



The Philip Roth Society Newsletter

Vol. 7 No.1

Summer 2009

Message from the Society's President Aimee Pozorski

I would like to open this letter by thanking Derek Parker Royal for both his commitment to Roth Studies and his dedication to the Society. As founding President, he has done as much in promoting us as Roth scholars as he has in promoting the work of Roth, and I am honored to have his confidence – and yours – in leading us into the future.

I met Derek early on in his own tenure as Society President – at the 2002 Jewish American and Holocaust Literature Conference in Boca Raton, Florida. What was clear to me then, and remains clear to me now, is one quality that sets the Philip Roth Society apart from any other academic organization I know: The incredible commitment of the veteran Roth scholars in helping to promote the new. On the one hand, that is quintessentially Roth, fascinated as he is by intergenerational relationships and various mentoring roles. But it is also quintessentially Royal. The Society began as a way to help connect experienced and beginning scholars, and I am happy to see that as a continuing value today.

In 1979, Nathan Zuckerman begins his tale of visiting his mentor, E.I. Lonoff by explaining: “For I had come, you see, to submit myself for candidacy as nothing less than E.I. Lonoff’s spiritual son, to petition for his moral sponsorship and to win, if I could, the magical protection of his advocacy and his love.” After all these years, I never quite know if Roth is mocking his naïve alter ego or celebrating his faith in Lonoff as an important mentor. Perhaps it is a little bit of both. But I have to admit to sharing these feelings when I walk into a room – as I do at the JAH L symposia or the meetings of the ALA or the MLA – and seeing mentors who have been so important to my reading and scholarship through the years.

And I know that I am not alone. I was deeply moved when, during the ALA roundtable entitled, “*Portnoy’s Complaint: Then and Now*” organized by Prof. Bernard Rodgers (see p. 13), I saw so many diverse scholars gathered to share their first impression of the infamous novel. Some of us were coming of age during that important cultural moment in 1969, and others of us were in our infancies, or had

(Continued on page 22)

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

ISSN 1543-1347

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

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

Editor

Richard Sheehan

Officers of the Society**Founder**

Derek Parker Royal
Texas A&M University – Commerce

President

Aimee Pozorski
Central Connecticut State University

Program Chair

David Brauner
The University of Reading
Reading, UK

Treasurer

Jessica G. Rabin
Anne Arundel Community College

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

Philip Roth Society Annual General Meeting Minutes ALA Conference, Boston May 2009

Present: Royal (outgoing President), Anderson, Gonzalez, McDaniel, Pozorski (incoming President), Rodgers, Shipe, Spargo

Mission Statement: The purpose of the Philip Roth Society is to connect people and share ideas on Roth to benefit both members and the field of Roth studies overall. Members may choose to join with or without the subscription to *Philip Roth Studies*, which appears twice a year. Members who do not subscribe to *PRS* do receive the Society newsletter, which is published at even intervals between the appearances of the journal itself.

Officers need to report annually at the ALA and again during their outgoing term. The spring 2009 elections resulted in new members of the executive board. Aimee Pozorski, as incoming President, replaced Derek Royal, who stepped down after founding the society. David Brauner was elected as Program Chair, a new executive office on the board; and Jessica Rabin will remain the Society's secretary. The newsletter editor remains a position appointed by the executive council; Richard Sheehan replaced Joe Krauss as newsletter editor.

The primary responsibility of the Program Chair is to organize PRS panels for representation at such national conferences as the ALA, Jewish American and Holocaust Literature Symposium, the ALA Symposium on American Fiction, and the Twentieth Century Literature and Culture Conference at the University of Louisville.

President's Report

Derek Royal emphasized his work with Richard Sheehan for putting out the newsletter (see attached report from the Society newsletter editor). After this next newsletter, we will back on schedule with alternating newsletters and journal issues. Derek also reminded members that he created a FaceBook page for networking, as an alternative to a listserv, which has not come to fruition in the past. *Philip Roth Studies* is happily at home now with the new publisher: Purdue University Press. They are helping us with quicker turnaround time. After the appearance of the "Mourning Zuckerman" special issue in January of 2010, the publication schedule should be back on track. *PRS* continues to maintain high standards, which also comes with a higher rejection rate. We need to work harder at having university libraries subscribe to the journal.

Tasks accomplished since May 2008 business meeting:

- In 2008, oversaw constitutional changes:
 - Newsletter editor no longer an elected office, but is now appointed by society's executive council
 - Added new elected position of program chair, who will handle all matters concerning conference and events programming.
 - The executive council of the society is now made up of the president, the program chair and the secretary/ treasurer.
- Successfully managed the 2009 election of society officers:
 - Those elected for the 2009-2012 term are Aimee Pozorski, president; David Brauner, program chair; Jessica Rabin, secretary/treasurer
- Sponsored conference activity since ALA 2008:
 - At 2009 ALA Conference in Boston, panel on "Mourning Zuckerman" (organized by Aimee Pozorski and Miriam Jaffe-Foger), and "*Portnoy's Complaint: Now and Then*" (organized by Bernard Rodgers, Jr.)
 - Did not offer panels at the 2009 Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture Conference at the University of Louisville
- Along with the incoming program chair, began laying groundwork for other upcoming conferences:
 - Two panels at the 2009 ALA Jewish American and Holocaust Literature Symposium, to be held in Salt Lake City, UT, in September.
 - Possible panel at the 2009 ALA Symposium on American Fiction in Savannah, GA, in October.
- Worked with Joe Kraus, who needed to resign as newsletter editor, and helped him to find a replacement, Richard Sheehan.
- Created Roth Society organizational page on *Facebook* (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Philip-Roth-Society/73597725394>). This page will be another way for society members to share information and a means for the society to expand its presence.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Parker Royal

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

- Oversaw the transition from Heldref Publication to Purdue University Press. Our first issue with Purdue UP was the Spring 2008 issue, which came out in February 2009. Because of the transition, the journal is temporarily behind schedule, but it should be back on track by the end of 2009.
- Finalizing manuscripts for the Fall 2009 issue, which should be out in summer 2009, and currently copyediting manuscripts for the Spring 2010 issue.
- Working with guest editors, Aimee Pozorski and Miriam Jaffe-Foger, on the next special issue, "Mourning Zuckerman" (Fall 2009).

- Instituted new policy for journal, beginning with Spring 2009 issue: all authors must be members of the Philip Roth Society in order for their essays to be published in the journal (a policy adopted by Roth Society members present at the 2008 business meeting).
- Acquired permissions from several cartoonists/illustrators so that the journal can use drawings or caricatures of Roth on the cover of the next several issues.
- Submissions to the journal are steady, and we have a healthy backlog.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Parker Royal

Secretary/Treasurer's Report

Jessica Rabin reported that there are a total of 50 members of the Society: 34 live in the US; 16 are international members. Jessica informed us that, "while the total numbers of renewals each year has remained relatively constant, the percentage of members who renew has mostly increased each year." She also suggests that offering multi-year members might promote retention.

