RED SCARE: THE EARLY COLD WAR IN NOVELS BY MAILER, DOCTOROW, AND ROTH

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IN 1949, RUSSIA TESTED ITS FIRST NUCLEAR BOMB, meaning that America no longer held the nuclear monopoly. Soon after, the Korean War began, and fear reached a peak of hysteria in the U.S. in the early 1950s. I was then a student in the New York City public elementary schools. There were frequent air raids to test evacuation procedures, and at the age of seven I was issued a dog tag like a soldier, so that after the bombs fell they could identify my body. We were taught to "duck and cover," to cower and assume a protective position under our little wooden school desks. In the rude way of children, we joked, "Squat like a chicken and kiss your ass goodbye." But the fear was real. I envied the kids on the lower floors because they could get to the safety of the basement faster. I even envied those seated closer to the door; I was next to the windows and sure to be showered with flying glass.

This paper concerns the beginnings of the Cold War as viewed in three American novels published in the second half of the twentieth century, between 1951 and 1998: Norman Mailer's *Barbary Shore* (1951), E. L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* (1971), and Philip Roth's *I Married a Communist* (1998). These three political novels by Jewish-American writers focus on the first decade of the Cold War, from 1946–54, when the few surviving remnants of the Old Left were crushed in the most severe political repression in American history, the period known as the Red Scare.

The dominant emotions of the early Cold War, and of these novels, are hysteria and depression. The mass hysteria was driven by political fear, in-

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duced by the American government, of communism, the paranoia that the Soviet Union was bent on undermining America from within through sedition—a vast communist conspiracy, so that there were traitors everywhere, from the highest levels of society to the lowest, "a Red under every bed." Or if Russia could not destroy America by boring from within, they would destroy it from without through nuclear war. In this climate of political hysteria, imaginary Russians hid under every bed and schoolchildren hid under their desks. The depression was despair caused by the loss of hope: hysteria and paranoia led to severe repression, which exhausted the victims of the witch hunt. The task of these three writers is to find a way in fiction to bridge Freud and Marx, to account not only for the forces, sometimes unconscious, which drive the individual, but also for the forces that drive the state. Mailer admits that, when he was writing *Barbary Shore*, "My conscious intelligence . . . became obsessed with the Russian Revolution. But my unconscious was much more interested in other matters: suicide, orgy, psychosis. . . ." (Marcus 29). Of the three, Doctorow in *The Book of Daniel* is the most successful at finding a connection between politics and the unconscious.

These novels concern the collapse of revolutionary hopes in America in the twentieth century. As the critic Irving Howe wrote, "The contrast between early political hope and later disillusion becomes the major theme of the twentieth century political novel . . . all are obsessed by the failure, or betrayal, of the revolution" (Howe 205). The three novels by Mailer, Doctorow, and Roth feature politically idealistic heroes whose utopian dreams fail and whose lives are ruined by not only the crushing forces of the politics of their times but also the flaws of their own personalities. *Barbary Shore*, *The Book of Daniel*, and *I Married a Communist* deal with Communists trapped by the political hysteria of the witch hunts of the early 1950s in America, during the Korean War. *Barbary Shore* is a kind of fever dream set in a near-future American dystopia where a political game of spy versus Communist is played out in the claustrophobic atmosphere of a Brooklyn rooming house. *The Book of Daniel* is inspired by the case of the married couple Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Jewish-American Communists who were electrocuted in 1953 for allegedly passing the secrets of the atomic bomb to Soviet Russia. The narrator, Daniel Isaacson Lewin, a graduate student at Columbia in 1967 during the politically charged era of the Vietnam War, writes his dissertation about the trial and execution in the early 1950s of his parents, Paul and Rochelle Isaacson, as atomic spies, and the continuing

traumatic effects of these events on Daniel, his younger sister Susan, and Daniel's wife and infant son. In Roth's novel, caught between his utopian desire to end the exploitation of the working class and his love for his actress wife who does not share his political dreams, actor Ira Ringold is blacklisted when his wife betrays him by outing him publicly as a Communist. Ira, a potentially great man, is destroyed not only by the woman he loves but also by the failings of his own character. What links all three novels is their concern with betrayal, where the failure of utopian political hopes is linked with betrayal by friends or lovers. Political passion clashes with sexual passion, with tragic results for the hero and for the cause.

Nevertheless, all three novels offer some slim hope for the passing on of revolutionary ideals to the next generation: in *Barbary Shore*, to the narrator, young Mikey Lovett; in *The Book of Daniel*, to the narrator, young Daniel Isaacson; and in *I Married a Communist*, to the narrator, young Nathan Zuckerman. These are *Bildungsroman*, novels of initiation in which the hero grows up by receiving a political education; Mikey, Daniel, and Nathan learn from their Communist mentors but determine not to repeat their mistakes.

Despite much revolutionary talk, there was no revolution in the United States in the twentieth century, only cycles of radical activity that peaked in the 1930s among what later came to be called the Old Left, and again in the 1960s among the New Left. After the Wall Street crash of 1929, the country was in political turmoil. From 1929 to 1932, during the presidency of Herbert Hoover, economic despair led to a temporary romanticizing of the Soviet Union in some quarters, and in that four-year period the United States came as close as it ever did in the twentieth century to revolution. But, beginning in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal led to reform rather than revolution. As Mr. Zuckerman, Nathan's father, says in *I Married a Communist*, "A great man saved this country's capitalism from the capitalists and saved patriotic people like me from Communism" (103). The American Communist Party had its heyday in the 1930s, organizing in the labor unions and the black ghettoes, but the remnants of the party were crushed in the anti-Communist paranoia of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Politics is not a natural subject for American novelists. As Irving Howe says, "Our writers tend to think of it as a special 'problem,' with all the awkwardness and self-consciousness that entails, while the Europeans take politics for granted. . ." (161). But American Jews have always been primarily on the left end of the spectrum, involved in the twentieth century in support-

ing the Democratic party, in organizing labor unions, and in promoting progressive causes including the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and feminism. America Jews have also been prominent in radical politics, across the left spectrum, from socialism to anarchism to communism. "Now, in the postwar period, the relentless hunt for traces of Communism in American life was bound to have an inordinate effect on the Jews, who had been as deeply implicated as any group in the radicalism of the thirties and the fellow-traveling of the forties"(Dickstein 46). As the children or grandchildren of Jewish immigrants, Mailer (born 1923), Doctorow (born 1931), and Roth (born 1933) grew up in an era of Jewish political activism and then as young men witnessed the postwar repression that followed, in which many Jewish radicals were persecuted. This helps to explain their interest in depicting the Red Scare in their fiction. Because he spoke out on behalf of the Presidential campaign of Henry Wallace, Mailer, the oldest of the three writers, was accused in 1949 by *Life* magazine of being a Communist dupe or fellow traveler (Lennon 116).

Certainly, Mailer, Doctorow, and Roth have never shied away from dealing with politics in their fiction, for they find in contemporary American history all the essentials of human drama. Their interest is in the behavior of human beings under pressure, and one of those pressures is ideology. But they do not write espousing a party line; they write casting a critical eye on all systems of belief. Doctorow says, "Novelists are not politicians. . . . the language of politics can't accommodate the complexity of fiction, which as a mode of thought is intuitive, metaphysical, mythic" (Levine 60).

