



## **Advertisements for Myself**

*Norman Mailer*

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# Advertisements for Myself

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## **Advertisements for Myself** Norman Mailer

An essential guide to the life and work of one of America's most controversial writers, *Advertisements for Myself* is a comprehensive collection of the best of Norman Mailer's essays, stories, interviews and journalism from the Forties and Fifties, linked by anarchic and riotous autobiographical commentary. Laying bare the heart of a witty, belligerent and vigorous writer, this manifesto of Mailer's key beliefs contains pieces on his war experiences in the Philippines (the basis for his famous first novel *The Naked and the Dead*), tributes to fellow novelists William Styron, Saul Bellow, Truman Capote and Gore Vidal and magnificent polemics against pornography, advertising, drugs and politics. Also included is his notorious exposition of the phenomenon of the 'White Negro', the Beat Generation's existentialist hero whose life, like Mailer's, is 'an uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self'.

## **Advertisements for Myself Details**

Date : Published September 15th 1992 by Harvard University Press (first published 1959)

ISBN : 9780674005907

Author : Norman Mailer

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# From Reader Review Advertisements for Myself for online ebook

## Michael says

The best stuff in this is really good. Especially his voice columns. The worst stuff is tedious.

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### 1.1 says

This was a very enjoyable book, from first to last, and even the somewhat lengthy dissertations on Hip and Square were enlightening and a handy window into 1950s culture, even if they do seem quaint and indeed dumb (though I suppose the culture they were countering was dumber still).

At one point Mailer even predicts the rise of Nazism in the future of America which is prescient, but he based it on a rewriting of the past and editing of Hitler's persona (better voice &c), which wasn't even necessary. He'd have a lot to say today about the matter, no doubt, and he fought in the Pacific Theatre... where is this leading? Sometimes it doesn't have to lead anywhere.

By far the greatest strength of this book is in the eponymous advertisements, which really give one a sense of what Mailer was struggling with and fill out the biographical details of his work, habits, responses to the world, and successes in his time. For instance I did not know Mailer was one of the founders of Village Voice, but then I'm not a New Yorker or American, but still it's a damn interesting tidbit to throw out at the literary parties I am never invited to.

Mailer writes well, straddling the line between 'old toff' style construction and modern energy and at times he nails it quite perfectly, so much so that I want to find and read *Barbary Shore* and *The Naked and the Dead* fairly soon, in that exact order. The rest of the pieces which are placed in this compendium/memoir (Vonnegut would call it a 'blivit') are enough to get one thinking about one's own writing and excited about the prospect of Mailer writing a sequel. Turns out I love this kind of self-guided overview more than any book of external criticism, as long as it is written with the kind of heart beat Miller imbues into this.

The book rarely lost me and I often kept reading a half hour longer than I should've (and paid for it in the morning). This book should be read by writers and will delight most readers. But a note: Mailer doesn't give a damn about women, but at one point he does recognize this within himself when he admits he can't read Woolf... that seem disingenuous to me, and maybe to you as well. But it doesn't change the fact that I gained an admiration for Mailer as a writer and teller of stories (you'll find that one story sort of monopolizes his mind after awhile), and (somewhat) as a thinker, and I always enjoy a solid trek back into time.

Don't skip this one because it says 'advertisements' on the front. It's got a little moxy yet.

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## M. Sarki says

<http://msarki.tumblr.com/post/5689494...>

Things were going pretty swell for me reading what the old coot had to say and absorbing his endless rants

of wisdom, enjoying all the advertisements and side notes regarding people, places, and things. By the time I got to *The White Negro* I was moving fast and furious, rethinking my position on a person I for the most part did not like, a writer who never meant much to me except as a character buffoon in the Gordon Lish first novel *Dear Mr. Capote*.

But after *The White Negro* essay the rest of the work began to slide downhill. The last pages regarding Mailer's opinions of writers other than himself tended to be a bore for me, and I did not agree with much he had to say, especially his silly words on Salinger. But the very beginning of this book was invigorating. I felt I was in the presence of a very brave man who was making great waves. I like a good trouble maker. I love somebody who flat out just doesn't give a shit. All writers want to be appreciated for what they do, to be acknowledged for the quality of work they have labored so hard to compose. Mailer wanted to believe he would still be remembered after a hundred years had passed. I am not sure that will be possible except for the size he made of his personality. The myth behind Mailer, the celebrity he became, may be what actually outlives his being remembered for the writing he gave us. Much like the Hunter S. Thompsons of the world and our times, it wasn't the greatness of the writer it was the size of his personality. Sometimes you get both, but not in Mailer's case, or Thompson's either, though for the record I do like Hunter Thompson's writing very much but not so much his celebrity.

