CHAPTER V

THE POLYPHONIC: OPERATION SHYLOCK

I stand around half-amazed by these audacious perspectives. I stand there excited ... by these stories so unlike my own.

- Philip Roth in Operation Shylock

Reality is always stranger than the human imagination. Not only that, reality can permit itself to be unbelievable, inexplicable, out of all proportions.

- Aharon Appelfeld, the Israeli novelist.

While carnivalesque and dialogic elements have been the subject of much critical application, Bakhtin's idea of "polyphony" has not received as much attention, and the present chapter takes up an analysis of Roth's latest work Operation Shylock (1993), as a polyphonic novel par excellence. At the same time, this work is Roth's cheerful rejoinder to the postmodern aesthetics of metafiction as well as to the modernist aesthetics of the autonomy of art. "It begins," in the words of Cheyette, "as autobiography ... but quickly turns into fiction and enters, 'forever,' the 'house of ambiguity'" (19). Before taking up a "polyphonic" reading of this work, a few words need be said by way of introduction.

Operation Shylock is a curious hybrid, and a loose, baggy monster. Its first person narrator and the protagonist is Philip Roth, the novelist himself. A number of events and details in the novel correspond exactly to verifiable facts of Roth's lived life. But there are other
things narrated in the novel as happening, which are not only unbelievable but which travesty the lived reality of Roth's life. Chief among them is the appearance of Philip Roth's double in Israel, also calling himself "Philip Roth," going about giving lectures and press interviews. The other Roth is the founder-advocate of a preposterous proposal which he calls "Diasporism." Roth has subtitled the novel "A confession," but the confession is an inversion, a parodic inversion of the aesthetics of metafiction. The typical postmodern metafiction advertises itself by its self-reflexivity as fiction; it often reminds us that it is a text, and that characters are mere typographical black marks on the white page and that there is nothing outside the text itself, or that texts are no more than an endless play of intertextual signifiers. Roth, on the other hand, proposes an inversion—that is, fictional events, incredible happenings and preposterous occurrences—what can only be the elements of fiction—do in fact happen, and happen, of all persons, to Roth himself. If once life imitated art, and if now (in the era of intertextuality) art imitates art, Operation Shylock suggests that life is a parody of art. It is as if Jonathan Swift instead of Gulliver, travelled to grotesque nations; or Gogol and not Kovalyev, turned into a nose; or Dostoevsky and not Golyadkin encountered his double; or as if Kafka, and not Gregor Samsa turned into an insect.
First, *Operation Shylock* demands that we give up simplistic readings that categorize fiction by separating the goats from the sheep. Such readings look either for verisimilar, traditional realism that requires just a willing suspension of disbelief on the one hand, or on the other--irrealism, surrealism, magic-realism, fabulation, metafiction and such kinds of nonmimetic writing. It is the pitfall of taking an either/or stand--between real/unreal, truth/imagination, fact/fiction, verisimilitude/textuality--that readers ought to guard themselves against, while reading Roth's later works beginning with his Zuckerman series and culminating in *Operation Shylock*. Such clear-cut opposites are problematized in these fictions.

A polyphonic reading, on the one hand, requires that we stop concerning ourselves with queries like whether it is a fact, real, true, or whether it is credible. Such questions can lead us nowhere, especially when Philip Roth himself takes the roles of the (implied) author, the narrator, the protagonist and even that of the antagonist. Instead, it would be more rewarding if we attune ourselves to the polyphony and a dialogic sense of truth essential to polyphony, that prevails in *Operation Shylock*.

The novel opens with a preface which declares that "The book is as accurate an account as I am able to give of actual occurrences that I lived through during my middle fifties" (13). By way of qualification, he adds that he has
altered facts, which implies that one can alter facts but still retain truth. He also goes on to add that such minor changes are of no significance to the "overall story and its verisimilitude." Contradicting his own preface, the last page of the novel carries the standard disclaimer often found in the front pages of fiction:

This book is a work of fiction ... the names, characters, places and incidents either are products of the imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely incidental. This confession is false.  

The novel also raises the question whether Roth really undertook the espionage mission, which he says (in the novel) he undertook for Israel's Intelligence agency. Periodical articles like those of Malcolm Jones Jr., attempt to verify the veracity of Roth's reported undercover mission. Such explorations do not in any way serve for an analysis or an understanding of Operation Shylock. Hamlet's dictum, "The play's the thing," seems the proper approach to a reading of this complex novel. Bearing the points mentioned above in mind, the present chapter takes up an analysis of Operation Shylock as a polyphonic novel--despite the strong presence in the novel of many verifiable facts, actual persons and verbatim extracts of court-room trials and so on.
Essential to the polyphonic novel is the fact that "a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event" (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 6). A study of this plurality in Operation Shylock would reveal the following:

1. Operation Shylock is a polyphonic text in the manner of the fiction of Dostoevsky and Dickens—a text in which the author allows full independence to his characters. More importantly, the author refrains from imposing his own moral or ideological control over the destinies of his characters.

2. It is a novel of a "plurality of unmerged voices and consciousnesses" in which the voices of the characters are held distinct from one another, representing many different social classes and linguistic registers.

3. The polyphonic novel's genesis (as Bakhtin demonstrates in his study of Dostoevsky) in ancient carnivalized literature such as the Menippean satire and the Socratic dialogue, can also be traced in Operation Shylock.

4. Operation Shylock reveals its generic hybridity through the use of inserted genres—letters, found manuscripts, retold dialogues, parodies of the higher genres, parodically reinterpreted citations, and—in this age of information technology—extracts from audio-taped lectures.
5. It exploits the traditions of the doppelganger in literature while at the same time making use of popular forms of fiction such as the picaresque and the detective fiction, espionage novel, international thriller and pornography.

6. Carnival as the structuring principle of Operation Shylock.

7. **Operation Shylock** carries a dialogic sense of truth that is absolutely constitutive of polyphony.

As a consequence of its relativizing of the author's voice and point of view, polyphony has sometimes been misunderstood as a concept that posits the absence or "the death" of the author. So, it should be borne in mind that Bakhtin explicitly states that the polyphonic author neither lacks nor fails in expressing his ideas and values. Bakhtin also maintains that a work without an authorial position is in general impossible. "The issue here is not an absence of, but a radical change in, the author's position," Bakhtin emphasizes (Problems 67). Nor does a polyphonic work lack unity, nor is it a mere assemblage and collage of differing views or voices. Rather, polyphony demands a different kind of unity "... unity of a higher order" (Problems 298).

The methods and techniques employed by Dostoevsky in achieving polyphony can as well be discovered in Roth's work through a Bakhtinian analysis. The techniques of the
two novelists bear a remarkable similarity despite the vast difference in the periods, faiths, nationalities, and the world-views of these two writers. So much so, that with respect to this novel, Roth may be hailed as the "Dostoevsky of contemporary American fiction." This is not to say that Roth's work is an imitation or stylization of his Russian predecessor. Nor does this chapter take up a study of the influence of the former on the latter. As Bakhtin has observed on Dostoevsky's knowledge and indebtedness to the genre of the menippea, Roth's technique can be attributed to genre memory. "The higher a genre develops and the more complex its form, the better and more fully it remembers its past," Bakhtin points out (Problems 121). The techniques adopted by Roth in achieving this polyphony will be identified and analyzed in the following study.

Author and Character

First and foremost, Roth creates characters who are not only independent but whose voices are "equally valid as that of the author," thus making for the polyphony of Operation Shylock.

The reportorial, straightforward, "factual" narration of the opening page of the novel contains a reference in its very first line to none other than the author himself. But then it is "the other Philip Roth," a double--incredible in life but common in doppelganger
fiction. This is followed by a reference to his "Cousin Apter," the small circle indicating that the real name has been changed 'for legal reasons,' as the novelist informed readers in the Preface. The reference to the trial of John Demjanjuk in Jerusalem is also a fact. Roth has referred to it earlier in his biographical memoir, *Patrimony* (211). In chapter 9 of *Operation Shylock* there is a verbatim extract from the court-room exchange of the trial. In the context of such authentic reporting is introduced the Israeli radio report of Philip Roth's presence in Jerusalem, even while he was very much present in New York.

Roth first takes it lightly as an erroneous report, but this news is further confirmed by a phone call from Aharon Appelfeld, the well-known Israeli novelist and a friend of Roth in real life. Aharon Appelfeld reads out on the telephone, a notification in *Jerusalem Post*:

"Diasporism: The Only Solution to the Jewish Problem." A lecture by Philip Roth; discussion to follow: 6.00 p.m. Suite 511, King David Hotel. Refreshments." (*Operation Shylock* 18).

Later, when Roth calls long distance the King David Hotel room in Jerusalem, a man comes on the line and Roth asks if it is Philip Roth. The voice replies: "It is ... and who is this please?" (19). The cool and the utter simplicity of the double's query makes Roth wonder if he is imagining things. The classic simplicity of this innocent query is a masterstroke in the genre of doppelgänger fiction. Commenting on this query, John Updike says that "The
question is a profound one, and the concept of the double in this novel is never again as electrically spooky" (109).

After "reporting" on this telephone conversation with his own double, once again the novelist reverts to a factual report of his close encounter with insanity. That it is a fact is borne out by Roth's earlier report in The Facts of his minor knee surgery in 1987 (5). It is also reported by Halio in his chronology of events in Roth's life (xii). This surgery caused terrible pain for which he was prescribed the pain-killing drug, Halcion. This drug produced a strange side effect as a result of which his "mind began to disintegrate." His pulse rate shot up, he felt depressed and frightened and he was asking Claire Bloom (the British actress with whom Roth had been living for twelve years and whom he married in 1990): "'Where's Philip Roth? ... Where did he go?' I was not asking histrionically, I asked because I wanted to know" (22). He now wonders whether the other Philip Roth is the answer—an ironic answer to his search for himself.

It was from a magazine article that he realized the cause of his affliction. Roth quotes from a British medical journal in which the article appeared stating that Halcion induced madness. It produced "depersonalization, derealization, paranoid reactions, acute and chronic anxiety" among other things (25). This magazine-report quoted in the novel makes us wonder whether we are to take
the discourse as that of a Halcion victim, a victim of insanity. Especially since the novelist announces in his Preface, that *Operation Shylock* is drawn from notebook journals, the question arises whether the appearance of the double is a report from the diary of a madman. It is now seven months, he goes on to say, since he is off Halcion but the presence of the double makes him wonder if he is still in trauma because "Hallucinations like these and worse stampeded through me day and night, a herd of wild animals I could do nothing to stop" (20).

This report brings to mind one of the features of the polyphonic novel identified by Bakhtin. Often, the narrator of a polyphonic novel is on the threshold of insanity—he may be dreaming, hallucinating or simply mad. Further, in polyphonic fiction, the dream is counterposed to ordinary life as another possible life, unlike the dream in the epic and other monologic genres, which does not destroy the unity of a represented life or create a second plane. "Dream visions, insanity, obsession of all sorts" in polyphonic fiction also serve the purpose of "testing of an idea" and the man of an idea (*Problems* 135). In *Operation Shylock*, the other Roth, who could be the product of Roth's dream/madness, serves in the testing of an idea. The idea in this case is that of Diasporism, the manifesto and the raison d'être for the other Roth, an idea that is hotly debated by other characters in the novel, including the
narrator. As Solotaroff points out, among other things, *Operation Shylock* is "a brilliant novel of ideas" (782).