Unlike Europe, America has never had a strong tradition of native radicalism. "In no other Western country has anti-communism or a more generalized form of anti-radicalism assumed the authority of an indigenous ideology" (Jezer 81). Because the United States is a nation forged out of immigrants from different countries, it had to create a national identity that suppressed many aspects of the identities of the various countries of origin. Thus Americans were suspicious of "foreign" ideas. Socialism and Communism, in particular, were seen throughout the twentieth century as radical foreign imports, somehow opposed to "Americanism" (Jezer 81). There has also never been much overt class warfare in the United States because Americans generally admire the rich and hope to become rich themselves. Some Republicans even saw Roosevelt's New Deal as "socialism." They also thought that Roosevelt was too cozy with the Russians, our temporary allies during

WW II. When the war ended with Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, that fed American anti-Communism, which Republicans used to gain seats in the 1946 election.

As the narrator Daniel writes in E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*, "Many historians have noted an interesting phenomenon in America in the years immediately after a war. In the councils of government fierce partisanship replaces the necessary political coalitions of wartime. In the greater arena of social relations—business, labor, the community—violence rises, fear and recrimination dominate public discussion, passion prevails over reason. . . . It is attributed to the continuance beyond the war of the war hysteria" (*Daniel* 23). This perhaps helps to explain the anti-communist hysteria and political witch hunts of the immediate post-WW II period, from 1946–54. Writes the critic Morris Dickstein about this period, "The hallmark of both foreign and domestic policy was the extremely narrow range of permissible debate. . . . Allied to this was the mania of national security which ruined the lives of some, touched many others with the cold hand of fear and conformity, and helped foreclose the political options of all" (Dickstein 26–27).

During the war, strikes were considered unpatriotic. But with the war over, 1945 and 1946 marked a resurgence of labor militancy not seen since the Depression years of the 1930s, including a two-day general strike in Oakland, California. Corporate leaders were alarmed. In 1947, the new Republican majority passed the Taft-Hartley act, limiting the activities of labor unions and requiring union leaders to swear they were not members of the Communist party.

Between 1946 and 1954, Congress carried out 135 investigations of Communism. Truman instituted a loyalty program for federal workers, and thousands of government employees were dismissed, accused of incorrect political sympathies. J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI, had a network of paid informants who infiltrated the Communist party and other leftist organizations. Many of these informers later profited further by writing books and articles or giving lectures about the Red menace. In Roth's *I Married a Communist*, the actress Eve Frame puts out a ghostwritten book of the same name denouncing her husband Ira Ringold.

There was an anti-Communist crusade in the schools and universities; teachers and professors were forced to sign loyalty oaths or lose their jobs.

If you had gone to the "wrong" kind of political meeting back in the 1930s or knew the "wrong" kind of people, or if you simply advocated for free speech, civil rights, or workers' rights, you could be accused of being a dangerous radical; your career could be ended or your life ruined. In *I Married a Communist*, Ira's brother Murray Ringold lost his job as a high school teacher because he lead the teacher's union.

The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) started to investigate the entertainment industry. "But more than subversives, HUAC was in quest of publicity; the appearance of Hollywood movie stars was guaranteed to win the committee front-page attention" (Jezer 92). Ten witnesses, known as the Hollywood Ten, who refused to answer questions about their politics, citing the First Amendment, were blacklisted and could not work in the movie industry for a decade or, in some cases, ever again. In 1950, *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*, was published, and more entertainers were blacklisted for supposed Communist sympathies. HUAC and *Red Channels* both figure in *I Married a Communist.*

Many politicians rose to power by enlisting in the anti-communist crusade. When he was in the Screen Actors Guild in the forties and fifties, Ronald Reagan was an FBI informant on suspected radicals in Hollywood, and when he was Governor of California in the sixties he encouraged the FBI to infiltrate and crush student political organizations (Rosenfeld). Richard Nixon came to prominence in 1948 as a Congressman serving on HUAC, interrogating Alger Hiss, a former State Department official accused of being a Communist spy. But the most notorious Red-baiter was Senator Joseph McCarthy, the reckless demagogue who from 1950 to 1954 bullied and terrorized many with unsubstantiated charges of Communist treason in high places in the U.S. government. The political hysteria and repression of that shameful period became known as "McCarthyism." The historian Allen J. Matusow wrote, "the great irony of McCarthyism is that it developed in the absence of any real internal Communist menace; for by 1950 Communism in America had lost whatever influence it once possessed"(Dickstein 41). The heyday of American Communism was during the Depression of the 1930s. Its membership declined steadily after the Moscow purge trials and Stalin's non-aggression pact with Hitler, so that by the 1950s there were only perhaps 10,000 party members remaining.

In 1949, after Russia exploded its first atomic bomb, the U.S. government, believing that the Soviet Union too primitive to achieve the bomb on its own, immediately began to look for spies. "Never mind that scientists then and since have labeled the A-bomb charge simplistic nonsense. All the frustrations of postwar foreign policy, all our fantasies of an enemy within to which this nation of immigrants has proved especially vulnerable, demanded a scapegoat" (Dickstein 43). In 1950, David Greenglass, a soldier machinist who had worked on the top-secret Manhattan project to build an atomic bomb at Los Alamos, New Mexico during the war, was arrested. He testified that his sister and brother-in-law, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, members of the American Communist party, had passed atomic secrets to the Russians. Greenglass got a 15-year sentence in return for testifying against the Rosenbergs. The couple died in the electric chair in 1953, leaving behind two young sons. Ethel Rosenberg was the first American woman executed in the twentieth century. Regardless of their guilt or innocence, the Rosenbergs could not obtain a fair trial or sentence in the hysterical political climate of the time, during the Korean War. In sentencing the couple to death, the judge said, "I consider your crime worse than murder," and, in refusing them clemency, President Eisenhower said, "by immeasurably increasing the chances of atomic war, the Rosenbergs may have condemned to death tens of millions of innocent people" (Dickstein 43).

The Rosenberg case became an international cause célèbre, the most famous American political trial of the Cold War. The controversy over the case continues to this day, in both nonfiction and fiction. Ethel Rosenberg is celebrated as a feminist heroine in the poem "For Ethel Rosenberg" (1980) by Adrienne Rich and appears as a ghost haunting her persecutor Roy Cohn in Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* (1995). The Rosenbergs are also mentioned at the beginning of Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* (1963)—their electrocution presages the heroine's later electroshock treatments—and fictionalized in Robert Coover's political satire *The Public Burning* (1977) and in Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel.*

The Rosenbergs' sons, Michael and Robert, took the name Meeropol after their adoptive parents, but kept the Rosenberg case alive by suing the FBI to release documents, by writing memoirs, and by creating the Rosenberg Fund for Children. Ivy Meeropol, one of the Rosenbergs' grandchildren, directed a documentary film about the case, *Heir to an Execution* (2004). In 2008 the Meeropol brothers said that, given revelations by their parents' co-

defendant Morton Sobell and documents since declassified, they believe that their father was a spy. But, they said, "To this day, there is no credible evidence that he participated in obtaining or passing on . . . the secret of the atomic bomb, the crime for which he was executed." They also believed that documents showed that witnesses had fabricated evidence against their mother, and that she was innocent of all charges (Robert Meeropol). David Greenglass has admitted that he and his wife gave false testimony against Ethel to protect themselves. Doctorow's novel does not attempt to resolve the guilt or innocence of the characters but to analyze the destruction of a family, to try to gauge the terrible, traumatic effects of politics on a married couple and their children.

