
CHAPTER 2

HIGH IDEALISM: *GOODBYE, COLUMBUS*

Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories, published in 1959, was the first book written by Philip Roth and it won him the 1960 National Book Award for Fiction. The book, including *Goodbye, Columbus* and some other short stories was acclaimed widely as a serious work of fiction testifying to the earnest artistic purpose of a young and ambitious novelist. Some of the stories ("The Conversion of the Jews", "Defender of the Faith" and "Eli, the Fanatic") evoked an unfavourable reaction among the critics and the Rabbis owing to some controversial reference to the Jewish culture and tradition. But in the very first book, Roth manifested in certain and unambiguous terms his ethical concerns and moral preoccupations.

The novella *Goodbye, Columbus* is the most interesting and popular of all the stories contained in the book. It narrates the tale of a brief love affair between Neil Klugman, a young man from Newark, and Brenda Patimkin, a rich and pampered suburban girl from an affluent Jewish family. In his attempt to cross the social and economic boundaries for the purpose of the consummation of his love, Neil faces the clash of his value system with that upheld by the affluent Patimkins. When he is at close quarters with them, he discovers the moral barrenness under the glittering facade. Neil is a novice and idealistic initiate who is equally confused by the spiritually hollow life of the successful suburban Jews and the inherent

value system of a "nice Jewish boy" who is never oblivious of his roots in Newark.¹ The affluent world of Short Hills, no doubt, fascinates him to begin with, but his experiences with Patimkins and their shallow value system cause such intense repulsion and moral indignation that Neil prefers to withdraw unobtrusively into his Newark ghetto life. In order to preserve his moral integrity and identity, he ultimately chooses to sacrifice his love. Brenda has naturally inherited and represents these false values. She has her full share of carnal pleasures and enjoyments to which she is accustomed and myopically – she is myopic literally – thinks that she has a legitimate and moral right to do so. From the very beginning she is shown to be a "practical girl".² Jay L. Halio pertinently remarks: "She knows her attractions, and she knows how to use them."³ The choice between her rich parents at Short Hills and the poor librarian from Newark to her is rather simple and easy. She prefers to wallow in the comforts and luxuries provided by her parents leaving, inadvertently, permanent lacerations on Neil's psyche.

But the superficial simplicity of the story is deceptive hiding underneath the complex social and moral issues. Judith Paterson Jones and Guinevera A. Nance find the narrative permeated by "the summer-romance theme and the vacation atmosphere."⁴ On the other hand, Sanford Pinsker is of the opinion that despite the apparent theme of love the novella's "real concerns are socioeconomic rather than erotic."⁵ In *Goodbye, Columbus*, Roth

explores the ethical instincts and motivations of the protagonist with rare earnestness and intensity. Neil does not seem to have any preconceived designs in making his advances towards Brenda. He falls headlong in love with her as is evidently clear in the first few pages of the novella. His feelings of love are genuine and sincere. It will perhaps be preposterous to suppose that Neil is trying to win Brenda with the ulterior motives of crossing "the hundred and eighty feet that the suburbs rose in altitude above Newark" (8). The love affair begins suddenly, unexpectedly and spontaneously:

The first time I saw Brenda she asked me to hold her glasses. Then she stepped out to the edge of the diving board and looked foggily into the pool; it could have been drained, myopic Brenda would never have known it. ... I watched her move off. Her hands suddenly appeared behind her. She caught the bottom of her suit between thumb and index finger and flicked what flesh had been showing back where it belonged. My blood jumped.

That night, before dinner, I called her.(3)

Obviously, prior to his arrival in the dreamland of Short Hills Neil's sole obsession is his love. But once in Short Hills, he is overawed by the "Horn of Plenty" in this world of materialistic luxury and abundance.⁶ The suburb, with cool climate, sprawling lawns, sporting goods and refrigerators

full of fresh fruits is in sharp contrast to the hot, congested, and poor Newark of Aunt Gladys. It seems as if the inhabitants of Short Hills "refuse" to share the very texture of life with those of us outside" (8). He knows that he is an outsider in Short Hills, but in order to experience fulfilment of his love he sleeps with her in her own house. It is noteworthy that Brenda savours the sensual part of their love more greedily as she is more inclined to hedonistic pleasures. For Neil the sexual part is a complementary act for the consummation of their love while for Brenda the pleasure derived from the sexual act itself is the sole objective. In fact, sexual indulgence and moral guilt is a recurrent theme in Roth's fiction. Some of his later heroes like Portnoy and David Kepesh also indulge in sexual gratifications but with the difference that they have to suffer horribly the pangs of guilt owing to their inherent ethical values. Brenda does not seem to be guarded by any such ethical barrier and is driven solely by her hedonistic instincts.

