Chapter III
The Hermeneutic, Narrative and Ethical Predicament

The highest art must take liberties, not with the truth but with the modes by which the truth is projected. - Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, 196

Going back to ancient history, ‘representation’ has been one of the foundational concepts in the theory of arts. The consensus regarding literature as the representation of life dates back to the founding fathers of literary theory, Plato and Aristotle, though among them they had initial differences of opinion regarding the nature of representation. While Aristotle defined all the “arts-verbal, visual, and musical—as modes of representation, and went even further to make representation the definitively human activity” (qtd. in Mitchell 11), Plato, qualified it as an illusory representation, as artistic representation becomes thrice removed from reality. Representations, Plato reasoned, “are mere substitutes for the things themselves; even worse, they may be false or illusory substitutes” (Mitchell 12).

Literary Theory of art has a long history of evolution and refinement and The Mimetic Theory of Art, the earliest one at that, had its origin in Plato’s ‘theory of forms’ or ‘theory of ideas.’ According to him, reality is made up of two distinct realms, the physical world, that which is visible to human sense perception, and the world made of eternal perfect ‘forms’ or ‘ideas.’ This eternal ‘forms’ or ‘ideas’ which Plato considers as the perfect templates that exist somewhere in another dimension, are the ultimate reference points for all that we see in the imperfect physical world.

Plato gives a classic example of the chair and the horse. He says, the chair in your house is an inferior copy of a perfect chair that exists elsewhere in another dimension, as is the horse you see in a stable, which is again an imperfect representation of an ideal
horse that exists somewhere else. He argues that, the chair in your house and the horse in
the stable, both are mere imperfect representations of the perfect chair and the perfect
horse that exist somewhere else (Vlach n.pag.), which he considers as the world of ‘ideas’
or ‘forms.’

The Mimetic Theory that traces its origin to Plato’s theory of ‘ideas’ where he
makes a categorical distinction between the ‘world of ideas’ from that of ‘the world of
appearances,’ gave the latter the status of truth. Therefore for him an artefact is thrice
removed from truth, as it is merely an imitation of what Edmund Husserl, the father of
Phenomenology calls as, ‘phenomenon.’ The phenomenological concept of
‘phenomenon’ and ‘noumenon’ can be traced back to the Platonic distinction between the
‘world of appearances’ and the ‘world of ideas,’ respectively.

Aristotle, who joined Plato’s Academy later, took the theory further saying that a
mere transcription or reproduction of the external world as it appears would not give any
insight into life, and therefore emphasised the role of creative imagination of the artist
which “transforms amorphous life into meaningful patterns contributing toward a better
understanding of the world” (qtd. in Mathur 13). It is this creative imagination of an artist
that renders aspects of human experience meaningful. Life, in the opinion of Henry
James, is “all inclusion and confusion” and art is “all discrimination and selection” (qtd.
in Blackmur 120). The pre-existent material of art, namely, various aspects of life is taken
up by the artist, and from this ‘all inclusive confusion’ he selects that which is significant
and creates a frame of reference, gives form and shape to that significant aspect of human
experience, leading to an “insight into life, into human emotions and motives” (Mathur
14).

Art thus, is an attempt to represent life and it takes various modes and the “only
reason for the existence of the novel is that it does attempt to represent life” (Wellek 220).
As a representation of life as it appears to be, what is aimed at here is not reproductive perfection of the work of art, but a revelation of truth. In this connection, the aesthetic hypothesis that is of paramount significance emerges from one of the Hemmingwayian principles which states that the “highest art must take liberties, not with the truth but with the modes by which the truth is projected” (qtd. in Baker 196).

The liberties that Hemmingway spoke of is akin to that of Jamesian idea of discrimination and selection, as the process of selection provides an artist the “means for aesthetic ordering of his chosen materials” (Mathur 16), so that it not only reproduces life but ‘affects’ it. From the wide panorama of human life, and from the abundance of factual data available as raw material for the artist, he has to select only the significant aspect of life, which in turn would qualitatively affect the life of the reader, even to the extent of being pragmatic. The pragmatic orientation of artistic representation conceives art as a medium to “effect requisite response in its readers” (Abrams 15). Literature, as one of the finest mediums of representation of human life and experience, normally transcends any geo-spatial, cultural, linguistic and racial boundaries.

Darshan Singh Maini in *The Spirit of American Literature* makes a poignant observation in this regard. According to him, the above though remains as an accepted norm, a serious perusal into the history of literature reveals an acknowledged fact of literary history, and that is, “each country, nation or race produces its own art uniquely expressive of its will, genius and essence.” He further argues that, If the usefulness of literature lies in how it reflects and represents the totality of the urges and dreams, problems and predicaments, common to the society, then, the uniqueness of a particular literature lies in the “variations, departures, accents and affirmations that could only relate to a given set of people at a particular moment in history” (Maini 1). This is considered to be the ‘sui generis’ character of a particular literature which in his opinion is
“predicated on the urgencies and contingencies located in the spiritual and moral life of its people” (2). It is in this connection that Philip Roth has emerged as the leading figure, in contemporary American literature, who has portrayed the post-war Jewish American life with all its socio-moral compulsions and contradictions, psycho-sexual upheavals and convulsions, degradations and regressions across various spheres of life.

Scanning the enveloping climate of secularization, reigning forces of bourgeoisie values, moral relativism, coupled with worldliness and spiritual hardening of the post-war American society, Roth, has explored the lived experience of the contemporary American society in his supple and ingenuous style. Dan Isaac in his Chicago Review titled, “Defence of Philip Roth,” vouches to this fact wherein he says that Roth’s characters are “men in the middle, lacking a sure sense of values ... continuously concerned with complex alternatives” (84).

The constant supply of signs and indices which tells the reading public exactly what is happening to the post-war Jewish American life. But right through his perceptive writing, Roth seems to hold the view that literature in general, and fiction in particular can tell us something about life only when life is first turned into literature. Literature for him is something which “holds its own kind of truth that is separated from life, but which nonetheless can still tell us something about life” (qtd. in Christiansen 221).

Following the Jamesian dictum of the relationship between life and literature as something that exist between ‘all inclusive confusion’ and ‘discriminative selection,’ Roth, though through his fictional alter-ego, Zuckerman, advocates that “life is ‘grist’ for the ‘fun-machine’ that is the writing process” (Christiansen 221-22). Life here becomes the ‘raw-material’ in the narrative factory of the artist, whose imaginative mastery turns it into a comprehensible, narrative manifestation of truth with certain amount of certainty, clarity and candour.
Since the first two chapters of the research focused on the Socio-moral and religious conflicts and predicaments respectively, the present chapter focuses on the hermeneutic, narrative and ethical predicament, with special reference to his autobiographical writings. Rothian literary corpus abounds in complex and deceptive fictional voices with simultaneity of the presence of the writer and the character, confusing form, intensely autobiographical but blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, intertwining of factuality with fictionality and vice verse.

Roth, self consciously, and often playfully, addresses the perils of establishing connection between the writer and his fictional characters, which has constantly deceived and confused both readers and critics alike. He, in the words of Jay Rogoff often “imposes upon facts the stamp of his imagination” making it rather impossible for the readers to track “where historical fact ends and historical imagining begins” (497). Rogoff considers him as a crafty exploiter of the complex relationship between memory and imagination, which in his opinion Roth makes use as a “theme and a mode of operation” (498). It is here that what Carlos Baker’s observation holds true in the case of Roth, as he seems to have taken liberties not only with the modes by which the existential truth is projected and represented, but apparently even with historical truth itself. Comingling of facts and fiction, autobiographical and fictional, indulging in self-reflexive fiction and fictionalizing biographical material etc., becomes signature characteristic of Rothian literary enterprise.

He has consistently challenged the readers and critics alike, regarding their expectations of the truth value of his narratives. Debra Shostak’s essay entitled, “Philip Roth’s Fictions of Self-exposure,” argues that Roth “simultaneously expose, conceal, and rewrite the autobiographical subject—the “I” in the text” (1). He has deftly exploited his own persona, in his attempt to thin the conventional boundary between fact and faction,
fictional and autobiographical, because he believes that any literal representation of facts requires an imaginative penetration of reality by the writer, which includes remembrance and interpretation leading to a tricky choice of “telling the truth and altering it” (Rogoff 499). Roth is very categorical in making his position clear, he doesn’t say that there is a kind of existence that exists in fiction that doesn’t exist in life or vice versa, but at the same time holds the view that a “book that faithfully conforms to the facts, a distillation of the facts that leaves off with imaginative fury, can unlock meanings that fictionalizing has obscured, distended, or even inverted and can drive home some sharp emotional nails” (FACT 7-8). This is precisely the reason why he ventures into autobiographical mode in the second half of his literary career, The Facts, being the first of a continuous series of what is purported to be autobiographical writings.

*The Facts*, being unconventional, to the extent of being labelled as a ‘fictionalized autobiography,’ is a rather mellowed endeavour of a middle-aged author to patch up himself at last to the ghosts of his past. It is a concise story of his life, works and literary motivations that led him up to the publication of *Portnoy’s Complaint* in 1969, and touching up to his depression in 1987. At the age of fifty-five, he touches upon his early childhood and college education, the passionate entanglement with Margaret Mattinson, impersonated as “Josie” (FACT 80), the clash with the Jewish public and rabbinic leaders in the wake of *Goodbye Columbus* (1959) and *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969), two of his most controversial books that ‘ignited’ and ‘fuelled’ the outrage, respectively. The narrative concludes by a sustained attack by Nathan Zuckerman; a creation of his own imagination, questioning Roth’s efficiency as an autobiographer and accusing him of “idealizing and sentimentalizing people and situations that have long ceased to threaten him, of leaching the venom from his sources of creativity” (FACT 80-81).
At the very outset of *The Facts*, Roth describes the reason, self-assigned in this case, for the shift to autobiographical writings, which in his opinion “embodies my [his] counterlife, the antidote and answer to all those fictions... the structure of a life without fiction,” (6) as mentioned in his introductory letter to his fictional alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman. He says it is to “restore my [his] experience to the original pre-fictionalized factuality” (1). It is to be noted that even while speaking about the capacity of non-fiction or autobiographical writing to unlock meanings that fiction normally obscures or keeps distended from the reader, or the marginal superiority of the non-fictional writings to drive home emotional effects, he is very quick to add the innate relationship that exist between facts and fiction.

He says that, the “facts are never just coming at you, but are incorporated by an imagination that is formed by your previous experience. Memories of the past are not memories of facts but memories of your imaginings of the facts.” Here, he is not advocating the subordination of one over the other, or domination of one over the other, but the inherent mutuality of facts and fiction, and the indispensible inter-relatedness of one for the perfection and effectiveness of the other. He argues in the following way, “it isn’t that you subordinate your ideas to the force of the facts in autobiography but that you construct a sequence of stories to bind up facts with persuasive hypothesis that unravels your history’s meaning” (8).

Therefore, it is by “setting fact against fiction, juxtaposing creator and created, yielding one version of the self and then another” (Kauvar 415), that Roth succeeds to blur the distinction between fact and fiction, between “fictional representation and autobiographical sources” (Epstein 67), making it endlessly complicated. Setting fact against fiction and vice versa can be seen in his technique of ‘self-referencing.’ A glaring example of such self-reference could be located when Roth goes against the conventional
mode of an invented or fictional character directing or dominating the fictional narratives. Quite contrary to most contemporary writers, who labour, harnessing all their literary creativity, to erase any biographical elements forming part of their fiction, we find in Roth, a progressive and intentional manifestation of his literary theory, which holds that, the line that divides fact and fiction is very thin, and easily deceptive.

What is noticeable in him is a gradual but conscious and purposeful progression towards blending of facts and fiction, and fictional with autobiographical. The progress is manifested first by the creation of an alter-ego in the character of Zuckerman, speaking on behalf of him, to a self-impersonation wherein he rather unconventionally names the protagonists as ‘Philip’ and ‘Philip Roth.’ For example, In Deception (1990), which is subtitled as a ‘novel’, we find Roth, “self-consciously presenting or seeming to present a version of himself” (Nadel 55). The novel in question is in the form of the notebook entries of an author named ‘Philip’ one who, in all possible personal details bare semblance to ‘Philip Roth’ the writer as we know him to be. In his Operation Shylock, subtitled as ‘a confession’ Roth seems to “say the ‘true,’ though outlandish and generally regarded as fictional, story of an impostor calling himself “Philip Roth,” wreaking havoc in Israel with Roth’s identity” (Gooblar 34). The point here is that, in both these novels, Roth, “makes capital out of his reader’s inclinations toward biographical interpretations of his work” (Shostak, “Philip Roth’s Fictions of Self-exposure” 2).

David Gooblar, in his recent monographic study on Philip Roth, is of the opinion that notwithstanding the fact that The Facts marks Roth’s first extended work in the autobiographical mode, he has played with known biographical facts about himself in many of his fictions. In The Major Phases of Philip Roth, Gooblar argues that, Roth has “thrived for decades upon playing with the temptation of readers to read his protagonists as thinly veiled autobiographical portraits of himself” (111). Here, self-reflexivity seems
to be one of the signature characteristics of Rothian literary trajectory. Ever since the publication of *The Facts* in 1988 until the publication of *Sabbath’s Theatre* in 1995, Roth has published a series of books, each of which contains a major chunk of non-fictional account of the author’s life, leading to a hypothetical conclusion that his non-fiction may be as unreliable a representation of reality as his fiction.

Christiansen speaks about an “epiphanic moment” (223) that happens in the life of Zuckerman—the fictional novelist—in *American Pastoral*, where he realizes that he has made wrong assumptions regarding the lives of his protagonists. But the self-reflection that the Zuckerman makes later on in the narrative appears to be the key to understand Roth’s own ‘Philosophy of deception’, which punctures, what Gooblar’s essay “The Truth Hurts: The Ethics of Philip Roth’s “Autobiographical” Books,” considers as, the “myth of non-fictional transparency” (34). In *American Pastoral*, Zuckerman reflects about the wrong assumptions he has made about the stories of some of his protagonists. He says “the fact remains that getting people right is not what living is all about anyway. It’s getting them wrong that is living, getting them wrong and wrong and wrong and wrong and then, on careful reconsideration, getting them wrong again” (35). If ‘living’ for Zuckerman is ‘getting people wrong’ then, it seems making a distinction between fictional and real, imagination and reality, life and literature doesn’t matter to him. Therefore, in and through Zuckerman, Roth upholds that the only way, to ever know, anything about anyone is “turning their life onto a comprehensible narrative, a possible truth” (Christiansen 222).

The possible truth that he speaks about can be considered as the ‘fictional truth’, “a truth that is aware that it is one possibility out of an unlimited number of other possibilities” (Christiansen 222-23), as any fictional truth is only a truth from the point of view of the one who narrates or describes it. Fiction is needed to make sense of life. And
it is fiction that is capable of encompassing the umpteen numbers of truths and lies that we tell about our lives. Roth himself drives this point home in *Exit Ghost*, where he writes that though “life may be the starting point for literature, but once the line between the two is crossed, the connection is severed, and literature becomes self-contained, something that cannot be tracked back to life” (183), then it gives way to misreading and a subsequent misinterpretation.

Roth, to a great tangible extent, has deliberately and consistently, taken advantage of this ambiguity that exists between fact and fiction, autobiographical and fictional leading to a triple predicament, hermeneutic, narrative and ethical. He has taken liberties, not only with modes by which the truth is projected, but has also overturned the entire enterprise of factual and fictional discourses. He has intermingled factuality and fantasy, interwoven fiction with facts, and to a great extent succeeded in presenting what is imagined into truth, and truth into what is imagined. This intermingling of genres, crossing of boundaries and transforming fact into fiction and fiction into facts has entailed what the research considers to be the hermeneutic, narrative and ethical predicament into which Roth has led his readers and critics.

