*The Talking Cure*

# Philip Roth's Psychoanalysts

Jeffrey Berman Ph.D.

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JEFFREY BERMAN

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When a Philip Roth character finds himself lying on a couch, more than likely he is engaged not in sex but in psychoanalysis. Therapy becomes the most intimate and imaginative event in life for the beleaguered hero, the one love affair he cannot live without. Of all novelists, Roth is the most familiar with the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, and from the beginning of his career he has demonstrated a keen interest in the therapeutic process. His characters are the most thoroughly psychoanalyzed in literature. Beginning with Libby Herz's dramatic encounter with Dr. Lumin in *Letting Go*, Roth has repeatedly returned to the psychoanalytic setting.[1] Through Alex Portnoy's stylized confession to the mute Dr. Otto Spielvogel in *Portnoy's Complaint*, Peter Tarnopol's troubled relationship to the greatly expanded Spielvogel in *My Life as a Man*, and David Kepesh's analysis with Dr. Klinger in *The Breast* and *The Professor of Desire*, Roth offers lively and fascinating accounts of the talking cure.

To his credit, Roth avoids stereotyping his analysts, and they remain conspicuously apart from and superior to other fictional therapists. Their uniqueness derives from their professional authenticity, sensitivity to language, and their refusal to subvert the therapeutic process. Indeed, Roth's analysts become more impressive when compared to other fictional healers who either misunderstand psychotherapy or exploit their patients' illnesses.

Roth's therapists do not marry their patients or have incestuous affairs with them, as do Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night*, Palmer Anderson in Iris Murdoch's *A Severed Head*, and Erica Jong's lustful Adrian Goodlove in *Fear of Flying*. They do not perform lobotomies or administer drugs, as Kesey describes in his psychiatric horror story, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, nor do they use electroshock therapy, as in Plath's *The Bell Jar*. Dr. Lamb's "Explosion" therapy in Lessing's *The Four-Gated City* and the behavioral modification found in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* are both alien to Roth's world. His analysts are neither priests in disguise, as is Sir Harcourt-Reilly in Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, nor therapeutic con artists, like Dr. Tamkin in Bellow's *Seize the Day*. And they are certainly unlike the sadistic caricatures posing as therapists in Nabokov's stories.

In short, Roth pays tribute to psychoanalysis by demystifying the patient-analyst relationship and by refusing to render therapists into caricatures or mythic figures. Even when Roth has been wildly inventive in his patients' confessions or symptoms, the novelist is scrupulously realistic in his portrayal of psychoanalysts. They are men of good will, expertise, and integrity. They maintain a proper distance from their patients, follow the rules of their profession, and avoid subverting their position into an instrument of evil power. They are orthodox Freudians in their theoretical orientation but pragmatic in their world view. They affirm the consolations of the reality principle, urging reconciliation and reintegration. They are

scholarly, dignified, mildly ironic in speech, and even tempered. They are not charmed by their patients' praise, bullied by their threats, or horrified by their revelations. Above all, they are excellent listeners.

In *Reading Myself and Others* Roth has perceptively commented upon the importance of psychoanalysis in his fiction, but he has been characteristically reluctant to discuss the autobiographical sources of his artistic preoccupation with therapy or the exact parallels between his own life and those of his fictional creations. Referring to the varied therapeutic experiences of Libby, Portnoy, Tarnopol, and Kepesh, Roth notes that "All of these characters, in pain and in trouble, turn to doctors because they believe psychoanalysis may help them from going under completely. Why they believe this is a subject I haven't the space to go into here, nor is it what I've given most thought to in these books" (pp. 9394). His main interest, he adds, is "in the extent to which unhappy people do define themselves as 'ill' or agree to view themselves as 'patients,' and in what each then makes of the treatment prescribed." Roth leaves unanswered, however, many important questions regarding the relationship between the creative and therapeutic process. Despite the profound similarities between the artist's and psychoanalyst's vision of reality, there are no less profound differences, chief of which is, perhaps, the assumptions of understanding reality.[2] Roth's patients, who are generally writers or professors of literature, maintain the belief that reality is intractable: Human passions are unruly, suffering cannot

be explained or alleviated, and reality seems impervious to understanding. Roth's analysts, by contrast, believe that psychological illness derives from childhood experiences, that conflict can be understood psychodynamically, and that guilt and rage can be worked through.

Toward which paradigm of reality, the artist's or psychoanalyst's, is die reader more sympathetic? And what effect does psychoanalysis have on Roth's protagonists? It is clear that they continually brood over the subject of psychological illness, often becoming depressed or paralyzed. Yet why does "illness" liberate Portnoy's spirit while it only depresses Tarnopol's? In reading the analytic confessions of Roth's characters, where does one draw the line between healthy or humorous fantasies and pathological needs? And what is the relationship between art and aggression, creativity and psychopathology? In particular, can a novelist write about his own psychoanalysis and sharply disagree with his analyst's interpretation without engaging in "resistance" or "narcissistic melodramas"?

The 11-page segment of Libby Herz's stormy interview with Dr. Lu-min in *Letting Go* represents one of the most brilliant fictional depictions of a patient's first analytic session. Although Libby summons all her strength to make the dreaded appointment, she still shows up 20 minutes late. To arrive on time, she fears, would be symptomatic of weakness. Upon seeing Lumin she is disheartened, for he fulfills none of the reassuring European

stereotypes she has imagined. A short, wide man with oversized head and hands, he has the beefy appearance of a butcher, which intensifies Libby's terror. Roth invests the scene with a wonderful seriocomic tone, handling the problem of narrative distance with equal expertise. Everything is filtered through Libby's consciousness as the novelist records her small shocks, such as her indecision over whether to sit or lie down on the analytic couch and, if to lie down, whether to take off her shoes. Alarmed at having her preconceptions of therapy shattered, she fears she is boring or angering the analyst. She remains a prisoner of her nervousness, victimized by a frantic heart and perspiring body. "It was like living with an idiot whose behavior was unpredictable from one moment to the next: what would this body of hers do ten seconds from now?" (p. 344).

Like all of Roth's psychoanalysts, Lumin maintains a passive demeanor throughout the session, allowing Libby to direct the flow of talk. Midway through the hour, however, he grows impatient with her chatter and, during a bantering exchange, he almost springs out of the chair to demand: "Come on, Libby . . . What's the trouble?" The unexpected question devastates her and for a full five minutes she breaks down and sobs, just as Tarnopol does when he begins his analysis with Spielvogel in *My Life as a Man.* When she finally looks up, Lumin is still there, "a thick, fleshy reality, nothing to be charmed, wheedled, begged, tempted, or flirted with" (p. 347). Neither a father surrogate nor an alter ego, Lumin remains Lumin. His name suggests his

function in the novel: He helps Libby to illuminate her confused thoughts and to focus on her contradictory emotions. She reveals more to him in a few minutes than she has admitted to anyone in her life, including herself. She expresses anger toward her husband for not making love to her more than once a month. ("Well," says Lumin with authority, "everybody's entitled to get laid more than that.") She confesses to her self-preoccupation and self-pity, discovers that she does not love the rootless Gabe Wallach but only the freedom she imagines him to have, and admits to behaving badly. These are not great insights, but they do represent a beginning.

In a novel filled with endless small talk and self-absorption, Lumin's silence becomes paradoxically eloquent. His attentive listening jolts Libby into a more rigorous self-examination than she has ever undertaken. The analyst offers no psychological formulas or medical truisms. He simply listens to her and occasionally asks pointed questions. When Libby demands to know what is wrong with her, he restates the question; when she begins to play the role of the mental patient, claiming she is "cracked as the day is long," he abruptly stops her. In a gruff but compassionate voice, he reproaches her for exaggerating her problems. He is not exactly a mirroring or empathic analyst, but his no-nonsense approach works.

*Letting Go* has received harsh criticism for its sprawling structure, desultory plotting, and self-indulgence, yet the scene between Libby and

Lumin demonstrates Roth's writing at its best. The compressed descriptions, dramatic pacing, expansion and contraction of Libby's point of view, and sparkling dialogue suggest that psychoanalysis has enlivened Roth's art. Lumin's speech has the desired effect on Libby, and she suddenly feels an awakening warmth for the analyst who has given her a new perspective to her problems. Interestingly, Libby brings to therapy an uncommon knowledge of the intricacies of the patient-analyst relationship. "She had, of course, heard of transference, and she wondered if it could be beginning so soon" (p. 350). It is questionable whether an inexperienced patient, in analysis for less than an hour, would be so aware of transference. Yet Roth's characters bring to psychoanalysis an extraordinary awareness of the mind, as if they had grown up on Dr. Freud instead of Dr. Spock. Libby's positive transference toward Lumin soon gives way to rage, however, upon learning at the end of the hour the expense of psychoanalysis. When Lumin informs her that the fee is 25 dollars an hour—a figure that surely dates the novel!—she nearly faints. The scene is both funny and sad and ends with Libby storming out of his office, convinced the analyst has betrayed her. Thus ends her only experience with therapy. It is significant that Roth reserves this psychoanalytic initiation for a woman, not a man: Gabe, not Libby, seems the more likely candidate for analysis, and in future stories psychoanalysis remains a distinctly male activity.

*Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) is not only Roth's most celebrated

psychoanalytic monologue but the novel which brought the analytic couch into the living rooms of millions of American families. Alex's attitude toward the talking cure may be gleaned from his reading habits, both by what and how he reads. Describing the set of Freud's Collected Papers he has bought, he remarks: "since my return from Europe, [I] have been putting myself to sleep each night in the solitary confinement of my womanless bed with a volume of Freud in my hand. Sometimes Freud in hand, sometimes Alex in hand, frequently both" (p. 185). Freud as a soporific? Or as an aphrodisiac? Portnoy reads Freud's writings for the usual reasons—intellectual curiosity, historical awareness, personal self-discovery—yet, he embraces psychoanalytic theory primarily for self-justification. The analyst becomes for Portnoy an erotic plaything, a masturbatory sex object, a handy "how-to" book. As Spielvogel's name suggests in German, he is a "playbird" to be stroked, serenaded, seduced.

Portnoy thus transmutes Freudian ideas into imaginative self-play, the first of many instances in which Roth transforms clinical case studies into the stuff of art. Portnoy's preference for orthodox Freudian psychoanalysis, uncorrupted by revisionist doctrine, reveals the same purist impulse that allows him to quote freely from other great classical writers—Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Kafka. Portnoy reads Freud's seminal essay, 'The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life," and then confides to us erotic fantasies and past exploits that would make the Viennese physician blush. In holding

up the Freudian mirror to life, Roth's hero is bedazzled by what he sees and by the tantalizing possibilities of life imitating the psychiatric case study. Contemporary analysts speak of fusion with the lost object, but Portnoy's story is an example of a character in search of the author of the *Standard Edition* (or the less epical *Collected Papers*), from which he quotes with Mosaic authority. The promised land for Portnoy is not Israel, toward which he ambivalently moves, but the rich landscape of textbook Oedipal fantasies. Rendered impotent in his mother country, he suffers no loss of verbal potency or bravado when journeying through virgin psychoanalytic territory.

It is obvious from the manic comic tone of the novel that Portnoy hungers not for redemption, as he mistakenly asserts, but for applause and validation. Humor aside, Portnoy does not exist. To question his "illness" seems to be in bad taste, as if to perform an autopsy on a good joke or to translate a pun from another language. *"Traduttore—traditore,"* as Freud remarked in his own Joke Book.[3] Nevertheless, we may wonder whether Portnoy's reading of Freudian theory allows him to chart new imaginative territory or merely to restrict his vision. The question is not how much psychoanalytic theory Portnoy has studied but the uses and misuses of his knowledge. Accordingly, we may analyze one of the most intriguing aspects of the novel, Portnoy's transference relationship to Spielvogel. The inexperienced Libby knows enough about transference in *Letting Go* to call it by its proper name. Portnoy, however, seems indifferent to the transactional

nature of psychoanalysis. Indeed, he refuses to allow Spielvogel to speak until the last line of the novel. The patient monopolizes the session in a dizzying display of Freudian virtuosity. He allows nothing to interrupt his monologue, neither doubts about psychoanalytic theory nor queries addressed to Spielvogel. All of Portnoy's questions are rhetorical.

Portnoy's transference relationship to Spielvogel suggests the desire to match his Freudian expertise against the analyst's, to compete with him, secure his approval, and ultimately to replace him as an authority. The intense identification with Spielvogel reveals the urge to incorporate him, as if Portnoy were digesting a book. Although he addresses him as "Your Honor" and "Your Holiness," the patient usually regards him as an intellectual equal. "Surely, Doctor, we can figure this thing out, two smart Jewish boys like ourselves." Portnoy never relinquishes his superiority. Identifying himself with Freud's famous case studies, he cites an illustrious artist whose fantasies coincide with his own. "I have read Freud on Leonardo, Doctor, and pardon the hubris, but my fantasies exactly: this big smothering bird beating frantic wings about my face and mouth *so that I cannot even get my breath"* (p. 121). Later Portnoy challenges Spielvogel (his own "playbird") to another competition, singing the songs of the service academies. "Go ahead, name your branch of service, Spielvogel, I'll sing you your song! Please, allow me—it's my money" (p. 235). *Portnoy's Complaint* is itself a raucous anthem to the psychoanalytic process, with the patient paying homage to His Majesty

Spielvogel while at the same time making plans for his own succession to the throne.

What does all this mean? To the extent that Portnoy attempts to win his analyst's love and to usurp his magical potency, he recreates Spielvogel into an idealized father figure—a judge, lawgiver, king—the antithesis of his constipated and passive real father, Jack Portnoy. But insofar as Portnoy refuses to surrender verbal control to Spielvogel, thus enforcing silence and passivity upon die analyst, he attempts to manipulate him into his father's submissive position. The transference relationship is consequently an accurate reflection of his life. Portnoy's cocky attitude toward Spielvogel is a disguised attempt to usurp the Oedipal father, to castrate him. Roth's hero never sees the irony. Nor does he comment upon the hidden meaning behind the exhibitionistic impulse to perform or spill forth to the analyst. In his nonstop verbal pyrotechnics, his quest for perfectionism and omnipotent self-control, his unceasing self-mythologizing, and his need to instruct Spielvogel with years of inherited wisdom, Portnoy becomes his own Jewish mother. The irony is crucial. Portnoy criticizes his seductive overprotective mother for overwhelming her docile son; but the son, now a grown man, has internalized his mother's values to the extent that even while rebelling against her, he cannot prevent himself from similarly overwhelming the analyst-father. The mother uses food to over-nourish her son; Alex uses a more symbolic form of orality, language, to satiate his analyst. The words never cease. In its

unrelenting intensity, Alex's language suggests love and hate, nourishment and suffocation.

And so despite his impressive reading of psychoanalytic theory, Portnoy misses the significance of his ejaculative performance to Spielvogel. "I lose Touch instantaneously with that ass-licking little boy who runs home after school with his A's in his hand, the little over-earnest innocent endlessly in search of the key to that unfathomable mystery, his mother's approbation . . ." (p. 49). Portnoy's colorful language offers the hope of rigorous self-examination and increased narrative perspective; yet, he still does not recognize that, instead of rejecting the mama's-boy values he professes to despise, he has unconsciously transferred these values to Spielvogel, whose approbation he is now demanding. Only now it is an "A" in psychoanalysis he is pursuing in his independent study.

How should Dr. Spielvogel react to Portnoy's artful monologue? In a satirical article entitled "Portnoy Psychoanalyzed," Bruno Bettelheim offers his interpretation of Spielvogel's responses. Portnoy's "diarrhea" of talk, observes Bettelheim's analyst, represents a reaction formation to his father's constipation of character. The patient's problem is reflected in his indiscriminate sexual and verbal discharge, a frantic defense against the threat of being unmanned. Accompanying Portnoy's castration fear is the contradictory wish to *have* a castrating father to restore his wounded image

of male power. Portnoy's confession is self-indulgent, claims Bettelheim's Spielvogel, because he regards psychoanalysis as a quick and easy catharsis rather than as a difficult process of self-healing through self-discovery. The analyst suggests additionally that although Portnoy believes his psychic impotence arises from an Oedipal attachment, the oral attachments to the mother determine his wish to remain a child forever. Bettelheim's most provocative insight is that Portnoy's complaint of an over-protective mother disguises the disappointment that she was not more exclusively preoccupied with him. "While consciously he experienced everything she did as destructive, behind it is an incredible wish for more, more, more; an insatiable orality which is denied and turned into the opposite by his continuous scream of its being much too much."[4]

Ironically, Bettelheim's Spielvogel is as perceptive in analyzing Portnoy's transference relationship as he is imperceptive in admitting to his own negative countertransference. Unable to concede any sympathy for his "troublesome—aren't they all?—new patient," the analyst is filled with anger, contempt, and intolerance, as if the patient's narcissistic defenses have triggered off his own. He fails to acknowledge anything worthwhile about Portnoy's character. Reading "Portnoy Psychoanalyzed," one is unable to explain the vitality and wit of the Rothian hero, not to mention the novel's linguistic brilliance. Angered by his inability to break through Portnoy's monologue, and worried (rightly, as it turns out) that he will be unable to

establish a minimal transference necessary for analysis to succeed, Bettelheim's Spielvogel never admits that countertransference is the key problem. Not even Eliot's Sir Harcourt-Reilly is as belligerent as Bettelheim's Spielvogel. He is offended by Portnoy's vulgar language, ingratitude toward his parents, inferiority complex, narcissistic rage, and failure in interpersonal relationships. Why, then, is the patient in analysis if he is not to work through these conflicts? In his narrow clinical judgments, threatening tactics, and European condescension, Bettelheim's Spielvogel becomes an unconscious parody of a self-righteous, withholding parent. Indeed, Roth could not have imagined a more unflattering portrait of an analyst. And the absence of authorial distance between the eminent psychoanalyst and his fictional creation makes "Portnoy Psychoanalyzed" more disturbing.

