



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

Vol. 3 No. 1

Spring 2005

A Message From the Society's President

Derek Parker Royal

Much has happened since the last *Philip Roth Society Newsletter*, both within the society itself and in Roth studies at large. The most significant event is the publication of *The Plot Against America*, a novel that has received an immense amount of critical attention and one that has put Roth firmly back on the bestseller list. True to the author's reputation, the novel has generated quite a bit of controversy, some of which you will see excerpted in this issue of the newsletter.

And if all the "Best Books of 2004" end-of-the-year retrospectives are any indication-the National Book Awards fiasco notwithstanding (Rick Moody has now secured the ire of Roth fans for years to come)-this novel is sure to come into its share of literary awards, or at least nominations. There is even talk of the novel being nominated for the grand prize in science fiction literature, the Hugo Award!

In terms of our work within the Philip Roth Society, there is much to report. With this issue of the newsletter, I am pleased to welcome Joseph Kraus to

its editorial reigns. Joe brings a strong résumé with him - among other accomplishments, he served as editor of *Chicago Jewish History* for six years - and I look forward to him taking this newsletter in exciting new directions. As newsletter editor, Joe will also serve as one of the executive officers of the Philip Roth Society, as per our society's constitution.

This spring we will be publishing the inaugural issue of *Philip Roth Studies*, our new peer-reviewed semiannual scholarly journal. Back in August we worked out an arrangement with Heldref Publications - nonprofit publisher of such prestigious journals as *Critique*, *ANQ*, *The Explicator*, and *Symposium* - where they will now be the ones, with the cooperation of the Philip Roth Society, officially publishing the journal. This is great news indeed, for now we have almost 50-years-worth of financial and editorial experience behind the journal, assuring it more exposure and a wider readership than if the Roth Society had published it on its own. You'll find more

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About the Philip Roth Society

Founded in July 2002, the Philip Roth Society is an organization devoted to the study and the appreciation of the writings of Philip Roth. Its goal is to encourage the exchange of ideas and texts concerning this most significant author through discussions, panel presentations at scholarly conferences, and journal publications. In order to accomplish this, the Society provides a membership newsletter, a refereed journal devoted to Roth scholarship, a Roth Society listserv group, information concerning upcoming events, calls for papers devoted to Roth's fiction, an extensive list of bibliographical resources, and a growing directory of organizational membership. The Society welcomes both academic and non-academic readers alike. The Philip Roth Society is a non-profit community of readers and scholars and has no official affiliation with either Philip Roth or his publishers.

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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. Disks in Word or email submissions are appreciated. For submissions or queries contact Joe Kraus, Editor, *Philip Roth Society Newsletter*, Department of English, The University of Scranton, Scranton, PA 18510
email: krausj2@scranton.edu

Editor
Joe Kraus
The University of Scranton

Managing Editor
Amanda Siegfried

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

**Calls for Papers**

To publicize a call for papers, lecture, or general events related to Philip Roth, contact the Philip Roth Society at events@rothsociety.org. When deadlines expire in calls for papers, the event will be listed as an "upcoming event."

Special issue of *Philip Roth Studies*: Philip Roth and Race

Philip Roth Studies, the semi-annual journal of the Philip Roth Society, invites submissions for a special issue of the journal on Philip Roth and Race, due out in Spring 2006. For this special issue of *Philip Roth Studies*, we will explore how Roth uses, produces, or subverts the idea of race, from the racial status of Jews, to the relationship between blacks and Jews, to marked status of Roth's own work as a Jewish American author.

Many critics have already addressed Roth's "American Trilogy," so we are particularly interested in essays that work with Roth's earlier novels, or which analyze early works in light of Roth's recent work. We encourage essays that explore the racial status of Jews; the presence of racial others in the novels; the idea of pluralism and multiculturalism in relation to race; the historical backdrop of the Civil Rights movement; the nexus of race, sexuality, and gender; and international racial ideologies and politics. We particularly encourage essays that draw on the study of race in other fields—e.g., Asian American, African American, Whiteness, or Postcolonial and Diaspora studies, or which situate Roth in a multi-ethnic context.

Essays should be 4000-8000 words, prepared in MLA format. Submit by July 1, 2005, by mail or as an attached document in MS Word format to:

Dean Franco
P.O. Box 7387 Reynolda Station
Winston Salem, NC 27109-7387
francodj@wfu.edu

New Book Collection of Essays - Philip Roth's America

I'm looking for essays focusing on Philip Roth's conceptions of America in the past fifteen years. These are for a book-length collection of essays, tentatively titled *Philip Roth's America*, and would accompany many of the essays found in the 2004 annual volume of *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, Vol. 23, one devoted exclusively to Philip Roth's most recent fiction. I'm particularly interested in essays devoted to *Sabbath's Theater*, *The Dying Animal* and especially *The Plot Against America*. Thematic and theoretical focus on these novels is open, as long as the central concern is Roth's engagement with America.

Completed essays are preferred, but detailed abstracts on a project-in-progress are also welcome. Final essays should be 5000-6000 words. Deadline for submissions is open. Submissions can be emailed (as an attached MS Word file) or sent via the USPS. Contact:

Derek P. Royal
Department of Literature and Languages
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Commerce, TX 75429-3011 USA
Email: derek_royal@tamu-commerce.edu

Book Collection of Essays Devoted to Philip Roth as a Comic Writer

We are looking for essays that specifically deal with Philip Roth as a comic writer. The “comic” here can be approached as ironic, satiric, wry, burlesque, mockery, etc. Contributions can deal with a general comic theme and preferably focus on a specific work or works. All contributions should be formatted using the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. For more information concerning this project, especially in terms of potential contributions, please contact either: Ben Siegel at BSiegel@CSUPomona.edu or Jay L.Halio at jlhalio@yahoo.com

Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture Conference

Louisville, KY (February 24-26, 2005)

The Philip Roth Society will sponsor two panels at the thirty-third annual Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture Conference. This is an international event, and it is sponsored by the University of Louisville’s Dept. of English and the Dept. of Classical and Modern Languages. For more information on the conference visit its Web site, <http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/cml/xxconf/>.

American Literature Association Conference

Boston, MA (May 26-29, 2005)

The Philip Roth Society will sponsor two panel events at the annual American Literature Association Conference. This year, we will hold a panel on the topic of Philip Roth and his representation of women as well as a discussion roundtable on his new novel, *The Plot Against America*. The Roth Society will also be holding its annual business meeting, an event that all society members are encouraged to attend. Plans are also in the works for a Roth Society-sponsored social at the ALA Conference, but the details are tentative. Updates for Roth Society events at the ALA will be listed on the society’s Web site, <http://rothsociety.org>. For more information on the ALA Conference, visit the ALA Web site at <http://americanliterature.org>.

Philip Roth Studies

Philip Roth Studies is a new, peer-reviewed journal published by Heldref Publications in cooperation with the Philip Roth Society, and we welcome all writing pertaining entirely or in part to Philip Roth, his fiction, and his literary and cultural significance. Upcoming articles include “Trials and Errors at the Turn of the Millennium: On *The Human Stain* and J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*,” “Philip Roth’s ‘Defender of the Faith’: A Modern Midrash,” “Dream or a Nightmare?: Contrasting the Depictions of Post-Civil Rights America in Philip Roth’s *American Pastoral* and Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*,” and “The Story of the Self: Philip Roth’s Progression toward *The Counterlife*.”

