



Portnoy's Complaint

Philip Roth

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The famous confession of Alexander Portnoy, who is thrust through life by his unappeasable sexuality, yet held back at the same time by the iron grip of his unforgettable childhood. Hilariously funny, boldly intimate, startlingly candid, *Portnoy's Complaint* was an immediate bestseller upon its publication in 1969, and is perhaps Roth's best-known book.

Portnoy's Complaint n. [after Alexander Portnoy (1933-)] A disorder in which strongly-felt ethical and altruistic impulses are perpetually warring with extreme sexual longings, often of a perverse nature. Spielvogel says: 'Acts of exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism, auto-eroticism and oral coitus are plentiful; as a consequence of the patient's "morality," however, neither fantasy nor act issues in genuine sexual gratification, but rather in overriding feelings of shame and the dread of retribution, particularly in the form of castration.' (Spielvogel, O. 'The Puzzled Penis', *Internationale Zeitschrift fur Psychoanalyse*, Vol. XXIV, p. 909.) it is believed by Spielvogel that many of the symptoms can be traced to the bonds obtaining in the mother-child relationship.

Portnoy's Complaint Details

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Author : Philip Roth

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From Reader Review Portnoy's Complaint for online ebook

Lubinka Dimitrova says

Although I definitely enjoyed it more than Bukowski's *Women*, I've come to realise that books about middle-aged male Americans who spend their time navel-gazing and contemplating their relationship with their penis is probably not my cup of tea. The book was fun, but I strongly suspect that if it weren't for the narrator, I might have never finished it. Ron Silver is a brilliant reader, I doubt that I would have enjoyed the story more even if Roth himself was whispering it in my ear.

Glenn Sumi says

Updated May 22, 2018: R.I.P. Philip Roth. Author of some of the defining works of the late 20th century (and even some of the early 21st). What a magnificent second act you had... and what a legacy you leave behind.

21 Random Thoughts After Reading Philip Roth's Classic *Portnoy's Complaint* 46 Years After Its Controversial Publication

1. I've read three or four Philip Roth books, but how have I never read this, which catapulted him to literary fame – or at least notoriety and celebrity – in the late 60s? Everyone's read it! Even Don Draper!
2. The young Roth sure was funny. We're talking laugh out loud, text-your-best-friends-favourite-lines, nearly pee your pants funny.
3. The guy was also rude and crude and.... *hmmm.... okay, maybe I shouldn't text that... um... where were we?* Yes, he was rude and crude, shocking even by today's standards.

Then again...

4. It's not really Roth saying these wild things but a *fictional character* – namely, Alexander Portnoy, a 30-something Jewish civil liberties attorney who's got one big fat mother complex. Incidentally, Roth was born the same year (1933) and in the same city (Newark, NJ) as his protagonist. But they're not the same guy, got it?

Also:

5. In a brilliant structural device, the book is essentially Alex's extended monologue to his psychotherapist, with Alex trying to find out why he's so screwed up. His rant includes recounting his extreme sexual

fantasies and fetishes, memories of chronic childhood masturbation habits and how he feels his persistent bachelorhood (he's in his 30s! and not married! and likes shiksas!) is tied to his ambivalent relationship with his (castrating!) mother. So, we wouldn't want to censor or harshly judge a fictional Jewish character's scabrous stream of consciousness, right? (Two words, folks: Leopold Bloom.)

6. *Oy gevalt!* Fictional guilt-inducing Jewish mothers seem a lot like guilt-inducing Asian mothers.

7. Back then, it must have been a really big deal to be in your 30s and unmarried.

8. Just when you think "Oedipus complex," Roth/Portnoy mentions Oedipus.

9. Woody Allen, who was doing stand-up at the time, must have been influenced by this book, not just in the artist-talking-to-therapist scenes but in the Jew-goes-to-WASP-girlfriend's-home-for-Thanksgiving scene in *Annie Hall*.

10. Even with the psychoanalyst set-up, Roth cleverly gets in stuff Portnoy wouldn't necessarily tell his therapist, but which is richly detailed and adds to the novel's texture. Smart.

11. The infamous liver scene makes the pastry-shtupping in *American Pie* (surely an homage) seem tame.

12. How funny is it that the book was published in 1969? 69, get it? (*groan*)

13. In 1969 it was way more acceptable to be misogynistic and homophobic in print. Not so funny today. (*different kind of groan*)

14. As Katie Roiphe points out in an excellent essay from *In Praise of Messy Lives: Essays*, today's literary male novelists (Dave Eggers, Jonathan Franzen, Michael Chabon) sure don't write about sex the way Roth, Updike and Mailer did when they were their age.

15. There's an exuberance and a vitality to this novel that's missing from a lot of the current literary fiction I read.

16. The book's baseball sequences, memories, what have you... I'm not even especially *fond* of the game, but Roth writes them with affection, tenderness and grace. And his portrait of middle-aged Jewish husband-dom is as sensitive and moving as his depiction of that era's discreet anti-Semitism is disturbing.