In *Deception* he says with a sense of indignation, “I write fiction and I’m told it’s autobiography, I write autobiography and I’m told it’s fiction, so since I’m so dim and they’re so smart, let them decide what it is or it isn’t” (190). This audacious statement is quoted again and again in the thesis, as the research considers it as the omnipresent thread that pronounces the Rothian literary intention, a self-revelation into his fictional technique. It looks as though Roth has inherited this tendency of intermixing of facts and fiction, or self-reflexive narrative technique and fictional form from Jewish American autobiographical tradition, which thrived on such representation of the self in and through autobiographical fiction.
Jewish American autobiography in general, down through the century has chronicled the tensions between the Eastern European Jewish heritage and those of the free and opportunity-laden New World. What one notices here is that, Jewish American autobiography began as a recollective narration of a geographical passage from the Eastern European shtetls—the present day ghettos—to greater opportunities of American life. But in the course of time, it had undergone tremendous changes regarding the nature and content of the experience, the form of narration, leading up to a mere shrinking distinction between fiction and autobiography. A progressive blending of genre, precipitated by a radical change of nature, form and content can be very visible right from Mary Antins’s pioneering work *Promised Land* (1912), which in fact was a personal recollection of the passage from a restrictive and deeply divided Eastern Europe, to an apparently free and open society of the America—the ‘promised land.’

Later, Abraham Cahan, with his widely popular, *The Rise of David Livingsky* (1917), describes the rapid enculturation, material and commercial success followed by an alarming sense of moral and emotional bankruptcy that the immigrant felt at the abandonment of the Jewish cultural heritage in favour of what Mary Antin considered as the ‘promised land’. Whereas, Michael Gold, in sharp contrast to Mary Antin, narrates the socio-political oppression and poverty, which the immigrant population experienced in his *Jews without Money* (1930). There is a slow progression of the content—from the individual, to the familial, and then to the communitarian experience. There is a noticeable change in the form as well. A chronological survey of Jewish American autobiography reveals what Gibbs calls, ‘generic hybridity’ (1147) that blurs the line between fiction and autobiography.

It could be said with certain amount of certitude that the generic hybridity of Jewish American autobiography that traverses the continuum that exists between the traditional
modes of fictional invention and unadorned autobiography, reaches its culmination in Philip Roth, whose works in question blurs the distinction between fiction and autobiography to such an extent, making Mark Shechner to commend in his *After the Revolution: Studies in Contemporary Jewish Imagination*, that “if Roth’s books are not precisely autobiographies, neither are they fictions in quite the same manner that Shakespeare’s plays or Dickens’s novels are fictions” (225). The dexterity, with which Roth garbs his fiction with verisimilitude, making the unoriginal appear original, or his adroitness in camouflaging his autobiography as fictional, seems to create hermeneutic ambiguities in plethoric abundance.

Bleicher’s *Contemporary Hermeneutics*, defines the Hermeneutics as the “theory or philosophy of interpretation of meaning” (1). It is a term that has come through centuries of development and refinement. As a theory in contemporary literature, hermeneutics in general is associated with the interpretation of written texts. In the opinion of Nishant Alphonse ‘interpretation’ becomes necessary as “no text is a closed deposit of what has been said” (2).

Etymological root of the word hermeneutics is often traced back to the traditions of ancient Greek philosophy and mythology, where the root word *hermeneuein* means ‘to interpret’. As per the Greek mythology, quoted in Palmer’s *Hermeneutics* Hermes-a “wing-footed messenger god,” (13) is responsible for the transmission of heavenly messages to mortals, “making it intelligible and meaningful” (Palmer 11). Hence the science of interpretation of meaning is connected with Hermes, who gave intelligibility to the divine messages. Though Hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation of meaning assumed prominence in the realm of Biblical exegesis, it was with the works of Friedrich Ast, Friedrich August Wolf and later on by Friedrich Schleiermacher, three German philologists, Hermeneutics gained its present status. They defined it as “the science of the
rules by which the meaning of sign is recognised,” while its aim was “to grasp the written or even spoken thoughts of an author as he would have them to be grasped” (qtd. in Palmer 81).

A close look at Roth’s literary career ranging from 1988 to 1993, not only reveals his conscious foray into non-fiction mode of writing, but also an intensified experiment with blurring the distinction between factuality and fictionality. His “self-conscious courting of generic confusion” (Gooblar 112), begins with The Facts (1988), followed by Deception (1990), and Patrimony (1991), ending with Operation Shylock (1993). What distinguishes these four books from the rest of his works, is its conscious subtitling, leading to an exacerbation the hermeneutic predicament for the reader.

The Facts, is subitled as ‘a novelist’s autobiography,’ Deception which actually is a collection of notebook entries of an author called ‘Philip’ is subitled as ‘a novel,’ while Patrimony, dealing with the final two years of his father Herman Roth is subitled as ‘a true story’ and Operation Shylock which forms the last of the autobiographical books, is subtilted as ‘a confession,’ and it deals with supposedly a true story of an impostor calling himself ‘Philip Roth’ promoting a counter-Zionist movement, self proclaimed “ideology of Diasporism” (Operation Shylock 32) in Israel. In all these four books, which many critics consider as ‘autobiographical’ contains a lot of hermeneutic, ethical and narrative issues, which the research considers as hermeneutic, ethical and narrative predicament.

Roth’s first instalment of “depicting a life without the fiction,” (FACT 8) betrays a generic hybridity, initiating what the research considers as the hermeneutic predicament. Though a writer in the realistic mode, Roth, in his own hybrid style, makes use of the postmodern literary technique of pastiche, and thereby attempts to create a unique, personal narrative style, mingling autobiographical with fictional and fictional with
autobiographical. There emerges the hermeneutic predicament, whether to consider his autobiographical writings as ‘autobiography’ or ‘fictional autobiography’?

When a text is read, the reader seeks to locate a meaning or truth that lies within, through the process of hermeneutics. Since a piece of literature is basically built “from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature” (Allen 1), a conformity to the past systems, codes and traditions of a particular genre of writing is necessary for a meaningful hermeneutical exercise. But in Roth we find a conscious combination of multiple genres so as to represent what Dewani considers as “the chaotic and pluralistic... aspects of post modern society” (157), and the tendency to fictionalise historical events so as to afford what Roth himself considers to be a “little protection from their being pawed over by perfect strangers” (FACT 10). Roth’s personal conviction regarding the writer’s right to “exchange facts for the sake of the aesthetic integrity” (Rogoff 498), as well as the writer’s duty to protect the privacy and feelings of others, gives flesh to the hermeneutic predicament.

Though many, if not all of Rothian oeuvre, could be considered as autobiographical, The Facts and Patrimony is professedly so. Speaking about Roth’s autobiographical writings Wirth-Nesher affirms the same when she says that both these are “self professed autobiographies-of Roth the writer in The Facts and of Roth the son in Patrimony” (159). Only a few lines into the narrative, in the letter addressed to Zuckerman, Roth affirms that for him “every genuine imaginative event begins down there, with the facts, with the specific, and not with the philosophical, the ideological, or the abstract” (FACT 3). Leaving aside the content, the way the book is prefaced with a very informal letter addressed to his fictional alter-ego Zuckerman, generates what the research considers as the hermeneutic predicament.
Given the preface, asking Zuckerman, creation of his own fictional imagination, to read the manuscript of his life, untransformed and unadorned, and suggest whether it is worthy of publication, brings in the mind of the reader a question of generic hybridity, whether to consider it as autobiography or fictional autobiography. Predicament comes to the fore as to whether to interpret his work as ‘facts’ or as ‘fiction.’ The reliability of the ‘factual’ representation, as it is claimed in the subtitle—‘a novelist’s autobiography’ is questioned and doubted due to the prefacing of the letter, and at a greater degree by a thirty-five page long prologue—which is made up of a severe verbal denunciation of the manuscript from Zuckerman, saying, “don’t publish—you are far better off writing about me than “accurately” reporting your own life” (FACT 161).

A close examination of the prologue and epilogue of The Facts reveals the extent of the hermeneutic and epistemological predicament that Roth’s autobiographical writings entail. In the epilogue, Zuckerman considers the ‘manuscript’ as a fictional tale of a victimised Jew-Philip Roth, whose mission was to deflate and deflect from what he calls the “inquisitorial pressure” (FACT 128), which he had experienced while addressing the Yeshiva Symposium—The Crisis of Conscience in the Minority Writers of Fiction in 1962— a vociferous accusation of “unfocussed hostility, and self-hatred, of provoking anti-Semitism and jeopardizing the Jew’s hard-won and tenuous security” (Wirth-Nesher 159) in the ‘promised land’ of America. As an American writer who has demonstrated the perilous intersection and collision of Jewish socio-cultural, moral and religious traditions with that of the American ideal of freedom and vertical advancement, Philip Roth had to face the ire of the hostile Jewish fraternity for what they considered as a trespassing of the barricaded Jewish inner circle. Autobiographical writings for Roth becomes a means to express a splintered self, of having a hyphenated identity of that of ‘Jewish-American’, one that of limitless freedom and opportunity, while the other being one of prohibitions
and proscriptions. Roth, in his attempt to reconcile these opposing forces, consciously mingle facts and fiction, leaving veritable scope for ambiguities, and that could be considered as a conscious effort to play it safe.

In the epilogue, Zuckerman mulls over the difference of motif that exists between fiction and autobiography. He is of the opinion that what one chooses to reveal in fiction is governed by an aesthetic motive, and as such a writer of fiction is judged by how well he or she tells the story. Whereas, the motivating factor of an autobiography is ethical, and as such the author of an autobiography is to be judged morally and ethically and not aesthetically. In his assessment, the author/autobiographer as a “personal historian is expected to resist to the utmost, the ordinary impulse to falsify, distort and deny” (164). Based on this premise, Zuckerman asks Roth not to publish it on ethical grounds, as he considers the manuscript as a corrective-retelling, characterised by selective “exclusions and conscious manipulations” (164). The selective exclusion of which Zuckerman accuses Roth is evident when he says, “I still feel that you’re not telling all that’s going on…it just doesn’t seem like Philip Roth to me” (165). The disparity between the Philip Roth he knows and the Philip Roth that is portrayed in the manuscript is so much that it makes Zuckerman to have a sneaking suspicion that, “it could be anybody, almost” (166).

In the manuscript, Zuckerman notes that Roth has only glancingly touched on certain issues, such as the family dissatisfactions, his conflict with his father, the prolonged psychoanalysis etc, to name a few, while the note of grievance, of criticism, of disgust, satire and estrangement that finds so powerful an expression in his fiction, is conspicuously absent. If Roth’s insistence at the beginning of the autobiography that, every genuine imaginative event begins down there with the facts, then the predicament for the reader is, what is to be believed? Whom to be believed? Whether to believe ‘Roth
The Facts

Zuckerman asks, and a series of questions that come in the mind of any probing reader is, where is the satiric rebellion that marked Portnoy? Where is that excruciating need for independence and freedom that made the ‘Assistant Commissioner of Human Opportunity’ cry, ‘let My Peter go’? Where is Portnoy who voices his anger at being controlled and suppressed, who says,

I am marked like a road map from head to toe with my repressions. You can travel the length and breadth of my body over superhighways of shame and inhibition and fear ... sure I say fuck a lot, but I assure you, that's about the sum of my success with transgressing. (PC 124)

And, finally where is the angst-ridden adolescent who cries,

Oh my secrets, my shame, my palpitations, my flushes, my sweats ... doctor I can't stand any more being frightened like this over nothing! Bless me with manhood! Make me brave! Make me strong! Make me whole! Enough being a nice Jewish boy, publicly pleasing my parents while privately pulling my putz! Enough! (PC 37)

In the absence of all these, Zuckerman concludes, “what comes closer to being an autobiography of those impulses was the fable, Portnoy’s Complaint” (FACT 171).

Accusing Roth of indulging in a corrective-retelling, Zuckerman takes Roth down the memory lane, where he was attacked tooth and nail for some of his early characters, for example, Alexander Portnoy with his manic masturbatory tendency in Portnoy’s Complaint wheedling Private Sheldon Grossbart, with his penchant for manipulation and favouritism in “Defender of Faith”, and the inquisitive young Ozzie Freedman who
challenges the shallow and false religiosity and fundamentalism of the orthodox Rabbis in “The Conversion of the Jews”, to name a few. *Portnoy’s Complaint* is misunderstood as a confession in the guise of a novel. Similarly, “The Defender of Faith” is considered to have done as much harm “as all the organized anti-Semitic organizations have done to make people believe that all Jews are cheats, liars, connivers”, and that the story “presented a distorted picture of the average Jewish soldier” (RMO 203).

Now Zuckerman is of the opinion that the existing misunderstanding among a few readers does not warrant the author to straighten them out, but rather having tricked them into such understanding should be considered as the success of fiction writing. Here is how he tries to reason it out with the author:

Of course, by projecting essentially fictional characters with manic personae out into the world, you openly invited misunderstanding about yourself. But because some people get it wrong and don’t have any idea of who or what you really are, doesn’t suggest to me that you have to straighten them out. Just the opposite—consider having tricked them into those beliefs a *success*; that’s what fiction’s supposed to do. (FACT 167)

The mellifluous manuscript in question, which in the opinion of Zuckerman, is aimed to meliorate the accusation of washing the dirty Jewish linen in public, an accusation which Roth gained in the wake of a gross misreading of the collection of stories, *Goodbye Columbus and Five Short Stories*, can find a parallel in the Biblical story of the ‘prodigal son’ (Luke 15:11-32). The manuscript appears to be strongly motivated by a “need for reconciliation with the tribe” (FACT 173) whose platitudinous demands once Roth defended vehemently. Zuckerman reminds that, even the prodigal son who decides to return to the comfort of his father’s house does it only at a juncture he finds himself at the dead end of the tunnel.
The prodigal son who stands as an epitome of selfishness, pride and rebellious disregard for the father’s authority and existence, comes to his senses only when he hit rock bottom, faced with financial disaster and famine. He had to sell himself into physical slavery to a gentile, and feed pigs, one of the most detesting jobs a Jew could ever think of. He finds himself in a position of utter poverty in which, “no one gave him anything” (Luke: 15:16) but in the opinion of Zuckerman, even if Roth consider himself as the prodigal son who once “upset the tribal balance,” the corrective re-telling of which Roth is accused of, comes a bit too early in the career, as Zuckerman says, “the prodigal son who once upset the tribal balance-and perhaps even invigorated the tribe’s health-may well, in his old age, have a sentimental urge to go back home” (173).

Zuckerman’s view is that the Biblical prodigal son takes the corrective step only at a very later stage of his wandering, where he finds himself nowhere to go. However, Roth who told about the existential and experiential truth at the age of early twenties, need not tell the same thing in a different way at fifty-five, when his mother is dead, his father is almost heading for the same, and where those who were supposedly disappointed and felt let down by Roth’s wrings, have either moved on with their lives or have embraced New Jersey cemeteries or Florida retirement communities. And therefore, a corrective re-telling, or an idealized presentation of the confining family and society that long ago ceased impinging on Roth’s spirit is, in Zuckerman’s opinion, is premature and unbecoming of the invigorating anger of the ‘Philip Roth’ that he has seen in his early fictions.

The “loving gentleness and the “tone of reconciliation” (165) that is found in the autobiographical narrative appears to be suspicious and difficult to substantiate given the nature of Philip Roth, who wrote ‘Portnoy’s Complaint.’ It becomes difficult for the reader to believe that the outrageous tone of author of the suffocating family drama, the
man who sketched the “The Most Unforgettable Character I’ve Ever Met” in 1959, or the
man who requested his psychoanalyst to rescue him from the role he plays “of the
smothered son in the Jewish joke” (PC 111), could ever think of converting the
experience of tunnelling out from a detention house, look like movement towards “a
serene, desirable pastoral haven” (FACT 173) where the defiant and recalcitrant son who
once “fucked his[my] own family’s dinner” (PC 134) is metamorphed as the lovable
“mother’s papoose” (FACT 174).

