ABSTRACT

Tracing the conflicts, the desires, the ambitions and hypocrisies inherent in the university set up, the thesis demonstrates that individuals within the academe are in no way different from those outside the academe. They try to put on a mask that everything is fine but the writers of academic novels are engaged in the task of tearing this mask and portraying the insider’s real experience and perception.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters and the introduction gives a brief critical survey of the American academic novel and of academic novels from various other regions of the world. It tries to show the differences in the attitude of various writers of academic novels. While certain novelists are engaged in depicting the plight of professors, some others are keen on showing the students’ problems, yet others deal with the problems on the administrative side. But whatever may be the area of study, these writers are keen on assessing the flaws in the University. They cannot leave it, because it is the arena from which they can speak. Finally the thesis projects the view that though the academicians have their defects yet we should allow room for the fact that they too are individuals and they too are liable to make mistakes. That is why writers like John Barth resort to black humor to point out the mistakes of those...
within the university. Indirectly he wants reform our universities and colleges and he has to a certain extent made individuals think about their role in forming our universities. He has kindled us to think, but the outcome is very difficult to assess.

The novels taken up for this study are:

John Barth’s - Giles Goat Boy
Edward Fitzgerald’s - This Side of Paradise
Mary McCarthy’s - The Groves of Academe
Philip Roth’s - The Professor of Desire
Salinger’s - The Catcher in the Rye
Willa Cather’s - The Professor’s House

Basically all these novels are campus novels yet there is a marked difference in the style and the views of these novelists.

The chapter on This Side of Paradise analyses the intellectual versus sexual conflict in the mind of Amory Blaine, the protagonist, whose intellect is shaped by his puritanical mode of thinking; this predilection prevents him from swaying towards the sexual, yet the conflict persists. Amory finally tries to resolve this conflict and to know his “SELF.” The knowledge gained by his experience enables him to be of use to the society at large.
The chapter dealing with *The Catcher in the Rye* is a thorough study of Holden Caulfield, the chief character in the novel, who is always in a state of flux and whose complex nature leads to different readings of the novel. Holden being a psychic personality, the novel has been studied keeping this aspect in mind.

Willa Cather’s, *The Professor’s House* was chosen for its vivid portrayal of the material versus spiritual conflict in the mind of Professor Godfrey Peter. Philip Roth’s, *The Professor of Desire* highlights the physical urges and conflicts experienced by David Kepesh. He gives undue importance to passion and hence loses his reasoning capacities regarding what is worthy in life. Mary McCarthy’s *Groves of Academe* is chosen for the novelistic stance it takes towards women and education. Further it is one novel which clearly depicts the inter-departmental clashes within the university. *Giles Goat Boy* is chosen entirely for its post-modernistic attitude towards academe and education. It aims to jeopardize all our prior notions of sex, intellect and spirit. It is a breakthrough of all academic novels because it denies labelling individuals and ridicules all our educational pursuits.