Roth's novel looks back from the perspective of the late 1990s on the years 1948 to 1950, before the Rosenberg case. In the presidential election of 1948, Harry S. Truman was running for re-election on the Democratic Party ticket against the Republican Thomas Dewey. But the Democratic Party had splintered. On the right, the segregationist "Dixecrats" broke away on the issue of civil rights and ran J. Strom Thurmond as the Presidential candidate of the States Rights Party. On the left, the newly formed Progressive Party's candidate for President was Henry Wallace, Vice-President during Roosevelt's third term and Secretary of Commerce under Truman. The Progressive Party, an amalgam of former Roosevelt officials, African-Americans, and union leaders, aimed to continue Roosevelt's New Deal policies and proposed trade with Russia rather than the anti-Soviet foreign policy of Truman. But a rival group, Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), which included Mrs. Roosevelt, other labor leaders, and prominent Democratic politicians, opposed the Progressive Party, claiming to be the true heirs of the New Deal. The ADA endorsed Truman's foreign policy and excluded Communists. The creation of the Marshall Plan to rebuild postwar Europe, the Stalinist takeover of Czechoslovakia, and relentless Red-baiting led to the failure of the Progressive Party. Henry Wallace's third party candidacy failed miserably, gaining only 2.3% of the vote, less than the segregationist Dixiecrats (Jezer 88). Harry Truman was re-elected. In 1948, Norman Mailer campaigned on behalf of Henry Wallace, although he later felt "he had been used by communists who had infiltrated the Wallace campaign" (Lennon 113). In Roth's *I Married a Communist*, the narrator Nathan Zuckerman as a teenager is attracted to Wallace by Ira Ringold and attends a Wallace rally.

Barbary Shore, the earliest of the three novels, was written between 1948 and 1951, right after the publication of Mailer's first book, the best-selling World War II combat novel, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). That novel predicted the coming of a postwar totalitarianism in America; *Barbary Shore* shows the realization of that totalitarian state. Mailer wrote to a fellow writer, "It's a symbolic novel, but the message is clear enough: both the state capitalism of Russia and the monopoly capitalism of America have internal contradictions which make war inevitable for each of them, and the only answer is revolutionary socialism" (Manso 154–55). The novel is dystopian; the time is an unspecified near-future. The action takes place in a rooming house in Brooklyn Heights during the course of one hot summer, but the narrator Mikey Lovett is writing in retrospect, after the events.

He writes by candlelight. "Although the room in which I write has an electric circuit, it functions no longer." And when the roomers go out for the night, "In fourteen hours, they will be back" (*Barbary Shore* 6). The poor conditions, the lack of electricity, and the fourteen-hour work shifts suggest a near-future America in decline, a totalitarian state. *Barbary Shore* shows the influence of George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* (1949), published only two years before. In fact, Mailer had congratulated Orwell in a letter, saying that *1984* was a model for *Barbary Shore* in trying to "combine the political essay with fiction" (Lennon 120). One critic compares it to another American novel about an underground man published the following year: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (Leigh 50). But it is also very much an American novel of political alienation, reflecting the postwar mood. Mailer calls *Barbary Shore* "the first of the existentialist novels in America" (*Advertisements* 106), although I would award that honor to Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* (1944).

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, many on the left feared that Truman was so anti-Soviet that nuclear war was inevitable. The two main characters in *Barbary Shore* feel caught between two colossi. Says the ex-Communist McLeod to the young hero, the aspiring novelist Mikey Lovett, "'You see, laddie, we're excrescences and we're waiting for the stones to grind us between them'"(124–25). Of course, those apocalyptic fears were never realized. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, no one could have foreseen that the hot, nuclear war would never take place, only a slow, grinding Cold War that was to last forty-five years, fought in proxy states across the globe, until the drain of empire and the cost of the arms race precipitated the collapse of the Soviet Union. Mailer was right that war was inevitable but wrong about

the nature of that war and its aftermath, which was not revolutionary socialism but the triumph of capitalism through globalization.

Barbary Shore, written just before McCarthyism, seems to prophesize the coming of an American police state (Wenke 39). It was also brave of Mailer to release an idiosyncratic political novel in such a repressive time. He writes, "*Barbary Shore* showed its face in the worst of seasons, just a few months after the Chinese had come into the Korean War and set us off on another of our clammy national hysterias" (*Advertisements* 105). Not surprisingly, it was a critical and a commercial failure. But it was a pioneering novel, the first to tackle the dangerous paranoia and hysteria of the Cold War. However, its feverish allegory did not provide a model for subsequent American novelists dealing with history and politics; instead, that model was provided by Mailer's later work, the highly influential *The Armies of the Night* (1968).

Barbary Shore is dedicated to Jean Malaquais, and Mailer says the novel "was formed osmotically by the powerful intellectual influence of my friend Jean Malaquais" (*Advertisements* 94). Malaquais also partly inspired the character in the novel of the repentant ex-Stalinist William McLeod. Under the influence of the French-Polish Jewish writer Malaquais, whom he met in Paris after the war, Mailer had become, for the time being, a Trotskyite. Leon Trotsky was a Russian Jew, a leader of the Russian Revolution who advocated anti-fascism, permanent revolution, and the spread of socialism throughout the world. He viewed Stalin as totalitarian, was forced into exile and, in 1940 was assassinated in Mexico by agents of Stalin. At the Waldorf Peace Conference in 1949, according to Irving Howe, Mailer gave a Trotskyite speech "advancing the theory of state capitalism. . . . the line that both sides are no good and moving toward an increasing concentration of state power" (Manso 135). This was the same argument that Mailer advances in *Barbary Shore*, which he was writing when he gave the speech.

Yet at the same time that Mailer was a Trotskyite, he was also a mystic, as his friend Adeline Lubell Naiman noted: "His nonrationalistic speculation, noncausal thinking really surfaced when he was writing *Barbary Shore*" (Manso 152). Mailer was still very young—only 25 when *The Naked and the Dead* was published and 28 when *Barbary Shore* appeared—and evolving rapidly, not fully formed as a political thinker or a novelist. As he was composing *Barbary Shore*, he wrote to a friend that it was "experimental, tricky, and I have to feel my way all through it" (Manso 137). He was trying for something challenging, a novel for which, unlike *The Naked and the Dead*,

he lacked literary models. He was not yet fully capable of integrating his rational politics with his mystical streak. The result is an intriguing failure of a novel, an overly-ambitious and finally unsuccessful attempt to mix political allegory with existential closet drama, myth, and family romance. The ghosts of George Orwell and Franz Kafka meet in a room in one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's haunted mansions.

It is a transitional work for Mailer, whose view of society as perverse and corrupt forced him away from the naturalism of *The Naked and the Dead* and into the feverish distortions of the dream vision. Nevertheless, the political allegory and polemic in *Barbary Shore* clash with the nightmarish surrealism.

What happens in *Barbary Shore* is that the overt, political concerns are swamped by the unconscious, psychosexual concerns. Leslie Fiedler claims that Mailer was trying to rewrite the old "novel of political disillusionment," but "only the hectic sexuality which threatens, despite his conscious attempt, to replace politics completely, seems his own" (Fiedler 26). Robert Solotaroff believes that, in *Barbary Shore,* "Mailer's interest in sexual disturbance ranges beyond its availability as a symbol and symptom of total social dislocation. It intrigues him in its own right" (Solotaroff 50). The uniformly bizarre, perverted sexual relationships in the novel are best understood as the eruption of unconscious concerns. "On one level," writes Howard Silverstein, "*Barbary Shore* is a novel about the compulsive incestuous drives of the characters. All the emotional attachments take place between characters living under one roof. In this sense, the novel is a 'family romance, a dramatization of the character's earliest sexual desires focused on the members of the family circle'" (Silverstein 279).

