Chapter V

"In some big cities in America, going from one street into the next is like changing tribes"

--Félix Guattari

Jerzy Kosinski and America

It is difficult to discuss Jerzy Kosinski's life in terms of the accomplishments alone, basically because, Kosinski, as is now known, is just an immigrant who managed to fake a passport and deceive governmental agencies to reach the United States. We know very little about his life in Poland, which he left at the age of twenty-four. We know that he holds a masters degrees in sociology and history. Through his novels we come to know of his deep knowledge of the intrinsic nature of a society's political existence. In his novels there is always an undercurrent of criticism of every kind of power being thrust upon the individual be it through a totalitarian regime or through propagandist means.

What we know about Kosinski's life is always mediated through the author's own accounts in the novels and interviews. His novels are essentially autobiographical in nature and that fact and fiction have a very thin line between them in the case of Kosinski's novels (Klinkowitz, "Betrayed by Jerzy Kosinski" 129-148). Thus critics always had difficulty in extracting the objective truths of his life. They, however, argue that whatever we get as
instances of Kosinski’s actual life have to be verified and scrutinised properly before reaching any kind of conclusion. There is another group of critics who have held that Kosinski never writes novels and that he just records his extraordinary life (Lavers for example vii). Norman Lavers writes, “Ironically, however, there is a disadvantage for such a novelist: we can become more interested in his life than in his art, or, a more subtle danger, we can confuse the two” (1). Many of the critics of the modern fiction have termed Kosinski’s accounts of his own life as fictitious (Klinkowitz alludes to this view in his introduction to the interview with Jerzy Kosinski, 142-143; Klinkowitz concludes his lengthy affidavit of the inconsistencies among the autobiographical stories that Kosinski had told him this way, “To tell stories is to generate secrets, and that is the central point of Kosinski’s life and art” (“Betrayed by Jerzy Kosinski” 148)). Moreover, he is as secretive as some of his secret agent heroes. Besides the unavailability of objective facts about his life, there was a big controversy regarding the real authorship of Kosinski’s works too in the later part of his career (a lengthy discussion of this can be found in Klinkowitz, “Betrayed by Jerzy Kosinski” 133, 135). He never successfully countered this charge till his suicide in 1991. Thus it becomes extremely problematic and difficult to give an all-encompassing introduction to Kosinski’s life.

These controversies of authorship and life are however not our concern here. Instead the aims of this chapter is to carefully analyse the works of Jerzy Kosinski and find out how he looks at and represents the United States as a nation through his novels. It is the specific outlook of the immigrant
about the nation that one can extract from the novels of Kosinski. Interestingly, in his novels the immigrant, because of the complex nature of his/her identity, becomes aware of the other marginalized identities too. In consequence Kosinski’s representation of the nation carries specific interest in the wake of the complex social relations of the 1970s.

Before attempting to elucidate the major novels which are important for this study and the actual concern in the present chapter, it is fitting to discuss the other novels by Kosinski at some length. This might give an insight into the underlying threads of unity in all his works. Kosinski, during his lifetime, was considered a popular novelist. After the sweeping first novel, *The Painted Bird* (1965), on the Second World War and the Nazi brutality Jerzy Kosinski concentrated more on the life in America, till his last novel, *Hermit of the 69th Street: the Working Papers of Norbert Koski* (1989), which goes beyond his previous works in narrative style and thematic concerns and in the manifold structures used.

*The Painted Bird* (1965)

The first feeling one gets of *The Painted Bird* is of awe as well as revulsion. The novel presents an abyss of moral chaos devoid of reason, a landscape not systematically sculpted according to the sins of the sufferers but ripe with terrors that seem like the offspring of human creatures who are prey to superstition and a latent bestiality. Kosinski’s theme is humanity’s inescapable complicity in evil, according to Langer (*The Holocaust and the*
Literary Imagination 167). Barbara Tepa Lupack believes that *The Painted Bird* is a “parable of demonic totalitarianism” (*Insanity as Redemption* 136).

Kosinski banishes from his fictional scene in *The Painted Bird* the power of discourse, which is considered the distinguishing feature of civilized human beings. It is literally a “speechless” novel. Its setting is an unidentified area of Eastern Europe, more precisely a series of peasant villages already overrun by the Germans. In this setting an unnamed boy of six wanders almost alone in an idiosyncratic way and, because of the brutal experiences he had undergone, becomes dumb. The characters in the novel converse with their environment through rituals. There is a lot of violence, passion, fear and superstition in the air. And at the same time there are atrocities in the background, which most of the time are absent from the actual narrative of the novel in the sense that it is the silence in the novel that loudly pronounces the atrocities throughout. And the reader on his/her part is quite aware of this.

Critics have called *The Painted Bird* an autobiographical work. “Kosinski has insisted that the entire story is based on fact and was a way for his wife to learn of his past” (Lavers 30). But the importance lies in the way Kosinski approaches the materials available for him in writing the novel. Since the background of the novel is an important event in history, how the novelist views history becomes extremely important. For Kosinski—it is evident from the novel—history does not have its primal function of coherence, since modern history has forced language to abdicate its role. That is why he presents dissociated sequences of incidents in the novel and encourages the reader to find out the meaning himself/herself. It used to be a
practice in the fiction of the Holocaust to present old and fragile beings or a matured enterprising youth caught up in the extremity of agony. This gives the writer ample liberty in forming a peculiar reaction to the atrocity. In the case of The Painted Bird, on the other hand, it is a tender youth—the unnamed boy is just four years in the beginning of the novel—the centre of difficult life situations. As a consequence Kosinski attains a response to atrocity which was never attempted by any novelist of the Holocaust before him.

Through the recurrent use of potential metaphors—the central metaphor of the painted bird itself is a powerful one in this respect—the novelist wants the reader to feel himself or herself a victim and to understand that the incidents and scenes in the novel are “too horrible to be real”. To a large extent he succeeds in doing so. The reader might reject the realistic narrations of incidents like gouging the eyeballs and squashing them with heavy boots (The Painted Bird 39). But the very extremity of cruelty and suffering in modern experience, conspiring with the reader’s reluctance to acknowledge such possibilities, unconsciously insulates him/her. Kosinski attains such possibilities through language and metaphor.

The central metaphor of the novel; the bird (a raven) with painted wings and body sent by the bird-catcher and attacked by the birds of the same flock, is a stunning image which could capture the problem of Jews in the wake of German propaganda. The painted one is attacked and put to death by its own kith and kin when it flies to them without knowing that it has become an unwanted one just because its colour has been changed (“one bird after
another would peel off in a fierce attack" (*The Painted Bird* 50)). Kosinski creates a parallel with the Jews and their story here by mildly observing that the Jews are also part of the same species as their oppressors, and that colour and race should not matter. He also equates humans to animals through his images and states indirectly that humans are no way better than the animals ("its eyes had been pecked out, and fresh blood streamed over its painted feathers" (*The Painted Bird* 51)).

