

The Pitch

NEWSLETTER OF THE PRPL

A Complicated Collection

Scholars often visit to consult books in the Philip Roth Personal Library. They might be studying Italian literature, poetry, or just trying to get a handle on books that influenced the writer. We are fortunate that Roth signed and dated many of the books when he read them, so we can distinguish what he read in college and what he read years later. We see a progression from slight underlining in pencil to full-blown, expressive marginalia. Sometimes more than one copy of a particular work contains Roth's markings. Why? We can partially address that question. For example, Roth's library contains three copies of *Lord Jim*. Two copies were kept in Roth's bedroom in New York City and another was shelved in Roth's living room in his Connecticut home. One copy from both residences contained markings. But what about multiple marked copies found in one location? Perhaps one served as a reading copy and one was a teaching copy?

And then there's the question of the marginalia itself. Some books contain marking in blue, black, and red pen. And, by the way, Roth never used a highlighter. One example is one of Roth's copies of Kafka's *The Penal Colony* (which will be studied in further detail by scholar Miriam Jaffe in a forthcoming special issue of *Philip Roth Studies* focused on the Philip Roth Personal Library). This copy is particularly intriguing and scholars have been trying to understand the meaning of the colors of the annotations. Certain phrases are underlined in red, some have red stars or check marks next to them, and some of Roth's notes in black felt pen are circled in red. The collection, its organization, and the marginalia it contains are complex, just as its writer.

-Nadine Giron

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

September 9, 1pm EST

A virtual [book club discussion](#) of *Portnoy's Complaint* with host Steven Sampson.

The Philip Roth Book Club

We now have over 130 members and have discussed several of Roth's works: *Patrimony*, *The Ghost Writer*, *American Pastoral*, *The Counterlife*, *Indignation*, *Nemesis*, and *Goodbye, Columbus*. All have

September 12, 6pm

[Poetry workshop](#) with Ameerah Shabazz-Bilal

September 26, 6pm

[Newark Poetry/StorySLAM](#) hosted by Joseph Reuben Fuller

October 10, 6pm

[Poetry workshop](#) with Marina Carreira

November 2, 6pm

[Philip Roth Lecture](#)

History, Memory, and the Weequahic Section of Newark | A lecture by Dr. John Wesley Johnson, Jr.

Seeking additions to our archive!

The PRPL has been flourishing and is continually being used by researchers who observe its terrific importance. We are constantly on the lookout for new donations, such as correspondence from Philip Roth and photographs of the author. Please [contact us](#) if you have an item(s) you would like to contribute to the Philip Roth Personal Library. Thank you!

Visit shop.npl.org for PRPL and NPL merchandise, including notebooks, caps, and more.

been [recorded](#).

Our next two sessions will focus on *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969). The first session with Steven Sampson will take place on Saturday, September 9, 1pm EST on Zoom. Sampson is a Paris-based literary critic and novelist who writes in French. Sampson is the author of two book-length essays, *Corpus Rothi* and *Corpus Rothi II*, as well as a novel, *Moi, Philip Roth*.

On Saturday, December 2, we'll do something a little different...members won't be expected to read an entire book. James Duban from The University of North Texas will focus on the epilogue included in the 25th anniversary edition of *Portnoy's Complaint*, titled "Juice or Gravy." The text will be distributed to all members of the PRPL book club.

-Nadine Giron



This fall, Philip Roth's novel, *Sabbath's Theater*, takes the stage with John Turturro, Elizabeth Marvel and Jason Kravits at The Pershing Square Signature Center [The Romulus Linney Courtyard Theatre] in New York City. For more information, click [here](#).

Into the Fall

"It's easy to wish Philip Roth were still around and producing work so he could give us the novel we all now want him to write; one that finds the humanity in the madness of the era even as it excoriates the hypocrisy and sloth that brought the madness about. But the truth is he already wrote that novel. He wrote it again and again, with dazzling form and devastating relevance each time. Even when he exasperated us, he never lied to us.

--Meghan Daum, author of *The Problem with Everything* and host of *The Unspeakable* podcast, *Literary Hub*, March 13, 2023

Meghan Daum's quote on the relevancy of Philip Roth's novels in our lives underlies a promise and enthusiasm as we go into the fall months at Philip Roth Personal Library.

Certainly, it's easy for Roth to matter here on the second floor at Newark Public Library

with the comings and goings of his followers, scholars, college and high school classes, writers, poets, Newark residents and city visitors. We thrive on the literary discussions and challenges, criticism and adulation, new ideas and the inspiration to figure it all out.

What Philip Roth wrote in his 31 books can't be taken away. He beckons everyone to be a part of this city and now into the third year since our opening, we have seen the impact of the sheer presence of Roth's 7,000 books bequeathed so that his personal library could exist through communal access in his hometown. The additional funds Roth gave through endowments support the ongoing work to ensure Newark Public Library's role in the city's future.

One of our responsibilities we deem nonnegotiable is to provide --actually guarantee -- ongoing opportunities for the reading and writing that was core to Roth's being for Newark's adults and children and the public everywhere.

With that said, we have an exciting lineup of events! Please see the listings above.

-Nancy Shields

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