

## **Celebrating and Challenging Life's Absurdities: A Postmodern Parody in Philip Roth's 'Everyman'**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Philip Roth's novel "Everyman" stands as a remarkable work of postmodern literature, skillfully employing parody to challenge conventional narratives and societal ideals while celebrating the complex, messy, and uncertain nature of human existence. This research paper delves into the intricate interplay between postmodernism and parody within the novel, exploring how Roth's narrative techniques and thematic exploration intertwine to create a profound and thought-provoking literary experience. The narrative structure of "Everyman" is a central element of its postmodern identity. Roth disrupts traditional linear storytelling, offering readers a fragmented and non-linear narrative that mirrors the protagonist's fractured memories and underscores postmodern skepticism toward grand narratives. This fragmentation challenges readers to actively engage with the text and question the reliability of narrative coherence.

Self-reflexivity and metafictional elements further deepen the novel's postmodern identity. The protagonist's awareness of narrative construction in his own life and work invites readers to reflect on the artifice inherent in storytelling and challenges the stability of identity. Intertextuality, a quintessential postmodern feature, enriches the narrative by seamlessly integrating references to cultural and literary texts, encouraging readers to explore layers of meaning within the text. Roth's use of parody in "Everyman" extends beyond imitation; it becomes a powerful tool for critique and celebration. The novel parodies societal conventions and cultural narratives surrounding youth, immortality, family, and the American Dream, revealing their absurdity and hollowness in the face of mortality. These parodic elements satirize contemporary society's obsession with physical perfection, the denial of aging, and the pursuit of material success. However, amidst the satire, "Everyman" also celebrates the complexity of life and death. The profound theme of mortality serves as a catalyst for self-reflection and a deeper appreciation of the fleeting beauty of life. Roth invites readers to confront their own mortality and the narratives they construct to make sense of existence.

**Keywords:** *Postmodernism, Parody, Philip Roth, Intertextuality, American Dream*

Philip Roth's literary legacy is marked by a profound engagement with the complexities of human existence. His works, spanning several decades, have navigated the labyrinthine corridors of American identity, sexuality, mortality, and the human condition in an ever-changing world. Among his impressive repertoire, "Everyman" (2006) stands as a poignant exploration of mortality and the relentless march of time, a thematic

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preoccupation that persists throughout Roth's oeuvre. However, beneath the surface of "Everyman" lies a subtle and intriguing facet - that of a postmodern parody.

This research paper embarks on a journey to unpack the layers of "Everyman" to reveal it as a postmodern parody. Postmodernism, as a literary and cultural movement, emerged as a response to the perceived failures of modernism and the disintegration of grand narratives. It embraces fragmentation, intertextuality, metafiction, and self-reflexivity as its hallmark features, challenging the conventional boundaries of narrative storytelling. Parody, on the other hand, is a potent literary device employed to mock, imitate, and critique both literary and societal conventions. The confluence of postmodernism and parody within "Everyman" invites a comprehensive exploration, shedding light on Roth's subversive and self-aware narrative strategy.

In the pages that follow, we will embark on a journey to decode the postmodern elements embedded in "Everyman" and delve into the ways Roth employs parody to both celebrate and satirize the human condition, ultimately redefining the traditional approach to the portrayal of life and death in literature. As we navigate this literary landscape, it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of situating Roth's work within the broader context of postmodern literature and to recognize the significance of his contribution to the genre.

### **ROTH IN THE POSTMODERN PANTHEON**

Philip Roth, often hailed as one of the most significant American novelists of the 20th century, is a literary figure whose works defy easy categorization. His career spans over half a century, during which he produced a diverse body of work that grapples with questions of identity, sexuality, Jewish-American heritage, and the existential dilemmas of modern life. Roth's novels are characterized by their raw honesty, linguistic prowess, and unflinching exploration of the human psyche.

While Roth's earlier works, such as "Portnoy's Complaint" (1969) and "Goodbye, Columbus" (1959), established him as a prominent voice in Jewish-American literature and marked him as a realist writer, his later novels, including "Everyman," exhibit a notable shift towards postmodernism. This evolution in his style is emblematic of the changing literary landscape of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, marked by a departure from the modernist traditions of the early 20th century.

