CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
The history of the Jews in the United States (United States of America), has been part of the American National fabric since colonial times. American culture has been a melting pot for many cultures, creating a completely new form of culture and political values. Due to the open culture it allowed many minority groups especially the Jews to enter and flourish in Christian and predominantly Protestant America. The Jewish population of the US is the product of, effect of immigration primarily from Europe.

American Jews, who are also known as Jewish Americans, are American citizens of the Jewish faith. The Jewish community in the United States violent sexual degradation, and agree that pornography is the ultimate objectification of is composed mainly of Ashkenazi Jews who emigrated from Central and Eastern Europe, and their U.S.-born descendants. Until the 1830s the Jewish community of Charleston, South Carolina was the most numerous in North America. With the large scale immigration of Jews from Germany in the 19th century, they established themselves in many small towns and cities. A much larger immigration of Eastern European Jews, 1880–1914, brought a large number of people New York City. Refugees arrived from Europe after World War II, and many arrived from the Soviet Union after 1970.

From 1880 and to the start of World War I in 1914, almost two million Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi Jews immigrated from Eastern Europe. They came from Jewish populations of Russia, the Pale of Settlement, and the Russian-
controlled portions of Poland. The latter group clustered in New York City. Leaders of the time urged assimilation and integration into the wider American culture, and Jews quickly became part of American life. The Jewish community expanded to other major cities, particularly around Los Angeles and Miami also. Gradually things worked out and they settled quietly in America.

There were various events that took place in the first half of the century that changed the scenario of many countries and also affected America on a large scale.

The three major historical events of the 20th century were the First World War that broke in 1914. The second important event was The Great Depression that was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The timing of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in America it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930s. The third most important historical event was the Second World War that occurred in 1939.

The affects of these events were immense as war changed the mindset of the whole society, making them rebel against the norms. After the World War I, the second great shock that in twentieth century was faced by America was the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Americans, being proud of their wealthy and affluent of their past were not able to cope with the adverse circumstances as the past comforts were in sharp contrast to the new difficulties. Politically, America became strong after World War I. It rose to become the
major superpower of the world but unrest was created in the people due to the anti-war sentiments. The hopes and optimism in people was entirely gone and those who fought in the war became to known as 'the Lost Generation' because they never fully recovered from their experiences. The large-scale migration after World War, also posed a threat to the country's stability. The immigrants began to be treated with suspicion and distrust. People had become disillusioned from religion due to the innovations posed by science, but seeing the demolition caused by scientific innovations during the war, disheartened them from science as well consequently this generation became empty and hollow from inside. Women became more active in the affairs outside home. Soldiers left behind helpless families. The sense of family life was disturbed and shattered. People became pessimistic about the future, as they had lost faith in the possibilities of human potential. Fear and uncertainty was created in people's psyche.

Historical and societal changes have always molded the novelists' perceptions while writing. This phenomenon is particularly visible with regards to post-war literature.

The beginning of twentieth century was dominated by cataclysmic events. The Americans survived the two World Wars and overcame the economic disruption of the Great Depression in 1930s. They won, but were not victorious. These events echoed through its impact on society and left a devastating psychological changes in people.
Writing down the experiences the novels of the era during and after world war, man's helplessness in facing different events was portrayed tragically. The major thematic concerns of these times unintentionally focused on how the individual had to combat with the restrictions and impediments posed by society. In addition, the extreme emptiness felt by the Lost Generation became a recurrent theme in the writings of this era. After the World Wars, Man became rootless and alienated from tradition and culture and became unemotional and practical. This loss of tradition was accompanied by moral degeneration and a resurgence of the meaninglessness of life. Man in these times was seen as fighting against a malignant natural world. As Daiches (1960) comments:

"The loss of the confident sense of a common world, of a public view of what was significant in human action…had an effect on both the themes and the technique of fiction."

A number of noble writers gave away grand writings and understandings of this era to the people like D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Franz Kafka and Ernest Hemingway. These writers has tried to imitate the society what it was like and what the man living in it was like. D.H. Lawrence was one of the notable literary figures in the early twentieth century. His works are a reflection of the major modern issues. He focuses upon the destructive aftereffects of the so-called modernity (an effect of the World War). He writes about the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and explores the nature of individuals and their relationships with one another. Likewise, Franz Kafka's works replicate the
anguish and guilt of the modern man. Kafka builds up the grim mood of individual tragedy that is common to many of his contemporaries, which had its roots in the grim experiences of war on that generation. Kafka himself is said to have stated in a 1904 letter he wrote to Oskar Pollack:

"I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us … we need the kind of books that affect us like a disaster, that grieves us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide."