One way we can increase membership is to waive the conference fee for graduate students, which might also get too expensive for the Society to sustain; we could also consider decreasing the membership or conference fees by $\frac{1}{2}$ for graduate students. It was also pointed out that returning to a regular publication schedule for the newsletter and the journal will help increase retention rates.

Our current balance is: \$6398.68.

Report from Secretary/Treasurer

Membership Statistics and Financial Report, June 2008-May 2009

Total members 2009 (November 2008-May 2009): 50

Society only: 12

Society and journal: 38

Total members at this time in 2008: 43

Total members in 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 2009: 33

New members in 2009: 17

2009 members with US addresses: 34

2009 members with international addresses: 16

Australia: 1
France: 3
Germany: 1
India: 1
Japan: 1
Netherlands: 1
Romania: 1
Switzerland: 2
United Kingdom: 5

Current balance: \$6398.68

Debts: start-up costs incurred by Derek Royal (\$161.43); to be reimbursed as a perpetual membership
Amazon.com earnings, May 2008-April 2009: \$62.48

Tasks Accomplished

- Supervised election to change By-Laws in PRS Constitution to create an elected Program Chair position and to make Newsletter Editor an appointed position
- maintained and updated membership spreadsheets
 - included addresses for gratis copies (EBSCO, Wylie, Houghton Mifflin, ABELL, Index to Jewish Periodicals)
- transmitted Directory of Members information to our webmaster (Derek Royal) and our Newsletter editor (Joe Kraus)
- 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
 - increased dues for Society membership from \$15 to \$20 domestic (\$20 to 25 non-US)
 - offered journal option for \$50 domestic (\$60 non-US)
- confirmed that contributors to conference panels and journal issues were current members of the Society.
- published *Philip Roth Studies* (now under the auspices of Purdue University)

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
- 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
- try to increase percentage of members who renew
- consider offering a 2-year membership for people who are committed to PRS but find it bothersome to re-new each year

- actively solicit memberships from academic libraries

Membership trends:

Year	total members	total # renewals	% who renew
2003	42	n/a	n/a
2004	82	28	34%
2005	71	28	39%
2006	80	36	45%
2007	52	31	60%
2008	51	27	53%
2009*	50	33	66%

*Nov-May

Thoughts on membership trends:

- while the total number of renewals each year has remained relatively constant, the percentage of members who renew has mostly increased each year
- offering multi-year memberships might continue to promote retention

Jessica Rabin

Report from the *Philip Roth Society Newsletter* Editor

As the incoming editor, I'd like to thank Derek and Joe, both for their previous work on the newsletter and for their help in the handover to myself. I'd also like to thank Professor Bruce Hay and Barbara Karasinski of Harvard Law School for their help with the mailings.

I have been a reader of Philip Roth for a number of years and while my relationship with his writing is of an informal nature and not necessarily academic, I hope that I can help maintain the high standard that has been achieved in the publication of the newsletter through Derek and Joe's stewardship.

I see the overall role of the newsletter as the following:

- A way of informing the members about matters pertaining to the society.
- A resource giving news about Philip Roth and his works.
- 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.

I would specifically 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 also 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.

I have completed a double issue for 2008 (Volume 6 Numbers 1&2) and will now work to produce 2 more issues this year. I want to ensure that the newsletter remains a valuable and relevant resource for the society and its members.

Richard Sheehan

Topics for ALA 2010

Traditionally, the last part of the business meeting is reserved for brainstorming topics for the upcoming ALA. In 2010, the ALA conference will be in San Francisco. The ALA gives us two events; in the past, we have used one for a roundtable discussion and the second for a more formal panel. We discussed reserving the 2010 roundtable for Roth's upcoming *The Humbling*. David's job would be to find an organizer (and it could be David himself) who gathers people who would speak in an informed way about *The Humbling* and how it fits into Roth's *oeuvre*.

For the more formal panel, we discussed looking at the phases of Roth's career in terms of his relation to Zuckerman; such a panel could be called "Roth Zuckerman Roth." We could also think about Roth's relationship to his other narrators. We could organize a panel around the concept of Roth and his Contemporaries, and perhaps work with such other author societies as McCarthy, Morrison, DeLillo, etc., in getting a trend like this off the ground. A panel like "Trans-Atlantic Roth" would not only celebrate Roth's importance beyond the US borders, but also draw on expertise from Roth Society members from around the world. (Derek will possibly use this theme for the upcoming special issue of *PRS*, in which case it would be the topic for a 2011 ALA panel.) We could also organize something on "Roth and his Critics," but then we'd have to make sure the emphasis stays on the work of Roth rather than the words of his critics.

After discussing possible panel topics, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Aimee Pozorski

Calls for Papers and Announcements

Call for Papers

The 38th annual Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900 University of Louisville, February 18-20 2010

The PRS is sponsoring a panel at this year's 38th annual Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900, to be held at the University of Louisville, February 18-20. Proposals of no more than 250 words are invited for 20-minute papers on any aspect of Roth's work. Please send your proposals by email to me at d.brauner@reading.ac.uk, remembering to include details of your university affiliation/status.

Dr David Brauner

Program Chair

Philip Roth Society

Department of English and American Literature

University of Reading

Upcoming Events

Proposal for Philip Roth Society Panel at ALA Symposium on American Fiction, 1890-Present, Savannah: October 8-10 2009

Philip Roth: Diasporism, Traumatic History and Manhood

The following panel, sponsored by the Philip Roth Society, ranges from Roth's landmark postmodernist novel of the 1990s, *Operation Shylock*, to the alternative history of *The Plot Against America* to his most recent novel of growing up in the fifties, with its posthumous narrator, *Indignation*. Though dealing with different novels and diverse themes, these papers all engage with concepts that are vigorously debated not just in Philip Roth Studies but in the wider field of literary studies and beyond: ideas of Diaspora, of trauma, and of masculinity. This panel should therefore appeal not just to Roth specialists but to anyone with an interest in any of these areas.

Dr David Brauner
Program Chair
Philip Roth Society
University of Reading

Amalia Rechtman (Ph.D.), Queensborough Community College.

Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock – A Confession*: The theme of Diasporism by the author (singular) through multiple Roths (plural).

In *Operation Shylock: A Confession*, Roth has added another voice to the growing chorus of “diasporists” in the academy and the arts. As always for Roth, the fact of writing and of being a Jew are intertwined. *Operation Shylock* is a narrative that, by its own admission, aspires to be “more drastic than a mere book.” The important point is that by getting to Israel, the ancestral home of the Jews, Roth meets the most perceptive and vicious reader his work has ever produced: *himself*. Roth finally makes himself the protagonist of what is, appropriately, his most ambitious novel. Nearly all of his novels have at their center a crisis of identity but in *Operation Shylock* his concern with Jewish identity is brought to a new level of fictional and autobiographical intensity. In this book Roth reveals how the conflict between telling Jewish stories and telling stories on Jews defines his career. In *Operation Shylock's* hall of mirrors, the narrator's opening question: “Where is Philip Roth?” becomes central for the reader, who must ask who the apparent impostor is, Philip (that is, an invention of the author) or Roth. There are at least three Philip Roths in *Operation Shylock*: Philip Roth, the author of the novel, Philip Roth, the author-narrator *in* the novel, and Philip Roth the impostor (*Pipik*) but its main achievement is to enact some of the most ludic—and ludicrous dimensions of the diasporic enterprise.

