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Negotiating the Self between Jewish Religiosity and The Gentile Allure In Saul Bellow's "*A Silver Dish*"

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear family:

To my dear parents, who have always been my spiritual support through your prayers that have always protected me, I hope you will always be proud of me, and I dedicate this achievement to you with pride and gratitude.

To my only brother, Zineddine. And my Sisters . Thank you all for everything you have done.

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AbdelKader

Dedication

All praise is due to Allah, by whose grace good deeds are completed.

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Abstract

This study his study investigates the negotiation of identity in Saul Bellow's short story "*A Silver Dish*" (1978), situated within a historical context marked by assimilationist pressures on American Jews following the Johnson-Reed Act. Despite extensive scholarly attention to Bellow's major novels, this short story remains comparatively underexplored. Existing criticism has largely emphasized alienation while overlooking the psychological and symbolic dynamics of identity formation. Drawing on Homi K.

Bhabha's postcolonial framework, particularly the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space, this study employs close textual analysis to examine the interplay between Woody Selbst's inner psyche and his external social environment. It argues that

Woody's identity emerges through a continuous negotiation between inherited Jewish religiosity and the secular, individualist worldview associated with his paternal influence. Rather than resolving this tension, Woody internalizes its contradictions, producing a fragmented yet productive space of subjectivity in which identity remains unstable and continuously reconfigured. The analysis demonstrates that Woody's memories, ethical ambivalence, and emotional conflicts reflect not a binary opposition but a dynamic process of identity formation shaped by intergenerational inheritance and cultural dissonance. Within this interpretive frame, the silver dish functions as a secondary symbolic marker of inherited obligation and moral displacement, reinforcing rather than structuring the narrative's central concern. Ultimately, the study contends that Bhabha's theoretical model provides a productive lens for reinterpreting

American Jewish identity in Bellow's fiction, revealing identity as an ongoing process of negotiation within intersecting cultural, psychological, and ideological forces.

Keywords:

American Jewish Identity, Hybridity, Identity Negotiation, Religiosity, Third Space, Assimilation, Saul Bellow.

Table of Contents

Dedication	I
Dedication	II
Dedication	III
Acknowledgements	IV
Abstract	V
Table of Contents	VI

General Introduction

Background of the Study	1
1. The Statement of the Problem	2
2. Literature Review	2
3. Aim of the Study	4
4. Research Questions	4
5. Research Hypothesis	5
6. Research Methodology.....	5
7. Organization of the Dissertation	6

Chapter One: Socio-political, and Religious Scene After the 1950s

Introduction	8
1.1. American Social and Political Realities	9
1.1.1. The Cold War and McCarthyism	9
1.1.2. The Korean War and Anti-Communism	10
1.1.3. Rise of Consumer Culture: The Price of Fitting In	10
1.1.3.1. Suburbanism and its Effect	11
1.1.3.2. The Nuclear Family and the Myth of Typical Home	12
1.2. Religious Revival and Post-War Anxiety	12
1.2.1. The Age of Anxiety	13
1.2.2. Third Faith and Anti-Communist Movement	13
1.2.3. Judeo-Christian Identity and the Rise of Anti-Semitism	14
1.3. Literary Scene in Jewish Narratives.....	15

1.3.1. Breakthrough Narratives: From Universal Themes	15
1.3.2. The Jewish-American Short Story.....	16
1.3.3. Dominant Themes: Struggle, Identity and Key Authors	16
1.4. Saul Bellow: An Autobiography in Practice	17
1.4.1. "The Silver Dish": Moral Liminality Uncovered	18
Conclusion	19
 Chapter Two: Postcolonial Theory: A Construction of A Hybrid Identity	
Introduction	21
2.1. Postcolonial Theory: Origins and Development	22
2.1.2. Development of Postcolonial Studies	23
2.2. Race, Identity, and Colonial Construction	24
2.2.3. The Concept of Otherness	24
2.3. Homi K. Bhabha and Colonial Discourse	25
2.3.1. Hybridity	25
2.3.2. Mimicry.....	26
2.3.3. The Third Space	26
Conclusion	27
 Chapter Three: Cross-Fading Subjectivity and Beguiled Religiosity	
Introduction	30
3.1. Synopsis of «A Silver Dish» (1978)	30
3.2. Between Two Worlds: Maternal Order and Inherited Innocence	31
3.3. The Seduction of Elsewhere	34
3.4. Mimicry and the Fractured Self	35
3.5. Unhomed in the Third Space	35
Conclusion	38
General Conclusion	40
References	42
Résumé	47
المستخلص	48

General Introduction

Background of the Study

American Jewish identity took shape through a series of historical events in the first half of the 20th century. Thousands of Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe due to World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, and this migration continued until 1924, when the Johnson-Reed Act suddenly limited Jewish immigration. This legislative freeze isolated the American Jewish community from cultural renewal and forced it to assimilate into the dominant Christian-majority. This tension between protecting their heritage and fitting into a new society, created a key historical context that shaped the literature of American Jewish writers, especially Saul Bellow.

Saul Bellow was born in the middle of this tension in 1915 to Jewish parents who emigrated from St. Petersburg to America in 1924. “As a Jewish American writer, Bellow’s work offers penetrating account of the history of the second half of the twentieth century” (Zhe wang, 2021, p. 52)”. Bellow’s work represents a mixture of conflicts and harmony between his Jewish beliefs and his American experience. His autobiography reflects those conflicts that fed his characters, who were caught between two worlds.

Bellow translated the suffering of the first generation of immigrants and the confusion of the second generation into rich literary material that raises timeless questions about belonging, identity, and authenticity. A reading of Bellow’s works such as «A Silver Dish» (1978), shows that his focus goes beyond private family matters to a deeper existential exploration. His novels explore how individuals and minority communities deal with their identity, and how their identity is shaped by a hybrid of their cultural heritage and their new reality.

Therefore, understanding the historical and social context of the pressures imposed by assimilation policies is essential to understand Bellow's deep interest, in issues like identity and belonging. Building on this foundation, studies can explore how his texts represent the “negotiation of identity” through detailed psychological and symbolic insights.

Despite the fact that this historical and biographical context is important for understanding Bellow’s works, a deeper analysis of the process of negotiating identity in his writing needs to have a strong theoretical framework. To move from a thematic reading

to an analysis of the complex psychological processes that are revealed in the short story «*A Silver Dish*» (1978), this study draws specifically on postcolonial theory, particularly the three concepts raised by Homi Bhabha: Hybridity, Mimicry, and the Third Space, provides a powerful lens through which to analyse the protagonist's troubled performance of self, caught between two worlds.

The Statement of The Problem

While many studies explore the Jewish American experience in Saul Bellow's major novels like *The Dangling Man* and *Herzog*, few analyse the short story «*A Silver Dish*» (1978) in depth, especially its psychological and symbolic ways of forming identity during belonging struggles. History shows strong pressures on Jewish Americans to assimilate after the 1924 Johnson Reed Act. This created tension between keeping Jewish culture and religion, and fitting into a Christian led American society, as son of Jewish immigrants, Bellow captured this in his writing.

He turned the pain of first and second generation immigrants into deep stories about life and belonging. Past studies often stick to themes like alienation, existentialism, and culture clashes. They miss the detailed mental and symbolic steps characters take to negotiate identity in a mixed world. It need a theory to break down these steps clearly. This study fills that gap.

Literature Review

In the twentieth century literature, Jewish American identity was a central theme, and Bellow was one of the most important figures, who lived through this experience and wrote about it. He portrayed the struggles of immigrants. Those who had to choose between their cultural heritage or assimilating into their new society, he turned them into timeless stories. However, critics have closely studied Bellow's major novels like *The Dangling Man* and *Herzog*. Nevertheless, his short story “*A Silver Dish*” (1978) has received less attention then his other works. This review looks at the history behind

American Jewish identity and the way critics have analysed Bellow's works and the theoretical tools that can help to read his works from a different lens.

It is important to understand the historical context; Joshua Benjamin (2023) has explained that the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 was not simply a law about immigration. But a tool of “demographic targeting”, a way to restrict the entry of specific groups of people. It led to a reduction in the number of Jews arriving from Eastern Europe.

Jewish immigrant's minorities faced pressures to assimilate into a majority Christian American society. These pressures were not only political but also personal. Jews changed their names and bought the same things their neighbours bought. This seems to be what Homi Bhabha calls “mimicry”, imitating the dominant culture in order to be accepted. This historical era shaped Bellow's literary voice, as collective conflict turned into personal anxiety.

Critics mostly cantered their attention on Bellow's novels, and often focus on existential crisis, alienation, and the search for identity. In addition, they connect his works to his personal life and to events like WW II and the Holocaust. However, these readings keep it on the surface. They explain that a character like Joseph or Herzog is struggling with an identity crisis. But they do not clarify how this problem plays out like the stages of the psychological process, and the role of objects and memories in the story or how does the character deal with the conflict between duty and desire. These questions remain unanswered, and almost no one has answer it through the short story “*A Silver Dish*” (1978).

Postcolonial theory offers interesting ideas. For example, Homi Bhabha's concepts hybridity, mimicry, and the third space. Justin Stolk (2016) explains that these concepts help to understand the “diasporic self”. It is when a person stuck between his past and his present at the same time. These tools have been used to study migration and diaspora. But they have rarely been used to read Bellow's works and never in his short story «*A Silver Dish*» (1978).

Therefore, there are three gaps. Firstly, the story “*A Silver Dish*” (1978) is disregarded despite being a rich corpus for the study of identity. Secondly, most studies describe the themes only, and they do not explore the psychological and symbolic details.

Finally, Bhabha's theory has not been applied to Bellow's short story. This study seeks to address these shortcomings through thematically analysing the corpus at hand. It connects the neglected story to Bhabha's ideas and questions how the protagonist navigates his hybrid identity, and how he balances his Jewish duty with the allure of the Gentile world. This reading may help to understand an overlooked story. It also shows that postcolonial theory can address identity conflicts not only in colonies but also within dominant societies.

