



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

Vol. 9 No.2

Summer 2012

Message from the Society's President Aimee Pozorski

Friendship, Democracy and Philip Roth

During one morning this past June, I had the pleasure of visiting Mr Philip Roth following his return to the charming Connecticut farmhouse where he spends his summers. I was happy to help him sort his mail after the several months he was away, living in Manhattan. Back in Connecticut, mail bins overflowed with manila envelopes stuffed with books: recent translations of his own books as well as monographs written by aspiring young critics and novelists.

I figured I must have passed the test as President of the Philip Roth Society when he elected to introduce me to a visitor: "This is my friend, Ben," he said. "Ben, Aimee is President of the Philip Roth Society." And then we shook hands while I noted that this "Ben" figure in front of me looked awfully familiar. But then again, I think everyone looks familiar. I once misidentified a random, balding businessman in LAX as Donald Trump, for example. So, I carried on.

When I finished my work, the three of us talked for awhile: about Martha Nussbaum, about ethics and politics, about Roth's recent visit to the White House and

Library of Congress, about the meetings I was planning to attend the following week at my university campus—meetings on the "remediation" process for students who are high school graduates but not yet college ready in terms of writing and reading. "What do you think about this remediation?" Mr Roth asked me. I said that I honestly did not know and asked him what he thought. Without a pause he said: "Well, they certainly need it." And that was when I fully understood the relationship between my teaching – reading and writing at a regional, comprehensive, four-year university – and Roth's fiction about the life of the writer, and the role of the reader, in a democracy. Isn't that one of the points of *Plot Against America* after all: We need a general public who can think clearly – who are literate in the sense of understanding what they read, as well as in the sense that they can write poignantly and persuasively. It is the difference between Lindbergh for President and the leadership of FDR. And with visions of Mr Roth touring the White House where the first African American US President currently resides, I began to understand that helping young people with their writing skills is inextricable from building a democracy.

(Continued on page 2 ...)

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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Philip Roth Society web page:
<http://www.rothsociety.org>

Message from the Society's President, continued ...

When I returned home, I scoured the web, as I tend to do, for clues about Roth's friend Ben. As it happens, I had seen his interview on the occasion of Roth's winning the 2011 Man Booker International Prize. I called back the next day and said: "You tricked me! That was not 'Your Friend, Ben'; that was Mr Benjamin Taylor!" I have not heard back since. I am not sure if I have passed the test or not. Benjamin Taylor! Why didn't I remember? I should have asked him about that wonderful interview; I should have asked him about Bellow.

Benjamin Taylor's name resurfaces here, in the pages of this newsletter, where Gustavo Sánchez Canales reflects on the significance of Roth's accepting the prestigious Prince of Asturias Award. At the end of the essay, Canales cites Taylor citing Bellow, who in 2000 wrote to the Swedish Academy to nominate Roth for the Nobel Prize in Literature. A true mark of friendship, Bellow used the power of the written word to prop up Philip Roth. A true mark of friendship, Roth entrusted Taylor with an in-depth interview after winning the Man Booker Prize. What it would be like to be a part of that circle of writers and friends, I thought! But for now, I have the pleasant memory of sorting mail, of shaking hands, of reading the works of these accomplished men.

Election of Philip Roth Society Officers

The votes have been cast, and members of the Philip Roth Society have chosen their officers for the 2012-2015 term. Beginning in May, the officers of the Philip Roth Society will include:

President – Aimee Pozorski
Secretary/Treasurer – Chris Gonzalez
Newsletter Editor – Richard Sheehan
Program Chair – David Gooblar

Congratulations to all of these elected officers for the next three-year term!

Chris Gonzales

Chris Gonzalez writes: "I will begin as an assistant professor of English at Texas A&M University-Commerce in the fall of 2012. I am also the current managing editor for Philip Roth Studies, a post I have held since 2008. In that time I have developed an excellent working relationship with many members of the Philip Roth Society. I welcome the opportunity to take a more significant role within the society as the Secretary/Treasurer."

David Gooblar

Roth Society member, David Gooblar, was interviewed in the latest issue of *The Quarterly Conversation*, an online cultural magazine. In his interview, Gooblar discusses his recent book on the novelist, Roth's writings and the state of Roth studies, as well the growing scholarship surrounding Roth's fiction (including the place of the Roth Society and its journal, *Philip Roth Studies*).

David Gooblar writes: "My name is David Gooblar and I'd like to be considered for the position of Program Chair. I did my PhD on Roth at University

College London, and my book, *The Major Phases of Philip Roth*, was published last year by Continuum. I'm just finishing up work as guest editor of a special issue of *Philip Roth Studies*, on the subject of "Roth and Women." I've been reaping the benefits of the Roth Society for years, and I'd like to get more involved, particularly on the "public" side of things. I think I'd bring to the position of Program Chair a wide variety of interests, a diverse academic background, and a practical nature that will help when it comes to working with other members of the society."

Minutes of the Philip Roth Business Society Meeting

26 May 2012

Present: Aimee Pozorski (President); David Brauner (Outgoing Program Chair); David Gooblar (Incoming Program Chair); James Duban, Royden Kadyschuk, Patrick Hayes, Maggie McKinley, Dan O'Brien, Elaine Safer, Jane Statlander Slotte

The meeting was called to order at 12:50 p.m.

After briefly going through the officers' reports (provided here), the meeting proceeded to cover the topic of conferences and programming for the 2012-2013 academic year. With work toward the Roth@80 conference ongoing, we also look ahead to the MLA special session accepted on "Philip Roth's Music" which will take place in Boston, 2013, and the JAHLLIT conference in Miami in November 2012, for which David Gooblar has drafted and circulated a call for papers. Rather than return to Louisville with a fully planned panel in 2013, we decided instead to circulate information about the Twentieth Century Literature conference provided by Louisville's organizers as a kind of courtesy to our members. That frees our attention to focus on the ALA conference for May of next year. After some discussion, we seemed to agree on a panel about Roth and his Narrators, Narration and Narratology. The roundtable suggestion picks up where we left off with this year's "Roth's Influences" panel by considering the open-ended question of Roth and his Contemporaries.

Our new business consists of two possible updates to the Roth Society Constitution. One is to update it in keeping with the Purdue University Press Memorandum of Agreement between the Philip Roth Society and the press regarding the journal, *Philip Roth Studies*.

