



## The Dying Animal

*Philip Roth*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# The Dying Animal

*Philip Roth*

## **The Dying Animal** Philip Roth

*'No matter how much you know, no matter how much you think, no matter how much you plot and you connive and you plan, you're not superior to sex'*

With these words America's most unflaggingly energetic and morally serious novelist launches perhaps his fiercest book. The speaker is David Kepesh, white-haired and over sixty, an eminent TV culture critic and star lecturer at a New York college - as well as an articulate propagandist of the sexual revolution. For years he has made a practice of sleeping with adventurous female students while maintaining an aesthete's critical distance. But now that distance has been annihilated.

The agency of Kepesh's undoing is Consuela Castillo, the decorous, humbly beautiful twenty-four-year-old daughter of Cuban exiles. When he becomes involved with her, Kepesh finds himself dragged helplessly into the quagmire of sexual jealousy and loss. In chronicling the themes of eros and mortality, licence and repression, freedom and sacrifice. *The Dying Animal* is a burning coal of a book, filled with intellectual heat and not a little danger.

## **The Dying Animal Details**

Date : Published March 7th 2002 by Vintage (first published May 18th 2001)

ISBN : 9780099422693

Author : Philip Roth

Format : 156 pages

Genre : Fiction, Novels, Literature, American

 [Download The Dying Animal ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Dying Animal ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Dying Animal Philip Roth**

---

## From Reader Review The Dying Animal for online ebook

### Melanie says

"There's no way to negotiate metrically this wild thing'

This abrupt, tense novel on the trading of dominance through sex, is not unlike Coetzee's 'Disgrace' though it is far more elegant.

David Kepesh, an ageing cultural critic is undone by the well-mannered and graceful Consuela who is more than thirty years younger than Kepesh and significantly less complicated.

For all the intellectualising going on the plot is fairly asinine and cliché, saved somewhat by the melodic and charismatic prose.

At only 156 pages it's an easy book to pick up and put down, but come tomorrow will I even remember these characters?

---

### Ruben Villa says

cosa puoi dire dopo aver letto questo romanzo ? Cosa si può dire davanti al genio di Roth assolutamente niente.

Leggetelo

---

### Yasmin ? says

I definitely did not like this book. Not very surprising though, pretty much anyone could've told you that this just isn't a book for me. But I had to read this for school, so I didn't really have a choice.

It wasn't like I hated the whole book; at times it was quite enjoyable. The writing wasn't that bad either, it's just that I couldn't stand the story. Yeah, not just the protagonist, but the whole story. I'm sorry (and like I said, these kind of books aren't for me) but it just felt like such a pathetic, ridiculous and pretentious book. You have this old, white, misogynistic professor who's constantly either whining about life and how it works or he's fucking young women.

But then, he "falls in love" with Consuela. Yeah, not really. He actually just gets obsessed with being with her and her breasts.

In this book, women are only pretty objects Kepesh can use to make himself feel better, just like men are apparently bound to cheat at least once in their married lives. He's constantly saying things like "Oh well it's in a man's nature and hey man, this is America, land of freedom, why the hell would you fuck only your wife lmao". That's really problematic. And the book is just completely about that philosophy. It was incredibly annoying and even more boring.

But I really can't get over the ridiculousness of this book. At one point, he asks Consuela to take out her tampon and watch her bleed. And then he fucking licks the blood of her thighs. I was quite disturbed. (Though the author has never probably done this himself, because menstruation blood doesn't just flow at once out of your vagina and over your legs. Seriously wtf. That's not how it works, Roth.)

And Consuela always just did whatever the fuck Kepish wanted her to do. She wouldn't even say a word. She literally was his object to use. And what was even more annoying, was that Kepish was constantly thinking things like "Consuela does this and that because she is like this and that and women always do this and that, and yes obviously I know everything about her because I'm an old white male, I know everything about the world and how it works duh <3". Just stop please.

And then Consuela leaves him and he is soooo upset and can't get his life to be normal again, because he was so obsessed with her. It's not even her personality he misses; he never speaks a word of that. It really is because of her magnificent body that it takes him three years to get over her. And even then he's still not completely over her.