Aim of the Study

The main goal of this study is to analyse Saul Bellow's short story "*A Silver Dish*" (1978) by using Homi Bhabha's postcolonial concept "hybridity", "mimicry", and "the third space". In addition, it seeks to look beyond the simple description of themes and explore the psychological and symbolic ways identity negotiating.

The idea is to understand how "Woody Selbst" the protagonist expresses his identity while he is caught between two worlds.

The study also aims to explore whether the protagonist's identity is best understood as a failed attempt at belonging or as a third space that goes beyond simple choices between two opposing cultures.

Furthermore, this study aims to identify how the protagonist mimicking, being a mix, and being somewhere in-between. If the theory works well in the American Jewish context, it will open up new possibilities for future research on modern day minorities in dominant societies, like Muslims in the West or even Westerners in the Middle East.

Finally, the study aims to fill a gap in Bellow scholarship by drawing attention to a neglected short story and by offering a new analytical framework for reading his work.

Research question

1. How does Woody negotiate his identity between inherited Jewish religiosity (embodied by his mother) and his father's secular, individualist influence?

2. In what ways do Woody's actions perform mimicry and hybridity, and how do these concepts complicate a binary understanding of his identity?
3. Rather than achieving belonging or remaining trapped, what kind of subjective space does Woody inhabit, and how does the silver dish function within that space?

Research Hypotheses

Woody's identity is shaped by the ongoing negotiation between his mother's inherited Jewish religiosity and his father's secular, individualist worldview. This tension produces a divided sense of self, but not a static one.

Woody's actions reflect hybridity and mimicry, as he oscillates between religious moral frameworks and secular behaviors without fully belonging to either—yet this very oscillation constitutes his mode of being.

Woody does not remain trapped between two cultures. Rather, he inhabits a Bhabhaian third space where identity remains unstable, continuously reconfigured, and productive precisely because it refuses resolution.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on close textual reading and interpretive literary analysis of *A Silver Dish* by Saul Bellow. The analysis focuses on Woody Selbst's psychological conflict, religious performance, and unstable sense of identity.

The study applies Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space as analytical tools to examine how identity is negotiated through memory, behaviour, dialogue, and symbolic actions in the story.

Particular attention is given to Woody's relationships with his parents, his contradictory moral behaviour, and his movement between religious discipline and worldly desire in order to explore the formation of a fragmented self.

Bhabha is chosen because his framework explicitly rejects binary oppositions (tradition vs. Modernity, religious vs. Secular) and instead emphasizes negotiation, ambivalence, and the productive potential of the in-between—directly relevant to Woody’s cultural position.

The analysis is based on the version of ‘A Silver Dish’ published in [Harper & Row, 1984, pp. 75–110.].

While existing criticism on Bellow often emphasizes alienation, this study diverges by applying postcolonial frameworks to a Jewish-American context, following scholars such as [homi k. bhabha].

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is divided into three chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter presents the historical, religious, and literary context of Jewish American identity in the twentieth century. It examines assimilation pressures, postwar American society, and the development of Jewish American literature, with particular attention to Saul Bellow and his literary concerns.

The second chapter explores the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies, focusing on Homi K. Bhabha’s concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space, and explains their relevance to identity negotiation and cultural conflict.

The third chapter provides a close analysis of A Silver Dish. It examines Woody Selbst’s divided identity, his imitation of both parents, and his unstable position between religious morality and worldly realism through the lens of Bhabha’s theory.

The conclusion summarizes the major findings of the study and reflects on the broader implications of identity negotiation in minority and diasporic contexts.

Chapter One:

***Socio-political, and Religious Scene after
the 1950s***

Introduction

In order to understand any literary work, one must first understand the historical and social world that shaped it. Characters are not simply fictional figures; they are deeply influenced by the fears, conflicts, beliefs, and pressures of their society. For Jewish Americans after World War II, life became a continuous struggle between preserving Jewish traditions and adapting to modern American society. They found themselves living between two worlds: the religious and cultural heritage of Judaism on one side, and the attractive image of the American Dream on the other.

The 1950s in the United States are often remembered as a period of prosperity, stability, and economic growth. However, beneath this image of success, many people experienced anxiety and inner conflict. During the Cold War and the rise of McCarthyism, Americans were pressured to prove their loyalty and conformity. Society promoted the idea that in order to belong, people had to behave, think, and live like everyone else. For many Jewish families, especially those moving to the suburbs and entering the middle class, this social acceptance came with a hidden cost: the gradual loss of cultural and religious identity.

Religion also became an important part of this struggle. In many cases, faith was no longer practiced only as a spiritual connection, but also as a social image connected to respectability and acceptance. This created tension between external success and inner belief, leading many individuals to feel divided between public expectations and personal identity. As a result, Jewish American literature of the period reflected not only questions of survival and assimilation, but also deeper questions about faith, morality, identity, and the meaning of belonging.

This chapter therefore explores the social, political, cultural, and religious realities that influenced Jewish American writers during the postwar period. It examines how these writers moved beyond simple stories of immigration and survival toward more complex explorations of identity and the human condition. Particular attention is given to Saul Bellow, whose works portray individuals struggling to negotiate between Jewish heritage and modern American life. Through stories such as «A Silver Dish» (1978), Bellow presents identity not as something fixed, but as a continuous negotiation shaped by memory, religion, family, and social pressure. A reality that he inspired from his community and from his inner struggle as an American Jewish individual. In his depiction of characters, he engraves the lives of Jewish-American whose his own identity is in question even for him.

1.1 American Social and Political Realities

After World War II, the United States experienced major social and political changes that deeply affected everyday life. Although the country became one of the world's strongest economic powers, many Americans lived under constant pressure caused by fear of communism and political suspicion. During the Cold War, the American government encouraged loyalty, conformity, and patriotism, while people who were considered different or politically suspicious were often marginalized or accused of being un-American (Gray, 2012). This atmosphere created anxiety within society and influenced literature, culture, and personal identity.

At the same time, American society was changing socially and culturally. The rise of consumer culture, suburban life, and the ideal image of the perfect American family pushed many individuals to adapt themselves to dominant social expectations. Minority groups, including Jewish Americans, often felt pressured to assimilate into mainstream society in order to gain acceptance and stability. These conditions created inner conflicts between preserving cultural and religious traditions and achieving social integration. As a result, many writers of the period reflected these tensions in their literary works, portraying characters who struggled with questions of belonging, faith, identity, and social conformity.

1.1.1 The Cold War and McCarthyism

In the late 1940s and 1950s, America entered what is known as the McCarthy era, a period named after Senator Joseph McCarthy. This era was characterized by an intense fear of communist subversion within the United States. It was not just a political movement, it was a wave of heavy accusations that targeted individuals in government (Glenn, 2014). Although the Cold War was external, its effects were felt internally under the banner of McCarthyism. It fostered a culture of suspicion, while any simple act, such as associating with the wrong people or reading the wrong books, could make you a traitor and potentially ruin your life, it was really difficult at that time.

For the American Jewish community, this period was a nightmare. As Susan Glenn (2014) argues, Jews felt a double threat as they were worried about the survival of their distinct community and feared that their historical ties to progressive politics would make them primary targets of McCarthy's accusations of disloyalty. This climate of doubt forced many to make a difficult choice. Jewish organizations had to perform "a careful balancing act, trying to prove their absolute Americanism" while avoiding any positions that might trigger a new wave of anti-Semitism (Benowitz, 2008, p. 264). This shows how Jewish communities lived under constant social and political pressure, where even expressing certain political opinions could lead to suspicion or

discrimination. As a result, many Jewish organizations became cautious in order to protect both their public image and their place within American society.

1.1.2 The Korean War and Anti-Communism

The Korean War (1950–1953) was not only a military conflict. For many Americans, it was also a war of deep psychological fear. Rawnsley (2009) explains that China used the war to challenge the US presence in Asia. Yet at home, the real enemy was neither North Korea nor China. It was communism itself. This fear changed how ordinary Americans saw the world. This wave of “anticommunist consensus” is a widespread belief that communism was not just another opinion but a dangerous disease (Mergel, 2011). For Jewish Americans, this was like a horror movie. Many had past links to leftist politics, which made them easy targets for suspicion.

The war also brought a new and frightening idea of brainwashing. Keene (2010) notes that around 7,100 American soldiers became prisoners of war, and some were accused of collaborating with the enemy. Newspapers began speaking of give-up-it is a condition in which soldiers simply gave up. The thought of an enemy that could enter a person’s mind created deep suspicion toward others and even toward oneself. After the Rosenberg case came the situation got worse. The message to Jewish Americans was very clear, Jewish identity, with any leftist connection could cost you your life.

1.1.3 Rise of Consumer Culture: The Price of Fitting In

The Cold War had hidden influences beyond its known effects, indirectly spread among American society under what it is called by McCarthyism and turning lifestyles upside down. Later on,

Capitalism produced what is known as consumer culture, where an individual’s value in society became measured by their material properties, and who have greater wealth and influence was most respected. Unlike the open terror of McCarthyism or the public shock of the Rosenberg trial, the demand to consume worked slowly, inside people’s homes, day after day. Therefore, the government and the advertising industry pushed a new idea: prosperity through spending.

Historian Lizabeth Cohen (2004) writes that this new America “required making new kinds of products and selling them to different kinds of markets” (p. 2). What is interesting is that buying things was no longer seen as a personal pleasure. It became a “civic responsibility” (p. 2). In other words, one was a good citizen if he/ she was a good customer. People started to judge people by what they had and what they owned, not by who they were or what they believed in.

