
Summary Information

Call number: C1609
Repository: Princeton University. Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 6.0 linear feet
5 boxes
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: Consists of a group of writings and speeches, biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, and medical records of American author Philip Roth (1933-2018) collected by his close friend and literary collaborator Benjamin Taylor (1952- ).
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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**Biography/History**

Benjamin Taylor (1952- ) is an American author. He is the author of the novels Tales Out of School (1995) and The Book of Getting Even (2008), as well as a number of nonfiction books, including Proust: The Search (2015) and The Hue and Cry at Our House: A Year Remembered (2017), a family memoir that describes his experience growing up gay and Jewish in Texas in the 1960s. He is also the editor of Saul Bellow: Letters (2010). Taylor teaches writing at The New School and at Columbia University's School of the Arts. He is a past fellow and current trustee of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and serves as president of the Edward F. Albee Foundation.

Taylor was also a close friend and confidant of author Philip Roth (1933-2018). Taylor and Roth first met in 1995 at a sixtieth birthday celebration for Joel Conarroe, then the President of the Guggenheim Foundation. After Taylor wrote Roth his impressions of I Married a Communist in 1998, the two began speaking regularly. In 2001, Roth sent Taylor the galleys of The Dying Animal, and thereafter Taylor became a first reader for each of Roth's books. Toward the end of his life, Roth also designated Taylor as one of his two medical proxies.

**Description**

Consists of a group of papers of American author Philip Roth (1933-2018) collected by his close friend and literary collaborator Benjamin Taylor (1952- ). Since the late 1990s, Taylor was a first reader of Roth's novels and later became one of Roth's two medical proxies. The collection contains materials related to Taylor's working relationship and friendship with Roth, personal records pertaining to his role as Roth's medical proxy, and drafts, notes, proofs, printed books, correspondence, and photographs Roth gifted to him, including both originals and photocopies. Of note within the gifted papers are 85 pages of early handwritten notes for Operation Shylock, an early annotated printout draft of the opening chapter of Everyman, and correspondence from John Updike. The collection also includes over 600 pages of notes, autobiographical essays, and correspondence Roth drafted and compiled for his biographers between 2000 and 2014. Much of this biographical material pertains to Roth's refutations of claims made by his first authorized biographer, Ross Miller, whom Roth accused of slandering him; as well as notes he gathered for Blake Bailey, who later took over as Roth's biographer. These extensive autobiographical writings contain detailed rebuttals of claims made by his former spouses, romantic partners, and friends, and demonstrate the care Roth took to control the public narrative of his life and literary output. There is also a small amount of correspondence between Taylor and Roth, as well as Roth's revisions and comments on a complete draft of Taylor's memoir, The Hue and Cry at Our House: A Year Remembered, which was then titled Under No Curse.

**Arrangement**

Arranged by material type.
Access and Use

Access
Open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. No further photoduplication of copies of material in the collection can be made when Princeton University Library does not own the original. Inquiries regarding publishing material from the collection should be directed to RBSC Public Services staff at rbsc@princeton.edu. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition
Purchased in 2018 (AM 2019-8).

Appraisal
No materials were removed from the collection during 2018 processing beyond routine appraisal practices.

Related Materials

Related Archival Material
The bulk of Philip Roth's personal papers are held by the Library of Congress: Philip Roth papers, 1938-2001 (MSS22491) http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms006030

Processing and Other Information

Encoding
This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2018-08-24T09:49-0400

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

· Bailey, Blake, 1963-
• Miller, Ross
• Roth, Philip, 1933-2018
• Taylor, Benjamin, 1952-
• Novelists, American -- 20th century -- Biography -- Sources.
• Novelists, American -- 21st century -- Friends and associates.
• Correspondence -- 21st century.
• Drafts (documents) -- 20th century.
• Medical records -- 21st century.
• Photographs -- 20th century.
• American literature
Contents List

Writings and Speeches, 1987 November 9-2014

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically.

Description: Consists of a selection of drafts, proofs, notes, and printed materials related to Philip Roth's writings and speeches, many of which Roth gifted to Taylor and are inscribed to him.

"Epilogue" (The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography), Photocopy of Annotated Draft, 1987 November 9

Description: Photocopy of heavily annotated typescript (23 pages), inscribed by hand "For Ben – Happy Birthday 2014 – Philip."

