CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Academic novel or campus novel is a term describing a particular genre of novels usually comic or satirical, which have a University setting and academics as principal characters. An early example of the campus novel in America was Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Fanshawe* published in 1828. From then on we have had a series of authors working on the academic novel.

In the early academic novels the authors had the protagonist reject the academy as “merely a world of ideas” (Lyons: 134). The undergraduate protagonist tends simply to be disillusioned with the academic experience. This was mainly due to the hypocrisies inherent in the college society. The established tradition of the academic novel portrayed the college men as a roisterer and the professor a pedant. Gradually there was a change in the depiction of the under-graduate. He began to reject his role as a rowdy but he knew very little to become a philosopher. Also there was an attempt made to portray the professor as the complete antithesis of a pedant.
Inspite of the attempt at these changes, most academic novels followed the age-old pattern where a young instructor, full of grand ideals about teaching would have to fight the hoary traditions of the school. He is usually unsuccessful in his attempts and being disillusioned he leaves the profession. This is a most frequent ending of academic novels. For instance, this has been the ending for Irving Stone’s *Pageant of youth* (1933), George Weller’s *Not to Eat, Not for Love* (1933), Mary Jane Ward’s *The Professor’s Umbrella* (1948) and Martin Larson’s *Plaster Saint* (1953).

There have been cases where the novelist depicts the professor leaving the profession. This happens when the professor feels that the institution is so un-intellectual and that there is little hope for education. This type of ending shows the author in a bad light for instead of propounding ways for improving the current educational set-up; he would cause only disillusionment in the minds of his readers.

One such example is *Grey Towers* (1923)—by Zoe Flannagan in which a young woman returns with great plans in her mind to improve her Alma Mater. But she finds that the University has prioritized business motives to its own integrity. When she tries to bring about a change to this set up, she is dismissed.
Robert Herrick's *Chimes* (1926) is another novel, which depicts the flaws in the administrative rules, laid down by the University officials. The University aims to raise the moral and economic standards of the nation by giving everyone Higher Education. But this only adds to the trouble of the lecturers who are overburdened. Clavercin expresses his disgust thus:

The very sight of a dissertation or thesis gave Clavercin an attack of "mental nausea" for he felt that for one useful, illuminating piece of research sponsored by the University...there must be at least a hundred utterly arid products, whose sole utility was to train some second-rate mind, fit only for elementary teaching - how to use a card-catalogue and other apparatus of scholarship (Lyons: 137).

What the writer stresses here is that Higher Education forced on the student cannot bring any good results. The University had only frustrated the teachers by making them lose interest in their respective areas of research.

By the end of this experiment, Clavercin is exhausted and he feels that the American Universities that gave so much attention to the teaching and investigating of "literature" were "the most unliterary places in the world, most purely barbarous in spirit" (Lyons: 138).
Another issue focussed in this novel is Clavercin's view that the University can even be run by a "despotic President" rather than by its "smaller benefactors." He feels that if the University is run by the donors then it can only be bullied by the opinions of the middle class, the conservative, well-to-do citizen! (Lyons: 138).

In this novel, Herrick seems to object to the views held by Dorothy Canfield Fisher in *The Bent Twig* (1922). Fisher had depicted her view that the University could be run more efficiently by donors from the same University community than by elite Presidents. Herrick seems to be biased in his views.

In Wanda Fraiken Neff's *Lone Voyagers* (1929), a young man Keith Lamberton, an eighteenth century scholar, who has come from Harvard to Chippewa English Department is disillusioned at the Chippewa University. His wife tells the story. The main focus of the novel is on the difference in the attitudes towards teaching. While the Lambertons consider the study of literature as a discipline, which is dependent on the history of ideas, the others mainly view teaching as a performance in front of the students.

Also we find that the novelist delves deep into the University community and categorizes people according to what they speak. Neff is
of the view that one type can discuss only current events and the latest theatre shows. While the majority is interested in talks concerning students and faculty politics, only a few are really interested in their subjects. Only the latter are concerned about the growth of the University. Lamberton hopes to change the attitude of many students by talking to them. But the novel has a major drawback. Since Lamberton acts on the instructions of his wife, there is not much of force in his statements.

What Lyons feels is that writers such as Herrick and Wanda Neff have not focussed on a single character, because of which the ideas projected are lost without creating the intended effect. There are also novelists who have projected the teaching position as being a hindrance to the budding artist. Thomas Wolfe’s Of Time and the River depicts Eugene - a teacher, who considers his teaching position as a burden, yet must continue to do so for his survival. Each class is a terror for Eugene. The thought of the class he had to meet the next day “fed at his heart and bowels” and as “the hour for a class drew nigh he would begin to shake and tremble as if he had an ague” (Lyons: 141).

Not only did he detest the students but also his colleagues who are shown to be mean hacks. He describes them thus:
They wasted and grew sick with hate and poison because another man received promotion, because another man had got his poem printed, because another man had eaten food and swallowed drink and lain with women. And they smiled and sneered at one another...they never struck a blow but they spoke lying words of barbed ambiguity, they breathed the weary hatred-laden air about them into their poisoned lungs (Lyons: 142).

Wolfe’s portrayal of the students too is very harsh. For instance, he shows the females as gossiping ones who flaunt their flesh before others. Eugene’s main interest is in Abe Jones, a Jew who does his best in class. He feels that his classes would only benefit him and not others because they don’t seem to be interested as they are caught in the “garbled chaos of their lives, the glare and the fury of the streets” (Lyons: 144).

Thus, Wolfe’s projection of University life is pessimistic in as much as he believes that the city itself is inherently evil and can bring no good to literature or life.

