



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

Vol. 8 No.1

Summer/Fall 2010

Message from the Society's President Aimee Pozorski

"Nemesis and Nobel"

Dear All,

It is difficult to believe that another Nobel Prize season has come and gone, and our beloved Philip Roth has not yet won the award in Literature. However, this is not to say that we need the Nobel Committee on our side to validate our work. Our success comes in the form of our members' successes – and there are many – and our pleasure in being members comes, in part, from the impressive output of Roth himself.

I would like to begin by congratulating Deb Shostak and David Gooblar who have books appearing with Continuum Press in the near future; further, David Gooblar is scheduled to guest edit an upcoming special issue of *Philip Roth Studies* on the topic of "Roth and Women" based on the success of the ALA panel of the same name last May in San Francisco. I would also like to congratulate Tony Fong, who is our first graduate student recipient of the Siegel/McDaniel Award for his paper entitled, "Matrimony: Re-Conceiving the Mother in Philip Roth's Life Writing."

And then there is Roth himself, who published *Nemesis* on October 5 to glowing reviews. His book earned its place on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* the following weekend, as well as inspired a lovely essay by J.M. Coetzee in the *New York Review of Books*, an in-depth review with BBC's Front Row featuring Mark Lawson and Elaine Showalter, and a

second provocative interview by Scott Raab for *Esquire Magazine*. I would like to thank Jim Bloom and Richard Sheehan for helping me stay on top of the many recent interviews with, and reviews of, Roth's work.

In his review-essay, Coetzee suggests that, "Behind *nemesis* (via the verb *nemo*, to distribute) lies the idea of fortune, good or bad, and how fortune is dealt out in the universe." In *Nemesis*, Roth takes on the "lunatic cruelty" of deaths of children during the polio crisis in 1944; Bucky Cantor calls these polio-inflicted deaths "a war of slaughter, ruin, waste, and damnation, war with the ravages of war—war upon the children" (*Nemesis* 132). In some ways, this has been a central problem of the 20th and 21st centuries, as it carries with it doubts about futurity and injustice in a universe that allows innocent children to die. While the novel is unrelenting in its way, it also captures the concerns of our global culture, using polio as but one example of the way wars are fought upon the children.

I've always understood "nemesis" to be something that is, simply, unbeatable – that cannot be overcome. This is not, perhaps, as sophisticated a reading as Coetzee offers, but it helps me to articulate my frustration in the face of Nobel season, especially after Roth has produced so recently such compelling and important fiction. Perhaps next year will be Roth's year to overcome his nemesis.

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://orgs.tamu-commerce.edu/rothsoc/society.htm>, by maintaining a listserv, and through the publication of *Philip Roth Studies*, a refereed journal devoted to Roth scholarship. The Philip Roth Society is a non-profit community of readers and scholars, and it has no affiliation with either Philip Roth or his publishers. The society is an affiliated organization of the American Literary Association, and we welcome both academic and non-academic readers alike.

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

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

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Treasurer

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

Annual Business Meeting of the Philip Roth Society San Francisco, CA: American Literature Association Conference May 28, 2010

Present: Pozorski (President), Brauner (Program Coordinator), Royal (Editor, *Roth Studies*), Fong, Gooblar, Gordon, Halio, Masiero, Morley, Safer, Shipe

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. and began with reports from the Officers of the Society.

Report from the Philip Roth Society President

This past year brought many (good) surprises as I learned the ropes of Roth Society President. Although our total members has stayed steady at 54, I believe I have heard from at least fifty other people interested in Roth who have (not yet!) become members. In considering building membership (see Jess's report – page 2) one thing we could consider is how to bring the many other interested parties into the fold. One might assume that people would become members first, then be in touch for information and other types of correspondence, but the cause/ effect relationship will likely work the other way around.

Interest in Roth seems to span from popular culture (Esquire Magazine, Jeffrey Bennett's New Jersey Tours) to academic culture (Continuum Press, Roth Studies). As Jess's report also points up, we need to find a way to appeal (in terms of membership) to both types of communities.

Directions for the future:

- Keep doing what we are doing in terms of newsletters, conference participation (increase conference circuit?), regular email updates, web updates;
- Consider ways to increase membership and renewals;
- Reach out to our base of non-academics;
- Recruit graduate students;
- Update web design (Jose Carlos del Ama)
- Maintain and strengthen relationship with Roth Studies and Purdue University Press

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

- Since the last business meeting, we have completed both issues for the 2009 volume year and the Spring issue of 2010 (which should be out in summer 2010).
- Both Spring 2009 and Fall 2009 issues were sent out at the very beginning of 2010. They were mailed out together so as to save on mailing costs (this was a suggestion that Purdue University Press made).

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- Currently working on the manuscripts for the Fall 2010 issue.
 - Christopher Gonzalez was brought on as Managing Editor of the journal.
 - According to Purdue UP, we currently have 35 individuals and institutions whose subscriptions come directly through them. These do not take into account those who subscribe to the journal through their Philip Roth Society membership.
 - Beginning this year, Project Muse will carry the full text digital version of the journal. They will first begin with the volume 6 issues (2010) and then include all previous issues. The journal will be in their Premium Collection. (Muse has an exhibit at the ALA Conference where they have information about carrying the journal.)
 - We have lost one editorial advisory board member, John McDaniel. We have also added two new members to the board, Catherine Morley at the University of Leicester and Gurumurthy Neelakantan at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur.
 - The use of illustrations/caricatures on the cover of the journal has gotten good response. We will continue using these kinds of covers in the next several issues.
 - Not certain about the next special issue. I think a Roth and Women issue is something we should pursue. We had discussed last year the possibility of an issue devoted to “International Roth,” and that’s still a possibility. Perhaps there is a way we could coordinate a special issue with what the Society decides to do with next year’s ALA Conference panels.
 - Submissions to the journal continue to be good, and we have a comfortable backlog.
 - Earlier this year Purdue UP printed up new bookmarks for the journal. The image on the bookmark is Zachary Trenholm’s caricature we used on an earlier cover.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Parker Royal

Report from the Philip Roth Society Secretary/Treasurer

Total members 2010 YTD (November 2009-May 2010): 54

Society only: 7

Society and journal: 47

Total members at this time in 2009: 50

Total members 2009: 73

Total members 2008: 51

Total members 2007: 53

Total members 2006: 79

Total members 2005: 71

Total members 2004: 81

Total members 2002-2003: 42

Number of past members who renewed in 2010: 41 (76%)

New members in 2010: 13

2010 members with US addresses: 38, representing 18 states and the District of Columbia

2010 members with international addresses: 16 (30%)

Belgium: 1

Canada: 1

Germany: 1

India: 1

Italy: 1

Japan: 2

Spain: 2

Switzerland: 1

United Kingdom: 6

2010 members who did not provide an academic or professional affiliation: 13 (24%)

Current balance: \$6202.88

Debts: start-up costs incurred by Derek Royal (\$141.43); to be reimbursed as a perpetual membership

Atypical Expenditures: \$1000 to Purdue University Press to get Volume 5 of the journal printed more quickly; \$190.95 in gifts (Barbara Karasinski's retirement) and donations (John McDaniel Teaching Award Fund).

