



**AMERICAN PASTORAL'S GHOST WRITER
ANNE FRANK IN OLD RIMROCK**

DEBRA SHOSTAK

The College of Wooster

In the summer of 2001, I had the delicious pleasure of digging through many uncatalogued liquor boxes containing Philip Roth's notes and manuscripts at the Library of Congress, in Washington, D.C. Among my more startling moments occurred when I came across a file folder, dated by Roth in 1998 and titled "Original 1972 version of AP." Just as enticing were a few enigmatic references within. On the inside back cover of the folder, scrawled in Roth's hand, appears the name "Anne Frank" and nothing more. About one page into the enclosed typescript appear approximately six pages of a fictional letter—or, perhaps, a diary entry—recounting the embedded writer's flirtation, in Czechoslovakia, with an American she has just met, named "Milton Levov." The entry is addressed "Dear Kitty" and signed "Anne."¹ Whatever, I thought, might Anne Frank have to do with *American Pastoral*?

Like me, a number of scholars have written about Anne Frank's explicit appearances in Roth's work, either incognito—most notably as Amy Bellette in *The Ghost Writer* (1979) and *Exit Ghost* (2007)—or in allusions to the role of Anne in the immensely popular 1955 adaptation for the stage by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (1956). Generally, the figure of Anne serves Roth as a muse or an apologia or a foil, especially for Nathan Zuckerman.² I

¹ Philip Roth Collection. Folder titled "Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998," TS pp. 3, 5. Accession 21, 771, Box 3 of 17. All subsequent references to Roth's notes and drafts are to unprocessed materials that were gathered into this box, under this accession number, as of 2001, when I visited the Library of Congress.

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² See GOOBLAR 2011: 74-88; and see MCLENNAN 2009: 254 for a succinct summary of Roth's allusions to Anne Frank and of critics who have addressed them. I elsewhere discuss at greater length some of the relevant archival material in relation to *The Ghost Write* (1979) and *My Life as a Man* (1974); see SHOSTAK 2004: 123-28, 201-4.

have previously been reluctant, however, to claim from such references that Roth writes more than incidentally about the traumas of twentieth-century European history for the Jews; certainly, he does not presume to imagine on paper the experiences that such contemporaries as Aharon Appelfeld know authentically. Yet the Holocaust has surely shadowed Roth's consciousness. Steven Milowitz goes so far as to assert that a "central obsessional issue" for Roth is "the Holocaust and its impact on twentieth-century American life" [MILOWITZ 2000 : ix]. David Gooblar argues in a similar vein that for American Jewish writers, the Holocaust "is always there, informing their very identities and literary sensibilities," and, specifically, that Anne Frank's story is the "central American Holocaust narrative," her diary "a metonym for the catastrophic event with which all Jews [...] must grapple" [GOOBLAR 2011 : 87]. Neither critic, however, reads *American Pastoral* in relation to the Holocaust.

However counterintuitive my approach may at first appear, I propose that the spectral presence of Anne Frank evident in Roth's initial conception of *American Pastoral*, submerged or fully erased over the twenty-some years between its inception and publication, deepens the novel's historical resonances. Anne Frank's faint inscriptions on *American Pastoral* illuminate it as Roth's first fully realized, if highly disguised, attempt to imagine something, albeit a pale imitation, of the experience of the Jewish Holocaust displaced to American soil. The figure of Anne Frank uncovers useful connective tissue in Roth's oeuvre, demonstrating how significant, perhaps even necessary, *American Pastoral* may have been as preparation for Roth's counterhistorical imagination of the fascist nightmare of *The Plot Against America* (2004), which to my mind bookends the American Trilogy.³ Gooblar notes that Roth brings the twin figures of Anne Frank and Kafka into his work as artistic "forebears" [59]; I suggest in addition that the overlay of these figures in his imagination helps Roth think through European history and construct its counterlife in the United States. My speculative method does not pin down definitive one-to-one correspondences between Anne

³ *American Pastoral* begins what has come to be called Roth's "American Trilogy," followed by *I Married a Communist* (1998) and *The Human Stain* (2000). David Brauner astutely observes the "signs that Roth was already thinking, during the composition of *American Pastoral*, about a novel that would deal more directly with the phenomenon of American anti-Semitism: a novel that would feature Charles Lindbergh" [BRAUNER 2007 : 196]. Brauner cites Roth's allusion to the Lindbergh child's kidnapping as well as Lou Levov's references to Father Coughlin, Gerald K. Smith, Senator Bilbo, and Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*, all of which reappear in *The Plot Against America* [197].

