

Dwayne,

please print this letter AND all attachments for NM--he needs to review/approve them for a British edition.

--- Kathryn Lewis <[klewis@wyllieagency.com](mailto:klewis@wyllieagency.com)> wrote:

> From Kathryn Lewis Thu Mar 9 08:00:02 2006  
> Subject: Mr. Mailer  
> Date: Thu, 9 Mar 2006 11:00:02 -0500  
> From: "Kathryn Lewis" <[klewis@wyllieagency.com](mailto:klewis@wyllieagency.com)>  
> To: "jmwordcraft" <[jmwordcraft@yahoo.com](mailto:jmwordcraft@yahoo.com)>  
> CC: "Jeffrey Posternak" <[jposternak@wyllieagency.com](mailto:jposternak@wyllieagency.com)>  
>  
> Dear Judith:  
>  
> I hope all is well with you. Jeffrey has asked that  
> I be in touch. He  
> would like to send the Mailers a gift and would like  
> to know where they  
> are staying at the moment.  
>  
> Harper Perennial has been back in touch with  
prelim  
> pages for THE  
> AMERICAN DREAM and THE NAKED AND THE DEAD  
(attached)  
> for Mr. Mailer's  
> review. Can you please share these with him and  
let  
> me know if they are  
> acceptable?  
>  
> One last thing, Corbis has been back in touch to  
ask  
> for Mr. Mailer's

Harper Perennial  
edition of An American  
Dream

hand-written  
edits are  
Mailer's

Ans.  
Dream  
reviewers

> permission to use his image in their desk diary.  
> Please do let me know  
> his thoughts on this when you have a chance.  
>  
> Thanks so much, as always.  
>  
> Best,  
>  
> Kathryn  
>

About the author  
The Time of His Time: A Brief Norman Mailer Chronology  
About the book  
Serial Killer  
Conclusion  
Did You Know?  
Nothing but Raves: What the Papers Said in 1965  
Adaptation  
Read on  
Must Reads  
Find Out More  
If You Loved This, You Might Like ...]

[page break]

[section title] About the author

[page title] The Time of His Time: A Brief Norman Mailer Chronology

### 1923

Norman Kingsley (Nachum Malech) Mailer is born in Long Branch, New Jersey, on 31 January. His parents, Isaac Barnett Mailer and Fanny Schneider Mailer, are Jewish immigrants of Lithuanian extraction.

### 1927

The family settles in the Eastern Parkway area of Brooklyn.

### 1939

Norman graduates from Brooklyn Boys High School. He enters Harvard University to study aeronautical engineering.

### 1941

'The Greatest Thing in the World' wins *Story* magazine's National Short Story Contest.

### 1944

Marries Beatrice Silverman.

### 1944-6

Drafted into the army, Mailer serves as an artilleryman. in the South Pacific. *Transfers to a Reconnaissance Platoon in the white in the Philippines*

**1946–7**

Writes *The Naked and the Dead*.

**1948**

On a GI Bill military scholarship, Mailer studies at the Sorbonne in Paris.

*The Naked and the Dead* is published on 6 May.

Mailer supports the Progressive Party candidate Henry Wallace's campaign for the presidency.

**1949**

Mailer travels to Hollywood and works as a scriptwriter for Samuel Goldwyn

His first daughter Susan is born.

**1951**

*Barbary Shore* is published.

**1952**

His marriage to Beatrice ends and the couple divorce.

**1954**

Marries Adele Morales.

**1955**

*The Deer Park* is published.

Mailer co-founds the *Village Voice*.

**1957**

'The White Negro', Mailer's influential essay, appears in *Dissent*.

His daughter Danielle is born.

**1959**

*Advertisements for Myself*, his ground-breaking miscellany, is published.

His daughter Elizabeth Ann is born.

**1960**

Mailer is arrested following a violent argument with his wife.

**1962**

*Death for the Ladies and Other Disasters*, a collection of poems, is published.

Adele and Mailer divorce.  
Mailer marries Lady Jeane Campbell.  
His daughter Kate is born.

### 1963

Mailer and Jeane divorce.  
*The Presidential Papers*, a collection of essays, is published.  
Mailer marries Beverly Rentz Bentley.

### 1964

His son Michael Burks is born.  
Mailer testifies on behalf of William Burroughs's novel *The Naked Lunch* in an obscenity trial at the Massachusetts Supreme Court.

### 1965

*An American Dream*, Mailer's first novel for ten years, is published.

