



# Philip Roth's Rude Truth: The Art of Immaturity

*Ross Posnock*

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Has anyone ever worked harder and longer at being immature than Philip Roth? The novelist himself pointed out the paradox, saying that after establishing a reputation for maturity with two earnest novels, he "worked hard and long and diligently" to be frivolous--an effort that resulted in the notoriously immature *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969). Three-and-a-half decades and more than twenty books later, Roth is still at his serious "pursuit of the unserious." But his art of immaturity has itself matured, developing surprising links with two traditions of immaturity--an American one that includes Emerson, Melville, and Henry James, and a late twentieth-century Eastern European one that developed in reaction to totalitarianism. In *Philip Roth's Rude Truth*--one of the first major studies of Roth's career as a whole--Ross Posnock examines Roth's "mature immaturity" in all its depth and richness.

*Philip Roth's Rude Truth* will force readers to reconsider the narrow categories into which Roth has often been slotted--laureate of Newark, New Jersey; junior partner in the firm Salinger, Bellow, Mailer, and Malamud; Jewish-American regionalist. In dramatic contrast to these caricatures, the Roth who emerges from Posnock's readable and intellectually vibrant study is a great cosmopolitan in the tradition of Henry James and Milan Kundera.

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