For Jewish families, this shift mattered a lot. They had already spent decades trying to prove their Americanness after the harsh immigration laws of 1924 (Cohen , 2003). The way to be accepted was through things. To belong meant to own a house in the suburbs and a television in the living room or a car in the driveway. During this time, “the general good was best served not by frugality or even moderation, but by individuals pursuing personal wants” (p. 3). So, spending money on things one did not really need became normal. It became fashionable, and it was how he/ she showed that they belonged. This trend had other, less direct but more deep aims just to influence American Jews. The new suburbs were not very diverse. In 1953, Fortune magazine described them as “big and lush and uniform” (as cited in Fishman, 2004, pp. 7-8). Jewish families were leaving the noisy, crowded streets of the Bronx, this was a big loss for them. The butcher selling kosher meat was gone and Yiddish was no longer heard on the corner and most importantly Judaism was practiced privately in homes, away from public view.

In reality, Jews did not simply accept this trend. They navigated it with such hypocrisy that they used what was perceived as a weakness as a strength to maintain their Jewish identity. As Fishman (2004) points out, consumer culture did not necessarily lead to complete assimilation. On the contrary, many Jews used “consumer culture to reinforce their Jewishness” (p. 207). Like they ordered kosher meat through delivery services and they sent their children to Hebrew schools and bought Passover candlesticks and plates from synagogue gift shops. This was a strange kind of negotiation, Jews consumed to reach the American middle class, and at the same time, they used consumption to preserve what they were supposed to lose.

As it seems, consumption was the price Jews paid for their integration into society. With this constructed mindset, they also abandoned parts of their identity, their traditions and their cultural Jewish pride to fit in into a dominant social model.

1.1.3.1 Suburbanism and Its Effect

By 1959, vast numbers of Jews, especially young middle-class were living in America’s suburbs. Migration to the suburbs redefined the boundaries of Jewish life. The suburbs were not merely clusters of new houses; fear was a major motivator for seeking stability and strategic refuge from urban centres associated with political and social unrest (Sarna, 2019). The importance of this migration lies in its impact on the identity of the community. Soddien (1962) demonstrates that this was a radical reshaping of the Jewish residential map. For instance, in his suggestion, Soddien shows that the Jewish population in traditional urban hubs like the South East Bronx “plummeted from 50,000 in the 1930s to a mere 3,000 by the mid-1950s” (p. 21). This was not merely a change in landscape it was indicative of the impact of American life on immigrants.

This new geography forced another difficult choice upon the Jewish community. The synagogue in the suburbs had to evolve into a what was called “social focal point” (p. 22). It became an institution that balanced the public desire for social status with the private need to keep the “Jewish ethno-cultural-religious formula” intact (p. 3). The suburban synagogue functioned as an anchor, allowing individuals to perform their roles as successful American citizens while maintaining a safe link to their heritage.

1.1.3.2 The Nuclear Family and the Myth of Typical Home

In the beginning, the rise of the Nuclear Family in the 1950s was a powerful cultural myth, while Americans believed that the typical home consisting of a breadwinner father, a house-wife mother, and children in a suburban environment was the ultimate symbol of stability and success. Sarna (2019) argues that this model was a primary site for Jewish American identity, where the home functioned as a stage for performing successful assimilation. This period reinforced the imagined ideal life. Jewish families were pressured to conform to this ideal, distancing themselves from the cluttered of their urban past.

This model home was supposed to be a place of order and values. However, as Marshall Sklare (1982) points out, this shift often created a silent tension between modern American expectations and the reality of Jewish family structures, which were often, more complex and less organized, causing confusion, disturbance and chaos within the Jewish community itself, and the individual on an equal footing.

1.2 Religious Revival and Post-War Anxiety

The world saw significant change in both the religious and social domains following World War II. Due to the importance of religion in these domains, these disturbances caused a confusion to Jewish people, and after that led to a series of existential questions. The big question for American Jews was whether they could find safety in America (Cohen & Fein, p. 2). So, the real question that comes to their minds is do they need to pay something, or worse than that do they need to abandon some of principles and values in order to leave in peace. For the Jewish Americans, “the task of integration required, in considerable measure, assimilation to American standards and styles” (p. 3).

Consequently to a similar emulation, unorthodox behaviour “the American Jew is torn between two sets of values – those of integration and acceptance into American society and those of Jewish

group survival” (p. 3), causing the Jewish people live in terrible anxiety and pressure, becoming stuck in the middle, not fully American and not even Jewish.

In spite of the challenges, the Jews did not give up on both sides; they tried to create and find ideas that will be workable and suitable in order to make balance. Between “Jewish loyalty and modernity, between authenticity and integration” (p. 4). Jews and Christians can live near each other and do business together, but it is difficult for them to share religious and spiritual practices because their beliefs are very different. The second generation, those who born in America had a different opinion. So, when they grew up in a stressful environment, they wanted to assimilate, forget the past, and abandon their beliefs with the help of their parents, who had previously been waiting for a sign of change, they “sought to forget quite often, with their parents’ enthusiastic approval” (p. 6). Nevertheless, in other scope, the anxiety did not disappear but it only changed in shape

1.2.1 The Age of Anxiety

During the Cold War, growing tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union created widespread insecurity and existential anxiety among Americans, particularly due to the fear of nuclear conflict. At the same time, atheism was increasingly promoted within communist ideology. As William van den Berken explains in *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union* (1989), Soviet ideology sought to establish a kind of exclusive control over the spiritual life of society. He argues that:

By its very nature, Soviet ideology’s statist system of values aims at a spiritual monopoly of society. Toleration of competing ideologies as equals is politically, ethically, and from the point of Weltanschauung out of the question. Such toleration would imply ideological pluralism and undermine the foundations of the Soviet political system. (p. 10)

In contrast, the situation of American Jews was shaped by different but equally pressing concerns. Their anxiety was not limited to physical survival, but also extended to fears of cultural assimilation and the gradual loss of collective identity within American society. Michal Kravel-Tovi (2021), observes in her study of contemporary Jewish anxiety that “over the last three decades, the American Jewish communal public sphere has been flooded with socio-demographic concerns about numerical decline, and a sense of threatened ability to maintain a vibrant collective life” (pp. 1-2). Under similar circumstances, the Jewish community struggled to redefine its identity especially in relation to the cultural shock and the inner imbalance its people faced, attempting to cope.

1.2.2 Third Faith and Anti-Communist Movement

The United States used the concept of the three religions as an intellectual and spiritual weapon to counter atheistic communist ideology. This idea was a Cold War tactic, specifically during World

War II, through the establishment of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1927, which aimed to combat religious conflict (Cooperman, 2021). These conferences marked the beginning of the concept of the three religions, and this idea was indeed successful in countering communist ideology. During WWI, a political idea, of uniting religious denomination, especially Protestant, catholic and Jews appeared in America to serve the soldiers and their interest. At that time, Anti-Semitism was a widely spread phenomenon. This created a climate of fear and exclusion, where Jewish communities often felt unsafe and socially marginalised.

1.2.3 Judeo-Christian Identity and The Rise of Anti-Semitism

The term Judeo Christian denotes early Jewish converts to Christianity. Later on, it became used against Nazi fascism, as Hitler was an anti-Semitic and a hyper-Christian. Therefore, Judeo Christian became the slogan of America, appearing to also identify the large immigration of Catholics and Jews (Mislin, 2015). The Cold War helped strengthen this idea because “If the Judeo-Christian tradition was constructed during World War II, it was enshrined during the early years of the Cold War, when the fight against ‘godless Communism’ made it seem imperative to view America as a religious nation” (Cooperman, 2021, p. 292). During this time, people often saw the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union as a struggle between religion and atheism.

In this view, Judeo-Christians represented the West, while Communism was linked with atheism. However, this idea was not completely simple or neutral. Even though Jews were included in the term Judeo-Christian, the idea was mostly shaped from a Christian point of view. Jews were not seen as atheists, but they were still sometimes treated as outsiders (Mislin, 2015). In the end, the term Judeo-Christian was not just about religion; it was also used for political reasons.

Anti-Semitism reached its highest level toward the end of World War II. At the period, Catholics believed Jews could not be forgiven for the death of Christ. In 1960, some poems written by American soldiers also expressed strong anti-Jewish feelings. Such attitudes were widespread during the war and even appeared in post-war literature of the late 1940s, including novels that featured Jewish characters (Mislin, 2015). Because of this discrimination, Jewish communities sought greater acceptance in American society by building religious alliances that removed the idea of collective Jewish guilt.

The response was the creation of religious inclusion models that aimed to promote unity among different faiths. Within this context, the Tri-faith concept emerged as a framework that presented Protestants, Catholics, and Jews as part of a shared national identity. It functioned as an attempt to reduce social tension and encourage belonging, even though real equality was not always fully achieved.

1.3 Literary Scene in Jewish Narratives

Jewish narratives in postwar literature developed within a tense cultural landscape shaped by memory, trauma, and the struggle for belonging in Western societies. After World War II, Jewish writers and characters increasingly appeared in American and European fiction, often representing the ethical aftermath of the Holocaust and the persistence of anti-Semitic attitudes beneath official narratives of inclusion (VanSpanckeren, 1994). These texts frequently move between testimony and fiction, blending personal memory with collective history in order to confront silence, denial, and moral responsibility. At the same time, Jewish-American literature explores processes of assimilation and identity negotiation, especially the tension between maintaining cultural and religious heritage and integrating into dominant Christian-coded national identities.

Authors such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth contributed to the development of this literary field by portraying complex Jewish subjectivities marked by irony, intellectual depth, and existential questioning (VanSpanckeren, 1994). Overall, Jewish narratives in this period become a space where history, ethics, and identity intersect, turning literature into both a form of resistance and a mode of cultural self-definition.

1.3.1 Breakthrough Narratives: From Universal Themes to Personal Experience

The early Jewish American writers focused primarily on the external immigrant experience. Their narratives were centred on the physical and social struggle to survive in a new land, it explores topics such as the journey across the Atlantic, life in the poor neighbourhood, and the pressures to assimilate (Zierler 2009). The foundational stage of Jewish American literature, being Jewish was often considered as a problem to be solved or a barrier that needed to be overcome to achieve the American dream.

