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Dis/Simulation as Post-Traumatic Symptom and
Literary Strategy in Jewish-American Fiction:
J. D. Salinger, Jerzy Kosinski, Philip Roth and
Paul Auster.

Submitted to Aberystwyth University
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy.

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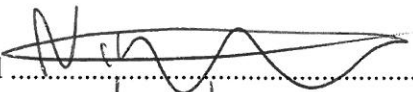
Abstract:

This thesis makes the case that the authors under discussion are part of an alternative Jewish-American canon, on the grounds that their work contains the shared motif of ‘dis/simulation’. This term encapsulates behaviours and techniques inspired by a will to hide or disguise an ethnic identity. Dis/simulation is seen to be a strategic act, for instance when a Jewish character lies about his ethnic identity. It is also seen to be an example of post-traumatic re-enactment, when a protagonist appears to re-enact a previous traumatic episode in which the need to dis/simulate is literally a matter of life and death.

In order to make this argument, I have referred extensively to Holocaust testimonies and the proliferation of academic work that has been published in relation to these. The theoretical framework that I have applied is based on the work of Dominic LaCapra, Cathy Caruth and Lawrence Langer, who all, referring to Freud’s later work, wrote about the ways in which trauma is processed belatedly in behaviour, ‘repetition’ and ‘acting out’. My original contribution to existing volumes of study is to consider the practice of hiding or disguising as an example of post-traumatic re-enactment, and to relate this to the fiction of the authors under discussion. Three out of the four authors are rarely considered as Jewish-American writers or as part of studies focussed specifically on Jewish-American writing. The motif of dis/simulation is used to suggest that these writers belong in a study alongside Philip Roth, because of shared anxieties about a visibly Jewish identity and a post-traumatic consciousness related to the Holocaust and other traumatic events in Jewish history.

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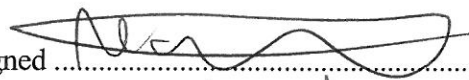
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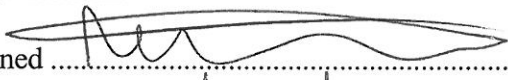
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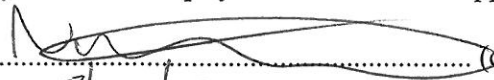
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I would like finally to thank my supervisors Tim Woods and Natasha Alden for many instances of help, guidance and support in the course of the last three years.

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Thesis: Dis/Simulation as Post-Traumatic Symptom and Literary Strategy in Jewish-

American Fiction: J. D. Salinger, Jerzy Kosinski, Philip Roth and Paul Auster:

Chapter 1: Introduction: Dis/simulation and its Relevance to Jewish-American Literature.

The root of Jewish disquietude is the necessity imposed upon the Jew of subjecting himself to endless self-examination and finally of assuming a phantom identity (Jean-Paul Sartre).¹

Simulation is the action or practice of pretending that something is there when it is not; conversely, dissimulation is the action or practice of pretending that something is not there when it is. For reasons connected to historical persecution, dis/simulation abounds throughout Jewish history.² Jews have periodically chosen to disguise their ethnicity or religion. Some have chosen to avoid publicity or community and to live reclusively rather than be ‘visible’ as Jews.³ It is not Jews alone who have done this in America. Light skinned African Americans have also ‘passed’ as white. This is represented in Nella Larsen’s 1929 novel *Passing*, in which two mixed-race friends meet different ends because one of them chooses to ‘pass’ as a white woman.⁴

Asian and mixed-race Americans (sometimes labelled ‘Eurasians’), have also been the victims of racial abuse and therefore some, who are able, choose to pass. A good example of this can be found in the biography of Chinese-American author Sui Sin Far. Sui was born Edith Maude Eaton to an English father and a Chinese mother, before her family’s emigration to America in

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. by George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), p.78.

² I made the decision to use the term dis/simulation as the authors under discussion in this thesis all represent compulsive hiding and disguising both for strategic reasons and as a ‘post-traumatic’ symptom in their fiction. It will be seen that the behaviours of dissimulating and simulating are inter-changeable depending on circumstances, but that both are connected to the historical Jewish need to disguise identity or escape corporeality.

³ J. D. Salinger is an example par-excellence of an author who retreated from public life and chose to live as a Thoreauvian recluse. In the next chapter this will be related specifically to his Jewish experience.

⁴ Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1969).

1871.⁵ Sui chose to assert her Chinese identity, despite the fact that the Chinese at the time were seen as ‘inscrutable and subhuman’, even though ‘her appearance allowed her to pass into mainstream American society’ (*Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s*, p.97 and p.88). This is in marked contrast to her sister, Winnifred, who assumed a ‘Japanese identity’ because at the time Americans held the Japanese in higher regard than the Chinese, a historical state of affairs that was, of course, destined to change radically (*Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s*, p.89).

Several theorists have argued that Jews dis/simulate with less difficulty, because they are in general closer to a racially ‘white’ appearance than, say, African Americans. The caveat remains in place, however, that if people are judged by appearances, the final arbitration where race is concerned lies with the observer:

All the same, the Jew can go unnoticed in his Jewishness [...] he is a white man, and apart from some other debatable characteristics, he can sometimes go unnoticed [...] Simple enough, one has only not to be a nigger. Granted, the Jews are harassed - what am I thinking of? They are hunted down, exterminated, cremated [...] the Jew is disliked from the moment he is tracked down.⁶

In his dated account of how Jewish identity is constructed, Jean-Paul Sartre claimed that ‘if the Jew did not exist the anti-Semite would invent him’ (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, p.13). Albert Memmi, whilst arguing that Jews have an inescapable ‘fate’, wrote of anti-Semites having the ability to ‘recognize Jews infallibly’ but that he had ‘seen too many mistakes to take that infallibility seriously’.⁷ Alain Finkielkraut turned these tendencies towards negative stereotyping based on appearance upside down, by arguing that once a child of his era was labelled a Jew by anti-

⁵ Xiao-huang Yin, *Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.87.

⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p.87.

⁷ Albert Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew*, trans. by Elisabeth Abbott (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1963), p.99.

Semites, he had a false identity as he had ‘inherited a suffering to which [he] had not been subjected’ and ‘could savor an exceptional destiny while remaining completely at ease’.⁸

Karen Brodtkin argued that in America Jews have been assigned as white at times, and at other times as ‘off white’.⁹ Brodtkin used the terms ‘ethnoracial assignment’ and ‘ethnoracial identity’ to differentiate between how the ethnic subject is classified by others and by her/his self (*How Jews Became White Folks*, p.3).

Following this, Brodtkin gave examples of Jews undergoing a process of ‘whitening’, in which they went from being categorized as racially other, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, before becoming model white, middle-class citizens after WWII. Brodtkin’s account of the historical process in which Jews overtook African Americans, in terms of accessing social mobility and also the ways in which class in America is reconfigured as race, is convincing and substantial. It is never argued, however, that anti-Semitism or the fear of persecution has ever entirely gone away. For instance, as Jews were taking the first steps on the ladder towards social integration through education (in large part because of the GI bill), anxieties about ‘Jewish appearances’ and discrimination/persecution continued to surface in fiction and film. Two excellent examples are Arthur Miller’s *Focus* (1945) and Laura Z. Hobson’s *Gentleman’s Agreement* (1947).¹⁰ In these films the subject of anxiety over being ‘recognized’ as Jewish is replaced by the WASP protagonists being wrongly identified and seeing, for the first time, anti-Semitism through the eyes of the victim. In Philip Roth’s writing, a recognizable Jewish appearance is often the subject

⁸ Alain Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, trans. by Kevin O’ Neill and David Suchoff (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p.7.

⁹ Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p.1. Brodtkin also noted that as of 1940 Jews have been classified by the US census as ‘white’ (*How Jews Became White Folks*, p.36).

¹⁰ Arthur Miller, *Focus* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock Inc, 1945); Laura Z. Hobson, *Gentleman’s Agreement* (New York: Cherokee Publishing, 2007).

of anxiety and resentment. Recalling his early experiences at Bucknell, Roth stated that he was invited to join a fraternity that already had one Jewish member, a ‘senior with a gentile name and unJewish appearance [...] though my own name and appearance weren’t likely to fool anyone’.¹¹

The question of whether, or to what extent, Jews are a race is contested and complicated. Emily Miller Budick claimed that it is Jews’ ‘likeness to whites [that is] the basis for their superiority over blacks’.¹² A recent challenge to the idea of Jewish identity being connected to ‘race’ came from Israeli historian Shlomo Sand. Sand has attacked the ‘national myth’ that Israel’s citizens descended from those allegedly exiled by the Romans in the first century BC, arguing instead that most modern Jews descend from converts whose homelands are spread across Eastern Europe and the Middle East.¹³ Richard Lynn summarized that there are four rough categories of Jewish ‘race’: The Mizrahim (from North Africa and the Middle East), the Sephardim (from Spain and Portugal), the Ashkenazim (from Eastern Europe) and the Ethiopian Jews.¹⁴ With the exception of the Ethiopian Jews, all of these ‘races’ or ‘sub-races’ are thought to be ethnically linked to Palestinian Jews before the diaspora. They are thought, however, to have developed as different races due to miscegenation and acclimatization to local conditions, and thus to have distinct ‘racial’ markings that include appearances and aptitudes. In this study, I will be focussing on four authors who either are or were descended from Ashkenazi Jews: J. D. Salinger, Jerzy Kosinski, Philip Roth and Paul Auster. These authors can, therefore, be connected through

¹¹ Philip Roth, *The Facts*, in *Novels and Other Narratives 1986-1991* (New York: Library of America, 2008), pp.305-462 (p.345). Roth is certainly conscious enough about this issue to have researched it. See, for instance, the passage in *The Counterlife*, in which Zuckerman clashes with Maria over whether or not Jews are a race (*The Counterlife*, in *Novels and Other Narratives 1986 -1991* (New York: The Library of America, 2008), pp.1-304 (pp.65-66)).

¹² Emily Miller Budick, *Ideology and Jewish Identity in Israeli and American Literature* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), p.204.

¹³ Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (New York: Verso, 2010).

¹⁴ Richard Lynn, *The Chosen People: A Study of Jewish Intelligence and Achievement* (Whitefish, MT: Washington Summit Publishers, 2011).

familial and/or racial connection to the terrible events that occurred in Eastern Europe between 1939 and 1945.

Race as a category in itself is also the subject of academic interpretation. Sander Gilman acknowledged that when he addressed the issue of the Jewish body he was talking about 'representations' rather than 'realities'.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Gilman was able to trace a history of projection by dominant white culture across centuries of negative stereotypes onto Jews. This spanned from medieval religious Jew hating, to twentieth-century 'sciences' of race that point to the racial inferiority of Jews. The qualities associated with the Jewish race in Gilman's book, often illustrated by anti-Semitic caricatures, include the myth that Jews have cloven hooves rather than feet, that Jews carry disease (from syphilis and spontaneous gangrene to AIDS), that Jews are swarthy or black skinned and therefore racially similar to Africans (with all the negative stereotyping that this entails), that Jews have looser muscles, are more prone to haemorrhoids, and have different eyes, mouth and nose to whites, which accounts for their voice and language. This is by no means an exhaustive list, when one considers what has been projected onto Jews as a 'race'.

'Race' is a controversial subject for many other 'white ethnics' too. In *The Great Gatsby*, the quintessential questing character of American literature, Jay Gatsby of San Francisco, is in fact James Gatz from rural North Dakota. His full immersion into his own brilliantly imagined American Dream relies on the total erasure of a European past. The existence and use of the term 'WASP' (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant), indicates that ethnicity in America is measured in relation to the characteristics of a dominant group. Michael Schuldiner pointed out that the English were in fact the 'first European peoples to participate in the founding of the United

¹⁵ Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.1.

States and be discriminated against', leading to the conclusion that all Americans are/have been/ could be 'ethnics'.¹⁶ Consciousness of ethnicity is of course an individual matter. Whilst on research leave in Washington DC, my Polish-American landlady told me that she had been discriminated against in her career because she was mistaken for a Jew. When I asked if the problem was eliminated by clarifying that she was not Jewish, she replied: 'not really. I'm still an ethnic. I'll never be a WASP'.

Dis/simulation can be as visceral as assuming a WASP identity through name changes, appearance altering surgery, and a staged narrative to account for one's past. It can also be as subtle as simply allowing another to make certain assumptions, or avoiding people as much as possible in order not to draw attention to oneself:

Many American Jews have changed their names and moved into a community in which they were not known and have become merged into the general population. Inherited marks are not so easily changed, but there have been many cases in which hair dyes and plastic surgery have been utilized.¹⁷

In the twenty-first century we are used to the concept that identity is labile, adaptable and performative. Who has not been told, when anxious about a job interview or a first date: 'just be yourself', as though a myriad of alternative selves are an option? Who has never fantasized about belonging to a different social class, race, religion or gender? Judith Butler's work on performed identity and interpellation is particularly cynical. Butler argued that 'naming' is an act of interpellation that obscures individual identity:

One is still constituted by discourse, but at a distance from oneself. Interpellation is an address that regularly misses its mark [...] identity is a function of that circuit.¹⁸

¹⁶ Michael Schuldiner, *Contesting Histories: German and Jewish Americans and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), p.103.

¹⁷ Tamotsu Shibutan and Kian M. Kwan, 'Assimilation into the Larger Society', in *Incorporating Cultural Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, ed. by Peter Kivisto (London: Paradigm, 2008), pp.59-81 (p.63).

¹⁸ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.33.

Erving Goffman argued that the individual's presentation of himself in a work setting was 'dramaturgical', and that:

He may wish [his colleagues] to think highly of him, or to think that he thinks highly of them, or to obtain no clear-cut impression; he may wish to ensure sufficient harmony so that the interaction can be sustained, or to defraud, get rid of, confuse, mislead, antagonize or insult them.¹⁹

This may remind the reader of Machiavelli's views on dis/simulation as a strategic tool, with which a 'Prince' manipulates the ways in which his subjects respond to him, by concealing his true intentions:

A skilful deceiver always finds plenty of people who will let themselves be deceived [...] hence he must be prepared to vary his conduct as the winds of fortune and changing circumstances constrain him.²⁰

I believe, however, that an increased anxiety towards being 'recognized' as Jewish can be discerned in popular culture, through such successful TV series as *South Park*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *House*. In each of these series, I have viewed episodes within the last year in which a Jewish protagonist is assumed to be Jewish on the basis of appearance, or assumes that gentile characters will make this assumption. Whether or not there is a Jewish 'race' or 'appearance' is irrelevant, as long as one person is willing to act on the assumption that there is. The anxiety that this causes, is in turn connected to the tragic history of the Jews and popular culture racial stereotyping, rather than racial characteristics. Gilman argued that whilst African Americans became less self-conscious about race in the late twentieth century, the demand among Jews for 'nose jobs' increased (*The Jew's Body*, p.239). Again, the closeness in appearances between white gentiles and some Jews may be at the route of this self-consciousness. A Jew who feels able to pass may view this as an opportunity to avoid discrimination or persecution that others in her/his family will never have.

¹⁹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1969), p.15.

²⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.62.

The Jewish people have suffered persecution, traumatic events and upheavals since the original diasporas. From the burning of the Temple, massacres in Britain and expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle-Ages and Renaissance, Jews have continually been persecuted in or expelled from their host nations. Eva Hoffman described Jews as ‘perpetually wandering’, and as ‘Europe’s quintessential travellers’.²¹ Indeed, Jews are viewed by many as being a perennially persecuted people and a symbol of human suffering. One can even obtain a book in which every day on the calendar is referred to as a day on which Jews were the victims of one form of persecution or another.²² As a counterbalance to this, others including Esther Benbassa have argued that Jewish history is falsely represented as tragic, and that Jews as a group leave out positive aspects of their history, in order to foster an identity that revolves around victimhood.²³ I will comment on this gulf in responses to Jewish ‘suffering’ periodically throughout this thesis, in relation to the overall argument concerning traumatized consciousness.

During the nineteenth century, Jews suffered persecution in the form of pogroms in Imperial Russia, and later as part of Stalin’s ‘Great Terror’ and the Holocaust. The Holocaust has been looked upon by many historians and theorists as a ‘limit event’, that defies representation or explanation, undermines our concepts of humanity, and leaves cultural and individual trauma in its wake. Following Theodor Adorno’s remark that it would be ‘barbaric’ to write poetry after Auschwitz, several theorists have published book-length investigations into the ethical issues that surround imagining, representing and fictionalizing the Holocaust. Daniel R. Schwarz questioned whether ‘the concept of a “fictive construct” [is] disrespectful to the Holocaust, the events of

²¹ Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl* (London: Vintage, 1999), p.27.

²² Simon Wiesenthal, *Every Day Remembrance Day: A Chronicle of Jewish Martyrdom* (New York: Holt, 1986).

²³ Esther Benbassa, *Suffering as Identity: The Jewish Paradigm* (New York: Verso, 2010).

which are all too true'.²⁴ George Steiner argued that art and language itself were inadequate to the representation of the Holocaust because 'the world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason'.²⁵ There have also been those that question whether non-Jews should represent the Holocaust, although it is well known that Jews were not the only victims of the Nazis.²⁶

Much of the reasoning behind separating the Holocaust historically from other violent events revolves around the sheer scale of death that occurred in a relatively short space of time. Raul Hilberg estimated that 5.1 million Jews perished between 1933 and 1945, but only counted deaths for which records were available.²⁷ Martin Gilbert came to a figure of 5.75 million by including higher estimates of those killed in Russia and other countries.²⁸ Lucy S. Dawidowicz used census figures to come to an estimate of 5.934 million.²⁹ The mechanization of the killing that took place is also the subject of claims that the Holocaust was 'unique'. Zygmunt Bauman, argued that modernity itself was the essential condition in which an event such as the Holocaust could occur, citing the 'technical superiority of a purposefully designed, rationally organized mass murder over riotous outbursts of orgy killing'.³⁰

Within the realms of popular modern culture most Western citizens will have some knowledge of a narrative that involves a Jewish subject hiding or disguising her/his identity in relation to these historical traumas. This is in large part because the Holocaust has remained in the public vision in the form of such narratives as Anne Frank's being made into films and serialized for television.

²⁴ Daniel R. Schwarz, *Imagining the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave, 1999), p.3.

²⁵ George Steiner, *Language and Silence* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p.23.

²⁶ See Martin Gilbert's figures on the numbers of 'Gypsies', homosexuals and 'mental defectives' as well as 'ten million non-combatants' that were not Jewish killed by the Nazis (*The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Collins, 1986), p.824).

²⁷ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (London: W. H. Allen, 1961).

²⁸ Martin Gilbert, *The Dent Atlas of the Holocaust* (London: J. M. Dent, 1982).

²⁹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (London: Penguin, 1975).

³⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p.22.

Peter Novick stated that the release of the *The Diary of Anne Frank* in America (1959) was a watershed moment, in which the Holocaust began to be openly discussed in terms of its ‘evocation of horror and revulsion against the Nazi program of Jewish extermination’.³¹ Other films such as *Europa, Europa* (1992) have revolved around the tension created by a scenario in which a protagonist has to assume the identity of (or ‘pass’ as) a non-Jewish subject in order to avoid severe consequences.³² In the case of *Europa, Europa* the Jewish protagonist actually goes as far as joining the ‘Hitler Youth’. Many would consider this scenario to be far-fetched, although Sartre actually wrote of a Jewish friend who was of ‘a marked Semitic type’ but occasionally ‘amused himself by going out with SS men who did not suspect his race’ (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, p.61). Such anecdotes reflect episodes of hiding or disguising that could easily be adapted for critical or even comedic purposes. In the majority of cases, however, such measures revolve around sheer physical necessity rather than ‘amusement’. One could consider the following remarks of a Holocaust survivor as paradigmatic:

I had to keep my Jewishness hidden, secret, never to be revealed on penalty of death. I missed out on my childhood and the best of my adolescent years. I was robbed of my name, my religion, my Zionist idealism. (Regine Donner)³³

Jews in America: Assimilation and European Legacies.

There are well-known examples of historical factors that encouraged or made necessary dis/simulation for Jewish subjects in Europe. Jewish Americans specifically have had mixed fortunes, both before and after the Holocaust. For many, it was not the ‘Promised Land’ they had

³¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p.117.

³² *Europa, Europa*. Dir. Agnieszka Holland. Central Cinema Company Film. 1992.

³³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Website

<<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&moduleid=10006126>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

sought.³⁴ On arrival in America, many Jews (who were escaping one form of persecution or another) were subjected to discrimination and other mistreatment. Ewa Morawska recorded that in early-colonial America, Dutch and English Jews ‘became assimilated to Anglo-American society to a remarkable degree’ through social mixing and inter-marriage.³⁵ Jews were later excluded from public places and offices, subjected to violence and in one instance lynched, victimized through anti-Semitic immigration quotas, and were often made the butt of abusive stereotyping in publications prior to the Holocaust. During the 1920s (the second wave of Jewish immigration lasted approximately from 1880 until 1924), Henry Ford’s newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, embarked on ‘an anti-Semitic crusade against the “International Jew”’ and reprinted the anti-Semitic tract *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.³⁶ America also discriminated against East-European Jews through immigration quotas around this time:

The 1924 Immigration Act literally closed the door to immigrants. Jews, blacks, and Asians were particularly affected. It was also a time of growth for the Ku Klux Klan. (*Ibid.*)

Even around the time of the Holocaust, barriers faced by Jews did not disappear. On arrival in America, many refugees found that they were unwanted.³⁷ There had been a strong movement within America to keep the nation out of the war. This was headed by the America First group, who argued openly that saving Jews in Europe was not worth the potential loss of American life

³⁴ Richard Lynn gave a good, concise overview of the waves of Jewish immigration from Europe to America (*The Chosen People*, p.272). I will elaborate on these further when I discuss their relevance to the novelists examined in the following chapters.

³⁵ Ewa Morawska, ‘In Defense of the Assimilation Model’, in *Incorporating Cultural Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*, pp.128-37 (p.131).

³⁶ Norman H. Finkelstein, *Heeding the Call: Jewish Voices in America’s Civil Rights Struggle* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), p.104.

³⁷ See Martin Gilbert’s account of the 1939 voyage of the MS St Louis, whose passengers were denied access to America and forced back across the Atlantic to meet their fate in Europe. Of the 1128 passengers aboard ‘more than seven hundred held United States immigration quota numbers, permitting them entry, but in three years’ time’ (*The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy*, p.80).

in battle.³⁸ David S. Wyman argued that American politicians ignored overwhelming evidence that the Holocaust was taking place and made little effort to assist refugees:

Although executive order 9417 clearly required their full cooperation, the State and War departments offered almost as much encumbrance as help. The Russians would not participate. The British were obstructive. Roosevelt took little interest except as a source of occasional favorable publicity.³⁹

Furthermore, relatively assimilated Jews already settled in America shunned the newcomers, embarrassed by their unassimilated ways and also a feeling of discomfort at the proximity of Holocaust survivors:

For those 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.⁴⁰

Peter Novick summarized the attitudes of American Jews, who on beginning to hear of the atrocities 'responded with deeper dismay and horror to pre-war Nazi-anti-Semitism than did gentile Americans [although] their reaction was not unmixed with a certain weary fatalism' (*Holocaust in American Life*, p.21).

Since the mid-1940s, Jewish Americans have faced public and media scrutiny because of concerns relating to their success in business and media industries, the wealth and military

³⁸ Frederic P. Miller and others, eds., *History of Anti-Semitism in the United States* (Mauritius: Alphascript Publishing, 2009), p.26.

³⁹ David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p.214. See also Bernard Malamud's short story 'The First Seven Years'. In this story, the shoemaker Feld is happy to employ Sobel, a Polish refugee, for a pittance. He is less happy at the prospect that Sobel should marry his daughter Miriam, preferring that she should marry an accountant or other 'materialist' so that she can have a 'better life' than he has. Many readers would empathize with Feld wanting the best for his daughter, but also sense that Feld enacts a complex mixture of guilt and revulsion towards the man who 'escaped Hitler's incinerators' ('The First Seven Years, in *The Magic Barrel* (London: Penguin, 1958), pp.9-20 (p.19)). This discomfort also occurs in Roth's 'Eli the Fanatic', in which the small community of Woodenton is unsettled by the presence of Eastern European refugees in traditional clothing ('Eli the Fanatic, in *Novels and Stories 1959-1962* (New York: Library of America, 2005), pp.187-225).

⁴⁰ Lisa Appignanesi, *Losing the Dead: A Family Memoir* (London: Vintage, 2000), pp.78-79.

exploits of Israel and their role in such political challenges as the Civil Rights Movement. Karen Brodtkin argued in her ethnography that Jews prospered after WWII and became model white, middle-class citizens in America, largely because they were able to take advantage of the educational opportunities of the GI bill, which were denied to blacks. This claim is reinforced by Richard Lynn's statistical analyses, which show that Jews thrive in the post-war period, whereas they had struggled with such basic issues as language barriers and literacy if they were first-generation Americans in the generation before WWII (*The Chosen People*, p.289).

Today, American Jews are the subject of conspiracy theories (the black leader Louis Farrakhan, for instance, publishing material calling Jews 'bloodsuckers' who are 'wicked deceivers of the American people'), hostility because of Israeli militancy, and dislike from other oppressed groups who envy their success (*History of Anti-Semitism in the United States*, p.69). Alan M. Dershowitz claimed, in his most recent evaluation of the Jewish predicament in America, that some Jews continue to see anti-Semitism even where it does not exist, but that this is understandable given their history of always being persecuted for one reason or another.⁴¹

Dershowitz cited an anecdote concerning two Jews in a Viennese café:

Kurt is reading the liberal Yiddish-language newspaper and shaking his head from side to side, uttering soft moans of 'Oy vey' and 'vey is meir'. Schmulie is reading the right wing, anti-Semitic German language tabloid and smiling. Kurt, noticing what Schmulie is reading, shouts at his friend, 'Why are you reading that garbage?' Schmulie responds, 'When I used to take your newspaper, all I would ever read about was Dreyfus being falsely accused, the Jews of Russia being subjected to pogroms, anti-Semitic laws being enacted all over Europe, and the grinding poverty of the Jews in the Holy Land. Now, ever since I take this paper, I read about how Jews control the banks, the press, the arts; how Jews hold all the political power behind the scenes; and how we will soon take over

⁴¹ Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew* (New York: Little, Brown & Co, 1997). It is interesting to note that in *Post-War Jewish Fiction: Ambivalence, Self-Explanation and Transatlantic Connections* (London: Palgrave, 2001), David Brauner described Dershowitz's previous work *Chutzpah* (New York: Touchstone, 1992) as arguing that Jews were still very much victims of 'a more insidious form of intolerance' in America (*Post-War Jewish Fiction*, p.23).

the world. Wouldn't you rather read such good news than such bad news? (*Vanishing American Jew*, p.12)

This may seem incongruous, as many, particularly within America, believe that Jews are the wealthiest and most successful group. Richard Lynn wrote that Jews are overrepresented at Ivy League colleges, as professionals and doctors (this statistic includes women), ahead of non-Jews in terms of capita per head and also in terms of eminence (measured, for instance, by winning Nobel prizes) (*The Chosen People*, p.284, pp.286-87, p.290 and p.293). Eva Hoffman's *Shtetl* is illuminating in this respect. Whether or not it is deliberate/rhetorical, Hoffman's descriptions of Jews arriving in Poland to avoid persecution elsewhere, being accused of having unfair advantages as a minority, being part of an emerging bourgeois class in a democratic and multicultural society, suffering restrictions and being pushed towards assimilation before the partition of Poland, all echo in stories of Jews emigrating to and integrating in America (*Shtetl*, p.40, p.42, p.48, p.61 and p.68).

Clearly, the Jews as a group have been relatively comfortable in a host nation before, only for historical circumstances to turn against them. On the other side of the coin, an event of the magnitude of the Holocaust continues to loom in Jewish thought and in thought relating to Jews. Anti-Semitism was not brought to an end by the dissemination of information concerning the gas chambers. In the preface to the paperback edition of her ground-breaking study, Deborah Lipstadt recounted how the results of a Roper Organization poll made one critic change his view of her work on Holocaust denial, from a 'waste of time' to 'a work of stunning relevance'.⁴² The question that sparked this revision was: 'Do you think it possible or impossible that the Holocaust did not happen?' (*Denying the Holocaust*, p.xi.). Twenty-two per cent of American adults answered 'yes, it was possible' (*Ibid.*).

⁴² Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p.xii.

Experience of victimization is a matter of individual as well as group perception. Throughout the period of this project, I have been speaking to Jewish Americans of all ages and listening to their different perceptions of their consciousness of appearances and how this relates to feelings of security or insecurity. How does one compare the anxiety experienced by a 20 year old student from Chicago who worries that her nose looks 'too Jewish' and that she may be overlooked on the college dating scene, to that felt by a young Jewish woman passing as a Polish peasant before finally being exposed and given up to the Nazis when the way in which she grates carrots betrays her identity?⁴³ Obviously individual morality and personal attributes play a large part, although collective trauma and on-going anti-Semitism should not be discounted.

When I visited the United States Holocaust Memorial in May 2012, I spent the best part of an hour looking at the reproductions of the trams that drove Jews into Auschwitz and the bunks in which the inmates slept. Opposite this is a room in which people can sit and listen to oral testimonies being played. I observed as one family entered the room, and the mother and one son (aged about ten) sat and listened in a sombre way. The father and the other son (aged about eight), laughed, joked and played 'air catch' until a family dispute broke out that curtailed their visit. My companion, a fellow John W. Kluge scholar at the time described the incident as 'sickening', and I concurred. Some 'everyday' Americans do not even feel the need to conceal their indifference towards the Holocaust. This complicates any overall vision of the position of Jews within America.

⁴³ The latter example is taken from Judith Tydor Baumel, "You Said the Words You Wanted Me to Say but I Heard The Words You Couldn't Bring Yourself to Say": Women's First Person Accounts of the Holocaust', *The Oral History Review*, 27 (Winter-Spring 2000), 17-56 (p.43). The young lady had 'been slicing carrots thinly, as if for tzimmes, the traditional Sabbath dish of sweetened carrots, instead of cutting them into large chunks as was the Polish custom' (*Ibid.*).

For all of the above reasons, for many Jewish Americans assimilation into mainstream American culture today is of primary importance rather than the preservation of traditional Jewish, and, for example, East-European, culture. Alan L. Berger argued that this is a cultural tendency connected to Jewish identity that began during the Enlightenment and was strongly related to the events of the French Revolution:

Entry into society at large required abandoning the Jewish corporate identity. Western European Jews emerged en masse from the ghettos where every aspect of their lives had been regulated by the *kehilla* (Jewish communal organization). Embracing their newly declared freedom, Jews viewed the secular state as providing an opportunity for political and civic equality heretofore unattainable. Jews in Western Europe drew the logical, but fatal, conclusion that the doctrine of human rights would be their salvation.⁴⁴

Ironically, other observers have pinpointed this shift in thinking as the moment at which anti-Semitism occurred on racial rather than religious grounds, although Sander S. Gilman disputed these categories and argued that trends in anti-Semitism have been continuous.⁴⁵

Many observers, including Dershowitz, have expressed fears that secularization and modernity pose a greater threat to Jewish identity than any overt program of discrimination. This is because their concomitant effects include a lapse in religious education, a tolerant attitude towards marriages of mixed race or religion, and low birth rates among Jewish Americans.⁴⁶ Regardless of where these changes began historically, it is clear that in America they constitute the crux of a paradox in Jewish consciousness. In a chapter entitled 'Blending in or Standing Out - An Ongoing Jewish-American Dilemma', Daniel Gordis cited the example of Sandy Koufax, who refused to take part in an important game for the Brooklyn Dodgers because it clashed with Yom

⁴⁴ Alan L. Berger, *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), p.7.

⁴⁵ Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp.6-7.

⁴⁶ Dershowitz provided a table to demonstrate that in four generations there will be few Jews that are not orthodox and endogamous (*Vanishing American Jew*, p.26).

Kippur.⁴⁷ Gordis argued that for many Jews this story is a ‘classic’ of Jewish-American folklore as it suggests that ‘one could be both an American and a Jewish hero at the same time’ (*Ibid.*). After having outlined the prevalent tensions in Jewish-American life, Gordis thus summarized the paradoxical condition of Jewish-American identity:

We want to be different at certain key moments, but thoroughly American at virtually all others. That’s the critical dilemma for many contemporary Jews: are we willing to commit to Jewish continuity and substance, even if it means giving up our camouflage? (*Does the World Really Need Jews*, p.83)

Gordis wrote here of the will among American Jews towards assimilation, for the purpose of fully participating in the perceived privileges of American life (in this instance being a Major League baseball star).

Some historians have portrayed anti-Semitism in the United States after WWII as an insidious rather than an open threat. This type of discrimination is notoriously difficult to document and address, and again would leave Jewish Americans understandably keen to assimilate and even pass as gentile. Bernice Schrank noted in her essay on rhinoplasty (‘nose jobs’) among Jewish-American women, that this procedure evolved from one developed to help those maimed in wars into a popular solution for Jewish women keen to disguise their ‘Jewishness’.⁴⁸ These women believed that they displayed their ethnic identity for all to see in the form of a ‘Jewish nose’ (a stereotype that Schrank deconstructs vigorously). Schrank related this emerging trend of the 1950s and 1960s, to a collective Jewish tendency to avoid association with radicals who attracted the attention of the House Un-American Activities Committee, many of whom were Jewish (‘Cutting Off Your Nose’, p.31). Schrank also noted, however, that in two fictional accounts of the Rosenberg case, E. L. Doctorow’s *The Book of Daniel* (1971) and Robert Coover’s *A Public*

⁴⁷ Daniel Gordis, *Does the World Really Need Jews?* (New York: Scribner, 1997), pp.82-106.

⁴⁸ Bernice Schrank, “‘Cutting Off Your Nose to Spite Your Race’: Jewish Stereotypes, Media Images, Cultural Hybridity”, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 25.4 (2007), 18-42.

Burning (1977) (by a Jewish and non-Jewish author respectively), American Jews ‘conflated the prosecution of the Rosenbergs, the anti-Communist crusade, the pogroms of Eastern Europe and the Shoah’ (*Ibid.*).⁴⁹

In this example lies a crucial factor of Jewish life in America. Jews are constantly aware of ‘insidious’ anti-Semitism and mentalities resonant of those of the most disastrous ideologies recorded in history. Adrienne Rich, for instance, wrote of the contradiction in her upbringing as she was encouraged to deny her Jewishness and associate:

Scorn and contempt with the word ‘Jew’ in a culture in which ‘Ideals’ and ‘manners’ included not hurting someone’s feelings by calling her or him a Negro or a Jew - naming the hated identity.⁵⁰

Ethan Goffman argued that Jews, like Negroes, are colonized subjects in America, and that this inevitably leads to a divided consciousness as the ‘relationship of colonized to colonizer plays itself out on the battlefield of the individual psyche’.⁵¹

Other scholars see this differently. The idea that underpins Yuri Slezkine’s historical work, for instance, is that Jews are exemplary moderns and that they in fact lead the way in creating twentieth-century western identity.⁵² Whilst these views should not be discounted, they are not strictly relevant to my thesis, as I am discussing those who do in fact feel a negative consciousness towards being Jewish in America. Over the past three years I have asked colleagues, fellow students and Jewish Americans who I met on research trips about this. The answers I have received constitute a spectrum, ranging from those who say they feel no

⁴⁹ Karen Brodtkin recalled that despite her relatively assimilated family background ‘the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs in 1953 heightened our sense of difference’ (*How Jews Became White Folks*, p.9).

⁵⁰ Adrienne Rich, ‘Split at the Root: An Essay on Jewish Identity’, in *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986), pp.100-23 (p.104).

⁵¹ Ethan Goffman, *Imagining Each Other: Blacks and Jews in Contemporary American Literature* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), p.8.

⁵² Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

consciousness of racial difference at all to those who state that they feel the atmosphere change every time they walk into a room full of strangers, because they are recognized as Jewish.

In many cases, however, the drive to remain in ‘camouflage’ has been seen to be a result of necessity for personal safety in America, rather than a tactic to avoid ‘insidious’ discrimination. No example could be more relevant to this than the Crown Heights Affair, in which the Lubavitch Jews of Crown Heights were targeted by their nearest neighbours (a poverty stricken Black community) in a series of anti-Semitic acts of violence. Finkelstein recorded that on 19 August 1991 Yankel Rosenbaum, a twenty-nine year old student, was beaten and stabbed to death in Crown Heights amid shouts of ‘Kill the Jew!’, in retaliation for a tragic accident that occurred three hours earlier, in which he played no part (*Heeding the Call*, p.3). Whilst I was on my research trip to New York (July-August 2011), the news was dominated by the abduction and murder of eight-year-old Leiby Kletzky, from the Hasidic neighbourhood of Borough Park, and the subsequent confession and arraignment of suspect Levi Aron, also a Hasidic Jew. Listening to the mostly African-American co-passengers on the red numbers two and three lines above Columbus Circle on the city’s subway, it was clear to me that anti-Semitic stereotyping has never gone away. This is also true of the will to project appalling qualities onto Jews as a race. In both of these extreme examples, the Jews in question were orthodox, and thus easily recognizable.

In America today, there is still the threat of persecution, violence and even murder simply because one happens to be Jewish. There are also strong groups who would deny Jewish people, collectively or individually, any sympathy where the Holocaust is concerned, as the 2009 shooting at the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum demonstrates. *The Washington Post* reported that the gunman, James W. Van Brunn, ‘was said to be a longtime “hard-core”

supremacist, whose Internet writings contain extensive, poisonous ravings against Jews and African Americans'.⁵³

In *The Facts*, Philip Roth's fictional creation Zuckerman uses the term 'fanatical security, fanatical insecurity' as a succinct summary of the resultant ambivalent instincts of Roth's fictional Jewish characters (*Facts*, p.449). Roth's characters alternately assert their shared victimhood and their equality, their full immersion in American opportunity and equality. In an interview with Alain Finkielkraut, Roth did, however, concede that there was a 'vast discrepancy' between 'the tragic dimension of Jewish life in Europe and the actualities of our daily lives as Jews in New Jersey'.⁵⁴ David Brauner made the point in a chapter on Roth's *The Plot Against America*, that the main 'trauma' in the novel is represented in the child protagonist's realization that 'everything is subject to the most violent and radical change'.⁵⁵ The point should be made clear that Jews, through their connection to the Holocaust (and other violent traumas) may understandably be perpetually 'on their guard' against the next outbreak of violence.

For these reasons, there has been much cultural discourse regarding Jewish identity and status in America, and many published volumes discuss the history of Jewish progress and assimilation. Many of these hold Jewish Americans up as shining examples of what can be achieved in America, the land of so-called 'unlimited opportunity'. Others, however, have considered Jews

⁵³ Michael E. Ruane and others, 'At a Moment of Sorrow a Burst of Deadly Violence', *Washington Post*, 11 June 2009 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/10/AR2009061001768.htm>> [accessed 25 November 2009].

⁵⁴ Philip Roth, 'Interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*' in *Reading Myself and Others* (New York: Vintage, 1985), pp.98-110 (pp.107-08).

⁵⁵ David Brauner, Chapter 6: 'Fantasies of Flight and Flights of Fancy: Rewriting History and Retreating from Trauma in *The Plot Against America*', in *Philip Roth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp.186-217 (p.206). See also the British novelist Jake Wallis Simons discussing his family background: 'It was accepted by us that Jews should always have a valid passport, in case "it should happen again"' ('I Broke Out of My Orthodox Cocoon', *Guardian*, 13 March 2010 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/mar/13/jewish-orthodox-jake-wallis-simons>> [accessed 15 May 2010]).

as ‘underhand’, ‘sly’ and ‘secretive’. One particular accusation levelled at Jewish Americans as a group, is that they publicly profess to collectively assimilate to American values whilst privately remaining loyal to their own minority group, and in the process accumulate disproportionate wealth and influence. Sartre quoted Andre Siegfried on this matter:

According to a remark by Andre Siegfried, the Americans believe their anti-Semitism originates in the fact that Jewish immigrants, in appearance the first to be assimilated, are still Jews in the second and third generations. This is naturally interpreted as meaning that the Jew does not sincerely desire to be assimilated and that, behind a feigned adaptability, there is concealed a deliberate and conscious attachment to the traditions of his race. (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, p.100)

Again, Berger pointed out that this has been the case ever since the emergence of the assimilated or hyphenated Jew, during the Enlightenment:

Non-Jews, for their part, continued to perceive Jews as outsiders, non-Europeans, whose cultural and religious practices rendered them unassimilable and untrustworthy. (*Crisis and Covenant*, p.8)

Another specifically contemporary accusation is that Jews have continued to ‘play the Holocaust card’, representing themselves as victims in an historical era in which they have little to complain or worry about. At a UNESCO meeting in 1976 an Algerian minister made the following remarks:

While the name of Goebbels remains in the memory of man as the very symbol of successful propaganda, the irony of history has it that his victims, or rather those who claim to have been his victims on the strength of other people’s corpses, should have become his spiritual heirs. They have spun a remarkable spider’s web around the world and their capital, Tel Aviv, is a formidable centre for the transmission of propaganda, relayed by the mass media and diplomacy of Imperialism; by such means they have had considerable success in hoodwinking world public opinion.⁵⁶

Peter Novick argued that the Israeli tendency to evoke the Holocaust in justification of Israeli militancy was ‘self-aggrandizement: we today, unlike they then, are *not* timid, *not* cowardly, will *not* fail’ (*Holocaust in American Life*, p.159). The stereotype of the Israeli ‘muscle Jew’ is

⁵⁶ Jacques Givet, *The Anti-Zionist Complex*, trans. by Evelyn Abel (Englewood, NJ: SBS Publishers, 1982), p.96.

parodied hilariously in *You Don't Mess With the Zohan*, in which Adam Sandler plays a special agent who catches bullets in his teeth and is a caricature of testosterone charged masculinity.⁵⁷

The film's plot uncovers the hidden vulnerabilities in even the most 'invincible' character.

The resentment that I have begun to discuss has surfaced, in particular, in Jewish relations with African Americans, who feel that their own history is, if anything, more tragic and traumatic than that of the Jews:

At the Village Vanguard, when Jones and Shepp were reminded of the six million Jews exterminated by Hitler, Jones replied to Larry Rivers, 'You're like the others [whites], except for the cover story'. Shepp added 'I'm sick of you cats talking about the six million Jews. I'm talking about the five to eight million Africans killed in the Congo. King Leopold is his name'.⁵⁸

These arguably anti-Semitic attitudes towards Jews, either as a group or a 'race', would surely have shaped Jewish-American consciousness and hence Jewish-American fiction between 1945 and the present day. As the following chapters proceed, I will relate the work of the authors that I discuss to the development of anti-Semitic stereotyping in America throughout this period. At this point of the discussion, something clear should have emerged that underpins this thesis. This is that a sense of anti-Semitic threat and racial consciousness is a continuing factor in Jewish-American life. This appears to be embedded in historical processes, and as I will demonstrate, is manifest in Jewish-American fiction through dis/simulation. In the final section of this introduction, I will outline the theoretical framework through which I intend to approach dis/simulation, specifically from the perspective of individual and collective trauma as well as historical contingencies. In the meantime, I will move away briefly from historical

⁵⁷ *You Don't Mess with the Zohan*. Dir. Dennis Dugan. Columbia Pictures. 2008.

⁵⁸ Harold Cruse, 'Negroes and Jews - The Two Nationalisms and Bloc(ked) Plurality', in *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews*, ed. by Jack Salzman (New York: George Braziller Inc, 1992), pp.118-31 (p.124). Toni Morrison's *Beloved: A Novel* carries the simple dedication 'Sixty Million and more' ((London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), no page number).

contextualizing and look at the ways in which dis/simulation in Jewish-American fiction interacts with wider literary concerns.

Dis/simulation and Identity in Jewish and Non-Jewish Fiction.

What do I have in common with the Jews? I don't even have anything in common with myself (Franz Kafka).⁵⁹

Taking the factors of American history that I have outlined above into account, alongside the long history of persecution suffered by Jews in general, it is not difficult to explain at a basic level why disguise (simulation) or hiding (dissimulation) recur in Jewish narratives over several centuries. One such narrative relevant to Jewish-American fiction comes in the form of Jerzy Kosinski's life story. Kosinski himself was forced to adopt the disguise of a Roman Catholic, in order to escape certain death in Poland during the Holocaust and eventually arrive (physically) intact in America.⁶⁰ Kosinski's story provided the original impetus for this thesis. This was partly because of his original encounters with dis/simulation, which occurred in Europe. It was also because of his well-documented continuation of 'acting out' (both in a dramatic and a Freudian sense) the compulsion to escape or conceal his true identity through disguise, which took place in America. This is reflected in his fiction as a Jewish-American novelist. Paul Auster recalled meeting Kosinski, and being impressed by his stories of his escape from Poland, but also by his penchant for disguising as a comedic technique that highlighted the gullible nature of his contemporaries:

How he would prowl around Times Square at two in the morning disguised as a Puerto Rican undercover cop. Or how, occasionally, he would turn up at expensive restaurants dressed in sham military uniform (made for him by his tailor and representing no identifiable rank, country or branch of service), but because that uniform looked good, and because it was covered with countless medals and stars, he would be given the best

⁵⁹ Jeremy Adler, *Franz Kafka* (London: Penguin, 2001), p.18.

⁶⁰ James Park Sloan, *Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1996).

table in the house by the awestruck maitre d' - without a reservation, without a tip, without so much as a glance.⁶¹

Issues related to dis/simulation have been of primary interest in studies of fiction and contemporary theories of identity. If one takes a classical perspective on fiction, from an overview that now seems dated, such as E. M. Forster's, this is immediately apparent. Forster argued, in short, that the difference between 'good' and 'bad' fiction is strongly related to whether or not central characters are 'flat'.⁶² Forster alluded here to the artist's ability to imagine beyond the exterior or surface of a character - the character's public, outer life - and illuminate the contradictions and tensions of the character's private, inner life. Jonathan Franzen suggested that even in the 'age of electronic democracy', with its resultant economy of subjectivity, it is the novelist's role and responsibility to explore the 'mystery' behind the 'manners' of her/his characters.⁶³

This relates to twentieth-century theories about consciousness and identity. The modernist intellectual movement, incorporating the theory of Sigmund Freud, rejected the notion of a stable consciousness and identity at the centre of human thought. Instead, it was argued that humans functioned through the repression of urges and desires that surfaced through 'sublimation'. So on a bare level, as human beings we routinely and unconsciously disguise our nature or 'true self' (if such a thing ever existed) in everyday life.⁶⁴ As the century progressed and 'identity' theory

⁶¹ Paul Auster, *Hand to Mouth* (New York: Holt, 1997), p.98.

⁶² E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Pelican, 1962), pp.75-81.

⁶³ Jonathan Franzen, 'Why Bother?', in *How To Be Alone* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002), pp.55-98 (p.58 and p.68). The use of the terms 'mystery' and 'manners' is an acknowledged allusion to Flannery O' Connor's essay on writing fiction.

⁶⁴ At a conference in summer 2011, a co-panellist presented a paper on the recollections of elderly women who had taken part in covert war-time resistance activities. After the panel I asked the presenter whether any of her seven subjects had been Jewish. She said that as far as she knew, four of them were. She had presented the actions of the women in the light of Jung's theory of the 'shadow', although it seems that for women expressing different aspects of themselves in assuming typically 'male' roles it may have been more apt to apply Jung's writing on persona and animus/anima, as here the self as presented in terms of gender is discussed in terms of its hidden

emerged, it was argued that all identity is ‘performative’ or ‘deferred’ and that we are all, whether we accept it or not, the product of multiple and competing drives and ideologies unknown to our conscious selves. Whilst such thought is looked upon as ‘new’ to the last century and a half, often classic art is alluded to as having ‘known this all along’ (Freud’s famous reading of *Oedipus Rex*, for instance), as demonstrated by a tendency to expose what is covered on the surface by its characters. As a result, in much of modern literary criticism the quest is to uncover what is hidden in characters and their actions, perhaps consciously by the modernist author sensitive to the complexities of character and identity, or otherwise to uncover what the author her/himself is ‘hiding’. This in turn leads to secondary debates about the value and merits of such criticism. I should, of course, acknowledge that the motive of several branches of twentieth-century criticism, including feminism, structuralism and also Marxism (which was clearly established in the nineteenth century), has been to uncover what is hidden or latent, for instance in society or language.

Classic American literature has its share of seemingly inscrutable or reclusive protagonists. We never learn the true character or motivation of Melville’s Bartleby.⁶⁵ The title character of Melville’s *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade* has a fluid and shifting identity.⁶⁶

Hawthorne’s Wakefield hides and stands on the margin of his own life as a spectator, while in ‘The Minister’s Black Veil’ Mr Hooper wears a semi-transparent veil that keeps his congregation,

‘opposite’ (see *Psychological Types, or, The Psychology of Individuation*, trans. by H. Godwin Baynes (London: Routledge, 1962), pp.593-96). When I asked whether the presenter had considered that as Jews these subjects were more ‘ripe’ for dis/simulating or assuming ‘shadow’ roles, she replied that she had not, and this was the beginning of a collaboration on a separate project. In *The Good German*, the character Lena Brandt is a Jew who is accustomed to disguising her ‘true’ self for survival (Dir. Steven Soderbergh. Warner Brothers. 2006).

⁶⁵ Herman Melville, ‘Bartleby, The Scrivener’, in *Billy Budd, Sailor and Selected Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.3-41.

⁶⁶ Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

and the reader, guessing as to what he wishes to reveal or conceal.⁶⁷ These stories have been seen as paradigmatic of changing perspectives on identity and visibility. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket* are seminal literary pieces on asceticism in the form of retreating from society and hiding in small spaces.⁶⁸ The writers whose work I will be discussing in the following chapters share a special preoccupation and affinity with the authors and works that I have mentioned here.

It may be acknowledged then, that art and life involve dis/simulation, but to simply state this when discussing Jewish-American fiction is ahistorical and overlooks the specific impact that a traumatic past can have. Jewish-American fiction (and Jewish art in general) has been argued to have common traits or sensibilities that make it simultaneously susceptible and resistant to such criticism. These traits are the result of 3,500 years of historical persecution, diaspora and perennially being guests in host countries. David Brauner pointed out that American Jews have continually been the subject of discriminatory and contradictory stereotyping:

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. (*Post-War Jewish Fiction*, pp.31-32)

Brauner went on to point out that many of these traits may have become internalized and are often presented to readers of fiction by Jewish writers who are simply 'representing' characters

⁶⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The Minister's Black Veil', in *Twice Told Tales* (Halifax: Milner and Sowerby, 1853), pp.39-57; 'Wakefield', in *Twice Told Tales*, pp.58-70.

⁶⁸ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and Related Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.1-178. See also Brauner's comments on Thoreau's use of the first person narrator in *Walden* (*Post-War Jewish Fiction*, p.37). Salinger, Kosinski, Auster and Roth all interact with the boundaries between autobiography and fiction and produce literary versions of their own 'selves'. As such, they all violate what Philippe Lejeune called the 'autobiographical pact', which he saw as a contract between author and reader in terms of the sincerity of the author's intention to represent her/his own life (*On Autobiography*, trans. by Katherine Leary (Chicago: University of Minnesota Press, 1989)).

that they know. As the terms ‘secretive’, ‘ostentatious’, ‘cowering’, ‘conspirator’ and ‘ghetto bound’ indicate, much of the stereotyping of Jewish Americans revolves around perceived tendencies toward dis/simulation.⁶⁹ On the surface this involves a type of dishonesty or deception, understandable though this may be, given certain circumstances. This may be something that Jewish-American subjects and writers have internalized due to stereotyping (as Sartre argued through his notion of the ‘inauthentic Jew’), but is obviously attributable, at least in equal measure, to learned behaviour acquired through historical trauma and necessity. From all of the above, it is fair to state that Jews have been consciously hiding or disguising their identity (or aspects of it) throughout their (and America’s) history.

To suggest that this motif in fiction is purely down to Jews as a group reacting to actual or anticipated persecutions and harassments from WASP American society, in turn overlooks several factors that have been used to measure literary achievement. For instance, successful novels often chart a protagonist’s desire to break away from their own social group or the confining scriptures of their parents’ culture. Michael Walzer noted in his preface to *Anti-Semite and Jew* that many Jews that fled Eastern Europe in the 1930s and 1940s to places such as America were:

not only trying to escape anti-Semitism and the anti-Semite’s construction of Jewishness, they were also escaping the closed communities and orthodox traditionalism of their own Jewish past - a presence, not an absence. (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, p.xiv)

⁶⁹ Brauner’s terms here also highlight the fact that he is largely alluding to the stereotyping of Jewish males. Readers may also note that I am writing mainly about dis/simulation in the work of male Jewish-American authors. This is because I am writing in opposition to criticism already published about these authors and their work. My point could of course be applied to the work of female authors in much the same way. For instance I may discuss Norman Mailer and his protagonists assuming the ‘disguise’ of ‘hipster’ as a reaction to American culture of the 1960s, or Saul Bellow’s protagonists of the same period exhibiting enough confidence in their American status to begin to reject an American identity, but ultimately argue that this could be a symptom of post-traumatic ‘acting out’. If the same critical method were applied to Grace Paley, Adrienne Rich and Cynthia Ozick, one could discuss in turn each author’s assumption of a strong political voice in relation to international and sexual politics in much the same speculative terms. I will return to the issue of trauma and gender in the Conclusion.

Consider the career of Arthur Miller, who rarely wrote openly about Jewish issues and encountered several incidents of anti-Semitism in his private and working lives.⁷⁰ In *Timebends*, Miller likened his feeling of being among religious people within his community (his parents were not particularly religious) to the Puritan witchcraft cult that was the subject matter of *The Crucible*:

I instantly knew what the connection was: the moral intensity of the Jews and the clan's defensiveness against pollution from outside the ranks. Yes, I understood Salem in that flash, it was suddenly my own inheritance. (*Timebends*, p.338)

Nicholas O. Pagan argued that Miller revised his view of Jewish identity as he became first aware of the events of the Holocaust and then aware of what many consider to be the transgressions of Israeli militancy.⁷¹ What this led to in Miller's writing (fiction as well as drama), was a tendency to reject the 'dogma' or 'ethos' of any particular group in favour of a 'universalist' approach ('Arthur Miller and the Rhetoric', p.93). This entails a 'coalescence of empathy and recognition of shared capacity for evil that [is] Miller's most important and enduring legacy' (*Ibid.*). What Pagan did not confront is that Miller's tendency to create characters like Willy Loman, who could be of any racial or national background, may equally be symptomatic of an attempt to disguise his characters or help them to 'pass'. Miller, like many other American Jews of his generation, sought to avoid discrimination and controversy.

Miller wrote that he:

gave up on Jews as literary material because I was afraid that even an innocent allusion to individual wrongdoing of an individual Jew would be inflamed by the atmosphere, ignited by the hatred I was [...] aware of.⁷²

⁷⁰ Arthur Miller, *Timebends* (New York: Grove Press, 1987).

⁷¹ Nicholas O. Pagan, 'Arthur Miller and the Rhetoric of Ethnic Self-Expression', *Journal of American Studies*, 42.1 (April 2008), 89-106.

⁷² *Jewish American Literature: An Anthology of Fiction, Poetry, Autobiography and Criticism* ed. by Abraham Chapman (New York: Mentor, 1974), p.xxxiii.

Ironically, although not surprisingly, many observers feel that the characters Miller creates are in some way 'Jewish'. David Mamet wrote that *Death of a Salesman* is 'most definitely a Jewish play'.⁷³ Those familiar with Mamet's work will be sensitive to the irony of his comments, as his smaller scale productions contain much more Jewish interest than his blockbuster movies.

If literature facilitates the expression of the idiosyncratic self, it logically follows that it provides Jewish writers with an opportunity to simultaneously distance themselves from their own Jewishness as well as anti-Semitic stereotyping. Richard Rorty argued that the novel is an ideal vehicle for the 'process of coming to see human beings as "one of us" rather than as "them"'.⁷⁴ The question that arises here, for the ethnic American writer, is whether one wants to create characters whose identity is at once 'universal' (in a literary sense) and 'assimilated' (in an American ideological sense). Critics such as Peter Schneider have suggested that in American culture it is only American 'versions' of otherness (Eastern or European) that are encountered, and this leaves the ethnic American writer confronted with an ideological cul-de-sac.⁷⁵ On the one hand, one can produce literature that insists on universal or human values, and feel that one has erased nuances of ethnic and historic difference that are worth preserving. Alternatively, one can produce literature that insists on ethnic difference and be accused of failing artistically (for the absence of a universal or human element), and ideologically (for rejecting assimilation). Jewish-American novelists may thus feel that they walk a tight-rope between expressing essential being and illuminating contradictions and instabilities.

As Sartre pointed out, many rationalist thinkers, from Spinoza and Proust to Marx and Freud happen to have been Jewish. Sartre defines rationalism as an 'exercise of asceticism and of

⁷³ David Mamet, 'The Human Stain', *Guardian*, 7 May 2005, Review, p.13.

⁷⁴ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.xvi.

⁷⁵ Peter Schneider, 'Across a Great Divide', *New York Times*, 13 March 2004, Arts & Ideas, p.7 and p.9 (p.7).

purification, an escape into the universal' (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, p.112). Reactions to the works of many of these thinkers reflect the paradoxical condition that I have described above. As Sartre pointed out, in asserting claims of neutrality and objective reason Jews have been accused of simply defending their own vulnerable position, pitting reason and justice against a 'hostile, brutal and unjust society' (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, p.117). The anti-Semite also points to the Jew's 'incapacity to assimilate' and the Jewish intellectual's pursuit of the 'universal', as being a symptom of his 'incapacity to take hold of vital racial and national values' (*Anti-Semite and Jew*, p.118). It seems that whatever artistic or philosophical position (or disguise) the Jew takes, s/he can be accused of self-serving obfuscation. Take, for instance, Ethan Goffman's discussion of Karl Marx, who internalized anti-Semitic stereotypes to the extent that alienation from his own culture influenced his major conceptual breakthroughs (*Imagining Each Other*, p.10). Marx, in dismissing Capitalism, was dismissing negative stereotypes of Jewish traits:

The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish manner, not only by acquiring the power of money, but also because money has become, through him and also apart from him, a world power, while the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of Christian nations.⁷⁶

The idea that Marx could philosophically reject his Jewish heritage and at the same time be accused of serving the Jews (and acting 'like a Jew'), because of his anti-Capitalist writings, neatly sums up the contradiction of the cultural tendency towards dis/simulation among Jewish writers. There may be a compulsion in many cases to reject, hide or disguise one's own Jewishness, but this is inevitably subject to the interpretation and approval of the ultimate arbiter of authenticity: dominant WASP culture. The Jewish American thus, like the child who claims that he lies to his parents because they never believe him when he tells the truth, is caught in the crossfire of compelling cultural reasons to dis/simulate.

⁷⁶ Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. by Robert Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), pp.26-52 (p.49).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Jewish-American Life and Literature.

*Now having seen that the patient repeats rather than remembers, and does so under conditions of resistance, we may now ask what it really is that he repeats or acts out.*⁷⁷

I do not intend to focus solely on conscious or conditioned hiding or disguising in this study. I also intend to look at the ways in which incidents of severe trauma have caused such behaviour as unconscious 'acting out' and the way that this is expressed or represented in fiction. As one aim of my thesis is to interact with contemporary responses to the Holocaust, rather than standing as an insular, 'original' piece, I will now outline the theoretical background against which this part of my argument is played out. In doing so, I will thus complete this introduction, which will clearly outline for the reader the overall conceptual framework regarding the way that I intend to allow theory and history to interact as I approach each author.

In his preface to *Post-War Jewish Fiction*, David Brauner addressed the concern of one of his academic advisors that the subject had already been 'done to death' (*Post-War Jewish Fiction*, p.ix). To any similar concerns, I would answer that a subject area can only be said to be 'done to death' when an original, insightful argument cannot be found. There are currently no studies of Jewish-American writing that concentrate wholly on cultural tendencies toward dis/simulation as a post-traumatic response manifested in fiction. This is what I intend to address, from a variety of angles. Brauner's book can be usefully looked upon as a starting place for discussion although many have seen it as a definitive study of American and British post-war Jewish fiction. The overall argument is that these writers share a 'mid-Atlantic or Anglo-American Jewish' sensibility that is manifested in a dominant drive towards 'self-explanation' (*Post-War Jewish Fiction*, p.22). Brauner does mention issues of dis/simulation and identity, self-parody and the

⁷⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through', in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, trans. by John Reddick (London: Penguin, 2003), pp.31-42 (p.37).

merits of participating within literary discourse specifically as a Jewish writer, but this is not the primary focus of his study. Furthermore, Brauner's method is largely narrative, as he juxtaposes cultural and political events in America (when his focus is America) with Jewish-American fiction, pointing to shared themes and concerns that the writers express. There is little reliance on 'theory', or attempt to deconstruct the 'shared sensibility' of the authors in terms of a pre-determined, psychological response to trauma.

In Jewish-American fiction of the last 65 years, there can be found hundreds of characters that disguise, hide or deny aspects of their identity, deliberately or pathologically. Such characters can be seen to 'play the victim' to gain an advantage, disguise their ethnicity to avoid discrimination, and adopt disguises for comedic and critical purposes. As in other literature, there are also numerous examples of representations of reclusiveness that could be linked specifically to Jewish-American identity. As I approach each author's work in the 'case study' chapters, I will be asking whether the dis/simulation of a character is an example or symptom of trauma (on the part of the character or author), whether it is symptomatic of learned group behaviour, or whether it is a straightforward representation of a conscious 'survival tactic'.

I will also, at various points, pause to consider whether such characteristics coincide with the general aspects of modern fiction that I have mentioned above, or whether aspects of dis/simulation have a particular relevance in the work of Jewish writers. Some literature, of course, is written with the deliberate intention of helping the author or reader express and/or cope with trauma. Kristiaan Versluys wrote that successful post-9/11 novels:

affirm the humanity of the befuddled individual groping for an explanation, express the bewilderment of the citizen as opposed to the cocksureness of the killers, give voice to stuttering and stammering as act of defiance.⁷⁸

Whether or not it is possible to fully experience trauma at any given time (or whether it can only be 'processed' belatedly or unconsciously), is a key area of debate in trauma studies. Lawrence Langer implied that literature that has a redemptive element is little more than an exercise in denial, when measured against the 'unheroic' reality of what European Jews suffered in the Holocaust. He argued that Proust, for instance, may give 'wasted time' a meaning, but for those who suffer a traumatic event such as the Holocaust, this remains a 'communal wound that cannot heal'.⁷⁹

The Holocaust has been described as a limit event that defies the usual methods of comprehension, because of its enormity as a human tragedy and its crushing impact on Enlightenment notions of human progress. Trauma theorists, including Dominick LaCapra, have argued that events such as the Holocaust, and their after-effects, should be considered through a mutually provocative dialogue between history and theory. In his seminal work on representing the Holocaust, LaCapra argued that straightforward history without theory is in fact history that represses theory, whilst theory that is ahistorical can lead to a fetishization of historical events or theory of aporia:

The conjunction of history and theory implies a critique of history without theory or in which the theoretical component remains unarticulated if not resisted and repressed.⁸⁰

To a large extent, what underpins LaCapra's work is his insistence that Freud's ideas of 'working through' and 'acting out' have 'received insufficient attention in post-Freudian analysis'

⁷⁸ Kristiaan Versluys, *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.13.

⁷⁹ Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (London: Yale University Press, 1991), p.204.

⁸⁰ Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust, History, Theory, Trauma* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.2.

(*Representing the Holocaust*, xii). Such positions have led LaCapra (and others such as Cathy Caruth) to explore whether certain aspects of cultural discourse, such as literary texts, could be argued to be specifically post-traumatic rather than universally post-modern. These critics have, up to a point, championed Freud and argued that such theories as ‘acting out’, ‘working through’, ‘nachträglichkeit’, ‘transference’ and ‘denial’ can be used to effectively explain many cultural ‘symptoms’ that arise directly from a post-Holocaust background. In Freud’s later work, his view changed from being fixed on the basic principle that humans are motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, to the idea that in some cases his patients could be seen to seek pain through post-traumatic re-enactments of painful memories and experiences. I will elaborate on this in greater detail as I approach each author.

Psychologists, such as Dori Laub, have carried out extensive case studies of Holocaust survivors and the ways in which their experiences have manifested themselves throughout their lives in symptoms of ‘acting out’, including the compulsion to dis/simulate through disguise, lying, abdication of a moral viewpoint and, conversely, over-identification with another.⁸¹ This school of investigation also encompasses the psychological effects of the Holocaust on those who were too young to remember it, those who lived in America at the time, and those informed by first-hand accounts from survivor parents. Bernard Malamud’s daughter recalled that her father knew of a case within his own family in which a relative was killed by a Cossack during a pogrom. That her father may have known of this two generations later she described as whether ‘sensed or heard told - an Old World Burden of collective and personal horror’.⁸²

⁸¹ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁸² Janna Malamud Smith, *My Father is a Book* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006), p.10.

Clearly, contact with those who have suffered trauma has an inevitable impact in terms of ‘vicarious’ or ‘associative’ trauma. I will expand upon scholarship in the areas of vicarious trauma and ‘postmemory’ later, as these apply specifically to literary texts in question. One controversial case relating to this is that of Bruno Grosjean, who published his Holocaust ‘memoirs’ under the name Benjamin Wilkomirski, having concocted a fictional, alternative self.⁸³ Ruth Franklin pointed out that whilst Wilkomirski angered genuine survivors by appropriating memories, it does seem that ‘from a psychological perspective [...] the fact and fiction may actually have fused in his mind: he seems to truly believe that he was a victim of the camps’.⁸⁴

B. Bower demonstrated that those with families that include Holocaust survivors are themselves more susceptible to developing ‘psychiatric symptoms, including depression and anxiety’.⁸⁵ One may extend this logic to Jewish children who were told stories of the Holocaust (or other traumatic events), in line with Laub’s views on witnessing and testimony.

