



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

Vol. 10 No.1

Winter 2012/13

Message from the Society's President Aimee Pozorski

In Memoriam

Dear All,

This issue of our newsletter attempts to address two major turning points in the life of Philip Roth: The late-fall announcement that he is indeed retiring; and, come spring, the celebration of his 80th birthday. While we all felt slightly disoriented and unprepared for Roth's retirement, we have been planning eagerly for over a year to celebrate Roth's birthday with him in March.

When the Huffington Post asked me, and several other Roth scholars – many of whom are members of this Society – whether I would write a personal reaction to Roth's retirement, I dutifully agreed. However, I did not start writing the essay in earnest until mid December. Originally entitled, "In Memoriam," I had planned to finish and submit the essay on Friday, December 14 – the day of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, CT, about 40 minutes from my son's elementary school. The title was intended to allude to a Tennyson elegy but also to reflect the sadness we all felt – our own elegiac responses – to the retirement of one of our literary heroes. Not yet cognizant of the impropriety of comparing the retirement of one of America's greatest living writers to an actual death or deaths, I put my pen down in the morning and went in to "volunteer" at my son's school.

The visit was unanticipated of course. What I really wanted to do was to give my son a hug. But the teachers had not yet heard of Sandy Hook, and the fourth grade classroom

seemed to be doing fine without me, so I was thanked and sent home to return to my writing.

I sent the essay off that day – with sadness on my mind, the children's families in my thoughts – and left the title of my own little essay as is. The Huffington Post was the first to discover the error in judgment, and I was a close second: We will run the essay, my editor said, but not with this title. It is too soon after Newtown, he said. And of course, I understood completely: I changed the title to something far less obsessed with death—and I resubmitted.

I bring this up now because I have reflected often on my actions since December 14 –some actions unconscious, others steeped in sadness and worry – and realized, in part, what our initial reaction to Roth's retirement has meant. We all have become used to turning to Roth's literature in order to process the horrors in life and the unsettling aspects of American history. Roth has used his narrative genius to make sense of what we feel we otherwise cannot articulate: the polio epidemic, the spread of Nazi totalitarianism and anti-Semitic attitudes, World War II, the Red Scare, the Korean War, Vietnam, life post 9-11, confrontation with terminal illness, abuse, terror, and the list goes on. How will we as a culture come to terms with gun violence and the horror of 12/14/12? I am not quite sure. But I can say that the literary landscape will be lesser without the appearance of another Roth novel another communiqué in the void of understanding. *(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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(Continued ...)

As such, I am recycling my former title, "In Memoriam," here. It is to remember the children of Sandy Hook and also to point up something we should have realized already – the fact that, despite the notice Roth has garnered for his focus on the post World War II generation and his youth among the Jewish American community, he has always been interested in the fate and futures of the children – from his very first novel to the very last.

Because he has given us so much already, we wish Mr. Roth all the best in his retirement and will share in his happiness as he turns 80: a great career behind him, a new life of leisure, time with friends, long, guiltless swims and walks ready to begin.

In the meantime—and this is a small token, I know – I hope you enjoy our newsletter. Richard Sheehan, whom I thank sincerely, has put so much time and energy into this work. And I thank all of you who delivered conference papers and wrote reviews, articles, and books contributing to our conversations about Roth. I wish you all the best in coming year.

Fondly, Aimee Pozorski

Retirement: A Timeline

In an interview published in French Magazine *Les InRocks* on 7 October 2012, Philip Roth announced "Némésis sera mon dernier livre" (*Nemesis* will be my last book) and yet, for a month, the rest of the world, and indeed the great majority of his fans, remained blissfully unaware of the announcement.

Then, on Friday 9 November, the *Salon* website republished the news, and the world, literary and otherwise, took notice. It was just a short piece, not at all like the long retrospectives that appeared in other media a little while later, as if the writer and editor were still slightly disbelieving of the news, deciding to keep it brief in case they were wrong, or quickly remove it if the news were retracted.

However, they weren't wrong, and in the days that followed, the news was reprinted many times over: "Was it true?," people asked. "Did he mean it?"

"Did this really mean there would be no more new Philip Roth novels?"

Whatever this means for Roth fans, the news was greeted in the media and on social media sites worldwide with a mixture of disbelief and resignation. Twitter buzzed and he trended on its timeline for a brief while above modern cultural icons such as Justin Bieber and the Kardashians.

To help us read the words for ourselves, *The Paris Review* thoughtfully reproduced the translated interview. The interviewer was Nelly Kaprielian and the significant point comes eleven questions in:

Do you still have the desire to write?

No. Anyway, I have no intention of writing in the next ten years. To tell the truth, I'm finished.

Nemesis is going to be my last book.

... I decided that I was done with fiction. I don't want to read any more of it, write any more of it, I don't even want to talk about it anymore. I've given my life to the novel. I've studied it, I've taught it, I've written it, and I've read it. To the exclusion of practically everything else. It's enough! I don't feel that fanaticism about writing that I felt all my life. The idea of trying to write one more time is impossible to me!

So there won't ever be another Philip Roth novel?

I don't think another novel more or less can change whatever it is I've already done. And if I write a new book, it will almost certainly be a failure. Who needs another mediocre book?

You don't have any desire to write about America today?

I'm seventy-eight, I don't know anything anymore about America today. I watch it on TV. But I don't live there.

To some, this came as no surprise as David Remnick said in *The New Yorker*:

"This is a definitive version of what he has been telling friends privately for a couple of years."

