

ART AND LIMINALITY IN  
PHILIP ROTH'S *THE GHOST WRITER*

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*The Ghost Writer* is a *Bildungsroman* of the young Nathan Zuckerman, a budding writer at the age of twenty-three. The young Zuckerman is initiated into writerhood to confront his problems as a writer and a Jew in America. The young Zuckerman's overnight visit with his literary mentor, E. I. Lonoff, is narrated by the later Zuckerman some twenty years after the event. The first-person narrative is a mixture of the younger Zuckerman's point of view at the time of the event and the later Zuckerman's retrospective one. The former's limited point of view shows the turbulence of his mind; and the latter's comparatively level eye comments on and controls the narrative's overall tone. While the young hero of the *Bildungsroman* at the end of the accounted incident remains uncertain of Lonoff's lesson, the narrator evaluates the former's experience as "rites of confirmation" with the understanding of the literary mentor's message.

The novel holds its axis in Zuckerman's "betwixt and between" existence, or "liminality," as defined by Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, and others. Liminality is the condition of being on a *limen*, or threshold, designated by van Gennep as a central phase of *rites de passages* (transitional rites), which consist of three phases: "preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)."<sup>1</sup> According to Turner, liminality signifies interstructural situation, or a gap between ordered worlds, where "the state of the ritual subject (the 'passenger,' or 'liminar,') becomes ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification."<sup>2</sup> The young Zuckerman is a ritual liminar,

as he goes through the rites of passage as a novice writer: a nice Jewish boy in Newark separates himself from his family, hides away in the writers' colony, and on his visit to the literary maestro, is given sanction to be an artist on his own.

On the other hand, Zuckerman is a static liminar, or a "marginal," as a writer and a Jew, since he is caught in a chasm between life and art, as well as one between his ethnic origin and America. While ritual liminars are expected to be reincorporated to the original structure, possibly with a higher status than their previous one, marginals remain in the phase of "betwixt and between" without any "cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity."<sup>3</sup> The ambiguity enables liminal personae to stand aside from their original structure without completely losing touch with it. Turner argues that their condition of being highly conscious and self-conscious provides a fecund space for prophets and artists, who "strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the clichés associated with status incumbency and role-playing and to enter into vital relations with other men in fact or imagination."<sup>4</sup> The contour of the liminality enables artistic creativity to assert itself; then, the discourse of its product lies beyond the realm of ordered structures.

*The Ghost Writer* is a novel of and about liminality. Lonoff suggests to the young Zuckerman that the space for an artist exists in the liminality between life and art, where imagination may draw its essence from the reality of life to create art. What is at stake is not the choice between life and art, but one's vital commitment to both. Zuckerman can be a true artist, only when he fixates his liminal existence as a Jew and confronts his unmitigable sexuality in his life. The manifold texts within the text—"Higher Education" written by the young Zuckerman, "Femme Fatale" mentally produced by the young Zuckerman during his visit at the Lonoff's, and *Het Achterhuis* or *Diary* by the Jewish child martyr Anne Frank—are all aligned to illustrate the relevance

of liminality to artistic creation. At the same time, an artist's imagination, rising from the interim of liminality and thus evading structural classification, may present ambiguity, paradox, and confusion to the reader.<sup>5</sup> Zuckerman's initiation consists of Lonoff's sanction to let his imagination go free, however disturbing or outrageous it may be. It is the mysterious power of imagination, not the author, that manipulates the creation. What Henry James calls "the madness of art" is the "ghost writer" behind an author's back.

The young Zuckerman is a volunteer neophyte in the rites of passage to become a true artist. Turner writes that "[t]he neophyte in liminality must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status."<sup>6</sup> Having just launched his writing career with four short stories published in magazines, Zuckerman says that his relationship, or literary kinship to any established writers, is yet "nonexistent," and that even his "relationship to [his] *own* work is practically nonexistent."<sup>7</sup> He is a novice, awaiting to be a member of literary clan and to secure his creative ground.