Neil has been criticised by different critics as a clever Jew aspiring to the wealth of the Patimkins. Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr. tries to convince us that he is a crafty and manipulative young man strategically trying to win Brenda to fulfil his dream of success. According to him, if the *u* in Klugman is pronounced long rather than short in Yiddish, it means "clever fellow."⁷ But it seems a far-fetched assumption. The name 'Neil Klugman' has been twisted by critics to connote a number of meanings. John N. McDaniel interprets the word as meaning "sadfellow" bringing to mind "the cry of the Jewish immigrant, cursing the unkept promises of the new world."⁸ Though Neil cherishes the dream of success and, during his stay in Short Hills,

occasionally assumes the role of the inheritor of Ben Patimkin's wealth, his sole objective, however, is the consummation of his love on ethical terms. Actually, his postponement of the marriage proposal to Brenda may be partly due to his disappointment at the absence of his cherished ethical values in the world of Brenda and her family.

Jones and Nance, comparing Neil to T.S. Eliot's Prufrock in his hesitation and inaction, point out that he is in "a kind of limbo"⁹ drifting "through his love affair and his job with the same lack of commitment to permanency."¹⁰ To understand his confusion and dilemma it is necessary to see his love for Brenda and his romantic dream of an affluent life in different perspectives. His love for Brenda is genuine, sincere and not qualified by any overt or covert condition. On some occasions he is obsessed with her idea to such a degree that he avoids even Aunt Gladys whom he adores. In such moments he "didn't care for anything but Brenda"(16-17). At the same time like the hero in contemporary American fiction, he wishes to rise socially and economically. Though this is not an obsession in his case, its presence cannot be denied. But it is preposterous to link this element of ambition with his ultimate search for higher ethical values.

The conflict in Neil's mind is two-fold. Initially, his romantic idealism is seen to be in clash with the superficial way of life in Short Hills. Later on, he gradually comes to comprehend the truth of the pampered and irresponsible personality of Brenda herself. But in the meantime his emotional attachment with her has grown so deep that he finds it difficult to

disengage himself. After the dream sequence where he alongwith the Negro boy waves adieu to the native women, it is amply clear that his love is doomed to failure. When Brenda manages to extend his stay in her house for another week he reflects:

This should have made me overjoyed, but ... I was not joyful but disturbed, as I had been more and more with the thought that when Brenda went back to Radcliffe, that would be the end for me. I was convinced that even Miss Winney's stool was not high enough for me to see clear up to Boston. Nevertheless, I tossed my clothing back into the drawer and was able, finally, to tell myself that there'd been no hints of ending our affair from Brenda, and any suspicions I had, any uneasiness, was spawned in my own uncertain heart."

(75-76)

Yet, he obsessively runs after Brenda only to confront the reality of her love in the hotel room when she categorically and unambiguously declares her choice to desert him in favour of her parents and the comfortable life they can buy for her. At this crucial juncture he has to make his final choice. Instead of pursuing dream-like Brenda he prefers to preserve his selfhood and identity.