The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time. By extension, the listener to trauma comes to be a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. (*Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, p.57)

To be strictly accurate, Laub is referring here to a person testifying about the Holocaust, re-living the event as it were, for the first time. It is equally correct, however, to state that children can be psychologically scarred by hearing horrific stories of human suffering and terror, particularly if they identify in some way with the victim/s.

⁸³ Benjamin Wilkomirski, *Fragments* (London: Picador, 1996).

⁸⁴ Ruth Franklin, *A Thousand Darkesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.217.

⁸⁵ B. Bower, ‘Trauma Syndrome Traverses Generations’ *Science News*, 149 (1996), 310.

Fara Kaplan stated that there is a consensus that the traumatic effects of the Holocaust may not have adversely affected the lives of all survivors, in terms of ‘pathological effects’ or their ability to be parents, although it is clear that passing on traumatic narratives to children has a psychological effect.⁸⁶ Kaplan also explained that the children of survivors typically struggle with ‘identity development’ and feel the need to ‘escape reality, hide or save others’. Yehuda and others found that survivors’ children who were diagnosed with PTSD often reported Holocaust-related thoughts or images as ‘primary’ traumas.⁸⁷

As an aside, it may be relevant to cite the example of Paul Auster here. Although Auster’s family was not directly affected by the Holocaust, his father was from a traumatic background within America. Auster recalled his father Sam as man who was cold and distant within his own family, but who was also remembered for his sense of responsibility and occasional acts of kindness to strangers. This was illuminated, when the novelist found out as an adult that his paternal grandmother had murdered his paternal grandfather, and that Sam Auster had been traumatized by this and also the anti-Semitic newspaper coverage of the story.⁸⁸ The Holocaust does, however, appear in many of Auster’s novels (in images of concentration camps and Nazism), in his writing on Paul Celan and in the anecdotes that he tells in collections.⁸⁹ It may be observed that Auster has a morbid fascination with the fragility of life and the possibility of disaster lurking around every corner, and one may infer that Holocaust stories were, alongside the

⁸⁶ Fara Kaplan, ‘Holocaust Survivors and Their Children: A Search For Positive Effects’, *American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress Website* <<http://www.aeets.org/article96.htm>> [accessed 10 February 2010]. William B. Helmreich argued that despite this survivors were better equipped in some ways than others (including other Jews) to be successful in America in terms of marriage, family and career (*Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1992)).

⁸⁷ R. Yehuda and others, ‘Relationship Between Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Characteristics of Holocaust Survivors and Their Adult Offspring’, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 155 (1998), 841-44.

⁸⁸ Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude* (New York: Sun Press, 1982), p.36.

⁸⁹ Auster wrote on Celan in ‘The Poetry of Exile’ (*The Art of Hunger* (London: Faber, 1998), pp.90-102), and anecdotes about the Holocaust and near death experiences in ‘The Red Notebook’ and ‘Why Write?’ (*The Red Notebook* (New York: New Dimensions, 2002)).

influence of his traumatized father, part of his formative development. In addition to this, Auster's fiction features protagonists who retreat to a small, cell-like space and are traumatized by life-changing events such as losing family members, characters who hide, disguise or over-identify with victims and recall events such as the Holocaust (as if belatedly, from experience, when they are confronted with other traumas).⁹⁰

This reflects the conclusions of Nadine Fresco's research, which suggests that children of survivors were affected by a combination of their parents' rigid silence about the Holocaust and a 'screen of words' composed of anecdotes about the Holocaust.⁹¹ Laub suggested that the ever-present yet unexplained event finds its way into these children's lives, 'through an uncanny repetition of events that duplicate - in structure and impact - the traumatic past' (*Testimony*, p.65). What all of the above suggests, is that Auster's work can be read in terms of vicarious trauma. I intend to expand on this greatly in Chapter 4, when I discuss the tendency of Auster and Philip Roth to evoke the Holocaust alongside events in American history.

As I address the literary work of Jewish-American authors in the forthcoming chapters, I will refer to numerous sources that relate to trauma and the Holocaust, to the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale (a source rich in post-traumatic case studies), and also to the proliferation of good scholarship related to these sources. In the course of my research, I had the opportunity to visit the archive and make my own observations of these testimonies, rather than relying on the descriptions of others. My argument will not be confined, however, to

⁹⁰ In *Waltz with Bashir*, the director's persona, Ari Folman, attempts to recover his own repressed memories of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. When he succeeds in recalling a massacre at a refugee camp, he is told by his analyst that the reason for his post-traumatic amnesia stems from the fact that this trauma re-awakened an earlier trauma, the Holocaust, which Folman is only connected to through relatives who were survivors (Dir. Ari Folman. Bridgit Folman Film Gang. 2008).

⁹¹ Nadine Fresco, 'Remembering the Unknown', trans. by Alan Sheridan, *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 11 (1984), 417-27 <<http://www.anti-rev.org/textes/Fresco84a/body.html>> [accessed 18 February 2010].

trauma as a direct result of the Holocaust. I intend to look at a variety of causes for the motifs that I examine and to broaden the scope beyond that of academic texts that cite ‘trauma’ as a singularly motivating factor.

As I mentioned above, there has been much debate over whether the Holocaust is a ‘unique’ or special case in the history of genocidal violence. I do not intend to take up that debate directly here, but simply to point out that other traumatic events will have had a traumatic impact on Jewish writers, either directly or vicariously. Langer, for instance, argued that the traumatized ‘personhood’ that resulted from the Holocaust is not ‘confined to this particular atrocity alone’ (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.201). The idea that Bernard Malamud may have been vicariously traumatized by a Russian pogrom, and that this trauma may have been reawakened by encountering accounts of the Holocaust, is a case in point based on the two examples given thus far that relate to him. One may also consider the enduring cultural stereotype of the Jewish mother in this context. Joyce Antler described the representations of Jewish mothers being over-protective and excessively anxious about their children over decades of American history, as ‘the American Jewish story: immigration, acculturation [...] the Holocaust’.⁹² This example hints that whatever the ‘scale’ of trauma caused by anti-Semitic violence, a similar post-traumatic reaction may occur when one’s own family is threatened. What I will be dealing with, in effect, are symptoms of diagnosable post-traumatic disorders. These appear to be similar (although not identical) if a person is affected by any ‘event outside the range of usual experience’.⁹³

⁹² Joyce Antler, *You Never Call! You Never Write!: A History of the Jewish Mother* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.10.

⁹³ Cathy Caruth, ‘Introduction’, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* ed. by Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp.3-13 (p.3).

Take, for instance, this example given by Margaret Ann Salinger of her mother's (British, gentile) war-time experience. She felt neglected by her parents who failed to act in the interests of her safety, was traumatized when the family home was bombed during the Blitz, and had to be shipped to America:

The ship was packed with stunned, weeping children headed for the safety of the United States to sit out the war. One bit of contact, which Claire clung to like a life preserver, was to stand on the deck each day and wave to the children on the deck of their sister ship, The City of Benares, which carried the same cargo of unaccompanied children and sailed alongside them in close convoy. The children would wave back to her. Several days out of Southampton, as Claire was exchanging waves, a German torpedo ripped into the side of the Benares. It exploded into flames. Claire watched in mute horror as it sank, children screaming and dancing as they burned.⁹⁴

Regardless of the 'enormity' or 'evil' of an event (factors that may make the Holocaust historically unique), the symptoms of trauma will be similar in the case of Holocaust survivors and such a case as the one detailed above. This too is a catastrophic event that would overwhelm the witness's cognitive processes and be processed belatedly, over time, perhaps requiring the intervention of psychiatric treatment and manifesting itself in post-traumatic symptoms. Langer argued that the mechanics of trauma experienced by survivors revolves around the sense of powerlessness to act that victims experienced, in addition to a sense that afterwards they would always 'know the truth' about humanity (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.59). I should also point out here that at various stages, Langer cited testimonies of people who did not experience the extermination camps. People who experienced violence and/or deprivation, for instance in ghettos, experienced similar traumatic symptoms of 'unheroic' or 'besieged' memory in Langer's view. It is also conceivable that Jews who grew up in America would have been traumatized by accounts of the Holocaust, and in particular by the sheer sense of threat created

⁹⁴ Margaret Ann Salinger, *Dream Catcher: A Memoir* (New York: Washington Square Books, 2000), p.5.

by a campaign of hate that aimed to wipe out an entire race in Europe and succeeded in wiping out two thirds.⁹⁵

In Imperial Russia, Jews lived in terror of pogroms that were intensely traumatic, caused large numbers of deaths and led many to flee to America to escape such conditions.⁹⁶ After the Russian Revolution came the ‘Great Terror’ (1933-34), in which 20 million people died of starvation or were shot in labour camps under Stalin’s rule.⁹⁷ Although the labour camp programme was not specifically aimed at Jews, a high number of those who died were Jewish, simply because unequal social conditions meant that Jews were more likely to be poor, and there was a significant number of their group in the Ukraine that was badly affected. Melanie Ilic reported that ‘in comparison with national and republican figures [...] Jewish victims of the purges constituted a greater proportion’.⁹⁸ Although Stalin’s party did not publicly profess to have anti-Semitic policies, anti-Semitism was still ‘widespread’ and ‘popular’ (‘The Great Terror’, p.154).

Stalin’s supposedly joking remark, that in view of the number of Jewish officials it ‘would be a good idea to have a pogrom in the party’, and the ‘Doctor’s Plot’ at the end of Stalin’s reign,

⁹⁵ Lucy S. Dawidowitz, *A Holocaust Reader* (New York: Berman House Inc, 1976), p.381.

⁹⁶ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website’s ‘Holocaust Encyclopaedia’ details pogroms from anti-Jewish rioting in Odessa in 1821 and the extensive riots that swept southern Russia and Ukraine in 1881-84. More shocking and relevant to this thesis are the details of pogroms that occurred after 1945, particularly against Jews attempting to re-enter Poland (<<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?module=Id10005183>> [accessed 21 February 2010]).

⁹⁷ Roger Osborne, *Civilization: A New History of the Western World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), p.434.

⁹⁸ Melanie Ilic, ‘The Great Terror - a Quantitative Analysis’, in *Challenging Traditional Views of Russian History*, ed. by Stephen G. Wheatcroft (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), pp.147-70 (p.154). Yuri Slezkine suggested that there were more Jews in the top echelons of the Party than any other group (including Russians) and that the administration of the Gulag was ‘headed by ethnic Jews’ (*The Jewish Century*, p.255). Slezkine also argued that ‘all diaspora nationalities of the Soviet Union became the subject of special “mass operations” involving quotas of arrests and executions’ (*The Jewish Century*, p.274). Despite any debate between historians as to the extent of Jews participating or being singled out, what is clear is that large numbers of Jews died in a generally traumatic human catastrophe.

would have given Jewish Russians cause for concern that the excesses of the Russian penal system could be directed specifically towards them at any time. Stalin's 'slip of the tongue' is addressed by Robert Conquest, as is the decision to shoot a group of Yiddish writers who refused to assimilate in 1952.⁹⁹ Conquest also devoted several pages to Russia assisting the Nazis by deporting Jews after the Nazi-Soviet Pact (1937).¹⁰⁰ Other traumatic events in Europe besides the Holocaust may be formative psychological factors in the families of Jewish-American writers. One must, therefore, apply a similar approach to the 'post-traumatic' impact of these events as others have to the Holocaust.

It must again be taken into account that news of the Holocaust may have re-awakened trauma in those vicariously traumatized by other historical disasters. Later I will be examining the work of Philip Roth, who lived through the years of the Holocaust among adults affected by the 'collective memory of Polish and Russian pogroms' (*Facts*, p.328). Aimee Pozorski's recent book reconsidered Roth's work in the light of collective American trauma.¹⁰¹ Pozorski's argument was that in Roth's work there is clear evidence of American historical violence and trauma being repeated at key moments. In some respects, my work on Roth can stand alongside Pozorski's: clearly there is no precisely definable extent to which a Jewish-American author can be affected by the different histories to which s/he is connected.

The work of those concerned with 'trauma theory' has thrown up some interesting problems for others concerned with history and literary criticism. One example is found in the related areas of

⁹⁹ Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (London: Pimlico, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ For the Doctor's Plot and the circumstances that led to Ignatiev ordering physical torture of the doctors who Stalin suspected, see Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov's *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), Chapter 8: 'Spies and Murderers Under the Mask of Doctors' (pp.249-82).

¹⁰¹ Aimee Pozorski, *Roth and Trauma: The Problem of History in the Later Works (1995-2010)* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

‘representation’ and ‘witnessing’. As Cathy Caruth outlined, to be traumatized means literally to be ‘possessed’ by an event that cannot be assimilated punctually, but only over time, ‘belatedly’ (Caruth, ‘Introduction’, p.4). This raises the issue of whether representation in literature or history can be accurate or unmediated after traumatic events, and ultimately brings into question the idea of authorial ‘subject-position’. LaCapra addressed this concern in his major study, and argued that for the critically engaged historian, the term ‘subject position’ should not be ‘equated with a notion of full identity’ (*Representing the Holocaust*, p.12). Indeed full identity can only be looked upon as a response to some overwhelming event in LaCapra’s view:

But a subject position becomes a total identity only in cases of extreme ‘acting out’ wherein one is possessed by the past and tends to repeat it compulsively as if it were present. A victim’s recovery may itself depend on the attempt to reconstruct the self as more than a victim. More generally, the process of coming critically to terms with the past requires perspective on subject positions and the ability to resist the total consumption of the self by a given identity that threatens to prevent any kind of renewal. (*Ibid.*)

In LaCapra’s view, the proposition of fully theorizing, understanding and representing the Holocaust (or a similar traumatic event ‘outside the range of usual experience’), is effectively a ‘non-starter’. This, however, does not signal the end of any critical attempt to discuss issues connected to the Holocaust, such as post-traumatic reactions. LaCapra went on to argue that the application of common sense, a moral viewpoint and ethical and political judgements remain crucial when encountering texts and narratives that relate to traumatic events. (*Representing the Holocaust*, p.10). Many post-Holocaust Jewish-American novelists have had their work subjected to rigorous assessments, underpinned by ‘postmodern’ theory that posits such notions as fractured or rhizomatic subjectivity, collapse of the referent (or representation), aporia, dispossession and deferred meaning. In this sense, such novelists as Paul Auster have been

assessed as demonstrating postmodernist traits in their work in much the same way as do contemporary writers of non-Jewish backgrounds.

This tendency has of late inspired revisionist critiques of twentieth-century fiction. Paul Crosthwaite argued that temporal confusion in novels by Thomas Pynchon, J. G. Ballard and Ian McEwan reflected Freud's theory of *nachträglichkeit* as post-traumatic engagement with traumatic events.¹⁰² Previous readings that apply postmodern theory in a 'blanket' or 'one theory fits all texts' method are challenged through close study of each author's background and historical contextualization of the novels. For instance, Crosthwaite challenged Fredric Jameson's assumption that the postmodern subject, rather than experiencing a linear history, instead experiences a series of unrelated presents because of the time-space compression of global capital:

I take the spatial peculiarities of postmodernism as symptoms of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities.¹⁰³

Crosthwaite took issue with the way that Jameson made WWII 'tangential' in his theory, and overlooked the argument that *nachträglichkeit* (belated experience of trauma evoked at a future traumatic moment) also causes temporal confusion in post-war narratives.

I intend to apply a similar critical method to the work of the Jewish-American authors under discussion, focussing on the after-effects of the Holocaust and related traumatic events rather than the existential threat associated with 'total war' examined by Crosthwaite. The post-traumatic behaviour, what is re-lived or 'acted out', is, specifically, dis/simulation. Combining biographical information, a background of psychological case studies and an insistence on the

¹⁰² Paul Crosthwaite, *Trauma, Postmodernism and the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁰³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p.413.

importance of historical contexts, I aim to produce new, provocative readings that demonstrate post-traumatic ‘symptoms’ in the writing practices and subject matter of the four authors.

Importantly, I will give credence to accounts of authors’ lives from those close to them, including friends, family and lovers, some of whom, such as J. D. Salinger’s daughter Margaret, have confronted issues of anti-Semitism and trauma directly. These accounts are often dismissed as ‘self-serving’ or ‘commercially driven’.¹⁰⁴ Whilst I do not intend to dispute that particular point, I would point out that they contain valuable first-hand information concerning the psychology and behaviour of the authors under investigation. I will also look at each author’s own autobiographical writing and associated material. This does not mean, however, that my analysis is in any sense straightforwardly biographical. I will be applying the theory delineated above to challenge each author’s own sense of authorial control. In this respect, I will be challenging any previous readings of works by Jewish-American authors that discuss identity (and particularly disguise of identity) as ‘postmodern’ or ‘decentred’, by insisting on the combination of trauma, history and theory, that in the view of LaCapra, Caruth and others, is essential for the processing and understanding of trauma.

Dori Laub described the process of victim and witness narrating trauma, as first narrating, then retreating from the past ‘with a sense that there is a truth that we are trying to reach, and this sense serves as a beacon we both try to follow’ (*Testimony*, p.62). Obviously, in the view of trauma theorists (as is the case with postmodern theorists), the idea of ‘truth’ is elusive. Yet as LaCapra has asserted, the abdication of a moral or discriminating viewpoint should not occur,

¹⁰⁴ Addressing Margaret Ann Salinger’s claim that she wrote *Dream Catcher* for the sake of her son and with the aim of breaking a cycle of suffering within her own family, Ron Rosenbaum wrote that ‘there’s something a bit disingenuous about this piety’ (‘The Flight From Fortress Salinger’, *New York Times*, 8 October 2000, <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/10/08/reviews/001008.08rosenbt.html>> [accessed 14 January 2013]).

even though the ‘issue of what distinctions should be stressed or elaborated in a present context, especially if one is concerned with ‘working through’ the past, is always debatable’

(*Representing the Holocaust*, p.10). I will now conclude this chapter with a brief example of my principal method.

A good example of criticism that at first glance seems theoretically illuminating, yet entirely overlooks history and trauma, can be found in Alenka Zupančič’s recent philosophical work on comedy.¹⁰⁵ Zupančič took an example from Sacha Baron Cohen’s controversial comic creation Borat¹⁰⁶, which I think is worth quoting in its entirety:

The constitutive moment of almost every episode in Borat’s apprenticeship in the ‘US and A’ involves a short circuit between some universal (and acceptable) notion or belief and its obscene other side. Yet the latter does not figure as the other side of what is ‘universally acceptable’ but as its most intimate kernel which is made, by Borat, to explode before our very eyes. Take the example of the brief but extremely effective gun shop episode. The firearms possession issue in America is split between, on the one hand, the universally proclaimed right to defend oneself and, on the other, louder and louder reminders of its catastrophic side-effects, such as fatal accidents, misuses of easily acquirable guns... Now, what happens in the Borat episode is that Borat walks into a (real) gun shop, and asks the guy selling the arms a very straightforward question (in his ‘Kazakhstanian English’): ‘What is best gun to defend from a Jew?’ Without so much as a blink, the shop assistant replies: ‘I would recommend a 9mm or a 45’. This exchange is simultaneously both shocking and comical, because of the smoothness with which the spectacular short circuit between the ‘right to self-defense’ (by the possession of firearms) and the taste for ‘shooting Jews’ passes unnoticed by the assistant. And, of course, the point is precisely that the two *cannot in fact* be dissociated. (*Odd One In*, pp.32-33)

Zupančič here took her lead from Lacan’s remark that ‘a lunatic is not some poor chap who believes that he is a king; a lunatic is a king who really believes that he is a king’ (*Odd One In*, p.32). The key point here is that in comedy, the focus is not the viewer’s empathy with a person’s ‘higher calling’. Rather than a king being an object of respect and fascination, kingliness itself is the real comic subject. The ‘short circuit’ to which Zupančič alluded, is the

¹⁰⁵ Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In (On Comedy)* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), pp.32-33.

¹⁰⁶ *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. Dir. Larry Charles. Twentieth Century Fox. 2006.

process of ‘disidentification’ on the part of the ‘kingly’ comic character (who truly believes he is a ‘king’). This is deconstructed, or ‘made to explode’. As Zupančič’s aim was to explain why we laugh when we see this episode, despite its bleak implications concerning the firearms issue in America and anti-Semitism, it is difficult to find fault with her argument concerning Borat. Yet when this is juxtaposed to her next example, it would be tempting to suggest that Sacha Baron Cohen’s comedy needs a broader historical explanation. This next example is that of President George W. Bush, who also believes he is a ‘king’ and attempts to show that he is ‘also’ human. His self-mocking jokes and attempts at seriously assuming the mantle of ‘president’, however, only consolidate the fact that he is deluded in thinking that ‘he really is an American president’ (*Odd One In*, pp.33-34).

There can hardly be a greater distinction than between the motives of Bush’s attempts to emerge as a credible political leader, as well as ‘the guy next door’, and Baron Cohen’s endeavour to mock conservative Americans (his own audience) for their shallowness and racism. A simple internet search for articles about Sacha Baron Cohen reveals the following salient facts: he is an observant Jew, and one of his grandparents (to whom he is close) is a Holocaust survivor.¹⁰⁷ He is shy, awkward and reclusive as ‘himself’, preferring to hide behind personae and disguises, from behind which he becomes confident and ‘sadistic’ (‘The Man Behind the Moustache’). Baron Cohen also has a lifelong interest in the ways in which bigotry and indifference contribute to racism, persecution and genocide (*Ibid.*). Whilst little intimate information is available about Baron Cohen, it seems feasible to suggest, in terms of what has been discussed about vicarious trauma thus far, that part of his artistic technique may revolve around a compulsion towards

¹⁰⁷ See, for instance, Neil Strauss, ‘The Man Behind the Moustache’, *Rolling Stone*, 14 November 2006 <http://www.rollingstone.com/new/coverstory/sacha_baron_cohen_the_real_borat_finally_speaks> [accessed 16 February 2010]. This is a rare example of a profile of Baron Cohen being based on information that he himself provided.

dis/simulation that has, almost as a by-product, allowed him to become a spectacular critical and popular success in comedy.

This compulsion may be the combined result of psychological trauma, historical processes and contemporary conditions. When I recently watched Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary *Shoah* (after an interval of a decade since my last viewing), I found myself reacting in a similar way and asking similar questions as to when I watched *Borat*.¹⁰⁸ As Lanzmann makes his way from one interviewee to another, he frequently disturbs the viewer by asking questions that allow, for instance, Polish peasants to express their bigotry and prejudice against Jews. Lanzmann asks a farmer to elaborate on his impersonation of camp inmates 'speaking Jew', films a peasant stating that Jews 'stank' and a group of women saying that they are not so sorry to see the back of Jews in their area because the male 'Poles liked the little Jewesses'.¹⁰⁹ After watching this documentary in the era of *Borat*, I laughed out loud as each of the 'kingly' interviewees expounded forth their wisdom concerning the exterminated Jewish population of Europe, tempered with assurances as to the reasonableness of their general character. As such, Zupančič's model explaining why one might laugh carries some weight. In the latter example, the 'universal' (a woman fearing that her lover will betray her) and its 'obscene other side' (the extermination of a race) are 'made to explode before our very eyes'.

It would be equally sensible to argue, however, that Lanzmann (who fought in the French resistance at the age of 18 and has devoted his life to supporting Jewish causes and contesting anti-Semitism), did not consciously contrive this 'comic' device. Rather, I believe that it is evident that Lanzmann (who was seriously injured and hospitalized after being attacked by an

¹⁰⁸ *Shoah*. Dir. Claude Lanzmann. New Yorker Films. 1985.

¹⁰⁹ For the Reader's convenience I will refer to the complete text of the film *Shoah* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), p.30, p.88 and p.89.

interviewee) responds to the cultural conditions in which he works, by not adopting a moral attitude with those who he questions. This is because any overt attempt to argue would make his documentary less palatable to general viewers, in addition to annoying the person involved and putting his own safety at risk. One could also argue that this was a type of ‘repetition’ or ‘acting out’. Lanzmann experienced the ‘extraordinary shock’ of Jews being rounded up by the French police, and his father concocted false identities for his family’s safety.¹¹⁰ In his ‘technique’ he thus re-enacts a soothing routine of successfully disguising to avoid danger.

Any viewer who had behaved indifferently towards ‘insidious’ anti-Semitism in America, for example, could conceivably feel associative guilt and recoil from or reject the film, feeling that on some level they were being accused or preached at. A ‘hard-core’ anti-Semite would respond that this is another example of an obnoxious and loud Jew attempting to advance his cause by promulgating the ‘myth’ of the Holocaust. Thus the Jew, or the artist supporting a Jewish cause, remains in disguise and allows his interlocutors to expose themselves. Equally, Lanzmann’s ‘sadism’ in assisting his ‘victims’ in the process of making fools of themselves, could be argued to be an example of post-traumatic ‘acting out’, catalyzed by his proximity to the Holocaust as he revisits it. These cultural factors could be applied equally to the work of Sacha Baron Cohen, who often reserves his most ‘sadistic’ stunts for uncovering anti-Semitism. Whilst I do not intend to speculate about this further now, I feel that the above example aptly demonstrates the ways in which Zupančič’s broadly theoretical approach fails to deal with the influences of history and trauma. In this negation lies an example that supports LaCapra’s concerns regarding theory that is ahistorical. The darkest slant that one could put on this is that in ideological terms, Zupančič

¹¹⁰ Claude Lanzmann, *The Patagonian Hare*, trans. by Frank Wynne (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p.22 and p.23.

overlooks, and in a sense dismisses or trivializes the enduring psychological scars of the Holocaust.

In the next chapter I will use this combination of history and theory to re-examine the work of J. D. Salinger in light of his Jewish-American experience. It will be seen that this has been largely overlooked in the last fifty years, possibly because Salinger's mother was not Jewish and he therefore was not Jewish in the faith. I will make the case that Salinger chose to cover his part-Jewish identity for strategic reasons relating to his safety and career prospects at key moments, and that this tendency is reflected in his fiction. This leads to the original conclusion that what ails the mysterious protagonist of *The Catcher in the Rye*, is that he is living under the cloud of a disguised ethnic identity. I will also assess Salinger as the first of four literary 'men in small rooms'. These aspects of dis/simulation; hiding, taking cover and only projecting oneself through fictional personae, are illuminated by Salinger's indirect experience of the Holocaust, another largely overlooked aspect of his biography. I am indebted to the assistance of Werner Kleeman, Salinger's army comrade, who met me to discuss his experience of the author. The new information acquired here, alongside references to Holocaust testimonies housed by the Fortunoff Archive, allow me to make a convincing case that besides Salinger's historically contingent tendency towards being evasive about his background, aspects of dis/simulation are also visible in his life and later fiction that can be read as post-traumatic 'acting out'.

In the third chapter, I revisit the fiction of Jerzy Kosinski. This may seem like an odd choice. Kosinski was not born in America (he was in fact a hidden child survivor of the Holocaust in Poland), but in his immigrant experience of America could be argued to have led an exemplary American life. Kosinski was chosen because on the one hand, in his supposedly attention seeking

antics and the extreme and disturbing content of his novels, he appears to be a mirror opposite of Salinger. I argue that this is not the case. By introducing research on bipolar disorder, I am able to make the case that whilst Kosinski may have been public and manic, as opposed to Salinger who was withdrawn and depressed, both writers habitually practiced dis/simulation that was connected to their Jewish experience and post-traumatic consciousness. I will be arguing, to a certain extent, that in both cases their fiction can be compared to the narratives encountered in Holocaust testimony and illuminated by scholarship examining these narratives, despite their differing experiences. I am indebted here to the Fortunoff Archive for access to the video tapes of Holocaust testimonies discussed. I am also grateful to the Beinecke Library for access to the Katherina von Fraunhoffen Collection, which enabled me to view television footage of the man ‘in the flesh’ as it were. This allowed me to get a better sense of the man behind the reputation and also of the verisimilitude of my own arguments. By the end of this chapter, the reader will have the sense of dis/simulation as both a motif and a literary strategy that is related to Jewish-American identity.

The fourth chapter compares the work of Paul Auster and Philip Roth, which is relatively novel in and of itself. Few critics have considered these writers as contemporaries, or as fellow Jewish Americans, because this is not a primary point of focus in Auster criticism. Having examined the work of two authors who were directly exposed to the Holocaust, I switch here to discussing two authors who grew up aware of that event and of their own Jewish connection to it. It will be seen in the analyses of Auster and Roth’s fiction, that each shares traits with that of both Salinger and Kosinski that are clearly connected to Jewish experience. The argument that unfolds is that Roth experiences his Jewish identity as a compulsion to dis/simulate that manifests itself in his characters and motifs, and also in his metafictional structures.

Similar aspects can be discerned in Auster's work. The striking difference, however, is the presence in Auster's work of dis/simulation as 'postmemory' on the part of his protagonists. This reflects each author's differing chronology (Roth was born in 1933, Auster in 1947) and distance from the catastrophic events of the Holocaust, as well as each author's sense of security and assimilation as an 'American'. Roth's work only addresses 'postmemory' when he is representing protagonists of Auster's generation. I am indebted here to Paul Auster for allowing me to visit his home and interview him (see transcript, Appendix). I am also indebted to the New York Public Library for access to the Berg Collection, which allowed me to achieve further insight into Auster's Jewish connections and the effects of Jewish identity on his formative experiences and career. Likewise, access to the Library of Congress's collection of Philip Roth papers strengthened my understanding of issues connected to Jewish identity and dis/simulation in Roth's work. In the Conclusion I speculate on other possible avenues of research to which the principal method in this thesis may be applied.

The originality of these readings will play an important part in convincing the reader that an investigation of dis/simulation, as both a literary strategy and a post-traumatic reaction, is necessary to illuminate the social experience and cultural heritage of the authors under discussion, and Jewish-American writers more generally. As the chapters progress, the reader will become attuned to the ways in which the behaviours of largely male protagonists are repeated, in particular hiding, disguising, assuming an alternative identity and lying. To an extent, therefore, the basis for comparing the works of these authors will become apparent at times without requiring extensive illustration. I will now commence this analysis, combining detailed historical contexts with trauma theory and reference to Holocaust testimony, in my re-examination of the work and career of J. D. Salinger.

Chapter 2: Dis/simulation as Response to anti-Semitism in America and Post-Traumatic

Reaction in the Life and Work of J. D. Salinger.

'What is hell?' I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love. He started to write Dostoevsky's name under the inscription, but saw, with fright that ran through his whole body - that what he had written was almost entirely illegible. He shut the book.¹

He was very polite and said he appreciated her good will; nevertheless, he told her, the biographical facts you want are in my stories, in one form or another, including the traumatic experiences you asked about. (Dream Catcher, pp.xi-xii)²

In the preface to *Holocaust Testimonies*, Lawrence Langer described a testimony from the Fortunoff archive, that of a Mr and Mrs B. The couple state in front of their own grown-up children that the Holocaust left them 'lonely' (*Holocaust Testimonies*, 'Introduction', p.xi). At one point, later in the interview, the children speak of having drawn strength from having survivors as parents. Langer used this example to illustrate a key point concerning the reality of 'survival'. This is that whilst the children speak of chronology and people who have 'built a life', the testimony of Mr and Mrs B. is marked by 'disruption, absence and irrecoverable loss' (*Ibid.*). Both parents and children, however, are giving their own earnest account of the parents' 'survival'. In the case of many survivors, it is seen that such a person lives two co-existent lives. The first involves an attempt to 'build a life', to have children and give them security and privileges that they themselves never had. The second is an inner life of grief that manifests itself in an inability to love, or feel happiness at one's accomplishments and achievements.³ This malaise is evident in the late stages of J. D. Salinger's writing career.

¹ J. D. Salinger, 'For Esmé With Love and Squalor', in *For Esmé with Love and Squalor and Other Stories* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953), pp.97-127 (p.116).

² This comment relates to Salinger's response when asked by an English student for help with the paper that she was writing about him.

³ See, for instance, Langer's account of the testimony of Leon H., who was unable to reconcile the loss of his family and wanting to kill himself, with his post-Holocaust life with a new family that he stated he loved (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.95). At the archive I also viewed the testimony of Leo G., who said that after his experiences he could not 'laugh and enjoy through inside, only superficially' (Leo G. Holocaust Testimony (T-158), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies).

In this chapter, I will begin with a detailed summary of the biographical information available about Salinger. This is unusual in essays or chapters of literary analysis, but I believe that it is necessary in the case of Salinger because of the paucity of information available concerning his private life. Any author-centred approach to Salinger's work needs at least to set out what one can know or surmise about the author. This idea is in turn reinforced by the common perception that Salinger's work reflects the author's own personal neuroses more than is usually the case in fiction. For instance, of Salinger's later work Mary McCarthy wrote that the Glass children represented a 'terrifying narcissus pool. Salinger's world contains nothing but Salinger'.⁴

The summary will serve the purpose of illustrating that Salinger was, in all probability, profoundly affected by anti-Semitism in America and the US army. This is not something that is generally argued or even acknowledged as an influencing factor in many critical studies. For instance, in 'Down at the Dinghy', a little boy called Lionel runs away and hides because, he tells his mother, he overhears a house maid calling his father a 'big sloppy kike'.⁵ Touchingly, the boy is upset to hear his father insulted even though he does not know what the abusive term signifies. Here is an example of one of Salinger's Glass children (Lionel's mother is Boo Boo Tannenbaum, née Glass) facing anti-Semitism. M. A. Salinger confirmed that the story of a boy running away from home with only his toy soldiers for company is based on something that Salinger himself did as a child (*Dream Catcher*, p.18). Paul Alexander dismissed the story with a single sentence, stating that it 'seems to rely too heavily on a single comment to represent a subject as vast and complicated as racism'.⁶

⁴ Mary McCarthy, 'Franny and Zooey', *Observer*, 3 June 1962, p.21.

⁵ J. D. Salinger, 'Down at the Dinghy', in *For Esmé with Love and Squalor and Other Stories*, pp.65-78 (p.77).

⁶ Paul Alexander, *Salinger: A Biography* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), p.134.

I will also argue that Salinger was traumatically affected by the Holocaust through direct experience over a period of eight years, and that this is manifest in changes of motifs and mood in his work after his wartime experience. Throughout this chapter, I will be commenting on these ‘direct’ or ‘indirect’ experiences of trauma. In respect of his actual exposure to the Holocaust, Salinger, like Jerzy Kosinski (discussed in the following chapter), could be considered to a certain extent as a survivor, or witness, rather than one vicariously affected or experiencing inter-generational trauma. Arthur A. Cohen asserted that all Jews were survivors, but described the generation of Jews born after the Holocaust as ‘the generation that bears the scar without the wound, sustaining memory without direct experience’.⁷

Having made this argument, I will then focus more closely on dis/simulation in Salinger’s work. It will be seen that Salinger’s fabled reclusiveness (a common topic in his post-Holocaust fiction), and the tendency of some of his characters to hide, disguise or adopt a false identity, can be directly related to Salinger’s Jewish ethnicity and personal traumatic experience. This is of particular interest as Salinger’s work has rarely been looked upon as ‘Jewish’ and even more rarely discussed as part of a collection devoted to Jewish-American writers.⁸ David Brauner overlooked Salinger in his survey, as did Alan L. Berger. Brauner did, however, allude to Salinger in his discussion of what constitutes ‘Jewish-American literature’. Whilst looking at what other critics had said on the subject and which authors had made the cut, as it were, in anthologies devoted to Jewish-American literature, Brauner cited Robert Alter:

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

⁷ Arthur A. Cohen, *The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), p.2.

⁸ In Sarah Graham’s *J. D. Salinger’s The Catcher in the Rye* (London: Routledge, 2007) the index contains references for ‘anti-Communism’, ‘homosexuality’ and ‘Jesus’ but none for ‘anti-Semitism’, ‘Holocaust’ or ‘Jews’.

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.⁹

Alter's off-the-cuff remarks hint that he may have seen just cause to exclude Salinger from his own Jewish-American canon based on some specific notion concerning his 'authentic status' as a Jewish-American writer.

There are some exceptions to the general tendency to look away from Jewish elements in Salinger's work. Maxwell Geismar asserted that the 'locale of the New York sections is obviously that of a comfortable middle class Jewish society where, however, all the leading figures have become beautifully Anglicised'.¹⁰ Geismar did, however, ultimately dismiss this as part of his identification of Salinger's work with the 'New Yorker School of Fiction'. Leah Garrett, who in her essay which used some of the sources that I cite below, asserted that Holden's 'kvetching' can be identified with the alienation of the post-war Jewish male.¹¹ I am in full agreement with Garrett that Holden 'passing himself off as gentile' as a narrator is a 'rhetorical system of obfuscation to impart the Jewish American experience' ('The Kvetcher in the Rye', p.658 and p.645). What Garrett did not argue, as I will below, is that the source of Holden's conduct disorder is connected to his wishing to pass as non-Jewish within the world represented in the novel.

In any case, in the terms in which I am reconsidering the work of four Jewish-American authors, Salinger is a most apt example. This is because Salinger's exposure to anti-Semitism in early-twentieth-century America, in addition to his traumatic experiences in connection with the

⁹ Robert Alter, *After the Tradition: Essays on Modern Jewish Writing* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1969), p.18, cited in *Post-War Jewish Fiction*, p.5.

¹⁰ Maxwell Geismar, *American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), p.197.

¹¹ Leah Garrett, 'The "Kvetcher" in the Rye: J. D. Salinger and Challenges to the Modern Jewish Canon', in *Arguing the Modern Jewish Canon: Essays in Literature and Culture in Honor of Ruth R. Wisse*, ed. by Justin Cammy and others (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp.645-59.

Holocaust, means that his work is inevitably shaped by post-traumatic ‘symptoms’. In this respect, his work does indeed have an affinity, or in Brauner’s terms a ‘shared sensibility’, with the other writers considered in this thesis.

J. D. Salinger - A Biographical Overview.

Often, at children’s parties, someone’s rather showily broad-minded mother would suggest a game of Spin the Bottle or Post Office, and I can freely attest that throughout childhood the two eldest Glass boys were veteran recipients of bag after bag of unmailed letters [...] unless, of course, the postman was a little girl called Charlotte the Harlot, who was a trifle mad anyway.¹²

Grandpa sat in a big chair at one end of the room and listened to the Mills Brothers on a huge Victrola. He had a nice singing voice [...] and I couldn’t figure out why his singing made Daddy squirm. (Dream Catcher, p.145)

In this section, I will be referring to three sources of biographical information concerning Salinger. Strictly speaking, only one of these sources is a biography. Ian Hamilton’s *In Search of J. D. Salinger*, whilst containing the results of painstaking research, is an account of Hamilton’s failed effort to unearth any intimate information on Salinger.¹³ This book also details Salinger’s successful legal action against Random House (who originally commissioned Hamilton), which prevented the publication of extracts from private letters. M. A. Salinger’s *Dream Catcher* purported to be the author’s own life story, and understandably faced the accusation of seeking to cash in on having a famous father, both commercially and in terms of public attention. If one puts these issues to one side, and judges the book as impartially as possible, it must be conceded that M. A. Salinger has constructed an excellent account of Jewish issues in Salinger’s background alongside respectable historical sources. In *Salinger: A Biography*, Paul Alexander made use of Hamilton’s research file alongside other previously unaccessed materials to produce

¹² J. D. Salinger, ‘Seymour: An Introduction’, in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (London: Heinemann, 1963), pp.109-248 (p.209).

¹³ Ian Hamilton, *In Search of J. D. Salinger* (London: Heinemann, 1988).

a biographical account of Salinger that suffers from a lack of vital information, an excess of understandable, compensatory conjecture and a perceivable will towards character assassination.

Much detail is missing, because Salinger successfully ‘covered his tracks’ and reliable sources of information have been notoriously hard to come by. Much of the information available, besides M. A. Salinger’s ‘insider’ information, comes from letters, legal papers and anecdotal sources. My intention here is to give a short account that foregrounds issues specifically related to Jewish-American experience in Salinger’s life.¹⁴ Salinger was born in 1919, to a Jewish father (Sol Salinger) and a Scots-Irish mother (Mary Jillich). At the time of Salinger’s birth, according to Leonard Dinnerstein, Jews were seen (in light of news of the Bolshevik triumph in Russia in 1917) as both ‘bomb-throwing, bearded Bolsheviks and money grasping Shylocks. These themes were picked up and broadcast throughout the nation’.¹⁵ M. A. Salinger noted that Jews changed their names ‘even in the entertainment business [...] for business reasons’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.27). Research carried out at the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute (in the Center for Jewish History, New York) confirmed that whilst both of Salinger’s parents were born in America, his paternal grandparents, the Rabbi Simon F. Salinger and his wife Fannie, were both born in the Russian part of partitioned Poland in 1860 and 1865 respectively.

Hamilton stated that the family had moved from Chicago, where Sol Salinger may have been involved in the entertainment business, whilst his mother may have been an actress or vaudeville performer (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.15). According to a quotation attributed to Salinger’s

¹⁴ On Salinger’s death in January 2010 I trawled the broadsheets to see whether these issues were placed in the foreground of any of the obituaries. Several of the broadsheets mentioned Salinger’s family background, yet the only obituary that commented upon it was that of the BBC, which stated that: ‘his conflict about being half-Jewish affected him deeply’ (‘Obituary: J. D. Salinger’, BBC Website, 28 January 2010 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3786891.stm>> [accessed 28 January 2010]).

¹⁵ Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.2.

sister, Sol Salinger may have been the only unsuccessful one ‘of all those Jews in the business at that time’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.17). Something in this part of the author’s parents’ background may have inspired the characters of Les and Bessie, parents to Salinger’s Glass children. I will return to this subject in the final part of this chapter. A vaudeville sketch first performed in Chicago in 1904 (around the time Salinger’s parents met) provides insight into the prevailing attitudes towards a Jew/Gentile marriage that they would have encountered. In *Glickman the Glazier*, a ‘whorish showgirl’ and a ‘vulgar Jew’ are horsewhipped for their flirtation and shown to ‘deserve each other’.¹⁶

Whilst both Hamilton and Alexander have commented on possible difficulties that Salinger faced because of his part-Jewish identity, M. A. Salinger brought a new piece of information to the fore that clearly alters any perspective one may have of Salinger’s formative experiences. This is that the exact truth of Salinger’s part-Jewish identity was withheld from him until around the time of his Bar Mitzvah (age thirteen), and that this was a ‘traumatic’ revelation (*Dream Catcher*, p.14).¹⁷ Immediately, this brings to mind issues connected to ‘passing’ and disguise in Salinger’s background. I will discuss the possible manifestation of this in his fiction later. For the time being, I should add that Salinger is said by M. A. Salinger to have grown up in a house where one was ‘snapped’ at for asking questions about one’s own background (*Dream Catcher*, p.14).

¹⁶ Harley Erdman, *Staging the American Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), p.119.

¹⁷ According to Jewish orthodoxy only those with Jewish mothers were considered to be Jews in the eyes of the faith. This view was generally held until the reform movement in North America (1983) decided to accept those with Jewish fathers and those adopted by Jewish parents as Jewish: ‘Until 1983 matrilinearity had been upheld in principle, and patrilinearity had been at best tolerated [...] by 1990 the National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) reported approximately 150,000 patrilineally defined Jews’ (Steven Bayme, ‘Patrilineal Descent Revisited’, in *Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism*, ed. by Dana Evan Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.137-45 (p.138)).

It is unclear whether Salinger was ever encouraged by his parents to 'pass'. What we do know is that Salinger's father was the son of a Rabbi, and that he drifted far enough from religious orthodoxy to make his living by importing ham (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.13). Furthermore, M. A. Salinger reported that when the family moved (in 1932) from a half-Jewish area (Upper West-Side) to a four per cent Jewish area (Park Avenue), this too may have affected Salinger deeply (*Dream Catcher*, pp.29-30).¹⁸ This move may well have been related to Sol Salinger's advance in business fortunes, or equally as a response to changes in the Jewish parts of the Upper West-Side, where areas came to be dominated demographically by Hispanics (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.15). Either way, M. A. Salinger recorded that at the time there were signs in some areas of New York that read 'No Catholics, Jews or Dogs', that most Jewish people in New York during the 1920s and 1930s 'would experience the rise of anti-Semitism, discrimination', and that Salinger's school record from this time stated that he was 'hard hit' but cited 'adolescence' as the cause (*Dream Catcher* p.28, p.29 and p.30). There is the possibility here that Salinger may have felt a sense of being exiled twice, as he learned that he was not 'authentically' Jewish in the eyes of one community, whilst his name, his appearance and his ethnic background meant that he may well have been considered Jewish (and hence an outsider) in another.

According to M. A. Salinger, her father's description matched that given by Buddy Glass of the Glass siblings, with eyes a 'Plaintive Jewish Brown' (*Dream Catcher*, p.10). Rare photographs of Salinger confirm that he was 'dark' in his appearance. I showed one to an American Rabbi, who said that on appearance alone he would consider Salinger one of 'our people'. He also added, however, that Salinger did not look 'so Jewish' that he would find it impossible to pass.

¹⁸ See Henry Roth's *An American Type*, for the effects on the development of the character Ira Stigman of being moved from a Jewish area of New York to one hostile to Jews in the early twentieth century ((New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011), pp.150-51). In many ways this character's interactions with anti-Semitism and passing articulate what is kept latent in *The Catcher in the Rye*, which I will address below.

In fact, with his figure, hairline and profile Salinger looked very similar as a young man to Gregory Peck as he appeared in the 1947 film *Gentleman's Agreement*.¹⁹ In this film, the protagonist Phil Green, a journalist, changes his name to 'Greenburg' as part of his plan to expose anti-Semitism. What this film confirms (as does Arthur Miller's novel *Focus*), is that in early-twentieth-century America, people often tried to deduce a person's background on the grounds of name or appearance. On appearances, Salinger may have been able to pass in certain situations.

Whether passing was ever actively encouraged or not, a sensitive person in this historical context could well have developed the habit unconsciously. This is particularly the case given the conditions in which Jewish adolescents attempted to enter colleges and universities. Salinger left McBurney, where he was 'hard hit', to attend the Valley Forge Military Academy. M. A. Salinger recalled Salinger's sister telling her that 'anti-Semitism at Valley Forge was "hell"' on Salinger, and gave statistics concerning military schools at the time confirming that anti-Semitism was widespread (*Dream Catcher*, p.30). M. A. Salinger also recorded a disturbing anecdote that involves one military academy of the 1920s printing a class photo, with the face of a Jewish cadet printed on perforated paper, so that it could be torn from the yearbook (*Dream Catcher*, p.30). On the entry form for Valley Forge, Salinger's parents put 'none' under religion (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.19). When Salinger was interviewed by the school only his mother accompanied him (*Dream Catcher*, p.33). Hamilton suggested that this was because of Sol Salinger's 'exasperation' with his son's lack of achievement at this time, but M. A. Salinger's suggestion that fears of anti-Semitism forced the issue also makes perfect sense (*In Search of J.*

¹⁹ *Gentleman's Agreement*. Dir. Elia Kazan. Twentieth Century Fox. 1947.

D. Salinger, p.19, *Dream Catcher*, p.33). It may be considered unsurprising that the one thing at which Salinger excelled as a child was ‘acting’ (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.34).

After Salinger had ‘flunked’ out of a number of educational establishments by the time he was nineteen, he was sent to Austria by his father to learn the business of importing and exporting meat and cheese, and was placed with a Jewish family that he was said to have ‘loved’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.39). Again, the reasons for Salinger’s career move may have been related to anti-Semitism. M. A. Salinger provided excellent statistical evidence that there was widespread anti-Semitism in the allocation of employment at that time (*Dream Catcher*, p.34). This is followed by statistics showing that Ivy League colleges were also discriminatory in their admissions policies (*Ibid.*). Although Salinger attended a series of less prestigious institutions of higher education, his dislike of Ivy League colleges and ‘types’ was engrained at an early age (*Dream Catcher*, pp.34-35). Hamilton implied that Salinger may have had a complex about his pedigree that mirrored that of F. Scott Fitzgerald (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.60). In this respect, Hamilton entirely overlooked the ‘Jewish angle’.

All three ‘biographers’ agreed that Salinger would have been aware of the presence of marauding Nazi gangs in the vicinity of the Jewish quarter where he lived that winter, especially the first two months of 1938, but that he must have left by the time Vienna fell on March 12 (*Salinger: A Biography*, pp.48-49, *Dream Catcher*, p.39, *In Search of J. D. Salinger*, pp.41-42). Salinger also told friends that he was traumatized by witnessing the slaughter of pigs at this time, and told Hemingway in a letter about a poignant memory of helping a girl his own age (eighteen) to tie the laces of her ice skates (*Salinger: A Biography*, pp.46-47). In typical fashion, Alexander related this to Salinger’s tendency, even in middle-age, to make a young girl the ‘ideal object of

his affection' (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.47). He omitted to mention that any girl with whom Salinger would have been out skating with would more than likely have been Jewish, and that she would, therefore, probably have been one of those who lost their lives at the hands of Nazis.

The extent to which this affected Salinger is impossible to grasp, because there are no written sources or accounts of oral testimony. It appears that Salinger's years between his Austrian experience and involvement in WWII were mixed in terms of success and happiness. One can only imagine how a young person in Salinger's circumstances felt on returning to America, given the prevailing attitudes towards Jews. According to Dinnerstein, a mere seventeen per cent of those polled favoured admitting a larger number of Jewish exiles, and after Kristallnacht this only increased to twenty-one per cent (*America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, p.1). On his return from Austria, Salinger enrolled at Ursinus college, where Hamilton cited fellow students calling him 'aloof', 'nasty', 'dissatisfied' and 'a loner' (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.44). Other accounts recalled that the girls were impressed by his good looks and his 'New York City background', so again there is the possibility that he passed (*Ibid.*).

Following this, Salinger managed to make his breakthrough by publishing 'The Young Folks', an event which in Hamilton's account left Salinger 'ecstatic' and 'fairly buzzing with self-admiration' (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.56). Salinger then had several other publishing successes and in late-1941 was described by Hamilton as 'restless', 'irritable' and wanting to 'be in love' (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.69). Salinger was said to be 'surprised by his own feelings of patriotic outrage' when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, and volunteered at the age of twenty-two for the draft (*Ibid.*). He was initially rejected because of a minor heart complaint, but eventually reclassified and drafted in 1942 (*Ibid.*). During the period

outlined in this paragraph, Salinger was said to have been rejected by Oona O'Neil, after he 'fell for her on the spot' (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.71). This experience left a very bitter taste for Salinger. His feelings towards being rejected in favour of another could, of course, have been connected to issues of ethnicity, as I will argue shortly.

Salinger clearly continued to be committed to his ambition of becoming a professional writer, but also decided that during WWII 'military service had to take precedence over everything' (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.79). He continued to write even during the war, being well known for taking his typewriter everywhere (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.86). Although Salinger was prickly with publishers (hardly an unusual trait in a writer), all three biographers gave numerous examples of Salinger, before and during WWII, being pleased with publications, angry over rejections and keen to court people to advance his career.

Salinger was posted to England with the 12th Infantry of the Fourth Division (having undergone training that related to interrogation), and on 6 June 1944 (or 'D-Day') landed on Utah Beach (*Dream Catcher*, p.58). During the next year, Salinger saw combat and atrocity at the Battle of Hurtgen Forest, The Battle of the Bulge and the liberation of Paris. M. A. Salinger also reported that:

As a counter-intelligence officer, my father was one of the first soldiers to walk into a certain, just liberated, concentration camp. He told me the name but I no longer remember. (*Dream Catcher*, p.55)

According to his daughter, Salinger stated that 'you never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose entirely, no matter how long you live' (*Ibid.*).

Many critics have focussed on Salinger's 'nervous breakdown' at the end of the war, which caused him to be hospitalized with what was then known as 'combat fatigue'.²⁰ This is understandable, due to the fact that many of Salinger's short stories published around the time of his service were based on a stricken war veteran protagonist who tries to fight off or recover from combat fatigue (and none of them allude specifically to Jewish or Holocaust issues). I would not wish to gloss over the effects that combat had on soldiers from various backgrounds. Salinger did, in fact, write that he would 'watch out for' a novel that was a 'trembling melody rendered without embarrassment or regret' for the 'men who have been in this war', and this indicates a stronger interest in combat than the Holocaust.²¹ His literary silence on the subject of the Holocaust, however, may be looked upon as telling in itself. Salinger may well have felt reticent about putting his head above the parapet, to speak metaphorically, for some time after his encounters with Nazism. He would have known that in Germany those in charge of census data categorized anyone with one Jewish grandparent as Jewish by descent.²²

Salinger may also have felt belated trauma (*nachträglichkeit*), as the events of WWII re-ignited his memories of Austria.²³ It would surely be more difficult to avoid 'triggering stimuli' if one happened to be a Jew returning from WWII combat to America, than if one happened to be a WASP. Dinnerstein stated that:

²⁰ Cathy Caruth explained that '*Post-traumatic stress disorder* is the name given by the American Psychiatric Association to what had previously been called *shell-shock, combat neurosis, or traumatic neurosis*' (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.130). Whatever term one uses the 'symptoms' include 'positive symptoms' (flashbacks and hallucinations) and 'negative symptoms' (numbing, amnesia and avoidance of triggering stimuli) (*Ibid.*).

²¹ J. D. Salinger, 'Backstage with *Esquire*', *Esquire*, 24 October 1945, p.34. One should also note that Caruth, enlarging on Freud's work on trauma, stated that there is often an 'incubation period' or period of 'latency' before trauma manifests itself (*Unclaimed Experience*, p.17).

²² G. Aly and K. H. Roth, *The Nazi Census: Identification and Control in the Third Reich* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p.xi.

²³ See Crosthwaite's discussion of the ways in which WWII trauma was re-ignited belatedly among Americans at other traumatic historical moments, such as Vietnam (*Trauma, Postmodernism and the Aftermath of World War II*, Chapter 2: 'Gravity's Rainbow and Traumatic Models of History', pp.45-75).

According to sociologist C.H Stember: ‘as late as 1945 and 1946, well over half the [American] population said they would not be influenced against a congressional candidate by his being anti-Semitic, and almost a quarter declared they would find him more attractive for being so - considerably more than expressed this view during the pre-war period’. (*America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, p.6)

Furthermore, it will be illustrated shortly that Salinger was not entirely silent on the subjects of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, but that the stories in which these are directly represented are rarely considered by critics.

It may be acknowledged that Salinger’s experience of confronting the Holocaust was impinged upon by the fact that anti-Semitism in the US army was rife at the time. As a result, many American soldiers did not fully believe that Hitler was pursuing the systematic destruction of European Jewry. Again, M. A. Salinger provided excellent statistical evidence relating to anti-Semitism within the U.S armed forces, and also of the profound affect that witnessing the Holocaust had on soldiers. In a survey for *Yank* magazine in August 1945, most G.I.s ‘agreed that “above anything else, the need for wiping out racial and religious discrimination” was their major hope’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.55). In Hamilton’s account, however, Salinger enjoyed the camaraderie of the army. This is reflected in a ‘new element of warmth’ that is evident in his letters and stories from the time (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.82). Perhaps Salinger was lucky in terms of those alongside whom he fought. Perhaps he passed. As Deborah Dash Moore argued at length, anti-Semitism in the United States’ armed forces was a complicated issue.²⁴ In an email Dash Moore told me that ‘most of the men I interviewed knew men who were passing but they did not blow the man’s cover and they only speculated regarding the reasons’. When I interviewed Salinger’s army comrade Werner Kleeman (at his home in Flushing on 13 July 2011), he told me that despite having been ‘close’ to Salinger throughout their service and a

²⁴ Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

proud Jew himself, he did not realize that Salinger had a Jewish identity until he read *Dream Catcher* over fifty years later. Clearly, Salinger did not advertise his Jewishness.²⁵

According to Hamilton, Salinger reenlisted as a volunteer after the war, and engaged in intelligence work that may have been connected to denazification. According to his daughter, his first marriage (generally looked upon as a reaction to his lapsed mental state at the end of the war) was not to a doctor but to a low-level Nazi official. M. A. Salinger wrote that Salinger told his second wife (Claire Douglass), that his first wife ‘hated Jews as much as he hated Nazis and she let him feel it. Their relationship, he said, was extremely intense, both physically and emotionally’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.71).

After WWII and his brief marriage, Salinger seemed to have re-settled into his life and career. According to Alexander, Salinger became interested in Zen Buddhism at this time and also enjoyed New York’s night-life. Alexander wrote that ‘instead of staying home and reading or writing as he had in the past, he started to go out, often ending up in Greenwich Village [...] Salinger also dated a succession of young women’ (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.114). *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in 1951 and enjoyed relative critical and commercial success (*Salinger: A Biography*, pp.152-55). Salinger had begun to publish stories in the *New Yorker*, something about which, according to Alexander, he had always ‘dreamed’ (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.69). Rather than mirroring an optimistic story, in which the novelist or his protagonist emerges from a

²⁵ Jewish G.I. Alan Moskin told me that during his basic training ‘there were two Jewish fellows from Brooklyn who tried to make everybody believe they were gentiles, but they did not fool anybody. Frankly, it made me angry and I told them how I felt about it. I might add that I did encounter some anti-Semitism as well as a lot of hellish anti-negro sentiment’. In *The Young Lions*, Noah Ackerman, played by Montgomery Clift, is afraid that people will reject him if he is ‘being himself’, and faces anti-Semitism in the army where he is recognized as being from New York ‘where they talk with their hands’ (Dir. Edward Dmytryk. Twentieth Century Fox. 1958).

period of exile or struggle related to trauma, Salinger's life trajectory looks to have taken, if anything, a turn for the worse at this point.

Later on I shall be discussing Paul Auster's 'morbid' fixation with worst case scenarios. Several of Auster's narratives, however, end positively with the protagonist managing to rebuild her/his life around writing, after traumatic events that include losing family or being persecuted by a perceived or real dispossessing spirit. Many readers choose to view the ending of *The Catcher in the Rye* in this way: as 'hopeful'. Hamilton wrote that after 1953 Salinger's life begins to 'read like a sequel to his novel', but his description of this 'sequel' is about as far removed from an optimistic or happy ending as one could get (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.137). Claire Douglass stated that Salinger in 1951 (when he was writing 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period') lived in a black apartment that 'seemed to match his depression' (*Dream Catcher*, p.75). Having reacted badly to fame and fortune, Salinger settled on the idea of living in a retreat, and on New Year's Day, 1953 (Salinger's thirty-fourth birthday), he moved into a secluded cottage in Cornish, New Hampshire (*Dream Catcher*, p.132).

As he faded from the public view, accounts of Salinger's life post-1953 are just as open to scrutiny and debate as those of his early years. What can be agreed upon is that Salinger decided that he no longer wished to be a part of a conventional American community, and lived as a virtual hermit until his death. What is less clear is why. According to his daughter, Salinger was a man who never recovered from his war-time experiences, who alternately overprotected and terrorized the people closest to him, and over many years switched religious affiliations (all 'alternative' or 'Eastern'), becoming enraptured and disillusioned time after time. M. A. Salinger wrote that her mother told her that Salinger often returned from writing holidays with 'some new

“ism” we had to follow’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.95). It appears that Salinger also continued to write; his daughter recorded that he worked like one gripped by a holy quest - writing as semi-divine act. M. A. Salinger wrote with some bitterness that to ‘get in the way of his work [...] is committing an act of sacrilege’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.429).

Much of what is described by Salinger’s daughter matches that described in the work of Aaron Hass. Hass’s work focusses on accounts of Holocaust survivors given by their children, and the effect that this group of parents had on their offspring. Common traits in these accounts include being work-obsessed (fathers are said to experience renewed feelings of potency from this), strange combinations of emotional unavailability and over-protectiveness, and being a ‘loner’ and ‘perfectionist’ who is more comfortable being alone than with others.²⁶ These comments relate particularly to male survivors. Obviously, I am not asking the reader to consider Salinger to be a ‘Holocaust survivor’ in a historical sense, or comparing the trauma that he would have experienced as a Jewish-American to that experienced by actual survivors. What I am suggesting is that since trauma affects people differently, and to different extents, and that survivors all had different experiences or encounters with Nazism, it is illuminating to note the similarities between Salinger’s fiction and ‘narratives of trauma’, particularly in light of Salinger’s personal experiences. In this respect, Salinger could be argued to have experienced certain aspects of trauma indirectly.

Salinger continued to publish until 1965, concentrating on his fictional Glass family before ceasing publication following a critical back-lash. There is no proof that the ‘back-lash’ and cessation of publishing are linked. We can surmise, however, that Salinger would not have enjoyed reading negative estimations of his own work. Critics called his Glass children stories

²⁶ Aaron Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p.87 and p.102.

“fake”, “narcissistic”, “spurious” (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.184). Of Salinger’s final story, ‘Hapworth 16, 1924’, Edward Kosner said that ‘the material had gotten too precious, too inward. Salinger had become so preoccupied with his own concerns that it didn’t translate into the outer world anymore’ (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.230, Alexander was citing here from an unpublished interview that he conducted with Kosner). Predictably, Alexander focussed on Salinger’s repeated interest in very young women, in his fiction and his life in reclusion. He argued that wanting to be around teenagers is ‘not something most well-adjusted grown men do’ (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.175).

Alexander also implied that Salinger’s reclusiveness was part of a well-orchestrated plot to add value to his published work (the reclusive author having always been a mythical figure in American literature, from Thoreau to Don DeLillo). At the end of this biography, Alexander almost sneered at Salinger’s rare interactions with the public:

Salinger became the Greta Garbo of literature, and then periodically, when it may have seemed he was about to be forgotten, he resurfaced briefly, just to remind the public that he wanted to be *left alone*. [italics in original] (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.302)

Elsewhere, Alexander described Salinger as churlish, even to those collecting for charity, and as having little sense of humour or community feeling (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.186 and pp.293-95). M. A. Salinger recalled Salinger being appallingly mean when it came to money: ‘Child support, pet food, clothing, tuition - all were part of the great conspiracy to “sponge” off him’ (*Dream Catcher*, p.218).

Prior to his direct experience of the Holocaust in Vienna and during his military service, Salinger has been described as a difficult or changeable person, a youth who in Hamilton’s view reflected Holden Caulfield’s mixture of sardonic detachment and being ‘anxious to please’ (One of

Salinger's Valley Forge teachers quoted in *In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.28). This, of course, may be accounted for in a number of ways. These have included the story that Salinger was spoiled by his mother but clashed with his father, that he may have had a 'natural writer's temperament', and that he may have been afflicted with class insecurities because of his father's social mobility or may actually have been 'hard hit by adolescence'.²⁷ I do not intend to suggest that Salinger's difficult experience of being half-Jewish over-rides all of the above factors as this, like any of the above, would rely heavily on conjecture.

There is plenty of conjecture, for instance, in Denis Jonnes's 'Trauma, Mourning and self-(re)fashioning in *The Catcher in the Rye*'.²⁸ Jonnes argued that Salinger 'works through' the traumatic impact that WWII had on him via Holden Caulfield's 'trauma', caused by the death of his brother Allie. In the précis to her book Graham stated that Jonnes is interacting with developments in 'trauma theory' that have been used in looking at testimonies by 'Holocaust survivors' ('Trauma, Mourning', p.98). There is no attempt in the essay, however, to relate Salinger's 'trauma' or 'mourning' to the Holocaust or Jewish experience specifically. In her introduction Graham cited M. A. Salinger as a source for Salinger's war-time experience, but excluded the information related to Vienna and the 'concentration camp', and Salinger's Jewish experience in general.²⁹ What I do wish to register, however, is that certain 'symptoms' of this difficult experience do surface throughout Salinger's fiction. It is this experience that is usually

²⁷ Much of the criticism devoted to Salinger focusses on his only novel. Critics are apparently so eager to relate the novel to its popularity among adolescent readers that many essays endeavour to analyse Holden Caulfield's angst as connected to age-related anxiety. A recent volume entitled *Depression in J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye* (ed. by Dedria Bryfonski (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2009)) contains essays that discuss Holden Caulfield's social alienation, sexual immaturity, search for a father figure and unresolved sexual conflict as reasons behind his sadness and acting out.

²⁸ Denis Jonnes, 'Trauma, Mourning and self-(re)fashioning in *The Catcher in the Rye*', in Graham, *J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye*, pp.98-108.

²⁹ Sarah Graham, 'Introduction: I: Texts and Contexts', pp.1-30 (pp.4-5).

overlooked, while many critics have conjectured that Salinger's work is best explained on grounds related to 'class', 'race' or 'psycho-sexual' motives.

As I conclude my profile of Salinger, I would like to make the point clearly that Salinger's temperament appears to have changed dramatically following his war-time experience. In the biographers' accounts he is described before this as testy, arrogant and changeable, but nonetheless one who dreamed of love, fame and success. Salinger was so 'elated' by the sale of three stories to *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1944, that he donated some 'of the proceeds as prize money for a *Story* magazine short story contest' (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.83). This is one of many examples of Salinger's outgoing or generous behaviour. What replaced this is a new persona, one that was incapable of fully enjoying anything or of expressing empathy unless it was through powerful self-projection, in short one that was incapable of love.

For the rest of this chapter, I will focus on Salinger's writing before, during and after his encounters with the Holocaust. Firstly, I will look at ways that dis/simulation may be perceived in his earlier work as a response to the cultural conditions in America, that would have made 'passing' an attractive option for a young 'half-Jewish' writer and one who had experienced the beginnings of the Holocaust in Europe. Then I will look at Salinger's post-war oeuvre, in particular *The Catcher in the Rye* and 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period', and discuss dis/simulation as a post-traumatic symptom. Finally, I will discuss the developing interest in Salinger's fiction in asceticism and literary sainthood. I will be arguing that Salinger's attitudes towards asceticism and publication can be related to post-traumatic symptoms of wishing to hide from the world consistent with the theories of 'trauma' and 'melancholia' elaborated by Caruth, Freud and Julia Kristeva.

Dis/simulation in J. D. Salinger's Early Fiction.