### 1966

The collection of essays *Cannibals and Christians* is published.  
His son Stephen McLeod is born.

### 1967

His novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* is published and nominated for a National Book Award.  
His play of *The Deer Park* is staged by Act IV Company at Theatre de Lys in New York.  
In an anti-Vietnam war march on the Pentagon in October, Mailer is arrested.

### 1968

*The Armies of the Night*, Mailer's non-fiction novel chronicling the events of the Pentagon march, is published and wins the Pulitzer Prize.  
His account of the Republican and Democratic presidential conventions, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*, receives the National Book Award.  
Mailer directs, produces, scripts, edits and acts in *Beyond the Law*, his <sup>second</sup> film about the police.

### 1969

He makes his <sup>first</sup> second film, *Wild 90*. (1967 or 1968)  
He campaigns, unsuccessfully, to become Mayor of New York.

### 1970

*Of a Fire on the Moon*, a book of reflections on technology and the Apollo moon landings, is published.

His film *Maidstone* is released.

#### 1971

*The Prisoner of Sex*, Mailer's response to Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, is published.

His daughter Maggie is born.

#### 1972

*Existential Errand*, a collection of essays and speeches, is published.

His reporting on the 1972 presidential conventions, *St George and the Godfather*, also appears.

#### 1973

Mailer spars with Jose Torres on *The Dick Cavett Show*.

*Marilyn*, Mailer's 'speculative' biography of the screen icon Marilyn Monroe, is published.

#### 1974

*The Faith of Graffiti*, a compendium of journalistic pieces, is published.

#### 1975

*The Fight*, Mailer's book-length account of Muhammad Ali and George Foreman's 'Rumble in the Jungle' bout in Kinshasa, Zaire, is published.

#### 1976

*Some Honorable Men*, a collection of Mailer's journalism covering successive presidential campaigns, is published.

*Genius and Lust*, Mailer's study of Henry Miller, is published.

#### 1978 (A)

*A Transcendental Narcissus* is published.

His son John Buffalo is born.

#### 1979

*The Executioner's Song*, Mailer's 'true-life' novel about the killer Gary Gilmore, is published and wins The Pulitzer Prize.

#### 1980

*Of Women and Their Elegance*, an illustrated 'autobiography' of the actress Marilyn Monroe, is published.

Divorces Beverly.

Marries and then divorces Carol Stevens

Marries Barbara ~~Church~~ <sup>Norris Church</sup> Davis Norris.

**1981**

Mailer portrays the architect Stanford White in Milos Forman's film version of E.L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime*.

**1982**

The collection of essays, *Pieces and Pontifications*, is published.

**1983**

*Ancient Evenings* is published.

**1984**

Mailer works on the screenplay of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in America*.  
*Tough Guys Don't Dance*, a crime thriller, is published.

**1987**

Mailer adapts and directs a film version of *Tough Guys Don't Dance*.  
He appears in Jean-Luc Godard's film *King Lear*. (one scene only)

**1991**

*How the Wimp Won the War*, his commentary on the Gulf War, appears.  
His epic novel about the CIA, *Harlot's Ghost*, is published.

**1995**

*Oswald's Tale: An American Mystery*, Mailer's biography of Lee Harvey Oswald, is published.  
*Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man*, his study of the painter, is published.

**1997**

*The Gospel According to the Son* is published.  
Mailer's film *Ringside* is released.

## 1998

On the fiftieth anniversary of *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Time of Our Time*, a comprehensive retrospective anthology, is published.

*The Naked and the Dead* is included in the Modern Library's 100 Best Fictions Books of the Century.

## 2002

*Into the Mirror: The Life of Master Spy Robert P. Hanssen*, a collaboration with Lawrence Schiller, is published. *by Maiter did research*

*for this book*

## 2003

*The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing* is published.

*Why Are We at War?*, Mailer's critique of the Bush Administration's policy on Iraq, is published.

## 2005

Mailer is awarded the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters by the National Book Foundation.

## 2006

*The Big Empty: Dialogues on Politics, Sex, God, Boxing, Morality, Myth, Poker and Bad Conscience in America*, a collection of exchanges with his son John Buffalo Mailer, is published.

