

A New Fable for Critics: Philip Roth's *The Breast*

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In his novella, *The Breast*,¹ Philip Roth—as is his wont—has set off a critical controversy which has little or nothing to do with the deep intention or total effect of the work. In an article entitled “Sublime to Sickening”—Roth, of course, is the “sickening” half—Geoffrey Wagner castigates the Peck's Bad Boy of contemporary fiction: “Roth has a genius for making everything potentially beautiful and joyful filthy and disgusting. . . . Roth writes dirty books, not pornography.”² Furthermore, Wagner denies Roth any and all aesthetic motivation, ascribing his commercial success rather to greed. The story, he claims, “is perfectly pointless, except as a quick way of making a large sum of bread: which it resoundingly has.”³ In an article entitled “Enemies, Foreigners, and Friends,” Roger Sale expresses puritanical outrage at the sexual excesses of the “enemies,” Robbe-Grillet in his *Project for a Revolution in New York* and Roth in *The Breast*. With no pretense at critical objectivity, he dismisses Robbe-Grillet's *Project* . . . as “not an easy book to forgive,” and Roth's *The Breast* as “just stupefyingly bad.”⁴ Working himself up into an emotional frenzy, he avers that “I can only feel, reading Robbe-Grillet's and Roth's latest efforts, that these people are my enemies, that their very facility with words, which is all that lifts these books above the level of the simplest pornography, is what makes them hateful.”⁵

The aforementioned Sale is only too happy to quote the moralistic sociological criticism of Irving Howe in support of his own attack on Roth. In a review of Howe's *The Critical Point*, Sale remarks on Howe's almost unlimited admiration for another American Jewish novelist, Saul Bellow, whose commitment is strikingly contrasted to Roth's more iconoclastic and radical approach. Howe has written that “Roth, despite his concentration on Jewish settings and his acerbity of tone, has not really been involved in this tradition. For he is one of the first American Jewish writers who finds that it yields him no sustenance, no norms or values from which to launch his attacks on middle-class complacency.”⁶ Neither Howe nor Sale perceives that Roth's role is that of intellectual gadfly, a role which Harry Levin sees, moreover, as central to the entire Jewish contribution to Western thought.⁷ Roth belongs to what Levin calls a “free-swung skeptical” tradition.

John Gardner's begrudgingly favorable review of *The Breast* is perhaps an exception to the universal moral condemnation of the novella, but even Gardner faults Roth for a certain lack of taste in the explicit genital preoccupations which, Gardner implies, are both “sick” and “self-regarding.” While he credits the book with being “inventive and sane and very funny,” the word “filthy” once again creeps into the final analysis.⁸ In fact, the only genuinely favorable review I have encountered is an essentially non-analytic one by Israel Horovitz, who has allowed himself to surrender to the pleasure principle embodied in the text: “Roth has succeeded in creating a literal breast as hero, a breast with a voice of its own, a sweet and gentle breast.”⁹ Horovitz perceptively quotes a 1903 letter of Rilke, whose poem, “Archaic Torso of Apollo,” closes the work: “. . . Works of art are of an infinite loneliness. . . . Only love can grasp and hold and be just towards them.” “So much,” concludes Horovitz sardonically, “for the scandal that is *The Breast*.”¹⁰

Although the majority of the critics, apart from Horovitz, have strayed far from the novella's center of gravity, it is doubtful that their misconceptions and

misdirections have caught the author by surprise. In fact, for once he has been pulling the strings and anticipating their every move. In an interview which he gave after the publication and sometimes horrified critical reception of *Portnoy's Complaint*, Roth affords us some clue to the overriding purpose of his new project, which was to become *The Breast*. He admits to having been haunted by a single phrase, "A terrible mistake has been made," and he nourishes the ambition to "write a book which will stand Kafka on his head"—Kafka whom he sees as "the great comedian of guilt," of "self-persecution."¹¹ Significantly, he describes the gestation of the idea in a form which already constitutes a parable:

Instead of having a guy who is more and more pursued and trapped and finally destroyed by his tormentors, I want to start with a guy tormented and then the opposite happens. They come to the jail and they open the door and they say to you, "A terrible mistake has been made." And they give you your suit back, with your glasses and your wallet and your address book, and they apologize to you. And they say, "look, people from big magazines are going to come and write stories on you. And here's some money. And we're sorry about this."¹²

This parable encapsulates Roth's plight as a more-than-usually misunderstood author, and *The Breast*, a metaphysical conceit, is his way of throwing down the gauntlet in front of both readers in general and critics in particular. *The Breast* is the work of art, and the work of art is *The Breast*: the stark simplicity of the title page design even in the mass-marketed paperback edition—no pornographic tableau, but a gold-lettered title, and a black-lettered author's name of equal size on a background of virginal white—points to this identification, rather than to the "filthy and disgusting" titillation decried by Geoffrey Wagner. In fact, in *The Breast*, Roth is himself functioning both as disabused critic and as author, though the work itself is essentially creative.