The ‘anger against suppression,’ the ‘desire for freedom and independence,’ ‘the
angst against breaking taboos,’ all these are missing in the autobiographical manuscript,
and that makes Zuckerman to consider the manuscript as a “fictional autobiographical
projection of a partial you[Roth]”(172) because even if it’s only just one percent that the
author has edited out, that one percent counts, as an autobiographical account as
envisaged in the prologue, expected to be “an untransformed rendering” (5) of one’s
experience.

It becomes imperative now to find out the reason for editing out facts from his
manuscript. In the opinion of Zuckerman, while writing The Facts, Roth seems to have
suppressed the power of imagination that served him for the past thirty years. Roth’s
works, up until then, was characterised by an intertwining of facts with imagination, but
the manuscript as it is being sent to Zuckerman, appears that Roth is taking recourse to
de-imagination. By de-imagination what is meant here is the way how Roth temporally
distances himself from his power of imagination, so that he “can restore his experience to
the original prefictionalized factuality” (3). But what we find in the epilogue is an
accusation that Zuckerman levels against such an attempt by Roth, saying, “You’re un-
tertwining them, you’re pulling them apart, you’re peeling the skin off your
imagination, de-imagining a life’s work” (166).
What is edited out from the manuscript, as a result of the self-censorship, in the words of Zuckerman, is saved for imagination or fiction! It is important to note that, what Roth finds unpalatable to be included in his corrective retelling, he keeps for fiction, and that actually remains as his counter-text. Therefore, in his autobiography there is an idealized family, idealized persons, falsified names etc., which makes his autobiography fictional.

The irony here is that, all these words are put in the mouth of Zuckerman by Roth himself, as Zuckerman is his fictional creation. It is a kind of self-talk, a simulated introspection, with which Roth tries to blend facts and fiction, presenting facts in the guise of fiction and fiction in the guise of facts. Through the verbal attack of his own fictional alter-ego- Roth indirectly accepts that even his self-professed autobiography is not a “reliable chronicle of the facts” (Wirth-Nesher 163). By doing so he is able, indirectly though, to divulge what otherwise would have been inhibiting to write about. It leads to the height of, what is considered to be, the hermeneutic predicament, leaving the reader in a quandary, whether to believe Philip Roth the autobiographer, or Philip Roth, the fictional novelist!

Wirth-Nesher’s “Facing Fictions: Henry Roth’s and Philip Roth’s Meta-Memoirs” considers autobiography as an attempt at setting the record straight or of telling the ‘facts.’ And in her opinion the success of both depends upon two things, “the intended audience and how much information about the life is already available to that audience before the autobiographer assumes the authority that comes with being the subject of the story” (259). What makes Roth’s autobiography a ‘setting the record straight,’ is that in the manuscript he tries to present his life as a “unique subject who has been heretofore ... known but misrepresented” (260), when the subject of autobiography is an artist, the case becomes more so, as the readers often construct an image of the writer based on the
artist’s fictional creations. Though the fictional creations of a writer may or may not have a direct bearing on the personal life, but once an image of author, that is drawn out of the fictional creations of an author, becomes the yardstick with which either the creator or the creation is perceived and evaluated, there comes the pressing need for setting the record straight, or to unveil the ‘real facts.’ The Facts, in particular, is motivated by a desire to rectify such misreading and misrepresentation of facts, which has happened during the course of thirty years of his imaginative outpouring, characterised by an easily distinguishable blurring of distinction between the factual and the fictional.

Biography or biographical writing, which Hamilton’s Biography: a Brief History, considers as a “creative and non-fictional enterprise devoted to recording and interpreting real lives” (1), has become a fundamental aspect of the debate between society’s notions of truth and the freedom of artistic imagination. Steven R. Serafin, the general editor of Encyclopaedia of American Literature, is of the opinion that “biography in its earliest form was indented to illustrate or record specific events or acknowledge the deeds, accomplishments or contributions of certain individuals,” (98) having the intention of edification of posterity. As years passed, maturing into a more analytical and evaluative genre as the natural outcome of growth, development and innovation, biography began to articulate the story of a person’s life coloured by the biographer’s interpretation of the life of the individual subject, leading to the ethical question of maintaining privacy and reputation of the one, written about. In this process, the delineation that is existed between the ‘subjective’ and ‘objective,’ the ‘real’ and ‘fabricated’-the basis for what Hamilton considered as the “Victorian fiction-fact paradigm” (282) is either lost or inverted.

As per the Victorian artistic conventions, where the boundary between fiction and non-fiction was strictly demarcated and enforced, fidelity to truth was maintained by non-
fictional writing, while fictional writing, or even the impressionistic Victorian painting maintained anonymity even while they portrayed nudity. Edouard Manet, the French Impressionist painter, whose *déjeuner sur l’herbe* (Luncheon on the Grass), oil on canvas, 1863, depicted a female nude and a scantily dressed bather on a picnic with two Victorian men fully dressed in a rural setting, the nude woman in her frank, voluptuous and intimate nakedness, staring at the onlooker, while the scantily dressed bathing in the background, though shocked the Victorian morality characterised by a high degree of modesty and an equally high sense of propriety, in essence seems to have maintained the Victorian artistic conventions. According to the then prevalent artistic conventions, which accepted nudity or semi-nudity in art, provided it maintained anonymity. Therefore, as far as Manet’s figures on canvas remained anonymous or fictive, it could be portrayed unclad.

What makes Hamilton to speak about the inversion of fiction-fact paradigm is because in the twenty-first century, biographical writing has for the most part, changed places with fiction. He says, “where once factual biographical reporting seemed hard and certain, while fiction could be dismissed as “make-believe,” the roles are now reversed” (283). Taking the maximum advantage of the contemporary relativistic culture, with permeable boundaries between fact and fiction, biographical and autobiographical writings, which comes under creative or narrative non-fiction, aimed at communication of factually accurate information, just like a reporter, has distanced itself from the conventional traditions as it is shaped in such a way that it becomes difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. Roth’s autobiographical writings need to be considered in this context, where he sometimes dodges historical facts, so as to present a coherent narrative truth which would serve his re-constructive aim, that of eliminating the
existing difference between the intended meaning and the imputed meaning that exist in the case of his earlier writings.

In the process of communicating the facts, giving it the appearance of fiction, or vice versa, as in the case of Philip Roth, for example, often a re-imagining or re-construction of those events that have slipped through the memories may take place. When the intention of the author is one of correction or re-construction of an existing version of the story, there turn up the possibility of ‘fabricated facts’ or distorted facts. Roth’s autobiographical writings come well within this category, as there are, contestable presence of fabricated facts and an incontestable presence of distorted facts and figures, in his self professed autobiographical writings.

Donald Spence, in his *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth: Meaning and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis* (1884), differentiates between what he considers as “narrative truth” and “historical truth,” (279) that needs to be understood in the context of the discourse of autobiographical writings. Autobiographical writing is basically an exercise of the memory, as Roth envisages in *The Facts* that the entire factual discourse is memory dependant, and that the “memories of the past are not memories of the facts but memories of your imagining of the facts” (8). In this connection, ‘what really happened’ is the historical truth, while ‘what one believes to have happened’ and the memories of what one believes to have happened, as it is organized in the autobiographical writing, could be considered as the narrative truth. As far as the narrator is concerned, the narrative truth equals the historical truth, but in the process of constructing a meaningful and coherent narrative, it becomes difficult to remain faithful to the historical truth.

In fact, it is the case with *The Facts*, wherein the narrative and aesthetic impulse has overpowered the historical and ethical, as there conscious selections and exclusions. Two conflicting impulses are at work here, one of not hurting the feelings of others, while
the other being the desire to be veridical. Changing the original names of persons, like Margaret his first wife and Ann Mudge his companion during the post depression convalescence, as Josie and May respectively, exemplifies the former, while a sustained presentation of the embattled marriage with Margaret vouches for Roth’s desire to be veridical.

Elaine Kheriaty, speaking about the dynamics of narrative and historical truth, describes about a research he conducted along with Ira Hyman and Ron Kleinknecht on the “Recall and Validation of Phobia Origins as a Function of a Structured Interview versus the Phobia Origins Questionnaire,” among a group of people who had extreme fears. In their research, the researchers asked the selected group to describe the onset of their phobias. A substantial minority could not recollect the genesis of their fears, while the vast majority of the respondents were able to recollect the onset.

Now after gathering the information regarding the phobia onset memories, the research tried to verify the veracity of the accuracy of each individual’s memories regarding their phobia acquisition from their parents. While crosschecking the individual memory with that of their parents, the research found that while the majority of parents verified the memory as historically true, a substantial minority of parents revealed, what the research consider as an “earlier causal event” (qtd. in Kheriaty 61) for the onset of their phobias. Their narrative was true to their memory, as it becomes a narrative truth, while it may not match the historical event as it happened in the past, which constitutes the historical truth.

Paul John Eakin, whose name has achieved synonymity with the study of autobiography, in his Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography (1992), makes a dual assertion regarding autobiographical writing wherein he says, “autobiography is nothing if not a referential art; it is also and always a fiction” (31). Here Eakin’s first
assertion of autobiography being grounded in reference originates from his assumption that the reader of an autobiography expects a verifiable referentiality, meaning, that the reader expects the name on the title page of an autobiographical work to be the one with the textual protagonist and that what s/he reads can be corroborated and validated by an extra-textual reference to the known biography of the author in question. For example, when a reader peruses Philip Roth’s *The Facts*, he expects a mutual correspondence between the historical Philip Roth and Philip Roth of the narrative.

Now, the self of an autobiography, as envisaged by Carolyn A. Barros, in *Autobiography: Narrative of Transformation*, is a “construct, a persona, not the person” (20). Therefore, the self of an autobiography inevitably depends, on the ideas of the self inscribed in his culture, history and language. In presenting himself in prose, as in the case of *The Facts*, Roth tries to remember “where I (he) had started out from and how it had all begun,” and while retracing the steps, he accepts that he had to “go back to the moment of origin,” (FACT 5) which is history. It is very important to note that Roth is candid in accepting to Zuckerman, and by extension to his readers that, in trying to recover the original experience, he found “no one moment of origin but a series of moments, a history of multiple origins” (5-6). He accepts that until he wrote his autobiography, he had looked only for those that could be transformed.

However, Roth here seems to accept Carolyn Barros’s contention that, autobiography is a construct, for example, when he writes to Zuckerman at his introductory letters that, “facts,” the expected constituent element in any autobiographical writing, “are never just coming at you but are incorporated by an imagination that is formed by your previous experience,”(8) but rather, the truth is that “the facts are much more refractory and unmanageable and inconclusive,” (166) and for a person to get to the bottom of his personal history and to make the facts of a life meaningful, a sequence of
Here, the point to be noted is that the structuring and organization of human experience is often conditioned by culture and language. Therefore when the author narrates a record of the memories of the past, which generally is expected to be an accurate transcription of an earlier memory, it is always coupled with, what Donald Spence describes in his *Narrative Truth And Historical Truth* as ‘background assumptions’ so that historical facts remain in its context, and that it is understood with maximum possible exactitude to the real experience. Spence goes on to argue that, if the author fails to provide the required background assumptions within the text itself, then the reader tends to interpret the text taking recourse to a set of “private assumptions” (30), which more often than not, could be far distant from the cultural and linguistic context of the author, leading to an erroneous hermeneutics.

Therefore, the predicament arises when the author attempts to make ‘facts’ or the ‘memorised past’ meaningful by supplying the required background assumptions, which leads to inaccuracy of historical truth, thereby leading to confusion in the minds of the reader. It comes about due to a plausible linguistic inadequacy in the verbal transcription of emotions and experiences, as it is encountered by the agent. In this context, it has to be accepted that, Language, with all its techniques of communication, is incapable of transcribing human experience and emotions with matter-of-factness, without using signs and symbols, metaphors and similes, to name a few linguistic methods at communicating the incommunicable. A sign, generally understood as any object, quality or event, whose
presence or occurrence indicates the possible presence or occurrence of something beyond itself.

Basing itself on Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Course in General linguistics* (1915), the *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* by J.A Cuddon describes a language system as a “series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas” (656). Going further with the theory of Linguistics, Saussure argues that a verbal sign is made up of two distinct but connected aspects, what he calls, the ‘Signifier’ and the ‘Signified.’ While the former stands for the sound or written letters, the latter represents the idea or concept. What is of great importance here is, that both the signifier and the signified are only linguistic entities, not the extra-linguistic object called the referent. For example, the sign ‘Chair’ is made up of the sound (signifier) and the idea of a chair (signified), while it does not refer to the referent, which is the actual chair.

Saussure suggested that not only was the relationship of the sign to the referent an arbitrary one, but also the relation of the signifier to the signified, and that the relationship is based on the linguistic convention, wherein each sign possess a meaning, which again is culturally contextual. It is here the role of background assumptions comes to the forefront, as the autobiographical text, in this case, which is based on the linguistic conventions and cultural context of the autobiographer, can be correctly interpreted only, if the reader either has competence in the linguistic system of the author, or has adherence to either the same or similar linguistic conventions, failing which the text becomes vulnerable to an arbitrary interpretation based on the private assumptions of the reader.

Therefore, the usual practice in autobiographical writings is that, the writer provides the background assumptions intra-textually, so as to avoid the possibility of an arbitrary hermeneutics. As a result, instead of a mere passive recollection of ‘facts,’ ‘events,’ or ‘experiences’ as disconnected pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, lacking in continuity
coherence and organization, the author who is aware of the linguistic inadequacy in the accurate translation of human experience into language, uses his constructive imagination to give a sense of connection, coherence and continuity to the passively recollected kernels of facts, thereby giving visibility to the hitherto amorphous collection of ‘facts’. This process of supplying coherence and continuity, providing a narrative polish to the undistorted, but fragmented series of factual data, leads to what is called a creative reconstruction of self, known in contemporary literary criticism, as fictionalized autobiography. It is this what Donald Spence refers to when he speaks about the artistic transformations of “historic truth into narrative fit,” (12) from being veridical to being creative. Roth proves himself to be a master craftsman in the art of autobiographical shading and amplifications.

In reconstructing or describing events and experiences as it actually happened, trying to piece together unorganised personal memories, there happens, what Siegel considers as a kind of “creative selection and convenient arrangement of personal details” (23), which bear a resemblance to Jamesian idea of art as ‘discrimination and selection.’ And it is in this innovative synthesis, or narrative polishing, that lies what Spence considers as the “persuasive power of a coherent narrative ... in which an aptly chosen reconstruction can fill the gap between two apparently unrelated events, and in the process, make sense out of non-sense” (21).

In an autobiographical discourse, facts alone are not sufficient, as these facts must be presented in a context that would entail its full significance to be understood and appreciated even by an amateurish reader, who has no prior knowledge about the writer or his life. Therefore, a passive recollection and presentation of ‘facts’ or mere recollection of past events, as it happened, in isolation, or a vague remembrance of an instance, would be ambiguous and incomplete. And when the writer tries to fill up the incoherent
recollection with his creative imagination, the autobiography, which is expected to be a
matter-of-fact recounting of self, appears to be fictionalized autobiography, sometimes
called as ‘autofiction’ or even ‘faction,’ a portmanteau of the words ‘fact’ and ‘fiction.’

