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Dissent and community in Jewish-American fiction

Gold, Ira Y., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1993

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A

DISSENT AND COMMUNITY IN JEWISH-AMERICAN FICTION

by

Ira Y. Gold

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1993

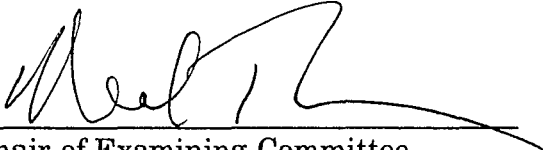
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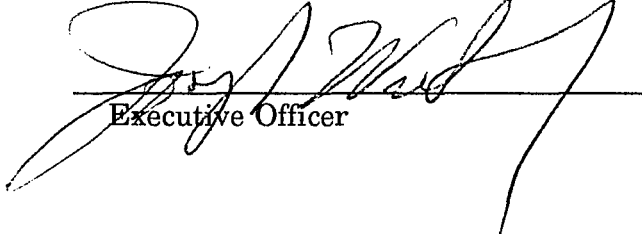
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Abstract

DISSENT AND COMMUNITY IN JEWISH-AMERICAN FICTION

by

Ira Y. Gold

Advisor: Professor Neil Tolchin

For much of this century, American-Jewish literature has been accused of being the work of alienated and marginal writers in revolt against both their ancient traditions and the modern American society. But this study approaches American-Jewish literature from a historical perspective. I hope to prove that the American-Jewish writer is working in a long tradition of dissenter as community builders. Far from being alienated from society, the main concern

of the American-Jewish writer is the search for community. Writers such as Anzia Yezierska, Saul Bellow, and Henry Roth, are actually following in the tradition of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah who preached against ritual formalism and spiritual poverty. It had been these prophets who, though sometimes ostracized and murdered, had given shape to a community-in-exile that might have otherwise have remained shapeless. Similarly, the American-Jewish writers, far from existing in a historical vacuum, are part of this tradition of criticizing a community while at the same time being drawn nearer to it.

The chapters of this work each deal with two writers from succeeding decades, beginning in 1912 with Mary Antin's Promised Land. It will become obvious that the Jewish community in America was formed because of a dialectical process between dissenting authors. The cast of the debate took on a historical pattern that began with the Old Testament: Should the Hebrew\Jewish community open itself up to foreign influences, or should it remain true to a heritage which they believed to be divinely ordained? Historically, and in America, the community actually adopts the dissenters positions, sometimes altering tradition, but making survival possible.

Prologue

When selecting a topic for literary investigation, there are some who like to view their project as an interesting cultural pursuit, a challenging intellectual puzzle, and a potentially rewarding professional opportunity. These scholars would acknowledge something of a split between their own lives and the subject of their work. Perhaps they enjoy this split and see it as a way to remain aloof -- impartial observers on the literary scene. To interject one's own life experience into one's scholarship is to lose a certain objectivity, the random sampling of themes and motifs replaced by a highly skewed group of personal concerns. On the other hand, there are those who seem to think it folly to pretend objectivity. They claim that it is impossible to remove oneself from one's own life experience; and to pretend that one can is, at best, foolish, and, at worst, a calculated strategy to deceive. They claim that ultimately, one always writes "through the body," and they feel justified in incorporating as much personal biography as scholarly research into their work. Selecting a topic for literary investigation for them then amounts to finding a text which they can use as a spool to wind their own lives into and around at will. Thus, they might claim, far more truthful and realistic conclusions are made.

My own formula in choosing a dissertation topic, basically a survey of American-Jewish literature from the perspective of the dissenter, had used a combination of the above views. While I do not interject my own experience into the discussion, keeping the tone scholarly and disinterested, I will admit that the topic was chosen for slightly more personal reasons than the scholarly objective of fulfilling the professional obligation of producing a book-length work. In the process of explaining the biographical reasoning that went into choosing my subject, it will also become clear why I felt there was a need for yet another survey-like study of American-Jewish literature.

My upbringing was one of rigid orthodoxy. But I couldn't help except be disturbed by a seeming contradiction between the authority's disapproval of my, at times, renegade behavior and the approbation granted the behavior of, for example, the Patriarch Abraham. Specifically, I rebelled against the great hair-splitting tradition of *pilpul* and *hiluk* in which I was raised, just as Abraham had decided to smash his father Terach's idols. And though I never claimed to have heard heavenly voices that justified my decision, I had read on my own Shelly and Byron and J.S. Mill and many other post-enlightment writers who protested against conservatism and parochialism, advocating more universal codes of brotherhood, ones which included women and even *goyim*. So instead of studying the arcane laws enumerated in the Talmud as I had

been encouraged, I left the yeshiva and fled to the local library just as the Egyptian prince Moses had fled into the Midianite hills after killing a servant of the Pharaoh, his adopted father. Despite my feeling, a feeling that I could not articulate, that I was doing nothing wrong (I could not even dream that I was working from inside a tradition,) parents, teachers, and friends acted as if I were losing not only my soul, but my mind as well. Clergymen, mystics, and psychiatrists were called in to save me from myself. Nevertheless, I continued to find myself substituting obsessive reading of ritual texts with the obsessive reading of secular texts. Of particular interest to me was a group of writers, born of immigrant parents and raised in a Jewish tradition, who saw through some of the middle-class pieties and hypocrisies and put themselves at risk for communal censure. And though it has taken me half my life, I have come to conclude, that despite my having been condemned for helping to destroy two-thousand years of tradition, I had actually been working inside a historical context, one in which dissent has been used by the community at large to change normative practice and to help create a community which is viable for the time and place in which it exists. This is not to say that those who wish to create a neo-*shtetl* in Brooklyn are wrong. But I emphasize that it is the fusion of Asian minor and European traditions with the American ideal of rugged individualism and multi-culturalism, that will allow a

recognizable Jewish community to survive into the twenty-first century.

Finally, this is not just a work intended to justify the ways of my life to my parents and childhood community. I have also found that previous surveys of American-Jewish literature are lacking a certain amount of historical context. Some of these surveys see American-Jewish literature as a unique manifestations of Jewish thought. Fiction, in particular, is sometimes judged in a complete vacuum, as either upholding what some see as traditional values (usually values which seem suspiciously similar to middle-class American Christian values) or as an expression of self-alienation and self-hatred. The best of the surveys link American-Jewish writing to a nineteenth century European literary tradition began by Sholom Aleichem and Mendele Mocher Seforim. Some European-Jewish elements that these surveys point out that are also part of American-Jewish writing is the concept of *Menchlekhait* (Ruth Wisse), the centrality of the *schlemiel* character (Sanford Pinsker), and the valuing of the family and the community (Louis Fried). However, the point I wish to make is that though American Jewish literature is heavy with the relatively new art form of fiction, it is a literature that is very much a part of two-thousand years of dialogue and community formation. As I attempt to show in the opening chapter, Mary Antin's The Promised Land is as much a

part of Jewish culture as Yehuda Ha'levi's Kuzari, and Bellow's Herzog is as much an explanation for the need of tradition as is Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed. American-Jewish literature is not merely an updated version of an earlier tradition, but a new creation which has as its thesis previously unforeseen problems in Jewish existence. But what Judaic writing from all periods have in common is a fearlessness to criticize normative practice. And it should never be assumed that the writers are alienated or self-hating, just as it is not assumed that the Prophets of the Old Testament are alienated and self-hating. It is the goal of this work to help make it understood that the American Jewish writers and thinkers do not have a desire to remove themselves from the community, but to be a very much a part of it and to have a voice in its formation.

It is for these reasons that I undertook this study. It is actually a labor which has healed some wounds and has, if nothing else, convinced me that dissenters are entitled to a place in the community which sometimes regards itself as monolithic and never-changing. Indeed, those who deny that dissenters have a place in the community are the ones who are ignorant of tradition.

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Dissent and Community in Jewish-American Fiction

The notion that Jewish-American intellectuals have willfully marginalized themselves -- first because they are Jewish in a Christian world, and second because they are intellectual in a materialistic society -- is accepted by many critics. Allen Guttman writes that

The history of political radicalism in America has very largely been the history of Jews doubly alienated from Judaism and from Christendom, apostates from the Mosaic dispensation and from the gospel according to Adam Smith ('The Conversion of the Jews' 443)

Those who accept this hypothesis often further postulate that Jewish intellectuals are self-hating and that they create works that deny their heritage:

The alienated, marginal men of the second generation who shed their ancestral background lacking a sense of group belonging and having no stable, continuous set of life definitions, often find themselves in an intolerable position. Their marginality finds expression in a sense of rootlessness, of an inferiority complex, which at times leads them even to self-hatred and hatred of their own people. (Cohen 97)

Others, however, see the alienation of the Jewish writer as a way in which the

Jew can speak for the modern age from a perspective denied those in the mainstream. Bernard Sherman holds that

the Jew's marginal position in society [by the end of W.W. II] seemed to be a reflection of the insecurity and dread of the Western World. As a long-time expert in alienation, the Jew presumably could provide insights that now had a universal application. A theme had been found . . . the Jew gained admittance as an outsider. As [Isaac] Rosenfeld put it: The Jew is a "specialist in alienation (the one international banking system the Jews actually control.)" A definite pride was taken in the sharing of this unhappy state, and a claim was made for its wider application in modern life than to the Jews alone. The perspective of Jewishness, it was asserted, opened a vista that made the Jew privy to the mysterious, destructive forces which now threaten human life and culture. (113-114)

Philip Roth takes an even more defiant stance in defending himself and other humanist writers against the presumption that alienation equals self-hate. He contends that the portrayal of Jews in the throes of a moral dilemma are perceived as anti-semitic only by self-styled Jewish apologists who are frightened by the idea of Jews being characterized as fully human. Roth goes on to defend his right to use his own experience and culture in order to better understand the human condition. In regard to his story "Epstein," Roth writes,

I do not write a story to make evident whatever disapproval I may feel for adulterous men. 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 ("Writing About Jews" 451).

The artist, Roth believes, deals not in races and nations, but in individuals.

I will argue, however, that these critics take a historically short view of Jewish writing and that Roth himself is being disingenuous when he claims that he deals in universal situations which have only incidental connections to his Jewish heritage. Jewish-American writers are neither "doubly alienated" nor merely exercising their rights as artists and thinkers. They are actually working inside a Jewish tradition that accepts dissenting voices as a means by which the community may be strengthened and kept alive. And while ideological battles are fought between the established community and its dissenters (and between dissenters and other dissenters), this is in no way a fight to the death.

It is a commonplace among Jews that Judaism is not in the habit of disowning its great heretics completely. Rather it accommodates with worldly wisdom what is worthwhile in Spinoza, Maimonides, Freud, and Kafka. (Schultz 22)

But one can go beyond saying that Judaism merely "accommodates" its heretics. The history of Judaism is steeped in the image of dissenter as community builder. Abraham smashed his father's idols in prelude to establishing the Jewish nation. Moses, as Egyptian prince, struck and killed an Egyptian soldier who was beating a Hebrew slave. Characters in the book of the prophets act in ways which separate them from community while at the

same time drawing them nearer to it. In criticizing the community, the prophets frequently use language just as harsh as more contemporary critics who are labeled self-hating. Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah preach against ritual formalism and spiritual poverty. For their pains, they are ostracized and murdered. But their works have been incorporated into the canon and their words have given shape to a community-in-exile which would have otherwise remained shapeless.

This work shall be an examination of some of the literature which helped shape the Jewish community in America. I will attempt to show that the overwhelming concern of the Jewish-American writer is community -- specifically, what does it mean to be an American and a Jew? Where do one's obligations lie? To tradition? To an international Jewish community? To an ideal of social justice for all the oppressed? Or conversely, does such allegiance belong with other Americans? To the American notions of self-reliance and rugged individualism? To the boosterism and optimism of the most capitalist of societies? In other words, which of these ideas and traditions, or which combination of ideas and traditions, do the American-Jewish community value most? An examination of representative works will show that the answers to these questions have come about through a dialectical process. From the earliest American-Jewish literature, writers of dissenting philosophies vie with each other to be heard as the "true voice" of community. Most of the writers in

this study are not happy with the status-quo. Mary Antin had, for example, written The Promised Land to counter what she saw as a needless clinging to a European tradition when such a tradition was no longer necessary in the new Zion. Both Abraham Cahan and Anzia Yeziarska counter Antin and remain unhappy with the assumption that a Jewish heritage has nothing unique to offer to the American community. They write novels which emphasize an adherence to some of the principles -- spirituality, a concern for social justice, suspicion of conformism -- that they see in Jewish tradition, but seems to be lacking in an American tradition. What actually occurs in the community is a remarkable synthesis of these opposing ideas. The community does not dismiss the economic and political potential of America, but recognizes that an Emersonian world-view fails to satisfy the needs of a people whose ethos has traditionally been less that of self-reliance than of community unity.

But the one Emersonian element which Jewish immigrants brought with them from Europe, perhaps more than any other immigrant group, is a respect for individual dissent. As a group, Jews were certainly the primary dissenters in an almost uniformly Christian Europe. They knew that to be an outsider did not necessarily mean one was wrong. While Salo Baron may be correct in saying that Jews relied on entrenched Christian authorities to protect them,

The German hierarchy served as the chief and relatively most consistent protector of Jewry.

Certainly, the bishops rarely initiated, even though they did not always strongly enough resist, the popular pressures aimed at the elimination of Jew from their bishoprus (192).

It is not at all clear that "[t]here had been for Jews of the diaspora a negative co-relation between Judaism and political radicalism" (Guttmann Crisis of Identity 135). This contention, however, misses one important point. The very existence of the Jews in a homogeneously Christian Europe was subversive, an act of radical destabilization. And though it's true that the Jewish community often sought the protection of regional rulers -- and had a stake in their stability -- it was with a distinct skepticism, even a cynicism, that the Jews looked upon the protection these rulers provided. One of Meyer Levin's first-generation characters in The Old Bunch remarks, "As the learned Rabbi of Bialystok said, a guarantee from a *goyish* government, begging your pardon ladies, is useful to wipe the behind" (184).

The real power behind what some call "the miracle of Jewish survival" lay, even in the closed world of the *shtetl*, in the right of every Jew be unconditionally accepted into the Jewish community:

Religious observance is no criterion. Even a man who breaks the commandments is a Jew, even one who eats forbidden food. A person who renounces the faith is repudiated by his family and mourned as if he were dead. Yet he can always repent and return. Moreover, even in his apostasy something of him remains Jewish . . . no matter what he does, he is 'still a Jew'." (Zborowski and Herzog 424)

Such acceptance has allowed the Jewish intellectual a certain freedom to range from orthodox opinion. Jewish enlightenment philosophers who wished to remain part of the tradition while questioning aspects of it subscribed to the idea that Judaism prescribes the deed, but frees the thought.

In addition, Judaism puts emphasis on the ability of each individual to interpret God's will for himself. As far back as Saadya Gaon (890?-960?), Jewish philosophers postulated that the evidence of one's own senses, and not miracles, is the foundation of God's legitimacy:

The certainty of the miracles of Mount Sinai was founded on the fact that God spoke face to face to the entire people; revelation is then not dependent on a single prophet, but upon the trustworthiness of an entire people. (Julius Guttmann 335)

Both Christianity and Islam give the words of their prophets the force of law. This is not the case with Judaism. Because God is unknowable and even unnameable, no individual can know His will, even in regard to His revealed law. In the Talmud, many questions remain unanswered with the prescription to wait until the Messiah comes for a definitive answer. (The one word formula for this decision is *Taku*. An agreement is then cobbled out between the arguing parties.) Jews, because of their subordinate position relative to the dominant culture, also had more latitude (and maybe more at stake) in choosing whom would speak for them. However,

the authority of any leader is not absolute but relative - the *shtetl* recognizes no absolutes.

Almost any category is subject to invasion from another category. Almost any agent is subject to replacement under exceptional circumstances. Any generalization has its exceptions. Any statement has its qualifications. Any authority, even that of God, is subject to check, question and criticism. (Zborowski and Herzog 420-421)

Though for the religious *shtetl* Jew, the ultimate source of authority is the Torah and one must remain true to its core spirit; each individual has the obligation to be his own *Shulkhan Arukh*, or code of law.

With the recognition that no one person, no matter how God-like, has a monopoly on revelation, the prospect for self-interpretation opens up. Also opening up is the prospect for schism, internal religious wars, the disintegration of community, and the ultimate absorption of the minority community into the majority. Yet a recognizable Jewish community had held together under the most adverse conditions for two thousand years. And the ability of the Jewish community to be formed by accepting dissent and incorporate far-flung and even contradictory ideologies into normative religious practice has played a large role in its survival. Before discussing the Jewish/American debate, I would like to outline some of the schisms in Jewish history which shows that by fusing dissenting voices, the Jewish community forms and re-forms, enabling it to survive great external pressures. I hope to demonstrate that from the earliest time, the debate in the Jewish community has revolved around how much the community should open itself to foreign

influences, and how much it should remain rigorously traditional. This is not a debate that predictably pits religious separatists against assimilationists. For even highly theo-centric thinkers such as Maimonides and Saadya Goan came to see the value of foreign rational philosophies, and such rationalist thinkers such as Moses Mendelssohn and Theodore Herzl came to see the value of a religious heritage. The American Jewish debate is, similarly, one which revolves around how, and how much, is it to open itself to foreign ideologies.

The Old Testament itself seems to be a document that had been written to unite not one nation, but two nations, with two distinct world views.

A challenging and perplexing duality runs through the Five Books of Moses in the Old Testament. There are not only two peoples, the Hebrews and the Israelites, but also two Moses, the Levite Moses and Midianite Moses. There are also two Gods, one referred to as Jehovah (translated as "Lord") and the other named "Elohim" (translated as "God"). Later in the Old Testament we read of two kingdoms, fused into one, then broken in two. There are two rival temples, one in the kingdom of Judah, in Jerusalem, the other in the kingdom of Israel, in Bethel. There are two version of many, many other events, as the perceptive reader of the Old Testament may have noticed. Are we dealing with two versions of the same story, or with two different stories merged into one? (Dimont 37)

Though no one is completely sure of the reason for these two versions, a likely explanation is that the Old Testament united the mythologies of invading

nomadic tribes coming out of Egypt with the mythologies of the indigenous population of Palestine. For even at the height of its power, Israel was a small nation situated at a crossroad of great strategic value to large empires. Its rulers could not afford a kingdom divided against itself. Consequently, the writing of the Old Testament (which began, approximately, at the end of the ninth century B.C. and was redacted in the middle of the fifth century B.C.) was a political act meant to unite two different thought systems. This may be the first example of a normative religious practice being created by a fusion of different ideologies.

By the time the Pentateuch was redacted, the seeds of all later Jewish conflicts had been sown. Specifically, the debate raged over just how open the Jewish nation had to be to foreign ideologies. Even during the reign of Solomon and the building of the first temple, the Northern and Southern kingdoms battled over the centralization of worship in Jerusalem. The South, in whose territory Jerusalem lay, advocated a centralized place for sacrifice in order to avoid adopting foreign influences and syncretistic forms of worship. The North had been more open to outside rituals, particularly the cult of Ba'al, and, "saw no reason to centralize worship or to limit membership in the legitimate priesthood" (Schiffman 8). After Solomon died (931 B.C.), there was a formal split between the two kingdoms. The North, or the Israelite Kingdom, anointed Jeroboam king. The South, the kingdom of Judah, was ruled by Rehoboam (1

Kings 12:1-15). Still, both kingdoms were tied together by tribal loyalties and by threats of invasion by, alternately, the armies of Assyria, Egypt, Babylonia, and Phoenicia. Before a definitive solution might have been found, however, the original Hebrew nation came to an end. In 722 B.C., the Israelites were conquered and dispersed by the Assyrians, creating the legend of the ten lost tribes. The kingdom of Judah along with the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C..

During the era of the Second Temple, four major Jewish sects lived in Palestine. Two of these groups, the Sadducees and the Boethusian, "were considerably Hellenized. They, therefore, represent the focal point of a group which accepted many aspects of Hellenistic culture while remaining loyal to the Jewish tradition" (Schiffman 13). The Pharisees were much more traditional. They rejected Hellenistic culture and, "they viewed as authoritative only what they regarded as the ancient traditions of Israel" (Schiffman 14). They were particularly careful about the religious purity of their food, the Sabbath, and tithing. Of the minor sects residing in Israel at this time, the Essenes are the best known. The Essenes, even more than the Pharisees, eschewed all Hellenistic philosophies, and some scholars connect this sect with the separatist colony at Qumran where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. All four groups were separated by language, economic status - the Sadducees were

the priests and aristocracy while the Pharisees were much more closely aligned with the common people - and religious practice. But there seems to have been very little sectarian strife.

The social consequences of these differences are readily apparent. What needs to be stressed is that, with the exception of the priesthood, one could join another group simply by adopting the rules of the sect. These were not closed groups . .

The fact is that there were affinities among all the groups since they shared many religious principles and practices and a common nationality. (Schiffman 29-30)

It becomes clear that Palestine had been a unique place at the turn of the common era. Not only was belonging to one sect or another a matter of individual choice, but even within the sects, political alignments cut across sectarian lines. All the groups, whether Pharisee, Sadducee or Essene, had their radicals and conservatives, their violent revolutionaries and moderate accomodationists. It is no coincidence that we cannot make any definitive statements regarding to which sect Jesus -- who lived during this era -- belonged. Plausible arguments can be made to link Jesus with Sadducees, Essenes, and even though he railed against them, the Pharisees. And it appears that Jesus never intended to break from Judaism and, certainly never considered himself a God or the Second Person in the Trinity. A.N. Wilson concludes that Jesus merely wanted to teach his followers how to be better Jews and how

to make a connection between their religious and ritual observances on the one hand, and on the other, the deepest stirring of conscience, when God speaks directly to the individual. (42)

John P. Meir suggests that Jesus was an outcast appealing to the mainstream community to be more forgiving and inclusive of his fellow outcasts. The break between Jews and Christians did not come until later, when Paul eliminated the most basic rituals in order to make Christianity palatable to communities outside Hebrew Palestine.

Until the destruction of the Second Temple it is impossible to talk about a settled Jewish tradition. "Despite the Rabbinic ideal," Schiffman writes, "it seems that the Jewish people always had room for differences and for movements within it. These could be religious, political, or socio economic" (35). What is interesting is that from the time the Hebrew tribes left Egypt until the twentieth century, the central questions facing Jews have remained the same: how centralized should Jewish leadership be? and how much of the philosophies of outside cultures should the Jewish community adopt? Certainly, it was discovered early that going to either extreme would mean the ultimate destruction of the community. To adopt nothing would result in rigor-mortis and begin the process of slow decay. To adopt everything would mean the dispersion of a culture that felt it had an ethical message to give the world. So Jews needed to develop a strategy which utilized dissenters and the

competing ideologies they represented to form the community:

What Judaism and the Jewish people needed was to experiment by playing out the results of the old conflicts to see how the various approaches would work. Thus, the sects were a proving ground from which emerged an answer to which way Judaism would move in the post 70 C.E. period. (Schiffman 35)

One reason why the Pharisee movement survived was because its approach to Jewish law was the most flexible. It had incorporated some of the separatist views of the Essenes, along with the accommodationist views of the Sadducees and Boethusians. Most importantly, it emphasized the Oral Law, which resulted in highly individualistic interpretation and allowed for continued dissent. It was also flexible enough to allow Jewish communities in diverse and alien cultures to adapt to their surroundings while keeping a distinct identity.

After the Romans sacked Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish community became Babylon, where the Babylonian Talmud and the rise of Rabbinic Judaism began. The Mishna and Talmud together comprised the codification of the oral law. These laws created, in effect, a very rigid interpretation of Judaism and were resented by many Jews, particularly those living far from the centers of Rabbinic influence:

The imposition of Rabbanism undoubtedly took a great deal of time and effort on the part of the Babylonian Jewish religious and secular leadership. Resentment of the process was strongest farthest away from the centers of Rabbinic Judaism, where local customs may well

have predominated. (Lasker 52)

Antagonism was particularly high in Persia and in Israel, where the Rabbis wrote a competing version of the Talmud known as the Jerusalem Talmud. The remoteness and the rigidity of the Rabbinic leaders caused one Anan Ben David to begin what later became known as the Karaite movement. Karaism was not, however, founded as an antinomian movement, intending to make Judaic practice easier (some practices, such as the prohibition against any light on the Sabbath, even light that had been lit before the Sabbath began, made orthodox practice more difficult.) Rather, it seems to have been a corrective movement, intending to reform Judaism from the inside by taking power away from the Rabbis and putting it back in the hands of the individual practitioners. Anan attempted to accomplish this by going back to the somewhat buried ideologies of the Sadducees and Essenes who believed not in the oral tradition, but only in the written words of the Pentateuch. Anan's motto was "Search well in the Torah and do not rely on my opinion."

So many communities flocked to the Karaite movement that the Rabbis were forced to respond. Neither camp was in a position to carry out anything other than a war of words, but works on philosophy, law, Hebrew grammar, calendar calculations were exchanged. The main defender of Rabbinic tradition was Saadya Goan:

[He] saw much that was fine in the Karaite religion, and recognized the legitimate aspiration

of the people who joined the sect. His first move was to translate the Old Testament into Arabic, so the people, who no longer knew Hebrew, would not have to depend upon Karaite preachers to learn what was in the Torah but would be able to read it for themselves, . . . Next Saadya Goan set out to incorporate into the Talmud the best precepts of Karaism. And finally, he penned a series of brilliant and devastating attacks against Karaism itself. (Dimont 294)

Just as the Pharisees were able to incorporate dissenting views into their communities, Rabbinic Judaism ultimately survived the Karaite challenge because it recognized the problems of petrification inherent in a highly codified religion. In response to Anan Ben David's challenge -- and it had been a relatively quick response -- Judaism incorporated needed reform in order to remain viable. It is ironic that though the Karaite movement alerted the Rabbis to the need for individuals to read the Torah for themselves, the Karaites themselves could not survive because of their overly literal interpretation of the Old Testament. It had been impossible for a code written in the tenth century B.C. to function as a guide of how to live two thousand years later. But today the Karaites are recognized as having "created a parallel, competing system to Rabbanism, which, though doomed to perpetual minority status, remains an imposing edifice. Jewish history has been enriched by their efforts" (Lasker 66).

The Rabbinic adoption of the Karaites' emphasis on the importance of individual interpretation of the Bible had a profound effect on the later

medieval controversy between faith and reason. As mentioned above, it was Saadya Gaon who first postulated the theory that historical revelation is true not because we can rationally prove it to be true or because of a prophet's words, but because we believe the observers who had witnessed the event. This philosophy is of critical importance to the writings of later Jewish thinkers who were reviled for using rationality to defend tradition. In Guide to the Perplexed, Maimonides (1135-1204) believes that God, "cannot do something logically impossible, but that God can do something naturally impossible" (Jospe 89). For example, it is possible to accept, based on the testimony of many witnesses, miracles such as the splitting of the Red Sea. But it is impossible to accept the logically absurd notion of the Trinity (one is three.) Though this might be considered hair-splitting today, Maimonides outraged many fundamentalist who believed that relying on reason to prove faith could lead to a laxity in the interpretation of the law. So outraged were some Jewish leaders, that in 1232, they asked the Dominicans in Southern France to publicly burn Maimonides' works Guide to the Perplexed and the Book of Knowledge. Later, protest and calls for bans against Maimonides' work spread to the Near East, Northern France, and Germany. Complicating the anti-philosophical movement begun by the biblical literalists was the rise of mysticism at the beginning of the Thirteenth century.

Both the philosophers and the mystics referred to esoteric doctrines in The Torah as *sitrei Torah*,

the secrets of the Torah. But philosophy engaged in abstract allegory, while the mystics sought a concrete symbol. (Jospe 101)

Though it is true that Maimonides did not start out being a dissenter -- his major philosophical works were not even meant for a lay audience, but for those familiar with Aristotelian thought - Maimonides and his followers had, nevertheless, been turned into dissenters and a dissenting movement by those in power. For Maimonides had used a previously unknown method of inquiry - rationalist philosophy - to prove what had previously needed no proof and which might undermine (as it eventually did) established practice. However, in the end, the attacks against the philosophers failed. Some of those who once testified against Maimonides undertook a penance of visiting his grave. Once again, Judaism proved that survival of a minority culture lay in its ability to absorb competing ideologies:

The rationalists succeeded in demonstrating that it is impossible to restrict Judaism to the confines of a spiritual and intellectual ghetto, to shackle the free minds of Jews in the name of Judaism. (Jospe 108)

Maimonides began the process by which Jews evaluated themselves by gentile and secular standards. He, unconsciously, set the stage for other Jewish rationalist dissenters such as Spinoza, Moses Mendelssohn, and even Theodore Herzl, all of whom can be seen to have continued the tradition of dissent that eventually had to be incorporated into the mainstream community.