Online site 'Flavourwire' listed New York's one hundred most important living writers (I'll let you guess who was at number one), and one of the questions they were all asked was "How do you feel about Philip Roth retiring?" The depth of respect for Roth was clear from the range of those featured. "If it's true, the man has done his job and mightily," said Junot Diaz. And then: "If it's not true: better." Robert A. Caro said, "It seems to me to be a wonderful, triumphant accomplishment when you can say, 'I have created a body of work that will endure, and now I am done.'" A.M. Homes reflected a lot of fans' disappointment, when she said: "Horrible. I'm in a panic – what will I do without the next Philip Roth novel?"

On November 17, Charles McGrath and *The New York Times* got the big scoop when they printed what Roth said would be his last interview. He explained the thinking and the events that led to his retirement. How he had made the decision shortly after finishing *Nemesis* in 2010, and how he had re-read the favourite books of his youth by writers such as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Conrad. He then also details that he re-read his own works,

"... from the last book forward, casting a cold eye. And I thought, 'You did all right.' But when I got to 'Portnoy' ... I had lost interest, and I didn't read the first four books."

Roth also detailed the plans for his biography, to be written by the biographer of Richard Yates and John Cheever – Blake Bailey – adding that he'd never been as truthful with anyone before, though, he did add: "The pay's not so good."

Whatever we may think with regards to whether or not Philip Roth will write again, there was an aspect of the interview with McGrath that will resonate with many authors. When he told McGrath that he has a post-it note on his computer to remind him that he is done, that: "The struggle is over," he reminds us all, that for all the great works, for all the wonderful words, sentences and passages, it was, indeed, hard work, and he had to dig deep within himself to bring this to the fore.

For now, at least, he can rest and reflect on work well done.

The Philip Roth Society proudly announces

Roth@80

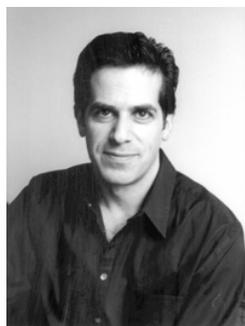
A conference event organized, in conjunction with the Newark Preservation & Landmark Committee, to mark the 80th birthday of Philip Roth

March 18-19, 2013, Robert Treat Hotel - Newark, New Jersey

This two-day event will include presentations on March 18 that cover the entire range of Philip Roth's writings, from his earliest novels and stories to his more recent Nemeses Tetralogy, and focusing on a diversity of topics and cultural perspective.

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 Philip Roth as the honored guest, and including such noted speakers as:



Jonathan Lethem

- Author of *Motherless Brooklyn* and *The Fortress of Solitude*



Claudia Roth Pierpont

- Author of *Passionate Minds: Women Rewriting the World*



Hermione Lee

- Author of *Philip Roth* and *Virginia Woolf's Nose*

For questions regarding the *Roth@80* event, please contact the Roth Society Program Chair, David Gooblar, at GooblarPRS@gmail.com.

Roth@80

Day One Conference Tentative Schedule March 18, 2013

Robert Treat Hotel, Newark, New Jersey

8:30am – 9:50am

Room A

Roth and Literary Reputation

1. "A Tale of Two Roths: Philip and Henry," Steven G. Kellman*, University of Texas at San Antonio
2. "'You Shouldn't Trouble Yourself Over My Tiny Opacity': Secrecy and the Novelist in *Exit Ghost*," Ben Salloum, Luther College, University of Regina
3. "What the Publication of Biographies Will Mean to the Reputation and Writing of Philip Roth and J.M. Coetzee," Benjamin Ogden*, Rutgers University

Room B

Roth and Lee, Roth and Bellow, Roth and Paley

Chair: Elaine B. Safer, University of Delaware

1. "To Mock A Killing Bird: *The Plot Against America*," Jacqueline E. Brown*, Jefferson Community College and Indiana University-Southeast
2. "Reverse Anti-Semitism in the Fiction of Bellow and Roth," Jay L. Halio*
3. "'You're a real one for opening your mouth': 'The Conversion of the Jews' and 'The Loudest Voice' or the Disentanglement From the Fold," Ada Savin, University of Versailles

Room C

New Perspectives on *Operation Shylock*

1. "'I told my wrath, my Roth did grow': Anger in *Operation Shylock*," Alex Calder*, University of Auckland
2. "Double-Consciousness and the Jewish Heart of Darkness: *The Counterlife* and *Operation Shylock*," Brett Ashley Kaplan*, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
3. "Teaching Roth as Trickster: Or, *Operation Shylock* as a Gateway to Contemporary Cultural History at Cleveland State University," Batya Weinbaum, SUNY Empire State College Center for Distance Learning

Room D

Roth and the Fiction Writer

1. "My Life as a Mannequin," Charles Barrett Hathcock*
2. Excerpt from *Mentiras*, Felipe Franco Munhoz
3. "What Roth Wrought," Steven Sampson*

10:00am – 11:20am**Room A**New Voices in Roth Studies

1. "Philip Roth, Playwright," Mike Witcombe*, University of Southampton
2. "The Reality of Fiction in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*," Taryne Leahey*, Central Connecticut State University
3. "Dean and The Swede: Examining the Characterizations of America in *On The Road* and *American Pastoral*," Thomas Bevilacqua, Florida State University

Room BRoth and the Canon

1. "'A terrifying Shakespearean liveliness': Roth's Shakespeare and the Vehement Passions," Patrick Hayes*, St. John's College, Oxford
2. "Yeatsian Agony in Late Roth," Jack Knowles*
3. "Philip Roth and the American Epic," Catherine Morley, University of Leicester

Room CRoth and Narrative

Chair: Andrew Gordon*, University of Florida

1. "Philip Roth's Contribution to the Narrativization of Illness," Miriam Jaffe-Foger*, Rutgers University
2. "'Every third thought shall be my grave': *Memento mori* and Story," Debra Shostak*, College of Wooster
3. "'Waiting and waiting for nothing': The Aesthetic of the Inevitable in Roth's Nemeses Books," Toni Oliviero*, Pratt Institute

