CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The American novel since World War II, particularly since the 60s, is a massive body of literature made up of works that are anything but homogenous. Marked by great vitality and inventiveness in confronting the diversity and paradoxes of the American experience, it has taken multifarious forms. Making brilliant utilization of the protean nature of the genre itself, the novelists of this period have exhibited astonishing creative abilities in their vigorous exploration of the reality around them.

Philip Roth (b 1933) is a noteworthy member of this group. He has shown an imaginative response not only to the socio-cultural events and upheavals of the postwar decades but also to the innovations and techniques that mark the contemporary, postmodern era. In the 60s Roth was recognized as a "Jewish-American" novelist. By the 70s he became the third entity in the Bellow-Malamud-Roth triad. "By the 1990s [he has] achieved a substantial body of fiction that easily stands on its own merits" (Hallo 1). An enormous output of critical commentary available on the variety and range of his works attests to Roth's significant position in American fiction. Many book-length works on his achievement have come out, but so far no attempt has been made at a rigorous analysis of his fiction from the perspectives of recent critical theory. The ideas of
Mikhail Bakhtin promise a rewarding critical exercise for yielding fresh insights into Roth's fictional achievement.

Overview of critical literature on Roth

When critical articles on Philip Roth first appeared in the sixties, they emphasized his Jewishness both in praise and in reprobation. In the first book-length study of Roth's achievement, John N. McDaniel recognizes Roth as a major American writer, his analysis unclouded by ethnic considerations. In his work, The Fiction of Philip Roth (1974), McDaniel states that the emphasis on Jewishness by earlier critics does "not derive from an analysis of his fiction," though Jewishness is McDaniel's point of departure for answering charges on Roth of anti-Semitism. He provides a succinct summary of the "Jewish" criticism on Roth (22).

McDaniel finds Roth "... a writer whose artistic intentions are 'moral,' whose artistic method is 'realistic,' and whose central artistic concern is with man in society" (Preface xi). He finds Roth's fiction unique in showing a shift from the activist-hero toward the victim-hero. This critic is concerned with hero-types with an emphasis on the "hard core of social realism" in Roth (6). By way of afterthought he admits that Roth shows a willingness for experimentation "despite the consistency of his artistic vision" (Preface xi). Roth's contemporaries of the fifties and sixties--Burroughs, Hawkes, Pynchon and Bellow--who are unable to visualize contemporary American
society in realistic terms, resort to fantasy, dream-world and the like in search of what Ihab Hassan has called "Radical Innocence." McDaniel traces a reversal of direction in Roth's fiction from the activist to the absurdist (victim) mode, attributing this shift to Roth's "artistic inclinations towards social realism" (98). In this shift, he discovers that Roth is unlike his contemporaries who "celebrate the self that is excluded from society" (99). McDaniel is among the first critics to suggest "that Roth and his fiction do not yield easily to Jewish-oriented theses about Jewish American writers ..." and that "His reliance on Jewish materials and Jewish values is qualified by an essentially secular and skeptical perspective ..." (29). He also sees a shift in Roth towards satire which is employed in order to "demystify" the personality of the individual and that of American culture in the sixties.

Like McDaniel, Sanford Pinsker, in *The Comedy that* "Hoits" (1975) covers the range of Roth's fiction up to *My Life as a Man* (1974), but unlike McDaniel, he does not formulate a thesis or draw any conclusions from his study to comment on the novelist's achievement. He places the value of Philip Roth's work "somewhere between the lavish praise and the lingering sense of disappointment it has generated." He finds that Roth "is a writer of brilliant talents all too often brilliantly wasted" (2). Suggesting a correspondence
between the public dimensions of Roth's scathing satire and the private realm of his self-abasement ..." he concludes that "Philip Roth is a writer out to 'shed his sickness' in the discipline and pattern-making of art" (3). Roth's heroes try to drown emotions into the vulgarity of a Jewish-American joke and hence Pinsker's title for his book.¹ He sees that the central concern of Roth's fiction is "Discovering a technique to not only deal with hoit but to transcend its crippling power..." (3). An important aspect of this study is the literary parallels and echoes of masters of fiction--Fitzgerald, Joyce, Lawrence, and Roth's contemporary, Bernard Malamud--found in the individual works of Roth. Pinsker concedes the "genuine talent" of Roth but complains that "the talent has not yet quite managed to fulfill itself" (28).

In Philip Roth (1978), Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., takes up his study using McDaniel's conclusions as his point of departure. He points out, like McDaniel, that an extra-literary emphasis by earlier critics has failed to do justice to Roth's literary contribution. He also disagrees with views as exemplified in Pinsker, that Roth's works, especially the later ones, are "regrettable self-indulgences distinguished solely by their author's enormous inventive talent" (Preface n.p.). Rodgers examines Roth on purely literary terms without taking into consideration the ethnic dimensions or autobiographical elements. Instead of approaching Roth through hero-types or plot, his analysis
addresses the style, forms, and techniques employed—from a Jamesian realism to the outrageous, ribald Southwestern humour and the tall tale of the 19th century, and to the nightclub and media comedians of the 1960s. Rodgers also takes into account the literary influences of the Modernist masters on Roth's writings. For the purpose of analysis, he traces three distinct phases in the novelist's career, which are chronological and "differentiated by their dominant technical strategies" (Preface n.p.). He views Roth as an "American realist who has attempted to expand and adapt the realistic mode..." and whose sole concern all through his career has been "... finding subjects and techniques which will reveal the effect of the interpenetration of reality and fantasy in the lives of his representative Americans" (Preface n.p.).

Philip Roth (1981), by Judith Paterson Jones and Guinevera Nance, bases its insights on a close, textual reading of the works under study. The authors point out that in Roth's early fiction is to be found the major themes and concerns of this author throughout his career. In his early fiction, Roth rejects authoritarian societal definitions of the self, of Jewishness, of moral righteousness, of "normality" in general. These definitions, not merely created by society but quite often created by our own self-deceiving notions and concepts, are both conditioned and oppressive. Thus the early heroes of Roth
either rebel against such conventions in open defiance or reject/question all that is moral, normal, authoritarian from a conventional point of view. This assessment of Jones and Nance is made with convincing evidence provided by a close scrutiny of the early texts to conclude that Roth's chief concern is "individual determination versus social and familial coerciveness" (51).

