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Philip Roth's Goodbye, Columbus: An Existential Psychotherapeutic Perspective.

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Dedication

This humble work is wholeheartedly dedicated to:

The memory of my beloved grandmother

Whose loving spirit sustains me still.

My beloved parents, Mohammed and Kaltoum

My brothers and my little muffin, Chahinez

Whom I love immeasurably.

My inexpressible delights, Amani and Houri, and Rima

Who were my emotional anchors throughout the past five years.

My one and only, Chakib

Whose unwavering support and care made everything easier.

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the existential crisis of Neil Klugman in <u>Goodbye, Columbus</u> from the stance and viewpoint of existential psychotherapy by means of its concepts of defense mechanisms; mainly displacement and the eternal rescuer. Accordingly, our objective is to analyze the studied character from an ingenious standpoint completely different from the previously conducted research, which had focused much more on the socio-cultural circumstances of America during the 1950s than on the central character's psychical development. That being the case, the theoretical framework will be grounded on the findings of Irvin Yalom and the field of clinical psychology in an attempt to localize Neil's own difficulties in dealing with the fear of death. Thus, the present qualitative and analytical study will attempt to give answers regarding Neil's existential and psychological troubles, and link them directly to his reliance on defense mechanisms. By the same token, its purpose is to investigate how did secularism enhance Neil's dependence on these coping modes? How did the classist nature of his community oppress him with the need for an eternal rescuer? And how did the consumerist lifestyle of the Patimkins act as a sedative on his own psyche, thus washing away the fundamental matters and issues from his conscious notice? In the end, our study reveals the manner in which all these components had acted together in accordance with the psychological system of defense mechanisms against the existential concerns, and formed an impediment in the face of Neil's process of individuation; an impediment he was unable to surmount at the end.

Key Words: Goodbye Columbus, Neil Klugman, Existential Psychotherapy, Clinical Psychology, Fear of death, Existential Concerns, defense Mechanisms, Displacement, Eternal rescuer

Table of Contents

General Introduction

Ever since its publication in 1959, Philip Roth's novella <u>Goodbye, Columbus</u> had occupied a significant position in the literary field on account of its multidimensional aspects, and the myriad of socio-cultural conditions portrayed and inspected in its pages. In spite of its brevity, this work addresses several of the central issues which had engaged the public opinion of America during the 1950s onward. What makes it different and far more interesting than a mere literary study of the social and economical scene of the day, however, is the subtlety of its approach. Nowhere in the text did Roth advance a personal belief or opinion in regard to the issues which his work depicts. Even his narrator is unreliable, biased, and influenced by the forces of his own community, class, ethnical group, and family; which leaves the door open before the reader to draw his own inferences, nurture his personal views, and interpret according to his own judgment. Such a literary technique places the novella within the range of postmodern literature characterized by paradox, fragmentation, paranoia, and dark humor amongst other traits.

Among the postmodern stylistic techniques which characterize <u>Goodbye, Columbus,</u> minimalism, maximalism, intertextuality, and unreliable narration are the most noteworthy. It is important to mention that the portrayal and description of the central character's physical traits are minimalized. The same can be said about the other characters at the exception of some details thrown here and there for the benefit of the plot. On the other hand, much is said about the neighborhood of Short Hills and the property of the Patimkins with all its sports equipments and gigantic refrigerators. Such an approach was used by Roth in order to convey his own interests and viewpoints without having to put a single direct word about them. In maximizing the details about all that is material, and at the same time casting a shadow upon the individual and all that forms his individuality, Roth had managed to convey the broad lines and major traits of the consumerist lifestyle, which will form a significant part of our study.

Intertextuality is also present in the novella by dint of the recurrent mention of Leo Tolstoy's 1867 masterpiece <u>War and Peace</u>. The least that can be said about the career of its Russian author is that he had devoted his life efforts to investigate the meaning of existence by plunging into a meditation of science, spirituality, and philosophy. The manner in which both work and author are mentioned by the narrator of <u>Goodbye, Columbus</u> denotes the depth of the schism that separated him from such a profound thinking, which suggests to the mind some sort of difficulty in dealing with existential questions as we shall see in a little while. Thus, another of Roth's major concerns is unveiled before the eyes of his readers without the necessity of infantile over-simplification. Unreliable narration is another valuable characteristic in the novella, for it teaches the scholar the art of analysis, and the necessity of a critical mind in reading what one character has to say about himself, and what the bigger picture looks like.

In addition to these techniques, Roth's work is highly concerned with the socio-cultural circumstances of his day, and which can even be traced to his own life. Much like his central character, Philip Roth was born in Newark, New Jersey on March 19, 1933, in a Jewish family, and to second-generation American parents. This is where his interests with the Jewish community on the one hand, and the lower classes on the other hand sprung from. His first work <u>Goodbye, Columbus</u> had earned him The National Book Award in 1960, and by the same token had set the pace for a number of semi-autobiographical works, which revolved around secular Jewish sons who sought to separate themselves, and break free from the influence of their parents, families, rabbis, and communities altogether. What differentiates the autobiographical tendencies of Roth from other authors, however, is its incorporation of social commentary and political satire that blur the distinction between fiction and reality.

While the majority of the former criticism and existing data had focused on the ethnical and social conditions in <u>Goodbye, Columbus</u>, the present analysis turns to a completely different scope, and adopts for an objective the investigation of the internal and existential conflicts of its central character instead. In this paper, we will focus on Neil Klugman's conflicted psyche and his inability to deal with the constants of existence; keeping in mind, at the same time, the impact of his class, status, community, and opportunities on the psychical process and internal workings of his mind. No doubt, psychoanalysis is a rich and vast field often appealed to in the course of conducting studies concerned with the frame of mind and behavioral pattern of a certain individual, but when the character in question begins to manifest a set of psychological disturbances caused entirely by the pressure exerted by the major existential concerns, it is to existential psychotherapy that we turn for a more suited theoretical framework.

Being the hybrid of two exceptionally vast and interesting fields, namely psychoanalysis and existentialism, existential psychotherapy comprises within its rich folds countless principles by means of which the psychological conflicts of the individual can be localized and traced to their source and genesis. Accordingly, our investigation of Neil Klugman's existential dilemma will make use of some such concepts; more precisely of displacement and the eternal rescuer as a coping mode against the anxiety of death, and consequently as the initial layer of psychopathology. Our theoretical guideline will be the work of American psychiatrist Irvin David Yalom. All along the way, however, valuable contributions of Swiss Psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung will be added since the Neo-Freudian school, which he represents, forms a great authority and one of existential psychotherapy's cornerstones. In the same manner, the philosophy of existentialism will be present in the guise of the viewpoints held by its most renowned figures, namely Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche.

The concepts of displacement and the eternal rescuer are to be detailed in this study as coping modes against the anxiety of death. For that purpose, the fear of death itself is to be investigated as one of the four existential concerns, and the one which Neil Klugman is unable to overcome and transcend efficiently. Such a fear is an inherent part in every single human being. Thus, when confronted with its oppressing presence, a set of defense mechanisms is, oftentimes, resorted to in order to channel the ensuing anxiety into other concerns of a lower order. Even though, the tenacity of death anxiety is lessened by means of this approach, a myriad of psychical limitations arises as well, barring thus the prospect of an efficient existence. The aim of this analysis is to reveal and display the manner in which such coping modes had impaired the psychical condition of Neil, and caused him, by the same token, a number of impediments that led to his mental regression, and prevented him from leading an effective life.

Since literary analysis is a process founded upon the accumulation of data and the continuity of research, the present study follows the steps of several previous papers which bring valuable contribution to our topic in spite of the difference of scopes. One of these is Faruk Kalay's article *A Humoristic and Satirical Perspective to Jewish Classes In Goodbye, Colombus By Philip Roth,* which investigates the otherness of the central character as a descendant of a Jewish family. Faruk's article seems to focus only on how did Roth satirizs the Jews and their relationship between themselves and the Gentiles. He focused on the language Roth used in portraying these relationships, overlooking the character's reasons behind using those kinds of humoristic discourse that imply their anxieties and insecurities that acted together against their psychological system f the characters . *An Analysis of Neil Klugman in Philip Roth's "Goodbye, Columbus": Questions of Class and Religious Identity* is another interesting article by Sarah Willim, which brings to the fore the importance of both class and religion in the shaping of personal identity. *A Struggle for Identity: Neil Klugman's*

Quest in "Goodbye, Columbus is yet another article, written by Helge Normann Nilsen in a manner which favors the investigation of Neil Klugman's identity. Sarah and Nilsen directed their attention only to the ethnic struggle of Neil and seemed to overlook the existential and the psychological issues that Neil has developed when being torn apart in the process of fitting in the melting pot of the United States. Mention must be made, however, that none of the above mentioned data used in this analysis is concerned with or based on the principles of existential psychotherapy. The latter sphere is what gives this present paper a touch of newness, and renders our analysis of Neil quite an interesting and intriguing task.

Thus, in order to investigate the inner conflicts and the existential dilemma of Neil Klugman, this qualitative and analytical study will be divided into three chapters. The first one forms the backbone of our theoretical framework, and will introduce accordingly the concepts that can help us reach the genesis of Neil's existential difficulties. The chapter itself will be split into three sections; the first will introduce the broad lines dictated by Yalom in regard to existential psychotherapy, the second will expound on the fear of death and the coping modes used to ward it off, while the last one will investigate the limitations generated by such a procedure. The second chapter will put Neil under the lens of analysis, and by means of the theoretical knowledge acquired in the previous portion of the work, the latter's existential conflict will be dissected and explained in terms of the employed defense mechanisms. Hence, the first section will be devoted to the eternal rescuer, the second to displacement with its two varieties, and the third to the restrictions of growth which resulted from the process of relying on them. The third and last chapter will focus on the outer conditions which had favored the decline of Neil's psyche, namely the ideology of secularism which will be detailed in the first section, class ostracism dealt with in the second, and in the third consumerism and the life of pleasure and acquisition.

It is only after all these concepts and notions are explained, detailed, and applied to the behavioral pattern and inner working of Neil's mind that a final inference can be drawn in regard to his existential dilemma, and the detrimental effect of defense mechanisms on his psyche

Chapter one:

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The first chapter in our literary study of <u>Goodbye, Columbus</u> and investigation of Neil Klugman's existential crisis is to be dedicated to the theoretical framework round which the analysis is to be centered. Needless to say, that the theoretical structure of any such paper is essential and of a vital significance to the purpose of the scholar, and the success of the task at hand. In accordance with this view, our first chapter is then to cover, introduce, and simplify the theory most fitted for our topic, namely Existential Psychotherapy.

The theoretical framework of this study is to be divided into three sections in order to cover as much ground as possible in the available space. The first portion entitled *Irvin Yalom and Existential Psychotherapy* is mainly an initiation, which contains a background of the theory in both its spheres of literature and clinical psychology, in addition to a simplified definition and an inventory of its major concepts. Taking into consideration that no doctrine stands alone and separated from its key figures, the first section contains as well an overview of the thinkers from whom we are to draw the guidelines of our study.

The next section bears the title of *Defense Mechanisms and the Fear of Death,* and as a continuance of the first; it narrows down the key concepts of the theory to those we are going to use in our analysis. Accordingly, we move from the vast realm of existential psychotherapy, as a clinical practice and a revolutionary literary theory, to that of its exact notions and concepts, namely death anxiety and the coping modes employed by the unconscious mind in order to ward it off. Our detailing of such concepts will be illustrated by some data extracted from important case studies.

Limitation and Restricted Growth is the title of the third and last portion of this chapter. This closing section joins the information gathered from its predecessors on the one hand, and from further research and case studies in the field on the other, in order to reach a final conclusion about the coping modes employed against the anxiety of death, and state

how they ultimately lead to psychopathology and a restriction of growth. Therefore, by the end of this chapter, we will be fully prepared to begin the analysis of Neil Klugman's existential crisis.

1.1. Irvin Yalom and Existential Psychotherapy

Given the fact that no two schools of psychoanalysis were ever founded upon the same concepts, and no two existential philosophers had ever agreed on the same principles; it is then no matter of surprise that the hybrid of these two rich realms of knowledge and intellect is a very complex and copious field. The orbit of Existential Psychotherapy is accordingly regarded today as one of the broadest, all-embracing schools of therapeutic psychology, which have been gradually making their way into literary criticism during the past few decades. Before diving into the depths of the unique school that is going to form the backbone of our analysis, however, it is important to mention that the ideas, concepts, and principles employed in the process are supplied for the most part by American psychiatrist Irvin D. Yalom, whose works and views are going to be the guidelines of the present study.

Irvin David Yalom is introduced in his own website *yalom.com* as an existential psychiatrist, an emeritus professor of psychiatry at Stanford University, and an author of both fiction and non-fiction. This brief yet impressive exordium reflects, in fact, but a teeny tiny part of this great man's career. The 89-year-old American psychiatrist has, in truth, surpassed the boundaries of his own field by experimenting with new writing techniques and revolutionary subject matters, which had secured him over seven different awards between 1974 and 2009, in addition to the undying fame of sixteen remarkable works. Among these, the one that interests us the most, and round which the current study is to be centered is his 1980 book Existential Psychotherapy. This title is regarded as one of Yalom's most influential works on account of its crystal clear explanations of the existential approaches to psychotherapy. Among the myriad of leading figures mentioned in this work, another

noteworthy master of the field is Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung and the school of Neo-Freudians of which he was the main representative.

Having thus placed the concepts which we are going to employ within the proper benchmark of their theorists, we must now move to the theory itself, to its definition and explanation. Existential Psychotherapy has evolved as a way of therapeutic practice based upon the principles of psychodynamics -conscious and unconscious- along with humanistic and existential philosophies. Thus, while the principals of this practice were founded by early existential philosophers -among which we may mention Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, and Friedrich Nietzsche- it did not take the form of a well-grounded therapy until the mid-twentieth century through the works of leading European psychiatrists such as Medard Boss, Otto Rank, Karl Jaspers, and Ludwig Binswanger, who were the first to apply the existential principals in the practice of psychotherapy.

