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Katharina Schuh Bakk. BA

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Introduction

The most significant development American Jewry experienced in the twentieth century was their transformation from Jews living in America to Jewish Americans. This process of Americanization was never without criticism from within the community, but the majority of former immigrants and second generation Jewish Americans welcomed the immersion into the so-called American melting pot. However, this development was called into question when World War II, and more specifically the Holocaust, forced Jewish Americans to re-evaluate the significance of their heritage in their lives. As a result, an identity crisis spread among the community of assimilated Jewry in the United States. This struggle became a characteristic element of Bernard Malamud's and Philip Roth's postwar literature. Several of their short stories focus on second or third generation Jewish American men, who are torn between the world of their parents and the streets of America. This identity crisis experienced by male Jewish American protagonists revolves around feelings of self-hate and can be overcome by internalizing the concept of *menshlichkeit* (or *mentshlekhhkayt*), which ultimately encourages them to embrace their Jewish heritage. By learning that *menshlichkeit* as well as their American socialization are integral parts of their masculinity, they are able to move beyond this either/or paradigm and accept their multi-layered masculine identities.

Malamud's and Roth's stories are informed by their own experience of the struggles second and third generation Jewish American men had to face. They witnessed their parents' and their own ascent into the American middle class and everything that entailed. Descriptions of suburbia and the appropriation of Jewishness as a faith rather than an ethnicity play an important role in their narratives, as do all the other efforts of American Jewry to be accepted by white America. Even though both authors use the premise of the Jewish American experience in the post-World War II period as a starting point in their stories, what makes the study of their work truly fascinating is the fact that they take fundamentally different approaches in describing the world their characters live in.

Malamud's work is characterized by its sensitivity towards Jewish American issues and the notion of *menshlichkeit* as an integral part of what it means to be Jewish. The concept of *menshlichkeit* is based on the assumption that member of the Jewish community are responsible for each other. This pillar of the Jewish secular moral codex emphasizes a strong sense of community, which is not only an important feature of Jewish life but also of Malamud's writing.

Roth's work on the other hand, emphasizes the betrayal of traditional Jewish values by prosperous middle-class Jews. This led to a backlash within the Jewish American community, who accused him of being a self-hating Jew. Even though American anti-Semitism declined in the postwar period, Jewish Americans were still anxious about their public perception. In general, the term Jewish self-hate refers to those Jews, who reject or conceal their own ethnicity and aspire to identify with the dominant ethnic majority group, often by denouncing others for being Jewish (Harap 156). Although this was never the case with Philip Roth, the concept of self-hate will still be crucial to the discussion of his work.

Malamud as well as Roth take up the issue of the Jewish American identity crisis in their short fiction work in the postwar era of the 1950s. Therefore, the objects of analysis are going to be three short stories from Malamud's short story collection "The Magical Barrel" (1958), which are "The Last Mohican", "The Lady of the Lake" and "The Magic Barrel" as well as Roth's short stories "Defender of the Faith", "Epstein" and "Eli, the Fanatic" from his short story collection "Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories" (1959). All of the stories feature a male protagonist that is in one way or another torn between his American and Jewish identity. The research questions guiding the analysis focus on how the identity crisis experienced by Jewish Americans in the postwar period manifests itself in the male protagonists' lives in Malamud's and Roth's fiction. Furthermore, the discussion of the short stories will revolve around the question of how American and Jewish concepts of masculinity are represented in the short stories and how the male characters navigate between them.

The first two chapters of this thesis are dedicated to the contextualization of Malamud's and Roth's work. The discussion of the socio-historical background offers insight into the state of American Jewry in the postwar period and a characterization of second generation Jewish Americans. This will be followed by an introduction to the authors Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth, their attitude towards the label 'Jewish American writer' and their relationship with the Jewish American community.

In order to provide a thorough and well-balanced analysis of the short stories, the theoretical framework developed for this thesis will include concepts from the fields of Jewish studies, masculinity studies and cultural studies, which will be presented in chapters three and four. The idea of *menshlichkeit* as a central element of Jewishness and the issue of Jewish self-hate have already been mentioned. In addition, the discussion of Roth's and Malamud's short stories will be supported by a masculinity studies approach that understands masculinity as a social construct and a product of social relationships (Reynaud 136). Furthermore,

stereotypical representations of Jewish American masculinity will be introduced and subsequently applied in the analysis of the short stories. The issue of American versus Jewish concepts of masculinity is of paramount importance to the identity crisis experienced by male Jewish Americans in the postwar period. Second or third generation Jews were socialized with dominant American ideas of masculinity to ensure their further assimilation into the American culture, which from the 1920s onwards included an emphasis on keywords such as physical strength, athleticism and virility (Grindberg 128). The Jewish ideal of manliness on the contrary, dates back to an older Eastern European Jewish culture that revolves around the before mentioned concept of *menshlichkeit* and paints a gentler, “mind over muscle” picture of Jewish men (Grindberg 128). The protagonists’ struggle to embrace their Jewish heritage implies the rejection of their American socialization, which can be described as navigating between dominant and marginalized concepts of masculinity.

Chapter five offers a short overview of Malamud’s and Roth’s short story collections and an introduction to the plot of the six short stories that will be analyzed in the course of this thesis. The characters’ identity struggle will be thoroughly discussed in chapter six, which features an examination of the protagonists’ encounters with Jewish characters who trigger their crisis as well as a discussion of manifestations of the concepts of self-hate and *menshlichkeit*. Furthermore, the issues of superficiality and respectability in the process of constructing and negotiating identity will be explored.

Moreover, representations of dominant American masculinity and Jewish American stereotypes will be the topic of chapter 7. This section also features a subchapter about the displays of weakness as defining characteristics of Malamud’s and Roth male characters and is followed by a chapter eight about the female characters as objects of desire as well as repulsion with emphasis on their emasculating powers which are an important contribution to the male characters’ crises.

Before concluding these introductory remarks, one particular insight should be shared in advance. The crucial message that both authors can agree on is this: No matter how hard their protagonists are trying to conceal, deny or change their Jewish identity, they will always remain both Jewish and American. A quote by Jewish German philosopher Hannah Arendt, who fled to the United States during World War II, sums this up perfectly, “[i]t is the history of a hundred and fifty years of assimilated Jewry who performed an unprecedented feat: though proving all the time their non-Jewishness, they succeeded in remaining Jews all the same” (Arendt 118).

1.) Historical Background: Post-World War II American Jewry

This chapter explores the state of American Jewry in the post-World War II period. It focuses on the characteristics of second and third generation assimilated Jews and the identity crisis they experienced as a result of the Holocaust. The life of Jewish Americans in the postwar era was characterized by their ascent into the American middle class, their so-called “suburbanization” and the appropriation of Jewishness as a faith rather than an ethnicity. These features of Jewish American postwar prosperity and the process of coming to terms with the trauma caused by the Holocaust will be discussed in detail throughout the following chapter.

1.1.) The Second and Third Generations: “Jewish Americans” rather than “Jews living in America”

By the 1940s most Jews living in the United States were already second or third generation Americans. Their assimilated middle-class existence hardly resembled the experience of their parents or grandparents, who had left their home countries in (Eastern) Europe with the aim of finding a place where they would no longer be persecuted and marginalized. Despite the hardships first generation Jewish immigrants had to endure in the sweat shops and urban slums of their greenhorn-days, they eventually succeeded in assimilating to mainstream America. They were so successful that in “the benevolent and absorbent atmosphere of America, Jewish culture had been thinned beyond recognition” (Shapiro xi, 1992). This criticism became visible in the relationship of second generation American Jews to their heritage. Most of them did not speak Yiddish and had no contact with the work of Yiddish authors, artists and philosophers. The majority avoided Orthodox synagogues, which were associated with the gruesome working-class life of the immigrant past. Moreover, growing up with the possibility of a comfortable middle-class existence in the future, Yiddish working-class socialism had no appeal to them. In summary, “their relationship with the Jewish world of their ancestors was largely nostalgic” (Shapiro 195), and they fully embraced the freedom and individualism America offered.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the children and grandchildren of former immigrants slowly transformed from “American Jews into Jewish Americans” (Shapiro 254). Not only could Jews become “real Americans”, but this process of assimilation and acculturation which can be summed up under the keyword “Americanization”, equipped them

“with a new set of values and a new outlook on life” (Knopp, *Trial*, 20). This new Americanized mindset of the second generation was often articulated through “disdain for the values of the world of [their] fathers” (Shapiro 10). This feeling of being torn between two different worlds often resulted in insecurities concerning their national identity.

Once the initial problems of first generation immigrants were overcome, their assimilation was accelerated by the overwhelming anti-Catholicism of the time and the fact that other Americans recognized them as white. Hasia Diner argues that Jewish Americans have “always enjoyed the benefits of whiteness” (*Looking* 358), which according to her is especially significant in a country like the United States that has “a pervasive [...] obsession with color” (*Looking* 358). Furthermore, she claims that neither the state nor any of its institutions prevented Jewish immigrants from acquiring citizenship because of their color (Diner, *Looking* 358). However, that does not mean that Jewish Americans were not discriminated against or did not suffer from restricted access to areas such as higher education or housing and employment— but those “anti-Jewish practices came from private individuals. The state stood aloof from all these matters” (Diner, *Looking*, 359).

The successful assimilation of Jewish immigrants and the status of their children as real American citizens “seemed a natural development and caused no particular concern until the destruction of European Jewish life in World War II and the subsequent establishment of the state of Israel. These events [...] forcefully and abruptly brought the importance of his ancestry into the consciousness of the American Jew” (Knopp, *Trial*, 20). As a consequence, Jewish Americans had to reevaluate the significance of their heritage in their lives and answer the question of what it means to be Jewish in the United States during the 1950s. This struggle, which was an individual as much as a collective one, resulted in “a persistent tension between assimilation and group survival” (Shapiro xii) in the postwar period.

1.2.) The Impact of the Holocaust on American Jewry

The victory of the Allied Forces over Nazi Germany in 1945 was a reason for joy and celebration throughout the United States. For Jewish Americans, however, the celebratory spirit was tempered by feelings of loss, sadness and trauma. Once the horrendous dimensions of the Holocaust became fully known, many Jewish Americans had to face the fact that numerous relatives and friends who had remained in Europe had died (Shapiro 1). An even more painful realization was that Jewish Americans “had escaped the fate of European Jewry

only because they and their ancestors had decided to emigrate from Europe” (Shapiro 1). Jews in the United States did not encounter the atrocities of the Holocaust in a first-hand experience. Nevertheless, the impact of the murder of millions of Jews left a mark on the Jewish American community. Historians agree that “the Holocaust did not stand apart from the history of the Jews of America, but, rather, belonged to their story” (Diner, *Confrontation*, 460), because the role of American Jewry was forever changed on a global scale. The destruction of Europe as the cultural and intellectual center of the Jewish community had wide-reaching consequences for Jewish Americans:

As a result of the decimation of European Jewry, the United States had become the most important Jewish community in the world. Nowhere else was there a Jewish population with its numbers, wealth, and intellectual resources. The burdens of world Jewish leadership had crossed the Atlantic and rested with these upstart Americans, most of whom were immigrants or the children of immigrants. (Shapiro 2)

In 1945 American Jewry made up forty percent of world Jewry, in contrast to twenty-nine percent in 1933 (Shapiro 60). It became evident that the preservation of the Yiddish culture was in the hands of Jewish Americans, which forced them to explore the nature of their Jewishness and caused them to acknowledge how far removed they were from the Eastern European Jewish culture of their ancestors (Knopp, *Trial*, 21).

Processing the changes and the trauma caused by the Holocaust was further complicated by the prevailing fear of anti-Semitism, which was widespread in the United States during the 1930s and World War II (Shapiro 5). These fears and insecurities were masked by the Jewish community’s efforts to appear confident during the postwar era, which provided plenty of chances for social and economic mobility (Sarna 309). In reality, “Jews suspected that the Holocaust had not changed the attitude of the great powers and their citizens toward Jewish victimization,” (Shapiro 3) and these sentiments could not be calmed by public opinion polls that estimated general anti-Semitism in the United States at an all-time low. The postwar period in the United States was defined by anti-Communist propaganda, not anti-Semitism. However, the fear of Communism did not spare the Jewish community from new prejudice. Jewish immigrants were associated with a history of working-class socialism and were suspected of being Communists or former Communists, which only added to their state of anxiety in the postwar period (Sarna 308).

1.3.) Post-War Silence: Coming to Terms with the Holocaust in American Culture

The trauma caused by the Holocaust among Jewish Americans slowed down the process of publicly coming to terms with the horrors of World War II. As Edward Shapiro suggests, it took almost a decade after the end of the war until movies and books about the Holocaust made it into the public's perception (4). Furthermore, actual Holocaust survivors and World War II refugees from Europe were reluctant to talk about their experiences once they came to the United States.

Hanna Arendt was a Jewish German philosopher, who fled from the Nazis the United States via France. She is famous for her coverage of the Eichmann trial and various other texts. In her 1948 essay "We refugees", she writes about her experience as a survivor of Nazi-persecution in postwar America:

We were told to forget; and we forgot quicker than anybody ever could imagine [...] [i]n order to forget more efficiently we rather avoid any allusion to concentration or internment camps we experienced in nearly all European countries – it might be interpreted as pessimism or lack of confidence in the new homeland. Besides, how often have we been told that nobody likes to listen to all that; [...] Even among ourselves we don't speak about this past. (Arendt 110-111)

This account supports the opinion of many historians, who suggest that the Jewish American community put a veil of silence on the issue of the Holocaust for several years after the end of World War II. This behavior was considered a result of the pressure to fit in during the 1950s. Jewish Americans encouraged each other to exhibit cheerful Americanism and contentment with suburban middle-class life instead of addressing the recent mass murder of the Jewish people (Diner 442-443). However, recent examinations of Jewish primary sources from the postwar era show that there is evidence to the contrary. The Jewish community in America did indeed mourn their loss, but not in a public manner. There are, for example, both religious and secular texts in Yiddish and Hebrew, such as prayer books or poetry that discuss the horrific events that had happened during World War II in Europe. But, as Hasia Diner points out, they were "directed at Jewish 'eyes' and 'ears' only" (446). In other words, the mourning process was first experienced in a private manner within the community, before it became a topic of discussion for the general American public.

With their short story collections in the late 1950s, the authors Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth made a contribution to the public discussion of the Holocaust and its impact on the American Jewish community. Both Malamud's *The Magic Barrel* (1958) and Roth's

Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories (1959) have the state of the Jewish community in the post-Holocaust era at the center of the stories. As Americans, they were not directly involved in the destruction of European Jewry, nevertheless, Bernard Malamud found very clear words about his motivation for making the Holocaust an integral part of his work. In an interview in 1958 he said: “the suffering of the Jews is a distinct thing for me. I for one believe that not enough has been made of the tragedy of the destruction of 6,000,000 Jews. [...] Somebody has to cry – even if it’s just a writer, 20 years later” (Wershba 5-6).

1.4.) Postwar Prosperity: Suburbanization and Middle-Class Life

Despite all the trauma and horror that had to be overcome in the postwar period, Jewish Americans never experienced a more prosperous time in the history of their settlement in the United States. They finally secured a place in “the nation’s social, cultural and economic mainstream” (Shapiro 52). Second and third generation Jewish Americans moved up the social ladder and entered the American middle class and replaced the former Jewish European immigrant population (Shapiro 52). World War II had Jewish as well as Gentile American soldiers fighting side by side, and after 1945 they were no longer viewed as an exotic other. For many Jews, finally announcing their arrival in the American middle class was proof of their secure place within the heart of white America (Berman 414).

The postwar period allowed Jews in America to acquire a life that was very similar to the white, middle-class ideal (Shapiro 125). The children and grandchildren of former Jewish immigrants were the personification of the so-called American dream. Those who are willing to work hard and relentlessly, are rewarded with a socially and economically comfortable life (Berman 411). In general, “Jews helped create American lore about boundless opportunity and individual pluck” (Berman 411), which made them rather agreeable in the eyes of the American public. However, Jewish Americans feared that their economic and social success, which was accompanied by the acquisition of considerable financial means and power, would cause resentment within Gentile America and reinforce old stereotypes (Berman 410).

Moreover, Jewish leaders were worried about the immersion of the Jewish people in the American middle class because it cost them their ethnic distinctiveness (Berman 411). Middle-class Jewish Americans were often criticized “as consensus driven and incapable of challenging power structures” (Berman 412). Some community members frowned upon the

Americanized lifestyle of others and feared for the basis of Jewish life. Lila Corwin Berman elaborates on this issue:

Herein was the anxiety of American middle-classness: in its openness it destroyed boundaries, and without boundaries, people would congeal into one unthinking, powerful, and dangerous mass. For American Jews in particular this anxiety magnified already festering worries about how to maintain communal boundaries and still be American, and how to negotiate Jewish power in diaspora. (426)

The most important characteristic of the newly acquired postwar “middle-classness” was a departure from the working-class urban ghettos in places such New York City and the arrival in suburbia. The suburbs as the epitome of American conformism, further strengthened the argument that the Jewish identity was being diluted (Shapiro 147). Nevertheless, “suburban social life was [still] divided along religious lines” (Shapiro 147). Even though Jews and Gentiles worked together and anti-Semitism was not considered an issue in suburbia, they still socialized only within their own groups (Shapiro 147).

It is rather paradoxical that for culturally assimilated, mostly secular Jews “the most common expression of Jewishness in suburbia was membership in a synagogue. Suburban Jews might not believe in God [...] but they believed in God’s people and wanted to be part of it.” (Shapiro 147). It is true that the majority of second and third generation Jews was not particularly religious but suburbia was dominated by the values of middle-class respectability. An important part of this concept was religious affiliation. By joining a synagogue, they reassured their Christian co-workers and neighbors that they adhered to these unwritten rules of suburban life (Shapiro 167).

1.5.) Jewishness as a Religion not an Ethnicity

One of the most striking phenomena of the Jewish American postwar experience was the conflation of Judaism and Jewish identity. Before the children of immigrants could become fully Americanized, they were expected to rid themselves of all the distinctive markers of ethnicity, which caused them to disconnect from their culture and religion. Neither the old Eastern European Yiddish culture nor the principles of Zionism were in any way appealing to Jewish Americans, who made themselves a comfortable home in the United States. Only few were inclined to actually settle in Israel, though the majority of Jewish Americans supported Israeli endeavors financially. Moreover, the only reason for suburban Jews to learn Hebrew was so that they could partake in worship as part of their communal routine (Shapiro 161).

The development from Jewishness as an ethnicity to Jewishness as a faith has its roots in the American attitude towards religion, which is a significant factor in the history of the United States (Diner, *Looking*, 361). “Americans viewed religious pluralism as natural and desirable” (Shapiro 148) and “there was no easier way for Jews to demonstrate that they were fully Americanized than to profess a faith in God, since nowhere else in the Western world was the status of religion as elevated as in America” (Shapiro 159). Consequently, “to repackage themselves as a ‘faith community’ as opposed to a people or a nation” (Diner, *Looking*, 362) made perfect sense. However, most of the second and third generation Jewish Americans who eagerly joined synagogues or encouraged their communities to build one were only interested in the social component of a congregation, not in religious tradition:

The number of Jews who kept kosher, observed the Sabbath, and had a serious interest in Jewish ideas and books declined during the building boom. [...] For most suburban Jews, the major role of Judaism was not the celebration of life-cycle events. Births, confirmations, Bar Mitzvahs, weddings, and deaths required the presence of a rabbi and a modicum of Jewish ritual. (Shapiro 149)

This view of Judaism and Jewish identity was passed on to the next generations, which would still primarily socialize with other Jewish Americans. Their parents were careful not to make them “too religious” because that was “associated with the lower-class Orthodoxy of the inner-city neighborhoods they had deserted. Jewish observance, the parents realized, was designed to segregate Jews from the rest of society” (Shapiro 150). The life of second and third generation Jewish Americans, both in an urban and suburban setting, will also be reflected in the discussion of Bernard Malamud’s life as a New York City native and Philip Roth’s upbringing in a stereotypical New Jersey suburb.

2.) Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth as Jewish American Authors

The following chapter provides an introduction to the lives and works of Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth. The focus of this section lies on the problematic and often contested classification of both authors as “Jewish American writers” and the particularly Jewish elements of their work as well as Malamud’s and Roth’s distinctively different relationships with the Jewish American community.

2.1.) The Authors: A Biographical Approach to Malamud and Roth

Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth are both Jewish American authors, but their experience of growing up in the United States was far from identical. Whereas Malamud’s childhood was characterized by the harsh working-class conditions of his parent’s immigrant lifestyle in New York City, Roth enjoyed the comforts of assimilated middle-class life in the suburbs of Newark. Both authors draw heavily on the struggles they experienced while growing up with a multilayered ethnic background. Malamud did not deny that his stories and characters occasionally bear resemblance to actual situations and people from his life, but he was always determined to keep his private life out of the public eye and rarely gave interviews at all. Roth’s fiction on the other hand is greatly and overtly influenced by his personal experience which he also discusses in autobiographical works such as *The Facts* (1988) and *Reading Myself and Others* (1975). Roth’s own interpretation of his life and work will be taken into account throughout the chapters of this thesis.

2.1.1.) Bernard Malamud: A Successful Late Bloomer

Bernard Malamud was born in New York City in 1914 to Bertha Fidelman and Max Malamud, who were Jewish immigrants from czarist Russia, but had met in the United States. Despite their precarious living conditions, the Malamuds always encouraged their son’s ambitions to strive for a college education and to become a writer (Greenspan 141& Hershinow 3).

The backstory to Malamud’s second novel *The Assistant* (1957) was his father’s unsuccessful business venture in Brooklyn, where he earned little money by running a small grocery store, which folded after Max Malamud was betrayed by his business partner (Solotaroff 3). Moreover, Malamud’s mother was also a source of constant sorrow. She died when Malamud

was fifteen, after battling a long illness. Max Malamud remarried several years later, but Bernard never accepted the role of his new stepmother in the family (Solotaroff 4). In Philip Roth's essay "Pictures of Malamud" (1986), which he wrote after Malamud's death, he examined the difficult circumstances of "Bern's" upbringing and concluded that "he'd had no choice but to forego youth and accept adulthood at a very early age". As Roth rightfully concluded, Malamud was no stranger to the suffering caused by harsh living conditions and personal tragedies. This experience equipped him with a mature outlook on life, which informed his literary work throughout his career.

Despite his challenging personal life and his parents' poverty, Bernard Malamud managed to graduate from the City College of New York with a B.A. in 1936 and later attended Columbia University where he completed his M.A. in 1942 (Greenspan 141). Malamud's goal was to teach English at a New York public school, but his search for an occupation during the late days of the Great Depression was unsuccessful. Therefore, he moved to Washington D.C., where he worked at the Bureau of Census and also had the opportunity to publish short pieces of writing in the *Washington Post*. When he returned to New York, he started teaching evening classes at his former high school and spent the days working on his career as a professional writer. During that time, he also met Ann de Chiara, who he married in 1945. They had a son Paul and a daughter Janna (Hershinow 4).

In 1949, Malamud moved to the West Coast and accepted a teaching position at the English Department at Oregon State College, Corvallis. He remained there until 1961, in spite of his difficult standing, due to his profession as a writer and the lack of a doctoral degree (Hershinow 4). During the time he was teaching literary composition, he finally managed to seriously pursue his career as a writer.

In the 1950s, his "prolonged apprenticeship" (Greenspan 141), which had lasted almost ten years, finally came to an end when his short stories started to appear in serious literary magazines. The publication of "The First Seven Years" in the *Partisan Review* and "The Prison" in *Commentary* in 1950 immediately earned him the reputation of an emerging author of great talent, whose stories were both powerful and original (Solotaroff 1). *The Natural* (1952) was Malamud's first novel and a critical success. In 1956, Malamud was awarded the *Partisan Review Fiction Fellowship*, which allowed him to move to Italy and travel in Europe. This period of his life led to the so-called "Italian stories," such as "The Lady of the Lake", "The Maid's Shoes", "Behold the Key" and "The Last Mohican." His wife, Ann de Chiara had Italian roots and understood the language, which made the stay in Italy a success

for the entire family (Hershnow 5). In the late 1950s, Malamud's popularity as a writer further increased. His second novel *The Assistant* (1957) immediately became a critical and financial success. In 1958, he published his first short story collection *The Magic Barrel*, for which he won the *National Book Award* in 1959 (Hershnow 5). Despite this unarguable success, Robert Solotaroff argues that "Malamud never fully lost the sense of the unfairness of his having, like so many of his characters, to struggle mightily to make up for a late start" (6). Bernard Malamud was thirty-six when his career as a writer took off, which makes him a literary late bloomer. In comparison, Philip Roth published his first short story collection at the age of twenty-six.

After Malamud left his teaching position in Oregon, he traveled extensively, visiting Spain, France and the Soviet Union, the latter of which became the setting for his fourth novel *The Fixer* (1966), for which he received the *National Book Award* and the *Pulitzer Prize* for literature (Hershnow 6). He resumed his teaching career at Bennington College, Vermont, in 1961 and became part of their language and literature program and stayed there until his retirement (Hershnow 5). Bernard Malamud died in 1986 as one of the most successful and renowned Jewish American fiction writers of the twentieth century.