The second section of the book, which deals with the outrageous, comic, satiric second phase of Roth, continues to treat these fictions in the same serious terms as his earlier works. This section does not address the absurdist aspects so dominant in this phase of Roth's work. Hence, their analysis in the second section is not as convincing as in the first. This section merely explores the underlying thematic concerns, ignoring dominant aspects of Roth's technical innovation, his use of obscenity and sex, and his comic genius. Jones and Nance conclude that while in Roth's early phase, it is the family, society and such external factors which give rise to a moral conflict in the protagonist, in the later phase this conflict arises from within the protagonist himself. The dichotomy is described by the authors as the "scholar-rake." The second section does not adjust its focus or shift its perspective which had been so successful in the first section.

The monologic approach does not always succeed, whether in creative writing or in critical analysis. This
insightful study is severely limited by its imposing seriousness (even where it does not exist). For example, Our Gang (1971) and The Great American Novel (1973) are relegated to a brief final chapter as social/political satires, as mere indictments and not as works of art. The concluding statement of Jones and Nance, that one of Roth's chief virtues is "a consistent method of presentation" (163), serves to sum up the severe limitation of this critical work. Jones and Nance also serve as a point of departure for the present study for examining the second phase of Roth in its own light, instead of as a "consistent" continuation of the early Roth. Their brilliant first section also justifies beginning the present study from the second, comic phase of Roth, with Portnoy's Complaint (1969) as its takeoff point.

Hermione Lee's Philip Roth (1982) deals with his major fictional concerns, subjects and themes. The chapterwise studies are rather sketchy and they attempt to underscore Roth's themes from the entire range of his fiction. The ideas put forward by the author in each chapter are well illustrated by drawing from Roth's works, but the sketchiness of this slender volume prevents it from providing an assessment of the individual works. The critical nuggets are not enough to make its reader comprehend the wholeness or the patterns to be discovered in individual works. This thematic study, however, brings out the tensions found in Roth's works. Lee's thesis is that
themes provide the technique and that his characters' problems run parallel to Roth's own difficulties as a writer.

In *Understanding Philip Roth* (1990) by Baumgarten and Gottfried, the authors have perceptively capsulized in the introduction and concluding chapters, the methods, the subjects and the concerns underlying Roth's fictional canon. However, their analysis of individual novels go little beyond providing synopses, punctuated by elaborate commentaries. As announced by the General Editor, this volume remains a mere guide, a companion for students and good non-academic readers (Preface vii). This work does not tackle the larger issues raised in Roth's fiction or elaborate on matters of technical strategy, style and variety in Roth. As in Jones and Nance, the phase of Roth's comic inventiveness is discussed in the same terms as his early, serious works. A notable feature of this book is its analysis of Roth's *The Counterlife* (1986), in which the authors refer to the "pluralist, heteroglossic universe of discourse," rather than "one dominant account" (204). Among the books on Roth's fiction, only in this work are the ideas of Bakhtin mentioned, briefly however, and critically applied.

In *Philip Roth Revisited* (1992), the most recent book-length work on Roth, Jay L. Halio takes exception to the critical grouping of Roth with Bellow and Malamud since
his fiction "easily stands on its own merits" (1). For the first time in Roth criticism, this volume, as declared by its author, "is an attempt to define and to demonstrate Roth's abilities as a specifically comic writer, one whose wit and humor are as varied and effective as they are funny and illuminating" (1). Halio is against the "pigeonholing" of Roth, as "He [Roth] rarely repeats himself ...[and] does not depend on a single voice or set of voices" (1). While earlier critics imposed seriousness even in Roth's comic works, Halio takes a diametrically opposite stand of discovering comic/farcical elements in his serious, "Jamesian" novels like Letting Go (1962) and When She Was Good (1967). Halio concludes that "Roth experiments not only with technique but also with constantly shifting perspectives on his major subject" (203).

The foregoing review of literature on Roth does not include comparative studies like The Fiction of Philip Roth and John Updike (1965) by George J. Searles. Similarly, criticism in chapters and sections of books, as for example, The New Novel in America: The Kafkan Mode in Contemporary Fiction (1970) by Helen Weinberg or The Schlemiel as Modern Hero (1971) by Ruth Wisse have not been touched upon. Two anthologies of criticism on Roth, those edited by i. Sanford Pinsker (1982), and ii. Harold Bloom (1986) have been left out as they are collections of articles by different critics in different periodicals.
Milbauer and Watson's *Reading Philip Roth* (1988) contains articles by different critics especially written for this volume. However, articles that relate to the central thesis of this work are discussed in the relevant chapters of this dissertation.

Even in a brief review as the foregoing, it is thus clear that Roth has not been paid a rigorous critical attention that he deserves. An analysis of his fiction in the light of certain recent critical discoveries is sure to yield rewarding results. Bakhtin's ideas on the novel promises to be a rich area for the exploration and mapping of Roth's fictional output.

**Bakhtin's ideas on the novel**

The concepts of the Russian literary theorist and critic Mikhail Bakhtin have provided new tools of analysis for the study of fiction in the post-structuralist context. The increasing influence and relevance of Bakhtin is borne out by Michael Holquist's observation in 1990 that he is now among the three most frequently cited authors in manuscripts submitted to *PMLA* (*Dialogism* 195). The Bakhtinian approach is now a well-founded, mature, critically rewarding enterprise.

