CHAPTER SIX

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

.... America has stood for three and a half centuries as a "city upon a Hill". Its Puritans and philosophers, Daniel Boones and George Babbits, frontiers and market places, mobility and abundance continue to make the United States a laboratory of national character.... [Luther S. Luedtke, "Introduction: The Search for American Character", in Making America: The Society and Culture of the United States, 1989, p. 29]

American Patriotism has a sort of abstraction about it that makes it uniquely difficult and valuable: it is a deviation not to a specific physical place, gene pool, cuisine or cultural tradition, but to a political vision, a promise and the idea of freedom. . . . [Lance Morrow, "The Return of Freedom", Quoted in Luther S. Luedtke, Making America: The Society and Culture of the United States, 1989, p. 32]

American Experience is distinct, unique and singularly famous. The world is the beneficiary if the parameters governing American Experience become the national experience of all the nations. American Experience has so much to offer by way of learning, training and developing for individuals and nations.

With New York identified, established, and globally accepted as the Capital of the world, and with America experiencing positive influences on all the Nations of the world, there is absolutely the felt need to know the history, politics, government, sociology, inter-cultural and multi-racial rooted-ness, womanism, of America and
American literary strengths, and America's spectral reachability, and the maximized limits and potentialities of American Experience in an integrated manner.

Moreover, every intellectual relates his Weltanschauung with America, which enjoys a centre of importance in world affairs. Therefore, there is the continual and sharp focus on American Experience as a means of establishing a welfare state.

American Experience is a way into the great issues of American mainstream culture and the national character of America. It is a lively and creative exercise for it offers an understanding of the social, economic, political, cultural, moral, spiritual forces that have shaped the American nation into what she is today.

There is a careful consideration of all the parameters governing American Experience. It is in the precise sense that American Experience is based on equality, candour, self-reliance, individualism, liberty, freedom, democratic processes, and readiness to confront all hardships and all odds, and all challenges of life, free enterprise, privatization, and free trade.

It is of immediate interest to record that America and Democracy are convertible terms right from the days of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. The glorious definition of Abraham Lincoln that American Democracy is the pragmatic form of government of the people, by the people, for the people. In letter and spirit this is put into effectual practice.

The Holy Bible to the Americans is sacred, supreme, and sovereign. Their faith in the American Constitution is supreme and sovereign. It is next to that of their faith in The Holy Bible. In fact, all Americans are constructionists.
Another significant factor that ought to be stressed and borne in mind is that American Democracy balances individualism against the safety, security, and prosperity and territorial integrity and the unity of America.

In other words, Thomas Jefferson's stress on the individuality of the individual is matched by Abraham Lincoln's accent on qualified liberty and the essential unity of America. In fine, the best interests of the individual and the best interests of the nations are well balanced.

All Americans immortalize America as the land of freedom. American Experience argues for independence of mind and deed. American Experience upholds capitalism, savings, free enterprise, and privatization. There is the sustained focus on the equality of opportunities and the equality before law. American Experience underscores the fact that diplomacy is the first line of defence and militarism is the second line of approach to solve problems.

As the twentieth century closes, Americans feel secure, prosperous, and confident. They see the United States of America as the world's most important and powerful country, with the fear of armed threats from a rival superpower diminished. In an era of increasing globalization, Americans view economic rather than military power as the most significant measure of global strength.

American Experience underscores the fact that the twenty-first century marks a new era of fundamental change. This acceptance of change is the strength of American Experience. In this context, the significant observation of W. Bowman Cutter is worth recording here ["New World, New Deal: A Democratic Approach to Globalization", Foreign Affairs, March/April 2000, p. 80]:
The United States enters the 21st century as the greatest beneficiary of the global system after World War II. As a power with unrivalled dominance, prosperity and security, it must now lead the peaceful evolution of this system through an era of significant changes. Rapid shifts in technology and the embrace of markets by developing and formerly communist countries are shifting the balance of power among nations... between nations and global economic forces. New technologies are making the world much more interdependent.