2.1.2) Philip Roth: A Career Defined by Controversy and Autobiography

Philip Roth was born in 1933 to Herman Roth and Bess Finkel, who were already second-generation Americans. He grew up in Newark, New Jersey in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood. Most of his family's closest relatives and friends were living nearby and this kind of "tight-knit family life is reflected in many of Roth's stories and novels" (Halio xv). Roth himself described his upbringing in the Jewish neighborhood of Newark as "a perfectly legitimate way of growing up American" and emphasized that "growing up Jewish as I did and growing up American seemed to me indistinguishable" (*Facts* 122).

Roth received a Bachelor's degree in English from Bucknell University in 1954 and helped to establish the school's literary magazine *Ed Cetera*, in which his first short stories were published. In 1959, five of these short stories were collected and published together with the title story of the collection *Goodbye, Columbus*, which was awarded the *National Book Award* in 1960 (Halio xv). Philip Roth was a young author of twenty-six at the time, but had already earned the reputation of a promising and accomplished writer.

He decided to pursue a Master's degree at the English Graduate School of the University of Chicago, which he finished in 1955. Roth later pursued a PhD and became an instructor of English. During this time, he also met Margaret Martinson Williams, a waitress, who had a child from a previous marriage. They had a strangely dysfunctional relationship, which Roth fictionalized in his novel *My Life as a Man* (1974). In his autobiography *The Facts* (1988) he spends an entire chapter called "The Girl of My Dreams" recounting the relationship that did not only scar him for life, but also had a lasting influence on his work. They married in 1959 and divorced in 1963, after a long struggle for her to agree to the separation. Margaret died in a car crash in 1968, but their relationship haunted Roth for the rest of his career. He refused to remarry until 1990, when he wed Claire Bloom, a British actress, who also had children from a previous marriage. Roth never had any biological children (Halio xvi).

Philip Roth's success with *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories* (1959) was tainted by a substantial and unanticipated backlash from within the Jewish American community. A similar reaction was caused by the publication of his fourth novel, *Portnoy's Complaint*, in 1969, which did not only increase his audience and fame among the American literary scene, but also benefited him financially. The criticism and antagonism from the Jewish American community was considerable. As a result, Roth had to defend his work in public lectures and conferences, but also in several essays. He collected and published them in *Reading Myself and Others* (1975) (Halio xvi).

Roth's reputation as a notorious author, whose publications frequently caused significant upheaval were the inspiration for his trilogy *Zuckerman Bound* (1985), in which Roth creates his alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman to work through his own experiences (Halio xvii). The trilogy includes the novels *The Ghost Writer* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981) and *The Anatomy Lessons* (1983) as well as the epilogue *The Prague Orgy* (1985). The Zuckerman novels contain more autobiographical elements than most of Roth's other novels, however, it is still necessary to distinguish between the author and his alter-ego's experiences (Halio 8). Roth uses a semi-autobiographical method, which "includes the practice of feeding savagely off the comic faults and amusing foibles of Jewish mothers, fathers, relatives, siblings, and girlfriends who bear a resemblance to his own, or at least make us wonder about resemblances and assume the consequence of wounded feelings" (Greenberg 496). The method that Greenberg describes here is also one of the primary reasons why Roth's fiction is so intriguing. Readers hope to get a glimpse at Roth's inner world through his novels and short

stories, however, the only proper autobiography that Roth published remains *The Facts* from 1988.

2.1.3.) Malamud's and Roth's Attitude towards the Label "Jewish American Author"

Malamud and Roth never denied their Jewish heritage and upbringing, but both authors struggled with the importance literary scholars ascribed to their Jewishness as a means of categorizing and interpreting their work. Their problem with the label "Jewish American author" was that it seemed to set them apart from the rest of the American fiction writers of the twentieth century. It was suggesting that they were Jewish writers, who only wrote for a Jewish audience. Malamud and Roth felt "that the title is reductive, that it denies a wide range of concerns and assumes the author to be obsessed with one group" (Abramson 146). Nevertheless, both authors set their short stories and novels in an exclusively Jewish American background and spent their entire careers explaining why.

In 1975 Bernard Malamud agreed to an interview with Daniel Stern, who asked him if he considered himself a Jewish writer. In response Malamud pretended not to understand the question and further argued "I'm an American, I'm a Jew, and I write for all men. A novelist has to or he's built himself a cage. I write about Jews, when I write about Jews, because they set my imagination going. I know something about their history, the quality of their experience and belief, and of their literature, though not as much as I would like" (Stern 63). Furthermore, Malamud clarifies, "the point I'm making is that I was born in America and respond, in American life, to more than Jewish experience. I write for those who read" (Stern 64). This means that his literature is not supposed to solely attract a Jewish readership, but a rather broad audience, which understands the topics he addresses as universal problems of the human kind. Malamud did not want to be reduced to his Jewish heritage and thus confined to a supposedly predictable and stereotypical mixture of themes and characters. Furthermore, he rejected the idea that there was a so-called school of Jewish American writers. Malamud did not deny that American writers with a Jewish heritage share common experiences and interests connected to their upbringing, but he saw nothing cohesive in their approach to fictionalizing these experiences in works of literature (Kidron 29). For Malamud, "being too Jewish for some Americans or too Christian for some Jews was not a problem. It marked out the holding-ground in which he worked; it forged the melting pot in which he found new combinations of possibility" (Davis 139). This sense of possibility that comes from a pluralist ethnic background fuels most of Malamud's novels and short stories.

Philip Roth maintained a similar attitude throughout his career. From the beginning, Roth was very outspoken about his rejection of the label “Jewish author”. He saw himself as “a ‘writer who is a Jew’ rather than as a ‘Jewish writer’” (Rubin-Dorsky 91). In 1963 Roth spoke to an Israeli audience about his identity as a writer and he said “the biggest concern and passion in my life is to write fiction, not to be a Jew” (Rodgers 2), which is a statement that leaves no doubt about his feelings on the matter.

In the essay *Writing About Jews* collected and published in *Reading Myself and Others* (1975), Roth contemplates what it means to be a Jewish writer: “[a]s I see it, the task for the Jewish novelist has not been to go forth to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race, but to find inspiration in a conscience that has been created and undone a hundred times over in this century alone” (245). Roth did not consider himself a representative of the American Jewish experience nor did he suspect to have any kind of responsibility towards this community, until he was confronted with the distress his literature caused among them.

2.2.) Jewish American Literature: The Disputed Definition of a Genre

Jewish American authors as well as literary scholars have been debating the appropriateness of the terms “Jewish American literature” and “Jewish literature” as genre classifications with no definite outcome. However, it is still worth discussing if the ethnic background of individual authors and a shared interest in the experience of a particular community is sufficient reason to speak of a literary genre.

First, it is by no means commonly accepted that Jewish writers are separate from non-Jewish writers and that Jewish or Jewish American literature is a literary genre (Knopp, *Trial* 23). However, it can be argued that “to the extent that a feeling of difference impinges upon the imaginative quality of the artist, to that extent will a genuine difference emerge in his creative work” (Knopp, *Trial* 28). So when a vital part of an author’s work revolves around these markers of difference, such as their cultural and religious background, it seems justified taking the writer’s ethnicity into account. Furthermore, every author, Jewish American or otherwise, writes out of his own experience. He might either attack or embrace his cultural background, but he can never get rid of it. (Lyons 62). Bonny Lyons makes a convincing case for the use of the genre term “Jewish American literature”:

However thorny the question about who is a Jew, what makes Jewish literature, and which writers are to be included, classifying literature as American-Jewish literature, or looking at certain writers and works as American-Jewish, is a useful approach. All generalizations and categories are somewhat artificial, and indeed what is most valuable about each literary work is its unique qualities. (62)

Although each author displays a unique style and set of topics, the major themes in Jewish American literature are overlapping and shared by authors such as Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth. They are writing about the possibilities and problems of acculturation and assimilation as well as the quest for meaning in a world that presents them with sometimes conflicting sets of values. The term “Jewish American author” makes sense as a general classification, as long as it does not imply an inferior position to their American colleagues.(rather a restriction, reduction) Classifying the works of an author as “Jewish American literature” should not mean that this literature was solely written for a Jewish audience or that the quality of the writing cannot be measured against that of authors of other ethnicities. As the next chapters will show, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth both use their Jewishness as a starting point in their novels and short stories, but their Jewish characters offer an insight into what it means to be a flawed human being that goes far beyond their Jewishness.

2.3.) ‘Jewishness’ in Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth

Malamud’s and Roth’s work cannot be reduced to their Jewishness, but it is nevertheless important to examine the particularly Jewish elements in their fiction. Where Malamud aims at universalizing the destinies of his Jewish characters, Roth finds inspiration in the particularities of his protagonists’ lives.

2.3.1.) Bernard Malamud: Where Jewishness Disappears Into Metaphor

Of all Jewish American writers in the twentieth century, Bernard Malamud is considered to be the ‘most Jewish’ (Greenspan 143 & Guttman 112). According to Allen Guttman, Malamud contributed significantly to the reaffirmation of Jewishness within the United States in the post-World War II era (112). His sensitive approach to writing about “characters and situations that are directly related to Jewish issues, rituals, and history” (Abramson 146) earned him praise from literary scholars as well as community members.

Malamud is part of an older generation that is considered to be closer to the Jewish immigrant authors of the early twentieth century and the last to show a connection to the literary tradition of Yiddish story tellers. Sidney Richman suggests that in the best of his short stories and novels “Malamud has re-created the same disconsolate and hungry world one finds in the masters of nineteenth-century Yiddish folk realism” (26). Traditionally Yiddish topics such as “tales of misery, frustration, insensate violence, greed [and] man’s inhumanity to man” (Rovit 5) can also be found in Malamud’s work. However, even though Malamud “captures the elusive tones and shadows of the traditional Yiddish tale” (Rovit 6) more proficiently than any other Jewish American author of his time, it would be wrong to assume that this is all his fiction has to offer (Rovit 6).

Although scholars agree that Malamud is “the most sensitive to Jewish speech, nuance, gesticulation, and historical insecurity”, he is also the “least inclined to associate them with specific Jewish settings, dilemmas, or moments of history” (Greenspan 143). It is difficult to define the particularly Jewish element of any Jewish American author, because there is no “uniformly acceptable definition of Jewishness in general” (Mesher 18). In Malamud’s fiction, Jewishness has been characterized as a “literary device” (Mesher 18) and as disappearing into “metaphor” (Abramson 147). Malamud sees “the Jew as a timeless, placeless everyman” (Greenspan 144) and “when he treats Jewish matters, most often he universalizes Jews, Jewish culture, history, and Judaism to such an extent as to render them no more than bases from which to explore the human condition” (Abramson 147). Bernard Malamud once said that he tries to see the Jew as a universal man and that “every man is a Jew though he may not know it” (Kidron 30). However, Edward Abramson rightfully points out that “one cannot effectively write about humanity in general; there must be a beginning in the specific so that the reader can move by induction to general truths” (147). In Malamud’s work that specific beginning is the life of a Jewish American protagonist whose human struggles then transform him into a relatable everyman (Abramson 147). This universal quality of Malamud’s fiction is also the primary explanation for his immensely successful and long-lived career with a readership that extends far beyond the Jewish American community.

The Jewish characters in Malamud’s work “reflect the experience of Eastern-European Jews as an oppressed people who somehow managed to survive centuries of humiliation and persecution without losing their humanity” (Hershinow 8). It is precisely their humanity which lets them stand by their moral and ethical convictions and not bow down to the “dehumanizing pressure of the modern world” (Hershinow 8). Nevertheless, the heroes in

Malamud's narratives first have to go through a painful process of self-exploration before they are allowed to truly connect with their humanity or, in other words, before they can be saved from themselves. This predominant theme in Malamud's work is what Sidney Richman calls the "myth of salvation" (Richman 24). Even though the universality of Malamud's work has been generally agreed upon, it has to be noted that "it is only his Jews [...], who ultimately succeed in his fiction" (Richman 24). This is why Richman further asserts that "if the author's intent is to generalize the Jew into a construct representing all men, it is the redemptive forces implicit in his dramatic portrait of Jews which finally persuades the reader that men can be better than they are" (24). If one considers Malamud's reputation, he succeeded in emphasizing the redeeming qualities of his protagonists as human beings and not merely as Jews.

In addition, the concept of *menshlichkeit* offers the frame to Malamud's choice of narratives and protagonists. He "has been characterized as the author of *mentshlehkhakyt*" (Rosenberg 171), which is the reason why this crucial component of the Jewish moral code will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3.

2.3.2.) Jewishness in Philip Roth: Corrupted Values in a Hypocritical Community

Roth's first publications earned him the status of a literary rebel, who felt frustrated by the subcultural and marginalized position within US society his Jewish American upbringing imposed on him. This frustration is not only aimed at the mainstream culture of his time but also at his own community (Greenberg 487). Robert Greenberg suggests that "Roth's fiction is built at the margins of the mainstream and from outside it. This outsider status, moreover, is not a direct product of his Jewishness, since in relation to his Jewishness he also stands largely outside, looking in" (501). In contrast to the work of Bernard Malamud, whose description of Jews can be characterized as universal and timeless, "Roth's work imagines Jews specific to their situations as Americans. Ironically, this also means that Roth had rejected many of the elements of identity that have historically made one 'Jewish'" (Parrish, *Ethnic Identity* 130). In other words, Roth used a strategy that is a direct contradiction to Malamud's approach. He does not try to universalize the Jewish issues he describes in his early works, but is ready to concentrate on the particular and "make universal conflicts more specific" (Rodgers 19).

Roth “has repeatedly and flagrantly violated Jewish cultural taboos” (Parrish, *Ethnic Identity* 132) and he does not shy away from criticism directed towards the Jewish American community in the post-World War II period. However, it has to be noted that “Roth’s criticisms are aimed not at the institution of Judaism as a whole but at certain individuals within it who, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, came to undermine what is most essential about Jewish identity” (Silvey 74). Roth’s aim is to point out the hypocrisy and the inconsistencies in the lives of Jewish Americans in the late 1940s and 1950s, who claimed to be Jewish but refused to incorporate fundamental Jewish values and practices in their everyday routines. Roth’s work can be understood as a comment “on the decline of American Jewry under the pressure of the ‘American way of life’” (Gilman 354), which essentially revolves around the incompatibility of American individualism with the pillars of the Jewish faith that hold communal responsibility and universal sympathy in high regard.

In his fiction, Roth addresses the “dilemmas and paradoxes” (Rubin-Dorsky 102) that second generation Jewish Americans had to face in the twentieth century. Robert Greenberg suggests that “this tension between subcultural and mainstream experience” (504) is at the center of Roth’s work. That is especially true when he describes the problems caused by assimilating to American mainstream culture and the identity crisis triggered by the Holocaust. In sum, the image Roth creates of Jews is “a suburban make-believe where glutted freezers give surrogate consolation to hungers that are insatiable and where the vaunted ‘good life’ is more often than not a system of blinders to screen men from the hollowness within the catastrophic possibilities without” (Richman 22). Unsurprisingly, this unflattering picture of the Jewish middle class was met with resistance and disapproval by the Jewish American community, which was worried about its public image. But Roth was “[p]art of a younger generation of nonconforming intellectuals who rejected the notion that Jewish writers ought to concern themselves with what the ‘goyim’ would think” (Glenn 116). He was not interested in limiting his characterization of Jews to either victims of the Holocaust, who suffered through anti-Semitic hatred for centuries, or to the Jews as grateful immigrants, who are optimistic and endearing people. In his opinion, this would falsify the real experience of American Jews and reduce his narratives to a narrow range of moral possibilities (Glenn 116). Roth was often faced with the accusation that he was not aware of his responsibility towards the Jewish American community, but “Roth distinguished between artistic and moral responsibility; and regarding his artistic work, he disavows moral responsibility. [...] Roth equates artistic responsibility with what would generally be judged moral irresponsibility and disruptiveness”

(Greenberg 496). It is therefore no surprise that his fiction was either met with outrage for its ruthlessness or admiration for its progressiveness.

Furthermore, Roth's work is predominantly influenced by his personal experience as "an American writer who cannot ignore that he is a Jew" and his work is thereby "a highly personal yet universal pathos about man as a rebel and outcast who must suffer for his cultural resistance" (Greenberg 504). Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky suggests that Jewishness in Roth's fiction has often been interpreted as a source of trauma, a psychological condition that needs to be worked through (91) because it fuels the protagonists' identity crises and personal struggles. However, the focus on his relationship with the Jewish American community hints at a bigger issue that links back to the problematic genre definition of Jewish American literature. Bernard Rodgers points out that

the emphasis on Roth's Jewishness is unfortunate because it has worked to isolate him from his non-Jewish contemporaries. Whereas if he is viewed as an American realist who has attempted to expand and adapt the realistic mode to deal with his own concerns and the social and literary exigencies of contemporary culture, the evolution of his fiction can serve to illuminate the impulses behind the direction the writing of many others has taken during the last twenty years. (3)

It is therefore of utmost importance not to make the mistake of focusing the analysis of Roth's and Malamud's short stories too much on the authors' Jewishness. They are two of the most renowned American fiction writers of the twentieth century and that cannot be changed by their choice of Jewish characters.

2.4.) Philip Roth: Bad for the Jews?

Philip Roth's and Bernard Malamud's different approaches to discussing Jewish American issues in their fictional texts also resulted in a distinctively different relationship between each of them and the Jewish American community. "Roth stresses the corruption of traditional Jewish values among modern American middle-class Jews, [while] the works of Bernard Malamud, as a general rule, tend to emphasize the persistence of these values uncorrupted and the relevance of the Jewish tradition of idealism to life in present-day America" (Knopp, *Trial* 109). This comparison leads to the obvious, but nevertheless accurate conclusion that Bernard Malamud was favored by the Jewish community since its members considered him loyal to their faith and culture. However, scholars such as Edward Abramson have suggested that the Jewish American community has:

failed to take account of [Malamud's] own statements and, more cogently, what actually occurs in those of his writings that deal specifically with Jews and Jewishness. Philip Roth has been viewed by many Jews as "bad for the Jews", Malamud as good. In fact, in what I call Malamud's "Jewish writings", Jewishness and Judaism most frequently disappear into metaphor. He is not so much "good for the Jews" as good for humanity. (147)

Bernard Malamud's emphasis on the universality of human morality and the success it has earned him within his Gentile as well as his Jewish readership has been thoroughly discussed throughout this chapter. However, the controversy that Philip Roth's publications caused and more importantly the harsh responses from within the Jewish community, have yet to be examined in detail.

Roth's first critical success *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), earned him angry responses from the Jewish American community, which accused him of exploiting and denouncing his Jewish background in order to cater to a larger American audience. He was suspected of trying to gain acceptance as an American author rather than being a marginalized Jewish writer (Parrish, *Introduction* 1). Especially conservative Jews and old-fashioned, traditional rabbis took issue with Roth's uncompromising portrayal of Jewish American life in the postwar period. They were startled by Roth's satirical observations and misinterpreted the motives behind it. Roth did not anticipate the unforgiving response of the Jewish establishment and at first tried to justify his fiction by evoking the principles of artistic freedom and truth. But his explanations failed to calm down the angered Jewish conservatives (Halio 6). On the contrary, the part of the Jewish community that felt offended by Roth's fiction started to label him as a self-hating Jew. The charge was obviously misguided, but the label sticks with Roth until today. Roth scholars unanimously agree that Roth's short story collection does not make him a self-hating Jew and that "the only crime that Roth commits with *Goodbye, Columbus* is the crime of holding a mirror to unflattering truths" (Silvey 60).

Roth addresses the issue of being called a self-hating Jew in his autobiography *The Facts* (1988). In the first chapter "Safe at Home" he discusses his childhood in Newark and what it means to grow up Jewish:

Discussions about Jewishness and being Jewish, which I was to hear so often among intellectual Jews once I was an adult in Chicago and New York, were altogether unknown; [...] About being Jewish there was nothing more to say than there was about having two arms and two legs. It would have seemed to us strange *not* to be Jewish – stranger still, to hear someone announce that he wished he weren't a Jew or that he intended not to be in the future (31).

Roth was baffled by the fact that people were suggesting that he did not wish to be a Jew or was denying his Jewish background. He never gave much thought to the nature of his Jewishness until he joined the ranks of Jewish intellectuals at several universities. Roth used this academic setting to find a scholarly approach to being a Jewish writer and to become a literary critic of his colleagues' work as much as of his own. The essay *Writing about Jews* is based on presentations and panel discussions in which he specifically defended his short stories *Defender of the Faith* and *Epstein*. He found himself facing an angry Jewish readership, which attended these events to publicly accuse his work of being disloyal to the community and bluntly wrong and dangerous (Halio 86). In the essay, Roth first presents the responses he received from angry readers: "Among the letters I receive from readers, there have been a number written by Jews accusing me of being anti-Semitic and 'self-hating' or, at least tasteless; they argue or imply that the sufferings of the Jews throughout history, culminating in the murder of six million by the Nazis, have made certain criticisms of Jewish life insulting and trivial" (*Reading* 149). Roth did not understand why Jews as well as Gentiles should not be represented as flawed human beings. Jewish critics and readers "found *Goodbye, Columbus* troublesome not simply for its unflattering portrait of some American Jews, but because it was critical while being marketed toward a largely non-Jewish audience" (Silvey 60). Roth was aware of the issue that he "had told the Gentiles what apparently it would otherwise have been possible to keep secret from them: that the perils of human nature afflict the members of our minority" (*Reading* 161). At the end of his essays, Roth is very clear about his stance on telling the truth, or at least his truth, about the Jewish American experience: He has no intention of keeping quiet in order to be invisible to the American public, because, in his opinion, "this is not fighting anti-Semitism, but submitting to it: that is, submitting to a restriction of consciousness as well as communication because being conscious and being candid is too risky" (*Reading* 163). Even though his essays and public appearances on the topic were "largely ineffectual in quieting his critics, who continued to accuse him of Jewish-self-hatred, if not blatant anti-Semitism", scholars still agree that "his arguments are trenchant, witty, and utterly sensible" (Halio 6).

However frustrated Roth was by the unjustified charge of being a self-hating Jew, he managed to turn it into a source of inspiration. He created his alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman, who embodies everything Roth was accused of being. Sander Gilman characterizes Zuckerman as the "American writer on Jewish themes who had begun to internalize the charge of being a self-hating Jew, of having a corrupted, degenerate, self-hating discourse" (384). Zuckerman equates "physical pain with his Jewishness" (Gilman 384) and represents "a very specific

form of Jewishness, [...] the identity of the writer as the self-hating Jew” (Gilman 384). In the Zuckerman trilogy, Roth explores what it means to be a ‘bad Jew’ and what self-hating behavior would actually look like (Gilman 355).

For the rest of Roth’s ongoing career, he expressed ambivalence towards the controversy triggered by his fiction. On the one hand, he tried to distance himself from the charge of being a self-hating Jew and, on the other hand, his creativity was sparked by the disruption he caused. Roth and his critics have come to accept that his career and, therefore, also his success have been determined by his professional and personal conflict with the Jewish American community (Parrish, *Introduction* 2).

2.5.) Malamud and Roth: Friends, Critics and Rivals

Bernard Malamud’s and Philip Roth’s paths often crossed throughout their careers. Despite their significant age difference (Malamud was nineteen years older than Roth), they were friends and, to a certain extent, also rivals. Malamud was “an older Jewish writer whose critical fame coincided with Roth’s own fame, a kind of uneasy father figure against whom Roth measured his own achievement” (Parrish, *Introduction* 4). Roth frequently wrote about Malamud, who he simply called “Bern”. Even though the authors had an amicable relationship, there was quarrel after Roth published the essay “Writing American Fiction” in the *New York Review of Books* in 1960, where he criticized Bernard Malamud’s famous statement “every man is a Jew though he may not know it” (Kidron 30). Roth wrote:

The Jews of *The Magic Barrel* and the Jews of *The Assistant*, I have reason to suspect, are not the Jews of New York City or Chicago. They are a kind of invention, a metaphor to stand for certain human possibilities and certain human promises, and I find myself further inclined to believe this when I read of a statement attributed to Malamud which goes, “All men are Jews.” In fact we know this is not so; even the men who are Jews aren’t sure they’re Jews. But Malamud, as a writer of fiction, has not shown specific interest in the anxieties and dilemmas and corruptions of the modern American Jew, the Jew we think of as characteristic of our times; rather, his people live in a timeless depression and a placeless Lower East Side; their society is not affluent, their predicament not cultural.

This analysis of Malamud’s portrayal of Jews also led to an exchange between the two authors in which Malamud informed Roth that what he had written was Roth’s problem, not his. Roth responded arrogantly that he had probably done him a favor by exposing his “fictional skeletons” (*Pictures of Malamud*). Even though they never saw each other more than a few times a year, this quarrel put a strain on their friendship and epitomizes the

differences between their approaches, which Jay Halio summed up in one simple but accurate sentence: “If Malamud’s recurrent theme is that ‘All men are Jews,’ than Roth’s is that ‘All Jews are men’” (26).

