

**Tribhuvan University**

**Manifestation of Subjective Identity: Psychoanalytical Study on Philip Roth's  
*The Humbling***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English**

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**Manifestation of Subjective Identity: Psychoanalytical Study on Philip Roth's *The Humbling* - Binod Marahatta 2011**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Binod Marahatta has completed his thesis entitled, "Manifestation of Subjective Identity: Psychanalytical Study on Philip Roth's *The Humbling*" under my supervision. He carried out his research work from 2010 to 2011. I hereby co-commend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis titled "Manifestation of Subjective Identity: Psychoanalytical Study on Philip Roth's *The Humbling*" submitted to the central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Binod Marahatta been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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## Abstract

*The Humbling* is the traumatic realism where the protagonist's psychology is filled up with the sense of loss of artistic power, of pain, and lamentation because of his problem of aging. Simon Axler has tormented psychology because of his sense of artistic failure and his separation from his beloved, Pegeen. As a marginalized man, his love with his beloved is violated because of her father's hindrances and the social standards of morality and propriety. Simon is obsessed with suicide and death drive. Because of the overwhelming realities of aging and loss in his psyche, he is expressing jealousy in the version of pornography. Thus, the researcher has exposed the exploration of protagonist's tormented identity and subjectivity in Roth's *The Humbling*.

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## Chapter I

### Philip Roth, *The Humbling* and Freudian Psychoanalysis

This project focuses on Philip Roth's *The Humbling* as the discourse of exploration of protagonist's subjectivity that is the result of artistic confession. The protagonist, Simon Axler, expresses his marginalized existence as dying being and mediates on loss and pain that are transformed in something enjoyable and controllable through the creative writing. The protagonist's subject position can be analyzed dividing his span of life. His youth is different from his old age. Time transforms him into old from the energetic and prosperous youth age. The protagonist's identity is filled up with the sense of loss, pain and lamentation because of his problem of aging. Philip Roth expresses his identity, here, through the authorial character, Axler in the novel because he feels that he has lost his creativity and imaginative quality. Philip Roth mentions the desertion of artistic quality and creative performance. The loss of creativity and lack of artistic capacity to create the dramatic world forces him to think him as the marginalized person in the society. Through the protagonist, Roth laments on loss of artistic power to construct the illusive world in the reality. The power of constructing excellent performance has been destroyed in his old age. The ageing has stolen his energetic and creative mind and he thinks himself as broken man.

The novel crucially centers on a time of transition in Simon's life, a time when he must be as the fragile and weak man as well as a rigid independence are of no help to him, and he is left groping for reparation in the face of extraordinary pain. So the novel tracks Simon's final stage in life, attachment to detachment, from the safety of solitude to the dangers of love and loss. Because of his sense of aging and sufferings, he is forced to think him as the dying animal in the society. As the marginalized man,

his inner quality and his love affair with Pegeen is denied by the social standards of morality and propriety. While facing the horror of morality and mortality, Simon feels lost as an unwilling outsider. To society, he is a dying man and society has little to offer such an individual. Without cultural support, he must forge a new space to gain an understanding of his crisis. The new space is the manifestation of repressed feelings and sentiments with the help of sublimation using the mechanisms that are condensation and displacement. It is with this search for space where he can grapple with the overwhelming realities of aging and loss, he is expressing jealousy in the version of pornography. Simon's out letting of pornographic jealousy is the form of catalyst for melancholic grieving and embodies the fundamental loss of control.

The realities of aging and mortality are truths that Simon has been denying all his life. His aggressive confession is the product of social marginalization due to the social denying of his aging artistic talent. The elegiac expression of subjectivity takes the form of 'pornography of jealousy' which is full of tormenting ideas and consisting of painful images. As the social outsider, he manifests his lost confidence and imagined gracelessness. He himself has found him at a time of vulnerability, a time when age can no longer be ignored and he feels defenseless and powerless. He realizes the realities of his situation: the sexual possibilities and power previously enjoyed with girls are slipping away. So he suddenly feels unprotected from hurt and loss.

In this traumatic realism, the protagonist's psychology is filled with pain of loss and tragic circumstances that are the results of ineffectiveness of protagonist's attempts to cope with loss. The novel is the pornography of the protagonist's destruction because he is out letting his pitiful situation that is fixated on losing his talent on the one hand and his life partner on the other hand and on his nihilistic

thought that he finds that nothing is left to protect him in his vulnerable condition. He is an aging man acknowledging his mortality for perhaps the first time when he realizes that he has spent his entire life avoiding the realities of aging, love and loss and lack of confidence. His sexual obsession is denied by society, so his fulfillment of sexuality with young girl is not possible. As the result of this situation, he is subjugated as the social outsider. Simon finds himself viewing life from outside or outside the frame because the dialectical relationship between libidinality and morality. The sexual desires he felt at lesbian girl are still alive in him but the society expects these desires to die with the onset of age. His emotions and feelings are repressed by the society. The identity of protagonist is full of melancholia because of social marginalization. He is psychologically dead in the sense that he is outside of the society and he finds himself marginalized and alone. He is psychologically weak and fragile and finds him as a broken man.

On the other hand the protagonist's subjectivity is colored by the irrationality and Dionysian qualities because his exploration of subjectivity is not conscious but is unconscious and sub-conscious. Unconsciously Simon expresses his repressed desires, feelings, sentiments and emotions that are product of his loss of magic of performance and his lack of maintain heterosexuality. His desires are denied by society, so they are collected in unconscious level. The unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts. We do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them. The repressed feelings and emotions in unconscious level look for outlets or mediums of expression. So to outlet the unconscious desires and sentiments, Axler, Roth's alterego, takes the help of sublimation to elaborate fantasized wish fulfillments into the work of art in a way that makes them capable of

satisfying the unconscious desires. The unacceptable desires are manifested in the creative writing with the help of different symbols, images, words and phrases such desires became the matters or materials in the construction work of art.

So, loss and pain were transformed into something enjoyable and controllable through artistic creation. Here in the novel, to describe these emotions of weakness, tenor and loss, Axler introduces the word 'artistic jealousy'. By using pornography in conjunction with the word jealousy, Simon manages to uniquely articulate his experiences of loss of artistic talent, loss of control and his own mortality. To explore the subjectivity, Simon uses pornography to describe the pain of his newly marginalized existence. His unconscious feelings are described in a surprisingly aggressive manner with full of pornographic symbols, words, phrases and images. So the novel is full of expression of painful losses which evokes the protagonist's psychological death. In the sense of emotional mourning of protagonist, it can be said as the modern elegy. The protagonist's subjectivity is infected by the melancholia because of society's strict morality and rationality. By repressing the individual sexual freedom, society dehumanizes the protagonist in the modern era. Society is taking an intensely subjective experience and forcing an individual to practice indifferent objectively. Therefore the researcher can claim *The Humbling* as pornographic elegy because of the protagonist's pornographic meditation on loss. Thus, *The Humbling* is a uniquely modern and inconsolable elegy in its new articulation of pornography of artistic jealousy.

Philip Roth's *The Humbling* has generated a series of critical commentaries; several critics belonging to various backgrounds have ventured to interpret and analyze it from diverse angles and point of views. Several critics praised it for its fictionalization of his personal neurotic psyche. Lawrence Rungren in his article

“American Pastoral”, views Roth’s *The Humbling* as the discourse of irrationality and sublimation of erotic desires.

This balance, made possible only by Simon Axler’s lack of emotional commitment, and inner artistic magic. Set in 1999, when Simon is in mid sixties, the book recounts the affair, which transpired eight years earlier, chronicling the breakdown of his emotional detachment and subsequent plunge into jealousy and neurotic infatuation--an infatuation unrelieved even by shocking disappearance at the turn of the millennium. Roth has concocted a scathingly frank rumination on eroticism and aging, sex and death. (07)

So from Lawrence Rungren’s arguments, it is proved that Simon Axler, while exploring his tormented identity due to the realization of his old age, mourns on the emotional detachment to the artistic world. His sense of mortality leads him to express his painful life in the form of creative writing.

Another critic James Phelan also regards Philip Roth’s *The Humbling* as the manifestation of the author’s psychological explosion of his repressed impulses:

*The Humbling is* a novel whose subject matter is as private as that of any sexual obsessive’s analytic session, galvanized his talent as nothing before had done, arguably bringing him to the height of his powers as an artist. After so many years of discipline in pursuit of probity, he succeeded at last in summoning the voice that would distinguish him as a writer by indulging in imaginative recklessness. This is the out letting reckless impulses that animates Simon is at odds with the moral imperative by which he feels bound as a writer. I will

consider how he works at reconciling that impulse with that imperative in this pivotal novel. (47)

From Phelan's argument, the researcher views that the protagonist takes the help of imagination and fantasy to erase his sense of loss and pain in the process of exploring his subjectivity. His traumatic feelings and sentiments are manifested in the form of pornographic writing due to the restriction of society to have emotional love affairs with young girl.