Yalom defines existential psychotherapy as "a dynamic approach to therapy which focuses on concerns that are rooted in the individual's existence" (5). In other words, he suggests a model that posits the presence of "forces in conflict within the individual, and that thought, emotion, and behavior, both adaptive and psychopathological, are the resultants of these conflicting forces" (6). Such forces, we must note "exist at varying levels of awareness; some, indeed, are entirely unconscious" (5). This definition brings to the fore two main aspects which differentiate existential psychotherapy from all other schools of psychoanalysis. The first is its split from the Freudian principles which we will shortly explain. The second is its reliance on the philosophical principles of the existential doctrines. "The relation of existential therapy to the existential school of philosophy," writes Yalom "is much like that of clinical pharmacotherapy to biochemical bench research" (15-16). This crafty analogy reflects the importance of existentialism in regard to the practice of existential psychotherapy, and inaugurates the latter as an approach that does not look for the causes of

the psychological problems within the biological sphere, but rather searches for them within the depth of the individual's inner existential conflict, and in his/her inability or ineffectiveness in dealing with the existential concerns.

What is most interesting in connection with the existential aspect of the theory is its universality, for such disquietudes, as the ones investigated in the current study, are "part of the human condition" (Yalom 12). They are an inherent part in every single mind and every single individual. Accordingly, they do not always culminate in a pathological state. These anxieties are known in the field as the four ultimate existential concerns, namely, death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. Together they form the givens of existence; constant and unchangeable. Consequently, the confrontation of the individual with any of them generates an inner discord known as the existential dynamic conflict. The latter state might be transcended in an effective manner by means of a healthy and constructive approach. In some cases, however, the conflict may prove too strong for either the conscious or unconscious minds, and sometimes for both. In such cases, the individual develops coping modes to shield himself against the anxiety generated by the terrifying unchangeable truth. These coping modes form a set of defense mechanisms, the investigation of which shall be effected in the next section.

Among the four existential concerns aforementioned, death is the one round which our analysis of Neil Klugman is to be centered, and accordingly the one that we must explain and simplify to the best of our ability in the present chapter. Although this task is to be carried on in the next section, let us take a moment to clarify death's position in regard to the Freudian school, and state accordingly the reason why the latter's principles have been abandoned in the practice of existential psychotherapy. In this respect, Yalom writes that death "can play no role in Freud's formal dynamic theory" (69). To put it differently, what caused the Freudian school's decline in regard to the practice of existential psychotherapy is

that it gives no significance to the anxiety generated by death in the making of neurosis. Such an outlook makes its whole approach somewhat lacking when one takes into consideration the inevitability of this inner conflict whether on a conscious or an unconscious level.

The Neo-Freudian school, on the other hand, tackles the issue from a different viewpoint and allows the inner conflict to be studied not from the lenses of childhood and long gone experience as suggested by Freud, but rather from the bifocals of the present. "In constructing our theory," writes Jung in his 1915 book The Theory of Psychoanalysis "so as to deduce the neurosis from causes in the distant past, we are first and foremost obeying the impulse of our patient to withdraw themselves as far as possible from the critical present. The pathogenic conflict exists only in the present moment." (81) Thus, instead of hunting for plausible causes within the early experiences of the human being, a minute examination of his present conditions and behavior is more likely going to reveal much more interesting data in regard to his inner conflicts and anxieties.

This stratagem is echoed by the practitioners of existential psychotherapy, who instead of stressing the past experiences of their patients in search of answers rather focus on their approach towards the present as a better means to understand the genesis of anxiety and inner conflict. Such technique is better explained in the following passage,

> To explore deeply from an existential perspective does not mean that one explores the past; rather, it means that one brushes away everyday concerns and thinks deeply about one's existential situation. It means to think outside of time, to think about the relationship between one's feet and the ground beneath one, between one's consciousness and the space around one; it means to think not about the way one came to be the way one is, but that one is. (Yalom11)

This excerpt explains the basics of existential psychotherapy not only as a clinical practice , but also as a theory that can help the scholar and researcher investigate the inner existential states and conflicts of one' self and of others

Thus, to move from the theoretical aspects of existential psychotherapy into those of a practical nature in order to have it employed in the analysis of Neil Klugman's data, we must now determine the means by which the theory is to be used in literary criticism. We have previously mentioned that the psychodynamics of an individual include both conscious and unconscious forces, fears, and anxieties. For the most part, however, the conflict arising from a clash with the existential concerns is often swept away, if not from consciousness itself then from its notice by means of different modes of distraction and diversion. Death, by way of illustration, is a universal truth; our common fate and certain end. And yet, in the face of such a source of pressure, a myriad of mechanisms is used on a daily basis to drive it away from the notice of the conscious mind.

At times, however, even the best of such resources fail in shielding us from the glaring light with which the existential conflicts in general, and death in particular, invade the comfortable obscurity of oblivion. In that context, Yalom writes that "Existence is inexorably free and, thus, uncertain." What renders death such a gloomy and dreary threat, after all, is the uncertainty with which it looms round all our projects and hopes of a longer life and a happier future. There is no guarantee against death. In spite of our fears and wishes, the reaper might appear at any moments to collect the life we hold so dear and expect to last with many a plan to fill its distant horizon. "Cultural institutions and psychological constructs often obscure this state of affairs," Yalom goes on alluding to the mechanisms we have just mentioned, and which are employed to drive such an oppressing fear away from the notice of the conscious mind, and if possible into the realm of unconsciousness altogether. "Confrontation with one's existential situation reminds one that paradigms are self-created,

wafer-thin barriers against the pain of uncertainty." (26) Here, he refers to the failure of such mechanisms in banishing the oppressing source of anxiety, explaining that at a given moment the individual is destined to realize, at last, that whatever barrier has been placed between him and such truths is just an illusion and a frail fortress that might collapse at any moment. Henceforward, the transcendence of such fears is what determines whether or not the individual is to fall into the trap of psychopathology.

Analogous to psychoanalysis, the use of existential psychotherapy as a theoretical framework for a literary analysis depends upon a number of symbols and concepts that are to be taken into consideration, interpreted and deciphered in terms of their clinical significance, and converted into meaningful data ready for analysis. Accordingly, what we are going to be looking for in our study of Neil Klugman's existential dilemma can be summed up in his own inner existential conflicts. Thus, in order to identify them, "one must use many avenues of access - deep reflection, dreams, nightmares, flashes of profound experience and insight, psychotic utterances, and the study of children" (Yalom 6). Therefore, our task in the next chapters will be to analyze Neil's stream of thoughts in order to see which direction they usually take; interpret his dreams in relation to his situation and psychological conflicts; investigate his impulsive and semi-voluntary acts and utterances in order to reach the fundamental layers behind his defense mechanisms, and pint point at last the real issues, which mask themselves so well behind a veil of oblivion and psychopathology.

By and large, this first section of our theoretical chapter has been dedicated to an overview and a thorough explanation of existential psychotherapy both as a clinical practice and a literary theory. The next one will be accordingly devoted to the concept of defense mechanisms in connection with the anxiety of death. Thus, after familiarizing ourselves with the theory at hand, with the theorists who provide our guidelines, and with the feats we are expected to perform, the following pages will help us narrow down the list of possibilities

and symptoms that are to be sought within the text as a hint of Neil's instable psychological and existential states.

1.2. Defense Mechanisms and the Fear of Death

The introductory note in regard to existential psychotherapy in the previous section has already defined the broad lines of our theoretical framework. Therefore, in our subsequent analysis of Neil Klugman's existential dilemma, we will be investigating his present conditions rather than past experiences, while keeping an eye on a set of symbols and signs that can elucidate his inner psychological state, and help us investigate the pathogenic aspect of his means to transcend the existential conflicts. The most pressing of the latter disquietudes, as we have already explained, and the one which fits perfectly Neil's data, is the fear and pathological anxiety caused and generated by death whether on a conscious or an unconscious level. Accordingly, this section is to be dedicated to the inspection of the fear of death and some of its defense mechanisms, namely displacement and the eternal rescuer, which figure ever so clearly in Neil's acts and behavior.

Although the above-named conflict, which flows from the individual's encounter with the givens of existence in general, and death's anxiety in particular, is an unavoidable portion of Man's fare and existence in the world, it nonetheless generates in some cases a number of unhealthy coping modes known in clinical psychology as defense mechanisms. Before setting about a minute investigation of such psychical implements, however, we must first explore the gloomy yet hazy realm of death, and attempt an explanation of how it can exert so much influence over the psyche of the human being. Death, Yalom argues, is the most obvious and most easily apprehended ultimate concern. "We exist now," he writes "but one day we shall cease to be. Death will come, and there is no escape from it. It is a terrible truth, and we respond to it with mortal terror." That indeed is the common and unavoidable fate of humanity. In spite of our differences -be it racial, ethnical, religious, social, economical, or

political- our shared destiny is a departure from this world; an ultimate end of life and of all its hopes, projects, and future. What makes of this position a source of constant anxiety is, in truth, the human kind's unwillingness to cease existing. This ongoing and painful conflict is accordingly the result of none other than the "tension between the awareness of the inevitability of death and the wish to continue to be" (9). In spite of Man's tremendous needs and yearning for an endless life, he is nonetheless made fully aware of the inevitability of death, and the bitter end it can hurl upon the stability and safe cocoon of his life at any given moment.

Furthermore, what renders death the strongest of the four existential conflicts is its constant presence in life. Life and Death are, in fact, "interdependent; they exist simultaneously, not consecutively; death whirs continuously beneath the membrane of life and exerts a vast influence upon experience and conduct" (Yalom 29). Thus, the concept of living can never be freed from the influence of death. Even in our happiest moments, the idea of the grim reaper creeps unnoticed into our thoughts, and influences without our consent most of our acts and behavior. After all, who among us did not look at his/her loved ones, at least once, without repressing a silent pang of pain and a sweeping wave of fear at the prospect of losing them to death. Who among us did not lie in his/her bed at night without entertaining the idea that this would be, at last, the beginning of an eternal sleep? For such reasons, "Death is a primordial source of anxiety and, as such, is the primary fount of psychopathology" (29), for unlike the other concerns, its influence is constant and existent at every moment.

Thus, death and the anxiety it generates play a colossal role in shaping Man's behavior both consciously and unconsciously, for it "haunts as does nothing else; it rumbles continuously under the surface; it is a dark, unsettling presence at the rim of consciousness" (Yalom 27). In the face of such an oppressing presence, Man often shrinks from the

encounter, and seeks different outlets by means of which he can elude the immediate influence of such a source of anxiety. In fact, a considerable portion of one's life energy, as stated by Yalom, is consumed in the denial of death, for that is the most obvious means for coping with that terrifying truth. Thus,

> Death transcendence is a major motif in human experience from the most deeply personal internal phenomena, our defenses, our motivations, our dreams and nightmares, to the most public macro-societal structures, our monuments, theologies, ideologies, slumber cemeteries, embalming, our stretch into space, indeed our entire way of life-our filling time, our addiction to diversions, our unfaltering belief in the myth of progress, our drive to "get ahead," our yearning for lasting fame. (40)

Consequently, a set of coping modes, as we have already mentioned, surges within the psyche of the individual, prompted all at once by the conscious need to flee the thought of death, and the unconscious dread that accompanies such a concept.

Before detailing the coping modes by means of which the individual flees the anxiety of death, it is necessary to specify that the genesis of psychopathology is not to be found under those layers of terror generated by fear, but is to be surprisingly sought within the mechanisms that are employed to drive it away and burry it deep in oblivion. For "The confrontation with the givens of existence is painful but ultimately healing" (Yalom 14) whereas the opposite only breeds mediocrity and limitation, since these "psychic operations (defense mechanisms) constitute psychopathology," and although "they provide safety, they invariably restrict growth and experience" (10) as we shall see in the following section.

The anxiety generated by death is a universal trait shared by all humanity. Similarly, the mechanisms used to flee and evade it are something inherent in the behavior of the majority of human beings who,

Develop adaptive coping modes - modes that consist of denial-based strategies such as suppression, repression, displacement, belief in personal omnipotence, acceptance of socially sanctioned religious beliefs that 'detoxify' death, or personal efforts to overcome death through a wide variety of strategies that aim at achieving symbolic immortality (Yalom 110-111)

Among such psychical implements the one that are reflected in Neil's behavior are displacement and the Eternal Rescuer. Accordingly, our study of the defense mechanisms against death anxiety will be narrowed down to these two concepts in order to prepare for their subsequent use.

The first coping mode to be introduced and tackled is that of the Eternal Rescuer. This concept is primarily defined as "The human belief in the existence of a personal omnipotent intercessor: a force or being that eternally observes, loves, and protects us" (Yalom 129). Yet, to some individuals the eternal rescuer is not to be found in the guise of a supernatural being or force, but rather in that of an earthly leader or a person of a higher nature. For a long time, many researchers and authors have been aware of this human need to create a godlike figure to whom one's freedom and life are to be sacrificed in exchange of an illusion of stability and safety against death anxiety. One of such authors is Leo Tolstoy whose 1867 novel War and Peace provides an excellent example of such a frame of mind. In this masterpiece, Rostov's ecstasy at the prospect of nearness, and therefore connection with the Czar, illustrates the mental workings of the individual who relinquishes his own life and greatness to embrace that of another, who represents a meaning provider and consequently an unconscious outlet of the anxiety of death. This detail is important in relation to our study given the fact that War and Peace is repeatedly mentioned by Neil, yet with a note of sarcasm that can reflect his own involvement in a practice similar to that of Rostov.