Watkins’ Geese in the Forum (1940) dealing with the University named Beauregard attempts to bring out many of the evil aspects of educational progressivism widely prevalent in Northern institutions. It
portrays the life of John Burgess who refuses to accept favors from the trustees of the University. His wife is frustrated because of this and she later elopes with a novelist. But Burgess is determined not to leave the place and he continues in his attempts to improve the University.

This novel is different from other novels of this period, which had depicted the hero as running away from difficult situations. The novel is fairly successful in projecting the flaws in the university set up. The faculty wives are shown as incorrigible gossips; the president is portrayed as swindling a quarter of a million dollars for his own use. There are special characters like Dr. Worthington who have been introduced to highlight the age-old belief in those days that one had the right to be educated, if one’s father had been so. By this, we are made to meditate on the present educational set-up and introduced to people like Dr. Worthington who will not accept any change.

For instance, he says:

Democracy! Democracy in education! Ideas are too precious for the mob. The mob is turning our college into something cheap; we’re not changing them. In my time you went to college because your father did; now you go because your father didn’t. I still believe the function of the college is to lead the mob in the right direction. We’d better
see to it that we run our school for the cream of the Southland, not the clabber of New Jersey (Lyons: 80).

One defect, which Lyons sees in such novels which ridicule the University rules and practices is that, they do not suggest another alternative that could be followed. There have even been cases where the practices abhorred in Geese in the Forum have been defended. For instance, in Robert Gessner's Youth is the time (1945), the instructor Christopher Nash, makes all attempts to improve the University but it is of no use. When he tries to discipline them, a girl student is all complaints and she says:

If our English is imperfect, kindly consult not our teachers but our neighbors. If our manner is brusque, do not blame Emily Post. The lady has never sought our acquaintance...Our hopes, aspirations, dreams—whatever they are, are of little consequence...we are the raw material of the conveyer belt, a four year run through the factory, a diploma slapped into our outstretched hands, and we’re out in the cold, just where we were when we started (Lyons: 148).

All through the novel we find that students want to relate themselves more to their immediate surroundings than to the past ages.
Gessner seems to pour out his views through the mouth of his protagonist Christopher Nash. Nash actually suggests in a staff meeting that the students themselves decide what subjects they want to learn. This infuriates the other members of the faculty. What Gessner wants to point out is the narrow medievalistic tendencies of these people. We are forced to think when Eugenia protests:

“We need some sort of mental discipline, why is okay to a point. But why the horse and buggy when we live in an airplane age? That’s what gets me” (Lyons: 149).

The novelist’s aim is to create an awareness among the students that it is upto them to come up with suggestions for improving our current educational set-up. He stresses that we need more and more “Eugenia’s” whom can put forth their views strongly and will be able to bear the wrath of others who oppose it.

In this novel Nash has to face the anger of the “arch medievalist” and his hatred shocked them and embarrassed them. Nash is fired and the novel ends with the “medievalists” remaining powerful. The novel projects only one-sided views and not the whole picture as such.

Everett Marston’s *Take the High ground* (1954) deals with the life of Giles Harmony who comes to teach English at Chase College from the
University of Chicago. The President is keen on introducing professional courses and has started a new School of Business. But Giles does not like the cringing nature of the President. He detests the "boorish benefactors" who know nothing about education but are given the right to frame the college rules. Thus, one's material possessions decide the respect one gains in society. Further, intellectuals have to submit to the forces of power. Giles feels that power has to be vested with the students, as they are the ones who know their needs. But when he expresses this idea, he is suspected of treason. Ultimately, he is frustrated with the teaching profession as such and feels that he has not accomplished anything. His own words reveal this frustration:

Teaching, Giles had soon discovered, is a nebulous endeavor. You stand before a group of kids hours on end. They sit there, listening politely...with little if any protest. So you assume you are educating these people, helping them to accumulate useful information (Lyons: 151).

What Giles wanted was that students must be given a voice to express their ideas on education.

Connaughey's Village Chronicle (1936) also echoes the same idea as the earlier novel but it is more preoccupied with the problem of racism. The novel portrays a battle among the faculty members after
their discovery that bright creative English major is a Negro. This is against the state regulation laws, which state that a Negro cannot be given access to University Education. The administration decides in favor of the faculty and the boy commits suicide. Though it is a sensitive issue the novelist has just touched upon this aspect rather than delving deep into the problem of a black student, hence the novel does not create much of an impact.

As Lyons observes, the limitation of these academic novels is the author's eagerness to include all the facets of life on a large campus. Thereby these novels fail to create the desired effect. We are not greatly moved by them but we become aware of the existing problems within the university.

All the novels discussed depict the hypocrisies inherent in the academic set-up but because of the episodic treatment of the subject they fail to sting. The episodes themselves are not seriously presented. For instance, Hester Pine's Beer for the kitten (1939) focuses on so many issues, that the readers are not given time to ponder seriously on any one of them. At times the novel uses a highly satiric tone while at other times it merely touches upon certain important events. On the one hand, we are shown a homosexual professor of English who terrorizes his students. On the other hand, we have Mc Masters, a classics professor, who has an argument with the Dean over teaching loads.
Likewise we are also introduced to a professor who creates a scandal by courting a local hairdresser. Thus the novel shuttles forth from one issue to another thereby failing to create an impression in the minds of the readers. We have also novels expressing the view that getting a doctorate is not the best preparation for teaching. The idea driven home is that the greater the degree a teacher obtains, the lesser the communication between the student and the teacher.