Malamud’s death in 1986 prompted Roth to write the essay *Pictures of Malamud*, an allusion to Malamud’s “Pictures of Fidelman”, where “Roth dispassionately portrays Malamud as a dying artist, who is too weak to summon the will required to complete his last work” (Parrish, *Introduction* 4). Roth used *Pictures of Malamud* to mourn the death of his friend “Bern”, but also to contemplate his life as a maturing writer. He gives an account of the last conversation he had with an already very sick Bernard Malamud in 1985. For the first time in their friendship, Malamud asked Roth to give him feedback on material he was working on. But the once great author was now a dying man. Roth describes the encounter:

To be constructive, I suggested that perhaps the narrative opened too slowly and that he might better begin further on, with one of the later chapters. Then I asked where it was all going. ‘What comes next?’ I said, hoping we could pass on to what it was he had in mind if not yet down on the page. ... But he wouldn’t let go of what he’d written, at such cost, as easily as that. Nothing was ever as easy as that, least of all the end of things. In a soft voice suffused with fury, he said: ‘What’s next isn’t the point.’ [...] He was suffering so, I wished I could have said that it *was* something more, and that if I’d said it, he could have believed me.

Philip Roth is heartbroken by the death of his mentor and *Pictures of Malamud* can definitely be understood as a testament to a friendship of great minds, who, despite their differences, respected each other’s work. Malamud’s death was also a caesura in Roth’s life and the starting point of a more mature phase in his career (Parrish, *Introduction* 4).

3.) Jewish Self-Hatred and *Menschlichkeit*

This chapter offers an introduction to the concepts of Jewish self-hatred and *menschlichkeit* (Yiddish: *mentshlekhhkayt*). It is the aim of this section to clarify what it means to suggest that Philip Roth is a self-hating author and that Bernard Malamud is the author of *menschlichkeit*. Even though each concept is primarily associated with one of the authors, they are both crucial for the analysis of Roth's and Malamud's short stories later in this thesis.

3.1.) Jewish Self-Hatred

Self-hatred is not an exclusively Jewish phenomenon. On the contrary, "a large variety of individuals can hate one or more innate or acquired traits that have prevented them from being accepted into their surrounding society as equals" (Golomb 238). This is especially common in marginalized communities, which are excluded from mainstream society because of its members' skin color, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. However, self-hatred within the Jewish community still has a unique quality due to the history of the Jewish people. "Their lack of a national state before 1948 and the worldwide persistence of anti-Semitism in all its varieties [...] have caused them to be regarded as an alien people nearly everywhere they settled" (Harap 151), which in turn motivated them to distance themselves from their community and, instead, associate with the host society. Jews thought they could prevent anti-Semitism by "religious conversion to a socially approved faith or by renouncing or concealing their Jewish origin" (Harap 151). The aim of self-hating behavior is to be eventually integrated into the dominant social group by abandoning or concealing all differences (Gilman 2). However, this usually leads to an identity crisis, since the ultimate goal would be to never have been different, which is impossible to achieve (Gilman 3).

3.1.1.) A Historical Survey: From the European Fin-de-Siècle to the American Forties

Although Jewish self-hatred is considered to have always been an issue within the community, it was not until the late nineteenth century that Jewish scholars and philosophers started to explore the concept in a serious way. It was especially "the fin-de-siècle society in Germany and Austria [that] expressed concerns about what they took to be a modern crisis of nervous self-alienation and existential inauthenticity" (Reitter 24). Many German and Austro-Hungarian secular Jews started to abandon their faith and Jewish traditions in order to acquire

a place in mainstream society. Nevertheless, they were still rejected by the Gentiles (Golomb 234).

In 1930, the German Jewish philosopher Theodor Lessing gained widespread recognition for his work *Jewish Self-hatred*, in which he “coined and popularized the concept” (Reitter 2). Lessing believed that self-hatred was an exclusively Jewish issue caused by unique innate psychological predispositions (Golomb 238). Jacob Golomb sums up Lessing’s argument in his essay “Jewish Self-Hatred: Nietzsche, Freud and the Case of Theodor Lessing”

Lessing indicated that as a result of external pressure from a hostile environment, the Jews had begun to direct their spiritual resources against themselves – a process that resulted in manifestations of insecurity, self-doubt, even self-torture. As Lessing described it, this state of affairs was basically unbearable, leading to an effort at self-liberation through a radical rejection of anything having to do with Judaism and Jewishness. (244)

Lessing’s work was published by a Zionist publishing house and motivated by Zionist beliefs, which helped him overcome his own feelings of self-hatred. According to Lessing, the Jews’ alien status and the resentment they were met with in their host countries undermined their confidence and pride as a people (Glenn 96). The Jewish self-hatred he described was “a disease that could only be cured by a separate Jewish homeland” (Glenn 96). Even though Lessing was the first author to make the concept of Jewish self-hatred known to a wider public, his remarks did not come from a cohesive “long-running [...] discussion of Jewish self-contempt” (Reitter 2). His definition was a direct reaction to Europe’s interwar period and was, therefore, historically and culturally contingent. Moreover, Lessing was convinced that Jewish self-hatred was to be understood as a psychological condition. However, social scientists and psychologists “disagree about whether the term Jewish self-hatred was (and is) a cultural construct or an actual psychological ‘syndrome’” (Glenn 96), which is why there have been various revisions of Lessing’s original concept.

In 1941 the German-born Jewish-American psychologist Kurt Lewin published the essay “Self-Hatred among Jews” and aimed at a more inclusive definition of the concept. His essay became the standard reference for Jewish self-hatred in the social sciences (Glenn 103). Lewin’s definition distinguishes between different forms of Jewish self-hatred. A Jewish person’s hatred “may be directed against Jews as a group, against a particular fraction of the Jews, against his own family, or against himself. It may be directed against Jewish institutions, Jewish mannerisms, Jewish language, or Jewish ideals” (Lewin 187). Furthermore, Lewin characterized Jewish self-hatred as an individual as well as a social

phenomenon (186). The first manifestation of self-hatred is characterized by the “individual renunciation of Jewish identity and ethnicity, the other [by] social dissociation of, usually, one class of Jews by another class” (Harap 152). For example, in the early twentieth century, Jewish immigrants from Germany were already successfully assimilated to the American society and disapproved of the Jewish newcomers from Eastern Europe. They did not want to be associated with the Orthodox Jewish tradition and the Yiddish language because they feared it would negatively influence the perception of the entire immigrant group (Harap 152, 156). Lewin also insists that “in a few cases, Jewish self-hatred may grow out of a neurotic or otherwise abnormal personality, but in the great majority of cases it is a phenomenon in persons of normal mental health. In other words, it is a social-psychological phenomenon” (197). Therefore, he dissolves the either/or discussion about the origin of Jewish self-hatred by suggesting that it is both a psychological condition as well as a social construct.

The decreasing importance of religion in the Jewish community and the emergence of highly assimilated secular Jews in the United States was, according to Lewin, a major factor in stirring feelings of insecurity. It was difficult for secular Jews to define their group membership through their faith, and as the significance of religion in their lives deteriorated, it became difficult for them to see being Jewish as a positive trait (Lewin 180). To Lewin, self-hating Jews engaged in that kind of behavior because it is precisely their Jewishness that keeps them apart from the majority group, to which they want to belong. But instead of growing hostile towards mainstream society, which will not accept them, self-hating Jews direct their anger against themselves and their community (Glenn 103).

Lewin’s conclusions about Jewish self-hatred led to a movement that promoted so-called ‘positive Jewishness’, which was an effort to counteract feelings of self-hatred. But it also led to a backlash between conflicting parties within the Jewish American community because some community leader appropriated Lewin’s approach for their own goals (Glenn 107). This intra-Jewish struggle concerning what would nowadays be called identity politics, happened in the 1940s and “established the conditions of reception [...] for Roth and other mid-century Jewish writers” (Glenn 107) and the uproar their literature caused.

Furthermore, Lessing’s and Lewin’s approaches to Jewish self-hatred are by no means the only two. Some definitions suggest that self-hatred is only a problem of Jewish intellectuals and the political left within the community. Others assumed that Jewish self-hatred is a result of assimilation and acculturation. Some scholars even doubt the usefulness of the concept and describe it as polemic rather than analytical engagement with the topic ‘Jewish identity

struggles' (Glenn 96). Moreover, definitions of Jewish self-hatred often consider the term interchangeable with "Jewish anti-Semitism" (Gilman 1 & Harap 151) and see Jewish self-hatred as "an internalized notion of antisemitism" (Golomb 233).

3.1.2.) The Age of Jewish Self-Hatred

During World War II and the postwar period, psychologists like Kurt Lewin started to take interest in Jewish self-hatred and turned it into a publicly discussed issue. Susan Glenn suggests that "the 1940s and 1950s might well be described as the age of self-hatred" (98), because it was the moment when the concept of Jewish self-hatred was introduced to the American public and at the same time changed the public discourse on Jewish identity significantly. There were several decisive factors for the emergence of this public debate. First of all, the growing popularity of psychology had a great influence on American public life and many Jewish intellectuals who fled from the Nazis during World War II focused their academic interests on investigating minority cultures in the United States. They did not only bring their academic expertise to the table but also their own experiences with anti-Semitism and Jewish self-consciousness in Europe. Furthermore, the discussion about Jewish self-hatred was fueled by struggles from within the Jewish community concerning questions of nationalism, group survival and loyalty (Glenn 100).

The debate about Jewish self-hatred was at its core a debate about the identity of Jewish Americans in the postwar period, and exposed numerous conflicts within the Jewish community. First-generation Jewish immigrants had a different approach to what it meant to be Jewish than their second-generation children, who were already born in America and had identity struggles of their own. Thus, the postwar period gave rise to "fundamental disagreements about what could be said by and about Jews in public and whether nonconforming individuals had a right to speak 'as Jews'" (Glenn 107). In the aftermath of the Holocaust, polemic statements about the punishment and destruction of Jews were no longer hypothetical, but harsh reality (Gilman 319). The Jewish American community grew increasingly worried about their public perception and anti-Semitism. They displayed exaggerated group-protectiveness, which was not only directed against outside criticism but also against critical voices from within, which were dismissed as self-hating Jews.

3.1.2.) The Self-Hating Jewish Author

The “self-hating Jewish author” is a label that causes significant confusion. “Individuals and groups across the intellectual, social, cultural, religious, and political spectrum deployed the term variously, inconsistently, and with conflicting social and political agendas” (Glenn 99). It is often used by the Jewish community to describe authors who deal with controversial characteristics of Jewish life. However, that does not mean that those authors actually exhibit self-hating behavior (Harap 156). This issue was specifically prominent in the postwar period when authors who wrote about self-hating Jews were mistaken for self-hating Jews themselves. These writers were then condemned for “inciting or abetting anti-Semitism by providing fuel for the case made against Jews. Often a realistic portrait of Jewish life is taken as a self-hating expression” (Harap 156). Even though many were aware that the community outcry over the fictional work of some writers was a rather exaggerated reaction, the charge of Jewish self-hatred was such a loaded topic that even other writers who examined their colleagues supposedly self-hating work, were themselves accused of anti-Semitic behavior (Glenn 99).

A group of such literary scholars and writers founded the magazine *Commentary* in 1945, which was a place for Jewish intellectuals to publish their essays and short stories. “Many of the *Commentary* writers were anti-Stalinist liberals and socialists, some of them former Communists, who denounced all kinds of orthodoxies: religious, ethnic, political, social, intellectual and artistic” (Glenn 110). Philip Roth published *Writing About Jews* (1963) in the magazine that was “viewed as Jewish self-hatred incarnate” (Glenn 109) by the more conservative community members. Like Roth’s work, the issues of *Commentary* were often met with disapproval from the Jewish American community. In the magazine, Jewish intellectuals were allowed to explore different concepts of Jewishness in America and rebelled against the assumption that there are limitations to what can be said about the American Jews (Glenn 109).

The charges of self-hate against Philip Roth have already been discussed in detail. What has not been discussed yet is that Roth proposed his own definition of Jewish self-hatred in his autobiography *The Facts*: “I soon understood self-hatred to mean an internalized, though not necessarily conscious, loathing of one’s recognizable group markings that culminates either in quasi-pathological efforts to expunge them or in the vicious disparagement of those who don’t even know enough to try” (*Facts* 117). What Roth means by “group markings” are visible differences from the Gentiles, which, in his case, is the dominant white Anglo-Saxon

Protestant society (Davison 164). Moreover, “he notes generically that self-hatred is a pathology individuals grow into as they are made to feel ashamed of their difference” (Davison 164), but Roth never admits to having experienced those feelings himself. What he primarily struggled with was his parents’ self-victimization. They were unable or unwilling to understand that Jewish Americans are not survivors of the Holocaust and do not share the same fate as European Jews did during World War II. Therefore, Roth made the false victimhood of middle-class Jewish Americans the focus of his narratives (Davison 165).

Roth was not the only young Jewish American writer to criticize the state of the Jewish middle-class during and after World War II. Most of his predecessors and contemporaries took issue with the conformist and complacent attitude that came with middle-classness. However, Norman Podhoretz, *Commentary’s* editor-in-chief from 1960 to 1995, suggested that these young intellectuals still believed in and even idealized the core values of Judaism, which means that their criticism was never meant to be perceived as self-hate. Podhoretz argues that “the essence of Judaism is the struggle for universal justice and human brotherhood,” and those young intellectuals claimed that “anyone who fights for the Ideal is to that degree more Jewish than a man who merely observes the rituals or merely identifies himself with the Jewish community” (310). This mindset embodies “the two basic attitudes toward Judaism occurring in works of fiction by Jewish-American writers since the end of World War II, that is, celebration of the Jewish tradition of idealism [...] and rejection of middle-class Jewish life in America” (Knopp, *Ways*, 70). This observation is also true for Roth, who, despite his reputation, never lost his admiration for the true values of the Jewish faith (Knopp, *Ways* 71).

3.2.) Menschlichkeit (Yiddish: Mentshlekhyt)

The importance of community is a distinctive characteristic of Judaism. Jews are not perceived as “isolated individuals” (Dorff 29) but as vital parts of a community, who have obligations to each other as well as to God. Moreover, the community is crucial to the performance of duties that are essential to the religious and social life of Jews. Judaism promotes efforts concerning social and legal justice, education and care for the poor. All of these activities need to be carried out collectively and therefore require a committed group of people rather than separate individuals (Dorff 29). Furthermore, Elliot Dorff explains that “the community is not only important for practical purposes, [...] it also has theological import. Israel stood at Sinai as a community, and it is as a group that they made the covenant with

God” (29). Jews celebrate the significance of community across families, generations and countries. They all have a duty to care for and look after each other before God. This sentiment becomes even more significant when one considers the Jewish people’s history of persecution.

The term ‘community’ has a different connotation in the United States and in other Western societies. There, group membership is usually a conscious, voluntary decision and can be decided against or revoked at any time. Americans are even free to give up their citizenship and become part of another nation if they choose to. In contrast, Jewish law states that once somebody is born to a Jewish woman or has converted to Judaism, they are Jewish for the rest of their lives (Dorff 29). This means that the membership in the Jewish community comes with life-long responsibilities and duties, which are the backbone of this tightknit and reliable environment. Even Jewish intellectuals who are critical of Jewish American life admitted the merits of the Jewish community experience. Norman Podhoretz praises the “elaborate network of social, welfare, and educational institutions” and “the generosity [the Jewish community] had consistently shown toward the oppressed and the homeless whenever called upon to do so” (308). Even the often criticized Jewish middle-class of the 1950s managed to incorporate “the traditions of communal responsibility and social service” (Podhoretz 308) in their otherwise Americanized lives.

It is precisely this sense of community that is at the very core of the concept of *menshlichkeit*. The term stands for “the moral imperative of man’s responsibility to his fellow man” (Knopp, *Trial*, 7). According to the concept of *menshlichkeit*, people are “seen as neither depraved nor noble, neither hopelessly fallen nor all good”, but “every good person should strive to become a mensh” (Lyons 67), which is usually a challenging and painful process. Furthermore, there is an underlying assumption that people are essentially innocent and when they are presented with a choice between good and evil, they will eventually “always choose what is morally and ethically right” (Knopp, *Trial*, 6). *Menshlichkeit* can be understood as a moral code that is not just a mere suggestion of how to act, but rather a law that prevents human life from dissolving into suffering and chaos (Knopp, *Trial* 7).

There are specific “values embodied in the moral code: the belief that a man has the right to fulfillment, the affirmation of gentleness and repudiation of violence [and] the assumption of responsibility of man for his fellow man” (Knopp, *Trial*, 15). It is the moral obligation of Jews to embody these principles and thereby improve their standing in the world, which will ultimately stir them towards the path of moral redemption (Knopp, *Ways*, 68). Moreover, this

code must be reflected in their actions, which should bring about positive changes in the world (Knopp, *Ways*, 69).

The concept of *menshlichkeit* is not a fixed law, written out in Jewish scripture, but its place of origin is rooted there. Léon Wurmser detects the origin of *menshlichkeit*, which he prefers to call “Mitmenschlichkeit,” in the so-called *derech erez*. It is a nineteenth-century interpretation of the Torah by the German rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch with the full title “Torah im derech erez” (Wurmser 407). The literal translation of *derech erez* is “the way of the land,” but it received the meaning of “‘ethics, morality, [and] right behavior.’ The best translation in Yiddish (and hence also in German) is *Menschlichkeit*” (Wurmser 407). Wurmser suggests that being a mensh requires an “ethical relatedness to the other person” and a relationship of “deep reciprocity” (407).

Josephine Knopp sees the origin of the concept of *menshlichkeit* in the *Ethics of the Fathers*, a Talmudic text which deals with the moral and ethical principles of Judaism. In the *Ethics of the Fathers* “the universe has been described as supported on the three pillars: Torah, service to God, and responsibility to man” (Knopp, *Ways*, 69). Furthermore, the study of the Torah according to the *Ethics of the Fathers* does not only include an understanding of Jewish morality and how to serve God, but also acts of kindness within the community (Knopp, *Ways*, 69). Hence, “man's obligation to man emerges as the principal moral foundation of the universe” (Knopp, *Ways*, 69), which is a point of view especially evident in the work of Bernard Malamud.

3.2.1.) Bernard Malamud, the Author of *Menschlichkeit*

There are several recurring themes in Malamud's fiction: Compassion towards those in need and a general concern for humanity are at the center of all of his works. Together with Malamud's emphasis on actions that he perceives as morally right, all of these characteristics can be summed up by the concept of *menshlichkeit* (Knopp 16). Moreover, the Jewish protagonists' personal and spiritual growth is irrevocably tied to their willingness to assume responsibility for their fellow Jews. Only by recognizing and accepting their duty as members of the Jewish community, can they connect with their true self. Malamud's heroes experience suffering through identity struggles as a productive force that makes them realize the importance of the Jewish moral codex of *menshlichkeit* (Ahokas 57). Malamud is concerned with his characters' development from man to *mensh*, which is usually a slow and painful

process (Knopp, *Ways*, 79) It involves the rediscovery of compassion and selflessness as the major prerequisites for a meaningful connection to other people. He “offers the ethical code of *menshlichkeit* as the positive definition of Jewishness in his works” (Ahokas 60), which is compatible with his secular world view, while at the same time also a celebration of his Jewish heritage. Malamud himself felt a strong sense of responsibility due to his understanding of his occupation as an author; he said that “the purpose of the writer [...] is to keep civilization from destroying itself” (Wershba 7). That statement was recorded in an interview in 1958 and Malamud spent the rest of his life working towards that goal.

4.) Jewish and American Concepts of Masculinity

The following chapter discusses masculinity as a product of social practice. It focuses primarily on the power relations between different kinds of masculinities and the influence of national identity on their construction. American and Jewish types of masculinity will be introduced and later on used as points of reference for the analysis of Bernard Malamud's and Philip Roth's protagonists.

4.1.) A Theoretical Approach to the Concept of Masculinity

The subsequent section relies heavily on R.W. Connell's article "The Social Organization of Masculinity" (2001). It will be the primary source for the theorization of the concept of masculinity throughout the thesis. Connell's model of power relations between masculinities will also inform the analysis of masculinities displayed in Malamud's and Roth's short stories.

4.1.1.) Masculinity as a Product of Social Practice

There is no universal or coherent understanding of the term 'masculinity' and therefore no generalized scientific concept which could offer a comprehensive theory that includes all of its manifestations (Connell 30). In this thesis, however, Connell's characterization of gender as "social practice" (34) and "masculinity and femininity [as] configurations of gender practice" (34) will be used as the standard definition. Connell further states that "gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body. [...] Gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does not determine the social" (Connell 34). Hence, Connell's definition suggests that masculinity is an outcome of social relationships and a response to specific situations which require social practice to be a space of creativity and inventiveness (34). This concurs with Emmanuel Reynaud's theory that men and women "do not exist in a natural state, outside social relationships" (136-137), but that who they are is a product of their social exchanges and interdependence.

Moreover, Western society's understanding of gender is "inherently relational. 'Masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'" (Connell 31). However, this perceived dichotomy of male vs. female does not lead to useful outcomes, which is why R.W. Connell suggests the following:

Rather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behavioral average, a norm on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives. 'Masculinity' [...] is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (33-34)

The attempt at a definition of masculinity in this thesis always refers to European and American social and cultural structures. These societies are organized according to patriarchic principles and therefore based on “the overall subordination of women and dominance of men” (Connell 36). Nevertheless, when gender is seen as a social practice, it also stands in relation to other concepts such as class, nationality and ethnicity. Therefore, the analysis of masculinity must also explore the power relations between dominant and subordinate forms of masculinity (Connell 37).

4.1.2.) Power Relations between Masculinities

It is important to acknowledge that there are many different kinds of masculinities that stand in relation to each other. In order to get a deeper understanding of these relationships, factors such as class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion need to be taken into account (Connell 38). There are various dichotomies that describe the organization of a society such as “masculine-feminine, strong-weak, and dominant-submissive” and these can also be used to identify and describe different forms of masculinities (Clatterbaugh 205). The concept of hegemonic masculinity is crucial to this undertaking. It is a gender studies variation of “Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of class relations, [which] refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life” (Connell 38). This kind of dominant masculinity can be seen as “a standard [...] against which other masculinities compete or define themselves” (Nagel 247). Moreover, “hegemonic masculinity often stands in contrast to other class-, race- and sexuality-based masculinities” (Nagel 247), which is why these power relations must be examined.

A relational approach to the study of masculinities has the benefit of producing comprehensive results that are closer to reality. In an individualistic society such as the United States, talking about various distinct masculinities involves the danger of merely interpreting them as “alternative lifestyles [and] a matter of consumer choice” (Connell 38). Hegemony, and the dominance it implies, organizes societies and creates relationships of superiority and subordination within that framework. The dominant position of heterosexual men in contrast to the subordinate position of homosexual men in American and European society is a crucial

example of such power relations. From the dominant, hence hegemonic, point of view, homosexuality is associated with femininity and therefore a reason for exclusion (Connell 39-40). Moreover, ethnicity is also an influencing factor in determining the dynamics between different masculinities (Connell 41). R.W. Connell uses the term 'marginalization' "to refer to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups" (Connell 42). However, "terms such as 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'marginalized masculinities' name not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships" (Connell 42). Therefore, who is considered dominant or marginalized is always fluid and historically as well as culturally contingent.

4.1.3.) Masculinity and National Identity

The construction of masculinities always happens within a specific cultural and national framework. In Western societies, such as the United States and Great Britain the interaction of various national identities shapes the construction of masculinity and vice versa. The emergence of different forms of masculinities "have influenced the very construction of national identity itself, potentially leading to a renegotiation of what it means to be English, British or American" (Horlacher 3). Due to their mutual influence, the two categories 'masculinity' and 'national identity' become essentially inseparable (Horlacher 3) and will be treated accordingly in the analysis of Malamud's and Roth's representations of masculinity in the United States.

In order to discuss the concept of national identity, the term 'nation' needs to be clarified. A nation, according to Benedict Anderson "is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). He further states that the nation "is imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Moreover, this national community is often organized as a state, which relates back to the issues of hegemony and gender. According to R. W. Connell, the state is "a masculine institution" (35), which "remain[s] dominated by men" (Nagel 248). Thus, the spaces where national identity is actively created are still controlled by men.

Hegemonic masculinity in the United States is strongly tied to terms such as "honour [sic!], patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty" (Nagel 251-252), which are linked to the idea of the

nation as a space that needs to be defended by the male body. A recent study about “Gender Asymmetry in the Construction of American National Identity” (2017) by Laura Van Berkel, Ludwin Molina and Shahana Mukherjee shows that national identity in the United States is still “constructed as a masculine space, which may exclude or devalue non-stereotypically masculine ideas and ways of being, thereby privileging men and/or masculinity” (360). Furthermore, the study also supports the assumption that maleness is overrepresented in the perception of American national identity (363). These results show that an examination of American masculinities cannot be conducted without paying attention to national identity.