In Salinger's case, the two histories, the history of the man and the history of the work, are clearly intertwined. Look at the life. It is there one can find the obsessions that manifest themselves in the work. Look at the work. It is there one can find the clues to the specifics of the life. (Salinger: A Biography, p.30)

Before his rise to fame and fortune on the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger published an oeuvre of short stories for 'slick' magazines and newspapers. He was given his 'break' by Whit Burnett, editor of *Story* magazine.³⁰ These stories are often alluded to as helping to shed some light on Salinger's life before 1946 and his development as a writer. Hamilton, for example, saw Edna in 'The Young Folks' as a 'thinly pencilled prototype' of Sally Hayes in *The Catcher in the Rye* (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.57). Alexander looked upon many of Salinger's early stories as charting his developing tendencies towards young girls in his fiction and life. They are also looked upon to shed light on Salinger's war experiences and other passages of his life for which there are no other sources available. Critics have disagreed about the literary merit of these stories and some look upon them as 'juvenilia'. I do not intend to address this point directly here, but some of my comments will inevitably appear to interact with what has been written previously by critics and biographers.

The motifs and concerns of the stories can be roughly divided into three interconnected categories. The first is coming-of-age. In these stories, such as 'The Young Folks' and 'The Long Debut of Lois Taggett', shallow debutants are represented and sometimes learn exceedingly harsh lessons as part of their induction into adult life. In others such as 'Both Parties Concerned' and 'Once a Week Won't Kill You', young couples struggle to adjust to married life.

³⁰ Hamilton detailed Salinger's rise from student in Burnett's story writing class to published writer (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, pp.55-56).

In all instances, the characters are drawn with an ambivalent mixture of satire and compassion. The second category relates to war. Several stories speak of the anxiety of young men and their families at a time when America was about to enter WWII. In some of these stories, such as 'Both Parties Concerned', coming-of-age anxieties and those connected to war are inextricably linked. In others, such as 'The Hang of It' and 'Personal Notes on an Infantryman', Salinger simply appears to write in a 'vogue' style that matches the 'message' about war that the magazines wanted to disseminate. Of 'The Hang of It', Hamilton wrote that 'Salinger's feel for the market was remarkably assured for a twenty-two-year-old' (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.60). Salinger's story 'Slight Rebellion Off Madison' was accepted by the *New Yorker* in 1941, but held back until after the war. This was largely because, in light of world events, Holden Caulfield's problems were considered 'trivial' (*Salinger: A Biography*, pp.76-77). Other examples of stories that feature war include 'A Boy in France' and 'A Girl I Knew', which depict war experience, and 'The Stranger' which focusses on the experience of a soldier re-adjusting to civilian, post-war life.

The third category addresses timeless concerns of authorship, such as clashes between commercialism and integrity. In 'The Heart of a Broken Story', Salinger takes a literary swipe at *Collier's* magazine and its expectation that writers make stories fit a set format. In 'The Varioni Brothers', a novelist is killed in a case of mistaken identity. The assassin mistakes him for his controlling brother, who kept him away from his vocation by insisting that he wrote popular songs for financial gain. In 'The Inverted Forrest', we are introduced to a protagonist that would become a recurring figure in Salinger's later fiction - the literary saint. In this story, Raymond Ford is distracted from his poetry by two women, a spoiled heiress and a hustling, ambitious woman who sees writing purely as a vehicle for financial gain. Two of these early stories, 'I'm

'Crazy' and 'Slight Rebellion Off Madison', feature Holden Caulfield and constitute episodes of *The Catcher in the Rye*. These stories do reflect coming-of-age anxiety and other aspects that include their protagonist expressing a desire to escape society and live hermetically. They also carry the motif of the protagonists over-identifying with others as victims.

The categories that I have listed may not seem to be straightforwardly connected to issues of dis/simulation, but do illustrate the point that Salinger was working within bounds that most would consider 'normal' to a writer of his age at the time. Alexander discussed Salinger's interest in young women and girls as if all of these characters reflected the same drive or complex. This is clearly not the case. The debutants of 'Long Debut', 'The Young Folks' and 'Elaine' reflect a young man's disgust at the way society puts certain women on a pedestal, while they are romantically unobtainable to the vast majority of their admirers on 'class' or 'college' criteria. M. A. Salinger contended that 'Long Debut' is a 'shot aimed directly at the heart of New York WASP "Society" with its exclusive, exclusionary clubs' (*Dream Catcher*, p.40). What M. A. Salinger did not address at this point, is the extent to which Salinger was writing from a position within this 'exclusionary' society, or from the margins. It would not have been a comfortable scene for a half-Jewish youth looking to date attractive debutants. According to survey figures at the time, forty-two per cent of parents interviewed would object 'strongly or somewhat' to their child marrying a 'Jew who had a good education and came from a good family'.³¹

In 'The Heart of a Broken Story', the 'format' for which the writer was aiming is rendered false by the reality that a strange-looking man with a name such as Horgenschlag could never attract the beautiful Shirley. The young girls Phoebe and Mattie (from the Holden stories and those

³¹ Harold E. Quinley and Charles Y. Glock, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Free Press, 1979), p.14.

featuring Babe Gladwaller, 'The Last Day of the Last Furlough', 'The Stranger' and 'A Boy in France'), represent an adolescent protagonist's narcissistic attachment to a child. They project pity for those having to enter the adult world of career, relationship and war onto the child, who will in turn meet the same fate.

Salinger is, however, able to give these characters a sacred element that marks them as human whilst different from himself. In 'The Young Folks', Salinger manages to evoke sympathy for the teenage girls who are overlooked and excluded. In 'Long Debut', the reader is tempted to find Lois Taggett vacuous, but also to empathize with her because she can be kind at times and at other times is trapped and defeated by life. In short, Salinger may have created such characters as a projection of his own feelings as a young man who would have been unlikely to be admitted to an Ivy League College because of his ethnicity, but nonetheless culturally conditioned to aspire to attracting such a debutant as Lois Taggett. He was, however, also representing literary types of that period with considerable literary self-awareness and perspective. Alexander argued that Salinger was following Fitzgerald as a literary model, 'writing about the wealthy, whose lives are often empty in their moral content' (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.61). Hamilton recorded that Salinger had:

begun to have doubts, solemn doubts, about the whole business of authorship [...] is there not a kind of sadism, an ugliness, in creating characters simply in order to arrange, readably, for their suffering and destruction? (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.70)

It is in two particular stories, however, in which Salinger represents a relationship between a young man and a young woman, that issues of anti-Semitism, trauma and dis/simulation are clearly present. The first of these is 'A Young Girl in 1941 with No Waist at All'.³² In this story a male protagonist, twenty-two-year-old Ray Kinsella, is working on a ship in 1941 as an

³² J. D. Salinger, 'A Young Girl in 1941 with No Waist at All', *Mademoiselle* 25, May 1947, pp.222-23 and pp.292-302.

entertainment organizer. These details match those of Salinger's life. Hamilton asserted that the story 'was based on his youthful spell as entertainments organizer on the MS Kungsholm' during the late 1930s (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.99). Barbara looks closely at Kinsella, and makes a decision to befriend him based on the fact that he looked 'like a boy who was in a lot of West Pointy pictures with Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler' ('A Young Girl in 1941 with No Waist at All', p.222).

The story, on the surface, reflects concerns of coming-of-age and war, as Kinsella falls for a wealthy young woman, Barbara, and it is mentioned that in four months' time the ship will be occupied by soldiers. Meanwhile, a couple named Mr and Mrs Woodruff feel the anxiety of their son being drafted. Kinsella tells Barbara that he is a Yale man and that he is from Salt Lake City. The Woodruffs keep getting his name wrong, and he keeps correcting them curtly. They seem much less concerned, however, at the prospect of Kinsella being drafted. Then, when Mr Woodruff asks if he likes 'clams oysters and stuff', Kinsella 'started slightly' ('A Young Girl', p.295). M. A. Salinger recalled her father once becoming angry when some Hasidic Jews with whom he was in touch asked him what his mother's maiden name was. In a footnote she mentioned that because of matrilineal descent, this was a way of trying to find out if someone was Jewish without asking 'bluntly' (*Dream Catcher*, p.22). Another way would be to ask about diet. Under strict Judaism, non-piscine seafood is forbidden as such animals live in water but do not have both fins and scales.³³ Kinsella may 'start' because he fears that Woodruff suspects that he is Jewish, or because he does not know for sure how a Mormon would answer the question.

'Kinsella', in a location where nobody knows him, has chosen to pass as a Yale man and quite possibly as a Mormon. Given Salinger's background and the cultural conditions described in the

³³ Leviticus, 11: 10-12.

first section of this chapter, it is conceivable that he himself would have felt the temptation to pass. After all, it is possible that Barbara would be less eager to break off her prior engagement (she is travelling with her future mother-in-law) to begin a relationship with a (part) Jewish youth with no college pedigree, than she would be to do so with a Christian, Yale man. In this respect, Salinger's interest in shallow and heartless debutants generally could be re-evaluated as being connected to his Jewish experience, and in particular a wish to escape it through dis/simulation.

The other story is 'A Girl I Knew'.³⁴ Again, this story appears to be autobiographical, as it matches in many details Salinger's experience in Austria. Hamilton wrote that it interested him as a 'biographer' for this exact reason, and because it had a 'documentary, real life feel' (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.39). Having read Hamilton's account first, I was surprised by the beginning of the story, which almost purports to be introducing a love song. The narrator starts by announcing that 'for every young man there is one city that sooner or later turns into a girl' ('A Girl I Knew', p.37). He then recalls falling for a Jewish girl, who is impressed by him as an American, but who marries a young Pole who the narrator sees as not 'much competition' because he looks 'too much like a foreigner' ('A Girl I Knew', p.192). After the war he goes looking for her, and ends up seeking information from Buchenwald, the concentration camp where she would most likely have perished.

The story reads as a narrative of endless mourning without recuperation - the narrator says that if he goes to 'Hell' it will involve someone playing his conversations with the girl 'over an amplification system confiscated from the Yankee Stadium' ('A Girl I Knew', p.191). The narrator, who calls himself 'John', asks a colleague for access when he reaches the building at

³⁴ J. D. Salinger, 'A Girl I Knew', *Good Housekeeping* 126, February 1948, pp.36-37 and pp.186-96.

which he stayed in Vienna, which is now occupied by American soldiers. The man's interest 'very visibly [...] waned' when he realized that John's lover was a Jew ('A Girl I Knew', p.196). The fact that he did not expect this may indicate that 'John' was passing as non-Jewish in one way or another. He certainly was not introducing himself: 'I'm John, and I'm Jewish'. And yet if this story matches Salinger's experience of Vienna, then only a young Jewish American would have been on a family-organized work placement in the Jewish quarter at that time. At the conclusion, the other soldier, faced with a comrade whose lover has perished at a concentration camp, is preoccupied with keeping champagne cool for an impending party. The reader must confront the sadness, but also the bitterness against WASP American indifference that is projected in this short story. I will now move on to discussing similar and related traits to those that I have discussed above in *The Catcher in the Rye* and 'De Daumier Smith's Blue Period'.

Trauma and dis/simulation in *The Catcher in the Rye* and 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period'

I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It's awful. If I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera. (Holden Caulfield)³⁵

But this is a very small lie. I can be a very good liar, too. This lie I allow myself. (Claude Lanzmann)³⁶

Salinger's 1951 novel *The Catcher in the Rye* was the end product of over a decade's worth of endeavour. It is important to point this out, as it means that the character Holden Caulfield and several of the novel's episodes pre-date Salinger's experience of war. According to Alexander, Salinger had conceived of Holden Caulfield by 1941, and in Hamilton's account he had written six chapters of the novel by the time he was on active service (*Salinger: A Biography*, p.74, *In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.83). None of the novel, however, pre-dates Salinger's early

³⁵ J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (London: Penguin, 1958), p.20.

³⁶ Claude Lanzmann and others, 'Seminar with Claude Lanzmann', *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991), 82-99 (p.92).

experiences of anti-Semitism in America or his Viennese experience. The novel is looked upon as a 'teen-classic', as the voice of *Catcher*, Holden Caulfield, is said to speak 'for' adolescent readers.³⁷

The main plot involves Holden being excluded from his school, Pencey Prep, his journey home, his descent into depression and disillusionment, and finally the breakdown that leads to him writing the story from a sanatorium in Florida. Trauma is clearly a contributing factor in Holden's malaise, as he tells the reader that his brother Allie has died from Leukaemia, and that 'I slept in the garage the night he died, and I broke all of the gaddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it' (*Catcher*, p.42). Holden's depression or post-traumatic symptoms manifest themselves in traits that include lying, picking fights for no real reason, alternating suicidal urges and fear of death, an excess of hyperbole and profanity, over-identifying with victims and a strong desire to run away and hide in some kind of ascetic retreat. In addition to this, Holden himself draws attention to his fragile mental state by repeatedly using the terms 'mad', 'nervous', and 'depressed'.

Many critics persist in seeing Holden's 'symptoms' as age-related or psycho-sexual. Robert Coles quoted the distinguished child psychologist Anna Freud, for instance, diagnosing Holden with a 'narcissistic personality disorder':

He's quick to turn on others, and he gives no-one the benefit of the doubt, and he's always bringing everything back to himself ('self-referential' as we'd say in a clinical conference).³⁸

³⁷ Alfred Kazin, 'J. D. Salinger: "Everybody's Favourite"', in *J. D. Salinger*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2002), pp.67-76 (p.68).

³⁸ Robert Coles, 'Holden Caulfield is a Teenage Everyman', in *Depression in J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye*, pp.137-47 (p.146).

It may be pertinent to note here that a lack of faith in other people is also a noted post-traumatic symptom, specifically when the traumatic event that precipitates this is caused by human actions and not an accident. Take, for instance, the testimony of Irene W.:

So it's a complete lack of faith in human beings, in all areas you know, whether it's politics or whatever: you hear one thing and you believe something else. I mean you say, 'Oh, well, I know the truth'. (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.59)

Aaron Hass, interviewing the children of survivors about inter-generational trauma, found a similar problem with trust:

My relationship to others is less naive because you know what other people are capable of. We learned you have to choose friends carefully, that you can't trust people. (Unnamed Interviewee cited in *In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.40)

An early-twentieth-century Jew from a Polish family background, such as Salinger, may have developed similar traits of 'inter-generational trauma' based on the effects of anti-Semitic threat and violence experienced by parents or grandparents, either in Europe or America. In this sense, contact with the Holocaust may have 're-awakened' such trauma.

James Bryan contended that Holden's problems revolve around a complex of desire and guilt that causes him to pursue and then back away from adult sexuality.³⁹ Bryan argued that this is due to Holden's incestuous desire towards his young sister Phoebe, and that the 'catcher in the rye' motif (Holden's dream of saving children from near the edge of a cliff) is simply a displacement of this desire:

His messianic desire to guard innocence against adult corruption, for example, comes of a frantic need to save his sister from himself. ('Psychological Structure', p.1068)

Other critics have argued that the cause of Holden's depression lies in the general ills of American society at the time. Carol and Richard Ohmann, for instance, argued that Holden is

³⁹ James Bryan, 'The Psychological Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*', *Modern Language Association*, 5 (Oct, 1974), 1065-74.

disgusted by practices relating to class distinctions in post-war America.⁴⁰ Citing examples such as the speech made by a famous alumnus during which a pupil farts loudly, and Holden bemoaning that people are looked down upon at his school for having worse suitcases than others, the Ohmanns concluded that:

The Catcher in the Rye is among other things a serious critical mimesis of bourgeois life in the Eastern United States, ca.1950 - of snobbery, privilege, class injury, culture as badge of superiority, sexual exploitation, education subordinated to status, warped social feeling, competitiveness, stunted human possibility, the list could go on. ('Holden Caulfield's Problems Are Caused by Capitalism', p.159)

The Ohmanns also mentioned that Holden 'tries various disguises' but saw this as part of his quest to find himself whilst addressing the question of whether his identity can be considered 'apart from the fact' that he is the son of a corporation lawyer ('Holden Caulfield's Problems Are Caused by Capitalism', p.155 and p.156). Obviously, Holden's problems can be considered as both psycho-sexual and caused by social indignation, and I do not intend to privilege one cause over another explicitly. What I do wish to register, however, is that all of the above mentioned critics not only generally overlooked one specific example of unusual behaviour - that of assuming a false identity - they also implicitly considered Holden Caulfield to be a middle-class WASP.

Discussing *Catcher*, Hamilton said that it was not like the other teen rebel classics of its time because it was 'middle class and it gave voice to the malaise of the advantaged' (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.155). Indeed Renée R. Curry, considering the novel from a racial perspective,

⁴⁰ Carol and Richard Ohmann, 'Holden Caulfield's Problems Are Caused by Capitalism', in *Depression in J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye*, pp.148-61.

assumed that Holden is a 'part of the elite white hegemony'.⁴¹ Mary Suzanne Scribner seethed as she asked:

How have critics managed to magnify to such proportions a protagonist who is, after all, but a sixteen-year-old urban, male, WASP preppy?⁴²

Jack Salzman also contended that Holden Caulfield no more resembles 'most people of the 1950s than he does Jesus Christ'.⁴³ Based on what I have written thus far, however, it could be equally true that Holden Caulfield's 'problems' are caused in part by the fact that he is, like his creator, in some part Jewish. This means that at times he feels unable to simply be himself, and that he always addresses the WASP culture that he describes so bitterly as an outsider looking in.⁴⁴

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden tells us that his parents are 'quite touchy about' anything personal and are from 'different religions' (*Catcher*, p.5 and p.105). We also learn that he is 'sort of afraid' that people will try to find out his religion, and that his father was 'a Catholic once' but 'quit, though, when he married my mother' (*Catcher*, p.117 and p.118). Regardless of ethnicity or religion, we learn that Holden's father is a successful lawyer, and that the family lives in an affluent WASP neighbourhood (*Catcher*, p.113). Holden's vagueness about his place of residence and appearance seems evasive when compared to the amount of information that he provides on other matters. He allows us to infer that his family home is a short walk from a part of Central Park that is between the Zoo and the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (*Catcher*,

⁴¹ Renée R. Curry, 'Holden Caulfield Is Not A Person Of Colour', in *J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye*, pp.77-88 (p.87).

⁴² Mary Suzanne Scribner, 'Holden Caulfield, C'est Moi', in *Critical Essays on Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye*, ed. by Joel Salzman (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990), pp.226-38 (pp.226-27).

⁴³ Jack Salzman, 'Introduction', in *New Essays on The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.1-22 (p.13).

⁴⁴ Richard Gray described Holden as 'deeply implicated [...] in the "phoney" circumstances he describes' (*A Brief History of American Literature* (Malden, MA: Wiley - Blackwell, 2011), p.294).

p.156). When one consults a map this fits the location of Salinger's childhood home in Park Avenue. Having made this vague 'admission' and several others about his appearance, and having acknowledged his parents' 'touchiness', the only direct statement he makes about his cultural background is to say that it involves Catholicism, as I shall discuss below. At the same time, Holden tells us that his father continually loses money that he invests on Broadway flops (*Catcher*, p.113). This may in some way allude to Salinger's Jewish connections to the entertainment industry.

Discussing the disparity between Salinger's own background and that of his protagonist, M. A. Salinger speculated on why 'the subject of anxiety changes' in an 'autobiographical novel' from questions of 'vetting one's Jewishness to whether one is a Catholic or not' (*Dream Catcher*, p.24). M. A. Salinger juxtaposed this speculation with an anecdote about her aunt telling her how open people were about their anti-Semitism in early-twentieth-century America. She recalled that when her mother applied to a finishing school for her, she was told: 'Oh, Mrs Salinger, it's too bad you married a Jew' (*Dream Catcher*, p.24). M. A. Salinger goes on to imply that because of Salinger's 'touchiness' on any subject connected to a Jewish background, he simply 'disguised' this aspect of his own life in the character of Holden (*Ibid.*).

Catholics did face some discrimination in New York, and in this respect Holden feeling the compulsion to hide a Catholic identity may sublimate any feelings that Salinger would have had concerning the need to either pass as non-Jewish or face prejudice. Indeed, someone with the name Caulfield would be as likely to be discriminated against for being ethnically Irish as for being a Catholic. This area of discrimination was not as virulent as anti-Semitism in early-twentieth-century America:

In the first half of the twentieth century the American Irish left behind them much of the discrimination and impoverishment that has characterized the nineteenth century [...] in racial terms the Irish were soon begrudgingly included in the superior 'Nordic' or 'Teutonic' category, while Southern and Eastern Europeans were classified as inferior.⁴⁵

It has never been argued, however, that discrimination against Catholics in schools, universities and employment, has been as virulent as anti-Semitism was in these areas, or as likely to have been based on appearances. I would argue, however, that in *Catcher*, problems concerning Salinger's part-Jewish identity are present and that Holden Caulfield is in some part Jewish. This is evident in Holden's tendency to switch identity depending on with whom he is communicating. For instance, on his train journey home, Holden falls into a conversation with the mother of one of his fellow pupils at Pencey, Mrs Morrow.⁴⁶ Holden describes her as 'lousy with rocks' and at the end of their meeting says that she 'got off at Newark' (*Catcher*, p.59 and p.62). Many American readers at the time would have associated these factors (the vulgar excess of jewellery and the place of residence) with a stereotypically Jewish character.⁴⁷ For no reason that Holden explains other than through his general tendency to lie, Holden introduces himself as 'Rudolf Schmidt' (*Catcher*, p.58). As subtle as this is, it appears that at this point of his journey Holden feels comfortable identifying with this woman as a person with a distinct European

⁴⁵ Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2000), p.181. There have been many theories about the genesis of the name Holden Caulfield. Hamilton suggested that Salinger came up with it as a combination of the names of a friend called Holden and the actress Joan Caulfield (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, p.39). Of course, Caulfield could be an Anglicized version of 'Kornfeld', which means a 'field of grain' (or rye) (Benzion C. Kaganoff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Names and Their History* (London: Routledge, 1978), pp.142-43). JewishGen.org offers links to sources such as the 1890/91 Index of New York Immigrants from Austria, Poland and Galicia, which show that there were immigrants from these areas called 'Kornfeld' in and around New York at the time (<<http://www.jewishgen.org>>, there is little point in providing a full URL as this database is updated continually).

⁴⁶ Names that end 'ow' are often shortened from endings such as 'owsky', 'ovcsak', 'awsky' and 'awisky'. See JewishGen.org for Jewish names that are longer versions of Morrow: 'Morowsky', 'Morawsky', etc.,

⁴⁷ For more detail see Jenna Weissman Joselit's discussion of the stereotype of Jewish women being believed to have 'an "innate" affinity for "conspicuous and flashing jewelry"' ('Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Clothing, Identity and the Modern Jewish Experience', in *Divergent Jewish Cultures: Israel and America*, ed. by Deborah Dash Moore and S. Ilan Troen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.107-22 (p.108)). Most Northern Americans would think of the Upper-West Side and Newark as areas with significant Jewish populations. Jewish life in Newark was immortalized by Philip Roth's *Goodbye Columbus* (1959) and *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969).

identity, and is thus able to enter easily into a conversation with her. There is little description of Holden's physical appearance, but clearly he can 'pull this off'.

M. A. Salinger recalled a family anecdote about Salinger's grandfather visiting from Chicago, and calling out the names of the streets during a bus ride in a heavy Yiddish accent (*Dream Catcher*, p.22). Holden recalls his grandfather from Detroit, 'that keeps calling out the numbers of the streets when you ride on a goddam bus with him' (*Catcher*, p.161). Again, any Jewishness is unmentioned, but the impression remains that Holden has similar insecurities regarding his family to those of the author. In Isaac Rosenfeld's novel *Passage from Home*, the young protagonist recalls feeling 'no real shame' in the presence of his grandfather in the heart of a Jewish neighbourhood, but after his family moved to an area more populated by gentiles 'I had been ashamed to meet him at the elevated station and walk down the street with him'.⁴⁸

In a later episode, when Holden entertains a prostitute with dyed blonde hair (supplied by a 'Cuban looking' pimp), he introduces himself as 'Jim Steele' (*Catcher*, p.99). It may be acknowledged here that when he had tried to contact a prostitute by phone earlier, he kicked himself for not using a false name. This perhaps would be a routine caution to take, but this may also be due to Holden fearing discrimination and/or rejection even in this sphere (*Catcher*, p.69).⁴⁹ Towards the end of the novel, when Holden returns to his family's building to visit Phoebe, he tells the new elevator boy that he is going to 'the Dicksteins' apartment, so that his parents will not know he has been back (*Catcher*, p.164). Whilst Holden's reasons for identifying with this Jewish sounding family are explained by his avoidance of his parents,

⁴⁸ Isaac Rosenfeld, *Passage from Home* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1947), p.77.

⁴⁹ The reader may recall Philip Roth's Alexander Portnoy concocting the WASP alter-persona 'Alton Peterson' whilst chasing 'shiksas' at an ice rink, and a few pages later being called a 'son of a bitch kike' by a prostitute (*Portnoy's Complaint*, in *Novels 1967-1972*, pp.227-468 (p.391 and p.402)).

Holden does comment with some bitter irony on the fact that the elevator boy accepts his connection to them so readily: ‘He probably *still* thinks I’m up at the Dicksteins’ [italics in original] (*Catcher*, p.187).

It is possible that in mentioning Catholicism, Holden, the ‘compulsive liar’ is passing, but as in the two short stories discussed above, the reader is given some broad hints that a Jewish identity is present. If one were to make the assumption that the above factors indicate that Holden Caulfield is at least in part ethnically Jewish, this casts an entirely different light on other parts of the narrative in which Holden rails against insidious prejudice. As I noted above, most accounts of the novel that relate Holden’s ‘problems’ to social factors make a number of assumptions, the most telling of which is that Holden is a WASP. It would be no more of an assumption, based on what we know of Salinger’s background and what we have uncovered in his work thus far, to conclude that he is not.⁵⁰ It may be because he is partly Jewish that Holden rails so bitterly against ‘phoney bastards’ like his former headmaster:

I mean if a boy’s mother was fat or corny-looking or something, and if somebody’s father was one of those guys that wear those suits with very big shoulders and corny black-and-white shoes, then old Haas would just shake hands with them and give them a phoney smile and then he’d go talk, for maybe a half an *hour*, with somebody else’s parents.
(*Catcher*, p.18)

Even though there is no reason to suspect that Holden is speaking of anti-Semitism, the experience of being marginalized is one that clearly affects Holden on a personal level. This can be felt acutely when Holden responds to one of his teachers asserting that life is ‘a game’:

⁵⁰ Helen Weinberg broke away from a tradition of linking Holden Caulfield’s narrative to classic American quests like that of Huck Finn, by arguing that his world is ‘Kafkaesque’. There is no mention of an explanation that relates this to Jewish factors (*The New Novel in America: The Kafka Mode in Contemporary Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970). This typifies a monograph which focusses on ‘contemporary American authors’ including Bellow, Malamud, Mailer and Roth in terms of the figure of the ‘spiritual activist’ and ‘absurdist hero’ in Kafka’s fiction, with almost no mention of Jewish or post-Holocaust factors.

Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right - I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game. (*Catcher*, p.13)

A similar identification with those that are not in with the 'hot-shots' is seen when he describes a friend:

His name was Bob Robinson and *he really* had an inferiority complex. You could tell he was very ashamed of his parents and all because they said 'he don't' and 'she don't' and stuff like that, and they weren't very wealthy. But he wasn't a bastard or anything. He was a very nice guy. (*Catcher*, pp.141-42)

Whilst it is often acknowledged that Holden over-identifies with those less fortunate, none of the critics mentioned thus far have really probed the possible reasons behind a supposedly affluent, intelligent and attractive WASP boy (who is quite self-involved, it must be said) feeling thus marginalized and hence empathic. At various points Holden expresses guilt about having more than others: 'I hate it if I'm eating bacon and eggs and somebody else is only eating toast and coffee' (*Catcher*, p.115). He also recalls a boy called Dick Slagle (a common Jewish name, Anglicised from Schlegel (see jewishgen.org)) swapping his suitcases in their room so that other pupils would think that he, not Holden, owned the more expensive set (*Catcher*, pp.114-15). All of the above, alongside Holden's skittish behaviour in the presence of his WASP room-mates (and what we know of Salinger's experience at a military academy), indicates a structured identity that revolves around disguise of one's background coupled with concomitant anxiety and guilt.

The novel bears some resemblance to Philip Roth's *Indignation* in the obstacles faced by the protagonist and the 'acting out' that follows.⁵¹ In this novel, Marcus Messner 'acts out' against his over-protective father and all forms of piety at 'Winesberg College' in 1951. In many ways, Messner's trajectory mirrors Holden's. He is sexually immature, is punched when he stands up to

⁵¹ Philip Roth, *Indignation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).

one of his room-mates, subverts authority and is expelled before spiralling into a Kafkaesque scenario that leads to his death. Besides the oppressive futility of Messner's story, another compelling difference is that in this novel it is made clear that the protagonist suffers on grounds of cultural inferiority. These are connected to his Jewish background, which he is either unwilling or unable to disguise. At one point, he declines the opportunity to be ghettoized in a Jewish fraternity. A senior named Sonny Cottler advises him thus: 'If you don't get into our fraternity, the only other house that'll have a Jew is the nonsectarian house, and they don't have much going for them' (*Indignation*, p.39). For Messner, the matter of identity is clearly connected to appearances. He wonders, sarcastically one suspects, how one such as Cottler, with 'those flashing black eyes and that deeply cleft chin and that helmet of wavy dark hair' could have a 'mere mortal's name' (*Ibid.*).

If Holden Caulfield disguises his identity in *The Catcher in the Rye*, it is quite possible that this is in response to anti-Semitism in America at the time, and this sensitivity will have been heightened by events affecting Jews in Europe. Holden rants that Allie told him that 'the Army was practically as full of bastards as the Nazis were' (*Catcher*, p.146). One could relate this statement to Salinger's personal experience of war. Clearly, the protagonist has suffered a traumatic loss in the death of his brother Allie, who represents a literary saint in Salinger's oeuvre, as opposed to Holden's older brother D.B., who 'sold out' to Hollywood. It would be impossible to argue conclusively to what extent any of Holden's post-traumatic behaviour is a sublimation of Salinger's own experience, of a traumatic passage into adulthood, or merely an oblique representation of being Jewish in America at that time. One should certainly acknowledge these possibilities, given the sheer volume of compelling evidence that I have presented in the course of exposing the collective critical blind-spot that exists towards the

relevance of Salinger's Jewish experience. In 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period', however, there is evidence of a character disguising his identity that is more distinctly post-traumatic and, quite possibly, Holocaust related.⁵²

On the surface, 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period' resembles *The Catcher in the Rye*, as a young male protagonist recalls a period of his life that includes the traumatic loss of his mother and his attempts to enter adult spheres of work and independence.⁵³ When the unnamed protagonist is insulted by a bus driver in New York, he immediately reacts by assuming a false identity and responding in French ('DDSBP', p.144). This may sound like the type of seemingly pointless and compulsive lying that Holden commits. The character's distaste for popular art and mainstream culture does little to contradict the impression of him being a similar character. Yet when the protagonist finds employment at a Canadian painting school, under the false claim of being a relative of a famous painter, his fear of being caught is incongruous, given that the only penalty that could possibly be incurred is dismissal. On meeting his new employer, M. Yoshoto, he is immediately uncomfortable, breaks into a sweat and talks 'incessantly' ('DDSBP', p.152). He bends over backwards to please his new employers, flashing 'an excessively winning smile' ('DDSBP', p.156).

Later, he takes a walk and is brooding over whether or not M. Yoshoto is on to him, when he begins to walk faster, 'as if any minute I half-expected to be stoned from all directions' ('DDSBP', p.158). On returning to the school, the protagonist is so alarmed by M. Yoshoto giving instructions that 'it took me several minutes to pull myself together' ('DDSBP', p.159).

⁵² Alexander wrote that Salinger was particularly annoyed when this story was rejected by the *New Yorker*, who thought that the piece was 'almost wilfully strange', but stated that this was because at this point of his career Salinger was used to having his own way with publishers (*Salinger: A Biography*, pp.158-59). In light of my own argument, it could be countered that Salinger's irritation was triggered by the personal nature of the story.

⁵³ J. D. Salinger, 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period', in *For Esmé with Love and Squalor and Other Stories*, pp.143-80.

He is later, for no reason that is given, further alarmed by the window display of an orthopaedic appliances shop ('DDSBP', p.171). In summary, following a traumatic period of loss and upheaval, the protagonist adopts a false identity and acts as if, to all intents and purposes, he is a Jew facing a pogrom or Holocaust, seeking to save himself through disguise. In reality, all that he needs to hide are his true convictions as an artist and his minimal qualifications. In this respect, Salinger's protagonist appears to re-enact a previous traumatic encounter that puts one in mind of Holocaust flight and escape narratives (see next chapter).⁵⁴

If this short story indicates a will towards disguising that could be related to anti-Semitism or personal trauma, it also provides a convenient departure point at which to move on to the final part of this chapter. This relates to 'De Daumier-Smith's' enchantment and later obsession with a nun, who represents an artistic saint of sorts. In this story, it is the protagonist's enchantment that provides him with an alternative mental state to anxiety and paranoia. He writes a rapturous letter to Sister Irma at her convent and tries to either meet her or engage her in a dialogue about various religions and saints. At this point, as he is teetering on the brink of a paranoid breakdown, feeling that 'every passer-by was giving me a second, basically censorious look', he has 'a case of genuine borderline mysticism', an epiphany whilst looking in the orthopaedic shop window ('DDSBP', p.176 and p.177). Following her withdrawal from the school and the school's closure, the protagonist is able to look back in a wry way at the events that he is recalling, and laugh about still being in contact with a former pupil whose lack of talent and

⁵⁴ Also see Cathy Caruth's discussion of Freud's theory of unwitting re-enactment of catastrophic events in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In particular consider Caruth's argument that literature is often used by Freud to illuminate psychoanalysis because both disciplines are 'interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing' (*Unclaimed Experience*, p.3). One may also wish to consider Hass's discussion of a child of Holocaust survivors who had extreme nightmares but only after watching the film *Shoah* (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.136). This indicates that one can be associatively traumatized (I'm a Jew, it could have been me), and experience the traumatic repetition of nightmares having never endured the traumatic situation oneself.

integrity used to irritate him terribly. In this instance, for the final time in Salinger's fiction, the example of an ascetic teaches the protagonist valuable literary lessons that allow him to reach out to others and find comfort in humanity. Introspection is merely one stage of recovery.

Personal and Artistic Regression - Salinger's Later Fiction.

Many models have been suggested in order to think out the process underlying the depressive retardation state. One of them 'learned helplessness', is based on the following observation: when all escape routes are blocked, animals as well as men learn to withdraw rather than flee or fight. The retardation or inactivity, which one might call depressive, would thus constitute a learned defense reaction to a dead end situation and unavoidable shocks. (Julia Kristeva)⁵⁵

To silence and expel self, to contemplate and delineate nature with a clear eye, is not easy and demands a moral discipline. A great artist is, in respect of his work, a good man, and in a true sense, a free man. (Iris Murdoch)⁵⁶

After publishing 'De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period' and moving into reclusiveness, Salinger published five more short stories or novellas in which his focus and style changed significantly. Each story focusses on the Glass siblings, all of whom are subject to some form of mental instability. Furthermore, the regular narrator of these stories, Buddy Glass, has himself become a kind of ascetic. In 'Zooney', Buddy is criticized by his mother for living as a hermit, without a telephone, 'way off in the woods'.⁵⁷ While this happens, Zooney, a loner in his own right, feels that his privacy is invaded by his mother in the bathroom (the most private of places) and imagines The Queen Mary sailing into Walden Pond ('Zooney', p.75).

There are tendencies in this later fiction that match Salinger's earlier oeuvre. These include, for instance, semi-autobiographical material and oblique references to a Jewish-American

⁵⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p.34.

⁵⁶ Iris Murdoch, 'On "God" and "Good"', in *Existentialists and Mystics*, ed. by Peter Conradi (London: Penguin, 1998), pp.337-62.

⁵⁷ J. D. Salinger, 'Zooney', in *Franny and Zooney* (London: Penguin, 1964), pp.41-156 (p.65).

background and anti-Semitism in America. The frequency of subtle and direct references to Jewish identity and discrimination based on appearances actually increases in Salinger's later fiction (when the author himself is 'hidden'). For instance, in 'Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters', a young Buddy Glass finds himself in a car with the family and friends of his brother Seymour's wife-to-be.⁵⁸ Buddy chooses not to announce who he is, and remains in disguise, as it were, until someone states that they know his identity. This is said to be because Seymour is not popular with the other guests, and therefore Buddy does not wish to be associated with him, but when he is offered a cigarette he calls it a 'small victory of common courtesy over caste' ('Roof Beam', p.38). In this respect, the wishes of several of the Glass children to hide or escape may be related to a wish to disguise their identity. In view of what has been discussed thus far, the reader may feel encouraged to relate these tendencies to the characters' ethnicity.

The Glass siblings are the progeny of Les Glass (Jewish) and Bessie Glass (Irish-Catholic), both of whom have been vaudeville performers. Seymour is connected to world events of his time, in as much as he is reliant on 'the U.S. Army to protect his parents and sisters from Hitler's Germany' ('Zooey', p.145). In 'Zooey', the narrator Buddy notes that many of the general American public would have liked to have seen himself and his radio star siblings 'drowned or gassed at birth' ('Zooey', p.48). Whilst this comment and the antagonism implied may be related to jealousy of precocious and talented children, it also brings to mind a comment from one of Aaron Hass's interviewees, whose mother told her always to be careful as 'there are a lot of

⁵⁸ J. D. Salinger, 'Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters', in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction*, pp.1-108.

Hitlers out there' (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.38). Leon H.'s comments, 'Don't think you're safe - it could happen even in this beautiful country', echo the sentiment expressed here.⁵⁹

It is also noted that Buddy and Seymour share the 'great, fleshy, drooping, *trompe*-like' nose of their 'Great Grandfather Zozo' ('Seymour: An Introduction', p.206). This description is one of several in the series that corresponds to examples of anti-Semitic stereotyping of appearances. In the final Glass story, 'Hapworth 16, 1924', there may be another hint of passing as a family trait related to anti-Semitism in America.⁶⁰ Seven-year-old Seymour Glass, writing home to his parents from a summer camp, believes at this point of his life that his father's accent is 'Australian', and must therefore believe that he is himself in no part Jewish ('Hapworth', p.80).

There is, however, an undercurrent to this story that mirrors almost perfectly the apparent climate of discrimination that Holden Caulfield has been argued to have faced in schools. Before describing his own features as 'ludicrous' and 'prominent', Seymour notices that another child's mother is disappointed that her son is friends with himself and Buddy ('Hapworth', p.68 and p.34). The reader may conclude that Seymour has been sheltered by his parents from the truth about his ethnicity, and hence his situation in WASP society. Another link between Salinger's late and early fiction is the continued distaste expressed towards Ivy League 'types'. This is nowhere better exemplified than in 'Franny', in which Hamilton argued that Zooey's success in steering his sister away from Ivy League student Lane Coutell is a reworking of Salinger's own

⁵⁹ Leon H. Holocaust Testimony (T-628), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

⁶⁰ J. D. Salinger, 'Hapworth 16, 1924', *New Yorker*, 19 June 1965, pp.32-34, p.42, p.44, pp.49-50, p.52, pp.55-56, p.58, pp.60-62, pp.67-68, p.70, pp.72-74, pp.77-78, p.80, pp.85-86, p.88, p.90, pp.92-96, p.98, p.100, pp.102-08, pp.111-13.

success in taking his first wife, Claire Douglass, from her first husband, a Harvard man (*In Search of J. D. Salinger*, pp.140-45).⁶¹

Having outlined briefly what is continuous in Salinger's later fiction, I would now like to note what most critics consider to be the major changes. Alfred Kazin spoke for himself and several other critics, when he made his judgement that Salinger had, in effect, lost sight of one of the key indicators of literary art as connected to human love. This he calls the 'sympathetic bond', a term borrowed from D.H. Lawrence ('Everybody's Favourite', pp.74-75). This is evident, Kazin argued, in Salinger's 'extra-ordinary cherishing of his favourite Glass characters', and the way that he represents them as 'right and everybody else [...] wrong' ('Everybody's Favourite', p.72 and p.75). Gone, then, is the tendency to relate to others, even those on opposed sides of cultural boundaries that one finds in Salinger's early fiction and in *Catcher*.⁶² For this reason, it is worth noting that the tendency towards reclusiveness and asceticism that Salinger develops in his later protagonists is a symbol of his failure in, or refusal to attempt, a continued interaction with his readership. This can be related to the condition of wishing to hide or remain anonymous, that may be considered symptomatic of the learned behaviour or post-traumatic reaction discussed throughout Salinger's oeuvre thus far.

In his chapter on Jews and non-urban spaces in *Post-War Jewish Fiction* (Chapter 3: 'Nature Anxiety, Homosocial Desire and Suburban Paranoia: the Jewish Anti-Pastoral', pp.74-112), David Brauner discussed a pervasive hatred and fear of the countryside in Anglo-American

⁶¹ J. D. Salinger, 'Franny', in *Franny and Zooey*, pp.7-39.

⁶² Some critics had noticed such traits in Salinger's first collection *Nine Stories* (the alternative title of *For Esmé with Love and Squalor*), in particular those which featured the Glass siblings or other 'wise' children. Dominic Smith, for instance, argued that this element of these stories was redeemed by the fact that they never 'sacrifice the mystery of human experience' ('*Nine Stories: Fifty Years Later*', *The Antioch Review*, 61.4 (Autumn 2003), 639-49 (p.641)). In fairness, Smith acknowledged that the critical response to these stories is conditioned by the critics' 'ability to accept the stories as paradoxes rather than narrative statements' ('*Nine Stories: Fifty Years Later*', p.643).

Jewish fiction. Brauner linked this to a Jewish history of living in deprived and over-populated areas of urban space that alienates Jewish people from a worldview that involves harmony between man, fellow man and environment. Brauner's argument, linking a fear of the wild to a fear of homo-social bonding in the texts he addresses, is convincing and well-illustrated. The reasons behind the continued attraction in Jewish-American literature toward ascetic countryside retreats, in particular ones linked with Henry David Thoreau and *Walden* are, however, often overlooked.

Paul Auster's protagonists often evoke Thoreau when they retreat to cell-like spaces, including small rooms, cellars, taxis, trashcans and cabins in the woods (see Chapter Four). Philip Roth evokes the fantasy of a Thoreauvian retreat in *I Married a Communist* (1998), as the protagonist, Iron Rinn, is renounced by society for his idealistic communism and finds a secluded countryside dwelling/hiding place. Arthur Miller lived in an isolated area of Connecticut, and the character Biff, in *Death of a Salesman*, fantasizes about living on a ranch and working outdoors 'with your shirt off'.⁶³ The protagonist of Bernard Malamud's *A New Life*, Sy Levin, sees a Walden Pond style retreat as a possible solution to his personal problems, which partly involve a Jewish identity issue. He is only put off by his own inexperience and ineptness: 'he had come too late to nature'.⁶⁴ I could continue with this list, but I think it sufficient to point out that the idea of such a retreat inspires fascination in at least equal measure to revulsion in the work of these writers. It may also be added that in several instances it is solitude, being hidden away from other people that is the source of attraction, as opposed to interaction with nature.

⁶³ Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (London: Penguin, 1961), Act 1, p.16.

⁶⁴ Bernard Malamud, *A New Life* (London: Penguin, 1968), p.53.

In several examples of modern fiction, protagonists with some form of artistic and/or political commitment retreat to a small room or cell-like space. This is because of their despair or nausea at the cultural or social conditions in which they exist. Many then re-emerge to connect with their audience in a constructive or radical way. I have already mentioned this trait in Paul Auster's work. An example par excellence would be Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), in which the narrator lives in a small underground room as he negotiates his passage from political activist to literary artist - he reconnects to his audience by telling his story from society's margins. A more contemporary example would be the fiction of Don DeLillo, which is clearly influenced by both *Invisible Man* and the media hype that surrounded Salinger's reclusiveness. DeLillo told Vince Passaro that his novel *Mao II* (1991) was, in part, inspired by a picture of Salinger being harassed by photographers.⁶⁵ In the course of the novel Bill Gray (another novelist who possibly disguises a Jewish identity) negotiates his artistic position, which fluctuates between retreat and non-production, and envy of terrorists who incorporate mass media technologies to assume 'total authority' over an 'audience'. The result is DeLillo's novel that, in addressing the society of the spectacle, in Linda Hutcheon's terms 'works within the very systems it attempts to subvert'.⁶⁶ The end product is a positive narrative that discourages artistic defeatism. In *Cosmopolis* (2003), a character using the name Benno Levin negotiates a similar clash between ascetic, artistic and violent impulses, from an underground room with stolen electricity much like the room of the narrator of *Invisible Man*. He then emerges to carry out an assassination. Such seemingly polarized responses as 'art' and 'terror' are frequently represented in DeLillo's fiction, and always follow a period of 'Salingeresque' withdrawal.

⁶⁵ Vince Passaro, 'Dangerous Don DeLillo', *New York Times Magazine*, 19 May 1991, pp.34-38 and pp.76-77 (p.76).

⁶⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.4.

In the case of Salinger's Glass siblings, there are in evidence similar contradictory compulsions. As has been well documented, each sibling in turn retreats into a life of quasi-religious devotion, a search for solitude, from which they only 'emerge' in order to occasionally inflict their view of the world on a younger sibling. For instance, in 'Zooey', the protagonist recalls that Seymour and Buddy 'drilled' himself and Franny with the 'The Four Great Vows' ('Zooey', p.85). Zooey himself has followed in this tradition by forcing his sister Franny to accept his religious views ('Zooey', pp.138-40). He even adopts a 'disguise' to do this, assuming the identity of Buddy over the telephone to trick his sister into speaking freely to him. Any attitudes expressed towards the production of literary narratives that can achieve popular success, whilst at the same time retaining their artistic integrity, are negative.

Much of this could be used to illustrate opposing sides of a debate on the value and veracity of literary 'saints'. The 'quests' of Buddy, Seymour and Zooey interact with ideas on what it is to be 'good' or 'saintly', such as those found in Iris Murdoch's discussion. Murdoch wrote that to be 'good' 'we cease to be in order to attend to the existence of something else, a natural object, a person in need' ('On "God" and "Good"', p.348). In art, however, one often witnesses the talent of the artist 'employed to produce a picture whose purpose is the consolation and aggrandizement of its author and the projection of his personal obsessions and wishes' ('On "God" and "Good"', p.352). Murdoch acknowledged that any such discourse may seem at odds with Freudian thinking, in which the existence of unconscious motivation means that agency to do good may be a false premise. She stated that Freud took 'a thoroughly pessimistic view of human nature' ('On "God" and "Good"', p.341). Murdoch's argument does at times seem to follow Freudian thinking, however, particularly in regard to ascetic suffering, as she suggested that 'the idea of suffering confuses the mind and in certain contexts (the context of 'sincere self-

examination' for instance) can masquerade as a purification' ('On "God" and "Good"', p.355). Murdoch at least professed to be arguing that to be 'good' one must practice self-abasement to the point of disappearance.

It should be noted here that much of Buddy's writing is an endeavour to immortalize or sanctify his brother Seymour, who committed suicide at the age of 31.⁶⁷ Another of Salinger's 'saints', Teddy McArdle, dies at the age of ten, and the story is told in such a way that the reader may assume that Teddy has reached a level of spiritual and intuitive knowledge which, if shared by the reader, would render the accident banal rather than a tragedy.⁶⁸ Salinger's Glass siblings are restless in their quest for some type of spiritual meaning to their existence and value asceticism as a human quality. They do, however, manifest some distinctly 'un-saintly' qualities in their behaviour toward others. This is a general complaint about artists that set high standards in principle but fail to live up to them in practice. I would not wish to make such a sweeping generalization as to discuss the pursuit of spiritual knowledge via the study of Eastern religions as a symptom of trauma or depression. I would like, however, to ask the reader to consider the possibility of a link between the two in Salinger's case.

In *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, Kristeva took the line concerning depression (outlined in her introduction) that the condition stems from an original or pre-object trauma. This is caused by a narcissistic attachment, from which the sufferer finds it impossible to recover. Psycho-motor retardation (silence, losing the will or ability to communicate) is a common symptom. Kristeva discussed depressed persons, artists in particular, seeming almost to take pleasure in cutting themselves adrift from others and revelling in a lonely and mournful

⁶⁷ See J. D. Salinger, 'A Perfect Day For Bananafish', in *For Esmé With Love and Squalor*, pp.97-126.

⁶⁸ 'Teddy', in *For Esme With Love and Squalor*, pp.181-215.

existence, as demonstrating a form of inhibited ‘thanatos’ (death drive) (*Black Sun*, p.179).

Salinger (in his later career) and his ‘saints’ work slowly and deliberately from lonely personal situations, attempting to express themselves as accurately and concisely as possible, thus fighting off ‘symbolic abdication’. None of his ‘saints’ express an interest in sexual matters, however, in line with Kristeva and Freud’s assertions that ‘depressive persons cannot endure “eros”’ (*Black Sun*, p.20).⁶⁹

On the other hand, Kristeva argued that the artist consumed with melancholia often labours to fight off symbolic abdication. Taking a view similar to the later Freud, Kristeva described intolerable object loss as causing:

the signifier’s failure to ensure a compensating way out of states of withdrawal in which the subject takes refuge to the point of inaction (pretending to be dead) or even suicide. (*Black Sun*, p.10)

In this respect, Salinger’s literary saints (and to at least some extent their creator), correspond to Kristeva’s model for depressive artists, who ‘with their despondent, secret insides, are potential exiles but also intellectuals capable of dazzling, albeit abstract, constructions’ (*Black Sun*, p.64). Such dazzling constructions, made by the revolutionary who believes that he is God or the patient enraptured in religious mania, are still argued to be symptomatic of depressive illness and are merely its other side: ‘a dam against suicide’, religion and mania are ‘counterbalances to despair’ (*Black Sun*, p.186 and p.187). Freud made a similar point concerning mania, arguing that:

⁶⁹ Those who have read *Dream Catcher* or Joyce Maynard’s recollections of living with Salinger will have noted a similar deferment of this type of desire in the author’s life (Joyce Maynard, *At Home in the World* (London: Picador, 1999)).

The manic person also unmistakably demonstrates his liberation from the object from which he had been suffering by pouncing on his new object-investments like a ravenous man.⁷⁰

In the light of this, the reader may be prompted to reconsider Salinger's transitory religious conversions, and his Glass characters' manic insistence on the righteousness of their own spiritual quests.

If one looks at Salinger's reclusiveness and his inability to empathize with others (in his life and in his later fiction), one might come to the conclusion that this can be linked to 'losses' suffered by Salinger in his lifetime. These may have re-awakened, in Freudian terms, pre-object or primal trauma:

The disenchantment that I experience here and now, cruel as it may be, appears, under scrutiny, to awaken echoes of old traumas, to which I realize I have never been able to resign myself. (*Black Sun*, pp.4-5)

It would not be difficult at this point, to produce a list of ways in which the behaviour of Salinger and his characters converge with symptoms and explanations of depression in Kristeva's view. The reader should, however, at least be prepared to acknowledge the possibility that this type of depression, triggered by trauma, could be an influencing factor in the 'saintliness' and withdrawal of Salinger's later protagonists.

One should consider that as Salinger's life progressed he would have been aware of anti-Semitic ideologies that resembled those used to legitimate the Holocaust. M. A. Salinger recalled that at school other children thought that her father was a 'Communist'. At that time (the McCarthy era) 'Communist meant anyone who looked different, spoke different, and boy, did it mean anyone who was a Jew or had even visited New York City' (*Dream Catcher*, pp.143-44). M. A. Salinger

⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, trans. by Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin, 2005), pp.201-18 (p.214).

also noted that for someone of her father's generation and personal experience 'seeing your daughter wearing a peace symbol could feel like seeing a swastika' (*Dream Catcher*, p.236).

This was seen by M. A. Salinger as related to her father's experience as an American veteran, because it is to this that his reaction alluded. An interviewee called 'Marty' gave the following statement to Hass:

My father does not believe we should advertise ourselves. This means he believes we should not make waves in society. For example, he gets very upset when I take part in a public demonstration. (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.57)

In reclusion and maintaining a low profile, Salinger could, up to a point, avoid both persecution and triggering stimuli.

I will now conclude by looking at ways in which the 'neurotic' tendencies of Salinger's later protagonists coincide with documented case-studies of Holocaust-related trauma. As I have noted above, Salinger is said to 'cherish' his Glass siblings, although at times they are insensitive and coercive towards each other. As Hass outlined, it is noted that those who survived the Holocaust have been both over-protective towards their children, and at the other extreme have been 'too preoccupied with their own mourning to attend adequately to their child's needs' (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.27). Indeed, in many cases survivors see their own children as resurrected siblings or other children who suffered. It would not be much of a leap of logic to extend this to a writer who obsesses over a group of fictional siblings. There are several instances in Salinger's later fiction, in which his protagonists panic or over-react when one of their siblings shows an inability to cope with their circumstances.

Zooey's behaviour towards his sister is one example. When Franny appears to have a nervous breakdown (the reader may feel encouraged to link this to coming-of-age related anxieties,

dating, etc), Zooey terrorizes her for a full ten pages, berating her with his ascetic religious views and condemning her inability to comprehend them. He relates this to an incident that occurred when she was ten years old, and refuses to accept her age as an excuse. This happens several times in Salinger's later fiction. Seymour lambasts his younger siblings in 'Hapworth 16, 1924': 'we are all too damnably prone to take refuge in our tender ages' ('Hapworth', p.80). M. A. Salinger recalled that Salinger himself seemed to re-enact this during several frantic lectures that he gave her. Her father often threatened her by informing her that 'when I lose respect for a person, I'm done with them, I'm through' (*Dream Catcher*, p.229). As M. A. Salinger recalled this happening when she was ten years old, it would appear that the author shared his characters' tendency to dismiss age as an 'excuse'. It should be acknowledged here that M. A. Salinger herself drew several links between her father's unpredictable behaviour and that of his Glass family characters.

Another example recounted by M. A. Salinger that could be related to a tendency observed in Holocaust survivor parents, relates to over-reactions when the child suffers illness or injury. At a time in her life when she experienced serious health problems, she recalled her father buying her a subscription to a booklet of testimonials to miraculous healing and advising her that: 'I would get well when I stopped believing in the "illusion" of my sickness' (*Dream Catcher*, p.403). An interviewee called 'Steve' related the following story about his own parents to Hass:

Hysteria, rage, and anger filled my parents and it all spilled over onto us. We were beaten quite frequently; most often when we did something that they thought was dangerous or harmful to ourselves. It was very common to fall down, hurt your leg and get beaten for it. I don't think that would have happened if they hadn't been survivors. If we got sick my mother would start crying because we hadn't worn a sweater, and my father would beat us. (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.64)

These examples illustrate the noted tendency among survivors to alternately overestimate and underestimate the resilience and maturity of their children. If one combines psychoanalytical theory, trauma theory and investigative accounts of Holocaust survivors and their post-Holocaust lives, it can be argued that tendencies in Salinger's later life and writing converge. This is most evident in the related areas of wishing to hide/be alone, and Salinger's failure (and that of his characters) to empathize with others. All of the above can and has been viewed as distinctly connected to Salinger as a 'Jewish-American' author and his experience of the Holocaust.

In conclusion, it would be difficult to determine the extent to which Salinger consciously or unconsciously inscribed issues related to disguising Jewish identity into the fiction that I have addressed. Given the number of speculative accounts of what ails Holden Caulfield, however, it is surprising that these possibilities have not been raised previously. On a visit to New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage, I sat and watched a video at the end of the third-floor exhibit that showed photographs of famous Jews, including Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, Philip Roth, Steve Reich and Philip Glass. This came after the first-floor exhibition of Jewish life before the Holocaust, the disturbing second-floor exhibition about the Holocaust, and the rest of the third-floor exhibition that one senses is aimed at projecting a sense of triumph over adversity. Among the photographs on this virtual Wall of Fame, was one of J. D. Salinger and one of his novel's dust-jacket. When I asked why Salinger was included and not, for example, Bernard Malamud I was given the number of a curator. When I called, the curator said that she had no answer, that the tape was made a decade ago by somebody else and that altering it was too expensive. This short anecdote speaks volumes about the casual attitude towards Salinger, his Jewish identity, and his fiction that I have sought to rectify in this chapter.

It is clear that Salinger was affected by anti-Semitism in America, as well as uncertainty concerning his own identity and exposure to the terrible events of the Holocaust. As I have shown at length, much of the criticism devoted to Salinger's work involves speculative attempts to explain what is 'wrong' with the author and his protagonists. This chapter constitutes a renewal of that speculative endeavour, but I believe with a considerably sharpened historical focus. The links between Salinger's experience and dis/simulation in his fiction, both as a strategy and a post-traumatic trait are clear. The dis/simulation of early protagonists matches a strategic obfuscation of identity that has clear sources in the author's life. Salinger's fiction is further illuminated by comparison to work on the testimonies of Holocaust survivors and those close to them. This relates both to the episode of 'relived' trauma in 'De-Daumier Smith's Blue Period', in which the protagonist fears exposure, and the depressive withdrawal of later protagonists. These aspects of Salinger's fiction encompass what I am labelling 'dis/simulation' - hiding and disguising connected to Jewish and post-traumatic identity. This will be seen to be all the more compelling when similar traits are uncovered in the work of Jerzy Kosinski, Philip Roth and Paul Auster.

Chapter 3: From Subtle Deception to Coercive Pranks: Dis/simulation for Safety and Revenge in the Life and Novels of Jerzy Kosinski.

Lying, which in the first years of life was punished and in every way reviled, now becomes obligatory [...] Telling the truth for the moment leads to losing one's property and one's freedom, and to various dangerous conflicts with the authorities in whatever uniform. (Maria Hochberg-Marianska)¹

The story is painful to read. It is vicious. It is manipulative. But it is also written with malice, that marvellously creative force which propelled Swift and Pope. Where would PEN people - poets and novelists, essayists, editors and translators - be without malice? rhetorically, he asks himself. The Yellow Pages are written without malice. But would you ever read them for fun? (Jerzy Kosinski)²

Jerzy Kosinski was once a novelist so celebrated that his work drew comparisons with that of Beckett and Borges in the 'heyday of the postmodern'.³ This changed dramatically in 1982, when the *Village Voice* wrote an exposé stating that Kosinski had hidden, over a period of three decades, the fact that he was not capable of writing publishable prose in English and that he had furtively and secretly used editors or ghost writers to achieve his final products.⁴ This came seven years after a doctoral thesis was completed that revealed the Polish 'sources' of Kosinski's fiction.⁵ These combined accounts led many to the conclusion that Kosinski was not the 'true' author of the stories or the language of his own books. Having suffered the public humiliation of being accused, to all intents and purposes, of plagiarism, in his later career and since his suicide in 1991, Kosinski has become a forgotten man of American fiction.

¹ Maria Hochberg-Mariańska, 'Introduction', in *The Children Accuse*, ed. by Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss, trans. by Bill Johnson (Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, 1996), pp.xv-xxxv (p.xvii).

² This quotation is from Kosinski's *The Hermit of 69th Street: The Working Papers of Norbert Kosky* (New York: Kensington Publishing Group, 1991), p.178. In this instance, Kosinski is responding to a short story by Cynthia Ozick, 'A Mercenary', in which any 'malice' is aimed at him personally. Kosinski was often criticised for indulging similar malicious impulses in his fiction.

³ James Park Sloan, *Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography* (New York: Dutton, 1996), p.293.

⁴ Geoffrey Stokes and Eliot Fremont-Smith, 'Jerzy Kosinski's Tainted Words', *Village Voice*, 22 June 1982, p.1 and pp.41-43.

⁵ Barbara Jane Tapa, 'Inside the Kaleidoscope: Jerzy Kosinski's Polish and American Contexts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, St John's University, New York).

In this chapter I am relying heavily on Sloan's biography, as it is a valuable source of anecdotal evidence. I should acknowledge at the outset that Sloan's book has a strong narrative drive towards discussing Kosinski's life in the context of the demise of his reputation in later life, and his eventual suicide. Whilst Sloan constructs a good argument concerning the accumulative psychological effects of 'living a lie', I will be making my own interpretations of Kosinski's complex psychopathology, relying more heavily on studies of trauma and bipolar disorder. The previous chapter demonstrated that patterns of intentionally passing and hiding interact with evidence of dis/simulation as psychological 'trauma symptoms' in the life and work of J. D. Salinger. In this chapter, I will demonstrate similar traits in the life and work of Jerzy Kosinski. The crucial difference is that in Kosinski's behaviour and fiction, we encounter hiding and disguising as acts apparently inspired by malicious and coercive impulses in addition to defensive ones.

Kosinski, like Salinger, is rarely looked upon as part of a Jewish-American canon. Having made the case for Salinger's inclusion in my own 'canon' based upon my insistence on historical detail and post-traumatic dis/simulation, I will begin this chapter by making a similar case for Kosinski. It will be seen that in Kosinski's biography and writing, motifs occur that could be argued to be paradigmatic of a post-war Jewish-American condition. This meant that American Jews were situated both within and outside mainstream American culture for reasons relating to their status as an ethnic minority and as immigrants, but also to their connection to unique historical events. In the first part of this chapter, I will give a summary of Kosinski's life, work and literary reputation that is channelled towards qualifying him as a Jewish-American author. Kosinski's work will be seen to have shared characteristics with that of Salinger, Roth and Auster. Following this, I will analyse motifs found in Kosinski's fiction that could be described as coercive or sadistic, by relating them to work on post-traumatic symptoms and bipolar disorder. The conclusion of this chapter is that

in Kosinski's fiction, post-traumatic symptoms can be observed, and are manifested in hiding and disguising for purposes of both self-protection and the expression of malicious impulses.

My profile of Kosinski's Holocaust experience and development as a writer in America is placed alongside a variety of historical sources, and Robert Kraft's work concerning the effects of the Holocaust on children who had to hide or disguise in order to survive. Kosinski can be classed as a Holocaust survivor, as his family evaded the Lodz Ghetto and made several moves to safety under a false identity, prior to the liberation of Poland. In a narrowly literal sense, all American Jews can be considered as 'survivors', as immigration to America itself meant that many evaded the terror of the Nazis. Kosinski's experience is a striking example of a 'near miss', if one considers the details.

Martin Gilbert recorded that 100,000 had perished in the Lodz Ghetto by October 1942, and that June 1944 saw the systematic murder of another 75,000. Only 10,000 survived.⁶ James Park Sloan reported that 'with one exception, a cousin who emigrated to Israel, every member of the extensive Lewinkopf-Weinreich family - more than sixty at their last family reunion in 1938 - had perished' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.50). Both of Kosinski's parents were well educated and cultured, his father a well-respected teacher and his mother an accomplished piano player. Indeed, his mother was imperious towards gentile families with whom they stayed whilst under their assumed identity, even surprising one landlady by suggesting that she employ her as a maid (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.29).⁷

It is worth noting here, that Kosinski's mother sent him a book of Polish children's testimonies (*The Children Accuse*) whilst he was writing *The Painted Bird*, from which

⁶ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: Maps and Photographs* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1993), p.7.

⁷ It should be acknowledged that Sloan's research concerning Kosinski's family background has several unfilled gaps. Sloan himself admits on a number of occasions that he is choosing one from several accounts on the basis of probability. There is little, however, to dispute the conclusion that Kosinski's family was educated and cultured.

Kosinski borrowed extensively (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.191). This source, and another book of early testimonies tellingly entitled *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, shed an interesting light on Polish Holocaust survivors, as in many cases it seems that their affluence and privilege (especially in terms of connections and the capacity to bribe) were key factors in survival.⁸

Novick noted that in the past assumptions have been made that those who survived the conditions of ghettos or camps must have been the ‘toughest’, those with ‘cunning and animal instincts’ (*Holocaust in American Life*, pp.68-69). Those analysts concerned specifically with testimonies, such as Langer, have emphasized the role of sheer ‘unheroic’ fortune in deciding who survived (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.178). Whilst I do not wish to become side-tracked by a lengthy discussion of the ‘qualities’ of survivors, I think it correct to raise the issue that some survivors had more privileged backgrounds than others. This would influence the ways in which trauma was processed belatedly, in terms of feelings of guilt and only being able to ‘associate’ with the horrific fate of those who were less fortunate.

Indeed, if accounts of Kosinski as a child are to be believed, he may have had added reasons to feel guilt. Sloan described him as ‘typed as a withdrawn, standoffish mother’s boy’, who responded to abuse by striking down at smaller and weaker children (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.20). This is further complicated when one considers hidden children as a specific group among survivors. Carla Lessing, at the Hidden Child Foundation office (within New York’s main ADL offices on 20 July 2011), told me that the stories of hidden children were suppressed by adults that had endured the camps. The hidden children were told not to make too much of their experiences because they ‘got so lucky’. This issue was addressed at the First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II in May 1991, in

⁸ David P. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

New York. Abraham H. Foxman recalled that ‘some 1,600 of us from around the world together broke the silence’.⁹

Kosinski’s father’s maxim was ‘live your life unnoticed’, advice that in his adult life Kosinski more often than not flouted (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.8). Moses Lewinkopf foresaw German victory over Poland and in 1939 moved his family out of Lodz, using the name Kosinski as part of an assumed gentile identity. Kosinski was born Jerzy Lewinkopf, but Kosinski was a name ‘so common in Poland as to be the equivalent of Smith’ (*Ibid.*). Obviously, changing one’s name did not automatically make one safe from persecution. Maria Hochberg-Mariańska noted that in order to pass under a gentile identity during the Holocaust, Jews needed to have the ‘right appearance’ (*The Children Accuse*, p.xxvi). In Polish émigré circles in America, the name Kosinski would signal a non-Jewish background, but Kosinski frequently sent up his own appearance, in particular his ‘beaky’ nose.¹⁰

Mary Lazar argued that in some sense Kosinski’s formative experiences would have been dominated as much by his assumed Catholic identity as by his Jewish connections, but this overlooks the practicalities of anti-Semitic persecution based largely on identity defined by appearance, as I have discussed thus far.¹¹ One of several flaws in Lazar’s overall argument stems from her attempt to classify Kosinski as a Polish Jew alongside his other identities as a writer and an American. Lazar chose to focus on the fine distinctions between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish traditions in Kosinski’s background (*Through Kosinski’s Lenses*, p.23). She also noted, for instance, that in *The Painted Bird* female characters help the male protagonist

⁹ Abraham H. Foxman, ‘Preface’, in *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust*, ed. by Jane Marks (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), pp.vii-xiii (p.vii).