For Spence, all narratives as ‘making up’ or ‘shaping up’ imposes an “artificial
unity on events” which can be intentionally false and fabricated or one which forms from
a “personal or cultural bias” (21). What is of paramount importance here in the
discussion of fictional autobiography lies in the hermeneutic predicament, of
distinguishing those self narratives which involves deliberate fabrication, and those that
contains only artificial unifiers, as part of the process of restoring the past experience to
the original, “prefictionalized factuality” (FACT 3). Distinction must be made between
historical or ontological truth and narrative or descriptive truth. In all narrative truth there
lies a historical truth, while all historical truths may or may not necessarily supply
narrative truths. Therefore what is important as regards to hermeneutics is to gauge the
predominance of deliberate invention or fabrication from an accidental fictionality that
arise out of the effort to provide a narrative unity to the self narrative.

What we can find in Philip Roth’s autobiographical narratives is a deliberate
attempt to deconstruct the ‘imagined author’ that has been already ingrained in the mind
of the reader. The ‘imagined author’ here refers to what Cooke’s Present Pasts describes
as the “picture of the author built up in the reader’s mind from textual indications, or
alternatively, by biographical and other para-textual knowledge as well as by textual
indications” (29). In the case of Roth’s meliorating autobiography The Facts, for
example, it appears to be an attempt to reconstruct the real and ‘historical Roth’ from the
‘imagined Roth’ through a powerful and deliberate narrative intervention, by a creative
selection and arrangement of personal history, by what he considers to be a movement
backward, “taking what I have already imagined and as it were, desiccating it, so as to
restore my experience to the original pre-fictionalised factuality,” (FACT 3) which in his opinion is the structure of the life of the historical Roth, “untransformed” (5).

The hermeneutic predicament arises, when the information gathered from the knowledge from the biographical and other para-textual and historical references, contradict with that of those that are presented in the autobiography. The quandary is whether to give credibility to the already ‘imagined author’ or to the ‘ontological author’- as a person seen and known in the chronological space and time. The creative selection and re-arrangement of personal details, imaginative sublimation of certain painful memories, be it personal, familial or social, selective exclusions and depersonalizations etc, which galore in the autobiographical narratives of Philip Roth, exacerbates the predicament.

The conflicting claims made by the ‘imagined author’ and its counterpart, the ‘ontological author’, as presented in the autobiographical narratives, disagrees with Roth’s initial assertion of The Facts being ‘Factual’ record of his life. If we take Roth on the face value of his claims, then it is easier to accept the ‘imagined author’ Roth than the ‘autobiographical Roth’, as he begins his autobiography by saying, “for me ... every imaginative event begins down there, with the facts, with the specific, and not with the philosophical, the ideological or the abstract” (53). Then the question is, how to account for the loving gentleness and the tone of reconciliation that one finds in the opening chapters of The Facts? It appears, suspiciously unsubstantiated. Zuckerman is so blunt in saying, “there’s an awful lot of loving gentleness in those opening chapters of yours, a tone of reconciliation that strikes me as suspiciously unsubstantiated and so unlike what you usually do” (165).

There seems to be some illogicality between the initial assertion at the beginning of the autobiographical text, and the content that follows. If we are to believe his initial
assertion that all imaginative events begin with facts, then the predicament is, as to how to reconcile the warm comforting home portrayed there, as the home that nurtured the author of *Portnoy’s Complaint*? The predicament that germinates from this ambiguity and illogicality is voiced by David Lida in the article “Philip Roth talks a little: I’m not quite the Schmuck Zuckerman Is,” where Lida observes that the autobiographical book *The Facts* is “written with such politesse and filial respect, one is bound to wonder about the unexplained sources of rage that inform so many of Roth’s novels” (434). Zuckerman, for his part, in his letter back to Roth echoes a similar concern, where he observes, “where once there was satiric rebellion, now there is a deep sense of belonging; no resentment rather gratitude, gratitude even for crazy Josie (Margaret Mattinson) gratitude even for the enraged Jews and the wound they inflict” (FACT 170).

What any reader of Roth’s autobiographical writing would find is that there is a marked difference in the treatment of the grievance, criticism disgust, satire, estrangement that finds powerful expression in his fictions, from the way the same is treated in the autobiography, as it is a much mellowed down presentation of the same. Though most of Rothian protagonists bear spacio-temporal and ontological resemblance to the author, for example the familial struggles of Portnoy, the generational divide that Ozzie Freedman experienced at the hands of the orthodox parents and Rabbi Binder, or what Nadel considers as the “crescendo of reactions from strangers, friends and family to his scandalous and sexually explicit expose of Jewish middle-class life” (259) , or the agony that Nathan Zuckerman experienced in the wake of his defamatory novel *Carnovsky*. Again, Peter Tarnopol in his psychological sessions with Dr. Spielvogel, his wife Maureen who purchased a urine sample from a pregnant woman to trick him resembles the historical Roth. However, Roth rejects any such direct resemblances saying that they are mere make beliefs and ‘world of words.’ Andrea Chambers quotes Philip Roth where
he says, “Like any other writer I have only the floor under my feet to stand on,” but he is quick to add, “I get my facts from what I see of life and of myself. Then I have to make another world out of them, a world of words that is more interesting than what exists” (98).

It is here the reason for the ‘suspiciously unsubstantiated’ details as remarked by Zuckerman comes alive, it is here the reason for the illogicality and ambiguity that is voiced by David Lida becomes clear. While there are more than enough historical details that pepper the text to confirm the existence of the historical Philip Roth in The Facts, there are notable inconsistencies, exclusions and incomplete presentations and questionable omissions along with embellishments and digressions in plerotic abundance, creating ambivalence and hermeneutic predicaments. For example, to cite a few inconsistencies so as to conclude the discussion on this topic, Josie or Josephine Jenson is not the real name of his first wife, but it is Margaret Martinson Williams. But history vouches for the fact that he did “meet Margaret Martinson on a Chicago street in October 1956” (Nadel 11), marry her in a civil ceremony in Yonkers, New York, in 1959, and that they got “separated after three years in 1962,” (FACT 134) and finally died in an automobile accident in New York City, Central Park, while the fight for divorce was still on, in 1968.

Again, there is enough evidence to show that Roth spent almost “five years together,” (FACT 133) during and after the completion of Portnoy’s Complaint with a lady named Ann Mudge, “one of the dedicates of his Novel, When She Was Good ” (Nadel 13), but whose is presented under a fictitious name, May Aldrige. As regards the exclusions or partial representations, one that gets the attention, even of a casual reader, is a mere one-liner regarding five to seven years of Psychoanalysis. Nadel makes a specific mention of the same wherein he says that in the aftermath of the mental breakdown Roth
suffered in his endeavour to “understand the upheavals in his life, including how to deal with his burdensome alimony and court costs, which diverted him from his writing and personal relationships” (13), Roth’s Facts provides only facts “assaulted by imagination” making Cooper to describe it as “limited facts of The Facts” (51). Almost five years of Psychoanalysis finds only a passing reference in his Autobiography where he mentions that “there was my intense psychoanalysis, which, undertaken to stitch back together the confidence shredded to bits in my marriage” (FACT 137).

What could be assumed from the above is that, though there are notable inconsistencies, illogicalities, exclusions, there is undoubtedly an indelible relationship between fact and fiction and fictional and autobiographical. Wallace Stegner observes in his book On Teaching and Writing Fiction, “because he (writer) writes fiction in order to reflect or illuminate life, his materials obviously must come out of life,” but he further clarifies that “a writer has no other material to make his people from than the people of his experience, and the only thing the writer can do is to recombine parts, suppress some characteristics and emphasize others” (21). What Roth has done is exactly the same with his autobiographical writings, the raw materials of his autobiography has indeed been culled out of his life, but as Stegner has noted, he has recombined, suppressed some, and emphasised some, leading to the hermeneutic predicament of distinguishing the ‘imagined Philip Roth’ from that of the ‘historical Philip Roth.’

The hermeneutic predicament that poses the question as to where the reader can draw the demarcating line between fiction and autobiography seems to have been put an end by Roth himself in one of his interview with La Repubblica, wherein he gives a very definitive answer to the problem. In his opinion both fiction and autobiography are related and reliant on each other as both the genres involve the mediation of life experience. He approaches the problem with the help of the ‘beefsteak-hamburger.'
metaphor. Bignardi gives an excerpts of Roth’s interview with La Repubblica, in

“Autobiography: False Confession?” as follows:

The fiction starts with the first line of a novel, autobiography with the first word of an autobiography. Using fragments of your life is exactly like putting pieces of beefsteak through the mincer to make hamburger. The mincer is your imagination. What comes out is something completely different, completely transformed: the result is still meat, but transformed, organised.

(104)

Therefore, Rothian fiction or autobiography has to be seen as fragments of life transformed by the ‘mincer’ of imagination into a ‘hamburger’ for the purpose of illumination of life. The line between the two is akin to the one that exists between the beefsteak and hamburger, the essence being ‘meat.’

After having completed twelve pages into his critique of the manuscript, Zuckerman moves on to the ethical implications of the autobiographical writing. He reminds Roth that “with autobiography there’s always another text, a counter-text” (FACT 172). What implied here is that, if autobiography, as the truthful representation of self, is taken as the ‘text’, then the relational presentation of the ‘other’ could be considered as the ‘counter-text’ as any authentic representation of self entails an equally or even more authentic presentation of the ‘other,’ as self is always relational.

A combined understanding of the relational concept of selfhood as proposed by Paul John Eakin in his How our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves (1999), and the Lacannian theory of ‘mirror stage,’ brings the ethical and narrative predicament of autobiographical writing upfront. The concept of relationality developed by Paul John Eakin who asserts that “all selfhood is relational” (50) and that an individual’s personal identity, that of the subject of an autobiography, for example, is never self-contained or
autonomous as it is inevitably tied up with that of the others, with whom we come in contact with. Continuing in the same line of argument with that of Paul Eakin, then “writing truthfully about oneself,” as Gooblar observes, “will always require writing truthfully about others” (The Major Phases of Philip Roth 113).

The concept of relationality of selfhood can be traced back to one’s early childhood experience where, as Jennifer George Palilonis observes, “every individual creates a sense of self through distinct interaction with others” and making use of the Lacannian concept of ‘mirror theory’, she further affirms that, “the mirror stage establishes the infant individual as fundamentally dependent upon external objects and forces represented by another” (201). In other words, she says, “our very ability to define ourselves as individual is almost entirely dependent upon our equal ability to do so in the context of an ‘other’ ” (202). Therefore, all representation of personal selfhood as in the case any autobiography, contains at least some aspects of the collective “other” (Eakin 70). It is here Arnold Krupat’s observation regarding the intrinsic relationality of individual selfhood, to that of others become significant. He observes, “any narration of personal history is more nearly marked by the individual’s sense of himself in relation to collective social units or groupings” (212).

In Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography, Paul Eakin underscores the ethical ramifications of autobiographical writing when he observes, “our lives never stand free of the lives of others, we are faced with our responsibility to those others whenever we write about ourselves” (159). In an age of unprecedented personal exposure, making critics to call it the ‘age of memoirs’, more and more individuals are brought on public display, laying bare, sometimes even the intimacies of family and friendship. The entire genre of life-writing, one of the most complex modes of human expression has as its accompaniment, a wide gamut of tricky ethical and narrative implications. It becomes a
predicament for the writer as he finds his/her private life, which actually is the subject matter of any autobiographical writing, always knotted with the private lives of others.

Therefore, when the author engages himself/herself in life writing, to present a true story of him/her, it becomes imperative that his/her true story involves individuals other than himself/herself, with whom the writer is engaged, more often than not, on a trust relationship. The ethical and narrative predicament here, is therefore, how to balance the desire to portray an authentic story, which is the expected outcome of any autobiographical writing by a reader, with an equally pressing desire which Tanya Y. Kam considers as the desire to “tell a morally responsible story” (313), without invading into the privacy of others. The ethical aspect of autobiographical writing comes to the fore, as any autobiography of ‘self,’ by extension, becomes a ‘biography’ of the ‘other.’ Then the question arises, as to what extent the autobiographical author can narratively expose and explore the lives of the other, whose life is closely associated with that of the writer. It is here the research considers Roth’s *Patrimony* as an example of ethical and narrative predicament of life-writing.

Moving on to Roth’s *Patrimony*, which constitutes the second book of what is considered to be the non fictional trilogy, along with *The Facts* and *Operation Shylock*, the research focuses on the ethical aspect of the autobiographical writing. *Patrimony*, considered to be the “most personal account yet by a famously personal and autobiographical writer” (Hedin 143), is one of the most poignant memoirs of his autobiographical trilogy which recounts the last two years of his father Herman, as he battles with a fatal brain tumour that would eventually kill him. It explores the psychological state of Philip Roth as he faces the prospect of losing his father even before he has recovered fully from the sudden demise of his mother in 1981.
Though *Patrimony* is an impassioned autobiographical chronicling of the account of Roth’s father’s deteriorating health, from the point of view of Roth, it is more of a biographical recounting of his father, as the focus is on Herman the father, and not, Philip the son. Notwithstanding the National Book Critics Circle Award for the same in the year 1991, what makes *Patrimony* important as far as the research is concerned, is the ethical and narrative predicament that Roth undergoes in the making of the same.

After discussing on the hermeneutic predicament, of demarcating the line between the factual and fictional, and the necessity of taking recourse to imaginative creativity, to provide coherence and continuity to the otherwise passive and unrelated recollection of past memory, the research now focuses on the ethical quandary that the author finds himself in, as to decide the extent to which he can invade into the privacy, individuality and dignity of the ‘relational other’ of the autobiography. David Gooblar notes in his article, “The Truth Hurts: The Ethics of Philip Roth’s “Autobiographical” Books,” that “when an author purports to tell the truth, and that true story involves people other than himself, he takes it upon himself to expose others in ways of his choosing” (36).

Roth’s attempt to be candid, impassioned and undisguised in his life-writing, leads him to an ethical predicament, as to decide the extent to which the narrative can reveal the private life of his father, as he, the grief stricken son accompanies his father through his physical and psychological ordeal. The predicament is to determine what is to be revealed and what is not to be, as the narrative in the case of *Patrimony*, is not ‘biographical’ but ‘autobiographical.’ Throwing light on this issue, Richard Freadman though highlights the author’s freedom to present a story from his point of view and perspective, saying that the “writers have a right to write,” soon shifts into an imperative mood as he posits an ethically and normatively pertinent question, “but how far into the
revealing what his diseased father would have liked unwritten, and it sounds parallel to the situation in which Roth finds himself enmeshed as he struggles in his narrative as to decide how far he can invade into the privacy of his father Herman, who, as in the case of Freadman’s father, is no more able to defend himself.

Thomas Couser in his *Vulnerable Subjects: Ethics and Life Writing*, asks the writers to resist the temptation to contravene another person’s right to privacy, even under the pretext of explanation, vindication or self-justification, as the subject in question may be vulnerable to narrative harm especially when the person is dead. Death, in his opinion, is “the condition of maximum vulnerability to posthumous misrepresentation because it precludes self-defence” (16). But this comes well within the jurisdiction of a fictional artist, whose obligation which in the opinion of Roth, ends with “the correct presentation of the problem” (RMO 16).

“I cannot” said Roth once in an interview to Hermione Lee, “and do not live in the world of discretion, not as a writer, anyway. I would prefer to, I assure you-it would make life easier. But discretion is, unfortunately, not for novelists” (266). However, in yet another interview with Mervyn Rothstein, after the publication of *The Facts*, Roth accepts that it is easy to write fiction, as “in the fiction you can be so much more truthful without worrying all the time about causing direct pain” (226). Therefore, in one of his interviews with Martha McGregor, he is very categorical in stating that fictional works does not offer answers as it is only an attempt to “represent the experience, the confusion and the toughness of certain moral problems (2).

