



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT

Israel as a Source for Identification in Postmodern Jewish American Literature

An analysis of Saul Bellow's *To Jerusalem and Back*
and Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock: A Confession*

Anna Jonas, B.A.

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 17.12.2012

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 343

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Betreuer:

Priv.-Doz. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt

Danksagung

Ich möchte mich bei all denjenigen bedanken, die mir in der Zeit der Entstehung meiner Diplomarbeit geholfen haben. Ganz besonders möchte ich mich bei meinen Eltern, Flo und Claudi bedanken. Es war eine intensive Zeit und ihr wart zu jedem Zeitpunkt sowohl emotional als auch fachlich für mich da und somit maßgeblich am Entstehungsprozess dieser Arbeit beteiligt.

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
1. Historical Background	15
1.1 The Jewish 'Experience' in the United States	15
1.2 Foundations of Jewish Existence	26
1.2.1 Zionism – Visions of a Jewish Homeland.....	26
1.2.2 Diaspora – Exile or Basis of Judaism?.....	32
1.2.3 Imagining Israel in Jewish American Literature.....	34
2. Saul Bellow's Quest for Identity in To Jerusalem and Back...	39
2.1 Bellow's Israel Skepticism.....	39
2.2 An Intertextual and Personal Approach to Israel	41
2.3 The Question of Anti-Zionist Sentiments in TJAB.....	43
2.4 The Fascination with Israel's 'Immediate Reality'	47
2.5 Bellow's Relinquishment of Binary Oppositions.....	53
2.6 Reconsidering Identity.....	54
2.7 The Palestinian 'Problem'	60
2.8 To Jerusalem and Back.....	64
3. Philip Roth's 'Operation Jewish Identity'	65
3.1 'Operation Jewish Identity' arriving in the Middle East	65
3.2 Metafiction, Metahistory, Multiple Narratives.....	67
3.3 Roth's Multiplicity of Voices.....	73
3.4 Operation (Jewish Identity).....	83
3.4.1 Freudian Doubles.....	87
3.4.2 Microcosmosis.....	88
3.4.3 The Dilemma of the (American) Diaspora Jew.....	89
3.4.4 Reconsidering Jewish 'authenticity'?.....	91
3.4.5 The Divisiveness of the Jew.....	92
3.5 Operation Shylock – A Confession?.....	96
4. Operation Jewish Identity – To Israel and Back	98
Conclusion	104
Bibliography	112

Introduction

What the present surge of Jewish-American literature on Israel tells us, in the most general sense, is that American Jews define themselves today by looking not only toward Eastern Europe and the Lower East side of New York – toward the dimming ‘world of our fathers’ [...] – but toward the West Bank, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and the Golan Heights as well. (Furman 4)

Jewish US American self-definition and the question of defining Jewish identity in general has always been one of the most dominant themes in Jewish US American literature. While the Jewish immigrant experience was the most dominant factor in shaping Jewish American identity at the beginning and until the middle of the 20th century (implicating such themes as alienation, marginalization and matters of assimilation), the question of what defines Jewish identity in the United States has become more complex in the second half of the 20th century. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and, accordingly, the Zionist realization of the foundation of a Jewish ‘homeland’¹, has arrived relatively late as a theme in Jewish American literature. Nevertheless it has ever since become all the more essential with regards to questions of Jewish American diaspora identity. With respect to the discussion of Jewish identity, contemporary Jewish American authors can no longer avoid debating the complex questions of the existence of a Jewish state and life in the American diaspora.

In this thesis I will argue that the existence of Israel has become a pressing issue for postmodern Jewish American authors, causing complex internal tensions, questions of identity and ambivalent approaches among those authors, with a tendency of mirroring a progressively more critical attitude towards the Jewish state and its policies in their writings.

Interestingly enough, the results of the National Jewish Population Study conducted in 1990 by the Council of Jewish Federations² suggest an increasing

¹ When I henceforth refer to Israel as a Jewish ‘homeland’, I will put the term in inverted commas, since calling the state a Jewish homeland could be understood as an advisory opinion with regards to the controversial Middle East conflict, which is not the aim of this paper.

² “The first national study of American Jews undertaken since 1970, the 1990 NJPS, conducted by the Council of Jewish Federations, studied over 5,000 Jewish households, which were found after extensive screening through random digit dialing techniques. These households represent Jews across the country living in communities of diverse size and composition. A summary of the findings is provided by Barry A. Kosmin, Sidney Goldstein, Joseph Waksberg, Nava Lerer, Ariella Keysar, and Jeffrey Scheckner: Highlights

polarization between a.) Jews defining themselves as 'Jewish by religion', who tend to be identified with the Jewish community and/or religious customs and b.) those who think of themselves as only formally Jewish, having few if any ties with Jewish life (cf. Barack-Fishman 274). However, 'Jewish by religion' does in this case not necessarily mean deeply religious, in the sense of actively practicing (orthodox) Judaism, but could also rather manifest itself in the long cherished American concept of "the Jewish heart" (ibid.). This concept derived from the observation that many 20th century American Jews have chosen a certain 'middleroad' of acculturation, instead of completely rejecting American mores and values or, contrarily, completely assimilating to 'American culture'. Hence, one's Jewish identity and commitment to it would not so much be expressed through religion than rather through, for example, supporting local, national or international Jewish institutions. The encouragement of full civil rights for Jews in the US and outside the US, the financial and moral support of persecuted and dispersed European Jews as well as the support for the young Jewish state have been viewed as commitments to a larger Jewish community and factors defining Jewish identity in the US (cf. Barack-Fishman 276).

This self-conception of secular Judaism, however, was fairly common among American Jews, who were often immigrants from Europe themselves, experienced the horrors of the Holocaust (at least from a distance), or were early second-generation American Jews, strongly influenced by their parents' generation. The question remains how those younger generations, who were perhaps growing up with a more assimilated and secular form of Judaism, define themselves as Jews within an American environment. Questions like "Who is a Jew?" and "Who is an American Jew?" suddenly began to appear fairly urgent (cf. Barack-Fishman 276).

Naturally, those socio-religious changes and newly arising questions were also reflected in literature, opening up new fictitious possibilities for Jewish American writers. While the depiction of rebellion against assimilation appeared to be the interesting theme in Jewish American fiction, it seemed that the struggle of assimilation had lost its appeal in the 1970s and 80s (cf. ibid.). New generations of American Jews were maturing, for whom the rebellion against assimilation was not a primary concern anymore. The struggle with this transformation of Jewish

of the CJF Jewish Population Survey (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1991)." (Barack-Fishman 274)

identity gave rise to new literary elements and themes. Hence, the exploration of the impact of the (horrors of the) Holocaust as well as the impact of the foundation and development of Israel became dominant themes in Jewish American literature of the later 20th century. Especially the establishment and the rise of a Jewish 'homeland' changed the Jewish self-conception and self-image immensely. A victimized Jewish people, which had been a wandering people for centuries, finally gained its own nation state. This strengthened the self-confidence of world Jewry immensely. The establishment of Israel did not only have an impact on survivors of the Holocaust and European Jewish refugees, but also affected American Jews, who had to deal with their feeling guilty of survival on the one hand and the tempting pleasures of assimilation and acculturation on the other hand. Generally they saw themselves confronted with a number of questions regarding the quintessence of Jewish identity in the United States in the second half of the 20th century and the problematic dimension of a Jewish 'home' in the Middle East.

Since I have used the terms 'Jewish American author/writer/literature' rather freely until now, I now want to define what is meant by them. Considering the long and complex history and the many wanderings of 'the Jewish people', one might well wonder what the composite 'Jewish American' denotes. There have been controversial debates about definitions, even among 'Jewish American writers' themselves about what actually defines a 'Jewish' writer in America³. To clarify matters for the purpose of this thesis, I refer to a definition of Cronin and Berger, for whom a Jewish American writer is

of Jewish origin, resident in America, aligned or not aligned with Jewish religious life in North America, and generally acculturated as a Jewish person. Practically speaking, however, the writers (...) are all self-identified as Jewish Americans and incontestably considered as Jewish-American writers by the American publishing industry, scholars, and the reading public. Not surprisingly, these writers reflect a wide variety of attitudes toward Jewish religion, ritual, and culture. What they hold in common is their shared sense of their Jewish and American heritages. (Cronin/Berger viii)

According to Andrew Furman, the fact that Israel has become an important issue for American Jews is mirrored in such magazines as *Partisan Review*, *Dissent*, *Commentary* and *Midstream*, where intellectuals "like Ruth Wisse, Michael Walzer,

³ A more detailed summary of this discussion is provided in the *Encyclopedia of Jewish-American Literature* by Gloria L. Cronin and Alan L. Berger (2009) on page viii. r

Norman Podhoretz, Robert Alter, Edward Alexander, Cynthia Ozick, Michael Lerner, and Martin Peretz prove that their Hawk and Dove disputes in regard to Israeli foreign policy have replaced the battles, waged earlier in this century” (Furman 3).

Furthermore, that the Middle East and questions of a Jewish ‘homeland’ have become pressing themes for Jewish American writers, can be demonstrated by an ever-growing list of works engaging Israel seriously as their subject. This list includes novels such as Mark Helprin’s *Refiner’s Fire* (1977), E.M. Broner’s *A Weave of Women* (1978), Jay Neugeboren’s *The Stolen Jew* (1981), Nessa Rapaport’s *Preparing for Sabbath* (1981), Anna Roiphe’s *Lovingkindness* (1987), Deena Metzger’s *What Dinah Thought* (1989), Philip Roth’s *The Counterlife* (1986), Carol Magun’s *Circling Eden: A Novel of Israel* (1995), or Tova Reich’s *Master of Return* (1988) and *The Jewish War* (1995) (cf. Furman 4) or 21st century works of fiction by Michael Chabon such as *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* published in 2007.

It is the aim of this paper to critically examine these political, cultural, and developments and discuss the following research questions: How do postmodern Jewish American authors approach Israel and the idea of Zionism underlying the Jewish state? Which literary aesthetics do they use and how have these changed over time? How and in which ways does Israel influence questions of Jewish American Diaspora identity in the second half of the 20th century? How is the complex ‘moral’ and political situation of Israel processed in Jewish American fiction? What are the general trends and future perspectives of Israel as a subject in Jewish American literature?

In order to answer these questions, this paper undertakes a case study of Saul Bellow’s *To Jerusalem and Back*, published in 1976 and Philip Roth’s *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, published in 1993. Saul Bellow and Philip Roth definitely belong to the most important and most prominent Jewish American authors of the second half of the 20th century, having published numerous literary works and having been literary awarded many times. Despite the fact that the two authors have similar family backgrounds, both being the sons of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and second generation Americans, their respective approach towards their subject opens different perspectives. Although both writers continuously publicly emphasized their secularity, the question of Jewish identity features as one of the most, if not **the** most, important theme(s) in their literary works. Most

notably, in *To Jerusalem and Back* and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* Bellow and Roth have literary approached the question of the role of Israel and its position with regards to Jewish American Diaspora identity-construction. The seventeen years lying between the dates of publications of the two works allow for an analysis of what has possibly changed within those years with regards to literary approaches of Israel and questions of Jewish identity as well as with regards to the perception of the political situation of the Jewish 'homeland'. Literature can be regarded as a mirror of 'reality' and as a contemporary witness, but it certainly transcends a mere reflection of 'reality'. Literature and especially fiction disclose creative alternatives to question 'actuality' and blur the lines between fact and fiction. With this in mind, it is specifically interesting how Jewish American authors have been approaching the complexities of the existence of a Jewish state.

While I will particularly make use of the classical hermeneutic method of close reading, the texts of Bellow and Roth will be examined in the context of the features of postmodern literary theory. It shall be shown how the structural elements of postmodern writing can help the authors to convey their respective approaches.

I will further make use of Stuart Hall's theory of 'Cultural Identity' to explain the complexity of Jewish American Diaspora identity. However, I will not analyze the primary texts exclusively through Hall's theory, but rather draw on his theoretical framework to emphasize certain arguments.

In his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1993)⁴ Hall has dealt extensively with questions of cultural identities and different concepts thereof. He also asks how identity is "produced", and how this can be related to diaspora identities. Being born in Jamaica and having grown up as part of what is sometimes defined as the "black diaspora", Hall writes against the background of experiences of this black diaspora. Nevertheless, he argues that "we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific" (Hall 222), and thus "what we say is always 'in context', positioned" (ibid).

Hall argues that there are at least two different concepts and ways of thinking about 'cultural identity'. The first one implies the idea of sharing one culture, "a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or

⁴ see also Hall/Held/McGrew *Modernity and its Futures* (1992)

artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall 223). In this sense 'cultural identity' reflects the shared historical experiences and common cultural codes that constitute human beings as "one people", "with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (ibid.). This concept of 'cultural identity' is a rather stable one, while a 'common shared past' suggests to be the primary factor of identity. Thus, this idea emphasizes everything that members of a community have in common⁵, be it a common history, or shared religious or cultural values. With regards to diaspora identities, Hall writes:

Crucially, such images offer a way of imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas. They do this by representing or 'figuring' Africa as the mother of these different civilizations. This Triangle is, after all, 'centered' in Africa. Africa is the name of the missing term, the great aporia, which lies at the centre of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked. (Hall 224)

It was this emphasis on the commonalities that helped the healing process of rifts of separation and the 'loss of identity'.

However, Hall illustrates his first concept of 'cultural identity' only to challenge it, when he suggests another, related but extended view of the concept. This second concept recognizes those many points of similarity, but also emphasizes some "critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'" (Hall 225). This notion of cultural identity suggests that people, who might share the same cultural identity, probably cannot speak about "one experience, one identity" without also seeing the other side, namely, the ruptures and discontinuities (cf. Hall 225). Hall argues that cultural identity is "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'", belonging to the future just as much as to the past. Certainly those cultural identities have their histories, but still they undergo constant transformation and are far from being "fixed in some essentialised past", but rather "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (cf. Hall 225).

In other words, what Hall suggests is that 'cultural identity' is a *process* of "identification" rather than a fixed state of having "one identity". Thus, he claims

⁵ Benedict Anderson's classical study *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* published in 1983 comprises similar ideas.

that identities are never consistent and stable, but rather diffused and fragmented, always to be contextualized. 'Identification' is, according to Hall, a process of becoming and being, while always underlying the "play of difference", meaning that differences and ruptures are essential for the process of identification:

It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'. This second view of cultural identity is much less familiar, more unsettling. (Hall 226)

Having Hall's theory in mind and applying it to questions of Jewish diaspora identity, we can better understand how history and the experiences of dispersal and fragmentation have shaped a feeling of a common Jewish cultural identity. At the same time, Hall's extrapolation of the concept of 'cultural identity' helps to explain how "history intervenes", meaning how ruptures and discontinuities are shaping and changing cultural identities. Although 'the Jewish people' might share a certain cultural identity, one cannot speak of "one experience" or "one identity" that is "fixed in some essentialised past". Rather one also has to acknowledge how 'cultural identities' are continuously changing in different cultural, historical and political contexts.

Cultural identities are undoubtedly always embedded in their specific social, geographical, and historical context. Hence, the first chapter of this paper will provide an introduction to the historical background of Jewish immigration to the United States in general and of the establishment of Jewish American writing in the United States in particular. It will illustrate the most important themes in Jewish American literature as reflections of 'the Jewish experience' in the US. Furthermore, this first chapter will analyze the basic concepts of Zionism and diaspora and their respective developments, which will be central to the following discussion of the primary texts. In a next step an overview of how Zionist ideology and the eventual establishment of the state of Israel have been processed in Jewish American literature up until postmodernism will finally lead to the core of the paper.

Subsequent to the historical foundation given in chapter one, chapter two will explore Saul Bellow's non-fictional account *To Jerusalem and Back*, while chapter

three will focus on a detailed analysis of Philip Roth's novel *Operation Shylock: A Confession*. Additionally, chapter four will contrast the two works, illustrating apparent parallels as well as explicit discrepancies that can be found in the two texts.

Apart from providing a summary of the main findings of this paper, the conclusion will take a brief look at the present development of Jewish American literature at the beginning of the 21st century. The question in which – maybe completely different – ways contemporary authors might deal with the subject of Jewish identity, Israel and its political implications, and the problems of the Middle East in general shall provide a final consideration and depict future prospects. In this sense, Furman's statement quoted at the beginning that "American Jews (and we could endorse, 'American Jewish literati') define themselves today by looking [...] toward the West Bank, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and the Golan Heights as well" could be reevaluated and maybe reassessed (Furman 4).

My study will demonstrate that the existence of a Jewish 'homeland' in the Middle East has become a crucial and at the same time ambiguous factor of 'identification' for Jewish American diaspora Jews, which is specifically reflected in postmodern Jewish American literature.

Bellow and Roth are important representatives of this discourse in American fiction since they are contemporary witnesses of the significant events in the 20th century, shaping 'World Jewry' in general and 'American Jewry' in particular. Although Bellow was born two decades before Roth, they both experienced the Shoah and the establishment of a Jewish state (from a distance). With *To Jerusalem and Back* and *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, the two authors have extensively engaged Israel in their writing and established a certain foundation for future Jewish American authors writing about the Jewish 'homeland'.

Bellow and Roth symbolize an important discourse in American literature, because they both shaped 20th century literature considerably. The two writers are regarded as major representatives of Jewish American literature in particular, but also as major literati of American literature in general.

Andrew Furman has certainly laid a foundation for academic discourse on Israel in Jewish American literature, when his work *Israel through the Jewish-American Imagination: A Survey of Jewish American literature on Israel 1928-1995* was published in 1997. His study comprises a summary of writers, who engaged

Israel in their fiction between 1928 and 1995, as well as an analysis of changing approaches towards Israel. Furthermore, Sylvia Barack-Fishman published an article on “Homelands of the Heart: Israel and Jewish Identity in American Jewish Fiction” in 1996. In this article, Barack-Fishman analyzes socio-political changes affecting Jewish identity as well as the possible role of Israel in this context. Sophia Lehmann’s article “Exodus and Homeland: The Representation of Israel in Saul Bellow’s ‘To Jerusalem and Back’ and Philip Roth’s ‘Operation Shylock’” was published in 1998, which focuses for the first time on Bellow’s and Roth’s works.

This study can be regarded as a contribution to the discourse on the role of Israel in postmodern Jewish American Literature. It is specifically adding new perspectives on the literary reflection of the role of a Jewish ‘homeland’ in the Middle East with regards to Jewish American identity. Furthermore, the study provides an extensive analysis of existing tensions between diaspora-based and Zionist foundations of Jewish existence.

1. Historical Background

1.1 The Jewish ‘Experience’ in the United States

The history of Jewish American Literature and Jewish authors in America is inevitably linked to the history of the Jewish people in the United States in general. Jewish history in the ‘New World’ began in the early days of colonization of the New World. The first European Jew setting foot in this ‘New World’ was Luis de Torres, who happened to be Christopher Columbus’ interpreter (cf. Cronin/ Berger xiv). When the Spanish Inquisition became increasingly violent and dangerous for Jews – they had the choice of either converting to Christianity or being killed –, the news quickly spread that there seemed to be better chances of a ‘normal’ and more convenient life in the New World. Consequently, many Spanish and Portuguese Jews soon left for the Americas in the hope of a better life (cf. *ibid.*).

Just one year after the Pilgrim fathers arrived in Massachusetts and established their famous colonies at the east coast, a ship that historians would later call the “Jewish Mayflower” with 23 Dutch Jews fleeing Recife (Brazil) arrived in New Amsterdam and heralded the beginning of Jewish settlement in New York. These Jews had been expelled when Portugal recaptured the colony from the Dutch. (cf. Cronin/Berger xiv). It was as early as then when Jews had to face anti-Semitic

attitudes, since Puritans relying on the traditional Christian anti-Semitic belief regarded them as the enemies of Christ. With the founding of the tolerant Quaker city of Philadelphia and the arrival of William Penn in 1682, Philadelphia became the first real center of Jewish Settlement in the New World in the 18th century (cf. *ibid.*). When the British took over the colonies, “the rules of worship were relaxed” (*ibid.*) which led to the establishment of further Jewish congregations and institutions. In the early 1700s, Jewish merchants arrived in Boston and by 1776 several Jews were already enlisted as soldiers during the War of Independence (cf. Cronin/Berger xiv). They soon began settling and numbering in the Southern areas, before and after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and especially arrived in large numbers in New Orleans. According to historian Seymour Kurtz, Jews during these years were engaged “in every walk of life in the original 13 colonies”, despite the prevailing atmosphere of anti-Semitism (qtd. in Cronin/Berger xv). This already shows, how Jews were beginning to be integrated in US American daily life. These early Jewish settlers in the New World soon became part of the mainly Puritan American society and numbered among America’s “religious pilgrims, explorers, pioneers, trappers, traders, religious leaders, settlers, soldiers, merchants, actors, peddlers, lawmakers, bankers, financiers, philanthropists, abolitionists, Revolutionary War soldiers, Civil War heroes, theologians, and patriots” (*ibid.*). In a sense, their presence also served to test the religious freedom that was officially guaranteed by the American Constitution.

In religious terms, a new strand of Judaism was arising in the course of the 18th century, called Reform Judaism, originally developing in Germany (cf. Fried 6). Generally speaking, Reform Judaism implied that Jewish traditions should be modernized to a certain degree and compatible with its surrounding culture, meaning an intermediate concept of Orthodox Judaism and secular Judaism. The first Reform movement in the United States had its roots in Charleston, South Carolina, which rapidly developed into a national phenomenon and became the dominant belief system of American Jews of that time (cf. Jewish Virtual Library D). Major American figures of American Reform Judaism were Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, David Philipson and Kaufmann Kohler, who propounded the theses for a new Jewish identity (cf. Fried 7). The Pittsburgh Conference of Reform Judaism argued that the Jews are “no longer a nation but a religious community” (*ibid.*). Reform Judaism contributed immensely to the concept of the diaspora, which will be

further elaborated on later in this chapter, since it suggested that the dispersion of Jews among nations was a necessary experience in the realization and execution of the people's duty. Thus, Reform Judaism rejected the biblical notion of Jews being in exile ('galut'). Furthermore, Zionism and the concept of a Jewish homeland were heavily refused by the Jewish Reform Movement only until after World War II, when those concepts were reconsidered in the face of the horrors of the Shoah (cf. Fried 10). Reform Judaism remained the dominant strand of American Judaism only until the 1880s, when a new wave of Jewish immigration would change the Jewish American landscape immensely.

In terms of their origins, Jews settling in America up until 1880 were mostly native-born Ashkenazim, meaning Jews originating from Middle or Eastern European countries, while in terms of religious and cultural factors they were perhaps more Protestant than Jewish and rather outside of Yiddish culture (cf. Cronin/ Berger xvi).

The immigration wave that would change the whole Jewish landscape of the United States heralding the complex phenomenon of the American diaspora would start in 1881, when predominantly orthodox Yiddish-speaking Jews from eastern European countries arrived, escaping from pogroms and other systematic "government-sanctioned violence against Jews" (Wade 19). A majority of those immigrants were from Russia, who escaped from their homes as a result of the horrific pogroms of the 1880ies and 1890ies.

Between 1881 and 1924, the year of the Immigrant Restriction Act, or "discriminatory Johnson Act of 1924" (ibid.), with thousands of hundreds of immigrants arriving in the 'New World', the number of Jewish immigrants rose from approximately 226.000 in 1887 to approximately 3.385.000 in 1920 (cf. Cronin/Berger xvi).

This turning point in the history of the Jews and "the notion of shifting settlement, impermanence and separateness is basic to an understanding of the literature of Jewish America" (Wade 19), while the immigrant duality and experience seems to be fundamental here. Almost all works on the history of Jewish American literature and writers seem to start with this wave of new immigrants. In trying to find reasons thereof, Allen Guttman argues that

[i]n the first place, approximately 90 per cent of the Jewish population of the United States at the present moment is made up of this group and its descendants. In the second place, American Jews have made their major

contributions to American literature since the arrival of the 'new immigrants' from Eastern Europe (Guttmann 13).

Since many of those immigrants happened to be fairly literate and ambitious, this immense influx of Jews introduced a certain Yiddish literary culture and speech into mainstream American culture, "along with their various European languages and centuries of Jewish and Hebrew religious learning. Within a generation these Jews would powerfully affect newspaper, entertainment, radio, movie, television, and literary culture in America"(Cronin/Berger xvi). With regards to religion, these changes meant that Reform Judaism would cease being the dominant form of Jewish expression in America and that both, Orthodox tradition as well as a vibrant secularism would from now on form and shape American Judaism.

In literary terms, Jewish writings were marked by their exceptional immigrant experience and the famous Ellis Island National Immigration Center. Immigration circumstances and procedures were to some extent immensely cruel, physically as well as psychologically, sometimes separating whole family members forever, often resulting in shipboard suicides (ibid.).

It was in the 1920s when anti-Semitic xenophobia reached its first climax and the majority Christian culture increasingly perceived the dominant Jewish immigrant group as rather inferior.

According to Cronin and Berger, the American Jewish population had produced rather few writers before this mass arrival of Eastern European Jews. Those engaging in literary writing apparently were mostly of German-Jewish origin and started their writing in the 1890s (cf. Cronin/Berger xvii). Furthermore, few of those early writers wrote in English, while questions of assimilation and labor unrest dominated this early work. Since orthodox Jewish women were assigned domestic duties, there were even fewer Jewish American women writers among these first generations. All the more it is important to distinguish Emma Lazarus as being one of the notable female writers of this earlier period and an important precursor. Lazarus was of German-Jewish and Sephardic descent and received a rather comprehensive education, due to her parents' support. Especially between 1882 and 1884 her poetry and essays were a powerful evidence of her fighting against hatred and persecution of the Jewish people, while her later works are of Zionist nature, promoting a Jewish state in Palestine (cf. Cronin/Berger 164).

One of the first major Jewish American authors heralding this new period of Jewish American literature was Abraham Cahan, who, with his classic *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), illustrated the immense tensions generated by a people caught between Jewish tradition and American modernity and had to deal with this duality and inner disruption (cf. Wade 6-7). As with probably all literatures concerned with departure and arriving, Jewish American texts also dealt with those shifting notions of identity, which added to identity questions of Jewish Americans in general.

Issues of assimilation and acculturation became the major themes for Jewish American authors of the late 19th and early 20th century, while Abraham Cahan's novel "became a paradigm for future assimilationist novels whose protagonist's Old World religious identity remains forever in conflict with a secular America" (Cronin/Berger xvii)⁶.

Although *The Rise of David Levinsky* celebrated great success at the beginning of the 20th century, American writers with a Jewish background constituted a minority among American writers.

A logical consequence resulting from this mass immigration at the beginning of the 20th century were, of course, poor housing and employment opportunities and conditions that Jewish and other immigrants had to face, which was an especially pressing issue in the major cities of the US. Additionally, they often had to cope with a hostile treatment by mostly Irish-Catholic and European Protestant immigrants, which soon led to labor unrest and a certain tendency of Jewish socialism and political leftism (cf. Cronin/Berger xvii). This and the clash of competing ethnic and immigration groups would form a dominant and principal theme for Jewish American writers for the next two generations.

Abraham Cahan's Yiddish-language political magazine *Forverts*, or *Jewish Daily Forward* was one of the many political propaganda magazines constituting records of these new generations of American Jews. This very popular magazine included a wide range of different literary works such as poetry, fiction, cultural, religious and

⁶ Definitions of the concepts of assimilation and acculturation are drawn from Lewis Fried's work on *The Jewish Writer In America* (1971): The key terms "assimilation" and "acculturation" require precise definition. The first refers to an entire process by which one group, usually a minority within a society, is absorbed into another group. The logical extreme of the process is the complete disappearance of the absorbed group, which may or may not contribute to the characteristics of the resultant amalgam. "Acculturation" is the adoption of the values and behavioral patterns of the "host" society. (Fried 8)

political commentary, as well as scholarship, daily news, and theater reviews. Those pieces of writings were the first accounts of “abandonment, divorce, poverty, family dislocation, and terrible homesickness” (Cronin/Berger xvii). It also illustrated a criticism of the younger generation’s rapid assimilation into the American lifestyle and culture, “their abandonment of the elderly, their general disregard of the Jewish orthodoxy of the medieval European shtetl, and the culture of their parents” (ibid.). Jewish American literature was generally on the rise:

This emerging literary culture received major impetus from two sources: (1) the Anglo-American and European modernist moment including avant-gardists such as Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford (half Jewish), Paul Rosenfeld, and Gertrude Stein; and (2) the appearance of several sympathetic and influential WASP writers and literary critics. Though few Jewish-American women writers emerged during these decades, Anzia Yeziarska and Mary Antin bridge the period. By 1922 the American Jewish Yearbook, 1922, edited by Harry Schneiderman, listed 275 Jewish-American writers of various genres. (Cronin/Berger xviii)

It was also in this period that writers of minority groups, such as Jews or African Americans, started to challenge the relatively closed club of the American mainstream literary culture of writers of predominantly Anglo and northern European ancestry as well as a rather “universalist notion of literary aesthetics” and assumption of who was and who was not capable of producing “real Literature” (Cronin/Berger xviii). The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, which marked the first high period of African American literary production with writers such as Langston Hughes, Alain Locke or W.E.V. Du Bois and the emergence of the ‘New Negro’ challenged the predominantly Anglo-Saxon canon of literary writers immensely (cf. Encyclopedia Britannica: “The Harlem Renaissance”).

