



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

Vol. 11 No.1

Winter 2013/14

Message from the Society's President

Aimee Pozorski

"He was utterly surprised to find that he felt free"— Claudia Roth Pierpont, 2013.

One would think that it would have been a quiet year in Philip Roth studies, with over a year gone by since Roth announced his official retirement. However, the opposite has been true: While Philip Roth has moved on quite happily from his fiction-writing life, we in the Philip Roth Society remained tuned in to every word: every word he has written that we are now going back to re-read, as well as every word written about him in the wake of his retirement. As Claudia Roth Pierpont observes in her widely read book, *Roth Unbound: A Writer and his Books* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux 2013): Roth "was afraid he would become depressed, would suffer from a lack of occupation, would be unable to cope with life without the daily application of his energies to the written page. But none of these things happened. He was utterly surprised to find that he felt free."

And while Roth is apparently free from the life of the writer, we are not yet—nor will we ever be—quite free from him. Perhaps Cynthia Haven

was speaking for all of us when, in a recent interview with Roth in preparation for Stanford University's "Another Look" book club discussion of *The Ghost Writer*, she asked: "We can't bring ourselves to believe you've completely stopped writing. Do you really think your talent will let you quit?" (See February 3, 2014: bookhaven.stanford.edu).

Roth's response, although charming, will certainly put all doubts of his retirement to rest: "Well, you better believe me, because I haven't written a word of fiction since 2009. I have no desire to write fiction. I did what I did and it's done. There's more to life than writing and publishing fiction. There is another way entirely, amazed as I am to discover it at this late date."

And yet we do not rest. As you will see in the following pages, conversations about the famous writer abound. In the pages gathered by our insatiable and tenacious newsletter editor Richard Sheehan, you will find evidence of recent conference presentations (3); forthcoming conferences (9); special issues (10); and scholarly books about the work of one man, Philip Roth (12–13).

(Continued ...)

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.

ISSN 1543-1347

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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Please keep up the work and keep in touch as you can. I wish you all the best during these waning weeks of February wherever you may be, and hope very much our paths cross again soon.

Respectfully submitted, Aimee Pozorski

Note: The Cynthia Haven interview can be found at the following address:

<http://bookhaven.stanford.edu/2014/02/an-interview-with-philip-roth-the-novelists-obsession-is-with-language/>

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

The winner of this year's Siegel/McDaniel Award for Graduate Student Research on Philip Roth is Joseph Darda, for his paper "Picturing the Pastoral: Cold War Apologetics and Hypertrophic Memory in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*." Joseph is a PhD candidate at the University of Connecticut. His paper impressed the executive board with its originality and with the power of its argument. Joseph beat out an excellent slate of submissions that gives us renewed hope for the future of Roth studies. He wins a \$250 cash prize, a year's membership in the Roth Society, and the opportunity to work with the editor of *Philip Roth Studies* to turn his paper into an essay in the journal. Congratulations, Joseph!

Stop Press!**Millennium Films Acquires *The Humbling***

Just as this newsletter was about to be distributed, it was announced in early February 2014 that Millennium Films has acquired worldwide rights to the Barry Levinson directed *The Humbling*, based on Philip Roth's novel. The cast includes Al Pacino, Diane Wiest, Greta Gerwig, Charles Grodin, Kyra Sedgwick, Dan Hedaya, Nina Arianda and Billy Porter. The film is currently in post-production and will be distributed when completed.

Recent Conferences

ALA symposium on “War and American Literature”

October 10–12, 2013

Hotel Monteleone

214 Royal Street

New Orleans, Louisiana

War in the Work of Philip Roth

Sponsored by the Philip Roth Society

Chair: Charles Rzepka, Boston University

1. “War as Primitive Festival in *American Pastoral* and *The Human Stain*.”

Marta Gierczyk, Independent Scholar.

War, aside of being a horror of brutality and death, is also the time of transgression—a frenzy of violated taboos, unleashed basic instincts, and overturned principles. The tension in which it cuts into the calm routine of everyday life leaves no one indifferent and nothing untouched. In its transforming power, modern war is not a mere interruption in the collective existence but a forceful paroxysm that slices time into “before” and “after”. This magnitude of form and impact, lined with destruction, waste, and eventual catharsis, allowed Roger Caillois to perceive war as a modern correlative to primitive festival.

This presentation is to examine how two of Philip Roth’s war narratives, *American Pastoral* and *The Human Stain*, reflect Caillois’s daring analogy. The analysis of how the corresponding elements of war and festival are present in both novels begins with the altered destiny of Les Farley.

Recognizing that war transgresses the highest law of modern order—respect for another’s life—in the same way that fertility and initiation ceremonies break the sacred rule of exogamy, allows us to read the life of Les Farley as a story of terminal transformation. When the sacrilegious act of killing becomes just as ritualistic and holy as the very taboo it violates, the return to reality from before the violation becomes impossible.

