

T.C.  
DOKUZ EYLÜL UNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI  
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI PROGRAMI  
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

**THE  
NEED FOR VICTIMIZATION AND THE SEARCH FOR  
PURIFICATION IN PHILIP ROTH'S  
“AMERICAN TRILOGY”**

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2008

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## ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

**The Need for Victimization and The Search for Purification in Philip Roth's  
'American Trilogy'**

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi

Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Programı

İnsanın kolektif bilinçaltında var olduğu savlanan mit ve arketipler bireylerin ve toplumların ortak davranış kalıplarını açıklamada kanıt olarak gösterilmektedir. Bu mit ve arketipler, İnciden günümüz romanlarına kadar edebiyatta özellikle trajediler yoluyla yansıtılmıştır. Trajediler, nedenleri tarih boyunca farklılaşsa da, insanoğlunun yenilgisini ve bunun sonucu yaşadığı acıyı, çeşitli arketipler kullanarak anlatır. Modern insanın içinde bulunduğu birtakım sosyal ve tarihsel olaylardan dolayı yaşadığı yenilgiyi anlatan trajedilerde de aynı arketiplerin kullanılması, arketiplerin zaman ve mekan tanımayan evrensel imgeler olduklarını ortaya koyar. “Günah keçisi” ve “kurban seçme” motifleri trajedilerde genellikle vurgulanan ve ayrıca bu tezde de üzerinde durulan iki arketiptir. Bu tez, kurban seçme gereksiniminin özellikle Amerikan tarihinin değişik evrelerdeki nedenlerini incelemeyi ve bu nedenlerin Philip Roth’un “Amerikan Üçlemesi” olarak adlandırdığı üç kitabındaki kahramanlarının hayatlarına yansıyan trajik sonuçlarını irdelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Esasen üzerine odaklaşılan nokta, Philip Roth’un yakın tarihli üç romanı olan *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist* ve *The Human Stain*’deki toplumsal kurallara yenik düşen trajik kahramanların deneyimleri olmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler : Mitler ve Arketipler, Kolektif Bilinçaltı, Trajedi,  
Kurban Seçme İhtiyacı, Günah Keçisi Motifi,  
Philip Roth’un “Amerikan Üçlemesi”**

**ABSTRACT**  
**Master Thesis**

**The Need for Victimization and The Search for Purification in Philip Roth's**

**'American Trilogy'**

**Dokuz Eylül University**

**Institute of Social Sciences**

**Department of Western Languages and Literatures**

**American Culture and Literature Programme**

**Myths and archetypes, which are claimed to exist in man's collective unconscious, are shown as a proof to explain the common behaviour patterns of the individuals and society. These mythical and archetypal images have been reflected in literature especially through tragedies since Old Testament till modern fiction. Though the reasons may differ through history, tragedies reflect the fall of mankind and the pain he suffers as a result of it through several archetypes. The usage of the same archetypes in the tragedies depicting the fall of man due to particular social and historical events of the era he lives in puts forward the fact that archetypal images are universal, transcending time and place. Two of the archetypal and mythical figures that are generally depicted in tragedies and also evaluated in this thesis are "scapegoat motif" and "the need for sacrifice and victimization". This thesis aims at analyzing the reasons for the need for victimization in different eras of mainly American history and its tragic outcomes that are reflected onto the lives of people in Philip Roth's "American Trilogy." The main emphasis goes to the experiences of tragic heroes who fall victim to the societal rules in Philip Roth's three recent novels, *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist* and *The Human Stain*.**

**Key Words : Myths and Archetypes, Collective Unconscious, Tragedy, The Need for Victimization, Scapegoat Motif, Philip Roth's 'American Trilogy'**

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## INTRODUCTION

Philip Roth, a world renowned contemporary Jewish-American fiction writer, is one of the most celebrated writers nominated for several important literary awards. The critical interest in Roth not only from academic circles but also from the general reading public testifies to his achievement as a fiction writer. To most critics, Roth is among the greatest of the living fiction writers in America. He has achieved a distinguished writing style and voice, which is nonetheless steeped in the greatest examples of not only American but world literature. The richness of the grounds on which his fiction is set results, to some extent, from the wide range of his own life and experiences. His professional career involves college teaching and writing fiction; likewise, his hyphenated identity as a Jewish-American combines one of the most ancient cultures with the youngest of world powers. Similarly, his mostly-Jewish characters do not only try to achieve a balance between their American and Jewish selves but they also transcend their national and ethnic identities in their pursuit of the most fundamental human problems and dilemmas. His themes thus encompass the most profound human questions from time immemorial.

A major fictional element that brings the daily concerns of his characters home to many readers all over the world and establishes them as members of the family of unforgettable characters of world literature can be found in Roth's narrative strategy of employing a narrator, another human layer. Critics classify his fiction based on his two narrators, the trademarks of his style, David Kepesh, a college professor, and Nathan Zuckerman, a fiction writer. These narrators function as fundamental elements of Philip Roth's mode of storytelling, for the events reach the readers as they are filtered through the consciousness of these two narrators who order and organize multiple stories and attach meaning to all. These narrators also stand for the two sides of Roth's own life as a member of academy and a writer of fiction respectively.

The role of Zuckerman in Roth's fiction is mainly listening. He does not take an active role in the events; instead Nathan only listens. Most of the time Nathan is



assisted with co-narrators with whose help he brings the pieces of the stories together. Thus, Nathan only listens to the stories that he is told by co-narrators and shares them with the reader by reorganizing them, filling in the gaps left by these narrators.

Roth's "American Trilogy," which is also called "Post-War Trilogy" and which will be the focus of the thesis, is narrated by Nathan Zuckerman, the Jewish-American fiction writer. The narrator of the three books that make up this trilogy--American Pastoral (1997), I Married a Communist (1998) and The Human Stain (2000)--Nathan Zuckerman is often considered Philip Roth's "alter ego" by many critics. Not only does he provide a double or a foil to Roth but he also deepens Roth's storytelling by contributing yet another layer to it. Zuckerman also points towards the fundamental mystery that lies behind all life and relativity of much of what we hold to be unchanging truths. In her dissertation entitled "A Twentieth Century American Tragedy: Defining Aristotelian Hamartia and Its Allegorical Function in Philip Roth's I Married a Communist," Short defines the role of Nathan Zuckerman in Roth's fiction:

As virtuous a narrator as Nathan is, his narration nonetheless presents some complications. The most important of these is the fact that the reader knows that Nathan is himself a novelist, and while he sets out to write about the lives of people he knows, he never knows the entire story, and therefore he relies on the other characters to complete the narrative, with the reader fully understanding that Nathan would have had no first-hand knowledge. (Short, 2002:4)

Thus many human stories are interwoven in the main story, which Nathan tries to piece together from eye witnesses and testimonies of friends and foes. In American Pastoral, the first book of Roth's "American Trilogy," Nathan tells the story of Swede Levov, a famous baseball star, who has an activist daughter, Merry, protesting the Vietnam War. Throughout the story, Nathan tells the tragic life story of Swede, whose only ideal is to enjoy the freedom America offers by becoming a part of the mainstream society. However, the ambiguous relationship between Merry and Swede due to Merry's involvement in terrorist activities and the reasons underlying her decision bring Swede's fall. Nathan brings the pieces together with

the contribution of Jerry Levov, Swede's younger brother. Thus, Jerry functions as a co-narrator with whose narration Nathan forms his story.

In I Married a Communist, Nathan Zuckerman tells the tragic story of Ira Gold, a famous radio actor, who is later accused of working for the Communist cause by his wife, Eve Frame. The fall of Ira is told to the reader by Zuckerman with the help of Ira's brother, Murray, who functions as a co-narrator in the story.

Similar to the two books mentioned above, the last book of the trilogy, in The Human Stain Nathan introduces Coleman Silk, a classics professor at Athena College who is forced to resign from his office because of making racial discrimination. Similar to Ira in I Married a Communist, the tragic ending of the protagonist is also brought by the accusation of people in The Human Stain. Nathan tells the story of Coleman who later succeeds in finding his true self by the help of Faunia, an illiterate cleaning lady, via Coleman Silk. Unlike the former books of the trilogy, Coleman himself functions as a co-narrator.

In constructing his version, the one that the readers are expected to regard closest to reality, Nathan thus gets help and information from everyone who knows the protagonist either as a friend or as an enemy, yet the only person who cannot contribute to the story is the central character whose story has prompted a deep human interest in Nathan, for often this interest begins after the death of the protagonist. Since their deaths mute them forever and leave them defenseless in the face of controversies that accompany their reputations even after death, Nathan's and by extension Roth's sympathies lie with those who do not have a voice. Without exception the lives of these characters involve a fall from a position of repute and influence to one in which they are charged with serious accusations. It is then possible to conclude that Roth's view of life is tragic, rather than comic, and it is this tragedy that underlies all human experience throughout the world from the beginning of time.

Roth's widespread success also stems from his ability to include universal themes in his fiction. Though Roth is a Jewish-American writer, he not only writes about being a Jew in America, but also presents his reader universal themes through modern tragedies from a unique perspective. Jewishness and being a Jew in America form the core of Roth's stories. However, the portrayal of Jews and their thoughts is not welcomed by the majority of Jews since Roth challenges the well-known Jewish stereotypes by depicting them as ordinary and often sexually-driven beings. Roth's Jewish protagonist is no longer in the image of a warrior or patriot but instead s/he is a human being with typical human characteristics. What distinguishes Roth's fiction from other Jewish fiction writers of the period is that his protagonists can love sexuality, they can get divorced, or they can do anything that they are not expected to do as a Jew.

Portnoy's Complaint (1969) is a perfect example for Roth's depiction of Jews in his fiction. Though being a best-seller, Portnoy's Complaint is considered rather outrageous especially by some Jewish readers who are disturbed by Roth's explicit presentation of a Jew having sexual fantasies. Before the publication of this book, Roth did not depict Jews as ordinary people who can love sexuality. For instance, in Goodbye Columbus (1959), Roth does not challenge Jewish stereotypes explicitly. That is why, Portnoy's Complaint can be considered as a turning point in Roth's portrayal of Jews as it marks a rather rebellious retaliation to those who rob Jews of their human pleasures and weaknesses in their fictional presentations.

It is clear that Philip Roth is mostly criticized by Jewish readers and conservatives since he chooses to be different from his colleagues in his representation of Jewish characters and identity. In an interview made with Asher Z. Milbauer and Donald G. Watson, Philip Roth states the most important reason for the hatred towards him in the large portion of Jewish society as follows:

After fifteen books I've depicted, largely because the Jewish generation that didn't go for me is by now less influential and the rest are no longer ashamed, if they ever were, of how Jews behave in my fiction. Because it *was* shame--theirs--that had a lot to do with that conflict. But now that everybody's more confident about the right of

Jews to have sexual thoughts and to be known to engage in authorised and unauthorised erotic practices, I think that stuff is over. (1988:4)

Hence, Roth explicitly states that most Jews have understood that it is natural for them to have sexual thoughts since they are human beings. Thus, Roth may have even influenced Jewish-Americans to gain a new identity by showing them as human beings rather than flawless and divine beings. To put it differently, as Aharon Appelfeld, in his article entitled “The Artist as a Jewish Writer” describes his fiction:

[Philip Roth] has never idealised the Jew. He has never elevated him to sainthood, never created him faceless; rather he speaks of him as if he is flesh and blood, about his human successes and his human defeats. I use “flesh and blood” because I have not found a better concept to single out the bare essence of human existence. In Philip Roth’s fiction there is hardly any Jewish philosophy, Jewish tradition, mysticism, or religion, and there is no discussion of who is a Jew or what is a Jew. There are those who are proud of their Judaism and parade it whether there is a need for it or not. And then there are those who are ashamed of it and those for whom Judaism has no importance at all. Roth’s Jews are Jews without Judaism. (1988:13)

Philip Roth tries to “alter a system of responses to ‘Jewish’ fiction to which they [the readers] had perhaps become more than a little accustomed” (Gündoğdu, 2003:1). Thus, despite the fact that Roth’s fiction without exception involves the lives, dilemmas and choices of Jewish characters, it always revolves around universal themes. As Sanford Pinsker claims, “What Roth does want to do is jump over the ethnic fence that keeps him forever chained to the expectations of the tribe” (2002:1). Thus, Roth can achieve his goal in his recent works by shaping his fiction with universal themes.

Philip Roth has drawn the attention of a large number of people since he writes about the essence of common man which was previously written by masters of art like Hawthorne. Roth successfully indicates the importance of human essence which impresses anyone from any ethnic origin and as a result makes Roth’s fiction universal. Roth does not write about a single ethnic group. Though his fiction includes characters of mainly Jewish origin, his main focus is on the quest of

characters for the core of man's heart. Thus, Roth brings people of different origins together by showing the tragedies of common man in the modern world.

I propose to show in this thesis that the "American Trilogy" focuses on universal themes rather than the individuals' Jewishness or Americanness. Roth presents his characters as individuals who suffer from social upheavals such as the Vietnam War, the McCarthy era or the impeachment of Bill Clinton. Their ethnic or religious roots are not important in his fiction since everyone, no matter which ethnic or religious group they belong to, suffers from varying forms of social oppression. Some of these sufferings are related to the patterns which have existed since the beginning of civilization: the need for "sacrifice" and "victimization," the resulting need for "secrecy" in human life, which in turn causes "constructed selves" and thus a clash between "appearance" and "reality." My focus will be on the underlying reasons behind the attitudes of people trying to name some as "other" and the reason for victimizing them in order to suppress their own fears of confronting their raw-selves.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the characteristics of tragedies will be examined mainly through Northrop Frye's analysis of tragedy and tragic hero. From the beginning of humanity, the tone in literary works is generally tragic. Even the most ancient stories such as the Genesis in the Bible focus on the fall of man and thus have a tragic tone. The general acceptance of the fallenness of mankind makes the tragedy a more fitting expression of the human condition. Mankind falls because of a flaw inherent in this condition. Not only the hero's "flaw" but also the influence of "fate" on the lives of the characters--or sometimes both of them--causes the fall of the hero. Though the time periods and the places the events depicted in each work differ from each other, still certain archetypal motifs such as "scapegoat motif" or "(self)-sacrifice theme" evoke the same feelings in the audience and leave them with a feeling of *catharsis*. It is not surprising that such patterns can be detected not only in the works of ancient literature such as the Old Testament but also in fiction past and present.

In the second chapter of the thesis, some archetypal motifs based on the description of the psychologist-philosopher Carl Gustav Jung will be presented. Since Jung claims that all humans have these archetypal motifs and images in their collective unconscious, these symbols are universal and, therefore, evoke the same feelings regardless of time and place. Following the theoretical description of “archetypes” and “collective unconscious,” Jung’s four archetypes--Mother, Rebirth, Spirit and Trickster--will be applied to Roth’s “American Trilogy”.

In the third chapter of the thesis, the important historical moments in American history and their effects on the lives of people are examined through Roth’s recent “American Trilogy” made up of American Pastoral, I Married a Communist and The Human Stain. The Vietnam War, the McCarthyism of the 1950s and the politics of the 1990s during the impeachment of Bill Clinton all have an impact on the individuals since they directly or indirectly lead to the fall of the tragic heroes in these three novels. The fall of the heroes is due to their being identified as “other” as a result of falling victim to particular moments of American history. Similar to Ira Gold, the famous radio actor who is accused of being a Communist upon the charges of his wife, Eve Frame, in I Married a Communist, Coleman Silk, the college professor, is also victimized upon the charges of racial discrimination in The Human Stain. Though the culpability of both protagonists is not proved, society identifies them as “victim” and punishes them. Thus, the effects of particular historical moments should be taken into consideration while evaluating the lives of the characters in three novels. What becomes clear after spotting the effects of such moments in American history is that Roth succeeds in reflecting “how these social changes can affect the capabilities of thought, interpretation and perception of people” (Gündoğdu 17).

Finally, the last chapter of the thesis aims at shedding light on the clash between appearance and reality and the dominance of secrecy in the lives of the protagonists in “American Trilogy.” In each novel, Roth’s protagonists try to avoid confronting reality. They are caught between a world of appearances and their own realities that they have had to repress. In the Pulitzer winning American Pastoral,

Philip Roth presents to the reader a character named Seymour Levov who is in fact the representative of America itself. Though descending from a Jewish origin, Swede becomes one of the few who can achieve an American way of life despite not being a WASP. Swede's flaw, Roth asserts through Nathan Zuckerman, is his deficiency in perceiving deceptiveness and falsity first in himself and then in the society he lives in. In other words, Swede's desire to lead an American way of life prevents him from seeing the reality. Due to his inability to see the "reality" inside and outside, he completely loses contact first with his daughter, Merry and then with his wife, Dawn. Swede fails in seeing the fact that his identity is based on illusions and his "dream land" is nothing but a wasteland.

The protagonists in the other two books of the trilogy are more alike since both Ira Gold in I Married a Communist and Coleman Silk in The Human Stain choose to "pass" as someone else with different intentions. Though their intentions are not the same, still the clash between "appearance" and "reality" has huge impact on both their lives. Ira Gold leads a life which lacks reality. As a result of killing someone in a fight, Ira hides his real name and starts working in a mine with a new name in order not to be found out. His choice to "pass" as another person for the rest of his life leads him to have a double life, one as a killer and one as a Communist radio star. Thus he creates his "self" as a result of his social and personal connections.

