



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

Vol. 10 No.2

Summer 2013

Message from the Society's President

Aimee Pozorski

At the end of March 2013, following the birthday party for Mr. Philip Roth co-organized and co-sponsored by the Philip Roth Society, I ran into a friend and colleague: a well known and active member of the Eugene O'Neill Society. When he asked how everything turned out during that two-day affair in Newark, he reflected a bit on my answer and responded: "You are doing the real work of the author societies! It sounds like a real success."

His comment on the success of the event sounded honest and true – he had read the coverage in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, the *Newark Star Ledger* and more – just as we all had. However, his comment about "the real work" of the society gave me pause. Was he mocking me? What in my anecdotes about star gazing in a room full of literati, eating birthday cake, and chatting with the man of honor himself, sounded like "work"? I wondered. Thank goodness the Museum where we held the reception didn't provide for alcohol. Can you imagine what kind of party it may have turned into then?

But upon further reflection I have decided that my friend was neither mocking me nor flattering

me: Our 2 day conference dedicated to celebrating Roth@80 was work in the truest sense – especially in light of the Society's mission which is "devoted to the study and appreciation of Roth's writings. The society's goal is to encourage academic conversation about Roth's work." I continue to be overwhelmed with gratitude for the one hundred members and friends of the Philip Roth Society who traveled to Newark, New Jersey to take part in our academic conversation about, and share in the appreciation of, Roth's writings. The museum reception which took place both before and after the talks given by Jonathan Lethem, Claudia Roth Pierpont, Alain Finkelkraut, Hermione Lee, Edna O'Brien, and Roth himself – moments when anticipation gave way to both to exclamations about how exciting it all was, but also to thoughtful considerations of the connections between and among the work of all who attended – was perhaps a high point when it comes to the work of the society, but also indicative of the enormous amount of fun we have when we are all together.

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About the Philip Roth Society

Founded in July 2002, the Philip Roth Society is an organization devoted to the study and appreciation of Roth's writings. The society's goal is to encourage academic conversation about Roth's work through discussions, panel presentations at scholarly conferences, and journal publications. It accomplishes this by disseminating information concerning upcoming events, calls for papers, and recent publications on Roth through this newsletter, through a web page at <http://rothsociety.org/>, by maintaining a listserv, and through the publication of *Philip Roth Studies*, a refereed journal devoted to Roth scholarship. The Philip Roth Society is a non-profit community of readers and scholars, and it has no affiliation with either Philip Roth or his publishers. The society is an affiliated organization of the American Literary Association, and we welcome both academic and non-academic readers alike.

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The Philip Roth Society Newsletter is published twice a year by The Philip Roth Society and is distributed to all dues-paying members. It is indexed in the MLA Bibliography, Modern Humanities Research Association's Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, and the Index to Jewish Periodicals.

The Philip Roth Society Newsletter invites submissions of 500-800 words. Contributions may be informal in tone, and may address such matters as the teaching of Roth's work or personal reactions to it. We welcome notes that add texture or background information to larger elements of Roth's writing. Email submissions in Word attachments appreciated. For submissions or queries, contact Richard Sheehan, *The Philip Roth Society Newsletter*, Email: sheehan@rothsociety.org

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NotePresident's Message continued ...

I thank Liz Del Tufo of the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Commission for working so closely with us during the nearly two years it took to plan this event. Without her help and connection to the city of Newark, we would not have been able to carry out this work. I also thank David Gooblar, Program chair, carried off every important organizational task with grace and dignity during an incredibly busy time in his life. I thank all of the people who joined us at this momentous event, who participated in all of the activities, and who shared two days in their lives with the Society. I thank my agent, Jessica Henderson and Wylie of New York, for helping with the logistical details leading up to the 80th birthday party, and Philip Roth himself for being there.

As always, Richard Sheehan has done the real work of putting this newsletter together. As with every issue, I find myself saying: "This is the best one yet." You will find in these pages documents related to the work of the society – minutes and executive committee reports from the past year, as well as also calls for papers and awards, new scholarly books on Roth, and a transcript of meeting Roth for the first time as given by our members as well as by the staff. It is all central to Roth's life. We hope you enjoy it. Stay in touch with us, and we will do the same.



Aimee with Philip Roth at Roth@80

Roth@80

When Aimee Pozorski, President of the Philip Roth Society, enquired of Philip Roth in August 2011 whether he would mind a conference and party being held in honour of his 80th birthday, I'm pretty sure she would have had little idea of how it would actually turn out.

A two-day event was planned. On Monday 18th March, a day-long academic conference took place attended by Philip Roth Society scholars from around the world.

On Tuesday 19th March, the day began with "Philip Roth: An Exhibit of Photos from a Lifetime" at the Newark Public Library. The photos were chosen and captioned by Philip Roth and show the author at home in Newark and on holiday at Jersey Shore when he was younger, as well as others with family members when he was older.

The highlight of Tuesday afternoon was a tour of Roth's Newark led by Elizabeth Del Tufo. Over 100 scholars and fans were taken around significant landmarks including 81 Summit Avenue, Roth's childhood home and Weequahic High, as well as locations that had been featured in his novels.

Tuesday evening featured, for many, the main event. At Newark Museum, with Philip Roth in attendance, fellow writers spoke in praise of the author. Following introductions from Elizabeth Del Tufo and Aimee Pozorski, among those who spoke were Jonathan Lethem, Hermione Lee, Alain Finkelkraut, Edna O'Brien and Claudia Roth Pierpont.

Following these, Philip Roth came onstage and gave what David Remnick of the *New Yorker* described as 'the most astonishing literary performance I've ever witnessed.' He read a passage from *Sabbath's Theater* where Micky Sabbath has returned to the cemetery where his ancestors are buried.

Following this, many of those in attendance got to meet the author, rounding out a wonderful two days celebrating the life and works of Philip Roth.

C-SPANning Philip Roth's 80th Birthday

C-SPAN has made available online a recording of the events that took place at the Newark Museum on March 19th, the occasion of Philip Roth's 80th birthday. As you will see, the first part of the event included speakers discussing Roth's life and work, and the second part included an address by Roth himself.

The recording was originally aired on C-SPAN2 as part of their BookTV programming.

<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/311957-1>

Roth@80 Memories

As well as for Philip Roth, his eightieth birthday celebration held great moments for other's present, some of which we describe here.

Gurumurthy Neelakantan

At Philip Roth's birthday party on 19 March, I had a moment with the novelist as he was about to take his leave. It was already past 10:45 P.M. I was not sure if I should intrude on him and introduce myself. For someone who is such a private person, his ability to engage with a stream of visitors, patiently listen to them and answer their queries struck me as gracious. He seemed hawk-like and certainly nothing could ever be lost on someone like him. I was amazed at the way he listened to people; it looked as if every pore of his body was at work then. However, I mustered enough courage to introduce myself, wished him Happy Birthday and added, "Thank you for touching my life." He gave me one of those deep glances even as a gleam lit up his eyes and he responded, "I'm glad I could do so." He held my hand for a minute and then moved on. This is a memory I'll cherish for the rest of my life.



Meeting my character, Philip – Felipe Franco Munhoz

While I was writing my novel *Mentiras (Lies)*, three years ago, a journalist from UFPR Television asked me: "Do you have any ideas for a next book?" And I answered: "No; I can't think about anything else, I think about Philip Roth all day – it looks as if I'm in love." We laughed, although it was not exactly a joke. Because I was obsessed about the writer Philip Roth and, above all, I was obsessed about my character Philip.

Let me explain better.

I was trying to find some way to write good dialogues – copying conversations I had, listening to people talking in the streets, reading authors such as Hemingway, Bellow and Steinbeck, when someone advised me, "You should try Roth's *Deception*." So I did: I drank *Deception* in one slow draft. That same day, later on, I've written a flirtation between the newborn characters Felipe and Thaís, and went to sleep exhausted.

As I woke up, first thing in the morning, I turned my computer on and reread the flirtation. Impulsively, I inserted a dash to create another character, who would criticize the previous dialogue: "*It's not good, forget it, don't waste your time*" – of course, the voice of my bitter Philip. An unfamiliar yet shapeless Philip. But from that instant, from that dash, my burden was sealed.

My burden was the metafictional narrative: Felipe discusses life and love and sex with Thaís; Felipe discusses those discussions, and technique and fiction with Philip. A novel built entirely in dialogues. The structure defined, the following step was to go deep into the whole work of Philip Roth. Deep into every paragraph, every single line. Every word. Analyzing word by word, licking *O-l-i-v-i-a* with Marcus Messner – licking *M-*



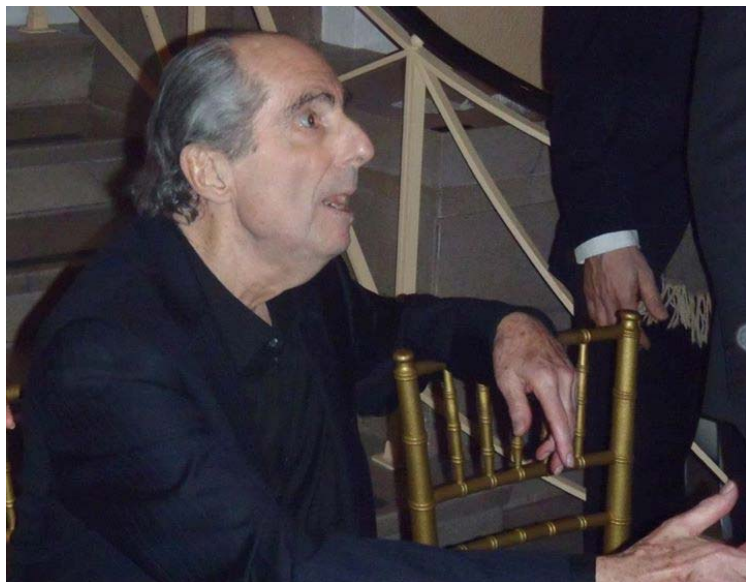
Three years later, dressed in black, my character Philip came through the Newark Museum's doors. It was his eightieth birthday party. We were introduced and, finally, surrealistically, Felipe and Philip were dialoguing outside of the fiction limits. It was the greatest moment of my life; feeling that *Mentiras* was alive, breathing, speaking out loud.

