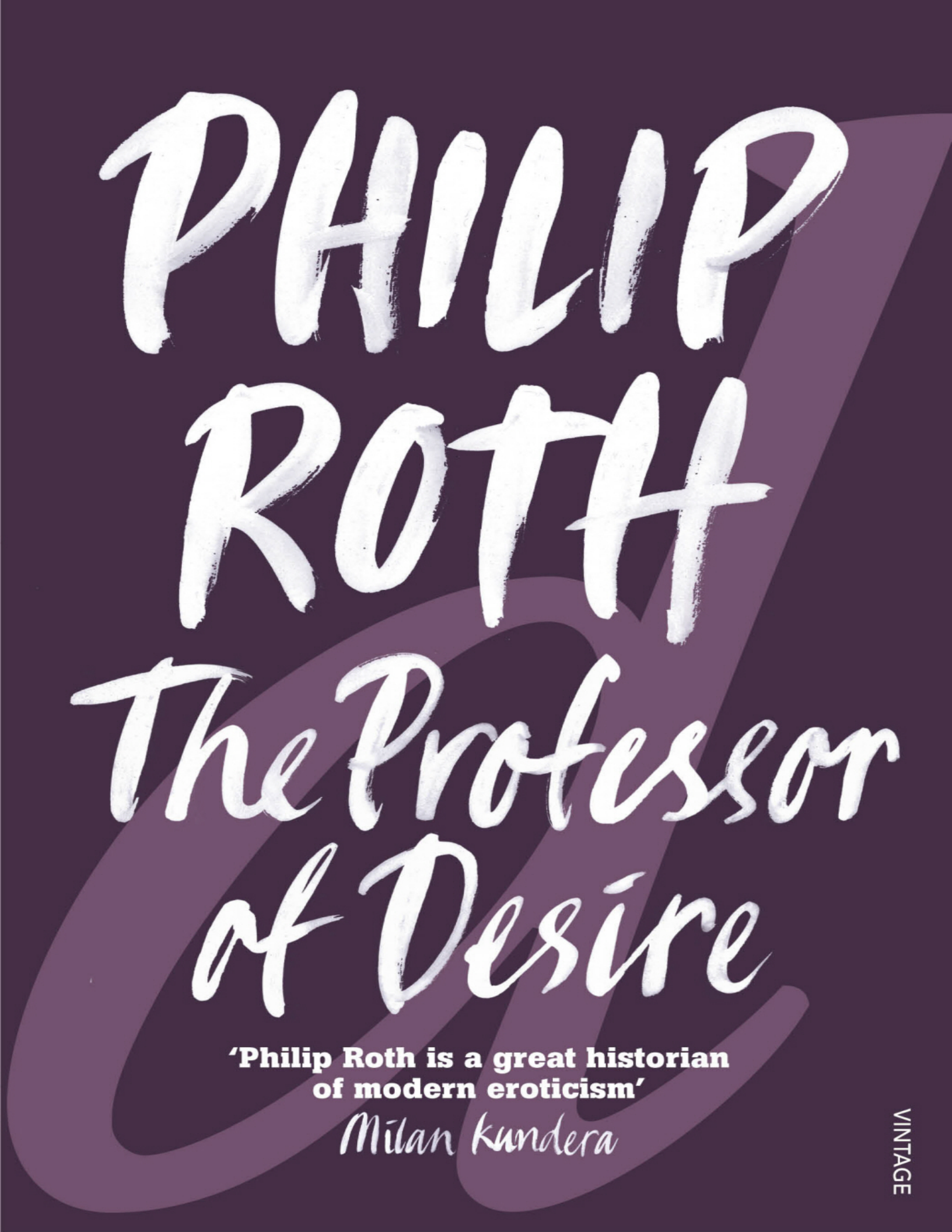
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The Professor of Desire
'Philip Roth is a great historian of modern eroticism'
Milan Kundera
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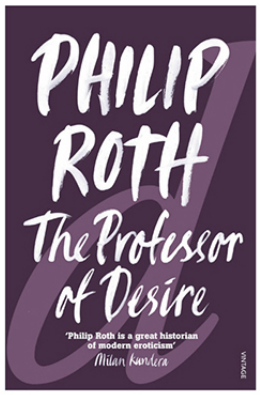
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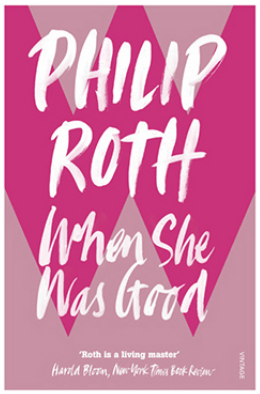
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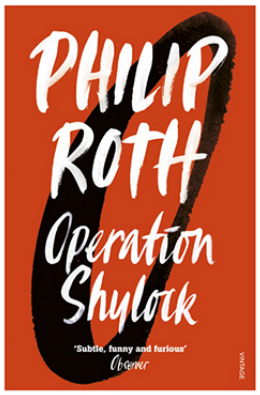
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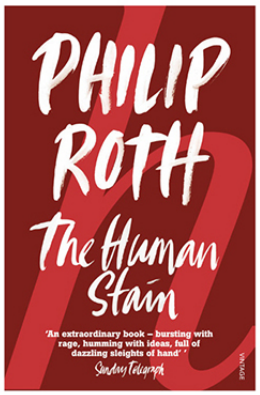
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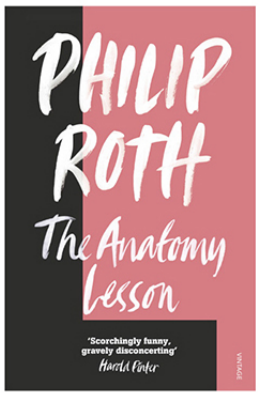
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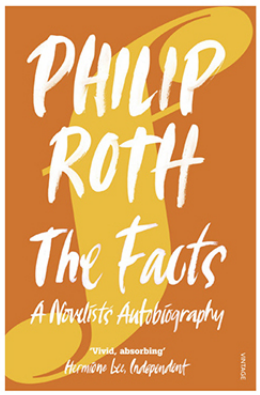
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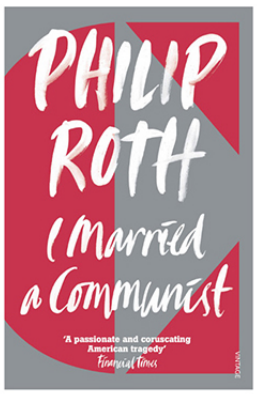
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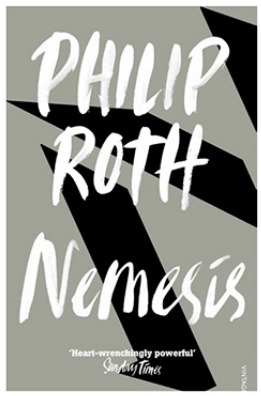