Later on, a major shift happened with the « breakthrough generation, » led by figures such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth identified a moment where “writers began to work from inside Jewishness, turning their cultural heritage into a sophisticated literary tool rather than a social burden” (Zierler, 2009, p. 70). Although the themes of exile and global struggle remained central, ‘they took on a more reflective tone, becoming deeply personal, psychological and existential’ (p, 71). This tension between the national and the universal was not entirely new. Yiddish writers argued that the essential drama of their literature consisted in “finding a synthesis between the Jew and the Universe. After the Second World War, these writers began to explore Jewish identity within the context of a secular, predominantly Christian society. The grand, universal themes were translated into the fabric of daily life to portray reality.

1.3.2 The Jewish-American Short Story

The short story has a particular place in Jewish American literature. Maybe just because it is short or maybe because it can hold contradiction without needing to resolve it. Whatever the reason, the decades after World War II saw a real flourishing of the form. Critics call this the "Golden Age" of Jewish American literature (Wolff, 2013). In celebrating the short story, M. Rama Devi (2017) notes that the period was “a significant time of Jewish American short stories.” Yes, novels were very important, but short stories made the difference. The short stories contained the themes of that era in a remarkable way, few pages, but big questions. In her discussion, Rama Devi (2017) lists two main concerns: “the desire to assimilate to American society” and “tension between Jewish traditionalism and American modernism” (pp. 19-20). A short story might simply establish the tension and maintain it for a few pages, and then stop, without needing to resolve anything. This is useful for writers who themselves have felt unclear

In the American-Jewish society, the short story became a space where assimilation and tradition could meet, argue, and stay unresolved, and at the end it did not require a winner, it only demanded honesty. For writers like Bellow, that was enough like he wrote short stories throughout his career, and they are no less than his novels (Wolff, 2013). They are just different, more concentrated, and more willing to live with the question of identity.

1.3.3 Dominant Themes: Struggle, Identity and Key Authors

The themes of the period in America are not hard to list. Rama Devi (2017) mentions “the desire to assimilate” and “the tension between Jewish traditionalism and American modernism” (pp. 19-20). These two pulls against each other, created the central struggle in most Jewish American short stories from the 1950s and 1960s. As for the authors, Saul Bellow’s, Bernard Malamud’s, and Philip Roth’s. Morris Dickstein’s writings about generations, place them at the pedestal (Vanspanckeren, 1994). These writers, share more than they differ. They all wrote short stories that asked the same question about assimilation, belonging and the crisis of identity in a gentile atmosphere.

The self-divided self is a common and current theme in all American Literature in general and in Jewish writings in particular. For the Jewish aloof individual, identity is innate, as “A Jewish atheist is still a Jew (Shapiro, 1997, p. 15). That is strange but true for them. The real tension, Shapiro argues, is between “integration and acceptance into American society and Jewish group survival” (p. 18). In confusion, it is onerous to balance two identities, preserving the tradition and coping with novelty.

Michael Meyer (1989) argues that modernity “posed a crisis for the Jewish religion” (p. 15). He believes that the old ways stopped working, Jewish communities lost their authority, the state took over and the Rabbis could no longer enforce the law. So being Jews became a matter of personal choice, not communal obligation.

The way to become modern was a daunting matter for the Jewish individual. Meyer (1989) notes that “children frequently conducted their religious lives very differently from their parents”. In other words, the family table was not the same anymore. The Shabbat dinner felt different and the holidays meant different things to different people. Ari Kelman et al, 2017) consider that within modernity, many described themselves as not religious. However, they did not abandon Jewishness. Instead, they held onto something they called tradition. For them, Not God. No law, as if the tradition is about connection, family, history, and holidays that bring people together.

1.4 Saul Bellow: An Autobiography in Practice

Throughout his career, Saul Bellow never wrote a formal autobiography. However, every story Bellow wrote is part of his autobiography. Not because he talks about himself directly, but because he practices the act of writing the self. Brauner (2006) calls this “self-explanation, justifying oneself, and of seeking to define the nature of selfhood” (p. 2). In fact, noticing this in every Bellow’s characters like Woody Selbst in «A Silver Dish» (1978), when he keeps explaining himself every time, explaining his relationship with his father, explaining why the dish was stolen, and explaining why he cannot be fully Jewish or fully Christian. Brauner goes further. He insists, “The need to explain himself to himself, to put his own house in order, was a basic drive behind many a Jewish writer” (p. 212). It was not a desire but an inner oppression, a feeling of instability something inside is messy and needs straightening out. This is what Woody is doing in the story: trying to put his inner self in order by remembering the past, by retelling his father’s story.

However, Bellow did not stop at this level of inner monologue. Leila Hojjati observes that “the shift in the confessional orientation from self to other consciousness... is even more intensified in Bellow’s later work” (p. 4). This means Bellow started caring not only about what his hero feels, but also about how others see him. Bellow himself knew that the ideal modern self is not solid. Brauner (2006) believes that Bellow has always considered that “the ideal modern self seems to me (him) to be a fabrication... made up in order to satisfy certain requirements of personal advancement and safety” (p. 20). That is a clear confession of Bellow. The self, for him, is not real. It is something he constructs. Something created. Better, it is something he writes so that he can believe it.

As a prolific writer, Saul Bellow's writings did not stop at self-loathing. His characters are more complicated than that. In his talent, Bellow takes marginality and turns it into strength. In writing about identity, there is something similar about the marginal man. He believed that "the intellect is at its best, and its ethical insights are at their best, when one is in a marginal position that is not too overpowering" (Glenn, 2006, p. 116). Amidst the hardship, Jewish identity stays solid no matter what, that is what Bellow wanted to show in his stories. He does not just show the pain of being split between worlds. He also shows that a person can keep his identity while adapting into the other world. That is the real point.

In the Jewish tradition, identity and belonging are highly attached to religiosity. This is the main concept of Saul Bellow's characters and Jewish writers in general. (Goodheart 2004) argues that something about Bellow's characters is about being alienated, as "Alienation is a modern piety" (p. 147). Piety usually means holding in religion like praying and wear some specific clothes. However, for

Bellow's characters, just feeling lonely and strange from society is a principle of religion itself. With the term piety of disguise, this hypocrisy comes unconsciously, Because of engaging with the modern world and staying in the middle, or what Alan Runcie calls "the middle ground between contradictory forces" (Lessing, 2021, p. 14), where no commitment can be perfect. Because of self-blaming and overthinking. Such divided reverence usually comes from the feeling of shaming about his origins that lead the person to engage and mix with the dominant culture; this is what calls Hypocritical Reverence.

1.4.1 "A Silver Dish": Moral Liminality Uncovered

«A Silver Dish» (1978) offers a complex exploration of moral ambiguity and identity conflict in modern literature. The character Woody Selbst is not presented as simply good or bad, but rather as a morally divided individual shaped by contradictory influences. His identity develops between two opposing forces: the strict religiosity associated with his mother and the more secular, transgressive influence linked to his father. As a result, Woody exists in a condition of moral liminality, where he constantly negotiates between belief, desire, and personal freedom.

Woody's actions throughout the story may appear inconsistent or morally problematic, but they reflect a deeper psychological and ethical fragmentation rather than simple wrongdoing. He often crosses moral and social boundaries, yet these actions emerge from internal conflict rather than deliberate ethical rejection. In this sense, Woody represents a divided subject whose identity is shaped by tension rather than stability.

John L. McLean describes this contradiction by stating that Woody “grew up fast, and his spirit has remained independent... There is no harm in Woody, yet his self-respect has not allowed him to live entirely within the law and has led him, over the course of his life, into theft, smuggling, procuring, and adultery” (McLean, p. 2–3). This highlights Woody’s paradoxical position: he is neither fully criminal nor fully conformist, but someone who exists between moral categories.

McLean further emphasizes Woody’s inner ethical complexity, noting that he “has held in his heart both a belief in love and a secret certainty that the goal set for this earth was that it should be filled with good, saturated with it” (McLean, p. 3). This contrast reveals a deep internal tension between action and belief, where Woody’s life becomes a continuous negotiation between moral aspiration and lived contradiction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the social, political, and religious realities of postwar America played an important role in shaping Jewish American literature. Although the 1950s were often presented as a period of prosperity and stability, many individuals experienced fear, pressure, and inner conflict beneath this successful image. The Cold War, McCarthyism, consumer culture, and the pressure to conform created a society where many people struggled to preserve their identity while trying to belong to mainstream American life.

For Jewish Americans in particular, this period was marked by tension between tradition and assimilation. The desire for social acceptance often conflicted with the need to preserve religious and cultural heritage. As a result, questions of identity, faith, belonging, and alienation became central themes in Jewish American writing. Literature therefore became a way to express the psychological and emotional struggles of individuals living between different worlds.

The works of Saul Bellow reflect these realities clearly through characters who experience confusion, fragmentation, and spiritual conflict while searching for meaning and self-understanding. Through stories such as «A Silver Dish» (1978), Bellow explores the complex relationship between religion, family, modernity, and identity. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that Jewish American literature is not only a reflection of historical events, but also a deep exploration of the human condition in a rapidly changing society.

Chapter Two

Postcolonial Theory: A Construction of A Hybrid Identity

Introduction

This chapter deals with postcolonial theory and its key conceptual frameworks. It focuses on how literature and cultural studies understand the effects of colonialism on identity, culture, and representation. Postcolonial theory is an important field that studies the relationship between colonizers and colonized societies, especially how power and history influence the way people see themselves and others.

The chapter also explores some important ideas such as Orientalism, otherness, identity, and race. These concepts help explain how colonial discourse created divisions between people and shaped unequal relationships between the West and the rest of the world. Orientalism, for example, shows how the East was often represented in a stereotypical and simplified way by Western writers. The idea of otherness explains how colonized people were seen as different or inferior compared to the colonizer.

Another important focus in this chapter is how identity is constructed in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Identity is not fixed or natural; instead, it is shaped by history, culture, and power relations. Colonialism played a major role in changing how people understood their culture, language, and traditions. As a result, postcolonial studies try to question these fixed ideas and show that identity is more complex and changing than it seems.