Patrimony, Photocopy of First Set of Galleys, 1990 February

Description: Approximately 150 pages of photocopied galleys, containing Roth's extensive annotations, including both typographic corrections and substantive changes to the text throughout.

Operation Shylock, Notes, 1990 September-1991 May

Description: Consists of 85 pages of primarily handwritten notes on yellow lined paper that represent nine months early in the process of composition of Operation Shylock. These notes illuminate Roth's preliminary planning stages, and include high- and low-level outlines, character notes for George Ziad and other characters, scene summaries, a reading list on dreams and hallucinations, and other ideas in gestation. The notes are covered in marginalia, circles, and stars, with various colors and types of ink on each page. Tucked within these notes are two computer printout pages containing the text of "Am I Reading the Papers Correctly?" ( New York Times, January 28, 1988), an opinion piece by Woody Allen that is referenced in the novel.

Philip Guston Illustrations of The Breast, Photocopies (Shop Talk), 2001


Il complotto contro l'America, 2005

Description: Presentation copy of the The Plot Against America, translated by Vincenzo Mantovani (Giulio Einaudi editore, s.p.a., Torino, 2005), that is inscribed by Roth to Taylor: "For Ben – In his native tongue – Philip. April 2005."

"A Medical History" (Everyman), Draft, 2005 June 22

Description: An early printout draft (41 pages) of the opening chapter of Everyman, with some handwritten revisions.
Everyman, Broadside, 2006

Description: Consists of a framed broadside poster (24 x 36 inches in a 27 x 39-inch frame) containing the entire text of the book in black-and-white offset print. The text is laid out in tiny print in six columns, with the printer's device in the bottom left corner and Roth's signature and the number of the print (4/10) in the bottom right corner. According to Taylor, the poster was commissioned by Roth himself as a celebratory gift to close friends.

Exit Ghost, Draft 6, 2006 November 2

Description: Typescript (226 pages) inscribed to Taylor on November 4, 2006, along with 12 revision leaves. Also included is a letter from Taylor to Roth giving his initial reaction to the text.

"Change of Life" (The Humbling), 2007 August 18

Description: Printout draft (24 pages) from the beginning of The Humbling.

"80th Birthday at Newark Museum", 2013 March 19

Description: Fax (April 21, 2014) of a heavily annotated typescript draft of a speech Roth gave for his 80th birthday, with additional handwritten annotations made after faxing and inscribed to Taylor, "Happy Birthday, Ben – Philip 8/20/14" (38 pages).

"For the 2013 PEN Literary Gala, PEN Literary Service Award", 2013 April 24-30

Description: Two typescript drafts of a speech (8-9 pages).

"On the Occasion of Receiving an Honorary Degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary", 2013 May

Description: Typescript draft of a speech (1 page).

"On Receiving the Légion d'honneur", circa 2013 September 27

Description: Two photocopies of annotated typescript drafts (each 6 pages) for two versions of a speech, one of which has additional handwritten annotations made after copying.

"For the Emerson-Thoreau Award, American Academy of Arts and Sciences", 2013 October 11

Description: Typescript draft of a speech, along with two copies a typescript selection (2 pages) from Sabbath's Theater, beginning, "He was from the shore...."

Philip Roth at 80: A Celebration, 2014

Description: Presentation copy of a published volume of remarks delivered on the occasion of Philip Roth’s 80th birthday (March 19, 2013) at the Newark Museum (New York: The Library of America, 2014), inscribed on title page by Roth to Taylor: "For Ben – who was there – [signed] 2014." Includes
remarks delivered by Jonathan Lethem, Hermione Lee, Alain Finkielkraut, Claudia Roth Pierpont, Edna O'Brien, and Roth himself.

"On Receiving the Yaddo Award", 2014 May 14

Description: Three typescript draft versions (4-9 pages) of a speech, one of which is inscribed "For Ben with love – P. 5/17/14."

"Marriage a la Mode", 2014 June-July

Description: Two draft versions (annotated typescripts, 7-8 pages) of an essay written in response to an accusation posed by Roth's biographer, Blake Bailey, that he would not accept blame for the dissolution of his two marriages. This essay is not the same as the piece of the same title in My Life as a Man.

Under No Curse: A Year Remembered, Draft by Benjamin Taylor with Philip Roth's Revisions, undated

Description: An early draft of Taylor's memoir (spiral-bound computer printout, 139 pages), which was published in May 2017 as The Hue and Cry at Our House: A Year Remembered and dedicated to Roth. This copy contains extensive handwritten annotations by Roth on almost every page. The comments cover Taylor's structure, content, wording, spelling, pacing, and other aspects of his writing that Roth either appreciated or thought could be improved.