¹⁰ See *Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography* (p.322) for an example of this, and Kosinski’s list of Jewish stereotypes: ‘black hair, black eyes, hooked noses, olive skin’ (‘Notes of the Author on *The Painted Bird*’, in *Passing By: Selected Essays, 1962-1991* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), pp.201-22 (p.216)). Carla Lessing recalled that as a dark-skinned, dark-eyed ‘Jewish-looking’ child in Holland, where the indigenous majority were often fair in appearance, she was told by her parents ‘don’t make yourself noticeable’.

¹¹ Mary Lazar, *Through Kosinski’s Lenses: Sex, Identity, and Violence* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), p.176.

to understand that appearance determines identity, which can lead to either victimization or empowerment (*Through Kosinski's Lenses*, p.66). She did not, however, grasp that a sense of on-going threat in all survivors who relocated to America was also based to a large extent on the general sense of an anti-Semitic environment, in which Jews were largely identified by appearance per se, rather than specific European Jewish tradition.

Carla Lessing told me that she was happy in areas of New York surrounded by other Jews, but that she refused to move to the Mid-West because she continued to feel 'very visibly Jewish' and did not want to stand out. Flora Hogman (whom I interviewed in her lower-Manhattan apartment on 13 August 2011), a hidden child survivor of Czech origin but whose Holocaust experience began in Italy, told me that she felt it 'was ok to be a Jew' in New York where there were two million other Jews. She never lost the sense, however, that it would be unwise to admit to being Jewish in other places, including Paris. Flora Hogman's experience differs from Carla Lessing's in that she felt that her appearance allowed her to pass, for instance, as Italian.

It is not known to what extent young Jerzy was aware of the horrors of the Holocaust over the next six years. What we do know is that he suffered various hardships, including alienation from other children and close confinement (because of the risk of detection), the continual stress of living in disguise, near misses, some dietary deprivation and quite possibly a traumatic incident that involved physical abuse (see *Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.21 and p.32). Robert Kraft argued that children who were aged between 6 and 9 when the war began often had little stable memory of life before the Holocaust.¹² Kraft described one child survivor from Lodz testifying that she tried to eat a banana with the skin on after liberation, being unable to recall eating bananas before 1939 (*Memory Perceived*, pp.58-59).

¹² Robert Kraft, *Memory Perceived: Recalling the Holocaust* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

In this respect, the conditions of war (terror, deprivation, disguise and deception) dominate early formative experience. Kosinski more or less concurred with this when he wrote that:

You do not remember your sixth year, or your seventh or eighth year. What you do remember are certain versions that have been condensed and defined by your mind as an adult.¹³

It should be noted here that Kosinski continued, until the end of his life, to insist that the experience of being separated from his parents and running wild and uncared for during the war, endured by the boy in *The Painted Bird*, was his own experience. This is entirely false. Whilst Kosinski may have interacted with aspects of his own Holocaust experience and subsequent awareness of how much worse it could have been, he never confronted it head on in his fiction or in his tendency to tell stories to audiences of friends.

At the end of the war, Kosinski's family returned to the decimated ghost town of Lodz. There is evidence that at this stage of his life (early adolescence) Kosinski's lifelong habit of 'night wandering' began, as did his tendency to assume disguises in order to cruelly terrorize others whom he perceived to be immoral, or to have caused injury. Sloan cited Kosinski's 'night wandering' as 'a desperate response to years of being cooped up' and described letters filled with 'a series of dirty names - wicked, sexual, suggestive names' that Kosinski sent to former neighbours and playmates towards whom he held a grudge (possibly related to having been rejected because of his ethnicity) (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.57 and pp.60-61). These letters also contained threats that the addressees would be handed over to the secret police if they did not 'toe the line', and are early prototypes of the revenge dramas that recurred throughout Kosinski's fiction (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.61).

¹³ Jerzy Kosinski, 'To Touch Minds', in *Passing By*, pp.32-35 (p.32).

During these school years, Kosinski became interested in America and democracy, whilst Poland was becoming a collective order based on Communist principles (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.62 and p.67). As a young adult involved in the post-war cafe society of Lodz, Kosinski became attracted to sexual intrigue, promiscuity and risk-taking. In one episode, Kosinski had to flee from an armed police officer after taking nude photographs of his girlfriend. Kosinski may have been drawn to such experiences, but they did not represent pure adrenalin-fuelled pleasure - he arrived at a friend's house needing to clean himself, as he had 'lost control of his bowels' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.72). At the Fortunoff Archive, I learned that compulsive risk-taking was not an uncommon behaviour, particularly among male hidden survivors. Dr Menachem Stern recalled that when fighting in the Yom Kippur War, he felt a combined sense of helplessness and invulnerability: 'I walked under the rain without getting wet'.¹⁴

Kosinski travelled to Russia twice, and ran into trouble with university officials in Poland for pushing political boundaries. Kosinski explained that his Russian hosts sometimes suspected that 'a young Pole on the loose must be on an intelligence mission' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.73). He was expelled from the ZSP (the Party-sponsored organization of university students) in 1953, for 'his refusal to speak on the subject of the Korean War unless permitted to present both sides of the issue' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.79). As a maverick in collective Poland, Kosinski felt similar fears for his safety and personal freedom to those experienced during the Holocaust. In an interview, he described his daily concerns in this period as 'Am I going to survive physically? Am I going to survive as a sane being?'.¹⁵

Finally, Kosinski made his move to America, amidst such 'typical immigrant misadventures'

¹⁴ Menachem S. Holocaust Testimony (T-152), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library. A personal observation of mine to which I will return in the Conclusion was that testimonies from male survivors were more likely to focus on individual acts of ingenuity, whilst those from female survivors were more likely to contain detailed lists of what was lost.

¹⁵ George A. Plimpton and Rocco Landesman, 'The Art of Fiction XLVI', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski* (Jackson, MI: University of Mississippi Press, 1993), pp.20-36 (p.22).

as having luggage fabricated from cardboard that had all but disintegrated because of heavy rain by the time he arrived at customs ‘in the condition of a bedraggled rat’ (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, pp.98-99).

From this point onwards, Kosinski’s life reads in many ways as a case study of an immigrant overcoming initial financial and cultural obstacles to ‘make good’ in America.¹⁶ Despite struggling with English, and having at times to resort to stealing or subsisting on the charity of others, Kosinski managed to produce a book that detailed his experience of Communism in Russia. It was at this point of Kosinski’s life (the late 1950s) that he began to lie about his status as the sole author of his work. Having hired an assistant to polish his prose, Kosinski explained to her that he was writing under the pen-name Joseph Novak, in order to protect his parents in Poland from any persecution that they may have experienced at that time for having a son who was the author of an anti-Communist book (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.125). He explained to his editor, Ewa Markowska, that he would not be able to acknowledge her contribution, as this would have been a clue through which he could easily be traced as the author (*Ibid.*).

This was the first act of deception in what was to become a career of hiding, disguising and creating cover stories. At this stage of his life, Kosinski regularly passed as non-Jewish (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.129). Kraft gave numerous examples of child survivors who needed to pass as Catholic or Protestant during the Holocaust. One survivor was cited as describing himself ‘disparagingly as a chameleon’, and Kraft concluded that ‘after denying their religion, many young children became profoundly reticent about reacquiring their original Jewish identity’ (*Memory Perceived*, p.74). This, of course, must be weighed up against the

¹⁶ The stories in *The Hidden Children* match those in *I Did not Interview the Dead*, in that many of them focus on diminished personal lives and emotional damage, whilst foregrounding externalized narratives in which dogged persistence and ingenuity lead to eventual success. For instance, Kristine Keren, D. D. S. concluded her story by stating ‘I believe you can make it through almost anything if you don’t give up’ (*The Hidden Children*, p.33).

tension discussed by Hass, between whether a ‘symptom’ is definitively post-traumatic in relation to an event such as the Holocaust, or can be related to the generally ‘traumatic’ nature of immigrant experience in America (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.33 and p.61).

Even after the publication of *The Painted Bird*, Kosinski frequently denied that he was Jewish. In Sloan’s account, the original reception of the *The Painted Bird* revolved around the terms ‘account’, ‘confession’, ‘testament’, ‘document’ and ‘testimony’ (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.223). In the novel, however, the child protagonist’s ethnicity is vague, as is the geographic location, as Kosinski himself was keen to point out (‘Notes of the Author on *The Painted Bird*’, p.207).¹⁷ In one interview, Kosinski told David M. Szonyi that, in 1942, he saw a German poster depicting ‘typical Jewish faces’ and that one of them closely resembled his own.¹⁸ In another, he told Dick Schapp that in his early days in America he was once mistaken for a Greek and suspected of wishing to hide that identity.¹⁹ From these examples, it appears that Kosinski was consciously aware that his appearance served in different contexts as a signifier that could attract prejudice and violent threat, but also that it was something that was fluid and could be manipulated.

The rest of Kosinski’s life can be given here in brief summary. Kosinski chose America as a permanent place of residence for the rest of his life. He published several novels, one of which was made into a successful Hollywood film. Kosinski was married twice, first to an heiress (which gave him freedom to write) and the second time around to Katherina ‘Kiki’ von Fraunhofer, who supported his career and tolerated his deviant personality until his

¹⁷ Sloan described Kosinski as ‘the kind of author who made publishers’ production staff tear their hair out’ (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.173). In writing this Sloan was alluding to Kosinski’s tendency to chop and change his texts until the last moment, and then make significant changes in subsequent editions, to some degree in response to criticism (*Ibid.*). This would present some academics with a challenge in selecting versions of his novels, but having looked at this closely, there was no need to select specific versions in order to make my own argument, as I am to a large extent engaged with what Kosinski imagined, exposed and concealed through his fiction, rather than finer details of editing.

¹⁸ ‘Jerzy Kosinski and the Writer on the Holocaust’, in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.193-95 (p.194).

¹⁹ Dick Schapp, ‘Stepmother Tongue’, in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.3-5 (p.4).

death. After establishing himself as a novelist, Kosinski served two terms as president of PEN (standing down in 1975), surprising doubters as he took on ‘the job with focus and energy, and demonstrated both political and administrative skills that none of his previous experience had revealed’ (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.317). In later life, after enduring the *Village Voice* setback, Kosinski went back to Poland on several occasions and embraced his Jewish heritage and various Holocaust-related causes. While this summarizes Kosinski’s career and public life, his personal life was characterized by manic behaviour, pranks, restlessness, nocturnal habits, a never-sated need for sexual experience and some black spots of depression in later life which culminated in his suicide.

I mentioned in the Introduction Kosinski’s pranks, which included impersonating a police officer in Times Square. When I read that Lenny Bruce used to dress in a prison uniform and ask police officers for directions, I was intrigued as to whether any other links or similarities between the two existed.²⁰ I found that like Kosinski, Bruce was more than likely a sufferer of bipolar disorder, was over-sexed, failed at committed relationships, showed paradoxical tendencies towards seeking love and publicity and at the same time repelling his audience, and finally lost his life to drugs, although whether this was deliberate is unknown. Bruce was Jewish and experienced anti-Semitism. Whilst he did not have the same traumatic childhood that Kosinski did, there are some similarities, particularly in terms of a lack of stability, between Bruce’s background and many hidden child narratives. For instance, Bruce was passed around between relatives and attended no fewer than twenty-six elementary schools (*Divine Madness*, p.220). It is conceivable that this aspect of the hidden child experience influenced Kosinski in similar ways to Bruce. This lack of stability affected Flora Hogman profoundly, leaving her ‘hard on the exterior’ but feeling particularly sensitive to rejection, which was certainly the case with Kosinski.

²⁰ Jeffrey A. Kottler, *Divine Madness: Ten Stories of Creative Struggle* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), p.219.

When Kosinski's work is discussed, it is often in similar terms to that of J. D. Salinger, in that it is said to reflect, perhaps more than is usually the case, the obsessions and neuroses of the author. The thematic content and the criticism that Kosinski's work attracted, and Kosinski's public persona, however, bear very few comparisons to Salinger's. Kosinski's fiction is popularly characterized by its earthy and frank sexuality and violence. His public persona, as a guest on TV talk shows and interviews as he rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous in his later career, would be seen by most as outgoing. Tom Teicholz noted that for Kosinski, interviews were 'part performance, part public relations, part blind date'.²¹

Having had the opportunity to view recordings of Kosinski's public appearances, I would concur with this. Kosinski seems set to win over the audience with his relaxed, reasonable manner. This is shown to be a deliberate strategy, however, and when he speaks about his experiences and his work, and is asked a question that triggers repressed emotions, the mask slips. On a disk marked 'Signature, 1982', Kosinski's demeanour, voice and eye contact with the interviewer all change when the interviewer expresses surprise at the brutality depicted in his fiction. From genial celebrity, Kosinski changes to one who appears to be re-enacting repressed indignation, telling the interviewer that such brutality is taking place in New York as they speak, and that he would not have survived in 'the seat of European civilization'.²² In discussing his private life (and in particular his sex life) on television, it seemed, to use a common expression, that Kosinski was fond of washing his dirty linen in public. Having experienced the necessity of hiding and disguising his identity as a child, however, Kosinski did have a lifelong compulsion to disguise, hide, lie or mislead others, as I will discuss in greater detail shortly.

²¹ Tom Teicholz, 'Introduction', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.ix-xiv (p.ix).

²² This was one of few disks available during my visit to the Beinecke Library to access the Katherina von Fraunhoffen Collection. Video-tapes which were in the process of digitization were not available. This makes citation difficult, as when the disks are completed, a new box will be created to contain them.

What emerges from Kosinski's fiction, and Sloan's biography, is that Kosinski was an extremely erratic character who acted out of a combination of psycho-sexual compulsion and the aim of making measured artistic and/or political statements. The idea of acting under compulsion, for instance, can be used to explain why Kosinski chose throughout his life to put himself in situations in which a need to cover up the truth about himself arose. For obvious reasons, he would have found this a stressful re-enactment of past traumatic experience. It is, therefore, not as simple to discuss Kosinski's fiction in terms of wishing to hide, disguise or escape, as is often the case with Salinger. Frequently, the need to disguise is created by the protagonist himself, and traumatic re-enactment is something that is undertaken compulsively by the victim of trauma in Kosinski's work. These actions match those of Salinger's De Daumier Smith, discussed in the previous chapter.

Sloan made considerable efforts to place Kosinski's fiction, and his biography, within a framework that takes into account his post-traumatic experience as a Holocaust survivor. For instance, when he discussed the 'cache' of secrets that Kosinski built up at the height of his fame, Sloan related this to the fear of exposure that Kosinski would have felt as a survivor, and concluded that this must have been particularly unpleasant for him (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.271). There would be little point in contesting any argument that, because of his background, Kosinski got into the 'habit' of hiding and disguising. What Sloan did not confront, as I have begun to do in the Introduction and the previous chapter, is that re-enactment of traumatic scenarios is a compulsive behaviour of Holocaust survivors that can be observed in their fiction. In short, Sloan did not confront the exact reasons for Kosinski and his protagonists voluntarily putting themselves in situations that are likely to cause pain, or more precisely, are re-enactments of past pain. I make this point, of course, in light of what was discussed in the Introduction in terms of Freud's later work on the psychological factors that motivate human behaviour.

Kosinski is seen on one page of Sloan's biography to be a hedonistic pleasure seeker and on the next, someone who volunteers for painful scenarios relating to hiding, disguising and threat of discovery. A good example of the complicated issue of compulsive, as opposed to deliberate, lying can be found in Sloan's account of Kosinski's meeting with Frank Sinatra. This begins with Kosinski as a member of a group of acquaintances stating that he does not know 'Jilly's', a New York night spot. When the party arrived, an 'attendant in uniform leaped out and greeted Kosinski with a bear hug' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.285). Kosinski had known the man and the club from his early experiences as a struggling immigrant when he had worked as a car park attendant. Sinatra was affronted that Kosinski had lied to him, and Sloan concluded that a 'friendship with Sinatra was not ordained by the higher powers' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.286).

This anecdote presents a case par excellence of compulsive lying in Kosinski's life that will be seen to be mirrored in his fiction. Kosinski, who endured the need to disguise at all costs in the Holocaust, and who experienced the usual deprivations and humiliations associated with struggling East-European immigrants in America, impulsively chose to lie about whether or not he knew where a certain place was. If he had simply wanted to avoid Sinatra knowing about his past struggles in America, as many immigrants would in this situation, he could still have stated that he knew where Jilly's was. Sinatra would probably have assumed that he, a prize winning author at that moment in time, had been a patron on other occasions. Instead of this, Kosinski lied compulsively and put himself in a position in which exposure could and did result in humiliation and censure. In this example, we can clearly see two impulses competing: one is to dis/simulate, the other is to participate openly in celebrity culture.

Democracy, Freedom of Expression and Dis/simulation: Jerzy Kosinski as Jewish-American Novelist.

Finally, we realize that Kosinski is still at war. He hides himself, he wears disguises, he keeps survival kits in his car trunk [...] in his private war Kosinski remained the protagonist, using every arm in his arsenal [...] he is at play - and at war. (Tom Teicholz, 'Introduction', p.xi)

The expression self-made man exists only in American English. It's interesting how the phrase betrays that self was made by a man, by himself or herself. (Jerzy Kosinski)²³

The case has been made that because of Kosinski's experiences of the Holocaust, collective society and later as an immigrant, he got into the habit of hiding and disguising. In an early interview he treated the interviewer to his 'disappearance act', concealing himself in his apartment until the interviewer gave up looking for him.²⁴ At various points in interviews, Kosinski also discussed adapting his public persona as a form of 'camouflage' and described himself as an 'inner émigré'.²⁵ In other instances, Kosinski made a point of extolling the relative freedom of American society, stated that aspects of life that interested him were universal rather than exclusively Jewish, and once said that 'there's nothing I fear more than not being able to be myself'.²⁶ In addition to continually appearing in published or broadcast interviews, Kosinski at various times adopted the role of jester/entertainer to his friends, telling stories as if he were in fact the protagonist and 'delighting dinner guests and, especially, their children' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.263).

Many tendencies towards dis/simulation are present in Kosinski's prose. The narrator of *The Future is Ours Comrade* (the alter-persona of a pseudonymous author) discusses issues

²³ George Christian, 'A Passion for Polo', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.167-73 (p.171).

²⁴ Cleveland Amory, 'Trade Winds', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.6-8 (p.8).

²⁵ Tom Teicholz, 'Being There and Staying There', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.180-87 (p.186).

²⁶ Lisa Grunwald, 'Jerzy Kosinski: Tapping into His Vision of the Truth', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.103-10 (p.106).

relating to Soviet treatment of Jews, but never reveals his own ethnic background.²⁷ At the end of *The Painted Bird*, the narrator begins to lie and/or assume a false identity to get his own way.²⁸ Although at this point he is in relatively secure circumstances, his journey of evasion and survival has also served as one of discovery. He has seen that dis/simulation can be used to gain an advantage. In *Blind Date*, Levanter pretends to be an official in order to frighten two Russians whose remarks about foreign workers he finds 'fascistic'.²⁹ By drawing their attention to the short-falls of the regime under which they live, Levanter here has used disguise both as an act of sadism and in order to challenge another's views.

At the beginning of *Pinball*, Domostroy is asked about his accent by a mechanic. He replies that he got it from 'South Bronx', but the mechanic is not satisfied and persists: 'I mean - before that. Where does that accent come from?'.³⁰ Domostroy refuses to answer directly. Throughout the novel, Domostroy lives as a Salingeresque reclusive artist, emerging only to engage with another artist, 'Goddard', the son of a Holocaust survivor who is similarly reclusive and shares his views on privacy. It is never stated in this novel that the connection between the two men is connected to Holocaust trauma or immigrant experience. It is never, in fact, stated that Domostroy is Jewish. Lazar, for instance, focussed entirely on the two characters' mutual empathy as 'artists' (*Through Kosinski's Lenses*, p.202).

In *Cockpit*, Tarden conceals himself in a 'hideaway' to confirm his suspicion that his younger lover is having a relationship with another man.³¹ In one of the testimonies collected in *The Children Accuse*, Frederyk Sztajkeller recalled living at one stage in a wardrobe and at

²⁷ Joseph Novak, *The Future is Ours, Comrade* (London: Bodley Head, 1960), Chapter 12: 'The Chosen People', pp.200-16.

²⁸ Jerzy Kosinski, *The Painted Bird* (London: Corgi, 1967), p.202.

²⁹ Jerzy Kosinski, *Blind Date* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), pp.20-21.

³⁰ Jerzy Kosinski, *Pinball* (London: Arrow Books, 1982), p.11. Dick Schapp noted that Kosinski's English was 'tinged with an Eastern European accent' ('Stepmother Tongue', p.3). Having seen some of Kosinski's television appearances, I can confirm this.

³¹ Jerzy Kosinski, *Cockpit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p.6.

another in a cupboard (*The Children Accuse*, pp.122-23). This experience not only saved him from being found by the Nazis, it also allowed him to listen in on the conversation of others and learn who could be expected to protect or betray him. It is conceivable that a child such as Kosinski, with a distinctly 'Jewish appearance', would have been hidden in the same way and re-enacted such a process in adult life. This is one of many acts of hiding and disguising undertaken by this protagonist, whose background has taught him to use such measures for 'survival'. This makes him a partly sympathetic character, despite some of his actions being extremely dubious in a moral sense.

Even in the case of Chauncey Gardiner, the protagonist of the Kafkaesque *Being There*, one could make the case that his blank identity and the ways in which other characters attempt to fit him into various schemes is a Jewish parable or fantasy of anonymity taken to extreme levels. Indeed Chauncey's predicaments of being friendless, without papers and cared for by wealthy benefactors (he has no family) match those often described in the testimony of survivors, although no critic has seen cause to comment at length about this.³² Sloan did note parallels between Chauncey and his creator, in particular that both were at 'constant risk of exposure and destruction' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.291). Chauncey's predicament at the 'Old Man's' house in some ways matches that of children of the Holocaust too innocent to understand the evil of the world in which they live. We are told that his dead mother was mentally deficient and that he was told that he must 'do exactly as he was told or else he would be sent to a special home for the insane [...] locked in a cell and forgotten' (*Being There*, pp.6-7). Lazar overlooked this and presented the protagonist as 'sheltered' by the old man (*Through Kosinski's Lenses*, p.93). In many respects, the subtle hiding of identity or wish to avoid the issue that I discussed in the Introduction is present in Kosinski's work. This may be a conscious literary trope that Kosinski chose to employ.

³² Jerzy Kosinski, *Being There* (London: Pan Books, 1973).

The actions of the protagonists that I have discussed above, may be related to examples of Kosinski himself hiding or disguising, either as a psychological defence mechanism or for the entertainment of others. In other examples, Kosinski used dis/simulation for the purpose of attack - to coerce or humiliate another. Sloan gave two examples of Kosinski convincing a braggart that he had symptoms of serious illness, and also upsetting a cocksure student by saying that he had a 'feeling' that he would die young, and that he had been right in having this 'feeling' about others (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.299 and p.287). In these episodes, Kosinski simply adopted a different persona - briefly became somebody else - in order to teach someone a lesson. These episodes form part of a spectrum of seemingly humorous acts that range in their degree of sadism. For instance, Kosinski liked to dress in uniforms and other disguises in order to draw attention to the prejudices and pretensions of other people, and these acts often made for amusing stories in his life and fiction. What varies considerably is the level of coercion used, and the extent to which sadistic impulses emerge in the technique. This dictates whether the story is amusing or unsettling. In either case, the compulsion to dis/simulate could be related to Kosinski's experience of the Holocaust, and I will return to this shortly.

It is not simply the case, however, that Kosinski's work is looked upon as that of a Holocaust survivor. Indeed, on the surface Kosinski's fiction reflects as many concerns that could be described as 'American' as it does concerns that are Jewish, and this can also be related closely to Kosinski's background. Kosinski has often been looked upon as one who wrote in opposition to the collective politics of the Eastern Bloc during the post war years. In numerous interviews, Kosinski extolled American 'freedom' over totalitarian regimes and often presented a conflated version of an imperfect but democratic West opposed to an intolerant and oppressive collective East. In these respects, Kosinski's fiction mirrors that of the allotropic and reclusive Italian-American author Don DeLillo, in whose work the

ideological perception of the 'East', as opposed to the 'democratic' West, changes over time from the former Soviet Bloc to the present day 'fanatical and intolerant' Middle-East.³³ Lazar noted that because Kosinski's work often seemed to be set against the social context of Communism, it had a distinctly 'American flavor' (*Through Kosinski's Lenses*, p.216).

Kosinski (again in common with DeLillo) frequently expressed concerns, in interviews and in his fiction, about the impact of mass culture and the competing aesthetic technologies of the media, particularly regarding their effects on the ability of contemporary 'viewers' to confront atrocity and to think and reason coherently.³⁴ These concerns could be read as constituting a warning that western culture would become 'totalitarian' at some point, and many readers of DeLillo's fiction of the 1990s and 2000s would agree that in DeLillo's view such a moment is now upon us.³⁵ These concerns, Kosinski argued, inform the representations of sex and violence found in his novels, as he saw a moral need to remind people of the harsh realities of life. In this respect, he saw the purpose of art as 'not to do what the popular culture does but to undo it' ('A Nation of Videots', p.107).

As Kosinski's fiction reflects popular political fears in post-war America relating to clashes between Eastern and Western ideologies, he could simply be classified as an American zeitgeist writer. Novick discussed American popular culture manipulating the Holocaust in a number of ways that included representing Nazism as one of many totalitarianisms (*Holocaust in American Life*, p.12). Kosinski's fiction allows readers to see evil as relative, because often the enemy is not a Nazi, but rather some other totalitarian force that is inflicted on the protagonist. This would be more palatable to an American audience, based on Novick's assertions that in post-war America people were more interested in hearing about

³³ John McClure, *Late Imperial Romance* (New York: Verso, 1994), p.146.

³⁴ See David Sohn, 'A Nation of Videots', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.88-102.

³⁵ See Mark Osteen, 'Becoming Incorporated: Spectacular Authorship and DeLillo's *Mao II*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 45 (1999), 642-74.

Soviet iniquity than Nazi evil, were less against Germany for persecuting Jews than for supporting the Japanese over Pearl Harbour, and saw Germans as new military allies in the fight against totalitarianism (*Holocaust in American Life*, p.24, p.26 and pp.87-88).

It would be a mistake, however, to view Kosinski's work exclusively in this context or to look upon it as influenced by combined Polish and American influences. Kosinski stated in interviews that he felt traumatized by the threat to personal safety that was a feature of collective Poland, but his formative experiences, as I have already discussed, involve war-time Poland and the Holocaust. These pivotal early experiences become central in Kosinski's last novel, and I will be arguing that they are present through the 'behaviours' of his protagonists up to this point. It will be seen that through the dis/simulations of Kosinski and his protagonists, the aspects of Kosinski's background that relate to the Holocaust, specifically hiding and disguising identity, are present and persistent in his life and work. These patterns can be considered as independent of any other influences from Kosinski's background, as they are often the result of a compulsion rather than a measured response to specific circumstances.

Kraft discussed the ways in which trauma experienced by children in the Holocaust comes out in 'behaviours' later in life (*Memory Perceived*, p.64). Clearly, writing fiction is a creative activity in which 'behaviours' or impulses related to past trauma can come to the surface. Lazar raised a pertinent point concerning Kosinski being attracted to the work of other non-Jewish authors who hid behind 'personae' such as Joyce, or who actually wrote about disguise, such as Melville (*Through Kosinski's Lenses*, p.183 and p.132). What Lazar did not do is relate the obvious attraction that these aesthetic traits held for Kosinski directly to his Jewish-American experience. This is part of a tendency in Lazar's study to evaluate Kosinski as being more calculating than he is compulsive in his fiction. The development of

Kosinski's oeuvre indicates both a long incubation period before the author felt able to directly acknowledge the centrality of the Holocaust in his life (*The Painted Bird* was emphatically not autobiographical), and a desire to avoid the triggering stimuli of confronting the Holocaust in a potentially hostile environment. Instead, Kosinski chose to write to his market on the political level. It is this combination of avoidance, indirect approach and underlying symptoms of trauma that, in my view, places the work of the authors discussed in this thesis in a clear relationship with each other.

Compulsive Insincerity: Jerzy Kosinski and the Boundaries of Fiction and Testimony.

Many survivors are quite articulate in their recognition that in order to 'pass' for one of us, they must learn that we do not really want to hear their stories, what they have to say about their experiences of atrocity, or, at best, that we only want to hear 'stock stories', which are familiar and therefore already known. (Anne Cubilié)³⁶

Once you are public, the public looks for what it has already seen. At one time, everyone tried to trace Salinger, to find Pynchon. No one tries to find Kosinski. In a sense, my visibility is my ultimate camouflage: nothing hides one better than appearing on the Johnny Carson show. (Jerzy Kosinski)³⁷

As I have investigated Kosinski's fiction, lying, disguising and self-fashioning alongside his 'actual experience' and the testimony of others, I would like to pause now to consider some of the implications of placing 'faithful' and 'creative' accounts alongside each other.

Lawrence Langer related Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* to other efforts to represent Auschwitz through metaphor.³⁸ Langer's argument, concerned as he was with ways in which literature can succeed in representing atrocity, is compelling, but he made no attempt to relate the specifics of Kosinski's experience to any post-traumatic symptom expressed in his writing.

For instance, we know that Kosinski himself was not a witness to or survivor of Auschwitz,

³⁶ Anne Cubilié, *Women Witnessing Terror: Testimony and the Cultural Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p.xiii.

³⁷ Barbara Leaming, 'Penthouse Review', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.196-212 (p.199).

³⁸ Lawrence Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven: YUP, 1977), Chapter 5: 'Men into Beasts', pp.166-204.

but that he may have experienced living with the threat of being taken to such a place. In this sense, it is hard to identify what his relation to the concentration camps is.

In *The Painted Bird*, the protagonist never experiences the camps but is aware of the trains that transport Jews to them and scatter the ashes of the dead on their outward-bound journeys (*Painted Bird*, pp.94-95). This experience would have been common to the Jews disguised as ‘Aryans’ who lived in Poland throughout the war, as would be encountering those who jumped from the trains. Martin Gilbert narrated the story of a Jewish family jumping from a train near Lodz. The wife died and the husband subsequently committed suicide (*The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy*, p.538). In *Hermit*, Kosinski’s protagonist aligns himself with both Paul Celan (who suffered the greatest personal loss and most unspeakable horror at Auschwitz) and Sylvia Plath (whose poetry causes controversy because some readers believe that she compared herself as a privileged American WASP to Holocaust victims, on the basis of feeling oppressed by her relationships with men) (*Hermit*, Chapters 3 and 10, pp.45-59 and pp.180-97). Whilst Kosinski also addressed the dangers of Holocaust trivialization in Chapter 10, it must be acknowledged that he had an increased tendency in later life to empathize with all who could be considered victims (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.247).

Historical and biographical specifics need to be placed alongside evaluation of character and symptom, especially where Holocaust fiction is concerned. Meta Lane and John Williams convincingly analysed the motifs and behaviours represented in *The Painted Bird*.³⁹ Their essay is focussed on the psychological verisimilitude of the character, including post-traumatic symptoms, and concludes that Kosinski’s portrayal is ‘skilful’. Lane and Williams were focussed here on representation of symptoms as opposed to Langer’s focus on technique

³⁹ Meta Lane and John Williams, ‘The Narrator of *The Painted Bird*: A Case Study’, *Renascence*, 24.4 (Summer 1972), pp.198-206 (p.206).

to represent atrocity. I will be taking this a step further by looking at examples from Kosinski's fiction in the light of the author's own symptoms.

Later I will look again at testimony from those whose post-traumatic experiences match those of Kosinski, but it is worth reminding ourselves here that testimony and fiction are usually considered to be separate entities. In the case of Kosinski, however, I think there is a case for comparing these seemingly contrasted forms of narrative. Literary critics have often enjoyed tackling authors' alter-personae, arguing that any given author is not as self-aware as s/he believes, and pointing to what the author 'betrays' about his/her self. As trauma symptoms often surface in unconscious behaviours, repetitions and ways of telling in testimony, there is a clear rationale for approaching the work of a 'traumatized' author in this way. Using an 'alter-persona' as a protagonist could be looked upon as a conscious act of dis/simulation in itself, in much the same way as presenting a sincere 'ego' that masks hidden motivations and drives could be considered to be 'normal' dis/simulation. This tendency was, importantly, part of a lifetime of compulsive insincerity for Kosinski. Kosinski never faithfully narrated his Holocaust experience either orally or in writing, preferring perhaps to relive certain moments or emotions in fiction. In many early interviews, Kosinski stated that he saw life as a 'series of heightened moments', a trait that I will revisit shortly when I discuss Kosinski's obviation of traditional novelistic structure (Tom Teicholz, 'Introduction', p.x). If one relates Kosinski's fiction to what we have learned about Holocaust testimony and the ways in which critics approach it, however, there are fertile grounds for comparison.

Slavoj Žižek characterized statements given by victims of violence as 'contaminated' by being inconsistent and factually deficient.⁴⁰ Žižek argued further that a concentration camp victim would 'disqualify himself by virtue of [...] clarity' (*Violence*, p.4). Žižek may have

⁴⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books, 2008), pp.3-4.

made a valid point on a general level: often victims of violence are disorganized in their accounts because they are traumatized. What he overlooked in this characteristically sweeping statement, is that often victims who make statements attempt to compose themselves and to adapt their stories to conventional narrative forms. This is particularly the case in written testimonies. For instance, Langer cited Wiesel using a Dostoevskian model as his protagonist Eliezer responded to inhumanity in *Night* and described the way that an interviewee for Lanzmann's *Shoah* made his account more 'literary' when he wrote it than in his oral statement (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.43 and p.58). When discussing Charlotte Delbo and her 'survivor literature', Langer made the case that 'anguished memory' seeps into literary memory even as the witness 'ventures to escape' it (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.42).

In the case of Holocaust testimonies specifically, Langer made considerable attempts to relate these narratives and the reactions of those who encounter them to literary narratives and reader reception. Most importantly, Langer found that such narratives are often without comforting aspects that affirm humanity, such as heroism, agency and other qualities that most readers or listeners expect as antidotes to evil, violence, death and trauma. Indeed, literary narratives are often criticized when they lack a redemptive element.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Langer found that those who testified often thwarted the listener's expectations by declining to discuss liberation or undermining conventional expectations of what motivated them at certain times under extreme conditions:

They are making a specific appeal to us to abandon traditional assumptions about moral conduct and the 'privileged' distinctions between right and wrong that usually inspire such assumptions. (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.xii)

In fiction, an author may aim to construct an organized narrative that details traumatic events, whilst pointing to the humanity of both perpetrators and victims, and conclude with a

⁴¹ See, for instance, Kristiaan Versluys on Don DeLillo's post-9/11 novel *Falling Man*. Versluys suggested that the 'absence in the novel's possible world of any valid alternative to melancholy' could be 'used as an excuse for [...] reactionary and even totalitarian movements of redress and moral restoration' (*Out of the Blue*, p.48).

redemptive 'out' for the reader.⁴² Conversely, an author may wish to produce a narrative, the very purpose of which is to represent the stifled, repetitive and disorganized perspective of consciousness overwhelmed by trauma.⁴³

It is my contention that Kosinski combined the two in his fiction, at times creating linear narratives and at others fiction that could be considered as a 'series of heightened moments'. The outcome of the stories is often the survival of the protagonist and his acceptance of some paradox of existence that had troubled him. In this respect, Kosinski's fiction does conform to literary convention, and this may explain why his work always attracted publishers and a fairly large readership during his publishing career. I make this observation in the context of many readers finding Kosinski's work disturbing. Geoffery Wolff was obviously feeling violated after reading *Steps*, when he described the novel as 'a study in the pathology of a hateful man rather than a study of men'.⁴⁴ Kosinski was never a 'bestseller', but Sloan suggested that he had a broad readership, catering to truck drivers, waitresses and academics with a 'mix of ideas, experience, and human possibility' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.334). Sensitivity to the subjective nature of the ways in which individual readers respond to literary texts is obviously important to this thesis. Consider the difference between a 'sheltered' or 'traumatized' perspective, for instance, or between 'prurient' and 'critical' perspectives.

What has always troubled readers and critics, however, is the unapologetic and often unredeemed presence of violence or 'evil' in the deviant personalities of Kosinski's protagonists. Reading his fiction gives the impression that these traits had 'seeped out' into

⁴² Again, see Versluys on the dilemma facing the novelist with values such as 'freedom' and 'humanity', as s/he seeks to avoid dichotomy and represent those who are intolerant towards tolerance (*Out of the Blue*, pp.151-52).

⁴³ See Caruth's analysis of the film *Hiroshima mon amour*, and the 'continual reappearance of a death' that the protagonist 'has not quite grasped' (*Unclaimed Experience*, p.37).

⁴⁴ Geoffery Wolff, 'Growing Poisonous Flowers', *New Leader*, 7 October 1968, pp.18-19 (p.19).

the narratives, leaving them uneven and jarring. In this respect, reading Kosinski's fiction matches the experience of encountering testimony as described by Langer. Often victims underestimate the 'sympathetic power of the imagination' of listeners and their capacity to be shocked (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.xv). One interviewee shocked his listeners by telling one horrific story after another, becoming increasingly agitated until his wife left the room. Having been calm in the early stages of his testimony, Moses S. became 'upset' and 'grows too graphic, thus alienating various members of his audience and vividly illustrating their difficulty in becoming active collaborators in the ordeal of testimony' (*Holocaust Testimonies*, pp.27-28).⁴⁵

I believe that it is a similar process which underpins the 'sadistic' or evil episodes of Kosinski's fiction - 'calm' and measured storytelling with a political and aesthetic agenda, from which traumatic psychic material spills over. The grounds for describing this pattern as compulsive, rather than deliberate, lie in a disparity between aim and impact, and how this relates to lapses in Kosinski's sensitivity towards his readers. Teicholz noted that generally Kosinski was amicable and charming in interviews, different to his protagonists, 'softer and more handsome in person' ('Introduction', p.ix). This contradicts the many sadistic or revenge-inspired impulses encountered in his work and in other stories about his behaviour. In any case, Kosinski's fiction, when placed against the specifics of his life as far as we can know them, constitutes a 'testimony' to psychological damage and distortion inflicted by the Holocaust.

⁴⁵ Besides a lack of sensitivity, in terms of underestimating the impact of his story upon his listeners, one could also make the case that Moses S. is partially motivated by sadistic impulses against those who have not endured the same level of trauma. As time frames often collapse during testimony, survivors feel that they are partly 'reliving' the events as they tell them. This could have the effect of listeners being identified with 'bystanders', towards whom survivors would naturally feel resentment and anger. Having watched the tape myself, I would also add the observation that Moses S. was reacting against a will to suppress his story, particularly from his wife, who obstructed the telling with a number of objections. These included that she found it too much to listen to on an empty stomach and even interruptions to correct his grammar (Moses S. Holocaust Testimony (T-511), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library).

Lazar frequently underestimated the potential impact of disturbing episodes on readers. This is in large part due to what I consider to be a disturbing empathy on Lazar's part with Kosinski's protagonists. When considering the moral rectitude of violence in Kosinski's work, Lazar frequently discriminated between acts of violence, as to whether they are gratuitous or partly justified/ revenge motivated. A protagonist will, obviously, appear more consistent if one course of action appears to be taken in response to an act committed by another. When evaluating *Cockpit*, Lazar felt compelled to justify Tarden's rape and murder of a diplomat's wife on the grounds that these characters are 'the worst that the American military-industrial complex of the 1970s had to offer' (*Through Kosinski's Lenses*, p.41). As I will discuss in greater length, I do not consider this in any way to be an 'average response'. Barbara Tapa Lupack judged rape, incest, adultery and homosexuality as 'erotic', whilst murder, suicide and genocide fell into her 'violent' category.⁴⁶ This aptly demonstrates that not everybody shares the same objections or experiences the same discomfort when confronted with certain narratives.

As the reader should be aware by this point, insisting on biographical and historical detail is only a portion of the critical method to be applied. Having argued in the previous chapter that Salinger's work shows traits of post-traumatic 'withdrawal' as discussed by Caruth, Freud and Kristeva, I am going to focus much more directly on the perceived 'flip side' of such withdrawal: mania.⁴⁷ This is appropriate, as Kosinski could be perceived by many as

⁴⁶ Barbara Tapa Lupack, *Plays of Passion, Games of Chance: Jerzy Kosinski and his Fiction* (Bristol, IN: Wyndham Hall Press, 1988), p.111. Tapa Lupack's argument is also impaired by the misguided belief that Kosinski's experiences largely matched those of the boy in *The Painted Bird* (*Plays of Passion*, p.21). Ruth Franklin, discussing Kosinski's representations of the Holocaust in *The Painted Bird*, was similarly misguided when she took as a starting position that Kosinski was always aesthetically in control of his fiction ('The Bird Painter: Jerzy Kosinski', in *A Thousand Darknesses*, pp.103-20). Her chapter does include, however, an intriguing, unreferenced anecdote about Kosinski being forced to admit that he was Jewish by another survivor who threatened to expose his penis (*A Thousand Darknesses*, p.104).

⁴⁷ Salinger's work could also be looked at in terms of mania. His alleged religious mania during later life and the raptures of some of his Glass protagonists would suggest episodes of mania linked directly to phases of literary production. There is also some evidence of linked sadism that was described in relation to the ways in which

Salinger's mirror opposite, in terms of both his sustained personal interaction with readers through his fiction, and also his choice to live a very public life in America. This, however, is not precisely the case. Kosinski's final novel, *The Hermit of 69th Street*, gives a strong hint in its title, alongside continued mention of ascetics (including Thoreau), yoga and meditation, that the character (one of many Kosinski alter-personae) experiences an equal penchant for withdrawal and solitude. Indeed, it is common for a Kosinskian protagonist to sporadically retreat to and emerge from a reclusive base.

Tarden, Domostroy and Fabian from *Passion Play* are all good examples of men who enjoy a secretive 'small room' existence.⁴⁸ Fabian lives alone in a motorhome and pursues a lifestyle that is a rejection of everything relating to accumulation and security in favour of transience (there are many echoes of *Walden*). Only at the end of the novel do we learn that Fabian's main formative experience was losing all of his relatives except his parents in 'one of the biggest fires ever' (*Passion Play*, p.205). Fabian also witnesses two violent incidents that are described in ways that make them sound similar to pogroms. In the first, he looks at a 'tableau of a massacre' while watching wild horses being captured, and in the second he watches Native American children being rushed to safety as police attack the adults for protesting against a programme for the sterilization of Indian women (*Passion Play*, p.135 and p.172). In many respects, the novel is a case study of a survivor's psyche: fantasies of transience and safety are interrupted by flashbacks that are presented as repetitions of violent traumatic events. Lazar argued that in Kosinski's last three novels, there is much that is positive as the levels of violence are reduced and the protagonists are more capable of romantic love, but did not address the underlying sense of withdrawal that unifies these works (*Through Kosinski's Lenses*, p.166).

the Glass children behave towards each other. The overwhelming sense that one gets from Salinger's life and work, however, is that of withdrawal.

⁴⁸ Jerzy Kosinski, *Passion Play* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1979).

Kosinski (as portrayed by Sloan) and his protagonists also regularly hide when there is no obvious need to do so, or choose to assume a false identity in highly public scenarios when there would be no apparent explanation for such behaviour besides the protagonist's Jewish/Holocaust heritage. When interviewing Kosinski on television, Mike Leiderman told the author 'you can read other people's books and know, well, this is a book about a Jewish theme, a Jewish person, a Jewish situation. You don't get that reading you'. To this Kosinski replied 'No. Life is not Jewish. Life is universal'.⁴⁹ Kosinski, concurring that leitmotifs found throughout his fiction are universal, rather than specifically Jewish, could and should be dismissed as one of many dis/simulations encountered in his prose and published interviews.

I have demonstrated that Kosinski had a conscious interest in hiding and disguising that is apparent in his fiction and biography, and which fits in with a motif of dis/simulation in the Jewish-American fiction discussed in this thesis. In the light of Kosinski's continued problems with mental health, his restlessness and anxiety, his inability to commit to personal relationships and his eventual suicide, I have argued that critics should be discussing his work in terms of compulsive behaviour alongside discussion of measured literary production. I will now be discussing Kosinski's work in terms of bipolarity and the artistic temperament, as flagged-up in the Introduction. In the final stages of this chapter, I will make the argument that Kosinski's work can and should be evaluated in similar terms to that of J. D. Salinger, in that one must acknowledge that trauma symptoms are present that may be directly linked to Holocaust experience. Several of these symptoms appear to be the opposite of withdrawal, and can be considered as manic manifestations of such trauma. Where the two converge, is in Kosinski's (and his protagonists') apparent addiction to disguising for the purposes of humiliating and coercing others. It is in 'hiding' that Kosinskian protagonists 're-enact' post-traumatic revenge.

⁴⁹ Mike Leiderman, 'Encounter - Jerzy Kosinski', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.216-26 (pp.219-20).

Before discussing Kosinski's work further, I will provide a brief outline of work on bipolar disorder by Kay Redfield Jamison. I will then analyse two traits found in Kosinski's novels and the behaviour of his protagonists, combining theoretical and historical contexts, and pointing to sources of testimony that coincide with Kosinski's established experience and post-traumatic traits. The first trait that I will discuss is Kosinski's obviation of traditional plot structure and time-frame, alongside his own comments on these aspects of his work. It will be seen that Kosinski uses methods and arguments that detract from his Jewish and Holocaust related experience and over-ride the possibility that his perspective and aesthetics are specifically post-traumatic. Secondly, I will address the presence of sadism, violence and revenge in Kosinski's fiction - traits that account for the majority of negative appraisals of his work. Once again, I will point to aspects of Kosinski's own commentary in order to argue that the author may have intended to achieve certain effects but unwittingly created others. I will relate this to dis/simulation as a post-traumatic trait by addressing the tendency of Kosinski's protagonists to disguise in order to coerce or humiliate others. It will be seen that this tendency is underpinned by similar psychological motivations to those that caused Kosinski to inflict his sadistic imagination upon readers of his novels.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or Hereditary Condition? Reassessing Symptoms In the Life and Fiction of Jerzy Kosinski.

You know what she said? She says nobody gets a nervous breakdown just from the war and all. She says you probably were unstable like, your whole goddam life. ('For Esmé With Love and Squalor', p.120)

The Fiery aspects of thought and feeling that initially compel the artistic voyage - fierce energy, high mood, and quick intelligence; a sense of the visionary and the grand; a restless and feverish temperament - commonly carry with them the capacity for vastly darker moods, grimmer energies, and, occasionally, bouts of madness. (Kay Redfield Jamison)⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: Free Press, 1994), p.2.

Following the defeat of Hitler's Germany and the end of the Nazi Holocaust, several processes of legal justice, including the Nuremberg Trials, brought those directly responsible to account. As has been the case in all modern societies, where blame has been attributed, a claim for compensation was never far behind. Some of those that survived the Holocaust attempted to secure financial recompense from the German government, for the losses that they had suffered and the psychological damage that they continued to endure.⁵¹ In many cases, survivors found it hard to claim compensation because they could not prove that they were not predisposed to an underlying or hereditary health problem. Hass noted that survivors had to counter claims by German psychiatrists that they would 'not have developed problems had it not been for their infantile neuroses, which made them excessively vulnerable to stress' (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.16). This may lead one to reconsider the later work of Freud and of Kristeva discussed thus far, in terms of the possibility that an underlying 'traumatic' condition causes psychological problems such as depression. Indeed, Freud doubted that 'a terrifying experience can of itself produce a neurosis in adult life', while Rappaport stated that 'he (Freud) could not have foreseen or imagined the terror practices of the SS which were designed to exhaust anybody's personality resources regardless of the presence or absence of specific conflicts in the unconscious' (Quoted in 'Psychiatry and the Holocaust', p.10).

Novick noted that several Jewish critics, 'occasionally in print, more often in private' have been 'acerbic about what they see as [Elie] Wiesel's carefully cultivated persona as symbol of suffering' (*Holocaust in American Life*, p.274). Also noted is that as a child, Wiesel had

⁵¹ Robert Krell noted that a 'compensation law was passed in 1956 by the Federal Republic of Germany to provide all individuals that were persecuted because of their race, religion [...] appropriate restitution. In order to receive compensation, the survivor had to prove that existing problems were a consequence of persecution' ('Psychiatry and the Holocaust', in *Medical and Psychological Effects of Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors*, ed. by Robert Krell and Marc I. Sherman (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1997), pp.3-22 (p.10)).

trained in ascetic religious exercises and as a teenager was attracted by ‘the lure and quest for suffering’.⁵² It may be argued, in the most basic terms, that Wiesel had a ‘melancholic’ or ‘contemplative’ aspect to his nature that would have emerged in later life, regardless of his harrowing experiences at Auschwitz. Similarly, Franz Kuna argued that despite any ‘trauma’ that Franz Kafka may have experienced because of anti-Semitism, masochism may equally have been a part of his underlying personality that he had ‘come to terms with’, as the content of his novels and ‘the extent to which he invited torment and humiliation from his fiancée Felice Bauer and other people he loved’, aptly demonstrated.⁵³

Whilst I do not wish to debate the legal merits of the often futile attempts of Holocaust survivors to claim restitution, the issue of whether a symptom is distinctly related to Holocaust survivors or whether it is determined by other factors (and so anyone, anywhere could be a victim), flags up key critical issues if one is seeking to address post-traumatic symptoms in the literature of a specific ethnic group. Most students of literature will have encountered a study of an author that looks at her/his work as symptomatic of a psychiatric disorder, whether it be hereditary, related to an organic cause (such as an illness with recognizable physical and psychological symptoms), or substance misuse. In the case of Holocaust survivors, the most enlightened studies have shown that there exist clear patterns among those analysed that are different from sufferers of other illnesses.⁵⁴ This is not to say, however, that Holocaust survivors may not have experienced pre-existing or congenital disorders alongside post-traumatic symptoms that were a direct result of their Holocaust experiences.

⁵² Elie Wiesel, *All Rivers Run to the Sea: Memoirs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p.150.

⁵³ Franz Kuna, *Literature as Corrective Punishment* (London: Elek Books Ltd, 1974), p.33.

⁵⁴ Some psychiatrists have also argued that Holocaust trauma is unique among other traumas. Krell wrote that ‘Generally speaking, no previous observations, research, or clinical expertise had prepared the psychiatrist and psychologist for the experiences of multiple loss and the severity of trauma suffered by Holocaust survivors’ (‘Survivors and Their Families’, in *Medical and Psychological Effects of Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors*, pp.23-31 (pp.27-28)). Again, one has to acknowledge that not all survivors had the same experience and that even those who did share similar experiences were affected differently.

In her seminal work on bipolar disorder and the artistic temperament, Kay Redfield Jamison listed symptoms that are connected to bipolar disorder and its milder forms, hypomania and cyclothymia. Those that would match Kosinski's erratic patterns of behaviour include uninhibited people seeking, hyper-sexuality, excessive involvement in pleasurable activities with lack of concern for painful consequences (financial improvidence, reckless driving), being talkative, decreased need for sleep and inappropriate joking and punning (*Touched with Fire*, Appendix A, p.265). One should also take into account that another crucial indicator is at least one major depressive episode, and that prior to the discovery of Lithium as a treatment, 'at least one person in five with manic-depressive illness committed suicide' (*Touched with Fire*, p.16).

It is worth noting here that Sloan speculated on the reasons why Kosinski never sought medical treatment, and concluded that he had a personal 'myth of omnipotence' as a survivor (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.439). There is an equally plausible reason related to Kosinski's background. As Jamison pointed out, and as Kosinski would have been aware, large numbers of people with mood disorders were 'systematically killed in German concentration camps' while sterilization of 'patients with [...] manic-depressive illness, was once practised in the United States' (*Touched with Fire*, p.8). In this sense, mental illness was another aspect of personal identity that Kosinski may have felt an understandable compulsion to hide. As Jamison also pointed out, the artist's lifestyle has always 'provide[d] cover for deviant and bizarre behaviour' (*Touched with Fire*, p.4). In *The Devil Tree*, the protagonist recalls a friend who compared American treatment of the mentally ill to the Holocaust, in which 'Jews, lunatics and the infectiously ill were the first to be massacred'.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Jerzy Kosinski, *The Devil Tree* (St Albans, Herts: Panther, 1975), p.56.

If one were to apply Jamison's diagnostic criteria and the psycho-biographic method that she has employed to 'diagnose' writers including Melville and Byron as 'probable cases' of the manic-depressive spectrum, it would appear from what we have discussed thus far that Kosinski is a 'prima-facie' case. One should also take into account, as Jamison explains, that suicide occurs most often when the sufferer is in a state of mixed or alternating mania and depression (*Touched with Fire*, p.46). Shortly before his death, Kosinski told an interviewer that 'there are days when I see myself as a profoundly heroic figure [...] and there are days when I see myself as a decrepit figure about to die' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.444). One could add to this that in Jamison's account, bipolar disorder appears to be more prevalent in artistic and creative families, and that among writers and artists there are more manic-depressives (and suicides) than in the general population (*Touched with Fire*, p.5). If one considers that suicide among Holocaust survivors in general is low, but that among those survivors who were creative artists it is elevated, the debate about what causes 'symptoms' in Holocaust survivor artists and their work becomes even more clouded.⁵⁶

As I have suggested in the first two chapters, however, trauma may be related to depression (or melancholia) and its perceived flip-side, mania. It must be said that Jamison was ambivalent in her position on this. For the most part, Jamison was keen to argue that disorders in the manic-depressive spectrum are hereditary and genetic, even discussing the practicalities of eliminating a culpable gene through science.⁵⁷ At one stage of her argument, for instance, Jamison noted that poetry is often born of despair, and gave the example of Paul

⁵⁶ For a discussion of this, see Thane Rosenbaum, 'The Survivor who Survived', *New York Times* Op-Ed, 12 October 2002 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/12/opinion/the-survivor-who-survived.html?scp=66>> [accessed 19 August 2010]. Also see Yoram Barak, MD MHA, 'The Aging of Holocaust Survivors: Myth and Reality Concerning Suicide', *Israel Medical Association Journal*, 9 (March 2007), 196-98. Barak argued that geriatric survivors are greatly at risk of severe depression and suicide compared to those of the same age with no Holocaust exposure. This is set against the 'myth that Holocaust survivors will never choose death as they [...] assumed an attitude of "endurance"' ('Aging of Holocaust Survivors', p.196).

⁵⁷ Having spent some time trawling the internet for science journals and news reports about the discovery of such a gene, I have not found anything conclusive. The phrase 'which may increase the risk of' is used quite often in relation to genes that scientists have isolated in this pursuit.

Celan, without a single allusion to his traumatic background (*Touched with Fire*, p.125).

Jamison also looked at the ‘advantages’ of the condition, such as increased creativity, production and success, but concluded that the main course of treatment used by doctors - drug therapy - is necessary to prevent suicide even if it dampens artistic flare: ‘No-one is creative when paralytically depressed, psychotic, institutionalized, in restraints, or dead because of suicide’ (*Touched with Fire*, p.249).⁵⁸

At other times, however, Jamison favoured an explanation that is based on environmental factors, such as events that cause suffering. For instance, Jamison acknowledged the following observation of Ernst Kretschmer:

Men of this kind have a soft temperament which can swing to great extremes. The path over which it swings is a wide one, namely between cheerfulness and unhappiness... Not only is the hypo-manic disposition well known to be a particularly labile one, which also has leanings in the depressive direction, but many of these cheerful natures have, when we get to know them better, a permanent melancholic element somewhere in the background of their being... The hypomanic and melancholic halves of the cycloid temperament relieve one another, they form layers or patterns in individual cases, arranged in the most varied combinations. (*Touched with Fire*, p.14)

Jamison also acknowledged that art is often concerned with extreme mental states and that part of the ‘knack’ of artistic creation is to seek out ‘regressive states’, as argued by Arthur Koestler:

We have seen that the creative act always involves a regression to earlier, more primitive levels in the mental hierarchy, while other processes continue simultaneously on the rational surface - a condition that reminds one of a skin diver with a breathing tube.⁵⁹

Finally, Jamison mentioned that environmental factors may influence ‘at least in part’ both the appearance of the illness and the tendency towards creativity (*Touched with Fire*, p.253).

⁵⁸ Indeed, Jamison mentioned at the outset that because of the legal risks associated with the care of mentally ill patients, attempting to treat manic-depressive illness with therapy alone is ‘usually considered to be malpractice’ (*Touched with Fire*, p.7).

⁵⁹ Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: Dell, 1971), p.316.

On the face of it, then, we are left with a conclusion that is paradoxical. No gene has been found that is wholly responsible for the condition, but all statistic-based studies indicate that it is hereditary. There is ‘no evidence’ that the illness can be successfully treated by psychotherapy alone, whilst anti-depressants simply blunt the symptoms (*Touched with Fire*, p.247).⁶⁰ In this respect, it could be argued that none of the above has successfully countered Freud’s later arguments, outlined in previous chapters, concerning depression, mourning, melancholia and trauma. In particular, there is no conclusive evidence that mania is not simply the flip side of depression, which signals the overthrowing of an ingrained, trauma-related depression or a ‘dam’ against it. There is no conclusive evidence that the condition is ‘pre-natal’, ‘pre-object’, or more liable to resurface in later life in some than in others who have shared traumatic experiences. In short, we can see that there are patterns and symptoms, but cannot turn away entirely from the notion that bipolarity is related to an essentially traumatic consciousness as described by Kristeva, Caruth and the later Freud. Having adumbrated so far in this chapter some of the key critical positions on trauma, depression and bipolarity, I will now focus directly on traits that have been commonly looked upon as typical in Kosinski’s fiction. The first of these, for which Kosinski was criticized at various points in his career, is the erratic form of his fiction.

Post-Traumatic or Postmodern Perspective? Competing Aims and Impulses in the Form and Motifs of Kosinski’s Fiction.

Kosinski himself remarked to an interviewer that his life was the stuff of novels [...] nonetheless, Kosinski felt that his unique individual experiences, when transmuted to fiction, became a didactic lesson for others. (Tom Teicholz, ‘Introduction’, pp.ix-x)

I see revenge as the last vestige of the eminently threatened self [...] Revenge can be a positive force - the victim’s final dignity. (Jerzy Kosinski, in ‘Penthouse Review’, pp.202-03).

⁶⁰ Kristeva was more sceptical about drug therapy, stating that ‘such sublimatory solutions to loss’ as literary catharsis ‘are lucid counterdepressants rather than neutralizing antidepressants’ (*Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, p.24). Also note that when discussing the depressed state of a bipolar patient, Jamison used the terms ‘grief’, ‘depression’ and ‘melancholia’ alternately (*Touched with Fire*, pp.119-25).

In *Steps*, the reader encounters a narrative that is devoid of traditional structure and accumulative drive. Instead, one incident or 'heightened moment' is followed by another that may be linked tenuously to what has gone before, if the reader is inclined to make such a link.⁶¹ Many of the episodes are violent or traumatic, and readers may conclude that whilst in some ways the protagonist comes to terms with his life, certain repetitions occur that may be post-traumatic re-enactments. For example, we read of a tragic accident brought about by a high-risk driving challenge undertaken by the narrator during his early immigrant days in America (*Steps*, p.127). Sometime later, the most traumatic element of this accident (decapitation) is reflected in another episode, which the reader is led to assume happened earlier, in the protagonist's previous life in Eastern Europe (*Steps*, p.145). In this example (and there are many others in the novel), trauma, as Freud suggests, is something that is processed belatedly, not experienced fully at the time, and only revisited indirectly through future triggering stimuli.

This post-traumatic tendency is reflected in the fractured chronology of the novel, and also in the technique of representing unlinked incidents without authorial intervention. Sloan suggested that *Steps* had 'a plot after all', as it was the 'fragmented story of a man who does not coincide with his own being' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.258). When addressing the implications of such a narrative, Sloan asked whether it is 'existential engagement of the highest order or borderline madness?' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.259). This question gestures towards a larger problem relating to postmodern or metafictional texts, as to whether they reflect a more honest and philosophically rigorous perspective of ontological and temporal stability and correctly undermine ideologically imposed world views, or whether

⁶¹ Jerzy Kosinski, *Steps* (London: Vintage, 1988). Kosinski relied on the same structure, or lack thereof, in *Blind Date*, of which Sloan lamented 'what could link such disparate events aside from the fact that all had been part of the life of Kosinski?' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.340). Noting the absence of chronology in *Hermit*, Sloan suggested that after the *Village Voice* attack 'for Kosinski, the onward flow of time stopped' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.411). This is an odd remark, given that in Kosinski's life and work lack of organization and sequence were recurring themes from the very beginning.

they are symptomatic of a disturbed or traumatized psyche. Jerome Klinkowitz, championing literary experimentation, rhapsodised that:

Kosinski demonstrates the structural art of handling the fragments of contemporary life in a sublimely synthetic way - in a manner which will soon be heralded as organic when the post-contemporary fictionists establish their work as the major literary mode.⁶²

When discussing the problems encountered with processing traumatic past events whilst living in the present, Langer concluded that survivors' memories were not 'a storehouse of consecutive moments in time' (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.5). Langer also described victims living their lives in 'two temporal directions at once' (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.34).

Applying a little literary 'close reading', Langer applied this idea of temporal disturbance to a tense shift unwittingly made by a survivor, who said that his mentality is to 'hit back very hard, before you get hit' (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.97).

Kraft described the primary unit of Holocaust testimonies as 'the episode', and this is further broken down into 'vivid perceptual images, deeply felt emotions, and psychological experiences', which would also aptly describe the narrative form of *Steps (Memory Perceived*, p.17). Jamison noted that mania (the condition in which bipolar writers often produce the bulk of their work) can result in 'a formidable combination of imagination, adventurousness, and a restless, quick and vastly associative mind' (*Touched with Fire*, p.109). The counter-balance to this seemingly advantageous 'symptom' where artistic creativity is concerned is that, as in the case of Samuel Taylor Coleridge for example, a lack

⁶² Jerome Klinkowitz, *Literary Disruptions: The Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975), p.101. When I began reading Paul R. Lily Jr.'s *Words in Search of Victims: The Achievement of Jerzy Kosinski* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1988), I expected, based on the title, to find some ideas that overlapped with my own. Lily Jr.'s thesis, however, is that Kosinski's fiction 'is about the art of writing fiction' (*Words in Search of Victims*, p.3). Words associated with Holocaust experience were frequently used by Lily Jr. in this context, for instance when discussing Kosinski writing in English as 'freedom' as opposed to a sense of 'confinement, a cage' (*Words in Search of Victims*, p.4).

of concern for comprehensibility can repel or befuddle an audience.⁶³ It would be difficult to make the case definitively that the form of Kosinski's work was inspired either by measured artistic and political intent, or by an unconscious compulsion caused by the idiosyncrasies of his mental condition. Kosinski's comments on his own work, however, can help us to understand this better.

Kosinski argued that he deliberately created *Steps* in a way that was devoid of Aristotelian plot, so that the reader could quit the book, should s/he choose, at the end of any episode.⁶⁴ He also stated that when he avoided traditional plot it was because 'he sees life' as a series of 'heightened moments' (Tom Teicholz, 'Introduction', p.x). Furthermore, Kosinski told Brandon Tartikoff that he disliked novels that were self-referential and failed to convey human incident and emotion.⁶⁵ In short, Kosinski argued in these examples that he was reflecting a world view that he found realistic, and one with which he believed that readers in general would identify. Kosinski insisted that people should accept a 'true sense of the randomness of life's moments' in order to find 'peace' and 'happiness'.⁶⁶

Kosinski, in fact, believed that he as a novelist had 'a lot in common with others', and saw his characters and their predicaments as 'typical'.⁶⁷ One contradiction that clearly hampered Kosinski, is that he looked upon literature both as a didactic lesson and at the same time as a matter of faithful representation. As I will discuss shortly, Kosinski conceded that it may

⁶³ Jamison cited Thomas Carlyle describing Coleridge in a highly talkative state, failing to 'communicate [any] meaning whatsoever to any individual of his hearers [...] the most had long before given up' (*Touched with Fire*, p.109). The salient point here is that bipolar sufferers, when manic, do not stay focussed on any subject for long and frequently skip between topics. If such a person narrates a life story, a similar effect may be observed to that found in *Steps*.

⁶⁴ Jerzy Kosinski, 'The Art of the Self: Essays à Propos *Steps*', in *Passing By: Selected Essays, 1962-1991*, pp.223-45 (p.224).

⁶⁵ Brandon Tartikoff, 'Jerzy Kosinski', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.9-19 (p.12).

⁶⁶ Daniel J. Cahill, 'An Interview with Jerzy Kosinski on *Blind Date*', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.150-58 (p.158).

⁶⁷ Tom Teicholz, 'Introduction', p.ix; Patricia Griffin, 'Conversation with Kosinski', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.132-41 (p.141).

have been difficult for readers to confront violence and trauma, but believed strongly that it was morally important that these aspects of life should be confronted. When Kosinski discussed the temporal aspect of his novels, however, he was more likely to assert that this structure was ‘typical’ or reflected the way that his readers, and not just he himself, experienced life.