Frank's story and the characters or plotting of *American Pastoral*. Rather, I consider the evocative traces of Anne as an icon of innocent Jewish suffering as well as an adolescent girl with mundane concerns, and her diary as a seminal text, insofar as they may have fired Roth's invention to compose the texture and form of his novel. I explore how Roth may have *thought through* Anne Frank in order to arrive at his shattered pastoral of Jewish American life. To do so, I will draw on the *Diary* itself, which I believe Roth must have recalled in some detail, as well as on some provocative tidbits from the archive.

Roth does not make the Holocaust, or Anne Frank, overt in the discourse of *American Pastoral*, and indeed, most critics have justly examined the novel in terms of its searing presentation of the 1960s and 1970s "indigenous American berserk" [ROTH 1997 : 86]. Some, however, have discerned the rich complexity of Roth's historical reference, including David Brauner, who reads the novel in relation to the 1940s, 50s, 80s, and 90s, and Aimee Pozorski, who traces its historical traumas back to the American Revolutionary War.⁴ For my purposes, the most important feature of the novel's historicity is precisely the way in which the 1940s are largely suppressed from it. Hana Wirth-Nesher notes, for example, the peculiar lacuna in the narration: "the Holocaust is not mentioned anywhere in Zuckerman's nostalgic rhetoric about growing up in a homogenous Jewish neighborhood in the 1940s" [WIRTH-NESHER 2011 : 29]. This gap, this apparent willed forgetting, I suggest, is actually the site of repressed traumatic memory, at the bottom of which lies the ghost writer, Anne Frank.

Once one looks, a surprising number of correspondences between Anne Frank's *Diary* and *American Pastoral* emerge, beginning with one of Roth's favorite conceits, the double. In the original 1972 draft, Roth signals his interest in doubles and others as counterlives, dual selves, and alternate histories in a provisional title that appears several times: "How the Other Half Lives." At one point, Roth makes the subtext explicit: "How the Other Half Lives" is handwritten at the bottom of a typescript page while several other titles are crossed out at the top, including the originally typed, "The Diary of Anne Frank's Contemporary," and handwritten over it, "A Businessman's Sorrow (Anne Frank in America)." The implicit "first half" is arguably the European Jew; if we take Seymour "the Swede" Levov to be the "other half," the question the novel poses is how—and whether—his experience in the parallel universe of the United States diverges from the grave sufferings of his Jewish twin. Roth implies another pointed dimension

⁴ See BRAUNER, 2011 : 20-25; and POZORSKI 2011 : 41-58.

of the doubling in an additional trial title, "The Good Son"; the unspoken resonance of that title is its opposition, the contrast between virtue and vice—or what Roth elsewhere famously dubbed the "Jewboy" vs. the "nice Jewish boy."⁵

Anne Frank's diary prepares well for Roth's exploration of ethical and ontological antitheses. In her efforts to be "good"—a nice Jewish girl—Anne despairs over her tendency toward "mischief" and repeatedly struggles against "rage" and her "habit of telling everyone exactly what I think" [FRANK 1993 : 31, 84]. "[E]veryday," she writes, "I try to improve myself, again and again" [46]. She sees herself as "two Annes"; an "ordinary Anne" replaced by "a second Anne who is not reckless and jocular, but one who just wants to love and be gentle" [217]. In her final entry, Anne returns, troubled, to her self-contradictions, her "dual personality," in which the exuberant side "is usually lying in wait and pushes away the other, which is much better, deeper and purer" [266].

