

PHILIP

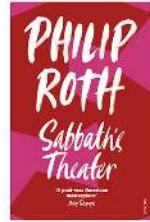
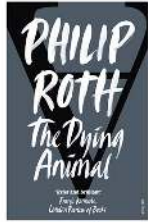
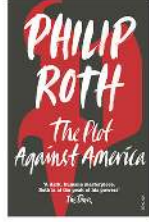
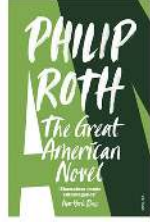
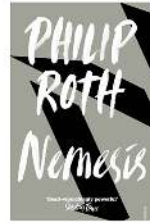
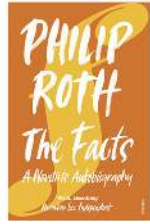
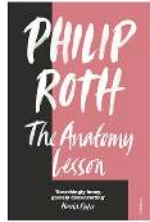
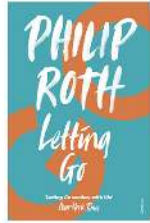
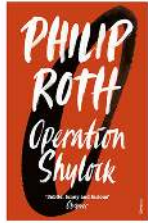
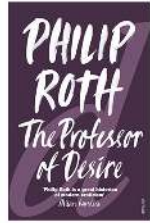
ROTH

Zuckerman  
Unbound

**'Elegant and furious... Witty, tender  
and brutal in a single paragraph'**

*Melvyn Bragg*

VINTAGE



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Following the wild success of his novel, *Carnovsky*, Nathan Zuckerman has been catapulted into the literary limelight.**

As he ventures out onto the streets of Manhattan he finds himself accosted on all sides, the target of admonishers, advisers, would-be literary critics, and - worst of all - fans.

An incompetent celebrity, ill at ease with his newfound fame, and unsure of how to live up to his fictional creation's notoriety, Zuckerman flounders his way through a high-profile affair, the disintegration of his family life, and fends off the attentions of his most tenacious fan yet, as the turbulent decade of the sixties draws to a close around him.

But beneath the uneasy glamour are the spectres of the recently murdered Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., and an unsettled Zuckerman feels himself watched ...

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 1997 Philip Roth won the Pulitzer Prize for *American Pastoral*. In 1998 he received the National Medal of Arts at the White House, and in 2002 the highest award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Gold Medal in Fiction, previously awarded to John Dos Passos, William Faulkner and Saul Bellow, among others. He has twice won the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. He has won the PEN/Faulkner Award three times. In 2005 *The Plot Against America* received the Society of American Historians' Prize for 'the outstanding historical novel on an American theme for 2003-2004'.

Recently Roth received PEN's two most prestigious prizes: in 2006 the PEN/Nabokov Award 'for a body of work ... of enduring originality and consummate craftsmanship' and in 2007 the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction, given to a writer whose 'scale of achievement over a sustained career ... places him or her in the highest rank of American literature'. In 2011 Roth won the International Man Booker Prize.

Roth is the only living American writer to have his work published in a comprehensive, definitive edition by the Library of America.

ALSO BY PHILIP ROTH

Zuckerman Books  
*The Ghost Writer*  
*Zuckerman Unbound*  
*The Anatomy Lesson*  
*The Prague Orgy*

*The Counterlife*

*American Pastoral*  
*I Married a Communist*  
*The Human Stain*

*Exit Ghost*

Roth Books  
*The Facts*  
*Deception*  
*Patrimony*  
*Operation Shylock*  
*The Plot Against America*

Kepesh Books  
*The Breast*  
*The Professor of Desire*  
*The Dying Animal*

Nemeses: Short Novels  
*Everyman*  
*Indignation*  
*The Humbling*  
*Nemesis*

Miscellany

*Reading Myself and Others*  
*Shop Talk*

Other Books

*Goodbye, Columbus*

*Letting Go*

*When She Was Good*

*Portnoy's Complaint*

*Our Gang*

*The Great American Novel*

*My Life as a Man*

*Sabbath's Theater*

‘America’s greatest living novelist’  
*Sunday Times*

‘There aren’t supposed to be degrees or intensities of uniqueness, and yet Roth is somehow inordinately unique. He is bloodmindedly himself, himself, himself’  
Martin Amis