Along with transformation, sacrilege, and taboo, we will discuss how interruption, outrage, and the all-consuming character of war is displayed in *American Pastoral* on two levels: as a mass phenomenon and an individualized experience.

In the end, we will demonstrate how the turbulence of the Vietnam War that Roth chooses as the historical marker, cuts across the stability of the American nation, inaugurating a new era and serving, just like the primitive festival, as a millstone in the passage of time.

2. “Soldier Citizens: Coleman Silk and Les Farley’s Contrasting Experiences of Social Exclusion in *The Human Stain*.”

Andy Connolly, The Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY.

In this paper, I will argue that Les and Coleman’s contrasting fortunes as military “veterans” play an important part in Roth’s exploration of notions of “whiteness” and American national inclusion in *The Human Stain*.

(Continued ...)

I will discuss how the ambiguities and tensions involved in Coleman's passing from his racial origins to a world of white privilege are evidenced by the manner in which he "cash[ed] in on the GI Bill" (110). I will draw upon Karen Brodtkin's argument about the GI Bill's significant contribution to a broader "lowering of racial barriers" (Brodtkin, 41) in post war America for Jews and other previously racialized or "non-white" social groups. Such an understanding of the relationship between the GI Bill and the changing racial status of American Jews throws into contextual light Coleman's decision to hide his racial origins within a social identity that is erstwhile shedding its historical association with a "deficient African American culture" (Brodtkin, 151).

While Coleman does not experience the battlefield, he is able to cash in on the democratizing ideal of the GI as a heroic symbol of the American white male that prevailed after World War Two. By contrast, Les's traumatic condition as a Vietnam War veteran renders him as a social misfit who cannot re-assimilate into the world back home. I will argue that Les's inability to escape the mental wounds of war configures him as part of a socially alienated class of "non-white" Americans.

I will finish by discussing how both Les and Faunia's underclass experiences provide examples of traumatic non-white exclusion in the novel, which help to reflect upon the buried trauma of Coleman's origins as a racial subject. In turn, I will suggest that the traumatic sense of incompleteness that persists in Coleman's identity as a successful white male reflects further back upon Zuckerman's lingering sense of being racialized and self-divided as an American Jew. In this sense, I will argue that Les's experiences of PTSD as a war veteran serve to illuminate upon other experiences of trauma in the novel, least of all that of the apparently unscarred GI, Coleman.

3. "Sabbath's Theater and the Uncanny Objects of War."

Brett Ashley Kaplan, University of Illinois.

This paper examines a strange scene from Philip Roth's curious novel *Sabbath's Theater* (1995) that places Roth's interest in war within his larger concern with what ultimately turns out to be a continuum between victimization and perpetration. The scene at the center of this essay finds the bizarre main character, Mickey Sabbath, wearing the uncanny objects of his dead brother's yarmulke in combination with the American flag draped over his coffin after he was shot down many years earlier over the Philippines in the Second World War. Roth has always been invested in the confluence and divergence between Jewishness and Americanness and here the text's final tragico-comic mode combines them through these tattered objects belonging to the beloved brother who was killed precisely for being American rather than Jewish. On the other side of the Atlantic he could have been killed for being Jewish, and this is an alternative reality that is never far from the thoughts of many of Roth's characters. By simultaneously wearing the flag and Yarmulke, Sabbath in one sense brings together these modes of identification, but by being ridiculous in this garb, Roth of course makes deep fun of the very project of hyphenated identities.

This presentation argues that Roth's novels (*Sabbath's Theater* is an example among many), teach us that Jewish anxiety stems not only from fear of victimization but also from fear of perpetration. It is impossible to think about Jewish victimization without thinking about the Holocaust, and it is impossible to think about the taboo question of Jewish perpetration without thinking about Israel. Roth's texts explore the Israel-Palestine question and the Holocaust with varying degrees of intensity but all his novels scrutinize perpetration and victimization through examining racism and sexism in America.

Jewish American & Holocaust Literature Symposium,

November 17–19, 2013

The Betsy Hotel, South Beach, Florida

Session 6: Philip Roth and Saul Bellow

Chair: Benjamin Schreier, Penn State University

1. “Roth’s *The Ghost Writer*, Hawthorne, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*”.

James Duban*, University of North Texas

This study discloses the influence on *The Ghost Writer* of Hawthorne’s “My Kinsman Major Molineux” (1832), though in the context of Meyer Levin’s outcry against Stalinist suppression of his staging of the Anne Frank diary. These varied texts and contexts coalesce, in *The Ghost Writer* and *The Prague Orgy*, to highlight Zuckerman’s contempt for Communist repression of the arts following the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. While existing studies of *The Ghost Writer* acknowledge the pertinence for that narrative of Levin’s protests against the muting of Judaism in the 1956 Broadway production of the Anne Frank diary, Levin’s assessment of the influence of Stalinism on the censorship of his staging of the diary remains understated by commentators on *The Ghost Writer* who otherwise profitably discuss Levin’s charges about the de-Judaized Broadway rendering of the diary (by Hackett and Goodrich) authorized by Otto Frank. Uniting these concerns in Zuckerman’s imagination is, I argue, Anne Frank’s May 5, 1944 diary entry expressing rebellion against her parents over her flirtatiousness with Peter Van Daan. As reconfigured politically by Zuckerman—in the context of Hawthorne’s revolutionary tale *and* the 1968 Communist invasion of Czechoslovakia—that diary entry inspires Zuckerman to merge the insurrectionist concerns of Hawthorne’s revolutionary tale with his own rebellion against censorial literary critics and artistic patriarch E. I. Lonoff. The outcome is ratification of unfettered artistry, however antithetical, unorthodox, or seditious its varied declarations of independence.