But then after 5 years, Consuela suddenly calls him. Because she has breast cancer. Of course she has. Everything about this book is about her breasts. So in the last 50 pages of the book, the only thing Kepish talks and thinks about are her breasts. "Oh no, she'll lose a bit of them". Because, as everyone knows, that's the real problem with breast cancer. Not the big chance of dying, but the surgery.

Ugh. Someone get this book away from me please.

---

## **olaszka says**

of course it wasn't until the film came out that i read the book. i mean, it's philip roth so i would have read it anyway but it sort of accelerated things when the film premiered. i wasn't expecting much, i mean - no one talks about 'the dying animal' like they do about 'portnoy's complaint' or 'everyman'.

the book was divine. it was shamelessly unputdownable. literally. i was starving and i needed to pee but i didn't put the bloody thing down until i read and digested every word.

i don't even know where to start. first of all it was just a good read. well-written but not pompous - just smart. it touched upon issues which everyone finds relatable: love, sex, family life, betrayal.

the plot itself was of course predictable - kind of lolita-esque, everyone knows it by heart - a man meets a woman, big age difference, a bit of passionate fucking which turns into obsession. but of course this is how it was meant to be. the actual story made up something of 10% of the novel, the rest was digressions.

digressions which turned out to be not so digressive at all, if you know what i mean. one thing i loved about the book is that the narrator speaks the language of men - portraying a shameless old man who's quite chuffed about his long list of 20-year old lovers, who trusts his basic instincts, who accepts adultery as a part of everyday life and doesn't believe in marriage. roth employs the discourse of masculinity but somehow translates it into the language of women, so i, being a woman, suddenly start to read the novel as if it was more of a handbook or a genius study of male behavioural patterns.

apart from all the smartness, i loved the interaction with the reader. roth's preferred reader is well-read so he does not shy away from employing intertextuality as one of the main devices. he drops in a bit of shakespeare, milton, even some of the puritan chronicles but he somehow manages to stay casual, he does not make you blush just because you haven't read 'the brothers karamazov'.

he also doesn't try to be innovative in terms of style. he just writes carefully and elegantly, always uses the write amount of words and simply provides the read with an amazing piece of simple literary art. he takes you to the place where form is content. he's just so observant, he creates the most complicated characters with precision and ease, he makes them fully believable, he provides many POVs, plays with the reader and is totally convincing. i swear i could go on for ages. it's the best book i've read in a long time.

---

## Michael Finocchiaro says

While not his greatest work, Philip Roth's *A Dying Animal* is a highly readable and entertaining story of Roth's alter ego David Kepesh and his various affairs as a septuagenarian ex-professor. It ranges from hilarious to grotesque (in the Sabbath's Theater sense of the word) to poignant. Few writers are as brutally honest about themselves as Roth and this is one of the books on which I find his psyche right on top. RIP (1933-2018). One of America's literary giants has left us.

---

## Darwin8u says

*"The only obsession everyone wants: 'love.' People think that in falling in love they make themselves whole? The Platonic union of souls? I think otherwise. I think you're whole before you begin. And the love fractures you. You're whole, and then you're cracked open."*

? Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal*

*The Dying Animal* is the last instalment of Roth's David Kepesh novels. Isn't top-shelf Roth (*American Trilogy*), but isn't bad either. Of the Kepesh novels, I think it ranks above *The Breast* (think 36D Kafka) and below *The Professor Of Desire*. I think my subconscious understood, even before reading this novel, where Roth was coming from because what I thought was a random reading order for me: 1. *Death in Venice* and then 2. *The Dying Animal*, was actually quite useful. It isn't as much a tribute to *Death in Venice* as the *Breast* was a tribute to Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, but there were certainly similarities. Roth is exploring death and obsession of an artist, so in those ways it is a similar novella to Mann's earlier exploration (see my review). However, instead of the aging author/narrator being obsessed with a "perfect" 14-year-old boy, Kepesh\* is obsessed with one of his Cuban student's perfect breasts. With a writer like Roth, it is hard to realize where the autobiography starts and where the fictionalizing ends. But it appears that AT LEAST Kepesh is a breast man. Another aspect of Roth is his brutal honesty about desires, impulses, and actions. Things others would hide, Roth flaunts. I think many (including my wife) feel he is a mysoginist. I would agree that Kepesh is. But Roth is a writer of fiction. He is exploring and discesting parts of American Culture that are indeed ugly, narcissistic, rough. But again, with Roth it is always difficult to know.

