

The Anthologist Nicholson Baker

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Nicholson Baker Interview *The Anthologist Nicholson Baker*

Nicholson Baker may well be the most unpredictable writer working ... It is thus not at all surprising that Baker's new novel, *The Anthologist*, is about a mid-list poet called Paul Chowder who is too.

While writing an introduction to a new poetry anthology, Paul Chowder struggles with the end of a relationship, his own stunted career, and the suffering of poets as varied as Tennyson and Roethke.

Paul Chowder is trying to write the introduction to a new anthology of rhyming verse, but he's having a hard time getting started. The result of his fitful struggles is *The Anthologist*, Nicholson Baker's brilliantly funny and exquisite love story about poetry. * * * A New York Times Notable Book, 2009 Favorite Fiction of 2009—Los Angeles Times Best Books of 2009—The Christian Science Monitor Best of 2009—Slate.com "A Year's Reading" Favorites,

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2009–The New Yorker Best Books of 2009–Seattle Times

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Paul Chowder is a poet, but he's fallen out of love with writing poems. He hasn't fallen out of love with his ex-girlfriend Roz, though. In fact he misses her desperately. As he struggles to come to terms with Roz's new relationship with a doctor, Paul turns to his acoustic guitar for comfort and inspiration, and fills his days writing protest songs, going to Quaker meetings, struggling through Planet Fitness workouts, wondering if he could become a techno DJ, and experimenting with becoming a cigar smoker. Written in Baker's beautifully unconventional prose, and scored with musical influences from Debussy to Tracy Chapman to Paul himself, *Travelling Sprinkler* is an enchanting, hilarious, and deeply necessary novel. 'I think the job of the novelist is to write about interesting things, including things that might not seem all that interesting at first glance, and to offer evidence that life is worth living' Nicholson Baker

A National Book Critics Circle Award-winner elevates the ordinary events that occur to a man on his lunch hour into “a constant delight” of a novel (*The Boston Globe*). In this startling, witty, and inexhaustibly inventive novel, New York Times–bestselling author Nicholson Baker uses a one-story escalator ride as the occasion for a dazzling reappraisal of everyday objects and rituals. From the humble milk carton to the act of tying one's shoes, *The Mezzanine* at once defamiliarizes the familiar world and endows it with loopy and euphoric poetry. Baker's accounts of the ordinary become extraordinary through his sharp storytelling and his unconventional, conversational style. At first glance, *The Mezzanine* appears to be a book about nothing. In reality, it is a brilliant celebration of things, simultaneously demonstrating the value of reflection and the importance of everyday human experiences. “A very funny book . . . Its 135 pages probably contain more insight into life as we live it today than anything currently on the best-seller list.” —*The New York Times* “Captures the spirit of American corporate life and invests it with a passion and sympathy that is entirely unexpected.” —*The Seattle Times* “Among the year's best.” —*The Boston Globe* “Baker writes with appealing charm . . . [He] clowns and shows off . . . rambles and pounces hard; he says acute things, extravagant things, terribly funny things.” —*Los Angeles Times Book Review* “Wonderfully readable, in fact gripping, with surprising bursts of recognition, humor and wonder.” —*The Washington Post Book World*

Our supreme fabulist of the ordinary now turns his attention on a 9-year-old American girl and produces a novel as enchantingly idiosyncratic as any he has written. Nory Winslow wants to be a dentist or a designer of pop-up books. She likes telling stories and inventing dolls. She has nightmares about teeth, which may explain her career choice. She is going to school in England, where she is mocked for her accent and her friendship with an unpopular girl, and she has made it through the year without crying. Nicholson Baker follows Nory as she interacts with her parents and peers, thinks about God and death-watch beetles, and dreams of cows with pointed teeth. In this precocious child he gives us a heroine as canny and as whimsical as Lewis Carroll's Alice and evokes childhood in all its luminous weirdness.

From a New York Times–bestselling and National Book Critics Award–winning author comes a “small masterpiece” of fatherhood, childhood, and bottle-

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feeding (Publishers Weekly). In a novel Entertainment Weekly called “intensely funny and moving,” Nicholson Baker takes the reader on an intellectual odyssey over the course of the twenty minutes it takes a new father to give his baby daughter her bottle. Through inspired moments of mental flight, Mike’s thoughts on his newfound parenthood lead him back to his own childhood and to reflections on the objects of his youth. From glass peanut butter jars to French horns, from typography to courtship, Baker reveals “some of the tenderest, most delicate interaction between husband and wife, adult and infant, in modern fiction” (Los Angeles Times). “Sparkling . . . frequently hilarious . . . This is a big novel unfolding . . . so subtly that one is scarcely aware of its magnitude until the last page.” —The Boston Globe “A delightful book . . . Every page provokes the shock, or at least the smile, of recognition.” —The Washington Post “A major cosmic drama . . . It is a delightful book . . . a real charmer, a breath of fresh air, a show-stopping coloratura aria made of the quirks of memory and the quiddities of daily life.” —The Sacramento Union “[A] small masterpiece by an extraordinarily gifted . . . writer.” —Publishers Weekly

TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME, BOTH OF NICHOLSON BAKER’S BRILLIANT NOVELS FEATURING BELOVED HERO AND POET PAUL CHOWDER A New York Times notable book and a national bestseller, Nicholson Baker’s The Anthologist introduces his quirkiest and most unforgettable protagonist yet, the “erudite, unpretentious, and often hilarious” (The New Yorker) Paul Chowder. Chowder really needs to write an introduction to his new anthology of verse, Only Rhyme—it’s the first work his editor has sent him in months—but he’s having a hard time getting started. Not only is his career floundering, but his girlfriend, Roz, just moved out. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Chowder can’t keep his mind from drifting to the sufferings of the great poets, from Tennyson and Yeats to Roethke, Merwin, to every poet who’s been published in The New Yorker. As he ponders the strange power and musicality of language, and adjusts to his newly single life, Chowder’s introduction slowly but surely begins to take shape. A wholly entertaining and beguiling love story, and the first novel in the chronicles of Paul Chowder—which is followed by Traveling Sprinkler in this same volume—The Anthologist is “a loving and superbly witty homage to poetry and to life” (The Boston Globe).

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The ostensible purpose of a library is to preserve the printed word. But for fifty years our country’s libraries—including the Library of Congress—have been doing just the opposite, destroying hundreds of thousands of historic newspapers and replacing them with microfilm copies that are difficult to read, lack all the color and quality of the original paper and illustrations, and deteriorate with age. With meticulous detective work and Baker’s well-known explanatory power, Double Fold reveals a secret history of microfilm lobbyists, former CIA agents, and warehouses where priceless archives are destroyed with a

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machine called a guillotine. Baker argues passionately for preservation, even cashing in his own retirement account to save one important archive—all twenty tons of it. Written the brilliant narrative style that Nicholson Baker fans have come to expect, *Double Fold* is a persuasive and often devastating book that may turn out to be *The Jungle* of the American library system.

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