Tasks accomplished:

- maintained and updated membership spreadsheets
- transmitted Directory of Members information to our webmaster (Derek Royal) and our Newsletter editor (Richard Sheehan)
- deposited dues into our Amegy Bank account
- renewed CELJ membership
- sent out welcome emails to new members and confirmations of renewals to returning members
- solicited renewals (no rate increase)
- confirmed that contributors to conference panels and journal issues were current members of the Society
- communicated with Purdue University Press regarding the publication, printing, and mailing of *Philip Roth Studies*

Suggestions for the next year:

- modify membership form (and Paypal form) to allow new members to indicate where they found out about PRS and use this information to target our recruitment efforts
- modify online membership form to allow members to indicate whether they wish to be listed in the Directory
- try to update Directory more frequently
- continue to make Newsletters available in PDF form for members who join after one of the year's newsletters has already been sent out
- coordinate Newsletter publications with solicitations for renewals (November)
- consider allowing members to choose whether to receive their newsletter by US Mail or PDF
- keep Paypal, as a number of our members have taken advantage of it
- consider if there are ways we can be appealing more to the interests of members with no stated academic affiliation (a substantial demographic)

- consider offering a 2-year membership for people who are committed to PRS but find it bothersome to re-new each year (several members have inquired about this possibility)
actively solicit memberships from academic libraries

Membership Trends

Year	total members	total # renewals	% who renew
2003	42	n/a	n/a
2004	81	28	34%
2005	71	28	39%
2006	79	36	45%
2007	53	31	60%
2008	51	27	53%
2009	73	35	48%
2010*	54	41	76%

*Nov-May

Jessica Rabin

Report from the Philip Roth Society Program Chair

The panels at Boca Raton and Savannah seemed to go well - the Louisville one less so, largely because, as a result of two late withdrawals, what was to be a four-person panel finished up as a two-person panel. Also, the audience was apparently small (perhaps because there were only two papers).

On the horizon are this year's ALA panels (of course!) and the next Louisville conference (the general cfp has already gone out for this one, but as the deadline is not until September, I thought I'd wait a little before putting ours out).

Overall, what was pleasing about the panels that we've sponsored this year is that we've managed to get some new faces on board (which has also meant, in some cases, new members for the Society); less encouraging was the overall volume of responses for the various cfps that I've put out. The only one where I was really spoiled for choice and had to turn down some good proposals was the 'Roth & Women' panel for this year's ALA. The original proposal for the other panel (the Kepesh novels) didn't elicit much of a response, hence our late decision to revert to the roundtable on *The Humbling*. With the cfps for the other conferences, I've tended to receive just enough good proposals to make the panels viable, but I haven't had the luxury (or difficulty, depending on how you look at it!) of picking and choosing from a large number of possibilities.

David Brauner

Report from the Philip Roth Society Newsletter Editor

In the past year we have brought out two issues of the newsletter, both of which included over twenty pages of news, reviews and information on the works of Philip Roth.

When I took over editing the newsletter I saw it as having three overall goals and I believe that we've managed

to stick to these pretty well;

- A way of informing the members about matters pertaining to the society.

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

- A resource giving news about Philip Roth and his works.

We have reviewed both of Roth's new novels during that period – *Indignation* and *The Humbling*. I also began a series of essays briefly examining Philip Roth's earlier uncollected short stories.

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

This is an area of a little concern due to the lack of submissions received. This year we had an article on the walking tours of Philip Roth's Newark but apart from that the cupboard was bare. I would like to encourage short submissions (500-1500 words) investigating aspects of Philip Roth's works, or other authors as they relate to him. This can be expanded to include how work in other forms of media such as film and TV uses Roth as an influence.

I would also be interested to hear from the members with regard to anything they would like to see covered in the newsletter, whether it's new ideas, expansion of current features or a re-introduction of old ones.

For the future, I hope, as well as encouraging new essays into the newsletter, that it will continue to work as a regular source of information and news about the work of Philip Roth.

Richard Sheehan

The meeting then continued with a discussion of how to capitalize on a growing interest in Philip Roth by serving current members better and reaching out to new members. Five key ideas emerged from that discussion:

- Work with the Modern Language Association to have the Roth Society recognized as an allied and affiliated organization. (NB: I have since written to Lorenz Tomassi, Coordinator of Allied and Affiliated Organizations through the MLA with a request and will keep you posted.)
- Offer "gift memberships" in the form of one free year to graduate students at various doctoral institutions in order to reach out to new scholars in the field.
- Host a Philip Roth conference in a tropical or historic place every spring. We have begun conversations about a Roth Conference in Spring 2011 in Newark, possibly hosted by Rutgers University. We could organize it around the special topic of "Roth and Newark," but include presentations on a variety of topics on Roth.
- Offer a prize to younger scholars for the presentation of their research at Roth Society sponsored panels in a given year. The cycle would be based on the ALA national conference – and our first round of consideration would cover May 2009 to May 2010. We would invite graduate student presenters to submit revised versions of their papers to be considered for publication in Roth Studies as well as a \$500 cash prize and a free society renewal. We would call the prize the Spiegel/McDaniel Award in honor of the two

prominent Roth scholars and Society members who passed away this year. (NB: The executive committee is working this week to articulate the details in policy form and will put it up for a vote in the coming days.)

- Build a greater presence on the World Wide Web by intensifying our Facebook efforts (Pia Masiero) and evolving the Roth Society website into a blog and redesigning it for a more contemporary appearance (Jose Carlos del Ama).

The second part of the meeting involved consideration of our presence at annual conferences throughout the nation – and beyond. Masiero and Morley offered to help by reaching out the European scholars, in particular, who have a growing commitment to Roth Studies. One example of an affiliated

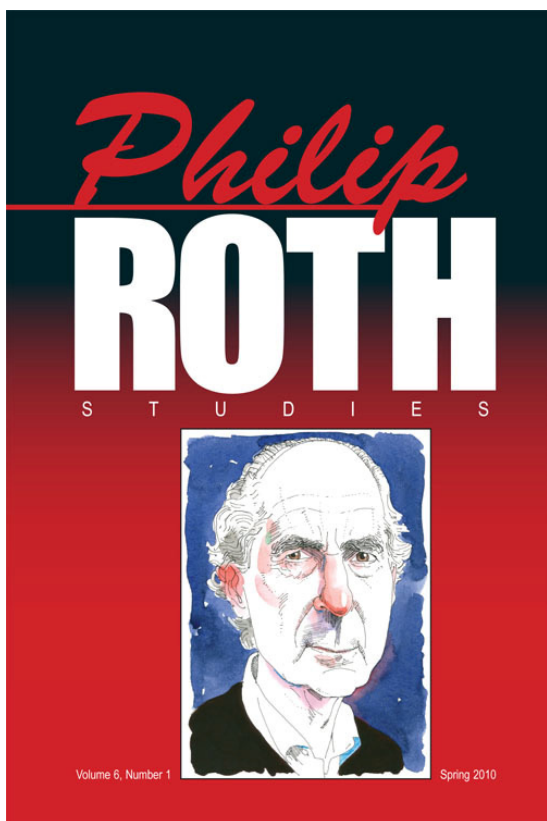
organization would be the European Association of American Studies.