Bakhtin's theories on the novel and on language address every critical question raised by literary criticism/theory since the New Criticism. Bakhtin wrote
most of his works in the twenties and thirties "without material or intellectual support." It is remarkable that he has probed every question that has been confounding structuralist, post-structuralist theorists, decades before such questions were even spelt out or enunciated. To New Criticism, his ideas advocate a close study of the text without going into the author's biography or relying on impressionistic/academic criticism based on taste and judgement. To structuralists, Bakhtin stresses on seeing the novel as a system of its languages, even though he is opposed to Saussurean linguistics which according to him sees language as static and dead. To deconstructionists, he offers a cheerful note that the meaning of a text is orchestrated in its play of voices. To Marxist criticism, his theories provide a social, culture-based view of language and literature. Literature and language are seen as an arena of struggle, the linguistic struggle of discourses, which Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia." To recent New Historicists and Cultural Materialists, Bakhtin emphasizes the importance of subcultures and "unofficial" cultures which are ever opposed to the dominant, "official" culture. In language, as in society, he sees a constant struggle between unifying, authoritarian, centripetal forces of power and the disunifying, rebellious, centrifugal forces. This Manichean struggle in language is most tellingly assimilated and incorporated by the novel form, according to him.
The "dialogic," the "carnivalesque" and the "polyphonic" are Bakhtin's key concepts. The "dialogic" is central to his thinking in general and his novel theory in particular. In "Discourse in the Novel" (1934-35) Bakhtin points out the inadequacy of traditional stylistics when applied to the novel because "they totally overlooked the authentic nature of artistic prose" (The Dialogic Imagination 260). It will not do to analyze linguistically the style of the novel by scanning passages of direct, authorial narration or the language of the narrator or that of the chief character who is considered to be the author's spokesperson in the novel. Bakhtin agrees that stylistically it is possible to break down compositional units in the novel which may comprise of 1) direct literary-artistic narration, 2) stylization of oral everyday narration, 3) various forms of semiliterary narration such as the diary, letters etc., 4) forms of non-artistic authorial speech such as moral, philosophical, scientific statements and 5) the individualized speech of characters (Dialogic 262). But what characterizes the style of the novel is that these "heterogenous stylistic unities, upon entering the novel, combine to form a structured artistic system and are subordinated to the higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole...." In other words, "... the style of a novel is to be found in its combination of styles, the language of the novel is a system of its languages" (Dialogic 262). More important, says Bakhtin, is that the
novel orchestrates all its themes by means of "...a diversity of social speech types and a diversity of individual voices ..." (Dialogic 262). The links and interrelationships between utterances and languages are always dialogized. It is through these dialogic relationships that the theme of the novel moves.

Bakhtin's theory of novelistic discourse rests on the dialogic orientation of the word among other words. As opposed to the direct word understood by traditional stylistics, between the "living word" and its object, between the word and its speaker, there exists an environment of other alien words about the same object. This environment is often difficult to penetrate, by the "living word". Besides, the object (at which the word is directed) itself is enveloped in a mist of alien words that have already been spoken about it. "The word, directed towards its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group" (Dialogic 276).

All this linguistic activity crucially shapes discourse in the novel. Apart from this internal dialogism inherent in the word "The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself
in the answer's direction" (280). In artistic prose, this
dialogization is at the very basis of the way in which the
word conceives its object. Thus Bakhtin claims that there
are no "neutral" words, no "no one's" words (293).

The prose writer/novelist does not try to strip
away the intention of others from the language employed in
his novel, but utilizes them to serve his own intentions. He
can do this refracting of his intentions primarily by means
of stylization, parody, *skaz* 4 and doubly-oriented discourse
(or what is now termed Free Indirect Discourse). The
novelist's words are presented with "intonational quotation
marks" The author is able to remain outside the language
and still work on it. "It is as if the author has no
language of his own" (311).

This heteroglossic, dialogic potential of
language, when incorporated into the novel, "is another's
speech in another's language" serving to express authorial
intentions but in a refracted way (324). Such speech,
characteristic of the novel, makes it a *double-voiced
discourse*. It serves two speakers, expresses two
intentions: the direct intention of the character speaking
and the refracted intention of the author. "In such
discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two
expressions," which are on the whole dialogically
interrelated. "Double-voiced discourse is always internally
dialogized" and the most striking examples of this are
comic, ironic, parodic discourse (324).
Just as Bakhtin's concept of "dialogue" is opposed to the authoritarian word, he posits "carnival" laughter as opposed to official culture. His idea of the "carnivalesque" is evolved from his study of Dostoevsky and later fully elaborated in his doctoral dissertation on François Rabelais. Carnival, with its elements of the grotesque, born out of the culture of laughter and belonging to the folk and the marketplace, serves the function of "unmasking" and disclosing of the unvarnished truth under the veil of false claims and arbitrary ranks," comments Pomorska in her foreword to Rabelais and His World (x). Grotesque realism is a "degradation," that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract: it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (Rabelais 19-20). Here, degradation is not negative, it is a means of bringing down to the earth which is both a grave and a womb. "Old age is pregnant, death is gestation, all that is limited, narrowly characterized and completed is thrust into the lower stratum of the body, for recasting and a new birth" (Rabelais 52-53). "To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body." This is a hurling not into the void of nonexistence and destruction but into "the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth takes place. Grotesque realism knows no other level: it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always
conceiving" (21). This wholesome aspect of the grotesque was severed by the 18th century Enlightenment and Reason, which saw the grotesque only in its negative aspects. In the Romantic Age, the grotesque elements were revived but to enter a purely subjective, terrifying phase. It was no more a gay, triumphant celebration. Laughter itself was reduced to satire, parody, irony, all of which are seen by Bakhtin as "reduced laughter." The grotesque tradition peculiar to the marketplace on the one hand, and the academic literary tradition on the other, parted ways, never to come together. The grotesque's link with the essential aspects of being, with the organic system of popular-festive images has been broken. "Obscenity has become narrowly sexual, isolated, individual, and has no place in the new official system of philosophy and imagery" (Rabelais 109).