One has to question whether this is so. I have already illustrated the case that temporal disorganization and processing memories as a series of episodes and heightened moments are symptoms that could be connected to both bipolarity and trauma. In terms of discussing whether such a perspective is ‘healthy’ or ‘average’, one need only look at polarized responses to metafictional experiments in the novel. These made a trope of temporal (and spatial) displacement in order to draw attention to the ‘constructedness’ of traditional narrative and as a measure of self-reflexivity. Some critics have expressed a puritanical distaste for such formal experimentation, citing self-absorption, effeteness and absence of recognizable reality as deep flaws.⁶⁸ In a similar mode, readers may complain that they feel terrorized by the prospect of a life devoid of structure. Others have applauded the attempts of such novelists to get under the skin of fiction and lay bare the falsehood of authorial control and intention that dominated literary criticism for thousands of years. For some, of course, fiction that abdicates traditional structure is so enjoyable as to become a fetish.

My own experience is somewhere in between. When reading novels such as *Trout Fishing in America* or *Travels in the Scriptorium*, I am simultaneously frustrated by the absence of linearity, clarity and conclusion, but admiring of the cleverness with which the novelist reminds me that so much of my outlook is predetermined by philosophically dated modes of

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Sean O’Hagan’s article on Paul Auster, ‘Abstract Expressionist’ (*Observer Magazine*, 8 February 2004, pp.30-37). O’ Hagan states that Auster is popular in France, where ‘metafiction’ is admired, but less revered in America where critics feel that those who undertake such experiments know that ‘the harder it is to be pinned down on any idea, the easier it is to conceal that one has no ideas at all’ (‘Abstract Expressionist’, p.35).

thought and perception. And yet in day-to-day life, linearity remains the very basis of my systems of perception. I do not abandon wholly the concept of concatenation or the responsibility of trying to make personal choices, based on an organized narrative of my own experiences. I do not live with a Kosinskian perspective of time and memory as heightened moments without narrative linking. I believe from experience of people who read modern fiction that I am in the majority in this sense, and that linear narratives certainly constitute the majority of popular written culture.

As such, I believe it is fair to say that Kosinski was, like other ‘experimental’ authors, out of kilter with ‘average’ readers, but this is quite possibly because his perspective was ‘post-traumatic’ or ‘manic’ at times.⁶⁹ In this respect, Kosinski’s misunderstanding of his ‘audience’ (and his arguments concerning his ‘readers’ and ‘people’) reflects Kraft’s argument that for those who endured the Holocaust during early years, it dominates formative experience and subsequent outlook. It also demonstrates Langer’s analysis of the disparity between listeners’ expectations and the testimony of survivors. The form of Kosinski’s fiction and the reaction of those critics who were unimpressed, mirror what has been observed concerning the interactive dynamics of testimony.⁷⁰

By using ‘teasingly autobiographical’ protagonists and events in his fiction, Kosinski was camouflaging his conscious self for reasons already discussed. Elements of Kosinski’s personal post-traumatic and/or bipolar ‘symptoms’, however, can be seen in the form of his fiction. A similar case can be made in terms of the alleged sadism of which critics made so

⁶⁹ Obviously, different cultures will have their own dominant cultural models, so one needs to be careful about the sorts of extrapolations that one makes. All of Kosinski’s public appearances and interactions show that he saw his audience as the general American public at the time. As I have already argued, his perspectives were not universally shared by his readership.

⁷⁰ John Leonard wrote that Kosinski ‘will not forgive the world for its displacements of “being”. He flings the bloody finger in our faces’ (‘Books of the Times: *Passion Play*’, *New York Times*, 13 September 1979, p.C21).

much in his novels.⁷¹ Whilst Kosinski may dis/simulate by presenting a fictionalized version of himself to readers, the genesis of any incidents or actions represented in his novels was, of course, Kosinski's own imagination. This was fertile ground for stories of sexualized violence and extreme revenge.

Throughout Kosinski's oeuvre, physical violence and psychological pain is represented in an unemotional way. In *The Future is Ours, Comrade*, the narrator describes Russian bureaucracy bringing about the end of a promising love affair in dispassionate detail and simply concludes: 'I drew the curtains closed across the compartment window and began to complete my notes' (*The Future is Ours*, p.61). On many occasions, a Kosinskian protagonist acts in response to violence or the character flaw of another, and the reader may empathize with this. More often than not, however, the revenge meted out is disproportionate and sadistic.⁷²

Hass noted that survivors who had endured or witnessed 'continuous humiliation would [experience] protracted [...] rage' that could manifest itself in 'a retaliatory posture' (*In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p.14). Kraft noted that survivors had an 'increased sensitivity for detecting cruelty, spiritual malignancy, and oppression' (*Memory Perceived*, p.169). Sloan claimed that Kosinski saw American society as 'empty, lonely, venal and inauthentic' (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.207). At the end of *The Painted Bird*, the boy has learned from his experiences that dis/simulation offers an advantageous range of tactics that can be adapted to a variety of ends. In the relative safety of post-war Poland, he adopts the identity of the son of a Russian army officer in order to get some nurses and an orphanage principal in trouble with

⁷¹ Jonathan Baumbach wrote that *Cockpit* contained a 'mix of poetic justice and whimsical viciousness' (*Cockpit*, *New York Times*, Book Review, 10 August 1975, p.3).

⁷² Kosinski's fiction sometimes exposes those who attack or malign other 'victims'. See for instance *Blind Date*, in which Levanter responds to the disproportionate negative attention attracted by a group of 'small Americans' or 'midgets' at a hotel by stating that 'It's a big country' (*Blind Date*, p.101). He is the only character who does not become hysterical or hostile when he sees this group of people.

the authorities (*Painted Bird*, p.201). Since he does not want to remove his Russian uniform, the boy has the principal and his nurses subjected to a violent and traumatic ransacking by Russian soldiers.

In *Cockpit*, Tarden witnesses scenes that again sound similar to pogroms, in Djakarta. As an international man of politics, he is sent by the 'Service' on an assignment to a conference of anthropologists and psychologists. Having become annoyed at one psychologist, and having been spoken down to by his wife, Tarden takes revenge on the couple by raping and murdering the wife (*Cockpit*, pp.68-73). The tone of this episode's telling is self-satisfied. Those familiar with Kosinski's background and studies of the effects of trauma may consider that here Tarden's response is disproportionate, but also that as a survivor of cataclysmic events his sense of what is proportionate may be impaired.

Lily Jr.'s most insightful passages relate to *Cockpit*, in which he saw Tarden as a 'writer who both deceives and risks exposure' (*Words in Search of Victims*, p.89). Having acknowledged that 'Tarden's pranks range from harmless to savage', Lily Jr. went on to state that 'Tarden's victims find their perceptions of themselves expanded by his altered truths' (*Words in Search of Victims*, p.96 and p.97). Once again, I am dubious about this writer's empathy with the actions and aims of the Kosinskian protagonist. Daniel J. Cahill, who at the time of writing his essay was a professed admirer of Kosinski, focussed on the affirmation of the 'final necessity of turning from violence', rather than the expression of violence in his work.⁷³

Samuel Coale suggested that Kosinski had fallen in on his own 'solipsism' as representations

⁷³ Daniel J. Cahill, 'Jerzy Kosinski: Retreat From Violence', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 18 (1972), 121-32 (p.132).

of unredeemed violence and cinematic subjectivity became the norm in his fiction after *The Painted Bird* and *Steps*.⁷⁴

In *Holocaust Testimonies*, Langer noted that when survivors talk of acts of resistance or revenge:

we impose [the motives] on the text, because the testimony does not even hint at these issues. Instead, it steers us away from our value laden vocabulary to the self-ish definition of self that came to constitute the *raison d'être* of so many former victims. (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.184)⁷⁵

When asked (as he frequently was) about sadism and revenge in his novels, Kosinski often answered by claiming that readers should be aware of violence and how it could affect them.⁷⁶ Elsewhere, he stated that his intention was to 'pierce' and inflict 'blows' upon the reader's imagination.⁷⁷ Kosinski also argued that his fiction represented violence in a way that was 'democratic', as it let the reader decide which moral position to take.⁷⁸

Once again, we could choose to take the author's word concerning his motivation to represent sadism without emotion and repeated episodes of disproportionate revenge. Given what has been discussed so far, this would be a mistake. Sadism and revenge in Kosinski's fiction coincide with similar impulses in his life and fit many aspects of the profile that I have been compiling on trauma symptoms in Holocaust survivors. The fact that in many cases Kosinski's work repelled his readers, who either misunderstood or otherwise did not appreciate the 'aims' of his art, again points towards a sadistic impulse on the part of the

⁷⁴ Samuel Coale, 'The Cinematic Self of Jerzy Kosinski', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 20.3 (1974), 359-71 (p.370).

⁷⁵ Leon Czerwonka testified that if given the opportunity, he would 'cut all the Germans into tiny little pieces' (*The Children Accuse*, p.198). Anna Kovitzka told of 40 SS officers being thrown into an oven with apparent excitement and expressed sadism at the prospects of Germans being made to feel small and weak (*I Did Not Interview the Dead*, p.18 and p.22). Nat G. told his interviewers at the Fortunoff Archive that he 'made a pogrom' at a Swiss watch factory, and also that he ran over a couple for no other reason than that they were German (Nat G. Holocaust Testimony (T-1637), Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library).

⁷⁶ For example see Brandon Tartikoff, 'Jerzy Kosinski', p.13.

⁷⁷ Jerome Klinkowitz, 'Jerzy Kosinski: An Interview', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.37-59 (p.49).

⁷⁸ Gail Sheehy, 'The Psychological Novelist as Portable Man', in *Conversations with Jerzy Kosinski*, pp.120-31 (p.126).

author, or at the very least a lack of sensitivity as discussed above.⁷⁹ And this, importantly, is expressed under the ‘disguise’ of a different self - a Kosinskian protagonist.

The Devil Tree is perhaps the best novel with which to demonstrate this. The protagonist, Whalen, is a privileged heir to a protestant empire who suffers the ‘trauma’ of his fortune being held in a trust of which he is not in control, and of being of a generation that cannot live up to the promise of the previous one. Kosinski told Cahill that he needed to ‘police’ himself not to respond to Whalen or project ‘my practicality and my own background’ onto the character (*The Devil Tree: An Interview with Jerzy Kosinski*, p.67). Kosinski conceded that he ‘would not like’ Whalen (*Ibid.*). The basis of this self-assessment is that Kosinski is writing ‘the most societal’ of his novels up to this point, as his character will be more recognizable to American readers, in Kosinski’s own words ‘over-familiar’ (*Ibid.*). Also, Kosinski’s aim, in this instance, was to represent and allow readers to judge the character and his motivations.

Whalen recalls a traumatic childhood incident in which he hid behind a cabinet (*The Devil Tree*, pp.35-36). He has problems trusting people, hides and spies, is never fully sincere (even in a therapy group) and manifests symptoms of a manic emergence from depression several times:

During the past days I have had a recurring physical sensation. It is as if the world were very sharply defined, but at the same time remote. Objects vibrate and quiver against me, but I cannot touch them. It’s like coming into bright sunlight from a photographer’s dark room. I fear that this sensation will last forever, that I will never be able to explain it and that I’m the only one who feels it. (*The Devil Tree*, p.124)

Kosinski could only produce a protagonist whose psychological and post-traumatic profile matches his own, even when his intention was to create a recognizable American character.

⁷⁹ In true contradictory fashion (or perhaps because some interviewers ask more trenchant questions than others), elsewhere Kosinski admitted that he had a lesser capacity for shock than many others because ‘I accept the reality the way I have perceived it in my life’ (*The Art of Fiction XLVI - Jerzy Kosinski*, p.26).

Kosinski often asserted that people of all backgrounds could be ‘victims’, but Kosinski’s ‘victims’, with the exception of Chance discussed above, all match the specific psychological traits that I have discussed as present in Holocaust survivors whose experiences match Kosinski’s.⁸⁰

In the case of Whalen, the tendencies towards sadism and revenge complete the profile of the Kosinskian protagonist.⁸¹ The reader may empathize with Whalen’s response when he is brutalized by a police officer, and in response uses the influence of his family history to extract proportionate revenge. Whalen insists that as he was punched in the face, the officer who dealt the blow should receive the exact same treatment. When this is done, Whalen is happy to move on. At the novel’s conclusion, Whalen murders two people who stand between him and his fortune. Again, readers may empathize with his negative impulse towards these unsympathetic characters, if not the extremity of his action and the emotionless way in which the episode is told.

Thus far, I have discussed dis/simulation and post-traumatic symptoms in Kosinski’s work. The conclusion that I have reached is that using ‘teasingly autobiographical’ protagonists is part of an ingrained and post-traumatic tendency to dis/simulate. This has been placed alongside Kosinski’s inability to control or predict the effects that his work would have on readers, which indicates post-traumatic or bipolar traits seeping into the narratives. I will now

⁸⁰ That *Being There* is different from other Kosinski novels in this respect could be explained by the fact that Kosinski borrowed ‘its protagonist, its structure, its specific events, and its conclusion’ from a source little known to American readers: Dolega-Mostowicz’s 1932 novel *The Career of Nicodem Dyzma* (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.292). As such, Kosinski was adapting rather than creating a novel from scratch, and, it could be argued, putting less of himself into it.

⁸¹ Langer described one survivor lamenting that his traumatic background was always on his mind: ‘I just can’t get out of myself’ (FA, Tape T-158. Testimony of Leo G., *Holocaust Testimonies*, p.146). David Brauner noted that Jewish authors often write about characters with an ‘exacerbated self-consciousness’ and need to explain themselves, but does not note that at the same time Jewish-American authors often create characters who are like themselves (*Post-War Jewish Fiction*, p.35). It will be seen in the next chapter that Auster and Roth create alter-personae protagonists who manifest trauma symptoms. In this sense they, like Kosinski, struggle to ‘get out’ of themselves.

complete this study with a theorized analysis of the motif in which these tendencies crystallize and coalesce. This is when Kosinski's characters dis/simulate ostensibly in order to carry out a prank, but other impulses impinge upon the reader's expectations of enjoyment.

Pleasure and Sadism: Competing Impulses That Inspire Pranks in Kosinski's Fiction.

I accept the notion that morality is to limit experience. [...] I would never consciously harm anyone. I know that harming others means that eventually it comes back at you. Our victim is in fact a replica of ourself. ('Jerzy Kosinski: Tapping into His Vision of Truth', p.109)

Keep it above the belt, stop short of total humiliation and, if possible, mix in some irony [...] a good prank, of course, involves good stagecraft. But it also requires emotional intuition. (Benedict Carey)⁸²

Pranks played by Kosinski's protagonists mirror those played by the author himself, as described by Sloan. Whalen describes an episode from his time in Bangkok, when he took to hiding in bushes and jumping out to misdirect the donkeys of villagers who were travelling home in opium-induced stupors, reliant on the animal to convey them (*The Devil Tree*, p.20). Many readers would find this amusing and dismiss it as 'horseplay', although it must be acknowledged that there is a degree of sadism in all pranks. As Carey noted, many studies by anthropologists have concluded that the purpose of pranks is initiation and the acceptance of an individual into a group.⁸³ This runs in parallel with the idea that a person will only tease you if they like you.

⁸² Benedict Carey 'April Fool! The Purpose of Pranks', *New York Times*, 1 April 2008
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/01/health/01mind.html?_r=1> [accessed 9 January 2011].

⁸³ For instance, cultural sociologist Jonathan Wynn is quoted as saying that in some groups people 'gain status by being picked on in certain ways' ('April Fool! The Purpose of Pranks'). Reading this brings to mind the Battle Royale in Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which the author said was a 'rite which could be used to project certain racial divisions into society and reinforce the idea of white racial superiority' ('On Initiation Rites and Power: A Lecture at West Point', in *Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: A Casebook*, ed. by John F. Callahan (Oxford: Oxford

Kosinski was capable of performing pranks that were geared towards ‘inclusion’ or ‘bonding’, as well as causing mirth, as the example of him hiding under a settee and pouring tea into Warren Beatty’s shoes indicates (*Jerzy Kosinski: A Biography*, p.368). Beatty was said to be ‘wholeheartedly amused’ (*Ibid.*). In *Passion Play*, when Fabian is harassed by some young men at a restaurant, he persuades several dogs to urinate on their jackets, spoiling their evening and leaving, thus indicating no wish to bond whatsoever (*Passion Play*, pp.3-5). Pranks are often, however, equally studied in contexts of bullying and harassment. Pranks can either be ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Narrated ‘good’ pranks should differ from revenge-inspired narratives as they should strive to please an audience and, in some cases, the ‘victim’ her/himself. Another conclusion of psychological studies of pranks is that they have the valuable social effect of being able to ‘kick start new behaviours, new self-exploration and, ultimately, self-improvement’ (Neal Roese quoted in ‘April Fool! The Purpose of Pranks’).

In *Passion Play*, Fabian terrorizes a class of Ivy League students, ‘maintaining a straight face’ whilst telling them that the course on which they have enrolled will involve pain, experiments on animals, autopsies and witnessing the last moments of a member of suicides anonymous (*Passion Play*, p.189). He does not disabuse the class even though ‘a frantic scampering to every exit broke out’ (*Passion Play*, p.190). In *The Devil Tree*, Whalen hides. In *Passion Play*, Fabian masquerades, or disguises, as an invented persona, somebody he is not. In each of these instances, Kosinski’s narrators may prove a point or reflect some readers’ impulses by playing a prank on someone who he judges to ‘deserve’ it. As with the examples that I detailed from Kosinski’s own life in the second part of this chapter, there are differing levels of sadism expressed in these pranks. Both of these characters frequently

University Press, 2004), pp.323-43 (p.332)). I am not convinced, however, by Ellison’s simple alignment of this act of brutal racialized sadism with ‘those rites of initiation called “fools errands”’, because in many cases such pranks are precursors to their ‘victim’ becoming fully accepted as a member of a group, despite any power relations that exist within it. For this comparison to work more precisely, the Negroes who took part in the Battle Royale would have to have been accepted as ‘white’ citizens afterwards.

dis/simulate for 'defensive' reasons, to protect their identity or self. Whilst dis/simulating in these instances, it can also be seen that aggressive impulses come to the surface that distort any potential pleasurable effect of the anecdotes on the reader.

If we wish to consider the effect that fictional pranks will have on readers, we need a brief framework that suggests where the reader's potential for pleasure and its opposites lie. If we refer to Freud's early work on literature and comedy, we can use as a starting position the idea that the reader or play-goer is, in part, motivated by an opportunity to 'blow off steam', by indulging in identification with an heroic character or one who shares one's own neurosis (without taking any risks), or by purging negative emotions through identification and compensation.⁸⁴ We may also assume that the creative work contains the writer's fantasies, in which the reader may share and indulge her/himself, but that the writer's *ars poetica* allows the reader to overcome the barrier between the writer's ego and her/his own - if the writer simply narrated her/his own fantasy it would leave the reader 'cold'.⁸⁵ The writer enables the reader to 'thenceforward enjoy our own day dreams without self-reproach or shame' ('Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming', p.153). To some extent then, creative writing involves the use of dis/simulation, of distancing oneself from one's true identity, desires and intentions.

Similar assumptions are made by Freud in his explanations of jokes or 'the comic'. These are generically related to other attempts to amuse others, including pranks, as Freud is focussed on discussing inhibitions that are overcome by laughter. Freud argued that jokes often conceal aggression or bitterness. For instance, mimicry and travesty can be used to make

⁸⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'Psychopathic Characters on the Stage', in *Writings on Art and Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp.87-93 (p.87 and p.89).

⁸⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'Creative Writers and Day Dreaming', in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1960), IX: *Jenson's Gravidia and Other Works*, pp.141-53 (p.153).

another contemptible, 'to deprive him of his claim to dignity and authority'.⁸⁶ Lewd jokes, in one example, are argued to be the product of a sadistic sexuality that is 'more or less inhibited in real life' (Freud, *Jokes*, p.143). The process of overcoming an 'inhibitory cathexis' involved in the technique of jokes, however, allows both the joke maker and her/his audience to laugh at what we would otherwise be 'ashamed' of or consider 'disgusting' (Freud, *Jokes*, p.149 and p.101). It may well be that, as in the example given of Sacha Baron Cohen's comedy in the Introduction, some readers laugh at Kosinski's 'pranks' whilst others feel discomfort more than pleasure.

This can be attributed to a lapse in Kosinski's technique as a 'creative writer' and a 'joker'. He did not, as has been discussed above, do enough to convince readers that the actions and impulses of his protagonists were not his own. This is in spite of the fact that rather than present a 'sincere' work of autobiography, Kosinski conformed to the 'creative' method of 'representing a character'. Furthermore, Kosinski did not, as Freud suggests is necessary, narrate the pranks in such a way that the reader is laughing spontaneously, before realizing exactly about what s/he is laughing. Freud gave the example of a joke by Heine. In this example, a poor lottery agent boasts that the 'great Baron Rothschild had treated him quite as his equal - quite "familionairly"' (Freud, *Jokes*, p.13). The attitude towards the Baron's condescension is apparent, but on hearing the sentence for the first time the listener experiences a moment of 'bewilderment' followed by 'enlightenment' and has laughed spontaneously before consciously grasping the joke's meaning (*Ibid.*). When the same joke or the sentiment behind it is simply explained, it loses its comic effect and cannot 'possibly raise a laugh' (Freud, *Jokes*, p.17).

⁸⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1960), XIII: *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p.189.

In the example from *Passion Play* involving Ivy League students, Kosinski could have achieved a comic effect had Fabian in some clever way poked fun at their obliviousness to the harsher realities of life (as non-Holocaust survivor WASPS), alongside their assumption of sincere and serious postures as ‘scholars’, thus allowing readers to overcome any shared inhibited aggression or bitterness towards them. Similarly, he could have taken the ‘joke’ so far and then laughed to signal a comic intent, in such a way as to encourage the students to laugh at themselves and their inhibitions. Instead, Fabian makes his intentions and motivations obvious from the outset and then, once the reader knows that he intends to upset the students, describes himself doing so at length and in detail.

In Zupančič’s view of comedy, there are two models based on identification. The first is ‘false, conservative’ comedy which, for instance, allows that an aristocrat is ‘also’ a man (*Odd One In*, p.30). In ‘true comedy’, a similar person who believes that he actually is ‘really and intrinsically an aristocrat is, *in this very belief*, a common silly human’ (*Odd One In*, p.31). Comedy has the power to be critically subversive when a viewer feels himself ‘at home’, for instance, in a character who falls in a puddle, and momentarily gives the impression that it is merely his id that has fallen while his ego has continued to walk down the street (*Odd One In*, p.65). In this view, after the laughter, a critical viewer may, in Zupančič’s view, reflect in terms of the limits to any idea of a ‘concrete universal’ as originally discussed by Hegel. In this deconstructive view, any pratfall can be funny regardless of the victim, as comedy seeks not simply to alleviate the burden of human finitude, but also to show that the excesses of comic characters point to them being more than ‘only human [...] the point where the human coincides with the inhuman’ (*Odd One In*, p.49).

If one were to apply these philosophical criteria, Whalen’s prank on the drug addled villagers succeeds as comedy because they retain their posture of kingly dignity, such as it is, whilst

being chauffeured by their donkeys. The id has missed its destination while the ego acts as if unaware and incapable of the mistake. Zupančič's argument, however, is clearly aimed at making a philosophical 'case' for comedy as a critical genre in the light of 'philosophy's often contemptuous attitude towards' it (*Odd One In*, p.3). In the light of this, one could judge Fabian's 'joke' at the expense of the Ivy League students as equally successful, but this would not illuminate the disparity in immediate, unconsidered comic effect, or in the impulses that inspired the two pranks.

Competing drives are clearly at work in Kosinski's fictional pranks. There is a clear impulse to share a joke with the reader, in such a way that brings pleasure to both parties and would overcome a shared inhibitory cathexis. In both of the chosen examples, there is also a clear critical intention. Other apparent impulses are 'acting out' and 'repetition', symptoms of trauma expressed in behaviour. In a situation of 'comic' dis/simulation, Kosinski's protagonists cannot, at times, resist the impulse to extract prolonged, sadistic revenge upon another or inflict a similar sadistic intention upon the reader. This transference is incongruent, as neither stupefied Bangkok villagers nor Ivy League students closely resemble Nazis or constitute an obvious 'threat' to Kosinski's characters. The same could of course be said for the testimony of Moses S., whose conduct towards his listeners was, quite understandably, not 'rational'.

Freud suggested that pleasurable or manic moods are often associated with the overthrowing of depression/trauma, while Jamison explained that manic people are often subject to unpleasant changes of mood. Teicholz noted that after Kosinski suffered the *Village Voice* setback, he struggled more than before to shake off depression, to 'feel alive' and summon up the impetus to experience 'heightened moments' ('Introduction', p.xii). In Kosinski's final novel, *The Hermit of 69th Street: The Working Papers of Norbert Kosky*, Kosinski's

depression is manifest in that there is little playfulness. The novel reads as a self-justification or apology, which due to the use of footnotes and references reads as much as an essay as a novel for long periods. There are no pranks as such, although at one point Kosky does a disappearing act that he immediately explains is connected to re-enactment, and at another point attempts and then abandons an attempt at pulling off a deception through disguise (*Hermit*, p.111 and p.256). Here Kosinski manifests little impulse to amuse or injure, and continually exposes the motives and methods of his actions, so that the reader is not allowed to suspend disbelief and finds it even harder than usual to distinguish between author and protagonist. There is, however, sexual content in this novel. Because of this, at least one reviewer overlooked the obvious change of mood in the novel and suggested that Kosinski was a 'performer who takes more pleasure in the act than is communicated to the audience'.⁸⁷

In Freud's view, a manic patient is one that 'demonstrates his liberation from the object from which he had been suffering by pouncing on his new object investments like a ravenous man' ('Murder and Melancholia', p.214). Jamison characterised mania as being defined by changes within heightened moods from 'restlessness, ebullience, expansiveness, irritability, grandiosity [...] intensity of emotional experiences' (*Touched with Fire*, p.105). Sufferers vary enormously in their capacity to 'tolerate extremes of emotions' (*Touched with Fire*, p.104). In either case, the 'pleasurable' mood required for joking is inextricably bound with impulses more often associated with aggression. This adds to my developing sense that Freud was partly correct in both his early and later work, concerning the clear presence of drives towards pleasure and overcoming inhibition in the unconscious mind, and also an underlying

⁸⁷ Walter Goodman, 'Books of the Times: Jerzy Kosinski's Fiction of Parallels', *New York Times*, 20 June 1988 <<http://www.nytimes.com/1988/06/20/books/books-of-the-times-jerzy-kosinski's-fiction-of-parallels.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>> [accessed 29 April 2010].

traumatic condition that manifests itself in some more than in others. The argument here also fits in with the idea that labile 'mood disorders' have similar psychological roots.

In the case of Kosinski, elements of his fiction, in which he, through his characters, attempts to 'play the wag' (to use Freud's term) are over-run by clear symptoms of trauma. This was also the case with the author himself. The 'triggering stimuli' for these symptoms are clearly related to dis/simulation in Kosinski's life, a range of behaviours into which his protagonists lapse readily and often find echoes of past traumatic events that they experience a compulsion to re-enact. It may be the case that Kosinski exhibited symptoms of a sadistic nature as a young child prior to the Holocaust, but the re-enactments of dis/simulation found in his life and fiction are obviously related directly to his Holocaust experience.

Chapter 4: Dis/simulation within Metafiction: Hiding and Disguising as Literary

Strategy and Post-traumatic Compulsion in the Fiction of Paul Auster and Philip Roth.

Salinger, Kosinski, Roth and Auster: A Jewish-American Canon.

*The room represents a world of restraint, inwardness and discipline [...] there are no pictures hanging on the walls, no photographs or personal artifacts on display. The only adornment is a calendar tacked to the wall just above the bureau - from 1945, open to the month of April.*¹

*Period mantelpiece. Overhead the ornamented plaster, below the gleaming parquet floor. Ah, but all properly ascetic [...] the pad of a well-heeled monk*²

Paul Auster and Philip Roth are Jewish-American authors who are known to each other but who are rarely mentioned in the same breath by critics.³ This is anomalous as their fiction contains recurring motifs that include reclusiveness, a tendency to blur the boundaries of biography and fiction, and characters that adopt disguises and alter-personae. Roth has lived as a country recluse on and off since the 1970s, shunned publicity, and when he has spoken to interviewers has often been caustic and defensive. This is often mirrored by the actions of his protagonists, who choose to abandon public life in favour of a Thoreauvian retreat. In each case, these authors could be argued to share tendencies, upon which I will elaborate later, with Salinger. It is also true, however, that their fiction shares motifs with Kosinski's, and I intend to focus on this equally. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that these authors share the motifs of hiding, disguising and reclusiveness that have been discussed in the previous chapters in their fiction, and that this is directly related to Jewish-American experience and post-traumatic consciousness.

¹ Paul Auster, *Oracle Night* (New York: Holt, 2003), p73.

² Philip Roth, *The Anatomy Lesson*, in *Zuckerman Bound* (New York: Library of America, 2007), pp.263-450 (p.315).

³ I interviewed Auster at his home in Park Slope on 4 August 2011. He told me, before I started recording, that he occasionally met with Roth for a meal, although he expressed surprise that I might be comparing their work (see Appendix). Gerard O' Donoghue cited Auster as having stated that Roth's writing is not his 'cup of tea [...] our sensibilities are so different' ('The Orphan's Kaddish: The Paternal Thanatographies of Paul Auster and Philip Roth', unpublished DPhil thesis, St Hugh's College, Oxford University, 2009), p.49).

Roth, in fact, has discussed several times what he perceives to be a paradox between the extrovert artistic and personal habits of Norman Mailer and the withdrawal of Salinger, as ‘idiosyncratic extremes’ of interaction between author and audience.⁴ Roth’s relationship to WASP culture is often overshadowed by his relationship to other Jewish Americans, because he has been accused of recklessness in representing Jews in a negative light in post-war America, and even of self-hatred and anti-Semitism.⁵ In his defensive riposte, Roth argued that the problem among contemporary Jewish writers was that they found it impossible to imagine Jewish characters who do not restrain ‘grandiose lusts and drives’.⁶ Here Roth pointed out that despite publishing controversial and possibly attention-seeking novels, the WASP identities of Mailer’s two most notorious protagonists, Rojack and O’Shaughnessy, demonstrated that:

for an identifiably Jewish hero [to] perpetrate such spectacular transgressions with so much gusto and so little self-doubt or ethical disorientation turns out to be as inconceivable to Norman Mailer as it is to Bernard Malamud. (*Ibid.*)

Kate Millet ignored this distinction in her critical hatchet job on Mailer as ‘prisoner of the virility cult’, and claimed that ‘there is a character in Mailer’s fiction who continues to appear under different guises’.⁷ For whatever reason, Roth chose his words so as to give the sense that Mailer’s is a failure of imagination, rather than a strategy of dis/simulation that concerns what the author is prepared to represent. This can be related to the tendency of literary critics to draw direct comparisons between authors and their characters.

⁴ One example of this can be found in Roth’s essay ‘On *The Great American Novel*’, in *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2001), pp.65-80 (p.69). Mailer courted controversy throughout his career and received ‘hate mail’ and ‘some fairly serious threats’ (Carl Rollyson, *The Lives of Norman Mailer: A Biography* (New York: Paragon House, 2000), p.326).

⁵ See, for instance, Irving Howe, ‘Philip Roth Reconsidered’, *Commentary*, December 1972, 69-72. Roth was asked at a Yeshiva symposium whether he would ‘write the same stories you have written if you were living in Nazi Germany’ (*The Facts*, in *Novels and Other Narratives 1986-1991*, pp.305-462 (p.407)).

⁶ ‘Imagining Jews’, in *Reading Myself and Others*, pp.251-80 (p.268).

⁷ *Sexual Politics* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd, 1971), p.314 and p.315.

Mark Shechner argued that all the evidence points to Roth having lived more like Salinger than Mailer.⁸ Roth stated that he learned the ‘very cloying come-on’ from Salinger, and saw Salinger as one of several Jewish writers at the *New Yorker* in his time (*Facts*, p.354 and p.399). Kosinski is mentioned in both *Operation Shylock* (in the contexts of survivor literature and involvement in secret organizations), and also in *Sabbath’s Theatre*, as an example of a creative writer who committed suicide.⁹ I described Auster’s connection to Kosinski in the Introduction. I could not find anything that Auster had written about Salinger specifically, although *The Book of Illusions* clearly interacts with the attention granted by academics and the media to Salinger’s reclusiveness and cessation of publishing, as I will illustrate below.

Auster has a less reclusive reputation than Roth, but is also known for his preoccupation with ‘men in small rooms’, and for characters whose actions are based on those of the archetypal American ascetic, Henry David Thoreau.¹⁰ Auster is also ‘tricky’ with interviewers, as I found out myself. Despite his genial manner, Auster often hands out a backhanded insult by claiming that he never reads criticism of his work. When I interviewed Auster, he blatantly contradicted himself by making the same claim and then five minutes later describing one book about him that he had read as ‘stupid’ (see Appendix). In his most recent novel, one character of many in an aging Jewish-American literary coterie, describes the interview as ‘a debased literary form that serves no purpose except to simplify that which should never be simplified’.¹¹ Given the negative reviews of Auster’s last two novels, this may be viewed as the type of counter-attack that Roth characteristically deploys in his fiction. Given Auster and

⁸ Mark Shechner, *Up Society’s Ass, Copper* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p.26.

⁹ Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock*, in *Novels 1993-1995* (New York: Library of America, 2010), pp.1-368 (p.74 and p.365); and, *Sabbath’s Theatre*, in *Novels 1993-1995*, pp.369-790 (p.518).

¹⁰ See N. Rodenhurst, ‘Prescience, Hindsight and Commitment in the Fiction of Paul Auster and Don DeLillo’, unpublished master of philosophy thesis, Lampeter University, Wales.

¹¹ Paul Auster, *Sunset Park* (London: Faber, 2011), p.271.

Roth's acquaintance, one may also speculate that this character, Jewish author Renzo Michaelson, is to a certain extent based on Roth.

Roth's fiction is often seen as preoccupied with the Holocaust and its traumatic effects on the Jewish-American psyche, as I will discuss further with reference to *Operation Shylock*. Roth is also well remembered for his portrayal in *The Ghost Writer*, of a young novelist (his alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman) imagining that his mentor I.E. Lonoff is conducting an affair with Anne Frank.¹² Another excellent example of Roth representing the pervasive presence of the Holocaust in Jewish-American consciousness, occurs in *The Anatomy Lesson* when Zuckerman's mother, stricken with a brain tumour, writes the word 'Holocaust' on a piece of paper when asked for her name. Zuckerman concludes that the tumour had forced everything except that word from her head: 'that it couldn't dislodge. It must have been there all the time' (*The Anatomy Lesson*, p.289).

Stephen Milowitz stated that the Holocaust appears in Roth's fiction as 'Kafkaesque eviction, confusion, uncertainty'.¹³ It is rare that the Holocaust or Jewish experience is discussed in terms of dis/simulation and/or appearances in Roth's writing, although this does occur occasionally, for instance when Zuckerman notes that one can see a resemblance between Kafka, who 'invented' Anne Frank's experience, and Anne Frank herself: 'a kinship is even there in the face. I think' (*The Ghost Writer*, p.110 and pp.109-10). Roth, in fact, interviewed the Israeli author and survivor Aharon Appelfeld, who was able to survive as a hidden child because 'I was blond and didn't arouse suspicion'.¹⁴

¹² *The Ghost Writer*, in *Zuckerman Bound*, pp.1-116.

¹³ Steven Milowitz, *Philip Roth Reconsidered: The Concentrationary Universe of the American Writer* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 2000), p.3.

¹⁴ Philip Roth, 'Conversation in Jerusalem with Aharon Appelfeld', in *Shop Talk: A Writer and His Colleagues and Their Work* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001), pp.18-39 (p.37).

Auster's prose is no less concerned with these themes and motifs. *The Invention of Solitude* would, for many academics who write on the subject of postmemory, provide material that is 'proof positive'. Having meditated throughout on memory and absorbing trauma, and having recalled the stories of Anne Frank and other Jews hiding from the Nazis, Auster concludes with the recollection of a dream. In this dream he is told by two nurses 'today you are going to die', but first has his head shaved (*Invention of Solitude*, p.170). This appears to be a case of a traumatic event, with which the subject had no direct contact, seeping into the unconscious and leading to the reverberative experience of reliving trauma.

In fact, the Holocaust and other examples of extreme violence towards Jews do pervade Auster's fiction. The examples are too numerous to list here, but among them are the Jews trapped in the National Library in *In The Country of Last Things* and the incorporation of pages from the 1937/38 Warsaw telephone directory into *Oracle Night*. When Anna Blume bursts into a room full of Rabbis, in a city that some have likened to a Jewish ghetto, she exclaims 'I thought all the Jews were dead'.¹⁵ *Oracle Night* is a cautionary post-9/11 novel about ignoring the possibility of disaster under one's nose. The Jewish novelist Sidney Orr, writing around the time of 9/11, recalls a traumatic time in his life twenty years earlier, in which he was continually confronted by signs of humanity at its worst. The pages of the Warsaw directory contain names from which his own could have derived (*Oracle Night*, pp.113-14).

Furthermore, Auster has written extensively on other Jewish authors including Paul Celan, Edmond Jabès, Kafka and Charles Reznikoff.¹⁶ Reading Auster's manuscripts and private

¹⁵ Paul Auster, *In The Country of Last Things* (New York: Viking, 1987), p.95.

¹⁶ All can be found in Paul Auster's collection *The Art of Hunger: Essays, Prefaces, Interviews* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1992). The reader should note that in my own interview with Paul Auster, I consciously repeated the pattern of questioning that Auster himself applied to Edmond Jabès concerning the extent and implications of his personal Jewish experience, and that Jabès was much less defensive in answering Auster's questions than

correspondence in the NYPL's Berg Collection, I came across numerous examples of Auster being invited to participate in co-projects with Jewish writers that he must have either ignored or declined. A large number of Auster's literary acquaintances over the years have also happened to be Jewish. I also found manuscript passages in early drafts of an essay that signal the central importance of Kafka's Jewish experience to his work, and that have been removed from the final draft.¹⁷ It appears that in Auster's background, associations and formative reading, there is a distinct Jewish influence that is not placed in the foreground of his work in the same way as it is in Roth's. Whilst this is no doubt due in part to the different historical circumstances that I have described above, it is also a conscious choice on Auster's part in some instances.

In the decade since 9/11, both authors have been more prolific than previously. Both have published novels that deal with the acts of terror as historical inevitabilities, and also as events that re-awaken awareness of the Holocaust. In novels such as *The Plot Against America* and *Oracle Night*, Roth and Auster respectively have been read as commenting on the political crisis in America under George W. Bush, by evoking the Holocaust.¹⁸ Each writer has also created convincing characters who are traumatized by the terror attacks or events of the 'war on terror' and are driven to 'act out' in strange ways.¹⁹ This may encourage more academics to compare their work, but in the meantime there are very few examples and

Auster was in answering mine ('Providence: A Conversation with Edmond Jabès', in *The Art of Hunger*, pp.136-61).

¹⁷ See Paul Auster, 'Pages for Kafka', in *The Art of Hunger*, pp.23-25.

¹⁸ Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004). Jane Statlander correctly pointed out the differences between 'the great WASP, gentlemanly leisure' with which Thoreau took his retreat compared to 'the sense of anxiety and panic' that causes Zuckerman to hide himself away in *Exit Ghost* (*Philip Roth's Postmodern Romance: Critical Essays on Selected Works* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011), p.95).

¹⁹ Auster's *Man in the Dark* (New York: Holt, 2008), and Roth's *Exit Ghost* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007) and *Everyman* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006) are good examples of this. I should acknowledge that Auster has been more focussed on 'post-9/11' subject matter and that this reflects his sense of himself as a New Yorker, as emphasized in *The Brooklyn Follies* (New York: Holt, 2005) (see 'In Conversation: Paul Auster with John Reed', *The Brooklyn Rail*, August/September 2003, pp.23-24). Despite the overt theme of 9/11 in *Exit Ghost*, Zuckerman has gone into reclusiveness as a response to an anti-Semitic threat: 'I may have left New York because I was fearful, but by paring and paring and paring away, I found in my solitude a species of freedom that was to my liking much of the time' (*Exit Ghost*, pp.58-59).

as I will demonstrate below, this is because academics writing in English are less likely to consider a Jewish angle in Auster's work.

The later fiction of each author also shares the theme of the disintegration of the human body with age.²⁰ Although Roth is older, as Auster was keen to point out, Auster's lifestyle (smoking cigars in particular) means that he is breathless after ascending one flight of steps. One could make the case that each writer composes with the awareness that he is nearing the final stage of his life.²¹ In addition to this, Auster's fiction in general shares the tendency towards self-explanation that Brauner diagnosed in Jewish fiction generally, and the motif of self-defence that Brauner found in Roth's fiction specifically.²² This is particularly the case in Auster's writing that is read as being related to the demise of his first marriage, to the writer Lydia Davies, and the knock-on effect that this had on their son, Daniel. In Auster's later writing, there is an increased tendency towards representing remorse and prolonged suffering for mistakes, as exemplified in *Sunset Park*, in which the young protagonist pays over and over again for one youthful misjudgement.

Focus on Specifics: Auster and Roth's Backgrounds and Reputations Compared.

*If someone asked me what my religion was or where I came from, I told him. If he didn't like it, I figured that was his problem. I wasn't going to hide who I was or pretend to be someone else just to avoid trouble. (Paul Auster, *Hand to Mouth*, p.54)*

Surely here, in the garden spot of anomie, it was possible to be nobody on the rush-hour streets. If not, try a moustache. This may be far from life as you feel, see, know, and wish to know it, but if all it takes is a moustache, then for Christ's sake, grow one.²³

²⁰ See Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium* (New York: Holt, 2006), and Roth's *The Humbling* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009).

²¹ See Alilki Varvogli, 'Ailing Authors: Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium* and Philip Roth's *Exit Ghost*', *Review of International American Studies*, 3.3-4.1(Winter 2008/Spring 2009), 94-101.

²² See Brauner, Chapter 2: 'The Trials of Nathan Zuckerman, or Jewry as jury; judging Jews in Zuckerman Bound', in *Philip Roth*, pp.21-45.

²³ Philip Roth, *Zuckerman Unbound*, in *Zuckerman Bound*, pp.117-263 (p.122).

Both Auster and Roth are Newark-born Jews, although as I will clarify below, their different ages and respective neighbourhoods are significant factors if one chooses to discuss each author's Jewish-American experience. In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated that attention to historical detail and psychological insights can enhance readings of each author's work in the context of Jewish-American experience. Here, there is less need to identify each author as Jewish-American, as this is hardly contested, especially in the case of Roth. Instead, in the early parts of this chapter, I have begun to qualify the grounds for comparing the work of these authors. In the paragraphs that follow, I will outline each author's Jewish experience, particularly in relation to anti-Semitism and trauma, and relate this briefly to the commonly acknowledged traits and critical reputation of their writing. This will be compared to the findings of Sherry B. Ortner's work, which bridges the backgrounds of these authors, to provide a sharp historical focus. It will be seen that critics have tended to largely overlook an essentially Jewish element in Auster's fiction, and that this has the effect of displacing him from a Jewish canon, thus precluding his work from comparative studies with that of other Jewish authors.

Before moving on to demonstrating aspects of dis/simulation discussed throughout this thesis in Auster and Roth's fiction, I will provide a brief outline of the ways in which each author's life and work has interacted with issues relating to mental health. I will argue, as in the previous chapters, that a combination of factors that include Jewish experience, trauma and familial/congenital traits can be seen at work in each author's fiction, specifically in its repetitive nature. Following this, I will readdress topics that are commonplace in criticism on Roth and on Auster to date, including metafiction, reclusiveness and engagement with the sociological moment. I will do this specifically through the now established concept of dis/simulation as a common strategy and/or symptom among Jewish-American authors. It will be seen that Roth's consciousness of being visibly Jewish is, on the surface, much

greater than Auster's (because of historical contexts). There are, however, clear shared patterns in their work that revolve around a tendency towards post-traumatic re-enactment and manic, sadistic 'acting out' on the part of protagonists when dis/simulation occurs. Finally, I will examine three novels by each author, devoting a greater proportion of space to discussing fiction here than I have in previous chapters. I believe this is apt, as both are more prolific than Salinger and Kosinski combined. In the process, it will be demonstrated that post-traumatic dis/simulation is a tendency that these authors have in common with Salinger and Kosinski, and that this is directly connected to Jewish-American experience.

Roth was born in Newark in 1933 and raised in the Weequahic area (a predominantly Jewish section). Auster was born in Newark in 1947, but raised in the Essex County suburb of South Orange. Auster attended Columbia High School in adjoining Maplewood. These details are significant, both in terms of the effects of the Holocaust on each author's formative experience, and in terms of the level of each author's immersion in mainstream American culture. When I asked Auster, he was clearly aware of and sensitive to these differences. As one example, he stated that Roth would have been able to remember the German Bund marching through Newark.²⁴ Warren Grover explained that in the wake of news of Kristallnacht, many Americans felt 'uncomfortable' at the publicity of Bund events that included 'goose stepping and Nazi-saluting uniformed troops' (*Nazis in Newark*, p.209). Linda B. Forgosh confirmed the strong sense of Jewish community in the Weequahic section

²⁴ Warren Grover described how relations between German Americans and a Jewish population of approximately 65,000 in Newark during the 1930s deteriorated when Hitler rose to power in Germany (*Nazis in Newark* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p.5). For a fuller explanation of the nationwide collapse of relations between Jewish and German Americans after World War I and the enduring antagonisms that still exist today, see Michael Schuldiner's *Contesting Histories: German and Jewish Americans and the Legacy of the Holocaust*.

in the 1930s, listing ‘as many as 140 Jewish fraternal and family associations, Newark branches of 16 national organizations, 8 athletics clubs, and 3 political clubs’.²⁵

Each author’s birth coincided with periods of regeneration in Newark. The Weequahic section was built on converted farmland to be a spacious and relatively opulent alternative for Jews previously ‘living in the city’s impoverished Third Ward tenements, or the Prince Street neighbourhood’ (*Jews of Weequahic*, p.7). Grover noted that of the Jews living in Newark, the original wave of immigrants had been from Germany and had arrived as early as the mid-nineteenth century (*Nazis in Newark*, p.3). These immigrants, who were established and integrated, initially resented the second wave of Jewish immigrants from the 1880s who were mostly Yiddish speakers seeking refuge from Polish and Russian pogroms, although by Roth’s lifetime such differences were less divisive in day-to-day life (*Nazis in Newark*, p.4).

There were also political differences. Prosperous German Jews tended to be anti-union, anti-radical and ‘saw Nazism as a temporary phenomenon’. Eastern Europeans were more likely to be left wing and living under the shadow of a fear of anti-Semitism ‘instilled in them by parents and grandparents who had faced it personally in Europe’ (*Ibid.*). It is important to clarify this, as both authors under discussion here fall into the latter category of heritage. In Auster and Roth’s fiction, however, the only sustained representation of divisions between groups of Jews occurs in Roth’s work when one of his Roth’s alter-personae has outraged the elders of his community by publishing negative representations of Jews. There is little representation of division between groups of Jews based on European country of origin, in either author’s work.

By the time of Auster’s birth, post-war Jews had begun to branch out further to the suburbs. Irving Howe described these second and third generation Jews as ‘eager to appropriate the

²⁵ Linda B. Forgosh, *Jews of Weequahic* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), p.8.

amenities their educations had taught them to value, while hoping to shake off parochial stigmas and embrace a new largesse of spirit and style'.²⁶ On the very next page, Howe described newly suburban Jews seeking out other Jews:

At least some of them must have been alive to the irony that they were going to escape from 'old fashioned Jewishness', perhaps from Jewishness entirely, but would escape together, as Jews, comforted by the presence of other, also-escaping Jews. (*World of Our Fathers*, p.614)

Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (again largely referring to New York Jews) noted the same tendency of Jews, regardless of actual shared experience or cultural beliefs, to avoid residential integration:

When the great exodus to Queens, Long Island, and other suburban areas began after World War II, many observers assumed that Jews would cease to be concentrated [...] however, before long the mixed developments showed a strong tendency to become almost entirely Jewish or non-Jewish.²⁷

It is not clear how Auster's family arrived in South Orange, but Albert I. Gordon recalled city officials referring to such Essex County suburbs as 'Little Israel' during Auster's formative years.²⁸ Gordon also noted that according to several historians, mid-nineteenth-century Jews living in America's suburbs had less interaction with gentiles than their forefathers did in the shtetl (*Jews in Suburbia*, p.232).

In the years after WWII, 'the lure of more land and larger homes in suburban Essex County enticed a new generation of Newark's upwardly mobile Jewish families' (*Jews in Weequahic*, p.10).²⁹ Such descriptions of social mobility would for many signal greater integration. This

²⁶ Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life they Found and Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), p.613. Howe's descriptions of urban life are mainly centred on New York's East-Side, although the stories of immigrant life and pressures followed by social change and improvement can be considered as representative of the experiences of immigrant Jews across America.

²⁷ Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1963), p.161.

²⁸ Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia* (Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1959), p.171.

²⁹ The waves of immigration and movement thus described were commonplace across the north of America. See, for instance, Betty N. Hoffman, *Jewish West Hartford: From City to Suburb* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2007); Sherry B. Ortner, *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture and the Class of '58* (Durham, NC: Duke

was not always the case. As C. Bezael Sherman explained, it was in the inter-war years that discrimination in educational and professional spheres really took hold and that Jews encountered the same difficulties and discriminations as their predecessors, ‘but in greater measure and [...] in more intensive form’.³⁰ Although anti-Semitism in the United States has never been argued to have been as extreme as the worst historical examples in Europe, it continued to have an impact on American Jews during each author’s upbringing (specific examples will be given below).

The historical changes that saw Jews move to the suburbs coincided with the collapse of the Jewish community in Newark districts such as Weequahic, and also a huge influx of African Americans into areas formerly occupied by Jews. These changing conditions may be used to explain Auster’s tendency to describe his upbringing as ‘middle-class’ and his perception of his early life as ‘comforts and advantages’ (*Hand to Mouth*, p.6 and p.13). In these instances, Auster chose to emphasize the ‘American’ aspects and understate the Jewish aspects.

Auster’s representations of underprivileged African Americans are often stilted and possibly guilt-laden, as are those found in the fiction of Roth and Malamud, for instance. Describing his father’s work as a landlord to poor black tenants in Jersey City, Auster stated that the term ‘slumlord’ would be unfair as he was ‘soft hearted’ towards the tenants in granting delays to payments (*Invention of Solitude*, p.56 and p.57). Clearly Auster, who has always benefitted from Jewish connections, shares something of the collective ideology of his generation of suburban Jews, whose financial success often came at the economic expense of other minority groups.³¹ Sherry B. Ortner is one of many to have described the influx of African

University Press, 2005); and Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), for three examples of Jewish waves of immigration, followed by upward mobility within urban boundaries and then departure to the suburbs after WWII.

³⁰ C. Bezael Sherman, *The Jew Within American Society* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), pp.174-75.

³¹ See Auster’s recollections of spending his Bar Mitzvah money and working at a Borscht Belt hotel as a youth (*Hand to Mouth*, p.19 and p.30). Many of Auster’s literary and artistic acquaintances happen to be Jewish.

Americans into New Jersey's urban centres and the resultant 'white flight', in particular following the 1967 race riots (*New Jersey Dreaming*, p.275). Both Auster and Roth described their aging fathers being mugged by African Americans in autobiographical works.³²

There has been no attempt by critics thus far to compare or separate the experiences of Auster and Roth with any degree of rigour. As Alan Cooper acknowledged, how one experiences identity in America is an individual matter and Roth's fiction may 'defy readers to separate out personal, tribal, national, global and fictitious shadings'.³³ Nonetheless, Roth brings his own specific experience of American and Jewish history to his work, and it is these historical factors with which I am concerned. Brauner uncomplicatedly saw Auster as a younger novelist who 'owes more to Thomas Pynchon than to Roth' (*Philip Roth*, p.3). Gerard O' Donoghue's thesis looked at Auster and Roth as 'second generation' Jews in America ('The Orphan's Kaddish', p.184). As the chapter unfolds, the reader will see that the details of each author's upbringing profoundly affect the types of dis/simulation found in their fiction.

Roth lived through the years of the Holocaust in a neighbourhood dominated by Jews and in a family largely preoccupied with Jewish issues. He described his father's repertoire of narratives as 'family, family, family, Newark, Newark, Newark, Jew, Jew, Jew' (*Facts*, p.319). The main drive in family life is described by Roth as 'fanatical security, fanatical insecurity', and the main peril is always anti-Semitism (*Facts*, p.409). Roth recalls experiencing the 'menace' of the Nazis and the Japanese 'because we were American', whereas the actual threat experienced at home came from gentiles who 'opposed or resisted us - or condescended to or rigorously excluded us - because we were Jews' (*Facts*, p.322). At

There are those who believe that one should not seek to distance oneself from a specific identity or community, if one has or continues to enjoy the benefits that it offers. This is part of the paradoxical condition of being a hyphenated American.

³² Philip Roth, *Patrimony*, in *Novels and Other Narratives 1986-1991*, pp.581-732 (p.658); and Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude*, p.60.

³³ Alan Cooper, *Philip Roth and the Jews* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), p.3.

the same time, however, Roth stated that for the Jewish-American children of his generation, the fact that they were fortunate enough to escape the tragic fate of their European cousins was something 'that we understood without ever needing to be told' (*Facts*, p.403).

We should pause here to reconsider the theorized differences between inter-generational trauma, vicarious trauma and 'postmemory'. I have already noted, with reference to Aaron Hass's work, that trauma passes through generations and that children often exhibit the same personality traits and symptoms of traumatized parents because of exposure to the parents' 'acting out'. Others, including Marian Hirsch, have argued that people with a deep personal connection to historical trauma can have 'memories' of events that have been so powerfully 'transmitted' that they manifest as actual recollections.³⁴ There is no evidence that either author had any direct experience of the Holocaust. Growing up surrounded by traumatized adults, with an awareness of what was happening or had happened in Europe, would, however, have left a distinct mark on a developing psyche. Traits of vicarious trauma and postmemory will be outlined in the authors' fiction below.

Roth's autobiographical and fictional works show paradoxical traits of Jewish-American life. This is characterized by a continuous shifting between feeling fully immersed and crucially marginalized in American life. Roth stated that he and his father, Herman Roth, who rose to a management position within a company that had a 'deep-rooted reluctance to allow a Jew to rise too high', had 'radically divergent experiences of America' (*Facts*, p.323 and p.319).

Growing up in such a household, affected by the 'collective memory of Polish and Russian pogroms', and facing anti-Semitism in various forms, Roth would, however, have shared

³⁴ Marian Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Politics Today*, 29.1 (2008), 103-28. Appropriation of the traumatic memory of events through which one has not lived is, of course, open to ethical scrutiny. For an example of this, see Karein Goertz, 'Transgenerational Representations of the Holocaust: From Memory to Post-Memory', *World Literature Today*, 72.1 (Winter 1998), 33-38. Goertz argues that 'vicarious sharing in past traumatic experiences is not, as Finkelkraut would have it, a ploy, to validate one's identity [...] rather, it is quite often a psychological reality for children who inherit the incomplete mourning of their parents' ('Transgenerational Representations', p.34).

many aspects of his father's outlook (*Facts*, p.328). Roth may have been able to access a good education at Bucknell, but even in recalling this he mentioned several causes for insecurity within that sphere, such as knowing that Princeton 'didn't take Jews' and worrying that his father would be 'an embarrassment' at his interview (*Facts*, p.338 and p.341). He recalled that he was invited to join a fraternity house that already had one Jewish member, a 'senior with a gentile name and unJewish appearance [...] though my own name and appearance weren't likely to fool anyone' (*Facts*, p.345). In these respects, Roth's formative experiences, especially in the realms of formal education, match Salinger's quite closely.³⁵

Roth's oeuvre also abounds with evidence that he is extremely well read on literature relating to the Holocaust, psychology, trauma, survivors and Israel. This is particularly evident in *Operation Shylock*, where Roth's sentences, for instance about child survivors, often appear to be more than the keen insight of a novelistic observer:

not only did their acquaintance with the unforeseen grotesquely exceed my own, but each had undergone the most tremendous transformation even before the clay of his original being had had time to anneal into a solid, shatterproof identity. (*Operation Shylock*, p.20)

In addition to interviewing survivors including Primo Levi and Aharon Appelfeld, Roth worked as an editor on East-European literature, including the work of Bruno Schulz.³⁶

Indeed, it could be said that Roth's career took the opposite trajectory to that of Arthur Miller, as discussed in the Introduction. For many years Roth had only written one piece of

³⁵ At the Library of Congress, I was able to read Roth's unpublished play 'Buried Again', in which the protagonist has died and is being given the option of a second life. As it transpires, the one course of action that is not open to him, but upon which he insists, is having his second life as a Jew. Speaking about this play, Roth related it to the understandable human fantasy of wanting to be someone/something else ('After Eight Books', in *Reading Myself and Others*, pp.85-97 (p.94)). This perfectly encapsulates the tension in Roth's fiction between asserting a Jewish identity and feeling that external powers make such an identity inescapable. Such an escape may be desirable though, if only one has the inclination and knows how not to be a Jew. Roth described his first wife's wish to become a 'simulated Jew' by 'camouflaging her own [...] past' as a 'distressing collapse of integrity' (*Facts*, p.406).

³⁶ See Shechner's discussion of Alan Lelchuk's novel, *Ziff: A Life*, in which Roth is caricatured as a secret 'student of Holocaust testimonies and a quiet supporter of Eastern European friends and causes' (*Up Society's Ass*, p.227).

fiction that was specifically about non-Jews, his 1967 novel *When She Was Good*.³⁷ Roth has written almost exclusively thereafter about Jewish characters, and discussed at length in essays and interviews his status as a Jewish-American author. The only consistency that can be found in Roth's comments on the matter is in his perennial inconsistency. In one essay he stated that one of his early characters, whilst not intended to be representative of all Jews, was a 'fact of Jewish experience and well within the range of its moral possibilities'.³⁸ Stating that he can better represent that which he knows, Roth claimed that:

Most of those jokes beginning 'Two Jews were walking down the street' lose a little of their punch if one of the Jews, or both, is disguised as an Englishman or a Republican. Similarly, to have made any serious alteration in the Jewish factuality of 'Defender of the Faith' as it began to fill itself out in my imagination, would have so unsprung the tensions I felt in the story that I would no longer have had left a story that I wanted to tell, or one I believed myself able to. ('Writing About Jews', p.201)

Elsewhere, Roth has been bluntly dismissive about being classed as a Jewish-American author and asserted that he is first and foremost an American. Roth told Danish journalist Martin Krasnik, when asked about being 'seen as a Jewish-American author', that:

It's not a question that interests me. I know exactly what it means to be Jewish, and it's really not interesting. I'm an American. You can't talk about this without walking straight out into horrible clichés that say nothing about human beings. America is first and foremost ... it's my language. And identity labels have nothing to do with how anyone actually experiences life.³⁹

Roth has also confounded critics by producing characters who resemble him in more ways than one. As Alan Cooper pointed out, Roth has often attacked his critics for engaging in a petty autobiographical detective game, but at the same time continues to incite this with autobiographical 'teasing' in his fiction (*Philip Roth and the Jews*, p.1). Like Kosinski, Roth

³⁷ Discussing the critical debate around Roth's status as an 'autobiographical' writer, David Brauner asserted that the negative reviews of this novel about a mid-Western girl confirmed 'for many the suspicion that it had, arguably, been designed to disprove: that Roth could only write (successful) fiction based on his own life' (*Philip Roth*, p.9).

³⁸ Philip Roth, 'Writing About Jews', in *Reading Myself and Others*, pp.193-211 (p.202).

³⁹ Martin Krasnik, 'It No Longer Feels a Great Injustice that I Have to Die', *Guardian*, 14 December 2005 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/dec/14/fiction.philiproth>> [accessed 1 September 2011]. During our interview Auster spoke for ten minutes about his attachment to aspects of Jewish identity and thought before becoming irritable in a similar way and citing Roth on the matter. I presume that it was this interview to which he was alluding (see Appendix).

has adapted his fictional form in response to reader reception throughout his career, having come under attack more than once. For this reason, when Roth published *Patrimony*, a seemingly sincere and personal memoir (as opposed to *The Facts*, which is undermined by Nathan Zuckerman's censorious comments concerning the boundaries of fact and fiction), many readers felt hesitant to take it at face value. For all we know, Roth may yet publish something that suggests that he was not being wholly sincere.

Brauner has pointed out that others have seen Roth's work as 'impoverished by his introspection', and that many see his oeuvre as tedious, poorly imagined and self-absorbed (Brauner, *Philip Roth*, p.9). The reader may note that a similar tendency in Auster's fiction has been largely overlooked. For instance, reviewing *Sunset Park*, Arifa Akbar noted that Auster's 'old man cycle' of novels is over and that his young, ethnically diverse characters are 'hastily imagined'.⁴⁰ She does not comment on the older generation of characters in that novel (literary New York Jews), who seem fully rounded by comparison. Joanna Briscoe, reviewing *Invisible*, stated that Paul Auster has 'created what amounts to his own, self-referential fictional world over the years', and acknowledged the repetitive nature of Auster's work.⁴¹ This is particularly the case as far as the perhaps self-mocking presence of 'a notably gorgeous and intellectually gifted Jewish American, born in the same year as Paul Auster' is concerned ('*Invisible* by Paul Auster'). Briscoe barely stopped short of labelling Auster a 'one trick pony', but because she is a professed fan there is no negative commentary on this.

Clearly Auster, whom one may surmise has considered the implications of Salinger's career, has benefitted from the accepting postmodern critical environment. Compare, for instance,

⁴⁰ Arifa Akbar, 'Too Many Brief Encounters in Brooklyn', *Independent*, 29 October 2010 <<http://independent.co.uk/arts-entertainments/books/reviews/sunset-park-by-paul-auster-2119223.html>> [accessed 13 October 2011].

⁴¹ Joanna Briscoe, '*Invisible* by Paul Auster', *Guardian*, 14 November 2009 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/nov/14/invisible-paul-auster-book-review>> [accessed 13 October 2011].

Mary McCarthy's blistering attack on Salinger's Glass stories to Alan Rafferty's indulgence towards *Invisible*:

Invisible includes an unforgivable in-joke about authors inserting themselves into their own novels and a number of unsubtle asides intended to draw attention to the more sophisticated effects of the novel's format. These apart, this is an impressive and, mostly, absorbing novel.⁴²

Regardless of Roth's comments, he is often discussed as a Jewish author. As argued in the previous chapter, the teasing use of metafictional and autobiographical material could be argued to be part of a Jewish-American tradition of formal dis/simulation. Ben Siegel pointed out that other Jewish-American writers including Saul Bellow and E. L. Doctorow, 'like to tease their readers by presenting protagonists who strongly resemble themselves in terms of time and place, age and circumstance'.⁴³

Auster, whilst open about the Jewish aspects of his background, never gives it the same centrality in his autobiographical writing, or in his fiction, as Roth does. The characters in his fiction are not always immediately recognizable as culturally Jewish, or obsessed/concerned with Jewish issues. In recent years, I have reviewed five monographs dedicated to Auster's work, all of which are converted doctoral theses. Brendan Martin related Auster's novels to debates within postmodern theory in what is, for the most part, a disappointing recapitulation of criticism from the 1990s that leaves Auster's Jewish heritage unmentioned.⁴⁴

Andreas Hau argued that Auster's 'literary pre-life as a poet is the key to his oeuvre', although the analysis that follows consists largely of speculative readings that link Auster's poetry to Jewish, Holocaust and Old Testament themes followed by a description of Auster's

⁴² Alan Rafferty, 'Murder he Wrote: *Invisible* by Paul Auster', *Literary Review*, November 2009, p.55.

⁴³ Ben Siegel, 'Introduction: Reading Philip Roth: Facts and Fancy, Fiction and Autobiography - A Brief Overview', in *Turning up the Flame: Philip Roth's Later Novels*, ed. by Ben Siegel and Jay L. Hailo (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), pp.17-30 (p.17).

⁴⁴ Brendan Martin, *Paul Auster's Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

conversion to writing prose.⁴⁵ From my own point of view, what is valuable about this thesis is that Auster is argued to be more visibly Jewish as an obscure poet than he has ever been as a mainstream novelist. Mark Brown argued that Auster's concern is primarily with loneliness and/or connectedness in the postmodern metropolis, citing his links to Reznikoff, Rakosi and Oppen in terms of the Objectivist project to 'locate the poet between the material world and the verbal world', without mentioning these poets' Jewish experience and personal connection to Auster.⁴⁶ Brown went on to assess the significance of Anne Frank's room as one of many rooms in Auster's fiction connected to 'recall of past events and a descent into despair' (*Paul Auster*, p.24).

Tom Theobald related Auster's prose to the writing of Sartre, Camus, Maurice Blanchot and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in terms of the existential dilemmas facing his protagonists.⁴⁷ Embedded within this book is a brief review of sources published in French, which have argued that Auster's drive to explore and preserve collective memory in *The Invention of Solitude* is part of a clear Jewish tradition of writing. Theobald chose not to extend these arguments to the rest of Auster's prose, in which his 'Jewish background is mostly subdued' (*Existentialism and Baseball*, p.69). James Peacock was the most insightful when he stated that 'unlike Roth, say, Auster rarely tackles overtly "Jewish" themes: it is more a question of aesthetic practice'.⁴⁸ Peacock followed this up with a series of interesting observations about Auster's Jewish 'sensitivity', although these constitute a fraction of the overall summary of Auster's oeuvre. Gerard O' Donoghue's thesis is a rare exception in that he approached both Auster and Roth exclusively in light of Jewish themes, although as I acknowledged above, he did not discriminate between the two in terms of their specific Jewish-American experience.

