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"So what's the joke?":
Locating Jewish-American Female Authorship

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A Thesis
in
The Department
of
English

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (English) at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

August 1997

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ABSTRACT

"So what's the joke?": Locating Jewish-American Female Authorship

Batia Boe Stolar

This thesis examines the fiction of three contemporary Jewish-American female writers, Grace Paley, Cynthia Ozick and Erica Jong, and locates their writing in the context of their quasi-double-marginalization--the yoking of their Jewishness and femaleness. Their texts illustrate their reaction to a history of patriarchal Judaism that relegates femaleness to the domestic sphere, and to a history of anti-Semitism that is marked by persecution, and, most explicitly, the Holocaust. An examination of the narrative strategies that these writers utilize--oral storytelling, traditional genre paradigms, and hyperbolic satire--illustrates their reaction to oppressive constructions of Jewishness--particularly Jewish femaleness--that have been authorized and promoted by such canonical Jewish male authors as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth. Paley, Ozick and Jong challenge the authority of their canonical male counterparts and ridicule their caricatures of Jewish women--particularly that of the ball-breaking "Jewish Mother." Their rewritings and inscriptions of Jewish-American femaleness reconstruct a frequently ignored immigrant domestic sphere, and the sexuality of the Jewish-American woman--whose sexuality has been dismissed by the Jewish male desire for the *shiksa*. And yet, their texts also remind us that Jewish-American female writers are not relegated to the domestic sphere, nor do they lack authority.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Nicola Nixon, for her advice, her sympathetic understanding, her critical suggestions and direction which have greatly influenced the writing of this thesis. Her thoroughness and high standards were crucial to the production and completion of this project, and are greatly appreciated. I also want to thank my readers, Prof. Bina Toledo-Freiwald and Prof. Judith Herz, for the care and interest with which they read this thesis.

I must also thank Prof. Mesh Butovsky for introducing me to the fiction of Grace Paley and Cynthia Ozick, and Prof. Marcie Frank for her courses on Restoration and eighteenth-century female writers and critical theory, which helped me to develop the critical approach to authorship that I take in this thesis.

I want to thank Prof. David Sheps for pointing out Claire Bloom's autobiography, and Prof. Terry Byrnes for his discussion on Jacqueline Susann.

I also want to thank Susan Brown for all her help and support with this thesis and throughout the course of my graduate studies at Concordia, and Audrey Burkowsky for all her help and encouragement.

The topic of this thesis emerged from a long conversation with Kirsten Nichols--thanks for the encouragement.

To everyone who shared their memories of reading Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* I give my heartfelt thanks, and, in particular, to Phil Shoore for his insightful conversations about Judaism in general and Philip Roth in

particular, his pointing out of Jong's Introduction to Colette's *The Other Woman*, and for the story of *The Carp in the Bathtub*.

This thesis is dedicated to my mom, Esther Merikanskas, who had to face the difficulty of being a Jewish female artist at a time and place in which such a strong, intellectual and artistic woman was not accepted. As a 'Jewish Mother' she has nurtured my education, encouraging me financially, intellectually and emotionally. I also owe her a debt of gratitude for introducing me to, and translating, Yiddish passages and Yiddishisms.

Last, but not least, I give my heartfelt thanks to Doug Ivison, who has borne the brunt of the thesis experience. His interest, support and discerning discussions have been crucial to the successful completion of this project. His help conducting research and editing have been greatly appreciated.

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Introduction

In *In the Mainstream: The Jewish Presence in Twentieth-Century American Literature, 1950s-1980s*, Louis Harap states that "the triumvirate of leading American-Jewish writers" consists of Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth, each of whom, during the 1950s--"the 'Jewish decade' in American Literature"--published a best-selling book that received the National Book Award (133). Like Harap, Allen Guttman focuses primarily on that "triumvirate" of Jewish-American male writers in *The Jewish Writer in America*. Ironically, the tacit ghettoization of these authors as "Jewish"-American writers also involves an implicit valorization of their maleness--a valorization that makes problematic the critical tendency to view their work as being representative of the Jewish-American experience generally. To celebrate Malamud's acclaim as the "most Jewish of American Jewish writers" (Oscar B. Goodman quoted in Guttman 112) and Roth's stature as the "most talented, the most controversial, and the most sensitive to the complexities of assimilation and the question of identity" of the "generation [of Jewish writers] younger than Saul Bellow and Norman Mailer" (Guttman 64-5), is, however, to reinforce a systematic disregard for such female Jewish-American writers as Grace Paley, Cynthia Ozick, Erica Jong, Johanna Kaplan and Rebecca Goldstein. Malamud's contention that "All Men Are Jews," could, in other words, be rewritten as: in America, 'All Jews Are Men'.

The synecdochical function granted to Jewish-American male writers emerges from the selection of specific Jewish texts "deemed worthy of

representing the 'ethnic [in this case 'Jewish'] experience'" (Palumbo-Liu 2). And, naturally, such an articulation is entirely facilitated by the general, North American, cultural promotion of male writers. In their representation of Jewishness, Jewish-American male writers have constructed Jewish-American femaleness as essentially cartoonish--as primarily some version of the phallic or ball-breaking Jewish mother. And, in formulating the *shiksa* (or non-Jewish woman) as their idealized and hyper-sexualized object of desire, writers like Roth and Bellow have further devalued Jewish femaleness by obliquely suggesting that Jewish-American women are not sexual. Jewish-American femaleness, as it is authorized by Jewish-American male writers, exists only within a restrictive and devalued domestic sphere. The 'authorized version' of the Jewish woman in effect places her authority within that sphere alone and certainly not within the professional, or public, sphere that the male Jewish writers occupy. While such a placement is articulated fictionally, I want to suggest that it reverberates extra-textually, destabilizing the authority of writers like Paley and Ozick to the extent that they respond to that destabilization in their own fiction. Ironically, they invoke the very matrilinear authority guaranteed by Judaism itself to challenge and undermine constructions of Jewishness, particularly the construct of Jewish-American femaleness, that have been naturalized and authorized by the canonical Jewish-American male writers. And, it is only the Jewish-American female writer who can, authoritatively, rewrite and write-in the 'missing' aspects of Jewishness in America--Jewish-American femaleness--since a female or male non-Jew cannot tell a Jew what Jewishness is. As this thesis will show, such Jewish-

American female authors as Paley, Ozick and Jong, employ different narrative strategies that satirize the supposed Jewishness painted by canonical Jewish-American male writers. Paley, Ozick and Jong do not use such narrative strategies as self-deprecating humour that the Jewish-American male writers control, but use strategies that are outside the bounds of control of the Jewish-American male writers. Paley's, Ozick's and Jong's texts illustrate that, unlike what the canonical male Jewish-American writers would like America to believe, female Jewish-American writers are not relegated to the domestic sphere, nor do they lack authority.

In their texts, Paley, Ozick, and Jong call attention to the problematic of their authorship--the yoking of their Jewishness and femaleness. And yet, any situating of this seeming double-marginalization in the context of contemporary discourses that theorize ethnicity proves difficult; Paley, Ozick and Jong are, after all, privileged, middle-class, 'white' *ashkenazi* women. This difficulty points to the tangential nature of Jewishness. Discourses of race and ethnicity, for example, are used quite unproblematically to differentiate between the two tribes, the *ashkenazi* and *sepharadi*, and, more recently, between the 'white' and Ethiopian Jews. Although the majority of American Jews identify themselves as secular, which suggests that Jewishness is essentially cultural rather than religious, the minority exhibit a distinct heterogeneity as marked by the presence of their different sects--ranging from ultra-orthodox to reform--that teach a particularized socio-political religious belief-system. Paley, like her secular Jewish-American male contemporaries, depicts Jewishness in the context of the Jewish immigrants who emigrated to "overcrowded

American cities" like New York in the late nineteenth century, seeking to establish their lives in America (Kamel 29). In contrast, Ozick is more traditional and religious, calling for an authentically Jewish-American literary tradition--a liturgical literature written in English. Jong's texts illustrate yet a different approach to Jewish-American female authorship. Jong promotes a secular and 'popular' literature that nevertheless invokes traditional and patriarchal religious Judaism in order to critique and undermine it. In spite of their different articulations of Jewishness, however, Paley, Ozick and Jong nevertheless define Jewishness as a common history of mythologized traditions, persecution and attempted genocide, language, dialect, speech, mannerisms, and oral and written literature--characteristics that stand in contrast to a dominant American WASP culture and persist despite the push toward 'melting-pot' integration.

The definition of Jewishness as an ethnicity is consistent with Werner Sollors' historical approach to Judaism. For Sollors, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries' description of Jewishness as a "race" is a synonym for what we now refer to as "ethnicity" (289), which "is typically based on a *contrast*" (288). Jewishness is equally naturalized as an ethnicity in the "Herder and the Grimms" models:

a "people" is held together by a subliminal culture of fairy tales, songs, and folk beliefs.... As a result of this legacy "ethnicity" as a term for literary study largely evokes the accumulation of cultural bits that demonstrate the original creativity, emotive cohesion, and temporal depth of a particular collectivity, especially in a situation of emergence--be it from

obscurity, suppression, embattlement, dependence, diaspora, or previous membership in a larger grouping (Sollors 290).

And yet, although Jewishness has been, historically, a marginalized ethnicity, the assimilation, integration and social ascendance of American Jews since the 1950s--an ascendance marked by the celebration of writers like Roth and Malamud--makes problematic any easy definition of Paley, Ozick, and Jong as members of a "suppressed" group who are writing from "obscurity." As Sollors reminds us, since the late 1940s 'Jew' has come to equal 'Gentile' for new immigrants and oppressed ethnicities and "may simply be subsumed under the common United States category 'white'" despite its past formulation as "*the crucial distinction in Nazi 'racial' theory*" (289).

In his study of canon formations, David Palumbo-Liu notes that, as David A. Hollinger points out, the insertion of Jewish 'texts' into the canon occurred at a historical moment when "an academy heretofore dominated by a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant professorate was broken into by Jewish scholars. A crisis in the Western world paralleled a reconfiguration of the American intellectual imagination" (Palumbo-Liu 3). According to Hollinger, this 'crisis' resulted in a pluralist cultural exchange between the "children of East-European Jewish immigrants and descendants of native American, 'WASP' families," a discovery that was made possible by each groups' revolting "against each's own provincial inheritance" (quoted in Palumbo-Liu 3). Palumbo-Liu critiques the pluralist approach that emphasizes similarities and commonalities. Although it was necessary for Jews to emphasize their likeness to Gentiles, in order to become, in a sense,

'human'--as epitomized in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in Shylock's speech: "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" (3.1.55-7)--this likeness can lead to an erasure of culture rather than to an erasure of racism. Palumbo-Liu proposes an alternative to pluralism that, he argues, is articulated in a critical "multicultural canon" that explores the

fissures, tensions, and sometimes contradictory demands of multiple cultures, rather than (only) celebrating the plurality of cultures by passing through them appreciatively.... [Therefore, as] well-intentioned as it may appear, "pluralism" is perhaps best regarded as a point of departure for a critical multiculturalism that would be likened in spirit to the antimonoculturalist trajectory of pluralism, but be unwilling to bypass an engagement with the historical and material effects of monocultural discourse, which has argued for a single normative culture to which all may subscribe voluntarily while in fact forcing a sense of consensus from those on the margins (5).¹

Palumbo-Liu's argument illustrates the problematic that King-Kok Cheung identifies in her study of Asian-American female writers. According to her, there are "certain tenets held by scholars on ethnicity: at one extreme the insistence on a unified (ethnic) self and on cultural 'authenticity'; at the other, the urge to transcend ethnicity altogether" (1). Cheung's study

¹Palumbo-Liu argues that "cultural difference" is necessary in order to "domesticate" the public, and a capitalist plot to make ethnicity "not only unobstructive but attractive" (5).

challenges the existing critical discourses about 'ethnic' fiction and calls for a re-assessment of 'ethnic' writing, particularly as that writing pertains to gender issues. Brooke Fredericksen observes that, with "assimilation comes the risk of losing the richness of one's culture; without it, one is limited economically and socially. This dilemma illustrates the paradox that while the Jew finds a home in America as other immigrants have he is no more at home here than anywhere else in the world" (41). In pluralist America, the myth of the 'melting pot' stipulates that assimilation is necessary and desirable; however, many immigrants face the limitations of actual integration, and others resist assimilation in order to maintain their cultural identity, their 'old' traditions, beliefs, and languages, which often results in tension between 'old' and 'new' Jewish immigrant groups.² In spite of, or perhaps because of, the assimilation and integration of Jews into 'white' America, Paley, Ozick, and Jong need to foreground their Jewishness and femaleness in their texts, and in turn need to allude to the limitations of actual integration.

²On a *Politically Incorrect* discussion, Bill Maher asked the panellists' opinion regarding immigrants who resist assimilation, referring in particular to a group of ultra-orthodox Jews in upper New York State who choose to live in a self-sufficient society in which biblical law replaces American justice. He asked: "If America is, indeed, the 'melting pot', shouldn't immigrants melt a little?" The panel consisted of three Jewish-Americans: Rhea Pearlman, Harlan Ellison, Fyvush Finkel, and one African-American, Star Parker. Finkel argued that the *Hasidim* are not hurting anyone and that Western civilization derives from biblical law. Pearlman stated, "we are all immigrants," and argued that melting was necessary in order to maintain 'American' culture--since that was the reason why immigrants were immigrating to America. Ellison denounced the ultra-orthodox as fanatics, and Parker argued that religious freedom is misused--"where do you draw the line?" Parker illustrated her point by calling attention to immigrant groups who eat puppies and pass the practice off as part of their cultural heritage. Parker linked such behaviour with cult worshipping (27 January, 1996).

Discourses of Jewishness as Otherness have been increasingly restricted to the academic Jewish ghetto of "Jewish Studies," to critical journals like *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, and to publications like the Library of Modern Jewish Literature, whose mandate is to "introduce new readers and reacquaint a past generation of readers to the imaginative literature of the modern Jewish experience" (*Cannibal* ii). The "Jewish experience"--despite special issues of *Studies in American Jewish Literature* on "Jewish Women Writers and Women in Jewish Literature"--is, however, primarily male. Although there is a significant amount of literature written by Jewish-American female writers, the special issue, for example, thematizes Jewish-American femaleness in essays about the female characters in Bellow, Malamud and Roth's texts, suggesting that canonical male writers still define Jewish-American femaleness. In the introduction to the volume, Daniel Walden states: "[a]s I was preparing this issue, several women asked me if I would title an issue 'male Jewish writers?' No, I would not" ("An Introduction" 4). It is Walden's contention that, since we "live in a multi-cultural, pluralist society"--"Pluralism and multi-culturalism are also as American as apple pie"--we should strive for an academic practice that incorporates--but does not differentiate--"all peoples, men and women, black and white, Jew and gentile" (4). The special issue of *SAJL* is, for Walden, an example of a necessary forum to "achieve an equal hearing for all" (4). And yet, the special issue clearly indicates that, in "pluralist multi-cultural" America, and within the ghetto of Jewish literature, Jewish-American female writers have yet to be heard--and, by extension, the critical response to Jewish-American female authorship has yet to be

sufficiently published. As the criticism on Paley, Ozick and Jong illustrates, the three are examined as either Jewish or women writers. When, for example, the authors' Jewishness is thematized the articles appear in such 'Jewish' journals as *SAJL*; when their femaleness is studied the articles appear in feminist journals and such anthologies as *Narrating Mothers*, *Contemporary American Women Writers*, *Plotting Change*, and *Women Writers Talking*. There are only a few studies, like *Jewish American Women Writers* and *Women of the Word*, that focus on the writers' crucial yoking of their femaleness and Jewishness. The academic ghettoization of 'Jewish' criticism on Jewish authors can be explained by Sollors' observation that "the study of literature is still overwhelmingly organized within national and ethnic boundaries" (303).³ I would add that the study of female writers in general is also overwhelmingly organized within equally restrictive but necessary gender boundaries.

In this thesis, I will illustrate the different narrative strategies that Paley, Ozick and Jong use to challenge the existing misogynist constructions of Jewish-American femaleness as authorized by the canonical Jewish-American male writers who they, in turn, satirize and lampoon. In *The Collected Stories*, Paley opts for a distinctively 'female' approach to her

³Jewishness, then, can be described as a temporal 'white' (religious) ethnicity. I am basing this term on the assimilation of such European immigrant groups as the Irish and Italians. Like the Jews, these groups maintain a distinctiveness of culture that is manifested by traditions, dialects, literatures, institutions and mannerisms that suggest that they are, in fact, ethnicities. The problematic of 'white ethnicities' has been examined in a number of recent critical studies, such as David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1991), Ruth Frankenberg's *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993), and Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (1995) (Stowe 68-77).

writing and her authorial persona that appears to be non-threatening to the established and valorized 'male' order. Representing herself mainly as a quasi-oral storyteller, Paley focuses on the largely unexplored domain of the feminized domestic sphere. In this space she rewrites the Jewish immigrant story from the perspective of the previously silenced female characters, and, through these characters' voices, she inscribes various experiences of Jewish-American femaleness. Paley humanizes the 'Jewish Mother,' emphasizes the sexuality and desirability of the Jewish-American woman, and illustrates the independence, wit and pragmatism--the *Yiddishe kop*⁴--that the Jewish-American woman must have, or develop, in order to survive and succeed.

Ozick's texts, "The Pagan Rabbi," "Puttermesser: Her Work History, Her Ancestry, Her Afterlife," "Puttermesser and Xanthippe," *The Shawl*, and *The Cannibal Galaxy*, illustrate an aspect of female Jewish-Americanness that significantly differs from that outlined in Paley's texts. Paley paints a secular immigrant (and post-immigrant) urban portrait in which her re-invention of Jewish femaleness--as outlined by such constraining literary models as the domestic, "Jewish mother"--results in her endorsement of a utopian vision of ethnic hybridity that celebrates cultural difference but which nonetheless calls for racial, class, ethnic and gender equality. Unlike Paley, Ozick opts for a traditional narrative style that echoes that of her Jewish male contemporaries, situating herself as predominantly an intellectual writer who challenges her reader to 'know' as much about

⁴Literally, *Yiddishe kop* means 'Yiddish head'. This phrase is used to emphasize a quickness of 'Jewish' wit. Using your *Yiddishe kop* means, in other words, thinking, wittily, like a Jew.

Jewish and Western Literature as she does. The endorsements on her book-covers, for example, construct "Miss Ozick" as an author who "writes with the cut-crystal precision of Singer and the scouring tragic-ironic strengths of Malamud" (*Kirkus Reviews* in *Pagan* cover, my emphasis).⁵ Paradoxically, the paralleling of Ozick's name to those of Singer and Malamud elevates her in importance as a Jewish author, but at the same time it posits her authority as that of a female mimic.⁶ And yet, Ozick has gradually attained eventual success. According to Ann R. Shapiro, "Ozick has been welcomed by male critics into the pantheon of Jewish American writers, while other wom[e]n who write more specifically about female experience have not" ("Introduction" 10). Unlike most Jewish-American female writers, she has been included, at times, in the elite company of Singer, Malamud, Bellow and Roth. In her texts, she strives to achieve a constancy of style, themes and vocabulary that mark her texts as 'Ozick's'. She appears to segregate her Jewishness from her femaleness, and, in her fiction, seems to circumscribe sexual politics. And yet, as my reading of her texts illustrates, she nevertheless calls attention to the convergence of her femaleness and Jewishness, in spite of her apparent separation of the two, for she examines the quasi-paradoxical construction of the 'Jewish (female) Artist'.

Jong, like Ozick, naturalizes her literary authority by citing such canonical writers as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, and more recent

⁵Mark Krupnick characterizes Ozick as "the Jewish T.S. Eliot".

⁶One of Philip Roth's paperback editions of *Portnoy's Complaint* even includes an endorsing quote by Ozick.