What is expected of the eternal rescuer, whether of supernatural or earthly natures, is a form of safety against the meaninglessness of life. Death as we have explained is unavoidable in spite of Man's distaste towards it. Thus, in the absence of any remedy against its evils the next best thing is the presence of a higher force or human being that can watch over us in this life, and make sure that no real harm befalls us. This somewhat infantile reasoning is the product of the unconscious mind's attempt to subdue the unbearable thoughts of death and the ensuing pressure. In truth, the patient or individual himself will not be aware of any ulterior designs in forming what can be regarded by others as an unreasonable attachment towards another person. The person who fills the position of the eternal rescuer can thus be a lover, a spouse, a parent, a teacher, a therapist…etc. The bond itself will display an acute fervency on behalf of the patient who channels all his interests, and puts the stability of his entire existence at the mercy of the success or failure of that relationship. A further explanation of that is supplied by Yalom who writes on the issue saying,

> An individual believing strongly in an ultimate rescuer (and striving toward fusion, merger, or embeddedness) will look for strength outside of himself or herself; will take a dependent, supplicant pose toward others; will repress aggression; may show masochistic trends; and may become deeply depressed at the loss of the dominant other. (152)

Accordingly, our analysis of Neil Klugman in terms of the eternal rescuer will focus mainly on the nature of his amorous relationship, and the weight he gave to his union with Brenda and her family.

The second defense mechanism to be used in the present study is displacement. Just like the eternal rescuer, this implement is employed by the unconscious mind in order to combat anxiety by "displacing it from nothing to something" (Yalom 43). The process includes the creation of a new source of concern that belongs to a lower order with a view to

supplant the anxiety of death. Accordingly, the lighter concern will be used by the unconscious components of the mind as a decoy to prevent the fear of death from making its way into the notice of the conscious part. Thus, by caring for a less primordial issue, the mind's forces will be channeled into safer concerns in order to avoid a direct confrontation with such a sweeping fear. In some cases, however, the process is not altogether carried out in the realm of unconsciousness, for some individuals, as stated by Yalom, avoid personal responsibility by displacing it to another (225). The two kinds, however, share a myriad of similarities that even when the design is prompted by conscious motives, its real meaning remains shielded from conscious notice.

In his book Existential Psychotherapy Yalom provides a number of case studies in order to illustrate the different manifestations of displacement. One of these is the case of a young man named Mike. This youth had been a strong independent man all his life. At one point, however, he was diagnosed with cancer, and in spite of his doctor's advice he insisted on going on a long trip instead of following his chemotherapy. The reason behind such a peculiar behavior is none other than the use of displacement as a defense mechanism against the anxiety of death. To a young man of Mike's bearing, the detection of cancer in his organism meant an early and an unexpected threat of death. Although "Mike did not consciously fear death, his fear of therapy was an obvious displacement of death anxiety" (113) That is to say, his dread of death was transformed instead into a milder anxiety in regard to chemotherapy. Thus, no matter how much they tried, the doctors could not convince Mike of the necessity of that process, which filled him with dread and disquietude. In such a manner, Mike's unconscious mind had displaced the oppressing fear of death into a more or less tolerable anxiety linked to his chemotherapy treatment.

In such a fashion, Mike's case study has allowed us to understand how displacement is used in order to shield the human psyche from the anxiety of death. Now that we have

tackled this issue, explained the inevitability of such an existential conflict, the mechanisms used to drive it away from the notice of the conscious mind, and how to localize them within the studied subject; our new objective is to observe and determine the outcome of such practices and defense mechanisms on the psyche. We have briefly mentioned above that the genesis of psychopathology is to be found in the midst of the mechanisms employed to banish the anxiety of death. Accordingly the next section will be devoted to the exploration of the end result of such implements.

1.3. Limitation and Restricted Growth

After introducing existential psychotherapy along with its primary concepts, and addressing existential conflicts and defense mechanisms, it is now our task to investigate the end result of such a psychical process and implements by sounding the limitations they might cause in both the individual's life and manner of living. Accordingly, the last section of our theoretical chapter is to be consecrated to the examination of the long-term outcomes that result from the use of defense mechanisms against death anxiety on both the levels of the individual's psyche and his own life.

Our former assertion that the pathogenic behavior has its genesis in the defense mechanisms against the anxiety of death rather than within the dread generated by death itself paves the way for the current task, and prompts us to be doubly alert in our analysis of the upshots of coping modes. We have previously mentioned that the existential conflicts do not always result in psychopathologies. There are indeed many ways to transcend such fears in a healthy and constructive manner. In spite of the bitter flavor which death adds to our lives, its presence remains a significant and even necessary condition in order for us to lead a meaningful existence. Accordingly, even an encounter with death, in any given form, can be regarded as an opportunity to reorganize life, and take into consideration the important details that are often lost in the midst of everyday's routine and neglect.

Of that fact, countless authors seem to have been aware especially those, whose writings bear a touch of the existential school of philosophy. The literary example previously mentioned, namely Tolstoy's <u>War and Peace</u> serves again as a good illustration, for it is one of the best cases of psychical growth after a close encounter with death. The novel's protagonist -Pierre to be more precise- is portrayed at the beginning of the tale as a member of the Russian aristocracy, who is all but lost in the midst of his life's empty and meaningless vortex. Once captured by Napoleon's troops, however, the spell of futility and insignificance is finally broken. For Pierre comes within an inch of his life when sentenced to death by shooting. Sixth in line, he watches the five men before him die thinking all the while of how pleasant life truly is, and how precious even those last moments of his existence have at last proved to be. Upon being reprieved at the last moment, Pierre immerges from this experience a changed man; an individual who is keenly aware of the gift of life, and intent upon living it to the fullest. If we give the example of Pierre here, it is only to prove and illustrate some of the ways of healthy transcendence of death without turning it into a psychological disorder.

In connection with this idea, Yalom affirms that the thought of death "saves us; rather than sentence us to existences of terror or bleak pessimism, it acts as a catalyst to plunge us into more authentic life modes, and it enhances our pleasure in the living of life." (33) For the realization that life is, by no means, a never ending process induces the individual to value its worth and make the best of it. Such approach towards death, however, is not to be confused for an absence of fear or anxiety. Death remains a primordial source of dread to all humanity. But instead of bending or breaking under the oppressing weight of its threatening presence, such approach turns it into the birthplace of new motivations instead. On the other hand, "A denial of death at any level is a denial of one's basic nature and begets an increasingly pervasive restriction of awareness and experience" (32). For to deny death, and lead a life

founded upon illusions prompted by fear, is equivalent to restricting not only the domain of one's life but even the growth of one's own mind.

This viewpoint is better understood when explained by means of the model posited by the Danish philosopher and father of existentialism Soren Kierkegaard, who divided life's issues into two main categories; one he called the finite, the other the infinite. While the first kind represents the here and now, and things that the human being can alter and change by dint of his own efforts, the second covers a sphere placed far beyond his reach and earthly capacities. In his 1849 book <u>Sickness unto Death</u> Kierkegaard explains the human being's relationship with these two realms saying that "Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors." (9) Therefore, an excessive and compulsive concern for one of these spheres at the expense of the other can only result in an unbalanced state. Similarly, the denial of one realm on account of its unpleasantness or the anxiety it might cause can only breed vital and mental restrictions.

The role of the coping modes and defense mechanisms used to ward off the anxiety of death is to drive it away of the notice of the conscious mind, and burry it under as many layers of different milder issues as possible. The direct outcome of such an approach is an involvement with a myriad of petty concerns that enhance the forgetfulness of being. Thus, by living in such a state "one lives in the world of things and immerses oneself in the everyday diversions of life: One is 'leveled down,' absorbed in 'idle chatter,' lost in the 'they.' One surrenders oneself to the everyday world, to a concern about the way things are" (Yalom 30-31). Such manner of living represents the exact opposite of the one we have just explained above in connection with the healthy transcendence of death and death anxiety. No doubt, forgetfulness of being can forestall the oppressing fear, which creeps unnoticed at the thought of death. At the same time, however, it prevents the individual from reaching the

heights of his growth, and living up to his potential. When one's sole concern is the futilities of life; when one denies and shuns the givens of existence out of fear, one is in fact nothing more than what German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had termed the Last Man; that is to say, a being who takes no risk, who is tired of life and accordingly only seeks its comforts for security.

This manner of living has, in truth, preoccupied theorists and philosophers for countless decades on account of its evils and the mediocrity it breeds in the human kind. In spite of their efforts, however, such an approach to life has been adopted by the greatest part of humanity because of the easy means it provides to reduce the anxiety of death notwithstanding the inevitable limitations generated in the process. German philosopher Martin Heidegger refers to that existence whose essence is a forgetfulness of being as "inauthentic", for it is nothing more than "a mode in which one is unaware of one's authorship of one's life and world, in which one 'flees,' 'falls,' and is tranquilized, in which one avoids choices by being 'carried along by the nobody'". And that is indeed the worst aftermath that can befall humanity, since it restricts its growth and evolution in every single field. On the other hand, the second mode allows one to exist authentically (31) in a perfect state of mindfulness of being. This second approach corresponds to the former concept of healthy transcendence of death and is the one championed by both philosophers and theorists.

The coping modes, which we have introduced in the previous section, are no different in that they too form latent causes for limitation and restriction of growth. In connection with displacement as a defense mechanism, Yalom provides a case study of a patient named Jane. This young woman had been in the habit of attending group therapies. Yet, each time her discourse would only bore her companion on account of its shallowness. Like Mike, it appears that Jane's unconscious mind had displaced the unbearable anxiety of death, and transformed it into a fear of rejection instead. Accordingly, her custom during each session

had become to scan "the sea of faces in the group for dues about what others wanted, and then shaped her statements to please as many people as possible. Anything to avoid offense, to avoid driving others away" (39). In such a manner, Jane had tricked herself into transforming the primordial fear of death into a concern about other people's opinions of her. Although such a method had indeed succeeded in warding off the full weight of the anxiety of death so that Jane herself was not aware of it, and never even entertained thoughts about it, the amount of collateral damage, which impacted her psyche, had caused her worst consequences than the fear of death would have ever done.

Jane's companions in the group therapy had tried their best to help her out and guide her steps in order to unearth her real self, and hear about her own true concerns instead of the petty things she made up to satisfy them. In the course of time, however, the majority had given up, and just abandoned her to her own delusions. In Yalom's words, Jane "drove people away, not from anger but from boredom. It was clear that Jane was in chronic retreat from life." (39) This is how the defense mechanisms against death and the rest of the existential concerns lead to a restriction of growth and culminate eventually in a state of psychopathology. At that stage of her life, Jane's behavior had acquired a number of pathogenic traits in that the balance between finite and infinite in her own perception was entirely lost. The milder concern of which she made use to banish the fear of death had ultimately taken over all her drives so that her sole anxiety summed itself up in how to please people. Like that, Jane was utterly unaware of the fact that she had been harming herself in the process. For although the main purpose of a therapy is to talk about one's concerns with the design of assuaging one's anxieties, her only intention was to entertain and satisfy her comrades.

The concept of the eternal rescuer shares many of the traits that accompany displacement as a defense mechanism against death anxiety. We have previously said that as

a coping mode, the eternal rescuer prompts the individual to relinquish his hold on life and reality, and rely for stability on that higher figure of his own creation. The dangers of such an approach were explained by Soren Kierkegaard, who wrote saying,

> It is dangerous to venture. And why? Because one may lose. But not to venture is shrewd. And yet, by not venturing, it is so dreadfully easy to lose that which it would be difficult to lose in even the most venturesome venture, and in any case never so easily, so completely as if it were nothing . . . one's self. For if I have ventured amiss -- very well, then life helps me by its punishment. But if I have not ventured at all -- who then helps me? And, moreover, if by not venturing at all in the highest sense (and to venture in the highest sense is precisely to become conscious of oneself) I have gained all earthly advantages . . . and lose myself! What of that? (35)

 In other words, the little comfort which the concept of the eternal rescuer might provide as a barrier against the anxiety of death culminates at last in a fatal situation, namely that of losing oneself. For "To remain embedded in another, 'not to venture,' subjects one then to the greatest peril of all - the loss of oneself, the failure to have explored or developed the manifold potentials within oneself" (Yalom131). We have previously mentioned the importance of death as a thought used to regulate life and give it meaning. By operating over someone's psyche, however, the eternal rescuer drives away this idea, and attaches all concerns and interests to a single source and figure instead. Consequently, the individual ends up losing himself in the whirl and endless maze of chasing another. He simply forgets about his own potential and personal goals, and throws himself as an alternative over the destiny of another.

Such are the limitations generated by the displacement and the concept of the eternal rescuer as coping modes employed to deflect the anxiety of death. Given the weight of

such a long term restriction of growth, we understand at last how the germ of psychopathology is embedded within the defense mechanisms rather than within the fear of death itself. Thus, at the end of our theoretical chapter, we are now fully prepared to move into the practical portion of our study. In the next chapters, we shall accordingly make use of all the concepts and notions we have introduced as part of the theoretical framework to investigate Neil Klugman's existential crisis, and explore his fears, anxieties, the coping modes he had employed and the limitations they put over his perception and mode of living.

Conclusion

All things considered, this first chapter serves as the backbone of our study in that it lays the foundation and corner stone for the subsequent analysis of Neil Klugman from existential psychotherapeutic lenses. The character that forms the center of our study is found to display traits, and adopt behavioral patterns typical to the neurotic individual, who experiences difficulties in dealing with the existential concerns in general, and death anxiety in particular.

For these reasons, the opening chapter has been dedicated to an introduction of the theory best fitted for the task of investigating Neil's existential dilemma in a manner that takes into consideration both his psychological struggles and existential challenges. Accordingly, our exploration of existential psychotherapy, as a literary theory founded on the principles of a clinical practice, is mainly based on the findings of Irvin Yalom, and the views of certain Neo-Freudian theorists who have shown great interest towards death as a primordial source of several psychological disturbances.

Our approach focuses thus on death and the defense mechanisms set in motion by the unconscious mind in order to ward it off. The two coping modes we have introduced on account of the similarities they bear to the acts of Neil Klugman are accordingly displacement and the eternal rescuer. Although such implements allow the individual a moment of respite

from the all-oppressing fear which looms round the idea of death, they lead nevertheless to a certain restriction of psychical growth.

Such restriction forms the core of our claim against the reliance on denial-based mechanisms to face the constants of existence. The viewpoint we adopt in this paper sums itself in a number of undesirable traits manifested by Neil, and preventing his adoption of a healthy and efficient approach to life. The next chapter will therefore address Neil's unconscious use of displacement and the eternal rescuer as a means to escape death anxiety, along with the ensuing restriction of growth binding.

