

Jay A. Gertzman collection on Samuel Roth

Ms. Coll. 1315

Finding aid prepared by Alexandra M. Wilder.

Last updated on September 12, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2017 June 20

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	5
Related Materials	6
Controlled Access Headings.....	6
Collection Inventory.....	8
I. Book notes (<i>Samuel Roth, Infamous Modernist</i>).....	8
II. Research notes.....	11

Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Gertzman, Jay A.
Title	Jay A. Gertzman collection on Samuel Roth
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1315
Date [inclusive]	1926-2014
Extent	4 linear feet (5 boxes)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Jay A. Gertzman, professor emeritus of English at Mansfield University, is the author of four books: <i>Fantasy, Fashion, and Affection: Illustrated and Decorated Editions of Robert Herrick's Poetry</i>, <i>Bookleggers and Smuthounds: The Trade in Erotica, 1920-1940</i>; <i>Samuel Roth, Infamous Modernist</i>; and <i>A Descriptive Bibliography of Lady Chatterley's Lover: With Essays Toward a Publishing History of the Novel</i>. This collection focuses on Gertzman's research on Samuel Roth (1893-1974), writer, publisher, and entrepreneur, who is best known for publishing unauthorized excerpts of James Joyce's <i>Ulysses</i> in the United States, and for being the plaintiff in a landmark case before the United States Supreme Court that redefined what constitutes obscene material unprotected by the First Amendment. Researchers will find notes associated with Gertzman's book, <i>Samuel Roth, Infamous Modernist</i>, which was published in 2013 by University Press of Florida, as well as various research notes on Samuel Roth's publishing and writing career.</p>

Cite as:

Jay A. Gertzman collection on Samuel Roth, 1926-2014, Ms. Coll. 1315, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Jay A. Gertzman, professor emeritus of English at Mansfield University, is the author of four books: *Fantasy, Fashion, and Affection: Illustrated and Decorated Editions of Robert Herrick's Poetry*, *Bookleggers and Smuthounds: The Trade in Erotica, 1920-1940*; *Samuel Roth, Infamous Modernist*; and *A Descriptive Bibliography of Lady Chatterley's Lover: With Essays Toward a Publishing History of the Novel*. According to Dennis Miller on *Huffington Post*, Gertzman is a "respected scholar [who] was asked by Roth's grandchildren to write an accurate biography ... [and who created] a fascinating look at the Jewish experience, censorship, government repression and conflicts between Christianity, Jewish religion and the American dream." Over seven years, Gertzman researched Roth's experiences, using the Roth papers at Columbia as well as learning about "the principles of First Amendment law, ... the American suppression of sexual expression, the background of Jewish life in eastern Europe, where Roth was born, and the principles of Hasidism to which Roth adhered to his whole life (although he also searched out the methods of making money, the key to the American Dream)," (Miller).

Samuel Roth (1893-1974), based in New York City, published and sold books, magazines, and erotica, and operated a mail order operation that defied Post Office censors for two decades. Samuel Roth's first project as a publisher was a student-run poetry journal called *The Lyric*, which he started at Columbia University with his friend Frank Tannenbaum in 1917. He later founded two literary magazines, *Beau*--the first American "men's magazine"--and *Two Worlds Monthly*. As a publisher, Roth was frequently accused of violating the copyrights of prominent authors including D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, and was responsible for the first, unauthorized editions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Ulysses*. After James Joyce published the "International Protest" against Samuel Roth in 1927, a petition signed by over one hundred international public figures and artists, Roth was ostracized from the publishing world. Roth then ventured into publishing literary erotica and the underground distribution of pornography. He was convicted of distributing obscene materials in 1936. Soon after his release, he turned, and very successfully after World War II, to the mail-order pornography business, publishing *Good Times* and *American Aphrodite: A Quarterly for the Fancy Free*. Among the books he published is *My Sister and I*, ostensibly a memoir by Nietzsche about his incestuous relationship with his sister, though both the authorship and the translation of the book are contested.

In addition to his work as publisher, Roth was a poet and essayist. His early poetry won praise from Edwin Arlington Robinson, Maurice Samuel, Marie Syrkin, Harriet Monroe, Israel Zangwill, and Louis Untermeyer. Some correspondence to and from these figures is in the archive.

In 1957, Roth was the appellant in a Supreme Court case, *Roth vs the United States*. The minority decision in the case opened the way to Constitutional protection for expression previously censored for indecency, and became a template for the liberalizing First Amendment decisions of the 1960s. He was incarcerated for his actions on several occasions: in 1928, for 3 months in a New York workhouse for

possessing indecent materials with intent to sell; in 1929 for 6 months in Detention Headquarters, NYC for violation of parole; in 1930 for 2 months in Moyemensing Prison, remanded after serving time in New York for selling obscene books; and from 1936 to 1939 and from 1957 to 1961 at Lewisburg penitentiary. The latter two were federal cases; the sentences were severe.

