



Call It Sleep

Henry Roth , Alfred Kazin (Introduction) , Hana Wirth-Nesher (Afterword)

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When Henry Roth published *Call It Sleep*, his first novel, in 1934, it was greeted with critical acclaim. But in that dark Depression year, books were hard to sell, and the novel quickly dropped out of sight, as did its twenty-eight-year-old author. Only with its paperback publication in 1964 did the novel receive the recognition it deserves. *Call It Sleep* was the first paperback ever to be reviewed on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*, and it proceeded to sell millions of copies both in the United States and around the world.

Call It Sleep is the magnificent story of David Scheckl, the “dangerously imaginative” child coming of age in the slums of New York.

Call It Sleep Details

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Author : Henry Roth , Alfred Kazin (Introduction) , Hana Wirth-Nesher (Afterword)

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From Reader Review Call It Sleep for online ebook

Ellie says

After 20 years of attempting to break open this novel (Call It Sleep by Henry Roth, I have finally finished it, thanks to a challenge. Once I finally was able to deal with the long sections written in dialect form (something I find very difficult to read), deal with the interspersed writings in Yiddish as well as other languages (also written in a dialect-a double whammy), I discovered an amazing novel.

A breathtaking, horrifying, gorgeous novel: poem, journalism, stream of conscious, realist, psychological, social-impossible to define. I can't say I ever found it easier to read; I can say I found it impossible to stay away from. The only way I could read it was by becoming deeply immersed in it, reading carefully line by line, word by word even.

The story is of a Jewish family, immigrants from Poland and one major theme of the text is the immigrant experience. They, as are most of the people living around them, are dislocated, cut off not only from family and friends and familiar landscapes but from their culture, their very language. Their speech is reproduced in dialect only when they are attempting to speak in English, in their native Yiddish the speech is rendered in perfect English, showing us their ease and eloquence in their mother tongue.

The story is also that of the streets of the Lower East Side, surrounded by tenements, overcrowded, teeming with people, life, clashing cultures, children adrift in families unmoored from their past and still unattached to their brilliant. Poverty is almost the least of their problems. Dirt, smells, noise-unbelievable noise of trolleys and trains and people screaming—"hollering", a word I haven't heard since my father died, to each other, at each other, pushing, fighting. All I remember as a child shopping on Delancey Street on a Sunday (back then, only the Jewish stores on the Lower East Side of Manhattan were allowed to be open on Sundays and I remember the terrifying crowds, loud, shoving and my terror that I would be separated from my parents).

The story is also a very personal one of three years in the life a boy (aged 6-9), whose father is often violent, paranoid to a clinical degree, who shouts, rages and beats the child who turns desperately to his gentle, adoring mother who, unable to speak English and thus even more isolated than the father, turns to her son as well as her emotional lifeline. The boy, David, is sensitive, gifted (very likely to some extent a portrait of the author, Henry Roth).

Published originally in 1934, the book was barely noticed. It is now considered an American classic. I wish I could quote from the book but it seems impossible to convey its power through any one sentence or paragraph. The book works in rhythmic sections that in an almost musical way resonate off, contrast with, and highlight aspects of the work in a way that resists easy description.

A difficult work still but one that pays off close reading many times over. This book was well worth the effort I put into reading it. I am grateful I did not give up on it, even after so many years. I feel as though through its reading I have been changed, both as a reader and as a human being.

Andrew says

This sounds terribly vulgar, but I just couldn't get over Roth's ham-fisted attempts to transliterate New York street-kid English to the written page. My mental reading voice makes each sentence sound like Feivel from *An American Tail*.

There were some utterly lovable scenes, and some memorable characters. I'd kick it with Aunt Bertha any day of the week. But the bulk of the story was simply pleasant, honest, and unexceptional.

And then the ending, holy crap. Suddenly, Roth takes flight on this bizarre modernist experiment, and it is the absolute most appropriate way to tell the story he's trying to tell. Whoa! There's a sort of comedown from the high of the ending, and I finished the book exhilarated, but I wasn't sure, really, how I felt about the 400 pages that preceded that ending.

JoJo says

Finally done with this horrendous book! It was so long, and practically nothing happened in it. The main character is a whiny, snivelling, cowardly little boy who goes around living in fear. The awful dialogue throughout the book is both excessive and confusing, and David's stream-of-consciousness internal monologues are extremely irritating. It's over 400 pages of insufferable pain, and at the end, nothing really happens. Nothing is resolved. One of the worst books I've ever read.