The Saturnalian festivities in Rome and the carnival life of the Middle Ages were aspects of folk culture which sought a release, a freedom from all that is official, authoritarian, serious. Official seriousness quite often is a mask that conceals pious pretensions and false authorities. The carnival aspect of folk culture seeks a release and a freedom from such attitudes that have become deadened by habit. Carnival tries to secure this freedom by celebrating and valorizing all that is low, in the process subverting all that is high and holy. These aspects of carnival entered literature itself and "carnivalized" literature, and the supreme master of the
"carnivalesque," according to Bakhtin, is François Rabelais. In the Middle Ages, Christianity had imposed a narrow restriction in the name of all that is high and holy, and carnival acted as a safety valve that temporarily freed people from such restrictions. During the Renaissance, Rabelais destroyed this monologic seriousness by carnivalizing literature itself. In a carnival, all that is low is celebrated. In human images, this led to the "grotesque realism" with its emphasis on the "bodily lower stratum" with the essential functions of eating, copulation, elimination. Here the womb is seen as a grave as well as an origin of fertility. Death itself is seen as giving birth to new life. All these reversals are not employed as mere satire, in a negative rejection or as a corrective to what is remediable. "Carnivalesque" seeks to destroy what is irremediable by an unabashed celebration of all that is low, thus securing liberation in the process of celebration. Freedom from fear is secured by the power of laughter. Laughter, according to Bakhtin, is the only means of freedom from all that has become narrowly serious, authoritarian and official. Bakhtin points out that everywhere in Rabelais's Gargantua and Pantagruel, all that is base, obscene and crude, by carnival laughter is transformed into something wholesome, regenerative. The high and the low, the serious and the mocking, death and regeneration are seen as the two sides of a coin that can never be separated. In this carnival vision, there is
nothing uniformly high or holy that does not include the low and the profane. Such an understanding of carnival takes it beyond what is merely ironical, satirical, farcical, even though carnival includes all these elements. Whereas satire merely negates what it attacks, hoping to redeem the remediable; carnival seeks to destroy what is irremediable, by a celebration of all that is low, which is seen as a positive force. It is gay celebration, and a laughter from below that marks carnival from other forms of literary ridicule.

While the concepts of the dialogic and the carnivalesque have been widely applied in literary research, mainly in the study of fiction, Bakhtin's idea of polyphony has not received as much critical attention. The advent of New Criticism with its manifesto of the autonomy of the text, followed by the structuralist and post-structuralist era with the Barthesian obituary of the author, has caused the disappearance of the author from literary criticism if not from the literary text. Against these critical currents, Bakhtin's concept of polyphony has revived the author, for polyphony designates a special position of the author in the text created by him.

It is in his study of Dostoevsky that Mikhail Bakhtin defines the polyphonic novel as one in which the author presents *"A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully*
valid voices" (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 6). Thanks to recent Bakhtin scholarship, the essential nature of the polyphonic novel has not only been identified but critical understanding of the term has also been sharpened. Such sharpened definitions have made polyphony an effective critical tool for analysing certain kinds of fiction. These sharpened definitions become relevant for two reasons.

1. Earlier commentaries on Bakhtin like those of Clark and Holquist have assumed that Bakhtin's terms 'polyphony' and 'dialogism' are interchangeable: "The phenomenon that Bakhtin calls 'polyphony' is simply another term for 'dialogism'" (Mikhail Bakhtin 242).

2. Bakhtin himself has often made use of the two terms as if they are synonymous. Almost every Bakhtin scholar has pointed out that Bakhtin is never consistent in the use of terms coined by himself and that he often uses the same term in different contexts to signify different things.

Morson and Emerson, in their exhaustive study, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, clarify the term by stating that primarily "polyphony" has to do with the position of the author in the text. In a polyphonic work, authorial viewpoint differs in kind and method of expression from its homophonic (monologic) counterparts. Bakhtin observes that the author of polyphonic fiction "Dostoevsky creates, not voiceless slaves... but free people capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing.
with him and even of rebelling against him." (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 6). Lynne Pearce, in her recent work Reading Dialogics, also clarifies this point when she explains that "the Bakhtinian definition of the polyphonic text... demands absolute equality among its voices, even as it necessitates the absence of a transcendent authorial presence" (147).

Thus, in polyphonic fiction, the author's voice remains simply one more voice in the text. Neither his voice nor his world-view/ideology is allowed to dominate over those of the characters created by him. Characters in polyphonic fiction are not presented as objects. They are neither finished nor whole. Instead, they are presented as independent subjects who are ever capable of surprising their creator. In other words, characters are not a mere "it" but a full-fledged "thou."

Even though these characters are the author's creation, he does not hold any "essential authorial surplus" regarding his characters. They do not answer to the question "Who is he?"; towards such characters in the polyphonic novel the author can only pose the question "Who are you?" Such an extraordinarily independent existence of the characters reduces the author's voice and presence in the text. This results in a radical restructuring of the author's position in the text created by him. Bakhtin calls this phenomenon "polyphony," a term borrowed from music,
signifying the simultaneous existence of different voices in which attention is paid to the quality of each voice rather than to the resulting harmony.

Seen under the Bakhtinian lens, the evolution of Philip Roth's career can be traced through four stages. His early fiction is predominantly "monologic," while the next phase is marked by the "carnival" element and "dialogic" discourse. More recently, Roth is predominantly "polyphonic." In these works, he confounds all distinction between fact and fiction, the real and the imaginary, or to use his own favourite dichotomy-- between "the written and the unwritten worlds."

Roth's early fiction

The early writings of Roth are briefly discussed below to show that they are predominantly monologic but do contain the germ of the carnivalesque and dialogic that abound in his later works.

_ Goodbye, Columbus (1959)_ , his first book, earned him instant acclaim at the age of twenty six when it won both the National Book Award (1960) and the Daroff Award (1959) given by the Jewish Book Council. Some of the short stories in this collection were included in several Best Short Story selections, besides winning a short-story award. There were also fierce attacks and vehement condemnations
from Jewish critics and other quarters. Earlier generation of Jewish writers like Henry Roth were concerned with the problems of immigration and assimilation. Roth's own older contemporaries Bellow and Malamud would not speak ill of Jews. After the Nazi Holocaust, the magnitude of the suffering undergone by the Jewish race made it taboo to portray them in bad light. It is exactly because of the taboo that Roth went ahead and did this. In the process, he earned instant fame as well as severe reprobation. Instead of seeing assimilated, suburban American Jews (Roth drew from his childhood suburban neighbourhood in Newark, New Jersey) as the offspring of Holocaust victims to be revered for what the race had suffered, Roth portrayed them as selfish and materialistic, bigoted in religious faith while promiscuous in personal life. Commenting on this "satiric bent," Louis Harap observes that it "is serious, acute, and often funny, an early manifestation of Roth's comic vein, which was to be so marked as his work progressed" (135).

