

A Reluctant Public Intellectual: Philip Roth in the German-speaking Media

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ABSTRACT. Philip Roth is one of the most popular American novelists in German-speaking countries. His novels often reached the top ten of German bestseller listings. In 2009, he received a literary award from the *WELT,* a German newspaper, and German-speaking journalists ritually lament that he has not yet been awarded the Nobel Prize. I suggest that German, Austrian, and Swiss media not only revere Roth for his literary merits, but that they repeatedly approach him as a public intellectual.

READING ROTH IN GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND

Philip Roth has encountered the many risks faced by writers due to fame: once he has nearly been arrested without any reason[1]; he is still troubled by the dubious quality of translations[2]; he had to take on Wikipedia.org[3]; and he once even had to read an interview he had never given. Moreover, in his German-speaking readers, he has found opponents to his view of a writer's duties and responsibilities. In *I Married a Communist* (1998), Leo Glucksman exclaims that the artist's duty is only to art (218). This view does not necessarily resonate with a readership used to writers such as Günter Grass, Elfriede Jelinek, and Adolf Muschg who use their literary and "actual" voice to engage in political matters. As this paper will demonstrate, a foreign writer of Roth's standing is subject to a political imperative, in that German-speaking media casts him not only as an artist, but also as a politically significant voice, a public intellectual, so to speak, who might help Europeans better understand the United States.

To provide an idea of Philip Roth's presence in literary discussions in German-speaking Europe, the first part of this article offers a brief overview of his success and reception in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The second part discusses the notion of "public intellectuals," and its implications in different contexts. Finally, the article shows how Roth is cast as a public intellectual by German-speaking print media, and how he playfully assumes and rejects this role at the same time.

TWENTY YEARS OF ROTH

All of Philip Roth's novels have been translated to German and are available from the distinguished German publishing houses Hanser and Rowohlt. Some of Roth's novels captured the interest of German editors only after a considerable time-lag. For instance, the German translation of *When She Was Good* was first marketed eighteen years after its original publication in 1967. By contrast, his recent works have been translated and published shortly after the publication of the English versions. Even Roth's non-fictional works—*Reading Myself and Others*, *The Facts* and *Shop Talk*—have been translated into German, and both his début novella *Goodbye Columbus* and the novel *Portnoy's Complaint* have been translated anew.

The availability of all of Roth's works in German has resulted in a large, enduring readership. As the table below shows, all of the novels that appeared within the past decade reached the top 20 of German bestseller listings. *The Dying Animal* and *Everyman* nearly reached the very top, while the most recent translation, *Nemesis*, ranked 8th.

The Human Stain *(Der menschliche Makel)*	Best rank reached: 17 Date of best ranking: April 22, 2002
The Dying Animal *(Das sterbende Tier)*	2 March 3, 2003
The Plot Against America *(Verschwörung gegen Amerika)*	12 September 12, 2005
Everyman *(Jedermann)*	2 September 11, 2006
Exit Ghost *(Exit Ghost)*	8 February 25, 2008
Indignation *(Empörung)*	13 February 16, 2009
The Humbling *(Die Demütigung)*	6 March 22, 2010
Nemesis *(Nemesis)*	8 February 21, 2011

Bestseller rankings of Roth's translated novels in Germany since 2002
(Source: http://www.buchreport.de)

Consequently, most daily newspapers cover Roth's publications and frequently interview him as well, thus providing an opportunity to probe the ways in which Roth is presented. For the purpose of this study, I consulted newspaper articles and interviews published in Germany and Switzerland between 2000 and 2012. Via the database *Factiva*, I searched major newspapers, as well as the online archives of the German weekly *Die Zeit* and the Swiss daily newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Additionally, I analyzed two publications that are neither weeklies nor dailies, yet are journalistic in nature and have been of singular depth: I examined a bilingual issue of the Swiss cultural monthly, *Du*, from 2003 that was dedicated to Roth (*Du* 740 – Philip Roth. Amerika erfinden./Philip Roth. Inventing America.). I also consulted a collection of interviews with Philip Roth published by German journalist Volker Hage, which covers, as its title literally suggests, *Bücher und Begegnungen* (2008)—"books and encounters." [4]

WRITERS AS PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

Public intellectuals have long attracted the attention of various disciplines, within both the humanities and the social sciences. The actual term "public intellectuals" was popularized by the American historian Russell Jacoby (1987), yet coined by sociologist C. Wright Mills (1957), and is mostly used to describe the vocation of politically engaged thinkers, thinkers who express their ideas to and for a wide spectrum of the public (Hudson 34; Posner 2; Said 21). The term's meaning is often expanded normatively by referring to public intellectuals as "critical guardian[s] of humane and universal values" (Kemp 199) who speak "the truth to power" (Said 25).