We discussed adding material that reflects articles 1 and 2 of the agreement in particular: Respectively, that "The Sponsor (The Philip Roth Society), through an editor it appoints *in consultation with the Publisher*, shall bear sole responsibility for conducting peer review of all articles submitted for publication in the journal according to standard scholarly procedures"; and "The Sponsor warrants that it is the sole owner of the Journal and has full authority to make this agreement."

In order to delineate in the constitution the relationship between the Roth Society and *Philip Roth Studies*, we discussed recommending to the publisher after consulting the current editor of *PRS*, adding a co editor and holding elections for both positions for fixed terms. (This latter change is contingent upon the agreement of the publisher to our recommendations.)

The second change to the Constitution would be the addition of a society officer in the form of a Membership chair – someone who would share responsibilities with the Secretary/ Treasurer in particular through handling member queries and recruiting new members.

After discussion of these two important changes, the meeting adjourned at 1:40.

Respectfully submitted,

Aimee Pozorski
President, The Philip Roth Society

Executive Officer Reports

President's Report, Aimee Pozorski

I would like to begin by welcoming two new executive officers: David Gooblar, as program chair, and Christopher Gonzalez as secretary/ treasurer. Thank you to the outgoing officers who have served many years in their respective roles: David Brauner, who served three years as Program Chair; and Jessica Rabin who served ten years as Secretary / Treasurer. She has been with the Society since the beginning.

Since July, 2011, I have been working with the executive committee members, general members James Bloom and Miriam Jaffe Foger, and the President of the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee to launch Roth@80, a conference planned for March 18-19 in Newark at the Robert Treat Hotel in honor of Philip Roth's 80th birthday. Featured speakers are Claudia Roth Pierpont, Jonathan Lethem, Hermione Lee, and Philip Roth.

I have also worked with the program chair in promoting the Roth Society through conference events: helping to organize the ALA events this year; presiding over and presenting at a panel at JAHLLIT in Miami; and organizing a panel for MLA 2013. Our objective there is to gain the status of Affiliated organization, but they have suspended this process over the past year.

While ideally I would be more successful at recruiting new members (see below), I work very hard at supporting the work of, and liaisons among, existing members. A brief look at newly published work in Roth studies suggests that an overwhelming majority are members of the Society and they seem to be thriving. Derek Parker Royal established an amazing community of scholars in 2002 and I work to continue that ethos.

Secretary/ Treasurer's Report, Jessica Rabin

Tasks accomplished:

- maintained and updated membership spreadsheets
 - transmitted Directory of Members information to our webmaster (Derek Royal) and our Newsletter editor (Richard Sheehan)
 - deposited dues into our Amegy Bank account; wrote checks for Roth@80 expenses
 - renewed CELJ membership
 - sent out welcome emails to new members and confirmations of renewals to returning members
 - solicited renewals (reduced rates for international subscribers as a result of the shift to electronic distribution of newsletters)
 - confirmed that contributors to conference panels and journal issues were current members of the Society
 - communicated with Purdue University Press regarding the publication, printing, and mailing of *Philip Roth Studies*
 - coordinated election for 2012 officers
- prepared for transition to new Secretary/Treasurer, Chris Gonzalez

Suggestions for the next year:

- make multi-year memberships available; numerous people allow their memberships to lapse and then are surprised to discover that they are no longer current members
- make provisions that allow members to pay dues through electronic transfer (several international members

have had trouble with Paypal and/or with regular mail)

- keep the “membership without journal” option
 - modify membership form (and Paypal form) to allow new members to indicate where they found out about PRS and use this information to target our recruitment efforts
 - modify online membership form to allow members to indicate whether they wish to be listed in the Directory
 - try to update Directory more frequently
 - coordinate Newsletter publications with solicitations for renewals (November)
- actively solicit memberships from academic libraries

Membership Statistics and Financial Report, June 2011-May 2012

Total members 2011 YTD (November 2009-May 2010): 49

Society only: 10

Society and journal: 39

Total members at this time in 2011: 49

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 2004: 81

Total members 2002-2003: 42

Number of past members who renewed in 2011: 30 (61%)

New members in 2011: 19

2012 members with US addresses: 33, representing 18 states

2012 members with international addresses: 16 (33%)

Canada: 1

France: 3

Germany: 2

India: 1

Italy: 1

South Korea: 1

United Kingdom: 7

Current balance: \$17,592.95

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

Membership trends:

Year	total members	total # renewals	% who renew
2003	42	n/a	n/a

2004	81	28	34%
2005	71	28	39%
2006	79	36	45%
2007	53	31	60%
2008	51	27	53%
2009	73	35	48%
2010	64	44	69%
2011	65	36	55%
2012	49*	26*	53%*

*Nov-May

Christopher Gonzalez, Secretary/Treasurer-Elect

Update on Move to Chase Bank

Preparations are being made to move our funds from our current bank, Amegy, to Chase. The primary reason for this move has to do with accessibility. At the moment, there is no one in the Society (with the authority to handle bank transactions) near an Amegy brick-and-mortar branch. While this is not a problem for general day-to-day business of the Society, there are times when someone must visit the bank—for example, the transition of outgoing to incoming Secretary/Treasurer. I have had preliminary talks with Chase, and it appears that the fees for both Amegy and Chase are comparable. It may also be that Chase has more amenities to offer us, particularly their online banking structure—one of the best in the business. Also, Chase's online banking allows the President of the Society to view the account at any time, in real time, but without the authority to make transactions. This is an ideal situation with regard to accountability. I will know everything that Chase can offer us once I am able to meet with them on Friday, May 25, 2012.

Now that I have all of the necessary documentation to authorize me to open a Chase account, I will notify Aimee and Jessica once the account is open. We will transfer all funds from our Amegy account to the new Chase account as quickly as is prudent. Once all transactions are occurring through the Chase account, we will close the Amegy account—something I believe only Derek can do, as he opened the account. **There will be absolutely no disruption in the Society's ability to conduct financial transactions during this transition.**

One final point: Jessica will stay on to work with me during this transition period. I am most grateful to Jessica for her willingness to help me and the Society out in this matter. Until then, please think of us as two parts of a whole.