Chapter Two:

An Inner Insight into Neil's Existential Crisis

Introduction

The second chapter of this paper forms the first analytical step in our study of Neil Klugman's existential crisis, and focuses on the inner aspects and the elements which caused and led to such a predicament. Accordingly, it follows closely the tracks of our theoretical framework in order to trace each psychical complication to its true genesis. Our objective in so doing is not only to explore and illustrate the manifestation of unconscious defense mechanisms against death anxiety, but also to explain their heavy weight upon Neil's personality, and how they had led to no end of limitations and restrictions.

The first section is accordingly entitled *The Eternal Rescuer*, and its sets the pace of our analysis by localizing the archetypal signs which prove the existence of a latent fear of death in Neil Klugman's psyche. Following this, the next step is to explore and illustrate the manner in which Brenda Patimkin is placed in the position of an eternal rescuer; how such a procedure functions, and what can be expected from it. Needless to say that the center of our focus, at this level, is the detection of all kinds of drawbacks and handicaps that had resulted from this coping mode including passivity, regression, and dependence among others we shall investigate shortly.

The next section bears the title of *Displacement*, and addresses accordingly the defense mechanism of the same name. This portion of the work dissects certain patterns in Neil's behavior in order to demonstrate his reliance on two main forms of displacement; one of self, the other of concerns. The former type is to be duly traced to Neil's exaggerated interest and distress in connection with the black child, who was in the habit of visiting the library. The second type, on the other hand, can be observed in a number of acquired frustrations such as Neil's inferiority complex.

The section entitled *Restriction of Growth* is the last stage of our analysis of Neil's existential crisis from the viewpoint of his own inner bearing. Accordingly, it focuses on

detailing the drawbacks which result from the reliance on defense mechanisms to ward off the fear of death, and which immerse the central character in a sea of psychical wounds that restrict his growth on the one hand, and make of him an easy prey to psychopathology on the other.

1.1. The Eternal Rescuer

Our first chapter, and the theoretical framework of our study, has allowed us to see into the multiple layers of the four existential concerns, and more particularly into death anxiety and the coping modes used to deflect it. Thus, after familiarizing ourselves with these concepts, our present objective is to dig deep into the behavioral patterns of Neil Klugman in order to prove the influence of such conflicts and defense mechanisms upon his acts and decisions. As indicated by its title, this section is dedicated to the analysis of Neil's relationships in terms of the eternal rescuer. But before setting about this task, it is important to shed some light on the symptoms and intimations displayed by Neil, and which suggest the presence of difficulties in dealing with the fear of death in the first place.

Countless theorists have attempted for decades a deconstruction of the fear of death as manifested by the psyche of the neurotic patient, and even by perfectly healthy individuals; for as we have already explained, the fear of death is an inherent part and an unavoidable concern in the life and existence of all human beings. Carl Jung's model of archetypes had, in fact, provided psychoanalysis with a powerful tool to detect the anxiety of death even when veiled under layers of encrypted signs. Existential psychotherapy makes use of the same system, and seeks death accordingly in a number of collective psychical forms such as darkness. "The anthropomorphic fear of death," writes Yalom "lingers with one all through life. Rare is the individual who does not, at some level of awareness, continue to harbor a fear of darkness" (100). Darkness, and the feeling of unease it might trigger, form, therefore, one of the signs under which the fear of death may conceal itself.

Such significant dread of darkness can be clearly observed in the behavior of Neil. Twice in the course of his narration did the topic make its way to his conscious notice, for it had acted strongly enough on his psyche to prompt him into making an open disclosure of such disquietudes. The first instance is connected to the mysterious fears he had experienced when left in utter obscurity with Brenda at her club. "I was having crazy thoughts," he declares ", I knew, and yet they did not seem uncalled for in the darkness and strangeness of that place" (Roth 53). Here, the workings of Neil's mind had merely displayed a collective and archetypal form of the fear of death in the guise of a strange and powerful uneasiness towards darkness. For the latter, we must remember, is likened by the symbolism of archetypes to the eternal silence and blindness of our disembodied spirits after death.

The second reference to the fear of darkness bears a more explicit acknowledgement of death anxiety. "I felt a weird fright again," Neil explains "had momentary thoughts of my own extinction, and that time when I came back I held her tighter than either of us expected" (Roth 53). This passage reveals, in fact, two important details about Neil's conflicted psyche. To begin with, his troubles are directly linked to the fear of death. The latter seems to form a strong enough drive in his psyche to overflow his unconscious mind, and even flirt with his conscious notice by means of the idea of a possible 'extinction'. The second detail launches our analysis of Neil Klugman back into its original track of eternal rescuer. For while oppressed by a strong fear of death and extinction, the first thing he did was to hold Brenda as strongly as he could. In other words, Brenda forms the immediate means for shutting out the idea of death and all its fears. Accordingly, it is she who represents the figure of eternal rescuer in the conflicted psyche of Neil.

In few words, to rely on the figure of an eternal rescuer, and to draw from it unconsciously for support is "to attempt to merge with another whom one perceives as the dispenser of protection and meaning in life. The dominant other may be one's spouse, mother,

father, lover, therapist, or an anthropomorphization of a business or a social institution" (Yalom 133). In the case of Neil Klugman, and for a number of reasons we shall investigate in the course of our analysis, this figure is no other than Brenda Patimkin. What gives the latter the traits of a psychical implement rather than the aspects of an ordinary lover is, in truth, Neil's burgeoning love which "often takes the form of putting her upon a pedestal, elevating her above the majority of her peers, of whom Neil is generally disdainful" (Gooblar 45). This can be traced not only to his acts, but also to his thoughts about Brenda. One very good illustration of that is when the latter had gone shopping in New York while Neil drove to the park of the orange mountains to pass the time. There, he found other spectators of the wild deer, namely a group of young suburban mothers; women just as young and beautiful as his own lover, but to Neil Brenda was "somehow better than these 'immortals,' somehow uncorrupted by her affluence" (46) which emphasizes his unjustified claim of her superiority. When comparing Brenda Patimkin to these young women, the reader can find no apparent trait by means of which she might be placed high above them in the hierarchy of womanhood and existence. Therefore, it is Neil alone who places her as high as a godlike figure in order to satisfy his need for an eternal rescuer.

The figure of the eternal rescuer may, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, provide an illusion of safety, and therefore stability enough to allow the neurotic individual a respite from the anxiety of death. This, however, is nothing but a temporary status that can only be reached and accomplished at the expense of the overall psychical growth and healthy development of the individual. In Neil's case, Brenda's presence had "changed his attitude toward his job and his colleagues," and made him "more assertive and sure of himself" (Nilsen 99) which reflects the stratagem employed by his unconscious mind in order to silence the thought of death, and lead a more or less untroubled existence. Brenda is thus used as a stabilizer and a safeguard against the primordial fear of death. And while a better

professional performance form the bright side of such a coping mode, a compromising restriction of the psyche's maturation represent the hidden and undesirable upshot of such an implement.

By placing Brenda on the pedestal of the eternal rescuer, Neil assumes an inferior position, which he willingly endures in spite of the ensuing psychological strain of degradation. When the two young people had met for the first time after their initial date, for instance, Neil relates how he "held Brenda's glasses for her once again, this time not as momentary servant but as afternoon guest; or perhaps as both, which still was an improvement" (Roth 14). In an article entitled <u>Naming in Philip Roth's Goodbye, Columbus</u> Dr. William A. Francis, professor emeritus of English at the University of Akron, explains how "Neil is threatened, ordered about, likened to a slave, and, on a particular afternoon when Brenda has another fight with her mother, she seeks revenge by ordering Neil to make love to her on an old dusty sofa…He says, 'I obeyed her'" (61). In accordance with such an assertion, Neil is in a way cognizant of his inferiority along the lines he, himself, had set for his union with Brenda, and yet the realization does not seem to bother him. In short, such treatment at the hands of the Patimkins takes on the colors of a fair price to pay in exchange of psychological stability in his conflicted psyche.

The negative effects caused by a reliance on the figure of the eternal rescuer represented by Brenda, however, go beyond the realm of psychological inferiority, and lay the foundation for far graver consequences. Neil's situation can be summed up in his assertion "I didn't care for anything but Brenda," (Roth 17) which explains the behavioral pattern into which he had unconsciously fallen subsequent to their union. "At the Newark Public Library Neil spends his time playing nonsense games to pass the time until he can visit with Brenda" (Francis 61). In a few words, Neil's dependence on Brenda for psychological support against the existential concerns and the anxiety of death had led, in the course of

time, to a form of regression, which made him withdraw and retreat from life. Taking into consideration that Brenda is his unconscious source of safety, protection, and meaning, Neil's psyche had begun to draw back from all activities and social interactions which did not include her. That is why, he preferred going to the park, and isolating himself, one way or another, when he could not be with her.

Furthermore, Neil had bound not only his well-being but also his entire existence to Brenda. This can be observed in his panic attack at the close of the summer, which signaled her approaching departure to school. This event is described in his own words as follow, "I was not joyful but disturbed, as I had been more and more with the thought that when Brenda went back to Radcliff, that would be the end for me." (Roth 75). The very diction of this passage reflects the conflicted state of Neil's psyche and the gravity of his existential dilemma in connection with Brenda. According to him, her departure would not lead to a break up or a state of sadness, but rather to his ultimate 'end'. For this reason, after being "spurred on by his fear that the affair will be over once Brenda returns to Radcliffe," Neil had begun contemplating "a marriage proposal as a way of securing her for himself" (Nilsen 98); a procedure which clearly reflects his desperation at the thought of having to face existence without the support and protection of an eternal rescuer.

Although the idea of an immediate marriage -after an acquaintance of no more than a summer break- is in itself a matter to raise eyebrows, it is by no means the only irrational act attempted or committed by Neil in order to preserve his relationship with Brenda. In a more peculiar scene, he "wanders into a cathedral and informally addresses God," (Gooblar 44) asking for help, guidance, and deliverance out of his unbearable quandary. Such behavioral pattern might seem justified at the beginning, but a closer investigation would soon reveal the absurdity of the whole situation. On the one hand, Neil is not Christian. He is a Jewish young man, who has no business in a cathedral; for even if he wanted to pray, his prayers and

supplications in a Christian church would rather be regarded as blasphemous according to the Jewish creed. On the other hand, Neil is depicted as the end result of an age of secularism. He is by no means a committed Jew or a religious enthusiast. Accordingly, his sudden display of religious fervor is caused entirely by the fear of losing Brenda, and the psychological support and stability which her presence had secured him during the summer break.

The belief in an eternal rescuer, as we have seen, provides much solace against the fear and anxiety of death, and yet "most individuals remain unaware of the structure of their belief system until it fails to serve its purpose; or until as Heidegger put it, there is a 'breakdown in the machinery'" (Yalom 132) for such is the certain end of any such coping modes in the long term. "The ideology may collapse for many reasons: the dominant other may die, leave, withdraw love and attention, or prove too fallible for the task" (133). This is the reason why such psychical implements form the nucleus of psychopathology, and are regarded as dangerous and fatal for the neurotic individual. In Neil's case, nothing is said about his future decisions and approach to life after his separation with Brenda. The novella ends, in fact, with "an ambiguous image of Neil gazing at the window of the Harvard library, looking both inward (at his reflection), and outward (through the window to the books inside)" (Gooblar 213) which signifies his utter loss of landmark after Brenda's desertion. This is the moment his belief system had at last collapsed leaving him lost and bewildered, not knowing what step he ought to take next, and whether he ought to follow his inner drives or outer duties. Such ending justifies our previous claim against the eternal rescuer as a psychical implement more dangerous than the anxiety generated by death itself.

1.2. Displacement

After detailing our analysis of Neil's psyche in terms of the eternal rescuer as a defense mechanism against the anxiety of death, the objective of this section is to explore Neil's use of displacement as a coping mode for the same purpose. Accordingly, this portion

of the work will investigate the two main forms of displacement that are to be traced and found in his behavior, namely a displacement of self and a displacement of concerns. The former type is manifested through Neil's strong interest towards the black boy and his affairs in the library, while the latter can be observed in a number of concerns which came to replace the more urgent and oppressing fear of death.

The first type of displacement we are going to focus on is the displacement of self, which can be seen in Neil's association with the black boy, who came regularly to the library in search of certain books. The latter is portrayed as a colored child, alienated from his community on account of his race, and estranged from his family because of his interests. This is a very significant detail, for such are the circumstances which had made of him an "alter ego" (Kalay 3249) of Neil's in the latter's perception. Let us recollect first what had been said in the theoretical chapter about the manner in which displacement is used as a defense mechanism against the anxiety of death. Displacement, we agreed, includes the creation of a new source of concern that belongs to a lower order with a view to supplant the anxiety of death. Thus, the lighter concern is employed by the unconscious mind as a source of diversion to prevent the fear of death from creeping into the notice of the conscious mind. A link, however, is always present between this lower concern and the individual himself in order to create a strong bond between the two.

In the present case, Neil and the colored child share two main traits, which favor the displacement of the former's existential concerns towards his younger acquaintance. To begin with, both are alienated from the circles they so desire to belong to. On his side, the black boy is disconnected from the rest of the Newark community on account of his race. For a better understanding of the situation, we must take the setting of the novella into consideration, namely New Jersey, United States by the late 1950s. This era marks the end of institutionalized racism in America; yet, it does by no means signify the beginning of a

harmonious coexistence between the different ethnical groups. Schools and living areas were still segregated at the time, so that the white did not associate with the black and vice-versa. Against this background, we understand more clearly why the child was not a welcomed addition in the library in spite of his right to go there as a Newark citizen.