Globalization is a new aspect of American Experience. And American Experience argues that the United States of America cannot shield herself from the effects of globalization. In today’s interdependent capital markets, global perceptions of the stability of the American economy and the credibility of American policy can significantly affect the dollar’s value and domestic interest rates.

Despite her economic and military might and diplomatic plus points, the United States of America cannot protect herself from global environmental problems like ozone depletion, climate change, and threats to biodiversity by acting alone. This appreciation of inter-subjectivity and interrelatedness constitute a new approach under the broad spectrum of American Experience.

Moreover, a study of American Experience underscores the fact that basically all Americans must accept both the unity in diversity and diversity in unity and then resolve them. And in that resolution is the significant strength of what is meant by American Experience.
Incidentally, the history of the growth and development of American economy from rags to riches is now an unquestioned success story. It is a classic example of how the commitment to democracy has benefited economic progress as well. Emerson's cry for positivism runs through the veins of all committed Americans and this positive approach has led all Americans and America to march ahead of all other nations.

The strong attraction and acceptance of the democratic process plays a key role in the growth, development, and phenomenal progress of America. With this solid rounding in democratic values, America has set herself as a fine Parliamentary Democracy, with freedom thrown open to all in all respects and a vibrant press all guaranteed under the American Constitution. It must be doubly stressed that America has lived its Constitution in practice as well as on paper.

American Experience values democracy that operates on mutual trust among the citizens of America. But then trust is starkly contrary to traditional liberalism. Among the core understandings of liberalism is that citizens should distrust and be wary of government.

Russell Hardin argues to the point ["Do We Want Trust in Government?" in Democracy and Trust, 1999, p. 22]:

That literature commonly assess that citizens must trust government if government is to work well and that a reputed decline in citizen trust of government bodes ill for many contemporary democratic societies. . . .

A democratic government and the people must be mutually trustworthy, honest, and cooperative. The democratic government and the citizens can prosper only, if there is the generalized trust, rather than particularized trust. For cooperation in a diverse
society to merge as the dominant strategy, a majority must be co-operators for the good to dominate over the nasty. And the more widespread the cooperation is, the more prosperous the community will be.

All aspects governing American Experience gain in significance, relevance, and consequence only because America is the land of freedom. And as such all Americans enjoy the equal opportunities to put into effectual practice the parameters governing American Experience.

For every significant practitioner of the parameters of American Experience there is the call to be patriotic on his part. It behoves on every American to honour and respect and revere America. In fact all Americans identify themselves with America, the land of liberty. This is precisely what Robert Frost recommends in the poem composed earlier but read on the occasion of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's inauguration as the President of the United States of America. The poem, entitled, "Gift Outright" makes interesting reading, and it is quoted in full below [An Anthology: American Literature: 1910-1965, 1965, p. 416]:

THE GIFT OUTRIGHT

The land was ours before we were the land's.
She was our land more than a hundred years
Before we were her people. She was ours
In Massachusetts, in Virginia,
But we were England's, still colonials,
Possessing what we still were un-possessed by,
Possessed by what we now no more possessed.
Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
(The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
To the land vaguely realizing westward,
But still un-storied, artless, un-enhanced,
Such as she was, such as she would become. . . .

All intellectuals extol America as the land of freedom, and have immortalized America in their writings. All Americans glorify America and recognize her as a pragmatic and dynamic nation. The intellectuals have accorded America a grand treatment in their artistic works. They had eternalized America as God’s country and the world’s richest nation. The American writers enjoy complete artistic freedom in America to express their mind and art with perfect candour. And it is a fact that in no other land is the artist allowed freedom of art to the fullest extent as in America. Therefore, the writers such as Bellow, Malamud, and Roth pay their debt to America by naming her as the leading nation of freedom, the foremost ally of democracy perpetually dedicated to an unconditional defence of all oppressed people and the sworn enemy of authoritarianism.