\* I just saw I originally put Roth here. See?!?

---

## Zinta says

Scanning this book as my other half poured over it with disarming fascination, I had to peek into what had so mesmerized him. After all, I hadn't read a Roth novel since my early 20's, already at that young age having determined that there was nothing here but adolescent angst. And this dying animal? Ah, but I had been right to not bother all these years and with all the in between novels. The story was quite the same one. This time the difference was only one of age. A Roth version of *Lolita*, an elderly man obsesses over a young woman who couldn't possibly care less, except for the intoxication of her power over the old wretch. Been there, read that. Has he nothing new to say?

Even as my partner and I swam into ever deeper waters of discussion, my presentation of the woman's perspective, his from the side of the aging man, I had to concede that Roth has the technical skills of good writing well in hand. It takes small talent to write action; it takes skill to write about nothing, and still he

moves the reader along. This does indeed read like a confession, an emotional purging, and it is done well enough, but to earn a Pulitzer, there must not only be skill, but substance as well. No prize here.

If one other point is earned, I give it for title. So precise, so right, this title is a masterstroke in itself. Aside from that, spare me such men, spare me such novellas. I wish only such skill might have been used to tell more than one story, as Roth appears to have only one to tell.

---

### Jenny says

"Ε?μαι εναντ?ον επειδ? σημα?νει πως ερωτε?εσαι.Η μοναδικ? ψ?χωση την οπο?α επιθυμο?ν οι π?ντες: "?ρωτας".Οι ?νθρωποι νομ?ζουν ?τι ολοκληρ?νονται με το να ερωτευτε?ονται;Θ?λουν την πλατωνικ? ?νωση των ψυχ?ν;Εγ? ?χω αντ?θετη ?ποψη.Νομ?ζω ?τι ακ?ραιο? ε?σαι στην αρχ?.Κι ο ?ρωτας σε ραγ?ζει."

Το πρ?το βιβλ?ο του Roth που διαβ?ζω,σ?γουρα ?χι το τελευτα?ο.Με αφορμ? μια ερωτικ? ιστορ?α με μια φοιτ?τρι? του,ο πρωταγωνιστ?ς μας μιλ?ει για πολλ? και δι?φορα θ?ματα,κυρ?ως ?μως για τον ?ρωτα,την ομορφι?,τη ζω? και το θ?νατο.Σοβαρ? και βαρι? θ?ματα,τα οπο?α ?μως αντιμετωπ?ζονται με απλ?τητα.Σε β?ζει στη διαδικασ?α σκ?ψης,χωρ?ς ?μως να σε πι?νει απελπισ?α...Μου ?ρεσε π?ρα πολ?!

---

### Thodoris Fotoglou says

4+

Λ?γο ?ναρχα γραμμ?νο αλλ? με δι?λυσε..

Πρ?κειται για συνταρακτικ? νουβ?λα που ο βαθ?ς σαρκασμ?ς και το υπαρξιακ? σκ?λισμα επικρατο?ν σε πολλές σελ?δες

?νας αποχαιρετισμ?ς στη νι?τη..

και πολλά και ?ντονα τα συναισθ?ματα ?σο η αναγνωση οδε?ει προς το τ?λος.

---

### Jan Rice says

#### Civilization and Its Discontents

The aging protagonist is proclaiming the unworkability of marriage for the male of the species, just as unworkable as for a gay man forced into a heterosexual marriage. In consequence, he ended his marriage years before. Now he has the pick of his female students. Being as it's the '90s, he has to sidestep new impediments by waiting until the young lady of the year becomes his *former* student.

He celebrates the 1960s sexual revolution as a great boon, even for older men well into adulthood at the time. In retrospect, many spouses seized the opportunity to fly the coop in those years. On one hand this guy is oblivious to any possibility that women react differently than men to the new freedom, but on the other hand,

his marriage was a prison and his wife the jailer. Still, something like justice has intruded, in the guise of an obsession regarding his newest lover. Obsession and jealousy--all new to him: now that he's old, someone like his younger self will eventually take her away.