Stephanie Cherolis in his article "Philip Roth's Pornographic Elegy" talks about process of creation of creative writing that is the sublimation of subjective erotic desires and impulses. He takes aesthetics as the authentic experiences that are overflowed with the help of condensation and displacement:

Philip Roth sorts out the number of issues such as the preparation for his talk, a provisional aesthetic attitude, authentic experience an understanding of his own disposition along with 'the frame and scope of won disposition' along with 'the frame and scope of the imagination' and to strike a relation with his environment, which will be conducive to his creative ambitions. The language that he uses to conclude this account of artistic compulsion and ecstatic discovery seems indistinguishable from the poignant confessions that Philip Roth had made earlier at the close of *The Humbling*. (12)

After the examination of all these reviews and criticism, we come to the conclusion that Philip Roth's *The Humbling* is the subjective expression of repressed desires that are manifested in the form of modern type of elegy in its new articulation of pornography of jealousy. From the above criticisms on Philip Roth's *The Humbling*

the researcher claims that Simons uses pornography to describe the pain of his newly marginalized existence in the path of exploration of his subjectivity.

Philip Roth is American psychological novelist who is influenced by literary tradition of modernism, especially by Sigmund Freud and his theory of psychoanalysis. So his writings are always about erotic behaviors of human beings. He argues that an individual should be conscious about sex according to biological development in his work we can see the conflict between id, ego and superego and always id remains dominant. He believes that sexual desires should not be repressed but should outlet them through the means of creative writing. Remarkably, Roth rehearses on sex puzzlement and sex psychology and carries on the search of meaning and solutions. So Roth is a leading psychological novelist who brings psychoanalysis into fictional medium and explores the issue of libidinal identity and subjectivity of human beings in public way. His main works such as *Good bye Columbus* (1955), *Letting Go* (1962), *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), *The Professor of Desire* (1977), *Myself and Other* (1975) *The Dying Animal* (2001), etc revolve around the theme of sexuality and irrationality. Due to his contribution in the mainstream literary tradition of modernism, he is considered as the catalyst in modern era.

Philip Roth is a author of modern literature who defies the objectivity in artistic creation rather believes the subjectivity in writing. He expresses his personal feelings and sentiments, especially sexual and erotic desire in his creation. Even, in his novel *The Humbling*, he outlets his personal and secret desires and feelings in very artistic way. Philip Roth's subjective expression or manifestation of his sexual desires and confession of his ageing vulnerability in the image of his protagonist, Simon Axler, in his novel *The Humbling*. He presents his hero Axler as his ego. As noted he has gotten older, so feels sense of ageing, death, and diminished capabilities that are

the theme of this novel. In other words Roth himself is aimless, compulsive, and self-gratifying not only in his representation of sex but also in his representations of traumatic history, death, and loss. Here such subjectification of his absurdist reality is foregrounded through the character Simon Axler in his novel.

*The Humbling* (2009) is a short novel which tells the story of Simon Axler is a famed sexagenarian stage actor who suddenly and inexplicably loses his gift. His weak attempts at portraying Prospero and Macbeth on stage at the Kennedy Center in Washington lead to poor reviews, sending Axler into a profound depression and cause him to give up acting and contemplate suicide with a shotgun he keeps in his attic. His wife, Victoria, a former balleriana, is unable to deal with Axler's depression and moves to California, where their son lives. Axler checks himself into a psychiatric hospital on the advice of his physician and stays there for 26 days. Months after his stint in the hospital, Axler's agent, Jerry Oppenheim, visits him at his upstate New York home to tell him about an offer to play James Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Axler refuses, fearing another failure.

Pegeen, the 40-years-old daughter of two actors he performed with around the time she was born, pays Axler a visit at his house. Pegeen has just moved nearby to work as a professor at a Vermont women's college after ending a six-year relationship with a woman who decided to undergo sex reassignment surgery to become a man. Simon and Pegeen begin an affair despite Pegeen's having lived as a lesbian for the previous 17 years. Louise is furious that Pegeen has broken off their relationship and begin stalking her. Months later, Louise calls Pegeen's parents in Lansing, Michigan, to tell them that their daughter is now sleeping with Axler. Pegeen is distressed that her parents have learned about the relationship she wanted kept secret. Her father,

Asa, tells her he disproves because of the age difference but Simon suspects he merely envies his professional success.

The plot continues on. Pegeen ends their relationship, telling Axler she “made a mistake.” He accuses her of leaving him to be with Tracy and believes Pegeen’s parents have turned her against him. He calls her parents, shouting at them in an angry tirade. After the call, Axler kills himself with his shotgun.

The researcher is going to apply the theory of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud to study the exploration of subjectivity in Philip Roth’s *The Humbling* by the protagonist Simon Axler, the mouthpiece of Philip Roth. Philip Roth’s exploration of subjectivity through the image of Axler is analyzed with the help of subjective theory; psychoanalytical theory. Psychoanalysis is a perspective to explore human mind. It deals with the exploration of human psychic function and its consequent impacts on the mode of living through analysis and interpretation. In literature used to analyze everything in a text to know the root cause of human activities, subjectivism, and pattern of linguistic expression. Not only has it analyzed the psyche of writer, but also of the protagonist. Austrian philosopher and neurologist, Sigmund Freud in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first developed such methodological perspective. As a doctor, he was interested in charting how the human mind affected the body, particularly in forms of mental illness, such as neurosis and hysteria. As a philosopher, Freud was interested in looking at the relationship between mental functioning and certain basic structure of human civilization.

The term psychoanalysis is used to designate a loosely knit body of ideas on the nature of the human mind, in particular, personality development and psychopathology; to describe a technique of therapeutic intervention in a range of psychological disturbances, to designate a method of investigation. Sigmund Freud

brought a new level of self awareness and for better or for worse, a permanently altered the image of humankind. He says:

Psychoanalysis, as therapy in its inception regarded as its central task the uncovering of pathogenic memories; this gives way to the search for fantasies, and with the theoretical shift away from “instincts and their vicissitudes’ to the discerning of configurations of characteristically adaptive patterns of human relationships and of work in particular society. (Corsini Vol.III 86)

Freud’s psycho-analytical theory especially deals with the workings of the unconscious of mind. He mainly focuses his attention on the elements of the unconscious that are revealed in dreams; puns, slips of tongue and so on. It can also has be conceived as a theory of personality , motivation, and neurosis derived from Freudian analysis based on the interaction of conscious, preconscious, and unconscious levels of the mind and the repression of the sexual instinct. He was the first to draw attention to the significance of unconscious processes in normal and neurotic behavior and was the founder of psychoanalysis as both a theory of personality and a therapeutic practice. The unconscious mind has sexual instincts, id impulses and other psychological conflicts. The unconscious is the larger sphere, which includes within it the smaller sphere of the conscious.

The unconscious designates one of the topography of the psyche, which more pervasive as compared to the conscious. It is a location in which all psychical materials that are not available in the conscious mind are found in active and dynamic form. It contains materials that are repressed due to cultural restriction. But Freud also says that repression is an element of the unconscious that is so vast and pervasive. The unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those

wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them. The unconscious comes into being when we are very young through the repression, the expunging from consciousness, of these un-happy psychological events. However, repression doesn't eliminate our painful experiences and emotions. Rather, it gives them force by making them the organizers of our current experience: we unconsciously behave in ways that will allow us to "play out" without admitting it to ourselves, our conflicted feelings about the painful experiences and emotions we repress. Thus, Freud's first major premise is that most the individual's mental processes are unconscious. The second premise is that all human behaviors are ultimately motivated by sexuality. Freud's third premise is that many of our desires and memories are repressed because of the powerful social taboos attached to certain sexual impulse. To be precise, our actions are regulated by the unconscious mental process with the help of sexual energy, but such spontaneity of the inner desires is prohibited by the social standard of morality and propriety. We are dominated and regulated by psychic life which is unconscious.

In his psychoanalytical study, Freud presents three psychic zones: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is entirely unconscious only the small portion of the ego and superego is conscious. The id is the reservoir of the libido, the sexual and the primary source of psychic energy. Its function is to fulfill the primordial life principle, that is, a mode and manner of life free of social and moral restriction. As:

The law of logic do not hold for processer, --- the id is the source of all our aggregation and desire. It is lawless, a social and a moral. Its function is to gratify our instincts for pleasure without regard for source of convention, legal ethics and moral

restraints--- its concern is purely for instinctual gratification, heedless of consequences. (Guerin 102)

And in order to protect the individual and the society from id's dangerous potentialities, the regulating agency is ego. As Freud points out that ego stands for reason and circumspection, while the id stands for untamed passions. Another regulating agent to protect the society from the unconscious is the superego. It is the moral censoring agency and repository of conscience and pride. Freud says that superego is the representative of all moral restrictions, the advocate of the impulse towards perfection; it is as much as we have been able to apprehend psychologically of what people call the higher things in the human life. The superego serves to repress the drives of id. It pushes us to block off and thrust back in to the unconscious those unacceptable impulses over aggression, sexual passion and the oedipal instincts. The superego is dominated by morality principal. In "The Anatomy of the Mental Personality", Freud says:

The superego is the representative of all moral restrictions, the advocate of the impulse towards perfection; it is as much as we have been able to apprehend psychologically of what people call the higher 'things in the human life'. The superego serves to repress or inhibit the drives of the id. It pushes us to block off and thrust back into the unconscious those unacceptable impulses over aggression, sexual passion and the oedipal instincts. The superego is dominated by morality principal. Where the id makes us devil, the super ego makes us behave as angels. It is ego that maintains a balance between those two opposing forces. (105)

Freud puts the notion of instinct from physiological point of view and points out the reason of it in human life. The dynamism of an instinct occurs when the human body comes in contact with other many things. Freud emphasizes that the function of the instinctual stimulus is to exert influence in the mind; it is motivated and regulated by a need that aims to achieve psychological satisfaction. This kind of pleasure can be achieved through various actions, because instinctual stimulus operates differently upon mind and different actions are required in order to remove it.