Derek Royal suggested a possible special issue of *Philip Roth Studies* on the topic of Roth and Women following the success of that panel at this year's ALA. One other fruitful topic, for both a special issue of *Roth Studies* and for next year's ALA panel would be International Roth (or Roth's Internationalism).

For next year's roundtable discussion, we proposed organizing a roundtable on Roth's last four novellas, what we have been affectionately referring to as the tetralogy on aging and death.

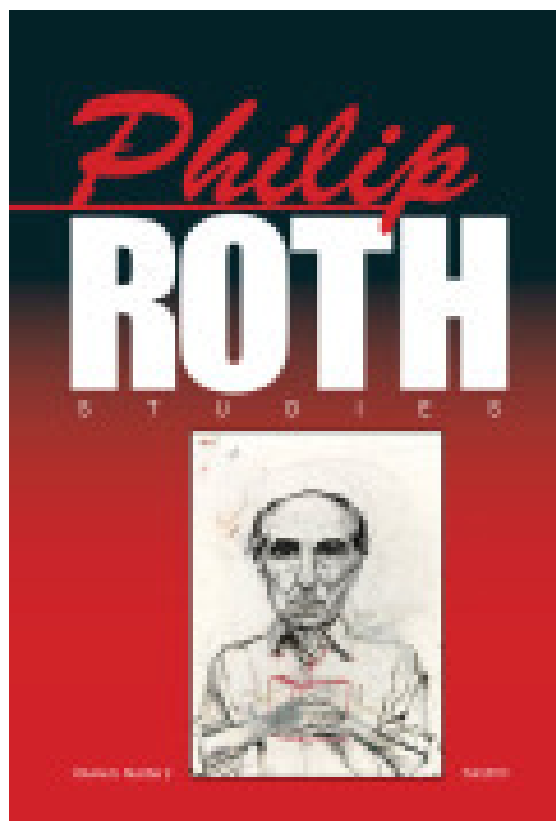
The meeting ended at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Aimee Pozorski



Left: The latest issues of *Philip Roth Studies*, available with membership to the Philip Roth Society (see inside back cover) or from Purdue University Press

www.thepress.purdue.edu/journals/prs



Abstracts from Papers Delivered at Recent Conferences

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

American Literature Association

21st Annual Conference, May 27-30, 2010, San Francisco, CA

Roth and Women

Organized by the Philip Roth Society

A Sexual Life in *The Dying Animal*

Kevin West*, Stephen F. Austin State University

Critics Carlin Romano and Elaine Showalter attacked *The Dying Animal* for the misogyny of its protagonist, whom they closely associated with the author. Although I feel that the novel admits of a more pleasant reading than they allow, I wish to explore the possibility of a certain legitimacy to their complaint—yet to do so by different means than they employed. Toward the novel's close, when Consuela tells Kepesh of her cancer, he laments the loss of such breasts as hers: "But at that moment I knew hers was no longer a sexual life. What was at stake was something else." A generous reading of this passage would see it as a realization that Consuela's life is more important than her ability to engender desire. But a less generous reader might ask why the loss of Consuela's breasts should reduce her to asexuality? Do women who lose their breasts necessarily lose their sexual identities? Only from an egotistical male perspective—precisely the perspective critiqued—does Consuela's announcement imply that her life is no longer sexual. Although Consuela later asks Kepesh if a man will ever love her body again, the answer cannot simply be no—and it is of signal significance that Kepesh never answers. What is a sexual life? What is its relationship to life unqualified? Are there other possibilities for life and sexuality than an unreconstructed Kepesh can imagine? Ultimately, I will argue for a "more pleasant" reading of the novel even allowing evidence seemingly to the contrary.

Matrimony: the (M)other in Philip Roth's Life Writings

Tony Fong*, University of Toronto

Critics often regard Philip Roth's life writing as a part of a masculinist tradition that privileges the singularity of the self. Nancy K. Miller, for instance, focuses on the ways Roth separates himself from his dying father in *Patrimony*; memoirs, she contends, "mark off your difference through betrayal." Despite critics' emphasis on patrilineal anxiety and self-reliance, this paper questions Roth's investment in such individualism. It investigates the "subterranean" presence of women in *The Facts* (1988) and *Patrimony* (1991); this ghostly presence, I argue, undermines ideas of the discrete self that are privileged in Western autobiography. In both texts, Roth's identity coalesces with the women around him. He, like his father, initially resists identification with femininity, but then comes to acknowledge that the violent encroachment of others makes compassion possible. Roth's identity uncannily merges with his wife's in *The Facts*. But ultimately, it is his mother Bessie Roth who structures the narrative of his autobiography. "Subterraneanly," Roth points out, "my mother's death is very strong in all this." The author's masculinity is similarly undermined in *Patrimony*. Roth's father even comments that "Philip is like a mother to me." Rather than feel threatened by his feminization—as conventional interpretations have had it—Roth comes to luxuriate in the immanence of the maternal. Concentrating on the intervention of the feminine other in *The Facts* and *Patrimony*, this paper posits that Roth's life writings develop a compassionate and ethical understanding of the autobiographical self.

“Can you explain to the court why you hate women?”: An Overview of Criticism of Philip Roth’s Portrayal of Women

David Gooblar*, University College London

In Philip Roth’s novel *Deception*, published twenty years ago, the author (or someone like him) is hauled into the dock and put on trial for “sexism, misogyny, woman abuse, slander of women, denigration of women, defamation of women, and ruthless seduction, crimes all carrying the most severe penalties.” What was a common accusation that Roth could send up in 1990 seems an unquestioned truth today: Roth is one of the last of the Aging White Male authors, and sexism just comes with the territory. It remains a commonplace in criticism of Roth in the popular press that women come off poorly in his work: even Katie Roiphe’s recent essay in the *New York Times Book Review*, which aims to defend Roth’s treatment of sex against feminist criticism, finds him guilty of “garden-variety sexism.” But whereas Roth’s fictional accuser has a laundry list of specific complaints, too often critical treatment of the subject of women in Roth takes the form of vague broadsides or knee-jerk name-calling. The question remains: if Roth has sinned against womankind, what exactly are his sins?

This paper aims to open up discussion of Roth’s treatment of women in his fiction by enumerating and summarizing the many charges against him over the years. I hope to generate a guide to the nature of the critical response to women in Roth over the years, and thus provide a starting point for further investigation of ‘the problem’ of women in Roth.

Roth and Mothers

Jessica B. Burstrem*, University of Arizona

Alex Portnoy’s mother Sophie is one of the most famous – or infamous – literary mothers of all time. She has, of course, been read as a Bad Mother for being smothering. More recently, she has been read as a Good Mother, at least by today’s standards. According to Alana Newhouse, arts and culture editor at the Jewish newspaper *The Forward*:

That is the way you’re supposed to mother. You’re supposed to be warm and inviting and caressing. All of the things that were caricatured as bad 30 years ago came back around, and now they’re considered to be a great alternative to what some people view as the cold working mother of today. There are children out there who wish they had Jewish mothers.

Either reading suggests that *Portnoy’s Complaint* is unkind to mothers, for criticizing them for what they do too much or for what they do not do enough.