Jewish writers as Bellow, Mailer, Roth and Singer. Such citations foreground her own literary prowess, emphasizing her scholarly background. Like Ozick, Jong simultaneously establishes her presence in both the generally Western and specifically Jewish literary traditions; yet, unlike Ozick, Jong does not restrict her writing to the 'intellectual' and 'Judaic' literary genres, nor does she make her literary intertextuality unattainable to the average reader. Reviewing Jong's *Serenissima*, her rewriting of Shakespeare's Jessica, Shylock's daughter, *Glamour* states, for example: "you won't have to brush up on your Shakespeare for this one" (quoted on book-cover of *Serenissima*). Jong, like Paley, promotes the 'everyday' and the 'everywoman', particularly in the context of erotica. Jong's novels, *Fear of Flying*, *How To Save Your Own Life*, *Parachutes & Kisses*, and *Serenissima*, point to the characterization of the female protagonists, Isadora Wing and Jessica Prutt, as the mythical "everywoman" (*How* 144) who appeals to a wide, heterogenous audience rather than to a "few other wise-ass Jewish girls from the Upper West Side" (14). Jong's success as a best-selling 'popular' writer is dependent on her texts' having "the common touch," the simultaneous appeal to scholars as well as to "totally uneducated people" (*How* 144). As a promoter of the 'everyday' and the (Jewish) 'everywoman,' Jong, according to Marie Anne Clabé, "analyse avec perspicacité la mentalité juive New-Yorkaise contemporaine" (77). I would suggest, however, that Jong's representation of *Yiddishkeit* represents the 'ordinary' and the 'little person' only insofar as 'ordinary' is an upper-middle class fantasy life and the 'little person' is a female Jewish

writer who achieves celebrity status.⁷

The study of Paley's, Ozick's and Jong's fiction offers an insight into the issues that confront the contemporary female Jewish author. Through their use of various narrative strategies--oral storytelling, traditional genre paradigms, and hyperbolic satire--Paley, Ozick and Jong challenge and undermine the oppressive constructions of Jewish-American femaleness as it is authorized and promoted by their canonical Jewish-American male contemporaries. Each writer rewrites and inscribes her 'authentic' version of Jewish-American female experience. Interestingly enough, in gendering their texts and correcting the profound absence of Jewish-female sexuality that their male counterparts articulate, they end up producing an exoticization of Jewish womanhood not at all unlike the orientalist and erotic female Jew of the nineteenth-century. However, these writers remind us that redressing female sexuality and rewriting, or inscribing, the domestic literary domain are necessary, revisionist tasks. Similarly, a critical 'redress' of female Jewish-American authors is a necessary, revisionist task.

⁷In *Parachutes & Kisses*, for example, Isadora's maternal and domestic concerns are finding the right nanny for her daughter, the right cook for her household, and keeping her husband from feeling like a 'house-husband' while she writes her books in 'a room of her own'.

Chapter One: Grace Paley

"The Storyteller's Story:

the Self-Invention of a Jewish-American Female Author"

In *The Little Disturbances of Man*, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*, and *Later That Same Day*, Paley's ambivalence toward her Jewishness is implicitly exhibited by the apparent lack of "Jewish content" and by a rather critical representation of Jewishness that is articulated by the recurring Jewish female characters on such topics as ethnic integration, religion, the decentralization of the immigrant Jewish family, and Zionism. And yet, Paley's texts clearly emphasize her deployment of storytelling as an oral Jewish literary tradition, and her endorsement of liberal-socialist politics as connected to the political tradition of *Yiddishkeit*. Because her narrative strategies are so firmly identified within a connotatively Jewish tradition, the criticisms of Jewishness voiced by such female characters as Faith Darwin operate on a sort of double register--they signal Paley's appropriation of the self-deprecating masculine voice of her male contemporaries and in turn expose the misogynist and anti-Semitic strain that infuses that voice. Her apparent ambivalence to Jewishness, in other words, forces a reevaluation of the manner in which Jewishness, and specifically, Jewish-femaleness, has been represented. And, perhaps more importantly, such ambivalence points to the difficulties of her dual marginalization as both a female and Jewish-American author. Paley's texts, in their reaching back to the Jewish immigrant experience, question the process of assimilation and integration as such processes affect female,

Jewish immigrants in particular, suggesting that Paley is herself textually negotiating a female Jewish-American identity in terms of its immigrant-Otherness and post-immigrant-'whiteness'.

Paley's text calls attention to her double-marginalization as a context in which to read her representation of female Jewishness. In "Friends," for example, Faith and Annie discuss different degrees of social suffering, a recurring theme in Paley's work, during a train ride back to New York after they have visited their friend, Selena, who later dies of cancer:

Well, some bad things have happened in my life, I said.

What? You were born a woman? Is that it?

[Annie] was, of course, mocking me this time, referring to an old discussion about feminism and Judaism. Actually, on the prism of isms, both of those do have to be looked at together once in a while (309).

The yoking of Judaism and feminism point to Paley's authorship. As a Jewish-American female writer, Paley competes in the literary marketplace with such contemporary Jewish-American male writers as Woody Allen, Malamud, Bellow, Allen Ginsberg, Roth, and Mordecai Richler,¹ all of whom participated in the writing of "strong masculine literature" (Marchant 609), and who have gained prominence within Jewish and mainstream circles, and have, increasingly, been applauded for their 'complete' representation of a

¹Although Richler is Canadian he has a large American readership. His texts rearticulate the modalities of his American counterparts. I am therefore including Richler in my discussion of canonical Jewish-(North)American male authors.

specific ethnic, or marginalized, or immigrant community.² Male Jewish writers have been, in other words, the authors of Jewish femaleness. Comedians such as Henny Youngman, for example, gained access and popularity in mainstream America at the expense of Jewish women, and further authorized the existing stereotyping of Jewish women as overbearing mothers and nagging wives--his most famous line being: "Take my wife... *please!*".

Jewish-American femaleness is further devalued by the Jewish-American male ideal, the *shiksa*. In Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, for example, the reader follows Duddy's quest for social power, which he visualizes as a leaving of the urban Jewish ghetto, and the equally oppressive Jewish family, in search of the *shiksa* who, metaphorically, represents mainstream America--penetrating the *shiksa* essentially symbolizes penetrating America³. Similarly, Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* depicts the Jewish male's social ascendance in relation to his desire for and use of the *shiksa*. Within such constructions Jewish femaleness is not desirable or sexual, but unpleasant, grotesque, and limited to a figuration of

²In "Two Ears, Three Lucks," Paley identifies the "masculine fiction" of the fifties as "traditional, avant-garde, or--later--Beat" (x). Ginsberg is primarily discussed as a Beat poet, but his poem "Kaddish" emphasizes his Jewishness. What distinguishes Ginsberg from other "masculine" Jewish writers is his openly gay lifestyle, which many traditionalists would rather ignore.

³Richler's use of misogyny is more complex. In his texts, all characters--female, male, Jewish, Gentile and "Other"--are equally condemned to grotesque characterizations. However, *Duddy Kravitz* offers a useful example of mid-twentieth century Jewish-(North)American male fiction.

the overbearing Jewish wife/mother⁴. As Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* illustrates, Alexander regards his older sister, and all Jewish girls, as mothers-to-be. He characterizes all Jewish-American mothers as follows:

What are they, after all, these Jewish women who raised us up as children?.... Only in America, Rabbi Golden, do these peasants, our mothers, get their hair dyed platinum at the age of sixty, and walk up and down Collins Avenue in Florida in pedalpushers and mink stoles--and with opinions on every subject under the sun. It isn't their fault they were given a gift like speech--look, if cows could talk, they would say things just as idiotic. Yes, yes, maybe that's the solution then: think of them as cows, who have been given the twin miracles

⁴The representation of Jewish male desire of the *shiksa* is also evident in texts written by non-Jews. In Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Simon Rosedale's desire for Lily Bart represents his desire to enter the mainstream elite. The resistance of intermarriage is marked by Lily's aversion to Rosedale, characterized by her aversion to his sex and "race," and her desire to escape the entrapment of marriage. Similar scenarios appear in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Henry James' *The Tragic Muse*. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot offers Myrah Cohen as a 'proper' alternative to the Victorian English stereotype of the "Jewess" as exotic and sexual--in Eliot's text the independent, anti-maternal artist, Daniel's mother, an actress, who, like many women in the theatre, is associated with prostitution. Myrah is an attractive, moral, domestic and submissive Jewish female who values her Jewishness in spite of the inherent sexism in (orthodox) Judaism. In 'puritanical' America, it is the Jewish male, rather than the Jewish female, who has been traditionally associated with the arts, particularly Hollywood, although female Jewish presences are gaining prominence. This may point to the female stereotypes naturalized in film, advertising, and television, which coincide with descriptions of the idealized *shiksa*. And yet, the butt of the joke in Fran Drescher's *The Nanny* is C.C., the *shiksa*. The show emphasizes the Jewish female, Fran, as the sexual, intelligent--in her Queens' vulgar simplicity--and desirable woman. *Entertainment Weekly* critic Owen Gleiberman has criticized *The Nanny* as misogynist in its treatment of C.C. However, I would emphasize that Drescher's portrayal of the *shiksa* should be read as reactionary to the ideal set forth by Jewish males.

of speech and mah-jongg. Why not be charitable in one's thinking, right, Doctor? (109-110).

The authorization of Jewish misogyny functions to silence Jewish women's voices within the Jewish community and the mainstream. Cheung draws from Donald C. Goellnicht's argument and states that this is symptomatic of the immigrant experience in which the male immigrants are the ones who have to "interact with white society, which often demand[s] deference from them and spurn[s] their foreignness;" women, in contrast, are assigned the task of maintaining and transmitting the 'foreign' culture to the children within the "relatively secure and secluded environment of home and ethnic community" (10). The male immigrant's interpretation of the female immigrant's role in America, as representative of the 'foreignness' that threatens the American Dream, offers an insight into Jewish-American maleness but leaves the task of 'accurately' representing Jewish femaleness, and the invisible domestic sphere, to the Jewish-American female writer.

Paley's representation of female Jewishness offers a necessary counterpoint to the characterizations of femaleness and Jewishness that appear in "strong masculine [Jewish] fiction" (Marchant 609). Her domestic ethnic sphere articulates the immigrant world that Duddy Kravitz and Alexander Portnoy left behind, in the 'authentic' lens offered by a writer who is an 'insider'. As Victoria Aarons points out, "Paley's characters are unremarkable, ordinary people who view the world from their well-defined neighbourhoods and communities," from such places as their "kitchens and old-age homes" particularly ("Talking" 21). In Paley's representation of

Jewish domesticity, the mother, unlike the self-centred son, does not have the desire, or the opportunity, to abandon her responsibilities in search of social, sexual and economic freedoms. Judith Arcana points out that Paley's characterization of motherhood calls attention to the difference between the "patriarchal institution of motherhood" and the mother's "own lived experience" (196):

Many of Grace Paley's stories simply include motherhood as a fact of life... which is neither played for laughs nor wrung with sentimentality. Such simple inclusion, ordinary as it may seem, is in fact unusual in a male-centered literary world, where mothering generally is presented in terms of romanticized service and hostile blame, or simply erased (197).

Critics such as Arcana and Aarons would seem to suggest that Paley's authority, as representative of the 'authentic' Jewish-immigrant urban sphere, is dependent on her own lived experiences as a woman, a mother, and a Jew. However, as Marianne DeKoven points out, "Paley's concern is not mimesis or verisimilitude, but rather the problem of creating a literary form which does not strike one as artificial" (217). In striving to represent a credible version of the ethnic domestic sphere and of Jewish femaleness, Paley challenges the figures produced by her male contemporaries, but equally participates in a reconstructing of the figure of the exalted and glorified Jewish male in order to allegorically critique the authority of Jewish-American male fiction.

In "The Immigrant Story," Paley's satirical characterization of Jack is "reminiscent of Bellow, Roth's and Mailer's" male characters who depict

"women as bitches" (Kamel 34). Jack's anger, anxiety, and self-reflexive paralysis derive from a childhood trauma--his having woken up one night to see his father asleep in the crib (238). Not surprisingly, Jack interprets this scene to be an example of his mother's dominance over his father, her rejection of his desire "to fuck her":

She was trying to make him feel guilty. Where were his balls?
... I see it all very gray. My mother approaches the crib.
Shmul, she says, get up. Run down to the corner and get me
half a pound of pot cheese. Then run over the drugstore and
get a few ounces cod-liver oil. My father, scrunched like an
old gray fetus, looks up and smiles smiles smiles at the
bitch (239).

Unlike the Jewish-American male text, Paley's story offers a "sturdy American Jewess" (Mandel 85) with "a no-nonsense authoritative voice" (Kamel 30-1), Faith, to counter Jack's interpretation. Faith responds to Jack, first with the comment that "most people like their husbands to do that" (239), then with a challenge to Jack's authority: "How do *you* know what was going on?... You were five years old" (239). As Rose Kamel points out, unlike "American men writers obsessively reiterating the myth that sexual contests for power can be traced to women's bitchery if not to original sin, Paley's fury is a response to men's egocentric lack of imagination and to their personal/political destructiveness of life" (37). Paley articulates the possibility of different sensible and rational interpretations by voicing Faith's undermining voice, which she uses to offer a pragmatic interpretation of Jack's memory:

Any dope who's had a normal life could tell you. Anyone whose head hasn't been fermenting with the compost of ten years of gluttonous analysis. Anyone could tell you.... The reason your father was sleeping in the crib was that you and your sister who usually slept in the crib had scarlet fever and needed the decent beds and more room to sweat, come to a fever crisis, and either get well or die (239).

Faith counters Jack's 'authority' as the typical, self-loathing American Jew, whose perception of his mother's domestic dominance--her apparent castration of her husband--and obsession over his own 'marked' (ritually circumcised) penis, all conspire to threaten his masculinity. In her text, Paley responds ironically to the "Jewish mother" of a Roth or Richler, offering instead a revisionist counter-representation.

In "The Contest," Paley further satirizes the Jewish male figure, as represented by her fictive storyteller, Freddy Sims, who, in considering himself to have been 'used' by Dotty Wasserman, articulates characteristics that seem particular to American-Jewish male consciousness. He states:

I was very good to [Dotty]. And to all the love she gave me, I responded. And I kept all our appointments and called her on Fridays to remind her about Saturday, and when I had money I bought her flowers and once earrings and once a black brassière I saw advertised in the paper with some cleverly stitched windows for ventilation. I still have it. She never dared take it home.

But I will not be eaten by any woman (45-6).

Not surprisingly, Freddy's construction of Dotty is as an emblematic "Jewish mother". In his "[t]his is your *last* chance" (49) letter to Dotty, Freddy writes: "I realize that you were motivated by the hideous examples of your mother and all the mothers before her. You were, in a word, a prostitute" (49). Freddy's attack reflects his own problems with his mother:

My poor old mother died with a sizeable chunk of me stuck in her gullet. I was in the army at the time, but I understand her last words were: "Introduce Freddy to Eleanor Farbstein." Consider the nerve of that woman... me, her prize possession and the best piece of meat in the freezer of her heart, she left to Ellen Farbstein (46).

Freddy's misogyny derives from his inability to grapple with his own Jewishness. He initially resists entering the contest--"Jews in the News," sponsored by *Morgenlicht*, an Yiddish newspaper (44)--which consists of an identifying of a partial photograph of a "newsworthy Jew" with the aid of two descriptions, or "a list of exaggerated attributes" (45). The first prize is "five thousand dollars and a trip to Israel. Also on return two days each in the three largest European capitals in the Free West" (44). The only stipulation, which Freddy does not know about but presumes later that Dotty did, is that the winners must be married in order to take the trip (47). Freddy's attitude towards the contest is not unlike his attitude towards Dotty and marriage: "A hundred Jews in the news?... What a tolerant country!... What's the idea, though? To uncover the ones that've been passing?" (44). Dotty argues that, "[t]hey're just proud of themselves, and they want to make Jews everywhere proud of their contribution to this

country. Aren't you proud?" (44). Interestingly enough, both Freddy and Dotty, who are Jewish, refer to Jews as *them*. The immigrant Jewish community establishes institutions, such as the newspaper *Morgenlicht*, which work to preserve the 'old' language and traditions and financially support its members. But Freddy's response points to an 'immigrant' paradox: the making visible of a Jewish immigrant community in America calls attention to its 'foreignness,' yet that very making of visibility can itself naturalize. The fear that visibility 'marks' and renders Jews vulnerable is accentuated in Freddy's attitude to the contest:

I would sometimes discover a three-quarter view of a newsworthy Jew or a full view of a half Jew. The fraction did not interfere with the rules. They were glad to extract *him* and be proud.... [It] sometimes took as much as an hour to attach a real name.... When it took that long I couldn't help muttering, "Well, we've uncovered another one. Put *him* on the list for Van 2" (45, my emphasis).⁵

Although Paley satirizes Freddy's perspective, particularly in his treatment of women, she voices, through him, some 'immigrant' concerns that demand examination. Freddy questions the ethnic need to "extract" a "fraction" of a Jew in order to authorize Jewishness in an American context--a need that suggests that ethnicity, however fractioned, is inescapable.⁶ While the

⁵Note that all the "newsworthy Jews" in the contest are male.

⁶Such preoccupations with "fractions" and percentages of race and ethnicity are based on historical contexts: in Nazi Germany Jewishness was measured in fractions and percentages. Similarly, in early twentieth-century America, to be considered 'white' a person had to be at most 1/32 black, despite the fact that it was impossible to tell from physical evidence.

contest provides Jews and Americans with recognizable success stories that emphasize the positive "contributions" of male Jews in America, the casual reference to the Holocaust highlights both the Jewish fear of scapegoating and the assimilated Jews' construction of visible Jews as *them*, as 'foreigners'. Yet, if ethnicity is inescapable, the 'immigrant' writer, even if 'passing' for white, will eventually confront her or his otherness or cultural perceptions that her or his sameness is mere debased imitation.

The female 'immigrant' writer strives to attain visible authority through her ethnic and sexual *invisibility*. However, as a visible ethnic female writer, Paley draws from her Jewishness and femaleness to construct her authority. In satirizing the authority of Jewish-American male texts, Paley portrays idealized Jewish-American female characters who, according to Arcana, can "eschew the patriarchally-conceived traps of masochistic martyrdom and idealized mother-love. They even enjoy sex and manage to take their sexual pleasure without guilt and without bringing shame to their children" (200). For Paley, a redressing of the myopic, Jewish male view of Jewish motherhood results in a re-writing of female Jewishness--a re-writing that is most notable in *The Little Disturbances of Man*. In "Goodbye and Good Luck," Paley offers the character of Aunt Rose as a model of Jewish-*American* femaleness. A self-reliant, independent, strong female character, Rose instructs her shy niece, Lillie, using her life as an example of alterity:

I put this in to show you your fat old aunt was not crazy out of loneliness. In those noisy years I had friends among interesting people who admired me for reasons of youth and

that I was a first-class listener.

The actresses--Raisel, Marya, Esther Leopold--were only interested in tomorrow. After them was the rich men, producers, the whole garment center; their past is a pincushion, future the eye of a needle (7).

Paley offers a character who, although she accentuates her own femaleness and Jewishness, transcends the traditional immigrant roles and traps assigned to ethnic femininity. While the end of the story suggests that Paley is conforming to traditional 'happy ending' norms--Rose marries--her story emphasizes alternate 'American' lifestyles available to the Jewish-American woman. Working as a ticket-seller at the Russian Art Theatre on Second Avenue, "where they played only the best Yiddish plays," Rose simultaneously asserts her independence and her place within the Jewish immigrant community--her job allows her to attend rehearsals and provides her mother with a free ticket once a week (4). Rose also establishes her identity as a feminine but shrewd woman who has the ability to deal with "a certain type" of man, including her employer; she warns him, "don't be fresh, Mr. Krimberg, and we'll make a good bargain" (4). Rose's desire for "a different way of living" (6) is, in part, a recognition of the trap that ensnared her own mother:

[P]oor Mama... it is true she got more of an idea of life than me. She married who she didn't like, a sick man, his spirit already swallowed up by God. He never washed. He had an unhappy smell. His teeth fell out, his hair disappeared, he got smaller, shrivelled up little by little, till goodbye and good luck he was

gone and only came to Mama's mind when she went to the mailbox under the stairs to get the electric bill (6).

Paley's depiction of Rose's circumstances effectively demonstrates that her idealized choice to "live for love" (6) is not met without family resistance and social consequences. Her affair with Vlashkin, a reputable Yiddish actor, places her in the role of mistress, to which other men "[n]o doubt observing the success of Vlashkin... thought, Aha, open sesame" (7). Yet, despite these circumstances, Rose maintains her endorsement of an alternate lifestyle, even after she ends her affair with Vlashkin, after realizing that he has responsibilities as a husband and father. Her assertion, "I am no home breaker," is grounded on the empathy she feels for Vlashkin's wife: "[p]oor woman, she did not know I was on the same stage with her. The poison I was to her role, she did not know" (8). Rose insists that marriage is a trap that occasions female suffering.

