# THE '60s, MAN: Hierarchical Structures and the Articulation of Male Experience in Selected Novels of Norman Mailer, Ken Kesey and Philip Roth.

## Part Three: "My Father's Face": Philip Roth's *Zuckerman Bound.*

## Chapter Nine: *Zuckerman Unbound:* "No Longer Any Man's Son."

*"He had become himself again — though with something unknowable added: he was no longer any man's son. Forget fathers, he told himself. Plural." Philip Roth,* Zuckerman Unbound.

*Zuckerman Unbound* (1981) continues the biography of the Newark-born novelist, taking up the thread of his life when the career toward which he had strained in *The Ghost Writer* is at its height. Set in the late 1960s, *Zuckerman Unbound* chronicles the personal angst and professional success that decade delivers to Nathan Zuckerman, while the novel demonstrates the truth of George Bernard Shaw's remark in *Man and Superman*: "There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it." The epigraph of *Zuckerman Unbound* is a quotation in like vein from Nathan's mentor, E. I. Lonoff, on the occasion of the younger writer's visit to Lonoff's Berkshire home thirteen years prior to the events the second of the Zuckerman novels depicts: " 'Let Nathan see what it is to be lifted from obscurity. Let him not come hammering at our door to tell us that he wasn't warned.' "[1]

The structure of *Zuckerman Unbound* is similar to that of *The Ghost Writer*. It couples a major "rite of passage" in Nathan's life with several thematically inter-connected and in narrative terms intertwining minor events which provide commentary on and elucidation of the novel's main concerns. In *Zuckerman Unbound* Nathan experiences the less salutary aspects of fame in a number of ways: the main event depicted in the novel is the death of his father, for which he feels his sensationalistic novel partly responsible, while the sub-plots concern the fame and the infamy which pursue Nathan as a result of the publication of his novel *Carnovsky*. These sub-plots include anonymous kidnap threats issued against Nathan's mother by those apparently unhappy with, and wishing to profit from, that novel and the novelist who creates it; the unwilling accommodation which results from Nathan's encounter with the bizarre figure of Alvin Pepler, a

former Marine and quiz show contestant, and a shadowy figure in whom Zuckerman recognises a "[s]ecret sharer"[2] and alternative self; and, ironically, in light of the above incidents, the attempts of Mary Schevitz, "sparring partner and wife to Zuckerman's agent, André, and would-be mother to André's clientele,"[3] to entice Nathan into the "enjoyment" of a more exciting life, as befits his income, reputation and status, to which end Mary stage-manages Nathan's brief affair with the beautiful Irish actress Caesara O'Shea.

The novel begins with Nathan's first encounters with a "public" only too ready to offer criticism and advice and to make personal observations based on their reading of Nathan's works. He meets Alvin Pepler, a "fan" who contrasts with the others by dint of his obsequious appreciation, from the first eerie, and vaguely threatening. *Zuckerman Unbound* chronicles the ending of Zuckerman's second marriage, destroyed by his serious-minded allegiance to his art and little else, wives included; it introduces the menacing telephone calls which suggest violence against Nathan's mother; turns back to a recollection of Nathan's "one night stand" with Caesara O'Shea; returns to the increasingly disconcerting attempts of the former serviceman Pepler to gain from Zuckerman exactly the kind of paternal affirmation and "moral sponsorship" Nathan once sought from E. I. Lonoff; and, after Nathan is called to the bedside of his dying father, attends his funeral, and must return to New York with a disgruntled brother who blames Nathan for their father's death, ends with Nathan, almost certainly as a reaction to these events, re-visiting the scenes and the neighbourhood of his childhood in an attempt to gain perspective on what has been for him a turbulent and confusing period.

Following the themes of the first novel, each of the strands of *Zuckerman Unbound* illustrates the extent to which Nathan, married three times but father only to growing collections of books and ex-wives, avoids adult accommodations, and shows how little he has done to deal with the emotions which bedevil him regarding his unsatisfactory accommodations with his first family. Ever guilt-ridden, Nathan is bound by adherence to the close accommodation to parents and parental expectations resulting from his childhood, at the heart of which is fear lest anyone think him less than the complete, duty-bound son and "good Jewish boy." Nathan's problems in this regard are exacerbated by his choice and pursuit of career. Zuckerman's acknowledgment that he does not, can not, and will not play the part he feels is assigned to him, and the shame which arises from that recognition, by the time of the events in the second novel in which he

features, have come to retard both his emotional and his spiritual growth. In this novelist's attendance at the secular shrine he has so painstakingly created he bows (or, rather, types) not to the Yahweh of his fathers, but to the pantheon of preoccupations which have fuelled his novels: sex; guilt; identity; the conflicting claims of Jewishness and American-ness; and his relationship with his family, especially with his father. With the publication of *Carnovsky* Nathan finally is able to answer questions he had posed himself during the beginning of his conflict with his male parent, and which are answered during the novel:

> If only I could invent as presumptuously as real life! If one day I could just *approach* the originality and excitement of what actually goes on...what then would they think of me, my father and his judge? How would my elders hold up against that? And if they couldn't, if the blow to their sentiments was finally too wounding, just how well would I hold up against being hated and reviled and disowned?[4]

The discipline of the creative artist has been Nathan's insulation from unfavourable opinion, whether his father's, his family's, the world's, or even his own. The success his art brings him has isolated him from the "normal" structures of society, and released him from the need to make contact and forge accommodations with social and economic hierarchies as part of experiencing a "real" life. Never making decisions or holding strong opinions, Nathan loses himself in the "what if?" of creative alternatives. It is one of the ironies of Zuckerman's existence that his public confuses him with the decisive, rampant characters he creates, or takes him for an incarnation of his first mentor, the romantic and flamboyant Felix Abravanel. However, the praxis to which Nathan subjects himself in order to produce his novels derives a great deal more from "the bluntness, the scrupulosity, the severity, the estrangement...the relentless winnowing out of the babyish, preening, insatiable self...the artistic mulishness and the suspicion of nearly everything else"[5] which he learns from the nobly, tediously, self-abnegating regime of E. I. Lonoff. The lonely, dedication of the artist assumes the air of a religious vocation for Nathan as he endures a symbolic self-immolation on the page in the hours devoted to a painful and painstaking craft, sifting through his past and turning it, by a process of fictionalised recall, into his livelihood. Occurring on a day-to-day basis a monkish routine dictates the tenor of a life which Zuckerman comes to guard so jealously that no current relationship can intrude, and for the sake of which all real life is excluded by the demands of his creation of fictional

life. Lonoff has warned Nathan against the adoption of such a regimen on the grounds that "you'll wind up like me. Fantasy for thirty years";[6] it is only the drama of death, in various forms, which in *Zuckerman Unbound* temporarily deflects Nathan from the make-believe existence which sees him absorbed in a perpetual creation and re-creation of the past, in order to mine its themes, and its images of family conflicts. Nathan is lost in the reiteration of the essential psychological dramas his childhood experiences reflect, and his "growth" into adult accommodations, and the creation of hierarchical structures of his own are truncated by his refusal to relinquish the habit of voluntarily re-living his accommodation with the hierarchy headed by his father. Despite marriage, and the opportunity for effortless close accommodation offered by his successful and remunerative pursuit of his career, between the 1950s and the end of the 1960s Nathan decides to father his own "worlds," in the form of his novels, and he rejects the chance to father an "original" family and children, while the nature of his working life prevents him from finding solace and companionship in the kinds of affinity groups which form a regular part of most people's lives. While to refuse accommodation for most men means disaster and exclusion, Nathan chooses isolation, and employs it to construct a world of fiction which not only takes the place of real human beings in his life, but which, paradoxically, brings him the income which cements this evasion in place, removing him from the need to make real accommodations and, in fact, allowing, even encouraging, him to continue to avoid making them.

An example of Nathan Zuckerman's inability to establish and sustain lasting relationships with women is to be found in the account of a short, carnal "love affair" in which he engages some two weeks before the events portrayed in the rest of *Zuckerman Unbound*. Significantly, in this entanglement the creator of *Carnovsky* is prey rather than predator, seduced by an expert at the art of flattering the fragile male ego, and eventually himself the subject of close accommodation in an two-term interpersonal hierarchy to the sexual desires of a strong female. Caesara O'Shea is the "keeper of the screen's softest, most inviting lilt, of a languishing air so sad and so seductive that a Warner Brothers wit had accounted for the box-office magic thus: 'All the sorrow of her race and then those splendid tits.' "[7] O'Shea and Zuckerman are both clients of André Schevitz, and, at Mary Schevitz's instigation, they become dinner partners while the actress is visiting New York. Emotionally pragmatic Mary has taken it upon herself to fill the traditional function of "match-maker" on behalf of two of her husband's more highly-strung clients, each of whom fate has removed from

the intercourse of normal life. Mary hints that, in her opinion, high emotions are best not left to the highly emotional, and she lectures Nathan in much the same manner as one imagines she has already lectured Caesara. The actress, according to Mary, has " 'had terrible luck with men,' "[8] while Mary also expresses her dissatisfaction at having had to see Nathan " 'mismated three times now.' "[9] Arranging for the two to meet, Mary urges Nathan not to dismiss Caesara merely because she is " ' a sex symbol to the hordes. So are you to the hordes, in case you haven't heard.' "[10] Mary's husband adds: " 'Don't be intimidated by the beauty...Or the press...She's a very unassuming, gentle and intelligent woman.' "[11] One imagines it is bankability as much, if not more, than compatibility that is on André's mind, however, for the itinerary of the "date" can only be described as unusual for a couple supposedly seeking privacy and the chance to become better acquainted. At a crowded dinner party *chez* Schevitz the conversation between Nathan and Caesara can only proceed "intimately"[12] for "five minutes, but did not lack for fervor on either side,"[13] and when a "quiet" nightcap is agreed upon, the venue selected is a celebrity bar named Elaine's, where although the novelist and the actress receive their share of attention, Nathan is given a reminder of the relativity and instability of fame when he is mistaken for the screen idol's hairdresser. In Caesara's hotel room Nathan notices a selection of books—including the Zuckerman works *Higher Education*, *Mixed Emotions*, and *Reversed Intentions*—and a prominently displayed copy of Kirkegaard's *The Crisis in the Life of an Actress* [sic].

Kierkegaard's aesthetics had called for a correlation between the stages of an artist's life and the stages of development in his or her artistic output as early as his first book, *From the Papers of One Still Living*. Roth has Caesara O'Shea reading *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, which discusses the female thespian and the processes of aging and maturation. The dilemma Kierkegaard examines is of intimate interest to O'Shea who is, of course, concerned with exactly the same issues of mutability as regards her own appearance, the roles she garners, and the progress of her career. Through the differing choices and styles of two actresses, Madame Heiberg and Madame Neilsen, Kierkegaard illustrates his idea that there are two approaches to the "crisis": Heiberg returned to play Juliet fourteen years after initially assaying the role; Neilsen instead assumed roles suitable to her age rather than recapturing earlier triumphs. For Kirkegaard an older actress can evoke even past youth through a kind of emotional authority and "a more and more intensive return to the original condition"[14]; others achieve a

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The full and correct title of this work is *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*. Even in his first book, *From the Papers of One Still Living*. Kierkegaard's aesthetic called for a correlation between the stages of an artist's life and the stages of development in his or her artistic output. Roth has Caesara O'Shea reading *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, which discusses the female thespian and the processes of aging and maturation. The dilemma Kierkegaard examines is of intimate interest to O'Shea who is, of course, concerned with exactly the same issues of mutability as regards her own appearance, the roles she garners, and the progress of her career. Through the differing choices and styles of two actresses, Madame Heiberg and Madame Neilsen, Kierkegaard illustrates his idea that there are two approaches to the "crisis": Heiberg returned to play Juliet fourteen years after initially assaying the role; Neilsen instead assumed roles suitable to her age rather than recapturing earlier triumphs. For Kirkegaard an older actress can evoke even past youth through a kind of emotional authority and "a more and more intensive return to the original condition"[15]; others achieve a

state nearing perfection, where loss of youth is offset by a steady progress in artistic method and self-command. Caesara, like Nathan, is a "product" competing according to a market-force driven aesthetic. As Zuckerman is equated with Carnovsky, so Caesara with the roles she plays; that it is harder for her to keep the distinction the public and private personae may be shown in her awareness of the need to promote her "image": to court the spotlight, and foster mystery and gossip in her wake.