The young Zuckerman aspires to devote himself to the religion of art, the only thing he believes to be "sane." He wants to serve "the high altar of art," the noble, superior sphere of great genius. Zuckerman's determination, however, is entangled in his personal life. The young writer feels that he is held back by his unruly sexual urge and his "unliterary origins." Zuckerman relates his sexual misdemeanor in the language of penitence; "the sin of lust and the crime of betrayal" are sacrilege against the sanctity of art. The young Zuckerman regards the sexual desire unworthy of or in opposition to his ideal of art. In his flight from the erotic entanglement in the writers' colony in Quahsay and the rural recluse's sanctuary of art, the young Zuckerman falsely congratulates himself for the purgation and renewal. He does not realize how irrepressible sexuality is in his own mind. Art and eroticism are

inseparable in Zuckerman. On the appearance of his interview in the *Saturday Review* as a promising young writer, he contemplates over some possibly interested women readers rather than his future career. His ambivalence is articulated by his girlfriend in the epithet, "an unchaste monk."

Zuckerman's Jewish immigrant family in the middle-class Newark affects him as another setback against his literary ambition. His troubled relationship to the father Zuckerman exemplifies his conflict with the foster culture. The young Zuckerman feels a certain grudge against his father's being a foot doctor, instead of being a real physician, or an artist. Away from home in the University of Chicago, he becomes "an orthodox college atheist and highbrow-in-training" (11), and pursues his writing career in New York.<sup>8</sup> Despite his struggle to set himself apart from the Jewish background, however, his bondage to his family remains undiminished. Expecting a great amount of love, praise, and admiration from them, he is emotionally dependent on his parents.

What brings about the decisive chasm between the young Zuckerman and his family is his latest fiction, "Higher Education." The story infuriates his father, as it deals with the old family feud among the Zuckermans. The grandsons of a seamstress in Newark were brought up by their hard-working mother to be dentists in suburban North Jersey. The subject is precisely about the liminality of Jewish immigrants, namely, their upward mobility in the social ladder in America.

The story also reflects the young Zuckerman's own higher education, which became his breaking away from the family background. His portrait of the characters and events is by no means flattering, but rather comical, indicating the apparent distance the young author sets between himself and the rest of the family. As he has become an "edgeman" to his foster immigrant culture, he cannot be understood by his own people. The bewildered mother Zuckerman asks him if he is "really anti-Semitic"; the paradox of the Jew

hating Jews reveals the out-of-structure existence of Zuckerman as a liminal persona.

Zuckerman resents his father's failure to give him "patriarchal validation." The father Zuckerman does not recognize any literary merit in the story; instead, he can only read it as malignant divulgement of the family scandal. There is a further irony in that the father Zuckerman has to run to *his* own protector, a certain Judge Wapter, who is the patriarch of the local Jewish community.

The apprentice writer and prodigal son, Zuckerman, turns to the elderly artist, E. I. Lonoff, as his surrogate father: "I had come, you see, to submit myself for candidacy as nothing less than E. I. Lonoff's spiritual son, to petition for his moral sponsorship and to win, if I could, the magical protection of his advocacy and his love" (9). In Lonoff, Zuckerman sees everything that his foot doctor father is not—devotion to the "high altar of art," forbearance, patriarchal authority and understanding.

Lonoff is an established Russian-born Jewish author, who writes about the Old World ghetto. His heroes are all in isolation, anonymous and away from home, reflecting the author's profile as a Jew and marginal man. Lonoff's stories invoke the young Zuckerman's inescapable bondage to his ethnic origin:

In fact, my own first reading through Lonoff's canon . . . had done more to make me realize how much I was still my family's Jewish offspring than anything I had carried forward to the University of Chicago from childhood Hebrew lessons, or mother's kitchen, or the discussions I used to hear among my parents and our relatives about the perils of intermarriage, the problem of Santa Claus, and the injustice of medical-school quotas. . . . I discovered E. I. Lonoff, whose fiction seemed to me a response to the same burden of exclusion and confinement that still weighed upon the lives of those who had raised me, and that had informed our relentless household obsession with the

status of the Jews. . . . [I] came upon Lonoff's thwarted, secretive, imprisoned souls, and realized that out of everything humbling from which my own striving, troubled father had labored to elevate us all, a literature of such dour wit and poignancy could be shamelessly conceived. (11-12)

While the young Zuckerman was trying to liberate himself from his "unliterary origins," Lonoff's writing, imbued with Jewish ardor and struggle, provoked a strong sense of Jewishness in the youth.