Similar to Ira, Coleman Silk's choice to "pass" as a Jew though descending from African-American heritage changes the rest of his life. By starting a new life which is full of "secrecy" and "appearance," he rejects his origin, his family and everything related to his early life. Even though he seems to manage to become successful in the academy, he is ironically accused of racial discrimination in the end. After his affair with an illiterate cleaning woman, Faunia, Coleman finds his true self. He rejects the titles and social ranks he previously accepted willingly. He no more wants to "pass" as a Jew nor as anything that he is really not. The only thing he wants is to lead a life of his own. Though he tragically dies in a car accident

together with Faunia, he still remains to be the one who in the end understands the importance of his existence.

Finally, the last chapter of the thesis is based on the “constructed selves” of the protagonists, which eventually lead to their “victimization.” The victimization Roth presents is two fold: one can become a scapegoat and be victimized as s/he is considered to be “other” like Ira and Coleman, or one can victimize oneself by ignoring his or her “true identity” like Swede. Thus, the perspective through which Roth reflects his fiction enables the reader to evaluate both aspects.

The following chapter will show the differences in terms of sacrifice from ancient times till modern times. The type of sacrifice that The Old Testament and New Testaments show has changed in modern world as a result of society’s usurpation of the role of God in sacrificial rituals. This change will be examined via tragedies in a chronological order. While these tragedies show the difference in sacrificial ritual, they also point out the fact that they evoke the same feelings in people of different origins through certain archetypal and mythical elements regardless of time.



## CHAPTER ONE

### TRAGEDY AND THE TRAGIC PLOT: A BRIEF HISTORY

Tragedies have existed since the beginning of mankind. Though the time periods change, the themes used in tragedies remain the same. Therefore, it is not surprising that the themes presented in Greek tragedies can also be detected in modern tragedies with slight differences. The writers employ certain archetypal motifs and mythic elements in tragedies. Some of these archetypal patterns can be “scapegoat motif,” “(self-)sacrifice of the hero” or “victimization of ‘the other.’” Since myths, like tragedies, reflect the fears and aspirations of people, they are universal. Though these fears and aspirations can change slightly through centuries, still the basic ones remain unchanged. These become archetypes and are reflected through tragedies. Thus, this is exactly the reason why the themes in tragedies are universal.

In its everyday usage, the term, tragedy is often used to refer to an event with a sad and unfortunate ending. However, the philosopher, Aristotle defines tragedy in a more specific way. According to Aristotle, there are three essential elements of tragedy, namely “*catharsis*,” “flaw” and “fate.” To start with, the aim of tragedy is to lead to *catharsis* as a result of its capacity for arousing fear and pity. *Catharsis* refers to a sudden emotional breakdown due to the feelings of fear and pity. This process in turn results in revitalization. The audience would feel relieved upon seeing somebody else, rather than himself, suffer from a bad event. *Catharsis* is then a sort of “emotional cleansing,” functioning as a medium for purification. On seeing somebody else, but not himself, suffering from a catastrophe, the audience is purified psychologically. Likewise, by putting the blame on the victim, the society is believed to be purified from their sins. Thus, *catharsis* has a twofold function both on the personal/psychological and societal levels.

The definition of tragedy by Aristotle also includes the tragic hero’s “flaw.” There must be a flaw in the character which would lead to his downfall. Though the tragic hero or heroine is a perfect and, most of the time, a noble being, s/he suffers as

a result of a trivial mistake s/he makes. In the book Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye claims that “the tragic process going must be primarily a violation of *moral* law, whether human or divine; in short, that Aristotle’s hamartia or ‘flaw’ must have an essential connection with sin or wrongdoing” (1957:210). The most common form of hamartia is ‘hybris.’ Frye argues that nearly all of the tragic heroes “possess hybris, a proud, passionate, obsessed or soaring mind which brings about a morally intelligible downfall” (210).

Nevertheless, the fall of the tragic hero is not only because of his “flaw”; “fate” is also another major element shaping the life of the hero in tragedies. No one can challenge fate no matter how hard they try. Fate is the ultimate power which can either bring the fall or the rise of the hero. It is more powerful than gods so much so that even they cannot change or challenge it. The power of fate on the lives of the heroes in tragedies is also acknowledged by Northrop Frye. In his book Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye states: “. . . all tragedy exhibits the omnipotence of an external fate. And, of course, the overwhelming majority of tragedies do leave us with a sense of the supremacy of impersonal power and of the limitation of human effort” (209).

### **1.1 Religion and Tragedy: Examples From The Old and New Testaments**

Since tragedies date back to the beginning of mankind, it is possible to find them in one form or another in the most ancient human documents. From The Old Testament until today we can detect various types of tragedies stemming from different reasons. The Old and New Testaments, which are among the oldest human myths, are both based on tragic events. In Biblical tradition, Adam and Christ are two significant tragic heroes. “The tragic hero is typically on top of the wheel of fortune, half-way between human society on the ground and something greater in the sky. Prometheus, Adam, and Christ hang between heaven and earth, between a world of paradisaal freedom and a world of bondage” (Frye 207). Since both Adam and Christ are noble, their downfall causes tragedy. An event can be considered as a tragedy as

long as a noble suffers. Since a noble person is perfect and, therefore, is not expected to fall, his fall is definitely a tragedy. The tragic fall of Adam and Eve from paradise upon eating “the forbidden fruit” made them mortal. Thus, according to Christian tradition, their children and the whole creation fell and became mortal after Adam fell. Eve’s fall is not important since the tragic hero who is noble is Adam. The second chance at salvation is provided by Jesus, who came to atone for the fall of Adam and sacrificed himself for man’s individual sins.

Tragedies are important since they are filled with archetypal images. Among these archetypal images can be found the images of “scapegoat” and “(self)-sacrifice.” All these archetypal images can be detected in the Biblical tradition. These examples of sacrifice in both the Old Testament and the New Testament show that the “scapegoat motif” and “sacrificial elements” lie behind religion and culture. The believers do offerings and make sacrifices to show how faithful they are and to prevent any kind of catastrophe that God may send to punish them. They believe that if they make sacrifices, their land will be “restored to fruitfulness” and they will not suffer. “The hero, with whom the welfare of the tribe or nation is identified must die to atone for the people’s sins and restore the land to fruitfulness” (Guerin, 1979:162). Literary expressions of such a belief start with the Greek tragedies and the Old Testament to be continued in Shakespeare’s tragic plays.

The types of sacrifice vary in Biblical tradition. The sacrifices can be categorized in three groups: First, a noble person can be sacrificed because of a wrongdoing; next, a noble person can sacrifice someone else to God because of his belief; and finally, a noble person can sacrifice himself. Adam and Eve’s fall from grace is among the first type of sacrifice. His fall from the Garden of Eden is due to his wrongdoing. He falls together with Eve upon eating the forbidden fruit which they were not allowed to eat. Thus, he suffers from an event in which he participates.

However, Abraham’s sacrifice of his own son, Isaac, does not come as a result of Isaac’s wrongdoing. Instead, he happens to be a “scapegoat” or “victim” in this sacrifice. Abraham offers his son as a sacrifice due to his belief in God. He

believes that God tests his belief by asking him to sacrifice what is dearest to Abraham's heart. The following excerpt from the Old Testament demonstrates the great challenge God places in front of Abraham: Will he obey God and show Him he fears Him, or will he choose his only son and defy God's will?:

When (Abraham and Isaac) came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. (Genesis 22:9-13)<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Abraham takes a test and thinks of sacrificing his child since he wants to show God that he is faithful. The "Lamb" which presents innocence becomes a sacrificial image. This image is not only used in the sacrifice of Isaac by his father but also associated with Jesus. Since Jesus claimed to rise from death again on the third day, on seeing Jesus Christ coming towards him, John the Baptist says: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).<sup>2</sup> Though these two sacrifices differ in practice since one is a sacrifice of someone else and the other is self-sacrifice, they present the symbolic image of "sacrifice" which is the "lamb." As symbols and images are already present in our "collective unconscious" from the time we are born, whenever one sees the "lamb" image, s/he relates it to sacrifice.

Though Abraham sets out to sacrifice his son, Isaac rather than himself, Jesus sacrifices himself for the welfare of the following generations. Thus, Jesus appears to be a "noble and blameless victim" since he sacrifices himself for curing the wrong others have done. What distinguishes Jesus' sacrifice from Isaac's is that Jesus gives his life of his own free will. He says, "Therefore doth my father love me, because I

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<sup>1</sup> <http://biblesources.bible.com/bible-read-php> (03.11.2007).

<sup>2</sup> <http://biblesources.bible.com/bible-read-php> (03.11.2007).

lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17-18).<sup>3</sup> Once Jesus Christ offers his body as a sacrifice, the followers are sanctified, and all sins are believed to be taken away with this holy sacrifice. In Matt. 20:28 and in Mark 10:45 Jesus says that he had come to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. The burnt offerings or sin offerings are no more necessary. Only that single sacrifice clears away the sins that are previously committed.

Since the fall of man is directly related to tragedy, according to Biblical tradition then, tragedies have existed from the beginning of mankind and will continue to exist so long as mankind lives on earth. Thus, the sacrificial heroes from The Old and New Testaments are not the only examples for tragedies since the examples of tragedy and tragic heroes can be found everywhere regardless of time and place. Some of the most famous tragedies showing the fall of the noble and semi-divine hero are found in ancient Greek culture.

## **1.2 Tragedy and the Greek Culture:**

The Greek tragedy is believed to be originated in the worship of Dionysus who is the deity of wild vegetation, fruits, and especially the vine. Every year at the opening of Spring, the birth and death of Dionysus used to be celebrated with hymns by a chorus. As years passed, spoken lines began to be inserted in the performances as well. These dialogues were between the chorus and the chorus leader who were seated at the “sacrificial” table. The worship of Dionysus is thus closely related not only to the fertility rites but also to the idea of sacrifice, which in fact is carried out so that people could have richer harvests. The sacrifice, mostly animals in these rituals, had to be of central importance to the lives of people. Thus, this ritual formed the basis for the Greek tragedy.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://biblesources.bible.com/bible-read-php> (03.11.2007).

The outcome of the tragedy shows that in Greek culture, religion and myth are linked to each other. Greek tragedies are dominated by mythical elements that are larger than life. For instance, gods often interfere in the lives of the mortals. However, not even the gods can challenge the fate since fate is stronger than the gods. If the hero is fated to do something, any effort he makes to avoid such an event will definitely be in vain. However, though gods cannot change the fate of an individual, there are negotiable areas that gods can decide for the humans in Greek tragedies.

The leading figures of Greek tragedy are Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Thanks to their works, Aristotle defines tragedy. Sophocles is one of the most influential poets to be examined in Greek tragedy. Many “scholars continue to debate vigorously what he is about, and his plays remain towering monuments of ancient literature, touchstones for defining tragedy and the tragic” (Segal, 1995:1). Sophocles’ plays are tragic since they show the undeserved sufferings of powerful heroes or heroines, which result in an abrupt change in their lives. The tragic hero or heroines cannot challenge fate, and at the same time they suffer from the ambiguities of their heroic greatness. Thus, both of these bring about the tragic fall of the protagonist in the plays of Sophocles. Charles Segal describes the tragic hero in the tragedies of Sophocles in his book, Sophocles’ Tragic World as follows: “With the beginning of what we may call the modern phase of Sophoclean interpretation with Hegel, tragedy has seemed closely linked to individuality; and Sophocles has appeared as the creator of the ‘tragic hero’ in all his or her problematical mixture of courage and folly, idealism and blindness, self-sacrifice and self-destructiveness” (2). In his most famous play, Oedipus Tyrannus, Sophocles reveals a fiction of blind self-destructiveness and self-sacrifice of the tragic hero, which is made to restore the land to fruitfulness. The play contains “sacrificial-scapegoat” motif. “In the king-as-sacrificial-scapegoat motif, the welfare of the state, both human and natural (Thebes is stricken by both plague and drought), is bound up with the personal fate of the ruler; only after Oedipus has offered himself up as a scapegoat is the land redeemed” (Guerin 168).

The play starts with a revelation of a prophecy which is told to the King and queen of ancient Thebes before their son is born. According to this, their new-born son would murder his father and marry his mother as soon as he grew up. On hearing this prophecy, the King orders someone to pierce the baby's heels and abandon him to die in wilderness. However, a shepherd saves the child and brings him up as his own child. Once Oedipus learns the prophecy when he grows up, he decides to go to Thebes. On his way, he encounters an old man, whom he will later learn to be his father Laius, and some other men and kills them all. When he arrives at Thebes, he sees the Sphinx and by solving her riddle, frees the city which was under her spell. After these events, he rules Thebes for many years and has four children by Queen Jocasta, his mother whom he never saw and whom he marries after he successfully solves the city's spell. However, since his father Laius' murderer, is still unpunished, the kingdom suffers from many misfortunes. In order to protect the kingdom from these troubles, Oedipus starts an investigation to find Laius' slayer. Once he learns that he himself was the one who killed Laius and married his mother, he blinds himself and goes into exile. Thanks to his sacrificial punishment, Thebes is restored to fruitfulness.

Taking the play and many other tragic plays into consideration, the reason lying beneath "the need for sacrifice," which appears in a variety of forms of victimization in our modern world, is the necessity of feeling purified. Though the types of sacrifice can change, its aim still remains the same. In other words, whether the hero sacrifices himself or becomes sacrificed as "a scapegoat," the reason behind each case is man's deep-seated fears and sense of guilt and the resulting necessity of taking the blame of others' sins or placing his sins on someone else. It is only after such a purifying act of relegated suffering that man can enjoy the relief of being innocent. This is not a merely psychological purification, though; more importantly the community's purification from all influences of evil is possible only with this act. Therefore, man also expects the land that he lives on to be fertile and productive after making his sacrifice which would save man from God's rage.

John Zerzan explains the reason why there is “a need for sacrifice” among man from ancient times till today in his book Gelecekteki İlkel. According to Zerzan, such a need dates back to Paleolithic era. In his book, Zerzan claims that it was only after man left hunting and gathering aside and started to cultivate the land that he felt the necessity of language, ritual and art. Zerzan points out the harmony and peace in the lives of people on account of having equality among sexes and not having social hierarchy in the Lower Paleolithic era, when people used to gather food mostly and hunt animals in times of necessity. However, in the Upper Paleolithic era, coinciding with the emergence of language, man changed and alienated himself from nature. The emergence of language presented a shift from a life in which people were at peace with nature to a life in which people were distanced from nature and used symbols to fill the gap between nature and himself. Hierarchy, owning property, agriculture, inequality and even the concept of time were the outcomes of the symbolic world. Moreover, with the emergence of language and agriculture, some rituals began to be held. Such rituals consisted of “sacrifices” that were made to the deities to prevent any catastrophe that they may send for man’s sin of severing ties with Mother Nature. Thus, after the sacrifices they presented to gods, the community was thought to be purified.

Hence, this is exactly what happens in the play, Oedipus Tyrannus. With the self-sacrifice of the hero, the land is believed to be restored to its fruitfulness since the city is directly related to the person it is ruled by. Since man no longer lives in the perfect and harmonious cycle of nature, he is responsible for keeping the balance in social life. Anything that goes awry especially at the top sections of social order has dire consequences not only for one person but for the whole community. When Laius dies in the hands of his own son, for example, the social order in all the city of Thebes is disturbed. Similarly, if the ruler is corrupt, then the city and its people will suffer just like Denmark under the leadership of Claudius in the play, Hamlet. However, if the ruler purifies himself from the sins he committed, then the city is also purified just like Thebes under the sovereignty of Oedipus.



Moreover, apart from the theme of self-sacrifice which is often presented by the tragic hero, the influence of fate cannot be ignored in the play, Oedipus Tyrannus. The harbinger of fate in this play is the prophecy at the beginning, which announces the approaching tragedy. Though his father tries to prevent it by sending away Oedipus to allow him to die in wilderness, he is magically saved by a shepherd who appears out of nowhere. His parents cannot challenge fate and cannot prevent the events which are meant to happen. Oedipus' being destined to be rescued from wilderness by a shepherd is not the only example for the power of fate over hero's life. Without knowing the truth, he kills his own father and by answering the Sphinx's riddle, he starts to rule the city and marries his mother. Such happenings which take place out of the control of human power demonstrate that there is an impersonal power called fate, which neither people nor gods can challenge. None of the events that are decreed by fate can be prevented. Thus, the human effort is limited before the power of fate, and therefore, things happen as they are meant to happen.

Not only the power of fate but also the flaw in Oedipus causes his tragic fall. Oedipus' flaw is his arrogance and pride. Due to his excessive self-confidence, Oedipus neglects the warnings of people around him. As a result, his flaw leads to his fall. Thus, the play presents all the features which are supposed to exist in a tragedy according to the definition made by Aristotle.

Both the flaw and fate are found in Sophocles' tragic play, Oedipus Tyrannus. Besides these two important elements of tragedy, the effect of *catharsis*, which is another element forming Aristotelian tragedy, is seen. Since *catharsis* is directly related to purification, both the city and the audience watching the play are purified as s/he does not suffer from such a bad event thanks to the "royal-scapegoat" who save the city and make it fruitful again by sacrificing himself. Such twofold purification can also be seen in Shakespearean tragedies, namely in Hamlet.