In Caesara's room Nathan and the actress engage in a discussion which furthers one of Roth's subsidiary themes in *Zuckerman Unbound*, fame and its vicissitudes, and how, in Kirkegaard's words, no one should envy the celebrated their " 'burdensome splendor.' "[15] Caesara reveals that her introduction to the uncertain world of the Thespian has involved a story with which the reader of *The Ghost Writer* realises Nathan has more than a passing familiarity. O'Shea tells Zuckerman: " 'I got into all this as innocently as any girl could. Playing Anne Frank at the Gate Theatre. I was nineteen years old. I had half of Dublin in tears.' "[16] The meaning the story of the Holocaust victim has for Zuckerman evokes an irony which is lost on neither novelist nor reader, especially after the events of *The Ghost Writer* and the tawdry fantasies Nathan concocts in that novel concerning Anne Frank/Amy Bellette. In *Zuckerman Unbound* he can only marvel in bemusement

> [t]hat Anne Frank should come to him in this guise. That he should meet her at his agent's house, in a dress of veils and beads and cockatoo feathers. That he should take her to Elaine's to be gaped at. That she should invite him up to her penthouse suite. Yes he thought, life has its own flippant ideas about how to handle serious fellows like Zuckerman. All you have to do is wait and it teaches you all there is to know about the art of mockery.[17]

Their discussion of literature leads Nathan and Caesara to compare the crisis in the life of a modern actress (aging) and the crisis in the life of a modern writer (isolation), from which they graduate to a dialogue on other philosophical topics. Nathan speaks to Caesara of Aristotle, and confides that the Greek sage " 'let me down. He didn't mention anything about the theater of the ridiculous in which I am now a leading character—because of literature.' "[18] A concerned Caesara gently prods Nathan with the accusation that he is " 'intensity-afflicted,' "[19] which charge she mitigates by averring: " 'I've got the same disease.' "[20] Nathan buries himself in Kirkegaard and Caesara takes matters into her own hands, asking Nathan: "

'Is the point you're making, reading in my little book, that you are nothing like the notorious character in your own? Or...is it that I'm not desirable?' "[21] The greatest example of his reputed wit the novelist and supposed sexual adventurer can summon by way of riposte is: " 'Your allure is staggering and you can't imagine how depraved I am.' "[22] Mercifully, a tactful caesura intrudes at this point, and what transpires between the duo immediately after this remark is not transmitted to the reader.

One presumes Nathan does not have to make do with the masturbation fantasies he concocts around the form of Amy Bellette in *The Ghost Writer*, for the novel recommences after the passage of some hours, as Caesara's apparently sated inamorata emerges from the actress' penthouse to find her limousine, with its armed driver alert behind the wheel, waiting. Nathan spends the next morning at a tailor, an intelligent and assertive female having turned him into a primping peacock; however, when he telephones Caesara's hotel he finds his lover has checked out, and, it seems, vanished. Nathan's first thought is that something he has said or done has not met the charming Celt's expectations. Caesara, Nathan imagines, has "left the hotel to shake the unwanted suitor."[23] Mary Schevitz later informs him that Caesara has departed from New York " 'in tears,' "[24] at having to abandon, according to Mary, " 'the best thing that's happened to me in a year.' "[25] Caesara, according to Mary, is in Mexico, en route "to Havana...She's been having an affair. Since March. With Fidel Castro. Nathan, you mustn't tell anyone."[26]

Whatever the reasons for Caesara's actions the reader can only note that it is she who initiates the physical side of the affair, and it she who terminates it. Nathan's power is with the word, not with the life that inspires the word, and, if Caesara inhabits a world of fantasy and fiction, much as he does, she, in this novel, has a "counterlife" as dramatic as anything in the works of Zuckerman. The author of the Castro story is either Fidel Castro, Caesara, or Mary Schevitz, (or, possibly, Nathan, finding a way to camouflage inadequacy with a potent fiction). Whichever is the "truth," it is the end of Nathan's and Caesara's *affaire d'amore*, except in the gossip columns of newspapers. Nathan seems to have been trumped by a figure of male potency with whom he cannot possibly compete, for the author of *Carnovsky* can not compare with the author of a nation, and an "alpha" male who is "a man who won't take no for an answer."[27] This is not true of Nathan Zuckerman, who once again in his life allows a relationship to end without his exerting any effort to change this outcome.

If there are charming, bitter-sweet, memories for Nathan when in *Zuckerman Unbound* he receives a short, self-consciously literary note from Caesara ending: " 'Vague memories, nothing but memories,' "[28] equally unforgettable but much less pleasant are the intellectual and emotional consequences of Nathan's likewise short, but infinitely more harrowing, relationship with Alvin Pepler. Pepler is an embittered former serviceman blessed with a phenomenal memory and cursed with an intense, urgent and assumptive demeanour. Nathan and Pepler are, as the latter quaintly puts it, "*landsmen*,"[29] fellow-Newarkers. The latter plays on this connection from the moment he introduces himself to Nathan while the novelist, uncomfortable with the vulnerability of celebrity, is attempting to have dinner *incognito* in a delicatessen in Yorkville. Pepler's endearing, boyish enthusiasm, "emotional brown....lachrymose eyes"[30] and puppy dog demeanour, and rapid-fire evocation of places and names from Nathan's own storehouse of memories, as well as his claim that they are distantly related, disarms Nathan's initial, suspicious reservations and desire for privacy. Zuckerman's ego is flattered by Pepler's hyperbolic praise —" 'You're our Marcel Proust, Mr Zuckerman' "[31]— and his pathetic gratitude—" 'I don't think people can appreciate what you're doing for the old Newark unless they're from there themselves,' "[32]—while the persistent Pepler dispels Nathan's fears and awakens his guilt over his "easy" success and the way in which he has mined his past to realise his fiction. Treating Zuckerman to an ice-cream, Pepler slips onto a first-name basis with the writer, and, looking at Nathan "as tenderly as a father on an outing with his darling baby boy,"[33] ask him: " 'Do you want jimmies on top, Nathan?...And flavor?...Both dips?' "[34] This is too much for Zuckerman, pessimistic enough about his feelings for his own ill and aging real father, not to mention in his dealings with strangers who take the purchase of his book as an invitation to intimacy; Nathan flees the combination of father-figure and reminder of the price of fame dually embodied in Pepler's ample frame.

Alvin Pepler, over succeeding days, displays the uncanny knack of happening upon Nathan at unexpected moments. It transpires that Pepler is keen to write a book justifying his involvement in a quiz-show scandal of the 1950s, at a time when Pepler was, or so he claims, known as " 'Pepler the Man of the People'...'Alvin the Jewish Marine'...for three consecutive weeks...the winner on the biggest [game show] of them all..."Smart Money." ' "[35] The "Man of the People," however, was deprived of this renown, along with his "robust health...Marine record, and...lovely, loyal fiancée, who took to the hills,"[36] when it was revealed that the answers to the questions were

provided beforehand to "Smart Money"'s contestants. Alvin insists he was an unwilling accomplice to the fraud, and urges Nathan to believe he was only convinced to participate by the producers' assertion that " 'art is *controlled*, art is *managed*, art is *always* rigged. That is how it takes hold of the human heart.' "[37] The importance of prestige to men is underlined as Pepler's conversation gravitates to this long-past disaster, his anger and bitterness clearly fuelled by the obloquy resulting from his implication in the deceit. Nathan senses a request for assistance is about to be forthcoming when his admirer's eyes fill "not with tears, but what was worse, with *truth*,"[38] as he tells his tale of chicanery in pursuit of ratings, and the exoneration he feels he deserves " 'If I have to say so myself,' " Alvin insists, " 'I don't think it did the Jewish people any harm having a Marine veteran of two wars representing them on prime-time national television.' "[39] Pepler's disclosures surrounding "Smart Money" and its producers, he assures Nathan, will be major news, and he already fears reprisals. " 'I can see Nixon himself getting involved to quash it,' "[40] Pepler says, before adding, perhaps unnecessarily, apropos his failure thus far to interest anybody in his story: " 'I'm supposed to be a disturbed and unstable person.' "[41] Eventually Pepler implores Nathan's help in finding an agent who will handle the book he is writing, which will tell the truth about "Smart Money" and which will, when published, go about restoring his once-considerable reputation for probity, and his "self-respect. As a man!...As a war veteran twice over! As a Newarker! As a Jew!"[42] Unwilling to become involved, fearful of being asked to become a mentor to one who gives every indication of being unhinged, Nathan is nonetheless fascinated by "the Jewish Marine." The writer who loves the fact that is stranger than fiction is amused by Pepler's incredible memory and court-jester's comportment. An encounter with Pepler amounts to a real-life vaudeville of old song-titles, baseball statistics, and hilarious, garrulous patter about a musical based on his life and the true story of the "Smart Money" scandal, which Pepler claims is to be produced by an obviously fictitious *wunderkind* of Broadway who rejoices in the name of Marty Paté, and who has a girlfriend who acts in Sardinian films and who bears the equally unlikely sobriquet of Gayle Gibraltar.

Pepler reminds Nathan of the thin line between a famous writer whose obsessions are his fortune, and a pathetic, unbalanced would-be writer whose obsessions fuel only a wasted, shadowy existence; he admires Pepler's imagination and invention, while the effusive Pepler himself strikes Nathan as a subject worthy indeed of a novel, or even a stage production.

Nathan is repelled and entranced at once, laughing at his fellow-Newarker's priceless performance despite himself, ruefully noting that "you don't run away from phenomena like Alvin Pepler, not if you're a novelist with any brains you don't. Think how far Hemingway went to look for a lion."[43] Nathan recognises his affinity with Alvin; both men share a neurotic obsession with past events, and a soul which draws its sustenance from a city which no longer exists, except in the mind. The point of the difference between Pepler and Nathan is that fate has bestowed on Nathan a gifted pen, fame and success, while Pepler's fantastic memory and quick tongue only make him an object of repugnant fascination. Nathan might well muse further on his good fortune: the sense of incompleteness he feels is also felt by Pepler, but whereas Nathan has sufficient money and status to enable him to transcend normal hierarchical accommodations, and search for, and find, palliatives for his discontent, this opportunity Pepler, ejected from hierarchical accommodations and forced to exist as an impoverished outsider, lacks. Nathan is "above" and Pepler "below," but it is a mark of the need all humans have for regular social interaction that both men feel the absence of place in a hierarchical structure, the contact it brings, and *isotimoi* with whom to battle, sharply, and experience it as an unsettling, aggravating, ever-present malaise.