Roth again telephones Aharon Appelfeld when the latter reads out from a newspaper the text of the lecture delivered by the double in Jerusalem. The lecture is entitled "Poland Needs Jews," itself an extraordinary idea. In his lecture, "Philip Roth" has advocated in very strong terms, his proposal of "Diasporism". Conceived as the opposite of Zionism, Diasporism is a proposal that the Jews of Europe and Russia who migrated to Israel during the Holocaust go back to their European "motherland," their motherland for more than a thousand years. The only Jews who would remain in Israel after the (second) Diaspora proposed by the Double are the native Arab Jews. They would remain in an Israel which is largely reduced in its area. The Israel-occupied territories in the West Bank would be handed over to Palestinian Arabs whose motherland it had been for over a thousand years. While reading out all this from the newspaper on the phone, Aharon Appelfeld remarks: "Philip, I feel that I am reading to you out of a story you wrote" (31).

The manifesto of "Diasporism" has all the force of serious, ideological rhetoric, except that the proposal, per se, sounds absurd. The fact that the proposal is made by Roth's double compounds its sense of absurdity. But seen through the carnival optic, Diasporism will be seen as a
trivialization of Zionism. It is an inversion of the very values of Zionism. The subversion of Zionism takes the form of the double's advocacy for Diasporism. While Zionism cherished dreams of a return to the Promised Land, Diasporism is comically hailed by the double as the solution to anti-Semitism, especially the Arab hatred for Jews.

After all, argues the double, Jews had been a part of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia and England. It is now time for them to return to Europe from Israel and renew their "pre-eminent spiritual and cultural role in Europe" where they had lived for two thousand years. Europe, and not Israel, is the authentic Jewish homeland—argues the double. It was Europe, he says, which gave to the world great men like Albert Einstein, Heinrich Heine⁹ and Shalom Aleichem¹⁰. It was the continent that nourished the flourishing Jewish worlds. What was a mere twelve years of Nazi oppression, asks the double rhetorically, against a millennia of flourishing Jewry.¹¹

"Diasporism" is thus the posing of an extraordinary question made possible by the double. However, it cannot be brushed aside as mere frivolity if we consider certain undeniable facts of history. The main charge of the Jews in Israel is against the entire Gentile world for having committed inhuman atrocities against them. It was a continual wave of anti-Semitism throughout history that culminated in the Holocaust of Nazi Germany. The
plight of the Jew was that he was treated as a social outcaste on every soil that had been his homeland for over a thousand years. The Jews claimed justifiably that they had contributed to the culture and progress of these nations.

But, after founding a homeland in the state of Israel, Jews began to systematically annihilate Palestinian Arabs and to conquer Arab territories in Palestine that had been their (the Arab) homeland for two thousand years. Thus Zionism as a doctrine, Israel as a nation, and the Jews as a race became guilty of the very crimes with which they had charged the entire western, Christian world. What the Gentiles had been to the Jews of Europe, the Jews of Israel were now to the Palestinian Arabs. It is this fundamental paradox of Zionism which the double points out through his proposal of Diasporism. This point is forcefully presented much later in the novel, when another character, George Ziad, accuses Israel of being "a military state, established by force, maintained by force, committed to force and repression" (271).

"Zionism has outlived its historical function," the double points out to Roth. This reminds us of Bakhtin's warning that all serious, official discourse, and the avowal of truth assumed by such discourse, tends to become one-sided, dead, mere propaganda, or at best, a complacency, with the passage of time. The other discourse (of Zionism) is nowhere present in the text, yet it controls the
discourse of the double on Diasporism. Commenting on the
dialogic nature of this hidden polemic, David Lodge states
that "In any text where the reader is conscious that the
author is not addressing him directly, but through the
represented discourse of some persona or character, or in
the accents of some recognizable literary style, we have the
phenomenon of doubly-voiced discourse" (After Bakhtin 85).

The appearance of the double not only creates an
extraordinary situation but also gives rise to comic
possibilities though it is a serious matter to Roth. The
presence of the double places Roth in an extraordinary
situation and provokes him to test a man and his idea and
makes him pose ultimate questions—all these being functions
that Bakhtin discovered in the Socratic dialogues and the
Menippea, the forerunners to polyphonic fiction.

Unable to contain his curiosity and eager to gauge
the reactions of the double, Roth calls Israel and conducts
a telephonic interview with the double. Taking on the
accents of a French reporter in order not to give away his
real identity, he calls himself Pierre Roget so as to catch
the impostor off-guard. Even while accusing the double of
impersonation, Roth himself becomes an impostor. This is
also a carnival inversion; while the double is busy
pretending to be the original, the original is pretending to
be someone else. In his own words, it gave Roth, a "Mardi
Gras kind of kick" (40). Disguise, that is, carnivallistic
shifts of clothing, and of positions and destinies in life, serve in the polyphonic novel the purpose of "imparting a joyful relativity, carnival levity, and rapidity of change" (Problems 125). The situation also gives rise to a clash of unsubmerged and independent voices--those of the reasoning Philip Roth, of Claire Bloom, of Pierre Roget, and the double--each coming out with his/her own version and interpretation of the incredible presence of the double.

The double explains on the telephone that temporarily he has given up fiction-writing because his "life now is focused entirely on the Jewish European resettlement movement. On Diasporism" (41). According to him, Zionism, which had once contributed to the recovery of Jewish hope and morale "has tragically ruined its own health, and so must now accede to vigorous Diasporism" (44). The voice of the double is so forceful that it takes on all the elements of persuasive discourse. Roth simply marvels at "The starchy rhetoric, the professional presentation, the historical perspective, the passionate commitment, the grave undertones" behind his double's discourse (44).

The extraordinary independence enjoyed by characters who are freed of authorial control in the polyphonic novel is thus described by Bakhtin:

A character's word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is, it is not subordinated to the character's
objectified image as merely one of his characteristics, nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work: it sounds, as it were, alongside the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters. (Problems 7)

The double enjoys such extraordinary independence that he condescendingly, grudgingly accedes to Roth: "your questions may be aggressive and nasty, but they are also intelligent, and I thank you for them" (47). Such is the independence of this character, that he not only stands alongside the author but even figuratively pats the author on the back for his intelligent question.

Roth flies to Jerusalem, meets Appelfeld there and more importantly, attends the trial of John Demjanjuk. There he encounters other characters whose presence is a silent commentary not only on the double but also on the uncertainties of who or what constitutes the self. Of immediate bearing to the plot, the Demjanjuk trial provides Roth the opportunity to encounter his double in person. At the end of the day's hearing, Roth comes out of the courtroom in Jerusalem. There is a sudden downpour, and he runs to a nearby hotel lobby for shelter. Someone taps him on the shoulder: "I turned to find facing me the other Philip Roth," reports Author Roth (69).
The first encounter between the Roths is a masterpiece of narrative imagination. The shock, the doubt, and the exasperation experienced by Author Roth is juxtaposed to the sheer joy, genuine surprise, and frank admiration felt by the Other Roth, on seeing his lookalike. In the face of this extraordinary situation, Philip Roth gives a perceptive rendering of what would defy the imagination of any writer—a rendering that is as authentic as it is comic.

With all seriousness, the Other Roth addresses Author Roth: "I can't speak ... It's you. You came" (70). Author Roth can only say that it was he who was "jolted by the spellbinding reality of his unreality as by its immensely disorienting antithesis" (70). The Other Roth is unable to control tears of joy on seeing his lookalike, whereas Author Roth expected him to recoil in fear and capitulate. What is more, the Other Roth possesses a sound knowledge of Philip Roth's oeuvre, his life, and his women. "What brings you here?" enquires the Other Roth with un-concealed joy. To Author Roth it was a dazzling question and so ingenuously put, that he finds himself answering simply: "Passing through." But nothing could dampen the exuberance of the Other Roth who remarks: "I'm looking at myself ... except it's you" (71). Roles are reversed, expectations are belied. In the moment of disbelief, anger and exasperation are forgotten. Author Roth had all the while been thinking of the Other Roth as a fake, or a conman.
who would recoil on seeing the original. Instead, the Other Roth exasperates Author Roth by being very pleasantly surprised.

The independence and equality granted to the characters requires that the author give up what Bakhtin calls "the author's surplus of vision." This "surplus" is what each of us possesses with respect to the others whom we encounter. In (homophonic) monologic works, authors enjoy an immense surplus of vision with respect to their characters. "In fact, the surplus enjoyed by monologic authors is much greater than the surplus we normally encounter in daily life. After all, the author has created the character, knows his psychology better, and knows the character's fate. This sort of "essential surplus" (knowledge of essential facts unavailable to the character) makes it impossible for the author and characters to 'exist on a single plane' and hence to enter into dialogue as equals. An author's surplus finalizes a character and definitely establishes his identity" (Morson and Emerson 241).

We see the principle of polyphony at work in Operation Shylock in which Author Roth has no "essential surplus" about the character. The Other Roth remains an enigma. Paradoxically, the Other Roth enjoys a "surplus of vision" in his knowledge of Roth's life, his works, and his women. Thus the character is capable of standing alongside
the author and existing on the same plane as that of his creator.

Exactly what this "surplus" means at the physical level, is tellingly brought out by what follows in the encounter between the Roths. When the initial shock and disbelief subsides, Author Roth begins to notice the features of the Other Roth. He notes that the Other Roth is not a spitting image, but bears only a strong resemblance to himself. "It occurred to me," Author Roth notes, "that he looked like the after to my before in the plastic surgeon's advertisement" (72). The import of this observation is a testimony not only to Philip Roth's imaginative power but also to Bakhtin's ideas on the "essential surplus of vision" we all possess with respect to others.

We look at ourselves only partially in the mirror--at the face, the front, or the side--and that too mostly in static positions. We can never see ourselves in full what we look like--walking, eating, speaking etc. It is Roth's keen awareness of this fact that makes him portray the Other Roth as looking not exactly but only strongly alike. Another author might have fallen into the trap of saying: "There he was! my spitting image!"

That Philip Roth's is not an accidental or unintentional observation becomes clear by what follows in the story. Author Roth, while engaged in conversation with
his double, begins to notice slowly, that in fact the Other Roth does bear a remarkable resemblance to himself. What is at work here is the fact that while looking at the double, Author Roth imagines himself in bathroom mirrors, photographs, and reflections of himself in other places. Comparing these mental pictures of his mirror image with his material lookalike standing in front of him, Author Roth forms a mental identi-kit. What Bakhtin notes in this context is very significant here: "I never know what I look like." Only another person can "see" me in perspective, or in differing perspectives. "Even in the physical sense, one always sees something in the other that one does not see in oneself," observe Morson and Emerson (53) while commenting on Bakhtin's surplus of vision.

From a psychological point of view too, Author Roth's observation makes sound sense. As presented in Operation Shylock, Author Roth is an introvert and his novels have repeatedly shown an obsession with the self. He is certainly not the flamboyant, outgoing, extrovert type as his lookalike is. It is only natural that the ruminating Author Roth thinks of the flamboyant Other Roth as physically better-looking. The Other Roth's sharp, chiselled features, Author Roth observes, is a striking contrast to his own soft chin and large, rounded Jewish nose. The Other Roth, naturally, appears more lively and friendlier and physically better-looking than his "original."
Bakhtin observes that in the polyphonic novel, there can be "no final, finalizing discourse that defines anything once and forever. There can be no firm image of the hero answering to the question "Who is he?" (Problems 47). The only question that can be asked is, "Who am I?" and "Who are you?". Author Roth in Operation Shylock asks the Other Roth over lunch, "What are you and who are you?". Calmly the Other Roth replies, "your greatest admirer." Each query, each utterance of Author Roth takes on a different meaning and brings forth an unexpected reply from the double. These questions act as "anacrisis," which Bakhtin identifies in the Socratic dialogues and defines as "the provocation of the word by the word" (Problems 111). Moreover, the Other Roth, by giving such answers as the one quoted above, eludes definition and an attempt at finalizing him. Till the end of the novel, the Other Roth as a character does not answer to the question "Who is he?" Instead of trying to give answers that would provide Author Roth with the "surplus of vision," the Other Roth goes on to say that he has read and loved Author Roth's books. He also shows an awareness of every critical attack on Philip Roth's works, the awards that his books deserved--and missed. Taken aback by so much first-hand knowledge, Author Roth shouts "Enough." Empathizing with Author Roth's feeling of indignation, the Other Roth says "It's been no picnic, that's all I'm trying to say. I know what a struggle living
is for you, Philip. May I call you Philip?" (74) the Other Roth asks innocently, infuriating Author Roth further.