American Pastoral is replete with doubles and internal dualities. Most notably, Seymour Levov seems, in his resistance to Zuckerman's perception, to be self-divided, to possess a "substratum," even though the "second" Swede can only be inferred from the blandly virtuous Swede presented to the world [ROTH 1997 : 21]. Zuckerman counterintuitively names the Swede, who seems in his youth to *escape* the exigencies of worldly experience, nevertheless "an *instrument* of history" [5, emphasis in original] because he serves a symbolic function for the Weequahic Jews who can, through him, "forget the war":

With the Swede indomitable on the playing field, the meaningless surface of life provided a bizarre, delusionary kind of sustenance, the happy release into a Swedean innocence, for those who lived in dread of never seeing their sons or their brothers or their husbands again.
[ROTH 1997 : 4]

⁵ Philip Roth Collection. In one gathering of these pages in a blue binder of notes, titled alternately "More Facts," "The Good Son," and "The Story of My Unlived Life," Levov appears as "Lebow." "How the Other Half Lives" appears crossed out on a folder titled "Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998" and also, within the same box, in the blue binder, on an internal divider sheet marked "Contains Notes & Original 1972 version of AP 'How the Other Half Lives.'" The Anne Frank titles appear some pages into the blue binder on a TS page numbered by hand as "3"; "The Good Son" appears on this page as well, crossed out, and on TS p. 1 in the front of the blue binder.

Roth describes his dichotomized Jew, in relation to *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), in "In Response" [ROTH 1985 : 35].

Effectively, awareness of the European war causes the Swede's community to require that he retain his innocence, that he be the Good Son, with a "golden gift for responsibility," who "must not run counter to anything" [5, 23].⁶ It is no surprise that a student of human character like the writer Zuckerman would be so confused by such a half-man as to waffle: "Either there was a whole side to his personality that he was suppressing [...] or, more likely, there wasn't" [5]. Although Zuckerman mourns that he was altogether wrong about Seymour [39], his discourse is intuitively right in juxtaposing the Swede's athletic prowess to the war: he was

esteemed with a passion that might never have been if he'd broken the Weequahic basketball record [...] on a day other than the sad, sad day in 1943 when fifty-eight Flying Fortresses were shot down by Luftwaffe fighter planes. [5-6]

Like a Jewish Superman, the Swede promises to deflect death. The power and innocence he feels obliged to craft as his identity he also must express in his material and social aspirations, because his success in ethnic assimilation offers a defense, however illusory, against the anti-Semitism that is the ideological underpinning of the war's threat to Weequahic households. The Swede signifies the Jews' experiment in the erasure of anti-Semitism, the antidote to Nazism on American shores. It is as if Anne Frank had hoped that by being truly good, resolving the two Annes into one, she might remain safe in her Secret Annexe.

In accord with Anne Frank's tragic literal condition, the Swede finds himself figuratively, as Roth tellingly calls him in his archived notes, a "displaced person." In Roth's imagination, Seymour's condition results solely from the illusion he feels he must commit himself to—what Roth described in his notes as "The Jewish cheeverlike environment. The deJewified Jews. The Unalien life that Merry overturns."⁷ American anti-Semitism has never taken shape like that of the Nazis, but it is nonetheless striking that Roth designs the Swede's fall in terms of his ambivalent Jewishness—his aspirations to be deJewified and Unalien, a "second Swede" not by virtue of his ethical character but by his attempts to rewrite his cultural identity and to leave the old world behind. Here, too, the Swede is simply acting the Good Son,

⁶ Roth underscores Seymour's one-sidedness by portraying his brother Jerry as his antithesis: enraged, brutally truthful, contemptuous of social convention.

⁷ Philip Roth Collection. Gathering of pages headed "Notes RM (6/23/95) The Sixties," TS p. 4, in the blue binder.

following the lead of the prior generation about whom he says, in the original draft, "'the old country' was not a subject for nostalgia, curiosity, pride, or shame. They were not there, they were here, and that was that."⁸ The Swede's displacement is partly geographical. By the end of the novel, his beloved home in Old Rimrock—his "secret annexe," if you will—has been made inhospitable by his culture's and his family's betrayal of him and his ideals, and his foolish dream of "own[ing] a piece of America" has been splintered and exposed [ROTH 1997 : 315]. Even more, his dispossession is ontological: he is no longer who he was or thought he was. He thus washes up in the 1990s as a cipher to perplex Zuckerman. I think it is no accident on Roth's part that the Swede's ambivalent Jewishness finds significant precedent among the prewar Jews who felt fully assimilated into their European nationalities. Like him, and like Anne, who writes emphatically "I love Holland" [FRANK 1993 : 239], they were utterly unprepared for the "very sudden thing" [ROTH 1997 : 87] that was to become the history of the Continent and their history of annihilation.⁹