Barbary Shore is an autobiographical novel in disguise. Speaking about the writing of the novel, Mailer says, "my life seemed to have been mined and melted into the long reaches of [*The Naked and the Dead*]. And so I was prominent and empty, and I had to begin life again. . . . Success had been a lobotomy to my past, there seemed no power from the past which could help me in the present, and I had no choice but to force myself to step into the war of the enormous present . . ." *(Advertisements* 92–93). Given these circumstances, Mailer ponders the possibilities for a second novel: "If my past had become empty as a theme, was I to write about Brooklyn streets, or my mother and father, or another war novel . . . was I to do the book of the returning veteran when I had lived like a mole writing and rewriting . . . I was

drawn instead to write about an imaginary future . . ." (*Advertisements* 93–94). Thus the hero, Mike Lovett, is a reflection of Mailer's situation: Mailer has been lobotomized from his past, and Lovett has amnesia, probably as the consequence of war injuries. Lovett essentially has no identity of his own: his wounds have resulted in a surgically rebuilt face, and his amnesia has robbed him of all but a few phantom memories. He is reborn and forced to live in "the enormous present."

In his essay "The White Negro," Mailer claims that the hipster or "white negro" is seeking "the opportunity to grow up a second time" (*Advertisements* 346). In creating Lovett, Mailer is seeking the same opportunity for himself. *Barbary Shore* is as much concerned with reenacting the past as it is with speculating about the future. Ironically, all the possibilities that Mailer discards for his novel become the subject of *Barbary Shore:* the novel takes place in Brooklyn, concerns a war (the Cold War), and has as narrator a returned veteran who lives like a mole in a rented room, trying to write a novel. Moreover, *Barbary Shore* is about a mother and father (McLeod and Guinevere) and a young hero (Lovett) trying to grow up again who attaches himself to this substitute family. Despite himself, Mailer wrote the novel about growing up in Brooklyn that he had tried so hard to avoid writing. Mailer has said, "What nobody has ever understood is that *Barbary Shore* is my most autobiographical novel" (Manso 155).

In *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero,* Otto Rank describes the typical pattern of the family romance: the orphan hero has been deprived of true knowledge of his identity and discovers that his parents are royalty. This is the pattern of *Barbary Shore.* Lovett is symbolically an orphan, stripped of his identity. Trying to write a novel, he saves some money and rents a cheap room for the summer on the top floor of a Brooklyn Heights rooming house. There he becomes involved in the lives of the various residents: Guinevere, the buxom but blowsy landlady, attracts him sexually; McLeod, a shrewd, severe older man, befriends him; Hollingsworth, an aggressive young man who claims to be a clerk in a Wall Street brokerage, puzzles and offends him; and Lannie, a deranged young woman, arouses both his pity and his desire.

As the summer goes on, Lovett is in for a series of shocks and surprises as he discovers that none of them is exactly what he or she appears to be. McLeod is not a mere department store worker but an ex-Commissar. Once known as "the hangman of the Left opposition," he had participated in the political purges and even murdered two comrades under orders of the Party.

Then, disillusioned with the course of the revolution, he defected to the West. He worked in a US government office until, as disgusted with capitalism as with communism, he stole some vital, unnamed "little object" and went into hiding under an assumed name. Having been a bureaucrat who served both systems, he is now the enemy of both. His theft of the object and refusal to give it to either side confirms this. Since then he has devoted himself to study and theory, writing pamphlets for a tiny audience, criticizing both communism and capitalism and advocating for revolutionary socialism. McLeod also turns out to be the mysterious missing husband of Guinevere.

Hollingsworth, in turn, is a government agent sent to spy on McLeod and retrieve the little object, and Lannie is an ex-Trotskyite who joins forces with Hollingsworth because she blames McLeod for the death of Trotsky. Lovett becomes involved in the web of suspicion and conspiracy, with each spying on the others, and all of them involved in a daisy chain of sadomasochistic love affairs: Lovett is tempted but frustrated by Guinevere, and has a brief, abortive affair with Lannie. Lannie in turn romances both Hollingsworth and Guinevere and Hollingsworth in the end kills McLeod and runs off with Guinevere and Monina, Guinevere and McLeod's little daughter. McLeod deliberately sacrifices himself, apparently from guilt over his many crimes committed for the Party. At the novel's end, Lovett inherits the hope for revolutionary socialism from his fallen spiritual and political father, McLeod, as well as the little object, and he takes his mentor's place, hiding out under an assumed name, living a monastic existence as he awaits the coming war and the revolutionary possibilities that may follow.

Critics have noted the political allegory and Arthurian myth that underlies the implausible plot. Lovett is the alienated young postwar radical who has been stripped of his socialist culture by the failure of Communism and thus has nothing left in which to believe. McLeod is the disillusioned Stalinist; Lannie, the betrayed Trotskyite; Hollingsworth, the oppressive American right wing; and Guinevere, the mindless, apolitical masses being wooed by all sides. To turn it into an allegory and to keep it at one remove from actual history, the novel never mentions the FBI, CIA, Communism, Stalin, or Trotsky. There has been a war, and Lovett may be a wounded veteran, which would account for his plastic surgery and amnesia, but it is never referred to as World War II.

Everyone romances Guinevere, who is up for grabs but really can only love herself; Hollingsworth wins her because he is the most ruthless and

sadistic. On another level, the failed Russian Revolution is symbolically equivalent to King Arthur's Round Table. McLeod then is Arthur, Guinevere his "burlesque queen," and, despite the name of "Lannie," Hollingsworth is Lancelot, who betrays Arthur and steals his queen. These Arthurian and mythic attributes reinforce the family romance, with McLeod and Guinevere as symbolic King and Queen, father and mother to the other characters.

There is also a religious allegory connected to the political and Arthurian allegory. Guinevere speaks of herself fancifully as a Jehovah's Witness. She says, " 'there's going to be wars and plagues and famines, and the Witnesses'll be the only ones saved because they bear true witness to the ways of the Lord, and they don't have false idols' " (*Barbary* 31). At the end of the novel, Lovett has inherited from McLeod the role of keeper of the faith. He will be a witness to the inevitable apocalypse of the Third World War, which he awaits in hiding, a witness who hopes to be saved because he no longer believes in the false idols of capitalism or communism. However, as a witness, he is not equipped to live in this world. His bleak existence is merely a preparation for the imagined revolutionary future that will presumably follow the apocalypse.

On a parallel level of mythic meaning, McLeod is a sorcerer out of a fairy tale, and Lovett calls himself "the sorcerer's apprentice" (7). When Lovett first meets him, McLeod resembles "a witch" and is holding a broom (20). In bequeathing Lovett "the remnants of my socialist culture" (312), he is passing on the mysteries of the faith to the new apprentice. Having passed his initiation rites, Lovett graduates into adulthood upon the death of McLeod.

According to Otto Rank, every myth is a paranoid structure revealing the wish to get rid of the parents, particularly the father. Nevertheless, through reaction formation, the hero often appears "not as the persecutor of his father . . . but as the avenger of the persecuted father" (Rank 65). In *Barbary Shore,* everyone is conspiring to get McLeod, spying on him, pressuring, and persecuting him to relinquish the little object. Only Lovett remains true to him.

Along with the paranoid conspiracy in *Barbary Shore* goes an atmosphere of mutual suspicion, shame and doubt. Everyone is keeping secrets and living in hiding or under assumed names and fake identities. They all spy on one another, and their deepest fear is of being found out. Even Lovett, that apparently innocent witness, is guilty: he spies on Guinevere, and bursts in on McLeod and Guinevere in their bedroom. Each time he is forced to do it,

as if against his will. Besides being a spy, Lovett is even more fake than the rest, since he does not know his real name or age, or even what his face looked like before it was remodeled. He conceals the fact of his amnesia from everyone except McLeod.