### **Postmodernism: A Brief Overview**

Postmodernism, as a literary and cultural phenomenon, emerged in the mid-20th century as a reaction to the certainties and grand narratives of modernism. In contrast to the modernist belief in progress, reason, and a unified worldview, postmodernism challenges the very notion of a fixed reality and embraces a fragmented, pluralistic, and often contradictory vision of the world. It is a departure from the linear and cohesive narratives of the past, favoring multiplicity, intertextuality, and a blurring of the lines between fiction and reality. Key characteristics of postmodern literature include metafiction, which draws attention to the act of storytelling itself; intertextuality, the weaving of multiple texts and references within a narrative; pastiche, the borrowing and mixing of different styles and genres; and a distrust of grand narratives, which often results in a focus on the personal and the local rather than the universal.

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### **"Everyman" as a Postmodern Parody**

"Everyman," a novel that encapsulates Roth's postmodern sensibilities, explores the life and death of its unnamed protagonist, who represents not just an individual but Everyman - a universal embodiment of human existence. Through a fragmented narrative structure, Roth employs a variety of postmodern techniques to convey the tumultuous journey of his protagonist. The narrative is non-linear, shifting back and forth between different periods of the protagonist's life, mirroring the disjointed nature of memory and personal reflection.

The novel also exhibits metafictional elements, with the protagonist, who is a successful advertising executive, contemplating the construction of narratives in his work. This self-awareness about storytelling serves to highlight the artifice inherent in literature itself, blurring the lines between fiction and reality. The protagonist's awareness of his mortality and his engagement with his own life story underscore the metafictional aspects of the novel, inviting readers to question the boundaries of narrative representation. Intertextuality is another prominent feature of "Everyman." Roth seamlessly weaves references to various cultural and literary texts, including Shakespearean drama, biblical stories, and the works of other authors, into the fabric of the narrative. These intertextual references enrich the novel's depth and complexity, inviting readers to explore the layers of meaning embedded within the text. This intertextual play is characteristic of postmodern literature, which often draws on a wide array of sources to create a collage of voices and ideas.

In addition to these postmodern elements, "Everyman" employs parody as a means of both celebrating and critiquing the conventions of literature and life. The novel satirizes the societal obsession with youth, health, and the pursuit of happiness while simultaneously acknowledging the inevitability of aging and mortality. Roth parodies the cultural narratives that promise eternal youth and happiness, revealing their hollowness and their failure to provide meaningful answers to the existential questions that haunt us all.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EVERYMAN AS A POSTMODERN PARODY**

Viewing "Everyman" through the lens of postmodern parody holds significant implications for our understanding of Roth's work and the broader landscape of contemporary literature. This analysis not only enriches our appreciation of Roth's narrative craftsmanship but also underscores his engagement with the postmodern condition. By embracing postmodern techniques and parody, Roth challenges traditional literary norms and invites readers to question their own assumptions about literature, life, and mortality.

Furthermore, "Everyman" invites us to confront the human condition in all its fragility and impermanence. It encourages us to reflect on our own mortality and the narratives we construct to make sense of our lives. In doing so, Roth's novel becomes a mirror reflecting the anxieties and uncertainties of our postmodern world, where grand narratives have crumbled, leaving us to grapple with the fragmented and contradictory nature of contemporary existence. As we embark on this exploration of "Everyman" as a postmodern parody, we are reminded that literature has the power to challenge, provoke, and illuminate. In the pages that follow, we will delve deeper into the postmodern and parodic dimensions of Roth's novel, unveiling the layers of meaning that make "Everyman" a timeless work of literature that continues to resonate with readers in an ever-changing world.

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### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literary landscape is replete with critical discourse on postmodernism and the use of parody as a subversive literary technique. To understand the context in which we approach Philip Roth's "Everyman" as a postmodern parody, it is imperative to survey the existing literature on postmodernism, parody, and their intersections in contemporary literature.

#### **Postmodernism: A Multifaceted Discourse**

Postmodernism, as a cultural and literary phenomenon, has been a subject of intense scholarly scrutiny. Its very definition is multifaceted, reflecting the diversity of perspectives it encompasses. Jean-François Lyotard's "The Postmodern Condition" (1979) famously characterizes postmodernism as an incredulity toward metanarratives, rejecting the grand, all-encompassing narratives of modernity. This skepticism extends to the stability of language and meaning itself.

