



Complete Works of Nathanael West (Wordsworth Classics)

Nathanael West

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With an Introduction and Notes by Henry Claridge, Senior Lecturer, School of English, University of Kent at Canterbury.

The four novels gathered here constitute the complete longer works of one the most brilliant and original American writers. West's vision of American modernity is terrifyingly comical and diagnoses the tawdriness and meretriciousness of much of American popular culture. His greatest work, *Miss Lonelyhearts*, which begins this collection, is unique in modern literature. It describes New York in the early years of the Great Depression through the point of view of an 'agony aunt' who corresponds with his suffering readers in the guise of Miss Lonelyhearts: '(Are you in trouble? – Do you need advice?)'. *A Cool Million* is, as its subtitle suggests, the 'dismantling' of a myth, here a caustic satire of the 'rags to riches' story. West's final novel, *The Day of the Locust*, is a comic, yet apocalyptic account of the fantasies of 1930s Hollywood. This volume concludes with West's parodic and surreal first venture into fiction, *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*. Henry Claridge's introduction to this new edition of West's fictional writings contextualises his work in the United States of the Great Depression, in his evocation of 1930s Hollywood (where he worked as a writer of screenplays), and in the larger context of his Eastern European Jewish background, and, particularly, his reading of Dostoyevsky. The text comes with extensive annotations, a note on the textual history of West's writings, and a guide to further reading for both the student and the general reader.

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