



## **Agents of Anxiety and Disintegration: The Double Motif in the Jewish-American Discourse**

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Examining the Jewish-American novel written in the postwar era, the present paper attempts to understand the relationship between the writers' recurrent use of the theme of the double and the psychological problematics to which the protagonists are always prone. It contextualizes the over-repeated tension between primary ego and alter ego within the postwar anxiety of Jews trying to prefigure the possibilities of history on the one hand, and to construct identity in the midst of lurking anti-Semitic perils on the other. For the Jewish-American novelist's part, representing such a psychological aspect of the Jewish dilemma can never be read out of his/her hyphenated standpoint and, thus, strategies of survival where delusions of persecution keep the identity's guard on by projecting the protagonist's fears in the form of a doppelgänger.

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It would be ironic while trying to contextualize the doppelgänger theme within the Jewish literary discourse of identity and anti-Semitism to trace back the term's etymological roots to German Romanticism, the supposedly ideological inspiration of Nazism and archetypal anti-Semitism. This thematic paradox, however, appropriately introduces the reader to the essence of the literary double where the self's identity is conceived and integrated through repetitive confrontations with its negative and nihilistic aspects. For a Jew, the double means either a possibility of persecution without which s/he would dwindle from the state of a distinct victim to that of an ordinary human being, or the consciousness of that possibility developing into an embodied anxiety and fears of multiple losses. To understand what those fears of multiple losses are and how they

constitute a strategy of survival dictate examining first the existential and psychological implications of the double.

Otto Rank refers the double in literature (E.T.A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allen Poe, Guy de Maupassant, Alfred de Musset, Fyodor Dostoevsky) to a paranoid state revolving around the persecution of the primary ego by its double and where the destructive alter ego reveals the psychological dimension of the writer as well as the collective consciousness cultivating his/her imagination. Primarily, Rank's definition highlights three essential implications of the double: it exists nowhere but within; it reveals a vulnerable exposure to a possibly hostile environment; and that it must be the result of a collective consciousness. In other words, it comes over whenever home—psychologically as well as emotionally—lies far away. Certainly, persecution might exist in the mentality of the writer due to not so much an actual encounter with it as being a hangover of the diasporic memory which closely explores the future with a lens of the past. Whoever but the Jewish angst-ridden mentality could typify such a case? Their entire contact with the then reality was refined by the bitter experience of the past and thus even the most obvious looked elusive and 'uncanny,' the Freudian term that defines one more aspect of the double.

According to Freud, "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (3676). It is an impression one gets of something that changes its state in our consciousness from being known and familiar to unknown and unfamiliar (one that is identical with its opposite). Citing Jentsch, Freud notes that in literature a writer is able to produce uncanny effects by creating characters that do not belong to the realm of humanity; they are either automatons or entities of animism causing confusion at the reader. Hoffmann's "The Sand-Man" stands out as a case in point where the anxiety of losing eyes is explored via the double bringing about uncanny effects. Taking into account Rank's classification of mirror reflections, shadows, guardian spirits, fear of death as projections of the double motif, Freud originated the double in a reversed and later-stage narcissism, "From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death" (3687). He proposes that an older form of narcissism that has been surmounted can continue to have an effect by changing into a "moral conscience" susceptible of being split off from the ego, as seen, for example, in delusions of being watched. In addition, the unfulfilled self, and the suppressed desires might transform into double; "the urge towards defense that caused the ego to project the material outward as something foreign to itself" (3688). Hence, the Freudian 'uncanny' starts in a psyche that is self-conscious, extremely unfulfilled, and extremely suppressed and then develops into projected fears and anxieties.

From this narcissistic perspective, the image of the anti-Semite as a double originates in the Jewish character's worship of his own image demonizing in the process that of the other. This has many testimonies in the novels where the protagonist's mirror reflection becomes 'uncanny' as it grows beyond the

two-dimensional frame into a flesh-and-blood double. Hence, as both an emotional impulse and a physical reaction, the anti-Semite double develops within the Semite's solipsistic desire to exist alone and grows into an anxiety of being destroyed and annihilated by that same uncanny impulse. The double motif in the Jewish literature is mostly a case of an absent anti-Semitism that has a potentiality of presence—a possibility of possibility in Sartrean terms. It reflects an unreal worldview blurred by anxiety and in the same way the double is an alter-ego that mostly exists nowhere but inside the Jew's consciousness.