A key figure in this field is Homi K. Bhabha, who introduced important concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, and the Third Space. His ideas help explain how colonial and local cultures interact and create new forms of identity. Instead of seeing cultures as separate and pure, Bhabha shows that they often mix and influence each other in complex ways.

This chapter therefore uses his theories to better understand how identity is formed in postcolonial societies, especially in relation to race and subaltern studies, which contribute to a deeper understanding of identity, inequality and power.

2.1 Postcolonial Theory: Origins And Development

The origins of postcolonial studies date back Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as the turning point to shed light on something that people were seeing with only one eye. What Said argued was that the West's vast body of knowledge about the Orient was not innocent (Young, 2009). For Said; the orient was a tool of power as he demonstrated how the West "had undertaken systematic and purposeful misrepresentation and denigration of the glorious Orient through its scholarship and literature" (Şafak, 2014, p. 359). The Orient, in this view, was not discovered, it was made in the subconscious mind of people. Said defined Orientalism in three interconnected ways. As an academic discipline: anyone who studied the Orient was an Orientalist, and as a style of thought built on a rigid

distinction between East and West, and third. This third meaning was the heart of his argument. For Said, knowledge was not separate from power, knowledge was the vehicle of power.

Said traced the discourse through literature, philology, politics, and travel writing, from the late eighteenth century into his own moment. He showed how the Orient was produced as Europe's silent Other: mysterious, sensual, irrational, and in need of being spoken for, they portrayed Europe as if it were the guardian or protector of the Middle East. He insisted that this was not a fringe phenomenon. It was central to the way Europe understood itself. Hamdi captures this clearly, when she notes that Said exposed "the pivotal link between Orientalist scholarship and power" (Hamdi, 2013, p. 132).

Under similar circumstances, Edward Said showed a strong connection between Orientalist knowledge and power. In other words, the way Europe studied and wrote about the Orient was not neutral or objective. It was linked to political control. Through literature and academic writing, the Orient was often described in a limited and negative way, which made European dominance seem normal or justified. So, knowledge about the East was used to support power over it, rather than simply to understand it.

2.1.2 Development Of Postcolonial Studies

The year 1978 was a starting point for that field and the official birth of it, but the ground had been prepared earlier. Writers like Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Albert Memmi were already working on the damage colonialism does to the mind. Fanon wrote about the colonised person who looks at himself through the coloniser's eyes and feels split (Dobie, 2011). Césaire called colonialism, a thing that turns people into objects. Memmi looked at both sides, the coloniser and the colonised, and what it does to each. After Said works and studies, this voice became a coherent academic field.

As Benjamin Zachariah (2013) explains, many of the main ideas and debates of postcolonial theory first appeared in literature departments, especially in European and North American universities. He states that "where they gathered much of the theory and many of the debates on post-colonialism originated in departments of literature, most often in metropolitan or North American universi-

ties" (p. 4). Literature became an important field for postcolonial studies because it deals with human experiences, cultural conflicts, and changing identities. In this context, the Subaltern Studies became very influential. they tried to recover the voices of peasants, workers, and tribal people whose stories were often ignored in colonial history. Zachariah points out that "it is now so ingrained in hearts and minds that Subaltern Studies (SS for short) was at the vanguard of the postcolonialism wave" (2013, p. 6). The connection between Subaltern Studies and postcolonialism became stronger after the publication of *Selected Subaltern Studies* in 1988. Later, postcolonial theory developed through the works of what Lavina Dhingra Shankar (1999) calls the "Holy Trinity of postcolonial theorists: Edward Said,

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha” (p. 143). Their ideas later became very important in postcolonial studies.

2.2 Race, Identity, And Colonial Construction

Identity resists simple definition. It is not just a name or an outside appearance. It is the constellation of qualities that specifies one person from another. As Chris Lorenz (2008) explains, "identity and difference, sameness and otherness, are therefore reciprocally related; without identity there is no difference, and without difference there is no identity" (p. 1). The two concepts complete each other. but race is often misunderstood as a biological given. But in fact, it is not. Race is a social construction, a classificatory system created by human beings to determine or control inclusion and exclusion. (Abrahamsen, 2007). No image of any group is transparent or unmediated. Representation is always a fabricated and shaped by those who control the means of knowledge production; those who decide how others will be seen.

Race, identity, and representation are therefore connected categories. There is no identity without multiplicity, without the other. It is often believed that differences in race are something unnatural. Skin colour, Bone structure, eye colour and Hair type. Logically it is normal, but colonialism built these ideas in people mindset. Glenn (2015) argues that settler colonialism should be seen "not as an event but as an ongoing structure" (p. 4). The racial ideas created during colonial times did not disappear when colonies became independent, actually they continue and they still shape who has power, who gets land, and who is seen as fully human.

Colonizers always needed a reason to justify themselves because you cannot just simply take someone's land without a story. So, they created a racial hierarchy, and they called themselves civilized, advanced, white, and they called native people savage, backward, underdeveloped and outdated even less than human. "Conceiving of indigenous peoples as less than fully human justified dispossessing them and rendered them expendable and/or invisible" (p. 7). They were clever in a wicked and devilish way. Land that belonged to indigenous people was declared empty, it became nobody's land.

These racial constructions did not fade away. They became part of everyday life, Part of law, part of education and Part of who gets a job and who goes to prison. White settlers built an identity for themselves normal, civilized, and fully human. They made themselves superior while Non-white people were pushed to the edges. "White people are able to define Whiteness as normality and to position themselves as full citizens whilst pushing non-White people (including migrants and indigenous people) to the margins or even outside of the boundaries of citizenship" (p. 8). Outside they are not citizens, not even quite human.

In his interpretation of the process, Türkmen (2003) agrees th at it means to destroy first, then rebuild in your own image, trying to project the other not only different but also “dangerous, primitive,

aggressive, lazy" (p. 3). So, identity under colonial rule is not a stable thing, it is not something a person is born with and keep forever, but something that gets taken, gets broken, then put back together in a different shape. a shape that serves the colonizer. The native becomes a ghost and the colonizer becomes a prisoner and the system keeps running, feeding on the confusion of both.

2.2.3 The Concept Of Otherness

The concept of the Other deals with the relationship between the self and everything that concerns it. For Homi Bhabha, the Other is not only a philosophical idea but a consequence of colonial power discourse. Bhabha (1994) writes, "An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (p. 66). Because of this fixity, the Other becomes "at once an object of desire and derision" (p. 67).

In his interpretation of the other, Bhabha does not reduce stereotyping to only false image. He describes it as "a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressively; the masking and splitting of 'official' and phantasmatic knowledges" (p. 76). It is through this contrasting and dialogic process that the concept of the Other shifts from a binary relation (self/other) to a third space, where "the stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity" (pp. 4-5). In this space, identity becomes unstable, and the boundaries between self and other disappears, as Bhabha describes with the notion of unhomeliness: "To be unhomed is not to be homeless... The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow" (p. 9). In this sense, detachment and fragmentation become likely to occur due to the split in identity and the feeling of cultural and psychological discomfort.

2.3 Homi K. Bhabha And Colonial Discourse

Homi K. (1949-) is considered one of the most important figures in post-colonial theory and the major theorist in the analysis of colonial discourse and how the colonizer can control the minds before the land and how he uses psychological pressure to control people. Beginning with fixity term that Bhabha defined as makes the colonizer put borders around people borders that says that you are you are less than me and more savage, stating: "An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of

representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (p. 94).

This form of fixity causing a bad stereotype but it is somehow changed into a term that makes the colonizer live in anxiety because he has to repeat it in order to convince himself and others of its existence. This is called confusion or Ambivalence. It is a form of knowledge and identification that Vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated ... It is this process of ambivalence, central to the stereotype, as explored, it constructs a theory of colonial discourse. For it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctions; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalisation. (p. 94)

The unhomely condition leads to a divided sense of self, where individuals feel separated from their cultural background and even from their own identity. It creates a feeling of distance and uncertainty, as what once felt familiar begins to appear strange or unstable. This produces a sense of inner fragmentation and emotional discomfort. This idea, developed by Homi K. Bhabha, suggests that identity is not fixed or stable. Instead, it is shaped by moments of cultural confusion where home and displacement overlap. The unhomely is not only about loss, but also about living in-between two states, where belonging and alienation exist at the same time.

2.3.1 Hybridity

Hybridity is one of the most debated and complex concepts in postcolonial theory. It refers to the emergence of new cultural forms and identities that arise when the culture of the colonizer interacts and mixes with that of the colonized, producing something new that belongs to neither side in a pure form. However, (Parker, 2019) notes that "what hybridity means varies not only over time but also in different cultures and this informs different patterns of hybridity" (p. 156). This suggests that hybridity is not a fixed concept; it changes according to historical moments and cultural contexts rather than remaining constant.

Homi K. Bhabha develops this term beyond simple cultural mixing. For him, hybridity is not only a blending of identities but also a form of disruption that unsettles the authority of colonial power from within. As he states, "Hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative" (Bhabha, 1996, p. 123). In this sense, colonial symbols such as flags, religious texts, and racial classifications are no longer stable sources of authority; instead, they are reinterpreted and destabilized

when placed in hybrid cultural contexts. For example, when different elements like coffee, milk, and sugar are mixed, each loses its original purity, and a new combined taste emerges that cannot be reduced to its separate parts.

2.3.2 Mimicry

Mimicry, in Bhabha's theory, refers to the process through which the colonized subject imitates the language, behaviour, and cultural practices of the colonizer. This imitation is never complete or exact; it always contains differences, gaps, or distortions. For instance, during British colonization in India, colonized subjects often adopted English education, dress, and customs, yet their imitation remained partial and marked by local influence. Bhabha explains this condition when he writes: "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1996, p. 126). This means that colonial power demands similarity, but not full equivalence, since total sameness would threaten its authority.

