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**Cultural Mobility and Diaspora: The Case of Philip Roth’s *Operation Shylock***

Since 1970 s, ‘diaspora’ was increasingly used to denote almost every people living far away from their ancestral or former home-land.¹

[Diaspora is] any ethnic collectivity which lacks a territorial base within a given polity.²

Traditionally the concept of diaspora has been seen mainly as connected to the Jewish people: displacement, dispersion, and loss of home haunt the works of Jewish writers from the Hebrew Bible to Kafka. Studies of the Jewish diaspora reached a universal and metaphysical dimension after the Shoah; they came to epitomize, metaphorically, also the modern condition of man’s alienation and homelessness.

Whereas in the history of religions and more vigorously in its neighbouring disciplines ‘diaspora’ was primarily employed as a geographic-sociological category to denote dispersed groups and trans-national relationships, since the 1990s a further, different approach has stepped forth. Post-modernist and culture critical authors such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy and James Clifford have adopted the diaspora term to denote a specific type of experience and thinking, i.e., that of ‘diaspora consciousness.’ Aspiring to move beyond essentialising notions such as ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race,’ in often jargon-laden papers, the idea of ‘diaspora’ has been celebrated as expressing notions of hybridity, heterogeneity, identity fragmentation and (re)construction, double consciousness, fractures of memory, ambivalence, roots and routes, discrepant cosmopolitanism, multi-locationality and so forth.³

Robin Cohen identifies four phases in diaspora studies: the first is concerned with the Jewish experience of victimhood; the second involves a metaphoric designation, a way to describe different categories of people, and it deals with the concept of racial minority. The third phase refers to the uprooting of people and therefore of their identities in the postmodern world, and considers their rapid displacement into other nations. Finally, the fourth phase is one of consolidation.

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³ Baumann, “Diaspora,” 324.
at the turn of the twentieth century and implies the study of how people settled within a new nation.⁴

In the first case the scarring historical tragedy of the Holocaust lends a particular colouring to the diaspora:

[T]he wrench from home must survive so powerfully in the folk memories of these groups that restoring the homeland or even returning there becomes an important focus for social mobilization, and the mould in which their popular cultures and political attitudes are formed.⁵

The concept of Diaspora is used when members of an expatriate community share several of the following features: dispersal of their ancestors, while retaining a collective memory of the past, and the belief that they are not accepted where they now are. The ancestral home is idealized. They believe that all the members of the diaspora should be committed to the preservation or restoration of the original homeland; the link to the native homeland must remain uninterrupted. Thus the diaspora often nurtures a collective identity, as well as a solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries.

However, though diasporas have par excellence been connected to displaced victims, they may also include cultural or political élites.⁶ This will be the focus of my paper. The analysis of Philip Roth’s novel Operation Shylock will in fact entail a debate on the relation of Jews to their homeland in Palestine, with a drastic reorientation of their diasporic self-image. In the Jewish case “their immediate nostalgia [is] focused on the country in which they had been born and raised, rather than on a mythic homeland in Palestine.”⁷ For most Jews in Palestine Israel is in fact not their homeland, but a fictitious state born out of the necessity to give a homeland to the persecuted Jews of the Shoah. The problem is: which country is exile?

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⁵ See Cohen, Global Diasporas, 4.
⁷ Fludernik, Introduction, xxvi.
1. Diaspora as Cultural Mobility

My view of diaspora involves its cultural consequences and focuses on the problem of cultural mobility.

Nicolas Rose asserts that society is the sum total of the bonds and relations between individuals and events – economic, moral, and political – within a more or less defined territory governed by its own laws. In fact social phenomena cohere in a significant way: social life forms a fabric of some kind and has continuity and scale. The social is always assumed to be, in a sense, intelligible as a unity.

In consideration of the concept of “field” derived from the sociological studies of Pierre Bourdieu, we will consider a global approach to pluri-national cultural fields within the perspective of their definition (through an analysis of the internal mechanisms of auto-definition and the external ones of recognition) and reciprocal interaction, with resolution of tensions and conflicts and their inclusions. This approach will involve investigations relating to the forms of trans-cultural migration and hybridization. Particularly useful are rewriting, trans-codification, translation and inter-textuality in literary, artistic, legal and economic products.