Strictly speaking, the term "public intellectual" is pleonastic (Townsley 39): when the French novelist Maurice Barrès first denounced those thinkers who joined forces with the writer Émile Zola in the Dreyfus Affair as *"intellectuels,"* the term was meant to have a "public" component, and still does so in the French understanding (Rubin Suleiman 117; von Kulessa 113-14; Jacoby, "Last Thoughts" 106-10). The different understandings of the notion are likewise mirrored in the different intellectual cultures in Europe and the United States, all of which have been the subject of extensive historical studies. Thus, we can refer to a rich literature on the French intellectual tradition and its roots (see, for instance, Jacoby, "Last Thoughts" 106-10, and Ory and Sirinelli's book *Les intellectuels en France*), but also on the American tradition (Townsley 39-66), Germany (Reul 24-32) and the United Kingdom (Collini 203-23), which have at times, but only rarely, been subject to comparative studies (Jennings 110-30). In spite of the different traditions, studies on intellectuals in the United States and Europe have still found a common theme, which Jacoby, the very author who ironically announced the decline of public intellectuals the moment he had named them, had already pointed out. His view of their diminished

importance has been reinforced, as the book-long studies by Posner and Lepenies show, on both the American (Hudson 33-50) and even earlier on the European side of the Atlantic, with the French complaints being particularly numerous. As early as 1927, Julien Benda (1957) deplored that intellectuals of his days failed to defend universal values. With the end of the so-called golden age of French thought, an epoch marked by personalities such as Jean-Paul Sartre, some wonder like Bernard-Henri Lévy (1987) whether dictionaries would in the future declare the intellectual a species extinct by the end of the 20th century. On both sides of the Atlantic, professionalization and specialization in academics have been identified as equally important reasons for the alleged decline, just as much as the mass media and the latter's need for expertise, yet they have done this in the form of opinion rather than reasoned deliberation (see, for instance, Barnett; Debray; Jacoby; Ory and Sirinelli).

In contrast to the dominant view of a decline, academic interest in public intellectuals has paradoxically risen, as the fact that many cited publications appeared only recently suggests and the appeal of actual rankings compiled by the journal *Foreign Policy* and the legal scholar Richard Posner's treatise *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (2004) conveys.

A particular subspecies of these treasured public intellectuals are Nobel Prize laureates, who enjoy increased public interest in spite of their oftentimes highly complex research that is usually unintelligible to the average news follower. Accordingly, Frédéric Lebaron talks of a "process of social construction of public intellectuals" (88), when the laureates are suddenly exposed to public attention that reaches beyond their fields of expertise. The same applies to writers who receive this honor, as Edward Said poignantly observed:

> The easiest way of demonstrating that is simply to list the names of some recent Nobel Prize winners, then to allow each name to trigger in the mind an emblematized region, which in turn can be seen as a sort of platform or jumping-off point for that writer's subsequent activity as an intervention in debates taking place very far from the world of literature. (25)

The founding moment, so to speak, of the idea of publicly engaged intellectuals, i.e. the writer Zola's cry for justice, shows that writers did then and do now act as public intellectuals irrespective of Nobel awards. For instance, in Central and Eastern Europe, intellectuals of literary repute, such as Vaclav Havel, who was originally mainly known as a playwright and dissident, or Arpad Göncz, translator of John Updike's oeuvre and former President of Hungary, assumed high political offices (Lepenies). In the "land of poets and thinkers" (Hahn 15-16), as Germany is often referred to, many adhered to an "old-German superstition according to which writers must have nothing to do with politics" (qtd. Brunssen, 324), as Günter Grass explained. During World War II, some writers broke with this tradition when they were exiled. But writers mainly became an immediate political force with Willy Brandt's ascendance to the post of the Chancellor, as he sought Grass's advice and thus broke down the "traditionally asserted opposition between the life of the mind and the world of power" (325).