Program Chair's Report, David Brauner

I don't have much to report this year: the year's been dominated by preparations for the Roth@80 conference (for which I can take very little credit), but which have now reached an advanced stage, with a very exciting programme of events planned, including a reception at which Roth himself will be present. It's been a quieter year than usual in terms of Roth Society panels, due to our decision (made at last year's ALA) not to sponsor a panel at this year's Louisville conference and to the fact that the C20 Lit & Culture conference at Savannah, at which we usually have a presence, had a theme this year - crime fiction - which pretty much excluded Roth. However, we did sponsor very successful panels at the ALA in Boston in May 2011 and the JAHLit Symposium in Miami in November. On a personal note, as this is my final report as Program Chair, I would like to

thank the other Society officers and the wider membership for all their support and kindness over the last three years. I've thoroughly enjoyed my term as Program Chair but I was also very happy to stand down to allow some new blood onto the Committee and I would like to wish David Gooblar all the best for the future: I'm sure he's going to do a great job.

Program Chair-Elect, David Gooblar

On or around May 1, 2012, I sent out and posted the CFP for Roth@80. The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2012. We'll have to discuss the possibility of Louisville next year, as well as details for a JAHLit panel.

Newsletter Editor's Report, Richard Sheehan

In the past year we produced two issues of the newsletter, one of 28 pages, one of 16, and continued to cover news, reviews and information on the works of Philip Roth. I hope to keep the number of pages of the newsletter to a minimum of 16 so that it provides a reasonably substantial publication for the members.

While compiling the newsletter, I try to make sure that I accomplish the three goals that I set out to achieve and 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.

This past year I've expanded the news articles about Philip Roth and his works to include news' items and general interest, and I have also continued the series of brief essays examining Philip Roth's earlier uncollected short stories.

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 been an area of concern in previous years due to the lack of submissions received. However, in the past year there has been more interest - an article by Velichka Ivanova was particularly notable and I have some possibilities for the future as well. 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.

Report from the Executive Editor of Philip Roth Studies, Derek Parker Royal

Since the last business meeting in May 2011 (ALA Conference in Boston), the executive editor has overseen the publication of two issues of *Philip Roth Studies*, volume 7 number 2, and volume 8 number 1.

Vol 7 No 2 included three essays, one roundtable discussion, one photo/essay/interview, five book reviews, and the annual bibliography.

Vol 8 No 1 is a special issue, guest edited by David Gooblar, called “Roth and Women.” It includes five essays, one note, and five book reviews.

The editorial staff is in the process of completing the editing of the Fall 2012 issue (Vol 8 No 2), which should be completed in time for autumn publication.

Since the last Roth Society business meeting, the journal has received 17 essay submissions. These do not include any of the essays submitted for the “Roth and Women” special issue.

Personnel:

Since Aimee Pozorski assumed the role of book review editor last year, book review submissions have increased significantly, and the journal looks forward to publishing more—and more of a variety—of reviews in future issues.

Due to becoming book review editor, Aimee Pozorski will be leaving the Advisory Board. Replacing her will be Ira Nadel.

The journal has published the first recipient of the Siegel/McDaniel Award, which the Roth Society awards to outstanding essays by graduate students.

As of CY 2011 Purdue University Press will be raising the Society’s share of licensing revenue generated from the journal on Project Muse from the 40% indicated in the initial contract to 50%. This brings *Roth Studies* into alignment with other journals we publish. The net royalties earned for this current payment period is \$3,296.80.

The accessing of *Roth Studies* on Project Muse are significantly higher than it was last year. The statistics on the journal from May 2011 to May 2012 are as follows:

Days resource(s) accessed	367
Articles (full-text) viewed	5407
HTML Articles (full-text) viewed	1465
PDF Articles (full-text) viewed	3942
Table of Contents viewed	3559
Journals viewed	1
IPs used to access database	2850

Future plans:

The journal’s next special issue, Spring 2013, will be one devoted to the 2012 Roth conference held in Venice, Italy. It will be guest edited by Pia Masiero.

The Fall 2013 issue will be a regular issue.

Plans have been but on hold for the planned “International Roth” special issue, since I have decided to do the special issue on the Venice conference. We still plan on doing this in the future, though. Due to the unique nature of this special issue (primarily invitation only, and mainly with non-US and non-UK scholars), the executive editor will serve as that issue’s editor.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Parker Royal

Philip Roth Society Activity at the 2012 ALA Conference

The Philip Roth Society sponsored both a panel and a roundtable discussion at the 23rd annual American Literature Association Conference. This year, the conference took place at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco in the Embarcadero Center, San Francisco, CA, May 24-27.

Saturday, May 26, 2012 11:10 am – 12:30 pm

Session 17-J Philip Roth's Influences (Room: Pacific H)

Chair: Jane Statlander-Slote*, Miami International University of Art and Design

1. "Roth and Nietzsche: Life as Literature," Patrick Hayes*, St. John's College, Oxford

There are allusions to Nietzsche throughout Roth's fiction: in *Exit Ghost* (2007) Amy Bellette finds the exhibition of literature in New York Public Library evidence of "the Nietzschean prophecy come true: art killed by resentment"; in *Letting Go* (1962) we find Dr Wallach taking what he calls a "Nietzschean" position in the debate with his son over medical ethics. Both writers are hostile to dogmatic moralisers, celebrate the body's Dionysian energies, and emphasise the tragic. Yet so far little direct attention has been given to this influence.

I will focus on one particular aspect of Roth's use of Nietzschean thinking: his insistence on the relationship between life and literature. With reference to *Deception* – one of the least discussed, but most overtly Nietzschean of Roth's novels – I will explore the way Roth develops Nietzsche's attack on the "faith in anti-theoretical values" (*Beyond Good and Evil*), especially his suggestion that "a higher and more fundamental value for all life might have to be ascribed to appearance, to the will to deception, to selfishness and to appetite", and will show how Roth draws upon Nietzschean thinking about the mask and the aesthetics of identity. I will connect Roth with the wider attempt to revive Nietzsche in America in the 1980s (such as Alexander Nehamas's influential study, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (1985), and the first English translation of Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1983)), and broaden out discussion by reflecting upon Roth's very deliberate creation of a many-sided 'oeuvre'. To develop this point I will contrast *Deception* with *The Humbling*, a very different exploration of life as literature, and will use Nietzsche's discussion of how the work of any "brave thinker" will seek to both embrace and counteract the will to deception in order to construct a "profound, many-sided and thorough view of things".