17. Not everything works (a trip to Israel, for instance), but damn this is still a fine book.

18. It was adapted into a movie starring Richard Benjamin (who also starred in his *Goodbye, Columbus*), and I recall seeing scenes from it late at night on TV, but it looked overdone and (checking the internet) it got really mixed reviews. So: thanks, but no thanks.

19. If you do want to see a movie that captures Roth's anarchic, self-obsessed spirit, check out Alex Ross Perry's *Listen Up Philip*, which pays homage to the man in the central character, title and even the font used in the marketing.

20. I've always been fascinated by those American bestsellers from the late 60s to early 70s by writers dealing with the fallout of the sexual revolution. Now I'm curious about John Updike's *Couples* and Erica Jong's *Fear Of Flying*.

But mostly...

21. I want to read more Philip Roth.

Jr Bacdayan says

Hey, Roth! What's with the smug smile on that face of yours? What's with that satisfied look? You think you're now a goy or something? Are you thinking of a shikse or something? Are you high? You think just because you wrote a bunch of anti-semitic, auto-erotic stuff you're some bigshot? What's the sense with that piece of crap? Don't you dare turn your back on me you balding Kike! You wanker! You kosher prick! You... oh, where's the sense in this? Come on, mate. Is this really just to ridicule society? What's the gist, the point, the essence? To say things which nobody has said before? Is it just anger, contempt? Sure, I get the whole defy the boundaries of society thing, to be rid of the cultural standards and stuff. Freedom from the restrictive paradigm! I get it, I do. Fuck society. Fuck culture, marriage, family, democracy, capitalism, sexual-restraint. Fuck them all! But is it just that? Why go through all the girlfriends? I bet that's boasting there, Philip. Just because you had cunt doesn't mean we wanna hear about it. All you did was give me a boner in some parts. That wasn't a very nice thing to do given all the whining coming with it. You're an asshole, Roth! You're worse. You're thinking of doing perverse stuff to your own Mother! That's going beyond the oedipal tendencies, bud. Are you suggesting that we should practice incest because fuck the society? Incest because fuck the law? You motherfucker! That's gross, man. Is that the point? What about all that wanking? Is it just to make me wanna wank myself? Well, you succeeded mate. I may have wanked somewhere in between reading your book. Satisfied, Roth? You corrupted a youth. If someone catches me doing the deed, Imma tell them I learned it from the venerated Philip Roth. But I'm telling you, you didn't succeed with that whole incest thing. You stay out of my family! And really the liver? You thought up that it should be fed to a family? I bet you did that in real life. What is this semi-autobiographical? Because I'm telling ya, some things here were a little too graphic to be made up. Come on, bud. Say it. I did all this when I was younger. There's a good boy. So you just wanted to share life experiences, eh? No? Then what is it? Ah, I think I've got it. Now, Phil. Mind if I call you Phil? So is this really just another *Catcher in the Rye*, except you know, you have crazy substituting the teenage angst here. Is it really just I'm too good for you stuff? Just another anarchy dude, another all that "my life, my rules" crap. The world's your oyster kid. Joke's on you, it's not. What's with all the sexual stuff? To prove that sex is a natural instinct and shouldn't be so shameful? Sure, that's pretty good. But is that all? Defy life, sex is normal. Is that it? Bullshit, Phil! You may be a chronic-wanker, but you're not stupid enough to write a book about this stuff. This is all movie crap. This is the bread and butter of scriptwriters, not novelists. You've got more pride than that. You've won a Pulitzer for cryin out loud! Why write this? What are you trying to tell me? Why all the babble! Are you a Nazi? Are you trying to justify the holocaust? What is with this book? Is it to make me be a better man? Is it supposed to show the inadequacies of my complaints, the shallowness of it all? Are you using reverse psychology?! It won't work, boyo. We gentiles are a smarter breed than you give us credit for. You cunt! You sexist, racist, homophobic son of a woman. Are you trying to show us the thoughts of the superior Caucasian man? Hehe! Now I'm the racist one. Sorry, Phil. Didn't mean to hurt ya there. But I'm still stumped here. What's the big picture? What's it saying to me? Libido is libertarian? I guess I can work with that. Hahaha! Wait, humor won't work here, Phil. You wrote a book and I read it. You have to answer me here. No, you don't have the right to remain silent. No, you can't invoke your right to self-

incrimination. Say it! Open up! Spill the beans! Let the cat out of the bag! Try to see the big picture, you say? Ah! I see! It's in the punch-line! What, no comment? So it's about the doctor. I get it now, sonny. You thought that you freed yourself from the chains of society. You broke everything, you howled! You didn't give a crap about anything. Heck, you even tore the tag off the mattress! But really, you weren't freed. The fact that you were talking to a shrink proved that you thought something was wrong with you. You say you didn't give a shit, but you put yourself under observation. You say you lived big, but you confined yourself with a mental-health professional. You were under invisible chains, your freedom was an illusion. Why the silence now, Phil? Say something. What? I'm confusing you with Portnoy? But you wrote it, mate. Doesn't that sort of identify you with the protagonist? What? I'm an asshole? Alright, whatever. You're the man. I'm just saying, freedom from societal-norms is an illusion. Sometimes, all we can do is complain. Am I right, Phil?