2. “Irving Kristol and Alexander Portnoy Walk into a Bar....; or, On the Identity of Jewish American Literary Studies”.

Benjamin Schreier, Penn State University

This paper adapts Foucault’s concept of biopolitics and Ramon Saldívar’s concept of “postrace” to argue that we should look past distracting disputes about race and essentialism to analyze what I call the “biologism” of an identitarian historicism currently ascendant in identity-based literary study. Specifically, I juxtapose representations of Jewish American identity from some of Irving Kristol’s more well known and explicitly Zionist essays and from Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint*, and then refract these crossings through the historiographic significance of *Commentary* magazine—where so much writing about American Jewish identity appeared and around which so much thinking about Jewish American culture and history has been centered—in order to analyze how a biologicistic emphasis on population structures our thinking about identity in Jewish American literary studies and beyond. This juxtaposition offers a lens through which to analyze not just the particular persistence of nationalist habits of thought in Jewish literary studies, but also the persistence of identitarian habits of thought in identity-based criticism more generally. The key critical question for the critique of identity that emerges from this contestation is how a concept of politicized meaning gets linked to the recognition of a population.

3. "Family and Holocaust in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*".

Allan Chavkin, Texas State University

A measure of Bellow's genius in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is his ability to reveal the complex consequences of the Holocaust on not only individuals but also its effect on interpersonal relationships. There is no question that exposure to terrible hardships during the war years has had a dramatic impact on the psyches of Sammler and his daughter Shula. More than two decades after the Holocaust, they cope with painful memories of what they experienced. Moreover, their father-daughter relationship is problematical. While the origin of their dysfunctionality is the Holocaust, their pathological family system severely exacerbates their problems and makes it difficult for them to cope in the present situation, the turbulent late 1960s. To better understand the dysfunctional relationship of Sammler and Shula, it is productive to look at the relationship through not only the lens of psychologists who have focused on Holocaust survivors but also with the lens of family systems theory.

4. "Haunted and Flayed: The Not-Said and the Not-Seen Other in *The Ghost Writer*".

Linda Dunleavy, Brown University

This paper discusses the tension between assimilation and difference in representations of Jews in literature in Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*. The paper focuses on three literary texts, their writers, and their critical reception by readers as represented in the novel: Nathan Zuckerman's short story "Higher Education" and Zuckerman's father and Judge Wapter's reading and projection about how a general American readership will read it; E.I. Lonoff's literary work and Zuckerman's reading and how he imagines this work fits into the American canon; and finally Anne Frank's diary and its variations and broad readership and influence. Reading the discussions of these texts and their receptions in the novel, the paper explores the remainder of difference within an assimilationist vision.

The paper argues that *The Ghost Writer* demonstrates a concern with the editing out of difference that assimilation requires and that it performs this concern with reminders, or hauntings, within the text of that which lacks representation. For example, Anne Frank's diary represents a fully assimilated family victimized because of an arbitrary and insidious emphasis on their social difference. The novel points out that what Anne's diary says underscores what Margot's lost diary might have said instead. While reading Anne's diary, Amy Bellette/Anne, and the reader, read what we would not read in Margot's diary, the remainder written in its absence.

Roth discusses the dynamic of assimilation versus difference in the Frank family in a section of the chapter "Femme Fatale" in *The Ghost Writer* in which Zuckerman imagines that Amy Bellette thinks she is Anne Frank and has survived Bergen Belsen and is now reading her own diary twenty years later. The text highlights Margot's unread words in its framing of passages from *The Diary of Young Girl*. The narrator notes that had we Margot's diary, it would "not have been quite so sparing as hers in its curiosity about Judaism, or plans for leading a Jewish life." And he goes on to introduce Amy as Anne reading one of the most famous statements from the *Diary*: "Certainly it was impossible for her to imagine Margot thinking, let alone writing with longing in her diary, *the time will come when we are people again and not just Jews* (142)." Anne could never imagine Margot having this sentiment or putting it on paper. The longing for a time "*when we are people again and not just Jews*" suggests the idea of Jewishness as limiting a person's humanity. This statement in the diary advances an assimilationist theory—someday we who are other will not be seen only for our difference, but will be viewed as people. In this scenario the question becomes what then happens to our difference. For Margot, perhaps, Jews never stopped being people. The novel seems to ask if it's possible to represent Jews as both different and the same.