The next major dissenting movement went in a completely different direction than the rationalists. Israel Baal Shem Tov, or "the Master of the Good Name" -- usually known by the abbreviation "Besht" -- founded the Hasidic movement. During his lifetime (1700-1760), Judaism had been suffering under oppression from both outside and inside the community. First, the Chmielnicki pogroms (1648-1649) in Eastern Poland and the Ukraine decimated a large portion of the Jewish communities in that region. The invasion of Russia and Sweden into Poland also caused much upheaval. It is estimated that about seven hundred communities were destroyed and 100,000 to 200,000 Jews were murdered during this time (Dresner 126). One result of the carnage was the rise of self-proclaimed Messiahs, whom the Jews were only too ready to believe. The rising and dashing of the hopes caused by these charlatans (Shabbetai Zevi [1625-1676] and Jacob Frank [1726-1791] are the best known) resulted in the Jewish community sinking into an even deeper malaise. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Jews of Eastern Europe were adrift economically, oppressed socially (by rising anti-semitism), and verging on spiritual and intellectual collapse. The rabbinic leaders seemed to have no answers and indeed themselves proved to be yet another source of suffering for their community:

[H]uddling over the Talmud, they closed their doors ever tighter, while the people were neglected. The method of study, characterized by hair-splitting dialectics, *pilpul* and *hiluk*, led more

often to contests of mental superiority than enlightenment, and was, in any case, reserved for the scholars alone . . . penance and fasting were prescribed. Vivid pictures of punishment in the next world, gruesome stories concerning the torture of sinners in hell, the transmigration of souls, and the exploits of demons, were thought to keep man from sin Fear prevailed, a gloomy asceticism, an atmosphere of strictness and melancholy. (Dresner 127)

The Besht countered the Rabbis by emphasizing two points. Firstly, he insisted that the most important element in the worship of God is joy. This was clarified by later Hasidic masters:

Moses compiles a frightful catalogue of curses which will befall the people after his death should they fail to keep the way of the lord. "Of all the people's sins which were responsible for these malediction," writes a later Hasidic teacher, "the Torah lists only one: 'All these curses shall come upon you . . . 'because thou servest not the Lord with joyfulness and with gladness of heart' (Dut. 28:47) From this we may deduce that it [not serving the Lord with joy] is the most serious of all transgressions!" (Dresner 133)

This is an obvious distinction from the dry Rabbinic scholasticism which had been practiced by those in power. By saying that joy, whether related to worship or merely to one's daily routine, was as legitimate a way to worship God as studying the most hair-splitting Talmudic points, the Besht attempted to wrest the mantle of legitimate orthodoxy from the intellectually elitist Rabbis and give it back to the people.

But it was the Besht's second point which the Rabbis found completely untenable. Here, in an attempt to strengthen the notion of the importance of the menial in the scheme of God's universe, the Besht postulated that all things have within them sparks of the divine:

Not only man in all his glory, but nature in all its splendor too was ablaze with the divine. The Besht taught that beneath the multiplicity of things and creatures, so utterly different one from the other - stone and insect, animal and flower, cloud and man there is an unseen, all pervasive, inner unity which runs through all creation, joining every form of existence, horizontally, and even more, binding the beginning to the end of time, vertically. (Dresner 143)

The devaluation of the study of the Talmud along with the philosophy of this proto-Pantheism was too much. The Rabbis, led by the Vilna Gaon, maintained that Hasidism was heretical and closely associated the leading *Rebbes* with false Messiahs. He refused to meet with the Hasidic leaders, and made it quite clear that their teachings were a danger to Judaism. Yet through it all, the Hasidic movement flourished. One early Hasidic leader -- Reb Shneur Zalman, founder of the Lubavitch Hasidim -- took comfort, ironically, in the treatment of the highly intellectual and now canonized Maimonides and wrote in a now famous letter:

Who was greater than the Moses of his time, Moses Maimonides, of blessed memory . . . Nevertheless, in distant lands he was considered a heretic, and his books were publicly burned, by order of those who were wise in their own eyes,

and objected to what he had written . . . However, with the passing of time, their hatred disappeared, the truth became evident and all Israel recognized that Moses was true and his teaching was true. So may it be with us, speedily, in our time. Amen. (Quoted in Dresner 121)

And while it did not happen immediately, today the various Hasidic sects are seen as living symbols of traditional Judaism.

Neither persecution and derision nor excommunications succeeded in driving out the Hasidim from the Jewish fold. They clung to Judaism and, in the course of time, their way of worship was not only accepted as orthodox, but it also profoundly influenced the circles who had previously opposed it. (Wrumbrand 303)

These influences range from the philosophy of Martin Buber to the recognition by non-Hasidic Jews for the need of joy in worship. For their part, Hasidim have distinguished themselves in Talmud study, with men often spending their first thirty years learning in Yeshivas and serving as teachers of the tradition to the less knowledgeable. Once again, the flexibility of normative Judaism to incorporate dissenting voices guaranteed its survival.

While the Hasidic movement was fighting for acceptance, a very different challenge to traditional orthodoxy arose from dissenters who wanted to bring ancient practice into the Age of Reason, re-igniting the most ancient of Jewish debates over foreign influences. The philosophers of the *Haskala*, the enlightenment, were rationalists who - though influenced by Maimonides - did

not share his medieval view of the synthesis of faith and reason. "Where Maimonides had supremacized faith over reason, modern culture demanded that reason evaluate items of faith" (Bayme 177). The earliest philosopher of the *Haskala*, Moses Mendelssohn, tried to unite Judaism and Modernism by showing that Judaism - by eschewing dogma and refusing to rely on miracles (though granting they may have been historical fact) to prove its truthfulness - was the religion of "pure reason." However, as influential as Mendelssohn had been, many later dissenters did not see Judaism in the light of pure reason. Rather they saw it as an anachronism which would be forever at odds with the modern world. The Haskala spread from Mendelssohn's Berlin to the East, where attacks on the rabbis in charge of the traditional community, the *kehilla*, were sarcastic and bitter. The Orthodox camp, including the Hasidim - for the *haskala* was a major force in bringing together the Hasidim with their antagonists, the *mitnagdim* -- issued proclamations and bans against reading the work of the enlightenment writers. And just as the situation mirrored the debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees, the basic solution, thesis-antithesis-synthesis, was the same:

In assessing the impact of Haskalah on modern Jewish history, both a positive and negative legacy emerge. Certainly the Haskalah signified the revival of the Hebrew language and the renaissance of Hebrew literature. Moreover the new relationship to secular culture captured the hearts of all but the most extreme elements within Jewish life. Finally the spirit of rebellion

against rabbinic and *kehillah* authority did produce positive changes in the social, communal, and economic structures of nineteenth-century European Jewry. (Bayme 189)

In short, both the dissidents and the traditionalists were forced to come to terms with each other for their mutual survival. For the Orthodox, the pressures of an industrializing world would require a more secular education to maintain economic viability. And the believers in human enlightenment had to shelve visions of a prejudice-free utopia because of the rise of violent nationalism and anti-semitism. Many of these dissenters lost their rationalist beliefs in progress and became political or cultural Zionists. It was at this point that dissent and community, once again, became inseparably intertwined.

The redactors of the Old Testament began the tradition of valuing difference, and this tradition continued throughout all periods of Jewish history. It has become especially important in the age of individualism. The strategy of allowing a dissenter not to become submerged into the group, but to be forever merged with it, is what Schultz means by "radical sophistication" - the dual recognition of one's existential aloneness and the concrete reality of the community:

The Jewish-American writer is admittedly bitten with the twentieth century neurosis which regards the mass of people as blind to the real problems of life; hence, in a general way he accepts the idea that the growth of the individual must be

achieved, not socially as the Declaration of Independence heralds, but existentially. Yet as a Jew and as an American he never forgets the effect that the private act has on the community. Thus, in his novels the pressure is always toward affiliation, of man-alone one again with the group. (Schultz 13)

It might be said that in Jewish-American fiction "man-alone" is never possible.

This, of course, does not mean that the American Jewish writer has a ready-made community. But as one reads through the decades, it becomes clear that what has developed between writer and writer, and more importantly, writer and community, is the same dialectical pattern that had begun with the writing of the Pentateuch. And though the rhetoric is sometimes extreme, the community accepts the contradictory points of view - and incorporates them into its political and social practices - with a remarkable facility that has become the source of the power and the influence which the Jewish community has achieved in America.

It should be noted that the Jewish dissenter is distinct from the American dissenter. A great deal of difference exists between the American-Jewish novelists who find themselves without an accepting community and the American writers who purposefully remove themselves from the culture as a reaction against industrialization, conformism, and materialism. Thoreau, Melville, Hemingway, Bowles wonder whether this society is fit to live in. And if it isn't, how can one live outside it? Does one go to the forest? To sea? To

Paris or Tangier? But for those coming from the *shtetl*, America had been the wilderness. New York was a place of exile arrived at from a place of exile. There was no question of removing oneself further. In America, one was already so far outside of everything, that further withdrawal could hardly be imagined. And the monastic tradition had been unknown to Jews in Europe.

The idea of asceticism, a kind of programmatic withdrawal from communal life, played only a minor part among East European Jews, partly because a society of deprivation is not likely to be tempted by the luxury of self deprivation. (Howe World of Our Fathers 13)

So what is finally arrived at is a forced merger between intellectual dissenter and community. Delmore Schwartz's protagonist Shenandoah Fish in "America! America!" speaks of his connection with the life of a middle-class, Jewish-American family whom, until this point, he has observed with ironic, intellectual detachment:

And now he [Shenandoah Fish] felt for the first time how closely bound he was to these people. His separation was actual enough, but there existed also an unbreakable unity. As the air was full of the radio's unseen voices, so the life he breathed in was full of those lives and the age in which they had acted and suffered (85).

This from a writer considered by some to be the epitome of the disenfranchised intellectual. Louis Harap writes that

Virtually overnight Schwartz became the standard bearer of the new mentality. In him were fused political disillusionment and an existentialist's modernism heightened by the tensions of the second-generation Jew teetering on the margins of

the semi-acculturated worlds of his Jewish family and the native American cultural milieu. In certain respects, Schwartz' entire career was of the most excruciating marginality because it was the most advanced and subtlest form of the acculturation process . . . In short, Schwartz was the prophet of the post-World War II literary era of alienation. (81-82)

The above quotation highlights the contradiction between writer and critic, text and gloss, and underscores the need to explore American Jewish writing, not for an affirmation of a mindless continuity - - as some apologists would have it - - or for a position of double alienation - - as many critics would have it - - but for the search for a just community bound together by its concern for social and economic equality and its vigorous debate over the spiritual legacy of a Judaic heritage which can be traced back to the earliest period of Jewish writing.

By focusing on characters' search for a community in representative Jewish-American works, it will become clear that in all periods of Jewish-American writing -- from Mary Antin's autobiographical The Promised Land in 1912 to the present day -- the main tension revolves around the type of community the characters struggle to create for themselves in a land forever in the process of creating itself. Pitted against privileging the old world ideas of descent, religious heritage and a sense of belonging to a nation of dissenters, is the idea of self-reliance and material success, of blending-in and passing -- itself a radical departure from the forced isolation of the *shtetl*. Finally, it

could be demonstrated that the concerns and conclusions of the early writers of the century foreshadow the dilemmas of the later writers.

The search for community is framed differently for succeeding decades: assimilation/ethnicity, in the twenties; success and capitalism/reform and revolution, in the thirties; intellectual protest/accommodation (suburbia, "the gilded *shtetl*"), in the fifties and sixties. The final part of this dissertation will deal with contemporary American-Jewish fiction where women and gay writers search for ways in which they can maintain their personal dignity inside a culture that is often hostile to their existence. This search by writers of all persuasions and orientations should be seen in a cultural and historical context (but not always a religious one), which again and again points up the fact that in order for a landless people to survive as a group, competing visions of what constitutes community must be accepted quickly. Yet this does not mean that Jews had an easy time settling in America. Meyer Levin writes that Italians (who often preyed on Jewish youths) found it easier to become Americanized:

My dominant childhood memory is of fear and shame at being a Jew. We children believed ourselves to be smarter than the wops. Yet they seemed more American. For though the Italians were immigrants just like our parents, their children already seemed to have a native right over us, a right to call us sheenie and kike which had overtones of degradation far beyond anything associated with wop of dago. (In Search 6)

The Italian immigrant community adapted more quickly precisely because they

did not have a history of displacement and had built up no strategies to counter assimilation. But the American Jewish community had to overcome the historical ambiguity it felt for forming attachments to any land. But it also had to deal with an intense desire to be, for once, in the mainstream. So through the dissenting voices - voices that protested a heritage being lost or, conversely, progress not being made - the community had been, and is still, being forged.

I will first discuss the period 1912-1929. This was the time when Jews first came to the U.S. in large numbers but had not yet discovered what place they were to have in their new land. Certainly, the possibilities in America were unlike anything they had experienced in Europe for fifteen hundred years. For these first generation immigrants, two competing views of community vied with each other. The first, represented by Mary Antin, asked that they throw off their heritage and seize the chance to assimilate and become part of the American community. On the other side, Abraham Cahan, Ludwig Lewisohn and Anzia Yezierska recognized the danger of not accepting one's heritage as an integral part of oneself. Both Cahan and Lewisohn had difficulty accepting America at all. Cahan had spent a good part of his career believing in the viability of an American socialist state. Lewisohn advocates a move to the actual Zion. Neither could accept America as it was. Therefore,

this study will focus on Yeziarska, one who had to make her peace both with her American and *shtetl* heritage. It must be noted that both Antin and Yeziarska were women, while during the following four decades it was the male writer and the male perspective which established the norm in the search for an American community. Perhaps one reason for this was that the traditional Orthodoxy of the first generation was especially hard on women and so threw into high relief the conflict between old world values and new. Antin and Yeziarska also foreshadow later debates between women and the predominately male power structure of the American-Jewish community.

Like Theodore Herzl, who was unconcerned with actual religious practice and who pressed early Zionists to accept Uganda as a place to build a Jewish state (Wurmbrand 384), Mary Antin also saw people of Jewish descent becoming a part of the community of nations rather than "a light unto nations." In The Promised Land, Antin sees America as just that, a new Zion whose Messiah was Emerson and who advocated integration of the Jew into the American landscape. She would agree with Emerson that

Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its
house, a world; and beyond its world, a heaven.
Know then, that the world exists for you . . . All
that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have
and can do. ("Nature" 930)

Her plea is that we are able to recreate ourselves outside history. In a land which values consent over descent, maintaining a Jewish identity is pointless.

Moreover, she makes the case that the Jew's European experience, where his/her nationality had been - - for better or worse - - forged in fire and blood, was off the track, a waste of time and energy.

But despite denouncing the tradition, what makes The Promised Land part of the discourse on what constitutes the American-Jewish community is that the work is directed to the Jews and steeped in Old Testament symbolism and the minutia of *shtetl* life. While in Europe, Antin says "Next year in America" rather than "Next year in Jerusalem." The chapter on her trip to America is titled "Exodus" and she makes the protagonist of The Promised Land a reconstituted Moses. As the work unfolds, we see her rejecting the past in order to lead her family, and by extension all those who suffer from the narrow constraints of the *shtetl*, out of the darkness of the ghetto and into the bright light of the new Zion, American democracy. She imagines the Atlantic parting so all Jews can easily reach America's shores. Like Moses, she sees herself as the lawgiver to the nation. When she witnesses her father extinguishing a light on the sabbath (considered a violation of the sabbath's laws), it recasts God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush and becomes a moment of spiritual revelation which commits her to leading her family from slavery to freedom. And finally, Antin continually draws the readers attention to the similarities between the old-world and the new-world, the Hasid and the Transcendentalist, Jerusalem and Boston. Antin's character certainly knows

that one's heritage is not going to disappear. But at the same time she desires nothing less than to write a new book of Exodus, one in which the Jews in America would create a community based on the promise of a land where ethnic persecution is unknown because there is no such thing as ethnicity.

The Promised Land is a paean to a self-reliant America where each individual creates his or her own culture. Antin's embrace of Emerson foreshadows the embrace by later Jewish intellectuals who believe it is possible for people to create themselves, outside of history. Alfred Kazin expressed a similar attitude.

I learned long ago to accept the fact that I was Jewish without being a part of any meaningful Jewish life or culture. . . The writing I have been most deeply influenced by - - Blake, Melville, Emerson, the seventeenth-century English religious poets, and the Russian novelists - - has no direct association in my mind with Jewish culture; it has every association, of course, with the fact that, like many another American, I have had to make my own culture. (392)

But other writers could not so simply "accept the fact" of being apart from a meaningful Jewish culture. One such writer, Anzia Yeziarska, comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to disassociate oneself from one's roots without losing an essential part of oneself. Recently "rediscovered," Yeziarska's short stories and novels deal with a single theme: the search for community. Conflicts often arise when her characters rebel against their fathers, invariably

a fanatically religious tyrant who ruins his children's lives merely to further his own comfort. In her semi-autobiographical work Red Ribbon on a White Horse the character leaves her father's home and becomes an "allrightnik" - a comfortable, rich capitalist - in Hollywood. But this victory is short-lived because she feels that she is not really part of this smug community. Yeziarska soon leaves Hollywood, goes back to New York, falls in love, works for the W.P.A., and goes to rural New Hampshire and joins a sort of women's commune. Each time she thinks she has finally found her community, she self-destructs by convincing herself that she is betraying her individuality by being absorbed by something larger than herself. Not until the end of the book, and her long life, does she come to terms with her own heritage in all its complexities. This occurs during a genteel literary dinner when, after the discussion turns to an anti-semitic play, she blurts out, "I'm a Jew." She realizes that she has embarrassed everyone, and she herself becomes confused. The two parts of herself - the American and the Jew - are divided. She accepts her Jewish heritage -- a heritage that does not, she claims, value prestige or money -- but still rebels against the limitations her father wished to impose on her. Only then does she, consequently, finally find peace. "Homelessness, hunger, exile, Jews had survived them for thousands of years. What was there to fear in a shabby coat? . . . All that I could ever be, the glimpses of truth I reached for everywhere, was in myself." (218, 220) Now, unafraid of being

swallowed by it, she is able to rejoin the community.

In all Yeziarska's work, characters struggle to balance the American concept of self and an old-world sense of communal submergence. To some, however, she seems the arch individualist.

Anzia Yeziarska was, in that sense, a revolutionary. Passionately convinced that her life was her own, she deliberately rejected traditional home and family roles... Sympathy with the oppressed and outrage at tyranny of any kind came natally to this child of a tyrannical father. . . . she could not conform to social convention for its own sake. Aggressive, dynamic, demanding and forceful, she sought and created a satisfying, self-directed career. It was not so much that she was a feminist, her daughter said of her later: she was just herself. (Kessler-Harris ix)

But in her works (as in the works of other writers dealt with in this study) we will not merely find a movement away from community followed by a movement towards one. Instead, we will find an intelligence trying to reconcile community, ethnicity, and individuality in a society that sometimes finds these to be mutually exclusive. The search for community leads characters to paths that combine the traditional and the American. For Antin, certainly, one need not consider one's heritage very much. For Yeziarska, one ignores one's heritage at the risk of becoming alienated from oneself. But she recognizes the responsibility she has to her talents, even if it goes against the best interest of the community. She embraces Emerson's words, "I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me" ("Self -Reliance"

958). Yet her genius feels compelled to encompass her ethnicity.

The stock market crash and the Great Depression neatly separate the concerns of Antin and Yeziarska (neither published anything of significance during this decade, with Yeziarska not getting back into print until 1951) from the concerns of writers whose themes focused on survival and the economic system. Never did a worker's revolution in America seem so close as it did in the '30s. The most powerful of these writers are Michael Gold and Henry Roth. Both work in the "prophetic tradition . . . [that] must be regarded seriously as uniquely Jewish" (Weinberg 96). In Michael Gold's Jews Without Money, the messiah comes in the flesh.

A man on the East Side soap box, one night,
proclaimed that out of the despair, melancholy
and helpless rage of millions, a world movement
had been born to abolish poverty.

I listened to him.

O workers' Revolution, you brought hope to me, a lonely, suicidal
boy. You are the true Messiah. You will destroy the East Side
when you come, and build there a garden for the human spirit.
(309)

This is the Messiah of Maimonides who believed that in the post-Messianic age life would carry on as usual, with the one caveat that the society would be a just society where one can work and worship as one pleases. This concluding prophecy comes after a loving but factual investigation into the conditions under which the Jews of the Lower East Side lived. Described in the novel are

families who are just making it, the pimps and prostitutes, and the hangers-on who sink under capitalism. Gold roots around in this conglomeration of humanity in the same critical spirit the Biblical Prophets rooted around in the lives of their co-religionists. Weinberg quotes I.F. Stone as saying

in the prophets you have the very best of Judaism. They're . . . well, in a very lofty way, they were sort of like radical journalists in their time, rushing around, exposing evils, interrupting people and getting in dutch. (95)

While Gold portrays the warping effect capitalism has on the worker in factual, almost social realistic prose, Roth's Call It Sleep is a modernist, psychological novel. Its young protagonist, David Schearl, tries to discover to which community he owes his allegiance, the compassionate, old-world community of his mother, or the harsh, mechanized new world of his father. Roth uses three voices to indicate David's divided self: a lyrical English translation of Yiddish, the broken street English of the tenements, and the detached prose of the omniscient narrator. When David comes to America, his house is torn apart because of his father's suspicion that his mother, Genya, had conceived David with a gentile organist. David's illegitimacy mirrors his confusion over his place in America. In the final pages, all voices, images and themes become united. As David, escaping from his father, runs through the streets, he hears snatches of conversation in all the languages and dialects of New York. When he reaches a trolley and plunges a metal milk ladle into the

electric tracks, the dissonance becomes fused in a surge of electrical power:

His father's hammer, the cellar, Isaiah's fiery coal - all the images are brought together. The electrical power that blasts and sears him is also the magical coal that grants redemption from sins . . . Perhaps David Schearl's pain and terror and triumph came too close to the experience of the young men and women of the second generation as they moved away from childhood to adulthood and from one culture to another." (A. Guttman The Jewish Writer in America 55)

This apocalyptic fusion of cultures, according to Guttman, was so revolutionary that it led Call It Sleep into a limbo, not to be rediscovered until the early '60s when Jews were more confident of their place in America. But Call It Sleep is far from the self-alienated novel which some critics (see Cohen above) have accused it of being. Rather it is a novel that harkens back to the most Judaic of heritages, the prophetic tradition and a desire to hold on to what is considered ethical. David Schearl's character seems to embody the hope that we can create a community where ethnic heritage is not a reason for oppression and economic injustice.

The radical writers repudiate the Emersonian model of self-reliance and rugged individualism advocated by Antin and, later, by Herman Wouk. They are situated between Yeziarska's looking to the old European model of the Jewish community and the post-holocaust Jewish intellectuals groping for an American Judaic tradition which emphasizes a liberal social policy. But coming

out the same year as Call It Sleep, and opposed to its radical and messianic vision, was Meyer Levin's The Old Bunch. This work can be seen as a way-station between Antin-style assimilation and Herman Wouk's '50s style suburban accommodation - where religion is used to reassure the gentile world that not all Jews are communists and atheists. Levin is most interested in showing his characters partake in the "great American barbecue," and does not worry about Emerson, assimilation, or middle-class pieties. A great deal of pure animal energy is expended simply surviving, and the niceties of life, the spiritual elements, are ignored. Rabbis come in for an equal amount of contempt as charlatans and idle dreamers. Most of his characters accept the status-quo of capitalist America. The success Sol Meisel has as a bicycle racer, certainly not a traditionally Jewish profession, is one example of how Jews become part of the physical, highly competitive American society. Even the final words of the 934 page novel is the refrain from the cowboy song, "Git along, little dogie, git along, git along." For the Jew in America, getting along in this imperfect, sometimes vulgar society is the key for any sort of survival.

Ironically, The Old Bunch was seen as a threat to both assimilationists and Jewish apologists:

The book was criticized on the one hand by such popular magazines as Time because it was "too self-consciously Jewish." On the other hand it was condemned by organized Jewish groups and rabbis for its "negative" view of Jews and Judaism.(Rubin Meyer Levin 48)

It was also considered weak on psychological development of its characters. But as the reader follows Levin's characters - - who are unlike Roth's hypersensitive (and obviously Jewish) David Schearl - - it becomes clear that they are not meant to be introspective. They are out to conquer America, and they don't have time to shrink from being seen as overly aggressive, or "too Jewish."

The post-W.W.II "Golden Age" of Jewish-American literature takes up the question of community and dissent under the shadow of McCarthyism and rising xenophobia by the dominant culture. Stylistically, some of these works begin what Irving Howe calls one of the contributions of Jewish American fiction,

I think it no exaggeration to say that since Faulkner and Hemingway the one major innovation in American prose style has been the yoking of street raciness and high culture mandarin that we associate with the American Jewish writers. (Intro American Short Stories 13)

Undoubtedly, the major writer who works in this mode is Saul Bellow, and he deals with nearly every aspect of the Jew in the modern age.

The holocaust notwithstanding, the Jewish community in America had transformed itself from one which didn't know its place to one in which the Jews reached a level of influence and comfort unknown since fifteenth century Spain. Yet Bellow continued to present the ambiguous blessing of having

arrived in America. His reflection on the past is not a sentimental harkening back to a time and a religion that never was. Rather his characters are often still torn between the world of free enterprise and a communal spirituality that requires some aloofness from the surrounding materialistic society. For example, in "The Old System," the narrator, a Dr. Braun, reminisces about his cousin Isaac, an Orthodox Jew who must give a white-haired patrician a seventy-five thousand dollar bribe in order to gain control of an old, restricted country club which he plans to turn into a shopping mall. This transaction eventually leads to a bitter rift in his family. At the moment the bribe is proffered, Bellow's protagonist has a premonition of the consequences of his act. "He sat there sturdily, but felt lost -- lost to his people, his family, lost to God, lost in the void of America" (Jewish American Stories 313).

When the bribe goes through and the shopping mall goes up, both the briber and bribee are made rich. But a family feud which results from this transaction destroys Isaac's peace. All attempts at a reconciliation fail, until he seeks the advice of an old-fashioned hasidic Rabbi, who has "the old tones, the manner, the burly poise, the universal calm judgement of the Jewish moral genius" (328). Essentially, the *Rabbi* tells him to make peace by utilizing something which for all his orthodox trappings Isaac has lost: compassion. The Rabbi advises putting aside the love of money, pride, even principle to make peace with a dying sister. Isaac humiliates himself and takes twenty-thousand

dollars to his sister's deathbed in order to be allowed to ask for her forgiveness. At the story's conclusion, the orthodox and the secular, the rich and the poor, the foolish and the wise, are reunited into a community through shared emotion. Even the narrator, someone who has separated himself from his practical-minded family by becoming a scientist, who has "learned from art the art of amusing self-observation and objectivity," changes (301). This observer, this writer, this dissenter becomes reincorporated into the whole when he comes to value the understanding of "Why life, why death" that one can get only as a part of a community. A much fuller treatment of individuals coming to terms with his responsibility to the community is given - and discussed in a later chapter - in regards to the novel Herzog.

Opposed to Bellow's intense intellectualism - - with its powerful strain of Jewish dissent - - is Herman Wouk's nativist, anti-intellectual stance. A proud accommodationist, Herman Wouk is completely convinced of the rightness of suburban living. He, like other Jewish leaders, found the external lack of distinction between Christian and Jews utterly as utterly agreeable. One senses in Wouk a desire to assure an increasingly paranoid country that Jews were not enemies of the state. And implicit in his novels is the criticism of the Jewish intellectual, those who were indeed radicalized by the thirties, whom he felt were projecting the dominant image of the Jew in America. In The Caine Mutiny, the intellectual is shown to be a hollow cynical fraud. In

Marjorie Morningstar, the main character begins her adulthood in love with a bohemian television writer named Noel Airman. In addition to having sex with her before marriage, as well as committing other sins against conventional morality, Airman leads her away from a fulfilling life in the suburbs. But Marjorie recovers her wits just in time to end up marrying Milton Schwartz, an accountant, and becomes

a regular synagogue goer, active in the Jewish organizations of the town . . . The only remarkable thing about Mrs. Schwartz is that she ever hoped to be remarkable, that she ever dreamed of being Marjorie Morningstar. (564)

Marjorie Morningstar is a character representative of the Jew as "regular guy." It marked a departure from the image of the Jew as outsider -- an image Wouk considered outmoded. Understandably, Wouk is condemned by the intellectuals as a quisling "middle-brow." In turn, Wouk inveighs against "grey college professors" who write only for other college professors and assume an alienated stance merely to keep their academic jobs. Yet, ultimately, the community is left to forge these visions into one which can realistically create a viable community.