Submission details. The journal welcomes both full-length articles as well as shorter notes. Articles should be between 4,000-8,000 words, and notes should not exceed 2,500 words. A brief abstract (approximately 50 words) should accompany each submission. Manuscripts and book reviews must be prepared according to the *MLA Style Manual*, 2nd ed. (1998) by Joseph Gibaldi and should contain endnotes rather than footnotes. Electronic submissions via email (as attached Word files) are particularly welcome. If sending through regular mail, please submit two copies of the manuscript, with author identification on a separate cover sheet. Works accepted for publication must be supplied both in paper and electronic format (Microsoft Word).

Address submissions to:

Derek P. Royal

Executive Editor, *Philip Roth Studies*
 Department of Literature and Languages
 Texas A&M University-Commerce
 Commerce, TX 75429-3011 USA
 Email: derek_royal@tamu-commerce.edu
<http://www.heldref.org/roth.php>

Abstracts from Papers Delivered at Recent Conferences

An asterisk * indicates that scholar is a member of the Philip Roth Society

American Literature Association/Jewish American and Holocaust Literature Symposium, October 13-17, 2004, Boca Raton, Florida

Philip Roth Society Panel I: New Perspectives on the American Trilogy

Moderator: *Derek Parker Royal

Andrea Levine - George Washington University

“Transnational Roth: The Domestic, the “Foreign,” and the Writing of Gender Relations in “Goodbye, Columbus” and *American Pastoral*”

Already in *Goodbye, Columbus*, the work of Philip Roth reveals intimate linkages between representations of gender at “home” and the logic of transnationalism. When Brenda Patimkin first invites Neil Klugman to her family’s country club, Neil takes care to distinguish Brenda from her milieu: Among the other women, with their Cuban heels and boned-up breasts, their knuckle-sized rings, their straw hats, which resembled immense wicker plates and had been purchased, as I heard one deeply tanned woman rasp, “from the cutest little schvartze when we docked at Barbados,” Brenda among them was elegantly simple, like a sailor’s dream of a Polynesian maiden, albeit one with prescription sun glasses and the last name of Patimkin.

Neil’s critique of the woman’s style, her sharp-edged gaudy excess, encompasses his implicit censure of her casual racism. Her ridiculous hat actually emerges from her particular brand of Caribbean tourism, which depends upon her construction of pliant Barbadian natives. In championing Brenda’s “elegant simpl[icity],” Neil also exempts her from this particular ideological critique. Brenda, instead, is a “sailor’s dream of a Polynesian maiden.” While such a dream certainly has its roots in conceptions of “exotic” Southeast Asian women, the image is explicitly coded as a fantasy; Brenda herself is not implicated in actual colonial encounters here. Brenda’s desirability, then, is rooted in part in her remove from reality, from the kind of problematic conjunction between domestic and transnational racial politics that the “deeply tanned woman’s” comment reveals.

By the time he writes *American Pastoral* (1997), Roth has developed a more complex reading of the relationship between the forces of transnationalism and the idealized domestic realm that Swede Levov so disastrously seeks to create. In my paper, I argue that the “America” of *American Pastoral* is embedded in global relations that Swede, to his detriment, seeks resolutely to contain or deny. Swede’s crumbling Newark is haunted by the shadows of globalization, of course, as one by one, its factories abandon urban New Jersey for Asia and Eastern Europe. But Swede imagines that the house he buys in rural Old Rimrock, far from the close-in Jewish suburbs his father has chosen for him, will be a de-ethnicized, exclusively “American” province. In Old Rimrock, Swede realizes the fantasy of his teenage years, when he had spent his Friday nights wondering which beautiful local girl he would ensconce in the stone house he coveted. Swede’s “all-American” fantasy, that is, clearly delineates gendered family relations as well.

Swede’s domestic idyll fails to fulfill its promise, however, and when his daughter, Merry, bombs the local post office in an effort to protest the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, Swede tries to locate the sources of her violence. Remembering Merry’s childhood fascination with the Buddhist monks who immolated themselves to show their opposition to the war, he figures her fascination explicitly as a kind of “alien” invasion:

Out of nowhere and into their home . . . into their home on Arcady Hill Road the charred and blackened corpse on its back in that empty street. That was what had done it. Into their home the monk came to stay, the Buddhist monk calmly sitting out his burning up as though he were a man both fully alert and anesthetized.

Swede’s Arcadia has been vandalized by a “foreign” response to an American incursion, and nothing will ever be the same. I argue that from the Swede’s early obsessions with the events unfolding in the Pacific Theater

of Operations, to his much later encounter with an emaciated Merry, who “could have been not fifty miles east of Old Rimrock but in Delhi or Calcutta,” global forces shape crucial linkages between gender and the American national identity that Swede seeks futilely to detach from any transnational - or ethnic - context.

In addition to making a contribution to Roth scholarship, my paper considers the importance of reading Jewish American literature from a transnational perspective that is not defined solely by the notion of the Jewish diaspora.

Sarah Bylund - Brigham Young University

“Merry Levov’s BLT Crusade: Rebellious (Dis)Empowerment Through Food in Roth’s *American Pastoral*”

In Philip Roth’s *American Pastoral*, the “post-Jewish” American protagonist, Seymour Levov (“the Swede”), lives the charmed, American pastoral life. He is an all-star athlete with prodigious strength and good looks who enlists in the Marines but is spared going to war, joins his father’s glove-making business, and marries a “post-Catholic” Irish beauty queen. However, via his narrator’s prodigious, omniscient imagination, Roth rewrites the idealized, golden age of early twentieth-century America: the Swede becomes “history’s plaything” because his sweet daughter, Meredith (Merry), evolves into a anti-war, anti-American radical who



Andrea Levine, Tara Johnson and Sarah Bylund in Boca Raton, Fla.

blows a total of four people to kingdom come. Notably, Merry’s murderous actions lead the Swede to ask “Why are things the way they are?” only to discover that this is the “question to which there is no answer, and up till [the moment when Merry’s bomb kills the town doctor] he was so blessed he didn’t even know the question existed.” In all honesty, up until I had plowed my way beyond the first third of the novel, I admired and sympathized with the Swede and possessed only a vague notion of Merry’s purpose.

Merry - raised during a time which Ellen Key termed “the century of the child” - ultimately suffers from a particularly virulent strain of emerging postmodernism. She joins a chaotic counterculture that combats the complacent affluence of her parents and patriarchal American society in general because both parties cling fast to bourgeoisie, capitalist aspirations and hope to compel other nations to embrace identical values and dreams. Unsurprisingly, food and the act of consumption play a major part in the development of Merry’s character.

Driven to extremes by a sense of middle-class guilt and a sense of having been maddeningly denied independence and power in a patriarchal culture, Merry Levov harnesses food as one way to address this crisis of pastoral complacency in an inchoate postmodern era. Essentially, she wields her relationship with food as a weapon of rebellious empowerment to secure autonomy from her oh-so-perfect, smother-loving family and from societal expectations and values. Moreover, she discovers that altering her eating habits imbues her with a political authority because it facilitates her rejection of and attack on capitalism as well as fortifies her against the aspartame appeal of the home she has cast aside as just so much beautifully formed yet inedible plastic fruit. The morally-inscribed political battle Merry fights through food (and homemade bombs) degenerates into extreme self-denial and self-starvation guided by the religious tenets of Jainism - a belief system that is highly distinct from traditional Western creeds. She plunges herself into a toxic broth of self-destructive starvation, ultimately becoming “chaos itself”, the very thing she had so desperately hungered to diffuse in places such as

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Viet Nam. Truly, weighing not quite ninety pounds, Merry is now enslaved by food rather than freed by it. My contention is that her anti-American rebellion, notably aided and abetted by food, ultimately leads to an ironic relentless dissolution of her selfhood. Essentially, her decision to become a Jain transforms her into a female, postmodern version of a Wandering Jew - a dirty, frail, homeless, deluded, and yet somehow immortal embodiment of chaos. In the end, the relentless dissolution of her selfhood is rather to be expected because she violently works to rupture the pastoral narrative about America (rooted in modern notions of capitalism, progress and flattering salvific metanarratives) only to replace it with another totalizing one.