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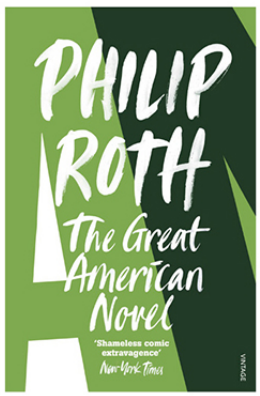
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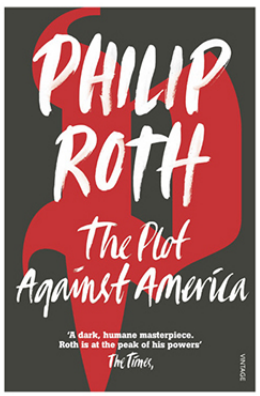
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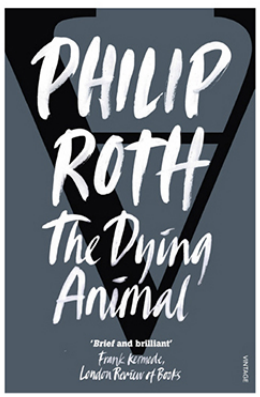
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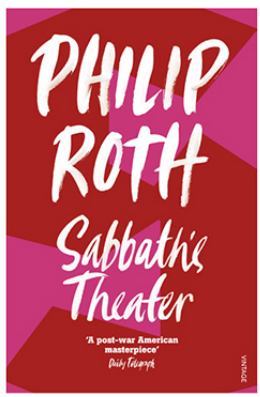
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As a college student, David Kepesh styles himself as ‘a rake among scholars, a scholar among rakes’ – an identity that will cling to him for a lifetime. As Philip Roth follows Kepesh from the domesticity of childhood out into the vast wilderness of erotic possibility, from a ménage à trois in London to the depths of loneliness in New York, Kepesh confronts the central dilemma of pleasure: how to make a truce between dignity and desire; and how to survive the ordeal of an unhallowed existence.

