



The Struggle for Jewish Identity in Philip Roth's "New Jersey"

Kerstin Krauss

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Seminar paper from the year 2008 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,0, University of Tübingen (Englisches Seminar, Abteilung für Amerikanistik), course: Oberseminar Philip Roth, 15 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: "Serious students of literature are keenly aware that all writing that passes for fiction contains a good deal of history."

It is no surprise that Ben Siegel made this statement in the introduction to his essay about reading the works of Philip Roth. The world, not only physical but also psychological, into which Phillip Roth was born and grew up is portrayed in detail in his writing. By reading his literature, one can gain a glimpse into the Jewish world where he lived, through the eyes of a Jew. This glimpse is particularly credible because Philip Roth has gone so far in blurring the distinction between himself and his character's that he has even written about a writer, Zuckerman, who has, through his writing, blurred himself and his characters.

"The single unifying characteristic of all Zuckerman's fans is that they assume that the author and his character are identical."

Consequently, his works give insight into the interaction of a diversified set of cultures forced to co-exist in the communities of US-America and the struggles, internal and external that resulted. Philip Roth notes that

"Ever since Goodbye, Columbus, I've been drawn to depicting the impact of place on American lives. Portnoy's Complaint is very much the raw response to a way of life that was specific to his American place during his childhood in the 1930s and '40s. The link between the individual and his historic moment may be more focused in the recent trilogy, but the interest was there from the start."

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