Herzog, which had been completed in 1963, can be seen as part of the apex of American-Jewish literature. Nearly all the influential post-war American Jewish writers -- including Roth, Malamud, Heller, Singer, Kazin,

Fiedler, Herbert Gold, Mailer, Elkin -- were on the scene and had published books and stories to popular and critical acclaim. Most were cautious in their embrace of American culture, though none except Singer would have any character become Orthodox in an old-world fashion. (Roth's "Eli The Fanatic" is a gothic joke.) They all have their vision of what it means to be a Jew in America, and often it is a different vision than the majority of Jews would agree with. Roth, in particular, had been able to raise the hackles of the conservative hierarchy with his stories and novels. But what all these writers have in common is that they are male and heterosexual -- often aggressively heterosexual, juggling woman like so many Indian clubs. But with the advent of the feminist and gay liberation movements, previously disenfranchised American Jewish writers tried to make their voices heard, much to the surprise of some critics who believed that American-Jewish writing would not reach significant heights after the crises brought on by immigration dissipated.

Irving Howe writes,

My own point of view is that American Jewish fiction has probably moved past its highpoint. Insofar as this body of writing draws heavily from the immigrant experience, it must suffer a depletion of resources, a thinning-out of materials and memories. (Jewish American Stories).

Contemporary American Jewish fiction, it is true, does not have the immigrant experience to draw from as did its predecessors, but there are frontiers which

writers, almost all heterosexual men, have ignored. Certainly, until the late '60s women have been sparsely represented. And until the mid-'80s, gay and lesbian Jewish writers looking for their place in the Jewish community have been non-existent. These writers, representing a previously silent majority, are joining the debate as to what constitutes the Jewish community. In the title story of Dancing on Tisha B'av, Lev Raphael deals with a synagogue which rejects a previously active congregant after it learns that he is gay. He concludes that it is the community that will have to learn to live with him, and not that he will have to accept the community standard. On the other hand, Allegra Goodman's story "Onionskin" tells of a woman who bounces around the world trying to find a community in which she can live. Despite her familiarity with the latest intellectual currents, she finds herself more at home in an anti-rationalist and spiritual world. What these young writers have in common with their older counterparts is the idea that change and reform is always needed if the Jewish community is to survive. While some of these writers work to open up the tradition to new ideas and others warn against losing a valuable moral tradition, most are working against the fears and warnings of the perpetually timid majority. But they are also working in a long tradition which has kept, and continues to keep, the Jewish community in America and elsewhere a dynamic force in world culture.

The Beginnings of Identity: Antin and Yeziarska

Though both Mary Antin's Promised Land and Abraham Cahan's Rise of David Levinsky show the stark transition between life in the *shtetl* and life in America, Cahan uses Levinsky to assert the emptiness of American culture, while Antin writes of the fulfillment which can be achieved through an American Transcendental emphasis on the Self. The question that must be asked is what accounts for the joy Antin feels for her situation and the disappointment Cahan feels for his? Certainly one element is community. Levinsky toys with many communities - orthodox, socialist, philanthropist and capitalist - but he finds that participation in a capitalist society leads only to isolation. In the end, Cahan sees America as devoid of spirituality, a place where the selfish pursuit of money defines one's worth. However, this may not accurately portray what many immigrants felt for America. The evidence suggests that most immigrants eagerly embraced economic opportunity.

Certain elements of second- and third-generation immigrants might have questioned upwardly mobile aspirations, but one would be hard pressed to find an immigrant millionaire who regretted his wealth. By highlighting a pre-ordained destiny -- once a yeshiva boy, always a yeshiva boy -- Cahan's work fits in with the Naturalism and Realism popular with nativists like Crane, Norris and Dreiser, but it ignores the reality of the immigrant life. It is Antin's Emersonian Transcendentalism that, initially at least, exerts more influence on the American Jewish community.

One essential difference between Antin and Cahan is that Antin sees the core of Transcendentalism not as the every-man-for-himself philosophy that critics such as Cahan suggests it is. Nor does Antin believe that Transcendentalism advocates casting off all obligations to something which is greater than oneself:

Thus, the doctrine of human individuality as both self-transcending and self-asserting - as both acknowledging its oneness with and obligation to something higher than itself and yet ever cherishing its uniqueness and independence as a distinct being - and the further conception that individual happiness depends upon the successful synthesis of these twin tendencies, provided an almost perfect theoretical framework for a new effort to discover supernatural sanction for the swift-moving and constantly changing panorama of American life. (Bowers 14)

Antin agrees that one needs to synthesize the self with the community: "A characteristic thing about the aspiring immigrant is the fact that he is not

content to progress alone. Solitary success is imperfect success in his eyes. He must take his family with him as he rises" (360). And Antin herself goes further than that; she wishes to raise the level of her entire people. Constantly invoking Old Testament imagery, she compares Polotzk to Egypt: "Well I knew that Polotzk was not my country. It was *goluth* - exile. On many occasions in the year we prayed to God to lead us out of exile" (227). Besides "The Promised Land," chapter titles include "The Tree of Knowledge," "The Burning Bush," and "The Heritage." She suggests that America is another Jerusalem and that she -- by extension of her ability to explain American Transcendentalism to her co-religionist -- is another Moses:

But what said some of us at the end of the long service? Not "May we be next year in Jerusalem," but "Next year -- in America! So there was our promised land, and many faces were turned towards the West. And if the waters of the Atlantic did not part for them, the wanderers rode its bitter flood by a miracle as great as any the rod of Moses ever wrought. (141)

Finally, Antin draws a connection between Emerson and King David by writing "And who can say my visions were not as inspiring as David's vision. He was a shepherd before he became a king. I was an ignorant child in the Ghetto, but I was . . . given the freedom of All America" (114). This is nearly a restatement of Emerson's asking in his Divinity School Address, "Why should we not also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should we not have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion of revelation to

us, and not the history of theirs?" (903). Antin is attempting to write a Bible that is more fully the property of American-Jewry than that of the old European revelations.

Yet many of the surveys of American-Jewish writing give short shrift to The Promised Land. Some surveys merely fast-forward to the thirties with the rise of New York intellectuals and the appearance of journals such as Menorah and Partisan Review. Max Schultz's Radical Sophistication: Studies in Contemporary Jewish American Novelists, for example, begins with Nathaniel West and contains major chapters on Bellow, Malamud and Salinger. Mark Shechner's After the Revolution: Studies in Contemporary Jewish American Imagination deals with Bellow, Mailer and Roth. However, even surveys which go back to the beginning of the century often ignore Antin. Allan Guttman's survey, The Jewish Writer in America: Assimilation and Crisis of Identity devotes two pages to Antin, briefly outlining her work as "assimilationist," concluding that, "Mary Antin lived until 1949 and was moved to acknowledge her kinship with the people of Israel, but she never repudiated the witness borne in The Promised Land (38). It's curious that Guttman makes no connection between Antin and the Transcendentalists in a work devoted to the "Crisis of Identity," since immediately preceding the chapter on Antin, Guttman discusses Emma Lazarus, whose first book, Songs of a Semite, had been dedicated to Emerson and was an ode to American

Transcendentalism. Antin had certainly inherited this philosophy from Lazarus. Finally, Bernard Sherman's book, The Invention of the Jew: Jewish American Education Novelists, 1918-1964, begins the century of Jewish American literature with Cahan's Rise of David Levinsky. There is one reference to Antin in a footnote that states Antin's work is an autobiography, not a novel. And while it's true that such genre distinctions might seem a valid reason to exclude Antin's work, Sidonie Smith points out that women have traditionally been reluctant to put themselves forward as authors of fiction. Instead, they have utilized alternate mediums to express themselves - diaries, journals, educational pamphlets and, most of all, autobiography. Antin's work should not be dismissed because it has been classified as "autobiography." Additionally, Sherman's study completely neglects Anzia Yeziarska, whose Bread Givers is certainly a novel of education. It may be that in questions concerning self and community, women's voices have been neglected. Yet for women who wished to be valued for intellectual accomplishment, the desire to escape tradition had been intense. So it is no coincidence that it is two women -- Antin and Yeziarska -- who most powerfully frame the question of dissent and community in American-Jewish literature.

It is too easy to dismiss The Promised Land as "assimilationist" or as "blatantly consent oriented" (Boelhower 133). True, one element that sets Antin

apart from Yeziarska and other Jewish writers is that the "*strum und drang*" which usually accompany the clash of cultures is missing. Antin is able to integrate the often incompatible heritages to which she is exposed with a composure sometimes bordering on the naive. But Antin is aware that her own ease in discarding Judaism -- "The days when I believed everything I was told did not run much beyond my teething time" (126) -- is in no way a definitive casting off of tradition. Though she dissents from what she had been taught in Europe, her ultimate goal is to build bridges between the religion of the *shtetl* and the dominant American ideology. She recognizes that even if she has managed to sever all ties with Judaism, re-evaluation of one's position regarding religion is inevitable. Of her father, who helped rid her of "any orthodoxy [which] began to interfere with the American progress of the family," Antin writes, "My father might speak and tell how, in time, he discovered that in his first violent rejection of everything old and established, he cast from himself much that he afterwards missed" (248). And later, in a burst of prophecy for the coming decades (and her own change of heart) Antin writes

My grandchildren, for all I know, may have a graver task than I have set them. Perhaps they may have to testify that the faith of Israel is a heritage that no heir in the direct line has the power to alienate from his successors. Even I, with my limited perspective, think it doubtful if the conversion of the Jew to any alien belief or disbelief is ever thoroughly accomplished. What positive affirmation of the persistence of Judaism in the blood my descendants may have to make I

may not be present to hear. (249)

What Antin does make clear is that though she is reborn as an American, "I was born, I have lived and I have been made over" (Intro XI). She does not disown her parents, "for they were also partners in the generation of my second self, partners in my entire line of ancestors." Nor does Antin ever deny her Judaism or talk of converting to Christianity. The trick America pulls off is that people did not have to convert, as had been the case in Europe, in order to be full members of society. They could keep whatever traditions they wished because belief in Man, not belief in God, is the dominant American ideology.

[Transcendentalism's] basic premise is that in man alone can we find the clue to nature, history, and ultimately the cosmos itself . . . This is expressed most clearly in the transcendentalist principle that the structure of the universe literally duplicates the structure of the individual self, and all knowledge therefore begins with self knowledge. (Bowers 16)

While this shows Transcendentalism at its most dismissive of "authority," there is also in Transcendentalism a sometimes ignored desire to synthesize past and present, a "desire to retain both the mysticism of the past and the empiricism of the present and to assign each a sphere in experience proper to its character" (Bowers 14). And this much is clear about Antin: for all her revulsion for the "rags of formalism" of the traditional religion, major elements that characterize Judaism also seem to characterize American

Transcendentalism. First, Antin shows how education in both cultures were means to overcome limitations imposed by circumstance:

History shows that in all countries where Jews have equal rights with the rest of the people, they lose their fear of secular science, and learn how to take their ancient religion with them from century to awakening century, dropping nothing by the way but what their growing spirit has outgrown. (110)

In both Jewish and Transcendentalist philosophies, education is able to launch an individual out of the station of life into which he or she has been born, and to become respected for his or her own accomplishments. Antin's first role model is the "shabby guest who sat down with us at table . . . Grandmother had told us that he was a *lamden* (scholar), and we saw something holy in the way he ate his cabbage" (32). And in a society that did not hold all men to be created equally - that did not believe, as Emerson did, "All that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have and can do" - the only way someone could create his own world was through education:

One qualification only could raise a man above his social level, and that was scholarship. A boy born in the gutter need not despair of entering the houses of the rich, if he had a good mind and a great appetite for sacred learning. A poor scholar would be preferred in the marriage market to a rich ignoramus. In the phrase of our grandmothers, a boy stuffed with learning was worth more than a girl stuffed with bank notes. (Antin 37)

Even the gentiles, if properly educated, wouldn't hate Jews. When as a young girl, Antin is persecuted by a neighbor's child, instead of wishing to

get even, she thinks "But this why - why? broke out in my heart, and I forgot to revenge myself. It was so wonderful - Well, there were no words in my head to say it, but it meant that Vanka abused me only because he did not understand . . ." (17)

Antin's mystical faith in education can also be traced to Bronson Alcott, whose experimental Temple School revolutionized American education. This progressive educator believed "that education is a calling forth and cultivation of the divinity within man, not an imposition of external forms upon a passive intellect" (Hochfield 47). Bronson believed in "treating young minds as though they were capable of growth and not simply accumulation . . ." Indeed, the education that Antin receives in America does not lead her like "a creature without a will," but allows her growth enough to bridge the ages: "The past was only my cradle and now it cannot hold me, because I am grown too big" (364). Antin wants the reader to feel that the purpose of education for Jews in Europe is compatible with the purpose of education for Jews in America. In the *shtetl*, education had been more than merely scholarship. It was the means -- and in the old Rabbinic tradition, the only means -- to worship God. Similarly, education in America is more than just learning to read and write. It is the manner in which an immigrant becomes that immortal creature, an American. When her father brings her to school on that first day, it is with more than just fatherly pride. It is an "act of consecration." And the teacher "guessed what my

father's best English could not convey. I think she divined that by the simple act of delivering our school certificates to her he took possession of America" (205).

The American education Antin speaks of is not Talmudic scholarship. Perhaps because she viewed the *shtetl's* attitude towards a girl's education as so dismissive - "It was not much to be a girl, you see. Girls could not be scholars and rabbonim." (33) - Antin felt that the *shtetl* education was destructive towards everyone. Of her own father she writes:

In his boyhood his body was starved, that his mind might be stuffed with useless learning . . . All that while he had been led about as a creature without a will, a chattel, an instrument. In his maturity he awoke, and found himself poor in health, poor in purse, poor in useful knowledge, and hampered on all sides. At the first nod of opportunity he . . . sought to lighten the gloom of his narrow scholarship by freely partaking of modern ideas. (Antin 125)

In addition, the teachers of Europe are shown to be pathetic fools who push lies and promote ignorance to their charges. In describing Reb' Lebe, Antin conjures up the same shabby images of the *cheder malamud* that seems to be *de-rigueur* for American-Jewish writers. "The hands of Reb' Lebe were large, and his beard was not half a handful. The fingers of the rebbe were long, and I am afraid, not very clean" (Antin 113). Worse than his lack of personal hygiene is his inability to confront questions of crucial importance to his young students. In answer to the question "Who made God?" the Rabbi is nonplussed

and retreats from the room. Soon after this, the hungry Reb' Lebe makes a fool of himself by being overly timid about accepting an offer of a slice of meat. When he finally gains the courage to stretch out his hand for the food, the food vanishes.

This comic, unenlightened figure is contrasted to Antin's teacher in America. Miss Dillingham is one of "The true teachers . . . Apostles all of an ideal, they go to their work in a spirit of love and inquiry, seeking not comfort, not positions, but truth that is the soul of wisdom . . ." (218). And she associates this wisdom with "being fully emancipated from the yoke of indefensible superstitions . . ." Antin remembers Reb' Lebe after a schoolyard incident in which she had denied the existence of God: "I knew now why poor Reb' Lebe had been unable to answer my question; it was because the truth was not whispered outside America" (249). The final rejection of Reb' Lebe and his timid inability to progress follows directly after this realization. Miss Dillingham, the great Teacher, invites Antin over for her "first meal at a gentile - yes a Christian - board." A platter of ham is passed to her and she experiences "a terrible moment of surprise, mortification, self contempt." But Antin is angry at herself, seeing in her timidity against eating "a pink piece of pig flesh" a terrible reminder of Reb' Lebe and all the superstition and untruthfulness he had stood for. So she eats the meat, and then offers what amounts to a Transcendentalist grace-after-meals:

Over and over and over again I discover that I am a wonderful thing, being human; that I am the image of the universe, being myself; that I am the repository of all the wisdom in the world, being alive and sane at the beginning to this twentieth century. The heir of the ages am I, and all that has been is in me, and shall continue to be in my immortal self. (251)

This comes at the conclusion of a chapter entitled "Miracles," and Antin states the case for the real miracle that has occurred in the world - a ten-year old Jewish girl can erase generations of tradition. Certainly, entitling a chapter in which a young girl eats pork "Miracles" seems to be a direct reference to the controversial attitude Transcendentalists had towards miracles:

The miracles of Christ had been a matter of considerable debate throughout the eighteenth century . . . The miracles of Christ stood as the one unmistakable body of evidence that the Author of nature was also the Author of the Christian religion . . . In criticizing the miracles of Unitarian theology, the Transcendentalists had begun by appealing to man's innate certainty of religious truth. Christianity was verified for them not by displays of magical power (which might very well have actually taken place), but by its "correspondence," as Ripley said, "with the divine spirit in man. (Hochfield 43)

Antin's point is not that it is possible to eat pork and live - as she had lived through her experiment in carrying a handkerchief outdoors in violation of the Sabbath. But by breaking the pork down to its "indivisible atoms," she manages to touch the miracle that is the engine of Transcendentalist thought - that God is not imposed from the outside, but that there is the Divine spirit

in everything, even a pig's flesh. This dissenting position, though hardly reconcilable with traditional Judaism, reflects (and perhaps even influenced) the positions which were becoming ever more popular among the immigrant Jewish community.

Another element which is very important to Antin is her relation to Nature. Here, too, she tries to draw a parallel between the traditional Judaism and the Transcendentalist movement. She sees herself as the voice of her inarticulate ancestors who were aware of nature, but who had no words in which to express their devotion:

I suppose my grandfather who drove a spavined horse through lonely country lanes sat in the shade of crisp-leaved oaks to refresh himself with a bit of black bread; and an acorn falling beside him, in the immense stillness, shook his heart with the echo, and left him wondering. I suppose my father stole away from the synagogue one long festival day, and stretched himself out in the sun-warmed grass, and lost himself in dreams that made the world of men unreal when he returned to them. And so what is there left for me to do, who does not have a horse to drive nor ancient lore to interpret, but to put my grandfather's question into words and set to music my father's dream? (214)

And Nature's role in her father's and grandfather's world is not just a fantasy which Antin dreamed to give credence to her own belief in nature. The Hasidic background from which Antin traces her descent is one that separates itself from the strict legalism and scholasticism of Rabbinism. The tales of Hasidic

masters are full of the wonders of the natural world, and the founders of Hasidism do place a stress on nature. Samuel Dressner points out, "[T]he Mishnah could have taught that 'He who interrupts his studies to say How lovely is this tree, is liable to punishment' (Avot 8.7) [but] the Besht saw no necessary contradiction between the book and the tree, spirit and nature" (143). The Besht, who founded the Hasidic movement in the middle of the eighteenth century, was convinced that nature and God were one and the same. The Hasidim discovered that the Hebrew word for nature, "*ha-teva*," (5+9+2+70 =86) is equal in numerical value to the word God in Hebrew, "*Elohim*," (1+30+5+10+40=86). The Hasidic creed is in fact remarkably similar to that of the Transcendentalists:

The Divine Presence, who dwelt in man and in the Torah, could also be found in nature. For the Besht there was no break in the line that ran from Creator to His creature, His work, and throughout all creation. God was one and His oneness united all, bound all, and gave life to all. (Dressner 144)

True, there is a great difference between Transcendentalist attitude towards belief in a God and the Hasidic attitude towards belief in a God, but Antin attempts to draw attention to the similarities in order to unite the immigrant from Poland with the philosophers from Concord.

In the end, Antin should not be seen as the pure assimilationist which Guttman and others make her out to be. However, she certainly does not

problematize her relationship with America, as do Yeziarska and Bellow. If one point can be drawn from Antin, it's that she agrees with Emerson's statement that "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds" ("Self-Reliance" 960). This is how she can say "Such creatures of accidents are we, liable to a thousand chances before we are born. But once we are here, we may create our own world, if we choose" (59). Yet at the same time Antin sees the value of community - not the old community of exclusion and religious prejudice - but a new community of people "all deserving noble things, and striving for them together, defying their oppressors, giving their lives for each other - all this it was that made my country" (220). Antin's vision of America is a vision which many Jewish immigrants accepted. For great hope and excitement was generated by the opportunities in America, opportunities which didn't occur in Europe. However, as Antin correctly predicted, her voice is just one among many, and it is from the dissonance created by dissenting voices which a distinct American-Jewish culture is created.

Yeziarska's Response:

The early life experiences of Mary Antin and Anzia Yeziarska are strikingly similar. They were both born in Polish *shtetls*. They both came to America as adolescents. And they both had an aversion to the patriarchal Orthodoxy in which they were raised. They felt this Orthodoxy was narrow and corrupt. But the background differences between these two writers are also significant. First, in The Promised Land, Antin describes her family as being, at least for a time, relatively well-to-do. Her father was not a scholar, but a businessman. In addition, one of the turning points of her life was when she saw her father extinguish a light on the Sabbath, which strengthened her own skepticism regarding religious tradition. By the time she and her family arrived in America, they had already been primed to drop the fundamentalism that tied them to a Jewish community. The relative ease with which her family accepted American mores seem to have led Antin to believe that it would be a simple matter if everyone dropped the customs of the old world and happily plunged into being American.

But Yeziarska's novels show no such ease in assimilation. Her work is obsessed with finding a community in a world in which community shifts from land to land and sometimes from moment to moment. In contrast with Antin, who portrays her father as much a victim of a religious upbringing as she had been, Yeziarska's father is a tyrant who uses the old world religion to oppress his entire family. But as monstrous as Yeziarska portrays him, she never can abandon him for the fossil she insists he is. Both Sara in Bread Givers and Yeziarska in Red Ribbon on a White Horse are, in the end, forced to come to terms not only with him but with the culture he represents. At the same time, both protagonists' search for a community of their own is bound up in confusion. They are terrified of losing their individuality by joining anything larger than themselves.

Yeziarska's works make the immigrant's dilemma very clear. To remain true to her father, she must -- according to the Orthodox law of which he is always the chief exponent -- subordinate herself to the law and men. But to enter the wider world of America, she would have to deny an integral part of herself -- the ghetto Jew. Ultimately, Yeziarska attempts the difficult task of combining the romantically inspired Transcendentalism of Emerson with the Naturalism of Frank Norris. For every time she soars out of the ghetto into "the life higher," there comes the time when she is pulled back to the tenements of Hester Street. For each time she follows her genius and makes

herself "ring in America," there is a time she realizes that her father still remains -- a primitive reminder of where she came from and who she is.

In Yeziarska's earliest stories, collected in Hungry Hearts, the distinguishing feature of each story is a tension, bordering on agony, that exists between the old and new ways of life. "Ring in America" is an early, rather fuzzy manifesto of how the determination to become an American can overcome all the disadvantages of birth. Shennah Pessa works in a sweatshop, but yearns to do something significant, to transcend her repressed, immigrant upbringing. Yet she still has the history-driven hunger of "Home, husband, babies, a breadgiver for life" (Hungry Hearts 61). In this story, Yeziarska is as yet unable to see these desires as compatible. So Shennah Pessa has to make the choice of a lifetime: the security of her boyfriend's bank book or the pursuit of her own genius. When Shennah Pessa turns the boyfriend, Sam Arkin, down, she also refuses to live through him and his traditional values:

"No - no!" she cried, cruel in the self-absorption of youth and ambition. "You can't make me for a person. It's not only that I got to go up higher, but I got to push myself up by myself, by my own strength - " (61)

Here Yeziarska most clearly echoes Antin's movement away from heritage. The Emersonian Individual becomes important for her. Though in Hungry Hearts Yeziarska is still vague as to how a person is supposed to achieve her personal ambition, the themes of stubborn individuality, pursuit of almost unattainable

goals and alienation from conventional society permeate her early fiction. At the same time, Yeziarska is very much aware of the "self-absorption" that this ambition entails. Even in Hungry Hearts, Yeziarska's work shows a move away from alienation to acceptance of a heritage -- or at least the part of the heritage that doesn't demand the silencing of her voice. She accepts history and tries to reconcile the immigrant culture and American culture. In "America and I," Yeziarska expresses the hopes of the inarticulate, tradition bound immigrant. "As one of the dumb, voiceless ones I speak. One of the millions of immigrants beating, beating out their hearts at your gates for a breath of understanding" (172). Yeziarska speaks for those who not only wish to join a community, but to help shape that community:

like those Pilgrims who came in the Mayflower .
 . . I began to build a bridge of understanding
 between the American-born and myself. Since
 their life was shut out from such as me, I began to
 open up my life and the lives of my people to
 them. And life draws life. On only writing about
 the Ghetto I found America. (175)

And America, drawing on the immigrant experience, found itself. This is the point that Antin is reluctant to admit. For Antin, immigrant culture must always give way to the dominant culture. For Yeziarska, immigrant culture is the dominant culture in America. And her writing becomes obsessed with proving that dissent creates both the American and Jewish communities.

Bread Givers is Yeziarska's first sustained attempt to reconcile the

dissenter with the old-world community. Subtitled "A Struggle between a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the New," Bread Givers brings to life not only the grinding poverty of the newly arrived immigrants, but also the struggle many children had with the traditional old world lifestyle. But this is not a benign conflict, settled with sentimental death-bed reconciliations as in other works of the period, such as "The Jazz Singer". For Yeziarska, the customs imported from Europe are not merely quaint and outdated, but a threat to one's life. Her frequent cry to "make for herself a person" is a cry of revolt against her father's orthodox view that women have no existence outside of serving men. The young narrator, Sara Smolinsky, explains why her father can have such contempt for the feelings and thoughts of his all female house.

The Prayers of his daughters didn't count because God didn't listen to women. Heaven and the next world were only for men. Women could get into Heaven because they were wives and daughters of men. Women had no brains for the study of God's Torah. But they could be the servants of men who studied the Torah. Only if they cooked for the men, and washed for the men, and didn't nag or curse the men out of their homes; only if they let thy men study the Torah in Place, then, maybe, they could push themselves into Heaven with the men, to wait on them there. (9)

But Sara hates her father for another reason. He is a *schmorer*, a beggar. His idea of the self-reliant man is one who has an endless source of charity. He relies on the toil of the women in his family to support him while he studies the Torah. At every turn this old-world man is tricked by more

assimilated immigrants. Setting himself up as an expert in judging human character, he finds, and then forces his daughters to marry, respectively, a gambler, a con-artist, and a fish seller with six children. Then he loses all the money he gets for his daughters when he is tricked into buying a grocery store that is actually stocked with boxes of sand. Here the danger of not adapting, of not being able to move forward and recognize a new reality, is highlighted. His inability to fuse his old-world knowledge with new-world realities leads to fiasco after fiasco. By adhering to old-world traditions, Rabbi Smolinsky is more than a failure. He's a monstrous danger to the well-being of his family.

On the other hand, Sara alienates herself from her family and Hester Street by becoming self-reliant. At the age of six, she sells herring on the street. Subsequently, she loses all contact with the old world while she tries to find "the life higher." This move away from the ghetto is familiar from Hungry Hearts. But in Bread Givers there is a variation on this theme. Sara goes beyond the fuzzy dreaming of Shennah Pessa. Instead, the protagonist now directs her actions to concrete achievement. She has a goal, which is to go to college. After a mighty struggle, she for the first time escapes the borders of the ghetto into a more privileged world. But her achievement inevitably turns to dust:

Even in [high] school I suffered because I was not like the rest. I irritated the teachers . . . "Who are the bosses of education who made us study so much dead stuff?" I asked. "How can those tyrants

over the college force all kinds of different people to stuff their heads with the same deadness that we all got to know alike?" I want the knowledge that is the living life . . . (180-181)

In the end, Sara consoles herself with a vision of being in college, "mingling every day with the inspired minds of great professors and educated higher ups" (190). But in college she is just as disappointed. She finds, (just as Marcus Ravage had found when he had gone off to a Midwestern university as a young anarchist,) that many of the college rituals are really cultural rituals. So she dissents from them, just as she had dissented from the cultural rituals of Hester Street. In one instance, Sara attends the freshman dance, but flees when she becomes aware that her sensibilities could never match the "gay-colored butterflies whirling in the arms of young men." The pattern is repeated time after time: First, a step into the foreign American community, and then a step back into the world of her childhood. Sara has experienced life inside the ghetto and she has seen the broader world, but her individual vision is still not merged with either her Jewish heritage or the dominant Gentile culture. The sense of isolation Sara feels causes her to become alienated from herself.

