

PAL: Perspectives in American Literature - A Research and Reference Guide - An Ongoing Project

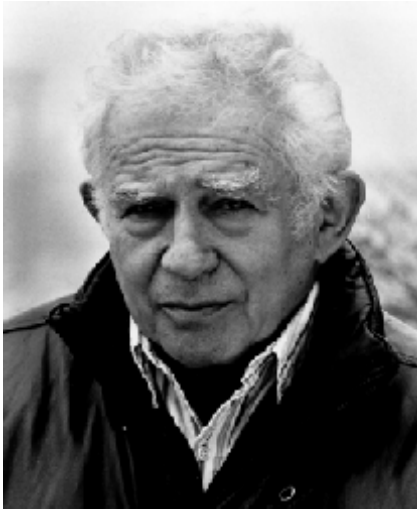
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Chapter 10: Norman Mailer (1923-2007)

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Source: [The Compass](#)

[New York Times Obituary](#) Nov. 10, 2007

[Mailer's Legacy - LA Times](#) Nov. 17, 2007

Primary Works

The naked and the dead, 1948; *Barbary shore*, 1951; *The Deer Park*, 1955; *The White Negro*, 1957; *Advertisements for myself*, 1959; *An American dream*, 1964; *Cannibals and Christians*, 1966; *Why are we in Vietnam? A novel*, 1967; *Miami and the siege of Chicago; an informal history of the Republican and Democratic Conventions of 1968*, 1968; *The idol and the octopus; political writings, on the Kennedy and Johnson administrations*, 1968; *The armies of the night; history as a novel, the novel as history*, 1968; *Of a fire on the moon*, 1970; *The prisoner of sex*, 1971; *Deaths for the ladies: and other disasters; being a run of poems, short poems, very short poems, and turns of prose...*, 1971; *St. George and the godfather*, 1972; *Existential errands*, 1972; *Marilyn, a biography*, 1973; *Genius and lust: a journey through the major writings of Henry Miller*, 1976; *Some honorable men: political conventions, 1960-1972*, 1976; *A transit to Narcissus: a facsimile of the original typescript*, 1978; *The executioner's song*, 1979; *Of women and their elegance*, 1980; *Pieces and pontifications*, 1982; *Ancient evenings*, 1983; *Tough guys don't dance*, 1984; *Harlot's ghost*, 1991; *The Gospel according to the Son*, 1997; *The time of our time*, 1998; *The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing*, 2003; *The castle in the forest: a novel*, 2007.

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Gordon, Andrew. *An American dreamer: a psychoanalytic study of the fiction of Norman Mailer*. Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson U P, 1980. PS3525.A4152 Z66

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- - -. *Norman Mailer's Letters on An American Dream, 1963-1969*. Shavertown, PA: Sligo, 2004.

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Manso, Peter. *Mailer, his life and times*. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1985. PS3525 .A4152 Z76

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Study Questions

The Armies of the Night (1968)

1. Do you find Mailer's use of himself as a third-person participant effective or confusing? This book, which won both a Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, has often been cited, along with Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968) as an example of the "new journalism." But a similar point of view was used by Henry Adams in *The Education of Henry Adams* as early as 1907, and the concept of a "nonfiction novel" dates back at least as far as Ernest Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa* (1935). Does this relatively unusual form attract or repel you?
2. Mailer writes (Signet, p. 63): "The American corporation executive . . . was perfectly capable of burning unseen women and children in the Vietnamese jungles, yet felt a large displeasure and fairly final disapproval at the generous use of obscenity in literature and public." Do you agree with Mailer that depersonalized governmental violence is more obscene than the use of four-letter words?
3. Consider Mailer's final statements in "The Metaphor Delivered." Do you feel that Mailer, despite his antiwar civil disobedience, is a patriot? Do the U.S. Marshals who think him a traitor love their country more? Were you emotionally moved by this conclusion?
4. These events took place nearly thirty years ago. Do they seem to have any bearing on your life, and on the America you live in today, or do they seem like ancient history? Are the participants (e.g., Robert Lowell, Dwight MacDonalD) familiar or alien to you?
5. Can you envision any future national situation in which similar demonstrations might occur? Are there any that you might find justifiable?

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