Consequently a certain rivalry between those writers of minority groups and Anglo-Saxon writers came into being, which was also reflected and negatively commented on in literary works of the latter.

As already mentioned, the younger Jewish American generations often saw themselves confronted with a certain notion of identity crisis, mixing American modernism and tendencies of Jewish orthodoxy, sometimes finding assimilation highly seductive and feeling embarrassed by their Yiddish heritage. This certainly often led to intergenerational conflicts. In this post World War I era, Nathanael West, Henry Roth, Meyer Levin, Mike Gold, Clifford Odets, Muriel Rukeyser, Hortense Calisher, Arthur Miller, Delmore Schwartz, and Isaac Rosenfeld belonged

to the group of the best known Jewish American authors (cf. Cronin/Berger: xix). Their work was predominantly promoted by journals such as *New Masses*, *Comrade*, *The Liberator* and the *Partisan Review*. Those magazines particularly gave rise to authors and literary works such as Mike Gold and his *Jews without Money* (1939), Meyer Levin's numerous works, including *The Settlers* (1972) and *The Harvest* (1978) and Henry Roth's well known classic *Call it Sleep* (1934) (ibid.).

Hence, one could come to the conclusion that the period of the 1920s and 1930s was the era when Jewish American writers were on the rise, gaining more and more self-consciousness and energy that would later help them to face "global fascism, capitalist excesses, Stalinist atrocities, Hitlerism, and the Holocaust" (Cronin/Berger: xix). At that point in time they were first and foremost reminding America that it was probably failing its democratic promises in many ways.

While the 1920s and 30s were shaped by a Proletarian Jewish American literature, the 1940s and 50s probably proclaimed the Jewish American entry into mainstream American literature.

After experiencing decades of anti-Semitism, witnessing World War II and the Shoah, Jewish American writers apparently showed immense passion about the issue of Judaism in the American context and about loyalty to Jewish values in general.

Cronin/Berger argue that the official moment of American Jewish entry into the American literary mainstream happened in 1944 with the symposium "Under Forty", which was published in the *Contemporary Jewish Record* of the American Jewish Committee, including prominent Jewish figures such as Muriel Rukeyser, Alfred Kazin, Delmore Schwartz, Lionel Trilling, Howard Fast and Isaac Rosenfeld (cf. Cronin/Berger xix). After the *Contemporary Jewish Record* was replaced by the *Commentary*, this publication along with the *Partisan Review* featured the early works of the later rather well distinguished Jewish American writers such as Saul Bellow, Delmore Schwartz, Alfred Kazin and Isaac Rosenfeld.

Although Jewish socialism as well as the American political left experienced a certain collapse, young Jewish writers like Leon Uris and Norman Mailer published socially conscious novels analyzing the absurdity of war, anti-Semitism in the American army as well as the impact of the founding of the state of Israel, the realization of a Jewish homeland, in 1948. Interestingly enough, the Holocaust and

the horrible trauma thereof was not ventilated in Jewish American literature until the early 1970s.

The period from the late 1930s to the early 1950s can be seen as a period of transition in terms of how Jewish Americans saw themselves, as well as the reflection thereof in their writings:

First, there is a reassessment of the 1930s and of ideological change; then Saul Bellow initiates a defined way of placing Jewishness within urban culture, and finally, a 'new wave' arrives with the early work of Philip Roth. (Wade 51)

Therefore, the 1950s are called the 'Jewish decade of American literature' by some scholars, originating further important Jewish writers such as Bernard Malamud or Philip Roth, who, together with Saul Bellow, would shape the Jewish American writers' canon of the second half of the 20th century.

Themes of anti-Semitism in the workplace, Jewish social life, intellectual life in America's universities, religious crisis, assimilation, the Jewish humanistic legacy, the disappearance of Yiddishkeit, political disillusionment, retreat into the private realm, consumerism, McCarthyism, black/Jewish race relations, and a host of related topics preoccupy these writers [...] These second-generation children of immigrants were writers whose roots lay in the moment of the Great Depression, the spiritual devastation of World War II, the Shoah, and the establishment of the fledging state of Israel in 1948 (Cronin/Berger xx)

While Arthur Miller in *The Crucible* (1953) reflected on the paranoia of the cold war era and the Jewish poet Alan Ginsberg, author of *Howl* (1956), dominated the American literary Beat movement, Saul Bellow reflected on European philosophy, modernism and its effects on Western culture of French existentialism (cf. Cronin/Berger xx-xxi). And it was perhaps the latter, who became the most dominant spokesman within the cadre of Jewish American writers, since his works tended to reflect the inner heartland of Jewish assimilation "which not only refused to lose the quintessence of its intellectual being, but actually to use that self-identity as a basis for building a critique of post-war America" (Wade 56).

Additionally, themes of Jewish American alienation in the aftermath of modernity, World War II, and the Holocaust continued to appear in the works of Herman Wouk, Chaim Potok, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth, who came of age during World War II.

Jewish American literature of the 1970s was probably mostly transformed by the cold war era, the bankruptcy of Marxism, the aftermath of the atomic bomb, the American youth revolution, drug culture, the rise of neoliberalism and the birth of

New Age religion (cf. Cronin/Berger xx-xxi). Furthermore, it was in the 60s and 70s in the wake of the first wave of feminism, when a wide range of Jewish American women writers gained more social and religious freedoms and joined their male colleagues in the literary mainstream, questioning patriarchal orders of orthodox Judaism, along with the generally patriarchal social structures of the American establishment (cf. *ibid.*). This new rising cadre of female Jewish American writers included women as Susan Sontag, Cynthia Ozick, Norma Rosen, Grace Paley, Erica Jong, Hortense Calisher, Ester Broner, Tova Reich, Anne Roiphe and Tillie Olsen (cf. *ibid.*).

While the horrible dimension of the Shoah had not been really noticed in the 50s and 60s, the 1970s brought a deepening awareness thereof. Hence, works of Holocaust survivors, escaping to the United States became well known, such as Elie Wiesel's classic memoir *Night* (1958), catalyzing many American born writers like Edward Lewis Walant (*The Pawnbroker*, 1961) or again Saul Bellow (*Mr. Sammler's Planet*, 1970). These, for the first time reflected on the dislocation of the Holocaust survivor. (cf. Cronin/Berger xxii).

The probably still most dominant issue in the decades of the 1960s and 70s remained that of Jewish identity in America, depicted in historical fiction by Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, E-L. Doctorow or Hugh Nisson, while the latter also shows a special awareness of the Holocaust (cf. *ibid.*).

The 1980s brought into existence a new generation of Jewish American writers, like Nessa Rappaport, Rebecca Goldstein, Robert Cohen, Allegra Goodman, Melvin Bukeit, Thane Rosenbaum, Helen Epstein, Art Spiegelman, Jonathan Safran Foer, or Michael Chabon, to name just a few (cf. Cronin/Berger xxii). Interestingly enough, the 1980s, in literary terms, experienced a privileging of Jewish tradition over and against American mainstream culture.

Other than that, the 1980s also witnessed the obvious paradigm shifting effects of postmodernism, which is remarkably reflected by a new generation of Jewish American women writers such as Wendy Wasserstein, novelist Alix Kates Shulman, Anne Michaels and Rebecca Goldstein, but also by male writers such as Michael Chabon or Steve Stern, who continue to explore the consequences of the Holocaust and Jewish identity by utilizing and deconstructing myths, symbols and language of the Jewish tradition, religion and mysticism (cf. Cronin/Berger xxiii).

Furthermore, it is in the 1980s when a second wave of Holocaust fiction comes into existence, which definitely examines the topic differently, probably seeking a twofold goal: on the one hand reminding the world of the Shoah, while on the other hand trying to prevent future genocides. Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust* (1979) and *Where She Came From* (1997), and Julie Solomon's *White Lies* (1987), as well as Rosenbaum's post Holocaust trilogy *Elijah Visible* (1996), *Second Hand Smoke* (1999) and *The Golems of Gotham* (2002) are famous examples thereof (cf. *ibid.*).

The New Millennium continues to offer a richness of themes covered by Jewish American writers, ranging from Orthodox Judaism, to Yiddishkeit, Jewish ethnic descent and identity, American secularism and the role of religion, which is, according to Cronin and Berger, covered in a rather vigorous, but at the same time controversial way (cf. Cronin/Berger xxiv). Perpetually, tensions between the still existent Orthodox Judaism and Jewish American particularism can be perceived.

It seems that younger Jewish American writers are gaining interest in changes within America's specific versions of modernity and some of the prominent aspects of postmodernism such as the communication revolution, intrusions into personal life, secular and religious pluralism, the challenge to order and authority and the mass media (cf. Wade 11). With regards to postmodernism, Stephen Wade argues that:

[i]f postmodernism means anything, then it must indicate the culture of confusing choice. We are able to choose allegiances and denials as well as choosing minority or majority views in a pluralistic world. Jewish-American writing has an important part to play in the question of how the literature of a global village deals with minority voices. (Wade 11)

One subject, that appears recurrently in Jewish American literature since its rising from 1900 until today, is the theme of 'the little man' or *Kleinman* (Wade 4). Author Isaac Bashevis Singer himself comments on this phenomenon in an interview, stating:

Well, the Yiddish writer was not really brought up with heroes. I mean there were very few heroes in the Jewish ghettos – very few knights and counts and people who fought duels. In my own case, I don't feel I write in the tradition of the 'little man' because their man is actually a *victim*. (qtd. in Plimpton 89)

This figure of the little man, nevertheless, seems to persist in the Yiddish novels written in the period 1900 to 1945. It is found in the absurd comedies of Philip Roth and Woody Allen, and lastly emerges into the depiction of specifically new

versions of being American in the work of Erica Jong or Cynthia Ozick, for example (cf. Wade 5). This portrayal of the Jew as the 'little man', even more as the victim, is emphasized here, since it was especially important for later discussions of changing Jewish identities, altered by the fact of Israeli nationhood in 1948.

Generally one could argue that conflicts and troubled times generated immensely productive creative impulses for Jewish American writers. At the same time they partly caused irreparable harm. Stephen Wade identifies two major conflicts affecting Jewish Americans and their literature. On the one hand, there is the problem of Jews being an ethnic minority with specific values and identities to be preserved within the context of an American popular culture. On the other hand, there are always tensions between Orthodox Judaism and Reform or even secular Jews, leading to inner conflicts in any case (cf. Wade 8).

After centuries of witnessing authors like Bellow, Malamud, and Roth analyzing and processing all those listed themes of assimilation, acculturation, identity crisis and inner tensions and the said duality, the question arises of what will constitute Jewish American literature in the future, while Wades argues:

This is perhaps the most exciting and rewarding time to study the literature of Jewish-Americans. As each generation of immigrants has moved further into assimilated American life, the more the deeper and wider religious and political meanings of being Jewish have been preserved and studied. (Wade 3)

It is evident that Jewish American writing has found renewal and impetus via the historical experience of their ancestors, while a new attitude can be asserted in Jewish American literature, namely "being American essentially but inescapably Jewish in origin and culture" (Wade 13).

In this chapter, I have briefly outlined the historical development of Jewish life and literature in the United States, which shall serve as a basic background for the actual focus of this paper. It is important to understand the meaning and significance of those historical developments for particular aspects of Jewish self-conceptions and approaches to Jewish identity. An understanding of tensions between assimilation and a remaining feeling of connectedness to a Yiddish/orthodox Jewish heritage resulting in a constant questioning of one's Jewish American identity is especially important with regards to the later discussion of Bellow's and Roth's works. Since specific concepts of Jewish existence such as the diaspora, sometimes regarded as the Jewish exile ('galut'), or

visions of a Jewish homeland (Zionism) have already been addressed fairly briefly, the next chapter shall focus on these concepts in more detail.

1.2 Foundations of Jewish existence

Before analyzing how Jewish American authors examine Zionist ideology and more specifically the later outcome thereof, namely, the state of Israel, in their writings, it is fairly important to briefly outline the general concept of Zionism and its development in Europe and the United States, as well as its 'counter-ideology', the concept of Jewish Diaspora and Jewish perceptions thereof.

1.2.1 Zionism - Visions of a Jewish Homeland

In contrast to the often dominant opinion that the first Zionist thinker was the Austro-Hungarian journalist and philosopher Theodor Herzl with his manifest *Der Judenstaat* (1895), Zionist ideology had been developing as early as at the beginning of the 19th century. With the European Enlightenment in the 18th century, hopes for full civic rights and equality for Jews were rising among the European Jewish people. Those hopes were primarily dominant among Jews who propagated a more secular form of Judaism, later called Reform Judaism. Thus, the rationalist Enlightenment with its implications of all human beings being equal and having equal rights, caused intense hope of the Jewish people for integration and equality among the European people (cf. Urovsky 6-11).

These hopes were destroyed to a certain degree in the course of the 19th century, giving birth to European nationalism, which clearly excluded Jews from the idea of national states, since those should be formed on the basis of common ancestors and shared history. While most Jews at that time were looking for assimilation or religious reform in order to have better chances of integration, some Jews began to apply the ideas of nationalism to the 'Jewish Problem'. Hence, the idea developed that the only solution for the Jewish People to live in peace was the building of a Jewish state. Thus, one could argue that Zionism, apart from its spiritual components, namely, the ancient connection to Palestine and the prophetic passion "for righteousness" (cf. Polish 272), inevitably developed as a form of religious nationalism (cf. Urovsky 12) and "began as a rejection of the universalist outlook of the 19th century liberal movement known as the

‘Enlightenment’” (MERIP Reports 3). Ever since the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Romans, there have been proposals among the Jewish people to resettle in Palestine. Furthermore, in the course of the 18th and 19th century, Christian groups began to advocate the return of the Jews to Zion as well (ibid.). The sense of Jewish unity, which Zionism took as its source, is originally based on the belief that

the Jews were formed as a people through God’s covenant with them, producing a common religion with its own liturgical language, and a sense of historical continuity. The Zionists, emerging in the context of 19th century European nationalism, took this sense of historical religious unity and transformed it into Jewish nationalism (MERIP Reports 3).

An underlying assumption of Zionist ideology was that anti-Semitism was inherent in non-Jewish society. While early Zionists believed that this anti-Semitism was a social, biological trait, later Zionists – starting with Herzl- believed it to be a rather political trait, inherent in Gentile society (cf. MERIP Reports 3).

The 1850s gave rise to a first group of isolated Jewish writers propagating Zionism, although their appeals went largely unnoticed until decades later. Among those first European Zionist writers were Judah Alcalay (1798-1878), Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874) and Moses Hess (1812-75) (cf. Urovsky 13). But those early proto-Zionists remained a minority, since most of the assimilationist Jews still believed that “a cosmopolitan rationalism would be the best guarantee of Jewish welfare” (Urovsky 14).

After the death of Czar Alexander II of Russia, who pursued relatively liberal policies towards Jews, the year of 1881 brought another vicious wave of violence towards Jews in Russia, which seemed to proof rationalism as a solution for the ‘Jewish problem’ wrong (cf. Urovsky 15). Leo Pinsker (1821-91), a Russian physician, would later be known as the first ‘real’ modern Zionist, propagating a Jewish state explicitly in Palestine and prompting more and more talk on Palestine as the Jewish homeland. As a consequence, the Hibbat Zion movement launched the first *aliyah* (= immigration to Palestine/later Israel) to Palestine between 1882 and 1903, with 25.000 Jews leaving for the Holy Land (cf. Urovsky 18).

In France, the mother country of the enlightenment, the Dreyfus affair shook the faith of many Jews in assimilation and led to a spreading of Zionist ideology. The earlier mentioned Theodor Herzl, who belonged to the group of rather assimilated, secular Jews, attended the Dreyfus trial in 1894, which convinced him

that assimilation would not be a solution (ibid. 20). Herzl devoted intense attention to study the 'Jewish Problem', which led to his famous work *Der Judenstaat* (1896). It can be seen as the starting point of the rise of modern Zionism. Urovsky summarizes Herzl's main thesis as follows:

While the Jews culturally and psychologically constitute a people, they lack the physical attributes of nationhood. This abnormality – statelessness- is the root cause of Jewish suffering and anti-Semitism. Unless the Jews could defend themselves and find expression for their inner nature, Jewish civilization and culture would be in danger of destruction. The logical means to achieve this would be a national state for the Jews, one that would guarantee Jewish survival and a continuing Jewish contribution to the world's culture. (Urovsky 21)

In August 1897, only one year after the publication of *Der Judenstaat*, the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel, which would later constitute an important institution helping to realize the idea of a Jewish state.

Although Zionist ideology developed various strands and dimensions, it generally represented the rejection of assimilation as a solution to the 'Jewish Problem' and shared the belief that only Palestine was suitable as the territory for a Jewish state, because of its unique association with Jewish history in Palestine (cf. MERIP Reports 4). Consequently, Zionism implied the view that diaspora would mean that Jews sooner or later would become completely assimilated into their surrounding cultures. Zionism further developed and spread in the course of the first half of the 20th century until it reaching its climax during and after World War II, finally resulting in the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, being supported by non-Jews especially after World War II as a consequence of the horrors of the Shoah.

The history of American Zionism differs to a certain degree from European Zionism. One of the earliest American Zionists, if not **the** earliest American Zionist, was Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785-1851), who became famous for, among other things, his visions of a Jewish homeland (cf. Brody). Noah is said to have been one of the most influential Jews in the early 19th century in the United States. He was an editor, journalist, playwright, politician, lawyer, major in the New York military and, foremost, an impassionate Zionist. His father was a German Jewish immigrant, while his mother was one half Sephardic (Portuguese) and one half Ashkenazi. Although three of Mordecai Noah's grandparents were Ashkenazi, he stressed his Sephardic identity, since this was supposed to give him deeper roots in America as

well as a more aristocratic status in the Jewish community (cf. Jewish Virtual Library B).

Being a fervent patriot, Noah soon became an influential journalist and politician, while those two professions were one career for him and interdependent on each other. As a politician and a journalist he addressed issues concerning the Jewish community as well as the Christian American community. For Americans he was the representative Jew, while he was the quintessential American to Jews, gaining from both roles (cf. *ibid.*). Therefore, Noah was constantly looking for common interests of Jews and non-Jews in the United States. During his travels to Europe, Noah realized that Jews in the 'Old World' desperately needed a safe haven in order to escape from widespread European anti-Semitism. On the other hand, one of America's greatest needs at the beginning of the 19th century were new immigrants (cf. *ibid.*). Thus, Mordecai Noah's idea was to bring European Jews to an America, in need for new immigrants, which would be an advantage for both.

In September 1825, Noah staged a drama in Buffalo, which presented the idea of establishing a Jewish state on American soil. He presented the Jews as the most desirable citizens, while the United States were presented as a great country for the Jews of the Old World (cf. Jewish Virtual Library B.). Accounts of his drama appeared in newspapers throughout the US as well as Europe and the idea of a state called "Ararat" as a refuge state for the Jews was hence established for the first time. Noah, in 1825, even helped to purchase a tract of land on Grand Island in the Niagara River near Buffalo, where he envisioned the Jewish state Ararat. Although Noah's project generally elicited interest and discussion among World Jewry as well as US politicians, it did not become reality. After this disappointment Mordecai Noah realized that perhaps Palestine was the only solution and answer to this problem. By expressing the idea for such a Jewish homeland, where Jews could live together in peace, Noah anticipated such well-known Zionists as Leo Pinsker or Theodor Herzl (cf. *ibid.*). The cornerstone for the Jewish homeland on American soil, which was laid in 1825, survived and is nowadays to be found in a museum on Grand Island (cf. *ibid.*).

The first dominant Zionist ideologies arrived in the United States with the wave of Eastern European immigrants from the 1880s onwards. Since the Sephardic and German Jews, who arrived earlier, were mostly committed to Reform Judaism,

Zionist ideologies were rather disclaimed. Ideologies promoting a Jewish homeland were also refused by the rather leftist Jews from the labor classes, since they regarded Zionism as irrelevant to the class struggle (cf. Stork/Rose 42). Still, a small group of Eastern European immigrants kept Zionism in the United States alive “through the lean years up until the 1930s, when it could blossom in an atmosphere more conducive for its growth: the fear of anti-Semitism, which came to permeate the consciousness of the entire Jewish community” (ibid.). Even before the development of a certain awareness of the degree of anti-Semitism that was spreading in Europe, there had been a certain predisposition to Zionism in the US. This predisposition for the idea of a Jewish homeland developed less out of a will to settle there, or out of deep religious belief, but rather out of a long tradition of philanthropy within their own community. Stork and Rose argue that those, who supported the founding of the state of Israel in earlier periods, and contributed financially, did so out of a rather philanthropic impulse than out of any deep commitment to Zionism (cf. Stork/Rose 43). Another factor accounting for the predisposition to Zionism is “the collective memory of persecution” (ibid.), while the third and probably most important factor was of course anti-Semitism in general. Even before the rise of Hitler and the Holocaust, there was obviously enough anti-Semitism alive in Europe as well as in the United States to produce an uneasiness and uncertainty among Jews, although they steadily climbed the economic and social ladder in the US (cf. ibid.).

Interestingly enough, two of the foremost and earliest Zionist ideologists in the US were former Reform scholars and members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which originally was uncompromisingly anti-Zionist (cf. Polish 262). While Reform Judaism was clearly promoting a humanity-embracing universalism, Zionism was said to promote a narrower particularism, meaning there was a tension developing between universalism and nationalism. Caspar Levis (1860-1934) was one of the early Zionists, proposing not only a Jewish State for refugees, but a Jewish homeland for a point of common reference. However, Bernard Felsenthal (1822-1908), influenced much by the ideas of Theodor Herzl, was placing rescue at the very top of his Zionist agenda (cf. Polish 265). There was the main question among scholars, whether Zionism was generally pursuing a political course or trying to revive the spiritual qualities of Judaism. Richard Gottheil (1862-1936) answered this question by trying to bring those two

concerns together, arguing that both are inherent to Zionist ideology (cf. Polish 266). Gottheil was assuming that the diaspora would continue as a normative phenomenon in Jewish life, thirty-six years before the creation of the state of Israel. During the course of World War II, as the process of loss of Jewish identity and the relationship among the various Jewries in the world intensified, he clearly saw Israel as the unifying agent:

A unified religion is no longer possible in the modern world and this must be replaced by a 'physical center' that 'will serve as a point toward which the thoughts, aspirations and longings of the Diaspora Jews will converge, and from which they will draw, each in his own measure, that sufficiency of moral and religious strength that will enable them to resist the encroachments of their surroundings'. (Polish 266)

What is important to mention is the fact that anti-Semitism did not necessarily imply anti-Zionist ideology, meaning that support for a Jewish homeland did not only come from the Jews themselves, but also from the non-Jewish population, partly holding anti-Semitic tendencies, which manifested itself in the establishment of a series of autonomous organizations set up to enlist non-Jewish support for Zionism (cf. MERIP Reports 6). The largest of these organizations were the Pro-Palestine Federation of America and the American Palestine Committee (APC), while most of their efforts were focused on gathering signatures on petitions protesting British immigration restrictions to Palestine (ibid.). But not only did Great Britain try to restrict immigration to Palestine, but also the United States restricted immigration from Jewish European refugees, which leads to a certain paradox. Certainly, a large wave of immigration to the US in times of or shortly after the Great Depression would have meant further enormous challenges for the economic and social system, which came rather inconveniently at that time. Furthermore, the Jewish population in America to some extent refused such a large-scale immigration.

By further supporting Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish homeland, the United States did not only show their support of Jewish refugees, but this also meant a solution to their refugee and immigration problem in the US.

As the Second World War finally came to an end, American Jewry was of course motivated by other aspects to support the foundation of a Jewish homeland. Sorrow, fear, anger, compassion, and also the element of guilt were spreading among American Jews (cf. Stork/Rose 49):

With the onslaught of the Shoah, American Jewry overnight became the political and intellectual center of Zionism outside Palestine. The spiritual resources of the American-Jewish community, having been cultivated for almost half a century, became indispensable for the national struggle that was to be waged. (Polish 268)

Although a minority of Jews in the US believed in Zionism because of religious or political reasons, American Zionism then mostly differs from the European version in the sense that it seems to be a form of loyalty to those Jews, who had been affected by the horrors of World War II and the Shoah. Stork and Rose sum up the phenomenon of American Zionism as follows

Between 1945 and 1967, Americans as private citizens (not all of them Jews) sent one billion, five hundred million dollars in contributions to Israel. But, as Hanna Arendt predicted, the American Jewish community did not send its children. [...] Throughout this period the Zionism of American Jews remained on the traditional philanthropic level. Within this process, all of the institutions of the Jewish community were zionized. In the face of the decline of many old, religious, institutional and cultural loyalties on post-war, urban and suburban America, Israel emerged as the unifying cultural and political focus for a large portion of the Jewish communities. For almost all American Jews, Zionism, in the minimal sense of affinity and support for the Jewish state, became an integral part of Jewish identity. (Stork/Rose 50)

1.2.2 Diaspora – Exile or Basis of Judaism?

After having framed the concept of Zionism, and mentioned the concept of diaspora several times, it is essential to take a closer look at the latter, in order to understand its origins and later existing tensions in the context of Zionist ideologies. The word 'diaspora' has its origins in the Greek word *διασπορά*, meaning 'dispersion', appearing in the Ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (cf. Jewish Virtual Library C). The Jewish diaspora is sometimes referred to as *galut*, deriving from the Yiddish word 'Golus', meaning 'exile'. It describes the Jewish escape from the region of the Kingdom of Judah, which began in the 6th century BCE with the destruction of the First Temple, and the later emigration from wider Eretz Israel (ibid.). The Jewish people have ever since then continued to spread in areas and countries all over the world, and currently live by the majority in countries like Israel, the United States, France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, Argentina and Germany (ibid.).

Over the centuries and years, there have been discussions of whether Jewish living in the diaspora equals living in exile, or whether it is exactly what defines Judaism. Polish argues that up until the Emancipation, when the Jewish people in

Western Europe gained civil equality, at least to a certain degree, there had been no distinction between the concepts of exile and diaspora (cf. Polish 273). Accordingly, especially American Jewry brought about a new distinction between the two concepts. The meaning of the concept of diaspora shifted from being understood as exile to an understanding indicating Jewish people living outside of their traditional homeland, “but chose to do so freely rather than being compelled by oppression and historical misfortune” (Polish 274). Feeling rather comfortable in their adopted and native land, American Jews at the same time felt obligated to support fellow Jews who indeed lived in *galut* in lands of persecution. The – particularly American - diaspora developed into a place where Jews felt that they could also develop a high degree of Jewish vitality and freedom.

One central assumption of certain strands of Zionist ideology, mostly the rather nationalist currents of Zionism, is the general rejection of Jews living in the diaspora, since this was viewed as restricting the full growth of Jewish national life (cf. Schweid 133). With the rise of the state of Israel, there was the dominant belief of Israelis that all American Jews would in fact live in *galut*, since all Jews living outside of the state were regarded as living in exile, with the only remedy for that situation being *aliyah*, the immigration to Israel (Polish 274).

Considering the two major strands of thinking with regards to the concepts of Zionism and diaspora developing in the course of the 20th century, there is on the one hand the opinion that Jewish existence outside of Israel equals living in exile, while on the other hand Jewish diaspora is perceived as a major characteristic of Judaism. Mordecai Kaplan, for example, was a member of the American intellectual advocates of the tenability of the diaspora, arguing that a rich diaspora existence was a corollary (secondary to Israel) to the Jewish state (cf. Polish 275). According to Kaplan, Israel serves as a common point of reference and identification for all Jews, while the diaspora could even serve as a creative impulse, offering the Jewish people to live simultaneously in two civilizations (ibid.). Krome sums up this debate as follows

During the inter-war years, and certainly in the aftermath of World War II, one of the dominant trends in Jewish historical writing was distinctly Zionist in orientation, and ‘Zionocentric’ historians often regarded the diaspora (*galut*) as fraught with the twin dangers of violence and assimilation. Ghetto life, which shielded Jews from cultural contamination even as it restricted their freedom of movement, was also said ironically to have enabled creativity. (Krome 284)

Furthermore, historian Cecil Roth developed a vision of the significance of diaspora to the Jewish people, arguing that Jewish creativity could only be expressed by possessing “a firm grasp of Jewish history into the broader sweep of European history” (Krome 283). In legitimizing the ‘galut’, Cecil Roth also provided justification for the development of a dual identity for modern Jewish life “that was both national and Jewish simultaneously” (ibid.). It was Roth’s firm belief that Jewish history was a product of creative interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish society as well as that particularly the American Jewry had become “a vital part in the maintenance of Jewish life in the modern world” (Krome 287).