[section break]

[section title]About the book

[title] Serial Killer

By the autumn of 1963, while scarcely idle (a collection of his political essays *The Presidential Papers* had only just appeared), Norman Mailer had not published a new novel since *The Deer Park* in 1955. As he confesses in *Advertisements for Myself*, *The Deer Park* was a book that he nearly suffered a breakdown finishing; several publishers rejected it – Alfred Knopf, according to Mailer, personally vetoed the novel, confronting one of his editors, in utter disgust, with the line, 'Is this your idea of the kind of book which should bear a Borzoi imprint?' – and the critics then mauled it. (Mailer responded by placing an ad featuring the worst reviews in *Village Voice* under the headline 'All over America "The Deer Park" is getting nothing but RAVES.') *5/1/06*

In 1959 Mailer had outlined the scope of his literary ambitions, expressing the desire to 'try to hit the longest ball ever to go up into the accelerated hurricane air of our American letters'. When he was asked about his future plans in an interview for the *Paris Review* in July 1963, Mailer was still thinking big. 'I've got a very long novel I want to do,' he said, 'and beyond that I haven't looked.' Mailer was under contract to deliver 'a big novel' for Putnam, the company which had published *The Deer Park*. But for several reasons, partly artistic and partly fiscal, in November 1963 Mailer embarked on a completely different project.

Discussing the experience of writing *The Deer Park*, Mailer had observed that, although at 'a much lower level', he thought it was akin to Tolstoy sitting down with the intention of penning *Anna Karenina* and coming out with *Crime and Punishment*. It would, however, be Dostoevsky rather than Tolstoy who provided the inspiration for his new novel, and in more ways than one. As well as sharing similar motifs and existential themes, *Crime and Punishment* was composed in haste to a strict deadline and to ease its author's financial difficulties. With *An American Dream* Mailer set himself the unenviable task of composing a novel, in the manner of Dostoevsky, Conrad and Dickens, in eight instalments, which would be published in *Esquire* magazine between January and August of 1964. Since, as he informed his close friend the novelist Francis Irby Gwaltney, he didn't have anything behind him, it came down 'to writing the book in eight months'. It was a challenge Mailer pulled off with, apparently, only the very final instalment coming dangerously close to the wire.

As this was not, or not intended to be, his 'big novel', Mailer had also secured a deal with the firm of Dial & Dell to bring out *An American Dream* the following year. (The novelist E.L. Doctorow, then an editor at Dial, worked on it.) Mailer spent several months turning the instalments into a novel, extensively revising and polishing the narrative for final publication, but the finished book retains the snappy chapter endings of the serial and conveys the vigour of its original composition.

According to *Harper's*, the end result – which by the time of its publication in 1965 was Mailer's first novel in a decade – was nothing short of a revelation. 'In its earlier serial publication,' the magazine's reviewer wrote, '*An American Dream* seemed to be hardly more than a series of cheaply lurid episodes in which the middle-aged bad boy of American literature was trying too hard to shock a bourgeoisie ... But now that the novel can be seen as a whole, the episodes come together in a pattern of remarkable imaginative coherence and intensity.'

[title] Conclusion

When the novel first appeared it shocked, awed and infuriated critics in equal measure (see 'Nothing But Raves: What the Papers Said in 1965'). Later the book was the main target of Kate Millet's critique of Mailer in *Sexual Politics*, but from this distance it can

been seen as pivotal work both in Mailer's output (his next novel, the short, sharp *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, was nominated for the National Book Award) and in the contemporary American canon. The 'mad, corrosive prose poetry' of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing*, for example, was memorably described by the *New York Times* as picking 'up where Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* left off'.

Even critics such as Salon.com's A.O. Scott, who believes it to be Mailer's 'worst novel', regard it as a literary landmark. 'The book's chaos,' Scott has written, 'seems now to be a vivid and indelible reflection of the disorder of its time and place. It is a work of sublime bravery.'

Bigger books, long promised, would follow in the decades after it, but as Joan Didion observed in her review of *The Executioner's Song* for the *New York Times* in 1979, *An American Dream* was and remains in every sense of the phrase a 'big book':

It is one of those testimonies to the tenacity of self-regard in the literary life that large numbers of people remain persuaded that Norman Mailer is no better than their reading of him. They condescend to him, they dismiss his most original work in favor of the more literal and predictable rhythms of *The Armies of the Night*: they regard *The Naked and the Dead* as a promise later broken and every book since as a quick turn for his creditors, a stalling action, a spangled substitute, tarted up to deceive, for the 'big book' he cannot write. In fact, he has written this 'big book' at least three times now. He wrote it the first time in 1955 with *The Deer Park* and he wrote it a second time in 1965 with *An American Dream* and he wrote it a third time in 1967 with *Why Are We in Vietnam?* and now, with *The Executioner's Song*, he has probably written it a fourth.