Mimicry therefore produces tension and uncertainty within colonial relations. The colonized subject appears similar to the colonizer, but the slight difference creates anxiety and instability. This imitation is not a completed state but an ongoing performance that must be repeated continuously. As a result, mimicry becomes ambiguous: it can appear as compliance, but it may also carry hidden resistance, since the colonizer can never fully control its meaning or outcome.

Homi K. Bhabha, drawing on psychoanalytic ideas, further explains this dynamic in *The Location of Culture* (1994): "Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare." (p. 85). Like a chameleon-changing colour in response to its environment, mimicry functions as adaptation and concealment at the same time. Bhabha also argues, "Mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 88), meaning that imitation does not hide a stable original identity; rather, identity itself becomes fluid and constructed through the act of imitation.

2.3.3 The Third Space

The concept of the Third Space emerged in the context of debates around postcolonial culture, particularly during discussions on "Third Cinema," which focused on films produced by artists from formerly colonized countries. In one such Western film festival setting, Homi K. Bhabha introduced

the idea of the Third Space as a way of rethinking cultural identity in postcolonial contexts. As noted, Responding to a context in which, ‘a large film festival in the West’ is being used to host a conference on work by ‘Third World filmmakers and critics’, Bhabha introduces a theory of third space in this paper dedicated to the work of Third Cinema as an attempt, in his words, to take ‘the cultural and historical hybridity of the post-colonial world as the paradigmatic place of departure. (Begun, 2024, pp. 2-3)

In this perspective, Bhabha challenges the idea of returning to a “pure” precolonial culture. Colonialism has already transformed language, education, traditions, and ways of thinking, making cultural purity impossible. Instead of searching for an original untouched identity, postcolonial subjects are encouraged to engage with their present condition. The Third Space is therefore a site of creation where new identities and meanings emerge.

Bhabha also addresses Western expectations that postcolonial artists should either imitate Western forms or remain trapped in nostalgia for the past. Instead, he argues that artists should appropriate available tools, such as language, cinema, or narrative forms, and reshape them through their own historical and cultural experience.

This produces a third cultural space that is neither purely Western nor purely traditional, but something new and dynamic. The Third Space is thus not a fixed location, but an ongoing process of cultural negotiation, where creativity emerges from tension, hybridity, and historical complexity.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that postcolonial theory is not only about studying the history of colonialism, but also about understanding its lasting effects on culture, identity, and representation. It explains how colonial discourse created ideas such as “the Other,” which divided people into categories of superiority and inferiority. These ideas are still important today because they continue to influence how cultures and identities are viewed.

The chapter also highlighted the importance of Orientalism and otherness in shaping the relationship between the West and colonized societies. These concepts show that colonial power was not only political or economic, but also cultural and intellectual. It influenced how people thought about themselves and how they were represented in literature and history.

In addition, the work of Homi K. Bhabha helps us understand that identity is not fixed. Through ideas such as hybridity, mimicry, and the Third Space, he explains that cultures are always changing and interacting. Hybridity shows that new identities can emerge when different cultures meet. Mimicry shows how imitation can both follow and challenge colonial power. The Third Space explains that identity is created in an “in-between” space where different cultures mix and transform.

Overall, postcolonial theory helps us see that identity is not simple or stable. It is shaped by history, power, and cultural contact. This chapter therefore provides a basic but important understanding of how colonialism continues to influence the modern world and how new identities are formed through cultural interaction and change.

Chapter Three:
Cross-Fading Subjectivity and
Beguiled Religiosity

Introduction

This chapter analyses “*A Silver Dish*” (1978) by focusing on Woody Selbst and the way his identity is shaped by his family and his environment. It looks at how his mother and father influence him in different and often opposite ways, and how this creates confusion and conflict in his personality.

The analysis focuses on three main points. First, it looks at the role of the mother and how she teaches Woody religion, morals, and responsibility. Second, it looks at the father and how he represents a more free and risky way of living. Third, it shows how Woody is affected by both influences at the same time, which leads him to copy both sides but never fully belong to either one.

In general, the chapter shows that Woody’s identity is not stable. He is always between two ways of life, and this makes him confused about who he really is and where he belongs.

3.1 Synopsis of “*A Silver Dish*” (1978)

The story of silver dish focuses on psychological and moral struggle of Woody Selbst, a man who tries to understand his role in the life, although the struggles he was facing in his environment.

It starts when Woody was wondering about death and how people around the world are killing each other. After his father abandoned the family and told Woody “From now on you’re the man of the house.” woody was 14 years old, Woody found himself placed in the care of his aunt Rebicca and her husband Dr.kovner who was a priest converting Jews to Christianity. He lived a harsh life working as a servant filling the oven with coal, Woody had done some terrible deeds, for example he stole canned goods and bacon from his aunt and ate them. Not out of hunger, but out of love of risk. Yet at the same time he was rewarded for his religious stances. Aunt Rebicca paid woody fifty cents for each time he stood in front of a church full of worshipers and testified the he accepted Jesus as his personal redeemer, woody joined the faculty of a theological institution sponsored by a wealthy, devout Swedish women named Mrs,Skoglund. Morris warned Woody about kovner and his aunt Rebicca describing them as hypocrites. In the other side Kovner and Rebicca warned Woody too from Morris, Kovener told him: “Your father is a dangerous person. Of course, you love him; you should love him and forgive him, Voodrow, but you are old enough to understand he is leading a life of wice.”. One day Morris went to Woody and told him that Halina stole money from her husband and turned them on to him to pay off his gambling debts, so he need to pay her back before her husband know so they went to Mrs.Skoglund house to give them money. Pop stole a silver dish from her cabinet, Woody was expelled from the church.

3.2 Between Two Worlds: Maternal Order and Inherited Innocence

Relating to common sense, experiencing internal and external conflict is a natural thing for any human being. In Saul Bellow's story «A Silver Dish» (1978), Woody as a character is the example of the individual whose relationship to his parents is defined and well accentuated via his inner and outer reshaping. In the story Woody's mother is not considered as a focal figure, but her being a minor character is internalized within the events of the story.

The maternal instinct that is forged in the text is somehow psychological and physical at the same time. Woody in his religious context is considered a post-modern figure whose detachment from himself is remarkably noticed. But before growing up and experiencing the outside world, there are certain moral aspects that have certainly framed his personality by reference to his mother's way of teaching and the way she raised him. In other words, Woody's relationship to his mother may be slightly portrayed in the story, but there is a connection that is felt by reference to him acting and reacting in society.

His mother's small teachings are doubtlessly within his personality and character, something that he has lost, especially when his moral duties, and his good sense and consciousness had intermingled with societal mischief and personal desires. For example, in the story: "Mother often said, 'I hope you put that brute in your prayers. Look what he has done to us. But only pray for him, don't see him.'" (p. 3) Woody's mother implanted in him something like a compass or a moral system through her words, so she portrayed his father as a misguided person whom he must avoid following and just pray for guidance for him. These words turned into an internal judge in Woody's conscience, ordering him to stay away from his monstrous father as a condition for survival whenever he got close to him.

The mother stands as a representative of "religious forces": "That theft was part of Pop's war with Mother. With Mother, and Aunt Rebecca, and the Reverend Doctor. Pop took his stand on realism. Mother represented the forces of religion and hypochondria." (p. 14) The text explicitly portrays the theft of the silver dish as not merely an incident; it is something sacred from the mother's world, stolen by the father, and carried by the son in his conscience throughout his life. This gives the silver dish its symbolic dimension. The mother's legacy turns into a wound that does not heal, and "inherited innocence" remains present even when betrayed.

The example represents a profound contradiction born out of his mother's teachings: "In the meantime, Woody, the sinful man, was their dutiful and loving son and brother." (p. 14). This contradiction reflects the inner conflict caused by this dual upbringing. The mother gave him strict moral rules that made him always see his own mistakes, while from his father he took a wild side that pushed him to actually make those mistakes.

What the mother planted in Woody's mind did not die, but rather passed from one form to another. His sisters in the story are a living extension of the mother's world "There were Woody's two sisters as well, unmarried, in their fifties, very Christian, very straight, still living with Mama in an entirely Christian bungalow." (p. 2). Describing them in this way shows that the world of the mother did not end but continued through them. «He maintained the bungalow—this took in roofing, pointing, wiring, insulation, air-conditioning—and he paid for heat and light and food, and dressed them all out of Sears, Roebuck and Wieboldt's, and bought them a TV, which they watched as devoutly as they prayed." (p. 14). He is not just doing this out of family obligation but he is being a dutiful son, as his mother taught him to take responsibility for the weak and protect them. When he pays the bills for his mentally ill.

His mother teaches him responsibility, care, and protection, so Woody always wanted to do the right thing. However, his concept of right was shaped by his father's world, as Morris had told him a strange story, the text says: "Morris told him that this happened only to neglected women and was a sign. Morris said that if tities were not fondled and kissed they got cancer in protest. It was a cry of the flesh. And this had seemed true to Woody.

And then the narrator adds: "Personally, he had gone far out of his way to do right by women in this regard. What nature demanded. He and Pop were common, thick men, but there's nobody too gross to have ideas of delicacy." (p. 4). His mother taught him to be good, while his father gave him a misguided understanding of what it means to be good. He ended up as a man with pure intentions, but his hands were dirty with what he had learned from the man his mother had forbidden him to see. thus, good intentions became a door to sin, not because he intended evil, but because the compass he inherited from his mother had been manipulated by his father.

3.3 The Seduction of Elsewhere

Woody is a character experiencing the external world and conflict within, his motherly voice settles in as his inner judge when his father's behaviour dismantles it. Woody did not fall into the father's world overnight. It was a slow pull. A seduction. Pop did not preach or threaten. He simply lived differently. And Woody watched. Consequently, he does not go through a clear split but rather he becomes thrown in a state of confusion and distress.