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.

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For Claire Bloom

Philip Roth

THE PROFESSOR OF DESIRE

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TEMPTATION COMES TO me first in the conspicuous personage of Herbie Bratasky, social director, bandleader, crooner, comic, and m.c. of my family's mountainside resort hotel. When he is not trussed up in the elasticized muscleman's swim trunks which he dons to conduct rumba lessons by the side of the pool, he is dressed to kill, generally in his two-tone crimson and cream-colored "loafer" jacket and the wide canary-yellow trousers that taper down to enchain him just above his white, perforated, sharpie's shoes. A fresh slice of Black Jack gum is at the ready in his pocket while another is being savored, with slow-motion sassiness, in what my mother derisively describes as Herbie's "yap." Below the stylishly narrow alligator belt and the gold droop of key chain, one knee works away inside his trousers, Herbie keeping time to hides he alone hears being beaten in that Congo called his brain. Our brochure (from fourth grade on composed by me, in collaboration with the owner) headlines Herbie as "our Jewish Cugat, our Jewish Krupa—all rolled into one!"; further on he is described as "a second Danny Kaye," and, in conclusion, just so that everyone understands that this 140-pound twenty-year-old is not nobody and Kepesh's Hungarian Royale is not *exactly* nowhere, as "another Tony Martin."

Our guests appear to be nearly as mesmerized by Herbie's shameless exhibitionism as I am. A newcomer will have barely settled into a varnished wicker rocker on the veranda before one of the old-timers arrived from the hot city the previous week starts giving him the lowdown on this wonder of our tribe. "And wait till you see the tan on this

kid. He's just got that kind of skin—never burns, only tans. And from the first day in the sun. This kid has got skin on him right out of Bible times."

Because of a damaged eardrum, our drawing card—as it pleases Herbie to call himself, particularly into the teeth of my mother's disapproval—is with us throughout the Second World War. Ongoing discussion from the rocking chairs and the card tables as to whether the disability is congenital or self-inflicted. The suggestion that something other than Mother Nature might have rendered Herbie unfit to fight Tojo, Mussolini, and Hitler—well, I am outraged, personally mortified by the very idea. Yet, how tantalizing to imagine Herbie taking a hatpin or a toothpick in his own hands—taking an ice pick!—and deliberately mutilating himself in order to outfox his draft board.

"I wouldn't put it past him," says guest A-owitz; "I wouldn't put anything past that operator. What a pistol he is!" "Come on, he did no such thing. That kid is a patriotic kid like anybody else. I'll tell you how he went half deaf like that, and ask the doctor here if I'm not right: from banging on those drums," says guest B-owitz. "Oh, can that kid play drums," says C-owitz; "you could put him on the stage of the Roxy right now—and I think the only reason he ain't is that, like you say, he doesn't hear right from the drums themselves." "Still," says D-owitz, "he don't say definitely yes or no whether he did it with some instrument or something." "But that's the showman in him, keeping you hanging by suspense. His whole stock-in-trade is that he's crazy enough for anything—that's his whole *act*." "Still, even to kid around about it don't strike me right. The Jewish people have got their hands full as it is." "Please, a kid who dresses like that right down to the key chain, and with a build like that that he works on day and night, plus those drums, you think he is gonna do himself serious physical damage just out of spite to the war effort?" "I agree, one hundred percent. Gin, by the way." "Oh, you caught me with