On Neil's side of the equation, his own presence in Short Hills was not welcomed with enthusiasm either. As a citizen belonging originally to the less well-to-do and even poverty-stricken Newark, Neil was regarded as an intruder in the opulent suburb in a manner analogous to the black child's intrusion upon the white community. In a peculiar scene which records Neil's first phone call with Brenda, the latter asks him "Are you a Negro?" (Roth 7) which is very significant to the position we hold since it likens Neil Klugman a little more to the black child who served him as an alter ego. Although the one was a white man of Jewish origins, and the other a colored infant, the two characters are similar in that they were both socially alienated from the circles they so wanted to integrate. In order to shield his own psyche from the repulsive feeling of rejection, Neil's unconscious mind had sought to displace such concerns to the colored boy. Therefore, instead of attending to his own rejection at the hands of the Short Hills wealthy circles, Neil had focused instead on the black child's exclusion from the Newark white community.

At the same time, the colored infant was also estranged from his family as a result of his artistic tastes and interests in paintings. Surging from the poorest part of Newark, he "seems to be an outsider in his family. He is interested in art and we can assume that nobody in his family understands this" (Willim 6). For such reasons, even though the child was not welcomed in the library, he had chosen the cold and disdainful treatment of the attendants over the possibility of taking the book with him to his place. If he did so, the item he so cherished and pursued with no end of interest and admiration would have been then simply destroyed by one of his siblings or even by his parents; for in his circle, fine arts were of no

consequence, and held no importance in the lives of that particular class. Similarly, Neil's appreciation and desire for the life-style of the Short Hills community were received with just as much ridicule and mockery as the little boy's love for art. His family, namely aunt and cousin, had never believed in nor supported his attempts to integrate the Short Hills circles. For this very reason, Neil had assumed the position of a protector towards the black child. Not being able to protect and realize his own desires, he had unconsciously fallen into the track of protecting those of the colored boy instead.

Another bond to unite the two characters can be found in Neil's admiration of the child's ambitions for all that is fine and superior. In a way,

> Neil appreciates the longing of the boy for a freer and more sensuous life which is so powerfully expressed in these colorful scenes and figures. The pictures are part of a chain of imagery which includes a South Sea island and symbolize an alternative life-style which Neil longs for. (Nilsen 97)

Thus, while striving for a better sphere of existence, the black child draws for Neil an image of his own self, and a representation of his own desires and dreams. Being himself in need of support and protection, as demonstrated in the previous section through the concept of the eternal rescuer, Neil had accordingly displaced his own needs and drives into the child. Accordingly, by protecting him and doing all he could to prolong his happiness, Neil had been unconsciously assuaging his own needs for protection.

Such procedure, however, is not without its drawbacks. For although "Neil directs this sentiment toward the Negro boy, it applies no less to himself" (Harvell 26). Thus, this approach enhances, on the one hand, the formerly mentioned regression and withdrawal from practical life in that it prompts Neil to neglect and flee the real issues of his life in the pursuit of others of a lower order. On the other hand, it weights down his psyche with utterly unnecessary concerns. Neil describes his own frame of mind saying, "Over the next week and

a half there seemed to be only two people in my life: Brenda and the little colored kid." (Roth 47) which confirms his unconscious use of these two individuals as assets for displacement and the concept of eternal rescuer. Thoughts about the black kid and his well-being had, in truth, harassed Neil to the extent of jeopardizing his job in order to secure the young reader his favorite book. "I was able, not without flushing once or twice," Neil confesses "to get the book back in the stocks when the colored kid showed up later in the day, it was just where he'd left it the afternoon before" (48). In this manner, this coping mode had, in the course of time, caused Neil to follow a course of action that is not only detrimental to his psychical growth, but also damaging to his career and social life.

The second form of displacement, namely the displacement of concerns is only another pattern to the same coping mode. The way in which it manifests itself, however, is a little different and can therefore be better explained by means of an illustration provided by Yalom. In the course of writing his book Existential Psychotherapy, the latter relates how he had been involved in a dangerous car accident. While the driver of the other car had been seriously injured, Yalom himself had nothing but scratches. And yet, not all injuries are physical. The accident had, in fact, triggered Yalom's death anxiety which, as explained above, was more likely to take another shape after being distorted by one coping mode or another. Accordingly, it had taken the form of displacement, and triggered a minor concern in the psychiatrist's mind in order to free him from a more oppressing fear.

Yalom explains how shortly after the accident he became aware of a change in his behavior. Before that, he was in the habit of lunching with his colleagues, and taking pleasure at the conversations they entertained together. Immediately after the accident, however, he comments saying,

I developed intense anxiety around these lunches. Would I have anything of significance to say? How would my colleagues regard me? Would I make a fool

of myself? After a few days the anxiety was so extreme that I began to search for excuses to lunch elsewhere by myself. (44)

From this passage, we observe how the existential concern of death and the anxiety it generates had been displaced and transformed into another concern of a less dangerous nature, namely that of social self-consciousness.

In order to shut off the thought of death, triggered in Yalom's case by the car accident, his defense mechanism had sought to create another fear to occupy his conscious mind. "I 'handled' death anxiety by repression and displacement" (188) he explains pointing to the downside of such a coping mode, "My fundamental death anxiety thus had only a brief efflorescence before being secularized to such lesser concerns as self-esteem, fear of interpersonal rejection, or humiliation" (45). Based on this explanation, we reach the conclusion that although the immediate fear of death is deflected by means of multiple lesser concerns created at an unconscious level, this course of action leads to no end of limitations. Even in the case of Yalom, who happens to be a psychiatrist and an authority on the subject, such method had led to a set of psychical limitations, and ultimately to a withdrawal from practical life.

The same unfolding of events applies to Neil Klugman, who displaces his anxiety of death to an inferiority complex observed in his behavioral pattern round the members of the Patimkin family. This can be linked to the concept of the eternal rescuer as well, for after placing Brenda high above the rest of humanity, her family by association was placed just as high. Consequently, Neil had developed, in the course of time, feelings of inferiority that rendered him self-conscious, passive, and hesitant in his interactions with them. This can be observed in his own bearing and thoughts during the dinner to which he was invited by the Patimkins, and which he describes as follow,

It was a pleasure, except that eating among those Brobdingnags, I felt for quite a

while as though four inches had been clipped from my shoulders, three inches

from my height, and for good measure, someone had removed my ribs and my

chest had settled meekly in towards my back. (Roth 22)

Neil, we must bear in mind, had no rational ground to feel as degraded as that even

when surrounded by far wealthier people than himself; for he is portrayed as a descent

looking young man, and an intellectual with a university degree in philosophy. And yet, just

like Yalom, his fear of death had found an outlet through displacement and a transformation

to a lack of self-esteem.

The amount of regression and withdrawal from life caused by displacement as a

defense mechanism is, therefore, far greater and more harmful than a direct encounter with

death. In some cases, it might even trigger outbursts of irrational acts like the one displayed

by Neil in his basketball or ping pong matches with Brenda's little sister. "Suddenly, I

wanted to win," he explains "to run little Julie into the ground" (Roth 28) which reflects the

amount of bewildering tension arising from the unnecessary concerns created by his defense

system to shut out the anxiety of death, and their detrimental influence on his acts and

reasoning. On the whole, this section explains the manner in which displacement was used by

Neil as a defense mechanism against the fear of death. Accordingly, the next portion of the

work will give more particulars about the drawbacks and complications which resulted from

such a process.

1.3.   Restriction of Growth

After poring over the details and manners in which Neil Klugman's psyche makes use

of displacement and the eternal rescuer as defense mechanisms against the anxiety of death,

we have come to notice a considerable number of drawbacks which form indeed the germ of

psychopathology, and make of such coping modes a more dangerous and precarious factor

than the fear of death itself. Accordingly, the task of this last section is to explore more of these impediments and handicaps in order to demonstrate with crystal clarity their nefarious influence over Neil's approach to life, and the amount of restriction and limitation they have caused him.

The first thing to be noticed in Neil's bearing as early as the first pages of the novella is a considerable amount of passivity and a state of curious inaction, which spreads even to his daily habits. In the absence of his parents, Neil is left in the care of his aunt and her family with whom he stays notwithstanding the fact that he is a grown up man with a job and the possibility of independence. When Brenda asks him why he stays with them, and whether it is because they are better people than his parents, he answers in the negative, and that they are even worse, adding "I don't know why I stay with them," (Roth 50) which sums us the state into which he had fallen on account of the coping modes used by his psyche to deflect the anxiety of death. Neil had, in the course of time, given way unconsciously to a state of chronic inactivity and regression; letting thus other people control his life in order for such a dreadful responsibility not to fall on his own shoulders. This is visible even in the minutest details of his life. When he sits to dinner at his aunt's, for instance, the latter "sits across the table, rapt with attention, monitoring what he eats" (Gooblar 43). In this manner, even the responsibility of regulating his own meals is done away with in order to create an illusion of an existence as removed from burdens and obligations as possible.

In a way, "Neil is caught up between the life of Aunt Gladys and that of the Patimkins," (Gooblar 45) for he has no separate or independent existence of his own. When he is at home, he follows the regulations established by his aunt. When he is with Brenda, he adjusts to the rules dictated by her circle. In his 1952 book Symbols of Transformation Carl Jung explains a similar frame of mind saying that all the things that were tied up in family bonds during the early years of one's life,

…must be withdrawn from the narrower circle into the larger one, because the

psychic health of the adult individual, who in childhood was a mere particle

revolving in a rotary system, demands that he should himself become the centre

of a new system. (438-439).

That, in Neil's case, is a process that was never accomplished. In spite of his capacity to start an independent life as most healthy adults do, he had chosen instead to stay with his aunt and deleguate to her the task of regulating his life as though he were still a child. Afterwards, this responsibility was shifted to Brenda, to whom he had relinquished even his own freedom in order to merge with her as an eternal rescuer in the manner we have already explained.

On top of that, Neil's system of defenses does not stop at the level of regression and rejection of responsibility, but goes on a step further to that of alienation. The latter state is known in psychology as a condition which occurs when an individual becomes isolated and withdraws from their environment. This can be easily traced to the behavioral pattern of Neil who "establishes a distance between himself and his colleagues and wants to define himself in terms of his opposition to them, just as he does in relation to his own family and, later, to that of Brenda" (Nilsen 97). This approach can be regarded as a desperate measure of self-isolation enacted by the unconscious mind in order to sever any possible connection with active life and its responsibilities. In his work place, Neil has no friends and therefore no connections. He shields himself against any such possible bond by means of distaste towards his environment and the life-style of its members. At home, the same approach is adopted. Besides the meals he takes in the company of his aunt, Neil attempts to have nothing else to do with her or with the other members of the family. Surprisingly, this applies to the Patimkins as well, for in spite of his desire to integrate their circle, Neil's unconscious mind

had managed to isolate him all the same by means of a constant opposition that can be read and observed in the unfavorable way he uses to describe them at times.

In the course of an existence marked by passivity, dependence, and alienation, Neil ultimately loses sight of any sort of landmark along the way. On account of his rejection of responsibility and a healthy active life-style, he is constantly tossed about between the two sanctuaries he had chosen for himself, namely his aunt's family and Brenda's own. Hence, he gets the feeling that "his life is positioned somewhere in between these two extremes, but he is not sure yet which way of life he will make his own" (Willim 4). That is why he adopts the passive approach we have just explained in his interaction with both circles, and which can be read as a "desire to stand aside so as not to get involved in the dangerous struggle for existence". At the same time, however, "anyone who refuses to experience life must stifle his desire to live—in other words, he must commit partial suicide" (Jung 113) which, in truth, is very accurate in Neil's case, for a life of such passivity and withdrawal is no life at all.

Another drawback caused by the reliance on coping modes against the anxiety of death takes the form of projection. Instead of assuming the full responsibility for his own acts and life, Neil often puts the blame on other people, mostly his parents and family members. In connection with his father and mother **"**Neil does not seem to miss them and he calls them 'penniless deserters'" (Willim 4) which gives us a hint about what stands behind such a dislike in the first place. On the one hand, he describes them as penniless. As we shall see in the following chapter, money is a factor of a colossal importance in Neil's life. Consequently, the fact that his parents are of a humble origin and had, therefore, no legacy to bestow on him had set the son violently against them. In a word, instead of working hard for the money he so mush desires, Neil simply puts the blame on his parents for not making a rich heir out of him. On the other hand, he calls them deserters on account of their departure to another state for healthcare reasons. We have already mentioned how in spite of his adulthood, Neil clings still

to the care of his elders as if he were still an infant. Thus, he grudges them the act of leaving him behind even though such a procedure is but natural given the fact that their son is a grown up man capable of taking care of himself, and even starting a new family on his own.

Neil extends such projection to his aunt and her family as well, for in his eyes they "will always be stuck in their class, Which might hinder his chances of leading a life only dependent on his decisions" (Willim 5). In this manner, Neil displaces his own inability to live up to his own ideals, and projects such incapacity on his family members. As an employee in a public library, part of him already knows that his dreams and desires for a life of opulence like that of the Patimkins is not to be reached by following such a reclusive career. Yet, instead of making a change and working for the goal he so much desires, his already withdrawing psyche projects the blame instead on the family members who hold accordingly the position of scapegoats. In one scene, he even tells Brenda "I'm not planning anything; I haven't planned a thing in three years" (Roth 51) which shows how out of place are the dreams and desires he harbors with the efforts he makes to accomplish them. "Not being a 'planner' also implies that Neil does not live his life very actively, but that work and love rather happen to him" (Willim 6) which is but the outcome of the regression and withdrawal we have already mentioned and explained.

An additional obstacle, which results from the employment of defense mechanisms against the existential fear of death, takes the form of an inferiority complex in Neil's psyche. We have already explained how the concept of eternal rescuer had triggered such feelings in Neil's mind. Another factor, however, is represented by the monetary and social conflicts which we shall investigate and detail later on in the work. Thus, on account of his humble origins, and because he had previously placed Brenda and her family above all mortals, Neil had at last manifested an inferiority complex, which played havoc with his thoughts and drives. Because he felt his way of life to be inferior to that of the Patimkins (Harvell 4) Neil

had often exhibited a submissive behavior when dealing with them. This approach, however, had taxed his mind, and culminated at last in irrational outbursts of anger like the one that occurred during a ping pong match with Brenda's younger sister. This bullying victory of his can be regarded as a "subconscious bid to feel more equal to the Patimkins" (23). This course of events reflects the damaging effects of such coping modes not only upon Neil's psyche, but also on his acts, decisions, and behavioral pattern.

