

TREATMENT OF SOCIAL TRANSGRESSION IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF PHILIP ROTH: A STUDY

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Abstract

This present research paper, entitled “Treatment of Social Transgression in the Select Novels of Philip Roth: A Study,” aims to explore Philip Roth’s treatment of transgression and narrative methods. This study examines Philip Roth’s representation of transgression and fiction with reference to his novels *Letting Go*, *Portnoy’s Complaint*, *My Life as a Man*, and *Operation Shylock*. In the process, the study traces the evolution of Philip Roth as a novelist and how far his works reflect the culture and struggles of his time. His creativity is focused on the cultural and transgressional implications of Philip Roth’s experience and imagination. The primary objective of this study is to describe cultural experience through a study of novels by Philip Roth. A second objective is to identify the changes that his creative sensibility underwent during his literary career. This situates certain tyrannical issues within the theoretical field of the representation of social transgression and investigates the intersection of culture and politics explored in the novels chosen for the study by Philip Roth.

Keywords: Psychosocial Dimension, Adolescence, Transgressive, Psychoanalytic Confession, Assimilation, Identity Politics

INTRODUCTION

The research paper titled “Treatment of Social Transgression in the Select Novels of Philip Roth: A Study” investigates Philip Roth’s select novels: *Letting Go*, *Portnoy’s Complaint*, *My Life as a Man*, and *Operation Shylock* with reference to transgressional representation. This paper deals with Philip Roth’s conjunction of transgression and his art of narrativization. Philip Roth is a post-modern Jewish American novelist who was born in New York, New Jersey, on March, 19, 1933. Roth is one of the most prolific Jewish diasporic writers among the contemporary writers of the American Jewish diaspora. He has credited his popularity to his fictional content, mastery techniques, and dexterous use of language. His stories are about the trials and tribulations of the American Jewish diaspora as they struggle to find their cultural identity in a fractured society. Cultural dislocation, cultural identity, and the quest for identity are major themes of his writings. As a writer, Roth is gifted with the extraordinary ability to discuss very sensitive aspects of human life and cultural identity tactfully. The way, he narrates each and every aspect of cultural identity is really wonderful.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to trace the social transgressions among the Jewish people in American society, through the writing of Philip Roth's select novels. The present research study is an exploration of social realism and moralistic views. This study brings out social infringements in Philip Roth's selected novels: *Letting Go*, *Portnoy's Complaint*, *My Life as a Man*, and *Operation Shylock*. *The purpose of this research is to investigate the reality of human beings' day-to-day life experiences, but the events do not lead people to live morally.* This paper examines the problems between familial relationships, especially married couples, and parents and children. This study concentrates on how Roth has sincerely interpreted his lines that motivate an uplifted and enlightened life.

This research paper examines the recurring theme of social transgression in Roth's 1967 novel *Portnoy's Complaint*. In his recent, explicitly postmodernist work, there is also a section on transgression. His narratives' psychosocial dimension is of particular interest. This paper demonstrates that, in the end, transgression allows Roth to enter resistant domains and go where he feels socially and psychologically excluded. Roth constructs his novel house from the outside or the inside, based on the dynamic relationship between mainstream experience and his Jewish-American self. Life as a Jewish-American is also characterised by rebellion and being an existential outcast. As will be seen, defining Roth's place as a novelist in the cultural field of American life has intriguing implications for the value of the category "Jewish-American writer" when studying second and third-generation writers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research paper presents review of literature related to the major critical works done on the selected novels. This paper provides the major controlling ideas of the research. It also supplies survey of literature and establishes, how the present research deviates from other critics in the appraisal of critical texts written on chosen works. This paper describes objective of the study and limitation of the study. The present study is a modest attempt and proposes to examine the predominant features of Roth's chosen novels. The objective of the study is a re-evaluation of Jewish social issues and social injustices as shown in select novels in the present context, and the scope of the study is limited to four novels dealing with the multifaceted social problems.

Paule levy's article "The Text as Homeland: A Reading of Philip Roth's *The Counter life* and *Operation Shylock*" (2002) explores Philip Roth's forefather's native land Israel. Even though Philip Roth is a third generation Jewish American his writings describe that, he is a Jew. *The Counterlife* and *Operation Shylock*, two highly notorious novels, published in 1986 and 1993, are brilliant reorchestrations of Roth's familiar themes and mark a turning point in his career. In this paper Paule Levy depicts that how much strong passion Roth having on his native. Paule Levy has described issues of antisemitism and Zionism. This paper explains Israel's intelligence agency Mossad and how, it has played vital role in Roth's *Operation Shylock*. The researcher probes further into the complexity of Jewish identity and history. This paper decodes a mixture of fictional elements, historical reference and autobiography fragments.