Rose's sexual independence and refusal to conform to the traditional lifestyle stipulated by the Russian-Jewish immigrant community is further marked by her refusal to marry any of the Jewish men to whom she is 'introduced' by her mother and sister, attempting to salvage the remains of Rose's reputation. Paley's characterization of Rose as an "urbanite" (Eckstein 138) who "live[s] for love" ("Goodbye" 6) and prizes her intellect, which, when combined with her willing sexual participation portrays her social role as something other than a 'kosher' reproductive apparatus, reflects Paley's endorsement of an alternative construct of Jewish femaleness. Yet, Paley also calls attention to the social and literary limitations of a character who recognizes her own invisibility in both the

Jewish immigrant community and in the broader context of America. She states: "Vlashkin went to Europe and toured a few seasons.... When he came back he wrote a book you could get from the library even today, *The Jewish Actor Abroad*. If someday you're interested enough in my lonesome years, you could read it.... No, no, I am not mentioned. After all, who am I?" (9). In offering Vlashkin's text, which excludes Rose's experiences, as an insight into Rose's (past) life, Paley is clearly addressing ironically the issue that Jewish women's lives are at the mercy of the Jewish male writers. Their insignificant lives can be found, apparently, between the lines of Jewish men's texts or past the "Jewish mother" stereotypes. Paley implicitly provides a story of symbolic redress, the recovered lost experiences of at least one alternate construction of Jewish femaleness.

The character of Rose is also important for her response to Zionism--to Ruben's proposal that she enter "a big new free happy unusual life" with him on the sands of Palestine (8). When Ruben asserts, for example, that "[w]e need strong women like you, mothers and farmers" (8), Rose replies: "You don't fool me, Ruben, what you need is dray horses. But for that you need more money... go and multiply" (8). For Rose, Zionism, like biblical Judaism, is an ensnaring trap for women; the life of an agricultural pioneer in the desert frontier is only a disguised form of civilized colonialism which authorizes the exploitation of her physical attributes. Rose's reaction to Ruben's (male) Zionist ideology provides an insight into a similar passage in "The Used-Boy Raisers," which first introduces Faith as a Jewish woman who unwillingly mediates the domestic argument between her ex- and present non-Jewish husbands. Their discussion of the role of the Church

in education shifts to a discussion of religious traditions as cultural markers. Faith's husband asks: "Faith, can you ever forget your old grandfather intoning Kaddish? It will sound in your ears forever" (84). Before Faith's sarcastic remark that she "rarely express[es]... [her] opinion on any serious matter but only live[s] out [her] destiny, which is to be, until [her] expiration date, laughingly the servant of man" (85), she thinks about her husband's question. "[F]urious" at being "drawn into [his] conflict" (84), she nevertheless has a contradictory response:

Kaddish? What do I know about Kaddish. Who's dead?... I believe in the Diaspora, not only as a fact but as a tenet. I'm against Israel on technical grounds. I'm very disappointed that they decided to become a nation in my lifetime. I believe in the Diaspora. After all, they *are* the chosen people.... But once they're huddled in one little corner of a desert, they're like anyone else: Frenchies, Italians, temporal nationalities. Jews have one hope only--to remain a remnant in the basement of world affairs--...a splinter in the toe of civilizations, a victim to aggravate the conscience... I hear they don't even look like Jews anymore. A bunch of dirt farmers with no time to read... they aren't meant for geographies but for history. They are not supposed to take up space but to continue in time (84-85).

Faith's reaction establishes Jewish identity as constituted primarily in the urban diaspora and in the intellectual domain. As a territory-less nation, Jews are idealized, by Paley, in that they do not participate in colonial or national oppression. As a Diaspora they further exemplify the idealized

vision of a world without borders. For critics like Arcana and Bonnie Lyons who read Faith as essentially Paley's "alter ego" (Lyons 28), and critics like Sanford Pinsker, Minako Baba, Kamel, Mandel and Adam Meyer, who maintain that the "line separating Grace Paley's life experiences and Faith Darwin's fictional ones is a thin one" (Pinsker 700), this passage is problematic. As Lyons notes: "Faith valorizes the Jews as having a special moral role and a unique homeland in history rather than in geography" (29). But her distance from them--and she "refers to Jews as 'they' not 'we'"--problematizes Faith's identity: "[w]hether and how Faith identifies herself as a Jew is not clear" (Lyons 28). Faith's response posits America, rather than Israel, as the 'promised land'. The urban land of opportunity is implicitly contrasted with the backward life of the arid desert. In this context, Paley establishes herself as an *American*, rather than as a *Jewish*, writer, and emphasizes her interest in the historical present rather than in the biblical past. Both Rose's and Faith's objections to a Jewish State should be read in tandem. Paley challenges the Zionist discourse as yet another subjugation of female Jewishness, but more importantly, she chooses America as the urban landscape in which the marginalized Jewish female can attain the Authority Dream.

Gloria L. Cronin celebrates Paley's "feminine" form (148) as "a kind of late-twentieth century urban 'Twilight Zone' literature [that] provides a series of 'melodramas of beset womanhood' located out on the cutting edge of a sexual, racial and economic combat zone--a feminized, postmodern domestic wasteland" (140). Paley illustrates, for Cronin, "the female writer's indictment of the patriarchal linearity of the male-dominated

literary tradition" (148), acclaiming Paley's "testifying voice" as "ultimately disrupt[ing] the progress of a historicist linear history," in that Paley's representation of historical events such as "the Depression, the Holocaust, nuclear devastation, and the effects of environmental decay are first articulated through vigorous ethical protest and then pragmatically distanced obliquely by the interposition of the subjective temporalities of the world of domestic relationships" (149). However, I would argue that Paley's stories also illustrate a chronological linear moment in American social history that, albeit implicitly, marks the simultaneous economical ascendance and 'whitification' of Jews, and, in particular, the social ascendance of 'white' women. Paley's first collection, *The Little Disturbances of Man*, published in 1959, articulates the voices of Paley's childhood-immigrant environment, but the sporadic references to the Holocaust, "the epidemics of '40, '41" in which people "died of Jewishness" ("Monkey" 103), situate her writing as post-Depression and post-war. Social changes filter through Paley's second and third collections, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (1974) and *Later That Same Day* (1985)--changes that correspond to such social and economic issues of the sixties and seventies as the Vietnam war, the sexual revolution, the Cultural Revolution, and the dialogue between black and white America; in contrast, the first volume establishes a dialogue between the various European immigrant minorities, namely Jews, Italians and Irish. As "The Long Distance Runner" illustrates, the 'old' European-immigrant neighbourhoods are repopulated by 'new' immigrant and minority groups such as blacks and hispanics, who come in to replace the upwardly-mobile European

immigrants. If each collection registers the impact of contemporary social history, *The Collected Stories* offers a mapping of almost forty years of American Jewishness, addressing the social position of the Jewish female immigrant who must first mediate between her cultural heritage and mainstream America, and then between her own double-marginalization and that of the 'new' immigrants and minorities⁷.

In various interviews and in the introduction to *The Collected Stories*, Paley confronts the problematic of female Jewish authorship. She draws from her own experiences as a female writer in the fifties, who had to make a self-conscious choice between two options: either to mimic her celebrated male contemporaries and thus potentially devalue her own authority, or to write against the mainstream literature and thus suffer potential disregard. Paley states that the "heavy, strong masculine literature" of the fifties "made women feel, or it made [her] feel, that what [she] really wanted to write about was so trivial. Who could possibly be interested in this kind of kitchen life?" (Marchant 609). Paley situates her textual representation of the invisible domestic urban ethnic sphere as rooted in the personal: "since I had been writing poetry without publishing it, I thought I could just as soon write fiction without publishing it" (Marchant 609). Paley's emphasis on the personal and the domestic naturalizes her authority as a storyteller: "I was beginning to suffer the storyteller's pain: Listen! I *have* to tell you something!" ("Two Ears" ix).

⁷I am not suggesting here that African-Americans are immigrants, although, by the sixties, there was a coherent effort by African American leaders to articulate black Americans as African immigrants who had been robbed of their cultural heritage.

Paley's urgency derives from her need to re-write and authorize actual female Jewish experiences, both within 'Jewish' and 'American' contexts; but she appears to be unconcerned with the business of writing, the 'masculine' domain of publishing, calling attention to her "luck" as a woman who, through personal friendships, was "visited" with a publishing contract for her first collection of short stories ("Two Ears" x). Paradoxically, however, Paley also points to her social role as a writer who is struggling to get published, which allows her to highlight her own marginalized position in attempting to "add to the balance of human experience" ("Of Poetry" 250). For Paley, then, writing *and* publishing are self-conscious political acts. Characterized by Pinsky as "a fiercely political animal" (696), Paley responds that "[all] of art is political" (Marchant 610). As a respectable literary authority, Paley can publish and voice her political agendas, yet her continued authority is nevertheless dependent on her reception as an author. As she points out:

[P]eople think I just send out a story and poof! it's published. That's not true at all. The last two or three stories of my last book were published in *Mother Jones*.... I had sent them everywhere. They just came back and that happens to me a lot. Another thing that happens is that people will anthologize certain stories all the time. I wouldn't say they're totally unpolitical, but they won't anthologize certain stories of mine. I meet people who think the only story I ever wrote was 'Goodbye and Good Luck'.... I just had a very short piece in *Seven Days* [a small-circulation magazine about politics and

human rights]. I had been asked by *The New York Times* for an Op-Ed piece, so I sent it to them. I also sent it to *The New Yorker* and *The Village Voice*. I thought it would be absolutely right each time. The piece is very political. On the other hand, it's very simple. I can't even say that *The Voice* didn't print it for political reasons. They didn't know if it was fiction or nonfiction. Neither did I, so what can I say? ("We don't say" 13-4).

Paley's comments illustrate the necessity of our examining the manner in which literary institutions participate in her textual construction of authorship. The fact that Paley's name does not guarantee her publication in reputable, established publications, such as *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Village Voice*, suggests that she lacks a certain recognizable authority.

Despite the difficulty of publishing 'feminine' or 'political' pieces-- particularly pieces that defy such categorizations as 'fiction'--Paley's use of storytelling points to her use of a literary form that lends itself to 'feminine,' 'Jewish,' and 'political' themes. As Paley's texts illustrate, storytelling proves to be a narrative strategy that combats the existing canonized Jewish male texts. As a short fiction writer, Paley represents herself as a storyteller, a literary role that points to the yoking of her Jewishness and her femaleness. Storytelling has been defended by feminists, Natives, and aboriginal peoples who seek to legitimize oral traditions as important artistic forms of expression and cultural communication which patriarchal, text-centred literary institutions have

devalued. Aarons argues that, "for all subservient, peripheral, or marginalized groups (women and Jews, in the case of Paley)," the telling of stories becomes an important ritual by which the "right to and need for a legitimate identity" is formed through talk and transmitted through storytelling ("Talking" 25). Aarons locates Paley's storytelling as part of her Jewish heritage:

We are continually reminded when reading Paley's fiction of the oral storytelling tradition at the heart of Judaism, a tradition of telling stories both of a religious and secular nature that serves to reinforce and codify axiomatic law, ritual, and community. This tradition is preserved in Paley's works: the oral qualities of the dialogues and monologues that characterize her narratives, suggest gesticulation and mannerism, the illusion of intimacy not only among the characters engaged in the discourse but a shared privacy between character and author, character and reader. We are able to visualize her characters because we can imagine them speaking. There is very little, if any, description or direct authorial intervention in the construction of her narratives. Instead, her stories *are* conversations ("Talking" 30).

Paley's 'orality' is, however, translated into written language; her "conversations" are colloquial, often accented, narratives. As a storyteller, Paley cultivates the illusion of a forfeiting of her literary authority through a representation of various characters as actual storytellers--they are narrators who appear to author their own 'oral' texts, who do not, as Aarons

points out, "need a narrator to tell their stories" ("Talking" 22). As oral storytellers, the various characters who "tell" their stories appear to supplant any writerly authority, any actual "author". However, as "Debts" and "A Conversation With My Father" illustrate, there are a few textual moments in which an authorial presence filters through an unnamed character, who, as a writer with specific political and authorial concerns, resonates as Paley's textual self-representation. In maintaining the appearance of almost transparent authorship in the majority of her stories, Paley provides an ironic counterpoint to and revision of her male contemporaries: she enacts invisibility in the authorial mode--where writers like Roth are their most self-consciously visible--and accentuates high visibility in the female characters' storyteller mode, which is a mode wholly invisible in male-authored texts. She also comments implicitly that, for all that male Jewish writers insist that women uphold traditions in the domestic sphere, the latter's silence in self-styled "Jewish" texts suggests that they are somehow the most integrated or assimilated precisely because they have so little definable presence. But as Paley points out, such silence does not imply assimilation; it implies only that male Jewish writers, in their slavish panting after *shiksas*, simply fail to recognize the locus of Jewish female authority--or, better, that they avoid it by not representing the storytelling that goes on within the domestic frames of apartments and kitchens. Paley allies herself with the authority that she grants to her female storytellers, never losing her consciousness that she is writing as a

woman and offering the opportunity to others to read as women.⁸

Paley suggests that her readers are welcome to participate in authorship themselves: "I have a lot of the same characters, so anybody who wants can make a novel out of it in their heads" (Marchant 613). And, a reading of *The Collected Stories* as metafiction does serve to unveil Paley's authorial voice. The recurring characters function to re-create an ethnic urban community constituted by different ethnic and sexual voices, each representing diverse social and political positions. As Ronald Schleifer observes, Paley's 'conversations' often call for "interpretation rather than providing explanation" (34). In shying away from didactic "explanations," and in promoting the reader and the characters as "authors," Paley achieves a transgressive freedom that allows her to voice controversial social issues, such as the construction of a "Jewish Nation" (the State of Israel), without running the risk of losing her authority, since she cannot lose what she does not appear to have.

In rewriting female Jewishness, Paley critiques Jewish patriarchal institutions and situates her Jewishness in a secular milieu. Lyons asserts that, although many of Paley's characters are not Jewish, and many of her stories do not "deal with particularly Jewish issues or experience... Jewishness is central to [Paley's] work and... [a] tracing [of] its role"

⁸My study does not utilize "reader-response" theories, but I will point out that at least one of Paley's critics, Adam Meyer, resists reading as a woman and identifies with a male character, Mr. Zagrowsky, a sexist and racist man who adopts his daughter's child (whose father is black). Meyer reads Paley's story as endorsing Zagrowsky's authority because of his action. However, I would argue that this story cannot be overly simplified, or 'resolved,' but instead indicates Paley's ironic articulation of controversial issues.

enables the reader to understand her *oeuvre*, and recognize her authorial voice (26). It is Lyons' contention that Jewishness is represented by Paley's choice of Yiddish accent, words, syntax, "and a whole style of ironic phrasing" (26), which is illustrated in "Goodbye and Good Luck." Rose refers to Yonkel Gurstein, one of the Jewish men whom her mother and sister introduce her to, as "a regular sport, dressed to kill, with such an excitable nature. In those days... the youngest girls wore undergarments like Battle Creek, Michigan. To him it was a matter of seconds. Where did he practice, a Jewish boy? Nowadays I suppose it is easier, Lillie? My goodness, I ain't asking you nothing--touchy, touchy" (8-9). Paley concedes that she writes with an Yiddish accent (Lidoff 5), which situates some of her writing as recognizably "Jewish." Lyons argues that Paley's work denotes a thematic context that is "deeply grounded in American Jewish experience," which is furthered in some stories by characters' comments on Judaism or Jewishness, and, most significantly, in Paley's use of *Yiddishkeit* (27):

The world view of *Yiddishkeit* and Yiddish literature is pervasively social, oriented toward the group rather than any one soul. Pervading Yiddish culture and literature is a questioning, in fact an underplaying of conventional heroism, even a distinctly antiheroic bias... and a powerless victim's sense of how what passes for heroic can be egotistical, narcissistic, and brutal.... *Dos kleine menshele*, the little person, with all *his* imperfections and foibles, is accepted and embraced. Likewise, a wide range of human emotions, including

ordinary, nonadmirable feelings, is explored.... One of the chief inheritances from *Yiddishkeit* is the rich complicated ethic embodied in the code of *menshlikeit*, which has been defined [by Irving Howe] as "a readiness to live for ideals beyond the clamor of self, a sense of plebian fraternity, an ability to forge a community of moral order even while remaining subject to a society of social disorder" (Lyons 31).

Lyons notes that Paley's work, unlike that of her Jewish-American contemporaries, insists that "the little person is often, although not always, female" (31). Aarons agrees with Lyons' assertion that Paley's representation of the "ordinary" is a result of "an ideology of Jewish character" ("Talking" 22), and situates Paley in the tradition of "late nineteenth-century/early twentieth-century Eastern European Yiddish writers such as Sholom Aleichem,... Issac Bashèvis Singer [*sic*] and Tillie Olsen" ("A Perfect" 39).

Paley's writing is also marked by her critique of religion. In "The Loudest Voice" and "In Time Which Made a Monkey of Us All," Paley demystifies the religious family unit and questions the duplicity of seemingly 'moral' people. In the former story, she states that the rabbi's wife's objection to the Jewish children's participation in a school's Christmas play is ignored since "[u]nder the narrow sky of God's great wisdom she wore a strawberry-blond wig" ("Loudest" 37). Similarly, "In Time" challenges the moral stigma attached to the rabbi's family by informing the reader that Shmul, the rabbi's son, was "a Yankee in a skullcap" who "played poker day and night under the stairs" ("In Time"

100)⁹. Although Paley does not attack the rabbi himself, in "At That Time, or History of a Joke" Paley re-writes Judeo-Christian cosmology: "At that time most people were willing to donate organs. Abuses were expected. In fact there was a young woman whose uterus was hysterically ripped from her by a passing gynaecologist" (316). The woman receives a uterus transplant, which contains a black fetus, "and behold, without conceiving, a virgin has born a son" (316), who we later discover "WAS a Girl... A virgin born of a virgin" (317). Paley's utopian story is not, however, 'told' without irony: "[t]hroughout the world, people smiled. By that time, sexism and racism had no public life, though they were still sometimes practiced by adults at home" (317). Paley's mythic story specifically targets "those particular discontented Jews" who deny the 'miraculous' birth:

"Wonderful! So? Another tendency heard from! So it's a girl! Praise to the most Highess! But the fact is, we need another virgin birth like our blessed dead want cupping by ancient holistic practitioners."

And so they continued as female and male, descending and undescending, workers in the muddy basement of history, to which, this very day, the poor return when requiring a cheap but stunning garment for a wedding, birth, or funeral (318).

⁹Kamel notes that, "Paley slyly undercuts the accolades given to immigrant men's biographies such as Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*. Shmul Klein... is given bogus footnotes when he records his memoirs of the escapade years later: *Yankee in a Skull Cap. My Day and Night in the East Bronx* and *The Moment of Pff: An Urban Boyhood*, both published by Mitzvah Press" (48).

Paley challenges the patriarchal religious institution's racism and sexism, but her attack on religion also corresponds to her endorsement of ethnic assimilation. The concluding image of the non-assimilated Jews depicts a backward people whose social importance and political contributions are only symbolic and historical. Their present, informed by their closed-minded stubbornness, condemns them to a banal and impoverished industrial existence. Paley distances herself from these 'backward' Jews, and from all patriarchal institutions, including Christianity. In proposing to replace the immaculate conception with a scientifically engineered virgin birth, and the figure of Christ with that of a black girl, "Paley nails Jew and Christian alike" (Cronin 143). Paley's anti-religiousness challenges resistance to cultural hybridity and promotes an American ideal of universal humanhood, celebrating finally a universalizing feminist discourse which values ethnic assimilation. According to her, every woman "writing in these years has had to swim in that feminist wave. No matter what she thinks of it, even if she bravely swims against it, she has been supported by it" ("Two Ears" xi).

Paley's endorsement of cultural assimilation and ethnic hybridity first appears in "The Loudest Voice". The inclusion and participation of Jewish children in their school's Christmas play occasions a debate in the Jewish immigrant homes. The fictional storyteller, Shirley Abramowitz, is awarded a significant role because of her loud voice, but her mother, as the keeper and transmitter of the 'old' culture, voices her concern: "If we came to a new country a long time ago to run away from tyrants, and instead we fall into a creeping pogrom, that our children learn a lot of lies, so what's

the joke?" (36). Mrs. Klieg also protests: "Not my boy!... I said to him no. The answer is no. When I say no! I mean no!" (37). However, Mr. Abramowitz asserts:

You're in America!.... In Palestine the Arabs would be eating you alive. Europe you had pogroms. Argentina is full of Indians. Here you got Christmas... (36). What's the harm? After all, history teaches everyone. We learn from reading this is a holiday from pagan times also, candles, lights, even Hanukkah. So we learn it's not altogether Christian. So if they think it's a private holiday, they're only ignorant, not patriotic. What belongs to history belongs to all *men*. You want to go back to the Middle Ages? Is it better to shave your head with a second-hand razor? Does it hurt Shirley to learn to speak up? It does not. So maybe someday she won't live between the kitchen and the shop (37-38 my emphasis).