⁴⁵ Andreas Hau, *The Implosion of Negativity: The Poetry and Early Prose of Paul Auster* (Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand GmbH, 2010), p.1.

⁴⁶ Mark Brown, *Paul Auster* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ Tom Theobald, *Existentialism and Baseball: The French Philosophical Roots of Paul Auster* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010), p.69.

⁴⁸ James Peacock, *Understanding Paul Auster* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), p.12.

Auster is usually evaluated as a writer of metafiction, a postmodernist, a fabulist and one not concerned with the sociological moment, as opposed to Roth, who, as outlined above, is seen by two opposing groups as either belonging to the 'postmodernist' or the 'Jewish' camp.

Elaine Safer made an excellent attempt to link the two in her reading of *Operation Shylock*.

Referring to Roth's use of doubles, Safer cited Linda Hutcheon in terms of the 'mixed, plural and contradictory nature of the postmodern enterprise'.⁴⁹ Safer then went on to argue that

Roth:

uses the concept of the divided or 'double' self as a means of pointing to the parallelism between social and private identity splits to which the Jew may be exposed. (*Operation Shylock: The Double*, p.173)

Critics have been more eager to point out that Auster's work reflects arguments made by deconstructionists, than they have to discuss the historical contexts of Auster's family background and ethnicity. Alison Russell's reading of the *New York Trilogy* was underpinned by the idea that it is 'amenable to the deconstructive principles of Jacques Derrida'.⁵⁰ Essays by Josh Cohen and Timothy Bewes constitute rare and praiseworthy efforts to connect Auster's postmodern aesthetic to his Jewish background through the peripheral presence of the Holocaust in his fiction.⁵¹

I have argued in the previous chapters that dis/simulation is a post-traumatic or historically contingent trait in Jewish-American fiction. It is thus implied that for fiction to qualify as Jewish-American, the protagonists do not have to be located in certain areas of New Jersey, be seen observing Jewish holidays, eating gefilte fish with horseradish, discussing the content of Jewish newspapers, speaking Yiddish or acting in the highly stereotyped manners

⁴⁹ Elaine Safer, 'Operation Shylock: The Double, the Comic and the Quest for Identity', in *Playful and Serious: Philip Roth as a Comic Writer*, ed. by Ben Siegel and Jay L. Halio (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), pp.152-80 (p.158).

⁵⁰ Alison Russell, 'Deconstructing the *New York Trilogy*: Paul Auster's Anti-Detective Fiction', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 31.2 (Winter 1990), 71-84 (p.71).

⁵¹ Josh Cohen, 'Desertions: Paul Auster, Edmond Jabés, and the Writing of Auschwitz', *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Review*, 33-34 (2000-01), 94-107; Timothy Bewes, 'The Novel as Absence: Lucács and the Event of the Postmodern Novel', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 38 (2004), 5-20.

sometimes found in Roth's fiction. Auster's writing is, however, not wholly without these aspects. His relationship to Jewish culture is considerably more ambiguous than Roth's, at least in terms of what we can learn from his work. His first full length prose work, *The Invention of Solitude*, is riddled with paradoxical comments relating to this. Auster recalls that as a small boy he watched his father in a Jewish restaurant:

wolf down borscht, pirogen, and boiled meats covered with horse radish. I, who was being brought up as an American boy, who knew less about my ancestors than I did about Hopalong Cassidy's hat. (*Invention of Solitude*, p.28)

In this, a book that revolves around the subjects of common, collective and traumatic memory, Auster also recalls being attacked on his way home from Hebrew school by 'older boys in leather jackets who called him a Jew shit' (*Invention of Solitude*, p.168).⁵²

Auster's father encountered similar discrimination to Herman Roth in his attempts to build a career. He was fired from Thomas Edison's lab in Menlo Park after one day because 'Edison learned he was a Jew' (*Invention of Solitude*, p.52). Whether this implies that Auster's father, who bore a strong 'resemblance to Abraham Lincoln', made any conscious effort to conceal the fact is unclear (*Invention of Solitude*, p.53). This surely would have some bearing though, on the fact that apart from this job, Sam Auster worked exclusively for family or for himself. Auster took his first trip abroad with savings that included his Bar Mitzvah money and actually moved to Weequahic with his mother when she left his father, and thus can be seen as shaped by both positive and negative aspects of Jewish experience (*Hand to Mouth*, p.19).

⁵² In an interview at Columbia University, Auster recalled his eventual rejection of the idea of becoming a practicing Jew, but stated that 'I still have a tremendous interest in the Jewish tradition [...] a certain kind of thinking which I think is more political and social than spiritual' (Mark C. Taylor, 'Rethinking Religion' <http://ircpl.org/2010/rethinking_religion/media/transcript/paul-auster-literature-and-terror-2/#more-898> [accessed 22 March 2011]). In their postmodernist survey of post-war literature, Peter Middleton and Tim Woods argued that *The Invention of Solitude* exemplifies Auster's 'exceptional ability to track the earliest signs of emergent cultural beliefs' (*Literatures of Memory: History, time and space in postwar writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.5).

I asked Auster about his background, and he was happy to discuss what he felt were the levels of prejudice during his upbringing compared to what Philip Roth would have encountered. Auster told me that he felt that there was a vast difference in their experiences because of the respective dates and places, and that things had moved on significantly in terms of the ‘gentleman’s agreements’ that had affected people of his father’s generation. From Auster’s writing, research carried out at the Ackman and Ziff Family Genealogical Institute, the National Archives at Houston Street and the Berg Collection, it is clear that Auster’s family had an unsettled and traumatic background that matches those of many immigrants struggling to make it in the new world. On his father’s side, the pressures of immigrant life may have contributed to the breakdown of the family and the remarkable case in 1919 of his paternal grandmother, Anna Auster, murdering his paternal grandfather, Harry Auster, in their home following an argument over another woman.

Auster recalled the process of finding out about this in *The Invention of Solitude*, and stated that the newspaper coverage in the *Kenosha Evening News* contained a:

mixture of scandal-mongering and sentimentality, heightened by the fact that the people involved were Jews - and therefore strange, almost by definition - which gives the whole account a leering, condescending tone. (*Invention of Solitude*, p.36)

I read the entire file of newspaper clippings that Auster has deposited at the Berg Collection, and noted that the writers seem to revel (as, one suspects, would their readers) at the story of a dysfunctional family having its problems paraded for public consumption. I saw not one comment that referred to them as Jews or any stereotyping that was obvious to me. Also in that collection are letters to Auster from the poet Carl Rakosi, coincidentally from Kenosha, Wisconsin, who tells, one assumes, an unsuspecting Auster about the rough, unidyllic lives that Jewish immigrants lived in that time and place. It could be concluded from this that something of the Jewish self-consciousness about being represented by gentiles conditioned Auster’s response to what he learnt.

At the Ackman and Ziff Family Genealogy Institute and the National Archives at Houston Street, I was able to trace one line of Auster's family history that shows what a 'fluke of history' (as Auster put it when I interviewed him) it was that he came to be alive in America as a Jew. Auster's maternal grandmother, Cecile Bogat, was born in Kobrin (part of Belarus since 1991) in 1896 and arrived in America, via Canada, in 1923. Kobrin was under Imperial Russian rule in partitioned Poland, and occupied by the Germans in 1941. According to Maxim Mill, 'there were almost 8,000 Jews in the Kobrin Ghetto. Almost all of them were killed by the spring of 1943'.⁵³ One would not be making much of an assumption if one related this closely to Cecile Bogat's 'Petition for Naturalization' (acquired at the National Archives), filed with government offices in Brooklyn, 7 May 1943. This indicates strongly that at least one of Auster's grandparents was personally affected by the Holocaust.

Although it can be plainly pointed out that there are differences of detail in Auster's background when compared with Roth's, it can equally be asserted that there are important similarities. These particularly include a consciousness of being Jewish or other than WASP, gentile or mainstream, an awareness of anti-Semitism and its consequences and a sense of connection to a larger narrative or history. When I interviewed Auster, I asked him directly about his sense of Jewish experience. He told me that he felt:

very connected to the entire history of the Jews, the culture of the Jews, this is what I come out of. And I think as a Jew one automatically feels oneself to be an outsider, which is I think a good position for a writer. (see Appendix)

I have argued thus far that Auster and Roth shared similar experiences, even though they had different backgrounds. I will now place these similarities and differences in the context of Sherry B. Ortner's ethnographic study of Weeqhahic High School's class of '58. This study looks at the class that came almost exactly midway between Roth's graduation from

⁵³ Maxim Mill, 'History of the Kobrin Synagogue' <http://www.jewishgen.org/Belarus/newsletter/Kobrin_Synagogue.htm> [accessed 18 June 2012].

Weequahic (1950) and Auster's from Columbia High School in Maplewood (1965). Despite the prevalent tendency of that era for people to conflate class and race, Ortner found in the process of interviewing over two hundred of her former year-mates, that those who graduated from Weequahic progressed in a way that suggests that it was a 'representative' American school. This is in spite of the school catering to a mostly Jewish demographic and otherwise catering to African Americans and other white ethnics, such as Italian Catholics (*New Jersey Dreaming*, p.9).

There were some instances of anti-Semitism and tensions created by Jewish pupils coming from different backgrounds as discussed earlier (German/ East European, established/ immigrant). It was seen, however, that the pupils of the class either succeeded or failed in later life in terms that could be said to be true of the pupils of many less ethnically diverse schools of that era. Ortner conceded that whether students accessed college, had impressive careers, or faced different social disadvantages, was largely connected to 'class', in terms of cultural know-how and wealth, as opposed to race. This was exemplified when Ortner admitted that she, a successful academic, was surprised to hear that a quarter of her classmates suffered from more or less hidden problems, including poverty, poor health, Holocaust trauma within the family and the shame of degeneracy within the family in a middle-class Jewish area (*New Jersey Dreaming*, pp.35-37).

This was in contrast to the average pupil's perception of those who made 'massive economical leaps', by moving to the suburbs and sending their children to Columbia High (*New Jersey Dreaming*, p.43). Clearly, there was the perception that these children had moved beyond Weequahic to an area that was not so exclusively Jewish and certainly had a better reputation for social equality than segregated urban Newark, despite the tendency

discussed above for Jews to settle into suburban areas populated by other Jews.⁵⁴ Ortner's findings can be applied to both Roth and Auster's fiction. Situated as it is in Weequahic 1958, the study bridges social changes that affected both authors, especially in terms of a shift away from Jewish identity towards a generic 'whiteness' or 'Americanness'. The disclaimer remains in place, however, that contact with family problems, Jewish or specifically Holocaust-related trauma, social group within the Jewish community and innate personality type are factors that influence development at least as strongly as race and historical processes.

I will now conclude this section with some observations on the subjects of psychoanalytic theory and mental health issues, and how they may have influenced each author's work. Both authors have shown an interest in psychology and extreme mental states in their work. Roth famously critiqued Freudianism in *Portnoy's Complaint*. David Gooblar noted that in this novel Roth outlined the mock condition 'Portnoy's Complaint' and that from that point 'the reader is [...] in a Freudian world, populated by language, theories and therapeutic practice'.⁵⁵ Roth has openly admitted having undergone analysis (*Facts*, p.414), and in the late 1980s suffered a nervous breakdown that is thought to be accurately detailed in *Operation Shylock*, and also in the autobiography of his wife at the time, Claire Bloom.⁵⁶ Roth, in fact, described his ability to recover from setbacks as well as his tendency to 'swing [...] swiftly through a

⁵⁴ Columbia High has never been a 'Jewish school' and there are many recollections on record of anti-Semitism occurring there in the 1930s and 1940s (see William B. Helmreich, *The Enduring Community: The Jews of Newark and the Metrowest* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1999), p.113). Having contacted some pupils who graduated around the time that Auster did, I found that none of them recalled any anti-Semitism.

⁵⁵ David Gooblar, *The Major Phases of Philip Roth* (New York: Continuum, 2011), p.92.

⁵⁶ This autobiography has been seen as vindictive or revenge inspired by some readers, given that it appeared after the breakdown of the marriage. Half of the book is devoted to describing this break-up. Bloom states that Roth, having undergone knee surgery, was prescribed the painkiller Halcion, which was later connected to mental health problems. She described Roth as anxious, angry, depressed, suffering from extreme nightmares and under the care of a psychiatrist (Clare Bloom, *Leaving A Doll's House: A Memoir* (London: Virago, 1996), pp.194-95). Roth wrote of 'hallucinations', 'panic', feeling 'suicidal' and questioned whether the breakdown was caused entirely by the drug or in part by something 'concealed, obscured, masked, depressed' (*Operation Shylock*, p.12, p.13, p.17 and p.18). In questioning whether or not he was fully 'detransformed' after this episode, Roth set up the fictional *Operation Shylock* for the reader as a post-traumatic narrative (*Operation Shylock*, p.19).

wide range of moods' as a familial trait that he shares with his father and brother (*Facts*, p.315). I will introduce some similarities between Roth's and Kosinski's work in terms of mania and sadism below.

That Roth has continued to acquaint himself with psychoanalytical theory throughout his career is in little doubt. In *The Human Stain*, Delphine Roux reads a book 'by Julia Kristeva, a treatise as wonderful as any ever written on melancholy'.⁵⁷ Roth has also taken several literary swipes at what he considers to be the reductivism of psychoanalytic discourse and teaching:

Dr Spielvogel invited me to look at the nursery for the answer. The question with which he began our second session was, 'Does your wife remind you of your mother?' My heart sank. Psychoanalytic reductivism was not going to save me.⁵⁸

Auster has routinely denied having any interest in any branch of modern literary theory, but in terms of psychoanalysis, the evidence refutes such claims. *The Invention of Solitude* abounds with allusions to and quotations from Freud. Two examples are Auster's description of Disney's *Pinocchio* compared to an earlier version in which things are expressed in a 'preconscious, dream-like form', and later his discussion of Freud's views on childhood memory and the uncanny (*Invention of Solitude*, p.132 and p.148). In a later interview, Auster introduced the theories of Lacan and Oliver Sacks when asked about 'solitude' in his fiction.⁵⁹

During our conversation, Auster stated that he felt that he had never suffered from anything that could be described as mental illness, although he acknowledged that he had been 'surrounded by insanity' in his own family. This remark relates to the extreme behaviour

⁵⁷ Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*, in *The American Trilogy: American Pastoral, I Married a Communist, The Human Stain* (New York: The Library of America, 2011), pp.701-1040 (p.889).

⁵⁸ Philip Roth, *My Life as a Man*, in *Novels 1973-1977* (New York: Library of America, 2006), pp.379-678 (p.573).

⁵⁹ Paul Auster, 'Interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory', in *The Art of Hunger*, pp.269-312 (p.300). I should also note here that Auster has translated Foucault, and that in the Berg collection there are drafts of a review of Steve Erickson's *Rubicon Beach* that contain explicit references to Jungian theory.

manifested by Auster's paternal grandmother, who in addition to murdering her husband attempted suicide more than once, and by his sister, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia after 'a series of debilitating mental breakdowns' (*Invention of Solitude*, pp.42-45 and p.25).⁶⁰ Auster described his early struggles and exile as a writer in terms of suffering from 'never ending panic' and towards the end of his first marriage in terms of 'stress and chronic anxiety' (*Hand to Mouth*, p.3 and p.123). Furthermore, I should point out that all of Auster's novels feature an episode of mental instability or trauma on the part of the main protagonist, whether this is induced by guilt, grief, phase of life issues, substance misuse or a postmodernist meltdown between language and reality as experienced in the *New York Trilogy*.⁶¹

In these contexts, it was apt to point to Ortner's study before beginning to discuss the fiction of these authors. Each, it has been seen, came from a profoundly different background despite their consciousness of being Jewish. Each in turn was exposed to familial instability, and to trauma and mood disorders that could equally be connected to Jewish historical trauma and to inherited traits. It is because of this, that as we shall see in the analysis below, whilst Auster's fiction shows less of the anxiety found in Roth's about being visibly Jewish, Auster is no more capable than Roth of moving beyond a repetitive tendency to dramatize dis/simulation in his fiction (both through its content and form). This is clearly related to a deeply inscribed consciousness of Jewish identity and history. Much of the malaise and 'acting out' that occurs in the fiction of Paul Auster and Philip Roth occurs in conjunction with hiding and disguising.

⁶⁰ In telling stories relating to male relatives, Auster recalled that his father, despite his seemingly closed personality, had a natural gift for storytelling, whilst his paternal grandfather was surrounded by 'the hocus-pocus of illusion' in his ability to make 'people believe in him' both in business spheres and in entertaining his family (*Invention of Solitude*, p.22 and p.120). Auster's career choice may thus be looked upon, as was suggested by Kay Redfield-Jamison, as reflecting a natural, congenital aptitude.

⁶¹ In the Berg Collection, there is an excerpt of Auster's college friend David Shapiro reviewing the *New York Trilogy* that makes the claim that Auster's representations of depression and mania are so convincing that they could only derive from personal experience.

Hiding and Disguising: Strategic, Withdrawn and Manic Dis/simulation in the Fiction of Paul

Auster and Philip Roth.

If this manuscript conveys anything, it's my exhaustion with masks, disguises, distortions, and lies. (Philip Roth, Facts, p.311)

One man contends that Hölderlin's madness was feigned, and that in response to the stultifying political reaction that overwhelmed Germany following the French revolution, the poet withdrew from the world [...] Speculations of this sort, however, strike A. as tedious. He has no difficulty accepting Hölderlin's presence in the room. He would even go so far as to say that Hölderlin could not have survived anywhere else. (Paul Auster, Invention of Solitude, pp.99-100)

Having outlined the grounds for comparing Roth and Auster, on the basis of common aspects in their backgrounds and themes and motifs in their work, I will now switch to focussing on the ways in which each author's work reflects the central concern of this thesis:

dis/simulation. In the first instance, it can be seen that externally Roth is more sensitive to the issue of being visibly Jewish. This can be seen in his fiction all the way back to *Goodbye Columbus*, in which the self-conscious Neil Klugman resents his girlfriend, Brenda Patimkin, having had her nose 'fixed'.⁶² As Bernice Schrank noted, Hollywood's 'insistence on erasing Jewish identity [...] was widely practiced until the 1960's' ('Cutting Off Your Nose to Spite Your Race', p.19). Auster may not have felt the same pressure or the same capacity to disguise or downplay his ethnic background as, for instance, does Brenda Patimkin, but he is more of her generation than of Roth's because of his suburban experience and shifting aspirations among Jews in terms of their immersion in American life regardless of ethnicity.

Neil also registers that Brenda is in the habit of adapting answers to questions about her life in order to be ambiguous about her social/ethnic group. This is clear when she states that she is going to college in Boston but does not specify which college, and Neil 'disliked her for the answer. Whenever anyone asks me where I went to school I come right out with it: Newark Colleges of Rutgers University' (*Goodbye Columbus*, p.13). Victoria Adams picked

⁶² Philip Roth, *Goodbye Columbus*, in *Novels and Stories 1959-1962*, pp.7-108 (p.17).

up on this and rightly argued that whilst the world of the Patimkin family, who have relocated to Short Hills, is inaccessible to Neil whose family is still based in Newark, total assimilation into WASP culture is just as inaccessible to the Patimkins no matter how they adapt.⁶³ Neil's irritation may be caused either by the principle of Brenda having the desire to be able to pass, or because he feels that for him this would be a hopeless project.

Alexander Portnoy is self-conscious because of the ways in which people are categorized by racial appearances. This is manifest in his assertion that he can identify non-Jewish women whilst he himself can be identified as a Jew, and face hostility and/or exclusion because of his nose (*Portnoy's Complaint*, p.365, p.378, pp.381-82 and p.383). In *Letting Go*, Gabe Wallach is recognized as a Jew and attributed negative stereotypes, even though he is acting under a false name.⁶⁴ The ways in which people respond to Gabe is seen to be connected to his appearance. Doris Horvitz states that Gabe looks 'Irish', unlike Paul Hertz, who looks 'very Jewish' (*Letting Go*, p.428).

These concerns and insecurities are expressed throughout Roth's oeuvre. Peter Tarnopol is scathing about his sister's attempts to adapt her 'hawk nosed' appearance, and concludes that despite various procedures, she is 'still Semitic' (*My Life as a Man*, p.478). Mickey Sabbath, recalling childhood summers, discusses how different he felt from Syrian Jews: 'I couldn't get over the dark skin' (*Sabbath's Theatre*, p.710). In Roth's most recent novel, the narrator dwells upon his description of Dr Steinberg, the protagonist's future father-in-law:

His nose was his most distinctive feature: curved like a scimitar at the top but bent flat at the tip, and with the bone of the bridge cut like a diamond - in short, a nose out of a folktale, the sort of sizable, convoluted, intricately turned nose that, for many centuries, confronted though they have been by every imaginable hardship, the Jews had never stopped making.⁶⁵

⁶³ Victoria Adams, 'Philip Roth's Comic Realism in *Goodbye, Columbus*', in *Playful and Serious: Philip Roth as a Comic Writer*, pp.35-46.

⁶⁴ Philip Roth, *Letting Go*, in *Novels and Stories 1959-1962*, pp.227-896 (p.882).

⁶⁵ Philip Roth, *Nemesis* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010), p.100.

Auster's fiction in general is not as historically detailed as Roth's, and he rarely gives much detail in his descriptions of characters, their backgrounds or their locations. The majority of Auster's fiction is 'set' in New York, but to all intents and purposes could be set anywhere, as Auster often appears to be grappling with an existential problem that gives his fiction a pared-down or sparse feel. Nowhere is this clearer than in *The Music of Chance*.⁶⁶ In this novel, which ostensibly presents as a classic American 'quest' or 'road' novel, the actions of the protagonist Jim Nashe could occur in any socio-historical context.

Nashe's post-traumatic condition is typical of Auster's work, but his willing submission to a seemingly futile and inescapable set of challenges would remind many readers of a Kafkaesque protagonist's willing submission to an overdetermined authority. The scenes in which Nashe and his companion Jack Pozzi are forced at gunpoint to carry out futile and backbreaking work, while those in charge continually invent new stipulations at random, will, of course, put some readers in mind of representations of the camp experience. This is reinforced further in the film version, through the visual imagery of the barbed wire fence that surrounds the field in which the 'work camp' is situated.⁶⁷ The Jewish actor Mandy Patinkin, whom many American viewers would associate with Jewish projects and acting roles, plays Nashe.

This stylistic tendency, combined with Auster's insistence that he is not interested in the 'sociological moment', drives Auster criticism in the direction described above, with the reliance on postmodern or deconstructive theory. It is not entirely the case, however, that physical descriptions indicating a Jewish identity are absent from Auster's fiction. One example worth recalling is that of Sidney Orr, whose sense of impending disaster is intimately connected to his Jewish identity. Orr's mentor, John Trause, makes fun of his

⁶⁶ Paul Auster, *The Music of Chance* (New York: Viking, 1991).

⁶⁷ *The Music of Chance*. Dir. Phillip Haas. IRS Media. 1993.

nose-bleeds by recalling an anti-Semitic myth that Jewish men menstruate, as well as the usual 'Jewish nose' humour:

'Old Faithful strikes again' he said. 'Orr's menstruating schnozz. Don't let it get you down, Sidney. At least you know you're not pregnant'. (*Oracle Night*, p.41)

If Roth's fiction on the whole is the more sociologically grounded, this may be explained in relation to his and Auster's generational difference. Roth's formative reading experiences revolved around early-twentieth-century experimental fiction by James Joyce and Sherwood Anderson, but also the historically grounded work of Howard Fast. Roth was also influenced by the 'autobiographical' style of Thomas Wolfe, and in terms of his adolescent feelings of vulnerability towards stereotyping, felt that he was 'sensitized unduly by Budd Schulberg's novel, that I'd read in high school, about the pushiest of pushy Jews, Sammy Glick' (*Facts*, p.337 and p.344).

In Schulberg's novel, the narrator Al Manheim describes Sammy Glick (born Sammele Glickstein) fighting his way out of urban Jewish poverty and victimization to wealth and power in the movie industry.⁶⁸ Sammy denies all traces of his background, adopting ultra-conservative politics, only to be finally defeated when his WASP bride forthrightly dismisses him. The reader is thus led to conclude that Sammy will never transcend his background, no matter how fast he runs.

Auster has spoken at length about the effect of Beckett on his thinking and writing:

You have the sense, when you read Beckett for the first time, that he reinvented the novel, and at the same time made it impossible for anyone to write a novel again. And I was in a sense crushed by him. It took me a while to get out from under the burden of Beckett.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Budd Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?* (New York: Random House, 1941).

⁶⁹ Mark Irwin, 'Memory's Escape: Inventing *The Music of Chance* - A Conversation with Paul Auster', *Denver Quarterly*, 28 (1994), 111-22 (p.118).

Writing as contemporaries of sorts since the mid-1980s, Auster and Roth have both fluctuated between writing novels that are more ‘metafictional’ and others that seem on the surface to be more engaged with history or contemporary politics. Formal experimentation in the novel was, of course, a developing literary trend throughout Kosinski’s writing career and Kosinski was, if only chronologically, a near contemporary of Philip Roth. Nonetheless, if Kosinski had lived and continued to write into the late 1990s and early 2000s, he may have enjoyed, as has Roth, a more relaxed critical attitude towards metafictional experimentation. Of *Being There*, Anatole Broyard stated that Kosinski had ‘renounced almost all of the ingredients of fiction for a few scraps from the philosopher’s table’.⁷⁰ Christopher Lehman-Haupt bemoaned that in *Pinball*, Kosinski:

tries literary reference, almost always pointlessly [...] he tries autobiographical references, which fail to make the story more real or exciting.⁷¹

This is in stark contrast to Sam Leith’s review of Roth’s *The Humbling*, which extolled similar aspects of the novel and simply stated, almost as an aside, that ‘It is stagy, sometimes, and a little schematic’.⁷² One could also make the case that Roth’s literary game-playing (experimental form, teasing autobiographical references) began after he was personally attacked and implicated in his own fictional worlds by critics early in his career, so this element of withdrawal is, in a sense, post-traumatic.⁷³

⁷⁰ Anatole Broyard, ‘The High Price of Profundity’, *New York Times*, 21 April 1971, p.45.

⁷¹ Christopher Lehman-Haupt, ‘Books of The Times: *Pinball*’, *New York Times*, 25 February 1982, p.C20. See the public spat that Roth got into with this reviewer, which is a textbook example of Roth’s extreme oversensitivity to the reception of his work (‘In Response to Imagining Jews’, *New York Review of Books*, 3 October 1974 <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1974/dec/12/critical-standards/?pagination=false>> [accessed 20 June 2012]).

⁷² Sam Leith, ‘Acting Up: *The Humbling*’, *Literary Review*, November 2009, pp.54-55 (p.55).

⁷³ Timothy Parrish argued that Roth sees himself more as a novelist than as a Jew, and that for him ‘asserting one’s identity is [...] always a transgressive act. This means that for Roth no form of identity, ethnic or otherwise - can ever be fixed’ (‘Introduction: Roth at mid-career’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*, ed. by Timothy Parrish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.1-8 (p.2)). Parrish is among a number of critics who have not confronted the paradox that such a position may naturally suit a non-WASP American author.

Even in the more socio-historically engaged mode of fiction, however, both authors have continued to insert teasing autobiographical references, techniques that draw attention to the constructed nature of the text and intertextual references to other metafictional prose. Each author's work reflects strongly the influence of twentieth-century European formal experimentation and the late-twentieth-century tendency to foreground the author, or auteur, in the text. To build on Linda Hutcheon's formulation, these authors do not write as if they are central in the work as themselves, they write 'as if' they were central in the work as 'themselves'.⁷⁴

Whilst this may be considered a feature of the modern American literary tradition (John Updike, for instance had two alter-persona protagonists in his Beck and Rabbit series), it may also be looked upon as part of a Jewish tradition, as I have been arguing throughout this thesis. Being partly visible as 'oneself' but always able to back out at any given moment and say 'it was the character', is a subtle tactic or social presentation of the self that stands alongside the instinctive need to 'act out', make someone laugh or keep others at a distance by feigning irony or cynicism. It is a comic tactic of subtle subversion that at once enables the artist/critic to make her/his point without putting her/his head fully above the parapet. At the same time it does not offend the audience through outright attack. As in the case of Lenny Bruce, perhaps the comic is not directly attacking the audience's politics or social mores - rather it is all an act - a zany, madcap, or socially inept person is simply running off at the mouth.

⁷⁴ On the self-referential nature of much late twentieth-century fiction, Hutcheon wrote that the effect is to 'highlight, or "highlight", and to subvert, or "subvert", and the mode therefore is a "knowing" and ironic - or even "ironic" - one' (*The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.1). Hutcheon here is addressing the tendency of late-twentieth-century fiction to be critical in its representation of, for instance, historical events, whilst at the same time demonstrating a self-reflexive awareness of the partial, incomplete and biased perspectives that pervade all forms of representation.

Several aspects of dis/simulation can be seen in Auster's *New York Trilogy* and Roth's *Operation Shylock*. In Auster's trilogy, I have argued (in my MPhil thesis) that the unifying themes largely relate to Auster's coming-of-age as an author. In none of the three novels are there any significant details about the protagonist or his background, although there are many hints that identify an aspect of Paul Auster within several of the characters.⁷⁵ For instance, in *City of Glass*, the protagonist is a Columbia alumnus who writes under the pen name Quinn (this matches Auster). At one point he encounters a writer named Paul Auster with a wife named Siri and a son named Daniel. The common aspects of the three novellas are that in each case a protagonist is haunted by a double, or 'dybbuk', and that each protagonist begins his narrative trajectory from a position of reclusion or retreat, only acting positively or assertively under a different guise. Quinn adopts the persona of 'Paul Auster'. Blue in *Ghosts* is an undercover investigator. The protagonist of *The Locked Room* figuratively 'fills the shoes' of his childhood friend Fanshawe, by marrying his wife and appropriating his literary output.

The concept of the 'dybbuk' is worth considering in the context of alter-personae, 'acting out' and dis/simulation, but also in the context of identifying Auster as an author whose fiction has distinct 'Jewish' elements. The 'dybbuk' is a figure from Jewish folklore said to be a malicious or dispossessing spirit whose soul has not entered the afterlife because of

⁷⁵ The Holocaust does figure peripherally in the trilogy. In *City of Glass*, Quinn visits a café owned by a man with a 'concentration camp number tattooed on his arm' (*City of Glass* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1985), p.60). Both Alik Varvogli and Gerard O' Donoghue related the 'red notebook' in *City of Glass* to Holocaust diarists (*The World that is the Book: Paul Auster's Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), p.90; 'The Orphan's Kaddish', p.243). Near the end of *The Locked Room*, the nameless protagonist is spiralling out of control in France when a former neighbour of his friend Fanshawe launches into 'a political harangue that I had trouble following' about Nazi collaborators, ongoing racial tension in New York and American genocide of Native Americans (*The Locked Room* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1986), p.146). As is the case with Kosinski's fiction (*The Devil Tree, Passion Play*) discussed in the previous chapter, Auster rarely writes a novel with no reference at all to Jewish history, even if such a reference is fleeting or reserved until the final stages. In *Timbuktu*, Willy G. Christmas (born William Gurevitch) tells his dog (the novel's main protagonist), that his mother was persecuted in the past: 'they tried to kill her too. They hunted her down like a dog' (*Timbuktu* (New York: Holt, 1999), p.120). Timothy Bewes noted that whilst the Holocaust is not actually represented in *Mr Vertigo*, there are echoes of it in a scene in which the Klu Klux Klan attack a number of ethnically diverse characters at the home of the Jewish protagonist Yehudi ('The Novel as Absence', p.10).

serious transgressions committed during life. This is the pretext of S. Anski's Yiddish play *The Dybbuk*, which for Joseph C. Landis features 'the moral universe of [...] the Ashkenazic Jew, in which the interdependence of man is not only a fact; it is an inescapable obligation: man is his brother's keeper'.⁷⁶

In many ways, the stories in the trilogy mirror narrative patterns found in Bernard Malamud's fiction. In *The Tenants*, Malamud's protagonist Harry Lesser is a writer working in one room of an apartment complex, tormented by the presence of a black, alter-persona tenant/writer in an adjacent room before the two come into violent confrontation, despite Lesser's stereotypically Jewish dislike of physical conflict.⁷⁷ Whether by design or otherwise, in *Ghosts* Auster created a character in the form of Blue who fits in with Roth's idea of a Malamudian protagonist. Blue pays the price for the expression of desire, when he thwarts the attempts of his tormentor to impose the literary ideals of the chaste and hermetic Henry David Thoreau upon him.⁷⁸ Blue decides that like a soldier at war (he is in fact a private detective with time on his hands being cajoled into reading *Walden*), he deserves some 'comforts', and after a sexual encounter with a woman he meets in a bar, is rejected by his intended, leaving him tearful and feeling like 'a fool'.⁷⁹ Of the two entombed protagonists, Blue has a breakdown and leaves while Black is beaten and possibly dies a martyr to his own ascetic cause.

In *Operation Shylock*, Philip Roth is haunted by an imposter who claims to be Philip Roth. Despite the disclaimer that this is a work of fiction, the 'authentic' protagonist resembles the author: his biography, career and even his medical record. The basic premise is that the

⁷⁶ *Three Great Jewish Plays*, ed. by Joseph C. Landis (New York: Horizon Press, 1972), p.17.

⁷⁷ Bernard Malamud, *The Tenants* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971).

⁷⁸ See Roth's comments on Malamud's 'entombed and impoverished' protagonists' ('Imagining Jews', p.266). One could argue that in *Ghosts* there is a parody, in the form of Black's coercive challenge to Blue, of the 'stern morality' that Roth sensed in Malamud's fiction and in the man himself ('Pictures of Malamud', in *Shop Talk: A Writer and his Colleagues and Their Work*, pp.120-30 (p.124)).

⁷⁹ Paul Auster, *Ghosts* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1986), p.43 and p.51.

author is informed by a cousin in Israel that he is being impersonated by a man who has spoken on television about the trial of John Demjanjuk. The narrative, which is preceded by a quotation from Kierkegaard that 'existence is a debate' and which revisits Demjanjuk's defence that nobody's identity can be proven with absolute certainty, revolves around Roth's Halcion induced breakdown and the disintegration of his sense of self. Whilst this is in process, 'Roth' is challenged by other characters about his political commitment, his choice to live as a recluse and his writing. 'Roth' only acts assertively under a false identity, calling himself 'Pierre Roget' and later assuming the identity of the imposter (*Operation Shylock*, p.31 and pp.168-69).

As was the case with Auster in the *New York Trilogy*, Roth is able to poke fun at himself through his characters' more extreme states of consciousness, in a narrative that constantly questions the idea of a stable or knowable identity. Meanwhile, another character assumes a disguise that one feels is adopted as part of an intended course of 'correction' for a protagonist. The one major difference is that Roth's work is steeped in historical detail and political contexts. In many cases the existential uncertainty that the novel foregrounds is related to Jewish themes:

But what I meant by 'the unsureness of everything' was the message of *your* work. I meant the inculcation of pervasive uncertainty.

Smilesburger is my kind of Jew, he is what 'Jew' *is* to me, the best of it to me. Worldly negativity. Seductive verbosity. Intellectual vengery. The hatred. The Lying. The distrust. [italics in original] (*Operation Shylock*, p.362)

Within these novels and several others, one can discern tendencies that I have already discussed in the fiction of Jerzy Kosinski. Some type of mania or sadism often occurs in conjunction with dis/simulation. In Roth's case, this occurs in *Operation Shylock*, as 'Roth' is tormented in political, sexual and psychological ways by another who acts under a disguise. Another example is found in *The Anatomy Lesson*, in which Nathan Zuckerman, tormented

by physical pain and acute personal problems, adopts the 'disguise' of Milton Appel, a fictional literary critic whom Roth reinvents as a 'pornographer' (*The Anatomy Lesson*, pp.379-87 and pp.400-06). Debra Shostak saw this self-invention as 'playful', although she acknowledged that Zuckerman's revenge against the 'father-critic', which in part stems from Roth's antagonisms towards Irving Howe, engendered hostile critical disapproval.⁸⁰ In a way that recalls Roth's claims concerning Malamud's and Mailer's protagonists, the Jewish Zuckerman is able to express certain sexualized and sadistic impulses only under a false identity, albeit an alternative Jewish one.

Roth has been attacked on a number of occasions for the lurid or sadistic content of his fiction. Al Alvarez described Roth's early reputation as a 'crazed penis' being at odds with his actual life, which he described as Salingeresque: living in a remote part of Connecticut and writing in a studio separate from his house.⁸¹ Roth himself confirmed this when he compared his reclusive life to the 'bizarre projections of others' based on what is in his fiction ('After Eight Books', p.86). Nonetheless, sadistic, sexual and manic impulses that are the product of Roth's imagination are expressed through alter-personae, such as Alvin Pepler in *Zuckerman Unbound*, and through protagonists who switch identity before acting in a manic and/or sadistic way.

Alvin Pepler appears as if out of nowhere to torment Zuckerman, who is besieged by a critical backlash and infamy in his own Jewish community, because of the content of his novel, *Carnovsky*. Pepler claims that the character in the novel is a carbon copy of him, and thus reinforces Zuckerman's sense that those who cannot distinguish between fiction and fact will be a cause of constant irritation to him (*Zuckerman Unbound*, p.217). Pepler is imagined

⁸⁰ Debra Shostak, *Philip Roth - Countertexts, Counterlives* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), p.46.

⁸¹ Al Alvarez, 'The Long Road Home', *Guardian*, 11 September 2004
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/sep/11/fiction.philiproth>> [accessed 20 June 2012].

in much the same way as Allbee, the anti-Semite who inflicts his unjust view that Jews enjoy disproportionate influence in New York upon Saul Bellow's protagonist Asa Leventhal.⁸²

Roth's fiction contains elements through which he may be seen to display the same lack of sensitivity to reader reception and lack of self-awareness that we have seen in Kosinski's work. He does, however, do more than Kosinski to distance himself from his characters, to filter them through narrators and in several cases to show that the character is behaving 'out of character' because of distress or a sense of persecution.

This is certainly the case in *Sabbath's Theatre*. Mickey Sabbath 'acts out' in a number of sexualized ways that include masturbating over the grave of his late lover Drenka. In this novel, Roth makes a greater effort to relate Sabbath's 'acting out' to enduring psychological pain and trauma, beginning with the 'loss' of his mother, who never spoke after her other son died. As Sabbath's mourning is occasioned by personal loss rather than issues with career and reputation, readers may have more sympathy than they have for Zuckerman in the examples given above. Alongside Roth's enhanced reputation during the second half of his career, this may account for the more relaxed critical responses to the obscene content of this novel. Sabbath speaks manically, considers suicide and pounces upon any available new object investment in terms of sexual activity (*Sabbath's Theatre*, p.552 and p.716). After being threatened on the streets where he grew up, Sabbath lapses into the disguise of his former self, a street performer hustling for money, in a perfect example of Kosinskian dis/simulation for the purposes of deflecting threat (*Sabbath's Theatre*, pp.561-62).⁸³

⁸² Saul Bellow, *The Victim* (London: Penguin, 1966).

⁸³ Doron Weber praised Roth for creating an: 'excessive character but his excess is stamped with authority. The authority comes from the ebullient Roth' ('Review of *Sabbath's Theatre*', *Boston Review*, October/ November 1995 <<http://bostonreview.net/BR20.4/Weber.html>> [accessed 20 June 2012]). Weber's review also reflected some critical relief that in this novel Roth had 'created a fictional protagonist outside of himself'. Ross Posnock wrote that 'what wisteria and alcohol are to Faulkner, and fishing to Hemingway, rudeness is to Roth. It seems to be everywhere in his books - a sport and a pastime, often delivered as a rant' (*Philip Roth's Rude Truth: The Art of Immaturity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p.xi).

As was the case with Kosinski, one could make the case that Roth's 'acting out' through his fiction causes a lack of self-awareness that is apparent in his published comments. Roth told George Plimpton that he felt more influenced by the chaste and hermetic Kafka than by the lewd and exhibitionist Lenny Bruce, completely brushing off the shocking effect that some of his frank sexual descriptions would have on readers.⁸⁴ In other examples, Roth referred to Borscht Belt comedians as 'attached to no restraints' (*Exit Ghost*, p.253). Roth did, however, acknowledge the influence of Borscht Belt comedians on his comic style. This is expanded upon at the beginning of *The Professor of Desire*, when David Kepesh recalls the entertainer Herbie Bratasky and how other guests at Kepesh's Hungarian Royale 'appear to be as nearly mesmerized by Herbie's shameless exhibitionism as I am'.⁸⁵ It seems that in terms of sensitivity and taste, Roth shows a similar ambivalence between believing that he writes nothing that should cause offence and appearing to enjoy causing offence, to that discussed previously in Kosinski's published comments. Perhaps more telling, is that what Roth took from Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* was a good example of a writer not over-simplifying categories such as 'good Jew' or 'bad goy' ('Imagining Jews', p.266). Roth, like several academics who wrote about Kosinski, entirely overlooked the repetitive and pathological representation of violence in Kosinski's work. In this respect, one could look upon the manic and coercive acts of some of Roth's protagonists, which occur within formal dis/simulation (teasing use of alter-personae protagonists and narrators) and represented dis/simulation (a character assuming another identity), as manifestations of similar drives to those observed in Kosinski's fiction.

Auster's fiction does not share a reputation with Roth's in this sense. This is partly because Auster's fiction is more understated and less emotionally involved, but also largely because

⁸⁴ Philip Roth, 'On Portnoy's Complaint', in *Reading Myself and Others*, pp.13-20 (p.18).

⁸⁵ Philip Roth, *The Professor of Desire*, in *Novels 1973-1977*, pp.679-869 (p.681).

Auster did not have such a critically conspicuous and controversial beginning to his career. The examples that I have described above, of manic or sadistic ‘acting out’ occurring in conjunction with dis/simulation, are, in fact, present in Auster’s fiction. In *The Locked Room*, the narrator takes on the guise of ‘Herman Melville’, and enjoys the ‘splendid confusion’ on the face of his interlocutor at a bar in Paris (*The Locked Room*, p.153). This follows a mental breakdown that involves a bout of acute alcoholism and repeated episodes of sexual debauchery (pp.148-49). Auster described his own reactions to grief earlier in life in similar terms (*Invention of Solitude*, pp.113-14).⁸⁶

Similar impulses to overthrow depression through manic excess are represented in most of Auster’s novels. Comparing this to the similar tendency found in Roth’s work, one might say that in terms of presenting a protagonist who does not restrain ‘grandiose lusts’, Auster, in downplaying the Jewish identity of his protagonists as part of the ‘sociological moment’, conforms to Roth’s ideas on Mailer and Malamud. As I will discuss below, in several works in which an Auster protagonist’s identity is clearly set in Jewish-American contexts, manic, sadistic, masochistic, and/or assertive actions occur when the protagonist dis/simulates.

Dis/simulation within Metafiction: Represented and Post-traumatic Hiding and Disguising in Roth and Auster’s ‘America Trilogies’.

*I am one of two Jewish children in a class of twenty-five, and a feel for the rules and preferences of society (as ingrained in me, it seems, as susceptibility to the feverish, the flamboyant, the bizarre) dictates that, regardless of how tempted I may be to light my fuse and show these hicks a few of Herbie’s fireworks, I do not distinguish myself from my schoolmates by anything other than grades. To do otherwise, I realize - and without father even having to remind me - will get me nowhere. (David Kepesh, *The Professor of Desire*, p.684)*

⁸⁶ It is almost certain that many of the events and incidents described in *The Invention of Solitude* are taken directly from Auster’s own experience. The use of a second person narrative and a ‘character’ called ‘A’ have led some to the conclusion that this book should not be looked upon as straightforward autobiography, but rather as a generic experiment. This certainly fits in with the idea of formal dis/simulation discussed thus far, as it leaves Auster with the option of distancing himself from actions, emotions and motives for which we have only his word. Brendan Martin argued that ‘Auster removes the mantle of authorial control and encourage [sic] his readership to question the concept of conventional truth’ (*Paul Auster’s Postmodernity*, p.11).

If the barrier between prejudice and persecution collapsed in Germany, this is hardly reason to contend that no such barrier exists in our country. And if it should ever begin to appear to be crumbling, then we must do what is necessary to strengthen it. But not by putting on a good face; not by refusing to admit to the intricacies and impossibilities of Jewish lives [...] not by making Jews invisible. (Philip Roth, 'Writing About Jews', pp.206-07)

I will now conclude this chapter by comparing three books from each author: Roth's 'American Trilogy' (*The Human Stain*, *I Married a Communist* and *American Pastoral*) and three of Auster's novels that constitute a different 'American Trilogy', *Moon Palace*, *Leviathan*, and *The Book of Illusions*. I have chosen these novels as they contain a mixture of metafictional play, autobiographical teasing and historical grounding. All six, to one extent or another, revolve around dis/simulation. In this respect, the reader is encouraged to read the drives towards disguise and hiding found in the formal aspects of each author's fiction, as related to the competing drives to embrace and disguise an ethnic identity that can be discerned in the stories themselves.

Auster's *Moon Palace* has been read by several critics, including Steven Weisenburger, as a novel that comments on the years in which Auster came of age in America, the Vietnam years, by embedding stories of family, art and history within 'the rubble of those days'.⁸⁷ Weisenburger argued that the structure of the novel is used by Auster to critique the 'naively nativistic self-fashionings of sixties radicals'.⁸⁸ The protagonist and narrator, Marco Stanley Fogg, reflects upon an era in which racial tensions, moon landings, Woodstock and the Vietnam War took place. During this time he attended Columbia University. This is balanced against stories of American progress and missed opportunities, such as those of the inventor Nicola Tesla and the artist Ralph Albert Blakelock. The result is a novel that Ilana Shiloh was correct to evaluate as a companion piece to *Leviathan*, 'through the metaphor that interlaces

⁸⁷ Paul Auster, *Moon Palace* (New York: Viking, 1989), p.25.

⁸⁸ Steven Weisenburger, 'Inside *Moon Palace*', in *Beyond the Red Notebook: Essays on Paul Auster*, ed. by Dennis Barone (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp.129-42 (p.140).

the two novels, “a complex dance of guilt and desire”⁸⁹. What Shiloh did not comment on, is that both novels have the shared characteristic of making clumsy attempts to inscribe a point of view into the narrative, by placing a family story and undergraduate papers on American art and history alongside representations of the events of a recognizable passage in American history.

Few critics have commented on Marco Stanley Fogg’s Jewish identity. This accounts for several inconsistencies within the novel. Fogg lost his mother as an infant and was raised primarily by his uncle Victor Fogg, whose family name was originally ‘Fogelman, but someone at the immigration offices at Ellis Island had truncated it to Fog’ (*Moon Palace*, p.3). The clues to Fogg’s Jewish-American experience are subtle but definitely present. At school in Chicago in the 1950s, he was abused relentlessly by classmates about his name when there is no reason to believe he would be singled out for any other reason than his ethnicity (*Moon Palace*, p.7). Through baseball, he is eventually able to assimilate and to ‘become one of those skinny American kids who went everywhere with his glove’ (*Moon Palace*, p.8). Fogg’s only friend at Columbia is David Zimmer, a Jew from New Jersey whose parents send him money and who, sporting glasses and a beard as did many students of the day, looks to Fogg ‘something like a young Rabbi’ (*Moon Palace*, p.88). This points to Fogg’s Jewish affiliations and is also relevant to the reading of *The Book of Illusions* below. After losing his uncle, Fogg drops out of college and unravels, undergoing a typical Austerian descent into despair, madness, solitude, defeatism and narcissism before eventually recovering.

The details of this descent are of interest here. After having become a hermit in his apartment, Fogg becomes homeless and begins sleeping rough in Central Park because there:

⁸⁹ Ilana Shiloh, *Paul Auster and Postmodern Quest* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), p.137.

I could have passed for one of the picnickers or strollers around me. The streets did not allow for such delusions. Whenever I walked among the crowds, I was quickly shamed into an awareness of myself. (*Moon Palace*, p.57)

In this example, Fogg's psychological lapse resembles that of Salinger's De Daumier Smith, in that the motif of hiding and paranoia about the attentions of onlookers is utterly incongruous with that which purportedly affects Fogg - grief.

A protagonist choosing to live in this kind of retreat is a commonplace in Auster's fiction. This is often done in direct response to American politics. In *The Brooklyn Follies*, for instance, Tom Wood retreats to an environment that is likened to a cell because of what he perceives to be the mistakes of the Bush administration in the build up to 9/11. He had previously written a thesis on Poe and Thoreau, who each withdrew from society as 'a sensible alternative to the conditions of the time' (*Brooklyn Follies*, p.16). Auster's ascetics have been compared to literary figures and artists including Hamsun, Kafka, Hölderlin, Thoreau, Baudelaire and Blakelock. This in turn is often related to twentieth-century or postmodern concerns. Shiloh, for instance, claimed that through describing Fogg's withdrawal, Auster is 'flaunting his familiarity with the writings of Sartre, Baudrillard and Camus' (*Paul Auster and Postmodern Quest*, p.138). Since this is both a psychological and an historical investigation, it is much more to the point to examine why Auster obsessively revisits these tropes and is drawn to the work of certain other artists, than it is to simply point out the resonances as and where they occur. Through the discussion so far, outlining dis/simulation as a post-traumatic and historical trait, I believe that I am now well on the way to successfully illuminating this point.

The interesting fact here is that throughout *Moon Palace*, whilst commenting on the American political scene of the late 1960s, Fogg is wholly removed from it. Placing himself within the context of his generation, Fogg states that 'for all the connection I had with them

(the people his age at Woodstock), they might have been standing on another planet' (*Moon Palace*, p.46). We are led to believe that Fogg's actions are inspired purely by his personal circumstances of never having had a father, losing his mother as a child and now losing his uncle. In addition to the felt need to pass or dis/simulate in Central Park, Fogg recalls several 'close calls', and describes moments in which strangers help him as 'miracles' (*Moon Palace*, p.64 and p.65).⁹⁰

There is also extended commentary on Fogg's weight loss, which concludes with his description of the effect on his appearance of shaving his head:

It accentuated my thinness to an almost appalling degree. My ears stuck out, my Adam's apple bulged, my head seemed no bigger than a child's. (*Moon Palace*, p.67)

Fogg even passes through and fails his medical for Vietnam in terms that are reminiscent of Holocaust testimonies, in which the subject describes the ludicrous and Kafkaesque scenario of surviving selection processes for the gas chambers (*Moon Palace*, pp.76-82).⁹¹

It may be pure coincidence that Auster characterizes Fogg's ascetic breakdown as consisting of actions and outcomes that match Holocaust narratives of flight, hiding and physical deprivation, but it would be careless to discount this so simply. This is, after all, a novel in which the protagonist 'acts out', to some extent, the actions of the previous two generations, whilst knowing nothing about them on a conscious level. If one is going to give a reading in which it is argued that traumatic events in American history are re-enacted on a personal level by the protagonists, it is equally plausible to argue in Fogg's case that here he 'acts out' a traumatic passage of Jewish history.

⁹⁰ See Langer (*Holocaust Testimonies*, p.178) and Kraft (*Memory Perceived*, p.111), for examples of survivors attributing their survival to sheer miraculous fortune or coincidence.

⁹¹ In *The Children Accuse*, there are several examples of this. W. J. Sachs recalls children playing a game that involved throwing sand in the air and catching some of the grains, and shouting 'that many died' and 'this many lived' (*The Children Accuse*, p.45). Witold and Jan Jakunbowicz are brothers whose narrative was fixated on the fact that they only survived through blind luck, numbers and logistics (*The Children Accuse*, pp.55-62).

Debra Shostak argued that *Moon Palace* comprises ‘compulsive repetitions’ linked to a rupture from the corporeal world, but that contrary to the case of the *New York Trilogy*, Auster ‘would seem to butt postmodern theory up against the hard reality of physical existence’.⁹² Markku Salmela discussed the novel in terms of the ways in which Auster’s confined protagonists interact with artistic notions of enclosed space, political liberties and freedom, placing Auster’s characters in a category with ‘Beckett and Federman’.⁹³ These examples of overlooking and/or brushing over Auster’s Jewish background are typical of the ahistorical tendencies that I have consistently taken to task in Auster criticism. Even more galling is the conflation without comment of Beckett’s and Federman’s confined protagonists. Raymond Federman was profoundly influenced by Beckett, but like Kosinski and unlike Beckett, survived the Holocaust as a hidden Jewish child. In his autobiography Federman linked his self-reflexiveness, indirect telling, use of interlocuting alter-egos, silence, solitude, speculation concerning alternate histories, and undermining of language and narrative, to his early traumatic experiences and lifelong sense of an inescapable Jewish identity.⁹⁴ On the final page, having concluded the analysis of American political and artistic contexts, Salmela acknowledged that ‘the specifically Jewish need to escape corporeality in the long wake of the exodus and the Holocaust both influence the configuration and functions of Nowhere’ (‘The Bliss of Being Lost’, p.144).⁹⁵

During his recovery, Fogg is employed as an assistant to a blind man in a wheelchair named Thomas Effing. Effing installs himself as Fogg’s mentor and proves to be extremely

⁹² Debra Shostak, ‘Under the Sign of *Moon Palace*: Paul Auster and the Body in the Text’, *Critique*, 49.2 (Winter 2008), 149-68 (p.150 and p.160).

⁹³ Markku Salmela, ‘The Bliss of Being Lost: Revisiting Paul Auster’s Nowhere’, *Critique*, 49.2 (Winter 2008), 131-48 (p.138).

⁹⁴ Raymond Federman, *Shhh: The Story of a Childhood* (Buffalo, NY: Starcherone Books, 2010).

⁹⁵ In many ways, what I am arguing here is a reversal of Aimee Pozorski’s arguments concerning repeated American, rather than Jewish traumas in Philip Roth’s fiction. Whilst I would have preferred to see Pozorski address the significance of these events to Roth as an American Jew, I still believe that to simply posit a different angle to the one commonly used is a refreshing and useful approach, given the one-sidedness that I have attributed to critical approaches both to Auster and to Roth.

capricious, verbally abusive and misogynistic. Despite this, Fogg is unable to reject him as one suspects that many would, because he hangs on to the notion that Effing's half-truths and evasions, opposing public and private selves, and the very falseness of his identity (he is in fact the 'deceased' painter Julian Barber, who lived for many years in exile and in fear of exposure) are in some sense geared towards teaching him a valuable lesson. Furthermore, Fogg chooses to focus in detail on Effing's own story of loss, ascetism, breakdown and re-invention and compare it to his own, although Effing's resulted from being cast adrift in the desert, whilst in pursuit of his own high artistic aims (*Moon Palace*, p.165). Effing did not put himself through his ordeal deliberately because he was at a low ebb, but there is little to counter an assertion that this is the source of Fogg's empathy with Effing.

A similar empathy exists between Fogg and his father, Effing's son, Solomon Barber (who as a child imagined himself as 'Solomon, the wise king of Hebrews' (*Moon Palace*, p.251)). Fogg has no problem empathizing with a man who 'sought to make himself invisible in the massiveness of his own flesh [...] immunizing himself against the pain of being seen' (*Moon Palace*, p.242). Like Fogg, Barber is preoccupied with the idea of Effing's cave in the desert, whether or not it actually existed or simply represents Effing's 'experience of a cave' (*Moon Palace*, p.276). The consistency of the narrative appears to break down, however, in relation to the overall sense that this is an American history of sorts. Both Effing and Barber were profoundly affected by American history and it influenced their choices directly. Effing left America for Europe in the 1920s because he believed that 'the whole country had gone to hell' (*Moon Palace*, p.189). Barber was traumatized by America's bombing of Japan and attacked for speaking in favour of the pacifist movement: 'he had not been blacklisted in any formal sense, but it was nevertheless convenient for his detractors to surround his name with pinkish innuendos' (*Moon Palace*, p.244).

Towards the conclusion, Barber dies and Fogg finds himself an Ishmaelian orphan once again. Fogg has another nervous breakdown and arranges for his gentile father to be buried at Westlawn Cemetery, ‘a lone Gentile in a sea of Russian and German Jews’, in the Fogg family plot (*Moon Palace*, p.300). The novel ends after Fogg completes an epic westward journey and finds himself on the West Coast, staring out like Nick Carraway (but in the opposite direction) while the town behind him makes ‘familiar late-century American noises’ (*Moon Palace*, p.307).

It is clear almost from the outset of this novel that as a Jew Fogg sees himself as an ‘outsider’ (the term Auster used when I interviewed him), and that he is not as immersed in American life as are his gentile forefathers.⁹⁶ To a certain degree, each generation repeats the mistakes of the previous one, especially in terms of relationships with women. This story matches the story of America that Auster highlights through Fogg - one of repeated mistakes and missed opportunities. In this respect, the personal and the political do mirror each other. Fogg’s initial breakdown, which bears the hallmarks of postmemory of Jewish history ‘acted out’, and his later decision to bury his father as a Jew, indicate that he does not, however, empathize with them on a straightforwardly historical or familial level. It is through the traits of dis/simulation, wanting to hide or disguise, experiencing life as someone other than oneself and presenting a staged identity that Fogg empathizes with Barber and Effing. This is something that dated back to his early childhood when he and Victor used to invent ‘imaginary worlds’ to counteract the ‘difficulties the real world had created for both of us’ (*Moon Palace*, p.6). In this respect, in traumatic times the protagonists of *Moon Palace* repeat dis/simulation, both as artistic strategy and as post-traumatic impulse.

⁹⁶ In recollecting those years, Auster presents himself as much more immersed than Fogg, describing himself as ‘crazy with the poison of Vietnam in my lungs’ as he took part in a sit-in at Columbia and was arrested (‘The Accidental Rebel’, *New York Times*, 23 April 2008, p.A21).

Leviathan mirrors *Moon Palace*, in that the actions of the main protagonist, Benjamin Sachs, interact with key events in American history. The historical backdrop to *Leviathan* revolves around the political climate of the Reagan years. The collapse of the historical left and the increasing marginalization of dissenting voices in that era are emphasized. Sachs differs from Fogg, however, in that far from claiming a lack of interest, he becomes involved to the extreme by launching a series of explosive attacks on replicas of the Statue of Liberty, before his untimely demise in one of those explosions. In common with *Moon Palace*, here Auster presents the protagonist's Jewish identity as marginal and foregrounds as many 'American' aspects as possible. This reflects the surface tendency of Auster throughout his fiction to codify his main characters as generically white and American. This fits in with what was discussed earlier, concerning the levels of Auster's consciousness of ethnic difference and the levels of his perceived immersion in WASP American culture.

One meta-text of the novel is the American classic *Walden*, with the actions of Sachs and Aaron's representation of them, interacting with the paradox found in Thoreau's writing between drives to be politically extreme, nihilistically reclusive or 'active' as a writer (this point is argued at length in my MPhil thesis). The critical reception has mostly focussed on the metafictional aspects of the novel. The narrator, Peter Aaron, presents a narrative of ifs and buts, and ultimately draws no conclusions about the characters whose motivations and deeper truths are perpetually beyond his grasp. Arthur Saltzman acknowledged that 'whatever document results from the novelist's efforts is essentially a record of incomplete transactions whose authority must be taken under advisement'.⁹⁷

In this respect, much of the criticism has verisimilitude as Auster demonstrates, over almost three hundred pages, that there is always an essentially mysterious aspect to human nature

⁹⁷ Arthur Saltzman, '*Leviathan: Post Hoc Harmonies*', in *Beyond the Red Notebook*, pp.162-70 (p.162).

and that it is impossible to conclusively ‘know’ another.⁹⁸ Furthermore, *Leviathan* reflects elements of Auster’s relationship to his own background and interview ‘persona’. Aaron posits numerous theories as to the genesis of Sachs’s personality quirks (trauma, family background, head injury), only to dismiss each one as equally likely or unlikely. In preserving the mystery of personality and defending the idiosyncratic self from the forces of criticism that would seek to reduce this to type, one could argue that Auster soundly serves the project of good, literary fiction.

Since I am making the argument that Auster’s aesthetic practice is related to Jewish identity, a good place to start would be by looking closely at what we do know of the characters themselves. Aaron first meets Sachs in a bar following an aborted book reading, and immediately describes him as enigmatic, resembling a ‘half-starved Russian soldier stranded on the outskirts of Stalingrad’ as well as such American archetypes as John Brown and Ichabod Crane.⁹⁹ Describing the way that Sachs talks to other people, Aaron claims that he is ‘utterly lacking in self-consciousness’, but at the same time notes something ‘impersonal’ and ‘abstract’ in the way that Sachs asks people questions (*Leviathan*, p.18). These initial descriptions provide a neat lead into to my analyses of both Sachs and Maria Turner in *Leviathan*. I will argue that the consistency of these characters coincides with acts of dis/simulation. Neither one of them is able to be sincere or earnest as ‘themselves’. As a result, both engage in a series of acts of hiding and disguising that appear compulsive or as ‘acting out’.

⁹⁸ Such criticism reflects a trend in the 1990s to extol writers who seemingly engaged with grand-scale historical events or processes whilst dismissing all-encompassing explanations. See for instance Skip Willman’s reading of Don DeLillo’s *Libra*, which is based on the Kennedy Assassination (‘Art After Dealey Plaza: DeLillo’s *Libra*’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 45 (1999), 621-40). Willman argues that DeLillo cuts across political ideas embedded in both conspiracy and contingency theory and at the same time shows that political systems are always defined by antagonisms outside them, rather than the possibility that they can be understood as a unified whole. In DeLillo’s novel, the title represents scales that can be tipped either way, as the protagonist Lee Harvey Oswald is shaped by myriad and unquantifiable influences that motivate his actions (*Libra* (New York: Viking, 1988)). Auster dedicated *Leviathan*, published four years later, to DeLillo.

⁹⁹ Paul Auster, *Leviathan* (New York: Viking, 1992), p.13.

We learn in the early stages of the novel that Sachs, similarly to Salinger, had a Catholic mother and a father whose East-European family fled pogroms in the 1880s (*Leviathan*, p.27). Aaron recalls that Sachs described his family history in terms of coming ‘to New York because of the death of God’ (*Leviathan*, p.28). This means that the pogroms were carried out after Czar Alexander II was assassinated by nihilists (who believed there was no God). Aaron says that Sachs’s remarks are like allusions to a poem - ‘if you knew the poem, you got it’ (*Ibid.*). The important point to note here, is that Aaron (itself a common Jewish name) clearly ‘gets it’ and that he empathizes on a personal level with Sachs’s ethnic background. There are also several hints that Sachs is shaped by aspects of Jewish culture, despite repeated disclaimers that, because of his mixed background, he had a secular upbringing and was ‘neither one nor the other’ (*Ibid.*). For a reader sensitive to historical contexts, this immediately raises questions as to whether or not Sachs (again, a common Jewish name) was still a potential target for anti-Semitism that could have blighted his childhood. The answer to this question, in all probability, is yes.

We learn that Sachs and his sisters grew up in New Canaan after his parents relocated there (*Leviathan*, p.31). This small town in Fairfield County, Connecticut, was cited as an extremely anti-Semitic community that would not allow Jews to rent or sell property in the 1947 movie *Gentleman’s Agreement*.¹⁰⁰ Aaron then recalls stories of Sachs as a schoolchild, drawing attention to himself by committing daring pranks. He suggests that this was to ward off ‘ridicule’ caused by his ‘ugly duckling’ appearance, when in reality, as was the case with Fogg, anti-Semitism is as likely a cause for Sachs having been a ‘walking target’ (*Leviathan*,

¹⁰⁰ Laura Hobson also named the neighbouring town of Darien in her novel, much to the disapproval of its residents. New Canaan is to this day known as a WASP stronghold of wealth, and as embodying the old New England values of Fairfield County (see Laura Z. Hobson, *Laura Z: A Life* (New York: Arbor House, 1983), p.399). Aaron recalls Sachs being ‘fond of’ juxtapositions, in particular one found in his novel *The New Colossus* that involves a relationship between Emma Lazarus (a Jewish poet) and Ellery Channing (a ‘white-haired New Englander’), which incorporates the ‘spirit of Walden’ (*Leviathan*, p.43). Through such anecdotes, Sachs’s consciousness of the social status of Jews in New England is made clear for the reader.

p.34). This impression is reinforced by a second story, in which Sachs's mother dresses him 'smart' in short pants and white knee socks for a visit to the Statue of Liberty. Like Fogg, Sachs says that he 'wanted to look like a regular American boy' (*Leviathan*, p.37). When he eventually wins this argument with his mother (because the other children on the trip are casually dressed), Sachs feels that he has 'struck a blow for democracy' (*Ibid.*). It is in these examples that we can perceive Sachs's sense of ethnic difference being connected to his tendencies towards extreme reactions to mainstream American culture (democracy as epitomized by the iconic Statue of Liberty), and adopting personae as a compulsive response to being the victim of injustice when ethnic group is a factor.

Auster, through Aaron, inserts other hints into the text that Sachs's Jewish background was a key factor in the development of his personality. There is the none-too-subtle allusion to the cliché attributed to Heinrich Heine that 'Jews are like everyone else, only more so'¹⁰¹:

Like everybody else in the world, but only more so perhaps, he managed to combine a multitude of contradictions into a single, unbroken presence. (*Leviathan*, p.19)

The most relevant of the 'contradictions' mentioned is that Sachs is said to be 'too happy mixing with crowds' for a writer, but that 'solitude scarcely disturbed him' (*Ibid.*). I am arguing here that Sachs tends to dis/simulate in his interactions with others and hence is not 'really there'.