All writers incarnate America and depict the true nature of America and create the right feel of America. In fine, they make America and American Experience come alive on their pages as it were in flesh and blood. Moreover, the American writers portray her charm, power and strength. However, they are not blind to her prodigious
faults and colossal mistakes. But what they admire in America is the fact that America is always on the move.

The American writers are conscious of the fact that their eulogy of the country that they love is not unfounded. For one thing, America is a nation strongly founded on democratic principles. They realize in their lifetime that American democracy provides the best environment for the individualist to grow, expand, and rise to his full stature. They understand America as the land of equal brood, as the land of geniality, and as a land of opportunities to all the people to the measure of their desert.

It is left to the individualist to rely on one’s own self and work out his or her particular destiny. Furthermore, nothing could be thrust down the throat of the individualist. It is because all the citizens of America reacted as one body, if the government proclaimed that there could be nothing beyond the State, and everything should be for the state and in the state.

The American artists know that America allows through her systems and structures political choice fairly and equally to all her citizens to determine their government. And in this lies the strength of America’s political system, which is the core of American Experience. The fact remains that it is America that offers the writers the scope, freedom, and encouragement to shape into unique, original and individualistic artists and thereby gains eminence.

The American intellectuals down from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman to the present generation of writers are democratic literati in the sense that they repeatedly argue and stress for individualism and liberty and democracy, the main
features of American Experience. In fact, through their democratic literature, the intellectuals have vitalized America and American democracy.

In their candour, in their handling of the theme of love, sex, and violence the Americans have established their American ingenuity and American character. But each has his own way of projecting America and underscoring American Experience as the staple of American mainstream culture.

Incidentally, one records the fact that America as the land of freedom gives unrestrained scope and liberty to the American artists to examine sex raw and deep in their works. For example, Roth with a thorough knowledge of sex studies all aspects of it, in many of his fictions.

It is because of America being the land of freedom, which is the main feature of American Experience; the American intellectuals voice their protests against the injustices and ills of the society and the American Establishment, in the spirit of the Old Testament prophets.

The American intellectuals believe in the social justice track. And their cry against the social wrongs perpetrated by the society and the American Establishment is not shrill, strident, sentimental or effeminately hysterical. On the other hand, it is their mature sensibility that guides their mind and art, and disciplines their denouncements, and decrivals and strictures. In fine, their protest has a certain sobriety and decorum.

One other factor, which should be recorded here, is that no other writer of other nations indicts either the Left Wing Authoritarianism or the Right Wing Authoritarianism, as the American intellectuals do. It is because of America being the land of freedom, which is the staple of American Experience. In voicing their protest
against the Left Wing Authoritarianism or the Right Wing Authoritarianism they never mince words.

The American intellectuals, for instance, denounce collectivism. Furthermore, American Experience places the accent on the individual safeguarding his separate identity though he is of different racial origins.

American Experience places the stress on the individualist maintaining his self respect, dignity and honour come what may. But the society and the Establishment conspire against the individualist and force him to lose his identity. Ralph Waldo Emerson makes a pointed observation, which is worth quoting here ["Self Reliance", in Emerson's Essays, 1971, p. 32, p. 33, and p. 35]:

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most requests is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs. . . . Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of our own mind . . . the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. . . .

Therefore, quest for identity as a challenging issue of life engages the mind of the American intellectuals. With their American ingenuity the American intellectuals subject the major theme of identity to a close and critical analysis, and study the question of identity in terms of its loss and the consequent search for it.
All the same they are conscious of the threats to individualism posed by the American society and the American Establishment. They are aware of the fact that the American society and the American Establishment reduce men and women to conformists.