Mr. Abramowitz's comments illustrate the necessity of the community's participating in America outside the immigrant ghetto, and views that education, even Christian, is non-religious history that can combat the ignorance that fuels racism, including the 'immigrant' groups' own racism toward American culture. But his sentiments, like Marty's father and Mr. Sauerfeld's, are also pragmatic. Their pride in their children's having "very important part[s]" (37) marks their acknowledgement that, in America, success is dependent on assimilation.

Paley's story does not perpetuate the conflict between male and female, 'new' and 'old,' binaries, but implicitly calls attention to the 'voice'

of the immigrant writer. At the end of the play, Mrs. Kornbluh muses over the fact that the Christian children "got very small parts or no part at all," which she considers to be in "very bad taste" considering that "it's their religion" (40). It is Shirley's mother who asserts that the Christian children have "very small voices; after all, why should they holler? The English language they know from the beginning by heart. They're blond like angels. You think it's so important they should get in the play? Christmas... the whole piece of goods... they own it" (40). Paley's story illustrates that the 'immigrant' writer must have a loud voice. As Kamel points out, "Mr. Abramowitz [and, I would add, Mrs. Abramowitz,] understands that a minority child has to yell louder in order to be heard in the promised land" (32). Paley purposely yokes ethnicity and femaleness to suggest that Shirley must have the loudest voice because of her Jewishness *and* her femaleness. Shirley's assertion--"I expected to be heard. My voice was certainly the loudest" (40)--emphasizes the self-assurance that a female 'immigrant' writer must develop in order to succeed and partake of the authority with which others are effortlessly endowed. And yet, as Kamel points out, the "woman writer crafting a text in the context of traditional and patriarchal literary conventions needs a voice even louder than that of little Shirley Abramowitz proclaiming an intention to assimilate while retaining Jewish identity" (44). However, I would argue that Paley strives to redefine, rather than retain, her identity as a Jewish female writer.

Her defining of her Jewishness reflects the social ascendance of Jewish-Americans that marks Paley's second and third volumes. Whereas

the first volume emphasizes the decentralization of the Jewish immigrants and endorses assimilation into the mainstream, the second and third volumes focus on ethnic hybridity. In rewriting Judeo-Christian cosmology, Paley 'creates' an ethno-hybrid American race, produced from on going social interaction. "The Little Girl," for example, tells the story of a black rapist preying on white girls. Although the black storyteller critiques his friend's behaviour, he is complicit, in that he does not prevent the rapes and allows his friend to use his apartment. However, Paley's story also critiques the naive white girls who, new to the big city, think of themselves as worldly and, in their eagerness to demonstrate their non-racist politics, trust a complete stranger. In "The Long Distance Runner," Paley articulates the dialogue between black and white America and represents aspects of the dialogue between blacks and Jews. Historically, there are parallels between these two groups who are targeted by white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, and who share a history of social marginalization in America, as represented by their exclusion from country clubs, vacation resorts, and universities. Needless to say, however, there are significant differences in the oppression of blacks and Jews; Paley points, for example, to class differences in Faith's father's speech in "Faith in the Afternoon":

Learn from life. Mine. I was going to organize the help. You know, the guards, the elevator boys--colored fellows, mostly. You notice, they're coming up in the world. Regardless of hopes, I never expected it in my lifetime. The war, I suppose, did it. Faith, what do you think? The war made Jews Americans and Negroes Jews. Ha ha. What do you think of that

for an article? "The Negro: Outside In at Last" (158).

The Jews' social and economic ascendance positions them as the employers and condescending oppressors of the "hired help". This relationship is further explored in "The Long Distance Runner," where the old Jewish neighbourhood is re-inhabited by blacks, thereby implicitly suggesting that the 'old' Jewish immigrants have relocated to middle-class neighbourhoods. Adam Meyer points out that Faith's reaction to her father's comments, her unamused response--"[s]omeone wrote something like that" (158)--is "perhaps referring to (although inverting) Leslie Fiedler's observation that 'the American is becoming an imaginary Jew' while, 'at the same time, the Jew whom his Gentile fellow-citizens emulates may himself be in the process of becoming an imaginary Negro'" (Meyer 85). Paley's "ethnic conflation" (Meyer 85) is also articulated in "Dreamer in a Dead Language," which draws parallels between the social marginalization and assimilation of blacks and Jews, and in "Zagrowsky Tells," which recounts a story about a racist Jewish patriarch who accepts the responsibility for raising his grandson, a child born out of wedlock whose father is black.

The stories in the second and third volumes emphasize Paley's interest in representing and articulating dialogue between Jewish and black, hispanic, Latin-American and Chinese voices. However, whereas the first volume invites the reader, an outsider, into the 'inside' of the Eurocentric-ethnic domestic sphere, the second and third volumes posit the 'insiders'--Paley's recurring characters such as Faith--as 'outsiders,' as "enthusiastic, bungling tourists" (Eckstein 138). As a storyteller who transfers her authorship to her fictional narrators, Paley creates the

illusion that her fictional authoritative voices, and not her own, are 'speaking'. Insofar as she uses Yiddishisms, Yiddish and European accents, Paley, whose own marginality informs her writing, is a tangible presence who is often mistaken for one of her characters--Faith. In translating black and hispanic colloquialisms into a written language, Paley furthers the illusion that these 'new' voices are speaking for themselves. Paley asserts that the role of the artist is to illuminate "what has been hidden... to imagine the real": "men have got to imagine the lives of women, of all kinds of women.... White people have to imagine the reality, not the invention, but the reality of the lives of people of color. Imagine it, imagine that reality and understand it" ("Of Poetry" 250-51). Paradoxically, however, in representing the experiences and voices, the "lives of people of color," Paley engages in the colonial and gendered practice of appropriation. Paley, then, is situated in a position of authority, yet her ethnicity establishes her social role as simultaneously that of the oppressor and the oppressed. Jewishness, as a temporal ethnicity which is, nonetheless, marginalized by the mainstream elite, problematizes Paley's authority. Interestingly, Paley's redefinition of Jewishness in the second and third volumes explicitly articulates experiences of and reactions to the Holocaust, which she only refers to in passing in her first volume. This suggests, in effect, that Paley strives to authorize Jewishness as an ethnicity at a time when 'new' immigrants and minorities define Jewishness as 'white'. In her fluctuating marginalization, Paley further strives to construct textually her authorship within an American context. She situates her representation of 'new' immigrants and minorities in the context of an artistic sensibility that

seeks to promote social awareness. While Paley does not claim to speak for the Other, she does imagine the Other's social circumstances and articulates the Others' speech mannerisms, intonations, and colloquialisms, situating her storytelling in the context of the American myth, pointing not to the 'melting pot' but to hybridity.

As a 'melting pot,' America is constantly redefined by the constant waves of 'new' immigrant, or newly-heard marginalized voices. According to Paley, these groups, "coming into the United States will make various changes in the language" (127), making "new sounds and new fictions" (128). These "new people" speak "English, but they speak it in an entirely different way, with different inflections, different accents" which is conveyed in writing in "the rhythms, in the music of the language and in the word-placement" (Batt 128). American assimilation incorporates these "new rhythms" into the "old" language(s), thereby redefining and naturalizing ethnic markers as American and, in turn, redefining America as ethnic. As Paley's authorship illustrates, her authority derives from her use of and emphasis on her *difference* as a Jewish-American female writer; that difference is, however, marked in relation to American society. When 'new' differences identify Paley as 'white' and therefore part of the mainstream, thereby excluding her writing from ethnic discourses and institutions, Paley incorporates a universal approach that emphasizes her recognition of American alterity, reinforcing the notion that, as Michael Fisher points out, ethnicity is "something reinvented and reinterpreted"

(quoted in Cheung 14).¹⁰ For Paley, the promoting of American assimilation indicates, as Aarons suggests, that "the posture of the 'assimilated American' is, like all stories, self-invented" ("Talking" 30).

¹⁰As I mentioned in the Introduction, Jewishness is no longer considered to be an 'ethnicity' or a 'race'. Palumbo-Liu's *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions* locates ethnicity (in America) as African-Asian-, Chicano, Indian-, and Caribbean identities.

Chapter Two: Cynthia Ozick

"The Moral of the Story:

the 'Portrait of the Artist' as Female Jewish-American Prophet"

The "written tradition of Jewish storytelling" (Aarons "A Perfect" 39) allows for different representations of 'Jewish' styles, themes and voices. Paley's storytelling, for example, utilizes a more 'transparent' voice that is given over to myriad voices--voices that articulate the concept of *Yiddishkeit* in the context of a largely unrepresented female-immigrant domestic sphere. Paley's self-conscious storytelling style emerges, Paley tells us, in response to the "strong [Jewish] masculine fiction" (Marchant 609) of the 1950s. But it also emerges from, and in response to, more 'traditional' Jewish storytelling by such Yiddish male writers as Sholem Aleichem who, for example, addresses such 'Jewish' concerns as 'tradition' and the 'everyday' life of the insular--male-centred--Jewish community.¹ Like Paley, Ozick's "portrait of the artist as a ... [Jewish] woman" characterizes her as "a storyteller" (Kauvar xiii). Unlike Paley, however, Ozick's stories often resemble those of her male counterparts; her stories concern themselves with patriarchal conventions, with male protagonists and 'masculine' (Jewish) themes.² And, although Ozick utilizes character-

¹These concerns are thematized in the stories about Tevye the Dairyman, which form the basis of the musical and film *Fiddler on the Roof*.

²In "Envy; or, Yiddish in America," for example, Ozick thematizes the tension between Yiddish (male) writers in America--a tension fuelled by the gradual loss of Yiddish literature in a culture that is highly influenced by the dominant Western culture. Interestingly enough, Elaine Kalman Naves points out that the "obscure" writer in Ozick's story has been identified as "Jacob Glatstein, one of the major American writers in postwar Yiddish

narrators, her stories are nevertheless 'told' in a distinctive authorial voice. Ozick's texts address the problematic of female Jewish-American authorship only in so far as that problematic is filtered through a 'moral' lens which thematizes the plight of the Jewish-American writer in general, a plight that emerges from the ongoing conflict between Judaic and American, or Western, literary traditions.

A reading of Ozick's "The Pagan Rabbi" as a modern Jewish parable, for example, points to what such critics as Elaine Kauvar and Victor Strandberg refer to as "the conflict central to Ozick's work--the battle between Hebraism and Hellenism"³--a conflict that Ozick introduces in her first novel, *Trust*, through the "Pan Versus Moses" essay written by Enoch Vand--the novel's Jewish character. In "The Pagan Rabbi," Ozick addresses the tension between religious and secular Judaism in the relationship between the deceased Rabbi Isaac Kornfeld and the unnamed lapsed-Jewish narrator who trades his orthodox lifestyle for the secular life of a bookseller and a temporary marriage to a *shiksa*. As Kauvar points out, Rabbi Isaac Kornfeld's name embodies the "Pan Versus Moses" conflict: "Isaac refers to the trust the biblical son placed in his father and 'Kornfeld' alludes to Demeter, the Greek goddess of fertility" (42). Ozick's text, although conforming to a traditional thematic concern in Jewish literature, departs from the familiar tension between old and new worlds--

literature," who hates his contemporary Yiddish writer, "a celebrity... the future Nobel Prize laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer" (J1).

³Matthew Arnold famously outlined this antimony in Western culture in *Culture and Anarchy*. Ozick, however, appropriates and re-interprets Arnold's terminology, and utilizes her version to describe what she sees as the central conflict in Jewish-American culture.

what gets articulated often, for example, in Richler's texts--and from the equally familiar tension between the assimilated immigrant Jews and the resisting *Hasidim*--what preoccupies Chaim Potok, for example, in *The Chosen*. Ozick's story focuses on the conflicting relationship between non-idolatrous Judaism and idol-worshipping (gentile/pagan) Art.

The epigraph to Ozick's story, a quote from *The Ethics of the Fathers*, clearly indicates that, in Scripture, there is no room for aesthetics or an appreciation of nature. As the revered Rabbi Jacob states: "He who is walking along and studying, but then breaks off to remark, 'How lovely is that tree!' or 'How beautiful is that fallow field!'--Scripture regards such a one as having hurt his own being" ("Pagan" 3). The life of the religious (male) Jew is devoted to study and prayer, and is thus consigned to constant 'proper' thinking of such 'literature' as Torah, Talmud and Midrash. The "famous" Rabbi Isaac Kornfeld--famous "if not in the world, certainly in the kingdom of jurists and scholars" (9)--is, however, "a closeted Romantic" (16) who "hurt[s] his own being" (Rabbi Jacob in "Pagan" 3); he strangles himself by allowing himself to read the "English poetry" of Byron, Keats, Tennyson ("Pagan" 17) and to enter into an Ovidian relationship with Nature, which he calls "Loveliness" (20). According to the narrator, Isaac was a 'proper' Jew because he was a student; he sat, thought (12), and "read everything": Saadia Gaon, Yehudah Halevi, Dostoyevski, Thomas Mann, Hegel and Nietzsche (9). As a storyteller, however, Isaac departs from the Jewish tradition and reveals himself to be, according to Sheindel, his widow, "a pagan" (22):

These were the bedtime stories Isaac told Naomi and Esther:

about mice that danced and children who laughed. When Miriam came he invented a speaking cloud. With Ophra it was a turtle that married a blade of withered grass. By Leah's time the stones had tears for their leglessness. Rebecca cried because of a tree that turned into a girl and could never grow colors again in autumn. Shiphrah, the littlest, believes that a pig has a soul (13).

Isaac's stories are, according to Sheindel, "fairy tales" (14), beautiful fictions that entertain but do not teach morality--imaginary fancies which, seemingly harmless, corrupt Judaic beliefs. Ironically, Isaac's "genius" (23) and fame as a rabbinical scholar in the seminary are attributed to his "imagination"--which was "so remarkable [that] he could concoct holiness out of the fine line of a serif" (4): He "could answer questions that weren't even invented yet. Then [he] invented them" (6). But his stories, both oral and written, are "full of dark invention" (13-14). In other words, Isaac, the rabbinical scholar, is an author of fiction. The "Pan Versus Moses" conflict materialises in Isaac when the philosophising rabbi seeks to authenticate the artistic pagan; Isaac seeks, through voyeuristic experiments, to acquire proofs that the natural world that is represented in classical texts exists (25). He seeks, in effect, to concoct truth out of fiction.

In Ozick's text the "Pan Versus Moses" conflict functions as a trope that allows Ozick to demonstrate her prowess as a Modernist author who, like T.S. Eliot, applies her knowledge of classical and literary conventions to her texts, and, simultaneously, demonstrates her prowess as a learned Jewish writer whose mastery over Jewish theology, literature and logic--in

spite of her femaleness--is equally articulated in her texts. As Joseph Lowin points out,

Ozick demonstrate[s] that she ha[s] no anxieties whatever about being influenced by previous writers. To the contrary, she publicly arrogated to herself the right to rewrite other texts, basing herself on a long literary tradition that goes back at least as far as Boccaccio and Shakespeare in the Western world, and to the domain of rabbinic literature in the Jewish tradition ("Rewriting" 101).

According to S. Lillian Kremer, "[i]ntertextuality in Jewish-American fiction has often gone unnoticed, for it has been presented in a manner that discourages recognition" (584). In Ozick's fiction, however, intertextuality plays a key role, which prompts Earl Rovit to comment that Ozick's texts are inaccessible and "unfriendly," that she appears to demand an "ideal reader--a figure whose intensity and intelligence must surely make the common reader quake a little in the awareness of his ineptitude" (35). Ozick's demands on her readers are indicative of her narrative tendency to establish authority through a self-staging as an intellectual and learned writer who challenges her readers to be up to scratch.

Ozick's deployment of the "Pan versus Moses" theme has perhaps less to do with the actual battle between Jewish and Western literary traditions than it does with her demonstrable ability to gain authority through a rewriting of both authoritative literary traditions. In "The Pagan Rabbi," for example, the narrator reads Isaac's notebook and finds "extracts" from "a miscellany, drawn mostly from Leviticus and Deuteronomy," which

"transcribed not quite verbatim" as follows:

Ye shall utterly destroy all the places of the gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree.

And the soul that turneth after familiar spirits to go a-whoring after them, I will cut him off from among his people (16).

These passages function to naturalize the authenticity of Isaac's identity as a rabbi, and consequently point to Ozick's knowledge and use of Jewish theological discourses. Similarly, Ozick's articulation of Isaac's rationalization of his desire and belief in paganism points to a creative process that is embedded in Jewish theo-philosophical logic: "There is nothing that is Dead. There is no Non-life. Holy life subsists even in the stone, even in the bones of dead dogs and dead men. Hence in God's fecundating Creation there is no possibility of Idolatry, and therefore no possibility of committing this so-called abomination" (20-1). Isaac moralizes the 'pagan' notion of free souls (as found only in Nature) by contrasting it to the biblical enslavement of the Jews in Egypt (22-3), and he draws parallels between literary Judaism and classical texts in order to render the copulation between humans and gods (or otherworldly creatures) a 'kosher' act:

I recalled all those mortals reputed to have coupled with gods (a collective word, showing much common sense, signifying what our philosophies more abstrusely call Shekhina), and all that poignant miscegenation represented by centaurs, satyrs, mermaids, fauns, and so forth, not to speak of that even more

famous mingling in Genesis, whereby the sons of God took the daughters of men for brides, producing giants and possibly also those abortions, leviathan and behemoth, of which we read in Job, along with unicorns and other chimeras and monsters *abundant in Scripture, hence far from fanciful*. There existed also the example of the succubus Lilith, who was often known to couple in the medieval ghetto even with pre-pubescent boys (27, my emphasis).⁴

Isaac's desire for pagan knowledge results in his eventual fornication with a tree--which evades the Torah's forbiddance of bestiality--while calling out in quasi-biblical language: "Come... couple with me, as thou didst with Cadmus, Rhoecus, Tithonus, Endymion, and that king Numa Pompilius to whom thou didst give secrets. As Lilith comes without a sign, so come thou. As the sons of God came to copulate with women, so now let a daughter of Shekhina the Emanation reveal herself to me. Nymph, come now, come now" (29). Ozick's text draws parallels between classical mythology and rather obscure Jewish theological literature thereby calling for a re-discovery of

⁴There are several interpretations regarding the story of Lilith. According to Judith Plaskow Goldenberg, Karen Bloomquist, Margaret Early and Elizabeth Farians, for example, Lilith was the first woman in Eden who was created with, but independently from, Adam. In this story, Lilith chooses to depart from Eden in order to get away from Adam--other variations of this story suggest that Lilith's aversion to Adam indicates that she was lesbian--and, to console him, God created Eve from Adam's rib to serve as his companion. There are scholars who argue that the story of Lilith as "first woman" is articulated in the Kabbalah. However, the patriarchal story, as represented in Ozick's text, constructs Lilith as a threatening sexual creature--a succubus who has sex with sleeping men and boys--a 'threat' that points to a displacement of sexual desire, particularly that of pubescent boys who are restricted to a sexually confining religious milieu.

'lost' Jewish references, symbols, stories, and literary traditions and conventions. According to Ruth Rosenberg, "The Pagan Rabbi" illustrates "a return to parable, in Hebrew 'Aggada,' rabbinic narrative" (220)--a parable in which the textual thematic struggle is really the struggle between the "legitimate" and the mystical, or the "forbidden doctrines," of Judaism (224). Similarly, in "Puttermesser and Xanthippe," Ozick's other-worldly creature, the golem, is representative of an 'authentic' traditional Jewish literary tradition that reminds us, as Lowin points out, that "traditionally Jewish subject matter also contains golems, dybbuks, and other gradations of the supernatural" ("Jewish" 311).