Pepler might provide nothing more threatening than an amusing, if disturbing, diversion in the life of Zuckerman were it not for the grave twist which occurs in the plot and Nathan's life at this point. Late on the evening of his first encounter with Alvin an individual with a gruff voice and a well-researched fund of personal detail telephones Nathan and threatens to kidnap his mother unless paid an initial sum of $50,000. The caller intimates he is speaking on behalf of a professional organisation, justifying the literally extortionate figure on the grounds that " 'kidnapping is an expensive operation...It...takes highly trained personnel...fifty thousand won't begin to cover costs. If I am going to keep my head above water, you won't get out of a kidnapping like this for under three hundred thousand.' "[44] The criminal caller's discourse on the expenses of his business extends to a critique of the state of crime in America; this is incongruous and inappropriate, to say the least, given the circumstances. The kidnapper bemoans the climate of violence in the U.S.: " 'My kids can't watch TV because of the violence...Jack Idiot Ruby, has become the patron saint of America!' "[45] For several reasons finding it beyond his comprehension that his interlocutor is really the representative of a powerful crime syndicate poised to bleed money from him the deranged Pepler immediately occurs to

Nathan as the prime suspect for the identity of the putative kidnapper. However, when Alvin appears before him in the street again the next day, and is in sparkling form —"Even richer in pointless detail than the great James Joyce"[46]— Nathan again relaxes, in spite of his alarm. Like Nathan the novelist, Pepler returns in the midst of comic invention and pyrotechnical discourse to the themes of his fixations, and renews his request that Nathan assist him with his "work" and the rehabilitation of his reputation. Nathan's fears and suspicions are resurgent as Pepler presses Zuckerman against a mailbox, and thrusts a portion of a review he is writing under Nathan's nose. The subject of Alvin's work—Nathan's novels—bears a further irony which is not lost on Zuckerman; it dwells on an issue to which Nathan, and the Zuckerman series, often turns: the relationship between art and life, and fact and fiction. Whether Nathan is pleased to receive information on these issues at this point, from Pepler, is moot.

Pepler writes:

> Fiction is not autobiography, yet all fiction, I am convinced, is in some sense rooted in autobiography, though the connection to actual events may be tenuous indeed, even nonexistent...An author cannot write about what he does not know and the reader must grant him his material, yet there are dangers in writing so closely on the heels of one's own immediate experience: a lack of toughness, perhaps; a tendency to indulgence; an urge to justify the author's ways to men. Distance, on the other hand, either blurs experience or heightens it. For most of us it is mercifully blurred, but for writers, if they can be restrained from spilling the beans before they are digested, it is heightened.[47]

Jittery Nathan is less than delighted at being asked to produce an impromptu review, and his lack of enthusiasm is construed by the hypersensitive Pepler as foreshadowing a damning criticism. Pepler's mask drops to reveal the frustration and vindictiveness that Nathan has suspected, all along, to lurk behind the clown's facade. Nathan tries to be objective about derivative material of which he says, in an attempt to be diplomatic: "Well, I don't think you have to go into the desert and stand on a pillar to come up with these "thoughts." ' "[48] This comment elicits only a snarling, mocking, resentful inversion of Pepler's previously charming self. "The Man of the People"'s cheery, self-effacing persona disintegrates and a violent harangue ensues. He berates Nathan with the accusation that

Zuckerman " 'only wrote that book [*Carnovsky*] because you could! Because of having every break in life there is! While the ones who didn't obviously couldn't!' "[49] Pepler continues in an increasingly irrational vein, and Nathan is incredulous before the former's claim that he is the original of Gil Carnovsky, the title character in Zuckerman's best seller. Pepler avers that " 'those hang-ups you wrote about happen to be mine, and...you knew it...you stole it...From what my Aunt Lottie told your cousin Essie that she told to your mother that she told to you.' "[50] As Nathan tries to flee, Pepler pursues him, taunting Zuckerman about his setting as well as his subject. " 'What do you know about Newark, Mama's Boy[?]' "[51] Pepler asks,

> 'Newark is a nigger with a knife! Newark is a whore with the syph! Newark is junkies shitting in your hallway and everything burned to the ground!...You! Whining about Mama back in Newark and how she wouldn't wipe your ass for you three times a day. Newark is finished, idiot! Newark is barbarian hordes and the Fall of Rome!'[52]

A link with the fantasy mobster on Zuckerman's telephone, and serving as a preface to later, funereal, events in the novel, is the lying-in-state of an underworld figure named Nick 'The Prince" Seratelli in a funeral parlour nearby. Nathan's current high profile comes to his rescue as he evades Pepler by wriggling through the crowd and, recognised by the young mortician, gains access to the building and a quiet corner in which to hide and rest. Nathan employs the calming influence of his writer's discipline to advantage, and he surrenders to the urge to make notes about his astonishing confrontation with his "fan." Now, feeling that Pepler was close to committing a crime of violence against him on grounds no more logical than: "You're you, I'm me, and for that and that alone you die,"[53] Zuckerman is quietened and reassured by his ability to forget himself in the transformation into merely "[a]nother writer with his urgent 'thoughts.' "[54] The writer caught in the act of turning life into art provides an accurate comment on his own existence:

> Why isn't P. Proust of the Pops instead of a file cabinet? The uneventfulness of writing, he couldn't put up with it. Who can? Maniacal memory without maniacal desire for comprehension. Drowning without detachment. Memory coheres around nothing (except Dostoevskian despair over fame). With him no things past...It's the talentlessness that's driving him nuts. The brute strength, the crazy tenacity, the desperate hunger...This Peplerian barrage is

> what? Zeitgeist overspill? Newark poltergeist? Tribal retribution? Secret sharer? P. as my pop self? Not far from how P. sees it. He who's made fantasy of others now fantasy of others.[55]

Zuckerman understands that it is one thing to imagine no end of Mary Patés and Gayle Gibraltars, and even to make up complex and authentic sounding characters who can deliver threatening telephone calls, but Nathan is all too aware of the distance between imagination and the page, and the struggle required to fill the empty space. It is the act of writing itself which eludes Alvin; he simply does not have the ability to recreate life so that it is arresting as writing. Nathan does, and his facility at the production of "fictionalised recall," for all that it cripples his private life and makes his accommodations with real human beings and actual human structures problematic, allows him to turn observations, experiences, mundanities and routines, his failed marriages and his unresolved Oedipal dilemmas, into the rich, universal comedy of, for example, Gil Carnovsky. Carnovsky is not Pepler any more than he is Nathan. He is a compendium of boys like them: Jews; Catholics; fundamentalists; Protestants; Americans of different stamps and colours and classes. Pepler is correct: Nathan is the man who did write the book, and did because he could, but his conclusion, that it was so simple anyone could have done it, is wrong. Nathan had the discipline, and the talent, and he also had the drive to translate the details of his accommodations with his father and the other members of his family into compelling fiction; this is his cross as much as his fortune. Pepler, who cannot turn his own rather riveting and colourful tales into a readable book at all, can never grapple with the detail of what to Nathan is not necessarily in any sense a cause for rejoicing: the relationship between life and art.

The potent metaphor of a comparison between the act of writing and the act of ejaculation has been discussed by a number of feminist and post-structuralist writers.[56] One reads, in *The Ghost Writer*, of Nathan both masturbating and writing. Although by the time of *Zuckerman Unbound* Nathan's prestige facilitates his access to real women who provide him with sexual release, Pepler does not have the same opportunities. Pepler's last communication with Nathan is the final underscoring of the difference between them and of the line, a matter of talent and promotion, and the prestige and money and fame which devolves from their combination, which separates them. Nathan discovers an envelope in his letter box; on it is "scrawled with a red felt-tip pen, 'Prestige Paté International.' "[57] Inside the envelope is "a damp matted handkerchief"[58] which Nathan had loaned

to Pepler at their first meeting. It features, "by way of a message, a stale acrid odor he had no difficulty identifying. Evidence, if evidence there need be, of the 'hang-up' that Pepler shared with Gilbert Carnovsky, and that Zuckerman had stolen from him for that book."[59]

The Pepler incident is the excuse for a number of excursions into the examination of questions regarding fiction, art, and personality, but, finally, Pepler recedes, devoured by Nathan, becoming, finally, menace notwithstanding, nothing more than another character fading into his colourful, outraged place in the Zuckerman universe. "Memory coheres around nothing (except Dostoevskian despair over fame)," Nathan had written of him, on the back of an already printed brochure, hiding from his flawed doppelganger in a morgue: this complex image, of writing-on-writing, text overscored on text, and the emergence of fiction, life and sanity in the presence of death, becomes an appropriate symbol for the comic dance-partners Pepler and Zuckerman make for each other. As their *danse macabre* concludes, when it seems as if the tone of Zuckerman's life and the self-examination its events promote is in danger of becoming overdone, perhaps even precious, and certainly self-indulgent, reminders of death and mortality intrude to drag the text in which Zuckerman and his eternal, self-obsessed meditations occur onto matters more immediate and cogent to the business at hand for characters, writer and reader.

When he arrives home after his last encounter with Pepler, there is an urgent message for Zuckerman from Miami, where his parents have moved from Newark to pass their retirement. Nathan's fevered imaginings threaten the kidnapping, but instead the call informs him that his father has suffered a major coronary attack and is not expected long to survive.

Nathan hastens to Florida, and although he thinks to take with him something from his own collection of books, at Newark Airport, instead of a work with philosophical import, Nathan buys "an illustrated paperback for laymen about the creation of the universe and the evolution of life"[60] to read on the flight. Thus Nathan, on the way to his father's deathbed, "instead of thinking the thoughts of the great thinkers on the subject of death...thought his own."[61]

In accordance with deeply-ingrained habit, at this moment of crisis Nathan finds himself thrown into contemplation of the past rather than the future. The history of the conflict between father and son replays itself in his mind. In the air Nathan recalls the last summer he had spent at home before his departure for college, and the Thomas Wolfe novel *Look Homeward, Angel* he had read "on the screened-in back porch of his family's stifling home—

stifling that August as much because of the father as of the weather."[62] Nathan recalls that "[a]ll he wanted at sixteen was to become a romantic genius like Thomas Wolfe and leave little New Jersey and all the shallow provincials therein for the deep emancipating world of Art."[63] He adds with evident self-irony: "As it turned out, he had taken them all with him."[64] When he finally arrives in Miami the scene at the hospital distresses Nathan greatly. Lying in his bed,

> Dr Zuckerman made sounds from time to time, but they were barely distinguishable as words...It was awful...His chin was quivering...from the recognition that all effort was pointless now. And it had been the most effortful life. Being Victor Zuckerman was no job you took lightly. Day shifts, night shifts, weekends, evenings, vacations—for sheer man-hours, not so different from being his son.[65]

It is a sobering realisation for Nathan. The obsessive devotion to his art that he has always felt distanced him from his father he understands, on one level at least, to be derived from that same parent. Nathan sees what he did not see as a boy: that he does not need a Lonoff, a theory of art, or even the idea of an artist's temperament, to explain what he called in Lonoff "the excruciating scrupulosity, the...maddening, meticulous attention to every last detail."[66] Instead what he sees is a family character trait; part of his father repeated in him. The "fussiness, the fastidiousness"[67] Nathan recognised in Lonoff, the intended replacement father, belonged to Nathan's real father also. Victor Zuckerman's mind and his pen, too, were no less intensely employed than his sons; in Victor's case it was in writing to the President and members of Congress on issues of national import. Nathan and his father might have met despite, and been drawn together by, their intense personalities, years earlier. Instead they have been driven apart by this shared approach to life, their "intensity affliction," to paraphrase Caesara O'Shea's remark.