To account for the damaging mental effects of the vulnerable exposure to a hostile diasporic environment, the Jewish-American novelists create characters whose fragmented psyches assume a number of manifestations. Most remarkably, the motif of the double represents a lively though indirect reenactment of the Jewish protagonist's psychological vulnerability. The double, in their case, is a developed version of anti-Semitism that, internalised and introjected by the protagonists, drives them into the entangled symptoms of anxiety. It becomes even impossible for them to maintain a sane outlook of the self and the world around as they struggle first to fathom the double's very existence and then to fend him off. Though almost all characters do not cross the borders into insanity, they sway on the verge unable to keep themselves intact. It is the anxiety of falling into the abyss of an inauthentic being rather than the actual fact of falling that prompts the writers to indulge into the motif of the doppelgänger.

Cultivating the idea of the double from the fictional works of Dostoevsky's *The Double* and Kafka's *The Trial*, such novelists as Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Edward Wallant invoke the presence of the ghastly Other as an important means for the continued definition of the self that derives its essence from the limits its Other imposes. In *Herzog*, *The Victim*, *The Assistant*, *The Tenants*, *The Counterlife*, *The Pawnbroker*, and *The Human Seasons an American Jew*, who seems only marginally Jewish and in the midst of identity crisis, defines or redefines his Jewish self in relation to a threatening alter ego. Such doubling at once dramatizes the sad disintegration of Jewish identity in the American transformation and the absurdity and elusiveness of finding a psychological anchor in the post-Holocaust world. To present that more effectively, the novelists make use of surrealism and dreamlike scenes in a way that portrays how slippery the borders between ego and alter ego and how but a historical miss survival might be.

To begin with, Saul Bellow involved most of his protagonists in a struggle to create a meaningful order out of a psychological chaos. He usually contemplates how the fall into an inauthentic being in the postwar American melting pot occurs as a result of the state of alienation, the absurdity of existence, and the violence of being that constitute altogether the American version of the European bloodshed carnival. He himself represents part of the postwar mood whose sensibility is further shaped by the pre-requisites of belonging to a col-

lective traumatic consciousness. Consequently, the ghetto experience and hostile environment are always present in the background of his characters' thought and action and, thus, the disjointed perception is dictated by the mental state of the central character. The Bellovian protagonist is, therefore, caught in a drama of the mind besieged by cultural and political oppression but never gives up the struggle to win the battle against the powers of darkness come from within. According to Malcolm Bradbury, Bellow is a modern novelist,

*who is aware of the tensions of modern selfhood and the crises of history, who understands the dark places of being, the lure of extremity, the power of madness, and the unusual historical and psychological pressures against which selfhood must be won.* (vii)

Hence, the spot of light has to be cast on the internal conflicts where one's weak and anxious self fears, anticipates, or experiences the intimations of disintegration.

In Bellow's typical novel *Herzog*, the problematic relationship with the self is introduced at the very outset of the novel where the protagonist says to himself, "If I am out of my mind, it's all right with me" (1). The statement implies a conflict between the image one holds of himself and the counter-image the others assign him. This sums up the nature of Herzog's psychological crisis as when the self-image he cultivates tends to yield to the one imposed upon him by the external world: "Some people thought he was cracked and for a time he himself had doubted that he was all there" (1). In order to overcome that crisis, he tries to assume self-confidence that he essentially lacks. Herzog is quite aware that there is some oddness in his behaviour which always singles him out in an environment of standardised objects. It is that awareness which exorcises the double as a monitoring agency, "*There is someone inside me. I am in his grip. When I speak of him I feel him in my head, pounding for order. He will ruin me*" (11). In his case, the awareness of the flaws in the personality leads not to overcome them but to a severe dichotomy between what he actually is and what he should be.