Ozick's creation of a parallel between Classical and Jewish mythology is necessary to her eventual championing of Jewish literary traditions over classical models and the rewriting of what Sheindel terms "sprites, nymphs, gods, everything ordinary and old" (14). When, for example, Isaac sees a "blue-armed girl.... Which is to say the shape of a girl" who comes to wade among his seven daughters and rescues the "tiresome baby" from drowning (25), he is exalted at finding a 'proof' of his pagan beliefs. But Ozick's Jewish lens constructs her 'pagan' as a voyeur who, rather than rushing from behind the bushes--where he is spying on his seven daughters--to rescue his drowning daughter, prefers to wait, observe and record the event with the clinical distance of an anthropologist. Isaac's credibility as a Jew and parent are brought into question; as Sheindel argues, Isaac proposes to go on family outdoor picnics "for the children's pleasure, [but] he would leave them and go off alone and never come back until sunset, when everything was spilled and the air freezing and the babies crying"

(13). Isaac also avoids having sexual relations with his wife--lest he be "depleted of potency" at the moment of copulation with a free soul (28). Finally, his sexual encounter with Iripomonoéià reveals that behind the pagan and the rabbi masks lurks a paedophile: Iripomonoéià "seemed a flower transfigured into the shape of the most stupendously lovely child" that he had ever seen (30-1)--"a girl no older than [his] oldest daughter, who was then fourteen" (30). Isaac's 'paganism' is thus rendered a 'Modernist' perversion. As Rosenberg points out, "Ozick goes out of her way to make Rabbi Kornfeld's 'aestheticist longings' appear ludicrous, utterly unfounded on reality" (221): the pagan's 'holy' site where Isaac, fornicating with a tree, eventually hangs himself from a tree branch with his *talid*⁵ is, according to the narrator, a "long rough meadow, which sloped down to a bay filled with sickly clams and a bad smell. The place was called Trilham's Inlet, and... the smell meant: that cold brown water covered half the city's turds" ("Pagan" 4). Having established her credentials as a Western classicist, Ozick then seems to warn that Art, as represented by classical and Modernist literary references, can seduce the Jew into worshipping 'false idols'; instead, she offers an alternative, a Jewish, or 'kosher,' literary tradition that is as varied and rich as classical literature.

In "Toward a New Yiddish" Ozick identifies herself as an obscure writer, "slow and unprolific," who *had* once given her life "over to the

⁵ *Talid* is Hebrew for the traditional prayer shawl worn by 'men' after bar-mitzvah (at the age of 13), and, in Reform and some Conservative synagogues, by 'women' after bat-mitzvah (at the age of 12). While it would seem that women have attained some equality in Reform and Conservative sects, the manufacturers of *talids* have introduced gendered--explicitly feminized--versions of the traditional prayer shawl, thereby suggesting that the prayer shawls that 'women' wear are not, in effect, 'real'.

religion of Art, which is the religion of the Gentile nations" (157). Ozick emphasizes this 'phase' of her life as her "apprenticeship of craft and vision" (157), both as a graduate student in English and as a novice writer whose first "huge novel" she meant "to be a Work of Art" (157).⁶ Ozick's authorial ambition--"I had yearned to be famous in the religion of Art, to become so to speak a saint of Art"--was thwarted by the failure of *Trust*, which, according to her, "did not speak to the Gentiles, for whom it had been begun, nor to the Jews, for whom it had been finished" (158). The failure of *Trust* is significant in that it illustrates Ozick's search for marketability as a writer and for a market which could, eventually, lend her authority. As Elisa New points out, for the "believer in the idea of a Jewish-American literature" during "a critical climate ready for her kind of authority," Ozick, like Moses, "comes as if to lead us out of Philip Roth's suburban Egypt" (288). Ozick's rediscovery of her Jewishness--and simultaneous undermining of her femaleness--did indeed give her a voice, even if this rediscovery was partly a pragmatic approach to a manufacturing of her own authority in a market that had yet to recognize her.

Although Ozick renounces her previous endorsement of the "religion of Art," she nevertheless, as Joseph Epstein argues, "thinks of herself as an artist" (66). As a "Jewish artist," Ozick advocates an authentically

⁶Her thesis was on Henry James and allegory. Ozick pointedly mentions the writers who have influenced her writing, both aesthetically as well as intellectually. *Trust* was her tribute to James. In portraying herself as James's self-appointed "apprentice", an artist's soul-mate, Ozick naturalizes her authority as a scholar and a literary author. She follows a literary tradition in which James himself considered himself an 'apprentice' of George Eliot--an apprentice who would eventually surpass the master.

Jewish-American literary tradition--a liturgical literature written in English. In "Literature as Idol: Harold Bloom," Ozick examines the problematic of Jewish authorship by examining the "oxymoron" of the phrase "Jewish writer" (178). Ozick argues that the text that leads back only to itself is indifferent to the world and to humanity (189); such a text is an idol, and, since Judaism is a non-idolatrous religion, idolatry and idol-making are "anti-Judaism" (187). Thus, the "Jewish artist" can be an artist in so far as she or he grounds her or his art in Jewish history, literary tradition, and covenant (or morality). However, Ozick's consistent incorporation of the Classical and Western literary models, even as examples of idolatry and idol-making, point to her textual authorial construction in that, although she utilises the Western models as examples of a subordinate moral stance to Judaical "Truth," her inclusion of these forms enables her to display her artistry in both Western, or Gentile, and Jewish terms. New observes that Ozick's "eschewal of the designation 'woman writer'" is congruent with her endorsement of the "separateness of the 'Jewish writer'" (290). Like George Eliot, Ozick seeks to distinguish herself from her contemporary female Jewish-American writers by insisting that she is a "serious" Jewish writer. Yet, like Paley's, Ozick's texts are responsive to and take issue with the representations of (female) Jewishness by her canonical male contemporaries.

Ozick challenges the "de-Judaized" American writers ("Toward" 164), particularly Mailer (170), and calls for the reinstatement of the "Judaized novel" (164). For Ozick this "Judaized novel" is, ironically, attributed to such non-Jewish writers as George Eliot, Charles Dickens and Leo Tolstoy--

writers who "were all touched by the Jewish covenant: they wrote of conduct and of the consequences of conduct: they were concerned with a society of will and commandment" ("Toward" 164). Ozick defines "centrally Jewish" literature as "whatever touches on the liturgical" (169), emphasizing morality and its connection to Jewish history and the Jewish literary tradition. She denounces literature's secular Judaism and, by extension, her canonical Jewish-American male contemporaries, since, she argues, the "secular Jew is a figment; when a Jew becomes a secular person he is no longer a Jew" (169). According to Ozick the Jewish literary tradition has not made its mark on the Western world:

Why have our various Diasporas spilled out no Jewish Dante, or Shakespeare, or Tolstoy, or Yeats? Why have we not had equal powers of hugeness of vision? These visions, these powers, were not hugely conceived. Dante made literature out of an urban vernacular, Shakespeare spoke to a small island people, Tolstoy brooded on upper-class Russians, Yeats was the kindling for a Dublin-confined renaissance. They did not intend to address the principle of Mankind; each was, if you will allow the infamous word, tribal. Literature does not spring from the urge to Esperanto but from the tribe (168).

For her, Mailer is a "tragic American exemplar of wasted powers and large-scale denial," (170)--a secularist, fated to become "a small Gentile footnote, about the size of H.L. Mencken. And the House of Israel will not know him.

And he will have had his three decades of Diaspora flattery" (170).⁷ Such flattery is, Ozick argues, merely a ploy to subordinate Jews to Gentiles, and only within Jewish culture can Jews be remembered and attain a significant and lasting authority. Ozick's efforts to be such an authority are confirmed by Victor Strandberg, who notes that her stories illustrate her "transition from being an 'American novelist' to being one of our foremost Jewish American storytellers" (292). She may not covet the Gentile role of "a saint of Art" ("Toward" 158) but she affirms that "no committed writer seriously aims to be minor or obscure" (170).

In 'coming out' as a Jewish author Ozick identifies her femaleness as an obstacle in her path to an attainment of authority. According to Strandberg, the stories that appear after *Trust* increasingly focus on the "problems of the artist, particularly the Jewish *or* female artist" (292 emphasis mine). Yet, I would suggest that Strandberg's phrase should be modified to read the "Jewish *and* female artist," for a closer examination of Ozick's *oeuvre* reveals that her authorial concern is precisely with the Jewish female artist. In "Virility," for example, Ozick illustrates the devaluation of female Jewish-American authorship, such as Paley's, with the story of a writer's critical reception, which, Ozick points out, is determined by the publisher's packaging and marketing of the text. A collection of poems by an anglicized Jewish male poet, Edmund Gate, is published under the title *Virility*, emphasizing male sexuality, strength and vitality. Critics

⁷This heavy-handed preaching is constant in almost all of Ozick's essays. While a similar didacticism appears occasionally in her fiction, I would argue that her fiction is not only more rewarding but more complex, in that there are more subversive narrative strategies that undermine the preacher's voice.

instantly praise Gate's poems as authoritatively literary, and he builds on that recognition with subsequent collections: *Virility II*, *Virility III*, *Virility IV* and *Virility V*. However, when the authentic author of the poems is revealed to be Tante Rivka, Edmund's English aunt, the ensuing collection of poems is published as *Flowers from Liverpool* with "a pretty cover, the color of a daisy's petal, with a picture of Tante Rivka on it" (264). Tante Rivka's text is critically devalued by the same critics who exalted the *Virility* texts. Ozick's awareness of the role that publishing and marketing have on the fabrication of literary authority explains why she vehemently eschews her categorization as a female writer, since, as "Virility" illustrates, Jewish female authorship is subject to devaluation in America. While both Edmund Gate and Tante Rivka are Jewish, Tante Rivka's name marks her foreignness--her Jewishness. Unlike her nephew, she does not anglicize her name. In fact she does not have a 'real' name--Tante means "Aunt" in Yiddish (and in French)--and the title of the collection emphasizes her English nationality; her photograph portrays her as "a young woman in Russia, not very handsome, with large lips, a circular nose, and minuscule light eyes" (264). Ozick's emphasis on the reception of Tante Rivka's book illustrates the role that both gender and ethnicity--in this case Jewishness--play in the evaluation of literary texts.

If, as Ozick seems to argue, femaleness is an obstacle to an attainment of literary authority, why, since she consciously differentiates herself from her Jewish-American female contemporaries, does Ozick maintain her identity as a female author? George Eliot, who wrote "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," published her own work anonymously prior to her use of an

explicitly male pseudonym. While Ozick does not hide her femaleness, her apparent ability to separate her Jewishness and her femaleness nonetheless conveniently naturalizes her authority as a traditionalist "Jewish writer," inviting the (presumed Jewish male) reader to temporarily forget her sex, the obstacle to her writing. However, Ozick's attention to her femaleness, as articulated in "Virility," also suggests that her traditionalist approach is a narrative strategy that she deploys in order to authorize a selective female Jewish authorship.

Ozick's own self-conscious and pragmatic approach to her authorship also leads her to question the authority of a name: in "What Drives Saul Bellow," for example, she inquires about the intrinsic identity of a text, asking: "if you found this book of stories at the foot of your bed one morning, with the title page torn away and the author's name concealed, would you know it, after all, to be Bellow?" (50). Ozick proceeds to decode Bellow's text, to reveal what marks Bellow's writing as "Bellow's". The significance of her exercise in relation to her own authorship is that she consciously produces "Ozick" narratives, and constructs an "Ozick" *oeuvre* that bears her own 'mark'. As Haim Chertok observes, unlike "many writers' more occasional work, Ozick's carries the authority of her fiction, for they wear the same vigorous stamp of her style and personality" (6). Ozick's *oeuvre* demonstrates a uniformity of style, vocabulary, recurring phrases, characters, plots and themes, all of which are influenced by Ozick's construction of her authorial persona--that of a Jewish-American scholarly intellectual, who *happens* to be female, an intellectual who is self-consciously producing specifically Jewish-American writing in fiction,

essays, translations and reviews, and in the form of talks, conferences, roundtable and panel discussions. This model of authorship is taken from her one-time authorial "Master," Henry James, who, Ozick reminds us,

[displayed his "genius" in his] novels (20 of these), short stories (112; some, by contemporary standards, the size of novels), biographies and autobiographies, critical and social essays (ranging from a book-length vision of Hawthorne to the 1905 Bryn Mawr College commencement speech), travel and museum impressions, a dozen plays, innumerable literary notebooks, dazzling letters bearing both difficult truths and what James himself termed "the mere twaddle of graciousness" ("Henry" 58).

Situating herself in the American and Jewish literary traditions, modelling herself after both Bellow and James, Ozick nevertheless confronts certain gender-inflected obstacles. Consequently, she publicly differentiates herself from her Jewish-American female contemporaries, like Paley. And yet, like Paley, she differentiates herself from her canonized male contemporaries in order not to risk further devaluation as a mimic.

Ozick's concern with her own authority dictates that she conform to conventional themes and styles. Not surprisingly, then, her texts do not foreground gender conflict, but instead portray female characters in minor textual roles who are often overshadowed by the liturgically "Jewish" concerns of the male protagonists. In "Bloodshed," for example, the protagonist, Bleilip, is a secular Jew in search of his college friend, Toby, who, despite her intellectual aspirations of becoming the "first lady Jewish

President"--the joke being "which would be the bigger breakthrough, the woman or the Jew" (57-8)--has rejected her secular lifestyle; she has adopted the confining role of a *Hasidic* wife and mother in the "new" *Hasidic* village, which consists of Holocaust survivors and children of Holocaust survivors who have chosen the rural *Hasidic* lifestyle outside New York City. Had Paley written the story, the focal point would have been Toby's life. However, Ozick's story simply utilizes Toby as a point of entry into Bleilip's inner conflict--a conflict between secular and religious Judaism.⁸ And yet, in deploying a traditional paradigm that 'restores' conventional order following an ephemeral transgression--the idea of a future "lady Jewish President"--Ozick's story registers regret and points precisely to the gender conflict that her texts seem to ignore. Her story illustrates the extent to which the role of wife and mother, as characterized by Toby, limits the ultra-orthodox woman. Such a role is not, in other words, worthy of textual attention.

However, Ozick does explore the undervalued role of the ultra-orthodox wife and mother. Sheindel, in "The Pagan Rabbi," wields power in spite of her being limited to a seemingly secondary textual role. Ozick, like Paley, rewrites Jewish-American femaleness. She satirizes the *shiksa*, Jane--the narrator's ex-wife--as an ignorant WASP voyeur. When, for example, Jane attends Isaac's and Sheindel's wedding with her husband, she remarks on the gender-segregation of the festivities: "Look, look, they

⁸ "Bloodshed" is Ozick's rewriting of Albert Camus' *L'Etranger*. Ozick adapts Camus' existential (male) story and re-sets it within a Jewish existential (male) context--the 'climax' being the existential exchange between Bleilip and the *Hasidic* rabbi.

don't dance together" (7), and exclaims that attending a *Hasidic* wedding is "a very anthropological experience" (8). According to the narrator, to Jane, "all Jews were little" (8). In her story, Ozick inscribes the sexuality of the Jewish-American woman; the narrator desires Sheindel and contrasts her desirability to that of his frigid "Puritan" (7) ex-wife--"Jane's [body] was so holy she hardly ever let [the narrator] get near it" (12). The narrator desires Sheindel--"I loved her at once. I am speaking now of the first time I saw her, though I don't exclude the last" (5)--and meant to marry her "when enough time had passed to make it seemly" (19). Sheindel, confined to her domestic role, transcends her role as a sexualized object of desire. At first, she appears to be the bridge between Isaac and the narrator. Discussing Isaac, both Sheindel and the narrator agree that Isaac was "a genius" (23), and that certain passages of his notes--notes outlining his 'scientific experiment' regarding the existence of an 'Ovidian-like Natural world'--are "beautiful" (23). However, whereas Sheindel, with "her clownish jeering smile" (23), seeks to unmask Isaac's identity as "a pagan" (22) because she thinks that "he was never a Jew" (13), the narrator seeks to remember Isaac as a teacher (22) and "scholar. A rabbi. A remarkable Jew!" (12). The conflict, then, lies between the narrator and Sheindel rather than between the narrator and Isaac. The narrator chides Sheindel for seeking to "destroy a dead man's honor... [and] tear it to pieces" (22), to which she replies that she does not destroy his honor since Isaac "had none" (22). Sheindel's comment illustrates that, as Rosenberg points out, she is the text's "authorial persona" (223). With a scar in the shape of an asterisk which points "to certain dry footnotes: she had no mother to show,

she had no father to show, but she had, extraordinarily, God to show--she was known to be, for her age and sex, astonishingly learned" ("Pagan" 7). Constrained by her sex, Sheindel is relegated to the domestic sphere, to the roles of wife, mother, and later widow. Yet, as Rosenberg observes, while Sheindel is "an unattested entity," she is also a "pious and learned woman in the eyes of a patriarchal religion. Better qualified by virtue of her understanding than either of the former rabbinical students [the narrator and her dead husband] to transmit the Law, she cannot" (225). Ozick characterizes Sheindel's patience and femininity in the discourse of political diplomacy. Her "dining table was as large as a desert," (suggesting the biblical and contemporary site of Israel), which is divided "into two nations" by an "old-fashioned crocheted lace runner" (a 'feminine' and domestic symbol). The narrator observes that Sheindel places his tea "in the neutral zone" (10) before confronting him with the written evidence of her dead husband's idolatry. Yet, Sheindel's importance transcends her textual diplomatic role. As the "authorial persona," Sheindel represents the only 'authentic' Jew, which is significant not only because she is female, but also because she is the only character in the text who is a survivor of the Holocaust: her "birth was in a concentration camp, and they were about to throw her against the electrified fence when an army mobbed the gate; the current vanished from the terrible wires, and she had nothing to show for it afterward but a mark on her cheek like an asterisk, cut by a barb" (7). Sheindel's significance is also marked, in that fourteen years after "The Pagan Rabbi"'s publication, Ozick published "The Shawl," a short story that rewrites Sheindel's childhood scenario as central. However, in "The Shawl"

the child, Magda, who is thrown against the electrified fence, dies while her mother, Rosa, watches.

In writing fiction that emphasizes both her Jewishness and her femaleness, Ozick is not only re-defining "Modern Jewish American Literature," which she consciously and publicly sets out to do, but, like Paley, she also participates in re-defining Modern Jewish American cosmology. However, Ozick's cosmological vision does not suggest racial hybridity and sexual retribution. In offering Sheindel as the authentic Jew and authorial persona of "The Pagan Rabbi," Ozick points to a different answer to an old question: Where do we come from? For Ozick, the answer is Auschwitz. Ozick insists on the proper use of Jewish history to, albeit implicitly, 'update' the biblical myth of creation. Hence, 'Eve' rises from the camps' ashes rather than from Adam's rib. Ozick offers the identity of American Jews, particularly women, as victims and survivors, writing about the social de-humanization facing the Jewish-American woman, generally, and the Jewish female artist particularly.

However implicit, Ozick's rewriting of Jewish cosmology bears examining. Ozick states that, while her writing has touched on the Holocaust again and again, she "cannot *not* write about it." For Ozick, it "rises up and claims my furies... I am not in favor of making fiction of the data, or of mythologizing or poeticizing it.... [yet] I constantly violate this tenet" ("Roundtable" 284). The Holocaust acts as a mythical muse for her, simultaneously functioning as a Jewish legacy and a Classical, or Modernist, concept, which points to its role as a catalyst in her own textual authorial construction. In "Primo Levi's Suicide Note," Ozick observes that "Levi has

kept his distance from blaming, scolding, insisting, vilifying, lamenting, crying out. His method has been to describe--meticulously, analytically, clarifyingly. He has been a Darwin of the death camps: not the Virgil of the German hell but its scientific investigator" (37). Ozick represents herself as a Jewish-American (female) artist who is self-consciously defining her authority, calling attention to the lack of a "Jewish Dante" or a "Jewish Shakespeare" ("Toward" 168), while explicitly situating herself in both the Western and the Jewish literary traditions, and establishing the regulations of the modern Jewish-American literature--a literature that draws on the Jewish literary tradition and continuously historicizes and moralizes. Clearly, Ozick envisions herself as performing the role of "the Virgil of the German hell" ("Primo" 37).

As a Jewish (female) Virgil, Ozick locates the historical Holocaust textually in a recurring prophetic metaphor. In "The Shawl," she calls attention to Magda's physical differentiation from her mother: Magda does not have Rosa's "bleak complexion, dark like cholera;" her eyes are blue and her hair is as yellow "as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat. You could think she was one of *their* babies" (4). Yet, despite her Aryan looks, Magda is murdered. In Ozick's novella *Rosa*, which is Rosa's story set in America thirty years after "The Shawl," Rosa depicts the humiliation of having been ghettoized in Warsaw:

[I]magine confining *us* with teeming Mockowiczes and Rabinowiczes and Perskys and Finkelsteins, with all their bad-smelling grandfathers and their hordes of feeble children!... we were furious: because the same sort of adversity was

happening to *us*--my father was a person of real importance, and my tall mother had so much delicacy and dignity that people would bow automatically, even before they knew who she was. So we were furious in every direction, but most immediately we were furious because we had to be billeted with such a class, with these old Jew peasants worn out from their rituals and superstitions, phylacteries on their foreheads sticking up so stupidly, like unicorn horns, every morning. And in the most repulsive slum, deep in slops and vermin and a toilet not fit for the lowest criminal (66-67).