This tension of the concepts of Jewish diaspora and Zionist ideology, the latter of which resulting in the state of Israel, where it has been developing further ever since the establishment of the Jewish state, will be central to the later discussion of the representation of Israel in postmodern Jewish American literature. Especially with regards to American Jews it is important to have those general concepts of Jewish ‘existence’, their internal tensions as well as the tensions between those concepts in mind. It is safe to say that Jews in America experienced more integration and a feeling of belonging than the Jews in the European diaspora. Hence, it is less surprising that when analyzing the representation and meaning of Israel in Jewish American literature as well as the relationship between American and Israeli Jews, we will certainly come across certain tensions.

After outlining the central concepts of Jewish diaspora and Zionism, this paper is gradually approaching its central concern of how Zionism and, as a historical consequence, how specifically Israel is imagined, represented and processed in the literary works of Jewish American authors.

1.3 Imagining Israel in Jewish American Literature

Before taking a closer look at specifically postmodern Jewish American literature on Israel, it is important to shed light on earlier literary visions of the idea and realization of a Jewish homeland. Since a fairly detailed review thereof would go beyond the scope of this paper, this chapter will provide a rather brief overview of key works broaching the issue of Zionism in general and Israel in particular.

At the end of the 19th and especially at the beginning of the 20th century, some Jewish American authors started to react to the spreading of Zionist ideologies and

ambivalent reactions thereof by adopting Zionism as an important theme in their works.

In order to provide a certain structure and overview, Andrew Furman rather generally distinguishes three essential relational phases between American Jews and Zionist ideologies which later resulted into the realization of the state of Israel during the course of the 20th century. To provide a somewhat reductive framework upon this relationship, Furman distinguishes the three phases of pre-Zionism, Zionism and post-Zionism (cf. Furman 5). Although the evolution of Jewish American fiction on Israel has probably evolved in ways too complex and various to be reducible to those three phases and categories, it is nevertheless connected to them and can be analyzed against this background.

According to Furman, one might use the term pre-Zionism (or anti-Zionism) to roughly define the American Jewish perspective towards the idea of a Jewish state and towards Zionist ideologies in general from the time of Theodor Herzl's first Zionist Congress in 1897 until roughly 1947, "when the atrocities of the Holocaust gained clarity in the United States" (Furman 5). Generally, Furman describes this period as a time when Zionism was a rather unpopular movement in the United States among American Jews for religious, assimilationist, socialist or downright traditionalist reasons. This attitude changes only until after the Holocaust convinced a majority of dissenters that Jews needed their own state "if they were to survive as a people" (Furman 6). Thus, the term pre-Zionism refers to the *zeitgeist* of the Jewish American community before the Holocaust, when a Jewish homeland was still only an idea.

The 'Zionist' phase, according to Furman, therefore refers to the period of the greatest and most uncritical support of Israel, a period when a majority of American Jews accepted Israel's moral righteousness almost without question. Thus, Furman argues that the "founding of Israel in 1948 precipitated this period, and it reached its zenith just after Israel's stunning defeat of the combined Arab forces in the 1967 Six-Day War" (Furman 6). Howe argues that for American Zionists, Israel brought a condition of permanent crisis, since they were reduced to a society of sympathizers from afar (cf. Howe 628). The reaction of most American Jews, therefore, was mostly to show their solidarity with Israel "less as a fulfillment of the Zionist or any other idea than as a vibrant historical reality, the

place where survivors of the Holocaust and other Jews in flight could make a life for themselves” (ibid.).

Finally, the period of post-Zionism was heralded by the 1980s, which is generally marked by a more critical attitude towards Israel and its policies. However, Furman emphasizes that this critical attitude towards the Jewish state should not be confused with an anti-Zionist attitude, since post-Zionism would still support the state of Israel, but would wish to see a more tolerant Israel honoring the multicultural realities of the people living within its borders (ibid.).

[T]he Lebanon invasion, the Pollard espionage affair, and the Palestinian intifada really forced American Jews to look at some of the more unpleasant, but very real, rhythms of political life in today’s Israel – instead of just the episodic moments of celebration (Friedman 478).

Furthermore, the 1996 incursions into Lebanon, the ongoing occupations of Palestinian territory in the West Bank and the Gaza strip as well as the normalization of Israel one nation among others, provided for an atmosphere in which American Jews started to be less reluctant to speak out against Israeli policy (cf. Furman 10).

Meyer Levin, a Jewish American writer, who had lived briefly in Palestine, probably published the first significant Zionist novel *Yehuda* in 1931 in a time when American Jews were generally opposed to the establishment of an independent Jewish homeland in Palestine (cf. Guttman 108). Levin’s novel is set in a kibbutz in Palestine, depicting the internal tensions at the kibbutz as well as threats coming from the Arab population, who look upon the Jews as interlopers. With his novel, Levin tried to challenge the pre-Zionist milieu within the Jewish American community, driven primarily by his strong ideological convictions concerning the Middle East as well as Jewish American literature in general (cf. Furman 14). His second Zionist novel was published in 1947, called *My Father’s House*, “a tenuously allegorical book about a juvenile refugee sententiously welcomed home to Israel, the House of his Father” (Guttman 109). The Jewish American reading audience reviewed both novels rather critically and partly with intense rejection.

Another Jewish American writer publishing early Zionist books was Michael Blankfort, whose works such as *The Brave and the Blind* (1940) or *The Juggler* (1952) also indicated a politically radical point of view. His works mainly deal with

Jewish immigrants arriving in Israel, discovering and beginning to understand their 'real' Jewish identity (cf. Guttman 109).

Those early Zionist works, except from *The Juggler*, one must remember, were written before the establishment of the Jewish state. Thus, Israel manifested itself in these novels as a dream or an idea, yet to be realized. It was a period in which only a minority of Jewish American writers were processing the idea of a Jewish homeland in their novels, mostly in a rather radical, idealized way, while the audience remained fairly critical towards Zionist ideas at that time.

The most popular novel of the Zionist genre, written in a time that Furman describes as the zenith of Zionism, was, without doubt, Leon Uris's *Exodus*, written in 1958, dealing with the establishment of Israel in 1948. Unlike Levin, Uris was facing a decidedly Zionist milieu when he wrote *Exodus*, but just like Levin, "he was driven by his ideological convictions concerning the Middle East and Jewish-American fiction" (Furman 15). Furman argues that

He wrote *Exodus* to tout the heroism of the Israeli sabra, to confirm the maliciousness of the Arab, and to challenge what had emerged by the late 1950s as the archetypal Jewish protagonist in American literature. "*Exodus*", Uris claims in a prefatory note to the paperback edition, "is about a fighting people", not about "the cliché Jewish characters who have cluttered up our American fiction". Lamentably, Uris merely replaced one set of clichés with another. From his canned depiction of the heroic Israeli freedom fighter to his facile demonization of the Arabs, Uris affirmed everything that American Jews wanted so desperately to believe about the Middle East. (Furman 15)

The fairly enthusiastic public reception of the novel furthermore shows how eager American Jews were at the time after the Holocaust to embrace this heroic, courageous image of a Jew.

Leon Uris wrote *Exodus* after the dream of a Jewish homeland became reality, but at a time of immense insecurity and instability. It was uncertain how long Israel would remain a reality, since it would not establish itself as a viable national entity in the Middle East until probably after its victory in the Six-Day War 1967 (cf. Furman 17).

Another writer including Israel in his fiction was Hugh Nissenson who published his collection of stories *A Pile of Stones* in 1965. The seven stories included in this collection provide two stories set in Israel. *The Blessing* tells the story of a German immigrant in Israel, while *The Well* conveys a sense of tragic conflict of two cultures and two nations, laying claim to the same land (cf. Guttman 111). In contrast to Levin's or Uris's rather polemic literature on Israel,

Nissenson's literature is more balanced. Guttman claims that it is "the breadth of Nissenson's sympathy that enables him to write movingly of Israeli and Arab [...]" (Guttman 122).

Eventually, according to Furman, it was Hugh Nissenson and Saul Bellow heralding the post-Zionist period with regards to literature who "were able to eschew Levin's and Uris's Zionist pieties to explore the psychological costs of Israeli militarism through less heroic, but ultimately, more human characters" (Furman 17). Works of Philip Roth, Anne Roiphe and Tova Reich provided further development of the Jewish American novel on Israel during the second half of the 20th century. While Roth takes on the Palestinian problem and the tensions between Zionism and diaspora, Reich and Roiphe are more concerned with the problem of Israel's gender discrimination (cf. Furman 17).

The latter mentioned authors all write in the more critical spirit of post-Zionism and try to explore the central issues that have linked and divided the American and Israeli Jewish communities:

[T]he role of Israel as both safe haven and spiritual core for Jews everywhere pitted against its rampant secularism and spiritual sterility, its militarism, its deference (given Israel's parliamentary government) to the ultra-Orthodox, and its entrenched sexism. (Furman 18)

Generally speaking, the rise of the state of Israel brought many new themes, questions and tensions to Jewish American authors and literature, such as the question of whether the emergence of Israel undermined the traditional Jewish concept of *galut*, resulting in tensions between the Jewish diaspora and the Jewish 'homeland'. Furthermore, questions of 'Jewishness' and what it meant to remain a Jew. Thus, questions of Jewish identity have become more pressing, since 'Jewishness' could less and less "be described as a common culture, the substance of shared immigrant life" (Howe 629).

In this chapter I have outlined responses of Jewish American authors to both early Zionist ideas and to the actual realization of a Jewish 'homeland' as well as to the first decades of Israel's actual existence. The further focus of this paper will be laid on the question of how postmodern Jewish American authors approach Israel and its underlying Zionist ideas, which will be done specifically through Bellow's *To Jerusalem and Back* (1976) and Roth's *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (1993).

2. Saul Bellow's Quest for Identity in *To Jerusalem and Back*

[T]he same Saul Bellow whose distracted, brainy protagonists nearly convince us that they have the Big Answers turned out to be just as confused about the Middle East as anybody else. (Pinsker 397)

2.1 Bellow's Israel Skepticism

In 1975, then already well-established Jewish American author Saul Bellow spent three months in Israel accompanying his wife Alexandra, who had just accepted a guest lectureship at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Being the author of famous works such as *Dangling Man* (1944), *The Victim* (1947), *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Herzog* (1969) and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), Bellow had covered a wide range of themes, such as moral responsibility, individual freedom, anti-Semitism, post-Holocaust Jewish America and questions of Jewish identity.

In this paper I argue that Saul Bellow in his nonfictional account of the Jewish 'homeland' experiences a fundamental change and development of his initially rather skeptical attitude towards and perceptions of Israel during his stay and throughout his narrative. This changing perspective predominantly involves the overcoming of self-imposed binary oppositions, strongly affecting the perception of his identity. Those binary oppositions are revealed by Bellow's initial contrasting of concepts such as 'Israel' and 'America', the past and the present, as well as rationality and spirituality. I further argue that Israel, ultimately, certainly serves as a source of 'identification' for Bellow as he begins to feel part of a larger Jewish community during his stay.

As most Jewish American authors writing at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, Bellow did not approach Israel at the beginnings of his writing career. What is more, Bellow had long refused to be called a *Jewish* American author, claiming "[t]he whole Jewish writer business is sheer invention – by the media, by critics and by 'scholars'" (qtd. in Pinsker xi). Furthermore, before World War II, the author seemed to be rather skeptical of the concept of Zionism and the idea of a Jewish homeland belonging to a generation of Jewish intellectuals who tended to perceive Zionism as a "virulent form of Jewish nationalism during the 1930s and 40s" and explicitly criticizing, among others, Meyer Levin's overt Zionist sentiments (cf. Furman 61). Considering himself a secular Jew, who would rather prefer to be called an American than a Jewish writer, Bellow's sense of his

'Jewishness', or at least his Jewish heritage, nevertheless is revealed in many of his works. Louis Ehrenkrantz states that it had always rather been "the commercialization of his Jewishness that Bellow fears, not the identification itself. He is no self-hating self-denying Jew" (cf. Furman 87). Giving up his Marxist-socialist views to a certain degree, Bellow gradually started to abandon his anti-Zionist sentiments starting by the time of the Six-Day War in 1967 and being intensified by the Yom Kippur War in 1973. In fact, Bellow travelled to Israel during the war in 1967 to serve as a correspondent for the *Newsday* magazine (cf. Furman 62). Thomas Friedman in his work *From Beirut to Jerusalem* probably best summarizes the changing *zeitgeist* of the time:

After the 1967 war, the perception of Israel in the mind of many American Jews shifted radically, from Israel as a safe haven for other Jews to Israel as the symbol and carrier of Jewish communal identity [...]. When the smoke cleared and the extent of Israel's victory became apparent, American Jews pored over the headlines, watched all the television footage of Israeli soldiers swimming in the Suez Canal, and said to themselves, 'My God, look who we are! We have power! We do not fit the Shylock image, we are ace pilots; we are not the cowering timid Jews who get sand kicked in their faces, we are tank commanders. (Friedman 454-455)

Ted Solotaroff agrees with Friedman when he states that "since the Six-Day War the survival of Israel has been the paramount concern of organized Jewish life and probably the paramount source of Jewish identity" (Solotaroff 33), while Andrew Furman refers to Arthur Hertzberg who adds that the American Jews' "identification with Israel" became "their religion" after the Six-Day War (qtd. in Furman 63). Furthermore, in trying to avoid creating a sudden atmosphere of idealization of Israel among Jewish American authors, Furman states that "Bellow was much too canny a writer and human being to be swept blindly away by the romance of Israel's military victory in 1967" (Furman 63). Nevertheless, Saul Bellow starts to approach Israel for the first time in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, in which a Holocaust survivor tries to come to terms with the past by, among other things, traveling to Israel. But the author focuses even more squarely on Israel and the Middle East in his non-fiction work *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account* from 1976, which was written by Bellow during his three-month stay in Israel in 1975.

The questions arising now are the following: **How** does one of the most important Jewish American authors approach the Jewish state in his work in the second half of the 20th century? Which strategies and literary devices does Saul

Bellow use to maintain his very personal account of Israel and the Middle East? How does he define himself against the backdrop of the existence of Israel as a Jewish homeland and which role does the latter play for him as an American Jew?

The next section of this paper will analyze Bellow's work with regards to its literary aesthetics and the respective function(s) thereof.

2.2 An Intertextual and Personal Approach to Israel

To Jerusalem and Back is an account of Bellow's stay in Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, certainly differing from a chronological travel narrative. His personal account takes the form of a travelogue, but also contains elements of a diary entry and an essay. The author, calling himself "an interested inexpert observer", describes his encounters with numerous people – Israeli politicians, poets, barbers, professors and masseurs. The work contains Bellow's conversations with these people, his observations and ideas, as well as records of his readings during his stay, all of them dealing with questions of Jewishness, Jewish history, Israel and the Middle East. Hence, *To Jerusalem and Back* furthermore includes various intertextual references to scholars, authors or journalists Bellow occupied himself with during his stay in Israel. In a *New York Times* review of Bellow's work, Irving Howe states:

Through quick sketches and vignettes, Bellow evokes places, ideas, people, reaching a sharp if patched-together picture of contemporary Israel. Writers are often drawn to this loose form, since it allows them to dazzle and flee, shift tones at will, evade the labor of transitions. (Howe 224)

At one point in his book, Bellow states that "[i]f you want everyone to love you, don't discuss Israeli politics" (TJAB 166), but discussing them is very much what he does in *To Jerusalem and Back*.

In *To Jerusalem and Back* the reader is confronted with references to the works Bellow is reading, who cites such notable scholars as Elie Kedourie, Walter Laquer, Jakov Lind, Malcolm Kerr, Yehoshafat Harkabi, Bernard Lewis, Theodore Draper, among others, all of whom provide different aspects and points of views of the political landscape of Israel and its position in the Middle East. Moreover, the author gives an account of his encounters with Israeli politicians such as Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Defense Minister Shimon Peres, with Israeli writer colleagues such as Amos Oz or David Shahar and an editor of an Arab newspaper.

Furthermore, the author includes reports of encounters with Israeli masseurs and barbers, providing the readers with their perspectives. By depicting his impressions at dinners with orthodox families and meetings with clerical persons, Bellow provides the readership with another perspective of the Jewish state and its daily life, namely with the deeply religiously afflicted side of Israel. The author manages to discuss Israeli politics and the country's position in the Middle East by including all of those different voices, to which he adds his own personal opinions at times rather explicitly while at other times rather interlined.

However, irrespective of those accounts of various voices, Bellow's personal attitude and sentiments before, during and after his stay in Israel are present throughout the whole narrative. While Bellow seemed to be rather dissatisfied with certain aspects of his previous work *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, stating in an interview that "*Sammler* would have been a better book if I had dealt openly with some of my feelings, instead of filtering them through" (Brans qtd. In Furman 72), it was Bellow's self-imposed demand to "get it right" this time. *To Jerusalem and Back* can, from this point of view, be regarded as his attempt to revise and polish his rather obscure earlier approach to Israel and to create his very own and personal account.

Small wonder, given this self-critique, that Bellow adopts in *To Jerusalem and Back* the genre of the non-fiction journal which allows him, of course, to write in his own voice and thereby deal more openly with the feelings he suppresses in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. (Furman 72)

From this perspective, *To Jerusalem and Back* can be regarded as Bellow's statement on and intensive discussion of Israel in the 1970s; a statement for which his critics, his readership and perhaps he himself had been waiting until then.

In this section I have analyzed the literary aesthetics of Bellow's work as well as the respective function(s) thereof. Subsequently, I will discuss Bellow's initial skepticism towards Israel as well as questions of anti-Zionist attitudes in *To Jerusalem and Back*.

2.3 The Question of Anti-Zionist Sentiments In *To Jerusalem and Back*

Right at the beginning of Bellow's account, the reader gets an impression of the author's attitude of and feelings about his journey to Israel. The writer starts his personal account with depicting a note on the flight to Israel, which is affected by a group of Hasidim – a subgroup of ultra-orthodox Jews. Representing the majority of passengers on the plane, the Hasidim are seemingly on their way to Israel to attend a circumcision. Although Bellow obviously feels estranged by this close confrontation with ultra-orthodox Judaism, there is nothing completely unfamiliar to him in the situation:

To me there is nothing foreign in these hats, sidelocks, and fringes. It is my childhood revisited. At the age of six, I myself wore a tallith katan, or scapular, under my shirt, only mine was a scrap of green calico print, whereas theirs are white linen. God instructed Moses to speak to the children of Israel and to 'bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments'. So they are still wearing them some four thousand years later. We find our seats, two in a row of three, toward the rear of the aircraft. The third is occupied by a young Hasid, highly excited, who is staring at me. (TJAB 2)

While reflecting on his encounter with the group of young ultra-orthodox Jews, Bellow recognizes elements of his own upbringing; elements that are rather familiar to him, remembering him of his own childhood and upbringing. On the other hand, the reader gets the impression that he considers this form of Judaism as something rather obsolete and archaic, commenting on the Hasidim's traditional clothes, which they are "still wearing [...] some four thousand years later". This scene arouses the impression of Bellow feeling fairly distanced and estranged when being confronted with this form of orthodox Judaism, which he rather associates with the past and his own childhood. Hence, one gets the impression that Bellow is confronted with something he can and cannot access and relate to at the same time.

After getting involved in a conversation with a Hasid, in which the young man wonders about Bellow's non-kosher eating habits and about his wife being a gentile, the author arrives in Israel feeling highly critical and distant as both an American and a secular Jew. Bellow is certainly struck by this intense confrontation with his own religion, which he views as a forecast of what to expect in Israel. The author creates an atmosphere of distance, skepticism and estrangement at the beginning of his journey to Israel.

Sophia Lehmann argues that when approaching Israel and its history one should keep in mind that there are, at least, two different types of history. Thus, she argues that there is Israel's

biblical religious history, which dictates that the state was established as part of a holy return to the promised land; and contemporary political history, according to which the state was formed as a refuge for survivors of the Holocaust, as a national homeland for Jews in which they cannot be marginalized, evicted, or persecuted as they were in the Diaspora. (Lehmann 80)

I argue that when Bellow arrives in Israel, he associates the country with its religious history, feeling rather skeptical of this sacred and ancient way of thinking, while his stance as an American is rather clear and confident. Staying in Jerusalem, he is certainly struck by the atmosphere the city exhibits to him: "This atmosphere makes the American commonplace 'out of this world' true enough to give your soul a start" (TJAB 10). The author perceives Jerusalem as a place where the past is overshadowing the present. In this sense, the beginning of Bellow's work, especially his flight to the Holy Land, very much emphasizes the differences the author senses between America and Israel, between places he associated on the one hand with the past and on the other hand with the present, as well as between religion and secularism. Lehmann emphasizes this argument:

[A] cloistered, religious fanatic and a secular, rational American. Bellow uses the Hasidim as a metonym for his criticisms of Israel because his preconceived notion of Israel hinges on religious rather than national criteria: he interprets the Hasidim as a forewarning of what to expect in the Holy Land. Furthermore, as an assimilated American, Bellow interprets the idea of Israel as limiting – all Jews sequestered together – rather than liberating – the Israeli idea of a country in which Jews can determine the national culture and live freely as either secular or religious Jews. (Lehmann 81)

Because of this rather critical attitude towards Orthodoxy and the biblical idea of Israel as the Jews' promised land, some critics accused Bellow of being an anti-Zionist. One of those critics is Emily Miller Budick, who expresses her opinion on Bellow's work in her article "The Place of Israel in American Writing: Reflections on Saul Bellow's 'To Jerusalem and Back'". I will briefly illustrate her argument, however, I will do this in order to challenge certain aspects thereof, since I argue that it becomes clear throughout Bellow's narrative that he is in fact strongly in favor of a Jewish state.

Budick comes up with a very strong claim, stating that Bellow's work reveals aspects "of a larger American tradition of thinking about Israel which resists the

idea of Israel as a material place" (Budick 59). Hence, she argues that Bellow joins Herman Melville and Mark Twain in their attitudes towards Palestine, when they wrote *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (Melville, 1887) and *Innocents Abroad* (Twain, 1869). This attitude, Budick argues, was coined by a clear detachment from religious motives that characterized other Holy Land narratives. Consequently, authors like Melville or Twain were refusing a literal – territorially existing – Israel that is founded on the basis of biblical 'myths'. To understand this argument, one has to go back to the origins of American history. According to Budick, it has profound implications for the place of Israel in the American consciousness, "both for those Americans who shared its original aspirations and for those (like Twain and Melville) who did not" (Budick 61).

When Bellow describes the Hasid on his flight to Israel, he states:

In me he sees what deformities the modern age can produce in the seed of Abraham. In him I see a piece of history, an antiquity. It is rather as if Puritans in seventeenth-century dress and observing seventeenth-century customs were to be found still living in Boston or Plymouth. (TJAB 5)

Again, Bellow contrasts the modern age embodied by him as an American and the "antiquity" personified by the young Hasid. But what is even more striking is the fact that Bellow brings up the comparison with 17th century Puritans arriving in America, which is not of an arbitrary nature. The Puritans who settled in New England in the 17th century aspired to found a 'city of God', 'a city upon a hill', 'a new Jerusalem'⁷. Hence, America was, in some way, their 'Holy Land', their 'promised land'. Puritans and their founding ideologies are here compared with 20th century Zionists and their intentions of establishing a Jewish nation. In this sense, the Puritans viewed America as their 'Israel', which was, for them, not an ancient kingdom belonging to history only, but rather "a living reality, a promise and a prophecy, to be realized, in their view, in America" (Budick 60). Thus, one could argue that for them, "the biblical analogy was no mere metaphor. They believed they were reliving Old Testament history, rewriting the covenant" and in this way created their "New-English Israel" (ibid.).

Budick argues that this founding ideology has for a long time been shaping America's historical consciousness. However, a large component of American literary culture, from the 19th century onwards, created a certain response against

⁷ This was declared for the first time by John Winthrop, the Puritan leader, in his famous speech *A Model of Christian Charity* in 1630.

this early 'American Zionist' notions. She names such well-established writers as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain, who, accordingly, all contributed to this "defeating the nation's impulses toward religious enthusiasm and nationalistic fervor, both of which passions were fed by the idea of America-as-Israel. These writers refuted the notion that American history reenacted biblical history" (Budick 60) and discussed whether "Israel", the spiritual idea "and center of Christianity and Judaism both" (ibid. 61) might or should actually be a literal place. Those writers then, Budick holds, were expressing a distinctly anti-Zionistic attitude, not to be confused with an anti-Semitic attitude, which was a direct response to American Puritan history. What she suggests then, is that although Saul Bellow points to works on Palestine written by Melville and Twain only to allegedly refute their argument of the place being a savage, lifeless land, his anti-Zionistic attitudes are actually not so different from those of earlier writers.

In this way, the only point in which Bellow seems to differ from previous writers is that he comes to Jerusalem as "a friend" and "a Jew" (Budick 63), "who wishes to fulfill his responsibility" (ibid.). Hence, she states, "Israel returns him to a set of beliefs and commitments that contradicts his rationalistic assumptions. It returns him to a Jewish childhood and, though he is Canadian-born, to an American infancy he believes he has outgrown" (Budick 63). This is illustrated fairly well in the Hasidim plane scene and Bellow's estrangement from ultra-orthodox Judaism. She goes on to argue that Bellow is satirizing "literal, sacred historicity" (ibid. 64), that Jerusalem represents a lifeless, not-life-affirming place to him, which is only associated to the past and death, still haunting him when he returns to America. Generally she argues that Bellow perceives Israel's history through America's myth, meaning that he actually refutes the literal, existing place of Israel and thus participates

whole heartedly in this American tradition of resistance to America-as-Israel. Indeed, he joins with Melville and Twain in extending this tradition to include the resistance to Israel-as-Israel. Like Hawthorne and others in the American literary tradition, he condemns a repressive, ahistorical imagination. For him, Israel itself is the latest embodiment of this ahistoricity. Israel, it would seem, is perversely following in the footsteps of America precisely where America had erroneously followed in the footsteps of Israel. (Budick 67)

At the beginning of Bellow's account, his attitude is certainly critical and skeptical towards the Jewish state. He rather emphasizes the differences of secularism and religion, America and Israel as well as the present and the past.

Hence, I agree with Budick that Saul Bellow, at the beginning of his work, approaches Israel with its religious history in mind as an explicitly secular American Jew and feels alienated by the idea of founding a Jewish 'homeland' on the basis of biblical ideas. Budick argues that throughout the work Bellow keeps perceiving Jerusalem as a lifeless place overshadowed by the past, that "[a]t best, Bellow's Israel is an unfortunate historical necessity" while at "worst, it is a delusion such as afflicted the American Puritans" (Budick 68). And it is exactly this part of her argument that I strongly disagree with.

I argue that Budick ignores a fundamental aspect of Bellow's changing perspectives. She overlooks the shift in Bellow's perspective on Israel, on America as well as on his own identity and the related reassessment of his own allegations and commitments taking place during his stay in the 'Holy Land'. While I have illustrated Bellow's ambiguous attitude towards Israel and Zionism in general in this chapter, the next subsection will start the discussion of the author's changing perspectives and shifts in his attitude towards Israel and his own Jewish identity.

2.4 The fascination with Israel's 'immediate reality'

Although I do not agree with Budick on certain aspects of her argument, she is probably right in stating that at the beginning of Bellow's trip, it is predominantly the present of Israel that interests Bellow rather than its past, and it is Israel's politics that fascinate him rather than its religiously afflicted daily life. This interest in Israel's current issues is illustrated at the beginning of Bellow's stay, when he and his wife have dinner with Jerusalem's Mayor Teddy Kollek and the Armenian Archbishop. Bellow describes the Archbishop's church, its long and sacred history, the church's manuscript collection and the antique tiles, but still emphasizes his distant, secular attitude when he writes:

But all these things are in some way external. We outsiders are not *stable* enough to appreciate them. We inherit our mode of appreciation from the Victorians, from a time of safety and leisure, when dinner guests knew better than to smoke after the main course, when Levantines were Levantines and culture was still culture. But in these days of armored attacks on Yom Kippur, of Vietnams, Watergates, Mansons, Amins, terrorist massacres at Olympic Games, what are illuminated manuscripts, what are masterpieces of wrought iron, what are holy places? We soon get around to contemporary matters. (TJAB 7)

By referring to himself as an outsider, who is “not stable enough to appreciate” those pieces of sacred history, Bellow is clearly distinguishing himself as a secularist, who is not able to relate to or define himself through the appreciation of sacred history.