Malbadeen says

It's recently been brought to my attention that my book reviews frequently are not actually about the book. And I'm wondering why would you want to know about the book when all you have to do is click on the little blurb about the book and then get on with the fascinating reading about...oh, say where I bought my milk last Tuesday or my fondest/most traumatic childhood memory, etc, etc.

And, yet. I aim to please so here is my sincere attempt to tell you something about this book. It (the book) goes something like this:

sex

sex

sex

sex

guilt

guilt

guilt

guilt

sex

sex

sex

guilt

guilt

moms fault

guilt

moms fault

moms fault

guilt

sex

sex

guilt

kinda dads fault too

mostly moms fault

guilt

sex

sex

sex

self loathing
Jewish loathing
protestant loathing
protestant awe
more jewish loathing
again with the Protestant loathing
sex
sex
guilt
guilt
guilt
guilt
partial reconciliation with perceptions of all things Jewish
attempt at sex
failure at sex
guilt
guilt
guilt
mom's fault

Now that I've, no doubt drawn you into the plot line and compelled you to pick up the book for yourself, let me share with you some of my personal thoughts on the book.

Growing up conservative/fundamentalist(?) Christian, I am no stranger to guilt. As a matter of fact some times I feel that Catholics and Jewish people think they have the market cornered on guilt, well, you know what? taint so. I got some pretty messed up voices going on in my head too, ya know. And maybe I can't articulate my guilt trips into clever phrases or pinpoint experiences but I can tell you that guilt taught me a thing or two.

1. If I don't pick up that clutter someone else is going to have to. When I was younger this meant my mom, whom after setting aside her career as an artist to raise 5 kids and nearly had (maybe did have at one point) a nervous breakdown from the lack of money, the accumulation of clutter and my argumentative nature. In my adult life this means the custodian, whom after leaving Vietnam as an educated person has to toil with 2 and sometimes 3 jobs to send his son (and seemingly only hope at respectability in this career driven society of ours) to college.

2. Flour is not cheap and ingredients are not to be wasted! oh, the shame, the shame of ruining yet ANOTHER batch of gingerbread men.

3. pre-marital sex is BAD. BAD! BAD! BAD! Offering yourself as anything less than a virgin to your someday husband is tantamount to giving someone a big bag of steaming compost with worms crawling through it for their birthday. The only thing worse than pre-marital sex is being gay.

*it might be worth noting here that there was some guilt reprieve and gargantuan amounts of titillating conversation regarding what exactly you COULD do, short of having sex but even that was fraught with the anxiety of "accidentally" having sex. and I'm still a little hazy on whether or not I can participate in oral sex. I'm assuming it's a no go, while (okay Catholics and Jewish people, I have to admit I've got it easier here) masturbating is okay AS LONG AS one doesn't start fantasizing about others while masturbating. Which you gotta hand it to them (wa-ha-ha) is that not the purest form of masturbation?

4. Paper is meant to be used and re-used and re-used and re-used and re-used. Buying new paper is an

intolerable opulence reserved for gluttonous pigs and ONLY gluttonous pigs.
etc, etc, etc,

so, did I find Portnoy's excessive guilt to be unreasonable or unreadable, not at all. I found it to be hilarious in it's familiarity. Matter of fact I found most of the book to be hilarious, which I hadn't anticipated. Some passages that I found particularly amusing are as follows:

-when he ate pudding he shouldn't have, "Well, good Christ, how was I supposed to know all that, Hanna? Who looks into the fine points when he's hungry? I'm eight years old and chocolate pudding happens to get me hot.

-Talking to his "doctor", "All I do is complain, the repugnance seems, bottomless, and I'm beginning to wonder if maybe enough isn't enough. I hear myself indulging in the kind of ritualized bellyaching that is just what gives psychoanalytic patients such a bad name with the general public"

-a child hood sexual fantasy, "Her favorite line of prose is a masterpiece, 'Fuck my pussy, Fuckface, till I faint.' when I fart in the bathtub, she kneels naked on the tile floor, leans all the way over, and kisses the bubbles."

-While observing "goys" at the skating rink, "Jesus, look how guiltlessly they eat between meals! what girls!"

-about a non Jewish girlfriend, ".....played polo (yes, a games form on top of a horse!)

But humor aside, I also appreciated some other aspects of the story. I loved the line, "What I'm saying, Doctor, is that I don't seem to stick my dick up these girls, as much as I stick it up their backgrounds-as though through fucking I will discover America". I remember standing alone in NYC (coming from a small town in Oregon) at age 17 and seeing the enormous variety of people and thinking how great it would be to be with the deaf man, the black man, the man in a wheel chair, the businessman, etc,etc,etc. Thinking how much I would KNOW if I could be with all of them (not simultaneously - gross! and not to worry, mom-should you come across this- I wasn't thinking sleep with them, just dates ya know, just some museums trips and a dinner here or there. okay maybe some light petting too, but really that's as far as that fantasy went). In the end I didn't broaden my horizons that way, I ended up dating one guy. One very nice Jewish boy. But still, I like the idea.