Yair Ben-Zvi says

Memo to Saul Bellow THIS is how you write an American Jewish novel. Joking aside, and with little in the way of preamble, please allow me to say that this truly is an opus of the rarest kind. Akin to Melville's *Moby Dick* and Jones' *From Here to Eternity*, this work is the result of a soul laid bare and detailed with the heaviest, the most austere, but in the end, most telling kind of language. Though some of the dialogue (better parsed as dialect) is hard to read (probably more so for those without at least a cursory knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish) this partial opacity is a necessary sacrifice at the altar of verisimilitude. And authentic it reads as, through the eyes of main character David Schearl, we see the dank squalor and raw feeling of his existence. Interspersed between the bouts of brutality (namely by way of David's viciously complex father Albert and the bullies of the story's later turns) there are moments of description in the text that bespeak a gorgeous sense of the beauty inhering in the urban and the squalid. I could write volumes more in laudatory verbiage but just, please, read this book if ever you've wondered about the truth of the immigrant experience in general, and the Jewish Ashkenaic American Exile in particular, it brings tears of alternating despair and joy, like the average life, I guess.

Petra says

I'm not sure what to make of 450+ pages told through the eyes of a 6-8 year old child, with a child's thoughts, a child's understanding and a child's limited understanding.

The story is told in 3 styles: the straightforward English style being the parts where people are speaking Yiddish, the phonetic dialect parts to supposedly show how difficult it is for immigrants to understand English and stream-of-consciousness style of David's thoughts (a child's thoughts). The phonetic sections were difficult to get through and I didn't find that the three styles melded well. It made the story uneven.

David is withdrawn, nervous, gets spooked by a look. He's a mama's boy of a kid. This is his story of life in the Lower East Side of New York. A book told through his eyes, at his age, isn't riveting. Quite honestly, there isn't a story here; just a kid's life in New York. Pleasant enough in some ways but with no plot, no story, no ending....just 3 years of a kid's life.

BlackOxford says

Probably the best immigrant novel ever written.

Robert Dunbar says

Re-reading -- for the ninetieth time.

Carloesse says

Henry Roth all'età di 25-26 anni (viene pubblicato per la prima volta nel 34) fa sua la lezione di Harry James e quella di James Joyce, la trapianta nel solco ebraico tracciato da Isaac Singer, ma la fa propria e tira fuori uno dei massimi capolavori della letteratura americana del 900, uno di quei libri che restano impressi nella memoria, per poi scomparire nel nulla fino agli anni sessanta.

Solo allora una ristampa di questo grande romanzo lo riporta in auge e lo convince a scrivere ancora, seppure libri meno memorabili, evitandogli il destino di "one-book writer" cui sembrava fatalmente destinato.

L'affresco di questa New York di inizio secolo che inizia a divenire l'approdo di frotte di emigranti da tutta l'Europa è un simbolo vivo di quel melting pot che sta diventando l'America: ebrei, irlandesi, polacchi, italiani, tedeschi, occupano interi quartieri con le loro usanze, religioni e culture, e parlando le loro diverse lingue che concorreranno a trasformare e a rendere l'Inglese una lingua estremamente viva e in perenne mutamento.

E anche di questo Roth si accorge e ci vuole dare testimonianza infarcendo l'inglese del suo romanzo di termini yiddish (a volte intere frasi), ma anche italiani e tedeschi, creando non poche difficoltà ai traduttori.

La storia narrata alla fine è solo un pretesto per sviscerare i rapporti di una famiglia ebrea proveniente da qualche regione polacca ancora sotto dominio Austro-ungarico (forse la Galizia) giunta da poco a N.Y. e, seppure raccontata per lo più in terza persona, è vista attraverso gli occhi di David, il bambino di questa coppia di emigrati. Solo in alcuni piani (quelli più concitati, quelli dove prende corpo il flusso confuso e ininterrotto dei suoi pensieri e delle sue paure, mettendo efficacemente a frutto la lezione dell'Ulysses) David si trasforma direttamente in un vivo io narrante.

