

## Henry Roth Call It Sleep - An Analysis

Katharina Eder



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Seminar paper from the year 2010 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1, University of Vienna, language: English, abstract: The New York Times described Roth's novel Call it Sleep as "One of the few genuinely distinguished novels written by a twentieth-century American" (Roth blurb). The book tells us about David Schearl, child of Jewish immigrants in the first decades of the 19th century. Similarities between the author's biography and David's life are quite obvious. This paper will give a short overview of the author's life and point out a few similarities with the book. After a brief abstract of the novel's content the focus will be on identity created through language and the Jewish origin of the character. Identity is a very important motif in Roth's novel and it is influenced by the history of Jewish immigrants in New York's Lower East Side, as well as by the urban experiences of the character. David searches for his own identity within and outside of his own community. In the following parts Roth's technique will be explained by Cohn's theory of psycho-narration, with a focus on the modernist climax in the penultimate chapter. The paper ends in the conclusion that Roth's novel is about the search of identity, depicted through a variety of methods.

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