The Breast bears a striking resemblance, in both manner and substance, to the recent critical work by that guru of the French New New Criticism, Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*.¹³ But American critics are accustomed to treating Barthes with reverence, awe, or bewilderment (the latter may well engender the former), whereas they are inclined to treat their compatriot, for all his gifts, with contempt and even pity for his supposed "sexual hangups" which, as Gardner puts it, "undermine the authority" of his work.¹⁴ Both Roth and Barthes, however, are shaping a hybrid genre which partakes almost equally of the creative and critical visions and which leaves a tremendous literary space to the reader. Most importantly, Roth and Barthes both remind us, in surprisingly similar metaphors of oral-sexual gratification, that the aim of art, and of criticism which is itself a form of literature, is to give pleasure in a holistic sense.

Unlike Barthes, however, Roth does not simply assert that there are "zones érogènes"¹⁵ in a literary text as in a human body—he actually shows them, and in the most vividly tactile manner.¹⁶ But American sociological-didactic critics, intent on labeling Roth as a "Jewish novelist," see only what their own preconceptions allow, and what they see is that Roth is willfully and hedonistically shocking the reader.

By suggesting comparisons with Kafka's "Metamorphosis," Gogol's "The Nose," and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and by superimposing a specifically sexual connotation, Roth sets a literary trap for academic critics who immediately cry, "Aha! he's trying to outdo Kafka." But he is not—at least not in the way they mean.

What Roth has created is an elaborate literary joke—with serious overtones. David Alan Kepesh, his young professor of comparative literature from Stony

Brook, is transformed into a six-foot breast. But the whole point about the breast is that others have to react to it. It has no limbs, they can get no handle on it—"but where was one to get a purchase on a phenomenon such as this?" (p. 88) cries Kepesh, in a statement whose humor is derived from its literal as well as conceptual appropriateness. Yet the meaning is embedded within it, a kind of "Jonah in the whale" (p. 31), as Henry Moore's ideal statue is embedded within the block of stone and needs only to be chiseled away.

A self-conscious metamorphosis is no metamorphosis at all: Kafka's Gregor Samsa would never have referred to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Roth's work is hermetic, a *jeu d'esprit* implying the androgynous nature of the artist. Kepesh, like Barthes' modern man, is in quest of his identity, of reintegration and fusion of flesh and spirit in an overly cerebral, analytic age suffering from what T. S. Eliot called a "dissociation of sensibility."¹⁷ We seem to be retracing the cycle from the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" which is at the heart of the modern technological universe to Rousseau's "I feel, therefore I am." David Kepesh must relearn feeling: he has already over-intellectualized.

The structure of the book marks the stages along the way to his visceral and sensual recognition that he must, as the Rilke poem advises, "change his life."¹⁸ One wonders why Roth, in the introduction, bothers to present Kepesh in a state of what society would term "normalcy," immediately preceding his transformation. It might have been more effective to begin with the simple assertion of the second section, "I am a breast" (p. 15), and fill in the rest by means of flashbacks (which Roth utilizes in any case). But perhaps, by perceiving Kepesh first as a relatively normal human being, the reader is expected to attain a more complete empathy with him. Moreover, the validity of Kepesh's pretransformation behavior as a pattern for normalcy is later undercut when it becomes clear that he has developed too great a dependence on rational, logical processes. What is ultimately "grotesque" to our final perception is the memory of the apparently "normal" Kepesh of the introduction, who was locked into a tidy, orderly existence, rather than the liberated, sensual "Breast" of the rest of the book.

Following the transformation, he undergoes three major crises before he begins to "get a purchase" on his new and unprecedented condition. First, there is the sexual adjustment: while retaining a "masculine" sex drive, he must learn to satisfy it with the apparatus of the opposite sex—and even then with only the secondary rather than primary sexual attributes. He is reduced to a world of pure sensation, of passiveness, of a communications breakdown. At the same time, in an important sense his appetite has increased.

