There is much awaiting us in 2008. The Philip Roth Society will be sponsoring several conference panels in the first half of the year. In February, we will be holding a panel at the thirty-sixth annual Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture. Hosted by the University of Louisville, the conference will run February 21-23, and our contribution, “Philip Roth as Reader, Reading Philip Roth,” will be held on Thursday from 3:15-4:45. Laura Tannenbaum, a long time Roth Society member, will chair the panel of three papers covering the topics of Roth and baseball in the 1960s, transitional Americanness in The Human Stain, and Roth as a critical reader of Saul Bellow.

And even though it is not a Roth Society-sponsored activity, Daniel Medin will be moderating the panel “Philip Roth: A Global Perspective” at the American Comparative Literature Association Conference, this year held at the Hyatt Regency in the Embarcadero Center, San Francisco. As we have done over the past three years, the Roth Society will sponsor both a roundtable discussion and a more traditional panel of papers.

The latter has been organized by James D. Bloom, the Class of 1932 Research Professor at Muhlenberg College and author of Gravity Fails: The Comic Jewish Shaping of Modern America (Praeger 2003). James has pulled together three intriguing papers under the title, “Philip Roth and the Visual Arts,” and will include discussions of stamp collecting in The Plot Against America, engagements with Jasper John’s Flag 1954-55, and the uses of painting in The Dying Animal.

The roundtable discussion will focus on Roth’s most recent novel, Exit Ghost, and will include noted scholars Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., Elaine B. Safer, Allan Cooper, and Michael Rothberg, as well as novelist Ruth Knafo Setton. The Roth Society will also hold its annual business meeting at the AIA Conference, this year held at the Hyatt Regency in the Embarcadero Center, San Francisco. As we have done over the past three years, the Roth Society will sponsor both a roundtable discussion and a more traditional panel of papers.

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Announcements

Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture Conference
Louisville, KY (February 21 - 23, 2008)

Philip Roth as Reader. Reading Philip Roth
Chair: Laura Tanenebaum, City University of New York, LaGuardia

“Reconsidering the National Pastime: Philip Roth, Baseball, and the Problem of the Sixties” — Matthew Shipe, Washington University in St. Louis

“Transition and Being an American in Philip Roth’s The Human Stain” — David M. Borman, University of Louisville

“Bellow Banished: Reconsidering Roth as Reader” — Laura Tanenebaum, City University of New York, LaGuardia

American Literature Association Conference
San Francisco, CA (May 22-25, 2008)

Philip Roth and the Visual Arts
Chair: James D. Bloom, Muhlenberg College

“Stamp Collecting and History in The Plot Against America” — Joshua Kotzin, Marist College

“I pledge a legion to the flag”: Flag 1954-55 and Roth’s Allegiance to Jasper Johns” — Aimee L. Pozorski, Central Connecticut State University

“Visual Expressions of Loss: The Dying Animal and a Contemporary Crisis in Representation” — Stephanie Cherolis University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Roundtable Discussion on Philip Roth’s Exit Ghost
Moderator: Derek Parker Royal, Texas A&M University-Commerce

Participants:
Alan Cooper, York College of the City University of New York
Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., Bard College at Simon’s Rock
Michael Rothberg, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Elaine B. Safer, University of Delaware
Ruth Knafo Setton, Lehigh University

Bibliographic Update:


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In addition to a personal subscription, please consider requesting that your library subscribe to the journal as well. Any subscription is, of course, helpful for the life of the journal, but institutional subscriptions carry particular weight. They represent support for the work for the work of the society, and they make our work accessible to larger numbers of people.

President’s Message: An Update on the Society

(Continued from page 2)

ence, and I strongly encourage everyone who can to attend.

There will be plenty to keep the Society busy during the second part of the year as well. In September, Roth will release his twenty-ninth book, Indignation, about American students during the time of the Korean War. (The man never rests.)

What is more, the film adaptation of The Dying Animal should be released in the United State by late spring or early summer. Going by the title Elegy, the film is directed by Isabel Coixet and adapted for the screen by Nicholas Meyers. It stars Ben Kingsley as David Kepesh, Penelope Cruz as Consuela Castillo, and includes supporting actors Dennis Hopper and the audience is ever-evolving. Just add the primary outlets for research and discussion—our journal, Philip Roth Studies, and the Philip Roth Society Newsletter—and readers have all they need for appreciating the growing diversity of Roth scholarship.
Bibliographic Update:
Compiled by Derek Parker Royal

Below is a listing of secondary critical resources that have appeared since (or were 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.

