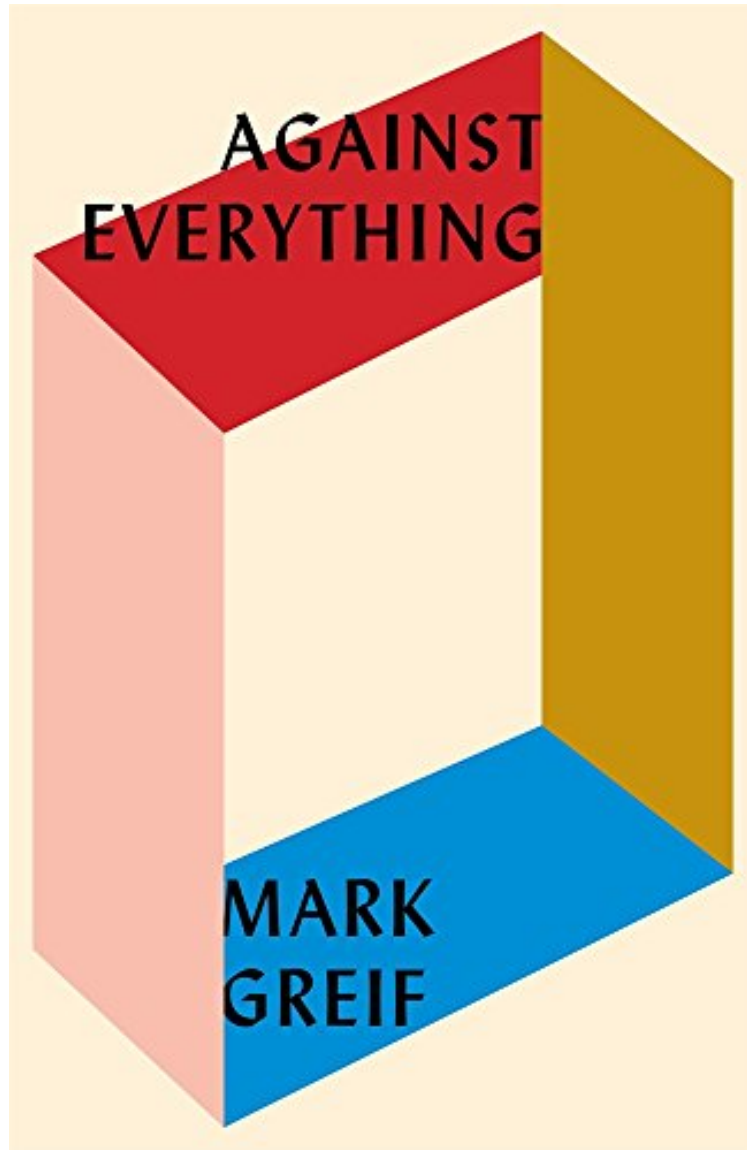


(Read and download) Against Everything: On Dishonest Times

Against Everything: On Dishonest Times

Mark Greif

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Mark Greif : Against Everything: On Dishonest Times before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Against Everything: On Dishonest Times:

Against Everything is a thought-provoking study and essential guide to the vicissitudes of everyday life under twenty-first-century capitalism. Mark Greif is one of the most exciting writers of his generation. In this invigorating

collection, he challenges us to rethink the ordinary world and take life seriously - in short, to stay honest in dishonest times. In a series of coruscating set pieces he asks why we put ourselves through the pains of exercise, what our concerns about diet or sex does for our fundamental worth, what political identity the hipster might possess, and what happens to us when we listen to Radiohead or hip-hop. Counter-intuitive and revelatory in his insights, Greif revels in the contradictions arising between our desires and the excuses we make to console ourselves. His work demands we have the courage to be 'against everything', to change our vantage on everyday life, find it wanting and demand something better.