Alan Segal's article "*Portnoy's Complaint* and the *Sociology of Literature*" explores the present condition of Jewish society. In this research paper, the researcher incorporates sociological accounts of literature have used fiction merely as illustrative of sociological theories, concepts and schemes of analysis, adding little to sociological theory and impoverishing richness of the literary work. The Marxist theory of literature has been explored in this paper the new genre of the novel as a representation, in one form or another, of the increasing tensions of early capitalist society, and such literature serves to illustrate or confirm the Marxist theory of history.

Alan W. France's article "Reconsideration: Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus* and the Limits of Commodity Culture" describes a summer romance between a young, lower-middle-class man and the daughter of a wealthy family recently arrived at upper-middle-class status. In this paper follows directly from this difference in achieved social status. Through this paper today's students able to see the poverty of a culture idealizing commodity satisfactions, which continues to bulldoze ethnic and religious traditions to build the shopping malls and entertainment worlds of mass consumption. This work occupies the historically anomalous calm at the end of the post-war era but before the student revolt of the following decade.

With this image the author of this paper presented the limits of the post-war reification of wealth, success, status, and sexual desire.

Maren Scheurer's article "A Psychopathology of Everyday Women: Psychoanalytic Aesthetics and Gender Politics in *Letting Go* and "*The Psychoanalytic Special*" describes psychoanalytic treatments make their first appearances in Roth's work, in *Letting Go* and *The Psychoanalytic Special* they revolve around women suffering in their marriages. In this paper readers could understand the amalgamation of a female point of view, a therapeutic motif, and a psychoanalytic aesthetics produces texts that address feminist issues by teaching readers to look beyond the surface of the patients' words. The author of the paper explains how, Roth translates feminism into psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis into literature thus sheds new light on Roth's and Freud's contested stake in gender politics.

Maggie McKinley's article "I wanted to be humanish: manly, a man": Morality, Shame, and Masculinity in Philip Roth's *My Life as a Man* describes Peter Tarnopol who, is the protagonist of the novel *My Life as a Man*. As Roth strives to achieve a specific masculine ideal, Tarnopol often finds himself torn between a desire to reject the definitions of manhood operative within American society at large and an impulse to embrace this homogenous masculine image, instead discarding what he views as the restrictive definitions of manhood defined by his Jewish heritage. This essay examines the ways in which Tarnopol's attempts to perform a specific version of masculinity are often undermined by the violence he uses to reconcile these contradictory impulses, which can in turn can be understood as arising from his internal struggle with competing notions of shame and morality.

Letting Go: An Analysis

Letting Go The novel, *Letting Go* depicts a social setup with rigid social norms and gender roles that is equally debilitating for men and women. The novel follows two graduate students

of literature in their romantic entanglements to explore these social norms. Gabe Wallach, who attempts a non-marital relationship with divorcee and mother of two Martha Reganhart, and Paul Herz, who marries his girlfriend, Libby. While Gabe's affair with Martha appears to imply that, in the 1950s, neither American society nor the individuals it produces can truly envision or tolerate long-term relationships outside the model provided by traditional marriage, the novel's second storyline, centred on Paul and Libby, demonstrates the failures and miseries that can be encountered within the confines of matrimony. Paul and Libby struggle financially and emotionally after marrying in defiance of both sets of parents, who were unable to reconcile their respective Jewish and Catholic backgrounds. To make matters worse, Paul convinces her to have an abortion in order to avoid further financial difficulties. Paul returns to graduate school, while Libby alternates between bouts of illness, meaningless jobs, and housewife duties.

Libby's subsequent behaviour could be described as neurotic, hysterical, unreasonable, and on the verge of mental collapse. Libby is depicted as clearly monstrous by ideologies that construct her femininity in conformity with virtuous domesticity, rather than as inherently nonsensical. According to Shostak's assessment, Husband describes Libby as a victim of patriarchy. Libby has given up her own career to devote herself to her husband, but because her health and poverty prevent her from being the beautiful and charming domestic creature she is expected to be, she is unhappy and unfulfilled. This analysis can be drawn from the novel as a whole; Roth has created a miniature portrait of Libby's predicament in a single therapeutic session, allowing readers to gain a better understanding of her through psychoanalytic techniques.

Libby's misery can no longer be expressed in words, not least because Paul has repeatedly chastised her for complaining, so she expresses herself through her body and a variety of hysterical symptoms. Roth includes a scene in the novel in which Libby is specifically asked to talk about her misery. The result is unexpected, and not just from Libby's perspective. The brief conversation between her and Lumin is one of the novel's few instances of dialogue producing intersubjective insight rather than incomprehension, ignorance, misunderstanding, or friction. According to the rules of psychoanalysis, free association, and evenly suspended attention, Libby must speak while Lumin must remain mostly silent. Libby notices a fundamental asymmetry in their roles in the encounter.

