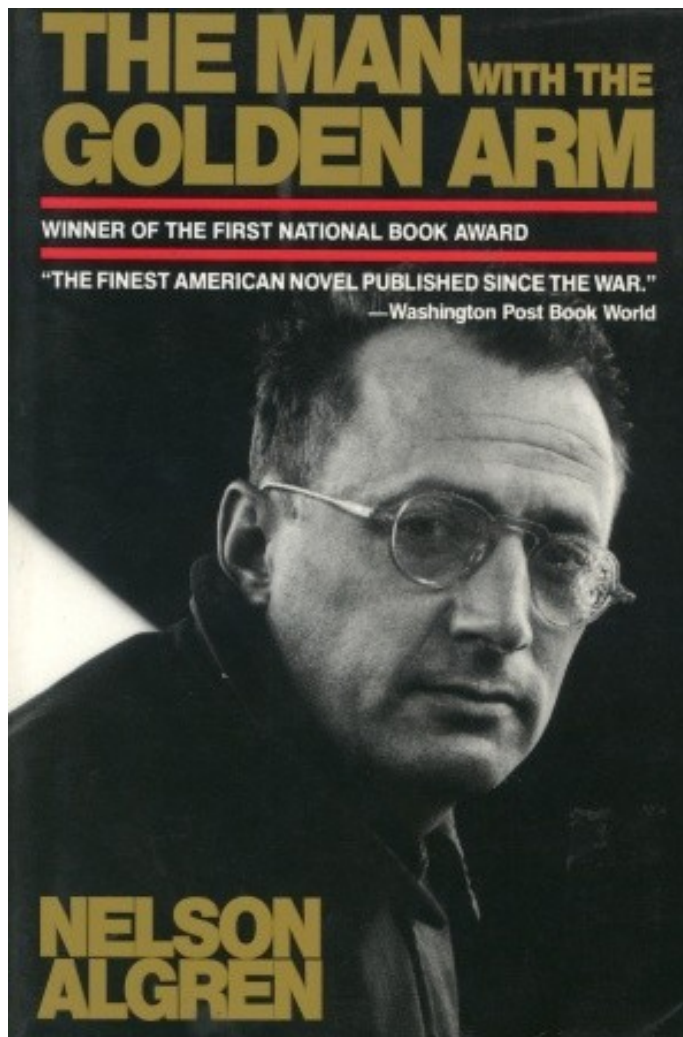


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**Nelson Algren**

**The Man with the Golden Arm**



Title: The Man with the Golden Arm

Author: Nelson Algren

Format: Paperback

Language: English

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## Description

A novel of rare genius, *The Man with the Golden Arm* describes the dissolution of a card-dealing WWII veteran named Frankie Machine, caught in the act of slowly cutting his own heart into wafer-thin slices. For Frankie, a murder committed may be the least of his problems. The literary critic Malcolm Cowley called *The Man with the Golden Arm* "Algren's defense of the individual," while Carl Sandburg wrote of its "strange midnight dignity." A literary tour de force, here is a novel unlike any other, one in which drug addiction, poverty, and human failure somehow suggest a defense of human dignity and a reason for hope.

## Insightful reviews

Carol: I grew up in Chicago in the neighborhood Algren writes about and at the same time he was writing about it ... so from the beginning I was at odds with this book. This isn't the neighborhood that I grew up in! But ... after finishing the book and thinking about some of my Polish relatives who either owned taverns or spent a lot of time in taverns I have to reluctantly admit that Algren is portraying a part of Chicago that I was simply too young to know about.

Some reviewers have referred to this neighborhood as a slum. Well, this neighborhood at that time was most definitely not a slum. It was a blue-collar, Polish and Jewish working class neighborhood. Many of the buildings in this Wicker Park neighborhood were divided into rental apartments. These three-story buildings often had two apartments per floor and were protected by rent controls for a number of years after World War II. The streets were clean and many of the kids walked to Catholic schools. Milwaukee Avenue, often referred to as Polish Broadway, was a main shopping area with lots of nice stores. The store he calls Niebolts was Wiebolts department store and Golds was Goldblatts department store. Both are now long gone but served the working class very well.