And finally I'd like to say that I think I damn near cried at one point near the end and yes, I did also nearly cry this week when I saw a mud flap of that silhouetted naked lady because I so hate the "ideal" that society feels so comfortable imposing on us less than "perfect" females, and I was a little chocked up when my son said, "I like having you for a mom", and all of this near teary-ness might indicate a certain hormonal fluctuation orrrrrrrrr it might indicate that I'm a sensitive genius? consider. Regardless, I felt sorry for the pathetic schlep at one point.

And thus concludes my thorough look at Portnoy's complaints plot points as well as the ubiquitous ME, ME, ME portion of my review.

Shovelmonkey1 says

Earlier today I grossly contradicted myself by stating that I'd enjoyed all the books I'd read which were written by Philip Roth. Then I realised I'd forgotten about Portnoy's Complaint.

There is a school of thought which says to write well you have to write about what you know. On that basis I know I definitely did not like this book, although that unfortunately does not guarantee that I will excel at writing about it. With that in mind Philip Roth is official King of writing about what you know and his throne is probably made from giant piles of books in which he has written about being himself or a variant thereof.

This book deals with several favorite Roth topics:

Being male (tick)

Being Jewish (tick)

Being an American Jewish Male (tick)

A mild obsession with the penis (tick)

Moderate biographical references throughout his works of fiction thus allowing us to see the author but never really get to know him (tick).

Not fitting into any of these categories, being neither male, Jewish, American or in possession of that vital bit of equipment (penis, not brain before anyone makes jokes) this book did not win me over. A monologue of sexual repression poured forth by the eponymous Alexander Portnoy, a young man who is so tied to the apron strings of his mother that he's only managed to liberate his right hand and his libido. Given the subject matter I think that it would be better dubbed a "manologue" rather than a monologue.

The highlight of the book for many (and this forms a lynch pin of many non Goodreads reviews and critiques) is Alexander Portnoy's sexual adventures with a piece of raw liver. Man meat meets cold meat in a way which might give you disturbing nightmares about visiting the deli. The misused liver is then served up to the family as part of a delicious traditional Jewish recipe later that same day. Gehakte leber anyone? And don't even ask what the special ingredient in the schmaltz and gribenes is!

Gorkem says

Portnoy'un Feryad?, dönemsel olarak bakıldığında neden çok fazla rahatsız edici olabileceği çok net bir şekilde anlaşılabiliyor. Cinsel devrim öncesi, bireysel cinsel varoluşun hem algılaması, hem dinsel öğeler, hem de Freudyen bakış yapışları arasında bence özel bir kitap. Bu perspektiften bakıldığında aynıdır. Hatta, Oedipus gönderimleri, Portnoy gibi karakter yaratması ve anlatması bakımından 5 yıldız bile olabilirdi, eğer 1960'larda ABD'de yayınsaydı.

Şu an için değerlendirilimde, Roth'un absürtlük algısı fazla aşırı geldi. Ve çizdiği yan karakterler, yorucu.Kitap okurken, özellikle bazı bölümlerde Woody Allen'in filmi izliyormu gibi keyifle okudum ve sonrasında artık bayacak bir durumda neredeyse American Pie izliyormu hissi verdi.

Sonuç:

Genel anlamda, Portnoy'un Feryad?, benim hiç sevmemi çok fazla Amerikan ve cıvık cıvık bir anlatıma sahip. Her ne kadar Portnoy dönemsel olarak önemli bir kitap olsa da, Roth'un yüklemeler yaptığı tüm alt metinlere rağmen, Roth'un laubali anlatması yorucu ve sıkıcı bir hale gelmeye başladı. Ve sonuç olarak da, Roth'u ve kitabı hiç sevmedim.

Amerikan edebiyatına meraklıysanız, okunması gereken bir kitap. Portnoy'u keşke Roth değil de başka bir yazar daha farklı anlatsaydı.

Yi okumalar.

10/7

Michael Finocchiaro says

This is the book that made Philip Roth both famous and scandalous. Portnoy is a mother-obsessed sexual maniac and actually quite hilarious. Who else would have had his character masturbating with a cow liver other than the author of the equally darkly humorous Sabbath's Theater? This book and the reaction to it drives the Nathan Zuckerman series of books which all refer back to the public reaction with equal measures of awe and dismay. The book itself is a classic and extremely well-written as only Roth can write. RIP (1933-2018). One of America's literary giants has left us.

zumurruddu says

Il mare impetuoso al tramonto...(*)

Esilarante, caustico, irriverente. Che altro dire?

Che ogni volta che leggo questo autore rimango incantata dalla vividezza, dalla potenza con cui le persone (nemmeno i personaggi) saltano fuori dalle pagine, e si muovono e parlano e agiscono, veri, nitidi, naturali. E la scrittura accattivante, scoppiettante, che non perde un colpo.

E non ho potuto non provare partecipazione e tenerezza per Alex Portnoy, per le sue ossessioni e i suoi sensi di colpa. Il senso di colpa! Questo romanzo è un vero e proprio trattato esaustivo su questo sentimento pernicioso, persistente, onnipresente nella vita di molti...

Mi è rimasto un dubbio: o anche i miei genitori sono ebrei e me l'hanno sempre abilmente tenuto nascosto, o la cultura del senso di colpa non è solo prerogativa di questa religione...