With *Operation Shylock*, Roth surmounts “the difficulty of telling a Jewish story”. By seizing control of his own oeuvre, as if *Operation Shylock*, in overturning the critical misreadings he has himself suffered and which have influenced his work, he can also overturn Shakespeare's invention of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. To overcome the views put forward by his double (which are a reflection of his own) the real Roth is nearly forced into the position of defending Israel because it preserves an essential Jewish self that he has abandoned in America. The struggle appears to be a contest between Zionism and Diasporism, delivered by different characters representing interested parties, which boils down to a choice, at the heart of this novel, which is at the heart of Jewish culture at the end of the second millennium, between “life” as “fiction” and life as “fact;” *Operation Shylock* might represent a watershed in popular Jewish self-representation. Here, the game of fact and fiction has found its objective correlative in the renewed struggle between Israel and Diaspora for a place of privilege in the economy of the post-Holocaust Jewish imagination. “Exile” is now rede-

defined as "Diaspora" and it is identity, the authenticity of self-invention, the privilege to dream and to create counter lives that all the "Philip Roths" are defending in *Operation Shylock*, and the Diaspora is represented as the only place where that is still possible, legitimate and maybe even necessary.

Professor Steven Funk, American Jewish University
Indignation: Philip Roth's Euphemism for Manhood

Philip Roth's *Indignation* begins as a seemingly predictable benign *Bildungsroman* – the son of a kosher butcher (Marcus Messner) goes away to college, dates a gentile girl and becomes a man. However, when Messner (as narrator) interjects, revealing his status as post-corporeal, he initiates a discourse with his reader and coerces the reader into confronting him as the monstrous post-human. Through Messner, Roth challenges the somatophobic model of masculinity. A la Derrida, this spectre *is and is not*.

Marcus Messner – the Jew, the American, the being, the corpse, the image, the reflected – reviews twenty years of life from a different perspective. But what perspective? While assessing his deeds and misdeeds, he compels the reader to examine how one becomes a man. Messner encounters female as authority, hostility as stifled homosexuality, scepter as male ejaculate, and manhood as butcher's blade and bayonet. Both the narrator and his father disable themselves with paranoia while perseverating on the Korean War. Marcus shoulders the responsibility of continuing the Messner name and of communicating his story and fails on both accounts, illustrating Derrida's principle, "destinerrance." Messner's arresting depiction of male subjectivity, or "manhood," looks like a livid butcher, bleeds like a ritually slaughtered chicken and resists description like a phantasm. Philip Roth's *Indignation* effectively lends itself to Derrida's deconstructionist theory, J. Butler's discourse on subjectivity, and J. Halberstam's developing "post-human" dialogue.

Sally Bachner, Wesleyan University.
Philip Roth and the Ascendance of Traumatic History

"We are not the wretched of Belsen! We are not the victims of that crime!" So says Nathan Zuckerman in *The Ghostwriter*, the first of Philip Roth's Zuckerman novels. What, then, does it mean that in Roth's *The Plot Against America*, published a quarter-century later, the reply of Zuckerman's mother – "But we could be—in their place—we would be" – turns out to be right? The apparent change of mind indicates a radically transformed view of the nature and meaning of Jewish life in the postwar America. But more than that, I will argue in this paper, this change of mind about anti-Semitism is part of a broader shift in Roth's view of history. Looking primarily at the Zuckerman and Roth novels, I will argue that Roth moves over the course of his career from a view of history consonant with a materialist social history to one that is increasingly committed to the postmodernist of history as trauma. This vision of history entails a turn away from the rich if mundane lived experiences of his characters – the pursuit of sex, affluence, prestige and security – to that which is invisible, underground, and often available only as a distorted traumatic memory. *The Plot Against America* marks the apotheosis of this view: Jewish-American life is best understood not as a lively drama of desire set against nameable social realities, as in his early books. It is relocated in an apparently forgotten, traumatic past in which a Holocaust was barely averted on American soil.

Birmingham book festival, 17th October 2009, 12.30 h - 14.00 h

South Birmingham College - Digbeth, United Kingdom <http://www.birminghambookfestival.org>

Philip Roth with Dr P. McDonald

Dr Paul McDonald, novelist and academic, introduces the work of Philip Roth

Abstracts from Papers Delivered at Recent Conferences

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

Works In Progress Postgraduate Conference, Birkbeck University of London, Saturday, 7 February 2009

Ann Basu, Birkbeck University of London

Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*: American fraternity betrayed

This paper will explore some of the ways in which Philip Roth's novel *The Plot Against America* (2004) interrogates and contests the notion of brotherhood in the context of American democratic fraternity. The novel reimagines 1940s America as a place where Charles A. Lindbergh, a Nazi sympathizer, has become president and has negotiated a neutrality pact with Hitler. I will utilise as a key image the postage stamp commemorating Lindbergh's record-breaking flight of 1927 from Long Island to Paris; since Roth employs the postage stamp as an important bearer of national meaning and as a prime signifier for national authority, legitimacy, and power relations as America changes leadership from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Lindbergh.

The paper asks what it might mean for Americans if the nation's Jews, whose status Roth still regards as liminal in America, were irrevocably branded as 'other' and thus were no longer considered to be eligible for American fraternity. Roth envisages a betrayal of the democratic fraternal ideal played out in an assimilated American, patriotic Jewish family (also called Roth) containing two brothers, one of whom is influenced by the pro-Nazi ideology of Lindbergh's America. The paper will connect the fraternal betrayals in the novel with a notion of brotherhood that is ineffective, narcissistic, self-betraying, and subject to the twin maladies of melancholia and paranoia.

The paper will argue that this evocation of failed brotherhood takes on a conspiratorial aspect which dominates the mood of the novel, and which produces the figure of the brother as a conspirator and a traitor. It will also show some of the ways in which the novel comments on what Frederic Jameson calls the conspiratorial text and his notion of "totality as conspiracy". It will, finally, show how Roth evokes the "perpetual fear" of the final chapter of the novel to comment on America's recent history.

British Association for American Studies Annual Conference, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom April 16-19, 2009

Alex Hobbs*, Anglia Ruskin University,

Masculinity and the Family in Phillip Roth's *The Plot Against America*

Reviews of the 2004 novel, *The Plot Against America*, noted that this work marked a newly sympathetic representation of the family for Philip Roth. This paper considers his portrayal of the fictional Roths against his previous depictions of families, and places this version of the family within the context of those prominent in American literary history.