The American literary scene in the post-World War II period was a space where ideas of masculinity and national identity were reaffirmed as well as renegotiated (Horlacher 4). Works from that era discuss “the strained relations between racially and ethnically dominant groups on the one hand and immigrant groups on the other, but also the ways in which ‘subaltern’ masculinities are often deeply informed by the national liberation struggles [...]” (Horlacher 6). Malamud’s and Roth’s short story collections are part of this postwar literary production and are concerned with Jewish and American manifestations of masculinity and national identity.

4.2.) Jewish and American Masculinities

The dominant form of American middle-class masculinity in the twentieth century has its origin in the so-called “renaissance of manliness” that happened in the “late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (Nagel 244). Anthony Rotundo organizes the values and norms associated with hegemonic masculinity during that time into three groups. He calls them the “Masculine Achiever”, who combines the attributes persistence, independence and competitiveness, the “Masculine Primitive”, who shows courage, strength and virility, and the “Christian Gentleman”, who is associated with the traits of willpower, restraint and discipline (Nagel 245). By 1900, “a massive nationwide health and athletics craze was in full swing as men compulsively attempted to develop manly physiques as a way of demonstrating that they possessed the interior virtues of manhood” (Kimmel, *Manhood*, 120). This was also the time when anxieties and insecurities about the feminization of the American culture were prevailing in men’s consciousness (Kimmel, *Manhood*, 120), which forced them “to rediscover [their] masculinity” (Kimmel, *Manhood* 135). Moreover, Michael Kimmel adds that “homophobia [...] is the animating condition of the dominant definition of masculinity in America” (*Homophobia* 135), which suggests that the definition of hegemonic masculinity in

the United States is essentially “a defensive effort to prevent [men from] being emasculated” (Kimmel, *Homophobia*, 135). The denouncement of supposedly feminine features and the fear of emasculation are characteristic for the perception of American normative masculinity and play an important role in defining Jewish American masculinities.

The time period between 1880 and 1920 was characterized by heavy immigration to the United States, especially from Eastern European Jewish communities. The male immigrants who entered the country during that time came “at the height of what historians have labeled ‘boy culture’, which emphasized the importance of allowing boys a period of wildness [...] as a necessary part of their development into men” (Rosenberg 22). The turn of the century society’s goal was to prevent the further feminization of American boys (Kimmel, *Manhood*, 181). Sports were the chosen solution for regaining the physical appearance of the prototypical American man and his virtues (Kimmel, *Manhood*, 137). The values associated with this culture favored “bodily attributes and physical prowess, courage and daring, resistance to adult authority, violence, and autonomy” (Rosenberg 25). In contrast, the Jewish ideal of masculinity was characterized by the so-called “mind over muscle” paradigm, which “emphasized intellect and combative debate” (Grinberg 128). As a result of these gender stereotypes, male Jewish Americans were excluded from the construction of hegemonic masculinity, which happened on the football field or in the streets. Moreover, “American anti-intellectualism and xenophobia” (Brod 91) were the backbone of a culture that linked intellectuality to “masculine deficiency, since the scholar was the opposite of the virile male athlete or working-class laborer” (Grinberg 132). The stereotypes that were derived from this dichotomy of American athleticism versus Jewish intellectualism were the cliché of the ‘incompetent bookworm’ or the myth of Jewish sexual impotence (Brod 91).

The image of the ideal American man shifted in the post-World War II period, which was characterized by a nation-wide suburbanization that also included the Jewish American community. All of a sudden middle-class, suburban fathers whose income provided for a comfortable family life were the most desirable role-models of American masculinity (Kimmel, *Manhood*, 227). However, this only added to existing male anxieties when they “discovered what happened to men who failed, especially the sons of men who failed as breadwinners and fathers. They became homosexual, they became juvenile delinquents, they became Communists – soft, spineless dupes of a foreign power, who were incapable of standing up for themselves” (Kimmel, *Manhood*, 237). At his core, the ideal American man still had to be a strong heterosexual man with an able body and an independent mind.

The new-found security in US middle-class suburbia did not prevent Jewish men from “[denying] their own cultural traditions and seek[ing] power vis-a-vis other men” (Brod 92), instead of forging their own complex identities as Jewish Americans. They deal with conflicting expectations from their Jewish background on the one hand, and their American environment on the other hand. According to Debra Shostak, this conflict is articulated in “two related ways. [...] In ethical terms, the Jewish man must choose how to behave as a Jew; in ontological terms, he must understand who a Jew is in relation to non-Jews” (Shostak 113). These two challenges led to a variety of configurations of Jewish American masculinity in the late twentieth century.

4.3.) Jewish (American) Masculinities: Between Stereotypes and Reality

In the first half of the twentieth century, Jewish American masculinities were predominantly shaped by “discourses on race and gender” that were interpreting Jewish men as manifestations of the so-called “other” (Grinberg 129). Many stereotypes were informed by “anti-Semitic myths about the inferiority and perversity of the Jewish mind/body complex” (Davison 4). However, “Jewish masculine norms were always fluid” (Grinberg 129) and therefore articulated in various ways. The development of Jewish American masculinities can be seen as a “reaction to mainstream American gender ideals” (Grinberg 131). The following chapter will deal with the stereotypical concepts of the feminized, the rabbinic, and the muscular Jew. This selection does by no means suggest that these are the only representations of stereotypical Jewish American masculinity, but they are the most commonly known. Despite their stereotypical quality, they are rooted in actual Jewish tradition and American history.

4.3.1.) Feminized Jews

Labels such as the ‘nice Jewish boy’ and the ‘intellectual Jew’ refer to qualities that are contradictions to the prototypical American male. They hint at feminized versions of masculinity, which is a term often used in the scholarship about stereotypical versions of Jewish American masculinity. They do not comply with hegemonic American masculinity and are therefore equated with being female or homosexual.

The primary physical reason for portraying Jewish men as feminine is the tradition of circumcision within the Jewish community. Jews were ethnic minorities everywhere they

went and “circumcision became a visible mark of Jewish difference from the norm” (Shostak 114). This led to the myth of the “damaged male body” with a “female essence” (Davison 6) and gave way to descriptions of “the Jewish man as a sort of woman” (Boyarin 3) and as an “effeminate [homosexual]” (Davison 6). Fueled by anti-Semitic sentiments that emerged in the early twentieth century, “Jews and homosexuals were often equated as ‘sexual invert,’ alternatively described as perverted, effeminate, abnormal, mentally diseased, immature or intellectually gifted” (Grinberg 131). All of these qualities were supposed to hint at the “Jewish man’s lack of virility” (Köhler 147), which was considered the most prominent distinction to the proper American man.

A variation of the feminized Jew is the so-called ‘nice Jewish boy’. This character type refers to Jewish men who are trying to blend into American middle-class society by showing no visible signs of Jewishness. Their behavior is motivated by a fear of anti-Semitism and exclusion from mainstream society (Köhler 146). Moreover, the ‘nice Jewish boy’ becomes the epitome of feminized manhood by displaying his “bookishness, his unworldliness, and his rejection of carnality and violence” (Shostak 114).

The ‘nice Jewish boy’ as well as an even more well-known stereotype, namely the ‘intellectual Jew’ are assumed to be inherently nonviolent and also non-threatening (Rosenberg 1). This stereotype is rooted in the notion that Jewish men “tend to be more verbal and smarter than other men,” therefore they “do not fight, they talk” (Rosenberg 1). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a group that became known as the “New York intellectuals” took the stereotype of the intellectual Jew and turned it into a battleground of Jewish self-exploration. They “refashioned what Jewishness in America could mean by embodying a vision, or ideology, of secular Jewish masculinity” (Grinberg 128) and “while multiple constructs of Jewish masculinity coexisted, one mode of gender expression dominated for the New York intellectuals: that of the argumentative and combative intellectual” (Grinberg 129). They succeeded in re-negotiating the characteristics of this old stereotype and eventually made it their own.

Even though the model of the intellectual Jew has been exaggerated to the point of a cultural cliché, it is rooted in the “Jewish ideal of a gentle, timid, and studious male” (Boyarin 2). Daniel Boyarin asserts that these qualities are “deeply rooted in traditional Jewish culture, going back at least in part to the Babylonian Talmud” (2). However, these character traits have been misinterpreted by American mainstream society and were never meant to make the Jewish male appear unattractive or emasculated (Boyarin 2). In addition, Harry Brod suggests

that the concept of the intellectual Jewish male is also “a defense mechanism against attacks on Jewish men for not conforming to dominant, more brawny standards of masculinity” (91). Moreover, “this sense of self-feminization was one of the traditional ways in which male Jews defined themselves over and against the gentile world” (Boyarin 212). This shows that some men within the Jewish American community were actively seeking out manifestations of masculinity that differed from the American prototype, even though it rendered them “feminine” in the eyes of mainstream society.

4.3.2.) The Rabbinic Jew

The ‘rabbinic Jew’ ties in with the concept of the ‘intellectual Jew’ and adds a religious quality to the stereotype. Religious scholars are held in high esteem in the Jewish community and hold a significant amount of power. Their position exemplifies the patriarchic organization of Judaism that had the exclusion of women from the study of Torah and Talmud at its core for a long time. Daniel Boyarin suggests that this exclusion fulfills “the functions that physical domination secures in various other cultural formations” (156). Moreover, it led to a social system in which the Rabbis “hold power over the actual practices and pleasures of female bodies” (Boyarin 154), which left female Jews in a position of forced ignorance and subordination.

According to Jewish tradition, the rabbinic male is “gentle, peaceful, and nurturing” (Boyarin 162), but most importantly, he is also a Torah scholar (Boyarin 156). The study of religious scripture is the most prestigious and most valued occupation in the Jewish culture (Boyarin 179) and exclusively reserved for men. Historical Judaism made women “experience themselves as impure, dangerous, and devalued through these exclusions” (Boyarin 153), which led to a strict gender division within the community.

The position of the rabbinic male as a Jewish American is, therefore, ambiguous: On the one hand, he depicts the ideal Jewish male and can be understood as a representative of hegemonic Jewish masculinity who holds power over the women in his community. On the other hand, in the broader context of America mainstream society, he is still the bookish and intellectual, feminized “other”, who has a subordinate position in relation to the dominant version of American masculinity.

4.3.3.) The Muscular Jew (or Jewboy)

According to Warren Rosenberg, fiction writers such as Philip Roth as well as Jewish scholars such as Daniel Boyarin have all contributed to a definition of Jewish masculinity that is based on a general repression and rejection of violence (4). This assumption also feeds into the stereotypes of the ‘nice Jewish boy’, ‘intellectual Jew’ or ‘rabbinic Jew’, because “a people whose highest aspirations are bound up in the study of the Torah, [...], are certain to exhibit ambivalence about physicality and violence” (Rosenberg 21). There is, however, a counter model to these non-violent, gentle and intellectual stereotypes of Jewish masculinity, the so-called “muscular Jew”. There were “movements to reshape the Jewish body through intensive physical training. The belief was that one could not be a full citizen of the body politic [...] unless one had a healthy and strong body” (Rosenberg 21). In this section, the muscular Jew will be equated with the concept of the “Jewboy”, who shows similar features.

Sports and self-defense organizations were part of creating a new, athletic and muscular identity that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century as a reaction to growing anti-Semitism and xenophobia in the United States. Until World War II, especially working-class Jews were a crucial element of the American boxing scene. In the interwar period, Jewish immigrants made up the largest ethnic group of boxers in all weight classes (Norwood 167). “Their prowess in the ring helped undermine hoary stereotypes of Jewish males’ physical incapacity, cowardice, and effeminacy [...]” (Norwood 167). These stereotypes were so firmly established in the minds of gentile America that Jews were even deemed unfit for military service (Norwood 167).

However, the ‘muscular Jew’ or ‘Jewboy’, who “does not concern himself with moral nicety” (Shostak 113), tries his best to refute this cliché. His “aim is to display masculine power” (Köhler 146) and “to conquer American soil on its own terms- to satisfy desires, to be as big as he might be, to eat, earn, and fornicate” (Shostak 113). He is the one who could have challenged the dominant American male in terms of physicality and character. However, “American Jews developed a greater sense of security after World War II” (Norwood 188) and “social mobility and suburbanization removed many Jews from dangerous urban neighborhoods, where they had lived in close proximity to gentile youth who sought out physical confrontations with them” (Norwood 188). Anti-Semitism declined significantly in the postwar period, due to the horrors of the Holocaust, and the creation of the state of Israel replaced the picture of the muscular Jew, the working-class American boxer, with the even tougher image of the Israeli soldier (Norwood 188).

4.4.) Man as *Mensch*

The concept of the *mensch* (Yiddish: *mentsh*) stands for the morally good and upright Jewish man and is the product of an old Eastern European Jewish tradition, which dates back at least fifteen hundred years (Rosenberg 1). A *mensch* is a person, who adheres to the ethics of *menshlichkeit*, which demands of a person to be “compassionate, socially responsible, intellectually dedicated, [...] man revering and life-affirming” (Landis in Rosenberg 1-2). Moreover, Daniel Boyarin adds the quality of “edelkayt” (English: nobility) to the concept. However, the Jewish implementation of the term nobility was not understood in the sense of the romantic hero, who is defined by “bravery and courtliness”, but in the sense of the Jewish *mensch*, who is characterized by “delicacy and gentleness” (Boyarin 36).

Warren Rosenberg uses a quote by Joseph C. Landis in his book about Jewish masculinity and violence called “Legacy of Rage”, which describes the significance of the concept to the Jewish people:

To [the Jewish] mind it was wholly different from and greatly superior to both the Christian ideal and that other ideal so often manifest in Western history, the ideal of muscled, aggressive manliness, which admires force and is basically suspicious of man, mistrustful of intellect as ‘impractical’ and of art as ‘effete’ and of social melioration as ‘visionary’. The admonition ‘Be a man’ is very far removed from the exhortation ‘Be a mensch’. (2)

The two ideas of being ‘a man’ and being ‘a *mensch*’, which obviously stand for two conflicting ideals of masculinity, are central to the aim of this thesis. Man and *mensch* are pitted against each other as two irreconcilable versions of masculinity, the one representing the American, the other the Jewish ideal. Boyarin identifies the Westernization process of immigrant Jews in the United States as one of the major reasons why the ideal of the *mensch* was abandoned by the Jewish American community (37). “The prototypical *mentsh* as husband, devoted, reliable, gentle, and emotionally warm” was not exactly the dominant American man defined by athletic and sexual prowess (Boyarin 55).

Furthermore, it is important to mention that the “*mentsh*, as a cultural ideal, proposes an ideal of person that is purportedly genderless, a norm to which both genders have to adhere” (Kaminsky in Boyarin 36). Yet, the concept is primarily related to Jewish men and their conduct. The reasons for that can be traced back to the inherently patriarchal structure of Judaism, which defines men as the bearers of religious knowledge and power.

4.5.) Masculinity in Roth

Philip Roth's literary obsession with the male psyche and sexuality are generally known to Roth readers and scholars. Roth himself readily admits that the lives of men are his primary subject (Shostak 111). Indeed, "his concern with questions of gender has been almost wholly confined to the trials of manhood" (Shostak 111). Roth's depiction of Jewish American manhood in the twentieth century is, on the one hand, influenced by "Western images and fantasies of 'the feminized Jew'" (Davison 1) and, on the other hand, by a sentiment of defiance (Greenberg 500). Second or third generation Jewish American writers "feel that [their] manhood depends on violating the taboos that [their] father[s]- too busy working, too puritan, or too hemmed in and timid- never dared to defy" (Greenberg 500). This observation is definitely applicable to Roth, whose major concerns were breaking with cultural taboos and exposing the hypocrisy of his parents' generation.

Roth's exploration of post-Holocaust masculine Jewish American identity is praised by many literary scholars for its relentless examination of middle-class Jewry and its critical condition in the aftermath of World War II (Davison 22). However, his treatment of Jewish American masculinity is restricted to "narratives of heterosexual pursuit" (Shostak 112). His characters are struggling to be both American and Jewish and are searching for ways to articulate their masculinity. "Their quest to choose a path toward self-positioning in postmodern US-American culture [...] stimulates a search for concepts of masculinity beyond any either-or paradigm" (Köhler 155) and causes them to realize that a choice between American man and Jewish *mensch* cannot be made.

Moreover, Roth's dysfunctional and straining experiences with women have a significant influence on all of his works. Debrah Shostak examines the relationship of his male characters with women:

Roth's male characters project their fears upon women who seem to threaten their performance of masculinity. Where a female character in Roth's early work appears flattest, she is presented almost exclusively through the male character's point of view, if not literally in a first-person voice, then as mediated through the focalized consciousness of the male protagonist. That point of view moves the female characters towards objectification when Roth's men express their anxieties, even hysteria, in measuring themselves against the myth of masculinity. (112)

This is also the reason why in Roth's narratives, sexual expression and even a display of sexual aggression are valued for their supposedly liberating powers (Davison 22). This

emphasis on male sexuality can be interpreted as a desire for the domination of women as a means of strengthening man's standing within mainstream society.

Roth's literary career took off in the 1950s, when Jewish Americans gained economic influence and wealth in the United States and political power through the creation of the state of Israel (Davison 163). "Given this period of growing Jewish power, one might imagine that internalization of the feminized Jew would fade as a critical issue of male Jewish identity. As Roth's work suggests, however, the gender components of both racial and religious Jewishness remained for him a living subject" (Davison 163). In his autobiographical novel *Patrimony: A True Story* (1991), Roth gives his opinion on what it means to be a Jewish American man and shows a deep ambivalence towards the topic:

We're the sons appalled by violence, with no capacity for inflicting physical pain, useless at beating and clubbing, unfit to pulverize even the most deserving enemy, though not necessarily without turbulence, temper, even ferocity. We have teeth as the cannibals do, but they are there, embedded in our jaws, the better to help us articulate. When we lay waste, when we efface, it isn't with raging fists or ruthless schemes or insane sprawling violence but with words, our brains, with mentality. (159)

His description sounds similar to a definition of the feminized, intellectual Jew. It seems as if Roth is condemning his Jewish environment for turning him into a non-violent, gentle and witty young man. Roth's upbringing prevented him from becoming a 'real' American man and throughout his career he never managed to make peace with that or at least not through his literary work.

5.) Objects of Analysis

This chapter offers an introduction to Malamud's and Roth's short story collections. The focus lies on the content of the short stories and the authors' overall approach to dealing with the Holocaust and questions of Jewish identity. This provides the foundations for the more detailed analysis carried out in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Before focusing on the short story collections, it is important to discuss the role of the Holocaust in Jewish American writing of the 1950s, when the mass murder of the Jewish people made its way into Jewish American literature and the American consciousness in general. However, "American-Jewish writers have tended to avoid evoking the Holocaust directly and to repudiate the nihilism that it implicitly suggests" (Lyons 76). Neither Malamud nor Roth use the word Holocaust or Shoah in their short stories or refer directly to the horrors of the concentration camps. Shimon Susskind in Malamud's short story *The Last Mohican*, for example, "ran away from Germany" (127) and Isabella in *Lady of the Lake* has "a bluish line of distorted numbers" (107) tattooed on her skin. Roth refers to the "European theater" (162) where "Nazi bastards" (180) were killed in *Defender of the Faith* and talks about the "persecution of the Jewish people" (262) in *Eli, the Fanatic*. In addition, Philip Roth has always refused to "embrace the Holocaust as a pillar of identity" (Rothberg 65) for the Jewish people, which does not mean that he did not take it seriously, "rather, Roth seems to be saying, the more seriously we take the Holocaust as history, the more important it is to distinguish the multiple legacies – comic as well as tragic, everyday [sic!] as well as extreme – that define the present" (Rothberg 65).

Both authors make World War II and the Holocaust a crucial part of the narrative but never the sole focus of their stories. To them, these events are not all-encompassing or identity-defining tragedies for their Jewish American protagonists, but (often painful) reminders of their heritage, constantly looming in the background and occasionally materializing in the form of Holocaust survivors. As the six selected short stories will show, even Jewish Americans who were not directly affected by the Holocaust cannot evade its evidence whether they are in New York or its suburbs, the Army camps of Missouri or post-World War II Italy.

5.1.) Bernard Malamud's *The Magic Barrel* (1958)

All of the thirteen short stories in *The Magic Barrel* are a testimony to Malamud's fascination with human nature. His preferred method of character development is to let his protagonists suffer as a result of their personal shortcomings before they can truly find themselves. However, as long as they extend compassion and empathy to those around them, they will always be deemed worthy of redemption by the author. Malamud's characters often have to endure harsh living conditions or face the most unfortunate events, which makes his short story collection "an affirmation of man's ability to realize himself, even in the face of deprivation and disaster" (Wershba 14).

Malamud's stories are full of "unequal encounters between unlikely counterparts" (Davis 160) that bring about change in his protagonists. "Above all, what interests Malamud is that 'impossible demand' becomes 'the imperative debt' [...]" (Davis 161). In *The Last Mohican*, when Sussman asks Fidelman for a suit, he expects his protagonist to grant the request – despite the fact that Susskind stole from Fidelman – just as much as he expects soon-to-be rabbi Finkle to love a so-called fallen or damaged woman in *The Magic Barrel*. What at first seems impossible to achieve for Malamud's protagonists will in the end feel like an obligation to their fellow Jews. This feeling is a direct result of Malamud's moral code, characterized by compassion and *menshlichkeit*. Malamud's timeless and universal portrayal of Jewish Americans earned him praise from many critics and scholars but was criticized by Philip Roth. Roth took issue with the depiction of Jews in Malamud's short stories for their lack of "relatability", in his essay *Writing American Fiction* (1961). Nevertheless, Roth knew Malamud's work well enough to see what is at the core of Malamud's, if not contemporary than at least timeless, short stories. "What it is to be human, to be humane, is his subject: connection, indebtedness, responsibility, these are his moral concerns" (Roth, WAF). And in depicting these human qualities, Malamud succeeds throughout his short story collection, even in the eyes of one of his most candid critics.

The short stories chosen from Malamud's collection *The Magic Barrel* include *The Lady of the Lake*, *The Last Mohican*, and the title story *The Magic Barrel*. The following plot summaries are meant to be a foundation for the subsequent analysis.

The Lady of the Lake

The main character Henry Levin travels to Italy on a quest for adventure and love. He immediately changes his name to Henry R. Freeman because he feels that his name and his

Jewishness are an unwelcome stigma that in the past prevented him from living the life he deserves. However, the repudiation of his Jewishness will ultimately lead to his downfall, which makes Malamud's story so tragically ironic. Freeman finds the woman of his dreams, Isabella del Dongo, who gives him several chances to reveal his Jewishness to her, all of which he passes up. Meanwhile, Isabella struggles with lies of her own. She tells Freeman that she is part of the aristocratic del Dongo family while her actual name is Isabella della Seta. She is the daughter of the del Dongo estate's caretaker and most importantly a survivor of the Holocaust. In the end, she cannot accept Freeman's romantic advances because she treasures her Jewish heritage too much. She disappears before Freeman can tell her the truth about himself.

The Last Mohican

Arthur Fidelman comes to Italy to study the work of the painter Giotto. In Rome he meets the Holocaust survivor Shimon Susskind. The interaction between the two men is a nuisance to Fidelman because Susskind is an unwanted reminder of his own Jewishness. The story begins when Susskind steals the opening chapter of Fidelman's manuscript on Giotto, which sends Fidelman on a tumultuous quest through Rome. On several trips through Rome's Jewish ghetto Fidelman passes by a Synagogue and a Jewish cemetery, which confronts him with the horrors of the Holocaust and the suffering of his people. This final confrontation serves as a reminder that he is part of the Jewish community and that he, therefore, has a responsibility to his fellow Jews. In the end, he forgives Susskind for stealing the manuscript.

The Magic Barrel

Leo Finkle is a 27-year-old rabbinical student from New York and a soon-to-be ordained rabbi. In the hope of enhancing his chances of finding a congregation, he enlists the services of the poor marriage broker Pinye Salzman, in order to find himself a wife. Although Leo finds flaws in all of the candidates Salzman presents to him, he nevertheless agrees to a meeting with the teacher Lilly Hirschorn. She insists on calling Leo "rabbi", which irritates him to such an extent that he burst out into a confession about his relationship with God: He feels no connection and is not sure if he loves God the way he is supposed to. As a result of this conversation, Leo falls into a depression. This, however, does not prevent Salzman from his quest for a prospective wife for Leo. When Salzman provides him with an envelope of pictures of potential candidates, it also contains a photograph of Salzman's estranged daughter Stella, who works as a prostitute because she could not stand her parents' poverty. Leo falls in

love with her picture and demands a meeting. At first, Salzman is reluctant to introduce the two, but eventually he gives in and arranges a date. Finkle is determined to save Stella and thereby find his own way back to God. In the end, there is a suspicion that this was Salzman's plan all along.

