle to commemorate the anniversary of a loved one's death, but Tarnopol has brought with him an electric version: it is the symbolic malfunctioning of this device which causes the fire in Tarnopol's room in which the manuscript of the narrator's novel in translation is burned.
23. One of Sinclair's earlier stories, 'The Promised Land', begins with a parody of the opening line of *Moby Dick*: 'Call me Schlemiel' (Sinclair 1982: 22), as does Roth's *The Great American Novel* (1973), the first line of which is 'Call me Smitty' (Roth 1973: 1).
24. Later on, Jake himself interviews Unger, and admits to being somewhat in awe of meeting his literary hero:

    > As an adolescent I thrived on the disreputable antics of his heroes, amazed and delighted that the vernacular of my subconscious could become – of all things! – literature. Needless to say, the elders of Zion weren't quite so thrilled, and the message was drummed from *bima* [pulpit] to *bima* that Unger was a betrayer of his people. Angered despite himself, he concocted a series of self-obsessed fictions charting the development of the writer Unger would have been if he were the person his enemies said he was. (Sinclair 1986: 102)

    This is, of course, an accurate description of Roth's career, and of its influence on Sinclair. In a further twist to the fiction-as-life-life-as-fiction games going on here, Sinclair names Unger's alter ego Smolinsky, the name of his own alter ego in many of his short stories.
25. Rabbi Nathan's words here ironically echo those of Gershom Scholem's infamous attack on Roth, which Roth in turn puts in the mouth of the Zuckerman family's Rabbi in *Zuckerman Unbound*.
26. Sinclair has conceded that these fears are his own, as well as those of his alter ego, Jake Silkstone: 'I deliberately set the novel [*Blood Libels*] a few years in the past, so as to avoid the adjective "prophetic", but I am superstitious enough to believe that what I write might indeed come to pass' (Sinclair 1987: 138).
27. That it is tenacious, even in modern-day Britain, I can confirm from personal experience. A girl whom I dated as an undergraduate (in the late 1980s) once told me that a 'Jewish convert' had lectured to the congregation of her local (Scottish Presbyterian) church on the subject of 'Jewish customs'. According to her account, he had claimed that Jews eat matzo (unleavened bread) and drink red wine at Passover to celebrate their

murder of Christ, the holes in the matzo symbolizing Christ's wounds, and the wine his blood (in a perversion of the Christian Eucharist). His testimony was, apparently, delivered with the sanction of the minister and without challenge from the congregation.

28. Indeed, Jake also suffers from another psychosomatic illness (dermagraphia, an outbreak of hives all over his body) that afflicts him whenever he experiences sexual desire. The onset of this condition coincides with his appointment as literary editor of the *Jewish Voice*, prompting Jake to observe: '"I felt that I had become the embodiment of my newspaper: allergic to life, over-sensitive to antisemitism"' (56–7).
29. Ziz shares Jake's taste in women: he has also, it turns out, had an affair with Jake's wife (another action typical of Sinclair's Jewish Others, as we have seen).

Afterword

1. A study of post-war novelizations of biblical narratives, provisionally entitled *Unauthorized Versions*.
2. A good example is Howard Jacobson's latest novel, *The Mighty Walzer* (2000), most of which takes place in the Jewish enclave of Manchester in which Jacobson grew up. Whereas in his earlier novels, Jacobson seemed to be very conscious of the fact that most of his readers would be non-Jews (and so Yiddish words would usually be glossed, and other allowances made for their probable ignorance of all things Jewish), in *The Mighty Walzer* he relies on the intrinsic expressiveness of his distinctive British-Jewish idiom to overcome any cultural barriers. No previous novel has represented the British-Jewish milieu with such an unapologetic lack of self-consciousness.

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Index