Here, the self is in struggle with the Sartrean "Being-for-others" as Herzog tries to reconcile between what he himself is, a mass of dreams and ambitions, and what the Herzog constructed and defined by the outside world looks like. Suggestively, Bellow chooses for his heroes the situation referred to by Melanie Klein as "paranoid-schizoid position" where the "persecutory anxiety" automatically gives rise to splitting as a defense mechanism (231). Herzog shuts himself up in a circle of victimhood and determines that the entire world is his perpetrator. The alter ego that has a complete control over him is but a means to evade first the need to justify his relationship out of the aforementioned circle and second the moral responsibility within its narrow domain.

In *The Victim*, the protagonist's psyche is not fragmented so far but his relationship with others is determined by the images figured out by his consciousness. The novel belongs to "psychological realism" in the sense that it is devoted to analysing the persona's mind as he reacts to various adversaries some real and some created by paranoia. It is the protagonist's paranoid mind, in addition to the real existence of anti-Semitism, that evokes Leventhal's classification of the world into two camps—Jews and anti-Semites—reinforcing what Helge Norman Nilsen describes as "the persecution complex of the Jew" (184). Though dealing with anti-Semitism as a central rubric, Bellow chooses to portray not so much the phenomenon in its larger social frame as the workings of the protagonist's psyche.

Asa Leventhal, like Joseph in *Dangling Man*, struggles with the nihilistic aspect of himself. That nihilistic aspect assumes the lively role of Albee as a doppelganger modelled on both Dostoyevsky's *The Double* and Kafka's *The Trial*. The appearance of Albee as a double is meant to dislocate the hero through a series of encounters that begin with anti-Semitic remarks and claims of victimisation and ends up with a vindictive displacement.

"The 'double,'" Freud writes citing Heinrich Heine, "has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons" ("The Uncanny" 3688). Otto Rank thinks of the double in literature as "the description of a paranoid state revolving around the persecution of the ego by its double" that reveals "psychopathological dimension (epilepsy, splitting of the personality)" (qtd. in Mijolla-Mellor 434). *The Victim* is suffused with tones of anxiety that comes as a result of the tense atmosphere created by the existence of the double as both part of the self and an embodiment of the Other. Albee, the antagonist, plays the role of a catalyst in Leventhal's sense of insecurity. The "short ring of the bell" (19) by unknown hand that Kerby Albee chooses dramatically to be a prologue for his appearance, marks an appropriate beginning of a journey into anxiety. The act introduces Leventhal to a world of objectification (of being object to the Other's look in Sartre's terms) where he feels the fragility of his lonely existence. That Sartrean anguish starts taking place when, waiting his turn at the drinking spout, Leventhal "had a feeling that he was not merely looked at but watched" (21). His sense of anxiety becomes evident under the recognition that somebody has been all the time observing and gathering information about him. Though, to assure himself, Leventhal tries to undermine the entire matter, deep inside his heart he feels afraid anticipating something bad to fall: "Leventhal suddenly felt that he had been singled out to be the object of some freakish, insane process, and for an instant he was filled with dread" (26). The anxiety of being objectified by the gaze is the initial harbinger of disintegration initiated by the double.

The sanity of an immigrant Jew is jeopardised by the persistent hunt of the anti-Semite that begins as a hidden danger and culminates in a hysterical encounter. The accident in which Albee grapples the hand of Leventhal's nephew for taking the mustard off his table in the restaurant intensifies Leventhal's

insecurity. It leaves him with the terrifying anticipation of danger to fall at any moment. Feeling that he is seen by while he cannot see his foe exposes Leventhal to a state of weakness and fragility: “Frequently, Leventhal felt that he was watched and he endured it passively” (95). He becomes so self-conscious that he is able to see every detail about his body and appearance as if via “a strange pair of eyes” changing in this way “into his own observer” (95). Goaded by that fear, Leventhal chooses an open space to have a rest with Philip in the park so that none can approach without being seen. At this stage, Leventhal, alert in mind, recounts the use of countering “absurdity with absurdity and madness with madness” (96). By choosing to avoid the encounter with absurdity, he was succumbing to the less annoying reality offered by the immature self no matter how misleading it might be.