Books

Chapters from Books


Journal Articles


* Rodgers, Bernard F., Jr., and * Derek Parker Royal, eds. “Grave Commentary: A Roundtable Discussion on Everyman.” [Participants include * Debra Shostak, Mark Shechner, * David Brauner, Derek Parker Royal, and Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr.] Transcribed by Derek Parker Royal. Philip Roth Studies 3 (2007): 3-25.

* Rudynsksy, Peter. “True Confessions in Operation (Continued on page 7)

Is Larry David the Philip Roth of situation comedy?

By Richard Schehera

“Larry David is the Philip Roth of situation comedy” was the leading line in an article published in the LA Weekly News by Brenda Bernhard back on November 12, 2002. Sometime last year whilst watching Larry David’s show Curb your Enthusiasm and in total igno-

rance of Mr Bernhard’s article, I came to a similar conclu-

sion. My reasoning was based on the parallels that I could see between the two writers, the characters they created and the situations that unfolded around said characters. The following is a light-hearted look at the similarities in the works of Philip Roth and Larry David.

There are obvious equivalences between the two per-

sonalities so I’ll list them now to get them out of the way. They are both Jewish males, both baseball fans and were both born just a few miles apart; Roth in Newark, David in Brooklyn. Both have also often been accused of encouraging unwelcome Jewish stereotypes and even of being self-hating Jews. Right, that’s out of the way.

Probably the standout similarity in the careers of Philip Roth and Larry David are that they are both well known for having created memorable characters that have been mistaken for themselves and in doing so have blurred the boundaries between their reality and their fiction. Larry David, after the completion of Seinfeld in late 1990s, created a new character in himself, or the creator himself. Larry, a woman’s toilet, an embarrassing rash, a bottle of water hidden in his underpants and the aforementioned young girl all conspire in a hilarious misunderstanding that reminded me of Mickey Sabbath in style if not in execution.

In the season two episode, “The Car Salesman” Larry decides on a career change to that of the title and brings to mind Zuckerman’s decision to go to medical school in The Anatomy Lesson. As with Zuckerman, acquaint-

ances are flabbergasted at what they see as an irrational and illogical decision. Both plans are as short-lived as they were badly thought out.

If we’ve yet to try Curb your Enthusiasm, give it a shot, see what you think. The similarities with Roth are there, and have been picked up by other observers in the media and I think these parallels are due to the fact that what we have here are two personalities looking at the world with similar eyes and reaching similar conclu-

sions, all the while trying to make the rest of us aware of the absurdities of life as they are.

Political correctness and racism have also been ad-

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Teaching Philip Roth and Toni Morrison

By Julie Husband

The New York Times surveyed a couple hundred writers, critics, and editors, asking them what they consid-
ered the best book of American fiction written in the last twenty-five years. Toni Morrison and Philip Roth
emerged as the top authors. Both authors have written about the American experience, each turning to Jew-
ish themes, and each offering a unique perspective on the American experience.

Roth and Morrison share a set of formal and thematic concerns. Both take up personal and ethnic histories that are traumatic, histories that are experienced as painful, chaotic, and dehumanizing. Morrison once commented on the shortage of materials available on the subjec-
tive experience of slavery: only about one hundred slave narratives exist and, under pressure to testify to the
“facts” of slavery, even these are generally shorn of af-
tect. This was a void Morrison sought to fill in her novel, Beloved. Morrison’s other writings, especially her
breakthrough novel, The Bluest Eye, similarly seek to understand the effects of trauma on the individual and
on African American communities.

Roth’s writing, while often humorous, also re-writes the history of a historically marginalized and oppressed
group, the Jewish diaspora. Roth’s perspective is quite different from Morrison’s, since it is, in most cases, the
amazing success and assimilation of Jewish families in the United States that is the source of self-doubt, guilt,
and repression in his works. Roth’s characters confront (and often commit) taboos in the effort to throw off a
stiffening sense of decorum, the price his third-generation American Jews pay for middle-class success.

While we approached the texts in the class from many perspectives, we especially focused upon psycho-
analytic readings. Traumas—whether the sudden death of a child (Beloved) or the sudden revelation that one’s
child is a killer (American Pastoral)—have narrative effects on the characters in Morrison’s and Roth’s works.