In contrast to his writing about Jews, Lonoff's life is deliberately set apart from Jews. His domicile is nowhere but in the Berkshires, the most *goyish* country with echoes of Hawthorne and Melville. The contrast is made more curious by his marriage to the daughter of an old New England family, Hope. The young Zuckerman sees Lonoff as "the Jew who got away"—not only from Russia and Palestine, but also from the bondages of life in America, the relatives in Brookline, and the clamorous literary scene in New York. Zuckerman is eager to emulate the maestro, who seems to have successfully withdrawn from a banal life in the distractive world: "Purity. Serenity. Simplicity. Seclusion. . . . I looked around and I thought, This is how I will live" (5).

Contrary to the young writer's naive idolatry, Lonoff admonishes Zuckerman that he should not imitate the elderly writer of fantasy, who has circumscribed his life to nothing but turning sentences around. Zuckerman has to learn what kind of man he is and what kind of writer, which is quite another case from Lonoff's:

"I believe I know exactly wherein my value and originality lie. I know where I can go and just how far, without making a mockery of the thing we all love. I was only suggesting—surmising is more like it—that unruly personal life will probably better serve a writer like Nathan than walking in the woods and startling the deer. His work has turbulence—

that should be nourished, and not in the woods. All I was trying to say is that he oughtn't to stifle what is clearly his gift." (32-33)

Lonoff suggests that Zuckerman's literary merit should be derived from tumult of his personal life. The space for an artist like Zuckerman is not in the quietude of sanctuary. If Zuckerman loses his ground in the reality of his life, he will have to lose the source of his creativity too.

The example of unruly personal life as inspiration to creativity may be recognized in the figure of Felix Abravanel, another famous Jewish writer, whom Zuckerman places as Isaac Babel's American cousin besides Lonoff.<sup>9</sup> Admitting his personality difference from the other, Lonoff appreciates Abravanel as a writer and penetrates that the source of his creativity lies in his bustling drive for fame, women, and adventure: "the disease of his life makes Abravanel fly" (52). Although the self-absorbed *célébrité* once failed to answer Zuckerman's plea for patronage, Abravanel, as a human type, has more in common with Zuckerman than with the self-restrained Lonoff.

The young Zuckerman's understanding also falls short in regard to Lonoff's relation to his life. While the awe-stricken young writer is unable to apprehend the man as a whole, the later Zuckerman intimates the fact that Lonoff is not a transcendent man. Distortion of character is Lonoff's reality and personal entanglements are his bondage to life, which the elderly writer of fantasy consciously hangs on to. It is through Hope, the solid, practical woman who can glue pieces together, that Lonoff is able to keep his contact with life and maintain the delicate balance between life and art.

Lonoff's domestic life is problematic. His self-possession estranges Lonoff from his wife; and the presence of Amy Bellette adds to the complication. However, when poignantly accused by Hope of creating art out of rejecting life, Lonoff does not give up the panic-stricken, aged woman, to prove the opposite point. Stumbling after his runaway spouse, Lonoff shows

in his own action that an artist must not elude the reality of life.<sup>10</sup> The later Zuckerman is aware that Lonoff's tour de force is nothing but the effort "[t]o wrestle the blessing of his fiction out of that misfortune" (74). While his writing does not directly reflect his personal life, the very touch of real life keeps Lonoff sane and creative against the solitary, pestering obsession of turning sentences around.

In order to secure his creative ground in life, Zuckerman must cope with reality by confronting his problems as a man and a Jew. As a sexually mature male, Zuckerman has to face his erotic desire, which refuses to abide by his self-imposed asceticism. As a Jew, Zuckerman vacillates between his love of family and resentment to their binding ties and lack of literary encouragement. Then, if he can successfully withstand his problems, not so much to solve the dilemmas as to discern and face them as they are, he should be able to make them the source of his creation, as Lonoff suggests.

The tentative answer in the novel is the third chapter, entitled "Femme Fatale," which stands as a story within the story, imagined by the young Zuckerman in emotional turmoil. The fiction reflects Zuckerman's concern with the question of writing, bonds to, and attempt to break away from, his father, liminality as a Jewish American, and eroticism. Unlike the young Zuckerman who is yet too engrossed in his problems at the end of the novel, the later Zuckerman seems to be aware of the relevance of the story to Lonoff's lesson. He thus presents the story as the proof of the young Zuckerman's initiation, and the entire novel as his *Bildungsroman*.