Certain other novels focus on the very process of examination. George Stewart’s *Doctor’s Oral* devotes nearly forty pages to examining the “conflicting personalities of the examiners and the nervousness of the hero” (Lyons: 157). It describes the mounting tensions in the mind of the hero and concludes with the statement that the hero passes the examination only by accident and that too because of the strife among the examiners.

Certain novelists are gentle in their satire like Randall Jarrell in *Pictures from an Institution* (1954). The whole novel is told from the point of view of Gertrude, a woman novelist who comes to teach creative writing. She also settles down to collect material for her next novel from the gossip and characters around her. This novel too advocates the principle of progressive education like Mary McCarthy’s *The Groves of Academe* (1952) and Shirley Jackson’s *Hangsaman*
(1951). In all these novels we are shown a “crusade against the rest of the educational world” (Lyons: 158).

In *Pictures from an Institution*, the college is projected as a liberal world as against the illiberal world outside. But when these girls go out they find that they are not accepted by the “complacent world” outside and so they take to drink and divorce. We find that in many of these academic novels there is no solution that is offered to improve the current academic set up.

Most of the techniques used in academic novels are to be found in Stringfellow Barr’s *Purely Academic* (1958). Prof. Schneider is the hero of the novel and he takes revenge on his wife, his colleagues and finally on the profession itself. First he is shown to be henpecked, later he has an affair with the wife of the Professor of Economics. He mostly speculates over who is going to be the next president. Finally he leaves the profession, exclaiming:

"Campus life! My god! I couldn’t take it. The place awash with perfectly decent boys and girls, sweating through the most ghastly text books... trying to get a grade...to get them a diploma, printed on imitation sheepskin for real sheep...It’s truly hideous picture of perfectly nice people caught up in an absolute web of pretense (Lyons: 161)."
A4alamud’s *A New Life* (1961) also deals with the life of a young instructor, Levin who being a reformed alcoholic wants to start life afresh at Cascadia State College. The novel depicts the dissatisfaction, a humanist would feel teaching at a technical college. Levin has an affair with a student and with a faculty wife. In each of these circumstances he feels as if he were born anew. He wants to bring about certain educational reforms, but then his love affairs are discovered and he is dismissed. He repents for his sin by resolving to take care of his love’s two children.

One common feature among all the writers of academic novels is that they are uncommitted. They are interested in pointing out the flaws inherent in the University set-up but not in providing solutions. Further, though they may offer lip service to the “virtues of the older classical education...the implications of this preference are never investigated” (Lyons: 163).

These authors also voice their disapproval of discussion method of introduction, where the student and the teacher learn together. Also they are against racial discrimination and favor political liberalism. The ending of these novels is highly romantic because we find that either the hero leaves the profession in a huff or a dull student is suddenly enlightened. Hence the protagonist does not truly serve as a mask for
the author to really satirize the current educational practices. The conclusion of such academic novels is vague and does not create an impact.

Most of the above discussed academic novels merely depict "the abuse of reason in the academy and the absence of common sense in high places" (Lyons: 164) rather than providing a solution for this kind of abuse. The incidents are merely portrayed in a haphazard manner and the ideas, if any are not forcefully articulated. There are certain academic novels, which focus entirely on academic freedom. There have been several instances when professors have been accused of misusing their academic freedom. The professor is punished for either violating religious rules or for holding certain liberal views. In novels such as Herrick’s Chimes (1926), Vardis Fisher’s, Passions Spin the Plot (1934), No Villain Need Be (1936) and Bernard De voto’s We accept with Pleasure (1934), all the professors land into trouble for holding pacifist views but only De Voto’s professor faces the grave consequence of being fired.

John Goodrichs’ Cotton Cavalier (1933) is one of the earliest novels addressing the question of academic freedom. There is an argument between the “narrow fundamentalists and the enlightened scientists” but “the argument is pretty one-sided” (Lyons: 166). T.S. Stribling’s These Bars of Flesh (1938) is centered on Andy Barnett, a
Georgia politician, who attempts to make a deal with the authorities for a degree. He identifies progressivism in politics with progressivism in education, as both are materialistic. Further he is fired because his views are not in accord with the spirit of the times. He favors “spiritualistic individualism as opposed to materialistic collectivism” (Lyons: 167).

There are also other novels, which sympathize with the liberal professor in a fight against a conservative President or a Board of trustees.

The most important novel on academic freedom is Mary Mc Carthy’s The Groves of Academe (1952). Here, the matter is not a simple one of good liberals opposed to bad conservatives; rather, through Mulcahy, Mc Carthy shows that he represents the weakness of liberalism and progressivism, because he intellectually knows these doctrines but does not have faith in them. He has “prideful” faith only in himself and thus Mc Carthy portrays the pretences of the college world. Mulcahy feigned being a communist because he wanted to project the president as a “snooper before the world of liberal thought” (Lyons: 170).

Mary Sarton’s Faithful are the Wounds (1955) again focuses on academic freedom. We are made to think why a professor should take his own life, for the failure of a social and political movement. Just
before the night, he throws himself before a train. Cavan has a
discussion with his colleague and his wife regarding the communists.
He expresses his view that communists should not be excluded from the
Civil Liberties Union.

The final scene of *Faithful are the Wounds* depicts an
investigation being conducted of sedition at Harvard. One of Cavan’s
colleagues defending intellectual freedom says thus:

> although Edward Cavan may have been wrong in his belief
that communists and socialists could and should work
一起, in the essence of his belief he was right and many
of us were wrong (Lyons: 179).