The situation of fragmentation that Woody witnesses is psychological, mental and most importantly spiritual. It is related to his religious beliefs, which is the only identity that shaped him. What he cared about was living a real life, the kind that happened in poolrooms, under the "L" tracks, in crap games, or over a poker table upstairs at Brown and Koppel's. Woody remembers this: "Pop was anxious, but he was set to go. determined. 'It's no use. I can't live a life like this'" (p. 3). when he said

“life like this” he meant the Christian bungalow, the mission, the prayers, and the preteens. Pop left out and he took Woody with him.

The seduction began early. When Pop left, he told Woody, “From now on you’re the man of the house” (p. 3). That sounded like responsibility. But what came next was something else. Pop needed money to buy gasoline. Woody had saved caddie money from the Sunset Ridge Country Club. He turned it over and Pop took it without hesitation. Woody later laughs about it: “he had bankrolled his own desertion” (p. 3). That is the trap. You think you are helping but in fact you are actually being pulled. Pop’s attitude was simple: “That’ll teach you to trust your father” (p. 3). A lesson in betrayal dressed as a lesson in life.

Pop's world was physical. Digestive. Circulatory. Sexual. Woody reflects: “If Pop got serious, he talked to you about washing under the arms or in the crotch or of drying between your toes or of cooking supper, of baked beans and fried onions, of draw poker or of a certain horse in the fifth race at Arlington” (p. 7). No theology, No guilt, No future. Only now and the body. That was the allure, it was honest in its own way. No lies about salvation nor pretending to be good. Pop was elemental, and for a boy suffocated by hymns and testimonies and the Reverend Doctor’s higher life, elemental was fresh air.

Woody knew this was dangerous. but he could not resist. The story gives us a perfect image of the pull. When woody and Pop were riding the Western Avenue streetcar through a blizzard, on their way to Mrs. Skoglund to beg for money. Pop has a scheme, Woody knew it was a wrong idea, but he goes anyway. Because Pop needs him. Because Pop says, “You’re practically a man and your dad has a right to expect help from you” (p. 7). That is the seduction disguised as duty.

Then comes the theft. The stealing of the silver dish is a sign of ethical and theological imbalance where the act urges him to deceive his principles: ““He told them he was innocent. Even as he was falling, he warned that they were wronging him. He denied that he or Pop had touched Mrs. Skoglund’s property.” (p. 12)”, This is the action where the ethical imbalance appears. the father is one who stole the silver dish, but Woody. is the one who cover up He choose to protect his father and himself by letting go the principle of truthfulness that his mother had planted inside him. “even as he was falling” symbolise his inner conflict state because he knows that he is crossing the boundaries, yet he acts innocence.

Theft here is no longer just an external act he performs it has taken root within him and changed his personality. Also, the contradiction here when woody goes to prayer, his outside shape is full and shines with purity and faith, while inside him he knows well that the stolen dish is still in his father's trousers. Here, the prayer is not repentance, but a game and a strategy. The pure act of the prayer has become a tool to hide an Unholy act of theft.

Under similar circumstances, the scared in Woody's mind transforms and becomes replaced by the unholy. It is through the twoness he projects himself to the world that he reacts to the disturbance, the seduction and the estranged demeanour his father shows.

The disconnectedness from one milieu to another is not only physical, via the religious entities but it is symbolic and figurative, but it is felt because it reflected his common sense and behaviour especially when praying with Mrs Skoglund and hides the reality about the theft «Mrs. Skoglund called Woody to her office and after she had given him the folded check said that they should pray together for Morris. So once more he was on his knees... Woody asked God only to make Pop put the dish back. He kept Mrs. Skoglund on her knees as long as possible. Then he thanked her, shining with candor (as much as he knew how) for her Christian generosity." (p. 11–12),

He kisses a stranger girl but he reads the bible "Without inconsistency, next morning he did New Testament Greek: The light shine in darkness to fos en te skotia fainei—and the darkness comprehended it not." (p. 4) With this, woody is culturally and spiritually contaminated, and it has become impossible to cure him. "Pop was no worse than Woody, and Woody was no better than Pop. Pop wanted no relation to theory, and yet he was always pointing Woody toward a position a jolly, hearty, natural, likable, unprincipled position." (p. 13), that means there is no longer any difference between him and his father

3.4 Mimicry and the Fractured Self

In real life or even in literary text characters and figures identify the process of identification comes natural from the receiver to the one who taking action in behaviour in speech or in mood defining woody's behaviour is connected is an aspect to be linked to his both parents because they are the primary ones influencing him from his childhood to adulthood especially in relation to religion

Morris is not just regular and basic father to woody he is more than that woody's father is a way of life, A pattern of desire, risk-taking, and self-justification, woody learn from this habit and understands it very well, then he reproduces it at the end, this is not just an influence it is called Mimicry, the imitation of high authority's actions, Woody doesn't imitate his father in a single emotional scene, but as a way of life that shapes his body, his speech, his way of doing business, and his deepest feelings.

At the beginning of the story, the author describes Woody's relationship with danger like the one he is talking about the father, «he liked taking chances. Risk was a wonderful stimulus. ... There was no harm at all in Woody but he didn't like being entirely within the law. It was simply a question of self-respect."(p. 1)

This is his father's life style, which was transferred to his son. After all, his father lived his entire life in America in illegal way: "He voted without identification, drove without a license, didn't pay taxes, and crossed every boundary" (p. 3). the most interesting thing is that woody is a rich man he owns a whole company and have a fancy car, but he chooses to live like his father (against the law) he plants

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marijuana behind his warehouse and smuggling hashish through borders. Here when he says «a question of self-respect" this phrase is the breaking point, In the value system that Bob planted in his son, the law became a form of self-deprecation; meaning, if you obey the law, you are not a man.

Bob's main skill was his ability to make up stories and tell lies, woody imitate his father style "Woody had the makings of a salesman, a pitchman. He was aware of this when he got to his feet in church to testify before fifty or sixty people. Even though Aunt Rebecca made it worth his while, he moved his own heart when he spoke up about his faith."(p. 7). Woody can switch faces and emotions to give a convincing performance, just as his father did on Western Avenue, when he was training the act that he was going to perform for Mrs. Skoglund. Here, the Father and his son share the same tool a face that seems unable to tell lies ,Woody knows this about himself and uses it when "His heart went away as he spoke religion and he couldn't find it anywhere. In its absence, sincere behaviour got him through. ... It took everything he had to keep looking honest."(p. 7)

The clearest signs of imitation are seen right after the stolen dish act Mrs. Skoglund enters the room, Woody finds himself forced to face her, «Mrs. Skoglund stepped in, saying, 'Did I imagine, or did something shake the house?' 'I was lifting the scuttle to put coal on the fire and it fell out of my hand. I'm sorry I was so clumsy,' said Woody." (p. 11), The lie in this scene came spontaneously. Contains an apology He plays the role of a polite young man that raised by his mother while hiding the messy truth of what just happened, Woody imitated his father so well that it became almost instinctive. This imitation developed when they discover the stolen dish, Woody is called to testify in front of the committee and the president of the religious institute "He told them he was innocent. Even as he was falling, he warned that they were wronging him. He denied that he or Pop had touched Mrs. Skoglund's property." (p. 12)

On the other side, woody's mother represents the opposite side, which at first look seems impossible to imitate; she is the symbol of moral stability and duty, and woody follow it

From childhood, Woody had learned to play the role of the Christian that his mother, wanted him to be. He stands in church and testify in front of the worshipers that he is a Christian and he knows how to sings hymns,"Woody himself had been a good hymn singer. He still knew the hymns. He had testified, too. He was often sent by Aunt Rebecca to get up and tell a church full of Scandinavians that he, a Jewish lad, accepted Jesus Christ."(p. 4) but the real deal is when this imitating comes from a pure acting "He moved his own heart when he spoke up about his faith. But occasionally, without notice, his heart went away as he spoke religion and he couldn't find it anywhere. In its absence, sincere behaviour got him through."(p. 7), the heart is absent, and honest behaviour fills the gap. For him, honesty has become a physical skill; he learned from his mother that true faith is shown on the face, so the face is all he cares about. This mimicry did not produce a true believer or a pretender, but a third type of

fractured person who practices faith as he has been trained to do, even when he does not feel it inside his heart.

The “Good Guy” Face is because the Mother’s Influence on his Personality, «He didn't look like a wrongdoer, a bad guy; he looked like a good guy.”(p.1). But it also became his tool for fooling others. especially when he faces the committee, the mask reaches its peak.

Woody did not only learn from his mother values but also her role in the family, he became the one responsible for feeding and protecting just as his mother had done for her daughters."Woody, who took full responsibility for them all... He maintained the bungalow this took in roofing, pointing, wiring, insulation, air-conditioning and he paid for heat and light and food, and dressed them all out of Sears, Roebuck and Wieboldt's."(p.14)

Finally, if Woody had continued to emulate his father, he would have become like him: a man without a soul, without any feelings of guilt. And if he had fully emulated his mother, he will become as pure as she was, there is no desire and robbery, But Woody didn't complete any of the simulations, and this is the point when simulation shifts from imitation to Fractured Self, it is not a mixture of two origins, but a tension between two object that do not fit together.

3.5 Unhomed in the Third Space

It seems very unlikely that an individual would feel unwelcome within a family atmosphere. Family and social environment are supposed to create comfort and abundance in the American society, the multicultural and multi-religious lifestyle is supposedly to bring that aspect of comfort into once life being a space for productivity and belonging because its cultivated sense of freedom for the people native or immigrants to practice their rituals and live freely.

In dealing with the religious context the Jewish religion is notorious for being sceptical the Jewish culture and character are there for always in unidentifiable state of mind in regard to the pressure on them and societal perception about them

From the very beginning, Woody as a character was born in a divided family ,from a Jewish father and strict Christian mother "Born a Jew, he was a Jew facially, with a hint of Iroquois or Cherokee, but his mother had been converted more than fifty years ago by her brother-in-law, the Reverend Dr. Kovner."(p. 2), Because of this contradiction and chaos in his family, Woody became lost had no specific path to walk in , "Woody, the seminary forty years behind him, described himself as an agnostic. «This agnostic stance is not a free choice; it is the result of an incapacity to belong to any of the two faiths

This divided life between his Christian mission and his rebellious “Jewish” behaviour became visible in Woody actions, «He took canned pineapple and cut bacon from the flitch with his pocketknife.