A by-now superseded concept of pan-European culture regarded it as fixed, predetermined and invariable through the centuries, with the only acceptable differences being those of the various national cultures, which formed legitimate and natural subdivisions of it. The fact remains that the major resistance to a thorough cultural study of humanistic topics has been felt most strongly where literature has been deeply connected with the essence of national identities.

According to Stephen Greenblatt, in order to be able to speak of cultural mobility there must be conditions of actual displacement (material, spatial, institutional) which have to be carefully investigated to understand correctly the metaphorical displacement that these conditions have brought about, between centre and periphery, or between order and its opposite, between external and internal.

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If culture functions as a structure of limits, it also functions as the regulator and guarantor of movement. Indeed the limits are virtually meaningless without movement; it is only through improvisation, experiment, and exchange that cultural boundaries can be established.¹¹

Among the most important phenomena, special relevance can be ascribed to movements of people, objects, images, texts, and ideas; the cultural mechanisms that involve the functioning of society can be migrations, phenomena of the market and of market change, the crossing of borders, or even cultural or non-cultural tourism, and periods of training abroad.

These migratory movements cause a transformation in the concept of national identity:

We need to situate the debates about identity within all those specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively ’settled’ character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the processes of globalization [...] and the processes of forced and ’free’ migration which have become a global phenomenon of the so-called ’post-colonial’ world.¹²

The new social identities that are formed by today’s migrations are constructed within the play of power and exclusion. This new concept of identity caused by cultural mobility is constructed through différance and is constantly destabilized by what it leaves out.

Studies on diaspora and cultural mobility must be able to account for the tension between individual agency and social limitation in a new way. One can speak of creative tensions in religious, sexual, and specific cultural contexts in which the static quality is only an unstable moment because it is inscribed in a dynamic process which may experience moments of destruction of the existing and moments of creation of the new. The operators of the transformation may have a varying degree of control over the process that is underway. In fact, every transformation finds fertile ground in a state of tension, of debate that does not have a determining function but rather a maieutic one, a potentiality that involves it also aesthetically. The mobility has its counterpart in the sense of binary opposition rooted in a sense of threat which is necessarily connected, at least partially, with change, with the separation from tradition and from individually and collectively reassuring rituals (as social psychology teaches).

The concept of trans-cultural migration brought into focus means the process through which a European field of knowledge is created, and where external, foreign, and subordinate elements are included within certain procedures: they may deal with translation, loan, rewriting, and modification both of the elements and of the whole field from within itself, to the point of determining an innovation in the network of the free exchange of ideas, texts, and themes among European cultures. Sometimes migration may regard specific works or authors that rise to pan-European canonical values; at other times there are genuine migrations of individuals or of whole communities that determine drastic epistemological changes in the European cultural field.

The most advanced research has dwelt on the elements of mobility within the diaspora through which each culture creates itself and temporarily establishes itself in a non-linear way, by dint of loans and adaptations of elements of other cultures, both near and far in time as in space. Cultural values are not in fact rigid and pre-arranged, but the result of a constant process, at times chaotic and unpredictable, of fluctuation and evolution; it is the product of a negotiation, founded upon the dialectic between conservation and innovation.

What is at issue today is not the essentialized or idealized Arnoldian notion of ‘culture’ as an architectonic assemblage of the Hebraic and the Hellenic. In the midst of the multicultural wars we are surprisingly closer to an insight from T.S. Eliot’s Notes towards the Definition of Culture, where Eliot demonstrates a certain incommensurability, a necessary impossibility in thinking culture. Faced with the fatal notion of a self-contained European culture and the absurd notion of an uncontaminated culture in a single country, he writes: “We are therefore pressed to maintain the ideal of a world culture, while admitting that it is something we cannot imagine. We can only conceive it as the logical term of the relations between cultures.”