A culture reporter for *The Washington Post* said this book was the right one to for these times, so I ordered it. Then I saw everyone and his brother had a recommendation. But I don't mind. This is my fifth Roth. I never read *Portnoy's Complaint* or *Goodbye Columbus*; just saw the movies, which I continue to confuse with *The Graduate*, not by Roth. In which one does the female love interest go and get fitted for a diaphragm?

### **Time Will Tell**

The protagonist is speaking as though he's the voice of authority, pronouncing great truths and discoveries, but I can hear him putting words in women's mouths. Maybe at first that keeps the raunchiness from being erotic--or maybe I was on guard.

### **The Truth Will Out**

At the beginning of the book he avoids talking about much that would undermine his manifesto, but his cocksureness cannot keep covering up reality.

Supposedly Christopher Hitichins did not waver in *his* principles even at the end, but in *The Dying Animal*, the bulwarks against the *a* word (*attachment!*) aren't as solid as they seemed.

Even so, little is resolved.

This book could lead to some good personal, group, or societal discussions on topical issues but that would require brutal honesty and avoidance of cultural bromides and psychiatric diagnoses. A moderator would come in handy.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/p...>

---

### **Evan says**

I wish I could say that it is just as entertaining reading the puritan backlash Roth engenders among a large number of Goodreads' reviewers as it is to read Roth himself. But, alas, I cannot say that.

So, all right, this is not the masterpiece that, say, "Portnoy's Complaint" is, but I also can't deny that Roth speaks to me on every page. And that's because the man refuses to lie about human sexuality and motivation. What he says makes a lot of people uncomfortable. In many quarters that's a prerequisite of art.

And it's funny that reactions to him that claim to stem from positions of enlightenment (eg., offended feminist sensibilities) strike me as coming from merely a mutated form of Victorianism. Roth addresses that very American tendency in this book; he might as well have been quoting from Hofstadter's "Anti-Intellectualism in American Life."

So, yeah, on the surface this is about a professor who "abuses" his position of "glamor" and power to seduce students, or at least ones who've just graduated, his classes being part of the leading-up-to process of the conquest. But in this framework much is examined about aging and longing and the choices, good or bad or

both, that people make in how they choose to live. There's much discussed about the mixed legacy of the sexual revolution of the '60s. The conflict between the "bad" father and the "noble" son, the latter overcompensating for the injustices of neglect he felt, is well examined, also.

The fact of the matter is, I visited a professor yesterday on the campus where I work to gather information for a music article I am writing. He's in his 40s and has a well-known reputation on campus for plucking his plums among the student body. He does the very same thing that Roth's protagonist in this book does. He even introduced me to his latest "assistant," a smoking hot young blonde ex-student whose knowing smiles to him during our interview spoke volumes.

So this shit happens, folks. So yeah, shoot the fucking messenger.

Readers need to stop personalizing so much when authors allow their characters to speak or act. I mean is the writing fabulous? Are the points well stated and thoughtful? Is there good basis in history and philosophy for what he talks about? YES, YES and YES!

And Roth's characters get to be promiscuous and fuck, and you don't. Don't get so frustrated and take it out on him.

I've just surpassed the halfway point, and Roth just fucking rocks, if you want to cut to the chase.

Just finished. Roth says so much about life and death. There's a scene close to the end, the passing of his best friend. All I can say is, I've never read a more intimate and moving depiction of a person's last hours. And it's not drawn out. He says just what needs to be said. And then there's more, but, don't want to spoil it.

The Dying Animal, the slow death of the body. Mortality. Who could have anything new to say? Does Roth say anything new? Maybe not, but it's all in HOW it's said.

I had to give this five stars. Roth just leaves me so full, so satisfied. I can't rate it any less.

---

## **Roxane says**

An absurdist, wish-fulfillment meandering stream of consciousness type book-length monologue recounting the inner life of an aging narcissist, misogynist, breast-obsessed professor who, like the cliché has sex with his students and is incomprehensibly virile in his sixties. In terms of committing to a premise, Roth is brilliant. There are some remarkable passages but they are interrupted by large swaths of self-indulgent, aimless prattle. The title is masterful, though.