In the final section of Bread Givers, Sara Smolinsky must confront what she had been denying, her heritage, in the person of her intractable father. At first, Sara can only hate her father for his tyranny and selfishness towards both his dead wife and children. It takes Hugo Seelig, a Jew who has no

strong ties to his Jewish heritage, to mediate between her and her father. Seelig, Sara's husband, functions as a *deux-ex-machina* and, rather ridiculously, decides he wants the old Rabbi to teach him Hebrew. When the old man refuses to go on living with his new wife - whom all his daughters knew to be a golddigger - it is Seelig who suggests that the old man come to live with Sara and himself. When Sara proffers this offer, the old man, who has no where else to go, is far from grateful:

"Can a Jew and a Christian live under one roof? Have you forgotten your sacrilege, your contempt for God's law, even on the day of your mother's death? I must keep my Sabbath holy. I can not have my eating contaminated with your carelessness." He paused. "But if you promise to keep sacred all that is sacred to me," he went on in an attempt to be tolerant, then, maybe, I'll see. I'll think it over." (295)

Understandably, Sara is outraged and feels her father's desire to oppress knows no bounds. But suddenly, a great pity for the old man overwhelms her: "In a world where all is unchanged, he is as tragically isolate as the rocks" (295). Though Sara still hates her father, she has moved forward enough to see him as a fellow outcast, someone else who remains -- destructively -- true to himself.

But Sara is still reluctant to include her father into her life. She laughs at Seelig's naive enthusiasm that the old man will enrich their lives. She thinks, "There it was, the problem before us - the problem of Father - still

unsolved" (296). The problem, of course, is not so much with the father, but with a cultural heritage she thinks she has transcended. Self-made woman that she is able to become, there is an element of determinism that she has not come to terms with: "I felt the shadow there over me. It wasn't just my father, but the generations who made my father whose weight was still upon me" (297). One can see the progression of Yeziarska's characters. While they are all dissenters from their societies, the early stories have characters who are at the mercy of outside forces or who are just beginning to see the possibility of taking control of their lives. Bread Givers is about the education of a girl who starts off helplessly furious about inequities which surround her, but manages slowly to focus and define her dissent. By accepting her otherness, she may be alienated from society, but is not from herself. By living with her father, the community which she desired to escape is brought home, and she does not have to give up her adopted community of the integrated Hugo Seelig.

But for Yeziarska, something is still missing. She can accommodate the past by changing her circumstances, but the past still partly determines who she is. So she must come to terms with it. In Bread Givers, it is quite unconvincing that Sara would so passively agree to live with her father after so long and bitter a struggle against his world. However, the recognition of the "problem of father" will be dealt with on a more sophisticated level in Yeziarska's final major work, Red Ribbon on a White Horse. Though Red

Ribbon was not published until 1952, its theme of assimilation and community is very much of the 1920s. In Red Ribbon, Yeziarska recaps the various communities of which she had tried to become a part, but which she ultimately rejected. It is a painful catalogue of a woman who searches not for a community, but for a utopia. Anything less and she refuses to subsume herself into it.

There are two epigraphs to Red Ribbon, both very telling about the characteristics of Yeziarska's work. The first expands on the book's title, giving the full proverb from which it is taken. "Poverty becomes a wise Man like a red a ribbon on a white horse." The second epigraph comes from John Hall Wheelock.

Not in the flesh, not in the Spirit even
 Not in the winning of thy brain that rides
 on in mastery on the road of heaven
 Or charts the rhythm of the starry tides,
 The answer and the truth are found by where
 Deep at the very core, the Stranger bides.

The proverb reflects the old world value of poverty, humility and sacrifice. It conjures up a sense of community where wisdom, not wealth, is respected. This would certainly seem antithetical to the acquisitive, upwardly mobile immigrant world to which Yeziarska now belonged. In short, the title proverb is a tribute to Yeziarska's father and the values he seemed to embody (though, of course, in her novels, the father of the protagonist would never let poverty get in the way of his comfort). The Wheelock quotation is a very personal one

for Yeziarska. The truth is only held "where . . . the Stranger bides." Yeziarska did seem to go out of her way to make herself a stranger from all community. But being unable to become part of any community is inevitably a great source of anguish for Yeziarska. The moment in which the realization that she must divorce herself from a community is also a moment of wrenching pain.

Even before she comes to the point of leaving a community, however, an intuition of her eventual isolation drowns out her ability to enjoy any new development in her life. In the second chapter of Red Ribbon, satirically entitled "Tiled Bathroom of My Own," Yeziarska, in a stroke of great fortune, becomes middle-class overnight. But at the very moment she achieves her dreams -- even before she has a chance to physically enjoy any comforts -- she thinks to herself:

It was too big, too beautiful. Could I enjoy such affluence unless I could forget the poverty back of me. The real world, the tenement, blotted out the sun and sky. I saw myself a child of twelve, always hungry, always asking questions. (38)

Yeziarska then goes on to recount the time she asked her mother for a birthday party.

"Birthday?" Mother stopped washing and looked at me. "A birthday wills itself in you. What is with you the great joy. No shirt on your back -- no shoes on your feet -- not a penny in the house to buy bread -- and you want yet birthdays? The landlord's daughters can have birthdays. For her the music plays. For her life is a feast -- for you, a funeral. Bury yourself in ashes because you

were born in this world." (38)

These words are put in the mouth of the mother, though the hyperbolic response to an innocent girl's question is characteristic of Yeziarska's own responses to what she detects is the world's hypocrisy and injustice. When she gains entry into the rich Hollywood community, she is at first overwhelmed by her good fortune: "For once in my life I was where I wanted to be. . . . It was all I could do not to let my head sink on the table and weep. I wanted to weep and I wanted to clap my hands and sing and shout" (61). But then, just a hint of the tawdriness which lay behind the grand facade disillusioned Yeziarska from her new found community. Moments after this paean to her good fortune, Yeziarska begins to burn her Hollywood bridges:

I pushed the empty wine glass from me. I had dreamed of Olympian gods and woke up among hucksters . . . Now I saw the fish market in evening clothes. The fights that went on at the pushcarts in Hester Street went on in this Hollywood drawing room. Loneliness oppressed me. (62)

But Yeziarska's ability to dissent and her search for community are relentless. In a vignette which is reminiscent of social-realism, she decides to become a Marxist. Disgusted by the exalted treatment she receives from the studio, she leaves her chauffeured car to take public transportation:

Outside the gates of the studio, I joined the crowd waiting for the trolley: stagehands, stenographers, nameless office workers who punched the clock morning and night. It was like the warmth of an

open log fire after the artificial fireplace in my office. Here's where I belong, I thought. I felt myself relax, for the first time at ease in Hollywood . . . I squeezed in among the straphangers, stimulated by the crowdedness, the physical discomfort. On one side of me, a big-boned Negro washerwoman, on the other, a grimy mechanic, a lifetime's hard labor in the lines of his face. (69)

But this reverie soon ends: "A smell of garlic and the sickening odor of sweat turned my stomach. . . . Another half hour of waiting in this noisy, pushing mob was too much. Confused, unnerved by the roaring traffic, I hailed a taxi" (70). When Yeziarska mocks those writers who pretend they are part of the working class, and have joined the progressive movements merely to assuage their guilty consciences, she attempts to distance herself from the community of writers, while at the same time highlighting the distance she feels from the community from which she had originated.

The penultimate chapter of Red Ribbon, entitled "Bread and Wine in the Wilderness," is a final attempt by Yeziarska to join a community. But this isn't the crass, upstart community of Hollywood, or the unstable community of the W.P.A. This is a community of women living in the one-hundred percent bedrock American New Hampshire hills. It is here that Yeziarska "make[s] a new start away from the market place where I had lost myself in the stupid struggle for success" (199). In New Hampshire she would meet centered people who "were rooted in the hills and valleys of the countryside around them . . .

not homeless, hunger-driven, like my ghetto dwellers" (200). And at first, just as in every other community Yeziarska had joined, she believes that this is the place where she will find fulfillment. "I would learn from Marian Foster to be happy, learn to enjoy everything and everybody. . . . In my infatuation right after I arrived in Fair Oaks, I actually believed I could slough off my skin and with this new home begin a new life" (203). But again, the idea of a new beginning doesn't even last the day:

Even as I ate my supper, I began to feel the fear that the country had always caused in me. Living a new life in a new place wasn't what I had thought it would be . . . There was a fraternity of aloneness in the city. It was part the common lot to be alone. But to be alone in a place like Fair Oaks was to be an outsider, a stranger, separated from the others. (205)

Not for a minute can Yeziarska relax. She can not let herself be absorbed into the most accepting of communities, not even in a community of women who welcome her with wine and then retreat into the background so Yeziarska can get on with her work. And, ultimately, Yeziarska wonders why she is so plagued. Why can she feel comfortable nowhere? The answer, as it had been in Bread Givers, is the realization of the problem of father -- or, in this case, the problem of fathers.

Everything that happened to Mrs. Thompson disciplined her faith that whom God loves he chastens. If one thing failed, she knew she could turn her hand to something else. she was anchored in the God of her fathers. But I had

abandoned the God of my fathers and had not found my own. And because I was so lost without God, I had such deep need for people. (206)

In the same way that Sara's agreement to live with her father had come out of nowhere, Yeziarska's religious awakening also seems to be somewhat forced. However, what becomes clear to Yeziarska during her stay in New Hampshire is that even dissent is meaningless unless it stays rooted in the community from which one is dissenting. By distancing herself from the Christian community -- Yeziarska insults her host after a traditional Thanksgiving pageant by saying, "I'd like to challenge Marian's words 'Christian tradition of justice and mercy' and tell her what's going on in the world" -- Yeziarska draws closer to her previous Jewish heritage. Yeziarska now knows what she had not known before.

[T]he battle I thought I was waging against the world had been against myself, against the Jew in me . . . that was why there was no wholeness, no honesty in anything I did. That was why I always felt so guilty and so unjustly condemned, an outsider wherever I went. (212)

Finally, after a lifetime of trying (Yeziarska was over seventy when *Red Ribbon* was published), there is some sort of reconciliation between the new world and the old world:

There has always been something haunting in Mrs. Cobbs' face. Something that made me feel I had known her somewhere, known her for a long time. And now on the train, it came to me where I had seen that look before. That expression at

once serene and wise had been on my father's face. (215)

What Yeziarska feels the farm woman from New Hampshire and the Rabbi from Poland have in common are poverty, truthfulness and a "devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow (216). It's a spirituality, a spirituality which transcends Jew and Christian, old-world and new-world, which Yeziarska lacks. Yeziarska then blames her own inability to find peace on her mistaken pursuit of money:

I saw that Hollywood was not my success, nor my present poverty and anonymity failure. I saw that "success," "failure," "poverty," "riches," were price tags, money values of the market place which had mesmerized me for years . . . I had sought security in the mud and in the stars, sought in the quick riches and glory Hollywood and in the security wage of W.P.A. I sought it everywhere but in myself. Suddenly I felt like that shipwrecked sailor who had been picked up dying of thirst, unaware that the current into which he had drifted was fresh water. (214)

When Yeziarska embraces the poverty of her father - the "red ribbon" - she is embracing herself, pulling herself together. Yet she does not look outside to the larger community of Jews to define herself. It is a distinctly Emersonian introspection, one in which she must make peace with herself more than with any society or heritage:

All that I could ever be, the glimpses of truth I reached for everywhere, was in myself. The power that makes the grass grow, fruit ripen, and guides the bird in its flight is in us all. At any moment

when man becomes aware of that inner power, he can rise above the accidents of fortune that rule his outward life, creating and recreating himself out of his defeats. (220)

Here Yeziarska comes very close to the Emersonian pantheism which concludes Antin's The Promised Land. But Yeziarska does not go as far as Antin in linking her father's Hasidic piety with Emersonian Transcendentalism. Instead, she sees her heritage as the dominant force in her life, and it can only be transcended by truly internalizing it. Every incident in the book points to the problems of failing to recognize one's heritage. If anything, one might view Yeziarska's final position as a modified Emersonism. In an earlier incident, she describes to a group of students the response she gave to her sister after having eaten all the food in the sister's house.

"I was hungry - "
 "You were hungry? What about the children?"
 "I don't live for myself - "
 "For what do you live?"
 "For my writing . . . A mother has a right to steal to feed a hungry child, I have a right to steal to finish my story - " (138)

There's genuine righteous indignation here from a writer who feels she can justify anything as long as she can continue to write. But she finishes the student lecture by moderating this extreme Emersonian reading: "I wish I could still justify the stealing of that oatmeal as I was able to fifteen years ago. But every step of my writing career was a brutal fight like the stealing of that oatmeal from hungry children" (138). Yeziarska admits her notion of Emerson

undergoes a transformation as she matures. She would no longer accept what seems to be Emerson's most extreme dictates. But she recognizes the great strength and sacrifice needed to pursue one's art. The moderation also takes hold in regard to Yeziarska's opinion on consent/descent. One is not completely controlled by heritage, nor completely free of it. One must recognize the forces which make up life as a combination of heritage and unique individual talents. To ignore either one is to risk having nothing at all -- no community, no self.

Yeziarska, though she believed in the power of heritage and tradition, was the archetypal dissenter. There was not a single community in which her characters could live. Yet her obsessive search for a community testifies to her belief in the importance of it. It can only be concluded that, for Yeziarska, dissenting from community served as a means of creating one. Like Antin, she wished to act as a voice for the disenfranchised. But in opposition to Antin, she saw the need for dissent from American culture, too. Even while she valued Emersonian individuality, she saw that it was impossible for the Jew to enter the American community without a strong recognition of where she came from. Only then can she bring something of value to America. Ultimately, Yeziarska's complex world view can be seen as more of a model for later Jewish writers than Antin's. They, like Yeziarska, sometimes search fanatically for a utopia. They, like Yeziarska, are comfortable with the idea of dissent. Yet they are also aware that one is inevitably part of a community - and one's heritage does play

some role in the formation of this community. It is a community affected by and effecting the outside world. It is, in short, the emerging Jewish community in America.

Optimism Re-assessed: Levin and Roth

Meyer Levin's The Old Bunch (1937) begins with Harry Perlin, later to invent a garage door closer, wandering down Roosevelt Avenue in Chicago, searching for a place to start a club. Nine-hundred and sixty pages later, the same group that had formed that club finds itself at the Chicago World's Fair, where it is implied that they have become members of a far larger club. In between, The Old Bunch follows the progress of nineteen Jewish characters who make up not only Jewish Chicago, but who also make up America. Levin's work, though obviously influenced by Dos Passos' USA trilogy, is a novel that is not concerned with radical or reactionary politics. While his contemporaries such as Michael Gold and Henry Roth became messianic prophets with their clarion calls for a revolution and social justice, Levin's is a conciliatory novel which attempts to build consensus and community between factions which would otherwise be at odds. While recognizing the crushing aspects of a capitalist society, The Old Bunch advocates a broad-based and culturally-American community. No one is outside the pale, nor is there any center. Though Levin does not create any plausible women characters (only the virginal Sylvia Abramson and the greedy, social-climbing Lil Klein are discussed at any length), the male characters represent every color of the

political and social spectrum: the artist, the cynic, the capitalist, the gangster, the jock, the radical, the healer, the inventor. By examining the searches these characters undertake, we see that Levin's novel is one which is open to new world influences, positioned between the Antin and Wouk, that is between trust in the opportunities which America promises to its minorities and the hatreds of American xenophobia and anti-intellectualism of the cold-war era.

Though Levin is in line with Antin and Wouk's notions of the place of Jews in America - - certainly more than he is with Yeziarska and Bellow's longings for a distinctly Jewish sensibility - - Levin is neither an isolationist nor an Emersonian. Gone is the wild Emersonian optimism which permeates Antin's The Promised Land. He is not a Pantheist; he doesn't see God in everything. Nor does he see any real connection between a Jewish heritage and an American one. (In fact, one may feel that Levin believes them to be mutually exclusive.) Not yet present is the reactionary isolationism of Herman Wouk's Marjorie Morningstar. For Levin, the Jewish community in America has not been fully accepted by (nor has it fully accepted) the majority culture. Dissenters, like Sam Eisen, who are interested in social justice, make many in the majority culture uncomfortable. Also, ethnicity counts. Terms such as kike, mick, sheeny, dago, and hebe abound, and are used by all groups to refer to themselves and others. However, there is no indication that Levin believes, as

Yeziarska does, that a person must come to terms with his/her Jewish heritage if he/she is to become a full human being. And unlike Bellow, who believes America is a void where Jews lose their instincts of purity and simplicity, Levin believes that the struggle for a spiritual life can take multiple forms, from mysticism to activism. The Old Bunch attempts to bring together Jews of all stripes into one community which is deeply connected to the dominant American culture. At the same time, it recognizes a distinct Judaic social and religious heritage which will not be forgotten, by Jew or Gentile, any time soon. Finally, it sees dissent not as an obstacle to community, but as an important part of it. The urge towards reconciliation and the unbreakable bonds of a shared heritage allow dissent to flourish on both the left and the right even as it helps define the American-Jewish community.

By straddling two very distinct decades, the twenties and the thirties, Levin highlights the idea that the promise America offers to its immigrant communities is a product of the economic forces that are beyond the control of any single individual or group. In a country dominated by the laws of property, minorities must hope for endless prosperity. During the twenties, when many groups in America were succeeding financially, the children of Jewish immigrants on the West Side of Chicago were optimistic, high on the chances of becoming part of the mainstream. When, at about the halfway point in the novel, the stock-market crashes, the keen optimistic note which had infected

the first half of the book disappears. In its place is a spiraling circle of frustration and despair, which destroys some of the bunch, radicalizes others, and makes some move to the right. The bunch, at least initially, becomes polarized at the very moment that the country becomes polarized. The fate of the Jews in America, Levin seems to be saying in the first two-thirds of his novel, is inexorably linked to the fate of the rest of America. In comparison to Henry Roth, this is a profoundly assimilationist message; for though under extreme duress, none of Levin's characters advocate revolution or any deep change in the American system. Only two characters really remain outside the community, Sam Eisen and Lou Green. They are radicalized and nearly destroyed, respectively, yet at the conclusion of the novel, they once again find themselves profoundly connected to each other and others in the bunch. At the World's Fair, the final scene, an incredible vision of a peaceful solution to social injustice is put forward which will not only unite the people in the bunch, but which will also unite the whole of America. The artist Joe Freedman speaks for the whole group when he says:

Every man didn't have to agitate, to be with the revolution. In every act of life, there were two ways of going, and if a man consistently, in his own life, in those decisions which confronted him, acted in harmony with the long historical wave toward revolution, why, he could claim integrity in his life. It seemed to Joe that Roosevelt was such a man and that, quietly, the American revolution was going forward. (948)

The revolution which Joe Freedman claims is going forward is not the spiritual revolution of the first generation writers. Levin's characters are all American born, not Talmud students or oppressed *shtetl* survivors. They are not concerned with breaking a mold which had been set in Europe. As a whole, they take for granted the social conditions of America. The community has its own dissenters, but there's no harping over a culture lost or an American void. As far as Levin is concerned, that battle is over. Only Estelle Green's mother seems unable to adapt and regrets the passing of a tradition. But she herself has become marginalized in the community. Mrs. Greenstein (it appears that only her children have changed their name to Green), is seen as something of a madwoman because she is unable to accept the American ways of her children. When her daughter Estelle gets her hair bobbed, she is too frightened to go home. When she calls her mother, Mrs. Greenstein seems to go mad.

Mrs. Greenstein's whole body was trembling. It was just as if her daughter had called her up to say she had done something bad with a man. The wildness of her. She saw the nakedness of her daughter, the young, white, evil flesh, the girl naked with shorn hair under the lustful eyes of men. Her daughter would become a whore in the streets, her daughter with the breasts that she had seen budding, and been ashamed to tell her daughter anything . . . but how could she talk when even their languages were different, how could she tell a girl such important things when she couldn't think of the English words for them, while in Yiddish you always felt you were talking up, not down to your children? And the girl would laugh at her. The girls knew everything already,

with their smart eyes, and their tongues licking their lips. Such young snips, wild, they were wild, something wild in them, like wild animals. (16)

Mrs. Greenstein continues, wanting "to get a stick, a whip in her hands, and hit until red welts were raised." She accuses her daughter of being a white-slave, a "*nafkeh*." This woman, lost in America and slowly losing her mind, is overwhelmed by the "wild" freedom that is available in America. The inability to adapt is seen as a fatal flaw; the children of Mrs. Greenstein pay a price which none of the others in the group need pay. Estelle, as if attempting to live up to her mother's worst fantasies, becomes pregnant by Sol Meisels, the athlete of the bunch, and subsequently takes up with a series of men. At the end of the novel, she finds herself modeling furs at the Chicago World Fair, getting drunk, having sex in public, and finally wandering naked through the riot. Her brother Lou's fate is equally tragic. He fails at everything he attempts and must rely on the kindness of the bunch. Though he could not pass the bar exam, he is hired by both Lou "Sharpshooter" Margolis, his childhood friend, and Runt Plotkin, another member of the bunch who is a gangster's lawyer. He is hospitalized because of a venereal disease, treated by another member of the bunch -- Rudy Stone -- and ends up at home, a cowering onanist. At the World's Fair he doesn't even have the price of admission, though he eagerly joins the mob who wrecks the place and is subsequently arrested. Levin condemns the Greens to the worst fate of any of the Bunch. Certainly a tie

could be established between the mother's inability to adapt to America and her children's fate. And her children have no pity on her. When Lou goes to Estelle and begs her return home, Estelle is contemptuous: "If she hasn't got enough gumption to get along herself, I can't help it!" (492) Levin constantly reminds us that "To git along, [little doggie]" is one's first obligation.

The other first generation parents, though somewhat affected by the culture gap between them and their children, give in to America. When Harry Perlin's father dies, he attempts to mourn in the traditional way, but he doesn't know how:

All Harry knew about "sitting *shiva*" was that, when a Jew dies, his family was supposed to sit in the house, and mourn, without leaving the house for seven days and nights, or how many days was it? And weren't you supposed to be barefoot? His mother didn't tell them what to do. It was as if she had withdrawn into her own world, doing things according to her strict religious ways; and leaving them to do as they wished. (151)

Other than Mrs. Greenstein, all the parents have a similar hands off attitude towards their children. Consequently, their children flourish, or certainly do no worse than the average American. For they are Americans, and it is folly to think that a European-style orthodoxy can be maintained. A "synagogue Jew" comes to see if Harry can pray for his dead father, but he gives up quickly. "A *tsadik*, a sage, we won't make of him in a day. He's an *Amerikanisher bocher*, I can see. Well, at least you can mumble a *Kaddish*"

(151).

But while the idea of *shtetl* orthodoxy in America is easily dismissed - perhaps too easily when compared with the reality - Levin, through Joe Friedman, does deal with the connection the American Jew has both with the Jewish and the American community. Though unassailably American, Joe takes a trip backwards in time, first to Europe, then to the *shtetl* of his parents, and finally to a Palestine just beginning to form into a new Jewish state. Joe first comes to realize his connection to a larger heritage in the home of his first girlfriend, Sylvia Abramson. When a relative of hers comes to America to raise funds for Russia, her parents argue the merits of the Russian Revolution and Joe provides this insight.

As this crowd jabbered, astonishing things poured from them. Why, they had been full of ideas, ideals; they had even been socialists, freethinkers; they weren't dead to the world at all! Joe no longer saw them as mere hulks that had to exist in order to produce Sylvia and himself, as greenhorns who had left that dumb country, Russia, to get to America, the land of gold, and raise smart children, geniuses. (182)

The older generation, who are nearly as indifferent as the younger generation to the rituals of the religion, does maintain one element from the old-world that is almost completely lacking in the younger generation -- idealism. This might be seen as the essence of their religion. When an old Zionist uncle is accused of being an idealist, he shouts, "Yes, it is an ideal! Why not? We Jews

have always been idealists!" (185) Only Rudy Stone, a doctor who risks his career in order to help start a health clinic, and Sam Eisen, a radical lawyer, live by any ideal other than material progress. Their very names - Eisen (iron) and Stone - show the extra strength of character needed in America to hold to any principle which has no material gain attached to it. The first generation does, however, pass down concern for the community. When someone at the Abramson house tells of the persecution of some rich Jews by the Red Army, a voice answers, "White, red, a Jew is a Jew!" The conversation turns to Palestine, Romania, Poland:

It was this that confused, amused, and yet got hold of Joe. A houseful of relatives on a Friday night, a house on Avers Avenue, Chicago, and, by God, nothing escaped their worry; they worried about the Polish pogroms, the Lithuanian Jews, the Rumanian exiles, the Galicians . . . they never forgot one, not one. (186)

Joe soon moves out and tries to reconnect with both his European and more distant Middle-Eastern heritage. But what he learns, through the encounters with these communities, is just how American he really is. When he first goes to Europe, it is to Paris to study art. But he soon realizes that there is something important that is missing - both in Paris and in his own art. He falls under the influence of a sculptor, Aaron Polansky, who sculpts conventional biblical patriarchs who "were squat, stumpy little men and women, Jews with long, narrow noses, elliptical faces; instead of biblical robes

they wore the knee breeches and short coats of old-country talmudists" (347). This artistic fusion of the Old Testament and the *shtetl* causes Joe to go back to Kovno - the town in which his father was born - to see his relatives. But once there, he realizes that he has

no point of contact with them. They would sit staring at him, smiling with their eyes, as though, any instant, a flame of true communication would spring between him and them, and finally they would break the silence with a question about some other Jew who had emigrated years ago, and of whom he had never heard.

Why had he come this far? (360)

The Jews of the town see him either as a savior who might be able to get them to America, or as a rich, pampered brat whom they silently scorn. It is only on the Sabbath - - which reminds him of the childhood Sabbaths that his parents practiced before they stopped because they "got ashamed of their greenhorn ways with their American children" - - that Joe feels some connection with his *shtetl* relatives. But even that feeling doesn't last long because that ritualized way of practicing the religion is "as unretrievable as childhood itself" (361). The point of the trip to the *shtetl* is highlighted immediately after Joe leaves and finds himself in Greece, overcome by the temples which were a "miracle of complete harmony, the work of man mated to nature, singing with the tranquillity, the eternity, of time" (364). At the temple, he runs into "a gray and stubble-headed native, perhaps the caretaker of the place," who finds out that Joe is from Chicago. "That so! I was live in Chicago! Thirty year!" He

stared at Joe with strange, unblinking eyes; as though a deep community had been established" (365). And it is at this moment, with a Greek who had a candy store on Blue Island Avenue, that Joe finds more community than with all his *shtetl* relatives. The kinship with both the Greek-American man and Greek art causes Joe to decide to create an American art that would harmonize with the nature of the American landscape.

However, Joe's dream is not easily fulfilled, nor is his quest complete. After trying and failing to put his artistic ideas into practice, he again tries to find a place where he can meld the spiritual and the physical in order to, ultimately, find a community. During his visit to the *shtetl*, the only person Joe can talk to as an equal is a young Zionist. Joe, who had given some thought to Palestine before, now decides to go there and become "A Jewish sculpture in a Jewish land" (365). At first he is ecstatic. Though he doesn't feel much for the "graybeards" who want to pray at the Wailing Wall, he is invigorated by the *chalutzim*, the pioneers who are creating a new nation in the desert bought from the Arabs. He is enchanted by the shepherds, the flocks, the reincarnation of the ancient ways of his people. Verses from Ecclesiastes spring to mind: "And why not? In this land, biblical phrases were as native and as fresh as the songs of Walt Whitman in America" (558). But after he settles in a Kibbutz and begins sculpting, Joe is caught up in a pitched battle where a woman is badly wounded. It is at this point that he begins wondering whether

this is really the place for him. Driving the woman to a hospital in Haifa, the scene of another bloody massacre, his truck is stopped and Joe is warned by a British soldier, "You're a Jew same as the rest of these, and your bloody American passport won't do you any fuckn good when a couple of Arabs pull out what's in your breeches"(572). While accepting this, Joe nevertheless is completely disillusioned by the pogrom: "He had not been like one those other comrades, given over permanently to this homeland, to *Eretz Yisroel*"(574). Because of the killings between Jew and Arab, the sense of Palestine being used to show the rest of the world a better way disappears: "Yes, Palestine would remain, and the settlement would go on . . . but the glow was gone" (582). No longer could he recite verses of Biblical poetry on Mount Gilead. "He would not find that feeling again. That love had given way, had been fused in a white arc of emotion; the comrades were united now by hatred"(583). Joe finally returns to America for good.

The rest of the bunch do not travel the world to search for community. They are, in the true American fashion, lacking almost any introspection. Yet they maintain throughout a sense of loyalty to one another. Mitch Wilner and Rudy Stone open up their medical practice together. Both Lou Margolis and Runt Plotkin hire Lou Green when he's down on his luck. Against the wishes of his wife, Sam Eisen lets Runt Plotkin practice law in his office. Ten years pass from the beginning to the end of the novel, and it becomes clear that

Levin is trying to show the inter-connectedness of the group. The religion they practice merely mirrors the religious practices of upper class gentiles. Those more fully aware of Judaism express their piety by throwing elaborate luncheons for the Hadassah. Bridge and costume parties replace prayers and ancient ritual. The one attempt at a religious ceremony, a Passover Seder hosted by Ev Goldberg, is a vicious parody of itself: the centerpiece of the ritual is a baked ham. Levin shows his distaste for this by having Sam Eisen, the principled socialist lawyer who is also an atheist -- stalk out in anger. It's one thing not to believe in God or organized religion. It's quite another thing to mock one's heritage.