The kind of neighborhood taverns where people sit around and play cards, drink, and maybe even do dope can still be found in virtually any little as well as big town today. If you look for it you will find it. Algren, at the time had little money and this was an inexpensive neighborhood to live in. He seems to have been naturally attracted to this level of society. He liked to drink and gamble and he liked to write about people who for whatever reason were stuck in a world they were not likely to ever escape from. Algren portrays them as they really were -- mostly not very nice. But, they were fellow human beings and as such they were worthy of having their story told as well.

His writing style is lyrical and poetic.....deliberately quite a contrast to the folks he is writing about. This book was hard to get through because these people are so unappealing, but I'm really glad I made the effort. I think he was rightly given the first National Book Award for this novel. In a cruel joke that I'm sure Algren appreciated he never made a penny off the movie version of his book!

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Shai: Algren's story takes place in the dark underworld of sub-class addicts: con artists, thieves, prostitutes, alcoholics, drug addicts, people whose voices are never heard, dehumanized, non-existent, yet trudging somewhere in our backyard of Chicago. Ironic how in the world of high rolling finance, these same addicts are all too real and commonplace.

I read Algren years ago, yet *Man With the Golden Arm* remains on the bookshelf of my favorite works of fiction. His characters were all too real, a voice (although extreme) lost from society, and yet with an ordinariness that somehow, deep down, there's a uncanny sense that every person is just one step away, albeit a giant one, from some form of madness. Even well respected neighbors or colleagues at work, intelligent and successful, are capable of fabricating a world built on deceit, easily influencing others into. This is an addiction and an ordinary way of acting upon others and one's world. It may sound quite an extreme thought, but there's a need to be greater than just ordinary. Too many examples of high class financiers, whose world of deceit and thievery, are all too commonplace, destroying lives of ordinary people, while Algren's underclass thieves and addicts are petty and insignificant in the grand scheme of our lives. Yet whose voice is made real?

Algren has a special talent (rather had) of breathing life into characters otherwise dead in society. And he does so with such ease and spontaneity, never forced, expressing all the human traits of grandeur, suffering, and everything in between. Amazing how the pen can evoke compassion for characters otherwise discarded into the wasteland of sub human sewerage.

Sean: A mind-blowing book, set in the tenements and bars of the down-and-out in pre-WWII Chicago. The main character a junkie card-dealer whose arm is golden because of his steady dealing skills and the lines of scars. An amazing mixture of idiomatic language capturing the thoughts, ticks, and dreams of the homeless, alcoholics, cripples, bar owners and prostitutes and a pristine, lyrical narrative voice- you are both in the world and looking in into its tragedy. Is this book Christian in its negative utopia?-- redemption through utter despair, failure, and heart-wrenching betrayals-- or is it a negative image of a communist ideal?

Bill Chamberlain: I used to be wary of this one through *The Irregular Character* via *Literature*, which excerpted this for his or her habit chapter. The excerpt was once very haunting, in its portrayal of the addict's utter hand over and the pusher's sadistic thrill. I used to be mildly disappointed, as the excerpt was once the main riveting part. Still, though, Algren can definitely position the phrases together. There additionally seems loads of soul during this book. There's a part of me which a little frowns on "junkie narratives". But, in fairness, Algren's paintings predated just about all of them, and is more advantageous in its craft.