---

## **Biron Pa?a says**

Ölen Hayvan, nas?l okuyaca??n?za göre sevece?iniz ya da nefret edece?iniz rahats?z edici bir roman. Kitap yanl??l?kla yahut bo?u bo?una rahats?z edici olmam??, yapmak istedi?i bir ?ey var ve onu yapmakta çok ba?ar?l?, ho?umuza gitmese de.

Romanda David Kepesh ad?nda ya?l? bir akademisyenin cinselli?ini, cinselli?inin hayat?na hükmetme çabas?n?, bir türlü sahip oldu?unu hissedemedi?i, bu yüzden de arzusunun sönmedi?i Consuela'ya olan tak?nt?s?n? görüyoruz. Ölen Hayvan'? "ya?l? ve azg?n bir adam?n serüvenleri" olarak okursan?z elinizde

vakit kayb?ndan ba?ka bir ?ey olmaz. Ben de romanda ya?anan olaylar?n bir hikâye de?eri olmad???n? dü?ünüyorum, ama kitapta önemli tek bir ?ey var: David Kepesh'in içindeki cinselli?i onun sesinden duyuyor olu?umuz. Bu ses, bask?lad???m?z, susturmaya çal???t???m?z ve sesini c?l?zca duydu?umuz arzular?n, içgüdülerin, Philip Roth'un kaleminden ç?kan güçlü sesi. Kepesh'in ölüm dö?e?indeki arkada??n?n, bilinci yerine gelir gelmez önce su içip sonra kar?s?n?n elbiselerini ç?karmaya çal???mas? da de?i?iklik olsun diye koyulmam?? kitaba. Philip Roth, cinsel arzular?n bilincin var oldu?u her anda oldu?unu böyle anlat?yor.

Yazar?n bu sesi yaln?zca kitaptaki karakterlerine mal etti?ini zannetmiyorum, herkesin içindeki susmak bilmeyen ses olarak okudum bu kitab?. Böyle bakt???m?zda korkuyu, a?k?, açl??? anlatmaktan belki de daha zor bir ?eyi anlat?yor Philip Roth. Üstelik tehlikeli, çünkü yüzeyde ucuz görünen bir i? gibi duruyor.

Kitab?n, daha do?rusu David Kepesh'in dilinin roman?n mant???na uygun oldu?unu dü?ünüyorum. Gerçekten içgüdülerinizin kula??n?za "Nazende sevdice?in siyah gözleri yaln?zca senin için bakmal? David" diye f?s?ldamas?n? m? bekliyorsunuz anlam?yorum ki.

Bence önemli bir roman. ?nsan?n kendini tan?ma yolculu?undaki duraklar?ndan biri olmal? en az?ndan.

---

## Ian "Marvin" Graye says

### Man of the World

In the third of Philip Roth's David Kepesh novels, David is a divorced, semi-retired professor, philanderer, libertine and man of the world. He teaches a class in Practical Criticism and does book reviews on NPR.

To his students, especially the female ones, he possesses an intellectual and journalistic glamour: *"They are helplessly drawn to celebrity."* He reciprocates their attention, being *"very vulnerable to female beauty"*.

At the time the novel is narrated, David is 70. However, the subject matter is an affair that started eight years earlier and lasted over 18 months. Consuela Castillo is a 24 year old student when he meets her in his class.

As he has done for the last 15 years, he targets Consuela for his advances, but resolves not to start a physical relationship until she has sat her exams and received her grade. This is his concession to propriety.

### Duchess in a D Cup

Consuela's appeal is most immediately physical. David first spots her beautiful cleavage, then her gorgeous breasts, then her ample buttocks. Overall, she is a tall voluptuous Cuban; statuesque, marvelous, enticing and alluring:

*"She knew what her body was worth...She has a D cup, this duchess, really big, beautiful breasts, and skin of a very white colour, skin that, the moment you see it, makes you want to lick it."*

Her appeal is, however, more than physical:

*"She's not a demi-adolescent, she's not a slouching, unkempt, 'like'-ridden girl. She's well-spoken, sober, her posture is perfect...she dresses carefully, with quiet taste...not to desensualise herself, but more, it would seem, to professionalise herself..."*

David implicitly differentiates himself from Humbert Humbert, because Consuela is adult, cultured, mature,

not a minor, not a nymphet, not a victim, supposedly not an inappropriate object or target, academic propriety and age aside. But she is an object, a target nevertheless.