Tara Johnson - Ball State University*Jewish Dreams of Success in America in Philip Roth's *I Married a Communist* and *The Ghost Writer***

Critics generally separate *I Married a Communist* and *The Ghost Writer* as the first novels of Philip Roth's American trilogy and Zuckerman trilogy respectively. Together, both novels provide insights into Roth's often-considered alter ego Nathan Zuckerman. *I Married a Communist* details Zuckerman's adolescent struggle with his father over his preference for American rather than Jewish culture and how Zuckerman as a second-generation Jewish American son carves an identity that is unique from his father's. Zuckerman's adolescent conflict in *I Married a Communist* explains him as a twenty-three year old in *The Ghost Writer*. Both novels focus on the theme of Jewish American identity and Zuckerman's struggles with his father's cultural assumptions.

With *I Married a Communist* and *The Ghost Writer*, Roth particularly shows the struggle between the first generation and the second generation of Jewish Americans. Roth's criticism of the first generation's limited mindset is revealed in the character of Zuckerman's father. Zuckerman's father believes that his sons should have professional careers. His youngest son Henry decides to become a dentist instead of an actor because of his father's pressure. However, his oldest son Nathan challenges his father's expectations by choosing to go to college but to study literature and creative writing. Nathan's success as a writer discredits his father's opinion that he cannot be successful unless he follows the first generation's plan for success. Zuckerman's father cannot understand the importance of literature and high art because he can only understand writing as a practical career choice, such as being the editor-in-chief of a well-known newspaper. Zuckerman's father believes that his sons have to work harder to be successful because they are Jewish and therefore subject to prejudice from gentile Americans in school and in the workplace.



Andy Furman, left, and Derek Royal in Boca Raton, Fla.

Philip Roth Society Panel II: Taking on *The Plot Against America*

Moderator: *Andy Furman

Derek Parker Royal - Texas A&M University-Commerce*“Plotting America in *The Plot Against America*”**

By directly linking postmodern assumptions of identity (individual, collective, and generic) to a profound awareness of historical contingency, Philip Roth in *The Plot Against America* has written what Linda Hutcheon has termed historiographic metafiction, a kind of writing that holds both the content and the form of historical texts open to scrutiny, thereby demonstrating their similarities to fiction. And while one could argue that

historiographic metafiction is nothing new to Roth's writing, never before has Philip Roth demonstrated with such intensity the discursive nature of historical narrative as he does in *The Plot Against America*. By rewriting the events of 1940-1942, and by intermingling fictional and nonfictional elements, Roth is drawing our attention not only to the ways in which we tell stories, but also to the strategies that are employed to make our stories believable as "fact" - or, in other words, and using phrasing that Roth has himself employed, how the written world is central to our understanding of the unwritten world. If in the American Trilogy Roth points out the ways in which individual identities are shaped by history, then in *The Plot Against America* he shows how our national story, much like identity, is shaped by authorial agency. What we have, then, is a novel that projects America as text, a series of icons and symbols that are malleable and open to both manipulation and interpretation. In this way, the book is a part of what the novelist has been doing his entire career. However, in *The Plot Against America* there is one difference: instead of textualizing American history, Philip Roth is showing us how America is textualized. So it might be that the "plot" against, or even for, America is not necessarily a fascist-inspired one, but one that is always/already being hatched by writers themselves.

***Elaine B. Safer - University of Delaware**

"*The Plot Against America: Paranoia or Possibility?*"

In 1961, Roth claimed to be jealous of American reality because it was topping his fiction: "It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's meager imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents, and the culture tosses up figures almost daily that are the envy of any novelist." In *The Plot Against America*, Roth uses his dazzling talent to present a counterfactual history that seems even more "weird and astonishing," more "fantastic," more bizarre than the actual events of the years prior to WWII. The satire is a warning. It satirizes the fearful complacency of Americans in the face of an increasingly autocratic administration that encourages anti-Semitism. Like Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*, *The Plot* is a fable with a moral, i.e., a warning. Both are political allegories but



Elaine Safer and Andy Furman in Boca Raton, Fla.

Lewis's, and one might add Orwell's *1984* and Malamud's *God's Grace*, present what may happen in the future. Roth addresses things that might have happened in the past. Lewis, Orwell, and Malamud describe remote fictional characters. Roth dramatically personalizes the story with the introduction of his own family. *The Plot* draws attention to the disparity between ideals of equality and the fear, reticence, and submissive actions of the people who fail to speak out because they are afraid of the consequences. In *The Plot*, Roth presents an ironic counterfactual history whose ramifications are distressingly painful, much more so than the *tzouris* arising from counterselves in so many of his other novels. The creative imagination, the "fantasy" of Lindbergh's presidency is more bizarre than the factual history. American reality no longer is topping fiction.

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Abstracts - continued from page 7**Philip Roth Society Panel III: Re-Viewing the Fiction of Philip Roth****Moderator: Andrew Gordon*****Dean Franco - Wake Forest University.****“Experience, Objectivity, and Postmodernism in Philip Roth’s *Operation Shylock*”**

Tim Parrish, left, and Dean Franco in Boca Raton, Fla.

This is a paper which considers the post-modernity of Roth’s novel beyond the conclusions reached in recent criticism by Galchinsky, Omer-Sherman, and Rubin-Dorsky. Current criticism focuses on Roth’s valorization or critique of Israel and the American Jewish diaspora. For example, Omer-Sherman calls *Operation Shylock* a “lamentation” for the lost opportunities of Jews in America, while Rubin-Dorsky points to Roth’s work as a celebration of the variegated Jewish American experience. However, instead of reading through Roth’s novel for a thesis on Zionism and American Jewish culture, I propose reading the novel as an epistemological performative, a narrative act of knowing what it means to be Jewish precisely through its own self-

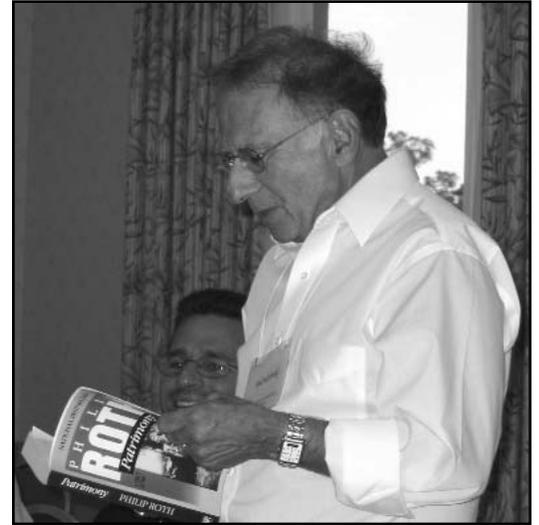
reflection and intertextuality. I argue that the novel disavows the burdensome nostalgia of the Jewish past and posits an ornery sort of Jewish “now,” a radically present way of being Jewish. I expand on Sidra Ezrahi’s conclusions about Roth’s diasporism, arguing that for Roth, diasporism is methodology for critiquing race, politics, and nationalism - modes of being - positing a Jewish “otherwise than being” instead.