This is the starting point of a long discussion of Israeli politics, of Yasir Arafat’s most recent deeds and of the conflict between two nations claiming their rights to the same territory. By emphasizing the immediacy of Israel’s present and its permanent involvement in world politics, his criticism of Israel’s hold to the past is neutralized to a certain degree. The author realizes how the past is inevitably still affecting Israel’s present:

One of the oddities of life in this country: when someone says ‘the struggle for existence’, he means literally that. With us such expressions are metaphorical [...]. And these are not fictions that we see on the box but frightful realities – ‘historical events’, instantaneous history. (TJAB 70)

By quoting the Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua, Bellow emphasizes how political questions and world politics are coining Israeli daily life, which is affected by uncertainty:

The feeling of being swept along and of uncertainty as regards the future prevents you from seeing things in any perspective whatsoever [...] You live the moment without any perspective, but you cannot break free of the moment, forget the moment. You cannot cut yourself off and not read newspapers or stop hearing the news over the radio for weeks on end, as you could six or seven years ago. (TJAB 21)

It is Israel’s “brutal reality” that the author acknowledges here and develops respect for as well as the “instantaneous history” one experiences in Israel. He experiences immediately how an Israeli people is daily struggling for its right to exist

Experiencing Israeli life, the author begins to reflect on the different lives of Jews living in the Diaspora (America) and the Jews living in Israel. He begins to feel rather ambiguous about the freedoms of the Jewish American Diaspora. Amos Oz writes: “I am a Zionist because I do not want to exist as a fragment of a symbol in the consciousness of others... . That is why my place is in the land of the Jews” (qtd. In Lehmann 82). Lehmann interprets this quote as follows: “As an Israeli, he is a reality rather than an abstract symbol, defined by himself rather than in relation to another surrounding dominant culture” (Lehmann 82). It is this dichotomy between Israel and the diaspora to which Bellow points as well. It appears that he

reflects on questions such as: Does living in the diaspora mean to live as just a 'fragment' of a larger Jewish community? What does it mean to be Jewish in the diaspora and outside of Israel?

Throughout his stay, Bellow starts to perceive life in Israel as 'more real' than life in the diaspora and emphasizes Israel's 'immediacy'. His enthusiasm for America on the contrary, and American abstractions gradually wanes. Thus, he argues that Americans can choose whether to read the newspaper or not, perceiving America "more a world than a country" (TJAB 130), entrapped in its own insular issues and thus distanced from international concerns and world politics. Experiencing Israel for three months, being confronted with Israeli daily life, with all its implications, draws Bellow closer to the Jewish state, its history and its present.

The subject of all this talk is, ultimately, survival – the survival of a decent society created in Israel within a few decades. At first, this is hard to grasp because the setting is so civilized. You are in a city like many another – well, not quite, for Jerusalem is the only ancient city I've ever seen whose antiquities are not on display as relics but are in daily use. Still, the city is a modern city with modern utilities. You shop in supermarkets, you say good morning to friends on the telephone, you hear symphony orchestras on the radio. But suddenly the music stops and a terrorist bomb is reported. A new explosion outside a coffee shop on the Jaffa Road: six young people killed and thirty-eight more wounded. Pained, you put down your civilized drink. Uneasy, you go out to your civilized dinner. Bombs are exploding everywhere. Dynamite has just been thrown in London; the difference is that when a bomb goes off in a West End restaurant the fundamental right of England to exist is not in dispute. (TJAB 25)

This paragraph obviously illustrates the ambiguity Israel, and specifically Jerusalem, entails for Bellow. The author portrays his rather subjective view of how he experiences the country. At times Bellow experiences Israel as a "decent" country, which was built by Zionists only within a few decades. He gets to know Israel as a "decent society" whose "setting is so civilized" and with whom he senses to have more in common than he perhaps originally thought. The author enjoys staying in Israel until "suddenly the music stops" and one is faced with the other side of Israel, with the brutal reality of the country's situation and with the people's struggling to survive and right to exist.

Furthermore, this part of the text displays Bellow's realization that Jerusalem actively unites the present and the past, being both a modern city and an ancient place whose antiquities are actively integrated into modern daily life. It also

illustrates his growing consciousness regarding Israel's violent daily life and the people's constant struggle for survival.

Bellow realizes how close Israel's history is connected with the history of the Jewish people in general, and how the Jewish struggle for existence is still so very present in Israel.

What you do know is that there is one fact of Jewish life unchanged by the creation of a Jewish state: you cannot take your right to live for granted. Others can; you cannot. This is not to say that everyone else is living pleasantly and well under a decent regime. No, it means only that the Jews, because they are Jews, have never been able to take the right to live as a natural right. (TJAB 26)

The author seems to be frustrated by the feeling that the Jews have never been able "to take the right to live as a natural right", which he senses mirrored in challenges of Israel's moral right to exist, coming either from the European intellectual Marxist left, or from the Arab countries surrounding Israel.

Being confronted with the history of the Jewish people and Israel's present daily struggle for existence, the author is drawn closer to Israel and a larger Jewish community and forced to reflect upon his earlier sentiments and his own American Diaspora identity.

Nevertheless, Furman points out that Bellow remains skeptical when it comes to Israel's controversial occupation of the Arab territories and criticizes overtly the strict Halakha, the Jewish law (Furman 74). Bellow, just as well, has little understanding for those Israeli Jews who "call upon American Jews to give up their illusions about goyish democracy and emigrate full speed to Israel. As if America's two-hundred-year record of liberal democracy signified nothing" (qtd. in *ibid.*), which still illustrates a certain tension between Israeli Jews and American Jews. Nevertheless, Bellow certainly develops an understanding of Israeli life and a Jewish people that is shaped by dispersion and persecution, still fighting for survival and its right to exist.

However, it is important to note that he nevertheless maintains his stance as an American Jew throughout the narrative, valuing the Jews' freedom in the American Diaspora. In a sense, he also remains loyal to his initial skeptical attitude towards the religious idea of Zionism. This becomes apparent when he recites Prof. Lamm, who heavily criticizes certain current Israeli politics. Lamm claims that Israel "has lost touch with reality" (TJAB 66) and that

[t]he need to save the Jews was translated into something else – the project of ‘redeeming the land’. The early Zionist leadership was willing to accept partition ‘in order to absorb and save the Jews rather than to remain faithful to slogans that it itself had coined. Rescue is the true aim of Zionism – not the ‘liberation’ of the Promised Land but the rescue of the Jews, repeatedly threatened with annihilation. (TJAB 66-67)

By referring to Lamm’s argument, Bellow in fact expresses a Zionist attitude, but one that goes back to the original Herzl Zionism, whose fundamental idea was the rescue of a pursued people by giving them a *homeland*. It is this rescuing idea of Zionism, rather than the founding of a *state*, which is based on biblical history and its idea of returning to their Promised Land, which is emphasized here.

Thus, when Budick suggests that Bellow refers to Twain and Melville to join them in their negative attitude towards Palestine, she ignores that Bellow quotes these authors precisely to refute their description of Palestine in the 19th century as a savage land and to reinvent Israel through his own perceptions. He cites them in order to show how parts of Palestine have developed into the vital country of Israel. When Bellow returns to America he associates Israel with vitality and intensity:

Later in spring (in Chicago), the lilacs have come and gone, and blossoming trees have dropped their flowers – Spring this year of 1976 is cooler than it normally is. In March I hear from friends in Israel how beautiful the season is. I remember the anemones on the hillside of Galilee. (TJAB 179)

The author describes the spring in Chicago as rather dull, while Israel apparently experiences a beautiful season. Bellow suggests metaphorically that while the United States is a country shaken by wars and death (i.e. through the consequences of the Vietnam War, the Cold War, etc.), Israel may perhaps be experiencing its spring. Strengthened by the victory of the Six Day War and the outcomes of the Yom Kippur War, Israel gained new self-confidence and might be experiencing its ‘May’ or its heyday, while America seems to be entrapped in its own world. However, only one paragraph later, this positive vision of Israel is shattered, when Bellow receives a letter from John Auerbach, which shows Bellow’s awareness of Israel’s complex political situation that is continuously challenging Israel’s ‘spring’, so to speak:

About politics, he writes that he has been in Israel for thirty years now and becomes more confused by the year. The politicians fight among themselves – ‘all this in a hostile world, and the stack of weapons rising daily all around’. There are troubles in Jerusalem over the Temple Mount, and demonstrations and riots on the West Bank. (TJAB 179)

Returning to America, Bellow is confused about his experiences in and memories of Israel. He seems to idealize the Jewish state up to a certain degree, while he reevaluates certain aspects of America. Lehmann at this point argues that both “Bellow’s denigration of America, like his idealization of Israel as a place of unmediated reality, is based in myth” (Lehmann 83). She points to Robert Boyers who notes:

Bellow’s Jerusalem has a lot in common with the mythic Africa of his novel *Henderson the Rain King*: ‘a place of spiritual refreshment from the usually indolent, all too sophisticated western traveler’ (95). Bellow’s depiction of America in *To Jerusalem and Back* partakes of a different yet equally pervasive belief in the powers of technology to create a better future. (qtd. in Lehmann: 83)

Spending three months in Israel, Bellow has come from viewing Israel as a country of archaic (Jewish) traditions that is stuck in the past, to a vital country where a people is fighting for its right to exist, a people that he seems to begin feeling to be part of:

Life in Israel is far from enviable, yet there is a clear purpose in it. People are fighting for the society they have created, and for life and honor. Israel is too small and too special a case to be grouped with the democracies of the West or contrasted with them. (TJAB 141)

Although he acknowledges all the complexities and problems Israel is dealing with and at times criticizes its politics, the reader gets the feeling that Bellow is, in fact, drawing a rather optimistic image of a young state in its ‘springtime’.

In this section I have demonstrated how Bellow’s attitude towards Israel and attachment to the country have changed and developed during his stay, which is reflected throughout his literary narrative. This analysis has shown how Bellow’s critical attitude towards Israel, regarding it as a country based on ‘archaic’ religious beliefs, changed. Instead, the author developed a deep understanding for a Jewish people that is trying to establish their new home in the Middle East. In the next section, this paper will illustrate how Bellow continuously erases his primarily self-imposed binary oppositions that he had in mind when he arrived in Israel.

2.5 Bellow's Relinquishment of Binary Oppositions

While at the beginning of his trip to Israel, Bellow arrived with clear conceptions and oppositional categories in mind, these oppositions gradually become blurred and are finally revised in their entirety. Saul Bellow arrives in Israel as a secular Jewish American author, who feels estranged by the first religious encounters he experiences. Hence he expects Israel, especially Jerusalem, to be an ancient place, "out of this world" (TJAB 10). By engaging in debates about current Israeli politics and discussing the nation's past, present and future, he becomes more and more concerned with the Jewish state. Lehmann writes:

And the past and present of Israel, which he initially described as contrasting elements, now become reconciled, as evinced in his description of the way in which the landscape reflects the country's history. Commenting on the length of Israel's past and the way it is incorporated into the present, Bellow writes 'Elsewhere you die and disintegrate. Here you die and mingle'. Instead of being forgotten after death, one becomes part of the historical record which is encapsulated in the landscape. (Lehmann 84)

In addition, Bellow states: "But there is nothing in the brilliant air and the massive white clouds hanging over the crumpled mountains that suggests exhaustion" (TJAB 10). In this way, his previous assumption of Israel being an antiquated relic turns into an idea of Israel as "an intriguing synthesis of contrasts: the defeat suggested by the crumpled mountains juxtaposed with the brilliance and massiveness of the sky; the antiquity of Judaism with the immediacy of the quotidian shifts in the conflict with the Palestinians" (Lehmann 84).

Another binary opposition that gradually becomes blurred is the clear division Bellow has drawn between rationality and spirituality.

Letting down the barriers of rationality, I feel that I can hear Mount Zion as well as see it. I have explored the hill. [...] There is no reason this hill should have a voice, emit a note audible only to a man facing it across the valley. What is there to communicate? It must be that a world from which mystery has been extirpated makes your modern heart ache and increases suggestibility. In poetry you welcome such suggestibility. When it erupts at the wrong time (in a rational context) you send for the police; these psychological police drive out your criminal 'animism'. Your respectable aridity is restored. Nevertheless, I will not forget that I was communicated with. (TJAB 93-94)

This passage suggests that Israel, for Bellow, in a way, also serves as a source for "spiritual refreshment" with regards to his detached 'Western' detachment. At the same time it reveals Bellow's inner tensions and conflicts, suggesting that the rational does not provide adequate explanations for all these antagonisms and

unsettlements he faces in Israel. Neither does it provide adequate explanations for the past of the Jewish people, which manifests itself probably when Bellow writes:

And the 'civilized world', or the twentieth-century ruins of that world to which so many Jews gave their admiration and devotion between, say, 1789 and 1933 (the date of Hitler's coming to power), has grown sick of the ideals Israel asks it to respect. These ideals were knocked to the ground by Fascist Italy, by Russia, and by Germany. The Holocaust may even be seen as a deliberate lesson or project in philosophical redefinition: 'You religious and enlightened people, you Christians, Jews, and Humanists, you believers in freedom, dignity, and enlightenment – you think that you know what human being is. We will show you what he is, and what you are. Look at our camps and crematoria and see if you can bring your hearts to care about these millions. (TJAB 58)

Rationality does not provide, in Bellow's opinion, adequate explanations for the still ongoing struggle for the right of existence of the Jews in the Middle East and their uncertain future.

Hence, the author discovers that rational thinking is not sufficient to describe, explain or control the contemporary world. In this sense, Bellow may gradually become more "open to spirituality through the physicality of Israel" (Lehmann 84). Bellow writes: "I, too, feel that the light of Jerusalem has purifying powers and filters the blood and the thoughts: I don't forbid myself the reflection that light may be the outer garment of God" (TJAB 93).

Therefore, it becomes clear that Bellow's concept of binary oppositions between the past and the present and between rationality and spirituality become rather blurred throughout his stay and throughout his literary narrative.

Becoming increasingly immersed in Israeli life, Bellow consciously or unconsciously begins to reconsider his own identity and the binary opposition of being an American and being a Jew, which shall be discussed henceforth.

2.6 Reconsidering Identity

[I]dentities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 225).

To state that Bellow experiences a fundamental change of perception of his own identity would probably go too far. Nevertheless, I will maintain that *To Jerusalem and Back* illustrates how a Jewish American writer who perceives himself more as an American rather than a Jew travels to Israel and begins to experience a feeling of being part of a larger, international Jewish community, for whom Israel certainly becomes a source of identification.

The beginning of the narrative, where Bellow is confronted with the Hasidim on his flight to Israel is indicative for the perception of his own identity when he arrives in Israel. He arrives as an American and as a Jew who remembers his heritage, but does not necessarily relate it to the present. During his stay, he gets involved with numerous Israeli citizens, who, on the one hand, illustrate the differences between Israeli Jews and Jews living in the Diaspora, while on the other hand they offer numerous similarities and recognitions to Bellow. They point to a common heritage, to a certain layer of common culture and make him feel being part of it. But what is it exactly that they all have in common, what is it that defines 'Jewishness'? This is exactly the question Bellow keeps considering throughout his work.

Christine Bird argues that many Jewish critics kept wondering how 'Jewish' Saul Bellow really is, sometimes doubting his commitment to Judaism, sometimes complaining that "Bellow created only 'peripheral Jews', typified by Moses Herzog, 'who always skirted around the Jewishness that welled up from his subconscious but who never came to grips with it'" (Bird 54) and whose heroes "continue to be ashamed of and to repudiate their true religious heritage" (Maxwell Geismar qtd. in Bird 54). While it seems that Saul Bellow has never been 'Jewish enough' for some of his fellow Jewish critics, he 'finally' confronts the question of his own Jewishness in *To Jerusalem and Back*. While still in Israel, Bellow observes:

Wherever you go in Israel you are subject to recognitions. You see familiar eyes, noses, complexions, postures, gestures. Professor Harkabi and my Cousin Louie, of Lachine, are much alike. Or, to take another pair: is this bald, deep-voiced, big-chested man the manager of a factory in Nazareth or is he the son of Dr. Tir, who became a captain in the U.S. Merchant Marine? You begin to suspect that a diverse band of spirits is operating out of a limited number of bodily and facial types. The experience is both pleasant and unpleasant. (TJAB 109-110)

While in Israel, Bellow is experiencing the commonalities among the Jews, the resemblances among them and senses a "diverse band of spirits". The description of his feelings and emotions are rather ambivalent. He is surprised by the many familiarities he experiences in Israel. This can also be interpreted as Bellow's acknowledgement of a connection between diaspora Jews and Israeli Jews, and between a connection among 'World Jewry', so to speak, which he seemed to initially doubt. I find it rather interesting that Bellow demonstrates this

'connectedness' among a larger Jewish community also with regards to outward resemblances.

Lehmann argues that Bellow is not just an outside observer to this phenomenon of 'feeling connected', but also personalizes it with respect to his own family, when he discusses a certain closeness with his brother whom he had hardly met when they were both in Chicago, but who comes to see him in Israel. Bellow refers to a marked family resemblance that links him to both Russian and Israeli cousins (cf. Lehmann 84).

The writer increasingly senses a feeling of an existing international Jewish community of which **he as well** is part of, irrespective of how religious or non-religious he genuinely is, or how traditional or untraditional his daily life in America is.

Considering the question of what it means to be 'Jewish' and what implications 'Jewishness' actually entails, the writer provides several suggestions and approaches. As he argues right at the beginning of his work, being Jewish, is for him certainly exceptional and rather complex. The author states that one fact of Jewish life that has been unchanged by the founding of a Jewish state is that the Jews cannot take their right to live for granted (cf. 26). At other times, being Jewish for Bellow is also a call for action (cf. Bird 54). Bellow writes:

But if history is indeed a nightmare, as Karl Marx and James Joyce said, it is time for the Jews, a historical people, to rouse themselves, to burst from historical sleep. And Israel's political leaders do not seem to me to be awake. I sometimes think there are two Israels. The real one is territorially insignificant. The other, the mental Israel, is immense, a country inestimably important, playing a major role in the world, as broad as all history – and perhaps as deep as sleep. (TJAB 131)

The reader learns that **history** certainly plays a major role for Bellow with regards to a 'common' and 'shared' identity among the Jewish people. Furthermore, the quote above once again illustrates Bellow's ambiguous attitude towards the Jewish state, on the one hand criticizing its politics, and its "historical sleep", while on the other hand perceiving a "mental Israel", that is "immense" and "inestimably important".

At the end of *To Jerusalem and Back* the author finds himself confronted with the impossibility of "ever settling the question of what it is to be Jewish" (Bird 54), when he agrees with the young Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua who writes:

'Perhaps there is something exceptional in all our Jewishness' [...] 'in all the risk we take upon ourselves, in the fact that we live on the brink of an abyss and know how to do so. To us our Jewish nature is clear and we can feel it – but it is hard to say that the world can understand it, and by a certain kind of logic one can even justify this lack of understanding, because when you come right down to it the phenomenon of the 'Jew' is not an easy one to understand.' (TJAB 161)

This illustrates fairly well the complexity of defining Jewish identity in general. Bird argues that Saul Bellow wrestles with the question of his own Jewishness, coming to several conclusions, "some humorous, some thoughtful" (TJAB 54), although, what it is to be Jewish, for Bellow, remains always part of the larger question, namely, what it is to be human (cf. Bird 55). At the very last page of Bellow's book, he thinks about world politics and its horrors, when considering the killing in Lebanon and the murdering of a million and a half Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge, which leads him to this question:

What is the meaning of such corpse-making? In ancient times the walls of captured cities in the Middle East were sometimes hung with the skins of the vanquished. That custom has died out. But the eagerness to kill for political ends – or to justify killing by such ends – is as keen now as it ever was. (TJAB 182)

Bird comes to the fairly reasonable conclusion that what Bellow seems to suggest in the end is that all the violence out of which the 'Jewish homeland' was born and with which it is still confronted, "is, ultimately, human violence" (Bird 55), just as the Jewish will to survive is a human will to live; "and the Jewish capacity for destruction is a human capacity" (ibid.). Hence, Bird ultimately comes to the conclusion that, in "dealing with his identity as Jew, Bellow is dealing with his identity as a human being" (ibid.).

Now, how can Stuart Hall's theory of 'cultural identity' be helpful with regards to Saul Bellow's questions of Jewish identity in general and his own identity in particular? Considering the history of the Jewish people and the final creation of a Jewish 'homeland', it is tempting to find the first concept of cultural identity described by Hall fairly appropriate, when it comes to questions of what constitutes this strong sense of a Jewish community, or Jewish identity among Jews all around the world. Aside of all difficulties to describe what it is that ultimately constitutes 'Jewishness' in the second half of the 20th century, the majority of the Jewish people, especially those of Europe, have one thing in common: a past that is in some way or another coined by persecution and overshadowed by the horrific

incidents of World War II. It is this experience of dispersal and fragmentation that they share and one could argue that what constitutes Africa for peoples in the 'black diaspora' equals Palestine for the Jewish people: a center and a mother of all people, to which the Jewish people turned to in a fairly territorial and 'real' way. This understanding of 'cultural identity' is certainly also illustrated to a certain degree by Bellow, who emphasizes a 'common history' as one aspect of a 'shared Jewish identity'. Nevertheless, it does not provide sufficient ideas to explain Bellow's conflicting identities of being an American and a Jew who is living in the diaspora.

While this first aspect of Hall's theory can help to explain the Jews' common reference to the past, it would probably be too simplistic to regard it as the only source of identification. This is made clear when Hall argues:

In the history of the modern world, there are few more traumatic ruptures to match these enforced separations from Africa – already figured, in the European imaginary, as 'the Dark Continent'. But the slaves were also from different countries, tribal communities, villages, languages and gods. [...] This paradox is that it was the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world that 'unified' these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past. (Hall 227)

This is definitely true for the Jewish people, for they share a common Jewish heritage, but come from different cultural backgrounds and were dispersed in the diaspora all over the world. And it is especially true for American Jews who all have different family backgrounds, different cultural heritages and varying immigration contexts. Hall writes: "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 235).

When Bellow travels to Israel, his emphasis is on him being an American, while when he returns to America, his emphasis is on him being 'Jewish'. Bird argues that Bellow, like many other travel writers, feels that "measuring himself against the cultural climate which surrounds him intensifies his feelings and his judgments throughout his journey." (Bird 52). This means that while Bellow is in Israel the contrast with his fellow Jews makes him – especially at the beginning of his stay - feel rather American, while as soon as he arrives back in the 'Western' world, the contrast between him and 'the American world' makes him feel rather Jewish. This illustrates very clearly, how identity, or rather the process of identification, needs

to be set in context of the respective situations and is relative. It also illustrates that identity is not a stable state, but rather a constant process of transformation and fragmentation. There is, according to Hall, not only one homogenous cultural identity. Rather, identity constitution is based upon hybrid experience (something which especially pertains to people living in the diaspora).

The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. (Hall 235)

Therefore, what I suggest is that apart from the complexities of 'cultural identities' of diaspora Jews, as well as of Israeli Jews in general, to which he refers in his work, Bellow has to cope with his own 'cultural identity', which is a rather 'hybrid' one. On the one hand, he deals with his Americanness, especially while being in Israel, while he confronts his Jewishness, especially when returning to America.

But there is a third strand of identity, which plays an important role in Bellow's work: his identity as a writer. In the course of the text there are at least forty references to other writers "from Shakespeare to Swift to Melville to Twain to Dostoevsky to Joyce to Faulkner to Eliot" (Bird 55). Bellow reminds us several times that he is a writer, with a writer's sensibility, sympathizing with an Israeli writer who complains about "the lack of solitude, the inability to be alone in the spiritual sense, and to arrive at a life of intellectual creativity" (TJAB 20-21).

Ultimately, the three strands of Bellow's sense of identity all come together "and intertwine repeatedly, as they must if *To Jerusalem and Back* is to have any coherence" (Bird 56). He returns from his journey as an American, as a Jew and as a writer, who saw himself confronted with all the complexities involved in the hybridity of 'cultural identities'.

This section has illustrated how Bellow's stay in Israel has influenced his perception of his own Jewish American identity. While in Israel, the author confronted questions such as what it actually is that defines 'Jewishness'. Although he finds it rather difficult to provide a clear answer, a certain 'common history of the Jewish people is certainly an aspect playing a role when it comes to a 'shared Jewish identity'. With regards to Bellow's complex identity as an American Diaspora Jew, I have demonstrated how identity is always rather a process of 'identification', rather than a stable state and always has to be contextualized. In

this context, Israel as the Jewish 'homeland' certainly becomes a source for 'identification' for Bellow when he returns to 'his home', the United States.

Up until now, I have illustrated how Bellow during his sojourn in Israel has gradually eliminated many of his original self-imposed binary oppositions, such as the past and the present, Israel and America, the Israeli Jew and the Diaspora Jew, sensing a certain connectedness and interrelation between all of those 'categories'. Interestingly enough, there is one binary opposition Bellow maintains throughout his stay in Israel. Throughout the narrative, the author continues to contrast 'the Israelis' and 'the Arabs', or in an even more abstract sense 'the West' and 'the Arab world', while to a certain extent he maintains the stance of an 'Arab other'. Hence, it is worth illustrating how the author evaluates and comes to terms with 'the Palestinian Problem' in *To Jerusalem and Back*, which will be the purpose of the following chapter.

2.7 The Palestinian 'Problem'

The 'immediate reality', which Bellow senses in Israel is closely related with the Israeli's daily struggle to survive. The Jewish people still have to fight for their existence and for their right to exist as a people in the world, while Israel seems to be the setting of this fight in the second half of the 20th century, Bellow suggests.

To answer the moral question of Israel's right to exist as a state, Bellow states that "[t]he founding of a state was inevitable" and it "was a desperate, naked need that sent Jewish survivors to the Middle East" (TJAB 160). In trying to come to terms with the way the Jewish state was created and the related 'collateral damages', the author refers to Walter Laqueur, who in *A History of Zionism* (1972) writes:

'The worst fate that could befall the Arabs [...] was the partition of Palestine and minority status for some Arabs in the Jewish state.' The founding of Israel was not sinless and pure, he says, but there was no way to avoid conflict, since 'the basis for a compromise did not exist'. How then does he see the guilt of the Zionists? Their sin was that they behaved like other peoples. Nation-states have never come into existence peacefully and without injustices. At the center of every state, at its very foundation, as one writer recently put it, lies a mass of corpses. 'It was the historical tragedy of Zionism', says Laqueur, 'that it appeared on the international scene when there were no longer empty spaces on the world map'. (TJAB 160)

When it comes to Israel's oppression of a Palestinian people and the media coverage of the 'Palestinian problem' or peace in the Middle East, Bellow suggests

that “the basic facts are not widely known” (TJAB 115). Bellow argues that while the Jews would have accepted “the provision for the political independence of the Palestinian Arabs” (ibid.) and the U.N. Partition plan in 1947, “[i]t was the Arab nations which rejected the U.N. plan, vowing to resist partition by force and assaulting the Jewish community in Palestine” (ibid.).

Bellow continues by referring to Prof. Harkabi, whom he meets in Israel after reading his book on *Palestinians and Israel* from 1974. Harkabi argues that

[t]he Zionists did not come into Palestine with a plan to expel the Arabs. Zionism hoped to establish a Jewish state, but when Herzl failed to obtain an international charter for such a state the Zionists limited themselves to the purchase of land for cultivation. This land was bought from the Arabs, not taken by force. (TJAB 151)

Furman suggests that the author emphasizes the refusal of the Arab states to tolerate a Jewish state in their midst as well as the subsequent history of Arab aggression towards Israel perhaps “to dispel misconceptions of Israel’s oppressiveness in the region” (Furman 78). Throughout the narrative Bellow repeatedly stresses the Arab’s brutality and unwillingness to coexist with Israel. Bellow refers to a friend who is arguing “[t]he Jews have not been inflexible and negative. Concessions are continually offered. They are rejected” (TJAB 37) and goes on with quoting Prime Minister Rabin stating that “[t]he Arabs [...] are not interested in territorial concessions and will never be satisfied with them. They consider themselves owners and masters of this land” (TJAB 113). Bellow finally concludes his account by claiming that “[t]he root of the problem is simply this – that the Arabs will not agree to the existence of Israel” (TJAB 179).

Among other aspects, one could hold against this rather cynical conclusion, that while Bellow was writing, the Arab States brought to the United Nations Security Council a resolution that called for a settlement on the borders of 1967 with “appropriate arrangements... to guarantee... the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all states in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries” (Salt 191).

