



The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing

By Norman Mailer

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“Writing is spooky,” according to Norman Mailer. “There is no routine of an office to keep you going, only the blank page each morning, and you never know where your words are coming from, those divine words.” In *The Spooky Art*, Mailer discusses with signature candor the rewards and trials of the writing life, and recommends the tools to navigate it. Addressing the reader in a conversational tone, he draws on the best of more than fifty years of his own criticism, advice, and detailed observations about the writer’s craft.

Praise for *The Spooky Art*

“*The Spooky Art* shows Mailer’s brave willingness to take on demanding forms and daunting issues. . . . He has been a thoughtful and stylish witness to the best and worst of the American century.”—*The Boston Globe*

“At his best—as artists should be judged—Mailer is indispensable, an American treasure. There is enough of his best in this book for it to be welcomed with gratitude.”—*The Washington Post*

“[*The Spooky Art*] should nourish and inform—as well as entertain—almost any serious reader of the novel.”—*Baltimore Sun*

“The richest book ever written about the writer’s subconscious.”—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Striking . . . entrancingly frank.”—*Entertainment Weekly*

Praise for Norman Mailer

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“A writer of the greatest and most reckless talent.”—*The New Yorker*

“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 Review 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*

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Although there's some original material, most of Mailer's reflections on the writer's craft have been assembled from decades of interviews, essays, lectures and other sources. As such, despite an effective integration in the earliest sections, most of the book has a scattershot feel. Mailer doesn't exactly offer advice, apart from the occasional warning: "writing as a daily physical activity is not agreeable." Instead, in the first half, he teaches by example, providing a self-portrait emphasizing the process of writing some of his earliest novels, including *The Naked and the Dead* and *The Deer Park*. Unfortunately, the closer he gets to the present, the less he has to say; later efforts like *Tough Guys Don't Dance* get little more than a page. Some people will find Mailer's self-assessment grandiose—he compares himself to Picasso repeatedly—but his confidence should hardly surprise anybody at this point. Not even his forceful personality can hold the second half together, though: Tantalizing bits such as a description of his relationship with Kurt Vonnegut as "friendly... but wary," or his insightful reflections on the ways writers might absorb the emotional impact of September 11 without writing about it directly, get buried under meandering ruminations. What he has to say about contemporary literature, like his observation that Jonathan Franzen "writes superbly well sentence for sentence, but yet one is not happy with the achievement," leaves the reader wanting more about books and less, much less, about *Last Tango in Paris*.

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From Library Journal

Mailer celebrates his 80th birthday by talking about the craft of writing.

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From [Booklist](#)

Mailer, a major figure in the pantheon of American letters, now approaches his eightieth birthday, a milestone that prompts him to proffer not another one of his provocative, immensely imaginative novels but, instead, a "collection of literary gleanings, aperçus, fulminations, *pensees*, gripes, insights, regrets and affirmations, a few excuses, [and] several insults." His intended audience is not novel readers per se but novel writers--and not beginners looking for a basic, how-to manual but young novelists "who have already found some vocation to write" and "who wish to improve their skills and their commitment to the subtle difficulties and uncharted mysteries of serious novel-writing itself." These pieces, numbering nearly 40, lead readers on luxurious explorations of such specific and universal topics as writing courses; the problems Mailer encountered in publishing his third novel, *The Deer Park*; finding one's own writing style; journalism vs. fiction; and the pleasures of reading and rereading *Huckleberry Finn*. This book is a goldmine--nothing less than marvelous erudition easily couched in stimulating prose. It is underscored, of course, by Mailer's own persistence at his craft--since, as he recalls, from the age of 17, he had no "larger desire in life than to be a writer." Chances are that all Mailer fans will be interested in perusing these pages, whether or not they are writers, as will anyone who is convinced a lifelong commitment to writing is for them. *Brad Hooper*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dawne Feliciano:

Book is to be different for every grade. Book for children till adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for people. The book *The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing* had been making you to know about other know-how and of course you can take more information. It doesn't matter what advantages for you. The publication *The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing* is not only giving you far more new information but also to be your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your own spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship with the book *The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing*. You never feel lose out for everything should you read some books.

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