Lumin is clearly portrayed as the idealised neutral psychoanalyst. The psychoanalyst for Roth appears, but he is unmoved by a thick, fleshy reality, and there is nothing to charm him. Wheedled, begged, tempted, or flirted with. He intervenes once, almost springing from his chair, their faces almost touching, and he actually encourages Libby to speak. Lumin acts as a blank screen, a safe haven for Libby's emotions, and a catalyst for her to abandon the role playing to which she has become accustomed. He lets Libby continue her self-discovery until she confronts and resolves her own contradictions. She bemoans Martha's vulgarity and refers to her as a bitch. Lumin simply asks her to explain after listening to her rant. Roth uses psychoanalytic dialogue to reveal Libby's self-deception, and she eventually realises she is unhappy with her idleness. She realises that, her symptoms could be related to a lack of a fulfilling job. Libby craves an interest, something to take her mind off herself, and she admits

to herself that her husband is the source of her problems. Lumin extracts a proto-feminist analysis of Libby's misery: trapped in an unsatisfactory marriage and unable to find appropriate employment for her intellectual abilities, Libby turns against others and against herself.

Libby is hesitant to admit that she requires assistance. She couldn't think of anything except that if she lay down on the couch, she should take her shoes off first. Her insecurity, self-consciousness, and desire to please everyone by conforming to what is expected of her are highlighted by the triviality of the problem she focuses on. All of these problems stem from the misery that brought her to Lumin. Libby's words and thoughts can thus be easily dismantled as resistance and replaced by new insights. The entire story is filtered through Libby's consciousness, no authorial voice, not even Lumin's, analyses Libby for readers, who are interested in her predicament. Libby's contradictions become so obvious throughout the session that readers are compelled to analyse her for themselves. During the process, they are taught a type of suspicious reading or interpretation as an exercise in suspicion.

Libby's initial narratives, which require them to pay attention to details of the unspoken and nonverbal. It is a mode of interpretation that takes a sceptical stance towards texts in order to extract meanings or implications that were not intended and are therefore inaccessible to both the authors and ordinary readers. Roth employs in his text a variety of techniques to entice all readers, whether they read for academic or personal reasons. Only in this case are readers expected to take that stance, not with regard to Roth's, but with regard to Libby's text and verbal and nonverbal communication. She accomplishes this through the therapeutic dialogue. It is worth noting that, Felski regards suspicious reading as more than just an epistemological or political project. It is an aesthetic one, providing not only knowledge but also pleasure in fashioning new plots out of old ones, connecting the disparate and seemingly unconnected through acts of forging, patterning, and linking. Readers, who start analysing and resynthesizing Libby's story in this way do so not only to learn more about her, but also because the novel invites them to play a game of pleasurable meaning-making.

Libby frequently dismisses her physical reactions, such as a faster heartbeat or a flush. Libby is at odds with her body, which, as the text gradually confirms the reader's suspicions, is the most obvious indicator of her current state. Libby's pronouncements are contrasted with opposing insights into her condition in numerous small instances like these. Roth satirises the European legacy of psychoanalysis, albeit more subtly than Spielvogel. This passage also demonstrates Libby's willingness to project, to imbue a male authority figure with distinguished exoticism and wisdom. Libby is terrified because she knows Lumin will not put up with nonsense. As a result, the therapeutic relationship resembles Libby's relationship with Paul. Paul explains how Libby becomes reliant on him and how she uses guilt to bind him to her.

Libby demonstrates this in her interactions with other men, allowing them to see the connections between her seemingly disparate actions and opinions. Despite Libby's obvious and instant adoration, the terms she uses to describe Lumin, crabby, dumb, pygmy, and butcher, indicate far more ambivalence. She even has a fantasy in which Lumin falls out of the window behind him. Libby's admiration for male authority appears to conceal a deeper distrust and

dislike. Unfortunately, Libby cannot afford to pay for additional sessions, and only the attentive reader can properly analyse these relational patterns. While Lumin's high fees allow for a critique of psychoanalysis's tendency to cater only to upper-class patients, they also highlight Libby's wifely dependence. Libby has no money of her own and is completely reliant on what her husband gives her. The scene's conclusion emphasises this quandary: Libby storms out of the office, walks right into Saks, and buys herself something. Libby's actions were influenced by her inability to achieve her goals in therapy with Lumin. She purchases something as symbolic compensation but finds no comfort in it because she is too reliant on Paul's approval.