In trying to represent that experience of confusion and moral decadence in the post-war American society, Roth, as we have seen in the first two chapters of the research, has been consistently and indiscreetly savage, fiercely focussing on the middle-
class American society, with special reference to the emerging American Jewish community as it faced an erosion of traditional values in the scuffle for material prosperity and social mobility. This post-war tendency of leading a life of guilt-less self-gratification is well represented by two of his most ‘indiscreet’ works till date, namely *Goodbye Columbus* and *Portnoy’s Complaint*. But as he switches to autobiographical mode, we find Roth in a dilemma, whether or not, to continue with the same condor and parrhesia while translating the debilitating psychological ordeal that he experienced during the last two years of his father’s illness and death in *Patrimony*.

He expresses his qualms regarding the possible impossibility of adequate translation of the ‘pages of life’ into the ‘pages of a book.’ See how he has described the linguistic inadequacy he experienced at the death of his father, which consumes a major chunk of *Patrimony*, he opens himself up to Alvin P. Sanoff thus:

> All the words that we spoke to each other and to the doctors, and the words that I wrote down, all of them are, finally, just that, words. The experience itself is another thing entirely. His death didn’t happen in the universe of words. Perhaps those of us who live with and by words are bit astonished by the real thing because we are always looking for the right word to describe the thing. We assume that if we find the right word, we’ve captured the thing. The words become a substitute for the thing. But the thing is something different. (267-68)

Roth’s words ‘but the thing is something different’ speaks volumes of the dilemma that he faces in trying to substitute his intimate personal experience with right words. And as he tries to unveil a strictly private world, without taking recourse to symbolic or stylistic invention or imaginative intervention, which is not Roth’s wont, he finds himself in a precarious situation. His endeavour to match words to such a delicate
issue, of describing the last years of his father’s illness and death in his memoir, he finds himself in the verge of some ethical and narrative predicament himself, as he confesses, though in a half humorous tone, “I had dressed him for eternity in the wrong clothes” (PATR 237).

The ethical pricking that Roth has about the text of the memoir, comes vivid in the description of a dream where Herman, the father rebukes the son, saying, “I should have been dressed in a suit, you did the wrong thing” (169). Predicament becomes evident by analysing how Roth has ‘undressed’ Herman in his memoir, Patrimony. Dressing Herman in a traditional Jewish shroud—a tallit instead of a suit seems to be an example of doing the wrong thing, a kind of infringing the dignity and privacy of the father, who is defenceless posthumously.

Patrimony, begins in 1987 when Herman Roth at the age of 86 is incapacitated with a kind of facial paralysis, that is diagnosed at first, as Bell’s Palsy, a temporary neurological disorder, common to people of his age. What follows is an unembellished, “unpoetic and expressive and point-blank” (PATR 128) presentation of the life of Herman Roth, manager of the South Jersey branch of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, husband of Bessie, father of Philip and Sandy.

The ethical and narrative predicament that Roth’s Patrimony pauses has its genesis as Roth is in a quandary as to how to strike a narrative balance between the ‘love-hate’ relationships he had with his tenacious but authoritarian father, “You must not forget anything” (PATR 125), reverberates in the subconscious realms of Philip Roth who finds it difficult to reconcile the multifaceted character of his father, who in his opinion “wasn’t just any father, he was the father with everything there is to hate in a father and everything there is to love” (127). The love-hate relationship between them may have worked as a catalyst in rendering a matter-of-fact presentation of his father and his last
years. And the raison d’être that Roth gives for *The Facts* that, “if this manuscript conveys anything, it is my exhaustion with masks, disguises, distortions and lies” (FACT 6), applies more to *Patrimony* than to *The Facts*, as in *Patrimony* he dispassionately unmasks his father, even to the extent of revealing a humiliating instance of incontinence, which the father wanted to have kept confidential.

In chapter four of *Patrimony*, for example, we find two conflicting opinions given by the doctors attending on Herman, regarding the course of treatment that could be undertaken. They later perform a biopsy so as to decide whether or not the tumour can be treated with radiation, so that they can prolong his life a “couple of years” (91). But after having discovered that the tumour is not susceptible to radiation, and finding his health fast deteriorating, Herman is taken to Philip’s house in rural Connecticut, where he along with Claire Bloom could give more attention to him.

It is then that one day Herman, who was unable to move his bowels since biopsy, suffers from an embarrassing moment in his life, as he is affected by an attack of incontinence and consequently defecates all over. Roth candidly represents the situation, “the shit,” he writes, “was everywhere, smeared underfoot on the bathmat, running over the toilet bowl edge and at the foot of the bowl, in a pile on the floor. It was splattered across the glass of the shower stall from which he’d just emerged, and the clothes discarded in the hallway were clotted with it” (120-21) for many it may appear an impassioned description of a spacio-temporal occurrence, characteristic of an author who wants to portray a realistic picture of his father’s illness.

But as the narrative progresses, we find that there is more to this scene than what we can make out externally. The ethical ramification of such an embarrassing situation comes alive from the following private conversation that transpired between the father and the son in the wake of this incident. He how it becomes ethical, he narrates:
‘Don’t tell the children,’ he said, looking at me from the bed with his one sighted eye.

‘I won’t tell anyone,’” I said. “I’ll say you are taking rest.”

‘Don’t tell Claire.

‘Nobody,’ I said! ‘Don’t worry about it. It could have happened to any one just forget about it and get a good rest.”(121-22)

When we take the conversation that goes on between Roth and his father on face value, we are given the indication that Herman Roth dies believing that Philip His son would keep his word, maintain absolute secrecy and confidentiality, and that his dignity is safe in the hands of his son. Breach of this trust that Herman places on his son seems to be ethically questionable, as Philip Roth, the writer’s attempt to invade into the privacy of the helpless dying Herman, amounts to a double violation, a violation of the promise of confidentiality, and the violation of the right to privacy and dignity of an individual, who had explicitly demanded secrecy of the incident.

Paul Eakin, Nancy Miller, Richard Freadman, Adam Philips, to mention a few stalwarts of life-writing, have mentioned directly or indirectly the above scene from Patrimony, as an example while speaking about the ethics of Autobiographical writing. The research here is more focused on the ‘ethical predicament’ that the author faces here. Roth, for example, is caught between the desire to fulfil his father’s admonition that “you must not forget anything,” (PATR 170) and a filial injunction to keep the embarrassing incident confidential. Roth tells himself, “I must remember accurately,” (125) and it appears that he is trying to do justice to his father’s directive to ‘remember’ everything as it happened. Roth’s attempt to remember as it happened leads to the narrative predicament having ethical implications. Through the narrative Roth reveals Herman as frugal, stubborn, primitive, undereducated, to cite a few examples, to show how the
narrative in its attempt to be true to the ‘facts’ becomes a kind of infringement into the individual subject’s right to privacy and dignity.

In the first chapter itself, for example, Roth describes how Herman had become more and more frugal towards his last days, even refusing to buy his favourite newspapers, though he loved it so much. Speaking about the devotion with which Herman used to read newspaper, in one of his interviews with Lynn Darling in 1991, Roth says, “My father couldn’t extract very much information from a sentence in a work of fiction. He could extract plenty of information form a newspaper and he was devoted to the newspaper and read it every day” (271). His frugality is further elaborated when Herman tries to preserve the ‘shaving mug’ of his grandfather Sender, in contrast to his wont of disposing all sorts of “useless” (PATR 15) things, even those that may have had sentimental value. To support this position Roth recounts here, how Herman starts cleaning out Bessie’s closets and bureaus, collecting her possessions into large plastic bags, which, after her death, in his opinion had become ‘useless,’ saying, “what good is this stuff anymore? ...this stuff can go to Jewish relief-it in mint condition” (17).

Soon in the same chapter Roth narrates an incident wherein Roth says that he was stunned by Herman’s “primitivism,” (32) wherein He flees from the dead body of his wife, who “slumped over” (20) and died fleeing from the dead body of his wife at the hospital seems to be stemmed from a primitive fear or prejudice, as we have enough instances where Herman breaks down, out of love for her, recounting the memories of Bessie, meaning to say that it was not lack of love that him to flee from her dead body, but a primeval fear, which stimulated such an unpremeditated action. Example of the incongruities of life, manifested in plethoric abundance in Herman’s life, for example, the man whom Roth thought would “die of loneliness,” (23) the man who queried “will I be a zombie,” (43) the man who “burst into tears,” (40) becomes “blissfully self-forgetful-
talkative, energetic, gregarious,” (26) as he meets Mrs. Isebelle Berkowitz at Jewish Federation Plaza, as they go in search for a retirement home. There is something pathetic about the most majestic of us, and something majestic about the most pathetic of us. This seems to be validated by this instance, where Herman is presented as a living witness of the inconsistent, fragmented and incongruent life of modern man.

Along with the frugality and primordial inhibition that characterised Herman in the narrative, Roth presents Herman as growing more stubborn, bossy and overbearing, “bluntly resisting points of view that diverged only slightly from his own reigning biases” (26-27). There is an incident that happens just the summer before his mother’s death, where he describes a private conversation they had on her weekend visit to Connecticut, where Bessie informed him of her thought of “getting a divorce” (21) as what she considers to be “his (Herman’s) obsessive stubbornness-his stubborn obsessiveness,” (20) had very nearly driven her to the brink of a mental breakdown.

Along with a straightforward and impassioned account of his father’s obstinacies and uncompromising attitudes, Roth contrasts Herman’s linguistic inadequacies and “eighth-grade education,” (7) with the astounding academic success that he himself had. Herman’s linguistic incompetence is revealed through the letter he sends to his younger brother Sandy, filled with grammatical errors and spelling mistakes, something which Herman himself accepts at the end of the letter saying, “please excuse the spelling and writing” (53). Though the letter is included in the narrative just to present what Nadel considers to be a pointer to the insistent and numbing “advising, criticising and directing,” (198) it serves Roth as a medium to exercise his intellectual and academic superiority over his otherwise dominating father.

By way of wrapping up the discussion, it transpires that a hermeneutic predicament occurs when the writer uses his own lived experience in fiction as a raw
material. We have also seen that the concept of the ‘imagined author’ - that which is shaped during the course of a series of fictional creations-tends to contradict partially, sometimes even fully, with the professedly autobiographical or life writings. The discrepant relationship between life as it is described in the fictional writing, and the life that which the subject of autobiographical writings has lived in actual chronological space and time, forms the crux of the hermeneutic predicament. The reader finds it difficult to separate the factual from the fictional, as the intentional distortion of the facts which happens in an autobiographical writing, as a narrative technique employed by the writer, often for a forceful and coherent narrative, as even the ‘facts’ passes through the faculty of imagination at work in the autobiographical author. Hence, the difficult task of separating the sheep from the goats becomes the task of the reader, leading to a hermeneutic predicament.

It has already been seen that, autobiographical/life writing is part of a larger programme of progressive identity formation and a process of corrective re-telling. In the opinion of Cooper it is a “fictive reworking of biographical material,” (54) as the subject is either the author himself, as in the case of The Facts, or those who are biologically related to the author-as in the case of Patrimony. The former exemplifies the hermeneutic predicament, painstakingly presenting himself as “the little boy nuzzling mama’s seal-skin coat,” (FACT 191) which in the words of Wirth-Nesher is Roth’s attempt to present a corrective and reworked version of his “family past in order to curry belated favour with an audience that has convicted him of treason” (264), which Zuckerman, one of his own fictional characters, judges as a “middle-age passion to be reconciled with the tribe” (FACT 194). Patrimony, the latter, however reveals the inherent ethical and narrative predicament in life-writing. What dominates the narrative is Roth’s unpronounced desire to be vindicated as a good, devoted Jewish son, “who loved his parents” (FACT 166). It is
What is seen in *Patrimony* is that, in his attempt to purge out the ‘imagined author’ Roth takes liberties with ‘facts,’ individual privacy, right to personal dignity and confidentiality etc., that forms the nucleus of the ethical and narrative predicament. If the former, the hermeneutic predicament mostly affected the readers, the latter takes a high toll on the author himself, as he finds himself oscillating between two opposing desires. First, the desire to reveal himself to be a submissive son of the dominating father, and the second, to quote his own words, the Freudian desire to “nullify the father by force” (PATR 111). This conflict is revealed in what could be considered as a mobile psychiatric session with a “parricidal driver,” (112) on his way from the Essex House Hotel to the University Hospital. The narrative is very poignant, wherein Roth deems the driver as belonging to the “primal horde of sons who, as Freud liked to surmise, have it in them to nullify the father by force—who hate and fear him and, after overcoming him, honour him by devouring him” (111). The sons in the Freudian theory are victims of an inner conflict, a love-hate relationship, as they hate their father, a figure who in the words of Hallahmi represents the “single patriarch who monopolized all the females” (1375), in the primal horde theory. However, they love him, for he keeps them safe and maintains order in their lives. Overcome with resentment and sexual deprivation, the sons murder and devour him.

The Freudian hypothetical patriarchal theory of human social organization, where the sons forcefully usurp their tyrannical father’s patriarchal position, finds resemblance in Roth’s description of the cab driver, who knocked out his father’s “four front teeth”
(PATR 109), as a physical expression of his resentment, a symbolic annihilation of the father. Now the self-reflection that Roth makes after recounting this incident is very vital to understand the chemistry behind writing *Patrimony*. He says, “I’m from the horde that can’t throw a punch. We aren’t like that and we can’t do it, to our fathers or to anyone else.” Then he goes on to explain the dilemma that he is in, saying, “we’re the sons appalled by violence, with no capacity for inflicting physical pain, useless at beating and clubbing, unfit to pulverize even the most deserving enemy, though not necessarily without turbulence, temper, even ferocity” (111).

In contrast to the primal horde of sons, or even with that of the ‘parricidal’ cab driver, Roth explains the predicament of his generation and the way, he along with the modern generation of sons have surmounted the predicament as follows:

We have teeth as cannibals do, but they are there, imbedded in our jaws the better to help us articulate. When we lay waste, when we efface, it isn’t with raging fists or ruthless schemes or insane sprawling violence but with our words, our brains, with mentality ...encouraging us to be so smart and such yeshiva butchers, they little knew how they were equipping us to leave them isolated and uncomprehending in the face of all our forceful babble. (111)

What is to be noted here is that Roth seems to have overcome the incapacity to use ‘brute physical force’ by taking recourse to a ‘sharper intellectual force’, substituting brute force with, brute ‘words.’ Zuckerman observes in his reply to the author of *The Facts*, that “with autobiography there’s always another text, a counter text” (FACT 172), and in this context the counter text of Roth’s autobiography-*The Facts*, is the biography of his father as presented in *Patrimony*. Here, a sharp and brute intellectual force seems to have compensated for the incapacity of inflicting physical pain on the Patriarchal figure,
which seems to have held a physical and psychological monopoly across a wide spectrum of familial activities in the Jewish American society.

Roth is very clear and prophetic when he says that it isn’t with raging fists or ruthless schemes or insane sprawling violence, that the younger generation combat the ‘love-hate’ relationship that exist between the tyrannical father’s patriarchal position and themselves, but with their words, their brains, and with their mentality. This though brings forth an apparent reconciliation of the predicament, it is akin to a dormant volcano which can become active at any moment of time, because beneath the ferocity and resentment of every son there is in every one, an underlying reverential fear of the patriarchal father figure, which can any moment re-invigorate the ‘love’ aspect of the ‘love-hate’ relationship, making the predicament a very integral part of human existence.
Conclusion

At the centre of Roth’s fiction is the concept that life is an absurd paradoxical
theatre characterized by the incongruity between the ideal and the real, the sacred and the
profane, the grandeur of our aspirations and the grossness of our flees. ...it is a Camusian
world in which the conflict between the desire for order and reason is thwarted, time and
again, by a reality gone berserk.