If culture now has become a migratory concept, it also has to do with the elimination of border lines. If we want to stand for and defend the unhomely, migratory and partial nature of culture we must go back to the archaic meaning of ‘boundary.’ The translation of cultures is a complex act that generates borderline effects and identifications (culture sympathy and culture clash).

What emerges is the notion of a polycentric Europe, where the boundaries of national literatures have come to terms with other kinds of diversified, discontinuous and dis-homogeneous European cultural boundaries. This conception of

14 Bhabha, “Culture’s In-Between,” 54.
European culture comprises national entities and identities that are distinct and often in competition with one another. In this respect, as Umberto Eco reminds us in *La ricerca della lingua perfetta*, the tower of Babel comes to represent no longer a curse, but the emblem of the cultural vitality of Europe.

We must consider that law is an intrinsic part of the cultural panorama of every historical period: “We speak of a cultural analysis of law, of law as culture and culture as law, of the use of cultural studies methodology to interpret the law, of law as a cultural artifact.” Therefore in a post-diaspora world we must invent new juridical languages that may be fit for human coexistence. The richness of European cultural identity comes to be located precisely in the cultural diversification of its micro-spaces.

The challenge then is to rethink Europe in terms of cultural identity that is rooted in difference. Multiplicity, plurality, difference, otherness, unity in diversity: these seem to be the keywords around which the notion of European identity can be constructed. Integration is not a flattening process of uniformity, instead it means cultural diversity coupled with equality of opportunity. Integration within multiculturalism has involved the creation of structures in which the incorporation of immigrants and ethnic minorities (the result of diaspora) goes side by side with the recognition of their cultural diversity.

Law gives form to our way of life, which brings us inside an anthropological perspective where law is a discourse among the discourses of society. [...] Law exists in culture: if it shapes the relations of a certain community, law also shapes culture and is in its turn shaped by it. Law creates the conditions of culture to some degree. However the creation of a transnational community is now being formed in a European society, which promotes new shared values. On one hand law defends tradition, but on the other hand it helps re-shape it so as to make it progress thus avoiding inertia.

We should investigate how choices and backgrounds of members of the same multicultural society affect their values, attitudes and opinions towards the law and the legal system.

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Legal culture, like general culture, is a body of ideas, values and attitudes. We can talk about the legal culture of a community; this does not mean, of course, that everybody shares the same ideas – what we refer to are patterns, tendencies, trends.¹

What has been the impact of migration on the attitudes towards law? Multiculturalism may pose a threat to the viability of democratic institutions. Tyler asserts that “as nature of American society changes toward a mosaic model, the question whether and how democratic processes can be maintained becomes natural to discussions of public policy.”²

It is hard to find a solution to the problems caused by diaspora and cultural mobility for what concerns the legal system: what sort of legal code should be applied if a norm satisfies one group but impinges on the freedom of another?

Liberalism does allow for an interpretation of equal rights that requires the state to grant the equal coexistence of majority and minority cultures; and that it should do so in terms of individual rights to cultural memberships of various sorts. This conception is liberal in so far as it follows Dworkin in assuming the priority of individual rights over collective goals or goods, including goods which depend on the maintenance of collective identities. Collective rights, hedging collective identities, may become dangerous or even illegitimate as they violate basic individual rights.²¹

The only possible solution to this legal impasse is attempting to keep human rights in mind. The Human Rights Declaration is a supra-national code that considers the basic rights of each individual independently of his/her national origin. The development of a cultural rights agenda goes parallel with the recognition that minorities have the right to retain the recognition of their distinctive cultures. It is possible to see the rise of multiculturalism as part of a wider struggle for human equality that followed the end of Second World War.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 ushered in a new era which in principle distanced itself from pre-1945 ideas of racial, national, and ethnic superiority and inferiority, typified by the Nazis.²²

2. Operation Shylock

Philip Roth’s *Operation Shylock* (1993) is a very good example of how literature deals with the concept of Diaspora, cultural mobility, and law, though from a subverted perspective.