Kosinski's major contribution to Holocaust fiction is that he tells us more about the peasants and their actual society in detail away from the death camps. Most Holocaust fiction concentrates on the victim and the unhygienic conditions of the concentration camp. Kosinski, on the other hand, is more worried about the reach of the Third Reich (Nazi) propaganda even to the far off villages where there are no means of communication with the towns or centres of power. (The people in the village only see the train passing with half-dead Jews, but they do not know who they are and where they are taken to.) The people in these villages are supposed to be in unison with Nature as opposed to the towns where the extremities can be seen almost everywhere. But in *The Painted Bird*, even the villagers are presented as not sympathetic towards the little boy who is lost there. This is the reason why he wants to take revenge on the people who have done wrong to him. His laws are those of Nature and not of the cultured groups in the city who might think of several things before getting into action. The boy concludes (as if to put the philosophy of the novel in a nutshell),
A person should take revenge for every wrong or humiliation. There were far too many injustices in the world to have them all weighed and judged. A man should consider every wrong he had suffered and decide on the appropriate revenge. Only the conviction that one was as strong as the enemy and that one could pay him back double, enabled people to survive. (The Painted Bird 214)

It is because of this philosophy that Kosinski was criticised vehemently by many critics (Leslie Epstain for example). They feel that this kind of a revenge is something which one should not propagated even in a novel based on the Holocaust.

Writing about historical narratives, Hayden White says, “in the case of an emplotment of the events of the Third Reich in a ‘comic’ or ‘pastoral’ mode, we would be eminently justified in appealing to ‘the facts’ in order to dismiss it from the lists of ‘competing narratives’ of the Third Reich” (395). He suggests that there should be a third position in historical emplotment. The idea of competing narratives of “truth” and “depiction” within the same narrative at the outset might seem like a factual record. Stretching the same idea of historical narratives, Hayden White further argues, “it seems to be a matter of distinguishing between a specific body of factual ‘content’ and a specific ‘form’ or narrative and of applying the kind of rule which stipulates that a serious theme—such as murder or genocide—demands a noble genre—such as epic or tragedy” (396). He goes on to discuss the framing of the story in a satirical mode pointing out the example of Maus: A Survivor’s Tale, a comic book in
black and white by Art Spiegelman. What Kosinski does with his narratives is to find the third path by pushing forward the metaphors of Nature (rather the disorders within Nature). In a lengthy article about Kosinski's style in *The Painted Bird*, Paul Lilly (Jr) writes that it is through the use of metaphoric language that he overcomes the problem of being sensitive (34). For him the historical contents become unimportant and they are treated only as a unit of symbolic chronology.

Jerzy Kosinski adds to the problems which Epstain presents. Adding a dimension to the problem of Western thought's failure to recognise the Holocaust literature in all its meaning Epstain says, "the very act of writing, the exercise of the will of the poet, the shape and form of his poem, implied a kind of meaning, and gave a degree of pleasure, that tended to mitigate if not contradict the very horror, the chaos, that he wished to depict. What other solution, then, but silence?" (Epstain 263) Epstain introduces the seemingly volatile nature of the relationship between the Holocaust fiction writer and the reader. He articulates the problems related to this in an interview: "When you describe the atrocity of the concentration camp you are immediately reminding the reader that this is not his reality. It happened, you say, it happened in such and such a time" (cited in Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* 185). It is the same argument that Elie Wiesel presents. He argues that at last when one tries to tell "what happened" (in the concentration camp and how one has survived), the first impression that the person has is that the listener (reader too) would not understand. When they think back, the survivors too do not understand ("How did I see and remain
sane, if I remained sane? How was it possible to endure so many nightmares and such despair?” (Wiesel 154). Hence, there is a limit for expression. As Wiesel points out “a novel about Auschwitz is either not a novel or it is not about Auschwitz” (155).

**Steps (1968)**

*Steps* also contains autobiographical episodes, besides the thirty five odd, seemingly isolated, narrative pieces. Critics have observed that there is “the lack of a protagonist who is dependably the same protagonist throughout” (Lavers 69). Here again the author wants the reader to ponder over the individual incidents, and that is the reason why one finds the lack of a proper “plot”.

The other novels like *Being There* (1970), *The Devil Tree* (1973), *Cockpit* (1975), *Blind Date* (1977), and *Pinball* (1982) become more important when one attempts the study of the concept of nation in Kosinski’s novels for they present vivid descriptions of the life in society. These “American” novels constitute the second part of his career, if one has to classify his novels according to the thematic concerns. At the same time novels like *Steps* and *Hermit of the 69th Street: the Working Papers of Norbert Koski* are not so related to the life in a country or society, since they concentrate more on the individual and individual relationships. On the whole, these novels discuss the concerns of life in the vibrant years of modern American history.

Even though Kosinski proclaims, “I had lived the American nightmare, now I was living the American dream” (Lavers 6), it is more significant that it is
always the nightmare that he is interested in. As a consequence in these novels of the second part of his career, the repercussions of these incidents can be detected more than the actual historical events. It was the time when Americans waged war against a nation which was not even half its own size (the Vietnam War (1967-1972)), and it was the time when John Kennedy, the then president, was assassinated. The conditions and forms in which the citizen reacted to these very incidents do give some idea about this nation, and Kosinski reflects on these to create his novels.

Kosinski is against the self being disturbed and traumatised in a political state. According to Lavers, “It is the power of the event and the cumulative impact of the actions that create the effects in Kosinski’s novels, not the richness of language. The language does what is necessary, then gets out of the way” (10). Most of the characters in Kosinski’s novels are in the state of becoming and they all are passionate enemies of any kind of totalitarian oppression. Even in *The Painted Bird*, the brutalities and catastrophes of the war become the prime factor that pushes the narrative forward. In the case of *Blind Date* it is the notorious Sharon Tate murder that acts as the backdrop. These novels discuss the role that chance plays in the life of the characters besides their concern for capturing the voices of the marginalized. All these novels are about manifold dichotomies, destiny and chance in the world of power abuse.
In *Cockpit* it is the 'I' who speaks from the beginning to the end of the novel. It is almost a stream of consciousness technique that Kosinski uses here and one feels that there is more to this narration than merely the technique, which makes the novel exceptional. Here the protagonist's name is uttered only once; Tarden, which the reader might reject as a pseudonym, because he always talks about adopting different names for different purposes. It is stated in the novel that he was working in an intelligence Service, after a point the reader comes to know that this is the Secret Service Agency of the United States and that this particular agent is so powerful that he can plot against and kill anybody. He is free to go anywhere irrespective of the country or continent. He can also sleep with anyone he prefers. He sometimes acts as a gentleman and most of the time acts as a person of vengeance. His past, as is true with most of the protagonists of Kosinski, is not given. There is no mention of his childhood or any of the sentimental relationships. His youth is presented and therein the reader gets to know the society and the people he mingles with.

Tarden's love towards women is at times gentle and at other times perverse. He acts as a rogue with people whom he does not like and he behaves rather kindly with people whom he wants for some purpose or the other. His ways are different from all the others for he has good faith in his memory and other people's carelessness. One could say his memory always makes him the master in all his dealings. His ways of taking revenge are at
all times unique, for he always uses unconventional weapons and uses them with genuine shrewdness: he keeps poison filled inside his ring as a syringe, as a suicide weapon, in case he is caught; to kill a person slowly by cancer he uses a radar signal, he uses a bomb tied to a dog and in a stunning way kills an ambassador; he kills a former secret agent who broke away with the agency using his own peculiar lock system in the car; and he kills a famous writer by motivating him to go to an unwanted and unmanned border. There are as many as ten murders in the novel, which are all cold-blooded and executed (as well as narrated) in a masterly way.