Sam Eisen, like Joe Freedman, is an exception. But even he becomes reconciled with the community. While Joe is the only one to search for a heritage, Sam is the only one who puts desire for social justice before the desire for riches. He fights with his wife, Lil Klein, who wants him to evict some of their tenants and to take cases defending factory owners who want to cheat their employees. Lil becomes furious, but Sam stubbornly refuses to use his power to oppress the poor. This puts Sam outside the community to such an extent that he wonders whether he is meant to remain outside both the Jewish and American communities: "Maybe he was destined to be a lonely and angry watcher at the saturnalia of Chicago, of America, but at least he would be clear with himself" (528). But even though Sam divorces Lil, he does not

remain alone. He remarries. And, more importantly, at the end, he becomes reunited not only with Joe, but with the others of the bunch he grew up with. On the last day of the World's Fair, Sam and Joe are on the balcony of the electrical building, discussing the state of America. Talking to Joe, Sam recalls the time he was expelled from college for not taking part in R.O.T.C. Joe, too, had refused to take part. But under pressure from both the Dean and a Reform Rabbi, Joe backed off from his stand. When Sam originally heard about the incident, he despised Joe. But now, ten years later, Sam can forgive:

After all, Joe wasn't a bad guy, he was more sensitive than most of that gang. "Think of the people you know," and you found yourself thinking not of the people you knew today but of the people you grew up with. Because you really knew their class background, Sam decided. Or was it because they were the people you really lived with all your life? Whether near or away from them, you measured yourself by their standards, for those were the ideas you had grown into, when you first became aware of the social world. They were the unchangeable flesh of your mind. (949)

This is as far as Sam could subjugate himself to the group. Yet the above is a statement of unity. One can not "outgrow" one's community. It is as much a part of oneself as one's own body. Sam doesn't lose his sense of superiority -- even self-righteousness -- yet he recognizes his own American, middle-class roots. He also finally accepts the people he grew up with, whether they are actively fighting for a cause or not. And though Meyer Levin might be justifying his own role as a writer, he has Sam draw even nearer to Joe by

having Sam think, "And fellows like Joe could be useful; they were the artists; they should reveal" (949). Though Joe and Sam are no more the center of the novel than any of the other characters, they (and to a lesser extent, the doctor Rudy Stone) are the dissenters who lead.

The bulk of the novel's characters "git along." Mort Abramson, Runt Plotkin, Rudy Stone, Lou Margolis, Harry Perlin, and all the women have all joined a community which is really part of a larger American community. The main motivating force is to make as much money as possible. Even Rudy Stone, who believes that his primary obligation as a doctor is to heal people, begins working at a medical clinic because it assures him a steady salary. The bunch consistently chooses money over principle. The danger of this is shown in the final scene of the novel. For after the bunch is shown participating in America's prosperity of the twenties -- a time when it was easy to maintain one's humanity -- the conclusion demonstrates what happens when an economic situation deteriorates, as it did during the Depression. The bunch then sinks into the barbarism of the rest of society. The apocalypse that concludes the World's Fair differs greatly from the apocalypse that concludes Call It Sleep. In Call It Sleep, the energy for which David Schearl is a conduit is the energy of empowerment. The only cure for David's hatred is an apocalypse that could erase race consciousness in his mind. The riot at the World's Fair, on the other hand, is one in which the Jews participate in equal

measure with the rest of the world. It is not an empowering destruction, one in which people are reborn. While David becomes a Messiah figure, the bunch who participate in the final riot are shown to be as savage as anyone, regardless of race or ethnicity. David Schearl rises and falls outside the grip of the American mainstream. And though united, the group - having heedlessly abandoned the traditions and idealism of their parents and hitched their chariot to the American dream -- will not rise from their sunken condition until the rest of America does. Their community and the mainstream American community are one.

Though it is clear that Levin follows Antin in the line of "assimilationist" writers, Levin is not one who dissents from the religious community as Antin had twenty-five years earlier. He rather dissents from the other main intellectual (some would say religious) trend that dominated the Jewish community -- socialism. While Roth and other socialist writers are extremely hostile to the mechanized, inhuman conditions that thrive in American cities, Levin's work revels in the possibilities of Chicago. And Levin dissents against both Antin's rugged individualism and the socialist writers who sought less nationalistic societies by succumbing to the powerful pull of an ethnic identification. Levin's message, by and large, is one which is conciliatory towards the American capitalist culture, while recognizing that it has its own significant problems. His belief in the American system is,

ultimately, based on its ability to incorporate dissent peacefully, just as, historically, the Jewish community has been able to do.

Roth's Radicalism

Like Yeziarska, Henry Roth suffered from long periods of neglect before he was "rediscovered." The first wave of interest began in 1956 when The American Scholar asked selected critics to contribute to an article entitled "The Most Neglected Books of the Past 25 Years." The only novel to be named by two critics, Alfred Kazin and Leslie Fiedler, was Roth's Call It Sleep (1937). Kazin and Fiedler were themselves products of the tenements and identified with the strains immigrants faced in adjusting to a modern American city. But it was more than merely the immigrant saga which had attracted them. Fiedler wrote, "Call it Sleep . . . is a *specifically* Jewish book, the best single book by a Jew about Jewishness written by an American, certainly through the thirties and perhaps ever." (Roth xvii)

But in what sense is Call It Sleep a Jewish novel? The omniscient narrator, the real consciousness of the novel, is quite detached from, and seems to have no specific feelings towards, Judaism. Roth later wrote of his own feelings of dislocation:

In the early thirties, when I became a writer, my attitude was one of complete detachment, at least I thought I was detached from everything - country, or class, or people, certainly, even my own. And everything was just objects, in very

much the sense, in very much the tradition, of the writers of my time, Joyce in particular. . . everything, even your own folk, became elements for art, without a feeling of being profoundly committed - to them, to their exilic struggle." (Shifting Landscapes 170)

This statement, made almost forty years subsequent to the publication of the novel, certainly seems to place Roth in a tradition that is antithetical to the Jewish position of engagement in the community. And it certainly puts him at odds, as he readily admits later in the same passage, with his own professed beliefs in the proletariat struggle: "I was not committed in a way that you would say was functional, in which I acted *dynamically* within the revolutionary struggle" (170). The communist reviewers of the novel sensed Roth's detachment, and condemned the novel as merely another attempt at bourgeois symbolism. Roth, stung by the criticism, attempted to write a "politically" correct novel with a genuinely radical protagonist. But after a hundred pages, he found himself eroticizing and symbolizing again and destroyed the project. But what Fiedler saw as specifically Jewish, beyond Roth's sensitive treatment of a Jewish child caught between two cultures, is Roth's ability to present a prophetic sensibility, one that uses harsh indictments to unite a community. American society is condemned as brutal, unforgiving and, most of all, overly mechanistic. Salvation lies in the old world values of acceptance,

forgiveness, and the faith that suffering has a meaning. The characters -- in particular David and his mother Genya -- fight to hold on to what they see as an old-world sensibility. For one thing, unlike the father Albert and Genya's sister Bertha, they do not become brutalized by their suffering. And the work's resolution -- which mirrors the hope that Jews had throughout history -- assures that one's pain does have meaning. Roth has said that though he denigrated his heritage as a young man, he never lost his sense of mystical purpose which he had learned in *cheder*:

There was never a moment that I strayed from the mighty Hebrew conviction that this suffering meant something, must have a meaning; suffering that I myself invoked, brought on by myself, was meant for me as one chosen to discover the meaning, unfold it. (Shifting Landscape 170)

Call It Sleep moves from the pain and confusion of the protagonist to the beginnings of understanding and healing.

The suffering of the immigrant is everywhere evident. Roth has none of Antin's beliefs that immigrants could merely glide into American culture without losing their humanity. Nor does Roth believe, as Levin does, in a society where disparate elements will eventually "get along" and social problems will magically solve themselves. Rather, like Yeziarska, he links his Jewish heritage to a more humane and less materialistic society. His response to America's problems is not to leave, as Hemingway and other American

writers did, but to build a humane community. But where Yeziarska feels that all answers to one's problems must be found by coming to terms, not with society, but with oneself (Red Ribbon concludes with a move, at least temporarily, away from society), Roth's work is infused with a radical sensibility which refutes the notion of individualism. America is not any sort of promised land, and Roth places much of the individual's dislocations at the feet of a brutalizing culture. As one critic points out, the "NET" effect - - nationalism, ethnicity and technology - - on David and his mother is the controlling force of Call It Sleep. David must conquer this force, or at least make sense of it, if he is to survive in America. He does this by a mystical reconnection to a past which he is just learning about:

David broke into the cheder to get the Bible; "the blue book with the coal in it! The man with the coal was what he was after. Of course this was all incomprehensible to the Rabbi who caught him. But to David it was another step on the way to the sign, to finding his identity in an ethnic jungle and a technological maze. (Walden 20)

David steals the *chumush* because in it is the story of Isaiah and the coal with which the angels had cleansed him. David needs to get hold of that coal because it is connected to the electric power which he will use to cleanse himself. The apocalypse which ends Call It Sleep and reconciles the protagonist and society is, in a sense, a biblical cleansing of the spirit.

The novel loses no time in plunging the reader into the pain of dislocation. It opens with the immigrants being delivered "from the stench and throb of the steerage to the stench and throb of New York tenements"(3). An oedipal triangle is soon established between Albert and Genya Schearl and their putative son, David. But beyond that obvious triangle there are two distinct dualisms that might be seen as equally central to the novel. The first is the symbolic dualism on which the novel is structured.

Roth's chief unifying device is his richly wrought symbolic structure which not only provides psychological coherence to the multiplicity of images, thoughts, and fantasies which crowd David's stream of consciousness, but reveals his character and emotions. . . . David's conflicts are convincingly rendered in the interior monologue, especially his recurring fantasy of a dual self . . . David's imagination and intelligence are analytic and creative; he tries to fuse two opposing perspectives into a single entity. (Kleiderman 9)

But these opposing perspectives are not unique to David. Every child is often unable to tell the real from the fantastic. The first task of joining the adult world is not so much to fuse these two worlds, but to eliminate as far as possible the imagined terrors of childhood, and focus one's strength on the actual terrors. David's real challenge is the dualism of the old world versus the new world, Jew versus Christian, and technology and displacement versus pre-industrial continuity.

When we are introduced to the characters in the prologue, Genya and Albert are fighting because Genya hadn't recognized Albert when he came to pick her up from Castle Garden. Genya defends herself by saying, "But you look so lean, Albert, so haggard. And your mustache - you've shaved. . . . I can see it. You've changed" (6-7).

Albert, on the other hand, is offended by the two-year old David's hat.

"Where did you find that crown?"
 Startled by his sudden question his wife looked down.
 "That? That was Maria's parting gift. The old nurse. She
 bought it herself and then sewed the ribbons on. You
 don't think it's pretty?" (10-11)

The husband becomes further enraged that his wife doesn't even see that the hat is the only thing that points them out as foreigners. It's a relic of the old-world, as much as the old nurse had been. (He had brought his wife some American clothes that she had been able to change into before she got on the ferry to New York.) He scoops up the hat and it throws it out onto the water. Thus the first shot in the battle between Europe and America is fired.

Albert is not so much a product of the new world, as a symbol of it. Genya's sister calls him an ungovernable beast. Like the uncontrollable forces of the technological society, Albert has superhuman power with which he overwhelms himself and those around him. Immediately upon coming to America, he drops whatever religion he had practiced in Europe and begins eating in the beer halls. It is also there, while speaking to a drunk, that he begins to learn English. He starts work as a machinist in a printing plant. When he gets too close to the machine, his thumb becomes "well-munched"(176). He is being eaten by the pressures of the new world - the rage, the frustration, the alienation from oneself drive Albert Schearl to the brink of madness.

David and Genya, on the other hand, are old-world creatures. Genya never learns English and she rarely ventures more than a few blocks from her home. The traits that

distinguish her are love and gentleness. Her Yiddish is as poetic as Albert's is violent. David obviously identifies with her. When his friend Yussie asks him whom he likes better, "ladies or gents", he answers, "Ladies" (21). Yussie, who identifies with men -- "I like mine fodder bedder" -- is obviously more assimilated. When David first comes upon him on their stoop, Yussie is taking apart an alarm clock. When David asks what makes it go, Yussie answers, "Kentcha see? Id's coz id's a machine" (20). David doesn't really understand the significance of this. "I god a calenduh opstai's," David informs him. But Yussie, a child of the new world, is far too engrossed with his machine to care. "Puh! Who ain' god a calenduh," he says. But in the first section of the novel, David's real treasure are the pages his mother rips out of the calendar which he then saves along with other old, worn-out junk that doesn't have any utilitarian purpose. He saves them all in a shoebox and looks at them periodically:

His mother called them his gems and often asked him why he liked things that were worn and old. It would have been hard to tell her, but there was something about the way in which the link of a chain was worn or the tread on a bolt or a castor-wheel that gave him a vague feeling of pain when he ran his fingers over them. They were like worn shoe-soles or very thin dimes. You never saw them wear, you only knew they were worn, obscurely aching. (41)

So is David's connection to the old world -- "obscurely aching." He is set against the new world personified by his father. In the unequal struggle -- "David and Goliath," one of his father's ex-co-workers calls it (27) -- he attempts to retain the right to hold onto the old, which later becomes identified with his heritage and the hope of messianic transformation.

Before any sort of transformation takes place, however, the characters must overcome their individual suffering and come together. For this to occur, the central riddle which defines each character must be answered. What is the source of Albert Schearl's paranoia and rage? Why is Genya so passive? (Even her sister Bertha accuses Genya of being "too calm, too generous" (218).) And why is David so conflicted? Why is David so unable to adapt to a culture with which others his age have no trouble at all? When the novel does supply answers to these questions, the characters are finally redeemed and the reasons for their intense suffering become clear. The reader, also, comes to realize, just as one realizes in Yezierska's later work, that one cannot escape one's past. Not even Albert, who has made his way furthest into the new world, can escape the anguish caused by events in the old world.

In the climactic scene, it is finally fully revealed that Genya's suffering is a result of an early rebellion. While still in Europe, she had an affair with a gentile organist. When Genya tells Bertha the story, Bertha places the blame on German Romances. "They were bad for you. . . . They made you odd and made your thoughts odd. They gave you strange notions you shouldn't have had" (218). Foreign influences, it seems, are at least partly responsible for Genya's trouble. But Genya had been willing to give up her entire heritage for her lover. She offered to go to a new city and start a new life. However, in Roth's world, the forces of history are not so easily discarded. One does not simply overthrow a millennium of history. Genya's lover had remained determined to go through with his plan of marrying a rich, older woman of his own faith and merely desires Genya

as his mistress. Genya ends the relationship, but her parents had already discovered the affair because they found letters he had written to her. A broken Genya throws herself at her father's feet and begs his forgiveness. The father, re-establishing his patriarchal power, decides how Genya must live her life and picks out a tragically flawed man to be her husband. She accepts this fate with a determined humility which is equal to the passion she had evinced in her moment of dissent.

Her husband, Albert Schearl, we learn, was held responsible by his own mother for killing his father. In fact, his mother had been going around the village spreading the story about how he might have saved his father's life. Albert himself blurts out the story to Genya.

"Didn't she [his mother] tell you that my father and I had quarreled that morning, that he struck me, and I vowed I would repay him? There was a peasant watching us from afar. didn't she tell you that? He said I could have prevented it. I could have seized the stick when the bull wrenched it from my father's hand. When he lay on the ground in the pen. But I never lifted a finger! I let him be gored! Didn't she tell you that?" (530)

Genya admits she heard it from his mother. And then Albert accuses her family of forcing her to marry him, a known murderer, because she had to get married right away when she had become pregnant with David from her Christian lover. When Albert discovers this through David's *cheder* rabbi (who had found out himself because David had ludicrously misinterpreted the tale when he had heard his mother tell it to his aunt), he explodes at Genya:

"How long do you think you'll hide it! Will I be

lulled and gulled forever? Must I tell you? Must I blurt it out! My sin balances another? Is that enough for you? (531)

Though Genya continually denies that she became pregnant from her lover, the weight of evidence does seem to be on Albert's side. Other evidence includes the suspicious alacrity, immediately after their marriage, with which her family had paid for Albert's ticket to America.

"After all, was I there to see him born? Was I even there to see you bearing him? No! I was in America - - on their money, notice! The ticket they bought me. Why were they so eager to get rid of me? Why such haste, and I not married more than a month?" (532)

There is other damning evidence. David's birth certificate had been conveniently lost. It also occurs to Albert that when Genya and David first arrived in America, the age of the baby had become a matter of dispute. Albert had told her to say that the baby was only seventeen months to save the fare (he is supposedly about twenty months), but the doctor only laughed and said the baby must be over two years old. Six years later, Albert figures this out and declares,

"He's born a month or two too soon to be mine - - perhaps more. You wait that time. That month or two, and then, why then exactly on the head of the hour you write me -- I have a son! . . . But when you come across the doctors are too knowing." (533)

Genya denies everything: "You're mad! There's no other word," she tells him. But she can not really answer anything else. Though Albert Schearl is frequently presented as violent and paranoid, he creates a powerful circumstantial case against his wife. He understands everything now. His sin is paid for by suffering for his wife's sin. Now he can be forgiven. He doesn't even have to suffer from the brutalizing effects of the new world anymore. When Genya threatens to leave, he says, "Go. . . . The nights in the milk wagon! The thoughts! The torment! The stables -- hitching the horse. The other men! The torment! I'll be rid of it!" (535)

It is David who ultimately serves to bring the community together. David is the one who keeps most to the old ways. To him there is power in the old religions, both Christian and Jewish. He senses the power in the rosary beads his friend Leo gives him. It is he, far beyond any other new-world child in the novel, who takes to heart the stories of the prophets. He has his own sense of justice and feels he must be cleansed through suffering. When his father beats him unjustly in the beginning of the novel, he protests and accepts his mother's protection. But at the end, after he admits having allowed Leo to "play bad" with his cousin, he hands his father a whip. It is at this point, at the moment David hands his father the whip, that David first reconciles fantasy and reality and he is able to start

living out his fate:

In the swirling, crumbling, darkened mind, that one compulsion rallied the body and the brain like a standard. A dream? No, not a dream. Not a dream nor the memory of a dream. An act, ordained, foreseen, inevitable as this very moment, a channel of expertness, imbued for ages, reiterated for ages, familiar as breath. (543)

He acts now with great deliberation. His mother pushes him out the door, for his father seems on the verge of murdering him. He heads straight for the trolley tracks, where the power of God resides. It is through this power that the elements of the novel are pulled together. Allan Guttman notes

His father's hammer, the cellar, Isaiah's fiery coal - - all the images are brought together symphonically into a crescendo of significance. The electrical power that blasts and sears him is also the magical coal that grants redemption from sins. (Crisis of Identity 54)

Bonnie Lyons concludes that "the analogues of redemption - - sexual, political, and Christian - - support and universalize David's personal mystical redemption in chapter XXI" (53). But David is granted more than an Oedipal victory over his father, as Guttman suggests, or a universal redemption, as Lyons says. At the moment when David sticks the milk ladle into the tracks, he touches God. There is no other way to describe the mystical connection with a higher power. He has been granted the power

to maintain a connection to the old world and power over the new. By short circuiting the trolley car, he has stopped the industrial, mechanized world in its tracks.

"Clang! Clang! Oy! Machine! Liberty! Revolt! Redeem!"

Power

*Power! Power like a paw, titanic power,
ripped through the earth and slammed
against his body and shackled him
where he stood. Power! Incredible,
barbaric power! A blast, a siren of light
within him. Rending, quaking, fusing his brain
and blood to a fountain of flame,
vast rockets in a searing spray! Power! (569)*

David is granted the power of a prophet. Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, he too, is able to give shape to a community in exile that, otherwise, would have fallen apart. All his previous dissent, his attachment to the old world, his rejection of industrialization and dehumanization, is brought together in an electrical firestorm that powerfully unites the community. As he rushes from the house, his family is tearing itself apart. When David is carried in by the policeman, "His father threw his chair back, sprang to his feet. His eyes bulged, his jaw dropped, he blanched" (589). David sees that he has won. It is not merely that his father has been conquered, but a certain semblance of the old order is reestablished. The father recognizes David as his rightful son. In answer to a question asked by the police, Albert says,

"Yes. Yes," he was saying. "My sawn. Mine. Yes. Awld eight. Eight en' - - en' vun mawnt. He vas bawn in --" (594). Albert accepts Genya's story about David's birth regardless of the evidence. His answer to the cop signals a unification between the new world personified by Albert and the old world personified by David and Genya. Albert reaches a level of forgiveness which Genya had already reached when she, despite the evidence of her eyes, dismissed the charge of patricide against Albert as the ravings of a madwoman. Before he drifts off to sleep, David becomes aware of what he has accomplished. The final image is one of unity, not only for his family, but for all the distinct and varied people of the new world:

It was only toward sleep one new himself still lying on the cobbles, felt the cobbles under him, and over him and scudding ever toward him like a black foam, the perpetual blur of shod and running feet, the broken shoes, new shoes, stubby, pointed, caked, polished, buniony, pavement beveled, lumpish, under skirts, under trousers, shoes, over one, and through one, and feel them all and feel, not pain, not terror, but strangest triumph, strangest acquiescence. (599)

In the image of looking up from the pavement at everyone's shoes -- men's and women's, the rich and the poor, the native and the greenhorn -- it becomes clear that David's greatest "triumph" is the community he has helped to forge.

Call It Sleep is clearly a novel that advocates dissent. It also seems

to be in revolt against the mechanistic, industrialized society. It suggests that America is a foreign culture even for those who live in it, and that it has replaced a culture that had offered more spirituality to the individual and the community. Though just a boy, the protagonist is a messianic character who refuses to integrate into American culture and tries to bring together a diverse community, not only of Jews, but of all people. Of course the reality of the American Jewish community lies between Levin's idea of slow but peaceful assimilation and Roth's notion of a cataclysmic revolution. Neither has occurred, and a distinct Jewish community survives today still split over how one should conduct one's life in America. But Call It Sleep remains a pre-eminent text in which the dissenter, while searching for community, creates it.

**The Struggle Over the Gilded Ghetto:
Herman Wouk and Saul Bellow**

Allen Guttman says of Herman Wouk's character Marjorie Morningstar that she "is led into temptation by Noel Airman, an assimilationist whose name suggests the ne'er do well Luftmensch of Yiddish literature, but she returns at length to her constitutional commitments to Judaism and its Law" (Crisis of Identity 121). However, it is, in fact, hard to see what Guttman means by the return "to Judaism and its laws. Marjorie never goes far from her roots. She never gets over eating bacon or shellfish. "Eating pork gave her an odd sense of freedom, and at the same time, though she suppressed it, a twinge of disgust" (409). Though she eventually has sex, she is convinced that without the benefit of marriage, it is evil. "The sex had been, in the best moments, shaking, lovely: but even in those best moments it had been darkened by reservations, fear, and unconquerable shame" (452). Marjorie only goes from the comfort of the Upper West Side to the comfort of the near New York suburbs. And all this is enacted in an environment that precludes anyone but Jews. Leslie Fiedler points out:

Marjorie is, first of all, detached from the

encounter with the gentile, allowed to choose only between the Jewish intellectual and the Jewish bourgeois. The effect of putting her in so totally Jewish a context makes her seem scarcely Jewish at all (though much is made of her difficulties with religion) hardly distinguishable from the Sweetheart of Sigma Chi." (Waiting 249)

Fiedler works under the assumption that one of Wouk's main goals is to chronicle the rise and fall and rise of one typically American-Jewish woman and show how Jews are, ultimately, the same as gentiles. Fiedler calls Wouk's book the first shot fired in a Jewish/American detente. Yet Wouk is more than someone who values consent over descent, the last in a long line of writers who, beginning with Antin, envisions an American-Jewish community embracing American values and, except for a few innocuous rituals, differing in no way from the majority culture. Wouk's work goes further than both Antin and Levin in favor of Jewish assimilation. By ignoring dissenters, Marjorie Morningstar seems more a desperate plea for acceptance by the dominant culture than a work which values a Jewish heritage. For example, when Marjorie learns that Michael Eden, a character she meets on a boat to Paris, is trying to help Jews escape from Germany, she is ashamed that she can barely muster any sympathy for the German Jews' plight: "I'm Jewish. I should care a little more." To this Eden answers, "Jews are just people." Marjorie says, "That's the best compliment anyone can pay us. Said, in that tone, anyway" (466). Wouk cannot be faulted here for historical inaccuracy. For at

the last moment when something might have been done to save at least some Jews from the Holocaust, the American Jewish community as a whole did not rise and take things in hand. And Wouk uses his heroine to underline to anyone reading the novel that even during the worst catastrophe to befall a nation, American Jews had been just as isolationist and self-absorbed as the rest of the world. Dissent -- if one could call it that -- to the mainstream policy of not making waves or asking for special immigration quota exemptions, is embodied in Michael Eden, a doomed, drug-addicted former psychology professor who is embarked on a suicidal course because he killed his wife in a car accident. True dissenters, such as the ultra-orthodox leadership and leftists in opposition to Hitler, are completely ignored. In Wouk's world, only one vision is allowed. Dissenting voices, voices that did eventually become a part of and shape the community at large, can no where be found.

In addition, Wouk's characters, like Antin's and to a lesser degree Levin's, show Jews assimilating into American culture with little or no angst. But there is a difference between Wouk and the earlier writers. Antin's work is a testimony to the highly abstract ideas of Emerson. Levin's work grapples with a community of people from the most complacent to the most radical, all of whom eventually make do in America. But Wouk places an iron grip of conformity on all his characters. If Antin's model is Emerson, and Levin's Dos Passos, Wouk's model is Joe McCarthy. While Wouk takes the external

symbols of Judaism more seriously than his earlier counterparts, he creates a community which lacks the element of individual interpretation, a keystone of Jewish tradition. The multiplicity of traditions and opinions which had shaped European Jewry and allowed it to survive is lost in Wouk's world. Except for a few pathetic oddballs, the Jewish community is just as anti-intellectual and, most importantly, just as anti-communist, as the rest of the country. So paranoid is Wouk, so touchy a subject is communism, that even the bohemian and disaffected intellectuals are forced to renounce communism as nonsense. Time and again, both Noel Airman and Michael Eden dismiss it as the provence of long-haired, dirty-necked fools. Even if one were to argue that Jewish radicalism is dependent upon the current social and economic status of the Jews (and this study makes no such arguement) the idea that Jews were not politically progressive amounts to nothing less than revisionist history, since the work is set in the 1930s and the defining event of that decade is the Great Depression and the crossing of radical politics into the mainstream. Yet neither the depression nor the radical movement plays any serious role in Marjorie Morningstar. Even the rise of Hitler makes only a brief, melodramatic appearance. The main concern of the work is rooted in the decade in which it was written -- the 1950s -- and it is concerned almost exclusively with discrediting dissent. Any character who shows the least dissatisfaction with the status-quo is doomed. In place of communists, the main bogeyman becomes the

intellectual her/himself, as close a facsimile for the communist as Wouk dares allude.

Wouk's characters have won what Antin had envisioned, a life indistinguishable from the longer settled majority. But it seems a victory in stasis, one that seems to diminish possibilities. While Antin and Yeziarska had seen Jews as a spark of regeneration in America -- creating America rather than being created by it -- Wouk's Jews are settled creatures, citizens without any special portfolio. They are not rootless and alienated, but models of decorum. The image of Marjorie at the end, her premature heaviness and gray hair, show the Jew as sluggish bourgeois, living comfortably off the rents of her properties and playing baseball with her children. There is nothing striving or achieving about them, no burning desire to create a new society. The insight of finally being at home after years of *goluth* is a physical, not a philosophical, fact. Where Antin says she is just as much at home in a tent as in a study - it's the idea of America that's important - Wouk jettisons all ideas as too close to intellectualism. He makes clear that it is the actual physical house with all its attendant responsibilities which is important. Wouk emphasizes that the American Jew is home; there is no where else to go. The Sisterhood might raise money for orphans and trees in Israel, but no sane person with a house and backyard could think seriously of actually going to help build a new country.