Bettelheim's hostility toward *Portnoy's Complaint* may derive in part from the psychoanalytic community's defensiveness of its image in literature. The angry denunciations of *Equus* suggest this, though certainly the play's flaws justify criticism. A more serious problem of "Portnoy Psychoanalyzed" is its unawareness of the satirical art of *Portnoy's Complaint* and Bettelheim's reduction of Roth's novel to a psychiatric case study. Only at the end of the essay does the author consider the possibility that *Portnoy's Complaint* is a literary production, not a clinical confession. He concedes that at best it is "not more than an effort to tell a good story." But he places no value on a good story. He also wishes to tell Portnoy—and his creator—that "it is time to stop

being a man of letters so that, through analyzing himself, he might finally become a man" (p. 10). Behind Spielvogel's hostility toward Portnoy lies, of course, Bettelheim's rejection of Roth. Roth's own Spielvogel in *My Lift as a Man* demonstrates greater compassion and understanding than the Spielvogel of "Portnoy Psychoanalyzed," which is to say that Roth is a better psychoanalyst than Bettelheim is a literary critic.[5]

Despite its appearance as a psychiatric case study, *Portnoy's Complaint* retains its allegiance to the interior monologue developed by Joyce, Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf. Beginning with *Portnoy's Complaint* and proceeding through *The Breast, My Life as a Man,* and *The Professor of Desire,* Roth has evolved his own narrative form in which the interior monologue is wedded to a contemporary psychoanalytic setting. The analyst, heard or unheard, becomes the recipient of the comic or anguished utterances of a patient searching for psychic relief and moral redemption. The free-association technique, the recurrent phallic-and-castration imagery, the Oedipal triangles, the idealization of the analyst, and the multilayered texture of Portnoy's consciousness help to create the psychoanalytic authenticity. "The style of *Portnoy's Complaint,"* Sheldon Grebstein observes, "is the rhetoric of hysteria, or perhaps the rhetoric of neurosis."[6]

Roth's prose style also captures perfectly the nuances of psychoanalysis. His language is analytic, restlessly interrogative, self-mocking. The prose is

always capable of anticipating the objections of an implied listener who usually turns out to be, of course, an analyst. The language is attuned to the nuances of spiritual imprisonment and moral ambiguity, capable of distorting small humiliations into traumatic injustices, and straining for a release that never quite comes. The voice bespeaks a romantic disillusionment that rarely frees itself from the suspicion that, contrary to what an analyst might say, an unruly personal life is good for a novelist's art. There is a self-lacerating quality about Roth's prose that has remained constant over the years. David Kepesh's observation in The Professor of Desire holds true for all of Roth's heroes. "I am an absolutist—a young absolutist—and know no way to shed a skin other than by inserting the scalpel and lacerating myself from end to end" (p. 12). Roth's stories dramatize the struggle between the impulse for sensual abandon, on the one hand, and the capacity for pain-filled renunciation, on the other. And the novelist is always willing to incriminate himself in the service of art, preoccupied as he is in novel after novel with illicit and ungovernable passions at war with a rigid conscience.

Does Portnoy discover anything about himself in the course of the novel? The circular form of Portnoy's Complaint undercuts the illusion of self-discovery. Roth's comments in Reading Myself and Others indicate the contradiction between the realistic and satirical elements of the story. "It is a highly stylized confession that this imaginary Spielvogel gets to hear, and I would guess that it bears about as much resemblance to the drift and tone of

what a real psychopathologist hears in his everyday life as a love sonnet does to the iambs and dactyls that lovers whisper into one another's ears in motel rooms and over the phone" (p. 94). The simile reveals Roth's own spirited love affair with psychoanalysis, at least during the creation of Portnoy's Complaint. In My Life as a Man, he will strive for and achieve stark realism in the treatment of the patient-analyst relationship, but, in Portnoy's Complaint, he uses a psychoanalytic setting mainly as the context for his protagonist's lyrical confessions. Never has confession sounded as poetic as this, as free and spontaneous and inventive as these artful outpourings. Portnoy has acquired his psychoanalytic armor before the novel opens, and he seems disinclined to lay down his defenses as the story closes. Consequently, he reaches few if any real insights, nothing comparable to a Joycean epiphany.

Patricia Meyer Spacks has pointed out the affinities of Portnoy's Complaint to the picaresque novel, but Roth's story also recalls the dramatic monologue.[7] Robert Langbaum has called the dramatic monologue "the poetry of experience," the doctrine that the "imaginative apprehension gained through immediate experience is primary and certain, whereas the analytic reflection that follows is secondary and problematical."[8] Nearly all of Langbaum's observations in The Poetry of Experience apply to Portnoy's Complaint, including the tension between our sympathy and moral judgment for a speaker who is outrageous or reprehensible. They apply to the circular rather than linear direction of the narrative. ("The speaker of the dramatic

monologue starts out with an established point of view, and is not concerned with its truth but with trying to impress it on the outside world.") Also, they apply to the gratuitous but lyrical nature of the speaker's utterance. "The result is that the dramatic situation, incomplete in itself, serves an ultimately self-expressive or lyrical purpose which gives it its resolution" (p. 182). And so it is with Portnoy's complaint. Interpreted as a Browningesque dramatic monologue, the novel ceases to be a psychiatric case study. The self-indulgent confession gives way to an internally structured monologue, the psycho-moral complexity shifts away from Portnoy as character or object onto the reader's problematic relationship to him, the patient's self-analysis becomes linked to self-deception, and Portnoy's failure to achieve a therapeutic cure is offset by his refusal to have acknowledged any illness.

Nowhere is the reader's troubled relationship to Portnoy better demonstrated than by the enormous controversy the novel has generated. Portnoy shrewdly anticipates the accusations of his critics. "I hear myself indulging in the kind of ritualized bellyaching that is just what gives psychoanalytic patients such a bad name with the general public" (p. 94). Do we praise his candor or criticize his rationalization? Or both? How do we respond to his next set of questions? "Is this truth I'm delivering up, or is it just plain *kvetching?* Or is *kvetching* for people like me a *form* of truth?" The answer depends upon the reader's sympathy for Portnoy, but of course this evades the prior questions of how and why the reader's sympathy for Portnoy

is or is not engaged. Irving Howe's influential indictment of *Portnoy's Complaint* in *Commentary* remains the most caustic evaluation. "There usually follows in such first-person narratives a spilling-out of the narrator which it becomes hard to suppose is not also the spilling-out of the author. Such literary narcissism is especially notable among minor satirists, with whom it frequently takes the form of self-exemptive attacks on the shamefulness of humanity."[9] This remains an extreme position, however, and amidst the claims and counterclaims of Roth's critics, a reader is likely to become confused. As Mark Shechner has noted in an admirable essay, one's enthusiasm for Roth's fiction is complicated though not necessarily diminished by the discovery that one's loyalty to *Portnoy's Complaint* as a version of the truth is not widely shared by other readers.[10]

Paradoxically, despite Portnoy's incessant complaints, it is hard to take seriously his demand for therapeutic relief. He may gripe that his parents have psychically crippled him, but they have also been responsible for shaping an imagination that never wavers in its comic inventiveness and vitality. The novel is less a complaint than a celebration. Why should Portnoy be cured of fantasies that are so entertaining? The exuberance of his language works against his claims for deliverance. The voice never assumes the flatness, fatigue, or disconnectedness that is symptomatic of depression. Narcissism notwithstanding, Portnoy realizes that he is not the center of the universe, and Roth's ability' to conjure up a rogue's gallery of minor

characters testifies to his escape from solipsism. Portnoy's voice never falters in its curiosity and delight in commentary. "The true center of Portnoy's heroism is his speech," Patricia Meyer Spacks has observed.[11] It is true that Portnoy has not figured out all the psychoanalytic dynamics of his situation. He prefers to discuss Oedipal fixations rather than pre-Oedipal narcissistic injuries. However, if he is consumed by guilt, he seems to be thriving on his imaginative disorders.

The delight in reading *Portnoy's Complaint* lies not in the analysis of a diseased mind but in the appreciation of one of the most fertile imaginations found in contemporary literature. Unlike *The Catcher in the Rye,* which ends with Holden Caulfield's psychotic breakdown, institutionalization, and uncertain return to society, *Portnoy's Complaint* concludes with the protagonist as an outpatient. Spielvogel's punch line, "So. . . . Now vee may perhaps to begin. Yes?", perfectly satirizes Portnoy's bookish self-analysis. Through Spielvogel's one-liner, Roth tells us that Portnoy's psychoanalytic (or pre-psychoanalytic) monologue is both inadequate and incomplete. The analyst has the last word and the last laugh. Yet, Portnoy has discovered one crucial truth that will prepare him for psychoanalysis or any other introspective activity. He has casually dropped upon us (in a parenthesis, no less) the moral of his story: "Nothing is never ironic, there's always a laugh lurking somewhere" (p. 93). *Portnoy's Complaint* appropriately ends with a Joycean "yes." And in the spirit of *Ulysses,* which also climaxes with Molly

Bloom's final affirmation as she drifts off to sleep dreaming autoerotic visions of past and present lovers, so does Roth's self-reliant hero, far from being drained or limp from his imaginative foreplay, return to Freud, on the one hand, and himself, on the other, ready to play with his Spielvogelian truths.

* * *

Unfortunately, psychoanalysis proves less inspiring to Roth's next protagonist-patient. Portnoy's masturbatory fantasies pale in comparison to the endocrinopathic catastrophe befalling the unfortunate hero of The Breast. Worse still, David Kepesh's metamorphosis into a giant breast remains inexplicable to his psychoanalyst, Dr. Frederick Klinger, who insists upon, oddly enough, a physiological etiology. To accept Klinger's judgment is to reject all efforts to interpret Roth's story. Devoid of psychological interest. The Breast wanders in a no-man's land between Portnoy's Complaint and My Life as a Man, without the great comic exuberance of the former or the intriguing involutions of the latter.[12] Unlike Portnoy, Kepesh's complaints seem joyless and unimaginative; unlike Tarnopol, his life as a man seems unworthy of extended critical attention. The Breast strays between realism and fantasy, unable to commit itself to either outlook. For whatever reason, Roth restrains the farcical implications of the story. The problem with The Breast is that it is not fantastic enough. The premise of the story would seem

to indicate an abandonment of the reality principle and a leap into pure fantasy; yet, Kepesh always sounds like Kepesh—before, during, and after the metamorphosis. The story remains exclusively preoccupied with the trivial facts of the transformation, thus neglecting the narrator's dislocation of consciousness. The metamorphosis into a breast fails to alter the dreary consistency of Kepesh's perceptions and speech, perhaps necessitating a more radical surgical procedure for Roth's curious novella.