Norman Mailer was credited with being an innovator of creative nonfiction which covers the gamut from essay to the nonfiction novel. Of today's stars in that field I have previously recorded my favorite as being Paul Hendrickson, though Paul wasn't any too happy with what I wrote about his time in the seminary and his Catholic religion. Creative nonfiction is a genre I am most deeply interested in and I am thankful for Norman Mailer and Truman Capote who both helped create it. I can see the bully Ernest Hemingway beating up my favorite poet Wallace Stevens down in Key West, but it is very hard for me to imagine Norman Mailer head-butting Truman Capote anywhere, but that is the myth surrounding these two men and their literary relationship.

This is the first book of Norman Mailer's I have ever completed and I am certain it will be my last. Not because his writing isn't up to par. Mailer is a very good writer. It is doubtful to me that any book following this one could measure up to the man and his celebrity. I can't say I actually like this guy, but I do like his courage, his audacity on the page, and his delusional thinking that he could possibly be in the same league as his heroes Hemingway and Fitzgerald. All this is funny in a way, completely sad as well, but at our all's expense the book remains highly entertaining.

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## **robert says**

A guilty pleasure. To me it's sort of like going to the supermarket and browsing US magazine. The egotism and narcissism on display for some reason seem fun and sort of charming. As he wrestles with language, we get a real sense of personality, of another human being struggling to create art though it doesn't seem to come either easily or naturally to him. The fact that he succeeds all the same is inspiring.

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## **Matt says**

(Accidentally) Visionary and prophetic...

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## **Andrew Kramcsak says**

This is the first book I ever read of Norman's. It combines two elements that are essential to his character: bat shit crazy bombastic proclamations (read him as he smugly battles people over his Village Voice editorial space!) to his genuine talent for the written word. But the hell with that, skip to the back (Norman only cares that you agree with him) and read his spot on characterizations of his fellow writers.

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## **Dan says**

In addition to a selection of Mailer's early writing (short stories, journalistic articles, essays, interviews, poems), this book includes the author's critical comments about that work. The book includes "The White Negro," an essay analyzing the social and political conditions out of which the "Beat Generation" emerged.

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## **Jtmichae says**

When I think of Norman Mailer I think of a figure like the one William Vollmann seems to cut in more contemporary times. Both men have distinct interests in sexuality (for Mailer an obsession with anal sex; for Vollmann a predilection for prostitutes), in large working projects (the many Great American Novels and novel cycles Mailer attempted to write and either finished partially or never started to begin with; Vollmann's ongoing cycle of novels about interactions with Native Americans and mostly white settlers), in most of all being as open as possible to the reader. Vollmann, for instance, in a sometimes paranoid book like *Riding Toward Everywhere* comes across as both completely honest and immediately quite childish for being so. His fears of the NSA and TSA are founded enough, but the grandness with which he writes about living in a rogue state is at best concerned alarmist and at worst slightly crazy person with a sandwich board. Mailer, too, goes with the philosophy of being able to write about anything as long as he writes about it with complete honesty, and complete capital-t Truth. In the end, both of these men can be boiled down to a continuing search for (and honest, if naive, belief in) an almost Platonic form for Truth.

To that end, at least in my opinion, the greatest Mailer ever becomes as a writer is when he's doing all he can to express that capital-t Truth which is relative to him. In an essay like "The Homosexual Villain" for instance--appearing in *Advertisements for Myself*--Mailer attempts to come to terms (quite movingly) with his theoretical acceptance of homosexuality and the ensuing contradiction that whenever he meets someone gay, he feels tremendously uneasy in some weird part of himself. Mailer is, without a doubt, everything his critics complain of: racist, homophobic, self-loathing, sexist--but his desire to express himself truthfully and honestly (a desire that results in these complaints being well acknowledged) trumps all of the flaws. In the essays collected in this book, Mailer is at his best. The fiction, however, is a bit more complicated. Capable of being good in the subject of one sentence and horrendously bad in the predicate (something Vollmann can do as well), the end result is something more uneven than your usual Mailer text, possibly because given the nature of a compilation volume we aren't quite given the proper amount of time to become invested in each piece of fiction writing before being swirled off to the next, resulting in a significant amount time feeling alienated and off-put by a lot of what happens here in the fictional excerpts from longer works.