[title] Did You Know?

The phrase 'American dream' is widely believed to have been coined by the historian James Truslow Adams, who first used it in his book *The Epic of America*, published in 1931. ('If the American dream is to come true and to abide with us, it will, at bottom, depend on the people themselves.')

A photograph of Norman Mailer's then wife, Beverley, was incorporated into the design of the original book jacket for *An American Dream*.

In 2004 Norman Mailer made a special guest appearance in the popular American sitcom *Gilmore Girls*. Playing himself, he starred in an episode entitled 'Norman Mailer, I'm Pregnant!'

[Page Title] Nothing but Raves: What the Papers Said in 1965

'But then Mailer was prickly. Let us hope it was not because he had been beaten a little too often by book reviewers ...' Norman Mailer in *The Armies of the Night*

'*An American Dream* is one more instance in which Mailer is going to laugh last, for it is a remarkable book, a novel in many ways as good as *The Deer Park*, and *The Deer Park* is in many ways a perfect novel.' Joan Didion, *National Review*

'... Mailer is born writer, it is a heady ride – a bit absurd but, like all of the latter-day Mailer, somehow disarming because it has been attempted by a man who knows all along bystanders may laugh'. *Time*

'*An American Dream* is a dreadful novel, perhaps the worst I have read since beginning this column.' Stanley Edgar Hyman, *New Leader*

'Like an ancient tragedy, *An American Dream* is a work of fierce concentration, with such pressures behind each scene that it risks (and occasionally achieves) absurdity ... The states of mind are extreme, not rendered by psychological explanation but with an extraordinary, almost unbearable immediacy.' *Harper's*

'An outpouring of all-consuming ego ...' *Newsweek*

'... Mailer exhibits much of the best things he has going for him, his drive, his pace, his gift of narrative, his nervous excitement, things Cain and Chandler had, but not too many other American novelists'. Tom Wolfe, *New York Herald Tribune*

'He tells a sometimes bizarre, always violent, absolutely contemporary story of evil death, and strange hope. Reading it is like flying an airplane with the instruments cross-wire; I'm not sure I liked the experience, but I'll remember it for a long time ... Unwise, irresponsible, devoid of the charm that passes for literature, it diagrams the pentacle around which so many of us dance with such fateful urgency.' Conrad Knickerbocker, *New York Times Book Review*

'From my own point of view as a novelist, the principal trouble with Norman Mailer's much-criticized *An American Dream* is that he seems to have lost his interest in writing novels. What he really wants to do now is to tell us what modern society is and what is wrong with it; he aims more to be a prophet than a writer of fiction' Louis Auchincloss, *New York Times*

‘He has made efforts more honourable and courageous than most to adjust his perspective to understand what he once spoke of as “a subterranean river of untapped, ferocious and lonely desires, that concentration of ecstasy and violence that is the dream of the nation.’  
*Times Literary Supplement*

‘It deals with life seldom treated with such candor in serious literature, and even less frequently with Mailer’s relish of detail ... William James probably would have admired Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream*. And since to read James is more instructive about contemporary literature than to read the reviews of Mailer’s book, there’s a chance that the novel will find the respected place in history that literary journalism refuses to give it.’ Richard Poirier, *Commentary*

[page title] Adaptation

***An American Dream (aka See You in Hell, Darling), directed by Robert Gist, 1966***

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a novel of such verbal intensity, *An American Dream* did not transfer to the big screen easily – or, in this case, well. Judging by the finished result, a tedious quagmire of cod-philosophy, melodrama and lurid violence, the novel appears to have been beyond director Robert Gist and scriptwriter Rubin Mann, who subsequently lent his writing talents to such TV classics as *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *The Return of Captain Nemo* and *Quincey*.

Fresh-ish from his turn as American air ace Orvil Newton in *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*, Stuart Whitman starred as Stephen Rojack. Eleanor Parker played an embittered, alcoholic Deborah. *Psycho*’s Janet Leigh, in a break from playing murder victims, appeared as Cherry; *Playboy* Playmate of the Month for August 1966, Susan Densberg, was Ruta. ‘With four months still to go,’ reported Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times* on 1 September 1966, ‘the year’s worst movie may well turn out to be *An American Dream*.’ It has not improved with age.