### 1.3 Shakespearean Tragedy and Tragic Plot:

Similar to the Greek tragedies, in Shakespeare's plays, the death of the hero, who is often noble but has a flaw in his character, is inevitable since the welfare of the city or the country is believed to be restored only after his death. The play, Hamlet, one of the Shakespeare's tragic masterpieces, is considered to be a "revenge-tragedy" since Hamlet tries to take his revenge on his uncle, Claudius, who killed Hamlet's father to ascend to the throne. Due to his indecisiveness, Hamlet continually delays taking his father's revenge, and this attitude causes more catastrophic events like the deaths of his mother and his beloved, Ophelia. Though Hamlet's only "flaw" is his being indecisive and late in taking action, this small flaw causes his fall. Hamlet even kills someone whom he mistakes for his uncle, Claudius. Though the tragic hero is given the greatest dignity at first, sooner or later he faces fall due to hybris and hamartia.

Fate also plays an important role in Hamlet. When Hamlet decides to take his revenge on his uncle, Claudius, for killing his father and marrying his mother, noticing and fearing his safety, Claudius decides to send Hamlet to England. However, pirates attack Hamlet's ship, and he is forced to come back to Denmark. Thus, an impersonal power does not let him out of the country. Since both are destined to die at the hands of each other, Claudius' efforts to send Hamlet to England turn out to be in vain. Similar to Greek tragedies, fate is too powerful to be shaped and changed by human intervention.

Like in the ancient Greek tragedies, there are mythical elements and archetypal figures in Shakespeare tragedies. One of these figures is the "royal scapegoat motif." In Hamlet, the protagonist of the title is the royal scapegoat. Hamlet dies at the end of the play by the touch of a poisonous sword in a duel which is organized as a trap for Hamlet by his uncle, Claudius. However, "[n]ot only must all those die who have been infected by the evil contagion, but the prince-hero himself must suffer 'crucifixion' before Denmark can be purged and reborn under the healthy new regime of Fortinbras," for although Hamlet dies in the end, he

eventually manages to kill his uncle, Claudius. (Guerin 172). Hence, since the state is identified with its ruler, Denmark is supposed to be in chaos under the regime of Claudius. Once he is overthrown by Prince Hamlet, “the royal scapegoat,” the city is purified (Guerin 172). Thus, the nobler the scapegoat is, the larger effect the sacrifice will have on the lives of the people.

The interference of gods in the lives of the heroes is not expected in Shakespearean tragedies. Instead, chance happenings and internal and external conflicts are indispensable parts of Shakespeare’s plays. Moreover, like the Greek tragic plays, Shakespeare introduces supernatural elements such as ghosts or witches. Finally, there is always an “anti-hero” who leads to the suffering and eventually to the death of the hero in Shakespearean tragedies.

According to many scholars, the core of Shakespeare’s play, Hamlet is mythic. Gilbert Murray, one of the first modern scholars, believes that there are parallels between the mythic elements in Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus. He indicates that the heroes of both plays are haunted sacrificial figures. What is more striking is that Murray claims that the plots of both plays are drawn from legends, which embody archetypal figures and images, the most significant of which is the royal sacrifice. Francis Fergusson shows the similarities between these two tragedies and states:

In both plays a royal sufferer is associated with pollution, in its very sources, of an entire social order. Both plays open with an invocation for the well-being of the endangered body politic. In both, the destiny of the individual and of the society are closely intertwined; and in both the suffering of the royal victim seems to be necessary before purgation and renewal can be achieved. (Guerin 170)

In both plays, there are further similar mythic elements, the first of which is the father figure. While Oedipus kills his own father without knowing the truth, Hamlet’s father gets killed by his uncle, Claudius. The father figures in both plays are very powerful. Though Hamlet’s father is dead, he can still shape his son’s life and tell him what to do by appearing as a ghost. Similar to Hamlet, in Oedipus Tyrannus, the reader also sees the power of the father. When Oedipus’ father was

alive, he changed Oedipus' life by abandoning him in wilderness. Even after his death, he continued to shape Oedipus' life since both Oedipus and the city he rules could not feel relieved until Oedipus found the murderer of his father. Thus, the tragic fates of both protagonists are prepared by their own fathers even before they were born. This demonstrates both the inevitability of fate and the unbreakable ties between the hero and his community.

Their loss of the father figure leads to an ambiguous relationship with their mothers in both plays. According to many Freudian critics, both plays reveal the tragic heroes' deepdown wishes to get rid of the fathers in order to be with their mothers. Some scholars believe that Hamlet constantly delays taking his revenge on his uncle since he considers his uncle as his own reflection. Hamlet unconsciously wants his father to die in order to be with his mother. However, the only way he can safely do this is by identifying himself with his uncle. The uncle is the hidden alterego that Hamlet carries in himself. Similarly, Oedipus also desires to be with his mother. Freud describes such structure of the unconscious as the Oedipus complex. According to Freud, Oedipus hated his father vigorously and wanted to get rid of this powerful father figure in order to be with his mother. However, this desire is repressed in Oedipus' unconscious. For Freud, the reason why Oedipus killed his father is "the repressed incestuous and patricidal desires of the unconscious" (Segal 170).

Freud's diagnosis of such a psychological state refers not only to specific cases in history but to all humanity; therefore, it would not be wrong to call them reflections of archetypal fears and aspirations. Although the time periods of both plays differ, the mythical elements that are common in two plays make these tragedies universal since such mythical elements and archetypal figures bind people regardless of time and place. That is to say, any tragic work of art of any nationality can evoke the same feelings in any culture at any time period. That is why, certain mythic elements can also be detected in the works of contemporary writers. Thus, myths still bring and most probably will continue to bring people together through fiction.

#### 1.4 American Purification Rites: Witch Hunts, Past and Present:

Similar to English literature, there are tragedies depicting the victimization of man as a result of his fall in American literature. While Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, which is identified as a milestone in American literature by many, show the tragic consequences of victimization of a person through the perspective of Puritan community, Philip Roth's The Human Stain points at the modern type of victimization of one and its tragic consequences on the lives of many. Though the time periods of both tragedies are beyond comparison, still both evoke the same feelings through certain and particularly similar archetypal figures. Furthermore, one other famous play writer Arthur Miller shows the absurdity of accusing someone and victimizing "other" during Salem witch trials. However, by referring to the Salem trials, what Miller really criticizes the absurdity of the McCarthy era in 1950s America.

Ostracism and victimization are some of the oldest themes of literature, one of whose best examples can be also found in the classic American fiction such Hawthorne's. Roth is one of the literary heirs of Nathaniel Hawthorne as both writers have a tendency to focus on such themes and the resulting human suffering and tragedy. In Roth's fiction, like that of Hawthorne's, the protagonists are either looking for their essence or trying to "victimize" the ones whom they call and treat as "other" for fear of confronting the reality of their lives which they choose to suppress. The similarities between especially Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and Philip Roth's The Human Stain are significant. In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne presents a female character, Hester, who suffers from the pressure of the Puritan community for giving birth to a child, Pearl, out of wedlock. Hester does not reveal the identity of Pearl's father and, therefore, is condemned to wear the letter "A"--for adultery--on her breast for the rest of her life. Chillingworth, Hester's missing husband, who is determined to find and avenge Hester's co-sinner, represents basically the community's hunger for revenge for an act, which, by today's standards, would be considered a matter of the private sphere, not a public issue. When, upon his arrival, he attaches himself to Reverend Dimmesdale, Hester's

partner in sin, he acts as the young man's conscience that has internalized the social definitions of sin and punishment. In the end, Dimmesdale makes his affair with Hester public and finds his essence by rejecting his social title. Though Dimmesdale eventually makes his affair with Hester public, he suffers for a long time since he cannot make the right decision easily due to his social rank and position of influence. Thus, Hawthorne shows not only how influential and powerful community is on the lives of the protagonists, but also how the community treats someone as "other" as a way of purifying the sins that permeate society as a whole.

Like Hawthorne, Roth questions the rightness or wrongness of calling and treating people as "other" and punishing them by either leaving them as social outcasts like Hawthorne's Hester in The Scarlet Letter or forcing them to pay for the sins which they were believed to have committed like Roth's Coleman Silk in The Human Stain. In other words, both Hawthorne and Roth demonstrate and, by so doing, call for a resistance against the intervention of community into the lives of people by judging and punishing them according to social norms, which often go against the very core of human existence. In his article, Ross Posnock comments on Roth's theme in The Human Stain and his characterization of Coleman Silk: "A colleague eulogizes Coleman as an 'American individualist' who, in the tradition of 'Hawthorne, Melville, and Thoreau,' resisted the 'coercions of a censorious community'" (2001:7). Like his nineteenth century predecessors, Roth believes that no human being can judge the purity of a man's heart. Coleman Silk, a college professor of African-American descent passing as a Jew, is wrongly accused of racially discriminating against two black students in his class. After his ensuing resignation from his office, Coleman begins to realize the power of social constraints that surround human life. Instrumental in this realization is his affair with an illiterate cleaning lady, Faunia. Yet, society will not let even two outcasts have an alternative existence, which may cause the whole system to be radically questioned and challenged by proving to the other members that different lives are possible. In this case, like Chillingworth in The Scarlet Letter, Faunia's ex-husband Lester Farley and the new dean of faculty in Coleman's department Delphine Roux become the agents of "a censorious community," not only by causing the destruction of Coleman and

Faunia but also by distorting and cleaning the evidences of their short-lived happiness together.

Coleman resists the social rules, titles and everything he once accepted and finds his true self by being himself, as he is purified of all titles and identities. However, he does not have time left to enjoy the freedom he has found with Faunia since they both die tragically after finding their true selves. Moreover, in both novels women characters, with whom the male protagonists have a secret liaison, namely Hester and Faunia, help their sexual partners find their raw-selves. Both Hester and Faunia prevent the tragic heroes from leading a double life by helping them let their “profounder-self” out (Posnock 8). Hence, what binds these two books is the prevailing universal themes that are also the trademarks of great literature.

Another American tragedy containing such universal motifs is The Crucible by Arthur Miller. Arthur Miller wrote the play The Crucible in the 1950s in order to shed light on the Red Scare that the McCarthy regime was incessantly propagating to silence opposition. Miller presents the political drama in 1950s America when many intellectuals with the slightest oppositional tendency were sued and imprisoned by referring to an earlier period in the 1690s when many people, mainly women, were accused of being witches and burnt at stake. Both periods testify to the mass hysteria resulting in purification rites of sorts and created by fear and terror in times of political oppression.

Salem witch trials took place in an era when people easily accused one another of being witches for the events which they could not comprehend. They did not need to have evidence to prove the suspects’ guilt. Most suspects were convicted of their so-called crimes due to the verbal accusations made by their neighbours. Since the accused were considered to be odd, they were condemned to be burnt at the stake. These accused were mainly women whom the patriarchal society considered as a threat. They were people who were left out and eventually punished by the paranoid society that feared their inexplainable power. The world history is full of

different versions of similar kinds of victimization due to people's intolerance towards other people, namely the groups that make up the social "other."

In The Crucible, Arthur Miller presents some striking examples of victimization and the tragic ending of these characters. When the daughter of the local preacher gets ill after a gathering with some local girls in the forest, witchcraft rumour starts to spread. Most start to believe that these girls are under a spell, and they suffer from some kind of witchcraft. To put an end to these speculations, everyone involved in the gathering starts to be questioned. This kind of questioning is similar to the questioning of the accused communists by the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities during McCarthy era. In the play, Miller introduces to his audience an important character named Abigail. Abigail once had a secret love affair with John Proctor who is a farmer in Salem village. This secret affair is a crucial point in the play as Abigail's jealousy lies at the bottom of every accusation made against innocent people. In order to take her revenge on the Proctors, Abigail accuses Elizabeth, John's wife, of performing witchcraft. Though John admits having an affair with Abigail in an attempt to prevent Elizabeth from taking punishment, his wife does not reveal the secret love affair of her husband in order not to damage his reputation. Thus, while Abigail and her friends are found innocent, John ends up being the one who lies to the court and all his accusations against Abigail are dropped. Miller shows that lies which people tend to believe, no matter how irrational they are, ironically outweigh the truth. What is more, by implying that those who were accused and punished in McCarthy era were innocent, Miller claims that we are still controlled by these irrational forces even today.

Arthur Miller thus shows the absurdity of McCarthy era while referring to the absurdity of the accusations made against innocent people during Salem witchhunt trials. Miller wants to show the reader the parallelism between the attitudes of people towards the "other" in different time periods. Through his play, Miller shows that it is easy to accuse people of something even without having enough evidence. Similarly, the attitudes of people are alike even in the 1950s. This time the issue is



not “fear of witches” but “Red Scare.” This time they are not burnt or hanged but put in prison. Though the punishment methods are different, the basis of the accusations is the same. That is to say, people fear the things they cannot name. They have no room for the “other” and try to suppress it with different methods in different time periods. In every era throughout history, people want to find a “scapegoat” to get rid of their fears and guilt. Once they put the blame on the scapegoat, they are freed from guilt. Ironically, the powerful fear the power of the weak.

Naturally, the play is a tragedy since it involves examples of victimization. For instance, John Proctor and many other characters are victimized due to the verbal accusations of Abigail and her friends. However, Arthur Miller’s definition of tragedy is different from other playwrights. In one of his essays “Tragedy and The Common Man,” Arthur Miller claims that tragedy is not a story with a sad ending; rather it implies more optimism than other genres since it depicts “the indestructible will of man to achieve his humanity.”<sup>4</sup> Miller states:

. . . I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be to secure one thing--his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his “rightful” position in the society.

In a similar vein, John Proctor reveals the secret affair he had had with Abigail to save the lives of many other innocent people including his wife. Thus, in accordance with Miller’s definition of tragedy, Proctor’s attempt is noble. He tries to show the rest of the citizens the truth.

Miller also presents the flaw in the tragic character. “The flaw, or crack in the character, is really nothing--and need be nothing--but his inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity.”<sup>5</sup> In the play, Proctor tears into pieces the confession he has signed since he learns that it

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<sup>4</sup> <http://vcsslitonline.cc.va.us/tragedy/millereessay.htm> (02.04.2008).

<sup>5</sup> <http://vcsslitonline.cc.va.us/tragedy/millereessay.htm> (02.04.2008).

would be stuck on the church door. To save his honour, he chooses to be executed rather than appear on that list. Thus, Miller's tragic hero sacrifices himself when his personal dignity is under threat. For Miller, "The only flawless ones are us who remain passive against everything, and accept them without questioning. These can be social norms or everything we have accepted out of fear or insensitivity."<sup>6</sup> Miller's protagonist, Proctor, on the other hand, does not remain passive but challenges the system that threatens his dignity.

Similar to all the tragedies mentioned above dating back to The Old Testament, the "scapegoat" motif is also detected in the modern fiction through the perspective of famous Jewish-American writer, Philip Roth. A testimony to the universality of myths of victimization and purification is found in Philip Roth's "American Trilogy." In his trilogy, Philip Roth mainly focuses on two archetypal figures in the novels American Pastoral, I Married a Communist and The Human Stain. These are "scapegoat" motif and "victimization" theme.

Tragedies are "the mythos of fall." (Guerin 163) As in the other two books of the trilogy, in The Human Stain the protagonist also falls as a result of being chosen as a "scapegoat." The novel opens with a quotation from Oedipus The King:

Oedipus: What is the rite of purification? How shall it be done?

Creon: By banishing a man, or expiation of blood by blood...

This is exactly what the reader sees in the story. A classics professor, Coleman Silk is accused of making a racial slur in class. When two students, who are later understood to be black, do not show up in his classes for weeks, Coleman asks whether these students are "spooks." Although Coleman uses this word in its customary and primary meaning which is a specter or a ghost, the academic staff tend to understand it as a term which was once applied to blacks in ancient times. Thus, this event shows that even though it is the 1990s, it is easy to charge someone

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<sup>6</sup> <http://vcsslitonline.cc.va.us/tragedy/milleresay.htm> (02.04.2008).

of a crime he has not committed and make him a scapegoat based on insubstantial evidence. It is not also surprising that such expiation of man or woman is also common in our civilized world. Philip Roth awakens us to the falsity of our myths of progress by demonstrating the essential sameness between past and present human practices. In his book A Handbook of Critical Approaches To Literature, Guerin calls attention to this issue, noting that: "If such customs strike us as incredibly primitive, we need only to recognize their vestiges in our own civilized world, for example, the irrational satisfaction that some people gain by persecution of such minority groups as blacks and Jews as scapegoats" (167). In fact, from ancient times till today, it is common to name someone who is different from society as the "other." In this story, society marks Coleman Silk as the "other" and eventually he ends up being the "scapegoat" chosen by the society he is living in.

In all tragedies mentioned above, both the places and time periods differ. However, in all, the tragic hero's fall due to his flaw is inevitable. In tragedies, mythic elements and archetypal motifs such as "scapegoat motif" or "mother figure" evoke the same feelings though cultures or time periods differ. Thus, mythical elements and archetypal figures are universal symbols evoking similar feelings in different societies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ARCHETYPES

A myth is a sacred story to which people attach religious or spiritual significance in different time periods in various societies. Most of the time, myths are “accepted uncritically by a culture or speech-community that serves to found or affirm its self-conception” (Heehs, 1994:3). Since myths are believed to predate religion, they were regarded as sacred narratives in ancient civilizations. Myths were considered to be important in ancient societies since they provided an explanation to mankind. By the help of myths, man tried to explain natural phenomena and understand his existence in relation to nature. Myths are the oldest stories of mankind that are formed initially due to man’s weakness before nature. When man began to be defenseless against the power of nature, he started offering sacrifices to gods for fear of being punished by natural catastrophes, which he thought gods controlled. Unlike ancient societies, in the modern world, such sacrifices are still made through different methods. Men do not offer their sacrifices to nature or gods, but to society. That is to say, they find scapegoats, and by putting all the blame on him or her, they feel purified from their sins and continue their lives in which they seem to be happy on the surface. Though myths are thought to be widespread in ancient societies, mythical motifs and archetypes are also used in the modern world, particularly through fiction.