Above all, for his honesty and in that honesty a certain amount of bravery, this book is recommended.

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## **Raegan says**

I wasn't familiar with Norman Mailer's work so this was an interesting introduction. His introductions to the pieces were often entertaining and it was much like an anthology.

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## **Downward says**

this is mailer at his worst. self-analytical beyond the point of narcissism, being very articulate about things he clearly hasn't thought past beyond what will garner a knee-jerk reaction from the audience, and often (too often) showing us pieces of bad writing (while acknowledging that they are bad) only to then tell us why he doesn't necessarily think they are bad. what this is is a great artist (if not a great thinker; mailer's "thoughts" are at times problematic and numerous enough to undermine any of his real ability) who seems more concerned about his career and his bibliography than he is concerned with making art, obsessed with his rank in the canon and self-critical to the point of paralysis while being critical of others to the point of meanness. worth reading for a perspective of a certain kind in 1959, but go into it with a very specific idea of what you want.

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## **Aaron says**

Mailer seems like an important transitional figure for the American zeitgeist. He's a champion of the look-at-me attitude that after decades of growth has found a new level on the internet. However, he balances this solipsism with intellectual rigor, or more precisely, the appearance of intellectual rigor, which hasn't as readily translated to the Web 2.0.

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## **Gabriel Congdon says**

482 ratings, take THAT, Norman Mailer! So much for advertising for yourself. Let me tell you buddy, if I know anything about the upcoming generation of writers (and I don't), they are going to HATE your work, way to masculine, but you believed in a form greatness that simply doesn't exist any more. The earthlings of 2100 may find some use for your, but it'll be a Spanish pause till then. Being a film noir man, I was aware of how awash America was with Freudianism, but I was surprised by how much of it splashed onto these works (the subconscious really meant something back then). The beauty of this book is you can skip whatever section you want. And for those of you who've read it: "It was the ganja that made me do it" hhahaa.

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## **Amy says**

In full disclosure, I only read this book because I am trying to finish up the Barthelme Syllabus. I mostly think that Norman Mailer represents the worst kind of entitled white dude author - racist, super misogynist, both self-aggrandizing and self-deprecating (including pieces of his work that he even admits are bullshit). In

any case, he's not without talent, but I'd be happy to never read him again.

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## **Patrick says**

This book is a compilation of Mailer's early work. Writings include: stories from Harvard and high school, as a columnist for The Village Voice and a scathing review of the work by his contemporaries. This last stands out the most.

Mailer absolutely rips Kerouac's writing style, but met him and liked him "more than I would have thought, and felt he was tired, as indeed why should he not be for he has traveled in a world where the adrenalin devours the blood" p.465. He has thoughts on Salinger, Styron, Ellison and Hemingway--and none of them very kind. This stands in opposition to his hate of judgemental readers, which he states at length shortly before this section.

There is a thorough exploration of the Samuel Beckett's new play "Waiting for Godot." Also, Mailer covers the topic of censorship trying to publish "The Deer Park." He had to go to six publishers before he would one where the script, and the sex, would remain intact.

His exploration of the Hipster culture, soon to become the Beatniks, is rather outdated, but many of the stories remain relevant. Including "The Homosexual Villain," where Mailer struggles with his own bigotry on the subject in a piece for One, a gay magazine in California.

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## **Jill says**

A collection of articles and short stories by Mailer with forewords by him for each piece. Over 500 pages but still a quick read.

Mailer tires me. He is limited by his ego. I didn't like his patronizing evaluations of other authors - except for female authors, because he couldn't find any worth reading. I paraphrase.

Some of the subject matter was diminished by time. No one cares about the minutia of how Hipsters differ from Beatniks. He hung around people with embarrassing affectations.

I didn't know he was one of the founders of The Village Voice.

I'm not planning to read his other work.

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