Victor's nearest living Zuckerman family relatives are gathered beside him and, encouraged by the husband of one of his father's cousins, a Mr Metz—" 'You are their wordsmith...You can say for everyone what is in their hearts,' "[68] —Nathan tries to articulate the plethora of his conflicting emotions. Yet the Zuckerman who can preserve Newark and his childhood and describe them for America cannot evoke the same scenes on behalf of the man who gave them to him. Nathan does not talk to his father about their relationship, and he does not try to atone for the arguments, and the misunderstandings. Although it is his "[l]ast chance to tell the man what he

still doesn't know. Last chance ever to make him see it all another way,"[69] Nathan is mute under the conflicting weight of emotions he sees, or thinks he sees, reflected also in the face of his brother Henry, a mixture of "inexpressible love"[70] and "blockaded hatred."[71]

The words Nathan eventually muster seem bizarre to everyone present, even to himself, yet they are symbolically apt. Instead of the particular, Nathan calls on the general, and lectures his father on astro-physics, and the universe's explosion from and implosion back to an "original egg" as way of indicating to his parent, to himself, and to the family, the universal nature, and the emotional scale, of the terminal drama being enacted before them. Gazing at his father "Zuckerman explained to him the big-bang theory...It wasn't just a father who was dying, or a son, or a cousin, or a husband: it was the whole of creation, whatever comfort that gave."[72] Nathan concludes by telling his father: " '...this is what we all want to tell you...the universe *has* been going on forever: fifty billion years out, fifty billion years back. Imagine it. A universe being reborn and reborn and reborn, without end.' "[73]

What comfort an awareness of this vacillation might bring is not related; perhaps what is being born and reborn without end is the dreadful mixture of animosity and love, the competition of hierarchical struggle between father and son. Certainly the gulf between Nathan and his father has never been greater; the final moment in which it is possible for them to find reconciliation is lost forever through the inability of Nathan Zuckerman at that moment to face his feelings, and say what is in his heart, rather than to seek an allegory to convey his message. An Esau at a dying Isaac's bed, he might be watching his last chance of absolution, of reconciliation, of inheritance, fleeting with his father's spirit. For, despite the conviction he musters in the recitation of his incongruous account of cosmic cycles, for the sake of simplification Nathan withholds from his father "the truth," which in this instance is the flaw in the scientific theory of an endlessly self-generating universe. As it happens there is, it seems, a "marginally insufficient"[74] density of matter in the universe for the sums on which the theory Nathan describes depends to come out correctly. The comment from Zuckerman's perspective is that "If not for this insufficiency, the whole thing might indeed oscillate to and fro without end. But according to the paperback still in his coat pocket, right now they couldn't find what they needed anywhere, and the chances for no ending didn't look good."[75]

The symbolism in this account seems grimly obvious. There is a critical state of entropy, or energy loss, in all systems in the universe. Thus there is

no "eternal" life; no answers to the great questions: only finite existence, inevitable death, and a continuing struggle which ultimately has no point. There is only an endless dissipation to no end, without hope of recuperation, or recovery. Nathan decides that "this information his father could live without...Enough for now of what is and isn't so. Enough science, enough art, enough of fathers and sons."[76] A temporary armistice is the only result that is "[a] major new development in the life of Nathan and Victor Zuckerman,"[77] but even this proves fragile. Nathan's father, despite the exiguous state of his life energies in his near-coma, rallies to have the last word. The text continues: "Though Dr Zuckerman didn't officially expire until the next morning, it was here that he uttered his last words. Word. Barely audible, but painstakingly pronounced. 'Bastard,' he said."[78]

Victor Zuckerman has been a man of powerful opinions and long-held and firmly cherished animosities. He has communicated his ideas and opinions to a number of political figures, as well as to his patients and to his family. The immigrant who fought his way to a comfortable position in the economic and social hierarchy, and thus provided a middle-class launching pad to enable both of his sons to aspire even higher, has participated fully in the political and social and religious life of the nation, albeit in a minor way. Why might he not, Nathan asks himself, at this last moment rail even against "He who had not seen fit to bestow upon His own universe that measly bit of missing matter...Or to bestow upon Dr Zuckerman, ardent moralist from grade school on, the simple reward of a healthy old age and a longer life?"[79] However, Dr Zuckerman's eldest son must reluctantly acknowledge that it seems more likely to be those closest to him, his inferiors in the family hierarchy, those who share the secondary places in the structure he has headed with such iron will for so long, those "opponents" with a much more immediate claim on what is left of his time, with whom his father is probably occupied, for "when he spoke at last, it wasn't to his correspondence folders that he was looking, or upward at the face of his invisible God, but into the eyes of the apostate son."[80]

Nathan finds, as Thomas Wolfe phrases it in the novel with which the chapter in which these events are related shares its title, and which was quoted by Nathan in his interior monologue in the plane on the way to Miami: " 'from all the chaos of accident the inevitable event came at the inexorable moment to add to the sum of his life.' "[81] Victor Zuckerman's dying words make him, literally, a "last gasp" "victor" in the Oedipal struggle, and in the battle of hierarchicisation he has fought with his son. Nathan feels, like Esau, robbed of his birthright by Henry/Jacob, who is "the

good son"[82] —"*Henry's your boy, poppa, not me,*"[83] had been the message Zuckerman felt his eyes had transmitted, and which had prompted his father's curse—and it is an unpleasant puzzle he must solve, and a crippling emotional legacy, to decide whether his dedication to art has been worth this loss, or not. That there are things he might have said to his father that would have made a difference, perhaps brought them together at the last moment, or at least made him feel better, things he might have said that both of them needed to hear, does not occur to the inventor of *Carnovsky*.

The sum of the details which Roth collects to describe the death of Zuckerman Senior is a reminder to Nathan that dedication to art may bring its own rewards, and that a best-seller full of sex and the juicy details of a family's peccadillos certainly will bring rewards of one kind or another, but that nothing will compensate for failure to address the vital issues of existence. There will be reminders aplenty to Nathan of that fact as his life continues in the next volume of the Zuckerman series. From Nathan's perspective Prometheus' punishment will be as naught before the rock to which, in a spiritual sense, at least, Nathan Zuckerman is presently being tied by the skeins of emotion being woven by the events in which he is currently engaged. He is aware in the days which follow, however, only that "[t]he funeral was a tremendous strain...Over the Miami cemetery, the sun made its presence known to Zuckerman as no Yahweh ever had."[84] Nathan's awareness that his failure to promote himself to adulthood, to the "father" or "Yahweh" position, also makes itself increasingly felt as time goes on, and for this failure, and the uncomfortable feeling of isolation and incompleteness it causes, there is no immediate remedy.

As the plane carrying Nathan and Henry Zuckerman takes off to return them to New York Nathan "suddenly pictured Mussolini hanging by his heels"[85] and notes that "to remember the vengeful undoing of that vile tyrant after the death of your own law-abiding, anti-Fascist, nonviolent father...[was a]...[r]eminder to the outer man of the inner man he's dealing with."[86] This statement, and the events which precede and follow it, are best glossed by reference to the psycho-mythic theories of Freud and the Oedipal drama in which the incestuous desire of young men for their mother causes them to be "expelled" from the primal horde by the father.[87] "The exiles," explains Martin Birnbach,

> were soon to take vengeance, for they joined forces, slew the father, and consumed his remains. Cannibalizing the victim was a natural act because the brothers desired to identify themselves with the envied yet dreaded father of

> the horde. They took on his strength in performing this primitive ritual...The physical incorporation of the father and of the authority he represents corresponds of course to the figurative incorporation of parental authority in the individual's resolution of the Oedipus complex.[88]

What takes place after their father's death between the Zuckerman sons is the battle for patriarchal authority which will not climax until 1986's *The Counterlife*, and only after which will Nathan's own Oedipal complex begin to be resolved. In that novel Henry faces his version of the crisis which Nathan faces in *The Anatomy Lesson*, and it will be Nathan's turn to respond. Indeed, Nathan will respond, and with greater calmness and compassion than his younger brother displays now. On the flight from Miami Nathan participates in the opening salvos of the fraternal war with little zest, for he is preoccupied by a somewhat guilty sense of "release"[89] and a "tide of euphoria"[90] which he feels following the death of his father. He muses of this emotion: "It was very likely the same heady feeling of untrammelled freedom that people like Mary and André had been expecting him to enjoy from becoming a household name,"[91] before concluding: "He had become himself again—though with something unknowable added: he was no longer any man's son. Forget fathers, he told himself. Plural."[92] The brothers sip martinis, for Nathan the "[f]irst time in his life he'd had a drink only an hour after his eggs."[93] The pairing of alcohol and eggs may indicate a symbolic kind of cannibal communion unconsciously solemnized in a shared ritual between the brothers, as their father's spirit, the "something unknowable added,' passes to them. This reading, combined with Nathan's evocation of the original "egg" of creation, with which each human creation begins, at Victor Zuckerman's bedside, provides a consistent symbolic explanation for Nathan's strange choices and stranger behaviour during the period of his father's last illness and death. He needs to deal with the patriarchal hierarchy, and the now physically vacant "father" position. Before the brothers take their drink Nathan has been wondering about the "blessing" Victor Zuckerman has bestowed on him at the death-bed. He wonders if he can possibly have heard the dying man correctly. He wonders if the word he heard might not have been " '[v]aster,"[94] or " 'Faster' "[95]; if, in typical fashion, Dr. Zuckerman had been "[t]elling Death his job the way he told his wife how to roll the winter rugs and Henry how to do homework,"[96] or if the word might even have been "better."[97] That Nathan is tempted to read Doctor Zuckerman's syllables as an exhortation, "reminding them to be better boys,"[98] is an example of the

depths of Nathan's despair in the face of the condemnation and criticism embodied in his father's final utterance. Nathan seems, however, sadly convinced that his hearing is in order, and that Dr. Zuckerman's Parthian parting shot amounted to "a final repudiation by Father."[99] As if in self-justification, he engages in a conversation with the near-stranger in the seat beside him. He reminds his brother that although " '[y]ou loved him and he loved you...he tried to make you somebody who would never do anything or be anything that couldn't be written up in the *Jewish News* under your graduation picture.' "[100] Victor Zuckerman's idea of being a father, Nathan insists, was to make his sons " 'beholden to narrow conventional people whose idea of life [they were] obliged to fulfill...The Jewish slice of the American piety—it's what we both fed on for years.' "[101] As much for his own benefit as his brother's, Nathan attempts to use the spell of words to break them both out of their place in the bourgeois family hierarchy: " 'You don't have to play the person you were cast as, not if it's what's driving you mad.' "[102] Henry, however, is determined to play at hierarchicisation, and to reach for the mantle of the now-absent father. He invokes their father's death-bed word as a weapon with which to begin the "war" with his elder brother. Henry's response to Nathan's chattering is a speech which might have come from Dr Zuckerman himself, had the doctor's deep love for his son and regard for his accomplishments despite his disappointment and their disagreements not prevented him. Standing on the tarmac once their aeroplane has landed, half-drunk and almost hysterical with anger, Henry answers the question Nathan has been asking himself by asserting: " 'He did say "Bastard", Nathan. He called you a bastard.' "[103]

Henry's tirade continues:

> 'You *are* a bastard. A heartless conscienceless bastard. What does loyalty mean to you? What does responsibility mean to you? What does self-denial mean, *restraint*—anything at all? To you everything is disposable! Everything is *ex*posable! Jewish morality, Jewish endurance, Jewish wisdom, Jewish families— everything is grist for your fun-machine...But you killed him, Nathan. With that book. *Of course* he said 'Bastard'. He'd seen it! He'd seen what you had done to him and Mother in that book!'[104]

Parricide is a unusual crime: universally desired, according to psychoanalytic theory as derived from Freud, but rarely achieved; even more rarely, one imagines, achieved—although possibly much more commonly attempted—through the medium of a work of fiction. For the

second time in *Zuckerman Unbound* Nathan is rendered speechless by the accusation that characters in his book have a direct relationship to characters in life. However, while it is one thing for Alvin Pepler to insist that he is the original of Gil Carnovsky, it is another for Henry to assume that Carnovsky's parents were intended as unflattering portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Zuckerman. Recalling their arguments over "Higher Education," Nathan had regarded it as "a blessing"[105] that "his father had the stroke that sent him into the nursing home"[106] before the publication of his most recent novel, so that "by the time *Carnovsky* appeared he was too far gone to read it."[107] Zuckerman had previously concluded that "he had beaten the risk. And beaten the rap."[108] Now he concludes: "He hadn't."[109] Henry tells Nathan that Essie's husband, the jovial and well-intentioned Mr Metz, has apparently read *Carnovsky* to the wheel-chair-bound Dr. Zuckerman, and, after imparting this information, winds up for the telling blow:

> 'You can't believe that what you write about people has *real consequences*. To you this is probably funny too — your readers will die laughing when they hear this one! *But dad didn't die laughing*. He died in misery. He died in the most terrible disappointment. It's one thing, God damn you, to entrust your imagination to your instincts, it's another, Nathan, to entrust *your own family*!'[110]

Henry berates Nathan and the " 'hijinks' "[111] contained in his " ' "liberating" book!' "[112] before expressing extreme disapproval of Nathan's death-bed manner, and his account of the origin of the universe to the dying man:

> 'When all he was waiting to hear was "I love you!" "Dad, I love you"— that was all that was required! Oh, you miserable bastard, don't you tell me about fathers and sons! I *have* a son! I know what it is to love a son, and you don't, you selfish bastard, and you never will!'[113]

This accusation strikes at the heart of Nathan's dilemma, as a comment from earlier in the novel assumes a new relevance: amongst the accounts of the buyers of his work who have accosted Nathan as he goes about his daily affairs is the story of a man who approaches Nathan and, "in heavily accented English—Zuckerman's grandfather's English— told him how sorry he felt for his parents. 'You didn't put in your whole life,' he said sadly. 'There's much more to life than that. But you just leave it out. To get even.' "[114] It may be too much to read the shade of Victor Zuckerman's own Yiddish-speaking father into the text, but the combination of criticisms

makes clear the extent to which wife-less, son-less, father-less Nathan Zuckerman, as a result of his pursuit of fictional lives, is denied fulfilment in his own. Repudiating distant accommodation with the first hierarchical structure of his life, he declines to force a close accommodation on the life of a single "real" human being—wife, father, brother, child—yet allows himself to be, perhaps as part of the same impulse, at the mercy of memories of real but past events and the lives of present but fictional people. Thus Nathan has no true life of his own, has never settled the business of accommodation with his father, and, by the end of *Zuckerman Unbound*, has come to believe he is condemned by patriarchs and patriarchal authority, and regarded as an outcast by the members of what is left of the family's structure.