Roth's original 1972 version of the novel made the American-European connection much clearer, though in relation to a later, if linked, episode of nationalized terror in Europe's history. In the typescript, Roth develops at some length the Swede's planned trip in the early 1970s to Communist Czechoslovakia to confer about moving some of Newark Maid's manufacturing there. Only traces of the trip remain in the published novel. For twenty-five draft pages, however, Roth extends a line of the plot into the Swede's rather paranoid relationship with a Czech contact in America, "Zdenek Blenka." Blenka provides a foil for the Swede's familial estrangement when he asks the Swede to take a parcel to his twenty-year-old daughter behind the Iron Curtain.¹⁰ Most important for my exploration,

⁸ Philip Roth Collection. Folder titled "Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998," TS p. 32.

⁹ Like the Swede after her, Anne makes little of her Jewishness beyond the way it categorizes her for others. Her diary records no particular religious feeling or engagement with ritual, and to the extent that she is "Jewish," it is as a familial and ethnic fact, not a religious or even cultural commitment. And while Otto Frank had the prescience to leave Germany for Amsterdam in 1933, he did not, like so many Jews, comprehend the Nazi threat until it was too late.

¹⁰ Philip Roth Collection. The Blenka episode appears in the folder, "Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998," TS pp. 73-98. Roth's decisive move to eliminate the Czech material, and hence to erase the European parallel, appears in a handwritten note on TS p. 85: "OUT. All Czech stuff out." This material appears to be the seed for Zuckerman's trip in *The Prague Orgy* (1985), where Roth preserves the first name "Zdenek" for Sisovsky.

however, is the conversation Levov has with Blenka about Blenka's painful conditions in a totalitarian state, "exiled from his homeland and separated from his family, his friends, his work, his native tongue. [...] I don't know," says Levov, "if aman [sic] like myself, with my roots and attachments, could take such a shock, and remain intact."¹¹ This is how the other half lives, it turns out. "[S]uch a shock," and the Swede's ability to "remain intact," are what the completed *American Pastoral* tests.

That shock is administered by the even more obviously divided and doubled figure in the novel, the Swede's daughter, the "monster Merry" whose monstrosity lies just in her impossible, irreconcilable idealism, which after all echoes the Swede's own idealism [ROTH 1997 : 67]. Merry's "dual personality" is clear.¹² She is the obese stutterer spewing venomous political critique like the rat-a-tat of a machine gun at her father, a young girl who like Anne Frank in her "rage" will not apologize "because I spoke the truth," and whose violence paradoxically expresses her desire to be *good* [FRANK 1993 : 77]. She is also the emaciated, ascetic Jain who won't bathe for fear of killing microorganisms and who hides her (now fluent) speech under a veil. On one hand, the bad girl Bomb who thrust her father "right back in" to the "real time" from which he had tried to remove her [ROTH 1997 : 86]; on the other, an ideologue who has removed herself from the acts directed toward the future that constitute living in real time, and who tells her father "I am the abomination. Abhor *me*," which he can explain only by seeing her as "a good girl [...] [who wants] to do penance" [ROTH 1997 : 248, 249, emphasis in original]. Anne Frank's normally maturing self-consciousness brings her to self-criticism—"There are so many things about myself that I condemn, I couldn't begin to name them all," she writes—but Roth distorts her prickly conscience into that of a murderer who projects her guilt everywhere about her, as when Merry tells the Swede "You must be done with craving and selfhood" [FRANK 1993 : 260; ROTH 1997 : 264].

Merry is a monster not only because she has acted beyond the law and beyond morality, but also because she embodies trauma, a timeless moment of horror reenacted in every moment of her life.¹³ Roth signals this symbolic

¹¹ Philip Roth Collection. Folder, "Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998," TS p. 90.