Neil, like Gabe Wallach, Peter Tarnopol, Nathan Zuckerman and David Kepesh is an intellectual and sensitive young man, highly conscious of his moral responsibilities. Though he has been a student of philosophy his

motives are almost invariably guided by his heart-felt instincts instead of logic. He falls in love with Brenda instinctively and, significantly enough, before he has a real glimpse of the dazzling life of Short Hills. He is swept off his feet by its prosperity and luxury so glaringly in contrast with the gloomy Newark of Aunt Gladys:

I opened the door of the old refrigerator; it was not empty. No longer did it hold butter, eggs, herring in cream sauce, ginger ale, tuna fish salad, an occasional corsage – rather it was heaped with fruit, shelves swelled with it, every color, every texture, and hidden within, every kind of pit. There were greengage plums, black plums, red plums, apricots, nectarines, peaches, long horns of grapes, black, yellow, red, and cherries, cherries flowing out of boxes and staining everything scarlet. And there were melons – cantaloupes and honeydews – and on the top shelf, half of a huge watermelon, a thin sheet of wax paper clinging to its bare red face like a wet lip. Oh Patimkin! Fruit grew in their refrigerator and sporting goods dropped from their trees! (43)

But before long he realizes the vacuity and meaninglessness of their life. He comes face to face with the moral and spiritual degeneration of American *nouveaux riches*. Brenda turns out to be a spoiled and lazy girl who does not know "what a day's work means" (64). She is always found playing games, eating or enjoying sexual pleasures with Neil. Julie, the younger

sister, always wants to win without any effort and hates Neil when he deliberately defeats her. Instantly, she turns malicious and accuses him venomously: "You cheat! And you were stealing fruit!"(45). Her brother, Ronald, totally unaware of the hard and painful realities of a less fortunate life, lives complacently on material comforts provided by his father. Not surprisingly, Mr.Patimkin and his wife, proud of their ascent to the suburban Short Hills from the Jewish Ghetto of Newark, evaluate every human value in terms of money. Mr.Patimkin writes in his letter to Brenda, "I love you honey if you want a coat I'll buy You a coat" (127). The Patimkins have replaced the humanistic values of love, charity and generosity with shallow and vulgar display of wealth.

In the suburban Short Hills, Neil is so acutely and painfully conscious of the difference in social and economic status of Patimkins and his own that he sometimes feels a dualism in his motives regarding his love for Brenda. He feels "suddenly angry" when Brenda tells him that they lived in Newark "when I [she] was a baby" (12). Thus, the rich suburban life of the Patimkins is, paradoxical though it may seem, a hindrance in the consummation of his love. Later, when Brenda again refers to Newark, Neil thinks that he "did not want to voice a word that would lift the cover and reveal that hideous emotion I always felt for her, and is the underside of love"(27). This "hideous emotion" is related to his dislike of all the hypocrisy, artificiality and lack of emotional depth which she has in her personality. The fact that the Patimkins were the inhabitants of Newark before their dream of success came true stirs that chord in his heart which

ties him to Brenda. Though the Newarkian milieu is not depicted in detail in the novella, its presence is always hovering in the mind of Neil. That is why some critics think that the story is about the "class conflict" between the "have-nots of Newark" and "the haves of Short Hills."¹¹ The fact which is generally overlooked is that Brenda has imbibed all the shallow and superficial values from her family about which Neil comes to know gradually through his intimacy with her in her own house.

Brenda does not seem to have the slightest exposure to the cruelty and suffering of the world outside her orbit of complacency and comforts. That she is more a fairy than an earthly being is suggested in the imagery used by the author in his description of her personality. When Neil kisses her for the first time he feels a "fluttering of wings – tiny wings no bigger than her breasts"(14). She is unable to see beyond her hedonistic and carnal desires and their fulfilment. She can deceive and manipulate her parents when it suits her purpose. In this respect, she seems to be a precursor of some later heroines of Roth, like Mary Jane Reed, Sharon Shatsky, and Birgitta Svanstromi who obsessively hanker after sexual pleasures. She is more interested in Neil's body than any other virtue in his personality. Her philosophy of love is reflected on the occasion when she asks Neil whether he loves her. When he does not give any answer she says, "I'll sleep with you whether you do or not, so tell me the truth" (51). Neil is naturally surprised that she has not "asked me anything about me" (18). She is only interested in the pursuit of her sensual gratification. There is also a hint of her flirtation with Luther Ferrari "whom Brenda had

dated for a whole year in high school" (55). After her quarrel with her mother she takes Neil to a room in her house and frantically searches for the money her father had hidden for her for a rainy day. Her animal instincts are suggested in her posture: "She was on her hands and knees in front of the sofa and was holding up its paunch to peek beneath" (67). Unable to find the money there, "among the disarrangement and dirt" she at once directs Neil to make love to her there and then and Neil obeys her (68). This episode amply demonstrates her moral vacuity, which manifests itself in either materialistic acquisition or sexual gratification. The imagery and diction employed by the author strongly evokes the image of Kurtz, the protagonist of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, who is seen "crawling on all fours" in the wilderness of Africa for materialistic acquisition.¹²