Amadeo Modigliani - "Le Grand Nu"

### **A Whopping Invitation**

David starts off interpreting Consuela's body as both a display and a "*whopping invitation*" that tells him "*that I need no longer suppress the wish to touch*". Apparently she has one of those bodies that articulates to sexually-active men:

*"That body is still new to her, she's still trying it out, thinking it through, a bit like a kid walking the streets with a loaded gun and deciding whether he's packing it to protect himself or to begin a life of crime."*

Consuela doesn't resist David's approach. She does specify one constraint though: "*I can never be your wife.*" He can never legitimate his conquest in a convention.

So far, perhaps, so bad. There is a lot of frank sexual description (not to mention psychoanalysis), at least of the women, in the novel.

Up to this point, Roth seems to have created some mischievous, but good-natured, septuagenarian version of lad lit.

If this were all you knew about Philip Roth and his writing, you'd be tempted to dismiss the novel as sexist and misogynistic. However, ultimately, there's more at stake, and the novel is more sophisticated and nuanced, even Proustian, than you would expect.

### **The Gift of Stature**

Although David is the first person narrator, Roth delves into the basis of the relationship from both points of view, via his narration. David is an astute, if self-interested, observer.

The relationship is nevertheless defined in terms of the male gaze. Consuela, initially, is something for David to look at, to watch over. She is not so much a sex object as an objet d'art.

What Consuela gets from David in particular, in his opinion, is the authority of his educated gaze. He purports to judge her professionally:

*"I had pronounced her a great work of art, with all the magical influence of a great work of art...she had only to be there, on view, and the understanding of her importance flowed from me. It was not required of her...that she have any sort of self-conception. That's what I was for: I was Consuela's awareness of herself."*

He admires her simplicity, her lack of complexity, even if it's not strictly correct to say that she lacks a self-awareness of her own.

Moreover, it's David "*who fired up her senses, who gave her her stature, [and] who was the catalyst to her emancipation...*"

The Professor of Desire sees his age-derived authority as mutually beneficial to his student(s):

*"They do it for the age...my age and my status give her, rationally, the licence to surrender, and surrendering in bed is a not unpleasant sensation...she gets both the pleasures of submission and the pleasures of mastery."*

Of course, this perspective is still David's.

Surrender seems to be more than succumbing to David's initial proposal. There is both submission and mastery present in the eventual relationship itself, one that Roth paints in terms of a (pleasurable and emancipatory?) master/slave relationship.

### **The Author of Her Mastery**

As the relationship progresses, Consuela starts to see through David. She calls him:

*"Mr Arrogant Intellectual Critic, the great authority on everything, teaching everybody what to think and setting everyone right!"*

Conversely, he realises that *"she didn't desire me...she experimented with me, really, to see how overwhelming her breasts could be."* Of course, breasts will win out every time!

Inevitably, David feels he has lost whatever authority he had ever had in the relationship. He knows because for the first time he experiences jealousy. Ironically, his own authority is at the heart of the problem. It has succumbed to her mastery:

*"[I had] inaugurated her into the sinister dream, the full amorous truth. The instinctual girl bursting not just the container of her vanity but the captivity of her cozy Cuban home. It was the true beginning of her mastery - the mastery into which my mastery had initiated her. I am the author of her mastery of me."*

The master has become the slave at his own behest. (Or is each lover always both master and slave? Is this the amorous truth?)

