

Vakrilen Kilyovski, Ivan Angelov  
University of Veliko Turnovo

***JEWISH IDENTITIES WITHIN THE AMERICAN SELVES:  
ETHNOCENTRIC ANXIETIES IN THREE JEWISH-AMERICAN  
AUTHORS***

***Keywords:*** Jewishness, identity, anxiety, marginalization, morality, escapism

***Abstract.*** By analyzing three texts (The Lady of the Lake, Portnoy's Complaint, Good as Gold), each of which marks the end of a decade, we follow the changing attitudes and modes of expressing 'Jewishness' as part of the larger construct of the authors' American identity. Malamud's The Lady of the Lake (1959) represents anxiety, shame and escapism as defining signs of ethnic Jewishness. We vicariously experience the self-pity of an author hopelessly trapped within his Jewish identity. Roth's Portnoy's Complaint (1969) depicts a narrator who makes the radical shift from passive self-pity to aggressive denial of his Jewish heritage which nevertheless remains an inextricable part of his identity. The marginalized subject finds himself in a limbo between two worlds – an American and a Jewish one but he belongs to neither. Overall, the novel is an example of 'masculine', as opposed to 'feminine', writing insofar as the protagonist is desperately trying to strike the balance between Jewish orthodox morality, gentile reality and the urges of his own sexuality. In Heller's Good as Gold (1979), the author makes the backward journey from radical dissent to compliance with the ethnic aspect of his identity, thus closing the circle and reaffirming his ineffable 'Jewishness' as part of his broader 'American Identity'.