But as an alter-ego, Albee leads the hero from self-enclosure and detached realisation of the world to a better understanding of reality. Heide Karst Elam views Albee as “the double who pursues the hero and even places his life in danger, yet he unintentionally helps the hero to gain a new understanding of social connections and increases his awareness of reality” (127). Leventhal is very conscious of his Jewishness and thus his confrontation with Albee is indeed a confrontation with that part of himself which fears anti-Semitism. Leventhal’s fears originate in the nature as well as limits of the American melting pot where he observes his original elements fall apart while an anti-Semite outlives the entire process of assimilation. Afflicted with the sense of guilt, Leventhal gets America embodied by a haunting anti-hero, Albee, who blames his misfortunes on a helpless victim. Furthermore, there is the anticipation, that most supports the double thesis, of a simple turn of the wheel of fortune which may bring him to Albee’s position of utter failure. Viewed positively, however, the encounter with the double proves to be cathartic in terms of purging those fears. In the words of Thomas B. Gilmore: “The alienation from or loss of self, however, also marks the beginning of its recovery; or perhaps one should say discovery” (392). Most likely, Bellow is driving home this exact message. Sometimes rediscovering the self might cost a fatal encounter with its destructive powers.

For Philip Roth, the double marks a crisis of identity as his assimilation reached the point of no return. His identity politics were always misunderstood by the fanatics who banished him from the Zionist utopia as a traitor. As a result, Roth never cared to fend off the identity-preachers though the gap distancing him from Jews problematizes his relationship with his people and then blurs the self-image. He dramatizes the dichotomy between what he really is and what his people want him to be by reinforcing the theme of the double in an innovative way in his meta-fiction *The Counterlife* (1986). This is a novel that deals with the many possible counterlives one might lead; just fragments that do not fit in with the ‘official story’ of the real being we actually are. The novel is composed in five parts where the protagonists Nathan Zuckerman epitomizes the crisis of a Jew by being projected into many different selves as

though to evade the modern insecurities he is prone to. Torn between the binaries of: the past and the present; reality and myth; humanist worldview and narrow-minded ghetto mentality, Roth changes the plot in each of the five parts by going back to a certain point and allowing events to develop in a different way. So, Zuckerman might be himself or his own brother Henry dying due to a heart problem. One of the narrative's possibilities leads Nathan to Israel where he had an encounter with Jimmy, the crazed fan involved in Jewish terrorist acts, and many other patriotic Jews including his brother Henry. Besides, getting married to Mary and settling with her in England where he has to endure her family's anti-Semitic prejudices is one of the possible progress of events. This plot, however, is again negated by Nathan's letter to Maria in which she is but a character in a book he is writing. Ultimately, Nathan's letter explains to Maria that there is "no you" just as there is "no me" and their entire existence is reduced to mere possible performances or "counterlives" one chooses for him/herself and others.

Instead of a single alter ego, Roth invents many which appropriately fits into the diasporic Jewish existence where all possibilities are open. Henry, the protagonist's brother, is an alter ego that implies two potential historical versions: death in exile or championing the national cause in the 'promised land.' This alter ego develops at certain junctures to a chauvinistic one that Jimmy represents which portrays the possible extremist fundamentalism a Jew might embrace in his search for a homeland 'Judea.' Hence, in Israel Nathan meets, talks to, and has hot controversies with that part of himself which fellow Jews want him to be. Such internal encounter with the double surpasses Marlow-Kurtz journey into the self in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* since the deep dark self is already explored by and known to Roth. It rather helps every American Jew—his critics in particular—investigate the real motif behind abandoning an achieved land (America) and going to the promised one (Israel). It can be concluded that the novel envelops parceled doubles that are set to work with every Jewish reader individually the moment s/he opens the book.

Apart from Roth's liberalized worldview, the intensive agony and suffering in which Bernard Malamud places his protagonists make it impossible for them to maintain a sane outlook of the self and the world around. Unlike Bellow, Malamud's characters do not cross the borders into insanity. They, however, sway on the verge unable to keep themselves intact.