What Cavan wanted, says the colleague, was that an intellectual
must stand on the frontier of freedom of thought because every day that
frontier was being narrowed down. Thus Cavan wanted his colleagues
not to be a “victim of intellectual complacency” but to expand the
frontiers of intellectual freedom.

The survey conducted by Lyons concerning the American
academic novel indicates that most of the academic novels were written
only after the First World War. Before 1925 only 44 titles were written
and after that around 171. Also we find that American novels came
later than British novels. In the 1920's there was a great release of academic novels as there was a big debate on the rise of Higher Education and its implications. As early as 1925 there was a saturation point in the production of academic novels. For sometime there was an average of only four new college novels each year. Earlier academic novels were based on particular institutions. For example, there were about nineteen Harvard novels before 1925. But recent academic novels do not focus on particular institutions, their objective being to make the scorn general and to avoid a specific locale.

Earlier not many novels presented the professor as the main character. But, after 1925, nearly 81 of the 167 novels have been about professors. Also most of the teachers are English professors. This was because most writers felt that professors of English teach a subject which most readers can understand. This notion began to change slowly and we have professors of other subjects also as heroes. For instance, in Robie Macaulay’s *The Disguises of Love* (1952), the hero is a professor of psychology, in Howard Nemerov’s *The Home Coming Game* (1957) a professor of history, and in Carlos Baker’s *A friend in Power* (1958) a professor of French.

There are other kinds of academic novels, which depict undergraduate life. These are many in number when compared to those about professors. The novels before the First World War indulged in
campus pranks and did not discuss serious issues. But there are novels which harp on equality in education; Fladrau's *Harvard Episodes* (1897) is one such where in the cruelty meted out to the outsider is pointed out. While earlier novels focussed on the Romantic notion of learning that Nature was the most capable teacher, Owen Johnson’s *Stover at Yale* (1912) fought against this notion and it also commented on “the odious chore of doing a page of Greek for the next day’s recitation” (Lyons: 183).

The demerits of modern day college education are highlighted in Arthur Train’s *The World and Thomas Kelly* (1917) in which Kelly feels that what he has gained at Harvard is only superficial knowledge and that he does not have an in-depth understanding of any particular subject.

After the First World War the style of the highly critical undergraduate novels became better. In *The Plastic age* (1924) the hero learns that what is being taught to him is “bunk.” Later novels in this age followed a typical pattern wherein a young man goes off to college and is disturbed by the ideas he learns and later pursued by a temptress and ultimately he flees the academe and re-enters the real world. But there has been a remarkable difference in recent academic Bildungsroman.
Last Puritan (1935) dismisses the elective system at Harvard as the method of study, which they followed as trivial. Santayana, in The Lecture Method rather than discussion. There are writers who dismiss higher standards, they prefer the classical mode of education and the school teachers cultured. The novels about professors usually depend have not changed much in style. A study of the Harvard Summer School It must be noted that novels, which have the professor as a hero, professors.

the students, the earlier ones concentrating on the pretensions of the academic novels written twenty years earlier. While these were against the heroes succumb to the earlier morality. Thus they differ from the heroes in conflict with the morality of the core fathers. In the end, we haveqty F (1958) and in both of these, the undergraduates morality comes such as Charles Lambard’s Senior Spring (1934) and Richard Beard’s Stairs (1975) and Jonathan Kozol’s the Fire of Popple (1958). In this type of ending is found in Charles Thompson’s Halfway Down the Bohemianism of college life in favor of the calm life of the suburbia. These are also authors who prefer the opposite; their heroes reflect the conformity of the academe in favor of the bohemian world outside.
frivolous. The portraits of the professor even in novels written by professors themselves are not favorable to the academic community.

The professor in Ann Marbut's *The Tarnished Tower* (1957) is a ruthless opportunist and that of Daniel Tamkus' *The Much Honored Man* (1959) an egotistic old fraud. The image of the professor as flirt is maintained in String Fellow Barr's *Purely academic* (1958), Douglas Angus' *The Ivy Trap* (1959) and Monroe Engles' *The Visions of Nicholas Solon* (1959). But those novels, in which the professor is treated very respectfully, are dull and often boring. In some cases, like in Gessener's *Youth is the Time*, he is portrayed as a man of ideas. In Ann Marbut's the *Tarnished Tower*, he is a scapegoat. The professor in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* is extremely good, but the one in Mary Mc Carthy's *Groves of Academe* is extremely bad. There are very few novelists who have written academic novels without making the professor "a bumbling bore" or the student a "callow youth."

In spite of the above stated reservations, the academy does yield good materials for fiction. This has been demonstrated by writers like Flandrau, Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, Wolfe, Shirley Jackson and Mary Mc Carthy.
Another writer who can be termed as being constantly engaged in writings on the academia is Philip Roth. We first meet professor David Kepesh in Philip Roth’s novella _The Breast_ (1972) Kepesh is portrayed there as a junior academic who had recently awoken to find himself transformed into a one hundred and fifty five pound female bosom. Next we find Kepesh appearing in _The Professor of Desire_, but in this he is portrayed prior to his metamorphosis (i.e.) telling us the first half of his life. But in _The Dying Animal_, we find Kepesh confronting the transformation of old age. In this novel, Kepesh is seventy, his hair has turned white, his neck has acquired wattle but the idea that is brought out is that despite his old age his libido remains intact. He is engaged in giving a senior seminar in practical criticism at a New York college. This seminar is largely attended by women and this gives him scope to find “nubile sex partners”. _The Dying Animal_ takes the form of a late-night, sofa-side monologue delivered by Kepesh to a young companion. He has a lot to say about the sexual revolution for he says:

“It’s not the sex that’s the corruption—it’s the rest. Sex isn’t just friction and shallow fun. Sex is also the revenge on death” (Heller Mann: 39).

