



I Married a Communist: American Trilogy (2)

By Philip Roth

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I Married a Communist: American Trilogy (2) By Philip Roth

I Married a Communist is the story of the rise and fall of Ira Ringold, a big American roughneck who begins life as a teenage ditch-digger in 1930s Newark, becomes a big-time 1940s radio star, and is destroyed, as both a performer and a man, in the McCarthy witchhunt of the 1950s.

In his heyday as a star—and as a zealous, bullying supporter of "progressive" political causes—Ira marries Hollywood's beloved silent-film star, Eve Frame. Their glamorous honeymoon in her Manhattan townhouse is shortlived, however, and it is the publication of Eve's scandalous bestselling exposé that identifies him as "an American taking his orders from Moscow."

In this story of cruelty, betrayal, and revenge spilling over into the public arena from their origins in Ira's turbulent personal life, Philip Roth—who *Commonweal* calls the "master chronicler of the American twentieth century"—has written a brilliant fictional portrayal of that treacherous postwar epoch when the anti-Communist fever not only infected national politics but traumatized the intimate, innermost lives of friends and families, husbands and wives, parents and children.

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I Married a Communist: American Trilogy (2) By Philip Roth Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

There was a time in America's not-so-distant past when a person could get genuinely punished for having unpopular beliefs, when pushing for workers' rights could get someone in serious trouble. Ron Silver gives voice to one of those people, retired schoolteacher Murray Ringold, one of the most colorful and passionate characters to emerge from Philip Roth's immense canon. Silver doesn't try to capture the cracks and wheezes of a 90-year-old man's voice (a good thing, considering this unabridged audiocassette's length); instead, he goes for the cadences, the pain from wounds incurred decades ago but recounted so vividly you'd think they happened yesterday. (Running time: 11 hours, eight cassettes) --*Lou Schuler*

From Publishers Weekly

Disconcerting echoes of Roth's relationship with Claire Bloom, as revealed in her memoir, *Leaving the Doll's House*, haunt Roth's angry but oddly inert 23rd novel. As in *American Pastoral*, Roth again deals with the Newark of his youth, and with the sons of Jewish immigrants to whom America has given opportunity and even riches—and how they are swept off course by the forces of history. Roth's old alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, narrates the story of Ira Ringold, aka Iron Rinn, a supremely idealistic political radical and celebrated radio star of the 1950s who is blacklisted and brought to ruin when his wife, Eva Frame (a self-hating Jewish actress born Chava Fromkin), writes an expose called *I Married A Communist*. The impetus for Eva's treacherous act is Ira's insistence that she evict her 24-year-old daughter from their house; the resemblance to Bloom's revelations of Roth's similar demand is too close to miss, and Roth's shrill belaboring of the issue seems a thinly disguised vendetta. Even high-pitched scenes of family conflict don't bring the novel to life. One problem is that the flat flashback narration shared between the 64-year-old Nathan and Ira's 90-year-old brother, Murray, is stultifyingly dull. Some fine Roth touches do appear: his evocation of the Depression years through the McCarthy era has clarity and vigor. But Ira's aggressively boorish behavior as he struggles with his conscience over having abandoned his Marxist ideals to assume a bourgeois lifestyle is never credible, and his turgid ideological rants against the American government are jackhammers of repetitious invective. In addition, the depiction of an adolescent Nathan as a precocious writer and social philosopher and the saintly Murray's infallible memory of long conversations with Ira—even between Ira and Eva in bed—challenge the reader's credulity. For those who lived through the years Roth evokes, this novel will have some resonance. For others, its belligerent tone and lack of dramatic urgency will be a turn-off. 150,000 first printing; \$150,000 ad/promo.

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From Library Journal

It is the McCarthy era, and Iron Rinn, star of the popular radio show *The Free and the Brave*, is married to glamorous film actress Eve Frame (reputedly born Chava Frumkin in Brooklyn). He's also the brother of Nathan Zuckerman's high school English teacher, Murray Ringold, and a committed Communist. Reminiscing with Murray, Nathan recalls his youthful involvement with Iron, slowly uncovering the source of Iron's beliefs, his dark rages, and the collapse of his marriage, which ends with Eve's publishing the seriously damaging expose *I Married a Communist*. Occasionally, Roth's tone is hectoring—we feel that we are getting a history lesson from, well, a high school teacher—but he also tells a riveting story, and the writing is more heartfelt, less guarded and cynical, than one might expect. In fact, Roth seems to have drawn on his own marital woes when writing this novel. Remember Claire Bloom complaining in *Leaving a Doll's House* that Roth insisted she throw her daughter out of the house? Iron asks the same of Eve, whose daughter (a monster here) wrecks their marriage. And Nathan pointedly observes, "People don't like seeing exposes on the best sellers list that falsely denounce them." The murderous secret revealed at the end comes as a good

surprise. For all collections.

-?Barbara Hoffert, "Library Journal"

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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