Libby's protectiveness of Paul throughout the analytic interview was a revelation of her innermost feelings, which she fully supported. By the end of the novel, Libby has abandoned her shallow materialistic fantasies and begun to share her husband's sense of duty. The ironic conclusion of the therapy episode implies that Libby's abandonment of her dreams and claims to independence through materiality is a painful surrender to the inevitable. Hayes believes that the Herz plot confirms, albeit cautiously, that there is such a thing as maturity and tragic wisdom, and that only the Wallach plot suggests that suffering may not teach anything other than that there is a tragicomic meaninglessness at the heart of life. The psychotherapeutic episode adds another feminist qualification to Libby's supposed maturity. Libby's retreat from her desires and ambitions is portrayed as a flight from the insights revealed during the psychoanalytic session, which are motivated by her fear and dependence rather than wisdom or duty. As a result, rather than the control and disengagement achieved in the novel *Letting Go*, Roth envisions a semiautobiographical literature based on baseness, messiness, and immaturity, a subversive approach to society that seeks to invert conventional theories and shock expectations about the appropriate material and goals of art.

Roth describes first-generation immigrant fathers as pioneering Jewish fathers bursting with taboos who produce second-generation sons brimming with temptations. A page later, he describes his literary alter ego, which would not have existed if it hadn't been for his father's frazzled nerves, rigid principles, and limited understanding. This intergenerational interpretation of the cultural origins of transgression in Roth's fiction illuminates many of his narratives. This analysis is a social and psychosocial perspective. Roth's dissatisfaction with his subcultural position as a Jew in American society is palpable in many ways. His annoyance is not simply the result of overt opposition in mainstream society. His dissatisfaction is also clearly determined by his position in Jewish-American culture and his involvement in rebellion against his parents' world. In contrast to Norman Mailer, he is fixated on transgression and has little interest in Jewishness. The major themes of Roth's work have been identified and defined in terms of cultural dynamics and subcultural perspectives on mainstream existence. Mailer was politically, radically, ideologically, and heroically inclined. Roth has revealed himself to be rooted in Jewish and European traditions, as well as feelings of vulnerability to persecution, beneath the brittle surface of his social defiance. This foundation of Jewish feelings and ideas in Roth's works has resulted in a far more explicit burden of moral and ethical sensibility. Simultaneously, as a writer, Roth has worked hard to achieve authenticity and artistic power through cultural and psychological transgression.

Another aspect of Roth the novelist's ethical substratum is his ambivalence about succeeding in the American mainstream. To transgress is to cross a boundary or go beyond a limit, and Roth's success in breaking down the barriers that bound his father's generation is fraught with crosscurrents. Roth, a second-generation American from a lower-middle-class Jewish family, dramatizes the arc of a talented literary rebel's career in his fiction. He takes advantage of liberal times, the gift's permission, and early success to express damned-up Jewish ambition, appetite, and anger, only to face the backlash, the counter current, of communal recrimination and psychological guilt. The joy of success is quickly replaced by the agony and perplexity of misunderstanding.

Portnoy's Complaint: A Critique

Roth's novel *Portnoy's Complaint* is an explicit work of boundary violation. In Portnoy's eyes, transgression entails a second-generation son's desire for instant gratification despite his father's long-term efforts to provide economic and moral stability for his family. The protagonist of this novel, *Portnoy's Complaint*, Alex Portnoy, is described as New York City's Assistant Commissioner of Human Opportunity and has become a transgressive monologist drawn to narratives of outrageous sexual and psychological candour and unflattering family satire. The imperatives of a seriocomic artist have trumped the motive of honouring his father and mother's liberal values.

Alex Portnoy nearly suffocates rental expectations as a young boy by wanting to be the smartest, cleanest, and best boy in his school. His melodramatic mother, hoping to impress America with her perfect offspring, supervises him to death and turns his transgressions into operatic flops. His home is currently locked, which is inconvenient. Masturbation becomes the spearhead of Alex's rebellion as he enters adolescence. In manhood, sexuality remains the focal points of his efforts to overcome inhibitions and resist oppression. Portnoy claims that, his transgressions frequently result in guilt and that his deviations from acceptable behaviour cause him such inner turmoil. He appears to find it surprisingly easy to transgress most of the time. His hesitation is the only thing standing in his way of freedom. Portnoy is tempted to masturbate on the darkened bus back to New Jersey with a Gentile girl sitting beside him after being treated to his first lobster dinner by his sister's boyfriend. The adult Portnoy speculates that being encouraged to break the Jewish dietary code also encouraged him to take a sexual risk.