The paper concludes with a reading of Amy as Anne experiencing a fractured identity after the atrocities of Bergen-Belsen in a passages where she describes herself as "flayed" and discusses having a face with two halves one of which is "flayed" and the other "still intact" (152). People would openly acknowledge seeing

either the peeled half or the intact unpeeled half, “pretending” when looking at the intact half that the flayed half was not there. Anne seeks to make the possessors of the unmarred faces “properly horrified” by showing them the hideous flayed side of her face, a face without skin, a bare uncovered face, the very antithesis of a face, forcing them to see that the face of an other so brutally othered does not resemble their face. (“Look at the *other!*” signifies not just the other side of the face, but the other capital O.) Their horror depends upon the knowledge of a before, the scene of the other side of the face, which they cannot see. And thus, Anne speaks, exclaiming “I was pretty!” “I was whole!” “I was a sunny, lively little girl!” Language must stand in for the absence of seeing fully; Anne’s speech here underscores the inability for those who see her to hold both the non-face and the face—that together constitute her one face—at the same time.

Except that this flayed face does resemble the faces of the unmarred on its other side, its intact side, that they cannot see while looking at the flayed side of the face. For to see the flayed on the face of the also intact would mean to embrace the threat of one’s own potential flaying. The other face, the face of the other face, is also our face. To meet that face at once flayed and unflayed might offer some kind of promise for a new way of seeing our simultaneously severed and lovely shared humanity.

MLA Conference 2014

Revisiting Masculinity in Philip Roth

Saturday 11th January 2014

1. “Masculinity in Crisis: Reading *Letting Go* as a Tale of Two Children,” Aimee Lynn Pozorski*
2. “Contradictions in Queer Identity: Ambivalent Masculinities in *The Professor of Desire* and *Indignation*,” Maggie McKinley*, Harper Coll.
3. “Queering Philip Roth: Homosocial Discourse in ‘The American Trilogy’,” David Brauner*, Univ. of Reading

As the editors of *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* (2003) point out, “modern Jewish and homosexual identities [have] emerged as traces of each other,” perhaps most conspicuously and tragically in “the ways that Jews ... were powerfully associated with the abjected homosexual” in Nazi propaganda. Sander Gilman, among others, has documented the long history of the feminisation of the Jewish male—what Adam Seth Rosen calls the “the age-old stereotype of the nonmasculine Jew”—in particular the perpetuation of the myth of the menstruating Jewish male, culminating in the proliferation of nineteenth-century (pseudo-)scientific discourse; Daniel Boyarin has argued that “the effeminization of Jewish masculinity” was not just the product of anti-Semitism but also of a desire among Jewish communities to promote a model of “Jewish self-affirmation” based on a “rabbinic masculinity” that valorized Talmudic scholarship rather than physical prowess; Jonathan Freedman has used what he calls “the contiguity between the Jew and the queer” as the basis for a model of cultural production that he calls “queer diasporism”; and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has pointed out both the analogies between the “epistemology of the closet” as it applies to gays and Jews, and the limitations of such analogies.

In this context, one might reasonably expect to find, in the work of a writer as interested in Jewish masculinity as Philip Roth, material that, in the broadest, contemporary theoretical currency of the term, could be termed “queer.” Yet Roth has no entry in the index of *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* and is in fact only mentioned once, in passing, in the four hundred pages of the volume. Moreover, in the entire body of Roth criticism (by now consisting of nearly forty books and hundreds of articles and book chapters) there is virtually no discussion of queerness. Perhaps Roth’s popular reputation as an aggressively heterosexual, libidinous, masculinist, in some versions sexist or even misogynist, author has determined the parameters of critical discourse. This Philip Roth Society panel provides a new focus in Roth Studies by contextualizing the role of masculinity in Roth’s oeuvre to date.

With David Gooblar as respondent, Aimee Pozorski, Maggie McKinley, and David Brauner will present papers on the theme of masculinity in Roth's work. Drawing on McKinley's scholarship interpreting a "crisis point" in masculinity in Roth's early work, *My Life as a Man*, Pozorski's paper, "A Tale of Two Children" interprets *Letting Go* (1962) ultimately as a novel about the fates of two children: one who falls to his death, and another whose future lies tangled in a drawn out adoption. While on the surface, Pozorski argues, *Letting Go* is an early homage to Henry James in terms of style, she goes on to propose that Roth sees in his early mentor what queer theorist John Carlos Rowe has called "The Other Henry James" – an author who has inspired in Roth important literary content as well: the ways in which a suffering child is inextricably bound up with a crisis in masculinity in the age of genocide.

In her paper, "Contradictions in Queer Identity," Maggie McKinley examines the intersection of queerness and masculinity in Philip Roth's *The Professor of Desire* (1977) and *Indignation* (2008). She argues that while Roth subtly troubles conventional definitions of masculinity in these works by including homosexual characters, the depictions of these characters themselves are troubled by contradiction and uncertainty. That is, while Roth's inclusion of queerness is often not perceived as an aberration by his protagonists, it is more often not perceived at all. Moreover, when not rendered invisible, these queer identities are represented as threatening to conventional notions of manhood because they are also violent and aggressive—qualities that, paradoxically, are often assumed by many of Roth's protagonists to be markers of heteronormative masculinity.