Secondly, there is the confrontation with his old mentor and Dean at Stony Brook, Arthur Schonbrunn. Schonbrunn, it is implied, is the one who fails to meet the test, not Kepesh. It is he who suffers from a life of unfulfilled promise, and perhaps sees measured in his younger colleague's plight the ridiculousness of his own yardstick for human conduct. As Kepesh's psychiatrist, Dr. Klinger, warns him, Schonbrunn's hysterical laughter is an indicator of his own unsoundness, of "the precarious grip such a person has on life, beneath all the glibness and the tailor-made clothes" (p. 82). Schonbrunn is, in fact, the kind of detached conformist Kepesh runs the risk of becoming before he—albeit unwillingly—succeeds in "changing his life." When Schonbrunn—with his Gucci loafers, his blazer made by Jack Kennedy's tailor (p. 66), his "Jacqueline-manqué [sic]" of a wife (p. 68), whose pretensions are "enough to fill the sails of all the schooners ever anchored in the Sound" (p. 63)—breaks down and laughs at Kepesh's predicament, we laugh too, but at him rather than at his "victim." For, as Kepesh is aware, Arthur has a "strong sense of role" (p. 64), and we seem to witness the puncturing of a balloon in his discomfiture.

Arthur Schonbrunn has been playing roles for so long that he has lost all touch with reality. His greatest ambition is to become an academic Jack Kennedy ten years too late, creating a latter-day Camelot in the unlikely setting of Stony Brook. Moreover, Schonbrunn's own academic credentials are derided, for even his ex-graduate student Kepesh is aware that his early promise has been thwarted: "Schonbrunn is one of those academics (often enough deans and provosts, occasionally just drunks) who produce a work of intellectual distinction in their early thirties—in his case, a sharp little book on the fiction of Robert Musil, at that time a novelist largely untranslated and all but unknown to American readers" (p. 62). Roth is also getting in some licks at scholars who "escape" into administration (or a bottle), as well as at reputations built upon the disinterment of hitherto deservedly obscure "minor authors." In a last satiric gibe, Roth informs us that Schonbrunn's *magnum opus*, in the works for over ten years and trotted out periodically as a conversation piece at cocktail parties, is on Heinrich von Kleist. Apparently, thesis directors generally agree with Kepesh-Roth that "to ponder anything as irreducible as the fictions of a Kleist" (p. 63) becomes either a feat of masochism or a life-long project. It is ironic that Schonbrunn and his wife should send Kepesh the recording of Olivier's *Hamlet*, for they represent a universe—which is no longer Kepesh's—ordered by what Hamlet dismisses caustically as "words, words, words," and they are blind to the "more things in heaven and earth . . . / Than are dreamt of" in Horatio's philosophy (I, 5).

Kepesh's third and final crisis occurs when he himself resists belief in the actuality of his present state and prefers to huddle in the shelter of words and labels, in the theory of madness: ". . . fearing that my damaged system could not stand up to such a sustained psychic assault (yes, those were the words I put into their clever mouths), they decided to place me under heavy sedation. . . . When I came around I understood for the first time that I had gone mad" (pp. 72-73).

The madness theory is climactic and must be refuted before Kepesh can undergo the spiritual transformation that will complete the physical. It is the last obstacle he must overcome before he can turn to his audience (and he always assumes there is one) and affirm, in an ironic inversion of his former pedagogical manner, "Yes, let us proceed with our education, one and all" (p. 112). But the new education is destined to be a very different one from any envisaged by Arthur Schonbrunn, for it is directed towards the liberation of the senses from narrow confinement.

Roth's strategy throughout the book is to anticipate and subvert every one of the reader-critic's attempts to formulate a rational explanation for the not-soludicrous phenomenon he witnesses. Kepesh's background affords us some insights into the appropriateness of his transformation, but they leave no doubt that it has indeed occurred. He describes himself as a "citadel of sanity" (p. 33) and asserts unequivocally that he is basically sound in mind and body, though somewhat hypochondriacal. From time to time he experiences pangs of guilt about his "Grand Guignol" marriage to his ex-wife, Helen (a name perhaps ironically evoking the classical paragon of feminine beauty) who has by now become a dipsomaniac. This bitter experience may account for a certain emotional coldness we detect in him at the beginning. His fear of total commitment to his mistress, Claire Ovington, is manifested in a decline of his lust. This coldness is "cured" by his transformation, rather than exacerbated by it, so that his condition can scarcely be viewed as a symptom or projection of alienation. We also learn that he is a very private person who prefers "the calm harbor" to "the foaming drama of the high seas" (p. 8). Until his metamorphosis, he values "the social constraint practiced by and large by the

educated classes" which affords him "genuine aesthetic and ethical satisfactions" (pp. 26-27), and he admits to being somewhat "formal" and "reserved" in public, if not in private.