My argument borrows from Paula Moya’s recent work on “post-positivist objectivity,” so I briefly summarize her thesis. Moya proposes that ethnic Americans have a privileged vantage point on cultural experience, and that ethnic narratives often enact a self-reflexive analysis of experience that is functionally objective (rather than hyper-relative), and serviceable for mainstream critique. In the case of Roth’s novel, passage between Israel and the US facilitates this self-reflexivity. I find several short-comings to Moya’s thesis, which I shore up by borrowing from Jonathan Boyarin’s idea of a “critical post-Judaism.” I then examine how in Roth’s novel, the self-reflexive performance of experience produces an objective ethnic consciousness, rather than a hyper-subjective response to Jewish American culture.

Joel Salzberg - University of Colorado at Denver, Emeritus*“Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel”: Or, the Question of Empathy in the Fiction of Philip Roth**

The earliest responses to Philip Roth’s short-story collection *Goodbye, Columbus* (his first published book, 1959) at best engendered in his readers ambivalent feelings of empathy for the author and his stories and at worst elicited condemnation by some rabbis for Roth’s reputed distortion of the Jewish-American experience. Predictably, such responses extended to such subsequent fiction as *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969) and the early Zuckerman stories. Indeed, Irving Howe, an iconic critic of Jewish-American literature and culture, acerbically remarked: “At times the note of disgust is sounded in full as . . . a nasty joke about a middle-aged man’s hapless effort to revive his sexuality.” In his own defense, Roth lucidly and lovingly explained to his detractors that the character of Lou Epstein (in “Epstein,” GC) had “been conceived with considerable affection and sympathy” - in short, empathy. Such early examples of Roth’s capacity for empathy were indeed hard to find in his subsequent fiction of the sixties and seventies, when Roth’s comic imagination turned Rabelaisian and gave license to such works as *Portnoy’s Complaint* and the early Zuckerman stories. In the very nature of their generic characteristics,

such hyperbolic mock autobiographies were inherently antithetical to reader empathy. As Roth entered what might be called his “major phase” in art and life, he began to explore another side of his art, the tragic mode, illustrated by such powerful works as *Patrimony* (1991), *American Pastoral* (1997), *The Human Stain* (2000), and *The Plot Against America* (2004). Correspondingly, his writing produced a new and more complex empathetic relationship involving Roth, his surrogate Nathan Zuckerman, and Zuckerman’s relationship to his characters; in *The Plot Against America*, however, the dynamics of empathy shifts to the reader’s direct relationship to an unmasked Philip Roth, as he remembers a childhood both real and imagined and shared by contemporaries of his generation.



Joel Salzberg in Boca Raton, Fla.

Tim Parrish - Texas Christian University
“Pictures of Roth and Malamud”

This paper looks at how Roth has constructed Bernard Malamud as a father-artist figure to be both venerated and desecrated. Roth’s involvement goes back to his beginnings as a writer when he and Malamud were awarded National Book Awards in the late 50s. When Roth came to tell a version of how he became an artist in the Zuckerman Bound trilogy, he based Zuckerman’s father figure, Lonoff, on Malamud. Against Roth’s image of Malamud as a stern moralist dedicated to an aesthetic of the ascetic, Roth fashioned Zuckerman (and the character known as “Roth” as well) as a comic foil intent on undermining received Jewish cultural pieties. In his essay “Pictures of Malamud” Roth gives a harrowing account of Malamud’s end as a writer. Framing Malamud as if he were a character in a Bernard Malamud story being written by Philip Roth, Roth portrays Malamud’s death as Roth’s worst nightmare: the writer who no longer has strength to give pages to his voice. The unkindness that Roth perhaps does to Malamud is perhaps redeemed by the knowledge that in this essay Malamud is Roth’s projection of his own worst fear. In light of Roth’s tremendous success since Malamud’s death in 1986, one may wonder to what extent Malamud has remained in Roth’s imagination, prodding him on.

(Jewish) Acts of Autoethnography:
Moderator: Maria Assif

***Ben Siegel - California Polytechnic University at Pomona**
“Bellow, Roth, and Doctorow: Facts and Fancy, Fiction and Autobiography”

Three of the most prominent contemporary American writers are Saul Bellow, E.L. Doctorow, and Philip Roth. These three novelists like to tease their readers by presenting protagonists who often strongly resemble themselves in terms of time and place, age and circumstance. In other words, the basic details of their protagonists’ lives strongly parallel their own. But when questioned by interviewers about the similarities, each novelist will reply that while he may have borrowed certain details from his own life, he should not be confused with his hero or his hero with him. What these writers are doing then is underscoring the interplay between fact and fiction, history and literature, the real and imaginative, and often between the present and past. And because they are Jewish, they frequently will draw from the general Jewish experience in America.

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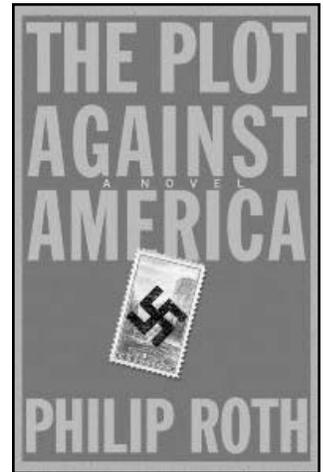
Reviewing the Reviews

Excerpts of Selected Opinions of *The Plot Against America*

The Plot Against America has been one of the most widely reviewed novels of the last decade. Many leading publications have run two or even three reviews, making it easy to imagine the many reporters who pleaded with their editors for an opportunity to have their say about it and reflecting a widespread sense that the novel touches many different nerves.

A handful of critics have hailed the book as a masterpiece, and perhaps just as many have expressed their outright disappointment with it. The clear majority, however, seem still to be wrestling with it. Roughly half of that majority seem interested in putting *Plot* into the larger context of Roth's career while the other half seem more concerned with reflecting how it interprets the presidency of George W. Bush in a broader historical light.

What follows are brief excerpts from 29 recent reviews. The excerpts are taken somewhat idiosyncratically; most reflect the larger thesis of the review, but a few are provocative asides or simply well-put observations. - *Joe Kraus*



Greil Marcus - *Los Angeles Times*, 9/22/04

After Roth's death, when his supremacy as the most commanding novelist of his time will suddenly seem easily questionable, [*The Plot Against America*] may be dismissed as the paranoid fantasy of a Jew who, it will then be possible to say, had Jews on the brain - a very distinguished ethnic novelist who was not, perhaps, an American novelist at all. In the canon of Roth's novels, *The Plot Against America* may come to seem slight, like...*The Great American Novel*, his fantasy history of a third major league, and so forgotten. That might even be the best fate for *The Plot Against America*-because then, someday, some unwarned reader, with no reason to respect it, will come upon the book and discover that, whatever else it is, it is a fabulous yarn.

Michiko Kakatuni - *New York Times*, 9/21/04

While the author tries, as he did in his "American Trilogy" novels (*American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*), to turn a wide-angled camera lens on the United States by creating a parable about the loss of innocence and the costs of "the indigenous American berserk," *The Plot Against America* hurries toward a preposterous (albeit clever) ending and takes place in a political landscape that seems cartoony in the extreme - a sort of high-

concept, comic-book landscape that might work in a big-screen extravaganza or satiric potboiler but that feels oddly flimsy here, especially when foregrounded by characters as realistic and psychologically vivid as members of the Roth family.