If one feels that these are unimaginable incidents, and purely fiction, the novelist has an answer. Kosinski was very vocal about his conception of horror in a seemingly peaceful environment. He says in the interview given to George Plimpton,

I see no essential difference between war and any other traumatic experience. For example, I know many people whose adolescence in the peaceful United States or Sweden was in its own way just as traumatic as was the war or Stalinist oppression for millions of Central and East Europeans. (320)

There is more to it than he had described in the novels,

[T]he American public learned to its horror from the pages of The New York Times that for the past fifteen years the unsuspecting staff of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow has been irradiated by microwaves, that a mysterious new
disease—possibly army toxin—has spread in several states, the CIA scientists secretly spread simulated biological poison on Manhattan subway lines to test its vulnerability to a biological warfare attack, and that its agents have routinely kidnapped and tortured suspected foreign spies in U.S.; that the food-colour dye was finally banned, etcetera, etcetera. (322)

The protagonist in Cockpit is one who loves to be in the company of women. He does almost anything to win a woman (not her heart but her attention mostly). He sacrifices (rather leaves aside) almost everything when he finds a woman interesting. He once likes a woman and in the very next instance wants to go to bed with her and agrees to perform a fatal stunt act with her father. Once he takes so much of pains to go to bed with a dignified lady who also had the same passion but he fails miserably to 'perform'. He also has this particular hobby of photography. He picks up women from cheap brothels and uses them as his models for photographs. What plays a major role in the success of this character is his will to make everything happen according to his own whims and fancies. He is able to attain whatever he wants because he does not have any friends or relatives, or rather no other person has any role to play in his life. He destroys all the records about him in the agency and the agency does not have even a copy of his photograph. So even if he is in danger or caught, nobody would be able to follow him up and destroy him completely. He leaves no trace for another agent to follow. His wife died long before if one relies upon the information
given here and there by him. Also he never has a steady girl friend. He uses different women and uses different addresses for each purpose.

In *Cockpit*, it is the description of the police force and the secret agency that attract the attention of the reader. It is this particular narrative of the secret agency that gives the reader space to ponder over the power of the state and nation. If one can leave out the personal and individual characteristics of the protagonist, one is left with a stunning description about the nature of the state's political power, its manifold ways of dealing with the citizen and the brutal ways through which it works. It shows that in America, even though it projects itself as a nation of the uppermost individual freedom, in fact, the individual's life is always under scrutiny and constant threat. *Cockpit* thus becomes a narrative of the state's ideological apparatus. It also proves that the United States acts as a nation through the state's totalitarian apparatuses rather than its history or spiritual glory.

*The Devil Tree*

*The Devil Tree* begins with a stunning reference to the city of New York. The protagonist, Whalen, is presented surveying the city from a hired helicopter. The pilot and the clerk in the office of the flying agency seem to have some doubts about Whalen because of his untidy clothes and foreign looks even after he shows the money he has with him. When the helicopter takes off the pilot turns to Whalen,

"Now, listen," he said. "We're gonna do the metropolitan area, see all the sights, and come right back here. No
tricks. Start acting funny, and I'll dump you out over the Statue of Liberty. Get it?"... "Every time I fly in a helicopter," Whalen said, "it reminds me of the model gyros I had when I was a kid. It's like being guided by remote control."

"Yeah," said the pilot. "Well, now I'll show you where they keep all the money."

The helicopter turned south towards the Battery. As they approached Wall Street, Whalen pointed to the old-fashioned skyscraper to the right of the Stock Exchange.

"Could you fly over that one for a second?" he asked.

"I've never looked down on it. I always saw the tops of other buildings from it. My father used to tell me their names." (The Devil Tree 3-5)

The officials at the office ring up the police before Whalen comes down because they mistake him for a miscreant and the cops wait for him in the office. He is interrogated and in order to escape he gives the name of his advocate, which turns the policemen friendly since they now know that he is the heir apparent of a wealthy family. Before leaving the place Whalen enquires the pilot,

"How many helicopters are there in the air over New York right now?" The pilot answers, "I guess about twenty-five."

"And how many people are they carrying altogether?"
"May be sixty."

"Sixty people looking down at twelve million", said Whalen. "That's really something. For thirty dollars you can spend half an hour looking down on twelve million people." (The Devil Tree 6-7)

This reference to the process of 'looking down' at the poor in the city as well as in the country has been taken to heights in the novel, where the life of the wealthy class is the prime thrust. 'Looking down' from a helicopter then becomes a convenient metaphor for the politics of the bourgeoisies. The novel shows the victims of the mechanized society that imprisons people's minds under the most openly totalitarian regime (which the novelist has a thorough experience of). The significance of the novel's title is explained in the note given at the beginning of the novel.

The native calls the baobab 'the devil tree' because he claims that the devil, getting tangled in its branches, punished the tree by reversing it. To the native, the roots are branches now, and the branches are roots. To ensure that there would be no more baobabs, the devil destroyed all the young ones. That's why, the native says, there are only full-grown baobab trees left. (The Devil Tree 1)

This note gives the reader the symbolic formula through which s/he can analyse the whole text. Here the tree stands for the wealth and the business empire that Whalen's father created exploiting the poor for many years. It
also stands for the wealthy nation of the United States. An experienced youth like Whalen would reject the past, the roots, in the symbolic order of the novel. At the same time his power and freedom of action depend a lot on the same power which he would reject due to his idealism saying that it is immoral. It is the picture of the American youth who reject wealth for the reason of the immorality behind its acquisition. The claim here is very clear, capitalism is self-destructive.

Maybe Kosinski is alluding to the Vietnam War which killed many American youths, just as the devil killed the young trees in the anecdote given at the beginning of the novel. Like Blind Date, The Devil Tree also has an allegorical dimension. Because of the constant reference to the factors concerning the nation, the reader is justified in thinking that it is the nation that the novelist is primarily concerned with in The Devil Tree. Though equating the use of allegory with the narration of nation in this particular case would not be out of place, it is not appropriate to assert that it is just the allegorical formula that works in an understanding of The Devil Tree. But depending upon the ways in which one looks at the symbolic structure of the novel the interpretation also changes. It is absolutely normal to look at this novel as a documentary of subnarratives. The reading changes accordingly with different understandings of the symbolic formula, even though the novelist takes care of restricting the reading possibilities.
*Blind Date*

*Blind Date* is about chance. Chance has more or less a major role to play in every character's life in *Blind Date*, unlike *Being There*, where Chance is the name of a character but plays a role only in the life of the 'unnamed' protagonist. *Blind Date* is about an investor, an "idea man", George Laventer. Kosinski's impeccable control over the plot construction is evident in the various incidents narrated in the novel. There is hardly any linear movement in the narrative structure; instead what we have are small incidents cutting through time and space by means of which Laventer reaches his destinations. He is a traveller, a man popular among women, a trained skier, a trickster, a friend to many a dignitary and celebrity, and to put everything in perspective, an upstart immigrant.