In addition to sharing the communal sensitivity to persecution and suffering, Malamud's Jews are bound by the dark prison of the self that, to a large extent, is inextricably caused by outside forces and demonic agents. Like Bellow's *The Victim*, Malamud's novels and short stories use the mirror-image to tackle the confrontation with the deep self. In this respect, Ben Siegel comments: "Equally vulnerable to human rage and pain, his non-Jews often become the 'mirror-image doubles' or 'secret sharers' of his Jews" (123). Hence, the double as a reflection of some aspects of the protagonist's self is one way of portraying fragmentation. In *The Assistant*, *The Tenants*, and many of his

short stories including (“The Last Mohican”), an American Jew, who seems only marginally Jewish and in the midst of identity crisis, defines or redefines his Jewish self in relation to a threatening alter ego. Such doubling at once reveals the sad disintegration of Jewish identity in the American transformation and the absurdity and illusiveness of finding a psychological anchor in the post-Holocaust world. To present that more effectively, Malamud makes use of surrealism and dreamlike scenes in a way that portrays how fragile the borders between ego and alter ego are. In this sense, Malamud, like Bellow, is influenced by Dostoevsky.

In *The Tenants*, the hero’s psyche is given depth and scope through the motif of the double. Although the novel begins with what Eric J. Sundquist calls ‘solipsism’ (382), the self becomes incomplete and unreal unless and until its own shadow is brought to the fore. As the novel opens, Lesser is portrayed “CATCHING SIGHT OF HIMSELF in his lonely glass” (3) as he wakes up to finish the book that would remain unfinished till the end of the novel. The mirror image foreshadows the existence of a double in Lesser’s life. There are two writers struggling to finish their works: Lesser is one, the other, Willie, is a reflection whose existence would surrealistically grow beyond the two-dimension frame of the mirror and at some stage threaten to displace its source object standing before the mirror. “The theme of the mirror,” observes Edmund Spivey, “introduced in *The Tenants*, is fitting: Harry believes he is sure of his own nature and defined identity, but his being is not complete without his less developed alter ego, Willie” (35). Accordingly, Harry Lesser follows Willie in being Irene’s weekend guest; in destroying his hope for future—the typewriter; and in disappointing Irene by giving priority to writing over love. In short, they seem to exchange roles in terms of writing, love, and despair, and thus their existence under the same roof in the same place at the same time is unnaturally destructive to both.

The appearance of Willie in the scene causes the symptoms of anxiety to surface and the farther their encounter goes, the more likely Lesser approaches psychological disintegration. Exposed first to the sound of a typewriter in the building, Lesser falls back on the paranoid fears of a ‘hyperactive imagination’ (4) linking that with a plot that might get rid of him. “Had *Lebenspiel*,” he asks himself,

*set up a spy office here, CIA sub-headquarter for hunting in on Harry Lesser engaged in writing a subversive novel? Every letter he typed on paper, neatly bugged, flashed on a screen in the Attorney General’s office, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.? (27)*

Even after discovering that the sound comes from a black’s typewriter, Lesser suspects that the squatter is the “latest variation of the landlord’s tactics of harassment” (30). Something in the “large liquid eyes poised in suspension” looks aggressive and menacing (29). If exposing the self to continuous

loneliness causes such delusions to occur, mingling with the wrong society has fatal results too.

The encounter with Willie and his black gangs in Mary's house and the anticipation of a raid by the blacks leave Lesser's spirit filled with dread. The tenement turns into a ghost house where he expects death to strike at any moment:

At the door he hesitated, momentarily afraid to go up the badly lit stairs. A million stairs, five hundred dreary floors, Lesser living in the top. He had vision of a pack of rats, or wild dogs; or a horde of blacks descending as he tries to go up. His head is ridden with bullets; his brains are eaten by carnivorous birds. There are other fearful thoughts. (174)

Whereas the rats, wild dogs and bullets contextualise Lesser's case within a broader discourse of persecution, the images give a clue to the psychology of a helpless writer who desires for peace to finish his book but gets instead a weird horror. The double in this context is black the fact that gives additional meanings to the Jewish identity crisis. The Jewish-Black conflict, placed within a historical framework, suggests how the marginalized groups fight over the no-space—the tenement as a symbol of diaspora. For the American Jew, the black is a shadow; an alter ego that might push him out of the margin.