Myths include archetypal figures and images. In the book A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature, Wilferd L.Guerin defines what archetype is and its relation to myths as follows:

. . . myths take their specific shapes from the cultural environments in which they grow. Myth is, in the general sense, universal. Furthermore, similar motifs or themes may be found among many different mythologies, and certain images that recur in the myths of peoples widely separated in time and place tend to have a common meaning or, more accurately, tend to elicit comparable psychological responses and to serve similar cultural functions. Such motifs and images are called archetypes. Stated simply, archetypes are universal symbols. (Guerin 157)

It is clear that “myth is ubiquitous in time as well as place. It is a dynamic factor everywhere in human society; it transcends time, uniting the past (traditional modes of belief) with the present (current values) and reaching toward the future (spiritual and cultural aspirations)” (Guerin 156). Thus, since myths are universal stories and archetypes are universal symbols, they can be found in contemporary fiction as well, even if the time period differs. That’s why, one of the most controversial Jewish-American fiction writers, Philip Roth’s success and his world-wide fame is due to his ability to use universal themes in his books.

## **2.1 Jung’s Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster**

The psychologist-philosopher Carl Jung’s theoretical approach to “archetypes,” “primordial images” or “motifs” can shed light on the “need for victimization” in literature and particularly in Philip Roth’s “American Trilogy.” Jung opposes Freud who claims that “unconscious is limited to denoting the state of repressed or forgotten contents” (Jung, 1969:3). Instead Jung claims:

A more or less superficial layer of the conscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term ‘collective’ because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. (4)

By expanding Freud’s theories of personal unconscious, Jung claims that beneath personal unconscious, there is “a primeval, collective unconscious shared in the psychic inheritance of all members of the human family” (Guerin 176). Thus, “Just as certain instincts are inherited by the lower animals (for example, the instinct of the baby chicken to run from a hawk’s shadow), so more complex psychic predispositions (that is, ‘a racial memory’) are inherited by human beings” (Guerin 176). Hence, every individual is born with these “contents of the collective unconscious” which are known to be archetypes. For Jung, “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by

being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (5). As a result, what Jung called “myth-forming” structural elements which are entitled archetypes are ever present in the unconscious psyche.

Jung describes four major archetypes, namely “Mother,” “Rebirth,” “Spirit” and “Trickster” in his book Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster. Naturally, these archetypes appear under a variety of aspects. Jung describes the mother archetype as follows:

Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype, as for instance the mother archetype who reappears as the maiden in the myth of Demeter and Kore; or the mother who is also beloved, as in the Cybele-Attis myth. Other symbols of the mother in a figurative sense appear in things representing the goal of our redemption, such as Paradise, the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance the Church, university, city or country, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea or any still waters, matter even, the underworld and the moon, can be mother-symbols. The archetype is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness. (Jung, 1972:81)

In Roth’s “American Trilogy” the mother archetype is detected in different forms mentioned above. In American Pastoral, America functions as the mother archetype since country is a mother symbol. Similar to Swede, in I Married a Communist, one more time the country functions as mother archetype. Finally, in the last book of the trilogy, in The Human Stain, two different mother symbols are detected. One is Coleman’s mother, whom he chooses to leave behind with his decision of passing as a Jew, while the other is the Athena College where he works as a Jewish classics professor. Thus, the latter mother archetype, which is the university, is used in a figurative sense like the country in American Pastoral and I Married a Communist.

However, there is a downside to this image of fruitfulness; in his book, The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious, Jung also claims that “the mother archetype forms the foundation of the so-called mother-complex” (85). According to Jung, the mother complex can be projected through homosexuality, Don Juanism and

impotence. Among these Don Juanism appears as the most common and the most suitable embodiment of the mother complex. Though Don Juanism has negative aspects, Jung believes that it can also have positive aspects in the life of the man. Jung states:

. . . what in its negative aspect is Don Juanism can appear positively as bold and resolute manliness; ambitious striving after the highest goals; opposition to all stupidity, narrow-mindedness, injustice, and laziness; willingness to make sacrifices for what is regarded as right, sometimes bordering on heroism; perseverance, inflexibility and toughness of will; a curiosity that does not shrink even from the riddles of the universe; and finally, a revolutionary spirit which strives to put a new face upon the world. (87)

These positive aspects of Don Juanism can be found in almost all tragic heroes. For instance, Sophocles' Oedipus can be given as an example to this kind of Don Juanism. On learning the truth about his past, Oedipus punishes himself and in a way makes of himself a sacrifice for what is regarded as right. Since the country is also regarded as a mother archetype, after the departure of Oedipus, the mother is freed and the land becomes fruitful again.

The second archetype that Jung believes to exist in the collective unconscious of all human beings is "rebirth." Jung divides the process of rebirth into two groups. One is the experience of the transcendence of life. Jung says:

By the "transcendence of life" I mean those aforementioned experiences of the initiate who takes part in a sacred rite which reveals to him the perpetual continuation of life through transformation and renewal. In these mystery-dramas the transcendence of life, as distinct from its momentary concrete manifestations, is usually represented by the fateful transformations--death and rebirth--of a god or godlike hero. (117)

Moreover, Jung asserts that the Mass is an example for the transcendence of life because Christ's self-sacrifice and his resurrection is "a moment of eternity in time" (118). He states that "The Mass is an extramundane and extratemporal act in which Christ is sacrificed and then resurrected in the transformed substances; and this rite

of his sacrificial death is not a repetition of the historical event but the original, unique, and eternal act” (118). In Philip Roth’s novel, The Human Stain, Coleman’s ticking white on the application form for the army functions as his rebirth since he recreates himself with this choice. He chooses to change the course of his life after facing the prejudices of people while going to Howard, a school for black students in Washington. This choice becomes the turning point in his life since Coleman sacrifices his true identity and is born again by creating his new identity. In the book, Roth states how Coleman suddenly chose to pass as a white without giving a deep consideration to its outcomes as follows:

It was October of 1944, and he was still a month shy of being eighteen. But he could easily lie about his age—to move his birth date back by month, from November 12 to October 12, was no problem at all. And dealing as he was with his mother’s grief—and with her shock at his quitting college—it didn’t immediately occur to him that, if he chose to, he could lie about his race as well. He could play his skin however he wanted, color himself just as he chose. No, that did not dawn on him until he was seated in the federal building in Newark and had all the navy enlistment forms spread out in front of him and, before filling them out, and carefully, with the same meticulous scrutiny that he’d studied for his high school exams—as though whatever he was doing, large or small, was, for however long he concentrated on it, the most important thing in the world—began to read them through. And even then it didn’t occur to *him*. It occurred first to his heart, which began banging away like the heart of someone on the brink of committing his first great crime. (109)

According to Jung, the other form of rebirth is through subjective transformation. This kind of rebirth is more related to psychology when compared to the “mystical experiences” mentioned above. One category of rebirth through subjective transformation is identification with a group. Jung believes that one does not fear when s/he is in a group. While people are in a group, they gain titles and “their personalities raise [*sic*] to a more exalted rank” (126). However, once they are removed from that group, they become a different person. Most suffer from self-alienation. Jung explains the state of these protagonists who are in need of identification with a group as follows: “The group can give the individual a courage, a bearing, and a dignity which may easily get lost in isolation. It can awaken within him the memory of being a man among men” (71).



Philip Roth's protagonists in his "American Trilogy" reflect Jung's theories about subjective transformation. In the three books, the protagonists are homeless. They are in search of a group where they can feel secure and at home. In Novak's article entitled "Strangers in a Strange Land: The Homelessness of Roth's Protagonists," Novak comments on the nature of Roth's characters in his fiction:

Roth continually tells us that his characters bring with them that 'desperate wish to be at home' which both defines their neurosis and their essential being. But, in fact, a distinction has to be made between what we ordinarily call alienation and marginality and what is the condition of the Jewish character in Roth. The more assimilated the Roth character becomes, the more intense his desire to be at home in his environment, the more homeless he feels. It is his sense of himself as separate that is continual reminder of his spiritual homelessness. This, and not any external force, creates his peculiar estrangement. (Novak, 1988:50)

What Roth tries to do in his fiction is "to find the 'home', the 'self' and the 'voice' that is one's own.

In American Pastoral, Swede, who is a Jew, wants to belong to mainstream society. In order to be part of it, he marries a former beauty queen and starts to lead a perfect life in a house which symbolically represents America. Similarly, in I Married a Communist, Ira is presented as a person who is also in need of belonging to a group. Though he finally finds one and becomes a member of a Communist group, after the accusations held against him, he is not welcomed by his group members anymore. Thus, in the end he dies all alone selling minerals in the Zinc Town. Finally, in The Human Stain, Coleman rejects his past to be able to belong to the mainstream culture. He wants to be part of mainstream society to have a better life. Without this group, he would be a different person. Thus, he needs to belong to that group identity to have a social status. Hence, when the protagonists belong to a group, they are "somebody"; however, when they are left out of the group, they are "nobody" and subject to loneliness.

The third archetype Jung presents is "the Spirit." When Jung considers the spirit in its archetypal form in both dreams and fairy tales, he claims that the Spirit is

represented by a father figure who is often described as a wise old man having authority. This figure always appears when the hero is in a hopeless situation. For Jung: “The old man thus represents knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as good will and readiness to help, which make his ‘spiritual’ character sufficiently plain” (222). According to Jung, the Spirit can work not only for the good but also for evil. That is to say, the spirit archetype can be presented through evil forces disguised in human forms or animal forms as well. For instance, the serpent can be claimed to be representation of the Evil Spirit in the Biblical tradition.

It can be claimed that the Spirit archetype is presented through Faunia in Philip Roth’s The Human Stain. Though she is not shown as a wise old man having a graybeard, still Faunia is the redeemer for Coleman. When Faunia meets Coleman, he is in a desperate situation since he is forced to resign from his position at Athena College. In addition, he is not aware of his true self and believes in the power of titles and ranks. However, Faunia helps him to see the reality right before his eyes. Jung explains the leading role of the Spirit and claims that the hero cannot be aware of his own deficiency “for internal and external reasons,” and the Spirit helps him become aware of the reality (218). Thanks to Faunia, Coleman rejects the titles that are given by society and becomes a free individual making his own choices. In the story, it becomes obvious that if it were not for Faunia, Coleman would not be aware of the reality on his own.

Moreover, the narrator of the three books, Nathan Zuckerman can also be considered as the Spirit archetype since he helps the tragic heroes when they are in a desperate situation. If Nathan does not have a chance to talk to the tragic heroes in private, he learns the events from which they suffered through the narration of their relatives and helps the tragic heroes, though sometimes after their deaths, by explaining their sufferings. In other words, Nathan makes the heroes’ wishes come true by speaking of their sufferings on their behalf, which is what they ask him to do. For instance, in American Pastoral, Swede wants Nathan to write about “how much he suffered because of the shocks that befell his beloved ones” (Roth, 1997:18). The

identity of the “he” that Swede mentions is not clear. Though Swede wants Nathan to think that it was his father who suffered, it later becomes clear that it is, in fact, Swede himself who suffered. Swede wants to make his suffering public through Nathan’s narration and to feel relieved. Thus, Nathan is the Spirit who helps the tragic hero in a hopeless situation since the hero cannot accomplish this himself.

Similar to Swede, Coleman Silk asks for Nathan’s help to reveal his story in The Human Stain. After his wife, Iris’ death, following his resignation from his office, Coleman wants to reveal the whole story since he believes that the reason behind Iris’ death was the accusations made against him. Thus, the revelation of his story through Nathan’s narration would be a relief to him as it would not only show his innocence in the case but also reveal the ones who disguised their guilt.

Nathan Zuckerman appears as the Spirit archetype also in I Married a Communist. This time it is not the protagonist who asks for help from Nathan. Instead, Ira’s brother, Murray, asks Nathan for help. Through Nathan’s perspective, Ira’s story is told and the reality, which would prove Ira’s innocence, is revealed. However, Nathan brings relief to both Ira and Coleman only after their tragic deaths. Thus, the function of the Spirit in the modern world has changed since the Spirit is no longer helpful to the hero when alive.

The last archetype Jung mentions in his book is “Trickster.” Jung defines the trickster as follows: “The trickster is a collective shadow figure, a summation of all the inferior traits of character in individuals” (177). The trickster figure is closely related to the special archetype Jung calls “Shadow.” Jung claims that although people in the modern world blame fate for playing tricks on them, they never think that it is in fact their own Shadow which causes their tragic failure. Philip Roth presents the trickster archetype through Delphine Roux in The Human Stain. As related to Delphine Roux, Shadow has a twofold meaning: Delphine has to suppress her own Shadow, and additionally as a whole she serves as Coleman Silk’s Shadow. Delphine Roux functions as a trickster as she herself has a dark side of which she is not aware although it follows her like a ghost and drops hints here and there.

However, the more she suppresses it, the more it leads to her failure. She cannot reveal to herself her real feelings about Coleman though she is attracted to him. When Delphine learns about Coleman's affair with Faunia, first she sends an anonymous message to him stating that everyone knows about his relationship with an illiterate woman. In fact, what Delphine wants to do by sending this message to him is to cry out her emotions towards Coleman; however, she decides to play a trick on Coleman since her shadow leads her to take such an action. Similarly, she later accuses Coleman of breaking into her office and sending a message to all faculty members which had composed to send to a newspaper's lonely hearts column. By doing this, Delphine not only accuses Coleman but also denies the fact that she has written an advertisement for the newspaper. Hence, in modern world, it is neither the fate nor supernatural powers that play tricks on people. Instead, it is our unconscious fears and desires which we try to suppress. Jung states this fact as follows:

The so-called civilized man has forgotten the trickster. He remembers him only figuratively and metaphorically, when, irritated by his own ineptitude, he speaks of fate playing tricks on him or of things being bewitched. He never suspects that his own hidden and apparently harmless shadow has qualities whose dangerousness exceeds his wildest dreams. (173)

On the other hand, many trickster figures help highlight the darker side of the other characters with whom they have an antagonistic relationship. Delphine Roux functions as the dark side which Coleman Silk tried to leave behind. She becomes the agent who causes him to pay for his decision to pass as a Jew, a decision that not only cut off his ties with his family but also led him to lie to everyone in his life including his wife and children.

Likewise, in American Pastoral, Merry functions as the Trickster archetype. She constantly reminds Swede of the falsity of his "appearance." She wants Swede to confront the reality from which he escapes. Her involvement in terrorist activities and her stuttering are the ways through which Merry destroys her so-called "perfect family." In sum, Merry becomes the agent who plays tricks on her parents, especially on Swede, to help them see the truth about their lives.

In conclusion, Roth's "American Trilogy" shows the fact that the victimization of the tragic hero is mainly due to his flaw which stems from his own psyche. His lack of self-evaluation together with the power of fate lead to his tragic fall. In Roth's trilogy, it becomes clear that Jung's four archetypes are present in modern tragedy. Hence, Jung's four archetypes can not only be applied to the ancient works of art but also to modern fiction like Roth's "American Trilogy." Thus, Philip Roth's ability to use certain archetypal figures in his fiction makes him a universal writer. His fiction transcends time as he refers to particular archetypal figures and mythical elements that are already present in our unconscious.

## **2.2 Jung's Special Archetypes in Roth's "American Trilogy"**

Related to these four archetypes, Jung also introduces three special archetypes, namely, the shadow, the persona and the anima, in explaining his theories of individuation, which will help to light the way in exploring the main characters in Philip Roth's fiction. While "the shadow is the darker side of our unconscious self," the persona is "the actor's mask that is shown to the world" (Guerin 180). On the other hand, the anima is considered as the "soul-image" (Guerin 180). All these three special archetypes are the phases one passes through the individuation process.

According to Jung, individuation "is a psychological 'growing up,' the process of discovering those aspects of one's self that make an individual different from other members of his species" (Guerin 179). Jung claims that individuation "is essentially a process of recognition--that is, as he matures, the individual must consciously recognize the various aspects, unfavorable as well as favorable, of his total self" (Guerin 179). However, according to Jung, one can become a neurotic unless s/he succeeds in confronting and accepting some archetypal component of his unconscious. Jung asserts: "Instead of accepting this unconscious element to his consciousness, the neurotic individual persists in projecting it upon some other person or object" (Guerin 179). This is exactly what the reader notices in Philip Roth's trilogy.