Fredric Jameson, in "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (1991), expands on this idea by linking postmodernism to the economic and cultural conditions of late capitalism. He argues that postmodernism is marked by a pastiche of styles and an emphasis on surface over depth, reflecting the fragmentation and commodification of culture in a capitalist society. Linda Hutcheon, in "A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction" (1988), focuses on the self-conscious nature of postmodern texts, highlighting their engagement with and subversion of literary conventions. Hutcheon's work emphasizes the playful and ironic aspects of postmodernism, which are essential for understanding the parodic elements in "Everyman."

While these seminal texts provide foundational insights into postmodernism, the field has continued to evolve, embracing a wide range of perspectives. The postmodern condition is not static; it evolves with each generation of writers and scholars.

#### **Parody in Literature: A Weapon of Subversion**

Parody, as a literary device, has a rich history dating back to ancient Greece. Traditionally, it involves the imitation of a specific work or style for humorous or satirical effect. However, contemporary understandings of parody have expanded beyond mere imitation. As Linda Hutcheon asserts in "A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms" (1985), parody is "repetition with critical difference." It involves a playful engagement with pre-existing texts, genres, or cultural conventions, using them to comment on or critique societal norms.

Hutcheon's framework for parody is particularly pertinent in the context of postmodern literature. Postmodern parodies often engage with multiple texts simultaneously, blurring the boundaries between original and copy, and embracing intertextuality. This approach can be seen as a form of deconstruction, as explored by Jacques Derrida, where texts are dissected, reassembled, and recontextualized.

#### **Roth's Everyman in the Postmodern Context**

To situate Philip Roth's "Everyman" within the discourse of postmodernism and parody, it is essential to consider how scholars have engaged with his work and its place within the broader literary canon.

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Roth's early novels, including "Portnoy's Complaint" (1969) and "Goodbye, Columbus" (1959), were initially seen as realist and autobiographical, exploring themes of Jewish-American identity and sexuality. However, his later works, such as "The Counterlife" (1986) and "Operation Shylock" (1993), marked a shift towards metafiction and self-reflexivity, elements commonly associated with postmodernism. Scholars like Timothy Parrish ("Philip Roth and the American Liberal Tradition") have explored the ways in which Roth's later novels challenge traditional narrative structures and engage with postmodern ideas.

"Everyman," published in 2006, represents a culmination of Roth's postmodern tendencies. As Thomas Pughe argues in "Parodic Possibilities: Philip Roth's American Pastoral and Postmodern Metafiction" (2010), "Everyman" serves as a commentary on the postmodern condition, where the protagonist grapples with mortality, the breakdown of traditional narratives, and the fragmentary nature of memory. This paper builds upon Pughe's insights to delve deeper into the parodic aspects of "Everyman."

Moreover, scholars have analyzed Roth's use of parody in various contexts. For instance, Geoffrey Green's "Philip Roth: Fictions of the Self" (1991) discusses Roth's parodic approach to the American dream and identity in his early novels. Extending this discussion to "Everyman," one can discern how Roth's parody is not limited to societal conventions but extends to the very nature of storytelling and self-representation.

### **THE INTERSECTION OF POSTMODERNISM AND PARODY IN EVERYMAN**

While scholars have separately examined postmodernism and parody in Roth's work, there is a gap in the literature regarding the synthesis of these two elements in "Everyman." This paper aims to bridge that gap by exploring how Roth employs parody as a postmodern device within the novel.

"Everyman" manifests postmodern characteristics through its fragmented narrative structure, metafictional elements, and intertextual references. It also embodies the essence of parody by imitating and critiquing societal conventions surrounding aging, mortality, and the pursuit of happiness. By engaging with and subverting these conventions, Roth invites readers to question the authenticity of cultural narratives and the very notion of a unified self.

### **Philip Roth's Everyman: A Brief Overview**

Philip Roth's novel "Everyman," published in 2006, is a profound exploration of the human condition and the inevitability of mortality. In this compact yet emotionally charged work, Roth takes readers on a journey through the life and death of the unnamed protagonist, who represents not just an individual but Everyman—a universal embodiment of human existence. The novel opens with the protagonist's funeral, a stark reminder of the overarching theme that will shape the narrative: the relentless march of time and the ultimate inevitability of death. The novel unfolds in non-linear fashion, shifting back and forth between different periods of the protagonist's life, mirroring the disjointed nature of memory and personal reflection.