5.2.) Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories* (1959)

All the protagonists in Roth's short story collection *Goodbye, Columbus* share the same anxieties and insecurities concerning the question of what it means to be Jewish and American in the postwar era. "The very settings and locales of *Goodbye, Columbus* emphasize the displacement, vulnerability, and sense of culpability that create such unease in Roth's early characters" (Aarons 11). His characters view their Jewishness as an obstacle standing in the way of being fully immersed in the American middle-class and as a stigma that prevents them from re-inventing themselves in the midst of social and cultural mobility in post-World War II America (Aarons 10). "[T]his tension, this push and pull between 'Jew or not' makes projected Jewish identity the single most uncompromising antagonist against which Roth's characters most contend" (Aarons 10), which means that they are mostly fighting themselves and a part of their identity that they will never be able to shake off completely. Roth is one of the harshest critics of middle-class American Jews in the 1950s and their corrupted values. Silvey writes that "the collection reveals Roth to be a social critic who is both bemused at, and cynical of those American Jews who have abandoned the morals of Judaism in favor of the more convenient morals of American individualism" (60), which is painfully obvious in the texts chosen from Roth's short story collection *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*. This collection includes *Defender of the Faith*, *Epstein* and *Eli, the Fanatic*. The following plot summaries are meant to be a foundation for the subsequent analysis.

Defender of the Faith

Nathan Marx is a World War II veteran, stationed at a training camp in Missouri. When the Jewish trainee Sheldon Grossbart notices that Marx is also Jewish, he starts asking him several favors, which leave Marx conflicted. First, Grossbart asks if he and his Jewish comrades Fishbein and Halpern could attend the Jewish service on Friday nights, which is also the time for cleaning the barracks. Marx grants the request, but watches their behavior at the service closely. It appears that only Halpern is a devout Jew. Then, Grossbart stirs trouble

when he writes a letter to his congressman about the lack of kosher food at the army camp, but pretends it was written by his father. Grossbart deceives Marx once more by asking for a weekend pass to attend his aunt's Seder dinner, which, too, turns out to be a lie. When Grossbart asks Marx to help him stay in the U.S. instead of being deployed to the Pacific, Marx refuses but later finds out that Grossbart managed to get stationed in the U.S. without his help. Angered by Grossbart's behavior, Marx changes his orders, which causes Grossbart to accuse Marx of anti-Semitism and self-hatred. Marx is concerned about his people's reputation in the army and uses this as a justification for his actions.

Epstein

Lou Epstein is the 59-years old owner of a paper bag company, living in New York with his wife Goldie and his daughter Sheila. He is repulsed by both women in his life. His wife does no longer resemble the beautiful girl he once married and his daughter turned out to be an unattractive social activist. One night, Lou witnesses his nephew Michael having intercourse with the pretty neighbor's daughter Linda Kaufman, which does not only trigger a life crisis in Lou but also results in him having an affair with Linda's mother Ida. When Goldie discovers her husband's rash, which he developed as a result of his affair with Ida, she throws a fit and demands a divorce. The next day the entire family ignores and humiliates Lou until he leaves the house. When he suffers a heart attack at Ida Kaufman's house, the paramedic tells Goldie that sixty-year-old men should not act like boys but he will be fine if he continues to lead a normal life. On the way to the hospital Goldie is determined to forget anything ever disrupted their normal life together and plans the rest of Lou's life accordingly.

Eli, the Fanatic

The lawyer Eli Peck lives in the suburb Woodenton, not far from New York. He is appointed by the Jewish community to talk to the headmaster of the newly opened Yeshiva, Mr. Tzuref, since the Americanized Jewish community feels disturbed by the traditional clothes of the Orthodox Jew who is employed by Mr. Tzuref. Eli urges him to relocate the school, because there is no space for them in the suburb. His pregnant wife and the Jewish community pressure Eli to get rid of this disturbance, which threatens their peaceful co-existence with suburban Americans. The fact that Mr. Tzuref, his employee and the children of the Yeshiva are all Holocaust refugees further complicates Eli's task. Thinking that he can solve the situation by giving the man one of his old suits so he would not look like an Eastern European Jew anymore when he comes into town, Eli, in turn, receives the traditional Jewish clothes the

man wore before. Upon seeing himself in the mirror in the man's old clothes, Eli has an epiphany. He is finally aware of his Jewishness and presents himself to the town in these clothes. His behavior is interpreted as a nervous breakdown by the rest of the Jewish American community, which will not allow anyone to step out of line. When his wife gives birth to his son, he visits her at the hospital in his Jewish clothes, which prompts the doctors to sedate him in an attempt to restore his mental health.

6.) Man or *Mensch*? – Male Characters in Crisis

The following chapter constitutes the main analysis of the protagonists' crises in Malamud's and Roth's short stories. All the characters' identity struggles are triggered by a fateful encounter. This common denominator is explored in the beginning of this chapter by way of an analysis of the initial conversations between the protagonists and their respective counterparts. The short stories *The Last Mohican*, *The Lady of the Lake*, *Defender of the Faith* and *Eli, the Fanatic* share numerous similarities, which is why they will be examined in a joint analysis. This includes an analysis of displays as well as accusations of self-hatred and a discussion of the internalization of the concept of *menshlichkeit*. Due to the unique characteristics of the crises displayed by the characters in *The Magic Barrel* and *Epstein*, these two stories will be discussed individually. The significance of superficiality and respectability for the construction of identity in Malamud's and Roth's short stories will be investigated towards the end of this chapter.

6.1.) Fateful Encounters in Malamud's and Roth's Short Stories

The male protagonists' crises are caused by encounters with other Jewish characters. These people are Holocaust survivors, nuisances to the protagonists and/or objects of desire. However, these categories are by no means mutually exclusive; several of the characters fit into more than one of them.

6.1.1.) Encounters with Holocaust Survivors

The crises experienced by Henry Freeman, Arthur Fidelman and Eli Peck are all triggered by encounters with Holocaust survivors. This either happens in the familiar environment of a New York suburb or abroad in Italy. The male protagonists are startled by these meetings because they reveal the instability of their American identities as well as the discomfort with their own Jewishness.

In the *The Last Mohican*, Arthur Fidelman's complicated relationship with his Jewish heritage is already evident in his first conversation with Shimon Susskind. Fidelman immediately complains about the fact that his first interaction in Rome is with a "schnorrer":

„Shalom,“ he greeted Fidelman.

“Shalom,” the other hesitantly replied, uttering the word – so far as he recalled – for the first time in his life. My God, he thought, a handout for sure. My first hello in Rome and it has to be a schnorrer. (124)

By using the derogatory term “schnorrer”, a label ascribed to cunning beggars in Jewish literature, Fidelman already denounces Susskind for his Jewishness. Moreover, Fidelman’s aversion towards his own Jewishness is further emphasized by his claim to have said “Shalom” for the first time in his life. His refusal to speak Yiddish or Hebrew does not merely hint at an ignorant attitude towards his own heritage but also at an overall lack of knowledge regarding the Jewish part of his identity:

“Yiddish?”

“I express myself best in English.”

“Let it be English then.” Susskind spoke with a slight British intonation. “I knew you were Jewish,” he said, “the minute my eyes saw you.”

Fidelman chose to ignore the remark. (125)

This exchange clearly irritates Fidelman, but he is determined to keep the conversation casually flowing until he asks Susskind about his country of origin, which leads to an unwelcome allusion to World War II and the Holocaust:

“Where else from, if I may ask?”

“Where else but Germany, Hungary, Poland? Where not?”

“Ah, that’s so long ago.” Fidelman then noticed the gray in the man’s hair. “Well, I’d better be going,” he said. He picked up his bag as two porters hovered uncertainly nearby. (125)

Fidelman does not want to be confronted with the Holocaust, but will not be able to avoid this painful part of his people’s history any longer. As soon as Susskind steals his briefcase, his quest for the “schnorrer” will turn into a mission of self-discovery through Rome’s Jewish ghetto.

In *Eli, the Fanatic*, all the residents of the Yeshiva are Holocaust survivors including the headmaster, the staff and the children. Eli’s first meeting on the grounds of the Yeshiva is with the headmaster Leo Tzuref, a displaced person from Germany. Eli informs him that boarding schools are not permitted in residential areas but Tzuref is not startled by this information. The headmaster simply replies that he and the others are tired and will be staying where they are. After their meeting, Eli encounters the source of the Jewish community’s outrage; a man dressed in Orthodox Jewish clothing:

Eli started toward the man. Perhaps he was less stubborn than Tzuref, more reasonable. After all, it was the law. But when he was close enough to call out, he didn't. He was stopped by the sight of the black coat that fell down below the man's knees, and the hands which held each other in his lap. By the round-topped, wide-brimmed Talmudic hat, pushed onto the back of his head. And by the beard, which hid his neck and was so soft and then it fluttered away and back again with each heavy breath he took. He was asleep, his sidelocks curled loose on his cheeks. His face was no older than Eli's. (253)

The last sentence demonstrates that Eli, who is the focalizer of the story, already sees something relatable in the man's appearance. Furthermore, Eli's description of the man shows nothing of the hostility displayed by the other Jews of Woodenton. On the contrary, it is a tender observation of the sleeping refugee which results in Eli's decision not to wake the man. This is especially important after Tzuref reminded Eli of their tiredness, which was a subtle hint at their lives as refugees. Eli acknowledges their situation by abandoning his endeavor of persuading the man to change his clothes, at least for the moment.

Freeman's encounter in *The Lady of the Lake* differs from Fidelman's and Eli Peck's, in that Isabella's true identity as a Holocaust survivor is not revealed until the end of the short story. However, her constant inquiries about Freeman's Jewishness cause him to reflect upon his situation as a Jewish American man, which only leads him to complete self-denial. He sees the Jewish part of his identity as a flaw, which is why he never manages to pick up on any of Isabella's clues. This is already evident in their first conversation:

"Are you an American?" she inquired, her Italian accent pleasantly touched with an English one.

"That's right."

The girl studied him for a full minute, and then hesitantly asked, "Are you, perhaps, Jewish?"

Freeman suppressed a groan. Though secretly shocked by the question, it was not, in a way, unexpected. Yet he did not look Jewish, could pass as not-had. So without batting an eyelash, he said no, he wasn't. And a moment later added, though he personally had nothing against them. (91)

Freeman is the only character in all of the six short stories who does not merely feel uncomfortable admitting that he is Jewish, but who completely conceals his Jewish identity. Furthermore, he completely dissociates himself from his heritage by referring to the Jewish community as "them". It does not occur to him that Isabella could find his Jewishness desirable since, in his point of view, it has always been an obstacle, standing between him and the man he is striving to be.

6.1.2.) Encounters with Nuisances

Shimon Susskind in *The Last Mohican* is not only characterized by being a Holocaust survivor, but also by being a complete nuisance to Arthur Fidelman. His personal contempt for the refugee fuels the struggle between the two characters throughout the story. However, Susskind's numerous requests, unwelcome appearances and the theft of Fidelman's manuscript are the driving force behind Fidelman's self-discovery and redemption. A similar dynamic develops between Leo Finkle and Pinye Salzman in *The Magic Barrel*. Their first encounter is characterized by Finkle's discomfort with the entire situation. Even though he is convinced that seeking the help of a marriage broker is a respectable way of finding a wife in the Jewish community, he is also very skeptical of the matchmaker and the whole endeavor. This feeling is exaggerated by the sight of Salzman's portfolio and the perspective candidates:

"So few?" he asked in disappointment.

"You wouldn't believe me how much cards I got in my office," Salzman replied. "The drawers are already filled to the top, so I keep them now in a barrel, but is every girl good for a new rabbi?"

Leo blushed at this, regretting all he had revealed of himself in a curriculum vitae he had sent to Salzman. (157)

Being called a rabbi makes Finkle feel deeply uncomfortable, which already hints at the nature of his personal crisis. His struggle revolves around his inability to love God and those around him. After Salzman made the mistake of calling him a rabbi again, Finkle corrects him by saying, "[c]all me Mr. Finkle. I'm not yet a rabbi." (157) Salzman ignores this request which will lead to Finkle's outburst and subsequent crisis.

Luftmentschn: Susskind and Salzman

The characters Shimon Susskind and Pinye Salzman are versions of the same Yiddish literary topos, the so-called *Luftmentsch*. It has been mentioned before that Malamud belonged to an older generation of Jewish American writers that still included literary elements associated with traditional Yiddish folk tales in their work. Therefore, it is not surprising that this particular character can be found in Malamud's short stories. *Luftmentschn* are described as optimistic, sensitive and poetic daydreamers. They are usually unemployed or receive an irregular income which forces them to live in precarious conditions, or in other words, they live "in the air (German: Luft)". Moreover, *Luftmentschn* are characterized by their versatility, especially concerning vocational matters (Rosten 350). In the face of pogroms and arbitrary working restrictions, Eastern European Jews found it more convenient

to practice several professions instead of specializing in one field, from which they might be banned in the future (Rosten 351). The term *Luftmentsch* was coined in the nineteenth century as an ironic way of describing Eastern European Jews' desperate living conditions and it eventually turned into a literary topos (Diner in Berg 7). Susskind's existence as a *Luftmentsch* is on display when Fidelman asks the unemployed refugee in *The Last Mohican* how he can live without a job and Susskind simply replies "I eat air" (131). A similar situation arises in *The Magic Barrel*, when Leo Finkle visits Salzman's apartment to inquire about the location of his office and Salzman's wife merely answers "[i]n the air" (170). Furthermore, the characters' physical appearance is a reflection of their dire living conditions: Both Susskind and Salzman are described as looking like skeletons (124 & 166).

Another similarity is their cunning behavior, which makes the male protagonists uneasy in their presence. Both Susskind and Salzman give Fidelman and Finkle professional titles that they have not yet received or never will receive. Thus, they display submissiveness that is satirical rather than a true recognition of Fidelman's and Finkle's status. Susskind repeatedly calls Fidelman "professor" (129) even though he is just a student and Salzman calls Finkle "rabbi" (157) even though he is not yet ordained.

The unlikely pairs develop a similar dynamic throughout the short stories. Both narratives start with a simple inquiry on the part of the *Luftmentsch* which leads to an uncomfortable situation for the protagonists. Salzman, for example, asks Leo for "a sliced tomato" and "a glass of tea" (161) when he visits his apartment. Finkle is reluctant to comply, but eventually gives in because of his guilty conscience. In *The Last Mohican*, Susskind asks Fidelman for a suit, a favor which the latter immediately denies. However, when Fidelman reflects upon the poor man's fate, he hands him a couple of dollars to buy a warm sweater (130). Finally, the two characters disappear into thin air, when the protagonists need them most. The tumultuous quests for the two *Luftmentschn* lead Fidelman and Finkle on the path of self-discovery and redemption.

In *Defender of the Faith*, Sergeant Nathan Marx encounters another kind of nuisance different from the *Luftmentsch*. He is faced with the Jewish soldier Sheldon Grossbart, who hopes to receive preferential treatment due to his Jewishness, which he believes to share with Marx. Nathan Marx is the only first-person narrator in the short stories analyzed, so the reader is exposed to Marx's personal memory of their first conversation:

"Sergeant Thurston was one thing," he whispered, glancing at the sleeping C.Q., "but we thought that with you here things might be a little different."

“We?”

“The Jewish personnel.”

“Why?” I asked, harshly. “What’s on your mind?” [...]

“We though you—Marx, you know, like Karl Marx. The Marx Brothers. Those guys are all—M-a-r-x. Isn’t that how you spell it, Sergeant?”

“M-a-r-x.” (163-164)

After this introduction, the conversation continues until Grossbart’s assumptions about Marx’s Jewishness are confirmed, which prompts him to ask for a favor. Grossbart wants to go to “shul” on Friday nights, which is the time when the soldiers have to clean the barracks. Marx indirectly gives his permission and continues: “I turned and saw Grossbart’s dark frame fleeing back to the barracks, racing to tell his Jewish friends that they were right – that, like Karl and Harpo, I was one of them” (165). This realization triggers an ongoing struggle concerning group membership and loyalty, which is at the core of Marx’s identity crisis in *The Defender of the Faith*.

6.1.3.) Encounters with Objects of Desire

Not all of the protagonists’ encounters are uncomfortable or annoying. To the contrary, some are alluring enough to tempt a character such as Lou Epstein into crisis. His struggle is the result of decades of disappointments, and ultimately culminates in committing adultery. His lust for an extramarital affair is triggered by witnessing his nephew Michael and the girl next door, Linda Kaufman, naked on the living room floor. This event opens Epstein’s eyes to Linda’s attractive mother, Ida Kaufman:

[T]he woman at the bus stop wore a thin dress and no coat, and Epstein saw her waiting, and beneath the dress, the stockings, the imagined underthings he saw the body of the girl on his living room rug, for Ida Kaufmann was the mother of Linda Kaufman, the girl Michael had befriended. So Epstein pulled slowly to the curb and, stopping for the daughter, picked up the mother. (209)

He is aware that this is the beginning of his downfall. In the beginning, the third person narrator, with Lou Epstein as the focalizer, wonders, “[h]adn’t the trouble, the big trouble, begun simply when it appeared to, the morning he saw Ida Kaufman waiting for the bus?— And about Ida Kaufman, why in God’s name was it a stranger, nobody he loved or ever could love, who had finally changed his life?” (209). The combination of his midlife-crisis, sexual

frustration and the attractive appearance of Ida Kaufman leads to a series of events that ends in a heart attack.

Desire is also the driving force in *The Lady of the Lake*. When Freeman sees Isabella for the first time, he is mesmerized by her beauty and determined to win her over. This instant attraction is the sole reason for Freeman's character development. Something similar happens to Leo Finkle in *The Magic Barrel* when he sees the picture of Salzman's estranged daughter Stella. He feels an immediate connection to the woman who lived through pain and regret, and is convinced that she is worthy of redemption.

6.2.) Navigating Identity: Between Self-Hatred and *Menschlichkeit*

The characters in the short stories *The Lady of the Lake*, *The Last Mohican*, *Defender of the Faith* and *Eli, the Fanatic* all have a similar socio-economic background and experience the same kind of identity crisis. They are either second or third generation Jewish Americans, who grew up in New York City; Fidelman, Marx and Eli Peck specifically recall their childhood in the Bronx, which hints at a working class background and immigrant parents. However, all of them lived comfortable middle-class lives now. Their most important commonality is their identification with American culture and history and the disregard for their Jewish heritage. They start to re-negotiate their attitudes towards national identity and masculinity in the face of a new moral code imposed on them by the Jewish characters they encounter.

6.2.1.) Accusations and Displays of Self-Hatred

The concept of Jewish self-hatred is crucial to the discussion of the Jewish American identity crisis in the 1950s, which is referred to as "the age of self-hatred" (Glenn 98). Freeman, Fidelman, Marx and Eli conceal or deny their Jewish identity and are embarrassed by their association with the Jewish community. In return, this behavior leads to accusations of self-hatred and of "Jewish anti-Semitism". By assimilating to the American mainstream culture, they adopt a contemptuous attitude towards the Jewish community, which is prototypical self-hating behavior. They are trapped in a paradox situation, where they are concerned with their individual well-being and safety from discrimination and persecution, on the one hand, and displaying exactly the anti-Semitic behavior the Jewish community is scared of, on the other hand.

The Lady of the Lake: Levin vs. Freeman

The most obvious example of self-hating Jews is Malamud's Henry Levin or, as he prefers to be called, Henry Freeman. He uses his journey abroad to completely rid himself of his Jewish identity because he was "tired of the limitations it had imposed upon him" (84). His Jewishness had only brought him "headaches, inferiorities, unhappy memories" (102) and therefore he decided to reinvent himself as a regular middle-class American man. These two versions of himself – the reality and the delusional fantasy – stay in conflict throughout the entire short story. This contrast between reality and illusion is an important theme that does not only concern his self-perception but also the way he perceives the people around him (Maltz 12). This discrepancy is exemplified by the narrator's commentary, which is often the opposite of Freeman's perception. Even though Freeman is the focalizer of the story "the narrator still continues to maintain his objectivity in recounting what happens" (Maltz 12). Freeman envisions himself as an American hero, who is charming, athletic and wealthy. When he first meets Isabella, he is convinced he could not have made a bad impression because "he wasn't a bad-looking guy, even it could be said, quite on the handsome side" (226). Even though he "dreamed of a triumphant return" (227) after their first conversation, he embarrasses himself on several occasions, making him seem awkward and anxious, instead of confident and heroic. Due to his delusional state, Freeman interprets these embarrassments as trials he has to endure before he can win over Isabella. He considers her inquiries about his Jewishness to be tests and assumes that "[m]aybe she had once had some sort of unhappy experience with a Jew? Unlikely, but possible, they were now everywhere" (92). This is the second time Freeman refers to the Jewish community as "they" or "them", which emphasizes his outside position and his hostile attitude.

Freeman's fantasy starts to fall apart when he finds out that Isabella is the caretaker's daughter and not of aristocratic descent. After his initial disappointment, he comes to terms with Isabella's confession and wants to marry her regardless of her social standing. Freeman's inability to distinguish between reality and illusion is exemplified in the scene where Isabella guides Freeman through the del Dongo mansion and admits to him that the paintings and sculptures are all replicas of the originals:

"Is something the matter?"

"Only that I couldn't tell the fake from the real."

"Oh, but many of the copies are exceedingly beautiful," Isabella said. "it would take an expert to tell they weren't originals."

At this she squeezed his hand and he felt better. (99)

Freeman's incapability to tell "the fake from the real" seems to be a general problem throughout the story, which in the end causes him to fail "both as a man and as a Jew" (Maltz 11). He cannot distinguish between his true character traits and the wishful fantasy he conjured up. It does not occur to him that Isabella's questions about his Jewishness are actually a way of determining his eligibility. Freeman sees his Jewishness as a flaw, whereas Isabella cherishes her heritage for which she had to suffer at Buchenwald during World War II:

"I can't marry you. We are Jews. My past is meaningful to me. I treasure what I suffered for."

"Jews," he muttered, "– you? Oh, God, why did you keep this from me too?"

"I did not wish to tell you something you would not welcome. I thought at one time it was possible you were – I hoped but was wrong." (107)

Freeman loses his identity when he decides to lose his name. In the end, "Henry Levin/Freeman finally realizes that denying one's heritage or one's name is tantamount to denying oneself. [...] Freeman, unable to reconcile himself to the responsibilities and limitations of his Jewishness, cannot love" (Mesher 20). The lesson Malamud wants his character to learn is simple: He could have achieved his goals by staying Levin instead of becoming Freeman.

The Last Mohican: Fidelman vs. Susskind

Arthur Fidelman's assimilation into the American middle-class is so successful that he first and foremost identifies as an American and does not want to be labeled "Jewish". However, this Americanized version of himself is a direct contradiction to his heritage and, more importantly, a repression of his immigrant past (Ahokas 63). This situation is poignantly described when Fidelman comments on his inability of continuing his work on the Giotto manuscript after the first chapter was stolen by saying that "he was lost without a beginning" (212), which is a metaphor for the identity crisis he experiences.

After Susskind steals Fidelman's manuscript about the painter Giotto, Fidelman searches for the refugee in the Jewish ghetto. There he discovers the graves of Holocaust victims at the Jewish cemetery:

In the cemetery, deserted on the Sabbath- he should have come Sunday – Fidelman went among the graves, reading legends carved on tombstones, many topped with small brass candelabra. [...] Many were burial places, he read on the stained stones, of those who, for one reason or another, had died in the late large war, including an empty place, it said under a six-pointed star engraved upon a marble slab that lay on the ground, for ‘My beloved father/ Betrayed by the damned Fascists/ Murdered at Auschwitz by the barbarous Nazis/ O Crime Orribile.’ (141)

Fidelman can no longer live in ignorance of his people’s history. He was sent to the cemetery by the beadle of a synagogue he visited on his quest for Susskind. The man was mourning the death of his son, who was killed in the Ardeatine Caves. Fidelman has to learn about his fellow Jews’ pain in order to re-evaluate the significance of his own Jewishness in his life. The moment he starts to understand his own heritage is also when he is finally able to truly understand the art he is studying.

Giotto’s “San Francesco dona le vesti al cavaliere povero” is crucial for the short story’s plot. When Fidelman sees the fresco in one of his dreams about Susskind, he has an epiphany – an event, which marks a turning point in the story. The fresco is part of an entire fresco cycle of the Life of St. Francis in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. Even though the attribution of this fresco cycle has been one of the most disputed in art history, scholars nowadays seem to agree that they belong to the work of Giotto (Encyclopedia Britannica, Giotto). The fresco about St. Francis giving his coat to a poor knight plays a significant role in Fidelman’s decision to give his suit to Susskind. The protagonist’s change of heart will be further discussed in the subchapter about the moral code of *menshlichkeit*.