- Happy birthday, Philip.
- Thank you.
- Thank *you*.

Mark Shechner

I can't recall a conference that leapt from high to high to high the way that one did. If there was a sour note, it was more strange than sour: the organ blast that drove us from the basilica, which I took for the Bach Cantata 'Get Thee Gone' from the Lenten Oratorio, "Who in Himmel are these people anyway?" But Tuesday night—who could imagine it? The one-time pariah of the Jewish establishment reading a half-hour litany of the dead and being riotously embraced for the audacity of his graveyard oratorio as though he was the Zaddik of the literati, the Baal Shem Newark, Nachman of Weequahic. And he was too; a beardless Rebbe bopping through the crowd for hugs and touches, while Louise Erdrich shouts out stuff in Ojibwe. I wanted to grab a piece of sod from Unterman Field next to Chancellor Avenue School, where the Swede (he was a real guy) once ran wild, but they had it locked. I'm sure the house at 81 Summit is lacking some pieces of asphalt siding these days.

"That was a good as it gets."



(Above, left: Philip Roth at the Roth@80 event)



(Above, right: Philip Roth and Derek Parker Royal, Founder of the Philip Roth Society)

Minutes of the Philip Roth Business Society Meeting

Business Meeting of the Philip Roth Society

25 May 2013

Boston, MA 02116

Present: Victoria Aarons, Gustavo Sanchez Canales, Aimee Pozorski, Andrew Gordon, Joseph Perr, David Gooblar, Frederick Coye Heard, Andy Connelly, Miriam Jaffe-Foger

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m.

During the president's report, Aimee Pozorski summarized her goals for the duration of her term: to bring more international scholars into the organization and to welcome into the field non-academics.

The program chair's report featured an overview of the Roth@80 conference and a discussion of our panels and sessions – past and future. He asked: Do we want to revisit the Louisville conference. The goal for Louisville is to put out a call for papers and see what kind of interest we get. David reported on the St. Gallen, Switzerland interdisciplinary Roth conference we are supporting for the summer of 2014. The group also decided to put out an open call – entitled Roth and War – for the ALA symposium organized by society member, Danny Anderson.

For the sessions at next year's ALA the following ideas were generated: Roth and Political Liberalism; Roth's Influence on Other Writers; for our guaranteed roundtable we discussed making it collaborative with one or more additional author societies.

At the time, we had not heard about the MLA proposal. [Since then, it has been accepted for Chicago's MLA in 2014. The topic calls for revisiting masculinity in the work of Philip Roth.]

During our discussion of the report of the Roth Studies editor's report, we considered whether another special issue could be dedicated to the topic of our most recent ALA panel: Roth and Narrative. As there will be no special issues this year, we left the question open for discussion. We might also propose an edited collection for an interested press. We also revisited the idea – and reminded participants – that there is still a possibility for publishing shorter pieces (under 2500 words) in the journal as well.

After an overview of the treasurer's report, we broached the topic of how we might spend or invest our savings. One idea is to give an undergraduate award based on an undergraduate course—possibly a hybrid/ online course offered by members—and an undergraduate conference, which would also speak to the desire on most university campuses to expand undergraduate research programs. We could give, for instance, two or three awards amounting to \$50 each and accompany the cash award with a book signed by Roth. We also discussed funding conference travel, especially for international members. We need to ask first: How much money is the treasurer willing to put toward these initiatives and how much should we spend elsewhere?

We will continue to give the Siegel / McDaniel Award for the best graduate level essay written during the past academic year. The deadline is October 1.

The newsletter editor's report brought with it the reminder that he is looking for brief essays on the topic of "Moments with Roth" from the 80th birthday conference. Send all essays to Richard Sheehan for future newsletters.

Under new business, we talked about ways to update the society constitution so it is aligned with our contract with Purdue University Press, which publishes Philip Roth Studies. Our Society constitution needs to reflect the contract's stipulation that the Roth Society appoints an editor in consultation with the publisher and bears sole responsibility for conducting the work according to standard scholarly procedures. As all members of the executive board are currently elected, except the editor, it makes sense to have democratic process in place for the executive editor going forward as well. We discussed the possibility that the editor would be able to run for reelection and there would be no limit to amount of terms served. However, there would be a 3 to five year term limit for each election cycle. We will establish a publications subcommittee to oversee the process along with the executive board to make sure the implementation of this new system is done thoughtfully and with all due diligence. The publications subcommittee will solicit candidates for editor and will accept self-nominations. The publications subcommittee will be based on volunteer support of three to five voting members. In order to update the constitution reflecting these proposals, we will need 2/3 affirmative votes of all members voting. If the updates are accepted, a subcommittee will be established and the process will begin from there.

Discussion of updating the society constitution led to a discussion of changing the webmaster to an elected position as well—along with new duties, looking forward to the new digital age. The web master could hire a web designer for a new look to the website

with, critically, new features – something along the lines of what scholars in digital humanities are able to accomplish with teaching (such as a hybrid online course), You Tube videos, interactive timelines, discussion boards and more.

Open discussion introduced two new possibilities: having a stronger Twitter presence, established by the webmaster, the journal editor – for tweeting announcements when updates are made – as well as hash tags and announcements from conference attendees.

We could also think about hiring an undergraduate intern for credit to work on social networking and media, web updates, and establishing creative ways for building a greater audience for the Philip Roth Society via the web.

When open discussion of new business ended, the meeting was adjourned. The time was 12:05.

Respectfully submitted,
Miriam Jaffe Foger and Aimee Pozorski

President's Report:

Over the last two years, on the recommendation of both Society members and officers, the society has pursued the interrelated goals of building membership – nationally and internationally – and inviting non academics in to share our appreciation of Philip Roth. To that end, beginning with the work of Pia Masiero and her Venice Symposium, we have tried to make a space for us around the world. After Venice was a small symposium in France. Our next stop, we hope, is Switzerland, for a conference spearheaded by Claudia-Franziska Bruehwiler and focused on Roth that includes scholars in the humanities and social sciences and beyond. There is also talk of travelling to University of Athens and Universidad Autonoma de Madrid in the coming years.

With our Roth@80 conference in Newark, we were able to draw on the local expertise and deep fondness for Roth's work through the resident experts in Newark. We have gained not only membership from Newark, but also – crucially – relationships with important community members there. I will continue this work in the Tri-State area and move outward from there, hopefully with the next President picking up the baton and networking from his or her locale.

We would also like to consider the future of Philip Roth Studies—the journal started by Derek Parker Royal in 2002 that has evolved significantly under his leadership. To this end, we would like to update the Society's constitution so as to keep it in line with both our contract with Purdue University Press as well as with other journals of its calibre, which have a democratically elected editor with a fixed term. The first step is to develop a publications subcommittee to make recommendations for (or against) and to oversee this process.

Respectfully submitted, Aimee Pozorski

Program Chair's Report:

Much of this past year was devoted to organizing and putting on Roth@80, an event held in March to commemorate Philip Roth's eightieth birthday. The event—a two day affair consisting of an academic conference, the opening of a photo exhibit devoted to Roth's life, a bus tour of Philip Roth's Newark, and a celebratory birthday gala that featured Roth himself (as well as many other literary lights)—was an unqualified success. Featuring over sixty presenters, the conference day was a whirlwind of Roth scholarship, a veritable fusillade of fresh takes on texts from all eras of Roth's career. The second night's program, held at the Newark Museum, saw many Roth Society members rubbing shoulders with some of the biggest names in American literature. The program featured tributes to Roth by Jonathan Lethem, Hermione Lee, Claudia Roth Pierpont, Alain Finkelkraut, and Edna O'Brien, and culminated in Roth taking the stage to deliver what David Remnick called "the most astonishing literary performance I've ever witnessed." The event received a great amount of press coverage, and is surely a feather in the Roth Society's cap.

Our participation at other conferences this past year is inevitably overshadowed by Roth@80, but nonetheless produced some exciting sessions. Last year's ALA, in San Francisco, featured a session on Roth's Influences and a roundtable discussing *Letting Go* on its 50th birthday. We sponsored a panel on Identity and Place in Roth's Work at last year's Jewish American & Holocaust Literature conference in South Beach. We had a special session at this past January's MLA, on Roth's Music. And this year's ALA has featured a four-paper session on Philip Roth and Narrative and a roundtable devoted to Roth in Retirement.

Looking forward, we'll want to decide whether to sponsor panels at this year's ALA Symposium (on "War and American Litera-

ture”), held in New Orleans in October, and at next February’s Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900. We

should also begin discussing possible sessions for next year’s ALA, to be held in Washington, D.C. Thanks to the work of Aimee Pozorski, the Roth Society has proposed a special session for next year’s MLA in Chicago, on Revisiting Masculinity in Roth.

Respectfully submitted, David Gooblar

Report from the Executive Editor of *Philip Roth Studies*:

Since the last business meeting in May 2012, the executive editor has overseen the publication of two issues of *Philip Roth Studies*, volume 8 number 2, and volume 9 number 1.

Vol 8 No 2 included five essays, six book reviews, and the annual bibliography.

Vol 9 No 1 is a special issue, guest edited by Pia Masiero, titled “Philip Roth: Between Past and Future.” This issue sprang from the February 2012 symposium held in Venice, Italy. It included seven essays (one of which was the 2011 Siegel/McDaniel Award-winning essay) and five book reviews.

The editorial staff is beginning work on the Fall 2013 issue (Vol 9 No 2), a regular issue, which will be completed in time for autumn publication.