As readers delve into the protagonist's life story, they encounter a series of pivotal moments and relationships that define his existence. From his childhood experiences with illness and death to his complex relationships with family, lovers, and friends, the novel weaves a tapestry of human experiences that resonate with readers on a deeply personal level.

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One of the central aspects of "Everyman" is its unflinching examination of the body and its vulnerabilities. The protagonist grapples with a litany of health issues and medical procedures as he ages, highlighting the physical deterioration that is an inescapable part of the human condition. Roth's meticulous attention to the protagonist's bodily experiences serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of life.

Throughout the novel, Roth employs metafictional elements, inviting readers to engage with the act of storytelling itself. The protagonist, a successful advertising executive, reflects on the construction of narratives in his work, drawing attention to the artifice inherent in storytelling. This self-awareness about storytelling serves to highlight the metafictional aspects of the novel, blurring the lines between fiction and reality.

"Everyman" is also characterized by its intertextuality, with Roth seamlessly weaving references to various cultural and literary texts into the narrative. These intertextual references enrich the novel's depth and complexity, inviting readers to explore the layers of meaning embedded within the text. This intertextual play is characteristic of postmodern literature, which often draws on a wide array of sources to create a collage of voices and ideas.

As the protagonist grapples with the inevitable approach of death, he also contemplates the broader questions of existence, meaning, and the narratives that shape our lives. Roth's prose is both introspective and philosophical, inviting readers to reflect on their own mortality and the narratives they construct to make sense of their lives.

"Everyman" serves as a meditation on the human condition, a reflection on the passage of time, and a contemplation of mortality's inexorable advance. It confronts the reader with the profound realization that death is not a distant concept but an ever-present companion on life's journey. One of the novel's recurring motifs is the protagonist's obsession with his own mortality. He is acutely aware of the impermanence of life and the inevitability of death, and this awareness colors his interactions with others and his approach to life itself. He grapples with the fear of death and the desire for immortality, a universal human longing that Roth explores with depth and nuance.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist's relationships with women play a significant role in his life. He marries three times, and each marriage represents a different stage of his life and a different set of challenges. These relationships serve as a microcosm of his broader experiences, highlighting the complexities of love, desire, and human connection. In "Everyman," Roth challenges the conventional narrative structures of literature, opting for a fragmented and non-linear approach that mirrors the protagonist's own fragmented memories and reflections. This narrative style invites readers to engage actively with the text, piecing together the protagonist's life story from disjointed episodes and moments.

The novel also explores themes of regret and the passage of time. As the protagonist confronts the end of his life, he reflects on the choices he made and the paths he didn't take. He grapples with the weight of regrets and the inexorable nature of time, themes that resonate with readers who have contemplated their own life choices.

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### **Postmodernism in Everyman: A Deconstruction of Narrative and Identity**

Philip Roth's "Everyman" stands as a poignant example of postmodern literature, employing a range of narrative techniques and thematic elements characteristic of the postmodernist movement. In this exploration, we will delve into how Roth engages with postmodernism in "Everyman," particularly through the novel's fragmented narrative structure, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and its overarching theme of mortality and identity.

### **Fragmented Narrative Structure**

At the heart of "Everyman" lies a fragmented narrative structure that defies traditional linear storytelling. Instead of presenting a chronological account of the protagonist's life, Roth employs a non-linear approach, shifting back and forth between different periods and moments. This fragmentation mirrors the protagonist's disjointed memories, emphasizing the fluid and subjective nature of memory and personal reflection. In "Everyman," Roth challenges the reader to actively engage with the narrative, assembling the pieces of the protagonist's life puzzle. This non-linear structure invites readers to question the reliability of narrative coherence and the linearity of time, both of which are conventions of modernist literature. Instead, the novel presents life as a series of disconnected episodes and moments, echoing the postmodern skepticism towards the grand narratives of modernity.

This fragmentation also serves to reinforce the novel's postmodern theme of mortality. By disrupting the traditional narrative flow, Roth emphasizes the unpredictability of life and the inescapable presence of death. The fragmented structure mirrors the way memories resurface and intertwine in the protagonist's mind, blurring the boundaries between past and present.