Not only does Bellow provide the reader with a clear opinion of who is preventing peace in the Middle East, but also does he, at times, present ‘the Arabs’ as a barbaric people in a rather polemic way. Furman emphasizes this argument by stating:

He, for example, recounts the eulogy that the Syrian Minister of Defense gives a Syrian war hero in which he exalts the soldier's cannibalism (the soldier, reportedly, took a hatchet to chop the Israelis' heads off and devoured the flesh of one Israeli soldier in front of his comrades). The Defense Minister, Mustafa T'Las, asks the mourners, "This is a special case. Need I single out to award him the Medal of the Republic? I will grant this medal to any soldier who succeeds in killing twenty-eight Jews" (TJAB 170). (Furman 78)

While *To Jerusalem and Back* is full of various different voices, ranging from Israeli politicians, Israeli authors, Israeli commentators to average Israeli citizens, it is remarkable that there is only one Arab voice, an editor of a Jerusalem based newspaper, granted one single paragraph in the book. This Arab voice is provided to support Bellow's argument that the Arabs are generally content with the Israeli control. Although this refers only to Jerusalem, this manifests itself also in statements like "Arabs [...] are satisfied with the Kollek administration" (TJAB 88), which are of a rather generalizing and simplifying nature.

Bellow praises Kollek's extensive building program, but disregards the fact that he wanted to construct 6000 new dwellings for Jews and only 300 for Arabs (cf. Salt 193). Furthermore, Bellow praises the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter in Old Jerusalem, while numerous Arabs who have lived in that area for generations were forcibly evicted from their homes.

Bellow acknowledges the moral problem that goes along with the subordinate status of the Palestinian Israelis just as well as he acknowledges the injustice concerning Palestinian refugees and their treatment. However, the author minimizes those injustices by the idea that the Zionists turned the Palestinians' wasteland into paradise, claiming: "In this unlovely dreamland the Zionists planted orchards, sowed fields, and built a thriving society" (TJAB 159). Furthermore, the author refutes the argument that "the Arabs do all the disagreeable jobs and form an exploited class of bottom dogs" (TJAB 131) by arguing that "this is probably not how the Arab laborers see themselves. Their wages have risen, and there is no precedent for the prosperity they enjoy" (TJAB 131).

Louis Horowitz and Maurice Zeitlin reaffirm Bellow's argument stating that

the class structure, in which a few sheikhs ruled the agrarian population, exploiting their labor and living comfortable lives in the cities on their 'earnings' from lands tilled by subsistence peasantry in the villages of Palestine, was, in fact, increasingly altered as the Jewish settlement and agricultural and industrial development impinged on the feudal ruling patterns (Horowitz/Zeitlin 69-70).

Furman counters those arguments by pointing to post-colonial perspectives, when he states that “Bellow does address the Palestinian issue in problematic ways which demand notice, given the recent post-colonial perspectives of Edward Said, Anton Shamamas, and others” (Furman 78). He continues by claiming that

[s]everal post-colonial critics such as Patrick Brantlinger, Chinua Achebe, and Tejaswini Niranjana note that the moral credibility of colonialist enterprises in Africa, Asia, and in the Americas lay rooted in the conviction, on the part of the colonizers, that they lifted native peoples from a debased state. That Bellow cannot resist such arguments no doubt prompts Noam Chomsky, being Noam Chomsky, to complain that Bellow, ‘the perfect victim of the propaganda apparatus...’ (306) ‘produced a catalogue of What Every Good American Should Believe, as compiled by the Israeli Information Ministry’ (299). (Furman 79)

However, the purpose of this section is neither to discuss the highly complex Middle East Conflict with all its various related positions and perspectives, nor to refute all of Bellow’s arguments in this regard. Rather, this section tries to illustrate why and in which ways Bellow is addressing the ‘Palestinian problem’ in problematic ways. This is done by simplifying historical events and minimizing the Palestinians’ harm, while at the same time presenting ‘the Arabs’ in a rather stereotypical and unified manner, thus, creating an ‘Arab other’. The author ignores or at least minimizes the rising Israeli oppression of the Palestinians as well as the fact that Palestinians, in 1976, practically had no national rights. This manifested itself in the problematic situation in the occupied territories in the West Bank and the Gaza strip, while Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories was steadily increasing.

Certainly, Bellow’s perspective has to be viewed in the context of its time, which is that of the 1970ies, only two decades after the founding of Israel, while, compared to the current government of 2012, a rather moderate Rabin government was holding office. Even in 1997, Furman was wondering, “How would Bellow sing his aria about the Middle East today?” (Furman 80). He concludes in doubting “that Bellow has the big answers”, interpreting one of Bellow’s last statements in *To Jerusalem and Back* where he says that he “never did learn the trick of lighting the oven” (TJAB 139), in a way that “he could not shine a light onto the nebulous Middle East either” (Furman 80).

In this chapter, I have illustrated how and why Bellow approaches the ‘Palestinian problem’ in rather problematic ways in *To Jerusalem and Back*, while

maintaining this specific binary opposition between 'the Israelis/the Jews' and 'the Arabs/the Palestinians'.

The subsequent section shall briefly summarize the main findings of this detailed analysis of Bellow's *To Jerusalem and Back*.

2.8 To Jerusalem and Back

Saul Bellow in *To Jerusalem and Back* takes the reader on his journey to Israel and back to America. With this nonfictional account, mixing elements of diary entries and travel journals, Bellow provides the reader with a rather personal record of his time and thoughts in Israel in 1976. His own thoughts and perspectives are mixed with numerous intertextual references to scholars, other authors and philosophers as well as records of conversations he led with various Israelis during his stay. In this way, Bellow provides the readers with multiple perspectives on what it means to be Jewish, on Israel as well as on the Middle East and its politics in general, while maintaining a clear pro-Israeli stance.

Arriving in Israel with a certain dimension of skepticism, Bellow experiences a shift in perspective with regards to the Jewish 'homeland' and his own sense of 'Jewishness'. The author's preliminary self-imposed binary oppositions become rather blurred – except the binary opposition regarding Israelis and their Palestinian 'antagonists' -, meaning that the author stops to cut clear division lines between the past and the present, Israel and America, spirituality and rationality, as well as Israel and the diaspora, while rather sensing a certain relation between those concepts. Bellow, while in Israel, meets various different people and is provided with their perspectives, which draws him closer to them. He begins to realize and acknowledge various similarities of Israel and America as well as of Jews in the diaspora and Jews living in Israel. Hence, the author begins to feel part of a larger, international Jewish community and is certainly drawn closer to the Jewish 'homeland', regarding it as a source of spiritual refreshment as well as a reference point for his own 'identification' as a Jewish American. Nevertheless, his stance as an American remains present, which manifests itself in the fact that Bellow views Israel's history and present, as well as world politics always in an American context. Therefore, the "and back" in the book's title remains inherent throughout the narrative, underlining Bellow's identity as both as a Jew and an American.

3. Philip Roth's Israeli 'Operation Jewish Identity'

In *Operation Shylock*, Roth, with comic irony, uses the concept of the double to reassert postmodern skepticism about identity of the self, about the metafictional aspects of history, and about the many faceted views of factual evidence. (Safer 167)

The duality of ideas and their resultant paradoxes are at the center of the Jewish experience in Roth's Israel, in the current events of Israel in the twentieth century, and in the region's history of warfare. (Safer 168)

3.1 'Operation Jewish Identity' arriving in the Middle East

Philip Roth has been praised by critics as one of the major Jewish American novelists of the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. According to Elaine B. Safer, Roth has started his literary career in 1959 as a comic realist, while his works have gradually become rather postmodern over the years (Safer 175). Roth's early, realistic novels such as *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959) and *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), as well as his more political and social satires *Our Gang* (1971) and *The Great American Novel* (1973) marked the beginning of his career. His later novels such as the Zuckerman series (*The Ghostwriter* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), etc.) as well as *The Counterlife* (1986) and the more recent works such as *The Plot against America* (2004), or *Exit Ghost* (2007) can be classified as rather postmodern and less traditional. This becomes clear when Safer states that the "subject matter of the later novels is the comic handling of fictional systems themselves. Novels engage in postmodern experimentation with multiple narrators in terms of their comic consciousness of their own fictivity" (Safer 175).

Thus Roth's later writings almost always focus on the relation between fact and fiction, including auto-biographical elements and playing with them. Furthermore, Roth's dominant themes are erotic (male) instincts as well as questions of Jewish (American) identity, while most of his novels have at their center a certain crisis of identity.

With *The Counterlife* (1986) and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (1993), Philip Roth has finally arrived in Israel as a setting for his fiction, where Jewish American identity is set and tested against the backdrop of the Jewish state. These novels have at their center the question of Jewish identity and the role of Israel in the forging of that identity. *The Counterlife* is the fourth novel of Roth's Zuckerman

series and the first one set in large part in Israel, engaging in a sustained examination of the relationship between Israeli and American Jews.

However, Israel and questions of Jewish identity play an even greater role in *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, which will be at the center of this analysis. The novel could be classified as a fictional memoir, in which the narrator and protagonist Philip Roth travels to Israel to interview his writer friend Aharon Appelfeld. While in Israel he encounters his doppelganger Philip Roth, who, pretending to be the writer Philip Roth, propagates his concept of 'diasporism'. This concept comprises the idea of relocating all Ashkenazi Jews back to their original ancestor European countries, in order to prevent the Jews from a second Holocaust in the Middle East and ceding the country to its 'original' inhabitants. During his turbulent stay in Israel, the narrator Philip Roth sees himself not only confronted with his double and the resulting tensions and struggles, but with a cast of other characters ranging from Israeli intelligence agents, Palestinian exiles, an accused war criminal and a member of an organization called Anti-Semites Anonymous. The story culminates in the narrator's involvement in an intelligence mission of the Mossad, 'Operation Shylock', the further description of which has allegedly been erased from the narrative. The reader never finds out what the Mossad's 'Operation Shylock' was really all about.

Operation Shylock: A Confession is a novel living from a range of significant characters and their radically differing perspectives towards various conceptions of Jewish Identity, Israel and the Middle East, while its narrative framework plays with blurry divisions between fact and fiction.

Unsurprisingly, this novel caused furor among Roth's readership and received critiques of diverse natures. On the one hand, his Jewish critics either accused the author of anti-Semitic tendencies or praised him because of his fairly liberal and 'revolutionary' approach of including Israel and the Middle East in his fiction. On the other hand, more radical, mostly Arab voices blamed the author for his orthodox pro-Zionist views. Those voices accused Roth of creating and reaffirming negative stereotypes of a colonized and marginalized Palestinian people, represented as an inferior race without history (cf. Gohar 108-121).

However, it is neither the aim of this paper to argue for or against those various radical viewpoints and critiques, nor to evaluate Roth's work from a post-colonial perspective. Rather, I will analyze *Operation Shylock* with regards to the

narrative framework, characters and motifs the author uses in order to discuss questions of Jewish (American) identity within an Israeli context. How does the composition of the novel add to the storyline and why can the work be classified as a postmodern work of fiction? How is the relation between fact, or 'reality', and fiction evaluated in the novel? Who is given a voice and what is the effect of the arrangement of characters in the novel? How does Roth manage to create and represent a tension between the concept of diaspora and Zionism, between America and Israel and between the narrator and his various 'counter-selves'? And last, but not least, why and how can the novel be said to center on a quest for and discussion of identity, an 'Operation Jewish Identity' with a rather ambiguous 'confession'?

The main thesis of this chapter is that with *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, Philip Roth created a highly postmodern fictional approach of discussing Jewish identity in the late 20th century set against an Israeli backdrop. Furthermore, I argue that the novel discusses tensions between the concepts of Jewish diaspora and Zionism on a more general level, and between American Jewish and Israeli Jewish identity in particular. Moreover, I will illustrate that in *Operation Shylock*, Roth questions the concept of an 'ethnic identity', while suggesting a rather postmodern understanding of 'cultural identity' with all its implied complexities.

With regards to the novel's setting, we are talking about Israel at the end of the 1980ies, and the beginning of the 1990ies, which is the time of the first Palestinian uprising (Intifada). The main plot is set in 1988, 40 years after the founding of the state of Israel, which, in those 40 years, experienced the first Arab-Israeli War (1948), the Suez Crisis (1956), the Six Day War (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973), the First Lebanon War (1982), an increasing Israeli settlement in the Palestinian territories as well as the beginning of the First Intifada (1987-1993).

3.2 Metafiction, Metahistory and Multiple Narratives

In philosophy and critical theory, the term 'postmodernist' applies to a wide range of concepts, approaches, and positions in ongoing debates, the most significant of which concern the problematic relationship between the real and the unreal; the constructedness of meaning, truth, and history; and the complexities of subjectivity and identity. (Geyh/Leebron/Levy x)

This subsection is focusing on the question of how the compositional and narrative framework of Roth's novel add to the storyline as well as why and in

which way it can be described as a postmodern experiment of including Israel in his fiction. I specifically argue that with regards to *Operation Shylock's* aesthetics, Roth makes particularly use of **metafiction**, **metahistory** and suggests a **multiplcity of subjective competing narratives**.

In *Operation Shylock*, the real-life author Philip Roth emerges as a literary construction, so to speak, in the sense that this fictional construction of the writer Philip Roth leads us through the novel as the narrator of the whole storyline. The reader soon learns that the narrator has just been through a significant psychological crisis caused by the addiction to the sleeping pill Halcion, which he was taking after a complicated knee surgery. The sleeping pill caused the narrator tremendous suffering from hallucinations and nervous breakdowns, all of which led to serious depressions and long-term psychological instability. With this in mind, the reader gradually gets to know the narrator Philip Roth and accompanies him on his journey to Israel, where the story is mainly set.

The novel starts out with a "Preface" that provides additional explanations and details concerning the following story, which the narrator assures in fact really happened the way he describes it.

For legal reasons, I have had to alter a number of facts in this book. These are minor changes that mainly involve details of identification and locale and are of little significance to the overall story and its verisimilitude. Any name that has been changed is marked with a small circle the first time it appears. I've drawn *Operation Shylock* from notebook journals. The book is as accurate an account as I am able to give of actual occurrences that I lived through during my middle fifties and that culminated, early in 1988, in my agreeing to undertake an intelligence-gathering operation for Israel's foreign intelligence service, the Mossad. (OS 13).

The "Preface" ends with the signature "P.R. *December 1, 1992*". After reading this introduction and learning that the narrator is actually supposed to be Philip Roth, the writer himself, the reader is instantly seduced to believe that what he or she reads is not fiction, but rather an autobiographical memoir by Philip Roth. This imitation of 'reality', so to speak, certainly adds to a sense of authenticity.

However, the book ends with the "Note to the Reader", which assures that: "This book is a work of fiction... This confession is false" (OS 399). Ironically, the narrator, earlier in the text, explicitly considered the option of adding such a "Note to the Reader", in order to make the publishing of his Mossad mission less of a 'risk':

I could even envision *Operation Shylock*, misleadingly presented as a novel, being understood by an ingenious few as a chronicle of the Halcion hallucination that, momentarily, even I, during one of the more astounding episodes in Jerusalem, almost supposed it might be. [...]

Less than fifty familiar words is all it takes for all your problems to be solved.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. (OS 361)

The reader is confronted with those thoughts at the very beginning of the “Epilogue”, *Words Generally Only Spoil Things*, in which the narrator Roth reflects upon his experiences in Israel and Athens and explains why he left out the last chapter and the description of ‘Operation Shylock’ in Athens, where the action supposedly took place. Roth describes his former considerations about the form in which he should publish the described incidents, which he emphasizes have really happened. The quoted words above clearly have the effect that the reader once again tends to believe in the verisimilitude of the story. Roth explicitly mocks the boundaries of fact and fiction and wants the reader to consider it possible that he, the real-life writer Philip Roth, in fact lived through the described events. By including the “Note to the Reader” already within the storyline of the novel, so to speak, and then again at the end of the book, this effect is even more reinforced. Thus, the “Preface” and the “Note to the Reader” constitute a bracket to the whole story, but are, at the same time, highly contradictory.

Roth’s novel in this way is, amongst other things, an example of **metafiction**, meaning that one of its themes is the creative process of writing itself, while the narrator plays with the comic consciousness of his/her own fictivity. And it is exactly this blurry line of fact and fiction that is mocked in *Operation Shylock* throughout the whole novel using elements of comic irony and satire. Safer adds that “[t]he frame of *Operation Shylock* comically challenges what the reader is lead to expect about the boundaries of fiction and reality. The certainty of the fictional world itself is brought into question [...]” (Safer 161).

We experience a picaresque description of the protagonist and his double, never really trusting the narrator and partly suspecting the whole story to be an outcome of the narrator’s psychic breakdown and the Halcion trauma. That the narrator himself continues doubting the experiences he made in Israel in 1988 by

constantly reminding us of his Halcion trauma, considering it possible that everything had just happened in his imagination, adds to the reader's skepticism.

I remained half dozing in that corner chair, groggily thinking that this was still last summer and that everything I took to be actuality – the Jewish courtroom in Ramallah, George's desperate wife and child, my impersonating Moishe Pipik for them, [...] was all a Halcion hallucination. Moishe Pipik was himself a Halcion hallucination; as was Jinx Possesski; as was this Arab hotel; as was the city of Jerusalem. (OS 176)

In this sense, we are not only dealing with multiple competing narratives, but also with a rather 'unreliable' narrator/protagonist. In this way, Roth does not only challenge the boundaries between fact and fiction, but also, as Safer suggests, the certainty of the fictional world itself (cf. Safer 161).

Furthermore, in *Operation Shylock* fanciful details merge with actual historical elements and facts. Not only are we confronted with the fictitious construct of the writer Philip Roth, who constantly engages biographical facts of the real-life Philip Roth, but also do we encounter actual Israeli history of that time. The court testimonies from Treblinka Death Camp survivors, like Elijahu Rosenberg, and details about the trial in Israel of John Demjanjuk, who was assumed to be Ivan the Terrible, play a major role in the novel. Additionally, real-life persons like writer Aharon Appelfeld and parts of interviews that Philip Roth lead with him are included in the narrative framework of the novel. Furthermore, distressing Holocaust narratives and references to the violence of the Israeli-Arab conflict at the time, which was the time of the First Intifada are described. Thus, we are dealing with a combination of factual and fictional events and details as well as with a combination of real and fictional characters. Barry Lewis in his essay on "Postmodernism and Fiction" describes this literary aesthetics as "pastiche", referring to a combination of multiple elements, mixing genres, fact and fiction as well as real and fictitious figures (cf. Lewis 114).

By including historical elements in the novel and presenting them in a rather ambivalent nature, Roth also makes use of **metahistory**. Roth includes the nonfictional Demjanjuk trial, which centers on the question of whether John Demjanjuk really is Ivan the Terrible from the Treblinka death camps, responsible for immense atrocities and killings of Jews during World War II. Moreover, one nonfictional testimony from the trial in 1988 of a Jewish Holocaust survivor, Elijahu Rosenberg, is included in *Operation Shylock*. While Rosenberg in 1947 and

1948 originally gave testimony that he witnessed the murder of Ivan the Terrible, he asserted in 1988 that his earlier comments were false and that John Demjanjuk actually is Ivan the Terrible (cf. Safer 166). In *Operation Shylock*, the reader is provided with excerpts of Rosenberg's testimony. When the witness is questioned about the accuracy of his account and why he originally claimed the death of Ivan in a written document although he now seems to be sure that Demjanjuk is Ivan, he responds: "I preferred to write this particular version" (OS 300).

This statement is somehow "acknowledging that any version is a choice", as Lehmann states, "as opposed to an objective record of events" (Lehmann 88). Whether or not John Demjanjuk is Ivan the Terrible from over 40 years ago or not is not the point in the novel. It is rather the uncertainty and ambiguity that is emphasized in the novel than the interest in 'the truth'.

One could argue that by this non-fictional account of Eliahu Rosenberg's ambiguous statement at the Demjanjuk trial and the fictional account thereof in *Operation Shylock* Roth somehow points out how narrative structures are created by people so as to adjust to events. He apparently suggests that memory and history are always subjective reconstructions themselves. In this sense the John Demjanjuk trial plays an important role in the novel, for once, because it points to multiple views of 'reality' and historical possibilities. This is not only mirrored in the Demjanjuk trial and its ambiguous court testimonies and competing narratives, but also in the character arrangement of *Operation Shylock*, also offering multiple views and versions of 'reality'. With regards to postmodern discourses, Jean-Francois Lyotard puts this to a more abstract level by arguing that

[...] there is no longer any hope of a single conceptual system or discourse through which we might aspire to understand the totality of the world. Indeed, one can no longer speak about 'totality' at all. Instead, we have a plurality of worlds and multiple, often mutually incompatible discourses through which to understand them. (Geyh/Leebbron/Levy xx)

In this context, the arrangement of the numerous characters appearing in the novel, be they fictional or real-life characters, plays a central role as well. They all represent different and sometimes radical viewpoints. Through those characters, multiple varying (subjective) perspectives are shared on questions of Jewish identity, Israel in particular and the Middle East in general. In *Operation Shylock*, 'the anti-Semite', 'the Arab', 'the radical right wing Jew' and 'the American Jew' all confront each other trying to challenge each other's ideas. The reader is provided

with a multiplicity of voices and thus with **a multiplicity of perspectives and narratives**.

To sum up, what the reader is dealing with in *Operation Shylock* regarding its aesthetics and narrative construction are elements of metahistory, manifesting itself in the merging of fictional and real characters as well as a merging of farce and realistic details – both from the author’s Jewish writer background and from then current (Israeli) events. Furthermore, metafiction is an important element in the sense that the line between fact and fiction and between ‘reality’ and imagination remains rather blurred throughout the whole novel. We, as readers, are perhaps looking for answers, which we are not given. There certainly are many gaps in the novel, which the reader has to fill in him/herself. Barthes distinguishes between the “readerly” and the “writerly” text. The readerly text considers what the reader might expect, e. g. it tells a story chronologically and has a cohesive plot. The writerly text, on the contrary, challenges the reader, it „is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text.“ (Barthes 4). In this sense the *Operation Shylock* can be read as a writerly text allowing a wide range of interpretation. Moreover, Roth’s novel emphasizes the subjectivity of historical narratives and ‘reality’ as such. The author does this by including multiple, competing perspectives on history and ‘reality’ through his arrangement of characters on the one hand and through including ambiguous perspectives on historical events on the other hand. Hence, the novel, in a way, questions reductionist historical thinking. Lehmann emphasizes this argument by stating that:

Roth situates the issue of competing narratives and realities in the context of postmodern literary theory, his writing suggesting the theories of Hayden White, with respect to history, and Jean Baudrillard, with respect to images. Thus the chaos in Israel becomes a question not only of racial and national politics but of a postmodern uncertainty about the existence of structure and order in the world. And history becomes not a record of fixed events but of the various narratives about those events. (Lehmann 91)

In this section, I argued that Roth in *Operation Shylock: A Confession* approaches Israel and the numerous themes and issues related to it within a rather postmodern narrative framework. The author makes use of pastiche, metafiction and metahistory in order to challenge traditional norms of literary narrative structures as well as to explore the boundaries of fact and fiction. A claim to the ‘truth’, whatever this would be, is denied, while the perspective of multiple

historical possibilities, if not to speak of multiple 'truths' and the need for creativity are emphasized. This seems specifically interesting and maybe also 'appropriate' with regards to the complex history of the state of Israel and the Palestinian territories. Considering the complex history and present of the Middle East Conflict, which is coined by numerous competing narratives, this literary narrative framework allows for various creative ways of exploration. This is certainly also true with respect to the discussion of the complex question of 'defining' Jewish identity.

In a next step, I want to focus on the questions of the role of Israel and Jewish identity in the novel, which, I argue, are mostly explored through multiple voices and the motif of the double. Since the arrangement of characters in Roth's novel has already been mentioned frequently, the next subchapter shall focus on the question of who is given a voice in *Operation Shylock*, what the function of the respective character is and how this creates the particular tensions in the story with regards to questions of Jewish (American) identity and the Jewish 'homeland' in the Middle East.

3.3 Roth's Multiplicity of Voices

No wonder Roth's impersonations are all such talkers, performers enacting selves and emplotting them in stories, resembling nothing so much as the Jews according to Smilesburger: 'We talk too much, we say too much, and we do not know when to stop' (332). (Shostak 753)

In *Operation Shylock: A Confession* Philip Roth discusses numerous issues related to Jewish identity, ranging from the aftermath of the Holocaust, to Diaspora-centered versus Israeli-centered foundations of Jewish living, and finally to the question of how 'Jewishness' actually can be defined at the end of the 20th century. What is specifically interesting is the method he is using to cover and discuss those themes. Roth uses a form of ventriloquism, articulating a multiplicity of voices, in order to explore the complexities and ambiguities of questions of a Jewish 'homeland' in the Middle East and Jewish identity. This means that he is creating a range of characters, 'letting them speak'. *Operation Shylock* is a novel driven by characters, who in some way all represent different, at times radical viewpoints and diverse backgrounds and (hi)stories. Safer writes:

Dualities also are presented through ideological extremes, particularly in relation to ethnic perspectives: unbending Zionism versus arguments of the

Palestinian Liberation Organization for the extermination of Israel. (Safer 167)

One of the most outstanding features of the novel are the extremely long monologues held by the characters, sometimes lasting over dozens of pages. By creating those monologues the characters are provided with space to present themselves and their arguments within the storyline and to the readership.

At the center of the story is, of course, the first-person narrator Philip Roth. Thus, the reader experiences the story and characters from his perspective and through his eyes. The characters are presented by a mixture of the discursive method and the dramatic method of character description. Thus, they are either described and analyzed by the narrator, or presented through their own actions and, in this particular case, through endless soliloquies.

With the character of the writer Aharon Appelfeld, Roth includes a real-life figure and real-life friend of his into the novel. The Israeli writer constitutes the original reason for Roth's journey to Israel, since the latter plans to conduct interviews with Appelfeld for the *New York Times Magazine*. Aharon Appelfeld was originally born in Czernowitz, Romania and deported to a concentration camp at the age of eight. After he managed to escape, he spent three years hiding in the Ukraine until he joined the Russian army, disclaiming his Jewish origins. As a post-war refugee, he managed to reach Italy, from where he emigrated to Israel in 1946, where he has been living ever since. A Hebrew University graduate, Appelfeld has taught as a professor of Hebrew Literature at Ben Gurion University and became one of the most established authors of the young state of Israel. His fiction mainly reflects upon the Shoah and the Jewish European Holocaust survivors and refugees and their fates (cf. Jewish Virtual Library A).

[...] Aharon, a small, bespectacled compact man with a perfectly round face and a perfectly bald head, looked to me very much like a benign wizard, as adept in the mysteries of legerdemain as his namesake, the brother Moses. 'He'd have no trouble,' I later wrote in the preface to our interview, 'passing for a magician who entertains children at birthday parties by pulling doves out of a hat – it's easier to associate his gently affable and kindly appearance with that job than with the responsibility by which he seems inescapably propelled: responding, in a string of elusively portentous stories, to the disappearance from Europe... of just about all the continent's Jews, his parents among them. (OS 53)

That Roth holds his writer friend Appelfeld in high esteem becomes clear right from the above-cited very first appearance of the Israeli writer in the novel.

Throughout the novel, he emphasizes what he has already mentioned in this scene, namely Appelfeld's "gently affable and kindly appearance", and illustrates his respect for Appelfeld as a friend as well as a writer. One could almost say that this character functions as one of the only constants (for the protagonist Roth) throughout the novel. What we do learn about Appelfeld as a writer, which is inevitably linked to what we learn about his past, is revealed through the interviews that Roth leads with him. In those interviews the two authors reflect upon questions of what it means to be a writer, as well as on questions of the Holocaust and Appelfeld's past as a survivor thereof. In one of their conversations, Appelfeld states:

My real world was far beyond the power of imagination, and my task as an artist was not to develop my imagination but to restrain it, and even then it seemed impossible to me, because everything was so unbelievable that one seemed oneself to be fictional.... At first I tried to run away from myself and from my memories, to live a life that was not my own and to write about a life that was not my own. But a hidden feeling told me that I was not allowed to flee from myself and that if I denied the experience of my childhood in the Holocaust I would be spiritually deformed... (OS 57)

With Appelfeld, Roth has created a character that shares his rather intellectual perspectives and views as a Holocaust survivor, who came to Israel after the Shoah to start a new life. Not only does he share his perspectives as a survivor, but also as a writer, who has all his life literarily reflected upon the fate of European Jews during and after World War II. Through interviews about his fictional works, the reader is once again reminded of the Jews' fate after the Shoah and the difficulties of pursuing life in a new country, where people came together to start a new existence. Throughout the novel, Appelfeld seems to remain one of the more comforting and stable characters, who are rather in the background of the events in Israel, but he nevertheless plays an important role, especially in relation to Philip Roth and his considerations of Jewish identity.