The generative milieu of the story "Femme Fatale" is the young Zuckerman's emotional ambiguity. He comes to Lonoff's place away from, but still burdened with, his troubled relationship to his father and his unruly sexuality. While his artistic ambition soars with the paternal encouragement by Lonoff, Zuckerman's eroticism remains ever active. When thinking of Isaac Babel's description of the Jewish writer "as a man with autumn in his

heart and spectacles on his nose," Zuckerman impulsively adds, "blood in his penis." As he inscribes "the words like a challenge—a flaming Dedalian formula to ignite *my*[his] soul's smithy" (49), the phrase seems to explain just what kind of man and writer Zuckerman is.

Zuckerman's creative mind is provoked by the presence of Amy Bellette, whom he instantaneously falls in love with. He learns that Amy is a refugee with a talent for prose writing, whom Lonoff had come to look after. While hesitantly suspecting the mysterious, seemingly innocent protégée of being Lonoff's concubine or seductress, Zuckerman mentally starts, probably in hope of impressing Amy as well as Lonoff, to demonstrate his command of imagination. Associating her with exotic images, however, the "pathos and originality of [his] impressions" are soon overtaken by his desire to kiss Amy. Zuckerman's creative attempt and erotic desire are inseparable and interacting.

His oscillation between impetuous eroticism and self-willed asceticism for the sake of high art is enhanced during the night he spends in Lonoff's study. The contrast is clear in the two quotations put on the wall: the one on Chopin in reference to Byron, both the great artists of Romanticism, and the other from Henry James, the solemn master of serious art. The most comic moment in the novel is rendered by the discrepancy between Zuckerman's literary aspiration and erotic impulse, as Zuckerman steps on a volume of Henry James to eavesdrop on the conversation between Amy and Lonoff.

Reckoning the clandestine conversation as Amy's wooing of Lonoff, the young writer is thrown into a fit of frustration by the preposterousness of real life to subvert his imagination: "Oh, if only I could have imagined the scene I'd overheard! If only I could invent as presumptuously as real life! If one day I could just *approach* the originality and excitement of what actually goes on!" (121). Then, the narrative moves on to the next chapter, "Femme Fatale," which is "Zuckerman's own imaginative answer to the challenge

presented by the events of the previous evening."<sup>11</sup> The story proves that by deriving his source from the problems in his personal life, Zuckerman *can* invent presumptuously and outdo the real life with his creation.

His literary subject is predictably the object of his erotic desire and the projection of himself as well. The content of "Femme Fatale" is the story, which Zuckerman's fictional Amy tells Lonoff apparently to obtain his love and sympathy. Just as Zuckerman longs for Amy, his fictional Amy is driven by her desire for Lonoff. The astonishing invention of her story (or Zuckerman's) is that she is Anne Frank who survived the concentration camp, to contradict the well-known history of the child martyr.

Through the invention of Anne/Amy, as Hermione Lee explains, Zuckerman "acts out his own anxiety about the double burden placed on the Jewish writer: disinheritance from those he must write about, responsibility to their history."<sup>12</sup> As Zuckerman's creative frenzy reflects his pendular sway between his Jewishness and its negation, his fictional heroine is caught in a chasm between her identities as Anne Frank and Amy Bellette. Her love of the father is unmistakably Zuckerman's, and her acceptance of what her book brought about at the expense of the reunion with the father is also his. Her agony embodies the conflict between personal life and the consequence of art. It is Zuckerman's own guilt of betraying his loving father and his desperate need to defend himself as an artist that motivate the creation of Anne/Amy.

The more curious point of Zuckerman's self-projection on Anne/Amy is her anguish as a writer and a student of Lonoff, for the lack of "great subject" in the life of America. Anne/Amy complains that it is the affluent, peaceful environment that has usurped what she could have written about. Zuckerman is expressing his sense of belatedness toward the Jews in Europe through the voice of Anne/Amy, as Lee argues:

[In Zuckerman,] Roth projects a complicated attitude, not simply the Jewish-American writer's guilt for the sufferings of eastern European writers and, before that, for the Jews in Europe, but, with it, a kind of wistfulness, even envy, for the writer who has had more to sink his teeth into than books and relationships.<sup>13</sup>

Anne Frank, the author of *Het Achterhuis*, is an explicit case of liminality, whose creativity again originates in her ambiguous existence at the threshold. Anne Frank's life in the *achterhuis*, or house behind, is a crossroad of death and life. Zuckerman thus says, "Kafka's garrets and closets, the hidden attics where they hand down the indictments, the camouflaged doors—everything he dreamed in Prague was, to her, real Amsterdam life. What he invented, she suffered" (170).