E in questo alternarsi di "oggettiva/soggettiva" si rendono vitali madre, padre e figlio, i personaggi principali della storia, una storia di piccoli accadimenti quotidiani che in fondo ruota tutta intorno al senso di violenza e di paura. Violenza e paura generate dal senso di colpa che ognuno di loro si trascina da tempo, come segreto, con sé, e che il Piccolo David si troverà infine ad accogliere sulle proprie spalle, ad accrescere quello per i suoi piccoli-grandi peccati (legati perlopiù alla scoperta della altrui sessualità ed alla paura della propria), fino a renderlo insostenibile e a tentare di liberarsene attraverso la possibilità di ripetere quell'esplosione di luce divina cui solo il Profeta Elia ebbe il privilegio di assistere, e cercandola in un cortocircuito tra le rotaie

del tram.

Ma l'affresco si completa con grandi ritratti anche di personaggi di secondo piano: quelli della zia Bertha e del marito Nathan, o quello dei Rabbino Shulim, fino a quelli di puro contorno: i bambini di strada e quelli dello heder frequentato dal piccolo David, vicini, poliziotti e umanità varia.

Chiamiamolo pure sonno, ma al di là di esso, dopo l'ultima pagina, vi sarà certamente un risveglio.

Jen says

I fell in love with the boy in this book. Proust, pay attention. A serious child who loves his mama doesn't have to whine. And this kid faced much more adversity than having to go to bed during dinner parties.

Back when NKOTB still signed posters for squealing girls, I lived for sleeping over at a friend's house. Most of my friends attended the same church I did, but didn't live for church. They were allowed to breathe and have two piece bathing suits. I was not. My parents lived like a light on a very high hill, a mountain really, and though you could see our shining example for miles, miles! I was oxygen deprived and craved color. Sleepovers were times of reckless abandonment for me, and by reckless abandonment I mean watching Ferris Bueller's Day Off without permission (it wouldn't have been granted anyhow) and swimming in neighborhood pools full of boys past dark and thinking that maybe, if I was lucky, sin would present itself. Coming up for a deep breath of glorious air after trying to talk to my friend through the chlorinated water, I'd see things poolside through kaleidoscope vision. If it was dark the street lights over the fence would be nothing but fuzzy glowing orbs. Walking home, everything was comfortably hazy and muted. And when I think of the memories from my childhood, this is the way I see them, with the edges rubbed off.

So, it was not difficult for me to adapt myself to the stream-of-consciousness narrative regarding the boy here. He was seeing things and recording them alongside his feelings before being able to understand them or explain them. And when he was alone he'd take these small streaks of experiences back out of his brain and sift through them, matching them up with things he'd heard his mother or aunt say, turning the tumblers in his mind until a click! of recognition, and he'd suddenly realize under what category this experience should be filed.

The boy has a category for his father- stark, severe, brutal. A category for his mother- soft, kind, laughter. A category for things he wants to know more about- Hebrew, Isaiah, fire, his apartment in regards to the city, why his father hates him, the basement. He's got categories galore. There are levels here to the boy's childhood and development that Roth captures perfectly. Absolutely perfection. And then there's the dialect.

The dialect almost derailed me at times. Paragraphs and paragraphs of dialogue, much of which I had to read aloud three or four times like Eliza Doolittle with marbles in her mouth before getting things right. But there was humor. And it was the humor, the black humor, that saved me. I marked the numerous Yiddish curses shouted to try to work them into my verbal repertoire. I loved those curses. They were an affirmation of life.

I would write about the spiritual imagery present in the book, the lure of the cross for a boy who gets beaten by a man waiting for a Messiah to come in glorious violence and avenge him his sufferings, but it would take too long and I'd become entangled. But it is there, hiding in the corners, waiting for the reader to dig at it and uncover a revelation.

Paul Bryant says

If I read this in 1934 I would have thrown my socialist cap into the air and declared it to be genius. But not now, friends, not now. James Joyce's name crops up in reviews of this book all the time, but the similarities are superficial. Stream of consciousness, yep, that's about it. Don't underestimate me through, Henry Roth is a very remarkable writer. But reading him gave me the same feelings the coffee shop manager has towards Phoebe's singing in Friends -

"Don't you like Phoebe's singing?"

"I'm not saying she's bad, but she makes me want to stick my fingers through my eyes into my brain and swirl them round... and round..."