Portnoy will stand up to mainstream culture. His sexual rebellion manifests itself in the form of an exclusive interest in Christian girls. Portnoy finds sex exciting when it is secretive and bad; the antithesis of the moral goodness instilled in Alex by his parents' sex with a shiksa is twice as enticing. It not only goes against the expectations of the Jewish community because he marries a Jew, but it also imposes his dirty will on the clean blonde daughters of the Gentile middle class. It asserts his mainstream entry and full entitlement as a male American. Finally, Roth's choice of the first-person confessional monologue as the narrative form and viewpoint that dramatises his intention to unburden his psyche, despite the pain and delight he will cause his family, explains the transgressive quality of Portnoy's expressing his inner life in a long complaint or psychoanalytic confession, which inadvertently or deliberately wounds and

offends readers who, like the author's parents, over supervise their children. The monologue also persistently generates an awareness of the author's performative transgressions, which violate the boundaries of decorum for serious literature. Roth continues to astound, delight, and shock. At the height of his masturbatory misbehaviour, Portnoy claims to have used a piece of liver before his mother prepared it. Roth goes from mocking the pretentious enunciation of rabbis, Jewish racism, and prejudice against goyim in Portnoy's stream of associations about his rabbi and his bar mitzvah to turning directly on his own people. The reader is automatically offended, which appears to determine whether he gives offence, particularly to other Jews.

Alexander Portnoy flies into Israel, referring to himself as Alex in Wonderland for the time being due to his chronic identity crises. Later, from his analyst's couch, he recites that remarkable spell of impotence with Naomi, the Israeli lieutenant. There are no dreams for him; instead, he has life. His daily bread is what other men consider nightmares. He encounters melodramatic, disproportionate, ironic, and terrifying ironies. In fact, his mother threatens him with a knife. His testicles had receded, and he had not broken his leg while chasing Christian girls. The first time he tried to have a sexual experience with a girl, he ejaculated in his own eye. In Israel, he is not impotent; he proposes to and attempts to seduce and rape a girl, a Jewish girl, who looks exactly like his mother. Alex is in Wonderland, and his literal world is turned upside down. His real world is what other men fantasise about, and his fantasies include marriage and children, softball, and eating dinner.

Portnoy's complaint has a lot in common with Alice in Wonderland. Alex's life, as he knows it with Monkey, as he has known it with his mother, and as he reveals to Dr. Spielvogel, is one in which he cannot find any truth consistent with the conventions of his specific situation, just as Alice cannot find any logic in Wonderland in terms of the conventions of the world above ground. Alice's adventures give meaning to the reader's unconscious's lawless and chaotic world. As a result, Alice in Wonderland can be thought of as dream vision literature. Except that Roth's novel reveals both underground and above-ground experiences, as opposed to Portnoy's *Complaint*. *Alex is living out his grotesque comic vision while fantasising about middle-class conventions. Portnoy, like Alice, is unable to break free from his past. As Alice searches for rules of propriety, patience, and the larger cosmic principles of sequential time and three-dimensional space, Alex is bound by the standards imposed by his mother and Jewishness. In his expectations of perfection in himself, he is as literal and priggish as Alice is in her arbitrary application of aboveground logic when she goes underground. But, like Alex's revelations about his unconscious self, the underground is timeless and spaceless.*

Roth's treatment of Jews is a source of contention, ranging from the Patimkins in *Goodbye, Columbus* to Alex's parents in *Portnoy's Complaint*. Howe complains that their history is used to pass negative judgements but that it is not allowed to emerge in order to make them understandable as human beings. Howe is expecting a finished and rounded artistic product in Roth's novel *Portnoy's Complaint*, but he has missed the point about Roth's new approach to the novel. Roth is in the process of developing a new set of goals and transgressive pleasures for an art that is primarily about process and catharsis, an art of enthusiasm, defiantly going overboard, and believing that truth lies in comic hyperbole and blasphemy, farce and cruel

satire. Fiction about one's cultural group should be the result of extreme perceptions rather than a detached and mature viewpoint. The struggle for authenticity of identity of an artist like Roth is a struggle with shadows of the past and illusions about the present.

My life as a Man: An Estimate

Roth began the laborious process of writing *My Life as a Man*, but he also worked in a lighter vein. In this novel, Roth underwent several years of psychoanalysis and was drawn into the possibilities of a fluid professional-fiction mode, as Portnoy reflects. He was juggling and struggling to reconcile the fluid confessional between the ironic, detached aspects of modernism and the kind of offences commonly associated with postmodernism in the early 1970s. The author then proceeds to synthesise these formal and stylistic modalities into one transgression and psychological confusion in his novel *My Life as a Man*. The narrator of the longest of *My Life as a Man's* three fictions, Peter Tarnopol, and the author of the other two stories about writer Nathan Zuckerman, teach an honour reading seminar on a dozen masterpieces of his choice. The course has an unusually strong hold on him, and he teaches it with zeal and vehemence that exhausts him. After several semesters, he realises "what the principle of selection was that lay behind" the novels he has chosen, and that the core subject was "transgression and punishment" (235).