"ARE YOU RECORDING THIS?"—ROTH IN THE GERMAN AND SWISS PRESS

"One of the giants of contemporary world literature"[5]—with these words, the jury of the literary award presented by the *WELT*, a German national newspaper, honored Philip Roth in 2009. This accolade is mirrored by the frequency and depth with which German, Austrian, and Swiss newspapers have discussed Roth's novels. They rarely leave unmentioned their opinion that he would be a worthy Nobel laureate, and, each fall, they almost ritually lament that he would have been just as good or even better a winner than the actual one picked by the Nobel Prize committee in Stockholm. Particularly loud were the calls for Roth as a Nobel laureate made by Marcel Reich-Ranicki (1920-2013), arguably the best known literary critic in the German-speaking world, who extolled Roth's literary qualities both in print and on television. On a side note, Reich-Ranicki, regularly referred to as *Literaturpapst*—"the pope of literature"—was himself an interesting example of a public intellectual, as he used to be a member of the famous *Gruppe 47*, a literary association including Günter Grass. He still contributed to the dissemination of literature and critical thought as a staff member of Germany's most prestigious daily newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and was the host of the widely popular literary talk show *Das Literarische Quartett* from 1985 to 2001. In that show, Reich-Ranicki and other critics also discussed several works by Philip Roth.

It is remarkable how closely German-speaking reviewers followed Roth's newest publications, not only the translated versions The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* sometimes dedicated an article to the original publication—and then went on to review the translation as well. Even though the high sales figures in Germany and Switzerland of the *Harry Potter* series in English[6] suggest that many German-speaking readers are able to understand books in English, the majority of new publications are read only in translations. The early reviews of Roth's novels are, thus, not prompted by the existence of a considerable readership of the original edition, but they instead reflect the importance attributed to Roth's work as a whole.

Although a reviewer joked how each new Roth novel makes him dread the re-appearance of green dildos and other eccentricities (Bartels), the tone of the reviews is generally favorable. Literary critics explore Roth's oeuvre in light of his reputation as the "Master of literary mimicry" (Gogos, "Der Meister" 62), focus on his balancing acts along the threshold of fact and fiction, enjoy his humor and delight in the obscene aspects of his writing. Their main interest, however, reverts to one quality attributed to Roth's works, which Andrea Köhler, a regular reviewer of his novels, expressed poignantly: "America can read itself in Roth's books" (65)[7]—and thus Europeans can read the

transatlantic "Other" in his writing. To underscore this potential dialogue, the issue of the Swiss magazine *Du* dedicated to Philip Roth was bilingual, i.e. in English and German, and included texts by the American writers Jeffrey Eugenides and Saul Bellow as well as by the German critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki mentioned above.

German-speaking readers might hope to attain a better idea of Roth's views than his American readers: in an interview with Volker Hage, Roth mentioned that he would feel more at ease if he knew that what he said would not be printed in the United States (27). Ironically, Hage's collection of interviews is due to be published by Polity Press in English. This will permit English-speaking Roth readers to better comprehend Roth's views and at the same time learn about one of the core interests of the author's German and Swiss readership. During his first interview with Roth in 1983, Hage introduced politics as an interview topic, and wanted to know why American writers did not engage as much in the public discourse as their European counterparts. Roth agreed that American writers only rarely speak out publicly, and explained this perceived reluctance to enter the public scene as due to tradition: "You have a famous example: Grass. And Böll as well. Here, this has no tradition. That the phone rings and a senator asked for my opinion: unimaginable. I would faint" (Hage 20).[8] In a later interview with Hage, Roth gave a more cheeky answer to the same question, perhaps prompted by the belief that his words would reach only German-speaking readers, who would be pleased by the implications of his response: "This is an expression of our cultural limitations. It would not occur to anyone to ask a writer" (Hage 55).[9]

Volker Hage is not the only German-speaking journalist who is interested in Roth's ideas as to what role a writer should assume in society. This preoccupation also shines through in reviews, for instance, when a writer for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* dedicated a paragraph in an otherwise rather short discussion of *Reading Myself and Others* to Roth's criticism of his colleagues' reluctance to address issues concerning the society as a whole (David 49). In another instance, Roth's condemnation of post-9/11 politics in an interview with the French daily *Le Figaro* was reported by several newspapers in both Germany and Switzerland.[10] This shows that the press is just as much interested in Roth as a public intellectual as it is in him as a writer.