Sethe (Beloved), Pecola (The Bluest Eye), and Dawn Levov (American Pastoral) try to repress memo-
ries of traumatic events, leading to numbness, psychosis, Roth, well, un-P.C.” “Will Iowans read Jewish Ameri-
can fiction?” Backed by the authority of The New York Times and the allure of Toni Morrison, I fi-
nally got the class.

And it was a tremendously rewarding one. A couple of graduate students came from creative writing back-
grounds, and several had strong backgrounds in post-
modernism and American history. When I’ve taught Roth in undergraduate classes, some students find his
post-modern narrative style confusing or slow. Even with a considerable amount of front-loading, many un-
dergraduates do not have the feel for American history that makes Roth fans respond so viscerally to his writ-
ing. Neither of these things was a problem in this class.

Roth and Morrison share the same issues, their representational strategies are strikingly different. It seems almost sacrilege to say, but Morrison can be melodramatic, particularly in The Blu-
est Eye and Beloved. Roth, on the other hand, risks los-
ing the reader’s sympathy for his characters by deflect-
 ing attention from their suffering and emphasizing their
irritation, envy, and anger. Roth and Morrison work in en-
tirely different meters. Her characters may be shell-
shocked, but they’re seldom anxiety-ridden. His scenes
often move toward absurdity, drawn with a fine hand
that never sacrifices realism (“Whacking off” in Port-
noy’s Complaint and the story of Jerry’s hamster coat in American Pastoral). Her scenes tend to move toward
shocking conclusions (Soapbox Church manipulating Pecola into poisoning the dog, Beloved seducing Paul

I paired texts from each author, to pursue specific
multicultural or psychoanalytic issues. We read Roth’s
Goofy, Columbus and Other Stories and Plot Against
America alongside of Morrison’s The Bluest Eye as
a way to consider the risks of and taboos against negative
ethic representations. In the early career works, Roth
and Morrison showed the effect upon children of ethnic
marginalization but also of betrayal within the commu-
nity. Both novels and one of the stories, “Conversion of
the Jews,” feature child narrators who are torn between
talking care, both texts consider the possibility that the
such story telling ultimately debases the storyteller and
demoralizes the listener. We considered, for example, what
went wrong when Sethe shared her story with Paul D.

The last third of the class considered the late-career
masterpieces, American Pastoral and Beloved, historical
novels that begin with terrible losses, and proceed to
consider how and whether stories of loss and shame
should be articulated or “passed on.” This took us back
to the original Freudian terms of our class. While many
argue that the best therapy for trauma and hysteria is the
“We’re definitely going to make it, but we haven’t gotten to where we can say anything about it.”

According to imdb.com, the project already has on board Philip Noyce, director of The Quiet American
and the story of Jerry's hamster coat in American Pastoral. Her scenes tend to move toward shocking
conclusions (Soapbox Church manipulating Pecola into poisoning the dog, Beloved seducing Paul

According to Halvorson, it's more
than coincidence that has brought so
many Roth projects to the studio.

“While we work and have a good
relationship with the author,” he said.

Joe Kraus

Assistant at Lakeshore, the studio has yet to determine a release date. According to Matt Halvorson, International Marketing
By Julie Husband

The New York Times surveyed a couple hundred writers, critics, and editors, asking them what they con-
sidered the best book of American fiction written in the last twenty-five years. Toni Morrison and Philip Roth emerged as the most-cited authors.

Both authors have explored the effects of traumatic events in a variety of ways—repressing, expressing, only to discover collective expression fleet-
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While Roth and Morrison deal with many of the same issues, their representational strategies are strikingly different. It seems almost sacrilegious to say, but Morrison can be melodramatic, particularly in The Bluest Eye and Beloved. Roth, on the other hand, risks losing the reader’s sympathy for his characters by deflecting attention from their suffering and emphasizing their chaotic, dehumanizing. Morrison once commented upon the shortage of materials available on the subject. "The facts of slavery, even these are generally shorn of af-
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Roth’s writing, while often humorous, also re-writes the history of a historically marginalized and oppressed group, the Jewish diaspora. Roth’s perspective is quite different from Morrison’s, since it is, in most cases, the amazing success and assimilation of Jewish families in the United States that is the source of self-doubt, guilt, and repression in his works. Roth’s characters confront (and often commit) taboos in the effort to throw off a stinging sense of decorum, the price his third-generation American Jews pay for middle-class success.