In the bigger picture, all these psychical impediments, which had originated in the coping modes employed to deflect the anxiety and fear of death, were very damaging to Neil's mental health on the one hand, and highly detrimental to his social relations and life style on the other. That being the case, the narrator and central character of Roth's novella is placed "in a world where he fits neither the urban life style mold of neither his family nor the Christianized, suburban existence of the Patimkins" (Harvell 17). Because he had alienated himself, withdrew from life, and led a passive existence of dependence and projection, Neil had ultimately failed in finding both a social position in his community, and a meaningful standing in life. Accordingly, he felt like an outsider both at home among the members of his own family, and with Brenda at the epicenter of a class he so desired to integrate. For the same reasons, Neil's intellect was laid to waste in a sorry manner. As a university graduate in the field of philosophy, Neil is portrayed as a highbrow, who can read through people and analyze their acts with great accuracy. Unfortunately, however, "the wise, clever man fails to see his own folly and to face his own fears…he does not see himself in clear focus. And after breaking up with Brenda he is not much the wiser" (Francis 59). Misled by the psychical implements of his own mind, Neil had failed in the task of locating the problem and attending to it. Instead, he had drowned himself in an ocean of minor concerns which only confused and jeopardized his life.

By the end of the novella, Neil is seen facing his own reflection on the shiny surface of a library window. He looks at himself, yet at the same time through the glass at the book shelves, which suggests that he is still out of focus. Therefore, breaking up with Brenda does not mean that Neil was getting his life back and bracing himself for a healthier approach towards existence. Instead, the ending implies that Neil has simply lost the support and protection of his eternal rescuer,

> And so he returns to the Newark Public Library neither 'champion' nor 'wise man,' to the perilous high chair of Miss Winney. In placing his hero on that chair, Philip Roth suggests that Neil's future will continue to be uncertain, that he will wander long before he ever finds his safe port and his own world, one without Brenda and her loud quarrelsome family of seaborne giants. (Francis 62)

In order to achieve his process of individuation, Neil needs to let go willingly of the semblance of security, and the illusion of protection supplied by defense mechanisms. The story ends with Neil and Brenda breaking up. In other words, he did not let go of her on his own accord, but had rather lost her against his will. This is why we see him looking both at his reflection and at the interior of the library, metaphorically lost between the two. At last, he flees again in direction of work. Now that he can no longer hide in the shadow of his lover, he turns instead to the next best thing, namely the strain of work. While busing himself with that, Neil can deflect again his old anxiety. Thus, the same concerns had remained; it is only the means which changed.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, our second chapter rests for the most part on the concepts dealt with in the theoretical framework. Accordingly, it makes use of such cognitive data in order to comprehend the inner workings of Neil Klugman's mind, and get to the bottom of his fears, anxieties, and defense system. The main objective, as we have seen, has been to sound

out such approach towards death and its existential fear in order to explore its drawbacks, and demonstrate the dangers of relying on it.

In view of this, the first two sections have been dedicated to a minute study of displacement and the eternal rescuer; this time not merely as theoretical concepts but as manifestations in Neil's own behavior. This step has enabled us to comprehend much of what had seemed enigmatic before. We have managed to trace Neil's weaknesses and psychical difficulties to their genesis, and explore by the same token the role played by defense mechanisms in the making of psychopathology by means of a set of drawbacks that are more or less manifest in his acts, feelings, and decisions.

The third and last section ends the present chapter and our analysis of the inner side of Neil's existential dilemma by enumerating and detailing the set of drawbacks traced previously in Neil's behavior as the outcome of his reliance on defense mechanisms. Accordingly, it points out the detrimental nature of passivity, withdrawal from life, dependence, displacement, projection, and inferiority complexes on his mind. In the long run, such handicaps, as we have seen, lead ultimately to a condition graver and far more dangerous than the direct exposure to the fear of death.

Thus, we conclude the second chapter of our study with an important note on how did Neil Klugman fail in his task of individuation because of his over reliance on defense mechanisms against the anxiety of death. At the end, we must bear in mind that "the incorporation of death into life enriches life; it enables individuals to extricate themselves from smothering trivialities, to live more purposefully and more authentically" (Yalom 54) which confirms once again our claim against the use of such coping modes in the presence of means for healthy transcendence and efficient individuation.

Chapter Three:

An Outer View of Neil's Existential Crisis

Introduction

Every Man is the product of his society, either consciously or unconsciously. Even when he stands against the views and principles upon which his community is founded, he bears nonetheless the weight of its legacy. This phenomenon can be clearly observed in the field of literature, where even authors, who revolt against their societies, are but a reflection of it. The same principle applies to psychopathologies. Oftentimes, such complications, if not caused by a decaying social structure, are maintained at least by its perverse whirl. Neil's condition is no different, for while the existential dilemma, we cover in this paper, was largely caused by his inability to transcend the fear of death, such anxiety had also been nourished and aggravated by the social order in a manner analogous to the effect of fire and fuel. Accordingly, this third and last chapter focuses particularly on the outer conditions and factors which had favored the deterioration of Neil Klugman's psychical state and frame of mind.

The first of such factors is the ideology of secularism, which is tackled and simplified in a section named after it. By explaining the importance of religion in ensuring the psychological well-being of Man in regard to his existential conflicts, this portion of the work points out the faulty upbringing of Neil in an environment that converted religion into a social value, thus depriving it of its personal traits and effectiveness in dealing with such concerns. The second section expands this line of thoughts, and is accordingly entitled *Classicism* on account of its focus on the effects of class struggle. It demonstrates the manner in which ostracism had channeled Neil's anxiety of death into different concerns related to social belonging.

The last section bears the title of *Consumerism and the Limitations of Comfort*, and has for an objective the exploration of the outcomes of the consumerist culture, which immerses the individual in an atmosphere of leisure with a view to suppress his individuality.

Such an approach is founded on the idea of herd morality, which generates no end of psychological impediments and handicaps in connection with the existential concerns. Accordingly, the goal of this section is to investigate the outcomes of a life of acquisition on the conflicted psyche of Neil, and how it had come in the way of his individuation, barring the prospect of efficient death transcendence.

1.1. Secularism:

In a chapter that focuses on the peripheral causes and the external factors, which had favored the decline and dwindling of Neil Klugman's psychical condition into one of a pathogenic nature, the first section and the cornerstone for a new analytical direction is entitled *Secularism*. Surely, the appellation is but a reflection of the content of this portion of the work, which adopts for a focal point the religious question and its weight on the psychological and existential well-being of the individual. To be more specific, our objective is to explore the ultimate results of Neil's life in the midst of an increasingly secular society, and investigate how did such an environment act upon and influence his existential crisis.

In order to grasp the real meaning of secularism, and comprehend the importance it plays in a society founded upon its principles, we must turn first to religion with a view to understand its necessity in the making of a stable and a meaningful existence, and then deduce the upshot of its absence in a secular regime. When speaking of religion, people often refer to the major organized religions. Hence, it is essential to stress that these organized forms are only part of the bigger picture. Throughout history and up to the present day, thousands of religions have been circulating. Some of which are practiced by small groups of people; others are even personal creeds with little to no formal organization. This is important to know because the concept of religion is oftentimes judged on the basis of people's opinions in regard to the major organized creeds. If such views are negative, religion is

accordingly stigmatized erroneously as something of little to no value at all. In the course of time, this very procedure has led to the propagation of secularism.

Religion -when thought of outside the bonds of such widely spread fallacies- can be explained in terms of its personal nature; in other words, in terms of the personal experiences and emotions it illicit through rituals and worship. In his 2011 book Religion in Human Evolution, American sociologist Robert N. Bellah defines religion as "a system of symbols that, when enacted by human beings, establishes powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations that make sense in terms of an idea of a general order of existence" (15). These words stress the powerful emotions evoked when the individual is in constant relationship with whatever he may consider all-important. Such a relationship plays the role of the well from which the answers to certain existential questions are drawn; questions that have long plagued and tormented the human mind. In the light of the foregoing, we can say that one of religion's primary characteristics and objectives is its attempt to provide answers of fundamental questions about human existence and Man's position in the universe.

We have previously reached the conclusion that the deep-seated anxiety of death is an irrevocable component of human existence on account of the inadequacy of life, and the haunting truths, which assail us on both conscious and unconscious levels; a difficulty from which our daily routine offers no consolation. The fact that our lives and the lives of the people for whom we care are destined to complete annihilation is a very uncomfortable thought, and one that can consume us entirely under certain circumstances. This is why, a set of defense mechanisms is often resorted to as a means to push away such fear and escape its immediate anxiety. Man, however, cannot flee forever what is embedded in his own psyche. Consequently, the fear of death is destined to resurface one way or another. When it does, a different means of escape is necessary to secure a balanced and an untroubled condition. For countless decades and long centuries, religion has, in fact, played this role like no other

implement. Most religions provide texts and stories that quell our doubt and suppress the existential fears. This can be seen in the way, in which, religion answers the questions about the purpose of our lives, how we should be living them, and what would happen to us once we are dead. Thus, through rituals, different forms of worship, adherence to certain moral codes, and relationship with what we consider divine, religion seeks to provide and create a realm of certainty that is strong enough to resist the world of daily life with all its doubt and insecurity.

Up to the age of enlightenment, religion was largely unchallenged in its role of providing Man with psychological and existential stability. But following the scientific revolution, the belief in religious dogmas had been put to question like never before. Some went as far as to suggest that science was slowly destroying the foundation on which all religions were built. Accordingly, religion had simply lost its hold over Man's destiny during the following decades; partly because science had come between Man and belief -providing new and different answers to his questions, and partly because corruption had made its way into the religious sphere, and sowed doubts as to its validity. As a result, religion had been stripped of its previous personal aspects, and of the personal experiences which made it efficient in the face of existential doubts. This view point is elaborated in a poem by Fyodor Dostoevsky entitled The Grand Inquisitor and included in his 1880 novel The Brothers Karamazov,

> So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be together in it. This craving for community worship is

the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. (235)

This passage illustrates the herd-like traits which became a fundamental aspect of mass religions. As noted above, this state of affairs had led to a decline in the religious fervor of Man, and in due time to a collapse of religion paralleled by the rise of secularism.

In America, secularism had acquired an institutionalized aspect during the early years of the 20th century with the propagation of the secular movement, which bore the traits of a social and political trend. In 1925, for instance, The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism was founded. In 1941, The American Humanist Association followed suit. Such organizations and establishments had given none-theistic Americans, secular humanists, atheists, agnostics, and free-thinkers the opportunity to gain visibility, and consequently to grow in number. Accordingly, the age itself had acquired the characteristics of secularism; separating law and life regulations from religion. In Goodbye, Columbus, such traits can be detected in Neil's position in regard to religion. The narrator and central character of the novella is, in truth, portrayed as the end result of a gradually increasing secular community. His "concept of God is jocular, but it also embodies his satirical view of religion as an integrated part of the whole bourgeois value system of an acquisitive middle class" (Nilsen 99). Hence, we perceive that religion had lost its weight and reliability in the perception of Man. The ultimate upshot was a generation of young people like Neil, who never took it quite seriously, or looked upon it as anything more than a class value.

Neil's estrangement from religion, and his perception of dogmas in general as a mere class standard can be observed with more clarity in the scene of his private interview with Mrs. Patimkin. The latter is portrayed as a zealous Jewess; not because of any religious fervor in her bosom, but because she belongs to the upper bourgeoisie – a social group to whom religion, as mentioned above, represents an emblem and a class value. In this scene, Mrs.

Patimkin converses with the young man with less frigidity than ever. Neil notices the change in her behavior and comments upon it saying, "Mrs. Patimkin, I thought, had begun to warm to me; she let the purple eyes stop peering and just looked out at the world for a while without judging" (Roth 87). The reason behind this change is none other than a hint supplied by Neil in connection with his family's religious practices. In thinking that Neil's family had been engaged in religious practice like herself, Mrs. Patimkin found a momentary link and meeting point between her own class and the obscure origin of her daughter's lover; especially that such origins represent in a way the unpleasant past of the Patimkin family as we shall see in a later section. In contrast with Mrs. Patimkin, however, Neil "could not care less about the different religious persuasions within Judaism" (Willim 10). He had even worshipped in a Christian cathedral, not to mention his perception of God, or attitude towards religion. Accordingly, when Brenda's mother had sensed such disinterestedness, she simply relapsed into her previous attitude. Neil had soon realized his mistake and that it was somewhat foolish "to risk lightheartedness with her about Jewish affairs" (Roth87). This entire situation demonstrates how did religion become a mere social and class implement; for it inspired neither Neil nor Mrs. Patimkin with any true devotion, and had implied no personal experience. Accordingly, it failed in its task of providing assurance against existential anxiety.

Such a religious decline in the midst of a secular environment had caused a tremendous impact on people's approach to life, and the manner in which they dealt with existential fears and concerns. Neil, for one, had been greatly impaired by his own lifestyle and religious skepticism. In his 1958 book The Undiscovered Self, Jung explains a similar state saying, "Under the influence of scientific assumptions, not only the psyche but the individual man …suffers a leveling down and a process of blurring that distorts the picture of reality into a conceptual average" (8). That is to say when applied to the present case, that the

religious decline in America during the 1950s onward had exerted a considerable pressure upon Neil's psyche, which deprived him of a valuable means to quell his existential doubts. Consequently, a deep-seated fear of a meaningless existence and career had surged into his conscious thoughts in the form of the antipathy he withheld in regard to his colleagues' lifestyle. In a way, he feared "that one day he will be like his fellow employees, lifeless, uninteresting, and uninterested," (Gooblar 50). Thus, in the absence of a religious ideal, and the over reliance on science and secularism, the spiritual and existential concerns of the individual were neglected and thrust back into the unconscious sphere.