These are the words, which come out of the mouth of a Professor of Practical criticism. He gives sex top priority. Also this is his defense of
his "erotic birthright." Further Kepesh is not keen on the "casualties" because of his reckless behaviour. His son Kenny is one of whom he is the least interested. Also he chides his women for having their maternal urges. He is least interested in this kind of stuff. His main interest is in a Cuban American Woman named Consuela Castillo. She is one of his practical criticism finds whom he met eight years ago when she was Twenty-four. At first the affair does not pose any threat to the professor. But later he finds himself in love with her and there is no end to his humiliating himself by begging in front of her. The affair ends and after six years she reveals to him that she has breast cancer. This is an irony of ironies; yet his attachment to her (mentally) is not severed. According to Zoe Heller Mann, Kepesh mortified and brought low is still a pretty awful and pompous Kepesh. Even though he admires her beauty he feels that without him appreciating her beauty, her beauty is nothing. She is, as he notes,

"a gorgeous phenomenon who acquires significance or meaning only when seen by him" (Heller Mann: 42).

He maintains his self regard at all times and his mentality is revealed in a line from Wallace Steven's "The unalterable animal." He has been fighting with the "unruliness of male desire" in novel after novel. The conflict between the Id and the superego is embodied in
almost all his novels. Zoe Heller Mann argues that if Roth had not felt that this was not somehow representative of the human dilemma, he would not have been writing about it. Thus Roth crawls for our sympathetic attention to the plight of all his heroes. Zoe Heller says that “writing about the unalterable necessity of being this unalterable animal is itself an unalterable necessity for Philip Roth.” His novel The Dying Animal is sure to evoke pathos in all its readers because Kepesh shamelessly admits that he is “very vulnerable to female beauty.” It is a kind of disease with which he is smitten and so he evokes pity. But Jonathan Cape does not spare Roth for his obsession with sex. According to him, The Dying Animal is “Controlled by narcissism, by exhibitionism and despite the energetic display, despite the audacity strangely inert” (Jonathan: 88).

Keith Gessen has an entirely different view of Roth’s The Dying Animal. According to him, though The Dying Animal is not a great work in the way that The Human stain and other works of Roth’s are, yet it is remarkable for its fidelity to the ground that Roth has always worked. It deepens the seriousness of all his previous books. It treats sex as vital “because it is based in your physical being, in the flesh that is born and the flesh that dies.” The above words are Kepesh’s words wherein he ascertains the importance of sex.
Roth’s *The Dying Animal* has been commended and criticized by other writers but one must not deny the fact that he stuck to his thesis at all times. He did not hold back from what he wanted to say. Like Lenin who claimed that Tolstoy was the mirror of the Russian Revolution so Roth’s is the mirror of the sexual one, says Keith Gessen. Roth was the one to show through his novels that though one may try to shatter convention yet society, with its superego has all the resources to defend itself with extreme prejudice.

Roth’s *The Human Stain* preys on stereotypes of the academe. A satirist at heart, Roth uses the campus setting as a way to Vent his rage against political correctness. According to Jay Parini, “The Roth book, despite its many virtues, drifts too easily into the realm of caricature.” The very premise of the Roth novel is absurd because Coleman Silk, a classics professor is essentially run off the campus as he had used the word “spooks” to describe two students who never show up for class. They turn out to be Blacks and the professor is charged with racism. It appears that Roth has intentionally made the situation absurd, as an exercise in hyperbole, these according to Parini only elicit guffaws. But there is the portrait of Nathan Zuckerman, the author’s familiar alter ego that is very well drawn. Roth has shown a keen eye for details such as the situation wherein the deans are beset by trials for denying salary...
raises and parking spots, also for turning down promotions and numerous related requests.

The *Human Stain* has been described by Jay Parini as a “mixed bag, combining memorable prose with some bizarre distortions” (Parini: 48).

Saul Bellow is another writer, whose academic novels created a stir. The novel *Ravelstein* features another academic hero, Abe Ravelstein, a philosopher based closely on Allan Bloom, the great critic. Bellow himself had taught at many academic institutions like the Bard College, the University of Minnesota, Chicago and Boston. He has often conjured up academic protagonists like Moses Herzog in *Herzog* and Albert Corde in *The Dean’s December*. But *Ravelstein* is of a different sort for he has none of Herzog’s manic existentialism or Corde’s wry despair. He is described by Bellow as an “oddball academic,” and a “gay philosopher,” whose best selling book suddenly makes him have a vision of himself in Levin jacket and custom tailored shirts from London. He covers his bed with angora skins and minks. He pranced and preened. Ravelstein has another scribe called Chick to inscribe him. Chick is another of Bellow’s brilliant rogues who, being the narrator, revels in Ravelstein’s complexities and ironies. Chick along with Ravelstein
analyses the culture gap that exists between the high class and the low class.

John Leonard tells us that *Ravelstein* "is the story of two deaths, one a philosopher and the other a novelist—with only one Lazarus, who isn't Socrates." He adds that this novel is animated because it deals equally with the friendship of Allan Bloom and Saul Bellow as well as their different ideas of on how to live and die and what happens after death. It propels the idea that in spite of being friends, they had different views altogether on the above mentioned subjects. While the philosopher (*Ravelstein*) was teaching us how to go, the novelist (*Chick*) with the help of his wife Rosamund was teaching us how to stay back in this world.