Later in the narrative, Sachs attempts to rectify his involvement in the death of Reed DiMaggio by compensating his wife Lillian Stern, a deeply flawed character. Sachs rants that 'It's about justice, and if justice means anything, it has to be the same for everyone' (*Leviathan*, p.232). These remarks match Auster's own when he told me about his connection to aspects of traditional Jewish thought (see Appendix). Sachs's eventual descent into

¹⁰¹ Ivan Kalmar, *The Trotskys, Freuds and Woody Allens: A Portrait of a Culture* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1993), p.9.

extremism is partly inspired by a doctoral thesis on Alexander Berkman, a persecuted Russian Jewish radical who shot Henry Frick during a New York labour dispute (*Leviathan*, p.251). This is tied in with his own father's background and involvement in socialist politics in the 1930s (*Leviathan*, p.30). Despite having had a difficult relationship with his son, when questioned by reporters Mr Sachs defended him for standing up 'for what he believes in' (*Ibid.*). Clearly, parts of Sachs's political drive stem from the influence of his Jewish Socialist father.¹⁰²

Having seen that Sachs's tendency to dis/simulate may be connected to his Jewish ethnicity, we can now revisit the contradictions within his story that other critics have read as metafictional. At their initial meeting, Sachs explains to Aaron that he spent seventeen months in prison for refusing to fight in Vietnam and, importantly, for refusing to dis/simulate about his reasons (*Leviathan*, p.22). Aaron sees this as further evidence of Sachs's sincerity and the extent of his principled nature, but Sachs's story of how he survived prison suggests otherwise. Sachs explains that the prison he went to, Danbury, was 'not a nightmare prison like Attica or San Quentin' (*Leviathan*, p.23). He states that he adjusted to his situation by simply accepting his fate, telling himself 'this is where you live now' and accepting that he was lucky to be alive (*Ibid.*). Sachs then illustrates his outlook by telling a Henny Youngman joke. This involves a man caught in the closet of his lover by her husband. The husband asks why he is there. The man replies 'everyone has to be somewhere' (*Ibid.*). This links Sachs's outlook to the Jewish tradition of Borscht Belt comedy. It also reinforces the relationship between Sachs's tendency to hide away in confined spaces and/or adopt

¹⁰² This may also in part explain why a half-Jewish male at the time would develop a habit of behaving in a distracting or deflecting way. Jews were often stereotyped as radicals during the mid-twentieth century, because of their strong involvement in politics in the previous era, and thus attracted negative attention from some other groups. Peter Kivisto explained that 'by WWI they were one of the two most radical ethnic groups, the other being the Finns [...] Jews, unlike the Finns, also provided these organizations with many national leaders. Jews also figured prominently in the labour movement' (*Americans All: Race and Ethnic Relations in Historical, Structural, and Comparative Perspectives* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), p.207).

attitudes and personae as a defence mechanism when threatened. In this instance, he responds with sardonic humour when he finds himself cornered. Sachs also states that he used his ‘funny looks’ to dis/simulate madness, because in prison this ‘inoculates you against trouble’ (*Leviathan*, p.23 and p.24).

In a somewhat vague passage, Aaron reveals that Sachs was upset that his father had not fought in WWII as had the fathers of his classmates, although why his father had not fought ‘was never explained to me’ (*Leviathan*, p.30). This can be related to a common stereotype that Jews can never be considered full citizens because of their dislike of violence, which leads to a common refusal to take part in wars. Albert Memmi deconstructed this myth, dating back to when Jews were not allowed to own animals, yet were still derided when conscripted into armies for being unable to ride a horse (*Portrait of a Jew*, p.153). To a certain extent, Sachs may have been re-enacting his father’s refusal to fight in terms that meant that he faced public disdain and marginalization. In any case, this, alongside Sachs’s father’s socialist politics, forms a pattern of reasons other than ‘appearance’ as to why Sachs may have become marginalized.¹⁰³

Eventually, following the traumatic ‘fall’, in which he was seriously injured (and thereafter felt by those who knew him to have changed as a person), Sachs lapses through a concatenation of circumstances into a subterranean existence. This includes becoming a recluse at a cabin, and as ‘The Phantom of Liberty’, assuming disguises and false identities:

The first step was to concoct an identity and a cover story, and since he was never the same person twice, his powers of invention were constantly put to the test [...] he always had a different name [...] did what he could to produce minor alterations in his physical appearance. (*Leviathan*, p.260)

¹⁰³ At the Berg Collection, there are notes that were not included in the final version of *The Invention of Solitude*, which confirm that Auster had a similar experience. His father lied to him that he had fought in WWII, even buying army surplus equipment and presenting them to his son as souvenirs. Gerard O’ Donoghue discussed this story, but did not comment on the specific significance of this to Auster as a Jewish child (‘The Orphan’s Kaddish’, p.241).

That Sachs is 'acting out' here is not in question. Prior to the bombings, Sachs decides to 'reinvent his life' and when he finally settles on a definitive course of action, describes himself as 'a man who had heard the call' (*Leviathan*, p.222 and p.256). Despite only being firmly committed to a course of action when pushed to an emotional extreme and taking a reactionary direction, Sachs still does not act openly as 'himself'. Having carried out the bombings, Sachs 'almost perversely' disguises himself as a journalist and asks local people about themselves: 'it was a nerve shattering experience, he said, but worth every minute' (*Leviathan*, p.261). Here, Sachs compulsively 'acts out' a scenario of putting himself in personal danger and reassuringly repeats acts of self-preservation. This matches Fogg's episode in Central Park, which is also described as a part aesthetic, part political series of acts.

The idea of Sachs as one who is only able to act under the guise of personae, or as a recluse shying away from sincere interaction with others, is reflected in the overall pattern of the novel. Sachs is not the only character whose motives remain oblique to Aaron and the reader. Aaron himself writes the novel as an act of dis/simulation, in the hope that the FBI will not discover the identity of 'the Phantom'. Aaron also commits other minor acts of dis/simulation, such as concealing what he knows about one character from another. At the beginning, Aaron displays the incredulity towards appearances and sensitivity to hidden motives of an impetuous gothic protagonist. He believes that the FBI agents who question him about Sachs's death are adapting their manners to draw information from him, and towards the end admits that he is using similar tactics to extract details from Maria Turner (*Leviathan*, p.7 and p.266). Clearly, Aaron's labile personality is another point of identity between him and Sachs. In this novel, in which normality revolves around lovers, husbands and wives not knowing the person with whom they are partnered, Aaron, attracted to Sachs

from their first meeting (and to the Kafkaesque impossible task of understanding him), uncovers similar tendencies in the object of his writerly curiosity.

In these respects, Sachs's relationship with Maria Turner, and the way that he seeks her out during his 'fall', is entirely congruous. Turner, ostensibly based on the experimental artist Sophie Calle, lives a shadow existence prior to her relationship with Sachs, engaging in artistic experiments that involve following people and photographing them, and paying a private investigator to follow her.¹⁰⁴ These actions mirror those of a Kosinskian protagonist (in particular Tarden and Domostroy), as she controls all aspects of her interaction with others in terms of her visibility and/or what the other is allowed to know about her (*Leviathan*, p.69 and p.70).

Sachs's actions also resemble Kosinskian control of personal relationships through dis/simulation. This is particularly evident when Sachs handles the situation of Aaron sleeping with his wife by emphasizing that he knows and does not mind. This leaves Aaron feeling that he has been swallowed up by a master plot. Sachs is insincere in knowing more than he admits and never loses control. Sachs even concedes that because his wife is paranoid that he sees other women and will not listen to his denials, he makes up stories about his 'imaginary conquests' (*Leviathan*, p.105). Turner's life spirals out of control when she adopts the identity of her friend Lillian as a prostitute, but at the crucial moment takes to hiding in a bathroom and photographing her client, and upon discovery becomes the victim of a brutal assault (*Leviathan*, p.85).

Aaron is wide of the mark when he discusses the effect that this attack had on Turner. He claims that this had a fundamental effect on her self-image, as previously she had felt that she

¹⁰⁴ For examples of Calle following and photographing people see Sophie Calle, *Double Game* (London: Violette Editions, 1992), pp.68-69 and pp.76-77.

was 'stronger than other people' and now realized that 'she was weak [...] hemmed in by her own fears and inner constraints' (*Ibid.*). Aaron makes no comment on the fact that Turner is only able to act boldly whilst dis/simulating. The only example that he gives of her acting in a bold way as 'herself', involves topless dancing. This came after another experiment in dis/simulation left her feeling 'a kind of nothingness' and a sense that she needed to 'act out' in this way 'to prove to herself that she still existed' (*Leviathan*, p.71). Describing her 'art', Aaron states that it was driven by the 'passion for taking risks' and 'the drama of watching and being watched' (*Leviathan*, p.69). Turner also told Aaron that she could only 'learn how to be herself' through the example of Lillian, a flat character in this novel apparently devoid of conscience or guilt (*Leviathan*, p.76). And yet when Aaron enters a relationship with Turner, he finds her fetish for role playing 'fairly childish' and doubts 'that I could have carried on with her in the way I did' (*Leviathan*, p.86).

We are only given the scantest detail of Turner's upbringing in Holyoke, Massachusetts. This is an area originally heavily populated by Irish Americans, but also later by other immigrant groups including Jews in the established waves of immigration. There is certainly nothing either implied or concrete to suggest that Maria Turner has any kind of Jewish background. The ways, however, in which Sachs and Aaron connect with this character, resonate with each character's tendency towards behaviours found in the fiction of Salinger and Kosinski. In particular *Leviathan*, with its structure revolving around two dis/simulating artistic characters drawn together through that shared trait (and also through Jewish identity), strongly resembles Kosinski's *Pinball*. Auster stated in conversation that he had never read this novel (see Appendix). Auster represents these characters in the late 1980s as generically 'white' in Karen Brodtkin's terms. They do not generally act as though they are socially oppressed or lacking in confidence when they interact with non-Jewish whites. Regardless of any historical process of 'whitening', their post-traumatic 'acting out' reflects, as I have

argued earlier, trauma that affects the sensibilities and creative capacities of Jewish-American writers to varying degrees. This is manifest in this novel through its perceived ‘postmodern’ or ‘metafictional’ traits.

To conclude the analysis of dis/simulation in Paul Auster’s fiction, I will now present a reading of *The Book of Illusions*. On publication, several reviewers criticized Auster for repetitiveness in his fiction. This, it transpired, was the beginning of a sustained, negative attitude taken towards Auster by reviewers. Most salient to this thesis was the opinion of Marc Flores:

Auster made his name with a memorable formula: A depressed character with a death wish succumbs to mental illness, a delusion or some other form of psychological impairment. While in a shadowy half-life, the character encounters a mysterious occurrence or situation, then decides that he [...] needs to solve this puzzle.¹⁰⁵

Having taken Auster to task for repeating allusive patterns found in earlier novels, Flores concluded that it is ‘time for him to start searching for a new plot to hang themes upon’.

Whilst I fully concur with Flores’s reservations, I will focus here on the repetition of a Jewish protagonist’s identification with another through dis/simulation and the details of the main characters’ behaviours when acting under said ‘psychological impairment’.

It is already well covered in reviews and criticism that the narrator, David Zimmer, is like Quinn in *City of Glass*, grieving the loss of loved ones. He is drawn back from the verge of severe depression by the prospect of an investigative quest, in this case concerning the disappearance of the silent film star Hector Mann. On the surface, it appears that Zimmer identifies with Mann through their shared experiences of suffering and loss. It should be noted here that Zimmer, like Mann, suffers consecutive traumas that all involve traumatic loss. As a fringe character in *Moon Palace*, Zimmer, we are told, suffers a semi-alcoholic

¹⁰⁵ Marc Flores, ‘*Book of Illusions* is an Auster Mystery’, *USA Today*, 16 September 2002 <http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/reviews/2002-09-16-16-auster-illusions_x.htm> [accessed 23 August 2006].

depression similar to the one detailed at the beginning of *The Book of Illusions*, because his beloved Anna Blume (a childhood sweetheart from the New Jersey suburbs) has ‘disappeared’ whilst searching for her journalist brother abroad (*Moon Palace*, pp.88-89). Those familiar with Auster’s fiction in general will recognize Anna Blume as the narrator/protagonist of *In the Country of Last Things*, persecuted, endangered and fighting to escape a scenario similar to a WWII Polish ghetto.

Zimmer’s research and the production of a book about Hector Mann constitute a life phase through which Zimmer reconnects with humanity and begins to believe in life again. The narrative ends on a sour note, when Mann (a Salingeresque recluse in his 90s producing films that will never be seen) dies and Zimmer’s love interest, Alma Grund, commits suicide. The overall message seems to be that life can be grim but that art can have a consoling, if not a redeeming quality. It will be seen in the following analysis that Zimmer’s connection to these characters fits in with patterns discussed elsewhere in Auster’s fiction, whereby Jewish identity, trauma and dis/simulation interact.

I am not the first to note discrepancies in Zimmer’s empathy with Mann. D. T. Max noted that in *Moon Palace* Zimmer was ‘a professor, a family man, the author of boring books, a bourgeois foil to the tormented narrator’, overlooking Zimmer’s deep connection to Fogg and their shared Jewish background.¹⁰⁶ Janet Maslin pointed out that when Zimmer describes his episodic adventures in pursuit of Hector Mann there is a ‘lot of pulp fiction’, although Zimmer is usually ‘reflective, fastidious’, before citing an example of Zimmer’s turgid academic prose.¹⁰⁷ It is more pertinent to note here, however, that Zimmer’s reactions to trauma are strikingly different to Mann’s. Zimmer repeatedly works through post-traumatic

¹⁰⁶ D. T. Max, ‘*The Book of Illusions*: Paul Auster’s Professor of Despair’, *Jewish World Review*, 18 November 2002 <<http://www.jewishworldreview.com/1102/dtmax1.asp>> [accessed 23 August 2006].

¹⁰⁷ Janet Maslin, ‘Books of the Times: A Novel Actor More Real Than Many Made of Flesh’, *New York Times*, 5 September 2002 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/05/books/books-of-the-times-a-novel-s-actor-more-real-than-many-made-of-flesh.html>> [accessed 23 August 2006].

phases that include reclusiveness, depression, self-harm (through alcoholism and pushing friends away), anger, and finally redemption through art and/or laughter, and reconnection through work and/or relationship and rehabilitation. Within Auster's representation of Zimmer's grieving is an excellent portrait of survivor's guilt. Zimmer asks a doctor for flight sedatives and experiences a poignant moment of therapeutic breakthrough, when he soberly confronts what has happened and feels that the worst is behind him.¹⁰⁸ There is also an example of Kosinskian sadism when Zimmer is rude to a guest at a party and expresses no remorse (*Book of Illusions*, p.76). It is common for Auster's protagonists to mistreat women whilst 'acting out'.

Mann, conversely, 'acts out' through hiding and disguising his identity and never fully reconnects to his former life. Having gone into hiding because he feels responsible for the death of Brigid O' Fallon, Mann describes his life as 'eluding capture' one day at a time, even though he has committed no crime and is not suspected of having done so (*Book of Illusions*, p.145). He then, in an episode of re-enactment that would remind most readers of Sachs, puts himself at risk of detection by insinuating himself, under a false identity, into the lives of the O' Fallon family. Mann is described as 'a moth [...] fluttering around a hot, burning candle [...] his wings could ignite at any moment' (*Book of Illusions*, p.154).

Having failed in consecutive suicide attempts, Mann also chooses to punish himself by taking a role as a sex worker, in what resembles an episode of severe mania: 'I'm out of my mind, out of my mind with joy' (*Book of Illusions*, p.182). By and large, Mann's capacity for 'high' moods far exceeds Zimmer's. He lives under false identities and personae. Through ascetic acts such as producing films that will never be viewed, Mann precludes the possibility of full rehabilitation through regaining as much of one's pre-traumatic life as is possible and makes

¹⁰⁸ Paul Auster, *The Book of Illusions* (New York: Holt, 2002), pp.23-24 and p.125.

his condition an unalterable fact. In fact, Zimmer describes Mann's project as an act of 'breathtaking nihilism', and sees the loss of Mann's work as a 'tragedy' (*Book of Illusions*, p.207 and p.270).

A question mark remains then, as to what drives Zimmer's quest to find and understand Mann. One can accept the connection through loss, and the fact that one of Mann's early films was what gave Zimmer his first moment of comic relief after the death of his wife and sons (*Book of Illusions*, p.9). At the beginning of the novel, Zimmer, who at times wishes to hide himself away, states his awe concerning the thoroughness of Mann's disappearance (*Book of Illusions*, p.3). Zimmer's interest in reclusiveness clearly predates the traumatic loss of his family. His second academic book, *The Road to Abyssinia*, was:

about writers who had given up writing, a meditation on silence. Rimbaud, Dashiell Hammett, Laura Riding, J. D. Salinger, and others - poets and novelists of uncommon brilliance who, for one reason or another, had stopped. (*Book of Illusions*, p.14)

Auster has been perceived by critics as mapping out a position concerning the value of art as opposed to life and the merits of self-sacrifice for art. The meta-textual inclusion of Hawthorne's story 'The Birthmark', of Auster's own film *The Inner Life of Martin Frost* and Luis Buñuel's memoir *My Last Sigh*, all point to this. Whilst I accept this, what I am adding to the critical debate is the notion that as ever, in Auster's formulaic fiction, the actions and interests of the protagonists are driven by reactions to trauma and Jewish ethnicity. Despite Zimmer's aloof and disapproving attitudes towards Mann's reactions to trauma (these often mirror those of Aaron towards Sachs), there is a deep-rooted and persistent empathy. This makes Mann much more than an object of clinical scholarly interest.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Mann and Zimmer do have the shared experience of changing direction after being placed in a chance, near death experience, although this happens to Zimmer after he has become interested in Mann. Each describes their experience in terms of 'not being afraid', and both are already traumatized at the time that it occurs (*Book of Illusions*, p.109 and p.195). Here Auster ascribes to his characters similar words to those used by the survivor Dr Menachem Stern, cited in the previous chapter.

It is possible to explain this in terms of shared Jewish experience. Zimmer initially speculates on Mann's choices to hide, disguise, become reclusive, delete his own work, abstain from pleasure and generally erase his self/identity. He steeps this in contexts connected to Mann's background that are pivotal to this thesis. Zimmer speculates (based on inconsistencies in information given to interviewers by Mann before his disappearance in 1929) that he may have been Jewish. Zimmer then provides extended commentary relating to the ways in which Galician Jews escaped to South America, thus highlighting his, and of course Auster's, sensitivity.

Despite such detail, Zimmer concludes that if Mann was indeed disguising his Jewish identity, this constituted 'the most pedestrian form of social hypocrisy' as 'it wasn't a crime to be a Jew in Hollywood back then' (*Book of Illusions*, p.86). He then acknowledges the slight chance that he may have been murdered for being Jewish by a rare anti-Semite in 1920s Hollywood (*Ibid.*). Later, Zimmer learns that Mann was born Chaim Mandelbaum, that his mother died when he was twelve, and that his father was 'nearly beaten to death by an anti-Bolshevik, anti-Semitic mob during La Semana Tragica in Buenos Aires in 1919' (*Book of Illusions*, p.127). There is no commentary on how this traumatic past (Mann left his father in Buenos Aires, to a fate we do not know) may have shaped the ways in which Mann reacted to future consecutive traumas. In fact, Zimmer's conclusion is that these details 'didn't matter', as he is only interested in Mann's films, not his life per se (*Ibid.*).

Of Zimmer, we know from *Moon Palace* that he is Jewish (and that in Fogg's estimation his appearance indicates this). He has been linked intertextually by Auster to Anna Blume and hence to Holocaust narratives of flight and hiding. There is also something a little jarring about Zimmer's description of the way in which his wife Helen Markham's family (Markham is an old Anglo-Saxon name) cut him off after her death and that of their children, as though

that curtailed any connection that they may have had to Zimmer (*Book of Illusions*, p.16). Yet there is never any evidence to suggest that for Zimmer passing as non-Jewish is even a remote consideration or possibility. His description of Mann, however, alongside the historical contextualizing mentioned above, indicates that he is sensitive to the implications and circumstances under which such acts take place.

Describing Mann as he appears in his silent films, Zimmer likens him to a ‘South American dandy’ with an ‘elegant nose’ (*Book of Illusions*, p.30 and p.32). It is even mentioned that a critic worried that he would ‘put his nose at risk’ by performing slapstick (*Book of Illusions*, p.87). Zimmer notes that Mann was the subject of four published profiles and that in each he adapted his accent as well as his background (*Book of Illusions*, pp.79-83). Much of what is written here matches the patterns of Hamilton’s largely fruitless efforts to uncover any substantial information about Salinger. There may be some grounds to suggest that Auster is obliquely alluding to this, such as the mention of a profile of Mann in *Collier’s* in 1941, around the time that Salinger was publishing in that magazine (*Book of Illusions*, p.92).

Mann changes his name four times and transforms his appearance. When he is confronted by Red O’ Fallon, whom he had suspected of being an anti-Semite, he has to inform him that he is in fact a Jew (*Book of Illusions*, p.151 and p.174). Zimmer’s empathy towards Alma Grund may also be related to dis/simulation, as her identity revolves around a striking facial birthmark by which she defines herself. She relates this to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story ‘The Birthmark’, in which a wife dies because of her husband’s obsessive quest for female physical perfection. The birthmark has the quality of a tuning fork, as she can tell by the reactions of other people whether she can trust them:

Other people carried their humanity inside them, but I wore mine on my face. That was the difference between me and everyone else. I wasn’t allowed to hide who I was. (*Book of Illusions*, p.121)

In an inversion of Fogg's actions in *Moon Palace*, when faced with the task of arranging Alma's burial, Zimmer/Auster sees fit to give the detail that he buried her 'next to her parents in a Catholic cemetery' (*Book of Illusions*, p.311). Despite the absence of such a symbolic gesture as burying Alma in a Jewish cemetery, it is not difficult, given Zimmer's sensitivity to Mann's dis/simulation, to conclude that issues of visual identity are a strong point of empathy between him and Alma.

The Book of Illusions, alongside *Moon Palace* and *Leviathan*, gives a clear insight into Auster's position as a Jewish-American novelist. Regardless of any postmodern or philosophical themes apparent in these novels, it appears that Auster felt unable or unwilling to write them without their protagonist having a clear Jewish identity that is placed in historical contexts. It is also clear that this Jewish experience is never made central. In this respect, Auster's fiction is a reflection of the historical contextualizing that formed the early part of this chapter. Auster initially experienced America as a suburban Jew in an era during which Jews underwent a process of 'whitening'. As a result, he clearly perceives the experience of his characters in the second half of the twentieth century as largely integrated but interrupted by the still present threat of anti-Semitism.

It is also clear that Auster is able to imagine vividly post-traumatic pathologies that take divergent forms ('working through' and 'acting out'). In several instances, these revolve around original traumatic aspects of ethnic experience and a strong presence in the background of extreme historical trauma that manifests itself in dis/simulation, both in the actions of his protagonists and the metafictional form of the novels. When his protagonists compulsively re-enact episodes of hiding and disguising, this bears the hallmarks of traumatic re-enactment or post-memory because they experience their actions and circumstances

vividly, and also as necessary and unavoidable, regardless of how they would appear to a dispassionate reader.

I will now conclude this chapter by analysing Roth's 'American Trilogy', beginning with *I Married a Communist*. Shostak noted the ways in which Roth's later fiction, the trilogy included, comments on American history and subjectivity in a way that could be considered less 'metafictional' than his earlier work:

Although Roth's turn in these later novels to deep engagement with the particulars of American history and culture may have surprised some of his longtime readers, he clearly had been preparing for this throughout his career [...] as outgrowths of his topical and aesthetic preoccupations.¹¹⁰

Shostak went on to argue that in these novels Roth pulls off his characteristic tricks of 'thwarting readers' desires to distinguish autobiography from fiction' and forms 'new narrative structures and resisted categorization' (Shostak, 'Introduction', p.6 and p.7). I am in agreement with Shostak's overall surmise concerning Roth's investigation of American selfhood, the existential tension involved in our flawed perception of others and the limitations of storytelling. I would like, however, to draw a clear distinction between this and my own vision of Roth's latent and conscious motives for producing this trilogy, with reference to Auster's 'trilogy' discussed above.

In each of these novels, Roth produces a protagonist (and in *I Married a Communist* two), whose destiny is shaped and governed by their appearance - by their ability to pass.

Therefore, Shostak's thoughts concerning, for example, 'Swede' Levov, are less than fully formed. Shostak argued that in *American Pastoral*, Levov's destiny is shaped by an America in which:

¹¹⁰ Debra Shostak, 'Introduction', in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, ed. by Debra Shostak (New York: Continuum, 2011), pp.1-14 (p.4).

Hard work, determination and material prosperity will bring him a fresh and vital identity in the world - and that, once fulfilled, these promises will make him an American who happens only incidentally to be a Jew.¹¹¹

The character, 'Swede' Levov, is based on a former pupil of Maple Avenue School, Seymour 'Swede' Masin, a fair haired Hall of Fame athlete described as 'much admired' (*Jews of Weequahic*, p.45). The character Coleman Silk from *The Human Stain* chose to conceal his African-American ancestry throughout his adult life and, in fact, to pass as a Jew. In *I Married a Communist*, Roth produced two characters who dis/simulate in different ways. The protagonist, Ira Ringold, is an actor who impersonates Abraham Lincoln. His wife, Eve Frame, is an actress who tenaciously disguises her Jewish ethnicity in order to advance her career. This may in some part be based on Roth's lingering resentment towards Clare Bloom, with whom he clashed over perceived levels of anti-Semitism, as well as the couple's inability to accommodate her daughter into their married life.¹¹² What is clear from this is that Roth is representing characters who can, because of appearances, bypass their racial identity, whereas for others in the America that Roth depicts, this is not an option.

I Married a Communist can aptly be discussed alongside *Leviathan*. Its structure sees a writer, Nathan Zuckerman, researching and ultimately failing to fully understand the life and motivations of another character who exemplifies the split between artistic and political impulses and alternates between disguise and reclusion. In fact, the ways in which the young Zuckerman looks up to Ira Ringold in many ways match the initial reactions of Aaron to Sachs. Despite the fact that Ringold is an activist and an outsider, Zuckerman initially views him as an 'everyman'. Ringold is seen at various points by Zuckerman as one who can

¹¹¹ Debra Shostak, 'Introduction to Part I: *American Pastoral*', in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.15-18 (p.15).

¹¹² See, in particular, Bloom's description of an incident involving anti-Semitic patrons in a London restaurant. Bloom saw this as 'an ugliness of life' while Roth saw her attitude as 'criminal indifference' (*Leaving a Doll's House*, p.198). Earlier, Bloom stated that whilst she never made any attempts to hide her origins she was seen by the press as 'The English Rose' (*Leaving a Doll's House*, p.25).

present himself 'without camouflage', seemingly beyond or above racial identity, as one who can pass for such an American archetype as Abraham Lincoln, and as a good mixer.¹¹³

This early positive perspective lapses, as Ira falls from grace through a misguided choice in marriage and through political radicalism. It is replaced by a sense that Ira always had a potential for radicalization, that his political posturing could be seen as Jewish self-fashioning as righteous and just, and that his 'honesty' is a posture of indignation designed to avoid confronting his past and thus to conceal a lethal rage (*I Married a Communist*, p.462, p.478 and pp.596-97).¹¹⁴ Even the ways in which Zuckerman attempts to fill the gaps in his knowledge of Ira's life resemble the efforts of Aaron to a degree. Whereas Sachs's experiences in prison are shrouded in mystery, Ira's experiences during the war (where he may have killed an anti-Semite) are not fully explained to Nathan (*I Married a Communist*, p.492). Ira's brother and Nathan's former teacher, Murray Ringold, actually berates Nathan for failing to apply the novelist's credulity toward an apparently one-sided character:

'Never had Ira down as a lady's man. Didn't go with dressing up in Lincoln's suit. I'm so stuck in my early vision of him, even now I find it inconceivable.'

Murray, laughing, said, 'That a man has a lot of sides that are unbelievable is, I thought, the subject of your books. About a man, as your fiction tells it, everything is believable'. (*I Married a Communist*, p.549)

Where *I Married a Communist* clearly diverges from *Leviathan*, is in its dense historical contexts. We learn that Ira grew up as one of few Jewish children in Newark's First Ward, having been born in 1913 and suffered because of degeneracy within his family (*I Married a Communist*, p.432 and p.457). Ira's full immersion in the Communist Party is linked directly to his Jewish experience. It is explained that what persuaded him to join was his empathy towards the 'Jewish street kid' Sokolow, whom he met in the army (*I Married a Communist*,

¹¹³ Philip Roth, *I Married a Communist*, in *The American Trilogy*, pp.397-700 (p.407, p.436, p.441 and p.510).

¹¹⁴ Ira is described as 'coming apart' in similar terms to those used by Aaron whilst describing Sachs's 'fall' (*I Married a Communist*, p.628).

p.442). This is contrasted with Nathan, who grew up, as Roth readers will know, in relative comfort and respectability in the Weequahic section, having been born twenty years later.

Nathan tells the reader that he met Ira for the first time in 1948, and later describes an episode in which Ira vents his distaste for suburban Jews ‘who’d lately acquired their first homes and their first lawns and their first country club affiliations’ in Maplewood (*I Married a Communist*, p.421 and p.491). Zuckerman speculates on the difference between his and Ira’s lives in terms of class, family stability and cultural know-how, in ways that match the views of Ortner that I described above (*I Married a Communist*, p.600). Murray also makes Nathan aware that Ira faced anti-Semitism in the armed forces (as discussed in the Salinger chapter) and renders his own theory that Ira was one of many ‘Angry Jews all over America’ in his time (*I Married a Communist*, p.445 and p.550).

As one might expect, therefore, Roth presents a similar narrative in terms of structure to Auster, but does so with a level of detail that indicates a heightened historical sensitivity. Perhaps for this reason it is not the case, as it is with *Leviathan*, that Jewish contexts and dis/simulation are largely latent or presented as post-traumatic ‘acting out’. Ira Ringold’s wife, the actress Eve Frame (in fact Chava Fromkin from Brooklyn), is described by Murray as ‘invisible behind the disguise of all that civility’, and as a ‘pathologically embarrassed Jew’ (*I Married a Communist*, p.419, p.452 and p.539). Eve’s daughter, whose father Carlton Pennington is an anti-Semite, stands tall among the many one-sided and unattractive female characters in Roth’s fiction, completely abdicating her ethnic background and insulting her mother by calling her a ‘kike bitch’ (*I Married a Communist*, p.503). She suggests that her mother ‘sucks up’ to the deeply conservative socialite Katrina Van Tassel Grant because of the ‘Van’ in her name, showing no sympathy for the possible reasons behind this (*I Married a Communist*, p.522).

Towards the end of the novel, Ira decides to take revenge on Eve (who has labelled him a Communist in her autobiography) and ‘destroy her’ by exposing her to the press as a Jew (*I Married a Communist*, p.683). Ira informs the *Nation* that ‘her father was a poor immigrant housepainter, an uneducated Polish Jew [...] nobody in her family had spoken English’ (*I Married a Communist*, p.684). Once Eve has been confirmed as a Jew, people start to comment on her Jewish appearance, likening her to Molly Goldberg (*I Married a Communist*, p.686).¹¹⁵ This is as clear cut a case as one might find of a Jewish-American novelist representing the drive to escape Jewish identity by altering appearance, name and manners for reasons of ethnic shame.

In contrast, Ira, whose Jewish experience was vivid and traumatic in terms of the effects of ethnic identity on his development, is ostensibly at sea in the world of Eve and her connections. He is labelled a ‘bullying, simple-minded, arrogant man’ when he challenges a guest at his home over his having recently entertained a Nazi (*I Married a Communist*, p.537). Despite Ira’s apparent sincerity, his destiny, like Eve’s, revolves around his appearance and his ability to modify or conceal Jewish identity, even if this is done in a more compulsive way. After murdering the anti-Semite Strollo, Ira is encouraged by Murray to move to the remote Zinc Town and adopt the name Gil Stephens (*I Married a Communist*, p.672). Ira is also noted to dis/simulate and manipulate, especially when concealing his Communist Party membership is at stake (*I Married a Communist*, p.497 and p.567). Ira is described as needing to work to keep in touch with his poor roots after becoming famous as ‘Iron Rinn’. At the same time he is described as completely out of place on his wedding night at ‘the toniest restaurant Jews ate at in Newark’ (*I Married a Communist*, p.447 and p.454). It appears that what Ira would like, regardless of his capacities, is a clean break from his past.

¹¹⁵ That identity is provisional and dependant on outside judgement is foregrounded at the beginning of the narrative, when Nathan is told that he was denied a Fulbright scholarship because according to the FBI’s ‘official’ file he is listed, incorrectly, as Ira’s nephew (*I Married a Communist*, p.414).

Despite this, there is a distinct absence of commentary on how Ira's past and later incarnations relate to his ethnic background, although as stated above, his 'anger' is connected to being Jewish. Instead, there is a relentless focus on other contributing factors that is in direct contrast to the comparatively narrow representation of Eve.

The contradiction that is evident here between Ira's 'sincerity' and tendency to dis/simulate, is clearly related to ethnic self-definition. Ira had adopted Communism as an ideology that supported the rights of the oppressed regardless of race. At the Henry Wallace rally, Nathan is surprised that Wallace is 'as American-looking and American sounding as any American I had ever seen' (*I Married a Communist*, p.431). Ira expresses distaste towards his wife's passing, her anti-Semitic daughter and to other Americans that fail to condemn or shun fascists, but never on the basis of personal connection. When Ira is described as psychologically crushed by his wife's betrayal, Murray says that this is because he is seen as a popular-culture Communist:

This was Abe Lincoln. It was very easy to grasp: Abe Lincoln as the villainous representative of a foreign power, Abe Lincoln as America's greatest twentieth-century traitor. Ira became the personification of Communism [...] Iron Rinn was Everyman's Communist traitor. (*I Married a Communist*, pp.660-61)

Murray had earlier listed Ira's 'Putting on that stovepipe hat. Mouthing Lincoln's words', as the first in a series of 'civilizing' distractions, including Communism, that allowed Ira to deflect his deep sense of rage (*I Married a Communist*, p.513).

It is clear that Ira never, after his early traumatic experiences of anti-Semitism at the hands of Italian neighbours, confronts his own Jewish identity and its historical significance, preferring to bury these deep within himself. It is reasonable to assert that Zuckerman and Roth identify with this aspect of Ira's character. Both have unresolved issues concerning Jewish identity. Brauner argued that in this novel, Murray Ringold stands for rigid assertion of principle and refusal to dis/simulate. Zuckerman writes this trilogy from a pastoral retreat

that he represents ‘in quasi-spiritual terms by invoking Rousseau and Thoreau’ and Murray warns him against ‘retreating from reality’ as Ira did (*Philip Roth*, p.153). Whilst Eve chooses to deal with her ethnicity by disguising and denying it, Ira chooses to deal with his by nullifying it and asserting its irrelevance. Since this is not possible in the America depicted here by Roth, Ira is seen to be accepted as an American ‘Everyman’ only when disguised as ‘fully American’. In this respect, these characters exemplify ambivalent attitudes towards Jewish-American identity expressed by Roth.

I will now move on to *American Pastoral*. This novel shares themes and concerns with *Moon Palace*, insofar as its young generation protagonist moves to an ascetic retreat partly in response to feelings of nausea towards America in the Vietnam years. Similarly to protagonists in the other novels under discussion here, Merry also becomes a hermit dedicated to the ‘rigours of asceticism and self-denial’.¹¹⁶ Mark Shechner viewed the novel as part of a ‘delayed response to the sixties’ by Roth (*Up Society’s Ass*, p.162). In the discussion that follows, it will be made clear that Roth is, in a sense, revisiting the historical moment of the late 1960s in a way that reflects his own Jewish experience, and that in turn differs from Paul Auster’s.¹¹⁷

I have chosen to address this book second (even though it was the first in the ‘trilogy’), as it also addresses themes that can be related to *Leviathan* and that follow on from my discussion of *I Married a Communist*. For instance, ‘Swede’ Levov’s pastoral idyll is shattered when his daughter Merry becomes a terrorist and Zuckerman’s attempts to understand Levov frame ‘Swede’s’ own efforts to understand his daughter. Michiko Kakutani noted that Roth depicts two opposing views: ‘the optimistic strain of Emersonian self-reliance [and] the darker side

¹¹⁶ Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, in *The American Trilogy*, pp.1-396 (p.217).

¹¹⁷ Andrew Gordon, for instance, asserted that ‘if the 1960s and 1970s are hell in *American Pastoral*, then the 1940s are heaven’ (‘The Critique of the Pastoral, Utopia, and the American Dream in *American Pastoral*’, in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.33-43 (p.41)).

of American individualism [...] the American berserk' in the novel.¹¹⁸ Jennifer Glaser made a similar observation to my own concerning *Leviathan*, when she cited the importance of 'lies and evasions in this novel'.¹¹⁹ Because of this, it is instructive to consider *American Pastoral* in relation to both *Moon Palace* and *Leviathan*.

David Brauner outlined the way in which critics have been polarized in their response to *American Pastoral*, in particular the issue of whether Roth empathizes with 'Swede' or his daughter Meredith 'Merry' Levov.¹²⁰ I would argue that Zuckerman's empathy with 'Swede' is more a question of sympathy for a deluded character, combined with occasional jealousy. He only empathizes with Merry when her negative views concerning 'Swede's' dreams coincide with his own. It is clear from the outset that Nathan is fascinated by 'Swede', recalling his high school reputation:

The elevation of Swede Levov into the household Apollo of the Weequahic Jews can best be explained, I think, by the war against the Germans and the Japanese and the fears that it fostered. With the Swede indomitable on the playing field, the meaningless surface of life provided a bizarre, delusionary kind of sustenance, the happy release into a Swedean innocence, for those who lived in dread of never seeing their sons or their brothers or their husbands again. (*American Pastoral*, p.7)

From the very outset, Nathan makes the reader aware that any admiration for or fond recollection of 'Swede', is provisional and qualified through the words 'bizarre', 'delusory' and 'innocence'. 'Swede' exemplifies a paradox related to Jewish identity. On the one hand he is able to pass as non-Jewish, and is described as 'a boy as close to a goy as we were going to get' (*American Pastoral*, p.13). Glaser observed that 'Swede' is 'incorporated into the

¹¹⁸ Michiko Kakutani, 'A Postwar Paradise Shattered from Within', *New York Times*, 15 April 1997, p.11.

¹¹⁹ Jennifer Glaser, 'America's Haunted House: The Radical and National Uncanny in *American Pastoral*', in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.44-59 (p.50). It is also reasonable to state that in common with *Operation Shylock* and the *New York Trilogy*, this novel features the recognizable pattern of a protagonist being taught a coercive lesson in the interactions between 'Swede' and Rita Cohen. Glaser also pointed out that 'Swede aggressively refuse[s] to see the shadows' in his life and this, she argued, is a condition of denial that 'Roth suggests is epidemic during the immediate postwar era' ('America's Haunted House', p.45).

¹²⁰ David Brauner, "'What was not supposed to happen had happened and what was supposed to happen had not happened": Subverting History in *American Pastoral*', in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.19-31 (p.20).

American body politic and the model of healthy American masculinity that so many Jewish men fail to attain' because of his physique and sporting prowess ('America's Haunted House', p.51). It appears that 'Swede' is exempt from the efforts of other immigrants to assimilate because of physique and appearance:

Our point man into the next immersion, at home here the way the Wasps were at home here, an American not by sheer striving, not by being a Jew who invents a famous vaccine or a Jew on the Supreme Court, not by being the most brilliant or eminent or the best. Instead - by virtue of his isomorphism into the Wasp world - he does it the ordinary way, the natural way, the regular American guy way. (*American Pastoral*, p.85)

Zuckerman had noted earlier, that he, like Fogg and Sachs, wanted to be an 'all-American kid' as a boy (*American Pastoral*, p.22). This encapsulates what Brauner described as the 'seductive pastoral dream of "passing" in American society' (*Philip Roth*, p.157). The other side of this paradox is the prospect of an homogenous America in which only those with 'Swede's' physical attributes can be fully immersed.¹²¹ Here, I believe is one source of any sympathy that Zuckerman may show towards 'Swede': the object of his writerly attention is no more able to escape his background or 'have it both ways' than Zuckerman himself.

Once Nathan has reconnected with 'Swede' and undertaken to document his story, what follows is the type of flat rejection of a character's aims and motivations that Roth customarily reserves for female characters. Nathan asks 'where was the Jew in him?' and finds him to be a 'human platitude' (*American Pastoral*, p.22 and p.25). There is more than one hint of jealousy or malice from Nathan. He describes 'Swede's' rise to popularity and success as 'mindless ascendancy' (*American Pastoral*, p.84). Another level on which they connect is that of feeling that they are trying and failing to see beyond the 'surfaces' of

¹²¹ Glaser was remiss in stating that in *American Pastoral* 'Jewish difference is something far more fluid, a racial identity that can be donned and doffed with comparative ease' ('America's Haunted House', p.52). This is clearly Swede's experience at certain points, but not that of Roth or Zuckerman. The drive of this concluding argument is that despite political changes in America, Roth's consciousness of being racially different remains both intact and resentful while characters such as Seymour Levov and Coleman Silk remain exceptions in their capacity to fully pass. In both *American Pastoral* and *The Human Stain* this is rigorously deconstructed.

people, the trait of a novelist, but a compulsion for which Nathan castigates himself (*American Pastoral*, p.32, p.37 and p.40). This in turn leads to more harsh observations of 'Swede' by Nathan, who 'had no idea where his thoughts might be or if he even had "thoughts"' (*American Pastoral*, p.36). Towards the end of the novel, this is emphasized when an exasperated 'Swede', tormented by the web of lies in his own home, demands to know 'what kind of a mask is everyone wearing?' (*American Pastoral*, p.330).¹²²

Zuckerman then depicts the farcical collapse of 'Swede's' pastoral idyll. His daughter becomes a terrorist who blows up the local post office at Old Rimrock and then disappears. When he finds her, she is living as a 'Jain'. 'Swede' realizes that he is living in an area where anti-Semites not only live but send hate mail to him (*American Pastoral*, p.158). His wife, a former Miss New Jersey whose Catholic parents did not want her to marry a Jew, rejects him and their home and commences an affair with William Orcutt III (*American Pastoral*, p.184). Orcutt is 'Swede's' WASP neighbour, whose family history and connections leave 'Swede' feeling a sense of separateness from American history and a closer connection to his father (*American Pastoral*, p.286). In the meantime, 'Swede' has to listen to the moralizing of his father, who would have preferred that his son had married a Jew or at least raised his child in the Jewish faith, and his brother who sees his downfall as the inevitable end product of 'playing at being Wasps' (*American Pastoral*, p.262). The Levovs' old neighbourhood of Newark has degenerated into a crime zone and this is summarized as follows:

Three generations of becoming one with a people. And now with the fourth it had all come to nothing. The total vandalization of their world. (*American Pastoral*, p.221)

¹²² As a boy, 'Swede' bases his future dreams on a book called *The Kid From Tomkinsville* and also sees himself, laughably, as the American Adam stereotype 'Johnny Appleseed' (*American Pastoral*, p.177 and p.298). Andrew Gordon rightly pointed out that 'Swede's' dreams place him in a tradition of tragic literary protagonists including Gatsby and Willy Loman, and in a sense this indicates some sympathy on Roth's part ('The Critique of the Pastoral', p.39).

At the novel's conclusion, as Lou Levov is stabbed in the face at the dinner table by Orcutt's drunken wife, Nathan asks 'what on earth is less reprehensible than the life of the Levovs' (*American Pastoral*, p.395).

Most critics, including Brauner, have chosen to view Nathan's, and by extension Roth's, view of 'Swede's' pastoral idyll, as scathingly critical. Brauner stated that 'Swede' is represented as a 'Utopian dreamer', 'delusional', 'nostalgic' (*Philip Roth*, p.170). It is clear that, as was the case with Eve Frame, Roth retains his critical attitude towards any attempts to disguise or reduce a Jewish appearance, his resentment towards those who can, and also his plainly dismissive stance towards the prospect of full assimilation. Ironically, as 'Swede's' world is collapsing around him, it is noted that his parents often speculate on whether or not an acquaintance is Jewish (*American Pastoral*, p.331). Yet through the earlier idealization of 'Swede', it is clear that Roth/Zuckerman can identify with the impulse inspired by the threat of anti-Semitism on the one hand, and a wish to be fully immersed on the other. When Nathan is reacquainted with 'Swede' after his traumatic reverses, he notes that his 'nerve was shattered' and that he 'used himself mainly to conceal himself' (*American Pastoral*, p.31).

As stated above, critics have differed over whether Roth/Zuckerman empathizes more with 'Swede' or his daughter Merry. I will conclude this analysis of *American Pastoral* by addressing this point in the established contexts of connections between Auster's and Roth's work. Jennifer Glaser was clear on this point:

Although Roth is brutal in his portrayal of Merry, throughout *American Pastoral* he clearly emphasizes that the Swede's acculturation and the lack of authentic identity he imparts to his daughter are partially at fault for her attraction to violence and disorder. ('America's Haunted House', p.53)¹²³

¹²³ Glaser went on to point out that 'Swede' eventually 'gives credence' to his father's concerns over Merry being deprived of her Jewish past, and that she possibly feels rejected by her mother for being half Jewish, whilst her incurable stutter mirrors the Yiddish inflected talk of her grandparents in that it does not suit 'Swede's' sense of 'all-American fluency' ('America's Haunted House', p.56 and p.57).

‘Swede’ first reconnects to Merry through the character Rita Cohen, whose actual role in relation to Merry is never made clear (mirroring the antagonists in Auster’s *New York Trilogy*). In several instances, it appears that she is more a projection of ‘Swede’s’ guilty conscience or worst fears than a real character. When she lures ‘Swede’ to meet her with the bait of possible reconnection with Merry, Rita first torments ‘Swede’ with the theory that Merry was traumatized by ‘sixteen years of living in a household where she was hated by that mother’ (*American Pastoral*, p.130). She then impersonates Merry, asking ‘Swede’ to have sex with her, referring back to a moment in Merry’s childhood when she asked her father to kiss her (*American Pastoral*, p.135). After ‘Swede’ finally tracks down Merry she denies knowing or having any connection to Rita. Despite this, ‘Swede’ later receives a phone call from the character saying that she and her associates have been following him and persisting in her sexual insinuations (*American Pastoral*, p.343). It is through episodes such as these, that one gets the sense of ‘Pinteresque menace’ encroaching on ‘Swede’s’ consciousness.

Merry’s own interactions with ‘Swede’ do little to alleviate his sense that everything in which he believes, or upon which he relies, is being dismantled. The allegedly hysterical Merry addresses her father as ‘though he were the child and she were the parent, with nothing but sympathetic understanding’, when she explains how she has come to be the ‘perfect Jain’ in opposition to the America that ‘Swede’ loves (*American Pastoral*, p.228 and p.229). ‘Swede’ cannot believe that his daughter has murdered four people, lived as a vagrant, been raped and that:

Almost three-quarters of the way through the century that with no regard for the niceties of burial had strewn the corpses of mutilated children and their mutilated parents everywhere, The Swede found out that we are all in the power of something demented. (*American Pastoral*, p.239)

Earlier, Nathan had described ‘Swede’ groping for explanations as to why his daughter descended into asceticism and terrorism. After considering the Vietnam War and televised

footage of Buddhist monks self-immolating, 'Swede' convinces himself that 'no other explanation existed' (*American Pastoral*, p.148). This perspective is replaced later by his own father's opinions concerning cultural grounding and also by the possibility that Merry's 'disorder' was congenital (*American Pastoral*, pp.363-64). If one adds this to the possibility that Merry in fact inherited her sense of political outrage from her grandfather (minus his historically contingent inhibitions where attacking America is concerned), one may perceive a distinct similarity between this novel and *Leviathan*, in terms of the multiple explanations and mystery preserved that stand against the FBI's 'official' investigation into Merry's actions (*American Pastoral*, p.271).

That Nathan empathizes with Merry is debatable. What is clear is that he shares with her the need to criticize 'Swede's' unquestioning nature. First he listens to 'Swede's' brother Jerry, stating that because he was well-loved and naturally gifted, the 'self-questioning did take some time to reach him' (*American Pastoral*, p.65). Nathan echoes Jerry's sentiments later, when he states that 'Swede', shocked by events, seeks childishly to understand what has happened with Merry as the result of a single transgression (*American Pastoral*, p.84).

Nathan describes the way that 'Swede' is never the same after learning that '[life] makes no sense', but 'Swede' is later heard dismissing all explanations that do not suit his world view, such as the notion that Merry developed her stutter in part due to the pressure of having 'good looking and successful parents' (*American Pastoral*, p.77 and p.91).

It would be fair to state that 'Swede', caught between Zuckerman's criticism, that of his family, his daughter's forthright deconstruction of all that he holds dear, Rita Cohen's psychological games and Roth's relentless authoring, is a most unfortunate literary character. His pastoral idyll, related intrinsically to his appearance and the historical immersion of American Jews into WASP mainstream life, is broken into fragments. Nonetheless,

Zuckerman's seemingly ironic closing question does suggest that the protagonist has been punished harshly for harbouring ambitions that all parties involved beside Merry and Rita Cohen can appreciate.

It does not on the surface appear that Zuckerman (or Roth) identify with Merry or Rita Cohen any more than 'Swede' does, when he bemoans:

What the hell happened to our smart Jewish kids? If, God forbid, their parents are no longer oppressed for a while, they run where they think they can find oppression. Can't live without it. Once Jews ran away from oppression; now they run away from no oppression. (*American Pastoral*, p.238)

To clarify the significance of Merry's actions it is useful to consider them in relation to those of Marco Stanley Fogg. This is particularly the case in relation to Merry's brief narrative of her flight after she sets off the bomb at the post office. This narrative includes fifteen aliases in two months, living hidden in an ante-room, false papers, clandestine flight, a group called 'the underground', being raped, yearning for family, scavenging in bins for food, working in fields and living in a camp barrack, begging, homelessness and constant fear of detection (*American Pastoral*, pp.240-44).¹²⁴ Unlike Fogg, Merry has legitimate reasons for embarking on a course of flight and evasion, as well as undertaking a strict ascetic regime. It is equally true that Merry has chosen to or compulsively put herself in this predicament. One could still make the case that her actions are related to 'postmemory' or a belated 'return of the repressed'.

When Merry attempts to make the comparison between Vietnam and the Holocaust, she is flatly dismissed by Lou Levov:

You're exaggerating, sweetheart. I don't say Johnson didn't let us down. But you forget what Hitler did to the Jews, Merry dear. You weren't born then, so you don't remember. (*American Pastoral*, p.270)

¹²⁴ There is also a lesbian affair that may remind readers of that between Anna Blume and Victoria Woburn from *In the Country of Last Things*, a narrative that matches Merry's in many aspects.

Ironically, Lou Levov here articulates in his Yiddish-inflected English, the tension in Merry between what was never experienced but has at the same time been so powerfully transmitted that it cannot be fully ‘forgotten’. In representing the clash between his/Zuckerman/‘Swede’s’ and Merry/Fogg’s generation, Roth has either knowingly or unwittingly commented on Auster’s fiction. For Newark Jews of Roth’s generation, the condition of being Jewish and the significance of appearances and historical trauma are engrained and central. For suburban Jews of Auster’s generation, these issues are marginal in everyday life, but this may in turn create a sense of disconnection and vicarious or ‘postmemory’ trauma may be experienced belatedly, as ‘acting out’. This may explain Fogg’s response to the historical moment that is the basis of *Moon Palace*, especially as his actions are triggered by the loss of family connections. It may also explain the different responses in Roth’s novel of those who consciously live their lives in relation to Jewish experience/appearances, and those who are historically distanced, but regress to re-enactments of Jewish historical trauma.¹²⁵ These differences mirror what was uncovered in Salinger’s earlier and later fiction, in terms of how dis/simulation occurred before and after the Holocaust.

I will now conclude this chapter with a reading of *The Human Stain*. *The Human Stain*, in the view of Sam Bluefarb is a ‘focused blast at fashionable political correctness’.¹²⁶ Coleman Silk is a Newark-raised African American, who has been able to pass as Jewish for his entire adult life because of his light skin. At the end of his career as a classics professor at Athena College, Silk is disgraced because of a ludicrous accusation of racism. He had misguidedly applied the word ‘spooks’ to two absent students, having ‘wholly forgotten’ that this is ‘an invidious term sometimes applied to blacks’ (*Human Stain*, p.710). Links to the formal structure of *Leviathan* are repeated in this novel, with Zuckerman gaining incomplete

¹²⁵ Milowitz vaguely related Swede’s ‘dreams’ to the Holocaust by suggesting that hopefulness to the extent of ‘false fantasy’ could be related to transforming a ‘brutal history’ (*Concentrationary Universe*, p.xi).

¹²⁶ Sam Bluefarb, ‘*The Human Stain*: A Satiric Tragedy of the Politically Incorrect’, in *Playful and Serious: Philip Roth as a Comic Writer*, pp.222-28 (p.222).

knowledge of the other protagonists and their lives, before coming to the conclusion that he is ‘blindsided by the terrifyingly provisional nature of everything’ (*Human Stain*, p.1015).¹²⁷

Also repeated is Roth/Zuckerman’s distanced representation of the next generation. Silk’s son Mark, having felt alienated within his family who were ‘Jews in little more than name’, became an Orthodox Jew who ‘acts out’ against his father ‘with all the arrogance of someone who has succeeded at nothing’ (*Human Stain*, p.761). Silk has to lie to his wife Iris (who is in fact Jewish and so in the faith are their children) and gives vague details about his ‘Russian’ background to his own children: ‘the old people didn’t talk about it that much’ (*Human Stain*, p.867). Mark Silk is a different type of character to Merry Levov in many ways. What is similar is that Roth again represents a case in which failing to pass on a history to the next generation leads to a return of the repressed. Gabrielle Seeley and Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky addressed Mark’s role in the novel as akin to Pearl’s in *The Scarlet Letter*, as ‘the prober of conscience’, but attached no specific Jewish historical or religious significance to this.¹²⁸

As I did with the *Book of Illusions*, I am going to address this book from the point of view of the narrator’s empathy with the dis/simulating protagonist.¹²⁹ It is my contention that Roth/Zuckerman identifies much more readily with Silk than he does with either Ira Ringold

¹²⁷ Debra Shostak noted that ‘the chapter title ‘Everybody Knows’, for example, threatens the power of the social network over the individual [...] obscures how impossible it is to reckon with either public histories or private secrets’ (‘Introduction to *The Human Stain*’, in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.61-63 (pp.61-62)). Brett Ashley Kaplan made the valid point that in this novel almost everybody is concealing something and that ‘the revelation of every [...] character’s secrets sustains Roth’s examination of disclosure and self-making’ (‘Reading Race and the Conundrums of Reconciliation in Philip Roth’s *The Human Stain*’, in *Turning up the Flame: Philip Roth’s Later Novels*, pp.172-93 (p.180)).

¹²⁸ Gabrielle Seeley and Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, ‘“The pointless meaningfulness of living”: Illuminating *The Human Stain* through *The Scarlet Letter*’, in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.93-109 (p.93).

¹²⁹ Catherine Morley pointed out that the relationship between Zuckerman and Silk bears ‘more than a passing resemblance’ to that between Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby (‘Possessed by the Past: History, Nostalgia, and Language in *The Human Stain*’, in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.80-92 (p.83)). Larry Schwartz made the convincing argument that Nathan fills in the gaps in Silk’s narrative to ‘construct Coleman in his own image as solipsistic artist’ (‘Erasing Race in Philip Roth’s *The Human Stain*’, *Philip Roth Studies*, 7.1 (Spring 2011), 65-82 (p.65)). Schwartz’s argument may have verisimilitude but does not address the fact that Roth does not generally favour characters that ‘pass’.

or 'Swede' Levoy, and certainly more than he did with Eve Frame. This, on the surface, is anomalous as Nathan does not have a strong basis for shared personal experience with Silk. Silk was born to an African-American family and experienced racial prejudice and poverty. In his school days, he was asked to step aside so that a Jewish student could use his position as valedictorian to beat anti-Semitic quotas in the medical profession (*Human Stain*, pp.784-86). Having left behind his family for college and discovered through his boxing coach that he can pass as Jewish, Coleman settles on this as his course in life in part because he experiences racism at key moments. He is thrown out of Woolworth's in Washington for being a 'nigger', and told by a girlfriend 'I can't do it' when she sees his black family (*Human Stain*, p.802 and p.822).

There is plenty of ambiguity concerning Coleman's appearance, signposted by the literary playfulness suggested in his name. Nathan sees him as a 'small-nosed Jewish type [...] something of the ambiguous aura of the pale blacks who are sometimes taken for white' (*Human Stain*, p.718). Later, when Delphine Roux is attempting to describe her ideal partner for a personal advert and trying to avoid sounding racist (and summoning up the image of Silk we are led to believe), she specifies 'Mediterranean complexion' (*Human Stain*, p.958). Clearly Silk is, unlike Roth/Zuckerman, able to pass as several racial categories based on visual evidence. Silk is rejected by his family for wanting to be something other than an African American. He is especially hurt by the rejection of his father, who taught all of his children the value of 'naming precisely' (*Human Stain*, p.791). It was from his father, however, that he developed the idea of turning his fair skin to an advantage, as he encouraged him to marry a 'light-skinned girl' and held the view that 'Negroes who were lighter were treated better' (*Human Stain*, p.799 and p.800). It is true that Silk faces the same paradoxical barriers that affect the Jewish protagonists of the previous two novels. Even in Greenwich Village, 'the four freest square miles in America', he is disconcerted to discover that a

number of people are ‘passing’ (*Human Stain*, p.829). Silk faces the same challenges and anxieties concerning the threat and consequences of detection as all of the Jewish passing protagonists discussed in this chapter.

Dean Franco pointed out that during the period in question, post-WWII America, Jews were seen, particularly by other outsiders, to be a more ‘integral part of America’s cultural pluralism’, ‘thus making Jewishness a fine vehicle for passing’.¹³⁰ Given the tensions between the interests of characters of African and Jewish descent in Roth’s fiction (and its historical contexts) and Roth/Zuckerman’s reactions to dis/simulation that I have discussed so far, it may be considered surprising that Zuckerman empathizes with Silk to the extent of finding him to be a soul-mate. At the beginning of the novel, Nathan is under the impression that Silk is Jewish and that the two of them have a shared culture. Silk bonds with him by saying that he fulfilled his (Jewish) father’s dream when he became a college professor and that his college president:

Pretended to enjoy me for my background, though, as we know, Gentiles actually hate those stories about the Jews and their remarkable rise from the slums. (*Human Stain*, p.725)

As men in their twilight years, each living a reclusive existence (Zuckerman has become a recluse after prostate surgery left him impotent), they quickly bond and in one moving (to me at least) scene they dance together on Silk’s porch after exchanging nostalgia (*Human Stain*, p.728). Even when it becomes apparent that Silk has deceived him, Nathan does not to any great extent condemn the man. This is surely connected to the irony that Silk was murdered by the former husband of his lover Faunia Farley, in an attack motivated in part by anti-Semitism. Les Farley, the traumatized Vietnam war veteran is described asking ‘why is he

¹³⁰ Dean Franco, ‘Race Recognition and Responsibility in *The Human Stain*’, in *Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America*, pp.65-79 (p.72 and p.73). Brett Ashley Kaplan correctly pointed out that when Silk took the decision in 1946 there was still a lot of institutional and insidious prejudice towards Jews, and following Brodtkin’s argument showed that Coleman, in taking advantage of the GI Bill, joined the upsurge in Jewish fortunes in general (‘Reading Race’, p.176).

suffering so much for what happened to him when she can go on giving blow-jobs to old Jews?’ (*Human Stain*, p.945). Nathan laments that a man of Silk’s ‘intellectual stature’ had died the ‘scandalous death of an alienated, bizarre outsider’ (*Human Stain*, p.968). At his funeral he thinks that Silk was ‘buried as a Jew [...] killed as a Jew’ (*Human Stain*, p.1006). In this respect Silk becomes a figure akin to Newman in Miller’s *Focus*, a gentile doomed to a Jewish fate because of his appearance.

As such, Zuckerman is seen to be in empathy with Silk because he cannot escape the dangers associated with an appearance that an anti-Semite might take for ‘Jewishness’. The reader may associate this with the interaction between Zimmer and Mann in *The Book of Illusions*. Zimmer identifies with Mann on the subjects of loss and post-traumatic withdrawal, but shares no personal empathy in terms of his responses to Mann’s passing because they do not share a historical context. In *The Human Stain*, what has happened to Silk could just as easily have happened to Nathan. Brett Ashley Kaplan wrote that ‘Roth seems to be arguing [...] if only we did not need to read race [...] but no [...] because we are still obsessed by reading race we cannot overcome racism and anti-Semitism in America’ (‘Reading Race’, p.172). John G. Rodwan Jr. suggested that ‘Silk would prefer to be neither one race nor the other and only to be himself’.¹³¹ Perhaps Zuckerman identifies with Silk because both feel, like Roth, that race is inescapable in America and that we are all constantly being ‘read’.

Nathan is similarly, although less strongly, drawn towards uncovering the truth about Les and Faunia Farley. Roth’s representations of Farley, who killed his and Faunia’s children in an arson attack, are reasonably well rounded and detailed in terms of acknowledging the impact that his war experience and the subsequent neglect of his government would have upon him. He is certainly a more rounded character than Delphine Roux, the collegiate official, whose

¹³¹ John G. Rodwan Jr., ‘The Fighting Life: Boxing and Identity in Novels by Philip Roth and Norman Mailer’, *Philip Roth Studies*, 7.1 (Spring 2011), 83-96 (p.91).

sole function in the narrative seems to be to demonstrate the point that sometimes political correctness can be a useful tool for those whose motives are less than pure. The idea that she attacks Silk because she desires him is embarrassing even by the general standards of Roth's fiction. Roth could defend this point by stating that this is fiction and that such characters do exist. My concern is that in his fiction there is almost always an immoral or treacherous female waiting in the wings to serve as a foil to a male character with a privileged position in the narrative structure.

At the novel's conclusion, Zuckerman meets a man ice fishing at a deserted spot, and believes that it is Farley. Since he senses a threat from Farley, Zuckerman acknowledges that he will have to move from his own Thoreauvian retreat: 'I knew that my five years alone in my house were over' (*Human Stain*, p.1038). As Brauner acknowledged:

Les cannot reconcile himself to his own, or to others' humanity. Ultimately, it is Zuckerman, not Farley, who is saved from the sterility of a pastoral retreat. (*Philip Roth*, p.177)¹³²

It transpires that Faunia has also been leading a kind of double life in suppressing the fact that she is literate. Nathan tries and fails to obtain information relating to a lost diary after her funeral. In her failed bid to escape from danger and trauma, and in her lost diary, Faunia represents to some extent another Anne Frank figure in Roth's work. She can also be related to Kosinski's *The Painted Bird*, through her admiration of a crow at the Audubon Society bird sanctuary named Prince. Since Prince has been hand-reared, he does not have 'the right voice' and as a result is attacked and harassed by the other crows (*Human Stain*, p.928). We can only speculate about the reasons behind Faunia's secrecy and empathy with the bird, but she and Silk are clearly complicit in creating alternative realities, and she expresses

¹³² This meeting sets Nathan to thinking about the practice of writing fiction and its distinction from how to conduct one's life. He realizes that he has become entrenched in 'speculation' and 'meditation' as opposed to 'the thing itself' (*Human Stain*, p.1028).

sentiments about ‘inescapable’ identity that match those found throughout the ‘American Trilogy’ (*Ibid.*).

In these respects, *The Human Stain* completes arguments that I have been making, concerning the ways in which the respective upbringings of Roth and Auster are manifest in their fiction through the motif of dis/simulation. It is clear that in constructing their male Jewish protagonists, each author gives a centrality to social and political issues that relate to their respective timescales, whilst events that they are historically distanced from remain in the background. It has also been seen that there are similarities in the ‘behaviours’ of some of the two authors’ protagonists, and that these can be related to the actions of the protagonists of Salinger and Kosinski discussed in earlier chapters. It is clear that whilst some of these common motifs and ‘behaviours’ have been traditionally examined in terms of postmodern experimentalism, an explanation that takes into account Jewish identity is equally plausible.

In each author’s work the themes that I have explored throughout this thesis concerning Jewish appearances, compulsive hiding and disguising, and strategic obfuscation of identity and motivation are present in ways that reflect the specifics of each author’s Jewish experience. In Auster’s fiction, Jewish identity manifested in appearances is not an issue that is made central in the narratives of Fogg, Sachs, Aaron and Zimmer, although in each novel acts of dis/simulation occur as post-traumatic ‘acting out’. This reflects Brodtkin’s concept of ‘whitening’ after WWII. In Roth this is reversed. Such issues as the effect of a Jewish appearance or the compulsion to dis/simulate are at the forefront, reflecting both Memmi’s view that Jewish identity is inescapable and Sartre’s view that Jewish identity is governed by the gaze of the anti-Semite. This is not the case with Roth’s characters who come of age in the Vietnam years, who in part because of the absence of a strong tradition, succumb to a similar return of the repressed to characters found in Auster’s fiction.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: New Directions and Avenues: Dis/simulation in Other Contexts.