In retrospect, *The Breast* occupies a transitional position in Roth's career. David Kepesh's life embodies most of the characteristics, external and internal, of the archetypal Roth protagonist. Kepesh and Tarnopol are similar in age, profession, parental and marital problems, and temperament. Both men have been in psychoanalysis for five years and teach English literature in colleges or universities where Roth himself has studied or taught. Interestingly, the age of the Roth narrator can be determined by subtracting the year of Roth's birth, 1933, from the publication date of the novel. The Roth hero ages from novel to novel at the same speed as the novelist himself. Gabe Wallach is 28, Roth's age when he finished writing *Letting Go.* Alex Portnoy is born in 1933. Kepesh says that he is 38 and that he turned into a breast in 1971 (the novella was published in 1972), thus placing his birth in 1933. Both Nathan Zuckerman and Tarnopol, in *My Life as a Man,* also were born in 1933. Similarly, the titles of Roth's stories reveal an allegorical pattern. They narrate the complaint of a professor of desire, whose struggle

for manhood is undercut by the difficulty of letting go of a literal or metaphorical breast. Roth has always been striving to write *The Great American Novel,* though the title of *Goodbye, Columbus* may suggest the increasing remoteness of the quest. The titles *Goodbye, Columbus, Letting Go, When She Was Good,* and *The Ghost Writer* also hint at an element of nostalgia and perhaps elegy, as if the past is more romantic than the present. Yet there is a depressing fear that, to echo Roth's contemporary, Joseph Heller, something happened.

The Klinger-Kepesh relationship in *The Breast* dramatizes the tension between rationality and irrationality, restraint and hysteria, the reality principle and the pleasure principle. Like all of Roth's analysts, Klinger is concerned with normal rather than abnormal psychology. He never claims omniscience or omnipotence. Roth continues to demystify the analyst, making him eminently human and sensible. To his credit, Klinger avoids threatening clinical tactics, obscurantist theories, and professional jargon. "You are not mad," he tells Kepesh, "You are not in the grip of a delusion, or haven't been till now. You have not suffered what you call 'a schizophrenic collapse' " (p. $5). Klinger mercifully abstains from Laingian metaphors of "journeying through inner space" and other fashionable psychiatric theories.

Yet, if Kepesh's illness originates from a hormonal imbalance, what is Klinger doing in *The Breast?* The analyst insists that Kepesh's metamorphosis

cannot be explained in psychoanalytic terms, such as wish fulfillment or regression to infancy. Does Roth need an analyst to tell us this? Better an endocrinologist. Klinger's vocabulary is not psychological but moralistic; he uses expressions like "strength of character" and "will to live" to help his patient adapt to the bizarre illness. Both the analyst and novelist take Kepesh's story too seriously. Perhaps one can excuse Kepesh's hypochondria and self-dramatizing; he is, after all, the patient and therefore entitled to his rightful suffering. "Alas, what has happened to me is like nothing anyone has ever known; beyond understanding, beyond compassion, beyond comedy . . ." (p. 11). Klinger encourages Kepesh's self-inflation, and even the analyst's dialogue sounds wooden at times. "You have been heroic in your efforts to accommodate yourself to this mysterious misfortune" (p. 55). Roth's great gift for dialogue fails him here, suggesting that the novelist cannot believe in Kepesh's "heroic" plight. Nevertheless, Roth continues to insist upon his patient's heroic stature, arguing, in *Reading Myself and Others,* that Kepesh's predicament is far more poignant and harrowing than Lucy Nelson's, the heroine of *When She Was Good,* or Portnoy's. "Kepesh strikes me as far more heroic than either of these two: perhaps a man who turns into a breast is the first heroic character I've ever been able to portray" (p. 66). Despite Roth's intentions, his hero seems neither sick nor imaginative enough to justify his fantastic situation. Why the metamorphosis into a breast instead of a penis, mouth, anus, brain? Why Kepesh's five years of therapy prior to the opening

of the story, only to be told that psychoanalytic reality does not apply to a biochemical disorder? Why attempt to remain a "citadel of sanity" when real madness seems more appropriate? Far from being the uplifting story Roth intended, *The Breast* remains pointless, a joke gone sour.

* * *

*My Life as a Man* is Roth's most profound investigation of the relationship lie tween literature and psychoanalysis. The full complexity of the novel becomes apparent only upon subsequent re-readings and an examination of its biographical sources. No novelist has given us a more authentic account of psychoanalysis in its intellectual and emotional vagaries than Roth does in *My Life as a Man.* The novel is unrivaled in its narration of the problems that arise when the novelist and psychoanalyst clash over different interpretations of reality. In this story, Roth develops a psychoanalyst for the first time and explores the impact of therapy upon the artist's life and work, the connection between art and neurosis, and the often-problematic distinction between acting out and working through psychic conflict. As with *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden,* we see a novel originating from an actual psychiatric case study and the problems arising from the issue of medical confidentiality. Although Roth has written about therapy prior to *Portnoy's Complaint* and subsequent to *My Life as a Man,*

these two novels complete a major cycle in the writer's career.

*My Life as a Man* is composed of the story of three novelists. The first novelist is Nathan Zuckerman, the fictional hero of two useful fictions, "Salad Days" and "Courting Disaster (Or, Serious in the Fifties)." Zuckerman's promising literary career is cut short by a catastrophic, loveless marriage to a self-abnegating divorcee and then, after her suicide, a joyless union with a daughter much like Lolita. The second novelist is Peter Tarnopol, the author of these two "Useful Fictions" and the narrator of an autobiographical novella called *My True Story,* which chronicles a myriad of personal problems ranging from a nightmarish marriage to a "psychopath," to another entangling alliance with a self-destructive woman. The third novelist is Philip Roth, whose relationship to *My Life as a Man* contradicts the Joycean injunction of the impersonal Godlike artist who "remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence." The two structural divisions of the novel, "Useful Fictions" and *My True Story,* emphasize Roth's deliberate blurring of literature and life, fiction and autobiography. The story falls into the category of the self-reflexive, Post-Modernist novel. It is highly self-conscious in narration, yielding little authorial distance. Filled with long passages of literary criticism and expository material, *My Life as a Man* also comments directly upon Roth's previous novels, including a summary of the writer's fortunes and misfortunes. Tarnopol occupies an ambiguous middle position between his fictional son Nathan Zuckerman and his

autobiographical father, Philip Roth. Like all the father-son relationships in Roth's world, it is deeply troubled.

To meet Peter Tarnopol is to remember Alex Portnoy. Tarnopol opens his section of the novel by asking: "Has anything changed?" A reader may ask the same question. Portnoy is an assistant commissioner on human opportunity, Tarnopol an assistant professor of literature. It is clear that they come not only from similar backgrounds but from the same imagination. They are exclamatory in their speech and ejaculatory in their sex. Mistrustful of women, they split females into spiritual and sexual antinomies and find happiness with neither type. Portnoy has his Monkey, Tarnopol his Maureen. Both men are highly competitive and temperamentally incapable of silence. Emotionally nourished by Jewish mothers and intellectually nurtured on Jewish mentors, Freud and Kafka, they are sensitive to the charge of narcissism which their behavior seems to invite. Filled with guilt and pent-up rage, they commit themselves to the same eminent psychoanalyst, Dr. Otto Spielvogel. And, as further proof of similarity, their names are anagrams: six of the seven letters of "Portnoy" appear in "Tarnopol."

But whereas Portnoy calls Spielvogel "Your Honor" and "Your Holiness," Tarnopol refers to him, with double-edged irony, as "Warden Spielvogel." The title hints at Roth's shift of attitude toward psychoanalysis. In *Portnoy's Complaint,* Spielvogel has the last word, but in *My Life as a Man* the analyst's

role is less privileged. "The doctor he reminded me of most," Tarnopol tells us, "was Dr. Roger Chillingworth in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter.* Appropriate enough, because I sat facing him as full of shameful secrets as the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale" (p. 203). But it is Dr. Freud whom Spielvogel resembles. Apart from his German-Jewish name and accent, Spielvogel is battling cancer. Yet he refuses to give up his work. Like Freud, he has a framed photograph of the Acropolis on his desk, and he demonstrates a keen interest in the application of psychoanalytic theory to art criticism. His specialty is treating "creative" people. The analyst's professional judgment of his patient is summarized in one wry sentence. "Mr. Tarnopol is considered by Dr. Spielvogel to be among the nation's top young narcissists in the arts." Tarnopol's judgment of Spielvogel is considerably more complicated.

Although Tarnopol's relationship to Spielvogel echoes previous encounters between patients and analysts in Roth's fiction, *My Life as a Man* is more than a variation on an old theme. From the memorable description of Tarnopol's first session with Spielvogel to their last farewell, we realize we are in the presence of an extraordinary event in the novelist's life. Roth invests Tarnopol's psychoanalysis with drama, humor, and pathos. The juxtaposition of interior monologue and dialogue is superb, and the tone sparkles with ironic wit and literary allusiveness. Entering Spielvogel's office for the first time, Tarnopol feels an impulse to "get up and leave, my shame and humiliation (and my disaster) still my own—and simultaneously to crawl

into his lap." Tarnopol breaks down and weeps for several minutes, as Libby has done in *Letting Go.* "Are you finished?" Spielvogel finally asks. Years later Tarnopol still reflects upon these classic words. 'There are lines from my five years of psychoanalysis as memorable to me as the opening sentence of *Anna Karenina*—'Are you finished?' is one of them. The perfect tone, the perfect tactic. I turned myself over to him, then and there, for good or bad" (pp. 203-204).