"Greif's book proposes the impossible thing, a phenomenology of the present-at a moment in which the present is slipping by so fast that anything we dare call that is already signed, sealed and delivered to the past. Hip hop, food shows, current events like war and the police, hipsters, exercises, the youth culture-this list omits the deliberate and attractive heterogeneity of Greif's notes on the everyday, his attempt to capture its random contents before they are incorporated into some official academic field or trivialized into familiar themes and slogans by an omnivorous public sphere. It isn't a novel, it isn't a journal either (which you could 'dip into'), it's probably not a blog, it is deliberately unfinished (in the sense of 'to be continued,' but maybe by all or each of us); but it is certainly wonderful reading which cuts into the present before the latter disappears." - Fredric Jameson "Mark Greif is the best essayist of my generation. No one is more modern or more classical - or more stylish. This has its alarming effects. When you read *Against Everything*, you will vow to change your life." - Adam Thirlwell "Like James Wood or Susan Sontag, George Orwell or Randall Jarrell, Greif defines our age yet writes with such wit and grace, he'll last forever. A must-read collection by one of our preeminent thinkers." - Mary Karr "I love Mark Greif. No living essayist effects the destruction of everything other people hold dear with a lighter or more elegant touch. An unmitigated delight." - Elif Batuman, author of *The Possessed* "Mark Greif writes a contrarian, skeptical prose that is at the same time never cynical: it opens out on to beauty and the possibility of change." - Zadie Smith "The ideas and images I discover in Mark Greif's essays stay with me for years, and become part of the way I experience and understand the world. I couldn't be happier that this book is being published so I can read them all over again." - Sheila Heti "In *Against Everything*, Mark Greif makes a case for so much: for curiosity and precision, for second glances, for reconsidering, for paying attention to the world and not being satisfied by what it's become, or ever been. Greif is interested in blame and desire and how we coax and wrench meaning from our lives. He's interested in how we might remain alive to what matters while staying attuned-also-to the truth of mattering itself as something fluid, its contours up for grabs. His unexpected turns of thought come with such persuasive acuity they sound like common sense. I found the crackle of rigor in these essays, but also so much tenderness and awe." - Leslie Jamison "Embodies a return to the pleasures of critical discourse at its most cerebral and personable. Greif brings to mind a host of critics from William Hazlitt to Lionel Trilling, but most of all he suggests it is possible to write about culture with a reverence for language and a passion for what has come before. I would read anything he writes, anywhere." - New York Times Book "Greif's essays aren't really 'against; and oppositional. Instead, they work through the experience of doing to find something more complex and luminous." - Robert Eaglestone, Times Higher Education "His generation's finest essayist...a powerful injunction to look, listen and reflect, our surest means of defiance against the encroaching dimness." Richard Godwin, Evening Standard "Greif is a critic of the modern American condition...a dazzling intellectual, and like all the best philosophers, he thinks we all can and should live our lives like philosophers. To read *Against Everything* is a good start on that path." - Christian Lorentzen, NY1 "Greif, who was not yet 30 when he helped launch n+1, understands his aspiration perfectly well; his work is committed to mining the ephemeral resources of precocity in order to preserve them against the corrosions of adult cynicism...Greif's point is that certain ideas may be no less valid because only a child would take them seriously. He wants adulthood, but a better adulthood, one in which the concepts of unfeasibility and impracticality have been unlearned." - Timothy Aubry, Los Angeles of Books "The title *Against Everything* announces a revision of Susan Sontag's project, or a completion of it. Sontag's "Against Interpretation" concluded, in 1966, that we ought to replace our hermeneutic drive with an erotics of art. Greif sees eros, however, as just one of the instinctive drives whose possibilities for pleasure and rebellion have been captured by the powerful, packaged by the inventive, and sold back to us not only with our consent but with our gratitude. Greif's sentences themselves can sound, at times, like Sontag's, especially in his admonitory mode, but they can also echo with the placid alienation of Joan Didion, or the commonsensical modesty of Richard Rorty." - Gideon Lewis-Kraus, Bookworm "The truth is that Greif, as we come to know him in these essays, is a deeply hopeful thinker, full of visions of a better, even perfect, world. His disciplined, thoughtful critiques of all manner of cultural phenomena-from YouTube videos to the mania for exercise-rest on an intuition that the world we have been given is not good enough...To argue this point with *Against Everything* is not to dismiss Greif's achievement, but the reverse. An intellectual's job is to provoke thought and argument, and this Greif does as well as anyone writing today." - Adam Kirsch, Tablet "I was impressed above all by the resourcefulness of his prose, the concentrated intelligence of the exercise...By being so alertly of his time, Greif becomes the vehicle for demonstrating just how out of joint the times really are." - Stefan Collini, London of Books "Smart, profound" - Brian Dillon, 4Columns "Engaging in its honesty