Since the last Roth Society business meeting, the journal has received 19 essay submissions. These do not include any of the essays submitted for the “Philip Roth: Between Past and Future” special issue.

The journal is proud to be the recipient of an Honorable Mention for the 2012 Best Special Issue Award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals. The awarded was specifically for the Spring 2012, “Roth and Women,” special issue (volume 8, number 1). Thanks goes to that issue’s guest editor, David Gooblar. A special thanks, as well, goes out to the journal’s editorial crew, all of whom were especially meticulous and adept at copyediting the special issue and preparing all manuscripts for final publication.

Personnel:

Jacques Berlinerblau, of Georgetown University, has become the journal’s new book review editor.

Joel Salzberg has decided to step down as a member of the Advisory Board. James Schiff, of the University of Cincinnati, is a new member of the Board.

The journal has published the second recipient of the Siegel/McDaniel Award, which the Roth Society awards to outstanding essays by graduate students. From the pattern that has evolved, it appears that winners of the Siegel/McDaniel Award will see their essays appear in the journal approximately two years after the award. (This assumes, of course, that the executive editor is able to work with the author to finalize in an appropriate manner the essay.) While it would be ideal to publish the Siegel/McDaniel Award winner sooner, logistics of the journal have not made this possible. This is primarily due to the journal’s growing backlog.

Book reviews:

The book review section of the journal is now at about its limit, with each issue now including approximately five to six reviews. Publishing more book reviews would mean expanding our page count, which Purdue University Press has asked me to watch, and/or including one fewer regular essays to provide this page space. Given the number of essays we have already accepted for publication, I will not decrease the number of essays per issue to accommodate more book reviews.

I am working with our new book review editor to ensure that all reviews we publish in the journal are both appropriate (i.e., concerning critical books that reflect our journal’s focus and that would be of interest to our readership) and objective. We need to safeguard against any potential problems of bias—such as approaching potential reviewers who are significantly acquainted with the author whose book is under review—and to utilize a broad pool of reviewers, not just the same individuals over and over. To this end, Jacques Berlinerblau, given his academic background and scholarly/administrative experiences, will be particularly effective in bringing a balanced and broader perspective to the journal’s book review section.

Purdue University Press continues to share with the Roth Society revenue generated from the journal on Project Muse, at a rate of 50%. The most recent net royalties earned for this current payment period (as indicated by the Press in April 2012) is \$4,312.52. This is up from \$3,296.80 a year ago.

The Project Muse statistical summary on the journal from May 1 2012 to April 30 2013 is as follows:

Days resource(s) accessed	365
Articles (full-text) viewed	4440
HTML Articles (full-text) viewed	1825
PDF Articles (full-text) viewed	2615
Table of Contents viewed	5409
IPs used to access database	3711

Future plans:

Over the past year the journal has published two guest-edited special issues, the Spring 2012 and the Spring 2013 issues. This being the case, I have decided not to publish another special issue for a while, giving us time to publish the essays we have already accepted.

The Fall 2013 and Spring 2013 issues will be a regular issues.

After consultation with the director of Purdue University Press, I have decided against devoting any upcoming issue of *Philip Roth Studies* to the recent Roth@80 event. Ideally, this would have been an appropriate move, but given the logistics, such an issue is highly problematic. For one, the number of essays to choose from (expanded versions of the conference papers) would have been prohibitive, and any selection would have been far from representative. Furthermore, that past couple of issues of *Roth Studies* have come close to stretching the limits of page count (as stipulated by the Press), and using an issue to include seven or more Roth@80-inspired essays would have created problems. I also broached the possibility of a double issue of the journal—something we have never before done—that would combine both a Fall 2013 and a Spring 2014 issue into one special issue on Roth@80. However, the director of the Press did not want this. I agreed with his assessment, especially given the fact that we already have a backlog of essays that we need to publish, and putting out still another special issue—in a single-issue or especially a double-issue form—would have pushed back the publication of accepted essays even further.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Parker Royal

Membership Statistics and Financial Report, June 2012-May 2013

Secretary/Treasurer's Report

Membership

Total members 2013 YTD (November 2012-May 2013): 78

Society only: 19

Society and journal: 59

Total members at this time in 2012: 49

Total members 2012: 61

Total members 2011: 65

Total members 2010: 64

Total members 2009: 73

Total members 2008: 51

Total members 2007: 53

Total members 2006: 79

Total members 2005: 71

Total members 2002-2003: 42

Number of past members who renewed in 2012: 26 (42%)

New members in 2012: 35

2013 members with US addresses: 49, representing 22 states

2013 members with international addresses: 29 (37%)

Brazil: 1

Canada: 2

China: 1

France: 7

Germany: 3

India: 1

Ireland: 1

Italy: 2

Japan: 1

New Zealand: 1

Romania: 1

South Korea: 1

United Kingdom: 7

Financial Report

Funds reported on last financial statement, May 2012: \$17,592.95

Deposits, Credits:

Membership dues:	\$ 3,869.75
Roth@80 registration fees:	\$ 9,260.56
NPLC reimbursement:	\$ 1,873.00
Purdue UP royalties:	\$ 4,312.52
	\$19,315.83

Debits:

Roth@80 expenses	
Jonathan Lethem:	\$ 1,000.00
Robert Treat:	\$ 1,392.99
Gateway Audio/Visual:	\$ 772.34
Milburn Hotel for H. Lee:	\$ 559.50
NPLC:	\$ 9,000.00
Misc reimbursements and fees:	\$ 435.91
CELJ fees:	\$ 45.00
	\$12,984.58

Current funds in accounts:

Amegy Bank:	\$ 218.95
Chase Bank:	\$21,315.20
PayPal:	\$ 2,213.89

Total assets, May 2013: \$23,748.04

Summary: We have around \$23,000 in the Chase bank and PayPal accounts combined (with a little left to transfer from the old Amegy account). The \$19,000-\$12,000 is our credits to debits ratio we've incurred since last year--around \$7,000. As per above, we carried over a balance of over \$17,000 from last year. The Society profited around \$7,000 since this time last year, resulting in a total of nearly \$24,000 in assets.

*Debts: start-up costs incurred by Derek Royal (\$101.43); to be reimbursed as a perpetual membership

Respectfully submitted, Christopher Gonzalez

Newsletter Editor's Report

In the past year we produced two issues of the newsletter, one of 24 pages, one of 20, and continued to cover news, reviews and information on the works of Philip Roth. Previously, I had a self-imposed target of a minimum of 16 pages per issue. I'm now going to see if I can raise that to 20 pages for this year's issues so that it provides a substantial publication for the members.

Over the years, while compiling the newsletter, I've tried to make sure that I accomplish the following three goals. Hopefully I've managed to do this.

The goals are:

1. Inform the members about matters pertaining to the society.

We have continued to communicate the news of the society as well as report back on its annual meeting and any other matters pertaining to it.

2. Provide news about Philip Roth and his works.

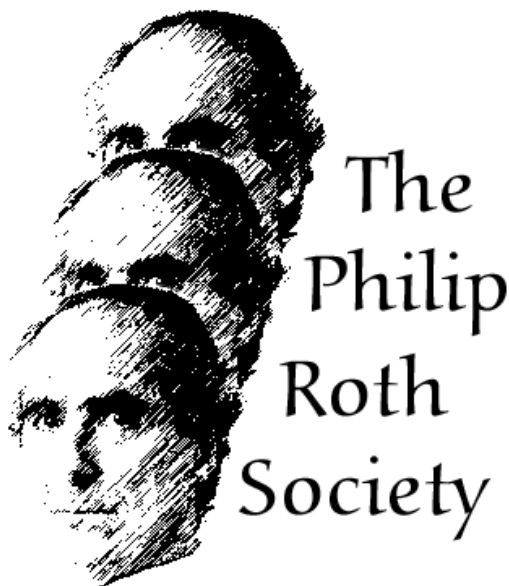
I've tried to expand the news articles about Philip Roth and have included news and general interest items. I've not managed to continue the series of brief essays examining Philip Roth's earlier uncollected short stories that had been ongoing, but I hope to revisit that in due course.

3. Provide a place where shorter essays about the author and his writing can be submitted, particularly those that are perhaps less formal in tone than those used in the "Philip Roth Studies" journal.

This has always been an area of concern in previous years due to the lack of submissions received. In the second half of the year this was somewhat bypassed due to the large amount of coverage for Philip Roth's retirement and the run-up to the Roth@80 event. There was, however, an interview with artist Tim Youd and I hope to have some articles in the pipeline for this year. As always though, I would like to encourage short submissions (500-1500 words) investigating aspects of Philip Roth's works, or other authors as they relate to him. This can be expanded to include how work in other forms of media such as film, theatre and TV use Roth as an influence.

I would also be interested to hear from the members with regard to anything they would like to see covered in the newsletter, whether it is new ideas, an expansion of current features or a re-introduction of old ones. For the future, I hope, as well as encouraging new essays into the newsletter, that it will continue to work as a regular source of information and news about the work of Philip Roth.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Sheehan



Philip Roth Society Activity at the 2013 ALA Conference

The Philip Roth Society sponsored both a panel and a roundtable discussion at the 25th annual American Literature Association Conference. This year's event took place on May 23-26, at the Westin Copley Place in Boston, MA. (Note: Members of the society are indicated using *.)

Friday May 24, 2013 – 11:10 – 12:30

Session 9-O Philip Roth in Retirement: A Roundtable Discussion (Parliament 7th Floor)

Moderator: David Gooblar*, Mount Mercy University

1. Kasia Boddy, Cambridge University
2. Ken Gordon, Independent Scholar
3. Timothy Parrish, Florida State University
4. Aimee Pozorski*, Central Connecticut State University

Saturday May 25, 2013 – 9:30-10:50am

Session 15-E Philip Roth and Narrative (St George D 3rd Floor)

Chair: Miriam Jaffe-Foger*, Rutgers University

1. **“‘An Astonishing Farce of Misperception’: A Comparison of American Pastoral and Tevye the Dairyman, or Philip Roth’s Epilogue to Fiddler on the Roof,” Joseph Perr*, Independent Scholar**

This paper examines Philip Roth’s *American Pastoral* as a contemporary American retelling of Sholem Aleichem’s *Tevye the Dairyman* stories and a challenge to *Fiddler on the Roof*’s morally un-ambiguous adaptation of this narrative.