In fact, after reading Marjorie Morningstar, it is easy to understand how Irving Howe could write:

My own view is that American-Jewish fiction has probably moved past its high point. Insofar as this body of writing draws heavily from the immigrant experience, it must suffer a depletion of resources, a thinning-out of materials and memories. (Jewish-American Stories)

What is lacking, Howe claims (quoting Ruth Wisse), are "pan-Jewish fictional atmospheres" -- that is, the overcrowded tenements and the dirty streets of the Lower East Side. As Leslie Fiedler points out, the removal of any direct reference to non-Jewish society makes Marjorie Morningstar seem like a novel written by one who is part of the dominant majority. There is an eerie dislocation about the book, for no matter where one goes -- to the theater or the movies (where even the star actors and actresses with non-Jewish names are actually rumored to be secret Jews), to the world of business, politics, or banking -- everybody seems to be Jewish. Reading Marjorie Morningstar one can get the feeling that America is a country populated mainly by Jews, but has a small population of friendly foreigners, like the "Irisher" from Boston who comes down for the bar-mitzvah of Marjorie's brother Seth and happily gets drunk with "the Uncle." Wouk places the Jewish dilemma not as the dilemmas of all other immigrant groups -- as Yeziarska and even, to a certain extent, Antin do -- but as the dilemmas of long-entrenched Americans. How does a "good girl" keep her virginity against the pernicious advances of a

member of the so-called intellectual elite? Fiedler holds that Marjorie Morningstar is a sentimental, middle-class debasement of Richardson's Clarrisa, where the social forces at work are not evil aristocrats, but bohemian intellectuals. Indeed, the novel itself attempts to mimic the 19th century English novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot. Certainly the first lines of the work -- "Customs of courtship vary greatly in different times and places, but the way the thing happens to be done here and now always seems the only natural way to do it" -- recalls, in its cadence, rhythm and general purpose, the grand statement, similar to the opening of Pride and Prejudice: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." Marjorie Morningstar is not so much a Richardsonian heroine as a heroine in the mode of Eliot's Rosamond in Middlemarch. Both these young women come from extremely privileged backgrounds and are looking for a useful way to spend their lives in a society where women's options are limited. Both want to make significant contributions to the world, and both initially sublimate themselves to the careers of the wrong man. Rosamond marries the pseudo-intellectual Casaubon, whose work "Key to All Mythologies" is strikingly similar to the crazy philosophies Noel Airman invents to explain civilization. The endings, too, are happy, with Rosamond giving up her dreams of changing society in a broad-based and radical fashion, to concentrating on her home territory and

attempting to affect the lives of the people with whom she naturally comes into contact. Marjorie, too, gives up the idea of conquering the stage to become a mother and member of the Sisterhood.

Wouk's use of a literary past serves as a warning to the reader not to expect the typical American-Jewish novel in any way. The language itself is atypical of Jewish-American language - one which melds the diction of the street and the language of academia. The characters are also remote in a distinctively English manner. They have no real outbursts of emotion, either rhapsodic like Antin and Levin or bitter and angry like Bellow and Yeziarska. Only the villain, Noel Airman, has the romantic hero's predilection for consumptive-like illnesses and works himself into such states of nervous despair as to bring him near death. The most obviously "Jewish" character, "The Uncle," is a ridiculous dinosaur, a link to the old world that has become extinct. This man, a sort of Gargantua when it comes to food, represents what some might see as the authentic Jew, the Hasid who worships through joy, but who in America is a figure of fun. The characters who Wouk wishes us to sympathize with are Marjorie's parents, immigrants who are models of sobriety and the Protestant work ethic. Though they speak with "slight" accents, they are not given to radical positions, either politically or socially. Mrs. Morgenstern, in particular, is a paragon of conventionality. She is what Bellow calls a "reality instructor," full of bleak "common sense," especially about business:

"Every man you talk to wanted to be a doctor or a writer," said Mrs. Morgenstern. "It's like a disease. And still half the doctors are starving and all of the writers. And why? Because most people are healthy and hardly anyone reads books. It's that simple. Business is what keeps the world young. And still nobody has a good word for business." (30)

Though tension exists between the generations, it hardly exceeds the bounds of normalcy typical of American families, and the mild revolt of Marjorie might even be seen as a healthy sign of a functioning nuclear family, especially since the older generation wins nearly every battle. Marjorie herself is only a star-struck girl who eventually comes to her senses and settles down in the subservient role laid out by her mother and by her lover/nemesis Noel Airman.

In the end, Marjorie ends up a part of a tightly-knit community, focused around her husband and children, extended by the synagogue's Sisterhood. But it goes no further than that. Wouk's project is an attempt to show how the Jewish community has progressed from noisy dissenters into placid citizens. Any outrage directed against broad social injustice is silenced. The outrage expressed by the Abramson clan in The Old Bunch against the pogroms targeting Jews from a variety of political and geographical backgrounds is absent. Marjorie herself becomes Wouk's metaphor for an entire community. Just as Marjorie had been eventually accepted by her husband despite rebelling and losing her virginity, the Jewish community might make good wives, though it could never be trusted as completely as it would have if it had

not been communists and dissenters. And finally, what remains distinctive for the Jews is the fact that at one time they wished to be distinctive.

Yet for all the "high-brow" distaste for Wouk's relentless conformism, he, along with Laura Z. Hobson's Gentleman's Agreement and Charles Angoff's multi-generational saga, captured a moment in the history of the American-Jewish community. It is the moment when the community is caught up far more in Materialism than Emersonism and desires to accept and be accepted by the majority culture. In fact, radical dissent was falling by the wayside even among formerly very committed communists. In 1939, with the news of Stalin's purges and his treaty with Hitler, the Jewish intellectuals of the '30s were moving away from the party and into lives where a steady paycheck took precedence over loud dissent. Certainly there was still an element of radicalism attached to these intellectuals, but it was not for nothing that Paul Goodman, one radical who refused to be co-opted by the system, accused intellectuals of being part of "the herd of independent minds." And Wouk -- himself under attack for his reactionary "lower-middle brow" fiction (in the 1950s, most intellectuals had a finely calibrated sense of "brow") -- lashed out at the "college professors" who were so negative about conventional values. In Youngblood Hawke, Wouk writes, "I'm getting a little tired of this cult of college professors who keep writing and reviewing novels for each other and about each other, and passing back and forth their own slightly damp gray

laundry" (182). In Marjorie Morningstar, the Uncle's son who changes his name from Milton Feder to Geoffrey Quill (this use of a ludicrous name change is actually used again when Saul Ehrman changes his name to Noel Airman), is the embodiment of all college professors and himself has published one obscure novel, The Gilded Ghetto. It seems to be a critique of the very sort of life which Marjorie and her family are living. When, during Seth's bar-mitzvah, his father comes to the table and eats a half dozen plates of food, Quill becomes discomfited and calls his father a boa constrictor: "A snake that can swallow his own weight in one meal" (96). At this, the owner of Lamm's department store and a businessman to end all businessmen (he had declared that he would shoot any son of his who wanted to be a writer), a Mr. Goldman, calls Quill on this: "Tell me Mr. Quill, you got something like that in your book? A son who calls his own father a snake?" Quill "looked at Mr. Goldstone with a half-smile, holding the pipe awkwardly in his teeth, like a boy of twelve caught smiling" (96). The dissenter is thoroughly rebuked and brought to his senses by the voice of authority. The joke is that every time Marjorie sees Geoffery Quill (whose wife insists on calling him Milton because it suits him better), he looks more and more like his father. The next time Quill appears in the novel is at his father's funeral. "Her first thought when she saw Geoffery was that he must have put on sixty pounds since getting married. His face was puffed out, and his bulging lines were beginning to suggest the shape of the Uncle"

(237). This type of naturalistic conclusion in a novel that is ostensibly consent oriented, is also in play with Marjorie, who ends up nearly a carbon copy of her mother. Wally Wronken, in a diary entry about his visit to the matriarch Marjorie, is "reminded forcibly of the way Marjorie's mother used to put her foot down in the old days" (560). Wouk seems to be reassuring the reader that even if there are young dissenters out there, they will, through the force of genetics if nothing else, soon enough be forced to duplicate the community of their parents.

The only character who escapes a genetically pre-determined fate is Noel Airman. He moves away from his roots and creates his own world. His father, a pompous politician given to sentimental speeches, is in the mode of Rube Moscovitz in The Old Bunch. His brother, Billy Ehrman, one of Marjorie's early suitors, is socially inept and both awed and shamed by his dissipated older brother. The origin of Noel's tall, blond looks and *savoir-faire* come from is a mystery. More mysterious still is his attitude towards life. He is shown to despise convention, to believe in free love, and possess intellectual pretensions. But what is most interesting about this character is that he wants to write musical comedies. As opposed to the less-satisfied members of The Old Bunch, intellectuals and socialists who eventually are brought back into the fold and who will get along in life, Noel is a dissenter whose root of dissension is not socialism or any sort of social justice. The grand theory which he

proposes in two different places hundreds of pages apart, is a baffling mix of Romantic notions of beauty and individual genius boiled down to one word -- Hits. Hits, as Noel feverishly explains to Marjorie, are what everybody -- from the businessman to the desperate mother -- want. It remains unclear what exactly is meant, but it could be summed up as the desire for perfection. This is an old charge, that the dissenter desires not simply a better life, but a utopia. Of course this "unifying theory" is dismissed as a product of Airman's drunkenness and disease. What the reader must finally conclude is that the only real talent Noel Airman exhibits is one for writing musical comedy. Certainly, the danger of revolution fermented by someone whose hero is not Marx and Engels but Gilbert and Sullivan is remote. Wouk defangs all dissent by showing that those fearsome bohemians and intellectuals simply desire fame and, even more damning for an intellectual, material comfort. At one point, Noel asks Marjorie to excuse his unorthodox views.

"Hell, Marjorie, I like good things. I like the thought of being able to afford them. I like shirts that fit well, and ties that knot attractively because the material is good, and suits made of fine stuff instead of Feinberg's wrought iron."
(267)

The community created by Wouk for Marjorie Morningstar is a curious one. It is a Judaism steeped in symbols of the past, yet it recognizes no continuity between the old and the new worlds. Even the trip to Paris brings

no new knowledge to Marjorie. For Marjorie - and indeed for Noel - Paris is just another round of bars and nightclubs. For Levin's characters, the trip to Europe bring Joe Freedman and Alvin Fox in touch with both their Jewish and American heritage. Joe in particular, through a series of small epiphanies, realizes that while the culture of Europe beckons, the people of Europe are foreign. Only among other Americans can a real community be built. An American Jew has more in common with a Greek-American than with a European Jew. But for Levin, this does not diminish the feeling of brotherhood and community one has with the European-Jewish culture. Certainly, one's ancient culture must be faced, if only to be rejected. In neither Palestine nor Europe does Joe find a home. Though willing to accept both as crucial sites in his development, only in America does Joe eventually find the community where he can do his best work. Wouk seems unable to recognize the importance of these other lands in Marjorie's life. Europe is the land not of mystics and spiritual searchers, but of wild drunkards who act like selfish children. The coming holocaust, which is foreshadowed in Mike Eden's rescue work in Germany, is otherwise ignored. The big tragedy for Marjorie in World War II is the death of her brother, an American pilot. If she had any other European relatives killed in the genocide, they are not mentioned. Nor do her parents, themselves immigrants, seem to have the connection to the old country which is so important in both Antin's and Levin's work. Wouk seems

to suggest that what's most important about the old country is that it plays no role in the life of the American Jew. By purifying American Jewry of the influence of other cultures, Wouk accomplishes two objectives. First, he reassures the dominant culture that Jews are just as nativist as anyone. And second, for Jews themselves he reifies the idea that the Jewish American community need not be one which restlessly struggles for individual meaning and participates in a sometimes self-destructive search for social justice. Instead, what is valued as completely in harmony with Jewish tradition is the tranquil beauty of family life, American style. The oppression which made many immigrant Jews suspicious of the settled, landed classes has no role in an America where everyone can own their own quarter acre in New Rochelle. While Wouk advocates community, it is all on American terms.

In addition to cleaning up the Jewish immigrant heritage, good old-fashioned capitalism in the form of conspicuous consumption is celebrated as an almost integral part of Jewish life. Seth's bar-mitzvah and Marjorie's wedding are described in gaudy detail and with almost a scornful lack of irony.

For there was an organ, of course. And there were two cantors, a handsome young man and a marvelously impressive gray-bearded man, both in black silk robes, and black miters with black pompons. There was a choir of five bell-voiced boys in white silk robes, and white hats with pompons. There was a broad canopy of white lilies, on a platform entirely carpeted and walled with greenery and white roses. . . . After the

ceremony there was to be as much champagne as anyone could drink, and as many hot hor-d'oeuvres as the greediest guest could stuff into himself. There was to be a ten-course dinner beginning with imported salmon, featuring rare roast beef, and ending in flaming cherries jubilee. There was to be a seven-piece orchestra, more champagne, a mid-night supper, and dancing to dawn. . . (555)

The description goes on, proud to leave nothing out. Even the price, sixty-five hundred dollars, is mentioned. Though Marjorie and her bridegroom wonder briefly if the money might be better spent, they quickly come around. "Marjorie and her bridegroom had discussed accepting the money, but they had decided instead to have the wedding, rococo excess and all. Their decision filled all four parents with joy. It was obviously what everybody had wanted" (555-556). If there had been any trace of doubt regarding Marjorie's capitulation to what "everybody wanted," it is erased in the blazing flames of the cherries jubilee.

In Marjorie Morningstar, the Jew has escaped from the role of being "stiff-necked" people, and she is more than willing to compromise. Even the synagogues serve as a bridge between the *shtetl* and America. "The Conservative temple was a pleasant compromise with its organ music, mixed sexes, shortened prayers, long English sermons, and young rabbi in a black robe like a minister's" (84). Only Mr. Morgenstern is made mildly uncomfortable by the Protestantization of worship in the new Temples of the Upper West Side. He stills his conscience by occasionally slipping into a small

orthodox *shul* to say *kaddish*, and by paying dues at both the orthodox and conservative *shuls*. Where the characters in Yeziarska, Roth and Bellow's work stubbornly stick to their principles, Wouk emphasizes the compromises which Jews are so willing to make. Where Yeziarska, Roth, and Bellow see the reliance on the solid materiality by American Jews as an illusion and retreat from spirituality, Wouk's characters become convinced that everything one needs for life can be found in American culture. Where Yeziarska, Roth and Bellow believe Jews can fill the intellectual and spiritual void of America by a harkening back to principles which are not connected to money and prestige, Wouk sees an overflow of worldly goods as a sign of God's blessing.

While Wouk has enjoyed amazing popularity, his view of the Jewish community in America has been adapted to fit a more complicated reality. Certainly American Jewry is today more settled in America than ever. However, new movements, unhappy with the status quo and yearning for a spirituality that is inclusive of previously marginalized groups, have taken root and have once again begun to change the face of American Jewry.

Bellow's Response:

Even more than Marjorie Morningstar, Saul Bellow's Herzog desires to be someone remarkable, to do something remarkable. But to be remarkable, as Wouk points out, is to set oneself apart from a community, thus creating a world of selfish individualists. Wouk believes that in forming a community it is better not to strive to be remarkable, but to attempt to fit in, to sacrifice one's individuality, if that is what the culture demands. But Bellow is forever looking back to an older world, a world in which his teacher in *cheder* can chide the young Moses, "Your mother thinks you'll be a great *lamden* - a rabbi" (131). Bellow does not see greatness, in itself, as threatening, for what could be a more cohesive force for a community than a great rabbi? But while Herzog never does become a *lamden*, the instinct to individual achievement remains. Herzog wants nothing less than to teach the modern world to synthesize individuality and communal responsibility: "What this country needs is a good five cent synthesis," he says.

Critics, however, accuse Bellow of being a disruptive and alienating voice. Richard Poirier, for instance, insists that

Without knowing it, Bellow is far more alienated than Mailer. It shows in his writing; or rather in the evidence that the art of writing and the promise of cultural mastery engendered by it, is not in his case sufficient to save him from the

feelings of victimization visited on his heroes.
My objection isn't only that Bellow would replace the "commonplaces" of alienation with the ever more obvious commonplaces about "the longing to be human." I mean that his works . . . suggest to me that imaginatively Bellow does not himself find a source of order in those commonplaces. (82)

And, certainly, after studying Herzog, it is easy to understand why one would find Bellow's writing "alienated" from all community and lacking in orderly consistency. As opposed to the paragon Milton Schwartz in Marjorie Morningstar, Herzog is inordinately unsettled, aspires to the intellectual, and is the ultimate *luftmensch*, truly without a discernable way to earn a living (his only source of income seems to be an inheritance which he squanders). Moreover, Herzog is in continual dissent from modern society, an archetypal outsider. Though he opposes the modern doctrine of alienation, he realizes that sentimentalizing his immigrant past borders on the imbecilic. Yet for all his emotional excess, Herzog is in fact a moderate in revolt against the extreme characters who surround him. Far from replacing one commonplace with another -- and believing in neither -- Herzog rejects both the Romanticism of Nietzsche and the Materialism of Marx. He offers a profound message on the need for a genuine community that is rooted in a heritage that values both the extraordinary and the ordinary. In Herzog, Bellow jumps from character to character in order to illuminate philosophical flaws, just as Anzia Yezierska moves from community to community to rail against the hypocrisy of each.

The primary villain of the novel is Herzog's ex-wife, Madeleine, who leaves Herzog and takes up with Valentine Gersbach, Herzog's best friend. Madeleine is one who elevates the commonplace and topples the extraordinary. When Herzog goes to his Aunt Zelda to find out what happened to Madeleine, he discovers that

Madeleine had convinced Zelda that she too was exceptional. Everyone close to Madeleine, everyone drawn into the drama of her life became exceptional, deeply gifted, brilliant. It had happened also to him. By his dismissal from Madeleine's life, sent back into the darkness, he became again a spectator. But he saw Aunt Zelda inspired by a new sense of herself. (38)

But Herzog sees this new sense Zelda has of herself as ludicrous, an empty, middle-class illusion. Like Tolstoy's description of Ivan Illiyach's home, Herzog sardonically catalogues the contents of this petite bourgeois's house: "Your kitchen is different, your Italian lamps, your carpets, your French Provincial furniture, your mink, your country-club, your cerebral palsy canister's are all different" (38). Self-centeredness is actually the root of this false sense of exceptionality that Madeleine bestows on all her allies. The great work which Herzog never completes

was supposed to have ended with a new angle on the modern condition, showing how life could be lived by renewing universal connections, overturning the last of the Romantic errors about the uniqueness of Self, revising the old Faustian ideology, investigating the social meaning of Nothingness. (39)

Universal connections can be interpreted in many ways, but certainly a connection to heritage is one. And yet Madeleine does not find this heritage convenient. It is rather an obstacle to ambition and to the sense of superiority she craves. She must consequently deny her past -- and the emotional truths which come with it -- by converting. "Conversion was a theatrical event for Madeleine. Theater - the art of upstarts, opportunists, would-be aristocrats . . . Obviously she had religious feeling, but the glamour and social climbing were more important" (112). Subsequently, "Culture - ideas - had taken the place of the Church in Mady's heart." But Herzog still feels that it's merely self-aggrandizement which fuels Madeleine's passions. Madeleine enters a Christian/Romantic tradition (Herzog's lone book was on the Christian roots of Romanticism) that, in the name of Self, does away with the community. When Madeleine talks to Shapiro, a bloated intellectual who also uses the intonations and language of aristocrats, Herzog jeers:

"How delightful" was inappropriate. A German Jew from Kenwood might have gotten away with it - old money, in the dry goods business since 1880. But Shapiro's father had no money, and peddled rotten apples from South Water Street in a wagon. There was more of the truth of life in those spotted, spoiled apples, and in old Shapiro who smelled of the horse and of produce than in all of these learned references." (70)

Like Madeleine, Shapiro attempts to fashion a self-identity by using the language of those in power and forgetting the community from which he comes.

For Herzog, this life is a lie. Many truths reside in a continuity with a tradition that is as powerful and mysterious as the more fashionable belief in

Nothingness:

Moses and his brothers put on their cap and prayed together . . . the bootlegger's boys reciting ancient prayers. To this Moses' heart was attached with great power. Here was a wider range of human feelings than he had ever again been able to find. The children of the race, by a never failing miracle, opened their eyes on one strange world after another, age after age, and uttered the same prayer in each, eagerly loving what they found. What was wrong with Napoleon Street? thought Herzog. All he ever wanted was there. (140)

Herzog relives this moment of prayer in a Proustian conjuring of the past which makes him feel whole. This past is also connected to an even more remote past, which creates a timeless community. Counterfeit feelings are alternately associated with the aesthetic and intellectual outlook, which inevitably lead to a denial of the past. In a further condemnation of Shapiro,

Herzog wonders:

Are all the traditions used up, the beliefs done for, the consciousness of the masses not yet ready for the next development? Is this the full crisis of dissolution? . . . we mustn't forget how the vision of geniuses becomes the canned goods of the intellectuals. The canned sauerkraut of Spengler's "Prussian Socialism," the commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice - too deep, too great, Shapiro. It torments me to insanity that

you should be misled. A merely aesthetic criticism of modern history. After the wars and mass killings. You are too intelligent for this. You inherited rich blood. Your father peddled apples. (78)

Herzog views alienation as a retreat from modern society, not the inevitable condition of intellectuals in an unjust age. Maybe an Eliot can view modern society as an aesthetic and moral wasteland; alienation might be fine for the dissipated, demoralized aristocrat. But after the holocaust, for a Jew whose father managed to survive on rotten apples, to take on these intellectual stands is a dangerous pose. Shapiro, who managed to complete his magnum opus, is only rewarded by society because he caved in to the current literary fashion of Nilhism. But Herzog does not, as Poirier and other critics suggest, replace one commonplace with another. Herzog demands recognition for a tradition that might prevent people from becoming lost in the "void" of America, a tradition that respects duality:

[Herzog] worked under different orders - doing the trusted work of the future. The revolutions of the twentieth century, the liberation of the masses by production, created private life but gave nothing to fill it with. This was where such as he came in. The progress of civilization - indeed, the survival of civilization - depended on the successes of Moses E. Herzog. (125)

These are strangely megalomaniacal words from someone who wishes to write a study exposing the problems inherent in the Romantic myth of the Self. But it is a stance in keeping with the Midrash's recognition of the duality that

exists between the individual and society. On the one hand, there is the idea of *Anochi Ofer v'eipher* -- we are merely dust and ashes. The counterweight to this is the ability to believe that *B'shvili Nivra Ha'olam* -- because of me, the world was created. The ability to believe in both at the same time can create a society in which the individual is valued, but not worshipped at the expense of the community. Herzog's nearly delusional desire is to single handedly turn a society away from the worship of Self and to fill the void with his own words. One reason Herzog totters on the brink of madness is because of his inability to synthesize the personal and the communal.

Bellow, like Wouk, has no patience for the alienated Wasteland outlook. But in a practical sense, Wouk is an assimilationist, searching for acceptance into the mainstream culture; Bellow, however, sense that modern suburban life is not the answer. Herzog's task is to hold himself together, to figure out what the next step in societal evolution might be.

"Survival!" he noted. Till we figure out what's what. Till the chance comes to exert a positive influence. (Personal responsibility for history, a trait of Western culture, rooted in the Testaments, Old and New, the idea of the continual improvement of human life on this earth. What else explained Herzog's ridiculous intensity?) Lord, I ran to fight in Thy holy cause, but kept tripping, never reaching the scene of the struggle. (128)

This notion that the individual assumes a personal responsibility for history, a dedication to keep alive the principles of the Testaments, indicate the extent

of Herzog's engagement in the affairs of society. One may even draw the conclusion that it is Marjorie Morningstar who is the Nilhist, the one who sees no future for the human race, the one who chooses to remain behind the walls of her split level in adamant refusal to engage society. It is Morningstar, despite her Sisterhood meetings, who denies the Testaments.

Bellow consistently attempts to distance himself from philosophies that isolate the individual. Like Wouk's Airman, Nachman Rozavich, is a troubled poet. He feels his wife has been driven to insanity by the relentless materialism of her parents. And Rozavich, Herzog's friend from *cheder*, is quick to exonerate himself and place blame on others:

"But I will never worship the fat gods. Not I. I'm no Marxist, you know. I keep my heart with William Blake and Rilke. But a man like Laura's father! You understand! Las Vegas, Miami Beach. They wanted Laura to catch a husband at the Fountainblau, a husband with money. At the edge of doom, beside the last grave of mankind, they will still be counting their paper. Praying over their balance sheets." (133-134)

But Herzog wants none of this. Just as intellectualism does not excuse alienation, so poetry-worship cannot justify separating oneself from society. Herzog's replies to his old friend by saying, "It isn't as bad as you make out, Nachmen. Most people are unpoetical, and you consider this a betrayal" (134). When they visit Nachmen's wife Laura in a sanitarium after her third suicide

attempt, she can talk only of French literature. It becomes clear that art cannot itself fill the void created by modern life and imposed upon the individual.

That which Bellow suggests can fill the emptiness of modern life immediately follows the pathetic tale of the poet. Juxtaposed to the story of Nachmen and his wife is the story of the Herzogs' boarder. This boarder, Ravitch, is indeed ravaged by life. He has lost his family in the Russian Revolution. By day he works in a fruit store and at night he gets drunk. The police, tired of throwing him into the drunk tank, take him back to the Herzogs' freezing hallway where he sings, "*Alein, alein, alein, alein / Alein vie a shtein / Mit die tzen finger - alein*" (Alone, alone, alone, alone/ Solitary as a stone/ With my ten fingers - alone"). Ravitch is someone whom the forces of history have indeed left stranded. His is not the often bogus isolation of the artist or intellectual. And it is the Herzogs' duty to bring this unlucky individual back into the fold. Though he complains -- "A Jewish drunkard, he can't even do that right" -- Moses' father, Yonah Herzog, goes out and brings the befouled man into his kitchen:

"Nu, landtsman? Can you walk? It's freezing. Now get your crooked feet on the step - schneller, schneller" He laughed with his bare breath. "Well, I think we'll leave your *dreckische* pants out here. Phew!" (136)

The Herzog family cares for the individual unconditionally, irrespective of

wealth, intellectual achievement or literary talent. While Madeleine requires that everyone around her achieve a pseudo-greatness, while Nachmen legitimates no one who does not worship poetry, the Herzog clan, circa 1923, creates a community that is all-inclusive -- the rabbi and the bootlegger, the poet and the drunk, the living and the dead. Certainly Herzog's continual reminiscence of the dead (and the scenes from the lives of the dead, such as the one mentioned above), plays a large role in his dissent from the ever progressive present. Only remembering the pain of the dead makes possible a humane response to the living. Herzog's dissent centers on the impossibility of community in a society which has no use for the past, either the collective past or the individual past. For these are inextricably linked. After having his life savings hijacked and his body beaten by hoods, Yonah Herzog is forced to speak:

He began to tell the story of his life, from childhood to this day. He wept as he told it. Put out at four years old to study, away from home. Eaten by lice. Half starved in the Yeshivah as a boy. He shaved, became a modern European. He worked in Kremenchug for his aunt as a young man. He had a fool's paradise in Petersburg for ten years, on forged papers. Then he sat in prison with common criminals. Escaped to America. Starved. Cleaned stables. Begged. Lived in fear. A *baal-chov* - always a debtor. Shadowed by the police. Taking in drunken boarders. His wife a servant. And this was what he brought home to his children. This was what he could show them - his rags, his bruises. (148)

This for Bellow is not only the story of an individual, but also the narrative of two thousand years of Jewish history: the early years of religious segregation, the middle years of moving away from the ghetto, the few years of assimilation and prosperity, the plunge back into the darkness of persecution, the new and painful beginning in North America. The collective past and the individual past cannot be separated. World War II, Herzog says, put us "on a more brutal standard, a new terminal standard, indifferent to persons." So it becomes important to remember individual cases of suffering and not just the impersonal horrors of the statistics engendered by mass slaughter: "These personal histories, old tales from old times that may not be worth remembering. But I remember. I must. . . . I am still a slave of Papa's pain. The way Father Herzog spoke of himself! That could make one laugh. His I had so much dignity" (149). And it is only by relating to this "I" that Moses can connect to present suffering.