At the same time, Neil's attraction towards the life of the Patimkins is greatly influenced by his deficient religious training. When he goes on an errand to their work place, for instance, he "recognizes that he is unsuited for such a life. He is not robust enough for the work, but, on the other hand, he is attracted to the neighborhood where the company is located" (Nilsen 98). In other words, Neil is attracted to the lives of the Patimkins on account of the privileges they enjoy, and the power they hold in society by dint of their wealth. To his humble upbringing, such riches paint them in the colors of gods. This procedure and distorted perception allows him to evade the responsibility of work in accordance with the concept of the eternal rescuer, and is largely the end result of the secular influence in his environment.

By and large, this first section focuses on religion and its role as a provider of psychological and existential stability. When such a fundamental function is explained and assimilated, the complications evoked by a secular regime become quite evident. So far, we have explained the manner in which religion can form a remedy to certain existential concerns by dint of its focus on personal experiences. We have also tackled the secular movement in America, and explored how such a new system had impaired the functioning of religion. On account of science, and because the religious sphere had fallen a victim to corruption, religion was deprived of the traits which had formerly given it strength in the face

of existential and psychological strains and conflicts. Accordingly, religion itself had become a simple social value attached to the practices and ideals of a given class. Neil's upbringing under such circumstances had taxed his psyche and deprived him of a valuable means to transcend the fear of death.

1.2. Classism

One of the major concerns in Roth's novella is the social gulf and the chasm placed between the different classes in New Jersey of the 1950s. This side of the story is of such a colossal importance in the steering of events that if our study were not concerned with Neil Klugman's existential crisis, it would have been centered round the ongoing class conflict between his own social group on the one hand, and the nouveaux riches towering above in the guise of the residents of Short Hills on the other. This issue forms, nonetheless, an important factor in connection with Neil's pathogenic tendencies in that it provides a suitable environment for the initiation of psychopathological traits and behavioral patterns. Accordingly, the present section will focus on classism, and the part it plays in impairing the psyche of Neil and enforcing his existential dilemma.

In order to fathom the full depth of the existential questions and psychological doubts, which the iron grip of a classist society had inflamed and intensified, we must begin by recalling Jung's remarks in Freud and Psychoanalysis in connection with the outbreak of neurosis, and precisely how it is not "…just a matter of chance; as a rule it is most critical. It is usually the moment when a new psychological adjustment, that is, a new adaptation, is demanded. Such moments facilitate the outbreak of a neurosis." (246) In light of this, and bearing in mind that Neil's first apparent signs of a tormented psyche had only risen to the surface following his meeting and getting together with Brenda, we can declare the latter event as the genesis and starting point of his crisis. Upon meeting Brenda for the first time, Neil's psyche had been taxed and compelled to adjust to her habits, expectations, and

standards. Such need to adapt was brought about by the colossal differences between the pair's means, customs, and lifestyles; in short, by the tremendous differences which distinguished their classes. Originating from the humble Newark, a direct contact with Short Hills and the endless riches of the Patimkins had signaled to Neil's perception the necessity for adaptation with a new environment. This step, however, had also facilitated his outbreak of neurosis, which while maintained by the internal implements we have detailed in the previous chapter, was also affected by external factors among which class clash holds a firm and strong position.

The potency of such a struggle can be noted in the constant thoughts channeled by Neil into a continual class-consciousness, which went hand in hand with his inferiority complex. Throughout their time together, "Neil is unable to forget the difference in status between Brenda and himself" (Gooblar 44). On the one hand, this was caused by his approach towards the Patimkins along the lines of the eternal rescuer as a defense mechanism, and by dint of the godly image they had acquired in his psyche in the midst of a secular regime and a society that worshipped money. On the other hand, however, this difference in status was aggravated by the wide gulf which stood between the two different classes, causing them to be alienated the one from the other. One excellent example of that can be observed in Neil's first phone call with Brenda. While introducing himself, Neil had tried to remind her of his cousin's identity, given that the latter was a member of the same club. Brenda, however, could neither recall him nor his cousin in spite of their interaction only few hours earlier. In short, Brenda and the rest of the Short Hills community refused to see and consider the existence of those who belonged to a lower order than their own.

This state of affairs had caused the representatives of the two classes to harbor a constant grudge and a sort of hostility towards each others. When Neil had asked his cousin to hold Brenda's glasses, for instance, the latter answered with quite unnecessary warmth,

"Put them down. I'm not her slave" (Roth 15) which illustrates the way with which those at the lower end of the class system had looked upon their counterparts from a wealthier and more powerful sphere. In a way, such a latent anger and violent bearing are to be found even in the behavioral pattern of Neil himself. For in spite of his compulsive attachment towards Brenda in accordance with the concept of the eternal rescuer, his less well-to-do origin had oppressed him with a growing sense of inferiority when compared to the opulence and ease of Brenda's family. Accordingly, there are clear tinges of anger and satirical irony to be traced in his thoughts and even conduct and demeanor towards the Patimkins. One good illustration of that is his assertion "some of my anger at her 'Boston' remark floated off and I let myself appreciate her" (11), which reveals the presence of anger in abeyance in regard to her class superiority, and the gulf which spread wide between them.

Such estrangement and hostility, however, do not form the fare of the lower classes alone. Similar feelings can be observed in the bearing and manners of the citizens of Short Hills as well. When Brenda and Neil had met by appointment for the first time, the former was playing Tennis against another girl bearing the name of Laura Simpson Stolowitch. On the following day, Brenda had invited Neil to the club where he remarked that Laura "was, in fact, walking somewhere off at the far end of the pool, avoiding Brenda and me because (I liked to think) of the defeat Brenda had handed her the night before; or maybe (I didn't like to think) because of the strangeness of my presence" (Roth15). This sort of behavior reflects the wide schism between the two classes, and how did those on top of the social ladder look down with frigidity upon those at the lower end. Like the greater number of her own class, Laura had refused to have any link with the less well-to-do, who would only drag her down the social hierarchy again. This is why she stayed away from Brenda as long as Neil was in sight. The same applies to Brenda's brother, who upon perceiving his sister in the pool had come to greet and talk to her. All the while, Neil's existence was thrust back into

nothingness. The siblings had simply ignored his existence; Brenda because he was not an acquaintance of whom she was particularly proud, Ron because he was simply wired on the principles of his own class, and could, consequently, see or take interest in no one below his own level.

As a member of the less fortunate social group, Neil "wants to establish contact with a member of a different class to get the possibility of a different life-style. He knows that associating with Brenda would open up this opportunity" (Willim 5). Such a design operates on an unconscious level in accordance with the previously mentioned defense mechanisms. Thus, the already conflicted young man who lived in a secular society, which worshiped money and treated people in keeping with their monetary value, had been unconsciously led by the principles of his own community to place Brenda and her family above all mortals in his own circle; not only because their wealth and lifestyle represented all he had ever wished for, but also because a connection with Brenda was equivalent to a key that gave him access to spheres and realms he had no means to unlock otherwise. This insight into the social and economical circumstances of Neil gives an additional explanation of the manner in which his defense system had involved the Patimkins as a coping mode.

The class clash between Neil's own circle and the bourgeoisie of Short Hills acts, in fact, as a constant source of pressure and a reminder of Brenda's importance and significance in his life, which empowers the concept of the eternal rescuer against more efficient ways to transcend the fear and anxiety of death. When driving down the alleys of that opulent neighborhood, Neil feels like an "intruder in their suburban paradise", for the lights are on but the windows are closed, and "These people refuse to share the very texture of life with those…outside" (Harvell 19). It was the accumulation of such external factors as the propagation of secularism and the acuteness of class conflict, in addition to the internal implements already mentioned, which had prompted Neil into a line of thoughts that

positioned the lifestyle of the Patimkins as the only true life conceivable and worth living. Shrinking from the struggles of existence on account of his regression and the conflicted state of his psyche, his life in a secular community had favored the rise of a compulsive desire for more security. The latter state was exactly what a union with Brenda had represented to Neil, at least on an unconscious level. This can be ascertained by recalling his antipathy towards the lifestyle of his colleagues in the library. Their lives represented, in all probability, his future existence. Accordingly, whenever he looked at them, he perceived his future opportunities and future self, which apparently failed to meet the high expectations he had come to nurture and hope for by dint of an alliance with the Patimkins.

Neil's social ascendency, however, was by no means a fair or smooth process. Even though he had managed to unite himself with Brenda for a certain period, he could never breach the gap which separated him from the other members of her family, who did "constantly underline the fact that he is from a lower social class" (Willim 9). Their treatment and reaction had, in fact, added to the ongoing strain upon his psyche; for while he desired nothing more than to belong to their rank, Neil was constantly reminded of his social inferiority, which his mind had registered as a trait of personal mediocrity leading accordingly to an inferiority complex. On top of that, the same strain had led to his estrangement from the very circle he wanted to integrate. When he was asked to babysit Julie, for instance, Neil declares, "For a while I remained in the hall, bitten with the urge to slide quietly out of the house, into my car, and back to Newark, where I might even sit in the alley and break candy with my own" (Roth 40). Except that such estrangement applied to the Newark community as well, and thus he was left hanging between two classes he did not belong to. What made the Patimkins so intent upon rejecting Neil, as a suitor to Brenda, however, was the fact that he represented their own unpleasant past. The Patimkins, we must remember, are portrayed as nouveaux riches; in other words, the bourgeoisie which had

accumulated enough money in a short period of time to ascend the social ladder, and move from a class to another. Accordingly, a constant dread of degradation and deterioration had come to haunt them. Such dread was personified in Neil and his obscure origins, which explains why they were so opposed to his union with Brenda afterwards.

The inevitable result of such a situation had been a social alienation that added to the strain of Neil's internal conflict and existential dilemma. In short, Neil was completely unsatisfied with his life. "He does not feel at home with his uncle and aunt…and he does not get on well with his cousin. His job appears to be an unloved duty and he does not like his colleagues. He wishes to escape the limitations of his lower-middleclass world" (Willim 13). This passage illustrates the upshot of Neil's life in a secular community, and how the class ostracism to which he was subjected had acted perversely on his psyche, prompting him to hold desperately onto Brenda and the Patimkins as the only means to reach the stability and opulence capable of shielding him from the challenges of life. By so striving towards a complete integration into a different class than his, Neil was alienated from his own in the process. Such estrangement took on the form of the antipathy we have already mentioned in regard to his family and colleagues, in parallel with an increasing desire to belong to the Short Hills community, and enjoy their privileges and riches. These privileges are, in truth, the one thing that endeared the thought of a union with Brenda to his conflicted psyche. Such union signified a lasting sanctuary and refuge from existential concerns on the one hand, and life struggles on the other.

1.3. Consumerism and the Limitations of Comfort

The third section of this chapter, and the last analytical portion of the present study, focuses on the limitations exerted by comfort and the ideology of consumerism on the conflicted psyche of the neurotic individual. Having demonstrated previously the manner in which the religious dwindling, the rise of secularism, and the strain of ostracism had

nourished Neil's existential dilemma and psychological faltering, our present task is to analyze his behavioral pattern with a view to detect and determine the weight of consumerism in the whirl of pathogenic tendencies.

By definition, consumerism is a social and economic phenomenon that promotes massive purchase and procuring of goods and commodities. As an outcome of the industrial revolution, its propagation had known a widespread in the 20th century on account of mass and overproduction. The most obvious and significant trait of Consumerism is that it links spending to leisure time, and is, therefore, based on the display of status rather than the usefulness and necessity of the products. In Goodbye, Columbus, such order is strongly present in the consuming habits and the nature of commodities enjoyed and amassed by the Patimkins. When Neil visits their home for the first time, he is struck by the large number of sports equipment lying at the bottom of a tree, for the Patimkin children practice, all of them, multiple sports. Brenda, for one, had made the acquaintance of Neil in a swimming pool. The two had their first date in a tennis court. Their activities as a couple involved a lot of swimming and running. During his visits to their house, Neil had often been challenged by Brenda's little sister in one game or another. Like her siblings, the latter had repeatedly displayed an urgent need to win. When taken into consideration, such details denote the fact that the Patimkins' interest in sports is not prompted by a love or a devotion to such an active and healthy life-style, but is rather used as a means to manifest their monetary value, class, and social status.

In his book The Undiscovered Self, Carl Jung explains the foundation of consumerism in terms of a psychological phenomenon saying,

> The bigger the crowd the more negligible the individual becomes. But if the
> individual, overwhelmed by the sense of his own puniness and impotence,
> should feel that his life has lost its meaning – which, after all, is not identical

with public welfare and higher standards of living – then he is already on the road to State slavery and, without knowing or wanting it, has becomes its proselyte. The man who looks only outside and quails before the big battalions has no resource with which to combat the evidence of his senses and his reason. (10)

This passage explains not only the foundation of consumerism, but also elucidates the manner in which it acts upon one's thoughts and drives. The whole order, according to Jung, is based upon the principles of herd morality; that is to say, the large number and the masses. It attempts to deprive the individual of his individuality, and make him believe that there is no such thing as a personal meaning to life and existence. Since Man is a creature easily tempted in favor of easy solutions in regard to his difficulties, this objective is oftentimes easily attained. Furthermore, herd morality usually grants the individual emancipation from the responsibilities of life and the struggles of existence by liberating him from the necessity of making personal choices. In such a manner, consumerism provides an economic outlet and a different type of coping modes in regard to the anxiety generated by the existential conflicts. It simply offers higher standards of living to silence the true concerns and needs of the self. Jung likened this to state slavery because once in its grasp, the individual loses control over his life, and becomes the servant and slave of his own desires, thirsting only for more and more products and commodities.

It is then no matter of surprise to see that the neurotic Neil had willingly followed the road of consumerism in order to flee the inner conflicts of his own psyche. The more riches and commodities he desired and thought of, the less he turned to his own mind for answers to oppressing existential questions. And yet, the more he followed such a rode, the weaker did his psyche get, which confirms the detrimental effect of consumerism and its damaging

influence over the mind. In a way, such an approach to life with its increasing immersion in consumerism deprives the individual of,

> …the moral decision as to how he should live his own life, and instead [he] is ruled, fed, clothed and educated as a social unit, accommodated in the appropriate housing unit, and amused in accordance with the standards that give pleasure and satisfaction to the masses. (Jung 8)

In short, just like secularism and class ostracism, a society founded upon consumerist ideals is a tremendous impediment in the way of individuation. Under its rule, the individual is merely turned into a buyer and a user, and prompted to forget the inner concerns of his psyche in favor of leisure and amusement.