“Quando Heshie restò ucciso in guerra, l'unica cosa che alla gente venne in mente di dire a mia zia Clara e a mio zio Hymie, per lenirne l'orrore e consolarne il dolore fu: - Se non altro non vi ha lasciati con una moglie *shikse*. Se non altro non vi ha lasciati con dei bambini *goysche*.

Fine di Heshie e della sua storia.”

(*) magari non c'entra niente ma questa è la mia colonna sonora
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Usa7N...>

Luís C. says

The case of an American Jew torn between the perfection imposed by parents and personal freedom, touches the universal! Alexander (at least for me) is not the prototype of the living Jew in the United States, suffocated by a severely exemplary education, where the parents choose the route to follow for their son, the latter who finds this life bland and demanding, who throws herself into the most insatiable sexuality (from

his childhood), he is a universal being who exists everywhere in the world: he can be Christian, Jewish, Muslim... etc, he has doubts about the belief, and the importance of this propriety and these morals, he no longer believes in the foundation of the family or marriage.

And so Alexander's monologue in front of his psychiatrist (the reader rather) continues with a lot of humor and g(oth)esque. Childhood stories (a "big masturbator") and sex stories (with the Monkey in particular). Alexander hesitates to choose between life according to the expectations of his family or the free life that escapes him in the impossibility of making a choice! So he has no life, he has an image, a very pale copy of a life. In addition he develops a very pessimistic vision of marriage, a tragicomic vision!

Alexander touches us, captivates us with his vision of things, he does not deny his belonging or hates his parents, but he opposes certain uses or beliefs.

Roth was able to present to us the soul of an American Jew without clichés, with an excellent mastery of the character of his character, and with a humor (I would not say to the Woody Allen) full of irony (original).

Deniz Balç? says

Yorumumu daha sonra girece?im.

Daniel says

I have a vague memory that when I first read "Portnoy's Complaint" as a teenager -- I was probably 16 or 17 at the time -- I either carried my paperback copy with me to my grandmother's condo, or perhaps just mentioned to her that I was reading the book. What a mistake. She was displeased with my choice in reading material, and wasn't shy about letting me know. This was many years before Philip Roth won the Pulitzer Prize, making him somewhat more respectable to the American Jewish community. To be frank, though, even if he had already won the Pulitzer at that time, Grammy likely still would have seen "Portnoy's Complaint," and probably anything else by Roth, as a *shanda fur die goyim* and best avoided by her grandson. As an already somewhat lapsed Jew at the time, though, I found the novel hilarious, shocking and frighteningly accurate, if a bit exaggerated.

At more than double the age I was then, I decided to revisit "Portnoy's Complaint" for the first time, partly because I want to see if it's held up for me after all these years, and partly to see how it compares to the handful of other Roth novels I've read in recent years, including "The Anatomy Lesson" and "The Plot Against America." So what did I find? As an older and now completely lapsed Jew, I found "Portnoy's Complaint" hilarious, shocking and frighteningly accurate, if a bit exaggerated. It also stands heads and shoulders above the other Roth novels I've read. As far as I can tell, there's "Portnoy's Complaint," and then there's everything else he's written.

I won't bother saying much about the book's content here because either you've already read it don't need to be told about it, or you should read the book, and I don't want to ruin it for you by recounting the best parts. (Frankly, the whole book's great, and singling out the best parts would be a pretty daunting task.) But I do have one caveat: I'm not sure how well this book would resonate with anyone who didn't grow up as a male in a Jewish family in America. I'm not saying other people shouldn't read this book -- they should -- but I am saying that much of both its comedy and its meaningfulness likely will be lost on all readers who aren't male American Jews. As just one small example, only such a reader could truly appreciate the brilliance of a suicide note, from a son to his mother, mentioned in passing:

Mrs. Blumenthal called. Please bring your mah-jongg rules to the game tonight. Ronald

"Portnoy's Complain" is chock-full of profanity (including judicious use of the dreaded c-word), sexual depravity (and not just the famous meat scene), and ethnic stereotypes (including a hilarious depiction of the home life of WASPs). I've seen some people criticize this book for being too much of a comedy, too prone to Borscht Belt-style humor. Well, yes, but so what? The book is intended as a comedy, and the entire novel even ends with a punchline -- and not just any punchline, but a punchline that wouldn't be out of place on a Catskills stage.

Anyhow, there's no need for me to say much more about "Portnoy's Complaint." Plus, I have an easier time writing lengthy reviews of books I hate than ones I love wholeheartedly. Much like Alexander Portnoy, I'm not very good at being positive and upbeat. I'm just glad that the book held up as well as it did for me after all these years.

Sorry, Grammy.

G.R. Reader says

Portnoy's Complaint was my first husband's favorite book, and he used to quote from it all the time. When we got divorced (it wasn't amicable), my lawyer asked how I'd feel about using that fact in court. I was strongly tempted but told him after careful consideration that it was below the belt.

As it turned out, my instincts were sound. The judge knew Philip Roth personally, and it would have been a disaster. I only discovered this several years later and was amazed at what a close call I'd had.

ArturoBelano says

Her zamanki gibi a??r spoiler içerir.