Spielvogel is one of the most formidable psychoanalysts in literature, a *tour de force.* Roth does not allow anything, including the falling out between Tarnopol and Spielvogel, to undercut the analyst's toughness of character, European dignity, and unswerving commitment. From beginning to end he remains the repository of Tarnopol's intimate history, the instrument of his psychic, even spiritual, recover)'. Although a darker side to Spielvogel's character emerges during his dispute with Tarnopol, Roth does not allow the portrait of the analyst to deteriorate into caricature. Spielvogel displays an immunity to criticism that both dismays and impresses his patient; although the analyst's refusal to concede responsibility for the apparent breach of confidentiality that later arises, or at least the unfortunate accident of publication, strikes Tarnopol as unforgivable, the patient is emphatic about one point. Without the years of psychoanalytic treatment, Tarnopol would not have survived, at least not as a reasonably integrated and functional person. Bereft of the will to live, unable to write, dependent upon a wife he despised,

Tarnopol had given up all hope. "On the June afternoon that I first stepped into Dr. Spielvogel's office, I don't think a minute elapsed before I had given up all pretense of being an 'integrated' personality and begun to weep into my hands, grieving for the loss of my strength, my confidence, and my future" (p. 101). The Fitzgerald mood suggests Roth's preoccupation with *The Crack-Up,* the hope of discovering a pattern to the broken pieces of his life. Roth's psychoanalysts are more toughminded than Fitzgerald's Dr. Dick Diver, however, and more effective.

Curiously, the therapeutic relief Roth's male characters receive from treatment does not extend to the females, although they are also in extensive analysis. Lydia Ketterer, Zuckerman's wife, commits suicide; Susan McCall, Tarnopol's girlfriend, attempts suicide; and Maureen Tarnopol dies violently in a suspicious automobile accident. All three women have been in analysis or group therapy. Perhaps Roth's male analysts cannot figure out, like Freud, what women really want; or perhaps the fatal or near-fatal endings of these women betray the novelist's wishful thinking. Whatever, psychoanalysis seems to be a male therapy in Roth's world.

As *My Life as a Man* progresses, though, Roth takes an increasingly skeptical view of psychoanalytic theory. Zuckerman is frustrated in his efforts to discover the significance of his crippling migraines and, despite his literary^ training, which predisposes him to see the migraines as *"standing*

*for something,* as a disclosure or 'epiphany,' " he rules out therapy. The headaches inexplicably disappear. Reality proves impenetrable both to Zuckerman and to David Kepesh in *The Breast.* The two men, in fact, are in a similar situation: Kepesh turns into a breast, Zuckerman succumbs to headaches. Both professors of literature search futilely for a meaning to their disastrous lives, finally acknowledging defeat. Ruling out psychoanalysis, literary' interpretation, or other treatments of choice, they fall back upon obscure physiological explanations. Both men spend a good deal of the time flat on their backs, infantilized. It is as if they are punished for the desire to understand or control their lives, to achieve meaning in an absurd society. Both men deny, perhaps too strenuously, the link between their incapacitating illnesses and the wish to escape responsibility for their actions. Zuckerman concludes despairingly that literature, with its assumptions of unity, coherency, and design, has influenced too strongly his attitudes toward life. Unable to make a clear connection between the order of art and the disorder of life, he mindlessly accepts and/or rejects all explanations of his self-imprisonment. He is certain about only one fact, that instead of fulfilling his high ambitions, he has irrevocably squandered his manhood.

What does Zuckerman's story reveal about Tarnopol? About Roth? Do "Salad Days" and "Courting Disaster" prophesy the direction of Tarnopol's life or his fate had he not entered psychoanalysis? It is ironic that Zuckerman and Tarnopol, both sympathetic toward Freudian orientations, should finally

repudiate the psychoanalytic model of reality. Or perhaps it is not ironic at all. A psychiatrist diagnoses Zuckerman's migraines as signifying "pent-up rage," raising the obvious question whether his escape into philosophical theorizing is a subtle rationalization. But to interpret Tarnopol's two stories from a psychoanalytic viewpoint is to risk the dangers one encounters in reading Nabokov's fiction. The novel deviously lures in the Freudian critic, baits him with Oedipal morsels, and then springs the trap. Tarnopol is admittedly aware of the Oedipal implications of Zuckerman's dependency on Lydia Ketterer and her daughter Moonie. Part of Zuckerman's attraction to Lydia derives from the fact that she has been raped by her father and apparently ennobled through suffering. Zuckerman's marriage only deepens her anguish. His dependency upon women parallels the incestuous regression implicit in Dick Diver's attraction to Nicole Warren. Tarnopol is very self-conscious in his use of the Daddy's Girl theme for his own fiction. After Lydia's suicide, Zuckerman engages in another loveless relationship with her daughter. Tarnopol's literature contains a rescue theme in which he attempts to save both Lydia, raped by her father and brutalized by her former husband, and Moonie, abandoned by her father. But instead of liberating mother and daughter, Zuckerman adds to their misery and his own.

From the psychoanalytic perspective which Tarnopol steadfastly rejects, Zuckerman's masochistic attachment to Lydia and Moonie represents an acting out of his own loveless childhood, an unsuccessful attempt to

compensate for his under-protectiveness as a child. The problem with this interpretation is that Zuckerman's parents (and Tarnopol's) seem loving and supportive, his childhood happy and halcyon—in short, the "Salad Days" the novelist has described. The counterargument is that Zuckerman and Tarnopol both idealize their childhood, with Roth's concurrence, to conceal the narcissistic injuries of all three figures. The argument cannot be resolved, at least not on the basis of the evidence offered in *My Life as a Man.*

This brings us to the clash between Tarnopol and Spielvogel over their conflicting interpretations of the novelist's dependency on his hateful wife Maureen. This section of *My Life as a Man* reads like a psychiatric case study, and indeed it is. In explaining how Tarnopol has been reduced by his wife to a bewildered, defenseless little boy, Dr. Spielvogel argues that his patient's vulnerability derives from a lack of love as a child. The analyst sees Tarnopol's mother as "phallic castrating" in her emotional coldness toward him. To protect himself from the profound anxiety engendered by the rejection, separation, and helplessness he experienced in his mother's presence, Tarnopol adopts narcissistic defenses. He continues to idealize his mother and childhood, denying his disappointment toward an effectual father.[13] The need to reduce women to "masturbatory sexual objects," as Spielvogel puts it, is both a derivative of the narcissism and a symptom of repressed rage toward the mother. The analyst devises a therapeutic strategy to deplete the fund of Tarnopol's maternal veneration on which Maureen has

drawn.

Tarnopol's version of his analysis differs from that of Spielvogel. He sharply disagrees with Spielvogel's characterization of the phallic castrating mother and ineffectual father. If his mother is responsible for her son's slavish dependency, he says, it is because of her adoration of him. Tarnopol concedes that his father may have been supernumerary but only because he was struggling successfully to make a living for his family. Tarnopol rejects Spielvogel's theory that the novelist's relationship to Maureen is a repetition of an ancient trauma. Tarnopol maintains, by contrast, that the uniqueness of the horror has rendered him powerless to deal with it because his childhood consisted only of parental love. "Wasn't it possible that in my 'case,' as I willingly called it, triumph *and* failure, conquest *and* defeat derives from an indestructible boyish devotion to a woman as benefactress and celebrant, protectress and guide? Could we not conjecture that what had made me so available to the Bad Older Woman was the reawakening in me of that habit of obedience that had stood me in such good stead with the Good Older Woman of my childhood" (p. 216).

Which of these two interpretations, the psychoanalyst's or novelist's, is more plausible? Roth's sympathy is clearly for Tarnopol, who consistently out-argues Spielvogel. Never has a fictional patient seemed as articulate and psychoanalytically informed. He invokes not only psychoanalysis but other

systems of reality, including literature and mythology, to argue his case. Simply on the basis of language, he wins the argument. Unlike Spielvogel's reductive prose style, which flattens out ambiguity and nuance, Tarnopol's language is precise, eloquent, and richly suggestive. Spielvogel has an annoying tendency to label all of Tarnopol's actions "narcissistic," and gradually the word loses precise meaning. Moreover, despite the analyst's claim that he uses the word nonjudgmentally, the label justifiably provokes Tarnopol's anger. (Spielvogel is apparently closer to Otto Kernberg's theoretical position regarding narcissism than Heinz Kohut's.) Tarnopol is also able to anticipate and summarize Spielvogel's argument, which gives him an advantage, as does his first-person narration. And Tarnopol's awareness of transference strengthens his point of view. Indeed, there is little, if anything, about psychoanalysis that escapes Tarnopol's attention. He is the better writer of the two and, it almost seems, the better analyst. In addition, Spielvogel errs on a couple of related issues. He interprets Tarnopol's fear that Susan McCall might commit suicide as "narcissistic self-dramatization," but after she does attempt to kill herself, the analyst acknowledges he is not a fortuneteller. He also dismisses the gesture as only an "attempted" suicide, a statement that provokes Tarnopol's disbelief.