*Blind Date* revolves around the individual perceptions of and the problems faced by the members of various immigrant communities. Transnationality acts as a leitmotiv in the novel. It also depicts the viewpoints of several social outcasts and vagrants who are normally not included in the discourses of any kind. Kosinski gives voice to these outcasts like prostitutes, people from the lower strata of society, transsexuals, dwarfs, children, African-Americans and most importantly the immigrants and refugees. *Blind Date* thus becomes a novel that looks at the nation from far below. It is this polyphonic nature of the novel that makes it important in a political reading of the text. There are significant references to 'no man's lands' throughout this novel like the unclaimed land in between the
boundaries of two nations, towns that are neither big nor small and have no specific role in the mainland's concerns and mountain planes covered with snow, which is neither water nor ice, all of which provide an ample background to the theme discussed.

Kosinski provides a perfect comparison between the two extremes in the society by contrasting the lives of the business magnates and the rich with those of the lower class and poor. The instance where Laventer takes Mary Jane Kirkland, the young widow of the billionaire William Kirkland, out on a blind date is a perfect example of this kind of a treatment. Laventer takes Mary Jane Kirkland to one of New York's most expensive restaurants. She acts as Mrs Kirkland's secretary fooling Laventer with her own maiden name, Madeleine Saxon; since he thought, guessing the age of William Kirkland and comparing it with his wife's, that she would be too old. He asks her when she wanted to share the check with him, "Where were you when I dined here a few years ago and needed such an offer?" (Blind Date 194). Afterwards when they go for a stroll he tells her what happened when he went to that restaurant for the first time. It was soon after he had arrived in America. He wanted to celebrate a fellowship he got for his studies. Till then he was living on an income by parking cars. He had with him a girl on a date whom he had just met. Without bothering about the menu and the rates they had a perfect dinner. And when the bill came he was surprised and did not understand how dinner for two could cost almost as much as he had to live on for a month.

The maître d' politely informed me that his little restaurant was justly known to be not only one of the very best in this
country but also—because of its insistence on French excellence—one of the most expensive. My date and I had about thirty dollars between us. Madeleine laughed. "Poor you! How did you pay for the dinner?"

"The maître d' took me aside and he agreed on a ten-month instalment plan. It was my first lesson in the relativity of riches in America," said Laventer. (Blind Date 194-195)

There is another instance too in the novel where the story of a wealthy WASP is juxtaposed with that of an immigrant. Kosinski successfully deals with the fear a WASP individual has about an immigrant. The immigrant is a non-entity for them and s/he is without personal and political histories. A WASP lives with a constant fear about the stranger (an immigrant) with an erased past, who, in terms of a political interpretation, can be perceived as the "other" or the "marginalized". Here Laventer, soon after his marriage with her, goes along with Mary-Jane to one of her former husband's friends. The latter shows the shelter he made underground to Laventer and Mary-Jane and remarks that the stock of food and medical supplies was sufficient for eight people to subsist for six months and thus outlive the immediate danger of an atomic war, and he continually revised the list of people he would invite to join him.

Patting Mary-Jane's shoulder, he said, "you've always been one of them, you know.

[...]
"I'll square with you, George," he said [to Laventer] in a cordial tone. "You're not on my list, even though you're married to Mary-Jane".

Laventer nodded politely.

"If you're cooped up underground, six months is a long time," said the host, "and you have to know all about someone you're going to be cooped up with."

"I understand," said Laventer.

[...]

"You're a survivor, George. The war. The Russkies. Parking cars. You have survived it all. And look at you now." He paused, as if to let the implication sink in. "Married to Mary-Jane, the nicest girl there is, who also happens to be one of the richest widows in America, with the most powerful friends around."

"Mary-Jane and I met on a blind date," said Laventer.

"Sure you did, George," he agreed quickly. "But have all your survivals begun on blind dates?" He looked at Laventer, then continued, his lips pursed. "What if there was some deed, some awful price you had to pay to emerge unscathed? How do we know that there wasn't?" He glanced at Laventer and, as if afraid he might have hurt his feelings, quickly added, "Take me, for instance. Like every other WASP, I'm completely documented; city state, federal records exist for every facet of"
my history; schools, hospitals, clubs have files on me; and there are people who have known me at every stage of my private and professional life. But where can one find out about you?"

He lowered his voice. "What does Mary-Jane, your own wife, really know about who you are?"

Laventer did not know what to say. (Blind Date 202-203)

Kosinski being an immigrant has an eye for what is not considered accepted in the "normal" lifestyle in America. He understands that being an immigrant means being in the watchful eyes of the authorities all the time. It also means that he is watched suspiciously by the fellow beings too. Kosinski asserts that it is a constant fear that Americans cannot get over with. More than the language and the economic status, the physical appearance, colour and shape of the skull are the major concerns of a society that boasts of "equality", "freedom" and "liberty". What Kosinski asserts through these instances fundamentally is that even in the so called most "modern" living conditions, the same outrageous ethnic hatred that killed millions in Europe previous to the second world war, of which Kosinski himself is a survivor, still holds. This is the reason why, probably, Kosinski provides a comparison between the lives under the Communist regime in Russia and democratic rule in the United States. The reference to little people in this respect becomes extremely important for its multifaceted possibilities of interpretation. Kosinski adds this reference with a bit of allegorical underpinning, which one can also find in Being There. "Small Americans", he says,
[T]ried to avoid convening in big cities. In subways and buses, their faces were pushed into other people's thighs, bellies, and bottoms. Most public phones were hung too high for them to reach. In general, dwarfs and midgets in trouble were afraid to ask for help, because most people of average height assumed they were also mentally handicapped. It was not uncommon for little people to be sexually abused and molested by those who saw them as mere children, though they were endowed with the minds and appetites of the adults. (Blind Date 89)

One stretches the allegory to the problems of the marginalized automatically because of the concerns that Kosinski presents all through the novel. There are other instances in the novel where the minority life in its vividness is portrayed. Kosinski makes it a point in Blind Date to observe how an individual from a minority community is looked down upon in public spheres. In Impton while taking a stroll in the afternoon Laventer stopped in front of a general store which sported an array of handguns, shotguns, rifles and holsters. He started to converse with the salesman. The salesman started an animated story of a buyer in his store;

"The other day a man comes in," the salesman said. "He is a black, a neat-dresser, and speaks with an accent. So I think he's one of those darky diplomats who do business with Impton Consolidated for one of those safari-land countries where the blacks kill each other like flies."

Laventer did not comment.
The salesman went right ahead. "So I lay out the best guns I handle; Browning, Beretta, Smith and Wesson, Winchester, Colt, Charter Arms, you name it! He picks up a Mossberg twenty-guage shotgun and pats it and feels it like a girl, and he aims it at the street like a toy. So I say, 'Sir, I'll give you the best deal in town if you want a few hundred of these for your people!' And he smiles real sweetly at me and says, 'My people would love to use them every day!' So I ask, 'What country are you from, sir?' And he gives me this scary look and says, 'Harlem, New York!' The salesman chuckled, his heavy belly bouncing up and down. (Blind Date 103)

If someone thinks that this is just an animated story, Kosinski gives more examples from daily life. His novels are about people and their relationships with themselves and with each other. He says, "I'm myself—it's the ultimate risk,,' says a character in Blind Date. My novels are about such characters—and about taking such risks. The greatest risks there are" (Interview with Plimpton, 322).