That *Ravelstein* is Bloom is obvious not only on the basis of internal evidence—the girl for teaching, the best-selling book, the many eating habits, the expensive tastes and sexual secrets but from Bellow's own remark at a memorial service for Bloom in 1992. Further in his novel *More Die of Heartbreak* he has said." “Of course, while everybody who ever met him at the university of Chicago knew Bloom to be a gay diva, there's no closet quite like the committee on social and so at the memorial they chose to blame his death on liver failure instead of AIDS" (Leonard: 26).
That Chick is representative of Bellow is known because Bellow too like Chick nearly died from eating a poisoned fish in the Caribbean. Only when Chick reached that point in life (when he was about to die, but luckily escaped) did he realise the power of love from Rosamund his wife. Hence the novel Ravelstein projects the eccentricities and the absurdities that are seen in individuals closely linked with the University. She knew far about it than her teacher Ravelstein or her husband (Chick). Saul Bellow’s Ravelstein has been compared to Roth’s The Human Stain. Why Leonard insists on a comparison of the two novels is that it brings to light the various similarities that existed in the minds of both Bellow and Roth. According to him, Both these writers played the role of Horatio in their novels to their departed friends. For instance as Hamlet lies dying, he tells his friend Horatio not to follow him immediately to the grave:

O! good Horatio—what a wounded name (Things standing thus unknown) shall live behind me!

If thou did’t ever hold me in thy heart, Absent thee from felicity awhile,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,

to tell my story (Leonard: 27).
By enacting the role of Horatio both inevitably find themselves harping on mortality. Another theme that is central to both Ravelstein and The Human stain is the theme of sex. Roth has no doubt dealt with this theme in his earlier books but it is very much forceful in The Human stain. The novel deals with “a torrid affair between a seventy-one-year old man, helped along by Viagra and a woman in her thirties symbolically named Faunia.” Similarly Ravelstein has as one of its main threads the story of a marriage between an old man (Bellow posing as Chick) and a young woman. But Bellow, seems to he a little reticent in his descriptions of sexual activity when compared to Roth. But what Leonard is concerned is that to both writers the preoccupation with death is tempered by their continuing interest in sex.

But, either Roth or Bellow not in any way conceives sex to be an escape from Death. In The Human Stain Coleman Silk’s affair with Faunia revives him from a long bout of despair but it also leads to death. Likewise, Chick is snatched from the grave by his wife’s (non-sexual but loving) diligence; but a contrast is provided here with the homosexual Ravelstein dying of AIDS. Hence to both Roth and Bellow sex signifies life, not death.

Finally as cited by one critic, both Ravelstein and The Human Stain brings home the drive of so many Americans to cut loose from the
genetic and social moorings of birth and to create themselves anew in images of their own devising.

Roth's characters make an effort to escape from Jewishness and the constrictions imposed on them because of it. But Bellow, who has more positive and affectionate feelings towards Jewishness, depicts characters as escaping from the "imposition of conventional wisdom" that surrounds them. This attitude is revealed in Ravelstein who loathes his Midwestern Jewish family and forges a new self through the Great Books he had read at the University of Chicago. In either case we find that 'Education' acts as the liberating principle. Thereby proving the age-old dictum "Knowledge is Power."

*Blue Angel* by Francine Prose is yet another novel that deals with individuals in the academe who land themselves in disaster because of their inability to cope with the problem of sex. Alan Charles Kors says, "from an evolutionary and ethological perspective, universities serve the purpose of assortative mating because Individuals with mutually desirable traits find each other easily" (Kors: 71). There are also cultural feminists who are much obsessed with the image of predator and prey. Also we find professors in cunning who "lay in wait for unwary, dewy creatures who yield to their guise." Further there are "the ordinary souls
who somehow stumble their way imperceptibly into sexual… and thus, in these times, institutional and personal disaster” (Kors: 71).

**Blue Angel** is about one such ordinary soul. It deals with a temptress who leads a smug professor of little self-awareness into personal disgrace, humiliation and ruin, Ted Swenson, teaches creative writing at Euston College in Vermont. He has been faithful to his wife, Sherrie all along but suddenly he is tempted by more. He has a bizarrely dressed, depressive, dishonest Goth girl in his class Angelo Argo who becomes his obsession. She uses him for her own ends. She then denounces him after having taped his admission of their encounter. Finally Ted Swenson has to face a “campus judicial hearing” and he loses his family and job. His position resembles that of the professor in Coetzee’s *Disgrace*. What Charles Kors feels is that Ted Swenson should be shot for stupidity and not fired for sexual misconduct. Further he adds that Francine Prose has not given a true picture of academic life. She has failed to catch the nuances that are inherent in university relationships. The characters and their actions do not represent actual University set up. For instance the Dean who believes that militant feminists can be charmed with retrograde male professors belongs to the 1950’s and not the 1990’s. Also the meeting of the faculty that hears and accepts the new sexual policy bears no resemblance to any actual meeting that takes place on campuses. The only credible character,
according to Kors, is Sherrie, Swenson’s wife, who serves as a “stable foil to the unfolding chaos.” Swenson’s hearing before a faculty panel is also depicted wonderfully. The excruciating pain felt by him at the isolation and humiliation meted out to him reveals that Prose has got all the details right in this scene. Swenson is betrayed by all his colleagues as though in revenge of his own betrayal of his wife and children. Kors calls Prose’s novel as being “opportunistic and shallow” because it fails to catch the tragedy implicit in the lives of those who have been affected by sexual and political incorrectness on our campuses.