¹² Alike Varvogli usefully compares Merry to Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde, suggesting that the analogy "emphasize[s] the idea that the two forces, the creative and the destructive, the benevolent and the murderous, exist in an uneasy symbiosis" [VARVOGLI 2007 : 105]. Unlike Varvogli, however, I am inclined to focus more on Merry as a victim of her culture and circumstances than as a "terrorist," despite her singular association with the bomb.

¹³ Matthew McBride perceptively suggests that what he terms Merry's "hysteria"

function in the underpass through which she must pass to reach her cell-like apartment—*her* ironic secret annexe, where she lives concealed from the authorities. A nightmarish portal to the Hell of Newark’s urban dissolution, the underpass as Zuckerman imagines it comes as close as Roth ever does to representing the unspeakable world of the *Shoah*. Filthy, unlit, menacing, full of refuse and “lumps of things that were unidentifiable,” full of bodies, too, perhaps, in garbage sacks, as well as “dangerous-looking people back in the dark,” with hundreds of trains rolling thunderously overhead daily, the underpass leads to the apartment, empty of human comforts, where Merry starves herself [ROTH 1997: 233]. With some stretch of a reader’s imagination, the sensory and moral terrors of the underpass and its destination may suggest Anne’s post-*Diary* experience, the unnarratable place of the camps—and, indeed, Judith Johnsey has suggested, by way of the work of Giorgio Agamben, that at this stage of her existence “the space [Merry] now inhabits is analogous to [...] Agamben’s camp” [JOHNSEY 2011: 71].

Merry thus is at once reminiscent of Anne and Anne’s opposite, an ambiguity that emerges especially in relation to her damaged voice. As a stuttering young girl, Merry is asked to keep a *diary*, a “stuttering diary” to help her record “how the stuttering fluctuated throughout the day” [ROTH 1997: 98].¹⁴ While in fact such diaries *are* used as therapeutic tools—this is not Roth’s invention—it seems more than coincidental that he chooses to emphasize its importance to Merry when, as Zuckerman imagines it, the stuttering diary is among the items that Rita Cohen requests, allegedly on Merry’s behalf. When the desperate Swede complies, the diary vanishes into the traumatic absence of Merry’s own disappearance, much as Anne Frank’s diary might well, like her, have been silenced from history had it not been miraculously rescued from the Annexe. The stuttering diary marks an ironic antithesis to Anne Frank, whose identity is known to readers only through the astonishing fluidity of her written voice and her self-characterization as a “chatterbox” [FRANK 1993: 6-7]. Roth is preoccupied with the multiple and contradictory voices of the monstrous Merry, whose opposing silences and

results from a lack of identity her father has cultivated in her in order to create “a child of the undifferentiated, history-less America” to which he aspires [MCBRIDE 2011: 117, 121].

¹⁴ Interestingly enough, Anne mentions stuttering when she records Peter Van Daan’s confession that he is often silent because he tends to be “tongue-tied. I begin to stutter, blush, and twist around what I want to say, until I have to break off because I simply can’t find the words” [FRANK 1993: 152].

volubility seem for Zuckerman to figure her trauma.¹⁵ Her stuttering seems loudest in the novel's discourse when she shrieks pages of political accusations at her parents, but it is quieted under two conditions. She is fluent when she engages in violence—"She never stuttered," Zuckerman envisions, "when she was with the dynamite" [ROTH 1997 : 259]; and likewise when, under the protection of the veil, she chants

[t]he monotonous chant of the indoctrinated, ideologically armored from head to foot—the monotonous, spellbound chant of those whose turbulence can be caged only within the suffocating straitjacket of the most supercoherent of dreams. [245]

What Zuckerman thus imagines as "missing" in her fluency "was the sound of life" [245].

