



In History's Grip: Philip Roth's Newark Trilogy (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and C)

Michael Kimmage

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In History's Grip concentrates on the literature of Philip Roth, one of America's greatest writers, and in particular on *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*. Each of these novels from the 1990s uses Newark, New Jersey, to explore American history and character. Each features a protagonist who grows up in and then leaves Newark, after which he is undone by a historically generated crisis. The city's twentieth-century decline from immigrant metropolis to postindustrial disaster completes the motif of history and its terrifying power over individual destiny.

In History's Grip is the first critical study to foreground the city of Newark as the source of Roth's inspiration, and to scrutinize a subject Roth was accused of avoiding as a younger writer—history. In so doing, the book brings together the two halves of Roth's decades-long career: the first featuring characters who live outside of history's grip; the second, characters entrapped in historical patterns beyond their ken and control.

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