However, Tarnopol may be winning the battle but losing the war. Despite the fact that he is a better debater, he still cannot figure out his humiliating relationship to his wife. At times, he uses the analytic setting

more as an intellectual or philosophical forum than as a testing ground for emotional truth. And it is difficult to know when Tarnopol's objectivity ends and his special pleading begins: He is a man of many obsessions and few certainties.

Before the combatants are able to resolve their conflicting interpretations of reality, a serious dispute arises over Spielvogel's publication of an article in a special issue of *the American Forum for Psychoanalytic Studies* focusing on "The Riddle of Creativity." At the time of the article's publication, Tarnopol has been in analysis for three years. He sees the journal lying on Spielvogel's desk, receives permission to read it, and grows incensed with the analyst's biographically transparent discussion of his own case study. Spielvogel's article is called "Creativity: The Narcissism of the Artist." Although only two pages of the essay pertain to Tarnopol, he is horrified by the rhetorical and substantive crudities. In his attempt to disguise his patient's identity, Spielvogel writes about a "successful Italian-American poet in his late forties" instead of a troubled Jewish-American novelist in his late twenties. After reading the article, Tarnopol bitterly accuses Spielvogel of creating narrow fictions to pursue a simplistic psychoanalytic thesis. He also condemns the analyst for blurring important genetic differences between the poet's sensibility and the novelist's. Tarnopol angrily dismisses the entire thesis of the article. Whereas Spielvogel maintains, along with Freud, that the artist is narcissistic, Tarnopol insists

that the artist's success depends on his powers of detachment, on *de*narcissizing himself. Reading Spielvogel's case study, Tarnopol can hardly believe the analyst's caricature of his life. Spielvogel has distorted his age, accomplishment, background, and vocation. Tarnopol cannot read a sentence without discovering significant factual errors, incorrect inferences, or distorted characterizations. He accuses Spielvogel, in short, of being a poor psychoanalyst and a poorer fiction writer, and of embracing a narrow thesis at the expense of an ambiguous and perplexing actuality.

What most infuriates Tarnopol, however, is that Spielvogel's essay has seriously compromised his identity. Anyone who reads Spielvogel's publication, Tarnopol charges, will realize that he is the analyst's patient. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Spielvogel has related a highly personal incident about his patient's life, which Tarnopol has also written about in an autobiographical story published in the *New Yorker.* The incident involves a traumatic childhood incident during World War II when Tarnopol's family is forced to move from one apartment to another. The day after the move, the nine-year-old boy returns to his old apartment after school, only to find several men standing inside. Instead of realizing they are housepainters, Tarnopol imagines them as Nazis who have taken away his mother. The hysterical child instinctively runs to the new apartment, whereupon he sees his mother and in tears collapses into her arms. Spielvogel's interpretation emphasizes the patient's guilt over the aggressive fantasies directed toward

the mother. Tarnopol's interpretation of the incident, which appears in a short story in journal form called "The Diary of Anne Frank," emphasizes the relief at finding the new apartment transformed into a perfect replica of the old one, thus reassuring the boy that he is living in safe America rather than war-ravaged, Jew-hating Europe. By the time Spielvogel learns about Tarnopol's story in the *New Yorker,* his own essay containing the identical incident is already at the printer.

Spielvogel's defense—though he does not use the word—is that he did nothing wrong in publishing the article. Since both men were writing simultaneously, he had no way of knowing about the unfortunate coincidence. The analyst insists that Tarnopol's rage is both unjustified and illogical in that the patient accuses him of excessive yet finally insufficient distortions. Spielvogel also denies that he was ethically required to secure Tarnopol's permission to publish the essay. "None of us could write such papers, none of us could share our findings with one another, if we had to rely upon the permission or the approval of our patients in order to publish." In Spielvogel's judgment, Tarnopol is disturbed not by the disclosure of his identity but by the fact that the analyst has "plagiarized and abused" the writer's material. The argument rages back and forth with neither man altering his position. Spielvogel finally gives Tarnopol an ultimatum—either to forget about his anger or break off therapy. Despite the analyst's inflexible position, Tarnopol decides reluctantly to continue treatment. He remains convinced that he has

been helped by analysis and that without Spielvogel's therapy, he would not have survived the marital crisis. Nevertheless, his faith in Spielvogel's art is permanently shaken.

The controversy between Tarnopol and Spielvogel raises intriguing questions about the link between Portnoy's Complaint and My Life as a Man. However questionable Spielvogel's diagnosis is of Tarnopol, it does seem to illuminate Alex Portnoy's dilemma: the use of narcissistic defenses against the anxiety engendered by separation from the mother, the reduction of women to masturbatory sexual objects, the acting out or libidinizing of aggression, the phallic castrating mother and ineffectual father, and so on. Has the Spielvogel of My Life as a Man been using Portnoy's Complaint as a psychiatric case study from which to base his judgment of Tarnopol? Or has Roth created My Life as a Man to refute Spielvogel's silent condemnation of the narcissistic hero of the earlier novel? Do we approach these two novels as separate, autonomous literary creations having little thematic relationship to each other apart from the dramatization of a hero's misadventures in manhood. Or do we read My Life as a Man as Roth's revisionist interpretation of Portnoy's Complaint, narrated by a disillusioned patient who is now ready to repudiate the virtuoso Freudian-ism of the earlier story? Where is Roth in relation to Tarnopol? Does the lack of narrative distance in My Life as a Man reinforce Spielvogel's thesis of the self-preoccupied artist who is unable to prevent himself from narrating narcissistic melodramas?

Tarnopol's psychoanalysis leads us inevitably to the biographical elements of *My Life as a Man.* "Roth's own driving compulsions are, at best, only thinly disguised in the robes of Tarnopol," Sanford Pinsker observes.[14] To that Tarnopol might reply, as he does to Spielvogel: "I do not write 'about' people in a strict factual or historical sense." But Roth's dismissal of the autobiographical nature of his fiction is too easy, and he goes out of his way to invite public scrutiny of his private life. Even a cursory glance at Tarnopol's biography reveals twinship with his maker.[15] Both the real and fictional novelists were born near New York City in 1933; graduated *magna cum laude* or *summa cum laude* in 1954; served briefly in the U.S. Army and were discharged because of injuries; enrolled for a year and a half in the Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago "before falling by the wayside, a casualty of 'Bibliography' and 'Anglo-Saxon' published first novels in 1959 for which they received major literary awards in 1960; resided at a writer's colony (Tarnopol's "Quahsay" is based on Roth's Yaddo); and entered into a catastrophic marriage to a woman later killed in an automobile accident (Tarnopol's marriage to Maureen Johnson in 1959 ended in her violent death in 1966; Roth's marriage to Margaret Martinson Williams in 1959 ended in her violent death in 1968). Both novelists write parallel autobiographical narratives about characters who cannot give up their self-destructive obsessions.

Roth's critics have also noticed the lack of authorial distance in his

fiction, and several have complained about the resulting solipsism. Remarking on the similarities between Tarnopol and Roth, John McDaniel tentatively concluded in a 1974 book length study that 'These parallels merely invite us to consider certain *proximities,* however, and I am not suggesting that Roth's fiction is to be read as thinly-disguised autobiography."[16] But other critics have gone further in their attack on the autobiographical element of Roth's fiction. Pierre Michel complains that "Roth betrays a turn of mind that exhibits a capacity for endless variations on similar themes that are limited to near-pathological behavior. We may wonder indeed if all those obsessions are not simply Philip Roth's. . . ."[17] A more severe indictment appears in a *Newsweek* review of *The Professor of Desire.* With the "cumulative failure" of Roth's inability to create objective characters, "it becomes increasingly difficult to credit the traditional distinction between narrator and author—the convention that asks us to believe that no matter what self-serving foolishness the narrator serves up, the author sees him clearly and has presented him that way for specific strategic (or artistic, if you like) reasons."[18] Without endorsing this harsh judgment, which neglects the strategic mirroring techniques of a novel like *My Life as a Man* and the deliberate juxtaposition of illusion and reality, we may still ask to what extent Roth's novel reads like thinly disguised autobiography, especially the long account of Tarnopol's psychoanalysis.

There can be no doubt anymore. This is confirmed by the discovery of

the actual 30-page essay published in a psychoanalytic journal which serves as the major source of the controversy between Tarnopol and Spielvogel. And in light of Roth's retaliatory response, nothing could be more ironic than the title of Dr. Hans J. Kleinschmidt's essay appearing in the 1967 spring-summer issue of *American Imago:* "The Angry Act: The Role of Aggression in Creativity."[19]

Along with six other essays devoted to the theme of creativity and psychopathology, "The Angry Act" seeks to establish a wider framework for the understanding of the creative process than traditional psychoanalytic theory has allowed. The author argues in the beginning of the essay that concepts such as sublimation of libido, neutralization of energy, and regression in the service of the ego are reductive because they do not affirm the adaptive, integrative aspects of the creative process. In rejecting these classical formulations, however, he proposes a theory of the artistic temperament that is based on several questionable assertions: The childhood of the artist is burdened by his awareness of being special or different; the artist is forced to rely on narcissism as a primary defense against over-dependency on his mother, whom he idealizes; and, as a consequence of his narcissism, the artist is filled with anger and remains indifferent to the needs of others. Based on the evidence offered in "The Angry Act," one cannot generalize, as the analyst does, that all artists are narcissistic or that they all perceive their mothers as unobtainable and their fathers as inadequate. Nor

does he distinguish healthy narcissism from pathological narcissism, as Otto Kernberg and other theoreticians have insisted upon. (Why is the artist necessarily more narcissistic than other people, including psychoanalysts?) Nevertheless, there is truth in the thesis that for some writers, art may reflect sublimated aggression. Arguing that the "artist is the uncommitted criminal who remains passive and is ambivalent about his passivity," Dr. Kleinschmidt maintains that, in contrast to the criminal, the artist does not act on his destructive fantasies. Instead, his artistic achievement allows him to confront reality without involving himself in it. "To have established the unique identity and accomplished the near-perfect artistic object means to have committed the crime, the angry act . . ." (p. 116).