In this regard, Merry emerges, like Anne Frank, as an icon of historical trauma. As the Swede's brother Jerry accuses, she is the "Miss America" the Swede longed for, who instead drags him into "the real American crazy shit" [277]. Roth's notes for the novel make Merry's function plain:

MEREDITH LEVOV IS REWRITTEN NATIONALLY. She is now a subject. The Rimrock Bomber. An object of attention. Amplified. Larger than life. Now missing in a different way. She's abducted again. NOW THE FAMILY ARE OBJECTS.¹⁶

Merry thus represents, as Jennifer Glaser argues, the "racial and national uncanny," the repressed material of the Swede's—and the Jew's—"at-homeness in America," a repressed that must inevitably, according to the patterns of history, return violently [GLASER 2011 : 48, 51]. Like Anne Frank in American culture, Merry becomes fetishized in the discourse of *American Pastoral*. At once a demon and a saint, Merry drifts unseen and inexplicable in the background, to dictate much of what Zuckerman narrates. Both Merry and her father emerge like objects in one of Kafka's persecutory worlds. Roth's notes for *American Pastoral* make the link between Anne and Kafka explicit. Concerning the Swede's deleted trip to "Kafka's Prague," he writes: "'The Diary of Anne Frank.' She is the one who lived out K[afka]'s

¹⁵ Erica Galioto insightfully notes that "Merry's stutter becomes the symbol of [the bombings'] unfathomable nature, as the traumatic, disgusting, absence of meaning" [GALIOTO 2011 : 127].

¹⁶ Philip Roth Collection. Blue binder, gathering of pages headed "Notes RM (6/23/95) The Sixties," TS p. 4.

fantasies."¹⁷

Rita Cohen also arguably manifests the return of the repressed. An uncanny doppelgänger and "proxy" for Merry, Rita embodies her violence, her elusiveness, and even the tender feelings she elicits in the Swede [GLASER 2011: 56]. Indeed, Rita Cohen brings to light the disconcerting father-daughter relationship that in part structures the novel's trauma and that curiously echoes Anne's intense feelings for her father, Otto Frank. When Anne confesses to "Kitty" that "I adore Daddy. He is the one I look up to. I don't love anyone in the world but him," she reveals that "I long for Daddy's real love: not only as his child, but for me—Anne, myself" [FRANK 1993: 44-45]. It is as if Roth senses an undertow in Anne's innocent adoration of and identification with the parent whom she resembles more than she does her mother, with whom "We are exact opposites in everything" [45]. I by no means suggest anything incestuous or untoward in the Frank family's relations, but only that Roth brings out the oedipal configuration as among the first possible explanations Zuckerman attempts in considering the enigmas of Seymour and his daughter. Seeking to pinpoint the moment that made Merry what she became, the Swede recalls her at eleven, asking him to kiss her "the way you k-k-kiss umumumother," to which he unconsciously, excruciatingly replies with a mimic stutter [ROTH 1997: 89-90]. Insofar as the stutter marks Merry's unspoken trauma, it seems an overdetermined symbol when, years later, Rita Cohen acts as a surrogate daughter punishing the Swede brutally, demanding a displaced incest by mocking both father and daughter when she stutters, "Let's f-f-fuck, D-d-d-dad" [143]. Unsurprisingly, too, Rita, a "tiny, bone-white girl who looked half Merry's age," with a dark "bush of wiry hair" and a surname, Cohen, that may indisputably stand for "the Jew," represents the return of the Levovs' repressed Jewishness [117]. In Roth's description of her dark, childlike appearance, it is possible that Rita might also, diabolically, recall the archetypal photograph of the young Jewish girl who appears in many editions of Anne Frank's *Diary*.

That the Holocaust, and Anne Frank as its iconographic victim, underlie *American Pastoral* may be discerned in the historical references of its asymmetrical narrative framing, as well. Following the "Dear Kitty" entry, Roth's original typescript begins in a first-person voice, that of "Milton" Levov. In the "present" time of the late 1960s, the draft Levov at once begins to tell the story of his daughter, Merry, in a confiding, reflective voice much

¹⁷ Philip Roth Collection. Folder, "Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998," on a handwritten sheet titled "Levov in Prague," p. 1.

like the “Anne” of the letter entry.¹⁸ Roth subsequently assigned Zuckerman to tell the story and incited his surrogate to desire doing so by visiting upon Zuckerman at his high school reunion nostalgic memories of his serene youth in the 1940s. These aesthetic choices suggest that Roth explicitly anchored the story of the Swede’s fall, when the “sliver off the comet of the American chaos had come loose and spun all the way out to Old Rimrock and him,” in the history of the 1940s [83]. Roth underscores the painfully ironic contrast between 1940s America and 1940s Europe, too, by noting that Lou Levov’s leather glove business was “a marginal business, no real money, until, in 1942, the bonanza”—a war contract [12]. In a curious way, then, the Levovs not only do not suffer but even profit from the war.