One of the chapters in the novel My Life as a Man is titled My True Story. Tarnopol's punishment is the psychic torment he endures from his wife, Maureen Johnson, and his inability to let go of his obsession with how she manipulated and tormented him after he left her. Tarnopol's transgression is that he believes marriage to a Protestant girl from a troubled background, that is, to a victim without the benefits of his stable, Jewish upbringing, will enlarge and liberate him as a writer and Jewish man. His transgression, as Zuckerman explains in one of the parallel fictions in Courting Disaster (33-96) in the volume also about marriage to a Gentile, is that he denies in himself his "grandmothers' observations about Gentile disorder and corruption" (94). His wife's former husband and daughter, says Zuckerman, "were the embodiment of what my grandparents and great grandparents had loathed and feared. Zuckerman rejects the European folk wisdom of his family "as irrelevant to the kind of life that he intended to lead" (93), Peter Tarnopol, when he is forced to decide about marrying Nemesis, ignores the advice of his brother and parents. He tells himself that he is capable of making moral decisions. His exposure to contemporary literature had prepared him. He believes he must gradually approach marriage in order to prevent Maureen from committing suicide and from having an illegitimate child. He tells himself that there is no way out of the intractability of life.

Another important aspect of Roth's fiction is the tragicomic effect he achieves, eliciting not only empathy for young Tarnopol but also, in some wild moments, dismayed and ended laughter at Tarnopol's deluded behaviour. This dramatic effect appears in a number of Roth's novels about transgression. Roth's ability to make his protagonists laugh harshly emerges as Roth's way of dealing with the humiliating behaviour they have fallen into. Roth's protagonist, a deluded, degraded object of ridicule, is Roth's way of atoning for his narrator's transgressions and freeing himself psychologically and artistically from his enslavement. In the novel

Portnoy's Complaint, when he is unable to get an erection with a confident female Israeli soldier, this degrading comic incident allows Roth to achieve punitive judgement about his transgressive protagonist in his increasingly process art, where values have become fluid and relativistic. His trick is to emphasise the antagonistic forces that have reduced his protagonist to delusion and invite readers to laugh along with him at what fools they have become.

The psychological antithesis between domestic happiness and sexual excitement is the central theme of Roth's novels. The novel is built around contrasting relationships. For starters, David met two young girls in London, Elisabeth and Birgitta, during his postbaccalaureate Fulbright year. Susan McCall's *My Life as a Man* describes in greater detail the character and effect on Kepesh of Helen Baird and Ovington, the former in the role of the damaging Gentile and the latter in the role of the posttraumatic and restorative upper-class White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Kepesh's reckless sexual adventure with Birgitta and his placement of Elisabeth in his life as a secure marital alternative foreshadow the pattern of his thinking throughout the novel, where his domestic contentment with Claire saves him from Helen Baird, despite Claire's own flaws.

These two pivotal novels establish Philip Roth's metanarrative. Nathan Zuckerman is best known as the author of *Portnoy's Complaint* Carnovsky. Realizations of a kind of fiction that simulates both experiential process and impenetrability, the first of the Zuckerman Unbound (1981), finds Zuckerman on the streets of New recognized by sycophants and Jewish want-to-be writers; and the second, *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), takes place three years after the publication Carnovsky and about eighteen months after the onset of medically unexplained neck, shoulder, and arm pain has brought his life to a standstill and been reduced to a Prometheus on a playmat visited by girlfriends. At one point, the narration employs an experimental historical imagination to broaden Zuckerman's world beyond his sheltered experience, as well as plausible fiction about a young woman who survived her family's Holocaust.

Lonoff has represented restraint and scrupulousness over instinct and spontaneity, the Apollonian over the Dionysian, the moral scruple over the transgressive impulse in Roth's fictional narrators since *Portnoy's Complaint*. Only a 23-year-old writer with profound Old World earnestness would try to emulate him and combine these characteristics with his own New World mischievousness and slashing satirical proclivities. Only the artistic values embodied by Lonoff are reasonably congruent with certain Jewish writers of the 1950s; they also clearly represent an important and overlooked aspect of Philip Roth, the aspect responsible for his work's sacrifice, scrupulousness, delicate and clairvoyant empathy, and comic detachment, ironically, without which this highly nuanced writer about transgression could not exist.

The second novel in the series, *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), is set in New York City and is about Zuckerman's disappointing experience with celebrity following the death of Carnovsky. Much of the novel takes place on the streets, at outdoor grills on busy corners where Zuckerman is approached by strangers. Describes a world of opinionated city dwellers with a threat and disillusionment. The implied moral appears to be that one reaps what one sows. Instead of the

high, hushed admiration of literary critics, Zuckerman gets a Times Square world: an agent telling him his place at the trough with the rich and powerful, a blackmailer attempting to kidnap his mother, and a one-night stand with a movie star who moved on to Fidel Castro by the next afternoon, while Zuckerman was ordering \$500 suits for his new life with her. And then there's Alvin, a former 1950s quiz show star with a photographic memory and a Newark Jewish background, obsessed with and fixated on Zuckerman, his successful Pepler is an unfocused, high-I.Q. man child, misunderstood by society. Despite his commercial success, Zuckerman, who has achieved notoriety rather than literary recognition, feels the same way about himself: he is disillusioned and has been denied recognition. Pepler is, on the one hand, Zuckerman's doppelganger; on the other hand, Pepler is a manifestation of Roth's wish not to have succeeded not to have achieved fame through transgressions and instead to have regressed to what he would have been if he had had less good fortune.