The political nature of Roth's novels provoked fervid discussions when *The Plot Against America* (2004) reached German and Swiss bookstores. In a 2005 interview with *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, Roth was confronted with the fact that many people had read his counterfactual vision as a comment on the then-governing Bush administration. When Roth dismissed this idea, the interviewer immediately asked whether Philip Roth did not see himself as a public intellectual. In response, Roth offered a similar explanation as he did in his first interview with Hage, letting his readers recall his statement that "what the kitchen sink is to the plumber, America is to me" (*Reading* 110):

> No. I write books, otherwise I am an ordinary citizen. During the war in Vietnam, I was very angry. [...] This [the writer-intellectual] is not an American tradition. There are always exceptions, but nobody here would listen for even thirty seconds to what a writer has to say. Who is that anyway, people would ask. There is no special respect for writers, nobody understands what they are actually doing. They have no greater moral authority than a plumber. [...] Yes, it is as if a plumber would suddenly make a statement about the state of the world, everyone would be astounded. . . . Are you recording this? (Minkmar 2)[11]

(Little could Philip Roth know that soon the world would listen to what a plumber had to say about politics.[12]) Rather unimpressed by Roth's rejection of his assuming any political role, the interviewer wondered whether the war in Iraq might lead to a mobilization to what occurred in the 1960s and 1970s to protest the Vietnam War: "But now you are asking me as a public intellectual" (ibid.). [13]

To every interviewer's delight, however, Roth plays along. He assumes the role of the public intellectual, and shares his opinions with the readers. He once reacted similarly when Volker Hage opened an interview with the remark that he would like to start the conversation off by discussing politics. Roth answered bluntly that this was just as well as he would certainly not answer such questions—but then continued to do just that, namely, to share his views on the political situation in the United States at the time.

This waggish play was repeated in interview after interview, inducing journalists at times to accuse Roth of being coquettish, for instance when he talked about his first walk through New York after 9/11. How did he perceive the situation? What had it been like to walk through New York's streets as a writer? He had walked through the streets just like any ordinary citizen, thus the coquettish answer. Yet again, this answer did not convince the interviewer that Roth considered his views as to be the same as those of any "ordinary citizen." In fact, he had rather provoked the journalist, this time of the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, to take a look behind the charade. The interviewer inquired whether Roth no longer felt comfortable in the role of a "thought leader," a public *Vordenker*, to which Roth could only nod: only a writer, that's what he was, Roth answered—someone who comes up with stories. And in any case, writers were no longer important: "Americans don't read anymore" (Scholz, "Ich kann den Hass").[14]

This harsh verdict of his compatriots' presumed barbarism is, however, smoothened by the humorous ending of the interview, which reminds readers that Roth also tends to play when he is off the field of fiction. Refuting the allegation that he would not commend to anyone a career as a writer, Roth declared:

> "Everyone can be what he wants to be—a striptease dancer, a milkman, an ape or a cow."
>
> "A cow?"
>
> "Why not, if it's good for him." (Scholz, "Ich kann den Hass")[15]

Fittingly, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* referred to Roth in an article on the cultural history of the cow (Balzerini 43).

As this episode shows, journalists who interview Roth are well aware of his joyful play with the limits of fiction and fact, and, in their desire to cast him as a public intellectual, they appreciate his humorous side. Therefore, the tale of a 2010 interview with the Italian daily *Il Libero* was also picked up by German and Swiss newspapers, even though such an anecdote could be considered of minor interest for the domestic reader: an Italian journalist had published an interview with Roth, wherein the writer ranted about the presidency of Barack Obama (Villiger Heilig 39). Again Roth had been presented as an outspoken public intellectual—but this time, his statements were only the results of a journalist's wishful thinking. The exchange was pure fiction and had never taken place.