Like the mythic hero Oedipus, Lovett is set apart from other men because of his lack of knowledge of his true identity and because of his wounds: "There is the mark of a wound behind my ear, an oblong of unfertile flesh where no hair grows. It is covered over now. . . . but no barber can hide the scar on my back" (*Barbary* 3). He is one of many Mailer heroes unmanned by war wounds who must forge a new identity and a new manhood for himself. Mailer may be deliberately borrowing the idea of the emasculating war wound from Hemingway, but it seems to fit his myth of himself and his need as an author to recreate his identity and seek renewed proof of his manhood in each new work. Unfortunately, as many critics have noted, Lovett is a vague character and an unsatisfactory hero, since he is reduced primarily to the role of a passive witness to events.

Instead of being integral to the plot, the ideology in *Barbary Shore* seems only loosely connected to it. The political talk is all abstract: if Communism is concerned with the working class, we never see anyone working in the novel, except perhaps Guinevere occasionally making beds. Mailer admits, "I was obviously trying for something which was at the very end of my reach, and then beyond it, and toward the end the novel collapsed into a chapter of political speech and never quite recovered" (*Advertisements* 94). In *Barbary Shore,* Mailer had as yet no way to mediate successfully between the opposing pulls of his personality, the intellectual ideologue and the irrational primitive. Consequently, the novel is overdefensive and overwrought.

Barbary Shore is a more aesthetically ambitious, intensely personal, even claustrophobic novel than *The Naked and the Dead.* It seems less like a second novel, and more like the sort of flawed, semi-autobiographical first novel many young writers produce. Nevertheless, *Barbary Shore* was worthwhile for Mailer, for it gave him the clue to the territory ahead. For the first time he began to explore directly the tensions in his own psyche as a clue to the anxieties of modern man:

> Working on *Barbary Shore* I always felt as if I were not writing the book myself but rather as if I were serving as a subject for some intelligence which had decided to use me to write this book

> . . . if I hadn't heard of the unconscious I would have had to postulate one to explain this phenomenon. For the first time I became powerfully aware of the fact that I had an unconscious which seemed to have little to do with me (Marcus 25).

Thus Mailer started out to write about history and politics and ended up writing about the unconscious. Perhaps the two are more closely linked than we imagine.

To create a bridge between politics and the unconscious, a novelist needs a way to connect Marx and Freud. Mailer wrote *Barbary Shore* when he was twenty-five to twenty-eight; it was his second novel, and he did not yet have the experience or the technique to make that connection. He perhaps found it in his later fiction with his use of the theories of the leftist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich. E.L. Doctorow was forty when his third novel, *The Book of Daniel*, appeared. If *Barbary Shore* is a cry of despair from the beginning of the Cold War, an anguished novel predicting the coming of a police state and the collapse of mankind into Barbary, then *The Book of Daniel*, which comes twenty years later, after McCarthyism and the Korean and Vietnam wars, is a work of therapy trying to heal some of that Cold War trauma. According to the critic Sam Girgus, Doctorow's narrator Daniel "seems to self-consciously design the structure so that the inner psychological world and the external political and social environment merge into one" (Girgus 84). In other words, Doctorow has found an experimental narrative technique that can bridge Marx and Freud.

He does so by using a variety of postmodern techniques: fragmenting the narrative, shifting between third and first-person points of view, shifting between time lines, integrating fictional characters into actual historical events, sometime radically shifting tone, and inserting essays into the story. The novel is meta-fictional, frequently commenting on its own construction. Daniel aggressively questions everything: the issue of his parents' guilt or innocence as alleged atomic spies and traitors and the meaning of the particular American psychodrama that was their trial. He also aggressively questions the structure of his narrative, his own identity, and even assaults the reader.

The shifts between first and third-person narrative combine subjective and objective stances toward painful personal material that might otherwise be intolerable; they also suggest Daniel's self-alienation. The shuttling be-

tween time lines creates parallel actions, allowing for a comparison between past and present, between two politically turbulent times in twentieth century American history, the early 1950s and the late 1960s, and also letting us see the continued effect of the past upon the present, both the repetitions and the subtle variations of events. The present of the novel goes from 1967 to 1968, beginning with the suicide attempt of Daniel's sister Susan on Memorial Day in late May 1967, followed by her retreat into catatonia and her funeral the following spring, and ending with the student uprising and occupation of Columbia University in April 1968. The past narrative goes from the late 1940s, when Daniel and Susan are very young children, through the early fifties, when their parents are arrested, tried, and executed. He also has Daniel, a fictional character, participate in actual historical events. For example, Daniel goes through a violent initiation at the March on the Pentagon in October 1967, where he sees Norman Mailer, and Daniel's book ends when he is interrupted in his writing in the Columbia library by the takeover of the University by the SDS in April 1968. This mixing of fact and fiction allows Doctorow to suggest the fictionality of history, the sense in which history is only stories we tell ourselves. The radical shifts in tone—sometimes Daniel lapses into black dialect or assaults readers about our prurient interest in his awful family history—provides occasional comic relief against subject matter which is inherently depressing. The insertion of non-fictional material, essays on various topics, into the narrative is allowed by the premise that Daniel, a graduate student at Columbia University in the late 1960s, is writing his dissertation about the history of his family and the execution of his parents as atomic spies in the 1950s. This permits him to digress freely on such disparate topics as capital punishment, twentieth century American and Russian political history, American popular culture, and the biblical Book of Daniel, all of which become relevant to his investigation.

The structure of the narrative reflects Daniel's self-therapy. It mimics the form of a series of psychoanalytic sessions, in which the analysand may relate family history, recent events, and dreams, all kinds of material in no apparent order, sometimes with radical shifts in tone, including laughter, anger, and tears. The patient may go off on tangents and free-associate to the material he brings up. In that case, the reader plays the role of the listening analyst, and Daniel's occasional aggression against the reader can be considered a form of transference.

What takes place in the narrative is the long-delayed process of Daniel's

mourning. Susan's suicide attempt and her slow death through catatonia reopens all the old wounds and Daniel resumes his unfinished mourning over the loss of his parents. As he writes: "Reader, this is a note to you. . . . If it is elementary and seems to you at this late date to be pathetically elementary, like picking up some torn bits of cloth and tearing them again. . . . If it is that elementary, then reader, I am reading you. And together we may rend our clothes in mourning" (*Daniel* 54). Rending one's garments is part of the traditional Jewish process of mourning.

After her suicide attempt, his sister in the mental hospital tells Daniel, "They're still fucking us . . . Goodbye, Daniel. You get the picture" (*Daniel* 9). Much later, we realize that these cryptic words were Susan's farewell, her last words to Daniel, and throughout the narrative he tries to puzzle them out. Soon after, he retrieves from Susan's car an old picture poster of their parents, the Isaacsons, with the printed slogan "Free them!" Could that be the "picture" to which she was referring? He flashes back to a rally for their parents when they were children, and the posters were waved in the air, but all he and Susan felt was terror at the crowd. The two were caught up in a political process they did not understand, turned into pawns and symbols, the children of the famous (or infamous) couple. The process robbed them of their parents and of their childhoods. Daniel suddenly bursts into invective delivered in black dialect: "Oh, baby, you know it now. We done played enough games for you, ain't we. You a smart lil fucker. You know where it's at now, don' you big daddy? You got the picture. This is the story of a fucking, right? You pullin' out yo lit-er-ary map, mutha? You know where we goin', right muthafuck?" (22–23). Whether we consider this sudden, angry, sarcastic outburst as directed at the reader, at Daniel himself, or at both simultaneously, the obscenity and dialect are necessary for him to discharge the intense, overwhelming emotion he is feeling about his dead "mutha" and "big daddy." Daniel is not just playing "lit-er-ary" games; this is his life and his pain and anger, his and Susan's. As to who is being fucked and by whom, that is the question of the novel: Is it his parents by the government? By the Communist Party, which abandoned his parents? Or is it Daniel and Susan, who were deprived of their parents? In that case, who is still fucking them? The U.S. government? The New Left? Or their own parents, who abandoned them?