Joan Acocella - *The New Yorker*, 9/20/04

In Roth's novels, this relentless cautioning is usually done by parents. The sons, most of whom are writers, rebel, and produce comic novels about their elders. For this, guilt is heaped upon them. "Jewish morality, Jewish endurance, Jewish wisdom, Jewish families - everything is grist for your fun-machine," Zuckerman's brother says to him. If you were Philip Roth, caught up throughout your career in this quarrel, and you wanted to make your peace, what could you do? Write a novel about how the Jewish parents were right all along. Produce a book about an American pogrom.

Gavandra Hodge - [*London*] *Evening Standard*, 9/27/04

Roth has made haste to deny that he has written a parable for present times, but the spectre of a grinning politician who gladhands his way to victory on a ticket of American supremacism is too proximate to be ignored, and Roth is too honest a writer to ignore it.

Ron Charles - *Christian Science Monitor*, 9/28/04

Once again, Philip Roth has published a novel that you must read - now. It's not that an appreciation of his book depends on the political climate; our appreciation of the political climate depends on his book. During a bitterly contested election in a time of war against an amorphous enemy, *The Plot Against America* inspires exactly the kind of discussion we need.

David Ulin - *Los Angeles Times*, 9/28/04

Roth was vilified by many Jewish readers. During a 1962 talk at New York's Yeshiva University, he was even asked: "Mr. Roth, would you write the same stories you've written if you were living in Nazi Germany?" In a certain sense, Roth's new novel, *The Plot Against America*, ...offers a response to that question, albeit at a distance of 42 years. Here, after all, Roth imagines not Nazi Germany, but Nazi America.

Adam Kirsch - *New York Sun*, 9/27/04

No writer has done more than Mr. Roth to satirize the anxiety of Jews confronted with anti-Semitism, the totalizing logic that sees in an idle insult the prelude to pogroms and concentration camps. Everything that makes Mr. Roth a great novelist - his rage, his subversive comedy, and his slipperiness - is a protest against that fear, and against the values it breeds: caution, diplomacy, anxious respectability.... *The Plot Against America* is a startling book because it shows Mr. Roth appearing to agree, for the first time in his career, with all those inner and outer voices of caution.

Sean O'Hagan - [London] *Observer*, 9/26/04

Roth's abiding theme is the impact of history on the individual. In *American Pastoral*, which may be his masterpiece, he tackles homegrown terrorism, the kind that grew out of Sixties radicalism rather than Eighties survivalism, and the psychic havoc a daughter's single act of politically motivated violence wreaks on her father's life. In *I Married a Communist*, he considers personal betrayal, and dissects the lingering damage done to democracy, and to individual lives, by McCarthyism. In *The Human Stain*, his

subjects are political correctness, race, old age, and the chaotic, but re-energising, power of chemically driven sexual desire. While newer talents such as Don DeLillo and Jonathan Franzen have been praised for their attempts to create the *Great American Novel* for our times, Roth, without fuss or fanfare, has written four of them in the last decade. And, in his seventh decade.

David Flusfelder - [London] *Daily Telegraph*, 9/25/04

Roth's best history has been done when he has confronted his American characters or imagined other selves with incarnations from doomed Europe: as in *The Ghost Writer* (1979), where Zuckerman meets a hysterical version of Anne Frank; or in a story from 1973, where the kindly but ridiculous Dr. Kafka teaches Hebrew in post-war Newark and is an unsatisfying suitor to Philip's aunt Rhoda. These confrontations take place on a dizzying number of levels of irony, most of which aren't present in "Lindbergh's peacetime America, the autonomous fortress oceans away from the world's war zones where no one is in jeopardy except us."

Josh Lambert, *National Post* [of Canada], 9/25/04

Reading *The Plot Against America* as a Canadian, in light of Canada's appalling Second World War-era immigration record, and only months after the fire-bombing of a Montreal Jewish school, one can only hope that Roth is right when he imagines our country wouldn't have fallen in line with a pro-Nazi America. A less flattering role for Canada is hardly unimaginable. With Lindbergh in the White House, might self-proclaimed Canadian fuhrer Adrien Arcand have risen to prime minister as leader of the National Unity Party?

Laura Miller - *Salon*, 9/29/04

Sexual persecution is the specter that really winds Roth's watch, but in an era of gay marriage and openly polyamorous households, it's hard to find a situation in which a heterosexual male of conventional proclivities can feel truly ostracized as a result of his sexuality. As a result, Roth has had to contrive some pretty preposterous scenarios, populated by an

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assortment of straw-man oppressors, in order to maneuver his main characters into a position in which they can be unjustly tormented.

William H. Pritchard - *Boston Globe*, 9/26/04

Sabbath's Theater is the Roth novel whose verbal life is most extravagant and disruptive. By contrast, extravagance in *The Plot Against America* is located not in the language but in the fable (it might be called a very tall tale) that replaces the history of America's entry into World War II with an alternative scenario.

Keith Gessen - *New York Magazine*, 9/27/04

Everything else in the novel eventually returns to normal - so that the Lindbergh years in this universe become just a terrible detour. The only thing that's different in the alternate future is Roth. He is frightened and overly cautious and needlessly loquacious. The narrator of this book is not the tirading monologist of *Portnoy's Complaint* or *Operation Shylock* or even *The Human Stain*. Had it happened here, we might have got this sentimental, essayistic champion of Jewish Newarkers. Instead we got the Roth who continues to reinvent himself, who has stared down death and read the *New York Times* and pondered the meaning of his freedom. And who still hasn't done anything for Israel.

Tony Hilfer, *Austin American-Statesman*, 10/3/04

The problem is not that *The Plot Against America* is fantastical - Roth's novels have been bizarre, outrageous and unsettling before. Think of David Kepesh transformed into a giant mammary gland in *The Breast*, or Roth meeting his double, also known as Philip Roth, in *Operation Shylock*. The problem, perhaps, is that it is not sufficiently fantastical. If the book was intended as an expression of the anger and paranoia so many Americans are feeling about their government right now, it is not bizarre enough. The politicians and demagogues that Roth presumably fears in real life subscribe to angry, paranoid narratives of their own. These seem a more convincing "Plot Against America."

Donna Rifkind - *Baltimore Sun*, 10/3/04

What ought to deepen and soften *The Plot Against America* is the personal story of the Roth family. Like Swede Levov in *American Pastoral* and Coleman Silk in *The Human Stain*, the Roths are the reader's emotional conduits to the larger historical drama...Yet all this, strangely, leaves the reader cold. Part of the problem is that Roth, speaking in his 7-year-old voice, talks a lot about terror but rarely shows it: too many events, including the novel's worst atrocity, in which a former neighbor is beaten to death by Klansmen in Kentucky, take place at a distance.

Hugh MacDonald - [Glasgow] *Herald*, 10/2/04

If *Patrimony* was a soiled but honest love letter to his departed father, *The Plot Against America* is a poignant chronicle of a selfless mother. Roth sends her his love that skims over the decades.

Fritz Lanham - *Houston Chronicle*, 10/2/04

The Plot Against America is absolutely first-rate, possibly the best novel of the year. Written in clean, straightforward prose, it solidifies Roth's reputation, earned in such novels as *American Pastoral* and *I Married a Communist*, as our greatest living anatomist of ordinary people caught up in America's periodic eruptions of collective madness.

Clive Sinclair - [London] *Independent*, 10/8/04

These scenes in the nation's capital are as tense and ferocious as anything Roth has written. His intentions are clear; to set the cat among the pigeons, and then record how the pigeons react. In other words, his own family is to be subjected to the same pressures as their European co-religionists. You will be pleased to learn that (though there is some peripheral wavering) the centre holds. Roth's parents do him proud; they suffer, but they do not break, nor (incidentally) do they lose faith in their new-found land. Their ordeal is convincing, and always a painful pleasure to observe, but for some reason the novel never quite sustains the intensity of those early scenes in Washington.