Ozick's interest in representing the Holocaust and imagining the events through a fictive female persona point to her socially apocalyptic vision which pronounces that, despite the apparent assimilation of urban Modern Jews in America, Jews will never be assimilated. Post-World War II America is thus paralleled with pre-World War II Germany. In "Toward a New Yiddish," Ozick states that the urgency with which she writes, while enjoying her middle-class life in pluralist America, is symptomatic of her vision: "the coming of the American pogrom!" (159). For Ozick, secularism, intermarriage, and assimilation are social myths designed to placate Jews who have not yet forgotten the results of programmatic anti-Semitism. For the Modern American female Jew, there is no escape.

Ozick's Puttermesser stories foreground a strong, intellectual Jewish woman who eschews the traditional domestic role allotted to Jewish women.⁹ In "Puttermesser: Her Work History, Her Ancestry, Her Afterlife," Ruth

⁹ See Afterword.

Puttermesser is introduced as a lawyer, a single woman, and "something of a feminist, not crazy" (21). She represents a possibility for contemporary Jewish-American women--a possibility that is nonetheless thwarted by the double-marginalization of the Jewish woman, even in contemporary America, and by Ozick's prophetic metaphor of anti-Semitic recurrence.

Characterized as having "a Jewish face and a modicum of American distrust of it" (23), she is naturalized as an over-achiever who finds employment with a prestigious "blueblood Wall Street" firm who hires her "for her brains and ingratiating (read: immigrant-like) industry" (24-5). The narrator asserts that, though "a Jew and a woman," Puttermesser "felt little discrimination" (25). An intellectual idealist, Puttermesser eventually leaves the prestigious firm, in which she remains a back office worker, for a civil servant position in an office full of (male) Jews and other European immigrants. Puttermesser's subversive potential is characterized not by her profession or active lifestyle, but by her intellectual idealist vision which is described as "a luxuriant dream, a dream of *gan eydn*" (31), an urban yet pastoral scene:

[Puttermesser sits beneath a tree eating fudge contemplating and reading] anthropology, zoology, physical chemistry, philosophy (in the green air of heaven Kant and Nietzsche together fall into crystal splinters)... Puttermesser will read Non-Fiction into eternity; and there is still time for Fiction!... all of Balzac, all of Dickens, all of Turgenev and Dostoevski (her mortal self has already read all of Tolstoy and George Eliot) (32-3).

Reconciling her idealism and her reality, Ozick attempts to construct a legacy and a historicity for Puttermesser, but a secondary narrating voice intrudes and states: "Stop. Stop, stop! Puttermesser's biographer, stop! Disengage, please. Though it is true that biographies are invented, not recorded, here you invent too much... do not accommodate too obsequiously to Puttermesser's romance" (35). Ozick's Jewishness demands that Puttermesser be situated within Jewish literary tradition, that she emerge from Jewish ancestry and not from an intellectual's cumulative reading list. Puttermesser cannot become a secular success. She must differ, although as a female character she already does, from those secular protagonists offered by Richler, Mailer, Roth and Malamud. It is not enough that, unlike these male authors' protagonists, Puttermesser learns Hebrew in her spare time (33). She must have a history, a literary tradition, a legacy, an "ancestry" (38). The intrusive narrator demands: "Who made her? No one cares... Hey! Puttermesser's biographer! What will you do with her now?" (38). This challenge, unusual in an Ozick text, is a window to Ozick's authorial vulnerability and an echo of Paley's approach to her own characters. Whereas Paley relishes her authorial ability to implement change and possibilities--her ability to re-invent and rewrite female Jewishness--Ozick envisions few possibilities. The Holocaust is Puttermesser's legacy; it is her ancestry and her history, and her perception of a lack of such ancestry and history is a product of the Nazi attempt to erase Jewishness.

In the ensuing "Puttermesser and Xanthippe," Puttermesser's biographer condemns the historically unconcerned Puttermesser to a life of

social and professional descent and unfulfillment. As in the first story, Puttermesser encounters new possibilities, but these also result in fantasy; she unwittingly creates a golem. Puttermesser does not accept the existence of her golem, a Jewish fantastical robot-like creature, until she has read the authorities on the subject. After providing a detailed rabbinical history of the golem, Puttermesser concludes that, if "the Vilna *Gaon*, with his stern refinements of exegesis and analysis... could contemplate the making of a golem, ... there was nothing irrational in it, and she would not be ashamed of what she herself had concocted" (104). As she does in her paralleling of Jewish mysticism to classical mythology in "The Pagan Rabbi," Ozick utilizes a non-representational form of fiction, the Jewish fantastic, to 'tell' a story--to produce a modern Jewish parable. However, Ozick's rewriting of the Jewish fantastic is gendered. In the rabbinic history that she cites there are no precedents for a Jewish woman's fashioning of an authentic female golem. In her story, the female golem, who names herself Xanthippe in honour of Socrates' wife, in turn creates an authorial Puttermesser, who becomes the mayor of New York City. Puttermesser's utopian ideal of paradise on earth, or at least paradise in urban New York, materializes but ultimately leads to her and her ideal's destruction. Like Undine in "The Dock-Witch," Xanthippe is representative of an uncontrollable and destructive female power that is characterized by her insatiable sexual appetite. Puttermesser's golem, in other words, ends up being a coherent male phantasm--the voraciously sexual and therefore dangerous woman who needs to be controlled by 'rational' masculine dominance--if the male has not been consumed by the female monster. What

is perhaps most disturbing in Ozick's story is that the end simply marks a return to Puttermesser's previous mediocre reality, thereby suggesting that, despite the ephemeral transgression in the form of a momentary possibility, Ozick cannot envision "the first lady Jewish President." And yet, her narrative strategy indicates that, although Ozick seems to conform to rather misogynist constructions, she nevertheless thematizes profound moments of female transgression to inscribe Jewish femaleness. In effect, she highlights her own narratives as adhering to the paradigms in traditional, explicitly 'male' texts but points to gender-inflected fissures, to fissures that Julia Kristeva might describe as irruptions of the semiotic into the symbolic texts of the father. In writing a Jewish woman's creation of a female golem Ozick participates in the rewriting of historical Jewish literary traditions, in the recovering of 'lost,' forgotten or ignored motifs, such as golems, and in the inscribing and naturalizing of the missing aspects, such as Jewish femaleness.

In *The Cannibal Galaxy*, Ozick thematizes Jewish femaleness in the figures of Hester Lilt--a renowned philosopher--and her daughter, Beulah, who becomes a renowned artist. The novel begins with the story of Joseph Brill, a Parisian Jew who survives the Holocaust by hiding in a convent basement surrounded by books, and who then emigrates to America in search of the 'American Dream.' Thus far, Ozick appears to conform, as she does in her earlier texts, to a male-centred Jewish story. As in "The Pagan Rabbi" and *The Shawl*, Ozick naturalizes the learned and intellectual survivor of the Holocaust--unlike the two earlier stories in *The Cannibal Galaxy* the survivor is male--as an 'authentic' Jew. Keeping within her

traditional "Pan Versus Moses" trope, Ozick further articulates Brill's personal intellectual relationship to both Judaic and Western literary traditions, and his eventual success as the founder of the "Edmond Fleg Primary School" in "the Middle of America" (17)--a private school that establishes a "Dual Curriculum" (36) that indoctrinates Brill's Jewish students in both the Western and Jewish literary and historical traditions that formed the formation of Brill's intellectual character. Obsessed with genius, intellect and success--hence the school's motto "*Ad Astra*" (39)--the school weeds out the undesirables, the mediocre students. Brill, as an 'authentic' Jew, appears to resolve the "Pan Versus Moses" conflict with the 'breakthrough' of his "Dual Curriculum". His name, Michael Greenstein points out, means "spectacles" in Yiddish (51), and he is the lens through which we read the problematic of Jewish identity in the Gentile world--in Europe and America.

There is, however, a shift that occurs in Ozick's novel--a shift toward an explicit focus on the figure of the Jewish female artist. Brill's destruction, or 'failure,' is occasioned by his conflicting relationship with Hester, whom he admires as a philosopher but who frustrates him because she defies his limited understanding of womanhood. She accentuates his inability to comprehend the complex relationship between the philosopher mother and the artist-to-be daughter: "[Hester] was not normal. Did she really suppose she was like all the rest of them--the mothers? Or did she posit Beulah as a higher idea that could be willed into being?" (93). Brill understands the relationship between Hester and Beulah as a form of cannibalism--the 'brilliant' mother devours her 'simple' child and brings

forth her 'brilliant' creation, her philosophy. Brill understands the relationship between "the [other] mothers" and their daughters to be emblematic of the Cinderella story--"they would command the slipper to fit"--but, he realizes, Hester and Beulah are not in need of a man, a husband or father, to define their identities and future--they are "ready to do without the slipper" (101).

Brill's 'complete' education does not prepare him to 'read' either Hester or Beulah. As texts, both remain inaccessible to him. Brill's failure is occasioned by his inability to penetrate either text--Hester (sexually) and Beulah (intellectually). He crumbles when he faces his own inadequacies--his intellectual and sexual limitations. Out of desperation, Brill impulsively exchanges his ideals, his *Ad Astra* attitude, for banality--he marries his secretary and has a bright, though not exceptional, son. His downfall is complete when he is suddenly confronted, years later, with Beulah's success--she becomes a leading Euro-American artist and theorist, an artistic genius (144-7). As a successful female Jewish artist living in Europe, however, Beulah Lilt has no recollection of her American indoctrination in Brill's dual curriculum (145). Herein lies Ozick's textual slippage: Ozick's novel marks the shift from her earlier texts' occasional transgressions, or irruptions of the feminine, to a more expansive re-evaluation of the "Jewish Artist" and the Jewish woman. Although she does not thematize either Hester's or Beulah's stories, but rather articulates their presences through Brill's inadequate lens, Ozick does explore alternate constructions of Jewish femaleness in both characters. The importance of Hester's and Beulah's characters becomes apparent when

examining Brill's success. While the introduction of a dual curriculum appears to resolve the "Pan Versus Moses" conflict that dominates and 'marks' Ozick's fiction, Greenstein argues that "Brill's dual curriculum remains an oxymoronic, schizoid impossibility, distorting bifocal perception" (53). I want to propose that Brill's dual curriculum is not a "schizoid impossibility" but an ideal that, Ozick points out, is limited, as is the figure of the 'authentic' male Jew. Beulah, having been indoctrinated into both the Jewish and the Western historical and literary traditions, is able to transcend her education--or the limitations of dual curriculum--and become extraordinary as a result of her inherent, though latent, artistic sensibility. Ozick's novel suggests that despite the intellectual ambitiousness of a rigorous "Dual Curriculum," artistic genius necessitates something more--a 'something' that cannot necessarily be 'taught' or formalized.

Beulah represents for Brill the mystery of artistic genius--that which transcends both the Jewish and the Western literary and historical traditions. Alluding to divine intervention, Brill wonders why Beulah's eyes, which, as a child had seemed to be "dead" (46), "green stones" that he tried to read... but could not. She was impregnable... such a pair of stony eyes" (84), are "stupendously lit.... Who had polished those green stones?" (145). The 'light' that Brill reads in Beulah's adult, artistic, eyes continues to haunt him. Mystified, he recalls a childhood lesson from his French rabbi--Rabbi Pult:

At forty [Rabbi] Akiva had not yet begun to learn, and still did not know anything. Once he was standing by a well in Lydda

and said: "Who made the hollow in that stone? And who polished this stone?" They answered him: "Don't you know, Akiva, what is written in Job? 'The waters wear away the stones.'"

... Who had polished those green stones? (149).

Ozick posits Beulah as an ideal of the Jewish female artist, who has the necessary cultural and historical knowledge, but who is able to transcend her own cultural specificity and produce authentic 'Jewish' Art. Her paintings, Brill notes, are "curious windows" that are not "abstract enough. You could fancy amazing scenes in them: but when you approached, it was only paint, bleak here, brilliant here, in shapes sometimes nearly stately, sometimes like gyres. The purity of babble inconceivable in the vale of interpretation" (147-48). Beulah's art is a non-idolatrous, non-representational form that, like parables, can be interpreted and moralized. Similarly, in her non-committal artistic public persona, Beulah does not represent herself as an icon; she does not call herself a leading theorist, and goes so far as to publicly protest the label (144-5), but she nevertheless allows herself to be constructed by the artistic authorities, the critics and institutions, as a contemporary artistic 'prophet'.

The Jewish female artist, as identified in Ozick's texts, emerges from that which is, in a sense, unthinkable. In an intellectual and cultural climate in which Jewish female experience is codified and over-simplified by male authors, any experience of Jewish femaleness that differs from the restrictive constructs is, apparently, outside the bounds of understanding. Similarly, the making of a Jewish artist cannot be over-simplified into an

academic formula. While Ozick calls for a high level of literary and intellectual knowledge, she also maintains that a crucial element that 'makes' an artistic sensibility is, in a sense, undefinable. Ozick does define, however, the role and persona of the Jewish female artist. For Ozick, the Jewish female artist functions, essentially, as a 'prophet' who, "touched by the Jewish covenant" ("Toward" 164), instructs her 'people' by offering intellectual 'moral parables' that lead American Jews--male and female--into the 'right' Jewish path.

Chapter Three: Erica Jong

"The Story of the '*Shlemiel Féminine*' as a Female Jewish-'American *Picaro*'"

A generation younger than Paley and Ozick, Jong first gained prominence as a poet, but, with the publication of *Fear of Flying* in 1973, she gained notoriety as a scandalous, popular and best-selling American writer. Writing from the position of the assimilated Jewish-American woman, in her novels Jong foregrounds the problematic of her identity--the yoking of her Jewishness and femaleness--through comedic and rhetorical discourses. An examination of Jong's use of humour and rhetoric illustrates her use of *Yiddishkeit*, her critique of patriarchal Judaism and anti-Semitic stereotyping, and her revisionist agenda. Jong moves toward a recovery of Jewish heritage that is necessitated because of the loss of culture that is symptomatic of successful integration. And, unlike both Paley and Ozick who emerge out of a restrictive immigrant culture, the chronology of Jong's texts points to her preoccupation with the 'white' Jewish woman's self-conscious and gendered entry into a patriarchal religious and cultural history. Like Paley, Jong humanizes the Jewish-mother figure and reconfigures the sexuality of the Jewish woman, and, like Ozick, Jong emphasizes the intellectual and artistic prowess of the female Jewish writer and glorifies, if not romanticizes, the figure of the Jewish female artist. And, like both of them, Jong employs several narrative strategies that function to undermine the existing authority of her Jewish-American male contemporaries, particularly Bellow, Mailer and Roth, and participates in the rewriting and authorizing of a revised construction of Jewish-American

femaleness.

Jong's critique of her male counterparts is immediately striking. In *How To Save Your Own Life*, for example, Isadora's first lesbian, or "bisexual chic" (151), experience with Rosanna, the quintessential midwestern *shiksa*, is a satire of the canonical Jewish male protagonists whose masculinity is consolidated by sex with a non-Jewish woman. For all she does ridicule those protagonists, however, Jong's ambivalence toward lesbianism is evident in the scene with Rosanna.¹ She veers between endorsing an idealized version of same-sex literary couples--"all very Vita Sackville-Westish or Colette-loves-Missy or Stein-loves-Toklas" (151)--and expressing her lack of fulfilment in a loving same-sex relationship. Isadora views her relationship with Rosanna, in part, as trendy and valuable 'writing material' (151). She states that she "went to bed with Rosanna out of curiosity the first time, horniness mingled with what [she] call[s] 'bisexual chic' the second, and obligation the subsequent occasions" (151). Isadora goes so far as to risk the wrath of her feminist "sisters" by relating her 'true' "first impressions of cunt-eating... Gentle Reader, it did not taste

¹ In *Fear of Flying* Jong hints at lesbian sex in a dream, not 'actual' experience, in which Isadora, in order to graduate, must make love, "in public," to Colette--"Only she was a black woman with frizzy reddish hair glinting around her head like a halo" (290). In *Fanny*, Fanny's sexual encounter with Molly, an inn maid, is rationalized by Fanny's crossdressing and gender-performance 'as a man'. Jong also portrays Anne Bonny, the historic female pirate, as a romanticized image of the fem-butcht whom Fanny desires. Fanny's desire, however, is explained as her desire to want to *be like* Anne Bonny rather than to *be with* her. Yet, despite these characterizations, Isadora's vehement antagonism toward lesbianism is explicitly articulated in her, albeit ironical, discourse of penis worship in *Parachutes & Kisses*. As these examples illustrates, although Jong endorses a romanticized version of literary lesbianism, successful same-sex relationships are not an option for her characters.

good" (155); then she muses that a "Martian" voyeur would, presumably, categorize "oral-genital relations (as the sex manuals coyly call it)" as a "form of cannibalism" (152).

Keeping within the constraint of the image of cannibalism, despite the reciprocity inherent in "oral genital relations," Isadora establishes her sexual encounters with Rosanna as a commercial form of ethnic exchange. She states that "[w]hat Rosanna was trying to eat through [Isadora's] cunt was [Isadora's] poetry, [her] vulnerability, [her] Jewish warmth. What [Isadora] was trying to eat through hers was [Rosanna's] WASP *coolth*, her millions, or perhaps the freedom which [she] imagined went with them" (152). However, as the scene develops, Isadora's role transforms from that of the female "bisexual chic" lover to that of the inept Jewish male lover. At first, the racial and cultural sexual exchange thrills her. She rejoices that "[t]he mouth of the American Jewish Bard [is] singing the passions of WASP America! What Sam Goldwyn did on celluloid, what Saul Bellow does in ten-point type--I am doing here in bed with Rosanna" (154). Her comment naturalizes her, and Jong by extension, as "the Jewish Bard". This passage is also significant in that, unlike her inept Jewish male contemporaries or their sexual idealization of the *shiksa*, Jong emphasizes the sexuality of the Jewish woman who is capable of reaching orgasm--and enjoying it. Hence, it is Rosanna's inability to reach orgasm that emphasizes Isadora's gender performative quest:

I began to understand what it meant to be a man, fumbling around--is *this* the right place or is *that*?--getting no guidance from one's subject (who is too polite and lady-like to

tell) and wondering, wondering if she is going to come now, or now, or *now*--or *has* she already, or *will* she next summer, or *what?* Help! I need some guidance... Do WASPS moan? ... Goddamn my cosmopolitan family (who would never dream of telling me to stick with my own kind)... I feel like a boob, an inept lover, a befuddled man in bed with a frigid woman. For the first time in my life I can identify with the athletic, exhausted hero of "The Time of Her Time." Oh dear. I really am in a bad way if my very first lesbian experience makes me think of Norman Mailer!... I was going to *find* a way to make her come... I was going to make that WASP cunt come!... I began to believe her cunt was an unconscious anti-Semite (155-7).

Isadora's 'success,' which involves the "bulging green base of a Dom Pérignon bottle," causes her to remark: "[Rosanna] attributed her miraculous orgasm to my skill. I attributed it to Moët et Chandon of Epernay. Would she have come with Paul Masson or Taylor's New York State? I think the answer is clear" (158). Jong mocks the modern Jewish-American male protagonists, and authors, who "are hung up on *shiksas*" (*Fear* 99) and who boast of their sexual prowess and macho-masculinity. As the sexually authoritative "Jewish Bard" asserts, the quintessential *shiksa* can only be satisfied by the *crème de la crème* apparatus, which is, ironically, what the male protagonists and authors strive to become.

In the trilogy of Isadora's chronicles, *Fear of Flying*, *How To Save Your Own Life*, and *Parachutes & Kisses*, Jong constructs Isadora as a modern American, Jewish female *picaro*--a literary construction that gives

Jong credibility as a 'literary' writer in spite of her texts' popularity as quasi-pornography. Interestingly, it is after the literary success of Jong's feminist rewriting of John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, entitled *Fanny: being The True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones*,² that she writes: "Isadora thinks of herself as an eighteenth-century type: a sort of pyrate of the heart. She's every bit as much a survivor as Moll Flanders or Fanny Hill" (*Parachutes* 4).³ Isadora, as a modern rewriting of Fanny Hill or Moll Flanders, functions within the context of the picaresque literary tradition, which stages Jong's textual bawdiness as part of that tradition. Isadora demands, "[w]here was the female Chaucer? One lusty lady who had juice and joy and love and talent too?" (*Fear* 101). Rhetorically, Jong offers

² Although *Fanny* does not depict the adventures of a Jewish character, and Jewishness is not central in this text, there are several Jewish discourses that filter through nonetheless. Jong, for example, conflates Judaism with matriarchal rewritings of paganism: the witches believe in "a greater God... A Female God... whose Name [like the Jewish God's] is too holy to be spoken. She that hath made the World and exists ev'rywhere in ev'ry living Thing. She that is both female and male, with Horns upon her Head, and a Belly that brings forth Young..." (89). After the massacre of the witches, Fanny demands: "if the Goddess were i'faith so pow'rful, why did She allow Her Chosen Children to perish so horribly?" (106). She addresses the many religions which have prayed to their deities for help, including Jews, but have not been saved from being "slaughter'd" (408). The Jews' acceptance of the Holocaust--that God allowed his Chosen children to be slaughtered--has been articulated in such texts as *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Fanny also argues with the atheist Captain Whitehead, whose belief that prayer is "nought but the Opiate of Child-like Minds," counters her remark: "Is there no Covenant betwixt Man and God?" (393)-- Captain Whitehead replies that "[c]ircumcision is said to be a Sign of the Covenant" (393).