Defender of the Faith: Marx vs. Grossbart

Nathan Marx in *Defender of the Faith* is not only an assimilated Jewish American, he is also a veteran of World War II who served in the United States army and is now an instructor at a camp in Missouri. The issue of “us vs. them” between American middle-class mainstream culture and the Jewish American community is especially prominent in this short story. The question of group membership was never relevant for Nathan Marx because his Jewishness did not play a role during his army career. Like the rest of them, he is, first and foremost, an American soldier. This, however, changes after Marx’s first encounter with Grossbart, who makes Marx aware of his own Jewishness. When Grossbart writes to his Congressman to complain about the non-kosher food in the army, Captain Barrett takes it upon himself to clarify to which group Marx belongs:

“Look Grossbart. Marx, here, is a good man— a goddam hero. When you were in high school, Sergeant Marx was killing Germans. Who does more for the Jews—you, by throwing up over a lousy piece of sausage, a piece of first-cut meat, or Marx, by killing those Nazi bastards? If I was a Jew, Grossbart, I’d kiss this man’s feet. He’s a goddam hero, and he eats what we give him [...]” (180)

Marx is an American “hero” and thrived in the U.S. army whilst neglecting the rules of traditional Jewish life. He does not eat kosher or attend “shul”, which is the main point of conflict between Marx and Grossbart, who is not a practicing Jew but is hoping for preferential treatment by exaggerating his religious feelings and playing on Marx’s insecurities about his identity. However, Grossbart’s friend Halpern, Marx notices, seems to be genuinely affected by not being able to observe the rules of Judaism. Grossbart tests Marx’s loyalty to the Jewish community at several points, which results in a conflict of interest for Marx. He is reluctant to grant Grossbart’s requests because he has doubts about the sincerity of Grossbart’s motives. When Grossbart asks for a weekend pass to attend his aunt’s Seder, Marx initially refuses which prompts Grossbart’s outburst:

“Why are you persecuting me, Sergeant?”

“Are you kidding!”

“I’ve run into this before,” he said, “but never from my own!”

“Get out of here, Grossbart! Get the hell out of my sight!”

He did not move. “Ashamed, that’s what you are,” he said. “So you take it out on the rest of us. They say Hitler himself was half a Jew. Hearing you, I wouldn’t doubt it.”

“What are you trying to do with me, Grossbart?” I asked him. “What are you after? You want me to give you special privileges, to change the food, to find out about your orders, to give you weekend passes.”

“You even talk like a goy!” Grossbart shook his fist.” (187-188)

Grossbart accuses an already conflicted Marx of persecuting his own people for being Jewish, calls him a “goy”, a gentile, and suggests that Marx is ashamed of his Jewish identity. These accusations are not without merit: Marx is not a practicing Jew and chooses not to show his Jewishness in the Army environment, which can be interpreted as self-hating behavior. Marx is clearly concerned about Grossbart’s actions and how they reflect back on the rest of the Jewish personnel and how this affects his own reputation. Marx’s and Grossbart’s conflict is especially problematic because Marx correctly assumes that Grossbart is deceiving him. Due to Marx’s inner conflict about being Jewish and a soldier in the U.S. army, he grants his trainees weekend passes to attend the fictitious Seder dinner. All of Grossbart’s accusations are insincere because he lied about his motives from the start. Finally, Marx loses his patience

when he finds out about Grossbart's success at having his orders changed, so he would not have to go to a war zone. Motivated by feelings of contempt for Grossbart and a sense of responsibility for the rest of the Jewish community in the army, Marx changes Grossbart's orders again. When Grossbart finds out, he confronts Marx, "[...] I curse the day I ever met you, Marx! Shulman told me what happened over there. There's no limit to your anti-Semitism, is there? [...]" (199). He accuses Marx of Jewish anti-Semitism, which suggests that Marx is not only a self-hating Jew but that he actively seeks to persecute the entire community for their ethnicity and faith. Marx is deeply troubled by these accusations and recalls how he felt after the encounter: "resisting with all my will and impulse to seek pardon for my vindictiveness, I accepted my own" (200). After getting caught between Grossbart, a representative of the Jewish community, and his position in the U.S. army, he has to accept that he has failed both sides, because he never managed to find a healthy balance between these different aspects of his identity.

***Eli, the Fanatic* and the Jews of Woodenton vs. The Yeshiva**

Eli's and his neighbor's behavior is one of the most obvious examples of self-hatred in all of the short stories. They do not only refuse to welcome Holocaust survivors to their community, they also have the audacity to suggest that European Jews are responsible for their own fate and if they had lived a more assimilated life, such as the Jews of Woodenton, the Holocaust could have been prevented entirely. In the letter to Leo Tzuref, Eli writes:

It is only since the war that Jews have been able to buy property here, and for Jews and Gentiles to live beside each other in amity. For this adjustment to be made, both Jews and Gentiles alike have had to give up some of their more extreme practices in order not to threaten or offend the other. Certainly such amity is to be desired. Perhaps if such conditions had existed in prewar Europe, the persecution of the Jewish people, of which you and those 18 children have been victims, could not have been carried out with such success—in fact might not have been carried out at all. (262)

This letter displays great disrespect for the pain European Jews had to endure, but also shows how disconnected Eli and his group are from their own heritage and their people's history of persecution.

The use of pronouns to indicate group membership has already been mentioned in the discussion of other short stories, and has an even more prominent role in *Eli, the Fanatic*. To the Jewish American who are living a suburban middle-class life, the Orthodox Jewish community is "the other". In the course of the story, Eli grows exceedingly confused about his

group membership. This is especially evident in his conversations with Leo Tzuref, who tests Eli's self-awareness. When Eli tells Tzuref that the community will not abandon their demands, Tzuref asks:

"But you, Mr. Peck, how about you?"

"I am them, they are me, Mr. Tzuref."

"Aach! You are us, we are you!" (265)

Eli meets Tzuref as a representative of the Jewish community of Woodenton but distances himself from the group by insinuating that they are forcing his hand. However, Eli admits that he is one of them, to which Tzuref replies that there is no such as thing as "us" and "them". They are all Jews, and more importantly, they are all human, who should treat each other with respect and common decency. As their conversation continues, Eli reverses his statement:

"It's not me, Mr. Tzuref, it's them."

"They are you."

"No," Eli intoned, "I am me. They are them. You are you."

"You talk about leaves and branches. I'm dealing with under the dirt." (267)

Eli revokes his affiliation with the Jews of Woodenton with a plea for individualism. He suggests that they are all separate parties in this conflict, which is a direct contradiction to what he claimed earlier in the conversation. Tzuref refutes Eli's argument by explaining what identity really means. It is not only about what is visible, but what is "under the dirt", which is an allusion to roots and a metaphor for Eli's lack of such. Victoria Aarons rightfully argues that "Eli Peck, a product of the secularization of American Jewry in the mid-twentieth century, believes himself freed from the restricting weight of a legacy linked to him only by an imposed inheritance, the remnants of history and blood" (Aarons 9), which is as delusional as Henry Freeman thinking he could change his identity by merely changing his name.

The most comic and equally telling scene which exemplifies Eli's and his neighbor's state of complete self-denial is when Eli's receives a call from Harriet Knudson, who warns him that there is a Jew at his door, "Eli there's a Jew at your door. *That's me*. Nonsense, Eli, I saw him with my own eyes. *That's me, I saw you too, painting your rocks pink*. Eli, you're having a nervous breakdown again" (287). This happens when Eli decides to put on the traditional Orthodox Jewish clothing that the Yeshiva employee left at his doorstep. Harriet Knudson seems completely oblivious to the fact that she and Eli are Jewish too, which makes the entire conversation tragically ironic. When Eli tries to prove to her that he actually saw her, she

dismisses his statement as part of another nervous breakdown. Nobody in this neighborhood wants to look or act “too Jewish” because they are scared of “forever being considered outsiders and interlopers among the rightful inheritors of American culture” (Aarons 9).

You Are What You Wear: Identity in Eli, the Fanatic

The manner in which identity is perceived and constructed in *Eli, the Fanatic* hints at a superficial definition of the concept, which has been internalized by the characters. In his first letter to Tzuref, Eli points out that, “Yeshivah personnel are welcomed in the streets and stores of Woodenton provided they are attired in clothing usually associated with American life in the 20th century” (262). The Jewish American community expects the newcomers to visually assimilate to the townscape of Woodenton so no attention will be drawn to their difference. When Tzuref informs Eli that this one traditional suit constitutes the totality of the man’s belongings, Eli simply responds: “[t]hen we’ll buy him one! [...] We-will-pay-for-it. All right?” (265). He assumes that money is the only issue that prevents the man from buying a new suit instead of trying to understand that this is probably the only connection to the life he was forced to leave behind.

Towards the end of the short story, Eli and the Yeshiva employee encounter one another wearing each other’s clothes. At first, Eli is satisfied with his accomplishment because the Jewish man “looked as if he belonged. Eccentric, maybe, but he belonged” (283), and as long as he looks the part, there would be no further disturbance. This kind of mindset is at the core of this Jewish community’s understanding of identity. They are all trying to look like they belong in a suburban and predominantly Protestant setting. As a result, they are wearing their American identities like masks that do not reach beneath the surface. If they truly believed they had a secure place in the community, they would not be as startled by the arrival of these Holocaust survivors. What Roth displays here are the typical anxieties of assimilated second or third generation Jewish Americans who are new to the American middle-class and who are not yet able to trust their new found comfort and peace.

Eli believes that putting on the man’s suit is an embrace of the Jewish part of his identity and will make him understand the pain and suffering of his people. Furthermore, Eli wants the Yeshiva employee to acknowledge his change of heart and to accept him as part of their community in order to complete his redemption. However, Eli does not receive the reaction he anticipated from the man, who does not want to engage with Eli, “‘I only want to...’ But in that outfit Eli didn’t really know what he wanted. ‘To talk...’ he said finally. ‘For you to look

at me. Please, just *look* at me...” (290). On the subsequent two pages of the short story, Eli asks the man to look at him five times, because he is under the false pretense that the man will recognize him as one of their own. Victoria Aarons points out that, “[j]ust as Eli’s clothes cannot replace the losses suffered by the man who resides at the yeshiva, the Jew’s suit of clothes cannot finally be a replacement for Eli’s loss of identity and absence of history” (Aarons 20). Moreover, this encounter further emphasizes Eli’s simplistic understanding of identity which can be summed up in one statement: You dress like an American, you are American; you dress in the traditional clothes of an Eastern European Jew, you are Jewish. This conflation of appearance and heritage shows how confused Eli’s is about his own identity. Being Jewish, American or both cannot be put on and tossed back into the closet like a suit. Dressing up to look like everybody else gives the Jews of Woodenton a false feeling of belonging that crumbles immediately once it is challenged.

6.2.2.) How to be a *Mensch*: Male Characters Embracing the Moral Code

It is a great honor in the Jewish community to be considered a *mensch*. This term is reserved for respectable, compassionate and candid human beings who have internalized the moral code of *menshlichkeit*. Bernard Malamud, the author of *menshlichkeit*, made this concept an imperative part of his characters’ self-discovery and their final redemption. The code of *menshlichkeit* has a high esteem for the concept of community at its core. Therefore, it is crucial for the characters to accept their place in the Jewish community and the responsibility that comes with it before they can truly embrace their Jewish identity. The scenes chosen for this section address the characters’ initial denial of any obligations towards their fellow Jews and their eventual change of heart. Henry Freeman will not be discussed in this section because the short story *The Lady of the Lake* ends before the effect of Freeman’s encounter with Isabella could be revealed.

Arthur Fidelman in *The Last Mohican* undergoes the most obvious change from a mere *man* to a true *mensch*. The first time the concept of *menshlichkeit* is directly evoked is when Susskind enters Fidelman’s hotel room to ask for money. Fidelman does not understand why he should be obligated to help a stranger to whom in he has no connection. He tells Susskind that there are enough charity organizations for refugees but Susskind does not want the committees’ help, which leads to this conversation:

“If that’s your decision, freely made, then why pick on me? Am I responsible for you then, Susskind?”

“Who else?” Susskind loudly replied.

“Lower your voice, please, people are sleeping around here, “ said Fidelman, beginning to perspire. “Why should I be?”

“You know what responsibility means?”

“I think so.”

“Then you are responsible. Because you are a man. Because you are a Jew, aren’t you?”

“Yes, goddamn it, but I’m not the only one in the whole wide world. Without prejudice, I refuse the obligation. I am a single individual and can’t take on everybody’s personal burden. I have the weight of my own to contend with.” (132)

The notion in Judaism that the Jewish community is more important than the individual and that a Jew is responsible for his fellow men is completely lost upon Fidelman. After wandering the streets of Rome’s Jewish ghetto, which are reminders of the Holocaust, he starts to understand the pain of his people, which in return makes him realize his connection to them and to Susskind. Once Fidelman experiences what it feels like to suffer, he is able to grasp the meaning of *menshlichkeit*, for if the whole world is turning against the Jewish community, its members have to be responsible for each other. In the end, Fidelman has an epiphany in his dream about Susskind in which he finally understands Giotto’s fresco:

In his latest dream of Fidelman’s he was spending the day in a cemetery all crowded with tombstones, when up out of an empty grave rose this long-nosed brown shade, Virgilio Susskind, beckoning. [...]

Fidelman, willy-nilly, followed, and the ghost, as it vanished, led him up steps going through the ghetto and into a marble synagogue.

The student, left alone, for no reason he could think of lay down upon the stone floor, his shoulder keeping strangely warm as he stared at the sunlit vault above. The fresco therein revealed this saint in fading blue, the sky flowing from his head, handing an old knight in a thin red robe his gold cloak. (145)

Helen Gealy explains that when Fidelman “dreams of Giotto’s fresco of St. Francis giving a cloak to a poor knight and is able to identify with St. Francis, and Susskind with the knight, he can do so because he has first recognized Susskind as a fellow Jew, a man for whom he is responsible” (53). However, this scene is also important due to its significant amount of intertextuality. “Undoubtedly Dante’s *Divina commedia* is one of the most powerful sources of allusion to the theme of redemption” (Ahokas 67) in *The Last Mohican*. Just like Vergil is the guide through hell in the *Divine Comedy*, Virgilio Susskind is the invisible guide through the Jewish ghetto that ultimately leads Fidelman towards his path to redemption. Only when Fidelman is ready to forgive Susskind and recognize the refugee as one of his own, the true

meaning behind Giotto's art is revealed to him. This is also why Susskind tells Fidelman not to despair about the lost pages because "[t]he words were there but the spirit was missing" (146).

The spirit of *menshlichkeit* is also missing in the Jewish community in *Eli, the Fanatic*. Here it is Eli's wife Miriam, rather than conflicted Eli, who represents the self-centered and individualistic American middle-class attitude. When Eli finally decides to give his suit to the man from the Yeshiva, Miriam replies by saying, "[w]hy does it have to be *your* suit? Who are you even to decide to give a suit? What about the others?" (272). Miriam disapproves of her husband's new-found compassion for the Holocaust survivors because it could possibly disturb their peaceful lives. Miriam also has a suspicion about Eli's motives: "I don't know, Eli. Something gets too much. Whenever everything's peaceful for a long time, and things are nice and pleasant, and we're expecting to be even happier. Like now. It's as if you don't think we deserve to be happy" (271). Miriam is completely oblivious to the atrocities committed during World War II and does not feel an affiliation to the newly arrived refugees. On the contrary, she implies that Eli feels guilty about the fate of these people for no reason. However, survivor's guilt was rather common among those who were not directly affected by the Holocaust or managed to escape it.

At the end of the story, Eli arrives at the hospital in Orthodox clothing to visit his wife and their newborn baby. Miriam greets him by saying, "[...] you *don't* have to dress like that. You didn't do anything. You don't have to feel guilty because...because everything is all right. Eli, can't you see that?" (296). She tries to justify her attitude and to discredit Eli's behavior by suggesting that they are not the ones who persecuted Jews in Europe and therefore cannot be blamed or held responsible for their fate. Eli has tried to publicly embrace the Jewish community by dressing up as an Orthodox Jew, but he expects that his change of heart will be met with resistance from his assimilated environment. Even though he recognizes his responsibility for the people of the Yeshiva, his journey to becoming a true *mensh* will be diverted by the Jewish American community of Woodenton. Brett Ashley Kaplan sums up this development by suggesting that "'Eli, the Fanatic' perfectly illustrates the counterintuitive approach to the uncomfortable continuum of victim and perpetrator that forms the focus [of] this book because Eli moves from perpetrator of anti-Hasidic sentiment to a victim of the very assimilated Jews he formerly represented" (27). However, the experience of persecution might in the end even strengthen his understanding of the history of his people.

Nathan Marx's interpretation of the concept of *menshlichkeit* is different from Eli's and Fidelman's and is a result of the ongoing struggle between him and Sheldon Grossbart. In the end, when Marx makes sure that Grossbart does not receive any special treatment and is sent to a war zone like his comrades, Marx justifies his actions:

"For each other we have to learn to watch out, Sheldon. You told me yourself."

"You call this watching out for me—what you did?"

"No. For all of us."

I pushed him aside and started for the door. I heard his furious breathing behind me, and it sounded like steam rushing from an engine of terrible strength. (200)

Marx's is clearly concerned about the fate of his trainees, which is one indication of his "adherence to the moral code of *mentshlekhkayt*" (Knopp, *Ways*, 73). This concept promotes a compassionate lifestyle that embraces the community and, even though Marx is deeply conflicted, he never denies his Jewishness and grants all of Grossbart's requests until the end, because he accepts his responsibility and recognizes their bond. Moreover, Marx is also concerned about the reputation of the Jewish American community as a whole, which is why in the end he refuses special treatment to Grossbart. However, in the moment he gets revenge on the person who used and betrayed him, "Marx feels that he has been vindictive, that he has himself violated the code of *mentshlekhkayt* which insists on humane behavior even in the face of evil" (Knopp, *Ways*, 74). Marx's awareness of his behavior and the consequences it has for his fellow Jews hints at the qualities of a true *mensh*.

6.3.) *The Magic Barrel*: A Crisis of Faith and Love

Leo Finkle's crisis is of a different nature than those previously discussed, because he does not struggle with his Jewishness as such. He embraces his existence as part of the New York Jewish community but questions his relationship to God and his ability to love. This personal crisis is set in motion when Leo decides to employ Pinye Salzman's services in order to find a wife, which seems to be mandatory for a soon-to-be rabbi. During the 1950s it was still common in the Jewish community to find a partner through a matchmaker and it is also how Finkle's parents met. Daniel Boyarin gives an insight into the tradition:

In traditional Jewish upper class culture the process of finding a spouse involved the efforts of a matchmaker who sought to discover a suitable pairing. Both members of the potential couple, after having met the "intended" or even "fated" one, had the absolute right to refuse the match. God himself was understood in Jewish folklore to

pick out appropriate partners for people even before birth; indeed, according to the Talmud this is what God does for a full third of his time. (45)

However, Finkle already quarrels with his decision in the beginning of the story, “[...] he wondered if it could be – his protestations to the contrary, and although he honored his father and mother – that he did not, in essence, care for the matchmaking institution? This thought he quickly put out of mind yet found himself still upset” (160). This is the first time he voices doubts about Jewish traditions, and it clearly causes him discomfort but he is not yet willing to explore where this feeling of being upset actually originates from. He is not ready to face his strained relationship to God yet, so he projects these feelings onto the matchmaking institution and the candidates Salzman offers him. This becomes evident when he finally speaks his heart during the rendezvous with Lily Hirschorn. Salzman had told her that Finkle is already a rabbi, so when she inquires about his motives for choosing this profession, he admits to her how he is truly feeling, “‘I am not,’ he said gravely, ‘a talented religious person,’ and in seeking words to go on, found himself possessed by shame and fear. ‘I think,’ he said in a strained manner, ‘that I came to God not because I loved Him, but because I did not.’ This confession he spoke harshly because its unexpectedness shook him” (164). This statement also reveals Finkle’s fear of being incapable of loving not only God but the people around him. Feeling true human emotion and connection is a necessity for a rabbi, since he will be the spiritual leader of an entire congregation. After uttering these words out loud for the first time, he allows himself to explore his feelings further:

Her probing questions had somehow irritated him into revealing- to himself more than her- the true nature of his relationship to God, and from that it had come upon him, with shocking force, that apart from his parents, he had never loved anyone. Or perhaps it went the other way, that he did not love God so well as he might, because he had not loved man. It seemed to Leo that his whole life stood starkly revealed and he saw himself for the first time as he truly was— unloved and loveless. (165)

Philip Davis suggests that “Malamud gave Leo this ‘terrifying insight’—that he had turned to the marriage broker because he felt incapable of finding love either for himself or in himself. But now he sees he cannot settle for anything less than that” (Davis 163). Similar to Malamud’s other protagonists, Finkle “had lived without knowledge of himself” (165) and first needs to suffer through this personal crisis before he is allowed further insight. A period of grave self-doubt commences during which Finkle hardly sleeps or eats and does not find joy in anything. In contrast to, for example Fidelman and Freeman, he, however, accepts this as a typically Jewish fate. Finkle embraces the suffering as characteristic of Jewish life, which connects him more closely to his own people. After the initial depression, Finkle

celebrates the new knowledge he has gained about himself and seeks out the marriage broker again. This is when he comes across the picture of Salzman's daughter Stella, a fallen woman who is estranged from her family due to the life she had chosen for herself. At first, Salzman is unwilling to arrange a meeting but eventually gives his permission. Finkle could see in her picture that she had lived through pain and regret and he was determined to save her and thus save himself. He wants to prove to himself that if he can love this damaged woman, he will also be able to love God. On his way to their rendezvous, Finkle already sees her from afar "her eyes – clearly her father's – were filled with desperate innocence. He pictured, in her, his own redemption" (172). His crisis is a crisis of faith, but also of feeling disconnected from the world around him. Finkle has desperately tried to study the Jewish religion in order to learn how to love God and his fellow Jews only to find out that this knowledge cannot be gained from books. This final insight will help him to become a more compassionate human being who cares for others and truly connects with them. In other words, in the end Leo Finkle has found the key to becoming a true *mensch*.

6.4.) *Epstein*: A Story of Regret and Unfulfilled Expectations

Lou Epstein's crisis does not revolve around a particularly Jewish matter but around a human condition that has nothing to do with ethnicity or nationality. It is the crisis of a married man and father, who at fifty-nine is disappointed with his life and yearns for a new beginning. But instead of making meaningful changes, he chooses the path of self-destruction and starts an affair with his neighbor Linda Kaufman.

Lou Epstein's life is characterized by many losses and regrets. He had lost his son Herbie, when the boy was seven years old, which also means that he has no heir to the moderate business he built. Additionally, he does not speak to his brother, because of a dispute over his paper bag company. Epstein's deepest disappointments, however, are the women in his life, which is why their roles in his downfall will only be roughly outlined in this chapter and then thoroughly discussed in chapter eight "Female Characters in Roth and Malamud", because the way women are treated and described in *Epstein* reveals a lot about the protagonist and his struggle.

Epstein mourns the loss of his wife's and daughter's youth and beauty, which remind him of the disappointing way his life had turned out to be. He is disgusted by the sight of his wife Goldie, fueling his sexual frustration that is increased in the face of his nephew's youth,

physical prowess and charm that result in his having intercourse with Ida Kaufman's daughter, Linda. Lou thinks that his affair with Linda will restore his youth and all the possibilities he missed in the past, but his extramarital indiscretion only causes a heart attack and leads directly back into the arms of his controlling wife. Lou does not manage to escape the status quo, but by trying to do so, he loses the respect of his family and every bit of authority he once had over the women in his life.

Roth's short story caused a significant amount of anger within the Jewish American community. The realistic portrayal of a Jewish man's existential crisis, revealing him to be a flawed human being, was received as an offense directed at Jewish American men. However, all criticism concerned with the short story's impact on the community's reputation was immediately rejected by him because, according to Roth, "adultery has been one of the ways by which people of *all* faiths have sought pleasure, or freedom, or vengeance, or power, or love, or humiliation" (*Reading* 152). He further elaborates:

I write a story of a man who is adulterous to reveal the condition of such a man. If the adulterous man is a Jew, then I am revealing the condition of an adulterous man who is a Jew. Why tell that story? Because I seem to be interested in how—and why and when—a man acts counter to what he considers to be his "best self," or what others assume it to be, or would like it to be. (*Reading* 152)

In *Epstein*, Roth's protagonist's Jewishness can be universalized because it is only Roth's starting point for revealing this man's humanity. The way Roth uses Jewishness in *Epstein* is similar to Malamud's habit of making his protagonists Jewish, but by describing universal human struggles and how to overcome them. However, due to Roth's notorious reputation and the delicate issue of adultery, the Jewish American community was not able to see past Epstein's Jewishness and made it the central element of their criticism.

6.5.) Identity Defined by Superficiality and Respectability

Even though the characters' crises all unfold in different ways, they all raise questions about their existence as Jewish American men. The issues of superficiality and respectability are often at the core of the protagonists' struggles to construct their identities, so the importance of appearance in a suburban setting and the displays of respectability are going to be discussed in this section as well as the all-encompassing urge of the Jewish American middle-class to live a *normal* life.

Middle-Class Respectability as a Guiding Force

Malamud's and Roth's short stories feature upper or lower middle-class protagonists and the authors are using various ways of drawing attention to their characters' status in society. Keeping up appearances and living a respectable life are not merely a guiding rule in *Eli, the Fanatic*, but can be found in other short stories as well. For example, the protagonists' comfortable middle-class lives and the corresponding consumerism are often manifested in the repeated mention of well-known clothing brands throughout some of the short stories.