Most of "The Angry Act" is devoted to a discussion of Kandinsky and Thomas Mann, but, toward the end of the article, the analyst introduces case-study material based upon two of his own patients, a painter and a Southern playwright. The analyst disguises (or "fictionalizes") their identity to preserve medical confidentiality, but Roth unmasks the identity of the writer by basing the fictional Spielvogel's essay, "Creativity: The Narcissism of the Artist," closely upon "The Angry Act." A comparison of the medical case study and *My Life as a Man* clearly demonstrates that Roth based the clinical interpretations of Tarnopol's illness on the material Dr. Kleinschmidt discusses in the 1967 article. First comes the real analyst's discussion in "The Angry Act." "A successful Southern playwright in his early forties illustrates the interplay of

narcissism and aggression while his points of fixation are later [than those of the painter] and his conflicts oedipal rather than pre-oedipal. He came into therapy because of anxiety states experienced as a result of his tremendous ambivalence about leaving his wife, three years his senior" (p. 123). Roth's fictional analyst, Dr. Spielvogel, puts it this way in *My Life as a Man.* "A successful Italian-American poet in his forties entered into therapy because of anxiety states experienced as a result of his enormous ambivalence about leaving his wife" (p. 239). Castration anxiety is important in the interpretations of both the real and fictional analyst. "It soon became apparent that his main problem was his castration anxiety vis-a-vis a phallic mother figure," writes the analyst in "The Angry Act" (p. 124). "It soon became clear that the poet's central problem here as elsewhere was his castration anxiety vis-a-vis a phallic mother figure," writes the analyst in *My Life as a Man* (pp. 240-241). The characterization of the father is identical. "His father was ineffectual and submissive to the mother" ('The Angry Act," p. 124); "His father was a harassed man, ineffectual and submissive to his mother" *(My Life as a Man,* p. 241). Both analysts view their patients as acting out repressed sexual anger. "His way of avoiding a confrontation with his feelings of anger and his dependency needs toward his wife was to act out sexually with other women. He had been doing this almost from the beginning of his marriage" ("The Angry Act," p. 125). Dr. Spielvogel echoes this interpretation. "In order to avoid a confrontation with his dependency

needs toward his wife the poet acted out sexually with other women almost from the beginning of his marriage" *(My Life as a Man,* p. 242). Finally, the psychoanalysts offer the identical interpretation of their patients' hostility toward women. "The playwright acted out his anger in his relationships with women, reducing all of them to masturbatory sexual objects and by using his hostile masturbatory fantasies in his literary output" ("The Angry Act," p. 125). "The poet acted out his anger in his relationships with women, reducing all women to masturbator)' sexual objects" *(My Life as a Man,* p. 242).

The ironies are astonishing and extend everywhere. Roth never expected anyone to make the connection between "The Angry Act" and My Life as a Man. Or did he? It is now clear that Roth's fiction is more autobiographical than anyone has suggested and that Dr. Spielvogel owes his existence to a real psychoanalyst. In My Life as a Man Spielvogel argues that, in Tarnopol's opinion, the analyst "plagiarized and abused" his words. If so, Roth has stolen back the analyst's words, as if to authenticate, however unbeknown to the reader, Spielvogel's character.

More importantly, "The Angry Act" serves as an invaluable bridge between Portnoy's Complaint and My Life as a Man. We can now appreciate for the first time the continuity between both novels. It is clear, for example, that Tarnopol's psychoanalysis recapitulates Portnoy's adventures and misadventures in therapy. Indeed, Portnoy's Complaint unexpectedly owes a

great deal to "The Angry Act." Roth playfully attributes "Portnoy's Complaint" syndrome to Spielvogel's learned essay, "The Puzzled Penis," published in an authentic-sounding and properly Germanic journal, Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse. 'The Puzzled Penis" is none other than The Angry Act" in disguise. Spielvogel's sentence (which Roth uses as the frontispiece of Portnoy's Complaint)—"Acts of exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism, auto-eroticism, and oral coitus are plentiful"—parodies the real psychoanalyst's language: "Practices of voyeurism, exhibitionism and fetishism abound" ("The Angry Act," p. 125). Every incident described by Spielvogel in My Life as a Man corresponds to a similar incident in the analyst's discussion of the Southern playwright in "The Angry Act." And "The Angry Act" remains an indispensable commentary upon Portnoy's Complaint. In fact, the two novels and the psychoanalytic essay represent an unparalleled example of the symbiotic relationship between literature and therapy. The major difference between Portnoy's Complaint and My Life as a Man is that, whereas the earlier novel apparently confirms the analyst's clinical interpretation in The Angry Act," the later novel ingeniously attempts to refute the charge of the artist's narcissistic personality. It is as if Portnoy's Complaint and My Life as a Man represent, transferentially, the loving idealization and harsh devaluation of the analyst, respectively. This does not imply that Tarnopol's dispute with Spielvogel over the publication of the analyst's essay can be dismissed simply as negative transference. Nothing is simple about Roth's extraordinarily

complex relationship to psychoanalysis.

Interestingly, the proliferation of psychiatric case studies arising from Roth's life and art has led to a lively public forum in which several analysts, real and fictional, have reached remarkably similar conclusions about the Roth hero. There is no evidence to indicate that Bruno Bettelheim was aware of "The Angry Act" when he published his satirical essay, but his own Spielvogel confirms many of Dr. Kleinschmidt's observations, namely, that the patient's complaint of an overprotective mother disguises the deep disappointment that she was not more exclusively devoted to her son, that the complaint of an ineffectual father disguises the wish for a castrating father to restore the son's faith in male power, and that the writer's incessant barrage of words is a reaction against the withholding father. The belief that the Roth hero reduces women into masturbatory sexual objects—a charge Tarnopol emphatically denies—has been echoed by many other critics. In a thoughtful review of The Professor of Desire, Patricia Meyer Spacks complains about Roth's inability to imagine women as full-fledged human beings who are not hopelessly dependent upon men. "The women in The Professor of Desire, like those in Portnoy and My Life as a Man, objectify male fantasies, infinitely ingenious in lust or endlessly cooperative with masculine demands or totally bitchy, devoid of identity apart from their central relationships."[20]

The discovery of 'The Angry Act" allows us to see the process in which a novelist transforms a psychiatric case study into a work of fiction and how the artist's conscious intentions are often shaped by unconscious forces. It is a psychological truism that observation and interpretation inevitably change the phenomena under scrutiny; Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty applies to psychoanalysis as well as to physics. Accordingly, the analyst's observations in "The Angry Act" have coincided with conspicuous changes in Roth's subsequent fiction. The castrating Jewish mother and ineffectual father no longer appear in Roth's novels, and the parents cease to be objects of the son's attack. Whether this is due to the novelist's conscious repudiation of the psychoanalyst's interpretation or the writer's interest in imagining other relationships is impossible to say. Significantly, the one major change Roth makes in incorporating "The Angry Act" into My Life as a Man lacks aesthetic conviction. In the psychiatric case study, the analyst discloses the patient's over-involvement with his wife's 14-year-old son from another marriage. "He was emotionally quite involved with the stepson and used the boy's dependency on him and his feelings of guilt if he abandoned him, as an excuse for his inability to make a decision concerning the divorce" ("The Angry Act," p. 123). Roth transforms this into Zuckerman's Humbert like dependency upon Lydia Ketterer's crass teenage daughter Moonie in "Courting Disaster." The incestuous relationship reinforces the Daddy's Girl theme and thus suggests an Oedipal component in Tarnopol's need to rescue Maureen from

her brutal past. Nevertheless, the Zuckerman-Moonic relationship remains improbable, and one can only imagine how Tarnopol—and Roth—would have handled the writer's devotion to a teenage stepson. Elsewhere, Roth has convincingly described the hero's quest for an idealized father figure. In The Ghost Writer, Zuckerman warmly admires the distinguished Jewish-American writer E. I. Lonoff. Zuckerman's unexpected affirmation of the patriarchal father represents one of the major postanalytic developments in Roth's fiction.

How do we finally evaluate Roth's relationship to "The Angry Act"? To say the least, the novelist shrewdly exploited the self-fulfilling ironies of the title. Psychoanalysis liberated the artist's imagination in Portnoy's Complaint and then provoked his sharp counterattack in My Life as a Man. Although "The Angry Act" does not persuasively demonstrate the relationship between narcissism and art in the works of Kandinsky and Mann, it does accurately describe the centrality of narcissism and aggression in Roth's fictional world. Appropriately, in Reading Myself and Others, Roth confirms the thesis of art or satire as aggression. "What begins as the desire to murder your enemy with blows, and is converted (largely out of fear of the consequences) into the attempt to murder him with invective and insult, is most thoroughly sublimated, or socialized, in the art of satire. It's the imaginative flowering of the primitive urge to knock somebody's block off" (p. 53). Roth's colorful language and imagery, which are far closer to Spielvogel's paradigm of reality

in My Life as a Man than to Tarnopol's insistence upon the inscrutability of reality, may be interpreted both as a tribute to his analyst's insight and as a wry acknowledgment of the novelist's urge to "murder" him in his art. However, there is also a more positive interpretation of the creative process, in which the artist seeks reparation from an earlier psychic injury. Behind Tarnopol's fiction lies a strong counterphobic motive suggestive of the mysterious relationship between neurotic suffering and artistic creativity. There can be little doubt about the adaptive and integrative implications of the artist's decision to write about his own illness in the attempt to gain mastery over it. This does not imply, of course, that every work of art is successful therapeutically, or that it is always possible to distinguish between the neurotic repetition of an illness (acting out) or the successful resolution of conflict (working through).