*Operation Shylock* is a case of the psychological examination of stolen identities. “Roth was wearing the mask of his mythic self in a character haunted by his double and namesake.” Roth’s challenge in this novel is that of merging personal and tribal obsessions,

...to expose as inherently absurd the presumption that this successful writer or the Jewish State or Jewish people were secure. Israel was a sovereign state yet much of the world still questioned the legitimacy of Jewish existence, however defined.

In this novel Roth discusses a fundamental historical problem in a paradoxical and ironic way, using a recurring figure in his novels, that of the doppelgänger: Philip Roth meets Philip Roth, whom he considers an impostor. The line between fact and fiction is blurred because it is the fake Philip Roth who proposes the theory of diasporism and also because real historical characters and events, such as Appelfeld, the Demjanjuk trial, and Lech Walesa, merge with invented ones, such as Roth’s double and Ziad. Things are made even more complex by the fact that the real and the fake Roth (in the course of the novel called Moishe Pipik [“pipik” in Yiddish means “belly button”] to distinguish him) exchange personality and ideas, so that for most of the novel it is the real Philip Roth who sustains the principles of Diasporism. As for the character of Ziad, he represents the opposite of the American Zionist: he is the Arab who has returned from the diaspora against all personal advantage because he is obsessed by his patrimony: the Palestinian cause. Ziad sustains that “the American Diaspora has opened Jews to their best potential while Israel has shrunk them into narrow bigots.”

The reactions to this novel were obviously conflictual and Roth was confirmed as the enfant terrible of literature. However I am not concerned with the novel’s geopolitical themes or with the perspectives on the Holocaust, the State of Israel, or even the future of Jewish life in America, but with the concept

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26 Cooper, *Roth and the Jews*, 264.
of Diaspora and Diasporism discussed in the novel. The novel extensively debates the concept of Diaspora but if, as far as we have theorized in the first part of the essay, Diaspora is separation and dispersal, for Roth Diaspora means reunification and merging. Zionism and Diaspora are put at variance: if Zionism meant the foundation of the State of Israel and the creation of a Jewish fatherland for the dispersed Jews, Roth's perspective is that of sending the Jews back to the nation they had fled from, so as to recover their lost European roots.

‘Diasporism: The Only Solution to the Jewish Problem.’ A lecture by Philip Roth; discussion to follow: 6.00 p.m. Suite 511. King David Hotel. Refreshments. (OS, 18)

This announcement is the starting point of the novel; the title of the lecture has itself many ironical innuendos. First of all, it plays with the Nazi idea of the Final Solution and with what they defined as the Jewish problem. Second, it introduces the figure of the double, thus also playing with the idea of the individual in the Diaspora as a split personality in search of himself. Third, it sets the debate at the very core of Judaism, given the name of the hotel: we understand that the solution will be a possible way out of the problem of Jewish survival in Eastern Europe. Fourth, it mischievously plunges the whole into ordinary surroundings, “refreshments,” as if to deflate the terrible burden of the problem.

The ‘real’ Philip Roth is experiencing the “disaster of self-abandonment” (OS, 22), a sense of deracination also due to a medical pill, Halcion, he had been swallowing that causes a sense of alienness and hallucinatory states. The situation that originates everything is a metaphor for the psychological condition of the diasporic individual that is not at ease with his own self, has lost contact with the external world and has lost his self-assurance, which prevents him from doing what his occupation had always been: being a writer. Halcion becomes the cause for the inner deracination experienced by the character who feels separated from himself: it is an image of the effects of diaspora on a person who does not consider himself any longer at home in the world. The effects of the pill are similar to those caused by a diaspora consciousness: a loss of contact with the external world and the loss of the qualities that characterized Roth as an individual, the separation from his own cultural world, and his loss of a sense of identity and belonging.

Roth's double is politically very active and is concerned with bringing the resettlement of Jews in Poland to a positive solution. He is the one concerned with diasporism. “The reason for my visit to Walesa was to discuss the resettlement of Jews in Poland once Solidarity comes to power there, as it will” (OS, 31), he asserts during an interview. The journalist heads the article: “Philip Roth
meets Solidarity Leader. [...] Poland needs Jews – Walesa tells Author in Gdansk” (OS, 31).