my pants down, you s.o.b. What the hell am I holding these jacks for, will somebody tell me? Look, you know what you don't find? You don't find a kid who is good-looking like this one, who is funny like he is too. To take that kind of looks, and to be funny, and to go crazy like that with the drums, that to me is something special in the annals of show business." "And what about at the pool? How about on the diving board? If Billy Rose laid eyes on him, clowning around in the water like that, he'd be in the Aquacade tomorrow." "And what about that voice on him?" "If only he wouldn't kid *around* with it—if only he would sing *serious*." "If that kid sang serious he could be in the Metropolitan Opera." "If he sang serious, he could be a cantor, for Christ sakes, with no problem. He could break your heart. Just imagine for yourself what he would look like in a white tallis with that tan!" And here at last I am spotted, working on a model R.A.F. Spitfire down at the end of the veranda rail. "Hey, little Kepesh, come here, you little eavesdropper. Who do you want to be like when you grow up? Listen to this—stop shuffling the cards a minute. Who's your hero, Kepaleh?"

I don't have to think twice, or at all. "Herbie," I reply, much to the amusement of the men in the congregation. Only the mothers look a little dismayed.

Yet, ladies, who else could it be? Who else is so richly endowed as to be able to mimic Cugie's accent, the shofar blowing, and, at my request, a fighter plane nose-diving over Berchtesgaden—*and* the Fuehrer going crazy underneath? Herbie's enthusiasm and virtuosity are such that my father must sometimes caution him to keep certain of his imitations to himself, unique though they may be. "But," protests Herbie, "my fart is perfect." "Could be, for all I know," replies the boss, "but not in front of a mixed crowd." "But I've been working on it for months. Listen!" "Oh, spare me, Bratasky, please. It just ain't exactly what a nice tired guest wants to hear in a casino after his dinner. You can appreciate that, can't you? Or can't you? I don't get

you sometimes, where your brain is. Don’t you realize that these are people who keep kosher? Don’t you get it about women and children? My friend, it’s simple—the shofar is for the High Holidays and the other stuff is for the toilet. Period, Herbie. Finished.”

So he comes to imitate for me, his awestruck acolyte, the toots and the tattoos that are forbidden him in public by my Mosaic dad. It turns out that not only can he simulate the panoply of sounds—ranging from the faintest springtime sough to the twenty-one-gun salute—with which mankind emits its gases, but he can also “do diarrhea.” Not, he is quick to inform me, some poor shlimazel in its throes—that he had already mastered back in high school—but the full Wagnerian strains of fecal *Sturm und Drang*. “I could be in Ripley’s,” he tells me. “You read Ripley’s, don’t you—then judge for yourself!” I hear the rasp of a zipper being undone. Then a most enviable stream belting an enamel bowl. Next the whoosh of the flush, followed by the gargle and hiccup of a reluctant tap commencing to percolate. And all of it emanating from Herbie’s mouth.

I could fall down and worship at his feet.

“And catch *this!*” This is two hands soaping one another—but seemingly in Herbie’s mouth. “All winter long I would go into the toilet at the Automat and just sit there and listen.” “You would?” “Sure. I listen even to my own self every single time I go to the can.” “You do?” “But your old man, he’s the expert, and to him it’s only one thing—dirty! ‘Period!’ ” adds Herbie, and in a voice exactly like my old man’s!

And he means every word he says. How come, I wonder. How can Herbie know so much and care so passionately about the tintinnabulations of the can? And why do tone-deaf philistines like my father care so little?

So it seems in summer, while I am under the demon drummer’s spell. Then Yom Kippur comes and Bratasky goes, and what good does it do me to have learned what someone like that has to teach a growing boy? Our -witzes, -

bergs, and -steins are dispersed overnight to regions as remote to me as Babylon—Hanging Gardens called Pelham and Queens and Hackensack—and the local terrain is reclaimed by the natives who till the fields, milk the cows, keep the stores, and work year round for the county and the state. I am one of two Jewish children in a class of twenty-five, and a feel for the rules and preferences of society (as ingrained in me, it seems, as susceptibility to the feverish, the flamboyant, the bizarre) dictates that, regardless of how tempted I may be to light my fuse and show these hicks a few of Herbie's fireworks, I do not distinguish myself from my schoolmates by anything other than grades. To do otherwise, I realize—and without my father even having to remind me—will get me nowhere. And nowhere is not where I am expected to go.