Johann Hari - [London] *Independent on Sunday*, 10/3/04

The decision to publish this book a month before the US Presidential elections may make good financial sense, but it ultimately does a disservice to the novel. Much of the advance buzz made it sound as though Roth was taking on the Bush administration and the “War on Terror” - so inevitably readers will squint to see the politics hiding behind this story. But who is the Bush proxy here - Lindbergh, a President preaching near-pacifism? Franklin Roosevelt, agitating to take on fascism? No; this is not a commentary on the 2004 election. (Could somebody tell Roth’s publicists?)

Craig Brown - [London] *Mail on Sunday*, 10/3/04

The prose is beautiful, and it would normally be moving, but one is always conscious that it could never have happened, and that made-up tears are somehow frivolous when set beside tears that were all too real.

Brian Morton - *Newsday*, 10/3/04

One aspect of Roth’s growth as a writer that may not have been sufficiently noticed is the growing note of empathy in his work - the growing conviction that all of us are “fellow creatures.” Reading the early Roth, one sometimes got the sense that the author considered himself smarter, and therefore better, than everyone else. Literacy and wit seemed to be the qualities that he prized above all others, and his fictional stand-ins were always given the wittiest and most literate lines. Herman and Bess aren’t witty or exceptionally literate; the only thing remarkable about them is that they are good and generous people who continue to be good and generous under the gravest pressures. I don’t think the younger Roth could have written a book that celebrates ordinary decency as *The Plot Against America* does. Roth’s late-career metamorphosis into a social novelist is impressive, but what is even more impressive is the glow of compassion in much of his later work.

Scott Eyman - *Palm Beach Post*, 10/10/04

The nature of the book precludes humor, and Roth - without humor - is typing with one hand tied

behind his back. There are some giddy flashes of Strangelovian brilliance - Lindbergh campaigning from the Spirit of St. Louis, etc. - but it’s a book written in tones of muted amber.

David Greenberg - *Slate*, 10/7/04

It’s significant that Bellow came of age just before Roosevelt’s presidency and Roth just after it: Growing up, Jews of Roth’s cohort imbibed America’s postwar ethos of inclusion as Bellow’s had not. Let’s remember the energy Roth wrote of those years in *American Pastoral*. Americans were governing not only themselves but some two hundred million people in Italy, Austria, Germany and Japan...The Depression had disappeared. Everything was in motion. The lid was off. Americans were to start over again, en masse, everyone in it together. Jews of Roth’s age were more apt than their elders to believe that America was equally theirs and were far less worried about offending their Christian compatriots.

Nicholas Lemann and John Shulevitz - *Slate*, 10/11/04

Somewhere along the line - *Patrimony*, maybe? - Roth began presenting his culture of origin in a positive rather than negative light. But since he doesn’t do contentment, this shift in attitude has presented him with the problem of how to continue achieving the characteristic Roth emotional condition, which hasn’t changed. The solution, in book after book recently, but never more dramatically than in *The Plot Against America*, has been to externalize. The source of that towering Rothian discomfort (which is no less deep, possibly deeper, in fact) is the nature of the outside world, not the nature of the Jewish world.

Christopher Goffard - *St. Petersburg Times*, 10/3/04

The Plot Against America is another chapter in Roth’s ongoing fictional interrogation of America. In *The Counterlife*, the writer Nathan Zuckerman tries to persuade his brother, who has abandoned his family in New Jersey to live among hard-line Israeli settlers, that Jews who are “flourishing mundanely” in America might be “making Jewish history no less astonishing” than the settlers. The benign miracle of Jewish life in

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America: to be fully Jewish, and fully American. In *The Plot Against America*, Roth examines how tenuous that miracle might actually have been.

Peter Kemp - *Sunday Times* (London), 10/3/04

The Plot Against America seems a masterly summation of earlier preoccupations. Roth's last three novels each showed an admirable individual under siege from the worst aspects of an era: 1960s counter-culture anarchy in *American Pastoral* (1997), the McCarthy witch-hunts in *I Married a Communist* (1998), 1990s PC punitiveness in *The Human Stain* (2000). *The Plot Against America* carries this concern a fantastic step further: the horrors of the 1930s are unleashed into a might-have-been version of Roth's childhood. Autobiographical immediacy gives his fictitious reign of terror gritty actuality.

Gabriel Brownstein - *Village Voice*, 10/5/04

It may be the saddest book Roth has written and the most frightening. There's always been a little Horatio Alger to him, a vein of optimistic patriotism. From Neil Klugman of "Goodbye, Columbus," to Coleman Silk of *The Human Stain*, Roth's heroes have been ghetto kids made good; his inquiries into self-creation and self-destruction have begun in the context of possibility. Even Alexander Portnoy, despite all that wanking, was a success, a commissioner in the Lindsay administration. In *The Plot Against America*, however, Philip grows up not in the land of opportunity but of terror.

Jonathan Yardley - *Washington Post*, 10/3/04

That Roth has chosen for the umpteenth time to write fiction as imagined autobiography will annoy some readers, as it annoys me. The fixation on self has always seemed to me the greatest weakness in his work, one that has kept him from fully realizing his amazing literary gifts because it personalizes and narrows everything it touches. But for once in his fiction, the self is less important than the world outside. *The Plot Against America* is far and away the most outward-looking, expansive, least narcissistic book Roth has written. The effects upon young Roth of the imagined events of 1940-42 obviously are of interest and importance to him, but the real core of the book is family, community and country, and the consequences for all these of America's flirtation with fascism.

Michelle de Kretser - *Weekend Australian*, 10/9/04

The Plot Against America thus falls short of an accurate denunciation of the Bush regime. Which leads you to wonder why Roth needs the smokescreen of a fictional past in the first place. Has American reality finally exceeded even his imaginative grasp? When in political life the real deal packs such a nightmarish punch, there is something terribly hollow about *The Plot Against America*. The novel is strongest when depicting what is private and true. The rest, the big-picture stuff, resembles the self-indulgent mess that results from Roth's other trademark activity.



Turning Up The Flame: Philip Roth's Later Novels, edited by Jay Halio and Ben Siegel, is due out from the University of Delaware Press in Spring 2005. The following is the table of contents.