The analysis throughout this thesis has been aimed at adding to existing studies that seek to explain common traits found in Jewish-American fiction. Whilst this makes it work of some significance within a relatively narrow field, the new model of analysis within means that this thesis could be considered a ‘tip of the iceberg’, in terms of the ways in which it can be applied to other literature and testimony. My readings of Salinger, Kosinski, Auster and Roth are original, particularly in their insistence on historical detail and contexts rather than the loose categorization by which other readings of these authors have been blighted. My development of the use of trauma theory in literary criticism, specifically to include hiding and disguising as an example of post-traumatic re-enactment, is, I believe, an important new addition to existing studies. This thesis offers a recognition of a different group of ‘survivors’ to those who endured the camps, in much the same way as did the Hidden Child Foundation’s inaugural meeting (cited in Chapter 3). As I have indicated above, this method of analysis can be applied to other literature in which ethnic subjects are addressed or where traumatic dis/simulation is represented. I will now complete this thesis, by offering a number of suggestions as to where my model of analysis can be applied other than to the four male, Jewish authors discussed. These include other ethnic groups that have suffered violence because of race, those who are other than heterosexual in their sexual orientation, the work of female Jewish authors, other contemporary Jewish authors and works that feature protagonists who cannot dis/simulate because of a disability.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, the subject of dis/simulation as a literary and/or post-traumatic strategy could be applied to other American ethnic groups that have connections to traumatic events and/or a disadvantaged position within the WASP hegemony of American society. Dis/simulation has been an example of human behaviour throughout history, and my

model of analysis can therefore be applied to worldwide literature. Armenians passed into other ethnic groups during the Armenian genocide of 1915 in Turkey. Raymond Kévorkian explained that one revolutionary ‘masqueraded as a Kurdish animal trader from Bitlis by the name of Hacı Hüseyin’.¹ Susan Billington Harper narrated the story of an American missionary in Turkey at the time, aided as she tried to help suffering Armenians by an Armenian driver who used his language skills to adapt his identity to Greek or Turkish, depending on the circumstances.² Bosnian Muslims fled and hid around the time of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, in which ethnic cleansing took place.³ Isabelle Wesselingh and Arnaud Vaulerin described the journey of Sead Jakupovic, a survivor from Prijedor, back to his home after having survived the genocide by fleeing to Britain.⁴ The authors noted that even in 1996 ‘at that time it was still suicidal for a Bosnian Muslim or Croat to show his face in Prijedor’ (*Raw Memory*, p.95). In a recent article in the *Guardian*, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, Illuminée Nganemariya, told a reporter that she believed that several Rwandans in her new home town of Norwich were passing as Congolese because ‘they want to forget or escape’.⁵

Post-9/11 Islamophobia dominates western ideologies, and as a result there is a widespread mistrust of Muslims in traditional dress that covers part of the face. The irony here is that women that have chosen, say, to flout the ban in Belgium and France, are asserting an authentic and visible Muslim identity, whilst their persecutors accuse them of strategic dis/simulation. Airline security has been the subject of repeated controversy, with widespread

¹ Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I. B. Tauris and Co, 2011), p.642.

² Susan Billington Harper, ‘Mary Louise Graffam: Witness to Genocide’, in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. by Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.214-39 (p.235).

³ Selma Leydesdorff, *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica Speak*, trans. by Kay Richardson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011).

⁴ Isabelle Wesselingh and Arnaud Vaulerin, *Raw Memory: Prijedor, Laboratory of Ethnic Cleansing*, trans. by John Howe (London: Saqi Books, 2005).

⁵ Henry Green, ‘Rwandan genocide: a survivor's story’, *Guardian*, 13 October 2011

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/series/first-person/rwanda-genocide-survivor-book-rebuild>> [accessed 24 July 2012]. This survivor sensed mistrust towards her among Rwandan-born people who feared that she was an agent of the Rwandan government.

mistrust of Muslims who wear traditional dress, because of what they may be perceived as ‘concealing’. Recently, two American Muslims began legal proceedings against Delta Airlines after they were searched three times, before a pilot finally took the decision to not fly with them on-board despite having made an announcement that any passengers who felt uncomfortable with their presence could leave the plane.⁶

In many societies, there is still good reason for homosexuals to ‘pass’ as heterosexual. A recent article reported that Uganda was considering introducing the death penalty for ‘repeat offenders’, and also stated that homosexuality is illegal in thirty-seven countries in Africa.⁷ Meanwhile, ‘activists say few Africans are openly gay, fearing imprisonment, violence and loss of jobs’ (‘Uganda to Introduce Death Sentence’). A fine literary example of the need to dis/simulate in this context is Christopher Isherwood’s *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, in which the protagonist wears disguises and assumes false identities in relation to undercurrents of political discord in pre-war Germany.⁸ Meanwhile Isherwood, who based his characters on real people, downplayed any overt homosexuality and instead used innuendo. The scandal that publishing overtly homosexual material would have caused in 1935 would have led, at the very least, to his uncle and benefactor cutting him off.⁹

The focus of this study has been comparatively narrow, as I have sought to compare in detail the lives and careers of four authors according to my principal method of combining history and theory to illuminate examples of dis/simulation in their work. This has fulfilled the scope of this thesis. I may, however, have chosen to look at the work of female Jewish authors, and

⁶ Matthew Cortina, ‘Muslim Men Booted From Delta Flight Sue for “Discrimination”’, *The Christian Post*, 20 December 2011 <<http://www.christianpost.com/news/muslim-men-booted-from-delta-flight-sue-for-discrimination-65309/#j9jCzEGdPxTJDzGl.99>> [accessed 6 September 2012].

⁷ Leon Watson, ‘Uganda to Introduce Death Sentence Bill for Gay “Repeat” Offenders’, *Daily Mail*, 8 February 2012 <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2098210/Uganda-introduce-death-sentence-gay-repeat-offenders.html>> [accessed 7 August 2012].

⁸ Christopher Isherwood, *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935).

⁹ Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and his Kind* (London: Avon Books, 1976), pp.184-86.

this would have presented different challenges. Thus far I have cited several sources on ‘reading’ trauma, following on from the work of theorists who have utilized Freud’s later work. At this point, I would like to note a flaw in the ways in which critics such as LaCapra and Caruth have read these texts. Freud, in his later career, changed his stance on what motivates human behaviour significantly. In ‘early’ Freud, the argument usually revolves around humans being motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Pleasure is largely seen to be fulfilled by the attainment of the ego’s wishes through removing obstacles that inhibit the libido. In ‘later’ Freud, we find arguments that relate to the presence of ‘trauma’ as a motivating factor, and possibly a pre-object or pre-natal factor that underpins all human behaviour.

The important difference for the purpose of this section of the Conclusion, between the early and later Freudian positions, is that in his later work Freud is much less likely to distinguish between patients of opposing genders. In his early work, Freud defined concepts such as the ‘Oedipus complex’ and ‘penis envy’, which drew clear lines between feminine and masculine motivation and, in the views of many critics, betrayed a strong masculinist bias. The unifying premise of what Freud wrote could be summed up as simply stating that women are psychologically and sexually more complex than men.¹⁰

In Freud’s later writing on mourning, trauma and depression, there is no distinction between the sexes. In ‘Remembering, Repeating and Working Through’ (1914), ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ (1917), and ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ (1920), Freud examined human

¹⁰ See Sigmund Freud, Lecture 33: ‘Femininity’, in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1973), pp.145-69. Freud makes many dated assumptions about the ‘passivity’ of women, but concedes that ‘psychology too is unable to solve the riddle of femininity’ (‘Femininity’, p.149). I am, of course, au fait with the many critical accounts of Freud’s work on women, and in this short conclusion do not wish to become bogged down by a lengthy debate on the matter. As I will discuss shortly, certain feminist critics have used Freud’s basic notions of female sexuality (including innate bisexuality), as a viable framework for understanding the differences between male and female behaviour and mental health.

unhappiness in terms of psychological factors that inhibit the pursuit of pleasure, but made no distinction between male and female patients. Freud took the same line of argument about theatre when he referred to Aristotle's writing on the ways in which drama assists the audience in 'blowing off steam'.¹¹ A traumatized person, it seems, is without gender, as is a person watching a play. Freud was fashioning himself against Aristotle here, but in *Poetics* the philosopher also referred to all that encounter poetry as one, despite his general views of the differences of the sexes:

There is such a thing as a good woman and a good slave, even though one of these is perhaps deficient and the other generally speaking inferior.¹²

Caruth, Langer and LaCapra have followed Freud's lead, in making all one gender in the face of grand-scale atrocity - to them trauma is trauma. For instance, Cathy Caruth in her reading of *Hiroshima mon amour*, discussed the struggle that the protagonists experience in coming to terms with the traumatic events that have befallen them. There is not a single comment on the ways in which their processing of trauma differs or the fact that they are in a heterosexual relationship (*Unclaimed Experience*, Chapter 2: 'Literature and the Enactment of Memory (Duras, Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*)', pp.25-56).

Anthropologists have noted female concerns and difference in perceptions of testimony. Joan Ringelheim argued that the 'experiences of Jewish women have been obscured or absorbed into descriptions of men's lives'.¹³ Janet Liebman Jacobs concluded that:

the study of women in the Holocaust is not only valid but necessary to redress the absence of women's lives and experiences in the documentation [...] and preservation of Holocaust memory.¹⁴

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, 'Psychopathic Characters on the Stage', in *Writings on Art and Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp.87-93 (p.87).

¹² Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Penguin, 1996), p.24.

¹³ Joan Ringelheim, 'Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research', in *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust*, ed. by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (St Pauls, MN: Paragon House, 1993), pp.373-418 (p.374).

¹⁴ Janet Liebman Jacobs, 'Women, Genocide and Memory: The Ethics of Feminist Ethnography in Holocaust Research', *Gender and Society*, 18.2 (April 2004), 223-38 (p.230).

Most of those who undertook similar studies generally agreed that women have fundamentally different lives, attitudes and resources to men. Holocaust testimony is not, however, exempt from the crippling chauvinism with which readers have approached other historical texts. One need only read Lawrence Langer's views on heroic/unheroic memory to get a sense of this. Langer applied literary conventions specific to male characters when discussing the testimony of male and female survivors (*Holocaust Testimonies*, Chapter 5: 'Unheroic Memory: The Diminished Self', pp.162-206).

Anne Cubilié attacked Langer on similar grounds, but in reference to his essay 'Gendered Suffering?: Women in Holocaust Testimonies', which she summarized in these derisory terms:

His essay quite explicitly implies that if one considers gender as an important category of analysis, then by definition one relegates other aspects of experience to the background. He employs caricatured arguments about gender that come from unexamined stereotypes rather than from a detailed engagement with the intellectual projects of feminist analysis, and the essay itself takes the form of a competition with an unclear and reductive notion of such an analysis. (*Women Witnessing Terror*, p.84)

Langer had argued that:

All efforts to find a rule or hierarchy in that darkness, whether based on gender or will, spirit or hope, reflect only our own need to plant a life-sustaining seed in the barren soil that contains the remnants of two-thirds of European Jewry.¹⁵

Cubilié made several clear distinctions between men and women in the situation of giving testimony. Two examples are Cubilié's claims that women experience shame differently to men, and her notion based on other people's research, that women are more likely to testify but also more likely to talk about the experiences of men than their own (*Women Witnessing Terror*, p.13).¹⁶ Indeed, one might question the dynamics of testimony and processing

¹⁵ Lawrence Langer, 'Gendered Suffering?: Women in Holocaust Testimonies', in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. by Dalia Ofer and Leonore J. Weitzman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp.351-63 (p.362).

¹⁶ Cubilié's eventual argument that women are more likely to recall 'community and sharing as necessary for survival' as opposed to men who focus on 'radical individuation and vicious selfishness' is deeply problematic (*Women Witnessing Terror*, p.83). Cubilié's determination to read same sex relationships within the camps as revolving around community and support networks denies the possibility that women can be desiring, shallow,

trauma, given the historical subjugation of women. One example where this is directly relevant to this thesis relates to sexual trauma. Joan Ringelheim argued that whilst both men and women suffered during the Holocaust, women were victimized specifically as women, carrying:

the burdens of sexual victimization, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, killing of newborn babies in the camps to save the mothers, care of children, and many decisions about separation from children.¹⁷

After such traumatic events, many women are reticent about admitting, for instance, that they were raped, particularly to their husbands. This has been a noted tendency among Rwandan women and an obstacle to ‘working through’ trauma.¹⁸ One could make the case here that women, subjugated to their husbands and male relatives, would be more likely to dis/simulate (in terms of presenting an acceptable self), even when it came to concealing extreme suffering.

Brauner noted that after a period of relative quiet, in terms of writing about the Holocaust in fiction, it was indeed women writers who broke the silence and forthrightly included it in their work (*Post-War Jewish Fiction*, Chapter 4: ‘Breaking the Silence: Jewish Women Writing the War and the War After’, pp.113-53). This, according to Brauner, was part of a ‘rebellion’ that Jewish-American women writers staged in retaliation against general oppression, oppression within Jewish traditions, and being over-shadowed by male authors such as Roth, Bellow and Malamud. Brauner went on to discuss *The Shawl* by Cynthia Ozick and ‘The Legacy of Raizel Kaidish’ by Rebecca Goldstein’, two examples of fiction that foregrounds the suffering of female protagonists and their losses. Brauner did not draw any

base and exploitative human beings. Although Cubilié was correct to assert that Langer’s comments are not incisive because he glosses over issues of gender difference, she was equally incorrect, I believe, in her reductive accounts of female motivation.

¹⁷ Joan Ringelheim, ‘The Split Between Gender and the Holocaust’, in *Women in the Holocaust*, pp.340-50 (p.350).

¹⁸ See Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

distinction between these works of fiction and Lesléa Newman's 'A Letter to Harvey Milk', alongside which he discussed them. In Newman's short story, a female protagonist is a foil against which a male Holocaust survivor's story and trauma unravel.

As has been acknowledged in previous chapters, fiction and testimony are separate entities. It is also the case that authors choose to create protagonists who are of the opposite sex to themselves. Roth and Auster both represented Anne Frank, or a related character, in their fiction, although in neither case was this anything more than a symbolic representation that alluded to what many Americans still think of as a 'classic' Holocaust narrative. Throughout this thesis, however, I have looked at writing that has expressed vicarious trauma and formal dis/simulation, looking at the similarities between this and testimony. Below are two examples that reflect the noted issue of female survivors being open to discussing the Holocaust, but sometimes struggling to foreground female experience.

Canadian novelist Bernice Eisenstein's autobiographical *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, tells the story of her parents' harrowing experiences in the camps and the effects that this had on them in later life.¹⁹ Also detailed, are the effects that this had on her, and in many instances the book reads as a fictional demonstration of Aaron Hass's thesis concerning the traumatic effects of the Holocaust on children of survivors. The structure of this book is telling, because for the first part the father's personality, experience and his effect on his children's development is foregrounded, while the mother remains a peripheral figure. In the second half, the mother's experience is foregrounded by the actual inclusion of her testimony of experiences at an all-female camp. Finally, there is a description of a gathering of survivors at which one woman asks Eisenstein to pass greetings on to her mother: 'Greetings conveyed to me from one woman to another, women who will never meet' (*I Was a Child*,

¹⁹ Bernice Eisenstein, *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (London: McClelland and Stewart, 2006).

p.177). This structure suggests an overcoming of silence, complicated by what the author describes as ‘the circle of hell belonging to mothers and daughters’ (*I Was a Child*, p.174).

In *The Boy Who Loved Anne Frank: A Novel*, Ellen Feldman presents a historical counter-narrative in which the famous teenage diarist’s story is used as the basis for a speculative account of what might have happened to Peter van Pels, had he survived and escaped to America.²⁰ What follows is a case study that superbly illustrates many aspects of this thesis, including passing as non-Jewish, post-traumatic re-enactment, mental breakdown and fear of detection. Peter van Pels lies to his Jewish wife about his background, loses his voice, secretly attends events related to *The Diary of Anne Frank* and finally admits the truth about whom and what he is. The perspective of Peter’s Jewish wife, and the female victims depicted in Anne’s diary, are entirely encapsulated within and subservient to Peter’s male perspective and concerns. A similar perspective dominates Cynthia Ozick’s *The Messiah of Stockholm*, although Ozick’s extensive oeuvre contains numerous references to the Holocaust and testimony, many of which relate to women.²¹

The revision of gendered approaches to Holocaust testimony has not yet been extended to the effects of trauma. What I mean by this, is that despite an insistence on the different experience and behaviour of women during the Holocaust, the assumption is still made that men and women exhibit the same traits when traumatized. In an extensive review of research on sufferers of PTSD, David F. Tobin and Edna B. Foa concluded that women were much more likely than men to exhibit symptoms of PTSD, more likely to be traumatized by war, and combat, exhibit different symptoms, face different social expectations whilst recovering, and have different coping strategies from male survivors of similar traumas.²² This is surely

²⁰ Ellen Feldman, *The Boy Who Loved Anne Frank: A Novel* (London: Picador, 2005).

²¹ Cynthia Ozick, *The Messiah of Stockholm* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987).

²² David F. Tobin and Edna B. Foa, ‘Sex Differences in Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Quantitative Review of 25 Years of Research’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 132.6 (2006), 959-92.

significant, when it has become common practice to approach Holocaust testimonies using theories of 'trauma' to explain inconsistencies, inaccuracies and fractured chronology, and thus enhance our readings of these texts. These approaches have the effect of de-gendering our understanding of female trauma and related depression and anxiety, in much the same way as the insistence on the primacy of male Holocaust experience effectively wrote women out of the historical record.

It is not the case, however, that those who have acknowledged Freud's influence have always come to the same conflation. Julia Kristeva chose Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia' as the main influence for her seminal work on depression and the inter-related issues of trauma and grieving. In Kristeva's extended analysis, common traits of those who are depressed or melancholic are contrasted with chapters such as 'Illustrations of Feminine Depression' (*Black Sun*, Chapter 3, pp.69-94). This was influenced by Freud's later work, but also took into account Freud's early work on female sexuality and mental health. In doing so, Kristeva was able to 'read' the case studies to which she referred with a combined understanding of the effects of trauma on how the patients present their narratives, but also with a gendered understanding of symptoms and the ways in which traumatic events affect women in particular. Kristeva concluded with a reading of *Hiroshima mon amour* that did just that, analysing the grief experienced by the female protagonist in terms of 'the unfulfilled mourning of the autosensual preobject' (*Black Sun*, p.240). It is through such theoretical texts as this that one should re-read Holocaust testimonies (and related works of art and literature), in order to respect the nuances of difference between the male and the female psyche and to read the types of texts that I have discussed more rigorously.

I will now discuss the work of some writers from the generation that followed Paul Auster. These authors have been influenced by different conditions to the authors examined

elsewhere in this thesis. I wrote at length about this in the Introduction. Jews in modern America experience mixed feelings because of being successful and well-integrated, whilst many still perceive a sense of threat from non-Jews and have personal connections to traumatic events such as the Holocaust. For these reasons, a number of contemporary Jewish-American authors show signs of ambivalence towards the importance, or even the relevance, of being Jewish in their work.

Tama Janowitz, for instance in her early work *Slaves of New York*, gave no indication that there was a Jewish background in the lives of either of the main protagonists, Eleanor and Marley. She did, however, foreground the Jewish identity of the nameless protagonist of the first story of this collection, 'Modern Saint #271'. Recounting her downward spiral into drug-addiction and prostitution, this character recalls being rejected by her father after she flunked college. Prior to this, he had bribed the college to overlook previous misdemeanours:

The only reason I was allowed to stay after that was that Daddy donated money to the school to build a new swimming pool. He never understood that no matter what he did, they were always going to think of him only as a rich Jew.²³

In *A Certain Age*, Janowitz returned to the terrain of *Slaves*. This was the singles and young persons' career scenes in Manhattan. Janowitz produced a central protagonist (this is a novel, as opposed to *Slaves*, which is a collection of vignettes), Florence Collins, who is in no way identified as Jewish.

Janowitz may have felt the diminished importance of a Jewish identity as a new millennium approached. One may also recall, however, Philip Roth's comments on Norman Mailer, and the extent to which this extrovert writer was able to 'imagine' a Jewish protagonist who was capable of certain acts or drives. In *Slaves of New York*, the main female protagonist, Eleanor, is a vulnerable character with little savvy at the mercy of an unforgiving city. In *A Certain*

²³ Tama Janowitz, *Slaves of New York* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), p.4.

Age, Florence Collins is excessively shallow, leading one reviewer who had commented on the heartless world that dictates her circumstances to ask:

Certainly people like Florence Collins exist. But do we care about them? ‘Shallow’ and ‘self-serving’ do not even begin to describe this character, who spends most of her income on clothing and personal upkeep, and who is unable to remember the name of the disease that her most ardent suitor suffers from.²⁴

In the light of this, we may look upon Janowitz’s decision to foreground a Jewish character leading such a wretched life as the first, striking story of *Slaves*, as unusually bold.

Alternatively, we may acknowledge that this story is brief and somewhat engulfed by the actions and motives of other characters (not specified as Jewish) that dominate the collection.

There have been studies published that demonstrate that the grandchildren of survivors (or the ‘third generation’) suffer with similar difficulties to those discussed in Aaron Hass’s study of the children of survivors. For instance, Paulo Ileceto and others concluded that:

In this study, we found that the grandchildren of survivors of the Shoah are similar to controls in affective temperament, hopelessness, and self-perception. However, they are more irritable and angry than controls, and their perception about others is dramatically negative.²⁵

One example of an author of this ‘third generation’, who not only makes Jewish identity and history central motifs in his fiction, but also represents or manifests Holocaust related trauma and dis/simulation, is Michael Chabon. This is clear from the autobiographical work *Manhood for Amateurs*, in which Chabon described his mother’s family background as ‘Jewish, southern [...] assimilationist’ and his father, who grew up ‘on the streets of Flatbush in the forties’, working as a paediatrician whose patients ‘tended to be either black or Jewish’.²⁶ Chabon also recalled his grandmother, who ‘survived pogrom and transatlantic crossing and Depression and war’ (*Manhood for Amateurs*, p.212). This book reveals an

²⁴ Henry Alford, ‘Slaves of the Hamptons’, *New York Times*, 8 August 1999 <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/08/08/reviews/990808.08alfort.html>> [accessed 28 August 2012].

²⁵ Paulo Ileceto and others, ‘Hopelessness, Temperament, Anger and Interpersonal Relationships in Holocaust (Shoah) Survivors’ Grandchildren’, *Journal of Religious Health*, 50 (2011), 321-29 (p.322).

²⁶ Michael Chabon, *Manhood for Amateurs: The Pleasures and Regrets of a Husband, Father, and Son* (London: Fourth Estate, 2010), p.140, p.60 and p.217.

interest in the causes of mental states similar to that which I have developed in this thesis. One example is Chabon's speculation concerning whether his grandmother's obsessive compulsive disorder was in fact something that 'runs in families' (*Manhood for Amateurs*, p.213). Issues connected to suicide, fear of confined spaces, and confused sexuality abound in Chabon's writing.

In his fiction, Chabon has repeatedly expressed an interest in mental states, Jewish historical trauma and dis/simulation. In his first novel, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*, the Jewish identity of the protagonist, Arthur Bechstein, is a marginal factor in his coming-of-age narrative, in which he resolves issues relating to his sexual orientation. It is, however, mentioned at the beginning that he is Jewish. Later, when he is ejected from the home of a WASP couple that his friend Arthur Lecomte has affronted, he is recognized as Jewish either because of his appearance, his name, or both: 'get out of my house right now - and take your young Hebrew friend with you'.²⁷

In *Wonder Boys*, the issue of a Jewish identity that can be concealed or revealed is explored through several characters. The main protagonist and narrator is Grady Tripp, a novelist and creative writing teacher who is estranged from his Jewish wife and having an affair with the Chancellor of the college, Sara Gaskell. Sara, whose mother 'was a sad, strong, undemonstrative Polish lady', had married the head of the English Department because she was attracted to 'his genteel manners, his Dartmouth education, his knowledge of sailboats'.²⁸ Tripp recalls that his father, who suffered from post-traumatic stress because of his military experience, murdered one of the few Jews in the area in which he was raised in an incident complicated by mistaken identity, before committing suicide (*Wonder Boys*, p.206 and p.45). This causes Tripp to ruminate about whether he married into the Warshaw family because he

²⁷ Michael Chabon, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* (London: Sceptre, 2007), p.65.

²⁸ Michael Chabon, *Wonder Boys* (London: Fourth Estate, 1995), p.38 and p.39.

was attracted to the idea of a close family, or as a compulsion towards making up for his father's transgressions (*Wonder Boys*, p.129 and p.206). This may be an inversion of Chabon's own experience, based on his comments concerning his own first marriage, in which he acknowledged his attraction to the WASP world of his in-laws:

They were in many ways classic WASPs, to be sure, golfing, khaki-wearing, gin-drinking WASPSs. The appeal of such people and their kind of world to a young man such as I was has been well documented in film and literature; perhaps enough to seem by now a bit outdated. (*Manhood for Amateurs*, p.90)

Issues of identity being a fixed or concrete entity are complicated throughout this novel in a number of ways. On a number of occasions, I noticed that characters recognized others specifically in terms of whether or not they were considered a hyphenated American (*Wonder Boys*, p.98, p.99 and p.111). Tripp attends Passover at the Warshaw home with his student, James Leer, and the reader learns that several family members, including Tripp's wife, are ethnically Korean and adopted into the Jewish faith (*Wonder Boys*, p.129 and p.165). The idea of a strong Jewish tradition is then satirized as none of the family members are particularly clued-up on the rituals and accoutrements associated with Passover (*Wonder Boys*, pp.214-15). Following this, it is revealed that James Leer, who 'acts out' and lies compulsively a number of times, is hiding his own Jewish ethnicity (*Wonder Boys*, pp.281-82). The structure of this narrative, which continually asserts and undermines ethnic identity, is reinforced by the many metafictional asides through which Chabon draws the reader's attention to the fictional nature of the story and to the fact that literary storytelling is inherently bound up with deception (*Wonder Boys*, p.93 and pp.233-34).

Elsewhere in Chabon's fiction, Jewish history, trauma and related dis/simulation are central. In *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, Chabon imagines an alternative history in which the Jews who fled Europe formed a small nation in Sitka, North America (instead of Israel). They now face a process whereby the land reverts back to the jurisdiction of the United States. What

this means, is that Jews once again have to look elsewhere for admission amid reluctance to accept refugees.²⁹ Thus characters whose parents, for instance, were originally refugees from Lodz, and who reportedly built escape tunnels based on those in the Warsaw ghetto, are confronted with a similar scenario to that faced by European Jews during the early stages of the Holocaust (*Yiddish Policemen's Union*, p.26 and p.22). This novel also reflects a preoccupation with appearances and sincerity. This can be seen in episodes in which a woman hides her face with a veil (so that the detective Landsman cannot read her face), and in which a man disguises as a woman to avoid the retaliation of a group of strictly religious Jews (*Yiddish Policemen's Union*, p.208 and p.225).

In *The Final Solution*, an aging Sherlock Holmes assists in solving a murder case that involves a Jewish boy rescued from Europe, who is either unwilling, or too traumatized by his experience of the Holocaust, to speak.³⁰ This is another example of a post-traumatic withdrawal and an indication that Chabon has thought (and quite possibly read) about the effects of Holocaust trauma in some detail. The novel that reflects the themes and concerns of this thesis in greatest detail is, however, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*. This novel revolves around two protagonists, the first of which is Josef Kavalier. Kavalier escapes Prague in 1939, disguised as The Golem of Prague, inside a coffin. For the rest of this epic narrative, Kavalier re-enacts episodes of disguise, concealment and escape, consistent with post-traumatic symptoms that I have discussed throughout this thesis. A Kosinskian protagonist, his aggressive actions towards revenge for the eventual deaths of his immediate family members occur successfully only when he is disguised, for instance, as the fictional

²⁹ Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), p.19, p.29 and p.54.

³⁰ Michael Chabon, *The Final Solution: A Story of Detection* (New York: Fourth Estate, 2004).

comic book hero 'Tom Mayflower'.³¹ Kavalier's actions here are particularly similar to those of Roth's 'Swede' Levov and Ira Ringold, who both act boldly as American 'archetypes'.

Kavalier also works as an illusionist, as part of an unsuccessful scheme to raise money to smuggle children out of Europe. After becoming lost in a military engagement (the sole purpose of which was to wreak revenge upon the Nazis), he begins a shadow life, concealing himself within the Empire State Building and wearing false beards and moustaches (*Kavalier and Clay*, p.570).³² Watching his former partner Rosa raise his child with his cousin, Kavalier remains on the periphery of his own former life before his dramatic return at the novel's conclusion, and is actually compared to Hawthorne's Wakefield (*Kavalier and Clay*, p.578). Clearly, Chabon has closely considered the psychological effects of severe trauma and the ways in which this can be re-enacted in later life, in his skilful portrayal of this character. Kavalier's actions are placed alongside the concept of 'survivor's guilt', and he is shown, even when he reattaches himself to his former life, to always be making contingency plans in anticipation of further traumatic upheaval (*Kavalier and Clay*, p.562 and pp.592-93).

The second protagonist, Sammy Clay, is Kavalier's cousin and his partner in the production of comic books. It was at Clay's home in Brooklyn that Kavalier sought refuge when he escaped Prague. Clay's story resonates with aspects of Kavalier's, in ways that reinforce the observations that I have been making about different kinds of strategic and post-traumatic dis/simulation. This shows that these issues are still relevant to a novelist of Chabon's age (Chabon was born in 1963). When he enters the comic book industry, Clay changes his name from Klayman because Clay sounds more 'professional' (*Kavalier and Clay*, p.71). The story that dominates Clay's half of the narrative, is of him being coerced into feeling the need to

³¹ Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (London: Harper, 2000), p.204.

³² Chabon has related his interest in concealment and confined spaces to a traumatic incident from his own childhood, that involved being trapped in a house that was flooding (*Manhood for Amateurs*, pp.205-10). The continued fascination in Chabon's writing does, however, seem clearly connected to the motifs of dis/simulation in Jewish-American fiction that I have uncovered in this thesis.

conceal his homosexuality, because of violent and exploitative actions carried out by agents of law-enforcement. When Kavalier disappears, Clay enters into a sham marriage with Kavalier's former partner, who has renamed herself Rosa Saxon (rather than Saks, her original Jewish name), and named her son Thomas Edison Clay. This comes after Clay speculates that Clark Kent must be Jewish because 'only a Jew would pick a name like that for himself' (*Kavalier and Clay*, p.585). When Sammy is finally denounced as a homosexual at a court hearing, he decides to leave for Los Angeles, where he believes he will be able to live without 'the need for stealth and concealment' (*Kavalier and Clay*, p.620). In these examples it can be seen that Sammy Clay dis/simulates for reasons related to traumatic experience, but that he had already acted in this way based on a strategic response to his Jewish identity in early-twentieth-century America.

Unlike Chabon, Jonathan Lethem and Jonathan Safran Foer both represent worlds in which strategic dis/simulation does not occur on the basis of appearances or names, and in which the characters are consistently and casually described as Jewish. For instance, in Lethem's *Chronic City: A Novel*, almost all of the protagonists are Jews from the Upper-East Side, although there is never any obvious anxiety relating to this.³³ In *The Fortress of Solitude: A Novel*, the protagonist, Dylan's, Jewish identity is subdued within the narrative until the closing stages, when his girlfriend challenges his previous assertion (that the reader is unaware of) that being Jewish is 'the least defining thing about you'.³⁴

Safran Foer's first novel, *Everything is Illuminated*, tells the story of a narrator who is obviously the novelist's alter-ego, 'Jonathan', on his journey to Eastern-Europe to learn his family history.³⁵ Combining elements that resemble Lanzmann's, Kosinski's and Baron

³³ Jonathan Lethem, *Chronic City: A Novel* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).

³⁴ Jonathan Lethem, *The Fortress of Solitude: A Novel* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), p.460.

³⁵ Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

Cohen's treatment of East-European peasantry and an obvious knowledge of testimony, Safran Foer presents a narrative that openly engages with Jewish-American links to the Holocaust and European anti-Semitism. Safran Foer may even run the risk of being accused of profanity in relation to testimony, when, for instance, he details the comical sexual conquests of one character by giving the standard first name and initial used in testimonies ('Golda R', 'Leah H'), in a narrative that clearly alludes to other examples in which victims of atrocity testify (*Everything is Illuminated*, p.194).

There is no dis/simulation in these novels on the basis of strategically changing identity or avoiding representing Jews. There are, however, a number of behaviours represented by these novelists that echo those found in the fiction of Salinger, Kosinski, Auster and Roth. In Lethem's *The Fortress of Solitude*, Dylan's father is an artistic recluse who is compared to Melville's Bartleby and ascetically produces art without any intention of exhibiting it (*Fortress of Solitude*, p.340 and p.433). In *You Don't Love Me Yet*, Lethem presents a world in which characters conceal their true motivations and/or identities for no reason that is clearly revealed.³⁶ This will remind some readers of Auster's fiction that I discussed in the previous chapter. In *As She Climbed Across the Table*, a novel that ostensibly focusses on characters who are insular and obsessive scientists, Philip Engstrand 'acts out' whilst in distress, compulsively giving himself the false identity 'Dale Overling' in a bar for no obvious reason.³⁷

In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Safran Foer presents the story of Oskar Schell, a young boy struggling to come to terms with his father's death in one of the Twin Towers on 9/11.³⁸ His grandfather, meanwhile, is living a subterranean existence similar to that of Josef

³⁶ Jonathan Lethem, *You Don't Love Me Yet* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

³⁷ Jonathan Lethem, *As She Climbed Across the Table* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p.61.

³⁸ Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

Kavalier, having failed to recover from the trauma of Dresden. Thomas Schell Sr. hides in closets, watches his own life from the outside, and is in turn followed and watched by his wife (this would remind some readers of Benjamin Sachs and Maria Turner in *Leviathan*). Even during his attempt at ‘normal’, married life, he insists on ‘nothing spaces’ in his home, where he can ‘disappear’ (*Extremely Loud*, p.110).

The experience of Oskar as an ‘American’ victim is not elaborated upon in terms of connection to a specific ethnic group. His grandfather’s experience as a ‘German’ victim is, however, complicated by his connection to victims of the Holocaust (*Extremely Loud*, p.215). Kristiaan Versluys assumed that Thomas Schell Sr. was German - not Jewish - and that in this novel Safran Foer, a Jewish-American novelist, ‘takes the side of victims, irrespective of their national origin or allegiance’ (*Out of the Blue*, p.82). John Updike declared that Oskar’s family were:

not Jewish, since they were moving about freely in Dresden at the time of the Allied incendiary raid of February, 1945, and, indeed, his grandmother’s family was hiding a Jew.³⁹

I believe that these assumptions are hasty. There were, in fact, some Jews in Dresden on the night of 13 February 1945. They had been ordered to report for deportation three days later. As one Jewish survivor of Dresden recalled, ‘whoever of the [Jews] was spared by this night was delivered, for in the general chaos he could escape the Gestapo’.⁴⁰ In the film version of *Extremely*, the Schell family were, in the assumptions of several reviewers, Jewish.⁴¹ When interviewed about the novel, Safran Foer did not see fit to challenge Robert Birnbaum’s

³⁹ John Updike, ‘Mixed Messages: *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*’, *The New Yorker*, 14 March 2005 <http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/03/14/050314crbo_books1> [accessed 13 September 2012].

⁴⁰ Martin Chalmers, ‘Introduction’, in Leo Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness - The Diaries 1933-1941*, trans. by Martin Chalmers (London: Phoenix, 1999), p.xi. Chalmers was alluding to the 198 ‘registered Jews’ and stated that all of these had non-Jewish wives or husbands, but made no allusion to the established fact that throughout the Holocaust there were hidden Jews in every European country (*Ibid.*).

⁴¹ *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Dir. Stephen Daldry. Paramount Pictures and Warner Brothers. 2012. I did not notice any overt mention of a Jewish identity. I asked around the peer-group with whom I saw the film, some of whom were American, and some had assumed that Thomas Schell Jr. was Jewish because of the appearance and dress of Tom Hanks in that role, and because of Schell Jr.’s profession as a New York jeweller.

description of Oskar as ‘ostensibly nine years old, Jewish, a New Yorker set in post-2001 America’.⁴² Safran Foer went on to side-step Birnbaum’s questions about Updike’s review, stating that Updike was ‘not the right reader for the book’ (Birnbaum, ‘Jonathan Safran Foer’).

This speculation concerning the background of the Schell family is, in itself, relevant to this thesis. One reader makes an assumption concerning ethnic background and another reader makes a different assumption. Safran Foer is a Jewish novelist with familial connections to the Holocaust. Bearing this in mind, the ways in which Thomas Schell Sr.’s post-traumatic symptoms are different to Oskar’s are also relevant to this thesis. Oskar’s symptoms of continued fear of public transport and hyper-vigilance can be related directly to the terrorist attacks that took his father’s life. His grandfather’s post-traumatic repetitions of dis/simulation are more similar to those manifested by Salinger and Kosinski (and their protagonists). This may demonstrate that for the Jewish victim of trauma, no event, Dresden and 9/11 included, over-rides the possibility that one can be persecuted or harmed specifically as a Jew. In any case, in none of the readings that I have encountered is Safran Foer’s choice of ‘trauma symptoms’, for a character ostensibly traumatized by Dresden, something that is related to a Jewish identity.

Lethem and Safran Foer also have a shared interest in characters who appear to have autistic spectrum disorders. This is, to borrow a phrase used in a previous chapter, a ‘fine vehicle for passing’. In recent years there has been increased debate about this range of disorders, which includes Asperger’s syndrome, due to increased diagnoses and what Stuart Murray described

⁴² Robert Birnbaum, ‘Jonathan Safran Foer’, *The Morning News*, 19 April 2005 <<http://www.themorningnews.org/article/birnbaum-v.-jonathan-safran-foer>> [accessed 13 September 2012].

as an autism ‘epidemic’.⁴³ These disorders are contested by experts and, in particular, by parents of children who are affected. Some argue that the condition has a neurobiological or organic basis, whilst others see it as either socially constructed or as a result of familial influences. Niall Ferguson claimed that:

You may not yet have heard of Asperger's syndrome. But you can be sure that someone will sooner or later offer it to you as an excuse for his own bad behaviour, for it is the height of hypochondriac fashion in New York.⁴⁴

Symptoms of autistic spectrum disorders that are relevant to this thesis include an inability and/or unwillingness to imagine or even care what another person is thinking, and a tendency to be seen as self-referential or reclusive.⁴⁵ William Stillman stated that ‘autism’ describes ‘individuals who appear to be in their own little world, an inner realm seemingly set apart from others’.⁴⁶ In these respects, Ferguson was correct to point out that such disorders as those in the autistic spectrum may present a fashionable excuse for aberrant, deviant and/or inconsiderate behaviour, as well as self-absorption. Murray, who also cited Ferguson, devoted a considerable proportion of his argument to the issue of whether or not the sufferer has a choice in terms of how s/he behaves towards or in front of others.⁴⁷ Citing David Lodge’s *Thinks* Murray asserted that the inability of the protagonist, Oliver, to tell anything but the truth, is ‘stereotypical’ (*Representing Autism*, p.46).

⁴³ Stuart Murray, *Representing Autism: Culture, Narrative, Fascination* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p.6. Murray also pointed out that some have claimed that autism is a side-effect of vaccinations such as MMR or others that contain mercury (*Representing Autism*, p.10).

⁴⁴ Niall Ferguson, ‘America has got Asperger’s Syndrome’, *Telegraph*, 25 May 2004 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2004/05/25/do2502.xml>> [accessed 30 July 2012].

⁴⁵ Julie Brown, *Writers on the Spectrum: How Autism and Asperger Syndrome have Influenced Literary Writing* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010), pp.18-19. As the title suggests, Brown here discussed the presence of autistic spectrum disorders among literary artists or those with otherwise creative temperaments.

⁴⁶ William Stillman, *The Autism Answer Book* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Inc, 2007), p.2.

⁴⁷ Discussing the ‘articulacy’ of Amanda Baggs, an American autism rights advocate, Murray questioned whether she makes claims for ‘the viability of her life without having to perform disability for those who expect it to come in a certain package’ (*Representing Autism*, p.44).

The reader will, of course, have noticed that the symptoms upon which I have chosen to focus bear some resemblance to trauma symptoms discussed throughout this thesis. Murray cited Leo Kanner, a child psychiatrist, discussing autism in similar terms:

He felt that the children did not retreat or depart from relationships into the self but rather exhibited ‘from the start an *extreme autistic aloneness* that, whenever possible, disregards, ignores, shuts out anything that comes to the child from the outside. [italics in original] (*Representing Autism*, pp.29-30)

Murray used similar, overlapping terms (that could apply equally to autism and PTSD) in his analysis of the film *House of Cards*, in which Sally ‘returns from her autism’ when her traumatized mother expresses an ‘appropriate degree of love and understanding’ (*Representing Autism*, p.130). Whilst Murray stated that autism has a ‘clear status as a neurological impairment’, he also had to acknowledge that ‘filmic narratives like those discussed here are contributors to a *cultural* construction of such a category’ [italics in original] (*Representing Autism*, p.129).

Here, the issue of whether behaviour is definitively symptomatic of one condition or another, once again raises its head. Stillman, commenting on the ways in which mood disorders, PTSD and autism overlap, made the case that autistic people often have other conditions but that these are often overlooked and misunderstood as symptoms of autism.⁴⁸ Nick Dubin argued that contrary to popular misconceptions, people with Asperger’s syndrome do care what other people think of them, and develop acute anxiety that leads to withdrawal because of what they perceive as ‘social failure’.⁴⁹ In a similar vein, Tony Atwood explained that as is often the case with neurotypical children, suffering social alienation leads to ‘increased social withdrawal’ and ‘escape into imagination’ as a ‘constructive internalization of thoughts and

⁴⁸ William Stillman, *Demystifying the Autism Experience: A Humanistic Introduction for Parents, Caregivers and Educators* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003), p.101.

⁴⁹ Nick Dubin, *Asperger Syndrome and Anxiety: A Guide to Successful Stress Management* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009), p.51.

feelings of being socially defective' in children with Asperger's syndrome.⁵⁰ I will return to the issue of trauma symptoms and symptoms of autistic spectrum disorder overlapping shortly, when I once again address *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.

In *My Name is Khan*, trauma and dis/simulation interact with a representation of Asperger's syndrome that is schematically placed within the context of post-9/11 American ideologies.⁵¹ The narrative is told through a series of analepses and prolepses, mirroring post-traumatic narratives that I have discussed throughout this thesis. The protagonist, Rizwan Khan, begins life as a talented but different Muslim boy in Mumbai, who becomes distressed at the peripheral presence of religious clashes in his community. Following his move to San Francisco and his diagnosis (his sister-in-law, Hasina, diagnoses him with Asperger's syndrome) Khan falls in love with a Hindu hairdresser, Mandira, whom he marries over the protests of his brother, Zakir. Zakir states that it is 'blasphemy' for a Muslim to marry a Hindu and that he will not allow them into his home. Mandira and her son Sameer take Khan's name, something that becomes pivotal, as Sameer is killed by other schoolboys in a racially motivated attack inspired by post-9/11 Islamophobia.

Mandira had earlier changed the sign above her shop to 'Mandira Khan' and suffered a loss of takings as a result. At a prayer vigil for the victims of 9/11, Khan wears traditional Muslim dress and chants a prayer from the Koran. Other attendees move away from him, motivated by a combination of mistrust and disgust. Khan ordinarily dresses as a 'typical' American, wearing Reebok trainers and plain clothes, but at certain points of the narrative insists on openly confirming that he is a Muslim and praying in public, even when this jeopardizes his own safety. This is based on his staunch insistence on the correctness of his mother's opinion that religion and caste are unimportant, and that there are only 'good' people and 'bad'

⁵⁰ Tony Atwood, *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006), p.24.

⁵¹ *My Name is Khan*. Dir. Karan Johar. Fox Searchlight Pictures. 2010.

people. After a friend of the Khans is killed in Afghanistan, his wife and son turn against them, and this leads to a school soccer field incident in which Sameer is killed.

Mandira responds by rejecting Khan and any connection to a Muslim identity. She feels that changing her name to Khan has caused the death of her son and cries 'it does make a difference'. Mandira tells Khan to tell the people of America, and the president, that he is not a terrorist. Incapable of dis/simulation and unable to interpret sarcasm, Khan does just that - approaches President Bush and makes that statement: 'My name is Khan and I am not a terrorist'. He is arrested when his words are misinterpreted, but eventually his actions are understood and he becomes a figure of hope for the new Obama regime, while Mandira takes him back.

Throughout the narrative, visual differences are foregrounded and deconstructed. Khan is mistaken for a 'Ghandian Indian' by a motel owner, whose premises are targeted in anti-Muslim attacks. He tells Khan that he will have to put up a sign reading 'no Muslims allowed'. Hasina is attacked and told 'get out of my country' because of her headdress. Zakir tells her 'don't wear this now, Allah will understand'. At the end of the film, in which there are many more episodes of assumed and mistaken ethnic/religious identity, Hasina is inspired by Khan's 'integrity' and reasserts her identity through the headdress. Khan's 'integrity', however, is seen largely as a symptom of his condition. Nonetheless, his assertion that people should not dis/simulate if they have done nothing wrong carries the moral message of the film, and is seen to be a 'winning' mentality.

Khan articulates a kind of wisdom concerning basic human truths, in addition to his capacity for understanding and mending technology. In these respects, he is the type of 'savant' that, in Murray's view, replaces the nineteenth-century 'idiot' to become an 'effective narrative tool' because the 'events of history are held up for examination precisely because of the

prism of difference a savant subjectivity is seen to provide' (*Representing Autism*, p.98). This 'examination', however, is conducted through the representation of a fictional, disabled character who is unable to dis/simulate.

Safran Foer's protagonists, Oskar and Alex, are (regardless of their 'diagnoses') unable and/or unwilling to dis/simulate, each presenting as hyperactive and at odds with those around them in terms of social convention and etiquette. This is matched by Safran Foer's own writing style, for instance in his letters to Paul Auster, which I viewed at the Berg Collection. Safran Foer's correspondence style is similar to that of his protagonists, in that it is gushing, associative, disorganized and, at times, incongruous with content and intended recipient. Safran Foer has acknowledged that he has read the work of Temple Grandin, an autistic author and advocate (Birnbaum, 'Jonathan Safran Foer'). Oskar Schell fits, up to a point, with Murray's thoughts on autistic 'savantism', as at the age of nine he is writing to and receiving replies from Stephen Hawking (*Extremely Loud*, pp.304-05). In the recent film version of *Extremely Loud*, it is added to the narrative that Oskar was tested for Asperger's syndrome but not diagnosed with it. From this example one could surmise that the producers wanted to concentrate on representations of trauma rather than an 'autistic' protagonist.

In *The Fortress of Solitude*, Lethem mentions an artist's 'autistic micro-detail' alongside his own father's apparent symptoms of excessive inwardness and single-minded focus (*Fortress*, p.255). Murray commented on the on-going perception of autism as a 'kind of "fortress", or state of siege' (*Representing Autism*, p.175). I have read many reviews of *Fortress*, and not seen any that comment on the father's excessive inwardness and asceticism as the 'fortress' alluded to in the book's title. In *Chronic City*, Chase Insteadman finds it odd that his friend Perkus Tooth claims that rock critics 'have Asperger's Syndrome' (*Chronic City*, p.15). At the conclusion, Chase learns (although the reader is led to believe that he already suspects)

that being ‘on the spectrum’ runs in Tooth’s Family (*Chronic City*, 460). Oona Laszlo had earlier described her social ineptness in the following terms: ‘I’m one of those subtext-on-the-outside people’ (*Chronic City*, p.46).

In *Motherless Brooklyn*, the protagonist Lionel Essrog, a Jewish child who grew up in a care home in which the other residents were Italian Americans, suffers from Tourette’s syndrome. This condition is characterized by involuntary and compulsive ‘tics’, such as blurting out inappropriate comments that are sometimes seen as private thoughts that have ‘slipped out’. Thus Tourette’s sufferers sometimes suffer from social alienation, although increased public awareness of the disorder means that sufferers are perceived by those less sympathetic as ‘getting away’ with more than other people. The observations that I have made above in relation to autism and Asperger’s syndrome apply to this character, as once again a Jewish-American novelist has created a character who cannot dis/simulate, although this is purely symptomatic of a condition that is foregrounded and inescapable. Lionel himself speculates on the reactions that Tourette’s draws from other people and, like Alma Grund in *The Book of Illusions* (with her birthmark), reasons that it allows one to interpret a person’s inclinations in terms of ‘what people will ignore and forget’.⁵²

It is interesting to note that these two Jewish authors, who represent Jewish characters and themes without representing the need or motivation to strategically dis/simulate, each represent similar traumatic dis/simulation to the authors discussed in the main chapters. It is equally interesting to note that each shows an interest in Jewish characters with conditions that mean that they cannot and will not dis/simulate strategically. In doing so, Lethem and Safran Foer have, like the writers of *My Name is Khan*, presented potentially controversial American outsiders whose actions are circumscribed in such a way that they cannot be

⁵² Jonathan Lethem, *Motherless Brooklyn* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p.43.

described as 'strategic'. This in itself provides a vehicle for 'dis/simulation', a situation in which a character's actions can be presented and at the same time explained as symptomatic of a spectrum of disorders that affects all ethnic groups. In the light of what I have written, it may be that other academics will write on the topic of characters with autistic spectrum disorders being used as a strategic tool in fictional narratives in the future.

It has been argued that dis/simulation exists as an aspect of Jewish-American literature. For this to be this case, the same must be true of Jewish-American life. Over sixty years have passed since the Holocaust, and America continues to promote the myth that an essential pluralism defines it as a nation and a society. Nonetheless, different levels of concern over identity continue to be a factor in Jewish-American life and literature, and are the cause of strategic dis/simulation. Others may assert that such narrow questions concerning identity do not apply to them, although as has been seen throughout this thesis, certain anxieties that are post-traumatic are seen to appear in subliminal or unconscious forms in fictional narratives. These seem to indicate that the traumatic need to disguise identity, in such an extreme historical situation as the Holocaust, has not yet been fully 'worked through' in Jewish-American literature.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the human trait of dis/simulation has a particular relevance to the work of Jewish-American authors. This is particularly the case with examples in which post-traumatic behaviours such as 'repetition' and 'acting out' are represented. In this conclusion, I have speculated upon the ways in which researchers interested in different areas of fiction and/or testimony could apply the principal theoretical framework that I have relied upon for my analyses. This new framework provides many possibilities, some of which I have alluded to, albeit briefly. I intend to pursue some of these research angles in greater detail in the future. It was my intention throughout this thesis to

stimulate renewed interest in the areas of criticism addressed. It was also my intention to provoke debate. Perhaps some of the critics with whose work this thesis has interacted will be drawn into such a debate triggered by my theoretical framework.

Appendix:

Paul Auster interview - Audio Transcription.

This interview was conducted at Auster's home in Park Slope on 4 August 2011 on a humid day. Auster was a gracious host having agreed to the interview primarily to help me with my PhD at short notice. We sat in his study and either side of the interview he told me about his acquaintances with Philip Roth and Jerzy Kosinski, as well as small talk about the weather, my first visit to New York and Auster's interest in Wales. At one point Auster's wife, the novelist Siri Hustvedt, arrived home from an art exhibition and came in to shake my hand and say 'hi'.

NR: I read an article about you on the internet and you were asked about the subject of Judaism, and you explained that this was not very relevant to you personally, you know, you are not an observant Jewish person; you're not very connected to the idea of being Jewish in the religion or in the faith...

PA: Right...

NR: But obviously Jewish identity is a lot more complicated than that - just for one example, you can be a victim of anti-Semitism because of name, birthplace or parents, whatever,

PA: yes...

NR: And I wanted to ask you how Jewish you feel in a secular sense as a person or a writer.

PA: I feel very connected to the entire history of the Jews, the culture of the Jews; this is what I come out of. And I think, as a Jew one automatically feels oneself to be an outsider, which is I think, a good position for a writer, you know? I'm here, I'm of this place, and yet not of it at the same time. I write in English just from a fluke of history, you know, because

my Grandparents came here from Eastern Europe. There is nevertheless quite a bit of Jewish thought that I'm attached to, and I think it's had a lot of meaning for me in my life, not so much as you say religious observance, but certain fundamental ideas that the Jews invented I guess for humanity. The idea of justice and the idea that if there is justice it has to be a justice for everybody. Not just for the Jews, for everybody. That's why I'm so attached to the Book of Jonah which is essentially about that. And you wonder why, this story, which is essentially a comic story, and it's the only book of the Bible written about a prophet that is written in the third person. Interestingly, it is also the shortest, and then you wonder why it is read on Yom Kippur which is the most holy day on the Jewish calendar, and I think it's because of that message - that there has to be justice for everybody. The idea that, you know, the Jews invented the Sabbath. It seems like nothing to us now, we are so used to this idea. But you know, that meant that there was a Sabbath even for slaves. It was somehow acknowledging the humanity of other people, I think. You know, this is a similar idea. And the other thing that interests me about Judaism as opposed to Christianity, of course they are very, very close, but it always seemed to me that to be a good Christian would require you to become a saint. I mean if you really believe in it, really take it seriously and you know, the most common description of Christianity, you know, the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Do you know how difficult that is? It's nearly impossible, that is to say, you never can feel envy, you can never feel anger, you can never feel hatred. Whereas the Jewish formulation is the opposite and I think it is much more bearable: don't do unto others what you don't want them to do unto you - there is a world of difference. It's a much more live-and-let-live idea, you know? I'm not going to cheat you because I don't want you to cheat me - that kind of thing. Anyway, so yes, I'm very attached to it all and at the same time, as a third-generation assimilated Jew in the United States, even though I do have that

outsider feeling, I nevertheless have many other preoccupations besides being a Jew, and I've tended to write about those other things in my novels.

NR: But nonetheless, your work has a lot of references to Jewish history, Jewish authors, the Holocaust, depictions of anti-Semitism in autobiographical pieces and I find it unusual in many ways that, you know, people read your work don't pull out those themes very much. We were talking earlier about Philip Roth. Philip Roth is described as 'Jew-obsessed', but he obviously had a different upbringing to you...

PA: Yes...

NR: But nonetheless, his work is all about Jews...

PA: Yes, but you see, he's the previous generation, you see Malamud, Bellow, Roth, they're all from the earlier second-generation group and the toe-hold that the Jews had in American society was much more tenuous when they were growing up. I mean Philip was born in the early thirties for goodness sakes, so a long time ago now. I know the territory, I know where he grew up. Right next door to Newark is a town called Irvington, which is a crummy little town, and it was filled with Germans, and they had the German Bund there in the thirties, you know, they would march around in Nazi uniforms. So it was all very close, this anti-Semitism, plus the terrible quotas that were in place then - you know, medical schools, the colleges, the law schools, they would just admit 'x' number of Jews - a mere fraction; restricted country clubs, restricted this, restricted that. See, I didn't grow up with that.

NR: So you didn't get that sense of gentlemen's agreements as they would have?

PA: No, they were in much harsher times for Jews, here in North America. And yet, then you have this new generation like Jonathan Safran-Foer, is obsessed with Judaism, but he comes from a very religious family.

NR: And also a family which contains some survivors I think?

PA: Yes.

NR: Have you contributed to any specifically Jewish or Jewish-American writing projects?

PA: There was something that happened a number of years ago at Princeton University. It was some kind of book collector who had amassed a large library of first editions of Jewish-American authors. Somehow I got into this exhibition, I remember going to a dinner, that's where I met Arthur Miller. I sat next to Arthur Miller at the dinner and it was very nice to meet him. It was maybe two or three years before he died. But no, I haven't really contributed to any of these things. I don't like labels on writers, and even Roth himself - he refused to be in this, I remember, he is very adamant about this; 'I am not a Jewish writer, I am an American writer', and I feel that way too. I get sick about, you know, 'women writers', I mean, 'black writers', it gets tiresome after a while - there is a ghettoization of...

NR: It must get tiresome, but in some respects it's inescapable...

PA: It doesn't have to be, it's just that people think in these rigid categories and it's boring, it's just boring.

NR: I think categories can be very rigid especially if one person's work only ever gets considered in one category.

PA: Yeah

NR: I still think it's interesting to relate, for example, your work to other writers in a tradition.

PA: Sure, sure, but then I'm thinking about gay writers too, you know this is a whole other new sub-category. There's a great book that I recommend highly. It is called *I Remember* by

Joe Brainard, have you ever heard of him? Joe Brainard was an artist, a visual artist but he also wrote a bit and his writing is extraordinary. He died of AIDS in the early 90's at the age of about fifty, and when he was in his late twenties, early thirties, he wrote this book called *I Remember* which is going to be, I am happy to report, in the Library of America next spring. I wrote the preface for it and it is a book I have championed for years and I just want to show you this...it's one of the editions. Alright, so this is *I Remember*, look - 'Memoir, Gay Studies' - you know, it's sickening. So this book was only put in the Gay section when it's really one of the great works of American writing. Every sentence, every bit starts 'I remember'. Well, he does recount some gay experiences and his sexual life. It is infuriating, that we have Library of America doing this.

NR: I wanted to ask you, since 9/11 you've been quite vocal about American politics, I would say, having read your comments in newspapers, radio etc. For example in your comments about George Bush and the Bush administration in general, but I've never heard you make a public comment about anything connected to Israel. Is this something you are interested in? Do you feel any loyalty or otherwise....

PA: I've talked about Israel a lot, but in Israel...

NR: Oh, I see...

PA: I've only been there twice and we were there a year ago in May of 2010. Siri and I went together for a literary festival. And in 97 I was there for almost a month. I was invited by the mayor of Jerusalem, a wonderful person, to stay at the arts centre. It's a great place where they put up writers, composers and painters. So it was an invitation and we took it. You know I talk to the press openly. It was about fourteen months after the Rabin assassination in 97. Everything was falling to pieces, Netanyahu had become Prime Minister, and I remember I

did an interview with an Israeli paper in which I called Netanyahu 'stupid and evil'. Boy, did the right-wing have it in for me while I was there. It was very interesting. But I stood my ground, I stand by my statements. And this last time, how interesting it was to do interviews there. Israel is the only country in the world where they have no interest in what's going on anywhere else; you know? If one, as a writer, travels to Spain or France or Italy the journals would say 'well what is going on in America?'. They want to know. The Israelis would say 'what do you think of Israel, give us your comments on Israel' - they are only interested in America in so far as it relates to Israel. I remember doing a TV interview there and having to defend Obama and say 'look he is not anti-Israel, his policies are the only sane ones, and if Israel continues its occupation of the West Bank, you are committing suicide. He wants the settlements to stop'. You know, very simple, basic stuff. So whenever anyone asks me about it I tell them, if I have put myself in a position to do an interview.

NR: Another thing I wanted to ask you about was mental health and alternative mental states. I was reading a very early review of *City of Glass* and the reviewer suggested that you wrote about depression and mania so convincingly that the reader would believe you had actually experienced this personally, so the question is, would you say that you had?

PA: I don't read reviews of my books, but even back then, when I did, I don't remember this, is it British or American or somebody else?

NR: I don't remember. It's in your papers at the Berg Collection.

PA: I see, ok, well, no. I have not had mental health issues at all, I have never been to a shrink, I have never had a nervous breakdown, never been into hospital. No, I am fine. It's just that I have been surrounded by madness all my life. My sister is schizophrenic,

undoubtedly my Grandmother was insane (my father's mother), and so it's not unfamiliar to me - what people go through.

NR: It's interesting to me, the way you gauged your answer there: that you hadn't had to receive medical attention for anything, and obviously there is a difference between people having 'ups and downs' and people having a medical condition right?

PA: Right...

NR: Which one of your autobiographical based pieces was it where you talked about a prolonged spell of anxiety, when you were living hand to mouth and things were getting on top of you a lot?

PA: It's not as though I'm smiling all the time, I go through, you know, dark periods. But I wouldn't qualify it as clinical depression, just being very low, very dark moods. This sense of hopelessness I think engulfs every healthy person. I mean if you don't have those dark periods, I don't see how you can even consider yourself human. Life is difficult. But that is a far cry from being ill, which it sounds like that reviewer was talking about.

NR: Yes, that was what the reviewer was talking about, and obviously you have alluded to the fact that you know what mental illness is, from experience, from contact with other people. I was reading a book recently by Kay Redfield Jamison called *Touched With Fire* and it is about Bipolar disorder and the artistic temperament. The book suggests that the majority of artists have to some degree a labile mood disorder that swings from one extreme to the other. The point is, the majority of people that have a susceptibility to that never actually become ill, they never actually need a doctor or anything like that.

PA: Yes, well maybe doing the art is what keeps us out of the hospital, I don't know...

NR: Some people think that being creative is therapeutic...

PA: Could be, could be. I have never felt that in any conscious way but it probably is. I've always felt that doing what I do is necessary to me, that I couldn't really live without doing it, but then, maybe I'm just being romantic about it. I doubt it, but it's possible.

NR: Obviously you know a lot of artists and creative writers. Does this ring true with you? Do you feel that in your experience as a group, you are more 'up and down' than the people that you know who are not artists?

PA: The funny thing is, I have known so many poets, novelists, painters, actors, directors, musicians. There are no rules - the personalities come in every stripe and there's no 'artistic' personality that I can generalize and say, 'well this is a type'. It's just not true. I know artists of whatever field who are very jovial people, and then they go home and they write very dark stuff. And I know other writers, for example, who are very shy and withdrawn and their work is essentially comic. I can't make any correlation between someone's personality and the work he or she produces.

NR: I think I remember that I read in one of your books that you found Kafka to be an essentially comic writer, is that right?

PA: Well there are very funny things in Kafka. I think maybe there's nobody funnier, but there's not only funny. I know that when Kafka would read out loud to his friends he would sometimes crack-up laughing and he couldn't stop, you know, wild fits of laughter. I think it was when he was reading *The Metamorphosis*. I mean it is so absurd, how can you not laugh? But it is a very dark story at the same time.

NR: Do you have a work pattern that is cyclical? For example, when you are getting the bulk of the work down you feel energized and industrious and that tails off whilst you are editing

it? And then, for example, you feel exhausted when the project ends or that you are at a loose end? And is that in any way connected to the seasons, have you ever noticed that's happened?

PA: I don't think it's connected to seasons. I think while I'm working on a book I feel happier, more energized even though I suffer a lot - there are tough days where I don't know what I'm doing. But then I think when the work ends I get kind of depressed when I'm finished with a project because I'm suddenly unemployed for one thing, I don't know what to do next so it takes me a while to figure out the next thing. I've always said to Siri: well, when I'm not working I'm just your everyday neurotic and when I'm working I'm a better, more complete person, I think.

NR: The other side of the coin in terms of mental health and mental states is trauma. I've noted, reading your novels over the years, that a lot of your protagonists seem to at some points in the novel endure a terrible trauma, endure unexpected grief and in some instances you start the novel that way - you introduce the person and the first thing you know about the character is that they've taken some terrible blow...

PA: Yes, yes...

NR: And as I've learnt, you don't read critics very often, but some of them have suggested that you have a morbid preoccupation with worse case scenarios and things going tragically wrong at the drop of a hat. Would you say in any way that that was a Jewish trait, a depressive trait or just that it's simply realistic?

PA: No, it's simply realistic - we do all get hit with body-blows in real life, and I think it's when we get hit we find out who we are. When things are going along reasonably well, you're not being tested and you don't really know who you are. It's when, as they say, the chips are down, your back is against the wall - then you find out what you're made of. And so

I am interested in exploring human beings in extreme situations, not necessarily physical danger, but some kind of emotional anguish or torment. And I think the death of loved ones is the most terrible thing that happens and it happens to everybody. It is absolutely fundamental to being a human being. At some point your parents are going to die and this is awful for everybody, and sometimes your siblings die prematurely from illness, accidents. Your friends, your wife, your husband. I mean these are the traumas of what I would call normal existence, and so I am interested in exploring that. I'm not what you would call a sociological writer, I'm not interested in the things that most novelists are concerned with. So I am starting always at a deeper spot, whether this is better or worse I'm not saying. It's just my way of doing things, this is what interests me. I'm not interested in your t-shirt very much, where a lot of people would be, 'Puma, why is he wearing that?' It's like sneakers, I don't know, but to me it's just an incidental.

NR: I wanted to ask you a question about coercion, or in the extreme event, terrorism. My favorite one of your novels or novellas is *Ghosts*. In that novel, Blue becomes the victim of an errant writer, and this writer imposes some sort of coercion upon him. Black seeks a way to teach him a lesson: 'the spirit of Walden'. But he doesn't do it through the democratic method of writing and publishing and hoping someone will read his book, he does it by stepping into reality and terrorizing poor Blue with an incomprehensible case, and actually forces his will upon this person. Obviously something very similar goes on in *Leviathan* as well. What I wanted to ask is, is this something you think about a lot - the effect or lack of effect that your work has on readers?

PA: One can't think about that. You hope that there are readers out there who will be with you every sentence of the book and understand what you are trying to do. A friend of ours said 'you know this novel is really a parable about reading a book' and in a sense he is right. I

thought it was a brilliant comment, and in a sense Black, who is also White, he wants to be observed. He doesn't want to be alone. The solitary nature of what he is doing is so crushing that he needs a witness. So I don't know if it's a situation of terrorizing him - he is being paid after all. And Blue is the one who gets agitated, Blue is the one who shakes things up. He gets frustrated, but Black really doesn't go after him.

NR: In all three of the books in the trilogy the protagonist is a young man and he goes on a bit of a journey and learns something about himself. These things could all be connected to, for example, a young writer learning the lessons of what it is to be a writer. For example, in *The Locked Room* the protagonist learns not to obsess about reader reception, to let the work go...

PA: Yeah...

NR: In *Ghosts* we learn the lesson not to impose a view, to simply write a story and let it speak for itself and I just wondered if that was something when you were a younger writer that bothered you more?

PA: Part of the trilogy, as it evolved, I mean I wrote it over a period of about three years from 81-84, so maybe three and a half years total because I was doing other things then too. The first book I could not find a publisher for; *City of Glass* was rejected by 17 publishers here, and that took about a year, year and a half of sitting around being rejected which is not a very enjoyable spot to be in, I can assure you. But it was also clarifying for me because I understood that whether I got published or not was not going to stop me from writing, so I was into the third book when I finally found the publisher for the three of them. And I think this whole story about Fanshawe is somehow a response to being rejected. And so this is the writer who doesn't want to be published. I flipped it in a way, because at a certain point I

thought 'well, I'm going to spend the rest of my life writing novels that no one is going to read and someday someone will open up the cabinet and find all these manuscripts, and that is going to be my fate'. But once I started getting published I stopped worrying about that aspect of the whole thing.

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