Biographical Materials, 2000-2015

Description: These materials relate to Roth's relationship with his authorized biographers and his efforts to manage the information that went into his biography. Roth chose Ross Miller as his biographer in 2004. Miller was a longtime friend of Roth's, as well as a professor of English and comparative literature at the University of Connecticut, architecture critic, author of several books, and editor of the Library of America's multi-volume edition of Roth's writings. Roth's opinion of Miller rapidly declined, however. He accused him of deliberately avoiding interviewing his family and friends and of slandering him to those he did interview. The arrangement was terminated in 2009. Materials collected here include over 600 pages of Roth's notes refuting the information Miller acquired during his interviews, as well as copies of related correspondence. With Miller gone, Roth took it upon himself to compose Notes for My Biographer, a 300-page point-by-point refutation of his ex-wife Claire Bloom's memoir, Leaving a Doll's House. Some correspondence and notes pertain to this work. In 2012, Roth picked a new biographer: Blake Bailey, the biographer for Richard Yates and John Cheever, whose biography of Roth is under contract with W.W. Norton & Company. Materials related to Bailey include his proposal for the biography, notes Roth provided to Bailey, and correspondence. There are also some essays by others and press clippings about Roth and Roth's notes critiquing reading guides about his work.

Ross Miller Materials, 2000 October 24-2011
Philip Roth Letter to Ross Miller, 2000 October 24

Description: Photocopy of a letter which Roth later annotated to indicate that he had gifted Miller money and sent to Benjamin Taylor.

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Ross Miller Questions for Barbara Epstein, 2006 February 17-18

Description: Two sets of questions by Miller for an interview with Epstein. The questions mostly pertain to mutual friends and Roth's relationship with and marriage to Claire Bloom.

Box: B-001209
Folder: 8

Notes on Ross Miller Interviews for Hermoine Lee, 2011

Description: Consists of a packet of materials (around 130 pages) with a cover letter that Roth created for Hermoine Lee. It contains Roth's refutations of the contents of interviews Ross Miller conducted for his biography, including essays titled "Money," "Pain and Illness History," "Ross Miller's limitless malice toward me and my mother," as well as notes on Miller's audio material and his interview with Bob Brustein.

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Folder: 9

Notes on Ross Miller Interviews for Benjamin Taylor, 2011

Description: Consists of a packet of materials (over 500 pages) with a cover letter that Roth created for Benjamin Taylor. It contains Roth's refutations of the contents of interviews Ross Miller conducted for his biography. The front matter indicates that these materials were intended for his authorized biographer (who then appears to have been Hermoine Lee).

Box: B-001209
Folder: 10-12


Notes on Marriages and Correspondence with Jack Miles, 2012

Description: Includes a packet of materials assembled by Roth for his biographer, including printouts of essays titled "Why did you marry Maggie? Why did the marriage end?" and "On the effect of my first marriage on my work," along with a group of photocopied correspondence with Jack Miles beginning when Roth asked Miles to read the manuscript of Notes for My Biographer.

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Folder: 1

"An Open Letter to Wikipedia", 2012 August 10

Description: Includes a packed of materials assembled by Roth for his biographer, including a printout draft, with copied annotations, of Roth's open letter to Wikipedia regarding the entry on The Human Stain (17 pages), as well as a draft of "The Facts about Coleman Silk: A Supplement to 'An Open Letter to Wikipedia'" (16 pages), and a cover letter titled "On Wikipedia's 'Facts'" (3 pages).

Box: B-001210
Folder: 2

Blake Bailey Proposal for Roth's Biography, 2012 August 28

Box: B-001210
Folder: 3

Philip Roth Letters to Blake Bailey, 2012-2015

Box: B-001210
Folder: 4
Description: Includes printouts of lengthy letters from Roth to Bailey including essays on various aspects of his life intended as source material for his biography. There is a letter titled "Grandma's File," which encloses a photocopy of a letter sent by Roth to his grandmother in October 1952, while he was a junior at Bucknell College. Many of the letters pertain to Roth's romantic relationships, including with "Maggie" (Margaret Martinson Williams) and Barbara Sproul. Others relate to Roth's experiences with depression and physical pain, his friendships, and refuting claims made by others about him. There is also a printout of an email from Blake Bailey (September 10, 2012) that includes a transcript of recordings of President Richard Nixon talking with H.R. Haldeman and Charles Colson about Roth.

