

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-86430-5 - The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth
Edited by Timothy Parrish
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The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth

From the moment that his debut book, *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), won him the National Book Award and earned him attacks from the Jewish community, Philip Roth has been among the most influential and consistently controversial writers of our age. Now the author of more than twenty novels, numerous stories, two memoirs, and two books of literary criticism, Roth has used his writing to continually reinvent himself – and in doing so remake the American literary landscape. This *Companion* provides the most comprehensive introduction to the works and thought of this major American author in a collection of newly commissioned essays from distinguished scholars. Beginning with the urgency of Roth's early fiction and extending to the vitality of his most recent novels, these essays trace Roth's artistic engagement with questions about ethnic identity, postmodernism, Israel, the Holocaust, sexuality, and the human psyche itself. They recognize that Roth's work resonates through American culture because he demands that his readers pursue the kinds of self-invention, the endless remakings, that define both Roth's characters and his own identity as an author. New and returning Roth readers, students and scholars, will find this *Companion* authoritative and accessible.

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PHILIP ROTH

EDITED BY
TIMOTHY PARRISH
Texas Christian University



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521682930

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First published 2007

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

The Cambridge companion to Philip Roth / edited by Timothy Parrish.

p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to literature)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-86430-5

ISBN-10: 0-521-86430-5

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-68293-0

ISBN-10: 0-521-68293-2

I. Roth, Philip – Criticism and interpretation. I. Parrish, Timothy, 1964– II. Title.

PS3568.O855Z617 2006

813'.54 – dc22

2006023588

ISBN-13 978-0-521-86430-5 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-86430-5 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-68293-0 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-68293-2 paperback

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DEREK PARKER ROYAL, Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University-Commerce, is the editor of the journal *Philip Roth Studies* and *Philip Roth: New Perspectives on an American Author* (2005).

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DEBRA SHOSTAK, Professor of English, The College of Wooster, Ohio, is the author of *Philip Roth – Countertexts, Counterlives* (2004).

HANA WIRTH-NESHER, Professor of English Literature and the Samuel L. and Perry Haber Chair on the Study of the Jewish Experience in the United States at Tel Aviv University, is the author of *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish American Literature* (2006).

CHRONOLOGY

- 1933 Philip Roth is born on March 19 in Newark to Hermann Roth (b. 1901), an agent with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and Bess Finkel Roth (b. 1904). The Roths live in the Weequahic, a lower-middle-class neighborhood.
- 1942 Roth family moves to 385 Leslie Street.
- 1946 Graduates elementary school in January.
- 1950 Graduates high school.
- 1951 Enrolls at Bucknell University.
- 1952 Founds Bucknell literary journal, *Et Cetera*.
- 1954 Elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduates magna cum laude in English. Accepts scholarship from The University of Chicago to study English.
- 1955 Receives MA. Enlists in US Army. “The Contest for Aaron Gold” reprinted in Martha Foley’s *Best American Short Stories 1956*.
- 1956 Hospitalized for two months due to spinal injury. Receives honorable discharge. Returns to University of Chicago to enroll in Ph.D. program but quits after one semester. Continues as an instructor teaching freshman composition.
- 1957 Meets Saul Bellow. Writes novella, “Goodbye, Columbus.”
- 1958 Publishes “The Conversion of the Jews” and “Epstein” in *The Paris Review*. Houghton Mifflin agrees to publish novella and five stories. Resigns teaching position.
- 1959 Marries Margaret Martinson Williams. Publishes “Defender of the Faith” in *The New Yorker*. Story provokes charges of anti-Semitism from Jewish organizations. Wins Guggenheim award from American Academy of Arts and Letters. Spends seven months in Italy writing *Letting Go*.
- 1960 *Goodbye, Columbus* wins National Book Award. Teaches writing at the University of Iowa. Meets Bernard Malamud.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1962 Accepts position as writer-in-residence at Princeton University. Separates from wife. Publishes *Letting Go*. Participates with Ralph Ellison in Yeshiva University symposium that would influence self-perception as a Jewish-American writer.
- 1963 Visits Israel.
- 1965 Teaches comparative literature at University of Pennsylvania. Does this intermittently for ten years.
- 1966 Protests Vietnam War.
- 1967 *When She Was Good*.
- 1968 Margaret Roth dies in auto accident.
- 1969 *Portnoy's Complaint*. Novel causes a sensation and becomes bestseller.
- 1970 Elected to National Institute of Arts and Letters. Begins *My Life as a Man*.
- 1971 *Our Gang*. Writes *The Breast* and *The Great American Novel*.
- 1972 *The Breast*. Buys an eighteenth-century farmhouse in northwest Connecticut. Irving Howe publishes attack on *Portnoy's Complaint*.
- 1973 Publishes *The Great American Novel*. Meets Milan Kundera and becomes interested in blacklisted writers from behind the Soviet-dominated Iron Curtain. Becomes General Editor of Penguin's "Writers from the Other Europe" series. Introduces, among others, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Tadeusz Borowski, Bohumil Hrabal, Danilo Kis, Tadeusz Konwicki, Ivan Klíma, Kundera, Witold Gombrowicz, and Bruno Schulz to American readers.
- 1974 *My Life as a Man*. Meets Vaclav Havel. Becomes friends with Vera Saudkova, a niece of Franz Kafka.
- 1975 Publishes *Reading Myself and Others*.
- 1976 Moves to London with Claire Bloom. They will alternate between living in London and Connecticut. Visits Israel for the first time since 1963 and frequently visits thereafter.
- 1977 *The Professor of Desire*.
- 1979 Publishes first Nathan Zuckerman novel, *The Ghost Writer*.
- 1980 *A Philip Roth Reader*.
- 1981 *Zuckerman Unbound*. Mother dies unexpectedly of a heart attack in Elizabethtown, NJ.
- 1984 *The Anatomy Lesson*.
- 1985 Publishes *The Prague Orgy* in one volume with *The Ghost Writer*, *Zuckerman Unbound*, and *The Anatomy Lesson* as *Zuckerman Bound*.
- 1987 *The Counterlife*. Wins National Book Critics' Circle Award for Fiction.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1988 *The Facts*. In Jerusalem attends trial of Ivan Demjanjuk, accused of being Treblinka guard “Ivan the Terrible.” Begins teaching at Hunter College for the next three years.
- 1989 Father dies of brain tumor. Roth’s care for father during the year-long illness will become the basis for *Patrimony*.
- 1990 *Deception*. Marries Claire Bloom in New York.
- 1991 *Patrimony*. Wins National Book Critics’ Circle Award for biography.
- 1993 *Operation Shylock*. Wins PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction. Separates from Claire Bloom.
- 1995 *Sabbath’s Theater*. Wins National Book Award for fiction.
- 1997 *American Pastoral*. Wins Pulitzer Prize for fiction.
- 1998 *I Married a Communist*. Wins Ambassador Book Award of the English-Speaking Union. Receives National Medal of Arts at the White House.
- 2000 *The Human Stain* completes the trilogy begun with *American Pastoral*. Wins second PEN/Faulkner award. In the UK wins the W. H. Smith Award for best book of the year. In France wins the Prix Medici for the best foreign book of the year.
- 2001 *The Dying Animal* and *Shop Talk*. Receives the Gold Medal in fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 2002 Awarded the National Book Foundation’s Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.
- 2004 *The Plot Against America*. Wins W. H. Smith Award.
- 2005 Third living American author to be included in the Library of America.
- 2006 *Everyman*.