An analysis of Herman Roth, the father in *The Plot Against America*, forms the main body of this paper. Using criticism from both literary and sociological masculinity, the paper considers whether the responsibilities undertaken by Herman and Bess Roth within the family conform to or subvert traditional sex-roles, and what

effect this has on Herman's masculine identity. Comparing Herman's masculinity with that of other male characters in the novel, the paper contrasts his everyday strengths and values, which are tested by institutional anti-Semitism, against Charles Lindbergh's seemingly all-American heroic identity and cousin Alvin's war hero status.

In dialogue with Leslie A. Fiedler's thesis that canonical American literature shows the American man to be fearful of maturity, with marriage and fatherhood ultimate signs of '[the] acceptance of responsibility and drudgery and dullness' (*Love and Death in the American Novel*, 338), this paper seeks to highlight the centrality of the family in this example of contemporary literature.

Dr Rachael McLennan (AMS) University of East Anglia
'Enabling Fictions: Philip Roth's Prosthetic Anne Franks.'

This paper will explore the ways in which Philip Roth has invoked the figure of Anne Frank, and made reference to her Diary, in both his Nathan Zuckerman and 'Philip Roth' novels, but especially in *The Ghost Writer* and *Exit Ghost*. It will be argued that Roth's use of Anne Frank always occurs alongside images of disability, amputation and prosthesis. Roth exposes how Anne Frank has functioned in American postwar culture as a figure through which to explore American responses to the Holocaust and American Jewish identity from the 1950s until the present day.

American Literature Association Conference **Boston, MA (May 21-24, 2009)**

The Philip Roth Society sponsored both a panel and a roundtable at the 2009 American Literature Association in Boston, MA. The topic of the panel was "Mourning Zuckerman" (to complement our upcoming special issue of *Philip Roth Studies*) and the roundtable title was "Then and Now—*Portnoy's Complaint* at 40."

The following abstracts are taken from the "Mourning Zuckerman" panel.

Miriam Jaffe-Foger*, Rutgers University
The Evolution/Revolution of Philip Roth

Philip Roth's authorship straddles the twentieth and twenty-first centuries while possessing a rarely compromised state of contiguity. In this paper, I will examine the relationship of his earliest works, such as *Goodbye, Columbus and Other Short Stories* and *Portnoy's Complaint*, to his latest work in *Indignation* to reveal the ways that Roth's work has come full circle. I will also consider how the fantasies of the Kepesh and Zuckerman's sexual exploits and the introspective tone of *Patrimony* evolved to furnish *Everyman's* theme of aging. Finally, I will discuss why *The Plot Against America* is a uniquely dissonant novel of the twenty-first century, which challenges his earlier approach to anti-Semitism and war in *Operation Shylock* and *The Counterlife*.

Daniel Anderson*: Case Western Reserve University
“Nathan Zuckerman, Plato, and the Lost Republic of Newark”

This essay examines the role that Newark plays in Philip Roth’s *Zuckerman Bound* books, specifically its role as a center of Jewishness. Tracing the model for Zuckerman’s Newark to Plato’s Republic, the essay shows how Zuckerman’s Aristotelian approach to literature causes conflict with his Platonic Jewish culture. By infusing Platonic ideas of state into Zuckerman’s protracted conflict with his Jewish community, Roth gives Zuckerman’s saga of familial alienation a tragic tone. What is lost is not simply Zuckerman’s relationship with his family. Ultimately, as Jewish Newark disappears, so does a center of Jewish identity.

Matthew Shipe*: Washington University, St. Louis
“Exit Ghost and the Politics of Late Style”

In “Exit Ghost and the Politics of Late Style,” I explore how Roth’s final Zuckerman novel reflects the condition Edward Said identified as “late style.” The essay considers how Said’s conception of late style offers a useful lens for reading *Exit Ghost* as it helps account for the troubling aesthetic and the political implications that are contained within Zuckerman’s sudden departure.

Chris Vials: University of Massachusetts
What Can Happen Here? Philip Roth, Sinclair Lewis, and Fascism in the Left-Liberal Imagination

Published in 1935, Sinclair Lewis’ influential novel *It Can’t Happen Here* put forth a disturbing “what if” scenario in which a folksy populist named “Buzz” Windrip becomes President of the United States and brings about a fascist America. Appearing only two years after Hitler’s seizure of power in Germany, Lewis’s novel suggests that fascism is not merely a foreign movement alien to American national identity, but is also something nascent in U.S. culture. Windrip comes to power by harnessing the racism and class resentment of white workers, farmers, and shopkeepers, promising them prosperity but ultimately serving the interests of the banks and corporations he purports to keep in check. The portrait of Windrip’s America that emerges in *It Can’t Happen Here* is in many ways emblematic of the reading of fascism common amongst leftists and many liberals of Lewis’ generation: that is, fascism is an explicitly right-wing form of nationalist violence latent in all modern societies. Exercised in the service of capitalism, it relies upon and intensifies established racial divisions in order to create a repressive, homogenous, and patriarchal nation-state. This pre-



(Above: Daniel Anderson)



(The Philip Roth Society’s new President, Aimee Pozorski)

Holocaust, pre-civil rights reading of fascism, widely circulated in American popular culture, provided a compelling language for articulating the relationship between race, class, and nationalism, yet tended to emphasize the movement's economic dimension.

Appearing in 2004, the very middle of the Bush years, Philip Roth's best-selling novel *The Plot Against America* placed this mid-century discourse over fascism back into historical memory. Roth's novel is also a "what if" historical scenario, but one in which the Republican Charles Lindbergh -- another home-spun leader -- becomes president in 1940. As in *It Can't Happen Here*, the narrative cuts back and forth between the national political scene and the lives of ordinary protagonists. But the formal similarities allow us to see how hindsight knowledge of the Holocaust and the race-based movements of the late-1960s have shifted the political reading of fascism within the American left-liberal imagination. Placing a Jewish family at the center of his narrative, Roth situates race and the drive for national, ethno-religious homogeneity at the center of his reading of the American far-right.

My presentation argued that both novels are part of almost century-long strand of cultural work that I call "critical antifascism." Changing shape and emphasis to meet new historical conditions, critical antifascist cultural production accesses the figure of the fascist and often the memory of the Second World War to destabilize the anti-cosmopolitanism and exclusionary nationalism inherent in right-wing notions of belonging. In stark contrast with literary critic Walter Benn Michaels, who argues that Roth is "nostalgic" for racism and anti-Semitism, I assert that Roth's historical portrait potently critiques contemporary, conservative assaults on the institutional legacy of the late 1960s. Roth, in short, shows how American "color blind" assaults on the maintenance of ethno-racial cultures and institutions can quickly and easily slide into overt denigration and racial violence. In so doing, Roth avoids topical indictments of the Bush administration in order to explore the fundamental basis of right-wing nationalism across the 20th and 21st centuries.