Guilt over commercial success achieved through artistic transgression appears explicitly as a theme in Roth's novels for the first time. Understand this theme as a by-product of the autobiographical method and Zuckerman's unavoidable autobiographical allusions. Roth's work method of "coaxing into existence," as Roth describes it in *The Facts*, and his experience were comparable to mine and registered a powerful valence, a life more charged and energised. This method includes the practise of savagely feeding off the comic flaws and amusing foibles of Jewish mothers, fathers, relatives, siblings, and girlfriends who bear a resemblance to his own, least make us wonder about resemblances and assume the result wounded feelings, to the fact that all but Roth's most dispassionate readers and critics take much of what he writes as literally true. Roth, for his part, distinguishes between artistic and moral responsibility, and he denies moral responsibility for his work. To make matters worse, Roth equates artistic responsibility with what most people would consider moral irresponsibility and disruptiveness.

This dramatically realised counterargument to Roth's imaginative argument elevates the issue of artistic guilt from a whirlwind of self-recrimination to a fully weighed reality with psychological, artistic, and moral dimensions. It reveals Roth's diabolical bargain in order to cultivate his talent for satire and his rage for psychological realism. Naturally, Roth devotes a significant amount of time to contemplating the rational psychosomatic causes of his problem. The belief that his suffering is self-punishment for the guilt he feels for literary cruelty to his parents and his success at their expense is at the top of his list. Another possibility is that the pain is an expression of his desire to cling to the past because he has exhausted his major subject and would prefer to be disabled than face a frightening future without parents, childhood, or a tribe to write about. Another theory is that he is embroiled in a conflict with male elders, as exemplified by Milton Appel, the critic who sailed him about Camovsky.

Roth's intergenerational thesis about the origins of his transgressive art is still relevant today. That was his entire story: a first-generation American father possessed by Jewish demons, and a second-generation American son possessed by their exorcism. These demons are glossed over as his father's rigid principles and narrow understanding, plus the fact that his father was full of taboos. Readers are clearly confronted with a first-generation immigrant father who is fairly similar to other first-generation immigrant fathers: driven by unexamined moral codes and

compulsions, the tenacity of hard work, and the desire to advance their families at any cost to themselves. Readers must adopt a more culturally specific and dynamic perspective on the genesis of Roth's transgressive art and theme, one based on the spatial image of transgression as the crossing of a line, to better distinguish the origins of Roth's art.

Roth's narratives can be understood in terms of crossing a psychosocial line from a subculture to the mainstream. Readers should imagine Roth as culturally marginalised and make the admittedly assimilationist assumption that he seeks admission to and validation from the mainstream. He perceives barriers or deficiencies in himself and wishes to overcome them. Readers will benefit from remembering that such impediments, especially when internalised, do not disappear easily. Strategies such as defying expectations, holding unpopular opinions, or acting unconventionally are required to confront, if not overcome, them. Such counter-resistance strategies are highly appealing to excitable and highly capable young men like Alex Portnoy and Peter Tarnopol, who are eager to put their skills to the test against cultural resistance. In fact, these men believe that only by acting aggressively can cultural resistance be vigorously challenged and their identities fully defined.

The subtext of crossing a psychosocial line runs throughout Portnoy's letter. Alex describes a strategy for infiltrating White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, such as taking their daughters as girlfriends and thus gaining a window into their worldview and family life. In literature, Jewish-Americans like Roth and Mailer appear to be especially prone to defiance. The aforementioned taboos and discipline of their fathers may be part of the reason why the second-generation son appears to believe that his manhood is dependent on breaking taboos that his father too busy working, too puritan, too hemmed in, and too timid never dared to break.

The novel *My Life as a Man* is written by the plot is structured around a master pattern of transgression and punishment. There is a Gentile girl in both novels whose family, cultural background, personal development, and deficiency suggest that no self-respecting, intelligent Jew would marry her. Following the disastrous marital consequences for his protagonists as a result of doing so, there is a continued pattern appearance of a second upper-class White Anglo-Saxon Protestant woman whose background is exemplary in terms of mainstream competence and perspective. This woman allows Roth's heroes to avoid the nurturing and stability of Jewish girls. Tarnopol, like Portnoy and Zuckerman before him, clearly prefer women who are ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse. While the preceding novels involve outward transgressions, Zuckerman Bound truth telling necessitates inward line crossing: hostility towards family and betrayal of the Jewish community by airing dirty family laundry in public and confessing subcultural dissatisfaction. Whereas upper-class White Anglo-Saxon Protestant men at least from the perspective of lower-middle-Jewish men seem to grow up in accordance with their manhood and sense of cultural place, the Rothian hero feels anchored to a rock of guilt complaint.