Roth's heroes in "Goodbye, Columbus," the title novella and the five short stories in the collection, are sensitive young men who defy and rebel against the above mentioned attitudes of the "normal," "moderate" Jews.

The protagonist in "Goodbye, Columbus," Neil Klugman, a poor but intelligent Jew, provides a typical case study of the defiant new breed of young Jews Roth portrays
in his early work. His love for Brenda Patimkin, the daughter of affluent upper-class Jews, forms the background for Roth's evocation of their material values and his brilliant satirical attack on them. Events are narrated in first person by the protagonist whose voice is consistent. The other voices—those of the members of the Patimkin family—are brought under the predominant voice and the world-view of the narrator Neil.

The rich surplus and the conspicuous consumption of suburban affluence are seen by Roth and his protagonist as negative values thus becoming the target of the author's satire. Baumgarten concludes that "Goodbye, Columbus" is a comic satire that dramatizes the clash between Jewish immigrant past and American present, lower and upper middle class (21). Carnival element is also presented at the wedding of Brenda's brother Ron when Leo Patimkin, Ron's uncle, regales Neil with accounts of his sexual life. Baumgarten points out that the "ritual moment of the gathering of the clan serves to reveal the link between ecstatic sex and Jewish celebration (39). These carnival moments in the text are however held in rein by the serious, satiric intentions of the author. In the words of Halio, "The Patimkin household thus comes in for the kind of satire that has since become a rich source for Roth's wit and humor—and his trademark, as viewed by many critics" (15). Thus, instead of being celebratory, Roth's tone is
censorious when he describes Mr. Patimkin as "tall, strong, ungrammatical, and a ferocious eater" (Goodbye 21).

If "Goodbye, Columbus" ridicules the American dream for its material vulgarity and possessive greed, the next short story "The Conversion of the Jews" takes on "narrow and sterile religiosity" and challenges the sanctity of the authoritarian word. In this most anthologized of Roth's short pieces, Ozzie Freedman, the thirteen-year-old Jewish boy, brings the bigoted rabbi Binder and the whole congregation literally to their knees. He then makes them accept that God "can make a child without intercourse" (Goodbye 157) that "they believed in Jesus Christ" and makes the rabbi "promise me you'll never hit anybody about God" (Goodbye 158).

This short story is rich in carnival potential--of carnival uncrowning in particular. The end, however, an instance of "farcical poetic justice" (Rodgers 22), is neat and finished. The gaiety and the freedom that carnival provides is not sustained. Instead there is to be seen the moral earnestness of a twenty-three-year-old writer (Jones and Nance 28).

From religious authoritarianism, Roth turns to the false sentiment of Jewish solidarity in the face of fellow-suffering in "Defender of the Faith," the next short-story. Roth exposes the pseudo-racial feelings through the character of a war-weary veteran, Nathan Marx, the sergeant
in charge of trainees in an army camp. The story ridicules Jews like Sergeant Sheldon Grossbart, who try to win small favours from a superior officer by appealing to their common racial background. However, at the end of the tale, Roth shows that such tactics do not succeed really, when Sergeant Marx refuses to yield to a "merely sentimental Jewish solidarity." In fact, Roth hints that Marx could be the real defender of the faith by rising above narrow racial sentiments. Here again, as Kazin has observed, Roth portrays the "Jew as individual, not the individual as Jew" (259).

It is the Jewish myths of family values that Roth turns to in "Epstein." In this story, the image of the Jewish father as an ideal, responsible head of family is comically debunked. Lou Epstein, a normal, respectable, fifty-nine year old man, begins an adulterous love affair with a buxom neighbouring widow. His old hag of a wife discovers a red rash in his crotch, assumes it to be venereal disease, and accuses him of adultery. Later, in flagrante delicto with his lover, he has a heart attack and his adultery is exposed. On the way to hospital, the doctor assures Epstein's wife that it is merely a skin rash which can be easily cured "so it'll never come back" (Goodbye 230).
This short-story in particular invited severe hostility from the Jewish community. Jones and Nance report that Roth was charged with anti-Semitism and condemned for presenting a negative picture of Jews in America. He responded to these charges in his essay "Writing About Jews," by pointing out that the moralist and apologist on the one hand, and the artist on the other, are distinctly different. That literature is not moralism was Roth's retort. He took the stand that it is not the purpose of fiction "to affirm the principles and beliefs that everybody seems to hold" but rather to free our feelings from societal restrictions so that we may respond to imaginative experience (Reading Myself and Others 151). If an older generation of writers had insisted, in Bernard Malamud's phrase, that "All men are Jews!" Roth's vision was that "all Jews were also men" (qtd. in Pinsker 4).

For all the insistence of Roth that literature is "beyond simple moral categorizing" (Reading Myself 151), Roth's monologic attack itself tends to become another kind of "moral categorizing." Here too, the rich, comic, carnival possibilities of the story are severely curbed by its satiric thrust. Nevertheless, as Rodgers has noted, in "Epstein" for the first time, Roth makes use of sexual behaviour "as both a physical manifestation of his hero's psychological problems and a comic possibility" (23). Philip Roth fully utilizes this comic possibility in his

After sexual abnormality, Philip Roth launches his attack on the very myths of normality, rationality and conformity in "Eli, the Fanatic." An extreme insistence on the normal and the rational could turn out to be as fanatic as blind faith and orthodoxy. This is what the word 'fanatic' indicates in the title of the story. The secularized, assimilated, suburban Jews of America become Roth's target this time in a story that is set in 1948, with the postwar cultural phenomena of suburbanization and its "numbing secularism." The clash presented in this story is between a Jewish community with its excessive commitment to "secularism" and "progress," and an individual orthodox Jew, running a school, (yeshivah) with its traditional practices. Roth makes use of a mysterious "greenie" (recent emigrant) as a symbol of that tradition, and, in particular, the long black coat and the Talmudic hat worn by the greenie as a motif. The message for a compromise sent through Eli Peck, the lawyer, and its acceptance by the greenie reveal the capacity of a community to be normal and flexible. However, the story shows that the mores and morals of the community can completely corrupt the individual. The madness that grips the lawyer and makes him run all over Woodenton wearing the greenie's old garb is an indication of "the blackness" that had enveloped his soul.
Eli is the representative of a people whose fanaticism for commonsense, moderation, and the law are far more absurd than the absurdities of traditional and orthodox faith. Eli, sensitive by nature, who is actually in sympathy with Tsuref, the greenie, is made to threaten him. Unable to withstand the pressures of normality and standardization, he buckles under, and suffers a fit of insanity. Eli himself is no fanatic, but belongs to a community of Jews fanatical about "secularization."