Quite naturally, the choice for Brenda is clear after the discovery of the diaphragm by her mother. Neil accuses her of leaving it in her room intentionally to break off their relation while she pleads that she left it there just by chance. But whether she put it there deliberately or by chance is beside the point. Whereas Neil is ready to accept her without the social and economic status attached to the Patimkins, the thought of choosing him at the expense of her family is totally unacceptable to her. Thus, it is evidently clear that given her family background and frivolous nature she is least likely to feel any pangs of remorse and guilt while deserting him.

But the dilemma in Neil's mind is more complex. That the love affair with Brenda is doomed to failure dawns upon him as early as the opening lines of section six of the novella. But his firm faith in his love still moves him

forward. He is susceptible more to the exhortations of his heart than to the calculations of his mind. He naively hopes for those values in Brenda which she sadly lacks and the poignant realization of this fact makes him more wretched. After the affair is over he ruminates: "If she had only been slightly *not* Brenda ... but then would I have loved her?"(136). What he does not realize at this initial stage of his ethical quest is that Brenda is an epitome of those false values which form an integral part of contemporary American society. Sometimes he sees himself in the role of Mr. Patimkin's son-in-law and partner in his wealth. When he goes to Mr. Patimkin's office to fetch some silver patterns for Mrs. Patimkin, he toys with this idea: "Suddenly I could see myself directing the Negroes – I would have an ulcer in an hour"(91-92). For one thing, such scenes are comic in nature. Secondly, whenever he visualizes himself as part of the Patimkins he feels doubtful of the compatibility of the satiety of his acquisitive self with his determination to keep intact his moral integrity. In his initiation into the social and moral experience, Neil is similar to such American heroes as Twain's Huck Finn, Melville's Ahab, Fitzgerald's Gatsby and Hemingway's Nick Adams. His confrontation with social reality assumes that "form of initiation", to use Hassan's words, the end of which is "confirmation."¹³ The protagonist in *Goodbye, Columbus* is at the initial stage of his ethical evolution. After disengaging himself from his messy love relationship he would have gained valuable insight into the social reality and his own motives.

Neil's disillusionment with the American social reality is juxtaposed with the dehumanization of Leo Patimkin – the half brother of Ben Patimkin – who

is among the guests on the occasion of Ronald's wedding. It is not without purpose that Roth makes Neil, of all the guests present there, to hear the long discourse of Leo, a typical Jewish failure like Bellow's Tommy Wilhelm. Like Willy Loman of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* he is a salesman and travels long distances to sell bulbs. He represents the cosmopolitan Jew ever exploring new fields and opportunities: "For the world was Leo's territory, every city, ever swamp, every road and highway(118). He is an embodiment of the shattered dreams and thwarted desires of modern man in materialistic American society. His poverty and helplessness is in sharp contrast with the vulgar display of newly acquired wealth by the Patimkins at Ronald's wedding. Under the soothing effect of champagne he confesses to Neil: "Everything good in my life I can count on my fingers!" (116) His strange kinship with Neil derives partly from the innate sadness of not belonging to the charming social circle of Short Hills. However, Halio's attempt to trace the figure of a schlemiel in Neil does not seem to be justified, as Neil is too sophisticated and sober to fit such a figure (14). Through the figure of Leo, Roth brings into sharp focus Neil's disinclination to be a passive victim like the former. He seems to suggest Neil's firm commitment to his ethical values despite the temptation and demands of his circumstances. Leo, on the other hand, displays all the attributes of a schlemiel. He is victimized by his circumstances, yet he manages to survive in his society with his antics.