[section break]

[section title]Read on

[page title] Must Reads

***The Executioner’s Song: A True Life Novel***

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, this book tells the true story of Gary Gilmore, who in 1977 became the first person to be executed in the United States since the reinstitution of the

death penalty. A chilling tale of distorted love and an unflinching journey into the mind of a murderer, *The Executioner's Song* is nothing short of a masterpiece.

### ***Why Are We in Vietnam?***

A modern parable of violence, narrated by a precocious teenager on the eve of his departure to fight in Vietnam, this brilliant novel follows three Texans as they head out on that most Hemingway-esque of ventures – a hunting trip in Alaska.

### ***The Deer Park***

Set in Desert D'Or, a fashionable Californian resort favoured by Hollywood's elite, *The Deer Park* is Mailer's mercilessly scabrous take on Movieland, centred on Sergius O'Shaughnessy, a novelist whose burning ambitions are gradually sapped by the decadence around him.

### ***The Naked and the Dead***

Published in 1948, *The Naked and the Dead* catapulted a twenty-five-year-old Norman Mailer to instant fame. A shattering work of nightmarish realism, it remains arguably the finest novel to emerge out of the Second World War.

### ***The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History***

On 21 October 1967 over 200,000 people marched on the Pentagon to protest against the Vietnam War. Among the demonstrators was Norman Mailer, who was arrested in the ensuing fracas. In this landmark piece of fictional reportage, awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1968, Mailer chronicles the day's events.

### ***The Fight***

When heavyweight boxers George Foreman and Muhammad Ali squared up for the world championship in Zaire in 1974 – the 'Rumble in the Jungle' – Norman Mailer was there. In a masterful account of one of boxing's greatest contests, Mailer goes far beyond the ropes to capture the primal ethos of the sport and the larger social event that made this fight so important.

### ***Ancient Evenings***

An epic novel that crosses three millennia to Pharaonic Egypt, *Ancient Evenings* is a mesmerizing tale of magic, death and reincarnation, lusts and ambitions, jealousies and betrayals.

### ***Harlot's Ghost***

A metaphysical thriller set in the murky world of the CIA in the 1950s and 1960s, Mailer's novel is a literary *tour de force* that raises serious questions about the course of American history.

FOR MORE ON THE MAN, HIS LIFE AND ART

***Advertisements for Myself***

Originally published in 1959, this collection of Mailer's stories, essays, polemic, meditations, interviews and autobiographical reflections is both a fascinating chronicle of its time and a significant work of American literature in its own right.

***The Time of Our Time***

Judged 'a remarkable portrait of an artist and of the indelible mark he has left on American life and letters' by the *New York Times*, this mammoth compendium, arranged thematically and chronologically, offers a wonderful survey of Mailer's work from the 1940s to the 1990s.

***The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing***

A wide-ranging book of Mailer's reflections on the writer's craft.

AND FROM ELSEWHERE

***Norman Mailer by Peter Manso***

An informative and readable 'oral' style canter through Mailer's life and times.

***Critical Essays on Norman Mailer edited by J. Michael Lennon***

A thought-provoking collection of pieces on Mailer's works.

[page title] Find Out More

SURF

<http://www.normanmailersociety.com/>

Why not join the Norman Mailer Society?

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/norman-mailer/>

Read Mailer's blogs here.

<http://www.iol.ie/~kic/>

A Norman Mailer fan site.

If You Loved This, You Might Like ... [insert in margin if extent problems]

*An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser

*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson

*American Psycho* by Brett Easton Ellis

*Mr Sammler's Planet* by Saul Bellow

*USA* by John Dos Passos

*The Day of the Locust* by Nathaniel West

*Mao II* by Don DeLillo

*Dead Babies* by Martin Amis

*Our Gang* by Philip Roth

*Crash* by J.G. Ballard

*Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk

(Ends)

[page title] Origins and Conception

Norman Mailer started his writing career while still a student at Harvard University. Inspired by James Farrell's *Studs Lonigan*, Mailer penned his first short stories as a freshman. In 1941 'The Greatest Thing in the World', one of his pieces for Harvard's literary organ, the *Advocate*, earned him *Story* magazine's national college fiction prize. Although Mailer did attend writing classes under Robert Gorham David at Harvard, he was actually studying aeronautical engineering, and in interview with the *Paris Review* in 1964 he commented on the influence of his course on *The Naked and the Dead*, describing it as the work of 'a young engineer' and revealing the methodical method of its construction.