"Goodbye, Columbus" and each of the five short stories are technically and thematically connected. Commenting on the thematic unity of these stories, Dan Isaac remarks that in the stories of Goodbye, Columbus "Two value systems clash and a sympathetic character makes a significant choice" (188) but here the clash is resolved in favour of a "sympathetic character." While the dialogic fiction is open-ended, in Goodbye, Columbus there is one "significant choice" that is made by the character, making a closed ending.

Sanford Pinsker, taking exception to the general acclaim received by "Goodbye, Columbus," points out that neat sarcasms born out of "moral earnestness" reduce this story to "ersatz psychology" and Roth's vision to the "merely glib." Coincidentally, Pinsker's comment reinforces Bakhtin's assertion that the serious side of an object is just one side and not the whole truth about it. Even the
names given to characters in *Goodbye, Columbus* are neatly allegorical; Klugman (in Hebrew, meaning 'clever fellow' or 'sad fellow'), Freedman and Binder, Grossbart, Tsuref (meaning 'trouble' in Hebrew). The name Woodenton, stands for the wooden, rigid, unfeeling nature of the suburban citizens. In the second phase too, Roth uses names which are allegorical... but there they are used for farcical, comic, carnivalistic purposes.

Thus all the elements of the carnivalesque, to which Roth gives uninhibited expression in the second phase, are to be found in *Goodbye, Columbus* in a rudimentary form. It is perhaps his serious intentions and earnestness in trying to make a point, that stifle the author's anarchic impulses and presses the impulses to the service of satire. The fearless carnival laughter discovered by Bakhtin in fiction is absent in *Goodbye, Columbus*.

It is probably the barrage of charges of anti-Semitism and self-hatred levelled against *Goodbye, Columbus* that made Roth produce two novels that are "uniformly dismal." He has always shown a keen awareness of critical response to his work in his interviews and articles written in defence of his creative works. Letting Go (1962), Roth's first full-length novel, and When She Was Good (1967) are written with their author in full control of point of view, and with remarkable restraint. There is no place here for laughter, not even satiric, or derisive laughter.
But given Roth's natural talent for comedy, *Letting Go* abounds in farce, but it is "deadly farce," the type that is born out of bitterness and which is also an expression of this bitterness.

As its title indicates, Roth's first novel is about the dire need in life of "letting go" and the protagonist's inability to do so. The implication of the title is, in the words of Jones and Nance, that "one finds freedom and selfhood in relinquishing claims upon others" and "the destructiveness that can be done through 'holding on'" (38). If the tone of *Goodbye, Columbus* was marked by "moral earnestness," it is "moral complexity" that informs the relationships of characters in *Letting Go*.

The complexities of human relationships are demonstrated in *Letting Go* by two separate but inter-woven narratives. Gabe Wallach, who is at the centre of both narratives, is a rich, assimilated Jew from New York, son of a prosperous dentist, a Professor of English at the University of Chicago.

The keynote of the novel is struck in its very beginning, with a letter. It is from Gabe's dying mother who has realized that she has been the cause of all unhappiness in their family; in her desire to be "very decent" and in "Doing Good." But "doing good" can, and often is, motivated by a desire to exert control. Roth's own perspective in this novel, and in several others to
follow, can be summed up in this death-bed confessional from Mrs. Wallach:

Since I was a little girl I always wanted to be Very Decent to People. Other little girls wanted to be pianists and nurses. They were less dissembling. I was clever, I picked a virtue early and hung on to it. I was always doing things for another's good. The rest of my life I could push and pull at people with a clear conscience. All I want to say now is that I don't want to say anything. I want to give up the prerogative allowed normal dying people. Why I am writing is to say that I have no instructions.

The novel, which opened with a letter, also ends with one, written by Gabe Wallach, in which he acknowledges the insufficiencies of his character. The entire narrative of 630 pages runs between these two letters. It is concerned with how Gabe tries to interfere with other people's lives while avoiding intrusion of others in his own.

Gabe's response to his mother's letter is his vow to "do no violence to human life, not to another's, and not to my own" (Letting Go 3). This ostensibly noble aim has disastrous consequences for Gabe. He has misconstrued his mother's message. As a result, he recoils from a loving relationship with his father because he equates intimacy with a surrender of the self. For the same reason, he is
unable to sustain a meaningful relationship with Martha Regganhart who offers intimacy without manipulative demands.

At the same time, and for the same reason, he entangles himself into the disaster-ridden life of Paul and Libby Herz. He tries to run their life for them by trying to extricate them from their dismal life. He is unable to "let go" of them. Gabe himself is aware of this propensity when he recognizes that "toward those for whom I felt no strong sentiment, I gravitated; where sentiment existed, I ran" (30).

Gabe's attempts to help the couple in various ways turn him, in a sense, into a "mad crusader," especially when he tries to arrange for them an adoption of the illegitimate child of a young mother. This attempt ends in a violent confrontation in which he threatens to kill the father of this child. The trauma of his self-imposed crusade leads him to a total emotional collapse. After a scene that excels in Roth's "deadly farce," he flees to London to recover from his breakdown, "letting go" of the Herzes, to evaluate his past and perhaps to begin anew. The novel ends with his letter from London to Libby Herz.

A number of episodes in the novel are instances of the author's potential for a full and free play of voices and are enumerated in detail by Halio (45-56). But this diverse and comic potential is suppressed by the author's seriousness of treatment and concern. Roth admits he was
"transfixed by [Henry] James's linguistic tact and moral scrupulosity" (Reading Myself and Others 82) when he was writing this novel.