Outside of their respective historical contexts, both the *Tevye* stories and *American Pastoral* share the same narrative: the story of generational tension between a controlling father and his daughter(s) from the perspective of the father. This perspective requires the narrative’s discourse to become unreliable and break with the story. Sholem Aleichem has Tevye, the father-character, narrate his own story, while Philip Roth casts his alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman as the heterodiegetic narrator of *American Pastoral*. In this shared narrative, a controlling father raises his daughter to fulfill his personal dreams and desires for self-reinvention, suppressing the daughter’s own aspirations and inclinations so as to fit her into his limited world. The daughter grows up to reject her father’s dreams as inauthentic, and struggles to establish her own identity outside of the limited role predetermined by her father. Unwittingly she emulates her father on a grotesque scale, as she embraces a series of equally inauthentic identities that lead to her undoing. The father becomes unreliable as a witness as he shirks responsibility for his daughter’s shattered life, blames historical circumstance and casts himself as a martyr.

Here is where the discourse breaks with the story and the reader must ask what the narrator is concealing. In recovering the moral ambiguity of Sholem Aleichem’s original, Roth challenges the deterministic cultural mythology embedded in the American musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, which itself was based on *Tevye the Dairyman*. In *Fiddler*, America is a beacon, a morally satisfying ending tacked onto Sholem Aleichem’s original dark and morally ambiguous narrative. The tension between father and daughters is papered-over in the musical when Tevye immigrates with his daughters to America, land of opportunity, escaping the fate of European Jewry for the promise of a bright future. Philip Roth places Sholem Aleichem’s narrative into the tumultuous context of the American Sixties, reclaiming the narrative as inherently ambiguous. *American Pastoral* reminds us that America is no Happily Ever After in the Jewish-American immigration narrative; this point is driven home as *American Pastoral* plays out against the backdrop of the Newark race riots and anti-

war movement of the 1960s. Ultimately, *American Pastoral* is Philip Roth's challenge to stories that, like *Fiddler on the Roof*, subscribe to the illusions of a deterministic American Dream.

2. “the illusion of life’: Re-thinking the Relationship Between Zuckerman as an Artist and Ira as a Propagandist in *I Married a Communist*,” Andy Connolly*, Pace University

In *I Married a Communist*, the overlapping narrative reflections of Nathan Zuckerman and Murray Ringold tend toward a common view of Ira Ringold's “unthinking” capitulation to certain political and cultural dogmas of the Left.

Murray's narrative perspective is shaped by a dispassionate form of “critical thinking,” by which he judges – and distances himself from – Ira's shortsighted and “overheated relationship to everything.” In addition, Murray's detached and controlled measure of events in the story that he tells is informed by a literary-formalist sensibility, which is set in contrast to the agit-prop clichés that Ira favors.

While Zuckerman's own narrative reflections demonstrate a shared interest in Murray's disinterested intellectual and aesthetic perspective, I wish to argue that he also retains a lingering kinship with Ira's “overheated” rhetorical style. I will locate certain ways in which Ira's inflated means of talking about actual historical conditions finds parallels in Zuckerman's literary penchant for distorting and amplifying aspects of ‘real’ life. Although no longer inspired by Ira's canned political rhetoric, Zuckerman's narrative recollections in the text continue to be drawn to the latter's “irresistible ventriloquism” and mimicry of others. On this stylistic level, both Zuckerman and Ira share the fact that they are “[a]lways impersonating and never the real thing.”

In addition, I will speak about how the emotional investment and “visceral charge” that drives Ira's political speech reflects aspects of the “agitation of the autobiographical” that have characterized Zuckerman's repeated failures to embody the role, à la Murray, of the disembodied literary aesthete.

In order to illustrate my general thesis, I will provide a close reading of the scene in Chapter 6 where Zuckerman recalls his and Ira's visit to the taxidermist, Horace Bixton. I will suggest ways in which Ira's fascination with how the taxidermist “create[s] the illusion of life” finds a peculiar mixture of both resonance and dissonance in Zuckerman's own “obsessive reinvention[s] of the real.”

My argument will thus establish Zuckerman's complex dialogical interactions between both Ringold brothers, highlighting the ways in which he paradoxically absorbs and rejects the contrary examples set by these “paternal surrogates.”

3. “Life is and’: The Counterlife's Invitation to Reading as Hospitality,” Frederick Coye Heard*, University of Texas at Austin

Critics frequently cite *The Counterlife*, Roth's most narratively ambitious novel, as occupying a privileged position in his oeuvre. For instance, David Brauner argues that the novel marks the beginning of Roth's late style, and Debra Shostak claims that its rich intra- and inter-textualities should be read as emblematic of Roth's narrative and ethical projects across his entire career. In my paper, I will demonstrate, first, that, Roth embeds two rival strategies for reading *The Counterlife*'s mutually contradictory, mutually entangling narratives in the distinct metafictional styles of the novel's final two chapters, “Gloucestershire” and “Christendom.” The fourth and fifth chapters of the novel each demonstrates an awareness of the book's other chapters, but they offer radically divergent strategies for approaching the novel as a whole. While “Gloucestershire” uses the inherent malleability of narrative to make the other chapters useful and amenable to its own story, “Christendom” argues that readers are impossibly responsible for accepting all five chapters simultaneously without the comfort of a unifying frame. After articulating *The Counterlife*'s rival self-interpretations, I will argue that, while readers as careful and insightful as Shostak and Derek Parker Royal have sided implicitly with the interpretive gestures of “Gloucestershire,” *The Counterlife* undermines “Gloucestershire” and privileges its final chapter's version of reading as the practice of an always-already fractured hospitality. Reading like “Christendom” aligns

The Counterlife with trauma theory studies of Roth (such as Aimee Pozorski's excellent work on his later novels) and offers an important correction or limitation to the fabulist power of self-construction through narrative that Shostak lionizes in her reading of *The Counterlife*. Roth presents narrative invention as a radical freedom, but this power of self-creation is a freedom *to respond* that emerges from and is empowered by an equally radical responsibility.

4. "The End of an Era: Late Style and Holocaust Memory in Philip Roth's *Exit Ghost*," Anthony Wexler*, Johns Hopkins University

Philip Roth's *Exit Ghost*, considers the struggle between the autonomy of the literary imagination associated with the dead writer E.I. Lonoff, and the pressures of cultural journalism and academic criticism embodied by the young literary journalist, Richard Kliman, who seeks to augment his own career by exposing a secret from Lonoff's past. Between these figures stands the seventy-one year old, Nathan Zuckerman, the aging writer whose flesh is leaking vitality and whose mind is leaking memory. Over the course of the novel, the aging writer seeks to protect Lonoff's work and legacy from its inevitable slide into the hands of a younger generation motivated by very different agendas. The novel, however, creatively entwines Zuckerman's inability to defend Lonoff's legacy with a larger struggle to protect the memory of the Holocaust, the trauma that haunts the novel, against its inevitable slide into the literary imagination. What unites both threads is the inevitable "fact of finitude": the aging and death of those who actually witnessed the traumatic events. Within the novel, Amy Bellette, the aging Holocaust survivor, blurs the need to protect her own traumatic past with the efforts to protect Lonoff's legacy from Kliman's revelations. In this paper, I consider how late style and the subjective experience of old age provides a narrative framework for confronting and coping with the end of the era of witnessing. Reading *Exit Ghost* alongside Primo Levi's last work, *The Drowned and the Saved*, which Bellette cites in the novel, I consider how old age serves as a crucible for exploring the interplay between the fictional impulse and the memories of atrocity that even Amy's tumor is unable to displace.

Among other papers presented at the ALA Conference.

"The terror of the unforeseen": Roth's *Nemesis* and that "poisonous summer" of 1944 Victoria Aarons*, Trinity University, TX.

A quarter of a century having passed since that terrible, lethal summer of 1944 when the polio outbreak in Newark was feverishly escalating and the furies of war were raging uncontrollably in Europe, Bucky Cantor, the defeated protagonist of Roth's *Nemesis*, will rail against the God he knows to be without conscience or mercy, a god who knows "no limits." In a parody of a Joban cry of outrage against the injustices wrought upon him, Bucky, years after contracting the disease that would dramatically unhinge his life, indicts God at the novel's close. He holds God accountable for the tragic misfortunes and barbarity of an era. And in his obstinate insistence on assigning blame and demanding accountability from some higher, inimical force, Bucky stubbornly fails to acknowledge the obvious evidence before him: "irrefutable historical proof, gleaned during a lifetime passed on this planet in the middle of the twentieth century." Roth makes it very clear that Bucky should know better: that one's cries are wasted, not only in the face of all-too-human malice, but, when up against the vagaries and contingencies of this uncontainable and volatile life. Yet Bucky Cantor, in full retreat mode, will point an accusing finger at God, indulging the delusion of an absolute enemy to pathologically justify suffering. Bucky will surrender history for theology, reason for irrationality, and happiness for self-imposed misery. Here Roth shows the conception of God to be an easy, far too simplistic projection of not only Bucky's failures and limitations, but of his compensatory will, his desire to overcome the odds, his desire for mastery. Bucky will make of himself not only *a* victim, but *the* victim. Held captive by his punitive super-ego and his fixations, Bucky is a man singularly without perspective, without the comic and ironic distance that might be said to save Roth's characters from themselves, which never bodes well in Roth's fictive universes.