2. "Nathaning Nabokov: Rothian Resonance in *Lolita's* Afterword," Royden Jay Kadyschuk*, Columbia University

One mark of Vladimir Nabokov's import to the work of Philip Roth can be located in Nabokov's famous afterword, "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*," which this paper discusses as a template for the life and times of Roth's own durable iconoclast, Nathan Zuckerman. "The autobiographic device may induce mimic and model to blend," begins an apologetic Nabokov, and in the slippery status of this afterwording voice—and in the mirrorwork of ersatz authority which this sly apology creates—Roth's readers can recognize one major model for the suspicious hermeneutic which will give birth, basis, and burial to Zuckerman across the pages of *The Ghost Writer*, *The Counterlife*, and *Exit Ghost*.

The paper begins by recalling the concerns and provocations of Nabokov's afterword: the imperative of never losing "reality" from quote marks; the discovery of "aesthetic bliss" in coupling life to "other states of being where art... is the norm"; the presumption that innocent readers do not exist; the positing of love between characters as a stand-in for love between author and form, or between author and language; the masterful

writer's urge to "transcend the heritage in his own way" through art's "baffling mirror." By correlating these brief opinions to attitudes later expanded and crystallized in the figure of Zuckerman, a rich aesthetic affinity between Nabokov and Roth can be explored. After establishing the debt to *Lolita* which Roth announces in the last lines of *The Counterlife*, the second section of the paper traces the concerted swerve from the influence of Nabokov that Roth simultaneously enacts, using Zuckerman's antics to nullify a romantic faith in posterity that the earlier writer could ironize but (as the *Lolita* afterword likewise demonstrates) could never completely disavow. I conclude by suggesting that the protracted imbroglio of authorial frames that Roth creates through his fictional alter ego can now anachronistically disrupt our re-reading of *Lolita*: when treating Nabokov's afterword in the manner that Nabokov suggests—"as an impersonation of Vladimir Nabokov talking about his own book"—it becomes difficult not to recall Nathan Zuckerman.

3. "‘Letting Go’: Roth's Nemesis and Melville's White Whale," James Duban*, The University of North Texas

In Roth's *Nemesis*, Bucky Cantor spends years blaming himself for spreading a polio epidemic from Newark to a Jewish summer camp, becoming the leviathanic object of his own Ahabian ire. Narrator Arnold Mesnikoff, on the other hand, grasps the arbitrariness of nature and disease and, though himself stricken by polio, makes the best of bad circumstances. As concerns the varied mood and behavior of these two victims, Arnold's ostensible "biography" of Bucky recalls key issues and temperaments anticipated in *Moby-Dick*. Arnold's good cheer and equanimity resonate with the more balanced outlook on tragedy espoused in *Moby-Dick* by Captain Boomer in "Leg and Arm: The *Pequod*, of Nantucket, meets the *Samuel Enderby*, of London" (Ch. 100). Although Boomer has lost an arm to *Moby Dick*, he remains a good-natured man, whose tone is light-hearted when he "good-humoredly" responds to Ahab's monomaniacal queries. Such, by way of literary precedent, is the healthier response to tragedy espoused by Roth's narrator in *Nemesis*. Since Bucky fails to accept the summer-camp polio epidemic as "a malicious absurdity of nature," deeming it, instead, "a great crime of his own," Arnold claims that Bucky "never knows where his responsibility ends" and that, through consummate presumption, Bucky "will never guiltlessly acknowledge that he has any limits" (273-74). Such is Bucky's Ahabian hubris, which stands in opposition to the life "without bitterness" practiced by Arnold, who knows when to let go, and without seeking ultimate causes behind the arbitrariness of nature and fate. To do otherwise were to regress from the greatness of javelin throwers like Hercules and Zeus to the self-immolation of being hunter and hunted along the equatorial line separating sanity from morbidity.

4. "The Roots of Bucky Cantor: Philip Roth Revisits Thomas Mann's Myth of Illness," Nicola von Bodman-Hensler*, King's College London

With a longstanding history of writing illness narratives, in his most recent book *Nemesis* Philip Roth turns towards disability exploring the effects of the 1944 polio epidemic in the United States. As Verlyn Klinkenbourg has pointed out no sickness—and certainly no epidemic—comes without its myths. But rather than relying on common cultural fantasies about polio, Roth creates his very own polio myth. In the novel *nemesis* comes to the fore as the goddess who deals out cosmic justice in an archaic world evoked already in *Indignation* where the tiniest misstep can have tragic consequences. The disabled body becomes the site to symbolize life and art. Where could Roth have found inspiration for this kind of literary exploration of disability and bodily disorder?

This paper will argue that the specific form of mythologisation of bodily disorder Roth employs is closely tied to German author Thomas Mann's treatment of illness. Roth frequently refers to Mann as source of inspiration to his writing. The appropriation of Thomas Mann makes it possible for Roth to link the body to art. In order to establish a connection between the two authors explorations of bodily defect, I will relate *Nemesis* to Mann's

which to negotiate questions of Eros and guilt, chaos and control, and eventually life and art. Therewith it becomes possible to explore the cultural meaning of bodily disorder in Fin de Siècle Germany and its links to postmodern writing. Examining Thomas Mann and Philip Roth together offers the opportunity to consider how Roth develops the tradition of writing the impaired body established by Mann, a thus far neglected line of influence.

Saturday, May 26, 2012 2:10 – 3:30 pm

Session 19-K Letting Go Turns 50: A Roundtable Discussion

Moderator: David Brauner*, University of Reading, UK

1. David Gooblar*, Independent Scholar
2. Maggie McKinley*, Marquette University
3. Aimee Pozorski*, Central Connecticut State University
4. Mark Shechner, University at Buffalo

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).