A more striking parallel of Neil is to be found in the Negro boy who visits the Newark Public Library frequently to look at the Gauguin paintings.



"Man, that's the fuckin life", he exclaims in euphoria, watching the exotic paintings of native women of Tahiti island (37). The beautiful life painted in the book is out of reach of the Negro boy and the Short Hills suburban life is a distant dream for Neil. Both are denied the materialization of their dream of a rich life. Later, Neil's ruminations reflect a similar sense of surprise and awe at the splendour of Short Hills which he "could see now, in my mind's eye, at dusk, rose-colored, like a Gauguin stream" (38). Pinsker thinks that the Negro boy is an alter ego of Neil. Pinsker further observes, "Also, his alternating bravado and uneasiness at the library is a mirror image of Klugman's own behaviour in the alien ground of Short Hills."¹⁵ Moreover, Neil recognizes his identification with the boy by securing for him the book even at the risk of offending other readers. Again, their identification is reinforced in the dream scene where the boat carrying them is moving away from the seashore. The Negro boy accuses him for this disaster while Neil tells him that it was his fault because he did not have a library card. But definitely they were moving "further and further from the island" which symbolizes their lost paradise (75).

As has already been pointed out, Roth's ethical tenets have their roots in family and society. For him human relationships in family and society reflect, testify and affirm ethical and moral values. Though Roth's main emphasis is on man-woman relationship, he is also concerned about parents-children relationship in his fiction. In almost all of his novels, he focuses upon this vital bond. For him the import of ethical choices can best be explored and understood in filial relationships.

In his books, Roth has delineated parents-children relationship in all its intricacy and complexity. At one end of the ethical spectrum is the tender, affectionate and dutiful son in *Patrimony*, while at the other end is Lucy Nelson, the heroine of *When She Was Good*, with her burning hatred and disgust for her father. In *Goodbye, Columbus*, Neil's parents are represented by Aunt Gladys who is a virtuous, hardworking and responsible lady. Though she has not much role in the narrative, she is an epitome of humanitarian virtues. Halio rightly remarks that "she is not merely a figure of fun but a standard of humanity" against which other characters loose their lusture.¹⁶ She is a stereotypical Jewish mother figure though she lacks the possessiveness and overprotectiveness of Sophie Portnoy of *Portnoy's Complaint*. Neil is tender and affectionate to her even though he has a tendency to be wary of her parental authority and carefully avoids any encroachment upon his personal freedom.

Conversely, in the case of the Patimkins money seems to be the criterion through which all human relations are evaluated. Brenda loves her parents (particularly her doting father) and owes them her unqualified loyalty because of the material goods she receives from them. Not surprisingly, she sometimes nurses bitter feelings towards her mother because her stern attitude poses a barrier in the fulfilment of her wayward desires. In exchange for the comfortable life provided to their children, Mr.Patimkin and his wife demand a particular kind of conduct from them. They are naturally disturbed when they learn about the sexual intimacy between their daughter and Neil. Mrs. Patimkin writes in her letter: "But

you drifted away from your family, even though we sent you to the best schools and gave you the best money could buy" (129). Similar is the case with Julio and Ronald, who are the typical product of the affluent upper class American society. Roth painstakingly depicts the family life of the Patimkins to imply that his protagonists embark upon their quest for their identity from the ambience of the oldest social institution devised by mankind. In this respect Roth is certainly distinct from many of his contemporaries whose heroes act in the orbit of their loneliness. For Roth, family relationships are pivotal for affirmation and verification of individual moral values. But it must be admitted that the canvas of *Goodbye, Columbus* is too small to allow the portrayal of the intricacies of familial relations in detail as found in such later novels as *Letting Go*, *When She Was Good*, *Portnoy's Complaint* and *The Professor of Desire*.

Various critics have pointed out a disturbing lack of commitment in Neil's character. For example, Ben Siegel points out that Neil is "determinedly uncommitted" towards his surroundings and his "lack of purpose prevents his accepting, rejecting or defining either his Jewishness or his social role."¹⁷ Similarly, Jones and Nance remark that due to his "incapacity for commitment", Neil goes on procrastinating his marriage proposal to Brenda.¹⁸ This seems to be a flaw in his character that he has no concrete idea regarding his future course of action. He himself admits frankly that he is not a "planner" (51) though he is certain that the "library was not going to be my lifework" (32). His love affair does not seem to be guided by any preconceived and ulterior motive other than his instincts.