Jung's special archetypes give a detailed description of individuation. According to Jung, "the shadow is the darker side of our unconscious self, the inferior and less pleasing aspects of the personality, which we wish to suppress" (Guerin 180). Secondly, "the anima" is called "the soul-image" (Guerin 180). Jung explains anima as follows:

Being that has soul is living being. Soul is the living thing in man, that which lives of itself and causes life. Therefore, God breathed into Adam a living breath, that he might live. With her cunning play of illusions the soul lures into life the inertness of matter that does not want to live. She makes us believe incredible things, that life may be lived. She is full of snares and incredible traps, in order that man should fall, should reach the earth, entangle himself there, and stay caught, so that life should be lived; as Eve in the garden of Eden could not rest content until she had convinced Adam of the goodness of the forbidden apple. Were it not for the leaping and twinkling of the soul, man would rot away in his greatest passion, idleness. (26)

Guerin states that "Jung gives anima a feminine designation in the male psyche" (180). He further proposes that if we follow Jung's theory, we might claim that any female figure who is invested with unusual significance or power is likely to be a symbol of the anima. For instance; Helen of Troy and Dante's Beatrice are personifications of the anima. In The Human Stain, Faunia functions as the anima since she transforms Coleman to see the reality in front of his eyes. With her help, Coleman finds his essence and is freed from social norms. Thus, Faunia functions as the anima which is "a kind of mediator between the ego (the conscious will or thinking self) and the unconscious or inner world of the individual" (Guerin 181). As a powerful female figure, Faunia shows Coleman his inner world and leads him to make a decision about the rest of his life. Moreover, Steena Palsson, Swede's girlfriend whom he passionately loved before meeting his wife, Iris, functions as a personification of the anima as well. For the first time in his life, Coleman wants to reveal his secret and tell someone that he is colored. Though Steena leaves Coleman after learning the truth about him, she is still an important figure in the novel since her reaction to his being colored transforms the rest of Coleman's life. Her attitude towards Coleman after learning his secret gives shape to Coleman's future life and therefore becomes the turning point of his life.

Finally, the last archetype of Jung is the “the persona.” Persona is the actor’s mask that is shown to the world. However, Jung warns us about the results of rigid or artificial persona. “Jung, in discussing this social mask, explains that, to achieve psychological maturity, the individual must have a flexible, viable persona that can be brought into harmonious relation with the other components of his psychic makeup ”(Guerin 181). Consequently, if a persona is too rigid, s/he can end up experiencing neurotic disturbance. For instance, in the novel The Human Stain, Delphine Roux, the new headmaster, wears two identities, one as the highly intellectual French academic, and the other as the young girl who competes for the attention of a father figure. She is portrayed as a person who constantly denies being in love with Coleman Silk, who functions in her psyche as both father and lover. Since she cannot evaluate her “real” feelings for Coleman, she not only starts to oppose him in the department but also interferes in Coleman’s private life. Her resentment towards Coleman grows so much that she eventually ends up sending an anonymous letter which accuses him of sexually exploiting an abused, illiterate woman. Thus, although Coleman resigns from his office, Roux continues watching and judging Coleman. Since Roux is not self-aware, she fails to confront her real feelings for Coleman. She cannot accept the fact that she is sexually attracted to Coleman, who is totally indifferent to her as a sexual being. Instead, she opposes him in every way she can. Thus, her rejection of the reality causes her failure. Thus, as Jung states, Delphine cannot accept her real feelings for Coleman because she is not self-aware. As a result, she suffers from neurosis since her “public self” and “private self” cannot be harmonized. They fall apart and leave her psyche divided.

Furthermore, it can even be argued that Roux wants in her unconscious to have an affair that is considered a taboo by society like Coleman. However, she is not as courageous as Coleman, and instead of approving of him, she becomes the one who blames him. Thus, as Jung claims, the neurotic insists on projecting his or her unconscious desire on others. She “projects her own unconscious faults and weaknesses on others much more easily than accept them as part of her own nature” (Guerin 179). While doing that, to retain her fame and dignity, Delphine Roux chooses Coleman as a “scapegoat” and puts the blame on him. Hence, Delphine

Roux is an example to the failure of individuation. While Delphine Roux is the one who fails as a result of her lack of self-evaluation, Faunia and later Coleman succeed in realizing their essence. They purify themselves from titles and discover their true selves.

No matter how harsh they suffer from not confronting the reality, many characters in Philip Roth's fiction escape from facing the reality and suffer mentally as a result of this. For instance; in I Married a Communist, Eve Frame also functions as the persona since she definitely wears a mask when she is in public. She never reveals her true feelings and tries to keep her appearance as presentable as possible.

In American Pastoral, Swede cannot get rid of his rigid persona as well. In order to appear as perfect as possible, Swede cannot let anything go. He always tries to fix things. He wants to have a happy marriage and a presentable daughter whereas he fails in both. One expects Swede to have a happy marriage since the couple seems to be a perfect match. While Swede is a baseball star, his wife is a beauty queen. Consequently, everyone expects their daughter to be lucky, presentable and perfect by any social standard. However, Roth surprises them by giving Swede's daughter not only a stutter but also the role of a Vietnam War rebel, a suspected bomber and consequently a killer. Merry's imperfection begins with her stuttering, the first sign of resistance to her family's perfection. Afterwards, she starts to protest the Vietnam War by placing bombs and killing several people. Hence, Merry attacks everything which her family represents. Thus, one more time, though things appear to be perfect on the surface, they are totally different underneath. And so long as Swede does not manage to face this reality due to his rigid persona, he ends up being neurotic and leads a life of somebody else. He begins to behave and feel like somebody else since he cannot confront his raw-self. However, once he confronted it, he would be freed.

Jung's three special archetypes explain the inner worlds of Roth's protagonists in his "American Trilogy." In his fiction, Roth shows that though some characters can become a well-balanced individual and discover their true selves, some suffer from neurosis since they cannot complete their individuation process.



Besides giving harm to themselves, the latter characters cause the tragic fall of the other by victimizing him or her. Roth's modern tragedies in his "American Trilogy" present these two different types of individuals from a unique perspective.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **AMERICAN HISTORY AS VICTIMIZATION IN “AMERICAN TRILOGY”**

World history is full of different types of victimization. In ancient times, man either sacrificed an animal or sometimes sacrificed himself to save his community. By doing this, the community was believed to be purified. However, the process of victimization quite changed in the modern world. In today’s world, man started to victimize the other because of his or her differences. In modern world, though difference in the one that is named as “other” is detected, we cannot name the difference in him or her easily. For instance, people used to be victimized mainly due to his or her different and imperfect physical appearance especially in medieval times. However, unlike medieval times, in today’s world, the difference in the other is not that easy to identify even though we know it exists. The difference in the other is not that clear and explicit to detect. Thus, though the reasons change, history is full of victimization. Roth’s “American Trilogy” shows the American side of victimization that resulted in the tragic fall of the victims. Roth shows the results of social catastrophes on the lives of the protagonists by revealing their tragedies. The novels in the trilogy will be examined in a chronological order in terms of the social events that provide context for the stories.

#### **3.1 The McCarthy Era in I Married a Communist:**

The anti-Communist hysteria began after the World War I and the Red Scare of 1919 and 1920; however, the influence it created heightened with the speeches of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy in the 1950s. Many laws were passed during the presidency of Truman to avoid Communism in the country. One of them was Alien Registration (Smith) Act, “which made it unlawful to advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government by force or violence or to join any organization that did so” (Norton 862). Another measure taken by the government to prevent the idea of Communism from spreading in America was the adoption of Internal Security (McCarran) Act of 1950. This act banned citizens from participating in the “establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship” (Norton, 1994: 866). Both of these measures show the fear

among politicians of the spread of Communism in America.

The explosion of the first atomic bomb by the Russian government and the victory of Communism in China alarmed Americans and increased their sensitivity to Communism. Apart from the laws that are passed to prevent the threat of Communism, most citizens became highly skeptical about each other and began to investigate the private lives of each other. The anti-Communist hysteria reached its peak in the 1950s. The 1950s are known as an era when “people began to point accusing fingers at each other” (864). These people often did not have adequate evidence to accuse the suspect. However, they still accused the people whom they believed to be working for the “Communist-front” organizations. Not surprisingly, many of the accused were found guilty by the court since the government and judicial branches were in fact responsible for this hysteria. Books that praised Communist teachings were removed from school libraries, and even people who were thought to know the names of Communist spies but did not reveal them were sent to prison for not cooperating. Several college professors with the slightest leftist tendencies were made redundant for fear that they might influence the students with their Communist ideas. The lives of many people, either celebrity or common man, were ruined since they were believed to show signs of disloyalty towards their homeland. Thus, this was the atmosphere when anti-Communist witch hunt hysteria did harm on many individuals.

In the novel, I Married a Communist, Philip Roth exemplifies the hardships people faced at this time period through the main character, Ira Ringold. Ira, a famous radio star, is blacklisted from radio for being a Communist after series of events. He is also famous for being married to the most famous and beautiful actress of the era, Eva Frame. Eva serves as a character to show the breaking of even the holies of ties of matrimony in the face of political oppression and atmosphere of witch hunt, for it is she who ends up siding with those who accuse Ira of being a Communist.

Nathan Zuckerman, the narrator of Philip Roth's trilogy, begins the novel, I Married a Communist, by presenting his high school teacher Murray Ringold's comment on the issue of victimization. At the very beginning of the novel, Murray says: "Thousands and thousands of Americans destroyed in those years, political casualties, historical casualties, because of their beliefs" (Roth, 1999:3). The story Nathan Zuckerman narrates according to what he is told by Murray Ringold reflects the dominant prejudice against Communism in that era. The resentment and fear towards Communism and Communists reach their peak through these years when not only do the people who are accused of being a Communist suffer from its consequences but also the people around them are dismissed from their jobs or lose opportunities which would change their lives forever. The dramatic change in the lives of two characters in I Married a Communist illustrates the effects of Communism on innocent people whose only fault is to be related to someone accused of being a Communist. One of these people is Ira's brother, Murray. After the inclusion of Ira on the blacklist, Murray gets fired from his school by the Board of Education as he refuses to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committee. The fear of Communism that took hold of the society in the 1950s is so extreme that meetings are held in order to prevent "the infiltration of the party into labor and education" (5). As a result of such hysteria in society, Murray leaves his profession aside and becomes a vacuum cleaner salesman in order to support his family.

Murray easily becomes a suspect since he is not only Ira's brother but also a teacher, which means he can easily influence "innocent" pupils with his Communist ideas. The members of the House Un-American Activities Committee goes after Murray and wants him to testify that he is never involved in Communist activities. However, Murray refuses to do so as he is well-aware of the fact that being judged due to one's political beliefs is against the Bill of Rights. As the Bill of Rights is the backbone of free and democratic America, Murray is surprised at being cross-examined by the Committee and asked to "return to American way of life!" (7).

The second victim who suffers from a close friendship with a Communist is Nathan Zuckerman. Because Nathan spends time together with Ira, the agent starts to investigate who Nathan is. However, when Nathan is mistaken for Ira's nephew and the wrong information that Zuckerman is a Communist is given to FBI agents by the collaborators, the agency prevents Nathan from getting a Fulbright scholarship. Thus, he loses an opportunity without even knowing that such an opportunity ever existed. In a conversation with Nathan, Murray says: “. . . The FBI didn't always get everything right. Maybe they didn't always want to get everything right. The guy told Ira, ‘You know your nephew who applied for a Fulbright? The kid in Chicago? He didn't get it because of your being a Communist’” (16). Thus, not only Ira but also the other people around him are somehow affected by the measures taken against Communism in the 1950s in America. However, if Nathan and Murray suffer from the consequences of the Red Scare of the 1950s, what they suffer is eclipsed by how Ira is affected by McCarthyism as he is the actual target of accusations of Communism.

Blaming someone without having reliable evidence is exactly what Philip Roth presents in I Married a Communist. When Bryten Grant, who is one of the neighbours of Eve and Ira, persuades Eve after they divorce to publish a book as an act of vengeance about Ira and his Communist ideas, everyone starts to blame Ira for being a Communist. No matter how unreal the things told in the book are, it is as if people want to believe what is told. As Eve Frame is a successful actress, she plays her role successfully with her daughter Sylphid and tries to convince American citizens of the fact that she and her daughter suffered a lot while trying to resist the activities which forced them to work for the Communist cause. In the book Eve states:

I don't believe I've ever seen anything so heroic in my life as my young daughter, who loved nothing so much as to sit quietly all day playing her harp, arguing strenuously in defense of American democracy against this Communist madman and his Stalinist, totalitarian lies. I don't believe I've ever seen anything so cruel in my life as this Communist madman using every tactic out of the Soviet concentration camp to bring this brave child to her knees. (242)

In the book she has written, Eve claims that Ira did “his best to ‘brainwash’ both of them and make them work for the Communist cause” (242). In a conversation with Nathan, Murray defines the McCarthy era as follows: “. . . I think of the McCarthy era as inaugurating the postwar triumph of gossip as the unifying credo of the world’s oldest democratic republic. In *Gossip We Trust*. Gossip as gospel, the national faith” (284). As a result, nobody questions the credibility of the accusations Eve makes. Instead, these accusations are believed to be true because, as Murray claims, gossip replaced the truth in the 1950s. During those years the subversive potential of language caused the fall of some people. Unfounded rumour and gossip brought about the tragic fall of some and destroyed the lives of other people that were close to them. In his fiction, Roth uses the power of language as well. However, he uses the same technique in a different way. He gives the name “Eve” to the character and draws the readers’ attention to who the word associates with. He implies that similar to Eve, who causes the fall of both Adam and herself, in The Old Testament, in *I Married a Communist*, Eve causes the tragic fall of Ira. Moreover, Roth also gives the surname “frame” to Eve. By doing this, he implies that Eve will frame anyone who stands against her benefits throughout the novel. Thus, Roth uses to power of language to reveal the hidden identities of victimizers in a time period when the subversive potential of language destroyed innocent lives.

All the events that these characters suffer from draw the catastrophic portrait of the era. The “simplistic conspiracy theories” and “lies and half-truths” were the only evidence necessary to send anyone to prison (Norton 865). That is why Ira became a victim easily. Only Eve’s book, which accused Ira of being a Communist, was enough to find him guilty. Thus, Roth not only presents the historical facts of McCarthy era by showing the victims of anti-Communist hysteria through a fictional perspective but also draws attention to the fact that the social events can lead to mass victimization while people can also victimize one another individually. For instance, Ira falls victim to the social system. Like him, many people were accused of betraying America and working for the Communist cause in the McCarthy era. Thus, this is a mass victimization. Besides this, Eve victimizes Ira since she wants to take her revenge on Ira upon learning the affair between Ira and Pamela, Sylphid’s friend.

This type of victimization is individual. Hence, both leads to the fall of man either separately or together.

### **3.2 The Vietnam War and Racial Tensions as a Means of Victimization:**

In American Pastoral, Roth depicts the effect of the Vietnam War on the lives of people. The story takes place in Newark in the 1960s. The 1960s are a crucial era for America since the majority of the American citizens was against the Vietnam War. The outbreak of the Vietnam War affected the lives of many Americans. In the novel, American Pastoral, Swede's daughter Merry is the embodiment of the great influence of the war on the lives of people. Though some, like Swede, "seem" content with their lives and continue exercising their daily routines regardless of what happens in Vietnam, Merry and her friend Rita Cohen show the other side of the coin. They show that however perfect things are shown to the American public, in reality the war in Vietnam is a far cry from victory for Americans.

In the novel, the victimization Roth presents is twofold: While Merry at first appears to be a "victim," she becomes a "victimizer" by placing bombs and taking an active part in terrorist activities in an attempt to protest the government's Vietnam policy. Merry strongly criticizes the president of the era, Lyndon Johnson, during whose presidency the American involvement in Vietnam War escalated. In a conversation with her mother and father, Merry directly states her opinion about the president and vice-president of the era. Upon seeing Lyndon Johnson's face on the seven o'clock news, Merry shows her reaction towards him by saying: "You f-f-fucking madman! You heartless mi-mi-mi-miserable m-monster!"(100). When she also sees the face of the vice-president Hubert H. Humphrey on television, she cries: "You prick, sh-sh-shut your lying m-m-mouth, you c-c-coward, you f-f-filthy fucking collaborator"(100). Merry does not feel attached to her country when its leaders act as victimizers to other people. She hates the country and its leaders in particular. She criticizes them and shows her reaction in a loud way. In order to draw people's attention to the war in Vietnam, Merry follows a different path and explodes first the post office then some other places, which result in the deaths of several

people. Though she is against war and violence, she herself ends up participating in violent acts in her own country.

Moreover, the disorder and impact the Vietnam War created lasted long. Not only did the people living in the 1960s suffer but also the following generations were affected. In Philip Roth's novel entitled The Human Stain, Lester, the ex-husband of Faunia Farley, shows the reader the permanent effects of war on individuals. Though the time period that the story evolves around is the 1990s, the influence of the war is still felt. Lester, who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, tries to "survive" after returning to his homeland. However, he finds it difficult to adapt to civil life. In addition, he cannot forget the death of his children in a fire which he believes to be caused due to Faunia's negligence. Lester tries to cope with this thought, which he believes to be true, and keep sane at the same time. Meanwhile, he develops conspiracy theories according to which the government sacrifices American people. Therefore, Faunia's affair with Coleman Silk is the last stroke for Lester. He continuously blames the government for ruining the lives of the individuals.

Similar to Merry in American Pastoral, Lester appears to be the "victim" at first glance, but then he switches the roles and becomes a "victimizer." Although it is not stated explicitly in the novel, Lester is implied to be the one who caused the death of Coleman and Faunia in a car accident. Merry also appears to be the "victim" of the political system at first. She wants the political system to be changed to prevent the death of innocent people. However, like Lester, she also turns into a "victimizer" by placing bombs and killing people in the course of protesting the Vietnam War.