" Kadir-i mutlak tanr? hazretlerini ciddi biçimde rencide etmeden bir bardak sütün yan?nda bir salaml? sandviç yemeyi bile dü?ünemezdim. Bir de öyle otuzbiri çekip çekip f??k?rtmakla vicdan?ma nas?l bir yük bindirdi?imi dü?ünün hele ! "

Portnoy'un Feryad? edebiyat tarihinin en a?z? bozuk, terbiyesiz ve provakatif eserlerinden biri ki Türkiye'de hakl? bir ?ekilde yarg?lan?p haks?z bir ?ekilde beraat etmesi bunun göstergelerinden biri. Merak etmeyin a?z?n?n bozuklu?u üçüncü s?n?f yeralt? edebiyat? argosundan kaynakl? de?il ve hakl? bir ?ekilde yarg?lanmas? derken ironi yapm?yorum bu eser 1968'in Amerika's?nda yaz?lm?? olmas?na ra?men 50 y?l sonra bile biz hala bunlar? ne konu?acak ne de yazacak düzeye gelmi? de?iliz. Nihayetinde Türkiye'de cinsellik mevzuu taciz tecavüz zina bermuda ?eytan üçgeninde ya?anan, ay?p yorgan alt?nda olur ile deyimle?en bir halet i ruhiyede icra edilmeye devam ediyor ve bu kitab?n edepsizli?i ve aç?kl??? maalesef bize fazla. Neyse Portnoy'le birlikte hepimizin ortak feryad?na biraz yak?ndan bakmaya çal??al?m ve evvala psikanalistin divan?ndan figan?n? hayk?ran karakterimizin idi ve onu bask?layan toplumsal yap?ya yak?ndan bakal?m.

Kitap ilk gençli?i ve olgunlu?unu 45- 68 y?llar? aras?nda Newark'da Yahudi geleneklerinin bask?n oldu?u

bir ortamda geçiren 30'lu ya?lar?n ba??nda ba?ar?l?,toplumda sayg?n bir yere gelmi?, arzular?, dürtüleri ve onu bask?layan yap?lar?n do?urdu?u utanç duygusu ile ba? edemeyen Portnoy'un psikanalistin divan?ndan yükselen feryad?n?n monolog yöntemi ile aktar?lmas? ile olu?uyor. Bu biçim yazar?n anlatmak istedi?i meseleye cuk diye oturdu?unu söyleyebilirim. Biz kitap boyunca psikanalisti görmeyiz ve monolog sorularla bölünmez bu ise karakterin dolup ta?m?l???n? vurgulamak için i?levsel oluyor eserde.

Portnoy'un Amerika's? çekirdek ailenin banliyöyede icat oldu?u, ilerlemenin, geli?menin ve toplumsal ödevlerin bireyi belirledi?i bir dünyay? ve bir de buna Yahudi inanc?n?n ?ekillendirdi?i bir y???n kural ve kaide eklenince kar??m?za idi ve süperegosu, istekler ve kurallar çat??mas? ile bölünmü? öznenin bunal?mlar?n? ç?kar?yor. “ Her yerde haz?r ve naz?r” bir anne, do?ru düzgün s?çamayan sigortac? bir baba ve sütyeni ie fantezilere dal?nan bir abla. Kitab?n temel derdi bast?r?lm?? bir cinsellik olsa da yazar ayn? zamanda Mc Carthy Amerika's?n?n yasakl? konular?na da de?inmeden geçmiyor. Portnoy'un Komünist eni?tesi, okulda söylenen Enternasyoneler ve ileride karakterimizin yürüttü?ü insan haklar? ve ayr?mc?l?k kar??t? çal??malar? bize Portnoy'un döneme ve zaman?n ruhuna uymayan karakterinin di?er yönlerini de ciziyor.

“ Kolumu sallasam ay?plancak bir ay?ba çarp?yor. ” Kitap Lineer bir hat izlememekle birlikte bize hikayeyi en ba?tan anlatmaya ba?l?yor. Çocukluk an?lar?nda kar??m?za “ Tan?d??? en unutulmaz ?ahsiyet” her ?eyi bilen her yerde haz?r dominant bir anne karakteri ç?k?yor. Örneklerine s?kça rastlad???m?z o?lu?una prens muamelesi çeken bir anne. Baban?n etkisiz eleman oldu?u evde her ?ey anneden soruluyor,o?ul annenin yasa?? ile ?ekilleniyor. Bu çocukluk an?lar?ndan elimizde b?ça?? ile o?lunu tehdit eden (“ bunun bir ?aka oldu?unu dü?ünmemi mi bekliyordu) anne ve bir testisini uzun bir süre kaybetmesi kal?yor ve bu bize kastrasyona götürüyor, had?m edilmemi? ama onun korkusunu hisseden bir çocuk ve ergenli?e ad?m at?nca o cehennemi ortamdan ç?k??? çavdu?u tokatlamada buluyor hem de durmaks?z?n. Ancak bu cici, neredeyse Einstein çocu?umuz bir ay?p ve felaket korkusu olmadan bu i?i de beceremiyor, masturbasyona ba?lad???na kanser olaca??n?, kar?? cinsle (Yahudi olmayan bir ?ikse) ilk yak?nla?t???nda ömür boyu sakat kalaca??n?(kay kay bölümü) ve ilk cinsel deneyiminde (evet yine büyük bir günah, k?z Yahudi de?il) kör kalaca??na inan?yor, bizde de masturbasyon boy k?sal??? muhabetti benzeri. Bu cinsel deneyim ve ard?ndan gelen felaket beklentisi kitap boyunca sürüyor, ?FK ba?kan?n ba?s?z cesedi, telek?z?n evinde bulundu, Cemiyetin yeni gözdesi, yahudininkini diplerken bo?uldu ve daha ne gazete ba?l?klar?.. “AZAT EDEL?M Y?D'?, GER? VEREL?M ONA ?D'?”.