Such extraordinary situations in the polyphonic novel, acting as a provocative anacrisis, bring forth unexpected answers to provoking questions. Pulling himself together, Author Roth charges the double: "You're involved in deceptive practice. Because you're breaking the law" (75). To this charge, the Other Roth replies with a series of questions. He wants to know which law--Connecticut State Law, Israeli law or International law? One way in which characters in polyphonic fiction resist definition is that they are "people cut off from their native land and folk, whose life ceases to be determined by the norms of people living in their own country ... they are not fastened down to their environment" (Problems 170-171). On foreign soil, the Other Roth is not governed by the laws that would bind him, nor can Author Roth invoke U.S. laws to apprehend the double. Israel guarantees him a freedom and immunity that he cannot enjoy in his homeland and the Other Roth is fully cognizant of this immunity. Instead of Author Roth, it is the horrified impostor who illuminates Author Roth on all aspects of law quoting from Professor Prosser's Handbook of the Law of Torts, leaving the original dumbstruck.

Over lunch, Author Roth studies the person of his double carefully and notices that the Other Roth is dressed identically, not just similarly, as himself. On more
careful observation, Author Roth also notices that what seemed to be differences in features an hour ago is now perceived to be identicality, even mirror-image.

An aspect of the characters in the polyphonic novel discovered by Bakhtin is that they are persons on the threshold of a final decision, at a moment of crisis, an unfinalizable turning point in life. A man awaiting a death sentence, for example, is a man on the threshold. Such a critical moment makes it possible to raise extraordinary questions of life and death, as it were. During their conversation together, the Other Roth reveals that he is terminally ill, a cancer patient. He is thus a man on the threshold and it is his impending death which makes him espouse the cause of Diasporism, which in turn raises extraordinary philosophical questions on the Jewish problem. At the same time, his presence puts Author Roth too in an extraordinary situation. He cannot grasp or make sense of the unfinalized, indeterminate phenomenon of the double. About the position of the author with regard to the hero in the polyphonic novel, Bakhtin says that it "is a fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero" (Problems 63). This is exactly Author Roth's position vis-a-vis the Other Roth in Operation Shylock.
Bakhtin was against all totalizing notions that finish and complete others. Therefore he was against Freudianism, and saw in the polyphonic fiction of Dostoevsky a rejection of psychologism. Bakhtin felt that the attribution of a person's behaviour to psychological factors is "a degrading reification of a person's soul, a discounting of its freedom and unfinalizability, and of that peculiar indeterminacy and indefiniteness which in Dostoevsky constitute the main object of the representation" (Problems 61). Bakhtin notes that when critics called Dostoevsky a psychologist, Dostoevsky rejected the description and said that he was a realist who wanted to see the "man in man."

In a remarkable passage in Operation Shylock, the Other Roth (like Dostoevsky) attacks the inadequacies of Freudian theory for the understanding of human behaviour. The powerful attack is put, not in the mouth of the narrator, but in truly polyphonic fashion, in the mouth of the antagonist. The Other Roth accuses Author Roth of having read too much Freud, resulting in a kind of psychological Bovaryism. He accuses Author Roth of being a Freudian—obsessed with the self, the id, and childhood experiences which determine adult behaviour. He attacks the inadequacy of Freudian theory and its belief in the power of causality: Causeless events don't exist in your universe.... Things that aren't thinkable in intellectual terms don't even exist. How can I
exist, a duplicate of you? How can you exist, a duplicate of me? You and I defy causal explanation. (79)

The Other Roth advises Author Roth to read Jung instead, on "synchronicity." "There are meaningful arrangements that defy causal explanation and they are happening all the time. We are a case of synchronicity, synchronistic phenomena," reminds the Other Roth (79). These words echo strongly Bakhtin's own ideas on "simultaneity and co-existence" celebrated in the polyphonic novel, instead of linearity and causality that are the hallmark of the homophonic novel. 14

Launching a tirade on Author Roth's faith in Freud, the Other Roth exhorts him to read Jung's "The Uncontrollability of Real Things." The Other Roth sees in it a convincing counterstatement to the closure in Freud's ideas. "The Uncontrollability of Real Things" is also the title to this chapter of Operation Shylock which could as well serve as an epigraph to the entire novel. This theme, passed through many characters in this novel, can also be discovered in Roth's other fiction as well as in real-life experience. The Other Roth admonishes Author Roth:

You look stupefied--without a causal explanation you are lost. How on this planet, can there be two men of the same age who happen not only to look alike but to bear the same name? (79)
Bakhtin's answer to this last question would be, "Indeed there can be" instead of, "No, there cannot be."

Subsequently during their exchange, the Other Roth does provide a "causal" explanation. He accepts that he had deliberately let himself pass for Author Roth. That was the only way he could get to meet leaders like Lech Walesa, the Polish Solidarity Party leader, and propose to them his programme of Diasporism. He says that he undertook his impersonation only after taking into account all the possible legal consequences of his deed. But then, the Other Roth's "causal" explanation hardly sounds convincing, and reads like a made-up story.

At this point, Author Roth reveals that it was he who had earlier, pretending to be Pierre Roget, a French reporter, interviewed the Other Roth on the telephone. The genuine indignation felt by the Other Roth, on hearing about Author Roth's impersonation as Pierre Roget, finally makes Author Roth overcome his own monologic seriousness towards the phenomenon of his double:

... somewhere within me a laugh began, and soon I was overcome with laughter, laughter pouring forth from some cavernous core of understanding deeper even than my fears: despite all the unanswered questions, never, never had anybody seemed less of a menace to me or a more pathetic rival to my birthright. He struck me instead as a great
idea ... yes a great idea breathing with life. 
(83)

Author Roth is at last released from fear by the power of laughter. He feels that now there is no need to "understand" his double. More importantly, the double appears to him as an "idea," a great idea breathing with life. In polyphonic novels, characters are often ideologues, in the sense that they are carriers of ideas. To Bakhtin what is of importance is not the idea as something absolute or abstract but living and inseparable from the man carrying the idea. Thus the Other Roth is a Bakhtinian man of an idea.

The loud laughter of Author Roth leaves "the aspirant Philip Roth" crushed and humiliated. What could not be overcome by seriousness is easily defeated by the power that Bakhtin attributes to laughter. The Other Roth leaves the scene, defeated by laughter. Author Roth next hears from the double when the Other Roth's voluptuous mistress Wande Jane "Jinx" Possesski brings a letter. They meet in the garden of the restaurant where Author Roth was staying. In the letter, the double makes an appeal to Author Roth to allow him to exist, because, the letter says, "I AM THE YOU THAT IS NOT WORDS" (87). So, he wishes to be a full person, a subject, and not a mere object made of words by the hands of a monologic author.

Wanda Jane too is an independent character in the Bakhtinian sense. She narrates that as a hospital nurse she
first met the Other Roth in the cancer ward. She then says that she is a recovering anti-Semite, saved by ASA (the Anti-Semites Anonymous), a recovery group founded by "Philip." The idea of ASA is inspired by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Wanda Jane says that she has been in recovery for five years and that it was in the cancer ward that she discovered her own affliction--anti-Semitism.

ASA is the Other Roth's follow-up plan to Diasporism. When the Jews of Israel begin their exodus as envisaged by the Other Roth's Diasporism, they place themselves in a possible wave of anti-Semitism, like the one of Hitler's era. To circumvent this wave of anti-Semitism, the Other Roth has proposed the formation of ASA. The Gentile world--God-fearing, life-loving, tolerant Christians--seemed to have contracted anti-Semitism like an addictive disease. There is no other way to explain what the Nazi Europe did to the Jews. Harold Bloom describes the idea of the Other Roth's ASA as "an organization, which, like its model, urges its potential members to abstain from their addiction, while simultaneously recognizing that they are incurable" (45).

By this time in the novel, the author's voice becomes just one more voice in the text which is filled with the voices of the Other Roth, Appelfeld and Wanda Jane. The author's voice is further relativized by the presence of inserted genres that help in dialogizing the text of the
novel. By now, two letters written by the Other Roth, an interview between Author Roth and Appelfeld quoted verbatim, citations from law books on the legal aspects of impersonation, are all incorporated in the text. To these is now added the "Ten Tenets of the ASA," a pseudo-document based on the tenets of AA.

Author Roth seeks to have a "surplus of vision," to have a monologic control over the characters, by treating the Other Roth as an object. To this end, he imagines many possibilities, but in vain. The paradox here is that Author Roth's failure to arrive at an understanding, is a success to the polyphonic design of the text. Like Dostoevsky's major heroes, the Other Roth and the other characters in the novel become "not only objects of authorial discourse, but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse" (Problems 7).

After his encounter with the Other Roth, Author Roth finds an interesting change taking place in himself. In the beginning, he tried to explain away the presence of the Other Roth through rational reasoning but failed. Now, after his face-to-face encounter with the latter, he finds himself strangely impersonating and even taking on the role of the double. Nothing is fixed in the polyphonic world, everything is in a state of becoming, trying to move towards its opposite. This is what happens to Author Roth.
Also in the polyphonic text, an idea is passed through the mouths of different people by the author. The testing of an idea is done precisely by passing it through many people. The old man who introduces himself as Louis Smilesburger, an erstwhile jewellery businessman from New York, is such another voice. He meets Author Roth by chance and takes him to be the Diasporist Roth. He proposes a theory and presents a cheque to Author Roth. It is his contribution to Diasporism, which he thinks is a sure way to escape the wrath of God. He hails Roth as another Moses leading the children of Israel in a second Exodus. Author Roth is taken aback to discover that the cheque is for an astounding figure of one million dollars.

Author Roth's encounters with Smilesburger serves the purpose of the sounding of an idea. It also starts a chain-reaction of counter-impersonation by Author Roth. When he realizes that Smilesburger has taken him for the Other Roth, he does not protest either that the other one is a fake or that he is the original, reactions we would normally expect from Author Roth. Instead, he allows himself to be taken for the double. He finds himself losing control—the control of an author towards his characters, his material. Instead, he is impelled by a force "that preferred this narrative to unfold according to his [the Other Roth's], and not my specifications, a story determined this time without any interference from me" (114). The author admits to losing monologic control over the other
person (his character) who emerges as an unsubmerged voice and presence. This admission of defeat by Author Roth is of significance to the understanding of the polyphony of *Operation Shylock*.

This impersonation by the other brings further changes for the better in Roth. He finds himself forgetting his own obsessions and subjectivity. The double has helped him become objective and polyphonic. So much so, that for him, the Other Roth has become a "character," not in the sense of a fictional personage but in the colloquial sense of a real-life eccentric, or a madcap. In this joyous mood, Author Roth christens his double "Moishe Pipik." When literally translated (from Yiddish), it means "Moses Bellybutton," a "derogatory joking nonsense name." Now Roth thinks of his double as: "Is this a Moishe Pipik," and thus could turn a "burden into a joke" (117). The Other Roth in the novel has now graduated to a rebel against authority.