Freud postulates two types of instincts in the psychic complexity. They are 'life instinct', and death 'instinct'. The former is associated with EROS, a Greek Word for love, while the later is related with THANATOS, a Greek work for destruction or death. The dualistic relation of psychic functioning regulates human life. Life instinct designates the instincts of self-preservation as pertaining to both individual and species. It also includes the instinct of both pleasure and unpleasure. Its common characteristic is that life instincts aim to create and maintain new unities, that is, it stimulates human organism to be united with opposite sex and gain optimum sexual satisfaction and reproduction. Freud viewed these tow forces are always engaged in a constant struggle that shapes mode of living. Lois Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* argues:

In suggesting that human beings have a death drive, Freud's attempt was to account for the alarming degree of self-destructive behavior he saw both in individuals, who seemed bent on destroying themselves psychologically if not physically, and in whole nations, whose constant wars and internal conflicts could be viewed as little other than a form of mass suicide. (24)

Regarding the meaning of death, it is the matter of realizing that the fear of death is not merely fear of biological death translates for most of us into fear of loss in general. We can see how death, emotional death rather than biological death, is so attractive on the unconscious level. The psychological death most of us suffered the first and we felt abandon by someone nearest. So the overwhelming feeling of loss is often a feeling of abandonment by a loved one that pushes the human being into the world of psychological pain and suffering.

On the other hand, human mode of thinking in the pattern of action is regulated by the duality between “pleasure principle” which is associated with id for the sake of satisfaction, and “reality principle” that is related to society and its norms and value. The most dominant aspect in human being is the unconscious search for pleasure. Freud says this is primitive, natural and biological need. Thus, the pleasure principle is life-giving psychic tendency that motivates one to strive for his real biological fulfillment. On the other hand, the primitive, wild, and natural tendency of the pleasure principle is checked by reality principle. It works in association with the ego. The background of reality principle is related with social, norms and value that regulate all the movements of an organism in the society. Shedding light on “reality principle”, Freud opines:

The reality principle reigns in the ego, and the functions that enable it to operate are those of the so-called secondary process---perception, thinking in word-presentations, memory, reality testing, control of mortality, etc. (Freud 508)

Freud focuses on the dominance of the reality principle on the pleasure principle. He says the quest for pleasure is always on, but not in anarchic ways and sways, rather in

society-friendly manner that rejects spontaneity of pleasure seeking attempts. As a result, unpleasure occurs in psychic functioning.

So mode of living of an individual is checked and balanced by the relationship between pleasure principle and reality principle. The pleasure principle is close to id while latter comes in connection with ego that mentions order and systematic pattern of living. As:

The pleasure principle long persists as a method of working employed by sexual instincts, which are so hard to educated, and starting from these instincts, or in the ego itself, it often succeeds in overcoming reality principle, to the detriment of the organism as a whole. (212)

Pleasure principle as opposed to reality principle generates tension in psychic functioning and reality principle censors pleasure in prohibited locations but paves ways in free situations. As the result of the repression of desires and search for manifestation of those desires, people employ various means and methods to obtain sexual as well as emotional pleasure or pain. The artistic creation is the manifestation of latent pleasure and pain.

ourselves, and they have consequently been repressed, pushed into the unconscious. Repressed wishes of this sort and their derivatives are only allowed to come to expression in a distorted form” (714). The writer outlets his unpacked feelings and emotions with the help of different images and phrases. In the process of sublimating his repressed psychological pathos, he takes medium of writings that can release him from anxieties and repressed feelings.

Philip Roth’s exploration of his neurotic and traumatic personality is the result of his sense of jealousy, pain, fear, loss and mainly of his feeling of suicide and his expression of subjective position through the imaginative artistic world which is the manifestation of his latent unconscious psychological condition.

In the process of exploring the subjectivity Philip Roth through the image of his protagonist Simon Axler faces the brilliant situation and the writer expresses that protagonist carries the authorial subjectivity as he says that he leaves the hero unconscious and bleeding from severe wounds. While exploring his subjective identity, the author consciously employs a medium through which he creates a world of his own, he expands large amounts of emotions on it and proves that the text is the store house of his wishes, desires and emotions. Desires are libidinal and infantile, collected in the unconscious state which is not erased. Freud correlates that desires manifestation with the creative activities of a writer. He expresses in *The*

*Interpretation of Dreams*:

When our wishes, desires or fantasies are not fulfilled, they are repressed. They stay in the unconscious mind waiting for an outlet. These repressed desires come out in different forms: dream, tongue sleep, eye-contact, mistakes, joke, lapse and literary works. The satisfaction at the fulfillment of the repressed wish may turn out to be

so great that it counterbalances the distressing feeling attaching to the day's residues. Freud correlates that desire's manifestation with the creative activities of a writer. (596)

So, his conception of the individual was as a reservoir of dynamic energy, continuously seeking a means of discharge and in turn continuously needing replenishment. This veritable storehouse of energy he called the 'Libido', the genetically inherent energy empowering the life instinct. The instinctual drive towards survival and replacement of energy requires translation into more specific terms such as 'food, love, security' etc.

Everywhere in the text there is expression of authorial identity that is built on the surface of several issues like sexual desires and obsession, neurosis, illusive living, journey from present to past, sense of pain and loss, sense of ageing and fear of death and pornographic presentation of jealousy. The subjectivity of author can be analyzed through the themes like sexual desires and repression, sublimation and manifestation, meaning of death loss and destruction, sheltering in the illusive world and pornography of jealousy.

## **II. I Domination of Sexuality and Exploration of Reality**

As the Simon Axler is exploring his personal neurotic personality and his tormented reality because of the antagonistic role of society which doesn't allow the person to express his/her sexual wishes and desires. Axler's mind is full of sexual instinct, id impulses and other psychological conflict. As his desires cannot be fulfilled, the desires are turned into something useful and productive. The human desires are mainly about sex; sex is pleasurable; the desire for sexual pleasure according to Freud is one of the oldest and most basic urges that all human being feel. Philip Roth with the egoistic presentation of his unconscious and erotic identity

through the image of Simon Axler in the novel is guided by the principle of sexual pleasure and libidinal wishes. In this sense Freud says:

The unpleasure principle takes control and causes the psyche to turn away from the transference thought. They are left to themselves 'repressed' and thus it is that the presence of a store of infantile memories, which has from the first been held back from the preconscious, becomes a repression. The repressed thoughts are strongly cathected by the unconscious wishful impulse on the other hand abandoned by the pre-conscious cathectis. The irrational processes are only carried out with thoughts that are under repression.  
(644)

Here, Freud's orientation was biological, a natural result of his medical training and of the period in which he began his work. His conception of the individual was as a reservoir of dynamic energy, continuously seeking a means of discharge and in turn continuously needing replenishment.

Philip Roth is aestheticizing the personal Id impulses which are avoided in the society as the immoral taboo. Sex and libidinal emotions are presented in his work very pornographically. Sex and erotic impulses are kept in center in this novel where the author's psyche is not void sexually and is covered by the ideas of sexuality. His sexual wishes towards his beloved Pegeen are the theme of novel. He openly expresses his bodily needs and hunger of sex is transformed into the work of art where his pleasure seeking tendency is dominant. The neurotic identity of the author is the heart of the text and sex is the major content of the Roth's artistic work. This kind of thematic issue is explored very artistically with the help of pornographic articulation.

In the novel such personal sexual and erotic desires are sublimated in the image of Simon Axler. Axler expresses his desire for sex towards his beloved that shapes his libidinal subjectivity. From the very beginning of the novel, he expresses his sexual obsession towards the opposite sex much widely. Roth outlets his feeling through Axler and says:

Now he saw a lithe, full-breasted woman of forty, though with something of the child still in her smile—a smile in which she automatically raised her upper lip to reveal her prominent front teeth—and a lot of the tomboy still in her rocking gait. She was dressed for the countryside, in well-worn work boots and a red Zippered jacket, and her hair, which he had incorrectly remembered as blond, like her mother's was a deep brown and cut close to her skull, so short at the back as to appear clipped by a barber's trimmer. (49)

Simon Axler the protagonist outlets his sexual wants and desires in this piece of work of art sublimating them in distort form. His every behavior is ultimately motivated by sexuality. He unconsciously manifests the primary source of psychic energy to fulfill the primordial life principle that is a manner and mode of the youth psychic.

The definer of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud views that ultimate goal of an individual is to gain sexual pleasure. Everyone does his best in seeking pleasure to enjoy life. Like the protagonist Axler in this novel, the individual gives priority to desired sexual necessities. Because of the restriction of society and morality, such quest is not allowed to fulfill wildly. So, the seeker disguises his actions and manners in socially accepted parameters for sexual requisite. The quest for satisfied living with the fulfillment of sexual pleasure is transformed in the creative work like the novel *The Humbling*.