Goodbye, Columbus and Other Stories

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Books

Journals

Philippa Roth Society Newsletter/Fall 2007

**Bibliographic Update:**
Compiled by Derek Parker Royal

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Is Larry David the Philip Roth of situation comedy?

**By Richard Sheehan**

“Larry David is the Philip Roth of situation comedy” was the leading line in an article published in the *LA Weekly* News by Brendan Bernhard back on November 12, 2002. Sometime last year whilst watching Larry David’s show *Curb your Enthusiasm* and in total ignorance of Mr Bernhard’s article, I came to a similar conclusion. My reasoning was based on the parallels that I could see between the two writers, the characters they created and the situations that unfolded around said characters. The following is a light-hearted look at the similarities in the works of Philip Roth and Larry David.

There are obvious equivalences between the two personalities so I’ll list them now to get them out of the way. They are both Jewish males, both baseball fans and were both born just a few miles apart; Roth in Newark, David in Brooklyn. Both have also often been accused of encouraging unwelcome Jewish stereotypes and even of being self-hating Jews. Right, that’s out of the way.

Probably the standout similarity in the careers of Philip Roth and Larry David are that they are both well known for having created memorable characters that have been mistaken for themselves and in doing so have blurring the boundaries between their reality and their fiction. Larry David, after the completion of *Seinfeld* in the late 1990s, created a new character in himself, or the creator himself. Larry, a woman’s toilet, an embarrassing rash, a bottle of water hidden in his underpants and the aforementioned young girl all conspire in a hilarious misunderstanding that reminded me of Mickey Sabbath in style if not in execution.

In the season two episode, “The Car Salesman” Larry joins a career change to that of the title and brings to mind Zuckerman’s decision to go to medical school in *The Anatomy Lesson*. There’s an episode in Series 2 called “The Doll” where Larry upsets the young daughter of a TV executive by cutting her doll’s hair. He manages to rescue the situation but final vilification is inflicted at the end of the episode. Larry and David both have created several characters whom casual readers might confuse with the writer. Nathan Zuckerman, of course, and numerous Philip Roths, none of whom were quite the real thing. When asked about these similarities, they have both been evasive but adamant that the characters were not autobiographical.

One of the Jewish male identity in modern North America is also a topic constantly addressed and queried within both bodies of work. In fact, more than that, they have been regularly criticised by orthodox Jews about their portrayals of the Jewish faith. Whether it’s Portnoy or Mickey Sabbath scandalizing all around them, or Larry David causing a fight between Jews and Christians at a baptism, or humming Wagner whilst in a cinema queue amongst other Jews, the two seem hell-bent on challenging Jewish orthodoxy.

Political correctness and racism have also been addressed by both writers. Roth looked at the issues in the *Human Stain* and Larry David confronted them in several episodes, most notably season one’s “Affirmative Action where Larry makes an affirmative action joke with a regard to a black dermatologist whom he later has David’s show *Curb your Enthusiasm* in total ignorance of Mr Bernhard’s article, I came to a similar conclusion. My reasoning was based on the parallels that I could see between the two writers, the characters they created and the situations that unfolded around said characters. The following is a light-hearted look at the similarities in the works of Philip Roth and Larry David.

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President’s Message: An Update on the Society

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and I strongly encourage everyone who can to attend.

There will be plenty to keep the Society busy during the second part of the year as well. In September, Roth will release his twenty-ninth book, Indignation, about American students during the time of the Korean War. (The man never rests.) What is more, the film adaptation of The Dying Animal should be released in the United State by late spring or early summer. Going by the title Elegy, the film is directed by Isabel Coixet and adapted for the screen by Nicholas Meyers. It stars Ben Kingsley as David Kepesh, Penelope Cruz as Consuela Castillo, and includes supporting actors Dennis Hopper and the audience is ever-evolving. Just add the primary outlets for research and discussion—our journal, Philip Roth Studies, and the Philip Roth Society Newsletter—and readers have all they need for appreciating the growing diversity of Roth scholarship.

Bibliographic Update:


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Update on recent Roth publications

The Philip Roth Society
Newsletter

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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 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.