Would you like to learn more about the items located in the Philip Roth Personal Library? Be sure to follow our social media accounts! You can find us on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter by searching: Philip Roth Personal Library (omit the spaces). Be sure to click the social media handles located at the end of this newsletter for easy access to our accounts!

Roth’s annotated copy of Operation Shylock (1993).

The Philip Roth Book Club

The book club launched on March 19, 2022 in honor of Roth’s 89th birthday. We’ve had three great discussions so far (The Ghost

One can’t help thinking upon entering the Philip Roth Personal Library that the gifted novelist would have been delighted upon his own first steps into the personal library he bequeathed to be created in his hometown Newark Public Library.

For a first-time visitor, a feeling of joy, almost awe, is immediate at the sight of more than 3,000 of the 7,000 books Roth donated from his rural Connecticut home and New York apartment now arranged in a sophisticated floor to near-ceiling design of wooden shelves. The books’ acclaimed owner, himself the author of 31 books, died in 2018. Now in their new home, Roth’s beloved and huge collection of books have established a certain understanding that no matter what else one finds in the Philip Roth
injury from “boisterous” teammates in the shower, is out as a pitcher, spends the off season
him the league’s ways cut overnight from the team. Roy suffers an accidental fall and elbow
outstanding rookie pitcher on the Brooklyn Dodgers but sees the veteran catcher who teaches
In the Kid’s case, Roy Tucker loses both parents by the time he is 16, becomes an
healthy kids and more like lean and hungry workingmen.”

When it was about the mysteries of earthly fate, when major leaguers looked less like big
story is about to unfold in the novel, Zuckerman talks of “The Kid” story disclosing real life
novels in the bedroom of legendary Weequahic High athlete Swede Levov. As the Swede’s
Zuckerman says that Tunis’ black and white drawings “cannily pictorialize the hardness of the
setbacks that a Brooklyn Dodger rookie must find the will and strength to overcome.

Baseball also showed up with some of life’s harsh realities to a young Philip Roth whose
favorite author was John R. Tunis. In the first pages of Roth’s Pulitzer Prize winning novel
American Pastoral, narrator Nathan Zuckerman talks of his awe and respect for Tunis’ 1940
novel, The Kid From Tomkinsville, which Zuckerman first sees among other Tunis baseball
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Kid’s life, back before the game of baseball was illuminated with a million statistics, back
when it was about the mysteries of earthly fate, when major leaguers looked less like big
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In the Kid’s case, Roy Tucker loses both parents by the time he is 16, becomes an
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Forever Baseball
By all accounts, and especially his own, Philip Roth loved the game of baseball. Like children everywhere, on urban
streets or rural farms, Roth kept his bat, ball and glove close at hand for the pickup games that consumed his
days growing up in his Jewish Weequahic neighborhood. And like so many teenagers, when he didn’t make that high
school baseball team in the 1940s, twice-cut on his tryouts but certain after that, the library’s website offers
information on all aspects of the Philip Roth Personal Library to be alive for today’s
Newark residents and the public as a whole. The site features the library’s history and an
ongoing blog on all things having to do with Roth, information about upcoming programs
and recordings of past events, and how to make appointments to look at the books and
materials during your visit.

“"For someone whose roots in America were strong but only inches deep, and who had no
experience, such as a Catholic child might, of an awesome hierarchy that was real and felt,
baseball was a kind of secular church that reached into every class and region of the nation
and bound us together in common concerns, loyalties, rituals, enthusiasms, and
antagonisms. Baseball made me understand what patriotism was about, at its best.”

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
November 5, 1pm (EST)
The Philip Roth Book Club: A Discussion of
Patrimony with host Jesse Tisch

November 18, 7 - 9pm (EST)
The Philip Roth Lecture: A Conversation
with Nikole Hannah-Jones and Jelani Cobb
at NJPAC

January 21, 1pm (EST)
The Philip Roth Book Club: A Discussion of
Goodbye, Columbus with host Steven
Zipperstein

March 17-19, 2023:
Philip Roth Festival in Newark
relearning his swing and comes back as a terrific right fielder who makes a game winning catch, smashing against the right field wall and propelling the Dodgers into the World Series. Everyone celebrates on the fields as the Kid, who is not moving, is carried off field on a stretcher.

“I was ten and I had never read anything like it. The cruelty of life. The injustice of it. I could not believe it,” Zuckerman writes. Then back to Swede Levov, the author wonders “did it occur to him that if disaster could strike down the Kid from Tomkinsville, it could come and strike the great Swede down too?”

In more uplifting ways, Roth’s love of baseball comes to the fore in his seeking out the game for help three years before his father died from a brain tumor in 1989.

In his 1991 book *Patrimony*, Roth tells of getting Herman Roth to follow the NY Mets beginning in the spring of 1986 when the team was promising and his dad was suffering an illness for about a month. Roth wrote that it was the first time his dad was engaged in baseball since Roth’s childhood when Herman would take Philip and his older brother Sandy to Newark’s Ruppert Stadium to see the Triple A Newark Bears play a double header against the Jersey City Giants.

In 1986, the father and son watched Mets games as the team compiled an exceptional regular winning season of 108-54 and went into the playoffs against the Houston Astros for the National League pennant.

Roth, who was in London for the Astros games, writes that he would check in with his dad living in Elizabeth on how the latest playoff game had gone. When it came to the sixth game, it took three calls between them on the 16-inning contest.

Their banter back and forth provides some brilliant, touching moments in the *Patrimony* pages leading up to Herman telling his son what happened when the two sides were still tied in the 16th. The Mets went three runs ahead, 7 to 4, but then their pitcher Jesse Orosco whom Herman keeps calling Morosco, gives up two runs. The next Houston batter comes to the plate, and Herman tells his son on the phone what he read in the newspaper.

He says the Mets’ first baseman Keith Hernandez came over to Orosco and said: “if you throw another fastball, I’ll kill you.” Orosco threw a curveball, retired the side, and the Mets were in the World Series.

“I wonder if he would have,” Roth writes. “I would have,” my father said, laughing, and sounding as though whatever had floored him in the spring was a fluke and he was going to live a thousand years.”

*Philip Roth’s bonds with baseball are featured in the current exhibit in the PRPL.*

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**The Philip Roth Personal Library catalogue will be available for purchase soon!**

The catalogue will include previously unpublished personal essays from Roth’s friends and colleagues.

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**CALLING FOR PARTICIPANTS!**

Did you grow up in Weequahic? Did you know Philip Roth? Or, maybe you have a family connection to the Roths in Newark? If so, we would love to hear from you! We are organizing a Weequahic Memories virtual program and would be delighted to hear your stories.

Email us if you would like to participate!