In his paper, "Queering Philip Roth" David Brauner will trace a persistent strain of what he will call, after Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, homosocial discourse running throughout his career, but with a particular focus on the three novels that comprise the 'American Trilogy': *American Pastoral* (1997), *I Married A Communist* (1998) and *The Human Stain* (2000). Beginning with a recognition that the tributes to the physical prowess of the protagonists of these novels are often couched in terms that suggest a homoerotic gaze, Brauner's paper interrogates the complex ways in which Nathan Zuckerman's sense of his own male identity is formed, and renegotiated, in response to the (ostensible) hypermasculinity of Seymour 'the Swede' Levov, Ira 'Iron Rinn' Ringold and Coleman 'Silky' Silk. Brauner concludes by positing a connection between Zuckerman's vocation as a writer – his compulsion to try, metaphorically, to penetrate Seymour, Ira and Coleman, to take possession of them, to know them imaginatively – and his physical intimacy with them, a desire (albeit disguised) for carnal knowledge.

David Gooblar, as respondent, will review all the papers in advance of the proposed session and offer commentary and criticism. He will work to ensure that there will be 15 minutes left for discussion after the three paper presentations.

Forthcoming Conferences

ALA 2014: The Philip Roth Society

Washington, D.C., May 22–25, 2014.

Roth and Arendt

Organized by the Philip Roth Society

Chair: Frederick Coye Heard*, Virginia Military Institute

1. "Facts, Fictions and Other Lies: Philip Roth, Hannah Arendt and the Unmaking of the World," Frederick Coye Heard*, Virginia Military Institute
2. "Silence, Speech and What Happened in Between: Roth, Arendt and Post-Holocaust Identity Politics," Hilene Flanzbaum, Butler University
3. "Odd Fellows: Hannah Arendt and Philip Roth," Ira Nadel*, University of British Columbia

Roth, History, Identity **Organized by the Philip Roth Society**

Chair: Aimee Pozorski*, Central Connecticut State University

1. "Re-ordering (Personal) History: The Case of *Patrimony*," Pia Masiero*, Ca'Foscari University of Venice
2. "New Deal (In)Securities: Liberal Disillusionment and the Birth Pangs of Narrative Artistry in *The Plot against America*," Andy Connolly, The Fashion Institute of Technology
3. "Roth's Children: Futurity, Aging, and Identity," Aimee Pozorski*, Central Connecticut State University

Philip Roth: Across Cultures, across Disciplines

The conference "Philip Roth: Across Cultures, across Disciplines" will take place at the University of St.Gallen in Switzerland (<http://www.unisg.ch>) on 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.

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

Calls for Papers and Announcements

The Political Companion to Philip Roth
Claudia Franziska Brühwiler* and Lee Trepanier
University of Kentucky Press

The editors of *The Political Companion to Philip Roth* are soliciting papers for their volume as part of the University of Kentucky Press series on "The Political Companion to Great American Authors". They are looking for papers that explore how politics and political thought is understood and represented by Philip Roth and how our understanding of fundamental principles such as democracy, equality, freedom, toleration, and community have been influenced and understood by Roth. By reappraising Philip Roth in this new perspective, this volume aims to be a lasting work that continues to inform and guide our understanding of politics and political thought.

Please submit an abstract with your professional information by March 1, 2014 for consideration to be included in the volume. You can submit this information to either Claudia Franziska Brühwiler at claudia-franziska.bruehwiler@unisg.ch or Lee Trepanier at ldtrepan@svsu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact either one.

Upcoming Publication: Preview

History, Memory, and the Making of Character in Roth's Fiction: A Thematic Issue

At present, Victoria Aarons* (Trinity University, Texas) and I (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain) are preparing a thematic issue entitled "History, Memory, and the Making of Character in Roth's Fiction" (Vol.16, No.2) which will be published in *CLCWeb (Comparative Literature and Culture, Purdue UP)* in June of 2014.

This issue, which gathers very engaging articles covering Philip Roth's career trajectory and will appear two years after the novelist announced his retirement, explores his novels from a fresh, holistic standpoint.

Firstly, one quarter of the essays in this volume address different aspects of Roth's early fiction. In her article about "Eli the Fanatic" (1959), Aimee Pozorski (Central Connecticut State University) dramatizes the tension between the law and the philosophy of ethics with the story's protagonist who chooses ethics as shown in his final identification with a displaced Hasidic Jew. Sandor Goodhart (Purdue University), whose essay mainly concentrates on "The Conversion of the Jews" (1959), approaches the issue of the Jewish community in the America of the late 1950s. And Victoria Aarons, who focuses on Roth's early fiction, shows that the characters of his first works serve as prototype for his later characters like Nathan Zuckerman and David Kepesh.