The stuff of the kid's life in *Call it Sleep* is mindbendingly dull, oh so very very dull, you are aching for an overladen truck full of anchovies or Tabasco sauce to swerve round the corner of 4th Street and for one - just one - crate to topple off and splat the little bugger flat on the sidewalk, just to put him out of his misery. But alas, this does not happen. But, you know, Henry Roth is a very great writer. Although except for the dialogue, which is (how can I put this) grotesquely tiresome. Every scene you've gone through many times already in other books, other movies, other past lives, other beermats. And no one has any fun at all, it's like fun was invented in 1935, yeah, that's right, the year AFTER *Call it Sleep* was published. Okay, Jewish immigrant, Lower East Side, turn of the century, sure, fun was in short supply. But surely you could find little tiny hints of it occasionally, maybe some rich guy dropped a bit of fun on the street. I dunno. Maybe we should create a goodreads Miseryometer for this kind of book - *Angela's Ashes* could be the gold standard. This one scores a strong 9.0 on the *Angela's Ashes* scale. But who said literature should be a barrel of donkeys? Nobody. I just like a glimpse of one cheeky little donkey now and then.

PS - I just checked other GR reviews of this - wow, am I out on a limb! Well, you gotta tell em like you finds em.

Allie says

The cover says, "One of the few genuinely distinguished novels written by a 20th-century American." (What does that even mean.) Pero lo siento, I think that Faulkner > Henry Roth.

Call It Sleep is a lot of gorgeous writing in an incredibly drawn-out narrative with no sense of pacing. Jarringly throughout there's the frequent enthusiastic insertion of choppy streams of consciousness, which are inspired by James Joyce, which makes me not want to read James Joyce.

Some people wonder why this novel wasn't well-received when it was first published in the 30s, but I don't: Its overflow of adverbs/adverbial phrases and labored description of every character's eye-blink is exhausting and only for the serious reader. Language gets obscured on purpose through the use of Yiddish, Hebrew, (implied) Polish, and even some Italian etc. The young boys speak a difficult-to-read English vernacular, all of which is innovative and painful.

I was out of patience by page 100-something but had to read to the end for class. And made a bajillion status updates on GoodReads to keep myself going! (BTW, the ending = X-treme experimental prose-poetry that seemed intentionally confusing and therefore made me angry.)

The plot is wrapped around questions of Jewishness in the New World + sexual guilt/awakening. Hooray. And the author's history of sexual abuse of & incest with his younger sister just made it all the more emo. You can feel his repressed issues traumatizing his shy & innocent protagonist/alter-ego. So I had to tell myself not to be judgmental and not to hate his guts 24/7. Lots of "black" and "light" in a dogged motif that intensifies in the final pages. Sin, and more sin! And then, redemption? Creation of the "new Jew"?

Who the heck knows. I can't help feeling that this is the kind of novel that is proclaimed a work of genius by pretentious literary people. It's honest but also a little too self-absorbed in some of its stylistic flourishes (sometimes lovely, other times unbreathable) and very juicy for analysis, all with enough ambiguity of meaning for people to be all, "Hmm, I don't really get this part, so it's probably brilliant."

Or maybe I am just bitter for not being able to successfully understand it. And just because I personally felt more connected with (the maybe equally pretentious) Faulkner, I am dissing Henry Roth? Not cool. But oh man, that is what I am doing.

Otherwise, I do think that it was a super great window into these Jewish immigrants' world of 1930s East Side NY. Lots of sights and sounds.

And repetitive rambling hard-to-follow stuff through which I felt like Roth was abusing my reader faithfulness. Characters were also often strangely "drowsy" or "lethargic" or another synonym of that. *Call it Sleep* should have been 300 pages or fewer. Oh, but I will stop being grumpy and end this review! Basically, unless this species of literature is what you crave, I would not recommend it, except in select wonderful excerpts. I have yet to decide if the struggle was worth it.

Alex says

An elegant, pre-adolescent *Bildungsroman* of sorts, a sort of urban-poetic mural of artistic perception and familial love. While reading *Call It Sleep*, I had the feeling of being in the presence of the most unassuming literary genius I'd never heard much about. Though the linguistic characteristics are fairly interesting, it's the wholly authentic rendering of David's inner struggles and the portrayal of mother-son love that make the book great.

Thanks, Will!

El says

To read *Call It Sleep*, one wouldn't automatically assume that it was published in 1934. There's a timelessness to the story, and the writing smells modern and familiar; I would have sworn it was published in the 70s or 80s and was just going to be a nice work of historical fiction. I'm think it is interesting to note that it was published during the Great Depression in America, and I wonder if that accounts for the lack of sales during its time. Perhaps readers weren't ready for it, perhaps it was too close to home for readers to feel

comfortable with it. Who knows - but they definitely missed out.