The hero of the novel Simon Axler manifests his objective of having sexual pleasure with his young beloved in very pornographic way. The sexual parts of her body like especially her breast, thighs and legs are given emphasized by him. His motto of satisfying his sexual desires is cleared because of his frank expression of his and her encounter. He presents his hunger for sex as clear as the objective presentation like in video. In the above extract, there is the evidence of manifestation of libidinal desires and even the sexual activities. In the given passage there is the motive of copulation behind the presentation of very nude and pornographic picture of the protagonist and his beloved. It is cleared that Roth is importantly focusing the sex as the prime necessity of human life. Though, in real life it is not possible to talk about sex and have the sexual pleasure openly the writer fulfills his objective of valuing the id impulses with the help of creative writing.

Roth is successful in the project of exploring the notion of subjectivity as the erotic and libidinal aspect that is guided by unconscious part of our psyche. Likewise, in another extract, he defines sex as the life energy. Simon Axler externalizes his feelings as:

Watching her breast shift beneath her blouse while she pretended, women what like a performing child, to lead the orchestra with her invisible baton was intensely arousing and, for all I know, maybe there was nothing the least bit childish bout it and to excite me by way of the mock conducting why she did it . . . There is no sexual quality, certainly not one where the allotments are equal, the male quotient and the female quotient in perfect balance. There is no way to negotiate metrically this wild thing. It's not fifty-fifty like a business transaction.

It's the chaos of Eros we're talking about, the radical destabilization that is its excitement. (19-20)

By giving importance to the irrational and wild aspects of human being, Philip Roth wants to prove that sexual obsession is compulsive behavior that is necessary to be fulfilled. Justifying the deconstruction of Freud in which irrationality is the formative force of human personality and it is dominant upon the rationality; Philip Roth is going to suggest that the human subjectivity or identity is the pile of emotional and irrational instincts. The attraction between the opposite sex and the physical union between them is more than the establishment of civilized and attractive personality.

The protagonist gives very keen interest in sex and takes it as the chaos of Eros and a kind of physical excitement. He rejects intellectually the aspects of sex he finds superfluous- the attempt to delve into the other's personality, the sharing of intimate thoughts and details, the caring. These matter, yes, but not for the purely physical act of sex. Sex requires nothing more than two people coming together: it is the joining of body parts for pleasure, and perhaps for children. The rest of it is the emotional aspect that is the supreme quality behind the shaping of the cultural as well as personal identity.

Roth allows Simon Axler to speak directly to the reader because of the pornographic revelation about the sexuality. In Axler's life there is overwhelming of sex and he always thinks about the sexual act and interprets love as the physical relation between male and female. It is proved that Roth is defining love as the compromise to have sex and is attacking the notion of love as spiritual love. By attacking the notion of spirituality in love he says, sex is a huge part of what it means to be an adult and it is the some part of one's self. In this regard Freud argues:

Obsessive ideas and impulses can also reach an excessive degree as in the morbid fears called phobias or in obsessive — compulsive behavior. In such cases, the obsession is more irrational and more persistent and tends to dominate individual's behavior. Obsessions are recurrent and persistent anxiety evoking or otherwise upsetting thoughts. Obsessive ideas and impulses can also reach an excessive degree. Obsession is more irrational and more persistent and tends to dominate an individual's behavior (*The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology* 192).

It is flashed from above theoretical concept that instincts drive and direct behavior, the goal of which is the satisfaction of needs, derived from the instincts. Needs create tension, and behavior is directed towards reduction of this tension. This concept of needs is called the 'Pleasure Principle', the attempt to keep excitation or tension as low as possible. In practice this is the desire for immediate gratification.

With the presentation of psychological reality of Simon Axler, his alter ego, Roth is targeting to prove the necessity of fulfillment of sexual desire to have the healthy life and he is going to say that human identity is imbricated in the world of fantasy, irrationality, childishness and other wild quality.

Sexuality and libidinality is the important part of human civilization and important and the formation of human subjectivity. Following the path of Freud, Philip Roth takes sex as the energy and a part of having successful life in modern world. When Axler feels absurd, his psyche turns toward sex, he wants to go beyond the tragic world with the help of orientation towards sexuality:

The pain from the spinal condition made it impossible for him to fuck her from above or even from the side, and so he lay on his back and

she mounted him, supporting herself on her knees and her hands so as not to lower her weight onto his pelvis. . . when he worked his thumb into her ass she sighed with pleasure and whispered, “nobody ever put anything in there before”—“Unlikely,” he whispered back and when later he put his cock in there, she took as much as she could of it until she couldn’t take anymore. (91)

But he is also conscious about that sex is taken as the social taboo and the element of distorting and destroying the social orders and system. Taken as the immoral and disgusting thing, society avoids the discussion of sex openly and frankly. Society doesn’t allow the human beings to fulfill their sexual desire socially and morally. Believing on Freudian model of mind where he divides human mind into three levels: “id”, “ego” and “super ego”, Philip Roth analyses the psychological conflict between the conscious and unconscious part of human psyche.

The protagonist in the novel is trying to valorize Id impulses and libidinal and sexual psychic energy as the inaccessible part of the personality and tries to obtain sexual satisfaction for instinctual needs in accordance with the pleasure principle. The unconscious and sub-consciousness sides of Simon Axler’s personality are dominant in this novel with the inclusion of the smaller sphere of the conscious part of mind.

But his sexual and erotic desires are denied by the society and it’s moral norms and conducts because the society regards the expression of libidinal desires openly as the immoral act. As the result of the restrictions of the society, such personal desires are collected in Axler’s unconscious part of the mind. His unconsciousness part of mind becomes the storehouse of those repressed experiences, emotions, feelings, desires and the unresolved conflicts. His love affair with Pegeen is violated because of the social hindrances. His love is broken or Pegeen left him

because of her father's warning and disturbance. The society becomes the antagonistic agent in the fulfillment of personal erotic desires and the patient is compelled to suppress such desires in the latent level of his psyche. In this sense Freud views:

It is quite true that the unconscious wishes are always active. They represent paths which are always practicable, whenever, a quantum of excitation makes use of them. It is indeed an outstanding peculiarity of the unconscious process that they are indestructible. Nothing can be brought to an end in the unconscious nothing is past or forgotten. . . . Indeed, the fading of memories and the weak affect of impressions which are no longer recent, which we are apt to take as self evident, and to explain as a primary effect of time in our psychic memory residues, are in reality secondary changes brought about by laborious work. (*The Freud Reader* 314).

Social infrastructures like social rules and regulations, moral conducts, cultural constraints and other obstacles in the path of fulfilling the personal desires are the hindrances.

In this realistic text, the author is taking the help of imaginative creative writing to outlet his repressed desires. Due to the social fences in the process of gratifying the libidinal wishes, the author is creating beautiful work of art. The impact of social restriction can be seen in the text of Roth. Roth expresses his views as:

“I told you, I wasn't planning to do it at all,” and then, either because desire had overpowered her or because she wanted to shut him up, she lowered her lips down the length of his cock while his gaze remained hypnotically fastened to hers, and the helplessness in him, the

knowledge that the affair was a futile folly and that Pegeen's history was unmalleable and Pegeen unattainable and that he was bringing a new misfortune down on his head, began to abate. (95)

The seed of the sense of social restriction, here, can be realized in the psyche of the Philip Roth and he is expressing the villainary aspect of the society. In the above passage, there is explosion of the sense of repression. According to the author, the society is not ready to accept the emotional love affair between late sixties protagonist and young lovely young beloved due to the age gap.

The sexual relation between characters is not acceptable to the society. There are some moral conducts that restrict him in the way of fulfilling the sexual gratification. Pegeen's father becomes the antagonist character in his process of fulfilling his sexual desires. As the result of social barriers, Roth tells us that he can't have sex with her any longer because of the social intrude. He accepts that he is not able to break the social norms and values in spite of the temptation and flirtation. His congregational life style stops him in the path of fulfilling his sexual gratification and he is expressing the social barriers are pushing him from the fulfillment of the desires and the enjoyment of the life.

In the romantic life of Simon Axler, the social norms and values become the obstacles and he regards them as the villain in his mission of gratifying sexual hunger in the establishment of emotional world. While expressing his sexual interest, Simon Axler memories:

When he called Pegeen that night he made no reference to what had happened that afternoon nor did he tell Pegeen about Louise's visit when she come for the weekend , nor, while they were having sex, was

he able to keep the re-haired Valkyrie out of his mind and the fantasy of what hadn't happened. (89-90)

His sexual obsession is in crisis because of the fences created by the society. He is enthusiastic in the realm of sex and he is also saying that his sexual energy and power of copulation is increasing in his old age but society is not ready to give him to indulge in the realm of sexuality and to have emotional attachment with the young beautiful beloved. He regards him as the thief of sex in the sense that he is deeply obscenest in the will of having sex with his beloved. But the set of rules that the society has imposed in the state of his project of penetrating her are the hindrances.