Daniel often lashes out in ager. He is very hard on others, but he is hardest on himself. He accuses himself: "You are a betrayer. There is no cheap

use to which you would not put your patrimony. You're the kind of betrayer who betrays for no reason" (16). He calls himself and Susan "cruel." "And we are really terrible low down people. I mean really low down" (14). As an example of his cruelty, a few pages into his account, Daniel wonders if maybe the way to start the story is with the moment when the phone rings with the news of Susan's suicide attempt.

> With Daniel and his child bride at sex. . . . And I have finally got her on all fours, hanging there from her youth and shame, her fallen blond hair over her eyes, tears sliding like lovebeads down the long blond hairs of her straight hair. . . . The thing about Phyllis is that when she's stoned all her inhibitions come out. She gets all tight and vulnerable and our lovemaking degrades her. . . . All her instinctive unprincipled beliefs rise to the surface and her knees lock together. She becomes a sex martyr. I think that's why I married her.

He describes "soft Phyllis from Brooklyn suffering yet another penetration from her tormentor Daniel" as he labors to bring her to "a very cruel come." This is indeed a "fucking," both a sexual and a political one, for he describes her genitalia as having "gland formations, Stalinites and Trotskyites . . ." (6). The Isaacsons too were both political and sex martyrs: "When the call came they answered. They offered up those genitals, didn't they, Dandan? Yes, they did" (32). So if his parents were "fucked" by the government, then Daniel suggests that they may have been willing participants in a sado-masochistic ritual.

As Freud writes in "Mourning and Melancholia," "The patient [the melancholic] represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished. He abases himself before everyone . . ." (Freud 584). The melancholic also lacks normal feelings of shame but instead "finds satisfaction in self-exposure" (585). According to Freud, in melancholia, "we perceive that the self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego. . . . They are not ashamed and do not hide themselves, since everything derogatory that they say about themselves is at bottom said about someone else" (586). So Daniel's self-reproaches are part of his incomplete mourn-

ing; they are disguised reproaches against his parents, whom he cannot forgive for abandoning him and Susan.

For the same reason, he tends to act out recklessly, abusing his wife and child the way he was abused as a child. When he was seven, his parents took him to a concert in Peekskill, NY to hear the African-American Communist Paul Robeson sing (an actual historical event). They knew there might be danger, and, in fact, on their way home, a mob attacked their bus, hurling stones through the windows. The police stood by and let it happen. Daniel's mother crouched on the floor of the bus and protected her son with her body. But his father, perhaps naively, tried to get the police to intervene and had his arm broken by the mob—a foretaste of his eventual martyrdom by the justice system. Daniel replays that incident when he drives his car recklessly in the rain, endangering not only himself but also his wife and baby son. Phyllis clutches the baby to protect him, just as Rochelle Isaacson had attempted to shelter Daniel during the assault on the bus. He bullies Phyllis to take off her pants in the car and even considers burning her with the car's electric cigarette lighter—an echo of his parents' electrocution.

Granted, Daniel is hard on himself and others, nasty and abusive to his family. Yet we sympathize with him because he is such a tormented soul, because of his wretched childhood as a "Red diaper" baby, and because his parents were killed by the state, leaving him and his sister orphans at an early age. Daniel is capable of love. As her older brother, he tried to protect Susan when their parents were in prison and after they were executed. Now he must deal with Susan's suicide attempt and her slow decline into death. And he wants to reform, to reconcile with his wife and child.

When Daniel goes on the March on the Pentagon against the Vietnam War in October 1967, he re-enters the dangerous terrain of political protest that had destroyed his parents. It was an arena he had until then avoided as an adult. Yet he chooses to participate consciously and deliberately. When he turns in his draft card in protest, he announces himself not as "Daniel Lewin," his adoptive name, but as "Daniel Iasaacson," reclaiming the family name. But even as he pays tribute to the family political legacy, he will no longer simply replay his parents' mistakes in the sort of repetition compulsion that had governed him before, as in the speeding car. Knowing the danger, he refuses to let Phyllis and the baby accompany him on the March. After he is beaten and arrested, he is happy, bloody but unbowed. It is his initiation into radical politics. When Phyllis sees his battered face, he jokes,

"'There was nothing to it. It is a lot easier to be a revolutionary nowadays than it used to be'" (*Daniel* 257).

Nevetheless, to have a future, Daniel must still come to terms with the past. He starts to investigate his parents' case, seeking out the remaining witnesses, trying to determine the truth and whether the Isaacsons were innocent or guilty. His investigation ends at Christmastime in 1967, when he finally tracks down the principal witness for the prosecution, a member of his parents' Communist party cell, a Polish immigrant, dentist and former family friend named Selig Mindish. If anyone knows the truth about the case, it is Mindish, who was first to be arrested; he denounced the Isaacsons as the ringleaders and testified against them so he could receive a lighter sentence. Daniel then has good reason to hate Mindish as a betrayer and villain who destroyed his family.

He confronts the Mindish family in California, in the ironic setting of Disneyland, which Daniel satirizes as a capitalist shrine, the repository of the distorted myths of official American history, a totalitarian fantasyland located in Anaheim, "a town somewhere between Buchenwald and Belsen" (285). This is the end of the line of Daniel's investigation. But Mindish, the last surviving witness, has nothing to tell Daniel about the case, for he is far gone in senile dementia. In a tremendously moving scene, the destroyed Mindish begins to cry when he recognizes Daniel, and in a remarkable gesture, bestows on the young man his blessing: "For one moment of recognition he was restored to life. In wonder he raised his large, clumsy hand and touched the side of my face. He found the back of my neck and pulled me forward and leaned toward me and touched the top of my head with his palsied lips" (293). This is another replay of a past scene, but of a good memory: Daniel's grandmother would kiss Daniel this way. So Mindish is not a monster but a suffering soul capable of love; he behaves in a grandfatherly way toward Daniel. This is a moment of catharsis for Daniel, when he is able to break free of his trauma and begin to complete mourning his parents.

Mindish cannot tell Daniel the truth. Perhaps the truth is irrecoverable, or perhaps each participant in the case has only his or her personal truth or family story. But Mindish gives Daniel something far more important: a new heart. Daniel may never know if his parents were guilty or innocent, but he knows that they loved him and that he must forgive them. Thus, immediately after Mindish kisses him, Daniel begins to talk about heart transplants and the danger of the body rejecting its new heart.

The Book of Daniel is a remarkable novel, one of the greatest American political novels, not despite but because of its postmodern, fractured narrative. As we follow Daniel's progress, Doctorow balances the 1950s with the 1960s, showing both continuity and change. One of the slogans of the 1960s was "The personal is political," and this novel illustrates that. Doctorow makes us both feel and think, achieving in fiction an amalgam of the personal and the political.