A year before he himself was inducted into the army, and while still a student, Mailer had already attempted to write about the Second World War: his 1943 story 'A Calculus at Heaven' charts the fate of a company of American soldiers who find themselves isolated and outgunned by the Japanese. And when Mailer arrived in the South Pacific the idea for 'for a short novel about a long patrol' was firmly lodged in his mind; stimulated in part, he later recalled, by having read John Hersey's *Into the Valley* and Harry Brown's *A Walk in the Sun*.

Returning to Brooklyn in 1946, he began assiduously working his memories, his notes and the letters he had sent home into a novel. Influenced by André Malraux's *Mart's Fate*, ~~of Fate~~, he began with the characters, compiling extensive dossiers and drawing up detailed charts for each of his men. 'For a book which seems spontaneous on its surface,' he has commented, '*The Naked and the Dead* was written mechanically.' The 'short novel about a long patrol' soon grew more expansive. 'I thought it might be a good idea to have a preliminary chapter or two in which to give the reader a chance to meet my characters before they went on patrol. But the next six months and the first hundred pages went into that, and I can remember in the early days I was annoyed at how long it was taking me to get to the patrol.'

With copies of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, *Of Time and the River* by Thomas Wolfe, Dos Passos's *USA* and *Studs Lonigan* on his desk, Mailer worked on the novel throughout the summer of 1946, putting in around five hours and completing on average seven pages of typed script per day, four days a week. Collecting his post of a morning, Mailer would make small talk with his neighbour, Arthur Miller, both men remaining blissfully unaware of each other's artistic endeavours. While Mailer was slogging away on *The Naked and the Dead*, Miller was hard at work on *Death of a Salesman*.

A friend of Mailer's, Adeline Lubell Naiman, was as an editor at Little, Brown and after reading the first 200 pages of the rough manuscript she was convinced of its potential and recommended that the firm publish the novel. But the book's language, the

so-called obscenity of its dialogue, was regarded as a stumbling block, and while Little, Brown <sup>hesitated</sup> Mailer showed it to Ted Amussen, an editor at the firm Rinehart, instantly eliciting a much more positive response and securing a far more generous advance into the bargain. Its language, though, would continue to prove controversial.

The novel was eventually completed in the autumn of 1947, and after turning the manuscript over to his publishers and overseeing the final amendments, Mailer left to study at the Sorbonne in Paris on GI Bill military scholarship. The book is scheduled to be published on 6 May 1948.

### [ title] Reception

To help promote the book, Rinehart placed a series of eye-catching pre-publication adverts in the *New York Times*. In a bold innovation for the era – one that, apparently, did not entirely meet with the approval of its author, who felt a teaser campaign risked trivializing his book – no mention was made of Mailer's name. Instead the ads plugged the title and introduced individual characters. One, for example, ran:

I am General Cummings  
This is not my face  
I am well-fed, well-rested, well-heeled  
This face belongs to  
*The Naked and the Dead*  
This is a picture of my soul ...

Look for me on May 6

Less reticent follow-ups did inform would-be purchasers that the novel was written by 'a young rifleman named Norman Mailer' and boasted, 'You will remember every man you meet here.' Readers were nevertheless advised that, 'Their language, their thoughts may shock.' They were 'only dirty soldiers in a very dirty war', and 'when you know their story, you will be proud to identify yourself with them. For these men were – and are – America.'

America, it emerged, was more than ready for *The Naked and the Dead*, even though it was priced at a then exorbitant \$4, when most other new books were selling for \$2.95. From the outset the book was a commercial and critical success. It topped the *New York Times* Bestseller List for eleven consecutive weeks and within a year of its publication Rinehart had sold over 169,000 copies of the book. At the age of 25, Mailer had gone 'from being the kid-next-door ... to being called a major America writer'. C.J. Rolo, writing in *the Atlantic* in June 1948, hailed the novel as 'by far the most impressive

piece of fiction to date about the Americans in the Second World War'. David Dempsey in the *New York Times* stated that it was 'undoubtedly the most ambitious novel to be written about the recent conflict, it is also the most ruthlessly honest and in scope and integrity compares favorably with the best that followed World War I'. Dempsey, who concluded by hailing Mailer as 'a new and significant talent among American novelists', also pinpointed part of the book's appeal to its contemporary audience when he dubbed it 'virtually a Kinsey Report on the sexual behavior of the GI'. Alfred Kinsey's best-selling *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* had appeared earlier that year, and *The Naked and the Dead*'s own exploration of desire and power and its examination of the sexual motivations of the men clearly tapped into a prevalent post-war interest in psychology. (Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rope* was another release of 1948.)

