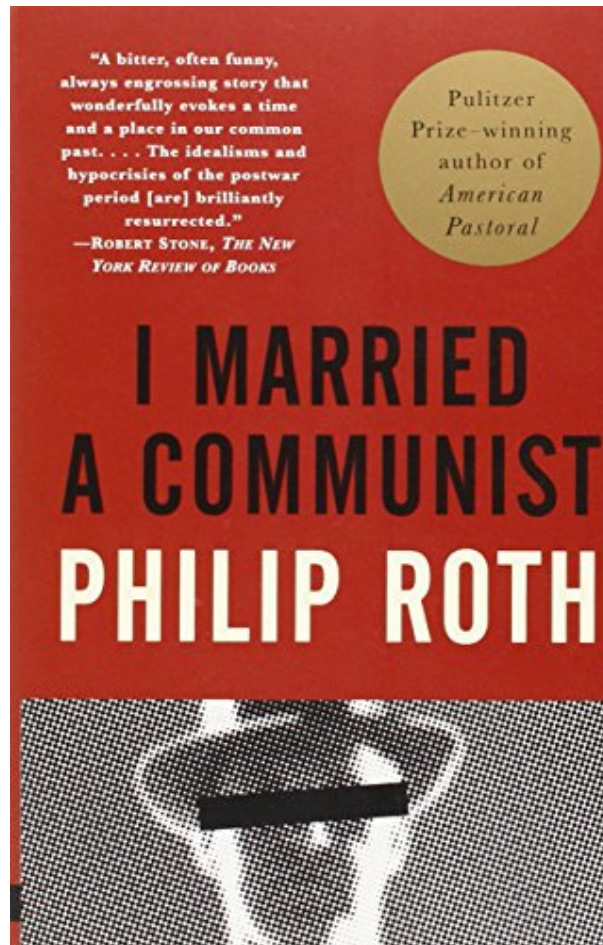


# I MARRIED A COMMUNIST: AMERICAN TRILOGY (2) BY PHILIP ROTH



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Prize-winning  
author of  
*American  
Pastoral*

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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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- 323 pages

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Three Stars

By Amazon Customer

Great first half and then sort of dies. Not the best from Roth...

40 of 47 people found the following review helpful.

## The Zuckerman Project II--A Superb New Novel

By Paul Frandano

"All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." In many respects, the two most recent novels of Philip Roth represent a long meditation on Tolstoi's famous observation and suggest a common wellspring of the unhappy family narratives. Roth goes as far as to put Tolstoi's words into the mouth of Murray Ringold, the high school English teacher who taught Roth's alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, the virtues of "cri-ti-cal thinking" and who, near the end of his life some fifty years later, unfolds the fate of his brother Ira, the radio personality "Iron Rinn" and young Nathan's boyhood mentor. Forget what you have read about *I Married a Communist* as Roth's roman a clef payback for Claire Bloom's recent memoir of her difficult life with the novelist. It is much, much more and is of a thematic and emotional fabric with Roth's great *American Pastoral*. Roth's project, of which this is the second installment, now seems to be "Nathan Zuckerman's America," thickly textured stories of lives collectively deranged and rendered dysfunctional by America and its political demons, now the MacCarthy era, Red-hunting, and the blacklist. Along the way we have countless carefully observed digressions on, among other things, taxidermy, how to make "literature," New Jersey's geology, the power of "the word," the triumph of lowbrow, and (of course) Newark in the 'forties and 'fifties. One remains in awe of Roth's undiminished ability to mine his own experience, augmented by prodigious research, to turn out superb, universal novels like *I Married a Communist*. Is he our greatest novelist? Consider the oeuvre--*Portnoy*, *The Zuckerman tetralogy* (which includes the magical *The Ghost Writer*), *The Counterlife*, *Sabbath's Theater*, *American Pastoral*, and now this--and compare his accomplishment to that of any living American writer. It isn't even close.

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