Room DEarly Roth

1. "Authenticity and its Discontents: Philip Roth, The Last New York Intellectual," James D. Bloom, Muhlenberg College
2. "Roth @ 26: Publishing *Goodbye, Columbus*," Ira Nadel*, University of British Columbia
3. "Roth and Literary Culture: Revisiting *Letting Go*," Matthew Shipe*, Washington University in St. Louis

11:30am – 12:30pm**Room A**Roth's Newark

Chair: Ezra Cappell, University of Texas at El Paso

1. "Philip Roth and the Discovery of Newark," Michael Kimmage, Catholic University
2. "Newark: The Shtetl," Mark Shechner*, University at Buffalo

Room B

Roth Abroad

1. "Roth in Romania: Teaching, Reviewing, Translating Roth's Work," Cristina Cheveresan*, West University of Timisoara
2. "Philip Roth in Russia: Translations and Criticism," Olga Karasik*, Kazan Federal University

Room C

The Counterlife and Other Writers

1. "This Way for the Counterlives, Ladies and Gentlemen: Philip Roth and Tadeusz Borowski," Gabriel Fernandez, Texas A&M University-Kingsville
2. "The Jewish Ghetto and the British Constitution: Meanings of Exposure in Austen, Joyce, and Roth," David Stone, King's College London and Sarah Marsh, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

12:30pm – 1:30pm Lunch

1:30pm – 2:50pm

Room A

Roundtable: Roth and Literary Biography

Chair: David Gooblar*

Jacques Berlinerblau, Georgetown University

Alice Birney, Literary and Cultural Historian, Library of Congress

Zachary Leader, Roehampton University

Elèna Mortara, University of Rome Tor Vergata

Ira Nadel*, University of British Columbia

Room B

Nemeses

Chair: Felipe Franco Munhoz

1. "Nemesis Divine; or, An Analysis of the Specter of God in Philip Roth's Late Fiction," Samuel J. Kessler*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
2. "'[Sticking] to a plan completely': Pretend Play, Performance, Memory and Suicide in Philip Roth's *The Humbling*," Amy Gelbart, Herzog College
3. "The Fantasy of Living the Counterlife in Roth's *Nemesis*," Victoria Aarons*, Trinity University

Room C

Roth and Gender and Sexuality

Chair: Tony Fong, University of Toronto

1. "Queering Philip Roth: Homosocial Discourse in 'The American Trilogy,'" David Brauner*, University of Reading
2. "'Till I Marry a Jewman': *The Playboy of the Western World* as Intertext to *The Humbling*," Dan O'Brien*, University College Cork
3. "Roth as Feminist? Points of View," James Shell*

3:00pm – 4:20pm**Room A**Roundtable: The Significance of Roth

Chair: Derek Parker Royal*, Southern Methodist University

Pia Masiero*, University of Venice Ca' Foscari

Gurumurthy Neelakantan*, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

Aimee Pozorski*, Central Connecticut State University

Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr.*, Bard College at Simon Rock

George J. Searles*, SUNY, Mohawk Valley Community College

Hana Wirth-Nesher, Tel Aviv University

Room BNew Connections Within Roth's Oeuvre1. "Tragic Farce and Comedic Range in *The Great American Novel* and *American Pastoral*,"

Maggie McKinley*, Harper College

2. "From Athene to Athena: *The Human Stain* and the Fall of Liberal Humanism," Daniel

Anderson*, Emmanuel College

3. "Philip Roth's Humorous Art of Ghost Writing," Paule Lévy*, University of Versailles

Room CNew Perspectives on Zuckerman

1. "Zuckerman/Roth: Between Two Deaths," Loren Glass, University of Iowa

2. "Stalkers, Comforters and Other Tormentors : Persecution in Philip Roth's Fiction," Aurélie

Guillain*, University of Toulouse

3. "'All is Not Well with America': Fraudulent Celebrities and Fake Americans in *Quiz Show*and *I Married a Communist*," Andrew M. Hakim, New York University**4:30pm – 5:50pm****Room A**Roundtable: Teaching Roth: How, now?

Chair: Dean Franco, Wake Forest University

Ezra Cappell, University of Texas at El Paso

Adam Zachary Newton, Yeshiva University

Rachel Rubinstein, Hampshire College

Benjamin Schreier, Penn State University

Room BRoth and American History1. "'A Human Being Lives Here': Philip Roth on the Presidency," Claudia Franziska Brühwiler*,
University of St. Gallen2. "America Unbound: Counterfactual History in Philip Roth's American Trilogy," Brian
Goodman*, Harvard University3. "A Free and Independent Man?: Ambivalent Citizenship and Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*,"
Schuyler J. Chapman, University of Pittsburgh

Room C

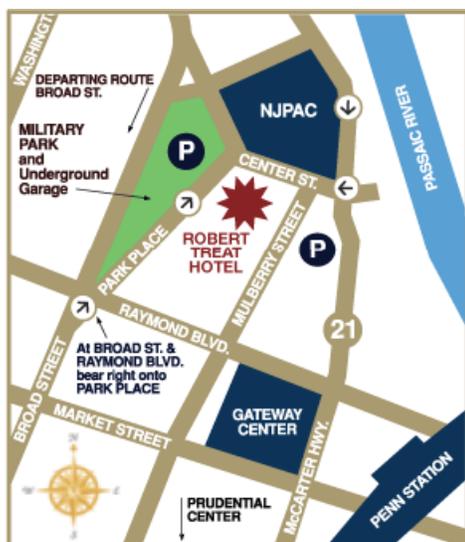
A New Lease on *My Life*

1. “‘Useful Fictions’: Transference as Aesthetic Experience in Philip Roth’s Novels,” Maren Scheurer*, Goethe University Frankfurt
2. “The Resistant Patient in *My Life as a Man*,” Andrew Gordon*, University of Florida
3. “Philip Roth’s Reflections on ‘A Life’ and ‘My Life,’” Sean Allan*, Southern Connecticut State University