[ title] The Trouble With You Limeys ...

Despite its acclaim in the USA, British publishers were reluctant to take on a novel whose style was memorably described as 'almost pure Army billingsgate'. Six leading London houses rejected it before Allan Wingate, a small firm that had only recently been formed by the young Hungarian émigré André Deutsch, eventually bought the book.

Some three weeks before the book's publication, Deutsch and his editor Diane Athill awoke on Sunday 1 May 1949 to discover that the novel had suddenly become headline news. A front-page editorial in that morning's *Sunday Times* called for *The Naked and the Dead* to be 'withdrawn from publication immediately'. Generally, the paper maintained, 'their talk, reported at length, is incredibly foul and beastly ... no decent man could leave it lying about the house, or know without shame that his womenfolk were reading it'. In her memoir *Stet*, Athill recalls the horror of their situation: 'The book was printed and bound – the first printing was large – it was a long book, expensive to manufacture ... close to wind as the firm was still having to sail, if this book was banned we would go down.' Served with an injunction preventing publication, they could only wait in frustration as the orders now came pouring in while the Attorney General, Sir Harvey Shawcross, considered their case.

The *Guardian* newspaper was among those who leapt to the novel's defence. It stated on 13 May 1949:

On the matter of *The Naked and the Dead* our duty as liberal and educated people is clear. If it comes to a showdown we stand by Norman Mailer. His book is tremendously good, and perhaps better than that. There has been some conjuring up of the ghost of what Henry James called 'that Rhadamanthus of English literature – the Young Person'. Presumably British grown-ups have enough moral fibre to read, without becoming demoralised, a book about soldiers fighting, frightened, swearing (which everybody knows most soldiers do all the time – and in any case almost everybody has been a soldier; even the women have been in uniform by the hundred

thousand), and about soldiers and their women and soldiers getting wounded and killed. As for the Young Persons, those belonging to what used to be known as the working classes are commonly enlightened very early about elemental things, and the other boys and girls are not nowadays brought up prudish. But in fact *The Naked and the Dead* will only be scavenged for obscene passages by those whose taste or fancy is already for such nourishment. It is a powerful, well-planned and excitingly intelligent book.

Four days later *Newsweek* was able to report that the Wingate Press's 'first impression of 10,500 copies of *The Naked and the Dead* has sold out before reaching the bookstores, and 20,000 more copies yet unprinted have been subscribed in advance'. Shawcross opted not to ban the novel, and it has been in print in the UK ever since.

### [title] Conclusion

In 1959, some eleven years after its publication, Harry T. Moore remarked in the *New York Times* that '*The Naked and the Dead* remains the finest combat novel in English about World War II' – an assessment that is as valid now as it was then. In recognition of its enduring place in the American literary canon, on its fiftieth anniversary it was included in the Modern Library's Best 100 Fiction Books of the Century.

### [page title] Adaptation

#### ***The Naked and the Dead*, directed by Raoul Walsh, 1958**

Bad books, or so the old adage goes, make the best films. *The Naked and the Dead* is a very good book, and Hollywood unfortunately served it poorly. The long-delayed film version was finally made in 1958. In one of motion pictures' numerous if-onlys, Charles Laughton had been in the frame to direct. Sadly the box office failure of his masterpiece *Night of the Hunter* (1955) meant he was never trusted with a clapperboard again. The project, taken over by Warners from the failing RKO studio, was then passed to Raoul Walsh. The director of such likeable war flicks as *Objective Burma!* (1945) and *Battle Cry* (1955), Walsh was not intrinsically a bad choice. As the film-writer David Thomson has commented, 'He could do modern war ... with such an eye for combat and such unforced sympathy for common soldiers under stress.' Dismissed as a third-rate action movie by Pauline Kael, *The Naked and Dead* is a sturdy if perhaps underwhelming war picture about a platoon behind enemy lines. There is a fine performance by Raymond Massey as the psychopathic General Cummings, and Rat Pack regular, the comedian Joey Bishop, plays Private Roth with some aplomb. But just as the *New York Times* would denounce Walsh's *Marines, Let's Go!* (1960) as 'an extremely roundabout, hollow and

often exasperating tribute to American fighting men in Korea', so his *The Naked and the Dead* barely pays lip-service to Mailer's World War II masterpiece.