The romance which began so spontaneously eventually leads to his sharp realization of the need for preservation of his identity in spiritually barren and affluent world of Short Hills. Neil is morbidly aware of the ghetto life in Newark awaiting him after the summer vacations. But despite a seeming non-seriousness of purpose on his part there is no apparent indication of the possibility of his compromise with his innate moral values, howsoever fascinating the suburban dream may be.

Neil's commitment to his intrinsic value system sometimes manifests itself in the form of mild outburst of anger and indignation at the most trivial hint of moral blemish on him. In the dream sequence when the boat is moving away from the seashore the Negro boy "shouted at me that it was my fault and I shouted it was his for not having a library card"(74). In Brenda's house he sometimes "felt like Carlota [the maid-servant]; no, not even as comfortable as that"(40). Similarly, when Julie displays some misgivings about his eating the fruit from their refrigerator he mercilessly defeats her as if to take revenge. Whether with his colleagues in the library or with the Patimkins in Short Hills, he steadfastly adheres to his moral values and is not willing to conform to the forces of normalcy. Seen in this context, the affluence of the Patimkins turns out to be a hindrance in the fulfilment of his love. Therefore, in his own heart the conflicting instincts – his love for Brenda and his dream of success – seem to overlap.

Later in the novel, instead of making his marriage proposal Neil asks Brenda to get a diaphragm. Initially, she shows her reluctance to use the

device, yet finally on his insistence she agrees. Unfortunately, it is discovered by her mother in her room. Though Neil has a foreboding of the failure of their love relation when Brenda manipulates to extend his stay in their house for another week, the shock comes with full force in their last meeting in the hotel room. Brenda shows him her parents' letters which leave no doubt about the hypocrisy of their value system. Mr. Patimkin's reaction, though mild and enwrapped in a somewhat false assurance of freedom to his children, clearly and unambiguously conveys the message that Brenda should have nothing to do with Neil in future: "As for your mistake it takes Two to make a mistake and now that you will be away at school and from him and what you got involved in you will probably do all right I have every faith you will" (127). As for Mrs. Patimkin's letter, it is more sarcastic and malicious as she does not approve of Brenda's wayward and irresponsible behaviour from the very beginning. She candidly gives vent to her sense of shock and disbelief on such horrid conduct of her daughter as well as Neil: "That the two of you should be carrying on like that in our very house I will never in my life be able to understand"(129). Particularly in the matter of money and sexual conduct her mother's response derives from the remnants of a Jewish value system inherited from her old Newark background.

In the hotel room, the interchange between Neil and Brenda brings into sharp focus the ethical choices each has to make at this crucial juncture of their love affair. Neil's accusation that Brenda deliberately left the diaphragm in his room brings to surface his subconscious apprehensions

regarding her preferences for a luxurious life. Almost convinced of the failure of their love relation, Neil directly throws the question to Brenda. The following interchange of words clearly brings out their conflicts and priorities:

"Neil, be realistic. After this, can I bring you home? Can you see us all sitting around the table?"

"I can't if you can't, and I can if you can".

"Are you going to speak Zen, for God's sake!"

"Brenda, the choices aren't mine. You can bring Linda or me. You can go home or not go home. That's another choice. Then you don't even have to worry about choosing between me and Linda."

"Neil, you don't understand. They are still my parents. They did send me to the best schools, didn't they? They have given me everything I've wanted, haven't they?"(133-34).

Neil is ready to accept Brenda if only she reciprocates his love irrespective of her social and economic status. If Neil had been clever and crafty and had any intentions to use her, he certainly would have tried to persuade and manipulate her. He is prepared to face his ultimate fate, which he has been apprehending probably for a long time. It might appear that lack of a determined pursuit of his love is the reason of his postponement of his marriage proposal to Brenda till it is too late. But it is his idealism

that prevents him to cultivate those pragmatic traits in his character which are necessary for survival in the upper class society of Short Hills. In contrast, Brenda is not troubled by any ethical dilemma in her mind regarding the choice between Neil and her parents. She chooses her parents who are capable of providing her the necessary security and material well-being in life.