Later, in a hired limousine, Nathan visits his old Newark haunts, the scene of family life and the domestic rounds and dramas of memory. Feeling without structure, without connections, and without family, Nathan responds to the past which has dogged him for so long in a manner perhaps predictable. It is,

> 'Over,' he thought. All his lyrical feeling for the neighbourhood had gone into *Carnovsky*. It had to —there was no other place for it. 'Over. Over. Over. Over. Over. I've served my time...You are no longer any man's son, you are no longer some good woman's husband, you are no longer your brother's brother, and you don't come from anywhere anymore, either.'[115]

The only question that remains to be answered then, is just where Nathan Zuckerman intends to go from here, and just what he is to make of his new-found freedom. The answer, which does not surprise anyone who has been following Nathan's adventures, is that he will use his freedom to further fuel both the turmoil of his guilt and the fiction to which, eventually, he will turn again in his apparently endless endeavour to understand the past and atone for its mistakes.

*Notes:*

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[1] Philip Roth, *Zuckerman Unbound, Zuckerman Bound* (London: Penguin, 1989) 133.
[2] Roth *ZU* 245.
[3] Roth *ZU* 164.
[4] Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer, Zuckerman Bound* (London: Penguin, 1989) 87.
[5] Roth, *GW* 41.
[6] Roth, *GW* 22.

[7] Roth *ZU* 186.
[8] Roth *ZU* 187.
[9] Roth *ZU* 187.
[10] Roth *ZU* 186.
[11] Roth *ZU* 186-7.
[12] Roth *ZU* 188.
[13] Roth *ZU* 188.
[14] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, trans. Stephen Crites (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) 90.
[15] Roth *ZU* 198.
[16] Roth *ZU* 196.
[17] Roth *ZU* 196.
[18] Roth *ZU* 199-200.
[19] Roth *ZU* 200.
[20] Roth *ZU* 200.
[21] Roth *ZU* 200.
[22] Roth *ZU* 200.
[23] Roth *ZU* 205.
[24] Roth *ZU* 205.
[25] Roth *ZU* 205.
[26] Roth *ZU* 205.
[27] Roth *ZU* 205.
[28] Roth *ZU* 186.
[29] Roth *ZU* 144.
[30] Roth *ZU* 141.
[31] Roth *ZU* 142.
[32] Roth *ZU* 141
[33] Roth *ZU* 162.
[34] Roth *ZU* 162.
[35] Roth *ZU* 144-5.
[36] Roth *ZU* 155.
[37] Roth *ZU* 159.
[38] Roth *ZU* 145.
[39] Roth *ZU* 146.
[40] Roth *ZU* 158.
[41] Roth *ZU* 158.
[42] Roth *ZU* 160.
[43] Roth *ZU* 231-2.
[44] Roth *ZU* 208.
[45] Roth *ZU* 211.
[46] Roth *ZU* 231.
[47] Roth *ZU* 239.
[48] Roth *ZU* 241.
[49] Roth *ZU* 243.
[50] Roth *ZU* 243.
[51] Roth *ZU* 243.
[52] Roth *ZU* 243.
[53] Roth *ZU* 245.
[54] Roth *ZU* 245.
[55] Roth *ZU* 245.
[56] See, for example, Sandra Gilbert and Sandra Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979).
[57] Roth *ZU* 257.
[58] Roth *ZU* 257.
[59] Roth *ZU* 258.
[60] Roth *ZU* 264.
[61] Roth *ZU* 264.

[62] Roth *ZU* 261.
[63] Roth *ZU* 261.
[64] Roth *ZU* 261.
[65] Roth *ZU* 261-2.
[66] Roth, *GW* 53.
[67] Roth, *GW* 53.
[68] Roth *ZU* 268.
[69] Roth *ZU* 266.
[70] Roth *ZU* 266.
[71] Roth *ZU* 266.
[72] Roth *ZU* 265.
[73] Roth *ZU* 269.
[74] Roth *ZU* 269.
[75] Roth *ZU* 269.
[76] Roth *ZU* 269.
[77] Roth *ZU* 269.
[78] Roth *ZU* 269-70.
[79] Roth *ZU* 270.
[80] Roth *ZU* 270.
[81] Roth *ZU* 261.
[82] Roth *ZU* 266.
[83] Roth *ZU* 274.
[84] Roth *ZU* 270.
[85] Roth *ZU* 274.
[86] Roth *ZU* 274.
[87] See Sigmund Freud, "Moses and Monotheism," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 23, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth P; Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1964) 7-137.
[88] Martin Birnbach, *Neo-Freudian Social Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1961) 22-3.
[89] Roth *ZU* 273.
[90] Roth *ZU* 273.
[91] Roth *ZU* 273.
[92] Roth *ZU* 273.
[93] Roth *ZU* 281.
[94] Roth *ZU* 274.
[95] Roth *ZU* 274.
[96] Roth *ZU* 274.
[97] Roth *ZU* 274.
[98] Roth *ZU* 275.
[99] Roth *ZU* 275.
[100] Roth *ZU* 284.
[101] Roth *ZU* 284.
[102] Roth *ZU* 284.
[103] Roth *ZU* 287.
[104] Roth *ZU* 287.
[105] Roth *ZU* 287.
[106] Roth *ZU* 287.
[107] Roth *ZU* 287.
[108] Roth *ZU* 287.
[109] Roth *ZU* 287.
[110] Roth *ZU* 288.
[111] Roth *ZU* 288.
[112] Roth *ZU* 288.
[113] Roth *ZU* 288.
[114] Roth *ZU* 139.
[115] Roth *ZU* 291-2.

# THE '60s MAN: Hierarchical Structures and the Articulation of Male Experience in Selected Novels of Norman Mailer, Ken Kesey and Philip Roth.

## Part Three: "My Father's Face": Philip Roth's *Zuckerman Bound.*

### Chapter Ten: *The Anatomy Lesson*: "Wrecked by the Wrathful Cells."

*"They all agreed with the psychoanalyst that the pain was self-inflicted: penance for the popularity of* Carnovsky, *come-uppance for the financial bonanza — the enviable, comfortable American success story wrecked by the wrathful cells." Philip Roth* The Anatomy Lesson.

*The Anatomy Lesson* provides a postscript to the 1960s. Set in 1973, the ramifications and after-effects of the earlier decade are marked in the novel in various ways. A kind of commentary on the waning of the 1960s is provided and, in a sense, summarised in the events which occur in Zuckerman's life. For example, Zuckerman has been changed by a "sexual revolution" (*Carnovsky*) which in the 1970s transmogrifies into a tawdry kind of promiscuity; "turning on" with mind expanding substances for pleasure or illumination in the 1960s accelerates, in the 1970s, to hard drug use as anodyne to pain, physical and psychic; the spectre of physical and intellectual decay, overdose and addiction tempers the 1960s enthusiasm for hedonism. *The Anatomy Lesson* demonstrates a 1960s adage—"you never know how much is enough until you've had too much."

If the main focus of the first two novels which concern themselves with Nathan Zuckerman's biography is Nathan's turbulent relationship with his father, Victor Zuckerman, the third novel in the series, *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) focuses on an only marginally less influential relationship in his life, the accommodation which preceded his engagement with his father and which, in the Oedipal equation, precipitated the aggravation between them: that is, Nathan's relationship with his mother.

The events of *The Anatomy Lesson* are precipitated by the deaths, a year apart in 1969 and 1970, of Nathan's parents. Nathan lingers on the details as if both events were more recent The shades of Zuckerman's mother and father inhabit the novel, as omni-present as the photograph Zuckerman keeps in the study where he works of his "dead parents as newlyweds in his grandparents' backyard."[1]

In *The Anatomy Lesson* Nathan explores his response to his mother's death in a series of frank, tender observations. The opening sentence of the novel: "When he is sick, every man wants his mother; if she's not around, other women must do,"[2] prepares the reader for the admission which occurs near the end of the novel, as the novelist "finally realised that his mother had been his only love...now that she was gone...[she was]...more present than she'd been in thirty years...the most passionate bond of a lifetime."[3] As a result of the demise of his antagonist father and uncritical mother, Zuckerman realises that the most important hierarchical structure with which he has ever been involved, the Zuckerman family, has been completely disassembled by death. This structure still exists in Nathan's memories, and its weight and its imperatives form his life in many ways.

*The Anatomy Lesson* powerfully invokes the primal, Oedipal drama involving father, mother and child, and the way in which the details of this "power struggle" re-enact themselves throughout an individual's life, serving as the model for all other relationships. However, Nathan's habit of defining himself in the present in terms of his accommodations with that structure in the past—as son, against father; and as writer, in opposition to that structure's normative bourgeois Jewish-American values—is no longer of particular use to him in life, no matter how helpful he still finds it in creating his fiction. The accommodations between Dr. and Mrs. Zuckerman and their eldest son are concluded, and nothing can be added to the record of those accommodations, except in their fictional recreation by Nathan. Over the course of *The Anatomy Lesson* the awareness of mutability his parents' deaths sparks in him causes Nathan to reflect on: youthful aspirations and influences; premature disillusionment; sexual and emotional anxiety; the ties of family, present, past and proposed; the stresses of living and finding meaning in urban society; and, lastly without being least, the inevitability of physical decay and the death of immediate family and, ultimately, of self.