In sum, the two types of victimization in different time periods are presented through Merry and Lester in American Pastoral and The Human Stain. Through Lester's perspective, Roth implies that the government victimizes people by sending them to Vietnam and ruining their lives. Roth shows that even if they manage to come back home alive, the veterans cannot lead a healthy life though clinical help is supplied to them by the government. However, though Lester tries to purify himself



from his sins by putting all the blame on the government, through Zuckerman's narration, it is understood that Lester was often cruel towards Faunia long before going to Vietnam. Since Lester had an impressionable psyche, most of the time he was a threat for his surrounding. Thus, the government was not the only one responsible for ruining Lester's life. It can even be argued that the government functions as a scapegoat for covering the cruelties of Lester. Moreover, the second type of victimization is presented through both Merry and Lester. They show how a victim can victimize others in Roth's fiction.

Apart from the Vietnam War, one other significant event of Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency that Roth presents in American Pastoral is race riots in many cities. For instance, the city of Newark is burnt down in 1967 due to these riots: "A variety of factors contributed to the Newark Riot, including police brutality, political exclusion of blacks from city government, urban renewal, inadequate housing, unemployment, poverty, and rapid change in the racial composition of neighborhoods."<sup>7</sup> In the novel, Swede's family business closes down because of the riots in Newark in 1967. Swede moves the glove manufacturing factory offshore some six years after the riots because the city is about to collapse, and it becomes hard to make money due to the lack of available workmen, which is a direct consequence of race riots. However, Newark Maid factory still remains one of the luckiest factories to manage to survive after the riots. The other factories are either set on fire or plundered. However, Swede believes that the image of the city has changed dramatically after the riots. Swede says to Nathan:

Used to be the city where they manufactured everything. Now it's the car-theft capital of the world. Did you know that? Not the most gruesome of the gruesome developments but it's awful enough. The thieves live mostly in our old neighbourhood. Black kids. Forty cars stolen in Newark every twenty-four hours. That's the statistic. Something, isn't it? And they're murder weapons—once they're stolen, they're flying missiles. The target is anybody in the street—old people, toddlers, doesn't matter. Out in front of our factory was the Indianapolis Speedway to them. That's another reason we left. Four, five kids drooping out the windows, eighty miles an hour—right on

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/n\\_index.htm](http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/n_index.htm) ( 17 April 2008).

Central Avenue. When my father bought the factory, there were trolley cars on Central Avenue. Further down were the auto showrooms. Central Cadillac. LaSalle. There was a factory where somebody was making something in every side street. Now there's a liquor store in every street—a liquor store, a pizza stand, and a seedy storefront church. Everything else in ruins or boarded up. (25)

Both Vietnam War and city riots are two important social events of the 1960s that directly or indirectly shaped the fate of the characters in Roth's fiction. Both events led to the victimization of many people. With the involvement of America in Vietnam War, not only American citizens, but also the people in Vietnam were victimized. Besides, many people, who managed to return home safe and sound after the war, continued to victimize innocent people as a result of their mental disorder. Thus, the outcome of the war was only victimization of more and more people. Likely, the city riots brought about a twofold victimization: while the mainstream society made the blacks victim and led them to rebel against the ongoing oppression against blacks, again the same society suffered economically and socially from the consequences of these riots. Hence, besides the political disorder, there was also social and economic disorder from which people suffered and eventually ended up being victims.

Another important moment in American history is examined through the perspective of the protagonist, Coleman Silk, in the novel The Human Stain. The story takes place in the 1990s when the affair between Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton is made public. By some critics this era is identified as “a scandal-ridden decade” (Owen, 2000). This affair shows one more time the loss of faith in the country's leaders. However, this time this loss of faith is not due to war or any kind of racial discrimination which can lead to city riots similar to the ones that happened in the 1960s. Instead, it is due to the lies told by the president about the charges made against him. Clinton's lying to the grand jury and the public about the affair with Lewinsky disappointed the citizens of the country. In contrast to common thoughts about the president's scandalous affair, Philip Roth presents this era from a different perspective in The Human Stain since he criticizes the accusing attitude of the moral majority against Clinton.

The novel begins with declaring the parallelism between Coleman and Bill Clinton. It says in the book: “The summer that Coleman took me into his confidence about Faunia Farley and their secret was the summer, fittingly enough, that Bill Clinton’s secret emerged in every last mortifying detail” (Roth, 2000:2). By commenting on Coleman’s affair through Zuckerman’s narration, Roth claims that even a president can do such a scandalous thing since he is also a human being after all. This is the reality Roth wants his readers to understand in his fiction.

Roth shows the power of technology over the lives of people in The Human Stain. In the modern world, the technological advances began to have a big part in the victimization process. While people in ancient Rome used to watch the gladiators victimize an animal or being victimized by that animal, in today’s world people watch the victimization of the other from their homes via television or other means of communication. Thus, this ritual became available to anyone sitting in the comfort of their houses in the modern world. Diana Owen describes the year 1998 and asserts the influence of mass media over the lives of individuals as follows:

Perhaps more than any other episode of this scandal-ridden decade, the events surrounding the impeachment of President Bill Clinton epitomize the conflation of political and popular culture that characterizes American society. The Clinton/Lewinsky scandal clarified, and in some ways redefined, how political and entertainment culture pertain to presidential leadership. (Owen, 2000:161)

The great power assumed by mass media and the public opinion it forms is the subject of The Human Stain. It has the power to speculate, to theorize, to exaggerate and reach a verdict. In The Human Stain, Roth shows the influence of media over the lives of individuals not only through the American president, Bill Clinton, but also the protagonist, Coleman Silk. The novel emphasizes in particular that the scandalous affair is made public through press and networks. Thus, technology plays an important role in the revealing and spreading of the secret affair of Bill Clinton. Similar to Clinton, Coleman’s secret is also revealed by means of technology. His having an affair with a young illiterate woman was publicized by an e-mail which was sent to everyone in the campus by Delphine Roux. Hence, technology has a “democratizing” function in creating and spreading scandals, for

they are not reserved for the high and mighty in the case of President Clinton but also for ordinary people like Coleman. In contrast to former ways of victimization which used to be verbal accusations, the new “means of victimization” are mass media and other technological devices in modern world.

Race has always been a significant issue throughout American history. It is seen that this fact remains the same even in the 1990s when people could still detect the signs of black-white polarization in American society. In the article “Managing the Racial Breach: Clinton, Black-White Polarization, and the Race Initiative,” Claire Jean Kim presents the results of a survey and states: “According to the 1997 Joint Center poll, a large majority of whites (76 percent) and blacks (92 percent) said they believed that discrimination against blacks remains common today” (Kim, 2002:58). As the survey shows, there is discrimination against blacks even in the late 1990s; however, what Roth tries to point out in his fiction is that talking about race outside the dictates of political correctness has become a taboo. Therefore, being politically correct is the most important thing one should do in this time period. Although there might be discrimination against racial or ethnic groups, expressing this discrimination is not appropriate. The charges against Coleman in The Human Stain support the importance of political correctness in the 1990s as well. Though Coleman has no intention of making racial discrimination, since the students whom he called spooks turn out to be blacks, he suffers from the consequences of not being politically correct. In other words, if racism was not a taboo, most probably people in the campus would not tend to make discourse analysis for the word Coleman utters unintentionally. Thus, in the 1990s, people are expected to be politically correct and pay lip service to democracy and equality.

Furthermore, the social uneasiness about racial issues is also shown by Coleman’s passing for a “Jew.” Coleman “passes” for a Jew thanks to his fair complexion. In order to have a better life, he chooses to leave his African-American heritage behind and start a new life as a Jew. He creates his own life story and leads a life based on secrecy. However, the important thing is that though he passes as a Jew, he still faces opposition since Jews also have difficulty in receiving equal treatment

from WASP society members. While in the past, Jews were not treated equally in America due to the fact that they were poor, currently they are not welcomed by whites and blacks alike on account of the success they have achieved economically. Hence, though Coleman escapes from his Afro-American heritage, he is trapped in an environment which is prejudiced not only against racial but also ethnic origin.

No matter how hard some political figures or civil right organizations try to overcome the obstacles that colored citizens suffer, the issue remains to be problem though nobody states it explicitly. In his trilogy, Philip Roth points out the victimized citizens due to the effects of historical events on their lives. Somehow either the main characters or their closest relations suffer from these events within their societies. Thus, Roth supports his fiction by setting it meticulously in a historical frame. He presents the reader a story within history. While he refers to Vietnam War and the racial issues of the 1990s in American Pastoral and The Human Stain, he points out the difficulties McCarthy era brought on individuals in I Married a Communist.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LIVING IN THE ABYSS: SECRETS, HIDDEN SELVES AND FAKE APPEARANCES

#### 4.1 “Flaw” in the tragic heroes in “American Trilogy”

The novels in Roth’s trilogy are considered to be modern tragedies because their protagonists suffer from tragic events. In these tragic stories, protagonists suffer mainly due to societies’ “invisible laws,” yet these laws are also at work due to the protagonists’ flaw. Since all protagonists have “flaws,” their tragic ending accelerates with their wrongdoings. In all three novels, there is a common flaw in the tragic hero which causes his fall. This flaw is forming fake identities and denying his or her true heritage and humanity by leading a life based on secrecy.

In Philip Roth’s trilogy, all three leading characters try to belong to “mainstream” society, whereas they tragically fail in their efforts for they deny their true heritage and put society’s values before being essentially human. In order to lead an “idealized American way of life,” the protagonists are ironically forced to choose a “fake” life which they tend to believe to be true. However, they realize their delusion once they confront the realities of their lives. Thus, the tragic endings of these protagonists show the reader not only the secrecy surrounding the heroes but also the clash between appearance and reality.

To start with, the clash between appearance and reality in the lives of people in the 1960s is well-presented through Seymour Levov in Philip Roth’s Pulitzer winning novel, American Pastoral. Actually, this clash is the “flaw” in the hero which leads to his tragic fall. Seymour Levov, the young star of his neighborhood, is the embodiment of “the perfect American” throughout the novel. Despite having descended from a Jewish-American origin, Swede represents the American way of life and the success of “American Dream” in the 1950s and 1960s at the beginning of the novel. However, as the narrator, Nathan Zuckerman, gathers information from Swede’s younger brother, Jerry whom he meets at his high school reunion after many

years, Nathan starts to evaluate the “real” life-story of legendary Swede Levov. When Nathan adds all pieces together, from what he remembers and listens to, he not only presents the dissolution of American promises but also reveals the delusion of belonging to mainstream society as a Jewish-American. Thus, once the secrecy that prevails Swede’s life is revealed, the reality is revealed.

The events in American Pastoral take place in Newark in the 1960s. While America enjoys the victory of the Second World War and is represented as a country of freedom at this time period, underneath “the flower children, radical activists, Vietnam protesters and civil rights activists dominate the atmosphere” (Gündoğdu 22). While Swede presents the bright side of America, Swede’s daughter, Merry, questions this bright side and shows the events that are concealed by the majority of the public fearing confrontation with this reality and its consequences. Thus, the best way for people to escape from this reality is to keep it a secret and act as if no such event as war exists.

While Swede is the ideal America itself, his daughter, Merry is just the opposite. Merry rebels and resists what her parents represent. In fact, she is the only one in the family who is aware of the ongoing social oppression and violence all over the world, especially in Vietnam. By bombing the local post office and continuing her rebellious activities by getting involved in other bombings, she causes deaths of many people. Her resistance to everything her parents represents is so strong that by exploding the post office, Merry not only destroys the building and kills Dr. Fred Conlon, but she thinks she also destroys “the bourgeois values” and “perfect order” that her family represents. In other words, Merry is the one who tries to show the hidden facet of “reality” to Swede. Merry shows him “the fact” that he has long avoided, the failure of the “ideal America.” For Merry, in reality, America is frightened of the idea of Communism because the lenses of Communism might show a different America, one in which inequality, oppression, violence and unrest plague people. However, the mainstream American policy conceals this fear by trying to praise Capitalism and show America as a land of “liberty” and “equality.” Similarly,

due to having been captured by the power of appearance, Swede fails in seeing the truth before his eyes.

As such, therefore, Merry's questioning of her mother and father is a symbolic way of questioning the Vietnam War and capitalism. According to Merry, her father is a robot that acts in the way it is programmed to act. In a conversation with Swede, Merry says "You're the most conformist man I ever met! All you do is what's expect- expect- expected of you!" (241). She continues and adds: "It's not thinking, D-d-dad! It isn't! It's being a s-s-stupid aut-aut-aut-aut-automaton! A r-r-r-r-robot!" (241). Merry hates her father's conformism since she wants him to question the values he lives by, especially the policy of the government about Vietnam War. Merry wants Swede to form his own idea about issues. She does not want him to accept everything, she wants him to have a unique voice. While trying to raise Swede's awareness of himself, Merry, who is of the same flesh and blood with Swede, leads to Swede's tragic fall. His fall is ironic since the flesh and blood which Swede rejects in an attempt to belong to WASP society brings about his tragic ending.

Moreover, by questioning her mother, Dawn, Merry also questions the Vietnam War. Merry has a problematic relationship with her mother. Dawn's being a former beauty queen puts pressure on Merry. For Merry, it is a burden to have such "good-looking and successful parents" (96). Since Merry cannot compete with her mother, she finds a way of manipulating Dawn. The best way she can do this is by stuttering. After a while, as Merry's psychiatrist puts it, her stuttering becomes "a vindictive type of behaviour" (96). Thus, she not only fights against her own parents, but also rebels against the policy of the government which legitimizes the Vietnam War. She refuses to be a part of a perfect family because she is aware of the imperfections behind this façade of perfection. Similarly, she reacts against the government since she is also aware of the reality behind that perfect country. Hence, Merry is against "appearance" of all kinds.



Since Swede's evaluation of America is so different from Merry's, Swede tries hard to perceive America in the way Merry perceives it. However, he ends up questioning Merry's evaluation of the "dreamland." He raises questions and seeks answers on his own. Swede asks: "How could she 'hate' this country when she had no *conception* of this country? How could a child of his be so blind as to revile the 'rotten system' that had given her own family every opportunity to succeed?" (213). However, according to Merry, her father should answer these questions that he asks because it is Swede himself who has no conception of this country. For Merry, Swede is totally blind to everything that happens around him.

Merry believes that the reason lying beneath his father's perception of America as a "perfect land" is his lying to himself about his "true identity." For Merry, his father, Swede and his mother, Dawn are the representatives of "constructed selves." They have no idea of who they are. They are wearing masks and acting out roles that are attributed to them. By moving to a Protestant neighborhood, they are showing that they also belong to mainstream America and can live as comfortably as the members of WASP community. It is as if they are trying to show that ethnic origins are not obstacles in America which is the land of equality and freedom. Since Swede, a Jewish-American, has already overcome one obstacle by getting married to an Irish girl who is also a Catholic, he believes he can also live peacefully in this "indestructible" house which "could never burn to the ground" (190). However, American history shows that not everyone can climb the hierarchical ladder as fast as Swede. Swede is among the few who can somehow manage to take their chances and lead a life they dreamed of. In other words, unlike what he considers himself to be, Swede's progress is not at all representative of all the Jews in America, let alone members of other ethnic and racial minorities. Instead he is the one who the social system somehow has allowed to go further in the hierarchical ladder. Thus, since America has given him several chances to grab and live as a member of a WASP society, he takes everything it gives as "real" and ends up living a "fake" life. However, like everything fake, the lies and delusions upon which he constructed his life prove to be doomed to deconstruction.

All through his life, Seymour Levov tries to do the best thing. He always tries to behave in a socially-accepted and proper way whereas this results in living a life of “appearance.” That is why nobody knows his “raw-self,” nobody including himself. His brother, Jerry, the narrator Nathan Zuckerman’s classmate, constantly warns his brother, Swede about his social mask. In a conversation with his brother, Jerry says: “You don’t reveal yourself to people, Seymour. You keep yourself a secret. Nobody knows what you are. That’s what she [Merry]’s been blasting away at that façade” (275). Jerry is well-aware of the fact that Seymour does everything “for the appearance.” He marries Miss. New Jersey. He buys a house that is “indestructible.” He “never breaks the code” (274). However, one day Merry reveals his secret. She not only blows the post office but blows Swede’s fake life as well.

Carl Jung claims that one has to conceal his or her inner thoughts in order to keep his/her appearance as presentable as possible. In other words, while revealing his “public self,” one conceals his “private self.” Thus, one can imagine that the majority of people throughout history has worn masks for fear of being revealed. The main character, Swede in American Pastoral, is a perfect example for showing the abyss between “public self” and “private self.” Since Swede has always been the perfect man representing “perfect America,” he feels he has to make his appearance as “real” as possible. For instance, Swede thinks that the more strongly and virtuously he acts, the stronger and more virtuous he will become, for this is the cycle that people follow: They judge by appearance, never question what lies behind and take the appearances for “real.”