But at the same time, the image that we get of Sophie is Alex’s image of her – and an image that he is expressing in words to his analyst too, so it is possibly little more reliable than the image that we get of another (in) famous mother, Mrs. Bates, whom we actually only see through her son Norman’s portrayal of her and the local policemen’s representations of her in the 1960 thriller *Psycho*. In this paper, I would like to discuss the implications of the representation of Sophie specifically through her son’s words for the picture of mothers, positive and negative, past and present, that it presents.

ALA CONFERENCE, MAY 2010

Recent Voices in Jewish American Literature

Organized by Society for Study of Jewish American Literature

“PHILIP ROTH’S *SABBATH’S THEATER* AND THE HUMBLING: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR CONTRASTING HEROES”

Elaine B. Safer*, University of Delaware

Simon Axler, protagonist of Roth’s 30th novel--at the age of 65, “the last of the best of the classical American stage actors”-- feels that he has lost his imagination, his ability to make “the imagined real.” The narrator explains: “Something fundamental has vanished.” “He’d lost his magic.” Axler is out of a job—a job from which he has gained his identity. For Axler, life becomes meaningless; he becomes so depressed that even his caring wife leaves him. For this renowned Shakespearean actor the only act left is suicide. One can contrast this once renowned Shakespearean actor with another actor out of a job-- Mickey Sabbath, protagonist of Roth’s 1995 *Sabbath’s Theater*; Sabbath, like Axler, ruminates on suicide. But *Sabbath’s Theater*—as a whole-- seems to be a means of evoking the horror of tragic loss and then meeting it with a rush of comic power that calls forth the chant “To Life, to life, L’Chaim.” The protagonist of Roth’s latest novel *the Humbler*, on the other hand, does end his life. In the later novel, to get the power to commit the act, Humbler needs to pretend that he is committing suicide in a play: He pretends that he is in a theater and that he is Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev in the concluding scene of *The Seagull*. Roth’s most recent novels---*The Humbling* (2009), *Exit Ghost* (2007), *Everyman* (2006)-- expose the simple brute fact that life comes to an end gradually if not suddenly, and that it is indescribably hard to come to terms with this. Or, if not indescribably, at least describable only by a great artist.

American Literature Association Symposium on American Fiction (1890-present)

October 8-9, 2010, Savannah, GA

The Philip Roth Society sponsored a panel titled “Philip Roth and the Holocaust.”

Guilt of the Living: The Trivial, the Tragic, and Rationalization *Post Factum* in Roth’s “Eli, the Fanatic”

James Duban, Texas

This study (under journal submission) explores Roth’s “Eli, the Fanatic” (1957) in the context of the first of Meyer Levin’s autobiographies, *In Search* (1950), and of historian and novelist Arthur Koestler’s *Promise to Fulfillment: Palestine 1917-1949* (1949). Building on recent disclosures of Roth’s debt to *In Search* in “Defender of the Faith” and *The Plot Against America* (Duban, forthcoming, *PRS*), I propose an association of ideas within “Eli, the Fanatic” that joins Levin’s analysis of Holocaust survivor’s guilt to Koestler’s claims about the emotive bases of 1939 White Paper policy—under the Civil Mandatory Government of Great Britain (1920-1948)—to limit the influx of Holocaust survivors into Palestine and to obstruct the purchase and settlement of land by Jews. Those measures, according to Koestler, were driven by “emotional conviction and traditional prejudice” that became self-accrediting pantomimes of rational, even-handed governance. These contexts come into play in the efforts of the Jews of Woodenton to rid their community of the Holocaust survivors at the Yeshivah, and thereby to eradicate from sight and mind their own trans-Atlantic survivor’s guilt. Eli’s legal “papers,” along with the prejudicial attitudes that inspire them, resonate with White Paper policy, and specifically as described in Koestler’s account of British policy grounded in

“rationalization *post factum*.” This is the first study to read “Eli, the Fanatic” as a political allegory and to ground that reading in an association of ideas inspired by Meyer Levin and Arthur Koestler.

“Philip Roth’s Real Name: Jewish American Fiction After the Holocaust”

Shaun Clarkson, Texas State University,

Towards the beginning of *The Anatomy Lesson*, Nathan Zuckerman’s dying mother is asked to write her name on a slip of paper and, in place of her name, perfectly spells the word “Holocaust.” Zuckerman considers this the expression of the constant, repressed stresses and fears of a typical Jewish American housewife who never outwardly shows anxiety. Likewise, the Holocaust lies just below the surface of Roth’s fiction and, while not always obviously shaping plot or character, shows itself in important, often unexpected ways.

Unlike other Jewish American writers, Roth has never created a protagonist who survived the Holocaust (Bellow’s *Sammler* and *Bellarosa*) or set a story in a concentration camp (Ozick’s *Shawl* or Spiegelman’s *Maus*), rather he simply allows his narratives to be shaped and misshapen by the pull of a post-Holocaust world. In *The Ghost Writer* Zuckerman imagines a fetching young lady to be a disguised, grown Anne Frank and temporarily falls for her. Philip Roth (the protagonist) travels to Israel in *Operation Shylock* to witness the trial of accused war criminal John Demjanjuk. He comes closest to directly depicting the Holocaust only through alternate history in *The Plot Against America*.

Readers can see Roth run into problems of representation as a writer who regularly uses experience and attempt to find a way to write about the unwritable and treat the untreatable. Contrasting his method with those of Malamud, Bellow, Ozick, and Spiegelman will reveal the limits of representation and show what happens when those limits are tested.

Upcoming Events

Philip Roth Society at the Jewish American and Holocaust Literature Symposium

The Philip Roth Society will sponsor a panel at the Jewish American and Holocaust Literature Symposium, 7-10 November 2010, in South Beach, FL. The title of the panel will be “Roth and the Holocaust,” and the presentations will include

* “Traumatic Realism and ‘Afterwardsness’ in *The Plot Against America*” – Aimee Pozorski, Central Connecticut State University

* “‘Submerged, Emerging, Disappearing, Unforgotten’: Holocaust Memory and Masculine Identity in Roth’s Fiction” – Maggie McKinley, Marquette University

* “‘The Most Dreadful Sound Imaginable’: The Holocaust as Psychic Trauma in *The Professor of Desire*” – Peter Rudnytsky, University of Florida

For more information visit the symposium website at <http://jahlsymposium.wordpress.com/>.

Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900

The Philip Roth Society is sponsoring a panel at this year’s 39th annual Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900, to be held at the University of Louisville, February 24-26, 2011.

Obituary**John McDaniel 1941-2010**

A member of MTSU's faculty since 1970, McDaniel joined the university's English department as an assistant professor before ultimately becoming chairman in 1978. He was named dean of the College of Liberal Arts in 1984, a job he fulfilled with distinction throughout his tenure.

Before joining the MTSU faculty, McDaniel served as an instructor, graduate fellow and graduate-teaching assistant at Florida State University, where he earned his doctorate in 1972 and received the Outstanding Teacher Award in 1966-67. Prior to his teaching duties at FSU, McDaniel was a teacher at McDonogh School, a coeducational day and boarding college preparatory school in Owings Mills, Md., from 1964 to 1966.

In addition to his doctorate, McDaniel earned a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Johns Hopkins University (1964) and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hampden-Sydney College (1963), where he graduated cum laude.

