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## Mark Adams

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### About this Person

**Born:** 1967 in Oak Park, Illinois, United States  
**Nationality:** American  
**Occupation:** Writer  
Updated: Feb. 26, 2016

### PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Born 1967, in Oak Park, IL; married; children: three. **E-mail:** mmiantlantis@gmail.com.

### CAREER:

Writer and editor.

### WORKS:

### WRITINGS:

- *Mr. America: How Muscular Millionaire Bernarr Macfadden Transformed the Nation through Sex, Salad, and the Ultimate Starvation Diet*, Harper (New York, NY), 2009.
- *Turn Right at Machu Picchu: Rediscovering the Lost City One Step at a Time*, Dutton (New York, NY), 2011.
- *Meet Me in Atlantis: My Obsessive Quest to Find the Sunken City*, Dutton (New York, NY), 2015.

Author of column "It Happened Last Week" for *New York*. Contributor to *New York*, *Rolling Stone*, *Men's Journal*, *GQ*, *New York Times*, *Runners World*, *Outside*, and *Fortune*; contributing editor to *National Geographic Adventure*.

### MEDIA ADAPTATIONS:

*Mr. America: How Muscular Millionaire Bernarr Macfadden Transformed the Nation through Sex, Salad, and the Ultimate Starvation Diet* has been optioned for film by Meredith Vieira Productions.

### Sidelights

Mark Adams is an American writer and editor. Born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1967, he contributes articles to a range of periodicals, including *GQ*, *Outside*, and *Fortune*. Adams serves as a contributing editor for *National Geographic Adventure* and writes the "It Happened Last Week" column in *New York*.

Adams published his first book, *Mr. America: How Muscular Millionaire Bernarr Macfadden Transformed the Nation through Sex, Salad, and the Ultimate Starvation Diet*, in 2009. The biography covers the life of American fitness guru and tabloid entrepreneur Bernarr Macfadden and the odd routines that he employed and promoted throughout his life.

A contributor to *Kirkus Reviews* observed that "Adams paints Macfadden as a bizarre, oversized figure" and described the book as "a funny, informative history of a true American eccentric and the national preoccupation with health and fitness." Josh Rottenberg,

writing in *Entertainment Weekly*, said that Macfadden's story proves that America's obsession with "fad diets and get-fit-quick schemes has deep, and deeply weird, roots." *Booklist* contributor Mike Tribby concluded his review by stating: "Bravo to Adams for enabling the rediscovery of this phenomenal American." A contributor to *Publishers Weekly* remarked that the author "carefully delineates how Macfadden's growing passion for publishing turned his various magazines into" a multimillion-dollar empire. The same contributor described the book as an "entertaining, briskly written biography."

Brian Doherty, writing in *Reason*, observed that the subject of this biography "comes across as one of the 20th century's most driven and fascinating kooks." A contributor to the *New York Times Book Review* commented that Adams puts Macfadden's life in historical perspective and "tells the story with journalistic remove, resisting much commentary, even as the reader is busy filling the margins with exclamation points." Tim Delaney called the book "highly recommended" in his review for *Library Journal*, writing that the author's "writing style and the fascinating life of Macfadden make this book hard to put down." Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, David Davis remarked: "The roller coaster that was Macfadden's life sometimes threatens to overwhelm Adams' narrative. The rollicking details pile up, so much so that this reader lost track of Macfadden's wives and lovers, and Adams offers minimal analysis of the junk-science treatments Macfadden advocated. Those criticisms aside, *Mr. America* is an entertaining, enlightening read that, in expanding on Robert Ernst's 1991 academic-press biography, gives Macfadden his overdue legacy."

Louis Bayard stated in the *Washington Post Book World*: "Delightful as it is, *Mr. America* may actually be the rare biography--very well, the only biography within the past two decades--that runs too short. I found myself wanting a deeper exploration of the homoeroticism that inflects so many issues of *Physical Culture*, as well as a richer take on our hero's politics." Writing in Florida's *St. Petersburg Times*, Richard Horan commented that the book "is a must read for those interested in health and fitness. Alas, even with the impressive list of names dropped and the accomplishments sedulously quantified, *Mr. America* fails to shed even a glimmer of light on its subject's interior landscape." A contributor to the *Interesting Pile* blog thought that the biography "can sometimes read like a dry business book" but is nonetheless "a thorough look at a forgotten man." Reviewing the book in the *Wall Street Journal*, Geoffrey Norman wrote: "It is a remarkable story, and Mr. Adams tells it with the kind of awe and occasional amusement that it deserves. He writes with an easy grace and has plainly gone to great lengths to research his quirky, fascinating subject. He even goes the extra mile and tries some of Macfadden's early diet and exercise regimens, including fasting, to see if they work."