‘Opening the first page of any Philip Roth is like hearing the ignition on a boiler roar into life. Passion is what we’re going to get, and plenty of it’  
*Guardian*

‘He is a writer of quite extraordinary skill and courage; and he takes on bigger enemies in every book he writes’  
Frank Kermode

‘Philip Roth is a great historian of modern eroticism’  
Milan Kundera

‘There is a clarity, almost a ruthlessness, to his work, which makes the experience of reading any of his books a bracing, wild ride’  
*The Times*

‘He is skilled, witty, energetic and performs like a virtuoso’  
Saul Bellow

‘Nobody writes about the American family with more tenderness and honesty’  
*New Statesman*

‘Roth is a living master’  
Harold Bloom



FOR PHILIP GUSTON  
1913-1980

Philip Roth  
ZUCKERMAN  
UNBOUND

VINTAGE BOOKS  
London

“Let Nathan see what it is to be  
lifted from obscurity. Let him not  
come hammering at our door to tell us  
that he wasn’t warned.”

E. I. LONOFF  
*to his wife*  
*December 10, 1956*

## 1 “I’m Alvin Pepler”

“What the hell are you doing on a bus, with your dough?”

It was a small, husky young fellow with a short haircut and a new business suit who wanted to know; he had been daydreaming over an automotive magazine until he saw who was sitting next to him. That was all it took to charge him up.

Undaunted by Zuckerman’s unobliging reply—on a bus to be transported through space—he happily offered his advice. These days everybody did, if they could find him. “You should buy a helicopter. That’s how I’d do it. Rent the landing rights up on apartment buildings and fly straight over the dog-poop. Hey, see this guy?” This second question was for a man standing in the aisle reading his *Times*.

The bus was traveling south on Fifth Avenue, downtown from Zuckerman’s new Upper East Side address. He was off to see an investment specialist on Fifty-second Street, a meeting arranged by his agent, André Schevitz, to get him to diversify his capital. Gone were the days when Zuckerman had only to worry about Zuckerman making money: henceforth he would have to worry about his money making money. “Where do you have it right now?” the investment specialist had asked when Zuckerman finally

phoned. "In my shoe," Zuckerman told him. The investment specialist laughed. "You intend to keep it there?" Though the answer was yes, it was easier for the moment to say no. Zuckerman had privately declared a one-year moratorium on all serious decisions arising out of the smashing success. When he could think straight again, he would act again. All this, this luck—what did it mean? Coming so suddenly, and on such a scale, it was as baffling as a misfortune.

Because Zuckerman was not ordinarily going anywhere at the morning rush hour—except into his study with his coffee cup to reread the paragraphs from the day before—he hadn't realized until too late that it was a bad time to be taking a bus. But then he still refused to believe that he was any less free than he'd been six weeks before to come and go as he liked, when he liked, without having to remember beforehand who he was. Ordinary everyday thoughts on the subject of who one was were lavish enough without an extra hump of narcissism to carry around.

"Hey. *Hey.*" Zuckerman's excited neighbor was trying again to distract the man in the aisle from his *Times*. "See this guy next to me?"

"I do now," came the stern, affronted reply.

"He's the guy who wrote *Carnovsky*. Didn't you read about it in the papers? He just made a million bucks and he's taking a bus."

Upon hearing that a millionaire was on board, two girls in identical gray uniforms—two frail, sweet-looking children, undoubtedly well-bred little sisters on their way downtown to convent school—turned to look at him.

"Veronica," said the smaller of the two, "it's the man who wrote the book that Mummy's reading. It's *Carnovsky*."

The children kneeled on their seats so as to face him. A middle-aged couple in the row across from the children also turned to get a look.

“Go on, girls,” said Zuckerman lightly. “Back to your homework.”

