CHAPTER VIII

SUMMING-UP

From a study of all the academic novels discussed in this thesis, we find that individuals within the academe are in no way different from those outside the academe. But this conclusion has not been arrived at, all of a sudden. It has taken a long time for all academic novelists to accept this fact. Traditional novelists were very keen on maintaining a mask that all is fine within the academy. But gradually writers such as John Barth wanted to tear this mask and portray the insider's real experience and perception. The traditional novelists did not want to accept the fact that individuals within the academe are liable to make mistakes. They wanted to place academicians on a high-pedestal and treat them as demi-gods. While the modern novelists were aware of these flaws, they tried to give excuses for their behavior. But it is only the post-modern novelists like John Barth who are prepared to accept academicians along with their flaws. He is of the notion that to classify individuals based on their intellectual ability or sexual misdeeds is atrocious. What Barth wanted was to deny classification entirely because he felt that today's world is always shifting and so are individuals and that we cannot afford to place individuals into
watertight compartments. Hence he wants each reader to have their own conclusions regarding the novel \textit{Giles Goat Boy}.

Barth's aim is to completely jeopardize all our notions of the university. He gives a new definition saying that the university can no longer be viewed as a place of "knowledge" but as one that harbors ignorance and acts as a harbinger of myths related to education. Also he drives home the point that the university perpetuates social stratification and moral insensitivity. All these aspects have been analyzed in \textit{Giles Goat Boy}.

Further Writers like Fitzgerald who were of a puritanical background considered sexual issues to be taboo and did not discuss them at length in their novels. This attitude can be found in \textit{This Side of Paradise}. That is why we find the conflict between the intellectual and the sexual persisting in the mind of the hero. Finally because of the hero's puritanical mode of thinking he begins to know of his SELF.

\textit{The Catcher In The Rye} by Salinger is another step in the advancement of the academic novel because the protagonist is a student, that too, a psychic personality and his views are given importance. One who is in the margins, a student with low grades, is given a voice and his ambivalent feelings towards sex, money, love and his teachers are vividly brought out.
There are academic novelists like Mary Mc Carthy, Salinger, Willa Cather and Philip Roth who all have dealt with one particular aspect of the university. For instance, Mary Mc Carthy’s *The Groves Of Academe* deals with the politics of power confronting the various members in a department. Her novels can be called “Novels of Ideas” because she portrays individuals who want to believe in flattering abstractions than in reality, which limits our thinking. Hoar and Mulcahy are keen on sticking to their ideas and this brings about their downfall. She has also drawn our attention to the fact that there are lecturers who exploit students for their own benefit. She says that this is because of the complacent nature of the students who are satisfied in whatever position they are. They are not ready for any positive change. This is what irks Mc Carthy. When she was a student she was for change because she was dissatisfied with the then university set-up. Hence she is of the view that students are the ones who can really bring about any change.

Willa Cather’s *The Professor’s House* shows the material versus spiritual conflict in the mind of Professor Godfrey Peter. His intellectual pursuits only help him in gaining material aspects, while Tom Outland’s spiritual pursuits help him realize his ideal, giving him unalloyed happiness. The spiritual and cultural aspects of life are highlighted rather than mere material gains.
Roth’s *The Professor of Desire* stresses the conflict between the moral responsibility a professor has and the sexual desires, which come in its way. David Kepesh fights a recurring battle between passion and reason but ultimately gives in and thereby passion clouds his reason. Thus all through our study of the American academic novel we are exposed to a variety of characters. Some protagonists desire intellectual gains, others material gains and there are yet others who want to indulge in sexual gains. The various conflicts that assault individuals within the academe along with their ambitions and hypocrisies have been highlighted in this study. Some overcome their conflicts while others succumb to them. But the novel, which is a major break-through, is *Giles Goat Boy*, because here we find that Barth wants to explode all our myths relating to intellectuality, spirituality and sexuality. He is against giving a single identity to any person, as every person is at the same time himself and his opposite. He is also aware that physical needs are as important as intellectual ones. So he denies classifying individuals within the academe or elsewhere for he is of the notion that today’s world is always shifting and we cannot afford to have fixed notions of any particular subject or person. His approach is an all-inclusive approach, which incorporate the views of all individuals and certifies all the views to be equally true. He wants the readers to have their own conclusions regarding his novels. And what he has done is to make
people think about their role in shaping our universities and thereby the world at large.

Hence the American academic novel has come a long way. It has opened new avenues for further research. For instance, a methodical study could be made by selecting all academic novels based on chronology and dealing with academic novels published over a particular period of time.

Along with the chronological study of academic novels published over a period of time, researchers could also group their novels particularly showing the distinction based on the types of protagonists. Also an in-depth study could be made, taking into account any one aspect of university life. Further we could generate more comparative studies in the area of the academic novel. For instance the academic novel published in America could be compared with those published in England, Canada, Africa, India and various other countries. The differences in the attitude of the writers along with the differences in the portrayal of universities and its academicians could be a very challenging one.