Taking leave of Smilesburger, Author Roth walks through the produce market, where he runs into George Ziad, his friend and college-mate whom he had not seen in more than thirty years. A Palestinian Christian, George Ziad launches a fierce rhetoric against Israeli-Jews, while at the same time praising Roth for his iconoclasm. He hails Roth as a seer and his Diasporism as "a visionary, bold,
historical step." He offers to do anything for Roth in appreciation of his fresh, brilliant vision.

Author Roth realizes that for the second time within an hour, he has been mistaken for his double. Once again, instead of protesting, he finds himself yielding to the mischievous impulse. Other originals (in fictions of the double) do everything to expose their double whereas Author Roth willingly lets others take him for his double. The so called original, in this case, tries to become his own double.

Continuing the sham, Author Roth agrees to meet Yassir Arafat in response to Ziad's request. He would meet the PLO leader, the arch-enemy of the Jewish nation, for the publicity it would create both in highlighting the cause of the Palestinian Arabs and in promoting his own pet scheme of Diasporism. Author Roth even gives Ziad's family a (false) rhetoric about the World Diasporist Congress, which is to take place soon in Basel, Switzerland, the very same historic site of the World Zionist Congress held nearly a century ago. Carnivally inverting the millennia-old slogan of the Jews "Next year in Jerusalem," Author Roth declares: "Last year in Jerusalem! Next year in Warsaw! Next year in Bucharest! Next year in Vilna and Cracow!" (158). This will have to be the motto of Israeli Jews. Author Roth declaims that "Diasporism exposed as fraudulent, every sacrosanct precept of Zionism." Thus Author Roth takes on
not only the identity but the voice and the rhetoric of his double. As a proof of the plausibility of the idea of Diasporism, he shows Ziad's wife Anna, Smilesburger's million-dollar cheque. Anna hugs her son Michael with happiness and says "Now you will be able to live in wonderful Palestine for the rest of your life. The Jews are leaving. Mr. Roth is the anti-Moses leading them out of Israel" (160). In this way, Roth deliberately sets out to become his own double.

The second confrontation of the Roths takes place that night in Author Roth's hotel room. To the realistic narration of the meeting surreal elements are added, so readers are left to wonder what to make of the happenings reported. Ambiguities abound. After a hectic day, Author Roth reaches his hotel-room to learn that the double had collected the key and was now in his room.

When Author Roth knocks at the door, it is opened by the Other Roth. Author Roth is startled to note that within twenty four hours, the handsome, boisterous version of himself had changed. The Other Roth now looks just as Author Roth had looked at the time of his nervous breakdown. Instead of exuberance, the Other Roth was now wearing "my look of perpetual grief." A counter-metamorphosis has been taking place in the Other Roth while a metamorphosis was taking place in Author Roth.
Transfixed and horrified at the sudden change in the Other Roth, Author Roth wonders why. He places it in a broader perspective and realizes the fundamental truth, the dialogic truth at the core of every human being:

I understood that people are trying to transform themselves all the time: the universal urge to be otherwise. So as not to look as they look, sound as they sound, be treated as they are treated, suffer in the ways they suffer etc. etc., they change hairdos, tailors, spouses, accents, friends, they change their addresses, their noses, their wallpaper, even their forms of government, all to be more like themselves, or less like themselves, or more like or less like that exemplary prototype whose image is theirs to emulate or repudiate obsessively for life. (180)

The passage is strongly reminiscent of Bakhtin's observation that everything is in a state of becoming; that in the polyphonic novel, the hero's "consciousness of self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy (Problems 53). Author Roth realizes how he himself had succumbed to the "urge to be otherwise" only a few hours earlier, during his encounter with Smilesburger and Ziad.

As in their previous encounter, the Other Roth recalls incidents from Roth's childhood, reciting even Roth's school song of the 1930s, but a little later dozes
off in the bed. Grabbing the opportunity, Author Roth calls King David Hotel and gets Wanda Jane on the line. Pretending to be the Other Roth, he informs her that he is waiting for Author Roth. An idea strikes him, and he engages her in intimate pillow talk. Ordering her over the phone to undress, he indulges in a game of simulated telephonic love-making with her. Through this make-believe cuckoldry, Author Roth not only has gained in one-upmanship on the Other Roth through comic sexual revenge but also continues in his becoming of the Other Roth.

On waking up, in response to Author Roth's query, the Other Roth comes out with "His Story" which could either be his life-story or just a story. Pulling out an ID card, he shows it to Author Roth, and says that he is a Private Detective running an investigation agency in Chicago. In his line of duty, he does matrimonial surveillance, traces missing persons, and had once been a personal bodyguard to President Kennedy. Crisply, he introduces himself:

I'm Philip Roth. I'm a Jewish private detective from Chicago who has got cancer and is doomed to die of it, but not before he makes his contribution [to the cause of Diasporism]. (196)

Once again as in the previous encounter, Author Roth's laughter at hearing the Other Roth's exploits as a detective leaves the double utterly crushed and defeated. He begins to pester Author Roth about the million-dollar
cheque but Author Roth tells him that he lost it somewhere on the highway. "Surrender yourself to what is real," he admonishes the double for his repeated insistence on the cheque.

Presenting the Philip/Pipik plot in a nutshell, Author Roth tries to unravel a thread of narrative from the knotty/naughty chaos of the events that have occurred thus far. He tries to account for the colourful personality and the interesting impersonation of the Other Roth.

The extraordinary freedom enjoyed by the Other Roth has been insightfully expressed by Harold Bloom when he says:

In Pipik, Roth deliberately creates a more Dostoevskian double at once in love with the idea of "Philip Roth" and helpless to cease his persecution of the writer. (46)

Bloom also points out that the most successful characterization in the novel after that of the outraged and outrageous "Philip Roth" are that of the Palestinian and Israeli characters respectively of George Ziad, Roth's old friend, and that of Smilesburger, the Mossad officer (47). Other critics too have pointed out that Ziad is an instance of great character creation (Solotaroff 782). These two and other characters possess "equally valid" voices and are not mere props in the stage of confrontation between the Roths.
A long harangue delivered by Ziad during their meeting is a powerful polemic against Jewish oppression. What appeared to Author Roth as the ravings of the lunatic—the idea of Diasporism—takes on a new perspective when Ziad presents the problem of Israelis and Palestinian Arabs. Israel "is a state founded on force and the will to dominate," Ziad concludes (122). Ziad takes Roth on a visit to an Israeli military court, near a border outpost in Ramallah and introduces Roth to Kamil, a Palestinian political activist whose brother was under trial. Kamil compares Israel to South African regimes where foreign Whites put Native Blacks on trial. American Jews, he points out, condemn in one breath White oppression of native population in South Africa, and in the other, approve wholeheartedly of Israeli atrocities on Palestinian Arabs. The meeting of Roth with Ziad, Kamil and others creates a polyphony of voices through which an idea is sounded. What Lunacharsky discovered in Dostoevsky's novels, and quoted by Bakhtin, applies equally well to Operation Shylock:

different vital problems [are put] up for discussion by these highly individual "voices," trembling with passion, ablaze with the fire of fanaticism—while he [the author] himself, as it were, is merely a witness to these convulsive disputes and looks on with curiosity to see how all of it will end, what turn the matters will take. (qtd. in Problems 33)
Another significant distinction is made by Bakhtin in this context between dialogic discourse and Hegelian dialectic. To Bakhtin, dialogic does not mean dialectic. The polyphonic novel, to him, is profoundly anti-Hegelian. It ... presents an opposition, which is never canceled out dialectically, of many consciousnesses, and they do not merge in the unity of an evolving spirit ... Within the limits of the novel the heroes' worlds interact by means of the event, but these interrelationships are the last thing that can be reduced to thesis, antithesis, synthesis.... The unified, dialectically evolving spirit, understood in the Hegelian sense of the term can give rise to nothing but a philosophical monologue. (Problems 26)

In the light of the distinction made above, we can see that the opposition in Operation Shylock is never cancelled out between:

Author Roth and the Other Roth
Zionism and Diasporism
Jew and Arab
PLO and Mossad

and several such oppositions present throughout the novel.

Another remarkable character in the novel is Louis Smilesburger. He comes out with his own theory of how God would punish Jews once again for their sins. This time nemesis would come in the shape of Arab retaliation.
Diasporism, he feels, is the only way Jews can escape the wrath of God.

Much later in the story, Smilesburger enters again quoting a rabbinical scholar who said "Words generally only spoil things." He then delivers a monologue running to several pages on the loshon hara. The phrase, Smilesburger explains, means "the laws of evil speech" and the laws were formulated by Choftez Chaim, the revered rabbi of Poland. The loshon hara forbids Jews from making derogatory or damaging remarks about fellow Jews even if the remarks were true. Chaim's fiat virtually forbade Jews from saying anything they wanted to say. It was such a stringent law that a Jew, under no circumstances could defame or denigrate another Jew. What was worse (and funny), he was forbidden to say anything that belittles even himself.

Choftez Chaim is the opposite of Sigmund Freud who discovered the talking cure. Once more in Operation Shylock, opposites are juxtaposed. Freudian psychoanalysis works on the principle that we can confront our unconscious desires and impulses by talking about them and thus come to terms with our abnormal behaviour or sinful action. The loshon hara, at the other extreme, preaches silence and bans the utterance of saying anything about not only others but even about oneself.

After completing his "elaborated outpouring," Smilesburger produces the million-dollar cheque that Roth
lost earlier somewhere on the road. He also informs that the Other Roth has taken a flight to New York and was now back in America. After that, we hear of the Other Roth only at the fag end of the novel. Roth is surprised at this old man's wizardry. It is then that Smilesburger discloses that he is an agent of the Mossad, the Israeli Secret Service, and that he has come to Roth with a proposal for an undercover mission.

According to Smilesburger, a number of affluent Jews who were sympathetic to the plight of Palestinian Arabs were making heavy contributions of money to the PLO, in furtherance of the Palestinian cause, and to the detriment of Jews and Israel. Smilesburger proposes to Roth that he undertake an intelligence mission to Athens, where he would be able to obtain the names involved in this "quorum of Jewish PLO-backers."

This encounter between Roth and Smilesburger is followed by an (ostensible) omission of the whole of the following chapter from publication, and in the "Epilogue," Roth explains the reasons that led him to delete this last and eleventh chapter of Operation Shylock. Apparently, the deleted chapter carried an account of the secret espionage mission which after all he did undertake.

Roth reports in the epilogue that he prepared a manuscript of all that happened in his secret mission, from
the journal entries he had been making. It may be recalled here that Roth stated in his Preface to this novel:

I've drawn Operation Shylock from notebook journals. The book is as accurate an event as I am able to give of actual occurrences that I lived through during my middle fifties and that culminated, early in 1988, in my agreeing to undertake an intelligence-gathering operation for Israel’s foreign intelligence service, the Mossad.

P.R.
December 1, 1992

However, before taking it to print, he wanted to show the manuscript to Smilesburger, for several reasons. In particular, it was the hope of learning from Smilesburger more about the Other Roth's identity, who had appeared from thin air and vanished likewise. Roth believed that Smilesburger's intelligence files would be comprehensively documented to cover the phenomenon of the Other Roth. Another important reason, to Roth, was that he needed Smilesburger's approval, an authentication, without which Operation Shylock would lack in credibility. Such was the unreal nature of the events reported, that he cannot claim any author-ity over the happenings or the people in Operation Shylock.