Calls for Papers and Announcements

Philip Roth: Across Cultures, across Disciplines

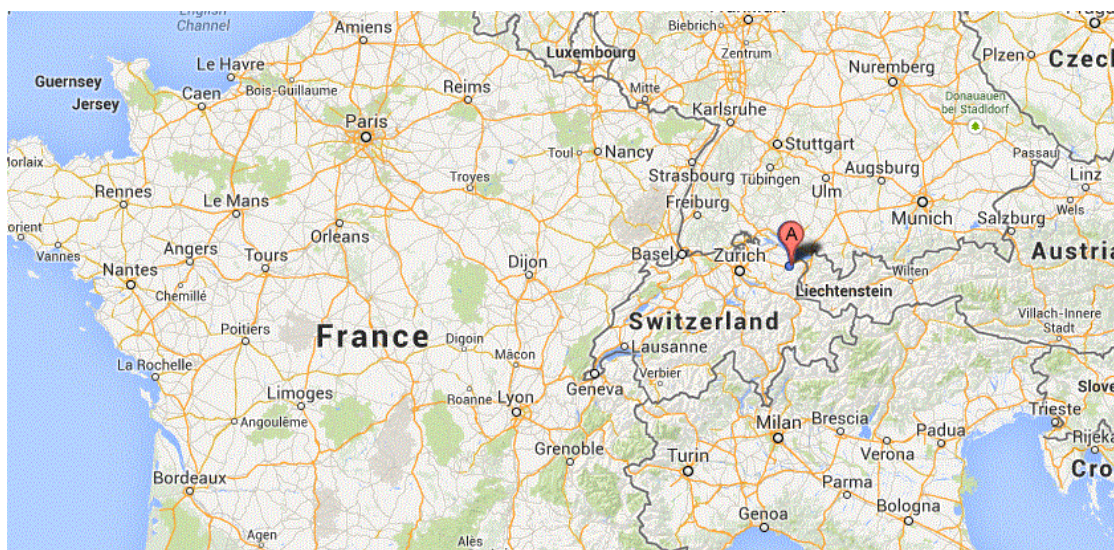
The Philip Roth Society announces a call for papers for the conference “Philip Roth: Across Cultures, across Disciplines” at the University of St.Gallen in Switzerland (<http://www.unisg.ch>). The conference will take place June 13-14 (Friday and Saturday), 2014.

Be it his acerbic portrayal of American politics and its impact on ordinary citizens, his constant play with historiography’s fictitiousness, the references to art and music, or his insight into the psycho-analyzed mind, Philip Roth’s novels have reached a scholarly audience beyond Departments of Literature and have been celebrated by readers across the world. Wherein consists Roth’s transdisciplinary and transcultural appeal? What do readers from different disciplines gain from reading Roth? What are the limits and limitations of an interdisciplinary approach to Roth’s work? How is Roth read, interpreted, and challenged in different cultures? These are only a few of the question that shall be addressed during our conference. We particularly welcome contributions on Roth from different academic disciplines, but also new takes on “International Roth” as well as fresh insights into his life and fiction.

The conference will be organized around panels with three to four papers, poster sessions, and plenary talks. Proposals of no more than 250 words are invited for 20-minute papers and poster contributions; please specify what type of contribution you would like to make. You are likewise welcome to apply as a discussant. Please send your abstracts by e-mail to the conference organizer, Claudia Franziska Brühwiler* at roth.hsg2014@gmail.com. Please include your professional affiliation or association status, along with full contact details. All presenters selected for the conference must be, or must become members of the Philip Roth Society. No participation fee will be charged, but you may be asked to pay a small fee for meals and for optional tours of the town.

Deadline for proposals is October 30, 2013; early applications are encouraged and welcome.

About the venue: St.Gallen is located a one-hour train ride from Zurich Airport, a four-hour train ride from Munich and Geneva.



Annual Siegel/McDaniel Award for Graduate Student Research Sponsored by the Philip Roth Society

Call for Papers: Summer 2013

The Philip Roth Society is still accepting submissions for its third annual Siegel/McDaniel Award for Graduate Student Research. The award recognizes high-quality work from graduate students written on any aspect of Philip Roth's writing in the past year (ending June 1).

Eligible graduate students should submit a clean copy of a 10-15 page essay, double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font to David Gooblar (gooblarprs@gmail.com) by **September 1, 2013**. The executive board members of the Philip Roth Society will evaluate all entries and notify entrants of their decision by October 1.

We ask that faculty members urge strong students to submit papers, and we welcome submissions from members and non-members alike. We are unable to accept papers that have already been published or accepted for publication.

This award is given in honor of the work of Ben Siegel and John McDaniel, two of the earliest and most influential Roth scholars in the history of American letters.



— Ben Siegel



— John McDaniel

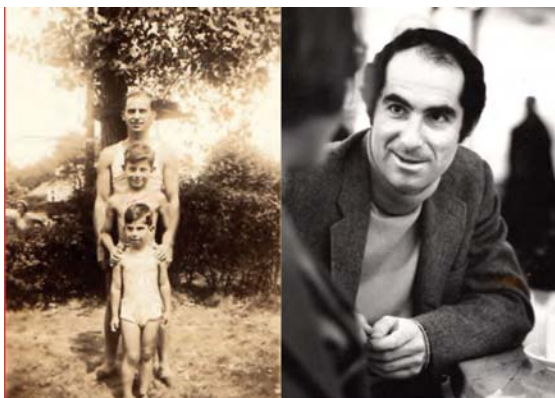
The annual deadline is October 1.

The winner of the Siegel/McDaniel Award receives:

- 1) a \$250 cash award;
- 2) a complimentary membership renewal that includes the journal option for the following year;
- 3) an opportunity to work with the editor of *Philip Roth Studies* to publish an expanded version of the essay.

Philip Roth News

Philip Roth: An Exhibit of Photos from a Lifetime



The Director and Board of Trustees of The Newark Public Library held a reception with exhibit curators Rosemary Steinbaum and James Lewis celebrating the publication of the exhibit catalogue, *Philip Roth: An Exhibit of Photos from a Lifetime*. The event took place on Thursday, June 6, 2013, in the Second Floor Gallery and Centennial Hall of The Newark Public Library (5 Washington Street, Newark, NJ 07102). Catalogues are available for purchase at \$15 per copy. All proceeds will be used to support the fiction collections at The Newark Public Library.

Philip Roth: An Exhibit of Photos from a Lifetime includes materials from the personal collection of Philip Roth and from the Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center at The Newark Public Library. The exhibit was presented in celebration of Philip Roth's 80th birthday, March 19, 2013, and is on view through August 31, 2013.

Washington DC Celebrates Philip Roth's 80th Birthday

On 14th March 2013, just prior to the celebrations for Philip Roth's 80th birthday, Derek Parker Royal and Jacques Berlinerblau discussed his literary works and his contribution to literature at Georgetown University. The video of this discussion can be seen here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=nOvdL3FN-fU#t=0s

Philip Roth Remembers Teacher and Friend, Bob Lowenstein

In a piece published in *The New York Times*, Philip Roth remembered and paid tribute to his friend and former teacher, Bob Lowenstein, the model for Murray Ringold in Roth's 1998 novel, *I Married a Communist*. See here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/21/opinion/sunday/in-memory-of-a-friend-teacher-and-mentor.html>

Note: This is also available as a free download from www.audible.com. For every download of this tribute, Audible will donate \$1 to the Newark Public Library, up to \$25,000.

In an interview with the *Paris Review*, Roth said: "The library was very important to me as a kid. The main Newark Public Library was downtown, and I went to a branch library where I lived, about a mile away. I went often, when I got to be eleven, twelve, thirteen. Then, my first year of college, I went to college there in Newark—Newark-Rutgers, now—and the college didn't have a library, so the Newark Public Library was our library. I'm very attached to it. And I don't want it to go under. Not that \$25,000 will save it, but it can't hurt."

Helping Himself and Others

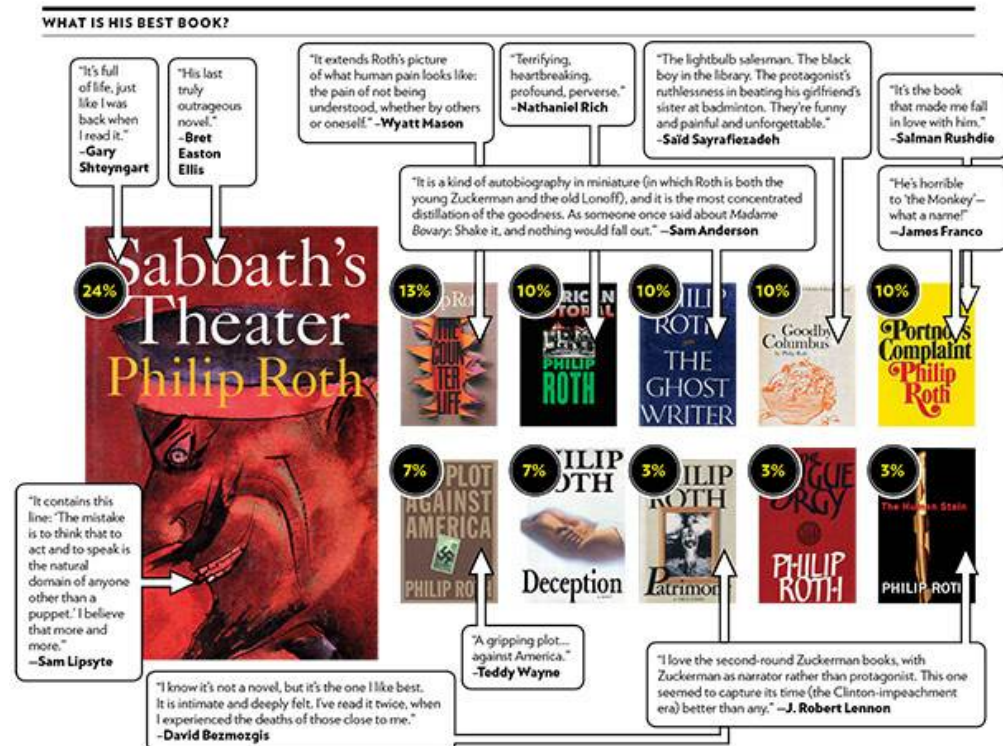
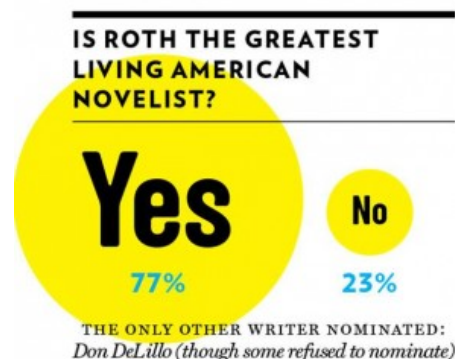
At the start of May, 2013, Philip Roth received the PEN/Allen Foundation Literary Service Award. According to the *Washington Post*, Roth was cited not only for his own work, such as *Portnoy's Complaint* and *American Pastoral*, but also for his advocacy in the 1970s and 1980s for writers in Czechoslovakia and other Eastern bloc countries during the Cold War.