Secondly, there are other essays which approach Roth's middle and/or late works from different perspectives. Miriam Jaffe-Foger (Rutgers University, New Jersey), whose essay studies *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), *The Dying Animal* (2001) and *Exit Ghost* (2007), offers a modern reading of the relationship between illness and sexuality. Debra Shostak (The College of Wooster, Ohio) and Emily Budick (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) draw our attention to Roth's approach to the theme of death. While Shostak, who mainly focuses on *Sabbath's Theater* (1995) and *Exit Ghost* through some key scenes, analyzes Roth's obsession with the graveyard, Emily Budick has chosen *Nemesis* (2010) in order to address the relationship between fate and fatality in human life in light of the Greek classical tradition. On her part, Paule Lévy (University of Versailles, France) analyzes *Exit Ghost* as a sequel of *The Ghost Writer* (1979). One of the most interesting aspects of her article is that, according to her, Roth resorts to the concept of "ghost writing" to show his ambiguous relationship between autobiography and fiction. And Pia Masiero (University of Venice, Ca' Foscari), whose essay also explores the close interrelation between facts and fiction, focuses on the alternative and contradictory versions of events concerning the lives of Nathan and Henry Zuckerman in *The Counterlife* (1986).

Finally, there are four contributors who have preferred to approach Roth's fiction from a strictly comparative viewpoint. That is the case with Jay Halio (University of Delaware). His essay, which draws heavily on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–98), analyzes what he calls "Reverse Anti-Semitism" in Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) and *Operation Shylock* (1993) and in Bellow's *The Victim* (1947). Timothy Parrish (Florida State University) has chosen *Exit Ghost* in order to establish a dialogue between Philip Roth and what Parrish calls Roth's "literary counter-ego," Henry Roth. John C. Rowe's article, which pays special attention to *The Ghost Writer*, explores the influence exerted by Henry James on the fiction of Cynthia Ozick, Jonathan Franzen and Philip Roth. And my article addresses the presence of European writers (Kafka, Chekhov, Mann and Yeats) in the Kepesh Trilogy in order to attempt to demonstrate that these "literary mentors" somehow function as different selves of David Kepesh.

I am convinced that this volume will offer very stimulating counterreadings of Roth's early, middle and later fiction.

Gustavo Sánchez Canales
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
Spain

Philip Roth News

Philip Roth Receives Insignia of Commander of the Legion of Honour at Groundbreaking for New York City's only French Bookshop



AFP PHOTO / TIMOTHY CLARY

On 27th September, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius presented Philip Roth with the insignia of the Legion of Honour at a ceremony that also led to the groundbreaking of New York City's only French bookshop, reading room and cultural centre at the Payne Whitney Mansion at 972 Fifth Avenue, which will open in 2014.

The award is the French government's highest honour and was presented in recognition of Roth's contribution to global literature and his decades-long relationship with France. Other writers to have been presented with the honour include Graham Greene and Toni Morrison.

Philip Roth is awarded the Emerson-Thoreau Medal by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

On the weekend of the 12–13th October 2013, Philip Roth was awarded the Emerson–Thoreau Medal by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He follows other authors such as Norman Mailer (1989) and his good friend Saul Bellow (1977). The award is given at the discretion of the Council of the Academy and is for total literary achievement in the field of literature rather than a specific work.

The award was collected on Roth's behalf by Stephen Greenblatt of Harvard University and can be viewed online here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2QQag6FhQ4>

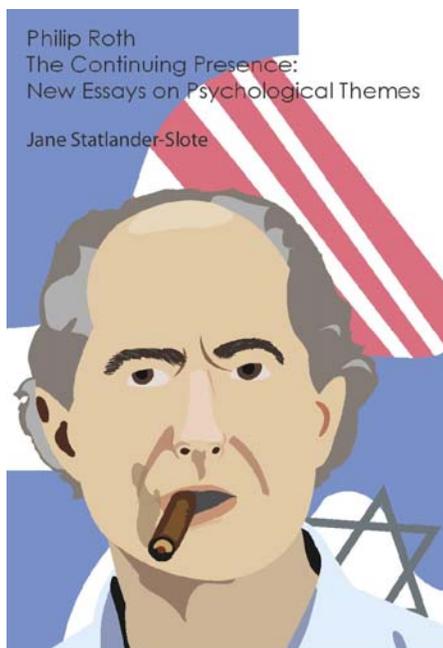
Raising the Curtain: Stars of Stage and Screen Salute Philip Roth

On 15th October, the Library of America organised a free public program celebrating Philip Roth's 80th birthday. Alec Baldwin, John Rothman and Paul Carlin read the opening passages from *The Plot Against America*, *American Pastoral*, and *Portnoy's Complaint*.

Unfortunately Philip Roth was unable to attend due to illness.

The event was held at the Leon Lowenstein Auditorium at Temple Emanu-El, 10 East 66th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues, and was co-sponsored by The TIPA Project and Congregation Emanu-El of the city of New York.