From one point of view, the nearly simultaneous publication of Portnoy's Complaint and "The Angry Act" was an unfortunate accident. One can appreciate Roth's anger when he discovered that an embarrassing incident appearing in an early chapter of Portnoy's Complaint—"The Jewish Blues," published in the first issue of New American Renew in September 1967—contained material that his analyst used in "The Angry Act" published at about the same time.[21] Roth rightly feared that anyone reading "The Jewish Blues" and "The Angry Act" would be able to identify him as the source of the analyst's "Southern playwright." From another point of view, however, the

accident gave birth to one of Roth's most impressive literary creations, My Life as a Man, in which the novelist painstakingly explores the relationship between the creative and therapeutic process. Although Tarnopol bitterly accuses Spielvogel of opening up his life to biographical scrutiny through the untimely and insufficiently disguised psychiatric case study, it is on the basis of My Life as a Man, not Portnoy's Complaint, that a reader is more likely to connect Roth to "The Angry Act." This observation, admittedly, does not free the critic from the dilemma of pursuing literary scholarship without calling attention to the accidental exposure of the patient-analyst relationship.[22] Nevertheless, by using the analyst's own language and by supplying the necessary biographical and bibliographical clues in My Life as a Man to locate the existence of the analyst's medical case study, Roth ambivalently invites the reading public to participate vicariously in his own psychoanalysis. To write about one's life in this way by using a published psychiatric case study as a major text of a purportedly fictional work seems both brave and risky, enlightening and self-justifying. Readers will doubtlessly come to different conclusions about whose version of reality is closer to the truth, the novelist's or psychoanalyst's.

Tarnopol's amiable departure from Spielvogel in My Life as a Man signals Roth's movement away from psychoanalysis. Maureen Tarnopol's violent death "releases" but does not "free" her husband at the end of the novel, a distinction upon which Spielvogel insists. The last sentence of the

story—"This me who is me being me and none other!"—evokes the protagonist's thwarted movement, the maddening circularity of a broken record. "If there is an ironic acceptance of anything at the conclusion of *My Life as a Man "* Roth remarks in *Reading Myself and Others,* "it is of the *determined* self. And angry frustration, a deeply vexing sense of characterological enslavement, is strongly infused in that ironic acceptance. Thus the exclamation mark" (p. 108). Despite all the problems of Tarnopol's psychoanalysis and the unprecedented controversy over the issue of patient-analyst confidentiality, the talking cure has helped to untangle or at least clarify the writer's determined self. Nor is Dr. Spielvogel the last of Roth's fictional psychoanalysts. In *The Professor of Desire,* we read about David Kepesh's analyst, Dr. Klinger, a "solid, reasonable man" who is a generalist in common sense. A key figure in psychoanalytic circles, as modern in dress as Spielvogel is old-fashioned European, Klinger is a "snazzy energetic conquistador." Klinger demythologizes Kepesh's unstable wife, Helen, and offers him the practical advice and ironic humor that restore the young man's sanity. Although the analytic sessions in *The Professor of Desire* seem anticlimactic in comparison to Tarnopol's tempestuous relations with Spielvogel, Roth succeeds in dramatizing the affection, humor, and goodwill implicit in the Kepesh-Klinger relationship. Klinger sounds less like an analyst than a warm-hearted father—a transference Roth is content not to analyze. If we read Roth's fiction as a continuing drama of a protagonist's arduous self-

analysis, then Kepesh's warm farewell to Dr. Klinger in *The Professor of Desire* represents a moving valediction to Philip Roth's psychoanalysts. Leaving Klinger for the last time, Kepesh shakes the analyst's hand and, in response to the invitation to "Stay in touch," the patient declares: "Let's hope I don't have to." Filled with elation and gratitude, which he dares not express out of fear of an outburst of tears, Kepesh leaves Klinger's office and thinks: "I've come through!" (pp. 158-159).

### *Notes*

1 The following editions by Roth are cited in the text. All references are to these editions. *Letting Go* (New York: Random House, 1962); *Portnoy's Complaint* (New York: Random House, 1969); *The Breast* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972); *My Life as a Man* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974); *Reading Myself and Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1975); *The Professor of Desire* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1977); *The Ghost Writer* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979).

2 For an extended discussion of the differences between the artist's endeavor and the psychoanalyst's, see Phoebe C. Ellsworth, "Regarding the Author as Patient," *New Literary History,* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Autumn 1980), pp. 187-197. The entire issue of *New Literary History* is devoted to contemporary trends in literature and psychology and contains several valuable essays, including Ernest S. Wolf's article, "Psychoanalytic Psychology of the Self and Literature," an examination of Kohut's contributions.

3 Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, Standard Edition* (London: The Hogarth Press,1960), Vol. VIII, p. 34-

4 Bruno Bettelheim, "Portnoy Psychoanalyzed," *Midstream,* Vol. 15, No. 6 (June/July, 1969), p. 4. All references are to this edition.

5 In *Surviving and Other Essays,* (New York: Vintage, 1980), Bettelheim prefaces the republication of "Portnoy Psychoanalyzed" with remarks intended to convey a more positive evaluation

of the literary success of Roth's novel than he initially implied. "Asked to write a review of Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint,* I attempted a satire instead. Only an interesting work of fiction permits and deserves to be made the substance of a satire—which suggests my evaluation of this book" (p. 387).

6 Sheldon Grebstein, "The Comic Anatomy of *Portnoy's Complaint,"* in Sarah Blacher Cohen, ed., *Comic Relief: Humor in Contemporary American Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 160.

7 Patricia Meyer Spacks, "About Portnoy," *The Tale Review,* Vol. 58 (Summer 1969), p. 623.

8 Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience* (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 35. All references are to this edition.

9 Irving Howe, "Philip Roth Reconsidered," *Commentary,* Vol. 54, No. 6 (December 1972), p. 72.

10 Mark Shechner, "Philip Roth," *Partisan Review,* Vol. 41, No. 3 (1974), pp. 410-427. All references are to this edition. Shechner's essay, which remains the best psychological discussion of Roth's fiction, has been reprinted in Sanford Pinsker, ed., *Critical Essays on Philip Roth* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982), pp. 117-132.

11 Spacks, "About Portnoy," op. cit., p. 630.

12 For a psychoanalytic interpretation of *The Breast,* see Daniel Dervin, "Breast Fantasy in Barthelme, Swift, and Philip Roth: Creativity and Psychoanalytic Structure," *American Imago,* Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 102-122.

13 Mark Shechner has observed that the source of terror in Roth's fictional world derives not from the castrating mother but from the ineffectual father. "Paternity is a legal fiction in Roth's books where sons and fathers turn out to be brothers under the skin, locked into generations by an unfortunate biological fate" ("Philip Roth," *Partisan Review,* op. cit., p. 413).

14 Sanford Pinsker, *The Comedy that 'Hoits'* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), p. 115.

15 For a biographical sketch of Roth see Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., *Philip Roth* (Boston: Twayne

Publishers, 1978). Rodgers has also published *Philip Roth: A Bibliography* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1974).

16 John McDaniel, *The Fiction of Philip Roth* (Haddonfield, New Jersey: Haddonfield House, 1974), p. 218. More recent critical studies of Roth include Judith Paterson Jones and Guinevera A. Nance, *Philip Roth* (New York: Frederick Un-gar, 1981) and Hermione Lee, *Philip Roth* (London: Methuen, 1982).

17 Pierre Michel, "Philip Roth's Reductive Lens: From 'On the Air' *to My Life as a Man." Revue des Langues Vivantes Tijdschrift Voor Levende Talen* (1976/5), p. 518.

18 R. Boeth, "The Same Old Story," *Newsweek,* 26 (September 1977), p. 83. Review of *The Professor of Desire.*

19 Hans J. Kleinschmidt, "The Angry Act: The Role of Aggression in Creativity," *American Imago,* Vol. 24, Nos. 1, 2 (Spring-Summer, 1967), pp. 98-128. All references are to this edition.

20 Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Male Miseries," *Nation* 15 (October 1977), p. 375. Review of *The Professor of Desire.* See also Sarah Blacher Cohen's criticism of Roth's female characters in "Philip Roth's Would-Be Patriarchs and Their *Shikses* and Shrews," in Pinsker, ed., op. cit., pp. 209-216.

21 In *Portnoy's Complaint* (pp. 50-51), Alex describes a painful incident during his adolescence in which his mother makes a typically castrating remark to him, filling him with humiliation and anger. The incident appears in the chapter of the novel called "The Jewish Blues," first published in *New American Review,* No. 1 (September 1967), p. 145. Dr. Kleinschmidt discusses the identical incident in "The Angry Act" (p. 124).

22 I must mention here that after I wrote this chapter, containing the discovery of Roth's relationship to "The Angry Act," I sent a copy of the manuscript to Professor Shechner. In a letter he told me that he, too, had made the discovery while engaged in the research for his essay on Roth. Shechner chose not to mention "The Angry Act," although he did inject some of the analyst's language, in disguised form, into his own essay.

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