Regarding an apparent contradiction in Bakhtin's thoughts between the independence of characters, and the
author's "essential surplus" towards his characters, Morson and Emerson provide the following explanation: "It is as if the author could pick the hour and room for a dialogic encounter with a character, but once he himself had entered that room, he would have to address the character as an equal" (242). This polyphonic principle is seen at work when Roth fixes the time and the place for his meeting with Smilesburger. But once together, Smilesburger becomes an equal. They meet in a restaurant at a time fixed by Roth. Smilesburger suggests three alternatives to Roth:

1. to publish the book but after adding imaginary elements in such a way that the book can never be mistaken for authentic report.
2. to publish the book as it is but carrying the disclaimer that it is a work of fiction, and
3. to publish the book after deleting the last (and the essential), eleventh chapter which would jeopardize the national interests of Israel.

(In fact, the novelist Philip Roth, ends up doing all three in publishing *Operation Shylock*).

Their last encounter is a high-water mark of the extraordinary freedom enjoyed by characters in polyphonic fiction. In this encounter, Roth, as curious as ever, wants to know from Smilesburger more about the Other Roth, to finalize him, as it were. Smilesburger's reply is a rude snub to Roth's curiosity, and to the closure inherent to
monologic thinking. He says that it is this curiosity, "the organizing preconception of the shallow mind faced with chaotic phenomena, the unthinking man's intellectual life" (385) that urges Roth to apprehend, to understand the Other Roth. This attempt of Roth is what Bakhtin condemns as "striving, through analysis, to give finalizing definitions to the heroes, to find without fail a definite monologic authorial idea, to seek everywhere a superficial real-life verisimilitude" in the face of "the rigorous unfinalizability and dialogic openness" of the artistic world (Problems 272). Still, the tyranny of monologic thinking makes Roth want to possess an "essential surplus" about the Other Roth. Forced to give a reply, Smilesburger gives an answer that surely portrays the Other Roth as a carnival force. Smilesburger's reply is both a reprimand to Roth and a raison d'être for the Other Roth:

Pipik [the Other Roth] is the product of perhaps the most powerful of all the senseless influences on human affairs that is Pipikism; the antitragic force that inconsequentializes everything—farcicalizes everything, trivializes everything, superficializes everything. (389)

Thus Philip Roth builds the issue of monologic thinking versus polyphonic structuring, into the very texture of Operation Shylock. This is made possible by making "Philip Roth" the protagonist-cum-narrator of Operation Shylock.
Returning to the question of publication, Smilesburger suggests that Roth delete entirely that last chapter. "Publish the book without its ending" Roth retorts bitterly. "Yes," affirms Smilesburger, "... incomplete, like me (Smilesburger is a cripple). Deformed can be effectual too, in its own unsightly way," he concludes, thus arguing for true open-endedness (387).

Operation Shylock may lack unity, appear chaotic, or even fragmentary but it possesses the higher unity discovered by Bakhtin in polyphonic fiction.

The hero of the polyphonic text rejects determinism, and other causal, genetic explanations. In support of the hero's "surprisingness," Bakhtin expresses one of his most cherished convictions:

As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word ... man is free and can therefore violate any regulating norms that might be thrust upon him.

A man never coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity A = A ... the genuine life of the personality takes place ... at his point of departure beyond the limits of all that he is as a material being, a being that can be spied upon, defined, predicted apart from its own will, "at second hand." (Problems 59)
When Author Roth expresses his futility in trying to finalize the Other Roth, we can attribute this futility to his hero's unfinalizability. Author Roth questions himself:

What was he [the Other Roth]? Was he fifty-one percent smart or was he fifty-one percent stupid? Was he fifty-one percent crazy or was he fifty-one percent sane? Was he fifty-one percent reckless or was he fifty-one percent cunning? In every case it [assessing the Other Roth's personality] was a very close call. (190)

The need for a dialogic understanding of others, the need for an I-Thou relationship, instead of an I-it relationship, is illustrated by the character of the Other Roth and brought home to Author Roth through the words of Smilesburger. It is that: "Man ... [is] the pillar of instability" and that there is only "The unsureness of everything" (393).

Operation Shylock is a polyphonic novel with a plurality of unmerged voices. Roth achieves this polyphony by submerging his own voice, and by imagining genuinely unfinalizable characters and by deploying "an arsenal of techniques to provoke unexpected reactions from them and to induce them to argue with each other and with the author's own views" (Morson and Emerson 257-58).

Before going on to analyze Roth's "arsenal of techniques" in achieving a polyphonic design, one more
aspect of the novel deserves to be discussed, though it digresses from the plot of Operation Shylock.

Author and Real-life People

In addition to the Dostoevskian techniques, Roth adopts yet another technique—of juxtaposing real-life persons and historically verifiable events. These events and persons act as a forceful commentary on the fictional events and structurally run parallel to the fictional plot. The major event, mentioned by the author in the Preface, is the trial of John Demjanjuk—alleged by the Israeli prosecution to be the notorious "Ivan the Terrible," the vicious guard of the Treblinka death camp during the Nazi era.

In Israel, Roth attends Demjanjuk's trial and is transfixed. Is he whom everyone says he is (Ivan the Terrible), or is he who he says he is? (the innocent car mechanic) Or is he both as made out by the prosecution? These questions that echo in Roth's mind are similar to what, according to Bakhtin, echoed in Dostoevsky's ears:

In every voice he [Dostoevsky] could hear two contending voices, in every expression a crack, and the readiness to go over immediately to another contradictory expression ... he perceived the profound ambiguity, even multiple ambiguity of every phenomenon. But none of these
contradictions ... became dialectical, they were never set in motion ... in an evolving sequence ... they were, rather spread out in one plane, as standing alongside or opposite one another. (Problems 30)

Can a man live two lives? Roth asks himself, first as the dreaded monster of Treblinka, then as the meek family man of Cleveland, Ohio. He can, he answers himself, as only recent history has shown. The German people, as a race, did live two lives simultaneously and "proved definitely to all the world" that one can have "two radically different personalities" at the same time. Pushing the same argument further, we can ask rhetorically why can't an author live two lives, be two persons at the same time.

Two days later, Roth again attends the trial which has now taken an unexpected turn, diminishing the possibility of ever possessing the truth about Demjan’uk. Roth presents in the novel, a verbatim report of the court proceedings, as indicated by him in "A Note to the Reader."

Eliahu Rosenberg was a prosecution witness. He was one among the seven to identify John Demjanjuk of Cleveland as Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka. Approximately of Demjanjuk's age, he had been a Jewish prisoner of the Nazi death camp in Treblinka. His job, as a "death commando," was to empty the gas chamber of corpses when the
gassing was over, and make it ready for the next consignment of victims. His job entailed carrying the bodies outside on stretchers, piling them up skilfully and incinerating them. In his daily routine of work, he met and worked with the Nazi guard (Ivan the Terrible) constantly. Hence his eyewitness testimony on the identity of Demjanjuk seemed unimpeachable.

A year after his testimony for the prosecution, he was now summoned by the defence for re-examination. He was questioned about a document just then discovered by the defence at the Warsaw Historical Institute. The document was a memoir, written by none other than the witness himself, soon after his escape from Treblinka after the fall of Germany. A couple of years after his escape from the Treblinka camp, some Poles had encouraged him to recount his story of the death camp. He complied with their wish, by spending two days writing down his memoir. It was later passed on to the appropriate institution for its historical usefulness.

Roth narrates all this background information because, in his memoirs written forty years ago, Rosenberg had reported the death of Ivan the Terrible, the death of the very man whom he had identified for the court just a year ago. On this serious contradiction of statements, Rosenberg was now recalled for re-examination. If the dead
can come back alive, Roth concludes, there can very well be a living double to his own self.

The other real life person in the novel is Aharon Appelfeld. The purpose of Roth's visit to Israel was to interview Appelfeld for *New York Times*. Appelfeld serves no function in the plot other than to tell us a story that illustrates "the uncontrollability of real things" and the impossibility of having "second-hand definitions" about others. This discussion leads Roth to his double: "I... was thinking about the man who wanted people to think that he was me--did he think that he was me as well?" (54).

The failure of the monologic, of assuming full knowledge of another person, of treating another person as an object rather than an independent subject, of presuming a surplus of knowledge about others, and the impossibility of possessing a ready-made, complete truth--not just in fiction but even in life--all these problems are posed by Roth in presenting real-life events and people.

Other than Demjanjuk and Appelfeld, Roth refers in the novel to a host of real-life persons from all periods of history and from all continents of the world. The improbable nature of the Philip-Pipik plot is counterposed by the introduction of dozens of persons who actually existed and who achieved renown. This is Roth's unique technique of juxtaposing fantastic, nonsensical and unbelievable elements of fiction with real-life,
historically verifiable events and persons who seem as fantastic, unbelievable and sometimes even nonsensical, though real. Philip Roth, the novelist, does not take sides or create a dialectic through a sequentially evolving synthesis. He achieves instead, through the independence of his characters, genuine polyphony.

Author and Plot

To ensure the independence and freedom of characters, Bakhtin identifies an arsenal of techniques that Dostoevsky deploys in his polyphonic novels. An attention to these techniques in Operation Shylock would reveal the nature and extent of their contribution to the polyphonic design of Roth. Bakhtin studies these techniques dating back from the genres of Socratic Dialogue, the Menippean satire and a whole range of the "realm of the seriocomic," all belonging to classical antiquity (Problems 106-07). These "unofficial" genres, per se, were not polyphonic, but it was Dostoevsky who combined them with the posing of ultimate questions, the testing of an idea, and a man of an idea— and created polyphony.

The most striking aspect about the structure of Operation Shylock is its adventure-plot of a picaresque type. Roth has totally rejected the plot of the biographical novel, or the novel of everyday social life. Read from the Bakhtinian perspective of polyphony, it
becomes evident that Roth's selection of plot-type is no accident and that it serves a very specific purpose in his polyphonic design.

The life of Dostoevsky's underground man, Bakhtin has observed, is absolutely devoid of any plot. A plotted life in which there are friends, brothers, parents, wives and in which the hero himself would be a brother, a son, or a husband ... defines the hero. This definition of the hero goes against the polyphonic principle which cannot be "fitted into the generic and plot-compositional forms of a biographical novel, a socio-psychological novel, a novel of everyday life or a family novel" (Problems 101). In other words, the plot of the biographical novel is not adequate to the character in a polyphonic novel, "for, such a plot relies wholly on the social and characterological definiteness of the hero" (Problems 101).

Instead, the polyphonic novels of Dostoevsky "are linked to the traditions of the European adventure novel." (Problems 102). The adventure hero serves the polyphonic design, because it is impossible to say who he is. He has no firm socially typical qualities out of which a stable image of his character, type or temperament might be composed. To the adventure hero anything can happen, he can become anything. He is not finalized and not predetermined by his image. The connections that he can establish, the events in which he can participate, are not predetermined by his character, nor by any social world.
In contrast, in a social, biographical, or psychological novel, relationship between characters is determined by ties—such as between father and son, husband and wife, lover and beloved and hence relationship of social class or family status form stable bases. "Contingency has no place here," laments Bakhtin (Problems 104). The adventure plot does not rely on already available and stable positions—family, social or biographical. As a plot, Bakhtin observes, it offers favourable material for the realization of Dostoevsky's artistic design.