This is a story of immigration focusing on an Austrian-Jewish family who have just come to America. The father, Albert, has been there for some time in order to begin to create a new American life for his wife, Genya, and son, David. The story is primarily David's story, told from his third-person perspective. He is close to his mother, perhaps abnormally close, and for as close as he is to Genya he is just as removed from his father.

Some readers may be turned off by the fact that this book has 448 pages and is primarily entirely about David's experiences to assimilate to his environment - his struggles to be understood by his neighbors, his strong desire to be accepted by his peers, etc. His physical fear of his father creates enough anxiety about staying home with his mother, but often the streets fare little better. His self-confidence is low and it oozes from the pages just how much he wants to belong.

I've seen comparisons of this book to James Joyce. All I can say to that is UGH. I do not and will not hide the fact that I dislike what I have read by Joyce, and any comparison to his writing could easily turn me off from something else. Luckily I forged through the Introduction where the comment about Joyce comes up. I can see the relationship, particularly towards the end of *Call It Sleep* as the reader is taken on a stream-of-consciousness adventure with David; but this change in text actually works and feels like an appropriate choice on the part of the author - something I can not say with any certainty I feel Joyce accomplished. But to each their own.

Roth was able to capture the sounds, the smells, the sights, the *milieu* of New York City in the early 20th century. I felt like I could understand the immigrant experience, I did not feel that far removed from how a 6-7-8-year-old immigrant boy felt in this brand new country he had just been thrown into. I was connected to the story the same I way I felt connected to Herman Wouk's *City Boy* which I had to read in high school. It's like Roth took that story and exploded it, put it up on a big-screen TV for an entire football stadium to see. This doesn't bonk *City Boy* off my list of favorites necessarily, but I do recognize that *Call It Sleep* does manage to be an adult version - much like *Tom Sawyer* is good, but *Huck Finn* is just a bit more mature.

Tijana says

Detinjstvo ume da bude najmu?nije životno doba, prepuno groznih i nejasnih (ili pak odviše jasnih) strahova, i ova je knjiga cela o tome. Tok svesti malog i permanentno zastrašenog deteta, plus sirotinjski kvartovi kao u "Bilo jednom u Americi", plus dijalozi nemilosrdno preneti uz sva mogu?a jezi?ka odstupanja friških imigranata: teško, sporo i tegobno ?itanje uz pokoji prosev svetlosti tu i tamo.

Karen says

This book is incredible - I've never read anything like it. I was expecting an immigrant experience story, a sort of "American Tail" rife with descriptions of seders and gefilte fish the way Mama used to make and so forth. This is NOT that. This book is completely original, intensely personal, and very disturbing. Disturbing not because of a specific event (e.g., rape, abuse, etc. - though those things, or at least close relatives of those things, do happen), but because, for the 400 or so pages of the book, you're made to look at the world in such a strange and horrifying way, and this view of the world seems so real, like it couldn't possibly have been

invented by some author experimenting with "character" and "style" - meaning that somewhere, out there, there is someone for whom this is real life.

William Shoemaker says

All the beauty of Joyce with none of his pretension, accessible and poetic, spiritual and religious. By far my most intense reading experience.

Samantha says

Anybody who has ever wanted to write should read this. I mean no hyperbole by saying so. This is one of the few novels I've ever seen to use dialect and get it *right*. *In most hands it's distracting, or patronizing to the outsiders it is usually attributed to. In Call It Sleep the broken Yiddish-English and street lingo complete the reader's immersion in young David Scheckl's world.*

As a recent immigrant, David's journey from innocence to experience is a vivid one. A sensitive child, he is bullied by his bitter, angry father and coddled by his loving mother. He plays in the street with children who often target him for ridicule and even violence. He is lured into a closet to "play bad" with a neighbor girl, foreshadowing a later encounter with an older boy who wants to do something similar with one of his girl cousins. He attends a cheder where he excels but where he is disciplined by a harsh rabbi. When David, in the final passages, takes a lesson too literally in a very dangerous way, it seems like all the experiences he's had are leading up to this catastrophe. The dialogue of the street and barroom denizens who find him, with its obscenity and brutality, are the culmination of the novel's power.