So far, our study has allowed us to perceive Neil Klugman in his true colors of a neurotic young man with difficulties in managing his own existential concerns; a condition aggravated by reason of the secular nature of his community, and the class clash to which he was subjected. Consumerism is no different, for it plays just as significant and damaging a role in his life. We have already explained the nature of Neil's attachment towards Brenda along the lines of the eternal rescuer as a coping mode against the anxiety of death. Such a turn to their relationship had been empowered by the secular upbringing of Neil. His society's worship of money, along with its acute class prejudice had added to the value of Brenda and her family in his already conflicted psyche. Consumerism acts upon his perception in a very similar manner. The opulence and profusion of the Patimkins' goods had, in truth, suggested to his mind a course of existence in which the daily struggle and the unpleasant involvement with life would not be necessary. Their "food and other material goods are so abundant that, to Neil at least, they do not need to be bought at all; they seem to sprout from the soil" (Gooblar 43). To Neil, who had already fallen into a state of regression and withdrawal from practical life, such a prospect endeared the Patimkins to his heart, and

placed them higher than the rest of mortals. Under their care, he would not be confronted with the necessity of venturing out into a dangerous world to make a living, and provide for himself.

Thus, we perceive with increasing clarity that Neil's attachment towards Brenda is also an attachment towards her family, class, opportunities, and lifestyle. In fact,

[The] repeated motif, of material possessions growing in suburban Short Hills, without even the unseemliness of purchase, emphasizes Neil's vision of Brenda and her family in both socio-economic and literary terms. In this way, Neil's sometimes ardent, often conflicted love affair with Brenda is also a love affair with Short Hills, with the increasingly prosperous lifestyle. (Gooblar 43).

One such good illustration of this can be found in Neil's reaction in regard to the massive fruit stock of the Patimkins. In the absence of Brenda, Neil had simply felt like thieving when he helped himself to a peach and a handful of cherries. The latter he even hid in his pocket and flushed down the toilet afterwards. The presence of Brenda, however, had allowed him to feel at home and partake of the boundless supply of fruits to his heart's content. In this manner, Brenda functions as his eternal rescuer with an additional form of security and protection that is entirely socio-economic. In other words, their relationship gives him access to privileges and commodities he cannot otherwise reach and obtain.

Such a frame of mind goes hand in hand with the previously mentioned passivity that marks Neil's behavior and approach to life. We have already explained how displacement and the eternal rescuer had affected his behavioral pattern in that they prompted him to withdraw from active and efficient life. An infantilized demeanor had been the ultimate upshot which manifested itself through Neil's delegation of the responsibilities of his existence to either his aunt or his lover. Consumerism acts upon the same drive in a similar fashion. "Neil is torn between the security of old Newark, where he was raised, and the

artificial world of the Patimkins" (Francis 59). On the one hand, the Newark community provides the habitual economic security to which he is used. Part of why Neil had never attempted to look for another job or make a change in his career, in spite of his antipathy towards its atmosphere, is the fact that he was afraid of losing its security. Even though Neil had not liked the company of his colleagues, and never aspired to partake of a future that resembled their lives, he could by no means break free from the vicious circle which entrapped him in fear. To resign in search of a better position implied losing his financial support without a single guarantee to find another, let alone a better one. And that is how the socio-economic ties of Newark had pulled the strings of his life into one direction. On the other hand, the promise of a better life in Short Hills had pulled into the opposite direction with equal tenacity. In contrast with his humble origin, existence under the protection of the Patimkins signified a wider horizon and emancipation from life struggles, which appealed tremendously to his infantilized mind.

Torn between these two economic spheres, Neil ends up alienated from both in a manner analogous to the social alienation, which made him estranged from both his class and that of the Patimkins. Even though the Newark community had granted him a given amount of security "at this stage Neil finds it disappointing because he cannot identify with the 'strange fellows' that are employed there and worries that he may end up like one of them, a dusty librarian…" (Nilsen 97) In this fashion, Neil's economic concerns had added to his existential crisis and ongoing estrangement. Dazzled by the bright prospect of a union with the Patimkins, he could not go back to his own economic sphere because he could no longer identify with it. At the same time, his wishes and desires to partake of the economic profusion of Short Hills did not grant him the fulfillment of his yearning. Accordingly, the period which he spent with the Patimkins in a perfectly consumerist atmosphere had constantly assailed him with the fear that such security and abundance would end up as soon as Brenda would go

back to school. And that is but another reason behind his desperate attachment toward the girl and her family.

Such are the effects of consumerism on the conflicted psyche of Neil Klugman. By immersing him in a life of acquisition and leisure seeking, such an ideology and a lifestyle had managed to worsen the state of his unstable psyche by giving him false grounds to admire and idolize the Patimkins in general, and Brenda in particular in accordance with the concept of the eternal rescuer. At the same time, the anxiety of death had been displaced to another concern, namely the yearning for a better socio-economic position. In this manner, the engrossment with his economic means and social status had cast a shadow upon the anxiety of death after the fashion of a defense mechanism, preventing thus a healthier and more efficient way to transcend it. Against this background, the ending of the novella is far from being the beginning of a different and a healthier phase in Neil's life,

> Having ended his relationship with Brenda in Boston, where she is at university,
> Neil wanders over to the Harvard library, and catches sight of himself in the
> darkened windows. Staring at himself, he tries to make sense of his
> situation...This image, of Neil's reflection merging with a wall of books, shows
> Roth's protagonist simultaneously looking both inward and outward…a signal
> that for Neil there is no alternative to the hollowness of 1950s commodity
> culture; he must go back to the Newark Public Library. But the Newark Public
> Library is an alternative to a life among the Patimkins or with Aunt Gladys.
> (Gooblar 50).

Thus, the Neil who immerges from the socio-economic haven of Short hills after the break up with Brenda is no different from his old neurotic self. Instead of localizing the genesis of his existential dilemma, he rather chooses to run away again towards another fake haven. After losing Brenda's support, and alienating himself from the household of his aunt,

he simply turns this time to the prospect of a workaholic. Thus, his attempt at busying himself with the strain of work can be read as an unconscious quest for another coping mode against the anxiety of death.

Conclusion

While the previous chapter had dealt with the inner nature of Neil Klugman's existential dilemma and psychological difficulties, the focal point of the present portion of the work was the elements and factors which the outer world provide, and which not only maintain but also magnify the already existent genesis of neurosis. Accordingly, our focus had been on secularism, class ostracism, and the effects of a consumerist lifestyle on the unbalanced psyche of Neil.

The first section which dealt with secularism had clarified the role of religion in providing stability and efficient ways to transcend the existential conflicts, especially death anxiety. Accordingly, we have reached the conclusion that Neil's secular upbringing had deprived him of a valuable means to transcend the fear of death by turning religion into a mere class value. Such circumstances had empowered the previously dealt with defense mechanisms by dint of the godly traits attributed to the Patimkins, and barred accordingly the way of an efficient transcendence of death anxiety.

In the second section, we have explained the detrimental traits of a classist society along with the effects of ostracism on the psychical development of neurosis. The class clash between the citizens of Newark and the inhabitants of Short Hills had culminated in a state of alienation that estranged Neil from both classes on account of his desire to flee one and integrate the other. In regard to the coping modes against death anxiety, such a state had favored the development of an inferiority complex in Neil's mind.

The last section was dedicated to the study of consumerism and the manner in which it acted on the psyche of Neil. By drowning him in sea of commodities and pleasure, such an

ideology had deprived him gradually of his individuality, and buried the important concerns of existence under a shallow layer of acquisition and a quest for more and more material goods in a better socio-economic state.

General Conclusion

At the end of our analysis, many important conclusions are to be drawn in connection with the existential concerns, and the coping modes generated by the unconscious mind with a view to flee and lessen their impact. In all probabilities, the most obvious, if not most significant, asserts that death anxiety is not to be surmounted by means of denial-based coping modes, for the latter implement is nothing but a shortcut towards psychopathology. No doubt the defense mechanisms, championed by the ones detailed in this study, have the ability of shielding the individual against the oppressing thought of death by displacing or transforming it into another concern of a lower order with which the psyche will be occupied. At the same time, however, a set of impediments and handicaps would ensue and tax the psychical development of the individual with a detrimental regression, withdrawal from life, and infantilized traits.

This inference is the final output of a thorough analysis conducted on three different levels. The first and initial phase was entirely theoretical, and based for the most part on the findings of Irvin Yalom. Thus, the opening chapter had formed the foundation used with a view to familiarize ourselves with the theory in question, its broad lines, and its concepts. Displacement and the eternal rescuer are the two main coping modes we have detailed on account of the similarities they bear to the behavioral pattern of Neil Klugman. At the same time, we have explored the outcomes of relying on such defense mechanisms, and how they ultimately lead to regression and psychopathology.

The second chapter makes use of the acquired theoretical data by analyzing the behavioral pattern, thoughts, and drives of Neil in accordance with the concepts of displacement and the eternal rescuer. Thus, it breaks down Neil's attachment towards Brenda, and concern with the black child at the library to their true nature as a manifestation of the already mentioned defense mechanisms. Once done, the chapter's objective shifts to the investigation of the impediments that can result from an over- reliance on each of the detailed

coping modes, and the manner in which they had impaired the psychological balance and life efficiency of Neil.

The focal point of the third and last chapter is the outer conditions, values, and circumstances which had favored the breakdown of neurosis, and aggravated the unbalance in Neil's psyche. Such forces can be summed up in the secular regime of the 1950s onward and which had deprived Neil of a valuable means to transcend the fear of death, the social ostracism which oppressed him with high standards he had no means to reach, and the anesthetic effect of the consumerist ideals of a community that drowned his true self in the constant struggle and strive for acquisition.

By and large, the objective of this paper has been the investigation of Neil Klugman's drives and behavioral patterns with a view of tracing his psychological unbalances to his inefficiency in dealing with the fear of death. Once accomplished, we have illustrated the manifest coping modes in his demeanor, and demonstrated their detrimental effect in the long run. At the same time, we have emphasized the significance of outer factors, which had maintained and worsened the frame of his mind. At last we reach now the conclusion which condemns such coping modes, for even if,

>…the physicality of death destroys us, the idea of death saves us. Recognition of death contributes a sense of poignancy to life, provides a radical shift of life perspective, and can transport one from a mode of living characterized by diversions, tranquilization, and petty anxieties to a more authentic mode. (Yalom 40)

Thus, fleeing death after the fashion of Neil Klugman is, by no means, a transcendental approach of individuation. It is merely a self-condemnation to a limited and restricted life of fears and mediocrity.

The women mentioned in this novella display a kind of behavior that hints at independence and freedom, at least to the extent the socioeconomic climate of the 1950s in the United States allowed. This is of significance for the men's existential crisis because the subtle loosening up of the patriarchic hierarchy within the Jewish community only builds on to their insecurity and insufficiency. Neil Klugman does not only have to fight for his status in a society ruled by a notion of masculinity he cannot live up to but he also has to worry about the once secure place in his own community. This observation put forward the possibility of subsequent studies of the female characters in Philip Roth's Goodbye, Columbus.

At the very end, a humble personal opinion might be added in connection with the defense mechanisms employed with a view to ward off the anxiety if death. Relying on such coping modes had no doubt shielded Neil Klugman's psyche from the impact of a violent and sudden collision with death. At the same time, however, they have infantilized and limited his psychical process of evolution, alienated and caused him to withdraw from life, and restricted him to a passive lifestyle that made him waste his youth, life, and energy. In short, the only thing that is more dangerous than death itself is its coping modes with all their illusion and fake heaven of safety.

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة الأزمة الوجودية التي يعاني منها نيل كلوجمان في وداع كولومبس من موقف ووجهة نظر العلاج النفسي الوجودي، وذلك من خلال مفاهيمه لآليات الدفاع ؛ بصفة أساسية الازاحة والإنقاذ الأبدي. هدفنا هو تحليل الشخصية المدروسة من وجهة نظر مختلفة تماما عن البحوث التي أجريت سابقا، والتي ركزت على الظروف الاجتماعية و الثقافية لأمريكا خلال الخمسينات أكثر من تركيزها على التطور النفسي المركزي للشخصية الرئيسية. الإطار النظري لهذه الدراسة سوف يستند إلى نتائج إيرفين يالوم ومجال علم النفس السريري في محاولة لتحديد مكان الصعوبات التي يواجهها نيل في التعامل مع خوفه من الموت. بناءا على ذلك فإن العمل الحالي سيحاول تقديم إجابات فيما يتعلق بالمشاكل الوجودية والنفسية التي يعاني منها نيل، وربطها مباشرة باعتماده على آليات الدفاع مثل الازاحة والإنقاذ الأبدي. وفقا لذلك فإن الغرض منه يتلخص في التحقيق عن الكيفية التي عززت بها العلمانية اعتماد نيل على آليات الدفاع المذكورة أعلاه ؟ كيف قهرته الطبيعة الطبقية لمجتمعه مع الحاجة إلى منقذ أبدي ؟ وكيف كان أسلوب الحياة الاستهلاكية لـ (باتيمكينز) يعمل كمهدئ على نفسيته ، وبالتالي يزيل الأمور والقضايا الأساسية من إشعاره الواعي ؟ وفي نهاية المطاف ، تكشف دراستنا عن الطريقة التي عملت بها جميع هذه العناصر معا وفقا للنظام النفسي لآليات الدفاع ضد الشواغل الوجودية ، وشكلت عائقاً أمام عملية نيل الفردية ؛ وهو عقبة لم يتمكن من التغلب عليها في نهاية المطاف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وداعا كولومبس ، نيل كلوجمان ، العلاج النفسي الوجودي ، علم النفس السريري ، الخوف من الموت ، الشواغل الوجودية ، آليات الدفاع ، الازاحة ، الإنقاذ الأبدي.