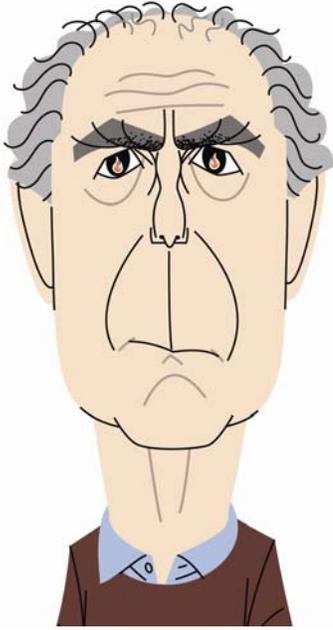
OPTION 2: Membership without the journal

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

Calls for Papers and Announcements

Roth@80 Call For Papers!

The Philip Roth Society proudly announces a call for papers for Roth@80, a conference event organized, in conjunction with the Newark Preservation & Landmark Committee, to mark the 80th birthday of Philip Roth. The conference will take place March 18-19, 2013, at the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark, New Jersey.



Individuals are encouraged to submit abstract proposals that cover the entire range of Philip Roth's writings, from his earliest novels and stories to his more recent Nemeses Tetralogy. A diversity of topics and critical perspectives is welcome. Individual proposals will be considered along with ready-made panels. The Roth Society welcomes proposals for:

- Scholarly presentations that provide fresh, critical approaches to Roth's fiction
- Roundtable discussions that focus on a single theme, or a particular text
- Creative or performance pieces that are based on Roth's work

There will also be a guided tour of "Roth's Newark," conducted by the Newark Preservation & Landmark Committee, as well as a photography exhibit at the Newark Public Library.

In addition to formal presentations, tour, and exhibits, the conference will include a reception on March 19 at the Newark Museum with Jonathan Lethem, Cladua Roth Pierpont, Hermione Lee, and Philip Roth himself.

Proposals of no more than 250 words are invited for 20-minute papers on any aspect of Roth's work. Please send your abstracts by email to the Roth Society Program Chair, David Gooblar, at GooblarPRS@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.

Deadline for proposals is September 1, 2012.

For more detailed information on the Roth@80 conference, including hotel accommodations, maps, and travel options, visit the conference website at <http://rothsociety.org/society/roth80/>.

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

Call for Papers: Summer 2012

The Siegel/McDaniel Award recognizes high-quality work of graduate students written on any aspect of Philip Roth's fiction in the past year (ending June 1).

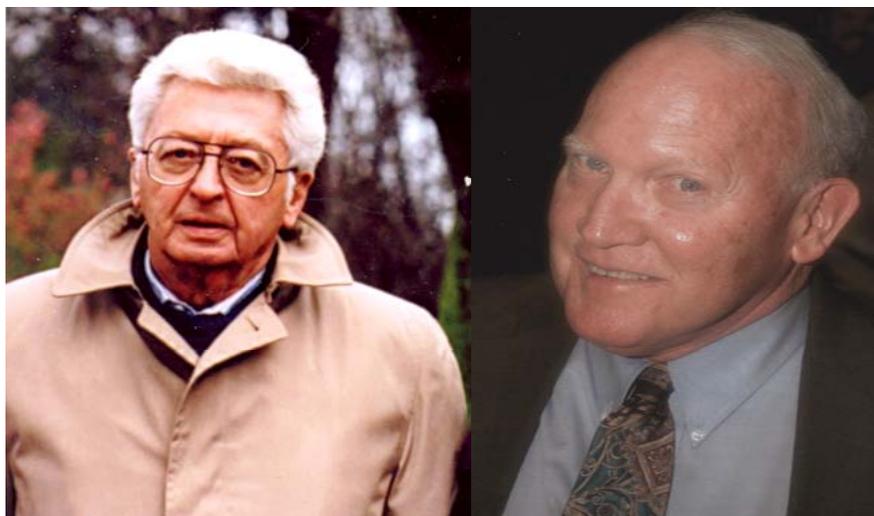
We recommend that faculty urge strong students to submit papers and welcome submissions from members and non-members alike.

Eligible graduate students should submit a clean copy of their 10-15 page essay, double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font to David Gooblar, Philip Roth Society Program Chair, at gooblar@gmail.com.

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.



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.

Philip Roth News

Screening of Philip Roth, without Complexes

On Sunday, March 4, and Tuesday, March 6, New York's Film Society of Lincoln Center will be screening the documentary *Philip Roth, without Complexes*, directed by William Karel. This documentary, based on over 10 hours of interview footage with journalist Livia Manera, is a surprisingly frank portrait of this major American author who's as popular in France as in the U.S. Roth speaks candidly about his upbringing, the success and the fallout from *Portnoy's Complaint*, and his feelings about aging in this illuminating work by French documentarian William Karel (*The World According to Bush*, *My Dad Is Into Terrorism*). For more information about the screening, visit the Film Society of Lincoln Center's website at <http://www.filmlinc.com/films/on-sale/juliette-greco-without-limits-philip-roth-without-complexes>.



Roth in the Media

Over the past week there have been two significant articles regarding Philip Roth. In the latest issue of *The Newark Star-Ledger*, Amy Ellis Nutt interviews Roth and discusses, among other things, next year's Roth@80 conference sponsored by the Philip Roth Society. (We will provide more information about this event in the coming months.) And in the April issue of *The Atlantic*, novelist Joseph O'Neill reviews the latest Roth volume in the Library of America series, *The American Trilogy*, and focuses on the perils of reading Roth's fiction as autobiography.



Philip Roth to Headline the National Book Festival



Philip Roth will headline the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., Sept. 22 and 23. The Library of Congress on Thursday announced the authors and poets who will appear at the event. These will include T.C. Boyle, Mario Vargas Llosa, Robert Caro, Geraldine Brooks, Junot Diaz, Colson Whitehead, Philip Levine and Jeffrey Eugenides. Mystery writers attending include Charlaine Harris, Michael Connelly and Patricia Cornwell. The weekend festival features speeches and book talks by authors, book signings and a chance to meet favorite writers.