Her ethnic identity is very ambiguous. Her upbringing in the Netherlands does not emphasize her identity as a Jew; and the Frank family observes Judaism very little. She sometimes feels a jubilant pride in being a Jew; on the other hand, she sometimes wants to be Dutch altogether. Compared to her sister Margot who wants to be a midwife in Israel, Anne is only vaguely Jewish. Her mind would crave for a human existence beyond ethnicity: "*the time will come when we are people again, not just Jews*" (142).

Anne Frank, moreover, is an adolescent, a ritual liminar *per se* in the rites of passage. At one time she declares her independence from her parents, and experiences an infatuation with Peter, the son of the family with whom the Franks share the attic. Awakening sexuality tells her that she is not a girl any more. She is going through an exemplary phase of transition from childhood to adulthood. As a characteristic of a liminal figure who experiences detachment "from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions,"<sup>14</sup> Anne talks of the sense of estrangement from her family as well as from herself:

*I have an odd way of sometimes, as it were, being able to see myself through someone else's eyes. Then I view the affairs of a certain "Anne" at my ease, and browse through the pages of her life as if she were a stranger. . . . I used at times to have the feeling that I didn't belong to Mensa, Pim, and Margot, and that I would always be a bit of an outsider. Sometimes I used to pretend I was an orphan. . . . (135)*

The case of Anne Frank is an evidence of the liminality as a fecund ground for artistic creativity. The passages from *Het Achterhuis*, therefore, serve as the core of all the manifold texts of the entire novel, which revolves around the axis of the liminality.

Standing upon Zuckerman's self-recognition as a liminal persona, the story of "Femme Fatale" demonstrates validity of liminal sphere for an artist. The story also makes a reference to the relationship of an artist to one's own work. The generative milieu of the story indicates the relevance of an artist's personal concerns to one's creation. At the same time, the story shows how art, with the power of imagination, may dissent from reality—the point Zuckerman makes to defend his art against the reproach of the father Zuckerman and Judge Wapter.

Zuckerman's story of Anne/Amy shows the discrepancy between art and life: the invention is fascinating as fiction but "improbable" as reality, since the real Amy is clearly not Anne Frank. The clue to the disparity is the "madness of art," which are the words of Dencombe, the dying writer in Henry James's short story "Middle Years." Like Zuckerman and Zuckerman's fictional Anne/Amy, the Jamesian hero witnesses unforeseen consequence of art; then he says, "Our doubt is our passion. Our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art" (116). Attributing the power of his fiction not to himself but to "the madness of art," Dencombe suggests the autonomy of imagination in a work of art.

The "madness of art" is a "ghost writer" who writes a story out of the

author's personal life. As Derek Rubin puts it, "fiction is often a reworking in one form or another of one's own experiences; but, once they are put into a fictional context, they cease to represent those experiences of everyday life and take on an existence of their own within that fictional world."<sup>15</sup> The figure of Anne/Amy has sprung from Zuckerman's personal feelings and experiences; nonetheless, his fervent imagination, which renders the power and charm of the story, creates a fictional world quite different from real life. In the name of Henry James, the later Zuckerman is explaining away the father Zuckerman's accusation that he is somebody who writes this kind of story. Since an artist's task is to present the fictional truth, not the fact, the author is only to let the creation spread its wings, when taken by the raving imagination.

The next morning after the imaginatively turbulent night, Zuckerman is licensed by Lonoff to let "the madness of art" go free. Appropriately attired in a dark coat with a black hat like the archdeacon, or the "chief rabbi," Lonoff performs Zuckerman's "rites of confirmation." He gives Zuckerman a sanction that a writer can be different from a person in one's life, because it is in the realm of liminality, in one's existence between life and art where the writer's unrestrained imagination asserts itself.

The young Zuckerman is initiated into writerhood by Lonoff, who is an artist not of an unworldly sanctuary of art, but of liminality between life and art. Zuckerman, if not at the age of twenty-three, then in the course of some twenty years, has learnt what kind of man and writer he is. Derived from his unruly erotic urge, the creation of "Femme Fatale" stands as the answer to Lonoff's lesson. The story also vindicates Zuckerman's tie to Jewish tradition, which is confirmed by the "chief rabbi." Only when he can confront his existence as a liminal persona and the problems in his personal life, can Zuckerman "wrestle the blessing of his fiction out of that misfortune."