Dört bir yan? tabularla çevrilmi?, yasak günah ay?p ile s?n?r? çizilmi? hayat?nda ilk yasa?? çi?nemek karakterimizin id ile süperego aras?ndaki gel gitli ili?kiyi bir üst boyuta ç?kart?r, bu bölümün öncesinde “Yahudi Yahudi Yahudi ! Kusaca??m art?k ac? ceken Yahudilerin destan?ndan. Hadi bana bir iyilik edin, can?mdan aziz halk?m ve ac?larla dolu miras?n?z? ac?larla dolu götünüze sokun “ diyerek özgürle?me prati?inin kökenlerine dair ipuçlar?da vermektedir. Bireyin arzusu ile bar??mas?, oldu?u her neyse ona sahip ç?kmas? üst anlat?y? bo?a dü?ürmekle mümkündür(bu kitab?n yasaklanmas? için bir neden daha) ancak bu atarlanmakla olacak i? de?il maalesef ki Portnoy bu kimli?e ve bask?lanmas?na tekrar tekrar dönecektir.Kitap boyunca dikkat çeken bir hususda öteki olmak. Portnoy için en ba?tan yasaklanm?? anglo sakson dünyas? bir vahay? temsil etmekte o beyazlar dünyas?ndan kald?raca?? beyaz kad?nlar için o lanet Yahudi burnu olmasa neler yapacakt?r kim bilir. Özellikle kaykay bölümünde beyaz k?zlara yakla?mak için kurdu?u hayaller bana Fanon'un Siyah Deri Beyaz Maskeler kitab?n? hat?rlatt?. Arada bu kitab? da önermi? olay?m.

Kitab?n önemli karakterlerinden biri de Maymun lakapl? manken k?z?m?z. Portnoy arzulad??? bütün fantezilere maymun ile ula??rken bile “ eksik bir ?ey” kal?r geride. Daha en ba?tan arzusu sakatlanan ve bunu makulle?tirmek için bahaneler arayan karakter saf arzusu ile yüzle?ince gerisin geri süperegosuna s???n?r ve bunun için elinde güçlü doneler var, k?z saf cehalet mirim, New York Belediyesinin parlayan y?ld?z? bu cehaletle tatmin olacak diye kendini daha ne kadar küçültebilir. Ki?inin arzusundan kaçmak için

s???naca?? binbir bahane vard?r ve halk aras?nda buna yemedi denir. Neyse a?z?m? bozmadan devam edeyim ve sonlara geleyim.

Maymun'un maymun etti?i sevgili Portnoy'umuz solu?u vaat edilmi? topraklarda al?r ancak bölümün ba?l??? sürgündür. O Yahudi çocuk en sonunda öteki olmad??, herkesin ona benzedi?i karde? topraklardad?r ancak vaat edilmi? topraklarda da i?ler yolunda gitmez. O azg?n teke ?srail s?n?rlar? içinde kald?ramaz, bundan iyi sembolizm mi olur ! . Çünkü enstest büyük bir günah?r ve kimse annesinin kutsal topra??nda kald?ramaz. Maymun ile sabahlara kadar üçlü yapar ama ?srail'de en fazla hay?rl? bir k?smet buluruz.

Asl?nda dün kitap kulübünde tart???rken dört y?ld?z veririm diye dü?ünüyordum hatta yaz?n?n ba??na geçerken de ayn? fikirdeydim ama san?r?m konu?tukça kendimi gaza getirdim ve edebi yetkinli?i bir yana bu aç?k sözlülü?e be? y?ld?z vermeden edemedim.

Son olarak; bu kitab? okumak isteyen ya da okuyup Portnoy'a k?zan köpüren ya da halden anlayan okur, Horatius'un Antik yunan'da Marx'?n Kapital'in Almanca bask?s?n?n önsözünde dedi?i gibi De Tabula Fabura Narratur..

Cosimo says

Non è un problema mio

“Con una vita come la mia, Dottore, mi vuol dire a cosa mi servono i sogni?”