As time passed by the Jews recognized their status with their writings and since then the Jewish American literature has chronicled and paralleled the Jewish American experience. It gives a picture of the struggles of immigrant life, the stable yet alienated middle-class existence that followed, and finally the unique challenges of cultural acceptance: assimilation and the reawakening of tradition. Being Jewish American allows to create characters who draw from their Jewish heritage and yet, are assimilated at the same time. The writings of the seventies written by post-immigrant writers such as Philip Roth and Saul Bellow, was completely different from the Jewish American literature that written by post-assimilationist writers such as Goodman.

The writer who best embodies variations and wast experience of the issues of American Jewish culture as well as of an individual’s psyche is Philip Roth despite the fact that he met harsh criticism by communal leaders and rabbis. In fact he told in an interview after Goodbye Columbus received the National Book Award in 1960 that:
“My work does not offer answers. I am trying to represent the experience, the confusion and toughness of certain moral problems. People always ask what’s the message. I think the worst books are the ones with messages. My fiction is about people in trouble,”.

When he started writing, the American Society was very much influenced by the big events of the century that had affected the people of the society to deep level.

He grew up in the city’s lower-middle-class section of Weequahic and was educated in Newark public schools. He later attended Bucknell University, where he received his B.A., and the University of Chicago, where he completed his M. A. and taught English. Afterwards, at both Iowa and Princeton, he taught creative writing, and for many years he taught comparative literature at the University of Pennsylvania. He retired from teaching in 1992.

Inspite of his own strident rejection of the label of being a Jewish writer, Roth has fulfilled the tradition of Jewish writers serving as critics of Jewish culture and society. His writings were completely dissimilar from his existing Jewish writers, more and more happy and satisfied in highlighting Jewish dysfunction.

As a youth, Philip Roth always aspired to the legal profession: before transferring to Bucknell University, he was a pre-law student at Rutgers University’s Newark campus. Especially in many of his mature works, Roth proceeds, like a lawyer, *arguendo*: the novelistic inquiry asserts a factual premise, makes fiction’s argument based on that premise, then makes a different argument based on factual assumptions put in the
alternative to the initial factual assumption. In *Operation Shylock*, it is averred that the 
book is a factual account by Philip Roth of an Israeli adventure that resulted in his real-
life recruitment by the Mossad (Roth gave a very funny metafictional interview to *The 
New York Times* confirming the book’s purely factual nature); alternatively, and save the 
aforesaid, the book is part factual, part fictional, and is to be read mutatis mutandis; in 
the further alternative, and without prejudice to the foregoing, the book is a work of 
fiction.

Philip Roth comes, as used to be said, from nothing, his nothing being a densely 
Jewish neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey, named Weequahic. The grandson of 
Galician immigrants, son of a gentle, domestically expert mother and of a loving, bossy 
father educated only through eighth grade but determined and able enough to ascend into 
middle management at Metropolitan Life. Roth is born on March 19 in Newark to 
Hermann Roth (b. 1901), an agent with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and 
Bess Finkel Roth (b. 1904).

At that time the Roth’s lived in the Weequahic, a lower-middle-class 
neighborhood after that in 1942 Roth family moved to 385 Leslie Street. He Graduated 
elementary school in January 1946 after that Graduating high school 1950 he enrolled at 
Bucknell University. While in the university he founded Bucknell literary journal, Et 
Cetera in 1952 he was also elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduates magna cum laude 
in English and also received scholarship from The University of Chicago to study 
English.
After receiving MA degree he was enlisted in US Army. His ‘The Contest for Aaron Gold’ reprinted in Martha Foley’s Best American Short Stories 1956. In 1956 he was hospitalized for two months due to his spinal injury and receives honorable discharge. After getting discharge he returns to University of Chicago and gets himself enrolled in Ph.D. program but quits after one semester and finally continued his profession as an instructor teaching freshman composition.


The Jewish dysfunction in Goodbye Columbus takes its most extreme and serious form in the story ‘Defender of the Faith’, wherein a Jewish soldier takes advantage of his background to avoid his duties, highlighting a Jew like that he created problems for himself. Also In this story Roth attacked various other issues to which most writers were till now silent and spoke about all the issues that troubled modern Jews like Christian theology, sexuality, Jewish particularism, and rabbinic authority and hypocrisy.