Schedule for Tuesday the 19th:

- 10:00 AM** Welcome ceremony for the Roth@80 exhibit at the Newark Public Library. A guided tour with coffee, muffins, fruit, etc. will be available.
- 12:00 PM** Buses leave for “The Philip Roth Tour of Newark.”
- 3:00 PM** Return to the Robert Treat Hotel.
- 4:00-6:00 PM** Cocktail reception with ample food in the Englehard Court of the Newark Museum.
- 6:30 PM** Program in the Billy Johnson Auditorium of the Newark Museum, featuring Claudia Roth Pierpont, Hermione Lee, Jonathan Lethem, and Philip Roth.
- 8:45-10:00 PM** Return to the Englehard Court for birthday cake, coffee, and a champagne toast.

Directions to the hotel



The easiest way to get to the Robert Treat Hotel is to fly into the Newark Liberty Airport. We provide a shuttle bus to and from the airport at no extra charge. We also provide a shuttle bus to the Newark-Penn Station which is on the North-East Corridor line. Amtrak, New Jersey Transit and PATH trains all stop at this station.

Directions from major highways are below.

From the New Jersey Turnpike take Exit 15W (Newark/The Oranges). After the toll booth, follow Route 280 West to Exit 15 (Route 21 - Downtown/Arts). Follow Signs to Route 21 South (McCarter Highway) and make right onto Route 21. Follow Route 21 to Center Street and make a right, hotel is on the left side.

From Garden State Parkway North take Exit 142 (Route 78). Take Route 78 East until it splits near Newark Airport. Stay right and follow Routes 1&9 North to Route 21 North (McCarter Highway). You will travel across the viaduct into downtown Newark. After crossing the viaduct, stay in the left-turn lane. At the first light, make a left onto Miller Street. Make a right onto Broad Street. Take Broad Street 18 blocks to Park Place (Military Park). Bear right at Park Place, hotel is on the right side.

From Garden State Parkway South take Exit 145. Follow signs for Route 280 East. Follow Route 280 East to Exit 15 (Route 21 South - Downtown). At bottom of ramp (traffic light), make a right onto Route 21 South (McCarter Highway). Follow Route 21 to Center Street and make a right. Hotel is on left side.

Membership

You can join the Philip Roth Society online by using the PayPal drop-down menu at the website here:

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

or you can join through regular mail by using the form at <http://www.rothsociety.org/Membership Form.pdf>

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.

Winner of the 2012 Siegel/McDaniel Award for Graduate Student Research

The Philip Roth Society is proud to announce the winner of the 2012 Siegel/McDaniel Award for Graduate Student Research, Andy Connolly. Andy, a recent doctoral graduate of Edinburgh University, accomplished this feat with his essay submission, "Literary Labor and Physical Toil: Contesting Notions of Work and Origins in *American Pastoral*." The prize comes with a \$250 cash award; a one-year membership (or renewal) in the Philip Roth Society, including a subscription to *Philip Roth Studies*; and the opportunity to work with the editor of *Philip Roth Studies* to publish an expanded version of the essay in the journal.

This award is given in honor of the work of Ben Siegel and John N. McDaniel, founding members of the Philip Roth Society and two of America's earliest and most influential Roth scholars.



Ben Siegel



John N. McDaniel

International Colloquium, Paris

"Philip Roth, American Pastoral"

November 29, 2012

Texts and Research Centre Francophonies (CRTF) - EA 1392, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Cergy-Pontoise, Conference Room, Building 1 Oak, University of Cergy-Pontoise,

On November 29, 2012, Dr Velichka Ivanova and Prof. Rémi Astruc from the University Cergy Potoise hosted an international colloquium on Roth's *American Pastoral*. Inspired, in part, by Prof Pia Maserio's colloquium in Venice the previous February, Ivanova and Astruc invited participants from around the globe to share with an audience of students and scholars their new readings of *American Pastoral*. Program details are as follows:

10.00-12.30 am Morning Session

10.00-10.15 Lazarus Bitoun (University Paris 8): "Introduction to the Jewish-American novel: Bellow, Malamud and Roth"

10.15-10.45 Gustavo Sanchez-Canales (Autonomous University of Madrid): "Classical Greek Archetypes in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* and *The Human Stain*"

10.45-11.15 Tsimpouki Theodora (University of Athens): "The Frontier, the Dreamer and the Dream: Crane, Roth and the Urgencies of American Nationhood"



(L-R Prof Till Kinzel, Jeff Pinkham, Debra Shostak, Dr Thierry Tremblay, Rémi, Dr Gustavo Sanchez-Canales, Dr Aimee Pozorski)

11.30-12.00 Debra Shostak* (The College of Wooster, Ohio): "*American Pastoral's* Ghost Writer: Anne Frank in Old Rimrock"

12.00-12.30 Aimee Pozorski* (President of the Philip Roth Society, Central Connecticut State University): "The Fall of the House of Levov: Bill Orcutt and the Unmaking of America in *American Pastoral*"

2.00-4.30 pm Afternoon Session

2.00-2.30 Till Kinzel (Technische Universität Braunschweig, Germany): "'Hate America?': Negotiating Melancholy, Death, and Self-Knowledge in *American Pastoral*"

2.30-3.00 Rémi Astruc (University of Cergy-Pontoise): "Aesthetics of idiocy in *American Pastoral*"

3.30-4.00 Pia Masiero* (University of Venice, Ca 'Foscari): "We Focalization again: What about the Reader?"