PHILIP ROTH, PRINCE OF ASTURIAS AWARD FOR LITERATURE

Last June 6th the 2012 Prince of Asturias Award for Literature was bestowed upon Philip Roth by majority vote. The Prince of Asturias Awards—established on 24 September 1980 by the Prince of Asturias, heir to the throne of Spain, and granted at the Campoamor Theater in Oviedo (Asturias, north of Spain) every fall—are a series of annual prizes given in this country by the Prince of Asturias Foundation to individuals, organizations and entities from around the world that make remarkable contributions to several disciplines such as sciences, humanities and sports. These awards, aimed to “consolidate links between the Principality and the Prince of Asturias, and to contribute to encouraging and promoting scientific, cultural and humanistic values that form part of mankind’s universal heritage”, are divided into 8 categories: Arts, Social Sciences, Communication and Humanities, Technical & Scientific Research, International Cooperation, Sports, Concord and Literature. (For further information, please visit <http://www.fpa.es/en/awards/2012/philip-roth-1/>)

In the field of Literature, these awards, Spain’s equivalent to the Nobel Prizes, have been granted to many fine writers throughout their 30 plus years of existence. The prize has been awarded to writers in Spanish like Spanish poets José Hierro (1981) and Ángel González (1985); Spanish novelists Miguel Delibes and Gonzalo Torrente Ballester (1982); Colombian poet Álvaro Mutis (1997); Mexican novelist Juan Rulfo (1983) and Guatemalan short story writer Augusto Monterroso (2000). In addition, the prize has also gone to writers outside the Spanish-speaking world like Israeli novelist and essayist Amos Oz (2007); Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood (2008); US playwright Arthur Miller (2002) and US novelist Paul Auster (2006).

For the record it is interesting to note that Peruvian-Spanish novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, Spanish novelist Camilo José Cela and British novelist Doris Lessing received the Prince of Asturias Award (1986, 1987 and 2001, respectively) and the Nobel Prize afterwards (2010, 1989 and 2007, respectively). Among the writers who have received the Spanish Award but never got the Nobel Prize is Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, who was granted the Prince of Asturias Award in 1994. Philip Roth, who expressed his joy at winning the prize, dedicated a significant part of his moving statement to remembering his dear fellow writer and friend.

I am delighted to receive the Prince of Asturias Award and thrilled that the jury should have found my work worthy of such an honor. It is particularly poignant for me to have gotten news of the award only a few weeks after the death of Carlos Fuentes, who received the award in 1994. Carlos was a dear friend of mine and a generous colleague for many decades and, of course, he was among the greatest novelists writing in Spanish in our era. I wish he were alive so that I could hear his mellifluous voice at the other end of the phone offering me congratulations in his courtly way.

Philip Roth

New York, 6th June 2012

Roth’s nomination for the Prince of Asturias Award was proposed by Michael Göring, Chairman of the Board of the ZEIT-Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius Foundation (Germany). In a book edited by Benjamin Taylor entitled *Saul Bellow: Letters* (New York: Viking, 2010), one learns that in the year 2000 Saul Bellow, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976, sent a letter to the Swedish Academy in which he “wish [ed] to nominate the American novelist Philip Roth for the Nobel Prize. His books have been so widely examined and praised that it would be superfluous for me to describe, or praise, his gifts” (p.546). Who can think of a better nominator and nominee?

Gustavo Sánchez Canales
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
España (Spain)

The Minutes of the announcement were as follows:

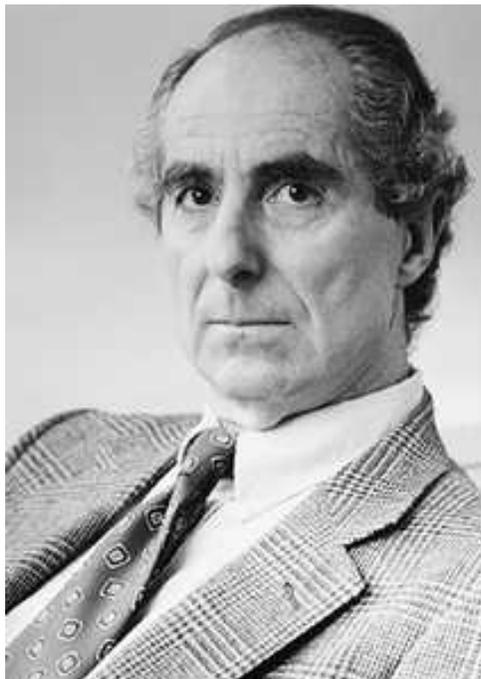
The US writer Philip Roth has been bestowed with the 2012 Prince of Asturias Award for Literature, as made public today in Oviedo by the Jury responsible for conferring said Award.

This nomination was proposed by Michael Göring, Chairman of the Board of the ZEIT-Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius Foundation (Germany).

At its meeting in Oviedo, the Jury for the 2012 Prince of Asturias Award for Literature, composed of Mr Luis María Anson Oliart, Mr J. J. Armas Marcelo, Mr Xuan Bello Fernández, Ms Blanca Berasátegui Garaizábal, Ms Amelia Castilla Alcolado, Mr Juan Cruz Ruiz, Mr José Luis García Martín, Mr Álex Grijelmo García, Mr Manuel Llorente Manchado, Ms Rosa Navarro Durán, Ms Soledad Puértolas Villanueva, Mr Fernando Rodríguez Lafuente, Mr Fernando Sánchez Dragó, Ms Diana Sorensen, Mr Sergio Vila-Sanjuan Robert, chaired by Mr José Manuel Blecua Perdices and with Mr Román Suárez Blanco acting as secretary, has decided by majority vote to confer the 2012 Prince of Asturias Award for Literature on the writer Philip Roth. The narrative work of Philip Roth forms part of the great American novel, in the tradition of Dos Passos, Scott Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner, Bellow and Malamud. Characters, events and plots form a complex view of contemporary reality torn between reason and feeling, such as the sign of the times and the sense of unease about the present. His literary quality is displayed in his fluid, incisive writing.
Oviedo, 6th June 2012

According to the Statutes of the Foundation, the Prince of Asturias Awards aim “to reward the scientific, technical, cultural, social and humanistic work performed at an international level by individuals, institutions or groups of individuals or institutions”. As part of this spirit, the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature shall be conferred on those “whose literary work represents a significant contribution to universal literature”.

Each Prince of Asturias Award comprises a diploma, an insignia, a Joan Miró sculpture representing and symbolising the Awards and a cash prize of 50,000 euros. The awards will be presented in the autumn in Oviedo at a grand ceremony chaired by H.R.H. the Prince of Asturias.



Interview with Tim Youd



Tim Youd is an artist who works in various forms. In recent times he's mined the works of Philip Roth for inspiration, so we decided to investigate a little further. The following is the result of a series of emails between Richard Sheehan and Tim.