- Elaine B. Safer, Mocking the Age: The Later Novels of Philip Roth.

The sui generis character of each and every literature, in the words of Darshan
Singh Maini, is “predicated on the urgencies and contingencies located in the spiritual and
moral life of its people” (1). It actually reflects the society and embodies the texture and
ethos of the context in which it originates. This observation seems to have proved right in
the case of Philip Roth, whose early fictions have registered the social, moral, cultural
and spiritual ethos of post-war Jewish American society with its distinct set of
ambiguities and contradictions, with a perceptible consistency and remarkable
penetration.

Roth’s early fictions, having semblance of a new jeremiad, has trenchantly
probed the American milieu, raising searching questions about its socio-religious mores,
more often than not, through his signature style of mixing genres, blurring the distinction
between factual and fictional, blending biographical and autobiographical and finally
courting, what George J. Searles in his Introductory note to the Conversations with
Philip Roth considers to be the, mutually inimical tendencies of “sheer playfulness and
deadly seriousness” (ix).
To begin with, taking note of the urgencies and contingencies, the incongruity between the ideal and the real, between the search for meaning and the meaninglessness of the Camusian world, Roth evolves a form of literature that, in his own words, best “represent the experience, the confusion and toughness of certain moral problems” (qtd. in Searles 2). This in the words of Maini makes Roth’s works a “sensitive seismograph of American life and lore, of its cultural compulsions and contradictions, its spiritual upheavals and convulsions,” (2) and subsequently making him, what the research considers as a ‘social realist’ and ‘culture critic.’

Though many, in the past, have explored one or more cryptic fragments of Roth’s literary mystique, only a critic who has a fine tuned reading ability to discern the subtleties of Rothian fiction that has earned praise and censure on equal measure, can fathom the way in which his writings have exposed the ambivalence besetting the Jewish experience in the tumultuous and turbulent post-war America. His works in general, reflects the Jewish way of life, their faith, the values they hold and their inherent prospects and predicaments.

In his interview with Martha McGregor Roth is very categorical about it wherein he says, “my fiction is about people in trouble” (1). What makes it appear to be exclusively a Jewish problem is its close proximity with Jewish Newark and Jewish characters. In the post-war scenario, many of them had suppressed their own Jewish identity and reinvented themselves as a modern Jews acceptable to the Gentiles. Roth’s voluminous work is representative of an approach wherein his fictional eyes have mimetically reproduced the real Jewish situation, as they live out a passage from one of the most orthodox to one of the most permissive socio-cultural milieus, where the Jewish ethnic self negotiates itself to maintain a tricky balance between the old world and the new world. What comes through Roth’s early fiction is an intricate and compelling
analysis of how the Jews and Jewish life, self-consciously reconstructs themselves in America, while struggling to retain an intrinsic air of superiority in the collective memory of the ‘chosen-race.’ The research traces the igniting forces of the social, moral and religious predicament as they engage themselves in negotiating the problematic of self-identity and assimilation in the ongoing vitality of the Jewish-American socio-cultural encounter, and finally to unearth the social critique in Philip Roth’s writings.

In and through a writing career, which has flourished for nearly half a century, Roth has demonstrated a universal outlook, a belief that by focusing on the local, the artist can reveal the universal. What could be considered as his ‘artistic credo,’ to affront all till there is no one on earth unaffronted, Roth’s verbal energy has surpassed all generic and canonical boundaries portraying what he considers to be the raucous impiety of the post-war era. In doing so, Roth has transcended the immediate parochialism of his Jewish background, which expected and in actuality demanded that the Jewish writers to be vehicles of ethnic propaganda. Continually defying the canonical trajectory of most major contemporary Jewish American novelists, Roth exposed the Jewish socio-moral and religious myth, his writings proving to be a glowing touchstone of the texture and colour of the age and culture, exposing the factual foibles of the historical moment, in his characteristic ‘rude’ style, which one of the contemporary critics Ross Posnock in *Philip Roth’s Rude Truth: The Art of Immaturity*, considers as the “precious lifeblood,” the source of his “stylistic energy” (xi).

Speaking the inadmissible, uncensored, and therefore, ‘rude-truth,’ Roth has distanced himself from the enlightenment qualities of maturity and reason, while presenting the dialectic of the post-war culture. Culture, in the words of Lionel Trilling, is “not a flow, not even a confluence, the form of its existence is struggle or at least debate—nothing if not dialectic” (9). Here Trilling is of the opinion that in any culture there
are likely to be certain artists who contain a large part of the dialectic within themselves, their contradictions. These artists, he goes on to say, contain within themselves, “the very essence of the culture, and the sign of this is that they do not submit to serve the ends of any one ideological group or tendency” (9). When a search is made so as to identify notable writers in contemporary American literature, for those who are repositories of the dialectic of their times, undoubtedly Roth finds himself high up in the list of such artists, as he consistently says ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to his culture in its varied, sometimes even the ugly manifestations. In his consuming desire for social realism, he has continuously explored the conflict between the private life and public self of the individual characters of his time.

In and through his writings, which has, to a large extent, grown out of his personal experiences and literary obsessions, he has undertaken a series of experiments in order to blend moral seriousness and comic insight, interpenetration of fantasy and reality. Exposing the rude truth, in Roth’s case tantamount to “courting,” what Posnock considers as “immaturity” (xii), something that has become an often voiced criticism against him. But going through Rothian artistic creation and vision, picking up the hidden grains of a universal human concern, one finds that, he has in fact, tried to emerge from what Immanuel Kant considers as the “self-incurred immaturity” (qtd. in Posnock 58), by getting out of the panoply of literary canons and authorities that surrounded him in the post-war era. Roth’s early works are exceptional examples of an audacious and often defiant transformation of the empirical evidence of the lived experience of the post-war American society, into various modes of intuitive and fictional truth, mediated in and through fictional characters and fabricated situations as lived out in the Jewish Newark neighbourhood. Goodbye Columbus and Other Short Stories (1959), and Portnoy’s Complaint (1969), which came out within the span of ten years, invited instant critical
negations labelling these works as rude and immature, while labelling Roth the writer as an anti-Semitic and Self-hating Jew.

The review of literature reveals that Roth is a recipient of almost all coveted literary awards. However, it also unveils a fact that in spite of being fairly well established, Roth has been victim of rather unfair or inaccurate critical treatment that has been associated with serious charges, as mentioned above, of being anti-Semitic and misogynistic. Richard Chase’s observation brings into focus the general tendency among the contemporary authors, something which the research considers as a ‘precautionary restraint’ as they abstain themselves from presenting the shockingly absurd facts of contemporary social experience.

It is in this context of unwillingness of the writing fraternity, to confront the vicissitudes of social reality; Roth has emerged as a major force to reckon with. He has defied criticisms, often very harsh and antagonistic, in his sustained attempt to present the socio-moral predicament faced by the post-war generation of American society, within the contours of Jewish religious orthodoxy. His fictions, have been an accurate barometer of the infectious volatility, trends and tensions of American life, essentially in a realistic mode. It is Roth’s razor-sharp eye for the socio-cultural observation, enhanced by a firsthand familiarity with the social, moral, religious and ethnic undercurrents of the post-war American Jewish society, in a matter-of-fact representation of human life and the existential experience, without giving into palliative fiction, idealization or romanticization, that Roth has enrolled himself as a realistic social critic.

Realism as a faithful imitation or representation of the contemporary manner of life and experience, dispassionate and often devoid of any artificial sentimentality, is concerned with an impassionate rendering of the ‘here and now.’ The characters
presented in such realistic fiction are easily identifiable by the readers as existing in their immediate neighbourhood, because living samples of both vices and virtues presented in such fictions are available among themselves. It often creates angst in the readers than appreciation as most models are appalling than appealing. The readers find themselves reflected in Roth’s fictional characters and it appears to be more real than fictional. This led to vociferous criticism against Roth.

The short survey of the emergence of American literature on the sidelines of the European exploration that is undertaken by the research reveals that, in sharp contrast to the general belief that the puritan religious orthodoxy was against any literary creativity, it was the initiative of some of the puritan writers such as Thomas Hooker, Edward Taylor in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, who gave great impetus to the American literature, which actually began as sub set of English literature. The American Revolution that took place during 1770s leading to the freedom from British colonial rule gave a visible identity for the American literature. Under the leadership of Herman Melville and Ralph Waldo Emerson, American literature took a moralistic turn, as their writings unveiled the growing contradictions between the idealized American reality and its lived experience. The demythologizing of the Great American Dream in the literary arena brought about a series of unprecedented experiments led by Emerson, Walt Whitman, Dickinson etc., but it was the trio of Mark Twain, Dean Do wells and Henry James that initiated the realist mode of literature, showcasing the chaos, absurdity and randomness of modern American life.

The emergence of realistic mode of literature and the demoralizing effect of the World War I, challenged the hitherto unchallenged faith in reason and religion providing the perfect setting for writers like Philip Roth to switch to modernist mode of radical experimentation in form, content and technique. Modernism and pre-eminence of Jewish
American literature are two distinguishing features of American literature in 1940s and 50s. Modernist mode of writing which aimed at providing an alternative vision of human experience and the emergence of Jewish American writers to the mainstream were two important developments that took place in the 1950s.

Modernism, a movement that had the devastating force of an earth quake, as far as the traditional structure and texture of art and literature were concerned, focused on a deliberate blurring of distinction between various literary genres, so as to symbolically present fragmented and fractured reality of the era. It, though mourned the loss of unity, coherence and order in all spheres of human society, believed that this lost unity and order could be restored, through what is considered as the ‘meta-narratives.’ In contrast, the postmodern writers consider that contradictions and differences are inherent in any social system, and that a provisional, contingent and relative explanation to the existing situations, which they consider as ‘mini-narratives,’ are the only way to celebrate the existential situation, than the modernist attitude of nostalgic mourning. The postmodern ideology of mini-narratives gives space for what is considered otherwise as marginal and local. Philip Roth has capitalized on these postmodern concepts while presenting a realistic picture of the post-war American experience, which was unpalatable for many.

The post-war American socio-political culture that recognized and reconciled differences, provided the much needed launching pad for the Jewish American writers to decode the pain of marginality and alienation within the context of the conflict between identity and assimilation, leading to an existential predicament of choosing between two equally desirables. The predicament arising out of the reconciliation of two opposing forces of ‘Jewish-ness’ and ‘American-ness’ forms the crux of Jewish American literature of the 1950s, which today is considered by literary historians as the ‘Jewish decade’ of American literature.
Keeping the above mentioned factors in mind, the research then undertakes a short historical survey of Jewish American literature, leading to the conclusion that though Jewish presence in American soil outdates the Jewish American literature, in the sense that a notable presence of the Jewish American writers in the literary arena began only with the commencement of the Eastern European migration in 1881, while Jews were already in America by mid-seventeenth century. Research identifies Abraham Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), exploring the psycho-social predicaments haunting the Jewish immigrants as they pursue the great American dream, the psychic loss and self alienation as they negotiate between the Jewish tradition and American modernity, as the trend setter of Jewish American literary concern. The exclusive ‘Jewishness’ which remained the basic concern, a common thread that united what once was considered to be a mere ‘ethnic voice’ becomes more inclusive in the twentieth century with the emergence of Singer, Malamud, Bellow, Paley, Ozick, Potok and Roth, to mention a prominent few. The research finds that many of the early Jewish writers were autobiographical and often nostalgic in their presentation of the immigrant tensions and existential concerns. The research here, therefore, makes a short survey of some of the stalwarts of Jewish American fiction, beginning with Bashevis Singer, who portrayed the immigrant psyche, as a veritable ground of existential conflict dealing with the conflicting claims which is generally considered as the ‘Jewish problem.’

Malamud, for his part, expressed the human condition through his rather parabolic and allegoric stories, mostly based on the horrifying stories of holocaust. Bellow continues with the presentation of Jewish experience characterized by a constant conflict with what he considers as the negative forces of American society. The stack realism initiated by Malamud is passionately taken up by Philip Roth, whose “fiendish accuracy” and impassionate and “ferocious exactness,” adjectives which David Gooblar in *The
Major Phases of Philip Roth uses to refer to the quality of Rothian writings, presenting the social, moral, religious and psychological undercurrents of post-war Jewish American life, with an accurate eye for “the minutiae of middle-class Jewish life” (12).

Truth hurts. In the case of Roth it has taken the form of negative criticism, even to the extent of branding him as an anti-Semitic, self-hating Jew. The aim of the research, is thus to critically analyse and examine some of the early works of Philip Roth, as to see how his realistic presentation of the socio-cultural predicament of the post-war generation has been misunderstood, and that Roth is indeed a social realist, who made his fiction a medium to present the cultural predicament of an age, instead of surrendering himself to be a mere parochial and domestic agent of a superfluous clannish solidarity and ethnic critique of the imperfect post-war world misunderstood, and his universal human concern misrepresented. Thus, the research finds that, although his characters were mostly Jews and his milieu often Jewish Newark, his concern was universal and non-denominational, giving a cosmic face to the Jewish American predicament.

To further understand how Roth’s realistic exploration of post-war Jewish American psyche, the research then examines in the first chapter how Roth has unromantically presented the socio-moral predicament, with special reference to the angst of the younger generations as they wriggle out of the binding forces of family and society. The continuous struggle against the socio-moral strictures, a daily affair, later on goes on to create a sense of guilt at the initial stages and finally causes emotional breakdown, irrespective of age and status of the characters.

One of the major characters that the research focuses on to represent the socio-moral predicament faced by the post-war generation is Portnoy, taken from what is
considered to be Roth’s most talked about novel, *Portnoy’s Complaint*, a hysterically funny monologue that has gone on to become a new prototype in American literature. Portnoy, as far as Roth is concerned is the symbol of the disoriented, emotionally broken and guilt-ridden post-war humanity, who tries to free himself from the totalitarian massing social force. He becomes an archetype, victim of extreme normative values imposed by the family, even to the extent of encroaching his privacy in the toilet, not even allowing him to wear a bathing suit with a jockstrap etc., just to mention as an example.

For Portnoy, as a growing up teenager, it is suffocating and the only way he can find a relief, a way to free himself from the psychological stress he has found himself in, is indulgence in excessive, but secretive masturbation and a licentious life with gentile women. What comes out of the analysis of the character of Portnoy is that, though he takes the role of a rebel while indulging in both these reactionary activities, he is under the grip of constant fear of being found out. The orthodox and moralistic upbringing he has had in his life creates a persistent sense of guilt in him.

For Roth, this is the typical condition of modern man, torn between conflicting desires and sensibilities. The hedonistic indulgence in the prohibited territories as a reaction to the excessive parental control and moral strictures, for example, is not a vexing problem that is exclusive to the Jewish society, but it has to be seen as a symbolic presentation of the cultural dialectics of the post-war era, having its ramifications across various societies. By focusing on certain specific moments, specific ways of the post-war socio-cultural context, with his characteristic matter-of-factness, Roth has become a ‘culture-exposer’ and a social realist.
From here, the research examines yet another character, Neil Klugman, the protagonist of “Goodbye Columbus,” with which Roth presents yet another post-war tendency, the tendency to submerge all the traditional values in the scuffle to obtain material prosperity and social mobility. The focus of the story is the predicament that arises out of the conflicting desires of assimilation and self-identity. The new middle-class tendency of assimilation at any cost, and the socio-moral and emotional implications of the same is presented in the story, as the values of the traditional Jewish family of Neil Klugman comes in conflict with the materialistic and luxury seeking Patimkins, whom Roth presents as the symbol of the modern consumerist and commodity culture.