“Everyone speaks about Jews,” Walesa told Roth. “Spain was ruined by the expulsion of the Jews,” the Solidarity Leader said during their two-hour meeting at the Gdansk shipyards, where Solidarity was born in 1980. “When people say to me: What Jew would be crazy enough to come here? I explain to them that the long experience, over many hundreds of years, of Jews and Poles together cannot be summed up with the word ‘anti-Semitism.’ Let’s talk about a thousand years of glory rather than four years of war.” (OS, 31)

The fact that Poland is unthinkable without Jews stresses the idea that a new positive diaspora should arise which would once more reconstitute the old population that was composed also by Jews.

The so-called normalization of the Jew was a tragic illusion from the very start. [...] The time has come to return to the Europe that was for centuries, and remains to this day, the most authentic Jewish homeland there has ever been, the birthplace of rabbinic Judaism, Hasidic Judaism, Jewish secularism, socialism – on and on. The birthplace, of course, of Zionism too. But Zionism has outlived its historical function. The time has come to renew in the European Diaspora our pre-eminent spiritual and cultural role. Roth, who is fearful of a second Jewish Holocaust in the Middle East, sees Jewish resettlement [...] as a historical as well as a spiritual victory over Hitler and Auschwitz. (OS, 32)

What the second Philip Roth proposes is the re-instauration of Jewish culture in Europe, a culture which would involve the Jews as an integral part of Western civilization. Instead of arguing along national or religious lines, Pipik posits cultural space as a major site of Jewish identity.²⁷

The question of Jewish survival is also a cultural problem. Paradoxically, in this case the diasporic feeling of deracination is not solved by the creation of a new independent Jewish State, founded on Jewish religious laws and customs, but instead on a kind of reverse diaspora, where Jews go back to the mixed kind of civilization they had helped create. This new diaspora would be a creative one, a positive one because “Israel is no longer in the Jewish interest. Israel has become the gravest threat to Jewish survival since the end of World War Two” (OS, 41):

[F]or the European Jews Israel has been an exile and no more, a sojourn, a temporary interlude in the European saga that it is time to resume. (OS, 42)

In other words from this perspective Zionism has failed because it has not been able to create a state that compensates for the sense of alienness that Jews had always experienced as a separate ethnic group within the different nations they had inhabited.

If Diaspora means a situation of non-assimilation, if it involves a perceived identity difference of the diaspora group when contrasted with society’s dominant cultural and religious norms and orientations, we certainly cannot speak of a diasporic consciousness in the case of the Israeli Jews. As a nation Israel is grounded in Jewish rules and laws: it is the materialization of all Jewish credos, a socio-legal construction of a common space, the wilful creation of an ‘ideal’ Jewish environment through religious identity. The Jews cannot help but identify with the nation they themselves have helped create. Still Israeli identity is artificial because the spread of the Jews throughout Europe developed parallel to the evolution of Europe itself to which they contributed. Even though anti-Semitism is unfortunately still very much present, the Jews have been part of the European cultural panorama for centuries and they probably identify more with their European nations of origin than with the artificial sort of community that has been created in Israel. At least, this is the theory advanced by Moishe Pipik in Roth’s novel. Israel now has become the exile land for the Jews, while their resettling in their European homeland would be a cultural reintegration. As Emmanuel Levinas writes: “The creation of the State of Israel revealed to Jews themselves, to the great surprise of some of them, the depth of their enrootedness in Western countries.”

In *Operation Shylock* two opposing views of diaspora are discussed: on the one hand we have, as it has been by now sufficiently discussed, the idea that a positive diaspora should be created in Europe, where each Jewish ethnic group forming the State of Israel would recover its place of origin; on the other hand there is the widely scattered group of “diaspora Jews” who constitute a pool of foreign nationals such as no other intelligence agency in the world can call on for loyal service. This is an immeasurable asset. The security demands of this tiny state are so great that, without these Jews to help, it would be in a very bad way. (OP, 384)

In other words, for the survival of Israel, the Jews of the Diaspora living all over the world, but especially in the United States, are necessary because of their loyalty and financial support. According to Diaspora studies we have thus both a literal concept of Diaspora (involving also the connection of the Diaspora groups

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with each other across the world) and an unusual, subversive concept, according
to which a positive perspective is the one promoting a re-unification of each sin-
gle group to its state of origin.