Drew: Hear up, these of you who enjoyed challenging *Rain Falling*. Carpenter's good, yet so far as I will be able to inform from simply interpreting one publication from every one of them, Woodworker owes with regards to every little thing he is bought to Algren. The *Man With the Golden Arm* follows Frankie Machine, morphine-addict and someday card-dealer, on a gradual direction of dissolution--my favourite form of path. It is just like endless *Jest* in its sober and sobering

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examine of habit and the cycle of poverty, and i've a difficult time believing Sergeant McGantic wasn't the direct notion for Wallace's smiley-faced Sergeant-at-Arms. Not that that is the merely angle, of course. Frankie falls in with a tender punk known as Sparrow, they turn into friends, and a homicide factors any variety of difficulties among them, riding the strain of the second one half the story. This was once it seems that the most thrust of the entire e-book till a person informed Algren he wanted one other angle, so he further within the morphine stuff later. that is shocking; I never, ever may have guessed that. Algren weaves it in so seamlessly that it sort of feels love it was once the impetus for the e-book all along. And the style! it would be a bit lyrical for the tastes of some, however the effortlessness of it negates any distaste i'll have had for the extra red passages. and there is a nice distinction among the grittiness of the discussion and the grace of the narration. here is a pattern quote from one of the extra lyrical: "A roach had leaped, or fallen, from the ceiling into the water bucket, the place a soggy slice of pumpnickel and a sodden hunk of sausage now rotated slowly, approximately and about, even supposing there has been no current. stomach upward, the roach's legs plied the alien air, making an attempt dreamily to regain a foothold; whereas Frankie, leaning dreamily on one elbow, knew simply how that felt." a bit facile, maybe; we already most likely can have guessed that Frankie felt that way. however the phraseology is so stable as to cancel that out after which some. Or this: "The marks of debauchery have been seamed throughout his face like a protracted disease." Compare that with discussion that is firmly colloquial and turns out very plausible so far as i will be able to inform (this, through the way, from an previous Polish cuckold, speaking to his spouse and her lover): "Work all day, seven days, no days off, purchase nize t'ings via howz, pay grocernia, pay buczernia, pay mens i do not even be aware of what is for, comes time to sleep everyt'ing all paid 'n nize fresh howz so ever'body sleep--who comes by way of howz from whisky tavern? Mrs. No-good with dronk pocket-picker! might be in mattress through hoosband in its place on head 'n makes funny: 'Is Christmas, now we struggle all night!' Is somethin' received to happen, is all." That's far more doctored, of course, than the voices of the other, much less heavily-accented characters. yet concerning the widespread italics: I take note taking factor with Nicola Barker's over the top use of related in Darkmans, yet this can be different. might be that is simply because i feel modern day Brits do not position lots of emphasis on person phrases inside of a sentence, yet I greatly do think that Chicagoans from the 1940's did. And Algren alternatives up on it, elucidating the cadences of that speech and doing an exceptional task of bringing me correct there. I particularly do not know what else to claim approximately this, simply because again, i believe like i have misplaced the ability to intelligently evaluation a book, perhaps simply because i haven't got entire afternoons to dedicate to it like I used to, yet overall, the standard of the prose and the timelessness and profoundness of the tale have me confident that Algren is heavily underread and underrated."

Jennifer: i cannot think i have eliminate examining Algren for therefore long. I had no notion what a super author he was. to not mention, as a born and raised Chicagoan, third new release Pole, and having lived in Ukrainian Village for a spell, i've got a different appreciation for his descriptions of put up WWII Chicago and his masterful use of the vernacular. a dead ringer for Piggy-O's bleeding gums turning the foam of his beer red is one i cannot erase from my brain and that i love the quote approximately "the great, mystery and distinctive American guilt of possessing nothing, not anything in any respect within the one land the place possession and advantage are one." Sparrow Saltskin is for sure probably the most memorable characters ever written, and the ever present rumbling of the "el" evokes such a lot of ghosts of assorted

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residences I lived in as a toddler and as an grownup the place the teach supplied the soundtrack for my life. This ebook is achingly sad, humorous and beautiful. a super tribute to the entire untold tales and unsung lives from my grandparents' iteration and on.

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