Being There

Being There is about the audience of TV shows. In America people spend more time watching TV shows, especially the "chat shows", than in any other activity. Being There had a code name in the beginning when Kosinski was writing it. (He usually used code names while writing and apparently settled on a title at the end.) The code name was a philosophical term,
Dasein, which is difficult to translate, which could mean the state in which one is and is not at the same time. The reactions to this novel focussed mainly on Chauncey Gardiner (or Chance), a formidable tribute to corporate image making. It is a created image like that of the image building of the political leaders that is being represented in this novel. It was the first novel in which Kosinski treated an American protagonist in an American setting.

According to Tepa Lupack, Kosinski described the television image as something “subjected to various collective influences, collective editing, collective simplifying, collective sponsorship” (Tepa Lupack, Insanity as Redemption 141). She argues that Chance is being tipped for the most influential post in the world for just his superficial charisma. His only actual political assets are that “he's personable, well-spoken, and he comes across well on TV (Being There 139). This approach to TV is not very surprising if we take census figures into consideration:

In 1950 about 5 million American families had a television set; by 1960 the total was about 45 million and growing rapidly. By 1970 the average American was watching TV for about seventeen hours each week—roughly the equivalent of one-third of the entire leisure time of an industrial worker [...] Politically television helped to win supporters for such telegenic candidates as John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, but proved a liability for heavy-jowled scowlers like Joe McCarthy and Richard Nixon. (Snowman 221)
In America "coming across well" on TV, means going up in the social ladder, in politics and in entrepreneurship. This is basically because of the American society's snobbish temperament and their interest in the TV shows.

*Being There* is a novel about the corporate world in which Chance sees his benevolent figure in the 'lone wolf' in American industry, Ben Rand. Kosinski is satirical about this character's benevolence. Ben is a powerful entrepreneur who can make things happen in the American political and industrial scenario. However, he is of no use for a common person. In the case of Chance his meteoric rise to celebrity was distinguished from the tempestuous climb of Ben to the top of the corporate world. One can see Kosinski making judgements on the two generations in America through these characters. Ben, who belongs to the older generation, is more sober about the material benefits since he knows the world around him much better with all his financial/political constraints. In the case of Chance the material benefits are making him exult, though his knowledge about the world is strictly and completely through the television set he has in his room. He belongs to the youth of America whose material success is made only because of chance. His name thus is allegorical.

There are many curious streams of coincidences in the novel like the one in which Chance is struck by EE Rand's limousine, which injures his leg and then his striking an impulsive friendship with her, upon which contemplates: "Everything that happened had its sequel" (*Being There* 38). Thanks to the media hype Chance becomes a celebrity even though he does not have any records to prove his past or family story. This unusual story of
success reminds us of the remarks of Baudrillard on America, that it does not have a history of long narratives of culture. The success of Chance is the allegorical story of American society's insistence on mindless images and success as distinguished from attaining greatness through intellectual struggles. The audience do believe in the success of Chance for they unconsciously feel that he will be able to do justice to their superficial expectations. *Being There* hence talks about the place which one successful person should take care of. It is the success story of public relations and the fictitious exposure of success. According to John Aldridge, *Being There* has to do with a totalitarianism of a much subtler and even more fearful kind, the kind that arises when the higher sensibilities of a people have become not so much brutalized as benumbed, when they have lost both scepticism and all hold on the real, and so fall victim to those agencies of propaganda which manipulate their thinking to accept whatever the state finds it expedient for them to accept. (Qtd. in Tepa Lupack, *Insanity as Redemption* 136-137)

*Pinball*

*Pinball* goes deeper into various manifestations of racial relationships in America. It is a novel about one of the most passionate endeavours of the human beings. It is about music of all kinds. It contains matters related to popular music, classical music, music industry and the individuals who wither away in the complex and fervent inner plays of the music industry. *Pinball*
can also be easily taken for a composite mixture of emotional bonding and abandoning of relationships for personal achievements as well as all the revenge and bloodshed related to it. Thus, in a nutshell, the novel is about genius and evil. However, one cannot deny or ignore the issues the novel raises in terms of the racial relationships in the United States during the 1970s. The attention paid in the novel to the racial question makes it the most important in the Kosinski canon. In *Pinball* he repudiates the criticism people made about him that his novels are always individual-oriented and overdramatic through straightforward narratives and down to earth characters.

By placing three 'others' as the core characters in *Pinball*, Kosinski invites the reader's attention to the complexities of American society. In this novel Kosinski's interest lies predominantly in the intricacies of ethnic and racial relationships, which can be easily observed from the interpersonal relations he presents in the novel. As a part of the discussion on the matters related to the minorities he equates the emergence of popular music and rock music with the ethnic resurgence in America. Nonetheless, Kosinski’s attempt in this regard cannot be considered path breaking, since, many sociologists who worked on the racial realities of the United States of the 1970s in general and the twentieth century in particular have also propounded this view (Lemann 235 for example).

Kosinski’s importance, however, lies in the fact that he builds this argument through situations and characters, and presents them before the readers so that they can arrive at their own conclusions. As a matter of fact, *Pinball* relies more on the underlying racial relationships and the politics
thereof than on individual relationships and plot structure as such. Furthermore, the novel raises questions of the individual’s identification with the nation in terms of the multipart identity of the immigrant minority and African American communities in the United States. The novel stops just short of giving any conclusions. Rightly so, given the issues that are raised, such conclusions can never be final and are most of the time meaningless. Even if there are solutions, in the context of the changing scenario, they should be regarded as time bound and not eternal. Since the issues change colour according to the environment and other political movements, raising such issues itself can be considered an important achievement.

As the concluding sentence of the Shakespearean epigraph suggests,

The man that hath no music in himself
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus;
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

(Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice)

All the major characters in the novel are “mark[ed by] the music”. Gerhard Osten, one of the fringe characters in Pinball, who has had the misfortune to lose his entire family to Nazi persecution, feels that only through music (rather classical music) “could he, and others like him, be lifted beyond the memory of all the hideous events of his young manhood and the terrible destruction of his family in the holocaust” (Pinball 141).
Kosinski's attitude towards music (and art in general) can be equated with Gerhard Osten's philosophy of music.

He believed that an individual risked being viewed as totalitarian if he was original enough to produce art, for the very act of imposing an image of the world on others demanded their approval or disapproval; it polarized people into friends and enemies, leading them to see art not in terms of its own merit but as an image of the artist. Thus, life and art necessarily became confused in the eyes of the audience, and any success the artist might have he would have to pay for with his happiness and with the happiness of those dear to him. *(Pinball 141)*

Though a classicist by training, Osten never practised his knowledge. He was against knowledge being institutionalised. His interest was primarily in the Greeks, beginning with Pythagoras, and their investigations relating mathematics to music. Furthermore, the interesting thing about Osten's philosophy (and Kosinski's) is that he connects originality in art with totalitarianism. In this attitude one can see the slight influence of a person who had undergone trauma of the extreme kind. In the case of Osten as well as Kosinski this trauma can be traced back to the Holocaust, of which they both are survivors.