Committing sex act is taken by the society as the moral punishment and the society doesn't allow having sex openly. But the author takes the sexual necessity as the birthright and regards sex as the fundamental need to have healthy life. The repression of desire that are lustful in the unconscious level are the result of restriction of society but the author subjectively appeals the reader and the human beings to take the sexuality as the necessity of human life. Society has established moral codes and conducts to maintain mannerism and discipline in the network of human relationship. Just like Roth's exploration of morality as the antagonism in the protagonist's personal life, every human being has to face such kind of obstacles in way of having romance and physical pleasure. His desire for sex with Pegeen is violated by the society in general and her father in particular. In the below extract, Roth traces the abstraction of morality in the process of spending physical lifestyle.

On the other hand, there is conflict between the pleasure principle and reality principle. The protagonist's instinctual quest and style of living is guided by pleasure principle but in order to protect the individual from the social and moral punishment and demoralization there is the regulating agency that is ego. Social infrastructure and

rational codes and conducts functions as the medium of sustaining disciplinary system where as libidinal desires are governed by the society.

As Freud emphasizes that the function of the instinctual stimulus is to exert influence in the protagonist's mind. Simon Axler mind is motivated and regulated by a need that aims to achieve physical as well as psychological satisfaction. But such primitive, wild, and natural tendency of the pleasure principle is checked by reality principle. The background of reality principle is related with social norms and values that regulate all the movements of an organism in society. Freud says:

He finds the way back to reality, however, from this world of fantasy by making use of his special gifts to mould his fantasies into truths of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of reality. Thus in a certain fashion he actually becomes the hero, the king, the creator, or the favorite he desired to be, without following the long, roundabout path of making real alterations in the external world. But he can only achieve this because other men feel the same dissatisfaction as he does with the renunciation demanded by reality, and because that dissatisfaction, which results from the replacement of the pleasure-principle by the reality principle, is itself part of reality.

(567)

Pleasure principle as opposed to reality generates tension in psychic functioning and reality censors in prohibited location but paves ways on free situations. Based on aforementioned line of thought, the ultimate goal of a person is incessant quest for pleasure that never ends but gets reduced in its intensity.

In the text, in the world of Simon Axler there is dominance of the reality principle on the pleasure principle. To him the quest for pleasure is always on, but not

in anarchic ways and always, rather in society-friendly manner that rejects spontaneity of pleasure seeking attempts. As a result, unpleasure occurs in psychic functioning.

About the reality of Axler, Roth says:

Everybody else would be sitting there gloomily silent, inwardly intense and rehearsing to themselves—in the lexicon of pop psychology or gutter obscenity or Christian suffering or paranoid pathology—the ancient themes of dramatic literature: incest, betrayal, injustice, cruelty, vengeance, jealousy, rivalry, desire, loss, dishonor, and grief.

(19)

So from the observation of Simon Axler experiences it is proved that human mode of thinking and pattern of actions are regulated by the duality between pleasure principle which is associated with id for the sake of satisfaction and reality principle that is related to society and its norms and values. Simon Axler's biological needs are not easily released in the external world where a man lives and strives for pleasure. He is forced to feel and realize his internal requirements and need but is always under restriction and regulatory force of society.

Thus, he is hard-pressed between duality of his real and realizable internal need, and constraints, restrictions and conditions of the society he lives in. So such psychological conflict formulates psychic personality into two distinct agencies that include pleasure principle and reality principle.

## **II. ii Manifestation and Confession of Irrational and Tormented Identity**

The constant and permanent duality between these agencies is the basis to know the reason behind one's suffering, thinking pattern and mode of action.

Desires are libidinal and infantile, collected in the unconscious state which is not erased, Freud correlates that desires manifestation with the creative activities of a

writer. When our wishes, desires or fantasies are not fulfilled, they are repressed; they stay in the unconscious mind waiting for an outlet. These repressed desires come out in different forms: dream, tongue slip, eye-contact, mistakes, joke, lapse and literary works, the satisfaction at the fulfillment of the repressed wish may turn out to be so great that it counterbalances the distressing feeling attaching to the day's residues.

Philip Roth is suggesting that when the writer can't express his sexual and erotic desires openly or when he can't explore his socially and morally unacceptable desires and feeling frankly, he makes his desires socially acceptable through the artistic creation. He distorts his sexual and erotic desires with the help of two mechanisms that are displacement and condensation in the process of sublimation. In this sense Freud says:

The transformation of latent into manifest content is done by 'dream work' whose function is to codify and disguise material, already subjected to repression because unacceptable into the ego or superego, in such a way that it can't reach consciousness. The latent material had been repressed because of its sexual, aggressive or frightening nature; and it follows that in order to understand it the course of the dream work has to be traced and disentangled by 'interpretation' (162).

The motive for the formation of an art is a wish repressed out of consciousness because it is intolerably painful. The unconscious wish can find expression in creative writing. The processes of artistic work into manifest level are chief mechanisms that affect the disguises of unconscious wishes.

In the process of sublimation, non-sexual objects displace sexual desires. The unacceptable desires are manifested in the form of creative writing with the help of different symbols, images, words and phrases. Such desires become the materials in

the construction of work of art. So latent contents here in Freud's theory are the sexual unfulfilled desires of the writer and manifestation of these latent desires is the work of art. Roth manifests:

He carried the gun into Pegeen's study and stood there looking at the room that she had stripped of Victoria's wallpaper and then painted a shade of peach, the room that she had made into hers just as he, holding nothing back, had invited her to make him into hers. He suppressed an urge to fire a shot in to the back of desk chair and sat in it instead. (137)

This is an example of manifestation of latent repressed desires and experiences with the help of sublimation. There is sublimation of his sexual desires and his sexual activities with his beloved with the help of imagery and symbols. The sexual images and activities are replaced by unsexual symbols and images. In the process of sublimation, non-sexual objects displace sexual desires or morally acceptable images displace the morally unacceptable desires. It is distortion of desire to make it socially acceptable. The unacceptable desires are manifested in the creative writing with the help of different symbols, images, words and phrases. Such desires become the matters or materials in the construction of work of art.

In the process of sublimating the erotic desires, Philip Roth as the writer applies the mechanisms like displacement and condensation. Sexual unfulfilled desire of the writer through the image of the protagonist Simon Axler is manifested in the form of work of art.

While manifesting the repressed desires, Roth displaces sexual objects with nonsexual objects and the morally unacceptable desires with morally acceptable images i.e. Axler's vulgar behavior is manifested through literary symbols and

phrases. The unacceptable desires are manifested in the creative writing with the help of different symbol, images, words and phrases. Such desires of Simon Axler become the matters or materials in the construction of work of art. Simon Axler's erotic desire are outletted with different literary symbols especially phallic symbols like tower, gun, swords, arrows, and female imagery like rooms, cups, caves, bread etc.

In such process of making the creative writing acceptable to the reader, he takes help of sublimation and manifestation of neurotic wishes and desires that are denied by reality or are prohibited by the social standards of morality. Roth narrates:

The ruthless madness that she'd mobilized in leaving the two small children at home, her driving single-mindedly to the estranged husband's house, her mounting the stairs, ringing the bell, raising the rifle, and, when he opened the door, without hesitation her firing twice at point-blank range—if she could do that, I can do this! (52)

The process of sublimating the protagonist's sexual behavior and action, Roth replaces erotic activities with the help of literary phrases, symbols, and images, etc.

In the process of sublimation Philip Roth anesthetizes the personal feelings and emotions in very socially acceptable way. For the formation of subjectivity, he in the image of Simon Axler, Roth utilizes Freudian Concept of Dream Symbolism and makes his work of art very symbolic.

Here in the text, the writer presents the sexual activities as well as sexual part of human body in symbolic presentation. It can be seen in the above extract where Roth displaces sexual act with dinner and setting of physical intercourse with the midtown. He even gives female imaginary in the act of describing female's body and her sexual part especially vagina and breast, just as D cup, theater, cleavage etc. Such

distortion with the help of symbols and images makes the work of art acceptable to the society.

### **II. iii. Suicidal Theme and Death Drive**

Philip Roth's psychological novel *The Humbling* is the traumatic realism where we can find manifestation of latent traumatized psyche of the author in general and the protagonist in particular because Roth presents Simon Axler as his alter ego. The author is articulating the beautiful piece of work of art with the exploration of subjectivity that is formed with the sense of loss of his artistic talent, fear, wounds, and guilty desires of unresolved conflicts. The protagonist, Simon Axler, expresses his marginalized existence and mediates on loss and pain that are transformed in something enjoyable and controllable through the creative writing. The theoretical background about the meaning of death and loss evokes the sense of marginalized existence of the human beings. Human beings have a death drive and degree of self-destructive behavior in them leads on destroying themselves psychologically. In this sense Lois Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* says about Freud's concept as:

Crisis brings into the spotlight wounds, fears, guilty desires, or unresolved conflicts that I have failed to deal with and demands action. I am flooded by the past because I can now see what was really going on. This is how I can know myself through crisis. The word trauma is also used, of course, to refer to a painful experience that scars us psychologically. Thus, I might experience the childhood trauma of losing a sibling to illness, accidental death, or suicide and, in later life, experience the trauma, or crisis, of being flooded by all the guilt, denial, and conflict I've repressed concerning that death. And I might

also see, for example, the ways in which my parents unconsciously encouraged my guilt in order to relieve their own. (23)

He concludes that there must be something in our biological make-up as a species to explain this death work, this psychological and physical self destruction. Of course, when we conceptualize our death work as a drive, as something natural and unavoidable, we are off the hook of having to probe too deeply into its workings or to try to change it; after all, nothing we do can alter a biological drive.

