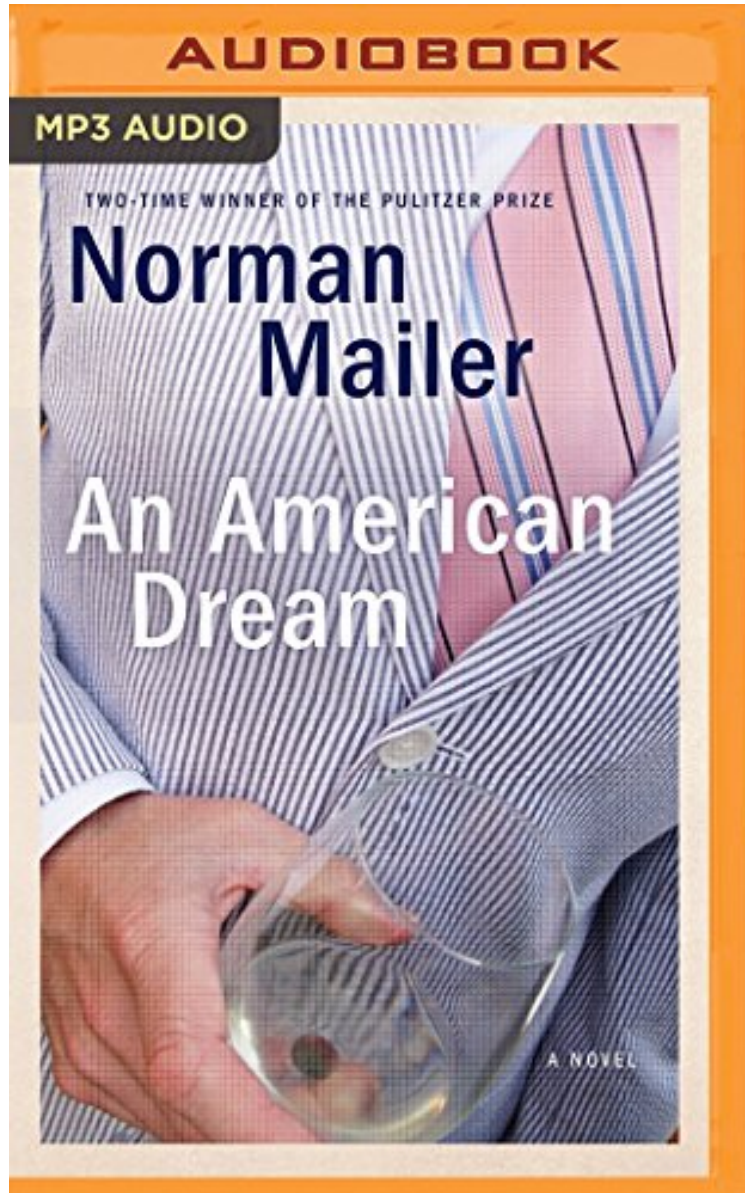


[E-BOOK] An American Dream

An American Dream

Norman Mailer

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Norman Mailer : An American Dream before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An American Dream:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An American Nightmare is more like it By Kris Villager I'll start by saying two things. One, this is one of my all-time favorite novels, so I'm biased. Two, this novel has been reviewed ad nauseam so I won't re-hash what others have already said better. What I do want to say is how surprised I was by some

of the negative reviews. That this was a classic I had always thought was uncontroversial. It is, after all, at its heart the story of one man's (Rojack) struggle to find meaning in an amoral world (appropriately set in NYC). One review in particular, don't recall the reviewer but its title was 'How to kill your wife and be happy ever after,' described the novel as "a lurid celebration of violence." While it's true that Mailer remains morally neutral on Rojack's crime(s), the criticism misses the point entirely. Rojack is a product of his times. The point of the story is the lengths he will go to to find happiness/meaning/achieve the so-called American Dream (hence the title of the novel) in a world that doesn't easily lend itself to these preoccupations. Yes, it's violent and Rojack is a misogynist of epic proportions, and for all I know so is Norman Mailer, but to say that this book is just about sex and politics, as so many have said, seems missing of the point to me. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An American Nightmare By Alfred Johnson