The Jewish family of Patimkins is to be seen as a miniature of the modern culture of materialism, which often goes to the extreme of renouncing one’s cultural and ethnic identities and values so as to attain assimilation to the mainstream culture. This leads to an ethnic, social and cultural distancing, which Roth presents, rather satirically, by the surgical intervention done so as to fix Brenda’s nose which otherwise is bumpy. This, for Roth is height of hypocrisy and artificiality. Roth’s graphic description of the Patimkin family with its hypocrisy, artificiality and shallowness is misunderstood by the Jewish fraternity as lifting the lid on the Jewish society.

As Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the contemporary existential philosophers said once, “people don’t want to hear the truth because they don’t want their illusions destroyed” (www.goodreads.com.web.18.nov.2015.n.p). Roth believes that hurting someone with the truth of their life is better than making them happy with a lie. Here in the story of “Goodbye Columbus,” by presenting the truth of the life of the Patimkins family, Roth is presenting the erosion of traditional family values among the new generation Jewish Americans, as they are engulfed by the demon of materialism and upward social mobility. The predicament comes to the fore when the young Neil
Klugman embarks upon his journey towards the Short-Hills in search of Brenda—symbol of social mobility and individual freedom and Americanization. When Klugman finds out, though bit late in to his summer romance with Brenda that, behind the external material prosperity and social affluence, there is an internal hollowness and spiritual poverty. He finds out that he actually has undertaken a meaningless journey towards Short-hills where ‘things’ matter more than ‘persons’ and ‘relationships.’

But the realization has come a wee bit late as far as Klugman is concerned, as he finds himself in a predicament whether to choose the affluent and superfluous Short-Hills or the calm and serene Newark Public Library, to which he actually belong. Though he has made the physical journey, he has not been able to reconcile with the socio-moral implications of his journey. He remains the victim of circumstances as he is forced to end the summer romance at a crucial moment of their relationship as Brenda is not ready to sacrifice the suburban leisure values of Short-hills for the sake of the lad of Newark Public library.

The research then moves on to yet another primary text, *The Professor of Desire* in which Roth presents one of his representative characters, David Kepesh, a professor of literature, who is in the midst of a familiar conflict, a conflict between the forces of pleasure and dignity. As a man who wades through the ocean of sensual possibilities, Roth presents Kepesh as an example of modern man torn between one’s libidinous urge and his sense of morality. As a professor in pursuit of passion and desire, he struggles to cope with his conscientious intellectual dedication. Roth’s stack realism comes to the fore here.

The series of voracious indulgence in erotic orgies and intercontinental ménage that he indulges in is symbolic of the erosion of moral values that characterised the
historical moment, where marital fidelity seems to have been replaced by sensuality, and sensual experiments, something that had become the order of the day. Divorces were the norm in such situations. Going further with the novel, Roth makes a pertinent point wherein he presents Kepesh as devoid of his passion, devoid of his pleasure, devoid of his potency and, undergoing psychoanalytic session in his effort to recapture his composure.

The confidence, vitality and potency is regained and renewed only with his association with Claire Ovington, preceded by the rejection of a life yielding to pleasure, passion and adventure. The value of marital fidelity, which ironically is so intimate and inviolate to Jewish family, is emphasized by Roth here, something which his critics failed to see. What is presented here is a universal descent into immorality, which has also made ripples in the otherwise highly moralistic Jewish society. Roth’s fiction points to the fact that more and more people are frequenting psychiatrists as the strain and stress of modern life is so much to handle, may be an indirect reference to his own mental breakdown in the wake of the embattled marital relationship with Margaret Mattinson.

The conflict between the hedonistic craving for sensual indulgence and idealistic desire for dignity, which constituted Kepesh’s predicament, the inner conflict in him, raises its ugly face with an unexpected visit of his estranged wife Helen. He is unsure of himself, he has no mastery over his own self, and his thoughts oscillates between the pleasures of the past and the serenity of the present, as he is unsure, how long the lovely life with Claire would last, as he is once again attracted to Helen. Thus, Roth presents the uncertain, emotionally split Kepesh, whose intra-personal and psychic struggle actually represents the fragmentation and division that plagues the humanity.

What emerges here that the fictional world of Roth is a realistic rendering of the existential plight of the post-war humanity, with its focus on individual freedom and
experimentation. The sexual freedom, licentiousness, material opulence which externally allured the sensuality of the younger generation, appalled their morality internally and thus created a sense of guilt and ultimately they become disillusioned. This is true of Portnoy, this is true of Kepesh, and this is true of Klugman. Kepesh and Portnoy who enjoy uninhibited carnal pleasures ultimately ends up in the psychoanalytic couch of Dr. Spielvogel, while Klugman who goes after the mirth and affluence of upper-middle-class materialism is finally disillusioned, and catches the train back to Newark, the place where he feels at home. In all these, Roth symbolically presents an all pervading sense of fragmentation, alienation and division that the post-war generation experience, as they try to make sense of the mystery of human life.

The next section of the research deals with how Roth has fictionalized the religious predicament which the post-war generation encounter as they negotiate between Jewish ethnicity and American identity. This section begins by tracing the historical origin of Judaism focusing on its remarkable capacity for adaptation, resilience in the face of unfavourable circumstances and diasporic persecutions. Since Judaism is more of a way of life than a religion per se, it demands a quite deal of strict adherence and conformity to a wide range of customs, rituals and practices. Being in exilic or diasporic situations, Jews had to adapt and assimilate into the predominant or local culture while being faithful to the original Jewish traditions. Faced with the exigencies of diasporic existence there emerges a conflict between the desire to preserve the Jewish ethnicity on the one hand and yet another equally appealing American identity. The predicament gets vitiated as the Jewish immigrant population in America is admixture of orthodox, reform and conservative Judaism, that too having among them those that belonging to two generations- one that belongs to the holocaust history and the other belonging to the post-holocaust era.
Though the religious predicament has two dimensions, Roth’s analysis focuses on what the research considers as the intra-religious or intra-ethnic dimension. This actually focuses on the conflicting generational divide precipitated by the two opposing desires, the desire for preserving the Jewish ethnicity and the desire to forge and American identity. In the story, “The Conversion of the Jews,” Roth presents how the new generation challenges some of the practices and beliefs of the older generations, while living in the context of American culture.

Ozzie Freedman, for example, is presented a symbol of freedom seeking, liberal and secular Jews who makes a seminal realization that the false religiosity and the exclusivist in-group tendencies actually only makes them perpetual outsider, a disparaged ‘other’ in otherwise inclusive American society. The efforts of Ozzie Freedman, to mention for instance, have to be seen in this context. The exclusivist, fanatic tendencies of the orthodox Rabbi Binder is brought bare, though temporally by Ozzie- a victim of arbitrary adherence to orthodoxy. The exclusivist claims of the older generation is further questioned and challenged by the young Portnoy, who again, does not approve of the religious bigotry and discriminatory practices perpetuated by his parents and relatives. Portnoy along with Heshie finds it difficult to accept a religiosity that is devoid of spirituality, as the traditional parents seems to be fundamentalistic and fanatic in their approach to the gentiles.

Focusing on the intra-religious conflict, the research analyses yet another story, “Eli the Fanatic,” where the struggle between the assimilated and ‘Americanized’ Woodenton Jews and the orthodox Yeshivas in their traditional Hasidic dress is presented. The intense psychological pressure that the modern man undergoes while negotiating the conflicting claims and compulsions, leads to nervous breakdown. This is evidenced by the character of Eli, the protagonist of the story. The blissful replacement of cultural and
ethnic identity creates actually an unhealable psychological vacuum in them, which in the opinion of Philip Roth is akin to the predicament of the modern man, whose life is a series of conflicting compromises.

Eli, who tries to broker a compromise between the Jewish ethnicity and American identity, between the Yeshivas and the Woodenton, is himself is broken in the process, as the pressure exerted on him by the conflicting loyalties is too much. What he tries to achieve is only an external, cosmetic intervention, as done by the Patimkins in “Goodbye Columbus,” something which Murray Ringgold one of Roth’s characters in I married a Communist, considers to be an attempt to “deodorise life and make it palatable” (179). The cosmetic changes attempted only divides the individuals as they fail to achieve reconciliation between that which is sacrificed and that which is gained. The vacuum that is created by what is lost is never replaced by that which is adapted and that generates an irrevocable sense of loss and guilt.

The sacrifice of the essential, often, for the sake of the accidental only brings in alienation from oneself and from the community. This has been the Jewish experience, from time immemorial. David Levinsky, the hero of Abraham Cahan’s The Rise of David Levinsky, vouches for this fact, as he looks back in sadness at his past, nostalgically saying, “David, the poor lad swinging over a Talmud volume at the Preacher’s Synagogue, seems to have more to do with my inner identity than David Levinsky, the well-known cloak manufacturer” (530). The price of American success for Levinsky, it seems has come at the cost of inner psychic loss, causing what Julian Levinson in Exiles on Main Street characterises as “alienation from an inner self whose connections to the old world seem as ineradicable as they are inexpressible” (12).
Similarly, it is the very same concern which Eli Peck in Roth’s story presents, as his association with the traditional Yeshivas reignites the suppressed affiliation to orthodox Judaism, which he and his friends at Woodenton had traded in exchange of a more safe and secular American identity. Here the Jewish characters embodies the split-subjects of post-war era, and in voicing the Jewish concern Roth is presenting the human concern, and the Jewish American predicament is actually the embryonic human predicament of the modern era-that of being divided between two conflicting desires and identities as they negotiate the ambivalent and fragmented modern life.

After analysing the behavioural pattern of some of the characters discussed by Roth explicates the Social Identity Theory proposed by Henry Tajfel and John Turner. The theory speaks about a prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour that becomes the criterion for social identification, and self esteem. Roth presents many characters who are examples of such discriminatory behaviour, indulging in either group favouritism or group derogation. The three primary texts, “The conversion of the Jews,” “Eli the Fanatic” and Portnoy’s Complaint which the research analyses, make it glaringly visible that such discriminatory or derogatory attitudes towards the out-group members often lead to intra-religious and intra-ethnic conflicts, which ultimately leaves the individual psychologically and emotionally split and fragmented.

In the final section of the research, dealing with the hermeneutic, narrative and ethical predicament the researcher finds that a major chunk of critical responses available on Roth presents what Milbauer and Watson calls a “constant confusion of tale and teller” (ix), as his artistic perspicacity leads the reader often to a hermeneutic ambiguity as they have to sift through his writings to differentiate the ‘fact’ from the ‘act.’ It appears that keeping in mind the hybridity of American society and culture, made up of an uneven mixture of various immigrant groups and cultures, cutting across various ethnic, racial
and regional sub-cultures, Roth have surpassed all generic boundaries. In his attempt to
provide a realistic representation of the post-war American reality, he toys with the limits of literary and artistic freedom, leading to what the research names as the hermeneutic predicament. Rothian verbal energy, characterised by a simultaneous presence of the thesis and anti-thesis, juxtaposing of the creator and the created, clash of point of view, fictive re-working of biographical material, blending of facts and fiction etc., provides the basis of the hermeneutic predicament.

*The Facts: A Novelist’s Autobiography,* is analysed as a case study where the elements of such a hermeneutic and narrative predicament galore. The text reveals a kind of distillation of facts, fictive re-construction of biographical materials, infusion of fancy and imagination, selective exclusions and obvious de-personalization, to cite a few glaring examples of Rothian literary style. Facts, when assaulted by imagination, become fictional. Even the presentation of facts as it passes through the faculty of imagination, which is always at work in an author; it becomes a partial disclosure of truth. And that part of truth which is undisclosed is often filled by imagination and thereby making it fictional. Therefore, through a conscious intermingling of facticity and fantasy, mingling of autobiographical with fictional, and fictional with autobiographical, Roth has stylistically presented the predicament that confronts the modern man.

A heartening development in Contemporary literary criticism is the phenomenon called ‘ethics-talk’ wherein ethics with its implication of right conduct at the centre of a writer’s intellectual enterprise is emphasised. In this connection, the research finds that Roth has not only taken liberty with the canonical modes of life-writing, but also with the ethics of life-writing. Analysing *Patrimony: A True Story,* within the purview of autobiographical or life-writing, the research focuses on the ethical ramifications Roth’s autobiographical writings. An important facet of autobiographical or life writing as
advocated by Paul Eakin one of the celebrated authors of the genre, the right to privacy of the relational other has to be maintained as life-writing is so intimately connected with the private life of those others who are connected to with the life of the author. It is here that an ‘autobiography’ often turns into a ‘biography’ of the ‘relational other,’ *Patrimony* for example, becomes a case study in this connection.

*Patrimony*, purportedly a memoir of the physical and psychological agony of the last two years of his father, in practice becomes the biography of Herman, his father. Roth, who is used to painting everything in its microscopic detail, invades deep into the private life of his father, even to the extent of breaching what many considers as the code of ethics of life-writing. One such example often cited by critics is the one in which he presents his father losing control of his bowels. The promise of secrecy he made to his father while he was still alive, and the breach of it in *Patrimony*, highlights the ethical aspect of life-writing, whether or not the writer is justified in doing that.

Roth himself seems to be in a dilemma as he is in two minds, whether to translate the debilitating psychological and physical ordeal of his father into words or not. The dream which he describes later in the narrative, wherein the father rebukes him for not dressing him in a suit, is symbolic of this ethical pricking and guilt he experiences. The subconscious fear that emerges through the medium of the dream is expressive of the guilt and inner conflict that Roth, the son, experiences while performing the role of a realistic artist. The desire to maintain historicity, leads a writer often to the brink of ethical infringement, however, any failure to present historical facts in an autobiographical endeavour, is depriving the reader of his right to expect verifiable truth. Here Roth, like his fictional characters, faces a predicament, as it is difficult to make the choice between the presentation of truth and privacy of the intimate subject in question.
The research concludes this section with the conjecture that a predicament occurs in the mind of an author, when he is undecided whether to present the historical truth, which is a mere passive recollection of a series of un-related and incoherent events and experiences, as it is, or to make available the misplaced links, by imaginative embellishments. When the writer sacrifices historicity for the sake of narrative flow, the reader is faced with the hermeneutic predicament of straightening out the factual from the fictional. Whereas, in the process of arriving at realistic verisimilitude, the super abundant detail of life-experience, the author of life-writing comes under the sway of an ethical predicament, wherein the desire to retain truthfulness and an equally important desire to uphold the privacy and dignity of the related-other, is nominal and tricky.

With the analysis of the primary texts done, the research finds that Roth’s childhood experiences were basically revolved around Newark, New Jersey, and it goes on to become the locus that blends his memory and imagination. In an age where writers were hunting for universal backgrounds for their fictional creations, presumably with the ulterior literary motif of gaining ‘universality’ Roth in his early fictions, seem to be concerned about themes and experiences that were intensely local and parochial, not withstanding his later fictions which have a wider focus. Here the research locates a faint imitation of Wordsworth, whose pronounced concern for the ordinary and local finds expression in Rothian fictional world. Jewish Newark and Jewishness in the fictional world of Roth, is a socio-moral condition determined by the facts of history, having an inescapably omnipresent, day-to-day existence which informs the life of his fictional characters at every turn. His novels therefore, deals with the existential human predicament, in which his characters are in constant struggle to understand and order the apparent chaos, as he/she tries to negotiate the conflicting pulls of the post-war American reality.
For Roth, literature should reflect the society and embody the texture and socio-cultural ethos of the age in which it takes shape. The excellence of a work of art depends on the insight that the writer brings to bear on his characters and their experiences, thereby endowing them with the quality of universality. Therefore, the insight that, the Portnovian struggle of being a disapproving moralist and an indulging hedonist, can raise its ugly head in my life, that there is an element of the material craving constantly weighing against the moral and ethical values that I hold in my life—the simultaneous presence of the Patimkins and Klugmans in me, that there is a relentless struggle that goes on in my life between the need to satiate the instinctual desires while apparently upholding the principle of moral rectitude—the Kepesh in me, or the insight that there are moments and occasions wherein I compromise my religious convictions for the sake of convenience, as in the case of the Woodentons, to cite a few examples which make Rothian corpus universal.