and earnestness and his critical evaluation of the social and cultural impact of consumer capitalism is clearly worth welcoming." - Rhian E Jones, Morning Star "It makes you think ... Greif thinks that a whole lot will have to change before real choice is possible. Until then, it's not enough to be against the box-office and the real-estate section and the best-seller list. Until then, we have to be against ... everything." - Louis Menand, New Yorker "It is difficult to do justice to the subtlety and wit of Greif's arguments." Times Literary Supplement "Matches brilliant critique with improbable optimism. His essays risk embarrassment to analyse the irritations of urban life - hipsters, foodies, gym-goers - so that we might see these characters in ourselves, and treat them with, if not more kindness, more interest." - Kate Wormsley, Spectator [Books of the Year] "Mark Greif's essay on the Kafkaesque nature of the modern gym, Against Exercise, is already a classic; and his new book, Against Everything (Verso), tells us it's not just the gym, it's also our music, our culture, our political life - everything about us, in fact - that is right out of Kafka." - Aravind Adiga, Guardian [Books of the Year] "Greif turns the quotidian world over like a miniature globe in his hand ... There is, in truth, nothing that Greif writes that doesn't have a kernel of interest at its core ... intriguing ... embodies a return to the pleasures of critical discourse at its most cerebral and personable. Greif brings to mind a host of critics from William Hazlitt to Lionel Trilling, but most of all he suggests it is possible to write about the culture with a reverence for language and a passion for what has come before. I would read anything he writes, anywhere." - Daphne Merkin, The New York Times Book "Isn't it elitist to talk about punk as if it were a text? To juxtapose Rousseau with a dating show? To say an intense workout is reminiscent of Kafka? ... Against Everything, a new essay collection by Mark Greif ... approaches populist topics like exercise, food, and pop culture from a decidedly not-populist perspective in order to deconstruct them, see how they work, and understand what they really mean to us. While the collection's title is delightfully antagonistic...the contents are not necessarily so. Greif's point is not to tell you how to live, but to encourage you to really think about how you're living." - Lauren Oyler, VICE "Mark Greif's Against Everything-as its title suggests-matches brilliant critique with improbable optimism. His essays risk embarrassment to analyse the irritations of urban life-hipsters, foodies, gym-goers-so that we might see these characters in ourselves, and treat them with, if not more kindness, more interest." - Kate Womersley, The Spectator (UK) Best Books of the Year "Susan Sontag was against interpretation. Laura Kipnis was against love. Seven were against Thebes. Mark Greif is against everything...Against Everything is really a book on a single subject: contemporary life, more specifically, the kind of life that someone who would buy such a book, or read a column about such a book-in short, yourself-might right now be living. It's meant to be consumed from beginning to end. It makes you think...Greif's argument-and this is what separates him from the usual solver of the times-is that what's killing us is deeply embedded in our social and economic system. It's not the gym that's the problem. It's the way we live now, which is making the gym seem like a solution to something. Greif thinks that a whole lot will have to change before real choice is possible. Until then, it's not enough to be against the box-office and the real-estate section and the best-seller list. Until then, we have to be against ... everything." - Louis Menad, New Yorker "Against everything, if it was corrupt, dubious, enervating, untrue to us, false to happiness," writes n+1 co-founder Mark Greif...Greif isn't a doomsayer, but a smart man, soused in decency and fellow feeling. He would like to know the meaning of life...Civil disobedience is a lived way to counter plutocracy. Consider Occupy Wall Street, an action in which Greif participated. "Fight the Power." That's to live." - Peter Lewis, San Francisco Chronicle "Dark, wonderful essays on contemporary derangement ... academically current but free of jargon; discontented but free of resignation; gladiatorial but free of truculence; sincere but free of gentility... [T]o a reader of my generation, [they] have taken on the finish of classics." - Gideon Lewis-Kraus, Bookworm "These smart and bracingly negative essays will break you out of your Facebook-induced stupor." - Esquire "[M]aybe you've missed cofounder Mark Greif's years of essayistic genius for [n+1]. This book is a one stop shop to fix that. In thoughtful, deeply informed, nuanced works of criticism, Greif makes the case "Against Exercise," questions "What Was the Hipster?" and delves into "Octomom and the Market in Babies." ... [F]ans of in-depth cultural criticism will have the perfect companion in this compendium." - Claire Fallon, Huffington Post "These essays carve out a space of silence ... a void levered open for new knowledge to rush in and fill... Against Everything is the work of a gadfly essayist, not a windbag: in it, Greif is nasty and fun and also takes us to new and spacious places." - Joseph Livingstone, The Awl "Greif has outdone himself (and this is saying something, because his work has consistently blown us away) with this collection of critical essays ... Everything is brilliantly disseminated, clearly argued, and will leave you wanting to host (or at least attend) dinner parties where you can show off your newfound knowledge." - Kristin Iversen, Nylon "Mark Greif's essays can cut, they can connect, and they can soar. Greif inhabits the center of all his subjects, from Nietzsche to Nas, but there is no display or cynicism here, only a powerful mind thinking hard about our culture and our politics. 'The instant for philosophy is always now,' he writes, because it can take forever. Now is Mark Greif's time." - Sean Wilentz "Mark Greif is one of the most consistently interesting American writers of the last decade, and this book proves it. I read him for the pleasure of never knowing where his brain's going next. Here's the first sentence of his essay on cops: 'A surprise of being around police is how much they touch you.' That's the kind of weird and accurate observation I want from an essayist. Get down with a writer who's dogged in his attempt to understand us better, and wise in knowing it's hopeless." - John Jeremiah Sullivan "Politically engaged, coolly stylish and often drily funny" - GuardianAbout the AuthorMark Greif is a founder and editor of the

journal n+1. He lives and works in New York, where he is Associate Professor of literary studies at the New School. His criticism and journalism have appeared in publications including the London of Books, Guardian, TLS, and New Statesman. He is the author of the hugely acclaimed *The Age of the Crisis of Man*.