[section break]

[section title]Read on

[page title] Must Read

### ***The Executioner's Song: A True Life Novel***

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, this book tells the true story of Gary Gilmore, who in 1977 became the first person to be executed in the United States since the reinstitution of the death penalty. A chilling tale of distorted love and an unflinching journey into the mind of a murderer, *The Executioner's Song* is nothing short of a masterpiece.

### ***An American Dream***

Mailer's powerful exploration of one man's quest for depravity, *An American Dream* shocked many when it was first published in 1965. Now widely regarded as one of the seminal works of twentieth-century American literature, this novel charts, in white-hot prose, the exploits of Stephen Rojack, war hero, politician and TV personality, who after murdering his wife is catapulted into a world of gangsters, crumbling tenements, police brutality and sleazy nightclubs.

### ***The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History***

On 21 October 1967 over 200,000 people marched on the Pentagon to protest against the Vietnam War. Among the demonstrators was Norman Mailer, who was arrested in the ensuing fracas. In this landmark piece of fictional reportage, awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1968, Mailer chronicles the day's events.

### ***The Fight***

When heavyweight boxers George Foreman and Muhammad Ali squared up for the world championship in Zaire in 1974 – the 'Rumble in the Jungle' – Norman Mailer was there. In a masterful account of one of boxing's greatest contests, Mailer goes far beyond the ropes to capture the primal ethos of the sport and the larger social event that made this fight so important.

### ***Why Are We in Vietnam?***

A modern parable of violence, narrated by a precocious teenager on the eve of his departure to fight in Vietnam, this brilliant novel follows three Texans as they head out on that most Hemingway-esque of ventures – a hunting trip in Alaska.

***The Deer Park***

Set in Desert D'Or, a fashionable Californian resort favoured by Hollywood's elite, *The Deer Park* is Mailer's mercilessly scabrous take on Movieland, centred on Sergius O'Shaughnessy, a novelist whose burning ambitions are gradually sapped by the decadence around him.

***Ancient Evenings***

An epic novel that crosses three millennia to Pharaonic Egypt, *Ancient Evenings* is a mesmerizing tale of magic, death and reincarnation, lusts and ambitions, jealousies and betrayals.

***Harlot's Ghost***

A metaphysical thriller set in the murky world of the CIA in the 1950s and 1960s, Mailer's novel is a literary tour de force that raises serious questions about the course of American history.

FOR MORE ON THE MAN, HIS LIFE AND ART

***Advertisements for Myself***

Originally published in 1959, this collection of Mailer's stories, essays, polemic, meditations, interviews and autobiographical reflections is both a fascinating chronicle of its time and a significant work of American literature in its own right.

***The Time of Our Time***

Judged 'a remarkable portrait of an artist and of the indelible mark he has left on American life and letters' by the *New York Times*, this mammoth compendium, arranged thematically and chronologically, offers a wonderful survey of Mailer's work from the 1940s to the 1990s.

***The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing***

A wide-ranging book of Mailer's reflections on the writer's craft.

AND FROM ELSEWHERE

***Norman Mailer* by Peter Manso**

An informative and readable 'oral' style canter through Mailer's life and times.

***Critical Essays on Norman Mailer* edited by J. Michael Lennon**

A thought-provoking collection of pieces on Mailer's works.

[page title] Find Out More

SURF

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*Going After Cacciato* by Tim O'Brien

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*All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque

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*For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway

*The Thin Red Line* by James Jones

*Dog Soldiers* by Robert Stone

*Dispatches* by Michael Herr

[End]

[pi]

Norman Mailer was born in New Jersey in 1923. He grew up in Brooklyn and entered Harvard University to study engineering when he was only sixteen. During the Second World War, Mailer served in the Philippines, an experience which formed the basis of his famous debut novel, the bestselling *The Naked and the Dead*.

A major figure in postwar American literature, Mailer's other works include *Barbary Shore*, *The Deer Park*, *Advertisements for Myself*, *Armies of the Night* (for which he was awarded both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award), *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (for which he was awarded a National Book Award for non-fiction) *Of a Fire on the Moon*, *The Prisoner of Sex*, *The Executioner's Song* (for which he was awarded his second Pulitzer Prize), *Ancient Evenings*, *Harlot's Ghost*, *Oswald's Tale* and, most recently, *Why Are We At War?*

[pii]

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[piii]

Norman Mailer

An American Dream

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London, New York, Toronto and Sydney

[piv]

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Norman Mailer

The Naked and The Dead

With an introduction written on the fiftieth anniversary of the book by the author

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[piv]

To my mother and Bea

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