But Kepesh is no screaming neurotic; rather, he is as you and I, particularly if you and I happen to be scholars, teachers, critics, "intellectuals," with all our customary professional deformations. And even Kepesh's deformations are operative before, not after his acceptance of his new condition. In some sense he recovers, after his "accident," his partially forgotten roots and such values as his Catskill hotelkeeper-father's steadfast and simple love, and his dead mother's "determination" which he believes he has inherited (p. 38); so much for Freudian analysis—he has not been "emasculated" by a hysterical, stereo-typed "Jewish mother." Dr. Klinger cuts off the escape hatches one by one in order to destroy Kepesh's rationalization "that this is all just a dream, a hallucination, a delusion, or what have you—perhaps a drug-induced state" (p. 80).

Nor does the un-Freudian theory of "womb envy" shed any light on the particular form his metamorphosis takes. Recalling a scene on the beach with a bare-breasted Claire, he remembers how he playfully envied her breast, "as though it were the globe itself—soft globe!—and I some Poseidon or Zeus!" (p. 47). But he denies categorically—and we believe him—that the wish was anything but whimsical: "No, the victim does not subscribe to the wish-fulfillment theory, and I advise you not to, neat and fashionable and delightfully punitive as it may be" (pp. 48-49). And then he reproaches us mockingly, "Reality is grander than that. Reality has more style" (p. 49). Time and again Kepesh reminds us of his humanity and actuality: "This is not tragedy any more than it is farce. It is only life, and, like it or not, I am only human" (p. 104). The book is, in fact, a Shakespearean *mélange*, of which the recording of *Hamlet* serves as reminder, and neither the scientists nor the men of letters can reduce it to their categories. Again, Kepesh's sexual hysteria when he makes obscene overtures to his nurse is directed at the audience (Roth's readers and critics?) which he always assumes is present, "to convince them that I am still a man—for who but a man has conscience, reason, desire, and remorse?" (p. 53).

What could be a metaphor is actually assumed by the human body, as in Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge*. Both Vidal and Roth have complained loudly and publicly of the critic's attempts to classify *Myra Breckinridge* and *Portnoy's Complaint* as mere pornography without "redeeming social value." In *The Breast*, Roth has deliberately chosen a transformation calculated to pander mockingly to the critics' prejudiced expectations of his work. There are, nevertheless, valid moral, aesthetic, and emotional reasons for the protagonist's transmutation. Curiously enough, when, in the introduction, Kepesh begins to detect a physical change, far from being emasculated, his passion increases dramatically, but in a way he admits he had "previously associated more with women than with men . . ." (p. 11). When the metamorphosis is complete, the intensity of the passion is almost unbearable because it cannot be assuaged, and he learns what it is to live a life of pure sensation. He is blind, almost deaf and dumb, and his senses of smell and taste have been completely stifled. But like the blind and other handicapped persons, he compensates by a heightened development of the remaining sense, the tactile. The sensation of being touched, if "undifferentiated," reminds him "of water lapping over the skin more than anything else" (p. 19). Water is also a reminder of the crucial whale or dolphin image which Kepesh associates with the shape of the breast. He is, perhaps, also somewhat literarily reflecting on the inscrutable mystery embodied in the whale of Melville's *Moby Dick*. Roth raises obliquely the only partly-amusing question, what if teachers became what they taught? Imagine turning into the great white whale!

But Kepesh doesn't turn into a whale (or a nose a la Gogol, or an insect a la Kafka), he turns into a breast. The water imagery would then seem evocative of life, fertility, the origin of being, rather than of death and destruction. This living metaphor is much less ambiguous than Melville's whale. Kepesh, the intellectual, has undergone a "sea change" enabling him to integrate both halves of the human experience into an androgynous whole: this is not the result of womb or Venus envy, but of a desire to balance head and heart—perhaps even to overbalance after a century of abstraction and technology. It may also be Roth's response to critics' complaints that he is a purely male-oriented writer. Kepesh suggests that his mistress Claire (light and purity?), the Phi Beta Kappa Cornell graduate, is just a little too nice to be liberating, with her "well-bred, well-behaved schoolteacher's idea of hot sex" (p. 106). She has resisted his urging her to collaborate in the currently fashionable sexual experiments (p. 42). Her last name, "Ovington," is probably derived from *ova*, "the egg," ovary, etc., and may suggest that she is repelled by deviations from the norm, which would be to run some risk of conception. Kepesh may, however, also be revealing a desire for "passive" feminine experience long before his transformation (p. 42).