Irene herself had a degrading and self-splitting present as a result of a traumatic past. Confessing that something hurts her emotion, she gives an account of her history: "I used to an awful lot. Anyway, what it amounted to is acting as a way of getting away from myself. I was a fucked-up kid, I drew men like flies and slept around till I began to wake up frightened" (118). Suggestively, there are some psychological implications in Irene, a Jewish girl, throwing herself in the arms of a black man. She is an actress, and what she calls love with Willie is no more than a profound desire to get away from her self; an unconscious part-playing in other words. From a different perspective, Irene tries to defeat that part of herself which she holds in contempt. But losing an essential part of her identity, Irene becomes an incomplete self, exactly like Lazar Kohan's portrait. In an attempt to amend her fragmented identity, Irene applies the wrong colour thinking that can put magic touches on her abandoned picture. Unfortunately, the outcome is a surrealistic Picasso image that neither retains the original traits nor acquires a new perfect disguise. In other words, she resembles automaton in Hoffmann's "The Sand-Man" in the sense of being an artificial partner with whom the protagonist gets involved in an emotional relationship. Her affair with Lesser, who plays the role of a redeemer, embodies a metaphorical journey into the self. Shedding off the previous artificial make-up and stylish camouflage on her body, Irene assumes her own originality, "Her hair grew in like a black cap on her blond head. . . ; she had redeemed her face something inside her, for she seemed kinder to herself" (154). Simultaneously, Irene decides to quit acting, the step that implies retreating to what is sane and natural. She herself denounces the past as

something happening beyond the rational; her visits to a psychoanalyst testifies to it.

In *The Assistant*, originally called *The Apprentice*, the apprentice character, that appears for the first time in his short story “The First Seven Years,” goes beyond the mere mentor-apprentice relationship to the synthesis of two egos. David Bruaner notes that Alpine’s relationship with Bober is more than mere assistant, “when Bober collapses with pneumonia, Alpine symbolically removes the grocer’s apron and puts it (like an albatross) round his neck” (41). The change that happens in their relationship is indeed a development from Klein’s paranoid-schizoid position characterised by interpersonal splitting into a more mature depressive position in which the two split personalities are fused into an integrated one (*Envy and Gratitude and Other Works* 2). Theirs is an advance representation of the double. The self-destructive aspects of that doubling or rather splitting appear in the criminal tendencies of Frank as he steals from the cash register and rapes Helen—Bober’s daughter. In this sense, Frank is a bad id rebelling against its superego—Bober. Frank’s torturing conscience, however, causes him at the end to accept the values of Bober as a compromise between the two selves. That integration of the two selves, however, has to pass through the stages of death and rebirth in order to work out. The early identification between ego and alter ego takes place in a metaphorical tomb, the store where Frank starts digesting Bober’s values and beliefs. It is, then, the descent into Bober’s grave at the funeral that helps him get symbolically reborn as Bober. As Ida and Helen go up the stairs they hear the cling of the register and know “the grocer was the one who had danced on the grocer’s coffin” (232). Reborn, Frank plays the new role as a resurrected Bober. He rises at six to sell the Polish woman a three cent roll and serves Breitbart, the light-bulb peddler, tea with lemon. Displacement is complete.

But while Malamud’s characters are indirect victims to the trauma of history, those of Wallant have a direct personal experience with it. Influenced by Kafka, Edward Lewis Wallant shows a profound insight into the human psychological condition that can never be perceived by short-sighted superficial outlook. Before his death he writes: “I suggest that most people are near-sighted, myopic in their ability to perceive the details of human experience” (qtd. in McDermott 5). That deep understanding of the human experience unfolds in a similar pattern governing his novels which consist of four stages: alienation that keeps the central character detached from the other people; a series of encounters with unhappy people to whom the protagonist is indifferent; a violent traumatic experience that causes the protagonist’s rehabilitation or regeneration; and the final shattering of numbness and apathy. This pattern is perceived vividly in *The Pawnbroker* where Nazerman’s traumatic past makes him fit well into the role of an indifferent money-lender shutting off his feelings, severing all familial and societal bonds and turning himself into a stone-hearted man. For him, the only means of survival is through self-alienation the situation that itself inaugurates a new stage of trauma.