“Our mother,” said the older child, taking charge, “is reading your book, Mr. Carnovsky.”

“Fine. But Mummy wouldn’t want you to stare on the bus.”

No luck. Must be phrenology they were studying at St. Mary’s.

Zuckerman’s companion had meanwhile turned to the seat directly behind to explain to the woman there the big goings-on. Make her a part of it. The family of man. “I’m sitting next to a guy who just made a million bucks. Probably two.”

“Well,” said a gentle, ladylike voice, “I hope all that money doesn’t change him.”

Fifteen blocks north of the investment specialist’s office, Zuckerman pulled the cord and got off. Surely here, in the garden spot of anomie, it was still possible to be nobody on the rush-hour streets. If not, try a mustache. This may be far from life as you feel, see, know, and wish to know it, but if all it takes is a mustache, then, for Christ’s sake, grow one. You are not Paul Newman, but you’re no longer who you used to be either. A mustache. Contact lenses. Maybe a colorful costume would help. Try looking the way everybody does today instead of the way everybody looked twenty years ago in Humanities 2. Less like Albert Einstein, more like Jimi Hendrix, and you won’t stick out so much. And what about your gait while you’re at it? He was always meaning to work on that anyway. Zuckerman moved with his knees too close together and at a much too hurried pace. A man six feet tall should *amble* more. But he could never remember about ambling after the first dozen steps—twenty, thirty paces and he was lost in his thoughts instead of thinking about his stride. Well, now was the time to get on with it, especially with his sex credentials coming under scrutiny in the press. As aggressive in the walk as in the

work. You're a millionaire, walk like one. People are watching.

The joke was on him. Someone was—the woman who'd had to be told on the bus why everyone else was agog. A tall, thin, elderly woman, her face heavily powdered ... only why was she running after him? And undoing the latch on her purse? Suddenly his adrenalin advised Zuckerman to run too.

You see, not everybody was delighted by this book that was making Zuckerman a fortune. Plenty of people had already written to tell him off. "For depicting Jews in a peep-show atmosphere of total perversion, for depicting Jews in acts of adultery, exhibitionism, masturbation, sodomy, fetishism, and whoremongery," somebody with letterhead stationery as impressive as the President's had even suggested that he "ought to be shot." And in the spring of 1969 this was no longer just an expression. Vietnam was a slaughterhouse, and off the battlefield as well as on, many Americans had gone berserk. Just about a year before, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy had been gunned down by assassins. Closer to home, a former teacher of Zuckerman's was still hiding out because a rifle had been fired at him through his kitchen window as he'd been sitting at his table one night with a glass of warm milk and a Wodehouse novel. The retired bachelor had taught Middle English at the University of Chicago for thirty-five years. The course had been hard, though not that hard. But a bloody nose wasn't enough anymore. Blowing people apart seemed to have replaced the roundhouse punch in the daydreams of the aggrieved: only annihilation gave satisfaction that lasted. At the Democratic convention the summer before, hundreds had been beaten with clubs and trampled by horses and thrown through plate-glass windows for offenses against order and decency less grave than Zuckerman's were thought to be by any number of his correspondents. It didn't strike Zuckerman as at all

unlikely that in a seedy room somewhere the *Life* cover featuring his face (unmustached) had been tacked up within dart-throwing distance of the bed of some “loner.” Those cover stories were enough of a trial for a writer’s writer friends, let alone for a semi-literate psychopath who might not know about all the good deeds he did at the PEN Club. Oh, Madam, if only you knew the real me! Don’t shoot! I am a serious writer as well as one of the boys!