Stanley Edgar Hyman reports on the "clinical leadenness" of the description of the Herzes' life that would sink even "the most buoyant novel" (38). The dismal aspect of the story is discussed thoroughly also in "The Gloom of Philip Roth" by Norman Podhoretz (236-43) who concludes that the effect of all this "is finally to make us lose all patience with these people and their nasty little woes" (239). This impatience is caused because the kind of in-depth exploration that Roth takes up of the characters is stifling. John Gross puts it succinctly when he comments that it "is a book with a thousand wisecracks and scarcely a single joke" (41). Gabe, in the novel, becomes "an avatar of Roth himself." Bakhtin would call this the failure of monologic seriousness.

In Roth's first extended fiction, he expands and makes complex the theme of the individual versus social and familial forces, introduced in the earlier short works. But the satiric tone and the sense of outrage turns to unrelieved seriousness. However, the comic genius of the novelist is present here, like the tip of an iceberg, in the episodes of "deadly farce," which struggles and surfaces later in Portnoy's Complaint.
Whereas Roth was concerned with characters being good in *Goodbye, Columbus* and focused on doing good in *Lettine Go*, he deals with the disastrous consequences of both in his next novel *When She Was Good* (1967). In this novel's setting and background he has allowed himself to "let go" of "Jewish concerns," for this is Roth's only fiction (besides *The Great American Novel*) whose characters are non-Jews and whose setting is the Mid-West. Roth has modelled this work on the modernist and naturalistic masters. A saga that covers five generations over a period of sixty years, it is the history of a Mid-Western family "from the pioneer days of the 1890s to the Cold War era of the fifties" (Rodgers 64).

The very opening sentence declares the aim of Willard Carrol, the patriarchal family-head in the novel, as well as the concerns of his creator Roth: "Not to be rich, not to be famous, not to be mighty, not even to be happy, but to be civilized—that was the dream of his life" (3).

The pressures of the family and being good, the assertion of the individual which means being "horrid," are examined by Roth with "deadly seriousness." The consequences of doing good examined with "deadly seriousness" earlier in *Lettine Go* and the assertion of the self examined with "sheer playfulness" later in *Portnoy's Complaint*—both become the central concerns of *When She Was Good* which is also chronologically wedged between these two works.
The traditional, patriarchal notion of the male as protector and the female as the protected has disastrous consequences for the heroine (who is really the anti-heroine), Lucy Nelson. Willard Carrol, Lucy's grandfather, believes that he can protect his family members if only they rely on him and relinquish their own will. All his well-meaning attempts end up in tragedy not only for his daughter and son-in-law, but also for the succeeding generation of their daughter and her husband.

Early in his childhood, (in the 1890s), Willard Carrol sees his infant sister retarded as a consequence of fever and his parents' insensitivity. From that moment he is possessed with an obsession for establishing a "civilized" family. Leaving his native town, Iron City, he settles down in the city of Liberty Center. The irony of his choice, implied by the names of the cities, is what the novel is about.

Possessed by his ideals, "Will" gets a wife and a job, a daughter and a house but his ideal of freedom succeeds only in creating a "tyranny of love" (Jones and Nance 56). He takes up the role of protector because he sees others as unable to protect themselves. He thus tries to run the lives of his daughter Myra and her husband Duane Whitey and his own wife Berta. He wants to be "Very Decent to people" by assuming all responsibility for them. His love smothers his own thinking which refuses to see them as
individuals but only as mere extensions of his own self. Only Lucy Nelson, his granddaughter, challenges his self-constructed image of himself as protector. When her father (Duane Whitey) misbehaves drunkenly with her mother, she calls the police instead of her grandfather Willard. Willard feels indignant because in a "civilized" family, he thinks only he has the right to act.

Lucy's attempts to extricate herself from the constrictions of the family leads her on to sexual involvement and marriage with Roy Bassart. There is a steady decline in Lucy's mental make-up: from seduction to marriage, from marriage to separation and from separation to suicide. Jones and Nance point out that it is "her exceedingly rigid view of reality" which makes Lucy see everything to be absolutely true, or absolutely false (60). What needs to be added to this observation is that it is not only Lucy's rigidity but her creator's rigidity of presentation that makes the novel oppressive and claustrophobic. Imitating her mother's way of dealing with her (mother's) husband, Lucy takes up the responsibility of making Bassart into a man. She wants Roy to fulfil her conception of a man, yet she wants to be the "director of a family of dependent weaklings." This makes Lucy both victim and villain.

It is this double-bind that leads her on to a schizoid state. When the reality of her destructiveness to
her husband and child dawns on her, Lucy "lets go" into schizophrenic escape. In her hallucinatory dreams, she repeatedly asks the priest, Father Damrosch, "Why can't people be good?" and the Catholic priest answers, "The world is imperfect" (When She Was Good 289).

When at last she realizes that her father is human and therefore innocent and forgivable, her own death becomes inevitable. She is frozen into rigidity, literally and figuratively.

Referring to the "awesome naturalistic power" of this novel, Rodgers points out similarities to Norris, Crane, Dreiser, Sinclair— all masters of naturalism (66). He commends Roth's achievement for his "choice of language and narrative viewpoint." Using a melodramatic framework and retelling "even in the banal language of the characters themselves," Roth manages to make all of the popular American clichés about morality, rectitude, family life and marriage, law and order, and male/female relationships tangible factors in the lives of his characters, observes Rodgers (66). For all his linguistic dexterity, which is his forte, it is Roth's oppressive vision and his moral earnestness that sustains the gloom of When She Was Good. It is the lack of double-voicedness, the lack of dialogic discourse that monologizes When She Was Good.

It is Roth's own obsession with obsessive figures like Lucy Nelson and Gabe Wallach that makes him in his
early work stifle his characters' voices. When his obsession is seen by himself as something funny, it leads him straight on to the carnivalesque of the second phase. When the shortcoming of this obsession is realized by himself Roth is able to "let go" of it.

While commenting on Roth's world and its people in *When She Was Good*, Jonathan Baumbach points out that it is "without texture." According to him, "Roth catches the rhythms of his characters' speech, the precise gestures that identify them for us ... But not ... what makes them human" (47). This comment is very relevant when seen in the light of Bakhtin's dictum that the mere presence of voices alone cannot make a novel polyphonic or dialogic, and also accounts for the fact that "deadly seriousness" by itself cannot make the work a success. "The conception of the novel," continues Baumbach, "is much more compelling than the full fact of its experience" (47). So much so, that he wants the novel to get away from its author, to violate at least for a moment, the logic imposed on it from without, because "It succeeds without life" (48). It is the dominant presence of the author which takes away the richness and the texture of the work as well as the life of its characters.