Viewing Nazerman's psychological condition from the perspective of the trauma theory, Philip Codde comments: "Nazerman, like all trauma victims, does not fully experience the traumatic event as it takes place . . . but suffers afterwards from so-called "abreactions," visual flashes that make one relive the trauma" (195). He is a body whose soul is quite detached from the present and attached to the past; a memory installed in a different time and place.

Again like Malamud's *The Assistant*, *The Pawnbroker*'s theme is based on the mentor-apprentice relationship that hides beneath its folds a double motif. But while the alter-ego in *The Assistant* replaces the Jewish ego, the double in *The Pawnbroker* sacrifices itself at the end of the novel allowing in the process the ego to pry open the shell of numbness and thus to start a new life. This alteration takes place because the ego that is already dead and numb lives once again the past suffering. The job of the alter ego is to ironically help Nazerman suffer. That is why he is able to cry towards the end of the novel.

Nazerman is a man whose disastrous encounter with the distorted realities of human frailty pushes him through a dark tunnel of insanity where he becomes hypersensitive to the sight, smell and sound of reality. He weakly prays, "Ah, leave me my brain at least, do not let me go mad" (167). His goy assistant, Ortiz, plays the role of a catalyst that retrieves memories through a series of questions. Symbolically, he represents the present that Nazerman unconsciously lives detached from. His sacrificial death represents the last attempt to bridge the gap between the shadowy past that Nazerman never forgets and the present realities he is not willing to accept. The mix-up of grief and healed numbness after Ortiz's death send Nazerman into a hysterical fit of laughter that causes horrible surprise in the midst of people gathering around the dead body. This is followed by tears that marked Nazerman's ability to feel and interact with his surrounding. Actually, a reversal in the role of the alter ego takes place but the end is the same. Instead of destroying the ego, the alter ego dies so that the numb ego can live, feel, and suffer normally.

*The Human Season* is another novel by Wallant where the protagonist's hopes of finding a home in America got shattered with the death of his wife. His ghastly life thereafter turns him into a tortured soul haunting both the house and the body. The image of Berman's reflection on the mirror is repeated suggesting a dichotomy between what a man is and his concept of himself in relation to the world, "Into the bathroom is where all the mirrors show a strange old man who glances stonily once at you through his dirtied glasses and then pays no more attention" (128). The strangeness separating Berman from his mirror-image marks a downfall in his psychological disintegration that is filled with self-hatred:

His face stared back at him as through a thin solution of blood, big-nosed, furrowed, spectacled in fashionable horn rims. He was bald on top graying on the sides. . . . Such an ugly face, he thought. How had it ever been loved?" (13)

The act of rumination in front of mirror gives clue to how the malady of self-hatred is no accident but originates in a collective history of inferiority

complex. This is a case in which the double is too immature to grow beyond the mirror's frame. Remarkably, Wallant's protagonists are Jews whose post-survival existence looks incomplete and unredeemable. It is that incomplete existence which reinforces the theme of doubling though in a different way. The missing bonds either with the past or with the present reality render the characters as inauthentic egos in search of identity that hovers around in the familiar faces and spaces but remains inaccessible.

The above-mentioned Jewish-American discourse marks, to larger or lesser degree, an embattled existence. Cultivating a collective apprehension of the post-Holocaust world, the writers re-enact the historical trauma by creating characters whose self-fragmentation suggestively accounts for their problematic relationship with the world. As a result, the direct encounter between the Jew and an anti-Semite gets replaced by a haunting alter ego that jeopardizes the ego's vulnerable existence. It, however, keeps the identity guard on because it dramatizes the anxiety of the downfall into an authentic being. As examined in the above novels, the anti-Semite double could be an alter ego that allows the ego to maintain a strategy of survival through having an everlasting enemy and thus activating the defense mechanism. It could also be a superego that is born out of the narcissist attitude only to suppress it. Most likely, however, the double in the Jewish-American context is a harbinger of disintegration resulting from the paranoid exposure to a world where one's own space might be shared with the Other.

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