According to the critic Debra Shostak, Philip Roth's *I Married a Communist* "can be seen as an extended critique of the late-twentieth-slogan, 'The personal is the political.'" In Roth's hands, the political and the personal are mutually betraying" (Shostak 252). The novel is the middle one in Roth's American trilogy, consisting of *American Pastoral* (1997), *I Married a Communist* (1998), and *The Human Stain* (2000). The three are fictional meditations on periods in twentieth-century American history: the late 1960s and the turmoil of the anti-Vietnam War movement in *Pastoral*, the late 1940s and early 1950s and the Red Scare in *Communist*, and the late 1990s and the Clinton impeachment in *Human Stain*. Roth says that what he was attempting in the American trilogy was "the joining of the public and the private, seeing the private drama as a public drama, really, or put another way, so saturated by history, the private drama, that it's determined by history" (Royal 186–87).

Each of the novels is narrated by Nathan Zuckerman, a fictional Jewish-American novelist who was Roth's alter ego and protagonist or narrator in many novels over almost thirty years. In each novel of the American trilogy, Zuckerman, now past sixty, impotent as a result of prostate cancer surgery, is in retreat from the world in a cabin in the woods where he lives alone and writes. The aged Zuckerman has radically pared down his life, so that he has become primarily an instrument for memory and writing. Zuckerman is no longer the protagonist but narrates the life of the hero.

In each novel, he reflects on the fall of a potentially great man, now deceased, whom he knew briefly, trying to reconstruct the life from what little he knows, from the testimony of others, and from his own imagination. The personal intersects with the political in each book, for each man is doomed when he collides with the history of America in his time. All three heroes, like Zuckerman, are Jews—except that Coleman Silk in *The Human Stain* is an African American passing as white and Jewish.

In *I Married a Communist*, Zuckerman reconstructs the life of the black-

listed radio actor Ira Ringold, who adopted the stage name "Iron Rinn," a man Nathan knew in the late 1940s when Nathan was in high school. After years as an itinerant laborer and serviceman in the army in WW II, Ira discovers a talent for impersonating Lincoln, which leads to a brief career as the star of radio dramas, particularly a show dramatizing American history called *The Free and the Brave*. For Ira, who was recruited during the war by a dedicated Communist, the patriotic show is a way to broadcast his political ideals. But Ira's life becomes increasingly complicated when he marries a beautiful radio actress named Eve Frame. The marriage is a terrible mismatch, and as it disintegrates it leads Eve and Ira into misery that destroys them both. Eve's spoiled 23-year-old daughter Sylphid hates Ira and bullies her mother into having an abortion. Devastated, Ira strays to other women but remains in the marriage, even as Eve grows more hysterical and Sylphid more abusive. At first, he stays because of love but later because Eve, who has powerful right-wing friends, provides him a political front during the blacklist. When Eve finds out about Ira's affairs, she betrays him, publishing a ghostwritten memoir called *I Married a Communist* which finishes Ira's radio career and sends him into a deep depression from which he never recovers. Ira gets his revenge by having some journalist friends out the anti-Semitic Eve Frame as Chava Fromkin from Brooklyn, not the rich WASP she pretends to be but the daughter of poor Jewish immigrants. One betrayal begets another.

It was widely believed that the novel was in part Roth's retaliation against his ex-wife, the English actress Claire Bloom, who wrote a tell-all memoir called *Leaving a Doll's House* (1996). Whatever the inspiration, by setting the story of a failed marriage in the time of the Red Scare, Roth gives his novel a historical and political dimension.

The subject of the novel is betrayal, in a period when personal vindictiveness is rewarded as a patriotic act. Eve is mad at Ira because of his sexual infidelity, but she gets her revenge by allowing the publication of a ghostwritten book that advances the political career of the gossip columnist Bryden Grant, who becomes a Congressman on the basis of his services as an informer. The book is a wretched piece of hackwork and political propaganda, filled with lies, portraying Ira as a calculating monster and spy for the Russians, and Eve and Sylphid as heroic Americans protecting democracy. Ira was a Communist, but he married for love, not under orders from the Party, and he was no spy. As Murray Ringold, Ira's older brother, tells

Nathan, "The only hitch is that in the halcyon days of the Cold War, turning someone in to the authorities as a Soviet spy could lead right to the chair" (265). Unlike the Rosenbergs, Ira is not imprisoned or executed, but his career is over and his life effectively destroyed. And Eve's actions damage Ira's friends in the party, for she hands over Ira's diary. Murray too later loses his teaching job because of his union activities and because his brother had been blacklisted. The man who denounces Murray before the House Un-American Activities Committee is none other than Congressman Bryden Grant.

As Murray Ringold says,

> To me it seems likely that more acts of personal betrayal were tellingly perpetrated in America in the decade after the war—say between '46 and '56—than in any other period in our history. This nasty thing that Eve Frame did was typical of lots of nasty things people did in those years. . . . When before had betrayal ever been so destigmatized and rewarded in this country?. . . . You retain your purity at the same time that as you are patriotically betraying—at the same time as you are realizing a satisfaction that verges on the sexual . . . (264).

The perverse sexuality of betrayal links these novels by Mailer, Doctorow, and Roth. Even as secret agent pursues Communist in *Barbary Shore*, the characters are involved in a sadomasochistic daisy chain of affairs. And, as Susan tells Daniel in *The Book of Daniel*, "They're still fucking us."

Almost everyone in *I Married a Communist* behaves badly. The only major character who comes off well is Murray Ringold, who is a sensible, level-headed liberal contrast to his angry, hotheaded radical brother. Murray lives a modest middle-class life, devoted to his wife, his daughter, and the students to whom he teaches English in a Newark high school. Murray practically raised Ira, who from an early age had an angry, sometimes violent temperament. As adults, Murray continues to try to help Ira, although the stubborn Ira resists advice. But while Ira falls apart and retreats from the world when he loses his job, Murray supports his family by selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door, fighting his case for six years until he regains his teaching position.

Murray is Nathan Zuckerman's teacher and introduces the teenage Nathan to the radio star Ira. The boy hero worships Ira, and Ira in turn

adopts him for a while as the son he never had. Over forty years later, when Ira and Eve are long dead, the 90-year-old Murray is taking a summer class on Shakespeare at a small college near Nathan's retreat, spots Nathan in the street, and, over the course of six nights, relates his story at Nathan's house. He is the novel's wise old man. Nathan and Murray are co-narrators, Murray filling in the details the teenage Nathan could not know, and telling what happened in the decades since. Nathan in turn complements Murray's account, alternating as narrator to relate his impressions of Ira. As in *The Book of Daniel*, the combination of narrative viewpoints adds depth and helps to illuminate a dark period of American history. Moreover, the 90-year-old Murray's account has extra force as the testament of a dying man; on the last page, Nathan tells us that Murray died two months after telling his story.

Many historical characters are mentioned or make cameo appearances in the pages of the novel. Ira takes Nathan to a rally where he hears Henry Wallace speak and even shakes hands with Paul Robeson. This is the same Wallace for whom the young Norman Mailer campaigned and the same Robeson whose concert the Isaacsons attend in *The Book of Daniel*. There is also mention of the Rosenbergs and of Alger Hiss; Murray says "'the Ringolds were the Rosenbergs to the Grants'"(7) and "Nixon had Alger Hiss, Grant had Iron Rinn"(277). Nathan is inspired by the novel *Young Tom Paine* by the American Communist Howard Fast; Mailer actually met Fast in Hollywood (Manso 150). And, just as Daniel sees Mailer at the March on the Pentagon in *The Book of Daniel*, Nathan reads Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* after Ira gives him the novel, and he says it was one of the books "that affirmed my own political sympathies" (*Daniel* 153). As in *The Book of Daniel*, the postmodern mixing of fiction and history, as well as the intertextual references, give *I Married a Communist* added density and verisimilitude.