So, like a boy on a calendar illustration, I trudge nearly two miles through billowing snowdrifts down our mountain road to the school where I spend my winters excelling, while far to the south, in that biggest of cities, where anything goes, Herbie (who sells linoleum for an uncle during the day and plays with a Latin American combo on weekends) strives to perfect the last of his lavatory impressions. He writes of his progress in a letter that I carry hidden away in the button-down back pocket of my knickers and reread every chance I get; aside from birthday cards and stamp "approvals," it is the only piece of mail I have ever received. Of course I am terrified that if I should drown while ice skating or break my neck while sledding, the envelope postmarked BROOKLYN, NY will be found by one of my schoolmates, and they will all stand around my corpse holding their noses. My mother and father will be shamed forever. The Hungarian Royale will lose its good name and go bankrupt. Probably I will not be allowed to be buried within the cemetery walls with the other Jews. And all because of what Herbie dares to write down on a piece of paper and then mail through a government post office to a

nine-year-old child, who is imagined by his world (and thus by himself) to be pure. Does Bratasky really fail to understand how decent people feel about such things? Doesn't he know that even sending a letter like this he is probably breaking a law, and making of me an accomplice? But if so, why do I persist in carrying the incriminating document around with me all day long? It is in my pocket even while I am on my feet battling for first place in the weekly spelling bee against the other finalist, my curly-haired co-religionist and the concert-pianist-to-be, brilliant Madeline Levine; it is in my pajama pocket at night, to be read by flashlight beneath the covers, and then to sleep with, next to my heart. "I am really getting down to a science how it sounds when you pull the paper off the roller. Which about gives me the whole shmeer, kid. Herbert L. Bratasky *and nobody else in the world* can now do taking a leak, taking a crap, diarrhea—*and* unrolling the paper itself. That leaves me just one mountain to climb—wiping!"

By the time I am eighteen and a freshman at Syracuse, my penchant for mimicry very nearly equals my mentor's, only instead of imitations à la Bratasky, I do Bratasky, the guests, and the characters on the staff. I impersonate our tuxedoed Rumanian headwaiter putting on the dog in the dining room—"This way, please, Monsieur Kornfeld … Madame, more derma?"—then, back in the kitchen, threatening in the coarsest Yiddish to strangle the drunken chef. I impersonate our Gentiles, the gawky handyman George, shyly observing the ladies' poolside rumba class, and Big Bud, the aging muscular lifeguard (and grounds attendant) who smoothly hustles the vacationing housewife, and then, if he can, her nubile offspring sunning her new nose job. I even do a long dialogue (tragical-comical-historical-pastoral) of my exhausted parents undressing for bed the night after the close of the season. To find that the most ordinary events out of my former life are considered by others to be so *entertaining* somewhat astonishes me—

also I am startled at first to discover that not everybody seems to have enjoyed formative years so densely populated with vivid types. Nor had I begun to imagine that I was quite so vivid myself.

In my first few semesters at college I am awarded leading roles in university productions of plays by Giraudoux, Sophocles, and Congreve. I appear in a musical comedy, singing, and even dancing, in my fashion. There seems to be nothing I cannot do on a stage—there would seem to be nothing that can keep me *off* the stage. At the beginning of my sophomore year, my parents visit school to see me play Tiresias—older, as I interpret the role, than the two of them together—and afterward, at the opening-night party, they watch uneasily as I respond to a request from the cast to entertain with an imitation of the princely rabbi with the perfect diction who annually comes “all the way” from Poughkeepsie to conduct High Holiday services in the casino of the hotel. The following morning I show them around the campus. On the path to the library several students compliment me on my staggering rendition of old age the night before. Impressed—but reminding me also, with a touch of her irony, that not so long ago the stage star’s diapers were hers to change and wash—my mother says, “Everybody knows you already, you’re famous,” while my father, struggling with disappointment, asks yet again, “And medical school is out?” Whereupon I tell him for the tenth time—*telling* him it’s the tenth time—“I want to act,” and believe as much myself, until that day when all at once performing, in my fashion, seems to me the most pointless, ephemeral, and pathetically self-aggrandizing of pursuits. Savagely I turn upon myself for allowing everyone, indeed, to know me already, to glimpse the depths of mindless vanity that the confines of the nest and the strictures of the sticks had previously prevented me from exposing, even to myself. I am so humiliated by the nakedness of what I have been up to that I consider transferring to another school,

where I can start out afresh, untainted in the eyes of others by egomaniacal cravings for spotlight and applause.