Finally, the paper explored how Roth's historical revisions raise potentially troubling complications. As Benn Michaels rightly noted, the fictionalized events in the novel did "happen here" but not to Jews. I argued that the situating of Jews within a history actually experienced by American people of color in the 1940s (namely, forced relocation and race riots) does not necessarily enact a form of amnesia. Yet, the way in which this move is deployed by the author represents a missed opportunity for a broader exploration of ethno-racial hierarchies in the U.S., an opportunity often taken within earlier generations of critical antifascist cultural production.

R. Clifton Spargo*: Marquette University

"How Telling: Irving Howe, Philip Roth's Early Career, and the Dialectic of Impersonation in The Anatomy Lesson"

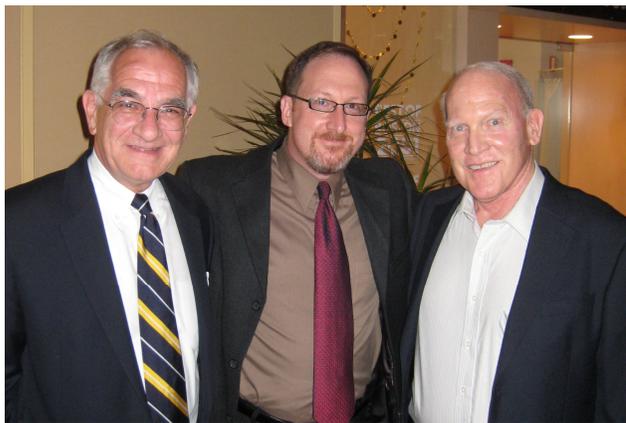
If the hostile reception of Philip Roth's early work by "rabbinical critics" and many everyday American Jewish readers procured him a reputation for controversy, Roth soon learned to propagate and feed on the spirit of controversy, and eventually to mine scandalous lore for his own creative purposes. Most formidable of all the criticisms directed his way was Irving Howe's 1972 essay published in *Commentary*, in which the great critic, contradicting his own former words of praise for Roth's 1959 debut, judged Roth to be a mean-spirited satirist who lacked a viable literary tradition and any sympathetic engagement with the ennobling dimension of human community — specifically, the contemporary American Jewish community. For Howe, all of this was manifested (most dramatically in *Portnoy's Complaint*) in a style rather more tendentious than thoughtful, in an inclination toward monologic schtick rather than realist standards of representation — in short, in a sensibility that was altogether "vulgar." In this essay Spargo argues that Howe was more or less right, if not necessarily

for the right reasons, about the shortcomings of Roth's early work. But far and away the most intriguing measure of that verdict, so Spargo contends, lay in Roth's own ironical and persistent responses to Howe's criticisms, which over time effectively shaped the emergence of a newly dialectical style marking the transition from the early Roth, a highly skilled satirist who somewhat fits Howe's pejorative description, to the late Roth, perhaps the most accomplished American novelist of his generation. More particularly, the invention of Zuckerman as autobiographical lens in the first Zuckerman trilogy — especially, in *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) — opened a dialectical space in Roth's fiction from within which he could interrogate all attempts to read him as a practitioner of modern roman à clef and easy satirical one-upsmanship while also beginning to engage some of the very categories of human experience Howe had accused him of neglecting.

Panel: Philip Roth's Late Novels: Outrage and Forebodings

Derek Parker Royal*, Texas A&M Commerce University

“Bringing it all Back Home?: Placing *Indignation* in Philip Roth's Oeuvre”



(Above: Bernard Rodgers, Derek Royal, and John McDaniel)

Although many reviewers of Philip Roth's twenty-ninth book, *Indignation*, were quick to link it directly to the novelist's earliest works, specifically *Goodbye, Columbus*, few approached the novella within the context of his more recent writings. This is especially the case when it comes to Roth's ongoing experimentations with narrative voice, a stylistic concern that reaches back to *Portnoy's Complaint* and continues to find new expressions. While *Indignation* may not measure up to the grand texts of Roth's later career, or even match the condensed power of such minor-key masterworks as *The Dying Animal*, it nonetheless demonstrates Roth's ongoing attempts to push the envelop of narration and as such, stands as a notable example of what appears to be his doggedly persistent attempts, now paced at a rate of a novel a year, to not go gentle into that good night. In other words, *Indignation* is not,

as many of his critics have argued, something that he has done before and something he has done much better; it is something that he has done before, yet something that he has done *differently*. Read in this way, *Indignation* is thus another twist to Roth's preoccupation with storytelling and the ways in which narrative—or more specifically, the act of narrating a life—constructs the subject.

“Then and Now--*Portnoy's Complaint* at 40: A Roundtable Discussion”

Chair: Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr.*, Bard College at Simon's Rock

Participants: James D. Bloom*, Muhlenberg College, Emmanuel Dongala, Bard College at Simon's Rock, Judith Yaross Lee, Ohio University, John McDaniel*, Middle Tennessee State University, Derek Parker Royal*, Texas A&M University-Commerce

The roundtable honoured the 40th anniversary of the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint*. The panel discussed the book's cultural and literary significance both at the time of publication and in the years since.

2009 Jewish American & Holocaust Literature Symposium Salt Lake City, Utah, September 9 - 12, 2009

The Philip Roth Society sponsored the following panel at this year's Symposium;

“Reading Philip Roth”

Chair: Judith Oster, Case Western Reserve University

Judith Oster, Case Western Reserve University

How to tell a False War Story (and make it seem true): Experiencing *The Plot Against America*

In this paper I explore various factors that affect our reading of *The Plot Against America*, beginning with the ways Roth has used both fact and fiction, memory and imagination, to create an almost credible scenario of great power, whose dominating emotions are escalating fear and helplessness. At the same time, we must keep in mind the other side of the reading contract: the reader's history, memory, present realities, and imagination surely affect the reading experience as well. Then too, we are affected by the very process of reading, as I will discuss, aided by reader response theorists.

Dr. Terry Barr, Presbyterian College Clinton, South Carolina

Phillip Roth and Our Fathers' Voice

While Phillip Roth's fictional Jewish mothers [stereo] typically dominate their sons, what is it that the fathers do? What hold do they have over their sons? What influence?

Roth's early literary culture of Jewish fathers is best captured by Mr. Portnoy and his male comrades who, in the idyllic nostalgia of Newark summers, watch or play baseball on Sunday afternoons and settle into their easy chairs on Sunday evenings, their voices quiet as they to listen to Jack Benny.

But in the later fiction, Roth's male scions of Zion cannot rest. Their voices--whether out of fear, or fading hopes, or a last gasp at believing that America is a land where even Jews can speak and dream freely—grow shrill at the injustice being done to them, and to their sons, because in mid-20th century America, there is no great payoff in being Jewish. And if you can't be truly or openly Jewish, what can or will you be? This is the father's lament.