After the death of his father one might have expected a long-delayed resolution of Nathan's Oedipal conflict, and to have seen the writer propelled toward full psychological maturity with increasing confidence. However, the opposite is true, and Nathan becomes more, rather than less, infantile in his adjustment to the world and the people around him. Instead of appropriating the drive of Victor Zuckerman, Nathan seems increasingly to suffer from a kind of spiritual ennui; it is as if his father's dying words are a curse, and his drunken celebration with Henry a ritual backfired, with the energy released rebounding with devastating effect on the unsuccessful perpetrators. In *The Anatomy Lesson* the final act in the

family drama, at least as far as Nathan's relationships with his parents is concerned, is over, and while the deaths of one's parents are important events in any person's life, for a man of Nathan's temperament, employment, and emotional and psychological preoccupations, they are of monumental significance. They force the final, unsought, "rite of passage" in his movement away from Newark and the family, although the bournes of memory which now constrain Nathan Zuckerman prove to be even more suffocating than the physical presence of his parents ever was. " 'The death of my folks was strong medicine,' " he will tell a friend in *The Anatomy Lesson*. " 'I'd been rehearsing it for years in my fiction, but I still never got the idea.' "[4]

As in *The Ghost Writer* and *Zuckerman Unbound*, Roth in *The Anatomy Lesson* employs a model in which an event of major psychological importance in Nathan's life is depicted, and paired with, minor events or sub-plots which humorously or ironically provide comment on that main event. In *The Anatomy Lesson* the stress caused by the death of Nathan's parents, and his suspicion that his injudicious employment of family history hastened those events, becomes physically manifest in Nathan's body in a pain which cripples his shoulder and which prevents him from writing. This disability accompanies the disturbance known as "writer's block," either causing, explaining, or contributing to it. In *The Anatomy Lesson* Nathan engages in a frenzied search first for relief—in the form of escalating resort to alcohol, drugs and sex—and then for a cure for his afflictions. He finally embraces the extreme of deciding to enrol in medical school so that he will never again be required to "give himself over to doctors who weren't interested enough or patient enough or simply curious enough to see a puzzle like his through."[5] Nathan's resolution results in a journey at the end of *The Anatomy Lesson* which is even more comical than his pilgrimage to E. I. Lonoff's house in *The Ghost Writer*. The novel concludes with Nathan's nostalgic "escape" to Chicago, where he intends to pursue his studies, ending in confusion and violence when Zuckerman, visiting a cemetery in a drink- and drug- fuelled stupor, attempts to strangle a friend's father, falls over a tombstone and nearly breaks his jaw. Zuckerman is finally confined to hospital for minor surgery and detoxification, where he engages in overdue contemplation of both his disease and his folly, and the mental and spiritual agitation which lies behind them both.

As *The Anatomy Lesson* begins, encased in "an orthopedic collar, a spongy lozenge in a white ribbed sleeve that he fastened around his neck to

keep the cervical vertebrae aligned"[6] Nathan Zuckerman seeks respite from a chronic pain from which he has suffered for the previous eighteenth months by relying on what is "commonly believed to be a function of great literature,"[7] to whit, providing an "antidote to suffering through depiction of our common fate."[8] Zuckerman is reading George Herbert's poem "The Collar" (from which the first chapter of *The Anatomy Lesson* takes its title), "hoping to find something there to help him wear his own."[9]

Herbert ends his poem with the lines:

> But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wilde
> At every word
> Me thought I heard one calling, *Childe*:
> And I reply'd, *My Lord*. [10]

One notes, in terms of the paradigmatic parent-child hierarchical interaction that dominates human accommodations, unaccommodated and unaccommodating Nathan is historically recalcitrant when it comes to responding obediently to the calls of "His Lord," whether it be the Father in Heaven Herbert intends, Nathan's father in the biological sense, or any of the substitute male authority figures that have populated his life. In addition, while the Renaissance poet also makes do with a metaphorical collar for his image of restraint (which in the poem, further highlighting its ironic employment here, carries both the sense of constraining and of temperance) and also perhaps intends a play on the word "choler," or temper, in *The Anatomy Lesson* Nathan's creator burdens him with a real collar—perhaps a yoke of penance—and allows him to work himself into an entirely uncharacteristic choler and an orgy of self-indulgence as he tries to deal with the pain which he suffers but which he acknowledges is a slight "cross" in comparison to others which he might be forced to carry under other circumstances.

In the three years since the "deathbed rebuke"[11] his father delivers after the publication of the controversial *Carnovsky* the formerly diligent, professional novelist has written "not a page worth keeping."[12] Eventually Zuckerman is "removed from command"[13] of his body by the main circumstance which drives the action of *The Anatomy Lesson*, and which sees Nathan Zuckerman finding himself drowning in agony and self-pity during what one (that one being Nathan) might reasonably expect to be a most satisfying and productive part of his life. With fame and financial success his as the rewards of a best-selling novel, the writer has found himself twisted out of shape, physically and psychologically, by a severe upper back and neck disorder characterised by a "hot line of pain that ran

from behind his right ear into his neck, then branched downward beneath the scapula like a menorah held bottom side up."[14] The symbolic appropriateness of "an inverted menorah" appearing on the body of the apostate Jew, Nathan Zuckerman, torturing, bewildering, and provoking him to greater heights of convoluted self-analysis than anything even he has achieved before, is more amusing, and more subtle, than if one of his religiously observant critics had assaulted him with a real menorah. Nathan has, since his youth, ignored the claims of the Jewish faith, and denied the claims of Jewish culture; he remains, however, both as man and as artist, aware of his Jewish "roots", and he continues to play the *epicoros*, perpetually and publicly in revolt against the Jewish father, whether his own or the God of his culture and his people, and the mores of that culture and that people. For Nathan, of course, his affliction is a tragedy; it prevents him from carrying out his normal routine of study and writing, but for the reader Nathan's agony and his reaction to it are the source of much amusement as irony is heaped on irony in Roth's depiction of the ramifications of the curse which falls on the fallen son of Judaism.

In the early part of *The Anatomy Lesson* Zuckerman's search for help from medical sources both orthodox and unorthodox is related; Zuckerman has, in the period before the commencement of the novel, consulted "three orthopedists, two neurologists, a physiotherapist, a rheumatologist, a radiologist, an osteopath, a vitamin doctor, an acupuncturist, and [an] analyst"[15] about his problem, and been persuaded to be a trial patient for an experimental "electronic pain suppressor."[16] After "a Mount Sinai orthopedist had ascribed his troubles to twenty years of hammering away at a manual portable,"[17] Zuckerman, having tried and abandoned the torture of writing long-hand, dutifully takes to the brief periods he can stand working at an electric machine. The relief this provides is temporary, however, and eventually the only "work" with which Nathan can occupy himself is reading from a prone position on a child's plastic playmat on the floor wearing "a pair of prism glasses...designed for the bedridden by a downtown optical firm to which he'd been referred by his physiotherapist."[18]

For all his exertions Nathan can find no relief from his agony, and a slow slide into the employment of increasing amounts of questionable medications and self-prescribed physiotherapy of dubious benefit ensues. As Zuckerman's initial hope of a rapid cure through treatment fails, and he realises he must learn to live, at least in the short term, with his discomfort, on the advice of his rheumatologist who tells him that "distraction,

pursued by the patient with real persistence, could reduce even the worst pain to tolerable levels,"[19] Nathan diligently takes on multiple sexual dalliances as the best kind of "distraction." Zuckerman finds himself with "a 'harem of Florence Nightingales' "[20]: a Polish emigré named Jaga; Diana Rutherford, a student who works as his amanuensis; Gloria Galanter, the wife of his accountant Marvin; and "robust, lonely, blunt"[21] Jenny, the resident of "a wooded mountainside...village up the Hudson called Bearsville"[22] whom Zuckerman meets through unnamed and previously unsuspected close friends. Each of the members of his seraglio offers the same kind of "distraction" to the ailing writer; the women work in shifts to minister to Zuckerman's needs, and, as they arrive in turn, "[t]hey told him their troubles and took off their clothes and lowered the orifices for Zuckerman to fill."[23] The author, enjoying the most transparent of male fantasies, believes he is "theirs to do with as they wished,"[24] and he describes feeling "like their whore, paying in sex for someone to bring him the milk and the paper."[25] Nathan surrenders to the sensual temptation of his manipulation of others, finding himself easily able to rationalise his self-indulgence and his emotional irresponsibility. Zuckerman exploits the inversion of power-relationships on a physical level to the hilt, although he is not in a position to enjoy his power—which paradoxically bring him more sexual activity than he has known for some time—to the full; his pain and powerlessness cause him to feel vulnerable and marginalised as never before in his life. As he did the first time he felt the security of the family hierarchy shake (in *The Ghost Writer*) he builds a "temporary" replacement family; yet he retreats again into fictional accommodations rather than make one of these temporary alliances permanent.

Nathan has complained of psychic pain often enough. In *The Anatomy Lesson* we learn that he does not deal with somatic pain at all well. Under the dramatic—often melodramatic—circumstances, Zuckerman over-intellectualises his problem, and finds in it excuses to justify deeds which exceed in bald carnality anything even Gil Carnovsky might have imagined. However, his "diversions" eventually fail to provide satisfactory relief, and Zuckerman begins to resort to the wholesale ingestion of mind- and body-altering drugs, legal and illegal. Although prescribed "twelve aspirins per day,"[26] Butazolidin, Robaxin, Percodan, Valium, and Prednisone, Nathan augments this pharmacopoeia with cannabis, and with vodka—"as tens of millions of Russians have known for hundreds of years...the best pain suppressor of all"[27]—but finds them each, in turn, only a temporary palliative. To Zuckerman it is tantamount to a surrender to chaos, as with

horror he notes the diminution of control brought about by his suffering. He feels the life and the self he has so carefully constructed being eroded and destroyed as he observes "(s)elf-regulating Zuckerman emptying another fifth, self-controlled Zuckerman sucking the last of a roach, self-sufficient Zuckerman helplessly clinging to his harem."[28] "He'd never had so many women at one time, or so many doctors,"[29] concludes the account of the origin and development of the trouble surrounding Nathan's upper back pain, "or drunk so much vodka, or done so little work, or known despair of such wild proportions."[30] The novelist, deprived of his mother, and without the disapproving glare of his father, loses the discipline which has made his life bearable and which kept his self-excoriating guilt in check. His inability to work sends him into a self-perpetuating cycle of childishness which amounts to a giant cry of psychic pain, as well as a none-too subtle symbolic request to be lifted from his playmat and for all his troubles to be put right. The appeal of the original Zuckerman family hierarchy continues, at least for one of its members.

The next blow to the stability of Nathan's world comes from a quarter that does not even allow for the possibility of cure; indeed, it rings a permanent change. If he harbours lingering hopes that he will find a cure for his back and the normal tenor of life will resume, Nathan's attention is forced afresh onto questions of mortality and aging as a result of a physical deterioration that is as permanent as it is undignified. The recalcitrance demonstrated by Zuckerman's "inverted menorah' is matched by that of hair follicles which are also in revolt, for the first signs of male pattern baldness begins to show on Nathan's previously resplendent cranium. The sight of clumps of hair coming "away by the combful as he prepared himself at the bathroom mirror"[31] is, coupled with the restrictions of movement caused by his other problems, one indignity too many for the proud Zuckerman. He might, he decides, have been able to stand being "vocationally obstructed, physically disabled, sexually mindless, intellectually inert, spiritually depressed—but not bald overnight, not that too.'[32] Nathan is not reacting abnormally when to him baldness signals middle-age, decay, and serves as a metaphor for all the potencies and powers which belong to a man and which must inevitably decline. To counter his hair loss Zuckerman begins to attend the " 'Anton Associates Trichological Clinic,' '[33] where he makes the acquaintance of the cynical, world-weary Jaga, and where he receives a diagnosis which is "the most optimistic he had heard in the last eighteen months."[34] This, however, only highlights the gravity, and the mystery, of the puzzle of Nathan's seemingly incurable shoulder. Unable to write, losing his hair,

fraught with worry, Zuckerman confronts in the mirror each morning "a skinny old man holding Nathan's pyjamas,"[35] and such is his despair that "(b)y December 1973, he'd run out of hope of finding a treatment, drug, doctor, or cure"[36] for his problems, even of "finding an honest disease"[37] to which he can point as its cause.

Zuckerman eventually concludes that, whatever its origin, he is faced by serious adversity. There remains the possibility that the pain in his back and neck, although resisting treatment thus far, may eventually respond to treatment and his life resume its normal course; Zuckerman's loss of hair is distressing, but not life- or career-threatening. More serious and more permanent is the final problem which Zuckerman acknowledges that he faces, and which the reader has by this stage become certain is related to his physical problem. Nathan Zuckerman decides that he will not, perhaps can not, write again, because he no longer has anything to write about.