Central to the story was, despite a liberal and open pretense, the rabbi’s inability to deal open and honestly with questions that troubled his students. What is amazing about this book was that he wrote it when he was only twenty-three years old, while growing up in suburban New Jersey.
At the age of 23, Roth engaged in a romantic affair with Margaret Martinson Williams, who was a divorcée and also a non-custodial parent of two children. She worked at the University of Chicago in a secretarial job, he (after short-lived graduate studies) as a composition instructor. Williams was four years his senior, Roth even after knowing about her Michigan upbringing and an early marriage gone very wrong pursued the relationship. Margret was grounded in an estimation of her as a woman of courage and strength for having survived that awful background, and animated—according to the self-analysis offered in *The Facts*—by a kind of rescue complex and by the desire to work at life under more difficult conditions.

But somehow their relationship was incompatible and didn’t work and after more than two years of wildly driving through marital quarrels, reproductive fraud (Williams faked a pregnancy and an abortion), separations, and other irresistible evidences their relationship finally ended in a divorce. Roth had charged her for fraud of faked a pregnancy and an abortion. Williams withheld her consent to a divorce; nevertheless, Roth was forced to make onerous alimony payments that ended only when she was killed in an automobile accident in Central Park in 1968.

His story “Defender of the Faith” was published in The New Yorker provoked charges of anti-semitism from Jewish organizations on him but at the same time he won Guggenheim award from American Academy of Arts and Letters.
He goes to Italy for writing his first novel *Letting Go* and spends seven months there. *Goodbye, Columbus* won him his first ever National Book Award, while teaching in writing at the University of Iowa he met Bernard Malamud.

He published his first novel *Letting Go* after which participated with Ralph Ellison in Yeshiva University symposium that influenced his self-perception as a Jewish-American writer. He taught comparative literature at University of Pennsylvania and does this intermittently for ten years. In 1966 he protested against Vietnam War. His book on Midwestern setting came in 1967 which was titled *When She Was Good*.

His life took a complete u-turn when his most controversial novel 1969 *Portnoy’s Complaint* which causes a sensation and becomes bestseller. He was then elected to National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1970 after which he began his another novel *My Life as a Man* in 1971. In 1972 came his *The Breast* after which he bought for himself an eighteenth-century farmhouse in Northwest Connecticut. His earlier supporter Irving Howe published an attack on his controversial novel Portnoy’s Complaint. In 1973 he Published The Great American Novel. He also met Milan Kundera and thereafter became much interested in blacklisted writers from behind the Soviet-dominated Iron Curtain.

In 1974 he published his *My Life as a Man* which was said to be very close to the author after which in 1975 he published *Reading Myself and Others*. Giving his
characters a little touch of himself was what Roth was known for and because of it his work was known to be very much about his own life but he said “Sheer Playfulness and Deadly Seriousness are my closest friends,” Roth said in an interview with Joyce Carol Oates back in 1974.

He was very close to British actress during that time and moved to London with Claire Bloom 1976. Visits Israel for the first time since 1963 and frequently visits thereafter. 1977, The Professor of Desire comes. 1979 Publishes first Nathan Zuckerman novel, The Ghost Writer. When in 1981 Zuckerman Unbound came after that His mother died unexpectedly of a heart attack in Elizabethtown, NJ. 1984 was the year when he wrote The Anatomy Lesson. 1985 Publishes The Prague Orgy in one volume with The Ghost Writer, Zuckerman Unbound, and The Anatomy Lesson as Zuckerman Bound.

1987 The Counterlife wins National Book Critics’ Circle Award for Fiction. In 1988 The Facts was published. Begins teaching at Hunter College for the next three years. 1989 his Father died of brain tumor. Roth’s care for father during the year-long illness will become the basis for Patrimony.
In 1990 he came up with *Deception* and then married his long time girlfriend Claire Bloom in New York. After that he wrote *Patrimony* and also won National Book Critics’ Circle Award for biography. *Operation Shylock* (1993) won him the PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction.

Like his protagonists in novels he too could not survive his relationship with women and separated from Claire Bloom. This man of greatest writing style did not stopped giving superb work of fiction with growing age and wrote Sabbath’s Theater (1995) grabbed National Book Award for fiction. It was not the end the decade of 90’s had lot more his 1997’s *American Pastoral* won him the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

In response to his second wife Claire Bloom’s work *Leaving a Doll’s House* in 1998 Roth gave a thrashing reply with *I Married a Communist*.