Diasporism seeks to promote the dispersion of the Jews in the West, particularly the reset-
tlement of Israeli Jews of European background in the European countries where there were
sizable Jewish populations before World War Two. Diasporism plans to rebuild everything,
not in an alien and menacing Middle East but in those very lands where everything once
flourished, while, at the same time, it seeks to avert the catastrophe of a second Holocaust
brought about by the exhaustion of Zionism as a political and ideological force. Zionism
undertook to restore Jewish life and the Hebrew language to a place where neither had ex-
isted with any real vitality for nearly two millennia. (OS, 44)

In any case both the diasporic and anti-diasporic perspectives would help create
a supra-national territory rooted in ethnic and religious affinity, with the exclu-
sion of bordered, segmented spaces. This would involve the actualization of a
continuous cultural mobility within a sort of striated space represented by the
different cultural groups. In this way the Jewish community would form a “het-
erotopian space generated through enlargement practices (ideological supra-ter-
ritory) and sovereign place (national territory).” ²⁹

Diasporism is presented as a repetition of Zionism, in that it echoes the underlyingi dea of
returning to a previous homeland. However, it is also a reversal of Zionism, a “retroversion,
a turning back, the very thing that Zionism itself once was.” (OS, 158)

Just as Zionism implicitly negated the history of the Diaspora, diasporism neg-
ates that of Zionism.³⁰

What is objected to is that this would create a second flight of the Jews, in
this case a flight toward life and not from life. Such a Diaspora would mean rep-
eration for their past sufferings, would also represent justice restored, because
it would not be re-entry as refugees but as “an orderly population transfer
with an international legal basis, with restoration of property, of citizenship
and of all national rights” (OS, 46). This is a fundamental perspective, because
the law would be involved and would ‘sanctify’ such an operation. The violation
of the rights of the Jews was made possible by the principles of the nation state
since it did not respect human rights as such, but only those rights belonging to

²⁹ Emma Patchett, “The Right to Free Movement as Temporal Deterritorialization in the Land-
³⁰ Sophia Lehman, “Exodus and Homeland: The Representation of Israel in Saul Bellow’s
To Jerusalem and Back and Philip Roth’s Operation Shylock,” Religion & Literature 30.3
citizens recognized by the state. In the event of this kind of diaspora, their human personhood and their rights as citizens would emerge and they would be legally reintegrated into the state. This new Jewish reality would be based on principles of historical justice. Moreover, the close connection between the idea of the free movement of persons and citizenship is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union.

I know that people call Diasporism a revolutionary idea, but it’s not a revolution that I’m proposing, it’s a retroversion, a turning back, the very thing Zionism itself once was. You go back to the crossing point and cross back the other way. Zionism went back too far, that’s what went wrong with Zionism. Zionism went back to the crossing point of the dispersion – Diasporism goes back to the crossing point of Zionism. (OS, 158)

For Moishe Pipik, Diasporism would take the place of by-now-superseded Zionism: Zionism no longer has the political and moral function it used to have. In the past it had the function of gathering together a scattered and persecuted people, thus giving them a legal and geopolitical space in which to recover their religious identity; now there is the necessity to reintegrate their cultural heritage within their European roots.

Diaspora [in this case is seen] at its parasitic worst, as it projects its own image onto a mythic incarnation of Israel without making an account of its own specificities. [...] A state of perpetual estrangement, dispersion is only barely remedied by way of a densely woven web of rules legislating social life.³¹

However Diaspora has always been the normal condition for Jews, who have been accustomed to it for millennia. In fact the novel offers also a third definition of a Diaspora Jew:

it is a Jew for whom authenticity as a Jew means living in the Diaspora, for whom the Diaspora is the normal condition and Zionism is the abnormality – a Diasporist is a Jew who believes that the only Jews who matter are the Jews of the Diaspora, that the only Jews who will survive are the Jews of the Diaspora, that the only Jews who are Jews are the Jews of the Diaspora. (OS, 171)

In other words, Jews must always be involved in a Diaspora of some sort, as if they were doomed to it.