Robert E. Wegner, on this point, has the following to say [The Poetry and Prose of E. E. Cummings, 1965, p. 57]:

The tragedy of modern man is that he has lost his dignity. In our time tragedy stems not from man's failure to recognize and accept his limitations but from failure to realize his own identity and potentiality. He has lost his dignity not because he has laid claim to powers beyond his scope and ability but because he has relegated his rights and responsibilities to abstractions of government and society. . . . the tragedy today is that people have crammed themselves into conformist boxes of established mores, conviction and beliefs about reality and correct behaviour. The result is that they are able to relate each other only as boxes of beliefs and ideas and not as individual human beings - - and this is tragic. . . .

Therefore, the American intellectuals who value American Experience recommend new conditions of life, which, they argue, ensures one's identity. One enjoys the identity only if one has the ability to remain the same, notwithstanding the varying aspects and differing conditions of life.

Maintaining one's identity means being one's own self. Identity of a man it is, that discloses to the other what he is. The loss of identity leads one to the resultant
theme of the search for identity. In this context, the American intellectuals argue that individualism like democracy is one of the twin important qualities of the American Experience.

The American intellectuals, therefore, spell out meaningful ways, which when put into effective practice helps one to maintain one’s separate identity. They want the self to be assertive. They argue that man should settle for self-trust, self-endeavour, and self-resilience.

The self should give expression to his feelings and thoughts and with no reservations and with fear of no one. He should not allow the impositions of the society and the Establishment to impinge on him. He should learn to live deliberately and to speak with candour. But then such an individualist will not be understood. All the same, endeavouring to be one’s own self is the only way to preserve one’s uniqueness, singleness, and individuality.

As stated earlier, there is a careful consideration of all the parameters governing American Experience. It is in the precise sense that American Experience is based on equality, candour, self-reliance, individualism, liberty, freedom, democratic processes, and readiness to confront all hardships and all odds, and all challenges of life privatization, and free enterprise.

It is only America the land of freedom that offers poetic license to the greatest extent to the artists. In no other country the intellectuals enjoy that amount of artistic freedom to the extent as the American intellectuals do in America. That is why the American intellectuals such as Bellow, Malamud, and Roth glorify America as the land of artistic freedom.
Moreover, sex is subjected to literary treatment by the American intellectuals such as Bellow, Malamud, and Roth with the greatest freedom, openness and candour. In fact, candour is an American virtue. Whitman in his *Preface to the Leaves of Grass* observes thus [*Nineteenth Century American Literature: An Anthology*, 1965, p. 127]:

*How beautiful is candour!*

All faults are forgiven of him that has candour [My Emphasis]. . . .

Bellow's *Seize the Day* is a critique of three traditions, namely, the work ethic, the American Dream, and the Jewish tradition. In this context it is interesting to refer to the statement of Dr Adler concerning his son who changes his name from Wilhelm Adler to Tommy Wilhelm, The text reads thus [*Seize the Day*, 1956, p.12]:

I [Dr Adler] uphold tradition, He's [Wilhelm is] for the new. . . .

*If tradition is taken in a rather loose sense, as any practice or way of life which is handed down from one generation to another, there are three traditions operating in the story’ The American Dream. The Protestant (more accurately secular) Work Ethic, and the Jewish Tradition.*

The Work Ethic and the American Dream are both shown to be incapable of answering Wilhelm's deepest needs. Both, the Work Ethic and the American Dream rest on the assumption that *the acquisition and possession of money constitute success*. They differ basically in the way or ways by which the money is acquired.

The Work Ethic demands conscious, intelligent preparation, and diligent, unremitting effort, while the American Dream is a *get rich quick* proposition, whose main ingredients are a good appearance and luck. A minor difference is that the
successful pursuant of Work Ethic is granted respect by the other members of the society, while success in the American Dream is accorded fame.

Despite Wilhelm’s reflection that his father considers himself the only right kind of Jew, Dr Adler is only peripherally associated with Jewishness. He is the embodiment of the Work Ethic and the American Dream. He believes in the *get rich quick* philosophy. From humble beginnings, his father’s selling dry goods in Williamsburg; Dr Adler by his own efforts became a diagnostician, one of the best in New York, and had a tremendous practice. He also has the respect and admiration of all the functionaries and casual acquaintances around him in the Hotel Gloriana.