³ In the Afterword of her text, Jong states that she does not share her character's critique of Cleland's book since, as the "[r]eaders who know the introduction [that Jong] wrote to *Fanny Hill: or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (Erotic Art Book Society) are aware that it is one of my favourite books... No disrespect to that classic of erotica, *Fanny Hill*, is intended" (535-6).

her own authorship in response to her own question in *Fear of Flying*.⁴ According to Robert J. Butler, "the picaresque heroes of American literature are... essentially restless people in quest of settings fluid enough to accommodate their desire for free and independent exploration of themselves and their worlds" (309). As an adventure novel, or a novel of self-exploration, *Fear of Flying* designates its ultimate quest as the development of Isadora's Jewish-American consciousness since, for Isadora, any understanding of the meaning of her Jewishness--particularly in relation to her femaleness--necessitates a journey of "exploration" (309). According to Mary Anne Ferguson, *Fear of Flying* can thus be read as a novel of "female [Jewish] development" (59).

In the context of Jewish American literature, however, Isadora's characterization as a female *picaro* deserves examination. Isadora, as a *picaro* narrator, emphasizes her fictionality but, more significantly, her unreliability. For Isadora, the main thing in writing is "entertainment, not literal truth," a statement that precedes her rhetorical question: "Surely you don't suppose that I'm telling the literal truth here either?" (*Fear* 183). Jong's comedic characterization of Isadora is resonant of certain aspects of "Jewish" humour: her self-mocking and self-conscious whining is

⁴ Jong's text points to the hypocrisy of the reception of her text as 'commercial pornography,' particularly in light of contemporary academic research interests, which she textually represents in the character of Prof. Harrington Stanton, Isadora's eighteenth-century literature Professor, who has a "fascinat[ion] with eighteenth-century dirty words" (*Fear* 194). Satire proves to be a useful tool in unmasking the appearance of literary authority as virtuous or wholesome. While this strategy functions to challenge her categorization as a 'commercial' writer, it has been countered by her reception as a female mimic--the female (Jewish) Miller, the female Roth, and, ideally, the female Jewish Chaucer--who uses pre-existing literary models.

reminiscent of the characters exploited by such Jewish male 'comedians' as Woody Allen (in both his books and films).⁵ But, unlike the self-hating humour that Jewish male 'comedians' or writers refine, Jong's counter-humour effectively ridicules male Jewish-American writers and their construction of Jewish-American femaleness. According to Judith Stora-Sandor, in *Fear of Flying*, Jong utilizes "l'humour auto-ironique qui comporte obligatoirement les déboires d'une *shlemiel* féminine" (91). Traditionally a male figure, the "*shlemiel* is a traditional figure of Jewish folklore" (Harap 122) who, according to Harap,

has become especially familiar to us through his extensive presence in classical Yiddish literature.... More recently, Isaac Bashevis Singer's Gimpel the Fool, the town fool much put upon by everyone, but who bears no one ill-will, is perhaps the best-known example to English-speaking people. Victimization of the Jews over centuries of persecution has given rise to the use of irony and satire as a measure of emotional protection against the effects of this persecution. Hence the typicality of the *shlemiel* as a Jewish literary device (122).

The construct of the "*shlemiel* féminine" calls attention to Isadora's characterization as a traditional *shlemiel* who is "frustrated, blundering, and generally lacking social status" (Harap 122), but situates her 'lack' of "social status" in terms of her assimilation--her bleached Jewishness--and

⁵ Jong illustrates Jewish humour in her texts: "'Why are you a vegetarian,' someone once asked our utterly deserving Nobel laureate, I. B. Singer, 'for health reasons?' 'The health of the animals,' the wry old Jew replied" (*Parachutes* 9).

her frustration and "blundering" in terms of her hyper-sexualized femaleness. Using self-mockery as a narrative device, Jong constructs Isadora as a character who strives to assert her self-esteem and self-worth. In a self-referential and metafictional moment in *How To Save Your Own Life*, for example, Isadora muses: "[i]f I ever get the time to write another book... I am going to call it *How To Save Your Own Life*--a sort of how-to book in the form of a novel. Hah. That was ridiculous. Imagine me saving lives when I couldn't save my own" (28).⁶ As a Jewish female *picaro*, or "*shlemiel féminin*," Isadora's gullibility, bungling self-mockery and whining are emphasized characteristics which nonetheless point to her character development--her understanding of her problematic identity.

Although in *Fear of Flying* Isadora does not feel "particularly Jewish" (54)--she does not have a traditional Jewish upbringing nor does she belong to a particular Jewish community like a synagogue or a group of immigrant Jewish-Marxists--Jong clearly knows what Jewishness is. In her texts, Jong points to the difficulty of defining Jewishness and challenges existing religious and cultural stereotypes that 'define' or 'mark' Jewishness in America. Isadora states:

Every Christmas from the time I was two, we had a Christmas tree. Only we were not celebrating the birth of Christ; we were celebrating (my mother said) "The Winter Solstice".... At Easter, we hunted for painted eggs, but we were not celebrating the resurrection of Christ; we were celebrating

⁶ Like Paley, Jong offers Isadora opportunities that a traditionalist writer, such as Ozick, would inevitably deny.

"the Vernal Equinox," the Rebirth of Life, the Rites of Spring. Listening to my mother, you would have thought we were Druids.... We weren't really Jewish; we were pagans and pantheists. We believed in reincarnation, the souls of tomatoes, even (way back in the 1940s) in ecology (54-5).

Clearly, Christmas trees and Easter eggs, whether symbolic of Christianity, quasi-paganism, or American capitalism, are not characteristic of traditional images of American Jewishness. And yet, despite her lack of a traditional, or stereotypical, Jewish upbringing, Isadora is naturalized as an 'authentic' Jew. She, like her mother and grandmother, is *born* Jewish. But Isadora resents not having been exposed to Judaism, or her Jewish cultural heritage. *Fear of Flying* suggests, as do many of Jong's other novels, that Judaism, or Jewishness, is 'marked' by something other than the simplicity of a *kosher* birthright.

The mapping of Isadora's journey of self-exploration as a female Jew challenges existing constructions that connotatively 'mark' Jewishness-- challenges such figures as the Jewish mother, who is inscribed relentlessly by canonical Jewish male writers. Isadora satirizes their endorsement of a Freudian misogynist stereotype by stating: "[w]hen I think of my mother I envy Alexander Portnoy. If only I had a *real* Jewish mother--easily pigeonholed and filed away--a real literary property. (I am always envying writers their relatives: Roth and Bellow and Friedman with their pop parents, sticky as Passover wine, greasy as matzoh-ball soup)" (147). Jong interrogates the authority of the Jewish-mother caricature, the "castratrice et autoritaire" (Stora-Sandor 89) figure, and reduces Bellow's, Friedman's

and Roth's endorsements of Jewish-motherhood to a pop reference-- culturally charged yet meaningless. Jong's text confronts the complexities of Jewish motherhood by addressing Isadora's relationship to her mother, whom she refers to as being both her "good mother" and her "bad mother" (*Fear* 157).

Unlike the male protagonists whom she satirizes, Isadora cannot rebel against her mother: she cannot be a "hippy because [her] mother already dressed like a hippy (while believing in territoriality and the universality of war)." She cannot "rebel against Judaism because [she does not have] any to rebel against," and she cannot "rail against [her] Jewish mother because the problem was deeper than Jewishness or mothers" (151). Isadora cannot rebel against her unconventional mother since, paradoxically, any adhering to conventionality inevitably results in a conforming to the social norm. Her marriage to a Chinese psychoanalyst proves to be too conventional, like those of her sisters, which she satirizes: Randy marries "an A-Rab" but leads "the most ordinary family life imaginable in Beirut" (40), as does Lalah who marries "the whitest white Negro in the history of the phrase" (41), and Chloe, who marries a non-domestic Jew, "an import, an Israeli of German-Jewish ancestry" (42) who, during their Christmas reunions, is "the sole Aryan in a playground of Third World children" (43). Unlike the male protagonists whom she satirizes, Isadora does not leave the implied ghetto of the claustrophobic Jewish family in her quest of the 'American Dream'. Jong decentralizes the unit of the Jewish family and ironically inverts the 'authentic' Jew as an "Aryan". She, in effect, places both "Aryan" and "A-Rab" enemies in the

Jewish family, and questions whether Jewishness in America can exist outside the domestic--outside such domestic stereotypes as the castrating Jewish mother, the castrated Jewish father, and "greasy" chicken (matzoh-ball) soup.

For all Isadora's apparent "lack" of Jewishness, however, Jong makes it clear that what she lacks are only the trappings of Jewishness that are defined, codified, and emphasized relentlessly by male Jewish writers. And the absence of such trappings allows Jong to both ridicule those writers and author a less codified, authentic female Jewishness in America.

Isadora's family, with its racial intermarriages and sitcom version of a multi-ethnic semi-dysfunctionality, suggests a microcosm of the American 'melting pot' which successfully melts all its racial ingredients into a solid substance: white ethnicity. In decentralizing the Jewish family, Jong displaces the Jewish mother and reconstructs her as a complex female figure. Isadora's mother, for example, makes Isadora feel secure, teaches her "the names of flowers" (151), is loving and tenderly demonstrative, pays attention to and encourages her writing, laughs at her jokes, and takes her, her sisters and their friends skating "while all the other mothers sit home and play bridge and send maids to call for their children." Isadora's mother is not "like anyone else" (152), nor does she fit into the "literary property" of Jewish motherhood. Jong participates in a stereotyping of the Jewish mother figure insofar as she characterizes the Jewish mother as the quintessential emblem of positive motherhood; as an ill Jessica emphasizes,

"I need a Jewish mama... All orphans do" (*Serenissima* 167).⁷

Jong focuses on the mothering aspects of the Jewish mother rather than on her Jewishness. Instead of blaming her mother for her lack of a Jewish education, Isadora turns to her tyrannical grandfather, the Jewish patriarch. According to Isadora, it is as a result of her grandfather's jealousy of her mother's artistic talent that her mother settled for a life of domestic mediocrity rather than for the exceptional life of an artist that she craved (*Fear* 38-9). Unlike Roth's and Bellow's protagonists, Isadora does not accept her mother's misguided blame--"If it weren't for you, I'd have been a famous artist" (*Fear* 38)--but redirects the blame to the original source, her grandfather, who "was nothing if not a mocker. Even in death, he held the whole family captive" (*Parachutes* 21). It is he who "painted over her [mother's] canvases... [and] mocked her until she gave up trying" (*Fear* 39). Isadora's mother's quasi-paganism is also redirected to Isadora's grandfather, since he forbade his wife, Isadora's maternal grandmother, "any 'religious baloney'" (*Fear* 53-4). Hence, Isadora's lack of a coherent Jewish identity is blamed on her grandfather's tyranny rather than on her mother's religious and cultural unconventionality.

Isadora's grandfather's ambivalence toward his own Jewishness is further critiqued by his characterization as "a former Marxist who believed religion was the opiate of the masses" (*Fear* 53) but turned into a

⁷ Jong's endorsement and rewriting of motherhood is evident throughout her texts. According to Ferguson, for example, in *Fanny*, Jong emphasizes the "support received from other women" and Fanny's identification "with a good mother powerful enough to give her crucial aid". Ferguson also argues that Jong focuses "on the mother in the mother-daughter relationship" (68).

"sentimental Zionist" in his eighties (*Fear* 54), then, prior to his death a decade later, returned to Judaism. His 'return' is ironically described in *Parachutes & Kisses* in the chapter "By the Light of a Jahrzeit Candle":⁸

Since the old man Stoloff [Isadora's grandfather] had not decided he wanted a rabbi at the funeral until the very last moment, he naturally knew no rabbis, or, rather, no rabbis knew him. That left Isadora's family with rent-a-rabbi: whatever sorry synagogeless specimen the funeral directors happened to have on tap. Isadora, for one, resented this-- resented her grandfather both for being a devout atheist and godless Marxist most of his adult life and then for making an irritating deathbed reversion to Judaism. If only he'd had the foresight to revert a year or two *before* his death.... He decided to be a proper Jew only during his last delirium.... "Ah, Stoloff," said the rabbi, looking pink and scrubbed as a pig. Couldn't they at least have provided a bearded rabbi? (21).⁹

In this passage, Jong implicitly addresses the issue of Jewish community as a definition of Jewishness. Although it is possible to be Jewish outside the

⁸ "Jahrzeit" is the anniversary marking someone's death. Jong, like most Jewish-American writers, does not translate the meaning of Yiddish words but assumes the reader's familiarity. Jong takes the title from Singer's "By the Light of Memorial Candles".

⁹ A similar scenario was addressed in an episode of *Seinfeld*, "The Bris," in which Jerry and Elaine are named godparents and, as their duty entails, are responsible for renting-a-moyel to perform the ceremony. Although Jerry Seinfeld's thematization of his Jewishness is more subtle than Paul Reiser's in *Mad About You*, both Seinfeld and Reiser participate in endorsing a 'typical' misogynist and self-deprecating 'Jewish humour'.

community and the 'family', Jong illustrates their necessity. Stoloff's distancing of himself from the Jewish community exposes his patriarchal Jewish identity as a fraud. Paradoxically, Isadora does not belong to a Jewish community either, nor does she practice Judaism. According to the Stoloff model, Jewishness is defined by birthright, sex (which permits males patriarchal dominance), and mocking humour. According to Stora-Sandor, Jewish humour has, traditionally, been consigned to the 'masculine' domain since "une des composantes principales de l'humour [est] l'agressivité. En effet, l'humour n'est pas une activité <<innocente>>" (89). For Stora-Sandor, Jong's use of humour demonstrates her transgressiveness, particularly since her "agressivité" is largely characterized by her use of crude and vulgar language, "jusque'là, à la plume masculine" (91).¹⁰ Yet, Jong does not recreate a 'masculine' text but adapts several aspects of Jewish humour, including its aggressiveness, into the 'feminine' literary domain. Like Caliban--"You taught me language, and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse" (Shakespeare I.2.363-4)--Jong uses Jewish humour to mock and curse the authority of the Jewish male authors.

Jong's use of "Jewish" humour is foregrounded in the introductory pages of *Fear of Flying*, embedded in the discourse of psychoanalysis, which functions to mark Isadora's antagonism toward Jewishness. She states:

Why do analysts always answer a question with a question? And why should this night be different from any other night--

¹⁰There are a number of female Jewish comedians who adopt an aggressive tone yet emphasize their femaleness, such as Joan Rivers, Roseanne, and Sandra Bernhardt.

despite the fact that we are flying a 747 and eating unkosher food?

"The Jewish science," as anti-Semites call it. Turn every question upside down and shove it up the asker's ass.

Analysts all seem to be Talmudists who flunked out of seminary in the first year. I was reminded of one of my grandfather's favourite gags:

Q: "Why does a Jew always answer a question with a question?"

A: "And why should a Jew *not* answer a question with a question?" (6).

Jong utilizes the religious discourse of the Passover *Agadda* and rewrites the "four questions" (How is this night different from all other nights?) to emphasize her paralleling of psychoanalysis to Jewishness, which she naturalizes further in her discussion of Freud's exile as a Jew from Vienna during the Second World War (*Fear* 5), and by characterizing psychoanalysts, regardless of their racial, ethnic or religious identities, as failed Talmudists. The duality of Jong's text lies in its simultaneous undermining of existing historical and cultural anti-Semitic stereotypes and discourses by both non-Jews and Jews, and offering of a critique of the male discourses that 'define' Jewishness.

Rhetorically, Jong addresses the stereotype of "Jewish guilt," a central topic in Jewish-American literature, particularly in relation to the 'cartoonization' of the Jewish wife/mother. Isadora muses:

Why had I been cursed with such a hypertrophied [*sic*]

superego? Was it just being Jewish? What did Moses *do* for the Jews anyway by leading them out of Egypt and giving them the concept of one God, matzoh-ball soup, and everlasting guilt?.... Is it any *wonder* that everyone hates the Jews for giving the world guilt?.... Think of those Egyptians who built the pyramids, for example. Did *they* sit around worrying about whether they were Equal Opportunity Employers? Did it ever dawn on them to ask whether their mortal remains were *worth* the lives of the thousands upon thousands who died building their pyramids? Repression, ambivalence, guilt. "What--me worry?" asks the Arab. No wonder they want to exterminate the Jews. Wouldn't anybody? (*Fear* 245)

The legacy of "Jewish guilt" is expressed in relation to the portrayal of Jews as the social consciousness of the world, a performative role that continuously reminds 'society' of its inhuman transgressions. Isadora's comment suggests that this performative function fuels anti-Semitism since 'society' wishes to forget and repress the memories of its past atrocities. Jong utilizes satire to articulate the notion that, since Jews are a constant reminder, a living testimony of the evils of 'society'--attempted genocide, historical exile, persecution and enslavement--they must be exterminated. The extermination of the Jews is ironically promoted as the 'solution' to the exorcism, which points to cyclical anti-Semitic propaganda--'the final solution'. Yet, Jong's text also addresses Jewish guilt within the context of Jewish-American literature, in which it functions as tyrannical superstition, a tradition of preventing Jews from developing fearlessly, as WASPS

supposedly do. Isadora states: "[a]ll that Jewish guilt. That constant appeasing of the evil eye. If something good happens, something bad is right around the corner. If you have pleasure, watch out for pain. If sex is good, you're going to get clap or pregnant or caught" (*How* 65). Similar to the canonical male protagonists who condemn their Jewish cultural heritage as an emasculating baggage that guarantees victimization, Jong's protagonists articulate the doubleness that maintains Jewish anxiety. Society regards the Jews as either constant reminders of its atrocities or as convenient scapegoats, while the Jews' fears, indoctrinated by a history of social victimization, condemn Jewishness to constant self-mocking, self-hating humanism. The female Jew in America, however, further experiences the anxiety caused by the authorized inscriptions of Jewish femaleness which 'mark' her as a castrating upholder of Otherness--or, in psychoanalytical terms, as the fetish; the Jewish woman is a constant reminder of castration, for she marks, as does circumcision, the man as a 'Jew'.

As Isadora affirms her identity as a female Jew, she also affirms that the doubleness of her identity labels her a 'victim,' in the context of both socio-historical anti-Semitism and patriarchal, self-hating society. She states: "[b]efore I lived in Heidelberg, I was not particularly self-conscious about being Jewish.... I had to read *Goodbye, Columbus* to learn the word *shtarke* and *The Magic Barrel* to hear of a paper called *The Forward*" (*Fear* 53). Like Paley's Aunt Rose in "Goodbye and Good Luck," whose unwritten history is apparently found between the lines of a Jewish male text, Jong's Isadora turns to male Jewish texts to 'discover' her Jewishness.

But Isadora's comment also illustrates Ozick's suggestion that Germany, specifically as the locus of the Holocaust, is the point of origin for the modern Jewish-American identity. And, in fact, Isadora's very blankness about what it is to be a Jew seems to exemplify Ozick's contention that the modern Jewish-American still suffers from the Nazi 'ethnic cleansing' of the Holocaust. Despite the restrictiveness that the position of victim entails, Jong utilizes Isadora's cultural and historical victimization as a narrative device that permits her to write historical accounts of the Holocaust. For example, Jong cites, as an epigraph, a paragraph from an affidavit of Rudolph Hess which clearly states that "all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz" (*Fear* 49), thereby countering the argument that the German public was unaware of the death camps (*Fear* 61).