3. Law and Diaspora

The problem of what kind of law should be applied pervades the novel. In fact the ‘real’ Philip Roth would like to sue his double for being an impostor and he is meditating on what charge he can bring against him: invasion of privacy? Defamation? Impersonation? Reckless conduct? But what law could be applied? At the moment when Roth is writing he is in New York while his double is in Israel—so what law to apply? What legal safeguards? Such a problem is also created by cultural mobility, as I asserted above.

In fact, in this novel we must also face a problem of cultural mobility, because of the cultural bases which the idea of resettlement entails. If the cultural roots of each single Jewish group forming the State of Israel are called into question by the idea of resettlement, then the legal roots are part of the problem. Israel represents the place of settlement, a local, national or even transnational place, the realization of an imagined virtual community linked by the creation of a common language and a common religion, by secured borders and emphasis on the homeland. It is a nation: the enemies of the Jews have caused the Jews to create a nation as a means of ethnic survival, as the solution to the sense of non-belonging they have always experienced throughout history, as a way to establish a national identity.

The Land and the Law are seen as mutually dependent, in that the Land needs the Law for the right government of the Land, for the establishment of an ideal society, while the Law needs a space in order to develop its full force. From this interrelation derives the Israelites’ legitimation for their territorial claims.³²

For most Israelis, Israel has become a model state based on equity and fraternity: it was all too easy for Zionist ideologues to promote the idea of creating a national homeland as an alternative to a doomed attempt at assimilation. The positive side of the state of Israel as Diaspora is that of mobilizing a collective identity,

not only a place of settlement or in respect to an imagined, putative or real homeland, but also in solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries. Bonds of language, religion, culture and a sense of a common fate impregnate such a transnational relationship, and give to it an affective, intimate quality that formal citizenship or long settlement frequently lack.³³

³³ Cohen, Global Diasporas, 7.
If a new diaspora is to exist, it must be on different grounds than formerly. The concept of law would in this case respect the concept of the heterotopian space\(^3\) in its juxtaposition of ethnicities and diverse environments. This diaspora in reverse would re-create a national identity in contrast to a supra-national identity represented by Diaspora Jews supporting the state of Israel from all over the world, and thus keeping connected with each other. We are torn between “a utopian sense of home [Zionism] and the cleaving segmentarity of a heterotopian site [Diasporism].”\(^3\) Such deterritorialization of the Jewish population would create an inter-legal space which is the consequence of diasporic migrations.

In this way the idea of Diasporism merges with the idea of flexible citizenship that has been debated over the past few decades, especially after the Cold War. A person can retain double citizenship: the one of the nation he has been forced to go to (also for work reasons) and the one of the nation of origin. This is particularly the case in *Operation Shylock*, where Philip Roth lives between two nations, America and Israel, living in between also two legal systems. He does not know at what jurisdiction he must apply to have justice against Pipik: his split personality is reflected both in the production of his double and in this double legal perspective. In fact Rawls contrasts a shared concept of justice to various conflicting conceptions of justice.

The concept of justice, applied to an institution, means, say, that the institution makes no arbitrary distinctions between persons in assigning basic rights and duties [...] and that its rules establish a proper balance between competing claims [...] People can agree on the meaning of justice and still be at odds, since they affirm different principles and standards for deciding these matters.\(^3\)

This is particularly true because

within the dominant American culture, Israel has been perceived historically as a repetition of the ideology which spawned the creation of the United States, thus establishing a particularly complex connection for American Jews.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) *Heterotopia* is a concept elaborated by Foucault to describe those spaces that are connected to all other spaces, while in some way neutralizing and inverting all the connections they themselves define, reflect or replicate. They are spaces of *otherness*, simultaneously physical and mental. See Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias,” *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46–49.