It could also be that Kosinski strives here to propose music, in the most pure sense of it, as the panacea for an ideological and intellectual overcoming of inequality and discrimination since music is readily available for everyone;
irrespective of his/her origin, race or creed. Right at the beginning of the novel he makes it clear through Domostroy's words, "[...] accents don't show up in music" (Pinball 4), neither does the colour of the skin nor the anatomical features of the person behind it.

Three of the four major characters in the novel belong to either an ethnic minority or are first or second-generation immigrants. Patrick Domostroy is an immigrant, Goddard alias Jimmy alias James Osten is a second generation immigrant, Donna Downes is an African American. Domostroy, a "serious", "dead serious" (Pinball 4) musician, who has had his heyday as a composer, has now stopped composing and lives on the little income he acquires out of his live concerts in cheap hotels and bars. Goddard, the most famous rock superstar in the country, takes so much of care not to let others know who is behind his voice (he does not perform on stage and never meets anyone in the music industry in person) and lives as a common man without the hassles of the superstardom. Donna Downes' interest in classical music and deep love for Chopin help her pull down the ladder of inequality. The fourth major character, Andrea Gwynplaine, is a student of theatre and music, and fakes intense passion for Goddard but she is really plotting to possess the tremendous amount of wealth that he owns.

The novel has four sections, told loosely from the point of view of two characters; Goddard and Domostroy. The storyline moves around Domostroy's enquiry into who Goddard actually is. Since no one in the United States knows who the actual face behind the most famous rock musician is, it turns out to be a difficult task. Domostroy tries all the possible ways to catch
him on the insistence of Andrea. He tries the most obvious ways like contacting the people in the industry for a possible lead without success. He uses letters in which there are naked photographs of a fan, who is passionate about his music. Then he uses his own knowledge of music. He listens to Goddard albums again and again for a possible clue, a musical influence that cannot be kept a secret from the trained ears of Domostroy. He finds out the clues in Goddard’s music in the form of two not so famous musicians namely Goddard Lieberson (from whom Goddard has taken the pseudonym) and Boris Pregel and discusses these possible influences in Goddard’s music in the letters send by the anonymous admirer in order to annoy Goddard in his anonymity. Nevertheless, he is unable to reach to the actual person behind it because James Osten is too careful in all his dealings including the recording of his songs (which he does all alone using state-of-the-art equipment in a deserted outhouse) and always uses a different voice to communicate with all the others—even to his father whom he loves the most. Domostroy finds out the actual person by the end of the novel. But the circumstances in which he identifies Goddard are eerie with Andrea, whose love to Goddard Domostroy thought is genuine, acting as a psychopath to grab all the wealth Goddard has. The description of the incidents leading to Domostroy’s meeting with Goddard has the quality of a suspense thriller. Meanwhile, after training under the watchful eyes of Domostroy, Donna wins the most prestigious Chopin competition held in Vienna. In the end Domostroy keeps all his options open and leaves Domostroy and Donna for their own destiny and goes back to his old role of the entertainer in the small bars and restaurants.
Kosinski in *Pinball* discusses the problems of Afro-Americans in all walks of life in the United States. He presents a bird’s eye view of the way in which Afro-Americans are treated in restaurants in the main cities:

Kreutzer’s [the name of the club situated in the South Bronx near Manhattan where Domostroy works as a piano player], like so many other clubs, used to discriminate against blacks. Unable legally to prevent black patrons from entering the premises, the manager would seat them at the least desirable tables, well back in the room, and then tell the waiters to ignore them until they either left of their own accord or provoked a disturbance by complaining too loudly, in which case the management would call the police—always friendly to the establishment—and have them thrown out. (*Pinball* 23)

His greatest concern in this novel is to show how music plays a major role in undermining the social ladder. He discusses how rock music affected the African American’s search for identity. The spiritual music, which was a part of the ancient culture, is compared here with rock music:

What spirituals once had been to the slaves, [...] rock had become for black performers and black audiences; while it helped to loosen their Protestant restraints, it also underscored their anxiety by seeming to reconcile what they, the descendants of slaves, knew could never be reconciled: the white man’s order with the black man’s chaos, the white man’s wealth with the black man’s poverty. Though rock lyrics often
recalled spirituals and seemed loving on the surface, they were sexually antiseptic, exploitive, and as spiritually needy and loveless as the black man’s existence in the white man’s culture.

*(Pinball 171-172)*

Part of his interest is the growth of the so-called “black music” into an industry of huge turnover and to compare it with the condition of western classical music, which is really on the decline, in the United States of America. He describes what had happened to the music industry with the emergence and popularity of rock music as a force that has to be reckoned with:

[...] the bigger the rock music business became, the more it led to the suppression of better music—the best in jazz, for instance—as greedy record companies weeded classical music and much of the superior pop music out of their catalogs so they could budget more promotional funds to keep the rock and disco industry booming. *(Pinball 170)*

Music thus has a major role to play in the novel; so does the internal politics of the music industry. Kosinski’s background in music—his mother was a piano teacher—helps in dealing with the complex details of classical music. His experience as the president of the American center of P.E.N. (an international association of Poets, Novelists and Essayists) makes it easier for him to discuss the intricacies of the industry. These intimate associations establish the backbone of the novel.

Kosinski presents almost every problem that is faced by an immigrant and a member of a minority community in *Pinball*. He suggests that white
immigrants are also treated the same way as the non-white minorities in the United States of America. His ideas of the ethnic and racial groups resemble those of Glazer who claims that "we cannot separate ethnic and racial groups into two classes: those that have suffered, economically and culturally, in American society and therefore deserve redress; and those that have not" (119). As far as discrimination is concerned Kosinski is quick to add that the white immigrants also are comparable with the "majorities" in discriminating against the coloured people.

The novelist further discusses the various facets of the white immigrants' problem of alienation. The second page of the novel contains a reference to how even the language with a slight accent is looked down upon. Here Demostroy was asked by the manager about his accent:

"You have an accent," said Jim, "Where are you from?"

"South Bronx," said Domostroy.

"I mean—before that. Where does that accent come from?"

"The New Atlantis," said Domostroy. (Pinball 4)

This instance shows the complex ways in which the American people react to the notion of the "other". It does not matter whether one is a successful businessman, or dressed well or in sports attires that show one is an entrepreneur, the fear that there is something which might harm an individual's selfish preference as an American always shows up essentially. It also shows that for an immigrant this constant reminder that s/he is not a "natural" citizen adds to the alienation with the new nation. Robert Blauner says:
Of course every human group is unique, forged in its special mold of history and circumstance. The uniqueness of human groups, a reality that is inevitably violated by the sociological impulse to generalize and classify, is particularly salient for ethnic peoples. For out of a distinctiveness of culture and history, ethnic and racial groups define their identities, their sense of nationality, and their particular relation to the world. Yet self-contradictory as the question may appear, are not the experiences of some groups more unique than those of others? The stories of the various immigrant nationalities in the United States contain very similar chapters—despite important differences in cultural background and old country condition, in the social and economic "welcome" received, and in the character of collective response to the New World. (244)

And these ethnic and racial groups are not opposed to "naturalization", "integration", "assimilation" or more bluntly "Americanisation", even though it happens to be a lengthy and painful procedure for them (Wilson 260-262). There are any number of such cases in the United States. Nevertheless, even after such adaptation and integration, the distinctiveness is perceived as the discernible "otherness". This is the major theme that Kosinski discusses in *Pinball* time and time again.