With Roth's cousin Apter, who is, like Appelfeld, a Holocaust survivor who lost his family and immigrated to Israel, the author created a character that could be described as the classical 'Jewish victim'. Apter tries to make a living by selling his paintings in the Jewish quarter of the Old City, feels frightened, lonely as well as betrayed by everyone and desires nothing more than to escape to America, where he imagines living a simple and peaceful countrylife on a farm. The narrator describes this mythical vision of America as a safe country without the threat of

history, as “this beautiful vision of an American *Gan Eden* where he will be saved from the blight and din of his past” (OS 264).

My tiny cousin Apter, the unborn adult, earns his living painting scenes of the Holy Land for tourist trade. [...] In Apter’s stories, people steal from him, spit at him, defraud and insult and humiliate him virtually every day and, more often than not, these people who victimize my cousin are survivors of the camps. (OS 57-58)

Throughout the novel, it seems that the narrator Roth constantly forgets to call or meet him, never stops to feel sorry for him, but still assigns him a minor role in the whole storyline.

[...] I suddenly remembered Apter, and the thought of him wondering if I had abandoned him, the thought of his vulnerability, of his lonely, fear-ridden, fragile existence [...].

Apter had been telling me again that he was afraid to go to his stall in the Old City for fear that the Arabs there would kill him with their knives. [...] He had cried and begged me to take him back with me to America, he had lost control of himself completely, bawling and shrieking that he was powerless and that only I could save him. (OS 262 f.)

The fear of the past, the threat of history, the fear of the present and the desperation about it in a sense all culminate in Apter’s character. Accordingly, the past is associated with Europe, while the present is associated with Israel, neither of which allow for a happy life in Apter’s case. The United States, on the other hand, he envisions as a country where one could start a new life, without the burdens of history, just as the other diaspora Jews did at the beginning of the 20th century, when they came to America and lived a rather peaceful life compared to the European Jewry.

While Appelfeld and Apter are characters that are grasped rather straightforwardly, the figure of Smilesburger is more complex. We encounter Smilesburger the first time as “a very slight, elderly cripple” (OS 108) when he apparently takes the narrator Roth for his double, whom he hands over a one million dollar check in order to support Roth’s double’s diasporism project. Only later do we learn that Smilesburger is in fact a Mossad agent, who prepares Operation Shylock in Athens in order to persecute those rich Jews, who allegedly work together with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) on a project similar to Pipik’s diasporism. Smilesburger could even be described as a key figure in the novel or as “the presumed author of the plot the narrator finds himself enacting” (Shostak 749). Firstly, he pushes the action forward by taking Roth as his double and giving him the check, which ultimately leads to Roth’s impersonating of

his own double. Secondly, he is the one who, towards the end of the novel, seems to reveal to Roth that he has been spied on by the Mossad throughout his whole stay in Israel and tested whether or not he is the ideal person to conduct Operation Shylock. When Smilesburger still appears 'undercover' as an old cripple pretending to support Pipik's diasporism, he mockingly claims that Jews of Eastern European ancestry are actually exclusively defined by being Jews from the Ukraine or Poland, suggesting that only in connection to Europe, 'Jewishness' is really authentic:

The roots of American Jewry are not in the Middle East but in Europe – their Jewish style, their Jewish words, their strong nostalgia, their actual, weighable history, all this issues from their European origins Grandpa did not hail from Haifa – Grandpa came from Minsk. Grandpa wasn't a Jewish nationalist – he was a Jewish humanist, a spiritual, believing Jew, who complained not in an antique tongue called Hebrew but in colorful, rich, vernacular Yiddish. (OS 47)

But we certainly learn most about the character of Smilesburger during a seemingly endless monologue that spans over ten pages in the novel, in which he mainly presents his interpretation of the Talmudic concept of *loshon hora*, or evil speech⁸. The complexity of Smilesburger's character probably manifests itself in the contradictions he personifies and his being fully aware of them. On the one hand, he represents the right-wing Israeli Jew, who does everything in order to defend his country, while on the other hand he seems fully aware of his and the country's flaws.

What we have done to the Palestinians is wicked. We have displaced them and we have oppressed them. We have expelled them, beaten them, tortured them, and murdered them. The Jewish state, from the day of its inception, has been dedicated to eliminating a Palestinian presence in historical Palestine and expropriating the land of an indigenous people. The Palestinians have been driven out, dispersed and conquered by the Jews. To make a Jewish state we have betrayed our history – we have done unto the Palestinians what the Christians have done unto us [...].

I am a ruthless man working in a ruthless job for a ruthless country and I am ruthless knowingly and voluntarily. (OS 349-350)

This passage, constituting part of Smilesburger's speech, continues with his consideration of a possible Palestinian victory and a following war-crime trial, in which he is questioned about his and the country's 'deeds'.

Will I invoke as my justification the millennial history of degrading, humiliating, terrifying, savage, murderous anti-Semitism? Will I repeat the story of our claim on this land, the millennial history of Jewish settlement

⁸ "The Hebrew term is the equivalent of 'gossip' or 'slander'; it might also be translated as 'tongue of evil'. It derives from Leviticus 19:16: 'You shall not go about as a talebearer among thy people.' (Parrish 1999: 580)

here? Will I invoke the horrors of the Holocaust? Absolutely not. I don't justify myself in this way now and I will not stoop to doing it then. I will not plead the simple truth: 'I am a tribesman who stood with his tribe', nor will I plead the complex truth: 'Born as a Jew where and when I was, I am, I always have been, whichever way I turn, condemned.' I will offer no stirring rhetoric when I am asked by the court to speak my last words but will tell my judges only this: 'I did what I did to you because I did what I did to you'. (OS 350-351)

Those words probably represent the quintessential complexity and contradictions of being Jewish as well as of the present situation of the Jewish homeland in the Middle East. Smilesburger demonstrates his being fully aware of it, nevertheless playing the game, so to speak, because he sees no alternative.

His extensively long speech certainly confuses the reader over and over again, as does the whole character. One never really knows in how far Smilesburger is serious about what he is saying, or in how far he is grotesquely sarcastic about everything. The name "Smilesburger" is certainly no coincidence and as Timothy Parrish states, "[w]e should not see Smilesburger only as a stand-in for Roth's Jewish audience", because as his name attests, "he too is a trickster figure" (Parrish 598).

With Appelfeld, Apter and Smilesburger we are confronted with diverse characters with equally diverse positions and perspectives on what it means to be Jewish. What they have in common is their Jewishness, which forms the key point in *Operation Shylock*.

Another Jewish character appears when David Supposnik takes the stage, more or less as an aside. As we learn, we are dealing with an antiquarian from Tel Aviv, who is originally from Eastern Europe, converted to Judaism after World War II and finally immigrated to Israel as well. Supposnik wants Roth to write the introduction for the soon-to-be-published diaries of Leon Klinghoffer, a Jew who was assassinated by Palestinians in the 1970ies⁹.

Mr. Roth, the introduction to the first American publication of The Diary of Anne Frank was written by Eleanor Roosevelt, the much-esteemed widow of your wartime president. A few hundred words from Mrs. Roosevelt and Anne Frank's words became a moving entry in the history of Jewish suffering and Jewish survival. Philip Roth can do the same for the martyred Klinghoffer. (OS 279)

⁹ "On October 7, 1985, four members of one of the PLO's factions, the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), hijacked the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and demanded the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak persuaded the hijackers to surrender, but not before they shot to death a wheelchair-bound Jewish passenger from the United States named Leon Klinghoffer, dumping his body overboard." (Bard)

In his monologue, which lasts about ten pages, Supposnik furthermore explains how his occupation with literature during all of his life has led him to his very own interpretation of the *Shylock* motif.

Yes, for four hundred years now, Jewish people have lived in the shadow of this Shylock. In the modern world, the Jew has been perpetually on trial; still today the Jew is on trial, in the person of the Israeli – and this modern trial of the Jew, this trial which never ends, begins with the trial of Shylock. [...] I studied those three words by which the savage, repellent and villainous Jew, deformed by hatred and revenge, entered as our doppelganger into the consciousness of the enlightened West. (OS 274)

By giving a voice to the character of Supposnik who, in his fervent lecture, provides the reader with his interpretation of the figure of Shylock, Roth, in a way, explores the act of categorization. John Gross in his essay on “Shylock: A Legend and its Legacy”, supports Supposnik’s argument that Shylock in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* was generally interpreted to support anti-Semitic stereotypes, which focused especially on his position as usurer and his bloodlust (cf. Gross 64). Shostak argues that “[t]he significance of Shylock to Roth lies in the way Shakespeare’s character has been received so as to reify the Jew into the position of loathsome other – in order to deprive him of a self-inscribed identity and to justify his persecution.”, while she furthermore argues that Shylock became “the symbolic Jew across the centuries, not an individual but a categorical type who can, in ill-willed interpretations, serve the vilification of Jews” (Shostak 745).

By emphasizing the importance of the publication of the Klinghoffer diaries, Supposnik tries to stress the remembrance of the never-ending perdition of the Jews. Anti-Semitism, accordingly, has not ended with the Holocaust and the publication of the Anne Frank diaries, but will continue to do so, as long as ‘the Jew’ will stand in the shadow of his or her Shylock doppelganger. This, I argue, is what Supposnik expresses.

With the character of Wanda “Jinx” Possesski, the reader gets to know the double Philip Roth’s girlfriend, who, after a turbulent childhood and youth acceded to the Catholic church to live a rather religious life only until she gave that up to become a nurse, which was when her anti-Semitic tendencies really started to reveal themselves. There are two scenes in the novel, in which the protagonist Roth and Jinx converge and are confronted with each other, which is how we get to know more about her story, but also about the double Philip Roth.

'Christianity saved me from a lot of craziness', she said, 'but not from anti-Semitism. I think I really got into hating Jews when I was a Christian. Before, it was just my family's stupid thing. Know why I started hating Jews? Because they didn't have to put up with any of the Christian nonsense. Death to self, you have to kill yourself, suffering makes you a better servant of Him - and they laughed at all our suffering. Only allow God to live through you so that you become nothing more than a vessel. So I became nothing more than a vessel while Jews became doctors and lawyers and rich. They laughed at our suffering, they laughed at *His* suffering.' (OS 231)

As a simple woman from a rather low class Christian family, who always had to fight for her life, Jinx Possesski provides another, in this case anti-Semitic, perspective within the novel. It is also from her that we learn about the recovery group Anti-Semites Anonymous (A-S.A.), which the double Roth has allegedly founded and which Jinx is part of as a recovering anti-Semite.

'Now, from A-S.A., I understand why else I hated them. Their cohesiveness, I hated that. Their superiority, what the Gentiles call greed, I hated that. Their paranoia and their defensiveness, always being strategic and careful, always clever - the Jews drove me crazy just by being Jews. Anyway, that was my legacy from Jesus. Until Philip.' (OS 231)

Although Jinx seems to hold her boyfriend, the Roth double, in high esteem, she nevertheless lets herself seduce by the protagonist Roth, who finds himself strangely attracted to her. By succeeding in seducing her, Roth develops a certain power against the threat of his double. While for the double Roth, Jinx serves as an instrument for his recovering group A-S.A., as well as his tempting informant with regards to the writer Roth, the latter uses her as a means of power and potency. Thus, Jinx Possesski rather functions as an 'object', who is used like a marionette for the purposes of the men surrounding her. Again, her name "Jinx" is definitely no coincidence. A "Jinx" can be defined as a type of curse placed on a person that brings bad luck, while "Possesski" could be derived from "to possess", referring to Jinx Possesski, as the possessed and cursed woman.

Roth presents the Palestinian perspective through the inclusion of the character of George Ziad (or Zee), who is a graduate-school friend of the protagonist Roth. Ziad is the Palestinian voice in the novel and, according to Andrew Furman, "American Jewish literature's first significant Palestinian character" (Furman 1995: 638). Once again, in an extensively long monologue, Ziad presents his perspective of the situation of Israel and Palestine, which starts with the statement: "I am a stone-throwing Arab consumed by hate" (OS 121). With this statement, he is certainly playing with the stereotyped image of the

Palestinian, who is an anti-Semitic terrorist, full of hate and frustration because of his lost home. George's discussion of Jewish history and Middle Eastern politics lasts over thirty pages, in which the reader is provided with his perspectives and arguments. Shostak argues that "Zee presents the subtext of the narrative of Jewish success that is modern Israeli history" (Shostak 741). Ziad views the "victorious Jews" of Israel as "terrible people" (OS 124), arrogant about their authenticity as Jews and contemptuous of Diaspora Jews, as well as exploitative of their own history of victimization in order to buy themselves moral immunity.

Because this state has no moral identity. It has forfeited its moral identity, if it ever had any to begin with. By relentlessly institutionalizing the Holocaust it has even forfeited its claim to the Holocaust! The state of Israel has drawn the last of its moral credit out of the bank of the dead six million – this is what they have done by breaking the hands of Arab children on the orders of their illustrious minister of defense. Even to world Jewry it will be clear: this is a state founded on force and maintained by force, a Machiavellian state that deals violently with the uprising of an oppressed people in an occupied territory, a Machiavellian state in, admittedly, a Machiavellian world, but about as saintly as the Chicago Police Department. (OS 135)

By this essential claim, Ziad is making a very strong argument, which, in Furman's words, nevertheless "cuts to the heart of a real-life concern of several Jews and non-Jews [...] – that Israeli and American Jews have exploited the Holocaust-related guilt of the world community to justify the state's action for too long" (Furman 648).

Ziad claims that Israeli politicians have, in a cynical way, used the Holocaust for propaganda value, by which the plight of the Palestinians has been immeasurably worsened. He argues that ever since the Six Day War in 1967, the Israeli government found it expedient "to remind the world, minute by minute, hour by hour, day in and day out, that the Jews were victims before they were conquerors and that they are conquerors only because they are victims" (OS 132). The continued occupation and conquest of the Palestinian territories, Ziad argues, have been facilitated because "[t]here's no business like Shoah business" (OS 133). Therefore, the oppressed lives of the Palestinians are in a way paralleled to the lives of oppressed European Jews, somehow suggesting that the Palestinian has become in some ways 'the double' of the Jew.

As a consequence, Ziad joins Roth's double in the novel in claiming that the true and valuable Jewish character is the Diaspora Jewish character, that of "real

Jews...truly superior people”, who displayed “vitality”, “irony”, “human sympathy”, “human tolerance”, and “goodness of heart” (OS 47).¹⁰

Although the protagonist Roth is skeptical about Ziad’s radical views, which he nevertheless comprehends to some extent, the author Philip Roth includes the ‘Palestinian problem’ in his novel by creating a significant Palestinian figure that is given a considerable space in the story. Furman, who argues that second-generation Jewish American literature has, up until *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, been coined by the absence of Palestinian voices, states that

[...] the absence of significant Palestinian voices in American Jewish novels about Israel does have an effect, well worth our attention. In *The Counterlife*, the absence of Arab voices contributes to the anti-Arab elements of the text that not only solidify comfortable stereotypes of the Arab other, but, in the long run, also valorize Mordecai Lippman’s Jewish fundamentalist perspective. For though Roth undercuts Lippman’s arguments, we should not give short shrift to the actual persuasiveness of Lippman’s rhetoric, rooted in his unchallenged depiction of Arabs who throw stones at school buses and rolled a hand grenade into his house while his child slept (132,143). (Furman 646)

The character of George Ziad and Roth’s treatment of the ‘Palestinian problem’ in *Operation Shylock* was, of course, not only praised by critics like Furman, but also met harsher critics, unsurprisingly mostly Arab counter-voices, such as Saddik M. Gohar. Gohar claims that “Ziad is aesthetically articulated to introduce the Palestinian narrative of the Arab-Israeli conflict from a perspective which fits his image in western colonial culture as an anti-Semitic fundamentalist” (Gohar 109). According to Gohar, Ziad’s argument is only introduced to be condemned by Roth’s central narrator as false allegations and viewed as nothing but “anti-Zionist crap” (OS 289). Furthermore, he criticizes George Ziad being the only Palestinian perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is, accordingly, narrowing the Palestinian viewpoint.

It would be interesting to analyze *Operation Shylock* from a mere post-colonial perspective, but since this would go beyond the scope of this paper, this discussion has to remain in the background here. Nevertheless, counting against Gohar’s harsh perspective, I would suggest, is the extensive space that Roth provides for the character of George Ziad, which is not at all a character reduced to stereotypes. The affection and understanding the main protagonist Roth maintains for Ziad

¹⁰ What is interesting is the fact that this ‘superiority’ of the Jew is mentioned by ‘the’ anti-Semitic character as well as by the Palestinian character in the novel.

throughout the novel are also elements that rather disapprove of Gohar's argument.

However, it is interesting once more to take a look at the name "Ziad". Barack-Fishman suggests that "Roth has almost certainly devised Ziad's name as an inversion of the name of literary critic Edward Said, who often criticizes Israeli policies" (Barack-Fishman 290).

Reflecting on the specific arrangement of characters in *Operation Shylock*, it is safe to say that Roth extensively discusses questions of Jewish identity and Israel's complex political situation by providing us with multiple narratives and perspectives. To put it in Barack-Fishman's words:

Operation Shylock prickles with splintered narratives, as characters with widely divergent historical perspectives wrestle with questions about who represents the 'real' Jew and which of the very different cultures depicted comprises a genuine Jewish peoplehood and civilization." (Barack-Fishman 287)

So far, I have analyzed the characters adding to the discussion of the novel's issues, surrounding our protagonist Philip Roth, but the ultimate question is, which role does **he**, the fictional construct of the author Philip Roth, play in all of this? How does **he** define his American Jewishness in an Israeli setting? Does he even define it after all and which role does **his double** play?

3.4 Operation (Jewish) Identity

The protagonist and narrator Philip Roth is very much modeled on the real-life writer Philip Roth, which means that, as already mentioned, Roth actually created a fictional construct of himself, who leads us through the story. Thus, we are dealing with the Jewish American writer in his 50ies, who travels to Israel just to find himself extensively confronted with questions of Jewish (American) identity. In terms of different foundations of Jewish living, Roth, as an American Jew, belongs to the Jews living in the diaspora. Being the son of an Eastern European couple who came to the United States during the period of the great immigration at the beginning of the 20th century, Roth has been born and raised in America within a Jewish (American) family environment. In the course of his literary career, Philip Roth has established himself as a rather critical Jewish American author, providing skeptical portrayals of Jews, often deliberately exaggerating and satirizing Jewish (American) life. Nevertheless, Jewish identity has always been an important, if not

the central theme in his works, suggesting it to be a major issue even for a rather secular and assimilated American Jew like Roth.

In terms of *Operation Shylock* it is specifically difficult to differentiate between the fictional construct of Philip Roth in the novel and the real-life author Philip Roth when it comes to analyzing the literary figure. Derek Parker Royal states: "Roth structures the text so that author and subject become indistinguishable, and it appears that the subject writes the author as much as the author writes the subject." (Parker Royal 55)

Since I read the novel on the one hand as a personal discussion of the author Roth's conflicting identities, and on the other hand as an imaginative response to his harshest literary critics as well as to his readership in general, I consider it necessary for this analysis to include the persona of the real-life Philip Roth, at least to a certain degree. Timothy L. Parrish states that

Operation Shylock implicitly contains within it both everything that Roth ever wrote and every critical attack his work has engendered. By making the name of the protagonist coincident with his own, Roth pursues to the end of logic and identity the consequences of having written novel after novel that featured a character, Nathan Zuckerman, whose experiences mirrored his own. (Parrish 579)

Not only does Roth in *Operation Shylock* finally make himself the protagonist of the novel, with which he has finally arrived in Israel, but when he gets there he also meets his most enthusiastic reader, namely 'himself'. By making himself the protagonist and creating his own doppelganger, Philip Roth brings his fictional quest for identity to a new level. Before providing possible interpretations of the fictional construct of Philip Roth and his double, it is worth recapitulating how the protagonist and his double interact throughout the story. To simplify matters, I will henceforth refer to the doppelganger Roth as "Pipik" or "the double" and to the protagonist as Philip Roth, or Roth.

By impersonating the writer Philip Roth and using his publicity, the double is, while in Israel, propagating and publicly advocating his concept of diasporism as the only solution to the 'Jewish Problem' in the Middle East.

When Roth, who learns about his impostor from his Israeli writer friend Appelfeld, finally encounters his double – a fanatical admirer of his novels – in Israel, he finds his appearance frighteningly similar to his own – clothes, gestures, facial features, etc.

Right from the beginning, Roth is both, attracted to and repulsed by his double. He immediately decides to call his impostor, while he passes off as “Pierre Roget”, a journalist who wants to interview him about his diasporism project. Subsequently, he decides to travel to Jerusalem, where he promptly runs into Pipik after attending the Demjanjuk trial. Immense tensions are arising, when his double tells him that his idea of diasporism was yielded out of reading Roth’s novels and being his biggest fan. When Philip Roth wants Pipik to tell him who he really is, he answers:

Your greatest admirer. [...] The person in the world who has read and loved your books like no one else. Not just once, not just twice – so many times I’m embarrassed to say. [...] You look at me as though I’m fawning, but it’s the truth – I know your books inside out. I know your *life* inside out. I could be your biographer. I *am* your biographer. (OS 73)

Although Philip feels deeply threatened and confused by his impostor and desperately desires to find out what is behind all this, he does not really take any measures, but stays rather passively, awaiting what is to come next. At times he thinks of him as a harmless neurotic, while at other times he is consumed by a manic desire to kill him. Despite his constant changing of moods towards his double, we experience Roth’s increasing possession by Pipik’s words and desires. This process is starting when he accepts the million-dollar donation, which is meant for the leader of the diasporist cause, continues when he is most convincingly impersonating his own impostor to his Palestinian friend George Ziad, pleading for the Diaspora movement, and finally culminates in seducing Jinx Possesski, his double’s girlfriend.

Nevertheless, as long as his double remains alive, he poses a threat to Philip’s mental state. The only way for our protagonist to gain control over the whole situation is for him to create his own narrative and story for his double. Thereby, he turns him into a ‘parody’. The writer states,

Yes, name him now! Because aptly naming him is knowing him for what he is and isn’t, exorcising and possessing him all at once. Name him! In his pseudonymity is his anonymity, and it’s that anonymity that’s killing me. Name him! (OS 115).

It is the act of naming him that is so significant here¹¹. Philip chooses the name “Moishe Pipik”, which translates from Yiddish into ‘Moses Bellybutton’. As Parker Royal states,

[i]t’s a name that Roth’s family used to designate a ridiculous, funny, but nonetheless innocuous character – significantly enough, one that isn’t real – and it gets its effect from being two dissimilar and antithetical words yoked together: Moses, the Jewish law-giver, juxtaposed to bellybutton, a purposeless anatomical mark. (Parker Royal 61)

A closer analysis and interpretation of the name “Moishe Pipik” will be provided later in this chapter. After the act of naming Pipik, he feels that “never had anybody seemed less of a menace to me, or a more pathetic rival for my birthright. He struck me instead as *a great idea*... yes, a great idea breathing with life!” (OS 83).

But, of course, Philip does not remain as confident about Pipik throughout the novel. There are episodes, when they meet again, both trying desperately to cope with one another, and times when Philip thinks him to be only a result of his Halcion breakdown and a mere hallucination.

When Roth, towards the end of the novel, is captured by the Mossad in an old school-classroom, suspecting Pipik to be behind all this, but nevertheless feeling sorry about the way he had treated him and coped with the situation throughout his whole stay in Israel, he states:

And only then did I understand what he did require of me, not to mention understanding finally just how very maladroit I was with him and had been from the start, how unforgivably self-damaging a miscalculation it had been to deny this impostor the thing that any impostor covets and can least do without and that only I could meaningfully anoint him with. Only when I spoke my name as though I believed it was his name as well, only then would Pipik reveal himself and negotiations commence to propitiate his rage. ‘Philip’, I said. He did not answer. ‘I am not your enemy. I don’t want to be your enemy. I would like to establish cordial relations. I am nearly overcome by how this has turned out and, if it’s not too late, I’d like to be your friend. [...] I should have called you by your name as you called me by mine. And from now on I will. I will. I am Philip Roth and you are Philip Roth, I am like you and you are like me, in name and not only in name...’. (OS 320)

But Pipik does not answer. He seems to have disappeared. It is at this point, when Pipik vanishes from the plot and only continues to exist in the narrative of

¹¹ By stating the importance of knowing somebody’s name, Roth uses the literary motif of the magic of naming someone or something, cf. Grimm’s fairy tale *Rumpelstiltskin*: At the very moment the Princess knows Rumpelstiltskin’s name, it loses its power.

Operation Shylock. Having accepted him, the two characters – Roth and Pipik – have become one, and Roth has to deal with it from there on.

The reader never finds out, whether Pipik was actually hired by the Mossad to test him, whether he actually existed as an independent element, who, in fact, really just wanted to carry out his diasporism project, or whether Pipik was nothing but another result of Roth's Halcion breakdown, or something that has taken place in Roth's head, reflecting his own internal divisions.

The central question arising now, is how to interpret Pipik. Why has Roth, in *Operation Shylock*, created his own doppelganger and how are we to interpret him and his function in the novel? There is, perhaps, not only one answer to these questions, but various interpretations, which I will elaborate on in this section.

3.4.1 Freudian doubles

In Josh Cohen's article about "Roth's doubles", he draws on Freudian psychoanalysis in order to explore the literary motif of the double. In his famous essay from 1915 *The Unconscious*, Freud states:

All the acts and manifestations which I notice in myself and do not know how to link up with the rest of my mental life must be judged as if they belonged to someone else: they are to be explained by a mental life ascribed to this other person. (Freud qtd. in Cohen 83)

Thus, Cohen suggests, it must be this idea of "someone else" that is responsible for the immense fascination in Freud as well as in his disciple Otto Rank for the literary narratives of the double, where a protagonist is shadowed or followed by a duplicate self (cf. Cohen 83). According to Rank, the double is the "detached personification of instincts and desires which were once felt to be unacceptable, but which can be satisfied without responsibility in this indirect way" (Rank qtd. in Cohen: 83). Thus, the literary motif of the double personifies Freud's 'return of the repressed'. By the appearance of a double, the protagonist is disturbed in his/her sense of who he/she is. In this sense, the double is simultaneously strange and familiar to the protagonist, while "the protagonist's frequent terror in narratives of the double stems from the perception of his tormenting copy as both his intimately known self and his radically estranged other" (Cohen 83). Consequently, the double is the self the protagonist both knows and does not want to know.

The detailed description of the protagonist's Halcion breakdown with all its consequences suggests that he has, as a consequence, only recently suffered from a

severe identity crisis, not knowing himself anymore. He had asked his wife, Claire, over and over again “Where is Philip?” (OS 22), “Where is Philip Roth? (...) Where did he go?” (OS 22). Philip tries to analyze the heart of his breakdown, when he is talking to his friend Appelfeld in Israel: “You know what’s at the heart of the misery of the breakdown? Me-it is. Microcosmosis. Drowning in the tiny tub of yourself.” (OS 55).

Thus, at the very heart of the novel, we are dealing with the protagonist’s identity crisis, which is only reinforced and challenged once more, when he is confronted with his double in Israel. Safer writes: “On one level, there are the shifting realities of Philip Roth, the fictional author, Pipik, the shadow self or the other, and the real author Roth. All three represent a quest central to the novel: how does one define the Jewish self?” (Safer 165).

3.4.2 Microcosmosis

In Freudian terms, we could interpret the appearance of his double as a manifestation of the protagonist Roth’s repressed emotions and conflicting ‘inner selves’; the manifestation of the fragmented Roth. This is, in a way, making him ‘sick’, which is illustrated through his Halcion breakdown. At one point, the double seems to be the mirror image of his sick self:

His face was the face I remembered seeing in the mirror during the months when I was breaking down. His glasses were off, and I saw in his eyes my own dreadful panic of the summer before, my eyes at their most fearful, back when I could think of little other than how to kill myself. He wore on his face what had so terrified Claire: my look of perpetual grief. (OS 179)

Safer argues that central to the novel is the protagonist’s fear of losing power to Moishe Pipik, which would equal losing his own healthier self (cf. Safer 164). How threatening Pipik’s usurpation of his identity is, is portrayed during a hysterical encounter between Roth and Pipik in a hotel room, when Roth’s dominant thought is: “now I was locked up with him” (OS 182). In this sense, Roth is finally confronted with his inner struggles, which he has to face. Parrish suggests an interpretation of this scene:

Roth highlights the idea that this scene represents the culmination of a lifetime of writing stories about self-obsession: ‘Philip Roth fucking Philip Roth! [...] is a form of masturbation too fancy even for me’ (191). (Parrish 588).

