

#3

In Philip Roth's novel, The Ghost Writer the reader is left perplexed, questioning, confused by the series of events that transpire over a one night meeting between E. L. Canoff, an acclaimed literary genius^{cf} and a budding writer^{cf}, Nathan Zuckerman. ~~The novel,~~

~~though entertaining, comical and engaging seems to draw attention to the fact that not only is the story fiction, but questions whether the story is even true.~~

→ Alain Robbe-Grillet has commented that "the purpose of the contemporary ~~novel~~ novel is to raise questions, questions for which the author may have no answer or only provisional answers." ~~By Definition~~ ^{It's as though} Roth's novel is a testament to ~~the~~ Robbe-Grillet's statement because Roth is questioning many things; The purpose of art/artist, how art or literature contribute to our creation of identity, he questions whether

the creation of self is through thought/imagination or action, and finally, he questions what is reality, is it the perception or the fact? The author was not only questioning issues of art, self and the creation of identity, but also ~~questioning~~ ^{playing with} ~~Structure~~ the readers concept of the structure, form and purpose of a novel, making it an almost post-modern novel that draws attention to the fact that it is fiction and makes the reader do so much work to grapple with these conceptions and questions meanwhile, he offers little to no answers on the questions he raises.

Roth presents the reader with two opposing philosophies of artists, their methods, their purposes, and their styles of art, while setting our protagonist, Nathan, as a young artist searching for his own voice. In presenting these two artistic

Ideals, in showing their opposition, Roth calls attention to both the purpose of art, is it art for art's sake; or is it for

entertainment. E.I. ~~K~~iconoff¹⁹³ presents the artist as an isolated,

a brilliant individual who requires almost complete detachment from

the world outside of art in order to be a creator of art. He layers

his life in a series of inconsequential schedules and avoids accolades

or recognition, seemingly presenting the image of the artist high above

all in the ivory tower, isolated from life to create works of art.

* Felix Abtravanel presents the other extreme, artist as a sacred ~~fact~~

fount, a man that must take in life as though his art depended on it.

He lives the exciting, bohemian, fast-paced life, constantly exploring new

territory. "He is the writer whose absorption with 'the grand human

discord' made his every paragraph a little novel in itself" ⁽⁵⁷⁾ ~~FS~~ and

when Nathan is seeking his own mentor to help create his

purpose and style as an author, he questions his own choices

~~in~~ in lifestyle, writing topics, and ~~his~~ responsibility as a

writer. He is caught in a feud with his family ~~as~~ because they

feel his being Jewish requires him to paint the most positive

picture of Jewish life, but, Nathan feels that the artist

is a reflection of his subject, ~~and~~ "But I did write it... I am

that kind of person who writes this kind of story!" (95) he shouts

to his father, showing his intrinsic view of art, that it should

not be only to glorify, pacify, examine the good (+) positive,

but to question the underbelly of existence and raise ~~controversy~~ controversy.

Roth is clearly playing with the notions of artistic ideals,

the purpose of ~~art~~ ^{art} ~~art~~, and the responsibility of the artist.

~~Through Nathan's own deliberate fiction of Amy and Leopold~~
 Roth is

Nathan makes a grand attempt with both of these artists, Lonoff and Abravental, to impress, to ^{of} ~~emerge~~ himself in their form of art with the intent of creating his own identity.

Roth, through Nathan Zuckerman, is questioning how art and literature can shape and contribute to our own creation of the self. When courting Abravental as his mentor, ^{yet} he finds himself enticed by the promiscuity, the beautiful women, the intelligent conversation ^F and the praise ~~also~~ ^{yet} from him elevated him, "For a hundred reasons I was in ~~an~~ ecstasy. When he [Abravental] told me to come along for my transfusion, I could not remember having myself ever felt like such a round character" (64). In other words, Nathan was creating his identity through Abravental's perception of him and his art. When meeting with ~~the~~ Lonoff, Nathan seeks to impress him with their similarly well read background and even

immerses himself in that which Lonoff is seemingly inspired by, in
 or an attempt to create his own self through ^{what} mimetic of Lonoff.

But, as if that is not enough, Nathan creates an entire world, identity, future, fantasy about himself, about the affair of Lonoff and Amy, about Amy being Anne Frank, about a potential marriage with Anne Frank, all purely in his imagination as an attempt at creating self from ^{imaginative} ~~pure~~ fiction/literature.

~~##~~ Following the lines of the previous argument and expanding the premise to include not only the questions of how one creates identity, but to further that in questioning what is reality and how ~~##~~ one's perception of reality contribute to identity. Through Nathan's deliberate fiction of Lonoff, Amy and himself, Roth is ~~##~~ exploring

The notion of whether reality exists in perception or fact, whether there is a distinction, art and life. Roth almost suggests that all life is fiction because perception is individual and identity or self is malleable.

Nathan ~~Drake~~ thinks to himself "Then does he know all I know? But what do I know, other than what I can imagine?" (180) This statement seems to be, ~~authorial~~ intrusion by Roth himself, seemingly ~~first~~ summing up the questions that the novel provokes.

The form of the novel itself ~~seeks~~ questions the convention of the modernist novel, questions ^{itself} ~~by~~ by being a work of art, how one defines art / & artistic conventions. ^{yet} Although this is rooted in Modernism, with the elitist ²⁰reflexes and assumptions of a well read audience and is an exploration

is not

in the purpose of art itself, it also seems to shake
conventions of modernism and take it to the level of
postmodernism by calling attention to itself, the author,
and the art as a work of fiction. It is layered in
meta-textual references ~~and~~ and designed to make the
reader dig for meaning much like post modernist
novels do. Roth seems to be questioning all notions
of convention, ~~and~~ art, and its purpose in
such a comical and almost passive way.

While Philip Roth's The Ghost Writer easily
fulfills Robbe-Grillet's notions of the purpose of the
contemporary novel is to question that which the
author has no answers for, it seems that Roth questions
even Robbe-Grillet's statement in his own novel

9

by never ~~answering~~ ^{asserting his own answer as to} what the purpose of art is, the right ~~that~~ artistic ideal is, what the purpose of his own novel is. What compelling questions Roth leaves his readers with to go forth and find their own answers