It's one thing to remember the pain of the dead, but something completely different to dread death. For dreading death is another way to luxuriate in it, to be so taken with it that community becomes impossible. This is brought home by the other character in the novel who lives by the old rules, valuing friendship, community and work, Lucas Asphalter. He's a bald-headed loner, a forty-five year old bachelor-scholar without his Ph.D., someone who still lives in "graduate student filth." He is also a figure of fun, a zoologist who

made the science journals because he gave mouth to mouth resuscitation to Rocco, his TB-infected macaque monkey who "was not an amusing creature, but obstinate and cranky, with a poor color, like a glum old Jewish uncle" (42). Though the comedy of the situation is not lost even on Herzog, love for a character who is able to risk something for another creature is evident. "True things in grotesque form, [Herzog] was thinking. He knew how that was. He felt for Asphalter" (269). But, in his grief, Asphalter tries to escape from life. He practices the theories of a Tina Zokoly, who counsils one to lie in a coffin and imagine being dead. He claims this is not so much a *memento mori* as it is a way to tell the truth to oneself. For if one is already dead, there is no point in illusions and lies. Only in death can one confront reality. But Herzog will have none of this. Though he is in no position to give anyone advice, he confronts Asphalter's method of retaining his moral balance:

It all goes back to these German existentialists who tell you how good dread is for you, how it saves you from distraction and gives you your freedom and makes you authentic. God is no more. But Death is . . . And so these other theorists introduce the tension of guilt and dread as a corrective. But human life is far subtler than any of these models, even these ingenious German models. Do we need to study theories of fear and anguish? . . . Do you have to think yourself into a coffin and preform these exercises with death? As soon as thought begins to deepen it reaches death, first thing. (271-272)

Herzog has discovered for himself what it takes to retain one's humanity:

But let's stick to what matters. I really believe that brotherhood is what makes a man human. If I owe God a human life, this is where I fall down. "Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brother's face. . . . Each shall behold the Eternal Father and love an joy abound." When the preachers of dread tell you that others only distract you from metaphysical freedom then you must turn away from them. The real and essential question is one of our employment by other human beings and their employment by us. Without this true employment you never dread death, you cultivate it. And consciousness when it doesn't clearly understand what to live for, what to die for, can only abuse and ridicule itself. (272-273)

This is the crux of Herzog's problem. He can find no use for himself. He values the past in an age when the past is instantly forgotten. He's an intellectual who would create community with his fellow beings in an age of intellectual separatism. He's a man of feeling in an age when emotion is seen as a relic of a dead time. At his father's funeral, his brother tells the weeping Herzog

"Don't carry on like a goddamn immigrant." I embarrassed him with his golfing friends, the corporation presidents. Maybe I was not entirely in the right. Here he was the good American. I still carry European pollution, an infected by the Old World with feelings like Love - Filial Emotion. Old stuporous dreams. (280-281)

His emotion is more than just a handicap that makes him seem like a greenhorn. Emotion is the reason Herzog is unfit for American life. One needs to be tough, a realist, a person who can recognize truth and accept it as ugly. Herzog, in fact, believes that in America, the uglier and nastier a fact may be,

the truer it appears: "truth is true only as it brings down more disgrace and dreariness upon human beings, so that if it shows anything except evil it is illusion and not truth" (93). Herzog bucks this trend and goes on to try to become something great, not to prove how disgraceful the human condition is, but to shed light, beauty, appreciation for both community and individual. His greatest work is himself, and his greatest accomplishment is resisting the impulse to give into the despair of the age: "Let us set aside the fact that such convictions in the mouths of safe, comfortable people playing at crisis, alienation, apocalypse and desperation, make me sick" (318).

On the one hand, Herzog rejects the intellectuals, the separatists: "And what kind of synthesis is a Separatist likely to come up with?" (322). These people pretend at alienation, strive for utopian communities, and are utterly useless to society. On the other hand are the realists, the Sandor Himmelstiens and Shura Herzogs, to whom all facts are nasty, to whom any egghead is a patsy and fool, but who have fallen "[i]nto a certain poise and quiet humor, part decorousness, part (possibly) slavery. The explosions had become implosions and where light once was, darkness came, bit by bit" (328). Severing ties with the past, giving up all old-world emotion, adopting the stoicism of Anglo-Saxon culture, has its price. Like a black hole, one slowly collapses into oneself, trapping light instead of spreading it.

And then there's Herzog. Caught between despising the pseudo-

alienated and rejecting the hard-as-nails realists, he succeeds only in making himself ridiculous. As the monkey-loving Asphalter uses the coffin to capture the essence of life, Herzog uses words. Writing letters like a madman, he tries to be a humanist, embracing humanity while giving it a conscience - a task so absurdly grandiose that of course his siblings, and Herzog himself, believe he's mad. But he must push through the madness and absurdity to be useful -- the only cure for an individual who wishes to be part of the society. The obvious solution then, or at least the one which is obvious to the reader from the earliest part of the work, is for Herzog to stop writing the letters. Just as Asphalter must come to mourn his monkey without the histrionics of a medieval monk, Herzog must shut up, accept himself for whom he is, a human being. Finally, in a quiet moment at the end of the novel, he is able to say, "I am pretty well satisfied to be, to be just as it is willed, and for as long as I may remain in occupancy" (340). At last, Herzog can stop his manic torrent of wild words. He can become the dissenter he wants to be, recognizing that the true dissenter is one who defines one's community. Like the prophets who demanded a closer adherence to the words of God as handed down by tradition, Herzog's criticism does not distance him from the community. Rather his intense desire to improve its spiritual aspects and make it more humane draws him closer to it. Always, he wishes to be true to his heritage, and he rails against emulating the dominant culture. In a last burst of self-revulsion,

Herzog mocks his mimicry of the Anglo-Saxon establishment:

The house was two miles beyond the village, in the hill. Beautiful sparkling summer weather in the Berkshires, the air light, the streams quick, the woods dense, the green new. As for birds, Herzog's acres seemed to have become a sanctuary. Wrens nested under the ornamental scrolls of the porch. The giant elm was not quite dead, and the orioles lived in it still. . . . Two years ago he had put up tomatoes and beans and raspberry preserves, and before leaving for Chicago he had hidden his wine and whisky. . . . There was always cistern water to fall back on. He could cook in the fireplace; there were old hooks and trivets - and here (his heart trembled) the house rose out of weeds, vines, trees, and blossoms. Herzog's folly! Monument to his sincere and loving idiocy, to the unrecognized evils of his character, symbol of his Jewish struggle for a solid footing in White Anglo-Saxon Protestant America. (309)

Here Bellow goes beyond merely questioning Wouk's belief that a house in the suburbs is the answer, the synthesis, to all modern problems. The description and ultimate rejection of his house in Ludyville seems to be a direct response to those who believe in a mystical connection between the Zion of Jerusalem and the Zion of America. Bellow does not believe, as Antin believes, that America is the promised land, the answer to the prayers of a dispossessed people. The statement that "[t]his land was ours before we were the land's" is folly when applied to Jews, whose history, at least through the middle of the twentieth century, lie elsewhere. Emersonian Transcendentalism and worship of nature might be a valuable ingredient of American culture, but it can never

erase the past or, as Antin says, allow one to outgrow it -- "The past was only my cradle, and now it cannot hold me, because I am grown too big" (The Promised Land 364). Bellow holds, with Yeziarska, that to be a useful part of a community, one must accept one's own being. A Jew is a product of a particular history and culture, and he or she is bound to it by intense emotional ties. If these ties, considered archaic by many, put one at odds with society, so be it. Herzog is a dissenter from contemporary culture. But this dissent entails not a separation from society, but a responsibility to create a new moral conscience for the community.

**Allegra Goodman and Lev Raphael: Drunk with
*Yiddishkeit***

Irrespective of Mary Antin and Anzia Yeziarska, until the mid-sixties, the debate between American-Jewish writers over to what degree the community should open itself to American influences had been framed mostly by heterosexual men. Regardless of whether a writer came down on the side of opening the community to American culture or remained on the side of maintaining a more European tradition, most heterosexual writers used the male experience as the norm, and women characters had been marginalized and, in some cases, demonized. To use some of the male writers discussed in this survey as examples, Meyer Levin's women in The Old Bunch are interchangeable stereotypes, interested only in finding husbands and enhancing their social status. Bellow sees women as both temptresses and villains. In Herzog, Madeleine is shown to be a selfish social-climber, while the only role of the two other women he becomes involved with is to minister to Herzog's fragile ego and delicate tastes. Wouk's Marjorie Morningstar is, as Leslie Fiedler points out, a cliched innocent in the mode of Richardson's Clarrissa. As for writers outside the scope of this survey -- Philip Roth, I.B.

Singer, Herbert Gold, Joseph Heller, Chiam Potok, Bruce Jay Friedman, to name a few -- they are criticized for using women chiefly to bear the brunt of the frustrations of their male creators. It is not surprising, then, that with the rise of the feminist movement, Jewish women writers began creating characters who defied the stereotypical representations which had become the norm from the thirties on. And the question which had obsessed the male writers -- whether the tradition should be opened or whether the Jews should struggle to remain a nation apart -- had expanded. The quandary posed by these women writers is still centered on the dilemma of being both Jewish and American. But added to this is the question of what it means to value a Jewish heritage and to be a woman, especially one who is committed to feminism. For many in the male dominated power structure deemed the women's movement to be in opposition to tradition. What is remarkable is that so many women writers ignored the hostility of men and thought the traditions and rituals of normative practice worth salvaging. For women writers, dissent was truly a means to strengthen the community and their ties to it.

Despite generations of enforced silence, it might be said of women that there had always been a place in the community for them, albeit one that did not have access to leadership positions. Yet for those who had defined themselves as gay and lesbian, the social stigma -- as much as the religious stigma -- created a barrier between them and the community which in the

history of Judaism had never been bridged. Following the inauguration of the modern gay liberation movement with the Stonewall riots in 1969, there were those who demanded access to the tradition in which they had been born. Of course, other communities and religions had to deal with the emerging gay consciousness. But for Jews, the question took on a predictable cast. In a society that was coming to grips with its multi-cultural aspects, how does normative practice of an ancient tradition incorporate individuals whose sexual orientation has been, from the beginning, antithetical to that tradition? Many in the community, both friends and foes, could not understand why gays and lesbians would even want to be part of a tradition that considered their sexuality an "abomination." A generation earlier, heterosexual male critics who considered themselves distant from the religion -- they claimed, as Alfred Kazin did, that their sensibilities were formed more by Milton and Marvel than Moses and Maimonides -- the decision had been to sever, as much as possible, any connection to a Jewish past. But there were those in the largely urban gay and lesbian community who felt an important part of their identities were bound up with a Jewish heritage. They felt -- in opposition to Kazin and others who chose to reject an identity that they had merely been born into -- that it was empowering to choose to be identified as Jews, despite the hostility of the tradition towards them. And, consequently, they have become an important new force in Judaism, forcing the tradition, even more than the women's

movement has forced the tradition, to open itself up to previously silenced minorities within the community. This section will demonstrate how many women writers are actually a force for conserving an older tradition, while the gay writers are desperate to expand the boundaries that had been set by normative Rabbinic practices.

It can be said that women, while demanding equality, are looking back to a tradition which values cohesiveness more than the individualist tradition which is found in America:

On the surface, many of these [women's] works reveal a familiar feminist emphasis on self-fulfillment in tales of adultery and the quest for personal gratification. Under the skin, consonant with erosive social change, are stories of family abandonment and emotional breakdown. One would expect contemporary statistics on assimilation to come to life in them. But in the heart of these texts, one finds instead live Jewish questions, centered deeply on tradition. (Burstein 9)

In fact, Cynthia Ozick, a seminal Jewish woman writer, has been noted to be a corrective to male Jewish writers who, she accuses, use Judaism as a mere backdrop for basically Anglo stories:

Enormously varied in their subject matter and styles, their themes and literary stances, the three [Bellow, Malamud, and Philip Roth] nonetheless generally write about the sociological and psychological dimensions of Jewish life, about being Jewish in America. They focus on the Jew

as everyman. . . . All three write from a broadly humanistic stance and see themselves as writers possessing a Jewish heritage, that is, as writers belonging to the Anglo-American literary tradition.

Cynthia Ozick, on the other hand, sees herself as a writer who perforce participates in that Anglo-American literary tradition, but identifies with her Jewish background, that is, as a Jewish writer who writes in English. Her vision is apocalyptic and fatalistic; she believes that Jewish writers are doomed: if centrally Jewish, they will last only for Jews; if not centrally Jewish they will not last at all. (Lyons "Cynthia Ozick as Jewish Writer" 15)

Ozick also struggles with aspects of Jewish *halakah* that are far from the concerns of her male colleagues. Most importantly, she worries that the very act of creating fictional characters violates the commandment against the forming of graven images. She, ultimately, though with reluctance, decides that she is not violating God's words. Yet Cynthia Ozick's work has a religious content that exceeds any American-Jewish writer up until then.

If Ozick is a writer who deals primarily with the philosophical underpinning of the religion, Grace Paley is someone who goes back to the Yiddish writers of Europe to give her writing power. The centrality of the anti-hero in Paley's work certainly has roots in Sholem Aleichem and Mendele Mocher Sopherim. And her fiction's valuing of the community -- even in her characters (mostly female) who are dissenters -- is rooted in centuries of Jewish experience of living in hostile lands.

The world view of Yiddishkeit and Yiddish literature is pervasively social, oriented toward the group rather than one soul . . . the ordinary person is elevated, or at least evoked, with love. *Dos klein menshele*, the little persons with all his imperfections and foibles, is accepted and embraced. . . . The ordinary person struggling with his everyday problems is the core of Yiddish literature; the heroic individual and sharply climactic plot are conspicuously absent. One of the chief inheritances from Yiddishkeit is the rich, complicated ethic embedded in the code of *menshlikeit*, which has been defined as a readiness to live for ideals beyond the clamor of self, a desire for plebeian fraternity, an ability to forge a community of moral order even while remaining subject to a society of social disorder, and a persuasion that human experience is a deeply serious matter for which all of us are finally responsible. (Lyons "Grace Paley's Jewish Miniatures" 33)

Beyond her use of *Dos Klein Menshele*, Paley relies on Yiddish syntax to give her stories a sense of rootedness. In the story "Goodbye and Good Luck" in her collection Little Disturbances of Man, a former mistress of a famous Yiddish actor can both defy and remain part of the community. And in "Midrash on Happiness," Paley brilliantly evokes the Midrashic method of exegesis to show how a single mother copes with a world which does not find a place for her.

Another author for whom feminism and tradition are of paramount importance is E.A. Broner. Janet Burstein points to Broner's novel Her Mothers and discovers that only in a community can rituals be effective as agents of healing. As a dissenting strategy, the novel advocates a degree of

women's separatism, but nevertheless her community is tightly bound to Judaism and Israel:

Broner's work turns to tradition not only for its liturgical language, its periodic festivals, its historical memories, its moral commitments. She draws also from tradition and its emphasis on collective being, on the need for community. Though this community's ritual life is richly innovative, its fictional circumstances strongly reinforce its continuing connection with historical Jewish tradition. Exiled at the end of the novel from the old stone house in Jerusalem, the women will live nonetheless, in Israel, will speak and pray in the ancient language of the Jew, and will continue to seek through rituals both ancient and newly imagined to reach out to a Jewish God. (Burstein 23)

Allegra Goodman, the writer on whom I wish to focus, deals almost exclusively with the need for community and the ways in which dissent can be a unifying force. What separates her from her slightly older contemporaries is her ease in America. Except for Cynthia Ozick -- whose characters often do not find a home in America at all -- the women writers mentioned above share a common assumption that America is something that must be dealt with. One can either attempt to embrace it or must find the strength to reject it. Goodman, in contrast, is completely at home in American culture. There is little angst about following an Orthodox tradition and living in America. In fact, it is the youngest generation, the fourth removed from Europe, which

most embraces Judaism. Conflict often arises because people attempt to become more *frum*, religious, than the community. American slang and references to both academic debate and popular culture mingle easily with the *halahic* debate over whether pushing a stroller to synagogue is analogous to driving a vehicle. The dialect which Howe credits the Jews for inventing -- the melding of the language of the street and the language of the academy -- is replaced by the ironic tone of the comfortably ensconced. Gone are the frantic, sometimes demented, ravings of Bellow's Herzog, Roth's Portnoy, or even Ozick's Yiddish poets searching for translators ("Envy: or Yiddish in America"). They have been replaced by the measured ironies and sociological detachment more akin to an Updike or a Cheever. Yet like Yeziarska in Red Ribbon on a White Horse, the characters must come to terms with the laws of their ancestors in order to find their place in the world. In a multi-cultural society, the integrity of the community might become even more important, and one of the tragedies which occurs in Goodman's stories is when someone removes her/himself from the community or feels somehow left out.

Mirroring the precociousness of Philip Roth in the previous generation, Goodman published her first collection of stories, Total Immersion in 1989 at the extraordinarily young age of twenty-one. Goodman's mostly female protagonists have as their main concern community formation. While there are dissenters on all sides, the idea that fulfillment can only be found inside a

traditional community comes through quite clearly. These stories, like the stories in Roth's first collection Goodbye Columbus, are often set in the suburbs. But Goodman's Hawaiian and Oxfordian suburbs are as distant from Roth's Newark as New Jersey is from Krakow. Theologically, while Roth is drawing away from the European model of Judaism, Goodman returns to the religion of her grandparents. And where Roth often uses characters who are Jewish to illuminate what he considers universal problems, Goodman uses Jewish characters to show how important religious continuity is in forming community and keeping one's identity intact. Even in her stories which do not have Jews or Jewish situations as the central concerns, the power of traditional religion is highlighted. In "Fait" a young Filipino-American woman is attracted not to her mother's ostentatious Protestant fundamentalism, but to the Catholicism of her Filipino grandmother:

Grandma does not approve of "Praise the Lord" bumper stickers and Protestant weddings. She is Ginnie's silent ally. She prays in another language. In the Philippines, she reveres the icons brought from Catholic Spain. There is no enthusiasm in her piety. Her prayers are ancient, nothing imported. Her church rings with music; its windows and walls jeweled with art. (59)

However, most of the stories concern characters who try to create and maintain connection to a Jewish community. A main element in making Goodman's stories unique are the Hawaiian locale. Goodman's Hawaii is an island paradise where Jews have only lately settled. Since it is far from the

main settlements of Jews in North America, it gives added strength to the notion of the Jewish community as separate, far from assimilating into the landscape of America. The type of community that will be created is frequently the focus of her stories. In the title story "Total Immersion", for example, a feud takes place in the synagogue over the calling up of woman to make the blessing and read from the Torah. One woman says that she doesn't feel herself to be part of the community because she cannot partake in the ritual:

"How do you think women feel, thrust into the audience? Always the echo in responsive readings. I want to lead. The Torah reading is the heart of the service. The aliyah is heart of the reading. And that's just where I'm excluded! For three years I've sat here patiently. . . . Now I want this group to give something back to me. What we've got here is a boy's club. This my holy book too, and I want a piece of the action." (251)

An attempt at compromise -- calling up women along with their husbands -- is dismissed. The upshot is that the two factions become irreconcilably divided. The small synagogue, which can barely muster a *minyan*, is split in half. On the one hand, Goodman is extremely well-aware of the comic elements of her story. It echoes the old joke of the Jew stranded on a deserted island for twenty years and when finally rescued is asked by his surprised rescuers why he has two large, impressive buildings. He points to one building and says, "That's the synagogue which I pray in every Saturday." The rescuers then ask what the other building is for. "That synagogue I wouldn't step foot into if you

paid me." But Goodman also knows the dangers of factionalism in a community already in such a minority. The narrator of the story, a woman who leaves the "Bet Keneset" because it votes to institute the calling of women to the Torah, is deeply disturbed by the break-up. "She imagines Ephrie's new group splitting just as Bet-Kneset had. Splitting like infinitely divisible cake. Scattering like crumbs" (253). The tone of this last line makes clear the deep regret that the narrator feels over the break-up of the synagogue. Further, what is implied is that even feminist dissent might sometimes take a backseat to the need for community cohesion. Regardless of what American culture might say about the rights of the individual, the community takes precedence over all.

Another aspect of American Judaism that has begun to be addressed by young writers is the politics of the new *frumkite*, or Orthodoxy, arising among the youngest generation. In "And Also Much Cattle," a family moves to Hawaii to establish an orthodox synagogue. The driving force behind this synagogue, as it is in many Goodman stories, is a woman, Gail Schick. Her problem is that the dissenter in her community is her teenage son Mark, who resents this move to Hawaii and the opening of the *shul* not because as an American he's not interested in the tradition, but because the synagogue -- the only Orthodox one on the island to have separate seating -- is not religious enough. In particular, it seems his mother has pulled him out of a ultra-orthodox yeshiva

in Israel in order to help her build her synagogue.

Oh, Betsy, he's so angry with me for making him leave Israel. This isn't kosher enough, that isn't frum enough. Not everyone in the Minyan is shomer shabbos. He hates it her already, he told me. Can you believe that? This is not him - my son I sent away. This is his yeshiva talking." (148)

While writers earlier in the century uniformly condemn the *Cheder* as an airless, foul place that might take much of the blame for the disappearance of Judaism in America, for Goodman the yeshiva offers a sanctuary and a spirituality which American culture can not. The crisis reaches epic proportion when the dissatisfied son creates a ruckus during prayers on Yom Kippur and is thrown out of the synagogue by his mother. The service stops because there's no *minyan*. Pandemonium breaks out, and it seems the whole enterprise is doomed because of this single dissenter. But peace is eventually restored, and a justification for why a traditional service is preferable is given by one of the congregants who came from the conservative temple to say *kaddish* for his wife. "Betsy,' the Doctor says, 'I can't explain it -- the Yizkor. I felt so close to her memory. It wasn't a physical or emotional presence. It was just an absolutely compelling feeling of continuity through the ages. Beautiful'" (155). Despite the comic annoyances and real disagreements between the community members, a serious attempt to build a traditional community has been made and has succeeded. The most religious members of the community are a group of Yeshiva students who come to Hawaii with Yossie Schick to fill out the

minyán. Though Mark is disillusioned, his friends are much more impressed.

"Let me tell you Mr Schick," says Moshe. "We have been to many Jewish communities. And yet we have never seen one quite like this. A small group of people in Hawaii learning and praying, spreading Yiddishkeit from this home. It is remarkable, and I mean that in a very positive sense." (166)

Though Goodman seems to mock the language of the orthodox speaker, the underlying sentiments are ones she takes seriously.

In "Retrospective," the idea of doing something for the community, of creating a community out of disparate individuals, becomes even clearer. In this story, which also contains Goodman's usual ironic undertones, an old woman, Henny, mourns her sister Lilian's death. Even more disturbing than the death is that her sister had been posing as an artist's model at the University of Hawaii, and in gratitude for being the ideal model, the university is planning a retrospective. Bitter because there's nothing she can do to stop the exhibition, Henny becomes distraught because she feels the Jewish community, whom she judges by her own parochial standards, will think less of her sister when it sees the canvasses painted with her naked body. What is especially upsetting is the realization that the Jewish community has become cohesive, in large measure, because of her efforts.

There was a time when she and Lilian would entertain -- fifty people at a dinner. They would really serve. None of this pot luck. They would work a whole day. They would spend their money

on it, because that was what was important to them -- to make for the community. To gather together. They remembered their parents house in Detroit. That was what they tried to create in Hawaii. (133)

At the supermarket Henny meets Betsy Sugarman, one of the more small-minded congregants of her synagogue, and thinks that Betsy is pleased at her humiliation. Yet, Henny, with an air of defiance, goes to the synagogue on the Saturday of the retrospective opening. With a sense of impending martyrdom, she is determined to face down the members of her congregation. "Let them stare at her. She'll stare back at them. Her friends and supposed friends. Let them dare confront her or sidle up with snide questions" (135.) But at the *kiddish* afterwards, no one mentions a word. She doesn't even feel that people are laughing behind her back. In fact, she senses that people are somewhat proud of her sister's elevation to icon status in the art community. It's not until that night, right before going to bed that she realizes what has happened. "She tried to shield her sister so Lilian could hold her head up in the community. She tried to protect her memory. And Lilian hadn't cared at all. She'd gone off and told them -- God knows what" (37). Henny underestimates the community. It is far more flexible and supportive than she imagines. She is a member of the community because she wants to be. Her sister, in spite of her rather unconventional occupation, is also accepted and respected for the choices she has made.

The most ambitious story in Goodman's collection is "Variant Text." This story does not take place in Hawaii, but in Oxford (the second most common setting in Goodman's work). Again, Goodman utilizes a highly incongruous setting for a Jewish community. Again, she highlights the importance of a small minority culture to remain cohesive and incorporate dissenters into the community structure. The protagonist, Cecil, is a *luftmench*, an academic without a post. Because his wife was offered a job at Oxford, he quit his job at Brooklyn College. He is quite pleased with himself because he has proved to himself that he is not sexist and bound by macho convention; he also enjoyed quitting because he did not get along with his colleagues at Brooklyn. His wife is "lean and brilliant -- though not devout. She agreed to keep a kosher kitchen and let the kids attend the gan. Cecil does not expect more" (71). This compromise foreshadows other compromises that must be made by Cecil himself, though Cecil is not one who has a compromising nature. Rather he is as argumentive and contrary as his Anglo/Jewish name -- Cecil Eugene Birnbaum -- indicates. Though he values community, he seems temperamentally unsuited for any. In the matter of his religious beliefs, he revels in his logically inconsistent position.

Though he doesn't believe in God, he remains observant. . . . His strict religious practice has never matched his agnostic intellectualism, his early fascination with Derrida and Paul De Man. He insists on the immutability of sacred law and at the same time savors the fluidity of secular

texts. He loves one as explicit and complete, the other as open and ambiguous. And yet he refuses to smooth away this discontinuity by allowing a divine authorship of sacred work. Cecil has always enjoyed his contradictions, and still nurtures them. He finds spiritual sustenance in academic discipline and intellectual structure in rituals of his childhood. (72)

In short, it turns out that Cecil doesn't believe in God, yet he is a stickler for *halakah*. He compares *halakah* to his wife's study of mathematics.

[I]t made him strangely happy when it seemed there wasn't any real-world application for her ideas. The formal structure of Beatrix's mathematics had to be appreciated for its own sake. He's often said the same of Halakhah. (73)

The community, too, fits this formal structure, and is important for its own sake. Cecil has ceaseless arguments with various members of the community, for it turns out that sacred law is not as immutable as Cecil wants to believe it is. Rather *halakhah* is open to interpretation, and it must be reconciled within the community, just as it must somehow be reconciled with rationalistic philosophy. Goodman's point is that the task of the intellectual is to try to utilize both sacred law and secular knowledge in a way that can keep the community together. For example, the school where Cecil sends his children (which has the sign "Hashem or Darwin? YOU decide" at its entrance) demands that Cecil dress his daughter in dresses instead of overalls because of the biblical injunction against *Beqed Ish* -- wearing the clothing of a man.

The school's principal, Kineret Greenberg, claims that if the girl continues to dress in overalls she will never find her place within her peer group and interact normally. "That's what we're working for here. We want every child at Kohlberg stage three by the end of the term" (79). Cecil refuses to comply, calling the principal "sexist" in her misinterpretation of a statute against transvestitism. Greenberg insists, "This school is governed by the standards of Kohlberg, Piaget, and the Rav Soloveichik" (79). At another point, Cecil outrages a member of his synagogue by wearing a pro-choice button. That same member angers Cecil by pushing a stroller to synagogue. "It's shocking, really, and isn't any different than driving a vehicle or carrying, when you think about it" (83). As a result of the inability to reconcile either *halakhah* or intellectual stances with those of the other members of the community, Cecil leaves in the middle of the service. In many of Goodman's stories, the protagonist finds him/herself running out, leaving the community. But usually it is only for a moment. Here Cecil's friend Jonathan comes to his house to try to get him to come back to the synagogue, to tell him that the community needs him, if only for Cecil to attempt to convince the community of his own point of view. Cecil is reluctant at first, unable even to articulate how he feels about *halakhic* prescriptions and the role they play in his life.

What he wants to tell Jonathan is that when he studies sacred texts he feels even more powerfully that the words themselves are enough for him, that they need no author or new interpreter. The

strict beauty of the law is complete in itself, needing no stalk for support or external scaffold for restoration. How false and ill-founded the apologies for ritual are -- the tracing to ancient river valley customs, the explanation for dietary and sexual laws as codes for social hygiene. And equally absurd to think each mitzvah is really a step toward God, when so clearly the law demands obedience for itself. It is not to be used as a bargaining chip, it is no vehicle for exaltation. But though Cecil wants to say this fully, he cannot. (102)

Cecil decides to rejoin the synagogue. He realizes that, "If one cares enough for principle, one can't be wounded by colleagues, in-laws, or even the likes of Kineret Greenberg" (90). And the fight for principles can only be carried on inside a community that is still being formed.

Goodman is a writer who operates from the presumption that Judaism has already opened itself up to secular rationalist philosophy. But for her it is a failed philosophy, or at least one that is incomplete. Cecil and her other characters realize that only in community and ritual can a sense of continuity, rootedness, and emotional serenity be found. In an uncollected story, "Fantasy Rose," the characters are crushed by the sense of rootlessness and lack of community. Rose Markowitz, living in a retirement complex, wants to move in with her son, Ed, a professor at a prestigious college. She feels without friends or community and ends up taking an overdose of Percodan. When she visits Ed, she insists the whole family go to synagogue. They go, and Ed is annoyed at the "soft murmur of kibitzing" (114). But Ed is desperate to be part of

something greater than himself, and he listens to the Rabbi's sermon. "We are divided within ourselves,' the rabbi says from the *bimah*. 'We are torn, and we *should* be torn. And yet -- no, all the more -- we love Israel'" (114). Ed is going through a crisis precisely because he can not love Israel, the people or the country. He is completely distracted by the conversations around him and fiercely resents his fellow congregants:

"Every once in a while I go [to synagogue] sort of expecting something. I mean, sometimes I feel like I'm in a crisis. Sometimes I want to go and hear some words of wisdom from the Rabbi. But I just end up sitting with those ladies with the jewelry" (115).