Philip Roth, likewise, eschews the plot-driven world of the family, biographical, social novel. Not only does he exploit the genre of the adventure-novel, but also combines with it the genres of the espionage and detective thrillers, which are the contemporary variants of the adventure plot. They provide an extraordinary freedom and movement to characters. All that we know of the Other Roth's past is that he was a private detective and even that is reported by himself. He has no biographical past that would define him as a social being. In the account of Author Roth:

Little is known of his earlier life other than that, as a young man, he conscientiously set out to disassociate himself from any social or vocational role that might mark him as a Jew. His acolyte mistress has spoken of a mother who disciplined him
pitilessly as a small child, but otherwise his biography is a blank.... (240)

It is therefore impossible to say who he is. Moreover, the very idea of the double (psychological dimensions apart) is a characteristic element of espionage fiction, in which physical doubles and double agents are common. It speaks of Roth's artistic genius that he can make use of even the clichéd conventions of a genre in the service of his design.

It is also significant that Author Roth meets his double in a foreign land where both the Roths are cut off from all social, familial ties that would restrict or limit them. Narrator Roth, though a passive spectator to most of the goings-on, is himself free of all positions and ties that would restrict his actions and movement in a city such as Connecticut or London. Even though readers and some characters know Roth to be a novelist, he is not bound by any of his social or vocational roles that would have restricted him back home. The novelist very diligently makes it a point to mention that this time he was not staying in the Municipal Guest House where he stayed during his previous visits, but in the American Colony Hotel in a predominantly Arab area, where he would be incognito.

Roth's selection of an alien soil for the locale of action cannot be taken to be coincidental. To provide a specific instance, Roth does not visit his cousin Apter in Jerusalem. This, despite the fact that during all his
previous trips to Israel, Apter was among the first persons he would call on. Likewise, it is interesting that Roth's meetings with Appelfeld are brief and broken, even the interview with him is incomplete. Considering the fact that the sole purpose of his visit is to interview the Israeli novelist for New York Times, the brief meetings and the broken interview assume significance.

It is this extraordinary freedom that makes Author Roth's encounter not only with the double possible, but also with the double's sexy mistress and such unlikely encounters with Ziad, Smilesburger, David Supposnik and others; and under very unusual circumstances. Author Roth enjoys virtually all the freedom of the hero of the adventure novel. Living under no obligation, he visits a number of places—a court-room, a military court and the borderland settlement of Ramallah. He takes a car ride at midnight in the Negev desert, and undertakes an espionage mission to Athens and Turkey. In his own land he would not have had the time, possibility or freedom for such adventures and misadventures.

Like the two Roths, other characters in the novel exist without social or family commitments. With the exception of Ziad, no one else has a family. Even he is an elusive character about whom Roth is puzzled. Smilesburger, who says he is a retired jeweller, turns out to be a Mossad agent. David Supposnik, an antiquarian,
appears from nowhere in a hotel lobby, presents Roth two diaries and disappears. Though Wanda Jane says she is a nurse and narrates her past to Roth, she lives with the Other Roth in a hotel room and has no family. The only thing that defines her is that she is a recovering Anti-Semite.

Of the real people in the novel, we (and Roth) meet Appelfeld only as an interviewee, though in real-life he is a novelist of renown and a good friend of Philip Roth (Hillel Halkin verifies that while Appelfeld confirmed the interview reported by Roth, he denied other conversations attributed to him in Operation Shylock in which the two men supposedly discussed Roth's impersonator 45). In Operation Shylock, however, Roth does not even provide a glimpse into Appelfeld's house, friends or family. The other (supposed) real person, Roth's cousin Apter, is just a presence, as neither Roth nor the readers meet him in the novel. It is to be emphasized that these characters have no biography in the sense of something past and fully experienced.

In addition to the adventure plot, Roth, like Dostoevsky, has drawn from the traditions of Menippean satire. The Menippea, Bakhtin points out, is not fettered by any demands of external verisimilitude to life. The fact that the leading heroes of the Menippea are historical and legendary figures presents no obstacle. It is unmatched in its invention and use of the fantastic. In Operation
Shylock, the fact that the entire happenings are witnessed, or take place in the presence of Philip Roth, and in which Philip Roth himself takes part, poses no obstacle to the novelist. But, this extraordinary freedom of plot does not in itself create polyphony. It is when they are combined with philosophical questions, and ideological issues, as Roth does in his novel, and as Dostoevsky did in his fiction, that we hear polyphony.

Such unrestrained use of the fantastic and adventure also creates extraordinary situations—for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea, a discourse, a truth. To this end, the heroes are made to wander through unknown lands (Problems 114). The issue is, Bakhtin clarifies, the testing of an idea and of a truth and not the testing of a particular human character. For this purpose, a person is placed in extraordinary positions that explore him, provoke him, make him collide with other people under unusual and unexpected conditions. In Operation Shylock, this is precisely what happens. Extraordinary ideas, grave moral/philosophical questions such as Diasporism, anti-Semitism, Israeli terrorism, are posed. The very idea of the Jews as a monolithic race is challenged. For the first time in contemporary Jewish-American fiction, if not in the whole of Jewish literature, we see Jews in their diversity—Ashkenazis, Sephardics, Moroccans, assimilated urban Jews of America—all portrayed in their diversity and difference.
The combinations mentioned above are compounded by a moral-psychological experimentation. This is done in the polyphonic text by means of a representation of the unusual, abnormal, moral and psychic states of man: insanity, schizophrenia, unrestrained day dreaming, unusual dreams, passions bordering on madness and the like (Problems 116). Almost all these types of experimentations are made in Operation Shylock. Philip Roth himself reports how he suffered from a psychic breakdown induced by Halcion. He also reports very unusual dreams and on several occasions, we cannot decide whether what he is reporting as happening is dream or reality. During his late-night encounter with the Other Roth and then with Wanda Jane, some of the events reported are surreal. Narrator Roth himself wonders if all of it is happening. Prior to the encounter, he had gone without food, sleep or rest for twenty-four hours, in addition to going through harrowing experiences. Roth, like readers of the novel, wonders if a fuse had blown in his brain.

Characters under such circumstances, in the polyphonic novel, are not brought to a moment of sudden, epiphanic insight, but presented "on the threshold of a final decision, at a moment of crisis at an unfinalizable and unpredeterminable turning point for his soul" (Problems 61). Everyone, everything is in a state, not of being but of becoming. The Other Roth advocates Diasporism and a recovery programme for anti-Semitism, when he is on the
threshold. He knows that he is a terminal cancer patient and that the days of his life are numbered. The real-life person, Demjanjuk, the other powerful presence in Operation Shylock, is also on the threshold. Some fifteen years under trial, he is now in the last stages of a trial that most probably would mean the death sentence, but could go either way. 17

A characteristic feature of polyphonic fiction, Bakhtin notes, is that its action always occurs on the threshold. The interior spaces of a house, the comfort of the rooms and the hearth, spaces distant from boundaries and far from the threshold are never the sites of action. This is because in the comfort of the hospitable interior space, far from the threshold, people live a biographical life in biographical time. They are born, grow, mature, marry, procreate and die. In contrast, on the threshold, the only time is crisis time. Very remarkably, almost the entire events and turning points in the plot of Operation Shylock take place on the threshold, or its equivalent:

1. To begin with, the two Roths live in a hotel room and not in a house. They are free to vacate, shift or come and go as they like. This is in fact what they do from the beginning till the end of the novel and spend very little time or meet people in their homes.
2. Author Roth's first face-to-face meeting with his double takes place in a hotel lobby, where the former was temporarily taking shelter from a sudden rain.

3. Subsequently, the Roths have lunch together at a restaurant.

4. Wanda Jane first meets Author Roth at a table in the garden of the American Colony Hotel.

5. She tells Author Roth that she found out the truth about herself in a hospital ward.

6. Smilesburger first meets Author Roth in a café to present him the million-dollar cheque. This meeting eventually leads Author Roth to the undertaking of the espionage mission.

7. Author Roth first meets Ziad in a vegetable market.

8. Author Roth meets Kamil, the Palestinian activist and poet-lawyer in a military court-room.

9. Author Roth meets Ziad's family on the "other side of Ramallah," a borderland, to discuss "ultimate questions" on Israeli terrorism.

10. Author Roth is attacked by Israeli soldiers and runs into Gal Metzler on a highway.

11. Smilesburger makes the extraordinary proposal of the espionage operation to Author Roth in an empty class-room. A class-room is really not a room but a kind of passage, the equivalent of a threshold.

12. Author Roth's interview with Appelfeld takes place in a café.
13. David Supposnik, an antiquarian, meets Author Roth in a hotel lobby and presents Klinghoffer's diaries, which are of great publishing value.

14. The Arab Colony Hotel where Author Roth was staying is on Israel-Jordan border. While its façade is situated in Israeli territory, the back of the hotel faces Jordanian territory.

15. Author Roth confesses everything about the double and his own counter-impersonation to George Ziad while riding in a taxi. It is also in the taxi that Author Roth reaches the conclusion that Ziad is a PLO spy.

16. In keeping with such "thresholds," even in the novel's Epilogue, years after his return from Israel to the US, we never see Roth in his house, with friends or in society. Smilesburger reaches Connecticut from Jerusalem to meet Roth and discuss the issue of the publication of Operation Shylock. This meeting takes place in a restaurant.

17. Many events take place in the novel which have no relation to the plot, but which facilitates the presence of independent voices. These events often bring out the contradictions, the unresolvability of "real things." One very powerful example of such incidents in the novel, described below, takes place in the parking lot:

During a recess from the tension-charged Demjanjuk trial, Author Roth comes out of the courtroom when he hears a commotion in the parking lot and rushes there. The cause of
the commotion is a Catholic priest of Ukrainian origin. What Author Roth sees there is unbelievable. In the heart of the Jewish land, just outside the tension-filled courtroom where a Christian was under trial for murdering a million Jews—here was a Catholic priest zestfully celebrating the thousandth year of the introduction of Christianity in Ukraine. He was distributing pamphlets and delivering a sermon. A local Jew, a seven-foot giant, would not allow him to go on. Physically, he lifts the priest and drops him down, but the priest is undaunted. He goes on extolling the virtues of Ukrainian Orthodox Christianity. "Wasn't he in his right mind, either?" Author Roth exclaims (305).

The sermon is, however, terminated when the giant Jew grabs the sheaf of pamphlets from the Ukrainian and hurls them in the air. The other bystanders yell and boo. Roth, worried about the safety of the Christian in the hands of a Jewish mob just out of the sensitive Demjanjuk trial, goes near and admonishes him: "why, in all of this world, do you come here with those pamphlets on a day like this one?" (307). Taking the reprimand for a genuine query, the priest answers earnestly: "To save Jews." He sincerely believes that the cause of the two-thousand-year suffering of the Jews was for their sin of crucifying Christ. He believes now that if Demjanjuk is convicted to death, Jews would again be severely punished by God.
This incident is a remarkable example of how opposites come together, sense each other, and clash in the polyphonic novel. This juxtaposition of "various points of view on a specific subject" which Bakhtin calls syncrisis, (Problems 110) can take place only at such thresholds, of which the courtroom parking lot is an example.

In addition to the "thresholds" listed above, Philip Roth makes use of the popular genre of the international thriller, a phenomenon of the contemporary jet-age. In these thrillers, people are never confined to their native land or environment, for they belong to the jet-set. Always on foreign soil, they enjoy an immunity from the categories of national/regional stereotypes. In Operation Shylock whose locale of action is Israel, not a single character is a native Israeli Jew. (Appelfeld and Apter are Israeli Jews, but, as pointed out earlier, they are virtually non-existent as characters.)

It is not merely the fictional characters, but even the real-life persons are those cut off from their own land:

1. John Demjanjuk is a classic example. A Ukranian (Russia) by birth, he was arrested in Germany during the World War. He is accused of having been the gas chamber operator in Treblinka (Poland), of then migrating to Ohio (U.S.A) and is now under trial in Jerusalem
(Israel). He is connected to five countries spread across the width of the globe.