4.00-4.30 Velichka Ivanova* (University Paris 3): "Author-reader dialogue in *American Pastoral*"
 Session moderators: Lazarus Bitoun (University Paris 8) and Aristi Trendel (University of Maine).

Organization: Rémi Astruc, Velichka Ivanova and Research Centre Texts and Francophonies (CRTF) - EA 1392, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Cergy-Pontoise

Philip Roth Society Activity at the 2013 MLA Conference

Philip Roth's Music, an MLA panel sponsored by the Philip Roth Society, considered the under-theorized role of music in Philip Roth's fiction. Speakers included:

Ira Nadel*, University of British Columbia, "Philip Roth and the Music of Seduction"

Aimee Pozorski*, Central Connecticut State University, "Nationalism, Lyricism and Self-Loathing in *I Married a Communist* and *Indignation*"

Matthew Shipe*, Washington University, "*Dream a Little Dream*: Music as Counternarrative in Philip Roth's Late Fiction"

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

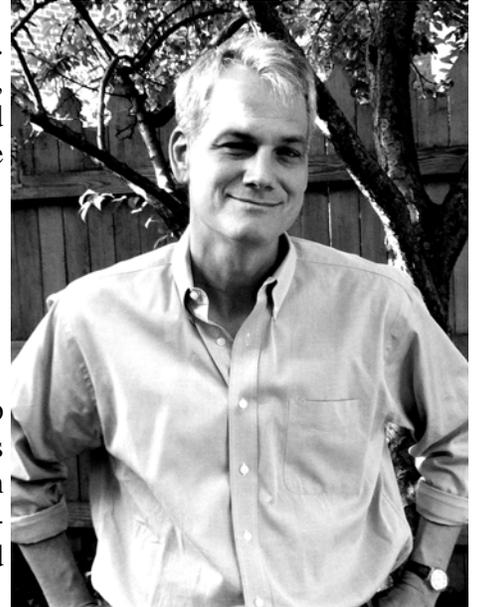
With Jane Statlander-Slote as Respondent, Ira Nadel, Aimee L. Pozorski, and Matthew Shipe presented papers on the theme of music in Roth's work. In the absence of previous scholarship, this panel, in part, relies on Nadel's discussions of classical and modern musical references in Roth's work from his recent study, *Critical Companion to Philip Roth* (New York: Facts on File, 2011). Examples of Roth's investment in music begin with the satiric refrain of Ohio State University's graduation song in "Goodbye, Columbus"; the references to opera in *Letting Go*; and composers' names and works strategically referenced in a variety of other novels. Nadel's paper, "Philip Roth and the Music of Seduction," closely reads such novels as *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), *The Human Stain* (2000), and *The Dying Animal* (2001) in order to emphasize the seductive influence of Roth's use of music. In so doing, Nadel examines the relationship Roth establishes between music and sex, showcasing the ways in which Roth's protagonists employ male composers in their pursuit of women. Performance will be another aspect of the discussion with particular attention to Yefim Bronfman's Prokofiev concert at Tanglewood in *The Human Stain* and the performance of the last movement of Mahler's *Third Symphony* at Coleman Silk's funeral. David Kepesh's piano studies in *The Dying Animal* will also be reviewed.

In a turn to the more political aspects of Roth's fiction, Aimee Pozorski's paper reads the relationship between nationalism and lyricism in protest songs—especially as Roth depicts these songs in Roth's later works, *I Married a Communist* (1998) and *Indignation* (2008). Specifically, her paper considers how Roth's narrators recall lyrics from nationalistic songs in order to evoke patriotic sentiments—sentiments that often work against the narrator in that they ultimately produce not the desired sense of patriotism but rather a nagging self-loathing that can be met only with silence. Finally, Matthew Shipe argues in his paper, "Music and Counternarrative in Roth's Late Fiction," that music plays an increasingly significant role in Roth's later works as their aging narrators employ music to inspire and shape their own narratives and sense of the past. Shipe proposes that music plays a profound narrative function in both *American Pastoral* (1997) and *The Human Stain* (2000), as Nathan Zuckerman returns to the songs of his adolescent, the jazz and pop songs of the late 1940s, as a way of revisiting his past. However, according to Shipe, this shift appears most dramatically in *Exit Ghost* (2007), when Nathan Zuckerman, now suffering from accelerated memory loss that threatens his identity as a writer, turns to Strauss's *Four Last Songs* as an inspiration for his final piece of writing—a play that he entitles *He & She*.

Philip Roth News

Roth Chooses New Biographer

Blake Bailey has agreed to work with Philip Roth as his new biographer. Author of biographies on figures such as John Cheever and Richard Yates, Bailey will be taking over from Ross Miller, who had previously signed onto this project in 2004. According to Bailey, the biography should take him 8 to 10 years to complete.



W. W. Norton to Publish Roth Biography

The Associated Press has reported that Blake Bailey's biography of Philip Roth has been acquired by publisher W. W. Norton and Co. The book is tentatively titled *Philip Roth: The Biography*. A spokesman for Norton said on Thursday that this book will be the definitive account of the novelist's life, and that Bailey will have unrestricted access to Roth's papers and unpublished works. No release date has been set.