An accomplished scholar, McDaniel served as an associate editor and advisory board member to *The Upstart Crow*, a scholarly journal of Shakespeare studies, and as a consulting editor for *Philip Roth Studies* in 2009. He also was named as a Distinguished Member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars in 2009.

In 2008, he was the recipient of the Bob Womack Distinguished Faculty Award at MTSU, and he previously received MTSU's Distinguished International Service Award, among other honors, including a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to complete *The History of Folklore in Europe* in 1981.

Born Jan. 30, 1941, McDaniel died May 3, 2010. He is survived by his wife, Jean; two sons, Scott (wife Donetta) and Craig McDaniel; and three granddaughters.

With thanks to Tom Tozer of the MTSU News and Public Affairs Office



In Memoriam

John N. McDaniel, 1941–2010

On the morning of May 3, 2010 *Philip Roth Studies* suffered a serious loss. John N. McDaniel, a founding member of the Philip Roth Society and part of the journal's editorial board, passed away in Mufreesboro, Tennessee, where he had resided since 1970. He is survived by his wife, Jean, and their sons Scott and Craig. His passing will be felt not only by his colleagues at Middle Tennessee State University—where he served as dean of the College of Liberal Arts since 1984—but also his fellow scholars in Shakespeare studies, as well as his many friends within the Philip Roth Society.

I first got to know John in April 2004, soon after we founded *Philip Roth Studies*. At the time, we were more of an idea than a brand new journal. Not only had we yet to see the publication of our first issue, but at this point we did not yet have a publisher. Although I had been negotiating with Heldref Publications to carry the journal, when I first contacted John we were all in “solo” mode, assuming that the Roth Society would not only oversee the editing and content, but also the printing and distribution as well. Needless to say, this was at the time a home-grown affair, and I was turning to more experienced scholars to help us begin our mission. John did not know me from Adam, and I emailed him out of the blue asking if he would be a peer reader for the journal. He enthusiastically responded, apologizing (needlessly) for having been out of the loop of Roth scholarship for a number of years—tapping instead into his passion for Shakespeare—but told me that “getting back to Roth after a long lacuna would be exhilarating.” As Rick said to Louis in *Casablanca*, this was the beginning of a beautiful friendship, and for the next six years I had the pleasure of working with this remarkable man.

At first, because John was a college dean with more responsibilities than I could imagine at the time, I was somewhat reluctant to tap into his expertise. He was, after all, the first scholar to publish a monograph on Roth's works, *The Fiction of Philip Roth* (Haddonfield House, 1974). But now he had larger responsibilities, and I was afraid that I might be bothering John by asking him over and over to read for the journal. I could not have been more mistaken. With the kind of warmth and good humor for which he was renowned—he told me that on the MTSU campus he was known as the “funny dean”—John put my concerns to rest and agreed, time and again, to give me his opinion on the submissions we received. I benefitted from his many insights, not only regarding the essays that I sent to him, but also on his vast experiences in academia and how best I and the journal could navigate that terrain.

In fact, I am indebted to John not only for his work with *Philip Roth Studies*, but for the professional guidance he was kind enough to provide. As I began to work more closely with my own university's administration, John shared with me the invaluable knowledge he gleaned from his own experiences, first as the chair of MTSU's English Department, and then as dean of its College of Liberal Arts. There were many times that I turned to John for advice about an executive issue, and when I decided to explore more fully university administration, he quickly offered to write me letters of recommendation. I cannot count the number of times he has helped me over the past few years, and I will miss the opportunity of contacting him at a moment's notice, and then receiving a quick response, a kind word, and a humorous anecdote.

Given the frequency of our correspondences, it is a bit surprising to me that we did not personally meet sooner than we did. Because we never attended the same conferences or traveled in the same scholarly circles, we had never had an occasion to physically meet and work together on a project. But in May 2009, we got that chance. Bernard F. Rodgers—who published his first book on Roth soon after John published his—was organizing a roundtable discussion for the 2009 American Literature Association Conference in Boston. Sponsored by the Roth Society, it was a panel commemorating the fortieth anniversary of *Portnoy's Complaint*. Bernie

had invited several people to be a part of the roundtable discussion, and John and I were two of those. (I have a picture of me, John, and Bernie taken after our roundtable, that John jokingly titled “The Roth Guys.”) Not only was I impressed by John’s experiences surrounding *Portnoy’s Complaint*—he had the luck of being an English doctoral student during the wild heyday of the novel’s publication and reception—but I was amazed by his likeability and the ease he seemed to feel with his audience.

Although I regret not having another opportunity to meet, I will nonetheless cherish that experience. I remember after our roundtable on *Portnoy*, and sharing dinner with John and his wife Jean, talking with him about contributing an essay to the journal. Since I had begun corresponding with John, he was forever making links between Shakespeare and Roth, and I kept encouraging him to pursue those ideas. We spoke in Boston about his plans for contributing such an essay, but his writing time was very limited. In the meantime, I encouraged him to write an extended review on Roth’s new novel, *The Humbling*, which we published in the Fall 2009 issue of *Philip Roth Studies*. He never did get around to completing that essay on Roth and Shakespeare, which I count as just one more loss for the journal.

John’s passing will be felt in a variety of ways. He contributed much to our profession, and it is for this reason that the Roth Society has decided to honor him in the title of its new graduate student prize, the Siegel/McDaniel Award. Named for both John and another founding member of the society that we recently lost, Ben Siegel, this annual award will be given for the best conference paper written by a graduate student and presented on a Roth Society sponsored conference panel. Winners will not only receive a monetary prize, but they will also have the opportunity to publish their expanded essay in the pages of this journal. Given John’s history with students and his encouragement of graduate scholarship, such an award is most fitting. There is much more that I could say regarding my indebtedness to John, his impact on the journal and society, and the rich experiences he leaves in his wake, but I will defer to the words of John himself, who, at the request of his estate advisers, wrote in his own obituary:

Having lived “the examined life” with animated good humor, Dr. McDaniel leaves behind few regrets and many memorable moments for loved ones to contemplate at their leisure. Teaching Shakespeare’s tragedies for four decades left him with the distinct impression that almost everyone dies in the end, though he had hoped that perhaps in his case an exception would be made.

No one could have put it any better.

To the memory of John N. McDaniel, I dedicate this issue of *Philip Roth Studies*.

-Derek Parker Royal

As published in the Spring issue of Philip Roth Studies

**The Philip Roth Society announces the
Annual Siegel/McDaniel Award for Graduate Student Research**

The Siegel/McDaniel Award recognizes high-quality research essays submitted for review by graduate student members of the Philip Roth Society in a given academic year (ending June 1).

Eligible graduate students should submit a clean copy of their 10-15 page essay, double-spaced, with 12 point Times New Roman font to David Brauner, Philip Roth Studies Program Chair, at d.brauner@reading.ac.uk

The annual deadline is September 1.

The winner of the Siegel/McDaniel Award receives:

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

The executive board members of the Philip Roth Society will evaluate all entries and notify entrants of their decision by October 1, of the same year. .