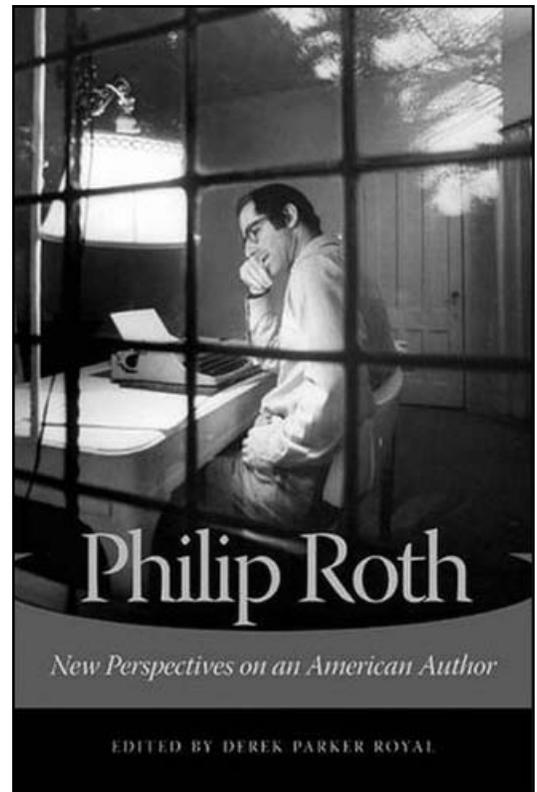
- Preface - Jay Halio & Ben Siegel
- Introduction: Reading Philip Roth: Facts and Fancy, Fiction and Autobiography - A Brief Overview - Ben Siegel
- Philip Roth's Fictions of Self-Exposure - Debra Shostak
- Textualizing the Self: Adultery, Blatant Fictions, and Jewishness in Philip Roth's *Deception* - G. Neelakantan
- Texts, Lives, and Bellybuttons: Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* and the Renegotiation of Subjectivity - Derek Parker Royal
- The Travels of the American Talush - Alexis Kate Wilson
- Autobiography: False Confession? - Margaret Smith
- Death, Mourning, and Besse's Ghost: From Philip Roth's *The Facts* to *Sabbath's Theater* - James M. Mellard
- Philip Roth's American Tragedies - Bonnie Lyons
- The End of Identity: Philip Roth's Jewish American Pastoral - Timothy L. Parrish
- The Critique of Utopia in Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* and *American Pastoral* - Andrew Gordon
- Newark Maid Feminism in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* - Marshall Bruce Gentry
- Reading Race and the Conundrums of Reconciliation in Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* - Brett Ashley Kaplan
- *The Dying Animal*: The Art of Obsessing or Obsessing about Art? - Ellen L. Gerstle
- Eros and Death in Roth's Later Fiction - Jay L. Halio



Turning Up the Flame authors Jay Halio, right, and Ben Siegel at the Modern Language Association Convention in 2002 in New York.

The following is the table of contents from *Philip Roth: New Perspectives on an American Author*, edited by Derek Parker Royal and forthcoming from Praeger in April, 2005.

- Introduction - Derek Parker Royal
- Still Resonant, Revelant, and Crazy After All These Years - *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories* - Jessica G. Rabin
- Female Hysteria and Sisterhood in *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good* - Julie Husband
- Getting in Your Retaliation First: Narrative Strategies in *Portnoy's Complaint* - David Brauner
- Philip Roth, MVP: *Our Gang, The Breast, and The Great American Novel* - Anne Margaret Daniel
- *My Life as a Man: The Surprises Manhood Brings* - Margaret Smith
- How to Tell a True Ghost Story: *The Ghost Writer* and the Case of Anne Frank - Aimee Pozorski
- The Ghosts of Zuckerman's Past: The Zuckerman Bound Series - Alexis Kate Wilson
- En-Countering Pastorals in *The Counterlife* - Bonnie Lyons
- Caught between *The Facts* and *Deception* - Richard Tuerk
- The Measure of All Things: *Patrimony* - Benjamin Hedin
- *Operation Shylock: Double Double Jewish Trouble* - Elaine B. Safer
- A Little Stranger in the House: Madness and Identity in *Sabbath's Theater* - Ranen Omer-Sherman
- Pastoral Dreams and National Identity in *American Pastoral* and *I Married a Communist* - Derek Parker Royal
- Becoming Black: Zuckerman's Bifurcating Self in *The Human Stain* - Tim Parrish
- Professing Desire: The Kepesh Novels - Kevin R. West
- It Can Happen Here, or All in the Family Values: Surviving *The Plot Against America* - Alan Cooper
- The "Written World" of Philip Roth's Nonfiction - Darren Hughes



Judging a Book By Its Cover: The Swastika of *Plot* Causes Problems in Germany

The Plot Against America is making waves in Germany - even for those who aren't reading it.

The American edition of the book's cover, featuring a swastika across an imagined stamp issued during the Lindbergh presidency, violates a German law that bans representations of the swastika. As a result, at least a handful of shipments have been denied by German customs.

According to a report in *The New York Times*, the cover image of the British version and on the German translation by regular Roth translator Carl Hanser Verlag both replace the swastika with an 'x' as part of a design executed by artist Milton Glaser and approved by Roth.

The same report quotes booksellers who say that some copies of the American edition have made it to German bookshelves. As Ruth Warburton of Frankfurt's British Book Shop put it, "They're not so strict that they check every book. And I have been told by the sales rep for Random House that if there's a swastika on the cover, it sells better in the U.S." - *Joe Kraus*

The Plot Against America and the Cash Register

Philip Roth's new novel is selling at a remarkable rate. It's easy for a casual observer to see that it is available near the front of most bookstores, that it's ensconced on various best-seller lists, and that it's floating in the single or double digits of Amazon.com's rankings.

When it comes to pinning down exact numbers for sales, however, it gets difficult. According to two or three editors at Houghton Mifflin, it's uncommon for contemporary publishers to release actual numbers. While the film and recording industries publicize ticket and unit sales in careful detail, the publishing industry leaves such reporting mysterious.

One reason they do so, according to industry observers, is that such a system allows many more titles than otherwise to claim the status of "best-sellers." So long as a book makes it to one of the many lists that various sources publish, it is a "best-seller" and such a designation can lead to still better sales.

Surprisingly, *The Plot Against America* is more than holding its own on most of the leading best-seller lists, something unusual for a work of serious fiction. Roth has had such success before - *Portnoy's Complaint* was ubiquitous, of course, and according to *The People Entertainment Almanac* and *The New York Times* list, it was the number-one best-seller of 1969, just beating out *The Godfather*.

Whether Roth has had such sales success recently is hard to determine, but it seems possible that *The Plot Against America* will have the second most popular release of all his works. (Residual sales are another matter. Because the algorithms that measure best-seller status take into account narrow time frames, something like *Goodbye, Columbus*, which has sold well for four decades, isn't likely to register.)

The Human Stain had a first printing of 100,000, substantial by the standards of novelists whose work also garners Pulitzer and National Book Award attention, but modest by the numbers for a Stephen King or a John Grisham.

Houghton Mifflin spokespeople declined to say what the initial print run for *The Plot Against America* is, and it may take several months before the company chooses to release sales figures that give us a clearer sense of how the novel stacks up against Roth's others. It is clear, however, that the book is already an impressive commercial success. - *Joe Kraus*

Abstracts - continued from page 9**Writing Economies: Methods in the History of Literary and Economic Ideas, Sept. 10, 2004
Queen Mary College of the University of London*****Laura Cardon - Tulane University****“The Intermingling of Economic and Religious Imperatives in Philip Roth’s *American Pastoral*”**

In a hypothetical speech for his 45-year high school reunion, Nathan Zuckerman reflects on the measures taken by his parents’ generation to shield his generation from “poverty, ignorance, disease, social injury and intimidation ... above all, insignificance.” The speech portrays how, since World War II, Jewish cultural values have incorporated economic principles to establish a cultural imperative for the younger generation that is both religious and materialistic. Roth attributes the elder generation’s dissemination of values to their survival of the Depression and World War II. In revealing this cultural imperative, Roth addresses the problematic issue of conflating Jewish values with material values in light of stereotypes about greed in both Jewish and American capitalist culture.

My paper will discuss the conflation of economic and religious values in the context of Zuckerman’s former classmates who have yielded to their parents’ guidance (described statistically in their reunion program by their occupations and number of offspring), as well as Zuckerman’s high school hero, the assimilated “Swede” Levov, who subverts the teachings of the elder generation by only obeying half (the economic portion) of the cultural duality.