In Adams's book *Turn Right at Machu Picchu: Rediscovering the Lost City One Step at a Time*, he not only provides historical background information on the Incas and on Hiram Bingham's expeditions of Peru, he also retraces Bingham's steps for himself and chronicles his journey. The combination of Adams's extensive research and the notes from his trip were compiled to make the book.

Reviewing the work in *Washington Post Book World*, contributor Jonathan Yardley noted that "Adams makes his way to a number of extraordinary places, all of them spectacular but pale by comparison with Machu Picchu. He has a few adventures and a scare or two, and gets a considerably deeper immersion in Peruvian life and culture than he'd previously been exposed to in Lima." A contributor to *Blogcritics* remarked: "Being that the first hand research material that is available for the Inca Empire has been chopped and diced by the emperors to glorify themselves, Adams does an excellent job pulling different resources to conjure up the beginnings of the Spanish conquest of the continent." Swapna Krishna, author of the website *S. Krishna's Book Reviews*, said: "*Turn Right at Machu Picchu* is a fascinating look at Incan history and culture, and the way they intertwine with those of Peru. This is a must-read for anyone interested in Incan history, armchair travelers, and those passionate about archaeology."

Adams offers another mix of research and travelogue with *Meet Me in Atlantis: My Obsessive Quest to Find the Sunken City*. In it, the author reflects on the lost city of Atlantis and early reports about it by Plato. According to Adams, the city could have been an island off Greece, Spain, Malta, or Morocco. Adams travels to each location, and he also profiles the work of other researchers, historians, and explorers who have attempted to find Atlantis. The author even discusses the possibility of Atlantis as a metaphor, conceding that it may never have existed in the first place.

Comparing the book to its predecessor in *Booklist*, Gilbert Taylor remarked: "Writing the same jaunty style as in *Turn Right at Machu Picchu* ... Adams merrily entertains the lost-cities audience." John Dockall, writing in *Library Journal*, observed that "Adams's excellent examination frames much of Atlantis research on an intimate level." A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer lauded Adams for "transforming an academic topic into a work of travelogue, investigative journalism, and serious philosophical examination," while Lev Bratishenko in *Macleans* declared: "Adams's ripping tale is part travelogue and part transcript, history happy-hour stuff. It's pulpy and fast-paced with chapters that end in cliffhangers--definitely something you risk reading in one sitting."

Adams once told *CA*: "I sort of fell into [writing]. I was working toward a Ph.D. in English literature and realized that if I continued down that path I would never write anything a) funny, or b) intended to be read by more than twenty-five people. That really didn't seem to play to my strengths.

"I hope people will be so entertained that they don't realize that they're reading something that contains a lot of research."

FURTHER READINGS:

## FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

## PERIODICALS

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- *Entertainment Weekly*, March 20, 2009, Josh Rottenberg, review of *Mr. America*, p. 69.

- *Kirkus Reviews*, February 1, 2009, review of *Mr. America*; December 15, 2014, review of *Meet Me in Atlantis*.
- *Library Journal*, February 15, 2009, Tim Delaney, review of *Mr. America*, p. 112; February 1, 2015, John Dockall, review of *Meet Me in Atlantis*, p. 93.
- *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2009, David Davis, review of *Mr. America*.
- *Macleans*, March 9, 2015, Lev Bratishenko, review of *Meet Me in Atlantis*, p. 54.
- *New York Times Book Review*, May 17, 2009, review of *Mr. America*, p. 17.
- *Publishers Weekly*, December 22, 2008, review of *Mr. America*, p. 41; January 12, 2015, review of *Meet Me in Atlantis*, p. 52.
- *Reason*, June 1, 2009, Brian Doherty, "The Freaky Father of Fitness," p. 53.
- *Reference & Research Book News*, August 1, 2009, review of *Mr. America*.
- *St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, FL), March 11, 2009, Richard Horan, review of *Mr. America*.
- *Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2009, Geoffrey Norman, review of *Mr. America*, p. W10.
- *Washington Post Book World*, March 17, 2009, Louis Bayard, review of *Mr. America*, p. C1; July 2, 2011, Jonathan Yardley, review of *Turn Right at Machu Picchu: Rediscovering the Lost City One Step at a Time*.

## ONLINE

- *Blogcritics*, <http://blogcritics.org/> (July 23, 2011), Mark Adams, review of *Turn Right at Machu Picchu*.
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- *Mark Adams Home Page*, <http://markadamsbooks.com> (July 1, 2015).
- *Mr. America Website*, <http://mramericabook.com> (October 5, 2009), author profile and interview.
- *NPR.org*, <http://www.npr.org/> (July 24, 2011), "Retracing an Explorer's Footsteps to Machu Picchu."
- *S. Krishna's Books*, <http://www.skrishnasbooks.com/> (August 16, 2011), Swapna Krishna, review of *Turn Right at Machu Picchu*.\*

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