Coming back to the name “Pipik” meaning ‘bellybutton’, one could argue that Roth is alluding to the concept of ‘navel-gazing’, or ‘omphaloskepsis’, this meaning an excessive occupation with himself and the self as such. To go a step further, one could even argue that not only is Roth referring to his own navel-gazing here, but to an exaggerated navel-gazing of ‘the Jewish people’ in general, always negotiating their identity and everything related to it.

3.4.3 The Dilemma of the (American) Diaspora Jew

Furthermore, one could argue that Roth, be it the real-life or fictional writer Roth, created Pipik in order to illustrate the dilemmas and maybe repressed tensions of the American diaspora Jew. Hence, this dilemma is caused by the relatively young existence of a Jewish state, which is now supposed to be the point of reference for Jewish identity, while the Jews in the diaspora have to find their way of (re)defining themselves against this backdrop and ascertain how and in which way they are relating to Israel.

Therefore, the creation of his own double in a way permits Roth “to explore territory that, even for a Jewish writer of notable courage and independence, must still seem impermissible” (D.M. Thomas qtd. in Safer 165). With Pipik’s concept of diasporism and harsh criticism of the state of Israel and the dilemma it poses to diaspora Jews, Roth is, once again, entering dangerous terrain. Pipik is the appraiser of diasporism, standing for denying Israel’s right for existence and propagating the dissolution of the Jewish ‘homeland’:

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Israel was the Jewish hospital in which Jews could begin to recover from the devastation of that horror, from a dehumanization so terrible that it would not have been at all surprising had the Jewish spirit, had the Jews themselves, succumbed entirely to that legacy of rage, humiliation and grief. But that is not what happened. Our recovery actually came to pass. In less than a century. Miraculous, more than miraculous – yet the recovery of the Jews is by now a fact, and the time has come to return to our real life and our real home, to our ancestral Jewish Europe. (OS 41,42)

Pipik views Israel primarily as a “Jewish hospital” for the survivors of the Holocaust, a place where they can recreate from their terrible sufferings and experiences. Furthermore, he claims that currently (which is the time of the 1980ies), the Jews have recovered and are supposed to return to their ‘real home’, which is, accordingly, Europe. Thus, he suggests that the ‘authentic’ Jew is not living in the Middle East, but in Europe, or America, this being what is

conventionally understood as the diaspora. Of course the distinction between diaspora and the Jew's 'original home' is becoming a paradox here, as well as distinctions between 'exile' and 'galut'.

Not only is Pipik propagating the dissolution of Israel, but also pointing to the threats, the state has accordingly caused for the (American) diaspora Jew:

Once again the Jewish people are at a terrible crossroad. Because of Israel. Because of Israel and the way that Israel endangers us all. Forget the law and listen, please, to what I have to say. The majority of Jews don't choose Israel. Its existence only confuses everyone. Look at what happened to Pollard. I am haunted by Jonathan Pollard. An American Jew paid by Israeli intelligence to spy against his own country's military establishment. [...] Pollard had fantasies about saving Jewish lives. I understand that, *you* understand that: Jewish lives must be saved, and at absolutely any cost. But the cost is not betraying your country, it's greater than that: it's defusing the country that most endangers Jewish lives today- and that is the country called Israel! (OS 81)

Pipik is suggesting that Israel poses an immense threat to the (American) diaspora Jew. Although American Jews have, accordingly, hardly anything in common with Israeli Jews, they are willing to do almost anything for the Jewish state. Not only is Israel endangering the lives of Israeli Jews, but the lives of contemporary diaspora Jews as well, "because American Jews are obsessed with saving Jewish lives, and helping Israel means saving Jewish lives" (Barack-Fishman 288).

Now, I would certainly not go as far as to argue that either the author or the protagonist Philip Roth mirrors his views via this fictional Philip Roth double. The protagonist is very much aware of the 'absurdities' of Pipik's concept of diasporism, opposing it, while insisting "all of Christian Europe would be appalled if the descendants of Europe's slaughtered Jewry were to return to their European homelands" (Barack-Fishman 291).

Furthermore, the tensions between diaspora Jews and Israeli Jews are addressed in a scene between the protagonist Roth and Smilesburger, who points to the ostensible liberties of the diaspora Jew:

Go to wherever you feel most blissfully unblamable. That is the delightful luxury of the utterly transformed American Jew. Enjoy it. You are that marvelous, unlikely, most magnificent phenomenon, the truly liberated Jew. The Jew who is not accountable. The Jew who finds the world perfectly to his liking. The *comfortable* Jew. The *happy* Jew. Go. Choose. Take. Have. You are the blessed Jew condemned to nothing, least of all to our historical struggle. (OS 352)

With Pipik and Smilesburger, we are provided with two contradicting views of the diaspora Jew. While the one is pointing to the dilemma of the diaspora Jew, caused

by Israel and its complex history, the other is highlighting the diaspora Jew's freedom from "historical struggle". For Roth, this contradiction cuts to the heart of the complexities of 'Jewishness' in general.

Roth is, in *Operation Shylock*, illustrating the complexities of both, being a diaspora Jew as well as being an Israeli Jew.

In *Operation Shylock*, the Halcion to which Roth the narrator was addicted in America also becomes symbolic of an alluring but false ease. 'Halcion' evokes images of an Edenic environment, yet the drug actually intensified rather than assuaged the pains of real life, causing Roth to have panic attacks and nightmares. The problems that he experiences in the Diaspora are magnified rather than contrasted in Israel, and the Americans he encounters are no less impassioned and driven than the Israelis. (Lehmann 90)

3.4.4 Reconsidering Jewish 'authenticity'?

On a more abstract level, the appearance of Philip Roth's double could be determined as a satire on himself as well as on his critics, forcing him to a reconsideration of his understanding of 'authentic Jewishness'. In this sense, Roth's double could be interpreted as the 'misreader' of his novels. Pipik claims that his idea for the concept of diasporism arose out of reading Roth's novels. Pipik, in a letter to Philip writes:

IN BEHALF OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. Please! Allow me to be the public instrument through which you express the love for the Jews/the hatred for their enemies/that is in every word you ever wrote. (...) I AM THE YOU THAT IS NOT WORDS. (OS 87)

The real-life writer Philip Roth had been confronted over and over again with anti-Semitism charges, because of his loose handling and sometimes satirizing of questions of Jewish identity. Thus, Pipik in *Operation Shylock* might constitute a self-reflection and response to his critics, given the fact that the fictional writer Roth at the beginning of the novel feels rather estranged by Pipik's ideas, but later on "suspects that his ludicrous idea may really represent him in some undeniable way" (Parrish 582). Pipik offers comically simplified versions of ideas implicit in Roth's fictions, which causes Roth to reconsider his own understanding of himself as a Jew.

The 'other' Roth's existence suggests that in being concerned with the 'authenticity' of his identity, the 'real' Roth depends on the same sort of essentialized self that undergirds the cultural theories of his fiercest Jewish critics. To combat the views put forward by his double (which are a reflection of his own), the real Roth is very nearly forced into the position of defending

Israel because it preserves an essential Jewish self that he has abandoned in America. (Parrish 583)

Pipik's view that the 'real authentic Jew' is living in the diaspora can be interpreted as a position, ironically, that Roth has at times presented as his own, whether in his fiction or in interviews. Roth challenges his understanding of his own Jewishness and authenticity thereof.

In *Operation Shylock* Philip Roth certainly demonstrates his awareness of Israel being very much the response to the historical incidents of the 20th century. Parrish argues that Roth certainly "does not object to Israel as a state or even, in a limited way, as an ideal" (Parrish 586). This he shows, in my opinion, with the character of Aharon Appelfeld in the novel, whom he straightforwardly presents as his counterself:

Aharon and I each embody the reverse of each other's experience; because each recognizes in the other the Jewish man he is not; because of the all but incompatible orientations that shape our very different lives and very different books and that result from antithetical twentieth century Jewish biographies; because we are the heir jointly of a drastically bifurcated legacy – because of the sum of all these Jewish antinomies, yes, we have much to talk about and are intimate friends. (OS 201)

Roth, here, very much suggests that neither authenticity counts solely for the diaspora Jew, nor only for the Holocaust surviving Jew, who escaped to Israel. Rather, he sees the two of them, to put it in Parrish's words,

as complementary halves of the Jewish self. Appelfeld is a Holocaust survivor, an Israeli citizen, whose fiction is rooted in the experience of the Holocaust. Roth is a Jew of the American diaspora, free to move in and out of questions of Jewish identity (Parrish 587).

Hence, with the creation of his fictional double and his radical idea of diasporism, Roth might have responded to his critics as well as undertaken a fictional journey of self-reflection, reconsidering his understanding of Jewish 'authenticity' and identity.

3.4.5 The Divisiveness of the Jew

In his article on *Operation Shylock* Parker Royal pursues the argument that Roth basically questions the concept of ethnic identity through the postmodern aesthetics of the novel, whereof the double is part of. This adds to the argument of this paper that Roth, in *Operation Shylock*, generally points to the complexity of subjectivity as well as that of identity, considering it, in Stuart Hall's terms, as a loose concept, always changing, never being fixed.

Revisiting the significance of the name “Moishe Pipik”, which translates to ‘Moses Bellybutton’, Parker Royal argues that this name takes on an even deeper meaning when it is viewed in the context of ethnicity. According to Parker Royal, in Roth’s earlier fiction there had mostly been the possibility “that some sort of ethnic bedrock can be reached, and that by turning back to one’s ancestral origins one could construct at least part of a fixed identity” (Parker Royal 61). In his later fiction and in *Operation Shylock*, however, this idea of a fixed identity has changed, while there seems to be only a remnant of origin leading to nowhere and being nothing more than a meaningless trace. This remnant is, of course, the ‘pipik’, the ‘bellybutton’, which Roth describes as

this conspicuously puzzling centrality, as meaningless as it was without function – the sole archaeological evidence of the fairy tale of one’s origins, the lasting imprint of the fetus who was somehow oneself without actually being anyone at all, just about the silliest blankest, stupidest watermark that could have been devised for a species with a brain like ours. It might as well have been the omphalos at Delphi given the enigma the pipik presented. Exactly what was your pipik trying to tell you? Nobody could ever really figure it out. You were left only with the world, the delightful playword itself, the sonic prankishness of the two syllabic pops and the closing click encasing those peepingly meekish, unobtrusively shlemielish twin vowels. (OS 116)

At that point, Roth might be questioning ethnic origins and ethnic identity as such. Hence, the bellybutton, “an anatomical relic of a once-present connection to the womb” (Parker Royal 2000: 61) being paired with the central figure of the Torah, Moses, together question the origins of a common Jewish ethnic identity, meaning that “any cohesive and unified understanding of ethnic identity, especially as it springs from a myriad of voices within the Jewish community, is called into question” (ibid.). This cuts to the heart of the novel’s quest for identity. Once again, what does being Jewish mean? How can Jewish identity be defined? How can Jewish American/diaspora identity be defined? How can Jewish Israeli identity be defined? And where in this complex chaos does Philip Roth stand? “Where is Philip Roth? (...) Where did he go?” (OS 22).

The author does not provide a clear answer to that, but the answer is: we do not know. If we wish, we can argue that the answer is provided by one of Roth’s voices. Towards the end of the novel, Smilesburger, when talking to the protagonist Roth, sums up the complexity of ‘Jewishness’:

Why couldn’t the Jews be one people? Why must Jews be in conflict with one another? Why must they be in conflict with themselves? Because the divisiveness is not just between Jew and Jew – it is within the individual Jew.

Is there a more manifold personality in all the world? I don't say divided. Divided is nothing. Even the goyim are divided. But inside every Jew there is a *mob* of Jews. The good Jew, the bad Jew. The new Jew, the old Jew. The lover of Jews, the hater of Jews. The friend of the goy, the enemy of the goy. The arrogant Jew, the wounded Jew. The pious Jew, the rascal Jew. The coarse Jew, the gentle Jew. The defiant Jew, the appeasing Jew. The Jewish Jew, the de-Jewed Jew. Shall I go on? Do I have to expound upon the Jew as a three-thousand-year amassment of mirrored fragments to one who has made his fortune as a leading Jewologist of international literature? Is it any wonder that the Jew is always disputing? He *is* a dispute, incarnate! (OS 334)

This speech underscores the understanding of a fluid and unanchored (ethnic) identity. As already mentioned, the novel is filled with monologues and speeches by characters and voices such as Pipik, Ziad, Appelfeld, Jinx Possesski, David Supposnik or Philip Roth himself. All of them can be understood as voices of Roth, he lets them speak by making use of literary ventriloquism, or as Royal states, "Roth slips on the puppets in this 'confessional theater' and gives voice to the mob of Jews inside of him" (Parker Royal 63).

In this sense, Philip's identity is never static, but constantly defined by others. The protagonist Roth does not only learn that he can easily slip into other identities, as when he is impersonating his own impostor several times, but also "when confronted with a destabilizing force such as Pipik, he undergoes a crisis where he is forced to question his own identity as an author writing for the general public and as a Jew" (Parker Royal 62).

When the protagonist Roth is sitting in an Israeli classroom trying to translate from Hebrew the telling passage from Genesis inscribed on the blackboard, which he actually had learned in Hebrew school, but is nonetheless unable to decipher, the question of ethnicity is addressed once again in the novel. There is something, which is part of him, in this case it is elements of orthodox Judaism, but which he nevertheless is not able to access. Roth's inability to translate the Hebrew words perhaps suggests "a problem in acquiring any sense of a unified identity" (ibid.). This is where Stuart Hall comes in, when he states:

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 225)

Hence, in *Operation Shylock* Philip Roth questions an understanding of fixed meanings and origins, an understanding of a fixed and stable identity, while “[b]oth the author and the text itself serve as case studies in the fluidity of subjectivity” (Parker Royal 62).

Most of the characters in the novel represent various fragments of Jewish identity. Thus, the centrality of Smilesburger’s speech becomes rather obvious, since it suggests exactly this fragmentation of the self and the subject.

In this perspective, cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is no once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return. Of course, it is no mere phantasm either. It is *something* – not a mere trick of imagination. It has its histories – and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual ‘past’, since our relation to it, like the child’s relation to the mother, is always-already ‘after the break’. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth (Hall 226)

Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘cultural Identity’ can be read, in a way, as an alternative of the concept of ‘ethnic identity’. In this sense, ‘cultural identities’ are “the points of identification” that are made within the discourses of history and culture, thus not “an essence but a *positioning*. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental ‘law of origin’” (ibid.).

“Moses bellybutton” evokes the origin of Jewish identity and its loss, while Pipik, therefore, represents “to Roth the necessary cutting of the cable that enables the invention of his own identity” (Safer 593). The Hebrew words that Roth tries to decipher in the classroom in Israel are only translated as an epigraph to the novel. They come from Genesis 32:24: “So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until dawn.” This story is about a strange encounter between Jacob and a mysterious man, which Jacob manages to drive away and is consequently “touched with holiness” (cf. Safer 593.). Maybe Roth is suggesting that Pipik was both a blessing and a torment. Just as Jacob wrestled with the creature until it mysteriously disappeared, so did Roth wrestle with Pipik until he finally disappeared and Roth is in a way able to find his tranquility, at least to a certain degree. He has probably finally dealt with his repressed conflicting inner selfs.

In accepting the chaos – the flux – that Pipik offers while rejecting his desire to erase Jewish identity in the name of preserving Jewish identity, Roth has mastered his double (American and Jewish) identity. (Safer 597)

3.5 Operation Shylock – A Confession?

Philip Roth, the protagonist and narrator of *Operation Shylock: A Confession* claims that he had to delete chapter 11, the last chapter of the novel, which would have actually described 'Operation Shylock' that he carried out in Athens. The reader is free to imagine and interpret the operation and its meaning in whatever way he or she likes. He or she is free to fill in all of the gaps and question marks the novel devises. And finally, the reader is free to decide whether or not there is any confession to be read out of the novel at all.

I argued in the this chapter that *Operation Shylock* can be read as an operation of Jewish identity, which is dealing with the complexity of Jewish identity in the second half of the 20th century.

As a self-declared secularized American Jew in the post-Holocaust second half of the 20th century, defining Jewish identity has become a complex entity, which is shaped by the pleasures of assimilation, the guilt of surviving as well as an increasing detachment from Jewish traditions and religion. Thus, the questions for Roth are: Who is a Jew? How can Jewishness be defined? Which role does Israel play with all its complicated political and moral implications? Which role does history play in shaping Jewish identity?

Just as Roth does not provide a clear answer when he is asked by a Palestinian cab driver "Are you a Zionist?" (OS 165), or by Israeli schoolkids "What comes first (...) nationality or Jewish identity? Tell us about your identity crisis." (OS 268), he neither provides a clear answer to all of those questions.

Rather, he provides us with intense discussions of and multiple perspectives on Jewish identity as well as on Israel and its ambiguous political and 'moral' situation. *Operation Shylock* is illustrating the self-dividedness of 'the Jew', the internal plurality of 'the Jew', the difficulty of defining 'Jewishness' at all. It is undermining the logic that there is an 'authentic' ethnic Jewish identity and rather accepting the complexity and the 'chaos'. It is trying to overcome binary thinking and illustrating the duality of ideas and their resultant paradoxes. Finally, it is doing all of this within a rather postmodern narrative framework, questioning fixed meanings, strict divisions between fact and fiction and reductionist historical thinking.

The crisis that Israel is possibly posing for 'the diaspora Jew' because of its symbolic power as the Jewish 'home' is resolved by overcoming the tensions between the concepts of diaspora and Zionism. Instead, the two concepts are seen as interdependent. Shusterman underlines that argument by stating:

If *aliyah* is an essential defining myth for Jewish identity, then not only the presence of *golah* but actual life in the Diaspora is a precondition of the enactment and very meaning of that myth. (Shusterman qtd. in Shostak 743)

Roth returns to America, accepting his 'identification' of both being a Jew as well as an American. This is mirrored very clearly towards the end of the novel when Roth and Smilesburger meet in a Jewish food store on Amsterdam Avenue in New York City, which he associates with childhood memories:

The place reminded me of the humble street-level living quarters of some of my boyhood friends [...] – the tiled floor sprinkled with sawdust, the shelves stacked with fish canned in sauces and oils, up by the cash register a prodigious loaf of halvah soon to be sawed into crumbly slabs, and, wafting up from behind the showcase running the length of the serving counter, the bitter fragrance of vinegar, of onions, of whitefish and red herring, of everything pickled, peppered, salted, smoked, soaked, stewed, marinated, and dried, smells with a lineage that, like these stores themselves, more than likely led straight back through the shtetl to the medieval ghetto and the nutrients of those who lived frugally and could not afford to dine à la mode, the diet of sailors and common folk, for whom the flavor of the ancient preservatives was life. (OS 378-379)

This is what a part of 'Jewishness' is to Roth. He connects the past with the present by describing everyday details, which are part of his own personal understanding of Jewish culture. Thus, although Europe and Israel are continuously referred to as the Jews' actual 'homeland', Roth emphasizes how he has found his home in the American diaspora and created his own sense of Jewish identity and 'feeling at home'. At the same time he acknowledges all the other various possible understandings of Jewish identity and 'authenticity'.

Finally, *Operation Shylock: A Confession* can be read as the author's attempt to come to terms with 'Jewishness' in general, his own Jewish identity and his attempt to come to terms with a Jewish 'homeland' in the Middle East. It is also the author's response to his audience and specifically to his critics, to whom he probably has devoted this 'confession'.

4. Operation Jewish Identity - To Israel and Back

To Jerusalem and Back and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* are two literary works that have as much in common as they differ from each other. Both are written by Jewish American authors, who consider(ed) themselves as secular American Jews. Their Jewishness certainly plays a major role in most of their works. Bellow and Roth were both experiencing a rather orthodox upbringing, being sons of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, while later growing into a rather secular form of Judaism. They are shaped by the Jewish Eastern European (immigrant) experience of their parents, but grew up in an American environment. Both writers keep considering questions of Jewish identity, meaning questions of how to define 'Jewishness' challenged by assimilation in this American environment. Furthermore, they both experienced what their 'fellow' European Jews had to face with regards to the horrors of the Shoah as well as the rising of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Finally, they both travel to Israel – one of them physically and literary, the other one at least literary – and back to America, testing their Jewish identity against the backdrop of the Jewish state as well as their home country. This chapter will compare the authors' (literary) journeys to Israel and back to the United States, illustrating differences as well as similarities among them.

While *To Jerusalem and Back* is a non-fictional, personal travel account, written in the 1970s, *Operation Shylock* can be regarded as a highly postmodern work of fiction, set in 1988 and published in 1993. Therefore, it must be taken into consideration that two decades lie between the publication of these works.

Saul Bellow travels to Israel with a confident stance as an American, skeptical towards what to expect from the Jewish 'homeland'. He associates Israel primarily with ancient Orthodox Judaism, and with people who are living in their isolated archaic worlds, based on sacred biblical history. Although this form of Judaism is nothing entirely unfamiliar to him, it is something that he relates with the past. He relates it with his own childhood, which he is - in this respect - hardly able to remember anymore. However, when Bellow arrives in Israel, he immediately gets involved in the turbulent, daily Israeli life. The author meets numerous different people, listens to their perspectives and reads extensively about the Jewish 'homeland' in the Middle East. Bellow grows more and more into the country, gets obsessed with the country's political situation and develops an understanding and

deep respect for its people, who he considers to be a people fighting for its struggle to survive. For Bellow, the Holocaust and the horrors of the Jewish Europeans' past play an important role in relating to a people that is still struggling for their right to exist and trying to find their place in the world. While in Israel, the writer experiences the complexities and ambiguities the Jewish state is involved in, but he is also reevaluating his own country and its role in world politics, while coming to a rather sinister conclusion. Bellow certainly maintains his stance as an American, which is mirrored in the title's part "and back". However, in a way he retrieves his Jewish identity while in Israel and begins to identify with a larger Jewish community. Saul Bellow held lectures on being a Jewish writer in America that were published in the *New York Review of Books*. In those lectures he focuses on questions of what it means to him to be a secular Jew in the modern world, as well as on questions of how to avoid "the easy slide into a meaningless Jewish identity" (Herschthal). "For that, Bellow argues, Jews need to study their history. That is the only thing that, for secular Jews, can give their identity meaning." (ibid.) Hence, Bellow seems to suggest that in order to be able to define one's Jewish identity, one needs to know one's history and find meaning in it. In *To Jerusalem and Back*, Bellow is certainly drawn closer to a larger Jewish community by looking back on the European Jewish past with all its horrors, as well as by realizing Israel's present complex and violent 'reality'. Barack-Fishman states that "[f]or many contemporary Jews, Jewish survival has become the primary moral obligation", while "Israel occupies a paramount position when Jewish writers contemplate Jewish survival" (Barack-Fishman 281). For Bellow, Israel definitely seems to play a dominant role with regards to Jewish survival. As an American diaspora Jew, he has experienced the Shoah from a distance. He had to experience how fellow European Jews are killed for being Jews, while American Jews were leading rather peaceful lives. The feeling of survival guilt became an issue for many American Jews during and especially after the Holocaust. Hence, the support of a Jewish state as a 'safe haven' for persecuted Jews was one possibility of showing loyalty to those Jews, but also a new source for 'identification' for Jews in the diaspora. Concerning Israel's position in relation to factors defining 'modern' Jewish identity, Barack-Fishman states:

Because of perceived divergence between the demands of physical survival and the definition of Jewishness in the modern world, Israel has become a

catalyst for spiritual self-examination among American Jewish authors.
(Barack-Fishman 281)

This holds true for Bellow as well, for whom Israel also becomes a source of spiritual refreshment, a place of self-discovery and a possibility to redefine his worldview.

In contrast to *To Jerusalem and Back*, where Bellow arrives in Israel rather skeptical and self-assured as an American, the protagonist of *Operation Shylock*, Philip Roth, experiences a major identity crisis while still in the US. Although this crisis is always ascribed to Roth's addiction to the Halcion sleeping pills, it is not difficult to interpret it as an identity crisis that goes back to Roth's conflicting identities as a secular American Diaspora Jew. When in Israel, those conflicting identities and complexities are even reinforced. On the one hand, the protagonist encounter a range of different characters, all providing different perspectives on the question of what it really is that defines 'Jewishness' and which role the Jewish state plays in all this. On the other hand, he furthermore meets his own double, which is probably acting out the most extreme positions of all. Moreover, while the author is used to control his environment at least through language and writing, that basis is missing in Israel, at least to a certain degree. This is revealed in the classroom scene, where Roth is unable to translate words from Hebrew and feels rather powerless in an environment he cannot control:

On the blackboard I saw something written in Hebrew. Nine words. I couldn't read one of them. Four decades ago after those three years of afternoon classes at the Hebrew school, I could no longer even identify letters of the alphabet. [...]

But I drove this possibility out of my mind by studying the nine words on the blackboard, focusing on each character as though if I looked long enough I might unexpectedly regain possession of my lost tongue and a secret message would be revealed to me. But no foreign language could have been any more foreign. (OS 312, 315)

How important language and the act of writing is for Roth is once more demonstrated when he describes how he learned the alphabet in school, stating:

[...] and their would be nothing as remotely inspirational again until a stimulant no less potent than the force of language - the hazardous allurements of the flesh and the pecker's irrepressible urge to squirt - overturned angelic childhood. (...) The alphabet is all there is to protect me; it's what I was given instead of a gun. (OS 323)

Roth's confusion and his crisis is reinforced in Israel, since he is confronted with multiple perspectives and competing narratives on questions of Jewish identity

and Israel. However, the character of Smilesburger plays a crucial role in this context and in the novel in general, since his speech about the 'divisiveness of the Jew' in a way appears to be the crux of the problem of defining Jewish identity, as well as a certain redemption for Roth. He apparently carries out Operation Shylock, while leaving its exact description out in his narrative after Smilesburger tells him: "Let your Jewish consciousness be your guide" (OS 398). After having returned to the US, the protagonist's status as a Jew and as an American is reaffirmed, while Roth has to redefine his identity as a diaspora Jew. This is illustrated when the protagonist depicts what 'Jewishness' personally constitutes for him, for example, a Yiddish diner in New York. In this diner, Yiddish is still spoken and Jewish Eastern European eating traditions are cultivated. However, the customers are not exclusively Jewish, but rather a multicultural mix of 'Americans'. The scene demonstrates, how it is not only American Jewry experiencing acculturation, but also how 'American culture' is shaped by the customs and traditions of its immigrants.

Operation Shylock does not answer all the questions, ambiguities and complexities implied in the novel. Rather those ambiguities and complexities of defining Jewish identity as well as those of the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East are acknowledged and presented from various perspectives.

In *To Jerusalem and Back* and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* Saul Bellow and Philip Roth address questions of Jewish identity and the role of the Jewish state through rather different literary techniques. While Bellow tells his story in a linear way, Roth disperses this approach by embedding various different texts into his narration, always surprising the reader by unexpected twists in the plot. The fictitiousness of *Operation Shylock: A Confession* allows Roth to play with a range of literary motifs and methods, while irony is certainly one of the most outstanding ones. One of the most ironic moments is perhaps when the author wishes to escape from his own plot.

But their approaches do not only differ with regards to their literary methods and genres, they also vary in their understanding (of the role) of history. While history appears to be 'reality' for Bellow, Roth approaches it in a more postmodern way. Bellow is regarding history as a fairly fixed record of events and has a clear perspective on it, while Roth's consideration of it is much more complex,

emphasizing the existence of various competing historical narratives, presumably even of different 'histories'.

Furthermore, *To Jerusalem and Back* and *Operation Shylock* differ when it comes to addressing Israeli politics and the Palestinian problem. Bellow is analyzing and presenting Israeli and Middle Eastern politics by pointing to expert scholars whose opinion he appears to represent. The author is drawing rather clear conclusions about who is preventing peace in the Middle East, stating that the root of the problem is that the Arab nations and the Palestinians would not accept a Jewish state in their midst. The sources he relies on are almost exclusively either Israeli or at least Jewish. The fictitious Philip Roth, on the other hand, is not explicitly expressing his opinions on Israeli politics with regards to its treatment of the Palestinian problem. However, with the character of George Ziad and the excursion to Ramallah, where the Palestinian perspective is reinforced, Roth is granting that question a certain amount of space. He allows for Palestinian voices to present 'the other' perspective on the Middle East conflict. This significant difference is not coincidental; in fact, it is due to the various developments the Middle East conflict historically underwent during the twenty years, that lie between Bellow's and Roth's texts. Whereas during the Sixties and Seventies the focus of world politics lay on Israel and its struggle for statehood, the late Eighties and the Nineties saw a shift in perspective. Hence, the case of the Palestinians became the focus of attention, while Israeli politics were increasingly facing criticism. Reconsidering Andrew Furman's distinction of American literary periods with regards to Zionism, I would settle Bellow's *To Jerusalem and Back* somewhere between the periods of Zionism and post-Zionism. Bellow is certainly not glorifying and exclusively celebrating the rise of the state of Israel. However, he is writing in a period in which Israel's moral righteousness was rather accepted by American Jews almost without question. In the face of the horrors of the Shoah, showing solidarity with Israel was one of the predominant concerns of American Jews. Roth's *Operation Shylock*, on the other hand, can be settled rather clearly in the period of post-Zionist literature; a literature becoming more critical of Israel, having the heart to express severe criticism on Israel's politics. Not only does the novel provide a Palestinian voice, expressing its criticism on Israel and its people, it also presents Israeli Jewish voices who talk freely about Israel's moral 'flaws' and complex situation.