Books

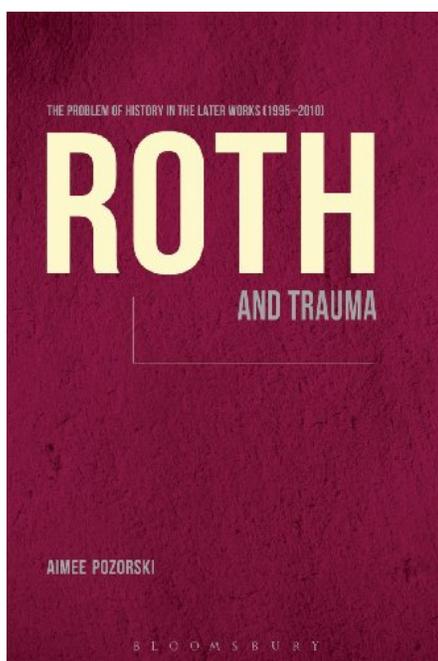


Philip Roth-The Continuing Presence: New Essays on Psychological Themes

By Jane Statlander-Slote*
NorthEast Books & Publishing
(15 Sep 2013)

Contributing Authors: Victoria Aarons*, Andrew Gordon*, Daniel Walden, Estelle Gershgoren Novak , Maximillian E. Novak, Jeffrey Berman, Lew Fried , Derek Parker Royal*, Miriam Jaffe-Foger*, Peter L. Rudnytsky*

This volume, edited by the internationally renown Roth scholar, Jane Statlander-Slote, also from Newark, New Jersey and a graduate of Weequahic High School, is a ground-breaking collection that explores a topic inimicable to the subject of the book, Philip Roth.



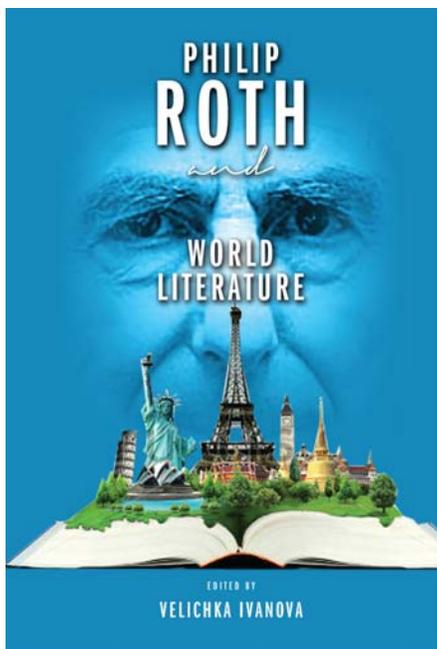
Roth and Trauma: The Problem of History in the Later Works (1995–2010)

By Aimee Pozorski*
Continuum Publishing Corporation
(Now in paperback)

Roth and Trauma: The Problem of History in the Later Works (1995–2010) moves beyond a critical reception of Philip Roth's recent fiction that has focused primarily on an interest in post WWII America. By contrast, Aimee Pozorski argues that these novels grapple more comprehensively with US history in their fascination with America's "traumatic beginnings" and the legacy of the American Revolution. Drawing on close readings and trauma theory, Roth and Trauma reveals the problem of history in Roth's later works to be the unexpected and repeated appearance of historical trauma that links the still-unfinished American dream with the nightmarish quality of our recent history.

Philip Roth and World Literature Transatlantic Perspectives and Uneasy Passages

Edited by Velichka Ivanova*



Cambria Press
Spring 2014

Given the lack of awareness of the numerous intersections between Philip Roth's fiction and world literature, this book fills an important gap by highlighting these intersections and uneasy passages and offers an important contribution to Philip Roth studies as well as to comparative literary study in general.

It builds on previous comparative scholarship on Philip Roth and further broadens the crossings and concepts through which comparisons can be made and sustained. It covers new authors from world literature and extends the analysis of previously studied authors.

The fourteen chapters on this book summon Roth's intertextual links to authors ranging from the anonymous writer of the medieval play *Everyman*, through Thoreau, Hawthorne, Crane, Ellison, Coover, and the New York intellectuals in the United States, to Swift, Chekhov, Svevo, Kafka, Schulz, Gombrowicz, Camus, and Klíma in Europe, and on to Coetzee in South Africa. The book explores works representing the different stages of Roth's development as a writer and brings into a dialogue a number of academic voices on both sides of the Atlantic with the aim to show that, like Roth's fiction itself, literary scholarship on him is not self-enclosed and unitary.

Of particular interest are the chapters by scholars working outside the United States who bring different interpretative frameworks into the existing traditionally North American scholarly criticism on Roth. By offering new readings of both well-studied and lesser-studied works, sometimes in unexpected company, the book discloses the critical difference that comparative scholarship can affect. The uneasy passages the book opens with will not exhaust the numerous intersections between Roth and the works of other writers. The volume's contribution is to place Roth's fiction firmly in a larger transnational context. Far from insular, Roth's work appears as deeply rooted in the American canon while at the same time showing a remarkable openness, a persistent need for contact with his European forebears, and true engagement with contemporary world literature.