That lament commands Roth's 2004 novel *The Plot Against America*. Herman Roth stands up to anti-Semites of all stripes in the cause of Jewish America—in being a Jew in America; in ensuring that his son, Phillip, can also be a Jew in America. His fear that there will be NO place for himself, his son, or any other Jew in “President” Lindbergh's Fascist America, at first confuses young Phil, but then is taken up by that boy. Taken up not literally in the plot of *Plot*, but in Roth's portrait of the father as an aging Jew: a father who wants to be



Above: L-R: Dr Terry Barr, Daniel Andeson, Judith Oster and Gurumurthy Neelakantan

surpassed by his son and who voices his passion so loudly because he knows that there is no guarantee that will happen.

Thus, in his evolving treatment of literary fathers, Roth pays homage to Jewish history, ancestry, heritage, and us, his spiritual sons who see in him and his “fictional father” ourselves and the ghosts of who we still want to be.

Daniel Anderson*, Case Western Reserve University

Philip Roth's *Prague Orgy* Television Adaptation: A Study in Intertextual Translation

This paper will examine the intertextual process of adapting Philip Roth's work to film. The recent Library of America edition of *Zuckerman Bound* includes an unproduced television adaptation, written by Roth, for *The Prague Orgy*. According to the notes written by Ross Miller for the LOA edition, the project emerged in a “spirit of craziness,” and was eventually abandoned before production began, much like the lost manuscript that Zuckerman went to Prague to recover in the novella.

The script's lack of fidelity to the original work signals that it is not a faithful re-production of the original novella, but rather a translation of that work for a new medium. There are new characters, events are rearranged, and background information about Zuckerman is added. The novella, originally presented as an “epilogue” to the *Zuckerman Bound* trilogy is, in short, ripped from its original context and re-assembled as a stand-alone object for a new audience.

This adaptation raises several questions about Roth's work as well as the nature of literary adaptation. André Bazin argues that notions of fidelity to literary texts are inadequate in theorizing adaptation and submits that film adaptations offer the possibility of a kind of intertextuality in which, “the notion of the unity of the work of art, if not the very notion of the author himself, will be destroyed.” This paper will investigate the way in which Roth's *Prague Orgy* adaptation rejects fidelity to an original, literary text in favor of an intertextual translation of that text. These adaptive choices also have reflexive ramifications. The novella's narrative depicts Zuckerman attempting a similar feat of translation in Prague as he attempts to remove a text (supposedly written by Sisovsky's murdered father) from captivity and “translate” it for a new, larger audience. What is more, this narrative element is itself a translation of sorts. It adapts the historical story of the Polish writer Bruno Schulz, making the translational rabbit hole even deeper.

Gurumurthy Neelakantan*, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

Two Versions of Oedipus and Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*

Philip Roth's engagement with psychoanalysis in his earlier fiction characterized by an uncritical appropriation of Sigmund Freud's concepts has steadily grown hostile toward the theory, deploying parody and lampoon against its rationale and, at times, thoroughly rejecting it. Further, *The Human Stain* (2000) posits the Oedipus complex as the psychoanalytic reproduction of a pre-existing representational myth that co-opts modern subjects as part of the power relationships prevalent in the society. Significantly, the novel develops a striking analogy between the story of King Oedipus's ‘passing for an alien’ in Thebes and that of the African-American Coleman Silk who, thanks to his light skin, passes for a Jew and succeeds in becoming a classics professor and dean of faculty in Athena College till a charge of racism brings about his downfall. In Roth's evocation of Oedipus, however, there are traces of two influential interpretations of Sophocles's *King Oedipus* advanced by Freud and Nietzsche. In focusing on how Roth's *The Human Stain* pits the Nietzschean version of Oedipus notably found in *The Birth of Tragedy* against Freud's reinvention of the myth, this essay seeks to analyze the attendant ideological implications.

Uncollected Roth

By Richard Sheehan



In forthcoming newsletters I shall be publishing articles about the works of Philip Roth that, to date, are uncollected and are quite likely to remain so. The majority of these are very early works, writing that he did in college and shortly thereafter. A bibliography of these works can be found on the Philip Roth Society website at [www.rothsociety.org.]

Roth had several pieces published in his college journal, *Et Cetera*, but I wanted to begin with what is widely regarded as Roth's first published story, "The Day it Snowed." It appeared in the *Chicago Review* Issue 8 (1954): pages 34-45, however, it has also appeared in *First Fiction*, edited by Kathy Kiernen and Michael M. Moore, a collection of first published stories by famous writers.

(Photo, by Naomi Savage, on back jacket of *When She Was Good*, 1967)

The Day it Snowed

The story begins with Sydney, a young boy living in an unnamed American City, who becomes concerned when members of his family disappear. At least, that's how it seems to him. First, an aunt and then an uncle disappear; Sydney is told that the adults must go out to look for them, while he has to stay in the house. When the adults return it's obvious to Sydney that a lot of them have been crying. Sometime later, Sydney's stepfather also disappears and all the adults go off again, apparently in search of him too. Sydney, by now curious at all the disappearances, decides to go out by himself to try to find his stepfather. He mistakes someone in the street for his father and then later begins talking to a old man on a bench. Sydney tells the old man what has been happening and the old man, after realising and then explaining to Sydney that his stepfather has died, agrees to take Sydney to see him. They walk to the cemetery and arrive in time to see the mourners and his mother leaving the gravesite. His mother is leaving in a car but stops when she sees Sydney. When he explains what the old man has told him, his mother becomes angry and tells the old man to leave. Seeing him walking away, Sydney goes to chase after the old man but in his haste is knocked down and killed by another car he doesn't see approaching.

The story highlights the innocence of youth and the attempts of well meaning adults who try to protect this innocence by sparing him the grief that comes from knowledge of death. This sets up a sequence of events that results in Sydney discovering that "disappearing" in the context of the story essentially means death. And even while he realizes this easily enough, Sydney is naive as to the exact nature of death, which ultimately leads to the tragic final scene with his mother and the old man.

In contrast to the short stories included in *Goodbye Columbus and five short stories* there is no obvious ethnicity specified for any of the characters. There are certainly no Jewish characters which is a typical characteristic of a Roth story, nor are there other indicators of characters of any other cultural or religious backgrounds. The denomination of the cemetery isn't identified and there isn't much depth added to any of the characters other than Sydney. The city in which the story takes place is never identified and appears to be very much a generic 1950s American city. It's also worth noting that for the first time in Roth's work we have scenes in a cemetery, a place to which he returns many times in future works.

The story by Roth's later standards is quite plain and straightforward. There's no hint of controversy or rabble-rousing. Nor is there much sense of the literary experimentation we have come to appreciate in Roth. In fact it feels like the story it is: an attempt by a new author to get published in a mainstream magazine.