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



Ben Siegel



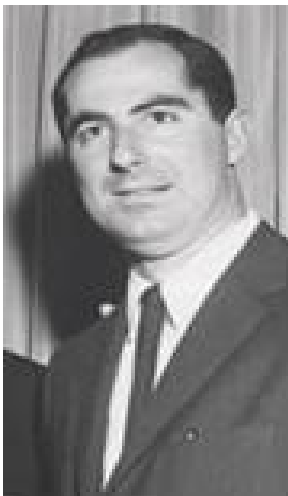
John N. McDaniel

Uncollected Roth

By Richard Sheehan

These articles are about the works of Philip Roth that, to date, are uncollected and are quite likely to remain so. A bibliography of these works can be found on the Philip Roth Society website at [www.rothsociety.org.]

The Love Vessel



Philip Roth at the National Book Awards, 1960.

Photo © National Book Foundation archives.

“The Love Vessel” was published in the Fall 1959 issue of *The Dial*. It concerns the travails of Sam Shachat, a perennial loser who has given up all his worldly goods to attend a Kibbutz in Israel, which, as seems his due, he has now decided to leave. He recalls his life prior to this as one of near-constant disappointment; forced to leave law school, he’d met and married Pauline - his ‘salvation’ - only to be divorced by her in due course. Then he’d attended dental school where he’d lasted only seven months before realising that it wasn’t for him. On top of all of this, he considers himself ugly and suffers from ‘excessive dandruff and rectal itching.’ After advising his Beekeeper friend on the Kibbutz of his decision to leave, the beekeeper asks Sam if he’ll take a gift for his mother who lives in New York. There’s no love lost between the Beekeeper and his mother; he describes her as ‘a colossal hag, a selfish old son of a bitch if ever you saw one,’ and believes her responsible for pushing his father to an early death. Reluctantly, Sam agrees, and the beekeeper gives him a biscuit tin filled with earth from his farm, saying, ‘she could have it thrown on her grave.’

Sam’s return journey across Europe results in a series of incidents involving the tin that stretches Sam’s reserve and further depletes his feelings of self worth. On the road to Haifa, he retires to the bathroom of a bus terminal to change his sweat-soaked clothes, only to find that the tin has broken open in his suitcase and the earth scattered all over Sam’s belongings. He carefully sorts through all his clothes and returns the dirt to the tin. Then, when in a hotel in Florence, he believes the tin has been stolen, with the unintended consequence that the cleaner of his room is fired. Ironically, the old lady doesn’t have the tin; in fact, she had watered the earth in the tin believing that it must contain a plant, but she had also stolen a small amount of money. He stops in a hotel in Paris recommended by friends and is scolded for washing his socks in his sink. Feeling hectored, he decides to keep the tin in his possession at all times whilst sight-seeing in France.

His patience breaks on his return to the US. At customs he’s told that they’ll have to send the tin away for tests, a proclamation that causes him to lose his temper and consequently punch the tin, causing the dirt to fall all over the customs officer’s desk.

Now, alone in New York and spiralling ever more into desperation and self loathing, Sam stops looking after himself and starts to put on weight. Two weeks after returning, he decides to go to see the beekeeper’s mother to give her the tin. On his way, he fills it with soil from the roadside and then proceeds to her apartment. When he tells her that he’s from Israel, she assumes that he’s bringing her news of her son’s death. But upon giving her the gift, she proceeds to fall into his arms, sobbing, at which point he kisses her.

The standout theme for me in this story is that of Sam’s self-loathing and feelings of inadequacy. These appear to be brought on by a couple of things: his own self-opinion, which is that he’s unattractive, with ‘close-set...beetle eyes’ and a body that is ‘fighting him all the way’; and secondly, the fact that he feels constantly emasculated by women. For example, the very first paragraph describes the women on the Kibbutz as ‘Dynamic, dark, emotional, [and] they unnerved him with their hairy thighs.’ We learn that he married his wife because he believed being married to her would improve him, but instead he found himself outclassed by her: ‘She was excellent at tennis,’ he says. ‘I mistook that for class.’ He says that even Pauline’s father considered him ‘--a lightweight? Not even half a man? ... If you were half a man, you’d tell Pauline what to do...’

All through the story he has bad experiences with women - the cleaner at the hotel in Florence whom he believes has stolen the tin, and the owner of the hotel in Paris who scolds him for his sock washing, leading him to believe that all women seemed to conspire against him.

Everything seems lost for Sam, and yet, right at the end of the story, we see perhaps some hope for him. When he goes to see the beekeeper's mother, he initially sees her as 'ghastly' and immense – appearing to be intimidated again by a woman. But upon giving her the gift, she crumples, physically collapsing into his arms and crying. Suddenly a woman becomes reliant on him and reacting to such helplessness, he reaches upwards and kisses her.

The Good Girl

“The Good Girl” is a short story published in *Cosmopolitan* in May of 1960. It takes a fairly straightforward evening in the life of its protagonist and tips our perception of expected behaviour on its head. It opens with Laurie Bowen, an eighteen-year-old student, returning home from a date with her current beau (of sorts), Richard Renner. Since the evening appears not to have been a rip-roaring success, Laurie finds herself trying to repel his insistent advances.

Eventually she manages to get inside her parents' apartment away from Renner. But once on the other side of the door, she discovers that her parents are having a party and that Cynthia Lasser, one of their middle-aged friends, has been eavesdropping on her conversation with Renner in the hallway. As the two collide, it's very apparent that Cynthia has been overindulging at the party. After leaving Cynthia, Laurie says a brief hello to her father on her way to the bathroom, and then, while inside, considers how charmed her childhood has been compared with those of her peers. In the midst of her day-dreaming, she's shocked out of her contemplation by Cynthia, who has snuck into the bathroom behind her and is now regaling her in drunken banter. Laurie loses her temper and accuses Cynthia of eaves-dropping earlier, and Cynthia - as she tumbles languorously into the bath - reveals that she's much more interested in men of Richard's age than their fathers.

“Bring on the sons, bring on the offspring!” she screeches. “I'm crazylegs Lasser, Cornell '36! Whoopee!”

It's clear that her marriage with her husband George is more or less dead and buried and that Cynthia seeks her excitement elsewhere. She exits the bathroom and begins dancing suggestively with someone whom we suspect is Laurie's father. Somewhat distraught, Laurie seeks out her mother and despairs when she finds her dancing with another man.

The following morning, Laurie ventures from her bedroom to find her parents' apartment in a state of complete dishevelment. When she tells her mother about her confrontation with Cynthia the previous night, her mother is unconcerned and not a little amused. This wasn't the response Laurie was hoping for, and when her father returns from getting the morning papers and asks her how her previous evening was, she explodes, exasperated with her parents' behaviour.

“I was just awful! I did everything I could think of!””You're no different. *Nobody's* any different!”

Except, of course, they are. The usual accepted roles are reversed. Laurie behaves as if she's a serious-minded, responsible adult, and her parents behave like stereotypical reckless teenagers. Cynthia is the antithesis of Laurie, an adult wanting to live with the abandon of a teenager. One has to remember when this was written, 1960, just a few years after the 'invention' of the teenager, leaving the two generations perplexed with the actions of the other. Laurie's frustration with her parents' behaviour explodes in the finale of the story and reflects the confusion of many parents of that era who are unsure of what is happening to their children.

Reading the Reviews:***A return to form with the completion of the Nemeses novels?***

Reviews of Nemesis were much improved from his previous work, The Humbling. There were still some naysayers but the majority of reviews were good and some were exceptional. Many also commented that the Nemeses group of novels would need to be revisited and assessed as a whole to examine their full impact and their importance within Roth's oeuvre.