A Literary Caucus on Philip Roth in *New York Magazine*

In anticipation of Philip Roth's 80th birthday in March, *New York Magazine* pulled together a collection of thirty literati to discuss Roth and his oeuvre, publishing the results on their *Vulture* website. Among the questions the panelists consider are:

- Is Roth the greatest living American novelist?
- What is Roth's best book?
- What do you admire or dislike most about Roth?
- Is Roth a minsogynst?
- What do you make of all of Roth's alter egos?
- What is Roth's greatest subject?
- Does Roth deserve to win the Nobel Prize?

<http://www.vulture.com/2013/02/philip-roth-literati-poll.html>



Philip Roth, the Modern Jewish Predicament, and Tough Talk

On Monday, March 18, literary critic Adam Kirsch, communications scholar Liel Leibovitz, and professor of Jewish Civilization Jacques Berlinerblau talked about Philip Roth's prodigious fictional output and its attendant provocations. Aside from assessing his contributions to literature, this panel also scrutinized Roth's survey of the modern Jewish predicament. The event also turned into a chance to listen to Liel Leibovitz and Adam Kirsch duke it out over Philip Roth's legacy while Jacques Berlinerblau calmly mediated.

The event was co-sponsored by The Posen Foundation and the Jewish Cultural Studies Program at The New School for Public Engagement. It was made possible by the generous support of The Posen Foundation.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=81I52y7W7P0

Conference: “Translation and Censorship: the reception of the work of Philip Roth in the Spain of the 70s” by Gustavo Sánchez Canales



(Photo: Gustavo Sánchez Canales, Cintia Rodríguez and José M^a Tomás) Photo: Rafael Morales (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

On the occasion of the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature bestowed upon Philip Roth one year ago, Cintia Rodríguez and José M^a Tomás, two colleagues and friends of mine at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, invited me to read a paper on the reception of Roth's works in Spain. The talk took place at the prestigious, private cultural institution Ateneo de Madrid on June 21.

The original idea of talking about this issue came when on August 18, 2011, Professor Pia Masiero (Department of Linguistic and Comparative Cultural Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice) contacted me to ask me if I wanted to speak about the reception of Roth's works in Spain for a two-day programme entitled “Philip Roth between Past and Future: Literature, History and Ethics” (Auditorium Santa Margherita, Venice Feb 16–17, 2012). After the talk, Leona Toker, editor of *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* (Johns Hopkins University Press), invited me to write an essay on this subject which has just appeared as “‘Lectura para Personas de Amplio Criterio’: Censor-

ship in the Translations of Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* and *The Professor of Desire*.”

My Ateneo paper, partly based on both my talk in Venice and my article in *Partial Answers*, addressed Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), *The Breast* (1972) and *The Professor of Desire* (1977). These three novels were translated into Spanish in a period when Spain was still under General Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975) or had barely left it behind. Censorship was common practice in those four decades. Although chronologically speaking *The Professor of Desire*, translated for the first time in 1978, does not fall into the category of “censored” works (1939–1976), in practice it does as censorship somehow continued to be practiced in Spain until 1985. As explained throughout my talk, all three novels underwent some “suspicious” modifications. To give an example, in *Portnoy's Complaint*, the two chapters which deal with the protagonist's initiation into sex, “Whacking off” and “Cunt Crazy,” were respectively translated in the censored Spanish version of 1977 as “Sacudidas” (“Shaking”) and “Ansia de sexo” (“Anxious about sex”). The second part of the event—time for questions and discussion—started at around 8 p.m. and finished close to 9 p.m. The reason was probably due to the fact that practically all the audience—mostly made up of (former) colleagues and (former) students—was familiar with Roth's fiction. One of the messages I conveyed during that two-hour time span was that, although the new translations into Spanish of Roth's works are fine, there is nothing like enjoying his prose in English. Apparently, many people taking part in the conference agreed with me.

Gustavo Sánchez Canales
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
Spain

With thanks to Cintia Rodríguez and José M^a Tomás from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and a special thank-you for Leona Toker, editor-in-chief of the Journal “Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas” (Johns Hopkins University Press), whose collaboration was essential in this event.

Meeting Roth

...a miscellany of first encounters and initial impressions.

(Compiled by Dana Cook)

Ernest Sirluck, English professor

Intense

...[University of Chicago English professor Joan Bennett] invited us to tea to meet one of her students; it was Philip Roth and the stories he was working on in Joan's class became *Goodbye, Columbus*. He was very intense and had pronounced views on the department; his wife seemed rather silent. (Chicago, mid-1950s)

from *First Generation: An Autobiography*, by Ernest Sirluck (University of Toronto Press, 1996)

* * *

Ted Solotaroff, editor and critic

Prince to my pauper

On the first day of a course on Henry James [at University of Chicago] in the fall of 1957, I found myself sitting next to...a dark debonair fellow in a jacket and tie who...looked like he had strayed into class from the business school...Phil Roth. With the antenna of New York/New Jersey Jews, we quickly tuned into each other. ...

.....

...Phil wore GI khaki gloves inside his leather ones, but otherwise dressed like the junior faculty member that he also was, having been given a job in the College that the rest of us Ph. D. students would have killed for. ...

.....

Around the second week of class, one of the students was going on about the religious allegory that underlay "Daisy Miller." [Professor Napier] Wilt asked me what I thought of this interpretation. I said that it was idiotic to read James as though he were Hawthorne. Then Phil jumped in and proceeded to show how eschewing the concrete for the symbolic "turned the story inside out," that Daisy had to be established as an American girl of a certain class and disposition before she became of any interest as a sacrificial figure. Like two players early in the season who find they can work together, Phil and I passed the ball back and forth, running up the score of good sense. ...

.....

...The one time he came to our flat, he sat there like a social worker on the edge of a couch over which I had nailed an old shag rug to cover the holes. Though we both came from the same hard-pressed Jewish middle class, his clothes, his place in the College, and the money he made from writing cast us in adult prince and pauper roles. ...

.....

During our humor binges, Phil would suddenly slip the moorings of his gifts of precise mimicry, timing, suspense, and imagery and get carried away--or better, swept away--into a wild dark sea of vulgarity and obscenity, as far out and obsessed as Lenny Bruce himself. ...

from *First Loves: A Memoir*, by Ted Solotaroff (Seven Stories Press, 2003)

* * *

A. Alvarez, poet, critic and novelist

Meticulous

...when Philip Roth was living in London, I went to the little apartment where he worked to collect him for lunch. While he was putting on his coat, I glanced at a page of manuscript lying beside his typewriter. Philip has one of the strongest voices of any novelist alive, effortless and apparently unhesitating, yet the page was black with tiny corrections.

‘Who’s going to notice the difference?’ I asked.

‘You are,’ he answered. ‘I am.’

Meticulousness is just one of the obsessions Philip and I share. When we first met 40 years ago [c. 1960] we were both angry young men with bad marriages, troublesome parents and a yearning for shiksas and literature. We had both been good students, full of high seriousness, and even now when we talk about books it’s usually about the masterworks we were taught to admire back in the fifties when we were at college--Kafka, Gogol, James. Since then I have written three novels, yet whenever I am with Philip I realize I lack the novelist’s temperament. A real novelist is an invigilator, constantly on the watch, listening, making mental notes, using whatever happens to happen and weaving it into stories. Maybe that was what James meant by ‘loose and baggy monsters’: the novel can accommodate everything.

from *Where Did It All Go Right?: A Memoir*, by A. Alvarez (Morrow/HarperCollins, 1999)

* * *

John Cheever, novelist and short story writer

Boys’ talk

I have a drink, go to meet Philip Roth at the station with the two dogs on leads. He is unmistakable, and I give him an Army whoop from the top of the stairs. Young, supple, gifted, intelligent, he has the young man’s air of regarding most things as if they generated an intolerable heat. I don’t mean fastidiousness, but he holds his head back from his plate of roast beef as if it were a conflagration. He is divorced from a girl I thought delectable. “She won’t even give me back my ice skates.” The conversation hews to a sexual line--cock and balls, Genet, Rechy--but he speaks, I think, with grace, subtlety, wit. (Ossining, N.Y., 1963)

from *The Journals of John Cheever*, by John Cheever (Knopf, 1990)

* * *

Claire Bloom, actor and wife of PR

Tall and handsome

We had first met in East Hampton, Long Island, in 1966. Rod [Steiger] and I had taken a house for the summer months, and we had a good time there...bicycle-riding, swimming, performing a host of healthy summer activities. Neighbors invited us over for a drink; one of their houseguests was Philip. Already a highly acclaimed young writer--the author of *Goodbye, Columbus*, a fine volume of short stories--I recognized his tense, intellectually alert face immediately from photographs. Tanned, tall, and lean, he was unusually handsome; he also seemed to be well aware of his startling effect on women. I was immediately attracted to him, and he would tell me years later that he also had felt the same toward me...