Che cosa mi definisce come essere umano, in prima istanza? La voglia di vivere e di essere libero, sembra affermare Alexander Portnoy, aspirazione che si esprime prevalentemente nell'ambiente creato dal dialogo tra caratteristiche sociali e familiari e desideri e qualità individuali: in questo caso, sessualità, ebraismo, società borghese e intellettualismo. E così la scrittura, sotto forma di monologo psicoanalitico, diventa un flusso che è metafora della vita, dell'atto sessuale come liberazione di energia, dell'affermazione professionale come prova della potenza virile, del sarcasmo verso l'altro e del solipsismo come difesa da narcisismo e disprezzo di sé. *“Che cosa è avvenuto del buon senso che avevo a nove, dieci, undici anni? Come ho fatto a diventare un tale nemico e fustigatore di me stesso? E così solo! Oh, così solo! Nient'altro che il sé! Rinchiuso in me stesso!* Quali sono le parole che sceglie Portnoy per salvarsi da questo isolamento forzato, quale teatro inscena per rappresentare la sua emancipazione dalla schiavitù dell'impotenza? *Meshuggener* inguaribile, uomo di successo e di cultura, ha in mente il solo obiettivo di vivere alla grande e inseguire, tra baseball e erotismo, ogni *shikse* che gli introduca le sue grazie e accolga la sua insaziabile fame di femmina, in una fantasmagoria della *fica*, la *passera*, dove la donna è soggetto di fantasie, il corpo femminile oggetto di amore e odio, venerazione e maledizione, dipendenza e estasi: Portnoy è un essere in balia di libido e pulsioni, tutte dirette alla femminilità, al sesso femminile, in una mitologia orgiastica dove lo *shlong*, il *putz*, l'organo maschile, è mediatore e totem di un incontro che si fa parodia linguistica della psicologia freudiana e del dispotismo della tradizione *tout court*. Tra farsa e tragedia edipica, Portnoy si rivela a seconda dei momenti infante sperduto con la nostalgia della madre che lo minaccia di evirazione con il coltello di cucina, giovane maschio che vede l'erezione come stato di divina prigionia e diviene soggetto di necessaria educazione all'onanismo sfrenato, uomo adulto virile e dominante che innalza contro la repressione puritana l'idolo del proibito, scelta negativa che conduce a una morale pansessuale e edonistica. Nella sua cronica insoddisfazione, nei suoi insuccessi iterati, Portnoy pensa se stesso come un mentecatto con una sofferenza significativa e dignitosa, un ebreo infelice che disprezza se stesso, dove l'esagerazione

viene eletta a stile esistenziale. Ogni confine è pregiudizio, la vita è desiderio illimitato, la relazione un dispiegamento narcisistico: la scrittura è luogo dove può prendere forma un rovesciamento anarchico del reale, evitando la negazione e superando nella dissolutezza la paura di crescere in un delirio dionisiaco connotato da oralità dissacrante e invettiva al turpiloquio. *“Il succo del mio ragionamento, Dottore, è che non mi par tanto di ficcare il mio uccello in queste ragazze, quanto di ficcarlo nei loro ambienti sociali... come se scopando volessi scoprire l'America. Conquistare l'America, è forse più corretto”*. Il piacere dei sensi è antidoto al soffocare angoscioso del quotidiano e l'irripetibilità dell'esperienza sessuale acquisisce una funzione liberatoria e rituale, nel trionfo di una ironia antivitalistica. *Il Lamento di Portnoy* è un romanzo confessione pieno di comicità viscerale, con un eroe americano ibrido e privo di certezze, irregolare e asociale anche nel successo, in un racconto satirico che è più complesso e versatile di come appaia; genera il riso e la catarsi, tratta di colpa e trasgressione, risolve su differenti piani il conflitto tra coscienza e istinto, suggerendo nell'impossibile e disastrosa ricerca dell'altro l'esistere di un valore vitale e doloroso che può restituire almeno parzialmente il senso della propria pienezza. Nello scandalo appassionato e nell'intenso *pathos*, un curioso e mai rassegnato interrogare.

“Dottore, forse altri suoi pazienti sognano – ma io, guardi, a me le cose succedono per davvero, tutte. Io ho una vita priva di contenuto latente. A me i sogni mi succedono! Dottore, non m'è riuscito di rizzarlo nello Stato di Israele! Beh, che gliene pare di questo come simbolismo, *bubi*? Mi indichi Lei qualcuno che sa fare di meglio, eh? Uno che non riesce a mantenere una erezione nella terra Promessa!”

Robin says

The title is apt for this book, because the entire thing is a complaint, made by Alexander Portnoy to his shrink. Oh, boy.

Initially I put this on my TBR list because Joe Goldberg, the well-read psychopath in Caroline Kepnes' *You* and *Hidden Bodies* lists it as his favourite book. A bit of a twisted road to get to Philip Roth's infamous, sexually explicit work that caused a big splash when published in 1969.

While cleverly written and quite funny in some parts, the rant-like nature of this book got a little tired after a while, and soon it was apparent that the story arc wasn't going anywhere interesting for me.

Portnoy complains mainly about his overbearing Jewish parents (particularly his mother - can you say Oedipus Complex?), his Jewishness, his attraction to *shiksas*, and his inability to pick a nice girl and have a normal relationship. And round and round we go. There are some pretty over the top scenes which depict him wildly masturbating (to successful fruition) while his mother screams from the other side of the door.

This was my introduction to Philip Roth. Yup. And, I'm still willing and interested in reading more. Now, what does that say about me, Doctor?