TY: Here is my story.

I've lived and worked in Los Angeles for twenty years, having grown up in Massachusetts originally. I didn't go to art school. In fact, my undergraduate degree is in Economics, from the College of the Holy Cross. With that in hand, I went to work on Wall Street for a couple of years, before moving to LA to make movies. In addition to working on may art, during my time in LA, I've produced a few short films and two feature films.

Generally speaking, most of my art has to do with the vagina. To quote Louis-Ferdinand Celine, "There are always, at all ages, discoveries to be made in the vagina." It is that same text, from *Journey to the End of the Night*, that in 2008 I appropriated for a series of paintings. Utilizing text was something of a departure for me, allowing me to move away from the figurative work I had been doing, without retreating to some form of abstraction.

After I completed the Celine series, I whispered to myself that maybe working with a quote was a one time thing, not wanting to become formulaic. But then I happened to be reading *Portnoy's Complaint* and came across the line, "They all have cunts! Right under their dresses! Cunts – for fucking!" and immediately knew that I had to use it. As I got into it, I found myself taking a slightly different graphical approach than I did with the Celine work. These drawings were more three dimensional, which led me to also create a series of sculptures featuring that same quote. They are really signs, more than sculptures...which I think fits the quote. It's an announcement, befitting of a sign.

From Roth, I then moved to Henry Miller and developed some large scale motorized constructions, consistent I think with Miller's Coney Island of the Mind carnival aesthetic.

(Right: *Untitled*, Tim Youd)

PRS: The vagina theme: what made you decide on this as a theme? Did you begin with Celine and the quote, or were you working on your art with this theme and then came across Celine's writing?

TY: The Vagina theme: I spent my 20s not being an artist, and instead trying to be a media titan. But when I came back to art in my early 30s, I took a few life drawing classes. Like Portnoy, the bulb went off. There were cunts everywhere, and all of them needed to be drawn. So 15 years later, I'm still at it.





Immediately prior to working with the Celine quote I was working on a series of paintings that were ultimately included in the feature film *Garden Party*. These are figurative paintings, portraying fleeting sexual encounters. While not exclusively about the vagina, in most every instance the vagina is the focal point of the image. When I was working on what would turn out to be the last painting in that series, I happened to be reading *Journey to the End of the Night* while sitting in my studio. That's when I came across the quote "Indeed, there are always, at all ages, discoveries to be made in the vagina." I jumped up out of my chair, tacked some paper to the wall, and started in on the Celine series.

(Left: *Untitled*, Tim Youd)

Just to digress a bit, I came to be reading *Journey to the End of the Night* because it was recommended to me by Mat Gleason, the long time publisher of *Coagula Art Journal*. Mat and I were talking about John Fante, and Mat said something along the lines of "Hey, you want to read something really dark, try Celine." So I did. Mat was the first person besides my wife to see the work. And he curated it into a show he was putting together.

PRS: What was the route from Celine to Roth? Had you read any Roth before this?

TY: Celine to Roth was a pretty straight shot. I think I had read *Goodbye Columbus* and *The Breast* in my twenties. It was while I was painting the Celine series or thereabout that I rediscovered Roth. I was at LAX waiting to get on a plane to Hawaii to catch up with my wife and son, who were already there. A few minutes before boarding I realized I had left whatever book I was reading at home, so I went into the airport bookstore. I just so happened that *Everyman* had just been published. I had to pick between that and Danielle Steel. I finished *Everyman* on the flight and made a note to read more of his work, which led me maybe a year or two later to *Portnoy's Complaint*. Since then I've read quite a few. *The Ghost Writer*, *Zuckerman Unbound*, *The Counterlife*, *American Pastoral*, *The Professor of Desire*, *The Dying Animal* and *Indignation*. And I re-read *The Breast*, which is right there with *Portnoy's Complaint* and *The Dying Animal* as my favorite. I've got four or five more sitting on the shelf, ready to go. He's like an old friend now. Whenever I can't decide what to read next, I pick up a Roth novel. One may be better than the other, but I haven't been let down yet.

(Right: *Untitled*, Tim Youd)





(Left: *Untitled*, Tim Youd)

RS: Did you create the paintings or the sculptures first, or was it more random than that?

TY: In the Roth series, I started out with the works on paper. They were a bit different from the Celine series in that the Roth works on paper had a three dimensional element lurking there from the beginning. I really think that it was a reaction to the text. The Portnoy quote is really an announcement, something that belongs on a sign. It was a natural progression from the images of the signs to the signs themselves.

PRS: Where did the ideas for the paintings coming from, how did you decide on the structure of the painting?

TY: I do think that's wrapped up in my reaction to the text and my insistence that I don't just repeat myself. That's to say, it wouldn't do to treat the Roth quote the same as I treated the Celine quote. In fact, if I ever came back to another Roth quote – I think there is a line that goes something like “whatever I say you are just going to keep talking about my cunt” or something like that, which is pretty

tempting – I would only do it if I saw a way into it that wasn't just a repeat of what I had already done.

PRS: Do you think you'll be doing any more Roth pieces, and do you have any more authors you'll be using as inspiration for new pieces?

TY: I wouldn't count Roth out, although I don't have a specific piece in mind just now.

In the Henry Miller show that is up now, I also have some work that utilizes a stanza from Edward Lear's *Owl & the Pussycat*: O lovely pussy! Oh pussy my love, what a beautiful pussy you are, you are, you are. What a beautiful pussy you are!

And I have been working on a series of vibrating sculptures that include quotes from Miller, Lear, Samuel Beckett, DH Lawrence and Charles Bukowski. They aren't quite working the way I want yet, however.

(Right: *Blue Stripes*, Tim Youd)

To find out more about Tim's work, visit his website at: <http://timyoud.com/>

Also, view the 13-minute documentary about Tim, 'Going Down' at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?>



BIBLIOGRAPHIC UPDATE - Compiled by Derek Parker Royal

Below is a listing of secondary critical resources that have appeared since (or not listed in) the last issue of the newsletter. For a complete listing of bibliographical resources in English, go to the Roth Society Web site at <http://rothsociety.org>. An asterisk * indicates that the scholar is a current member of the Philip Roth Society.