### **The Fracture of Love**

Whether or not David realises it, he has undertaken a journey of his own. His starting point is a pretty masculine mindset:

*"He who forms a tie is lost, attachment is my enemy."*

Inevitably he becomes attached. However, his friend, George, a Pulitzer Prize winner, questions what has happened to him. He diagnoses his plight in the following abstract and intellectual terms:

*"You violated the law of aesthetic distance. You sentimentalised the aesthetic experience with this girl - you personalised it, you sentimentalised it, and you lost the sense of separation essential to your enjoyment...what lies behind the comedy of this Cuban girl taking a guy like you, the professor of desire, to the mat?...it's falling in love..."*

*"People think that in falling in love they make themselves whole. The Platonic union of souls? I think otherwise. I think you're whole when you begin. And the love fractures you. You're whole and then you're cracked open. She was a foreign body introduced into your wholeness. And for a year and a half you*

*struggled to incorporate it. But you'll never be whole unless you expel it. You either get rid of it or incorporate it through self-distortion. And that's what you did and what drove you mad."*

### **Haunted by the Pastness and the Still-Being**

Once again, there's a misogynist overtone to this perspective. However, it has to be assessed in the context of the last third of the novel. Just as David's self-conscious about his age, Consuela at the premature age of 32 becomes ill and for a time must confront her own mortality.

As David ages, his attitude towards time has changed. This is his view at the beginning of the novel (the language both resembles and questions that of Heidegger, at least in its embrace of the past tense):

*"To those not yet old, being old means you've been. But being old means that despite, in addition to, and in excess of your beenness, you still are. Your beenness is very much alive. You still are, and one is as haunted by the still-being and its fullness as by the having-already-been, by the pastness."*

In contrast, David believes that the young focus on the past as the evidence of their life and vitality. There is less concern about the future, because it's assumed that it will just happen inexorably, and that it will take and last a long time.

### **Sailing to Byzantium**

Only this doesn't recognise the risk of illness. When you become ill, your perspective necessarily changes:

*"Time is now how much future [you have] left, and [you don't] believe there is any."*

Until now David has always enjoyed good health and has pursued a life of absolute freedom within which he has only been accountable to his own (masculine) desire.

More recently, he has known *"the sickness of desire...fastened to a dying animal"* that Yeats speaks of in a poem that gives the novel its title (see comment 1 in the thread below this review).

Now David has started to experience feelings of genuine *"longing, dotting, possessiveness, even of love."* Ultimately, Consuela forces David to look at her breasts in a different way, just as she has had to. (I won't say more than this because of spoiler concerns.)

David realises that his concern about his own death sometime in the unforeseeable future is nothing compared with the more immediate terror confronting Consuela because of her illness.

As a result, he surrenders some of his freedom, some of his libertarianism for the sake of a better relationship.

While David's perspective is undeniably male, *"The Dying Animal"* examines many Proustian concerns, only from a more overtly heterosexual point of view. That doesn't necessarily mean the novel itself is sexist or misogynistic. It's arguable that it is quite the opposite, that it is critical of the attitudes of David and George, and ultimately respectful of the women in the novel.

David finally recognises that he has stood in the way of Consuela's real liberation, as well as his own.

Whatever the sexual revolution might have achieved in the sixties, only when men retreat from patent selfishness and egotism will a non-sexist relationship be possible for women or men. To this extent, the novel concludes as an argument for the (sexual) liberation of women (even if it must be at the expense of men), not against it.

This is often a highly stimulating and enjoyable work, if you're prepared to look and explore beyond the rudeness and lewdness of the male gaze.

Madeleine Peyroux

**SOUNDTRACK:**

(view spoiler)

## Carmo says

[David é um homem bem sucedido; professor universitário, crítico literário, vive para lá das regras recusando laços e afetos.

Foi apanhado pela revolução sexual dos anos sessenta a viver um casamento gasto, abandonou as calamidades domésticas e deixou mulher e filho para trás. Passou a viver de relações breves, a maioria com alunas, sem qualquer envolvimento romântico ou sedução- "eu sei o que quero, tu sabes o que queres, vamos a isso."

Até ao fatídico dia em que conhece a jovem e l

---

## Chris\_P says

*"Look," she said, "there's hair on my arms but not on my head"*

This short novel is my first Roth. I've heard much about the guy, but I'd never got around to reading any of his works. *The Dying Animal* is a complex monologue that touches many delicate matters. Written just after the turn of the century, this change of everything in the world is portrayed clearly and in an in-your-face fashion, leaving, however, plenty of space for misunderstandings.