**A note from the Philip Roth Society officers**

Please remember to purchase a subscription to our new journal, *Philip Roth Studies*, now put out by Heldref Publications. To subscribe, visit the journal’s Web site at Heldref, <http://www.heldref.org/roth.php>, click on the “Subscribe Today!” link, and follow the subscription directions. You may subscribe online, via email, over the phone, or through the U.S. mail. Subscriptions for Philip Roth Society members are \$30.40 for individuals and \$70.40 for institutions, a discount of 20% off the regular subscription rates. When you subscribe through Heldref, please tell them that you are a Roth Society member so that you will receive the discounted rate.

If you were a member of the Society in 2004, you will receive a copy of the first issue of the journal as part of your membership benefits from that year. 2004 members can purchase the second issue of the journal, Fall 2005, for \$15.20, half the yearly subscription rate.

We apologize for any inconvenience this change causes, but it is a byproduct of the happy development that Heldref Publications has agreed to produce and distribute the journal. As a consequence, we will be able to put our energies entirely into the work of writing and editing and can allow the people at Heldref to take care of all the technical matters.

Please note that beginning with this issue, the two issues of each volume of the *Philip Roth Society Newsletter* will now span a calendar year. Volume 3 Number 2 will be the Fall 2005 issue.



Philip Roth

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Bibliographical Update

For a complete listing of bibliographical resources in English, go to the Roth Society Web site <http://rothsociety.org>

An asterisk * indicates that scholar is a member of the Philip Roth Society

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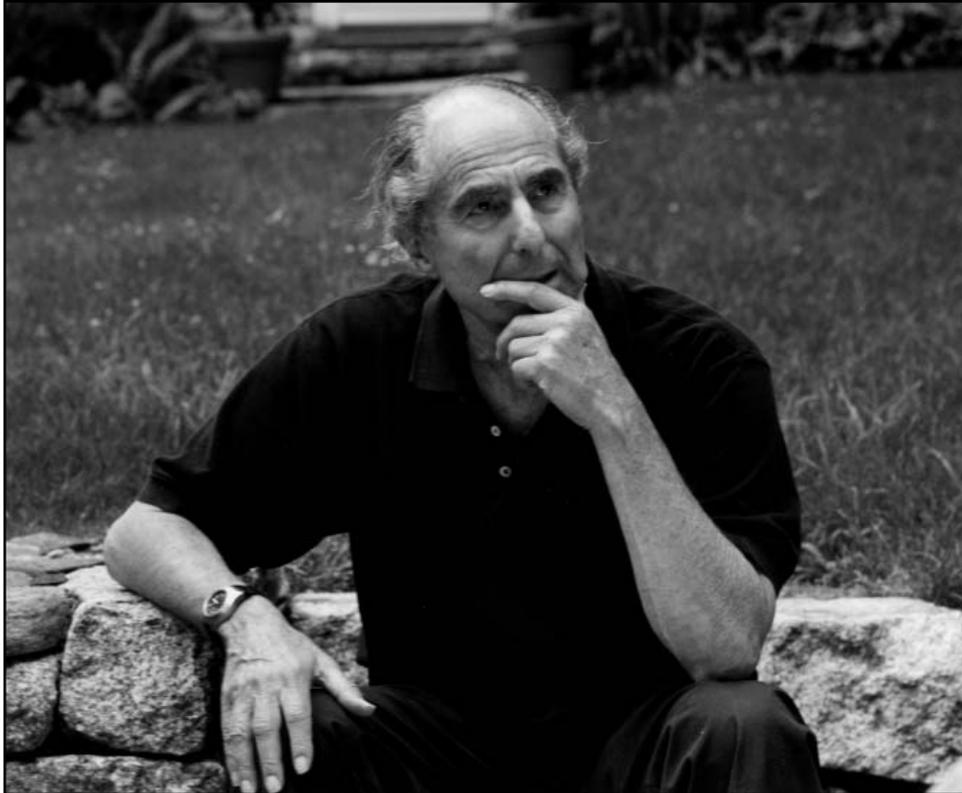
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Philip Roth

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details about the inaugural issue, including subscription information and its ongoing call for papers, inside this issue of the newsletter.

The Philip Roth Society continues its active participation in a variety of national and international conferences. In October 2004 the society sponsored three separate panels at the tenth annual American Literature Association's Jewish American and Holocaust Symposium in Boca Raton, Florida, and we plan on participating at this event again in 2005. So far we have lined up for 2005 four separate panels at two different conferences. As usual we will conduct two panels (and a business meeting) at the American Literature Association Conference, this year to be held in Boston, Massachusetts: one will be a regular panel on the topic of Roth and his representation of women, and the other will be a discussion roundtable on the new novel, *The Plot Against America*. And in February we will be sponsoring, for the first time, panels at the University of Louisville's Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture Conference: one devoted to Roth's early fiction, and a second focusing on his more recent works.

In terms of the scholarly criticism, it continues to flourish. The last half of 2004 saw the publication of two significant works on Roth's fiction: Debra Shostak's *Philip Roth - Countertexts, Counterlives* (University of South Carolina Press) and *Philip Roth's America: The Later Novels*, the 2004 annual volume of *Studies in American Jewish Literature* devoted entirely to Roth. This year promises more of the same. In late spring Greenwood-Praeger will publish *Philip Roth: New Perspectives on an American Author*, a brand new collection of essays covering Roth's entire career, from *Goodbye, Columbus* to *The Plot Against America*, both fiction as well as nonfiction writings. And soon after that the University of Delaware Press will publish *Turning Up the Flame: Philip Roth's Later Novels*, a collection of thirteen essays edited by Jay L. Halio and Ben Siegel. If, on top of all this, we add our new journal and the first of the Library of America editions of Roth's novels, which are due out this year, then 2005 will certainly be a most notable year in Philip Roth studies.

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"subscribe rothsociety" or "subscribe rothsociety-digest" (without the quotation marks)

This message should go in the body of the email. Please do not put your commands on the subject line; Majordomo does not process commands in the subject line.

If you wish to have the mailings go to an address different from the one that automatically appears in the "From:" header on the mail you send, you should add that address to the command. For instance, if you're sending a request from your work account, but wish to receive Roth Society email at your personal account (for example, jppublic@my-isp.com), you'd put the line in the email message body:

"subscribe rothsociety jppublic@my-isp.com" (without the quotation marks)

Upon subscribing, you should receive an introductory message containing list policies and features. Save this message for future reference; it will also contain exact directions for unsubscribing. If you lose the intro mail and would like another copy of the policies, send this message to Majordomo@listserver.tamu-commerce.edu:

"intro rothsociety" (without the quotation marks)

Membership Information

To become a member of the Philip Roth Society, fill out this form and mail it to the address below. Annual membership dues are \$15 (\$20 for overseas addresses, \$30 for institutions), and they should be paid by check or money order to the "Philip Roth Society." In addition to supporting the work of the society through your membership, you will receive biennial copies of the *Philip Roth Society Newsletter*. To indicate your willingness to be listed in the directory of members on the Roth Society's web site, please check the appropriate lines below.

Name: _____

Academic or Professional Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

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Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Web Page: _____

I give permission for the following information to be listed in the directory of members at the Philip Roth Society's web site (please check all that apply):

Name _____ E-mail _____ Postal address _____ Phone _____ Web page URL _____

Full name signature: _____

Mail to:

Philip Roth Society

c/o Jessica Rabin

Anne Arundel Community College

Department of English

101 College Parkway

Arnold, MD 21012



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

In this issue:

Abstracts from recent conference presentations

Excerpts of recent reviews of *The Plot Against America*

Calls for Papers to Roth-related publications and panels

Message from the Society's president

Philip Roth Society
Joe Kraus, Newsletter Editor
Department of English
The University of Scranton
Scranton, PA 18510