2. Demjanjuk's defence team is a mixed collection of nationalities. Sheftel belongs to, of all nations, Israel, and in addition, is a Jew. Chumak is a Canadian, Gill an American.

Not only people, but a range of events from the dim, historic past, to current newspaper headlines, all come together in Operation Shylock.

This does not mean that Roth tries to trace the evolution of a people, or an idea over vast periods of history. Nothing could be farther from Roth's purpose. Nor does it mean that Roth's intention is to create a dialectic synthesis. Far from it, all these intersect and come together in a single moment, "in the unity of the event." Like the Dostoevskian polyphonic text, Roth depicts "simultaneity and co-existence," in a spatial rather than in a temporal mode. What Bakhtin perceived in Dostoevsky can be perceived in Roth's mode of visualization in their simultaneity, to juxtapose and counterpose them dramatically; and not stretch them out into an evolving sequence. For him, to get one's bearings on the world meant to conceive all its contents as simultaneous, and to guess at their inter-relationships in the cross-section of a single moment.
This stubborn urge to see everything as co-existing, to perceive and show all things side by side and simultaneous, as if they existed in space and not in time, leads Dostoevsky to dramatize, in space, even internal contradictions and internal stages in the development of a single person--forcing a character to converse with his own double, with the devil, with his alter ego, with his own caricature. (Problems 28)

Bakhtin's description of simultaneity and spatial vision can be fittingly applied to Operation Shylock. Even the Rothian double becomes a part of the author's vision of simultaneity and co-existence. In this roller-coaster of a novel, so much happens, so many people come together across historical and geographical borders—all in a time-span of seventy two hours. In the simultaneity of his vision, Roth leaves no time for characters to evolve, to grow, to mature, to learn from experience. They are maximally, wholly free.

As a chief expression of this "simultaneity" in real life, Bakhtin finds the newspaper, "a living reflection of the contradictions of contemporary society in the cross-section of a single day, where the most diverse and contradictory material is laid out, extensively, side by side and one side against the other" (Problems 30). Very interestingly, Roth too finds in the newspaper an expression of this contradiction. One morning, in the hotel lobby
Author Roth picks up the morning paper and notices three datelines.

Wednesday, January 27, 1988 (Christian Calendar)
Shevat 8, 5748 (Hebrew "")
Jomada Tani 9, 1408 (Mohammedan "")

printed in a row beneath the logo of Jerusalem Post.

This lack of agreement over the year and date is a fundamental contradiction, Author Roth feels, and exclaims to himself: "Agreement on nothing ... dissension over everything, beginning with where to begin" (266). The difference (between the years 5748 and 1408) is not a matter of decades or even centuries but four millennia. The newspaper, thus, is a repository of the cacophony of voices, it is a veritable Tower of Babel out of which no single voice or solitary language can emerge. This is the Manichean sense of opposition and struggle that Bakhtin sees at the heart of existence.

This vision of simultaneous co-existence is constantly present in the novel. That is why the Other Roth discredits Author Roth whenever the latter tries to "compartmentalize my impostor" (103), that is, to explain the phenomenon of the Other Roth. On one occasion, while talking to his double, Author Roth says he can never accept the presence of the double. The Other Roth points out that it is because of the narrowness of Author Roth's outlook. The double remarks to Author Roth: "You, from your career perspective, may think it's horrible that there are two of
us and that you are not unique. From my Jewish perspective, I have to say I think it's horrible that only two are left" (80).

In the simultaneity of this vision, nothing is fixed or stable, not even doctrines and philosophies. Everything is in the process of becoming. Against traditional, stable notions of Jewish suffering, their exile, their dispersal, Operation Shylock counterposes its opposite, the burden of Zionism--Jewish aggression, violence and repression. Israel, as a Jewish state, is portrayed as a dictatorial regime that spies, eavesdrops, and obliterates dissension. Author Roth's rhetoric (impersonating the Other Roth) in favour of Diasporism is a case in point. The idea of becoming is illustrated when the Other Roth says:

You go back to the crossing point and cross back the other way. Zionism went back too far, that's what went wrong with Zionism. Zionism went back to the crossing point of the dispersion--Diasporism goes back to the crossing point of Zionism. (158)

This principle of ever becoming is at work also at the level of the plot in Operation Shylock. To begin with, the double who is unlike Roth in every respect except physical resemblance, tries to pass for the original Roth. Later on, arriving in Israel, the original goes about pretending to be the other.

From the foregoing analysis, we can see that the adventure plot, action on the threshold, turning points--and
moments of crisis—all these provide meeting points for heterogeneous people and the clash of heterogeneous ideas and views. In addition, these extraordinary situations create opportunities for syncrisis and anacrisis, so that questions are provoked, ideas are juxtaposed and passed through several mouths.

Besides fulfilling the functions mentioned above, the adventure novel (and the world of espionage) guarantees "narrative interest, thus facilitating the reader's difficult journey through the labyrinth of philosophical theories, images and human relationships all packed into a single novel" (Problems 103).

One more source for the polyphonic text, (other than the Menippean satire) is carnivalized literature. The polyphonic author embeds in his novels heterogeneous literary genres. In modern times, Bakhtin observes, carnival has become a literary and generic tradition. Carnival, its forms and symbols, have seeped into many literary genres. From carnivalization of literature there is a shift to the "literaturization" of carnival. On this tendency, in his article, Ken Hirschkop points out that "... the carnival of our times might mix genres from mass and high culture in ways that deconstruct the prestige of the latter" (774). This is what Philip Roth does in Operation Shylock when he draws from a number of genres of mass culture to mix them with the novel of ideas. John Updike, in his review, calls
this novel an international thriller, a psychological thriller and something of a medical thriller. Solotaroff acclaims *Operation Shylock* as the first international contemporary Jewish novel and a brilliant novel of ideas.

Foremost among the genres of "mass culture," Philip Roth has made use of the genre of espionage fiction. The idea of the double, a decoy, is one of the mainstays of the spy novel. The double, in spy fiction, also means a double-agent: the agent of one country is recruited by a rival power and becomes a source of intelligence information to this rival nation. One more ingredient of spy fiction is "disinformation." Intelligence agencies of a country go to extraordinary lengths not just to prevent information leaks, but deliberately "leak" all kinds of wrong information. This is both to put the enemy on the wrong track and to deny him access to true information. In the parlance of spy fiction this is called "Disinformation." When Author Roth narrates to Ziad how he spoke in support of Diasporism, not only impersonating the double, but advocating the cause of the double, Ziad is amazed by Author Roth's ingenuity. Full of admiration he tells Author Roth, "You're the Dostoevsky of Disinformation" (283). This is a telling comment on Philip Roth, the author of *Operation Shylock*, who has combined Dostoevskian polyphony with the labyrinths of post-war espionage fiction.

The genre of the spy fiction also suits another of Roth's purposes. In the world of espionage, truth is
never readymade, nor can it be apprehended by simple means. In a world of double-agents, triple-agents, counter-espionage, and moles, one can never be sure of the truths ascertained. It could all be disinformation. One can never be sure of an espionage agent, who he is or what he is. The title of the novel clearly indicates that it is a code name for some kind of an intelligence or military operation. It should be mentioned here that Roth was not interested in writing a spy-thriller. He merely makes use of the plot-conventions of this genre. It is very significant in this context that he states to have deleted one whole chapter (Chapter 11) of Operation Shylock, which narrates the mission itself that he undertook.

Besides the plot of espionage fiction, there are also elements of detective fiction and action thriller in the novel. Author Roth returns in a taxi late at night from Ziad's house in Ramallah through the lonely desert highway. An eerie ride, it is beset with dangers both of Palestinian attacks as well as Israeli security raids. Roth combines terror and laughter in this episode of the novel.

The love affair between the terminal cancer patient the Other Roth and his buxom nurse, Wanda Jane "Jinx" Possesski, is a spoof of popular romance. It parodies the clichés of sentimental, romantic fiction. There is also a bit of pornography, even hard-porn, with all the lasciviousness of the Restoration Comedy of Manners.
Operation Shylock contains elements of the international thriller. The ambit of the novel's action covers many continents, and characters hail from different parts of Europe, the Middle East, the U.S.A., and Russia.

The novel can be read as a political thriller, whose action takes place against the background of Israeli-Arab hostility. Not only the historical and social dimensions, but also the political aspects of Israeli policy on the Palestine issue are discussed by Ziad, the Other Roth and other characters. The novel makes use of the elements of the psychological fiction, mainly in the appearance of the double. Psychoanalytic explanations of the doppelganger are provided, along with medical explanations of hallucinations induced by Halcion side-effects.

One more important feature of Operation Shylock is confession. "A Confession" is the subtitle of Operation Shylock. At some point of crisis, or under provocative anacrisis, characters confess to their past, their sins, their desires. The Other Roth confesses to Author Roth about his past, and vice versa, Wanda Jane confesses to Author Roth. Author Roth confesses to Ziad. But, in the spirit of carnivalized fiction, this is a confession without shame. In "A Note to the Reader," the last line of the novel, Philip Roth gives the entire novel a strange twist by informing readers, "This confession is false."
More than all this, as the critic Theodore Solotaroff points out, *Operation Shylock* is a brilliant novel of ideas. Extraordinary ideas--Diasporism, Zionism, anti-Semitism--are discussed and in the process, tested. But these ideas are not presented as abstract philosophy. The ideas are presented as someone's and the man carrying the idea is as much a part of his idea.

In all the ways mentioned above, Philip Roth combines the adventure-plot with other genres foreign to it, such as the confessional novel. As in the Menippean genres pointed out by Bakhtin, there is a strong combination in *Operation Shylock* "of absolutely heterogeneous and incompatible elements: philosophical dialogue, adventure and fantasticality, slum naturalism, utopia, and so forth" (*Problems* 134). Again, it is to be emphasized that Roth is not a mere stytlizer, but that these elements offered him favourable material for the realization of his artistic design.

**Dialogic and Carnivalesque elements**

The carnivalized genres, and a dialogic discourse that help in the polyphonic design, are marked by double-voicedness, thereby rejecting stylistic unity. To this end, Bakhtin observes that they make use of incorporated genres. These are--letters, found manuscripts, retold dialogues, parodies on high genres, and parodically
reinterpreted citations (Problems 108). In this respect, Operation Shylock is a compendium of incorporated genres. Everywhere, the text is dialogized by these inserted genres, thus relativizing the author's voice.

Carnival images are present throughout Operation Shylock, though they are not dominant as in Portnoy's Complaint or The Great American Novel. Images of sex, abundance, food, copulation, death, and a defiance of death, punctuate the novel.

The use of nicknames, discussed in the previous chapter, is a carnival element. Roth nicknames his double Moishe Pipik which, in Yiddish, means 'Moses Bellybutton.' Other names--Smilesburger, Supposnik, Jinx Possessski--do not sound like real names and can only be nicknames.

Regarding the language of the novel, the presence of independent, unmerged voices in it makes the novel heteroglot--multivoiced. But it must be mentioned that the kind of dialogic discourse, the hybrid construction within the units of utterance as found in My Life as a Man, is by and large absent in Operation Shylock. On the other hand, Roth puts to telling effect, another kind of dialogue, present everywhere in the novel, providing much comedy.