The adequacy of the Work Ethic and the American Dream is undercut from the beginning in the irony of his being a diagnostician, since he cannot diagnose what is wrong with his own family relationships. He does not remember the year of his wife’s death, and he is no closer to his daughter, who also changed her given name, than he is to Wilhelm. His credo is dictated by the primacy of money and the text reads thus [*Seize the Day*, 1956, p.32]:

> And I [Dr Adler] want nobody on my back. Get off! And I give you the same advice. Wilky Carry nobody on your back.

This is another aspect, perhaps the logical conclusion, of the high regard Americans have had for self-reliance at least from the time of Emerson. Dr Adler repeatedly proclaims his self-reliance, his individualism; but is finally alone, pathetically attempting to fend off his fear of death by clinging to his money. His position is reaffirmed in the final section of *Seize the Day* in most violent language. The text reads thus [*Seize the Day*, 1956, p.12]:

> And I want nobody on my back. Get off! And I give you the same advice. Wilky Carry nobody on your back...
You [Tommy Wilhelm] want to make yourself into my cross. But I'm not going to pick up a cross. I'd see you dead, by Christ; before I let you do that to me. Go away from me [Dr Adler] now. It's torture for me to look at you, you slob! . . .

If the respect of functionaries and casual acquaintances masks this finally intolerable loneliness, so much the worse: Dr Adler's success is illusory and it encourages self-deception. Thus, in a subtle Bellow explodes the myth of the American dream. A supporting representative of the Work Ethic is Mr. Rappaport, whose fortune made in the chicken business suggests an ironic ambiguity.

In Wilhelm's use of the term, "chicken" is a term of opprobrium meaning false and trivial. Rappaport's fortune may not be so fortunate for him after all. Rappaport is almost blind, an unpleasant old man who is a prisoner of the figures on the board of the Commodities Exchange, which he is unable to see. His hero is Teddy Roosevelt, T. R., the champion of rugged individualist. There is irony here too; Rappaport cannot read only the figures, which hold him captive but also is dependent on Wilhelm to be helped across the street to purchase the cigars. His physical blindness is an indication of his spiritual condition.

Rappaport can supply the readers with a transition to considering the American dream, for the Commodities Market is the variation of the get rich quick with which Wilhelm is involved on the day the story takes place. Since there must be a loser for every winner on each transaction in commodities, it is obvious that as a way of life it is at best untrustworthy. The untrustworthiness is humorously expressed by Dr Tamkin, who is a monument of ambivalence. When he is talking to Wilhelm into investing with
him, he says [Seize the Day, 1956, p.42]: "They gamble, but I [Dr Tamkin] do it scientifically. This is not guesswork." When it comes to the crunch, however, Dr Tamkin says [Seize the Day, 1956, p.42]: "But I have confidence: I'm sure I'll outguess them." The primacy of luck, guessing, entails an absence of responsibility, no real investment of the self, which inevitably prevents full human significance or meaning.

It is an operation of what Dr Tamkin, in a phrase, which powerfully affects Wilhelm, calls the pretender soul. Perhaps Hollywood is the most blatant variation of the American Dream. Maurice Venice, the failed talent scout, states it succinctly [Seize the Day, 1956, p.72]:

You may plug along fifty years before you get anywhere. This way in one jump, the world knows who you are. You become a name like Roosevelt, Swanson, From east to west, out to China, into South America. This is no bunk. You become a lover to the whole world. The world wants it, needs it . . . Listen, everywhere there are people trying hard; miserable, in trouble, downcast, tired, trying and trying. They need a break, right? A break through, a help, luck, or sympathy . . .

