



The Time of Our Time (Modern Library Paperbacks)

By Norman Mailer

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Norman Mailer's **The Time of Our Time** is a giant retrospective, a rich, boisterous portrait of our times seen through the fiction and reportage of one of America's greatest writers.

Mailer selected and edited the contents of this work to create an ongoing narrative of events large and small that have shaped America over the last fifty years. Included are passages from *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Deer Park*, *An American Dream*, *The Armies of the Night*, *The Executioner's Song*, *Ancient Evenings*, and *Harlot's Ghost* as well as portraits of Ernest Hemingway, Dorothy Parker, Truman Capote, JFK, Marilyn Monroe, Lee Harvey Oswald, Madonna, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, and Richard Nixon as they appeared in some of his best magazine pieces. How readable is the result! It is as if one is being drawn into a fabulous novel with extraordinary characters, real and fictional, who appear and reappear through the years until a vast mural of America as a nation comes into focus, full of follies and blunders, surprisingly elegant and often crazy--tragic in its losses and large in its triumphs.

On display here are Mailer's enormous energies, his vast curiosity, and his powers of delineation. Here too are his errors of judgment and deed, both personal and literary. As a writer, Mailer eschews all limits. He goes at the world like a tiger. What will surprise many readers of **The Time of Our Time** is what a shrewd and stylish tiger he has been.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Compiling an anthology of one's own work can be a tricky business. Norman Mailer, of course, first committed this act of literary cannibalism back in 1959, when he assembled a brilliant collage of stories, journalism, essays, and poetry, *Advertisements for Myself*. Now, 50 years after the publication of his first novel, Gore Vidal's favorite sparring partner has put together another, more massive anthology, advertising not only himself but what we might call (paraphrasing Frost) his lover's quarrel with American life. "Over the course of years," Mailer writes in his foreword, "most of us compose in the privacy of our minds a social and cultural history of the years through which we have passed." True enough. But Mailer's history of the American Imperium has always been public--extremely public--and in *The Time of Our Time* he attempts to get it all into a single book.

Surely this sense of himself as the republic's recording angel accounts for the structure of Mailer's anthology: rather than arranging the excerpts by date of composition, he groups them by the historical era they describe. His 1963 polemic about the Bay of Pigs, for example, appears alongside his cloak-and-dagger reconstruction of the same event from *Harlot's Ghost* (1991). Fiction and fact lie cheek-by-jowl and eventually become impossible to tell apart. Here is the fulfillment of a project that Mailer began decades ago with such cunning hybrids as *Armies of the Night*. Yet this enormous volume shouldn't be read merely as a hand-tooled work of history. It is also the record of a phenomenal literary career, documenting Mailer's initial triumphs, his adrenaline-infused masterpieces of the late 1960s, hyperbolic stinkers like *Marilyn* and *Ancient Evenings*, and the astringent sorrow and awe of *The Executioner's Song*, which marked his return to form in 1979 after a long fallow period. Who but this loudmouthed, elegant, shrewd, and invariably excessive author would claim that *his* time--i.e., his accounting of it--is essentially *our* time? And who else could even begin to make such a claim stick? The list is a short one indeed.

From Library Journal

How to sum up 50 years of writing? Mailer's 31 books since 1948?some great, some infuriating or silly, but none of them safe?have held him a consistently high place among postwar American writers; in between his novels, his charismatic accounts of political conventions, prize fights, demonstrations, and moon landings effected a sea-change in magazine journalism, launching a thousand self-referential copycats. No subject ever seemed outside Mailer's swaggering intelligence as he evolved from young war-novelist to Existential essayist riffing above the cultural storms. Mailer doesn't need to stake his claim as a novelist or social critic: This sprawling reader does both, following Mailer's two careers by presenting novel excerpts set chronologically and thematically among his most memorable nonfiction, right up to his account of the 1996 campaign. In another half-century, will he be remembered as a great novelist or a gifted man of letters who divided his talent? Readers who don't balk at this collection's heft (1279 pages) may decide for themselves. This compilation is an ego indulgence, but even Mailer's indulgences are lucid and surprising.

Recommended, but not essential.?Nathan Ward, "Library Journal"

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From Booklist

Issued as a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Mailer's first novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, and weighing in at about the size of the Manhattan phone book, this retrospective anthology contains excerpts of exemplary works, personally selected by the great writer himself. The compilation is creatively organized; in looking back over his oeuvre, Mailer, as he posits in his, not surprisingly, brilliant

introduction, realized its thematic thread is his abiding interest in writing about America. Consequently, he has positioned the pieces in this collection so that each one "appears in accordance with the year it refers to rather than the year in which it was written." Thus, as we read excerpts from Mailer's fiction and nonfiction, things are purposefully out of chronological order of composition but ultimately in *perfect* order in terms of overall effect; the reader witnesses Mailer's reactions to almost every step of America's evolving political and social conditions over the past 50 years. Excerpts range from a portrait of Dorothy Parker that every reader will enjoy to a segment of his novel *Ancient Evenings*, which many did *not* enjoy. A brain, a talent, a rascal, and an observer: Mailer is all these, and the mix of these elements results here in a monument, not to his ego, but to his high place in American letters. *Brad Hooper*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daphne Jones:

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Joseph Mitchell:

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Danny Solberg:

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