IT IS ABOUT WHAT IT IS ABOUT: HIDE AND SEEK

In an interview with Hermione Lee for *The New Yorker*, Philip Roth declared that he was "not out to make fiction into a political statement." Repeated interpretations of *The Plot Against America* as an allegory of the administration of George W. Bush even prompted Roth to write an article for *The New York Times* titled "The Story Behind *The Plot*" and to share his motivation for writing the novel. He stressed again in the interview with Lee that the novel was "neither an allegory nor a metaphor nor a didactic tract; *The Plot* is about what it is about, which isn't now but then"—and he used variations of this statement when talking to German and Swiss journalists. Philip Roth's denial of any political intention behind his works is in unison with his belief that, with reference to Sinclair Lewis, "repeating . . . 'It can happen here,' does little to prevent 'it' from happening" (*Reading* 207).

In Roth's eyes, it would convey a wrong understanding of a writer's role if he delivered propaganda and supported a political cause in his writings. Rather, he seems to agree with the fictional "Philip" in *Deception* (1990), who views literature as outside of the political sphere and thus immune to political charges: "I can only reply that this self-styled equal-rights democracy has aims and objectives that are not mine as a writer" (*Deception* 110).

Roth's struggle to defend his novels from allegedly too political interpretations seems rather futile, as readers, and among them particularly critics, tend to develop on their own interpretations of his work. His refusal to be presented as a public intellectual in the German and Swiss press is consequently just as futile—and one cannot entirely refute some interviewers' assertion that it is rather coquettish. On the one hand, Roth complains about the lack of status of writers in the United States; on the other hand, he still only wants to answer questions behind the mask of the ordinary citizen. As Roth's references to Böll and Grass in the interviews reveal, he is well aware of the special status of writers among the German and Swiss public. It seems that even as an American writer, he cannot hide from his ascribed role of a public intellectual. Thus, whenever he claims the status of the ordinary citizen, this particular *non*-status, he (perhaps knowingly) teases Swiss and German journalists, and seems to compel them to reveal the intellectual behind the staged persona.

Roth might not be aware of the fact that many Swiss and German writers are not as inclined to assume the role of a political conscience as their predecessors, including such ageing literary giants as Günter Grass. Politically charged novels rarely come from the midst of the younger generation of German-speaking writers, which forces journalists to search abroad for critical voices. Or, perhaps, German-speaking journalists think that they only have to look across the Atlantic, a similar trend that Roth has observed in the United States. In an interview with the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, he agreed with novelist John Irving that the U.S. media criticize American writers fiercely when they express their opinion on politics. In the same interview, Roth modified his claim that writers had no prestige in the United States and conceded that, for instance *The New York Times* indeed seeks the opinions of writers, though of European ones:

> The *Times* asks European, but not American writers. For instance: when Bill Clinton had a few problems with an intern, I was hoping that someone in this country would call John Updike. He wrote brilliant books about sex and power, one could even say: he's an authority in that field. It would have been obvious to let him write about the Lewinsky affair. Didn't happen. Millions of words have been written about Monica Lewinsky—but not by any writers. (Scholz, "Ich bin nicht mehr")[16]

Either way, Roth's reputation as the originator of literary scandals, his outspokenness and his readiness to jest make it easy to cast him in the role that very few German and Swiss writers seem to be ready to fulfill, namely, to speak out as a public intellectual. His blunt criticism of American cultural and political life render him, in European eyes, even more interesting as an intellectual authority, whose statements one can easily quote out of context to the national readership's delight—as in this instance: "Swissair. The most beautiful word in the English language" (Prague 86).[17]

Probably to Roth's relief, however, the media do not limit his image to that of a public intellectual, but also show him as the comic inventor and reinventor of lives—and America: "Inventing America" was the subtitle of the special issue of the Swiss magazine *Du*, which, thereby, did his creative, his literary side justice. The interviews show that readers also try to find America in its uplifting and upsetting moods in Philip Roth's novels—just like Roth sometimes has to find Europe in his interviews: it was only during a conversation with *ZEIT* journalist Michael Naumann in 2009 that Roth learned of the anti-American comments made the previous year by Horace Engdahl, the former secretary of the Nobel Prize committee. According to Engdahl,

American authors were culturally too isolated and too susceptive to trends in American mass culture, and thus unlikely candidates for the Nobel Prize. Roth's reaction (Naumann):