Philip Roth's Open Letter to Wikipedia

In a September 7th posting on the blog of *The New Yorker*, Philip Roth contributes "An Open Letter to Wikipedia," pointing out incorrect information posted in The Human Stain entry found on the popular web-based resource. In particular, Roth notes the inaccuracy of the Anatole Broyard reference regarding the creation of his 2000 novel:

"The entry contains a serious misstatement that I would like to ask to have removed. This item entered Wikipedia not from the world of truthfulness but from the babble of literary gossip—there is no truth in it at all."

Roth goes on to clarify that the events surrounding Coleman Silk's dilemma were actually inspired by the circumstances of his late friend, Melvin Tumin, a longtime professor of sociology at Princeton.

Readers of Roth's "Open Letter" go on to comment on his assumptions of Wikipedia and accuse him of not understanding the medium.

For Roth's complete letter, visit *The New Yorker* blog:

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2012/09/an-open-letter-to-wikipedia.html>

Philip Roth Discussed at La Règle du Jeu

On Sunday, November 25, scholars/journalists Steve Sampson (a Philip Roth Society member), Lazare Bitoun, and Josyane Sivigneau joined moderator Alexis Lacroix for a lively discussion on Philip Roth and his writing of America. The event was part of the La Règle du Jeu series, a literary revue founded in 1990 by Bernard Henry-Levy and directed by him. The series covers literature, philosophy, politics and the arts. The November 25 discussion was part of the weekly “seminar” sponsored by the La Règle du Jeu series, and taking place on Sunday mornings at the Saint-Germain movie theatre in St. German dès Pres, on the Left Bank near the Latin Quarter in Paris.

You can view the event (conducted in French) at <http://rothsociety.org/philip-roth-discussed-at-la-regle-du-jeu/>



The Unmasking of Philip Roth...PBS Style

Later this year Philip Roth will be featured on PBS' American Masters series.

Philip Roth: Unmasked will air on March 29, ten days after Roth's 80th birthday. The novelist spoke via satellite earlier this week during a panel discussion in Los Angeles of the Television Critics Association. He said he doesn't watch a lot of television, but he does make time for American Masters.

He announced recently that his 2010 novel Nemesis would be his last. He told Tim Molloy in a recent interview that he has not changed his mind and that life was going smoothly. "I'm doing fine without writing," he said. "Someone should have told me about this earlier."

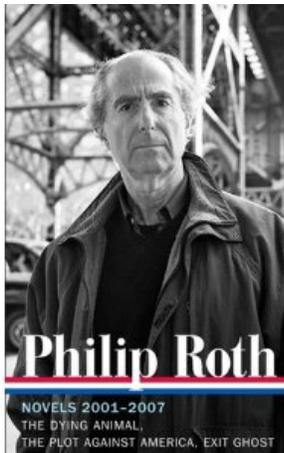
Interview with Steven Sampson

Scholar and Philip Roth Society member, Steven Sampson, is interviewed in the January 2013 issue of Causeur where he discusses his recent work on the American novelist.

http://rothsociety.org/CAUSEUR_55_BD.pdf

Books

Philip Roth: Novels 2001-2007: *The Dying Animal* / *The Plot Against America* / *Exit Ghost*



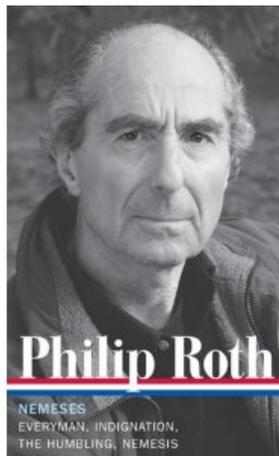
The Library of America's definitive edition of Philip Roth's collected works continues with the novels written in his late sixties and early seventies.

The Dying Animal (2001) completes the chronicle of the erotic metamorphoses of David Kepesh, depicted previously in *The Breast* and *The Professor of Desire*. Here Kepesh is over sixty when he sets out to seduce Consuela Castillo, his decorous student of twenty-four, the daughter of wealthy Cuban exiles. Unintentionally, Consuela subverts his well-ordered life with an adventure deformed by jealousy that evolves into a story of grim loss. Roth again entangles the fate of his characters with the social forces that shape our daily lives—in *The Dying Animal*, with the consequences of the sexual revolution of the 1960s. When the renowned aviation hero Charles A. Lindbergh defeated Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election, fear invaded every Jewish household in America, first because Lindbergh had publicly blamed the Jews for pushing America toward a pointless war with Nazi Germany and then because, once having taken office, he negotiated a cordial

“understanding” with Adolf Hitler. What followed for Jews during the Lindbergh presidency—most particularly in the Newark household of the boy Philip Roth—is the subject of *The Plot Against America* (2004), the fifth of the author's Roth books.

Exit Ghost (2007) presents the final chapter in the extraordinary literary odyssey of Nathan Zuckerman, begun in 1979's *The Ghost Writer*. Like a latter-day Rip Van Winkle, Zuckerman returns to New York after eleven years to find a city radically changed by the dramatic events of the new century. A rash decision quickly propels him into a complex of relationships that will expose him once more to the irresistible force of attraction, the limits of art, and the inevitability of decay.

Philip Roth: *Nemeses*: *Everyman* / *Indignation* / *The Humbling* / *Nemesis*

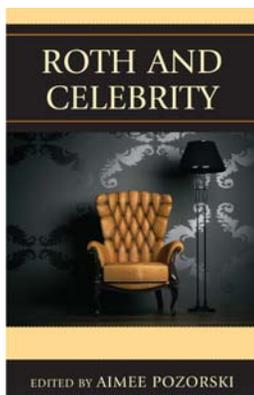


Published together for the first time as the author intended, *Nemeses* is a quartet of novels whose terrain is the human body and whose subject, the common experience that terrifies us all. *Everyman* (2006) takes its title from a classic of early English drama, whose theme is the summoning of the living to death. It tells the story of one man's lifelong skirmish with mortality, from his first shocking confrontation with death on the idyllic beaches of his childhood summers into old age, when, facing the end, he is a man who has become what he does not want to be.