\(^3\) Lehman, “Exodus and Homeland,” 77.
Early immigrants from Europe considered America in Messianic terms as the Promised Land. America’s own Biblical tradition envisions a Jewish correlative to Christian America.

Jewish immigration to the U.S.A, like the Zionist immigration to Palestine, was nurtured also by idealistic motives, by the belief in the Jewish – and the liberal American – values of freedom and equality.\(^{38}\)

This double sense of belonging characterizes also Philip Roth in the novel as he feels a strong umbilical connection to Israel while living in America and having American nationality. This situation mirrors a common aspect of the contemporary world where the possibility of a double nationality and a double passport widens the concept of citizenship and can be set in the ideological debate between Diaspora and centre.

The multiple passport-holder is an apt contemporary figure; he or she embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration and changing global markets.\(^{39}\)

Given the spreading of modern communication and nomadism, passports have become not so much attestations of citizenship as claims of participation in global markets. But this is taking the idea of diaspora too far from the intent of this essay.

However, we cannot resolve conflicting loyalties except by recourse to universal moral obligations to act justly. A society of peoples should be created, in Rawls’ terms, whose

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\text{system of law must be guided by a common good conception of justice [...] that takes impartially into account what it sees not unreasonably as the fundamental interests of all members of society.}^{40}\]

The fulfilment of this condition would be rooted in the application of human rights, which include a right to subsistence and security, freedom from slavery, as well as formal equality expressed by a respect for natural rights. Even in diasporic cases such rights should be the basis of a common existence.

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4. Conclusions

What is dealt with in this novel is on the one hand a possible solution to Eastern European political problems, but on the other hand the situation of Roth as a loyal and sincere Jew, here evidently ironic. “Let your Jewish conscience be your guide” are Smilesburger’s closing words to the real Philip Roth. This statement emphasizes a common Jewish element which transcends both national allegiances and differences.

We are constantly inside and outside fiction, as the note to the reader at the end of the book demonstrates. Once more Roth makes fun of our quest for a final explanation, because he declares that what he has described is a product of his imagination, but the closing words “This confession is false” refute his assertions at the very end, leaving the reader forever in suspense.

My idea of cultural mobility as a consequence of Diaspora is connected to the concept of embodiment in space through territorial conceptions of belonging. The different Jewish groups must coalesce with the European cultures they came from, thus superseding the negative image of Diaspora and transforming the term into a constructive and vivifying one.

To the very end of the novel we are split between an appreciation of a diasporic hybrid (the artificial creation of the state of Israel formed by different Jewish groups united only by their common religion, a state conceived as a refuge from European persecution; the double consciousness of being Jewish and American, for instance, within a nation increasingly known for the multiple hyphenated identities it contains) and a nostalgic revivalism for a coherent homeland. It is a split between the assimilationist drive (Diasporism) and the nationalist drive (Zionism). In the course of the novel we are thrust within the ongoing tension between Zionism and Diasporism and with an uneasy awareness of the contradictions embodied in the security offered by ‘home,’ whether in one’s land of origin or in the traditional religious idea of a haven.

As Pipik argues, Zionism, after fulfilling its historical role of “recover[ing] Jewish hope and morale” in the immediate post-war years, has exhausted itself and in turn become “the foremost Jewish problem.”

The novel brings to the fore the Jewish contradiction, pointed out by some writers, of longing for a homeland and then feeling dislocated in it: “I am a Jew-

ish writer in the sense of writing forever about the ache to have a home, and then having one, aching to go away thinking that this is not the real one.”

Jewish history and identity are inextricably bound up with the diasporic condition. The outcome of the novel is also a re-reading of the very term ‘diaspora,’ which comes from the Greek dia, meaning ‘apart,’ and speirein, meaning ‘to sow.’ While in both ancient and modern thought the former meaning has tended to dominate, the latter meaning, with its promise of replanting, re-rooting, and subsequent growth gains momentum in Operation Shylock.