In a long passage, Kepesh outlines some possible reasons for his supposed "mammary envy": the breast's passivity, its brainlessness, the "playboy" image haunting American youth, hibernation, the cocoon—a return to the womb. The breast is described as "a big brainless bag of tissue, desirable, dumb, passive, immobile, acted upon instead of acting, hanging, *there*, as a breast hangs and is *there*" (p. 87). There also seems to be an echo of Tiresias, the blind prophet whose breasts denote his androgyny, which in turn endows him with the gift of prophecy. Through the *bi*cast's difficulties with hearing, Roth pinpoints the relationship between a breakdown in communication and a breakdown in the sexual dialogue, T. S. Eliot's theme. Like Laurence Olivier, Kepesh must follow Hamlet's advice to the players and "virtually give a recitation, as from a stage, whenever I wanted to make my every word understood" (p. 88). If the disenfranchised breast becomes enamored of Olivier, it is not of a man but of a disembodied voice (p. 102). Hamlet's feigned madness speaks eloquently to a man who would rather believe that he is mad, than accept the fact that his situation is. Kepesh identifies with Hamlet "when my mind departed Elsinore Castle for Lenox Hill Hospital" (p. 102). He has, moreover, lived through an extravagance Hamlet is only able to imagine or wish for: "O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt / thaw, and resolve itself into dew!" (I.2). Kepesh's flesh literally melts, fuses, and compresses itself into a new shape.

The supreme irony of this latter-day over-reflective young scholar-Hamlet is that any understanding or communication he achieves after becoming the breast is through the nipple, which has apparently been formed not out of the head, as he initially believes, but out of the penis. After a final attempt to cling to insanity and refuse to accept the unthinkable, Kepesh at last admits that fiction did not create this enormity: "No, hormones are hormones and art is art" (p. 104). But he leaves open the possibility that he may have literally compensated on a biological level for his failure to create on an aesthetic one: "But, I say, 'it might be my way of *being* a Kafka, being a Gogol, being a Swift. They could *envision* those marvelous transformations—they were artists. They had the language and those obsessive fictional brains. I didn't. So I had to live the thing.' . . . I had the artistic longing without the necessary detachment" (p. 104). It is in this sense that he has equalled the Biblical Jehovah and "made the word flesh," that he has "out-Kafkaed Kafka" (p. 105). Roth, unlike Kepesh, his alter ego, does have the necessary detachment, and his creation, *The Breast*, remakes flesh into word.

Kepesh concludes with a lecture, but it is a witty parody of his previous professional skills. It constitutes his attempt to reach beyond mere cerebration to a total democratization of cultural values. He addresses us all directly as "my

fellow mammalians" (p. 111), establishing a bond of common humanity (the whale and the dolphin, both mammals, are also intelligent creatures, he reminds us). He may be avoiding the "apocalyptic" in favor of the "banal," but only in the sense of instilling in us all what the doctor calls the "w. to l." (will to live, p. 30) and instinct to survive. Kepesh has spent his life learning and teaching; "now," he says at the end of the book, "I am just listening" (p. 103). This passive, receptive state is one his creator would perhaps like to see all human beings cultivate in order to relearn feeling.

When Kepesh is first apprised of his plight he tries desperately to ensure his "civil liberties" and is obsessed by his powerlessness. Fantasizing that his "sexual frenzy is being carried 'live' on television," the old Kepesh embedded within the new imagines being observed from a "gallery" or "the bleachers" (p. 50) like a cheap show, or appearing on "page one" of the tabloids (p. 51). Dr. Klinger constantly debunks this overreaction to public opinion. It is only at the end, however, that Kepesh himself begins to perceive some possible advantages in an audience: he imagines himself becoming rich as a one-man freak show, filling Shea Stadium like the Beatles and being sought after by "groupies": "If the Rolling Stones can find them, if Charles Manson can find them, we can find them too" (p. 107). He imagines himself emulating Gulliver among the Brobdingnagians, although Gulliver did not particularly enjoy his experience in the Age of Reason: ". . . but this, my friend, is the Land of Opportunity in the Age of Self-Fulfillment" (p. 108). The ironic, bitter note here, the reference to Manson in particular, suggests that Roth, along with Kepesh, is decrying the sick and debased taste of the public. By Roth's own choice of subject, he is satirizing the kind of "art" that is supposed to appeal widely to the public, and taking aim at our contemporary cultural values in general. But Roth's irony has a serious undercurrent. The reader-critics who will condemn him are really reflecting their own moral twists and kinks. Roth is turning the critics' own weapons against them, since they have always concentrated on what they consider to be aberrant sexuality in his works, rather than on what he considers to have been his real intention.