Philip Roth explores the realm of liminality as the ground for artistic

creation in *The Ghost Writer*. Zuckerman's search for identity as an artist and a man in the space of "betwixt and between" reflects Roth's own.<sup>16</sup> Roth, however, is entrusting his fiction with something more than the representation of his own struggle. From his liminal standpoint as a Jew and a writer in America, Roth addresses the reader to re-examine what one has taken for granted in the society circumscribed by institution. The "Femme Fatale" section of *The Ghost Writer* is not merely Zuckerman's challenge to his father and Judge Wapter but a superb example of Roth's challenge to the reader, who is conditioned by cultural assumptions to accept the myth of Anne Frank as a martyred Jewish saint. As Sam Girgus remarks, Roth seems to be aware of his moral responsibility to the reader as a Jewish American writer:

In Roth, one finds justification for the argument that the Jewish writer and thinker is a linguistic innovator who develops the rhetorical and narrative structures of the myth and ideology of America while maintaining the role of the modern Jewish hero of thought. . . . he wants his fiction to lead the literary and intellectual effort to help liberate people from the bonds and shackles that they put on themselves.<sup>17</sup>

The work of art can imaginatively impose the condition of liminality upon the reader to free oneself from the structural bondage of the society. Through his work of imagination, Roth provokes the reader to step aside from matter-of-fact reality and experience the expansion of one's horizon, no matter how fanciful and transient it may be.

#### NOTES

1. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passages*, trans. by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 11.
2. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 232.

3. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, p. 233. In the same location, Turner enumerates examples of marginals such as "migrant foreigners, second-generation Americans, persons of mixed ethnic origin, parvenus (upwardly mobile marginals), the déclassés (downwardly mobile marginals), migrants from country to city, and women in a changed, nontraditional role."
4. Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), p. 128.
5. Turner writes that "[t]he attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (*Ritual Process*, p. 95).
6. Turner, *Ritual Process*, p. 103.
7. Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), p. 49; further references to the work will be cited within the text in parentheses.
8. Sam B. Girgus points out that "[f]or Roth, this contrast between the styles and sensibilities of the 'paleface' as opposed to the more aggressive 'redskin' is complicated by being Jewish, which automatically enlists one in the ranks of the 'redskin.' The contrast between genteel sensibilities and the 'redskin' reality of Jewish ethnicity and class origins creates acute tensions for the Jewish writer and intellectual" ("The Jew as Underground Man," in his *The New Covenant: Jewish Writers and the American Idea* [1984], rpt. in Harold Bloom, ed., *Philip Roth* [New York: Chelsea House, 1986], p. 165).
9. Patrick O'Donnell remarks that Felix Abravanel is "a thinly disguised combination of Norman Mailer and Saul Bellow" ("The Disappearing Text: Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*," *Contemporary Literature*, XXIV, No. 3 [1983], 366).
10. Lonoff tells Zuckerman that "[i]t's like being married to Tolstoy" (180). Relevance of the Russian author in the context seems to lie in his infamy as a henpecked husband and deep concern with the life of common people.
11. Derek Rubin, "Philip Roth and Nathan Zuckerman: Offences of the Imagination," *Dutch Quarterly Review*, XIII, No. 1 (1983), 48.
12. Hermione Lee, "'You Must Change Your Life:' Mentors, Doubles and Literary Influences in the Search for Self," in her *Philip Roth* (1982), rpt. in Bloom, ed., p. 156.

13. Lee, in Bloom, ed., p. 155.
14. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 94.
15. Rubin, p. 51.
16. Roth says in an interview with George Plimpton on *Portnoy's Complaint*, "I have always been far more pleased by my good fortune in being born a Jew than my critics may begin to imagine. It's a complicated, interesting, morally demanding, and very singular experience, and I like that. I find myself in the historic predicament of being Jewish, with all its implications. Who could ask for more?" ("On *Portnoy's Complaint*," *The New York Times Book Review* [February 23, 1969], rpt. in his *Reading Myself and Others* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975], p. 20).
17. Girgus, in Bloom, ed., p. 164. In his earlier essay Roth has written to the extent that condition of liminality is valid for both the writer and the reader to free themselves from the impositions of the surrounding world: "The world of fiction, in fact, frees us from the circumscriptions that society places upon feeling; one of the greatneses of the art is that it allows both the writer and the reader to respond to experience in ways not always available in day-to-day conduct" ("Writing about Jews," *Commentary* [December 1963], rpt. in his *Reading Myself and Others*, p. 151).