Works cited:

Miller, Dennis. "Jewish Self-Styled Prophet 'Pirate' and Pornographer Brought Ulysses to America." *Huffington Post*, 2013 September 3

(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jewish-selfstyled-prophet_b_3846306/ / accessed June 26, 2017)

Scope and Contents

This collection is arranged in two series: I. Book notes, which author and collection creator Jay A. Gertzman compiled as part of the research and writing for his book *Samuel Roth, Infamous Modernist*, published in 2013 by University Press of Florida; and II. Research notes, which are more general research notes on Samuel Roth compiled by Gertzman. The first series is arranged in subseries according to book chapter, and the second series is arranged in subseries according to subject.

Most of the papers in this collection are photocopies of essays, book chapters, and legal and government documents. There are also handwritten research notes, as well as minimal original correspondence to Jay A. Gertzman spread throughout, from people such as Gershon Legman. Research is mostly focused on Samuel Roth's publishing career and legal battles, with some research notes regarding authors that Roth published, such as Claude McKay. A novel by McKay was discovered in the Roth Archive at Columbia U., and received its first publication in 1917. There are few papers related to Roth's personal life, though there are a number of copies of letters that Roth sent to various people while he was incarcerated.

Administrative Information

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2017 June 20

Finding aid prepared by Alexandra M. Wilder.

Access Restrictions

The bulk of this collection is open for research use, however, access to original audio/visual materials and computer files contained in Box 3, Folder 9 is restricted. The Kislak Center will provide access to the information on these materials from duplicate master files. If the original does not already have a copy, it will be sent to an outside vendor for copying. Patrons are financially responsible for the cost. The turnaround time from request to delivery of digital items is about two weeks for up to five items and three to seven weeks for more than five items. Please contact Reprographic Services (reprogr@upenn.edu) for

cost estimates and ordering. Once digital items are received, researchers will have access to the files on a dedicated computer in the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center. Researchers should be aware of specifics of copyright law and act accordingly.

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Source of Acquisition

Gift of Jay A. Gertzman, 2016.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Samuel Roth Papers, 1907-1994 [Bulk Dates: 1910-1979], Columbia University, Rare Book & Manuscript Library Collections.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence
- Research notes

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Roth, Samuel, 1893-1974

SUBJECT(S)

- Book industries and trade
- Censorship--United States--20th century
- Literature
- Publishers and publishing

Collection Inventory

I. BOOK NOTES (*SAMUEL ROTH, INFAMOUS MODERNIST*).

A. CHAPTER 1: "1893–1916: FROM A GALICIAN SHTETL TO COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY".

	Box	Folder
Galacia, circa 2007-2013.	1	1
Literature of the shtetl, circa 2007-2013.	1	2
Poland, circa 2007-2013.	1	3
Roth's writings, circa 2007-2013.	1	4

B. CHAPTER 2: "1917–1925: PRELUDE TO AN INTERNATIONAL PROTEST: A RISING, PUGNACIOUS MAN OF LETTERS".

	Box	Folder
<i>The Lyric</i> , Frank Tanenbaum, circa 2007-2013.	1	5

C. CHAPTER 3: "1925–1927: 'DAMN HIS IMPERTINENCE. BLOODY CROOK!': ROTH PUBLISHES JOYCE".

	Box	Folder
Friends and mentors, circa 2007-2013.	1	6-7

Jewish-American poetry, circa 2007-2013.	1	8
<i>The Lyric</i> , circa 2007-2013.	1	9
Roth's early poetry, circa 2007-2013.	1	10
Roth's reviews and essays, circa 2007-2013.	1	11
Roth's writings, circa 2007-2013.	1	12
Zionism, circa 2007-2013.	1	13

D. CHAPTER 4: "1928–1934: ROTH MUST LIVE: A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS AND ITS BANKRUPTCY".

	Box	Folder
James Joyce, circa 2007-2013.	1	14-17
Magazine distribution, circa 2007-2013.	1	18

E. CHAPTER 5: "1934: JEWS MUST LIVE: 'WE MEET OUR DESTINY ON THE ROAD WE TAKE TO AVOID IT'".

	Box	Folder
People vs Roth, 1931.	2	1
U.S. vs Roth, 1926.	2	2

F. CHAPTER 6: "1934–1939: A STRETCH IN THE FEDERAL PENITENTIARY".

	Box	Folder
Antisemitism, circa 2007-2013.	2	3

"Jewish self-hatred", circa 2007-2013.	2	4
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Judaism and sex, circa 2007-2013.	2	5
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G. CHAPTER 7: "1940–1949: ROTH BREAKS PAROLE, UNCOVERS A NAZI PLOT, GIVES 'DAME POST OFFICE' FITS, AND TELLS HIS OWN STORY IN MAIL-ORDER ADVERTISING COPY".