Another novelist who has been popularizing the campus novel on the British side is Sir Malcolm Bradbury. He was an academic, a professor of English and American as well as a successful novelist. His most famous work *The History man* published in 1975 was a best seller. Another novel, which was equally good, was *Rates of Exchange* (1983). He also produced the novel *Cuts* in the year 1987. However Kingsley Amis’ *Lucky Jim* published in 1954 was the one to create a stir, prior to Bradbury’s novels. *Lucky Jim* presented an enlarged sense of life. The campus was shown to be a microcosm, a place where humanity plays out its obsessions and discovers what makes life bearable. Further it serves as an ideal atmosphere for satire and serious exploration of the human condition.
Another writer of campus novels who deserves to be mentioned here is A.S. Byatt. Her novel *Possession* (1990) was an academic best-seller. *Possession* depicts the literary sleuthing of two young scholars who are forced to reconsider the Victorian poets they study after finding a trove of their love letters. Another campus novel by her is *The Biographer’s Tale* which revolves around a graduate student who sets out to write a biography of a biographer, “a double immersion in history and literary Analysis”- says Ruth Franklin. *The Biographer’s Tale* begins with an epiphany. Phineas Nanson, a doctoral Student in English Literature is sitting in a seminar discussing Lacan’s theory of morcellement when he decides, all of a sudden, that he cannot go on with the world of academia. He also feels he has had it with the “not-too-long texts written by women,” with the professor himself, who “read his Foucault and his Lacan in translation, like his Heraclitus and Empedocles”. What Phineas wants is “a life full of things...full of facts. On the advice of his professor he reads a three-volume biography of Sir Elmer Bole. After reading it his interest shifts to the book’s writer Destry Scholes and he later on begins to write a biography on Destry Scholes. Byatt’s pet obsession with order and systems of organization is let loose in this novel Further she has also slung a few arrows at the academe but they are not as perfectly tuned as the ones in *Possession*. Franklin describes *The Biographer’s Tale* as a “tired book.”
James Lasdun's *The Horned Man* is another novel, which deals with Lawrence Miller an English academic living in New York. As the novel opens, he's concerned that somehow, overnight his bookmark has been moved. He is sure that he didn’t touch it. He meets his therapist and wonders if it is a case of parapraxis. But soon it becomes clear that a Bulgarian writer is living under his desk. *The Horned Man* turns out to be an original and imaginative mystery story.

David Lodge is another eminent writer of academic novels. His novel *Changing Places* introduces the Zapps, the Swallows and their respective campuses in Euphoria and Rummidge. Like its sequel *Small World*, the novel gleefully satirizes academic manners and presents a tangle of coincidences for comic effect and to present the absurdities inherent in an academic set-up. Lodge's novel moves from narrative proper, to epistolary, to movie script. Another of Lodge's novels about academic life in Rummidge, *Nice work* pairs feminist scholar Robyn Penrose with Manager Vic Wilcox in an Industry year scheme to acquaint the business and academic fields. Robyn finds the industry uncaring and Vic finds the academe out of touch. Finally both of them learn to compromise a little. Both are round characters and their respective transformations are realistic and believable. The two then take a trip to Germany and they learn to accommodate themselves to each other's nature.
Small World is again an extremely funny novel by David Lodge dealing with the academe. The story follows a variety of professors from conference to conference, with big names in the field chasing a newly created endowed chair and one lowly Persse Mc Garrigle chasing the mysterious Angelica Pabst. Along the way there are coincidences for it is after all a “small world.” The academe is comically satirized. For instance characters such as Morris Zapp declare that “every decoding is another encoding” and that “reading is like a strip tease.” The caricatures are drawn delightfully. Lodge’s three novels form a trilogy and must be read together to get its full effect.

Alison Lurie’s The War Between The Tates is a decent cautionary tale that cautions students and professors who have a crush on each other. The ‘War’ begins when Professor Brian’s wife opens a letter labeled urgent and discovers it to be a love letter from his student Wendee. When questioned, Brian moves out of the house but comes back with Wendee. Wendee is pregnant, and so his wife Erica gets them married. Lurie has pictured the war between Brian and Erica without taking sides. Their friends—the Zimmerens (divorced) and the placid Wendee along with the unpleasant children Muffy and Jeffs are precisely portrayed such that the novel seems to be “an artifact.”
Smiley Jane’s *Moo* is another campus novel that deals with the administration, faculty, staff, students and a large hog of one Midwestern agricultural school named Moo. Though the characters and incidents are varied, but they are loosely linked together.

James Hynes’ *Publish and Perish* is a collection of three loosely collected novellas subtitled “Three Tales of Tenure and Terror.” He portrays academic “types” such as a commuter-marriage couple and the dissertation advisor from hell and pushes them into more threatening situations.

James Finney Boylan’s *Getting In*, tells the story of the hapless applicant, Dylan Floyd who tries to get into the University after he has had a mishap with his SATs. The characters are all caricatures and there is Juddy who insists that he’s going to that Harvard.

Hazard Adams has also written three novels based on academic life. His first work *The Horses of Instruction*, set in an University in the 50’s, deals with the faculty who have become entrepreneurs. Adams expresses the belief that their loyalty was no longer to the institution but to their own careers. So he expressed this idea in his first novel. His second novel *Many Pretty Toys* is also an academic novel but it also
revolves around political issues of the time, primarily Vietnam. His third novel, Home is set in the Northwest where the protagonist Edward Williams, a historian becomes interested in an Utopian community called Home. This community consisted of anarchists with no government but co-operating to get things done. The novel Home places Williams in the middle of two academic controversies, while he is researching the historical community home. One is a sexual harassment case and the other is a battle over the appointment of a professor to a prestigious chair. Adam has written knowledgeably about the internal squabbles and jockeying for position among the faculty and the administrative staff.