There is something Sophoclean in the grandeur of late Roth. In many ways Roth's remarkable intensity as an artist – his ability to concentrate with manic fixity on a single theme – has always threatened to destabilise his fictions, to render them too specific, too eccentrically personal. But in these late works Roth has corralled his energies with astonishing skill. These books are wintry, skeletal, winnowed to a piercing point. They cast a cold eye. It should go without saying that they are all, with the forgivable exception of *The Humbling*, small masterpieces, the parting gifts of a man who has devoted his life to the scrupulous perfection of his art.

The Irish Times - Kevin Power

Nemesis is an artfully constructed, suspenseful novel with a cunning twist toward the end.

Compared with works of such high ambition as *Sabbath's Theater* (1995) or *American Pastoral* (1997), the four Nemeses novels are lesser additions to the Roth canon. *Nemesis* itself is not really large enough in conception--in the inherent capacities of the characters it deploys, in the action it gives them to play out--to do more than scratch the surface of the great questions it raises. Despite its length (280 pages) it has the feel of a novella.

There is a further sense in which the four Nemeses novels are minor. Their overall mood is subdued, regret-filled, melancholy: they are composed, as it were, in a minor key. One can read them with admiration for their craft, their intelligence, their seriousness; but nowhere does one feel that the creative flame is burning at white heat, or the author being stretched by his material.

New York Review of Books - J M Coetzee

Nemesis is a meticulous recreation of the times. Its portrayal of polio, of athletic competition and summer camping, of Newark itself in 1944, spins out a tissue of Updikean detail, minutely researched, with upfront acknowledgment of Roth's sources. But like so many realistic writers going back to Hardy, Norris, and Dreiser, Roth also has a vision, a thematic grid he imposes on the action. He cannot resist putting his thumb on the scales to ensure that things will go badly for his characters, not in spite of their goodness but because they are good, and because our world is indifferent to good and evil alike.

The Daily Beast - Morris Dickstein

It's not unmoving, exactly, but all a little synthetic -- less like a vintage Roth narrative than like a very well-executed O. Henry story, complete with a deliberately ironic plot twist and a sentimental outcome.

New York Times - Michiko Kakutani

.....take *Nemesis* for what it is: possibly Philip Roth's saddest work of art -- and like Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome, right up there with the classics.

The Huffington Post - David Finkle

Reading the Nemeses quartet for the first time as a unified work leaves little doubt that the slimness of each volume and the apparent artlessness of the prose have quietly accumulated into a major statement by the 77-year-old novelist. If the regularity of these recent publications has come to seem as routine as the autumnal equinox, it turns out to be equally as profound.

Avi Steinberg - Haaretz.com

This unnerving book dwells, like the short novels that preceded it (and the long novels that preceded them), at the pinnacle of American writing.

Bloomberg - Craig Seligman

Nemesis is painful and powerful. It reminds us how much worse life used to be and about the two kinds of tragedies: the ones that strike us and the ones we make for ourselves.

USA Today - Bob Minzesheimer

The shadow of Camus' classic can certainly be discerned in Philip Roth's very fine, very unsettling new novel, *Nemesis*.

One of the many technical strengths of Roth's narrative is the way that he conjures up an entire lost world -- Jewish New Jersey seven decades ago -- with a narrative economy and a resolute absence of cliché or ethno-stereotypical dreck. His descriptive language is deceptively simple and profoundly evocative. This vanished universe of drugstores with soda fountains, of crippling heat waves in a pre-air-conditioned world, of iron lungs and medicine practised with a quasi-industrial revolution brutality, is so brilliantly rendered that it seems absolutely immediate and palpable.

Do we magnify our misfortune by demanding meaning from the vicissitudes that encroach on all our lives? Days after finishing this haunting novel, that question still nags. And like all major writers, Roth knows that the great dilemmas of human existence have absolutely no answers.

The (London) Times - Douglas Kennedy

If you haven't read anything by Roth this is as good a place as any to start, but while *Nemesis* would have made an outstanding short piece, it's only a so-so novel (by Roth's elevated standards).

The Sunday Telegraph - Tibor Fischer

Masterfully compressed, it is never cramped or sketchy-seeming. Characters brim with complex believability. From its perfect choice of narrator to its beautifully exact prose, everything seems precisely in place but never cut and dried: quandaries reverberate around the inexorable momentum of its story line. Occasionally, as in Bucky's prowess with the javelin, reminders of the work's classic antecedents flicker into view.

The (London) Sunday Times - Peter Kemp

Roth, often described as America's greatest living novelist, writes at the top of his form in a straightforward, unadorned, almost muted prose, a kind of factual recounting of a horrible situation with its corrupted air of menace and disease.

The Providence Journal - Sam Coale

For all that, what heat his previous novels give off is the heat of friction, of conflagration. His newest, *Nemesis*, stands out for its warmth. It is suffused with precise and painful tenderness.

New York Times - Leah Hager Cohen

The rage at the novel's heart is more than earned and is unexpectedly balanced by some of the tenderest passages in Roth's sizable oeuvre. As Roth has aged into his seventies (he's now 77), the love of the carnal, which animated the best of his early works, has melted into a sensual appreciation of the human body at play, at work and in moments of affection. The scenes in the Newark playground and Pocono summer camp evoke the untiring joy of children at play and cast the novel in an almost mythical hue. When the children's joyful, sun-baked bodies are twisted and snuffed out by the virus, the reader feels the horrific randomness and pointlessness of premature death. Cantor is overwhelmed with an aggressive rage toward the virus's ultimate source, and so are we.

The Star - James Grainger

Roth does an utterly convincing job of evoking the terror that polio creates over the frightened and bewildered Newark community. (The vaccine was only licensed in 1962.) The powerlessness of parents, the desperate lack of information, the speed and severity of the disease are all conveyed with affecting veracity as – seemingly at random – polio sentences child after child to crippling or to death.

One of the things that makes a writer great rather than merely good is their ability to get the fully realised account of an individual to stand for something wider and deeper – a community, a nation, even (at rare best) humanity itself. Needless to say, this is much harder to achieve when the focus is inward-looking or concerned with a very particular and priapic desire – though Roth has, of course, managed even this feat before. In the context of his late work, *Nemesis* – if it's not too sinister to say so – is a breath of fresh air, because polio provides Roth with a new, outward-looking and substantial subject around which his writing can thrive; and, perhaps for this reason, the book contains many of the things that I find most exhilarating in his work.

The Guardian - Edward Docx

It's not just that Roth has changed speeds again, and again changed the way the story is being told -- it reads so fully as a third-person narrative that the reader can altogether forget that there is a hint in the book's second sentence that this is not so, and be utterly surprised when, at the end, the narrator steps forward to seal the tale. Rather information is being pieced out slowly so that the reader experiences how the events in the story were received as they happened: as explosions that no one -- no matter how loud or quiet each event's arrival, whether Pearl Harbor or an epidemic's first death -- could have imagined as the all-consuming cataclysms they would become.