Additional Publications

Many Philip Roth Society members will be aware of the work and publications of PRS member Steven Sampson*. Recently he advised us of two new publications that include some of his work.

In a quarterly literary review called *L'Atelier du roman* (septembre 2013), grouped together under the title "Roth redouble", Steven had a short story published titled "Roth est-il venu?", and profile of Roth@10 called "Newark, Newark: Roth revisité".

L'Atelier du roman is available on both Amazon.fr and Amazon.co.uk.

(Continued ...)



Steven also had an article entitled “Philip Roth, marque déposée?” (“Philip Roth, registered trademark?”) featured in an issue of *La Quinzaine littéraire* (number 1095, 16–31 December 2013).

It covers the recent publication by Gallimard of four of Roth’s novels in the Quarto collection, and there’s also a brief discussion of the books by Claudia Roth Pierpont and Michael Kimmage.

Reading the Reviews:

***Roth Unbound* by Claudia Roth Pierpont**

Claudia Roth Pierpont’s book has been covered widely in the press and online. Here’s a selection of comments.

Roth Unbound is a critical biography of the old school, though one invaluable topped up with reported comments and judgments from the Philip Roth of today.

Martin Amis, *New York Times*

As terrific and independent a literary critic as Pierpont is, Roth has got his prints all over this book: In the end it feels like a joint effort to navigate the stormy seas of literary reputation and bring Roth home to the port of The American Canon. It certainly convinces me.

Cornel Bonca, *Salon*

Roth Unbound brings heightened understanding to the extraordinary scope and risk-taking brilliance of Roth’s work, and makes a compelling case for its enduring importance.

Heller McAlpin, *NPR.org*

Pierpont is an attentive reader of Roth’s work: that she is a fan and an advocate is, at moments, a tremendous asset. And she is downright eloquent about those books she most ardently admires.

Yevgeniya Traps, *Forward.com*

There will be biographies of Roth, with names and events and objective reporting of facts, but for a portrait of what occupied the majority of his time and thoughts—his fiction—I doubt there will be anything more revealing than this volume.

Hannah Gersen, *TheMillions.com*

Pierpont brilliantly captures much of Roth’s life in her words.

Kate Tuttle, *Boston Globe*

Roth Unbound is Pierpont's close reading of Roth's body of work, enhanced by conversations with the novelist and access to his papers and notes, though he did not read her book before publication. It is not a biography per se, though it includes many biographical details and some revelations. It's a sympathetic book—Pierpont is his friend—but not a hagiographic one.

Jim Higgins, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

A smoothly readable hybrid of biography and criticism [...] Pierpont's book, though respectful, is not entirely adoring. [...] As an old-fashioned critical biography, *Roth Unbound* has much new to say about the novelist's life and work.

Ian Thomson, *Financial Times*

Pierpont [...] triumphs in a lucid, tender, illuminating study, beautifully poised between intimacy and detachment. [...] insights abound in this intelligent and highly readable study.

Caroline Moore, *The Spectator*

Pierpont's biography is as good as anyone is likely to obtain now or later about Roth's whys and wherefores.

David Finkle, *The Clyde Fitch Report*

Her book manages the immensely difficult feat of remaining both warm-hearted and critically balanced. The result is a useful key to Roth's work and a sequence of incidental portraits that, absent the promised biography, one wouldn't swap for anything.

Tim Martin, *Daily Telegraph*

There is, necessarily, a valedictory tone to this book, since the great eloquent frenzy of Roth's last two decades, a most remarkable rage against the dying of the light, seems to have ended. In its sense of emotion recollected in tranquillity it captures the seductive humanity of Roth the writer and man, and not far from the surface, still just enough of what his whoring hero Mickey Sabbath called "preposterone", that obscenely generative spark that has brought his words to such vivid life.

Tim Adams, *The Observer*

The true Roth, the man behind the typewriter, is not quite exposed in Claudia Roth Pierpont's *Roth Unbound* but he is visible in a way that has never before been rendered. [...] Pierpont is as excellent a guide through Roth's works as one could hope for. [...] Pierpont's finely researched and well-tempered readings of each of Roth's books accentuate their indisputable greatness, but don't necessarily provide an appropriate introduction to the author for those yet to experience the work. This will likely limit the audience of *Roth Unbound* to a small group of voracious Roth readers, but to them, *Roth Unbound* will be an integral piece in their understanding of one of America's greatest living authors.

Nixon on Roth

On January 25th 2014, Jon Wiener had an article published in the Los Angeles Review of Books which detailed conversations on November 3rd, between President Nixon and his Chief of Staff, H.R. Haldeman. In it, the president and Haldeman discuss Roth's recent book, *Our Gang*. Some of the details of the conversations can be seen on the Los Angeles Review of Books website at:

<http://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/nixon-asked-haldeman-philip-roth>



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

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.