As readers have often noted, Roth does not return to the Zuckerman frame he establishes in the opening chapters of the novel. After the narrator “lift[s] onto [his] stage the boy we were all going to follow into America,” he mostly vanishes from the reader’s awareness [89].¹⁹ Roth thus creates an essential gap in the close of the novel—we return neither to Zuckerman nor to the nostalgic picture of 1940s America he summons at the novel’s beginning. Instead, Roth suspends the discourse at the Levovs’ nadir in the early 1970s, marked by Marcia Umahoff’s cynical laughter and by plaintive rhetorical questions:

They’ll never recover. Everything is against them, everyone and everything that does not like their life. All the voices from without, condemning and rejecting their life!

And what is wrong with their life? What on earth is less reprehensible than the life of the Levovs? [423]

This very intentional gap reiterates in a reader’s experience the disappearance of Merry herself and formally echoes the presentation of the Swede’s last conversation with his daughter before the bombing, which

¹⁸ Philip Roth Collection. Roth’s handwritten note on the first page of this section indicates “3rd person”; clearly, he experimented with the voicing for this tale. Folder, “Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998,” TS p. 1 in a gathering titled “1. I am not given to daydreaming.”

¹⁹ Narratologically, the discourse is far more complicated, as it is possible to discern Zuckerman’s understandings and desires in the inventions he devises for the Levov story. For my purposes, however, the novel’s shift away from Zuckerman as a commanding center of consciousness to an apparently neutral narrator is plain enough in the reader’s perceptions. See MASIERO 2011 : 179-192 for a brilliant reading of the details of Zuckerman’s narrative mediation.

closes the first section of the novel, “Paradise Remembered” [117]. It also recalls the hideously involuntary gap at the end of *The Diary of a Young Girl*—a gap that readers unavoidably fill with extratextual knowledge of Anne Frank’s death at Belsen in 1945. The very notion of a narrative gap at the point of trauma—the unnarratable story, the questions that will not or cannot be answered, the silence that remains—is of course customary to Holocaust representation. While Roth is no stranger to the suspensive ending, the openness of *American Pastoral*’s conclusion seems uniquely despairing because it suspends at the point of unrecuperated trauma.

Roth’s rhetoric also echoes Anne Frank’s agonized questions, even to the repetition in their structure. Anne writes: “Who has inflicted this upon us? Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up till now?” [FRANK 1993 : 207]. In addition, Zuckerman’s melancholy questions recall the much cited entry that Anne makes in July of 1944, just two entries before the *Diary* breaks off into silence, in which her optimism conflicts with her foreboding, without resolution:

It’s really a wonder that I haven’t dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can’t build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us, too, I can feel the sufferings of millions. [263-264]

Anne’s youthful faith, however compromised by the evidence around her, seems ready-made as a model for the Swede, a mysterious figure whom Zuckerman sees as a “big jeroboam of self-contentment” [ROTH 1997 : 29]. In the pastoral fantasy of marrying Miss New Jersey, moving out to Old Rimrock, and emulating Johnny Appleseed, Zuckerman shows the Swede as arguably even more innocent than the 14-year-old Anne. He simply hasn’t grown up, as she was given no opportunity to do so.