The protagonist's subject position can be analyzed dividing his span of life. His youth is different from his old age. Time transforms him into old from the energetic and prosperous youth age. He has lost his reputation as the last of the best of the classical American stage actors. From the novel's opening lines, the researcher learns that Axler has, suddenly and inexplicably, lost the ability to act: he has lost his magic. He has never failed in the theatre, everything he had done has been strong and successful, and then the terrible thing happened: he couldn't act. So, the protagonist's identity is filled up with the sense of loss, pain and lamentation because of his problem of aging. Sense of loss of his talent that tolerates him very much, is explored by Roth in the following text:

HE'D LOST HIS MAGIC. The impulse was spent. He'd never failed in the theater, everything he had done had been strong and successful, and then the terrible thing happened: he couldn't act. Going on-stage became agony. Instead of the certainty that he was going to be wonderful, he knew he was going to fail. It happened three times in a row, and by the last time nobody was interested, nobody came. He couldn't get over to the audience. His talent was dead. (1)

In the novel, Philip Roth outlets his personal and secret desires and feelings in very artistic way. There is Philip Roth's subjective expression or manifestation of his loss of his artistic talent of his writing power in the image of his protagonist, Simon Axler, in his novel *The Humbling*. Axler's loss of capacity to act resemblances with Roth's loss of capacity of producing art.

Roth presents his hero Axler as his ego. As noted he has gotten older, so feels sense of ageing, death, and diminished capabilities that are the theme of this novel. In other words Roth himself is aimless, compulsive, and self-gratifying not only in his representation of sex but also in his representations of traumatic history, death, and loss. Here such subjectification of his painful reality is foregrounded through the character Simon Axler in his novel.

Simon Axler, a man of late sixties feels that he can't have good performance. His lack of having good performance compels him to regard as the marginalized man in the moral and energetic infrastructure of the society. He is forced to think him as the incapable candidate to have excellent artistic talent. Even in another extract Simon Axler legitimizes the sense of lack of artistic capacity in his psychology in this way:

It didn't pass. He couldn't act. The ways he could once rivet attention on the stage! And now he dreaded every performance, and dreaded it all day long he spent the entire day thinking thoughts he'd never thought before a performance in his life: I won't make it, I won't be able to do it, I'm playing the wrong roles, I'm overreaching, I'm faking, I have no idea even of how to do the first line. And meanwhile he tried to occupy the hours doing a hundred seemingly necessary things to prepare: I have to look at this speech again, I have to rest, I have to exercise, I have to look at that speech again, and by the time he

got to the theater he was exhausted. And dreading going out there. He would hear the cue coming closer and closer and know that he couldn't do it. (3)

Because of his sense of aging and sufferings, he is forced to think him as broken man in the society. As the marginalized man, his emotional love affair is denied by the social standards of morality and propriety. While facing the horror of incapability and mortality, Axler feels lost as an unwilling outsider.

To society, an aging man is a dying man and society has little to offer such an individual. Without cultural support, he must forge a new space to gain an understanding of his crisis. The protagonist Simon Axler thinks that his failure to have good performance due to the sense of aging. Just like in the above extract, Roth unpacks the protagonist's sense of aging and suffering as:

Self- travesty had come into being who did not exist before, a self- travesty grounded in noting, and he was that self-travesty, and how had it happened? Was it purely the passage of time bringing on decay and collapse? Was it a manifestation of aging? His appearance was still impressive. his aims as an actor had not changed nor had his painstaking manner of preparation for a role. There was no one more thorough and studious and serious, no one who took better care of his talent or who better accommodated himself to the changing conditions of a career in the theater over so many decades. (10-11)

While foregrounding the painful failure, the protagonist with the fountain of frustration explores his identity that is affected by the sense of aging. The realities of aging and inability to performance are truths that Axler has been denying all his life. His aggressive confession is the product of social marginalization due to the social

marginalization because of lack of confidence. His sense of vulnerability forces him to regard him as the marginalized being.

Axler is an aging man acknowledging his failure for perhaps the first time when he realizes that he has spent his entire life avoiding the realities of aging, love, and loss. It is clumsy and complex, perhaps exposing his lost confidence and imagined gracelessness. At a time of vulnerability, a time when age can no longer be ignored and Axler feels defenseless and powerless. Roth's use of the image of the humbling carries the theme of the protagonist's artistic failure in contemporary society asks readers to recognize the impossible existence of the aging.

In this traumatic realism, the protagonist's psychology is filled with pain of loss and tragic circumstances that are the results of ineffectiveness of protagonist's attempts to cope with loss. The novel is the exploration of the protagonist's destruction because he is out letting his pitiful situation that is fixated on losing energy and on his nihilistic thought that he finds that nothing is left to protect him in his vulnerable condition. He is an aging man acknowledging his mortality for perhaps the first time when he realizes that he has spent his entire life avoiding the realities of aging, love and loss. His sexual obsession is denied by society, so his fulfillment of sexuality with young girl is not possible. As the result of this situation, he is subjugated as the social outsider. It is because we can see how fear of death often results in fear of life. In this regards Lois Tyson, about Freudian concept of death, in his text *Critical Theory Today* writes:

If we complicate matters by realizing that our fear of death is not merely fear of biological death but translates for most of us into fear of loss in general—loss of my mate's attention, loss of my children's love, loss of my health, loss of my job, loss of my looks, loss of my

money. . . And if we realize that our first experience of death is not biological at all, but the psychological “death” most of us suffered the first time we felt abandoned by a parent, then we can see the ways in which our early experiences of abandonment created our fear of death.

(25)

From the above conceptual base it can be said that our fear of death, of losing our life can result in our fear of being intimately attached to life. The ultimate loss, of which human beings are utterly terrified, is death but life itself ultimately results in death.

Axler is psychologically dead in the sense that he is outside of the society and he finds himself marginalized and alone. He is psychologically weak and fragile and finds him as a broken man. Such kind of sense of loss and frustration is explored by Philip Roth in the given extract:

They became actresses with Axler, they became the heroines of their own lives. Few stage actors could speak and be spoken to the way he could, yet he could do neither anymore. The sound that used to go into his ear felt as though it were going out, and every word he uttered seemed acted instead of spoken. The initial source in his acting was in what he heard, his response to what he heard was at the core of it, and if he couldn't listen, couldn't hear, he had nothing to go on. (4)

He is thinking about his existence at the contemporary society as the marginalized person and he condemns his state of being old. His lamentation on his loss of artistic power leads him in the world of frustration, depression and isolation.

Axler regards that his existence as empty and void. Her belonging with him is being out of his control and her closeness is, for him, as the past romance. His

lamentations on losing her are too much unbearable to him. The theme of loss and loneliness is outleted by Roth in this extract:

They had given him one medication for depression that didn't agree with him, then a second, and finally a third that caused no intolerable side effects, but whether it did him any good, he could not tell. He could not believe that his improvement had anything to do with pills or with psychiatric consultations or group therapy or art therapy, all of which felt like empty exercises. What continued to frighten him, as the day of his discontinuation to frighten him, as the day of his discharge approached, was that nothing that was happening to him seemed to have to do with anything else. (16)

Philip Roth's protagonist is haunted by the fear of the unfathomable reality of loss around him. Axler's futile existence is the exploration of Roth's absurd existence because Roth is exploring his subjectivity through his authorial character Simon. In this context, K. R. Eissler in "Death Drive, Ambivalence, and Narcissism" says:

In *The Humbling*, Simon Axler's great theatrical career, is arrested by inexplicable bouts of self-consciousness, bears immediate comparison to Roth's own literary theatrics. That a Roth novel will be seen in terms of "Roth" is a certainty . . . But the self-consciousness that torments Axler is Roth's most valuable possession—his inability to maintain the fictional façade. Skidelsky forgets that Roth's characters—even Nathan Zuckerman, the Rothlike central figure of nine novels—have always been ungainly Frankenstein's monsters, not exact copies. *The Humbling* is not an old man's indiscretion; it is a wittily self-mocking turn . . . It is also a moment in which we identify

Axler with Roth, not only due to the comparison of actor and writer, but because Roth's career has been marked by the same perversity that defines his characters, the same refusal to do what is in one's interest. Like his combative, peevish, adulterous protagonists, Roth will not play nice; he chooses his subject matter more to antagonize than to please his audience. (12)

It means Axler is a garden-variety solipsist, a melancholy hedonist with a knack for pre-emptive self-forgiveness. No death-defying counter life for him, and no evasive reckoning of the facts: just a self-contradicting biography the inconsistencies of which raise no great ontological questions about the intertwining of fiction and reality.