	Box	Folder
Nazism, circa 2007-2013.	2	6
Prison writings, circa 2007-2013.	2	7
Roth on antisemitism, circa 2007-2013.	2	8
Transmigration, circa 2007-2013.	2	9

H. CHAPTER 8: "1949–1952: TIMES SQUARE, PEGGY ROTH, SOUTHERN GOTHIC, CÉLINE, AND NIETZSCHE".

	Box	Folder
<i>Inside Hitler</i> , circa 2007-2013.	2	10
Postal law, circa 2007-2013.	2	11
Roth vs Goldman, 1951.	2	12

I. CHAPTER 9: "1952–1957: THE WINDSORS, WINCHELL, KEFAUVER: BACK TO LEWISBURG".

	Box	Folder
Maxwell Bodenheim, circa 2007-2013.	2	13
<i>My Sister and I</i> , circa 2007-2013.	2	14

J. CHAPTER 10: "1958–1974: 'IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE SOMEONE LIKE YOU HAD APPEARED IN THE WORLD': ROTH FULFILLS HIS MISSION'".

	Box	Folder
Citadel Press, circa 2007-2013.	2	15
District attorney files, circa 2007-2013.	2	16
Seven Sirens Press, circa 2007-2013.	2	17

K. CHAPTER 11 (NOT INCLUDED IN PUBLISHED BOOK).

	Box	Folder
Copyright files, circa 2007-2013.	2	18

L. ADDITIONAL BOOK NOTES.

	Box	Folder
Appendix, circa 2007-2013.	2	19
Interchapters, circa 2007-2013.	2	20
Permissions, circa 2007-2013.	2	21

II. RESEARCH NOTES.

A. AUTHORS, PUBLISHERS, AND INFORMATION ON ROTH.

	Box	Folder
Arthur Sainer, circa 2007-2010.	3	1
Articles on Roth, circa 1954-2010.	3	2
Autobiography (writings on), circa 2007-2010.	3	3
Barney Rosset, circa 2007-2010.	3	4
Claude McKay, circa 2007-2010.	3	5
Fraud order hearings, 1947-1948, circa 1947-2013.	3	6
Gay Talese, 2009-2013.	3	7

B. GERSHON LEGMAN ON ROTH.

	Box	Folder
Gershon Legman on Roth, correspondence from Legman to Gertzman, 1986-1992.	3	8
Gershon Legman, two floppy discs containing files by Gertzman [restricted], undated.	3	9
Gershon Legman, notes and an excerpt from "Peregrine Penis," Legman's unpublished memoir, circa 1953-1882.	3	10

C. BACKGROUND RESEARCH.

	Box	Folder
Harry Roskolenko, circa 2007-2013.	3	11
<i>Heliogabalus</i> , circa 2007-2013.	3	12

Herbert Hoover, circa 2007-2013.	3	13
Images of the Lower East Side, New York City, circa 1940.	3	14
<i>Israeli Book of Psalms</i> , circa 2007-2013.	3	15
Mail-order titles published by Roth, circa 2007-2013.	3	16

D. FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER WRITERS ON ROTH.

	Box	Folder
Milton Hindus, circa 2007-2013.	3	17
Patrick Kearney, circa 2007-2013.	3	18
Pauline Roth, circa 2007-2013.	3	19
Peggy Roth, circa 2007-2013.	3	20

E. LETTERS WRITTEN BY ROTH IN PRISON, BOOKS PUBLISHED BY ROTH.

	Box	Folder
<i>The President's Daughter</i> , circa 2007-2013.	3	21
Prison letters, 1956-1959.	3	22
Robert McAlmon, circa 2007-2013.	3	23

F. ROTH'S FBI FILES AND GOVERNMENT RECORDS.

	Box	Folder
FBI files, circa 1930s.	4	1

FBI files, circa 1950s.	4	2
Government records (marriage, naturalization, social security), 1939-2008.	4	3
Roth's publishing imprints under investigation, circa 2007-2013.	4	4
Roth vs Goldman, 1949.	4	5
Roth vs US, 1956.	4	6

G. UNMAILABLE BOOKS.

	Box	Folder
<i>A Scarlet Pansy.</i>	4	7
<i>The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover.</i>	4	8
Unmailable books: lists, excerpts and correspondence, circa 1950-2008.	4	9

H. U.S. VS ROTH COURT CASES, 1929-1959.

	Box	Folder
1929.	4	10
1941.	5	1
1956.	5	2
1959.	5	3

	Box	Folder
I. VARIOUS NOTES ON ROTH, CIRCA 2007-2013.	5	4-8