from *Leaving a Doll’s House*, by Claire Bloom (Little, Brown, 1996)

* * *

Barry Callaghan, journalist, novelist and editor

Casual

...I was talking to Philip Roth for the *Tely* [Toronto *Telegram*]. He spoke in the tapered tone of a man who wanted to convey a casual intelligence and amiability, a man deft with an idea. Slender, a little balding, wearing a pullover V-neck sweater and a shirt open at the neck, he paced back and forth on the burgundy plank floors in his flat, and then sat at his writing desk--heavy oak, somewhat awkward to sit at--a gray metal elbow lamp clamped to the desk top, jutting into the air, it angled back over his typewriter. (New York, late 1960s)

from *Barrelhouse Kings: A Memoir*, by Barry Callaghan (McArthur & Company, 1998)

* * *

Ned Rorem, composer

Swarthy glory

...as JH [companion James Holmes] and I were finishing our chowder at The Tavern, toying with the notion of leaving next day, stopping our ears against an aggressive accordion and trying to compare notes on our mutual loathing of the local Catholic dishwasher-blond fauna, and exclaiming, My God, there's not one Jew in this town, much less anyone we'd ever want to know! Who should enter in all his swarthy glory but Philip Roth, and Barbara. So they sat and chatted a while, cheered us up some (we'd seen no humans hitherto), and we made a date for Wednesday, but didn't keep it because we fled instead.... (Siasconset, Mass., 1972)

from *The Later Diaries: 1961-1972*, by Ned Rorem (North Point Press, 1983)

* * *

Joyce Carol Oates, novelist

Completely likeable person

May 15, 1974. ...Met Philip Roth. We went to his apartment, then out to lunch. Attractive, funny, warm, gracious: a completely likeable person. We talked about books, movies, other writers, New York City, Philip's fame (and its amusing consequences), his experiences in Czechoslovakia meeting with writers. Ray [husband Smith] and I liked him very much. *My Life as a Man* irresistibly engaging. But one wonders at Philip's pretense that it isn't autobiographical.

from *The Journals of Joyce Carol Oates 1973-1982* (HarperCollins, 2007)

Ned Sherrin, film and stage producer

Handshakes received and avoided

Philip Roth came with Claire Bloom to [film and stage producer] Patrick Garland's wedding to [actress] Alexandra Bastedo in the Chichester Cathedral and to the reception afterwards in Bishop Kemp's quarters in the cathedral grounds. Edward Kemp, the youngest teenage son of the bishop approached him. 'Mr Roth,' he asked, 'may I shake you by the hand?' After his wish had been granted and he slipped away (to become in time an excellent writer/director), Philip Roth whispered, 'Women at literary luncheons across America have run a mile rather than shake the hand of the man who wrote *Portnoy's Complaint*.' (West Sussex, England, mid-1970s)

from *Ned Sherrin: The Autobiography*, by Ned Sherrin (Little Brown, 2005)

* * *

Emma Tennant, novelist and editor

Inward-looking self-explorer

...a feeling of authentic French provençal with faded ochre walls and pine tables where you can sit as long as you like...Thompsons, as this modest establishment on the corner of Portobello Mews and next to a new dry-cleaner's, soon becomes known. ...

.....

Today Philip Roth is sitting at the back of Thompsons in the gloom. Like an ant-eater's, his long snout and bright eyes are trained downwards, on the food he consumes. A book is held up close to his face; Roth most definitely does not wish to be disturbed. I've heard this most inward-looking and remarkable of self-explorers has a room where he writes in Stanley Gardens, up the hill. I know, despite the fact of his apparent great distance from the talk or excitements around him, that every word one says goes into the long, this head, shaped like a quill with its tufty feathers of black hair, and lies waiting to be inscribed in stone. ...

.....

The other day, Roth went so far as to invite me to join him in the dark recesses of the restaurant. We talked of nothing much, except Roth's first wife and the novel, *My Life as a Man*, that he'd written about her violent and untimely death. My sympathy was brushed aside; Roth declared himself unperturbed by the outcome of his spouse's tragic accident...

After lunch, Roth suggests I 'see' his Stanley Gardens workplace. I go up the hill with him, and then up three floors to the minute flat where he sits over his desk, deep in Nathan Zuckerman, his *alter ego*. There is hardly any space, between desk, armchair and wall, to stand in; but somehow Roth has fitted a rubber mat, green with a swirly pattern, in this tight space, and I find myself—there is nowhere else to go—standing on it. 'For my exercises,' Roth says. A silence falls, and I leave, suddenly aware I don't want to be here at all. Whatever the 'exercises' are, I definitely do not want to be a part of them. (London, 1976)

from *Burnt Diaries*, by Emma Tennant (Canongate Books, 1999)

* * *

Al Alvarez, poet, critic and novelist

Monk's cell with a great view

Roth's face is lined now, his mouth has tightened and his springy hair has turned grey, but he still looks like an athlete—tall, lean, with broad shoulders and a small head. Until recently, when surgery on his back and arthritis in the shoulder laid him low, he worked out and swam regularly, though always, it seemed, for a purpose—not for the animal pleasure of physical exercise, but to stay fit for the long hours he puts in at his writing. He works standing up, paces around while he's thinking and has said he walks half a mile for every page he writes. Even now, when his joints are beginning to creak and fail, energy still comes off him like a heat haze, but it all driven by the intellect. It comes out as argument, mimicry, wild comic riffs on whatever happens to turn up in the conversation. His concentration is fierce, and the sharp back eyes under their thick brows miss nothing. The pleasure of his company is immense, but you need to be at your best not to disappoint him.

...the New York studio...where me met to talk...is on the 12th floor, a single large room with a kitchen area, a little bathroom and a glass wall looking south across Manhattan's gothic landscape to the Empire State Building, with a wisp of cloud around its top.

The lectern at which Roth works is at right angles to the view, presumably to avoid distraction...There is a bed with a neat white counterpane against the wall, an easy chair in the center of the room, with a graceful standing lamp beside it, all of it leather and steel and glass, discreetly modern. It is a place strictly for work, spare and chaste, a monk's cell with a great view. (2004)

from "The long road home," by Al Alvarez, *The Guardian*, 23 September 2004

* * *

Lee Rosenbaum, journalist and blogger

Missed opportunity

...I went to hear Hermoine Lee, an Oxford University English professor, speak at Columbia University this evening about her just published biography [of Edith Wharton]...

I arrived early at Low Library and took a seat in the third row of the nearly empty rotunda. Soon afterwards, a professorial man in a tweedy brown jacket sat down in the seat right next to me, which struck me as odd, considering that he might have been expected to leave an empty seat between us in such uncrowded circumstances.

I glanced at him, thought he looked vaguely familiar, couldn't place him, and went back to working on some writing. (I now blush to think he might have been looking at the page.) Fifteen minutes later, along came my husband, who sat down in the seat on my left. The "professor" soon moved one seat over, laying his coat across the seat between us.

When Hermine Lee took her seat onstage, I noticed her nod in greeting to the man on my right. Then, the person who introduced her mentioned that she had once written an essay on Philip Roth.

And then, of course, I knew.

I cast a sidelong glance at "the professor," and realized the person I had studiously ignored while I continued my own scribbling was arguably our country's most famous living literary novelist...

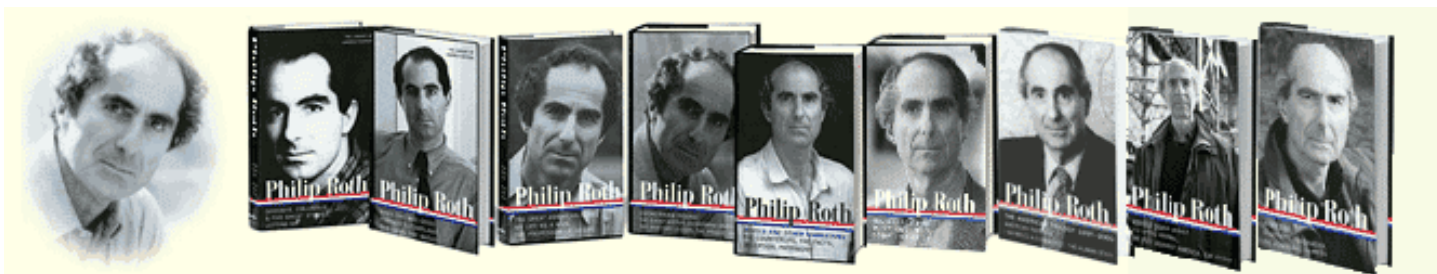
I had just missed the opportunity to have a 15-minute tête-à-tête with the perpetrator of Portnoy. After the Wharton talk concluded, I lamely inquired if he was Philip Roth and told him it was nice to see him. He returned the pleasantry and was off to commune with the academic types up front. (New York, 2007)

from the blog "CultureGrrrl" at *artsjournal.com*, 12 April, 2007

* * *

[Dana Cook's collections of literary encounters have been published in a wide range of newspapers, magazines and journals. Contact: [danacook\(at\)rogers.com](mailto:danacook(at)rogers.com)].