Writings by Others about Philip Roth, 2003-2014
Description: Printouts and copies of essays by others about Roth.

Comments on Reading Group Guides, undated
Description: Consists of Roth's annotated copies of reading group guides for his books, dismissing or editing many of the questions.

Questions for Roth for Indignation Day, 2008
Description: Photocopy of an annotated list of questions.

Press Clippings about Roth, 2001-2005

Correspondence, 1990-2017
Description: Consists of a small selection of original or photocopied correspondence of Philip Roth, both outgoing and incoming. While most files consists of only one or a few letters, the file with Benjamin Taylor is the most substantial.

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

"Caro", 2013 December 23-26
Description: Two letters from Roth (photocopy and printout).

Klímová, Helena, 2011-2013
Description: Consists of copies of letters between Roth and Klímová, along with related writings and Roth's cover letter for Peter Godwin at PEN regarding his relationship with Helena and Ivan Klímová.

Newark Public Library, 2005-2013
Description: Letter from Roth in 2013 and notes for a speech accepting an honor in 2005.

Pierpont, Claudia Roth, 2012 December 8
Description: Letter from Roth including a review of In History's Grip by Michael Kimmage (Stanford University Press, 2012).

Rudin, Max, 2012 March 12

Description: Letter to the publisher of Library of America regarding numerous typographical errors Roth reports he found in the Library of America edition of Operation Shylock.

Taylor, Benjamin, 2007-2017

Description: Consists primarily of letters and cards from Roth to Taylor, including regarding comments on Taylor's writings, letters Taylor was to pass onto others, instructions for his memorial service program, a birthday invitation, and personal notes. There is also a photocopy of a photograph inscribed to Taylor of Roth's great-aunt Meema Gitcha, who appears in Operation Shylock, Roth's letter in support of Taylor for a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a thank-you letter to Taylor from Cheryl Hurley of the Library of America.

Updike, John, 1990-1992

Description: Includes a typed, signed postcard, as well as photocopies of three letters from John Updike and one from Miranda Updike.

Winard, Barbara, 2009 April 19

Description: One letter from Winard regarding the polio epidemic in Newark in 1944.

Photographs, 1951-2009

Description: Consists of 13 black-and-white and color photographs of Philip Roth, his home in Connecticut, and inspirations for the scenes in his writings, many of which are captioned by him by hand.

Photographs of Philip Roth and Others, circa 1951-2009

Description: Photographs include: "(1951) Bradley Beach, NJ. Stan Pressman, Jerry Lechter [, Philip Roth];" "Two tall kids. Maxine Groffsky. P.R. Back of Roth Moorestown house. 1956;" "England, Summer 1968. Photo by Ann Mudge, used on inside back leaf of Portnoy's Complaint jacket;" [Roth drinking tea]. Stamped "Property of Time Incorporated;" [Roth making a point]. Stamped "Property of Time Incorporated;" "With Mel Tumin, Conn. 1974. Mel was a perpetual pedagogue and here, once again, he is straightening me out. But gently;" "Prague. Milan Kundera, Barbara Sproul, P.R. 1974;" "In my First Grade classroom at Chancellor Ave. School [Newark, NJ]."

Nancy Crampton Photograph of Philip Roth Sitting on a Stone Wall, 1990

Description: Inscribed: "For Ben / New Year's 2013 / The best of friends – P. © 1990 Nancy Crampton."
Photographs of Philip Roth's Connecticut House, undated
Description: Three photographs: "West Side [of Roth's Connecticut house];" "South Garden [of Roth's Connecticut house];" "[East Side of Roth's Connecticut house]."

"Model for Levov Glove Factory" (from American Pastoral), undated
Description: 1 photograph.

Medical Records, 2010-2017
Description: Consists of Taylor's file of medical records on Roth, which he maintained due to his role as one of Roth's designated health care proxies. This file includes multiple revisions of various documents, including a list of hospitalizations from 1943 to 2017, a list of medications, a signed letter from Roth to Taylor regarding his burial and funeral instructions (June 7, 2017), health care instructions designating Taylor and Julia Golier as joint Health Care Representatives, a HIPAA waiver, and a document from an emergency room visit.