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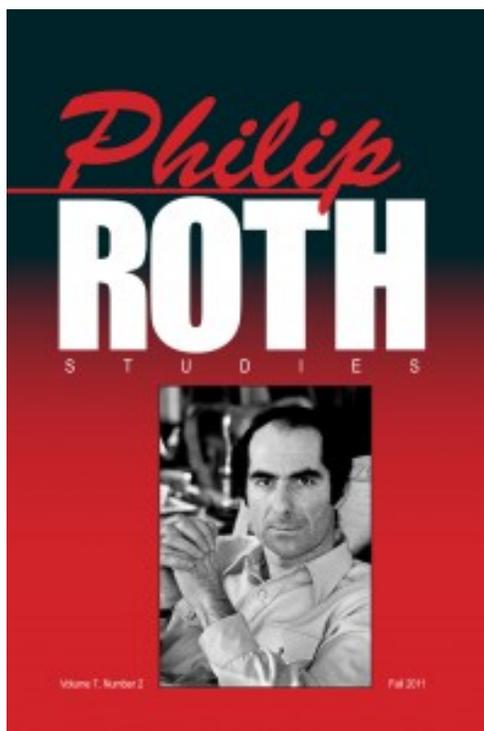
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Latest Issues of Philip Roth Studies

In March, Philip Roth Studies (Vol. 7, No. 2) was released. The table of contents included:



- Editor's Column
- Framing the Cusp of Celebrity: Bob Peterson's 1968 Photographs of Philip Roth – Derek Parker Royal
- Contemporary American Fiction and the Confluence of Don DeLillo, Cormac McCarthy, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, and John Updike: A Roundtable Discussion
- Arthur Koestler and Meyer Levin: The Trivial, the Tragic, and Rationalization Post Factum in Roth's "Eli, the Fanatic." – James Duban
- The Sene of an Ending: Alternative History in Philip Roth's The Plot Against America - Ginevra Geraci
- Putting a Finger on That Hollow Emptiness in Roth's Indignation – Frederick Luis Aldama
- Annual Bibliography of Philip Roth Criticism and Resources-2010 – Derek Parker Royal

Book Reviews

Philip Roth's Postmodern American Romance: Critical Essays on Selected Works (review)
Nigel Rodenhurst

Saul Bellow: Letters (review)
Gloria L. Cronin

Contemporary American Fiction (review)
Maggie McKinley

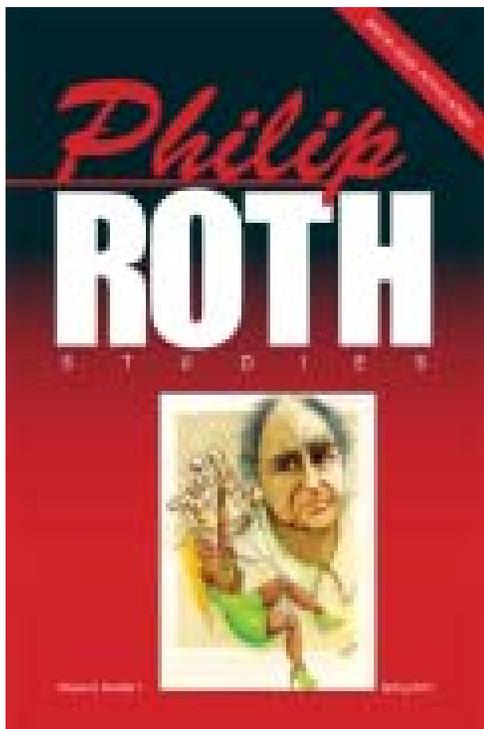
The Global Remapping of American Literature (review)
James D. Bloom

The American Novel Now: Reading Contemporary American Fiction Since 1980 (review)
Christopher Gonzalez

This is a particularly special issue of Roth Studies, in that we feature photographs from award-winning photographer, Bob Peterson, who covered Roth for Life Magazine in late 1968, just months before the publication of Portnoy's Complaint. Most of the photographs have never before been published, and they all show a young, vibrant novelist before the explosion of literary celebrity.

The Spring 2012 issue (Vol. 8 No.1) is a special issue on ‘Roth and Women’

- Editor’s Column - Derek Parker Royal



- Roth and Women - David Gooblar
- “Angry Because She Stutters”: Stuttering, Violence, and the Politics of Voice in American Pastoral and Sorry - Christopher Eagle
- My Own Foe from the Other Gender: (Mis)representing Women in The Dying Animal - Velichka Ivanova
- “You’re Neither One Thing (N)or The Other”: Nella Larsen, Philip Roth, and The Passing Trope - Donovan L. Ramon
- Matrimony: Re-Conceiving the Mother in Philip Roth’s Life Writing - Tony Fong
- “[A]nything but fragile and yielding”: Women in Roth’s Recent Tetralogy - Miriam Jaffe-Foger, Aimee Pozorski
- Against Representation: Death, Desire, and Art in Philip Roth’s The Dying Animal - Zoë Roth

Book Reviews

Philip Roth and the Zuckerman Books: The Making of a Storyworld - Pia Masiero – Andrew Gordon

Philip Roth: American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Plot Against America – ed. Debra Shostak(review) Gurumurthy Neelakantan

I Sing the Body Politic: History as Prophecy in Contemporary American Literature – ed. Peter Swirski Samuel Saldivar III

Passing into the Present: Contemporary American Fiction of Racial and Gender Passing – Sinead Moynihan Donovan L. Ramon

Contesting Histories: German and Jewish Americans and the Legacy of the Holocaust – Michael Shuldiner Nigel Rodenhurst

Cover artwork by Bill Richards

The journal welcomes both full-length articles as well as shorter notes. Essays should be between 4,000-8,000 words in length, and notes should not exceed 2,500 words. A brief abstract (approximately 50 words) should accompany each submission. Please address all submissions and queries to the executive editor, Derek Parker Royal, at rothstudies@rothsociety.org.



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

In this issue:

Message from the Society's President
Election of Philip Roth Society Officers
Minutes of the Philip Roth Business Society Meeting
Philip Roth Society Activity at the 2012 ALA Conference
Philip Roth, Prince Of Asturias Award For Literature
Annual Siegel/McDaniel Award for Graduate Student Research
Roth@80 Call For Papers!
Interview with Tim Youd

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