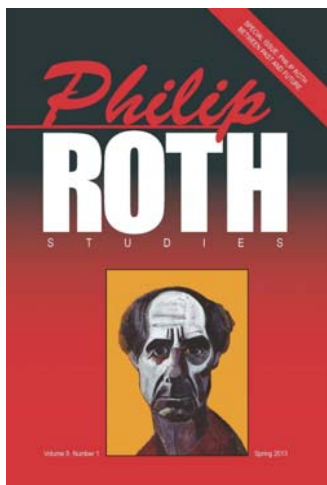
Philip Roth: The Complete Philip Roth Collection



By special arrangement with the author, **The Library of America** has published the definitive edition of Roth's collected works. These nine books can be purchased from the Library of America website at <http://www.loa.org/roth>

Books and Journals

Spring 2013 Issue of Philip Roth Studies



The latest issue of *Philip Roth Studies* (Vol. 9, No. 1) has just been published, and members of the Roth Society, if they do not already have their copies, should be receiving them soon. This one is a special issue, "Philip Roth between Past and Future," guest edited by Pia Masiero and with a cover image by [Andrea Ventura](#). The table of contents includes:

- Editor's Column – Derek Parker Royal
- Introduction: Philip Roth between Past and Future – Pia Masiero
- Philip Roth's *Our Gang*, the Politics of Intertextuality and the Complexities of Cultural Memory – Till Kinzel
- Fathers and Writers: Kafka's "Letter to His Father" and Philip Roth's Non-Fiction – Michael Kimmage
- "Between Dystopia and Allohistory: The Ending of Roth's *The Plot Against America* – Leona Toker
- Expelled Once Again: The Failure of the Fantasized Self in Philip Roth's *Nemesis* – Victoria Aarons
- Roth, Ethics and the Carnival – Rémi Astruc
- The Fate of Sex: Late Style and "The Chaos of Eros" – Ira Nadel
- "I wanted to be humanish: manly, a man": Morality, Shame, and Masculinity in Philip Roth's *My Life as a Man* – Maggie McKinley (Winner of the 2011 Siegel/McDaniel Award)
- Book Reviews

For more information on *Philip Roth Studies*, contact the executive editor at rothstudies@rothsociety.org. To subscribe to the journal you may do so through the Philip Roth Society, or by contacting Purdue University Press.

Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas

Volume 11, Number 2, June 2013



The most recent issue contains a special forum, guest-edited by Pia Masiero. The forum consists of studies of selected translations of Philip Roth's works into Spanish, French, Italian, and Polish. The translations, along with the interpretations and misinterpretations to which they lead, reflect the time and place in which they are performed but also shed new light on the linguistic and cultural folds of the original text.

The issue can be purchased for John Hopkins UP or accessed through MUSE: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/partial_answers/toc/pan.11.2.html

These are the papers:

Forum: Translating Philip Roth, guest-ed. Pia Masiero
Introduction: From Translation to Interpretation

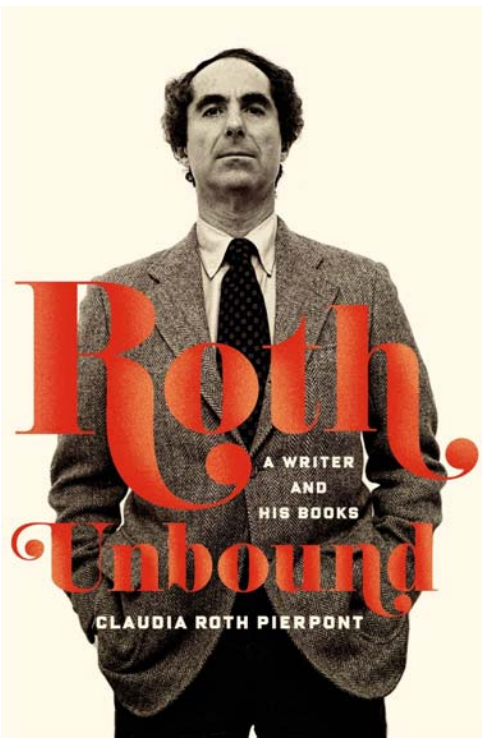
"Lectura para Personas de Amplio Criterio": Censorship in the Translations of Philip Roth's Portnoy's Complaint and The Professor of Desire—Gustavo Sánchez Canales

Philip Roth's Professor of Desire in the Light of Its French Translation—Velichka D. Ivanova

The Difference in One Word: The Italian Translation of Philip Roth's American Pastoral—Pia Masiero

Ventriloquism in Philip Roth's Deception and Its Polish Translation—Jerzy Jarniewicz

Roth Unbound: A Writer and His Books



Claudia Roth Pierpont

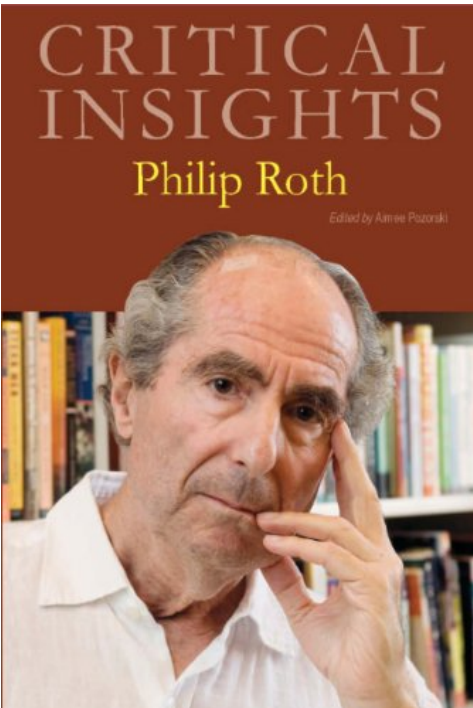
Hardcover: 368 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2 Jan 2014)

Claudia Roth Pierpont tells an engaging story even as she delves into the many complexities of Roth's work and the controversies it has raised. This is not a biography – though it contains many biographical details – but something more rewarding: an attempt to understand a great writer through his art.

Pierpont, who has known Roth for several years, peppers her gracefully written and carefully researched account with conversational details, providing insights and anecdotes previously accessible only to a very few, touching on Roth's family, his inspirations, his critics, the full range of his fiction, and his literary friendships with such figures as Saul Bellow and John Updike.

Philip Roth (Critical Insights)



Edited by Aimee Pozorski

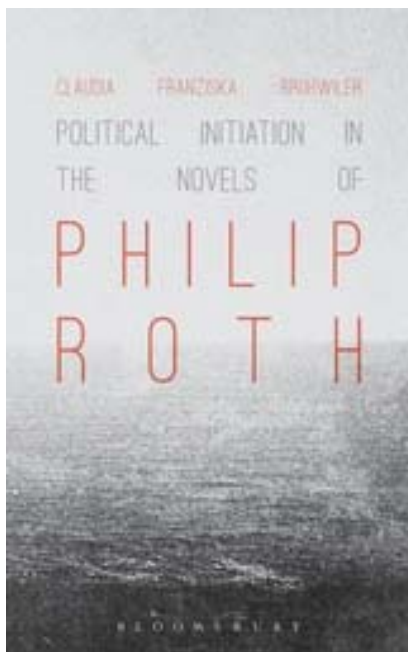
Hardcover: 254 pages

Publisher: EBSCO Publishing; Har/Psc edition (30 May 2013)

This volume in the Critical Insights series presents a variety of new essays on the Jewish-American writer, who stunned the literary world by announcing his retirement in November of 2012. For readers who are studying Roth for the first time, a biographical sketch relates the details of his life and four essays survey the critical reception of Roth's work, explore its cultural and historical contexts, situate Roth among his contemporaries, and review key themes in his work. Readers seeking a deeper understanding of the writer can then move on to other original essays that explore a bevy of topics, such as major thematic trajectories in Roth's work, the author's use of autobiographical gestures, the mechanics of history in his works, and the author's style in his later writings and books.

Works discussed include *The Professor of Desire*, *The Plot Against America*, *The Ghost Writer*, the *Nemesis* tetralogy, and Roth's American trilogy (*American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*). Among the contributors are Victoria Aarons, Naomi Desrochers, Derek Parker Royal, and Debra Shostak.

Political Initiation in the Novels of Philip Roth



Claudia Franziska Bruhwiler

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic (20 Jun 2013)

Political Initiation in the Novels of Philip Roth exemplifies how literature and, specifically, the work of Philip Roth can help readers understand the ways in which individuals develop their political identity, learn to comprehend political ideas, and define their role in society. Combining political science, literary theory, and anthropology, the book describes an individual's political coming of age as a political initiation story, which is crafted as much by the individual himself as by the circumstances influencing him, such as political events or the political attitude of the parents.

Philip Roth's characters constantly re-write their own stories and experiment with their identities. Accordingly, Philip Roth's works enable the reader to explore, for instance, how individuals construct their identity against the backdrop of political transformations or contested territories, and thereby become initiands—or fail to do so. Contrary to what one might expect, initiations are not only defining moments in childhood and early adulthood; instead, Roth shows how initiation processes recur throughout an individual's life.

The Philip Roth Society Website



To find out all about The Philip Roth Society, go to:

Rothsociety.org

As well as Society news and information, you'll also find information about *Philip Roth Studies*, the peer-reviewed semiannual journal edited by Derek Parker Royal and published by Purdue University Press.

There are also resources for research and teaching and detailed information for anyone wanting to study Philip Roth's works.

Membership

You can join the Philip Roth Society online by using the PayPal drop-down on the Society page at:

<http://rothsociety.org/society/membership/>

or you can join through regular mail by going to <http://rothsociety.org/MembershipForm.pdf> and printing off the form and mailing it to us.

Members have a choice of two membership options: Membership with the Philip Roth Studies, and Membership without the journal. Both options include a subscription to the society newsletter, Philip Roth Society Newsletter, and all members, regardless of membership option, will be included in all future email notifications regarding Roth Society-related announcements, calls, and news.

OPTION 1: Membership with Philip Roth Studies

Membership to the Roth Society includes an automatic subscription to Philip Roth Studies. Roth Studies is a semi-annual peer-reviewed journal published by Purdue University Press in cooperation with the Philip Roth Society, and is devoted to all research pertaining entirely or in part to Philip Roth, his fiction, and his literary and cultural significance. Annual membership fees for Membership with Philip Roth Studies is \$50 (add \$5 for non-U.S. addresses), which will include subscription to a full volume year (2 issues).

OPTION 2: Membership without the journal

Regular membership to the Roth Society, but without a subscription to Philip Roth Studies. Annual membership fees for this option are \$20.