Here the universality is not in the themes of characters he chooses, but the universal insight that his characters bear on the readers cutting across historical context and cultures. It is in transcending the present and finding contemporaneity with later time that Roth’s works assumes significance. His local attachments or territorial sense of belonging to Newark thus does not minimize his universal appeal. Therefore, the research feels that some of the criticism that is levelled against Roth as a parochialist, anti-Semite etc., is a case of the failure to recognize the universal in the particular, which in the words of W.E.B. Du Bois “breeds the menace of all group exclusiveness and segregations” (1194).

As far as Roth’s fictions are concerned, he believes that chronicling the experience of Jewish characters is almost writing the experience of the world, as conflicts, tensions and predicaments resides with in all human beings irrespective of
being Jews or gentiles. There is conflict that goes on between our better worse selves that tear us apart, drive us to despair or make us crazy. Therefore, the research argues that the readers and critics have to purge the lingering sense of parochialism that seems to dominate Rothian fictional world, have to get rid of the baseless anti-Semitic charges so as to see the hidden universalism in him. Then Roth can be considered as a social realist and a culture critic whose Jewish characters represented the contemporary humanity in its existential predicament.

After the close reading of some of the early works of Philip Roth, the research would like to underscore a general narrative tendency that is evident in Roth, which is the propensity to go beyond all existing generic boundaries. He relies a great deal on technical experiments in order to present the fragmentation experienced by individuals in the contemporary society as close as real. Though he draws heavily on the Jewish American predicaments, his focus extends to the facts of American life in general, as he is focused on the revelation of the predicament of the post-war era in and through a realistic exploration of the private life of his characters, which are often from his Newark neighbourhood.

His fiction, which could be considered as a new jeremiad, reminds everyone that there is something which needs to be corrected, and that too, the sooner the better. Presenting the ‘un-presentable,’ saying the ‘un-sayable’ in a dispassionate manner made Roth unacceptable to a vast majority of the Jewish establishment. At the same time the research is of the opinion that such a situation is the sad result of the failure to recognize the intricate relationship between a writer’s intention and the manner and form of manifestation which the writer utilizes for the presentation of the reality. Such a breakdown has resulted in a failure to recognize the ‘cosmic face’ of Jewish American predicament.
In this context, the research finds that though Roth appears to be regional in characterization, he is universal in his concern and as such belongs to a universal-space, with a universal vision, something which has been neglected in the past. This could be one area for further research in future.

Further, the present research locates Roth as one of the greatest artful literary dodgers of contemporary American literature, whose fictional narratives, which he calls as the ‘written-world’ bears emotional, psychological resemblance to the life-the ‘unwritten-world’ of the author, which create hermeneutic dilemmas in the minds of the reader. He has continuously wrestled with the problems of Jewish history, inviting the readers to draw striking parallel with their own socio-historical context.

With the universal vision of recapturing the socio-moral fragmentation of the post-war era, Roth has presented his protagonists as emotionally split and psychologically fragmented, victims of constant inner conflicts. It requires great sensitivity for the reader to unearth the hidden insight in the plain texts, dealing with the Jewish-American predicament. The fact is that the microscopic Jewish-American predicament is laden with greater insights into the macroscopic human predicament, which actually is the focus of Rothian artistic vision. But as an artist who thrives on aggression and transgression, whose artistic tendency has been to expose than to withhold, Roth has realistically probed the post-war existential field with his inherent tendency to be playfully serious and technically ambiguous.

The failure to understand the double layered nature of Rothian textual communication, a failure in reading the mind of the writer by focussing more on the external narrative instead of a detached focalization on the never-ending interplay of the external and the internal, the written and the unwritten world, has actually led to the
initial hypothetical assumption of the research, that there has been a gross misunderstanding of Rothian literary trajectory.

There is an anecdote that goes on in the social media, which the research would like to add here which would enlighten one of the characteristic features of Rothian corpus. It goes like this; Albert Einstein met Charlie Chaplin once, he said, “What I admire most about your art is its universality. You do not say a word, and yet the world understands you.” “It’s true,” replied Chaplin, “but your fame is even greater: the world admires you, when nobody understands you.” The research feel that there is something of Einstein and Chaplin in Roth, the admiration that Roth commands is mostly for his universality and to a lesser degree to the overshadowing ambiguity of his narratives.

Though the research has been done, the researcher would like to say that not all areas have been covered, not all ambiguities that surround Rothian narratives have been cleared. The thesis’s primary focus was how Roth has made a realistic presentation of the Jewish-American predicament in the context of the post-war American society and culture with an unbiased and universal vision. The research finds Roth as a realist and culture critic whose major concern was to present the socio-moral struggles of the post-war generation without fear or favour. This antagonized a section of uncritically orthodox Jewish establishment which made them to consider Roth as an anti-Semitic self-hating Jew, but an unbiased examination of the selected texts proves the allegations wrong.

For example, a neutral reading of the highly controversial *Portnoy’s Complaint* actually proves a kind of philo-Semitism. After having lampooned the prohibitive dietary rules and regulations, as something that reminds the Jews three times a day that life is boundaries and restrictions, Portnoy goes on to praise the self control, sobriety and a sense of inhibition which he received as a Jew. Similarly, his derogatory comment on the
gentiles as the ones who “sink their teeth into whatever lowly creature crawls and grunts across the face of the dirty earth...contaminating their humanity” (PC 81), appears to have been bypassed by the very same critics who accuse Roth of anti-Semitism. These sentences uttered by Portnoy, which should have rather been considered as something pro-Semitic seems to have fallen on deaf ears of the selective orthodox critics, who consider Roth as a transgressor against the Jews and Jewish community.

Again, an impartial reading of Portnoy’s monologue should even out the criticism levelled against him, it goes like this:

Let them (if you know who I mean) gorge themselves upon anything and everything that moves, no matter how odious and abject the animal, no matter how grotesque or shmutzig or dumb the creature in question happens to be. Let them eat eels and frogs and pigs and crabs and lobsters; let them eat vulture, let them eat ape-meat and skunk if they like—a diet of abominable creatures well befits a breed of mankind so hopelessly shallow and empty-headed as to drink, to divorce, and to fight with their fists. All they know, these imbecilic eaters of the execrable, is to swagger, to insult, to sneer, and sooner or later to hit. (PC 81)

Portnoy calls the goyim stupid; who would eat anything that they can get their big goy hands on. The above text from one of the most controversial books of Philip Roth here is cited as a counter-witness to the charges of anti-Semitism.

The research feels that there are a few areas that could be dealt further. One such area that the research finds as having scope for further research and study is to examine Roth as a model of new generation writers, who adapts their narrative styles to the contemporary historical context so as to be realistic in the presentation of the otherwise
surrealist world of today. His courage to experiment with form and structure of the narrative, to suit the socio-historical reality and context, so as to make fiction writing more contextual, can become a beacon light for further innovative way of fiction writing. Roth’s courage to deconstruct the literary styles and technical canonicity could be further studied.

Secondly, the research finds that the suppressive domination, unilateral prescriptions and biased prohibitions that is imposed upon some of the young Rothian Protagonists, creates in them a sense of powerless-ness, rootless-ness, loneliness and alienation, making characters like Ozzie, Heshie, Eli and Portnoy living examples of what Gayatri Spivak, the post-colonial intellectual and critic considers as being ‘subaltern.’

Challenging the legacy of colonialism and refusing to accept the hegemonic superiority of “the Occident” over “the Orient,” a distinction popularised by Edward Said in his Orientalism, in which he calls it as “the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism” (10), an ontological and epistemological distinction—one of the most recurring images of the other... as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (9-10).

Spivak in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” has adapted the Gramscian term ‘subaltern’ to refer to the sum totality of the “oppressed subjects” (283), who due to the “western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over” has in the words of Said, failed to be a “free subject of thought and action” (11). In the Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Gramsci speaks of ‘subalternity’ in relation to the Marxian “proletarian class” (55). Spivak, in an interview with the editors of Spivak Reader, however makes the conclusion that the subaltern in any society cannot speak, and that even when the “subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak” (292) there are no mainstream listeners to what they speak.
Therefore, the research feels that the whole network of the vested interests of the orthodox Rabbinical leadership in imposing unilateral socio-religious prescriptions and dietary laws on the young generation comprising of Portnoy, Ozzie and Heshie, arbitrarily deciding and determining what is to be said and done, brings an element of subalternity, not only as a minority group among the gentile Christians, but as a minority within the minority, who though makes an effort to the death to speak, is not heard by the mainstream Jewish orthodox majority.

For example, Rothian characters like Ozzie, Heshie or Eli, all seems to be overpowered by the system, though they try to speak in their own way. Their personality, ideas and experiences are suppressed and unheard. Ozzie, though was in command over the situation atop the roof, is well aware that he would be subdued and alienated once he is back on the ground. Heshie, tries to oppose the out-group derogation, false religious superiority complex by marrying a Shikse but he is vehemently opposed and finally dies in an accident. Eli, another character who tries to break away from the intolerable fanaticism of the Woodenton Jews, who tries to broker a compromise between the traditional yeshivas and the more secular Woodentons is ultimately subdued and silenced by administering a forceful sedation. In all these three, what one finds is that their voices are either unheard or suppressed by the mainstream society, and they become symbols of socio-moral subalternity. This aspect of Rothian Fiction could become an area for future research.

To sum up, the research began by a short historical survey of American literary consciousness that began as a feeble echo of European model, which later evolved itself into a full-fledged literature with its own rich and distinctive culture and tradition, though not without a series of confusions and contradictions, specific to the historic and cultural developments. It has been a history of constant dialogue between the real and the ideal,
the conflicting claims of the American Dream and the souring reality, between the spiritual and the material. The materialistic philosophy of life that often distorted the structure and texture of the relationship, between man and man, between man and society, ultimately having its ripples in the relationship between God and man, becomes the focus of the first chapter, titled as ‘disapproving moralist versus indulging hedonist: the socio-moral predicament.’

The deep-rooted love for freedom, individuality coupled with an unlimited appetite for innovation and experience which marked the American reality of 1950s, and the socio-religious predicament that arose from the cultural encounter between the tradition bound immigrant Jewish culture with that of the liberal, American materialistic society and the ethical questions that emerged among the post-war generation becomes the focus of the second chapter. The predicament that emerges as they negotiate a tricky balance between Jewish ethnicity and American identity and the consequent religious predicament form the crux of this chapter titled ‘negotiating Jewish ethnicity and American identity: the religious predicament.’ The generational divide that existed as regards to their approach to various religious practices and convictions, the attitude towards the faith of the gentiles, the internal rift between the assimilated, secularized and ‘Americanized’ Jews and the orthodox, traditional Jews etc., becomes the constituent factors of the religious predicament.

Though many prominent Jewish American writers and critics of the time dodged these pressing issues that confronted the contemporary society for the sake of various reasons best known to them, Philip Roth was one of such writers who did not sacrifice his humanistic vision and universal concern for the sake of racial and religious acceptance and recognition. Even in the face of mounting opposition and unfavourable critical sanctions, Roth presented fragmentation and inner conflicts of the existential reality, in
his characteristic style of blending facts and fiction, fictional and autobiographical, leading to various hermeneutical and ethical predicaments. This forms the focus of the third chapter of the research, titled ‘the hermeneutic, narrative and ethical predicament.’

The ethical predicament that the writer faces as he tries to give a realistic and objective presentation of his personal experience in life-writing, and the predicament which a reader of autobiographical writing faces as he/she tries to differentiate between the writer and his fictional characters or between the ‘imagined author’ and the ‘ontological author,’ between the ‘narrative truth’ and the ‘historical truth’ forms the first part of the final chapter. Our lives, in the words of Paul Eakin never stand free of the lives of others and we are constantly faced with the responsibility to those others whenever we write about ourselves, therefore, the ethical ramifications and dilemmas inherent in autobiographical writing forms the second part of this chapter.

The research feels that even the narrative techniques of Roth are symbolic of the fragmented and split modern reality and human existence as he consciously blurs the distinction between the author and character, creator and the created. Roth, who presented the perils and pains of negotiating cultural and ethnic identity, with its angst and excess, has become one of the most powerful voices of contemporary Jewish American literature. Analysing some of his early works, the research in the conclusion observes that he has presented Jewish characters as the authentic voice of post-war America. In this connection the observation that Leslie Fielder made, that in Rothian corpus “the image of the Jew tends to become the image of everyman,” (411) seems to be vindicated. Therefore, Jewish feeling and Jewish sensibility becomes a metaphor for the feeling and sensibility of the post-war humanity.
While speaking about greatness of the writings of Updike and Bellow, who held their flashlights out into the world, revealing the real world as it is, Roth once accepted that he has only tried to dig a hole and shine his flashlight into the hole. Similarly, the researcher places on record that the present research too has tried to hold a small flashlight on to the literary creativity of Philip Roth, revealing his commitment to social realism, his courage and willingness to confront his own community, its mores and manners, and that there is much more to be done to unearth the inherent social realism and cultural criticism in Rothian literary enterprise.

There are quite many areas to be explored into the mystique of Rothian corpus. The research concludes with no semblance of doubt that, as a man of thought and feeling, concerned more about morality than aesthetics, whose instinctual and impulsive mind understood the spacio-temporal context in which he lived, Roth as a writer has, tried his best to give a realistic voice and meaning to the existential reality of the post-war era.

However, there has been a great deal of bad blood spilled; labelling him as anti-Semitic as his characters has been mostly Jewish. But as Robert Spiller observes while speaking about the role and responsibility of a serious reader and critic, one should approach the text with an unprejudiced mind, so as to “analyse the meaning and structure” of the written text, by “reconstructing the point of view of the writer” (6) along with the circumstances within which the text is written. This aspect of an unbiased criticism seems to have been missing in the case of Philip Roth.

Bill Ashcroft’s opinion expressed in The Empire Writes Back, that literature is one of the most important ways by which “new perceptions of life... the day-to-day realities of life can most powerfully be encoded” (1) seems to have realized in Rothian literary corpus, which are a matter-of-fact rendering of post-war Jewish American life from the
point of view of a social realist and culture critic, who had a moralistic perception of literature than that of an ethnic or racial propaganda.

The present research is an attempt to provide a balanced evaluation of some of the early works of Philip Roth, looking at him as a social realist for whom the subject was more important than the form as a result of which he experimented with the structure and texture, techniques and styles to suit his subject. The study reveals that Philip Roth is a novelist with a Universal human concern, a social realist and a culture critic who courageously transcended the constricting barriers of ethnicity and clannishness.

Wherein Roth’s essential human and social concern, the ‘micro-Jewish possibility’ represents a ‘macro-human possibility.’ The Jewish sensibility of marginality, victimization and alienation expressed in and through his characters thereby becomes the symbol of the universal predicament of post-war humanity, who is caught in the tension resulting from an existential conflict between his religious traditions and social aspirations, between his dignity and desires, negotiating the slippery balance between being a moralist and a hedonist.

There is still much research to be done on Roth, it is hoped that the present research will be a catalyst for further analysis in the future, and research scholars across the globe will be provoked to take some of the unexplored areas, such as his unique narrative styles and techniques, the hybridity of genres, and the syncreticity of approaches which seems to be symbolic of the fragmentation of the post-modern world, or the subaltern perspectives in Rothian corpus, thereby making Roth a writer who constantly holds his flashlight out into the world, revealing its inherent concerns and conflicts.
The research concludes with the satisfaction of being a runner in the relay, hoping that the baton handed over will lead to further search and research, enlightening the hearts and minds of many who are in search of knowledge and wisdom.