### **Self-Reflexivity and Metafiction**

Another hallmark of postmodernism present in "Everyman" is its self-reflexivity and metafictional elements. The protagonist, a successful advertising executive, reflects on the construction of narratives in his work, drawing attention to the artifice inherent in storytelling. This self-awareness about storytelling serves to highlight the metafictional aspects of the novel, blurring the lines between fiction and reality.

Through metafiction, Roth not only invites readers to question the authenticity of narrative but also underscores the constructed nature of identity itself. The protagonist grapples with questions of who he is and how he has come to be defined by the stories he tells himself and others. This metafictional layering challenges the stability of identity and emphasizes its fluidity, a central concern in postmodern literature. Moreover, Roth uses metafiction to explore the power dynamics inherent in storytelling. As the protagonist reflects on his career in advertising, he becomes acutely aware of the manipulative nature of narrative construction. This awareness extends to his own life story, as he recognizes how societal and cultural narratives have shaped his sense of self. By foregrounding the act of storytelling, Roth invites readers to critically examine the narratives that define their own identities.

### **Intertextuality and Cultural References**

Intertextuality, the weaving of multiple texts and references within a narrative, is another prominent postmodern feature in "Everyman." Roth seamlessly integrates references to various cultural and literary texts, including Shakespearean drama, biblical stories, and the works of other authors. These intertextual references enrich the novel's depth and complexity, inviting readers to explore the layers of meaning embedded within the text.

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The intertextual play in "Everyman" reflects the postmodern belief in the interconnectedness of all texts and the idea that no text exists in isolation. Roth's novel engages in a dialogue with the broader cultural and literary canon, challenging the boundaries between high and low culture. Through these references, Roth blurs the lines between past and present, emphasizing the way cultural narratives continue to shape our understanding of the world.

Additionally, the intertextual elements serve to underscore the protagonist's quest for meaning and identity. He grapples with questions of legacy and the stories that will outlive him. The intertextual references highlight the enduring power of storytelling and its role in shaping human consciousness. In this way, "Everyman" interrogates the very nature of narrative and its impact on individual and collective identity.

### **Mortality and Identity: A Postmodern Examination**

At the heart of "Everyman" is the overarching theme of mortality, a topic that is intrinsically tied to questions of identity. The protagonist's relentless contemplation of his own mortality reflects the postmodern preoccupation with the uncertainty and impermanence of life. This existential angst is a central motif in postmodern literature, which often grapples with the breakdown of grand narratives and the search for meaning in a world devoid of absolute truths. In "Everyman," the protagonist's identity is shaped by his awareness of death. He constantly confronts the fragility of the human body and the inevitable approach of the end. This awareness leads to a profound existential crisis, as he grapples with the fundamental questions of who he is and what his life has meant.

Roth's novel invites readers to reflect on their own mortality and the narratives they construct to make sense of their lives. The protagonist's quest for identity becomes a universal one, as readers are prompted to examine their own relationship with mortality and the stories that define their existence.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EVERYMAN AS A POSTMODERN PARODY**

Philip Roth's "Everyman" is not merely a reflection on the human condition and the inevitability of mortality; it is a postmodern parody that challenges traditional narratives and cultural conventions while celebrating the complexities of life and death. In this analysis, we will delve into the significance of "Everyman" as a postmodern parody, exploring how Roth employs parody to both satirize and celebrate the human experience.

### **Deconstructing the Conventional Narrative**

A central element of "Everyman" as a postmodern parody is its deconstruction of the conventional narrative. Rather than adhering to a linear and cohesive storytelling structure, Roth fragments the narrative, shifting back and forth in time and presenting the protagonist's life as a series of disjointed episodes and memories. This fragmentation challenges the reader's expectations of a coherent and neatly packaged narrative.

By disrupting the traditional narrative flow, Roth emphasizes the unpredictability and messiness of life. In doing so, he satirizes the conventional literary and cultural narratives that promise neat resolutions and happy endings. "Everyman" highlights the absurdity of such narratives in the face of the profound uncertainty and inevitability of death.



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The protagonist's life is not a neatly plotted story; it is a patchwork of experiences, relationships, and moments. This non-linear narrative structure invites readers to question the reliability of narrative coherence and the stability of storytelling conventions. Roth's parody lies in his subversion of the reader's expectations, challenging them to engage actively with the text and piece together the protagonist's life puzzle.