Simon Axler is assembling his loneliness with the absurd hero who is socially excluded. So sense of loss forces him to be indulging in the world of void, empty, and nothingness. Like the theme of loss and the aging self, Philip Roth's alter ego imagines the nightmare of the future because of the psychological fear of getting alienated identity. In this regard Roth exposes:

Of course, if you've had it, you always have something unlike anyone else's. I'll always be unlike anyone else, Axler told himself, because I am who I am. I carry that with me—that people always remember. But the aura he'd, all his mannerisms and eccentricities and personal peculiarities, what had worked for Falstaff and Peer Gynt and Vanya—what had gained Simon Axler his reputation as the last of the best of the classical American stage actors—none of it worked for any role no. (1-2)

Psychologically, he is too much weak and fragile. His mental and psychological state is full of sense of loss of his artistic talent in the one hand and his girlfriend on the other hand.

In the chain of exploring the tormented subjectivity, there is big crisis in the world of the protagonist because the crises brings him into the spotlight wound, fears, guilty desires or unresolved conflict that he have failed to deal with. The word trauma can be applied to refer his pain full experiences that scare him psychologically. His traumatized feelings and experiences tell the reality of psychological experiences of every human being because such kind of loss and fear also happens in our life. Philip Roth is supposed to have the guide line from Sigmund Freud's theory of "Thanatos" that carries the theme of psychological and physical self destruction. In this regard Otto Fenichel in "A Critique of the Death Instinct" argues:

Freud postulated that human beings are dominated by two basic instincts: 'Eros' (the sexual drive or creative life force) and 'Thanatos' (the death force or destructiveness). The mythical characters of Eros and 'Thanatos' were used by Freud in his formulation of drive theory to represent the two primary outlets of biological energy. 'Eros' represents life, creativity, growth, and increase in tension; and Thanatos represents the movement toward homeostasis (elimination of all tensions), dissolution, negation energies, and death. We are constantly stimulated and driven into action by a balance of these. (17)

From Fenichel's argument, it is proved that the sense of death and loss is the major factor that naturalizes the subjective position of writer in the process of building the creative work of art.

In the novel, Roth is going to explain that everyday world is very realistic in which the act of psychological and physical self destruction occurs. The protagonist also undergoes in the sea of mourning because he is psychologically dead. Such theme of psychological death is expressed by Roth in this way:

ALL AT ONCE Axler was alone in the house in the country and terrified of killing himself. Now there was nothing stopping him. Now he could go ahead and do what he'd found himself unable to do while she was still there: walk up the stairs to the attic, load the gun, put the barrel in his mouth, and reach down with his long arms to pull the trigger. (9)

There is the dominance of death drive in the psychology of protagonist. It is the truth that the novel can be nomenclature as the account of alarming the degree of self destructive behavior that is seen in Simon Axler. Though he is alive in the materialistic world, psychologically he is dead.

The fear of death and loss is responsible in the tragic situation of the protagonist. That is, his fear of death, of losing his artistic life, can result in his fear of being intimately attached to life. The ultimate loss, of which he is utterly terrified, is the death that is symbolic of losing the tolerance and patience. His desire of death is because of loss in general; loss of his beloved's affection, loss of artistic capacity, loss of his fame and name, loss of his sexual power etc. Psychologically or unconsciously, the desire of death occurs in him because he is suffered with the feeling of being abandoned by his nearest and dearest one.

#### **II. iv. Memory and Escapism**

Through the image of Simon Axler Philip Roth is exploring the identity of 20<sup>th</sup> century human being who is forced to be caught between the world of illusion and

reality. The protagonist in the novel suffers so much and has the sense of frustration, alienation, isolation and loneliness. He has been spending tormented life because he is entangled in the sense of loss, fear, death, and nothingness. So, as the result of sense of ageing and suffering in the physical world, he tries to take the help of world of illusion as the medium of surviving. Rob Weatherill in “Freud's Theory of Art and Creativity” says:

... psychoanalytic theory will have to accept that the imagery of the primary process can possess an invisible order of its own at least as far as creative work is concerned. The great psychoanalyst and art historian, E. Kris, prepared the way for recasting our concept of the primary process by suggesting that the creative mind can allow conscious functions to lapse in a controlled regression towards the primary process. But this does not yet mean that the primary process is itself accessible to control and order. (19)

It is the concept that human being takes the help of imagination and imaginary to escape from the tragic realistic world. The repressed and regressed psyche can controlled an ordered with the help of escapism. People imagine the illusive world as the solution of getting rid of suffering and pain.

To get rid of from the fountain of frustration he imbricates the castle of illusion. An illusion becomes a source of solace for him and he remains in the fantasy world. The fantasy world becomes a heaven for him because he wanted to escape from the meaningless and futile lives for fear of confronting harsh reality. The protagonist takes help of aesthetics, music and memory to escape from the suffering and pain. For him music becomes the medium of forgetting the tragic real world. Roth says:

One of his legs would intermittently go dead so that he couldn't raise it properly while walking, and he would miss a raise it properly while walking . . . Only a few months earlier his best and only local friend, an eighty-year-old judge who'd retired some years back, had died of cancer; as a result . . . he didn't have anyone with whom to talk or to eat a meal, let alone share a bed. (45)

Simon Axler with the help of memory tries to fly from the tormented and painful life. He indulges in the wandering in the past and forgets about the suffering and pain of losing his energy and most beautiful things.

Philip Roth walks in the path of Sigmund Freud who views that a happy man never fantasies, only an unsatisfied one, fantasies are product of unsatisfied wishes, every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality in his work *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* Freud says: "Fantasy creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfillment of the wish. What it thus creates is a daydream or fantasy". (p 714, *Critical Theory since Plato*). The fantasy carries the traces of imagination to avoid the sense of suffering and ageing, even loss of Consuela's intimacy. Indulging in the world of music and imagination he forgets the tension of physical world temporarily.

Due to the huge load of tragic situation in real life, the protagonist Simon Axler plays the music regardlessly. He prefers to live in fantasy and he accepts indulgence in the pleasing and seductive charm of illusion. Not only with the help of music has he created his illusive subjectivity but also with the help of art. Axler imagines:

He was happy— an unexpected feeling. Usually at the dinner hour he had the worst blues of the day. While she cooked he went into the

living room and put on Brendel playing Schubert. He couldn't remember the last time he'd bothered listening to music, and back in the best days of his marriage, it was playing all the time. (53)

To escape from the ruined life in the reality, he takes the help of world of art as the medium of getting solace. He gives priority to read and to create art and start to think that the artistic world is suitable for him to celebrate the life.

Simon Axler favorites to involve in party and in the musical world to avoid the sense of pain and suffering and physical world. Art becomes the form of escapism that gives temporary relief to him and it helps him to forget the fragile life and breakable existence. Freud argues:

The accumulation of excitation is felt as unpleasure and that it sets the apparatus in action with a view to repeating the experience of satisfaction which involves a diminution of excitation as pleasure a current follow of wish starts from unpleasure and aims at pleasure. Only a wish is able to set the psychical apparatus in motion and that the course of excitation in it is automatically regulated by feeling of pleasure and unpleasures. The first wishing seems to have been a hallucinatory cathecting of the memory of satisfaction. (614)

The unpleasurable world is replaced by pleasurable world. When people are in suffering and pain, they want to be in romantic world and aim at pleasure. They wish to remain in the illusion and to forget the tragic life. So, the burden of reality is replaced by the charm of music and artistic creation for the protagonist. The propensity to escape from the burden of ground reality pushes him to dwell vicariously in the quicksand of illusion.

Just like the aesthetic as the medium of escaping from reality, the alternate means of getting rid from the tragic world is the remembering and memorizing the past. Memory is the storehouse of ideas. Something much to be experienced or learned before it can be remembered, and that which is remembered must somehow be retained between the time of acquisition and the time of recall or recollection. It is quite true that the unconscious wishes are always active. They represent paths which are always practicable, whenever; a quantum of excitation makes use of them it is indeed an outstanding peculiarity of the unconscious process that they are indestructible. Nothing can be brought to the ending but can take help of past. Indeed, the fading of memories and the weak affect of impressions which are no longer recent, which we are apt to take as self evident, and to explain as a primary effect of time on our psychic memory.

## **II. v. Jealousy and Pornography**

Loss and pain were transformed into something enjoyable and controllable through artistic creation. Here in the novel, to describe these emotions of weakness, tenor and loss, Axler introduces the word 'jealousy'. By using pornography in conjunction with the word jealousy, Axler manages to uniquely articulate his experiences of loss of artistic power, loss of control and his own mortality. To explore the subjectivity, Axler uses pornography to describe the pain of his newly marginalized existence. His unconscious feelings are described in a surprisingly aggressive manner with full of pornographic symbols, words, phrases and images.

While defining Pornography, Freud argues:

Pornography, in its own way, derives from the urge to defile an other.

On the surface, it may seem that pornography is simply about erotic pleasure. But when the human body is made into a biological toy, it is

stripped of all human dignity, and this defilement is an act of aggression. The hostility may be unconscious or it may be openly violent, but, either way, it has its basis in resentment. (Freud 334)

When people can't get their wished objects or can't fulfill their desires, they take the help of creative writings, especially they outlet their repressed desires in pornographic way. They express their packed feelings and emotions in very erotically. While they sublimate their erotic emotions, they replace sexual desires with different phallic symbols and female imaginary.