While Swede may deceive others as to who he actually is, he cannot lie to himself without psychological and moral consequence. He is torn between appearance and reality. He suffers a major dilemma while wanting to help his daughter, knowing that he cannot due to the crimes she has committed. Swede cannot find the courage to defend his daughter and he even does not know what he “really” thinks about the participation of his daughter in terrorist attacks. His ambiguous attitude towards his daughter describes the dilemma he suffers. Swede’s loss of sense

of reality in the world of appearances is described with these sentences through the end of the novel:

Everybody who flashed the signs of goodness he took to be good. Everybody who flashed the signs of loyalty he took to be loyal. Everybody who flashed the signs of intelligence he took to be intelligent. And so he had failed to see into his daughter, failed to see into his wife, failed to see into his one and only mistress—probably had never even begun to see into himself. What was *he*, stripped of all the signs he flashed? (409-410)

Swede thus believed in the appearances of people and events. He neither questioned them nor doubted about their reality. That is why he also took his appearance for real. He believed he was the person that he saw in the mirror. He never thought that his reflection in the mirror would be fake. Thus, having a fake identity by not being aware of his essence is the flaw in Swede which caused his tragic fall.

Philip Roth reflects the clash between reality and appearance in I Married a Communist through the character, Eve Frame. Similar to Swede in American Pastoral, the flaw in Eve is also not being aware of herself and leading a fake life. It is so hard to get a true picture of Eve since she is always under a cover. From the conversations Nathan has with Murray, Nathan understands that Eve does not reflect her own feelings; instead, she “acts.” Murray explains to Nathan how difficult it is to understand who Eve is at first glance. Therefore, he does not blame Ira for not realizing the fact that Eve is always in disguise. Murray recalls their first encounter with Eve:

That evening he first brought Eve to our place and we went out for dinner, I didn't see anything wrong myself. It's only fair to say that it's not Ira alone who couldn't figure this out. He doesn't know who she is because, to be honest, *nobody* would have right off. Nobody could have. In society, Eve was invisible behind the disguise of all that civility. (56)

According to Murray, nothing about Eve is real. She simply acts every minute of her life as she does in films. Murray describes Eve as follows: “Underneath the smile there was nothing at all, not her character, not her history, not even her misery”

(253). Thus, Eve is constantly hiding her inner feelings and reflecting a “fake” appearance. Moreover, Eve’s surname is also symbolic in the novel. She presents herself, which is actually fake, within a “frame.” She only reveals the part that she wants to expose within a frame and people can only see that part since she conceals the rest of it.

Eve is not the only character in the book without an essence. Though for Murray, Ira is a person without camouflage, O’Day believes him to be just the opposite. According to O’Day, who led Ira to become a Communist when they met in the army, Ira is an insubstantial figure who impersonates everything and everyone. After the publication of Eve’s book which not only accuses Ira of being a Communist but also gives the names of the other Communists including O’Day, O’Day holds Ira responsible for what happened. When Murray wants to get in touch with O’Day to ask him to help Ira to cope with the accusations, O’Day refuses to comply with Murray’s request and says:

Your brother used the party to climb to his professional position, then he betrayed it. If he was a Red with guts, he would have stayed where the fight is, which is not in New York in Greenwich Village. But all Ira ever cared about was everybody thinking what a hero he was. Always impersonating and never the real thing. Because he was tall, that made him Lincoln? Because he spouted ‘the masses, the masses, the masses,’ that made him a revolutionary? He wasn’t a Lincoln, he wasn’t anything. He wasn’t a man—he impersonates being a man along with everything else. Impersonates being a *great* man. The guy impersonates everything. He throws off one disguise and becomes something else. (288)

As O’Day tells Murray, Ira is not real but only an appearance reflecting the original. As a result, Ira’s fall is due to his tendency of impersonating other people and giving a false image.

Similar to the tragic characters above mentioned, Coleman Silk, who is the protagonist in the novel, The Human Stain, suffers from the clash between “appearance” and “reality” as well. Coleman’s flaw is also denying his own heritage and forming a fake identity. The story takes place in the 1990s when “appearing as”

somebody is still the most important thing in the lives of Americans. Coleman has managed to climb the social ladder by denying his ethnic and family heritage, yet after everything he constructed has fallen apart with one word, he realizes the insubstantiality that rules America. Coleman Silk describes this era they are living in as a time when “the sincere performance is everything” (147). What is ironic is that people are not expected to behave naturally; instead they are expected to act. However, this act or performance should be sincere. Coleman continues and claims that since all these sincere performances are empty, this generation is full of “shallowness.”

In such a time period, Coleman Silk, a descendant of African-American heritage, chooses to pass as a “Jew” because his physical appearance allows him to do this. His decision opens new doors to him and he becomes a successful classics professor at Athena College. He is described as “a neat, attractive package of a man even at his age, the small-nosed Jewish type with the facial heft in the jaw, one of those crimped-haired Jews of a light yellowish skin pigmentation who possess something of the ambiguous aura of the pale blacks who are sometimes taken for white” (16). Not only his physical appearance but also his Jewish mannerisms help him “appear” as a Jew. He knows how to behave as a Jew because he grew up in a Jewish neighborhood. During his service at Athena College as the dean of faculty, he acts like a stereotypical Jew. He brings in competition to the college, “which, as an early enemy noted, ‘is what Jews do’” (9). Since he acts like a Jew, everybody accepts him as a Jew. After all, performance is the only thing that counts in America. Thus, the more he acts and appears to be a “Jew,” the more “real” his Jewishness becomes for the people living in the 1990s in America.

The secrecy in Coleman’s life starts with his decision of passing. He begins to lead a double life. He rejects his own family and creates a new family based on lies. His artist wife, Iris and his children do not know the truth about his background. Instead, they believe he has descended from a Jewish origin. Inevitably, after making his decision, Coleman stops seeing his mother and his brother and sister, who would give away his African-American origins. He rewrites his life story and starts a new life in which he hopes he will have a fair chance at leaving behind racial restrictions

and at forming a free self. He is careful about every detail in his passing process and remembers the clues that would help him while passing. Coleman believes that anyone can pass as somebody else if they behave accordingly. He believes this since this is what he had learned while he was in the army. “What he’d learned in the navy is that all you have to do is give a pretty good and consistent line about yourself and nobody ever inquires, because no one’s that interested” (131). Since his physical appearance already lets him “pass” as a Jew, he finds the “acting as a Jew” part easier. He already bears the biblical mark of circumcision; the rest follows of its own accord, for he hangs out with whites, rejects his African-American heritage and deprives his own mother of the simple privilege of seeing her grandchildren. Thus, Coleman does everything that is necessary for his new way of life and manages to give a consistent “appearance.”

While Coleman tries to conceal his real identity, he occasionally questions himself as well. He asks: “To be two men instead of one? To be two colors instead of one? To walk the streets incognito or in disguise, to be neither this nor that but something in between? To be possessed of a double or a triple or a quadruple personality?” (130). Though Coleman faces the difficulties caused by this secret, he never finds the courage to tell Iris the reality about his heritage. He cannot risk what he has achieved as a Jew rather than a black. Moreover, Coleman also remembers what he went through when he, for the first time, revealed the truth to Steena, his ex-girlfriend whom he passionately loved. Upon meeting Coleman’s mother and brother, whom Steena had thought to be Jews, Steena stops seeing him. Thus, this comes as a shock to Coleman and disheartens him. From then on, he avoids revealing his secret to anyone, including his wife and children.

Coleman bears the burden of this secret until meeting and having an affair with Faunia Farley at Athena College. Faunia shows Coleman his “true identity,” “his essence.” However, Faunia also has secrets. She hides the fact that she is literate. After becoming aware of the emptiness and absurdity of social titles that are generally used to define who someone is, she chooses to live at the level of essence. Since she believes that being cultured is covering this essence, she persists in acting

as if she were illiterate. She chooses to be pure and innocent. She does not fear losing anything or anyone because she has already lost her children in a fire. When she loses everything that was once very important to her, she starts to reject everything that people attach undue importance to. For instance, she gets really angry at Coleman when he starts to believe that his suffering because of what everybody says about him at Athena College is so life-shattering. However, Faunia believes that it is not a big deal when compared to her tragic life story. In other words, she hates it when Coleman attaches too much importance to his “appearance” in society or to the ideas of other people about him. “According to Faunia, the process of conforming one’s self to what is proper in society and among people is the attempt to erase what is deep down in one’s self and what is seen as ‘stain’ by one’s self or by others” (Gündoğdu 76). Due to her perspective of evaluating people, Faunia rejects and ignores all the titles attributed to people including Coleman. Thanks to her, Coleman can find his “true self.” After his affair with Faunia, Silk becomes aware of the importance of “being himself.” Thus, instead of “acting” as somebody else, he finally chooses to be himself.

Coleman’s passing as a Jew shows the clash between appearance and reality; however, this clash is not only revealed through people. That is to say, not only people but also government hides secrets of its own. Philip Roth presents the clash between appearance and reality also from this perspective in The Human Stain. The Vietnam War functions as a catalyst that reveals the conflict in a government torn between appearance and reality. Similar to American Pastoral, Roth reflects the effects of Vietnam War on individuals in The Human Stain. Lester, Faunia’s ex-husband, is a Vietnam War veteran who finds it really difficult to adapt to civilian life again. He suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and constantly blames the government for sending American soldiers to Vietnam. Lester believes that the death of his children as a result of a fire which burnt down their house is a kind of “payback” for all the sins he committed in Vietnam. Though the government acts as if the veterans will be sane and able to continue their lives prior to Vietnam War after they receive medical care, Lester proves just the opposite. He says that he does not feel anything even towards his dead son and daughter. He has become callous and

numb towards everything and everyone. He describes his mood after returning from Vietnam as follows:

Numbed out. My kids are dead, but my body is numb and my mind is blank. Vietnam. That's why! I never did cry for my kids. He was five and she was eight. I said to myself, 'Why can't I feel?' I said, 'Why didn't I save them? Why couldn't I save them?' Payback. Payback! I kept thinking about Vietnam. About all the times I think I died. That's how I began to know that I can't die. Because I died already. Because I died already in Vietnam. (73)

After coming back from Vietnam, he starts stalking Faunia and blames her for the death of his children. His resentment towards her grows once he learns the affair between Coleman and Faunia.

Lester is the embodiment of the failure of the American government in Vietnam, yet while Coleman Silk passes as a Jew by creating a new life based on lies and secrets, the government passes as a government that is successful in Vietnam. As a policy the government of the period tries hard to conceal the fact that many people are getting killed in Vietnam. In order to prevent the confrontation with the reality, the government also wants to hide the fact that veterans cannot continue their lives in sanity after returning to their homeland. In other words, so long as Coleman acts as a Jew, he is a Jew. Likely, so long as American government appears "successful" at Vietnam War and makes people believe that the soldiers returning home will continue their former lives happily, it is believed to be "real". In 1990s America, what really matters is what is seen, what goes underneath is not that important. Thus, the lives of characters in The Human Stain and the government policies in the 1990s are dominated by secrecy.

Apart from the effects of Vietnam War, being "politically correct" also rules the era. Coleman shows the power of discourse in the lives of people. Certain issues like racism have become a taboo about which people make a silent agreement and decide not to talk about. A significant example which shows the power of discourse when talking about a taboo is the accusation of Coleman for being a racist. Upon the absence of two students in his classes for several weeks, Coleman asks: "Does



anyone know these people? Do they exist or are they spooks?" (6). Though Coleman does not have the intention of racially discriminating against the students since he does not even know what color these students might be, still he is accused of being a racist when these two missing students bring charges of racism against him. In response to these accusations, Coleman says:

I was referring to their possibly ectoplasmic character. Isn't that obvious? These two students had not attended a single class. That's all I knew about them. I was using the word in its customary and primary meaning: "spook" as a specter or a ghost. I had no idea what color these two students might be. I had known perhaps fifty years ago but had wholly forgotten that "spooks" is an invidious term sometimes applied to blacks. (6)

No matter how strongly he argues against these accusations, people are so blinded and conditioned by political correctness towards the race issue that Coleman is forced to retire in the end.

Political correctness goes no further than paying lip service to the deep-seated problem of race in America. It was this problem that had led the young Coleman to his decision to pass, and it is again this problem that causes him to lose everything he gained by passing. Initially, Coleman Silk rejects his African-American heritage and "every day wake[s] up to be what he had made himself" (345). Since Coleman wants to better his lifestyle and attend the school he wants to study at, he passes as a Jew. Even as a valedictorian in his class, Coleman learns that his chances of a successful future will never be equal to those of white people. Dr. Fensterman, the father of a student in Coleman's class, makes an offer to the Silks and offers paying three thousand dollars for Coleman's college expenses and supporting Gladys Silk, Coleman's mother, to become the first colored head nurse in exchange for Coleman's getting a lower grade than Bert, Dr. Fensterman's son. The reason for Dr. Fensterman's offer is due to the tiny Jewish quotas in most medical schools.

Dr. Fensterman explained to Mr. And Mrs. Silk that Bert wanted to follow his father in medicine, but that to do so was essential for him to have a perfect record. And not merely perfect in college but extraordinary going back to kindergarden. Perhaps Silks were not

aware of the discriminatory quotas that were designed to keep Jews out of medical schools, especially the medical schools at Harvard and Yale. (86)

Thus, though Jews do not suffer as severely as African-Americans from racial discrimination, they also have to do their best to prove themselves to WASP society. Dr. Fensterman not only shows the reader the obstacles black-Americans face but also similar hardships Jews encounter. He is also aware of the obstacles the Silk family encounters. Although Coleman's father is a college graduate just like Dr. Fensterman, after going bankrupt, he begins to be employed as a railroad steward which is "in no way commensurate with his professional training" (86). Hence, with the offer Dr. Fensterman makes both sides would overcome some of the social and racial obstacles. Bert would have a chance to attend Harvard or Yale which is extremely hard to attend for a Jew, and in return Mrs. Silk would become a head nurse which is almost impossible for anyone descending from African-American heritage. However, Dr. Fensterman's offer also puts forward his hypocrisy. Fensterman already takes for granted that black-American are victims and will be satisfied with half-solutions which will slightly alleviate their conditions but will not return their efforts fully. Knowing this, he takes advantage of this situation and uses it for his son's benefit by making the Silks an offer. As a result, Roth shows that an ethnic group that has access to better opportunities victimizes the other group having worse opportunities. This is the reality that people try to cover by being "politically correct."

All protagonists in the trilogy of Philip Roth appear to be somebody else. As a result, they either cannot evaluate who they really are or cannot know what they really want in their lives. The reason why they tragically suffer from some events is mainly due to their lack of self evaluation which leads to their living a fake life based on performance and appearance. As a result, their "flaw" brings about their tragic fall.

## 4.2 “The Invisible Law” in “American Trilogy”

The fall of the tragic heroes or other characters in the novels is not only due to their “flaw” but also because of “invisible law” which functions as “fate” in tragedies. The reason why these characters in Roth’s fiction suffer from tragic events is that their “flaw” makes it possible for “fate” to influence their lives.

Roth writes about different kinds of victimizations of “lost selves” in his trilogy. The victimization of the protagonists can either be psychological or can result in the death of the protagonists. Besides, they all differ in terms of their time periods and underlying reasons. What remains common in three books is the “invisible laws” unanimously applied for the “victimization” of the protagonists.

Robin West in his article “Invisible Victims: A Comparison of Susan Glaspell’s ‘Jury of Her Peers,’ and Herman Melville’s ‘Bleekwater’” questions the suffering of the victims from “invisible harms” legitimated by law. He states:

There is, however, another type of suffering—another “category” of harms—toward which the law stands in a quite different relationship. As a number of critical legal scholars have argued, some of the sufferings of daily life—some of the harms individually sustained—are not simply compensated by our positive law, but their existence is aggressively denied, trivialized, disguised or legitimated by our legal rhetoric. These harms tend, not coincidentally, to be by-product of institutions, social systems, and structures of belief which overwhelmingly serve the interests of powerful individuals, groups or subcommunities. Although law does not cause these harms it is complicit in the process by which they become “legitimate”—an accepted part of the terrain of daily living—and hence become invisible, often even to the individuals who sustain them. Particularly from a perspective internal to the legal system, such harms can be extremely hard to discern. (West, 1996:203)

Only after the tragic fall of the hero, does the harm become visible. The law, however, is accepted by the members of society and nobody can challenge it.

In the first book of Roth's "American Trilogy", American Pastoral, Merry functions as the agent of fate in Swede's life. She constantly destroys the image of Swede's dream land by showing its falsehood. Thus, his blindness to his daughter's attempts to show him the reality causes his fall. Swede is a "blind victim." Due to the position he achieves though descending from a Jewish background, he cannot face the realities of America. For Swede, America is a paradise. There is no way for him to describe America as something other than a dreamland. However, this is the source of his fall. Since he cannot see the ongoing events like Vietnam War from the perspective of his daughter, Merry, he ruins his relationship with her. Swede never questions America. Instead he is grateful to such a country which presents him the life of a WASP. He considers himself lucky in this "rat race." Swede does not question the social system, which he is also a part of, no matter how hard Merry, who functions as an agent of fate, tries to show. Thus, his fall becomes inevitable.