The most obvious example is a conversation between Eli Peck and his wife Miriam, during which Eli is in the process of packing up a suit and a shirt for the Yeshiva employee. His wife points out that the shirt he chose does not go with the suit, "Eli, batiste? With a tweet suit?" she inquired" (270). This question is the comic counterpart to Eli's state of frenzy and is a testimony to her indifference towards the situation of the Yeshiva Jews and to her obliviousness concerning her husband's state of mind. Their conversation continues with another ridiculous exchange about the clothing brands he is giving away. Miriam says, "Eli, it's a Brooks Brothers suit. You say yourself how much you love it" (272), thus implying that the suit is too good and too expensive to give away for charity. Eli simply replies, "It's a J. Press," (273), an equally expensive and prestigious brand. This seemingly pointless conversation epitomizes Roth's criticism of middle-class values, where clothing brands and not the destiny of Holocaust victims are the focus of a discussion.

The importance of consumer brands is also evident in a scene in Malamud's *The Last Mohican*. Fidelman finds out that his briefcase and the first chapter of his book on Giotto have disappeared from his room. The theft leaves Fidelman confused because a thief "would then and there have ditched the chapter and stuffed the brief case with Fidelman's oxblood shoes, left by the bed, and the fifteen-dollar R.H. Macy sweater that lay in full view on the desk" (136). The clothes Fidelman is able to afford and the brands he wears are important enough to be mentioned in the narrative and hint at Fidelman's status and his relatively comfortable living situation. Fidelman is able to purchase valuable clothing items but is not willing to help out Susskind, which he simply excuses by relativizing his wealth, "[d]on't get the wrong idea of me, Mr. Susskind. I'm not rich. In fact, I'm poor. Don't let a few new clothes deceive you. I owe my sister money for them" (127). Claiming that he has no money in order to release himself of any responsibility towards a refugee who is practically homeless, seems like an especially cruel act.

However, status is not only mentioned in terms of clothing brands, but also by discussing their income. In *The Lady of the Lake* Isabella's father and brother are trying to find out if

Freeman is a viable suitor by blatantly asking Freeman how much money he makes. This gives Freeman the chance to present himself as an established American middle-class man, “‘I’m comfortable,’ Freeman replied, and in honesty added, ‘but I have to work for a living.’ [...] Freeman then gave the guide an earful on the Americans standard of living, and he meant living” (96). Regarding his wage at Macy’s book department he says: “‘I personally average about a hundred dollars a week. That comes to about a quarter million lire every month.’— Ernesto repeated the sum, holding onto his hat in the breeze. The boy’s eyes had widened. Freeman hid a satisfied smile” (96). Freeman is proud to impress Isabella’s family with his respectable lifestyle. During this scene, Freeman has the power to re-define his masculinity in the eyes of Isabella’s father and brother, making up for the embarrassment he had suffered in an earlier scene due to his lack of physical prowess.

The concept of respectability also constitutes the premise of Malamud’s *The Magic Barrel*. The protagonist Leo “Finkle, after six years of study, was to be ordained in June and had been advised by an acquaintance that he might find it easier to win himself a congregation if he were married” (155). In order to be a successful and respected community leader, a rabbi is expected to have a family of his own. As such, Leo Finkle is required to uphold the values of the Jewish American middle-class, whose high esteem for the nuclear family is undeniable.

This importance of a tight-knit and functioning family is also the reason why, in Roth’s *Epstein*, Lou Epstein is outraged his wife’s suggestion of a divorce. Breaking up a family would go against every notion of respectability the Jewish community holds dear.

Jewish American Suburbia in Eli, the Fanatic

The Jewish Americans of Woodenton are described as respectable and modern. They profit from the postwar economic growth and contribute to the success of their country by paying taxes. This is stated twice throughout the short story (249 & 256) exemplifying their lives as normal and modern citizens. However, the postwar prosperity does not calm Jewish Americans’ anxiety of persecution. Eli and his neighbors do not only refuse to welcome Holocaust survivors to their community, they also have the audacity to claim that if European Jews lived a more assimilated life, the Holocaust could have been prevented.

The Jewish community of Woodenton perceives their co-existence with Protestants to be in a precarious state. Therefore, their self-denial results in a betrayal of the traditional Jewish values of *menshlichkeit*, and a dangerous shift to ignorance and Anglo-conformity. Eli’s friend and neighbor, Ted Heller, is the voice of the collective will of the Jewish community of

Woodenton and displays the narrow-minded mentality typically associated with suburban conformity:

“[...] I refuse to sit by and watch it happening on my own front lawn.”

“Nothing’s happening on your front lawn, Teddie.” [...]

“Look Eli— pal, there’s a good healthy relationship in this town because it’s modern Jews and Protestants. That’s the point, isn’t it, Eli? Let’s not kid each other, I’m not Harry. The way things are now are fine—like human beings. There’s going to be no pogroms in Woodenton. Right? ’Cause there’s no fanatics, no crazy people—” (277-278)

The way Ted Heller phrases his statement makes it appear as if suggesting that pogroms were inevitable due to the provocatively different lifestyle of Orthodox Jews and the only thing that prevents him and Eli from being persecuted is their moderate interpretation of what it means to be Jewish. In sum, “Eli, along with his wife and the suburban Jews of Woodenton, have willfully remade themselves as middle-class Jews, so much so that they exchange their Judaism, their connection to a war-torn, shattered, and not-so-remote past, for a wished-for gentile (and genteel) respectability” (Aarons 15). However, for Eli, this exchange only lasted until he had a first-hand experience with Holocaust survivors, an encounter that shattered the fragile façade of his middle-class respectability.

Roth’s Jewish American Middle-Class: Dreaming of a Normal Life

The wish for a normal life is often expressed by Goldie Epstein and Miriam Peck and thus determines Lou’s and Eli’s family life. When Epstein is diagnosed with a heart attack, the doctor suggests that he should live a life that is appropriate and normal for a man his age. As a result, Goldie “[s]uddenly [grips] his hand. ‘Lou, you’ll live normal, won’t you? Won’t you? [...] You’ll keep this up and that’ll be the end—’” (229). She never asked for anything more than the normal life she was living and in her view this heart attack constitutes the ultimate measure to prevent Lou from ever trying to break free of their shared normalcy again. The doctor’s advice is such a relief to Goldie and an assurance of what the rest of their lives together will look like, that Goldie is even able to forget his unfaithfulness.

Similarly, *normal* is also the condition in which Eli’s and Miriam’s relationship works best. When he starts changing his mind about the Yeshiva situation, Eli knows that “if Miriam were awake to see Eli’s upset, she would set about explaining his distress to him, understanding him, forgiving him, so as to get things back to Normal, for Normal was where they loved one another” (254). Their relationship works when everything is peaceful and simple, which is

also the environment in which the Jewish community of Woodenton functions best. The moment Eli steps out of line and endangers the supposed cohesion of the suburban Jewish community, he is declared slightly insane and being on the verge of a mental breakdown. Any behavior that deviates from the status quo will immediately be sanctioned, thus ensuring lasting normalcy, which they mistakenly equate with security.

7.) Representations of Masculinity in Malamud's and Roth's Short Stories

This chapter examines different versions of masculinity displayed in Roth's and Malamud's short stories. The concepts of masculinity introduced in chapter four will be applied to the discussion of the protagonists and vary from hegemonic American masculinity to stereotypical representations of Jewish American masculinity. Moreover, the issues of inadequacy and marginalization as defining aspects of the male protagonists' lives and its influence on their self-perception will be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

7.1.) Nathan Marx: Approaching Hegemonic American Masculinity

Nathan Marx's masculinity is primarily defined by being his a soldier in the American army. He is a World War II veteran and still serves as a member of the troops. The American military is one of the pillars of American national identity and crucial to the construction of American masculinity. A soldier embodies qualities such as patriotism, bravery and a sense of duty, which enable him to defend his country with his body and, if necessary, with his life. These traits are still considered an integral part of hegemonic American masculinity.

The question of group membership in *Defender of the Faith* is crucial to the discussion of masculinity. Marx's superior, Captain Paul Barret, who is described as "short, gruff and fiery" (162), repeatedly sets Marx apart from the rest of the Jewish personnel by emphasizing those traits that make him a model American soldier. When he introduces Marx for the first time to the company he says, "'Sergeant Thurston, as you know, is no longer with the company. Your new first sergeant is Sergeant Nathan Marx, here. He is a veteran of the European theater, and consequently will expect to find a company of soldiers here, and not a company of boys'" (162). According to Barret, soldiers who have survived the battlefield are real men. Therefore, Barret, who is the only voice of gentile and hegemonic American masculinity in the short story, declares that Marx represents the same qualities and values that he himself embodies. In a personal conversation with Nathan Marx, Barret further clarifies this: "'I admire you. I admire you because of the ribbons on your chest. I judge a man by what he shows me on the field of battle, Sergeant. It's what he's got here,' he said, and then, [...] he jerked a thumb toward the buttons straining to hold his blouse across his belly. 'Guts,' he said" (166). Barret does not only approve of Marx but even admires him and accepts him as one of his own group. In moments of self-reflection, Marx reveals the extent to which the

army has become an integral part of his personality. He says that he “developed an infantryman’s heart” (161) and that he is now a “noncombatant” (185).

Marx is not only characterized by his physical prowess, which is a prerequisite for a true soldier, but also his professional ambitions. He attended Columbia University, an Ivy League college in New York, prior to serving in the army and contemplates returning to Law School after his employment in the army has ended. When he calls his colleague Bob Wright towards the end of the story to inquire about Grossbart’s orders, the first thing Wright asks him is: ““How are you, Nate? How’s the pitching arm?”” (198). This hints at Marx’s athleticism and the boy culture of the 1950s that promoted sports as a crucial part of male socialization. He plays baseball, which is both an American tradition and a favorite pastime within the Jewish community in the United States. This completely assimilated and prototypically American life is also the major point of conflict between Marx and the Jewish personnel. The Americanized Marx is the only Jewish soldier that Captain Barret knows, so Barret does not, for example, understand the upheaval about non-kosher food in the army:

“A year in combat, Grossbart. Twelve goddam months in combat all through Europe. I admire this man.” The Captain snapped a wrist against my chest. “Do you hear him peeping about the food? Do you? I want an answer, Grossbart. Yes or no.”

“No, sir.”

“And why not? He’s a Jewish fella.”

“Some things are more important to some Jews than other things to other Jews.” (180)

The environment in which Nathan Marx lives makes it easy for him to forget about his own Jewishness, because it is never brought up. Not even fighting Nazis in World War II made him recognize his Jewishness, “[I] had managed even to deny myself the posture of a conqueror—the swagger that I, as a Jew, might well have worn as my boots whacked against the rubble of Wesel, Münster, and Braunschweig” (170). Victoria Aarons correctly suggests that “[t]he conditions of his life in the army, the equality and impartiality assumed within the ranks, make it possible for Nathan Marx to dismiss any ties to the other Jewish personnel. In the midst of war, fighting the Germans, not as a Jew, for which he might have taken some measure of private triumph, but as a soldier” (11). Philip Roth knows why Marx was more accepted by his American peers in the story than any of his other protagonists. He suggests that “there does not seem to be any doubt that the image of the Jew as patriot, warrior, and battle-scarred belligerent is rather satisfying to a large segment of the American public” (*Reading* 137). Therefore, Nathan Marx is the only one of the six protagonists analyzed in this

thesis who manages to approach the ideal of hegemonic American masculinity and is also accepted as such by his colleagues. His identity struggle differs from the crises of the other protagonists due to his unique position as an American soldier. The other characters still navigate between Jewish and American ideals of masculinity and morality, and have not yet managed to be either a prototypical American man or a Jewish *mensch*. For them, embracing their Jewish identity does not involve abandoning a culture that had already accepted them. Marx on the other hand, has to actively give up his army socialization and disregard his colleagues' acceptance of him in order to have a chance at becoming a *mensch*.

7.2.) Stereotypical Representations of Jewish American Masculinity

Stereotypical representations of Jewish American masculinity include the concepts of the so-called 'Jewboy', the 'nice Jewish boy' – as a version of the 'feminized Jew' – and the 'rabbinical Jew' as a version of the 'intellectual Jew'.

The first two of these concepts can be found in the short story *Defender of the Faith* and are embodied by Sheldon Grossbart and Mickey Halpern. Sheldon Grossbart is a prototypical 'Jewboy' who does not concern himself with moral nicety and only looks out for himself. This is especially evident in the way he manipulates Marx into granting him special treatment. The difference between Grossbart and Mickey Halpern is already obvious in the way they introduce themselves to Marx. Grossbart irritates Marx with his casual behavior that suggests familiarity between the two men even though there is none. "[...] [H]is green speckled eyes, long and narrow, flashed like fish in the sun. He walked over to me and sat on the edge of my desk. He reached out a hand. 'Sheldon,' he said" (163). Halpern, on the other hand, "[h]opped forward. 'Private Michael Halpern.' He saluted. 'Salute officers, Halpern,' [Marx] said. The boy dropped his hand, and, on its way down, in his nervousness, checked to see if his shirt pockets were buttoned" (169). Halpern is a 'nice Jewish boy' who is respectful and shy. Even though he is by far the most religious of the Jewish soldiers introduced in the story, he does not complain about the non-kosher food or demand to go to shul. Halpern only tries to blend in and not to cause any disturbances, which is the primary goal of a 'nice Jewish boy'. He is Grossbart's subterfuge for being excused from cleaning the barracks on Friday nights and for receiving a weekend-pass for an alleged Seder dinner. After their first encounter, Marx observes them at Friday night services where Grossbart and Halpern show their respective roles:

In the sudden silence that followed, I thought I heard Grossbart cackle, “Let the goyim clean the floors!” Were those the words? I wasn’t sure, but Fishbein, grinning, nudged Halpern. Halpern looked dumbly at him, then went back to his prayer book, which had been occupying him all through the rabbi’s talk. One hand tugged at the black kinky hair that stuck out under his cap. His lips moved. (172)

Grossbart feels victorious for outwitting the “goyim” whereas the devout Jew Halpern takes going to shul seriously. Halpern is predominantly characterized in conversations between Marx and Grossbart, the latter describes Halpern as a gentle, soft and almost helpless boy. When Grossbart tells Marx that Halpern is only “‘Eighteen,’ [...] ‘But like he can’t tie is shoes or brush his teeth himself. I feel sorry for him’” (174). Grossbart keeps disguising his cunning manner behind false concern for Halpern by saying: “‘Sergeant, I never felt for anybody like I feel for him. Last night I heard Mickey in the bed next to me. He was crying so, it could have broken your heart. Real sobs. [...] I had to talk to him to stop him. He held my hand, Sergeant—he wouldn’t let go. He was almost hysterical’” (174). This conversation reveals the characteristics of both stereotypes: Halpern displays stereotypically feminine behavior by crying and allegedly holding his friend’s hand, which is part of the cliché of the feminized Jew. Grossbart, on the other hand, is tough and cunning with no concern for morality, which is typical of the so-called ‘Jewboy’.

Another stereotypical concept of Jewish American masculinity is the ‘rabbinic Jew’, a subcategory of the ‘intellectual Jew’, who is clearly embodied by Leo Finkle in *The Magic Barrel*. He is a religious scholar who has no experience with women because “[h]e had for six years devoted himself almost entirely to his studies, as a result of which, understandably, he had found himself without time for a social life and the company of young women” (156). This impression of Leo Finkle is reinforced when Salzman enters Finkle’s apartment for the first time:

Salzmann, though pretending through his eyeglasses he had just slipped on, to be engaged in scanning the writing on the cards, stole occasional glances at the young man’s distinguished face, noting with pleasure the long, severe scholar’s nose, brown eyes heavy with learning, sensitive yet ascetic lips, and a certain, almost hollow quality of the dark cheeks. He gazed around at the shelves upon shelves of books and let out a soft, contented sigh. (156-157)

The way Leo is characterized through Salzman’s perception, who describes his “scholar’s nose” and “shelves upon shelves of books”, makes it clear that Leo can be categorized as a prototypical intellectual and rabbinic Jew. However, this representation of a male Jewish religious scholar should not be mistaken for the ideal of being a *mensch*. Leo Finkle might

have extensively studied the Torah, but he has yet to learn how to love his fellow Jews and God.

7.3.) Malamud's and Roth's Male Protagonists: Inadequate and Marginalized

Malamud's and Roth's male characters often share feelings of inadequacy. They show signs of physical or mental weakness or are characterized by professional failures and regrets. These feelings of inadequacy and disappointment are directly linked to the perception of their own masculinity. The short stories *Defender of the Faith* as well as *The Magic Barrel* are excluded from the analysis in this subchapter since the protagonists have already been discussed in the previous subchapters and the issues raised here do not apply to them.

Weakness, in the most traditional sense of the word, is associated with a lack of physical prowess or athleticism. Henry Freeman's struggle to row properly, in *The Lady of the Lake*, is the best example of a poor physical performance, which stands in direct contrast to the image of masculinity he would like to project. This becomes painfully obvious when Freeman is on his way to meet Isabella and suggests rowing the boat all the way to the island:

Freeman traded places with the boy, then wished he hadn't. The oars were impossibly heavy; he rowed badly, allowing the left oar to sink deeper into the water than the right, thus twisting the boat off course. It was like pulling a hearse, and as he awkwardly splashed the oars around, he was embarrassedly aware of the boy and Ernesto, alike in their dark eyes and greedy beaks, a pair of odd birds, openly staring at him. He wished them far far away from the beautiful island and in exasperation pulled harder. By dint of determined effort, though his palms were painfully blistered, he began to row rhythmically, and the boat went along more smoothly. (95)

This situation is an embarrassment to Freeman because it does not correspond to the image of the potent American man he is trying to convey to Isabella's family. This lack of athleticism is a central characteristic of the stereotype of the 'feminized Jew' and clearly applies to Freeman.

Eli Peck displays a different kind of weakness. He lacks mental strength which he himself and his wife Miriam are aware of. According to Miriam's statements throughout the short story, Eli has a history of mental instability. Victoria Aarons calls him a "nervous, anxiety-ridden, conflicted Jew" (20-21), which sums up his character perfectly.

Lou Epstein's and Arthur Fidelman's feelings of inadequacy concern their professional careers. A crucial part of Epstein's mid-life crisis is his lack of an heir to inherit his paper bag

company, which never turned out to be as successful as he hoped it would. The company never filled Epstein with pride or joy but was always seen as a necessity to provide for his family. Fidelman, the “self-confessed failure as a painter” (123) had artistic aspirations but was forced to write about art instead of creating it due to a lack of talent. Even his work as a scholar was inadequate until he embraced his Jewish heritage.

These characters are all either lacking physical or mental strength or professional success. Even though they appear to be aware of their shortcomings in the face of hegemonic American masculinity, they are never directly confronted with white Anglo-Saxon protestant man. According to sociologist Erwin Goffman, the American manifestation of hegemonic masculinity in the twentieth century is the image of a “young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height and a recent record in sports” (Goffman in Kimmel, *Manhood*, 5). All other configurations of masculinity in the United States are therefore being measured against this one stereotypical image. It favors white over African American men, heterosexuality over homosexuality and Protestantism over other religious faiths. This preference results in a hierarchy of masculinities, which renders Jewish American masculinity essentially marginal.

The lack of interaction between Jewish American men and gentiles in the stories hints at the marginalized status of Jewish communities in the United States in the 1950s. Despite their assimilating efforts, the protagonists’ friends, neighbors and business partners are all Jewish Americans, which points to a lifestyle that is segregated from the American mainstream culture. Thus, these men cannot take part in the process of constructing and negotiating hegemonic masculinity due to their Jewishness. Meanwhile, they are also prevented from being Jewish *mensch* because of this internalization of American middle-class values and habits such as individualism, respectability and consumerism.

Moreover, their masculinity is further threatened by the women in their lives who defy the traditionally patriarchic structure of Jewish communities. The male protagonists suffer from their marginalized position in American culture and their lack of authority over their women. The next chapter, which deals with the female characters in Malamud’s and Roth’s short stories, will address the emasculating, rather than empowering, effect these characters have on the male protagonists.

8.) Female Characters in Malamud's and Roth's Short Stories

The following chapter addresses the role of women in Malamud's and Roth's short stories. The female characters in most of the short stories are described by a third person narrator, focalized through the male protagonists' consciousnesses. Therefore, their characterizations and descriptions reveal more about the male protagonists' desires, fears and insecurities than about the women's identities. This chapter explores the role of women as objects of desire as well as repulsion and their emasculating powers. Furthermore, Philip Roth's relationship with women and his alleged misogyny is examined towards the end of this chapter. The short stories *Defender of the Faith* and *The Last Mohican* do not include any female characters and are, therefore, excluded from the subsequent analysis.

8.1.) Women: Objects of Desire and Repulsion

The women in the short stories considered are frequently reduced to their physical appearance, leading the male protagonists to either admire the beauty of the female characters and pursue them as potential sexual partners, or to be repulsed by their appearance and irritated by their behavior.

8.1.1.) Objects of Desire

When female characters are pursued as objects of desire, their beauty and sex appeal are highlighted in the description of their physical appearance.

The Lady of the Lake: Isabella

As a result of Freeman's delusional quest for a European princess, he does not only idealize Isabella's beauty but he also projects certain preferable traits onto her, without showing any interest in her true identity. He willingly believes that Isabella belongs to the aristocratic del Dongo family, because "[h]er past he could see boiling in her all the way back to the knights of old, and then some" (92). Freeman's assumptions about Isabella are a product of his own imagination and stem from a desire to find a gentile bride. He tries to woo her, because a non-Jewish wife would not only make it easier for him to erase his own Jewishness but, according to his point of view, it would also elevate his social standing in American society.

Isabella's physical appearance is described at length in several sections in *The Lady of the Lake* and equated with the grandeur of Italian history and heritage:

[...] she had grace to lean on; herself also favored physically—mama, what a queenly, high-assed form—itself the cause of grace. Her dark, sharp Italian face had that quality of beauty which holds the mark of history, the beauty of a people and civilization. The large brown eyes, under straight slender brows, were filled with sweet light; her lips were purely cut as if from red flowers; her nose was perhaps the one touch of imperfection that perfected the rest- a trifle long and thin. (90)

In his description of Isabella, Malamud includes a remark regarding the shape and length of her nose, which seems to be her only physical flaw. Highlighting this specific facial feature can be interpreted as a foreshadowing of Isabella's Jewish identity, since it is an (often anti-Semitic) stereotype that a prominent nose is a marker of Jewish origin. Isabella is perceived through Freeman's eyes, therefore, it is not surprising that a character who struggles with his heritage and represses his own Jewish identity would find fault with a physical feature that reminds him of stereotypical and often offensive descriptions of his people.

Additionally, Isabella's breasts are repeatedly mentioned throughout the narrative, which is, on the one hand, evidence of the objectification of the female body in this short story and an emphasis on Freeman's desire for her. On the other hand, it is also a hint at the significance of this particular part of her body:

Slowly she unbuttoned her bodice, arousing Freeman, though he was thoroughly confused as to her intent. When she revealed her breasts – he could have wept at their beauty (now recalling a former invitation to gaze at them, but he had arrived too late at the raft) – to his horror he discerned tattooed on the soft and tender flesh a bluish line of distorted numbers. (107)

Her breasts bear visible marks of the Holocaust and, therefore, provide evidence of her Jewish heritage and the pain she suffered. This final revelation does not correspond to Freeman's fantasy. He was so fixated on the image he created in his head that he was blind to Isabella's real identity and the history of her family.

The Other Woman: Ida Kaufman

Epstein's adulterous desire for Ida Kaufman as described by Philip Roth does not exhibit the romantic delusion of Malamud's Freeman, but the frustration of a middle-aged man who is appalled his wife's loss of beauty. The descriptions of Ida Kaufman's body are crude objectifications and focus on her womanly features. She is "dark, good-looking, [with] a big chest" (209) and when Epstein tells her a joke, "she laughed so hard her breasts swelled over

the top of her tan dress” and according to him, “[t]hey were not cups but pitchers” (211). Epstein complains about his wife’s lack of humor and about her unattractive figure, which makes Ida Kaufman even more desirable by comparison. She functions as Epstein’s escape from his unfulfilling everyday life.

The Damaged Damsel in Distress: Stella

Leo Finkle is very critical of the women Salzman introduces to him; none of the candidates the marriage broker presents are good enough. However, when Finkle finds the picture of Salzman’s estranged daughter Stella, he is immediately infatuated:

Feature for feature, even some of the ladies of the photographs could do better; but she leaped forth to his heart – had *lived*, or wanted to – than just wanted, perhaps regretted how she had lived – had somehow deeply suffered: it could be seen in the depths of those reluctant eyes, and from the way the light enclosed and shone from her, and within her, opening realms of possibility: this was her own. Her he desired. (168)

Only later, there are hints at Stella’s occupation as a prostitute. She did not want to live in poverty and chose this path instead. Finkle is able to see all her suffering and regret by only looking at her picture. His desire for her differs from that of Freeman and Epstein because it does not stem from a need to satisfy physical urges but the wish to bring about his own redemption. This becomes evident when “[h]e [...] concluded to convert her to goodness, himself to God” (171), because “[h]e pictured, in her, his own redemption” (172). Finkle’s desire for Stella becomes as obsessive as Freeman’s for Isabella because both men believe that these women can save them from their doomed existences.