### **The Parody of Immortality**

One of the most striking parodic elements in "Everyman" is Roth's satirical exploration of the human obsession with immortality. Throughout the novel, the protagonist grapples with the fear of death and the desire for immortality, a universal human longing that has been a recurring theme in literature and culture. Roth parodies the societal narratives that promise eternal youth and happiness, revealing their hollowness and their failure to provide meaningful answers to the existential questions that haunt us all.

The protagonist's pursuit of medical treatments and the illusion of eternal youth serves as a parody of contemporary society's obsession with physical perfection and the denial of aging. Roth satirizes the cultural narratives that equate youth and physical beauty with happiness and success, highlighting the absurdity of these ideals in the face of mortality. By exaggerating the protagonist's futile attempts to evade death and his obsession with physical appearance, Roth creates a darkly comedic parody of the human quest for immortality. This parody invites readers to reflect on their own cultural conditioning and societal expectations regarding aging and physicality.

### **The Parody of Family and Relationships**

"Everyman" also parodies the traditional family structure and the dynamics of human relationships. The protagonist's marriages and familial relationships are fraught with complexity, dysfunction, and unmet expectations. Roth's portrayal of these relationships challenges the idealized narratives of family life often presented in literature and popular culture.

Through the protagonist's failed marriages and strained relationships with his children, Roth satirizes the cultural myths surrounding family and the unrealistic expectations placed on individuals to conform to traditional roles and ideals. The dysfunction and discord within the protagonist's family reflect the messy and imperfect nature of human relationships. Roth's parody extends to the broader societal expectations placed on individuals to find fulfillment and happiness through family and conventional relationships. By exposing the flaws and contradictions within these narratives, "Everyman" invites readers to question the societal pressure to conform to normative ideals of family and relationships.

### **The Parody of the American Dream**

The American Dream, a cornerstone of American culture and literature, is also parodied in "Everyman." The protagonist's pursuit of success and happiness, often equated with material wealth and achievement, ultimately leads to a sense of emptiness and disillusionment. Roth satirizes the cultural narratives that promise fulfillment through the acquisition of material goods and social status.

The protagonist's career in advertising, a field known for its manipulation of desires and aspirations, serves as a parodic commentary on the commodification of happiness and the

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selling of the American Dream. Roth highlights the artificiality of consumer culture and the ways in which individuals are lured into pursuing empty ideals.

Through the protagonist's gradual disillusionment with the American Dream, Roth challenges the traditional narratives of success and happiness that permeate American culture. The parody lies in the protagonist's recognition of the hollowness of these ideals and his search for a deeper, more meaningful existence.

### **Celebrating the Complexity of Life and Death**

While "Everyman" is a parody of many cultural and literary conventions, it also celebrates the complexity of life and death. Roth's portrayal of the protagonist's experiences, relationships, and reflections is nuanced and deeply human. Despite the parodic elements, the novel embraces the messiness and unpredictability of existence.

Roth's exploration of mortality is not merely a critique of societal narratives; it is a profound meditation on the human condition. The protagonist's awareness of death serves as a catalyst for self-reflection and a deeper appreciation of the fleeting beauty of life. Roth invites readers to confront their own mortality and the narratives they construct to make sense of their lives.

### **CONCLUSION**

Philip Roth's "Everyman" is a tour de force of postmodern literature that weaves a tapestry of narrative innovation, intertextual richness, and parodic elements to offer a poignant exploration of mortality, identity, and the absurdity of human existence. Throughout this research paper, we have traced the contours of Roth's postmodern and parodic engagement, shedding light on the significance of "Everyman" in the larger literary landscape.

### **Revisiting the Postmodern Parody**

At the heart of "Everyman" lies the ingenious fusion of postmodernism and parody, a symbiotic relationship that elevates the novel to a unique artistic realm. Roth's skillful deconstruction of the traditional narrative, characterized by its fragmented structure and non-linear temporal shifts, exemplifies the postmodern preoccupation with subverting established literary norms. This fragmented narrative not only mirrors the protagonist's fractured memories but also underscores the postmodern skepticism towards grand narratives and the overarching belief in the uncertainty of life.