It is in "Discourse in Life, Discourse in Art," that Bakhtin/Volosinov discusses the extra-verbal context that determines meaning in utterances. Bakhtin makes a
valid distinction that while sentences are repeatable, utterances are not. Morson and Emerson have elaborated on this idea: Two verbally identical utterances can never mean the same thing, because the context is never the same, the speaker or the listener is different. No matter how many features they share, two utterances can never share everything. Each is unique, and each therefore means something different even when they are verbally same (126).

In this context, Bakhtin says that the meaning of an utterance is always determined by a context that is non-verbal. Hence, meaning in actual speech depends on a network of relations between the addressee and the topic of utterance. Bakhtin illustrates this idea by an example. First he gives the verbal equivalent of a close-up camera shot. Two people are sitting in a room, one of them utters the word "Well!". On its own the word is meaningless. Bakhtin then provides the verbal equivalent of a long-distance shot. Given the facts that the room is a waiting-hall in a railway station, that it is Russia, that it is the month of May, that both people have observed through the window that it is snowing outside, the word 'well' gets charged with meaning. Surprise, annoyance that even by May spring has not arrived, is conveyed by uttering one word. Still more important is the intonation of the speaker in pronouncing the word "Well!" It can convey much information that would be unavailable without the intonation. The shared knowledge between the addressee and
the addresse (in this case, of the Russian weather) plays a major part in determining meaning. If all these potentials are realized, the word "Well" would be paraphrased as follows: "How stubborn the winter is, it won't go away, even though it is high time" (Paraphrased by David Lodge 78).

Philip Roth makes use of these factors throughout Operation Shylock, to provide comedy. In all these exchanges of conversation, the author puts to use the pitfalls, misunderstandings, shared meanings, satiric-ironic intents, that we commonly deploy in our everyday conversation.

The polyphony of Operation Shylock ensures the freedom of characters with "equally valid" voices, by relativizing the author's voice which becomes one more voice in the text. It does not exercise authorial control or suppress the other voices. Roth weaves this issue into the very fabric of the story, when all his attempts "to define" the Other Roth fail:

Better for real things to be uncontrollable, better for one's life to be indecipherable and intellectually impenetrable than to attempt to make causal sense of what is unknown ... Better, I thought that the events of these three days should remain incomprehensible to me forever than to posit, as I had been doing, a conspiracy of foreign intelligence agents who are determined to control my mind. We've all heard that one before. (290)
Thus Author Roth (and his creator Philip Roth) expresses the need, even the desirability of relinquishing authorial control, for such relinquishing alone can guarantee the humanness of the other. As Author Roth says elsewhere in *Operation Shylock*: "Pipik was protean, a hundred different things. Very human in that regard."

*Operation Shylock* sets out initially to recount an espionage mission, whose purpose was to gather intelligence for Israel about "Jewish anti-Zionist elements threatening the security of Israel" (358). Contrary to his (ostensible) purpose, in writing this novel, Roth speaks of a great many things, except the intelligence mission itself. Mesmerized by the presence of his own created beings, Author Roth succumbs to

the enchantment of these alluringly effervescent characters with their deluge of dangerous talk, spinning inside the whirlpool of their contradictory views—and without the least control over the narrative Ping-Pong in which I appear as the little white ball. (358)

These words read like a text-book illustration of the polyphonic author who is all the time "surprised" by the humanness of his own characters. Instead of wielding authority over them under his monologic discourse, he becomes helpless in a whirlpool of contradictory views. This is the Copernican revolution which the polyphonic
author brings about, by rebelling against a Ptolemaic universe of which the earth assumes to be the centre (Problems 49). In Roth's own metaphor, he is reduced to a tiny ping-pong ball tossed everywhere by the players, and not a player who tries to wield control over the ball. The once-mighty earth and the once-mighty author are both reduced to a tiny speck in the corner of a grand universe that is everywhere studded with bright stars.

As one reviewer pointed out, "Philip Roth wishes to create an unauthored 'plot' which dramatizes the uncontrollability of real things" (Cheyette 19). Everywhere in Operation Shylock, a specific sum total of ideas, and thoughts are passed through several unmerged voices, sounding differently in each. The object of authorial aspiration is not towards these ideas in themselves as something neutral or identical with itself. The object is precisely the passing of a theme, an idea, through many mouths and varied voices.

The present study of Operation Shylock demonstrates its plurality of voices in open-ended dialogue. The essential characteristics of the polyphonic text, summarized by Morson and Emerson, are everywhere witnessed in Operation Shylock:

the polyphonic author is supremely active in conceptualizing whole personalities, setting up
open-ended dialogues, and provoking characters to speak. (251)

[To end] polyphonically and openly ... invites us to draw dotted lines to a future, unresolved continuation that the narrator "promises." (253)

As a polyphonic work has a plot without a structure, so it also has a conclusion in which--genuinely, not just ostensibly--nothing is concluded. (254)

Each character has his own word, and neither the author nor any character can turn that word into a mere object or character trait.

The presence of many heroes, each of whom speaks in an autonomous and "relatively independent" voice "breaks down the monologic unity of the work (without, of course, violating artistic unity of a new and nonmonologic type)." (254)

[Nor does the polyphonic author] construct a dialectical system in which all the characters participate as preliminary thesis or antithesis. (255)

All this, of course, is not to deny that

... characters in a polyphonic work have been created by the author, but once they come into being, they partially escape his control and prevent him from knowing in advance how they will answer him (240).
The quotation above summarizes the characteristic features of polyphonic novel, while, the observation of Lynne Pearce, given below, answers charges of being a "loose, baggy monster" and "fluid pudding," that may be levelled against the seeming chaos and welter of Operation Shylock:

[The] ... representation of multiple voices and multiple points of view leads, inevitably to a different structuring of the polyphonic novel: a linear development of plot and character culminating in exposition and closure, is replaced by texts which are far more contradictory and indeterminate.... from the perspective of the 'monologic European novel,' the polyphonic novel may appear chaotic but Bakhtin claims for them the 'higher unity' of the polyphonic novel. [The polyphonic novels] disappoint traditional expectations of unity and closure in their resistance to notions of growth, evolution and dialectic. (45)
NOTES

1 David Lodge's article "Lawrence, Dostoevsky, Bakhtin" in *After Bakhtin* seems to be the only article to focus on polyphonic elements in fiction criticism.

2 In Nikolai Gogol's short story "The Nose," the protagonist finds his nose missing, which later appears on the street in the guise of a military gentleman.

3 In *The Double*, Golyadkin encounters his double who infuriates and outwits the original.

4 The idea of a "false confession," which is really a contradiction in terms, has been on Roth's mind nearly a decade before the publication of *Operation Shylock*. In a 1984 interview with Hermione Lee, Roth said: "We know about people who walk into the police station and confess to crimes they haven't committed. Well, the false confession appeals to writers, too. Novelists are ever interested in what happens to other people, and like liars and conmen everywhere, will pretend that something dramatic or awful or hair-raising or splendid that happened to someone else actually happened to them" (225).

5 In the interview quoted above, Roth speaks of other instances of novelists appearing as characters in their own works: "Victor Gombrowicz [the Polish novelist] in *Pornographia* introduces himself as a character using his own name. Konwicki, another Pole in *The Polish Complex* and *A Minor Apocalypse* works close to the gap between the reader and the narrative by introducing 'Konwicki' as the central character. He strengthens the illusion that the novel is true—and not to be discounted as 'fiction'—by impersonating himself" (223-24).

6 All subsequent references to *Operation Shylock* will be indicated by page number in parentheses.

7 Author Roth's definition of Diasporism: "a program that seeks to resettle all Israeli-Jews of European origin back in those countries where they or their families were residents before the outbreak of the Second World War and thereby to avert a 'second Holocaust'" (Operation Shylock 104).

In the Other Roth's words, "Diasporism seeks to promote the dispersion of the Jews in the West, particularly, the resettlement of Israeli Jews of European background in the European countries where there were sizable Jewish populations before World War II (Operation Shylock 44)."
Zionism is a movement for the reestablishment and development of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel. It was started in 1879 by Theodor Herzl and others in Basel, Switzerland. It advocated the idea of founding a nation for Jews, who had been driven to different parts of the world in the Jewish Diaspora. It culminated in the birth of Palestine and the nation of Israel. After two thousand years, the Jews had a homeland of their own. Zionism is a fundamental principle, a highly cherished ideal, and a reality jealously guarded by the Jews.

Heine, 1796-1856: Born in Germany, the poet whose international literary reputation was established by the Buch der Lieder (The Book of Songs 1827).

Aleichem 1859-1916: The popular Yiddish author, born in Ukraine, published some forty volumes of novels and plays. Known as the Jewish Mark Twain in the U.S, he is one of the greatest humorists in world literature.

These ideas are mentioned by Roth in The Counterlife through the characters Shuki Elchanan and Jimmy Ben-Joseph, but elaborated only in Operation Shylock with all the force of an ideological manifesto.

We are given two fictional characters calling themselves Philip Roth. In subsequent references throughout this chapter, wherever it becomes necessary to distinguish between the two, I refer to the protagonist-cum-first-person-narrator of Operation Shylock as "Author Roth". His double in the novel, also named Philip Roth and nicknamed Moishe Pipik, I refer to as "the Other Roth". While referring specifically to the novelist and the author of Operation Shylock, I use the name "Philip Roth" or simply "the author".

In an extended discussion like this chapter, I choose these nomenclatures, their purpose being to make the distinction clear without at the same time appearing cumbersome or confusing.

The novelist himself, as well as other characters in the novel, use "Philip Roth" to denote both the protagonist and his double, but I use "Philip Roth" only while referring to the flesh-and-blood novelist. I have capitalized the 'A' in 'Author Roth' and the 'O' in 'the Other Roth' to indicate that both are characters and proper names. D.M. Thomas, in his review of Operation Shylock calls them Philip Roth I and Philip Roth II. While this makes the distinction clear, I feel that in an extended discussion, it would be clumsy repetition, ad infinitum.

Besides, Philip Roth I and Philip Roth II would indicate a privileging, or in Bakhtin's terms, the monologizing, of
the original and the relativizing of the double, which is against the very polyphonic spirit of the text. In fact, the text often raises the question, which of the two is the authentic Roth.

Harold Bloom, in his discussion, refers to the author of Operation Shylock as Roth, the central character in the novel as "Philip Roth", and the impostor as "Moishe Pipik", the name assigned to the double by the narrator.

13 Of course, in the nineties, with the boom and easy access to video cameras, tapes, players and colour television sets, it is now possible for almost anyone to see what he looks like to others in the course of his common everyday activities both at home as well as in the outside world. One can evaluate one's own walk, gesture, manner and demeanour, as we do of other persons in real life.

14 It should be mentioned here that in Operation Shylock, the narrative does not follow any causal sequence. Contradictory reports of what is happening; real and imagined incidents as well as people; dream, surrealism, hallucinations placed alongside historically verifiable events and people who actually lived; all these are juxtaposed and counterposed. It is for the purpose of analysis that the welter and chaos of Operation Shylock are unravelled and discussed in separate segments in this chapter.

15 The word refers to White Israeli Jews who hailed from East European countries before settling down in Israel.

16 Jews of Spanish-Portuguese ancestry.

17 The interesting events of Demjanjuk's trial have been prominently reported by New York Times between 1988 and 1993. When Operation Shylock was published, the Israeli court was deliberating the appeal made by Demjanjuk against the conviction that he was "Ivan the Terrible." Subsequently, in 1993, the Supreme Court acquitted him, on "reasonable doubt" whether he was the sadistic Nazi guard at the Treblinka concentration camp during World War II. The ordeal of Demjanjuk which began 17 years previously in the Cleveland district court, came to an end in 1994, but the question whether he was the dreaded guard as he was accused to be, or not, remains unanswered.