Tempest says

With remarkable control over language and an intuitive instinct for rhythm and sound, Roth presents life through the eyes of a young Jewish immigrant. When David, the boy, is with his mother in the sanctuary of their home, the language is melodic and harmonious. When outside, interacting with others, the language becomes more chaotic, stressful, and ultimately jarring. Using voice, Roth presents all sides of a character. You know, and understand them through the eyes of David, but when another character is introduced into the small stage of the book, you are forced into seeing the characters differently. The mother, when with David, speaks poetically, flawlessly. A quarter of the way through, you watch her interact with an American police officer--speaking in jarring English and incapable of generating any real understanding of the situation. As soon as the police officers are out of the scene, she is once again soft, loving, and idyllic.

Through this style, Roth is able to present a heart-wrenching view of growing up. David's innocence is palpable, the loss of it becomes more pointed.

Vit Babenco says

Call It Sleep is a profound tale about all sorts of child's fears. Bereft of father's love David has no choice but

to become a mummy's boy. And he finds himself standing on the threshold of the hostile, inimical and indifferent world.

"Relieved by slight flurries in traffic from his father's smouldering eye, David stared unhappily at the houses gliding past the doorway. He felt strange – feverish almost. Whether it was that he had been staring down into the cellar too long, or whether because his fear of his father clouded and distorted all the things he saw, he could not tell. But he felt as though his mind had slackened its grip on realities. The houses, pavements, teams, people on the street no longer had that singleness and certainty about them that they had had before. Solidities baffled him now, eluded him with a veiled shifting of contour. He could not wholly identify even the rhythm and the clap of hooves; something alien and malign had fused with all the familiar sounds and sights of the world.

And to escape isolation David desperately needs someone he can lean on...

"The hour that had passed had been one of the most blissful in David's life. He had never wanted to be anyone's friend until this moment, and now he would have given anything to be Leo's. The longer he heard him speak, the longer he watched him, the more he became convinced that Leo belonged to a rarer, bolder, carefree world. There was a glamour about him. He did what he pleased and when he pleased. He was not only free of parents, but he also wore something about his neck that made him almost god-like. Sitting next to him, David's one concern had been how to ingratiate himself, how to keep Leo amused, keep him from remembering that time was passing."

But instead of finding friendship David finds himself being used so there are no restrictions to his despair... Children are like litmus paper – they at once react to all family troubles and they suffer most.

david says

The weather for the last two days has been spectacular. Not a cloud in the rich blue sky, the temperature sitting at a perfect 72 degrees, with a gentle ten miles an hour breeze. How do I know? I looked it up on weather.com. No, I did not go out this weekend. I was reading. I even had to make a 'numbah one,' as it is described by the young boy in this novel, for the last four hours of it. But I could not. I was reading.

I, for some very odd reason, am stuck in a period in which I never existed. That would be from the mid 1800's to the early 1900's. And most of the time I find I am stuck in Britain. Luckily, although this book was published in the early 1930's, I am finally in America. And I am glad to visit the country again. And I am in the lower east side of Manhattan for a change. No longer in Piccadilly, Lower Slaughter, or Southampton. I 'jumped the pond' as the English may refer to it.

This book is not for everyone. It is a story, partially, of the immigrants that flooded New York during the early part of the nineteenth century. Its protagonist has an endearing name, David. David is a young boy and we witness through his eyes the process of integrating and assimilating into this new world with others who have traveled here from other parts of the world. However, we know, that this is a difficult transition for even the smartest and strongest of us. And through the eyes of a child it is even more interesting.

It is layered, it is textured, it is engrossing. It is not a simple escape. It is not a quick read even if you read quickly. I know, for me, much of the symbolism has escaped my limited cranial capacity. But the little I did understand I am still crunching. There is a lot going on here. As one might guess, there are relatives, and parents, and neighbors and all the havoc you would expect if you were to come here during this period, go through the intimidating agency on Ellis Island, and decide to live near Manhattan.

This author, who many may not have heard of previously, Henry Roth, is no slouch. He is in the camp of

elites, such as some of the Old Russians, the Hemingway's, Bellows, etc. So, for you who may like hidden symbolism and the art of fine literature, it may be a choice. Most of characters are Jewish immigrants, and although any culture has their own unique challenges, miens with the current zeitgeist, a familiarity with Judaism lessens the heft of the tale. For me, I like reading about all people from any place in any situation. Let me also add, that Roth is wide, not narrow. There are references to Christianity and other faiths hidden within his passages. Roth is ecumenical and inclusive, but his clues are not always obvious.

So, okay, four to four and a half stars from your guide here. And if you follow me and what I read, I can suggest several doctors to you. Especially eye doctors and psychologists and philosophers. Just give me a ring, and you too can come and wander the variegated unknowns in life with me.