In addition to his novels and short stories, Roth has also proven to be an
accomplished essayist. In collections such as *Reading Myself and Others* (1975) and the more recent *Shop Talk* (2001), his focus is on the act of writing, both his own and that of other authors. The lengthy interviews that make up *Shop Talk* first appeared in such publications as the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Yorker*, and the *London Review of Books*. The pieces themselves are a testament to Roth’s unwavering and ongoing admiration of some of the most significant writers in the last half of the twentieth century. Until 1989 he was the General Editor of the Penguin book series “*Writers from the Other Europe*” which he inaugurated in 1974. The series helped to introduce American audiences to, among others, Milan Kundera, Primo Levi, Aharon Appelfeld, and Ivan Klíma.

Roth has made repeated efforts to express his filial relationship to Kafka in print. He has always declared his indebtedness openly, crediting, for example, his reading of the latter’s tales of spiritual disorientation and obstructed energies with enabling his composition of *Portnoy*: the ways in which Kafka allowed an obsession to fill every corner of every paragraph.

Mann, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, and Henry James have all been featured prominently in Roth's work, Kafka alone has surfaced with persistent regularity since the publication
of Portnoy's Complaint in 1969. He even dominates Roth's nonfiction: Shop Talk, a collection of interviews with and essays on other writers between the years 1976 and 2000, may well have been titled "Responses to Kafka."

An author's predominance can be gauged by the degree to which his influence exerts itself on the preeminent writers of later generations, Roth too has inspired various young writers like Nathan Englander.

Unlike many prolific novelists, whose creative and prolific qualities may tend to wane over time, Roth has demonstrated a unique ability not only to sustain his literary output, but even surpass the scope and talent inherent in his previous writings. Literary critic Harold Bloom has named him as “one of the four major American novelists still at work, along with Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo and Cormac McCarthy”. The fiction of the past twenty years is arguable his best work, as demonstrated by the succession of awards he received in the 1990s. He has lived in Rome, London, Chicago, and New York. He currently lives in Connecticut.
Awards and Honors:

1960 National Book Award for *Goodbye, Columbus*

1975 National Book Award - finalist for *My Life As A Man*

1978 National Book Critics Circle Award - finalist for *The Professor Of Desire*

1980 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction - finalist for *The Ghost Writer*

1980 National Book Award - finalist for *The Ghost Writer*

1980 National Book Critics Circle Award - finalist for *The Ghost Writer*

1984 National Book Award - finalist for *The Anatomy Lesson*

1984 National Book Critics Circle Award - finalist for *The Anatomy Lesson*

1984 National Book Award - finalist for *The Counterlife*

1986 National Book Critics Circle Award for *The Counterlife*

1986 National Book Award - finalist for *The Counterlife*

1991 National Book Critics Circle Award for *Patrimony*

1994 PEN/Faulkner Award for *Operation Shylock*

1994 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction - finalist for *Operation Shylock*

1995 National Book Award for *Sabbath's Theater*

1994 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction - finalist for *Sabbath's Theater*

1998 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *American Pastoral*

1998 National Book Critics Circle Award - finalist for *American Pastoral*

1998 Ambassador Book Award of the English-Speaking Union for *I Married a Communist*

1998 National Medal of Arts

2000 Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (France) for *American Pastoral*
In May 2011, Roth was awarded the Man Booker International Prize for lifetime achievement in fiction on the world stage, the fourth winner of the biennial prize. One of the judges, Carmen Callil, a publisher of the feminist Virago house, withdrew in protest, referring to Roth's work as "Emperor's clothes". She said:
"he goes on and on and on about the same subject in almost every single book. It's as though he's sitting on your face and you can't breathe ... I don’t rate him as a writer at all ..."

Observers quickly noted that Callil had a conflict of interest, having published a book by Claire Bloom which had criticized Roth. In response, one of the two other Booker judges, Rick Gekoski, remarked:

"In 1959 he writes Goodbye, Columbus and it's a masterpiece, magnificent. Fifty-one years later he’s 78 years old and he writes Nemesis and it is so wonderful, such a terrific novel ... Tell me one other writer who 50 years apart writes masterpieces ... If you look at the trajectory of the average novel writer, there is a learning period, then a period of high achievement, then the talent runs out and in middle age they start slowly to decline. People say why aren’t Martin [Amis] and Julian [Barnes] getting on the Booker prize shortlist, but that’s what happens in middle age. Philip Roth, though, gets better and better in middle age. In the 1990s he was almost incapable of not writing a masterpiece – The Human Stain, The Plot Against America, I Married a Communist. He was 65–70 years old, what the hell’s he doing writing that well?"

In 2012 he received the "Prince of Asturias prize" for literature.
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