A final aspect of the American Dream, which engages Wilhelm is baseball. While he thinks that baseball gives him an advantage over his wife in competition for the love of his sons. The text reads thus [Seize the Day, 1956, p.85]:

When he went to fetch them to go to Ebbets Field, though, he was not himself. He put on front but he felt as if he had swallowed a fistful of sand . . .
In other words, he is not aware that the commonplace attempt in the American society to invest sports events with the myth breaking significance of religious ritual in older cultures is futile. After all, baseball is not a revelation of total reality, nor can it supply, except in a very limited way, models of universally exemplary behaviour.

A detail, which radically undercurrents baseball’s myth-bearing potential is easily missed by the reader, unless that reader is a baseball historian or an old White Sox fan. In the story’s third paragraph the readers are told that the neighbourhood’s great landmark was the Hotel Ansoniu - - the very place where the members of the 1919 White Sox met with the gamblers to fix the World Series.

It can be seriously maintained that the fixing of the 1919 Series did more to undermine confidence in America as the land of the free the home of the brave than anything prior to the involvement of the Americans in Viet Nam. The fix certainly attests that where money is absolute, a certification for success for the American Dream, corruption is highly probable.

Thus, Bellow examines the subject of Americanism in his fictions.

In Malamud’s fiction, The Magic Barrel, the protagonist Leo Finkle follows tradition well, that is, the tradition of the old world, at the beginning. As a rabbinical student Leo Finkle understands adhering to law, to ritual, to custom; so, to pick a wife. Leo consults a marriage broker because his own parents had been brought together a matchmaker. Salzman, the marriage broker, is a man of business with a ritual, first comes family, then the amount of dowry, and finally also what kind of promises.
The ritual progresses toward strict standards and specifications in order to better bargain. Such ritual is not a part of the American myth, which has its centre a virtual lack of history and tradition. The marriage broker is an element in a tradition that is not American. Even Leo realizes the un-American tone of matchmaking when he inquires about one of Salzman's clients. The text reads thus [Magic Barrel, 1956, p. 27]:

I [Leo] don't understand why an American girl should go to a marriage broker...

Salzman is part of a profession that existed long before Jamestown, so, properly, that profession has established procedures, ritualized and orderly, to accomplish the bargain in an unemotional way. Leo requests the old-world tradition because his is an old world personality. His severe scholar's nose and ascetic lips illustrate an inactive life. He studies without time for a social life even in the midst of that entire all-American place, New York City. No women, no laughter, no dancing, drinking or theatre going accompanied his life.

Likewise, Leo lacks decisiveness, another American characteristic. Leo wants someone else to act and to decide for him - - not a reflection of the American independent streak - - rather than to experiment and experience on his own. Leo's Lack of initiative parallels his lack of emotion - - at least emotions other than embarrassment and uncertainty. His first exposure to matchmaking disconcerts him. By nightfall, however, he had regained sufficient calm to sink his nose into a book and there found peace from his thoughts.

Leo's old world traits make him incapable of finding, pursuing, or captivating an American woman. However, the development in the story is the development of Leo's
American personality that finally enables him to love Stella. Malamud parallels this development with the coming of spring and warmth, symbols of fertility and freshness long associated with America, the New World. Leo’s first change is toward emotionality. Showing emotion may not be a signal of maturity, but it certainly is an element in the typical American personality, which is characteristically youthful and exaggerated. The change begins after Leo’s epiphany about his own religion: he found himself possessed by shame and fear. The text reads thus. [Magic Barrel, 1956, p. 39]:

I [Leo] think that I came to God not because I loved Him but because I did not. . . .

Leo sees his own lack of emotion and his heart begins to pump out feelings from that moment. Subsequently, Leo was infuriated and he swore and his anger rose when he looked at Stella’s photograph and let out a cry. Leo was astounded and overjoyed when he burst out. As his emotion about Stella increases, so does he bend toward action.

Leo would never have known his desires if his Americanization had not included for him a change toward decisiveness. Leo’s conversion to American traditions reveals itself through his newly developed emotionality, action, and decisiveness. These traits are fostered, obviously, by self-awareness, suffering and love; a woman is the catalyst for each of these.