Roth's rage over insufficient fathering in Zuckerman Bound, the source of his later spasms, oscillates between guilt and rebellion. The preparation that the second-generation Jewish-American male receives to take his place in mainstream America never feels right. And the young Rothian writer protagonist, who continues to feel different, insecure about his cultural

reception, and unwilling to change, has the option of directing his rage at the source of his possible deficiency, his parents and his subculture. The Rothiannist both welcomes and fears the growing schism or mismatch between his point of view and mainstream culture, and he is unsure whether this new battle line is a blessing or a curse. Regardless, he blames his family for putting him in this perplexing situation. Not calm down. In other words, his attack on his family is a redirected attack on the culture that scares him with its constant rejection and assertions of difference.

This is the writer Philip Roth's position in relation to mainstream culture. He constructs his fictional house from outside the mainstream, or does it emerge psychologically and culturally by straddling the line between his outsider's sphere and the mainstream? Clearly, it is not constructed entirely from within. Assimilation is akin to denying the most authentic aspects of himself. Roth's fiction is created on the outskirts of the mainstream. This outsider status is not a direct result of his Jewishness, because he is also largely outside in relation to his Jewishness. In the end, we might think of Roth as a 'Jewish outsider.' He maintains a critique of both mainstream and Jewish life, and he seeks counter-resistant authenticity at odds with both mainstream and Jewish life ideals. Roth's art exists on the outside of mainstream codes and imperatives, angry and embattled, independent and proud, and on the inside, bound, guilty, and moved to transgress.

Transgression remains a central theme in Roth's fiction. Transcultural and historical perspectives have shaped it, and postmodern self-concepts have come to dominate. The aforementioned transgressions are revisited in a metadrama about Nathan and Henry Zuckerman in their forties. The fact that there are so many different narrative versions of the fates of the same brothers and their women begs the question of whether the transgressive impulse is an essential part of human identity. When approached with more irony and distance, with a cool omniscience framing hot topics, the transgressive self can be described as simply performative, a cultural construct animated by literary ingenuity.

In the 1993 novel *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, the transgression theme shifts to explicitly Jewish issues of identity and identity politics. These are dramatised through the use of a counterpoint of opinion and, in particular, the use of a doppelganger with political views opposing the narrators. Another Israeli, Philip Roth, is promoting "diasporosis," the idea that Israelis should defect and return to the European diaspora in order to avoid a new Holocaust. The irony is that the protagonist, narrator Roth, appears to harbour latent sympathies for the anti-Zionist aspects of this viewpoint. Roth eventually agrees to work for Israeli intelligence out of guilt and to balance out his assimilationist sympathies. *Operation Shylock* could be described as a story about the friction of doubles. The reader is led to believe that there is no essential Jewish identity because so many points of view about political and ethnic identity are dramatised through secondary characters (Shostak 4). To Smiles burger, Jewishness is as intrinsic-intrinsic as Roth's libido, but we are shown throughout the book that identity is multiple and changing, a product of circumstance, mood, imaginative impersonation, and contrivance.

SUMMATION OF THE STUDY

Philip Roth's novels *Letting Go*, *Portnoy's Complaint*, *Operation Shylock*, and *My Life as a Man* have been taken up for this research and are examined under the light of "Treatment of Social Transgression in the Select Novels of Philip Roth: A Study". In this paper, a brief summary of select novels has been given. The brief author biography, review of literature, and objectives of the study have been presented in the introductory chapter. The core objective of the study is "social transgression," which has been clearly defined in this paper. The confluence of personal and artistic themes about being Jewish can result in a perpetually renewing literary originality in Roth's fiction. Roth's novels are a lens through which he investigates an American writer who cannot ignore that he is a Jew. It is a material that achieves a highly personal universal theme about man as a rebel and outcast who must suffer for his cultural resistance and transgressive authenticity. Roth's portrait of second generation Jewish-American protagonists might arguably be seen as a representation of, generalised late-twentieth century alienation. This cultural positionality in Roth's work remains important, since his narratives derive their universal power from their technical and sociocultural specificity. This universality in the novels is not, then, a basis for claiming that Roth is not quintessentially hyphenated, a Jewish-American writer. The tensions between subcultural and mainstream experiences are at the core of each novel and at the heart of his preoccupation with transgression. This essay suggests the importance of further investigation of the tensions between the "minority" and "mainstream" status of second and third generation post-immigrant writers.

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