But it was too late to plead his cause. Behind her rimless spectacles, the powdered zealot’s pale green eyes were glazed with conviction; at point-blank range she had hold of his arm. “Don’t”—she was not young, and it was a struggle for her to catch her breath—“don’t let all that money change you, whoever you may be. Money never made anybody happy. Only He can do that.” And from her Luger-sized purse she removed a picture postcard of Jesus and pressed it into his hand. “ “There is not a just man upon earth,” she reminded him, “that doeth good and sinneth not. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

He was sipping coffee later that morning at a counter around the corner from the office of the investment specialist—studying, for the first time in his life, the business page of the morning paper—when a smiling middle-aged woman came up to tell him that from reading about his sexual liberation in *Carnovsky*, she was less “uptight” now herself. In the bank at Rockefeller Plaza where he went to cash a check, the long-haired guard asked in a whisper if he could touch Mr. Zuckerman’s coat: he wanted to tell his wife about it when he got home that night. While he was walking through the park, a nicely dressed young East Side mother out with her baby and her dog stepped into his path and said, “You need love, and you need it all the time. I feel sorry for you.” In the periodical room of the Public Library an elderly gentleman tapped



him on the shoulder and in heavily accented English—Zuckerman’s grandfather’s English—told him how sorry he felt for his parents. “You didn’t put in your whole life,” he said sadly. “There’s much more to your life than that. But you just leave it out. To get even.” And then, at last, at home, a large jovial black man from Con Ed who was waiting in the hall to read his meter. “Hey, you do all that stuff in that book? With all those chicks? You are something else, man.” The meter reader. But people didn’t just read meters anymore, they also read that book.

Zuckerman was tall, but not as tall as Wilt Chamberlain. He was thin, but not as thin as Mahatma Gandhi. In his customary getup of tan corduroy coat, gray turtleneck sweater, and cotton khaki trousers he was neatly attired, but hardly Rubirosa. Nor was dark hair and a prominent nose the distinguishing mark in New York that it would have been in Reykjavik or Helsinki. But two, three, four times a week, they spotted him anyway. “It’s Carnovsky!” “Hey, careful, Carnovsky, they arrest people for that!” “Hey, want to see my underwear, Gil?” In the beginning, when he heard someone call after him out on the street, he would wave hello to show what a good sport he was. It was the easiest thing to do, so he did it. Then the easiest thing was to pretend not to hear and keep going. Then the easiest thing was to pretend that he was hearing things, to realize that it was happening in a world that didn’t exist. They had mistaken impersonation for confession and were calling out to a character who lived in a book. Zuckerman tried taking it as praise—he had made real people believe Carnovsky real too—but in the end he pretended he was only himself, and with his quick, small steps hurried on.

At the end of the day he walked out of his new neighborhood and over to Yorkville, and on Second Avenue found the haven he was looking for. Just the place to be left to himself with the evening paper, or so he thought when

he peered between the salamis strung up in the window: a sixty-year-old waitress in runny eye shadow and crumbling house slippers, and behind the sandwich counter, wearing an apron about as fresh as a Manhattan snowdrift, a colossus with a carving knife. It was a few minutes after six. He could grab a sandwich and be off the streets by seven.

“Pardon me.”

Zuckerman looked up from the fraying menu at a man in a dark raincoat who was standing beside his table. The dozen or so other tables were empty. The stranger was carrying a hat in his hands in a way that restored to that expression its original metaphorical luster.

“Pardon me. I only want to say thank you.”

He was a large man, chesty, with big sloping shoulders and a heavy neck. A single strand of hair looped over his bald head, but otherwise his face was a boy's: shining smooth cheeks, emotional brown eyes, an impudent owlish little beak.

“Thank me? For what?” The first time in the six weeks that it had occurred to Zuckerman to pretend that he was another person entirely. He was learning.

His admirer took it for humility. The lively, lachrymose eyes deepened with feeling. “God! For everything. The humor. The compassion. The understanding of our deepest drives. For all you have reminded us about the human comedy.”

Compassion? Understanding? Only hours earlier the old man in the library had told him how sorry he felt for his family. They had him coming and going today.

“Well,” said Zuckerman, “that’s very kind.”

The stranger pointed to the menu in Zuckerman’s hand. “Please, order. I didn’t mean to obtrude. I was in the washroom, and when I came out I couldn’t believe my eyes. To see you in a place like this. I just had to come up and say thanks before I left.”