Similar to Merry, Eve Frame functions as an agent of fate in I Married a Communist. She causes the fall of Ira, and his fall cannot be prevented because it is his "fate." In the novel, Ira hides his true identity since he hides in mines and changes his name after killing someone with a shovel at the age of sixteen. After this incident, he starts to fear his violent nature and starts looking for a way to stop his murderous rage. To escape from showing signs of violence again, he starts to look for a home. He wants to belong somewhere. This somewhere becomes Communist group before meeting Eve Frame. Together with O'Day, Ira learns the principles of Communism and becomes an advocate of the Communist cause. However, after getting married to Eve, Ira finds a new place to belong to. Though he continues to defend the Communist idea, he is not welcomed by O'Day who believes that the rights of working class cannot be defended by a bourgeois person living in wealth and luxury. Hence, Ira ends up being the one who is desperately in need of a shelter. That shelter happens to be either Communism or the love of a woman; sooner or later he would need one shelter or another. Nothing in the course of his life story can be prevented. In other words, things happen as they are meant to happen. Some events are even ironic. For instance, though Ira hides in mines for years after the crime he committed, he also spends the last days of his life hiding due to the charges made

against him. Thus, his life story repeats itself and this is named “fate.”

Furthermore, in the last book of the trilogy, in The Human Stain, both Delphine Roux and Lester function as agents of fate in Coleman’s life. Since Delphine Roux, the new chairperson of the department, is totally lost in the “performance-based” world, she victimizes Coleman who mirrors her emptiness. Roux does not try to face her emptiness or fears. Instead, she chooses a person in whom she sees herself and victimizes him or her. By doing this, she fills herself with what she fears. However, in the end, ironically, she both becomes a victim and victimizer.

Delphine Roux flees away from France to America to prove herself to her over-achiever mother. She refuses to be under the authority of her mother and throughout the novel, she tries to appear as successful as possible. Her only ideal is to show off what she is academically capable of to her relatives and friends in Europe. What makes Delphine a victim while trying to victimize Coleman is her lack of self-evaluation. Although she becomes the chair of the humanities department, still she does not know herself as a human being. She longs to have a title but it is not because of her ambition for her own future. The truth that lies beneath is the fact that she wants to show her family that she can accomplish something by herself. She makes her decision as a result of her resentment towards her family heritage. She only wants to prove herself by surpassing her mother. She cannot evaluate her past, her present state and her future. Since Delphine does not have a true sense of herself, she believes in the power of performance and appearance. As long as she appears to have achieved something on her own abroad, her parents will think it is real. Thus, for Delphine, everything should be superb on the surface.

Due to her lack of self-evaluation, she has an ambiguous relationship with Coleman as well. She is sexually attracted to him but she lies to herself about her innermost feelings and therefore acts as an opponent to Coleman in the college. Her putting the blame on Coleman by accusing him of filtering into her mailbox is an example of her rejection to face the reality. She makes decisions immediately

without thinking about their consequences. Therefore, most of the time, her decisions are arbitrary and irrational. Thus, Delphine is also a victim because through the end of the book because she ends up as the one who cannot know who she really is. On the other hand, since Roux also causes the fall of Coleman, she also functions as a victimizer. Her not having a true sense of herself and rejecting the reality are the two important factors that lead Delphine to become a victimizer. Delphine functions as an agent of fate in Coleman's life and brings his fall since Coleman constantly shows her emptiness which she tries to suppress.

Like Roux, Lester also functions as an agent of fate in Coleman's life. In order to take his revenge on his ex-wife, Faunia, and her lover, Coleman, he causes their death in a tragic car accident. Though Lester appears to be a victim of government's policy by being sent to Vietnam War, he darkens another person's life after returning home. Though he hides behind the reason that he suffers from mental disorder after the Vietnam War, it is, in fact, his weakness for not confronting the reality that leads him to victimize the other. Lester puts all the blame on Faunia for the death of their children in a fire. He does not blame himself. Instead, he believes that Faunia neglected their children as she was always out with different men. Thus, in the end, both in order to take his revenge on Faunia and make her repay for the death of their children, Lester causes the tragic car accident. Lester not only victimizes Faunia but also Coleman, for he has an affair with Faunia, Lester does not hesitate to kill both. For Lester, Coleman can also be the one to be blamed for the death of his children since Coleman might be the man who was together with Faunia on the day of the fire. Actually, the reason behind Lester's ending up as a victimizer is his denial of reality because Lester chooses to believe in the scenarios he created in his mind rather than seeing the most obvious truth. Hence, both Delphine and Lester function as an agent of fate in Coleman's life and the events they cause are inevitable because Coleman cannot challenge his fate.

Apart from the agents of fate, the "invisible law" itself is also presented through the academy's mass-hysteria. In Coleman's "spooks" incident, there is no evidence for blaming him, whereas the academic staff accuses him with the charges

of racial discrimination by showing the “word” he uses. Though Coleman insists on repeating the fact that he used the word in its primary meaning, people tend to take the word “spooks” as “. . . an invidious term sometimes applied to blacks” (6). It is as if there is an “invisible law” which everyone agrees to accept when they detect a “scapegoat” in their society. They name this “scapegoat” as “other,” and once they detect this other, they apply the invisible law and victimize this person by blaming and punishing him. The punishment does not always have to be physical. Most of the time, it is psychological, just like in Coleman’s case. The charges made against him defame his character and status for which he gave up his past. He earns a bad reputation at Athena College since everyone knows the reason for leaving his position. Besides, Coleman believes that the reason for the death of his wife, Iris, is the accusations made against him in the academy. Thus, the “invisible” law is at work.

Roth shows that in 1990s America, there is general acceptance among people that if they do not dwell on any social matter, it will not exist. Therefore, being “politically correct” is very important in the 1990s in America. The underlying reason for the failure of Coleman is people’s naming him as “other” since he is not politically correct. Furthermore, nobody sides with him. Even if some believe Coleman’s innocence, they would not support him since they do not want to put their reputation at risk by being at war with the majority of the public. Thus, once again the “invisible law” is legitimated by the public silently. Since the law itself is invisible, the victim becomes invisible, too.

In conclusion, in the lives of the protagonists in the three novels, not only the flaws of the characters but also the invisible law lead to their tragic fall. The events that the tragic heroes suffer stem from their flaw. However, invisible law which functions as fate is so powerful over the individuals that none of the events in the protagonists’ lives can be prevented or changed. Thus, similar to Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, in modern tragedies the intersection of the wrongdoings of the protagonists due to their flaw and the power of fate on the heroes’ lives lead to their tragic endings.

## CONCLUSION

In his literary career, Philip Roth has explored his characters on an endless quest for self. These “constructed selves” do not know their true selves and suffer from the consequences of leading fake lives. Roth’s “American Trilogy” not only presents such protagonists’ quest for self, but also reveals a universal issue which is “the need for victimization” within a society. Ironically, the protagonists in the trilogy are not punished due to the crimes they committed or the immoral acts they did. Instead, they are punished as a result of being randomly chosen as a scapegoat. Thus, similar to ancient tragedies in literature, Roth succeeds in presenting the tragedies of the common man whose fall is inevitable either due to his flaw or his fate.

As examined in the first chapter of the thesis, the historical background of “the need for victimization” dates back to the Old Testament. However, what is important is the change in the type of victimization through centuries. While in The Old Testament, Abraham sacrifices his son to God, in The New Testament, Jesus sacrifices himself to God to pay for the sins of mankind. Therefore, the two sacrifices are different from each other. To start with, Abraham decides to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to God since he wants to show his unquestionable faith in God. His faith in God is so strong that Abraham can give up the most beloved person for him. In her article “The Place of Ritual in Our Time,” Susan Mizruchi states that “. . . where there is sacrifice, there is faith” (Mizruchi, 2008:468). In the latter example, however, faith results in self-sacrifice. This sacrifice is different from Abraham’s since Jesus gives up his “self” for the sins of mankind. This kind of sacrifice of self is the ultimate step one can take.

In recent history, however, the patterns of victimization have changed further since people started to victimize the ones who they identified as “other.” There is no longer the sacrifice of a loved one dear to the heart nor the self-sacrifice of noble victim. Instead society randomly chooses a “scapegoat” to victimize for purifying the whole of society.



What Philip Roth does in his fiction is to present this modern type of victimization in today's world. Thus, Roth presents the reader modern tragedies of our time. Roth's trilogy is a perfect example for modern tragedy. The fall of the characters stemming from different reasons presents to the reader the tragic fall of modern man. In modern literature, the definition of tragedy has changed. The tragic plays, short stories or books present the fact that not only those in power but also ordinary people can be depicted through this genre. This is what Roth does in his fiction. He depicts the tragedy in ordinary lives and the terror in everyday life. It is no longer a "royal scapegoat" or a "half-divine being" who is sacrificed. Instead, common man is sacrificed. In contrast to ancient times, the individual is autonomous from civic and religious authority. Thus, Roth's protagonist can be anyone. S/he does not have to be royal or divine. Roth writes about the tragedy of common man who is believed to be innocent. The common man who falls victim to tragic events is randomly chosen. Most of the time the reader identifies himself with the tragic hero. Hence, it is this fact that makes Roth's fiction a tragedy since the reader feels that this victim could be him or her as well. That is why Roth's fiction is universal.

In his trilogy, Roth shows that people do not only read about the victimization of groups of people as historical fact, for it is still present in everyday life. Roth presents the fact that in everyday life, everyone is victimized no matter which ethnic or religious group they belong to so long as they are identified as "other." Thus, the victimization of modern man in his everyday life forms the unwritten history. Furthermore, while presenting the fall of ordinary man in his fiction, Roth also refers to certain archetypal figures which are ever-present in mankind's "collective unconsciousness." Since Roth's three novels are tragedies, certain archetypal figures, which are also used in ancient tragedies, are detected in Roth's fiction as well. That is why Roth's fiction is considered universal since the archetypes and mythical figures he uses in his fiction transcend time and evoke the same feelings from time immemorial.

The tragic ending of these stories are to some extent due to the influence of particular historical events, which provide context by evoking a sense of reality and

familiarity in the modern reader. While American Pastoral depicts the effects of Vietnam War on individuals and shows the failure of Swede upon not seeing “the reality” but keeping on believing “the appearance,” I Married a Communist shows the influence of McCarthy era on the lives of people. Similarly, both historical events cause the fall of the protagonists; however, these events are not the only reason for their fall. The heroes’ flaw also brings about their tragic fall. In tragedies the reader tends to identify with the tragic hero or heroine since s/he suffers from undeserved events though s/he is good and innocent. That is why, on seeing the tragic fall of the protagonist, the reader feels pity for the hero but then admits that the protagonist falls since s/he has a flaw.

In Roth’s “American Trilogy” particular historical moments has huge effect on the lives of the protagonists. However, though Roth shows the effects of Vietnam War in American Pastoral, he also ironically implies that no one dies as a result of the war. In contrast to history, literature shows the reader the individual losses. Through his fiction, Roth shows the reader the battle Merry gives at homefront and draws the reader’s attention to its similarity to the Vietnam War. Roth implies that both wars, inside and outside, change the course of people’s lives and cause tragic consequences. He wants to show the fact that people are also victimized at their homeland, where supposedly there is peace. For instance, Merry bombs the post office and many other places afterwards and kills people in her homeland. Though she protests the war, she ends up as the one who causes the death of innocent people among whom there may even be the ones against the war. Hence, while presenting the social atmosphere affecting the lives of the protagonists, Roth also shows that these events are not enough to victimize someone since it is the protagonists’ flaw that actually causes their weakness. Actually, it is their weakness that makes them be easily affected by the social events. In tragedies, hero’s fall cause fear in the reader because the reader identifies himself with the protagonist. Since the protagonist is randomly chosen, the reader fears that the next victim could be him or her. This random victimization leads the reader to live in fear all through his life. As a result, day by day his free will and autonomy is destroyed.

The last book of the trilogy, The Human Stain shows the impact of the politics of the 1990s on individuals. Roth presents the reader the parallels between individual and historical tragedies. For instance, the novel opens with the declaration of Clinton's affair with Monica and its resemblance to Coleman and Faunia's affair. While the former is known as a historical scandalous event, Roth shows that a similar event can also be experienced at individual level. Thus, Roth forms basis for comparison for two events in his novel. Moreover, Roth's commentary on this scandal is different from the rest. Through his fiction and especially through Coleman, Roth tries to show that though one can have a title and even be a president, he is still a human being and therefore it is natural for him to fall due to his wrongdoing. According to Roth, titles and other social ranks do not contribute to the essence of a person. Roth's main focus in the novel is not the scandalous affair of Clinton, instead he focuses on the new type of racism in the 1990s which is being "politically correct." Words are so powerful that using an inappropriate word can lead to the fall of people in this time period. For instance, in The Human Stain, Coleman falls as a result of not being politically correct. By not publicizing the bad conditions black people live in and the oppression against them, people believe that such conditions do not exist. However, if one fails to be politically correct like Coleman in this case, then s/he becomes the scapegoat and causes his or her fall. Throughout Roth's novel, the reader sees the power of words on the lives of individuals. Words can cause the fall of people and consequently people are alienated from reality since it is only words that matters. In other words, unlike ancient times when people used to give harm to one another with wars, in today's symbolic order the power of discourse destroys the lives of people. Hence, Hawthorne's "persecuting spirit" has been replaced by being "politically correct" in 1990s America.

All the protagonists in Roth's "American Trilogy" fall victim to tragic events either as a result of their flaw or their fate which functions as "invisible law" in today's world. Similar to Greek tragedies, the fall of the protagonist is due to his "flaw." The common flaw in the two novels of Roth is that both protagonists do not know who they really are. They have hidden identities which they do not make public. In American Pastoral, Swede does not question anything and accept the role

that is given. He is not even aware of what he thinks. He fails because of his lack of self-evaluation. On the other hand, in The Human Stain, Coleman passes for a Jew and if it had not been not for Faunia, he would not have become aware of his true identity. Hence, both protagonists suffer due to their “constructed selves.” As it is known the tragic hero does not only fall because of the “flaw.” He also falls since he cannot challenge “fate.” However, fate which was once important in Greek tragedy is replaced by the “will of social institutions that shape the fate of the individual through policies and practices” which function as “invisible law” in modern tragedies. The protagonist Ira, in I Married a Communist sets an example to this. The fear of Communism in 1950s gets hold of the society so firmly that it is as if people are forced to cause the fall of one another by accusing them of being a Communist. Ira does not have control over his own life since his life is under the control of the government policies. Thus, not the fate itself but the fate that the government policy shapes determines the tragic fall of common man. However, not only the invisible law, which functions as fate in modern world, but also Ira’s flaw cause his tragic fall. Ira’s flaw is his blindness. He marries Eve as he cannot see who Eve really is since she constantly masks her true self. Ira fails to see the unpredictable and fickle nature of Eve. Thus, his blindness brings about his fall.

Not only Ira, but also Coleman suffers from invisible law. Coleman cannot manage to be politically correct in 1990s America. Being politically correct becomes the new type of racism in which whites avoid talking about race at all. Since it becomes a taboo to talk about race, people try to act politically towards them in the 1990s. However, Coleman fails to do this and causes his fall. At this point, Roth draws the reader’s attention to the difference between nature and symbolic order. In contrast to natural order, in the symbolic order, which man created, language and action began to be different from each other. For instance, people started to talk the way they were expected to even if they did not believe or side with what they were saying. In contrast to ancient times, people began to wear cultural lenses which affected their perceptions of particular events. For instance, in 1990s America, people began to be sensitive towards race. Thus, even a single word having a negative connotation was enough to accuse that person of being a racist. Moreover,

Roth also shows that man began to play the role of God and started to shape the lives of one another by creating new rules in the symbolic order. Thus, Roth points out the tragic consequences of the destruction of natural order by the symbolic order through his protagonists in his novels.

The tragic fall of victims are twofold: The victimizer can kill the victim by causing his tragic ending or torture the other psychologically by defaming him or her. For instance, in The Scarlet Letter, Hester wears the letter A, which stands for adultery, for the rest of her life and is therefore forced to remain as a social outcast. Similar to Hester, in The Human Stain, Coleman suffers from defamation since he loses his social rank, for which he changed the course of his life, as a result of accusations held against him in the department. Besides the defamation, Coleman also gets killed in a car accident which Lester causes. Thus, his victimization is twofold.

Similar to ancient times, in modern world, the victimization process is still important for the victimizer since s/he feels freed from his sins by victimizing the other. By putting all the blame on the other, who functions as a scapegoat, s/he is purified. The victimizer is relieved upon seeing that it is someone else rather than himself who falls tragically. While in ancient Greek tragedies, the audience feels freed after witnessing the victimization of the other, in Roth's modern tragedies, especially in The Human Stain, the reader witnesses the purification of the victimizer after causing the fall of the victim. Roth's victimizer is so desperately in fear of confronting the reality that s/he sees the other as a threat to his or her own existence. In the end, in order to guarantee living in his or her fake environment, he kills or destroys the other. In today's world, Roth shows that people tend to victimize "other" as they see their desired but unrealized reflections in him or her and try to fill their lack by victimizing "other." In other words, the other mirrors the emptiness of the victimizer's self and to avoid the confrontation with this reality, s/he victimizes him or her.

Taking everything into consideration, the award-winning writer Philip Roth remains to be one of the most successful contemporary fiction writers. His fiction transcends the boundaries of not only Jewish fiction but also American fiction. Therefore, among his predecessors, one can find not only American writers but also writers and dramatists such as Shakespeare and Sophocles that hail to us from Elizabethan England and ancient Greece. Just like his worldwide literary ancestors, Roth identifies and reveals the most profound problems of humanity within his own time. Roth's focus on the "constructed selves" of modern man and his "victimization" because of his lack of self evaluation and his being identified as "the other" presents the reader the reasons for the tragedy of modern man. In this way, Philip Roth's three novels forming his trilogy portray the tragedy of modern man by depicting it through a unique voice.

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