Kosinski shows an example of the immigrants' motivation to keep their individuality intact when he describes the Cuban expatriate association's annual formal party. Cubans who declare themselves as the "Jews of Latin
"America" (Pinball 203) are always alert about the way Cuba is perceived in America and how the home country actually is. This alertness can be seen in another incident presented in the novel too where Domostroy asks a bartender in a saloon for Cuba Libre:

When he finally reached the bar and ordered a Cuba Libre, the bartender, a Latin with a fierce mustache, glared at him and asked, "What was that?"

"Cuba Libre!" Domostroy repeated in a louder voice.

"Cuba what?" asked the man angrily.

"Cuba Libre," said Domostroy slowly, controlling himself.

"You're a bartender, aren't you? That's rum with coke!"

"I know what a Cuba Libre is. I'm Cuban!" snapped the bartender. "But Libre means 'free,'" Senôr, so instead of calling a rum and coke a Cuba Libre—which is a lie—I suggest, Senôr, that you call it a Big Lie! Do you understand?"

"I understand," said Domostroy, deadpan. "Then give me a double Big Lie. With a slice of lime, please." (Pinball 38)

The major item in the Cuban expatriate association's annual formal party is cockfighting, though it is not legalized in the United States, in which all "Free Cuba Fighters", especially men, took part with abundant enthusiasm. Back home in Cuba, this used to be the favourite pastime for the now middle aged expatriates. And by having the cockfight as a part of their annual party they are in a way refreshing their memory and reliving their past, however
hard they try to adapt themselves to the country in which they are now. This shows the complexity of the expatriate life.

Domostroy's story is the most arresting one in the whole novel, since the readers get most the novel through his point of view. He is not an “original American”, on the other hand he has come to America from Poland through Russia, with his music. As James Osten says, there is still something foreign about him, it might be the way he carries himself around:

Middle-aged, skinny, wrinkled, and balding, Domostroy moved through the room like a starved vulture. His voice had a hint of some foreign accent, and everything else about the man seemed foreign as well—his gestures, his quick glances and frenetic way of talking, his clothes forcefully sporty, his manner overly at ease. (Pinball 105)

In fact James himself is a second-generation immigrant. His father, Gerard Osten had reached America losing all his relatives and friends in the Holocaust. But James was born and brought up in the United States itself, and considers himself more an American than a second-generation immigrant. He is thus a "naturalised" American or what is now termed as the "assimilated" immigrant (This “naturalisation” or “assimilation” is considered the ultimate fate of the immigrants, once they adapt themselves to the situations in the United States (Blauner, 243)).

On the other hand even Domostroy is branded a racist. Domostroy's case is curiously poised. He is an "outsider" of sorts in America since he is an immigrant, at the same time he is also being accused of racial discrimination
because his colour is almost the same as the whites. Once when he comments on her attitudes towards Donna's race Andrea retorts:

Now let me tell you who's the racist here. Why do you think you like Donna Downes? Bull! You went after your tawny temptress [...] not because she was your spiritual soul sister, but because she was black, and for you, and for every other white male sexist, black skin means slavery and [...] whoredom. (Pinball 233)

This is rather the way whites (rather white males) perceive and approach the "coloured skin", or coloured people.

It is the same curiosity that people have when Donna with such mastery plays Chopin on Piano. For Donna "given the life she had been born to, very little struck [...] as bizarre or extreme" (Pinball 208). "What was bizarre to her [...] was that there were so many black people, born into the countless ghettos of America, whose rage to live could never be fulfilled" (Pinball 208-209). Her curious question to Goddard was "Why? Ain't it right for a little ol' black girl to know what the white folks play" (Pinball 103)? And she considers herself primarily to be an interpreter of Chopin. And Chopin is her life accomplishment. For everyone else, there is "something incongruous about this ravishing black girl choosing to express herself in the field of classical music" (Pinball 126-127). Domostroy was surprised to know that Donna likes his compositions. (She told him thus when they got introduced to each other in Gerald Osten's party.)

"[...] I wouldn't expect you to like my music."
"Because I'm black?" asked Donna.

"Yes—and I'm white," said Domostroy, frankly staring at her. "It is a matter of different rhythmic intensity." (Pinball 106)

But Domostroy changes his perception at the very first instance itself when he exclaims to Gerhard, later when he hears her play Chopin: "She is a gifted Chopinist," [...] "You'd never guess it from her looks, would you" (Pinball 108)?

Donna knows her musical lineage perfectly well. Her music is rooted in the tradition of her people. And it is equally genuine and down to earth. Thus her music has the traces of all that her people had gone through by way of physical and mental agonies. And these traits are characteristically different from the western tradition of musical practices. She puts it bluntly:

To me, rhythm is not a musical exercise inhibited by bar lines, but an impulse—my body's own musical exercise inhibited by bar lines, but an impulse—my body's own natural percussion. My ancestors were African slaves who communicated from one slave ship to another with Atumpan and Ashanti talking drums. And even though my father was a jazz pianist, the first musical instrument he taught me to play, when I was still a child, was an mbira, a thumb piano with simple metal reeds and a ground resonator— [...] but what to you is probably just black history [...] is to me a living rhythm—a music like no other. (Pinball 106)
On the other hand Chopin does not have that relationship with the rhythm of the people. Western classical music itself is being criticised for its elite leanings, because of the royal patronage it enjoyed. Nevertheless, Chopin's music is never considered universal and it never inspired the masses. The nineteenth century Polish born composer, Chopin, lived most of his life in France and was an esoteric in more ways than one. Though he composed solely for the piano and was an idol of literary coteries, his works are delicate creations, illustrative and tinged with melancholy, highly personal in their harmonic colouring, and richly ornamented. Because of its sentimentality his music is considered part of the Romantic tradition of Western classical music. "Chopin was 'another composer who is best heard after seeing a bootlegger. His music [...] is excellent on rainy afternoons in winter, with the fire burning, the shaker full, and the girl somewhat silly' (Pinball 128). Even in the United States his music belonged to the upper class in the society, elitist concert halls and music schools (Pinball 127).

Kosinski makes it clear in the novel that a white, even if he is Donna's lover, will not understand what she and her family found so exciting in Chopin. She, like her ragtime predecessors in Missouri and Louisiana, might have found some "rich hidden meaning which was essential to her but which, so far at least, had eluded her white lover altogether" (Pinball 128). It can also be that, as Glazer pointed out, "the extermination of their cultural traits was almost total, while the white immigrants could, if they wished, maintain their cultures in churches, afternoon schools, and parochial schools (118).
The conclusion could be that in America, what are regarded as normal are always the practices of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant and not anybody else's. If any other culture or practice is presented in public, it is always looked down upon with contempt or with some kind of disgust. This is one trait that the Americans have not learned to discard. As Blauner puts it, "the norm of 'Anglo-conformity' has been a dynamic of domination central to American life" (253).