> "Well, he did not say that."
>
> "Yet he did."
>
> "But why?"
>
> "Maybe he has anti-American aversions?"
>
> "Anyone who knows anything about literature knows that the American literature is of permanent, even greatest strength since 1945, I could name at least 12, no, 15 American writers.... Well, no, he could not have said that."
>
> "But he did." [18]

Though German-speaking readers might find only a reluctant public intellectual in Philip Roth, they hope that he will not have lost his interest in American affairs, in spite of his announcement in the French magazine *Les Inrockuptibles* in October 2012 that he would not to write another novel. The latter would only liken him to Nathan Zuckerman, whom journalists love to describe as his alter ego, saying that:

> I've served my tour as exasperated liberal and indignant citizen [...]. I don't wish to register an opinion, I don't want to express myself on 'the issues'—I don't even want to know what they are. It no longer suits me to know, and what doesn't suit me, I expunge. That's why I live where I do. (*Exit* 36-37)

Although Philip Roth said to *Les Inrockuptibles* that he no longer knew anything about today's America and only saw it on television,[19] German and Swiss journalists and critics hope that his retreat will only be temporary (Radisch). And one of them hopes the whole announcement might be a ruse to finally make Stockholm award the Nobel Prize to Philip Roth (Schwering).

NOTES

1. See Philip Roth's interview with Martin Scholz ("Ich schrie"), in which he talks about his travels to Eastern Europe and his nearly being arrested in Prague.
2. See Philip Roth's acceptance speech of the International Man Booker Prize 2011, in which he mentions the "heartaches of translation": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6uL8SUYqeY.
3. See, for instance, Stein: Roth wrote to Wikipedia.org in September 2012 to correct the often repeated allegation that *The Human Stain* (2000) had been inspired by the life-story of Anatole Broyard.
4. On a side-note, scholarly attention for Roth's work has likewise risen in German-speaking academia. Fittingly for the topic of this paper, Wiebke-Maria Wöltje's dissertation (2006) explores one particular characteristic of Roth's protagonists—their intellectuality. She shows how his protagonists typify different variations of the intellectual and also briefly discusses Roth's own status as an intellectual. Thomas Pughe's *Comic Sense: Reading Coover, Stanley Elkin, Philip Roth* (1994) was, to my knowledge, the earliest dissertation at a Swiss or German university that was in large parts dedicated to Roth's writing, whereas Frank Kelleter was the only German scholar contributing to Harold Bloom's volume on Roth (2003). The turnout of published doctoral theses increased substantially during the past decade: Antje Kley (2001) covers Roth's work in her dissertation on the construction of the self and autobiography. Subsequently, two theses focusing on Roth as a Jewish writer were published. Scheerer (2004) depicts Roth as a creator of defiant Jewish American visions of life, while Gogos (2005) discusses Roth as one of the most important writers of Jewish family sagas. Roman Halfmann (2008) explores the tenuous, allegedly paralyzing relationship of Roth and other writers with Franz Kafka's oeuvre, covering thereby the two first Kepesh novels. Till Kinzel's (2006) post-doctoral thesis (*Habilitationsschrift*) focuses on the American trilogy, specifically on Zuckerman's manifold visions of America. Kinzel discusses aspects of the games Roth plays with history and historiography, a topic at the heart of the dissertation by Andreas Martin Widmann (2009), who analyzes political scenario novels, including *The Plot Against America*. Kress and Egloff (2007) complement these explorations of Roth's counter-historical worlds by exploring the 1950s as depicted in *Goodbye, Columbus*. Moreover, the prestigious publishing house Suhrkamp has commissioned a brief introduction for the general readership interested in Roth's life and work, which should be published soon, and a rororo monography on Roth is also scheduled for publication.
5. My translation. Original phrasing: "Philip Roth zählt zu den Großen der zeitgenössischen Weltliteratur."
6. On the success of the English editions of Harry Potter see for instance: http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/spiegelspecial/d-28731603.html or http://www.focus.de/kultur/buecher/harry-potter_aid_68617.html. In Switzerland, Dan Brown had a similar success; see Basler Zeitung, "Was nach Harry Potter kommt" at http://bazonline.ch/kultur/buecher/Was-nach-Harry-Potter-kommt/story/28597872.
7. My translation. Original passage: "...in Roths Büchern kann sich Amerika lesen."
8. My translation. Original passage: "Sie haben doch ein berühmtes Beispiel: Grass. Und Böll ja auch. Das hat bei uns keine Tradition. Dass bei mir das Telefon klingelt und ein Senator mich um meine Meinung bittet: unvorstellbar. Ich würde vor Schreck umfallen."
9. My translation. Original passage: "Das ist Ausdruck unserer kulturellen Beschränktheit. Einen Schriftsteller zu fragen, fällt hier einfach niemandem ein."
10. See, for instance, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 9 Oct. 2002, p. 54.
11. My translation. Original passage: "Nein. Ich schreibe Bücher, und ansonsten wirke ich als normaler Staatsbürger. Während des Vietnamkriegs war ich sehr wütend. [. . .] Das ist auch keine amerikanische Tradition. Es gibt immer Ausnahmen, aber hier würde niemand auch nur dreissig Sekunden hinhören, was ein Schriftsteller zu sagen hat. Wer ist denn der, würde man fragen. Es gibt keinen besonderen Respekt für Schriftsteller, keiner versteht, was sie genau machen. Sie haben keine grössere moralische Autorität als der Klempner. [...] Ja, es ist, als würde der Klempner plötzlich Statements zur Weltlage abgeben, da würden sich auch alle wundern.... Nehmen Sie das hier eigentlich auf?"
12. The tale of Joe the Plumber can be retraced at Wikipedia.org and on various news sites: Samuel Joseph Wurzelbacher, an employee of a plumbing contractor, came to fame during the presidential election 2008 when he questioned Barack Obama on his small business tax policy. During the campaign, he was frequently referred to as the archetypical middle class American.
13. My translation. Original passage: "Jetzt fragen Sie mich ja doch als öffentlichen Intellektuellen."
14. My translation. Original passage: " Die Amerikaner lesen gar nichts mehr. "
15. My translation. Original passage: "Jeder kann sein, was er sein will – Stripteasetänzer, Milchmann, Affe oder Kuh. " "Eine Kuh? " "Warum nicht, wenn es demjenigen gut tut. "