He later muses to his brother that "it would be very comforting to believe in God. Just for some sense of permanence. The stability" (116). But what Ed can't do is reconcile the belief in God or even following *Halakhah* for its own sake (as Cecil does), with his empiricist and rationalistic outlook. Because of that, Ed feels "completely at sea" (116). Ed never does find what he's looking for. The story concludes with Ed clinging to his fantasy of attempting to find permanence in his own life by asking his engaged daughter to come visit without her fiance. "You could just come down by yourself when you finish Anatomy," Ed says, sticking to the near future" (119). But of course the questions about the more distant future are still to be answered. It becomes clear that for Goodman a sense of future is only possible if one channels

personal dissent and doubt into a form that helps to construct community.

Raphael's Pride

Another writer of the eighties who deals with the neo-orthodox movement is Lev Raphael. But his gay identity makes him follow a far more politically explosive path than Allegra Goodman. While Goodman's characters go back to the European religion of their grandparents to construct their identity in America, Raphael's main thesis is that the religion which came out of Europe is dead; what Americans now need is a transformed tradition -- one that does not in any condone racism, anti-semitism, or homophobia, though it will place a high value on ritual and sacred laws for the sense of continuity which they offer. But Raphael wishes to force open the Jewish community by making it see its objection to homosexuality as akin to the Nazi's genocidal policies. His characters are often the sons of holocaust survivors who, like their gay children in an American context, had to hide their identity in Nazi dominated Europe. Central to the issue of a gay and Jewish identity is the ability to "pass," to blend into the mainstream by pretending to be either straight or Aryan. Yet even successfully "passing" is problematic because it necessitates a denial of one's own identity.

In "Caravns," a story typical of Raphael's desire to combine religious and sexual awakenings, the protagonist, a teenage boy, attempts to come to terms with his sexuality and his Judaism. His father, permanently embittered by the war, refuses to talk about the past. All he says is that "I'm cursed . . . I shouldn't have lived" (70). It seems he survived the war because he had been able to pass himself off as Aryan. But he couldn't pass completely because he was circumcised. "My Polish was the best, and my German -- ! I had blue eyes, blue like the sky, but you couldn't hide *that*" (72). Therefore, he doesn't have his son circumcised or teach him anything about Judaism. "You don't need all that *chazerai*, it's *bubbeh mysehs*, nonsense, junk. There's no God, no Torah; it's only lies. All I learned in *cheyder*. . . . What did it get me?" (73). The boy is curious about Judaism and wants a bar-mitzvah, but he cannot articulate an answer to his father's devastating question. It reaches the point where he even becomes uncertain of his own motives in wanting a bar-mitzvah.

I couldn't really argue, because I wanted a bar mitzvah as I'd wanted a G.I. Joe doll in fourth grade, to join the Boy Scouts in fifth, to collect Man from U.N.C.L.E. books in sixth -- so that I'd be as much like other kids as possible. (73)

The boy thinks his confusion and unhappiness is a result of his *not* being able to pass. But in fact, the problem stems from his inability to merge his sometimes conflicting identities. When he's invited over to the home of Bonnie, a girl with whom his mother has set him up, he experiences a traditional

shabbos meal and feels his life has changed:

I felt drunk with *yiddishkeit*, Jewishness, as if I were in a Jewish Disneyland; they all knew so much about history, tradition, customs, religion, books, and legends. I felt the way I imagined Hindus were supposed to feel when they bathed in the Ganges -- purified and whole." (79)

And the protagonist is also able to come to terms with his sexuality. When he has to sleep in the same bed as Daniel, Bonnie's brother whom is more confident in his sexual orientation, he has sex for the first time. Though he is ecstatic, he immediately feels guilty, as if it were he who had committed a Nazi-like act:

I remembered the Stonewall riots I had read about in the *Times* that year, read in a fog of incomprehension and excitement, and how my parents had said, "It's sick, like the Nazis." I was sure they meant the police, and their harassment, the beatings, the oppression. But then my father said, "Men with men. It's like the Nazis, disgusting." And I had left the room so they wouldn't see my reddened face. "They did that you know," he said. "*Parshiveh baheymehs*. Filthy beasts." (81)

The protagonist is worried that his father, though far from religious, would be very disappointed and blame his "cursed luck" for his son's sexual orientation. "While all his friends would have doctors and lawyers and show off wedding pictures and all the rest, I would force him outside that circle of simple continuity" (81). It's not only his father who would feel this loss of continuity. The protagonist also feels that his most basic instincts go against the ancient

tradition which he values. The boy, nevertheless, feels that his first obligation is to heal himself by recognizing who he is: "And when he [Daniel] held my head up to kiss me, I felt like a straggling desert caravan, savaged by bandits, swept up in a sandstorm, that had suddenly emerged near an oasis -- still devastated, but humbled by relief" (82).

Some might feel this ending too neat, too happy. But for Raphael, happiness, optimism, and hope is an American trait. The European experiences, like the European religion, are too bleak and pessimistic. In the above story, the protagonist tries to explain to his father why there is no danger in knowing about one's religion. "This is America." I ventured, and he nodded, contemptuous, knowing his tragedy crushing my unthinking optimism" (72). In "Witness," too, a young woman is dismissed because her parents see in her a different spirit than the one brought over from Europe.

Mostly it was my ignorance they criticized, and through me, the America they both agreed was too optimistic and eager, too blind. In high school, I found a Frenchman in a James Baldwin novel saying, "You Americans -- you do not know any of the terrible things." That voice of hard wisdom was my mother's, was Eric's. That was what united them most deeply, I suspected, and what kept them most apart. (199)

There seems to be an unbridgeable gap between America and Europe. But Europe is dead as far as a Jewish culture is concerned. While Mary Antin believed that Jews in America merely outgrew their European heritage,

Raphael postulates that Europe self-destructed during the genocide and lost all its moral credibility. Even for the European survivors who despise America, Europe is part of the past. When the protagonist of "Witness" asks her father if he would ever go back to Vilno, he answers, "Never. Europe is dead for me. They bulldozed Jewish cemeteries! My family came to Vilno in the 1600's, and now there is nothing left . . . not even dust" (202). But the problem the European survivors pose for their American children is more than the cultural detachment from America and ambiguous feelings regarding Judaism. The problem the elder generation presents is rather a product of the relics of their culture -- xenophobia, racism, and homophobia -- which poisons the lives of their children. In "The Life You Have," a writer is blocked because he cannot deal with the homosexuality in his stories. The main reason is because of a note his mother sent him after she found out he was gay. "When we were married your father said we had to have children because of all the lives lost in the war. I didn't want to have any. Now I know I was right" (212). Again, in an ending that might seem too pat, he decides to overcome his mother's biases and start writing truthfully about his homosexuality. His lover sums up every person's obligation by quoting a line from James Baldwin's Another Country: "You've got to be truthful about the life you *have*. Otherwise there's no possibility of achieving the life you *want*" (213).

Raphael's gay men adopt a dual strategy that is antithetical to the

strategies Jews were forced to adopt in Europe and even in earlier periods in American history. First, he rejects the strategy of "passing," for that involves a renunciation up of one's identity. He sees no reason to deny either his homosexuality or his Jewishness. Second, he rejects the European strategy of silence and passivity. In America, he decided, neither Jews nor gays need remain silent in the face of oppression. In "Cassacks," a Hillel House where the protagonist lives is attacked by anti-Semitic vandals. There is even a physical clash where one Jewish student knocks out the teeth of a jeering neo-Nazi. The protagonist writes a letter to the campus newspaper deploring these anti-semitic attacks. He signs his name, which someone then uses to find his parents' phone number in order to leave a threatening message. Both his parents are extremely disturbed.

"You shouldn't write letters," his father said.

It was the voice that had always cautioned him against signing petitions, any petitions, against demonstrations, no matter what the cause, against joining groups of any kind, no matter how innocuous, against being too free about what he said on the phone, because "you never know." (92)

However, the American protagonist refuses to be marginalized. He believes that America differs from Europe because in America one has a right to speak out forcefully in defense of his heritage. This idea is echoed even more forcefully in the story "Abominations." It is one of three stories that involve Nat, Mark, and Brenda. Nat and Mark are gay and met in the orthodox

synagogue which they helped found. After the congregation discovers they are gay, they are expelled. Brenda is Nat's older sister who is struggling to accept her brother's homosexuality. After a wave of homophobic attacks on the campus on which they all live, Brenda inadvertently "outs" her brother in the campus newspaper. As a result, his dormitory room is firebombed. Nat runs to her house to tell her what has happened. The stark comparison between the situation of the Jews in Germany and homosexuals in America becomes clear for her. "She was suddenly flooded by all the terrible films she'd seen of Germany in the Thirties, with *JUDEN RAUS* ('Out with the Jews') whitewashed across Jewish-owned storefronts, synagogues collapsing in flame, religious Jews beaten, bloody, dead" (229). All that is saved from the fire is a pink triangle Gay Liberation button. When Brenda first saw the button, she had complained to Mark, "But you're Jewish, too! . . . Don't you hate that they use something from the camps?" (229) But for Mark and Nat, that was the point of the button's symbol: "shocking people, reminding everyone of the worst that could happen, that did happen." And when Mark arrives at Brenda's soon after Nat, Brenda wants to leave, escape the campus for safer havens. But Mark is not going to retreat. "I've been making lists of phone numbers. We're calling all the papers, the ACLU, the FBI, because it's arson. You need a lawyer" (230). Mark insists, "I'm staying. We've got lots to do." Finally they agree to drive to the suburbs merely to tell Brenda's and Nat's parents that

Nat is gay and that his room has been destroyed. By this time Brenda has already become radicalized. She decides not to stand by silently while her brother is in danger. Her parents could say what they think, but Brenda, "took out Nat's button and used the rearview mirror to help pin it to her dress" (231).

Though Raphael shares Antin's optimistic creed that a new religion can be built in America, he doesn't agree that this necessarily entails giving up ancient ritual. Unlike Antin, Raphael differentiates between something that is old and something that is useless. What is useless in the old tradition is prejudice. What is simply old -- and hence gives one a sense of continuity -- can remain valuable. In "Betrayed by David Bowie," a young man's religious awakening is coupled with his sexual awakening.

I was surprised at how seriously he took the services, and even more the first Saturday morning that I saw him *shokeling* -- the swaying back and forth that intensely religious Jews do, which I had always found a bit alien and repulsive. But in Jeff it was very sexy, imbued with all the power of his beautiful body. I suppose it also made him more unknowable, almost romantic: the man I'd sucked off was at that moment no longer an individual, but an expression of faith and tradition. (98)

At this moment the young man sees no reason why there should be any conflict between his tradition and his sexuality. Raphael believes that in order to be religious, one must give up one's ego, not one's sexuality. In "Shouts of Joy,"

a character is constantly criticizing his synagogue and some of its members for what he considers lapses in their worship. A character who is later to take on mystical significance tells him, "You think you know all about God? People like you keep God away" (192). Raphael takes on, as Cecil Birnbaum does in Goodman's stories, the desire for rational explanations for sacred laws. It is only destructive to the tradition to rationalize that the laws of kosher are a good way for avoiding trichinosis or that sexual prohibitions -- including those against same gender sex -- just follows the "laws of nature":

At the faculty-dominated shuns in their university town, the persistent chitchat and laughter were like the desperate assertion of rationality and control in the face of what was mysterious -- as if to let go, to be silent and feel, would be an admission of nakedness and shame. ("Dancing on Tisha Ba'av" 1-2)

True worship consists of transporting oneself backwards and forwards in time, psychically connecting oneself with generations past and the generations to come. Mark, the character who is most comfortable being orthodox and gay, is the embodiment of the true religious spirit.

"Sometimes I feel transported, completely," Mark told him, explaining why he was often intoxicated by *davening* -- prayer. "On Rosh Hashanah once, I saw my shadow on the wall in shul, yarmulke, beard, and it didn't look like me. It could've been anyone, any Jew, who knows where, how far back. ("Another Life" 123)

After Nat sleeps with Mark for the first time, he feels as he did when he had

become Orthodox and had prostrated himself on Yom Kippur.

With his forehead touching the floor, tired, hungry from fasting, intent, awed by moment kept intact through two thousand years, Nat had know that his final, unexpected willingness to surrender to something beyond his understanding was a border, a crossing that would always mark him as different from what he had been. (125-126)

This crossing of the border, this willingness to surrender oneself to something greater, is the true spirituality. Everything else, even one's sexual orientation, is insignificant, merely a product of a European legacy that lives no more. When Nat complains to Mark that, "Sometimes at services, I feel like I shouldn't be there, shouldn't kiss the Torah or do anything" (124), Mark answers, "That's what your *parents* would say, your *rabbi*, not you! You don't believe that, you *can't*. When are you going to stop *hating* yourself?" (125). Only the older generation, parents and conventional rabbis, would not accept the Orthodox homosexual. But this new generation, epitomized by Nat's sister Brenda, is beginning a new tradition, one which would lose the European hatred of the "other," the Jew, the homosexual. Raphael advocates a tradition that overturns the notions of exclusivity, while keeping the rituals which have sustained the Jews for most of their history.

Both Goodman and Raphael are part of a new wave of Orthodoxy.

Goodman clings to ideas that are far more closely aligned to Yeziarska than Antin. She believes that members of the community must maintain a unified front, though it is sometimes difficult to submerge oneself into a community which one disagrees. But at times, Goodman suggests, personal political dissent such as feminism must be compromised in the name of community. One must come to terms with the traditions of the fathers before one can move forward with one's own. Raphael, however, is willing to jettison some of what was brought over from Europe. Like Antin, he believes America offers unique opportunities. But while Antin insists that these unique opportunities consists of expanding the Judaic creed into a more universalist and pantheistic creed, Raphael believes that transcendence can be achieved inside one's sacred tradition. But this tradition must be altered to fit the American pluralistic reality. Only by accepting all those who wish to participate in its service can Judaism survive. As Mark points out in "Dancing on Tisha Ba'av," when he and Nat are expelled from the synagogue that does not have a quorum without them, "They need us, it's our *minyan* too" (13).

Epilogue

From conflict comes community; from dissent comes consensus. The Old Testament seems to have been an attempt to fuse the mythologies of two separate nations into one very distinct culture. The Mishnah and the Talmud are obsessed with recording not only the law, but the rabbinical arguments which led to the prevailing judgements. No disagreement is too small to be mentioned. In the great legal battles between the schools of Shamai and Hillel, Hillel is always judged victorious. Yet the Rabbis of the Mishnah, wishing perhaps to stress the value of dissenting opinions, say that in Messianic times the law will follow the school of Shamai's opinion (for it is then that Jews will be able to live according to a more rigorous code). The completion of the Talmud in the ninth century was just one chapter in the continuous debate over what constitutes Jewish law and practice. The *gaonim*, *rishonim*, *achronim*, and *achrei achronim* have all found places in the Talmud, creating a page with so many dissenting voices that Derrida would later use it (along with the midrash) as a model for deconstructionist exegesis. Perhaps spending

two-thousand years as a minority culture, living as subjects in extremely hostile majority cultures, caused a certain amount of drawing together, a reluctance to disenfranchise or excommunicate dissenters. Even had they desired, Jews did not have the means to prosecute large-scale sectarian warfare. One thing is certain, dissenters from Maimonides to Moses Mendelssohn were eventually accepted by the community as legitimate interpreters of a Judaic heritage. The American-Jewish literature, codified by fictional and autobiographical writings, merely follow the traditional path to community building.

In the same way, the community in America reflects the combined visions of its writers. The unique culture which Jews had been forced to create ideally suited a country being populated by the dislocated and one that was very much still in the process of "becoming." Jews had been debating assimilation versus adherence to tradition for two thousand years. The competing visions of the dissenters -- from the first century Essenes to the twentieth century Bundists -- had been recorded and codified, with normative practice emerging from compromises between the combatants. And though it is true that despite historically maintaining their culture by accepting dissent, there were times when American-Jewish intellectuals took issue with prevailing practices and were consequently seen as being alienated and self-hating. Yet the vigorous debates between Jews in America could be seen as a

model for all ethnic groups whose process of assimilation was not as raucous. It might be noted that nearly seventy years before multi-culturalism took center-stage, the debate between Mary Antin and Anzia Yeziarska anticipated many of the issues. Both might be seen as dissenters, staking out extreme positions. Antin is a Transcendentalist, nearly maddened by the promise of escaping ethnic persecution by creating a society that could ignore centuries of "tradition." Her great desire was to show how American Transcendentalism, with its emphasis on the education and the valuing of each individual, was completely compatible with a Judaic and even Hasidic heritage brought over from Europe. Yeziarska remains profoundly unconvinced that the extreme optimism of America is justified. In particular she is disturbed by a gross materialism that she feels has distorted the inner being of the American Jew. A sense of the loss of a valuable heritage permeates her work, and she is not ready to enter any American community. And the Jewish community, having two models to choose from, chose a middle course, accepting the economic promise that America had offered, but rejecting the extreme ahistoricism of Emerson.

The crisis of the Great Depression brought other challenges beyond assimilation to Jews in America, but the positions staked out by Antin and Yeziarska were, in large measure, followed by subsequent American-Jewish writers. Henry Roth, looking back at the old-world *shtetl* community, saw a

need to reject the mechanization of an industrial culture and take more time to examine alternate forms of community. These communities would be based on assumptions different than Emersonian individualism and they would utilize economic systems other than capitalism. Ironically, though Roth wrote lovingly of the pre-enlightenment community of the old-world and re-examined America in light of its brutal social injustices, he, along with other progressives such as Michael Gold, were accused of being alienated. In fact, Roth and, for that matter, Yeziarska, were working in a long Judaic tradition of prophetic muckraking, where individuals spoke out against the evils of their day and put themselves at risk for the sake of the community. Meyer Levin, on the other hand, while not a radical Emersonian like Antin, believed that it was inevitable that the sons and daughters of the first generation immigrants become part of the American community and the American economic system. And though he recognized the value of community and the advantages of cohesion for the "old bunch," he advocated no radical plan to create new types of community; nor did he suggest a retreat back to pre-enlightenment and pre-industrialization models of community. Again, the reality of the emerging Jewish community was a combination of the two positions. While many Jews suffered from the worst abuses of capitalism, they rejected revolution and overwhelmingly supported the social evolution of the first two Roosevelt administrations. This more moderate approach certainly more closely reflects

Levin than Roth. But it must be noted that many Americans, especially intellectuals, were unhappy with the slow and uneven progress of Roosevelt liberalism. In addition, with the beginning of the Second World War and the end of the Depression, much of the country reverted to a more conservative social and economic policy. Yet Jews as a group remained more politically progressive than any other single ethnic group in America.

The Holocaust and the start of the Cold War marked another monumental change in the cultural landscape of America. By the early fifties, many of the Jewish intellectuals were completely disillusioned by the Soviet experiment with communism. But they were also uncertain about fully participating in the American mania for wealth and social status. So once again, the charge of alienation and self-hatred was advanced. It became a cliché that the Jew was a "specialist" in alienation. Yet if alienation is meant to be a move away from community, if it is meant as a writer's desire to be seen as "man alone," there is little evidence that this is what Jewish intellectuals wished. In actuality, the debate among American Jews from all points on the political spectrum revolved around the question: "To what manner of community should one belong?" For Jews began to recognize, particularly as the horrors of the Holocaust became known, that even if they wished to forget his heritage, the world will not let them forget. Even those writers such as Delmore Schwartz, who had many problems with Protestant,

middle-class morality American Jews had adopted, there remains the recognition that an unbreakable bond to his community exists. In Herzog Saul Bellow makes the case, for example, that the individual must synthesize a sense of oneself with a sense of one's community. It is only through this synthesis that inner peace and a true sense of accomplishment can be achieved. In creating the character of Herzog, Bellow shows how a dissenter and can help create community. Herzog is an intellectual who mocks the pretensions of those intellectuals who sell their souls for money and position. He is a non-practicing Jew who longs to recreate the *shtetl* values of simple prayer and belief, though he cannot accept them as complete answers to the modern dilemmas. In addition, he sees how history has shaped his personality and the folly in denying that history. He revels in his role not of alienated outsider, but of dissenting insider who is secure enough in himself and his community to know that dissent is an acceptable form of community building.

Yet the pressure for conformity that permeates the fifties and early sixties forced such American Jewish writers as Charles Angoff and Herman Wouk to deny that dissent is a necessary ingredient to build community. Wouk, in particular, wished to show that the Jew in America never had any agenda other than to live a quiet and comfortable life. Though his characters are, superficially at least, the most observant of any of the American-Jewish characters in this study -- because of his complete negation of the dissenter --

his works are actually the most assimilationist of the works dealt with herein. His desire to show the dissenter in a position counter to the Judaic code, belies not only the reality of the Jew in America, but the very heritage he claims to protect. The idea of the Jewish communist, or even the Jew dissatisfied with the status quo, is untenable for Wouk. Such characters in Wouk's works are inevitably punished, even degraded. This is not to say that Wouk's position is outside the debate regarding the course of the American Jewish community. Decades of work by immigrant parents were starting to pay off, as the second and third generations began making remarkable economic progress. While some doors in major corporations were still closed to Jews, no barriers prevented access to the middle-class. In both the professions and small (and some large) business, the Jew had achieved a place in America. And there was promise that the barriers at the highest level would, in time, fall. For the Jews who perceived the situation thus, it seemed madness to fume at the inequities of the society. There also might have been the feeling, both for those who escaped Europe before the Second World War and for those who survived the war, that the Jew had suffered through so much in Europe that he or she was entitled to the respite America seemed to offer. Though more for economic than philosophical reasons, the immigrant and refugee agreed with Antin that America was indeed the promised land. Of course, the actual practices of the Jewish community incorporated the visions of Bellow and of Wouk. The Jewish

community, while not eschewing professional achievement or life in the suburbs, became active in organizations which promoted change. Already deeply involved in union organization, Jews joined in the civil rights struggle in the early fifties, and became active in other movements which pushed for a shake-up in the status quos. At times, particularly in the sixties, these movements pushed for radical and sometimes violent means to speed up the change. While the perfect synthesis between self and community which Bellow had written about might not have been achieved, the Jewish community continued to struggle to merge the dissenting points of view which had been presented to it.

From the beginning of mass Jewish immigration, the Jewish community in America had reflected the larger America by always being in the process of "becoming." Today, the rise of "Yiddishkeit" and the literary debate which surrounds it, is just the latest instalment in the continuing evolution of the American-Jewish community. As always, writers -- in this case exemplified by Allegra Goodman and Lev Raphael -- serve as codifiers of the debate which American Jewry is having with itself over the boundaries of its community. What might surprising many who wrote in the earlier part of the century is that the debate is now over actual religious practice. Due to assimilation, Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fiedler, Henry Roth and others had predicted the ultimate disappearance of the Jew in America. And though the history of the Jew in

America has not ended, there is a movement towards a revival of Jewish awareness and religious practice among all sectors of American Jewry, from feminist academics to the newly arrived Russian immigrants. The question now merely seems to be how to open the religion to fit today's emphasis on equality and multi-culturalism. How can traditional religious practice incorporate the feminist and gay rights movements? And does the failure of an immediate response of the community mean one can disassociate oneself from normative practice? Like Antin, Raphael believes that given a choice between competing identities -- gay and Jewish (being American and adopting the trappings of the American mainstream is no longer a significant point of debate) -- one's obligation is to the new identity, which in his case remains the gay community. A gay man, Raphael feels, would lose more by denying his sexual orientation than he would by leaving the Orthodox Jewish community. But even Raphael does not seem to advocate a permanent leave taking from Judaism. Rather he sees his removal from the community as temporary. His characters express the hope that not only will the mainstream community come around and accept the attitude of the dissenters -- as it had throughout history -- but also that it needs its gay and lesbian members in order to remain a community. Allegra Goodman, on the other hand, when dealing with such issues as feminism and abortion rights, does not see a justification of breaking up the community. She feels the American Jewish community is small enough,

and a break-up, no matter how temporary, would cause the individual elements of the community to "scatter like crumbs." She would rather have the dissenter voice his or her opinions from the inside, even if it means a momentary swallowing of principles.

From this vantage point, it is impossible to predict to what degree the Orthodox community will accept the changes demanded by the feminist and gay and lesbian movements. Some Orthodox women have started their own synagogues, using the same liturgy as Orthodox men. Whether they will be allowed to participate with men in the men's services in the near future is doubtful. The Conservative and Reform branches have been more open to women and have allowed them to participate fully in their services; it seems, however, that feminists desire entry into the neo-traditional communities. As for gay and lesbians, they are having a much more difficult finding acceptance. The attitudes of the mainstream community described in Raphael's Dancing on Tisha B'av are virtually unchanged. And it seems it will be many years before open gays and lesbian people will be allowed to participate on an equal basis in any branch of Judaism -- Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform.

Over the course of writing this study some issues have become clear. Firstly, it is impossible to predict the future of the Jewish community or the direction the literature which it generates will take. Attempts to do so, such

as Irving Howe's statement that the loss of the immigrant culture will create a less energized and distinct literature, have failed in the past -- not because of the critic's misreading of the available evidence, but because of unforeseen events. The Holocaust, for example, alerted many previously disaffected intellectuals that though they might not think of themselves as Jewish, there were those in the world who did. This brought about a re-evaluation of their positions in respect to their heritage, and though most did not put on a yarmulke and turn orthodox, there was a recognition of a previously unacknowledged heritage and community. Leslie Fiedler makes the point that before World War II if asked about the future of American Jewry, he would have replied, as did Henry Roth, that, "I feel that to the great boons Jews have already conferred upon humanity, Jews in America might add this last and greatest one: of orienting themselves toward ceasing to be Jews" (quoted in Fiedler on the Roof 164). But the dream of international brotherhood notwithstanding, Fiedler is very much aware of the "silent Holocaust" where,

it cannot be denied that the future we have dreamed is, like that foreseen for the "Thousand-Year Reign," Judenrein. It is for this reason that I have found it impossible to reflect self-righteously on the Holocaust which left me unscathed, without alluding to that other which has left me feeling like a Last Jew. (180)

While not a convert to orthodoxy, the Holocaust had made Fiedler aware of the role he was playing in the Jewish community. And the change of attitude

towards the Jewish community is even more stark for Roth. The 1967 Six-Day War gave him a new sense of national destiny. He wrote,

When the 67 War broke out it acted upon me like a second vector, to borrow a term from mathematics, a second impulse acting in the same direction as the first, and reinforcing it. The Jewish identity came to the fore, asserting itself in consciousness. Not only that, but something else was being catalyzed, a changed personality, at last, an individual with an increasingly firm point of view, an ideology, however spotty, but durable, tenable, a new bond with tradition, a new reunion with folk. (Shifting Landscape 173)

Roth seems absolutely shocked at his own transformation. At the age of sixty, his attitude towards his connection to the Jewish community undergoes a complete change. He feels much more a part of a people and a heritage which he had rejected. This recognition has the effect of revitalizing him, making him feel able to write and express all aspects of his psyche:

Significant for me is that after his vast detour, the once-Orthodox Jewish boy has returned to his own Jewishness. I have reattached myself to part of what I had rejected in 1914. Even before the Israeli-Arab war I was beginning to feel that there might be some path that would lead me back to myself, although I realized there was no returning to the Jews of the East Side of more than a half century ago. Then suddenly I discovered that I could align myself with a people that is forward-looking and engaged in the vital process of its own formation. And with the resumption of writing I find that I myself am reabsorbed into something that is immediately vital. (174-175)

To add irony to irony, while Roth expresses amazement at his own late-in-life

and unexpected philosophical flip-flop, he also proffers the opinion that "I feel that the Diaspora is headed for assimilation, and all that is left of Judaism in the future will be in the state of Israel" (177). In fact, today much of the Israeli religious policy is determined by Rabbinic leaders living in the same Brooklyn neighborhoods that Roth had escaped from in 1914. And the practice of Judaism is on an upswing which has been unseen since the beginning of the Enlightenment.

What might have fooled Roth, Irving Howe, and others who tried to predict the future for American Jewry was the monumental cultural shift to the right during the eighties. Other cultural shifts, which would be equally impossible to predict, will undoubtedly occur. However, there is one thing that is predictable. As long as there is a Jewish community, in America or anywhere else, dissent will continue to be an integral part of it, and it will continue to shape it in unpredictable but vital ways.

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