Other academic novels which deal especially with Women and Education are Other Men’s Daughters by Richard Stern, The Small Room by May Sarton, Crampton Hodnet by Barbara Pym. The Professor by Charlotte Bronte and Professor Romeo by Anne Bernays. Carol Shield’s Swann is a satire of the making of an academic industry out of the discovery of an obscure Woman poet. Gail Godwin’s The Odd Woman addresses gender issues within the academe. Henry James’ The Aspern Papers and Nabokov’s The Real Life of Sebastain Knight focuses on issues related to scholarship. The Crown of Columbus by Louise Erdich and Michael Dorris, Death in a Tenured position by Amanda Cross, The Odd Woman by Gail Godwin, Miss Giardino by Darothy Bayant, Stepping by
Nanvy Thayer and *The Women's Room* by Marilyn French all deal with the situation of Women in academe.

*Double Yoke* by Buchi Emechta (Nigerian writer) deals with a village girl going to college, how she negotiates her way through harassment at college with a professor and how she becomes a person in the eye of her boyfriend as her relationship with him circumvents his expectations.

Lisa Shapiro’s *The Color of Winter* is a lesbian academic novel. Another academic novel dealing with women and education is Dorothy L. Sayers *Gaudy Night*. Further Rebecca Goldstein’s *The Mind / Body Problem* deals with being a student and then being married to an academic. Alice Kohler’s *A Solitary Woman* deals with herself, of how she dropped out of a Ph.D. program in philosophy in order to explore her own philosophical and educational quest alone. Adhaf Soueif has written a very powerful novel, *In the Eye of the Sun* which tells the story of a young Egyptian woman Asya and her graduate study in England. Another Canadian Academic novel is *My Sister’s Keeper* by Nora Kelly set in a women’s studies Department in a Canadian University.
One American Academic Novel in a lighter Vein is Sister Safety Pin by Larrie Sprecher. It is a really enjoyable novel about a female, punk lesbian in a graduate school. And almost all of Carolyn Feillbrun’s novels have an academic setting.

Another Branch of the Academic Novel is Academic Mysteries. These novels tend to avoid explicit violence but lend themselves to satire and to the question who done it? Almost all the academic mysteries take a very keen look at the eccentricities of those in academic life. Some of the Academic Mysteries are Robert Barnard’s School for Murder.

School for Murder exhibits British School tradition by using the pedants and crackpots at a private day academe as subjects for a murderous comedy of manners. In Matricide at St. Martha’s Ruth Dudley Edwards introduces to Jack Troutbeck a woman of strong convictions. She is called in to head a troubled Woman’s college. The humor is broad and aimed at political correctness in academe.

Another Satiric look at academe comes from Robert Grudin in Book, where Professor Adam Snell disappears a few days before his post tenure interview. Here the target is not only at pedants and bureaucrats but also at those who make their living by theorizing about books
instead of reading them. Other academic mysteries include Michael Innis *Death at the President’s Lodging*, D.J.H Jones’ *Murder at the MLA* and *Murder in the New Age*. Lev Raphael has so far written two novels about gay professor Nick Hoffman. *Let’s get criminal* and *The Edith Wharton Murders*. Both the novels are wickedly funny satires of the power play among academics. All these novels could make a wonderful subject for research on the Academic Mystery novels.

Sanford Pinsker has written an article called “who cares if Roger Ackroyd gets tenure?” in the *Partisan Review* of summer 1999. In this article he says that the academic novel has begun to gain recognition and this is because of the marked improvement in the style of writer. He says though the form is as old as Aristophanes’s *The Clouds* where Socrates is held up to ridicule as a man riding through the heavens in a basket, the most recent novel by L’ Heurex *The Handmaid of Desire* is quite interesting. L’ Heurex takes a hard and satiric look at a handful of academic feminists. He describes a meeting thus:

There was the gay Dean and the Lesbian Dean, a sort of androgynous duo, whose clothes and hair and dress and indeed even their features seemed remarkably alike...Originally there had been only a single Dean for both gays and lesbians, but the lesbian had complained that
this was a clear case of penile hegemony and so a lesbian Dean had been appointed (Pinsker: 439).

Pinsker is of the view that L’Heurex has got the more unsettling truths in a single paragraph than most critical studies of the educational follies manage to unpack in fifteen or sixteen earnestly written chapters. This, according to him, has been the main reason for the increase in readers of academic novels. Again Richard Russo in his *Straight Man* has made a remarkable comment on faculty meetings through the mouth of the chair person, William Henry Devereaux, Jr., who projects the view that despite having endured endless faculty meetings, I can’t remember the last time anyone changed his (or her!) mind as a result of reasoned discourse.

Pinsker argues that:

Such manufactured fictional excitement is perhaps the nub of why novels about campus life continue to have such an intrinsic appeal, for what we get is not academic life as it actually is, but rather a heightened highly patterned alternative (Pinsker: 452).
This could be the reason why academic novels are appealing to us. One way of describing this effect might be to call it comic relief says Pinsker. But whatever be the name of the effect, that academic novels appeal to all especially to university folks cannot be denied. The American Academic Novel has come a long way, beginning with the traditional kind of novels like Irving stone’s *Pageant of youth* (1933) wherein we have a young man disillusioned with the hoary educational practices upto Barth’s *Giles Goat Boy* which has the audacity to ridicule all our educational pursuits; there have been a variety of academic novels dealing with students, professors and professors’ wives. But each novel is unique in its own way as it has contributed to what the American Academic novel is today.