Set against the backdrop of the Korean War, *Indignation* (2008) is the extraordinary narrative of Marcus Messner of Newark, New Jersey, a sophomore at conservative Winesburg College in Ohio. Aspiring to intellectual independence and sexual experience while struggling to shake off the stifling conformity of his classmates and the suffocating spectre of a father mad with fear and apprehension for his beloved boy, Messner is schooled in “the terrible, the incomprehensible way one's most banal, incidental, even comical choices achieve the most disproportionate result.”

Everything is over for Simon Axler, the protagonist of *The Humbling* (2009), Roth's thirtieth book. One of the leading American stage actors of his generation, now in his sixties, he has lost his magic, his talent, and his assurance. Into this inexplicable and terrifying self-evacuation bursts a counterplot of unusual erotic desire so risky and aberrant that it points not toward comfort and gratification but to a yet darker and more shocking end.

It is the summer of 1944 and Newark playground director Bucky Cantor is waging his own private war against a terrifying polio epidemic besieging his closely knit, family-oriented neighborhood. Focusing on Cantor's mounting dilemmas as the epidemic ravages the children he loves, *Nemesis* (2010) is a tenderly exact portrait of the emotions—fear and anger, bewilderment and grief—that spread with the contagion



Roth and Celebrity Aimee L. Pozorski (Editor)

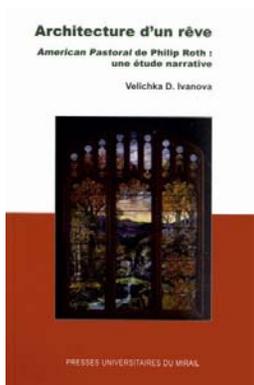
Roth and Celebrity is composed of 10 original essays that consider the vexed and ambivalent relationship between Philip Roth and his own celebrity as revealed both in personal interviews as well as in the fiction that spans his publishing history. With its simultaneous interest in American popular culture and the work of the most important living American writer to-date, the collection will hold wide appeal to advanced readers in American studies, literary scholarship, and film.

Hardcover: 220 pages

Publisher: Lexington Books; 1 edition (20 Sep 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0739170619, ISBN-13: 978-0739170618



Architecture d'un rêve. American Pastoral de Philip Roth: une étude narrative (Architecture of a Dream. A Narratological Study of Philip Roth's American Pastoral).

Velichka Ivanova

Since its publication in 1997, *American Pastoral* has brought its author immense international critical acclaim and popularity. However, and as is usually the case with each new Roth book, less enthusiastic voices were immediately heard. Some critics lamented the novel's major weakness—its haphazard narrative structure. Further, Roth was blamed for taking a conservative turn with this novel. To make things worse, accusations of misogyny flourished again.

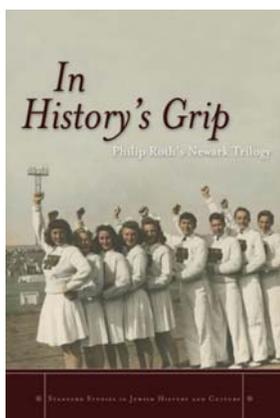
This monograph interrogates the formal aspects of *American Pastoral* which may have been insufficiently studied or misinterpreted. It analyzes the architecture of the novel, i.e. the way in which the narrative is organized. Text features are studied in conjunction with some of the effects they produce according to the author's intentions. Moreover, the meaning of the text exceeds his intention when individual readers bring in their own unique interpretations. The analysis allows one to understand the complexity of the novel and its indeterminacy: *American Pastoral* represents simultaneously the success of the American Dream and its destruction, the ideals of American democracy and its flaws.

The narratological approach provides a solid foundation for the argument, complemented by other methods of interrogation such as enunciative narratology, stylistics, pragmatics, sociocriticism, and reception. Structured into seven chapters, the study invites the reader to distinguish between the various narrative perspectives and ideological positions in the novel and to opt for dissonant, ironic readings, instead of passive identification with the (male, white) focal character Swede Levov.

146 p. Paperback.

Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2012,

ISBN 978- 2810702213.



In History's Grip: Philip Roth's Newark Trilogy Michael Kimmage

In History's Grip concentrates on the literature of Philip Roth, one of America's greatest writers, and in particular on *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*. Each of these novels from the 1990s uses Newark, New Jersey, to explore American history and character. Each features a protagonist who grows up in and then leaves Newark, after which he is undone by a historically generated crisis. The city's twentieth-century decline from immigrant metropolis to postindustrial disaster completes the motif of history and its terrifying power over individual destiny.

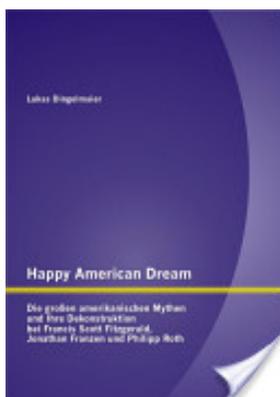
In History's Grip is the first critical study to foreground the city of Newark as the source of Roth's inspiration, and to scrutinize a subject Roth was accused of avoiding as a younger writer—history. In so doing, the book brings together the two halves of Roth's decades-long career: the first featuring characters who live outside of history's grip; the second, characters entrapped in historical patterns beyond their ken and control.