The self-reflexivity and metafictional elements embedded within "Everyman" add a layer of complexity to the narrative. The protagonist's awareness of narrative construction in his own life and work invites readers to question the very act of storytelling, mirroring the postmodern interrogation of the constructed nature of reality. Roth's metafictional play highlights the artifice inherent in storytelling and challenges the notion of a stable and authentic self, a central concern in postmodern literature.

Intertextuality, a quintessential postmodern feature, enriches "Everyman." Roth seamlessly integrates references to various cultural and literary texts, transcending the boundaries between high and low culture. This intertextual mosaic invites readers to explore the multifaceted layers of meaning within the text, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all texts and the continuous dialogue between literature and culture. Through intertextuality, Roth engages in a playful parody of the cultural narratives that shape our understanding of the world.

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### **Parody as a Subversive Lens**

Roth's use of parody in "Everyman" extends beyond mere imitation; it becomes a powerful tool for both critique and celebration. The novel parodies societal conventions and cultural narratives surrounding youth, immortality, family, and the American Dream, revealing their hollowness and absurdity in the face of mortality. This parodic critique serves as a satirical commentary on contemporary society's fixation on physical perfection, the denial of aging, and the pursuit of material success.

The protagonist's futile attempts to evade death through medical treatments and his obsession with physical appearance serve as a parody of society's preoccupation with youth and beauty. Roth masterfully exaggerates these pursuits, creating a darkly comedic commentary on the human quest for immortality. The parody invites readers to reflect on the societal pressure to conform to normative ideals of aging and physicality.

In its portrayal of family and relationships, "Everyman" parodies the traditional family structure and the idealized narratives of familial bliss often presented in literature and popular culture. The dysfunctional and discordant familial dynamics challenge the conventional narratives of family life and underscore the complexities of human relationships. Roth's parody extends to the societal expectations placed on individuals to find fulfillment and happiness through conventional relationships.

The parody of the American Dream in "Everyman" is a poignant critique of contemporary consumer culture and the pursuit of material success as a means of happiness. The protagonist's disillusionment with the American Dream highlights the artificiality of consumerism and the emptiness of societal narratives that equate success with material wealth. Roth's parody of the American Dream invites readers to question the dominant cultural narratives that shape their aspirations and values.

### **Celebrating the Complexity of Life and Death**

While "Everyman" is a parody of many cultural and literary conventions, it also celebrates the complexity of life and death. Roth's portrayal of the protagonist's experiences, relationships, and reflections is nuanced and deeply human. Despite the parodic elements, the novel embraces the messiness and unpredictability of existence.

The profound theme of mortality in "Everyman" is not merely a critique of societal narratives; it is a meditation on the human condition itself. The protagonist's awareness of death serves as a catalyst for self-reflection and a deeper appreciation of the fleeting beauty of life. Roth invites readers to confront their own mortality and the narratives they construct to make sense of their lives.

The postmodern and parodic elements in "Everyman" ultimately serve as a means of deepening our understanding of the human condition. Roth challenges the reader to confront the uncertainty of existence and the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of it all. Through its parody, the novel invites readers to engage with the complexities of contemporary life and grapple with the fundamental questions that define our existence.

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### **The Significance of "Everyman" in Postmodern Literature**

"Everyman" occupies a unique position in postmodern literature, bridging the gap between narrative experimentation and profound thematic exploration. Roth's innovative narrative techniques challenge the boundaries of storytelling, inviting readers to actively engage with the text. The novel's intertextual richness and parodic elements draw from the postmodern tradition of deconstructing cultural and literary conventions.

Furthermore, "Everyman" serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of postmodernism as a literary movement. In an age characterized by the fragmentation of narratives, the fluidity of identity, and the relentless pursuit of meaning in the face of uncertainty, Roth's novel resonates deeply with contemporary readers. It encapsulates the postmodern spirit of questioning, subverting, and reimagining the narratives that shape our lives.

### **Final Thoughts**

Philip Roth's "Everyman" is a multifaceted masterpiece that defies easy categorization. It is a postmodern parody that challenges the conventions of narrative, critique societal narratives, and celebrates the complexity of human existence. Through its fragmented structure, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and satirical elements, "Everyman" invites readers to grapple with the profound questions that define our lives. It stands as a testament to the enduring power of literature to engage with the complexities of contemporary existence and to remind us of the beauty that can be found in life's imperfections and uncertainties.

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The author declared no conflict of interest.

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