However, Kosinski is extremely clear about his role as a writer. He tries to present the incidents that can be difficult and sensitive in terms of the racial questions, with the most possible straightforwardness and wants the reader to reflect on them. He never tries to be the spokesman of any of these groups that are being discussed in the novel. He understands the problems and politics of patronising a community. And African American individuals in America would never be able to stand such a possibility. This would be the reason why he presents Demostroy as helping Donna in her pursuit but not accepting her love in the first instance itself, even though he also had the same feeling. Kosinski thus understands that there is a characteristic difference between the white immigrant and an African American. According to William J. Wilson who explores the relationship between the races in America,

If we accept the assimilationist's argument that the experience of black Americans differs from the experience of European immigrants only in a matter of degree and not of kind, then it is à propos to ask why only blacks (and occasionally Puerto Ricans)
have revolted thus far, and also, why earlier urban ethnic
groups—the European immigrants—failed to resort to
spontaneous rebellions against the symbols or agents of the
dominant group. (Wilson 264)

It is clear thus, the question of identity and racial relationships is extremely
convoluted and Kosinski has done justice to the issues he raised in the novel
in a politically positive sense. In fact, treating African Americans in fiction was
itself a daunting task for a white American. Kosinski's success in this lies in
the fact that he could present the racial relationships with all the complexity in
which it appears in American society.

Conclusion

Almost all novels of Kosinski contain several references to the
subculture present in the United States. These references give the reader
ample opening to look at the other side of the much discussed “American
Dream”. In *The Devil Tree*, Whalen says:

*In the toilet of a downtown restaurant I read the graffiti;*

"Do you realize that one out of every four Americans is
unbalanced? Think of your three close friends. If they
seem normal, then you are the one". Three closest
friends! I have one close friend, a woman whom I love,
and I am unable to tell her what I feel. (*The Devil Tree*
118)

At another place Whalen muses about his old house. His girlfriend reacts:
"In the middle of the night, here in Shitsburgh you feel like visiting your old house with me"? She laughed

Whalen smiled. "My mother used to call this town the same thing." (The Devil Tree 120)

These references to the subnarratives make the reader think about the social, historical and schizophrenic aspects of the individual's life in the United States of America.

Juxtaposing the theories of nation that are discussed in the Second Chapter with that of the nation that is presented in the novels of Jerzy Kosinski, it is easy to see that through his novels Kosinski implicitly questions/attacks the concepts of nation that have been proposed by many of the theoreticians. His concept of the nation is far from idealistic or idealizing. His depiction of nation shows that it is not one which has a glorious history or past to boast off (which Renan puts as the primary constituent of any nation), instead, it is a nation which gives more prominence to the present. Through Kosinski's novels we come to understand that it is a nation which tries to live the life according to the economic equations of the present. His nation does not project the glory of the past or history that all nations boast of. That is the reason why his protagonists do not have a past, be it troublesome or nostalgic, most of the time. His characters and his concepts of nation follow what Baudrillard has constituted in his book (America), where he discusses America's lack of a past and its attaining modernity without going through the long and perilous journey of enlightenment. (According to Timothy Brennen
the nation-state was invented by the renaissance and the advanced countries under the pressures of the enlightenment ideals and commercial needs (58)).

Kosinski's America is an individualistic nation wherein the sacrifices of the past have no value other than as textbook references. The solidarity of the people from all the corners cannot be attained in this nation for the people belong to different ethnic and moral concerns. The people are not bothered about the way in which the United States got freedom and also they do not esteem the perils or sacrifices that the forefathers had gone through. Timothy Brennen says that "As for the 'nation', it is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous" (45). Kosinski agrees that America has no ancient past. Also he confirms that the United States is more a totalitarian state than a welfare state of social liberty. For Kosinski the nation is, as Gellner puts it, "an abstraction, an allegory, a myth that does not correspond to a reality that can be scientifically defined" (cited in Anderson 15).

It is not nationalism in an ordinary or ideal sense that we see in Kosinski. On the contrary, we would be able to locate several instances in which he and his characters undermine the nationalism of the United States of America. Homi Bhabha in his essay "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation", discusses the complex procedure of a people to find a metaphor for their own nation (like for example the English weather). He says:

I have taken the measure of Fanon's occult instability and Kristeva's parallel times into the 'incommensurable
narrative' of Benjamin's modern storyteller to suggest no salvation, but a strange cultural survival of the people. For it is by living on the borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender, that we are in a position to translate the differences between them into a kind of solidarity. ("DissemiNation" 320)

Through his descriptions Kosinski attempts to give voice to the different suppressed voices of anti-nationalism. The novel, as a form, according to Benedict Anderson, had allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation. The novel depicts, says Anderson,

[T]he movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside. The picaresque tour d'horizon — hospitals, prisons, remote villages, monasteries, Indians, Negroes — is nonetheless not a tour du monde. The horizon is clearly bounded. (35)

Kosinski restricts himself to the United States as a nation in the second part of his career. His concerns are more political here when compared to the first and last parts of his career. In Pinball he provides a comparison between a totalitarian state and "an open, freely competitive American society" while thinking about the impossibility of locating the pathways leading to Goddard:

The irony was that if he were living in a totalitarian state—as he did in his youth—dealing with a monopoly run by a single leader or party, he would only need to befriend or seduce
someone in a position of privilege—or insinuate cleverly to others that he had done so—in order to gain access to any information he wanted. It would be far easier to find the button that would open all the doors in a closed, one-party, totalitarian country than to find the one closed door [...]. (Pinball 31)

Kosinski constantly brings out images of threat and political terror. In many of these novels in the second part of the career he uses photography as an image, which is an escape from a potential political terror. When his eyesight was going down, because of the constant use of the dark room, Kosinski muses, “I learned that my eyesight was in danger. Oh, my God, maybe it will become a metaphor for my American existence as well” (Plimpton 327).

Is this the America which one gets to know when one is knee deep in that country, as a citizen, a traveller, or as a settler? One might get a different picture from the novels of Jerzy Kosinski, who was a settler as many others are. Barabra Tepa Lupack discusses Kosinski's awareness of an Average American’s lack of rootedness in reality,

Kosinski documented this tendency of Americans to accept without question or challenge what others offer as reality. One week, in a course on “Creativity and Reality” which he taught at Yale University, he announced that, at the next class, teachers from a professional dance studio in New Haven would come and teach all the students how to tap dance; after the dance session, he would have a point to make. As Adrienne Kennedy, a student in that course, recalls: “The Following week the dance
teachers came and gave us lesson in basic tap steps. We practiced for more than an hour. When the lesson was over, Mr. Kosinski told us we had just had a lesson in reality. He pointed out that, as inept as the teachers had been, because he told us they were dance teachers, none of us, not one, had even questioned it. The dance teachers were, in fact, undergraduate students at Yale. It had all been staged." Little wonder then that Kosinski repeatedly criticized the American college student, a modern "dead soul on campus" who has succumbed to the collective impulse and no longer thinks for himself. (Insanity as Redemption 142)