16. My translation. Original passage: "Die Times fragt Europäer, aber keine amerikanischen Schriftsteller. Ein Beispiel: Als Bill Clinton ein paar Probleme mit einer Praktikantin hatte, hoffte ich, dass irgendjemand in diesem Land mal bei John Updike anrufen würde. Er hat brillante Bücher über Sex und Macht geschrieben, man könnte sagen: Er war die Autorität auf diesem Gebiet. Da hätte es doch nahe gelegen, ihn über die Lewinsky-Affäre schreiben zu lassen. Ist nicht passiert. Es wurden Millionen Wörter über Monica Lewinsky geschrieben - aber nicht von Schriftstellern. "

17. Ironically, the word is no longer in use: Swissair, the former Swiss national airline, went bankrupt in October 2001 as a result of its economic difficulties that were exacerbated in the wake of 9/11.

18. My translation. Original passage: ZEIT: "Eine besondere Form von Antiamerikanismus scheint die schwedische Jury befallen zu haben, die über den Literaturnobelpreis entscheidet. Jedenfalls hat der mächtige Sekretär des Nobelkomitees in Stockholm, Horace Engdahl, im vorigen Oktober erklärt, Amerikas Autoren seien zu empfänglich für die Trends ihrer eigenen Massenkultur. Das ziehe die Qualität ihrer Arbeit nach unten. Europa sei das Zentrum der literarischen Welt. Damit scheint Ihre Chance—oder die von Pynchon, Updike oder DeLillo, von Auster oder Ford—auf den Nobelpreis auf null gesunken zu sein." Roth: "Also, das hat er nicht gesagt. " ZEIT: "Doch, doch." Roth: "Aber warum? " ZEIT: "Vielleicht hat er einen antiamerikanischen Vogel? " Roth: "Jeder, der irgendetwas von Literatur versteht, weiß, dass die amerikanische Literatur seit 1945 von dauerhafter, ja größter Stärke ist. Ich könnte mindestens 12, nein, 15 amerikanische Autoren nennen . . . Also, nein, das kann er nicht gesagt haben. "

19. Original passage: "J'ai 78 ans, je ne connais plus rien de l'Amérique aujourd'hui. Je la vis à la télé. Mais je n'y vis plus."

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