The pornographic expression of latent sexual as well as erotic desires is colored with jealousy. People become jealous towards the detached or snatched objects and they express their jealous motives with the help of creative writings. Jealousy is the product of unfulfilled desires because their motive of fulfilling is gone away from their criteria. So, they outlet their jealous feelings and emotions in a pornographic way. Freud asserts:

Jealousy is defined as an emotional state that is aroused by a perceived threat to a relationship or position. It motivates behaviors that counter the threat. Jealousy is a reaction related to fear and rage, and it makes one want to protect, maintain, and prolong the association of love.

Evolutionary psychologists believe that the cues that trigger sexual jealousy are weighted differently in men and women. From the man's perspective, a sexual infidelity will result in uncertainty in paternity of their children, which often leads to sexual jealousy. Sexual infidelity acts as a cue that triggers sexual jealousy among men. (222)

So, jealousy mainly occurs in the domain of love because of the domination of erotic desires. When there is sexual infidelity or sexual unfulfillment or when people can not grasp their wished thing, there is germination of jealousy.

Roth discourse is pornographic form of art. It carries the pornographic expressions of unfulfilled desires. So the novel is full of expression of painful losses which evokes the protagonist's psychological death. In the sense of emotional mourning of protagonist, it can be said as the modern elegy. The protagonist's subjectivity is infected by the melancholia because of society's strict morality and rationality. By repressing the individual sexual freedom, society dehumanizes the protagonist in the modern era. Society is taking an intensely subjective experience and forcing an individual to practice indifferent objectively. Thus, *The Humbling* is a uniquely modern and inconsolable elegy in its new articulation of pornography of jealousy. Simon Axler is expressing of jealousy through the pornographic description:

Do you have some special dislike of me dating back to the beginning?  
Is there envy here, Asa, or revenge perhaps, or jealousy? What harm have I done her? I'm sixty-six, I haven't been working, my spine's a problem— where is the horror in that? Where is the threat to your daughter in that? Did it prevent me from offering her anything she wanted? I gave Pegeen everything I possibly could! I tried to satisfy her in every conceivable way! (134-135)

Axler begins the passage with hard questions, questions that his previous life of distraction never required that he ask. It is at the point where he must face these questions for the first time that he invents the term pornography of jealousy to help articulate what he newly faces.

In expressing, and then describing the pornography of jealousy, Axler must contemplate the loss of power, loss of control, and his own mortality. The realities that he has fought so hard to avoid have now forced themselves into his once structured and controlled life. This is seen not only in the particular words of the passage but also in the structure of the passage. The shortened sentences, especially at the end, express a giving in and giving up that result in a tired and exhausted-sounding syntax. By the close of this powerful passage, Axler is weak, vulnerable, and at the mercy of his lover. In another extract, like this, there is exploration of theme of pornography of jealousy.

To describe these new emotions of weakness, terror and loss, Axler introduces the word jealousy. By using pornography in conjunction with the word jealousy, Axler manage to uniquely articulate his experience of loss as being rooted in a loss of control. In *The Humbling*, Axler has shifted the focus to the jealousy because of separation from Pegeen. Ordinary pornography in some ways protects the viewer from the pain of jealousy, and pornography of jealousy does not allow the recipient to escape the pain. The elegiac expression of subjectivity takes the form of ‘pornography of jealousy’ which is full of tormenting ideas and consisting of painful images. In the process of defining pornographic writing, Laura Kipnis in “The Eloquence of pornography” argues:

Like the artistic avant garde's, pornography's transgressions are first of all aesthetic. It confronts us with bodies that repulse us -- like those in fat porn -- or defies us with genders we find noxious. It induces us to look at what's conventionally banished from view. Pornography is chock full of these sorts of aesthetic shocks and surprises. Here's one: in a culture which so ferociously equates sexuality with youth, where

else but within pornography will you find enthusiasm for sagging, aging bodies, or the permission to sexualize them? (4)

From Laura Kipnis's argument, it is clear that creative writers' texts are nothing but the discourse of pornography and jealousy. While aestheticizing the internalized feelings and emotions, writer creates the regime of jealousy and pornography.

It is with this search for space where he can grapple with the overwhelming realities of aging and loss, Simon Axler is expressing jealousy in the version of pornography. Axler's out letting of pornographic jealousy is the form of catalyst for melancholic grieving and embodies the fundamental loss of control. This novella as a work of pornography in the prosaic sense, accusing Roth of creating a tired simulacrum of his earlier, disturbing examinations of human sexuality. The easy, by contrast argues that *The Humbling* is Roth's exploration of an existential "pornography of destruction," one that both encompasses and transcends the realm of the sexual in its fascination with witnessing the event of its own death.

### Chapter III

#### ***The Humbling: Domination of Death Drive and Orientation towards Suicide***

*The Humbling* is an exploration of reality through a sensuous presentation and a recreation of memories. In the text, there is evidence of the artist as being stimulated by an emotional excitement whose nature and source involves bringing it before his conscious mind. The researcher has attempted to explore the neurotic identity of the protagonist and justified that there is resemblance between the subjectivity of author and the protagonist. Philip Roth has presented Simon Axler as his alter ego and has expressed his subjective identity through the image of Axler. While exploring the subjectivity, Roth has followed the Freudian psychoanalysis and his notion of subjectivity. Philip Roth's subjective identity is studied in the line of time, situation, age and psychological reality. So, the researcher tells that subjective identity of the author can be viewed as the traumatic identity, erotic identity, neurotic identity, authorial identity and tragic identity. Freudian concept of "Eros" and "Thanatos" is used by the researcher to explore the subjectivity of the authorial character.

The authorial image of Philip Roth, Simon Axler is too much obsessive and compulsive and so his behaviors are dominated by the irrationality. In this sense, his action and behaviors are either directly or indirectly guided by instinctual drives. His activities are motivated and regulated by the instincts from the beginning to the middle part of the novel but death instinct is dominating in his life in later part of novel. So, "Eros" and "Thanatos" play the vital role in determining the subjective position of the authorial character Simon Axler. But in his later life, there is dominance of the reality principle because of his tragic situation.

The researcher claims that there is dominance of unconscious search for pleasure in his life. The primitive, natural and biological need directs the protagonist

to fulfill his erotic desires. The compulsive behavior of the protagonist forces him to explore his erotic wishes through the medium of sublimation. As a result, the protagonist exuberantly takes part in a series of actions that are independent to each other. The researcher says that it is the unconscious characteristic of “Id” in Axler that generates psychic tension to regulate human behaviors, speech and actions.

But in the life of protagonist, the natural tendency of the pleasure principle is checked by reality principle. That is related with social norms and values that regulate all the movements of an organism in the society. The researcher tells that Axler’s quest for pleasure is always on, but not in anarchic ways, rather in society-friendly manner that rejects spontaneity of pleasure seeking attempts. The sexual and libidinal desires of the protagonist are controlled by the social morality and reality. And reality principle generates tension in Axler psychic functioning and the reality principle sensor pleasure in prohibited locations. The protagonist is subjectivity is infected by the repressive and neurotic behavior and actions because of society’s strict morality and rationality. By repressing the individual sexual freedom, society dehumanizes the protagonist in modern era. Such cultural barriers prevent him from living a satisfied life. From the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is entangled in his quest for pleasure but the social restrictions push him to repress his feeling and desires in unconscious level.

In the process of studying the subjectivity of the author, the researcher has shown the conflict between personal desires and the restrictions of the society. The protagonist, here in the novel has been facing the social marginalization because of his emotional as well as sexual desires of his young beautiful beloved. Pegeen’s isolating Axler also forces him in the pound of melancholia, as the social outsider, he manifests his vulnerable existence and tormented existence. The identity of Axler is

full of melancholic feeling and emotions because of his marginalized existence in the society. He is obsessed with the feeling of suicide and wants to die by self. He attempts to shot gun himself and desires to be away from the tragic reality. In one sense, the researcher argues that the protagonist is psychologically weak and fragile and fins him as a broken man.

The researcher says the realities of aging and mortality on the one hand and the realities of loss and morality on the other hand too has tormented the life of protagonist. So as the result of the sense of pain and sufferings and sense of fear of losing the intimacy of Pegeen, there in the psychology of protagonist seeds the jealousy, his jealous feeling and thoughts are outletted in the text pornographically and aggressively. Pornography and jealousy have been manifested in the novel. On the other hand, to avoid the sense of pain and suffering, sense of traumatic experiences, the protagonist has tried to escape from the world of imagination. He takes the help of music to forget the torture of the reality and indulges in the world of irrationality. Not only that, he also takes the help of memory, he envisions the past romantic life, past youthful and energetic life to avoid the traumatic experiences. So the researcher argues that the identity of the authorial character is affected by the social prohibition and the result of such marginalized existence.

To explore the subjectivity, Philip Roth, through the image of Axler, has manifested the subjective experiences and emotion with the help of creative writing. The unacceptable desires of protagonist are manifested in the form of writing with the help of different symbols, images, words, and phrases. Roth presents Simon Axler as a character and supposed author of the novel. Thus, the novel reveals the experiences of protagonist as a writer, which in turn recapitulates the manner in which Axler has leads his life through art.

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