As he realises at the end of *Zuckerman Unbound*, the character of Nathan's home city/suburb has radically changed, and "[n]o new Newark was going to spring up again for Zuckerman."[38] Since the death of his parents Zuckerman has become frightened that he "had lost his subject...What he'd made his fiction from was gone."[39] The structure of his family life has irrevocably altered too, and the sum total of these changes is that Nathan will "[n]ever again...feel such tender emotion and such a desire to escape. Without a father and a mother and a homeland, he was no longer a novelist. No longer a son, no longer a writer. Everything that galvanized him had been extinguished."[40] As the novel progresses he takes up his lament of loss with intense precision. "Gone. Mother, father, brother, birthplace, subject, health, hair."[41] Nathan Zuckerman's anatomy lesson reaches a peak as he comes to recognise that his physical discomfiture, his hair loss, and the death of his parents are all signs of the inexorable passage of time; his shoulder seems to be a manifestation in a single physical locus of all his guilts, ailments, and all his worries and regrets.

As a last resort the crippled Zuckerman is hospitalised for corrective work, but after eight days in traction with his "[e]very thought and feeling, ensnared by the selfness of pain"[42] Zuckerman flees his infirmary bed, "stunned by his cowardice"[43] and engaged in bitter self-recriminations. Zuckerman can only ask himself: " 'what if something really terrible were happening to you? What then?' "[44] Nathan resorts to psychoanalysis in an attempt to answer this question, and the advice of the practitioner he consults is that his ills are caused by "hysterical conversion,"[45] and that

Zuckerman is surrendering to "the appeal of illness"[46] generated by his conscience, "the ineradicable infant, the atoning penitent, the guilty pariah...the remorseful son of the dead parents, the author of *Carnovsky*."[47] No matter how much this idea appeals to the reader, Zuckerman is not disposed to accept the suggestion that what he is experiencing can be dismissed as " '[e]xpiation through suffering' "[48] and that his pain is a self-inflicted " 'judgement on [him]self and that book.' "[49] Nathan is distressed to find that his roster of nurses all "agreed with the psychoanalyst that the pain was self-inflicted: penance for the popularity of *Carnovsky*, come-uppance for the financial bonanza—the enviable, comfortable American success story wrecked by the wrathful cells."[50] Although psychoanalysis loses a patient, Nathan becomes etymologically focussed by the concept that he might be "paying" for his best-seller status, and that a repressed, guilty survivor of the good Jewish boy within, the aspect of Nathan Zuckerman he has tried so energetically to exterminate, might be responsible for his current straits. He takes " 'pain' back to its root in *poena*, the Latin word for punishment,"[51] and grudgingly concludes the possibility —remote— that levied on him is "poena for the family portrait the whole country had assumed to be his, for the tastelessness that had affronted millions and the shamelessness that had enraged his tribe...the punishment called forth by his crime: mutilation as primitive justice."[52] Zuckerman begins to consider that this might be the truth, and that he might be completely at the mercy of his deepest conditioning: "Unconsciously...frightened of everything...frightened of success and frightened of failure...frightened, after *Carnovsky*, of himself and his instincts, and frightened of being frightened...Unconsciously suppressing his talent for fear of what it'd do next."[53] His moment of terror and panic subsides, however, and Zuckerman decides of the proposition that his pain is psychosomatic that he

> wasn't buying it. His unconscious wasn't that unconscious. Wasn't that conventional. His unconscious, living with a published writer since 1953, understood what the job entailed...he could never had come this far without it. If anything, it was tougher and smarter than he was...If the Morse code of the psyche was indeed being tapped out along the wires of physical pain, the message had to be more original than 'Don't ever write that stuff again.'[54]

Having dispensed with the medical viewpoint and with a psycho-analytical rationalisation, Zuckerman settles on what can only be described as the mystical hypothesis. Physically prevented from writing and forced to

find another explanation for his incapacity, Zuckerman begins to wonder if his infirmities are not a sign, a "message flashing forth from a buried Nathan along the fibres of his nerves."[55] Nathan wonders if "pain had come, then, not to cut him down to size like Herbert's 'Lord', or to teach him civility like Tom Sawyer's Aunt Polly, or to make him into a Jew like Job, but to rescue Zuckerman from the wrong calling."[56] Nathan becomes entranced by the idea that the purpose behind his body's rebellion is not self-punishment for his exposure of family secrets, and falsification of Jewish-American life and betrayal of Jewish solidarity, but simply against the rigour of the code of the artist he has learned and adopted from E. I. Lonoff, and the "collar" of endless self-discipline and self-abnegation it entails. He begins to question his vocation with anguished intensity. Slowly, reluctantly, he wonders if his subconscious, at some level of his being, is offering him "a way out of what he should never have gotten into? The right to be stupid. The right to be lazy. The right to be no one and nothing,"[57] and an end to "relentless doubt-ridden concentration."[58] He wonders if he dares "capitulate to qwertyuiop, asdfghjkl, and zxcvbnm, to let those three words say it all,"[59] and "[t]o leave what is given untransformed."[60]

It has always galled Nathan that his public thinks that he enjoys the hedonistic lifestyle of some of his characters. The thought that his pain may be his long- and hard- worked body's idea "to bring Nathan purposeless pleasure...to debauch him...[with the intellectual sin of light amusement, of senselessness self-induced,"[61] has a certain poetic justice to it; Nathan could become Carnovsky, as many have asserted to be already the case, and as Nathan himself is forced to acknowledge is not so far from the mark given his current predilections. Yet if "the psyche's enjoinder,"[62] is really to laziness and sloth, the sloughing off of responsibility, he is soon forced to wonder, "to what end?"[63] Nathan first postulates that it might be "[t]o *no* end...To escape completely the clutches of self-justification? To learn to lead a wholly indefensible, unjustified life -- and to learn to like it?" and then concludes that "if that is the future that my pain has in mind, then this is going to be the character test to top them all."[64]

While he may, however, be willing to accept the first part of this alternative way of accounting for his twisted spine, (that he has entered "the wrong calling") he will not accept the second, (that he should be "lazy" and "lead a wholly indefensible, unjustified life"). The man who learned about sacrifice and hard work at the knee of Victor Zuckerman, and dedication and self-abnegation at the feet of E. I. Lonoff, takes up the challenge of "the character test to top them all." Self-indulgence is hardly likely to appeal to

the guilt- and anxiety-ridden son of Victor and Selma, and acolyte of Lonoff, for long, and Nathan swiftly turns to pondering his next, pain-constricted move.

His secretary, Diana Rutherford, suggests what seems obvious: "There's only one thing for you to do and that's *to get on with it*. WRITE ANOTHER BOOK."[65] "You cannot make yourself a life of misery," she tells him, "out of a book that just happened to have been a roaring success."[66] Headstrong, creative Nathan settles on an even more self-appealing, and certainly more complicated, option. When she makes her remark Diana is at Nathan's apartment typing for him "the longest sustained piece of prose he'd composed sitting upright in over a year,"[67] a deeply subjective and emotional response to a biting piece of criticism from a Jewish commentator named Milton Appel. Following *Carnovsky*, Appel, who received Nathan's early work most warmly, has turned into a harsh critic; recently he has proposed, in the pages of an influential magazine called *Inquiry*, the idea that Nathan's talent, never very great, has disappeared altogether.[68] Coinciding with Nathan's physical reverses, and the feeling that he has been robbed of the subjects and themes which illuminated his fictions, Appel's words fester. Zuckerman attacks the critique with vigour, and Diana and Nathan argue over his retort, which she claims is petty and ill-considered: " 'You're a man of forty and you're flailing out like a schoolboy who's been made to stand in the corner,' "[69] she tells him. Tired of living up to the expectations of others, particularly those of the self-righteous man he characterises as " 'the good, the best, the most responsible Jewish son of them all,' "[70] —by which he means Appel, but by which he might well as have meant the ideal image of "son" implanted by all parents in the heads of all sons, particularly his own— Zuckerman suddenly, and without indicating that he has given the matter a great deal of forethought, in the middle of the dispute announces his plan to renounce writing, enter medical school, and become an obstetrician.

Zuckerman claims to have been " 'thinking about this for a long time,' "[71] because he sees it as a way to be free of the "imprisonment"[72] of his craft. "From morning to night" he crows, in defence of his choice of career change, doctors are "bombarded by stories, and none of their own devising."[73] "No words,"[74] he states with resolve. When shortly thereafter Zuckerman receives the forms to apply for medical school he remains convicted, and the reader, and Zuckerman's well-wishers in the novel, are astonished to learn that he has come to regard as inspired his recent decision to apply to become a medical student, and that he intends indeed to pursue

medical studies despite the considerable obstacles which stand in his way. After "[f]our decades, four novels, two dead parents, and a brother I'll never speak to again,"[75] he considers that his "exorcism's done. Why *not* this as a second life?"[76] For the reader, it seems that Zuckerman has, as even he concedes at one point, in his desire to become a doctor, entered "that stage of chronic ailing known as the Hysterical Search for the Miraculous Cure."[77] Elsewhere Nathan's "good boy" conscience appears to be once more at the heart of his motivation when he acknowledges that he is dedicating his medical career: "In memory of the mother to whom he intended no harm. In the name of ex-wives who had done their damnedest. For his ministering harem. Where I have fornicated, there shall I diagnose, prescribe, operate, and cure. Up with colposcopy, down with Carnovsky."[78] Nathan apparently sees in his decision a way "to escape not only the never-ending retrospection but all the quarrels he'd provoked"[79] with his "fictionalised recall" of Newark, the Jewish family and the private life of the Zuckermans. Zuckerman plans to enact "[a]fter the popular triumph of his devilish act of aggression, the penitential act of submission. Now that his parents were gone he could go ahead and make them happy: from filial outcast to Jewish internist, concluding the quarrel and the scandal."[80] A more logical explanation might be that through this bizarre lifestyle non sequitur Nathan has found a way to side-step the creative dilemma of writing his next novel (how does one follow a best-seller?) and in addition thereby resolving the tension between his creative self, the image he has of Nathan Zuckerman, writer, ("secular," "American," "bad," "adult," Nathan) and the image of self arising from his close accommodation with the patriarchal family hierarchy ("good," "Jewish," "son," Nathan). Becoming a doctor and delivering children instead of a new book provides a novel solution, and one which will enable him to meet the imperatives of the first "self" at the same time as he meets the imperatives of the second "self." "Your next work of art — *you*,"[81] he exults.

Nathan applies for entry to the faculty of medicine at Chicago University, and several weeks later takes off for that city to reconnoitre. As a youth Nathan pursued his tertiary studies in Chicago, and the suspicion that it may be those carefree days that he is attempting to recapture looms large for the reader. However, while once Nathan took similar flights armed only with "a pen and a pad and a book to read,"[82] now he requires "hormone drops, the pink No. 7 dressing, a jar of Anton's specially prepared conditioner, and a bottle of his shampoo"[83] for his hair, and, for his back (and perhaps for a growing case of chemical dependency),

> the electronic suppressor, three brands of pills, a sealed new spray-cap bottle of ethyl chloride, his large ice bag, two electric heating pads...the eleven joints left in the refrigerator, and a monogrammed Tiffany's silver flask...that he filled to the lip with hundred-proof Russian vodka.[84]

Although upon arrival Zuckerman is seized by doubts that "[g]*oing to medical school is nuts, a sick man's delusion about healing himself,*"[85] he perseveres, patently unwilling to give in to the unanimous suggestion of those in whom he confides his dream that it is immature, escapist, and the function of his physical and/or psychological condition.

On the ground in Chicago, putting the lie to Appel's criticism that his talent has atrophied, Zuckerman engages in a frenzied, bizarre bout of creativity which is as absurd as anything elsewhere in Roth's history of Nathan Zuckerman. Nathan's revenge on Milton Appel is achieved when he pretends to the driver of the limousine he hires that Milton Appel is his name, in which persona he is the proprietor of a "swinging" club called "Milton's Millenia,"[86] a venue for couples to swap partners and practice mutual consensual sex, and the owner/publisher of a pornographic magazine called *Lickety Split*. This "Appel" has views which epitomise the libertine attitudes of the 1960s, and are the absolute antithesis of the conservative opinions one imagines the real Appel (not to mention the Zuckerman with whom the reader has become acquainted in previous books) holds.