Martin Buber, who was an influence on Bakhtin, makes a radical distinction between two types of relationship among human beings. One is the "I-it" relationship, in which one treats another person as an
object—something whole, finished and dead. The other relationship is the "I-Thou" relationship, which takes into account the other person's living, changeable nature and treats him as an individual subject—open, alive and unfinished. It is a relation of reciprocity and mutuality.

What makes Roth's early works monologic is their author's "I-it" relationship with his characters, in which he treats his characters as finished, whole, dead. Lucy Nelson, comments Gindin, "is not only a character ... but the focal metaphor of the American middle class tightness and repression" (357). This observation can be extended to Roth's novel itself, as a metaphor for the "tightness and repression" of all that is serious, and one-sided.

The possible reason for this kind of seriousness has been attributed by Saul Bellow in his "Some Notes on Recent American Fiction." While the works of novelists of the first-half of this century are marked by a tone of bitterness, "lamenting the passing of a more stable and beautiful age demolished by the barbarous intrusion of an industrial and metropolitan society, writers like Roth, writing in the second half of the century, have simply 'inherited' this bitterness to which they themselves have not established clear title." This "unearned bitterness" makes the "writer automatically scorn contemporary life. He bottles its stinks artistically. But, seemingly, he does not need to study it" (62).
All the attributes of monologism, "a clearly recognized voice, a firmly held point of view, a sense of continuous control of the materials" (Donoghue 118)—mark Roth's early fiction. The present study, therefore, begins from the mid-career of Roth providing an analysis of Portnoy's Complaint (1969) as carnival in the following chapter. The gay celebration and freedom from fear which Bakhtin sees in the carnival are, however, reduced and what results in Portnoy may be called "bitter carnival." All such reservations are set aside and Roth gives full vent to carnival energy in The Great American Novel (1973) which is examined in Chapter III. Whereas Portnoy struggles with feelings of guilt and fear, The Great American Novel is free of all fear in its attack on "normalcy" and the "official version of reality." The untrammeled celebration of the grotesque body in The Great American Novel is scrutinized in this chapter.

Two works of Roth belonging to this phase of his career—Our Gang (1971) and The Breast (1972)—are not included in the present study. Despite the presence of farcical, obscene elements, Our Gang remains a satire on President Nixon. It lacks both in celebration and in ambivalence, what it gains in prescience. Besides, unlike carnival, which to Bakhtin is a "pageant without footlights," Our Gang is a negation of individual phenomenon. Likewise, in The Breast, "having chosen a story-line that looks ideally suited for his taste for outrageous
sexual farce [Roth] has sidestepped the opportunity and instead written a work of high seriousness" (Crews 65). These words of praise also indicate the limitation of this work from the point of view of carnival. Carnival transcends both satire and seriousness as the novels discussed in chapters II and III would demonstrate. The Professor of Desire (1977), written as a sequel to The Breast, also does not concern the present study.

Chapter IV is a study of My Life as a Man (1974) as double-voiced discourse. Applying Bakhtin's dialogic model of language, the voices present in the novel are studied as utterances, spoken by a person and addressed to another, the words carrying the evaluations not only of the speaker but those of previous uses of the word in other contexts. The theme of My Life as a Man is seen to be orchestrated through its language(s), as it were.

Zuckerman Bound (1985), as the title indicates, is a collection of four separately published works, all dealing with the life of Nathan Zuckerman, a "novelist." This collection, to be sure, would render itself to a study of the dialogic relationship between the individual texts, but the type of double voicing that Bakhtin discovers within an utterance and discussed in Chapter IV, is by and large, absent in this collection. Likewise, the metafictional strategies of Roth in The Counterlife (1986) take it beyond the purview of this study.
With each work, Roth strikes new paths and as he mentions, he sets out with each new work as a reaction to his previous one, in its concerns, strategies and themes. His latest work *Operation Shylock* (1993) is a strange hybrid that defies all attempts at definition. However, when Bakhtin's idea of polyphony is applied to this text, it reveals that *Operation Shylock* is, above all, a polyphonic novel, a supreme example of its kind. Earlier, in *Deception* (1990) Roth presents pure disembodied voices. The novel is presented as a transcript of snatches of conversation without attribution or expository/descriptive passages. Bakhtin associates voices and ideas always with the persons carrying them and hence this work is left out of this Bakhtinian study.

Out of the smorgasbord of the rich Roth canon, this study takes up for analysis a selection of those works which are thrown into sharp relief when viewed through the perspectives of Mikhail Bakhtin.
NOTES

1Pinsker has chosen the word "hoits" from Alexander Portnoy's monologue in Portnoy's Complaint in which the hero howls with the pain caused by his role-playing as the "smothered son in the Jewish joke". This joke "hoits"—a Yiddish slang for 'pains'.

2A scan of the Humanities Index which records the appearance of articles in nearly three hundred journals and periodicals also attests to the steadily increasing number of articles on Bakhtin or fiction criticism based on Bakhtin's theories. The Dissertation Abstracts International too attests to the increasing attention Bakhtin's theories have been receiving in literary research, chiefly in fiction studies.

3Mani, the third-century Zoroastrian philosopher, saw existence as a constant struggle between forces of light and those of darkness, between unifying and destabilizing tendencies. The Manichean myth begins with the two principles of Light and Darkness, each dwelling in its own realm, coeternal but independent. Perception of the light excites envy, greed and hate in Darkness and provokes it to attack the light ("Manicheism" The Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

4Skaz, in Russian, designates stylization of various forms of oral, everyday narration.

5Several of these were compiled and published by Roth under the title Reading Myself and Others (1975). Besides being a self-defence and justification they provide as well a perceptive analysis of his own work.

6Roth has taken the title from the rhyme: "When she was good, she was very very good, but when she was bad, she was horrid" (qtd. in Rodgers 74). Alter sees it as elliptical: when she was good... she was horrid (45).