Dr. Klinger warns Kepesh, in what is a clear aside to Roth's own critics: ". . . you will not be taken on your own terms, ever" (p. 111). Roth's fable evidently soars above the inflexibility of critical boundaries to reach the sensitivity of individual readers. He envisions the possibility of the breast "swelling with milk"—on the level of the parable, of breast-feeding his audience. The allusion to Rilke's poem, "Archaic Torso of Apollo," reminds us obliquely that not only is this statue a headless trunk physically resembling the breast, but also that it represents Apollo, god of the sun, of light (Claire?), of beauty and, most significantly, of poetry. The "gaze" is still there, as in the breast, "only turned low":

Else could not the
curve
of the breast blind you, nor in the
 slight turn
of the loins could a smile be running
to that middle, which carried
 procreation. (p. 112)

The line "for there is no place that does not see you. You must change your life" (p. 113) is Roth's invitation to us to ignore the "terrible mistake" of the critics and to read him on his own terms. But more than that, it also urges us, liberated finally, to accept our integrated selves on our own terms, and to feed at *The Breast*.

NOTES

- ¹Philip Roth, *The Breast* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973; orig. publ. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), all references are to the 1973 edition.
- ²Geoffrey Wagner, "Sublime to Sickening," *National Review*, 24 (November 1972), pp. 1254-55.
- ³Geoffrey Wagner, "Sublime to Sickening," p. 1254.
- ⁴Roger Sale, "Enemies, Foreigners, and Friends," *The Hudson Review*, 25 (Winter 1972), p. 703.
- ⁵Roger Sale, "Enemies, Foreigners, and Friends," p. 704.
- ⁶Roger Sale, "*The Critical Point*, by Irving Howe," *The New York Times Book Review*, January 6, 1974, p. 7.
- ⁷Harry Levin, "Literature and Cultural Identity," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 10, No. 2 (June 1973), pp. 139-156. Levin bases his discussion on Thorstein Veblen's essay on "The Intellectual Pre-Eminence of Jews in Modern Europe," which is rooted in the assumption that those members of the intellectual community who make the most original and seminal contributions are, in Levin's terms, those who are free "from received opinions or restrictive conventions" (p. 147). Moreover, Veblen worried that Zionism might lead once more to an inward-turning, to "a large national complacency," so that Jewish intellectual contributions would "take on the complexion of Talmudic lore, rather than that character of free-swing skeptical initiative which their renegades have habitually infused into the pursuit of the modern sciences abroad among the nations" (p. 147).
- ⁸John Gardner, "*The Breast*, by Philip Roth," *The New York Times Book Review*, September 17, 1972, p. 10.
- ⁹Israel Horovitz, "Apology for a Pornographer," *The Village Voice*, 17 (October 1972), p. 38.
- ¹⁰Israel Horovitz, "Apology for a Pornographer," p. 38.
- ¹¹Albert Goldman, "A Comedian of Guilt: 'Portnoy's Complaint' by Philip Roth Looms as a Wild Blue Shocker and the American Novel of the Sixties," *Life*, 7 February, 1969, pp. 58C, 64.
- ¹²Albert Goldman, "A Comedian of Guilt . . ." p. 64.
- ¹³Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1973).
- ¹⁴John Gardner, "*The Breast*, by Philip Roth," p. 10.
- ¹⁵Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, p. 19.
- ¹⁶I am indebted to Professor H. A. Bouraoui of York University for pointing out some of the resemblances between Barthes' and Roth's works in his study of "The Creative-Critical Dialectic." I am also appreciative of his criticisms and suggestions concerning the present discussion.
- ¹⁷T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in *Selected Prose* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Book, 1953), p. 117.
- ¹⁸Quoted in *The Breast*, p. 113.