Amused by his own inventiveness, excited at the prospect of a new career, and buoyed by chemicals, Nathan seems a changed man from the person described by one of his carers as a man who was "always finding new ways to be unhappy and didn't know how to enjoy himself unless he was suffering."[87] Nathan feels "defiant, resolute, fearless, instead of tentative, doubt-ridden, and perpetually dismayed,"[88] as befits a best-selling author, "a man grossing several million a year,"[89] and one who needs to be "*protected*...against the envy of rivals"[90] and critics.

Zuckerman revisits old haunts in Chicago; just as he has visited Newark at the end of *Zuckerman Unbound* he now re-enacts old adventures and first awakenings, remembering the sense of liberation he felt when there were "[e]ight hundred miles between him and home: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana—the best friends a boy ever had."[91] Nathan recalls with pleasure that simpler and more innocent time, when, on arriving in the Windy City he "felt as though he'd come out from the East by covered wagon,"[92] and

when the move away from the gravitational pull of his Jewishness and the mere geographical remove from the claustrophobic claims of the Zuckerman family could transform his life and his outlook: "He became large, hearty American six-footer and a contemptuous bohemian all at once."[93] Zuckerman's account of the freedom and growth toward which he has moved decades previously only reinforces for the reader how, as his life has progressed, Newark and family find a way to maintain their hold on Nathan Zuckerman no matter where he wanders. Breaking the distant accommodation of family and early childhood conditioning becomes a feat which geographical distance does not, in fact, accomplish. Nathan always has Newark, and Dr. and Mrs. Zuckerman, with him; and he has constantly invoked them and reinforced their hold on him in his fiction, through the pendulum swings between "Rebellion, obedience—discipline, explosion—injunction, resistance—accusation, denial—defiance, shame."[94] Hierarchy is inevitable, and, in the absence of any new claims on him, the claims of the old hierarchy and his old place remain compelling.

Nathan dares, by an act of will by re-enrolling in university, to attempt again the years in which he leaves home and family, perhaps to resolve, or even to solve, the primal score. Nathan arranges an interview with his old university friend, Bobby Freytag a doctor, in the hope of learning more about the profession he intends to adopt. Bobby informs Nathan that from his perspective Zuckerman seems to have an extremely unrealistic view of the proposed undertaking. Besides the difficulty of assaying the academic prerequisites, the practice of medicine is, Bobby tells Nathan, more arduous and unrewarding than Nathan can possible imagine. Freytag implies that the ill and unhealthy looking man before him seems, even after the briefest of conversations, to be himself in need of a doctor's services, and to have personal problems that becoming a physician might obscure, if not exacerbate. Zuckerman also learns during his conversation with Bobby that family problems are not a Zuckerman monopoly; in fact, Freytag's domestic difficulties revolve around the same power struggles as those within the Zuckerman clan. Freytag is separated from his wife, and he has an adopted son who is contemptuous of him, disrespectful and recalcitrant. The war between the generations which had operated in the 1950s when Zuckerman was a teenager, and which had reached a peak in the 1960s when the term "generation gap" came to prominence, shows no sign of abating in the 1970s. The reader is not blind to the eternal nature of the struggle for authority and validation which occurs between fathers and sons, and between men and women, and which are at least a part of most if not all human interactions.

The real ending of *The Anatomy Lesson* occurs as Nathan gains a perspective on his pain through hearing of the tragedy of others—like Freytag, whose wife has deserted him, and Freytag's father, whose wife of many years has recently died—and when the discomfort in his shoulder is sharply contextualised by a fall which moves his attention to another part of his body after he fractures his jawbone. Nathan is taking Bobby's father to visit his wife's grave when he finally spins out of control, and too much vodka, too many opiate pills, and enormous stress cause Zuckerman to temporarily lose his grip on sanity. He sees in the old man at his side all the Jewish fathers who throughout history have repressed all the Jewish sons, and he decides to strangle the aged male in a ritual effort to end once and for all the terrible cycle.

If, at the end of the novel, nothing is resolved, by the conclusion of *The Anatomy Lesson* metaphor and life-event will fuse, as they so often do in Nathan Zuckerman's life when, hospitalised after his drug-and-alcohol assisted collision with a grave marker after his attack on Freytag's father, the novelist will conclude

> Chasing that old man around those tombstones, Mr Zuckerman, is the dumbest thing you have ever done. You have opened the wrong windows, closed the wrong doors, you have granted jurisdiction over your conscience to the wrong court; you have been in hiding half your life and a son far too long.[95]

The cycle of patriarchs is complete as a "dead father" finally shuts Nathan up, an Isaac slapped down for complaining about Abraham. Both the dissatisfied sons of that son, in turn, have been seen mirrored in Nathan and Henry, and only Job or Solomon have been absent from Nathan's patriarchal pantheon. In sober rather than mature mood, Zuckerman sees a serious side to the life of a medical practitioner, but seems little dismayed; anything, it appears, is more satisfying to Nathan than continuing the self-suffocating life of a novelist and compulsive fictionaliser. *The Anatomy Lesson* ends with another pun on the intimate and intricate connections between art, identity, history, Nathan's work and his physical state which have been nurtured by Roth throughout the Zuckerman series, and particularly in this work, as Nathan (not terribly convincingly, in light of his past record) wanders the corridors of a Chicago hospital, "on his own by day, then...with the interns at night, as though he still believed that he could unchain himself from a future as a man apart and escape the corpus that was his."[96]

The point Roth is making seems to be that such an effort is beyond Zuckerman—and beyond all men. Zuckerman cannot be a man apart just because he wishes to be. Nathan, like every Jew, like every American, like every man, like every human, must learn to make and accept the distant accommodation with life's realities. One is rich, or poor, talented, or not, a son, or a daughter, and the subject to laws of time, fate and God. Nathan must live with the violence and randomness of life, and the violence and randomness in his own soul; he has to learn to live with the variety of the roles he is called to play, and the conflicting claims of past and present on him. Finally, through overcoming his penchant for "mythomania"[97] he learns that life is in no sense obliged to mimic the controlled, contrived and meaningful world of art. Meaning, coherence, fulfilment: these are not promised. Everything is not connected to, not a symbol, for everything else. The story-teller is not in the story, nor is the story the "whole" of anything. Rising action, climax, denouement, conclusion: these depend on the actions of the "character" and not on some predetermined narrative plan. Nathan must, in the simplest terms, learn to live with who he is, who he was, and with the realities of the life which made and then unmade the accommodations of the past.

Nathan must also take responsibility for changing his agendas and his accommodations with the hierarchies of his past. There must be a future, and neither Selma nor Victor Zuckerman can be held responsible for it. Nathan must either find the structures that will make his current life meaningful (like Kesey's Lee Stamper) or he must force a close accommodation on the structures around him, accepting that he might fail in the attempt (like Mailer's Stephen Rojack). Either way, fiction and theory will not be as important as personal behaviour and individual acceptance of individual moral choices. For the writer to become vital again he must live, must accommodate, must compromise, must give, and not just record. The past imbues the present with meaning, but Nathan, finally, learns that the responsibility and the task of making the future are his and his alone. It is his compulsion, as well as his living, to turn fiction into fact, but it is his mistake when he allows the equation to begin working the other way around. The self-examined life reduced to a life of self-examination is not worth living.

In allowing his marital relationships to founder and in his failure to produce children Nathan has wasted the time granted him to forge permanent accommodations to replace those of his first family, and to take his place at (or near) the head of a hierarchy of his own. Nathan's physical

distress, his "anatomy lesson," may be nothing more than the tone of an "alarm" being sounded by his biological imperatives urging him to activity before too many more years pass. Certainly, like so many traumatic events in Zuckerman's life, the crisis of the "inverted menorah" passes, and the reader is favoured with little conclusive from Zuckerman about cause, effect, and consequences. Through Roth, he retreats instead into silence.

*Notes:*

[1] Philip Roth, *The Anatomy Lesson, Zuckerman Bound* (London: Penguin, 1989) 301.
[2] Roth, *AL* 297.
[3] Roth, *AL* 467.
[4] Roth, *AL* 441.
[5] Roth, *AL* 374.
[6] Roth, *AL* 297.
[7] Roth, *AL* 298.
[8] Roth, *AL* 298.
[9] Roth, *AL* 298.
[10] Roth, *AL* 298.
[11] Roth, *AL* 324.
[12] Roth, *AL* 324.
[13] Roth, *AL* 322.
[14] Roth, *AL* 298.
[15] Roth, *AL* 305.
[16] Roth, *AL* 313.
[17] Roth, *AL* 299.
[18] Roth, *AL* 302.
[19] Roth, *AL* 304.
[20] Roth, *AL* 304.
[21] Roth, *AL* 307.
[22] Roth, *AL* 306.
[23] Roth, *AL* 303.
[24] Roth, *AL* 303.
[25] Roth, *AL* 303.
[26] Roth, *AL* 312.
[27] Roth, *AL* 314.
[28] Roth, *AL* 319.
[29] Roth, *AL* 297.
[30] Roth, *AL* 297.
[31] Roth, *AL* 315.
[32] Roth, *AL* 316.
[33] Roth, *AL* 315.
[34] Roth, *AL* 318.
[35] Roth, *AL* 318.
[36] Roth, *AL* 314.
[37] Roth, *AL* 314.
[38] Roth, *AL* 323.
[39] Roth, *AL* 323.
[40] Roth, *AL* 323.
[41] Roth, *AL* 343.
[42] Roth, *AL* 302.
[43] Roth, *AL* 306.
[44] Roth, *AL* 306.
[45] Roth, *AL* 312.

[46] Roth, *AL* 312.
[47] Roth, *AL* 312.
[48] Roth, *AL* 312.
[49] Roth, *AL* 312.
[50] Roth, *AL* 319.
[51] Roth, *AL* 319.
[52] Roth, *AL* 319.
[53] Roth, *AL* 319-20.
[54] Roth, *AL* 320.
[55] Roth, *AL* 320-1.
[56] Roth, *AL* 321.
[57] Roth, *AL* 321.
[58] Roth, *AL* 321.
[59] Roth, *AL* 321.
[60] Roth, *AL* 321.
[61] Roth, *AL* 321.
[62] Roth, *AL* 322.
[63] Roth, *AL* 322.
[64] Roth, *AL* 322.
[65] Roth, *AL* 370.
[66] Roth, *AL* 370.
[67] Roth, *AL* 361.
[68] Roth, *AL* 343.
[69] Roth, *AL* 363.
[70] Roth, *AL* 365.
[71] Roth, *AL* 368.
[72] Roth, *AL* 368.
[73] Roth, *AL* 373.
[74] Roth, *AL* 369.
[75] Roth, *AL* 373.
[76] Roth, *AL* 373.
[77] Roth, *AL* 398.
[78] Roth, *AL* 418.
[79] Roth, *AL* 425.
[80] Roth, *AL* 425.
[81] Roth, *AL* 438.
[82] Roth, *AL* 397.
[83] Roth, *AL* 397.
[84] Roth, *AL* 397.
[85] Roth, *AL* 418.
[86] Roth, *AL* 427.
[87] Roth, *AL* 319.
[88] Roth, *AL* 430.
[89] Roth, *AL* 458.
[90] Roth, *AL* 320.
[91] Roth, *AL* 421.
[92] Roth, *AL* 421.
[93] Roth, *AL* 421.
[94] Roth, *AL* 368-9.
[95] Roth, *AL* 494.
[96] Roth, *AL* 505.
[97] Philip Roth, *Zuckerman Unbound, Zuckerman Bound* (London: Penguin, 1989) 275.