Months follow in which I adopt a penitential new goal for myself every other week. I *will* go to medical school—and train to be a surgeon. Though perhaps as a psychiatrist I can do even more good for mankind. I will become a lawyer … a diplomat … why *not* a rabbi, one who is studious, contemplative, *deep* … I read *I and Thou* and the Hasidic tales, and home on vacation question my parents about the family's history in the old country. But as it is over fifty years since my grandparents emigrated to America, and as they are dead and their children by and large without any but the most sentimental interest in our origins in mid-Europe, in time I give up the inquiry, and the rabbinical fantasy with it. Though not the effort to ground myself in what is substantial. It is still with the utmost self-disgust that I remember my decrepitude in *Oedipus Rex*, my impish charm in *Finian's Rainbow*—all that cloying *acting!* Enough frivolity and manic showing off! At twenty I must stop impersonating others and Become Myself, or at least begin to impersonate the self I believe I ought now to be.

He—the next me—turns out to be a sober, solitary, rather refined young man devoted to European literature and languages. My fellow actors are amused by the way in which I abandon the stage and retreat into a rooming house, taking with me as companions those great writers whom I choose to call, as an undergraduate, "the architects of my mind." "Yes, David has left the world," my drama society rival is reported to be saying, "to become a man of the cloth." Well, I have my airs, and the power, apparently, to dramatize myself and my choices, but above all it is that I am an absolutist—a *young* absolutist—and know no way to shed a skin other than by inserting the scalpel and lacerating myself from end to end. I am one thing or I am the other. Thus, at twenty, do I set out to undo the contradictions and overleap the uncertainties.

During my remaining years at college I live somewhat as I had during my boyhood winters, when the hotel was shut down and I read hundreds of library books through hundreds of snowstorms. The work of repairing and refurbishing goes on daily throughout the Arctic months—I hear the sound of the tire chains nicking at the plowed roadways, I hear planks dropping off the pickup truck into the snow, and the simple inspiring noises of the hammer and the saw. Beyond the snow-caked sill I see George driving down with Big Bud to fix the cabanas by the covered pool. I wave my arm, George blows the horn … and to me it is as though the Kepeshes are now three animals in cozy, fortified hibernation, Mamma, Papa, and Baby safely tucked away in Family Paradise.

Instead of the vivid guests themselves, we have with us in winter their letters, read aloud and with no deficiency of vividness or volume by my father at the dinner table. *Selling himself* is the man's specialty, as he sees it; likewise, *showing people a good time*, and, no matter how ill-mannered they themselves may be, *treating them like human beings*. In the off-season, however, the balance of power shifts a little, and it is the clientele, nostalgic for the stuffed cabbage and the sunshine and the laughs, who divest themselves of their exacting imperiousness—"They sign the register," says my mother, "and every *ballagula* and his *shtunk* of a wife is suddenly the Duke and the Duchess of Windsor"—and begin to treat my father as though he too were a paid-up member of the species, rather than the target for their discontent, and straight man for their ridiculous royal routines. When the snow is deepest, there are sometimes as many as four and five newsy letters a week—an engagement in Jackson Heights, moving to Miami because of health, opening a second store in White Plains … Oh, how he loves getting news of the best and the worst that is happening to them. That proves something to him about what the Hungarian Royale means to people—

that proves everything, in fact, and not only about the meaning of his hotel.