Writers, American writers have since the beginning of the Republic, maybe before, attempted to tackle the question of what the American Dream of prospects, prosperity, and promises looked like to their time. Obviously in times of social stress (like now) that dream looked pretty ephemeral, looked like chasing after rainbows. Okay, let's be blunt a rather raggedy dream. For other generations writers have acted as advance men and women for the "streets paved with gold" idea of what the democratic social experiment started over two centuries looked like to them. The book under review, Norman Mailer's American Dream, was written during a time of social stress in the 1960s and reflects that rather ambiguous former take on the dream. Actually maybe in Mailer's case he was part of the disruption with his campaign for Mayor of New York and his anti-war writings, and perhaps he liked to think of himself that way. An avenging warrior against the night-takers, then (and now still with us). The early 1960s produced a certain view of success, home, hearth, health, spouse, kids, maybe a stray dog thrown all the time keeping your head down ("nose to the grindstone" a lot of people called with some pleasure) in the main which is what a lot of us, including avenging angel Mailer, were fighting against but that view, and those who espoused success by the amount of celebrity as now, have won out in the ethos of the times battle. Or at least this round. Celebrity is what allowed the protagonist here, Steve Rojack, to think he could get away with murder, in this case the murder of his wife by his hand. Murder in an alcoholic rage. Of course if that was all that it was there would be a pretty thin plot. So Rojack denied having anything to do with it, had in any case staged the murder to look like a suicide (dropping his lovely high society wife out a big old New York apartment house window). And if he could not brazen it out he would have been more than happy to find a convenience fall-guy because guys who are celebrities don't figure to work their act well in a prison setting, or waiting around for the big step-off that comes with a capital case like murder in many states. It is that tension, that thrill of the possibility of getting away with the dastardly deed, putting his wits against the New York police who are on to him, some serious underworld bad guy types and his now ex-wife's father's machinations which drives the rest of the story. Naturally with the trademark Mailer twenty-nine varieties of sexual encounters, some of them rather strange by conventional literary standards then, some off-hand musing about the fate of modern humankind and its views on success, at least in the West, and another choice story line tinged with the existential philosophy and situations that Mailer picked up from the Europeans and made a hallmark of his writing in the 1950s and 1960s. Not Mailer's best of his thirty some works and a novel that caused a firestorm in feminist circles later (and rejoinders by him) but a good read about the tenor of those times. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Dream might be a Nightmare, but its GoodBy Mark Sanchez

I think the reviewers who gave this book one star bring up some really ridiculous points. Especially the woman who says that he "raped" the maid, which is clearly not the case. He may have been aggressive with her, but she certainly did not cry rape. Anyway, I could see someone not enjoying the book because the prose reads kind of like the title - a long, psychedelic dream. In fact, we may not be sure any of the things in the book actually happened, it all may just be a dream. Or at least art of a dream. We are never explicitly told. There is a certain brilliance to the description in this book, his attention to details of the thoughts and feelings in Rojack's mind are beyond vivid. The book is not for everyone, and is confusing at points, but I think it is meant to be. Not confusing in the sense that you don't know what's going on, just confusing in the sense that many of his actions are ambiguous, difficult to see where they are coming from. I'm sure this book was written under the heavy influence of drugs and alcohol in 1964 and 1965. It is significant that it was originally an 8 piece story written for Esquire, but the story does read as a novel, with each piece broken into a chapter. I think this work may have influenced writers such as Hunter S. Thompson, or at least was part of the same movement at the time, because the prose reads like someone on a trip almost. The one thing I would say the story lacks is a real climax, the climax happens at the beginning of the book, and when he meets the father. There is no real climax. The story structure is unusual I suppose. I would have given it 3 stars if not for the magnificent descriptions and portraits Mailer brings to life in the mind of a crazy person. Not for everyone, but something about it was still fascinating.

In this wild battering ram of a novel, which was originally published to vast controversy in 1965, Norman Mailer creates a character who might be a fictional precursor of the philosopher-killer he would later profile in *The Executioner's Song*. As Stephen Rojack, a decorated war hero and former congressman who murders his wife in a fashionable New York City high-rise, runs amok through the city in which he was once a privileged citizen, Mailer peels away the layers of our social norms to reveal a world of pure appetite and relentless cruelty. One part Nietzsche,

one part de Sade, and one part Charlie Parker, *An American Dream* grabs the reader by the throat and refuses to let go.

Praise for *An American Dream* “Perhaps the only serious New York novel since *The Great Gatsby*.”—Joan Didion, *National* “A devil’s encyclopedia of our secret visions and desires . . . the expression of a devastatingly alive and original creative mind.”—*Life* “A work of fierce concentration . . . perfectly, and often brilliantly, realistic [with] a pattern of remarkable imaginative coherence and intensity.”—*Harper’s* “At once violent, educated, and cool . . . This is our history as Hawthorne might have written it.”—*Commentary* Praise for Norman Mailer “[Norman Mailer] loomed over American letters longer and larger than any other writer of his generation.”—*The New York Times* “A writer of the greatest and most reckless talent.”—*The New Yorker* “Mailer is indispensable, an American treasure.”—*The Washington Post* “A devastatingly alive and original creative mind.”—*Life* “Mailer is fierce, courageous, and reckless and nearly everything he writes has sections of headlong brilliance.”—*The New York of Books* “The largest mind and imagination [in modern] American literature . . . Unlike just about every American writer since Henry James, Mailer has managed to grow and become richer in wisdom with each new book.”—*Chicago Tribune* “Mailer is a master of his craft. His language carries you through the story like a leaf on a stream.”—*The Cincinnati Post*

About the Author Born in Long Branch, NJ, in 1923, and raised in Brooklyn, Norman Mailer was one of the most influential writers of the second half of the 20th century and a leading public intellectual for nearly sixty years. He is the author of more than thirty books. *The Castle in the Forest*, his last novel, was his eleventh *New York Times* bestseller. His first novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, has never gone out of print. His 1968 nonfiction narrative, *The Armies of the Night*, won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. He won a second Pulitzer for *The Executioner’s Song* and is the only person to have won Pulitzers in both fiction and nonfiction. Five of his books were nominated for National Book Awards, and he won a lifetime achievement award from the National Book Foundation in 2005. Mr. Mailer died in 2007 in New York City.