Paul Robeson tells Nathan, "'Don't lose your courage, young man'" (33). Ironically, young Nathan quickly loses what little political courage he ever possessed. Nathan is never a Communist; in fact, he is never very political at all. His politics is based in the naïve patriotism of a teenager who grew up during World War II, enraptured by the propaganda of poetic radio dramas at the time, such as those of Norman Corwin, the format which Nathan's first literary efforts slavishly imitate. Like Corwin, Nathan romanticizes "the little guy," the average American who won the war; to him Ira is the epitome and the advocate of the common man. The comedy lies in the fact that Nathan knows nothing whatsoever about these mythical average Americans;

growing up in a middle-class Jewish-American neighborhood in Newark, he has never met them. Nathan is a callow, impressionable youth, desperately seeking models of manhood; this is not so much politics as Nathan's yearning to be a real man and a real, assimilated American. "I was a Jewish child, no two ways about that, but I didn't care to partake of the Jewish character. . . . I wanted to partake of the national character" (39). Ira, who has lived like a hobo all over the country, Nathan sees as his ticket into the real America. But Nathan soon outgrows Ira; the more time he spends with him, the more he sees him as limited, repetitious, and boring in his political rants. For a moment, Nathan is ready to enlist in the Communist cause when he spends a day with Ira's mentor, the organizer Johnny O'Day, handing out leaflets at a factory gate. There he finally sees the average working guys he had idolized. "There *it* was, the world where I had long secretly dreamed of being a man. The whistle blew, the gates opened wide, and here they came—the workers! Corwin's far-flung ordinary men, unspectacular but free. The little guy! The common man! The Poles! The Swedes! The Irish! The Croatians! The Italians! The Slovenes!" (234). They are a blend of immigrants from all over the world, yet conspicuously lacking in Nathan's list of average working-class Americans are the Jews. Nathan's enthusiasm for the workers fades in a day when he returns to his studies of literature at the University of Chicago. Nathan is no politician; he is a writer.

Toward the end of the novel, we find that Ira's politics and his marriage may have both been attempts to channel or tame his rage. Murray reveals that Ira killed a man when he was sixteen; after that Ira went on the lam for years. He was afraid of his potential for violence; the Communist party gave him an idealistic way to sublimate his rage. As to his marriage to the ultra-civilized Eve, Murray says, "She needs the brute to redeem her purity, while what the brute needs is to be tamed" (299). Ironically, in this fable of Beauty and the Beast, Beauty is unstable and histrionic, and rather than civilize the Beast, she destroys him.

So all Ira's political struggle accomplishes nothing and ruins his life. The only one who does anything for the working class is the liberal Murray, though his teaching of generations of students and his union work.

In all three novels, the characters find it difficult to balance their politics and their private lives. It is just about impossible to be a committed revolutionary and a married man with a family; one or the other must suffer. In *Barbary Shore*, McLeod is devoted to revolutionary socialism, although he

knows it does not yet exist. Late in life, McLeod attempts marriage and fatherhood, but he is poor at both and loses his wife and child to the passionate barbarian who persecutes and kills him, the government agent Hollingsworth. McLeod's disciple Lovett is at the end of the novel living in isolation in a rented room, waiting for the apocalypse of the coming war and the faint hope of socialism which may lie beyond it. In *The Book of Daniel*, Paul and Rochelle Isaacson put themselves and their children at risk through their radical politics. They die in the electric chair, and their daughter Susan later attempts suicide. Only Daniel survives. He opts for marriage and fatherhood, but he will not repeat the mistakes of his parents. Although he honors their heritage of political dissidence, he takes his political risks alone rather than place his family in harm's way. In *I Married a Communist*, Ira is destroyed by the attempt to maintain both his uncompromising radical politics and his marriage. The only successful Communist in the novel is Johnny O'Day, a severe, chilly man who isolates himself and lives for the party. But Murray considers Ira's messy, flawed human existence preferable to O'Day's zealotry and monkish purity.

The most ideological of the three novels is *Barbary Shore*. Mailer, writing at the very beginning of the Cold War, rejects both the state capitalism of Stalinist Russia and the monopoly capitalism of America as totalitarian systems that make war inevitable. He opts instead for the slim utopian hope of revolutionary socialism, something akin to Trotskyism. But his political thought would continue to evolve throughout his career.

In *The Book of Daniel*, Doctorow too is critical of both doctrinaire Communism and American capitalism. The former is too fanatical and rigid; the latter indulges the populace in materialism, fantasy, and hysteria. Both are rejected as totalitarian. And, although the novel is also skeptical about the New Left (represented by an Abbie Hoffman-like figure called Artie Sternlicht), nevertheless, Doctorow through Daniel seems to advocate resisting the state through late 60s means: participatory democracy, civil disobedience, and non-violent protest. At the end of *The Book of Daniel*, Daniel writes, "However, just a moment ago, while I was sitting here writing the last page, someone came through announcing that the library is closed. . . . 'Close the book, man, what's the matter with you, don't you know you've been liberated?'" (*Daniel* 303). What has happened is that Daniel is once again about to be swept up into history; it is April 1968, and a student protest is shutting down Columbia University. Despite all the tragic happenings in Daniel's life, Doc-

torow provides the most optimistic ending of the three novels, even though it is a qualified optimism: "'Don't you know you've been liberated?'"

The bleakest and most tragic of the three is *I Married a Communist*. Lovett and Daniel are young men who undergo a political education and are, in a sense, liberated at the end. Nathan too gains a political education, but the Nathan we see at the end of the novel is apolitical, an old man, a writer living like a hermit in the woods, observing and reflecting but no longer participating in the world. In the final scene, Nathan is stargazing, taking a distanced, cosmic view of politics and history, indeed of all human striving. For Nathan, Murray is "no less a historical casualty than his brother" (*Communist* 318). Indeed, he sees all the characters as "impaled on their moment" and caught in "the traps set for them by their era" (322). According to Nathan, only death can liberate them from the prison of history and their false, utopian illusions of changing anything. *I Married a Communist* frequently cites Shakespeare but most often mentions the tragedies *Othello, Hamlet, King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Murray, who has spent a lifetime teaching and studying Shakespeare, says, "What does it is betrayal. Think of the tragedies. What brings on the melancholy, the raving, the bloodshed? Othello—betrayed. Hamlet—betrayed. Lear—betrayed. You might even claim that Macbeth is betrayed—by himself—though that's not the same thing" (185).

The period of the Red Scare, of the anti-Communist witch hunts and the blacklists, was a time of betrayal, a shameful, tragic era in American life. These three novels confront that tragedy, reflecting on history through the medium of fiction. They all transmit the feeling of that time, the mix of hysteria, fear, paranoia, rage, and depression. Mailer does it in the form of a psychodrama, Doctorow writes a therapeutic fiction to heal some of the continuing grief over the losses of that era, and Roth composes a bitter comedy with tragic overtones.

The politics of these novels emerges indirectly, through our involvement in and imaginative sympathy with the lives of the protagonists, who are victims or survivors of those harsh times. That makes them a particularly powerful form for moving the reader. Doctorow prefaces *The Book of Daniel* with three epigraphs. The middle one is from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*: "With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,/I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for conquered and slain persons."

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