Salon - Greil Marcus

Nemesis could be the darkest novel Roth has written and ranks with the most provocative

Kirkus Book Reviews

Nemesis begins rather slowly and deliberately, and plods on, like boring Bucky himself, for quite a while. The hysteria (and tragedy) that the polio epidemic caused -- and efforts by people like Bucky to maintain some sense of normalcy and calm -- are captured well, as is the Newark heat of that summer, and the Jewish neighborhood. Roth takes his time, and the build-up can seem very slow; Bucky, too, can seem too good to be true -- too obviously being set up for one hell of a fall. Still, it works well enough, Roth's confident if occasionally lazy prose consistently engaging. But the novel winds up taking that turn and jump -- over a whole quarter of a century. Roth makes it too easy for himself -- and the reader. The big questions are thrown out there, but then just quickly checked off. It works, but barely; it's certainly disappointing (redeemed only slightly by a fine retrospective closing scene.)

Nemesis is worthwhile but puzzling, and certainly falls short of what it could have been.

The Complete Review - M.A.Orthofer

What makes Roth such an important novelist is the effortless way he brings together the trivial and the profoundly serious, and nowhere is this more in evidence than his late books.

The Independent - Matt Thorne

Ethnic hatreds, anti-Semitism, targeting of particular individuals, all start appearing. Mr. Roth is adept at showing how such attitudes can mushroom at times like these and how irrational they can be. But his particular genius as a storyteller is his capacity to mix in the ludicrous certain hard facts concerning contagion - polio is a disease that can have carriers who are not (yet) themselves symptomatic - which make his book not only an exciting narrative but a wise and cautionary tale as well.

For all its virtues, though, *Nemesis* is a curiously flawed work, especially from someone like Mr. Roth. Although as we have seen, his prose here can be both luminous and hard-hitting, some of the dialogue is amazingly weak: wooden, stilted, stiff, simply not even remotely credible on occasion.

(Continued on P.22)

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.

Book Chapters

- * Brauner, David. "Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*." *Contemporary American Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010: 121-34.
- * Hobbs, Alex. "A Gendered Approach to Ageing in Contemporary American Fiction: A Portrait of the Old Man in Philip Roth's *Everyman*." *Writing America into the Twenty-First Century: Essays on the American Novel*. Ed. Elizabeth Boyle and Anne-Marie Evans. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010: 6-21.
- Klimek, Julia F. "The Taboo in Philip Roth's *Sabbath's Theater*." *The Taboo*. Ed. Harold Bloom and Blake Hobby. New York: Chelsea House, 2010: 177-87.

Journal Articles

- Boddy, Kasia. "Philip Roth's Great Books: A Reading of *The Human Stain*." *Cambridge Quarterly* 39.1 (2010): 39-60
- * Bylund, Sarah. "Merry Levov's BLT Crusade: Food-Fueled Revolt in Roth's *American Pastoral*." *Philip Roth Studies* 6.1 (2010): 13-30.
- * Hobbs, Alex. "Reading the Body in Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*." *Philip Roth Studies* 6.1 (2010): 69-83.
- Jacobi, Martin J. "Rhetoric and Fascism in Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*, and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*." *Philip Roth Studies* 6.1 (2010): 85-102.
- Kelly, Adam. "Moments of Decision in Contemporary American Fiction: Roth, Auster, Eugenides." *Critique* 51.4 (2010): 313-32.
- Miller, Nancy K. "Starting Out in the Fifties: Grace Paley, Philip Roth, and the Making of a Literary Career." *Contemporary Women's Writing* 3.2 (2009): 135-42.
- Peeler, Nicole. "The Woman of *Ressentiment* in *When She Was Good*." *Philip Roth Studies* 6.1 (2010): 31-45.
- * Sánchez Canales, Gustavo. "Interrelations between Literature and Life: Literary Mentors in Philip Roth's *The Professor of Desire*" *The Icfai University Journal of American Literature* 3.1-2 (2010): 68-79.
- * Sigrist-Sutton, Clare. "Mistaking Merry: Tearing Off the Veil in *American Pastoral*." *Philip Roth Studies* 6.1 (2010): 47-68.

Dissertations (with significant portions devoted to Roth)

Chandler, Aaron. "Pursuing Unhappiness: City, Space, and Sentimentalism in Post-Cold War American Literature." Diss. U of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2009.

Love, Christopher D. "Creating Tragic Spectators: Rebellion and Ambiguity in World Tragedy." Diss. U of Michigan, 2009.

Call for Papers

American Literature Association

The 22nd Annual Conference, May 26-29, 2011, Boston MA

The Philip Roth Society will be sponsoring a panel on 'International Roth' at this year's American Literature Association conference, to be held at the Westin Copley in Boston, May 26-29. Proposals are invited for twenty-minute papers on any aspect of this topic, including the following:

- * the significance, and representation of, Israel, England, Czechoslovakia etc. as locations for Roth's fiction
- * the significance of Roth's 'London years'
- * the significance of the Penguin 'Writers from the Other Europe' series in Roth's career
- * the critical and popular reception of Roth's fiction outside the U.S.
- * Roth's relationships, literary and extra-literary, with writers outside the U.S.
- * foreign translations of Roth's work

Proposals of no more than 250 words, accompanied by full addresses, institutional affiliations and email addresses, should be sent by December 20 to David Brauner at d.brauner@reading.ac.uk.

Nemesis reviews continued...

Part of the appeal - and the strangeness - of Roth's novel is the way that it renders this situation, with its seemingly undramatic topic and unlikely protagonist, without hyperbole, yet maintains a grasp on the tension and ethical drama. At once deadly and quotidian, polio outbreaks were a perennial occurrence in the United States before the development of the first vaccine by Jonas Salk in the early 1950s. Roth's rendition of Cantor's softly tragic story mirrors in miniature a crisis as ordinary as it is terrifying, one that makes the baseball fields and hot-dog shops of a minor American

city like Newark into a battlefield of the everyday, nearly as perilous for the children of the city as the fields of Normandy would soon become for their older brothers.

Times Literary Supplement - Michael Sayeau

Roth once said, "at any event, all I can do with my story is to tell it and tell it and tell it." Indeed he does, and *Nemesis* confirms Roth's status as one of the most brilliant storytellers in the history of Jewish fiction.

St. Louis Jewish Light - Robert A. Cohen



It's more than just jokes about liver . . .
Become a member of the

Philip Roth Society

Beginning in 2009, 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 official society organ, *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 \$10 for overseas), 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 (add \$5 for overseas addresses).

For either membership option, fees should be paid by check or money order (made out to "Philip Roth Society").

Membership with *Philip Roth Studies*
(domestic) \$50

Membership with *Philip Roth Studies*
(overseas) \$60

Membership without the journal
(domestic) \$20

Membership without the journal
(overseas) \$25

Name: _____

Professional Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Mail to: The Philip Roth Society
c/o Jessica. G Rabin, Secretary/Treasurer
Department of English
Anne Arundel Community College
101 College Parkway
Arnold, MD 21012

For more information, and a sample
newsletter, visit the Philip Roth
Society Web site at
<http://rothsociety.org>



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

In this issue:

Message from the Society President

Obituary for John N. McDaniel

Abstracts from recent conference presentations

Call for papers for the 22nd annual conference of the ALA

Uncollected Roth: Early short stories

Nemesis Reviews

Bibliographic update

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