He crammed himself with uncooked bacon."(p. 3) and after that "He was often sent by Aunt Rebecca to get up and tell a church full of Scandinavian that he, a Jewish lad, accepted Jesus Christ. For this she paid him fifty cents.""(p. 4). A contradiction makes woody feel that he does not belong neither to the Christians (because, as a Jew, he is stealing from them) nor to the Jews (because he declares his faith in Jesus). He is out of place in both sides.

Woody lives in a spacey apartment that he built on the top floor of his commercial warehouse as the story states that, "very spacious and convenient" (p 2). After that, the text says, "He lived alone; as did his wife; as did his mistress: everybody in a separate establishment." (p 2). In addition, he goes on to say "On weekends, the institutional vacancy of decades came back to the warehouse and crept under the door of Woody's apartment. It felt as empty on Sundays as churches were during the week." (p 5). Woody was lost and a stranger in his luxurious apartment. It is true he owned the residence of a successful businessman, but it lacked familial warmth and was filled with emptiness, he felt homeless.

Before his father's death, Woody lived a seemingly normal and orderly life as the text says "Because he left every Sunday morning at seven to spend the day with Pop, he had forgotten by how many churches Selbst Tile Company was surrounded. » (p 2). After his father's death, Woody becomes preoccupied with duties towards his job and multiple family members "Then for the rest of the week Woody was busy, had jobs to run, office responsibilities, family responsibilities." (p 2). That was an attempt to hide his sadness : "So, he was too busy to attend to his own feelings except, intermittently, to note to himself, 'First Thursday in the grave.' 'First Friday, and fine weather.' 'First Saturday; he's got to be getting used to it.' Under his breath he occasionally said, 'Oh, Pop.'" (p 2). Suddenly everything changes "But it was Sunday that hit him, when the bells rang all over South Chicago... He was still in bed when he heard the bells, and all at once he knew how heartbroken he was. This sudden big heartache in a man of sixty, a practical, physical, healthy-minded, and experienced man, was deeply unpleasant." (p 2). These were not just bells, but a collective cry from all the Christian denominations surrounding him; it was his moment of awakening.

Woody, the pragmatic man who always sought a material solution to every problem, refused to drink whiskey to escape this time. Instead, he drank coffee and sat lost in thought. The shock awakened him from his daily reverie and for the first time, he began to question his life: Why am so unhappy? Why I feel homeless even in my luxurious home? Why i do not belong to any of the churches whose bells rang? From this point, Woody began to recall past memories: the train in the storm, the theft from the mission, the fight with his father on Mrs. Skoglund's house. These memories were not random he was rebuilding his identity. Eventually he realized that he had always lived in a third space between father and mother, Judaism and Christianity, truth and lies, between life and death. But he had not known this until father's death created a crack in the wall, and Sunday bells brought it down completely.

Conclusion

This chapter presents an analysis of Saul Bellow's short story "*A Silver Dish*" (1978) from the lens of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, focusing on the main character's identity struggle using the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space.

The study uncovers new meanings through a deep study of the story's characters, as well as the psychological mechanisms of internal conflict and action that Woody Selbst uses to deal with his divided life between his Jewish religiosity and the gentile allure in the story "*A Silver Dish*" (1978).

Bellow includes multiple meanings that express the possibility of a fixed identity, and the complex negotiation between inherited innocence, from mother world and the experience from father world, between testimony and theft, between the holy and the secular.

The analysis reveals that Woody does not simply divided between two worlds but lives in a third space where imitating both parents produces neither a true believer nor a complete criminal, but instead a split self whose identity lies exactly in its failure to find a solution to the inner conflict.

General Conclusion

The twentieth century witnessed major transformations in Jewish American identity as immigrant communities struggled to preserve their cultural and religious heritage while adapting to the pressures of American society. These tensions became more visible after immigration restrictions such as The Johnson-Reed Act (1924) intensified assimilationist pressures on American Jews, creating the very cultural tensions that surface decades later in Saul Bellow's 'A Silver Dish' (1978), which limited Eastern European immigration and intensified processes of cultural assimilation. Within this historical context, Saul Bellow emerged as one of the most important Jewish American writers whose works explore alienation, moral conflict, and the instability of identity in modern American life. His short story *A Silver Dish* presents the psychological struggle of Woody Selbst, a man caught between his mother's religious morality and his father's worldly influence, creating a divided sense of self that shapes his behaviour and understanding of belonging.

This study examines identity negotiation in "A Silver Dish" through Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space. While previous Bellow criticism has focused on existentialism and alienation in his major novels, this dissertation investigates the psychological and symbolic complexity of this under-explored story.

Through close textual analysis, the findings reveal that Woody does not fully belong to either his mother's moral world or his father's rebellious realism. Instead, he imitates both systems simultaneously, producing a fractured identity marked by guilt, performance, and emotional instability. His prayers, lies, and contradictory behaviour demonstrate that identity in the story is not fixed but continuously negotiated.

However, this fracture is not merely negative. Woody ultimately occupies what Bhabha describes as a "third space"—not a site of paralysis, but a productive location where identity remains unstable and continuously reconfigured. His inability to embrace either Jewish tradition or secular American life is not simple loss, but the very condition that enables ongoing moral inquiry and self-revision.

The study concludes that Bellow presents identity not as a stable essence rooted in a single origin, but as a conflicted and performative process shaped by memory, inheritance, and social pressure. In doing so, this dissertation contributes to Jewish American literary studies while also demonstrating the relevance of postcolonial theory to minority identities formed within dominant societies—and, in Woody Selbst, offers a portrait of identity as a continuous, unresolved performance. The analysis further demonstrates that Woody ultimately occupies what Bhabha describes as a 'third space'—not as a site of failure or paralysis, but as a productive location where identity remains unstable and continuously reconfigured. His inability to fully embrace either Jewish tradition or secular American life is not simply a loss,

but the very condition that enables ongoing negotiation, memory work, and moral inquiry. Consequently, the study concludes that Saul Bellow presents identity not as a stable essence rooted in a single origin, but as a conflicted and performative process shaped by memory, inheritance, and social pressure. Through this reading, the dissertation contributes to Jewish American literary studies while also demonstrating that for Bellow, as for Woody Selbst, identity is less a destination than a continuous, unresolved performance.

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Résumé

Cette étude examine la négociation de l'identité dans la nouvelle « *A Silver Dish* » (1978) de Saul Bellow, inscrite dans un contexte historique marqué par des pressions assimilationnistes exercées sur les Juifs américains à la suite du Johnson-Reed Acta. Bien que les romans majeurs de Bellow aient fait l'objet d'une attention critique importante, cette nouvelle demeure relativement peu étudiée. La critique existante met souvent l'accent sur l'aliénation sans analyser en profondeur les dynamiques psychologiques et symboliques de la formation identitaire.

S'appuyant sur le cadre théorique postcolonial de Homi K. Bhabha, notamment l'hybridité, la mimicry et le *third space*, cette étude propose une analyse textuelle rapprochée du rapport entre la psyché intérieure de Woody Selbst et son environnement social. Elle soutient que son identité se construit à travers une négociation continue entre la religiosité juive héritée et la vision du monde sécularisée associée à la figure paternelle. Loin de résoudre cette tension, Woody en internalise les contradictions, produisant ainsi un espace subjectif fragmenté où l'identité demeure instable. L'analyse montre que la mémoire, l'ambivalence éthique et les conflits émotionnels de Woody relèvent d'un processus dynamique de formation identitaire plutôt que d'une opposition binaire. Dans ce cadre, le plateau en argent constitue un marqueur symbolique secondaire de l'héritage et du déplacement moral.

Mots-clés

Identité juive américaine, hybridité, négociation identitaire, religiosité, tiers-espace, assimilation, Saul Bellow.

المستخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في مسألة التفاوض حول الهوية في قصة «A Silver Dish» 1978 للكاتب سول بيلو، وذلك ضمن سياق تاريخي اتسم بتزايد الضغوط الاندماجية التي مورست على اليهود الأمريكيين عقب قانون جونسون-ريد. وعلى الرغم من الاهتمام النقدي الواسع بروايات بيلو الكبرى، فإن هذه القصة القصيرة لا تزال أقل تناوياً في الدراسات الأكاديمية. وغالباً ما ركزت القراءات النقدية على موضوع الاغتراب دون تحليل معمق للديناميات النفسية والرمزية لتشكّل الهوية.

استناداً إلى الإطار النظري ما بعد الاستعماري لهومي ك. بابا، ولا سيما مفاهيم الهجنة، والتقليد والفضاء الثالث، تعتمد هذه الدراسة تحلياً نصياً دقيقاً للعلاقة بين النفس الداخلية (mimicry)،

لوودي زلست وبيئته الاجتماعية. وتذهب إلى أن هويته تتشكل من خلال مفاوضة مستمرة بين التدين اليهودي الموروث والرؤية العلمانية المرتبطة بالشخصية الأبوية. وبدلاً من حل هذا التوتر، يقوم وودي باستبطان تناقضاته، مما ينتج فضاء ذاتياً متشظياً تنسم فيه الهوية بعدم الاستقرار وإعادة التشكل المستمر.

وتظهر الدراسة أن الذاكرة والتوتر الأخلاقي والصراعات العاطفية لدى وودي تعكس عملية ديناميكية لتشكّل الهوية بدلاً من كونها ثنائية جامدة. وفي هذا الإطار، يعدّ الطبق الفضي علماً رمزياً ثانوية للإرث والانزياح الأخلاق.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الهوية اليهودية الأمريكية، والتهجين، والتفاوض على الهوية، والتدين، والفضاء الثالث، والاندماج، وشاول بيلو.