Publisher: Stanford University Press (15 Aug 2012)

Format: Hardcover and Kindle Edition

Print Length: 213 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0804781826



Happy American Dream: Die großen amerikanischen Mythen und Ihre Dekonstruktion bei Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Jonathan Franzen und Philipp Roth Lukas Dingelmaier

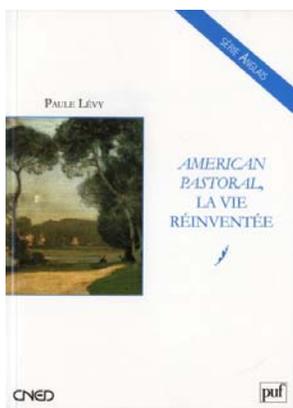
We focus on the presentation and the deconstruction of three American myths in three great novels of the 20th Century. The Works: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *American Pastoral* by Philip Roth and *The Corrections* by Jonathan Franzen. The myths discussed are the 'American Dream' – With the sub-myths 'self-made man', 'upward mobility', 'from rags to riches', 'land of endless opportunities' and 'the frontier' – the 'happy American family' and 'manifest destiny' / 'American exceptionalism'.

Paperback: 108 pages

Publisher: Diplomica Verlag (9 Nov 2012)

Language: German

ISBN-10: 384288964X, ISBN-13: 978-3842889644



American Pastoral, la vie réinventée
Paule Lévy

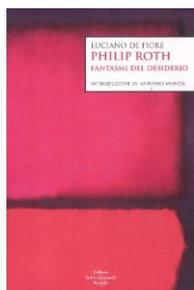
An analysis of Philip Roth's Novel, *American Pastoral*.

Paperback

Publisher: Presses Universitaires de France - PUF (27 April 2012)

Language: French

ISBN-10: 2130591892, ISBN-13: 978-2130591894



Philip Roth. Fantasmi del desiderio
Luciano De Fiore

The first Italian monograph on the contemporary writer Philip Roth.

Paperback

Publisher: Editori Riuniti (1 Jan 2012)

Language: Italian

ISBN-10: 8835991536, ISBN-13: 978-8835991533

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.

Bibliographies

Royal, Derek Parker*. "Annual Bibliography of Philip Roth Criticism and Resources – 2011." *Philip Roth Studies* 8.2 (2012): 227-34.

Books: Monographs

Avishai, Bernard. *Promiscuous: Portnoy's Complaint and Our Doomed Pursuit of Happiness*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2012.

Kimmage, Michael. *In History's Grip: Philip Roth's Newark Trilogy*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012.

Book Chapters

Chevereşan, Cristina. "Fairytale Gone Bad: Failures of Romance in Philip Roth's Short Novels." *Romance: The History of a Genre*. Ed. Dana Percec. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012. 133-48.

Esteve, Mary. "Postwar Pastoral: The Art of Happiness in Philip Roth." *American Literature's Aesthetic Dimensions*. Ed. Cindy Weinstein and Christopher Looby. New York: Columbia UP, 2012: 328-48.

Leonard, John. "Philip Roth's *Patrimony*." *Reading for My Life: Writings, 1958-2008*. New York: Viking, 2008. 122-23.

Rampton, David. "The Ethical Turn: Ageing in Late Roth." *Acculturating Age: Approaches to Cultural Gerontology*. Ed. Brian J. Worsfold. Lérida, Spain: Universitat de Lleida, 2011. 297-312.

Wolff, Martina. "Self, Identity and Terrorism in Current American Literature: *American Pastoral* and *Terrorist*." *Literature and Terrorism: Comparative Perspectives*. Ed. Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012: 103-22.

Journal Articles

Basu, Ann.* "Before the Law: *Operation Shylock: A Confession*." *Philip Roth Studies* 8.2 (2012): 178-95.

Duban, James.* "'That Butcher, Imagination': Arthur Koestler and the Bisociated Narration of Philip Roth's *Indignation*." *Philip Roth Studies* 8.2 (2012): 145-60.

— "To Dazzle as Macbeth: Bisociated Drama in Philip Roth's *The Humbling*." *Comparative Drama* 46.1 (2012): 1-16.

Hobbs, Alex. "Family and the Renegotiation of Masculine Identity in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*." *Journal of American Studies* 46.1 (2012): 121-37.

Kaminsky, Inbar. "Jewish Mischief in the Land of Pranks: The Mistranslation of Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* into Hebrew." *Philip Roth Studies* 8.2 (2012): 197-208.

Levine, Andrea. "Embodying Jewishness at the Millennium." *Shofar* 30.1 (2011): 31-52.

Newlin, James.* "Living on the Edge: Deconstruction, the Limits of Readability, and Philip Roth's *The Counterlife*." *Philip Roth Studies* 8.2 (2012): 161-77.

Ogden, Benjamin H.* "Formal Antagonisms: How Philip Roth Writes Nathan Zuckerman." *Studies in American Fiction* 39.1 (2012): 87-101.

Slivka, Jennifer A.* "History and the 'I' Trapped in the Middle: Negotiating the Past in Roth's *The Ghost Writer* and *The Plot Against America*." *Philip Roth Studies* 8.2 (2012): 127-44.

Sundquist, Eric J. "Philip Roth's Holocaust." *Hopkins Review* 5.2 (2012): 226-56.

Philip Roth Studies Wins CELJ Award

Philip Roth Studies is proud to announce that it is the recipient of an Honorable Mention for the 2012 Best Special Issue Award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals. The awarded was specifically for the Spring 2012, "Roth and Women," special issue (volume 8, number 1). Derek Parker Royal, the executive editor of the journal, wishes to thank the entire editorial team for a job well done. And a very special thanks goes to David Gooblar, the guest editor of the special issue, for pulling everything together.



The Honorable Mention award was given on January 4, in Boston, at the 128th annual Modern Language Association Convention. It was accepted at the CELJ ceremony by the guest editor, David Gooblar.



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

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