The male protagonists in all of these stories use these women for a specific purpose, be it to fulfil a romantic fantasy, to escape a frustrating life or to achieve redemption in the eyes of God. What attracts them to these female characters are their physical attributes alone. The favorable descriptions of their bodies are an objectification and often show a total disinterest in their personalities.

8.1.2.) Objects of Repulsion and Irritation

Not all female characters in the short stories chosen are objects of desire. Those who do not trigger sexual interest are often disregarded as irritating, repulsive and disgusting.

Like Mother Like Daughter: Goldie and Sheila Epstein

Lou Epstein is disgusted by the women in his life. He laments the loss of his wife's and daughter's beauty and youth, which are a constant reminder of the hopeful aspirations he once had but never realized. Epstein is disappointed by the development of his life and conveys these feelings in the description of his wife's body, "[...] he had watched as she dropped her white nightdress over her head, over the breasts which had funneled down to her middle, over the behind like a bellows, the thighs and calves veined blue like a roadmap. What once could be pinched, what once was small and tight, now could be poked and pulled. Everything hung" (203-204). In this merciless description of Goldie's body, the reader is not introduced to Lou Epstein's own physique. He only claims that "[...] in 1927 he and his wife were handsome people" (204), but sexual desire was replaced by repulsion due to the physical changes Goldie's body had undergone in the course of their marriage.

Similar to the description of his wife, he also mourns the loss of his daughter's youthful beauty, which to him is an indication of time passed, and, more importantly, a condition that can never be restored. Sheila's supposed physical flaws become even more evident once he compares her with Linda Kaufman, whose pretty face and delicate body arouse him. He asks himself when Sheila's development took a wrong turn: "What happened, he wondered, what happened to that little pink-skinned baby? What year, what month did those skinny ankles grow thick as logs, the peaches-and-cream turn to pimples? That lovely child was now a twenty-three-year-old woman with 'a social conscience'!" (205). Beside her physical appearance, he also criticizes Sheila's intellectual progress. Epstein disapproves of her lifestyle and even denies her the right to a love life due to her unappealing appearance. "For her and that guitar plucker to touch each other's unmentionables seemed worse than sinful—it was disgusting" (205). His misguided interest in his nephew's sex life and the condemnation of his daughter's sexuality seem inappropriate and are an expression of his own sexual frustration.

Epstein's misogynist attitude towards the women in his life is also fueled by grief for his dead son Herbie. Lou Epstein has worked all his life to provide for his family, but once he retires, there is no one who will take over his paper bag company and the "thought of a stranger taking it over made him sick. But what could be done? Herbie, who would have been twenty-eight, had died of polio, age eleven. And Sheila, his last hope, had chosen as her intended a lazy man. What could he do? Does a man of fifty-nine all of a sudden start producing heirs?" (205). If Epstein's son were still alive, he would be able to carry on his father's legacy and

relieve Epstein of his worries regarding the future. Epstein refers to his son's death as a turning point in his life, and he wonders if this was the moment where he changed for the worse. Therefore, his affair with Ida Kaufman is not merely a result of his unsatisfying love life but also a reaction to the sudden realization of his own mortality triggered by his worries concerning the lack of a male heir.

Miriam, the Psychoanalyst

In contrast to Lou Epstein's discontent with his wife's and daughter's physical shortcomings, Eli Peck is often unhappy with his marriage because of his wife's overbearing nature and her tendency to psychoanalyze him. This becomes evident, when Eli talks to his unborn child in Miriam's belly and says: "You know what your mother brought to this marriage – a sling chair and a goddam New School enthusiasm for Sigmund Freud" (259). Throughout the entire short story, Eli complains about Miriam's efforts to understand and forgive him when neither understanding nor forgiveness is what he wants:

He hated cold soggy dinners, but would take one gladly in place of Miriam's presence. He was ruffled, and she never helped that, not with her infernal analytic powers. He loved her when life was proceeding smoothly—and that was when she loved him. [...] The difficulty with Miriam's efforts was they only upset him more; not only did they explain little to him about himself or his predicament, but they convinced him of *her* weakness. Neither Eli or Miriam, it turned out, were terribly strong. (254)

Eli resents Miriam for adding to his own weakness because his lack of mental strength is only aided by his wife's willingness to forgive his actions and to understand his behavior. He is angry with her for not expecting or demanding more of him.

Markers of Disgust: Animal Imagery

An especially offensive way in which some of the women are discussed in the short stories is by comparing their physical traits to those of animals, which is an especially cruel and de-humanizing way of talking about female bodies and personalities. When, for example, Goldie is first introduced in *Epstein*, it is pointed out that her "nipples were dragged down like a cow's" (204). The animal imagery in *Epstein* is also used in the description of Lou's daughter, eating "like a horse" (205). Even in Malamud's *The Magic Barrel* Salzman resorts to that kind of language when Leo Finkle asks him why his daughter Stella is not a proper match for him:

"She is not for you. She is a wild one – wild, without shame. This is not a bride for a rabbi."

“What do you mean wild?”

“Like an animal. Like a dog. For her to be poor was a sin. This is why to me she is dead now.” (171)

This observation leads to the conclusion that women in the short stories *Epstein* and *The Magic Barrel*, are denied their humanity when they do not meet the male protagonists’ expectations regarding their physical attributes or character traits.

8.2.) Acts of Emasculation

The male characters in *The Lady of the Lake*, *Epstein* and *Eli, the Fanatic* are not only struggling with an identity crisis and conflicting ideals of Jewish and American masculinity, but with women challenging their manhood in general. The following instances show situations in which female characters contest the protagonists’ physical fitness, authority and even their mental health.

Freeman’s Lack of Athletic Prowess

Freeman’s lack of physical strength is mentioned in several scenes throughout *The Lady of the Lake*. A situation that caused Freeman great embarrassment was Isabella’s suggestion to go for a swim on their first rendezvous. Freeman was “hating the picture he must make in her eyes” because “[h]e swam awkwardly” (100) and was very much aware of his shortcomings as a swimmer. He is unable to catch up to Isabella and wonders if she ridiculed him on purpose, because “[...] when he had pulled himself up on the raft, to his dismay, Isabella was no longer there. He caught a glimpse of her on the shore, darting behind the shrub. Nursing gloomy thoughts, Freeman rested a while, then, when he had sneezed twice and presupposed a nasty cold, jumped into the water and splashed his way back to the island” (100). In addition to his inability to reach her in time to admire her naked body, he is worried about his health, which hints at a rather weak physique and does not correspond to the concept of masculinity Freeman is aspiring to. Instead of being the knight in shining armor that faces several trials to win over his bride, he is humiliated by her. This situation makes Freeman painfully aware of his weakness and lack of physical fitness, not just in comparison to other men but to the woman he is trying to woo. However, Freeman is able to rid himself of these feelings of embarrassment and proceeds to pursue Isabella.

Epstein's Loss of Authority

Lou Epstein has to cope with a different kind of humiliation when his wife finds out about his rash and alerts the entire house with her screams. Epstein's daughter Sheila wonders why her mother Goldie is crying and demands an answer from her father, leading to the following exchange:

"Don't you raise your voice to me! Respect your father!" He pulled the white stripes tighter around him. "Now get out of here!"

He took a step towards her and growled, as though to scare away a stray cat or dog. With all her one hundred and sixty pounds she pushed her father back; in his surprise and hurt he dropped the sheet. And the daughter looked on the father. Under her lipstick she turned white.

"All of you," Epstein shouted. "Get out!"

But no one obeyed. (215-216)

This scene illustrates two kinds of embarrassments for Epstein. For one, it shows a total loss of authority over his daughter and the rest of the household. Jewish families, just like American families in the 1950s, followed a patriarchal order, recognizing the father (husband) as the head of the household. Lou demands respect and obedience from the members of his family but receives neither. For another, it also shows a loss of physical dominance over the women in his life. When he tries to scare his daughter away, she pushes him back, marking not only an act of defiance but also a demonstration of her physical superiority in contrast to her aging father. This symbolical emasculation is further exaggerated by the humiliation of having to stand naked in front of the entire family, displaying evidence of his adultery. The scene ends with an emancipated Goldie, demanding a divorce from her husband, which he dismisses as a crazy idea.

Epstein's Humiliation and Downfall

Epstein's disgrace continues at the breakfast table, the day after his wife has found out about his affair. Goldie humiliates him by insinuating that he lost his hearing due to a sexually transmitted disease he caught while having an affair with Ida Kaufman:

"Syphilis softens the brain..."

Epstein stood up, raging. "Did you tell her that?" he shouted at his daughter. "Who told her that?"

The folk singer stopped plucking his guitar. Nobody answered; a conspiracy. He grabbed his daughter by the shoulders. "You respect your father, you understand!"

She jerked her shoulder away.” You’re not *my* father!” [...] He leaned across the table to his wife. “Goldie, Goldie, look at me! Look at *me*, Lou!” [...]

“Goldie,” he said, “Goldie, I did the worst thing in the world? Look me in the eyes, Goldie. Tell me, since when do Jewish people get a divorce? Since when?” (223)

Epstein is outraged by his wife’s disrespectfulness and lashes out at Sheila, who he suspects of being the source of this insult. The way he grabs his daughter by the shoulders exemplifies his desperate attempt to hold on to his role within the family. But instead of showing him respect, Sheila does not recognize Epstein as her father anymore. Epstein turns to his wife, hoping that she will forgive him and reconsider her threat of divorcing him. It appears as if Epstein finally felt his authority slipping away from him and takes his wife’s demand seriously. He insists that Jewish people do not get divorced, implying that this is not a custom in their culture and could threaten their standing in the community. Lou never apologizes to Goldie or shows remorse, but he seems to be worried about their reputation. Everybody turns on him, which is why he seeks refuge at Ida Kaufman’s house. This then leads to the ultimate defeat, a symbolic act of emasculation, leaving Lou Epstein with no power over his own life. He has a heart attack while visiting Ida Kaufman’s house, and Goldie later insists on riding with him in the ambulance. On their way to the hospital, Goldie lays out a plan for the rest of Epstein’s life and even tells him not to speak anymore: “‘Don’t you talk,’ his wife said. ‘Don’t you worry about anything. Not even the business. That’ll work out. Our Sheila will marry Marvin and that’ll be that. You won’t have to sell, Lou it’ll be in the family. You can retire, rest, and Marvin can take over. He’s a smart boy, Marvin, a *mensch*’” (229). In the end, Lou’s rebellion against his own life was pointless: Not only did it fail to bring lasting change, it nearly killed him. His pitiful state in the end causes his wife to take pity on him and seemingly forgive his unfaithfulness, but her behavior can also be interpreted as calculated revenge that transfers all the power over his life to her.

A Reversal of Gender Roles: Male Hysteria in Eli, the Fanatic

Miriam Peck’s intention to psychoanalyze her husband does not only annoy him but also causes her to question Eli’s mental fitness. When he has doubts about his case against the Yeshiva, his wife dismisses his behavior as neurotic. Statements like “[y]ou can’t function as a lawyer by being neurotic” (258), suggest that she is sceptic about his ability to fulfil his duties as a lawyer. The moment Eli starts to challenge the collective will of the Jewish community of Woodenton, they accuse him of being neurotic, and his wife starts suggesting he should see the psychiatrist Dr. Eckmann. This dynamic is similar to that of nineteenth-century English and American husbands accusing their wives of suffering from hysteria when

they refused to be quiet and obedient. The questionable diagnosis of hysteria was often associated with emotional instability, but also included more severe symptoms such as trances and paralysis. It is still highly debated if hysteria was a real or fictitious disease or if it was a form “of protest, a symbolic voice for the silenced sex, who were forbidden to verbalize their discontents, and so created a language of the body” (Scull 7). Hysteria was viewed as an inherently female disease because of the notion that the disorder “was rooted in the female reproductive organs, more specifically the womb” (Scull 23). So by declaring their wives hysteric or insane, men discredited their progressive or even rebellious ideas in order to maintain the status quo. Miriam’s and Eli’s relationship displays a reversal of gender roles, transferring the agency to the wife. By saying “Eli, please, baby, shouldn’t you maybe stop in to see Dr. Eckmann, just for a little conversation?” (259) she discredits his thoughts and actions because they do not comply with her and the community’s demands. It is mentioned early in the short story that Eli is aware of his and his wife’s weakness, and that he had “faced this fact, and on both occasions had found solace in what his neighbors forgivingly referred to as ‘a nervous breakdown’” (254). This means that his neighbors also use Eli’s alleged mental instability to police his actions. Moreover, Eli seems to have internalized this allegation, because he states that “[s]ooner or later, everybody’s wife finds their weak spot. His goddam luck he had to be neurotic” (261). His wife’s constant questioning of his mental health only adds to his insecurities and his identity crisis.

8.3.) Women in Philip Roth

Despite the accusation of being a self-hating Jewish American author, Roth was also attacked for allegedly being a misogynist. David Gooblar explains that “[a]t some point in the past, it was agreed upon that readers won’t find fair treatment of female characters within Roth’s fiction, and that a certain type of blinders must be worn by feminist readers” (8). In the article “Philip Roth hates Women” in the *Chicago Tribune* in 2006 Julia Keller says about Roth’s female characters that ““they generally exist only to serve or to annoy men. Actually, they don’t seem to exist at all, independent of men”” (Keller in Gooblar 9). Furthermore, “she notes that there is almost a total absence of scenes in the Roth canon in which women interact with each other, without men” (Gooblar 9). This observation is definitely accurate regarding the short stories *Epstein* and *Eli, the Fanatic*. *Defender of the Faith* does not feature any actual female characters, there are only allusions to mothers, aunts and girlfriends. However, Gooblar points out that “bemoaning the fact that Roth does not sufficiently get inside the

female characters' heads and hearts is not so very different from objecting that he does not sufficiently explore the lives of gentiles" (Gooblar 9). After all, Jewish American men and their struggles are Roth's primary topic and his field of expertise.

Nevertheless, critics like Vivian Gornick are convinced that the allegations against Roth have merit. Moreover, she claims that the misogyny in Jewish American writing originates in the marginalized position of the Jewish American author (19). Gornick argues that "[a]s the social reality of Jewish outsidership waned, the rage at the heart of Jewish-American writing began to lose its natural source of energy. [...] Woman-hating had been the synthetic fuel needed to keep the sense of illness alive. Without that, the work had nowhere to go and nothing much to say" (Gornick 19). She even suggests that "misogyny in Roth's work seemed less and less a function of character, and more and more an indication of the author's own swamped being" (Gornick 19), which is a direct attack on Philip Roth's character.

Given the autobiographical nature of the majority of Roth's work, the source of his alleged misogyny is assumed to be his relationship with Margaret Martinson Williams. In his autobiography *The Facts* (1988), he recounts the stages of their disastrous relationship, which was already strained by 1958:

By then we no longer had anything resembling a love affair, only a running feud focused on my character flaws from which I was finding it impossible to escape no matter how far I fled.

[...]

I had left Chicago for good in May after a year in which the deterioration of trust between Josie and me had elicited the most grueling, draining, bewildering quarrels: her adjective "wicked" did not sound so alluring when it began to be used to describe me. (95)

The trauma and anger that resulted from this relationship provided Roth with an abundance of inspiration for the rest of his career. In *The Facts*, he lashes out at "Josie" and describes her manipulative and cruel behavior in detail. Hence, an author who makes his personal life the subject of his fictional work should not be surprised at the comments by critics who are willing to equate his personality with the opinions of his misogynist narrators. Roth denied any accusations in an interview in 2014 by saying, "[m]isogyny, a hatred of women, provides my work with neither a structure, a meaning, a motive, a message, a conviction, a perspective, or a guiding principle" (Shostak, *Life*, 213). Nevertheless, it is unlikely that this statement will appease his critics.

In contrast to merely denouncing Roth's writing, Debra Shostak's commentary offers a more comprehensive analysis of Roth's motives for his allegedly misogynist treatment of women:

[...] some readers fail to discern just how acutely he notices the conditions in which women in general, and his protagonists' beleaguered women in particular, have lived. Because his male characters, struggling to be the men that the masculinist mythology tells them to be, often perceive women as objects for their distorted purposes, Roth has been taken to task over the years as himself a misogynist rather than being understood as a writer who exposes the misogyny that the hegemonic system of gendered performances promulgates. (Shostak, *Life*, 213)

The socially accepted suppression of women enhanced by the ideals of hegemonic American masculinity in the 1950s was a part of the environment Roth's male characters had to navigate in order to find acceptance in the broader society. Therefore, Shostak's remarks on the issue of Roth's alleged misogyny are by far the most convincing because they take into consideration the socio-economic climate of the 1950s.

Since this thesis only discusses two short stories by Roth which feature female characters, namely *Epstein* and *Eli, the Fanatic*, there is too little evidence to decide the issue of Roth's alleged misogyny. This chapter provides evidence of the objectification of the female body and the crude language that is used to describe it. The treatment of female characters can definitely be described as misogynist, but that alone is not sufficient for drawing conclusions about the author's personal convictions. Rather, Roth's short stories seem to accurately portray the lives of Jewish American middle-class families in an era that was without any doubt characterized by the misogynist treatment of women.

Conclusion

Even though Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth are considered to take fundamentally different approaches to portraying the struggles of Jewish American men in the United States, the analysis of their short stories shows more similarities than differences. Issues such as self-hatred and ignorance towards the hardships of Holocaust survivors play a prominent role in both authors' narratives and so does the concept of *menshlichkeit*. Moreover, Malamud and Roth chose similar manners in which their protagonists' identity crises are triggered and overcome. This does not mean that the juxtaposition of these two authors is generally wrong, as their fictional short stories and novels vary widely in themes, characters, language and reception; however, these six short stories set and published in the post-World War II era do not support the notion of Malamud and Roth as two opposite ends of a spectrum. It is true that Roth offers more provocative subjects whereas Malamud's work is gentler in tone, but the emotions and struggles displayed by their characters are similar because they are fundamentally human.

The short stories *The Lady of the Lake*, *The Last Mohican*, *Defender of the Faith* and *Eli, the Fanatic* were jointly discussed because their plots follow a similar pattern. At the core of each protagonist's struggle is a crisis revolving around their Jewish identity, which is inextricably linked to their perception of masculinity. The identities the characters have constructed for themselves are inherently fragile, superficial and characterized by the suppression of their Jewish heritage. Their encounters with other Jewish characters make them reconsider the significance of their own Jewishness in their lives and the quality of American middle-class values. They strive towards an unreachable ideal of hegemonic American masculinity in the face of their own inadequacy. Henry Freeman's lack of athleticism, Eli Peck's psychological instability and Arthur Fidelman's professional misfortune result in a marginalized position within American society, where they will never be accepted as full-blooded Americans. Malamud's and Roth's short stories depict a middle-class life that is divided along ethnic and religious lines, and the marginalization of Jewish American men is visible through the absence of ties to gentile, white America. Only Roth's protagonist Nathan Marx functions as an exception: Among the six protagonists, he resembles the ideal of hegemonic American masculinity the closest due to his status as a World War II veteran and an active member of the U.S. army. But he abandons his army socialization for the same reason as the other characters who learn to embrace their Jewishness: to become a *mensch*. The characters' feelings of self-hatred are overcome by recognizing their part in the Jewish community and

taking responsibility for other members of their group, which is indicative of the moral code of *menshlichkeit*.

While the short stories *The Magic Barrel* and *Epstein* depict different kinds of identity struggles, they are connected to the other men's crises through their shared feelings of inadequacy. Leo Finkle is troubled by his inability to love and have faith in God as well as his inexperience with women. Lou Epstein, the most tragic of all the characters, suffers from a belated mid-life crisis that renders him completely helpless and with no hope of redemption. These two characters as well as Eli Peck and Henry Freeman are troubled by their relationships with women, which aggravate their insecurities. The female characters in these short stories are not only treated as objects or used to further the men's personal and spiritual development, but they also have the power to emasculate them.

The women in Malamud's and Roth's short stories are also second or third generation Jewish Americans and have therefore undergone the same Americanization process as the male characters. Female Jewish Americans were affected by the possibilities American life entailed. U.S. culture could not be further from the obedient domestic lifestyle their Orthodox Eastern European ancestors displayed. The women in the short stories exhibit a kind of behavior that hints at independence and emancipation, at least to the extent the socio-economic climate of the 1950s in the United States allowed. This is of importance for the men's identity crisis because the gradual loosening up of the patriarchic hierarchy within the Jewish community only adds to their feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. The male protagonists do not only have to fight for their status in a society ruled by a notion of masculinity they cannot live up to but they also have to worry about the once secure place in their own community. This observation suggests the possibility of subsequent studies of the female characters in Bernard Malamud's and Philip Roth's short stories. Such a project could involve an investigation of how culturally different ideals of gender have influenced the process of Jewish American identity-building in the literature of the postwar period. Gender identities are always created in a relational manner, meaning that ideas of masculinity and femininity do not exist separately. An analysis of female Jewish American characters and their interaction with men would therefore contribute to a better understanding of the identity crises displayed by the male protagonists in Malamud's and Roth's short stories.

In the end, the question of "Man or *Mensch*?" needs to be replaced by the affirmative statement "Man and *Mensch*". By re-evaluating their Americanized lives, embracing their Jewish heritage and striving towards becoming a *mensch*, most of characters in the short

stories considered are able to move beyond the either/or paradigm that compels them to choose. In general, Malamud and Roth expect *menshlichkeit* from all of their protagonists, regardless of the nature of their crises, in order to redeem their existence as inherently flawed men, which is their inevitable lot as human beings.

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Appendix

English Abstract

This Master's thesis examines the identity crises experienced by second or third generation Jewish American male characters in selected short stories from Bernard Malamud's short story collection *The Magic Barrel* (1958) and Philip Roth's short story collection *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories* (1959). The theoretical background of this thesis includes concepts from the fields of Jewish studies and masculinity studies. Jewish self-hatred, the moral code of *menshlichkeit* and a relational approach to the construction of masculinities are guiding the analysis. A close reading of the authors' short fiction showed that their stories depict middle-class lives that are divided along ethnic and religious lines and the marginalization of Jewish American men is visible through the absence of ties to gentile, white America. At the core of several of the protagonists' struggles lies a crisis revolving around their Jewish identity, which is inextricably linked to their perception of masculinity. They strive towards the unreachable ideal of hegemonic American masculinity in the face of their own inadequacy. The protagonists' insecurities are reinforced by their relationship with women. The female characters in these short stories are not only used to further the men's personal and spiritual development, but they also have the power to emasculate them. Moreover, all of the protagonists' crises are triggered by fateful encounters with other Jewish characters that make them reconsider the significance of their own Jewishness in their lives and the quality of American middle-class values. The characters' feelings of self-hatred are often overcome by recognizing their part in the Jewish community and taking responsibility for other members, which is indicative of the moral code of *menshlichkeit*. Therefore, the question of "Man or *Mensch*?" needs to be replaced by the statement "Man and *Mensch*", which exemplifies the male characters' multi-layered masculine and national identities.

Keywords: Jewish American literature, masculinity, Jewish self-hatred, *menshlichkeit*, post-World War II, 1950s

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Darstellung von jüdisch-amerikanischen Protagonisten aus zweiter und dritter Generation und deren Identitätskrise in Kurzgeschichten aus den 1950er Jahren. Für die Analyse werden die Kurzgeschichtensammlungen *The Magic Barrel* (1958) von Bernard Malamud und *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories* (1959) von Philip Roth herangezogen. Der theoretische Hintergrund dieser Masterarbeit setzt sich aus den Bereichen der Judaistik sowie der Männerforschung zusammen. Die Analyse orientiert sich an den Konzepten des Jüdischen Selbsthasses, dem Moralkodex der Menschlichkeit und einem beziehungsorientierten Zugang zu verschiedenen Arten von Männlichkeit. Die Literaturanalyse zeigt, dass die Protagonisten von der amerikanischen Mittelschicht trotz erfolgreicher Assimilation an die Grenze der Gesellschaft gedrängt werden. Sie eifern dem unerreichbaren Ideal von amerikanischer Männlichkeit hinterher und werden von Gefühlen der Unzulänglichkeit geplagt, welche von den Frauen in ihrem Leben noch weiter verstärkt werden. Die Identitätskrisen werden durch Begegnungen mit anderen jüdischen Charakteren ausgelöst und bringen die männlichen Protagonisten dazu, den Stellenwert ihrer jüdischen Herkunft zu überdenken und ihre amerikanische Sozialisation in Frage zu stellen. Ihre Identitätskrisen sind oft von Selbsthass geprägt, welcher durch ein Bekenntnis zur Jüdischen Gemeinschaft überwunden werden können. Die Protagonisten lernen Verantwortung für ihre jüdischen Mitmenschen zu übernehmen und sind somit nicht mehr nur Männer, sondern auch wahre Menschen im Sinne der jüdischen Morallehre. Letzen Endes sind sie dazu in der Lage, die Vielschichtigkeit ihrer männlichen, und sowohl amerikanischen also auch jüdischen, Identität zu akzeptieren.

Schlagwörter: Jüdisch-amerikanische Literatur, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Männlichkeit, jüdischer Selbsthass, Menschlichkeit, Nachkriegszeit, 1950er