Through this conversion, Leo demonstrates one of the American paradoxes: *E Pluribus Unum*. The rabbinical student has long been alone. However, to be American he must be independent, which ironically occurs only after close association with people. He must know others to be himself; he must be part of society to be himself. Leo must love one other person to love humanity.
With this balance of the one and the many, Leo’s decisions, actions, and emotions are fully American.

Thus through the character Leo Malamud projects the *Melting Pot* brewing up new commitments in Leo, the American.

It is with American ingenuity and candour that Roth panders to the female reader in *The Dying Animal*. Roth’s heroes and alter egos make no apologies for the male gaze. They are frank, shamelessly frank, about their preferences and proclivities. These are eclectic: they have lots of time for women who are cerebral and gutsy and witty and accomplished. But the ones they rate the highest are never just cerebral, gutsy, witty, and accomplished. They are also young and beautiful with size D cups.

The title of Roth’s fiction, *The Dying Animal*, is lifted from Walter Butler Yeats’s poem, “Byzantium”, and it runs thus [Quoted in Maureen Freely, “D Cups to Die For”, *New Statesman*, 130, no. 4543 (25 June 2001), 52]:

Because only when you fuck is everything that you dislike in life and everything by which you are defeated in life purely, if momentarily, revenged. Only then are you most cleanly alive and most cleanly yourself. It’s not the sex that’s corruption - - it’s the rest... 

As Kepsesh admits to the unnamed confidante to whom this monologue is addressed, he cannot fully understand what he sees in this woman, because Consuela has no brain and is no match for the wild women who failed to get their claws into him during the earlier stages of his sexual revolutions. She was so matter-of-fact about her right to pleasure that one would think it was guaranteed to her by the *American Declaration of Independence*. She was athletic but was soulless in bed. The textual
passage makes interesting reading, and hence it is quoted below [The Dying Animal, 2000, p. 144]:

When she was sucking me, she would move her head with a relentless rat-a-tat-tat rapidly - - it was impossible not to come much sooner than I wanted to, but then the instant I began coming she abruptly stopped and received it like an open drain. I could have been coming into a wastepaper basket . . .

Through this sexually overtone description of a sex act, marked by frankness and candour, Kepsesh tries to bring out the animal in her. And, in just a few quick lessons he succeeds. But the joke is on him, because it is the animal in her that makes him feel his age. It will be other, younger men who enjoy the fruits of his tutorial. The young man he sees most clearly in his jealous fantasies is himself at twenty-five.

Thus, Roth subjects the theme of sex to literary treatment with frankness and extreme candour in his fiction,

Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal . . .

The cover of The Dying Animal features a Mondrian nude who could easily be of the size F or G. The narrator is David Kepsesh.

People of the age of Kepsesh tended to play safe on the margins. But Kepsesh was not for accommodation. So he left his son and wife and went to town. His only true ally was a poet named George who had taken the extraordinarily brave and innovative step of parking his wife and kids in the suburbs so that they had no way of checking up on him. It was not just fun that these men were after. The lust of Kepsesh and George
had a theoretical base. Their mission was to sidestep the worst of the revolution and to seize the idea; to seek pure pleasure, with the emphasis on the word “pure”.

In Roth’s *American Pastoral* the less reprehensible the only thing to aim at in the downbeat, unhappy America; not to kill people; not to harm people; to accept blows and condemnation and rejection calmly and with endurance. Philip Hensher remarks [“Terrorism, the Perfect Choice”, vol, 278, no. 8809 (31 May 1997), 37]:

It [*American Pastoral*] is not a comforting book, and like all of Roth’s books, it is not a novel that one would return to willingly. It is admirable, oppressive and moving; perhaps that ought to be enough. . . .

Thus, with America, the land of freedom offering poetic license, Malamud deals with frankness and candour the themes of sex and terrorism.

Thus Bellow, Malamud, and Roth examine Americanism in their fictions.