Regarding the termination of the love affair there are different versions offered by different critics. McDaniel observes: "In rejecting Brenda, he has lost a dream and gained a sad insight into the shallowness of his quest."¹⁹ He has realized the futility of Mr. Patimkin's wealth in attaining spiritual harmony and prepares to embark upon his moral quest with renewed vigour and determination. Rodgers is of the opinion that Neil's plans to grab Mr. Patimkin's riches through Brenda have "backfired."²⁰ And it is she who has rejected him and not vice versa. This line of contention appears flawed. Brenda apparently rejects him in favour of her parents on the occasion of their last meeting in the hotel room. But prior to her decision, Neil clearly demonstrates his utter disgust with the value system she and her family have chosen. Though his encounter with social reality in search of ethical and spiritual harmony has proved futile, yet his gains in awareness of the nature of conflict between his self and the outer reality cannot be underestimated.

Standing in front of the Lamont Library (which, ironically, "had Patimkin Sinks in its rest rooms")(135), Neil tries to analyse the failure of his love affair:

I simply looked at myself in the mirror the light made of the window. I was only that substance, I thought, those limbs, that face that I saw in front of me. I looked, but the outside of me gave up little information about the inside of me. ... What was it inside me that had turned pursuit and clutching into love, and then turned it inside out again? What was it that had turned winning into losing, and losing – who knows – into winning? I was sure I had loved Brenda, though standing there, I knew I couldn't any longer. And I knew it would be a long while before I made love to anyone the way I had made love to her (135-36).

Initially, Neil was not able to visualize in their true perspectives the two most forceful motives in his heart – love for Brenda and his dream of a high social and economic life. It appears that now he is gaining an insight into the gap between his apparent engagement in frivolous pursuits and the reality of his inner moral and ethical being. His deeply ingrained idealistic values come in the way of his winning his love. Though he has lost Brenda, he has kept intact his selfhood and moral identity which were at stake in his pursuit of Brenda. He neither compromises his values nor succumbs to any acquisitive temptations in his spiritual quest. This is his ethical triumph and it promises him an assurance of self-realization and the possibilities of survival as a human entity in the contemporary reality. In *Goodbye, Columbus* the Rothian hero has emerged stronger and more determined from his conflicts and struggles, and is certainly better equipped to involve in, and commit himself to the social reality in the next novel, *Letting Go*.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (New York: Farrar, 1975) 37.
- ² Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*, 30th Anniversary ed. (Boston: Houghton, 1989) 7. All subsequent citations will be to the text as given in this edition and the page numbers will be indicated in parentheses appearing immediately after the quotation.
- ³ Jay L. Halio, *Philip Roth Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1992) 21.
- ⁴ Judith Paterson Jones and Guinevera A Nance, *Philip Roth* (New York: Ungar, 1981) 13.
- ⁵ Sanford Pinsker, *The Comedy That 'Hoits': An Essay on the Fiction of Philip Roth* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1975) 5.
- ⁶ W.B. Yeats, "A Prayer for My Daughter", *W.B. Yeats: Selected Poetry*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: Pan, 1974) 101.
- ⁷ Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., *Philip Roth* (Boston: Twayne, 1978) 45.
- ⁸ John N. McDaniel, *The Fiction of Philip Roth* (Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield, 1974) 74.
- ⁹ Jones and Nance 16.
- ¹⁰ Jones and Nance 13.
- ¹¹ Pinsker 7.
- ¹² Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 93.
- ¹³ Ihab Hassan, *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961) 35.

¹⁴ Halio 15.

¹⁵ Pinsker 10.

¹⁶ Halio 21.

¹⁷ Ben Siegel, "Jewish Fiction and the Affluent Society", *Northwest Review* 4 (Spring 1961): 91.

¹⁸ Jones and Nance 13.

¹⁹ McDaniel 74.

²⁰ Rodgers 42.