It is unsurprising that Roth chooses Zuckerman, who first rearranged Anne Frank’s story to suit his own in *The Ghost Writer*, to become obsessed with the mystery of the Levov family, since Roth began thinking about the *American Pastoral* project with the aid of Anne Frank—the consummate Jewish ghost writer, the uncanny spectral presence who casts her shadow over the Jews in America. Anne’s story gives access in a very personal way to the chaos of modern Jewish history and to the incoherence of historical causality—“there are no reasons,” the Swede thinks, “Reasons are in books” [281]. For Roth, one of the most compelling features of *The Diary of a Young*

Girl may be that Anne, though informed of what is happening to other Jews, cannot write the unutterable horrors she has yet to experience. The *Diary* speaks forever from a kind of prelapsarian state of consciousness, despite its dramatic ironies for a reader who knows Anne's fate. Like the Swede, she retains the capacity for an optimism that our retrospective knowledge cannot allow. It thus may be no accident that when Zuckerman engages fully in inventing the family's tale, he asserts that he "dreamed a realistic *chronicle*" [89; emphasis mine]. Like the diary form, the chronicle is non-teleological. Neither diary nor chronicle offers an overarching interpretation; each simply inscribes a succession of events. It is therefore fitting that Zuckerman can end his tale only with questions, followed by silence. No consoling act of coherent interpretation or closure is possible, only what comes *next*.

That sense of being entirely at the mercy of the unforeseen also provides a link between *American Pastoral* and *The Plot Against America*. The stripping away of self and of everything the Swede knows and believes, the unspoken vein of anti-Semitism suppressed beneath the complacent lives of the insular Weequahic Jews, and the inexplicable violence unleashed in the United States as a result of deluded ideological rectitude clearly prepare for the terror and anguish of the Roth family in the fascist counterhistory of the later novel. *The Plot Against America* lands its characters and the reader smack in the marginal condition that Roth's typescript for *American Pastoral* laments: "Doing away with the other half is frequently what utopians propose to make this a better place for the remaining half, or fifth, or tenth to live in."²⁰ The experience of alienation and even persecution that, translated by time and national culture, *American Pastoral* echoes at some distance from the Jewish Holocaust, Roth places at closer parallel in *The Plot Against America*. There, Zuckerman's projection of the Swede's sense of fear and betrayal—"The outlaws are everywhere. They're inside the gates"—becomes rather more literal [366]. The implied allusion to Anne Frank's story is much closer to the surface of the later novel, as well. This is especially true in Roth's choice of narrative voice—the youthful, hopeful, ignorant Philip, nearly crushed and surely wised up by the national trauma of the Lindbergh administration, and compelled to recount it in the "memoir" that is the fictive premise of the novel. That quasi-autobiographical voice also provides a curious loop back to the original 1972 version of *American Pastoral*, which named the first-person narrator "Milton" Levov—after Roth's middle name.²¹ These dizzying confluences of Roth, his narrators, and his characters

²⁰ Philip Roth Collection. Blue binder, TS page numbered by hand as "1."

²¹ That Roth began imagining the storyteller as "Milton" implies his identification

give credence to the remark he made in 1984, when, in denying to Ian Hamilton that his subject in the Zuckerman books had been the Holocaust, he also admitted about this “unforgotten” subject, “You don’t make use of it—it makes use of you” [ROTH, “Interview” 1985 : 136].

I do wish to be circumspect, however. It is too much to claim—and queasily wrong—that, say, Merry Levov as the Rimrock bomber stands as the untransformed return of repressed Jewish history, or that Roth appropriates Anne Frank’s story wholesale for his own distinctively American stories. I do not wish to argue that Roth is writing the Holocaust as such. Rather, I suggest that Anne Frank’s story as the cultural signifier of the destruction of individual Jewish lives during the Holocaust seems to have stimulated Roth’s imagination toward *this* novel. The subtextual resonances of Anne Frank and her *Diary* reveal the Holocaust as the uncanny history that irrupts from Roth’s unconscious, visible in his preparations for the novel but not, on the surface, in what survives into *American Pastoral* as we know it. And that is as it should be, since Roth knows as well as anyone just how much the Jews in America were spared.

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with the figure’s trauma, as, elsewhere, does his suggested title “The Story of My Unlived Life.” [Philip Roth Collection. Folder, “Original 1972 version of AP—PR 1998,” TS hand-numbered 1; blue binder, TS p. 1.] The typescript’s reference also foretells Roth’s later reflexive play with his own autobiography in such novels as *Deception* (1990) and *Operation Shylock* (1993).

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