The Contest for Aaron Gold

This story appeared in *Epoch 5-6 (1955): Pages 37-50.*

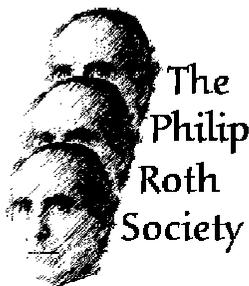
Set in a summer camp in 1954, the story features Werner Samuelson, who in 1940 had been forced to flee Austria by German soldiers and had ended up in the United States. During the intervening fourteen years he relied upon the trade he had learned in Europe and set up a pottery and ceramics shop in Philadelphia. Now, falling on hard times, in an attempt to keep his business running, he takes a position at a Jewish Summer camp - Camp Lakeside - as a pottery teacher.

The lessons are harder than he'd foreseen; the kids he has to teach are, for the most part, unconcerned with the fineries of pottery. There's an exception though; eight-year old Aaron Gold, who, rather than creating the pancakes and baseballs of his classmates, decides that he wants to sculpt an armoured knight. He's so taken with his attempted creation that he's initially late for and eventually misses the swimming lessons that immediately follow the pottery class. The Camp Director, Lionel Steinberg, reminds Werner that every child must both learn to swim and to create some pottery for their parents' arrival at the end of the week. Lionel sees the purpose of the summer camp as easily defined. "Parents," he says, "want something for their money."

Unfortunately, young Aaron is a little slow in creating his masterpiece and by the final lesson before the parents visit, he has only managed to finish the legs and the body of his knight. Under pressure from the Director, Werner completes it for Aaron so it is ready the following day. Aaron is distraught that someone has completed his work and runs off crying into the nearby forest. Werner, equally distraught at upsetting Aaron on the one hand and with the pressure imposed on his artistic ideals, on the other hand, packs his bags and leaves, forfeiting his payment.

This story feels in many ways to mark a definite progression in Roth's development from "The Day it Snowed." It felt stronger both as a story and thematically. There is a strong divide between the individual and the team ethic displayed by Werner and Aaron in the Pottery class on the one hand and by Lionel Steinberg and the swimming coach, Lefty Schulberg, on the other. Lionel states to Werner that the last thing they want in the camp is 'one-sided kids'. The story also hinges on the dichotomy between art and commerce through the slow creation of Aaron's sculpture juxtaposed with the need of the Camp director to have something to show the Parents — "something for their money". He can't understand why the kids take as long making their pottery as it takes for his workmen to asphalt the road and the parking lot. Time and the creation of art seems to be a lost cause with Steinberg. In the end, at least at Camp Lakeside, commerce has won. The story is also bookended with an interesting parallel; Werner's flight from the Germans in 1940 highlighted early on in the story and his consequent desertion of the camp at the finale, appear as especially relevant to Werner's Jewish ethnicity, a connection between flight and survival that Roth takes up in his future work.

A couple of interesting asides: This story was chosen for the anthology, *The Best American short stories of 1956* edited by Martha Foley, and was also produced as an episode for the series *Alfred Hitchcock presents* in 1960.



*Reading the Reviews:****Minor masterpiece or throwaway Roth?***

Reviews of Indignation are as split as they have been for most of his recent works. Some critics regard it as a minor masterpiece, others as throwaway late-era Roth. Interestingly, the reviews for the paperback release of the novel were generally more favourable than they had been at the time of the release of the hardback.

Roth, blending the bawdy exuberance of his early period and the disenchantment of his recent work, demonstrates with subtle mastery the incomprehensible way one's most banal, incidental, even comical choices achieve the most disproportionate result.

The New Yorker

The characters in *Indignation* are for the most part thin and flimsy, and the contrived relationship between the local and the cosmic, or the local and the global, finally manages only to produce a mainly storm-in-a-teacup effect.

Christopher Hitchens, The Atlantic

Since *The Plot Against America* in 2004, Philip Roth, 75, has scaled back with three short novels in a row: *Everyman*, *Exit Ghost*, and now *Indignation*, the most blistering and successful of the three minor (only for Roth) books. His 1951-set tale follows Marcus Messner, a freshman who, suffocated by his overbearing father, leaves college in New Jersey and transfers, somewhat disastrously, to Winesburg College in Ohio, where he fears he's just a transgression or two away from ending up a doomed rifleman in Korea. Roth's bugaboos are his old favorites (e.g., sex, rectitude, conformity), and perhaps we've been around these bends with him before, but he is a master. And the short form serves the story: The shocking rush from this book comes from watching Roth expertly and quickly build up to a half-dozen final pages that absolutely deliver the kill. **A-**

Gregory Kirschling, Entertainment Weekly

Indignation is Philip Roth's best novel since *The Counterlife* (1986)..... in this new novel he has regained the poise and subtlety of his earliest work and produced a late masterpiece.

John Banville, Financial Times (London)

Like last year's *Exit Ghost*, *Indignation* doesn't meet the high standards Roth has set for himself. Each individual episode is quickly sketched with a few vigorous, jagged strokes, but the story zigzags wildly from set-piece to set-piece, and the novel as a whole only hangs together under the pressure of Roth's buttonholing intensity. This is his third book in as many years, and with many other writers you'd be tempted to suggest a less furious work rate, perhaps a little relaxation. But who'd have the balls, of whatever colour, to give advice like that to Philip Roth? Or the knuckle-headedness to think he'd be capable of taking it?

Christopher Tayler, The Guardian (London)

The novel is profoundly - and perversely - dark, offering no exits. *Indignation* is not as richly textured as, say, Roth's great works, *American Pastoral* (1997) and *The Human Stain* (2000), perhaps because it relies more on types than fully realized characters. But in his exploration of a quintessential Jewish-American dilemma - to assimilate or stand apart - Roth, at 75, remains a powerful and provocative writer.

Glenn C. Altschuler, The Jerusalem Post

Philip Roth is our greatest living novelist, and his new book, *Indignation*, is an irritating, puzzling and fascinating bundle of mistakes, miscalculations and self-indulgences.

Tim Rutten, Los Angeles Times

By Roth's standards, this is a slight, even slack book, with a faint whiff of the bottom drawer about it. But he is a compulsive writer, seemingly unable to produce work that doesn't swirl with oceanic depths of feeling and thought, that isn't drivingly readable.

Robert Hanks, The New Statesman

Indignation is flawed, but I promise to ignore the problem as long as I can (it's a case of ill-considered narrative strategy) and celebrate instead a magnificent display of writerly talent: a lean, powerful novel with bold characters who command attention; scenes of impressive dramatic intensity and comic vitality; language that blasts the reader's cozy complacency (it's not called *Indignation* for nothing); and a theme that swells imperceptibly from a murmur to a satisfying roar.

Adam Begley, The New York Observer

His powerful new novel, *Indignation*, seethes with outrage.

In his famous essay "Writing American Fiction," written back in 1960, Roth spoke about the difficulty of writing credibly about the time we live in. "It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's meager imagination." As his new book and his many other novels show, it can be done by a master.

Charles Simic, The New York Review of Books

This short novel has the rushed feeling of being hastened to the finish line. Moments of tension are left unresolved, forgotten.