Despite their different approaches, the two works exhibit various parallels. As already mentioned, in both texts a journey to Israel and back is undertaken, in order to test questions of Jewish identity in general, and of Jewish American (diaspora) identity in particular. While certainly sensing differences between the young Jewish 'homeland' and their life in the American diaspora, there are just as much commonalities that are illustrated in the works. This seems surprising for both, the author Saul Bellow and the protagonist Philip Roth. Both seem to begin to feel part of a larger Jewish community, while they experience a certain reconciliation of their previously conflicting identities and acknowledgement of the 'duality' or even 'hybridity' thereof. Their stance as American diaspora Jews is reaffirmed, while Israel, with all its complexities and ambiguities, definitely begins to serve as a point of reference and a source for identification.

Summing up, an author (Bellow) respectively a fictitious author (Roth) travels to Israel in order to do what an author does on a journey like that: meeting friends, colleagues, relatives or significant public figures, discussing prevailing questions and problems of Jewish history and identity as well as Israeli politics, trying to find a position of his own. Beyond that he experiences this travelling as a journey to the past defined by political history as well as by his personal history. In all, this journey turns out to be one to his childhood, to his inner self, at last leading to the everlasting questions of (Jewish) identity. Both, Bellow as well as Roth ask "what is more consonant with American Jewish identity, feelings of connectedness to Israel or to the peculiarly creative insider-outsider posture of Diaspora Jewry?" (Barack-Fishman 285). They put the same questions and to a large extent they obtain the same cognitions. But while Bellow seems rather reconciled, Roth refuses to give definite answers.

Bellow calls his travelogue 'a personal account', meaning that he kept an account of his experiences and impressions that "evokes places, ideas, and people [...] on the edge of history, an inch from disaster, yet brimming with argument and words." (Howe 224). The account leaves the reader rather propitiated than doubtful about Bellow's attitude towards his subject.

Roth's subtitle, more precisely the second half of his title, reads "A Confession". Consequentially, the reader expects some kind of 'confessional' statements. The last sentence in his "Note to the Reader" reads "This confession is false" (OS 399). It is not clear whether that sentence refers to the whole novel - which would imply

that the whole text should be read as a confession – or whether it refers just to the “Note to the Reader”. Again the reader is left in the dark, if not in complete confusion, and he is tempted to believe that Roth never intended to write this final chapter at all. Shostak suggests that “[i]n bringing the narrative to the point of refusal and in rationalizing that refusal, Roth represents the pressures that bear on Jewish identity and the contradictory desires to confirm and elude, to define and confound Jewish subjectivity, especially in relation to the Jewish nation-state.” (Shostak, 727). In this sense, if anything, Roth provides the reader with answers that have to be found between the lines. Therefore, Roth stays loyal to the tradition of the whole novel of denying ‘absolute truths’, but rather accepts several ‘truths’.

To conclude, this chapter has illustrated that Bellow and Roth utilize a fundamentally different aesthetics in their works in order to explore fairly similar questions and issues. While Bellow approaches his discussion of Jewish identity and the role of Israel non-fictionally and fairly personal, Roth created a postmodern novel that challenges the idea of ‘fixed’ meanings and the boundaries between fact and fiction. While Bellow provides relatively clear answers to the questions he poses, Roth emphasizes the chaos, complexities and the impossibility of providing definite answers.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have demonstrated that the existence of the state of Israel as a Jewish ‘homeland’ has become a pressing subject in Jewish American literature in the course of the second half of the 20th century. This has been particularly the case from the 1970s onwards, while becoming an even more significant theme at the end of the 20th century. I have illustrated how and why the existence of a Jewish ‘homeland’ causes complex internal tensions and questions of identity for Jews living in the American diaspora, and how this, as a consequence, manifests itself in various literary approaches. Furthermore, this paper has shown that although Israel has remained an important point of reference for Jewish American authors in the course of this period of time, they have developed a tendency of dealing more openly with critical approaches of Israel and its policies.

I have started out by briefly tracing Jewish history in US America, illustrating how the United States became a home for millions of Jews, especially since the time of the great immigration, starting in the 1880s lasting until the 1920s. In this wave

of migration, particularly Eastern European Jews escaped from pogroms in Europe, hoping to find peace and a new home in the US. It became apparent that despite the fact that anti-Semitism was also present in the United States to a certain degree, Jews were accepted and integrated in American daily life in almost all ranks. When Jewish American literature started to flourish at the beginning of the 20th century, the most dominant themes were clearly the experience of dispersion, fragmentation, migration, assimilation and questions of (re)defining identity.

In a next step, this thesis analyzed the concepts of Zionism and diaspora in further detail. The development of Zionism in Europe and in the United States was outlined as well as compared. It became apparent that because of the fairly dominant development of Reform Judaism and the relatively better living circumstances and options of integration for Jews in the United States, Zionist ideologies gained ground rather late in the US. By the time of the 1880s up until after World War II and the Shoah, when Zionism gained a foothold in the United States, the predisposition for the idea of a Jewish homeland developed less out of a will to settle there and/or out of religious belief, but rather out of a prevailing tradition of philanthropy within their own Jewish community. Jewish American support for Israel manifested itself mainly through financial and mental support, showing loyalty to those Jews affected by the horrors of the Shoah who were trying to start new lives in the young state of Israel. Hence, the basis of American Zionism was less to make *aliyah*, than to show loyalty and support for the young Jewish 'homeland', all of which became an integral part of Jewish American identity in the course of the second half of the 20th century.

Interestingly enough, there have always been tensions between the biblical idea of Zionism in terms of returning to the sacred 'homeland' of the Jews and the 'political' idea of Zionism in terms of building a safe haven for Jews who have faced centuries of dispersal, pogroms and prosecution.

With regards to the concept of diaspora, this paper has illustrated the different understandings of the Jewish diaspora. On the one hand it can be understood as the concept of Jews living in exile with a negative connotation. On the other hand it can be considered as a major characteristic of Judaism. A large number of American Jews has started to celebrate 'modern' life in the American diaspora and a dual identity, while their Israeli counterparts partly have considered them as Jews living in exile whose only remedy was making *aliyah* to Israel.

In a next step, this thesis has illustrated how visions of a Jewish 'homeland', i.e. Zionist ideologies, and finally how the existence of such a Jewish state since 1948, have shaped and been processed in Jewish American literature. With the help of Furman's classification of the three phases of pre-Zionism, Zionism and post-Zionism I have established a certain framework of Jewish American literature dealing with Israel. Hence, early literary works dealing with Zionist ideologies were traced, exhibiting a certain amount of skepticism towards the idea of a Jewish 'homeland'. I then continued with literary works and authors supporting, valuing and glorifying the rise of Israel (e.g. Uris' *Exodus*). Finally, this study approached the post-Zionist phase where Israel has seriously been established as an important theme, but is again processed more ambiguously and critically. An overview of Zionism and Israel as topics in Jewish American literature has shown how the establishment and the existence of a Jewish state had brought many new elements to Jewish American literature, leaving Jews in the American Diaspora with questions of what remains of 'Jewishness' outside of Israel and with questions of redefining their Jewish identities.

By analyzing *To Jerusalem and Back* (1976) by Saul Bellow and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (1993) by Philip Roth, this paper has illustrated how two of the most important Jewish American authors of the 20th century are literary approaching the existence of a Jewish state as well as its ramifications on Jewish identity in general and on Jewish American identity in particular. Saul Bellow and Philip Roth have similar backgrounds in the sense that they are both descendants of Eastern European immigrants, who experienced a fairly orthodox Jewish upbringing in an American environment. They both gradually distanced themselves from this form of Judaism, starting to lead rather secular lives. Nevertheless, Jewish identity has always been a major theme in the works of both authors.

In *To Jerusalem and Back*, Bellow illustrates through his very personal and non-fictional account how he travels to the Jewish 'homeland' with a considerable amount of skepticism. He is skeptical, since he primarily associates it with an archaic orthodox Judaism and a country based on biblical ideas, all of which seems rather foreign to him. His account demonstrates how the author is drawn closer to Israel by experiencing its daily life and getting to know its people and their histories. Hence, he develops an understanding and deep respect for a people

fighting for its right to exist, after having gone through the horrors of World War II and the Shoah. The tension between the biblical idea of a Jewish homeland and the political, 'rescuing' idea is fairly well illustrated in Bellow's work. Furthermore, the author occupies himself extensively with Israel's complex political situation. Although Bellow holds an awareness of the ambiguous nature of certain Israeli politics and cites many expert scholars he draws fairly clear conclusions by developing an explicitly pro-Israeli stance. The reader realizes how Bellow overcomes self-imposed binary oppositions and begins to sense a connection and relation between America and Israel, the present and the past as well as diaspora life and Israeli life. Although he maintains his stance as an American, Israel definitely becomes a source of spiritual refreshment for his detached 'Western' 'rationality'. Moreover, Israel begins to serve as a point of reference for Bellow's own Jewish identity. In a sense, the author rediscovers his Jewish identity while in Israel, whereby history plays an important role in relating to a larger Jewish community. The writer returns to America with a certain sense of reconciliation of his identity as both an American and a Jew.

In *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, the author Philip Roth approaches Israel within the framework of a highly postmodern novel. He creates his own fictional construct, the protagonist Philip Roth, who leads the reader through the story. Roth experiences a major identity crisis at the beginning of the novel, the root of which, I argue, is his conflicting identity as a secular American diaspora Jew. "Where is Philip Roth? (...) Where did he go?" (OS22) are the questions posed at the beginning. By travelling to Israel the protagonist basically exposes the core of his problem. In the Jewish 'homeland' he is confronted with numerous different perspectives on the question of what defines Jewish identity in the second half of the 20th century and which role the Jewish state in the Middle East plays in that context. The protagonist celebrates his freedom as a diaspora Jew, but at the same time struggles with questions of loyalty to the Jewish state.

A crucial moment in the novel is when the character of Smilesburger holds his speech on the "dividedness of the Jew", which emphasizes the internal plurality of the Jew and the difficulty or even impossibility of ever defining Jewishness, denying **one** 'authentic' Jewish identity. Similarly to Bellow in *To Jerusalem and Back*, the protagonist returns to the US with his status as an American and a Jew reaffirmed. However, the novel does not answer all of the complex questions that

arise throughout its story, but rather acknowledges the complexities and ambiguities of defining Jewish identity as well as of the existence of a Jewish 'homeland' in the Middle East. Through numerous different characters and their extensive monologues, those complexities and ambiguities are presented from various perspectives. One of those complexities is certainly the 'Palestinian problem', which is given space in the novel through a rather significant Palestinian character. George Ziad takes up a significant amount of room in the novel, providing the Palestinian, or at least a Palestinian perspective on the complex Middle East conflict.

Operation Shylock emphasizes how Israel can pose a crisis for the American diaspora Jew because of its symbolic power as the Jewish 'home' and overcomes this tension by viewing the concept of living in the diaspora and the concept of living in the Jewish 'homeland' as interdependent.

To Jerusalem and Back and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* differ highly in terms of their literary aesthetics. The first one is characterized by its non-fictional, personal access and its intertextuality, while the latter is a postmodern novel, continuously playing with blurry lines between fact and fiction, questioning fixed meanings and the existence of a 'reality'.

Nevertheless the two works are asking rather similar questions: Who is a Jew in the second half of the 20th century? How can 'Jewishness' be defined? What remains of and what defines Jewish identity for secular American diaspora Jews? Which role does Israel play as a Jewish 'center' and 'home' with all its complex moral and political implications?

As Lehmann already observed (cf. Lehmann 93), the themes set forth in *To Jerusalem and Back* and *Operation Shylock: A Confession* certainly established a foundation and a basis for younger Jewish American authors, who include Israel as a subject in their works. A number of Jewish American authors have been writing about Israel since Roth's publication of *Operation Shylock*, such as Anne Roiphe, Tova Reich, Joanna Spiro or Michael Chabon.

With regards to future literary research it would be interesting to examine how younger generations of Jewish American authors include the theme of Israel in their fiction. Those younger generations are no longer the children of Jewish European immigrants, but rather the grandchildren or grand-grandchildren, born

into an even more assimilated Jewish American environment which possibly has an effect on their self-conception as American Jews.

In 2007 Michael Chabon published his detective story *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. To provide a brief insight into contemporary Jewish American author's concern with the everlasting question of Jewish identity and Jewish statehood in their fiction, I want to finish my paper with a short glance to Chabon's novel.

The story is set in an alternative history version of the beginning of the 21st century. In contrast to 'real history', in this alternative version the 1940 Slattery Report was implemented in the United States. The Slattery Report recommended the provision of land in Alaska for a temporary settlement of European Jews, persecuted by the Nazis during World War II. As a consequence, 'only' two million Jews are killed in the Holocaust, instead of six million in reality. Hence, the setting of the novel is Sitka, the center of the Jewish settlement in Alaska. The lands across the border of the settlement are primarily populated by the Tlingit, an indigenous people of Alaska, while the region is shaped by tensions and conflicts between the Jewish and the Native Alaskan population, but also by incidents of intermarriage and cross-cultural contact. The Jewish settlement's independence has been granted for only sixty years, while the novel is set at the end of this period. An evangelical Christian US President is promising to go through with the 'Reversion' of Sitka to the US, meaning that the Jewish population's future of Sitka is uncertain. Furthermore, in the alternative version of history of the novel, the State of Israel is founded in 1948 only to be destroyed after three months in an alternative version of the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Palestine and specifically Jerusalem are described as an area shaken by violence and as a setting of contesting religious extremist groups.

With respect to the turbulent storyline, the reader is following detective Meyer Landsman and his partner Berko Shemets, who is half-Jewish, half-Tinglit, along their investigation of a murder. As it turns out the victim has been considered the potential Messiah, who is supposedly born in every generation. The investigation leads the two detectives to an orthodox Jewish paramilitary group, who is planning to rebuild the third Temple in Jerusalem and the return to the Promised Land. Furthermore, the reader learns that the US government, in fact, has been supporting the extremists, propagating neo-Zionism and supporting the idea of the Jewish reclaiming of Israel. The story ends with Landsman solving the crime, while

at the same time the news report reveals that the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem has been bombed. The future of Landsman and his colleagues with regards to where they will go after the 'Reversion' of Sitka remains obscure and uncertain.

Michael Chabon's postmodern novel explores questions of Jewish exile and return, the everlasting Jewish search for a 'homeland', issues of Jewish statehood and of Jewish identity in rather innovative ways. With elements of comic relief and satire, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* offers a, maybe rather frightening, "picture of what happens when Jews are both granted and not granted a state" (Kravitz 96). Chabon's approach to the idea of a Jewish state and to 'Jewishness' in general has been interpreted rather ambivalently, while the author had to face divided and partly severe negative criticism after the novel's publication. He had to face accusations of being a "virulent anti-Zionist" (Kravitz 97), of demonstrating "contempt for the Jewish state" (ibid.), as well as of an outright dismissal of Orthodox Judaism. On the other hand, the author has been praised for engaging crucial issues of Jewish exile, homelessness and statehood in such an innovative and entertaining manner.

Once again, Jews are expelled from an unwelcoming world, longing for a home, while the story mirrors the uncertainty of the Jewish situation throughout history.

Franz Rosenzweig has noted that exile is an integral part of Jewish existence. Writing in 1972, he declares that 'The events which have dictated the terms of Jewish existence in our generation – Holocaust and Statehood-have had an especially profound effect upon recent Israeli reflection concerning the meaning of Jewish homelessness and homecoming' (Star of Redemption 117). In that respect, nothing much has changed over the past thirty-eight years, and what Rosenzweig says about Israelis is true about Jewish Americans as well. Jewish homelessness and homecoming, exile, statehood, and redemption are still critical issues that Jews must engage. I find no reason to fault Michael Chabon for creating such a wildly entertaining, engaging, and noble effort to do so. (Kravitz 110)

With regards to the question of the role of Israel in prospective Jewish American literature, it is safe to say that an analysis thereof remains tantalizing. Israel in 2012 is facing an increasingly fierce political position. This becomes obvious by regarding its strained relationship with Iran, the increasing possibility of a future Palestinian state – which has at least formally been recognized by the United Nations in November 2012 as an observer state -, the revolutions in the Arab world, and finally, Israel's increasingly debated settlement policies in the West Bank as well as its blockade of the Gaza Strip.

It will be exceptionally interesting to learn how literature in general and Jewish American literature in particular will respond to those developments. Considering the importance of the 20th century in general and for the Jewish people in particular, it remains to be seen which elements of identification will prevail in the literature of future generations of Jewish American authors. Those future generations – unlike Roth or Bellow – will not have had the possibility to witness these decisive incidents in person and in an immediate way and it is going to be interesting to analyze how they will incorporate them into their works. Michael Chabon is one example, perhaps promising future literary approaches to be more distant, more controversial and more satirical.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bellow, Saul. *To Jerusalem and Back*. New York: The Viking Press, 1976.

Roth, Philip. *Operation Shylock: A Confession*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1993.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.

Barack-Fishman, Sylvia. "Homelands of the Heart: Israel and Jewish Identity in American Jewish Fiction" *Envisioning Israel*. Ed. Alon Gal. Bloomington: Indiana University Press and Jerusalem: Ben Gurion University. 1996, 271-292.

Barthes, Roland. „S/Z: An Essay“. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

Bellow, Saul. "Common Needs, Common Preoccupations: An Interview with Saul Bellow" by Jo Brans. *Southwest Review* 62 (1977): 1-19.

Bird, Christine M. "The Return Journey in *To Jerusalem and Back*". *MELUS* 6.4 (1979): 51-57.

Budick, Emily Miller. "Roth and Israel". *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*. Ed. Timothy Parrish. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 68-81.

Cohen, Josh. "Roth's Doubles". *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*. Ed. Timothy Parrish. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 82-93.

Cronin, Gloria L. and Alan L. Berger, eds. *Encyclopedia of Jewish American Literature*. New York: Facts On File Library of American Literature, 2009.

Ehrenkrantz, Louis. "Bellow in Jerusalem". *Midstream* Nov. (1977) 87-90.

Fried, Lewis; Gene Brown, Jules Chametzky, and Luis Harap, eds. *Handbook of American-Jewish Literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988.

Friedman, Thomas L. *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Furman, Andrew. "A New 'Other' Emerges in American Jewish Literature: Philip Roth's Israel Fiction". *Contemporary Literature* 36.4 (1995): 633-653.

Furman, Andrew. *Israel through the Jewish-American Imagination: A Survey of Jewish-American Literature on Israel 1928-1995*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1997.

- Geyh, Paula; Fred G. Leebron, and Andrew Levy, eds. *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology*. New York: Norton & Company, 1998.
- Gohar, Saddik M. "Narrating the Palestinian in Philip Roth's 'Operation Shylock: A Confession'" *Nebula* 7 (2010): 108-121.
- Guttman, Allen. *The Jewish Writer In America: Assimilation and the Crisis of Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". *Identity*. Eds. Rutherford, J. Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.
- Hall, Stuart, David Held, and Tony McGrew, eds. *Modernity and its Futures*. Oxford: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd and The Open University, 1992.
- Horowitz, Irving Louis and Maurice Zeitlin. "Israeli Imperatives and Jewish Agonies." *Israel and Zion in American Judaism: the Zionist Fulfillment*. Ed. Jacob Neusner. New York: Garland, 1993. 61-84.
- Howe, Irving. *World of our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life they Found and Made*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.
- Kravitz, Bennett. "The 'Aquatic Zionist' in The Yiddish Policemen's Union". *Studies in Popular Culture* 33.1 (2010): 95-112.
- Krome, Frederic. "Between the Diaspora and Zion: Cecil Roth and His American Friends". *Jewish History*, 20.3-4 (2006): 283-297.
- Lehmann, Sophia. "Exodus and Homeland: The Representation of Israel in Saul Bellow's 'To Jerusalem and Back' and Philip Roth's 'Operation Shylock'". *Religion and Literature* 30.3 (1998): 77-96.
- Lewis, Barry. "Postmodernism and Fiction". *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*. Ed. Stuart Sim. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.
- MERIP Reports. "Zionism and American Jews". *Middle East Research and Information Project* 29 (1974): 3-13.
- Miller Budick, Emily. "The Place of Israel in American Writing: Reflections on Saul Bellow's 'To Jerusalem and Back'". *South Central Review* 8.1 (1991): 59-70.
- Omer-Sherman, Ranen. *Diaspora and Zionism in Jewish American Literature*. Brandeis: University Press, 2002.

- Parrish, Timothy L. "Imagining Jews in Philip Roth's 'Operation Shylock'". *Contemporary Literature* 40.4 (1999): 575-602.
- Pinsker, Sanford. *Jewish-American Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1992.
- Plimpton, George. "Isaac Bashevis Singer." Interviews from the *Paris Review* 3 (1975): 177-195.
- Polish, David. "Zionist Ideology in America". *Handbook of American-Jewish Literature*. Ed. Fried, Lewis, Gene Brown, Jules Chametzky and Luis Harap, New York: Greenwood Press, 1988, 261-286.
- Royal, Derek Parker. "Texts, Lives, and Bellybuttons: Philip Roth's Operation Shylock and the Renegotiation of Subjectivity". *SHOFAR: an Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 19.1. (2000): 48-65.
- Salt, Jeremy. "Fact and Fiction in the Middle Eastern Novels of Leon Uris". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 14.3 (1985): 54-63.
- Safer, Elaine B. "The Double, Comic Irony, and Postmodernism in Philip Roth's Operation Shylock". *MELUS* 21. 4 (1996):157-172.
- Schweid, E. "Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches". *Essential Papers on Zionism*. Ed. Reinhartz, Jehuda and Shapira, Anita. New York: New York University Press, 1996. 133.
- Shostak, Debrah. "The Diaspora Jew and the 'Instinct for Impersonation': Philip Roth's 'Operation Shylock'". *Contemporary Literature* 38.4 (1997): 726-754.
- Solotaroff, Ted. „American-Jewish Writers: On Edge Once More“. *The New York Times Book Review*, 1.31 (1988): 33.
- Stork, Joe and Sharon Rose. "Zionism and American Jewry". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3.3 (1974):39-57.
- Urofsky, Melvin I. *American Zionism: From Herzl to the Holocaust*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.
- Wade, Stephen. *Jewish American Literature since 1945: An Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

Online Sources:

- Bard, Mitchell. „Terror Aboard the Achille Lauro“. 20 October 2012.
<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Terrorism/achille.html>>
- Brody, Seymor. “Mordecai Noah“. 5 August 2012.
<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/MNoah.html>>
- Encyclopedia Britannica. “Harlem Renaissance“. 2 November 2012.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/255397/Harlem-Renaissance>>
- Howe, Irving. People On the Edge of History: Saul Bellow’s Vivid Report on Israel. 1976. In: <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/04/23/specials/bellow-jerusalem.html>>. July 29 2012.
- Jewish Virtual Library A: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. “Aharon Appelfeld“. 29 October 2012.
<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/appelfeld.html>>
- Jewish Virtual Library B: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. “Judaic Treasure of the Library of Congress: Mordecai Noah.“ 5 August 2012.
<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/loc/noah.html>>
- Jewish Virtual Library C: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. “The Diaspora“. 1 August 2012.
< <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Diaspora.html>>
- Jewish Virtual Library D: A Division of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. “The Origins of Reform Judaism“. 27 July 2012.
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/The_Origins_of_Reform_Judaism.html>

Abstract

Die Arbeit behandelt Rolle und Funktion Israels in der jüdisch-amerikanischen Literatur der Postmoderne. Sie setzt sich dabei mit folgenden Fragen auseinander: Wie verarbeiten jüdisch-amerikanische Autoren Israel und die Ideologie des Zionismus in ihren Werken? Welche literarische Ästhetik verwenden sie und wie hat sich diese über die Jahre verändert? Welche Rolle spielt Israel im Bezug auf jüdisch-amerikanische Identitätskonstruktion? Wie wird die komplexe moralische und politische Situation Israels in diesen Werken aufgearbeitet und was lässt sich hinsichtlich zukünftiger Trends und Perspektiven dieses Themas sagen?

Die Arbeit geht von der These aus, dass die Existenz eines jüdischen Staates im Nahen Osten ein zentrales Motiv für die jüdisch-amerikanische Literatur der Postmoderne darstellt. Dabei spielt Israel vor allem im Bezug auf Fragen jüdisch-amerikanischer Identität insofern eine wichtige Rolle als die Existenz des Staates Israel und alle damit verbundenen Fragen nach Identität, (ambivalenten) Einstellungen und politischer Positionierung im Verlauf des 20. Jahrhunderts zu wichtigen Themen jüdisch-amerikanischer AutorInnen geworden sind.

Die oben genannten Forschungsfragen werden anhand eines Vergleiches der Werke *To Jerusalem and Back* (1976) von Saul Bellow und *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (1993) von Philip Roth untersucht. Ein anschließender Vergleich der beiden Werke zeigt Entwicklungstendenzen, Konstanten und Veränderungen in der literarischen Bearbeitung des Themas auf. Während sich die Arbeit der klassischen hermeneutischen Methode des ‚Close Readings‘ bedient, werden die Texte von Bellow und Roth im Rahmen postmoderner literaturwissenschaftlicher Kategorien analysiert. Stuart Halls Theorie von „Cultural Identity and Diaspora“ dient als Basis im Bezug auf die Komplexitäten der Identität jüdisch-amerikanischer Diaspora im Allgemeinen und der jüdisch-amerikanischer SchriftstellerInnen im Besonderen.

Curriculum Vitae

Anna Jonas, BA

Geburtsdatum/-ort: 12.02.1989, Bregenz

Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

Hauptwohnsitz: Rohrmahd 6, 6850 Dornbirn

Nebenwohnsitz: Hahngasse 30/7, 1090 Wien

Telefon: 0043-5572/21670

Mobil: 0043-650-8667260

E-Mail: anna.jonas@gmx.at

Schulische Laufbahn:

- 1995 – 1999** Volksschule Dornbirn-Rohrbach
- 1999 - 2007** Bundesgymnasium Dornbirn, 6850 Dornbirn, Realschulstr. 3
Abschluss: erfolgreiche Reifeprüfung mit gutem Erfolg
- Okt. – Dez. 2007** Aufenthalt in Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Besuch der New England School of English in Cambridge, MA
Absolvierung des IBT (Toefl-Test) – Score: 106
- März 2008** Beginn Studium der Politikwissenschaften (Bachelor) und
Anglistik und Amerikanistik (Diplom) an der Universität Wien
- Februar 2011** Abschluss des Studiums der Politikwissenschaft (Bachelor of
Arts)
Thema der Bachelorarbeit: *Kritischer/Investigativer
Journalismus in der Volksrepublik China des 21. Jahrhunderts*

Praktika:

- Juli – Aug. 2006** Ferialpraktikum in der Pensionsversicherungsanstalt,
Landesstelle Dornbirn
- Aug. 2007** Mitarbeit bei „Greber Gastronomie“ anlässlich der 13. World
Gymnaestrada in Dornbirn
- Juli 2009** Praktikum bei böhler-pr (PR-
Agentur/Kommunikationsberatung),
6850 Dornbirn, St.Martin-Straße 14
- Juli 2010** Praktikum bei böhler-pr (PR-
Agentur/Kommunikationsberatung), 6850 Dornbirn, St.-
Martin-Straße 14
- Juli 2011** Praktikum bei ORF Vorarlberg (Radioredaktion)

Sprachkenntnisse: Englisch fließend
Spanisch Grundkenntnisse
Französisch Grundkenntnisse

Sonstige Interessen:

1997 – 2006 Mitglied der Leistungsgruppe des Schwimmclub TS Dornbirn
(u. a. mehrfache Landesmeisterin in div. Disziplinen; 2005
österr. Vizejuniorenmeisterin über 400m Lagen und 200m
Rücken)

seit Jänner 2011 Stellvertretende Leiterin des Vereins *Youth Creating Change
Austria* (YCC Austria)

Studienreisen USA (2007), Trinidad/Tobago (2010), Taiwan/Volksrepublik
China (2010), Israel (2011)