Jong's decision to represent Isadora as both unconventionally forthright and conventionally victimized, as both a Jew and assimilated American, is mirrored in *Fear of Flying's* fluctuating geography--a geography that operates on both literal and allegorical levels. Isadora physically moves between New York, Germany and Beirut, temporally through the 1960s and 1970s, and allegorically between the present and the Second World War. Isadora's paranoia and "panic," characteristic of victimization, occur during her direct contact with Heidelberg and Beirut. Like Ozick's Rosa in *The Shawl*, Isadora asserts that, for the Jew, there is no escape. She states: "Germany (and Austria, too) was a kind of second home to me.... All as if I had spent my childhood in Germany, or as if my parents were German. But I was born in 1942 and if my parents had been

German--not American--Jews, I would have been born (and probably would have died) in a concentration camp--despite my blond hair, blue eyes, and Polish peasant nose" (*Fear* 21). Since Isadora cannot escape her Jewishness, she searches for its meaning by exploring the anti-Semitic relics that provide a detailed 'tourist' map in which the main attractions are literary representations of "the history of the Jews and the history of the Third Reich" (*Fear* 60), Freud's exile from Vienna (*Fear* 5), and "all the landmarks of the Third Reich which were deliberately not mentioned in the guidebooks" (*Fear* 61). Isadora's anxiety functions as a literary device that allows Jong to personalize the Holocaust and the victimization of the female Jew through Isadora's imagining of herself as a victim during the Holocaust:

I read about the *Einsatzgruppen* and imagined digging my own grave and standing on the brink of a great pit clutching my baby while the Nazi officers readied their machine guns. I imagined the shrieks of terror and the sounds of bodies falling. I imagined being wounded and rolling into the pit with the twitching bodies and having dirt shoveled over me. How could I protest that I wasn't a Jew but a pantheist? How could I plead worship of the Winter Solstice and the Rites of Spring? For the purposes of the Nazis, I was as Jewish as anyone (*Fear* 60).

Isadora's fear of being 'discovered' resonates as Ozick's prophetic metaphor of the return of the pogrom. Despite the anglicization of her name--"née Weiss--my father had bleached it to 'White' shortly after my birth" (*Fear* 29)--and her Aryan looks, she fears being recognized and

identified as a Jew. In *How To Save Your Own Life*, Isadora comments on the plastic surgery that Jewish women in Beverly Hills subject themselves to in order to anglicize their Jewish marker--the nose (137). Although Isadora does not have a stereotypical nose, but a "Polish peasant nose," she too is 'marked,' as her initial encounter with Adrian Goodlove illustrates. The WASP Englishman, upon meeting her, authoritatively exclaims that she "look[s] Jewish" (*Fear* 27). Isadora's fear of discovery recurs during her recalled visit to Beirut:

I was pretty panicky... whether the Arabs would discover I was Jewish (even though the word "Unitarian" was carefully block-lettered on my visa)... I was terrified of being unmasked as a fraud, and despite my utter ignorance of Judaism, I despised lying about my religion. I was sure I had forfeited whatever protection Jehovah usually gave me (not much--admittedly) by my terrible act of deception (*Fear* 231)... Could [the Lebanese women] tell by patting that we were *Jewish*? I was sure they could. But I was wrong (*Fear* 240).

Jong characterizes the anxiety of the female Jew as a conflicting desire to, on the one hand, escape the constraining constructions of Jewishness and femaleness and, on the other, emphasize the cultural heritage of Judaism, particularly as that heritage places her as a Jewish woman. The 'moral' or 'lesson' derived from Isadora's anxiety suggests that, although the position of 'victim' condemns the female Jew to a life of constant anxiety, social victimization is the authentic source of, or reference to, 'Jewish guilt'.

Although Jong's revisionist agenda frequently dismantles misogynist

representations of Jewish women, she nevertheless deploys anti-Semitic and misogynist cartoon-like characters. In *How To Save Your Own Life*, Britt Goldstein is a conflation of the greedy and stingy business-oriented capitalist Jew and the castrating and authoritative Jewish woman (though interestingly *not* a mother or maternal figure); and her presence in the text serves to distance Isadora from negative Jewish (female) stereotypes. Britt's Jewishness is characterized, in part, by her physical appearance. Her nasal voice is "almost a vaudeville parody of the voice of a Jewish girl from Brooklyn. 'Hoyyy' would be the dialect-writer's translation" (*How* 138). Despite her 'fixed' "S curve" nose, "possessed by fully half the Jewish women in Beverly Hills," Britt's "mouth tells all. The tight muscles that pull on either side of her thin lips reveal her spiritual stinginess, her total lack of generosity" (*How* 137-8). Differentiating herself from Britt, Isadora states that, "Britt and I were as different as Adolf Hitler and John Keats" (*How* 135), thereby both dismissing Britt as an anti-Semite and establishing Isadora's (and Jong's) literary authority. Isadora remarks that "Britt belonged to that ancient Jewish merchant class whose philosophy seems to be that you don't actually have to *buy* a thing if you can make everybody believe you already own it" (*How* 141), but, interestingly enough it is Britt's Jewish female authority that is most threatening. Isadora remarks:

I was frightened. She had some weird kind of authority. The authority of a street urchin, perhaps. The authority of the playground bully--but authority nonetheless. You sensed at once that Britt would win out over others--not because she was

either more intelligent or craftier--but because she would stoop to things no one else would even think of.... If I were a gentile, she would have confirmed my worst suspicions about Jews. If I were a man, she would confirm my worst mistrust of women (*How* 138).

Precisely because Isadora's tentative grasping towards a recognition of Jewish identity depends on her self-representation as a victim, Britt is a threat as a powerful female Jew who appeals only to a "few other wise-ass Jewish girls from the Upper West Side" (*How* 14). But Jong sows the seeds of mistrust for Isadora's self-representation as a victim, since Britt also associates her Jewishness and femaleness with exactly the same formations as does Isadora. And there is a certain ignorance or bad faith in Isadora's attack on Britt's apparent identification with that victimization:

She was a Jewish girl from Flatbush. She felt she had been victimized by the male sex, by the whole world. This was especially interesting, because if any victimizing was being done, you could be sure Britt was, as the N.Y. police say, the perpetrator. As for being victimized by the male sex, it was hard to imagine any man fucking Britt and coming away with his genitals intact. Just as her laugh was metallic, one could presume her inner organs to be made of the same unyielding stuff (*How* 144).

In rewriting Jewish femaleness, Jong's text reminds us that some aspects of Jewish femaleness can best be characterized as a misuse of power.

Although Jong's text does not endorse Britt as a positive role model of

Jewish femaleness, it depicts the heterogeneity of the construction of Jewish femaleness rather than reducing and oversimplifying this construction to a singular model that challenges an existing stereotype.

In *Serenissima*, Jong challenges the negative stereotype of the greedy and stingy Jew in her characterization of Shalach. Jong Jewishizes Shakespeare's supposed anglicization of Shylock's name, thereby authorizing her 'authentic' characterization and implicitly rationalizing his anti-Semitism. As in *Fear of Flying*, in *Serenissima* Jong offers an account of anti-Semitic persecution by rewriting a historical, yet personalized, testimonial narrative of Jewish Renaissance Italy. Keeping within the parameters of metafiction, Jong introduces a *shiksa* character-narrator who, nonetheless, thinks of herself as "an imaginary Jew (the very definition of the outsider)" who therefore identifies with her namesake, "the young Jewess who renounces her faith and her father for a facile Christianity and a foppish young man" (22). In Jong's text, Jessica shifts back and forth imaginatively between twentieth-century Venice, in which she is an actor filming a modern variation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, and sixteenth-century Venice, in which she is Shylock's daughter and Shakespeare's lover. It is Jessica's unique doubleness, her intellectual and intimate acquaintance with Shylock, that allows Jong to characterize Shalach as a "lugubrious and bittersweet Jew" (46), whose wry Jewish humour was simply incomprehensible to Shakespeare. Jong writes her imagining of Shakespeare in Venice, his wandering into the Jewish ghetto, the Ghetto Vecchio (200), and eventual meeting with Shalach. Jessica narrates:

"And what's the interest?" asks the Englishman [who has pawned a stolen silver mirror].

"A pound of flesh," jokes the Jew, my father. "A pound of flesh nearest to the heart--*my* heart, of course. But 'tis only a Jew's heart, and so it doth not bleed as doth a Christian's." It is a joke, of course, but a bitter joke under which much truth lurks (220-21).

The "truth" refers to the historical Jewish persecution and anti-Semitism that Jessica proceeds to narrate. Having researched the history of the Jews in Venice, which provides her with authoritative sources, Jessica then experiences that history in the persona of a Jewish woman: she depicts her anxiety as a Jew during a time in which Jews were believed to steal Christian babies for sacrifice, she describes Christmas and carnival as "a most dangerous time for Jews" (364), since killing Jews during these times was considered to be "merry sport" (256), and she offers a history lesson about Jewish slavery, which emphasizes the struggle for freedom that characterized the Jews' passage into Europe (277), and the uncertainty that such a 'free' life in Europe entailed (273). Describing the taunting of a Jewish boy, she states: "The boy's mouth gapes wide in silent horror. The screams of all the Jews for the last six thousand years are in that silent O" (364). The history of the Venetian Jews allows Jessica to understand Shalach as a "subtle and self-mocking Jew who knows the uselessness of Jewish violence in a world of Christian bloodshed" (318). A Venetian who "loves Venice like an unrequited lover, and Venice scorns him for a Jew" (219), Shalach is a mirroring of the modern Jewish-American

protagonist whose love and desire for America is tainted by 'her' scorning of him because of his Jewishness, her undermining of his Americanness.

Rhetorically, Jessica explains Shalach's characterization as follows:

[The Jews'] moneylending was the lifeblood of the Serenissima [Venice], the very basis of its maritime wealth, and yet they were reviled for doing what kept the republic alive. Time and again in history one found the Jews in this appalling double bind, viciously attacked for doing exactly what preserved the society in which they found themselves. No wonder neuroticism was in their very blood. They could never be right (104-5).

Using a pluralist approach, Jessica undermines the stereotype of the greedy Jew by emphasizing that greed is not particular to Jews--both "within and without the ghetto, human nature is equally inhuman when it comes to gold" (363). Such negative qualities associated with Jewishness, both by non-Jews and Jews, as neuroticism and 'dirty' occupations like profitable moneylending, are attributed to society's ambivalence toward Jews; Jessica states: "the world needed them--but also needed to disclaim its need for them" (105). Jessica's account of anti-Semitism in Venice depicts the familiar world of the Second World War, in which the Jews were condemned and restricted to a ghetto in the slum area of the city (prior to their deportation to the death camps). While the Jews of sixteenth-century Venice were coerced into wearing the "hated" mark of their Jewishness, a red hat (198), "that desperate mark of humiliation forced on a people who otherwise would thrive and prosper too well" (199), the Holocaust Jews were

coerced into wearing the yellow Star-of-David. Not surprisingly, then, Shalach is illustrative of "[t]he joking, bitter Jew that jests of pounds of flesh and is ... loath to be a Jew.... Loath, yet also proud--the fate of Jews" (225), the Jew who states: "Our ancient nation weaves a curious path twixt servility and pride" (262).

Jong emphasizes Shylock's literary function as a stereotype by stating that "the Jews of Venice were not all moneylenders, as aficionados of Shakespeare might imagine" (184). Yet, she also comments on the complex characterization of Shakespeare's Shylock that renders him un-stereotypical in Jessica's reading of Shakespeare's play. She states:

Oh, dear Will Shakespeare, when he finally came to write his Jewish play, was unerring about Shylock! For all his grumbling and bitterness, he remains the most interesting character in the story--a tragic hero like Lear, a great soul despite his defects. Even at the end, when Portia (that Miss Priss, that WASP debutante) grants him the flesh but not the blood to go with it, and calls in a forgotten law against the alien to do him out of his ducats, our sympathies remain with him. For Shylock, and Jessica (with Antonio a poor third), seem finally the only real characters in the play. ... Against our wills, we leave the theater feeling Shylock's deep humanity. And Jessica's (361-2).

That Jong's text focuses on Jessica rather than on Shylock is significant.¹¹

¹¹In Jewish literature there are many interesting 'minor' Jewish female characters, such as Jessica, who are overshadowed by the 'main' or more complex characters such as Shylock. In *Fiddler On the Roof*, for example,

Although Jong participates in the Shylock debate, offering history as a rationalization for his "bitterness" and humour as a useful reading of his character, her interest in Jessica gives a response to the comparatively less frequently debated rationalizations and readings of her character in Shakespeare criticism. Jong offers Jessica as a possible source of Shakespeare's mysterious "Dark Lady" (150), or, suggesting that she resembles the "other dark lady who inspired such bitter poems of throttled lust" (223).¹² Jong's rewriting of Shakespeare's Jessica emphasizes her doubleness, which parallels Shylock's. Jessica states:

I suddenly realized how lost Shakespeare's Jessica was--how lost, self-hating, and finally anti-Semitic--to pawn her mother's ring for a monkey, to betray her father for a foppish young man who never quite treated her like an equal because she was a Jew. "A wilderness of monkeys," Shylock said after her elopement. And that was Jessica's legacy, wasn't it? A wilderness of Christian monkeys and, finally, no home to go to. Exile was the worst punishment one could think of. Exile was worse than death (192).

Jessica offers Jong an opportunity to discuss, historically, the treatment of

Chava, the intellectual daughter, is forced to choose between her faith (which symbolizes her community and family) and her love for a Gentile. In choosing love over 'duty,' she is ostracized. Her story functions to draw the limit to the revisions that the Patriarch Tevye is willing, and capable, of making to the outdated traditions. Yet, her story remains untold.

¹²While Jong does not dismiss the possibility of Shakespeare's gay love interest, she depicts his relationship with his noble patron as 'payment' for his artistic patronage. Jong's 'dismissal' is characteristic of her ambivalence toward same-sex relationships.

women in Judaism. Jong's texts--the Isadora chronicles and *Serenissima*--recapitulate the historical coercion of Jewish women within the Jewish community as parallel to the contemporary Jewish-American society that minimizes or ignores Jewish femaleness. Jessica, like Isadora, has "no home to go to"; the former forfeits her right to a Jewish legacy, while the latter is deprived of that legacy by assimilation into the American melting pot. Both are robbed of their cultural heritage: Jessica by her desire for the *shagetz*, the opposite of the *shiksa* (*Fear* 99), and Isadora by her tyrannical grandfather. Both are ostracized and exiled. Jessica's assertion--"[w]e are a nation of wanderers, of vagabonds" (*Serenissima* 277-8)--situates the female Jew in the context of a historical and metaphorical Diaspora.

Jong's critique of the treatment of women in Judaism is most apparent in her discussion of religion. Although her texts emphasize Jewishness as a cultural, rather than as a religious identity, her depiction of the treatment of women in Judaism deserves consideration. In *Serenissima*, Jessica, researching her Jewish role, wanders to a synagogue; the rabbi's sermon admonishes the Jews who "do not keep the faith of their fathers strictly enough," a 'lesson' that "becomes repetitious, and I observe how, in every age, the mouthpiece of official piety is equally tedious, equally predictable" (218). Jessica's objection to religious dogma is further emphasized by her depiction of a sixteenth-century Jewish Sabbath service in which the women are segregated in an upper latticed gallery (216). Similarly, Isadora's critique of the treatment of women in Judaism is articulated by her religious, or, rather, her feminist discourse on 'women and spirituality'. In *Parachutes & Kisses*, for example, the narrator writes:

[D]uring her pregnancy [Isadora] became convinced that God must be a woman. She takes all dogmas--even feminist--with many grains of salt, but it does seem to her that God must certainly have a female aspect, and she, mother of an only daughter, would rather pray to Her than Him.

God, of course, has no gender, or all gender--if you will. Yin and Yang, Shiva and Kali, Great Mother and Horned God, Christ and Mary, Moses and...who? Alas, only the Jews have neglected Her totally. The religion of Isadora's birth leaves out women entirely" (13-4).

Jong does not consider Kabbalism as an alternative Judaism in which the two aspects of God are polarized into 'male' and 'female' constructions. Her focus is solely on conventional Judaism which has systematically undermined, if not obliterated, femaleness. Although she takes issue with Jewish misogyny and its disregard for female spirituality, Jong does not rewrite Jewish cosmology. Instead, her response is based on a feminist reappropriation and rewriting of pagan matriarchies, which are based on an overarching 'sisterhood' model that ignores racial differences and cultural specificity, providing 'all' women with a multicultural grab-bag 'religion'. According to Jessica, "[p]erhaps God is a woman with milky breasts, perhaps a vengeful bearded patriarch, perhaps a dancing satyr, perhaps a maiden in a helmet with a sword in one hand and scales of justice in the other, perhaps a Triton with the waves at his command, perhaps a wood nymph piping through the wild, perhaps a seething fog seeking to become incarnate" (*Serenissima* 337-38). Yet, it is art, as a religion, that Jong, like

a self-proclaimed 'naive' Ozick, endorses. Jessica asserts that her ability to "hold two characters in mind at once, one's self and one's not-self, this is my art.... *That is my religion*" (*Serenissima* 258).

In *Serenissima*, Jong explicitly parallels Jews and artists. Jessica envies the Jews "*their neuroses*" (191), she thinks that "being a Jew would be so *cozy*. They seemed to have more blood, more poetry, more sensuality than [her] people--whoever [her] people were" (192). For her, "the Jew is the quintessential exile, like the artist. No matter how entrenched, how rich, how established, how necessary to the regime, how seemingly tolerated, there was *never* a time when they could not be expelled at a moment's notice" (104). Jong emphasizes the identity of the Jew, particularly of the female Jew, as victim. However, in *Serenissima*, she valorizes the role of the victim. Jessica's ambiguous identity as a pseudo-Jewish WASP, and, as in *The Merchant of Venice*, a woman crossdressing and 'passing' for male, affirms her identity as follows:

Jew, Christian, man, woman--what am I truly? Just one burning human soul, one flame, one puff of white smoke--who wears different disguises in different times.... And yet, if it is most difficult of all things on this earth to be (and most perilous), then I shall choose to be a Jew. For a Jew is one who goes willingly into the flames rather than renounce *her* burning faith, and such heroism would I choose.

"I am a Jew" (*Serenissima* 290, my emphasis).

A similar parallel exists in the Isadora-chronicles. Isadora, as the "*shlemiel* féminine-American *picaro*," is a "survivor" (*Parachutes* 4), a term that

resonates with discourses about the Holocaust. She is the "wandering Jewess" (*How* 4) and the self-mocking "Jewish Princess"--"whatever [*she* is]. (I had used the term ironically in *Candida* and everyone had taken it literally, and thrown it back in my face)" (*How* 29)--who negotiates the problematic of her identity as a female Jew, particularly in the context of her authorship. Both Jessica and Isadora point to Jong's inversion of the 'victim' label to mean 'hero,' thereby emphasizing, through the use of humour, historical evidence, and rhetorical stereotyping, the heroism of the devalued female Jewish-American writer who risks persecution, condemnation, exile and ostracization from both the Jewish and the literary communities, in order to assert her identity as a female Jewish artist. The unexplored and un-mapped domain of female Jewish artistry is, in Jong's novels, the romanticized metaphorical Diaspora--the legacy of Jewish-American femaleness.

Afterword

In her search for a recovery of 'lost' roots, Jong moves, in effect, in the opposite direction from Paley and Ozick. Paley and Ozick emerge, precisely, from the Jewish female artistic heritage that Jong seeks to recover and enter. And yet, there is a common point of interaction: the rewriting of constructions of Jewish artistic identity and Jewish femaleness that have been naturalized by canonical Jewish male texts. Moving from opposite ends, all three seek to vocalize that which has been silenced and to rewrite that which has been overly simplified and misrepresented. Using various narrative strategies, each writer approaches her task from a different perspective. For Paley, self-invention is necessary to the articulation of her experience and only possible by assimilation into the American 'melting pot'--an assimilation that retains, nevertheless, a historicity and cultural specificity. Ozick counters, however, that assimilation is a delusion and a fiction. For her, Jewish femaleness can only be brought to light by inscribing female experience into conventional Jewish texts. While Ozick appears to circumscribe sexual politics in her fiction, her latest publication, *The Puttermesser Papers*, explicitly marks her preoccupation with, and thematization of, the Jewish-American woman.

Unlike both Paley and Ozick, who emerge from a similar, restrictive immigrant milieu, Jong's fiction explores Jewish-American femaleness from the perspective of the assimilated woman who is in the process of recovering her cultural heritage, and who must mediate her relationship to a patriarchal tradition and history. Her latest novel, *Inventing Memory*,

maps her 'imagined' cultural heritage and proposes a matrilinear reading of Jewish-American female artists. Despite their differences, all three writers face the same obstacle--the silencing and disregard of Jewish-American women--which they try to overcome and remedy. Their texts are examples of the necessary revisionist rewriting and inscribing of Jewish-American femaleness that can, eventually, lead to an understanding of the conflicting identity of the Jewish-American female artist. Similarly, this thesis is an example of the necessary critical work that has been begun but that nevertheless requires further exploration.

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