Ruth Franklin, The New York Sun

Indignation is a strange, troubling and occasionally ridiculous book. The themes are very familiar: the role of a stern, overbearing father in the life of his restlessly rebellious son; the evocation of a lower-middle-class boyhood in what is now a vanished neighbourhood of Newark; the Jewish immigrant experience in America; the way we can all become caught up in and destroyed by historical forces beyond our control. It can be read, perhaps, most successfully as an addendum to Roth's recent fiction, as a novel engaged in a complicated conversation with those that preceded it, rather than as a significant work in its own right. And yet one is ultimately moved and fascinated by it: a great writer is a great writer even when he's on cruise control.

Jason Cowley, The Observer (London)

The book is a tragedy, but not in the way Roth intended.

Justin Cartwright, The Independent (London)

I wonder what would happen if the manuscript of the book were to appear, without the Big Name, in a slush pile. I can imagine an eager publishing assistant being captivated by an anonymous *Indignation*, thinking parts of it were wonderful, parts of it derivative of Philip Roth, and slipping it back in its jiffy-bag with a regretful rejection note.

Stuart Kelly, Scotland on Sunday

 BIBLIOGRAPHIC UPDATE - Compiled by Derek Parker Royal

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

Bibliographies

* Royal, Derek Parker. "Annual Bibliography of Philip Roth Criticism and Resources – 2007." *Philip Roth Studies* 4.2 (2008): 199-205.

Chapters from Books

Badir, Yasmine. "'He' Who Knows Better Than 'I': Reactivating Unreliable Narration in Philip Roth's *Human Stain* and Jean Echenoz' *Nous trios*." *Narrative Unreliability in the Twentieth-Century First-Person Novel*. Ed. Elke D'hoker and Gunther Martens. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 259-80.

Banita, Georgian. "Philip Roth's Fictions of Intimacy and the Aging of America." *Narratives of Life: Mediating Age*. Ed. Heike Hartung and Roberta Maierhofer. Vienna, Austria: Lit Verlag, 2009. 91-112.

Gurr, Jens Martin. "Philip Roth, *The Human Stain* (2000)." *Teaching Contemporary Literature and Culture Vol. 2: Novels, Part II*. Ed. Susanne Peters, Klaus Stierstorfer, and Laurenz Volkmann. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008. 443-62.

Masiero Marcolin, Pia. "A Liminal Narcissus: Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*." *Quale America? Soglie e cultura di un continente*. Vol. II. Ed. Daniela Ciani Forza. Venice: Mazzanti, 2007. 231-41.

Journal Articles and Essays

Benatov, Joseph. "Demystifying the Logic of Tamizdat: Philip Roth's Anit-Spectacular Literary Politics." *Poetics Today* 30 (2009): 107-32.

Gooblar, David. "The Truth Hurts: The Ethics of Philip Roth's 'Autobiographical' Books." *Journal of Modern Literature* 32 (2008): 33-53.

- Kellman, Steven G. "It Is Happening Here: *The Plot Against America* and the Political Moment." *Philip Roth Studies* 4.2 (2008): 113-23.

Klein, Scott W. "Nathan Zuckerman as Irish Jew: James Joyce, National Difference, and Roth's *The Counterlife*." *Philip Roth Studies* 4.2 (2008): 153-69.

Kutlu, Filiz. "Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus*: Neil's Farewell to the American Dream." *Interactions: Ege University Journal of British and American Studies/Ege Üniversitesi İngiliz ve Amerikan İncelemeleri Dergisi* 17.2 (2008): 57-64.

* Morley, Catherine. "Memories of the Lindbergh Administration: Plotting, Genre, and the Splitting of the Self in *The Plot Against America*." *Philip Roth Studies* 4.2 (2008): 137-52.

* Neelakantan, Gurusurthy. "Philip Roth's Nostalgia for the *Yiddishkayt* and the New Deal Idealisms in *The Plot Against America*." *Philip Roth Studies* 4.2 (2008): 125-36.

Radu-Cucu, Sorin. "'The Spirit of the Common Man': Populism and the Rhetoric of Betrayal in Philip Roth's *I Married a Communist*." *Philip Roth Studies* 4.2 (2008): 171-86.

Stinson, John J. "'I Declare War': A New Street Game and New Grim Realities in Roth's *The Plot Against America*." *ANQ* 22.1 (2009): 42-48.

Weisland, Jorgen. "The Stain and the Sign: Poetics in Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*." *Sudia Anglica Posnaniensis: International Review of English Studies* 44 (2008): 475-89.

Zierler, Wendy. "The Making and Re-making of Jewish-American Literary History." *Shofar* 27.2 (2009): 69-101.

Dissertations

- Balter, Barrie. "American 'I-deologies': The Personal and the Political in the Post-Vietnam Novel." Diss. City U of New York, 2008.
- Baskin, Jason M. "Embodying Experience: Romanticism and Social Life in the Twentieth Century." Diss. Princeton U, 2008.
- Benatov, Joseph. "Looking in the Iron Mirror: Eastern Europe in the American Imaginary, 1958-2001." Diss. U of Pennsylvania, 2008.
- Cardon, Lauren S. "Marrying in and out of Whiteness: Twentieth-Century Intermarriage Narratives." Diss. Tulane U, 2008.
- Chandler, Aaron. "Pursuing Unhappiness: City, Space, and Sentimentalism in Post-Cold War American Literature." Diss. U of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2009.
- Ehrlich, William A. "The Happiest Boy in the World." Diss. Drew U, 2007.
- Fullerty, Matthew H. G. "The British and American Academic Novel. The "Professorromane": The Comic Campus, the Tragic Self." Diss. George Washington U, 2008.
- Gillota, David. "Belly Laughs: Body Humor in Contemporary American Literature and Film." Diss. U of Miami, 2008.
- * Jaffe-Foger, Miriam. "Cross-Ethnic Mediums and the Autobiographical Gesture in Twentieth-Century American Literature." Diss. Rutgers, 2008.
- Love, Christopher D. "Creating Tragic Spectators: Rebellion and Ambiguity in World Tragedy." Diss. U of Michigan, 2009.

Message from the Society's President

Aimee Pozorski

(Continued from page 1)

not yet been born. For me, this was a powerful example of how easily and well we are able to come together at these events, swapping stories from very different generational perspectives, yet linked closely by our appreciation of the work of Roth. This says as much about the power of Roth's literature to connect people as it does about the power of our Society to build upon these foundational relationships with one another.

I think you will find evidence of these relationships, and the wonderful work they produce, in the pages of this newsletter. I would like to thank Richard Sheehan for his remarkable work in putting this together. The newsletter would not be possible without him. And thank you, to all, for sharing with us your interest in Roth Studies. I wish you all the best in the remainder of the year!





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 new Society President

Uncollected Roth: Early short stories

Indignation Reviews

Bibliographic update

Abstracts from recent conference presentations

Philip Roth Society
Richard Sheehan,
Newsletter Editor
39 Forge Close
Fleckney
Leicester
United Kingdom
LE8 8DA