The sexual liberation that took place in the sixties gave birth to a ton of misconceptions dutifully adopted by the then soon-to-be fathers. Misconceptions which are the great legacy the sons and daughters inherited. And since they are merely inherited and not formed naturally (or even unnaturally, for that matter) as was the case with the fathers, they are quickly turned into neuroses and dysfunctionalities. What are we, really, but other people's misconceptions? The relationship between father and son is depicted in painful detail and, dare I say, extreme accuracy. In short, cultural and historical changes form people's lifestyle as much as families do. It's the long-term outcome that differs.

As the narrator's thoughts develop, we are treated with facts we normally tend to shy away from. Facts that we, who hardly, if at all, had the chance to get a glimpse of the world as it was before the new millennium, find hard to swallow although we clearly are products of them. I admit I felt my stomach tied to a knot with the twist of events at the end of the story and the century, and how those two equally inevitable ends were paralleled as much to each other as to the aforementioned twist.

Tied stomach or not, *A Dying Animal* is a gripping book, capable of delivering the trauma we, readers, tentatively seek from time to time.

---

## Paul Bryant says

Philip Roth is a sexist pig. Who can argue about that? When he drags his mind off his wilting member for a week or so he produces *Operation Shylock* which is a minor masterpiece. But that was just a vacation. For years now he just rewrites the same story where some old geezer (himself) fantasises about shagging some young bird and then - just like life - gets to shag her. Bah. What a pig.

## Teresa Proença says

Não sei que pensar deste livro. Tem muito assunto mas pouca consistência.

Um professor de sessenta e dois que seduz alunas na casa dos vinte. Não acredito muito nisto, pois as miúdas não gostam de homens velhos (acho eu...).

Na cama faz-lhes coisas que nem miúdas nem graúdas apreciam (digo eu...).

Apaixona-se por uma delas; tem muitos ciúmes, sofre muito, mas continua a fazer uns biscates com outra.

Quando ela o deixa entra em depressão durante três anos (não percebi...).

Entretanto vai divagando sobre casamento, infidelidades, filhos, Cuba,...

Na parte final, aparece a doença - a trombose e o cancro - com uma personagem que morre e outra que logo se vê...

Concluindo: acho que este romance está moribundo da primeira à última página.

As três estrelas são todas para a boa escrita e algumas ideias interessantes, conforme se pode comprovar pelos dois exemplos abaixo:

1. *"As pessoas pensam que ao amar se tornam inteiras, completas? A união platónica das almas? Eu não penso assim. Penso que estamos inteiros antes de começarmos. E o amor fractura-nos. Estás inteiro e depois estás fracturado, aberto."*

2. ...

~~a segunda citação está escrita em tinta simpática...~~

---

## Matteo Fumagalli says

Videorecensione: <https://youtu.be/yQwWeTJ1ir8>

---

## Fabian says

Oh, Mr. Roth, you're so dead-on when you write: "You're not superior to sex" (33). This simple idea is made manifest with that inimitable, incredible Rothian verve we absolutely admire. The entitled voice nears perilously close to, in my recent memory, the pu\*\*y protagonist of the horrid abortion that goes by the name of "Ian McEwan's Saturday." The 70 year old in this book, a decrepit nonetheless persistently sharp Hot Shot TV persona, goes on ridiculing people, mainly sexually (mostly an array of too-sharp, too-glamorized-then-trashed [this, a defining element of the iconic writer] women one-third his age) & Oedipally/Emotionally (his son). A bastard, but clearly one that can foretell the upcoming dance (a total downer) of the elements of death and sex, & there are plenty graphic depictions of these both.

In "The Dying Animal", Roth's mastery of whisking up just the correct ingredients to stuff a 156 page novella with, is impeccable: national themes, concerns & histories (his lifetime is marked most decidedly by the dawning millennium and the sex-and-drugs 60's) and personal anecdotes of sexual love (hot) and biological death (lame). It is a story about the sadness of sex and the literary thrill which comes from an

immediate proximity to, a pronouncement of, death.

Alas, bottom line: damn better-than-good novel and a less-than-average novel in terms of Philip Roth. (For that enlightening feel, go to "Sabbath's Theater," go to "Everyman", go to [you really really REALLY oughtta go to] "The Human Stain".)

---