After reading the letters, he clears a place at the end of the table, and beside a plate full of my mother's *rugalech*, and in his sprawling longhand, composes his replies. I correct the spelling and insert punctuation where he has drawn the dashes that separate his single run-on paragraph into irregular chunks of philosophizing, reminiscence, prophecy, sagacity, political analysis, condolence, and congratulation. Then my mother types each letter on Hungarian Royale stationery—below the inscription that reads, "*Old Country Hospitality In A Beautiful Mountain Setting. Dietary Laws Strictly Observed*. Y*our Proprietors, Abe and Belle Kepesh*"—and adds the P.S. confirming reservations for the summer ahead and requesting a small deposit.

Before she met my father on a vacation in these very hills—he was then twenty-one, and without a calling, spending the summer as a short-order cook—she worked for her first three years out of high school as a legal secretary. As legend has it, she had been a meticulous, conscientious young woman of astounding competence, who all but lived to serve the patrician Wall Street lawyers who employed her, men whose stature—moral *and* physical—she will in fact speak of reverentially until she dies. Her Mr. Clark, a grandson of the firm's founder, continues sending her birthday greetings by telegram even after he retires to Arizona, and every year, with the telegram in her hand, she says dreamily to my balding father and to little me, "Oh, he was such a tall and handsome man. And so dignified. I can still remember how he stood up at his desk when I came into his office to be interviewed for the job. I don't think I'll ever forget that posture of his." But, as it happened, it was a burly, hirsute man, with a strong prominent cask of a chest, Popeye's biceps, and no class credentials, who saw her leaning on a piano singing "Amapola" with a group of

vacationers up from the city, and promptly said to himself, “I’m going to marry that girl.” Her hair and her eyes were so dark, and her legs and bosom so round and “well developed” that he thought at first she might actually be Spanish. And the besetting passion for impeccability that had endeared her so to the junior Mr. Clark only caused her to be all the more alluring to the energetic young go-getter with not a little of the slave driver in his own driven, slavish soul.

Unfortunately, once she marries, the qualities that had made her the austere Gentile boss’s treasure bring her very nearly to the brink of nervous collapse by the end of each summer—for even in a small family-run hotel like ours there is always a complaint to be investigated, an employee to be watched, linens to be counted, food to be tasted, accounts to be tallied … on and on and on it goes, and, alas, she can never leave a job to the person supposed to be doing it, not when she discovers that it is not being Done Right. Only in the winter, when my father and I assume the unlikely roles of Clark *père* and *fils*, and she sits in perfect typing posture at the big black Remington Noiseless precisely indenting his garrulous replies, do I get a glimpse of the demure and happy little *señorita* with whom he had fallen in love at first sight.

Sometimes after dinner she even invites me, a grade-school child, to pretend that I am an executive and to dictate a letter to her so that she can show me the magic of her shorthand. “You own a shipping company,” she tells me, though in fact I have only just been allowed to buy my first penknife, “go ahead.” Regularly enough she reminds me of the distinction between an ordinary office secretary and what she had been, which was a *legal* secretary. My father proudly confirms that she had indeed been the most flawless legal secretary ever to work for the firm—Mr. Clark had written as much to him in a letter of congratulation on the occasion of their engagement. Then one winter, when

apparently I am of age, she teaches me to type. No one, before or since, has ever taught me anything with so much innocence and conviction.

But that is winter, the secret season. In summer, surrounded, her dark eyes dart frantically, and she yelps and yipes like a sheep dog whose survival depends upon driving his master's unruly flock to market. A single little lamb drifting a few feet away sends her full-speed down the rugged slope—a baa from elsewhere, and she is off in the opposite direction. And it does not stop until the High Holidays are over, and even then it doesn't stop. For when the last guest has departed, inventory-taking must begin—must! that minute! What has been broken, torn, stained, chipped, smashed, bent, cracked, pilfered, what is to be repaired, replaced, repainted, thrown out entirely, "a total loss." To this simple and tidy little woman who loves nothing in the world so much as the sight of a perfect, unsmudged carbon copy falls the job of going from room to room to record in her ledger the extent of the violence that has been wreaked upon our mountain stronghold by the vandal hordes my father persists in maintaining—over her vehement opposition—are only other human beings.

Just as the raging Catskill winters transform each of us back into a sweeter, saner, innocent, more sentimental sort of Kepesh, so in my room in Syracuse solitude goes to work on me and gradually I feel the lightweight and the show-off blessedly taking his leave. Not that, for all my reading, underlining, and note-taking, I become *entirely* selfless. A dictum attributed to no less notable an egotist than Lord Byron impresses me with its mellifluous wisdom and resolves in only six words what was beginning to seem a dilemma of insuperable moral proportions. With a certain strategic daring, I begin quoting it aloud to the coeds who resist me by arguing that I'm too smart for such things. "Studious by day," I inform them, "dissolute by night." For "dissolute" I soon find it best to substitute "desirous"—I am

not in a palazzo in Venice, after all, but in upstate New York, on a college campus, and I can't afford to unsettle these girls any more than I apparently do already with my "vocabulary" and my growing reputation as a "loner." Reading Macaulay for English 203, I come upon his description of Addison's collaborator Steele, and, "Eureka!" I cry, for here is yet *another* bit of prestigious justification for my high grades and my base desires. "A rake among scholars, a scholar among rakes." Perfect! I tack it to my bulletin board, along with the line from Byron, and directly above the names of the girls whom I have set my mind to *seduce*, a word whose deepest resonances come to me, neither from pornography nor pulp magazines, but from my agonized reading in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*.

I have only one male friend I see regularly, a nervous, awkward, and homely philosophy major named Louis Jelinek, who in fact is my Kierkegaard mentor. Like me, Louis rents a room in a private house in town rather than live in the college dormitory with boys whose rituals of camaraderie he too considers contemptible. He is working his way through school at a hamburger joint (rather than accept money from the Scarsdale parents he despises) and carries its perfume wherever he goes. When I happen to touch him, either accidentally or simply out of high spirits or fellow feeling, he leaps away as though in fear of having his stinking rags contaminated. "Hands off," he snarls. "What are you, Kepesh, still running for some fucking office?" Am I? It hadn't occurred to me. Which one?

Oddly, whatever Louis says of me, even in pique or in a tirade, seems significant for the solemn undertaking I call "understanding myself." Because he is not interested, as far as I can see, in pleasing anyone—family, faculty, landlady, shopkeepers, and certainly least of all, those "bourgeois barbarians," our fellow students—I imagine him to be more profoundly in touch with "reality" than I am. I am one of those tall, wavy-haired boys with a cleft in his chin who has

developed winning ways in high school, and now I cannot seem to shake them, hard as I try. Especially alongside Louis do I feel pitifully banal: so neat, so clean, so *charming* when the need arises, and despite all my disclaimers to the contrary, not quite unconcerned as yet with appearances and reputation. Why can't I be more of a Jelinek, reeking of fried onions and looking down on the entire world? Behold the refuse bin wherein he dwells! Crusts and cores and peelings and wrappings—the perfect mess! Just look upon the clotted Kleenex beside his ravaged bed, Kleenex *clinging* to his tattered carpet slippers. Only seconds after orgasm, and even in the privacy of my locked room, I automatically toss into a waste-basket the telltale evidence of self-abuse, whereas Jelinek—eccentric, contemptuous, unaffiliated, and unassailable Jelinek—seems not to care at all what the world knows or thinks of his copious ejaculations.

I am stunned, can't grasp it, for weeks afterward won't believe it when a student in the philosophy program says in passing one day that "of course" my friend is a "practicing" homosexual. *My* friend? It cannot be. "Sissies," of course, I am familiar with. Each summer we would have a few famous ones at the hotel, little Jewish pashas on holiday, first brought to my attention by Herbie B. With fascination I used to watch them being carried out of the sunlight and into the shade, even as they dizzily imbibed sweet chocolate drinks through a pair of straws, and their brows and cheeks were cleansed and dried by the handkerchiefs of galley slaves called Grandma, Mamma, and Auntie. And then there were the few unfortunates at school, boys born with their arms screwed on like girls, who couldn't throw a ball right no matter how many private hours of patient instruction you gave them. But as for a practicing homosexual? Never, never, in all my nineteen years. Except, of course, that time right after my bar mitzvah, when I took a bus by myself to a stamp collectors' fair in Albany, and in the Greyhound